

Muz., 2019(60): 267–272
Rocznik, eISSN 2391-4815

received – 08.2019
accepted – 08.2019
DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0013.4675

JÓZEF POKLEWSKI-KOZIEŁŁ (21 APRIL 1937–21 MAY 2019)

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Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum in Bydgoszcz, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

Abstract: On 27 May 2019, we bid farewell to Józef Poklewski, a trusted Colleague and Friend, professor at the Nicolaus Copernicus University (UMK) in Toruń. Born in Kowalewo in the Vilnius Region, following WWII, orphaned by his father Władysław, he moved to Giżycko with his mother Emilia, with whom he felt a strong bond until the very last days. This was his individual feature: the long-lasting character of and reliability in relationships. Following the studies in history of art at the University of Poznań, he became assistant lecturer at UMK, with which he was bonded throughout all of his academic and scientific career. He remained strongly influenced by his teacher and mentor Gwidon Chmarzyński, professor at both universities. In his research Poklewski initially concentrated on Baroque art (doctoral dissertation on the Marian Jesuit Sanctuary at Święta Lipka), gradually more intensely focusing on the topic of the history of art and artistic life, as well as education in art, history of art, and conservation in Vilnius (post-doctoral dissertation) and in Toruń.

An appreciated and dedicated lecturer, at UMK Józef Poklewski performed the function of the head of the Department of the History of Mediaeval and Modern Art, and of the Director of the Institute of Monument and Conservation Expertise; furthermore, he was the University's Senate member. Actively participating in the scientific life, he was tutor of graduate theses, as well as of doctoral dissertations, reviewing also post-doctoral ones; moreover, he organized scientific conferences. Poklewski strongly committed himself to the activities of the Toruń Scientific Society and the Association of Art Historians (beginning from the Secretary, to the President of the Toruń Branch, member of the Main Board, finally becoming its Deputy President). Furthermore, he sat on Museum Boards: at the National Museum in Gdańsk, District Museum in Toruń, and the Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum in Bydgoszcz. Prof. Józef Poklewski died in Toruń, and was buried there, too.

Keywords: Józef Poklewski (1937–2019), Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (UMK), history of modern art, artistic culture in Vilnius, organisation of academic life, cooperation with museums.

Each death comes unexpectedly and prematurely, even if preceded by a long serious disease. Our Colleague, Friend, and Professor, aged 82, passed away on 21 May 2019. Until the very last minutes he had been working on his latest book, introducing corrections, adding details, particular about every single phrase used. His plan was to introduce more corrections upon being discharged from hospital; regrettably, he was not granted that time.

Józef Poklewski-Koziełł represented the leaving generation of scholars, not only in view of his age, but due to the fact that he belonged to the generation well-rooted still in the Second Polish Republic, also recalling the war time and the foreign occupation of the country: in the case of his native Vilnius Region, multiple occupations. He suffered the typical vicissitudes, and let us emphasise that by saying so we do not want to sound trivial, symptomatic and tragic at the

same time, namely the poverty of the wartime, and the loss of his father murdered at Katyń. He was, however, open and friendly-hearted, since he harboured neither hatred nor resentment towards any definite individuals, members of other nations. One could be tempted to say that he understood, which does not go to say, that he accepted, the tragic fate of those 'blood-drenched territories', of Central-European societies, all the historical entanglements, deaths, losses of native territory, uprooting, war violence, and particularly the ideology-driven persecutions. He was free from toxic hatred, but never approved of Communist oppression. Open to others, tolerant of different views, Józef was highly principled when it came to moral choices.

