

BOOK



REVIEWS



Anna Szkulat, Secesja. Przewodnik dla kolekcjonerów.
Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Arkady, 2012,
311 p.

Secesja. Przewodnik dla kolekcjonerów (The collector's companion to the Art Nouveau) is a handbook to the Art Nouveau style written by Anna Szkulat, PhD in arts and curator of ceramics and glass collections of the Royal Castle in Warsaw. The reviewed book constitutes an extension of the author's field of interest, indicated earlier in her publication titled *Secesja w architekturze Warszawy* (The Art Nouveau style in the Architecture of Warsaw), released in 1999. This time, architecture is only a background element generally introducing the reader to the climate of Art Nouveau times, when the prevailing style influenced all arts and crafts. And it is mainly handicrafts that are extensively discussed in the book.

The introduction of the book reveals the objectives of the publication. Thus *it presents the era and world of the Belle Epoque, with all its articles, shrouded in an aura of mystery, a little decadent. It discovers beauty of original artefacts from the era, that reflect craftsmanship of their creators. It helps to identify, understand and evaluate them. It was written for anyone interested in Art Nouveau antiques as well as for potential buyers.* The book's subject confirms that Art Nouveau has been attracting interest for some time now.

The respective chapters describe the art market, topics related to the conservation of artefacts, the history of Art Nouveau with division into separate centres of the style. The chapter on Art Nouveau on Polish soil deserves special attention. It provides an overview of the most important centres of this style in Poland, noting their characteristic features. The successive sections present interiors, handicrafts, graphics and posters, and everyday objects. For those who want to explore the issue further on their own, the author has prepared a dictionary, a selection of museums in Poland and other countries with permanent exhibitions of Art Nouveau works, a choice of antique shops, auction houses and galleries, and a bibliography and index.

The main aim of the book is to explain what to take into consideration when buying Art Nouveau furniture, textiles, and ceramics. Rich illustrative material is a substantial complement to the text. Additionally, in most cases the book contains information on the auction house and the price at which a particular object was purchased. The publication not only thoroughly introduces the art market of the Fin de siècle artefacts, but it can also be seen as a guide to how to take one's first steps in the art market. It should be appreciated that the author put a lot of effort into presenting the reader with a broader context of the art of this period. Thanks to this, the publication is not a dry how-to book; rather, it is one of the few works that allow us to see the Polish art of that time compared to other European art.

*Piotr Koźurno, The International Center
for Information Management Systems and Services*

