

Architectural Decorations Printed on Polish Earthenware Objects in the Collection of the National Museum in Krakow

Summary

Ceramic print, which allows us to copy motifs and ornaments mechanically, is one of the most popular decorative techniques used in decorating ceramics. The first decorations of this kind appeared in England in the 1750s, and at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries they started to be used on the Continent. In the beginning decorations were engraved on sheet copper which was later replaced by sheet steel. Printing technology, gradually developed and improved, started to be used on a large scale in a number of earthenware factories. Interestingly, similar ornamentation can be found on the objects produced in different manufactories and different countries, as it was common not only to imitate popular decorations, but also to import ready-made sheets from abroad. The first Polish manufactory to use ceramic print was Ćmielów. According to researchers this happened in the early 1830s. The collection of the National Museum in Krakow includes several dozen Polish earthenware objects with printed decorations. They are decorated with ornamental patterns, genre scenes, landscapes etc., in one or two colours. Worthy of special note are earthenware objects with architectural decorations showing real views or historical sites. Most of them are the views of Krakow and its environs taken from an album by Jan Nepomucen Głowacki. Other common motifs include a view designed by Jan Frey based on a drawing by Zygmunt Vogel and views of Russian cities: Odessa and Saint Petersburg, which decorate earthenware objects from Włocławek. The pieces in question date back to the period between the 1850s and the 1880s.