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**“Life seemed to be a theatre-play, and the world its scenography”. Theatralisation of life in a Polish artists’ colony in Kazimierz Dolny - during the interwar period**

Artists’ colony in Kazimierz Dolny was clustered around Tadeusz Pruszkowski – a charismatic professor from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. He initiated there a series of *plein airs* with peers and students in a small picturesque *sztetl*, quiet province where lived peasants and Jews. From 1923 more and more painters began to settle there. They would study the beautiful landscapes, the local people, the architecture and discuss how art, in a reborn Poland, should be. Pruszkowski’s students referred to tradition – in technique and iconography based on Old Masters, name (Brotherhood of Saint Luc), ideas on national art. Pruszkowski was a painter and teacher, and also a colorful character. He was a sportsman, flew his own private aeroplane, fashioned his own outfits and designed the studio he worked in. During *plein airs* he and his pupils devised, and lived, a specific style of life. This style was accurately described by Maria Kuncewiczowa, a writer associated with the interwar colony: “*Life seemed to be a theatre-play, and the world its scenography*”.

Until now artists’ colony in Kazimierz has been a field of study that presented it as a place of social meetings, in a rather anecdotal way. Some of the artists have been researched for monographic studies. In 2013 r. Kazimierz, as a member of European Federation of Artist’ Colonies, started partnership with Worpswede and Schreienrau. Since then those studies has changed to a comparative research. The aim of this thesis is to present a new interpretation concentrated on the style of life generated within this artists’ colony – the ceremonies, rituals, customs and traditions. The questions it will approach are: Why? How? And what for, those artists, made life a space of theater?

To answer the question: “Why?” I will look closely at the teachers of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. The Academy was a unique place in the interwar period, alongside the more traditional studies of drawing, painting and sculpture, students were also taught a wide spectrum of applied arts - ceramics, frescos, stained-glass techniques and so on.

Alongside this was the professor, Wincenty Drabik, who was a stage and theatre designer. I will study the possible inspiration these artists gained from the borders of XIX and XX century art and theatre; from artists cabarets, to poetic and artistic groups. I will compare the practices found in Kazimierz with the role of the theater in other artistic colonies in Europe.

To answer the question: "How?" I will look carefully at documents from Kazimierz, testimonies of direct witnesses of the interwar colony, and of course the works of the members (poetry, writing, paintings, sketches, photos, films, etc.). I will look for tendencies of theatricalisation in clothing, housing and the studios. The behavior of the members, the roles they played in everyday life, para-theatrical practices such as balls and dances, birthday parties, the welcoming and departure of the students.

In approaching the question: "What for?" I will look at the effects of these tendencies. Some of the members of the colony, became stage designers. Poet Józef Czechowicz wrote a play, "Obraz" [Painting], that takes place in Kazimierz and is based upon discussions about art held there. Kazimierz was also the setting of "Szczęśliwy wisielec, czyli Edison znad Wisły" [The Lucky Hangman, or Vistula Edison] - a surrealist film directed by Pruszkowski, in which his students played the main characters. I will compare these tendencies with similar para-theatrical practices in XIX century traditional artistic groups (The Nazarens, The Prefaraelites for example) and avant-garde movements like Bauhaus or Dada. Was Kazimierz a place of tradition, or was it actually much closer to the XX century avant-garde?