

Coins

– Polish painters of the turn of 19th & 20th centuries –
Leon Wyczółkowski



face value	20 zł
metal	Ag925/1000 and paints: red, yellow, green and blue
finish	proof
length	40.00 mm
width	28.00 mm
weight	28.28 g
mintage	56,000 pieces

Obverse: A stylized image of the painting "Rogalin zimą" (Rogalin in Winter) by Leon Wyczółkowski, 1925. At the bottom, on the right-hand side, image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland. Around the Eagle an inscription, 20 zł, a separating dot, an inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA, and the notation of the year of issue, 2007. The Mint's mark under the Eagle's left leg, $\frac{m}{w}$.

Reverse: An image of Leon Wyczółkowski, in accordance with the self-portrait of 1927. In the left-hand bottom corner, a palette and three paint brushes. On the palette paints: red, yellow, green and blue. On the left-hand side and above an inscription, LEON WYCZÓŁKOWSKI, on the right-hand side a vertical inscription, 1852–1936.

Coin designer: *Ewa Olszewska-Borys*



face value	2 zł
metal	CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy
finish	standard
diameter	27.00 mm
weight	8.15 g
mintage	990,000 pieces

Obverse: An image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland. On the left-hand side, a palette and two paint brushes. At the bottom a semicircular inscription, 2 ZŁ, at the top a semicircular inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA, and the notation of the year of issue: 2007. The Mint's mark under the Eagle's left leg, $\frac{m}{w}$.

Reverse: An image of Leon Wyczółkowski, in accordance with the self-portrait of 1927, against the background of a stylized detail of the picture "Dęby rogałińskie" (Oak trees of Rogalin) by Leon Wyczółkowski, 1926. On the right-hand side, a semicircular inscription, LEON WYCZÓŁKOWSKI, and on the left-hand side a semicircular inscription, 1852–1936.

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

Obverse designer: *Ewa Tyc-Karpińska*
Reverse designer: *Ewa Olszewska-Borys*

Information on the sale of coin at the website:
www.nbp.pl

Coins struck by the State Mint in Warsaw.

Printed by NBP Printing Office



Design: DECORUM

On 5 December 2007, the National Bank of Poland is putting into circulation coins depicting Leon Wyczółkowski, of the following face values:

- 20 zł – struck in proof finish, in silver,
- 2 zł – struck in standard finish, in Nordic Gold alloy

In 1869 Leon Wyczółkowski, considered to be one of the most outstanding Polish painters and graphic artists, commenced his artistic career when Polish painting was under Jan Matejko's supreme artistic reign, and continued it until after avant-garde established its place in the Polish art. Exceptionally talented - especially sensitive to the beauty of the Nature - he was inspired by the beauty of the Polish land and wanted to discover the mystery of its spell with a view to record it on canvas. No other Polish artist could match him in landscape painting.

He was born on 11 April 1852 in Wola Miastkowska in the eastern part of Poland, and spent his childhood there.

In 1869, Wyczółkowski became a student of Wojciech Gerson's Drawing Classes in Warsaw. In 1876, he furthered his education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich under Aleksander Wagner and received a bronze medal of the Academy. Regrettably, due to financial problems he discontinued his studies abroad and moved to Cracow. In 1877, he enrolled for the faculty of historical painting conducted by Jan Matejko. In future he saw himself a painter of historical scenes. It was only under the influence of landscape painting from the Barbizon school - exhibited at Paris World Fair in summer 1878 - that he rejected the pressure to become a historical painter.

Having returned to Poland, Wyczółkowski visited Lviv, where he met Adam Chmielewski and - inspired by him - evolved towards symbolism.

Over next years, periods of residence in Warsaw alternated with long trips to Podlachia, Volhynia and Ukraine. In Warsaw, superior salon paintings earned him popularity and money, i.a. a scene at the piano "*I once saw...*" [*„Ujrzałem raz..."*] 1884 and "*In the boudoir*" [*„W buduarze"*], 1885, both of them which exhibited the mastery of artistic form. On the other hand, it was thanks to something else that his name has been remembered in the history of Polish art.

