

# | Anna Frąckiewicz

(17 September 1962 – 3 December 2016)

Anna Frąckiewicz was born on 17 September 1962 in Washington and died on 3 December 2016 in Warsaw. She attended the Jan Zamojski Secondary School and studied at the Institute of Art History of the Faculty of History of the University of Warsaw. In 1992 she defended her doctoral thesis on “Czesław Knothe. His work in furniture and interior design.”

She joined the Centre of Modern Design of the National Museum in Warsaw in 1992. Her interests included interwar furniture design, the work of the Ład Artists' Cooperative and the applied arts of the 1940s and '50s. Due to a lack of interest in Polish design from others in the museum field, she became a near-pioneer in its research and promotion. Her work at the centre consisted mostly of acquiring exhibits for its collection, gathering information about their origins, and learning about the creators of applied arts, decorative arts and design.

Believing that Poland was accomplished in design, which deserved to be studied and admired by the general public, Anna made every attempt to popularize knowledge about it while she herself acquired more expertise in it. It was largely through her efforts that the centre's collections attracted the attention of the press and visitors. In conjunction with the Adam Mickiewicz Institute she often showed the collections to foreign journalists, critics and researchers, informing them about the background and the unique characteristics of Polish design.

Documenting Polish design outside the collections in our museum, in private collections and archives and in public interiors, especially objects and sites threatened by decay but not under conservators' protection, was a pursuit she enjoyed and considered important. She documented the interiors and furnishings of selected buildings belonging to the state administration and the Palace of Culture and Learning in Warsaw. She took part in all the major projects undertaken by the Centre of Modern Design. The first exhibition we prepared together was a monographic one about Wanda Zawidzka-Manteuffel (Królikarnia, 1994).

For years, Anna (Ania) studied the Ład Artists' Cooperative. The extensive documentation she gathered about it paved the way for an exhibition in the main lecture hall of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 1997, which a year later travelled to the Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź. Ania curated the exhibition and edited a publication to accompany it. As the materials she had gathered did not fit into the first volume, last year she began a second one, which was cut short by her illness and death. Her co-editors have continued to work on the book, which the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw is planning to publish.

Writing an article about the Ład cooperative inspired her interest in writing about other subjects that had long fascinated her, including “A study of interiors and furnishings” and “The design of public and private interiors in Poland in the 1930s.” The latter served as a backdrop for the script of an exhibition and catalogue about interwar design at the Stalowa Wola Regional Museum in 2014. Ania's interests also included the architecture of the Warsaw Housing Cooperative, and in 2015 she presented a paper on this topic at a conference at the Centre of Contemporary Art in Toruń.

Ania made significant contributions to all our exhibitions, which would become the core of our permanent gallery of Polish design. For example, the first one, *Towards Modernity*, was presented in 2005 when the storerooms of the collection were being packed for its move from the Officer Cadets School in Łazienki Park in Warsaw to Otwock. It was intended to serve as an important argument in favour of acquiring exhibition space for design. This idea was also

behind the show in Cieszyn and another exhibition, *Scene I*, in the Poster Museum at Wilanów (2007). The *We Want to be Modern...* (2011) exhibition, which delighted Ania, also contributed to the creation of a permanent gallery of Polish design.

Ania's research into the history of our collection included the role of Wanda Telakowska and her activities in the immediate post-Second World War period in the governmental Office of Oversight of Production Aesthetics. She was involved in organizing an exhibition on the 50th anniversary of the Institute of Industrial Design (2001), which assembled objects made under Telakowska's direction.

Crucial to any tribute to Ania is her love of artistic craftsmanship, especially jewellery. Shows she co-curated included *Polish Artistic Jewellery of 1945–50* in Kazimierz Dolny in 1999 (with Agnieszka Kasprzak-Miler). She explored jewellery made not only of silver but also of natural materials, such as unstripped wood, seeds or pasta.

Another of her interests was ceramics. She was involved in editing a catalogue of Polish ceramics of the 1950s and '60s in the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw and a catalogue and exhibition of *Ćmielów* figurines. An exhibition reviewing the work of Marek Cecuła, organized by the Museum of the City of Gdynia (summer of 2016, co-curated with Weronika Szerle), became a great success. Her illness got in the way of Ania's enjoyment of the final display of this beautiful show.

An overview of Ania's museum work must also include future exhibitions that will take place without her. They are the permanent exhibition in the Gallery of Polish Design, which is being set up by our team to open in December 2017, and, further in the future, *Porcelain Figurines*.

For nearly a quarter-century, the three of us formed a harmonious team of the three Anas. She was a diligent researcher and demanded a lot from others, but it was impossible not to appreciate her opinions. She was open, curious about the world and about people, fair and tolerant; she did not judge and did not jump to conclusions. She was a good listener and liked to share her views. As a meticulous, hard-working art historian, she sought knowledge outside art in other areas of the humanities. She was a perfectionist, demanding, especially of herself. Her perfectionism was always present in her professional activities and at times made it difficult to put them into practice. Her rigorous drive to perfection appeared alongside her other personality traits – brittleness, sensitivity and empathy.

Above all, she was a loyal and helpful colleague who willingly jumped into shared plans. She would defend common causes and fight to win appreciation for the unique collection of Polish design in the National Museum in Warsaw and to acquire new space for it. The guided visits she gave of the collection warehouse in Otwock gratified her immensely, connoisseur of the craft that she was.

We will miss the many projects we shared with her: planning the new and eagerly awaited Gallery of Polish Design at the National Museum in Warsaw; expeditions to institutions around Warsaw searching for industrial design and discovering spaces still being planned; trips to and meetings in Łódź, Cieszyn, Krakow and Gdynia to take part in design conferences and festivals. The influence of Ania's museum vision survives in the choice of the exhibits in the gallery, the notes she wrote for its brochure and the choice of photographs and excerpts of newsreels that provide the context to the story of Polish design.

Anna Demska and Anna Maga  
Translated by Maja Łatyńska