

# Plant Ornaments in The Architectural Details of Art Nouveau Townhouses And Villas in Sopot

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**Abstract:** The article presents issues related to the use of floral ornaments in decorations and in detail of Art Nouveau tenement houses in Sopot. The research covered 2 and 3 storey buildings – 14 tenement houses and 4 villas. The research was aimed at isolating the characteristic and most commonly used plant motifs and fragments of the façade on which these motifs appeared. Comparisons of floral motifs and architectural details in iconographic form and in the form of tabular lists are presented. The results of the research indicate that the most frequently used characteristic plant motifs in Sopot are: the dominant acanthus, then field poppy and a group of three plants – water lily, nasturtium and sunflower. Privileged in this respect fragments of the façade are: the zone under the windows and doors (joinery and glazing) and the next in the order of occurrence of plant ornaments are frames and glazing of windows (stained glass).

**Key words:** plant ornaments, Art Nouveau, Sopot

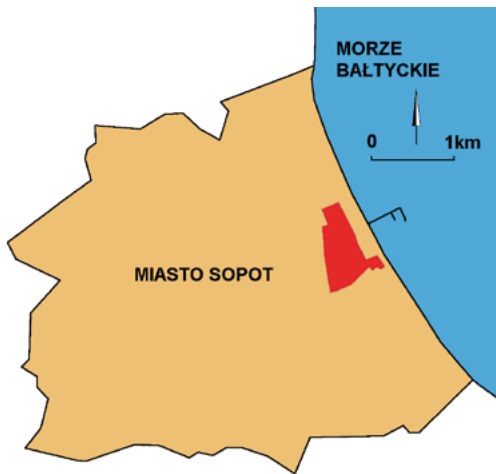
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## Introduction

Art Nouveau objects in Sopot are located in the central district of the city located by the sea and create a specific landscape and spatial context of the city. Of particular importance here is the floral motif, which, when used abundantly, has influenced the considerable decorativeness of the objects. The real flowering of Sopot eclecticism falls on the years just before the end of the nineteenth century and on the first decades of the twentieth century. The extremely fashionable “romantic historicism”, i.e. a style drawing full handfuls from all previous architectural epochs, had all the grounds for lush development in Sopot. Not only the beauty and details of the residential and guesthouse buildings erected at that time were taken care of, but also rich decorations and sophisticated forms of buildings were promoted. The method was simple and consisted in reducing property taxes for those homeowners who decorated the facades so that their form was varied, interesting and unique. In this way, a huge accumulation of all kinds of bay windows, balconies, turrets, galleries, balustrades, cornices and everything that could fit on the facades of newly built houses was brought about.

Art Nouveau also found its place in this system, which appears with its own winding lines not so much in the architecture itself, but in the decoration of Sopot houses. The architectural mix, a style called “Sopot” in the area, gave the city created in 1901 a specific atmosphere, which can be admired and felt to this day. Particularly important in the region of ul: Helskiej, Grunwaldzkiej, Romualda Traugutta, Aleji Wojska Polskiego,

Jana Kilińskiego, 3 Maja, Tadeusza Kościuszki, Dworcowej, Bohaterów Monte Cassino, Obrońców Westerplatte, and Jana Winickiego [Fig. 1, 2].



**Fig. 1.** The area of occurrence of Art Nouveau tenement houses and villas in Sopot. Source: study of P.P. Szumigała

This area was part of the central zone of Sopot. In this zone there is an abundance of objects realized and preserved in the Art Nouveau style, which was the main architectural and artistic trend at the end of the nineteenth century and at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Representatives of the Art Nouveau of Sopot in architectural structures are tenement houses and villas. Many of them have survived to our times, but they are now in different technical condition.

An important area of activity of architects during the Art Nouveau period were facades and architectural details, giving individual and artistic character to the buildings. They were a manifestation of investors' personal preferences, and often expressed the need to demonstrate their social status. The final form and character of the building was a compromise between the current decorating and stylistic trends and the investor's expectations. Famous architects working in Sopot at that time were: Carl Koppershmitt, Artur Frischer, Paul Puchmuller, Fenzloff, Heinrich Dunkel, August Schmidtke, Walter Schulz, Wilhelm Lippke and Walter Schulz (Szyperski, 2000).

