

**Lechosław Lameński\***

## **Ukrainian Scholars on Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski, the Son of the Volhynia Region**

### **Studiosi ucraini in merito a Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski, il figlio della regione di Volhynia**

Le opere scultoree di Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski (1812–1886), artista polacco nato a Novomalyń in Volhynia (odierna Ucraina), non sono state di interesse sia per gli storici che per gli storici dell'arte ucraini per molto tempo. I primi articoli a carattere divulgativo e scientifico riguardanti l'artista sono stati pubblicati solo negli anni '90 da Yaroslava Bondarchuk. Tuttavia, né lei né altri ricercatori erano a conoscenza della data di nascita di Sosnowski. Nel 2012, Mykola Bendiuk, basandosi sulla scoperta di Igor Teslenko, pubblicò un opuscolo che affermava la nascita nel dicembre 1812. La divulgazione di Bendiuk, però, contiene tutta una serie di imprecisioni ed errori fattuali causati dall'interpretazione troppo liberale da parte del suo autore di informazioni non verificate. D'altra parte, nel 2015 e nel 2022 Valery Vojtovych, pittore e scrittore allo stesso tempo, ha autopubblicato due edizioni del suo libro su Sosnowski. Si tratta dei primi libri in ucraino così completi e significativi dedicati interamente all'artista. Purtroppo, queste (soprattutto la prima) sono caratterizzate da un nazionalismo estremo, mentre i contenuti fattuali e interpretativi sono più che inaffidabili e fuorvianti per il lettore. Tuttavia, il primo passo è stato fatto e forse nel prossimo futuro gli autori ucraini saranno tentati ad essere più obiettivi quando scriveranno di artisti polacchi nati sul territorio dell'attuale Ucraina.

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**Parole chiave:** Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski, scultore, Volhynia, Roma, ricercatori ucraini.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski, rzeźbiarz, Wołyń, Rzym, badacze ukraińscy.

**Keywords:** Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski, sculptor, Volhynia, Rome, Ukrainian researchers.

**A**lthough Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski (1812–1886), a Volhynia-born sculptor who was one of the leading figures of the Polish artistic colony in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Rome, has been present in Polish scholarly literature at least since the 1930s, his name appeared – probably for the very first time – in Ukrainian literature only in the early 1970s. A very brief, few-sentence-long entry for the artist was found in *Slovnnykh khudozhnikov Ukrainy* [*Dictionary of Artists of Ukraine*] (Kyiv 1973),<sup>1</sup> which only reported that he was a Polish sculptor, a representative of academism, who lived between 1810 and 1888 (sic!).

For another Ukrainian publication to acknowledge him, one had to wait until the 1990s, when Yaroslava Bondarchuk of the Ostrog Landscape Museum in Volhynia became interested in the artist. The museum, located in the historic interiors of the 14th-century castle of the Ostrogski princes – just 12 kilometers from Novomalyn, the place where the future author of the Roman statue of Nicolaus Copernicus was born – has several of his sculptures. It is therefore unsurprising that the researcher published two articles on Sosnowski, in which she recognized him – correctly – as a Polish artist. The first one was published in 1992, in a volume containing papers delivered at three scientific conferences organized on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of Ostrog,<sup>2</sup> and the second one in 1993, which was a more extensive two-part article in the local press.<sup>3</sup> The two articles, however, deprived of footnotes, did not factually go beyond the questions com-

1 Sosnowski Choma, in: *Slovnnykh khudozhnikov Ukrainy*, eds. M. P. Bażan, W. A. Afanasjew et al., Kyjiv 1973, p. 216–217.

2 J. Bondarczuk, *Tomash Oskar Sosnowski i Ostrih*, in: *Ostrih na porozi 900-richia. Materiały I–III naukowo-krajoznawczych konferencji (1990–1992)*, part 1, Ostrih 1992, pp. 27–29.

