

# **KALOS KAGATHOS**

## **In Memoriam Wojciech Mikołaj Zabłocki**

### **1930–2020**

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*KALOKAGATHOS. Kalos kai agathos – a Greek ideal combining truth, goodness and beauty, the unity of the virtues of mind, heart and body. The term was derived from two Greek adjectives: kalos – "beautiful" and agathos – "good". The noun kalos has a broader meaning exceeding the modern concept of beauty. The Greeks applied it not only to things and objects, but also to human characters, professions, and even political systems. It was used to describe all things which appealed to the human senses and provided them with experiences of an ethical nature.*

*The adjective agathos, on the other hand, meant someone of noble birth, brave and skilful. Only later, around 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., did it acquire its ethical meaning, as "good, noble". Kalos kai agathos thus combines moral and aesthetic sensations and refers to those individuals who join beauty with the arete, a virtue of bravery naturally conditioned by physical fitness. Someone beautiful and good at the same time represents the attributes of physis and psyche. By using contemporary notions we can assume that kalokagathia can be understood as a tight and – what is very important – harmonious relation of the carnality and intellectuality [Słapek 2006, p. 344].*

KALOS KAGATHOS is an order awarded to distinguished athletes who, during or after their careers in sports, accomplished considerable success in other fields. The Chapter of the Order was established in December 1984 as an initiative of the editor-in-chief of a Cracow magazine "TEMPO", Ryszard Niemiec. The author of the name, which is an abbreviation of the Greek term kalos kai agathos, is Wojciech Lipoński.

For the first time, the *Kalos Kagathos* Orders designed by Jerzy Nowakowski, were awarded simultaneously to seven people on March 29, 1985: Jerzy Chromik, an athlete, the European champion in 3000 metres steeplechase, an engineer at the "Wujek" coal mine; Stefan Dziedzic, the academic world champion in skiing, a member of the Parliament and the director of the Juventur centre in Zakopane; Witalis Ludwiczak, an Olympian in 1932 and 1936, a Professor of Law at the University of Poznan; Zbigniew Resich, a basketball player, a European Championship competitor, the President of the Supreme Court, former Chairman of the UN Human Rights Committee and the Director of the Institute of Civil Law at the Warsaw University; Marian Suski, a fencer, an Olympic medallist in 1932, an academic worker at the Wrocław University of Science and Technology and co-founder of the Polish radio industry; Marian Śliwiński, an athlete and a worker in Ostrowiec Steelworks; Wojciech Zabłocki, an Olympic medallist in fencing and a renowned architect [Lipoński 1987, p. 142].

### Athlete and olympian

"I was small and frail after my parents, and the heart I had after my mother was not the best either. There were no sports traditions in my close or extended family. During the German occupation in Warsaw, I was deprived of the possibility to practice sports; there were no gymnastics lessons at the private elementary school and other schools. Like many of my colleagues, I would go out to fight with sticks and stones in the Mokotów Field. I didn't know that any modern fencing even existed."

"My studies, intensive training and poor nutrition resulted in a health crisis. I would grow tired very quickly and it happened twice that I lost consciousness during a morning mass... Frightened, I went to see a cardiologist in Cracow, who was a good friend of my uncle. After the examination, his diagnosis was disheartening: Boy, you have a severe valve regurgitation inherited from your mother and you can't do sports at all! You have to take it easy, don't exert yourself and preferably go on a special treatment every year. I decided to check this grim prognosis and visited a sports doctor in Warsaw. He confirmed the previous diagnosis in its entirety and added that if I didn't stop doing sports immediately, I would certainly not live to see my thirtieth birthday... This guy had a good memory because when we met in a streetcar ten years later, he said – You're alive! – and he was genuinely happy. I didn't tell anyone about the test results because I decided to go to Budapest and compete for the first – probably the last – time against the world champions, Hungarians." (...) "When I returned to Warsaw, I was determined to inform the Fencing Federation of my resignation from any further training. I went for a routine check-up with a sports doctor at the University of Physical Education. He examined me rather carelessly, listened to the previous doctors' opinions, looked at my electrocardiogram and said that I did not have to give up sport at all. I could take one more try. I should start jogging slowly for three kilometres. And wearing heavy shoes too. Why three kilometres? He didn't say. I decided to give it a try... More frequent sports camps in a good climate and additional sports made my health improve and soon the doctors said that my heart problems were behind me. Maybe I would not be as tough as my colleagues, but in the short run, I did not have to be inferior to them at all." [Zabłocki 2006, pp. 11–13] (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Wojciech Zabłocki on the day of the Polish Olympic athletes departure for the Olympic Games in Tokyo, 28.09.1964

