

## SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

## From the editors

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of People's Poland, the articles in this issue summarize the development of folk art in this country in the post-war period.

**Kazimierz Pietkiewicz, Head of the Folk Art Section at the Ministry of Culture and Art**

**A BALANCE SHEET OF FIFTEEN YEARS' PATRONAGE OF FOLK ART.**

When in 1945 work was started to protect folk art from extinction, it became clear that despite existing valuable experience, the new economic, political and social conditions had brought a number of problems which called for new solutions. The absence of qualified personnel and the lack of a long-term programme of activities did not make the task any easier. And yet the years 1945-48 recorded a number of organizational achievements: at the first post-war conferences, representatives of various institutions concerned with folk art elaborated a programme coordinating their efforts and the Folk Art Section at the Ministry initiated a broad programme of research in the various districts of the country, conducting at the same time consultative and propaganda work. Next, new forms for the enhancement of folk art were evolved and here an important role was played by the exhibitions, competitions and working conferences with folk artists, arranged by the Ministry.

In the years 1948-49, the new approach towards folk art was firmly established and the Section of Folk Art, in cooperation with the People's Councils, maintained close contacts with folk art centres throughout the country. It was also then that the Folk Art and Folk Industry Centre (CPLiA) was formed to coordinate the production of the folk art industry. It should be added that many folk art centres were revived at that time. In the publishing field, 1949 saw the appearance of the first volume of the *Atlas of Polish Folk Costumes*, while the quarterly *Polish Folk Art* devoted ever more space in its columns to topical folk art problems. A number of Polish Folk Art Exhibitions enjoyed much success in this country and abroad.

In the years 1950-55, the Ministry of Culture and Art inspired and coordinated all measures which were taken to boost folk art. The cultural policy of the Ministry was however not devoid of errors, which had an adverse effect also on the development of folk art. Suggestions were made that folk artists should abandon the old traditions and take up contemporary themes. Without causing much harm, this policy was responsible for a temporary lowering of the artistic

level of folk art. Nevertheless, the general balance sheet for these years was closed on the credit side. Financial assistance to promote folk art was considerably expanded, as was theoretical and practical research in various regions conducted mainly by the State Institute of Art and the Polish Ethnographic Society.

Following the changes which took place in Poland's methods of management in 1956, the existing system of folk art protection also underwent a radical change. With the general trend for decentralization, more powers were delegated to local organs and freedom of creative art was restored, which has not failed to produce very good results. In the meantime CPLiA was reorganized into the National Union of Folk Art Cooperatives, an institution which in the new situation could considerably expand the scope and variety of its activities and which can claim credit for raising the artistic level of folk art and the quality of the industry's products. Here, of great assistance is the special fund placed at CPLiA's disposal to finance creative work.

A separate problem which arose as early as in 1945 was that of collecting old and new specimens of folk art which, through exhibitions, were to popularize the best achievements of folk artists. And indeed, during the last 15 years about 12,000 pieces have been collected and stored at the Ministry of Culture and Art, which, on the initiative of the Folk Art Section, purchased them from exhibitions and competitions or directly from the artists. The collection has been on show at 232 exhibitions and offers interesting material for research workers. In 1958, a major part of the collection went to the Museum of Folk Culture and Art in Warsaw, while the rest was divided between regional museums.

In summing up the period under review, the author writes that though in contemporary conditions folk art "has lost its former position in its own milieu, it has found application and a place in the life of the greater part of the population". The popularization of folk art, which after the war gained a firm foothold in our life and was brought nearer to professional art, contributed much to raising the general level of artistic culture, particularly in applied art. As an example one may cite here weaving and certain industrial designs which show a pronounced influence of folk art. Also as far as teaching is concerned the School of Embroidery in Zakopane benefits much from the inventiveness of folk artists.

"The high level and original character of contemporary Polish folk art is due to the fact that it did not take the wrong path of mechanized, semi-industrial trash produced en masse, but preserved its individual form of expression, shaped through generations of artistic efforts".