3 Eadem, *Temistyji szliach mytca*, part 1–2, “*Żytia i Slovo*”, 1993, no 24, s. 3; no 26, p. 3.

monly known from the existing scientific literature (mainly Polish), available only partially to their author. Despite all this, they drew attention to the figure of Sosnowski not only among representatives of the academic and research community from the area of his native Volhynia, but also in the capital of the young and newly sovereign state (since 1991). As a result, the editors of two subsequent dictionaries devoted to Ukrainian artists, published in 1997 in Kyiv<sup>4</sup> and Rivne,<sup>5</sup> included his summarized entry, emphasizing, according to the facts, that he was a Polish sculptor. Meanwhile, Yaroslava Bondarchuk, after becoming more familiar with the basic literature and the findings of Polish researchers, including a monograph on the artist published by me in 1997,<sup>6</sup> published yet another scientific article, this time including footnotes.<sup>7</sup>

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has intensified the studies of Ukrainian historians and art historians on the course of their own independent (since 1991 as I have already mentioned) homeland and its most remarkable representatives. Understandably, in the sphere of their interest was also Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski, who was popular and highly regarded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, having been born, after all, in Volhynia. In 2001, on the pages of the magazine “Archives of Ukraine” was published a very short article (a communiqué),<sup>8</sup> whose author O. A. Buravskiy indicated that in the State Archive of the Rivne Region in Rivne

- 4 Sosnowski Choma, in: *Mystectvo Ukrainy: biograficzna dovidka*, ed. A. W. Kudryčkyj, Kyiv 1997, p. 555.
- 5 Sosnowski Tomasz Oskar, in: B. J. Stolarczuk, *Mytci Rivenshchyny. Encyklopedychnyi dovidnyk*, Rivne 1997, p. 101.
- 6 L. Lameński, *Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski (1810–1886) rzeźbiarz polski w Rzymie*, Lublin 1997.
- 7 J. Bondarczuk, *Skulptor Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski – propowidnyk chrystyjańskoi morali*, in: *Wychovania molodoho pokolinnia na pryncypach chrystyjańskoi morali w procesi duchovnoho vidrozhennia Ukrainy*, ed. I. Basicznyk, Ostrih 1998, pp. 364–371. The author, satisfied with the rift her text caused, after introducing minor additions (especially in the footnotes), published it twice more. See: Eadem, *Tomash Oskar Sosnowski (blyzko 1810–1886)*, in: *Ostrozki prosvitnyky XVI–XX w.*, Ostrih 2000, pp. 277–284; eadem, *Wychidci z Nowomalyna. Mytci. Tomash Oskar Sosnowski (1812–1886)*, in: *Nowomalyn u prostori i czasi: krajeznawche doslidzhenia wolyskoho sela: monografia*, eds. M. M. Lavzik, A. W. Melnyk, Charkiv 2013, pp. 584–591.
- 8 O. A. Buravskiy, *Novi dokumenty do biografii Tomasha Oskara Sosnowskiego: Majnovi spravy rodyiny*, „Archiwa Ukrainy”, 2001, no 6, pp. 120–122.

and the State Archive of the Zhytomyr Region in Zhytomyr there are – hitherto unknown to researchers – records related to the Sosnowski family's inheritance cases, lawsuits on the matter, and the relations of Tomasz Oskar (the main heir) with Ukrainian peasants from the villages and hamlets that were his property. However, these documents did not concern the artist's sculptural work.

