

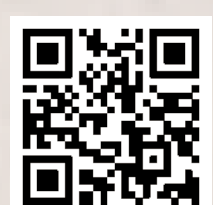
DREXEL WESTPHAL  
COLLEGE OF MEDIA  
ARTS & DESIGN PRESENTS:

# POLISH POSTERS

COLD TRUTH: MASK  
SYMBOLISM IN 20TH  
CENTURY POLISH  
POSTERS

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REFERENCES:



## THE VIRTUAL EXHIBITION

01 Through extensive research, this exhibition explores several artists works and the symbolism they used in posters as propaganda against the Soviet Union in the twentieth century. More specifically, the online gallery focuses on the third generation artists: Andrzej Pagowski, Franciszek Starowieyski, Mieczysław Górowski, Stasys Eldridgevičius, Wiesław Walkuski, and Wiktor Sadowski and their interpretations of mask imagery.

02 Immersed with rich culture and traditions, each poster shown in the collection contains a depiction of a mask that advocated for Poland's independence and or revolted against the Communist rule. Whether the form may be literal or metaphorical, the object represents a deeper and meaningful story about Poland's oppression under the Soviet Union. This visual concept attracted many people as it became a secret game of hide-and-seek to determine the real meaning of the image.

03 However, because of the economic collapse during the late twentieth century, the themes of the Polish Posters became darker, and the designs appeared as uncomfortable and psychologically impacting for viewers to look at. Comparing and examining each artist's work, each had a contributing role to the significance of the Polish posters and its impact on the design world.



GHETTO  
1987, Wiktor Sadowski



KRAKSA (ACCIDENT)  
1974, Franciszek Starowieyski



WIELKI TEATR ŚWIATA (GREAT THEATER OF THE WORLD)  
1989, Stasys Eldridgevičius

“Life without  
objects is  
not possible...  
we are guests  
in the existence  
of things.”  
-stasys  
sidrigevičius

## ABOUT THE COLLECTION

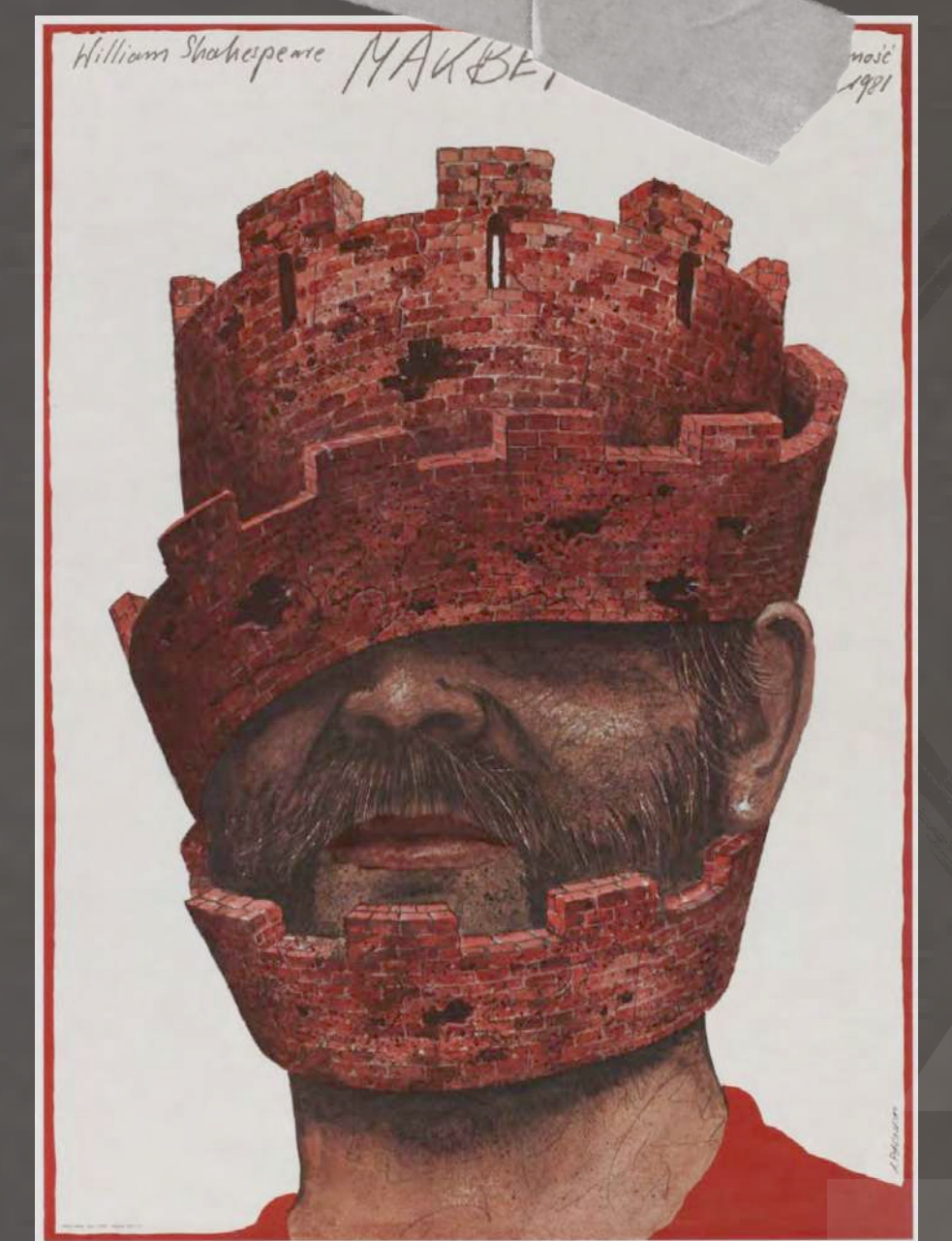
01 Housed in Westphal's URBN Center at Drexel are the Frank Fox Polish and the Kenneth F. Lewalski Polish Poster Collection, which contains around 2,500 posters ranging from the 1930s through the 1990s, the "Golden Age" of Polish posters. While the physical posters are located at Westphal's Graphic Design program, the digital versions of them can be found online. Together, this collection represents one of the largest surveys of Soviet-era Polish posters in an institution in the United States.

