

The staff of the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów remember Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek not only as a person endowed with an extraordinary memory for dates and events from the near and far history, an ardent admirer of the splendour of the British royal house, a master of anecdotes and an art historian with a flair for researching customs, but also as a person of exceptional kindness, gifted with a practical approach to complicated matters and ready to assist others with both her knowledge and her rich life experience.

Krystyna was born in Warsaw, in the midst of the turmoil of war, which certainly influenced her later fortitude and resourcefulness. One of her earliest memories was that of the forced evacuation of women and children from Warsaw in 1944, in which she took part as a four-year-old girl under the care of her mum and a 'down-filled pillow' she took with her, which was for her the only substitute for home and a memory of family warmth. The journey could have ended tragically, as little Krysia contracted scarlet fever. A young German soldier took an interest in the girl lying in a fever and, out of the kindness of his heart, every morning, noon and evening brought her a glass of red wine (this was during the the foot column was forced to halt near Fukier's wine warehouse), believing in the healing power of the beverage. Krysia recovered. On the last day before the column marched out, the soldier came to say his farewells – forever. As an adult, Krystyna many times gratefully recalled this story as a testament to the complexity and ambiguity of human nature.

From this and similar stories spun in moments of short breaks at work, there emerges a picture of a woman curious about the world and about others. Her interests were always linked to art, with which she associated her entire professional life. She obtained her diploma in art history in 1964 at the Faculty of Art History of the University of Warsaw, with her Master's thesis written under the supervision of Professor Władysław Tomkiewicz. It is necessary to mention here her great respect for the authority of the eminent doyens of Polish art history – Professor Jan Białostocki, Professor Andrzej Ryszkiewicz, Professor Jerzy Lileyko, Professor Kazimierz Żygulski, Professor Mariusz Karpowicz, which characterised her both at the beginning of her career and at its end, when, as an independent researcher, she made some attempts to debate their theses.

She started working at the Wilanów museum in 1963, guiding tours. She was still as a student then, a year before her graduation. During this time, radical changes were taking place at the museum. The underfunding of Wilanów estate in the pre-war period and the looting of the palace

KRYSTYNA GUTOWSKA-DUDEK (1 JANUARY 1940– 22 DECEMBER 2022)

IN MEMORIAM

*Anna Kwiatkowska,
Joanna Paprocka-Gajek,
Dominika Walawender-Musz*

*Museum of King Jan III's Palace
at Wilanów*

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during the Second World War left the residence in a disastrous state. The ceremonial opening of the Wilanów Palace (then a branch of the National Museum in Warsaw) after partial restoration took place on 10 September 1962; two days later, on the anniversary of the Relief of Vienna, the palace was opened to the public. The renovation and reorganisation work undertaken implemented a new concept for the palace's function, and a new concept for the museum and its exhibition. It was a difficult yet fascinating period when the new vision of the museum was being implemented, and the remnants of the dispersed collections and equipment remaining in the palace were being selected. The Wilanów Museum presented its first exhibition in newly restored interiors, enriched with newly discovered Baroque paintings, with few works of art and modest furnishings coming largely from the collections of the National Museum. Recovered paintings from the Wilanów Collection were gradually being returned, as was furniture seized by the German occupiers. The collections needed to be recorded, subjected to conservation procedures, and made available to countless tours.

Krystyna joined the flow of the palace life with the enthusiasm of a neophyte. In her thoughts and stories she often returned, with admiration and a hint of nostalgia, to the times when the then director of the museum, Wojciech Fijałkowski, was overseeing all renovation, conservation and exhibition work from the dawn hours onwards, often rolling up his sleeves himself and working with his team.

Accompanied by the team of the Art Department, Krystyna was gaining her first professional experience at that time, documenting, among others, the collection of paintings and participating in the establishment of the Polish Portrait Gallery, which from 1963 became the Palace's showpiece for many decades. She collaborated with senior colleagues in compiling the catalogue *Portrety Osobistości Polskich znajdujących się w pokojach i w galerii Pałacu w Wilanowie*, published by the National Museum in Warsaw in 1967.

The work ethos she acquired at the time, combining (due to the shortage of staff) substantive work with purely technical work, would surface in later decades, when the existence of the notorious 'drawer', inherited by Krystyna from Irena Voisé, became an open secret in the museum. Inside the drawer, those in need could find screwdrivers, hammers, clams, tape measures and cords, in short, all tools needed to hang paintings; tools that always go missing a moment before the 'H-hour'.