A breakthrough in the research on Sosnowski, especially in the attempt to establish the actual date of his birth (until now it was generally stated as 1810, sometimes 1811 and even 1813), occurred in 2012. At that time, Mykola Bendiuk published an article where he was the first to cite the content of the artist's baptismal certificate, found by chance (?) by historian dr. Igor Teslenko at the Volhynia Region State Archive in Lutsk. It reveals that Sosnowski's baptism took place on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1812.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, neither Bendiuk, nor Roman Jakiel, who also referred to Igor Teslenko's discovery (in a 2013 article),<sup>10</sup> stated whether the historian had published an article on the topic or only informally talked to them about it. Today it is known that the historian limited his information to oral accounts only. Thus, finally the exact year of Sosnowski's birth is revealed, but due to the differences between the Julian and Gregorian calendars it will probably never be known on which December 1812 he was born. Mykola Bendiuk – probably fascinated by Sosnowski's work – did not stop at publishing the actual year of the artist's birth. In fact, he published, still in the same year, a booklet of twenty pages, thirty-one footnotes and seven illustrations entitled: *Tomash Oskar Sosnowski (1812–1886)*, (Ostrih 2012), which only came to light in scholarly circles in 2017. At that time its second edition was published also in Ukrainian as part of the library of the bimonthly “Wołanie z Wołynia” [Volhynia Calling], a religious-social periodical of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lutsk, founded and published in Polish since 1994<sup>11</sup> by Father Witold

- 9 M. Bendiuk, *Data narodzhennia skulptora Tomasha Oskara Sosnowskiego*, „Ostrozkyi krajeznavczyj zbirnyk”, 5 (2012) pp. 361–362.
- 10 R. Jakiel, *Skulptor bez pamiatnika*, „Zerkalo Niedieli”, 2013, no 29.
- 11 From almost the very beginning of the magazine's publication, Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski and his sculptures became the main topic of at least a few highly diverse articles in terms of their factuality, content, and volume. Probably the first to publish her article was the aforementioned J. Bondarczuk, *Rzeźbiarz Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski (1813–1886)*, „Wołanie z Wołynia”, 3 (1996), no 6, pp. 17–20. Later, however, only Polish authors would write about him.

Józef Kowalów, pastor of the parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ostrog (incidentally, Sosnowski's home parish). The text of the booklet, this time accompanied by thirty-five footnotes and only six illustrations, makes for an interesting reading. The author has also identified Sosnowski's unique mark, the equivalent of his signature, being the motif of a water drop (tear), that appears on the end of the folds of the robes in some of the artist's sculptures and bas-reliefs of religious subjects. The well-written text, however, does not lack untruthful. For example, in the very first paragraph – on page 4 – the reader learns that Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski was supposedly the chief director of museums and galleries in Rome, and that as many as twenty-four art academies around the world chose him as their scholar (sic!). Unfortunately, none of this information is true or supported by the facts.<sup>12</sup> Admittedly, Bendiuk states in a footnote that he took this data from a 1992 article by Yaroslava Bondarchuk (the one without footnotes!), but the researcher, in correspondence with the writer of these words (in the spring of 2022), backed out of her earlier findings. This is not surprising, since it was not Sosnowski, but his Italian master Pietro Tenerani “who became [...] at the end of his life the general director of the museums and galleries of Rome. He was a member of twenty-four academies and a chevalier of eleven orders.”<sup>13</sup> Relying on Italian sources, Tadeusz Dobrowolski was most likely the first to write about it in the Polish scientific literature, followed by me in my 1997 monograph on the artist. The data indicates

- 12 The author of all the translations from Ukrainian included in this article is Ms. Uliana Hirniak, who I hereby thank very much for her translation assistance. It is remarkable that also Emilian Pralat, the author of a monograph on Leopold Nowotny, the Polish painter who lived and worked for many years in the city on the River Tiber, wrote in a biographical note of his colleague Sosnowski that “the spectacular career [of the sculptor] in Rome brought him the position of chief inspector of the artistic institutions of the Eternal City and the general director of the galleries and museums of the city. His recognition is evidenced by the fact that he was awarded 24 honorary doctorates. In 1859, Pius IX awarded him the Order of Saint Gregory the Great.” See: E. Prałat, *Leopold Nowotny. Życie i twórczość*, Poznań 2021, pp. 324–325. Only the last information is true, but the most surprising is that the author as a source of all the above-mentioned facts cited... my 1997 book on Sosnowski [sic!].
- 13 T. Dobrowolski, *Rzeźba neoklasyczna i romantyczna w Polsce. Ze studiów nad importem włoskim i świadomością estetyczną*, Wrocław 1974, p. 171.

