

Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz

Rules of the S. I. Witkiewicz Portrait-Painting Firm¹

*The customer must be satisfied.
Misunderstandings are ruled out.*

The rules are published so as to spare the firm the necessity of repeating the same thing over and over again.

§ 1

The firm produces portraits of the following types:

1. Type A – Relatively the most ‘spruced up’ type. Rather more suitable for women’s faces than men’s faces. ‘Slick’ execution, with a certain loss of character in the interests of beautification, or accentuation of ‘prettiness.’

¹ This version of The Rules of the “S. I. Witkiewicz” Portrait Painting Firm was originally published in *Witkacy in Słupsk. The “S. I. Witkiewicz” Portrait Painting Firm*, pub. Słupsk 2010. The City Hall in Słupsk (ed.) Beata Zgodzińska & translated by Beata Brodniewicz. We are able to reproduce this extract here thanks to the kind permission of Maciej Kobyliński The Mayor of Słupsk. The text presented here appeared in print in Polish in 1932 and was published by “UNIVERSUM” Printing House, 9 Oboźna Street, Warsaw.

2. Type B – More emphasis on character but without any trace of caricature. The technique is more dab-like than in type A, with a certain touch of character traits, which does not preclude 'prettiness' in women's portraits. Objective attitude to the model.

3. Type B + d – Intensification of character, bordering on the caricatural. The head larger than actual size. The possibility of preserving 'prettiness' in women's portraits, and even of intensifying it in the direction of the 'demonic.'

4. Type C, C + Co, Et, C + H, C + Co + Et, etc. – These types, executed with the aid of C_2H_5OH and narcotics of a superior grade, are at present ruled out. Subjective characterization of the model, caricatural intensification both formal and psychological are not ruled out. Approaches abstract composition, otherwise known as 'Pure Form.'

5. Type D – The same results without recourse to any artificial means.

6. Type E – and its combinations with the preceding types. Spontaneous psychological interpretation at the discretion of the Firm. The achieved effect may be the exact equivalent of that produced by types A and B – the manner by which it is attained is different, as is the method of execution, which may take various forms but never exceeds the limits of (d) A combination of E + d is likewise available on request.

Type E is not always possible to execute.

7. Children's type – (B + E) – Because children can never be still, the purer type B is in most instances impossible – the execution rather takes the form of a sketch.

In general, the firm does not pay much attention to the rendering of clothing and accessories. The question of the background concerns only the firm – demands in this regard are not considered. Depending on the disposition of the firm and the difficulties of rendering a particular face, the portrait may be executed in one, two, three, and even up to five sittings. For large portraits showing the upper body or full figure, the number of sittings may even reach twenty.

The number of sittings does not determine the excellence of the product.

§ 2

The basic novelty offered by the Firm as compared to the usual practice is the customer's option of rejecting a portrait if unsatisfied with its execution or resemblance. **In such cases the customer pays one-third price, and the portrait becomes the property of the firm.** The customer does not have the right to demand that the portrait be destroyed. This clause, obviously applies only to the **pure** types: A, B, and E, **without supplement d** – that is, without any supplement of exaggerated characteristics, or in other words the types that appear in series. This clause has been introduced because it is never certain who will be satisfied with what. An exact agreement is desirable, based upon a definite decision by the model as to the type requested. An album of samples (but by no means 'of no value') is available for inspection at the premises of the Firm. The customer receives a guarantee in that the Firm in its own self-interest will not issue work that could damage its trademark. There may be cases in which the artist himself will not authorize his work.

§ 3

Any sort of criticism on the part of the customer is **absolutely** ruled out. The customer may not like the portrait, but the firm cannot permit even the most discreet comments without giving its special authorization. If the firm had allowed itself the luxury of listening to customers' opinions, it would have long ago gone crazy. **We place special emphasis on this rule, since the most difficult thing is to refrain the customer from making remarks that are entirely uncalled for.** The portrait is either accepted or rejected – yes or no, without any explanations whatsoever as to why. Inadmissible criticism likewise includes remarks about whether or not it is a good likeness, observations concerning the background, covering part of the face in the portrait with one hand so as to imply that this part really isn't the way it should be, comments such as, 'I am too pretty,' 'Do I really look that sad?,' 'That's not me,' and all opinions of that sort, whether favourable or unfavourable. After due consideration, and possibly consultation with third parties, the customer says yes (or no) and that's all there is to it – then the customer goes (or does not go) up to what is called the 'cashier's window,' that is, and simply hands over the agreed-upon sum to the Firm. Given the incredible difficulty of the profession, the Firm's nerves must be spared.

§ 4

Asking the firm for its opinion of a finished portrait is not permissible, nor is any discussion about a work in progress.

§ 5

The firm reserves the right to paint without any witnesses, to the extent possible.

§ 6

Portraits of women with bare necks and shoulders cost one-third more. Each arm costs one third of the total price. For portraits showing the upper body or full figure, special agreements must be drawn up.

§ 7

The portrait may not be viewed until finished.

§ 8

The technique used is a combination of charcoal, crayon, pencil and pastel. All remarks with regard to technical matters are ruled out, as are the requests for touch ups.

§ 9

The Firm undertakes the painting of portraits outside the Firm's premises only in exceptional circumstances (sickness, advanced age, etc.) in which case the firm must be guaranteed a secret receptacle in which the unfinished work may be kept under lock and key.

§ 10

Customers are obliged to appear punctually for sittings, since waiting has a bad effect on the Firm's mood and may have an adverse effect on the execution of the product.

§ 11

The Firm offers advice on framing and packing of portraits but does not provide these services. further discussion about types of frames is ruled out.

§ 12

The firm allows total freedom as to the model's clothing and quite definitely does not voice any opinion in this regard whatsoever.

§ 13

The firm encourages a careful perusal of the rules. Lacking any powers of enforcement, the firm counts on the tact and good will of its customers to meet the terms. Reading through and concurring with the rules shall be deemed synonymous with **concluding an agreement**. Discussion about the rules is inadmissible.

§ 14

Paying by instalments or billing may be possible. Considering the already low prices the Firm charges, requests for discounts are not advisable. Before the portrait is begun, the customer pays one third of the price as a down payment.

§ 15

A customer who acts as 'an agent of the Firm' and refers others to the Firm for jobs in the amount of 100 zlotys or more, shall obtain a premium of the customer's own portrait or that of any person the customer wishes in the type of the customer's choice.

§ 16

Notices sent by the firm to former customers announcing its presence at a given location are not intended to force them to have new portraits painted, but rather to assist friends of these customers in placing orders, since having seen the Firm's work they may wish something similar themselves.

§ 17

It is recommended that customers not unpack portraits after they have been wrapped by the packaging department of the Firm, but have them framed immediately in order to avoid the kind of destruction that has occurred many times.

The 'S. I. WITKIEWICZ' Firm

Price List

Type A = 350

Type B = 250

Type B + d = 150

Type E = 150-250

Type C = priceless

Type D = 100

Children's Type = 150-250