

Joanna Krasnodebska

(Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń)

“An English Woman in Paris.” Halina Korn-Żuławska’s Letters to Her Husband (May–June 1950)

For Polish visual artists living in Britain after the war, Paris of the early 1950s was a very important point on the map of modern art and continued to serve as the capital of Europe and the intellectual capital of the world. Since Polish newspapers provided little coverage of art events in France, artists listened to BBC broadcasts and read the British art press, headed by *The Studio*. News of Poles exhibiting their works in Paris reached London through a handful of press notes appearing in the Paris-based *Kultura*, *Wiadomości*, and *Dziennik Polski*. If Zdzisław Grocholski, a journalist writing for *Kultura*, is to be believed, Paris was the city where the largest community of Polish artists outside Poland lived, created, and exhibited their works. The most numerous was a group of artists who had lived there for a long time, often since the beginning of the century, and who had their own studios, pre-war achievements, and a relatively – in the Parisian conditions – established position in the world of art. Grocholski listed the following artists among them: Konstanty Brandel, Mela Muter, Władysław Jahl, Waclaw Zawadowski, and Alfred Aberdam. A slightly younger group, which arrived in Paris shortly before the war, comprised, according to Grocholski, Ludwik Lille, Zdzisław Cyankiewicz, Katarzyna Librowicz, Kazimierz Zielenkiewicz, and Lutka

Pink;¹ Marek Szwarc returned to Paris from England just after the war. Most of these names appeared at a major exhibition devoted to Polish artists living in Paris, organized by the local Polish-French Friendship Association, which was opened at Galerie Beaux-Arts in early 1948. Even though, as Pierre Descargues wrote for the Cracow-based *Przegląd Artystyczny*, the exhibition primarily paid tribute to several deceased Polish artists: Józef Pankiewicz, Olga Boznańska, Louis Marcoussis, Eugeniusz Zak, and Tadeusz Makowski.

In the early 1950s, artists from the École de Paris circle were still the most recognized in the Polish art community in France. There was a shortage of opinion-forming critics. The Literary Institute, which would award its art prizes a few years later, did not yet play a major role, and Józef Czapski, who lived in Maisons-Laffitte, had not had exhibitions since the war. The Polish Galerie Lambert of Zofia and Kazimierz Romanowicz was not to be built until nine years later.

On the other side of the English Channel, a community of Polish artists had been forming and growing for many decades. The artists who settled in Britain just before the war included Henryk Gotlib, Marek Żuławski, Stefan and Franciszka Themerson, Jan LeWitt, Jerzy Him, and Feliks Topolski. During the turmoil of the war, by various routes, many Polish visual artists arrived in England. Some as refugees, most as soldiers who ended up in France after the September defeat, only to make their way to the British Isles after France's defeat in 1940. Such a route was taken by Jankiel Adler, Józef Natanson, Zygmunt Haupt, Aleksander Żyw, and Witold T. Mars. During the war, Piotr Potworowski, Józef Herman, and Zdzisław Ruszkowski² settled in England.

¹ Z. Grocholski, "Plastycy polscy w Paryżu" [Polish visual artists in Paris], *Kultura* 1948, no. 5, pp. 153–154.

² S. Teisseyre, "Polscy malarze w Anglii" [Polish painters in England], *Przegląd Artystyczny* 1947, no. 4–5, pp. 3–5; most complete information on the topic of successive waves of emigration: M. A. Supruniuk, "Sztuka polska w Wielkiej Brytanii w latach 1940–2000. Źródła i stan badań" [Polish art in Great Britain in 1940–2000. Sources and state of research], in: *Sztuka polska w Wielkiej Brytanii 1940–2000. Antologia* [Polish art in Great Britain in 1940–2000. An anthology], selected, prepared for print, and with an introduction by idem, Toruń 2006, pp. 20–21.

Five years after the war, Polish artists in Britain still believed that in order to really make a name for oneself in art, to achieve both artistic and commercial success, one should come to Paris and try to organize an exhibition there. Such an attempt was made in May 1950 by Halina Korn, a Polish painter living in London since 1940. After the success of her first individual exhibition entitled "Paintings of London Life" in January 1948 at London's Mayor Gallery and the positive reviews that appeared in both British and Polish press,³ she decided to make a name for herself in the art market in France as well.

Halina Korn – this is how she signed her paintings – was born as Halina Julia Korngold on January 22, 1902 in Warsaw, in a Jewish family. Her father Julian Korngold was a representative of foreign leather goods companies. Her mother, who had a petty bourgeois background, grew up in a small provincial town near Lyon, France; hence both Polish and French were spoken in Halina Korn's family home.⁴

After graduating from the private Antonina Walicka's Girls' Gimnazjum in Warsaw, she began studying journalism at the Warsaw School of Political Science. At the same time, she studied singing with Professor Adela Comte-Wilgocka and Stanisława Korwin-Szymanowska, Karol Szymanowski's sister. Before the war, she gave several performances in War-

³ See, among others: "[...] Halina Korn, who is exhibiting at the Mayor Gallery, seems to me to rely on disarming us by the pleasant scumblings of her paint and by an accidental naivety which really arises from the fact that she has not carried her pictures fully through"; C. MacInnes, "[Ever since Henri Rousseau shoved us...]" *The Observer*, January 18, 1948. "[...] Instead of the stereotyped 'sitting' she shows people at Zoo, men and women in pubs, customers in shops and passengers waiting at bus stops. All her subjects are doing something – even if is only standing on Hampstead Heath, watching fireworks or waiting for trains. None of them is a picture of a man or woman just sitting to have a picture painted." J. Bouverie, "John Bouverie's Journal: Smile, Please," *News Chronicle*, January 8, 1948. "In January this year, a group exhibition of paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Halina Korn was opened at London's Mayor Gallery, under the theme 'Paintings of London Life.' The Polish artist gained great popularity in England and her name is listed in the prospectuses of the most prominent London galleries." "Sztuka polska za granicą" [Polish art abroad], *Przegląd Artystyczny* (Cracow), 1948, no. 2 (26), p. 11.

⁴ University Library in Toruń, Archives of Emigration (hereinafter: AE), Archive of Halina Korn-Żuławska, ref. no. AE/HKŻ/1, biographical materials.

saw. She particularly enjoyed performing 18th-century Italian songs and works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Gabriel Fauré.⁵

A year before the outbreak of World War II, at the famous Ziemiańska café, she met Marek Żuławski, a painter and former student at the Warsaw School of Fine Arts who had lived in London since 1935. The artist came to Warsaw in connection with the 10th (last) Salon of the Institute of Art Propaganda (IAP), in which he participated.⁶ In August 1939, they met during the summer vacation in St. Malo in Brittany and were still there when the war started. Marek, who had an English visa, returned to London, while Halina stayed in France, trying to find work in Paris. As early as in October, she was given the job of a stenographer at the Ministry of Social Welfare, and in November, she moved from Paris to Angers with the Polish Government-in-Exile. In May 1940, sharing the fate of thousands of Poles, she left France on a ship, which arrived after a few days in Falmouth on the coast of Cornwall. She ended up in a refugee camp in England and from there she made contact with Marek, who came to get her. They lived together in his London studio, located on the fifth floor of Dudley Court, where the air Battle of Britain was fought over their heads. Until the end of the war, Halina Korn worked at the Polish embassy in London. On February 10, 1948, Halina and Marek were married.⁷

At the end of the war, she learned that her entire large family (she had three brothers and an older sister) had been murdered during the German occupation of Poland. This caused her nervous breakdown and triggered her illness (alternating states of depression and euphoria), with which she struggled for the rest of her life.⁸

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ The last, tenth, Salon of the IAP was held in November 1938. Works (paintings, graphics, sculpture) by more than 180 artists were exhibited; see: A. Wojciechowski, ed., *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1915–1939* [Polish artistic life in 1915–1939], Wrocław 1974, p. 418; M. Żuławski, *Studium do autoportretu* [A study for a self-portrait], Toruń 2009, p. 158.

