

## Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz

Called Witkacy, he was born on February 24, 1885 in Warsaw. He died of suicide on September 18, 1939 in Jeziorach in Ukraine. His symbolic grave is located in the old cemetery at ul. Kościeliska in Zakopane.

Witkacy was the son of a painter, art critic, creator of the Zakopane style - Stanisław Witkiewicz. He gained recognition as a painter, art theoretician, playwright, novelist, and philosopher. He is the author of, among others, *Pragmatystów*, *Tumora Mózgowicz*, *W małym dworku*, *Kurki Wodnej*, *Wariata i zakonnicy*, *Pożegnania jesieni* and *Szewców*.

The artist was born in Warsaw, but from 1890 he lived in Zakopane. In January of the following year, his re-solemn baptism took place here, and Helena Modrzejewska and Jan Krzeptowski Sabała became godparents. Witkacy was interested in painting, drawing and photography since his childhood. According to his father's will, he did not attend regular school classes, but he learned privately. He passed his matriculation in Lviv in 1903, and then for a time studied painting at the Krakow Academy of Fine Arts under the direction of Józef Mehoffer. Guided by his father's opinion, he interrupted his studies and continued his education in Zakopane.

It is worth mentioning that in the young years Witkacy practiced hiking, skiing in the Tatras, and in the company of highlanders even mountaineering, climbing among others, Durny Peak. However, in the artist's work there are only small references to Podhale or the Tatra Mountains. Noteworthy are the numerous portraits of his authorship, photographs of Zakopane and the Tatras, many of which have documentary value today, and portraits also artistic values.

His private life was full of events. For several years he was associated with the actress Irena Solska. Later, he became engaged to Jadwiga Janczewska, who in February 1914 committed suicide. He spent time until July 1918 outside Poland. He then took part in the research expedition of his friend, anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski, to New Guinea and Australia. The journey was interrupted by Witkacy himself because of the outbreak of World War I. As a Russian subject he could not return to Zakopane, so for some time he served in the Russian army, receiving a nomination for a lieutenant.

After returning to Zakopane, he was accepted into the Formist group, which soon became the main theoretician group. In the following years, he wrote most of his dramatic works. At that time, he married the granddaughter of Juliusz Kossak, Jadwiga Unrug called, Nineczka. In addition, he was constantly involved in cultural activities. In 1927, he founded a famous portrait company. Most of the works created at that time can be seen today in the Koliba villa in Zakopane. In 1929, Witkacy co-operated with Czesława Oknińska-Korzeniowska. After the outbreak of World War II, despite being referred to the mobilization point, he was not appointed to the army. On September 5 he left Warsaw. At the news of the Soviet invasion of Poland on September 18, 1939, he committed suicide in Jeziorach in Polesie. Together with him, his successful partner Czesława, made an unsuccessful attempt. The artist was buried in the Jeziorach, and the attempt to relocate his body to the Tatras was unsuccessful. In April 1988, human remains were buried ceremonially in the old cemetery in Zakopane, which, as it turned out, did not belong to Witkacy

In Zakopane, since 1985, the Witkiewicz Theatre, in the Tatra Museum, numerous exhibitions dedicated to the artist are organized, and 2015 was declared the Year of Witkiewicz in the Lesser Poland Voivodeship.

Prepared by Agnieszka Jurczyńska-Kłosok based on:

A. Szałagan *Witkiewicz Stanisław Ignacy (1885-1939): Contemporary Polish Writers and Literary Scholars. The Biobibliographic Dictionary*, edited by J. Czachowska, Warsaw 2004, pp. 166-192.

Z. Radwańska-Paryska, W. H. Paryski, *Great Tatra Encyclopedia*, Poronin 2004, pp. 1342-1343.

The text is read by Andrzej Bienias - Actor of the St. I. Witkiewicz Theatre

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