Photo: T. Prażmowski/MS&T<sup>1</sup>

Such were the surprising and almost disqualifying beginnings of Wojciech Zabłocki's sports path. After years of an intensive career on the world's fencing pistes, Wojciech Zabłocki could be proud of a rich medal collection and a long list of sports awards. He was a member of the Międzyszkolny KS in Katowice, Budowlany Cracow, Cracow Fencing Club and Marymont Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> Museum of Sports and Tourism; Wybrzeże Gdyńskie 4, 01-531 Warszawa

He was considered not only to be the favourite of Hungarian fencing master Janos Kevey, who coached the Polish Olympic team in 1947–1958 but also as the most classic representant of his fencing style. He was one of the "wonder children" of the Polish fencing, who presented themselves to the world during the XV Olympic Games in Helsinki (1952). For the first time, Zabłocki became the Polish team champion in fencing in 1948, at the age of eighteen! Already then he was called "Kajtek", as the youngest of the team. The friendly nickname stuck to him for life, also long into his adulthood. In 1951 he was already a national champion in sabre and he achieved this title several more times – he was a five-time champion and four-time vice-champion of Poland. In the team competition, he was a champion of Poland five times; in foil (3 times) and in sabre (2 times). He was also a four-time Polish vice-champion in sabre and once in foil, and a five-time bronze medallist in sabre.

His famous world debut took place in 1953 at the World Junior Championships in Paris. The gold medal came after a 5:2 duel with an Italian, Paolo Narduzzi. Typically, the listing of Zabłocki's world successes begins with this victory. This symbolic medal was Zabłocki's favourite sports memorabilia, recollected with fondness at the end of the Champion's life. Between 1953 and 1963, he brought medals from eleven World Championships. Undoubtedly, the gold medal from the World Championships held in Gdansk in 1963 was the most exciting for all Poles. (Figs. 2, 3).



Fig. 2. Wojciech Zabłocki during the fencing tournament for the "Sportsman" Cup, 1961



Fig. 3. The fencing tournament for the "Sportsman" Cup. Wojciech Zabłocki (on the left) fighting with Jerzy Pawłowski, 1963

Photo: T. Prażmowski/MS&T

Competing in the Olympic Games is a separate chapter, usually the most important for every athlete. Wojciech Zabłocki was a four-time Olympian: Helsinki, 1952; Melbourne, 1956; Rome, 1960; Tokyo, 1964. He brought 3 medals back from these Games, won in the team competition (silver in 1956 and 1960, silver and bronze in 1964). These starts at the Olympics were a demonstration of the best Polish fencers, who were exceptionally "abundant" in those years. Jerzy Pawłowski, Ryszard Zub, Emil Ochyra, Marek Kuszewski, Andrzej Piątkowski were not only teammates, often opponents on the piste, but also friends of Zabłocki, often lifelong.

Everyone knew, that despite successful starts this ambitious and brave athlete was suffering mentally from a lack of individual Olympic medals. He was counting on success at his last Games in Tokyo. Unfortunately, his dreams did not come true. After his return from Japan, the Fencing Federation received a short, one-sentence note, "I hereby inform you that as of 5 November 1964 I am no longer practising fencing and request that I am removed from the sabre national team. Wojciech Zabłocki". When questioned by astonished fans and journalists he explained, "I started to master the sabre in 1946 and since then it has occupied every free moment of my life, my moves and thoughts have been shaped by fencing, my opinions have been formed during fencing camps, I have usually talked to sportsmen and women and listened to coaches' advice. Therefore, whether I want to or not, whether I will continue to train or not – I will remain a fencer for the rest of my life." [Zabłocki 2006, p. 244]. Today we know that it did occur... The evidence of such an approach to fencing are the titles of world champion of old-boys (1989) and the European champion of veterans (1995).