**Roman Reinfuss, Head of the Section for Research in Folk Sculpture, State Institute of Art. FIFTEEN YEARS OF WORK**

Research in Polish folk art, however unsystematic, was started as far back as the 19th century. It was not until the formation soon after the war of the Polish Institute of Folk Art that planned and coordinated research began to be conducted all over the country. In 1950, the Polish Institute of Folk Art was merged with the State Institute of Art. After a few years of work it was deemed expedient to isolate two of the Institute's sections and link them up directly with their own Institutes. Thus, the Section of Folk Music came under the Institute of Music History and Theory and the Folk Sculpture Section came under the Institute for the History and Theory of Plastic Arts, with the headquarters in Cracow, at 70 Karmelicka St. Dr. Roman Reinfuss was appointed Chief of the Section.

The research conducted by the Section embraces every genre of folk sculpture. In addition, a sister section at the State Institute of Art engages in special research into folk art which borders on professional art, concentrating also on the work of "primitive" painters.

In the initial period, the methods of research were not devoid of methodological errors and organisational shortcomings. Yet, in principle research developed along the lines mapped out by the First Conference of Art, held in 1951, namely, the study of the historic, social and economic aspects of folk art. The section developed successfully bibliographic work and also succeeded in photographing all the most remarkable folk art relics, and now has at its disposal rich archives of valuable documentation.

Most important of all however was research on the spot in various regions of the country. War destruction and the rapid transformations taking place in the very character of folk art called for the utmost efforts and such methods of work as would allow the collection of as much information as possible within the shortest period of time. Particular care was paid to the less known regions. Thus, research started in the most distant districts, covering gradually the whole country.

In the years 1946-48, with the then existing shortage of transport facilities (to carry groups of research workers and equipment), research was mostly done by individual workers, but this later proved to be insufficient. At present individual research is only conducted as a study supplementing scholarly work. Then came group research, including ethnographers, art historians, sketchers and photographers, who did reconnaissance work, followed by research proper if justified by the discoveries of the advance group. The year 1950 witnessed another new form of research, known in this country as the "annual camp research". Groups of as many as 30 research workers travel deep into the country where they encamp in some place and from their "base" they make expeditions to adjacent and distant regions of the area under examination. Here, ethnographers fill up special questionnaires on the basis of information they receive by interviewing local artists. When taking down information concerning folk fabrics, the description is supplemented with threads ripped out of the fabric and this is done to give a faithful account of the colouring.

Descriptions of sculptures in wood and stone and of paintings are supplemented by photographs.

"The camp" methods proved to be the most fruitful. The Section now has in its archives 50,000 items.

including descriptions, drawings, diagrams and 16,000 photographs. The collection is very useful to research workers, and numerous publications, including essays, albums and articles, have been based on material collected by the Section.

The archives are open to other institutions concerned with folk art, such as the Ministry of Culture and Art, the People's Councils and other kindred institutions.

**Janina Oryńzyna — FOLK ART IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE**

Arguing with the claim that folk art is doomed to extinction, Miss Oryńzyna writes that "even today, at the beginning of the atom era and interplanetary communication, a hand-made folk art object has lost nothing of its charm and freshness". It is true that as it no longer serves the needs of the countryside, folk art has departed from the milieu it was originally intended to serve, but it has gained instead admirers and a ready market in the urban milieu.

In the new conditions folk art has many important functions to fulfil — it can be very useful in raising the standard of the aesthetic taste of the population, being a valuable interior decoration element, and folk art goods sold as souvenirs to tourists visiting this country or exported abroad can be an excellent means of popularizing the Polish national style.

It is from this point of view that Janina Oryńzyna discusses the activities of CPLiA, the Centre for Folk Art and Folk Industry, which not only coordinates the work of folk art cooperatives and sells their products, but also caters for folk dance and song ensembles.

**Aleksander Jackowski — FOLK ART — PAST AND PRESENT**

In Poland folk art is still a living realm of art even though the process of its gradual extinction has been observed since the end of the 19th century. Continuously rising standards of social consciousness and demographic changes taking place in the countryside, are responsible for the irreversibility of this process. The isolation from the urban world impressed in the past the stamp of originality on folk art; at present the countryside is no longer a closed and isolated entity and urban culture is penetrating freely into rural life, changing the tastes and the needs of the rural population. Machine-made products are ousting artistic handicrafts, and folk art in its traditional form is gradually disappearing from the scene.

Sculpture and painting are particularly affected by the urbanization process, since deformation and other means of expression which were moulded by generations of folk artists, are no longer acceptable to the countryside, the tastes of which are strongly influenced by photography, chromolithography and mass produced figurines of very poor artistic standards. This realm of folk art is thus definitely dying out.

