

**Natalia Keller**

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

**Wiktoria Goryńska: A State-Building Artist of the Second Polish Republic**

My research project analyses the work and life of the Polish artist Wiktoria Goryńska (1902-1945). Specifically, it examines the ways in which she negotiated her gender, professional, national and ethnic identity within the context of interwar Poland and Europe.

Goryńska was born in Vienna to a couple of assimilated Polish Jews. During her early years she moved with her parents between European metropolises and up until her early twenties she resided in Vienna, London, Warsaw, Berlin and Paris. She was an unconventional figure of her times; a professional and accomplished fencer and one of the first three female referees in this sport; she did winter sports and swam, used male clothes and wore skiing trousers as parts of her regular outfit. She was also a prolific printmaker and art critic and was actively involved in the printmaking lobby of the interwar period in Poland. Goryńska wrote regularly in Polish and foreign press and art magazines (among others *The Studio* and *Print's Collectors Quarterly*) where she promoted Polish graphic arts and reviewed exhibitions. She was related with the Warsaw circle of Władysław Skoczylas' printmaking group *Ryt* (Scratch or Incision; 1925-1939), however within the Art Deco movement she maintained her own unique style and original iconography influenced by her multicultural experience and education. She was also strongly involved in the official artistic structures in Poland, for instance as secretary and vice-president of the Association of Polish Printmakers. She participated in the Warsaw Uprising as a runner and radio operator, was arrested and died in 1945 in the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

One of the starting points of my study is the recent publication by Agnieszka Chmielewska devoted to the Second Polish Republic in which an informal group of so-called "state-building" artists is identified (*artyści państwowotwórczy*).<sup>1</sup> In Chmielewska's study all state-building artists were men who held positions in the institutionalized artistic structures. I wish to contest this category and examine the contribution of women artists to the process of nation- and state-building. I take Goryńska as a case study of a woman

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<sup>1</sup> Agnieszka Chmielewska, *W Służbie Państwa, Społeczeństwa i Narodu: „państwowotwórczy” Artyści Plastycy w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2006).

artist that participated in the state-building mission, but from a different standpoint and applying distinct strategies than her colleagues men artists did. I interpret the abundance of her activities related with her artistic creation, art criticism, sports, institutional involvement and private life choices to show how women artists could be involved in the state-building mission during the years of the Second Polish Republic. Such an analysis is executed applying a multidisciplinary methodology that includes elements of feminist and gender studies, particularly studies related with the feminist canon critique, fine arts vs. crafts/applied arts discussion and the concept of gender performativity as well as application of categories that will help place and describe Goryńska within the realm of relations of power and subversive or oppressive moments (including gender, class, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc.).

In conclusion, the main topic of my research revolves around the question: In what ways did Goryńska participate in the state-building mission as a Polish citizen, a woman, and a printmaker? I am consequently interested in the wider question of the relation between gender and national culture in interwar Poland. The dissertation is initially divided into four thematic sections devoted to the following topics: 1). Politics of the Polish artistic modernism; 2). National art and style; 3). New (Polish) Woman; 4). Catholicism as a modernizing project.