## Architect

He owes the choice of architecture as his professional path in life to his mother. He graduated from the AGH University of Science and Technology in Cracow in 1953 and went through all the stages of his academic career over the following years to become a professor in 1999. Architecture was Wojciech Zabłocki's life passion equally to fencing. He was an active architect, associated with sports architecture the most. He also had thorough reflections and opinions on contemporary architecture and its future. His projects are still in use today. "I am an enthusiast of organic architecture. Mimesis – a creative following of nature, drawing inspiration from the principles of construction and development of natural, organic forms, transforming them creatively into architectural works. It gives new, additional content to works of architecture and, if successful, enhances the aesthetic experience of an audience. The danger lies in a superficial imitation of organic forms, which often means imitating only decorative elements and using them to ornament buildings. This was common for many architectural styles in the past. Organic architecture usually contains a certain amount of setbacks and surprises; when moving within or around it, we discover with satisfaction new, sometimes unexpected solutions and spatial relationships." [Zabłocki 2007, p. 9].

Sports architecture provided opportunities for large-scale roofs, innovative suspensions and stretches. "The main arsenal of my architectural statements were – and still are – curved lines, arches and ropes, which, by the way, are the most logical from the point of view of the statics of buildings" – Zabłocki defined in 2007.

Among his most important sports projects was the Olympic Training Centre, designed in 1962 and built in 1964 on the grounds of Warsaw's University of Physical Education. Four rather small (15x30 m) sports halls were designed together with Stanisław Kuś, a long-time co-author of other projects by Wojciech Zabłocki. In 1970, Zabłocki designed the Games Hall, located in the vicinity of the four aforementioned halls. The Hall was built onto the existing

sports hall in 1974. All the buildings at the AWF have suspended roofs, stretched on steel cables and anchored in steel structural columns. Thanks to these light structures, the buildings are bright, and their interiors do not have to be divided by pillars carrying the roof.

In the 1970s and later several interesting sports facilities were built in smaller towns – Głogów, Konin, Puławy, Zgorzelec, Leszno, Choszczno, and Michałowice.

It is difficult to measure the level of satisfaction of an author with his work, especially after years, when creations often experience unexpected problems and their functioning shift away from the designer's vision. Undoubtedly, the indoor cycling track in Pruszkow (Fig. 4) and the winning design for the indoor ice rink Stegny in Warsaw (2006) can be counted among such projects. Although both caused a lot of frustration to their designer, they are frequently mentioned in various high-end publications on sports architecture.



Fig. 4. The cycling track in Pruszków, project 2004

Source: watercolour painting by the author

The jewel in Wojciech Zabłocki's architectural crown was winning the 1983 International Competition for designing the Latakia Sports City in (Syria). In September 1987, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Games were held at this site. "The spatial plan for the 160-hectare coastal site was organic, without a shadow of axially or symmetry, and was influenced by a study of the natural forms of meandering streams and rivers. As usual, three structures were dominant: a stadium, a swimming pool, and sports halls" (Figs. 5, 6).



Fig. 5. Sports hall in Latakia (Syria), realization 1984-1987



Fig. 6. One of the swimming pools in the Olympic swimming pools complex in Latakia (Syria), realization 1984-1987

Source: reproduction from W. Zabłocki, Architektura, 2007

“Because I wanted to spatially balance their bodies, I tried to reduce the shape of the largest of them – the stadium. Covered by a roof, the main stand is the only one that competes with the other buildings; the other rows of seats rest on earthen embankments that merge with the surrounding green areas. The motif of a grand arch is repeated consistently throughout the key facilities: there is a 240-metre-high arch in the stadium, supporting the roof of the stand; the gymnasium complex is dominated by a 100-metre-high arch above the main arena; the pools have two horizontal arches, shifted in relation to each other. Between these great convex arches, there are wave-like concave surfaces, alluding to Bedouin tents.” [Zabłocki 2007, pp. 101–103].

