

Commentary on the chapter devoted to exhibitions of Beksiński's works

There have been numerous exhibitions of Beksiński's works which I was able to organise on my own, without any support. There have also been many exhibitions organised on the initiative and at the expense of other institutions and persons, in which I merely took part by lending my paintings or sharing the costs of framing, packing into boxes, transport, catalogue issue, vernissage arrangement, insurance of works or paying for their supervision.

The first exhibition I organised myself took place in Paris, in the autumn of 1985, in Valmay Gallery, rented from Jan Leszczyński, on a very well-situated Seine Street, in the sixth district. In this part of the city there are a few dozen art galleries which attract all the artistic circles of Paris.

This exhibition is described in full detail in my book „Struggle for Beksiński”. It was held for 3 weeks.

The second exhibition in the same gallery I organised a year later, in the autumn of 1986, so as to get out of debt that I had incurred during the first one. This exhibition was held for a month.

Then, the third exhibition in Valmay Gallery, which also lasted one month, I organised in the autumn of 1988.

I organised all the three exhibitions and paid for everything by myself, covering the costs of rent, framing of paintings, transport, insurance, text translation, catalogue issue, posters, advertisements in the press and on billboards, renovation works in the gallery, which was completely run-down and had no electricity, as well as the costs of the supervising staff etc.. Throughout the exhibition I also received the guests on my own, putting my work at the University and lawyer's office aside.

In the meantime, in 1987, I exhibited several paintings by Beksiński in „L'Evasion” gallery in Versailles; in the same year I exhibited the artist's drawings in the Polish Institute in Paris and over twenty of his paintings at the Orly Sud Airport near Paris. Then, in 1988 I organised a big exhibition in the seat of UNESCO in Paris. In 1988 an exhibition in Ars Polona in Dusseldorf was held, and in 1989 I exhibited Beksiński's works in „Galerii de Lelie” in Anvers (Belgium). I include these exhibitions in those organised on my own, because despite the fact that the premises were sometimes made available to me free of charge – by

UNESCO, Orly Sud Airport, by Ars Polone, and then by the Polish Institute in Paris, it was me who ordered and paid for the framing of works, their transport, insurance, production and distribution of posters, issue of catalogue, issuing and sending of the invitations, having a cocktail party at the vernissage and providing for the supervision staff (with the exception of Ars Polona, where the staff were paid by them and „Galerie de Lelie”, where I had to pay the rent, but the vernissage itself and supervision staff were paid by the gallery.

The exhibition in „L’Evasion” Gallery was held on the initiative of its owner, who proposed it to me as she was a great fan of Beksiński.

Also the exhibition in „Galerie de Lelie” was organised on the initiative of its owner, Mr Renders.

The exhibition in the Polish Institute in Paris was organised on my initiative and approved by its director at the time, Ms Marszałek-Młyńczyk.

The exhibition in UNESCO was also organised on my initiative, on the approval of the representative of Poland in this institution, Mr Zabłocki.

The exhibition in Ars Polonais was probably organised by Ars Polona and its director, Ms Wolska, the son of whom, Mr Bimer - an artist, was the author of the model layout for the first volume of my album about Beksiński.

As far as I remember well, it was the Orly Sud Airport, and not me, which organised the exhibitions of Beksiński’s works in their place.

Then, in 1989 I decided to open my own gallery on Quincampoix street in Paris, near Pompidou centre. Previously it was the district of prostitutes and knife-wielding assailants. However, since the time when Pompidou was built in its very centre, many galleries have opened here and from this point of view the place showed promise, although it cannot be compared to the prestige of the Seine Street. That is why I built (in the literal sense of this word, as there was nothing except for barn floor, no electricity, and the dark unplastered premises were used as a banana ripening room) a gallery at my own expense and in the best way I could. I called it „Galerie Dmochowski, Musée-Galerie de Beksiński”, as the only purpose was to finally have a place where I could exhibit Beksiński’s works permanently, without being dependent on the others and without asking anybody for anything.

