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# Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski: Political Struggle and Metaphor

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ALFRED WIERUSZ-KOWALSKI:  
POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND METAPHOR

by

Marin Kniskern

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts  
in Art History

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2016

## ABSTRACT

### ALFRED WIERUSZ-KOWALSKI: POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND METAPHOR

by

Marin Kniskern

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016  
Under the Supervision of Professor Richard Leson

This thesis examines the role that political metaphor plays in the artwork of Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski (1849 – 1915), a Polish painter of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He studied in Poland and later at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, where he was known for paintings of the everyday lives of rural, Polish people. Later in his career, he delved into historical and romantic subjects, most notably the Cossacks, an East Slavic, semi-military people with deep roots in Poland. In the eighteenth century, Poland was conquered and partitioned by the imperial powers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. During Wierusz-Kowalski's lifetime the Polish people were under constant duress, a state reflected in many of his paintings. His works often suggested the struggles of Polish people in those lands that became Russian territory. Such paintings illustrated the vast class divide that existed between the gentry and the peasants, but also spoke to a deep sense of national pride among the Polish people. Subtle details of Wierusz-Kowalski's paintings of Poland reveal his critique of the social and political issues that confronted the nation.

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## Introduction

The Polish artist Alfred Jan Maksymilian Wierusz-Kowalski (1849-1915) was a prolific painter, known for his depictions of rural life in Russian-occupied Poland.<sup>1</sup> Works by Wierusz-Kowalski are found in museums around the world, but predominantly in Poland, Germany, and particularly in private collections in the United States. He studied and taught at the Munich School, one of the most prominent institutions for the instruction of art, and is considered to be the most exemplary Polish artist of the School. Wierusz-Kowalski favored historical events, hunting scenes, peasant weddings, and animals in his work.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most common motif in his oeuvre was a horse-drawn sled pursued by wolves.<sup>3</sup> Although his paintings received attention during his lifetime, there is a noticeable dearth of scholarship about Wierusz-Kowalski.

Wierusz-Kowalski's works suggest much about the cultural, political, and social situation of late-nineteenth century Poland. Examining his motivations can help to shed light on the situation of Poland at the time, and provide a more in-depth appreciation of the works of one of the most prominent modern Polish painters. Drawing on earlier scholarship, as well as research concerning nineteenth-century Poland and surrounding lands, this exhibition and catalog explore concepts of social and cultural relevance in order to elucidate Wierusz-Kowalski's influential role in Polish painting. This exhibition focuses on two paintings, *Russian Winter Scene* and *Returning Home at Sunset* to illustrate themes salient to Wierusz-Kowalski's works as a whole.

## **Provenance: The Intersection of Milwaukee Breweries and Polish Art**

*Russian Winter Scene*, depicting wolves pursuing travelers in a barren, snowy landscape, was obtained by the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) Art Collection in 1983 as a bequest from Joseph and Ilma Uihlein. Like many owners of Wierusz-Kowalski paintings, the Uihlein family is of German ancestry. The Uihlein family owned the Schlitz Brewing Company, which produced “The Beer that Made Milwaukee Famous.”<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the UWM painting, *Returning Home at Sunset*, now owned by the Milwaukee County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture and on long-term loan to the Pabst Mansion, shows a more relaxed scene of a caravan of carriages in the fading sunlight. The two works have a similar provenance. *Returning Home at Sunset* was originally owned by Emil Blatz (1858-1944), of the Blatz Brewing Company. When Blatz passed away, his eclectic collection of art was donated to Milwaukee County. Portions of this collection, including *Returning Home at Sunset*, were loaned to the Pabst Mansion for the exhibition *The Blatz Art Collection, a Beer Baron’s Legacy*.<sup>5</sup>

The provenances of the two works suggest how Wierusz-Kowalski paintings may have come to Milwaukee, and are indicative of what sort of collectors were interested in this artist. The provenances are especially significant due to the connections among the owning families. Not only are all three of these families (Pabst, Uihlein, and Blatz) major brewery names in Milwaukee, but they are also further connected through marriage.<sup>6</sup> Captain Frederick Pabst (1836-1904), who formed the Pabst Brewing Company from his father-in-law Phillip Best’s Brewing Company, had five children that survived into adulthood. One of these children, Frederick Pabst Jr. (1869-1958), married Charlotte Uihlein (1874-1968), the heiress to the

Schlitz Brewing Company of Milwaukee, which was founded by German immigrant August Krug (1815-1856) and later passed to the German Uihlein family.<sup>7</sup> Emil Blatz, also of German heritage, never officially ran the Blatz Brewing Company, though his father was the founder. Emil Blatz instead focused on traveling the world and collecting oriental rugs and paintings by French, Czech, Polish, German, and Austrian painters.<sup>8</sup> His collection included a work by Wierusz-Kowalski, who was well known in Germany, as well as in Poland.

It can, therefore, be inferred that the families' German heritage led to their collective interest in Wierusz-Kowalski paintings. Many auctions in New York and Chicago were selling the estates of German immigrants in the late nineteenth century, and numerous other Wierusz-Kowalski paintings were sold through these major auction cities.<sup>9</sup> Not only would German families be familiar with and interested in a painter of the Munich School such as Wierusz-Kowalski, but the strong family ties, particularly between the Pabst and the Uihlien families, would encourage similar tastes. The families may have had the same art dealer, or they may have developed an appreciation for Wierusz-Kowalski through their association with one of the other German brewery families.<sup>10</sup>

## **Metaphor in *Russian Winter Scene* and *Returning Home at Sunset***

The eighteenth century saw the partitioning of Poland by the imperial powers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. These nations began asserting their control in Poland in 1764, and after three separate partitions (1772, 1793, 1795), Poland had become an official Russian province. Despite being under control of the Russian Czar, the Polish people still identified as Polish and attempted numerous, unsuccessful revolts. The Polish people suffered from not only these foreign powers, but also from an immense divide between social and economic classes. It was within this political climate that Wierusz-Kowalski created his works.<sup>11</sup>

Both Polish landscape and genre paintings, the types of paintings for which Wierusz-Kowalski is best known, focused on the beauty of the nation and portrayed the Polish people's devotion to the land. This painting style was primarily concerned with the political situation that plagued the nation, and not so much with developing innovative painting techniques.<sup>12</sup> In describing such works, a late nineteenth century reviewer wrote, "sometimes Poland is represented [by artists] as a strong man thrown prone upon the ice, with an eagle plucking out his vitals."<sup>13</sup> In other words, Poland, as a nation, was often addressed metaphorically. The artists of such works were not all Polish, but still chose to depict Poland as destroyed or injured, as for example, the French painter Horace Vernet (1789-1863) did in his *Le Promethee Polonais* (1831) (fig. 1). However, it seems that Wierusz-Kowalski's energy and tension-filled paintings of carriages chased by wolves through a snowy landscape provide a more subtle metaphor for the plight of Poland, one that is, however, equally politically charged.

A large number of Wierusz-Kowalski's paintings become more intelligible when viewed through a political or social lens. While his subject matters vary, from Cossacks, an East Slavic,



**Fig. 1** Horace Vernet, *Le Promethee Polonais* (*The Polish Prometheus*), Oil on canvas, 13.8 x 17.7 in, 1831, Société Historique et Littéraire Polonaise, Paris.

semi-military people with roots in Poland, to upper class school children, or from peasants being attacked by wolves to military men hanging about town, there is always a clear indication of social class. None of Wierusz-Kowalski's known works portray an individual whose class is in question. This iconographic clarity is a consequence of the political situation in Poland, where there was a severe separation between the gentry, nobility, and peasantry. A peaceful image of wealthy schoolgirls in the sun-lit woods might not appear to assert a political message on its own. Yet, when it is placed next to a work by the same artist in which a lower-class family frantically tries to shoot down wolves that are attacking their sled, the drastic differences



**Fig. 2** Alfred Wierusz Kowalski, *Attack of Wolves*, c. 1885-90, Oil on canvas, 20.1 x 33.5 in., Private collection.

between social classes becomes open to critique (fig. 2). From comparisons such as these, it becomes clear that social class was important to Wierusz-Kowalski.

