

Andrew Stanislaus [Andrzej Stanisław] Ciechanowiecki (1924–2015)

NO ONE ENCOUNTERING Andrew Ciechanowiecki can have doubted his aristocratic origins. They might have been more surprised to learn of his underground activities in the early 1940s, his participation in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 or the fact that he spent nearly six very difficult years in prison.

Ciechanowiecki was born in Warsaw on 28th September 1924 and his first studies, concentrating on economics, were undertaken clandestinely, when formal education was banned by the Nazis. He had intended to follow his father into the diplomatic service, and, thanks to his linguistic skills, after the War he became Chief of Protocol in the Polish Ministry of Trade; however, six months later he abandoned this promising career to return to the University of Cracow to study economics and art history, gaining an MA in the latter. This academic career, studying the history of furniture and the Baroque silver of Cracow, while also teaching, and working in the Castle Museum of Łańcut, was interrupted by his imprisonment in February 1952, allegedly for spying for the Vatican and Britain. He recommenced his studies only after his release from prison in 1956. A grant from the British Council brought him to London in 1958, and he also travelled to the United States, lecturing on Polish culture. He then studied for his doctorate in Tübingen, which was conferred in 1960 for a thesis on 'Michał Kazimierz Ogiński und sein Musenhof zu Słonim'.

Ciechanowiecki's diplomatic skills and his academic credentials, as well as his command of several languages, were to assist him in the very different field of art dealing after he decided to settle in London in 1961 (becoming a British subject in 1967). With no money, he accepted Francis Egerton's invitation to become a director of Mallett at Bourdon House, and immediately began to make his innovative mark on the London art trade scene. Asked to mount an exhibition of bronzes, he acquired a substantial collection of the French *animaliers*, a name he was the first to use in an adjectival form (since accepted by the Académie Française); this type of bronze, previously little known here, had an immediate popularity with British animal-lovers. Other exhibitions of French nineteenth-century painting and sculpture followed, showcasing artists such as Dalou and Carpeaux.

In 1965 François Heim invited Ciechanowiecki to set up a branch of the Heim Gallery in Jermyn Street, which opened the following year and which he eventually took over. It was here that he could be said to have revolutionised the role of the London art dealer. This was not just for the works he sold, with a particular emphasis on sculpture, especially that of the Baroque and Neo-classical periods, but for the scholarly catalogues, on which he was assisted by a succession of young scholars, carefully segregated from the commercial side of the Gallery so that some went on to successful museum careers. His opening parties became a part of the London art scene, and a meeting place for scholars, museum directors and the social elite. While ever willing to favour British galleries, he made regular annual tours around American museums, both large and small, which became his

principal clients. Museum directors and curators from either side of the Atlantic, but also art historians, both the established and the young, would be treated to lunch at his regular table at Franks, next door to the Heim, and instructed in the sculpture that he loved, while also exchanging the latest news and gossip of the art world, in which he retained a lively interest up to his death.

Helped no doubt by his many contacts, Ciechanowiecki could scent a coming trend, acquire important pieces and learn about the subject, then instruct his potential clients in its beauty and persuade them of its relevance to their own collections. At first the Heim's twice-yearly exhibitions were of his own stock, including many major pieces sold to museums, but later these alternated with exhibitions of loans from foreign collections in aid of charity, which subsequently toured museums in Britain at his expense.¹

Ciechanowiecki's name is listed among the organisers of a number of international exhibitions, such as those of *The Twilight of the Medici* (Detroit and Florence, 1974), *Giambologna* (Edinburgh, London and Vienna, 1979), *The Golden Age of Naples* (Detroit and Naples, 1981) and *Treasures of a Polish King* (Dulwich, 1992). But those involved know that he was one of the prime instigators, and that their success owed much to his wide acquaintanceship among museum directors, private owners and aristocratic supporters, to his generosity, and above all to his diplomatic skills in handling his often fractious colleagues.

He continued to publish, if rarely: an article with Gay Seagrim on 'Soldani's Blenheim Commission and Other Bronze Sculpture After the Antique' (*Festschrift Klaus Lankheit* 1973), and two reviews and a shorter notice in this Magazine,² but he contributed generously of his knowledge, including his exceptional grasp of genealogy in which he was virtually a walking *Almanach de Gotha*, to numerous other scholars.

Proud of his British nationality, he retained a love of his native country, Poland, and also Belarus, whence his family had come. He collected art connected with Poland, forming the Ciechanowiecki Foundation in the Royal Castle in Warsaw with his own broadly based collection, and a considerable library and archive. His ninetieth birthday was celebrated in Poland with great pomp. One of his foibles was collecting honorary doctorates and, particularly, distinguished orders, of which he had no less than thirty-three, many from Poland, some from elsewhere, including Bailiff Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. To his regret, he never received any such recognition from his adopted country.

A serious accident in 1995 confined him to a wheelchair, and he had to retire from work, but he was mentally unimpaired, and his phenomenal energy only slightly reduced. His fierce determination and self-discipline, aided by his strong Catholic faith, enabled him to travel to fulfil his many charitable commitments, and to maintain, despite his failing health, his international friendships.

JENNIFER MONTAGU

¹ Most notably those devoted to Thorvaldsen (autumn 1974), German drawings (autumn 1975), American Drawings from the J.D. Hatch Collection (autumn 1976), drawings from the Museums of Angers (autumn 1977) and drawings from Polish Collections (winter 1980).

² A review of the exhibition *Polish Art Treasures* at the Royal Academy, 112 (1970), pp.120–24; a review of the book *Słownik Artystów Polskich I obcych w Polsce Działających – Malarze, Rzeźbiarze, Graficy*, 4, 128 (1986) pp.910–11; and 'A Bozzetto by Lorenzo Vaccaro', 121 (1979), pp.252–53.