that Bondarchuk was the first to make the mistake, followed by Bendiuk and a little later by Walery Wojtowicz in his two books – fundamental for our further consideration – the latter probably used my findings. The only problem is that they either misread what I wrote, or consciously decided to glorify a Volhynian dear to them by attributing to him the honors and titles that were not his.

Equally false is the information that Sosnowski began studying at the Department of Sculpture of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 1833. Firstly, there was no academy in the capital of the Congress Kingdom at the time, only the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Warsaw, which closed down along with the entire university as part of the repressions after the fall of the November Uprising. Secondly, in the *Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and Other Slavic Countries*,<sup>14</sup> which Bendiuk referred to in a footnote, there is not a single word about it. There are, unfortunately, many more factual errors of this type in the booklet. Moreover, this is a characteristic feature of many publications by Ukrainian scholars, who all too easily incorrectly provide the names of artistic institutions that existed in the former Polish territories as well as in other countries, while additionally taking for granted information that should be marked with a big question mark at the very least.

The situation looks similar with the most reputable – so far – Ukrainian publication devoted to Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski, a book entitled: *Tomash Oskar Sosnowski. Skulptura klasycyzmu* (Rivne 2015). It was written and published by Walery Wojtowicz (b. 1952), a writer, local historian, and painter, who has been conducting research on the life and work of the sculptor for at least eleven years, according to his own words. The book was published very neatly, on good paper, stitched not glued, hardcover, with aesthetically pleasing layout and numerous good quality black and white photographs presenting Sosnowski's most important sculptures. The extensive core text, divided into several chapters, is concluded by a list of the artist's works and a bibliography. That being said, the very good first impression of the book unfortunately passes away quite quickly. The preface already states that

14 *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. 7, ed. F. Sulimierski, B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski, Warszawa 1886.

Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski [...] is an outstanding internationally renowned sculptor born in Ukraine. He received his artistic education at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, the academies of Berlin and Rome. T. O. Sosnowski was a doctor of sculpture and a regent of the Academy of St. Lucas in Rome, and visited Italy's art institutions; he was the general director of Rome's museums and galleries. Twenty-four of the world's academies of fine arts awarded him honorary doctorates.<sup>15</sup>

While the facts quoted in the above excerpt from the book and the phrasing irresistibly suggest that they were taken from Bendiuk's earlier booklet, Walery Wojtowicz provided a completely different footnote. This is due to the fact that he referred to the entry *Sosnowski Tomasz Oskar* in the *Nowa encyklopedia powszechna PWN* [New Universal Encyclopedia]<sup>16</sup> and to the entry *Novomalin* appearing in Nikolai Ivanoviych Teodoroviych's multi-volume publication.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the problem this time is not only that Wojtowicz has uncritically repeated once again information that is fundamentally false, but above all because both the PWN Encyclopedia and Teodoroviych's publication do not contain a single word on the subject (sic!).

This is the first, but unfortunately not the only distortion of reality and the associated facts. However, it seems that the biggest flaw in Wojtowicz's book is the spirit of extreme nationalism emanating from it quite unnecessarily. According to the Ukrainian writer and painter, Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski is "a famous descendant of an ancient nation, the »Ruthenian nation«,"<sup>18</sup> several dozen pages further he stated directly,

Therefore, in accordance with the Maliński family of the former and native Sosnowski family of the Nałęcz coat of arms, and in accordance with the place of birth of Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski, we have the right to call Sosnowski a Ukrainian sculptor, contrary to what Łukasz Rafal-

15 W. Wojtowicz, *Tomash Oskar Sosnowski skulptura klasycyzmu*, Rivne 2015, p. 11.

16 *Sosnowski Tomasz Oskar*, in: *Nowa encyklopedia powszechna PWN*, vol. 5, Warszawa 1997, p. 948.