Another piece of Wojciech Zabłocki’s visionary legacy, this time shared with his patron and the most versatile fencer of his time, Ryszard Parulski, was a project called the 2012 Olympic Games in Warsaw, announced by the Society of Polish Olympians in 1997. The project of the “Olympic Warsaw” touched many hearts and minds but did not gain favour with politicians, which is the most important in such situations.

Years later the concept of the ‘Olympic Warsaw’ began to be called a ‘utopian project’. It envisaged the creation of a sport and ecological corridor along the Vistula River. This would involve creating a network of riverside sports facilities and recreational areas, ultimately culminating with the “Olympic Centre” located on the site of the 10<sup>th</sup> – Anniversary Stadium. The concept of Zabłocki and his team will be mentioned in historical studies of Warsaw’s efforts to make the Polish capital the site of the Olympic Games as the second most important project, next to the 1939 vision of Mayor Stefan Starzyński (Fig. 7).

Wojciech Zabłocki’s most personal and intimate project was his villa in Żoliborz, designed in 1974. (Fig. 8). The double atrium house, an example of *ambience fantasy*, as characterized by the author, was a building that evoked emotions and voices of criticism. Nevertheless, it was listed as a historical monument in 2016, and the author of this paper received the following email at the time: “The Kaniowska 21b and 21c residential complex have recently been included ... in the register of monuments. You can’t imagine how pleasant it is to live in a historic monument! It’s always nice to think that even after my death no one will be able to change my architecture...”



Fig. 7. The ‘Olympic Warsaw’ project, Central Stadium project 1999, not realized

Source: reproductions from W. Zabłocki, *Architektura*, 2007



Fig. 8. Atrium house designed by W. Zabłocki, Warsaw-Żoliborz, completed in 1975

Source: reproductions from W. Zabłocki, *Architektura*, 2007

The house on Kaniowska Street was one of his three villa designs. Two were built in Syria – a residence near Damascus §9) and a holiday villa near Latakia.

Wojciech Zabłocki was a three-time winner of the highest special prize, awarded by the Polish Olympic Committee since 1967, for his achievements in the field of architecture. His first award was a silver Laurus in 1969, a bronze one in 1980, and a gold one in 2016 for "lifetime achievement in architecture and art". In a way, there was also

a fourth Laurus as the indoor cycling track BGŻ ARENA in Pruszków, designed by WAZA Ltd WOJCIECH ZABŁOCKI, was awarded a gold medal in 2008. This one of the largest indoor sports facilities in Poland was opened on 3 September 2008.

Wojciech Zabłocki enjoyed teaching. For decades he was affiliated with the Institute of Architecture at the Technical University of Łódź. He was a supervisor and a reviewer of doctoral and post-doctoral theses. Most of them, understandably, were written by students from Arab countries.

"I primarily try to pass on to students my practical experience in design and construction, with a special emphasis on how to cooperate with other participants of the creative process, with constructors, fitters, electricians, as well as executors and, finally, operators of our projects. I also try to encourage young students of architecture to creative explorations, to take a critical look at their first ideas. It's a result of my own experience: I do a lot of sketching myself, I rarely get the correct idea right away. The first concepts are often generic; they follow the line of least resistance." [Zabłocki 2010, p. 17].

He was a teacher who continued to give lectures even at an advanced age. His last place of work was the Higher School of Ecology and Management in Warsaw. He wrote a textbook for the students of this university, "Sports Facilities of the Olympic Games" (2016).

As a symbolic culmination of a rich career, he was awarded SARP's 2017 Honorary Award. This is the most important award an architect can receive in Poland. It is granted by experts and previous winners. It is a crowning achievement of one's professional path, as it is awarded for a lifetime of creative work. The justification states that the award was granted for, among others, "creative works, accurate in content and form, enriching the current domestic cultural heritage, reflecting the high standards of civilization of the current era; for the recognition that architecture is not only about building, but is a state of mind in which energy finds an outlet in various fields of creativity and creative passions; for bearing witness to the fact that architectural ideas can transcend cultural boundaries and can facilitate understanding between people from all over the world; for the fact that an architectural form can, with a touch of a magic wand of its creator, surpass the static limitations of a structure and enter the realm of poetry." [SARP website, accessed on 18.01.21]. During the award ceremony, an exhibition presenting the architectural achievements of the laureate was opened.



