

Heritage of Polish painting and contemporary street art

Audiodescriptions for the blind



This is a collage made by our blind student **Maja Sobiech** and her schoolmate **Małgorzata Bucior**- The poet is reading poetry without lights and colours to the blind ...



Maja Sobiech during the school workshop

A LIST OF SELECTED WORKS OF ART:

- **STAŃCZYK, JAN MATEJKO, 1862**
- **BOCIANY (STORKS), JÓZEF CHEŁMOŃSKI, 1914**
- **PRZECHODZĄCY PRZEZ RZEKĘ (WALKER CROSSING THE RIVER), JERZY KĘDZIORA, 2004**

Descriptions of the works selected to be presented to the blind were prepared in individual classes based on analysis of the requirements for audiodescription

[<http://www.audiodeskrypcja.org.pl>] and after visiting the *Invisible Exhibition* and workshops conducted in the school with the participation of a blind student Maja Sobiech and participants of the project task.

Żyrardów, February 2017

STAŃCZYK, JAN MATEJKO



[https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sta%C5%84czyk_\(obraz_Jana_Matejki\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sta%C5%84czyk_(obraz_Jana_Matejki))

“Stańczyk” is an oil painting on canvas, 88 cm wide and 120 cm long, by Jan Matejko, completed in 1862. The proper title of the painting is *Stańczyk during a ball at the court of Queen Bona in the face of the loss of Smoleńsk*. It happened during the war with Russia in 1514. Since 1924, the painting “Stańczyk” has been in the possession of the National Museum in Warsaw.

The main character portrayed against a dark background in the centre of the painting is the titular Stanczyk, a court jester, dressed in a blood-red outfit, sitting on a chair pensive and worried probably by the fact of the loss of Smolensk by Poland.

Behind him, in the upper right-hand corner of the picture, you can see a red-lit scene of the ball. The foreground is created by an image of a dark brown curtain in the bottom left-hand corner of the picture and a dark diagonal floor space, which is covered with a patterned carpet in brown hues, better lit than the floor itself. Only the bottom left-hand corner lies in a shade.

Although the figure of the jester is in the background, it is the most prominent feature in the painting. He has a typical red fool’s hat on his head, with three horn insets in the shape of triangular cones. Two are placed symmetrically on the sides of his head, sticking out from the head at the height of the ears, slightly bending towards the shoulders. The hat is pointed at the top - its third horn is hanging over the top of the head in such a way that the triangular shape of the fabric is bending down slightly towards the back in the direction of the left



Kamil Kozłowski

is presenting this painting

arm. Small, round golden bells hang from all the three horns of the hat and in the middle of the hat, from the front to the end of the central horn, there is a row of even smaller bells. The hat, covering the entire head, is connected like a hood to a short cape buttoned at the neck and thrown over a red caftan with embroidered sleeves. Stańczyk is wearing very tight pants. The jester's carved wooden armchair is standing slightly sideways, towards the bottom left-hand corner of the paintings. For the viewer, the figure of Stańczyk sitting casually there is arranged in the same way. We see him slightly sideways to the left. The figure takes approximately 3/4 of the height of the paintings. Sitting very comfortable, Stańczyk has casually outstretched, widely spaced legs and feet, clad in red flat shoes with short uppers. The man is resting his elbows on the arms of the chair. He is holding his hands at the height of his abdomen, with the fingers laced together. He is slightly tilted forward and is looking down unseeing. On his long face you can see reverie and sorrow. He has a high forehead and a clearly outlined, aquiline nose and expressive dark eyes. He is a dark-haired, middle-aged man with a short beard and moustache. His ears are hidden under the hat. Only a small piece of black fringe is protruding from under it.

On the left of the chair there is a small, low table covered with a thick dark golden patterned fabric reaching the floor. There is a document lying on the table. On the bottom of it a red stamp is visible. Given the historical context, you can guess that this is a proof of the loss of Smolensk.

Above the table there is an open window, but only the bottom right-hand part of it is visible. It is situated in the top left-hand corner of the painting. In the night sky a few stars and a bright streak, like a comet, are visible, and also a Wawel Cathedral tower. The comet might symbolise an impending disaster.

