

# Coins

## – Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, 1905-1953 –



horses. Above the coach on the right side obliquely the notation of the year of issue, 2005. Below an inscription, 10 Zł. The Mint's mark,  $\frac{m}{w}$ , under the Eagle's left leg.

**Reverse:** On the right side an image of Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński. On the left, a stylized image of a green goose. On the left side a semicircular inscription, KONSTANTY ILDEFONS, on the right side a semicircular inscription, GAŁCZYŃSKI. On the right side an inscription, 1905/1953.

face value	<b>200 zł</b>
metal	<b>900/1000Au</b>
finish	<b>proof</b>
diameter	<b>27.00 mm</b>
weight	<b>15.50 g</b>
mintage	<b>3,500 pcs</b>

**Obverse:** On the left side an image of the Eagle established as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland and the notation of the year of issue, 2005. Above, a semicircular inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA (the Republic of Poland). Below the notation of the year of issue, a stylized image of a coach and a horse. Below an inscription, 200 Zł. The Mint's mark,  $\frac{m}{w}$ , under the Eagle's left leg.

**Reverse:** An image of Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, below obliquely a reproduction of K.I. Gałczyński's signature and below an inscription, 1905-1953. A circumscription: KONSTANTY ILDEFONS GAŁCZYŃSKI in the rim.



face value	<b>2 zł</b>
metal	<b>CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy</b>
finish	<b>standard</b>
diameter	<b>27.00 mm</b>
weight	<b>8.15 g</b>
mintage	<b>850,000 pcs</b>

**Obverse:** An image of the Eagle established as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland. On both sides of the Eagle the notation of the year of issue, 2005. Below the Eagle an inscription, Zł 2 Zł. In the rim, a circumscription: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA, preceded and followed by six pearls. The Mint's mark,  $\frac{m}{w}$ , under the Eagle's left leg.

**Reverse:** On the right side an image of Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński. On the left side stylized images of a horse's head and a goose's head. In the rim a circumscription, KONSTANTY ILDEFONS GAŁCZYŃSKI, above, and 1905-1953, below.

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



face value	<b>10 zł</b>
metal	<b>925/1000 Ag and green paint</b>
finish	<b>proof</b>
diameter	<b>32.00 mm</b>
weight	<b>14.14 g</b>
mintage	<b>62,000 pcs</b>

**Obverse:** An image of the Eagle established as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland. Above, a semicircular inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA (the Republic of Poland). Below the eagle a stylized image of a coach and

Coins designer: *Ewa Tyc-Karpińska*

Coins struck by the Mint of Poland plc. in Warsaw.

Printed by NBP Printing Office



On 26 October 2005 the National Bank of Poland is putting into circulation coins, depicting Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, with the following face value:

- 200 zł – struck in gold, proof finish;
- 10 zł – struck in silver, proof finish;
- 2 zł – struck in Nordic Gold, standard finish.

„... poetry is a golden hornet  
that stings, so one keeps writing poems  
and well, a man writes, as man can ...”

This fragment of one of the verses from the "Przekrój" [Digest] weekly can be regarded as a motto for the entire amazing artistic work of Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński.

K.I. Gałczyński lived short but he compensated it with creativity. His artistic legacy includes hundreds of enchanting poems, a number of poetic verses, radio plays, novels, unforgettable lines from *The Smallest Theatre in the World* and feature articles from under the banner of a violet. A number of quotations, sayings taken from his poetic works have become a lasting part of the language; his poems have been used as lyrics in hundreds of songs which have been performed for fifty years by most famous vocalists, and, most recently, even by rappers. In many cases those verses and sayings live among us anonymously. Can there be a more convincing proof of the everlasting freshness of this poetry, of its lasting presence transcending the temporal reality, even though this year we celebrate the hundredth anniversary of his birth? He became a classic but at the same time for the new generation of Poles he does not cease to be a thoroughly contemporary author.

Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński (23 January 1905 – 6 December 1953) was born in Warsaw. All major events of his life connected him with this city; he graduated from the secondary school here, and here he began his studies at the University at the classical philology and English studies departments. It is here that in 1923, he wrote his first poem "Szturm" (*Storm*) in the literary supplement to the magazine "Rzeczpospolita" ("Res publica"). He could not refrain from giving a description of his real debut in the *Short autobiography* written at the end of his life: "I wrote my first poem – *Sonnet to love* – in 1916 weaving it from emotions born out of love. The botany teacher's name was Kazimiera". In Warsaw he joined the literary group called Kwadryga (Quadriga) - the second one in importance in the period between the wars. Since 1926 he collaborated with a popular satirical weekly "Cyrulik Warszawski" (The Barber of Warsaw), where he published a lot of important works. This collaboration lasted eight years.

In Warsaw Gałczyński published his first book – fantastic-grotesque novel *Porfirion Osielek czyli Klub Świątokradców* (*Porfirion the Donkey or the Club of Sacrilegists*). In May of 1929, he met Natalia Awałow, whom he married in June next year in an orthodox church in the Praga district of Warsaw. It is to her that all

his most beautiful love lyrics were addressed, starting with such well known verses as *Portrait of Miss Noel* or *Hello, Madonna* and ending with *Songs* constituting a sort of his poetic testament.

