

I Introduction

Apart from the typical museum publications such as collections and exhibition catalogues, it is essential that the National Museum in Warsaw (NMW) put out a regular periodical to showcase the research and documentation conducted by its staff, many of whom are distinguished experts with rare specialties. The large size of our collections and their broad thematic, temporal and geographic range make the museum a superb workshop for these specialists. It is thus all the more important to give them an opportunity to disseminate the outcomes of their work as theses, notices and reports and to launch them on the international academic circuit. Like other prominent museums, for many years NMW had its own periodicals, *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie* / *Annuaire du Musée National de Varsovie* [Journal of the National Museum in Warsaw] and *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie*. Terminating them disrupted our relations with other museums and diminished our rank as a research institution that makes a significant contribution to the world museum community. In this 150th anniversary year, we have resolved to bring back one of our museum's best traditions.

The publication of the first issue of *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie* in 1938 accompanied the opening of the museum in its new building at Aleja 3 Maja in Warsaw. The museum's director, Stanisław Lorentz, who established this annual publication and until 1983 served as its editor and co-editor, sketched out its thematic framework as:

1. theses addressing the historical objects belonging to the NMW and theses lying outside this area, but connected to the museum's collections or activities;
2. materials about the history of museums and collecting in Poland;
3. articles about the work of the museum's conservation studios;
4. accounts of research and educational activities and a chronicle of events and;
5. a bibliography of books and articles touching on the museum and its collections.

Between 1938 and 1992 *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie* published 592 articles written by more than 238 Polish and foreign authors. It was basically a Polish-language publication, but on occasion included texts in French, English, German and Italian, some of them précis of its Polish-language articles. *Rocznik* was one of the most important Polish publications devoted to museum affairs. Next to exhibition catalogues, it was a key place to publish the results of scholarly research conducted at the museum and about works from its collection.

Professor Kazimierz Michałowski, the museum's deputy director, was its co-editor, and in this publication one could distinctly hear two discourses, one about the history of art, mostly Polish, as practised around Professor Lorentz, and the other about Mediterranean archaeology from Professor Michałowski's school. This annual publication submitted to these two great authorities had classic graphic design and kept a safe distance from the artistic and political affairs of the day – and this made it elegant, dignified and hermetic.

It was Professor Jan Białostocki, an internationally recognized art historian, who created a second, radically different museum publication in 1960. The *Bulletin*'s modest and slender notebooks, planned as a quarterly but often published less often as double issues, contrasted with *Rocznik*'s traditional, "heavy" form, bound in canvas, its dust jackets imitating hand-made paper. It was only in its last decade that the *Bulletin* adopted a showier format. It was a foreign-language publication, at first primarily French and later English; some articles appeared in Italian or German to suit a subject or an author's language. Over the years, more than 200 articles about individual works of art, collections and groups of historical objects from the museum's holdings or having a link to works in its collections appeared in it. Thanks to the *Bulletin* editor's widespread contacts, writers from outside Poland contributed to it significantly. Despite its coarse format and inferior illustrations, as well as the unpredictability of its publication dates in the Communist era, *Bulletin* was present in the libraries of all the important museums and cultural institutions across Europe and the world, was acquired by subscription or subscription exchanges and served as the main source of information about the National Museum in Warsaw and its collections. Even though its last issue appeared in 2009, libraries outside Poland continue to ask about it.

In choosing to resume our predecessors' work after this long break, and wanting to combine the best features of *Rocznik* and *Bulletin*, we needed to decide what form this new periodical would take. After intensive discussions we adopted the title *Journal of the National Museum in Warsaw. New Series* and determined that it would be bilingual, Polish-English, and appear as a single volume. We also created a Research Committee, whose members will serve as reviewers for submissions and commission articles. *Raport Roczny Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie* [Annual Report of the National Museum in Warsaw] will take over reporting on the museum's current activities and appear separately.

Let me introduce to you the first in the new series of the *Journal* and to invite you to contribute to it, whether you are an art historian, a conservator or a specialist in another discipline wanting to share the results of your research and your reflections about subjects relevant to the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw, issues in conservation or topics in contemporary museum affairs.

Agnieszka Morawińska

DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN WARSAW