„Ukraine... a breakthrough for me" - he used to say. Indeed, it really was a turning point which helped him free from the influence of academic painting. He visited the Eastern Borderlands of Poland on numerous occasions, for the first time in 1884. Excluding intervals in Warsaw, Paris (1899 World Fair) and Moscow, he spent 10 years there. Intensive period of discovering the beauty of eastern Poland had a bearing on his artistic profile; Wyczółkowski drew more from impressionism - used light and shade to model the form, used brighter colours, applied paints very thickly by using the so-called impasto technique. Unlike impressionists did it, in his case only the act of making sketches was held in the open air, whereas his paintings were made indoors. His artistic work was centred around a man living in the Nature: fishermen - peasants in a boat who take fish or crayfishes out of their nets, wade in water or come back from fishing as well as the scenes of ploughmen and oxen, sowers, digging for beetroots, - all of them lit by the sunrise or sunset. On the other hand, the periods of residing in Warsaw show the use of different artistic techniques. At that time Wyczółkowski produced both the works of a cheery style: "*Cheerful pages*" [*„Wesołe pacholeta"*], "*A page with a lute*" [*„Paż z lutnią"*] or "*Lute players*" [*„Lutniści"*] (all of them made in 1891) and symbolic "*The Petrified Druid*" [*„Druid skamieniały"*].

In 1895, Wyczółkowski accepted Julian Fałat's offer to take up a chair at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow. He was a well-known and recognized

painter at that time. His links with the Academy lasted until 1909/1910 and he finally became the rector of the school, but following a serious illness, asked to retire at the end of 1911. Aside of the Academy of Fine Arts, he conducted classes at Maria Niedzielski's School of Fine Arts for Women and at Teodor Axentowicz's School of Drawing and Painting.

Little doubt, *genus loci* of Cracow stimulated the artist, who was under strong impression of its historic monuments. Although he made reference to history in his works, his aim was not to illustrate past events, but to depict the historic places of Cracow in a characteristic, symbolic and nostalgic way. To this end, he used a subdued, nearly monochromatic range of colours and chiaroscuro to achieve a sense of volume in modeling three dimensional objects. In 1896, he painted "*The Wawel Cross*" [*„Krucyfiks wawelski"*], a universally admired work. Seeing it Józef Chelmoński „clutched his head, approached the canvas and gazed at it in sheer admiration saying: how did he do it, old rascal? It could not have been done better!". Wyczółkowski also painted the interior of the cathedral, the Wawel Castle and royal sarcophagi. The Cracow period brought about financial stability and the search for new topics and techniques. As from 1900, he less and less often used oil paints, as he developed hypersensitive sense of smell to paints. Watercolours and pastels - occasionally used since 1892 - became his primary techniques at that time. In this technique, and in drawing at a later time, he achieved effects unparalleled in Polish art.

His most beautiful landscapes of the Tatra mountains were made in pastels. After visiting Zakopane in 1896 for the first time, he made numerous trips there over 30 years. While in the mountains - irrespective of the weather - he never abandoned the earlier selected motifs, but took patience and waited for better weather or passionately attempted to record changes of light on canvas. Most his works aimed to provide a detail of view, to which a viewer must add further perspective and imagine a whole perspective. A well known pastel "*Mnich summit on Morskie Oko Lake*" [*„Mnich nad Morskim Okiem"*], 1904 was described by Tadeusz Jaroszyński as: „Amazing simplicity of technique, accompanied by a power of expression [...]. How was it made? Several grey, black and green chalk smudges, and the painting is finite, period. Despite those careless, apparently accidental, touches, what a perfect sense of form is conveyed there, in the sketch of sharp granite recesses of Mnich summit!".

