

Exhibition of Painting by Jan Henryk Rosen on the Centenary of the Battle of Warsaw 1920

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July 24th – November 15th, 2020

The Royal Library

The painting by Jan Henryk Rosen *Polska – Matka świętych, tarcza chrześcijan* (*Poland – Mother of Saints, Shield of the Christians*) was created in 1936. The ornamental, large-format (254 x 726 cm) frieze was made for the Polish Pavilion for the International Catholic Press Exhibition in the Vatican, opened on 12 May 1936. The exhibition was organized to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the existence of the Vatican daily newspaper "L'Osservatore Romano" founded in 1861.

The frieze for the exhibition was commissioned from one of the most important Polish artists of the symbolism movement, Professor J. H. Rosen. From the beginning, the oil technique was excluded, assuming that the work should be sent to the Vatican in a rolled up form. Financial limitations and the short deadline for the order's realization forced the artist to use the rare "aux trois crayons" technique consisting in drawing with three crayons. This technique, which originated in the Baroque era, consisted in extracting graphic elements from the background, most often coloured paper, with crayons and pastels in three colours: black, red and white. The author extracted the plasticity of the figures with crayons from the beige surface of thick, grey paper, which is the painting base of the work, and then filled the background with gold, which gave the impression of using painting technique.

The frieze presents figures related to the propagation and defence of faith. The work was inspired by the idea of showing Poland as a bastion of Eastern Christianity with the figures and facts that built and developed it, both in religious, scientific and cultural terms. The work was supervised by the Bishop of Katowice Stanisław Adamski. The painting presents eleven figures arranged in two groups on both sides of the centrally placed, contoured image of Wawel Castle, based on a 17th-century graphic image, above which there is a gorget with the image of Our Lady of Częstochowa. Among the figures, the painter showed St. Jan Kante, Jan Kochanowski, St. Stanisław Kostka, Cardinal Ledóchowski, Józef Kuncewicz and Fr. Ignacy Skorupka with a cross in his hand supported by a Polish soldier. In the painting we also see King Jan III Sobieski, Józef Piłsudski and other prominent figures. This monumental work connected with the history of the Church and the presence of Polish culture is a carrier of national content, in connection with religious themes in the European arena. This is the first public post-war presentation of the frieze, which is currently located in the Warsaw Metropolitan Curia.

Jan Henryk Rosen (1891-1982) – painter, draughtsman, designer, whose works saturated with rich religious and philosophical content enchant with their form and colours. Now almost completely forgotten, once extremely appreciated. His numerous large-format frescoes, mosaics and paintings can still be admired in the Armenian Cathedral in Lviv and many churches and

public buildings in the United States.

Exhibition available as part of the Royal Route

Free admission on **Wednesday**

The task of full preservation of the painting by

J. H. Rosen – *Polska – Matka świętych, tarcza chrześcijan* from 1936, in 2020 financed from the subsidy granted by the Mazovian Voivodeship Historic Preservation Officer and the Foundation for the Promotion of Art - the initiator of the preservation of the work and its public display at the Royal Castle in Warsaw