Born at Kowalewo near Brasław on 21 April 1937, he was son of Władysław and Emilia née Bogusławlewicz. Upon the end of WW II, he left his home region, and moved with



1. Józef Poklewski ca 2005

his mother to Giżycko, where in 1956 he passed the final secondary-school exam. He decided to go to Poznań to study at the Adam Mickiewicz University (UAM), choosing history of art. He attended lectures of, among others, Zdzisław Kępiński, also participating in his seminars, whose advanced academic content and discipline were what he would later recall on numerous occasions. However, it was Prof. Gwidon Chmarzyński who had the greatest impact on him, and whom he would often remember in later years. Having obtained his MA degree in 1963, he was offered by Prof. Chmarzyński the opportunity to become his lecturer at the Chair of History of Art (later History of Art Unit) at the Department of Fine Arts, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (UMK), the Professor ran simultaneously in 1959–69. Chmarzyński's bonds with Toruń had stemmed from the inter-war period when he was for several years monument conservator of the Pomeranian Voivodeship (Toruń serving as its capital), as well as the curator of the Toruń City Museum. I am mentioning this on purpose, since Gwidon Chmarzyński was the disciple and continuator of research directions of Father Prof. Szczęśny Dettloff, transferring them with particular methodological sensitivity from Poznań to Toruń. What was characteristic of both was the research into and investigation of the issues of Late Gothic, as well as understanding of and sensitivity to Baroque art. Maybe this was facilitated by a peculiar form of artistic expression of mature and decline phases of the art of Gothic and Baroque.

Initially, in his research Józef Poklewski was faithful to the art of the Baroque, writing about e.g. artists and paintings in Pomerania (Jan Jerzy Petri's oeuvre, monograph on the former Bernardine Church at Zamarte, which belonged to the Kamieniec. Archdeaconry of the Gniezno Archdiocese located on the borderline between Greater Poland and

Pomerania). At Toruń University's Institute for the Study and Conservation of Monuments at the Department of Fine Arts he gave lectures e.g. on the Introduction to the History of Art (together with much regretted Maria Michnowska); moreover, he conducted numerous in-field investigations, giving his students, me being one of them, the basis of the methodology of our discipline. His interests in Baroque art and in issues of historic architecture yielded the dissertation on the pilgrimage church at Święta Lipka, Jesuit Church and Sanctuary of Our Lady bonded with Warmia, though located several kilometres outside its borders, already in the territory of the Lutheran Ducal Prussia (strictly speaking the Duchy of Prussia).

Later Józef would retackle the issues of pilgrimage churches in Catholic Warmia, constituting as if an ideological borderline protecting against the impact of Protestant ideas. His monograph on the Święta Lipka Church prepared under Prof. Chmarzyński was accepted and defended as a doctoral dissertation at Poznań's UAM in 1963, while a year later it was published by the Toruń Scientific Society, in the Series of dissertations of Department 2 by PWN. The Author did not limit himself to narrowly conceived issues of the Church's architecture, décor, and furnishing. He analysed the questions of Baroque art in a broader context: that of art in Central Europe, thus leading to reflections on the architectural oeuvre of Jan Blażej Santini. Returning to modern, namely Baroque art by the end of his life, Józef Poklewski published papers on the Sanctuary of Our Lady in Samogitia's Szydłów, on the painting by Christian Cornelis Schütz in the former Jesuit Church at Stare Szkoty, or on Domenico Trezzini, Peter the Great's architect, who came, like many other active architects in our part of Europe, from the borderline between Switzerland and Italy, namely the Canton of Ticino, who may have acquired his artistic skills in Rome, and created many major edifices in St Petersburg.

In Ducal Prussia Baroque art did not yield too many impressive pieces, the architectural facet of the region remaining dominantly Gothic. A peculiar feature of this territory stemmed not only from densely scattered Teutonic castles (in modern times often serving as seats of fortified town *starost* offices), but also brick-structured towns, featuring high town-hall and church towers. Furthermore, in the provinces the landscape had by then been shaped, too: with villages being established with the Kulm town constitution, characterized by a dense network of parishes, with brick Gothic churches. Even the Jesuits did not raise affluent churches: it was particularly them who adjusted to the existing style in the area, either by slightly modernizing the Gothic churches they took over (like in Toruń or Malbork), or by building simple structures of modest programmes (as in Grudziądz, Chojnice, or Gdańsk–Stare Szkoty), which blended in with the already existing architectural tissue. An exception here was precisely Święta Lipka; picturesquely located, in its form almost ostentatiously echoing Baroque concepts, with its architect Jerzy Ertli having also been related to Vilnius. All of these, all the coincidences, made Józef Poklewski turn towards Vilnius, making him as if return to the country of his childhood. Surprisingly enough, however, not to Baroque Vilnius, so close to our hearts with numerous and valuable sacral and lay complexes, with churches of numerous monastic, male and female orders, as well as with town palaces of grand Lithuanian families.

