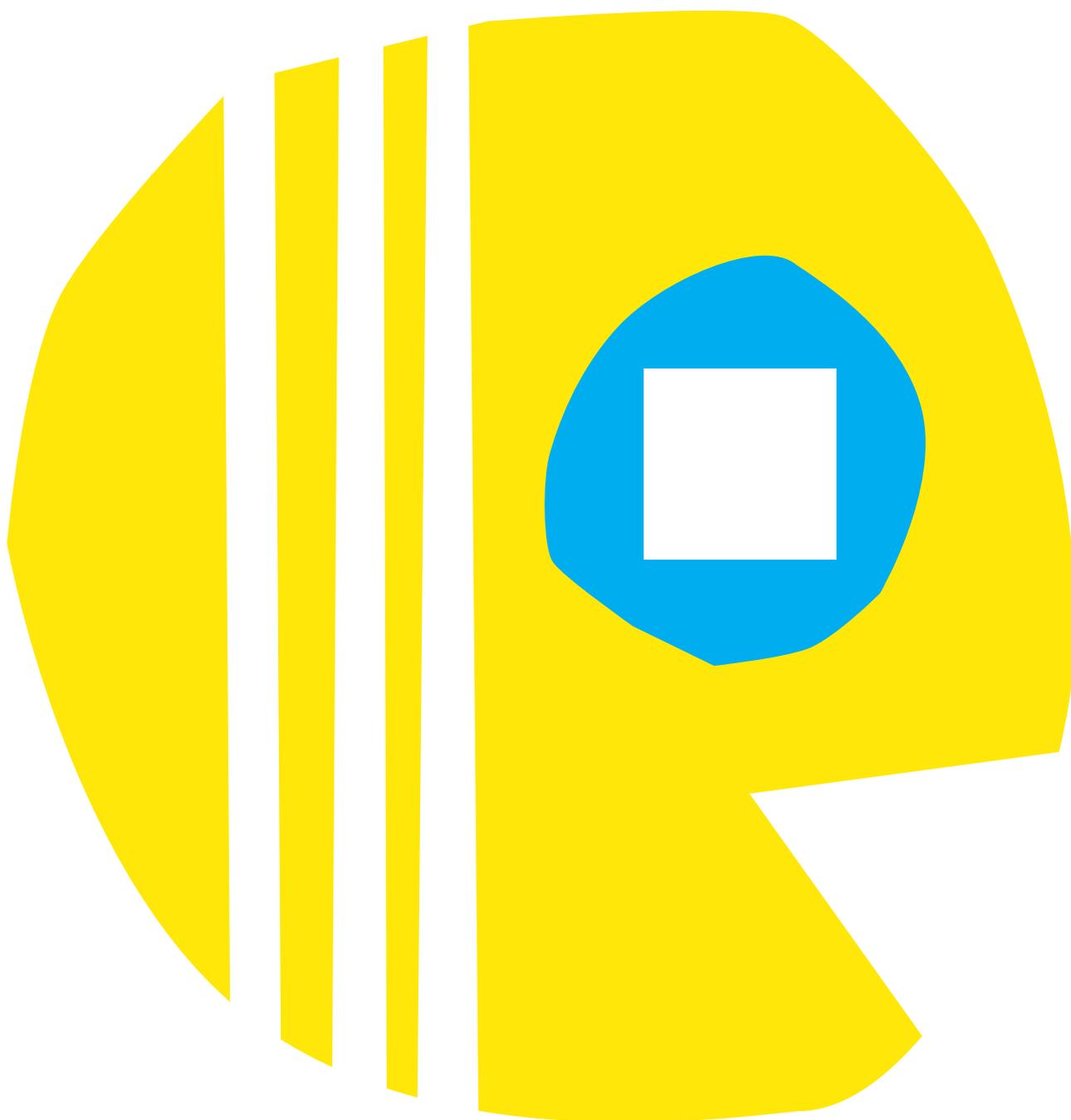




# COLLEC\_THINK TANK

*Konferencja a lengyel dizájnról*  
*Conference on Polish Design*



Az Iparművészeti Múzeum fenntartója az Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma  
The Museum of Applied Arts is maintained by the Ministry of Human Capacities



The conference and the volume are supported by the Wacław Felczak Foundation and  
the Adam Mickiewicz Institute



Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest  
Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest



# COLLEC\_THINK TANK

Konferencia a lengyel dizájnról

Conference on Polish Design

Iparművészeti Múzeum – Museum of Applied Arts  
Budapest, 2019

### COLLEC\_THINK TANK - Konferencia a lengyel dizájnról

„Museums not only collect and store fragments of culture: they themselves are part of culture...; a special zone where living culture dies and dead culture springs to life.”

(Durrans 1993, p. 25.)



Az Iparművészeti Múzeumban az elmúlt ötven évben nem volt koncepciózus kortárs gyűjtés. 2015-ben alakult meg a Kortárs Dizájn Főosztály, melynek feladata újra megteremteni a múzeumban már az alapítástól jelen lévő jó gyakorlatot, miszerint az intézmény mint a magyar kreativitás központja élő kapcsolatot ápol a nemzetközi és hazai kortárs iparművészet legfontosabb szereplőivel, intézményrendszerével.

A múzeumi főépület 2018-ban megkezdődött rekonstrukciójának ideje alatt egyik fontos

célunk, hogy a megújuló intézmény nyitására felépüljön egy a 20–21. századi dizájn és kraft ágazatait reprezentáló gyűjtemény, elsődleges fókusszal a poszt szocialista régió országaira. Feladatunknak tekintjük, hogy a rendszerváltás előtti „keleti blokk” jellegzetes dizájn darabjait pótoljuk, hiszen ezen időszakból szinte alig található tárgy a gyűjteményünkben. A Kortárs Dizájn Főosztály szoros szakmai kapcsolatot ápol a közép-európai régió múzeumaival, kulturális intézményeivel is.

A lengyel dizájn reprezentatív helyen szerepel az Iparművészeti Múzeum programjában, melynek voltak előzményei, mint a 2011-es *Unpolished* – kortárs lengyel dizájn című kiállítás vagy a 2014-es Lengyel Red Dot díjazottak tárlata.

Az Adam Mickiewicz Intézet, a budapesti Lengyel Intézet, a Wacław Felczak Alapítvány, a Stalowa Wola Regionális Múzeum és a varsói Nemzeti Múzeum munkatársaival, illetve a poznani School of Form tanáraival való kiváló együttműködésnek köszönhetően 2018-ban és 2019-ben is sikerült már több közös projektet tető alá hoznunk. Nagyon hálásak vagyunk, hogy az Adam Mickiewicz Intézet támogatásának köszönhetően osztályunk két munkatársa egyhetes varsói és łódzi tanulmányúton vehetett részt, ahol dizájn stúdiókba is eljutottak. 2018 őszén a LENGYELORSZÁG 100 – a lengyel függetlenség visszaszerzésének alkalmából szervezett nemzetközi kulturális program – ke-

### COLLEC\_THINK TANK - Conference on Polish Design

„Museums not only collect and store fragments of culture: they themselves are part of culture...; a special zone where living culture dies and dead culture springs to life.”

(Durrans 1993, p. 25.)

Over the past fifty years, there has not been conceptual contemporary collection at the Hungarian Museum of Applied Arts. The Contemporary Design Department was established in 2015, with the task of recreating the best practice that had existed in the museum since its founding, according to which the institution, as the centre of Hungarian creativity, nurtures active relationships with the leading artists and the institutional infrastructure of contemporary applied arts, both in Hungary and internationally.

One of our most important aims during the reconstruction of the museum's main building, commenced in 2018, is for the revived institution to build a collection representative of the branches of design and craft of the 20th–21st centuries for its re-opening, with a primary focus on the countries of the post-Socialist region. We consider it our mission to supplement pieces characteristic of the design of the “Eastern Bloc” prior to the political transition, as objects from this period can scarcely be found in our collection currently. The Contemporary Design Department nurtures a close professional relationship with the museums and cultural institutions of the Central/Eastern European region.

Polish design plays a representative role in the programme of the Hungarian Museum of Applied Arts, for which there have been antecedents, such as the contemporary Polish design exhibition of 2011 entitled *Unpolished*, and the 2014 show of award-winners, *Polish Red Dot*. It is thanks to the excellent collaboration with

the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Polish Institute in Budapest, the Wacław Felczak Foundation, and the curators and staff at the Stalowa Wola Regional Museum and the National Museum in Warsaw, as well as the professors at the School of Form in Poznan, that we have been able to already host several successful joint projects in 2018 and 2019. We are extremely grateful that with thanks to the generous support of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, two of our staff were able to take part in a research tour of Warsaw and Łódź, where they also visited designer ateliers.

In the fall of 2018, within the framework of POLAND 100 – the international cultural programme organised for the occasion of the recuperation of Polish independence – the Stalowa Wola Regional Museum bequeathed a contemporary Polish artwork to our collection, Paweł Grobelny's outdoor bench, entitled 'In Situ', which the internationally recognised designer planned for the garden of the György Ráth Villa, re-opened just one month prior. The colour and formal approach of the bench subtly reflect upon the edifice and garden that served as the home of the first director of the Hungarian Museum of Applied Arts.

It is with thanks to the kind support of the Wacław Felczak Foundation that the first conference of the Collec\_Think Tank conference series could be arranged under the auspices of the Contemporary Design Department, in which the representations



1. Bench, des. Pawel Grobelny

retében a Stalowa Wola Regionális Múzeum egy kortárs lengyel alkotást ajándékozott gyűjteményünk számára, Paweł Grobelny *'In Situ'* címet viselő kültéri padját, melyet a nemzetközileg is elismert tervező az akkor egy hónapja megnyitott Ráth György-villa kertjébe tervezett. A pad színe és formai megoldása visszafogottan reflektál az Iparművészeti Múzeum első igazgatójának otthonaként szolgáló épületre és kertre.

A Wacław Felczak Alapítvány támogatásának köszönhetően kerül megrendezésre a Kortárs Dizájn Főosztály szervezésében a Collec\_Think Tank konferenciasorozat első konferenciája, mely a lengyel dizájn megjelenítésének lehetőségeit kutatja a II. világháborútól máig az Iparművészeti Múzeum gyűjteményében. Fontosnak tartjuk e diszkurzus elindítását, hisz a múzeum mindannyiunk tere. „... major

*museums have never owned their artworks in quite the same way that an individual does. Their collections are held in trust for a wider community – defined as a city, class, caste or elite, nation, or projected global community of high culture. The objects in a museum are often treated as a patrimony, someone's cultural property. But whose?”<sup>1</sup>*

A Collec\_Think Tank konferenciasorozattal a gyűjteményezés egyoldalúságát próbáljuk oldani, a hierarchikus viszonyokat kívánjuk csökkenteni, és egy mellérendeltebb viszonyrendszerben gondolkodni. „A contact perspective views all culture-collecting strategies as responses to particular histories of dominance, hierarchy, resistance, and mobilization.”<sup>2</sup>

Az egykori keleti blokk országainak dizájn-teoretikusait és -szakértőit invitáljuk közös gondolkodásra arról, hogy országuk dizájnya milyen módon jelenjen meg a gyűjteményben. A jelen esemény jó alkalom arra, hogy egy épülőben lévő múzeumi gyűjtemény szakmailag megalapozza a lengyel alkotásokra vonatkozó közép- és hosszútávú gyűjteményezési stratégiájának sarokpontjait.

2018-tól az Iparművészeti Múzeum Kortárs Dizájn Főosztálya egy olyan kiállítássorozatot indított útjára, mely a múzeumi gyűjtemény tekintetében több szempontból is hasznos. A Körforgásban (In Circulation) sorozat keretében ma élő dizájnereket kérünk fel, hogy egy tárgyat vagy tárgyegyüttest kiválasztva a gyűjteményből és inspirálódva általa hozzanak létre saját dizájnt. Az évi két kiállításból az egyik felkért dizájnerek mindig magyar, a másikat a poszt-szocialista régióból kérjük fel tervezett program szerint haladva.

<sup>1</sup> Clifford 1997, pp. 209–10.  
<sup>2</sup> Clifford 1997, p. 213.

of Polish design could be researched from World War Two up to the present day in the collection of the Hungarian Museum of Applied Arts. We consider the initiation of this discourse essential, as the museum is the space for all of us. “... major museums have never owned their artworks in quite the same way that an individual does. Their collections are held in trust for a wider community – defined as a city, class, caste or elite, nation, or projected global community of high culture. The objects in a museum are often treated as a patrimony, someone's cultural property. But whose?”<sup>1</sup>

With the Collec\_Think Tank conference series, we attempt to resolve the one-sidedness, or bias, of collecting, to reduce the hierarchical relations, and to think in terms of a more co-ordinated network of relationships. “A contact perspective views all culture-collecting strategies as responses to particular histories of dominance, hierarchy, resistance, and mobilization.”<sup>2</sup>

We invite design theoreticians and experts of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc to reflect together with us on the way in which the design of their countries should be presented within our collection. The current event provides an appropriate occasion to professionally establish the cornerstones of collection strategy in the middle- and long-term, with regard to Polish artworks, for a museum collection in progress.

In 2018, the Contemporary Design Department of the Hungarian Museum of Applied Arts launched an exhibition series that is extremely useful from the aspect of the museum collection, from multiple perspectives. Within the framework of the *In Circulation* series, we invite contemporary living designers to select an object or group of objects from our collection, and inspired by it, to create their own design. One of the invited designers of the two exhibitions each

<sup>1</sup> Clifford 1997, pp.209–10.  
<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

year is always Hungarian, and we invite the other from the post-Socialist region in progression according to the planned programme.