*Russian Winter Scene*, an undated oil painting, is a typical example of a Wierusz-Kowalski painting (fig. 3). It shows a wintery, barren landscape scattered with weathered bushes. At the center of the scene, a team of horses struggles to pull a sled carrying two men, a woman, and a child. The subject matter of *Russian Winter Scene* exemplifies Wierusz-Kowalski's dialogue with the social and political situations of nineteenth-century Poland. The scene, similar to many others that he painted during the 1880s, is focused around a sled carrying a small group of people. The man who drives the sled is instantly recognizable as a peasant, while the remaining people are probably wealthier, as indicated by their lush furs and golden earrings.



**Fig. 3** Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski, *Russian Winter Scene*, n.d., Oil on canvas, 30 x 60 in., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Art Collection, Bequest of Joseph and Ilma Uihlein, 1983.113.

However, the condition of the sled itself suggests a lack of resources to purchase a sturdier vehicle. It appears to be made of rough wood and is falling apart as it is rapidly drawn along the snowy path. The sled is pulled by four frantic horses, whose musculature indicates the artist's close study of a horse's body and movements. Surrounding the fleeing sled are two wolves, with three more closing in. The men on the sled attempt to beat back the wolves using a gun, held by the male passenger, and a whip, controlled by the peasant. The woman and the child cower in the sled and appear to be yelling in panic. One of the wolves has fallen, but Wierusz-Kowalski's rendition of the psychological state of the horses and the men indicate that the group is far from safety.

When viewing this painting with the political state of contemporary Poland in mind, it is reasonable that the work alludes to national and cultural discord. The scene is no doubt a representation of rural Poland, or what was Russian Poland at the time. This being the case, the people depicted would identify as Polish and exemplify the large discrepancy between the wealthy and the poor. In other words, they represent a range of classes within the Polish population. As they fight for their lives, their attackers can be equated to the assailants of the nation, or more specifically the Russians, Austrians, and the Prussians that have torn their nation apart, as discussed below. The fact that both a peasant and a wealthy family were being attacked suggests that Wierusz-Kowalski was asserting that no Pole was safe from the invading nations.

The landscape itself also plays a significant role in this work, and in similar scenes. The romantic painters of nineteenth-century Poland represented their affection for their nation through the land and its natural beauty. Wierusz-Kowalski seems more concerned with realism

than with portraying a pleasant landscape. The barren, wind-swept scene is not only an accurate depiction of the actual appearance of northern Poland in winter, but also a metaphor for the bleak outlook of the Polish nation, as the people had been struggling for over one-hundred years to regain their independence. While the landscape is not depicted in a positive way, the viewer still appreciates Polish affection for this desolate land and a sense of national pride as the people defend their sled.

The bushes are the only thing in close proximity beyond the chasing wolves, indicating that the group in the sled is alone in the world of the painting. This may be read as an allusion to Poland being partitioned without any support from foreign allies. After their land and culture were forcibly overtaken, the Poles were forced to fend for themselves, just as the sleigh riders are alone in the unwelcoming landscape, fearful of being overwhelmed by avaricious wolves. There are small homes in the distance of the painting, but they offer no relief for the travelers. Despite this fact, the travelers still attempt to carry on and push through the attacking wolves, just as the culturally Polish people were forced to endure and continued to resist the invading powers.

While at first glance, *Returning Home at Sunset* is a more appealing subject than *Russian Winter Scene*, similar conclusions may be drawn concerning its metaphorical meanings (fig. 4). This painting depicts a central troika, or Russian carriage, carrying two figures, most likely Polish gentry. Behind the troika, three women carry bundles on foot, and further in the distance, another carriage follows. The landscape of *Returning Home at Sunset* is similar to that of *Russian Winter Scene*; the snowy land is dotted with small, battered bits of vegetation and the



**Fig. 4** Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski, *Returning Home at Sunset*, c. 1900, Oil on canvas, 18.5 x 24 in., Milwaukee County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture. EL40.1983.

path used by the caravan is scattered with rocks. A group of leafless trees stands in the distance.

However, unlike the figures in *Russian Winter Scene*, the travelers in *Returning Home at Sunset* appear relaxed, as though they are enjoying the carriage ride. The bright sunset compliments the more uplifting tone implied by the figures' facial expressions. The three women who journey on foot are weighed down with the bundles that they carry, yet still seem at ease. Despite this, the work can also be analyzed in a more somber way. The landscape is

equally inhospitable to that in *Russian Winter Scene*, suggesting the desperate situation of the Polish people. Similarly, the horses pulling the troika do not appear as calm as the riders. The central horse throws its head back and bares its teeth, implying anxiety and distress. Painting for an elite clientele, Wierusz-Kowalski sympathized with their plights, and despite portraying a seemingly merry journey, he invites a critique of the social inequalities and poverty of the time.

## The Career of Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski

Alfred Jan Maksymilian Wierusz-Kowalski was born on October 11, 1849 in Suwałki, Poland, a city which at that time was controlled by Russia.<sup>14</sup> In 1865, the Wierusz-Kowalski family moved to Kalisz, a larger city in central Poland. Here, the young Wierusz-Kowalski's talents as an artist became clear even in secondary school, and he began to take drawing lessons from Polish artist S. Barcikowski. Three years later, Wierusz-Kowalski relocated to Warsaw to attend the Warsaw Academy where his instructor was the obscure Rafał Hadziewicz (1803-1886), a Polish artist largely unknown to the non-Polish speaking. Hadziewicz painted portraits and classical scenes, and has been compared to early twentieth-century genre painter Aleksander Kamiński (1823-1886).<sup>15</sup> There is little doubt that Hadziewicz influenced the young Wierusz-Kowalski. The young painter's skills were recognized at this time, but he had not yet achieved the mature style or produced the dynamic compositions that characterize his later paintings.<sup>16</sup>

Just one year later in 1866, Wierusz-Kowalski moved again, this time to Germany, where he entered the Dresden Academy. There his career as an artist began to take shape. He witnessed numerous exhibitions, including an important show of works by Russian artist Nikolai Swertschkoff (1817-1898). The prominent Swertschkoff focused on genre scenes and historical battles. The influence that this exhibition had on Wierusz-Kowalski is evident in his later work.<sup>17</sup> Similarities in style and subject matter are visible between such works as Swertschkoff's *Alexander III and Orlov Trotters* (n.d.) and Wierusz-Kowalski's *Sledge Ride* (1903), for example (fig. 5, fig.6). Both show carriages riding through otherwise uninhabited landscapes. Swertschkoff also placed strong emphasis on the horses in the image, just as Wierusz-Kowalski

did in his painting and others like it. Other works by Swertschkoff parallel Wierusz-Kowalski's paintings in that they show single riders accompanied by a dog. The fluid brushstroke characteristic of Wierusz-Kowalski is perhaps also anticipated by Swertschkoff's work. During his stay at the Dresden Academy, Wierusz-Kowalski also had the opportunity to connect with many Polish immigrants, including other painters, writers, and journalists. Not only did this keep him in touch with his native Poland, but it also created opportunities for work.<sup>18</sup>

After his stint in Dresden, Wierusz-Kowalski moved on to Prague with his friend, Czech painter Václav Brožík (1851-1901). Brožík was a history painter working in the academic style who soon gained fame for scenes from Czech history. Perhaps wishing to become similarly successful, Wierusz-Kowalski turned to scenes of Polish history. He began a series of paintings of seventeenth-century Polish general Stefan Czarniecki (1599-1665), who had achieved victories against Sweden, Russia, and the Ottomans. Unfortunately, these early works by Wierusz-Kowalski remained unfinished, and he abandoned his attempts at history painting. He then returned to painting genre scenes of rural Poland, an image that had been familiar to him since his childhood in the country and occupied him throughout his career as an artist.<sup>19</sup>



**Fig. 5** Nikolai Swertschkoff, *Alexander III and Orlov Trotters*, 1869, Oil on canvas, 28 x 48.8 in., Location unknown.



**Fig. 6** Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski, *Sledge Ride*, 1903, Oil on panel, 26.6 x 41.7 in., Private collection.

