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Children and National Identity. Towards the Exhibition in 1920 in Warsaw.

Poland regained its independence on 11th November 1918 after 123 years of the annexation made by neighboring countries. The Polish nation was overwhelmed by the excitations and anxiety about new order. The new and relentless changing governments tried to arrange coherent politics bringing together three regions with entirely different social, economic and cultural status.

The new Polish culture was not only symbolical issue but an urgent matter for the sake of the national propaganda for the divided country. During 20 years of the Second Polish Republic for only 3 years (1919-1922) the affairs of culture and art had its own ministry which was created by intellectuals, officials and artists with different practice, social and political views. And it were the officers with their private ideas who had the main impact on the actions undertaken in the framework the Ministry of Art and Culture.

One of the most spectacular initiative of the Ministry was an undocumented yet event from May and June 1920 – the exhibition “Art of Child” which took place in the main building of Warsaw University of Technology. The organizers presented few thousand artworks made in schools and in an extracurricular way, created by the children up to 14 years old. In the catalogue the exhibition was described as designed systematic and explanatory project, that shed light on the richness of spirit of Polish child and which showed most popular teaching methods.

The mentioned publication and remaining documents in Polish archives present a multi-tiered narration of the “Art of Child” show. The introducing text shows how much issue of a child, its art and education concerned matters of a propaganda, a crafts revival, school system and even... anti-German propaganda. The origins of the project also present diversification of the social status of the young citizens.

The remaining documents show that the main initiator and *spiritus movens* of the project was Eligiusz Niewiadomski (1869-1923) – a painter, an art critic, a teacher now well known for his extreme nationalist ideas that led him to murder in 1922 the first president of Poland, Gabriel Narutowicz. Because of his dreadful act he become a *persona non grata* of Polish art history.

Research of the unique event from 1920 can take up few more issues for Polish art history. Firstly, it can investigate undocumented endeavor that can shed light on the cultural policy of early Second Republic. Secondly, it can show network of relationship and hierarchy among the Polish intellectuals of these times, including unapparent achievements of Niewiadomski. Eventually, investigating “Art of Child” exhibition can let introduce issue of child art into discourse as an important inspiration for the modernist culture in Central-Western Europe.