In the course of the programme, attention can be directed to forgotten pieces in the collection, which have never been on exhibition, and now, on the basis of a personal selection, sympathy, or an idea, they take on a starring role, and even become the inspiration for the creation of other objects and new designs. The connection between the selected objects and the new designs will always remain, as the new artworks will also become a part of the museum collection. Additionally, we also produce a film on the design process, which offers an explanatory background of the old and new pieces, and at the same time, the “collection” of digital content is also augmented.



2. Bench, des. Pawel Grobelny

In the spring of 2019, a contemporary Polish designer, Maria Jeglinska, is the guest artist of the second exhibition in our seasonal exhibition series entitled *In Circulation*. Jeglinska selected from the museum's collection of over 100,000 pieces an armchair from 1969 designed by Sándor Mikó, which served as a part of the furnishings of

A program folyamán a gyűjteményből olyan elfeledett darabokra is ráirányulhat a figyelem, melyek még soha nem kerültek kiállításba, most pedig egy személyes választás, szimpátia, gondolat okán főszerepet kapnak, sőt ihletőjévé válnak más tárgyak, új dizájnok létrejöttének. A kapcsolat a kiválasztott és az új dizájn között mindig megmarad, hisz az új alkotások a múzeumi gyűjteménybe kerülnek. Mindemellett a dizájnfolymatról készítünk egy filmet is, mely magyarázó háttérrel nyújt a régi és az új darabokhoz, s közben a digitális tartalmak „gyűjteményét” is gyarapítja.

2019 tavaszától egy kortárs lengyel tervező, Maria Jeglinska a meghívottja a Körforgásban címmel elindított időszak kiállításorozatunk második kiállításának, aki egy Mikó Sándor által tervezett, egykor a *Te + Én* nevű budapesti preszó berendezési darabjaként szolgáló, 1969-ből származó karosszékot választott ki a múzeum több, mint százezer darabot számláló gyűjteményéből. Az egyszerű, négy négyzet alakú diófa lapból összeállított és négy diófa kockán álló karosszékra reflektálva Maria Jeglinska játékos térelválasztókat tervezett, tőle megszokottan egy fogalom köré rendezve gondolkodása folyamatát. A fogalom a *support*, azaz a támogatás, a támasz, a tartás, a térben való meghatározottsághoz szolgáló segítség volt.

Ezt a szimbólumot szívesen kölcsönveszem tőle az első Collec\_Think Tank bevezetőjében, hisz a konferencia egyik alapgondolata is kapcsolható e fogalmi körhöz, amennyiben szeretnénk, ha a gyűjteményezési programunk minél több szupporrtal bírna, jelentsen az támogatást, támaszt, tartófelületet. Célunk, hogy ne csak saját szemmel és a rendelkezésünkre álló tudással gyűjtsünk, hanem kísérletet tegyünk arra, hogy belülről is értsük egy-egy kiemelkedő darab fontosságának háttérét, időbeli és térbeli kontextusát, származásának körülményrendszerét. Közös történelmi múltunk ugyan

<sup>3</sup> Rogoff 2005, pp. 123–124.

összeköt minket, de az attitűd, amivel ezt a múltat feldolgozzuk, továbbélési technikáink, lehetőségeink, módszertanaink különbözőek. A gyűjteményt már kevésbé a reprezentáció, mint inkább a lehetőségek megmutatkozásának hordozójaként képzeljük el.

A Collec\_Think Tank a gyűjteményről való közös gondolkodás azzal a féllal, akihez leginkább közel áll az aktuális gyűjteményi tematika, jelen esetben a lengyel dizájn szakértőivel, hisz Irit Rogoffal szólva: *„Well, the „we” I have in mind is not identity-based – it cannot be found in the named categories by which an identity is currently recognized in the world. (...) the „we” I have in mind is designated through recognition of shifts taking place in the project of „theory” (...) the project of theory has moved on from being a mode of analysis by which you understand what lies behind and beneath the workings of knowing and representing. Instead „theory” can become the space of making, or re-making, of culture, of envisaging further possibilities rather than of explicating existing circumstances. (...) that’s us, that’s who I mean.”*<sup>3</sup>

#### Felhasznált irodalom

1. Clifford, J., 'Museum as Contact Zones'. In: *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Twentieth Century*, London, 1997, pp. 189–219.
2. Durrans, B., 'The Future of Ethnographic Exhibitions'. In: *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, No. 118, pp. 125–129.
3. Rogoff, I., 'Looking Away: Participations in Visual Culture'. In: Butt, G. (ed.), *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance*, Oxford, 2005, pp. 117–135.

the one-time *Te + Én* [You + Me] café in Budapest. Reflecting upon the simple armchair, composed of four square walnut planes, and standing on four walnut cubes, Maria Jeglinska has designed playful spatial dividers, in a process of thinking around a concept, diverging from her usual process. The concept that served as an aid to her was *support*, as in a buttress or prop, as in holding up, as in mental or material support, as in affording a definiteness or definition in space.

I would like to borrow this symbol from Jeglinska for the introduction to the first Collec\_Think Tank, as one of the fundamental ideas for this conference also relates to this conceptual realm, insofar as we aspire for our collection plans to possess as much support as possible, whether that means intellectual or material support or patronage, a buttress, or a load-bearing surface. Our aim is not to collect only on the basis of our own vision and available knowledge, but to attempt to understand from within, the background of importance of each highlighted piece, its chronological and spatial context, and the circumstances of its provenance. While we are joined by our common historical past, our attitudes with which we process this past, our survival techniques, our possibilities, and our methods are what differ. We imagine the collection less as a representation, and more as a vessel for revealing the possibilities.

Collec\_Think Tank provides a space for thinking together on collection with our partners who stand closest to the collection thematics at hand, in the present case, experts in Polish design, as in the words of Irit Rogoff: *“Well, the “we” I have in mind is not identity-based – it cannot be found in the named categories by which an identity is currently recognized in the world. (...) the “we” I have in mind is designated through recognition of shifts taking place in the project of “theory” (...) the project of theory has moved on from being a mode of analysis by which you understand what lies behind and beneath the workings of knowing and representing.*

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## ANNA MAGA

*kurátor, Modern Dizájn Központ (Modern Design Centre), Nemzeti Múzeum, Varsó*

### Lengyel dizájn a varsói Nemzeti Múzeumban – a gyűjtemény kialakításának kritériumai

A tanulmány a varsói Nemzeti Múzeumban működő Modern Dizájn Központ (Modern Design Centre) rövid történetét mutatja be, és a gyűjtemény létrejöttének elbeszélésére helyezi a hangsúlyt, mindemellett kitér a lengyel dizájn gyűjtési kritériumainak meghatározására. Áttekintve a központ történetét és a gyűjtemény szerkezetét, láthatóvá válnak a főbb nehézségek, amelyekkel a munka során a gyűjtemény gondozói szembesülnek.

Az előadás tárgyalja a gyűjtemény kialakításának legcélravezetőbb módszereit. Érdekes látni, hogy ezek a módszerek milyen változáson mentek keresztül az elmúlt negyven év során. A fő gyűjteményi egységek példáin keresztül jól láthatóak a gyűjteményépítés kritériumai. A gyűjtemény történeti aspektusain túlmenően a szerző hangsúlyozza annak fontosságát is, hogy a dizájn „a hétköznapi élethez leginkább kapcsolódó művészeti terület”.

## ANNA MAGA

*Curator, Modern Design Centre, National Museum in Warsaw*

### Polish Design in the National Museum in Warsaw: Principal Criteria for Building the Collection

A short history of the Modern Design Centre will illustrate how we built up this department of the National Museum in Warsaw. It is important to point out the principles followed in collecting objects of Polish design. By taking a look at the history of the Centre we can shed light on the main difficulties we came across and the methods employed for seeking out the best pieces for our collection. Showing examples from the main groups of objects we can demonstrate the criteria for building up the collection and tell the story of Polish design.

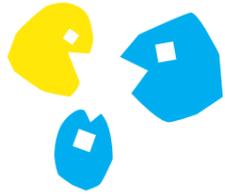
The Modern Design Centre is a department of the National Museum in Warsaw (part of the Collection of Modern Art). Opening in 1979, it started with a collection of design transferred from the Industrial Design Institute (IDI). This was the idea of the first director of the IDI – Professor Wanda Telakowska – who wanted to secure the works in the design studios of the IDI. This collection was worthy of museum presentation, but in the early days of our Centre there were many who didn't accept the idea of industrial art in the National Museum. We, the creators of our department, were convinced that our collection was valuable, but at the beginning we had to persuade other authorities from the world of museum curators and art historians that our design objects were bona fide objects of art.

However, the need for giving design the status of art is still common among many people and leads on to the idea that design is a branch of art, which is not quite true. If we want to find a comprehen-

sive and essential definition for design, we have to admit that it is more than art. Many designers say: I'm not only an artist, I'm a designer. Meaning: I don't paint my dreams – I make my dreams come true. I realize my dreams in cooperation with engineers, technologists etc.



*1. Feathers Chair, des. Jan Kurzątkowski, prod. "Ład" Artists Cooperative, 1935*



Another side of the problem is that people want to admire beautiful, exceptional things – unique pieces. In the case of design it's quite the opposite. Serial production is a natural feature of a well-designed object. Being ordinary or usual is not a disadvantage: a well-designed item is characterized by the harmony of aesthetic and utility aspects.

Now, when design is so much in fashion and people admire certain icons of design, we have another problem with terminology: we must show that we appreciate a design, not because it's an object of art, but as a well-designed piece. A spectacularly beautiful object can be a poor product, so to build up a design collection is very difficult.

The first very realistic principle for us was to focus only on the works of Polish designers. To collect world design would have been simply impossible, and we started with a collection that had been transferred from the Industrial Design Institute – in other words, Polish design from the late 1940s till 1970. From the moment of its foundation the collection was systematically enlarged with pieces from the beginning of the 20th century till the present day, both unique and mass-produced. Now we have about 25 thousand objects: textiles, clothing, furniture, interior design projects, ceramics and glass, toys, jewelry, machinery, mechanical devices – diverse products that we respect from the design point of view (whatever that means). We also collect projects (drawings), models, prototypes.

Hanna Chwierut-Jasicka – the first director of the Centre – established the criteria for building up the collection:

“1. to collect items designed by a given person, a professional designer with an education in fine

arts, who successfully presents his/her works at exhibitions at home and abroad and consciously aims at achieving his/her artistic goals, providing a creative contribution to cooperation with a technologist or constructor which can be defined in the practice of design as a contemporary artistic discipline;

2. to have an opinion on the value of the object confirmed by an award or a mention in publications; many of the objects accepted in the collection are accompanied by recommendations from artists or theoreticians, widely respected in the field of applied design;



2. Seven coat hangers, des. Tomek Rygalik, prod. Profim, 2012

3. to have a set of features distinguishing a given work by its impact in the creative field, specific characteristics typical of good design that are common in the work of many artists creating in the same material or genre.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite such precisely determined criteria we sometimes decide to be more flexible. It is often difficult to assess a “fresh” object, and it's easy to make a mistake and reject projects which have not yet been “tested”.

Up till now there were four people working in the Centre – two art historians, one ethnologist and one laboratory worker. But recently we lost one of the two art historians (a new ruling in the event of a new director of the museum).

Right from the start an educational mission has been one of our principal tasks. Since there was no possibility of getting space for exhibitions, the storage space in the Centre was arranged so as to be accessible to small groups of visitors. Now that space has been filled, we can no longer provide access to the “open” storage – it is dangerous for both visitors and museum objects. On the other hand this rule cannot be strictly applied. We can't refuse our services, our consultations with students and other researchers. Unfortunately the lack of space for permanent exhibitions was an on-going problem till 2017 when we opened our Gallery of Polish Design.

Textiles and clothing make up one of the biggest parts of our collection, including a vast range of woven objects and several kinds of fabric with surface decoration – painted, printed, batik. This rich collection has different groups of items illustrating certain subjects and characteristic aspects of Polish design. Our collection of printed fabrics shows very well the style of the late 1950s and 60s. We have good examples of the work of Barbara Hoff,

who was an important fashion designer from the 1960s till the 90s, and Moda Polska – our greatest haute couture from the 1970s.

Our collection of glass includes several groups of pieces that illustrate interesting subjects, for example: works of artists who prepared the designs for the Silesian glass industry in the late 1940s (about 60 prototypes); another problem of glass – seeking a new, modern type of ornamentation for crystal; we have two post-competition collections (1987, 1995); new Polish glass from the 60s – works of young designers who graduated from the Academy of Arts in Wrocław and continued their artistic paths.

The collection of ceramics is one of the most attractive in the Centre, especially those pieces created in the Industrial Design Institute between 1956 and 1968. It is considered large and of a high artistic level. Apart from a number of various pieces we have a vast group of porcelain figurines that have recently become well-known and in fashion (especially among collectors). They were the work of four sculptors from IDI and were produced by several Polish porcelain factories.



3. Elzab K10 cash register, des. Ergo Design, prod. ELZAB, 2012

<sup>1</sup> Hanna Chwierut-Jasicka, cited after Maga, A., Anna Maga on Hanna Chwierut-Jasicka, In: Amadei, G. I. (ed.), *Discovering Women in Polish Design: Interviews & Conversations*, Warsaw, 2009, p. 104.

Polish toys is an interesting theme still needing serious elaboration, as well as other projects for children, such as furniture, clothes, etc. Our exhibition "What Toys!" (2008) was not representative enough (we were limited by lack of space), but it had a fully developed educational programme – which won it the second prize founded by the Minister of Culture under the name Sybilla (for its promotional and educational value).

The collection of furniture is the most complete and interesting illustration of the progress in Polish design. These pieces are evidence of seeking out new solutions and corresponding with old traditions.

