

Prints From the Work of Gosia Baczyńska, a Polish Fashion Designer During the Polish Transition Era

Kowalska, Joanna Regina

National Museum in Krakow, Poland

Abstract

Gosia Baczyńska started her career in 1997, and since then, she has been the most recognisable personality in the Polish fashion world. She was the first Polish designer to have her collections showcased on the Paris Fashion Week catwalks. Since 2008, Gosia Baczyńska has used custom-made prints in high fashion collections. Draperies from 15th century Dutch paintings were her source of inspiration for prints. She transformed them into printed patterns on silk fabrics she used for the collection displayed at Porczyński Gallery in Warsaw. Interesting prints can also be found in 'The Big Laundry' collection. They were created for Gosia Baczyńska by graphic designer Rober Kuta and refer to the murals in Warsaw's Praga district and kitchen wall hangings. We can also find customised prints in other important collections such as: 'Frankenstein's Dream,' 'Black Spring,' 'Eastern Europe Goes Wild - Wild West,' and 'Per Aspera ad Astra.'

Content

1. Gosia Baczyńska and her path to fame
2. A collection 'for princesses,' Porczyński Gallery, 2008
3. The 'Great Laundry' performance, 2011
4. 'I feel love,' Paris Fashion Week 2013
5. 'Frankenstein's Dream,' 2015
6. 'Black Spring,' 2015
7. 'Eastern Europe Goes Wild - Wild West,' 2017
8. 'Per Aspera ad Astra,' 2019
9. Gosia Baczyńska in the National Museum in Krakow's collections

Gosia Baczyńska and her path to fame

Gosia Baczyńska is one of the most outstanding Polish fashion designers of the 21st century. Her name is recognised in Poland and abroad. Second only to Arkadius (Arkadiusz Waremczuk), who gained fame on London catwalks at the turn of the century, she was the only Polish designer to draw the attention of the international fashion world and be invited to participate in the Paris Fashion Week shows.

Her path to fame as a designer was not the easiest one. Born in the small town of Kępno on August 13, 1965, she completed her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław, at the Faculty of Glass and Ceramics Design (1989-1996)—thus repeating the first stage of the outstanding *Moda Polska* designer Jerzy Antkowiak's creative process. In 1991, she interrupted her studies to go to London. There, she managed to find a job in a tailoring studio, working for young London designers, including Alexander McQueen.

In 1996, Małgorzata (Gosia) Baczyńska founded the company FRI 13.08 Design and Development Studio. The ten years that followed were an arduous process of climbing to the top. Initially, she worked in Wrocław, and her clothes were sold in the most prestigious boutique of the city, Lalka. Her first success came in 2000, when her show was recorded and broadcasted on Fashion TV. Her designs then appeared on fashion magazine covers in Poland, including *Elle*, *Glamour* and *In Style*. In 2001, Gosia Baczyńska opened an atelier in Warsaw, and her creations became increasingly popular. Her first Warsaw fashion show took place in 2002. The designer skilfully searched for sponsors who gave her the opportunity to have a highly intense presence in the fashion world. Thanks to the Lexus brand, world-class models Alek Wek, Liz Jagger and Helena Christensen participated in her shows in 2005 and 2006. She also cooperated with Canon. For a general audience, she designed the 'La carrousel' collection for the Reserved brand of the large Polish company LPP SA, in 2010. Additionally, she accepted to collaborate with the Teatr Wielki Opera Narodowa, creating excellent costumes for *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi, directed by Mariusz Treliński, and for the opera *Iwona, Princess of Burgundy*, directed by Marek Weiss-Grzebiński. She also cooperated with the Polish Red Cross¹.

Gosia Baczyńska's versatility, sensitivity to inspirations from the world around her, fascination with the past, and creativity preventing her from repeating old patterns, have made her an independent, original fashion designer. She was the first Polish designer who creatively used customised prints in high fashion collections.

A collection 'for princesses', Porczyński Gallery 2008

Gosia Baczyńska's collection was on display at the Porczyński Gallery, in 2008. It developed out of a fascination with the Middle Ages, although the references to this era are very non-

¹ About Gosia Baczyńska: K. Sulej, *Modni. Od Arkadiusa do Zienia*, Warszawa 2015, s. 294 – 317; Aleksandra Boćkowska, *Gosia Baczyńska*, December 2017, culture.pl (<https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/gosia-baczynsk>, visit 23.08.2024) Photos of all designer's collections and art projects are available at her website: <https://www.gosiabaczynska.com/> (visit 22.07.2024).

obvious, as will be the case throughout the designer's work. It was the collection where she used customised prints for the first time. Her two main sources of inspiration were 15th century Dutch paintings and the medieval armour. She was especially fascinated with the Capilla Real de Granada's collection of Dutch paintings, which she visited during her holidays². After returning back home, she researched and ordered prints mirroring the shape of draperies from Rogier van der Weyden and Hugo van der Goes's gothic paintings. The collection also featured armour-like, stiff, well-cut clothes that contour the mannequin's body. The collection was being described in journals as 'made for princesses'³ (**Fig. 1**).

