

| Anna Tyczyńska

(18 May 1942 – 14 April 2020)

My earliest memory of Anna is connected with the arrival of what was the National Museum in Warsaw's first photocopier. The machine was installed in the Director's office, where I worked at the time, and I was put in charge of it. Of the many staffers who used this wonder of technology, I remember two, who, on a fine sunny day, showed up in warm shoes and buttoned-up white overalls. Those were Anna Tyczyńska and Krystyna Znojewska. It turned out they both worked in the Painting Storeroom, where, as I'd learn, it was not too warm even in summertime. It was not only their appearance that drew my attention: I also remember an enjoyable conversation with Anna and her warm goodbye smile as well as the keen interest she showed in me, asking kind-heartedly how I was coping with a new job. Over successive visits, I had a chance to talk to her several more times. With time, however, the processions of staffers started making office work difficult, the copier was moved to the corridor, and our meetings stopped. But when in 1990 Director Marian Sołtysiak was leaving and asked me if there was a department where I'd like to work, I immediately chose the Painting Storeroom. Thus, on 1 October 1990, began what would be many years of my collaboration and with time, also friendship with Anna Tyczyńska.

Anna was born in Lviv, but unfortunately could not remember the city, her family having fled it during the war to seek refuge from the upcoming front. Vivid recollections, stories, the characteristic language spoken at her home, meant, however, that she became as familiar with Lviv as if she had always lived there. She used every possible opportunity to visit the city, she even visited her parents' former apartment. She acquainted herself with the historical landmarks, knew the street names and moved freely around; she also collected books about Lviv. Sometimes a single word was all she needed to recognize a fellow countryman. Such meetings made her enormously happy. Her second beloved city was Bielsko-Biała. Situated at the foot of the Beskid mountain range, it became a "base camp" for family excursions. With time, Anna moved on to paths in the Tatras. She came to love those mountains, which she traversed far and wide, and where she returned whenever she could. She completed primary school and secondary school in Bielsko, obtaining her *matura* in 1960. True to family tradition – her father was a doctor – she started studying medicine, but soon realized this was not her path and in 1962 transferred to the Institute of Art History in the Faculty of History of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. In 1967, she defended a master's thesis there, written under the supervision of Prof. Adam Bochnak, "The Ex-Carmelite Holy Virgin Mary Church Known as St Lazarus in Krakow." Another city where she moved to with her family – she married when still a student and gave birth to a son – was Warsaw. She joined the National Museum on 15 July 1971 and worked there until her retirement in March 2004, followed by another year on a freelancer contract (2005).

As a museologist, she learned the ropes at the Xawery Dunikowski Museum of Sculpture in the Królikarnia building, a division of the National Museum in Warsaw. She assisted the then chief curator, Aleksandra Kodurowa, in working on an exhibition commemorating the centenary of the eminent sculptor's birth, titled *Xawery Dunikowski and His Disciples* (1975). She also worked on a series of shows devoted to his disciples. In 1976, a presentation took

place of the works of Antoni Mehl, and two years later, Anna herself curated an exhibition of the sculptures and drawings of Maria Jarema.

In January 1979, she started working at the Painting Storeroom, where she would spend twenty five years, first under the direction of Teresa Mielniczuk, and, following her retirement in March 1982, as its head. She continued to curate, preparing *Polish Timber Rustic Architecture in Painting* for the District Museum in Białystok (later shown also at the District Museum in Ciechanowiec) in 1980, and, in the same year, *Polish Portrait Art from the 1600s–1800s in the Collection of the National Museum in Warsaw* (with Teresa Mielniczuk) for the Museum of Warmia and Masuria in Olsztyn. She worked on a major monographic exhibition devoted to the work of Tymon Niesiołowski, presented in the National Museum's main building in October–November 1982, together with the artist's daughter, Dorota Niesiołowska, a conservation specialist at the National Museum. She also curated for the museums in Gniezno (*Landscape in Polish Painting, 1800s–1900s*) and Piotrków Trybunalski (*In the Circle of Henryk Sienkiewicz's Trilogy*) as well as for the entertainment company Cyrk Polski (*Circus in the Work of Tymon Niesiołowski*). With time, she devoted herself increasingly to work on exhibition and collection catalogues. She participated in the selection of works and preparations for a redesigned permanent exhibition that opened in April 1979 at the Jerzy Dunin-Borkowski Museum in Krośniewice, a division of the National Museum in Warsaw. In 2000, alongside a team of Museum staff, she co-curated the exhibition *To Fortify the Heart*, which accompanied the premiere of the film *With Fire and Sword* based on the eponymous novel (Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy* was one of her favourite readings; she knew Zagłoba's anecdotes by heart and could quote them at will).