The richness of Art Nouveau design and detail required the involvement of specialists in the field of stucco, stained glass, carpentry, woodcarving and blacksmithing. The presented district of Sopot is an example of the development of craftsmanship in this area. The quality of craftsmanship ensured high standards of implementation, artistic objects and architectural objects of Art Nouveau objects. Stylistic differences characterized by individual decorating tastes were recognizable and associated with authors, performers and owners of objects.

## Literature review

The issue discussed in the article was described in the literature, m.in. by Sarzyński (2014), who discussed the specificity of Sopot Art Nouveau architecture in terms of the richness of ornamentation and composition of building facades. In turn, the ornamental values of plants from a botanical point of view were presented by m.in. Mcvicar, Biggs (2007) and Urbański (2001).

Mentions of architectural objects of the Sopot Art Nouveau can still be found in the descriptions of the design activity of architects from the times of Art Nouveau. They described the works of Sopot by Carl Koppershmitt (Danielewicz, 2004, Golec, 2001, 2008). We find bibliographic studies on Paul Puchmuller and Heinrich Dunkel (Golec, 2008) and Wilhelm Lippke (Golec, 2001, 2008; Sperski, 2000; Lasota, 2002). There are also descriptions of the building designed by August Schmidtke, which was included in 14 stunning Art Nouveau buildings in Poland (Lewoc). In the literature, studies on the Sopot secession are few. Therefore, this work can complement and enrich knowledge in this area.

## Purpose of research

The aim of the research is to determine the characteristic floral motifs in the architectural detail of Art Nouveau buildings in Sopot. Research on the architecture of Sopot Art Nouveau is an independent study. It is also a part of national and European research, the aim of which is to determine the characteristics and differences in the use of plant motifs in regional varieties and trends of Art Nouveau architecture in Polish and Europe.

## Materials and methods

The study area included selected parts of the city [Fig. 1, 2]. The subject of the research were facades of buildings and fragments of elevations visible from the side of public spaces – squares, streets and access roads. Fourteen townhouses and four villas were surveyed. The research used the method of case study analysis – based on selected examples in the following aspects: aesthetic, botanical and architectural. The studied objects were subjected to comparative analysis consisting of matching the botanical prototype to the form and content of the architectural detail.

## Results and discussion

Secession brought an unprecedented development of plant motifs, which, due to their special decorative, compositional and chiaroscuro values, became important components of the city landscape and public spaces. Of particular importance were the facades of buildings, which testified to the prestige of the investor or owner. Art Nouveau ornamentation was a manifestation of the tastes of the then elite of Sopot and also served as an identification of public space.

Of particular importance in this respect was the organic structure of the plant detail, which affects the “softening” of the objects of Art Nouveau architecture. The floral detail gave “lightness” and “fluidity” to architectural forms and at the same time expressive helioplasty and rich texture of the façade. Plant ornamentation appeared in almost all elements of the objects erected at that time and the detail inspired by plants was used to decorate various fragments of the façade. In the studied examples of Art Nouveau objects of Sopot, the following places of locating the Art Nouveau detail were distinguished: above the window, under the roof of the Art Nouveau, window frames, stained glass, pillars, balustrades, door and window joinery [Table 1 and 2]. The highest number of repetitions of the occurrence of the detail was recorded for places: under the window and door, as well as the window frame and stained glass [Table 2 and Fig. 3].

A characteristic feature of Art Nouveau is a huge number of decorative patterns inspired by native vegetation – forests, fields and gardens as well as exotic flowers. In the ornamentation of this period appeared: chamomiles, daisies, thistles, dandelions, glaucoma, spurs, snowdrops, crocuses, mulleins, foxglove, bells, lilies of the valley, tares, cornworts, primroses, poppies, mallows, nasturtiums, irises, sunflowers, geraniums, violets, flowers of the vetch, pale white, flowers and fruits of apple trees, mistletoe shoots, maple wings, leaves, inflorescences and chestnut fruits and ears of cereals (Wallis, 1984).

