

Collector Coins



face value	20 zł
metal	925/1000 Ag and paints: red, yellow, green and blue
finish	proof
dimensions	length: 40.00 mm width: 28.00 mm
weight	28.28 g
mintage	80,000 pcs

Obverse: A stylised view of the painting by Stanisław Wyspiański entitled "Macierzyństwo" (Maternity) of 1905. An image of the Eagle, established as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland, on the right-hand side at the bottom. Around the Eagle, an inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA, the notation of the year of issue, 2004, and 20 ZŁ. The Mint's mark, $\frac{m}{w}$, under the Eagle's left leg.

Reverse: A stylised view of the painting by Stanisław Wyspiański entitled "Autoportret" (Self-Portrait) of 1902. Below, and inscription, Stanisław Wyspiański 1869-1907. A palette and three paintbrushes on the right-hand side below. On the palette the following paints: red, yellow, green and blue.

Coin Designer: Robert Kotowicz



face value	2 zł
metal	CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy
finish	standard
diameter	27.00 mm
weight	8.15 g
mintage	900,000 pcs

Obverse: An image of the Eagle established as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland; a palette and two paintbrushes on the left-hand side. An inscription, 2 ZŁ, below, and a circumscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA, and notation of the year of issue, 2004, above. The Mint's mark, $\frac{m}{w}$, under the Eagle's left leg.

Reverse: Stylised view of the painting by Stanisław Wyspiański entitled "Autoportret" (Self-Portrait) of 1902. Below, a circumscription, STANISŁAW WYSPIAŃSKI 1869-1907.

On the edge: An inscription, NBP, repeated eight times, every second one inverted by 180 degrees, separated by stars.

Designer of the obverse: Ewa Tyc-Karpińska

Designer of the reverse: Robert Kotowicz



Coins struck by the State Mint in Warsaw.

Printed by NBP Printing Office

Design: DECORUM

**– POLISH PAINTERS of the TURN
of 19th and 20th CENTURIES –**

On December 15, 2004, the National Bank of Poland is putting into circulation collector coins depicting Stanisław Wyspiański, of the following face values:

- 20 zł – struck in proof finish in silver,
- 2 zł – struck standard finish, in CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy (Nordic Gold).

Stanisław Wyspiański was the most prominent figure of the Young Poland art movement. He was the most versatile artist of the so-called great four (Jacek Malczewski, Józef Mehoffer, Witold Wojtkiewicz) and it was Wyspiański who managed to reconcile the avant-garde movements in the European art of those days with Polish history and tradition.

He was born on January 15, 1869 in Kraków as the firstborn son of Maria of the Rogowski family and Franciszek Wyspiański. His father – a professional sculptor – had enjoyed a short-lived artistic success. Following the premature death of his mother, Wyspiański would spend time with his father in the environment of sculptures and craftwork.

In 1880 Wyspiański moved to his aunt and uncle's, the Stankiewicz family. This respected Kraków family that Wyspiański kept in touch with for a long time, was imbued with patriotic and national tradition; it was this tradition that determined the attitude (not only the artistic one) of Wyspiański.

Wyspiański attended the St. Anna classical secondary school in Kraków. Among his friends were Stanisław Estreicher, Józef Mehoffer and Lucjan Rydel. In that day and age, the students would entertain themselves by reading, giving school stage performances and going to the theatre.

The artist was an average student. He excelled only at drawing. It was still at school when Wyspiański decided about his future. He attended the Academy of Fine Arts as a freelancer before he even obtained his secondary school certificate and his school sketches were apparently viewed with interest by Jan Matejko himself.

Wyspiański discovered Polish architecture and landscape relatively early, thanks to the excursions organised by Prof. Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, an art historian. It was when his documentary drawings came to being. After he graduated from the secondary school, Wyspiański entered the Jagiellonian University and regularly attended lectures on old art.

