

Collector's Coins



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|------------|--|
| 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 | 57,000 pcs |

Obverse: Stylised image of Jan Matejko's picture "Staćczyk" ("Staćczyk during a ball at the queen Bona's court after having heard about the loss of Smoleńsk"). In the right angle below an image of the Eagle as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland. Around the Eagle, an inscription: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA and 20 zł. Under the left talon of the Eagle, the Mint mark: $\frac{m}{w}$.

Reverse: On the left side Jan Matejko's self-portrait, below an inscription: JAN MATEJKO / 1838-1893. On the right side a fragment of stylised sketch to Jan Matejko's picture "Staćczyk". In the right angle below a palette and three paintbrushes. On the palette the following paints: red, yellow, green and blue..



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|------------|--------------------------|
| face value | 2 zł |
| metal | CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy |
| finish | standard |
| diameter | 27.00 mm |
| weight | 8.15 g |
| mintage | 700,000 pcs |

Obverse: An image of the Eagle as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland, on the left side a palette and two paintbrushes. Below an inscription: 2 ZŁ, at the top in a semicircular inscription: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA 2002. Under the left talon of the Eagle, the Mint mark: $\frac{m}{w}$.

Reverse: Jan Matejko's self-portrait, higher up, on the left side Stańczyk from the painting "Hołd pruski" ("The ceremony of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order swearing allegiance to King Sigismund the Old of Poland"). Above in a rim an inscription: JAN MATEJKO, below in a rim dates: 1838-1893.

On the edge: an inscription: NBP eight times repeated, every second one turned by 180°, separated by stars.

Coins designer: *Ewa Tyc-Karpińska*

Coins were struck by the State Mint SA in Warsaw.

Printed by NBP Printing Office



On 11 December, 2002 the National Bank of Poland puts into circulation collectors' coins depicting a personage of Jan Matejko, of the following face values:

- 20 zł – struck in silver, in proof finish,
- 2 zł – struck in standard finish, in CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy, the so called Nordic Gold

"He was the one who showed in front of the baffled eyes of the Polish nation a phantom of its conscience, its suffering, dreams, glory, power, crime and collapse, the phantom so real, so wonderfully present which can not be annihilated by time" – these words characterise the meaning of Matejko's work. Pronounced many years ago by Stanisław Witkiewicz, town hall of Cracow he was handed a sceptre as a symbol of artistic

Matejko was a painter who gained in his life the greatest distinctions. He was an honourable member of many artistic associations, he held a position as a member of the Academy of Abilities in Cracow, of the French Institute and the Art Academy in Berlin, he was *honoris causa* doctor of the Jagiellonian University, companion of the Honourable League. The emperor Francis Joseph paid a visit to his atelier in Cracow at Floriańska street. In the country, in 1875, he was awarded a golden medal struck in his honour - a gift from public collection. Three years later, in the years ago by Stanisław Witkiewicz, town hall of Cracow he was handed a sceptre as a symbol of artistic

– POLISH PAINTERS of the TURN of XIXth and XXth CENTURIES –

reign, and in 1883 the Market Square of Kleparz was named Matejko Market Square.

Beside admiration, his activity raised controversy, however not only his direct pupils recognised their inspiration from Matejko's art but next generation painters as well, who had completely different thematic and formal interests. "He was small like frail people and stooping because of work and not age [...] he would bend his head in curls, his eyes shine mystically" - described by his pupil, Stanisław Wyspiański.

Extremely talented, he was undoubtedly one of the most eminent individuals in the Polish art of the nineteenth century. His vision of the national history shaped for many generations historic imagination of the Poles.

It is through the most famous paintings of Matejko - "*Kazanie Skargi*" ("*Skarga's sermon*", 1864), "*Rejtan na sejmie warszawskim*" ("*Rejtan at Warsaw diet*", 1866), "*Unia Lubelska*" ("*Union of Lublin*", 1869), "*Batory pod Pskowem*" ("*Batory at Psków*", 1872), "*Bitwa pod Grunwaldem*" ("*Battle of Tannenberg*", 1878), "*Hold pruski*" ("*The ceremony of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order swearing allegiance to King Sigismund the Old of Poland*", 1882) or "*Śluby Jana Kazimierza*" ("*Vows of Jana Kazimierz*", 1893) - that we can see the most important historic moments of the Republic of Poland.

Jan Matejko was born on 24 June, 1838 in Cracow; his father was a Bohemian, music teacher, while his mother was the daughter of a saddler from Cracow. The biggest influence on shaping interests and educational course of the future painter had his older brother Franciszek, historian and assistant professor at the Jagiellonian University. Early, when he was fourteen years old, he started to study painting at the Fine Arts Academy where soon he was acknowledged as "the most diligent, the most talented of talented students". He had studied there until 1858 because in December, thanks to a scholarship, he went to the Fine Arts Academy in Munich. After a year he moved to Vienna willing to continue his studies which, however terminated after eight days; he went several times to Vienna and Munich as well as to Paris and Italy where he saw and adored works of Rubens and Italian painting. In Cracow he had an atelier at Krupnicza street, and from 1873 in his house at Floriańska 17, which nowadays hosts Matejko's museum. He paid a lot of attention and gave his energies to the Fine Arts School where, till his last days, he held a position of a head master; he carried out its reorganisation, set up a new statute, he ran the faculty of historic painting.

