

On the *Procession to Wawel Hill* by Waław Szymanowski

Summary

On the *Procession to Wawel Hill* by Waław Szymanowski looks at a monumental composition the artist planned to install on Wawel Hill at the site of the former royal kitchen. In his work, the sculptor invoked the romantic concept of rebirth through death. This gigantic procession of 52 statues of historical figures with a deeply symbolic reference to a mythical ritual of communication with the forefathers, which had been held on the holy Wawel Hill, touched upon an issue that was critical for Poles in the first decade of the 20th century: independence regained after over a hundred years under the yoke of national bondage. Although a 1:20 plaster model proved a great success at a Vienna exhibition, the sculpture was never to be executed. Instead, it provoked a heated dispute around what were highly sensitive issues in the 19th century: the artist's attitude to the existing tradition, freedom of interpretation of historical events, and the ambiguous definition of monument sculpture.