⁷ M. Żuławski, *Studium do autoportretu* [A study for a self-portrait], pp. 159, 255–256. Marek Żuławski's first wife was Eugenia (Imogena) Różańska (1906–1982), a painter and illustrator; they married in 1937 and divorced on January 30, 1948; *ibidem*, pp. 184–185.

⁸ Halina Korn was diagnosed with cyclothymia. She was repeatedly treated in psychiatric clinics; AE, Archive of Halina Korn-Żuławska, ref. no. AE/HKŻ/I, materials on health.

Halina Korn did not have academic training as a painter, but she was able to enlist the help of her husband, who was an academy graduate. As she repeatedly emphasized, he gave her only two pieces of advice: "Keep your paintbrushes clean and don't try to imitate anyone."⁹ She started painting and sculpting relatively late in life (she was about 40 at the time) and virtually by accident.

One day, as Marek Żuławski recalled, she painted Adam and Eve on a closet door in her studio; their naked elongated figures resembled Cranach's nudes.¹⁰

This is what she wrote in the introduction of one of her catalogs:

[...] after marrying in London the painter Marek Żuławski and by the temptation of palette-cum-brushes close to my hands I took up painting myself. A year later, in 1948, I had my first one-man show at the Mayor Gallery; the second in 1952 at [London's] Beaux Arts Gallery, where I also exhibited my sculpture. I have shown work with the London Group, the R. A. [Royal Academy], and in many mixed exhibitions in London and Paris galleries.

I love to paint, I love the smell of oil and turps. I love bright colours – the taste I probably inherited from my father, who used to spend all his weekends painting red, green and gold whatever he could lay his hands on in our home. I find subjects for my paintings everywhere; they follow me and sometimes I have to write them down for fear of forgetting them. I never draw on the spot, I only watch intensely and draw from memory when back in my studio.

I love everything that is paintable; thus I love human beings, not Humanity (you cannot paint Humanity, can you?). But you can paint street markets in Whitechapel (and, by Jove, how beautiful are the fat buttocks fisherwomen!). To me an acrobatic act in the circus is not less dramatic than a crucifixion, and a bunch of human faces at Lyons is as beautiful as a bunch of flowers. The landscape of Kilburn High Road gives me a same kick as the most picturesque Italian landscape.

I am neither looking for beauty nor for ugliness. [...]

Some people think my painting is "slightly satirical." Nothing upsets me more. I never attempt to show the ridiculous side of life, because I cannot see

⁹ "Nota" [Note], in: *Halina Korn*, Gallery One [exhibition folder], [London 1960].

¹⁰ M. Żuławski, *Studium do autoportretu* [A study for a self-portrait], p. 400.

it. Perhaps I have no sense of humor? And if some faces in my paintings appear funny – it is their fault.¹¹

The main subject of Halina Korn's works was everyday life, as observed and captured on London's streets, and human beings. She did not understand and did not like abstractions. She painted in her own way the world around her and people: women in a mechanical laundry, a boy with a large cut of meat, store mannequins in the display window, coalmen, men and women on an escalator and in a café. She depicted scenes from a park, a psychologist's office, a funeral, a circus, and strip-tease bars. A frequent motif appearing in her works, especially in sculpture, was motherhood. Marek Żuławski wrote that "everything that was born in London in the 1950s found its expression in her work. [...] Authenticity transformed into a symbol, translated into art, and filled with poetic content. Not sentimental, but poetic."¹²

Halina Korn's work, classified as a naive painting by Aleksander Jackowski and Ignacy Witz, among others, does not easily lend itself to this classification. Other critics and artists, such as Victor Musgrave, Marek Żuławski, and Feliks Topolski, noted her unfailing sense of composition and form, as well as her great sensitivity to color.¹³

Jackowski, after all, in his encyclopedic outline on naive artists, emphasized that: "It would be a misunderstanding to speak in this case of naiveté of the kind we know from the paintings of Nikifor, Więcek, and Rybkowski,"¹⁴ and Ignacy Witz wrote in the catalog of an exhibition organized by the Warsaw Society of Friends of Fine Arts:

¹¹ "Nota" [Note], in: *Halina Korn*, Gallery One [exhibition folder], [London 1960].

¹² M. Żuławski, *Studium do autoportretu* [A study for a self-portrait], pp. 308–309.

¹³ V. Musgrave, "Introduction," in: *Halina Korn* [exhibition folder]. Camden Arts Centre, London, May 17–June 7 1981, [London 1981]; M. Żuławski, *Studium do autoportretu* [A study for a self-portrait], pp. 306–310; F. Topolski, "Halinka," *Wiadomości* 1979, no. 3 (1712), p. 5. See also: P. Vann, "In search of their roots. Three immigrant naive painters whose images reflect their origins in spite of the influence of a changing world," *The Artist* 1985, no. 3, pp. 18, 20.

¹⁴ A. Jackowski, *Sztuka zwana naiwną. Zarys encyklopedyczny twórczości w Polsce* [The art called naive. An encyclopedic outline of art in Poland], Warsaw 1995, p. 86.

There was talk of the naiveté of Halina Korn-Żuławska's painting. However, this is neither the naiveté of a child nor that of a brute. Instead, it is the mature and conscious simplicity of an artist who knows how to remain in part both a child and a brute, despite and perhaps even contrary to what one knows and understands. So there is a naiveté, primitiveness to her painting, evident not only in the vision, but also in the definition of the form, in the contour, the composition, in the use and alignment of colors. It is not something invented, not something resulting from some self-imposed programs, but something most certainly and completely authentic, flowing from the entire psychological structure of the artist.¹⁵

Halina Korn's period of artistic activity lasted just over twenty years. During that time, she had numerous exhibitions, both individual and group ones, in London, Edinburgh, and New York, as well as in Poland: in Warsaw, Cracow, Gdynia, and Katowice. She was a member of the Artists International Association (AIA) and a founding member of the Arts Society of Paddington, but also showed her works in exhibitions of the London Group, the Royal Academy of Arts, and the Women's International Art Club, among others. In the mid-1960s, due to her deteriorating health, she had a neurological surgery, after which she stopped creating.

She sat on the bed like a good girl and seemed completely cured of her depression. Only later did it turn out that this was not the case. It is true that she stopped wringing her hands, but she also stopped singing, painting, and sculpting. [...] The operation was successful – it completely changed her personality.¹⁶

She painted her last painting in the clinic under pressure from doctors. It shows a small figure of a man in a white apron against a black background. Its title is *Sanitariusz* [Male nurse].¹⁷

In about 1957, she began writing childhood memoirs illustrated with her own drawings titled *Wakacje kończą się we wrześniu* [Holidays end in Sep-

¹⁵ I. Witz, [Note], in: *Halina Korn-Żuławska* [exhibition folder], Warsaw: Society of Friends of Fine Arts, 1967, p. [5].

¹⁶ M. Żuławski, *Studium do autoportretu* [A study for a self-portrait], p. 218.