She frequently joined in the work of the Polish Painting Department, which the Storeroom was part of at the time. She wrote artist bios and work descriptions for the majority of the Museum's exhibition catalogues, guidebooks, and international presentations. She was also part of the team that edited the catalogue of the exhibition *Artistic Education in Vilnius and Its Traditions* (1996), commemorating the bicentenary of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Vilnius and the fiftieth anniversary of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Mikołaj Kopernik University in Toruń.

Her vast knowledge and quite incredible visual memory (at the Storeroom, she had permanent access to a collection of nearly ten thousand works, which she knew "inside out"; she used to say she never forgot a painting once she had seen it) meant that she became an outstanding expert and unchallenged authority on Polish painting of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In October 1994, at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture and Art's Representative for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad, she joined, as an expert for Polish painting, a committee appointed to discuss – through representatives of the governments of Poland and Russia – the transfers of cultural artefacts during the Second World War. Consequently, she was asked by the Ministry to co-write, with Krystyna Znojewska, a book on wartime losses. Titled *Wartime Losses. Polish Painting: Oils Paintings, Pastels, Watercolours, Lost Between 1939–1945 Within Post-1945 Borders of Poland*, the volume was published by the Ministry of Culture and Art in 1998 (a re-edition with a supplement came out in 2007). In 2012, a second volume was issued under the same title, with the difference that the publisher was now called the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Department of Cultural Heritage.

Anna was extremely meticulous in researching bibliographies, tracing back the histories of entire collections or individual works, recording index files (it was certainly no accident that her family called her the Ant). She was highly knowledgeable not only on art history and iconography, but about literature as well (she knew Greek myths inside out, and

unmistakeably recognized religious or historical scenes, or references to poems, great epics, or legends). She was always keen to share her knowledge with her colleagues. On numerous occasions, she discreetly corrected minor slip-ups, and sometimes more serious mistakes (even by highly acclaimed art historians). She treated her colleagues at the Painting Store-room with great kindness and faith in their goodness, skill, and learning ability. This faith spurred you to work, and sometimes also to continue your education. The bond that she built between her co-workers was underpinned by her ability to listen and a willingness to help in difficult life situations. Anna had great wit and a sense of humour; always with an aphorism or epigram up her sleeve, she was a perfect joke teller. Sometimes a well-chosen quote had a better effect than a reprimand; when one of our colleagues miscalculated and cut back too much on a painting frame, the next day there was a quote on the door to his workshop: "It's easier to thin a stick than to thicken it afterwards." He was never off-measure again. Anna's kindness and openness extended to the Storeroom customers as well. No one was sent back, even if they came unannounced. She gladly helped researchers, sharing her knowledge of the collection and art-historical expertise.

In the course of her professional career, she was promoted to Senior Assistant (1975), Assistant Curator (1979), Curator (1985), and finally Senior Collection Curator (1988); in 1987, she was awarded the Bronze Cross of Merit. Even after her retirement, she sporadically worked on Museum publications, drawing up bios and catalogue notes for the exhibition *Chopin. The Iconsphere of Romanticism* (2010), the *Gallery of Polish Painting* guidebook (2006), and the Vilnius exhibition *Founders of the Lithuanian State. Portraits from the 16th – First Half of the 20th Centuries* (2006).

Anna could not live without work. It was not enough for her to attend all the major cinema and theatre premieres, read the important new novels, or lead an intense social life. She embarked on a close collaboration with the Dom Aukcyjny Agra-Art auction house, to which she had provided expert advice since the early 1990s. She finished working on her last auction catalogue shortly before going to hospital.

There were so many places she still wanted to visit; she was a keen and experienced traveller. She wanted so much to see the Gąsienicowa Alp once again – she said, "I know I'm weak, but slowly, at my own pace, perhaps I'll get there." Alas, she would never again see the view of the Tatra Mountains stretching from the Murowaniec mountain hut, nor her beloved Sicily.