Let us note yet the first soiree of the young poet in the Warsaw Artistic Club in the spring of 1929, his first job in the Polish Emigration Association (commemorated e.g. in the *Romance about three emigrant sisters*), and then in the Warsaw Government Commissar's Office as a ... censor. He managed to work only three weeks there!

Years 1931-1933 are marked by his stay in Berlin, where Gałczyński works as cultural affairs officer in the Polish consulate. He writes little and travels a lot. January 1933 sees the creation of the poem *Ball at Salomon's Palace* (to this day considered by some literary critics as an exceptional work); two months later the poet wilfully returns to Warsaw. His job in Berlin was his last attempt at leading a clerk's life. From then on he decides to earn his living solely by means of artistic creation. And although throughout his whole life he suffered financial problems, he never changed his mind.

In 1934-1936 Mr and Mrs Gałczyński lived in Vilnius; the poet establishes close cooperation with the Vilnius radio, he publishes in local newspapers as well as in magazines coming out in Poland. The best known works from this period include the poem *Folk party*, poems – *Inge Bartach*, *Letter from the Limpopo River*, *Prayer to the Guardian Angel*, *Crisis in the Charlatans' Profession*, *Five denunciations*. Gałczyński and his wife make friends with a well known actress and signer Hanka Ordonówna and her husband, Michał Tyszkiewicz. The poet writes poems and whole reviews for his new acquaintance.

The return to Warsaw begins the period of close collaboration with the two weeklies – "Prosto z mostu" (Straight from the shoulder) and "Szpilki" (Pins), where he published his best known works – *Skumbrie w tomacie* (*Skumbria in Tomato Sauce*), *Opis domu poety* (*Description of the Poet's House*), *Ulica szarlatanów* (*The Charlatan Street*), the poem *Noctes Aninenses* and dozens of lyrics, satires and grotesques. In 1938, the poet received his one and only literary award for the extensive selection of works *Utwory poetyckie* (*Poetic Works*), which appeared a year earlier as the 5th volume of the "Prosto z mostu" library.

On 23 August 1939, Gałczyński received a mobilisation card with a destination to a unit of the Frontier Protection Corps, stationed in what then constituted the eastern provinces of Poland. On 17 September he was taken captive by the Soviet Army and was assigned to a newly formed POW camp in Kozietulsk. From there he sends to his wife the poem *Soldiers' dream*. He does it through a friend of his, just as he did a dozen days before with the *Song about soldiers from Westerplatte*. At the end of October, following the last exchange of Polish soldiers for Soviet citizens that had remained on the German side of the new German-Soviet border, he was forwarded to the POW centre at Altengrabow near Magdeburg. He is

a worker, a translator, an ambulance man, rarely a poet. Over the years in captivity (1939-1945) Gałczyński wrote six poems only – among others the ones so well known as *Silver Acacia*, *The Wild Rose*, and *Song about the flag*. They were all published in the Polish underground press.

Upon the return to his homeland in March 1946, he initiated literary collaboration with the "Przekrój" weekly, which afterwards published his best known works: *Zaczarowana dorożka* (*The Enchanted Coach*), *Kolczyki Izolda* (*Isolda's Earrings*), the apparently absurd *Teatrzyk Zielona Gęś* (*The Little Theatre of the Green Goose*), *Listy z fiołkiem* (*Letters with a Violet*).

The poet wrote and published a lot of works, *inter alia*, in "Tygodnik Powszechny" (Common Weekly), "Odrodzenie" (Renaissance), "Szpilki", as if he wanted to make up for six years' silence. He also co-founded the cabaret of "Przekrój" – "Seven Cats". He met his readers at numerous poetry reading events across the country. He was enjoying tremendous popularity at that time.

Polish readers dejected with socialist realism, senior foremen, standard outputs and the like, snap up copies of "Przekrój" and the limited editions of Gałczyński's volumes of verse.

The writers' conference in June 1950 proclaimed the ban on all the works of Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński for "bourgeois delicacies, formalism, failure to comply with the spirit of the epoch, petty bourgeois tendencies". They all disappear - his lyrics, the Green Goose, letters with a violet. The stay in Mazury becomes the only cure for a deep depression, illness and psychical breakdown: Warsaw is far away and he has yet a lot to say. The forester's lodge in the village of Pranie in Masuria - north-eastern part of Poland – which he visited on five occasions, was the birthplace of poems: *Kronika olsztyńska* (*The Olsztyn Chronicle*), *Niobe*, *Wit Stwosz* (*Veit Stoss*), *Spotkanie z matką* (*Meeting with the Mother*), *Pieśni* (*Songs*), cycle of satirical poems *Ezop świeżo malowany* (*Aesop with Wet Paint*) and a number of beautiful lyrics and grotesque poems.

On the 6 December 1953 the poet suffers his third and last cardiac arrest. At the moment of death he was only 48. He was on the verge of making new poetic discoveries, whose emerging shape we can see in *Songs*. Gałczyński was buried in Warsaw at the Military Cemetery of Powązki.

*My poetry consists of simple wonders* – Konstanty Ildefons wrote years ago. Maybe this is why we keep coming back to these wonders, to the world of the enchanted coach, to those magical images that open to us his seventh heaven, to the still alive and ever so moving poetry of Magician Konstanty.

Kira Gałczyńska

All coins issued by the NBP are legal tender in Poland.