

## Feliks Manggha Jasieński. “We all dream of reaching the Moon...”

### Summary

Commonly known by his nickname Manggha, Feliks Jasieński, one of the most notable Polish art collectors, is among the most generous benefactors of the National Museum in Krakow. Therefore, a presentation of this interesting figure is preceded by a discussion of the Deed of Donation of his collection to the Museum, dated 11 March 1920. With its nearly 20,000 inventoried items, the collection is a very comprehensive one that reflected the tastes of a man of versatile interests in the humanities, a friend of artists and a passionate national culture activist. Travels across Europe, visits to Germany, France, England, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland and Spain as well as a trip to the Near East had a tremendous impact on Feliks Jasieński's intellectual personality. As a habitué at museums, galleries, artists' studios, theatres, concert halls, opera houses, libraries, antique shops as well as Near East bazaars he was highly involved in the cultural life of key European art circles. Good knowledge of European culture had a major effect on the way his collecting passion developed. It was sparked off by a set of Japanese objects, the embryo of a collection he kept extending throughout his lifetime by embracing more and more art areas. He had wide contacts in the art world and was well-read, particularly carefully studying art criticism. All that paved his way to his own literary activity, which achieved its fullest in the extensive essay *Manggha. Promenades à travers le monde, l'art et les idées*, published at the same time in Paris and Warsaw in 1901. Both the book and its continuation *Polish Manggha*, which was published in 1911 in episodes in “Miesięcznik Literacki i Artystyczny”, a literary and art monthly that came out in Krakow, strengthened Jasieński's position of an art expert. His essay was modeled after *Journal des Goncourt* by the brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, whom Jasieński appreciated a lot, mostly for “...discovering Japanese art for the West”. The title of the book and the collector's nickname are a reference to the title Katsushika Hokusai gave to its sketchbook. Jasieński's *Manggha*, much like the Japanese *Hokusai Manga*, is a collection of miscellaneous sketches. It contains reflections on the sites and people the author had come across, and a number of areas of the broadly defined culture: visual arts, literature, music and philosophy. Presented vividly, in witty style, the essays are surprisingly unconventional in their interpretations that bear witness to the author being a penetrating observer and aesthete, both impulsive and compulsive, who drew lavishly on the European literary heritage and humanistic ideas of the most outstanding intellectuals of the age.

Feliks Jasieński's overall literary output and the collection are a *manga* in its own right: a fruit of his individual likings, passions and sentiments. It reflects fascinating traits of its creator's personality, without, however, disclosing the entire truth about him. The truth was veiled in theatrical costumes and masks but another thing Feliks Jasieński left for us is “the innocent pleasure of unmasking it”.