Munich was the next stop for the young artist. There, in 1873, he was accepted at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. During this period, his works were characterized by peaceful scenes of sled rides or hunting scenes painted *en plein aire*, and he studied under well-known Hungarian artist Alexander von Wagner (1838-1919).<sup>20</sup> Wierusz-Kowalski also became familiar with the work of Polish painter Maksymilian Gierymski (1846-1874), a realist painter known for battle scenes and landscapes. Wierusz-Kowalski used Gierymski's *The Patrol of Polish Insurgents* (1872) as inspiration for his own *Polish Outpost* (1873-74) (fig. 7, fig. 8).<sup>21</sup> However, he modified Gierymski's approach by unifying his composition with shadows and creating more harmony between the background and foreground.<sup>22</sup> Scholar Eliza Ptaszyńska argues that certain features of Wierusz-Kowalski's works can be attributed to Gierymski, including a freer approach



**Fig. 7** Maksymilian Gierymski, *The Patrol of Polish Insurgents*, 1872, Oil on canvas, National Museum in Warsaw.



**Fig. 8** Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski, *Polish Outpost*, 1873-74, Oil on canvas, 22.4 x 43.3 in., National Museum, Warsaw.

to composition, naturalism, the ability to portray light and climate, and the tendency to portray the emotions and psychological state of the figures. However, his colors are arguably richer and more appealing than those of Gierymski.<sup>23</sup> Also pivotal to the artist's development was the connection he formed with Józef Brandt (1841-1915), a well-known Polish painter likewise working in Munich.<sup>24</sup>

In the early 1880s, while still in Munich, Wierusz-Kowalski turned to a more exotic theme for a period of time. Drawing inspiration from his friend, the more successful Brandt, the blossoming artist used the latter's collection of costumes, weapons, and images of the Caucasus Mountains to paint scenes of its land, horsemen, and Bedouins. In this decade, Wierusz-Kowalski also focused on rural life in Poland, creating some of his most recognizable scenes, including *Cossack (undated)* and *Cossacks Returning Home on Horseback (undated)*.<sup>25</sup>

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the artist began to receive more attention, particularly in Munich. Scholar Hans-Peter Brühler noted the disparity between Wierusz-Kowalski's newfound popularity and the relative lack of interest his work attracted in his native Poland. This is surprising since in 1894 he cooperated with Brandt and Cszczorski to create a society dedicated to Polish artists in Munich.<sup>26</sup> However, the lack of recognition in his homeland may have been due to political tensions not only between Germany and Poland, but also within Poland itself. Ultimately, while he did not receive as much acclaim in Poland as he did in Munich, the Polish Warsaw Museum did accept him as a member in 1865, one of only ten Polish painters to receive this honor.<sup>27</sup>

Wierusz-Kowalski exhibited in the Paris Salon (1880), Dresden (c. 1880), Berlin (c. 1880), Munich (1892), and Vienna (1894). He also was included in the International Art Exhibition in

Vienna (c.1880-1885), and he was appointed as Honorary Professor of the Munich school in 1890.<sup>28</sup> Recognizing the artist's talent, Prince Regent Luitpold of Bavaria (1821-1912) requested works from him, and awarded him an artist's medal in 1883. Largely on account of these successes, Wierusz-Kowalski's works began to be sold in North America in the early 1900s through the Munich Wimmer Gallery.<sup>29</sup> These facts are seemingly at odds with the lack of scholarship and general knowledge on the artist, since he received such recognitions during his lifetime.<sup>30</sup> The silence in the literature where Wierusz-Kowalski is concerned may be attributable to Cold War affairs, which isolated parts of Eastern Europe, or to a trend in Polish scholarship that focuses on nineteenth century artists who were considered more authentically Polish in their styles and less influenced by the Munich School.<sup>31</sup>

Though Wierusz-Kowalski was a successful artist and his works sold relatively well, by the end of his life he suffered financially, largely on account of a lavish lifestyle. The style of his work also changed towards the end of his life, as new Polish painters were coming onto the scene. Attempting to compete with the new styles, the artist adopted looser brushstrokes and created works that looked almost unfinished. These works, while not overly criticized, did not succeed to the extent that Wierusz-Kowalski had hoped, and he never regained the fame of the late 1800s and early 1900s.<sup>32</sup>

The financially struggling artist passed away on February 15, 1915 while still living in Munich. The Munich Academy of Fine Arts and the Polish *Unterstützungsverein* (support association) paid their respects to the artist in undocumented ways. The first exhibition dedicated to Wierusz-Kowalski was not held until 20 years after his death, in Warsaw.<sup>33</sup> Here,

again, one can point to the political situation in Poland as the source of this delay, as the nation did not gain its independence until after the First World War.<sup>34</sup>

## **The State of Poland during Wierusz-Kowalski's Lifetime**

The political and social situation of Poland in the late nineteenth century had a profound impact upon the lives of the Polish people. According to one 1905 commentator, the country was in a state of "chaos and disorder."<sup>35</sup> This situation no doubt affected Wierusz-Kowalski's work. A discussion of the state of Poland at the time in which Wierusz-Kowalski lived will grant insight into the predominant themes in his work.

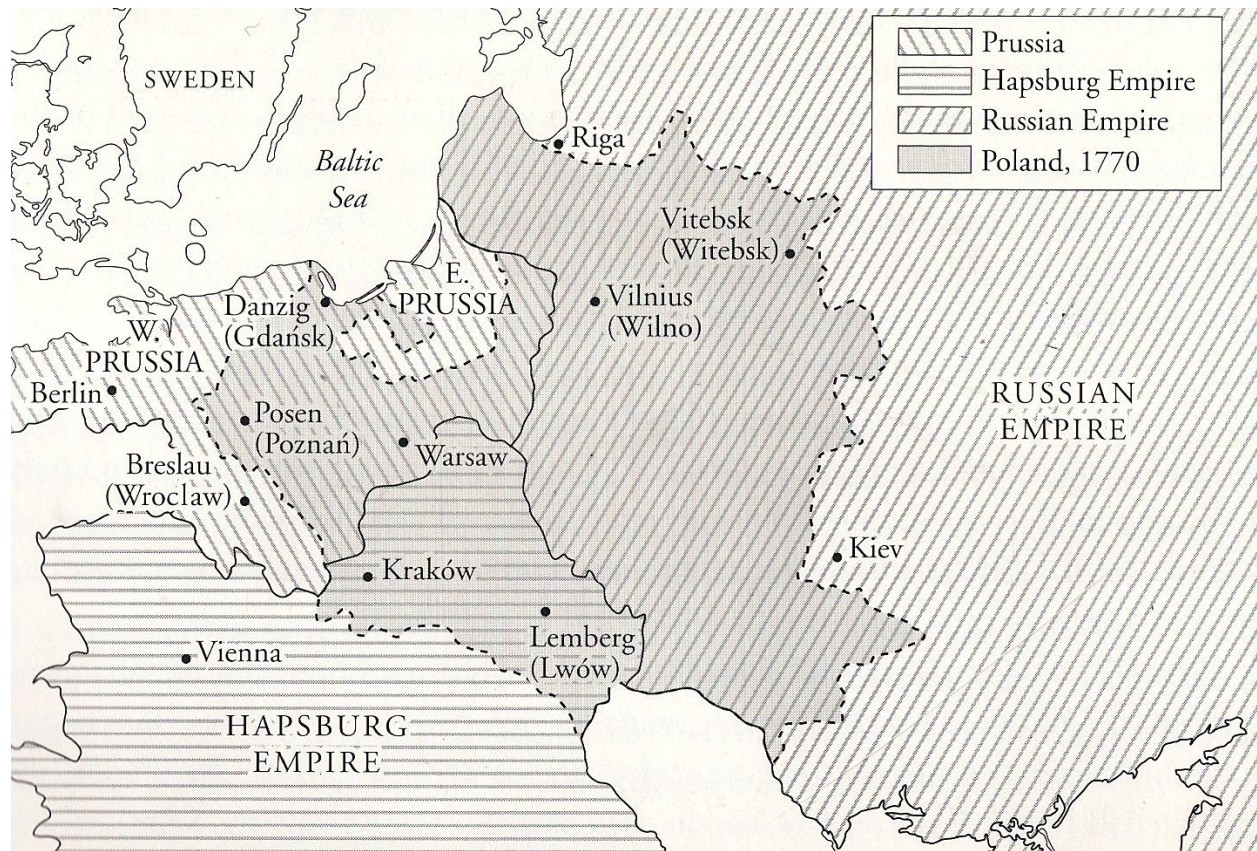
The nation of Poland was not officially partitioned by outside powers until 1772, but even before the partition, the Polish people were losing control of their nation. By the end of 1764, Stanislaw Augustus Poniatowski (1732-1798) was named king of Poland, but Catherine II of Russia (1729-1796) and Frederick the Great of Prussia (1712-1786) were essentially controlling him. Frederick the Great in particular was denounced by a late nineteenth century writer as "one of the most bitter and uncompromising enemies of [Poland]."<sup>36</sup> In 1768, one of the few near-successful revolts took place, even before the official division had occurred. This uprising was led by a group of Polish noblemen called the Convention of Bar. Their goal was to "free the county from foreigners."<sup>37</sup> Despite being eight-thousand strong and militarily prepared, the uprising fell to Russian troops and the Convention of Bar failed in their attempt to assassinate King Poniatowski.<sup>38</sup>