Fig. 9. The mansion near Damascus, completed in 1987

Source: watercolor painting by the author

The traditional act of revealing a "brick" with his name on it ended with a humorous incident. The laureate unintentionally pulled it out of the wall, publicly confirming his strength and creative energy in the eighty-seventh year of his life.

### Watercolourist

Wojciech Zabłocki wanted to be a painter. Although he abandoned these youthful dreams rather quickly, painting remained his favourite activity, especially in the autumn of his life. He took drawing lessons from Ludomir Ślodziński (1889–1980) and Tadeusz Brzozowski (1918–1987), who painted a portrait of his talented student in Cracow in 1953.

Architects usually draw and paint well. And yet there is a group of exceptionally talented architects. Wojciech Zabłocki was one of them. He was a member of the group of architects painting "En plein air." He participated in its exhibitions and was a member of an international group gathering artistically talented Olympians, "Art of the Olympians". An exhibition and an auction of the Olympians' works were organized in Athens in 2004. Wojciech Zabłocki's watercolour "Vikelas in Paris" (2002) reached the highest sum – 2,500 euros. This was a great success and a reason for satisfaction, even though the money was intended for charity.

Following the footsteps of the 19<sup>th</sup>- century peregrinators, he rarely parted with his sketchbook. This wonderful habit, developed during his work in Syria or trips to the International Olympic Academy in Olympia, later became a basis for a whole series of works done at home, exhibitions, publications and other small works. He painted in watercolour, a technique that gives almost no room for corrections and retouching. He liked painting alone, but he was sometimes accompanied by other people, including his grandchildren.

Almost all his architectural projects were painted by him in their final form. All were accompanied by numerous sketches and watercolour sketches following each stage of their completion. Apart from the professional aspect, the subjects of the watercolours were at times surprising.

In 2011 the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw was gifted with a set of 27 watercolours dedicated to the ancient games. It was a vision of the author but supported by knowledge from the latest scientific studies. It became an interesting educational asset for the museum (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. The opening of Wojciech Zabłocki's exhibition "The ancient games in watercolours", 2009

Photo: P. Oprządek/MS&T



Two subsequent series of his paintings gained the most publicity, Pastiche and Ukiyo-e. They were shown on temporary exhibitions at the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw. The first exhibition (2014) was titled "Famous duels in Wojciech Zabłocki's pastiches". It featured 45 watercolours painted between 2010 and 2013, based on the most famous works by the canon of European artists over several hundred years, from Hieronymus Bosch, Peter Bruegel, Dürer, Montegni, Vermeer, El Greco, Tiepolo, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cezanne, Chagall to Wyspiański and Beksiński. The author of pastiches incorporated characters duelling with swords, sabres, épée and rapiers into the original works. It appears as if the fighters have always been there. The added elements are so accurately composed into the surroundings that it seems strange that the famous authors did not think of such a solution in the first place. A pastiche assumes a conscious imitation of an artist, transforming or supplementing elements of a work of art, without the features of forgery. It is a rare form of artistic creation, as it requires, apart from a mastery of the technique, intelligence and a sublime sense of humour. Wojciech Zabłocki possessed both of these characteristics in abundance.

"The first inspiration to work on pastiches came at the Frick Collection museum in New York. I was admiring a painting by Rembrandt depicting a Polish horseman, probably it was the Lisowczyk when I remembered the panorama of the Dutch city of Delft, painted at the same time by Vermeer. At that time, Polish soldiers were fighting against the Swedes in Denmark and Holland under the command of hetman Stefan Czarniecki. Maybe they came to Delft as well? I thought that I could paint a panorama of that city adding a Polish rider to it. I just needed to get him another horseman, so that he would have someone to fence with. And so my adventure with pastiches began." [MS&T exhibition folder] (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. Watercolour from the Pastiche series

Source: from the author's collection, 2013

We did not have to wait long for this artistic adventure to continue. Being very interested in the Japanese culture since his start in the Olympics in Tokyo, Wojciech Zabłocki turned to the subtle art of the Land of the Rising Sun. "This year I decided to look for inspiration in Japanese Ukiyo-e woodcuts, represented by the four most famous artists: Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Chikanobu Toyohara, Katsuschika Hikusai and Ando Hiroshige. I intertwine fragments of works of these masters in my watercolours, but fencing is always their central point". [exhibition folder at MS&T] (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12. Watercolours from the Ukiyo-e series