In this gallery I exhibited the artist’s new works, as they were created, in four separate exhibitions (1989, 1991, 1992-93, 1994), providing a poster, catalogue and

advertisements in the press. Apart from that, in the very picturesque basement was held a permanent exhibition of Beksiński's 12 paintings, which lasted six years. I and my wife were the only staff to receive guests and take care of the works. Every day we travelled there from Paris, where we lived, and stayed from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. I almost completely quit my job in the lawyer's office, and at the University I reduced the number of my lectures to minimum.

Apart from Beksiński, in my gallery I exhibited works of many artists who, similarly to Beksiński, believed in strong expression (Szajna, Starowieyski, Henricot, Russev etc.).

After six years, in 1995, I had to close the gallery as it was 100% loss-making. I did not get back any of the enormous costs I put in the building (which almost made me bankrupt), as due to the economic crisis at that time I could not find a successor who would pay me the compensation. So thanks to me the owner of the building made a very good deal as instead of a dark, damp hole that the place had been before he took over beautiful, empty premises with marble floor, plastered walls and ceiling, equipped with electricity, sewage system, refurbished cellar, concrete floor and walls covered with sandstone boards, with lavatories, an alarm system and electrically-activated glass door grille etc..

Then, in 2003 I started this virtual gallery on my website, which was also aimed at propagating the art of Beksiński in the company of artists who because of strong expression were close to him.

Here I exhibited three old and new paintings and drawings by Beksiński, and now, two years after the artist's death, I also present photographs from his youth. The whole financial burden connected with the providing of scans, graphic layout, computer preparation, translation of introductory texts etc falls solely on me.

I do not have and have never had any sponsors who would support me financially.

So much for the exhibitions which were „exclusively” (or almost exclusively) organised by me.

Apart from that, however, many times I exhibited Beksiński's works in co-operation with other people or institutions. In such cases the whole burden or at least its greater part was taken by those people or institutions.

This was the case of the Community Centre in Metz, the director of which, Mr Banas, having seen the exhibition in Galerie Valmay, undertook initiative to

organise an exhibition at his place. So in 1987 I lent him several paintings to be shown at a big individual exhibition. My role was limited to that. It was Mr Banas who produced invitations, paid the insurance costs and at the expense of his institution organised a vernissage and supervising staff. As far as I remember well, they also paid for packing into boxes and transport of works.

The same happened in case of Hans Hartel, a wealthy German industrialist who had his own, small museum in Freising in Germany, near Munich. He became acquainted with the art of Beksiński through my album and in 1992 undertook his own initiative to exhibit several Beksiński's paintings, which he had lent from me. He also sponsored a catalogue containing different texts ordered from art reviewers and reproductions of the artist's works, paid for professional packing and transport of the paintings, their insurance, vernissage, advertisements in the press as well as supervision staff. My role was limited solely to a speech that I had at the vernissage (to which he invited me, paying for a luxurious hotel for me and my wife).

Then, the same happened in case of Lindner, the director of „Panorama Museum”, in Badfrankenhausen, east Germany. He also came became acquainted with the art of Beksiński through my album. That is why he proposed to organise a big exhibition at his place. I lent him about a hundred of Beksiński's paintings. The exhibition took place in 1997 in an unusual building of this weird museum. This time I also did not participate in any costs, as „Panorama Museum” paid for everything, including the packing into boxes, transport, insurance, posters, invitations, a beautiful catalogue, advertisements in the media, vernissage and all the other costs. My role was to negotiate a contract and arrange different formalities connected with transport.

It was similar in case of an individual exhibition of several paintings by Beksiński in Saint Sebastien sur Loir in 1999.

In the meantime, many times I exhibited one or a few paintings by Beksiński at collective exhibitions in Paris or outside Paris. In such cases I had to pay for the transport and (in most cases) the right to exhibit the works. Sometimes paying the insurance belonged to my duties and on another occasion it was paid by exhibition organisers. The rest (staff, renting the premises, vernissages, posters, invitations etc.) was the responsibility of the exhibition organisers. It was like that almost all the time, except for „Mac 2000” salon, where apart from paying the cost of stand hiring, for a week I had to receive visitors on my own, as each person hiring a stand where they could show several works had to supervise it in person. Such collective exhibitions included: „Soyez camera” in Cannes, during the Film Festival in 1986 (here I did not pay for anything), Salon de Mai”, „Salon Comparaisons”, „Salon d'Automne”, „Salon des Indépendants”, „Salon des la Société Française des Beaux