In 1772, a sizable portion of Poland was partitioned into three sections by Russia, Austria, and Prussia, resulting in "three countries hold[ing] the land and its people in bondage."<sup>39</sup> This was a result of an agreement between Frederick the Great of Prussia and Catherine II of Russia. In January of 1772, the imperial powers signed two treaties to occupy and then annex provinces of Poland and to create auxiliary troops for protection. They justified

their actions by creating the treaties in the name of the Holy Trinity, and stating that the splitting of Poland was done to resolve the “general confusion in which the republic of Poland exists by the dissension of its leading men and the perversity of all the citizens.”<sup>40</sup>

The Austrian Empress Maria Theresa (1717-1780) was not originally included in this treaty, but Frederick and Catherine II determined that a third portion of divided Poland should go to Austria, in order to create stronger ties between the nations. Although initially unwilling, Maria Theresa eventually acquiesced to the arrangement in February of 1772, and the treaties were put into action in July of that year. At this time, the nation of Poland was stripped of twenty percent of its population and a quarter of its sizable territory.<sup>41</sup> By 1773, Russia had gained such a hand in Polish territory that the “czar’s ambassador became the country’s actual ruler,” at least, presumably, in the Russian portion of Polish lands.<sup>42</sup>

As James Brown Scott, jurist and expert in international law, observed an, “appetite...‘grows by what it feeds on.’”<sup>43</sup> The three powers desired more of Poland, and thus entered into a second division of the nation in September of 1793. In this division, Poland was cut to a third of its original size and left with a population of only 3.5 million. By October 1795, a third treaty was agreed upon by Frederick’s successor (Frederick William II), Catherine II, and Maria Theresa’s successor (Joseph II) that resulted in the division of the remainder of Poland among these three parties<sup>44</sup> (fig. 9).<sup>45</sup> Eventually, this division was officially enacted by the Congress of Vienna. Russia’s Polish province became the Kingdom of Poland under Alexander, Czar of Russia (1777-1825), who was succeeded in 1830 by Czar Nicholas (1796-1855). Nicholas officially accepted Poland as a Russian province.<sup>46</sup>



**Fig. 9** Third and final partition of Poland.

There is notable disagreement concerning from where the impetus behind the original division of Poland came. Nineteenth-century historian Carlyle proposed that Poland was destined to be divided and that Frederick was in no way guilty of orchestrating the partitioning. Instead, he “simply...accepted and put it in his pocket without criticism, what Providence sent.”<sup>47</sup> However, German historian Heinrich Von Sybel suggested that the original blame should be placed on Prussia, although he did not feel that country benefited from the separation. Without the proposition from Prussia, he claims, “Poland would, it is true, have remained undivided, but would have fallen as a whole into Russia’s hands.”<sup>48</sup>

Subsequent scholars blamed Poland itself and the “radical fault” in the nature of the Polish people for the misfortunes.<sup>49</sup> Robert Atter cited “lack of solidarity,” which became evident as “their high intelligence and rare mental gifts” prevented them from comprehending and anticipating the concept of politics in the international front.<sup>50</sup> According to Atter, the Polish people also failed to maintain a sense of trust and balance within the country. This led to turmoil and allowed for other stronger nations, such as Russia, to take power. However, Atter suggested, the key factor in its weakness in world affairs was no doubt the “most corrupt government in the world.”<sup>51</sup>

The heavy divide between the social and economic classes in Poland was also a key factor in the weakening of the state. Separated into nobility, gentry, and peasantry, the aims of the Polish people were in discord.<sup>52</sup> Peasants accounted for about ninety percent of the population in the original Polish lands, the vast majority of whom could not read or write.<sup>53</sup> Due to this great divide, and the fact that the largest class in the nation was illiterate and underprivileged, no group was large enough to challenge the imperial powers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. This chaos within Poland plagued the nation until the end of World War I, just years after Wierusz-Kowalski’s death.<sup>54</sup>

## The Polish Artistic Response

As a writer of 1874 appropriately remarked, “artists and poets never tire of depicting the sorrows of Poland, a country whose misfortunes make one of the darkest pages in history.”<sup>55</sup> It is clear that Polish artists of the time expressed their passion and sorrow over the political issues facing Poland through painting. Wierusz-Kowalski was no exception to this trend, as his artwork spoke to the distinctly Polish concerns of the day.

The attempt to express the social and political struggle of Poland in the arts brought about a change in Polish painting. Around the time of World War II, scholars identified two distinct veins in the work of Polish painters of the nineteenth century. The first of these was a revival of “early exuberance and idealism, which pictured a fantastic epic of Polish greatness.”<sup>56</sup> Artists identifying with this celebratory trend attempted to distinguish themselves from those painters that accepted guidance from the Munich School. This work is exemplified by the painter Jan Matejko (1838-1893) who commemorated the previously powerful nation in images that glorified Poland’s military victories, for example the Polish defeat of the Turks in 1683 (fig. 10).<sup>57</sup> The second tendency, exemplified by Wierusz-Kowalski’s snow scenes and genre subjects, focused on the frustration and acrimony of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Poland. Despite their dark undertones, these subjects illustrated the intensified sense of nationalism that arose as a result of the occupation.<sup>58</sup>

The themes explored by the latter group owed their origins to the “romantic” movement that had begun in Polish literature.<sup>59</sup> The literary works and the paintings, as observed by scholar Jan Cavanaugh, “define[d] and defend[ed] the national identity through works that inspired solidarity.”<sup>60</sup> Though the artists relied upon many of the same motifs

present in literature, they also focused on the negative side of Polish life and attempted to maintain native tradition while incorporating newer, worldlier styles. They hoped that by working with a more international sensibility that they could promote an awareness of Polish identity, incorporating the Munich School's preference for naturalistic painting. Similarly, their connections with Munich School artists of other nationalities would expand their market and enable Polish painters to communicate their concerns to a wider audience. The fact that Wierusz-Kowalski was a part of this movement helps to explain the general lack of scholarship regarding him. By Polish standards, Wierusz-Kowalski's standing as an authentic Pole may have been tarnished, since he was strongly influenced by the Munich School. On the other hand, scholars researching the Munich School may overlook Wierusz-Kowalski because of his tendencies to support distinctly Polish concerns.



**Fig. 10** Jan Matejko, *John Sobieski, Vanquisher of the Turks, the Gates of Vienna*, c. 1883, Oil on canvas, 180 x 360 in., Sala del Sobieski (Vatican City).