The 'Great Laundry' performance, 2011

The 2011 collection 'Wielkie Pranie' ('The Great Laundry') received wide attention in Poland⁴. The household appliances manufacturer, LG Electronics, sponsor of the show, expected that one of its products would be shown. Gosia Baczyńska had to figure out how to do so without obscuring the artistic expression of her performance. She wanted to demonstrate that she had a connection to the Praga district of Warsaw, where she had only been operating her atelier for two years. The fashion performance was organised in a Praga backyard, where an LG washing machine played the role of an important prop; the show itself was called *The Great Laundry*. For this event, Gosia Baczyńska was inspired by the animated film *Tango* by Zbigniew Rybczyński (Oscar 1983). The show took the form of a dynamic performance, choreographed and directed by Jarosław Staniek. Gosia Baczyńska's designed clothing became costumes for the characters hurrying through the yard: an office worker, a cleaning lady, a girl heading to a nightclub, or a schoolgirl. At the climax of the show, there were several dozen characters on the backyard 'stage,' over and over repeating the actions assigned to their roles, just like in the Rybczyński's movie. For this collection, prints were designed imitating writings and pictures that could be found on Prague city walls or on kitchen wall hangings (for example: 'Tell no one what happens at home')⁵ (**Fig. 2**).

'I Feel Love,' Paris Fashion Week 2013

During the 2013 Paris Fashion Week, Gosia Baczyńska presented her collection 'I Feel Love' (S/S 2014), which was a major turning point in her career⁶. Baczyńska became the first

² Anna Jurgaś, *Motywy piękna*, w: „Viva!”, nr 4.

³ Gosia Baczyńska: kolekcja dla księżniczki (kobieta.wp.pl, 1.04.2008) - <https://kobieta.wp.pl/gosia-baczynska-kolekcja-dla-ksiezniczki-5982779316827265g>, visit 22.08.2024.

⁴ *Wielkie pranie Gosi Baczyńskiej i LG: niezwykły pokaz mody*, Dziennik.pl, 17.10.2011 (<https://kobieta.dziennik.pl/moda-na-topie/galeria/362036,wielkie-pranie-z-lg-gosia-baczynska-pre-collection-2012.html>, visit 23.08.2024).

⁵ The video of the show is available at: <https://youtu.be/s1P902Rzsdo> (visit 22.08.2024).

⁶ Natalia Kędra, *Gosia Baczyńska - pokaz kolekcji "I Feel Love"*, 28.06.2013, elle.pl, (<https://www.elle.pl/artukul/gosia-baczynska-pokaz-kolekcji-i-feel-love>, visit 23.08.2024); Michał Zaczynski,

Polish designer to have her name included in the calendar of this major global fashion event. The title of the collection refers to the song 'I feel love' by Donna Summer, the 'disco queen' who died in 2012. The artist was also inspired by David Bowie and the 2013 exhibition honouring him at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

'Frankenstein's Dream,' 2015

During the Paris Fashion Week, the 'Frankenstein's Dream' collection (A/W 2015/2016) created for the brand's 18th anniversary was presented at the Palais de Monaco. The first inspiration was a self-portrait of a man from 1909 taken in a photo booth—such photographs were printed on a long, narrow strip of photographic paper. The designer was also fascinated by the film adaptation of Mary Shelley's novel from 1931 and the story of Dr. Frankenstein's monster. Some of the designer's outfits from this collection give the body a sort of anatomical crust, while others feature multiplied faces from photographs or shiny materials that resemble celluloid film. The mannequins appeared to have been sewn together from different elements and take the form of beautiful brides for Dr. Frankenstein's monster⁷ (**Fig. 3**).

'Black Spring,' 2015

The title of a collection of short stories by American author Henry Miller, who wrote in Paris among other places, is repeated in the 'Black Spring' collection (S/S 2015 & S/S 2016) that was presented in the Palais de Monaco in Paris. In one of his novels ('Tropic of Cancer'), Henry Miller included 'eleven commandments of writing' and his creative routine, which became the motto of the show⁸. This time, Gosia Baczyńska had to figure out how to incorporate these written words into clothing. Her inventiveness in this field was astonishing: various forms of pleating or transparent cellulose inserts became extremely helpful in hiding and revealing the maxims. Two dresses were covered with a print inspired by a typesetter's font. The most beautiful was a dress made of vertical, dense pleats with a 'collar' featuring one of the commandments. Dresses with a flocked lace bodice decorated with printed sentences and a pleated skirt with cut-outs 'windows' and a black ball gown with a corset with golden printed commandments were also presented (**Fig. 4**).

Gosia Baczyńska: I Feel Love. Relacja z pokazu + wywiad, 19.07.2013, michalzaczynski.com (<https://michalzaczynski.com/2013/07/19/gosia-baczynska-i-feel-love-relacja-z-pokazu/>, visit 23.08.2024); <https://www.gosiabaczynska.com/collections> (visit 23.08.2024).

⁷ *Gosia Baczyńska Fall 2015: Frankenstein's Dream*, 28.03.2015, Fashionwindows.com, <https://www.fashionwindows.com/gosia-baczynska-fall-2015-frankensteins-dream-2/>, visit 23.08.2024.