Arts”, „Salon Mac 2000” as well as the exhibitions organised by Phantasy Art Society „SAFIR”. All of them were paid. Only collective exhibitions, organised in 1998, 2004 and 2006 by „Cercle d’art de Saint Leonard de Noblat”, to which I lent several paintings, were free of charge. There were several periodical, collective exhibitions at which I showed Beksiński’s works every year. I usually exhibited one to three works for a period of two-three weeks. This was the case excluding three exhibitions at „Cercle d’art de Saint Leonard de Noblat”, where each time I showed several paintings in a special room, which except for the collective exhibition of a few other artists, was reserved for Beksiński as a guest of honour. Exhibitions in „Saint Leonard de Noblat” were always organised by its director, a fan of Beksiński’s art, Ms Malbet, but other exhibitions during such collective events were my own initiative.

Also on my own initiative I exhibited 90 paintings by Beksiński in Poland, in years 1995-96, in co-operation with the National Museum in Gdańsk, Municipal Art Gallery in Łódź, the Archdiocesan Museum in Warsaw, Municipal Art Gallery in Katowice and the International Cultural Centre in Cracow. The works for this exhibition held in different towns I transported myself or at my own expense from Paris to Poland and back. That is why I personally had to arrange all the formalities (unending) connected with taking the paintings from France to Poland and then, back from Poland to France. Those piles of forms that you had to complete disappeared after Poland’s accession to the European Union, so now you are no longer forced to stand in customs clearance queues in Paris, Warsaw and border checkpoints. As for the remaining procedures connected with this circulating exhibition, they were the responsibility of Polish organisers, who paid for the transport between Polish cities, produced posters, jointly released a catalogue (terrible), organised vernissages and paid the supervising staff.

In 2003 I proposed to many museums in Poland a deposit of several Beksiński’s paintings in my possession, provided that they would be permanently exhibited. Only the Museum in Lublin and Art Gallery in Częstochowa accepted my proposal. After many preliminary stages, finally I proposed to lend 50 paintings and 100 drawings by Beksiński to the above-mentioned art gallery for a period of many years, with the intention of opening a small museum of the artist. The City of Częstochowa accepted the proposal and to this end, in 2005, it refurbished and arranged at its own expense the premises in a part of MGS (Municipal Art Gallery) for this event and transported the paintings from France, using their own means.

MGS in Częstochowa provided new frames for those 50 paintings and 100 drawings by Beksiński that they had borrowed from me. In return, I presented them with one of Beksiński’s paintings. The gallery also produced a museum catalogue

at their own expense and two times issued a calendar with the reproductions of the exhibited works.

In years 2004-2005 I organised on my own initiative a collective exhibition entitled „Visions des ténèbres”, which was similar to the individual exhibition of Beksiński’s works circulating in Poland in years 1995-96. In this exhibition I showed 5 paintings by Beksiński among other artists’ works in my possession. The exhibition was held in the Archdiocesan Museum in Warsaw, National Museum in Gdańsk, Municipal Art Gallery in Częstochowa and Municipal Art Gallery in Olsztyn. The works were transported from Paris to Poland and back by MGS in Częstochowa, which used its own means. Transport in Poland was organised by each exhibiting person, whose responsibility also included the organising of vernissages at their own expense, contacting the media and providing the supervision staff. As for me, I issued at my own expense a catalogue for this exhibition. In this case the paintings were not insured, as Polish institutions could not afford to pay it and I was going through a hard time after closing the gallery in Paris.

So much for my initiative and participation as well as the initiative and participation of other institutions in the exhibitions of Beksiński’s works from my collection, which were shown in different places in Poland and abroad in years 1985-2007.

I wish to add that apart from Beksiński’s exhibitions in „Galerie Valmay”, „Galerie de Lelie”, my gallery on Quincampoix Street in Paris and in „Ars Polona” in Dusseldorf 1987, no other exhibition was designed for sale. They were solely exhibitions of prestige.