¹⁷ National Museum in Warsaw, *Sanitariusz* [Male nurse], 1967, oil, fiberboard, 56 × 38 cm.

tember] (they were published with an introduction by Stefan Themerson in Warsaw in 1983). In the memoirs, she recreated Warsaw before World War I and recalled her last summer vacation spent with her family in the countryside near the capital. What is unusual about the book is that the narrator is a ten-year-old Halinka, in her language of the time, with her vocabulary and childish way of thinking.

In the last years of her life, she slowly withdrew from activity, both in private life and as an artist:

[...] she was submissive and obedient. The demon that lived inside her had left her forever. A void was left behind.¹⁸

She died on October 2, 1978 in London; she is buried in the Kensal Green Cemetery in that city.

Halina Korn's works can be found in the National Museum in Warsaw (a large collection of 32 paintings and 200 drawings and sketches),¹⁹ the National Museum in Poznań, and the University Museum in Toruń,²⁰ among other places. Some of her works can also be found in London's Ben Uri Gallery²¹ and in many private collections, including a large American collection of naive art owned by Anthony Petullo.²²

¹⁸ M. Żuławski, *Studium do autoportretu* [A study for a self-portrait], p. 218.

¹⁹ In 1985, Marek Żuławski donated 29 paintings, drawings, and sketches to the Warsaw museum. The other two paintings were purchased on the occasion of a series of exhibitions Halina Korn had in Poland in the 1960s, and one was donated to the Museum's collection in 1990; see: AE, Archive of Halina Korn-Żuławska, ref. no. AE/HKŻ/VIII, Artistic activities, a letter from Marek Żuławski to the director of the National Museum in Warsaw, dated March 15, 1984; Information based on a search at the National Museum in Warsaw.

²⁰ The University Museum in Toruń owns 34 paintings, a sculpture, and more than a thousand drawings. The works of art and archival legacy of Halina Korn and Marek Żuławski are a gift from Maria Żuławska, the artist's third wife.

²¹ W. Schwab, J. Weiner, eds., *Jewish artists: The Ben Uri collection. Paintings, Drawings, Prints and Sculpture*, London 1994, p. 60.

²² *The Anthony Petullo Collection of Self-Taught and Outsider Art*, [Urbana 2001], pp. 86–87.

"AT HOME IN PARIS"

What did artistic Paris look like in the late spring and early summer of the early 1950s from Halina Korn's perspective? This can be determined on the basis of the letters exchanged between the spouses (Marek stayed in London, where he supervised the renovation of the studio). The excerpt of their correspondence presented below, which illustrates this issue, was selected from the letters written by Halina Korn and Marek Żuławski in May and June 1950 and circulating between Paris and London.²³ In her first letter, sent shortly after her arrival in Paris, Halina asks her husband to send some forgotten items, including tea and a coat, and describes the trip. It should be emphasized that to Halina Korn Paris was not a strange place where it would be difficult for her to find her place. As Marek Żuławski wrote in his *A Study for a self-portrait*:

Paris with Halinka was an inhabited city. Her intimate knowledge of the language, her elegance, her friends, her cousins... She felt at home in Paris.²⁴

A great advantage of these letters is the language, often biting and ironic. Both Halina Korn and Marek Żuławski had a gift for observation and writing. In addition to periodically writing about art for magazines and preparing broadcasts for BBC Radio for many years (in the 1950s Halina worked with him preparing exhibition reviews for the "Round the Galleries" program), Żuławski was the author of two (actually three)²⁵ volumes of autobiographies. Halina Korn's literary abilities can be seen by reading, among other things, a volume of childhood memoirs.

Colorful language, accuracy of judgment, and interesting, insightful observations can also be found in Halina Korn's rich extensive with many people.

²³ The correspondence is part of the artists' legacy, held in the collection of the Emigration Archives (ref. no. AE/HKŻ/XIV, AE/HKŻ/XVI).

²⁴ M. Żuławski, *Studium do autoportretu* [A study for a self-portrait], p. 215.

²⁵ The first and second parts of the autobiography were published in Warsaw by Czytelnik (1980, 1990). The entire autobiography, including the previously unpublished third part, was published in Toruń in 2009.

The fact that she made copies of most letters is very valuable. Kazimiera Żuławska,²⁶ Marek Żuławski's mother, was very fond of receiving messages from her daughter-in-law; she especially asked for reports from Paris, a city she herself had visited many times in her youth and knew very well. She was very complimentary about Halina's letters, to which the latter replied: "I am greatly flattered by your high opinion of my letters; I have a great ease of writing, the same as of talking, and that is probably it."²⁷ Her sensitivity and emotionality when confronted with the variety of experiences in Paris made it necessary for her to pour her impressions onto paper. After a two-week stay, this is what she wrote to her husband:

I decided to write a Paris diary, so as not to murder you with the need to read too often. Because I have to speak out, otherwise I'll burst. So I will write long letters [...] etc. ... and I will send them once in a while. This way I will save money on stamps and I won't have to keep looking for mailboxes, which are much better camouflaged in this country than the most important military facilities during dangerous military operations (letter dated May 12, 1950).

The main "heroes" of the letters are the Paris galleries Halina Korn visited during the month of May and her circle of acquaintances and friends, both Polish and French. In the galleries, she held conversations, trying to generate interest in her art and attempting to organize an exhibition. During these meetings, economic aspects often came up, such as the desire to sell her own and her husband's works, the cost of the preparation of an exhibition, renting the exhibition room, etc. In her letters, she repeated-

²⁶ Kazimiera Żuławska (1883–1971), a romanist and translator; the wife of Jerzy Żuławski (1874–1915), a poet and playwright. Since 1910, the Żuławski family lived in Zakopane; their villa "Łada" became a meeting place for well-known personalities from the world of literature and art, including Stanisław Przybyszewski, Leopold Staff, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, and Tymon Niesiołowski. In 1921, Kazimiera Żuławska moved to Toruń, where she ran a boarding house and literary salon in the villa "Zofijówka." Besides Marek, she had two sons: Juliusz (1910–1998), a writer and translator, and Wawrzyniec (1916–1957), a musician and composer who tragically died in the Alps; see: J. Belkot, "Żuławska Kazimiera," an entry in: K. Mikulski, ed., *Toruński słownik biograficzny* [Toruń biographic dictionary], vol. 3, Toruń 2002, pp. 258–259.

²⁷ AE, Archive of Halina Korn-Żuławska, ref. no. AE/HK/XVII, Correspondence, a copy of a letter from Halina Korn to Kazimiera Żuławska, March 23, 1965.

ly mentioned that she would like to meet Helena Rubinstein,²⁸ a wealthy cosmetics manufacturer and art collector who was in Paris at the time.

The friends and acquaintances who appeared in the letters were mostly people with links to art: critics, painters, and sculptors.

Among the closest were the prominent art expert and critic Karol Sterling²⁹ who had lived in Paris since 1925 (an employee of the Louvre since 1929) and the painter Katarzyna Librowicz.³⁰ They both remembered Halina Korn from their childhood years in Warsaw. When the book *Holidays end in September* was published, Karol Sterling wrote in a letter to M. Żuławski:

I was very touched by Halinka's book. Her memory is utterly remarkable – disturbing. It suddenly occurred to me that her entire illness, which erupted as a result of her sister's death, consisted or was rooted in a desire to take

²⁸ Helena (Chaja) Rubinstein (1872–1965), a Polish woman of Jewish descent, the founder of the Helena Rubinstein Inc. cosmetics company, an art collector and patron of many artists, including Elie Nadelman, Louis Marcoussis, and Alicia Halicka; see: A. Halicka, *Wczoraj. (Wspomnienia)* [Yesterday. (Memoirs)], an authorized translation by W. Błońska, Cracow 1971, pp. 148–152; M. Fitoussi, *Helena Rubinstein: kobieta, która wymyśliła piękno* [*Helena Rubinstein: the woman who invented beauty*, London 2013], Warsaw 2013, pp. 112, 276.