The attempt to maintain native traditions in art coincided with the rise of nationalism that swept European countries in the late 1800s. Groups who identified as Polish encouraged the teaching of the Polish language, culture, and history, despite the fact that these were considered illegal acts by the occupying regimes. The Polish artists of the time were involved in such efforts, working to create a consistent identity amid the political and social pandemonium. Even art theory and criticism of the second half of the nineteenth century was focused on the creation of a distinct culture, one that had been repressed by the occupying forces.<sup>61</sup> As one scholar stated in 1874 in relation to Polish paintings that intended to communicate individuality, “the story of Poland’s dismemberment by Russia, while all Europe stood idly by is well known to every reader of history.”<sup>65</sup> This indicates that such works would have resonated with Polish people and their political concerns. The painters of these works intended to create a category of Polish painting, a genre distinct among nineteenth-century European painting as a whole. It was within this climate that Wierusz-Kowalski worked and rose to the forefront of Polish painters of the nineteenth century.

## Wierusz-Kowalski: Historiography

The majority of sources that discuss Wierusz-Kowalski mention him only in passing or discuss him as part of a larger group of artists or stylistic movements. These sources provide little information about his life, his beliefs, or his development as an artist. The few scholars that delved deeper into the artist's life and works have done so in Polish; of these, the most prominent is Eliza Ptasińska. The Polish emphasis in the scholarship is particularly interesting, as Wierusz-Kowalski spent most of his artistic career in Munich, not in Poland. Many sources consider Wierusz-Kowalski a Munich School artist rather than a Polish artist, yet Ptasińska argues in her scholarship that the painter's work was distinctly Polish. Indeed, there is a noticeable lack of research interest in Wierusz-Kowalski shown by scholars focusing on the Munich School. The following brief overview of these sources will demonstrate the current state of Wierusz-Kowalski scholarship with the aim of clarifying the contribution of the present exhibition.

The oldest available sources concerning Wierusz-Kowalski appear to have been written during his lifetime or shortly after his death. These do not tell us much about the painter as an artist, but rather illustrate the market value of his work. The first mention of Wierusz-Kowalski dates to 1906, thirteen years before his death. It was included in the English journal *Brush and Pencil*.<sup>63</sup> This short mention of Wierusz-Kowalski appears in the "Art Sales and Sales Prices" section of the journal, where recent sales of paintings were listed along with the identities of the sellers. For example, Wierusz-Kowalski's *The Morning Ride* (undated) is listed with a sale-price of \$550, sold to buyer S.G. Bayne.<sup>64</sup> By the standards of 1906 this was a considerable sum, but relative to other works listed, it appears that Wierusz-Kowalski paintings were not as

desired. The group of approximately fifty works by different artists, derived from the collections of six different owners, obtained a total sum of \$110,105. Wierusz-Kowalski's work was amid the small handful of works in the group that sold for under \$600. Other artists in this small group included the Belgian artist Eugene Joseph Verboekhoven, and the Frenchmen Jules Worms and Emile Horace Vernet, although the work of these artists shares no particular similarities with that of Wierusz-Kowalski. The majority of the works obtained \$1,000-\$2,000, with some reaching over \$5,000.<sup>65</sup> These figures suggest that, while Wierusz-Kowalski was well-known during his lifetime and his works commanded a large amount of money, his paintings were still selling for notably less than his contemporaries. Some of the top sellers included Frenchman Jean Baptiste Camille Corot, Dutchman Josef Israels, and fellow Polish painter Józef Brandt, whose works varied considerably more in terms of style and subject matter. Wierusz-Kowalski's work did not necessarily stand out among the offerings of this disparate group of international artists.

In 1921, Wierusz-Kowalski's name appeared in another sales publication, *American Art News*. In the section "Art and Book Sales," two paintings by Wierusz-Kowalski are listed as having been auctioned.<sup>66</sup> The auction is described as "fairly successful considering the conditions of the times and the fact that...the majority of the works offered were too familiar to art picture buyers, several having been shown at Blakeslee Galleries and having passed through several previous sales...while there were also some doubtful attributions."<sup>67</sup> The phrase "conditions of the times" no doubt refers to the fact that World War I had left the United States in an economic recession and people were less likely to purchase luxuries such as paintings. While the article specifies another painting that is under scrutiny in terms of authorship, there

is no evidence to suggest that Wierusz-Kowalski's work was under similar scrutiny, and it is unclear whether or not the Wierusz-Kowalski works were among those considered "too familiar." Such observations, however, could have slowed the dissemination of Wierusz-Kowalski works throughout the United States and delayed the interest of collectors and scholars. *Merrymakers* (undated) was auctioned to an S.A. Powell for a mere \$275, though the 20" x 20.25" painting is arguably smaller than the artist's other works, most of which are at least 36" x 36" and some of which extend to over 60". On the other hand, at \$900, *Start of the Journey* (c. 1870-1880) fetched one of the highest prices of the group, selling to an E. Takamine, although by no means was it the most expensive painting in the auction. It presumably depicted a group riding a sleigh or carriage through a landscape, as Wierusz-Kowalski painted numerous works of this type of scene with similar titles, including *Journey in Winter* (undated) and *Return from a Market* (prior to 1880).

The difference in price between *Merrymakers* and *Start of the Journey*, when considered along with the price commanded by *The Morning Ride* in the 1906 auction, illustrates that Wierusz-Kowalski's works did not dramatically increase in value in the years following his death. While the market value of his paintings did not increase drastically during his lifetime or throughout the mid-twentieth century, the latter half of the century and the beginning of the twenty-first century saw a dramatic rise in the price of Wierusz-Kowalski paintings. For example, *The Lone Wolf* (c. 1890), one of the painter's most recognizable works, sold for \$22,500 in April of 2012.<sup>68</sup> Much more recently, in 2014, *The Mountain Patrol* sold through Bonhams Auction for \$149,708.<sup>69</sup>

In a 1938 publication, titled *Notable Personages of Polish Ancestry*, Wierusz-Kowalski appears in the lengthy register of well-known Polish persons, including artists, architects, authors, musicians, military leaders, scholars, scientists, rulers, and religious individuals.<sup>70</sup> However, this source provides very little in the way of new information on the painter. Mentioned under notable artists, his biography, apart from dates of his birth and death, states only, “painter; known for landscapes.”<sup>71</sup> While this no doubt sums up the artist in the most basic terms, the same language is used in entries for several other persons. The author of this volume makes no attempt to distinguish exemplary aspects of the works of Polish artists.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, as previously discussed, Wierusz-Kowalski’s works were not limited to landscapes. While the land is definitely an important motif in his paintings, he focused more on figures and action. He also delved into historical scenes and daily activities. As exemplified by the above mentioned sources, more focused and serious art-historical interest in late nineteenth-century Polish painting had not yet developed, and would not do so for many years, as a result of the social and political situation of Poland.

Wierusz-Kowalski was acknowledged in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* of 1944, a publication that marks the beginning of greater scholarly attention to the artist.<sup>73</sup> This may be due to the close of World War II and the dispersal of information that had previously been isolated due to international conflicts.<sup>74</sup> The very brief “Notes” portion of the bulletin upholds Wierusz-Kowalski’s works as exemplary of certain characteristics of Polish painting. The author (and presumably the exhibition) places emphasis on how the political situation of nineteenth-century Poland influenced the art of the time. The fraught state of Poland is summarized and the author suggests that the artists were expressing their despair through

their artwork. This concise notice marks an important first attempt to place Wierusz-Kowalski's work – and attendant metaphors – in the context of Polish history. Similarly, by settling upon Wierusz-Kowalski as the most exemplary Polish painter, the author elevated him in relation to the status of other Polish artists. Unfortunately, no citations were included in this very brief notice, providing no avenues for further research.

In 1979, the importance of Wierusz-Kowalski as an artist was alluded to in an auction sale advertisement for Sotheby's that appeared in *The Burlington Magazine's* "Front Matter."<sup>75</sup> A painting by Wierusz-Kowalski appeared along with works by eight other artists in the portion dedicated to nineteenth-century European painting. Wierusz-Kowalski's inclusion as a highlight of the Sotheby's catalog indicates that, by this time, the well-known auction house trusted his name to draw buyers. Not only did Wierusz-Kowalski's name command respect among Polish artists, but he was also significant enough to deserve mention in a sale of European paintings, which included a broad selection of works by international artists.