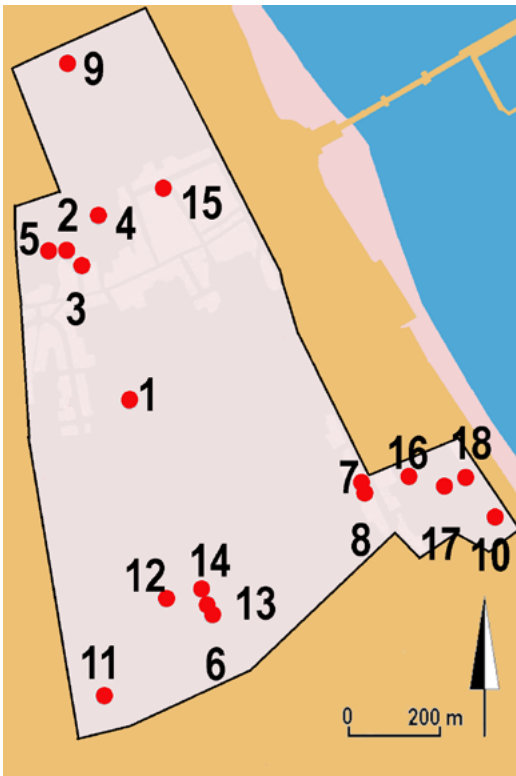
## Plant structures in architectural detail

Research indicates that in Sopot Art Nouveau ornamentation, motifs inspired by bushes, flowers, and trees fashionable in that period were dominant and most often used on building façades. In the surveyed area **10** plants were identified, which were used for elaborating Art Nouveau ornaments decorating various fragments of the façade. These plants are: ***Acanthus*** – acanthus, ***Quercus robur L.*** – oak, ***Cucurbita L.*** – pumpkin, ***Malus Mill*** – apple tree, ***Sorbus intermedia*** – mountain ash, ***Ranunculus L.*** – buttercup, ***Leucanthemum vulgare Lam.*** – mistletoe, ***Viscum L.*** – mistletoe, ***Aesculus Hippocastanum L.*** – chestnut, ***Crocus L.*** – crocus, ***Tropaeolum*** – nasturtium, ***Nymphaea L.*** – water lily, ***Papaver rhoeas L.*** – poppy, ***Carduus L.*** – thistle, ***Typha L.*** – scabious, ***Primula L.*** – primrose, ***Paeonia L.*** – peony, ***Platanus acerifolia*** – plane tree, ***Tussilago farfara L.*** – coltsfoot,

*Clematis L* – clematis, *Convolvulus L.* – ericaceae, *Rosa L.* – rose, *Helianthus annuus L.* – sunflower, *Vitis L.* – vine/grape, *Spiraea* – woodruff, *Tulipa L.* – tulip.

The most common motifs used here were: acanthus leaves, water lilies and field poppies, and nasturtiums and sunflowers [Table 3, Fig. 4].

The analysis of decorative ornaments in the studied area proves that their creators were inspired by specific plant patterns in a very diverse way. After analysing over 110 floral ornaments used in 18 architectural objects in the designated area of Sopot [Fig. 2], 12 plant species were identified as inspiration for the selected designs. Some of the details deviate from their original botanical forms because they were freely processed by the authors. These details took on universal shapes and their identification was possible through their connotation with the then “fashionable” plants in design. To sum up the research, a list of discussed Art Nouveau objects with floral details was prepared, as well as a list of read and recognized relations between selected examples of architectural details and their botanical prototypes [Table 1, 2, 3, 4].









**Fig. 2.** Selected Art Nouveau buildings with a plant detail in Sopot. Numbering of objects according to table1. Source: study of Szumigala, K.O. and Szumigala, P.P.

**Table 1.** List of studied Art Nouveau objects

LP	Street	Object type	Number of floors	Location of the detail	Floral motif	Author, year of construction
1	Chmielewskiego 8 / Kubacza 4	multi-family tenement house	3	above and below the windows on loggias doors	sunflower nasturtium	Carl Kupperschmitt 1904
2	Chopina 7	multi-family tenement house	3	around the window under the roof of the bay window	poppy Leaves of acanthus	No data

LP	Street	Object type	Number of floors	Location of the detail	Floral motif	Author, year of construction
3	Czyżewskiego 6	multi-family tenement house	3	Windows (stained glass windows)	water lily	Artur Frischer 1905
						
				Source: 1 – [13], 2 – [14], 3 – photo: Szumigała P.P. 2020		
4	Czyżewskiego 8–10	Apartment house Villa	2	metal elements doors	nasturtium	1905
5	Czyżewskiego 9	multi-family tenement house	3	under the windows	Leaves of acanthus	No data
6	Dębowa 2	multi-family tenement house	2	Window frames	Oak leaves	No data
						