The shutter, opened to the right, is filled with many small thick hexagonal panes. It is covered with a dark green curtain hanging freely down and reaching the table. On the carpet, on the right of Stańczyk, there is a sceptre. It is a short stick placed slightly diagonally towards the viewer, ending with a spherical, red head.

A dark brown curtain is hanging behind the jester, but the top right-hand part of the painting is illuminated with red light. The artist painted there a scene of the ball, dimly visible through an open door, whose left jamb is covered with a heavy red cloth. In the room you can faintly see a few people standing with their backs to the viewer. On the right, there is a woman in a long dress with a fan in her hand. On her left there is a bearded man. You can see a part of his right profile. His head, covered with a hat, is leaning to the left towards the floor. Behind their backs there are two dwarfs of the opposite sexes. One of them is holding a lute in his hands. At the left door frame you can only see an elderly grey-haired man with a thick grey moustache, who is standing facing the viewer. The face of the jester seems to resemble the face of Jan Matejko himself.

This painting was described by **Weronika Ulewicz**

BOCIANY (STORKS), JÓZEF CHEŁMOŃSKI



[https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bociany_\(obraz\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bociany_(obraz))

“Bociany” (Storks) is an oil painting on canvas, 67 cm wide and 100 cm long, by Józef Chełmoński, completed in 1914. After he returned from Munich, where he had studied, Józef Chełmoński spent many years in Kuklówka near Żyrardów. He was a frequent visitor to the Krasiński Palace in Radziejowice, which now holds the largest collection of his works. The painting “Bociany” is in the possession of the National Museum in Warsaw.

In the chosen painting we can see an elderly man and a boy depicted against the background of a meadow covered with lush grass and tiny flowers. They are watching storks flying high in the sky. Their appearance and the circumstances they are shown in, indicate that they are country people.

The artist didn't care about pronounced contours or detailed presentation. He painted this work with long strokes of the brush, showing no concern for presenting details. The painting is dominated by pastel colours. In the foreground, the man is sitting on the grass with his legs stretched. His centrally placed figure takes almost half of the height of the painting. He is turned aslant towards the bottom left-hand corner. We see him from the perspective of his left profile. He is holding a clay pot with food in his left hand, propping it on his left knee. He is bending his right arm, naturally pressing it to his side, because in his hand he is holding a spoon at the stomach level. He looks as if he stopped eating for a moment and slightly raising his head, is looking at the sky towards the front of a flock of several storks. The ones he is looking at are not visible in the picture. The storks are flying in a V-type formation. The man has wrinkles on the neck and face, a prominent straight nose, small deep-set eyes and a large, slightly open mouth with the corners slightly dropping. The artist hardly marked his eyelashes and eyebrows. The peasant has grey-flecked medium-length hair covering the ears, but of unequal length and carelessly arranged. He is dressed in a whitish-cream, loose caftan with a small collar, reaching almost to his knees, and baggy ankle-length pants. He has dirty bare feet. Beside him, under his right hand, there is a dark

brown hat lying on the ground carelessly turned upside-down. The man must have taken it off during the meal. His face and hair seem sweaty as the picture shows a sunny day.



Karolina Wojtowicz

is presenting this painting

The play of light and shadow is strongly evident on the face, hair and clothes of the man and the boy who is standing on his left, and is also watching the storks in the sky. The boy is tilting his head firmly back, because he is rather looking at the middle than the front of the left-hand side of the flock. He is about 9 years old. He is dressed in the same way as the peasant, but his caftan is looser and girded with a dark green piece of cloth, and his right trouser leg is casually rolled up to his calf. The old man's and the boy's caftans are tied at the neck, but it is not presented clearly, so we can only guess, looking at the yellowish outline of the binding at the neck of the caftans of both of the characters. On his head, the boy is wearing a firmly settled flat hat in brown hues – its rim is dark brown and the rest is a lighter colour. Much of his bright yellow hair is sticking out from under the hat. It is reaching his neck, when he is tilting his head back. The hair is covering his ears. His face is visible only from the left profile. The boy has a petite nose, small deep-set eyes, like the old man, and a rather

big, but closed mouth with slightly dropping corners. Both the boy and the man are tanned, but the boy's cheeks have more pinkish shade. The play of light and shadow is mainly visible on the characters' clothes, creamy and pale pink patches of light in different shades appear on them, and the creases of white cloth become grey.

