

New York, the Mecca of the Art World. Initial Study on Polish Migrant Artists who Left for the United States, 1986–1995

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Abstract: The paper strives to characterize the circle of Polish visual artists who left for the United States in the late 20th century and settled in New York City, where they continued their careers. For the purposes of the paper, the subject matter has been focused on an excerpt from an ample research problem i.e. the analysis of the history of the Polish American Artists Society (PAAS,) operating in New York from 1986 through 1995. Their activities form the basis for the analysis and constitute a database to construct a more profound picture of the organization. Therefore, the years in which PAAS operated shall also constitute the paper's framework. To foster simplicity, the term 'artist' and 'artists' shall be used to refer to visual artists born in Poland who came to New York City mainly in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, permanently resided in the United States, and worked as visual artists, regardless of the technique they adopted, be it painters, sculptors, photographers, graphic artists, illustrators, performers, artistic fabric weavers, or video artists. The paper uses their micro-stories to illustrate the phenomenon behind the prolific community of Polish artists in New York City from 1986 through 1995. It is based on research on PAAS, which has become the basis for a monographic book about the Society.

Key words: Art history, American Art, art life, artistic migration, New York, Polish American Artists Society, Polish migrant artists

Art and its safe haven. General information on the research problem

The present outline of the circle of Polish visual artists who left for the United States and settled in New York City in the late 20th century is based in a historical analysis of the Polish American Artists Society (PAAS), which operated from 1986 through 1995.

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Their history has spurred research and serves as a database to create a description and a portrayal of the Polish artists in New York in 1986–1995, gathered around one formal organization.

The text has a few reference points, with New York City being the first. Artists and art historians widely consider the Big Apple the capital of artistic life – a denomination which first appeared following World War II. The legend continued to persist in the 1960s and was spread among artists from Central and Eastern Europe, who would often travel there. The city enjoyed equal footing with Paris and London, in which Polish visual artists had previously aspired to create. Polish artistic migrants in the late 20th century would choose New York consciously, being fully aware of the possibilities it offered. The next point of reference lies within PAAS history, which was a crucial organization from 1986 through 1995, founded by artists for artists. PAAS was a phenomenon of sorts, as it has been the only such organization in the city to date (we could even dare say in the entire United States.) Its heritage is rich and its list of members and initiatives abounds. Looking back at their history, one sees a vivid picture of the Polish visual artists who came to New York to make their artistic career grow.

The paper is rooted in factography and biography, the artists' micro-stories, a preliminary analysis of their art, and the analysis of the forms they employed, and emphasizes studies pointing to both the context and the reception. Its source-based character is necessary to create an adequate picture of the environment. It allows not only to describe the state of current research and sketch the portraits of individual protagonists, but also to reconstruct the scale of activities undertaken by PAAS, thus reconstructing the image of the community of visual artists working in New York in the years 1986–1995. Additionally, it lays the foundations to subsequently draw the vectors of further research activities in the field.

The subject matter in the present paper is merely a fraction of a bigger picture and requires much work and further research. However, the paper tries to stress the undeniable value of such initiatives. The environment has been characterized based on data I collected while researching PAAS history to be included in a book on the subject. The research work included searching archives, conducting unscripted interviews, analyzing the literature on the subject (mainly the history of American and Polish art and reviews by art critics,) and analyzing the artwork. The present study focuses on a fragment of contemporary art created by Polish Americans in the late 20th century, which is to spur further research and stimulate a wider discussion.

Polish visual artists in the United States. Research to date

The research problem – migration of Polish visual artists to the United States, which is considered a collective characteristic of Polish visual artists who lived and worked in the United States in the 20th century and their influence on the local art world –

has not been researched by art historians on a wider scale. As a result, the current state of research on the subject is genuinely modest. There are single monographs, articles on individual phenomena (e.g. artistic groups or architecture,) texts written for exhibition catalogs, or post-conference publications. Nevertheless, we lack extensive, programmed, and consistently implemented research studies and analyses and the resulting publications.

The register of specific works takes into account studies on individual artists such as: Stanisław Stach z Warty Szukalski (1893–1987), Władysław Teodor Benda (1873–1948), Maria Werten (1888–1949) (Chudzicka 2015; Lameński 2007; Rudek-Śmiechowska 2016; Nowak 2021.) A relative number of papers has focused on a central issue, e.g., on world exhibitions and architecture. To date, the only broader attempt to gather knowledge about the Polish art community in America, both in the late 20th century and in general, was authored by Szymon Bojko (Bojko 2007.) The writer spent over thirty years collecting materials for the compendium during his visits to the USA. He managed to create an encyclopedia profiling Polish artists, simultaneously offering a synthesis and depiction of the relevant environments grouped by creative forms (sculpture, photography, painting.) It is currently the only cross-sectional study on Polish-American artists written from the perspective of an art historian. However, Bojko discusses the period from 1900 through 1980. Moreover, the author himself wrote that he was going to leave ‘the reflections and interpretations going beyond the individual fates of the artists’ for a later, systematizing stage of research on this particular community (Bojko 2007: 13–14.) Regrettably, his plan was never put into action. Bojko completed his study in 1980 which, in hindsight, became another breakthrough which changed the map showcasing Polish artists arriving in the United States. Another important figure in the debate on Polish migrant art is art historian, critic, exhibition curator, poet, and the president of AICA Marek Bartelik. His perennial cooperation with the newspaper *Nowy Dziennik* resulted in a chronicle on matters relating to culture, where he would review exhibitions in addition to publishing numerous interviews and articles on both the Polish and the American art scene. His pieces were also published in the trade press (e.g. the *Artforum*,) in exhibition catalogs, and as research contributions (Bartelik 1988; 1992; 1993.)