Participation in the works on polychromy in St. Mary's Church in Kraków (1889) proposed to Wyspiański by Jan Matejko proved both an adventure and significant experience to the artist. Not only was this half a year spent on the scaffolding technical experience but also introduction to the artist's great visual architectonic and painting solutions. Wyspiański dismissed Matejko's advice and left for Paris. "A *premature*

departure cannot produce any advantages," claimed the professor. Those words proved prophetic as early as in 1891. Wyspiański and Mehoffer failed to enter Ecole des Beaux-Arts. For both artists, the stay in Paris was the time to discover old and French contemporary art (Gauguin, Nabis, Art Nouveau).

Wyspiański experienced another failure when his design prepared for the competition to decorate the Rudolfinum Concert Hall in Prague was rejected. The discussions and problems regarding the stained glass designs for the cathedral of Lvov multiplied. The monks refused to accept their "primitivism". The folk style of expression proved incomprehensible to them. This one of the greatest works by Wyspiański, with a particularly interesting portrayal of "Polonia" (1893-1894) was, from the point of view of principals, inappropriate. This work revealed the elements which soon became a distinctive feature of his output: flexible and wavy outline, grand still plant ornaments (stalks, flowers, branches).

Being engaged in work on monumental projects, Wyspiański would paint a great number of pastels – views of Kraków, portraits and self-portraits. His first success came with the order (1897-1904) and – what is more important – with the completion of the ornamentation for the Franciscan Church in Kraków. Wyspiański provided the interior of this gothic church with avant-garde (Art Nouveau) designs.

The ornamentation encompassed figures (Blessed Salomea, St. Francis, God the Father) and the image of four elements (water, fire, earth, air). The strength of gesture and intensity of colours (additionally lit by the light from the outside) have made this work one of the greatest masterpieces of art.

The church walls were covered with "herbarium" – huge nasturtiums, lilies and roses carefully filled (in line with the art trends of those days) vast parts of the temple's nave and aisles. In September 1900, Wyspiański married Teodora Teofila Pytko. The marriage proved to be a breakthrough event both in his private and artistic life. Wyspiański painted numerous portraits of his wife (often wearing her national costume), self-portraits with his wife and – the best-known – portraits of his children. The famous pictures include "Śpiący Mietek" (Sleeping Mietek) and "Helenka" (1900) are the most remarkable examples of portraits of children in the Polish school of painting. His master ability to capture poses or mimicry is manifested in his pastels that portray children known to the artist or those whom he met by chance (portraits of Eliza Pareńska of 1905, "Dziewczynka gasząca świece" «A Girl Extinguishing the Candles» of 1893). In his series of works entitled "Macierzyństwo" (Maternity), Wyspiański used light though distinct line to portray a breastfeeding mother. Serenity, admiration and a kind of tenderness are all manifested in those works.

The scenes marked by intense colours are often embellished with ornaments typical of Wyspiański.

In his late years, the artist's achievement was dominated by small and modest painting works. A previously undertaken motif of landscape is manifested in "Widok Kopca Kościuszki z pracowni artysty" (A View of Kopiec Kościuszki from the Artist's Atelier) of 1904-1905 (several versions). The typographic works for *Życie* (Life) magazine, interior designs for secular buildings (the flat of the Żeleński family), the design for the reconstruction of Wawel Hill, the design of the seat of Doctors' Association in Kraków, or preparation of the entire stage setting and costumes for his own dramatic works are all evidence of Wyspiański's versatile artistic talent.

Kraków bid farewell to the barely 38-year-old artist on November 28, 1907. Tens of thousands of people walked in the funeral procession from St. Mary's Church via Wawel Hill to the Pauline Church at Skałka.

Wyspiański was undoubtedly the most avant-garde representative of Polish art of his time. The literary world announced him "the fourth bard" but for the fine arts he will unquestionably remain the first one.

Wyspiański's artistic output has been, on many occasions and in many different ways, used as inspiration. He has been imitated extremely often. He became an inexhaustible source of inspiration for, inter alia, Tadeusz Kantor and Andrzej Wajda.

"*They should say: "Mr Wyspiański was the Great Master" – Tadeusz Kantor.*

Anna Ziemia-Michałowska