The smallest part of the collection (in my opinion) should be the most important. I am thinking of "hard design" – industrial design which relates to the design of products having complex forms and functions – technical machines and equipment built from different materials using advanced technology. The designers with engineering know-how and technological experience who cooperate with the high-tech industries often achieve spectacular success in



3. Tulip armchair, des. Teresa Kruszezwska  
prod. Bent Furniture Factory in Radomsko, 1973

their field, but the final product is not "beautiful" enough to be accepted as a new item in the museum's collection.

We are in permanent contact with Polish designers: those from the older generation, as well as contemporary designers – in order to develop the collection and enrich historical knowledge.

New acquisitions are acquired in many different ways: purchases – very rarely (because of lack of money), gifts from designers, and the families of designers, from producers and other owners.

Our rich collection motivated us to stage some significant temporary exhibitions: Polish Design in the 40 years of the Polish People's Republic (1984); ŁAD Artists' Cooperative 1926–1996 (1996); Common Wealth. Polish Products 1899–1999 (2000) and We Want to be Modern. Polish design from 1955–1965 (2011). But our main dream was to organize a permanent exhibition which would illustrate the history of Polish design, and this was finally realized in December 2017.

In the history of Polish design we have excellent designers but they are almost totally forgotten, even in Poland. As is the case with all applied arts, our masters of design have not been appreciated enough by critics and art historians, so we still have a lot of work ahead. Sometimes it is difficult to re-discover designers and their works, but I consider this a very important goal. There are two main reasons for this: they are worth admiring and they can inspire contemporary designers.

Our job is to make them as famous as Eames or Jacobsen. Jan Kurzątkowski – a member of the ŁAD Artists' Cooperative – was one of the most prominent Polish designers. His oeuvre collected in the Modern Design Centre (furniture, toys, paper sculpture, glass, projects) justifies our intention to arrange a big exhibition dedicated to this extremely interesting artist. Several years

ago, thanks to the furniture factory IKER, which granted the acquisitions, six precious pieces of furniture designed by Kurzątkowski have come to the Centre. In the history of our Centre this was the first time a producer gave us money strictly for buying new works for the collection. The history of Polish design interests us not only from the chronological point of view, it also gives us an opportunity to discover various fascinating topics: for example, the correlation between folk tradition and contemporary works. Especially in the way this correlation has been changing, beginning in the first decades of the 20th century till the present day.

The Centre has been engaged in different ventures (exhibitions, conferences) with the aim of promoting Polish design. Since 2002 we have participated in the post-competition exhibitions 'PRODECO' organized by the magazine Elle Decoration. Winning pieces have enriched our collection. Elle Decoration no longer organizes this event and the competition doesn't exist anymore, but I think that this idea or something similar could be interesting.

The Centre is in contact with the producers cooperating with good designers and we take an interest in the high artistic level of their products. In this way we widen our range of activity. We cooperate with Vzor – the producer which makes reproductions of some of the objects from our collection. Apart from the historical value of our collection I want to underline its significance in discussion about the importance of design as an artistic field most closely linked to everyday life.

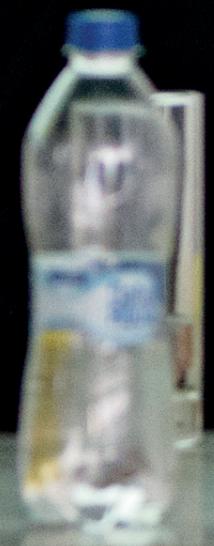
Our exhibition Common Wealth. Polish Products 1899–1999 was the result of cooperation with Czesława Frejlich from the Cracow Academy of Fine Art who after this experience established the quarterly 2+3D which appeared from 2001 till 2016 and was very important in raising the status of design. 2+3D was a platform publishing texts on contemporary design as well as including in each edition an article on important Polish designers in the past. The curators from the National Museum were among the contributors, and after several years this material was used in the book Out of the Ordinary which was significant in promoting Polish design.



4. Tulip armchairs, des. Tomek Rygalik, prod. Noti, 2015



14-15 FEBRUARY 2019  
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## KAJA MUSZYŃSKA

*független kurátor, kutató, a varsói Nemzeti Múzeum Lengyel Dizájn Galériájának volt társkurátora*

### Dióhéjban a varsói kortárs dizájn-szcénáról

Az elmúlt néhány évtized során két ellentétes dizájn-trendet figyelhetünk meg: egyrészt a globális piac terjeszkedését, illetve a nemzeti stílusok közötti határok elmosódását, másfelől a helyi hagyományokhoz való visszanyúlást.

Mindkét tendencia jól látható és kitapintható Európa valamennyi nagyvárosában, beleértve Varsót is. A tanulmány megvizsgálja, hogy jelenik meg napjainkban e két tendencia

a varsói dizájn-trendek alakulásában. A szerző egy kortárs dizájn-kiállítás esettanulmányán keresztül mutatja be a dizájnnon keresztül a mai Varsó identitását. Tárgyalja a változást, mint a kiállítás (és egyúttal a város) immanens tulajdonságát, az antropológiai megközelítést, mellyel megérthetjük, hogyan tükrözi a dizájn a kortárs valóságot, valamint a város közterületen létrejövő konceptuális projektek bevonását a kiállítás narratívájába.

## KAJA MUSZYŃSKA

*freelance curator, researcher, (former) co-curator of the Polish Design Gallery at the National Museum in Warsaw*

### Encapsulating Warsaw's Contemporary Design Scene

#### **Warsaw's Identities and Finding Oneself in Design**

The project I am currently working on involves creating a permanent exhibition of Warsaw's contemporary design in a museum in the capital of Poland. The venture is still at an early stage, but the research I have conducted so far made me ponder over how the identity – or identities – of modern cities is made manifest through design in the era of globalization, how young designers draw on local traditions, and what is the dynamic between design and the human inhabitants of cities. The following study is the result of my early reflections on these questions.

Before going further, I would like to mention that I am not concerned with the exact definition of design, and I will not rely on any particular definition stating what design is. However, I should indicate that my study is concerned with both material objects and conceptual projects that are part of urban life. I choose the interdisciplinary approach to design and draw from design studies, cultural studies, anthropology and social studies. I believe that bringing methods from these disciplines together allows us to better understand objects themselves, our relationships with them, and hopefully can lead us to a better comprehension of who we ourselves are.

#### **Urban Life and Design**

Moving through modern cities, we are exposed to design more than in any other circumstances, and to all sorts of it: outdoor furniture in public space, graphic design on billboards and posters, on both the insides and outsides of public transportation, city information systems, and cars, fashion in shop windows and on passers-by, ad infinitum. For some, such environments can be oppressive and overflowing with unnecessary commodities, which they refuse to consume; some see it as a place of excess where it is easy to become indifferent and blasé; some find urban consumption addictive; and others view urban space as a perfect environment and thrive in it.<sup>1</sup>

This is to illustrate that, although it cannot be denied that we live in an age of over-production and ecological crisis, things are not good or bad in themselves. Or to use the anthropologist Dan Miller's words: "Stuff is ubiquitous and problematic", but the attitude to "stuff" that simply tries to oppose ourselves to it will only lead to false and simplistic conclusions.<sup>2</sup> Instead, it is worth bearing in mind Miller's thinking that our use and identification with material culture "provides a capacity for enhancing, just as much as for submerging, our humanity".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Miller, D., *Stuff*, Kindle Edition, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

I admit that some of the objects I have selected for display qualify as commodities, and they do not solve the “real”, practical problems that design is supposed to solve, but I will not judge their moral value in relation to consumerism. The quality, function and aesthetics of these objects played a significant role in my selection process, but I also hope that the selected exhibits will help contribute to discovering a more profound understanding of what modern Warsaw is. This is why I will consider the things on display as design (by making note of their quality and the technology used to make them, etc.), but I will also try to explore how people express themselves and understand the world through things.

### ***The Identity/Identities of the City; Our Identity/Identities and Design***

I take as my starting point: we create the city, and the city creates us. To more deeply explore this thesis, I should first determine who “we” are. The answer that first comes to mind is: the residents of the city. Those born and raised in Warsaw, as well as migrants from other parts of Poland, and migrants from other countries (mainly from Ukraine 6,989, Vietnam 2,743, and Belarus 1,627).<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, the city is also created by authorities, private investors, architects, designers and, occasionally, artists. The factors stimulating the development of the city include the growing domestic market, and participation in the expanding global market.

Clearly, we cannot talk about one consistent identity of the city. What’s more, it is hard to talk about a single identity of any person. Vietnamese fashion designer Lana Nguyen was born in Vietnam, raised in Warsaw and studied in Łódź.<sup>5</sup> She considers Vietnam her motherland, but chose to live and work in Warsaw. Her work takes inspiration from both cultures – she does not feel obligated to choose between them.<sup>6</sup> Polish designer Marcin Ru-

sak studied at the Design Academy in Eindhoven and at the Royal College of Arts in London. In 2014, he established his studio in the British capital. He invented his own technology, which allows him to use actual living flowers as decoration and fuse them with the objects he creates. He does not feel entirely part of the Polish design scene, but he recently moved his workshop to Warsaw because, as he says, “it gives him freedom to work the way he wants to work”.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the inspiration for his work is deeply rooted in his Polish heritage: his family was in the flower business since 1904.<sup>8</sup> His work is a mix of international experience and his own heritage.

Paradoxically, the qualities of Rusak’s work and its circumstances place it within a broad global context, but at the same time, those selfsame qualities and circumstances make it unique.

How can these diverse identities that coexist in Warsaw be visualised through a permanent exhibition of contemporary design?

### ***Permanent Display***

It might sound contradictory at first, but the main principal of the permanent display of Warsaw’s contemporary design should be constant change. Objects on display should be exchanged regularly. Change is an intrinsic quality of the city: new trends emerge, some design studios close down, new ones open, social changes occur, and this situation should be reflected in the display.

Another important role of the exhibition is to provide information and education. The scale and specificity of Warsaw’s contemporary design scene should be clearly communicated to the viewer. The most efficient way to obtain this is via a mobile application, which introduces the most important sites related to design, including shops and studios in Warsaw, as well as temporary events, such as festivals and fairs.

The most important components of the exhibition are the exhibited objects themselves, which I would like to elaborate on. The material I am concerned with can be divided into two principal groups: original pieces of design, recently manufactured or produced, which are in some way related to Warsaw; and the exhibits that are represented by objects on display, but in fact are not material things themselves, but phenomena, such as urban activism.

As part of the exhibition narrative, I distinguished several categories, which I think best reflect the nature of the city. They can be described using various methods from different disciplines, such as design studies, anthropology, and sociology. These categories are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they very often overlap, and thus, we will see that some exhibits often fall into more than one category.

My first category centres around local traditions. Under this heading, we take a closer look at design that is rooted in native crafts, architecture and the poster. Through case studies of furniture from “Nurt Studio”, printed textiles inspired by Warsaw’s architecture by Zuzanna Wantrych, and new cutlery designs from “Hefra”, we discover quite different ways of reviving Warsaw’s heritage. Furthermore, we acknowledge the improvement and development of local design schools and design departments. Traditional methods of the history of design, including formal analysis and historiography, might be useful in interpreting objects in this group.

The second category is concerned with a broad global context: it tries to situate Warsaw’s designers in the framework of the global market and international design scene. It is an attempt to observe the contradictions of globalization from the perspective of design. We examine the work of the designers who attained their education in the academic system abroad, such as Marcin Rusak and Tomek Ryga-

lik. In addition, we ask questions about originality in the era which can be characterised by a free-flowing exchange of thoughts and ideas, as well as by cultural homogenisation. In this case, sociology might offer the right tools and broaden our understanding of the topic.

The next group is related to migration. Here, we take into consideration such initiatives as “Kuchnia konfliktu” [Conflict Kitchen], a restaurant in Warsaw run by migrants from conflict zones. We also investigate the work of designers with, for instance, Ukrainian or Vietnamese heritage, who live and work in Warsaw. Anthropology as a discipline thrives in the age of multiculturalism: it has developed interesting comparative methods that can aid us in reading the changing environment around us through design.

The last group I identified is dedicated to city activism and conceptual projects conducted in urban space. These activities, like graphic designer Jan Bajtlik’s initiative of putting posters around the city, engage design and use it to their advantage. In addition, we introduce the city’s initiative “Dzielnica Wisła” [The Vistula District], whose main goal is the integration of Warsaw’s residents around the Vistula River. This project uses design in a very conscious way to build the identity of the city.

I see problems embedded in my approach, chiefly the risk of creating a false, idealised image of Warsaw by not mentioning poorly designed public spaces, air pollution, an excess of car traffic, ugly billboards and tacky shopping malls. I am currently trying to find a way to include more designs that are concerned with rising social awareness into the display. Nevertheless, presenting a complete picture of Warsaw was never my goal. Instead, I hope that the objects on display will direct the audience’s gaze deeper into some of Warsaw’s current identities.

<sup>4</sup> <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,24018417,przybywa-cudzoziemcow-w-warszawie-najwiecej-z-ukrainy-pojawil.html> [accessed 1.02 2019]

<sup>5</sup> See <https://lananguyen.com/> [accessed 1.02 2019]

<sup>6</sup> See <https://natemat.pl/113093, lana-nguyen-25-letnia-projektantka-z-wietnamu-ktora-podbija-serca-polek> [accessed 1.02 2019]

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Marcin Rusak, “More than 100 Design Events”, September 2018, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.