Interestingly, if we further limited the research problem to the years 1986–1995, we would notice that the research on the Polish community of visual artists operating in the United States during this time is even scarser. Monographs feature Krzysztof Wodiczko and Krzysztof Zarębski and there is also an unpublished doctoral thesis on Rafał Olbiński (Wodiczko, Ostolski 2015; Piotrowski 2009; Gabrielson 2013.) In light of the above, exhibitions and the accompanying catalogs become an educative source of information. The catalog complementing the exhibition ‘Jesteśmy’ (‘We are’) on Polish migrant artists (i.a. in the USA, France, Canada, Israel, and the USSR) at the Warsaw-based Zachęta–National Gallery of Art (Wierzychowska, Dzikowska 1991.) Moreover, we may also list the exhibition catalogs featuring Hanna Zawa Cywińska

(1986), Magdalena Abakanowicz (2005), Jan Sawka (2020). Worth noting are exhibitions in key American institutions, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which showcased 'Transmissions: Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America, 1960–1980' (2015) and 'Polish Posters 1945–89' (2009). The last crucial source material to facilitate research encompasses artist autobiographies or biographies written for the general public, e.g. writings discussing Ryszard Horowitz and Lubomir Tomaszewski (Horowitz 2014; Wlazło, Rij 2021.)

Two names should also be mentioned – Piotr Piotrowski and Andrzej Szczerski. These researchers' perspectives reveal a chapter in the discussion about Central and Eastern European art in its broader, global domain. Szczerski's 'another perspective' paints a picture of Central and Eastern European art history that hinges on the categories of the center and the province, whereas Piotrowski's concept of horizontal art history establishes a distinctive research perspective, which must be noted here (though it cannot be discussed more widely in the present paper,) especially as it is a starting point for future research studies on the subject (Piotrowski 2018; Szczerski 2018.) Last but not least, we shall touch upon the text by Tomasz Ferenc, who considers artistic migration from the sociological point of view and includes the most important art circles of Paris, London, Berlin, and New York (Ferenc 2012.)

Current investigations on the subject matter are fragmentary and require further research, constant complementing, and wider, more complete, and meticulous studies. They may illustrate great dispersion and expose the small scale of research on the subject, but they also substantiate the need to conduct further analyses. There is no doubt that the subject at hand is an important one, and that it combines numerous research threads to be examined, focusing both on individual motifs and a wider range of research problems.

New York City archives. Materials and methods

The paper is founded on materials and data uncovered in connection with researching the history of the Polish American Artists Society and its individual members. The research was conducted in several stages (2006, 2009, 2019–2020), both in the United States and in Poland. The first stage of the research work was thought as a preliminary study of the New York archives kept by the perennial PAAS president Andrzej Kenda, made in person. This stage also involved canvassing the archives of *Nowy Dziennik*, which are still to be found at the newspaper's Manhattan headquarters on 333 West 38th Street. *Nowy Dziennik* would often mention PAAS and its members, since both the journalists and the publishers were their true aficionados (about 180 articles appeared from 1986 through 1995, and later, in 2005 and 2006, the newspaper would also publish memoirs.) The inquiry would also lead me to libraries and private archives belonging to artists, collectors, families, and friends and cover both

original and photocopied texts on a given artist published in newspapers or exhibition catalogs. I analyzed the acquired visual materials, such as documentary photographs from exhibition openings and various meetings.

Further studies involved long interviews with PAAS members. They included event participants and witnesses and were conducted face-to-face, over the Internet, or by phone. The list includes, but is not limited to: Andrzej Kenda, Grażyna Boguta Kenda, Hanna Zawa Cywińska, Krzysztof Zacharow, Rafał Olbiński, Marek Bartelik, the late Bartek Małysa, Barbara Małysa, Jerzy Kubina, Krystyna Spisak-Madejczyk, Katarzyna Gruda, Mariola Markiewicz-Olbińska, Krystyna Sanderson, Krystyna Borkowska, the late Jacek Gulla, Andrzej Seta Szczepaniec, Barbara Marjańska, the late Lubomir Tomaszewski, Ryszard Horowitz, Andrzej Baranowski, Jagoda Przybylak. In a number of cases, I also examined selected works by PAAS artists, and their incipient analysis and interpretation shall form the basis to discover bilateral contexts and its reception which, due to the slightly different nature of the present outline, are only signaled here, and undoubtedly require further, extensive studies. Finally, I analyzed the German literature, focusing on American and Polish art history.