But folk artists who have abandoned old traditions and resort to modern means of expression often show much inventiveness and their products, if more of an artisan character, present genuine artistic values, gaining an ever stronger foothold in the towns.

This is in particular true of decorative arts (tapestry) which pay from the point of view of financial considerations and for which there is a demand both

in town and country. In contrast, regional costumes and interior decoration are changing their character under the impact of new bourgeois trends making their way into rural homes.

Under these circumstances protection of folk art to save it from extinction assumes special significance. In summing up the results of State support for folk art during the past fifteen years, the writer points to such beneficial measures taken by the authorities concerned as competitions, exhibitions, the well thought-out policy of prizes, organized purchases of folk art products and scholarships, and expresses the opinion that in the present situation more forms of encouragement should be evolved. The need arises to support artists who, though they are not continuing old traditions, create artistic values in a new style, and here not a single gifted person should be deprived of assistance, and the practice of encouraging, not to say imposing, old patterns should be abandoned. Among the measures of assistance to folk artists courses at which they would be taught the principles of painting, composition, ornamentation, etc, seem to be a very expedient vehicle to encourage interest in folk art. Good results have been achieved by groups of folk artists who work under the guidance of professional plastic artists. It goes without saying that the most important problem here is the raising of the general standards of culture in the countryside.

"The downfall of popular art, which is already an accomplished fact, not only uprooted it, but it undermined the whole system of aesthetic views of the rural population, bringing about a radical change in the function folk art played in this milieu".

Newspapers, books, radio, films and television have brought the countryside nearer to towns and today we no longer divide art into "educated" and "popular", but into élitarian and mass art, the latter being mainly of an entertaining character, incapable of fulfilling the function formerly performed by folk art. Mass culture reduces the recipients to the role of consumers, whereas folk art inspired creative processes contributing to man's development. It was an expression of man's urge to create beautiful things which embellished the surroundings and which was part and form of life.

The question arises what support should be given to fill the gap, what can today become an equivalent of those values which in the past folk art contributed to the countryside. It seems that the only way out of the situation is to broaden support to embrace not only the few continuators of old trends, but also the broad movement of amateur artists, encouraging them to take part in the creation of art and culture.

#### *Ewa Jęczalik EXHIBITION OF OLD SILESIAN GLASS PAINTING*

With the wealth of preserved Silesian glass painting, the establishment of its genealogy is a complex problem, since the painting shows a great variety of artistic forms, thematic material and formal features.

In her attempt to trace the origin of this type of art in Silesia, the authoress divides the material under examination into three groups: the paintings in the first group are classified according to the technique used by the artist in drawing, painting and decorating the work; a thematic division of paintings is made in the second group, where the authoress observes a recurrence of a certain type of iconographic compositions, and in the third group, the paintings are segregated according to background decorations.

In the opinion of Miss Jęczalik, the classification is very helpful in that "it casts some light on the period, the origin of the designs and the milieu which adapted them, leading gradually to the discovery of the artistic genealogy of glass painting in Silesia".

Following preliminary research, the authoress arranged an exhibition of some hundred paintings she had selected from the collections of the Wrocław Ethnographic Museum and the Museum in Jelenia Góra. The exhibition was on view in October 1958 in Wrocław and in July this year in Warsaw. The exhibits were divided into the following five groups: 1) the oldest Silesian painting on glass, representing the highest artistic values, 2) background decorations, 3) thematic division (votive offerings, Silesian images of the Mother of God, Saints, etc), 4) painting technique and 5) painting on mirrors.

The article explaining the mode of the exposition, contains an analysis of the various groups of paintings, with interesting inferences made by the authoress from her research. Thus, for example, there is the observation that "the oldest paintings on glass date back to a period where this type of painting was not yet practiced en masse, as was the case later, in the 19th century, when on the occasion of religious remission processions, iconographic compositions painted on glass were produced in series.

An analysis of the paintings on mirrors leads the authoress to the conclusion that this type of painting, which was believed to have been the oldest in Silesia, did not originate until after 1880, when the countryside was invaded with petty bourgeois fashions.

The few signatures on the serial paintings point to the region of Kłodzko, which was the main centre of remission ceremonies, as the place of their origin, justifying the assumption that serial Silesian paintings on glass was linked up with pilgrimage and remission places, rather than with Silesian glass industry centres.