²⁹ Charles Sterling (1901–1991), an art historian. One of the most prominent experts on European painting of the 14th to 19th centuries. In 1924, he graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of Warsaw. From 1925 he lived in France. From 1929–1961 (with a break during World War II, when he was the curator at the Metropolitan Museum in New York) he worked at the Louvre. He is the author of, among others: *La Peinture française. Les Primitifs* (Paris 1938), *La nature morte de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Paris 1952) – Polish translation: *Martwa natura: od starożytności po wiek XX* [Still life: from antiquity to the 20th century] (Warsaw 1998); see: J. Białostocki, *Karol Sterling doktorem honoris causa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego* [Karol Sterling to receive the title of honoris causa doctor of the University of Warsaw], *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 1983, no. 3–4, pp. 454–458.

³⁰ Katarzyna (Katherine) Librowicz (1912–1991), a Polish painter and graphic artist who lived and worked in Paris. She specialized in children's portraits, which were very popular. Her uncle was Roman Kramsztyk (1885–1942); from 1949, she lived in his Paris studio. After Halina Korn died, she wrote to Marek Żuławski: "I recall that evening when you invited me to dinner – she was home at the time and you showed me her so very beautiful paintings. And I still remember from the days of The Saxon Garden how she used to come with her sister – with whom we used to play – me and my sister – so many years ago"; AE, Archive of Marek Żuławski, correspondence, a letter from Katarzyna Librowicz to Marek Żuławski dated October 30, 1978.

refuge in childhood. I am one of the few witnesses of her accuracy – I played with her in in The Saxon Garden, she wore a red dress...³¹

Halina Korn's close acquaintances included the singer Maneta Radwan,³² who, after divorcing the sculptor August Zamoyski, married the French sculptor Jean-Claude de Saint-Marceaux. During her stay, Halina Korn met a young art critic Bernard Dorival,³³ whom she wanted to make her protector, and tried to make contact with Jean Cassou,³⁴ the then director of the Museum of Modern Art in Paris. She met with Dr. Helen Rosenau,³⁵ an art historian and author of the books *Women in art: From type to personality* and *A short history of Jewish art*. Marek Żuławski sent her addresses and names of people she should contact. One of them was the art critic Chil Aronson (1898–1966), who, between the wars, as Francis Biedart, wrote articles on French art and reports on Parisian exhibitions for Warsaw magazines *Głos Plastyków* and *Wiadomości Literackie* (later also for *Wiadomości Polskie, Polityczne i Literackie* in London). After the war, he organized expositions in France presenting primarily the works of artists of Jewish origin; he is the author of a publication devoted to Jewish artists associated with the École de Paris (*Scènes et visages de Montparnasse*, Paris 1963).³⁶

Another person recommended by Marek was Jules Lefranc, a French painter with an extensive collection of naive art, which he donated in the 1960s to the Museum of the Vieux-Château in Laval (which became a mu-

³¹ AE, Archive of Halina Korn, ref. no. AE/HKŻ/XVIII, correspondence, a letter from Karol Sterling to Maria and Marek Żuławski dated December 4, 1983.

³² Maria (Maneta) Radwan, a singer. In Paris, she performed at the Théâtre Beriza, among others. In 1928 she started a relationship with the sculptor August Zamoyski and soon became his second wife. Their marriage lasted until 1939. Her second husband was the French sculptor Jean-Claude de Saint-Marceaux (1902–1975).

³³ Bernard Dorival (1914–2003), an art historian and critic. In 1950, an English edition of his book *Cézanne* (Paris 1948) was published.

³⁴ Jean Cassou (1897–1986), a French writer and critic, a director of the Museum of Modern Art in Paris (1946–1965).

³⁵ Helen Rosenau (1900–1984), an art (mainly architecture) historian. The author of, among others: *Women in art, From type to personality* (London 1944) and *A short history of Jewish art* (London 1948).

³⁶ A. Wierzbicka, *We Francji i w Polsce 1900–1939* [In France and in Poland, 1900–1939], Warsaw 2009, pp. 324, 343.

seum of naive art in 1970).³⁷ Encouraged by her husband, she visited the painter and graphic artist Louis Lille, who settled in Paris in 1937, living alone on Boulevard Saint-Jacques in very difficult material conditions.³⁸

When she did not hold meetings, she sought inspiration for her drawings and paintings on the streets of Paris: she observed two black nuns on the Pont des Arts, silhouettes of people on a crowded bus, and Percheron horses on the street. She often spent time in two Parisian cafes located on Boulevard Saint-Germain, Café de Flore and Les Deux Magots, which have been fashionable continuously since the 1930s and were meeting places for the intellectual and artistic elite of Paris. Before the war, they were frequented by, among others, Picasso and his then-life companion Dora Maar, a painter and photographer, as well as André Derain, Louis Marcoussis, and Mojżesz Kisling.³⁹

The most important reason why Halina Korn came to Paris was to attempt to organize her own painting exhibition. Thanks to her correspondence, we can trace almost step by step her endeavors, the conversations she held, the names of galleries, and the names of friends, intermediaries, and artists. The painter's opinions, often ironic and biting, about the Parisian milieu of Polish artists, art critics, and intellectuals are a description of the hard years of post-war existence of émigrés, but also of internal feuds and disputes.

The exhibition ultimately failed to materialize. Many drawings and sketches have survived from that period, and some of them are in the collection of The Archives of Polish Emigration in Toruń.

³⁷ *1^{er} Salon International d'Art Naïf. Hommage au peintre Lavallois Jules Lefranc*, [Paris 1984]. Jules Lefranc lived from 1887 to 1972.

³⁸ Louis Lille (1897–1957), a graphic artist and painter, he lived in Paris from 1937. After the war, he was one of the founders of the Union of Polish Artists in France, of which he became the president. He was primarily engaged in drawing and graphic art. He was a loner and lived on the brink of poverty, yet he helped many artists materially; see: W. Banach, "[Introduction]," in: *Ludwik Lille. Prace z lat 40. i 50.* [Louis Lille. Works from the 1940s and 1950s], Information brochure from the exhibition organized in the Historical Museum in Sanok on June 25 – July 31, 2004, Sanok 2004.

³⁹ A. Halicka, *Wczoraj* [Yesterday], pp. 123–124.

The letters selected below are a small fraction of the correspondence Halina Korn and Marek Żułowski exchanged throughout their life together. It can be assumed that the entire correspondence, covering the years 1939–1978, is preserved in the collection of the Emigration Archives. The couple often traveled separately, and Halina Korn regularly wrote to her husband during her stays in the hospital. The following excerpts (never published so far) are from twenty-five letters by Halina Korn and eleven by Mark Żułowski, written in May and June 1950. Halina Korn's letters show the sender's address: Hotel de Londres, 3 rue Bonaparte, Paris 6^{ème}; the envelopes are addressed to: Fulthorpe Studio, 3 Warwick Ave, London W2. All the letters are manuscripts. For the purposes of editing, spelling and typos were corrected, and inflectional endings were modernized. The original spelling of phrases and words in English and French is preserved. Possible errors are marked with [!] and doubts with [?]. The cut-out parts of the letters are marked with [...].