## AGNIESZKA JACOBSON-CIELECKA PhD

dizájnkurátor, újságíró, programigazgató, School of Form, Poznań

### A lengyel dizájn változásai 2008 és 2018 között kurátori szemmel

A szerző több, mint tíz évnyi kurátori tevékenysége során a lengyel dizájn nemzetközi elismerésén dolgozik. Számos sikeres kiállítást szervezett Lengyelországban és külföldön. A sokéves munka során tapasztalta, hogy változtak meg a dizájnerek kompetenciái s ezzel együtt az a mód

is, ahogyan az ipar képviselőivel együttműködtek, de változott az üzleti tudatosságuk és maga az ipar is. A tanulmány arra keres válaszokat, hogy ezek a változások milyen nyereségekkel és veszteségekkel jártak. Megvan-e még, s ha igen, miről szól a lengyel dizájn identitása?

## AGNIESZKA JACOBSON-CIELECKA, PhD

design curator, journalist, Program Director at School of Form, Poznań

### A Curator's Eye on Changes in the Polish Design Scene 2008 – 2018

Exactly 11 years ago I was offered the position of art director for the second edition of the Łódź Design Festival.<sup>1</sup> At the time, the festival had not yet managed to build up its own tradition, and the Polish design scene was practically non-existent. In curating my first art show,<sup>2</sup> the Łódź Design Festival in 2008, I invited all the Polish product designers I knew and managed to reach out to, as well as several foreign designers who were not afraid to come or send their work to Poland. The exhibition, which gathered over 40 participants, served three important purposes. First, it brought together an entire generation of designers who shared the same goals, dreams and problems. It created a sense of community among a group that had so far been scattered

across the entire country, detached from academic centres and convinced that the world was changing and they had to be ready for it. Second, it attracted foreign guests, albeit only a few, lured by the punkish atmosphere of the festival, the picturesque buildings of the Scheibler factory<sup>3</sup> and the decadent climate of the city. In the years following, the popularity of the festival, as well as its international renown, started growing at a rate we never even dreamed of. Third, it cre-

ated something that was long missing: a space for dialogue and comparison, a place to look for answers to the fundamental question: What is Polish design like in this pivotal moment, and where does it get its inspirations from? What is our identity? It seems I was not the only person who found that interesting. Shortly after the festival, I was approached by the Regional Museum in Stalowa Wola,<sup>4</sup> asking me to prepare an exhibition dedicated to Polish design. That exhibition was an expression of the predominant observation that we were still deeply rooted in material culture. Called Natural Resources of Polish Design,<sup>5</sup> the exhibition presented the problem from a very



1. POLSKA FOLK selected objects

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lodzdesign.com/home-en-gb/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.agnieszka-jacobson.pl/en/lodz-design-festival/play-and-joke-2008->

<sup>3</sup> <https://culture.pl/en/article/industrial-lodz-past-present>

<sup>4</sup> <http://muzeum.stalowawola.pl/en>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.agnieszka-jacobson.pl/en/exhibitions/natural-resources-of-polish-design>

wide perspective: from graphic design to architecture, with numerous examples of application and transformation of various regional designs and craftsmanship techniques, as well as formal, functional and material inspirations. Later on, the exhibition, renamed Polska Folk<sup>6</sup> and limited to usable objects, represented Polish design in several international festivals. This new version comprised items which, by themselves, did not evoke any folklore associations. But when brought together, owing to the colour scheme, interactions between their shapes, colours, motifs and materials, they unmistakably brought the Polish folk traditions to mind. Some of these became part of the established set of Polish design, even though their authors changed their scope of application. This primarily concerned the Koko'n straw lamps, the Messy embroidered tablecloths and the knitted Nodus carpets from the Aze Design studio, which treated their work as a social project and had deliberately settled at the Eastern border and started cooperating with a local farmers' wives' association. Another project worth remembering was the Dia carpet, which comprised a scaled-up folk cut-out made in thick felt by Moho, a studio which has since then changed its name and replaced some of its members, and now deals with serious industrial design.

Soon after, another invitation came, this time from the Polish Institute in Brussels, to prepare an exhibition for the design festival organised there. Although ethno-design and regional art were very much the "in" thing in Europe at the time (ca. 2010), there were strong reservations that the exhibition should not be folk-like. It was Brussels, after all. I decided to invite Pawel Grobelny,<sup>7</sup> my friend and fellow designer to curate the event

<sup>7</sup> <http://pawelgrobelny.com>  
<sup>6</sup> <http://www.agnieszka-jacobson.pl/en/exhibitions/polska-folk>

with me. We began to wonder if there would be anything left of the typical Polish design of the era if we removed all the colours and patterns. We ended up analysing the way designers think and the possibilities they had. We thus came up with several important features that seemed to recur in numerous works. Most significantly, I would mention a specific type of resourcefulness that was inherited from previous generations, including the childhood years of the designers of the 60s, 70s and 80s. The shortage of materials, lack of tools, technologies and contractors all made the designers work in simple, artisan and inventive ways. In some ways, they simply had no other choice. They used what they had, and learned to easily replace some materials with others, intuitively borrow solutions from other paradigms, and come up with ways to satisfy current needs with surprisingly simple design decisions. From this perspective, their work was an ironic, critical comment on the reality they lived in. Some examples of such creative perceptiveness include: the sleek Malafor stools made of tree stumps packed in metal cylinders with handles, or the inflatable paper armchairs and sofas made of dunnage sacks fitted into a thin metal frame coated with rubber. Another



2. UNPOLISHED. YOUNG DESIGN FROM POLAND selected objects

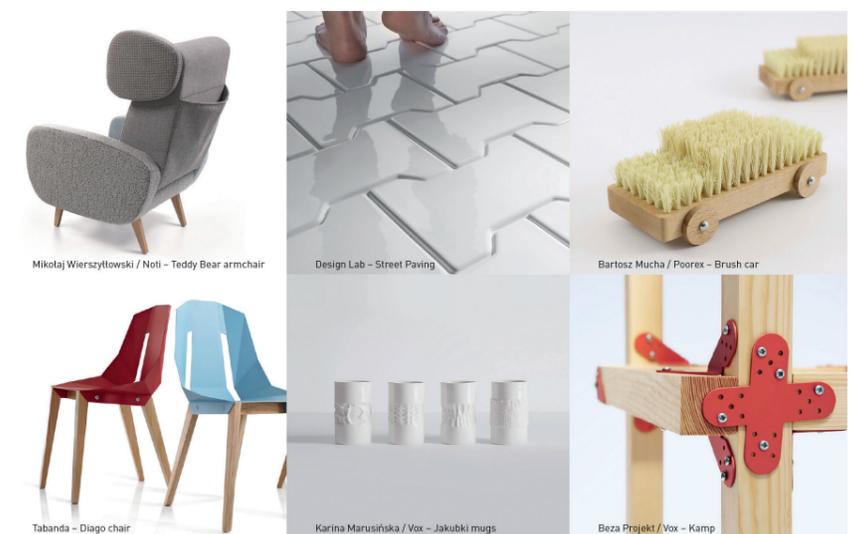
iconic design of the era, which today seems trivial, is the underwear buckle equipped with a USB key by Bartosz Mucha. It received media attention and was awarded in the first edition of the MakeMe!<sup>8</sup> competition. It even began to be copied in Asia – millions of fake versions were made. A surprising concept by Gogo Design, featuring radios and clocks by the metre provoked a discussion about consumerism, the life span of goods and mass production long before the topic became relevant. The Radio, an ironic design by Studio Kosmos, wittily comments on the fact that when broadcast licences were granted, a famous Catholic station (called Radio Maryja) received the strongest bandwidth. Then there are the designs by Karina Marusińska and Agnieszka Bar with their questions about the boundaries between the unique and the mass produced, and about the relationship between producer and designer. Naturally, these questions remained unanswered, as industry was not represented in this design exhibition. There was not much interaction between the designer stage and the local manufacturing industry, which is one of the largest in Europe.

We called the new project Unpolished,<sup>9</sup> as Polish design at the time was exactly like that: honest, homemade and raw. The exhibition turned out to be a success, partly due to the fact that our region of Europe was in the spotlight at the time. Over the next four years, it was invited to various festivals and museums (including Budapest's Museum of Applied Arts in 2011) and supplemented with new items. Overall, it was exhibited more than 20 times.

After those four years, we recognised that the situation was changing and Unpolished

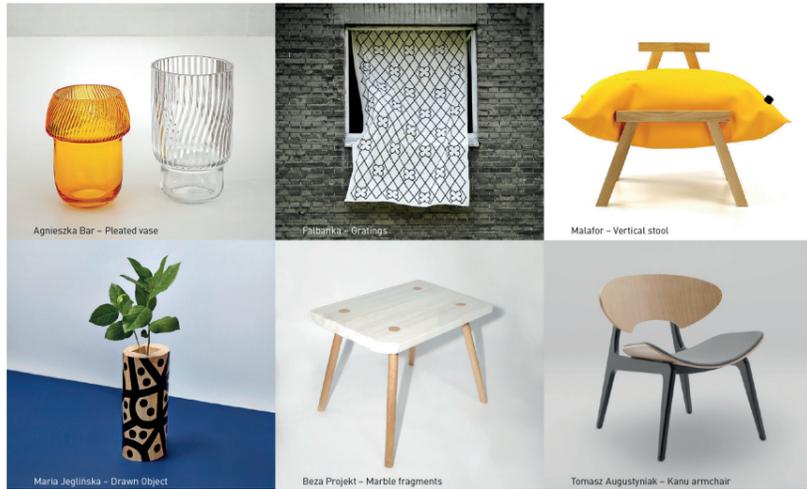
<sup>8</sup> <http://makeme.lodzdesign.com/en/home-page/>  
<sup>9</sup> <http://www.agnieszka-jacobson.pl/en/exhibitions/unpolished-young-design-from-poland>  
<sup>10</sup> <http://www.agnieszka-jacobson.pl/en/exhibitions/polished-up>

could no longer accurately depict the Polish design scene. Therefore, in 2014 we concluded the project and initiated a new one, which we called Polished Up.<sup>10</sup> With this, we wanted to emphasise that some kind of understanding finally appeared between the Polish producers and designers. Naturally, this did not mean that the values I mentioned earlier had lost their validity. Nevertheless, Polish design started to develop a practical and economic dimension as well. The designers of today do not just create artefacts for galleries to exhibit. They now work in genuine collaboration with producers. For instance, Karina Marusińska started cooperating with Vox; Bartosz Mucha produces his own toys; and the Malafor team are experimenting with materials more durable than paper, like felt and Dacron, which they use



3. POLISHED UP. DESIGN FROM POLAND selected objects

to make inflatable cushions for their sofas and armchairs. Large companies, such as Profim and Noti, started employing designers or creating new brands for new products that are developed from scratch with design in mind. Some designers, like Tabanda or Oskar Zięta, invested in new technologies and are successfully running their own businesses now.

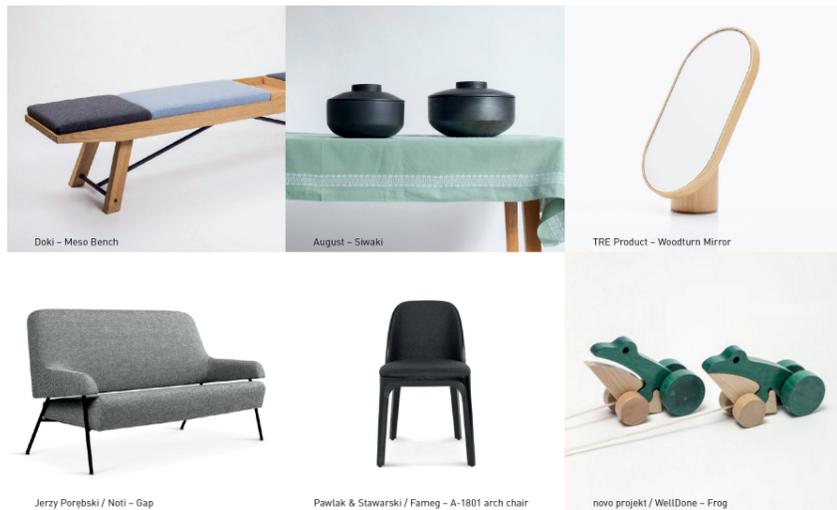


expression of the same idea, embodied in various forms and materials. Objects are supposed to serve their function. And they are supposed to last. Product quality is equally affected by its design as it is by its material and workmanship. When we were creating this survey of Polish design – the third one in just a few years, we realised how we had unintentionally become historians of this transformation. The Moderna exhibition was presented in 2015–16, and we decided not to develop it any further.

4. MODERNA. INDUSTRY+CRAFT.

But after another two years, the landscape changed again. When we were invited by the museum in Stalowa Wola to present an exhibition referring to the history of the town, we started looking for modernist values in Polish design. The Moderna exhibition Industry+craftsmanship<sup>11</sup> presented items in which the designer's idea, mass production and craftsmanship came together for the purpose of assuring the unique quality of the product. Examples include porcelain sets by small design studios like Modus and Vola, or projects by Maria Jeglińska for Kristoff, her wooden vases, or the two-part crystal vases by Agnieszka Bar, ornate tiles designed by Paulina Matusiak for Purpura, and fabrics designed by Falbanka. Another example is furniture – the Kanu chairs designed by Tomasz Augustyniak for Marbet, and Nikodem Szpunar's work for Paged, or the Marble Fragments coffee tables made of waste material – developed by Beza Studio. All of them are an

An unexpected conclusion came in 2018. We were asked by the Łódź Design Festival to select 40 design and manufacturing companies among the applicants for an EU-funded enterprise support programme. One of the elements of the programme was an exhibition called PolishUp.<sup>12</sup> We chose large, experienced brands, such as Fameg or Noti, as well as smaller companies, which treated design as an avenue for their development (e.g., Doki, Tre Product). We



4. MODERNA. INDUSTRY+CRAFT.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.agnieszka-jacobson.pl/en/exhibitions/moderna>  
<sup>12</sup> <http://www.lodzdesign.com/archive/lodz-design-festival-2018-en-gb/program-2018-en-gb/exhibition/polishup-en-gb/>

also picked several small studios of just a few people, or even one-person workshops (e.g., August, Tartaruga), which exist somewhere between design and craftsmanship. The selection also featured second editions and interpretations of Polish design from the 60s (e.g., Vzor, 366 Concept). As a result, we saw the full spectrum of possibilities and the scale of activity. The exhibition, which became the fourth in the series, has much less to do with designers than it does with producers and the market as a whole.