#### *Maria Przedziecka — FOLK SCULPTURES IN THE 18TH CENTURY*

The article discusses three 18th century sculptures in wood preserved in the parish Church in the village of Kraszewo (Ciechanów district). The most recent among them — the eiborium dates back to 1726. Next comes the pulpit carved out of a tree trunk and supported by a separately carved figure. Maintained in the mature baroque style, it shows a tendency towards moderation of the contorted forms inherent in this style. The third, dating back to 1755 is an early Renaissance Style plaque on Jan Franciszek Kucharski's tomb. All the three sculptures show an affinity of style which justify the assumption that they were the work of one and the same sculptor. The fact that the pulpit is carved out of a tree trunk shows that the sculptor was a folk artist and the development of forms show the gradual perfection of his craftsmanship.

#### *Ewa Fryś — STUDZIANY LAS POTTERY*

Studziany Las was until quite recently an active pottery centre and its ware was characterized by the primitiveness of its form and technique. The vessels were made either of red or grey clay with some sand content to diminish the fatness of the clay. The earthenware was very simple in its shape and its dark brown colour turned into shining black after long usage. This earthenware was in great demand because of its high fire-proof quality.

In describing the process of production, Miss Fryś writes that a similar production technique was used in the pottery centres in Pieszczanka, near Grodno,

and as Studziany Las is situated nearby it could be inferred that its pottery is genetically linked up with the Byelorussian region. This seems also to be confirmed by the fact that the first potter who settled in Studziany Las was said to be a Byelorussian called Sobótka, from near Grodno.

*Anna Kunczyńska — FROM THE REPORT ON THE EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY FOLK ART IN THE LUBLIN AREA*

On the 15th anniversary of Poland's liberation, an exhibition of contemporary folk art was opened in the

Lublin Museum, which is well known for its artistic displays. This time too the Museum could claim credit for the fine arrangement of the exhibition, the apt selection of the exhibits and their setting, which brought into sharp relief the various kinds of folk art, their artistic centres and the artists themselves, mainly of well established renown.

Among the new discoveries, the authoress calls attention to Andrzej Wieleba (from the village of Godziszów, Janow-Lubelski region), whose bas-relief of St. Nicolas, could be singled out from among the works of other sculptors.

CZASOPISMA PAŃSTOWEGO INSTYTUTU SZTUKI

wydawane przez

P.P. WYDAWNICTWA ARTYSTYCZNE I FILMOWE

**BIULETYN HISTORII SZTUKI**, kwartalnik, ponad 100 str. dużego formatu, około 100 ilustracji. Cena 24 zł, prenumerata półroczna 48 zł, roczna — 96 zł.

**POLSKA SZTUKA LUDOWA**, kwartalnik, 64 str. dużego formatu, bogaty materiał ilustracyjny. Cena 18 zł, prenumerata półroczna 36 zł, roczna — 72 zł.

**PRZEGŁAD ARTYSTYCZNY**, kwartalnik poświęcony nowoczesnej twórczości plastycznej, 80 str. dużego formatu, bogata szata ilustracyjna w technice rotograwiurowej. Cena 18 zł, prenumerata półroczna 36 zł, roczna — 72 zł.

**PAMIĘTNIK TEATRALNY**, kwartalnik, ponad 170 str. druku, około 100 ilustracji. Cena 18 zł, prenumerata półroczna 36 zł, roczna — 72 zł.

**KWARTALNIK FILMOWY**, około 100 str. druku, kilkanaście ilustracji. Cena 10 zł, prenumerata półroczna 20 zł, roczna — 40 zł.

**MUZYKA**, kwartalnik, około 130 str. druku, liczne przykłady nutowe. Cena 18 zł, prenumerata półroczna 36 zł, roczna — 72 zł.

PRENUMERATA

Zamówienia i przedpłaty na prenumeratę przyjmowane są w terminie do dnia 15-go miesiąca poprzedzającego okres prenumeraty — przez: Urzędy Pocztowe, Listonoszy oraz Oddziały i Delegatury „Ruchu”. Można również zamówić prenumeratę dokonując wpłaty na konto PKO nr 1-6-100023 — Centrala Kolportażu Prasy i Wydawnictw „Ruch” — Warszawa, ul. Srebrna 12.

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SPRZEDAŻ

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