LETTERS

May 5, 1950 [Halina]

[...] well I'm already sitting in the Café [de] Flore. [...] On the terrace it is warm, cloudy, full, bustling, and strangely homely + I feel very much at home among the shaggy guys and the maned fancy girls with big eyes. I'm starting to think about drawing with a single line, but I'm afraid I won't succeed because it's more difficult than to smudge in my own way. [...] I have everything I need in my checkered bag: pencils, erasers, sharpeners, sketchbooks, and my little cards – I'm all bachelor and I'm already afraid I won't draw enough for you – but I can't yet. I'm sorry.

Mareczek, I could have transported a piano harnessed to two cart horses – no one even looked at my luggage. I slept all night, I didn't even wake up when we went into the water, only at about 5 o'clock there was a great ruckus near Dunkerque – but the French douane⁴⁰ entered the carriage only in Paris – looked at my checkered jacket, smiled, and that was it! –

⁴⁰ *douane* (French) – customs.

The sculpture emerged from the panties in the hotel and stood on the mantelpiece in front of the mirror – it looks lovely, exceptionally lovely in Paris – my whole scabby room took on a different expression. I will carry it to Karol [Sterling] as soon as I communicate with them. [...]

I had breakfast for 150 fr. with a tip at Beaux Arts: a great chopped meatloaf, fries too. I sip a coffee with one cookie in Flora, I read letters and watch people, nature, and traffic there. People pee in urinals, nature doesn't yet have enough leaves to play a role for Miss Korn, and the damn traffic drives on the wrong side and just waits until I get absent-minded! And I don't – I just watch and pay attention to the right, to the left, and I sweat due to my zeal not to make you a widower.

Saturday, May 6, 1950 [Halina]

[...] Now it's 11 a.m. I'm sitting in the sunlight on Flora's terrace – lots of adorable quacks and much less adorable English "compatriots" are basking lazily – and chattering, chattering, chattering!!! After I drink my coffee (with milk, please Mr. Mark, no black!) I will go to Galerie Caputo.⁴¹ Mrs. Caputo told me that there was an excellent Israeli landscape painter, a great success, the Jews from the government were buying. I said that I was writing for the Hebrew Section [BBC]⁴² – a great stir – I am supposed to go there and meet Mr. Artist himself. [...] He – supposedly a landscape painter – is going to London with an exhibition⁴³ so you'll see what it's like – and I'll write you from here what I think about it – again, we will spend a couple of guineas. But there is something else – Halusia [Halina Sterling] asked me if I could make a pattern for wallpaper, something tapestry-line – 50 thousand francs can be earned just like that. So I said no, what else could I say?

⁴¹ Galerie Billiet-Caputo was established in Paris in 1947. It was run by Gildo Caputo and Myriam Prévot (at the end of 1950, they took over the management of the Galerie de France, which became one of the most important galleries in Paris in the 1950s and 1960s).

⁴² The Hebrew Section of the BBC existed in the years 1949–1968.

⁴³ Aharon Kahana (1905–1967). He had an exhibition at London's Zwemmer Gallery in June 1950.

But your roosters!⁴⁴ I'll give you the sizes and requirements on Monday because I'll see Sterlings in the evening: there will be the dirty Aronson at the dinner – Halusia says he can sell me something. I will take the sculpture or have it transported by Karol. I am sorry to part with it, it looks beautiful! [...] Mareczek, wouldn't it be a good idea to make me a Jewish painter?

One has to think about it and jump into Israeli shoes – *pourquoi pas?* Have you talked to Olhy?⁴⁵ There is no rush but do it when you have a chance. And remember that the singer and the horse are rather for the Gimpels.⁴⁶ Communicate with them, he wants to come and you have a lot of good new stuff. These two upholsterers are great! You have to collect your stuff and mine from them (my *La belle de La Ciotat*).

May 8, 1950 [Marek]

[...] I received your letter and two postcards and I am v[ery] happy about everything you do and see. Greetings to the Karoleks [Sterlings]. Lud[wik] Lille's address ([Witold] Mars⁴⁷ asked to give it to you when thanking you for the card) is 51 Boulv. St. Jacques.

I had a good mention in *Art Review* of the mining exhibition at A.I.A. [Gallery].⁴⁸

⁴⁴ This is about a painting by Marek Żuławski titled *Cock and Hens*, oil on canvas, dated 1948 – privately owned.

⁴⁵ William Ohly (1883–1955), a British art collector and owner of London galleries (including Berkeley Galleries, established in 1942).

⁴⁶ Gimpel Gallery – a London art gallery established in 1946 by brothers Peter and Charles Gimpel.

⁴⁷ Witold Tadeusz Mars (1912–1985), a Polish painter and graphic artist. He was a graduate of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. After World War II, he stayed in England, where he participated in exhibitions of the London Group and the Society of Scottish Artists, among others. In 1952 he moved to New York and focused almost entirely on book graphic art; see: S. Jordanowski, *Vademecum malarstwa polskiego w USA* [Vademecum of Polish painting in the USA], Wrocław 1996, s. 168.

⁴⁸ The exhibition *The Coalminers. Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Coalminer and Professional Artists*, organized by the Artists International Association took place from April 20 to May 17 at the AIA Gallery at 15 Lisle Street in London. Its participants were professional and amateur artists. The first group, along with Henry Moore, Paul Hogarth, and James Holland, among others, included at least two Poles: Józef Herman and Marek Żuławski; see:

I started painting [...]. And you, darling, don't try par force to do something – it will come by itself – watch and ingest what you see. It would be good for Karolek [Karol Sterling] to buy (this is quite a strange thing because, after all, he himself returned twice to this topic and stated that he was buying [...]) it would be good because, as I found out today, I have £18 of overdraft in the bank and it's the beginning of the month. [...]

[May 8, 1950] [Halina]

[...] Yesterday I went to Galerie Billiet-Caputo and had a kind of non-binding *interview* (that I write for the Hebrew Section, that in view of the fact that he is going to London with an exhibition I will try to send them, if they want... it, etc.) with the artist Kahana. An exhibition of things of this nature is rather good: Jankiel Adler not abstract but "abstracting" and "formalizing"; however, with a starting point from nature what reconciles me with it. The texture is not licked but vivid, the color is vivid and pleasant. Referring to the mood and traditions of Phoenician art – the influence of undoubtedly decorative local art, although it seems to me, of course, that Braque and other gentlemen are also painted.

A German-born artist⁴⁹ came out, as he told me, of this art (present) to which, after passing the influence of Gustave Courbet, he returned completely at the moment. He showed me his classical period in photographs – he agreed. He has exhibited with the entire group at Galerie de Berri,⁵⁰ and the current exhibition is the first one man show in Paris.

He will be in London in June at Zwemmer's [Zwemmer Gallery]. He took your phone number and will contact you. It seems that he was very *impressed* by my photographs. Maybe if you see the exhibition at Zwemmer's you can write something for Ludwig [Gottlieb]?⁵¹

L. Morris, R. Radford, *The Story of the AIA: Artists International Association 1933–1953*, Oxford 1983, pp. 83–84; G. S. Whittet, "London Commentary", *The Studio* 1950, vol. 140, no. 689, p. 61.

⁴⁹ Aharon Kahana was born in Stuttgart.

⁵⁰ Galerie de Berri was located at rue de Berri. It was headed by L. van der Klip.

⁵¹ Ludwik Gottlieb (1914–1985), worked at the BBC, among others, in the Polish Section and as the director of the Hebrew Section; see: K. Pszenicki, *Tu mówią Londyn. Historia Sekcji*

[...]

