

Panorama Raclawicka

The Raclawice Panorama (Polish: *Panorama Raclawicka*) is a monumental (15 × 120 meter) panoramic painting depicting the Battle of Raclawice, during the Kościuszko Uprising. It is currently located in Wrocław, Poland. The painting is one of only a few preserved relics of a genre of 19th century mass culture, and the oldest in Poland. The panorama stands in a circular fashion and, with the viewer in the center, presents different scenes at various viewing angles. A special kind of perspective used in the painting and additional effects (lighting, artificial terrain) create a feeling of reality.

History ... The idea came from the painter Jan Styka (1858 – 1925) in Lwów (Lvov) who invited the renowned battle-painter Wojciech Kossak (1857 – 1942) to participate in the project. They were assisted by Ludwik Boller, Tadeusz Popiel, Zygmunt Rozwadowski, Teodor Axentowicz, Włodzimierz Tetmajer, Wincenty Wodzinowski and Michał Sozański. The project was conceived as a patriotic manifestation commemorating the 100th anniversary of the victorious Battle of Raclawice, a famous episode of the Kościuszko Insurrection, a heroic but in the end fallen attempt to defend Polish independence. The battle was fought on April 4, 1794 between the insurrectionist force of regulars and peasant volunteers (awesome scythe-bearers) under Kościuszko (1746 – 1817) himself and the Russian army commanded by General Alexander Tormasov. For the nation that had lost its independence, the memory of this glorious victory was particularly important.

The National Exhibition, organized in Lwów in 1894, offered an excellent opportunity to realize Styka's idea. Canvas, woven to order, was bought in Brussels, the specially built rotunda's iron structure (designed by Ludwik Ramułt) in Vienna. The rotunda, located in Stryjski Park in Lwów, was ready in July 1893. The huge panorama painting was executed within 9 months, between August 1893 and May 1894. The official opening was on June 5, 1894. Since the very beginning, Panorama of the Battle of Raclawice attracted enormous attention and brought crowds of tourists to Lwów.

After World War II, the painting was brought to Wrocław along with a part of the collection of the Ossoliński Institution. As under the Communist regime the subject was considered politically sensitive, the efforts to have the canvas restored and exhibited, undertaken by successive Volunteer Committees, were successful only after August 1980. Reopened on June 14, 1985, the major attraction of the old Lwów has immediately become the main tourist attraction of Wrocław. Here, contemporary viewers have an opportunity to participate in a unique illusionist spectacle. Among many guests visiting the panorama were Pope John Paul II, Beatrix, Queen of the Netherlands, and Czesław Miłosz, winner of the 1980 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Segments of the panorama are shown below:





Battle of Raclawice

The **Battle of Raclawice** was one of the first battles of the Polish Kościuszko Uprising against Russia. It was fought on April 4, 1794 near the village of **Raclawice** in Lesser Poland. The Polish forces prepared for the battle were relatively small. The Polish Order of Battle was as follows:

Unit	Commander	Soldiers
2 battalions	Infantry Regiment of Czapski	400 bayonet's
2 battalions	Infantry Regiment of Wodzicki	400 bayonet's
2 battalions	Infantry Regiment of Ożarowski	400 bayonet's
1 battalion	Infantry Regiment of Raczyński	200 bayonet's
10 squadrons of cavalry	under Antoni Madaliński	400 sabers
10 squadrons of cavalry	under Magnet	400 sabers
4 cavalry squadrons	under Biernacki	160 sabers
2 auxiliary cavalry squadrons	Duchy of Wurtemberg	80 sabers
<i>2440 men altogether</i>		

In addition, Lesser Poland fielded approximately 2,000 peasants armed with war scythes and pikes, as well as 11 cannons. The outcome of the battle was a tactical Polish victory, with Kościuszko defeating the numerically superior enemy. However, his forces were too small to start a successful pursuit and the Corps of General Denisov evaded destruction and continued to operate in Lesser Poland.

The victory was subsequently promoted in Poland as a major success and helped in starting the Kościuszko Uprising in other areas of Poland and the Warsaw Uprising of 1794. In addition, the participation of peasant volunteers was seen by many as the starting point of the political evolution of Polish peasantry from serfs to equally entitled citizens of the nation.



Emblem of the 303rd Squadron

After the battle, Kościuszko paraded in front of his troops in a *sukmana*, a traditional attire worn in Lesser Poland, in honour of the bravery of the peasants, whose charge ensured the quick capture of the Russian artillery. He also praised Wojciech Bartosz Głowacki, a peasant who was the first to capture the cannon (he is visible in the Matejko's painting, above). Both the red cap worn by his soldiers and the homemade war scythes were later featured on the emblem of the 303rd Polish Fighter Squadron that took part in the Battle of Britain.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panorama_Raclawicka