Instead, Józef's interest turned towards an important, though at the time strongly neglected period in the town's history, namely towards the artistic culture of Vilnius of the 1st half of the 20th century, and more strictly speaking the interwar period. He investigated the questions related to the Vilnius artists, the organizational forms they applied, he wrote about art exhibitions ('Muzealnictwo' 35/1993); furthermore, he tackled conservation services and restoration works they conducted, and he wrote about Vilnius not only as the centre of fine arts, but also as a research centre. Last but not least, he authored numerous biographical notes on Vilnius artists, as well as those bonded with Vilnius, like Zbigniew Pronaszko or Antoni Wiwulski. All these questions centred around the Department of Fine Arts at the reactivated Vilnius University bearing the name of its former founder, namely Stephen Bathory University (USB). Established in 1919 by Ferdynand Ruszczyc, the Faculty, whose professors together with a number of students moved in 1945 to Toruń, provided foundations for the department that continued the Vilnius one, also as far as the direction of research and scope of teaching were concerned. Moreover, Józef dedicated his biographical works to Ruszczyc, he also focused on Józef Kłos: architect, monument conservator, researcher into Vilnius art, author of an excellent guide to Vilnius, actually still used today, professor at the Department of Fine Arts. Poklewski incorporated numerous biographical notes on Vilnius artists into an extensive catalogue of the Exhibition titled: 'Artistic Teaching in Vilnius and Its Tradition', organized as a result of a compromise in 1996 in order to commemorate the jubilee of 200 years of the first in Poland academic chair of painting and drawing, established in 1797 at the instigation of Franciszek Smuglewicz, and the 50 years of the Departments at UMK, established in the autumn of 1945. Earlier, in the preceding months, he had been actively involved in the organization and preparation works for the large exhibition headed by Prof. Jerzy Malinowski and the author of the present essay, under the patronage of the Vice-Chancellors of Toruń's UMK and ASP in Vilnius respectively, displayed first at the District Museum in Toruń, namely in the rooms of the Town Hall in the Old Town, to later move on to the Vilnius Centre of Contemporary Art (Šiuolaikinio meno centras).

A peculiar crowning, though not the completion of those works, can be seen in the extensive synthesis based on sources, press of the period, abundant literature, own

research, prepared over many years, titled precisely and exhaustively *Polish Artistic Life in Interwar Vilnius*, published in 1994 by Wydawnictwa UMK. The book became a reference point for many scholars, while its Author retackled this very topic on many later occasions, almost until the end of his days, adding new facts and interpretations. Close to his heart, the theme stirred strong emotions, and inspired further reflections. The very dissertation turned out to be the basis for the conferment procedure of the post-doctoral degree to Józef Poklewski, subsequently conducted at the Department of Historical Sciences, UMK, a year later in 1995. He was given the associate professor position at his native university on 1 October 1996, which he occupied until 31 July 2010, namely to his retirement.

The next research sphere of Józef Poklewski included the history of institutionalized history of art as a scientific discipline and university subject of studies. He analyzed these issues with reference to the studies at the Department of Fine Arts in inter-war Vilnius, and following 1945, at UMK where at first it was the Chair of History of Culture that was established at the Faculty of the Humanities, while only later, after the studies in the history of art had been closed down as part of the Bierut 'reforms', it was transferred to the Department of Fine Arts, where there simultaneously operated the Chair for the Study and Conservation of Monuments; the employees of the latter did not refuse to conduct research in history of art, applying the discipline's scientific methodology.