New York City. The world art capital

Eminent European artists had a rather positive attitude to New York. Case studies (e.g. Piet Mondrian, Fernand Léger, Marcel Duchamp) and the story behind The Art of this Century Gallery show that the choice of a new place of residence and the resulting adaptation to the new environment caused a virtual revolution in the art created. In his New York notes, art historian Piotr Piotrowski wrote:

‘Duchamp says that New York had created a favorable atmosphere for him. [...] He had found a new home. The rich artistic life of Europe, and especially that of France, had suddenly disappeared and had been replaced by the harsh atmosphere of militarism. In New York, on the other hand, it developed dynamically, partly thanks to the influx of Europeans. Duchamp was one of them, but not the only one.’ (Piotrowski 1996: 9.)

Marcel Duchamp was born in France (1887), but in 1942, he settled in New York City and was even awarded American citizenship (1955). The artist was one of many European peers who fled the war-stricken zones to arrive in the United States of America. The ‘How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art’ contribution by Serge Guilbaut marked a new era for New York, which became the new capital of the art world (Guilbaut 1985.) Europe, engulfed in war, lost countless respected artists, but this phenomenon positively impacted the development of American art on the international arena. It raised the rank of New York City as the new art capital, on a par with Paris and London.

A similar scene emerges from the analyses of migration from the 1960s through the early 1990s in Poland. At that time, large numbers of renowned visual artists left the country and made a conscious decision to move to the United States of America. Researcher Patryk Pleskot estimates that in the 1980s, about one million Poles emigrated, most of them in 1980–1981 and 1987–1989 (Pleskot 2016.) According to the researcher, the most frequently chosen destinations were the United States of America, Germany, Scandinavia, Italy, the United Kingdom, and France. Poles would leave for a number of economic and political reasons. Based on the information provided by Tomasz Ferenc, New York was the most frequently chosen city. To illustrate the thesis with an example, we could quote the year 1910, when 41 percent of the population came from outside the United States. In 1998, 11 percent of all emigrants who had come to the United States lived in New York City (Ferenc 2012: 203–204.)

When we venture a look at the biographies of Polish artists who chose to settle in New York City in the late 20th century and analyze their statements, we see that the city was then considered the Mecca of world artists and an excellent place to develop. It became another leading destination recorded in Polish biographies after Paris and London (which would return onto the world art map, since Poles had invariably considered them important points) (Majewski 2020; Sienkiewicz 2012.) It was the go-to place for the young, ambitious, free, and independent go-getters. The Polish college graduates would embark on a journey to the Big Apple to devote their personal and professional lives to the city, often making art history.

Recalling the reasons why he chose New York, the painter and illustrator Krzysztof Zacharow said:

New York suited me. I adapted quickly. For me, it was a place of opportunities, a true American Dream. No other European city was so promising. (Zacharow 2007.)

When interviewed, photographer Andrzej Baranowski, who came to New York from Wrocław via Munich, stated:

The majority of my generation was thinking about leaving Poland. The West seemed to have a future, and the East did not. We had many friends in Munich who were also artists, so the choice was clear. In Munich, we applied for U.S. permanent residence and were awarded a Green Card. I was fascinated by American photography and of course New York City as the epicenter of creativity. When we arrived, New York was shockingly different from all the European cities we knew; there was a strike of sanitation workers and garbage would pile in the streets, the subway was dirty [...] (Baranowski 2020.)

Warsaw-born painter and conceptualist Krystyna Borkowska came to New York from London (1994). In her words:

Manhattan in the late 1980s and early 1990s was quite exceptional. There was a reason why we considered this place the capital of the world. It was practically bursting with

creative energy. No wonder that countless artists from all over the world accepted the city as their own. The artists would fiercely quarrel, but they were also dear friends. (Borkowska 2020.)

Andrzej Czeczot, a famous illustrator, painter, set designer, and drafter, was forced into exile for political reasons, and temporarily settled in New York City (1982). For him, emigration equaled defeat. Nevertheless, he would later recall this chapter of his life as a time of opportunities:

You simply cannot be bored in New York City. It is a conglomerate of all possible cultures composed of ethnic districts, where I was even able to find a world I knew from my childhood. Flocks of restless vagabonds, lunatics, and villagers gather here from all over the world. In fact, it is like a macro-cosmic giant countryside town with an amusement park on the outskirts, where people can still play. For anyone who aspires to be called a creator, it is a virtual cognitive mine of impressions.' (Przybyłowska 2018.)

Statements such as the quoted ones and the emerging picture of Polish-American artists are far from being considered single cases and seem to paint a coherent panorama.

The wave of artist migration in the late 20th century would also include Rafał Olbiński, Jagoda Przybylak, Hanna Zawa Cywińska, Jerzy Kubina, Andrzej Dudziński, Janusz Kapusta, Lubomir Tomaszewski, Adam Niklewicz, Bartek Małysa, Leo Małysa, Krystyna Borkowska, Katarzyna Czerpak-Węgliński, Zbigniew Krygier, Roman Kujawa, Krzysztof Zarębski, Peter Grzybowski, to name a few. Some of them choose to enrich the New York visual art landscape, strengthening the local art community.

The environment is best illustrated on the example of the Polish American Artists Society (PAAS), operating from 1986 through 1995, which brought together as many as 140 Polish-American artists (both formal members and casual visitors, friends, supporters). Poles who came to New York were joined by Americans of Polish descent and artists who emigrated to Canada (Casimir Bart) or France (Zbigniew Dłubak, Mariusz Hermanowicz.) However, PAAS would also accept Americans and migrants from other countries (e.g. Akira Komoto, Igor Kopelnitzky, Toyo Tsuchiya.)