To the right of the boy, just below the skyline, where there is a row of several huts, a piece of ploughed field is visible, with a pair of oxen working on it, harnessed to the plough. Just a part of the plough can be seen. From behind the silhouette of the first ox you can only see the rump of another animal with a raised up tail as if the ox is chasing off flies. On the horizon, situated just above one third of the height of the painting, behind the backs of the characters, there is a row of several rural cottages visible mainly from the perspective of their large thatched roofs reaching the ground. Only one hut can be seen below the thatch. The visible front wall of the house is the single whitish patch of colour in the background of the horizontally spaced brown roofs. Between the third and fourth house from the left, a very tall leafless tree, like a withered poplar, is visible. At the top, there is a large empty stork's nest. A subtle pink streak is hovering in the sky above the houses. It suggests a sunset or a sunrise. Above the layer of light pink clouds there appears a ragged strip of non-uniform white clouds against the background of blue sky emerging from behind them. The sky under the upper frame has a clear light blue colour. The painting is outstanding in terms of colour harmony. The thatches of the huts, the tree, the nest, the field, the oxen and the boy's hat are brown, and even the peasant's hat is dark brown. Brown appears in this picture in different shades. The brown of the characters' faces and the copper shade of brown of the dish that the old man is holding blend harmoniously with the underdetermined brown colour scheme of the other elements mentioned in the painting. The play of colour shades influenced by sunlight is a characteristic feature of realistic painting in the first half of the twentieth century, represented by Józef Chełmoński.

This painting was described by **Jasmina Kwiecień**

PRZECHODZĄCY PRZEZ RZEKĘ (WALKER CROSSING THE RIVER), JERZY KEDZIORA



<https://www.google.pl/search?q=przechodz%C4%85cy+przez+rzek%C4%99+bydgoszcz>

As the third piece of art we would like to present a balancing sculpture “Przechodzący przez rzekę” (Walker crossing the river) also named “Linokoczek” (Equilibrist), which was placed over the Brda river in Bydgoszcz on the 1st of May 2004 to commemorate the accession of Poland to the European Union. It was created by Jerzy Kędziora, an artist who probably is more famous and appreciated abroad than in Poland. We think that thanks to his new exhibitions organised also in Poland, everybody will soon have a chance to see that Jerzy Kędziora is a first class sculptor, painter, designer and educator, who has set a completely new direction in sculpture. It is a new way of exposing sculptures, as well as a new technology of creating them and a new approach to the concept of the presence of art in public space and its complex relations with the viewers and the environment.

Balancing sculptures by Kędziora are highly admired in Florida, Monaco, Dubai and in Berlin, where is the biggest collection of them. The majority of his balancing sculptures in Poland are in Kędziora’s hometown Częstochowa and in the manor house in Tomaszewice near Cracow, but the most important of them is the one chosen by us for description, because it has become a modern symbol of Bydgoszcz. It shows an about two-metre high figure of a very young naked man wearing a narrow loincloth covering the genitals with a piece of cloth dangling on a piece of string. He has a sporty but not very athletic body and is standing on a 100-metre long rope stretched slightly sideways to the line of the Jerzy Sulima-Kamiński bridge, several metres from its left parapet. Walking along the bridge in the direction of the Old Town, we get from the left side of the Brda river to the right side, where we can see the Old and New Granaries, the boulevard of the old port, Opera Nova and Młyńska (Mill) Island on the east.

The figure of the "Equilibrist" adds more interest to the beautiful panorama of the right side of the Brda River. The walker is turned back to all the objects mentioned above, with his front facing the bank on the opposite side of the river. Standing on the bridge, we see his body very slightly turned towards the parapet with his left arm and side. We see a young man with his body shaped according to the classical canon of proportion, his shoulders, which are not too broad, flat and muscular stomach and nice muscles arranged along his ribs.