Now we can truly say that the Polish market has matured, on every level. Manufacturers have learned why they need designers, and designers have learned that they, too, are responsible for

the success of each project. The consumer market has also grown. People now look for well-designed, good quality products and appreciate domestic brands. What is more, today customers have more money, and they're willing to spend that money on home decor. The products developed here, however, might as well have a "Made in Europe" label on them, because as design has developed, it has also lost that clear-cut edge, which ten years ago still gave away its place of origin and source of inspiration.





## MONIKA ROSIŃSKA PhD

*szociológus, dizájnkatató, School of Form, Poznań*

### Dizájnerek dizájntárgyokról – egy kvalitatív szociológiai tanulmány ismertetése

A tanulmány egy kvalitatív szociológiai kutatást mutat be, melynek keretében egyéni mélyinterjúkon (IDI, Individual Depth Interviews) keresztül ismerkedhetünk meg lengyel dizájnerek dizájnnal kapcsolatos nézeteivel. Az interjúk 2008–2009-ben készültek tizenegy lengyel dizájnerral. A kutatás célja volt megérteni, ho-

gyan gondolkodnak a dizájnerek a tárgyokról és anyagszerúségről egy, a tárgyak szociológiai, antropológiai és STS (science and technology studies) fogalma által ihletett, tágabb elméleti kontextusba ágyazva. A tanulmány röviden ismerteti a kutatás eredményeit.

## MONIKA ROSIŃSKA, PhD

*sociologist, design researcher, School of Form, Poznań*

### Designers' Voices on Design Objects: A Qualitative Sociological Study

In 2009, Chinese artist and designer Ling Fan arranged in a gallery a spatial installation, 'Design Into Life'.<sup>1</sup> It represented three dimensions of possible relations of design and everyday life. In the first case, geometrical forms arranged chaotically illustrate the mutual ignorance of design and life, and therefore define design as an elite practice of high art inaccessible and distanced from real life. The second type of a relationship is represented by the same elements, but attached to a wall. In this way, Ling Fan highlights the role of a design devoted to visual consumption that is determined by lifestyle magazines. The third arrangement of elements creates a cafe that might serve visitors and is integrated for use in everyday life. In all three cases, the elements are almost identical; what is different is the physical and metaphorical contexts of its placement: the ceiling, the wall, and the floor. This minimalistic installation of Ling Fan is a very simple, yet effective way to communicate the different roles of design and its relationship to everyday life.

The attempt to understand and analyse the ways in which the notion of design is present and constructed among designers was the inspiration for the qualitative sociological research I conducted between February and April of 2009 in Poland. It was also part of my Master's thesis that was published as a book in 2010.<sup>2</sup> The aim of the research was to reveal professional

designers' thinking about objects and materiality, as well as to identify less visible definitions of design that designers employ once they start designing. I carried out thirteen in-depth interviews (IDI – Individual Depth Interviews) among professional designers, in which I asked about their motivation for becoming a designer, their satisfaction from designing, the way they defined objects, and perceived their roles in the context of everyday life. I was also interested in the way professional designers perceive ethical dimensions of their practice, and their attitude towards the social responsibility of design, best articulated by Victor Papanek in *Design For the Real World*.<sup>3</sup>

Design is usually perceived by professional designers within a rather narrow sense of technical and visual, yet rational operations, that result in an object in which form follows function.<sup>4</sup> However, design might be defined much more broadly – as in Judy Attfield's *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*:<sup>5</sup> 'as things with attitude – created with a specific end in view – whether to fulfil a particular task, to make a statement, to objectify moral values, or to express individual or group identity, to denote status or demonstrate technological prowess, to exercise social control or to flaunt political power'. The understanding of what design and object are in the sociological, anthropological and science and technology

<sup>1</sup> L. Fang, *Design Into Life*, <https://www.designboom.com/design/ling-fan-design-into-life/>, accessed: 27.01.2019.

<sup>2</sup> Rosińska, M., *Przemysław użycie. Projektanci, przedmioty, życie społeczne, Bęc Zmiana*, Warsaw, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Papanek, V., *Design for the Real World. Human Ecology and Social Change*, Toronto, New York, London, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> I refer to Sullivan's expression and then the Bauhaus tradition of what it means to design properly.

<sup>5</sup> Attfield, J., *Wild things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*, Berg 2000, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Latour, B., *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Oxford, 2005.



studies (STS) theoretical framework is at least extended to designing individual and social behaviour, and human adaptation to the world through materiality, as well as perceiving objects as non-human actors.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in conducting the research, I was very much interested in the relational aspects of design and materiality, and not its essentialist definitions.

Among my interview subjects, there was a tendency to describe the object through technical parameters rather than its social or cultural roles, or its relation to users. One of the designers put it this way:

*First of all, a designed object needs to be functional, and even if the object is extremely beautiful, if it lacks functionality, its life will be short. The example of Juicy Salif by Philip Starck is very apt here. Absolutely devoid of its function as a juicer, it somehow became a design icon. (...) All designers have a certain list of parameters that describe good design, but in general, a chair needs to be comfortable, a table has to have a certain height, etc.*

*The object always has its function. Without its function, there is no object. Well, even art has its function: to satisfy our personal need for beauty or other preferences.*

*An object is a thing that was designed to serve its user, to perform a given function.*

At the same time, among almost all designers, there was a strong distance palpable towards the object. Most of them expressed their preference for the word “thing” instead.

*The word “object” sounds so lifeless. It’s something dead in its form. But a “designed object” should be alive... it should seduce, it should encourage one to take it in their hands and use it according to its purpose or not. (...) “Object” is something deprived of personality and dead, but a “designed object” is alive and evokes emotions.*

*I would rather use the word “thing” than “object”. Objects are voiceless. But whether we want it or not, they are an intrinsic part of our lives. Whatever we do, wherever we are, whatever we touch or use, we always deal with things. I believe we are so strongly dependent on objects, that it is impossible to discard them all: they create the context of our human lives.*

Among many indicated functions of objects, designers focused on their role to inspire, and their ability to represent Zeitgeist, as well as highlighting their role as status symbols.

*Objects are simply symbols. Thanks to archaeology, we can know about humans from back in history, and what we are creating nowadays will one day be a representation of our times, in which our objects were created, reflecting our fashion and technology.*

*Objects are status symbols. There are objects that are luxurious, created for the elite. These objects send a message through their form and use of materials that they are distinct and not available to everyone (...) That is why some objects are more*

*desired than others, because the type of a phone, or the shoes you wear, or the car you drive, all determine the way we are perceived by others. It is a special code.*

Some of the designers also mentioned that the role of objects is to mediate between humans, and to create the meaningful context for their lives:

*Let’s take a toy as an example. It is not something we can give to our child in order to have rest for ourselves. It is rather something that facilitates interaction between the parent and the child, who are connected with a bond. It is very important both to the child and their parent. Many objects are about enabling contact and interaction.*

When it comes to the understanding of design, there was a tendency to indicate two layers of design: one that is more ideal and connected with the obligations of design to improve the comfort of human lives, and the second that referred to its surface, to the visual and formal aspects of an object. Within the first layer, the designers highlighted the role of design as an initiator of change, synonymous with progress, as well as a practice that creates the material world.

*The goal of design is always to make things better, to improve something: from the perspective of the user, the entrepreneur, the environment and the world. Just better in every possible aspect.*

*Design means innovation. It nearly always means the improvement of existing conditions. Either it refers to new needs and possibilities, or*

*to a new group of clients. In most cases, design addresses the needs of humans. It solves given problems. But it also sometimes creates something totally new.*

*Design is a practice that creates the material world around us. But it is also the ability to create new situations triggered by those objects. Therefore, it is designing human behaviour and action.*

There was also a strong indication that design not only addresses human needs, but also creates them:

*Design is not only about addressing the contemporary needs of users. Design should aim at finding and creating new needs. It is my quasi-philosophical definition of design: it creates new needs.*

*It is amazing in a way, when you consider the fact that people did not need a particular thing some time ago. Simply did not think it will be needed. And it is astonishing that design can so effectively create new needs.*

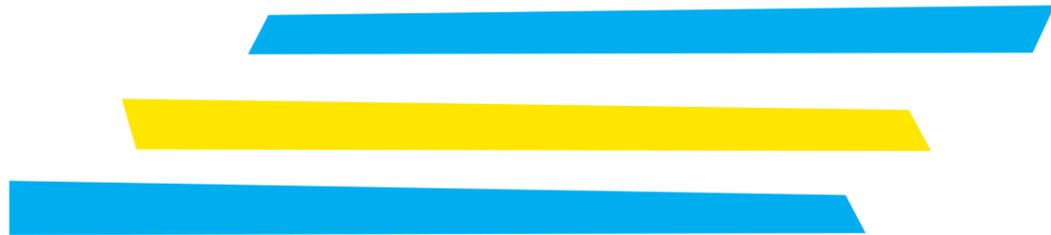
At the same time, many of them complained about the prevalent understanding of design resulting from its role as an effective tool for selling more goods on the market:

*In our part of Europe, design is misunderstood: it is seen as the art of making things bizarre and expensive. This happens because design is treated as a marketing tool and not as a part of material culture.*

*In everyday life, design was to a great extent subordinated to marketing requirements and the economy. I think that nowadays the very word 'design' is over-used. It is becoming a cliché, because no one truly knows what it means. I assume most of society has no clue about its origins and meaning.*

ideas, probably trying to distance themselves from the world of art and its contemporary role of critiquing the status quo. However, most of them also strongly highlighted that design needs to be first and foremost functional, but also to represent added value. As it seems, design in the view of the interviewed designers is a great example and illustration of the changes and transformations this practice faces nowadays.

The above quoted and exemplary empirical material from the interviews I conducted represents only some of the interesting issues designers elaborated on. It is worth noting here that many of them were reluctant to recognise design as





## MARIA OSTROWSKA

*Polska Design programmenedzser, Adam Mickiewicz Intézet, Varsó*

### A kortárs lengyel divat

Napjainkban a lengyel divat számos irányzattal büszkélkedhet a globális piacra sikeresen betörő márkák (kiskereskedelmi láncok) anyagi és marketing sikerétől kezdve a prémium és niche piacára fókuszáló dizájnerek képviselte független márkáig, illetve az utcai viseletek stílusáig vagy alternatív művészeti törekvésekig. Lengyelország gazdag kínálata nemcsak figyelemreméltó kreatív potenci-

álról, megbízható színvonalú oktatásról és a magas szintű kivitelezésről tanúskodik, hanem mind a lengyel, mind pedig a külföldi közönség ízlésének és érdeklődésének következetes fejlődéséről is. Vajon mely dizájnerek hatnak leginkább a kortárs lengyel divat világára, és melyik „made in Poland” címkével ellátott öltözék kelti a legnagyobb érdeklődést a nemzetközi piacon?

## MARIA OSTROWSKA

*Polska Design Programme Acting Manager, Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Warsaw*

### The Contemporary Polish Fashion Scene

Poland is currently host to a well-developed textile manufacturing and apparel manufacturing industry. According to KPMG's November 2018 report on the 'Fashion Industry in Poland', the Polish textile and clothing manufacturing market in 2016 was worth 29.1 billion zlotys, putting it in the top ten Europe-wide, and in the top 30 globally. In 2016, Polish fashion companies, amounting to some 22,000 today, employed some 190,000 people.<sup>1</sup>

Following the transformation of the political system in Poland after 1989, there was a significant period of growth for Polish fashion brands and smaller producers; the fashion industry evolved much like any other profitable business in the newly democratic nation. In the 1990s, a number of fashion firms sprang up, which have since grown into the extensive chains that stretch across the country today – and across its borders. These include LPP (the biggest of the bunch, owner of several major brands: RESERVED, MOHITO, House, Cropp and SiNSAY), as well as KAN (owner of TATUUM), Redan (owner of Top Secret), Simple and Solar.

RESERVED is decidedly the most visible brand of them all, offering a wide range of clothing for men and women that caters to the season's latest trends. 'Reserved collections are available in 16 European nations and 4 countries in the Middle East. Altogether, LPP operates a chain of 460 shops under the Reserved brand.'<sup>2</sup> In September 2017, it opened its first flagship store in London's Oxford Street, with a campaign star-

ring Kate Moss – the face of the brand's Fall/Winter 2017 collection. LPP and RESERVED are an example of a Polish fashion company producing goods at the swift rate typical of 'fast fashion' (offering several collections a year according to the latest fashion trends) and much like other global companies in the industry, they produce most of their goods outside of Poland.

Retail chains and production plants make up a substantial part of the Polish fashion market, and yet the image of Polish fashion is primarily painted in the colours of independent designers who produce smaller collections and often limited-edition series that are of higher quality in terms of raw materials and design. The shape of the Polish fashion industry over the last decade has undergone a number of permutations, significantly expanding the presence of independent brands and designers, and their unique design concepts. The fashion is irrevocably tied to the material aspects of culture. At the same time, it is an expression not only of major aesthetic trends, but also serves as a tangible element of cultural testimony tied to a particular moment in history. From the anthropological point of view with regard to culture and society, fashion's constant pursuit of change comes from the individual's pursuit of acceptance within the social system, and the concurrent effort to express one's individuality by the same token.<sup>3</sup>

That which we can currently observe as 'fashionable' on the Polish style scene is rooted in a particular set of circumstances that marked the

<sup>1</sup> <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/pl/pdf/2018/11/pl-Raport-KPMG-pt-Rynek-mody-w-polsce.pdf> (5 January 2019)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lppsa.com/marki> (5 January 2019)

<sup>3</sup> Magala, S., *Simmel*. Warszawa, 1980, p. 192.

past decade of fashion design in this country. One of these significant factors was the development of B2C fashion trade fairs across major cities in Poland towards the end of the 2000s. The initiation of a series of cyclical events of this type, which congregated all the most interesting small brands on the fashion scene, made it possible to discover a brand, buy some pieces and get to know the designer personally – which all contributed to the strengthening of these brands, increasing their brand recognition and, as a result, driving their sales.