Tamara Richter

Translated by Marcin Wawrzyńczak

Publikacje Anny Tyczyńskiej

I Literature by Anna Tyczyńska

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- 1976 *Antoni Mehl (1905–1967). Rzeźby–rysunki. Wystawa z cyklu: Uczniowie Xawerego Dunikowskiego*, oprac. Aleksandra Kodurowa, Anna Tyczyńska-Skromny, kat. wyst., Muzeum Rzeźby im. Xawerego Dunikowskiego, oddział Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie, 1976, Warszawa 1976.
- 1978 *Maria Jarema, 1900–1958. Rzeźby – obrazy – rysunki. Wystawa z cyklu: Uczniowie Xawerego Dunikowskiego*, oprac. Anna Tyczyńska-Skromny, kat. wyst., Muzeum Rzeźby im. Xawerego Dunikowskiego, oddział Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie, 1978–1979, Warszawa 1978.
- 1980 *Wystawa „Polska wieś drewniana w malarstwie”*, wstęp i oprac. Anna Tyczyńska-Skromny, kat. wyst., Muzeum Okręgowe w Białymstoku, Muzeum Okręgowe w Ciechanowcu, 1980, Ciechanowiec 1980.
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- 1982 *Tymon Niesiołowski 1882–1965. Katalog wystawy*, oprac. i red. Anna Tyczyńska; artykuł wstępny Joanna Pollakówna, kat. wyst., Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 1982, Warszawa 1982.
- 1983 *Cyrk w twórczości Tymona Niesiołowskiego. Z okazji jubileuszu artystów cyrku*, tekst i oprac. Anna Tyczyńska, kat. wyst., Zjednoczone Przedsiębiorstwo Rozrywkowe Zakład Widowisk Cyrkowych „Cyrk Polski”, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie, 1983, Warszawa 1983.
- 1985 *Pejzaż w malarstwie polskim XIX i XX wieku. Katalog wystawy ze zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, oprac. Anna Tyczyńska przy współpracy Krystyny Znojewskiej, kat. wyst., Muzeum Początków Państwa Polskiego w Gnieźnie, 1985–1986, Gniezno 1985.
- 1988 *W kręgu „Trylogii” Henryka Sienkiewicza. Wystawa ze zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, tekst i oprac. Anna Tyczyńska, kat. wyst., Muzeum Okręgowe w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim, 1988, Piotrków Trybunalski 1988.
- 1991 *Artystki polskie*, red. Agnieszka Morawińska, kat. wyst., Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 1991, Warszawa 1991 [biogramy, noty katalogowe].
- 1995 *Elżbieta Charazińska, Ewa Micke-Broniarek, Anna Tyczyńska, Malarstwo polskie w zbiorach prywatnych. Nieznane dzieła wybitnych artystów XIX wieku*, Dom Aukcyjny „Agra”, Warszawa 1995. *Galeria Malarstwa Polskiego. Przewodnik. Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie*, red. Elżbieta Charazińska, Ewa Micke-Broniarek, Warszawa 1995 [noty katalogowe].
- 1996 *Koniec wieku. Sztuka polskiego modernizmu 1890–1914*, red. Elżbieta Charazińska, Łukasz Kossowski, kat. wyst., Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie; Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, 1996–1997, Warszawa 1996 [biogramy, noty katalogowe].
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- 1999** *Dla pokrzepienia serc. Malarstwo, rysunek i grafika z zbioru Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, wystawa z okazji premiery kinowej „Ogniem i mieczem” według powieści Henryka Sienkiewicza, kat. wyst., oprac. Anna Tyczyńska et al., Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 1999, Warszawa 1999.
- Romantyzm. Malarstwo w czasach Fryderyka Chopina*, red. Agnieszka Morawińska, kat. wyst., Zamek Królewski w Warszawie, 1999–2000, Warszawa 1999 [biogramy, noty katalogowe].
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- 2005** *Malarze polscy w Bretanii (1890–1939)*, red. Barbara Brus-Malinowska, Ewa Micke-Broniarek, kat. wyst., Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 2005, Warszawa 2005 [noty katalogowe].
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- 2014** *Stanisław Wyspiański „Dwie dziewczynki”*, [esej Elżbieta Charazińska, nota o obrazie Anna Tyczyńska], Dom Aukcyjny Agra-Art, Warszawa 2014.

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