PAAS started as a modest idea expressed by Polish poet and activist Tadeusz Chabrowski (1934–2016), who wrote in *Nowy Dziennik* that he was founding an art club and invited all interested parties to join. To his surprise, a myriad of young, well-educated artists came forward, most of whom had rich portfolios and experience gathered in crucial Polish art circles (e.g. Kraków, Wrocław, Poznań.) The first meeting of the so-called art club resulted in the young taking the initiative. A decision was made to establish a professional organization for artists and PAAS was called into existence. The organization also became a networking site. For migrant artists, it constituted the first stop on their journey. Artists could professionally showcase their works (they had their own gallery in Manhattan), thus gaining experience, an entry in

the resume, and an opportunity to invite art dealers and collectors. Its members would also stress that PAAS had become ‘an adoptive family’ of sorts, creating a friendly environment in the vast world of the new city and country.

Krzysztof Zacharow, who has been residing in New York since 1981 and was once actively involved in PAAS activities, recalls:

PAAS was a meeting place for the Polish art community of New York, a place to showcase their work, exchange information, inspire each other, and to keep the faith in the possibility of success alive, and much, much more... It was an emotional need; an oasis, especially during the first years in the foreign country. (Zacharow 2007.)

The Society would literally serve as a ‘friend’; it offered real help to artists during their first days and months in the new country. ‘PAAS was like an adoptive family. Individuals who had not produced any works for years suddenly started to create... It was the only place on earth you could call home,’ explains Krystyna Spisak-Madejczyk, sculptor and PAAS board member (Spisak-Madejczyk 2006), who has been living in New York since 1981. Organization member Bartek Małysa, an outstanding graphic artist and illustrator, adds that it was the only place where something was happening, ‘so it would be wrong not to be a part of it.’ (Małysa 2005.)

The PAAS gallery was like a figurative, positively-charged nucleus with a cloud of surrounding artists. It was natural, given the standards of the market and rules guiding the artist’s existence, where the exhibition means life, a reason to continue. In one interview, New York avant-garde performer and PAAS member Krzysztof Zarębski, who set foot in New York in 1981, talked about the reality of living in New York and working on its art market:

It is challenging to make a name for yourself. In order for the works to be recognized and associated with the name of their author, one needs money to display them in exclusive galleries. Only the ones who are persistent, tenacious, consistent and, of course, talented can succeed. Polish artists can count on the support of PAAS—the Polish American Artists Society. They offer a showcasing room in Lower Manhattan, which oftentimes hosts exhibitions. In fact, every artist, even the non-associated one, can launch an exhibition there. And there are many visitors coming to see them (Piotrowski 2009: 199.)

The PAAS Gallery, located at Irving Place in Manhattan (in a tenement house owned by the Polish Army Veterans’ Association of America,) hosted 121 group and individual exhibitions. Each artist could come forward with an exhibition proposal, which PAAS would approve after analyzing the artist’s portfolio (which often required a joint decision by several board members, since the decision was made at board meetings.) The condition to get an approval hinged on membership, paying the registration fee, and covering relevant expenditures, such as the cost of printing the invitations. PAAS authorities (Andrzej Kenda, Krystyna Spisak-Madejczyk, Katarzyna Gruda, Mariola Markiewicz Olbińska) would also invite established artists who already

enjoyed a high reputation on the American market. The list of artists who agreed to exhibit their works at the PAAS gallery includes Ryszard Horowitz ('Photocomposits,' March 5–18, 1992) and Ryszard Anuszkiewicz together with Julian Stańczak and Hanna Zawa Cywińska (May 21–June 14, 1992.) When we turn our attention to the technique, it is possible to ascertain that paintings were most prominent (48 exhibitions); followed by photography (24 exhibitions); graphics and associated pictorial images on paper (18 exhibitions); and sculptures (16 exhibitions.) Others included artistic fabrics, ceramics, video, and installations. Many artists showed their works at the PAAS Gallery on several occasions, others merely 'flashed' a small fraction of what they were capable of producing. An good example thereof are Krzysztof Zacharow, who showed his paintings at an individual exhibition (April 29–May 9, 1987) and as part of a collective exhibition of illustrators (November 21–December 4, 1991) as well as Andrzej Czeczot, who displayed his works at the same exhibition and solo, dazzling the viewers with his watercolors (November 3–11, 1987.) There were also artists who showed a cross-section of what they were capable of during one exhibition, such as Mariusz Kulpa (sculptures, drawings, graphics, July 21–31, 1988,) Rafał Olbiński (illustrations and posters, June 16–19, 1988.) Others focused on one form, such as the sculptures by Lubomir Tomaszewski (September 13–22, 1988,) Krystyna Spisak-Madejczyk (November 12–22, 1987, December 15–23, 1988,) Sofia (Zofia) Zezmer (July 20–27, 1989,) textiles by Joanna Michałowicz-Staroń (January 25–30, 1990,) photographs by Krystyna Sanderson (December 13–23, 1990,) or the two solo exhibitions by Andrzej Baranowski (June 18, 1992, November 11–24, 1993.) Worth mentioning are also painters Zbigniew Krygier (March 24–April 7, 1987) and Roman Kujawa (February 13–29, 1992.)

