

Summary

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This article is the first analysis of the unpublished and yet not studied letters of the Kossak family, which has been elaborated by the author of this article in 2015–2016 for the National Archive in Cracow. This article presents the external conditions that had influenced the Jerzy Kossak's personal and artistic attitude. He is considered the weakest representative and the least accepted heir of the artistic Kossak family, realistic painters from 19th and 20th century who were fiercely both hated and loved. The author has elaborated the collection of Kossak family documents and letters (among others the letters of 25-years-old Jerzy Kossak; his then future wife, Ewa Kossak, neé Kaplińska, and their daughter, Maria Woźniakowska, neé Kossak written in the 1930s) and now she confronts them with the literature on the subject by Kazimierz Olszański. She notes also the fact, that Jerzy Kossak didn't left any publications, and there are few memories of his family, students and co-workers only. The interpretation of those letters is now the only way to illuminate this person, and to find the answer to the question, why the painter made such controversial artistic decisions, how did he solve the dilemma, whether to become an apologist of the nobility like his grandfather, Juliusz Kossak, or to follow his father steps in becoming the painter of people and horses, accepted at the imperial court. The author notices also, that Jerzy is almost not mentioned in the extensive (ca. 1400 letters) correspondence between Wojciech Kossak and his wife from the years 1883–1942, published in 1985 by Kazimierz Olszański. There is neither a trace of his first son in Wojciech Kossak's *Memories*, published in 1913. Jerzy is not mentioned by his sisters, a poet Maria Jasnorzewska-Pawlikowska, and a writer Magdalena Samozwaniec who published in 1956 a family saga *Maria and Magdalena*, nor by his cousin, also a writer, Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, who spent with him her childhood, and who wrote a lot about her family's history. There are only a few short information in the pre- and after-war press about the artist who died in 1955. The author analyses conditions that influenced his artistic attitude, his ambivalent family relations and dependences, tries to answer the question, why he gave up his own artistic aspirations becoming until his death merely a copyist of his father's most popular paintings. Did his well-educated and successful father, Wojciech Kossak influence his artistic journey?