				Source: 4, 5 i 6 – photo: Szumigała P.P. 2020		
7	Grunwaldzka 68	multi-family tenement house	2	Stained-glass windows doors	scabious water lily	Paul Puchmuller 1905
8	Grunwaldzka 70	multi-family tenement house	3	Window frames	thistle nasturtium	W.W. Fenzloff 1905
9	Haffnera 45	multi-family tenement house	2	Windows (stained glass windows) under the windows	Leaves of acanthus water lily	No data
						
				Source: 7 – [15], 8 – photo: Szumigała P.P. 2020, 9 – [16]		
10	Kilińskiego 12	Multi-family house villa with services	2	Pillars	thistle	Heinrich Dunkel 1906
11	Kościuszki 64	Multi-family house villa with services	2	above and below the windows	poppy Grape vine	1907

LP	Street	Object type	Number of floors	Location of the detail	Floral motif	Author, year of construction
12	Lipowa 9 / Władysława IV	Apartment house Villa	3	Railings doors under the windows	sunflower poppy	August Schmidtke 1904
10			11		12	
Source: 10, 11 i 12 – photo: Szumigała P.P. 2020						
13	Lipowa 14	multi-family tenement house	3	doors	Grape vine	początek XX wieku
14	Lipowa 15	Apartment house Villa	2	Window frames	Leaves of acanthus	Walter Schulz 1904
15	Morska 4	multi-family tenement house	2	Door and window frames	Leaves of acanthus	1907
13			14		15	
Source: 13 i 14 – photo: Szumigała P.P. 2020, 15 – [17]						
16	Parkowa 55	multi-family tenement house	3	Window frames	sunflower	1912
17	Poniatowskiego 6	multi-family tenement house	2	Stained-glass windows	Leaves of acanthus	Wilhelm Lippke 1905 (Szyperski, 2000)
18	Poniatowskiego 8	multi-family tenement house	2	Door carpentry	poppy	Walter Schulz 1903–1904
16			17		18	
Source: 16 – [18], 17 – [19], 18 – photo: Szumigała P.P. 2020						

Source: compiled by Szumigała, P.P.; Szumigała, K.O.

Table 1. collects examples of 2 and 3 storey 14 tenement houses and 4 villas, built in the period from 1903 to 1912, whose authors were German architects. The presented objects are examples in which floral motifs occur in various fragments of the façade and architectural detail.



**Table 2.** Compilation of the places of the Art Nouveau motif

LP	Location-type of the workpiece	Number of repetitions of the workpiece with plant motif	[%] Proportion of the workpiece in the object group investigated
1	above the window	2	7,0
2	under the window	5	17,9
3	on loggi	1	3,6
4	doors	5	17,9
5	around the window	1	3,6
6	under the roof of the bay window	1	3,6
7	metal parts	1	3,6
8	window frame	4	14,3
9	stained-glass windows	4	14,3
10	pillars	1	3,6
11	railings	1	3,6
12	door carpentry	2	7,0

Source: compiled by Szumigala, P.P.; Szumigala, K.O.

The list of examined features in Table 2. shows that the dominant fragments of the façade in which Art Nouveau floral motifs were noted (5x more often) were: the zone under the windows and doors (woodwork and glazing) and then (4x more often) were noted on window frames and window glazing (stained glass). The next preferred places were fragments of window frames and the finials of door openings. The most numerous group of elements for which a floral motif was recorded once were: loggia, window band, area under the cornice above the window, metal elements, pillar and handrail/balustrade (Table 4).

**Table 3.** Compilation of decorative motifs

LP	Plant motives leaf, flower, fruit, stem, branch, stem, etc.	Number of motif locations in the object detail	Number of motifs in the investigated object group	[%] Proportion of the motif in the investigated object group
1	<b>water lily</b> , <i>Nymphaea L.</i>	4	3	12,5
2	<b>oak</b> , <i>Quercus robur L.</i>	1	1	4,2
3	<b>chestnut, (leaves)</b> , <i>Aesculus hippocastanum L.</i>	1	1	4,2
4	<b>acanthus (leaves)</b> <i>Acanthus</i>	6	5	20,8
5	<b>poppy</b> , <i>Papaver rhoeas L.</i>	6	4	16,6
6	<b>nasturtium</b> , <i>Tropaeolum</i>	5	3	12,5
7	<b>thistle</b> , <i>Carduus L.</i>	1	1	4,2
8	<b>scabious</b> , <i>Typha L.</i>	2	1	4,2
9	<b>sunflower</b> , <i>Helianthus annuus L.</i>	5	3	12,5
10	<b>grapevine</b> , <i>Vitis L.</i>	2	2	8,3

Source: compiled by Szumigala, P.P.; Szumigala, K.O.

