

## **Doctoral thesis summary**

Barbara Chojnacka

*Artistic life and creative arts community in Bydgoszcz in 1920-1939*

promotor: Prof. Jerzy Malinowski, PhD

The work *Artistic life and creative arts community in Bydgoszcz in 1920-1939* is the first monograph of artistic life in Bydgoszcz during the twenty-year interwar period, focusing on creative arts – painting, sculpture, graphic art and drawing. To a lesser extent, it encompasses other art genres, such as applied arts and scenography, which were mentioned but require more in-depth research. The most essential research topic is determination and presentation of issues that impacted the process of formation of artistic life and creative arts community in Bydgoszcz, a city that was incorporated to the Second Republic of Poland after 140 years of the Prussian annexation. This topic involves formulation of specific conditions that influenced development of a new art center in the city located in the western borderland of the newly regained territory of Poland. This field also includes matters of the interrupted continuity of artistic traditions, “provinciality” of the city in relation to Polish major art centers, the impact of migration on the multicultural aspect of the local art community, search for artistic identity and expression of one’s identity through art, and attempts to self-identity, and opinion-forming groups. The issue of determining one’s identity appears also in a general context of the city situated in the border area between Pomerania and Kuyavia, a city “leaning toward Pomerania.” All these factors comprise the issue of rebuilding Polish identity after World War I, and in reference to Bydgoszcz, they reveal emergence of a separate, expansive art center, which dynamic growth was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first one, entitled *Artistic life* features seven chapters, which in the chronological order, determined by sequential key events, present the most important art institutions and societies, artistic associations and groups, defining specificity of the developing and changing artistic life. The first three chapters, encompassing the 1920s, describe the origins of the newly forming artistic life and the first attempts to consolidate the community. The consecutive chapters present continuation of culture formation processes and fast growth of the new art center during the 1930s. They also present activities of institutions that contributed to development of this art center and local creative arts community. Moreover, there is a description of art education (State School of Art Industry and State Industrial School), fast growing exhibition activity of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, and the culture formation role of the Municipal Museum, in

particular in reference to the local artistic community, functioning of new artistic associations and groups emerging in Bydgoszcz, and activity of the Society of Friends of Fine Arts and the Arts and Culture Council. The last chapter is a supplement of Bydgoszcz artistic life, describing all related, important noninstitutional matters. A significant issue that appears in the first part of the thesis, an integrative element in all chapters, is reconstruction of the process of organization and functioning of art exhibitions.

The second part of the thesis, entitled *Creative arts community – artists and their works* consists of three chapters that describe in a synthetic form fields of art dominating in interwar Bydgoszcz – painting, sculpture, graphic art and drawing. The fourth chapter is dedicated to art criticism in Bydgoszcz. In reference to the first part, where the creative arts community of Bydgoszcz emerged in the context of activities of institutions, societies and associations, the second part focuses on artists and their works. The group of Bydgoszcz artists during the interwar period associated creative people representing various generations, migrant artists from various parts of Poland and abroad, and native artists of Bydgoszcz, educated in the city or in out-of-town schools. The group of artists also included those who were based in the city, worked and participated in its artistic life. Presenting artists who stayed in the city on a temporary basis, the thesis focuses on the least known stage of their artistic life in Bydgoszcz, describing only their earlier undertakings, just like continuation of their activity after leaving the city. In the case of artists who rendered a great service to development of arts in Bydgoszcz, an analysis of their activity was expanded by setting the “Bydgoszcz stage” in their artistic biographies. The consecutive chapters, dedicated to painting, sculpture, graphic art and drawing, have uniform design, determined by chronology of events and subsequent generations of artists, appearing on the stage of local artistic life. In addition to this common assumption, every chapter can be distinguished by a different narrative, determined by the specificity and dynamics of growth of individual fields of art. The last chapter is a current perspective on the issue of Bydgoszcz art through the eyes of art critics. This chapters features art critics and their art reviews, present in artistic life from back then, witnesses of past events. The thesis also analyses critical reviews, taking into consideration their diverse character.