In the evening at 8 o'clock

[...] I spent the whole day with the Karoleks [Sterlings] in the car. A wonderful road through the Seine Valley on the path of the victorious American army through the mutilated French land which is miraculously being rebuilt. Only no longer Renaissance houses with blackened wooden carvings, but modern and unfortunately not always successful buildings. A wonderful landscape. One with a pink fallow, gray sky, a black horse, black crows, and a black old lady in a Sunday "chapeau" dramatic and magnificent! I will paint for sure when I get back. At home, I also have a wonderful still life of cacti and a brown wall. *La petite Catherine*⁵² will lend me the *gouache*.

I haven't done anything yet but I already have a lot in my heart: the back of the bus stuffed with vertical, funny silhouettes of standing people – they look like herrings in a green pot – at the bottom a steel-gray street, at the top a fawn-gray sky – Wonderful!

Sorry, I'm chattering again. [...] Send me a set of your photos – I don't know if Galerie de Berri will give me them back and I want to show Aronson and others. Bernard [Dorival] is delighted and charmed by you. [...]

May 9, 1950 [Halina]

[...] Yesterday Aronson came to the Sterlings' for dinner, and I and some other American antiques buyer and a nice crazy lady director of the Musée du Cinema. A great dinner – your sculpture in a wonderful place with its behind facing the mirror, and me – the birthday girl that your wife, that herself a child prodigy, that "oh – she has a lovely profile – like a Florentine artist?" (Aronson). And that my painting is half primitive and half childish, that I have a lot of talent. [...] About this Kahana said the same thing I wrote and considers him a great artist – he will be writing about him I will get

Polskiej BBC [This is London speaking. History of the Polish Section of the BBC], Warsaw 2009, p. 44.

⁵² Catherine Sterling-Binda, the Sterlings' daughter and a well-known art restorer in France.

the article and copy it. He gave me a press review for Salon de Mai⁵³ – I'm going tomorrow. [...]

I drew a very chiseled and elaborated *Still life with a cactus* (?). I wonder if I manage to paint it – the rest – when I stop flying. [...]

Karol is so kind and helpful to me, so delighted with the sculpture, and he produced it in front of people so proudly talking about you with the highest praise. Aronson praised the form a lot and said he would like to see more – oh, how funny and at the same time angelic and holy he is with his exultation for art and total insensitivity to worldly matters. [...]

I wanted to go to Lascaux, but it's expensive and a one-way trip would cost more than 7,000 francs – there's no way I will do it [...]. I have a lot to do and see here. On Friday I'm going to Mrs. *Something Rather Saint Marceau* [!] *de Passy* – this is Maneta I voto Zamoyska, she said she knows you very well and asked very much to greet you and inquired nicely about you. [...]

[Annotation in the letter on the first page:] Aronson fully condemns Jankiel Adler and speaks very badly of [Henryk] Gotlieb's painting.⁵⁴ He thinks I know something about painting – huh!

May 11, 1950 [Halina]

[...] We'll be saving when we get back and besides, you'll probably get a portrait and I – if the inspiration is right – should push some drawing to the snobs here. The exhibition here is hopeless: the cynicism of the gallery owners is completely unparalleled. [Galerie] Drouant David⁵⁵ charges 300,000 fr. for the room – last year he mentioned 150,000! And shit sells. [...]

It is terribly expensive here – money leaks out like water. But it's so wonderful and I'm so comfortable here that it's going to be the goal of my life to come here regularly and be able to do some serious work. My

⁵³ The VI Salon de Mai was held at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris from May 9 to May 31, 1950.

⁵⁴ The person in question is Henryk Gotlib (1890–1966), a Polish painter, graphic artist, and art critic, living in London since 1939. He is the author of the following books: *Polish Painting* (London 1942) and *Wędrówki malarza* [A painter's wanderings] (Warsaw 1947).

⁵⁵ Galerie Drouant-David – a gallery operating from 1942 to 1958 at rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, headed by Armand Drouant and Emmanuel David.

head is so full of topics that I haven't started anything yet – thank you for absolving me – I'll calm down any day and start working [...].

What are you painting, puppy? I drew and finished a still life and now I am drawing a boy with boxes: a black sweater and wide trousers, a gray Courbet wall, a long Modigliani face and a *bleu* Corot scarf around his neck – and boxes like Braque's still lifes: brown, train-like with black letters. After all, it's not a rip-off, but the world is, after all, made up of everything that all painters have seen in it, right? The drawing is getting good, but will the painting work out? My pencils break, I bought a razor blade – I'm going to cut myself in half. [...]

May 12, 1950 [Halina]

[...] So yesterday Galerie de Berri. Van der Klipa is lovely, apologizes, remembers, excuses herself, asks to come on Wednesday at 11 o'clock because she will have plenty of time *pour bavarder*. It was in the morning. Then sitting in the sun on the Champs-Élysées with eyes squinted because of the wonderful light and looking out for the incessant *cortège* of wonder. Crazy-haired gals with worked-out rococo waists, with active butts, on high heels, with wonderfully delicate feet and lecherously thin stockings, guys with the chicness of East End spivs – jackets up to their knees, linen ties, and shoes on lard as big as crates and as tall as [missing passage] buckets. Everything went out for the estrus. [...] This is undoubtedly the magic of France – its sunshine, its wine, and this is what England does not and will not have. [...]

I was at Salon de Mai 1950⁵⁶ – there was nothing I liked. Fortunately, there is no abstraction – but this is not a positive advantage. Some drawings and lino are good, two nice terracotta – the rest is crap – I have an illustrated catalog so you will see for yourself.

So today to this Maneta.

⁵⁶ See footnote 54.

May 12, [19]50 [Marek]

[...] Pass to Aronson my warm regards. He is an authentic guy. What does he do for a living and how did he survive Hitler? Maneta probably confuses me with Jacek [Żuławski],⁵⁷ but that's okay.

At Potwor[owski]'s opening Gimpel himself talked to me about your singer – that she was so good.⁵⁸ I am putting off his visit because I still want to paint something and I can't do anything in this mess. [...]

But try above all there in Paris to make as many contacts as possible and benefit as much as possible in every way. Have you seen Picasso's new paintings? Apparently, there is an exhibition. Have you been to Le Franc? [!] and Clavé?⁵⁹ [...]

I am sending you separately some photographs but don't give them away and keep them (especially *Women of Dieppe* and a still li[fe] with brushes that are not in the film – these are recent copies).

Is your room bright and good? Have you started drawing anything besides the cactus yet? [...]

May 13, [19]50 [Marek]

[...] Dr. [Helen] Rosenau was here – v[ery] friendly and clever. I also showed her a couple of your paintings. She's going to Paris because she's writing a book on French utopian architecture⁶⁰ – an amazing topic. She said that if I was German or Jewish she would help me a lot, and when she learned that you were Miss Korngold she absolutely wanted to meet you in Paris. She

⁵⁷ Jacek Żuławski (1907–1976), a Polish painter, graphic artist, mountaineer, and lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. He was Marek Żuławski's cousin; see: W. Zmorzyński, ed., *Marek i Jacek Żuławscy: malarstwo, rysunek* [Marek and Jacek Żuławski: painting, drawing] [exhibition catalog], Gdańsk 2002.

⁵⁸ This probably refers to the painting *The Liedersinger (The Singer)*; reproduction in: *The Artist* 1985, no. 3, p. 19.

⁵⁹ Antoni Clavé (1913–2005), a Catalan master painter, printmaker, sculptor, stage designer and costume designer. In October 1947 he had an exhibition of paintings at the Anglo-French Art Center in London. He then visited Marek Żuławski in his studio and expressed a favorable opinion about his painting.

⁶⁰ *The Ideal City in Its Architectural Evolution*, London [1959].

asked you to call her (preferably early in the morning). [...] You must definitely do it, she knows all the Friends of the Tel Aviv Gallery and other rich Jews who buy paintings here. In general you can do it without worries. [...]