Another factor that led to the greater professionalisation of the fashion market for designer labels was the launch of Poland's first official Fashion Week in the city of Łódź. The first edition of FashionPhilosophy Fashion Week Poland took place in 2009, presenting debut collections every six months, until it ceased operating in 2017. The prestige of the event also guaranteed the presence of Polish and international journalists, and increased the chances for exposure.

Over the last decade, there has been a high level of development in the e-commerce sector. Online boutiques exclusively offering goods made by Polish designers started up, which made Polish fashion more widely available to a broader public. The leader in online sales of Polish designs is Showroom.pl, launched in 2011, which sells clothing by some 500 different designers today. The potential of the Polish fashion market was noted by the publishers of Harper's Bazaar, and a Polish edition was launched in 2013. Poland had just a few more years to wait before the premiere of the fashion world's most renowned title: Vogue. The first edition of Vogue Polska came out on 14 February 2018, drawing a great deal of interest among its readership and a wide discussion around its cover. The fashions created by Polish designers over the past decade have been allowed to flourish to a remarkable extent. The excerpt below describes the Polish fashion designers' scene and the various formats it represents.

### Red Carpet Fashion

If we were to draw some lines within the Polish fashion scene today, dividing it up into several areas according to their own distinctive character, the area that stands out most would be taken up by brands that have achieved a substantial measure of success on the Polish market and upheld that success for a number of years. The most conspicuous examples of Polish fashion success stories are in the garments that drape the shoulders of Polish celebrities in major magazine editorials. The price and quality of these pieces reflects their adherence to the standards of the premium and luxury segments of the market. The trend for building brands based on the name of a specific designer is evident – someone who often goes on to serve as the brand's chief designer and art director.



1. Gosia Baczyńska, *Eastern Europe Goes Wild, Wild West, SS 2018*  
© Gosia Baczyńska

Among the most notable designers in the field is Gosia Baczyńska. She has built up a highly reputable brand based on the refined character of her craft and the precision she devotes to creating each collection. She was the only Polish designer to be shown on the prêt-à-porter runway at Paris Fashion Week. In 2017, Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge wore a dress by Gosia Baczyńska for the royal couple's official visit to Poland.

Another of Poland's prominent 'red carpet' designers is Łukasz Jemioł. His brand has been thriving for 12 years, and in the meantime, he has launched two lines – premium and basic – each geared at a different customer base and priced accordingly. Just after graduating from the Clothing Design Department at the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź, he was named winner of the country's biggest fashion design competition: Złota Nitka [Golden Thread].

### Creative Concepts

Another major slice of the contemporary Polish fashion scene is made up of brands that have not only acquired a substantial degree of popularity and stability on the market, but that have also become part of the cultural current, becoming a recognisable style code among Polish fashionistas and the creative class overall.

Standing out in this sector is the 'it bag' created by Zofia Chylak under her Chylak brand. Established in 2014, the brand has made a name for itself worldwide by making high-quality bags and leather goods in limited editions at a fairly accessible price point (approx. 250–300 Euros). There's also a waiting time for each item. All these factors have contributed to making Chylak bags a recognisable item among the fashion-minded crowd in Poland – and those who would like to be considered as such. Chylak's bags are an apt illustration of the social role of fashion and its resulting mechanisms.



2. Łukasz Jemioł, *SS 2018* © Łukasz Jemioł

Another brand that has earned cult style status among a specific audience (a group which uses fashion to amplify their own individual brand) is Nenukko. Established in 2008 by a design duo who remained anonymous for several years, the label is characterised by a universal, unisex, oversized style that allows its wearer to 'hide within its folds'. Nenukko clothing envelopes the wearer, allowing them to disappear into the crowd, while also bringing them together as members of the creative class who subscribe to this particular style of dress. Its customers include designers, graphic designers, filmmakers, artists and writers.



3. Nenukko, *The Next Chapter*, AW 2017/2018, © Nenukko

## Global Phenomena

Polish brands are gaining pace, not only at home, but throughout the European continent, across to Asia and into the Americas. The greatest international success stories in Polish fashion have proven to be: UEG, MISBHV, Magda Butrym and Local Heroes. Each of these brands is characterised by its own individual aesthetic, attracting a distinctive clientele. What they all have in common is that they have managed to storm the global fashion market and make an indubitable impression.

MISBHV captured the fashion industry's imagination in a similar way. Run by designer Natalia Maczek, the brand's name is a play on the word 'misbehave', gaining tread on the trend of subversive fashion and post-Soviet chic brought into the limelight by the likes of Vetements and Gosha Rubchinskiy. MISBHV is sold all around the world – across Asia, the USA, Canada and Europe.

Local Heroes is a brand set up by a duo of young designers in 2012 who rose to stardom by producing attention-getting slogan t-shirts, beginning with the tagline 'Doing real stuff sucks'. The brand that Areta Szpura and Karolina Słota created won over the Polish fashion scene by capturing the attention of young people across the country, then spreading across the world. Their slogan t-shirts offer quirky, tongue-in-cheek lines in casual fonts, calling out 'Last Clean T-shirt' and 'Single, taken, hungry'. The foundation of their success is mainly attributed to social media: Instagram, Tumblr and Facebook.

The global brands of Polish fashion have also profited from their popularity among international celebrities who, in turn, spread the word among their own loyal followers. Styles by the Polish brands mentioned above have been worn by the likes of Gigi and Bella Hadid, Emily Ratajowski, Kylie Jenner, and Rihanna. Sometimes these collaborations come about spon-



4. Magda Butrym, *#RODEOtoVEGAS*, AW 2018/2019  
© Magda Butrym

taneously, as in the case of Justin Bieber, shot by the paparazzi wearing a Local Heroes T-shirt, or it is the effect of planned marketing and PR techniques that reach out directly to a particular celebrity or their team. It is often these untraditional approaches that have a more substantial effect on sales than conventional methods, such as taking part in an international fashion show.

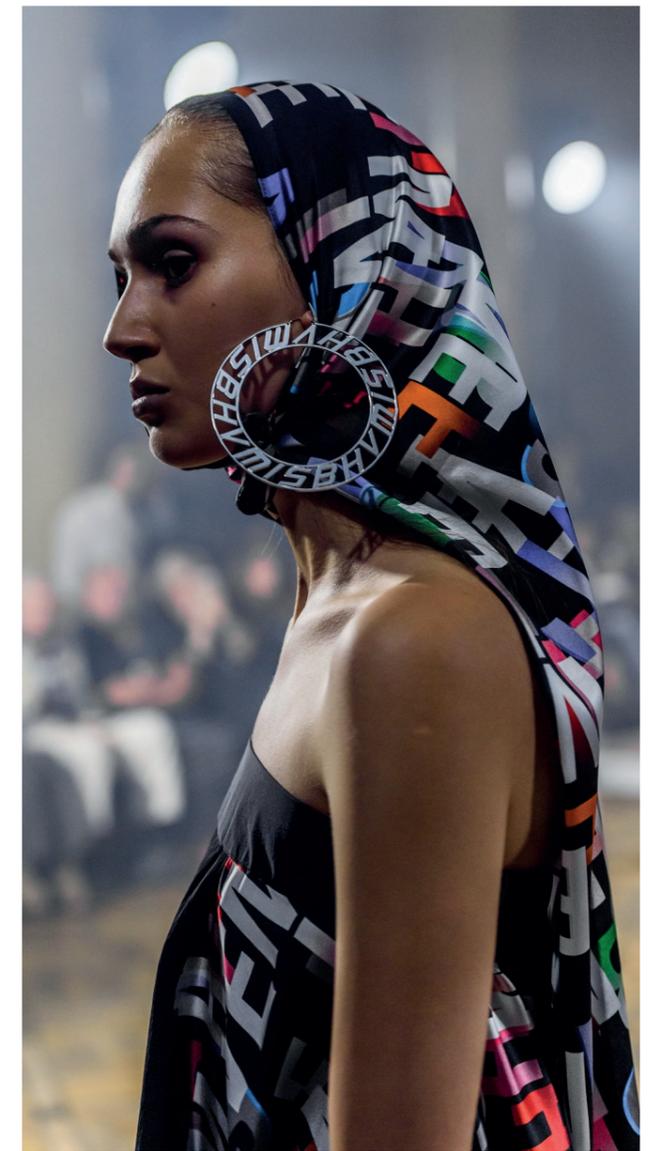
## Ethical Fashion

British design historian and theoretician Deyan Sudić has written about fashion as a democratic form of expression that can be adopted by anyone at all, whereas consumer choices influence how the cycle functions, sometimes shifting it into a new direction and offering a new resource. Sometimes consumers of fashion take control of what the system offers, and force it to operate according to their own standards.<sup>4</sup>

This is certainly the case with regard to ethical fashion, whose rising popularity is linked to the specific needs of consumers who want clothing produced in a way that has the least detrimental effect on the environment, using natural resources and transparent methods of production. The Polish fashion scene today also includes brands that strive to create collections based on the tenets of sustainable fashion.

Pat Guzik – a brand operating in the realm of ethical design – creates clothing that joins street-wear together with high fashion in a way that can literally be described as 'patchwork'. The brand's original, vibrant collections are often the synthesis of scraps of fabric, bits and pieces and textiles from second-hand sources that are coupled together with a creative eye and hand. The brand often collaborates with socially-minded initiatives, such as the Cooperative Ushirika, which brings together women from an underprivileged area of Kenya.

<sup>4</sup> Sudić, D., *Język rzeczy. Dizajn i luksus, moda i sztuka. W jaki sposób przedmioty nas uwodzą?* Kraków, 2013, p. 173.



5. MISBHV, *Polish Jazz*, SS 2018 © MISBHV

A relative newcomer to the sustainable fashion current in Polish fashion is Nago. The brand (whose name translates to 'naked') is based on a concept that offers a 'basic' collection of universal pieces that can be worn extensively no matter the style trends of the moment, made of certified textiles like organic cotton, Tencel, cupro and wool. Nago's entire process is transparent from start to finish, with a concerted effort to minimise any effects on the environ-



6. Pat Guzik, *We All Come From A Place*, presentation of the collection during CenterStage - Asia's Fashion Spotlight in Hong Kong, 2018 ©Pat Guzik

ment. Production happens locally, ready pieces are shipped to shops and to customers in reusable bags, while all tags are made of recycled cardboard, and attached with twine.

### The Ones to Watch

Those who are most deserving of attention, perhaps, on the Polish fashion scene are the young designers of the nation, the recent graduates of its design schools: the Academies of Fine Arts in Łódź and in Warsaw, The School of Form in Poznań, The International School of Costume and Clothing Design (MSKPiU) and Viamoda in Warsaw, as well as the International School of Fashion Design in Kraków (SAPU). Their collections are presented to the public as part of diploma fashion shows or competitions, such

as the most significant contest for young designers – Złota Nitka [Golden Thread] – and the international Łódź Young Fashion competition. The winner of the Złota Nitka prize in 2018 was Adrian Krupa, who's currently on his second year of Master's Studies in the Design Department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź. Krupa's designs are an interplay between construction, precision and a game of hide-and-seek that reveals certain parts of the womanly form in an unconventional way. What makes his collection stand out is the maturity of his approach to fashion design.

Another promising student to capture the imagination of the press and the fashion world, and the art world to boot, is a student of the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź named Tomasz Armada. He is likely one of the most eccentric and most talented personalities on the Polish fashion scene. He is also one half of the artistic collective Dom Mody Limanka.

### The Democratisation of Fashion

This roundup serves only as a general sketch of what the Polish fashion scene holds and the key role that the country's brands have – particularly those led by designers. They might not make up the most profitable part of the commercial sector; yet, their role in building the image of Polish fashion, its creativity and conceptual ingenuity, is key.

We might take a look at fashion as a tool for a certain kind of liberation, thanks to its distinctive character (which may stand in opposition to tradition or the status quo – which functioned so unwaveringly over past centuries). This approach reveals the nature of fashion as a mechanism, as opposed to considering its individual forms of expression, the possibility to find common ground with other people, imitating established patterns, and building a group's sense of identity. In the postmodern world, the way we look is not dictated by filters instilled by tradition, which strictly dictated the realm of superficial appear-

ance at one time, but is related to our choices and how they correlate with the style of our times. When it comes to contemporary society, it is difficult to speak of class divisions, especially in the realm of fashion. Fashion creates the opportunity for an individual to become their own fantasy, making it possible to put on a suit of identity that is tailored specifically to our needs – down to the last stitch.<sup>5</sup> This realm of Polish fashion is also the part of the industry that has the greatest impact in social terms, making it possible to see ephemeral communities through their individual visual codes, often created by Polish designers of late.



