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Intensivism as a Tool of an Art Historian

In 1897 in Warsaw, the art critic, Cezary Jellenta, published in a weekly magazine "Głos" the article titled *Intensivism*. This article in its times did not influence on a polish art, but nowadays a category of intensivism created by Jellenta can be seen as an useable tool from the point of view a art historian.

Jellenta noticed in his article a new trend in painting of the end of the century. In his mind modern art turned to a subjective way of perception of reality. Presentation of ordinary objects and phenomena, which are known by a viewer, in work of art tends to experience them anew. The art critic maintained a role of personal experience of powers of nature through a painting and the fact that this power may be embodied with the soul of an artist. At the beginning of his paper he refered to anachronistic examples of Andreas Achenbach's and Anders Zorn's work but also pointed out Arnold Böcklin, Władysław Podkowiński or Józef Pankiewicz as founders of the new movement. Jellenta paid attention to a modern composition, simplification and painting synthesis, which enable to express reality better and deeper. He applies a category, separated plastically and semantically from a representation, of *main motif*, which, as Jellenta wrote, "tunes our soul". In fact it is an attempt to transfer the music theory of *Leitmotif* by Richard Wagner on the ground of the painting.

However the postulates of naturalism underlay the theory of intensivism. The impact of *Esthetics* by Eugène Véron published in polish translation in Warsaw, 1892, can be observed in Jellenta's paper. Véron's dissertation, which was widely known in Europe and also translated into many languages, was an interpretation of a naturalistic thought about the art. French philosopher considered: "True and only source of art, it's always an artist".

Intensivism may be courageously compared with important art critic texts of the end of the century. Manifestos of symbolism and expressionism in an european art, on the one hand, refers to the issue of evocation of spiritual life of nature, on the other hand, to expression

of artist soul through an art work. This duality describes the text by Jellenta. The community of intensivist ideas can be found in thought of Albert Aurier or Stanisław Przybyszewski, who wrote about work of Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch, using similar categories.

Wiesław Juszcak in his canonical for polish art history dissertation *Modernism* (1977) defined *Intensivism* as a manifesto of expressionism. He noticed that portraits by Olga Boznańska, who was polish painter active in Munich and Paris, are characterized by "emotional tension" and "grasping expression". The painter reached with the media of impressionist painting effects close to expressionism. Therefore Juszcak ascribe the work of Boznańska to the movement postulated by the critic – intensivism.

Intensivism in fact can be seen as the manifesto of expressionism, but it is expressionism *avant la lettre*. Jellenta in his article among intensivist painters mentions only symbolist artists – for example Podkowiński and Pankiewicz. Although intensivism is a very useful category to describe works of artists, who were active a little bit later. In my previous research I used the term of intensivism to exposure expressive values of landscape painting of so-called Young Poland in work such artists as: Wojciech Weiss, Konrad Krzyżanowski, Stanisław Wyspiański, Władysław Ślewiński, Jan Stanisławski, Ferdynand Ruszczyc and Gustaw Gwozdecki. Many of them are described by art historians as symbolists, not expressionists. However, the formal character of their painting and the manner of work answer the Jellenta's postulates. In addition modernist art critics perceived expressive elements hidden in their artistic achievements.

The category of intensivism is an useful tool from the point of view of the art historian to describe artistic phenomena of the end of century, which are usually determined as a symbolism or modernism (or in polish history of art as Young Poland). It may be used to characterize tendencies, which appear on the contact of naturalism, symbolism and expressionism. In my future research I want to extend the problem of intensivism on the wider field than painting of the end of the century. The category of *intensive sight* refers to a naturalistic art the last decades of XIXth century, symbolism, expressionism and it reaches art movements at the beginning of XXth century.