Surprisingly, despite the success that Wierusz-Kowalski works had earned in the post-war years, the 1988 exhibition *Nineteenth Century Polish Painting*, hosted by The National Museum in Warsaw and the National Academy of Design in New York, included only one painting by Wierusz-Kowalski.<sup>76</sup> In the catalog for this show, the sole Wierusz-Kowalski work, *Departure in a Carriage* (1890), is accompanied by a very brief essay on the artist that provides little to no new insight into the artist's character or significance. The essay's author, Janina Zielińska, discusses Wierusz-Kowalski's mentors, training, and where he worked, and provides a brief account of his favored subject matters and the reception of his works. So brief is the catalog's entry on Wierusz-Kowalski, however, that an actual discussion of *Departure in a*

*Carriage* is completely absent. Zielińska cites only three sources: a general encyclopedia of artists, a Polish biography dictionary, and a Polish artist's dictionary.<sup>77</sup>

While Zielińska's entry does not add substantially to knowledge on the artist, it includes a note of some importance. The author states "His pictures found many buyers in Europe and America who were fascinated with the exoticism of Polish rural scenes," a further indication that the paintings were well-received.<sup>78</sup> It is perplexing that Wierusz-Kowalski, who is even acknowledged in the entry as the Polish painter who best exemplified the Munich School received no more attention than three very short paragraphs. Other artists in the volume merited essays three times as long with specific descriptions and analyses of paintings.<sup>79</sup> While there is no clear reason for the various degrees of attention shown to the artists in the volume, it is possible that Wierusz-Kowalski's large role in the Munich School may have prejudiced scholars when it came to his identification as a Polish artist. To be sure, many of the other artists in *Nineteenth Century Polish Painting* attended the Munich School at some point, but Wierusz-Kowalski seems to have played a much larger role in the Academy relative to his peers. Not only was he elected an Honorary Professor, but his painting style is more exemplary of the Munich School than a distinctly Polish style. This may have led him to be seen as less of a Polish artist and more of an expatriate.

The year 1993 saw significant advances in Wierusz-Kowalski research, with the publication of Hans-Peter Brühler's *Jäger, Kosaken und Polnische Reiter: Josef von Brandt, Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski, Franz Roubaud und der Münchner Polenkreis*.<sup>80</sup> This volume represents an extremely valuable contribution to Wierusz-Kowalski scholarship. It is the only substantial source on Wierusz-Kowalski that provides evidence that non-Polish scholars

developed an interest in this artist. Brühler presents a different perspective than previous Polish scholars, as he is writing as a German and in German. Though Wierusz-Kowalski studied and was popular in Munich, Brühler may not have been as inclined as later Polish authors to present Wierusz-Kowalski as such an undervalued player in the art world. True to this, Brühler's account of the artist is mainly devoted to Wierusz-Kowalski's artwork. While it includes biographical information on the painter's personal life, the book includes a chapter dedicated to Wierusz-Kowalski's style, influences, and training. Eventually, the volume was translated from German into Polish, a further indication in the growing interest in Wierusz-Kowalski in his native land.<sup>81</sup>

The year 1999 saw the first exhibition devoted solely to Wierusz-Kowalski, held in the Muzeum Okręgowe in Suwałki, Poland. The accompanying catalog added significantly to the scholarship.<sup>82</sup> Promoted as a 150 year anniversary of the birth of the Suwałki-born painter, the exhibition displayed 44 of the artist's works. Zielińska, the editor of the publication, stressed that the works came together from private collections and other Polish museums, as well as from the permanent collection of the Muzeum Okręgowe. The catalog supplied valuable information as to the locations of many Wierusz-Kowalski paintings and importantly revealed where they were sold: Munich.

In addition to providing substantial biographical information about the artist, Zielińska, more so than previous authors, hailed Wierusz-Kowalski as an extremely talented and noteworthy artist. She stressed how prolific he was as a painter. Though many of his paintings were lost during World War II, many are also now in collections where they are "pieczołowicie strzeżone" (that is to say, "jealously guarded"), suggesting that the works are still highly

prized.<sup>83</sup> Describing the artist's work in similar terms throughout the short introduction to the catalog, Zielińska also included testimonies from Henryk Piątkowski, a contemporary, well-known Polish artist, praising Wierusz-Kowalski.<sup>84</sup> The nature of these praises will be further explored below.

While Zielińska's assessment of Wierusz-Kowalski is invaluable, it does suffer from a lack of critical distance. She was writing in Polish for a patriotic, Polish audience and for a museum exhibition held in the artist's birthplace. However, Zielińska made more thorough use of the available sources on Wierusz-Kowalski than she had in her earlier *Nineteenth Century Polish Painting* essay. In addition to the previously discussed sources, such as Bühler and Piątkowski, she also drew upon more obscure Polish sources. These included weekly magazines and newspapers, as well as images of works in other museum collections and their associated records. As before, Zielińska employed more general Polish art-historical sources, but she now combined them with more focused sources and personal observations to present a much clearer image of Wierusz-Kowalski, both as a person and as a notable painter.

Despite its title, Jan Cavanaugh's *Outside Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art 1890-1918* (2000), provided little information specific to Wierusz-Kowalski.<sup>85</sup> Mentioned once in the 200 plus pages, Wierusz-Kowalski is described as "prominent," and discussed only in terms of his sojourn in Munich.<sup>86</sup> Despite this, the volume does prove useful in terms of context, consideration of related artists, and artistic practices of the time. For example, it includes discussions of how artists were handling the political situation in Poland and incorporating their thoughts on political matters into their works.

Cavanaugh's use of his sources, however, appears insufficient. As discussed above, Wierusz-Kowalski is considered by some of these scholars to be one of the leaders of modern Polish painting, and he no doubt played a large role in the shaping of both Polish art and that of Munich. Despite relying upon many of the same sources as Ptaszyńska would in a few years, Cavanaugh saw fit to reference Wierusz-Kowalski once, in a single sentence. While this is helpful in illustrating the need for further research on the artist, it suggests that Cavanaugh could have exploited these sources further. Even without focusing more narrowly on Wierusz-Kowalski, the sources would have benefitted the volume by strengthening the portrayal of the origins of the modern Polish painting, as Wierusz-Kowalski was, arguably, a key figure in such developments. Once again, omission of Wierusz-Kowalski may have been due to the fact that he was not viewed solely as a Polish painter or a Munich School painter, but as more of an expatriate or itinerant artist. After Cavanaugh, no significant publications focused on Wierusz-Kowalski until 2010.<sup>87</sup>

In 2010, a major scholar published the most comprehensive volume on Wierusz-Kowalski to date. Eliza Ptaszyńska, a Polish art historian, presented the first biography dedicated to the artist: *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849-1915*.<sup>88</sup> Ptaszyńska delved deep to answer "Jaki był Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski" (that is to say, "Who was Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski").<sup>89</sup> This author took a more objective approach than Zielińska, as her work does not seem to be influenced by patriotic sentiments. Ptaszyńska traced the artist's life from his birth, through his bankruptcy, and to his death. She focused mainly upon biographical information, notably Wierusz-Kowalski's roots in Suwalki, his teachers and followers, and his oeuvre. Ptaszyńska's work suggests that Wierusz-Kowalski was a highly undervalued artist, despite the

fame he received during his lifetime. It is emblematic of the state of research on the artist that this, the only biography dedicated to Wierusz-Kowalski, was published almost 100 years after his death beyond the boundaries of Poland, even though he was popular during his lifetime.

As expected in a monographic work, Ptaszyńska's use of sources was extensive. She drew upon information from catalogs by Zielińska, biographies of other related artists such as Józef Brandt, broader studies of general trends in Polish art, and art theory and practice books. By utilizing such a wide range of sources, Ptaszyńska compiled the most complete history of Wierusz-Kowalski to date. Unfortunately for other scholars, all but three of the sixty-plus sources that the author employed were written in Polish. The remaining three were German and do not represent substantial resources.

