

= Jan Matejko =

Jan Alojzy Matejko ( Polish pronunciation ) ( also known as Jan Mateyko ; June 24 , 1838 ? November 1 , 1893 ) was a Polish painter known for paintings of notable historical Polish political and military events . His works include large oil on canvas paintings like Rejtan ( 1866 ) , Union of Lublin ( 1869 ) or Battle of Grunwald ( 1878 ) , numerous portraits , a gallery of Polish kings , and murals in St. Mary 's Basilica , Kraków . He is counted among the most famous Polish painters .

Matejko spent most of his life in Kraków . His teachers at the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts included Wojciech Korneli Stattler and Władysławuszczkiewicz . Later , he became a director at this institution , which eventually was renamed the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts . A number of his students became prominent painters themselves , including Maurycy Gottlieb , Jacek Malczewski , Józef Mehoffer and Stanisław Wyspiański .

= = Biography = =

= = = Youth = = =

Matejko was born on June 24 , 1838 , in the Free City of Kraków . His father , Franciszek Ksawery Matejko ( Czech : František Xaver Matějka ) ( born 1789 or January 13 , 1793 , died October 26 , 1860 ) , a Czech from the village of Roudnice , was a graduate of the Hradec Králové school who later became a tutor and music teacher . He first worked for the Wodzicki family in Kościelniki , Poland , then moved to Kraków , where he married the half @-@ German , half @-@ Polish Joanna Karolina Rossberg ( Rozberg ) . Jan was the ninth child of eleven that his parents had . He grew up in a kamienica building on Floriańska Street . After the death of his mother in 1845 , Jan and his siblings were cared for by his maternal aunt , Anna Zamojska .

At a young age he witnessed the Kraków revolution of 1846 and the 1848 siege of Kraków by the Austrians , the two events which ended the existence of the Free City of Kraków . His two older brothers served in them under General Józef Bem ; one died and the other was forced into exile . He attended St. Ann 's High School , which he dropped out of in 1851 because of poor results . From his earliest days Matejko showed artistic talent , but he had great difficulty with other subjects . He never mastered a foreign language . Despite that and because of his exceptional talent he studied at the School of Fine Arts in Kraków from 1852 to 1858 . His teachers included Wojciech Korneli Stattler and Władysławuszczkiewicz . He selected historical painting as his specialization , and finished his first major work , Tsars Shuyski before Zygmunt III ( Carowie Szujscy przed Zygmuntem III ) , in 1853 ( he would return to this topic in a year before his death , in 1892 ) . During this time , he began exhibiting historical paintings at the Kraków Society of Friends of Fine Arts ( starting with 1855 ) . His seminal project for his graduation in 1858 was Sigismund I the Old ennobles the professors of the Jagiellonian University ( Zygmunt I nadaje szlachectwo profesorom Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego ) .

Following his graduation , Matejko received a scholarship to study under Hermann Anschütz at the Academy of Fine Arts , Munich in 1859 . Next year he also received a scholarship to study at Academy of Fine Arts Vienna , but after a few days and a major quarrel with Christian Ruben , Matejko returned to Kraków . There he opened a studio at his family house at Floriańska Street . It would however be years before he would gain commercial success ; for a time he was the proverbial " starving artist " , who celebrated when he sold a canvas ( the Tsars Shuyski ... ) for five gulden .

In 1860 Matejko issued an illustrated album , Clothing in Poland ( Ubiory w Polsce ) , a project reflecting his intense interest in historical records of all kinds and his desire to promote such interest among the Polish people in an effort to intensify their patriotic feelings . His financial situation improved with the sale of two paintings , Death of Wapowski during the crowning of Henry Valois ( Zabicie Wapowskiego w czasie koronacji Henryka Walezego , 1861 ) and Jan Kochanowski mourning his daughter Urszulka ( Jan Kochanowski nad zwłokami Urszulki , 1862 ) , which settled his debts . In 1862 he finished a painting , Stańczyk . ; initially received without much applaud , in

time it would become known as one of Matejko 's most famous masterpieces . In Matejko 's art style , it visibly marks a transition from simply illustrating history to being the artist 's philosophical and moral commentary of it .