Source: from the author's collection, 2015

Both exhibitions raised extraordinary interest. Visitors were pleasantly surprised and acknowledged Zabłocki's vision with a smile. The museum published a calendar and a series of postcards with the pastiches. These exhibitions were not the only presentations of Wojciech Zabłocki's artistic work. It was put on display in many other museums – Museum of Asia and the Pacific (Syria; Sharp-edged weapons), Museum of Architecture in Wrocław (Syria; Olympic Projects). The Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw presented his works many times (Olympic Games in Warsaw; Ancient Games; Projects of new sports facilities). He also took part in group exhibitions, mainly dedicated to architecture, but also various other subjects. They were chiefly organized by the architects' painting club "Plener." One cannot fail to mention an event that occurred in 2004, the "Art competitions at the Summer Olympics" exhibition, prepared by the Historical Museum of Warsaw. It featured, for the first time, numerous works of artists who won medals at the Olympic games. Ryszard Parulski and the Polish Olympians Society were very active in making this exhibition possible.

"Art critics should comment on Wojciech Zabłocki paintings in a separate analysis. His style can probably be placed in a realm of imaginative realism, with strong expressionist elements. But it is also close to a gentle, subtle colour scheme of the impressionist landscapes. An exposition of ordered space, usually shaped into architectural forms, is a strong and distinctive feature of the artist's imagination. When choosing the content of paintings not only was the author's pure imagination involved but also his professional, professorial knowledge. It was regularly inspired by motifs of the motion of human silhouettes, as well as by his favourite portraits of horses in Kossak's style (both static and in dynamic action)." [Zabłocki 2006, p. 244] (Fig. 13).

Wojciech Zabłocki's works of art can be found in the following museums: IOC in Lausanne; Ministry of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw, Aleppo, Holmenkollen, Puławy and Lubartów. Wojciech Zabłocki's many donations of his paintings to various people and institutions (e.g. Polish Olympic Academy) was a very warm gesture.

On the other hand, the artist's assessment of his artistic achievements was minimalistic: "Of course, I am aware that my paintings cannot be considered as great art. For that, you would need to have real talent and to work a lot. Therefore, I can count on the applause of my wife and children the most, when I show them my new watercolours on Sunday afternoons before family dinners." [Zabłocki 2006, p. 293].



Fig. 13. Sketches from Olympia, 1998

Source: from the photo archives of the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw

## Writer

The first book by Wojciech Zabłocki "Around the world with a fencing bag" was published in 1962. Zygmunt Kałużyński wrote an enthusiastic review of the book at the time: "Around the world with a fencing bag" is a book intended as the athlete's journal who at the same time describes his journey from the beginnings of his career to the position of an Olympic athlete. This idea alone would be enough to make this book an interesting publication... a contribution to the history of Polish sport in recent years... But Zabłocki's book is more than just the sportsman's journal: it provides material for reflection and aesthetic satisfaction. It is a book of literary, psychological and sociological value... achievement in the field of literary culture all the rarer when we take into consideration that the author is a debutant... A brilliant, dashing and variable style make the book not at all boring... it is unexpectedly abundant in content, observation and reflection... The author's writing skill is not limited to the style alone. It is also evident in the composition: each chapter is not just a page from a journal, but a kind of small "essay" that presents some thought..." [Zabłocki 1962, wrapper].

There was no need to wait long for his next books to appear. In 1965 he published "Travels with a Sabre", and a specialist publication "Architecture for active recreation in urban agglomerations" (1968).

The increasing interest of the author in sharp-edged weapons and good sales results of the previous books resulted in the following titles being published: "With a feather and a sabre" (1982), "Cuts with a real sabre" (1989), "Polish martial arts. A two-handed sword and a hussar sabre," "Sabres of the World" (2011) (Fig. 14).