It seemed quite natural for Józef to also continue dealing with the oeuvre of the Toruń artists active in the 2nd half of the 20th century; while doing so, he obviously paid special attention to those originating from Vilnius who following WW II together with the whole Department, as mentioned above, moved to Toruń; among them there was Jerzy Hoppen, an outstanding printmaker, and Bronisław Jamontt, a landscapist.

An important portion of all Poklewski's published texts, not only volume-wise, are those dedicated to the deceased researchers. They were meaningful, since in them he was paying tribute to his teachers, mentors, colleagues, and friends. They constituted a testimony to the period, to the times that were becoming the past, the times that he would recall for us representatives of the subsequent generations of art historians. Interestingly, in those recollections on several occasions he retackled



2. Conference dedicated to Prof. Gwidon Chmarzyński, Faculty of Fine Arts, UMK, 2003; from the right: Józef Poklewski, Marian Kutzner, Elżbieta Pilecka, Janina Kruszelnicka, Zygmunt Kruszelnicki



3. Prof. Józef Poklewski during the jubilee celebration in 2008 at the Dąbrowski Palace in Toruń

the figure of Prof. Gwidon Chmarzyński and Prof. Jadwiga Puciata-Pawłowska, the 'great lady' of our circles, in 1969–73 serving as the Head of the History of Art Unit at UMK. Among the other friends Józef dedicated recollections to was Reader Jerzy Frycz, a prematurely dead historian of architecture and monument conservator. Another individual Poklewski wanted to recall was Prof. Jerzy Remer, pre-war conservator of the Vilnius-Novogrodek District, and later on Poland's General Monument Conservator; he was the one who following the war founded the Department for the Study and Conservation of Monuments at UMK, and most substantially contributed to consolidating the impact of the Toruń District Museum; it was for the purpose of the latter that he succeeded in acquiring the entire building of the Town Hall: a sumptuous, enormous Gothic edifice, extended and modernized in subsequent years. Other individuals he commemorated were: Józef Kozłowski, interior architect, artist; much regretted Kinga Szczepkowska-Naliwajek, professor of Mediaeval studies, definitely affiliated with our University circles for too short a time; Prof. Konstanty Kalinowski, Józef's friend from Poznań, an outstanding Baroque art investigator and museologist; Borys Woźnicki, a Lvov historian of art and museologist, with exceptional contributions to the research into the art of Lvov, in particular of the Rococo, and to saving the monuments of art from the First Republic of Poland that belonged to our shared heritage, a task particularly challenging under Communism. As a matter of fact, building bridges between differing parties was an attitude close to Józef, too.

Extensive areas of scientific and organizational spheres that Józef was committed to also served other people; he organized scientific seminars (and personally actively