17 N. I. Teodorowycz, *Uezdi Rovenskyj, Ostrozkyj i Dubenskyj*, in: *Istoriko-statystykoje opisanije cerkwej i prichodow Wołynskoj jeparchii*, vol. 2: *Ujezdy Rowienskij, Ostrożskij i Dubienskij*, ed. N. I. Tieodorowicz, Pochaev 1889, pp. 786–788.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

ski says, calling Sosnowski a »Latinist«, and the Frenchman Louis Veillot – a Pole.<sup>19</sup>

Becoming more familiar with the content of the book leads to the conclusion that its construction is unbalanced, lacks coherence and clarity of argument. It contains too many extensive deliberations of historical nature, unrelated to the topic, touching upon Ukraine's glorious past, in the author's opinion unfortunately forgotten and neglected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, created over the centuries by the representatives of the great Ukrainian princely houses living there, among which Wojtowicz mentions: The Wiśniowiecki, Sanguszko, Czartoryski, Chodkiewicz or Tyszkiewicz families. Entire paragraphs devoted to Sosnowski were unnecessarily divided by the author's sightseeing remarks, neutral for the subject, that he called the Novomalyn wanderings. It is also unclear what was meant by quoting a several-page description of a journey made in the Ostrog district of Volhynia province in 1864–1865 by the aforementioned Łukasz Rafalski, an ardent chronicler of Volhynia. Finally, the book lacks important scientific components due to the fact that Walery Wojtowicz is not a scholar, let alone an art historian. Therefore, there is no state of research. Admittedly, the author informs the reader that in 1997, in Lublin, the writer of these words published a book on Sosnowski, but he does not refer to its content and scientific level. Although he repeatedly used the information and photographs of the sculptures included in it – as can be seen from the footnotes and from the passages in the text – we basically learn nothing about my book: whether it was written well or badly, whether it exhausts the subject or not, and finally what mistakes I made. The same applies, by the way, to publications by other Polish and foreign authors, from which Wojtowicz drew information just as eagerly. The reading of his book also shows that he did not conduct a query of the 19th-century Polish press, and even less of the Italian one. Lastly, what is missing – perhaps surprisingly for a writing painter – is any formal analysis of Sosnowski's sculptures, as if this aspect of the artist's work was of no interest to him at all. Walery Wojtowicz purposefully omits the issues of the artist's technique, does not mention his distinctive features, does not ana-

19 Ibid., p. 44.



lyze the way he portrays, models and composes busts, bas-reliefs, and whole figures. The book also lacks a complete list of Sosnowski's works, there is no catalog including basic inventory data (year of creation, material, dimensions, place of storage), and the exact dimensions of individual sculptures are provided only in a few cases. This is the aftermath of the fact that Wojtowicz did not make extensive inventory queries in Poland, and especially in Rome, where – as he admitted in a private conversation to the writer of this article – he had not been until now. As a result, he became acquainted firsthand only with those of Sosnowski's sculptures that are housed in museums in Western Ukraine. It is also worth pointing out that the list of references lacks information about archival sources, which he used after all, as mentioned in the preface. Finally, there is no index of names, so necessary in scientific publications.

In the conclusion of the book, Walery Wojtowicz expressively refers to the dramatic and bloody events that took place on February 18–23, 2014 on the Independence Square in Kyiv, stating passionately in the last sentence:

Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski – one of the famous Sons of Great Volhynia, the same as millions of Sons who contributed to the independence of Mother-Ukraine. My son is also in Maidan – this is my Ukraine. Glory to Ukraine!<sup>20</sup>

This is not the end as in 2021, Wojtowicz published a series of 32 postcards in a cardboard case, with great photographs of dozens of Sosnowski's sculptures located in the museums of Ukraine, as well as in the churches and museums of Poland, Italy, and Russia.