His torso is slightly leaning to the front. He is holding his head above more or less 1/3 of the length of the thigh of his bent left leg, on which he is teetering on the rope. The thigh is arranged almost parallel to the rope, and the knee is resting on a 6-meter rod held by the young man in his right hand and set perfectly perpendicular to the rope, about 50 cm above it. The bent leg, supported on the rope, is almost touching the other, straight one. The young man is holding the rod at the height of his knee, which is raised a little below his navel. His right arm holding the rod is only slightly offset from the side of his trunk and stretched to the front, and barely bent at the elbow. The knee is touching the rod. In the other hand, with the arm identically arranged in relation to the trunk and knee, he is holding, as if for balance, an arrow kept in its middle with his two fingers, set parallel to his left side. He looks like a tightrope walker balancing on a rope in one of his spectacular figures. He is maintaining his balance, touching the rope only with one foot, holding it between the big and the second toes.



Marek Chmielewski

is presenting this sculpture

The right leg of the young man is lowered below the rope and stretched perpendicular to it. The muscles of the leg lowered below the rope are visibly tense, the patella in the knee pulled up, the foot fully extended and vertical as if he is dancing on tiptoe, and placed perpendicular to the direction of the rope at right angles to it. On the right shoulder, close to the side of the young man's body, there are straps of loosely hanging Roman sandals, one at the front and the other at the back, at waist level. The head of the figure is visible from the bridge mostly from the left profile. It is slightly raised upwards, the young man is looking far ahead, squinting a little. His face betrays no effort, but rather peace, it has regular features, is rather long and slender, with sharply outlined and slightly protruding chin. The young man has a straight prominent nose and medium sized slightly pursed lips. The upper lip is much narrower than the lower one and almost invisible. The eyes are deep set and placed close to the nostrils. His face gives the impression as if he is watching the place for which he is heading. In the corners of his mouth and on both sides of his nose, the artist carved small wrinkles. The young man has a very thick mop of curly hair arranged in a manner reminiscent of ancient sculptures or of a Renaissance David. It creates a compact structure over the head and the average sized forehead, almost obscuring the ears, and at the back reaching just below the neck line. The hair is layered around the face according to its oval. It encircles its shape with curls twisted down at the ends. It has a deep straight parting in the middle of the head. The parting includes a curly fringe piling up over the forehead in twisted down curls.

In front of the equilibrist, not far from him, a swallow with outspread wings is hanging below the rope, hooked on the rope with its beak. Its right wing is almost parallel to the rope, and the left one is nearly perpendicular to it and strongly inclined to the back.

Watching this extraordinary sculpture balancing on a rope we wonder how it happens that it does not fall. The artist uses the phenomenon of gravity with his talent and scientific consideration. The secret of the figure maintaining a vertical position lies in shifting its centre of gravity below the rope.

The exposure of the *Walker crossing the river*, like of many other similar sculptures, was preceded by many tests in the artist's studio in Poczesna near Częstochowa. The sculptor prepared a detailed documentation of the place where the work was to be installed, and then arranged the place before its suspension. As usual, he was helped by professional climbers in placing the sculpture on a rope.

As the artist puts it, this and other similarly fascinating sculptures live "thanks to the forces of nature." They could be interpreted in many symbolic ways, but it is worth looking at them as suggested by their author, Jerzy Kędziora, "Sculptures I create embody an unreal, though experienced by many people, dream of walking on a rope."

In this sculpture we can find a lot of interesting symbols and hidden messages: for example the German word for "swallow" is "schwalbe", which sounds exactly the same as the surname of the founder of the Pomeranian Philharmonic, Andrzej Szwalbe, highly respected for his outstanding contribution to the development of Bydgoszcz, in this way memorised in the sculpture. Many people associate the figure of the "Walker" with that of the "Spinner", a piece of art created in 1908, which has been a symbol of Bydgoszcz for more than a hundred years, due to the presence of Roman sandals, common for both of them.

This sculpture was described by **Marek Chmielewski**