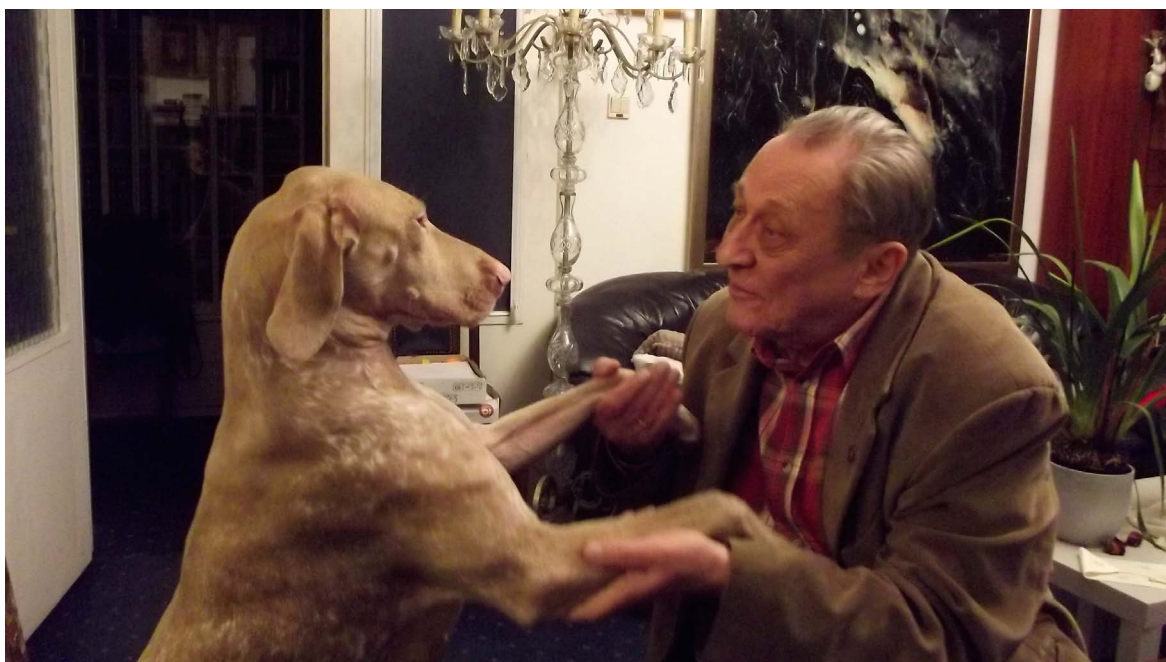
participated in others, both domestically and abroad), these including the one titled 'Art of Toruń and the Chełmno Region' held in 1983 on the jubilee of the 750th anniversary of granting Toruń the town constitution. He was editor of collective studies, these including the museum catalogue of Jagiellonian University (UJ) Professor Wiesław Litewski's collection the latter donated to the University, housed at the University Museum, the catalogue published in 2002. Moreover, of museological character was the written opinion on the Ślędziński Gallery in Białystok J. Poklewski submitted in 2004. He also published reviews of many other papers, these including an extensive list of his reviews of MA theses written at UMK, as well as doctoral and post-doctoral dissertations written not only at UMK, but also at a number of other Polish universities. As a reviewer, he would always emphasise the volume of work the author of the thesis put into it, merits of the text, researcher's effort, reluctant to form negative opinions; this being one of the more indispensable traits of his character.

Józef unchangeably enjoyed the reputation of a good teacher among students, sharing his passion with freshmen, particularly his passion for the art of the Polish Republic's eastern territories, and its two civilizational, cultural, and artistic centres: Lvov and Vilnius. As part of his university courses, he also ran that of history of modern art in the Polish territories.

Józef Poklewski performed numerous organizational and administrative functions at UMK, having served for many years as Head of the History of Art Unit, and following its division, of the history of Mediaeval and Modern Art. For two terms of office he was the Director of the Institute for the Study and Conservation of Monuments, always aiming at a compromise and a consensus on often challenging issues and problems, incessantly enjoying respect and authority. This very thing in itself, strengthened by his personality and predispositions, was a substantial accomplishment.

A substantial section of his public activity was constituted by his contribution to the scientific movement. Upon my return to Toruń to become junior lecturer after a brief break due to my work at the National Museum in Poznań, Józef was Secretary of the Toruń Branch of the Association of Art Historians (SHS), at the time presided by Jerzy Frycz. As a consequence of the election in the spring of 1979, Józef Poklewski took over as President of the SHS Toruń Branch, while I was elected member of the Board, taking over after Józef the position of the Secretary. Four terms of office later, in 1987, I was given the responsibility of the Branch's President; meanwhile, in 1989, Józef left for the Main Board of SHS, sitting on it for many terms of office, until 2011, in the meantime also performing the function of Deputy President. On 23 October 2009, as a result of the decision of the General Assembly of the Delegates of the Society's Branches, he was awarded the prestigious Honorary Membership of SHS.