When we consider artists to be an element that represents the environment, we shall briefly recount certain biographies to be able to use their micro-stories to illustrate a broader context and, in a way, establish patterns inherently connected with artistic migration. Let us start with Krzysztof Zacharow, who represents a group of artists whose art turned into his profession, thanks to which he can now enjoy a lecturer position. Born in Zamość (1954), he graduated in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków (1979), left Poland and settled in New York City (1981). He is primarily associated with book and press illustrations, but the artist is also a painter and has spent years shaping young generations of artists. He has cooperated with many newspapers and magazines, including TIME Magazine, The New York Times, Business Week, Newsweek, and created covers for the following publishing houses: Franklin Library, HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishing. He has been working as a lecturer for The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art (since 1997,) Parsons School of Design (since 2000,) and the Pratt Institute (since 2003.) He has been awarded many times, including a Silver Medal by the Society of Illustrators (1986.) Yet, his adventure in New York began inconspicuously. Zacharow came to New York City at the age of twenty-six to earn some money and return to Poland. It was June

1981. He wanted to stay for a mere six months, but December 1981 would change his plans forever. The imposition of Martial Law in Poland caused the artist to consider staying in New York until such a time when the political winds would stop blowing. He took a job with a gallery on Madison Avenue, where he would copy paintings for commercial purposes. Continuing on his American path, Zacharow changed jobs a few times, but never turned away from painting and drawing. His 'Woman with Cello' was published in the 27th Annual of American Illustration (1985) as one of the best illustrations of the year. This breakthrough moment resulted in Zacharow receiving orders from various publishers. A year later (1986), the Society of Illustrators selected four book covers by the artist among the most prestigious works which came out that year. His artistic career was further aided by exhibitions, held not only at the PAAS Gallery (April 29–May 9, 1987, November 21–December 4, 1991,) but above all, as he himself emphasizes, his five-year contract with Vorpall Gallery in Soho (West Broadway & Spring Street.) Thanks to his position on the American illustration market, he was able to turn to teaching after the economic crises of recent years started affecting the publishing market.

Krzysztof Zacharow is only one example of an illustrator's career in New York. Polish illustrators proved crucial to the town, and would regularly appear in American magazines in the 1980s, thus fitting in with the tradition initiated by W.T. Benda (1873–1948) and Artur Szyk (1894–1951.) The first Polish contemporary artist whose works appeared in *The New York Times* was Jan Sawka (1946–2012.) He was later joined by Maciek Albrecht, Andrzej Czeczot, Andrzej Dudziński, Janusz Kapusta, Bartek Małysa, Adam Niklewicz, Rafał Olbiński, Tomasz Olbiński, Wiktor Sadowski, Stasys, Beata Szpura, Joanna Żamojdo, and Andrzej Kenda. Most of them cooperated with PAAS, exhibited their works at the PAAS Gallery, and would come to their Christmas parties and auctions. Elżbieta Dzikowska, who has conducted numerous interviews with migrant Polish artists, organized (with Wiesława Wierzchowska) the first and only cross-sectional exhibition of Polish migrant artists in Poland at the Zachęta–National Gallery of Art (1991), wrote:

When I asked Janusz Kapusta why *The New York Times* would commission Poles with their illustrations, he told me that the only deciding factor were the skills. Poles knew how to think on their feet: sometimes a Polish graphic artist would be given two hours to illustrate an article before it was sent to the printing house and they would not only produce timely results, but also did so with flying colors. When cooperating with Americans, punctuality and quality are paramount. (Dzikowska 1991.)

Another group to enjoy a good reputation on the American art market were Polish photographers. The gripping story of photographer Andrzej Baranowski aptly illustrates the exciting challenge to adapt to the rules of the American market, which offered the artist the possibility to fulfill his own artistic ambitions (Sobota 2017: 252, 305.) Baranowski studied Polish philology at the University of Wrocław. He was

cooperated with the Wrocław Photography Club, the Wrocław Photography Gallery (Wrocławska Galeria Foto Medium Art,) and Group 4+ (Baranowski 2020.) He showed 'Time and Space. Andrzej Baranowski' at Wrocławska Galeria Foto Medium Art and ran his own advertising studio in Państwowy Dom Towarowy in Wrocław (Baranowski 1979.) He and his wife left for the United States via Munich. There were various jobs to apply, but the most important ones were connected with photography. His would target the best publishers, including Time Inc., where he started working in their Editorial Services section (1985). It was a major development in the career of a young immigrant. The photographer's works have appeared in many places, including book covers for McGraw Hill, and ranked top in the Graphis magazine competition. Motivated by his successes and having collected a rich experience, Baranowski opened his own studio – the Andre Baranowski Studio Inc. (1995). His works appeared on the covers of prestigious magazines, such as the Garden Design, and received numerous awards, including the yearbook published by the Society of Publishing Designers, based in New York, which honored his cover (1996). Baranowski collaborated with editor Dorothy Kalins. He gained prestige, which allowed him to join the ranks of the best.