Meanwhile, on the occasion of the two hundred and tenth anniversary of Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski's birthday, which fell in December 2022, the Ukrainian writer once again self-published the second edition of his book, revised and supplemented, this time entitled: *Oskar Sosnowski Skulptor* (Rivne 2022). This is a much larger publication – in terms of format and volume – than the previous one, with a huge number of diverse and this time mostly colored photographs of the artist's sculptures and other works of art (engravings), ranging from technically very good to completely inadequate, but

20 Ibid., p. 289.

probably even more rambling and unbelievable than its first edition. The first concern for the reader is the aforementioned illustrative material. The reproductions of artwork included in the book – especially the engravings with a view of the Novomalyn Castle from the collection of the National Museum in Cracow – are not photographs taken of the originals, but from the museum's website, with its trademark logo obstructing the view. Writing about a particular sculpture or group of Sosnowski's works, this time Wojtowicz places information about the sources (Джерела) he used at the end of the relevant section of the text. Unfortunately, almost exclusively these are website addresses written without the date of access. Admittedly, at the end of the book there is – as in the first edition – a list of references, but it is far from complete, especially in the case of publications by Polish researchers. The reliability of the facts provided by Wojtowicz is also highly questionable – not for the first time – especially regarding quotations from other authors' publications and the relatively few footnotes accompanying them. It is impossible to address all of the author's shortcomings in this matter. Here is one characteristic example. When writing about Cardinal Włodzimierz Czacki's visit to Sosnowski just before his death to administer the anointing of the sick, Wojtowicz quotes an excerpt from a letter by painter Jan Drewaczyński: "It is a great loss for the many poor whose providence he was. And I am very grateful to God that he gave me the grace to prepare him for the last crossing."<sup>21</sup> The reader learns from the footnote in the margin that he took the quotation and all the information from my 1997 book. Meanwhile, the book does not mention it at all, because at that time I had no knowledge about it yet. But there is more to it than that. In fact, the quote comes not from Drewaczyński's letter, but from Cardinal Czacki's letter to the painter, which is quoted by Bogusław Mansfeld in an interesting article published in the bimonthly "Wołanie z Wołynia."<sup>22</sup> However, Wojtowicz does not mention it, although he almost literally rewrote its fragments. In turn, in the list of the literature used, there is a notation of the correct issue of "Wołanie z Wołynia" but lacking the title of the article and the name of its author. In addition, the Ukrainian writer misread the content of Mansfeld's remarks, attributing to Sosnowski a severe bone disease. Meanwhile, it

21 W. Wojtowicz, *Oskar Sosnowski skulptor*, Rivne 2022, p. 514, footnote 3.

22 B. Mansfeld, *Z Wołynia do Rzymu*, „Wołanie z Wołynia”, 20 (2014)no 4, pp. 21–23.

was Czacki, not Sosnowski, who was in poor health and suffered from the disease which made it difficult to move around, especially climbing stairs.

Finally, the information about the Sanctuary of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Marian Hill in Levoča, Slovakia, qualifies as a peculiar oddity. After briefly presenting the history of the Sanctuary, illustrated with several photographs: a view of the town square with the town hall and church in its center, the top of the mountain with the basilica and its main neo-Gothic altar, the author included an archival photograph of the statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception standing on a pedestal. Wojtowicz devoted the last, very short paragraph of the text to the statue:

