

# POLIAM

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## Happy Easter!

### Beware of Wet Monday!

## Polish Literary Spring in Twin Cities

## U of Mn Iron Pour

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# Playing with Fire

Michał Staszczak at the 50th Annual University of Minnesota Iron Pour

By/Rozmawialala Natalia Litak

## WHAT IS YOUR CONNECTION TO MINNESOTA AND THE IRON POUR?

Metal casting movement has its roots in the USA, which is why many of these artists are American. Among many others, it's Jack Gron, James Wade, David Lobdell, Kurt Dyrhaug, Coral Penelope Lambert, and Casey Westbrook.

During the 10th edition of our Festival (Festival of High Temperatures Wrocław), we had the pleasure to host Wayne E. Potratz - Professor, who used to work for the University of Minnesota (Professor Emeritus and Scholar of the College Emeritus, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN USA). He is a world-renowned authority in the field of metal sculpture and casting techniques. In Wrocław, Poland, he conducted a workshop dedicated to forming, which incorporates ancient techniques with the usage of natural materials like clay, horse manure, hay, and tow. I have never used such materials and it was really fascinating for me to learn about different methods of creation. Since then, these casting techniques are permanently used in Wrocław Academy of Fine Arts, and there have also been similar workshops during the 11th edition of the Festival.

It's very important for us to be in constant connection with artists that use casting techniques. In 2018, I took part in the 8th International Conference on Contemporary Cast Iron Art in Scranton, Pennsylvania. I met some of the artists that visited Wrocław before, but not only, as I came across people I had met before only on social media. It was a real blast, and it was also the first time I had ever been to the USA. I had the opportunity to present some of my works, talk about it, and take part in workshops.

Wayne Potratz and Tamsie Ringler (University of Minnesota) invited me to take part in the 50th Annual University of Minnesota Iron Pour. It's a big honor for me, because not only do I get to participate, but I also can present my work. I'm not going to get into details, but a sure thing is that I'd like to use ancient methods that I learned from my master, Wayne Potratz. The University of Minnesota has a long tradition in artistic casting. I can't wait to meet some of my fellow artist friends and to meet new people. I hope to learn more about American culture as well.

## FROM WHERE DO YOU DRAW INSPIRATION?

My journey with cast materials started while I was a student and I took part in a workshop organized by Rick Batten. The subject of this workshop was molding, Rick is an American who has lived in Poland for many years. He gained his experience in building and handling outdoor furnace for metal in the USA. These workshops left me inspired by implementing new techniques and the magic of fire.

All I wanted was to build such furnaces in Wrocław. Rick and my friends helped me achieve it - in the next few years, such furnaces were built, first for melting bronze and aluminum. In 2014, I built my first tilting furnace for casting iron. The name of this furnace, the tilting furnace, comes from the special construction I designed. It has a special gear that allows the furnace to tilt and transport liquid iron to a special cast tub.

Forming sculptures for metal castings is very time and energy-consuming. I'm present at every stage of it - that allows me to decide what the final form will look like.

PACIM sponsored Michał Staszczak through PACIM Artist Exchange Fund to participate in the 2019 Annual Iron Pour. Mr. Staszczak (born 1979) graduated from the Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław (Poland). He now runs and teaches in the Casting Studio at the Academy. Since October 2016 he has been the head of the department of sculptural techniques.

He represented Poland during many international symposiums of Metals. He is a board member of the Polish Association of Artists. He is the creator of many nationally and regionally recognized statues in Poland. He leads metal casting demonstrations and workshops including his work as a curator of the Festival of Hot Temperatures in Poland.

Mr. Staszczak invites everyone interested to visit his website [www.michalstaszczak.pl](http://www.michalstaszczak.pl) and the official website of the Hot Temperatures Festival [www.festiwalwysokichtemperatur.pl](http://www.festiwalwysokichtemperatur.pl)



"Crocodile" for the Kalambur Theatre in Wrocław by Michał Staszczak

## THE WORKS

I create sculptures and reliefs using an assemblage technique. I seek my inspiration in the textures of objects that surround me. I use gypsum to retain these textures. Once I have them in plaster form, I cast them again using wax, that way I can multiply, modify, or connect together different elements together. I call such a collection of wax forms my "library." Typically, when I start with a new project I use forms already stored there. When an object reaches its final shape it has to be prepared for its final form, to be cast from metal. In my final work, the sculpting object is entirely made out of metal, the objects that were used during the creation process are not part of it, they're only a memory.

I see the world as a collage of an undefined structure, a collage that's constantly going through many changes. Method of my choice, assemblage technique, allows me to organize elements that create this world in my own way, my sculptures and reliefs allow me to make these objects permanent.

## TELL US ABOUT HIGH TEMPERATURES FESTIVAL IN WROCLAW

In 2007, I discovered that my fascination with fire and creating art using hot temperature solutions are shared by some students and graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts. We decided to create the High Temperatures Festival together. It takes place annually since 2007; in 2019 we will be hosting its 12th edition.