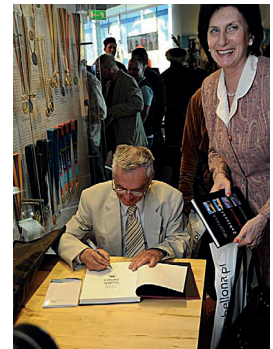


Fig. 14. Promotion of Wojciech Zabłocki's book "Sabers of the World". Irena Szewińska waiting for an autograph, 2011

Photo: K. Moniewski/MS&T

However, his Opus Magnum turned out to be "I fight, therefore I am" (2006). A colourful picture of his life and sporting career, a complete script for an adventure movie. The latest publications were connected with his increased focus on painting – "Duels and Women" (2015) "Samurai Fights" (2016), "Sports and Games in Greece and Rome" (2017). This list could also be expanded by including many articles in collective publications, both on the Olympic and architectural topics. Regrettably, the author of this paper and Wojciech Zabłocki's joint publication will remain uncompleted: "Architecture on Sports Medals." It appeared to us in our long conversations as an extraordinary and pioneering work.

### Athletic family

The Zabłocki family was both artistic and very athletic. Alina Janowska, a well-known and popular actress, loved tennis, skiing and swimming. She practised these sports until late in her life, and constant improvement of her swimming results was one of her New Year's resolutions, even in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Fig. 15).

Wojciech Zabłocki, apart from doing fencing "professionally", enjoyed tennis, skiing and swimming as well. As he wrote and said, he had no sporting family traditions and was considered a sickly person. According to his doctors, he shouldn't be involved in sports at all. His own family, though, was a completely different story...

For obvious reasons, fencing was to become the family discipline of choice for his two sons – Marcin (1956) and Michał (1964). Although both of them left their mark on this discipline, they did not compete at the Games.

Marcin Zabłocki, an architect by profession, shares his father's passion for old sharp-edged weapons. He continues his father's work, running the Sabre Association in Warsaw, which reenacts the Polish art of fighting with a 17<sup>th</sup> century hussar sabre.

Michał was a multiple Polish junior champion and vice-champion in individual and team fencing (sabre). In 1984 he came sixth at the World Junior Championships in Leningrad and it remained his biggest success. At the moment of a symbolic beginning of his senior career, his health failed him. Perhaps because of this, a poet Michał Zabłocki was born (Fig. 16).



Fig. 15. Wojciech Zabłocki with his wife Alina Janowska at the promotion of his book "I fight, therefore I am" in Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw, 2006

Photo: J. Ślubowski/MS&T



Fig. 16. Professor Wojciech Zabłocki with his sons and granddaughter in the Museum of Sport and Tourism, 2013

Photo: K. Moniewski/MS&T

The daily life of the large family was filled to the brim with sports. As recalled by Michał Zabłocki, "Our house tradition was to train at WKN on Sundays, that is, at the Warsaw Ski Club in Mokotów. The whole family would go there and no way were we allowed to sit in front of a TV and watch kids shows. Besides, we knew no such thing as leisure at home at all. These Sunday trips to WKN happened regardless of the weather. A downpour, frost – it didn't matter, sometimes it was a real torment. Or vacations. It was impossible to go on a normal vacation with dad. We had a tradition of family sports camps. For example, we would go to the then state-of-the-art pentathlon centre in Drzonków. Once there, we practised all possible sports and we had to pass all of them every day. Horse riding, shooting, fencing, and tennis... We were being tortured with it all the time..."

Two daughters – Agata Borecka (1957) and Katarzyna Zabłocka (1969), were also obliged to follow the same rigorous exercises and daily schedule. At present, both women live with their families in the United States and are not involved in professional sports.

The professor himself described the sports education of his children in a slightly different light: "I was implementing the socialist slogan "first in sports, first in learning." In reality, this meant that children could do whatever they liked as long as they got good grades and succeeded in the sports I had introduced them to from an early age. This included skiing and numerous camps with WKN (Warsaw Ski Club), swimming, horseback riding, and of course fencing. Only Agata didn't practise fencing; instead, I took her to rhythmic classes. As far as their education was concerned, help at home was allowed, but no tutoring. This system, among other things, made the children adequately tired and no stupidity was ever on their minds. At first, they laughed at the slogan: "first in sports, first in learning", but as they grew older – they admitted, although reluctantly, that it was an exhaustingly good educational system. I organized family camps during the summer holidays. The schedule was busy and accompanied by various cultural activities. We made adventure and thriller films using our scripts, we wrote poems and songs, there were also drawing lessons (...) Kasia also looked promising as a fencer. Maybe she did not have much enthusiasm for training, but she was diligent as she did not want to hurt me. (...) I dreamed that at least one of my children would take the fencing honours over from me (...). Well, maybe one of my grandsons or granddaughters? We will live and see. Time works in our favour..."