During the January Uprising of 1863 , in which he did not participate because of poor health , Matejko gave financial support , donating most of his savings to the cause , and personally transported arms to the insurgents ' camp . His Skarga 's Sermon ( Kazanie Skargi ) , finished in May 1864 , was displayed in the gallery of the Kraków Society of Friends of Fine Arts , which gained him much publicity . On 5 November that year , in recognition for his contributions to recreating historical themes , he became a member of the Kraków Scientific Society ( Towarzystwo Naukowe Krakowskie ) . Soon afterward , on 21 November , he married Teodora Giebuttowska , with whom he would have five children : Beata , Helena , Tadeusz , Jerzy and Regina . Helena , his daughter , also an artist , helped victims in World War I and was awarded the Cross of Independence by president Stanisław Wojciechowski .

= = = Rise to fame = = =

At that time Matejko started to gain international recognition . In 1865 Matejko 's painting Skarga 's Sermon was awarded a gold medal at the yearly Paris salon ; soon afterwards Count Maurycy Potocki bought it for 10 000 guildens . In 1867 , his painting Rejtan was awarded a gold medal at the World Exhibition in Paris and acquired by Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria for 50 000 francs . His next major painting was the Union of Lublin ( Unia Lubelska ) , created in the years 1867 - 1869 . Once again applauded in Paris , it yielded Matejko a Cross of the French Légion d'honneur . It was purchased by the Sejm of Galicia . Union ... was followed by Stefan Batory at Pskov ( Stefan Batory pod Pskowem ) , finished in 1871 . In 1872 he visited Istanbul in the Ottoman Empire , and upon his return to Kraków he finished Astronomer Copernicus , or Conversations with God ( Astronom Kopernik , czyli rozmowa z Bogiem ) , which was acquired by the Jagiellonian University . From the 1870s he was aided in many tasks by a secretary , Marian Gorzkowski , who would become his " right hand " , his closest friend , a model for a number of paintings , and an author of memoirs about Matejko .

In 1872 during an exhibition in Prague he was offered a directorship of Academy of Fine Arts , Prague , and soon afterwards , a similar position at the Kraków 's School of Fine Arts . He accepted the Kraków 's offer , and was for many years the principal ( rector ) of the Academy of Fine Arts . In 1874 he finished Zawieszenie dzwonu Zygmunta ( The Hanging of the Sigismund bell ) . In 1878 he finished another masterpiece , Battle of Grunwald . That year he received an " honorary grand gold " medal in Paris , and the city council of Kraków presented him with a ceremonial scepter , a symbol of his " royal status in fine arts " . In year 1879 he finished working on Rok 1863 - Polonia ( Year 1863 - Polonia ) , his take on the contemporary January Uprising . Begun in 1864 , a year after the Uprising he himself lived through and where he lost a number of friends and family members , Matejko abandoned work on this canvas until prince Władysław Czartoryski became interested in acquiring it ; it is still considered unfinished .

Years 1880 - 1882 marked his work on another large painting , Prussian Tribute ( Hołd Pruski ) . Matejko gifted this painting to " the Polish nation " , and it earned him honorary citizenship of Kraków ; one of the squares in the city was also named Matejko Square . In 1883 he finished Sobieski at Vienna ( Sobieski pod Wiedniem ) . Sobieski ... was gifted to Pope Leo XIII as a " gift of the Polish nation " and Matejko who was one of the members of the group delivering it received a Knight Commander with Star Order of Pius IX . At that time he also became a vocal spokesman in a number of political issues , publishing letters on issues such as Polish - Russian relations . Another arena he was very engaged in were efforts to protect and reconstruct various historical monuments in the city of Kraków . In 1886 he finished a painting focusing not on Polish , but on French history : Virgin of Orléans , portraying Joan of Arc . Next year Matejko received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy , honoris causa , from the Jagiellonian University , and the Austrian Litteris et Artibus . In 1888 he finished Battle of Racławice ( Bitwa pod Racławicami ) . In 1888 - 1899 , to justify his new academic title , he published a cycle of twelve sketches with an accompanying

commentary , History of civilization in Poland ( Dzieje Cywilizacji w Polsce ) . From 1890 to 1892 he published another cycle of sketches , this time of Polish kings ( Poczet królów i księży polskich - Fellowship of the kings and princes of Poland ) , which over the years became so popular they are seen as their canon portrayals . 1891 saw him finishing Constitution of the 3 May ( Konstytucja 3 Maja ) . He then began composing another large painting , Oaths of Jan Kazimierz ( ?luby Jana Kazimierza ) , but it remained unfinished due to his death . In 1892 , a year before his death , he finished a Self @-@ portrait ( Autoportret ) .