Inside the church stands a magnificent replica of the statue of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, chiseled by the famous Ukrainian sculptor Oskar Sosnowski. On the pedestal the inscription: "Our Lady of Jazłowiec. Ukraine. Sculpture made in Rome, commissioned by Mother Marcelina Darowska for the Congregation of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception, which was founded in Rome in 1857."<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, the brief quote is a manipulated fragment of the text, which can be read almost entirely from the pedestal visible in the published photograph. It says that the statue was made in Rome by "Polish sculptor Oskar Sosnowski." The most important thing, however, is that the basilica on the Marian Hill has never had and does not have a statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception by Sosnowski (sic!), and thus the photograph depicting the statue was certainly not taken there. In general, it is not known where and when it was taken. It is likely to be an archival photograph, prior to 1939. Meanwhile, Wojtowicz, in order to protect himself from possible criticism, included a note at the end of the book stating that it is a popular science publication. But even in publications of this type, one should provide information that is reliable and, as far as possible, verified, not just phantasmagoria of its author.

Finally, a few sentences about the sculptures mistakenly attributed to Sosnowski by Wojtowicz. The 108th auction of Old Art at the Rempex Auction House on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006 (item 410 in the catalog) featured an alabaster (sic!)

23 W. Wojtowicz, *Oskar Sosnowski skulptor*, p. 385 (text), p. 387 (photograph).

bust of a boy, with dimensions 42 x 27 x 22 cm, which, although unsigned, was advertised as a sculpture by Sosnowski.<sup>24</sup> Clearly damaged, with chipping on the base, stylistically entirely different from the numerous busts of the gifted Volhynian, carved exclusively in Carrara marble, leaves no shadow of doubt that it is the work of another artist. Meanwhile, Walery Wojtowicz included a photo of the bust in both editions of his book, without any description, with the caption: "O. Sosnowski, bust of a young man, circa 1860."<sup>25</sup>

Eight years later, in 2014, Renata Samotyj, an employee of the National Library of the National University "Lviv Polytechnic", wrote in an article *On modern trends in the architecture of academic libraries of Ukraine*, that in the entrance hall of the Scientific Library of the National University "Ostrog-ska Akademia" in Ostrog stands an "antique sculpture" chiseled by Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski.<sup>26</sup> Walery Wojtowicz recognized this sculpture as a statue of the Immaculately Conceived Mother of God. However, from the arrangement of the figure and the folds of her attire, it can be deduced that it is rather a sculpture representing an unspecified saint or a symbolic figure, created much earlier, probably in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which seems to be confirmed by its near-Baroque stylistics. The statue was found by chance in the Ostrog area (in a ditch), badly damaged, with missing parts of the hands. After reconstruction and restoration by a local artist, it was placed in the aforementioned hall, with a plaque placed next to it misleadingly stating that it was the work of Sosnowski.

Walery Wojtowicz, who included the photograph of the statue – without any commentary – in both the first and second editions of his book, was probably not entirely sure whether it was actually Sosnowski's piece, since he put a question mark over his name.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, he had no doubt regarding the attri-

24 When I emailed Rempex management to ask on what basis the auction house's experts considered it to be Sosnowski's work, I received no answer, and the photograph of the bust was removed a few days later from the auction house's website.

25 W. Wojtowicz, *Tomash Oskar Sosnowski skulptura klasycyzmu*, p. 186; idem, *Oskar Sosnowski skulptor*, p. 217.

26 R. Samotyj, *O współczesnych trendach w budownictwie bibliotek akademickich Ukrainy*, „Biuletyn EBIB”, 2014, no 2, p. 1.

27 W. Wojtowicz, *Tomash Oskar Sosnowski. Skulptura klasycyzmu*, p. 226; idem, *Oskar Sosnowski skulptor*, p. 141.

bution of another statue of the Immaculately Conceived Mother of God, standing in the courtyard at the Basilica of the Annunciation of the Lord in Nazareth (Israel), a photograph of which he also published in both editions of his book,<sup>28</sup> lacking any comment, only with a caption under the photo that it is the work of Sosnowski. Unfortunately, this attribution is also not correct. The basilica is a modern architectural structure erected in the 1960s, so not surprisingly, all the design elements and decorations (both inside and outside the basilica) are the work of 20th-century artists. These undoubtedly include the aforementioned statue, which not only has nothing in common with Sosnowski's composition and technique (a completely different arrangement of the figure with wide-spread hands lowered toward the base, but especially a radically different treatment of the Mother of God's dress and mantle and a strongly graphic way of showing the numerous folds). In addition, the photographs of the statue posted on the Internet – especially the view of the damaged fingers of both hands – seem to suggest that the statue was carved in wood (sic!), i.e. from a material Sosnowski never worked with, and then painted white.