### **President, activist, friend**

The Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw maintained close relations with Professor Wojciech Zabłocki for a very long time but the exact date it begun is unknown today. In his memoirs commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw, Zabłocki said that it was the 1950s, i.e. at the very beginnings of the museum. For many, many years we benefited from the Professor's knowledge, especially in arranging further permanent exhibitions, and probably most of all, during the time we moved to the Olympic Centre (2005–2006) when he visited us frequently.

In the final years of the Professor's life, the Museum's collection was being gradually enriched with his sports trophies, awards confirming his life achievements (the Olympic Order, the Kalos Kagathos medal), successes in other fields (Olympic Laurel), and works of art. We had been asking for them for a long time as the Professor had not been generous with them before (Fig. 17).

Since 2006 Wojciech Zabłocki became another Olympian (after Irena Szewińska and Erwin Ryś-Ferens), who has headed the Museum Council established by the Mazovian Voivodeship Management Board. After two terms of office, he became its honorary Chairman and continued to systematically participate in its work. Later directors and employees of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism cooperated with him on The Polish Olympic Committee and in the Polish Olympic Academy, of which he was the President in 1993–2000. For nearly half a century the Museum of Sport was a place of exhibitions, authors' meetings, lectures, promotions of new books and traditional and historical fencing duels (Fig. 18). The Master announced that it was in the Museum that the last duel in his life would take place. Wojciech Zabłocki was visibly nervous and moved as he duelled with his son Marcin using sabres in front of a large Museum audience. It was 2013.

Considerably more absorbing was his work in the Polish Olympic Committee, where he was active since 1997 (a member of the Board) and for two terms chaired the Polish Olympic Academy, and then became its Honorary President in 2000. Wojciech Zabłocki attended the Olympic and museum gatherings, exhibition openings, scientific sessions, visits of foreign guests, concerts and lectures.

For his versatile achievements, he was honoured with many state decorations, as well as other awards and medals, including the Pierre de Coubertin Medal and the Ecce Homo Order. He was awarded the gold medal "For outstanding sports achievements" five times.



Fig. 17. Professor Wojciech Zabłocki donating IOC memorabilia to the collection of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, 2018

Photo: P. Oprządek/MS&T



Fig. 18. Installation of the permanent exhibition at the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw, The Olympic Center, 2006

Professor Wojciech Zabłocki comparing the projects with the current status

Photo: J. Ślubowski/MS&T

We are glad that we have rich photographic records of many meetings and events, that many interviews and documentary films with the Professor were made, and that there was no end to our long talks....(Fig. 19).

After the death of his wife, Alina Janowska, in 2017, he initially visited us more often and seemed to work more, particularly painting. Yet we saw that he was becoming more and more withdrawn, wrote fewer emails, to which he would often attach his drawings and paintings. Then his son

Michał wrote: "On December 5, 2020 – after a short illness and fully content with the life he lived, Professor Dr Wojciech Zabłocki passed away at the age of 90." When asked in those last moments how he felt, he said – HAPPY... He lived for 90 years but decided not to start the 91<sup>st</sup> year. He died a day before his birthday.

"Disciplined, hard-working, popular, well-liked, he quickly became known (to colleagues and rivals alike) as a gentleman athlete. He was able to combine sport with studies and professional work, unlike many others. Neither neglecting the arduous and absorbing training nor neglecting his fencing skills, he graduated with honours from architecture. In his later professional work (and not only there), he demonstrated outstanding talent and deserved to be called a Renaissance man" [Tuszyński 2004, vol. II, p. 390].



Fig. 19. 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Olympic Games in Rome, a meeting held at the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw, 2010

Photo: P. Oprządek/MS&T

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