When the direction of necessary renovation and conservation works was discussed at the threshold of the twenty-first century, the subject of the necessity to verify and modernise the exposition was also raised, which involved, among other, the liquidation of the Polish Portrait Gallery in its traditional form (its elements appeared among the exhibits of the new permanent exhibition 'The Potocki Collection'). In order

to immortalise the values of the traditional concept of exhibiting paintings, which was becoming a thing of the past, Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek undertook the monumental work of creating a publication that was designed as a 'memento' of the Gallery: *Portret polski. Tradycja i świadomość historyczna* (2012). The sophisticated graphic design was created in collaboration with graphic artist Professor Maciej Buszewicz, which is worth noting as the book was awarded the 2013 Klio Prize in the editorial category.

To return to the 1970s: in that period, Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek's research interests focused on pastel painting, which resulted in two articles: 'Dwa pastele Anny Rajeckiej ze zbiorów wilanowskich' (1971) and 'Louis Marteau i jego portrety uczestników obiadów czwartkowych' (1975). The latter was published a year after the author changed her workplace, transferring to the National Library in Warsaw. She would return to her favourite subject matter on many more occasions, including in her book *O pastelach i jego mistrzach* (1982), in a presentation entitled *Nadworny pastelista króla Stanisława Augusta – Louis Marteau* delivered during the meeting of the Conservation Session of the National Museum in Warsaw in 2003, or, years later, in the booklet *Zbiór pastelów w kolekcji pałacu w Wilanowie*, published in 2018 in the series '200 years of the Wilanów Museum'.

In moments of reverie, she used to say that if she ever had the opportunity to commission her portrait from a prominent artist, she would choose the pastel medium. She was captivated by the uniqueness and transience of this technique, which combines the precision of drawing with the flair of painting, delighting the viewer with the intensity and luminosity of colours and with the freedom of artistic expression. The speed of execution and – a point which she raised with a wink, making a tongue-in-cheek remark about the financial condition of Polish museum professionals – the relatively low costs were also important. She sincerely admired the pastel masters: Rosalba Carriera, Louise Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, Emilia Dukrzyńska-Dukszte or Anna Rajeczka and she knew their biographies by heart, in great detail, treating them almost like bosom friends.

Employment at the Iconographic Collections Department of the National Library from 1974 to 1982 allowed Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek to broaden her professional specialisation and personal interest in drawing.



Fig. 1

A meeting with Irena Voisé, then going into retirement.

From the left: Anna Kwiatkowska, Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek, Barbara Szelegajd, Irena Voisé, Wilanów, before 1990

This resulted in further publications: ‘Odnaleziony rysunek Elżbiety z Mirysów Zawadzkiej’ (1976) and ‘Zespół rysunków do sztuki baroku w Rosji w Bibliotece Narodowej w Warszawie’ (1980). This subject remained close to her heart, and she returned to it a dozen years later, for example by compiling catalogue entries presenting the most valuable drawings from foreign school to be found in the Polish collections for the study *Master European Drawings from Polish Collections* (Washington 1993).

It was during this period that she began work on what was perhaps the most important work of her life, a four-volume catalogue listing the many thousands of drawings from the Wilanów collection donated to the National Library by the owners of Wilanów in 1932, entitled *Rysunki z wilanowskiej kolekcji Potockich w zbiorach Biblioteki Narodowej*. The selection of published pieces includes 2,000 drawings with illustrations and descriptions. The first volume appeared in 1997, the last in 2004. Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek outlined the profile of her interests and methodology in her signature article ‘Zbiór rysunków z dawnej kolekcji wilanowskiej w Bibliotece Narodowej w Warszawie’, published in *Studia Wilanowskie* (1981). There is a dramatic story associated with the work on the catalogue. It turns out that it took so long to publish not only because of the diligence and meticulousness of the author, but also because of the loss of her laptop, with two volumes of the almost completed work. These were the early days of digitisation and the backups that are common today, including data clouds, were not in everyday use, so all research had to be reconstructed from handwritten notes. Years later, Krystyna recalled the debacle with humour, saying that these volumes turned out to be even better than the others, as she had to climb to the heights of her synthesising skills and, for the shortage of time, consolidate the texts; and this, as she herself admitted, was not her strongest point.

