

Art communities and exhibitions of children's art 1898-1922.

Polish perspective and European contexts

The goal of this project is to attempt, for the first time, a description and analysis of the phenomenon of exhibitions of children's art, organized by art communities (artists, critics, art dealers) in Europe during the first decades of the 20th century. This analysis will comprise the European exhibitions from 1898 (a children's art exhibition in Kunsthalle in Hamburg) to 1922, i.e. when Franz Cizek's studio's last traveling exhibitions in the United Kingdom and the last traveling exhibition *Children's Art* in Poznań took place. They marked the end of more than two decades of intense engagement of art communities in exhibiting children's art.

I can narrow down the five cultural-political areas where the most relevant events took place: **Poland** (the Russian partition Second Polish Republic), **Russia** (the Russian Empire), **France**, **United Kingdom** and the **German-speaking** area (The Second Reich, Austria-Hungary). I intend to divide my research according to this geographical key. I shall work mainly with artists' archives, national or municipal archives, press documents and primary and secondary sources. The research abroad will be tied to particular figures: Franz Cizek (1856-1946), Henri Matisse (1869-1954), Volodymyr Izdebsky (1882-1962), Mikhail Larionov (1881-1964), Natalia Goncharova (1881-1962) and Roger Fry (1866-1934). Based on these queries I will try and pinpoint the most relevant individuals and events, as well as provide an outline of the organizers' principal ideas. I will either examine the differences and similarities or report on the general nature of these events. The outcome of this project should translate into new chapters of the PhD dissertation, a participation in one international conference and at least two peer-reviewed publications.

The principal research question **regards the meaning European artistic circles attributed to children's art**. I recognize that the children's art plays into the theme of returning to one's origins, to the primitive, i.e. the topics relevant for contemporary trends in art. Also, art education, interest in child empowerment, conviction of the necessity to support natural instincts and creativity are all well versed in the modernist vision of a new man. I shall depart from looking at children's art, or, in a broader sense, at childhood itself, as cultural constructs. My goal is not to describe the works, but rather to analyze the discourse about children's art.

My planned research on European children's art exhibitions has therefore the potential to become the first monographic attempt at the phenomenon. As such, it could provide relevant insights into modern European culture studies. This analysis will be fed on different humanist disciplines, namely social history, education history and aesthetics. Perhaps it will allow to draw a new intellectual outline of described artistic communities. I shall try and picture this phenomenon as a supranational one that applies to artists and communities of different and often contradictory opinions.