

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

and its owners

Anna and Piotr Dmochowski

The presentation of the collection of Anna and Piotr Dmochowski – first at the Municipal Art Gallery in Częstochowa (34 paintings), for over ten years at the Nowa Huta Cultural Centre (50 paintings, 100 drawings and 100 artistic photographs) and simultaneously at the Museum of the Archdiocese of Warsaw (25 paintings) – is the result of over 42 years of efforts to create a dream permanent exhibition of their collection of works by Zdzisław Beksiński in Poland.

Piotr Dmochowski was born in 1942 in Warsaw, the son of Antoni, a professor of biochemistry at the University of Łódź, and Teresa, a Catholic writer and translator fluent in four languages. In 1964, after completing the fourth year of law at the University of Warsaw, he emigrated to France, where he completed studies at the Faculty of Law of the University of Paris and at the Paris Institute of Political Sciences (Sciences Po). He began his academic career, obtaining the title of Maître de conférences from the University of Paris X. At the same time, he practiced law. In 1974, Anna Dmochowski left for Paris and took up modeling work in local fashion houses.

Apart from their professional work, the greatest passion of the Dmochowski couple was art, and in particular the work of Zdzisław Beksiński, whose works they discovered by accident in 1976 at an exhibition at the BWA in Łódź. In 1983, they bought several paintings from the Artist, and a year later they signed a contract with him, containing an exclusivity clause, becoming his dealers for 12 years. During this time, they presented the Master's paintings first in the rented Valmay gallery in Paris (on Seine Street), and then - for seven years - in their own Galerie Dmochowski - Musée-galerie de Beksinski. As part of the promotion of the Artist, they exhibited paintings in Parisian salons, in the Polish Institute in Paris and in the Polish Institute in Cologne, in Belgium, Germany and in many French cities. In 2018, the Parisian Grand Palais displayed several dozen paintings and drawings by Beksiński from the Dmochowski collection as part of the Salon du Dessin et de la Peinture à l'eau – a “Homage” was paid to the Polish artist, whose works occupied four large exhibition halls. The salon and the exhibition of Beksiński's work were visited by 34,000 people.



For many years, the Dmochowskis were striving to create a permanent presentation of Beksiński's works in Poland. The fulfilment of this desire was the free acceptance of a significant part of the collection into deposit, first by the Częstochowa City Art Gallery, and currently by the Nowa Huta Cultural Centre and the Warsaw Archdiocese Museum. The first two of these institutions, thanks to the support of local governments, prepared exhibition arrangements and published albums with reproductions of the works on display.

Piotr Dmochowski described his many years of efforts to popularize Beksiński's art in the West in a book written in French under the title "Notes sur la situation générale. Historique d'un échec", then translated by the author into Polish and published twice under the changed title "Zmagania o Beksińskiego". In the 2000s, two more books by Piotr Dmochowski were published to promote the Master's art, titled "Zapiski z przedednia Apokalipsy" and "Strony wyjete z dziennika kolekcjonera". The "struggles" described in these books had a dramatic dimension for the Dmochowskis, when they twice found themselves in a very difficult financial situation. This happened after the first exhibition in Paris, which involved huge expenses. At that time, they offered too high prices, which is why they were unable to sell any paintings - they then got into debts exceeding one million francs. A similar situation occurred a few years later, when they took out loans to build a gallery from scratch on Quincampoix Street in Paris, near the Pompidou Centre. They were saved from financial disaster by a large purchase of Beksiński's paintings by a group of Japanese, who turned them into a museum in Osaka. Today, this museum no longer exists, and the paintings have returned to Poland.

Piotr Dmochowski maintained a prolific correspondence with Zdzisław Beksiński for many years. The whole, divided into three volumes, was transferred after the Artist's death to the virtual museum dmochowskigallery.net, and then to the Beksiński promotion archive beksiniskiarchiwum.net. All three volumes were also published in printed

form by Dmochowski himself: "Beksiński-Dmochowski. Letters 1983-1995", "Beksiński-Dmochowski. Letters 1999-2003", "Beksiński-Dmochowski. Letters 2003-2005" (the books are distributed via the website beks.pl).

The break in this correspondence after 1995 resulted from the termination of the contract between Zdzisław Beksiński and his Parisian art dealer. The main reason for the separation was financial issues - after the introduction of a market economy in Poland and the adjusting the dollar exchange rate to the zloty (from PLN 650 to PLN 4), cooperation on the previous terms ceased to be profitable for the Artist. In addition, as can be read in the letters, both gentlemen were already tired of each other... By terminating the contract, Beksiński was obliged, in accordance with its provisions, to give Mr. and Mrs. Dmochowski 50 paintings as "compensation" for their many years of investment. The artist found it very painful. In 1999, however, Beksiński proposed - as he put it - "to bury the hatchet". From that time until the tragic death of the Master, lively correspondence continued again, and the Dmochowskis continued to buy his paintings from Beksiński, although this time without any obligations on either side.

The Dmochowski couple tried to enrich their collection of the Master's works not only by purchasing directly from him, but also from other Polish and foreign sources. As a result, a collection of 300 works was created: 100 paintings, 100 drawings and 100 artistic photographs. In recent years, the Dmochowskis established the "Anna and Piotr Dmochowski Foundation", whose main goal is to promote the Master's art after their death and to create the Zdzisław Beksiński Museum.

The importance of Anna and Piotr Dmochowski's collection is demonstrated by, among other things, the ranking of the best-selling paintings by contemporary painters. A year before his death (2004), Beksiński was ranked 18609 (the first place is usually occupied by Monet or Picasso); in 2009 he was already listed at 6344, in 2019 at 1089, in 2020 the Artist's name appeared at number 727, and in 2021 – 316. In 2025 he was ranked 391 (source: Art Price).