Perhaps Walery Wojtowicz recognized this statue as Sosnowski's work, because in the General House of the Immaculate Conception Sisters in Szymanów, there are two very similar statues of *Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception* of almost analogous composition, differing only in minor details. The first, regarding which nothing is known, is a metal casting painted in light beige, set on top of the finial of the brick entrance gate leading to the area belonging to the congregation. The second statue, on the other hand, is located in the monastery building in the hall in front of the gate. The Immaculates received it as a gift from Father Wincenty Siedlecki, rector of the parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Szymanów in 1919, and it is also a metal casting this time painted white.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, Wojtowicz, interested in the former, posted its photograph on one of the aforementioned thirty-two self-published postcards in 2021, traditionally without any commentary, only with the information that it is the work of Sosnowski and is located

28 W. Wojtowicz, *Tomash Oskar Sosnowski. Skulptura klasycyzmu*, p. 141; idem, *Oskar Sosnowski skulptor*, pp. 338–339.

29 Hereby I would like to thank Sister Macieja Kuidłacz, an Immaculata, who provided me with all the information on the two statues.

in Szymanów. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian author was wrong once again. It would be enough to compare the most famous of the statues of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, the so-called Our Lady of Jazłowiec, standing in the chapel in Szymanów with the statue from Nazareth and the one from the postcard, to realize that they could not have been sculpted by the same artist, and certainly not by Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski.

Concluding, one should be happy that the sculptural oeuvre of Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski, after years of oblivion in his native Volhynia, has finally lived to see several articles, a brochure and as many as two books in Ukrainian. On the other hand it is a great pity that there are so many flaws and misrepresentations in them. The reason is that Walery Wojtowicz did not write them with the necessary objectivity, and they also lack a critical approach to evaluating and interpreting the basic facts related to the life and work of the artist he was interested in. Nevertheless, the first step has been taken, and one can only hope that there will be further publications – whether by Ukrainian, Polish, Italian or Russian researchers – devoted not only to Sosnowski (about whose life and work, after all, we still do not know everything), but also of our other sculptors born in Volhynia and working for decades in Rome (especially Wiktor Polearch Brodzki and Antoni Madeyski, still awaiting monographs dedicated to them), which would be characterized by scientific and research reliability as well as responsibility.

**Abstract:** The sculptural works of Tomasz Oskar Sosnowski (1812-1886), a Polish artist born in Novomalyn in Volhynia (modern Ukraine), have been of no interest to both Ukrainian historians and art historians for a long time. The first scholarly and popular articles concerning the artist were published as recently as the 1990s by Yaroslava Bondarchuk. However, neither she nor other researchers knew Sosnowski's date of birth. In 2012, Mykola Bendiuk, based on Igor Teslenko's discovery, published a booklet claiming the date of birth was December 1812. However, Bendiuk's disclosure contains a whole series of inaccuracies and factual errors caused by its author's overly liberal interpretation of unverified information. On the other hand, in 2015 and 2022 Valery Wojtovych, a painter and writer, self-published two editions of his book on Sosnowski. These are the first such comprehensive and significant books in Ukrainian dedicated entirely to the artist. Unfortunately, these (especially the first) are characterized by extreme nationalism, while the factual and interpretative contents are more than unreliable and misleading to the reader. Nevertheless, the first step has been taken, and perhaps soon Ukrainian authors will be encouraged to become more objective when writing about Polish artists born on the territory of present-day Ukraine.

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