As well as landscapes, Wyczółkowski's favourite subjects included flowers: bravely painted on special construction of easels moving on runners, with pastels of the required colours handed to him by his two assistants. Although Wyczółkowski also used to paint portraits, he did not like this genre. In his youth, in Warsaw and during his trips across the Eastern Borderland of Poland, he earned his living this way, but over time, when he was in a position that he could chose, he limited his artistic work in this genre to making representations of men, artists and friends. Among the best of this category are the portraits of Jan Kasprowicz, 1898, Juliusz Kossak, 1900, Feliks Jasieński, 1911, Erazm Baracz, 1908 and 1911, Józef Chelmoński 1900 and 1910, Karol Estreicher, 1905, Stefan Żeromski with his son, 1904, professor Ludwik Rydygier with his assistants, 1897. He was reluctant to depict women but made exception for actresses: Irena Solska, 1899, Idalia Pawlikowska, 1902, Helena Sulima, 1903, Maria Przybylko-Potocka, 1902.

As well as a painter, Wyczółkowski also accomplished himself as a graphic artist achieving the results as no artist before him had done in the genre.

His over 30-year work was marked by constant experiments and perfecting his technique. His artistic legacy includes more than 100 works - 14 portfolios and several dozens of individual charts. Prior to 1914, the artist published the „mixed" portfolio, 1904, next „*The Tatras*", [*„Tatry"*], 1906, „*Lithuanian portfolio*" [*„Teka Litewska"*], 1907, „*Danzig*" [*„Gdańsk"*], 1909, „*East Carpathian portfolio*" [*„Teka Huculska"*], 1910, „*Ukrainian portfolio*" [*„Teka Ukraińska"*], 1912, and two "*Wawel*" portfolios, between 1912 and 1913.

At the outbreak of World War I, the artist left the land estate Malinowszczyzna near Mińsk and - via many hardships - managed to get to Warsaw. Although his mood was low at first, he engaged himself in intensive work with the aim to beat his dejection. He used to climb the roofs with the aim to sketch the panorama of Warsaw from atop of buildings; this output was used in the next graphic portfolio „*Warsaw*" [*„Warszawa"*], published in Cracow in 1915, upon his return there later that year. Having learnt about the legions, of senior age though he was, he joined the camp in Legionowo near Warsaw for a short time, where he served at the rank of mayor. The sketches he produced there were compiled and made the portfolio „*Memories from Legionowo*" [*„Wspomnienia z Legionowa"*].

The year of 1918 and Poland's re-assumption of independent statehood rose his spirits high and filled him with new creative energy. Actually, at that time he gave up painting and committed himself entirely to graphic art. Wyczółkowski continued his portfolios; at the turn of 1918 and 1919 he issued „*Lublin*", in 1922 „*Białowieża portfolio*" [*„Teka Białowieska"*], and in 1926/27 „*Saint Mary portfolio*" [*„Teka Mariacka"*]. In 1925, he took a cruise along the Vistula river to Sandomierz and Tarnobrzeg. Presumably, during that time he developed an idea to paint the landscapes of Poland from the Tatras to the Baltic sea along the Vistula river, not finalized though. He only made particular watercolours and drawings, and in 1931 he issued „*Pomeranian portfolio*" [*„Teka Pomorska"*].

In 1922, he purchased a land estate in Gościeradz, in Tuchola Forest. There, his dreams came true - he could maintain everyday commune with the Nature. On the other hand, he left Cracow as late as in 1929 and lived alternatively in Poznań and Gościeradz. He took a special interest in the Nature, making representations of bushes, flowers, and trees illuminated differently in different seasons. At the turn of 1923 and 1924 he compiled a picturesque „*Gościeradz portfolio*". Trees were his favourite subject. He used to say: „I have a dream - dark, black forest and a mass of ferns; light glints on them, moved by the wind". As late as in 1935, being of the age of 83, he sketched in ink and in chalk one of the biggest oak trees in Pomerania in Nowy Jasioniec. Old though he was, for the last two years of his life, he traveled from Gościeradz or Poznań to Warsaw and taught graphic art at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. Following a short illness, he died in Warsaw on 27 December 1936. Fulfilling his last wish, he was buried at the graveyard in Wtelnio near Bydgoszcz. The Regional Museum in Bydgoszcz has been named after him.

Irena Bal