The New York world of photography would also hail Ryszard Horowitz, Jagoda Przybylak, Krystyna Sanderson, Tomasz Lamprecht, Sabina Szafrankowska-Kur, and Zosia Zeleska-Bobrowska. Polish artists whose faith brought them to distinct parts of the world would often stay in touch with the New York artistic circles and show their achievements in collaboration with PAAS. The list includes Anna Pomaska (from Los Angeles) and photographers from Canada, France, Australia, including: Casimir (Kazimierz) Bart, Wojtek Szkudlarek, Leszek Szurkowski, Zbigniew Dłubak, Mariusz Hermanowicz, and Tomek Sikora. The PAAS Gallery would not only feature artists of Polish descent, but also organize influential exhibitions of world photographers such as Toyo Tsuchiya and Akira Komoto. It was a bustling and hustling environment with spectacular successes on the artistic and commercial scenes.

When we bring the community of painters to the fore, we also observe interesting tendencies, although it will be already harder to uncover meaningful names, because the painting market is much more challenging than the commercial one of photographers or illustrators. Analyzing the list of PAAS exhibitions, which is the basic source of data on painters, we can distinguish several groups. We will encounter individuals who settled permanently in the USA, such as Anna Białobroda (the Fair Game exhibition of drawings, September 24–October 13, 1992,) Richard Anuszkiewicz, and Julian Stańczak. Moreover, there are artists who came to the United States in the 1980s and 1990s: Krystyna Borkowska, Grzegorz Czezeluk, Katarzyna Czerpak-Węgliński, Zbigniew Krygier, Hanna Zawa Cywińska, Jerzy Kubina, Stanisław Młodożeniec, Roman Kujawa, and Barbara Maryanska. Much can be written about each of the above mentioned artists, especially if we paid particular attention to their integration into the American environment and the equally good reception in Poland. One of the more interesting characters is the Warsaw-born Krystyna Borkowska. She graduated

from the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź (1983), before living and working in London (1983–1992). She left for New York when she found herself weary of the London arena (1994). She quickly found her place not only in galleries, but also in the local urban fabric and the accompanying art circles. Together with husband Robert Pardo, she founded the Pardo View Gallery on 51 Street, featuring James Spouse, Jea H. Hahn, and Krzysztof Zarębski (Basara 1997.) Borkowska first worked on installations and then went back to her roots, i.e. painting. She would call her art ‘reductionism,’ and experts classify it as minimalism. When talking about her works, the artist explains: ‘my work method is to reduce, clear the image of the characters and easy to read allusions [...] For me, reduction is not destroying beauty, it means refraining from telling a story.’ (Basara 1997.) The artist would traditionally employ many materials. She applies acrylic paints onto boxes (large frames) and matches them with metals, such as silver, copper, aluminum, and gold. Thanks to such plastic materials, she interacts with space, light, and the passage of time, which leaves its marks on the metal. As she herself admits, her works are often created within the framework of a given space, which shapes them, and they change together with the changes of places. The accompanying reduction in the narrative, which in a way conveys the content and binds it to the technique and material used by Borkowska, adds further layers of meaning and interpretation.

The PAAS gallery showed her works during the Recent Paintings exhibition (September 30–October 13, 1993.) Hanna Zawa Cywińska is another painter to take a prominent place in the canon of Polish art, but her story is slightly different (Rudek-Śmiechowska 2021.) The artist began her real adventure with art after she left Poland for the United States, where she stayed (1967–1994). America prompted Zawa Cywińska to develop her talents. Since she started studying art (at the Fashion Institute of Technology, SUNY, the Purchase College, and the The Art Students League of New York), she has gained the reputation of a recognized graphic artist and painter. Her name has appeared in more than 150 collective exhibitions, but she has also opened many individual ones, both in the United States and in France, Switzerland, Japan, and Poland. Her career, which began in New York, has been noticed in Poland. Zawa Cywińska has had a solo exhibition at Zachęta–National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, and her art has been reviewed by esteemed art critics and experts, including Wiesława Wierchowska, Joanna Sosnowska, Bożena Kowalska, Marek Bartelik, Danuta Wróblewska, Mario Amaya, curator of the Bronx Museum of the Arts Betty Wilde, and Josephine Gear with the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. The artist showcased her works at the PAAS Gallery on two occasions. The first, individual exhibition was entitled ‘High tech art’ (May 14–28, 1987.) At the time, the artist’s works caught the attention of curator Betty Wilde with the Bronx Museum of the Arts, who wrote that Zawa Cywińska:

physically dramatizes one’s impulses or reactions to symbols of our technological society through the high tech art. And records similar phenomena through her graphic images to present a vision of her perceptual journey. (Rudek-Śmiechowska 2021.)

The subsequent group exhibition with Zawa Cywińska, Ryszard Anuszkiewicz and Julian Stańczak (May 21–June 14, 1992) was preceded by an invitation written by Marek Bartelik. The critic hailed the exhibition ‘an outstanding artistic dialogue’ (Bartelik 1992.) The works presented accentuated the forms of expression, characteristic of the three artists. On the one hand, viewers witnessed geometrically sterilized forms; on the other hand, the composition was extremely well thought-out, deep, and left much room for color and its optical function in the work.