Ptaszyńska also provided information pertaining to the reception of Wierusz-Kowalski. As indicated by sources discussed above, Wierusz-Kowalski's works usually sold for a mid-range price. However, in 1889, one particular work, *Night Return* (undated), sold for 6,800 marks – a very high price for the time.<sup>90</sup> During this period, the artist's works were gaining fame, insuring that prices would rise for his paintings in the future. Even before this, Wierusz-Kowalski was gaining recognition in the museum world. The International Art Festival in the early 1880s in Munich included one of his works; while it is unknown which painting was shown, Wierusz-Kowalski was awarded a second class medal for it.<sup>91</sup> This exhibition was not only a testimony in itself to the artist's popularity, but it also allowed hundreds of new patrons to view his work. In 1897, *Market Day in Poland* (undated) was shown at the opening exhibition of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, and was likewise greeted favorably.

However, not all reactions to the artist's works were positive. His painting *Autumn* (undated), displayed in Warsaw in the mid 1880s, drew some negative criticism. The general public seemed to have responded well to the work, but critics found it unoriginal and unimaginative due to its strong realist tendencies. Similarly, his later shows, particularly his last show in 1914, were considered modest, and the new works exhibited never received the attention that he had hoped for in order to make a successful come-back.<sup>92</sup>

Also important to Wierusz-Kowalski scholarship is a chapter in a volume edited by Ptaszyńska in 2012. This book, *Ateny and Izarq: Malaestwo Monachijskie Studia i Szkice*, contains an essay by Helmut Hess titled "Gierige Wölfe und Rasende Schlitten: Ein Erfolgreiches Bildkonzept von Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski" ("Greedy Wolves and Sled Racing").<sup>93</sup> Here, Hess discussed the reception of Wierusz-Kowalski's work by the larger art world, presenting Wierusz-Kowalski as exceedingly influential both in the Munich school and for Polish painters.<sup>94</sup> In a discussion of the style of a lesser-known Polish painter, Hess observed, "if one asks for the inventor of this 'famous, good style,' it quickly becomes clear. It is above all, a painter, who had great success and became established with this vocabulary of images: Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski."<sup>95</sup> Hess, unlike other historians and critics preceding him, made a forceful argument for Wierusz-Kowalski's influence on other artists.

Despite some important advancements, scholarship on Wierusz-Kowalski remains in its infancy. Clearly, the greatest challenge lies in the fact that the most comprehensive sources on the artist are in Polish. While this is understandable, as it is the painter's nationality, it has also resulted in the relative dearth of information concerning the painter's career. The fact that the main research is in Polish also raises questions of national bias.

Scholarship on Wierusz-Kowalski mainly focuses on his personal life and the current state of his works. There are gaps in the scholarship where more research is needed, particularly where Wierusz-Kowalski's style of painting and role as a teacher in the Munich school are concerned. Wierusz-Kowalski served as an instructor at the art school, and while scholars such as Ptaszyńska have shed light on this history, more research can be done here. Similarly, a stronger focus on the followers of Wierusz-Kowalski would enhance the understanding of the contribution of this artist. Overall, the scholarship on Wierusz-Kowalski should benefit from burgeoning interest shown by non-Polish scholars. Brühler began this trend, and Hess continued it by publishing in German. Additional scholarship along the lines pursued by Hess is necessary. This should treat Wierusz-Kowalski's role in the larger art world, a consideration of those artists whose work he influenced, and a discussion of the nature of such influences.

## Conclusion

Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski was a key player in nineteenth-century Polish painting, as well as the Munich school. He became well-known across Europe, and his works found homes in private collections in both Europe and North America. He studied under some of the most prominent artists of the time, only some of whom were Polish. This allowed him to make connections with other artists and patrons, many of whom had a lasting impact on the style and themes of his work. As scholars have argued, however, Wierusz-Kowalski appropriated aspects from other painters and combined them, along with other adjustments, to create a style of his own.

The political state of Poland had a profound effect on Polish art, and the paintings of Wierusz-Kowalski are no exception. A more in-depth look at just two of the paintings by the artist, *Russian Winter Scene* and *Returning Home at Sunset*, illustrates how his works can be understood as political and social metaphors. A comparison of the two works demonstrates the artist's mastery of multiple genres and suggests the prevalence of Wierusz-Kowalski's concern with the plight of Polish people. It becomes clear that, while Wierusz-Kowalski was able to cater to a varied clientele, he was especially attuned to happenings within his native Poland.

The success that Wierusz-Kowalski experienced during his lifetime is not accurately reflected in the scholarship available today. Few scholars focused on the artist while he was alive and, even after his death, a century passed before a monographic study was dedicated to him. It is clear that more research is needed, especially in terms of Wierusz-Kowalski's role as a teacher at the Munich academy and the stylistic innovations he developed at that time. Most scholars focus on his personal life and achievements rather than his actual paintings. This brief

study, it is hoped, will shed further light on Wierusz-Kowalski by contextualizing two relatively unknown examples of his work.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The artist is sometimes referred to as Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski. This is the German influence on his name, due to his history of working and selling works in Munich. The correct usage of his name is Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski. Some sources also use an alternative spelling of Wierusz-Kowalsky. However, Wierusz-Kowalski is the most accepted spelling. "KOWALSKY-WIERUSZ, Alfred von," *Benezit Dictionary of Artists, Oxford Art Online*, Oxford University Press, Accessed March 15, 2015  
<<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/benezit/B00100909>>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> As a child, Wierusz-Kowalski's sled was attacked by a pack of wolves. After this experience, the artist was fascinated with the animals, not only painting them, but also breeding wolves on his estate to observe and sketch. Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski, "Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski: Artist File," George Peckham Miller Art Research Library, The Milwaukee Art Museum.

<sup>4</sup> "Schlitz Brewing," *Jos. Schlitz Brewing Company*, 2014, Accessed February 26, 2015  
<[www.schlitzbrewing.com](http://www.schlitzbrewing.com)>

<sup>5</sup> James Auer, "Blatz, Pabst Merge for the Cause of Art," *Milwaukee Journal* (1983): 86-87.

<sup>6</sup> The Pabst Mansion also previously owned another Wierusz-Kowalski, entitled *Cossack*. It is currently owned by a private collector.

<sup>7</sup> Jodi Rich-Bartz, *Art of the Pabst Mansion*, Milwaukee: Captain Frederick Pabst Mansion, Inc., 2013, 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> Auer, "Blatz, Pabst Merge," 86-87.

<sup>9</sup> "Art and Book Sales," *American Art News* 19, no. 18 (1921):1-10.

<sup>10</sup> Milwaukee also hosts two other Wierusz-Kowalski paintings. The Milwaukee Art Museum owns *The Landowner* (c. 1880) as a gift from the René von Schleinitz Foundation, and *Winter in Russia* (prior to 1885) is a part of the Layton Art Collection and housed at the Milwaukee Art Museum.

<sup>11</sup> For further background on the Polish history, see the section The State of Poland on page 16 of this catalog.

<sup>12</sup> Jan Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art 1890-1918*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 17.

<sup>13</sup> "Poland," *The Aldine* 7, no. 3 (1874): 53.

<sup>14</sup> Eliza Ptasińska, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849 – 1915*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2010, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Hans-Peter Brühler, *Jäger, Kosaken und Polnische Reiter: Josef von Brandt, Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski, Franz Roubaud und der Münchner Polenkreis*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms AG, 1993. The title translates to *Hunters, Cossacks, and Polish Rieders: Josef von Brandt, Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski, Frans Roubaud and the Poles of Munich*.

<sup>16</sup> Ptasińska, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849 – 1915*.

<sup>17</sup> Brühler, *Jäger, Kosaken und Polnische Reiter*, 118-128.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Alexander von Wagner was a nineteenth-century Hungarian-born history painter who later taught at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. Wagner also painted genre scenes, and quite often, horses. The “natural vigour” (124) that characterized his paintings can arguably also be seen in Wierusz-Kowalski’s work. “Alexander Wagner,” *The Art Journal (1875-1887)*, New Series 3 (1877): 123-124.

<sup>21</sup> Maksymilian Gierymski, “The Patrol of Polish Insurgents” (1872-73), Muzeum Narodowe, Warszawa. [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Gierymski\\_M/Gierymski\\_M\\_3.htm](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Gierymski_M/Gierymski_M_3.htm)

<sup>22</sup> Brühler, *Jäger, Kosaken und Polnische Reiter*, 118-128.