7. Tomasz Armada, *The collection of patriotic clothing (diploma collection)*, 2017 ©Tomasz Armada, photo Aga Murak

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## AGATA SZYDŁOWSKA PhD

*Dizájtörténeti és -elméleti Tanszék, Dizájn Kar, Képzőművészeti Akadémia, Varsó*

### “A lakásom a hobbim”. Lakberendezés és ideológia a második világháború utáni Lengyelországban

Ha átlapozzuk bármelyik 1956 után Lengyelországban kiadott életstílus- vagy női magazint, az a benyomásunk támadhat, hogy a lakberendezés az akkori állampolgárok legfőbb érdeklődési területének számított. A valóságban azonban még a legszerényebb lakás megszerzése, bútorokkal és háztartási gépekkel való felszerelése is a legkomolyabb kihívások egyike volt a háború utáni Lengyelországban. Nem csak a hiánygazdaság, hanem az ideológiák és törekvések változásai is rányomták a bélyegüket arra, ahogyan az emberek otthonaikban éltek.

Ez a tanulmány kilép a dizájnerekről és gyártókról szóló paradigmából, és a fogyasztásra fókuszál, arra, hogy az emberek ténylegesen mit használtak a hétköznapokon és miért. A szerző hangsúlyozza a mediáció fontos szerepét, vagyis amikor a szakértők a fogyasztók felé ideológiát, trendeket, divatirányzatokat közvetítettek. A tanulmány magazinok, filmek és tanácsadó kiadványok példáin keresztül meséli el a második világháború végétől az 1970-es évekig terjedő korszak lengyel lakástrendjeinek történetét.

## AGATA SZYDŁOWSKA, PhD

*design historian, Dept. of Design History and Theory, Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts*

### “My flat is my hobby”: Furnishing and Ideologies in Post-War Poland

In 1960, seven years after Stalin's death and four years after the 'Thaw', a new magazine appeared on Polish newsstands. *Ty i Ja* (You and Me) was probably the strangest monthly in communist Poland. Not only was it the first to employ an art director who was almost as important as the editor-in-chief. It was also to a great extent devoted to material culture. *Ty i Ja* is often called the first Polish lifestyle magazine. In fact it was focused on subjects seemingly far from politics. They ranged from culture (especially film and literature), through fashion, design and cuisine to tips and advice on everyday concerns (raising children, *savoir-vivre*, wellness and beauty, pets, health, etc.). It was all gathered into an extraordinary graphic design created by Roman Cieśliewicz who was later replaced by Elżbieta Strzalecka and Bogdan Źochowski. The magazine was relatively expensive and in fact available only in the main cities which made it a kind of luxury item.

The mission of the magazine was to educate people on material culture. The context was a growing supply of new flats along with a belief that the quality of everyday products could and would be improved. Teresa Kuczyńska, the deputy editor of the magazine, says: “*Everyone was furnishing their flats, people were moving to the West, to the formerly German territories. The magazine was there to help these people to navigate the world of things*”.<sup>1</sup> In fact, a glimpse at the content of the magazine – which was closed down in 1973 – gives the impression that furnishing one's flat was the major concern of every citizen. *Ty i Ja* was a guide to strategies for coping with major living-related problems: low quality and high prices of goods

available on the market; flats being too small and poorly designed. At the same time the magazine's tastemakers educated people on current trends in design and helped them distinguish good taste (modern or retro) from bad (petit bourgeois).

The articles ranged from advice to presenting interesting examples. Ordinary people were advised on how to make a modern lamp from paper, create a built-in wardrobe or throw a party when you don't have enough chairs (“A Japanese-style party! No chairs, everyone sitting on the floor”). *Ty i Ja* showed individual objects as well: selections of designer items from the Instytut Wzornictwa Przemysłowego (Industrial Design Institute) or editors' choice of goods available on the market (a compulsory column). It also published interviews with designers. Although the magazine's authors distanced themselves from the kind of popular furniture which was a bestselling item in 1960s Poland, they naturally promoted modernity, even modernism, with kitchen laboratories, built-in solutions, pragmatism, simple and modest decoration, etc.

The presentation of existing flats was a completely different story. Felicja Uniechowska's column “My flat is my hobby” featured the flats of well-known artists and intellectuals from Warsaw, mostly Uniechowska's friends and acquaintances. At first glance it looks like a provocation. The interiors were seemingly luxurious since most of them were furnished with antiques. In fact the flats were still modest or even shabby, and it was often the fantasy of the resident that

<sup>1</sup> Conversation with Teresa Kuczyńska, 18.05.2018.



transformed them into something attractive. Apparently Uniechowska and her friends had a taste for everything old and retro. This was in obvious contrast to the magazine's campaigns in favour of modernism. Since Uniechowska always emphasised that readers should not try to emulate the flats belonging to artists (they should rather look for their own individual style), we can argue that this contrast has much to do with the phenomenon French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu described as social distinction. These individually furnished interiors look surprisingly alike when we compare them, indicating that their owners shared a particular taste which revealed their "cultural nobility".<sup>2</sup> Artists and intellectuals have often been a part of impoverished elites, so acquiring antiques could be a way of restoring the bygone era. At the same time ordinary people were encouraged to embrace the modern style which was modest, practical and neat. These two stylistic options had in common a distaste for the petit bourgeois style which at that time was taken up enthusiastically by members of the aspiring working class. In the elitist context of *Ty i Ja* this distaste could be a mark of social distinction wrapped into the officially proclaimed aversion towards the bourgeois class.

This focus on furnishing, objects and goods is surprising given the fact that the official communist doctrine was against "commodity fetishism". The key to this paradox lies in the transition from Stalinism to the Thaw. Polish communists had never created any comprehensive or convincing theory of consumer consumption.<sup>3</sup> The communist system was built on a promise of material progress. It created an illusion that the Promised Land was in sight. The only thing we have to do is accept temporary austerity and limit our consumer desires for some time. Present-day restraint was to guarantee future welfare. Obviously in Western countries citizens also faced post-war austerity, but in the Eastern bloc consumerism was a battleground where allies and

enemies were clearly defined. In the Stalinist period an individual's needs were subordinated in favour of the masses. As a consequence home wasn't a place for fulfilling one's individual dreams and aspirations any more. A family was controlled by society and had a strictly defined function: to bring into the world new builders of socialism. Consumption was condemned but there was hardly anything to consume anyway. Light industry was almost non-existent and all forces were directed towards post-war reconstruction and heavy industry.

When in 1956 Nikita Khrushchev revealed Stalin's crimes in the so-called "Secret Speech", communist leaders were faced with a need to find a new way to legitimise their rule. One of the ideas was a shift towards consumption, a promise of welfare. Khrushchev himself was reportedly an enthusiast for high quality products. A symbolic event was the "Kitchen Debate" between Khrushchev and Richard Nixon which took place during the American National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959. The event was to impress the Cold War enemy with a plethora of American consumer goods, especially those relating to homes. Although Khrushchev remarked that the American wonder kitchen is a "golden cage" for a professional housewife, while the compact Soviet one is designed for an emancipated working woman,<sup>4</sup> he apparently accepted the challenge. He announced that the Soviet Union would very soon surpass the USA when it came to consumption and the standard of living.

The general secretary of the Communist Party of Poland was much more ascetic than his Soviet counterpart. Nevertheless the opening towards consumerism could not be avoided. A society exhausted with consumer regulations, shortages and poverty would be happy to have more of a consumer choice, an element of personal freedom and an atmosphere which encouraged a focus on goods and buying

them – or so it was assumed in the Party headquarters.<sup>5</sup> New and elegant cafes appeared in towns, the first supermarkets were opened, hundreds of neon lights were installed, advertisements reappeared, and young people could enjoy motor scooters and portable radios. This liberal atmosphere allowed a magazine with a title such as *Ty i Ja* to be founded.

The magazine enthusiastically embraced the new promise of a consumerist paradise. The editors were obviously aware of the actual poverty of the society that matched the market, which was still inefficient and organised according to the principles of a shortage economy. In fact improvement in the quality of life came about very slowly, and new flats were either very small (in 1959 a standard flat for four people had a floor surface of 48 square metres) or non-existent. At the same time *Ty i Ja* played the role of a guide to the western world full of wonders. Teresa Kuczyńska says: "Our aim was to reach well-educated readers and offer them a view on the world, on western culture. I might add that the Party constantly accused us of

being too 'western'. We shaped tastes by a careful selection of things which were in the West – though they had different trends and styles".<sup>6</sup> The western objects were in fact often introduced as things Polish readers could make themselves at home. DIY tips and advice often promised that the effect would be no different from the Parisian original. Nevertheless the magazine's content never really matched the shabby reality of 1960s Poland. Literary critic and historian Marek Zaleski refers to the monthly: "Ty i Ja was a shop window, a showcase of fabricated reality, not a document of the real thing. (...) Ty i Ja was invaluable because it offered relief: the things it showed were not genuine proposals (they weren't available as goods!) – it was our musée imaginaire, a collage of pictures and desires".<sup>7</sup> We can conclude that *Ty i Ja* was paradoxical when it came to consumerism and everyday goods. While being openly pro-consumerist and in love with everything western, it embraced the specific nature of the communist teleology of consumerism. Though it did promise a consumer heaven, preparing its readers to cope appropriately with goods yet to come.

<sup>2</sup> Jaworska, J., 'Moje hobby to mieszkanie'. In: „Widok. Teorie i praktyki kultury wizualnej” No. 1 (2013), <http://pismowidok.org/index.php/one/article/view/27/20>, access: 15.05.2018.

<sup>3</sup> Crowley, D., 'Warsaw's Shops, Stalinism and the Thaw'. In: Crowley, D. – Reid, S. E. (eds.), *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, Oxford–New York, 2000, pp. 25–27.

<sup>4</sup> Reid, S. E., 'The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution'. In: Lees-Maffei, G. – Houze, R. (eds.), *The Design History Reader*, Oxford–New York, p. 162.

<sup>5</sup> Crowley, D., 'Thaw Modern: Design in Eastern Europe after 1956.' In: Crowley, D. – Pavitt, J. (eds.), *Cold War Modern 1945–1970*. London, 2008, pp. 131–132.

<sup>6</sup> Conversation with Teresa Kuczyńska, 18.05.2018.

<sup>7</sup> Ty. Ja. Rzeczy, „Widok. Teorie i praktyki kultury wizualnej” No. 1(2013), <http://pismowidok.org/index.php/one/article/view/24/12>, access: 12.04.2018





## MAGDALENA KOCHANOWSKA PhD

tanszékvezető, Dizájntörténeti és -elméleti Tanszék, Dizájn Kar,  
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### Lengyel dizájn 1989 előtt és után – ikonok és hétköznapi tárgyak

Akárcsak más országokban, Lengyelország dizájntörténetében is léteznek ikonikus tárgyak. Igazat mondanak ezek a tárgyak a dizájn világáról, a mi történetünket mesélik el? A mi ideáinkról szólnak, a mi kultúránkat képviselik? A tanulmány néhány példán keresztül mutatja be a központi tervgazdaságtól a piacgazdaságig vezető utat, majd a nyitást Európa, a világ felé.

## MAGDALENA KOCHANOWSKA, PhD

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### Polish Design before 1989 and after - Icons and Everyday Objects

In Polish history as well as in other countries there is a set of objects perceived as icons of design. The Cambridge Dictionary explains “iconic” as *very famous or popular, especially being considered to represent particular opinions or a particular time*.<sup>1</sup> From the very beginning of the 20th century, even before Poland regained independence, we can find excellent iconic furniture by Stanisław Witkiewicz, Stanisław Wyspiański and others. In the interwar period Polish design gained international fame; among many talented designers were Barbara and Stanisław Brukalscy. The Second World War was devastating for all Polish culture, and the period of communism created a specific social and economic environment for design. I will not even try to cover the whole history of Polish design. I will focus on 11 selected projects – six from the period 1958–1988 and five from the period 1989 till the present day. Some of them are considered to be so-called icons, others are not. I will use them to discuss the kind of objects that tell us more about Polish design, Polish culture and history.

#### Before 1989

Young designer Teresa Kruszevska created the Scallop chair in 1956 in times of the “Thaw” and the influx of inspiration from the West. *The form of a shell was wrought from a single piece of plywood, while the link points running through the supports were covered by an igelite weave*.<sup>2</sup> The chair was perceived as one of the top designs from that period. It was contemporary and innovative; it had characteristic form. For

*decades it was admired and exhibited in numerous shows both in Poland and abroad. But it was never implemented in mass production*.<sup>3</sup>

The story of the second object was more dramatic. *Syrena Sport was intended to be a test automobile; the producer never planned to release it. It was meant to test the technological solutions and sub-assembly of mass-produced models earmarked for modernization*.<sup>4</sup> The design team was given absolute freedom in regards the shape. The red, two-door cabriolet came into being. Poland was a poor country at that time and Syrena Sport corresponded to the imagination of a richer Western world. *It caused a sensation in red with a shiny black roof when it was presented on Labour Day in 1960. The car was widely covered in the Polish press, and even in magazines abroad.*



1. Syrena Sport passenger automobile, 1960, design: Cezary Nawrot (style), Stanisław Łukaszewicz (construction), prototype production: Passenger Automobile Factory in Warsaw, fot. Zbyszko Siemaszko

<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/iconic> (access: 04/01/2019)

<sup>2</sup> Łuczak-Surówka, K., „Furniture for Children. Teresa Kruszevska”. In: *Out of the Ordinary. Polish Designers of the 20th Century*, Warsaw, 2011, p. 266–268.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *Design Everywhere. 40th Anniversary of the Faculty of Design of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw*. Frejlich, C. – Kochanowska, M. (eds.), Warsaw, 2018, p. 75.