Wednesday, May 17 [Halina]

I am very curious about what can be arranged in this de Berri, although, of course, I am not counting on anything.

Yesterday I had breakfast at de St. Marceaux's. It was extremely nice – we are already going by first names – [...] talking about art, about love, about war, about books. He considers me a natural born sculptor and says that some of my drawings (e.g. the Welsh poney) he could sign *un grand maitre* [!] “*un drôle de phénomène que vous êtes*” [!].⁶¹ They really wanted to see your photographs, but I only found them in the evening. I will see them many more times – they will go with me to the Karoleks [Sterlings] or we will meet. On June 17 they are going to London so we will see them. I've been to his studio – he is working seriously in a classical style, an excellent craftsman – large sculptures – he complains that artists can't make a living and she's doing some extra work somewhere – they have a delightful studio but I prefer ours. He said I should chisel with the sculpting temperament he sees in me, took me to the courtyard, gave me a hammer and a chisel, and said he could show me the technique if I stayed longer. How wonderful it would be to make a florist or a singer in stone. It will probably end there, because something is pulling at me terribly. Only the whole anatomy will have to be insured first, eh?

Yesterday I was at Lille's – sad suburban squalor, filth, tip, helplessness, painting similar to Mack [?] – worse in color – some weddings, veils, gatherings, charcoal drawings much better than painting and sadness, helplessness, gutlessness in everything. A good guy, kind as honey, helpful, pecked to death by life.

He watched everything, said nothing – I think he liked it. The same with your photographs. He gave various decent tips – we'll see each other again. I like him. [...]

⁶¹ (French) – the grand master “you are a funny phenomenon.”

May 18, [19]50 [Marek]

[...] In addition, go to Galerie Louise Leiris,⁶² 29 bis rue D'Astorg, 8^{eme} where there is supposedly a good exhibition of Braque, Picasso, Léger etc. At Maeght's⁶³ there are Chagall's last things – see them. I am sending you the AIA form for the summer exhibition. If you want to send it – fill it out, sign it, and send it back to me right away.

Did you get the photographs of my stuff? But please don't do things for me, but for yourself. You can only pass on my stuff on occasion or if someone, like Aronson – wants to see them specifically. [...]

Friday – May 19 [1950] [Halina]

[...] Puppy – I'm working – I'm already doing my third big drawing – I'm getting things done. And according to the plans: *Still life*, *Boy with boxes*, *La petite communiant*e. Now it will probably be *Pansy Club – Quartier Latin*.

I run around the city and people like a devil. I was at Paczkowska's⁶⁴ – only Polish ladies – talking about costumes and personal remarks – boring. Yesterday a meeting at Alma⁶⁵ with Rosenau: smart – right – talkative – quite nice. [...] – a friendship established.

Today is the first day with no plans – that is, I just want to see Bonnard's exhibition and Odilon Redon. I have to call Clavé and Lefranc and also I am writing a card to Katarzyna Librowicz and I want to see my discovered cousin Marcelli Natkin,⁶⁶ whom I have not seen for 20 years. He is

⁶² Galerie Louise Leiris – an art gallery in Paris established in 1920 by Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, who handed it over to Louise Leiris (1902–1988) in 1940. One of the most famous artists who sold works through the gallery was Pablo Picasso.

⁶³ Galerie Maeght was established in 1936 in Cannes. The Paris branch, headed by Aimé Maeght, was opened in 1946. It mainly exhibited contemporary artists from France and Spain

⁶⁴ Irena Paczkowska-Gabaud (1898–1963), the wife of the poet Jerzy Paczkowski, who was an employee of the Polish Embassy in Paris from 1935 to 1939. She worked at Galerie Lambert from its inception in 1959 until her death.

⁶⁵ This is probably about Place de l'Alma.

⁶⁶ Marcel Natkin (1904–1962), a photographer and author of books on photography.

a children's photographer, reportedly well-known and respected – he is successful. Married to an English woman.

At Galerie de Berri it seems to be all right. She said to give her a couple of small sculptures, one or 2 pictures – a drawing so she will hang it and keep at her place. At the end of next week I'll visit her with the pictures that are at Karol's. Maybe Zbyszek will take it by car because I want to take everything – she wants to see the color. She is serious and nice. Doing an exhibition at the moment is hopeless – not enough sales – indeed, I have not seen a single sticker. I will still go to that sophisticated "Galerie la Hune"⁶⁷ – to show what I do and talk.

I need to buy a fixative and fix the last drawings. [...] I am arranged comfortably and I try to save money. I'm going to ask Karol [Sterling] what the American situation is. [...]

May 21, 1950 [Halina]

[...] I will go to various galleries – but I don't want too much, because my brilliant predecessors rather disturb the vision of my world and Paris. The only ones who help me are Goya, Ensor, Watteau, and the one who has such a lovely name and paints lovely colorful little people prettier than mine. Also Paolo Ucello. But I have those in London. [...]

May 23, 1950 [Halina]

Puppy, I'm sitting over a glass of vermouth at Pam-Pam on the Champs-Élysées. It's 12:45 and the big parade *en marche* is going on at full speed. I am full of admiration for the life and color of this landscape, and of course, as always when some emotion comes I have to talk it out. And, of course, only to you, because you are the only one who understands me and feels the same as I do myself, and sometimes even better. I am more and more in awe of this city and more and more I dream to being old here and not somewhere else. To drag my scabby bones from bistro to bistro, to eat

⁶⁷ Galerie la Hune was located in Paris' 6th arrondissement at 170 Bd St-Germain, near the Café de Flore and Les Deux Magots.

as much as I can pay for and my stomach can withstand, and to paint everything I see... [...]

Yesterday on Goëthe⁶⁸ [!] I saw an exhibition of Géricault:⁶⁹ what a beautiful painter! Damn, how he paints those horses, and I am starting a landscape with a horse (drawing no. 5, Paris 1950 series, private collection), I get so tired: one time I get a pig, another time a piano – I went out this morning to draw Percheron horses on the street [...].

May 25, 1950 [Marek]

[...] You write me about so many things and about exhibitions, but haven't you, you little barbarian, been to the Louvre yet? Are you really not attracted to it at all? I think you should go around all the museums and even maybe take notes for yourself (you have almost free entry with your A.I.A. card). Whether you like it or not, in museums there is precisely the entire legacy of what we call human civilization. You need to know it – and this is more important than modern experimental stuff – just as you need to know the monuments of literature to be a fully cultured person. [...]

Saturday, May 27, 1950 [Halina]

[...] I'm a little afraid of you because I didn't draw much, because maybe I didn't see what you would have liked. But I have a lot of impressions and desires. With Galerie de Berri I'll probably make a positive agreement, I saw lots of people, I sold your sculpture (because various diplomatic sayings strongly contributed to the fact that Karol [Sterling] decided that he would pay a little bit at a time!) – so seemingly the profit of staying here is pure and simple. I'm sad today because Whitsun is approaching, the weather is bad, everyone is somehow preoccupied with themselves [...]. There is

⁶⁸ Probably rue Goethe.

⁶⁹ Théodore Géricault (1791–1824), a French painter and graphic artist, also known as the "painter of horses and madmen," who worked during the Romantic era. The exhibition in question is "Géricault, cet inconnu... Aquarelles, gouaches, dessins," which took place in May and June 1950 at Galerie Bignon in Paris.

no one to tell me where the horse's legs grow out of its butt, or how to sit a guy so he doesn't fall off a bench, and without your guidance I get so terribly discouraged about all my so-called "art." Sure I'm capable as hell, sure I eventually get lovely things out of this "sawing," but I can't, I really can't manage in life without you and only with you can I be happy. [...]