Contradictory pairs of adjectives describe the art of Richard Anuszkiewicz, Julian Stańczak and Hanna Zawa: constructed and poetic, dynamic and serene, timeless and fragile,’ Marek Bartelik continued. ‘Despite these oppositions, their non–representational art, based on geometric discipline of form and color in the tradition of Vasarely, Albers and Stażewski, stands as viable, harmonious and beyond pictorial rhetoric (Bartelik 1992b.)

Yet another painter to leave a mark on PAAS history is Jerzy Kubina, who seems to be one of the most interesting contemporary artists, yet his biography and life-work require additional studies. The artist studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków (1982–1987.) He first came to New York City in high school to return after college graduation and this time stay for good. He was quickly noticed, first by Ewa Pape, the then businessman and collector Henryk Lachman. He also took to the local avant-garde. Reviews of his work were published in *Artforum* and another trade and daily press (Bartelik 1993.) He collaborated with major galleries, including Gallery Louis XIV and Prisunic Gallery by Paul and Benjamin Steinitz, sons of French millionaire Bernard Steinitz, in Manhattan’s Meatpacking District. Their gallery wanted to organize Kubina’s exhibition, which ultimately turned into a one-year stay in Paris (Latus 2013.) Kubina’s work underwent several stages; it is not homogeneous, but born of a great European tradition, not only in painting. The latter is particularly evident in his work entitled *Ikonostas*. Marek Bartelik points out that one notes influences by Jerzy Grotowski’s *Laboratory* and Tadeusz Kantor’s *Cricot 2* (Bartelik 1993.) Kubina’s works are melancholic, profound, and filled with painful feelings. Symbolic and understated, they predominantly play with colors, textures, and formats. The artist himself admits that:

‘the intimate consistency of emotions and memory, which accompanies me when I am working on a painting, is a crucial creative element for me. [...] The natural character of the matter stimulates and influences me. I am interested in the impulse, the clash of the physical of the image with the viewer’s imagination. The abstract character of most of my paintings collides with the desire to convey a narrative message.’ (Kubina 2017.)

The above mentioned characters forming the PAAS puzzle constitute a starting point to construct a full picture of the environment in question. Artists who have found their place in the commercial areas of art, such as illustration or photography, are mentioned with more frequency and ease. Looking at their lifework, we see that

the vast majority of them has stayed true to their artistic beliefs and continued to create works not directly aimed for commercial purposes. The community of Polish-American painters is more difficult to discern, and suggests a number of names who require wider studies. However, the current state of research leads to believe that their work is worthy of the interest. Equally captivating is the circle of performers, which can be only signaled in the present paper by mentioning such names as Peter Grzybowski and Krzysztof Zarębski (who is featured in a large and interesting monograph.) Regrettably, the sculptors or artistic fabric weavers remain to be discovered, although preliminary research shows that they are modestly represented. The list of noteworthy sculptors includes Lubomir Tomaszewski, who has made a name for himself as a designer and lecturer, Ursulia von Rydingsvard, an American of Polish descent (not a member of PAAS per se, but von Rydingsvard would exchange correspondence with President Andrzej Kenda, who was dedicated to organize a visit to the artist's studio for PAAS members,) Andrzej Seta Szczepaniec, Zofia Zezmer, and Andrzej Pawłowski (from Toronto.)

Notwithstanding the current state of research, both the artists, their artwork, and the contexts associated with them require a thorough investigation in order to provide an assessment of their work and their contribution to art history in a reliable manner. Relevant biographical information is to be found in the case of some, but at times, it is even problematic to establish the simplest facts (e.g. in case of Roman Ponikowski Poro.) Despite the inherent challenges, their names and scope of activities bear testimony to the existence of Polish-American artists in New York and, consequently, of an art community with a prolific life.

PAAS made a joint effort to take opportune initiatives and to reach out to the wide world. On one hand, the Society was in the hands of well-educated, young, and ambitious artists, who knew the importance of giving back to the community and would do so through student and art clubs back in Poland (Andrzej Kenda, Krzysztof Zacharow, Krystyna Spisak-Madejczyk.) On the other hand, such individuals were strongly connected with their new homeland, had an established network of peers, and spoke perfect English (Katarzyna Gruda, Mariola Markiewicz Olbińska, Grażyna Boguta Kenda.) Thanks to the above, PAAS and its gallery at Irving Place truly mattered in New York. Their exhibitions, all 121 of them, were paramount, though they were not their only enterprise. Interestingly, PAAS artists would form clusters and organize exhibitions outside of PAAS premises. A great example thereof is the Polish-American Art Exhibition at the Arsenal Gallery in Central Park (November 12–December 5, 1986) and relevant collective exhibitions such as Del Bello Gallery in Toronto, Canada (January 19–February 3, 1988) and the Galería PEMEX in México City (June 14–July 4, 1989.) PAAS recorded numerous initiatives on behalf of the Polish community in New York, such as co-organizing the Salute to Poland at the Kaye Playhouse at the Hunter College in NYC (September 24, 1989) in collaboration with The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America.

PAAS also invited musicians, e.g. Urszula Dudziak and Michał Urbaniak, writers, e.g. Janusz Głowacki and Jerzy Kosiński, journalists, and art historians. There was also a large group of ‘gray eminences,’ thanks to whom PAAS was brought to life and a suitable venue for the gallery was located, but it was also possible to organize numerous prestigious events (e.g. Tadeusz Chabrowski, Grażyna Boguta-Kenda, Bolesław Wierzbiański, Marek Bartelik.)