2. Armchair R58, 1958, design: Roman Modzelewski, prod. Vzor (since 2012), fot. Vzor

Though there was support for its production, the Party intervened, tests were concluded, and the model ended up in the storehouse of the Research and Development Centre where it was destroyed by a commission in the mid 1970s.<sup>5</sup>

Apparently, the end of the 1950s was a time of unfulfilled dreams. The armchair R58 of Roman Modzelewski was one of the first Polish examples of furniture planned with the use of polyester-glass laminate. Its innovativeness lay not only in the materials used in its production. The fully-closed organic form of the seat had no counterpart in its time, either in Poland or elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Handmade prototypes (made from epoxy resin and fibreglass) were purchased for collections including the National Museum in Warsaw and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.<sup>7</sup> The armchair waited more than 50 years for its mass production to start. The new edition adheres to the original form, but has been manufactured using up-to-date rotational polyethylene moulding technology by the company, Vzor, since 2013. Photographs of the red, glossy version of the

armchair appeared in hundreds of magazines and Internet pages, at design fairs and exhibitions in Poland and abroad.

The Scallop chair, the R58 armchair and Syrena Sport did not have many users. They have not become part of Polish everyday life. Meanwhile, in the history of Polish design, we can also find interesting objects that played the role of “supporting actors”.

The armchair “366” designed by Józef Chierowski in 1962 followed proven trends that came from the West. There were not many armchair models on the Polish market and the demand was very high. It was implemented into production by the Lower Silesian Furniture Factory in Świebodzice and gained popularity through decades of manufacture. It was simple, with an easy-to-assemble construction; it was attractive and comfortable, and its size was suitable for small apartments.<sup>8</sup> Several factories in Poland were producing less faithful copies of it until the 1980s. Now it is living its second life because of the vintage trend.

Another Polish mass-produced object from the communist period was the Vela television. The model 201 and the six after it, in casings of wood or synthetic materials, were created for the foreign consumer. Vela 203 was sold on the West German, Austrian, French, and British markets. It was also available in Poland. From 1973 till 1990, 220,000 were produced. The pure, bright colours – white, orange and yellow – made it stand out against the gray Polish reality, and it corresponded to how people imagined a modern product.<sup>9</sup> Although the Vela television was present in many Polish houses it is not perceived as an emblematic design.

In the late 1980s Warsaw-based designer Wojciech Małolepszy designed a wooden toy in form of a frog for his son. The material and very simple construction of the toy enabled him lim-

ited series production. The result was a small private company with its own label created together with his wife. First sales started in Warsaw’s Design Gallery; the company gradually gained partners. Frog reached Scandinavia, Austria, Holland, Germany, Switzerland and France. In Poland it ended up in IKEA. In the mid-1990s 30,000 of the frog toys were exported annually. After the company closed, the designers donated the design to the Być Razem Social Co-operative in Cieszyn and now it forms part of the socially responsible label WellDone.<sup>10</sup>

### After 1989

The shift from a centrally planned to a market economy opened doors onto Europe and the world, the global network of thought, invention and knowledge exchange. However, this did not happen immediately. It was a process that lasted more than 10 years.

The municipal information system for Warsaw was the first project carried out on such a scale in public space in free Poland. It introduced the inhabitants of Warsaw to a new reality. *The visual information (...) was made up of blue signs set in the modern Frutiger typeface, and brown signs reserved for heritage districts, where the typography becomes more traditional-looking (the Optima typeface).*<sup>11</sup> The municipi-



4. Plopp stool, 2005/6, design: Oskar Zięta, prod. Zieta Prozessdesign, fot. Zieta Prozess design

<sup>9</sup> *Design Everywhere...*, p. 84.  
<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.  
<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.  
<sup>12</sup> *The Other Side...*, p. 484.



3. Municipal information system for Warsaw, 1996–1998, design: Jerzy Porębski, Grzegorz Niwiński, Michał Stefanowski, in cooperation with: Marta Kusztra, Konrad Majkowski, Albert Salamon, fot. Towarzystwo Projektowe

pal information system in Warsaw became a model and a reference point for other Polish cities. Blue-and-red signs have been present in our environment for more than 20 years but are not necessarily noticed and commented on as design icons.

Unlike the Plopp stool designed by Oskar Zięta. *The stool, shown at numerous exhibitions abroad, is an icon of Polish design. (...) Oskar Zięta has developed the technique of producing very light and durable contractions through pumping compressed air between two layers of thin metal,* we read in catalogue of *The Other Side of Things. Polish Design After 1989*,<sup>12</sup> the exhibition staged last year in the National Museum in Cracow. The stool has now gained international recognition thanks to the Red Dot Award it won in 2008.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>6</sup> [http://www.vzor.com/product/rm58-classic?seat=standard\\_black\\_RAL\\_9005&legs=standard\\_black\\_RAL\\_9005](http://www.vzor.com/product/rm58-classic?seat=standard_black_RAL_9005&legs=standard_black_RAL_9005) (access: 03/01/2019)  
<sup>7</sup> *The Other Side of Things. Polish Design after 1989*. C. Frejlich (ed.), Cracow, 2018, p. 354.  
<sup>8</sup> *Rzeczypospolite*. Frejlich, C. (ed.), Olszanica, 2001, p. 156.

The project by Helena Czernek and Aleksander Prugar is of a completely different character. They explore the contact between Polish and Jewish cultures which have been developing side by side for so long. A mezuzah is a container for the piece of a Torah scroll traditionally placed on door frames. Czernek and Prugar located the remains of mezuzahs torn from their settings during the Second World War and made plaster casts of them. These casts were then used to create negatives of historical traces from bronze. Where possible, they also compiled a history of the houses where the originals were found and their owners. Beautifully polished castings were supposed to be gallery objects, but they find buyers and become objects of worship.<sup>13</sup>

Shoes are usually under the pressure of fashion, and models are changed every few months. Not Avir ankle boots that are part of Balagan, the Polish-Israeli sustainable label created by Agata Matlak-Lutyk and Hanna Ferenc Hilsden. Balagan shoes and bags are made in Poland by experienced craftspeople in small workshops. Agata and Hanna are also co-founders of the Transparent Shopping Collective, of which the Balagan label is a part. The company website shows what makes up the value of the product in simple diagrams. Every consumer can check the cost of the materials, production, taxes and sales margins. Furthermore, part of the profit is donated to a private social initiative program. The label designers are intent on making fine and durable items, and spreading the idea of responsible consumption.

The Vilto stool by Maja Ganszyniec is listed in the IKEA catalogue available globally. A small, modest and helpful feature of the home, made of solid wood, according to the philosophy of the designer Maja Ganszyniec – an object that remains

invisible. Maybe it should be seen as an important part of our design output. It tells about everything we have achieved in recent years – about the possibilities (cooperation with international brands), care for the environment (Ganszyniec always works in accordance with the principles of sustainable development) and democratic approach (cheap and available to many people).

Polish design is a source of very different approaches and topics. There is a great tradition of cooperation between designers and craftsmen; there is a great tradition of experimentation and technological innovation; there are fantastic stories of designers oriented towards the needs of people, and those who have realized their own ideas despite unfavourable conditions. It is worth juxtaposing those products that stand out from the crowd with others – perhaps not so attractive – that also have a lot to tell about our culture, ambitions, traditions and dreams.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 352







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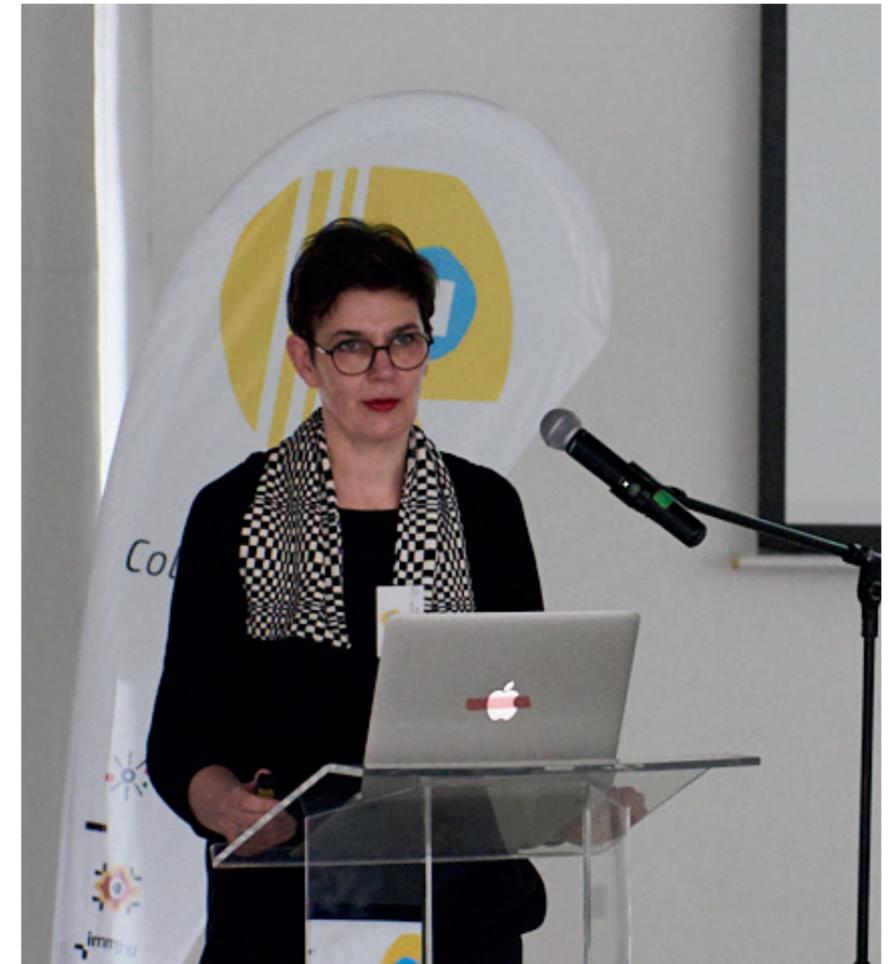
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Major exhibitions: Is Coral a Colour?; Roundabout Baltic: Design with a Sea View; Common Roots: Design Map of Central European Design; series of exhibitions entitled Unpolished, Polished Up, and Moderna, presenting the work of Polish designers of the transformation era.





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## COLLEC\_THINK TANK

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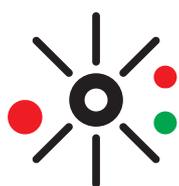
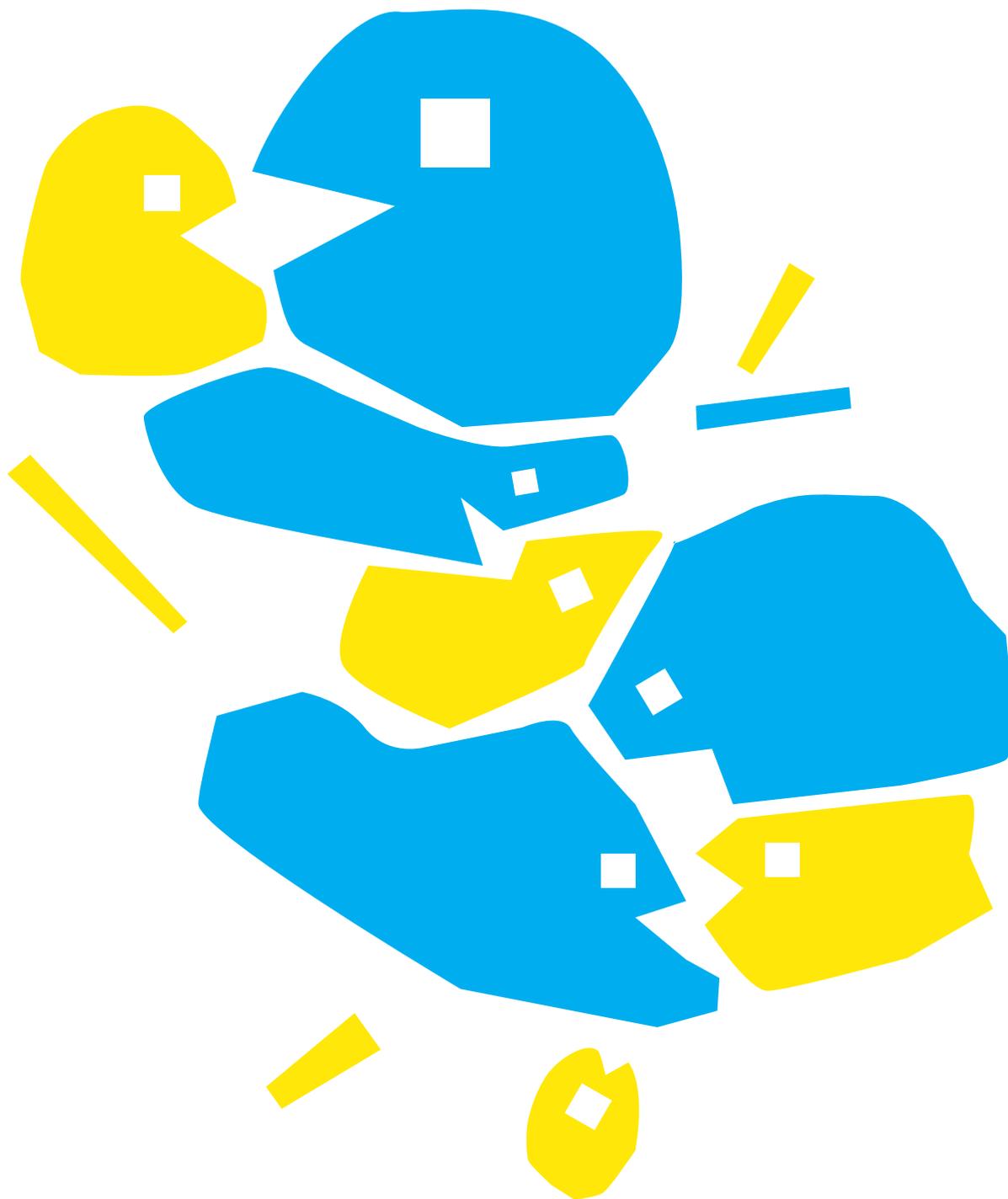
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