The analysis of the characteristics in Table 3 showed that the most commonly used plant motif is the acanthus leaf (almost 21% of all examined motifs), followed by the motif of field poppies (16.6%) and in third place is the group of three motifs water lilies / water lilies, nasturtium and sunflower with a result of 12.5%, followed by the grape 8.3%, and the ranking is closed by four motifs: water club, thistle, oak and horse chestnut (Table 4).

**Table 4.** List of botanical prototypes and their equivalent in the architectural ornament of Art Nouveau tenement houses and villas in Sopot.



**horse chestnut, conker tree**  
*Aesculus hippocastanum* L. [1]



Morska 4, [20]



**acanthus (leaves)**  
*Acanthus* [2]



Czyżewskiego 9,  
photo: Szumigała  
P.P. 2020

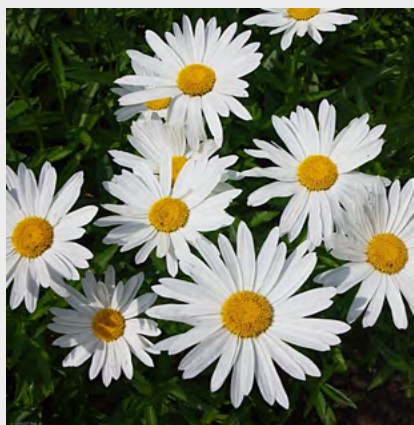


Lipowa 15, photo:  
Szumigała P.P. 2020



Poniatowskiego 6,  
[21]





**ox-eye daisy**  
*Leucanthemum vulgare* Lam. [3]



Chopina 7, [22]



**nasturtium,**  
*Tropaeolum*, [4]



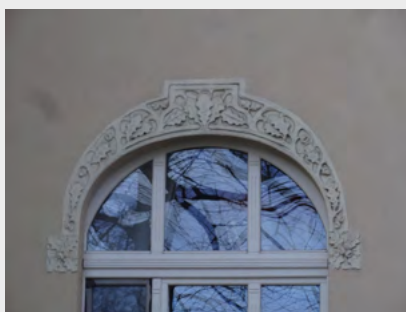
Czyżewskiego 8–10,  
photo: Szumigała  
P.P. 2020



Grunwaldzka 70,  
photo: Szumigała  
P.P. 2020



**oak (leaves)**  
*Quercus robur* L. [5]



Dębowa 2, Źródło:  
Szumigała P.P. 2020



**four-leaf sorrel**  
*Oxalis Deppei*, [6]



Kilińskiego 12,  
photo: Szumigała  
P.P. 2020



Czyżewskiego 6\*,  
photo: Szumigała  
P.P. 2020



**water lily**  
*Nymphaea L.* [7]



Grunwaldzka68, [23]



Haffnera 45, [24]



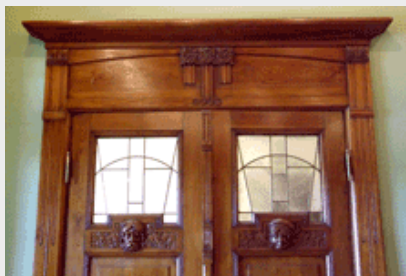


**Poppy**

*Papaver rhoeas* L. [8]



Kościuszki 64, photo:  
Szumigała P.P. 2020



Poniatowskiego 8,  
[25]

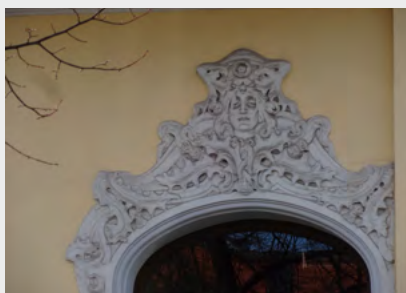


**thistle**

*Carduus* L. [9]