In 1873 he was offered the position of head master at the Fine Arts Academy in Prague, however he declined thinking that he should stay in the country. His public spirit is documented by the fact that the building of the Fine Arts School in Cracow was erected on a lot financed by Matejko, and four years earlier, paying a visit to Lvov in 1869, he funded two scholarships: one

for a Pole and the second one for a Russin, who wanted to study at the Fine Arts School of Cracow.

He engaged himself with passion in the restoration of Cracow monuments. He participated in works of commissions and groups of preservation, he wrote letters and memorials; in 1872 was a member of Commission of the Academy of Abilities, which aimed to elaborate a project of a bill about the preservation of the monuments of art and history. In 1875-1879 he collaborated with the architect Tomasz Pryliński at the restoration of Sukiennice, at that time he also protested against the pulling down of the royal chapel at Wawel, he also prevented the destruction of the baroque altar in the cathedral. Not always, however, his efforts were crowned with success. A year before death he sent back to the town hall council the diploma of an honourable citizen of Cracow, outraged by the destruction of the gothic chapel of St. Spirit's Church.

He died on 1 November, 1893. He was buried in Rakowicki Cemetery in Cracow.

Beside historic painting, which absorbed all his artistic invention, he also cultivated portrait painting, not paying much attention to realising. Among numerous examples of portrait activity a special place is reserved for portraits of the nearest and dearest, beloved wife and children; there, apart from the excellent technical background, we can spot lyrical, private atmosphere impossible to find in representative portraits, where models, according to Matejko's belief, were usually featured in historic disguise.

At the end of his life Matejko took an interest in monumental painting and stained glass art. He even funded a scholarship for a student who specialised in this realm. The main work of Matejko in this realm of painting, carried out by students according to his cartoons and under his supervision, is a polychrome of St. Mary's Church (1889-1891), pioneer work introducing into gothic interior modern decoration and combining both styles into harmonious unity. This polychrome inaugurates the beginning of modern monumental painting in Poland.

Matejko understood his role of an artist as a mission at service of the nation and the country; through his art he wanted to educate the nation, stimulate intellect and emotions and at the same time remind the former glory of a non-existing country. He had a subjective vision of Polish past and his own moral opinion about the nation history. While choosing themes for his paintings he decided on past events which, according to his belief, influenced subsequent fate of the country and at the same time referred to the current situation.

His historic knowledge was immense although he was self-taught in this realm. From the childhood he collected a peculiar historic documentation, completed by readings. He redrew from old sketches and wood engraving illustrations portraits of

famous people, clothes, armour details and other antique objects. Just at that time he took notes of the ideas of future compositions. Every painting was preceded by scrupulous studies of historic sources, than numerous sketches were drawn, until the final shape of a composition emerged. His paintings, however, were not a simple reflection of past events. In order to enhance intellectual and moral message of his vision and give it adequate expression and dramatisation, the artist directed scenes, often willingly renouncing faithful depiction of historic facts. He perfectly reconstructed psychological features of personages, their emotional state, he cared about faithful reconstruction of realities. "*Stańczyk*" (original title of the painting "*Stańczyk during a ball at the queen Bona's court when the news about the loss of Smoleńsk is broken*") was painted by Matejko in 1862, when Matejko was only twenty four years old. Matejko was interested in the theme of the king Sigismund II jester earlier; during his studies in Munich he did sketches and a painting "*Stańczyk simulating toothache*".

These works did not yet have the profoundness of philosophy of history, which is fully presented by a painting of 1862. According to the sources, the origin of the canvass should be searched in discussions of the artist with a friend, Izidor Jabłoński-Pawłowicz, who is said to have suggested the artist the idea of depicting the jester "in contrast of internal feelings with his appearance", and literary source – Seweryn Goszczyński's work "*Król zamczyska*" ("*King of the castle*", 1842). Wearing a jester's outfit the main character of this literary work pronounces the following words: "*This rubble is your country, your strength is the glory of its past changed into pain; your destiny will reign through suffering among joy*". On the painting Matejko depicts a lonely Stańczyk, who is the only one to understand the danger which is threatening the country after Smoleńsk had been given away, while a group of courtiers depicted in the background remain unaware of the situation. The artist identified with Stańczyk; he made him look like the painter himself, serious and melancholic. He is as much concerned as Stańczyk, he feels lonely; he better understands the current events and its consequences. The painting impresses with formal maturity, which is expressed in consistent composition with no irrelevant element, splendidly created atmosphere, deep psychological study and harmonious colouring. "*After that there were bigger, more excellent and more famous paintings. But there were not more beautiful.*" - wrote in 1897 Matejko's monographer, Stanisław Tarnowski.

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