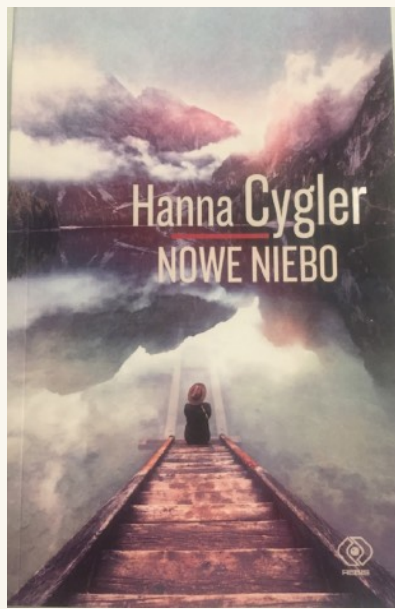
It's an artistic venture organized in the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław. The idea is to create a common area for all kinds of artistry using hot temperatures to create the final object - ceramics, glass art, and metal sculptures. At the Festival, we have workshops for students and audience, performances, exhibits, lectures, contests, and many more. Many works of art are created. The main purpose is sharing knowledge and experience. This exchange occurs not only between artists but also with the audience. For many people it's the first time in their lives to experience the process of creating hot temperature art, to even be a part of this process or create their own masterpiece.

For me, as a curator of the metal section for the last few years and one of the directors of the Festival, one of the most important things is the possibility to invite international artists. They perform and lead workshops, it's an opportunity to learn a lot when it comes to technical solutions and concepts.

Attending the 50th Iron Pour event wouldn't be possible if not for the financial support of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota, for which I thank you. I hope to meet Polonia in Minnesota during the stay there and be able to tell the Polish community about my artistic creation in person.







# Polish Literary Spring in the Twin Cities

Krystyna Borgen on behalf of the Literary Fund.

**Polish literary life in the Twin Cities** has never been better. For both language readers, there is plenty to offer. Monthly book club meetings filled with passionate discussions last long into the evening, author's events are popping up every few months, and the pace and quality of new books flowing into the library can satisfy any reader! Several factors have generated this vibrant scene. The PACIM library is located in a nicely lit and inviting space in the historic Riverview building of St. Anthony Main. The Twin Cities has a strong group of readers actively participating in library life seeking yet more books and meetings with the authors. As a result of the swiftly increasing interest, the Literary Fund was created in 2018 to reserve funds dedicated to sponsor and co-sponsor writer's events.



The PACIM library has already hosted 4 "Meet the author" events. The series started in 2016 when **Hanna Cygler** visited Minneapolis to conduct research for her Minnesota-set novel "Nowe Niebo". This book about Kashubians who immigrated to Winona in the late 19th century is now published, but available only in Polish at the library. We eagerly await an English translation!

In 2017 **Filip Springer** came with the American edition of his novel "Miedzianka". We partnered with Common Good Books, a cozy bookstore in St. Paul for the location of the discussions. This event was quite successful and catalyzed broader collaboration with local bookstores, literary centers, publishers, as well as other Polish culture institutions in the US.



In 2018 there were 2 events. In September **Olga Tokarczuk** visited the North Star State with her newly awarded novel "Flights". The anticipation for her arrival was filled with excitement and heightened by her being recently named as a finalist for the 2018 National Book Award for translated literature. And this right after winning the Man Booker International Prize. The venue provided by the LOFT Minneapolis literary center was well attended by around 150 readers. Among many fascinating topics, Tokarczuk focused on the human psychological condition of modern-day traveling, reflections on life in motion, migrations, and exploration of the human body. Tokarczuk's latest novel "Jacob's Books" is currently under translation and projected to hit US bookshelves in 2020.



On December 1<sup>st</sup> we had 3 authors visit town; **Jacek Dehnel**, the translator of his poetry, **Karen Kovacik**, and co-author **Piotr Tarczyński** met in St Paul's Subtext bookstore on a snowy Sunday afternoon. Although attendance was impacted by the inclement weather, we still had around 40 participants enjoying the discussion on the main topic of the novel "Lala", a cross-generational relationship between a grandmother and a grandson, grasping in the background of several decades of Polish history. Co-authors Dehnel and Tarczyński introduced English readers to their series of crime stories, very popular in Poland, and featuring a female detective, Prof. Szczupaczyńska in XIX century Kraków. We look forward to any possibility of translation of the series.

There is a feeling of renaissance in the translation of contemporary Polish literature. The forecast for 2020 of English editions looks very promising. Several publishers have announced premiers for next year. American editions of Polish writers drive more frequent promotional book tours through the USA, an opening door for us here in Minnesota for more meetings with authors, potential book events, discussions, and of course new titles in the library stacks. Stay tuned for upcoming meetings!

Filip Springer at Common Good Books

Olga Tokarczuk at the Loft

Jacek Dehnel, Karen Kovacik and Piotr Tarczyński at Subtext Bookstore