In 1993, after almost twenty years, Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek returned to work in Wilanów as senior curator of the Art Department. She was entrusted with the care of the painting and sculpture collection.

The three-hundredth anniversary of the death of King Jan III, which occurred in 1996, was a high-ranking event in Wilanów. Its spectacular success – i.e. the second prize awarded by the Minister of Culture and the Arts in the category ‘Event of the Year 1996’ – was the achievement of Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek, author of the scenario and co-organiser of the exhibition entitled *Tron Pamiątek ku czci „Najjaśniejszego, Niezwyciężonego Jana III Sobieskiego Króla Polskiego”* [The Throne of Memorabilia in Honour of ‘The Most Serene, Invincible King of Poland’]. She also took part in the preparation of the exhibition catalogue, compiling some of the items in the areas of painting, drawing, prints, sculpture, as well as weapons and metalwork.

Many items written by her were included in the catalogues of later Wilanów exhibitions, such as *Boginie, Muzy, Bachantki...* [*Goddesses, Muses, Bacchantes...*] (1999) and its continuation *Bogowie, Herosi, Śmiertelnicy...* [*Gods, Heroes, Mortals...*] (2002) as well as national exhibitions such as *Malarstwo na miedzi / Painting on Copper*, organised by the Copper Museum in Legnica in 2003, or *Gdańsk dla Rzeczypospolitej w służbie Króla i Kościoła* [*Gdańsk for the Commonwealth in the Service of the King and the Church*] in the Historical Museum of the City of Gdańsk, in 2004.

The two-part publication *Kolekcja wilanowska* (2005) and *Kolekcja wilanowska. Kontynuacja 1993–2011* (2012), co-authored by Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek, who prepared entries on 41 paintings, provided an opportunity for the first presentation of some of the most valuable works of art kept in the Wilanów collection. It was undoubtedly more attractive and in-depth than any previous study and constituted a *sui generis* celebration of an important moment in the history of the Wilanów Museum: the bicentenary of its educational activity. The celebrations included as its integral part also an exhibition on the process of shaping the collection entitled „*Grand Tour*”. *Narodziny kolekcji Stanisława Kostki hr. Potockiego* [*‘Grand Tour’. The Birth of the Collection of Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki*]. The exhibition catalogue, in which Krystyna Gutowska compiled a collection of engravings, drawings and European paintings, was published in 2006.

In the same year, a catalogue *Madonnas in the Wilanów Museum*, compiled by Krystyna Gutowska in collaboration with Dominika Walawender-Musz, was published by the Wilanów Museum. The album is known to have had countless colour corrections, because the ambition of both authors, strongly supported by the museum’s directors, was colour perfection measured by sameness with the ‘actual state’. Many of the persons involved in the works on this publication will long remember the endless consultations of art historians, conservators, photographers and graphic designers, during which almost every square centimetre of test printings was painstakingly analysed and approved. All that was done *in situ*, in front of the paintings, in the local light. The final effect can be assessed in the book itself.

Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek also made her mark in the development of the collection of paintings in the publication *Zapomniane „leonardiana” w zbiorach wilanowskich. Problematyka konserwatorska* accompanying the exhibition *Zapomniane „leonardiana” w zbiorach wilanowskich. Problematyka konserwatorska* [*Secrets of Two Cupids. Forgotten ‘Leonardiana’ in the Wilanów Collection*] and published by the Museum Palace in Wilanów in 2007. In the following years, she worked on works by Louis de Silvestre present in the Wilanów collection and on the portrait collection. Her last published work was an article entitled ‘*Madonna del velo – historia obrazu*’ (2019) published in volume 26 of *Studia Wilanowskie*.

Figl. 2

Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek
during the CODART
convention in Paris, after
2004

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Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek was member of the International Council for Curators of Dutch and Flemish Art (CODART) since 2003; she participated in the work related to the congress and scholarly tour dedicated to the collection of Dutch art in Poland in 2004. She is author of the article ‘The Dutch and Flemish paintings from the collection of Jan III Sobieski housed in Wilanów Palace Museum’, featured in *CODART Courant* (no. 8, 2004). She also participated in the CODART congress in Paris held in 2007. The invitation to become a member of this important international organisation focused on Dutch and Flemish art was particularly important to her and was a kind of seal of approval and appreciation of her research and popularisation work. She considered it to be a symbol of a new era, a time of openness to the world, the emergence of new scientific possibilities. As she well remembered the world behind the Iron Curtain, she was able to appreciate the scale of change far more fully than her younger colleagues, saying with nostalgia that she had been born a little too early.