<sup>23</sup> Ptasińska, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849 – 1915*.

<sup>24</sup> Brühler, *Jäger, Kosaken und Polnische Reiter*, 118-128.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ptasińska, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849 – 1915*.

<sup>28</sup> Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski, “Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski: Artist File,” *George Peckham Miller Art Research Library*, The Milwaukee Art Museum.

<sup>29</sup> The only painting that was found to have been documented as going through this Gallery is “Wolves Attack,” 1882. There is a stamp from this gallery on the back of the canvas. However, it is safe to assume that, based on the referenced sources and popularity of this Munich gallery, other paintings were sold through this institution, but now reside in private collections. “Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski,” *Polska Sztuka w Świecie*, 2015. <<http://www.polishartworld.com/Strona->

glowna.html>

<sup>30</sup> Brühler, *Jager, Kosaken und Polnische Reiter*, 118-128.

<sup>31</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ptaszyńska, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849 – 1915*.

<sup>33</sup> Brühler, *Jager, Kosaken und Polnische Reiter*, 118-128.

<sup>34</sup> Brühler suggests that Wierusz-Kowalski may have painted some works under the pseudonym of J. Konarski. He cites the style, subject matter, color palette, and appearance of the signature of the works under this name as indicators of Wierusz-Kowalski's hand. He states that these works are sold as less expensive and are less popular. However, research on this concept is severely lacking, and Brühler does not discuss why Wierusz-Kowalski may have done this. The works by J. Konarski no doubt show similarities to Wierusz-Kowalski's work, but arguments could also be made against this claim. Images available at "J. Konarski Auction Results," [www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com).

<sup>35</sup> Robert Atter, "Poland To-Day," *The North American Review*, 181, no. 584 (1905): 90.

<sup>36</sup> William Morfill, *Poland*, New York: Books for Libraries, 1893, 212.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 216.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> James Brown Scott, "Poland," *The American Journal of International Law*, 11, no. 1 (1917): 140.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 141

<sup>42</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Scott, "Poland," 141.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Scott, "Poland," 141.

<sup>47</sup> Carlyle, *Life of Frederick the Great*, Vol. VI, 481-482, as cited in Scott, "Poland," 141.

<sup>48</sup> Sybel's History of the French Revolution, English translation, Vol. II, 347, as cited in Scott, "Poland," 142.

<sup>49</sup> Atter, "Poland To-Day," 91.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Atter, "Poland To-Day," 91.

<sup>54</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*.

<sup>55</sup> "Poland," *The Aldine* 7, 53.

<sup>56</sup> Beulah Dimmick Chase, ed., "Notes," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series* 2, no. 6 (1944).

<sup>57</sup> Jan Matejko (Kraków 1838-1893) was a Polish painter that also studied at the Munich Academy of Fine Art during 1852-1855. His works were censored by the Russian government when Poland was under Russian control. Matejko focused on depicting authentic Polish history, regardless of the unpleasantnesses. He depicted weaknesses in the Polish state that may have led to the partitioning of the nation. Danuta Batorska, "The Political Censorship of Jan Matejko," *Art Journal* 51, no. 1 (1992): 57-63. Jan Matejko, "John Sobieski, Vanquisher of the Turks, the Gates of Vienna," (undated), Sala del Sobieski (Vatican City). *ARTstor*.

<sup>58</sup> Dimmick Chase, ed., "Notes."

<sup>59</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> "Poland," *The Aldine*, 53.

<sup>63</sup> "Art Sales and Sales Prices," *Brush and Pencil* 18, no. 1 (1906): 11-12.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> "Art and Book Sales," 1-10.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>68</sup> "Sale 2547/Lot 27," *Christie's Auctions and Private Sales*, Modified April 2012  
<[www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)>

<sup>69</sup> "Lot 44," *Bonhams*, Modified January 2014, <[www.bonhams.com](http://www.bonhams.com)>

<sup>70</sup> W. Moore McLean, *Notable Personages of Polish Ancestry*, Detroit: The Unique Press, 1938.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>72</sup> For examples, see McLean, "Malecki, Władysław" (pg 7) and "Wrzeszcz, Eugenjusz" (pg 15).

<sup>73</sup> Dimmick Chase, ed., "Notes."

<sup>74</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> "Front Matter," *The Burlington Magazine* 121, no. 910 (1979): i-1.

<sup>76</sup> Angieszka Morawińska, *Nineteenth Century Polish Painting*, New York: National Academy of Design, 1988.

<sup>77</sup> Thieme-Becker 1909-50, vol. 21; *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* 1968-69, vol. 14; *Słownik artystów polskich* 1986, vol.4. as cited in Morawińska, *Nineteenth Century Polish Painting*.

<sup>78</sup> Morawińska, *Nineteenth Century Polish Painting*, 102.

<sup>79</sup> For an example, see Morawińska, "Arthur Grottger," pg. 80-83.

<sup>80</sup> Brühler, *Jager, Kosaken und Polnische Reiter*, 118-128.

<sup>81</sup> In Polish: Brühler, Hans-Peter. *Józef Brandt, Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski i Inni: Polska Szola Monachijska*. Translated by Tomasz Kozłowski. Warszawa: Amber, 1997.

<sup>82</sup> Janina Zielińska, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849-1915*, Suwałki: Muzeum Okręgowe, 1999.

<sup>83</sup> "Pieczętowanie strzeżone" loosely translates to "jealously guarded." Zielińska, front cover.

<sup>84</sup> Henryk Piątkowski, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski, Sylwetka*, Tygodnik Ilustrowany 25 (1908), quoted in Zielińska, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849-1915*, 6-7. Tygodnik Ilustrowany was a weekly publication from Warsaw, active from 1859-1939.

<sup>85</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>87</sup> There were two brief mentions of Wierusz-Kowalski in 2003, but these did not further the scholarship in any major way. In Roman Nir's "The Archives, Libraries and Museums of Polonia at Orchard Lake," the different departments of this organization and their roles are outlined Wierusz-Kowalski is listed with other "well-known artists" as examples of the notable works of the art that The Galeria owns (78). Unfortunately, Nir does not expand on Wierusz-Kowalski or any of the other artists to list the works of art that this includes or any related information to the paintings and their prominent Polish artists. Similarly, in "A Brief History of the Mission and Collections of the Piłsudski Institute of America for Research in the Modern History of Poland," author Pietrzyk merely lists Wierusz-Kowalski's name as being part of the collection in the institute's library. Roman Nir, "The Archives, Libraries, and Museums of Polonia at Orchard Lake," *Polish American Studies* 60, no. 1 (2003): 51-80. Paweł Pietrzyk, "A Brief History of the

Mission and Collections of the Piłsudski Institute of America for Research in the Modern History of Poland,” *Polish American Studies* 60, no. 1 (2003): 91-98.

<sup>88</sup> Ptaszyńska, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849 – 1915*.

<sup>89</sup> “Jaki był Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski” translates loosely to “Who was Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski.” Ptaszyńska, back cover.

<sup>90</sup> Ptaszyńska, *Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski 1849 – 1915*.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Eliza Ptaszyńska, ed, *Ateny and Izarq: Malaestwo Monachijskie Studia i Szkice*, Suwałki: 2012.

<sup>94</sup> Helmut Hess, “Gierige Wölfe und Rasende Schlitten: Ein Erfolgreiches Bildkonzept von Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski,” in Ptaszyńska, Eliza, ed, *Ateny and Izarq: Malaestwo Monachijskie Studia i Szkice*, Suwałki: 2012.

<sup>95</sup> Hess, “Gierige Wölfe und Rasende Schlitten,” in ed. Eliza Ptaszyńska, *Ateny and Izarq*, 286. Fragt man nach dem Erfinder dieser ‘bekannten guten Muster,’ so wird man schnell fündig. Translated from “Es ist vor allem ein Maler, der sich mit diesem Bildvokabular etablierte und damit großen Erfolg hatte: Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski.”

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