Józef was an active member of the Scientific Society in Toruń, while in the Commission of the History of Art he served as a secretary for many years, later its Chairman, taking over after Prof. Zygmunt Kruszelnicki. Finally, he became President of Philological – Philosophical Department 2: it is within its structure that the Commission operated and published an important periodical titled 'Teki Komisji Historii Sztuki TNT'



4. 2018

(Fot. 1, 2 – A. Skowroński; 3 – J. Raczkowski; 4 – A. Saar-Kozłowska)

with exceptionally interesting studies published dealing not only with the mediaeval and Pomeranian art topics (though these dominated). Furthermore, which may prove significant to 'Muzealnictwo' Readers, he sat on Museum Boards: at the National Museum in Gdańsk, District Museum in Toruń, and the Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum in Bydgoszcz.

In 2008, at the instigation of Józef's Friends and Colleagues, the Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK (UMK Scientific Publishers) released a commemorative *Album amicorum*.

Między Toruniem a Wilnem [Album Amicorum. Between Toruń and Vilnius] dedicated to Józef on his 70th Birthday, and edited by Elżbieta Basiul, the then Director of the Institute of for the Study and Conservation of Monuments, and at the time lecturers: Piotr Birecki and Juliusz Raczkowski (currently already professors), employees at the Unit of Mediaeval and Modern History. It contained a complete bibliography of Prof. Poklewski's scientific publications prepared by Małgorzata Wawrzak and Juliusz Raczkowski.

To conclude, we cannot refrain from presenting the book on which Józef Poklewski was working until the end of his days, the one mentioned at the beginning: *Studies in Vilnius History of Art and Culture in 1900–45. Selection of Texts*, edited by Prof. Elżbieta Pilecka, Alicja Saar-Kozłowska (Professor's last doctoral student), and Małgorzata Wawrzak, who completed the bibliographical list with the latest items. Almost all the studies refer to earlier texts, however these had been thoroughly transformed and completed, with some literally written anew; respective Chapters are titled: *Vilnius under Political Conditions of the Turn of the 20th Century*; *On the Insignia and History of the Stephen Bathory University in Vilnius in 1919–39* (the latter two papers written anew); *Artistic Education at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the*

Stephen Bathory University in the Inter-war Period; *Cultural and Artistic Life in Vilnius in 1899–1919*; *Contribution to the History of Artistic Vilnius in the 1920s and 1930s*; *Designs of the Monument of Adam Mickiewicz in Vilnius in the Light of the Then Opinions, Criticism, and Press Polemics*; *Vilnius Artistic Exhibitions in 1919–1939*; *The 'Vilnius School' and Its Assessment by International Art Critics*; *History of Art in Vilnius*; *Artistic Organizations and Institutions Taking Care of Art in Inter-War Vilnius*; *Vilnius-Novogrodek Conservation District*; *Professor Juliusz Kłos (1881–1933): an Architect, a Conservator, a Teacher*. At the moment when I am writing this paper the book is finishing to materialize; when you, dear Reader, shall read these words, it will be available at the UMK Wydawnictwo Naukowe, and in libraries. It will be worth your attention and reading.

At the very beginning I mentioned that Józef belonged to the generation of researchers becoming the thing of the past. He did not use typewriters, he did not use the computer: he wrote and edited all his texts by hand, with a refined and beautifully shaped handwriting I never stopped to admire. He boasted a wonderful memory for facts and individuals, whom he showed respect and attention. He always had time for others, often to his own disadvantage. He served as a liaison between the previous generation of researchers and the today, enabling continuation within our discipline, supporting our self-awareness, which is such an important element at the time of the disintegration of institutions, traditional forms, and customary ways. It is the memory of such individuals that allows us to survive.

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Word count: 3 370; **Tables:** –; **Figures:** 4; **References:** –;

Received: 08.2019; **Reviewed:** –; **Accepted:** 08.2019; **Published:** 09.2019

DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0013.4675

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Competing interests: Authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Cite this article as: Woźniak M.F.; JÓZEF POKLEWSKI-KOZIEŁŁ (21.04.1937–21.05.2019). *Muz.*, 2019(60): 267–272

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