The research on PAAS uncovers a wide, colorful, and intriguing community of visual artists living and working in the United States. Summarizing PAAS objectives, Marek Bartelik wrote:

The first years in exile can be challenging for anyone. Our position in the new country in many cases depends on the period. It is much easier if we are initially surrounded by a group of compatriots, which is going to provide us with a sense of security. It is still possible to communicate in the language we know; and more importantly, it makes you realize that our thinking patterns and experience coincide. Two years ago, PAAS started to create a friendly community of Polish artists. At the same time, it gave us an opportunity to bring together a large number of Poles, who were loosely associated with the organization as its supporters. I reckon that bringing people closer through art is of great importance (Bartelik 1988.)

A fascinating environment. Summary and subsequent steps

PAAS was the first formal organization in New York City established by Polish artists for Polish artists, and was officially registered by the state authorities (the New York Department of State in Albany, NY formally registered the organization as the Polish American Artists Society (PAAS) on October the 14th, 1986, where it operated for 10 years until 1995). The organization became an essential element in the lives of Polish migrant artists, New York, and the American art world. It was an active community of artists, linked at its origin by the country of birth, but without a common manifesto, ideology, style or leader. The main reason for establishing PAAS was the need to professionally promote Polish artists and their art on the difficult and demanding American art-market. In addition, the need to unite under a common banner was to establish a community whose members understand each other.

In light of the current research, it can be asserted that it has been the only such Polish formal organization of such character and history in the entire United States. It should be mentioned that there were other informal Polish art groups such as the KrakArt Group, the Emotionalists or MOST but they were completely different. The KrakArt Group is the oldest and has been operating continuously for 40 years. It is an informal group of artists from Los Angeles, founded (1981) by painter and lecturer Andrzej Kofo Kołodziej. It brings together artists of Polish descent who are active and continue to create, be it painters, sculptors, or illustrators. However, the Group is not

bound by any artistic manifesto and/or ideology. They have been brought together through their Polish roots and the fact that they are living and working in the USA, but also come together through exhibition. The Emotionalists were founded in 1998 on the East Coast by Lubomir Tomaszewski, and initially called themselves 'In Tune with Nature' (1994), to be renamed the Emotionalists. Their driving force has been rooted in the need to highlight a trend in contemporary art that would respect classical aesthetics in art. The group members are therefore united by common ideals, under one leader, but also through their exhibitions. The MOST Group – the youngest one, was an ephemeral organization arising from the need to unite for the sake of commercial activities. It was established in New York by Mirosław Rogala and Krzysztof Zacharow, who invited several other artists of Polish origin to join with the aim of facilitating exhibitions. The Group was dissolved following two exhibitions. Against this background, PAAS appears to be an extraordinary phenomenon, the only formal organization uniting Polish visual artists in the USA but with various other determinants that distinguish PAAS on the background of various groups formed by immigrants or artists themselves. A 'community' in the context of PAAS requires a broader analytical approach, in a sociological context as well.

The paper was aimed at outlining the environment of Polish visual artists in New York from 1986 through 1995 on the basis of materials collected during research on PAAS history. The data collected during the studies on the subject brings forward an interesting picture of significant Polish artistic migration in the 1980s. The artistic forms adopted by individual artists vary; so do their fates. Nevertheless, many of the names associated with the history of PAAS (whose number nearly amounts to 140) found their place on the New York art arena and their lifework can be considered as significant and worth further studies. In this context, New York becomes a crucial reference point as the capital of art and a city that artists deliberately choose to settle in. The historical phenomenon of Polish artists migrating to New York in the late 20th century (especially from the 1960s through the 1990s) forged a fascinating environment. There is no doubt that it was a period of artistic migration of the generation that left significant traces on the history of art and migration. The research on the Polish community of visual artists working in the United States is scarce and random, principally when we compare it with the research on Polish artist migration to France or Great Britain (Majewski 2020; Sienkiewicz 2012.) To date, there have been no concise and systematic research and analyses, and no comparative studies. There is no relevant comprehensive study, no attempt to create an exhaustive picture and no thorough evaluation of the phenomenon. This research problem deserves a bigger interest from art historians and sociologists.

Research suggestions and plans to expand and deepen the research on the Polish art community in the United States are therefore becoming key from the point of view of their contact with the outside world, their influences, background, the environment in itself and its individual representatives. In art history, it would be advisable to develop

contexts and work on receptions, both in Europe and in America, that emerge in art thanks to migrants from Poland. Teachers and lecturers, individuals who have shaped generations of artists by teaching art at numerous American universities, shall not go unmentioned. Additionally, in-depth studies combining two fields, i.e. sociology and art history, would be indicated here in the context of the study of artistic groups. Attention should be paid to the sociological theory that provides many different approaches to the problem of the community, subculture or formal organizations.

The pioneering research on the Polish American Artists Society (PAAS) and thus on the community of visual artists of Polish origin constitutes a valuable contribution to the continuing efforts to document the problem of migration of Polish visual artists to the United States (in the late 20th century) and to create a well evaluated picture of the community and its achievements. The research topic indicated in this paper may serve as a basis for further research to supplement the knowledge on art history pertaining to 20th century Polish artists.

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