May 31, 1950 [Halina]

[...] Yesterday I was at the Galerie du Siècle: admiration for everything – that I would publish the drawings in a book (I impudently said that I was designing a London–Paris book as I would have more drawings from Paris), the terracotta are *très intéressants*, the paintings are beautiful in color – for only 65 thousand I can have an exhibition right away – at the end of June – they are asking [for] an immediate response. On my part, simple indignation – on the part of the gallerist – ironic coldness. Finally – a positive willingness to accept at any time 5-6 terracottas, a few drawings, and small pictures to hold *en dépôt* [!] in the gallery. The terracottas will go into a neat glass display case in his office in the gallery. I'll talk to Berri and I'll write about everything to you. Caputo will call me whether it's better with Berri or Galerie du Siècle – I think since I'm not under any contract – it's better with both. [...]

I'll already be reasonable and run around less – I'm not a tourist but a crazy woman-enthusiast. And in addition, I do not know the value of my strength, which, although they are horse-like, have limits. I'm slowing down – but it's not the physical pace that makes me tired – it's the experience of constant awe, it's this state of relish in Paris that gets me tired and at times it delightfully but suffocatingly leaves me breathless. And it's not Louvre, not my brilliant predecessors who teach me painting: it's the bustling dusty streets, the colorful people, the big-assed gals, and the halfwit elegant men, the picturesque poverty of the Quartier Latin and the roguish splendor of the Georges 5s⁷⁰ and the Ritzes that are my teachers. Still lifes in bistros have more eloquence than the most beautiful Chardins⁷¹ and

⁷⁰ Hotel George V – a luxury hotel in Paris at 31, avenue George V.

⁷¹ Jean Chardin, actually Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin (1699–1779), a French painter, he was a master at painting still lifes.

what I myself feel in my fingers seems to me bigger and more important than what everyone else has done so far. I have consciously developed my attitude towards painting: "The whole world is a big picture that I have not yet painted"! I have lived this saying and feel it deeply now.

It may be arrogant and barbaric what I write, but God is my witness that it is as unfalsified and true as my own ass!

I will go to Louvre and I will go to Petit Palais. On Tuesday at 11 o'clock I am going to Clavé. Tonight – to St. Marceaux's. Tomorrow I will write all the plans and cost estimates. [...]

June 1, 1950 [Halina]

[...] The place has been bought. I can't go earlier because I'm supposed to see Clavé and surprisingly, de Berri, after seeing my pictures, asked me to come on Monday morning – *je'veux réfléchir ce que je veux faire!*⁷² Of course, it will be the same as everywhere else but the woman is interested – that's the most important thing. On Monday evening I am to visit Katarzyna Librowicz. [...] And most importantly, I am "drawing at full speed": I'm doing *Un picnique [!] à Rambouillet* and I really think I should find people to publish the book: *Paris-Londres par un peintre naïve [!]* – I'll talk to Karol [Sterling] he knows all publishers! He says that my last drawings are completely "crazy" – Douanier Rousseau *tout craché*.⁷³ Indeed, they are intense and nuts – the sixth is in the making. I can't draw the furt horse, maybe I will finish at home. One stylist will probably make me a hat for a drawing – I can then sell it in London. [...]

I still want to see "L'Art Moderne Italien" and if I can after visiting Berri I want very much to also see Dorival (Cassou is seriously ill!) to make him my protector. And – because I'm very afraid of you – I have to be in this Louvre and Petit Palais – but if I don't make it you won't beat me. It will be so enjoyable to see the horror in the eyes of Maciuś [Mars]⁷⁴ that I didn't see it! [...]

⁷² (French) – I have to think about what I want to do!

⁷³ (French) – a living image, very similar.

⁷⁴ "Maciuś" was how friends called Witold T. Mars, see: J. Natanson, *Zgrzyt otwierającej się bramy* [The screeching of an opening gate], Warsaw 2003.

June 2, 1950 [Halina]

[...] Since six o'clock this morning I have been drawing on the street: the rue Bonaparte with *dustbins* in the morning light. I already have 14 drawings. All of them are good! Really the idea of the book *Paris-Londres par un peintre naïve* [!] seems great to me. A few more weeks like the last two and I'll have plenty of material. I'll just need the text and a publisher. [...]

Oh, that Louvre and that French painting are still hanging over my head. But you see how I have been working like this the last couple of days, when I "saw off" my drawings I'm sick and tired of visual arts. It's almost afternoon – as it is now – after 4 o'clock and it's too late. Do I really have to? [...]

I don't want to go to [Marek] Szwarc⁷⁵ anymore – I'll probably just spend these last days messing up and, God willing, drawing. I'm already starting to count the hours and I'm actually getting fed up with student wandering. [...]

So I was at the Petit Palais: *La Vierge dans l'art français*. Painting and mostly sculpture – beautiful! In one room, 19th-century amateur paintings mostly on the topic of thanking the Our Lady for miraculous rescues, well it's wonderful I say – some guy run over by the 1st train, a child rescued from underneath rowdy horses, a praying woman with a vision of the Virgin Mary. Complete wonders. Well, and the French chef d'oeuvres, I discovered La Tour, and [brothers] Le Nain (wonderful!). Chardin, [illegible].

Monday June 6, 1950 [Halina]

[...] You have no idea what I saw. École de Beaux Arts ball at 5 o'clock in the morning – on the street, crumpled and knocked-off girls in ball gowns, red velvet drapes (Venice 16th century), guys in tailcoats like black ravens among costumed pageants, squires in leotards, pierrots, and oth-

⁷⁵ Marek Szwarc (1892–1958), a Polish painter and sculptor. In 1910–1914, he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. At that time, he lived in the legendary La Ruche, where he met, among others, Soutine and Chagall. In 1914, he returned to Poland. After World War II, he settled permanently in Paris and focused mainly on stone sculptures and bronze castings. He had a studio at Boulevard Arago; *Notice biographique*, in: *Marek Szwarc 1892–1958*, Paris 1960, pp. 5–7.

er devils. Bistros are opened, I lost admirers, and with a charming quite strange Swedish painter I went at 7 o'clock in the morning to Bois de Boulogne. There I felt like taking off my shoes and walking barefoot on the wet grass. [...].

But that's not the most important thing (although it's nice!) – the most important thing was the image of the ball street – it was pure Ensor in color and mood: the fantastic nature of the theme, a bit of doom in the mood of the crumpled ravers, and the miraculous colors: the cold color of the morning, the white and purple dresses, and the mass of bare arms and tits. Death with a scythe in the corner of the bistro and with two skeletons with flowers and Ensor like no other! But it will prevent me from painting my own painting, although I may succeed! [...]

I've seen a lot of things and I don't want any more, now only Clavé, Galerie de Berri and du Siècle, Catherine Librowicz, Karoleks, St Marceaux's – and back home. [...]

It seems that the early 1950s was the last moment for Polish artists in exile to think of Paris as the capital of art. From London, which was becoming an important center of European artistic events during that period, people looked with interest at the United States, mainly New York and Washington. America offered a guarantee of income and professional prestige. Halina Korn, too, would turn her eyes in that direction a few years later and successfully hold her exhibition overseas at a New York gallery in 1962.⁷⁶

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⁷⁶ The exhibition titled "Halina Korn: paintings, drawings and sculpture" took place at Galerie Norval on January 9–22, 1962. The introduction to the catalog was written by Pierre Rouve.