Suffering from a peptic ulcer , on 30 October 1893 he suffered from internal bleeding , and died in Kraków on November 1 that year . His funeral on November 5 drew large crowds , and his death was mentioned in at least thirty two European newspapers . He was buried in the Kraków 's Rakowicki Cemetery .

= = Significance , style and themes = =

He is counted among the most famous Polish painters , described as " Poland 's greatest historical painter " and " a cult figure to the nation at large ... [ already ] by the time of his death . " . His style was praised for being " colourful , detailed and imaginative " . He succeeded in propagating Polish history , and reminding the world about Poland , while his country remained partitioned and without any independent political representation . His works , disseminated in thousands of reproductions , have become almost standard illustrations of many key events in Polish history . His 1860 illustrated album Ubiory w Polsce ( Clothing in Poland ) is seen as a valuable historical reference . Critics of his work have pointed to his use of traditional painting style ( " antiquarian realism " , " theatrical effects " ) . At exhibitions abroad the nuanced historical context of his works would be often lost on foreign audiences . Occasionally his paintings would cause controversy ; for example Rejtan offended a number of prominent members of Polish nobility , who saw the painting as an indictment of their entire social class . His paintings were subject to censorship in the Russian Empire , and Nazi Germany planned to destroy Battle of Grunwald and the Prussian Homage , which the Nazi authorities considered offensive to the German view of history ( those paintings were among many that the Germans planned to purposefully destroy in their war on Polish culture ; both were however successfully hidden by the members of Poland resistance ) .

Many of his works are dedicated to famous events in Polish history . Matejko was focusing on major themes in Polish history and using historical sources to paint events in minute historical detail . His earliest paintings are simple historical paintings with no hidden messages . The later ones , starting with the painting Stańczyk ( 1862 ) , are intended to inspire the viewers with a patriotic message . Stańczyk focuses on the court jester , portrayed as a symbol of country 's conscience , sitting in a chair in the background of a party - a sole figure reflecting on the war , ignored by the joyful crowd .

In addition to history paintings Matejko made also numerous portraits . Among others : portraits of Jagiellonian University rectors Józef Szujski and Stanisław Tarnowski , and numerous portraits of family and friends , including Wife in the wedding dress ( " ?ona w sukni ?lubnej " ) ( 1865 , destroyed by his wife during a quarrel and recreated in 1879 ) and a self @-@ portrait ( 1892 ) . Altogether Matejko authored 320 oil paintings and several thousands drawings and watercolors . He also designed the polychrome in St. Mary 's Basilica , Kraków ( 1889 ? 1891 ) .

His paintings are on display in numerous Polish museums ; including the National Museum in Warsaw , National Museum in Kraków , National Museum in Poznań and National Museum in Wrocław . National Museum in Kraków has a branch dedicated to Matejko - House of Jan Matejko ( Dom Jana Matejki ) located in his former studio and family house at Floriańska Street , opened in 1898 . Another museum dedicated to Matejko , Dworek Jana Matejki , opened in Krzeszawice ( where Matejko acquired a manor ) in 1865 .

Over 80 painters have been Matejko 's students at some point , many influenced during his tenure as the director of the Kraków School of Fine Arts , and are referred to as members of " Matejko School " . Prominent among them are Maurycy Gottlieb , Ephraim Moses Lilien , Jacek Malczewski , Józef Mehoffer , Antoni Piotrowski , Witold Pruszkowski , Leon Wyczółkowski , and Stanisław Wyspiański .

= = Selected works = =

Following is the list of Matejko 's selected works , in a chronological order .