02 Led by the Polish School of Posters movement, artists gathered and produced unique designs that advocated for either social or political change. Artists challenged themselves to produce colorful yet clever paintings that passed through the official state censors. The colorful posters were publicly displayed on the kiosks of Polish cities like Warsaw and Krakow, which brought a sense of hope and pride for the people.

## ORIGIN OF POLISH POSTERS

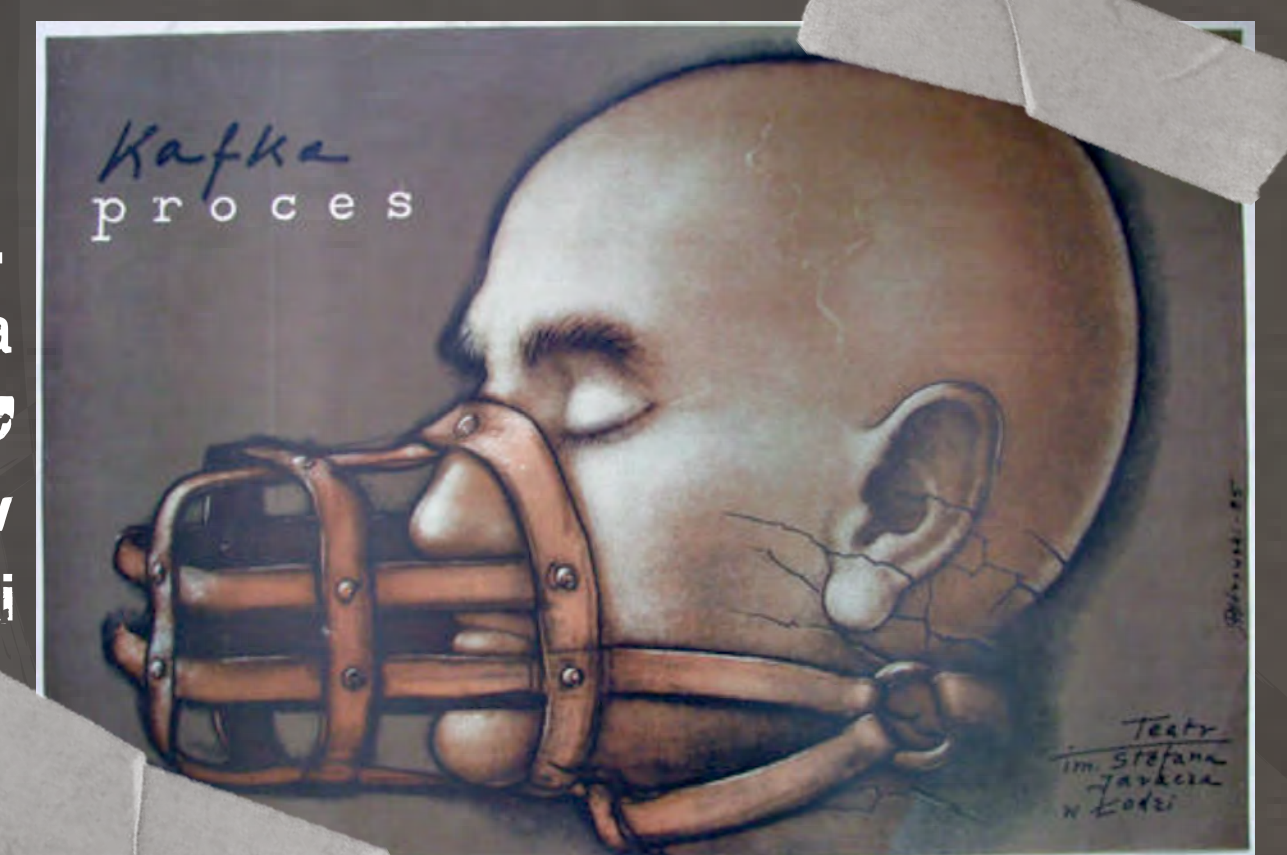
01 Polish posters can be traced back to the 1890s, however, its significance did not make an appearance until the twentieth century when Poland was overtaken by the Soviet Union. Towards the end of World War II, the Soviet Union (USSR) conquered Poland from Germany under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, whose intentions were to spread the ideals of Communism, a movement that envisioned a classless society, and instead, focus on the common ownership of property and wealth.

02 Artists were only allowed to create art through commissions, which were then passed through a censorship that called to eliminate any elements that could cause upheaval or a revolution for the Russian society. Using ironic elements, specific color palettes, and abstract subjects, the poster artists used these methods of visual language to communicate their complex thoughts in the form of a physical image. Recognized as both an art form and a movement, these posters have left a huge impact for the industry of Polish graphic design and the people of Poland.



MAKBET (MACBETH)  
1981, Andrzej Pagowski

“the streets were  
very empty at  
that time...  
it was a  
sad landscape.”  
-mieczysław  
górowski



KAFKA: PROCES  
1985, Mieczysław Górowski



W ŚREDNIM WIEKU (AT MIDDLE AGE)  
1986, Wiesław Walkuski