Czyżewskiego 9\*,  
photo: Szumigała  
P.P. 2020



Grunwaldzka 70,  
photo: Szumigała  
P.P. 2020



Kilińskiego 12,  
photo: Szumigała  
P.P. 2020



**scabious**  
*Typha* L. [10]



Grunwaldzka 68, [26]



**sunflower**  
*Helianthus annuus* L. [11]



Chmielewskiego 8/  
Kubacza 4, [27]



Parkowa 55, [28]



**grapevine**  
*Vitis L.* [12]



Kościuszki 64, photo:  
Szumigała P.P. 2020



Lipowa 9 /  
Władysława IV,  
photo: Szumigała  
P.P. 2020



Lipowa 14, photo:  
Szumigała P.P. 2020

Source: by Szumigała, P.P. and Szumigała, K.O.

## Summary

Art Nouveau in the historical architecture of Sopot drew abundantly from the aesthetic values of natural flowers, trees and shrubs. The collection of applied plant motifs was the result of periodic Art Nouveau fashion and local preferences of designers and investors. The architectural detail of the Sopot Art Nouveau is dominated by motifs of acanthus leaves, field flowers (field poppies and sunflowers) and aquatic plants (clubs, water lilies). A particularly popular architectural detail, which was decorated with floral motifs, are windows, doors and stained glass. In the examined sample of Sopot Art Nouveau objects, there is a significant share of objects showing good technical condition of facades and facades. Sopot Art Nouveau presents an individual set of floral ornamentation and architectural details that give this part of the city a special character and spatial and landscape expression. It is also a recognizable trend against the background of Polish secession.



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- [29] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/poniatowskiego6\\_pliki/poniatowskiego2.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/poniatowskiego6_pliki/poniatowskiego2.jpg);
- [30] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/morska4\\_pliki/morska5.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/morska4_pliki/morska5.jpg)
- [31] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/poniatowskiego6\\_pliki/poniatowskiego4.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/poniatowskiego6_pliki/poniatowskiego4.jpg)
- [32] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/chopina7\\_pliki/chopina3.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/chopina7_pliki/chopina3.jpg)
- [33] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/grunwaldzka68\\_pliki/grunwaldzka5.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/grunwaldzka68_pliki/grunwaldzka5.jpg)
- [34] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/haffnera45\\_pliki/haffnera2.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/haffnera45_pliki/haffnera2.jpg)
- [35] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/willaclaaszena\\_pliki/willaclaaszena6.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/willaclaaszena_pliki/willaclaaszena6.jpg)
- [36] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/grunwaldzka68\\_pliki/grunwaldzka2.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/grunwaldzka68_pliki/grunwaldzka2.jpg)
- [37] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/chmielewskiego8\\_pliki/chmielewskiego2.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/chmielewskiego8_pliki/chmielewskiego2.jpg)
- [38] [http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz\\_pliki/sopot\\_pliki/parkowa55\\_pliki/parkowa2.jpg](http://www.muzeumsecesji.pl/podroz_pliki/sopot_pliki/parkowa55_pliki/parkowa2.jpg)

## Ornament roślinny w detalach architektonicznych secesyjnych kamienic i willi w Sopocie

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**Streszczenie:** W artykule przedstawiono zagadnienia związane z wykorzystaniem ornamentów roślinnych w dekoracjach oraz w detalu secesyjnych kamienic w Sopocie. Badaniami objęto 2 i 3 kondygnacyjne obiekty – 14 kamienic i 4 wille. Badania miały na celu wyodrębnienie charakterystycznych i najczęściej stosowanych motywów roślinnych oraz fragmentów elewacji, na których te motywy występowały. Zaprezentowano porównania motywów roślinnych i detali architektonicznych w formie ikonograficznej oraz w postaci zestawień tabelarycznych. Wynik badań wskazują, że najczęściej stosowane w obiektach Sopotu charakterystyczne motywy roślinne to: dominujący akant, następnie mak polny oraz grupa trzech roślin – nenufar, nasturcja i słonecznik. Uprzywilejowanymi pod tym względem fragmentami elewacji są: strefa pod oknami oraz drzwi (stolarka i oszklenia) a następnymi w kolejności występowania ornamentów roślinnych są ramy i przeszklenia okien (witraże).

**Słowa kluczowe:** ornamenty roślinne, secesja, Sopot

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