A memorial for both the creator of the Wilanów museum and the authors of the first pioneering study devoted to the painting collection, Irena Voisé and Teresa Pocheć-Perkowska, is Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek’s text *Muzeum sztuk pięknych i pomnik chwały narodowej, czyli Galeria malarstwa europejskiego i polskiego Stanisława K. Potockiego w pałacu*

króla Jana III w Wilanowie (typescript). So far, it is still in draft form, but there are plans to edit it and bring her work to a successful closure.

Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek's last day of work at the Wilanów Palace was the one when the state of epidemic was officially declared during the Covid-19 pandemic. That was when most of us saw our 'Pani Krysiénka' for the last time. The effects of her work remain in the form of studies, notes and publications. They will be the inspiration for future work on the Wilanów collection.

Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek was buried in a family grave at the Piaseczno cemetery (sector J1, row 19, grave 6).

PUBLICATIONS

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Fig. 3

Krystyna Gutowska-Dudek

Między światem mitów i legend a współczesnością. Louis de Silvestre – nadworny malarz królów Polski z dynastii Wettynów (Warszawa, 2015).

(with Elżbieta Modzelewska, Joanna Strombek, Paweł Kozakiewicz) ‘Madonna del Velo z przedstawieniem kardynała Paola Emilia Sfondratiego ze zbiorów wilanowskich w świetle ostatnich prac badawczych i konserwatorskich’, *Studia Wilanowskie*, vol. 26, 2019, pp. 119–152.

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Cooperation preparing the exhibitions

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Piękno za woalem czasu (Wilanów, 2001).

Bogowie, herosi, śmiertelnicy... (Wilanów, 2002).

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Typescript

Muzeum sztuk pięknych i pomnik chwały narodowej, czyli Galeria malarstwa europejskiego i polskiego Stanisława K. Potockiego w palacu króla Jana III w Wilanowie.

Membership

International Council for Curators of Dutch and Flemish Art (CODART), since 2003.

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ANNA KWIATKOWSKA

orcid.org/0009-0009-4284-6737

Art historian, senior curator with 47 years of experience of work in the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów (in 1992–2005 as head of the Art Department); custodian of the clock and furniture collection. Author of publications on medals, furniture, Saxon chinoiserie, carriages, clocks and the history of Stanisław Kostka Potocki's collecting activity. She studies the archival sources of the cultural activities of the owners of Wilanów.

Contact: akwiatkowska@muzeum-wilanow.pl

JOANNA PAPROCKA-GAJEK

orcid.org/0000-0003-0170-7051

Graduate of the Art History Department at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, author of a doctoral dissertation on the history of the Warsaw silver-plating industry in the years 1822–1914. Her research interests focus on the history of tableware, customs and the collecting activity of Stanisław Kostka Potocki and his descendants. Awarded in the Professor Fr Szczepny Dettlof Competition and in the Hanna Szwankowska Competition “Varsaviana 2013–2014”. In the years 2006–2022, Head of the Art Department of the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów. Author of scientific and popular science articles; editor-in-chief of the Wilanów Studies scholarly periodical.

Contact: jpaprocka@muzeum-wilanow.pl

DOMINIKA WALAWENDER-MUSZ

orcid.org/0009-0003-7282-1844

Graduate in Philosophy and Art History, she focuses her research interests on the birth of scholarship in natural sciences (translation and commentary on *De sex dierum operibus* by Thierry of Chartres) and Renaissance painting theory, with a particular focus on Alberti's theory of expression. Employed at the Art Department (since 2003) as a curator, she curates the collections of European paintings and wall paintings (and, before that, sculpture) and successfully

continues to explore issues in art theory, supplementing them with practical aspects. In this spirit, she undertook postgraduate training in journalism and cultural management. Author of articles on paintings from the museum's collection. Scientific editor and editor-in-chief of museum publications. Curator and co-curator of temporary exhibitions and a permanent exhibition of painting at the Museum of King Jan III's Palace. Her interests also include poetry, verbal culture, and the semantic boundary between word and image.

Contact: dwalawender@muzeum-wilanow.pl

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