⁸ Marta Kowalska, 'Black Spring' Gosi Baczyńskiej w Warszawie, 16.06.2015, elle.pl (<https://www.elle.pl/artykul/black-spring-gosi-baczynskiej-w-warszawie#gosia-baczynska-black-spring-wiosna-lato-2015-i-2016-pokaz-w-1>, visit 23.08.2024); Michał Zaczynski, *Gosia Baczyńska: „Black Spring” – recenzja kolekcji*, 16.06.2015, michalzaczynski.com (<https://michalzaczynski.com/2015/06/16/gosia-baczynska-black-spring-recenzja-kolekcji/>, visit 23.08.2024).

'Eastern Europe Goes Wild - Wild West,' 2017

The 'Eastern Europe Goes Wild - Wild West' collection was created in 2017, inspired by the the Wild West imaginary⁹. Its main motifs were feathers, fringes, thistles, and bandanas. Outfits recalled an evening in a saloon and luxurious versions of farmers' clothes. The collection also presented customised prints echoing the 'The Big Laundry' collection: motifs of guns, knives, handcuffs and cacti, associated with the Wild West.

'Per Aspera ad Astra,' 2019

'Per Aspera Ad Astra' collection (2019) was Gosia Baczyńska's last collection before the COVID pandemic (2020), referring to the Italian Renaissance¹⁰. Many models featured the face of Sandro Boticelli's *Madonna del Magnificat*, and fluttering bands were filled with Latin maxims. Religious inspirations and admiration for the art of Sandro Botticelli are clearly visible in the collection, which not only includes expensive, shiny outfits, but also sets consisting of straight-cut trousers or skirts and sweatshirts or bomber jackets (**Fig. 5**).

Although the present article was just a short insight into Gosia Baczyńska's life and oeuvre, her creativity and courage in designing prints were quite amazing.

Gosia Baczyńska in the National Museum in Krakow's collections

The National Museum in Krakow collects designs from the best Polish contemporary designers. In 2020, the museum started to cooperate with Gosia Baczyńska and decided to buy a selection of her works from different collections. Most of them were obtained this year thanks to the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The museum received funds from the Cultural Promotion Fund, for the project 'Building the MNK design collection - Purchase of a clothing collection designed by Gosia Baczyńska.' The museum has also organised an exhibition devoted to the designer, *Gosia Baczyńska—Exhibition from the Collections of MNK*, where 21 of the most interesting outfits from the museum's collections are displayed (MNK the Szolański, pl. Szczepański 9, 13.06.2024 – 5.06.2025).

⁹ Kinga Nowicka, *Pokaz Gosi Baczyńskiej 'Eastern Europe Goes Wild, Wild West' wiosna-lato 2018*, 22.11.2017, glamour.pl (<https://www.glamour.pl/artykul/pokaz-kolekcji-gosi-baczynskiej-east-europe-goes-wild-west-wiosna-lato-2018-171122051342>, visit 23.08.2024);

¹⁰ Karolina, *Gosia Baczyńska „Per Aspera Ad Astra” jesień/zima 2019*, 4.11.2019, fashionspot24.blog (<https://fashionspot24.blog/2019/11/04/gosia-baczynska-per-aspera-ad-astra-jesien-zima-2019/>, visit 23.08.2024).

Fig. 1

Evening gown in silk fabric with a custom-made print inspired by the draperies in a Gothic painting.
Collection shown at the Porczyński Gallery in Warsaw,
2008, National Museum in Krakow.

Obtained in 2024, financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage from the Cultural Promotion Fund, project: 'Building the MNK design collection - Purchase of a clothing collection designed by Gosia Baczyńska',
inv. no. MNK XIX-12898.

© Anna Olchawska, Photographic Workshop of
the National Museum in Krakow



Fig. 2

Mini-dress sewn from silk scarves designed for the collection and printed in Italy (drawing: Robert Kuta, pattern design: Gosia Baczyńska and Assi Kootstra), with figures and sayings from kitchen wall hangings ('Tell no one what happens at home').
Great Laundry collection, 2011, National Museum in Krakow,
obtained in 2024, financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage from the Cultural Promotion Fund, project:
'Building the MNK design collection - Purchase of a clothing collection designed by Gosia Baczyńska,' inv. no. MNK XIX-12899

© Anna Olchawska, Photographic Workshop of the
National Museum in Krakow





Fig. 3

Dress made of lace, fabric imitating celluloid film and fabric decorated with a print with the face of a man, Frankenstein's Dream collection, Fall/Winter 2015/2016; National Museum in Krakow, obtained in 2024, financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage from the Cultural Promotion Fund, project: 'Building the MNK design collection - Purchase of a clothing collection designed by Gosia Baczyńska,' inv. no. MNK XIX-12909.

© Anna Olchawska, Photographic Workshop of the National Museum in Krakow



Fig. 4

Evening gown in white acetate: back knife-pleated, front panel knife-pleated and draped. Collar and bodice with decorative band with printed sentences, Black Spring collection, Spring/Summer 2015, National Museum in Krakow, obtained in 2024, financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage from the Cultural Promotion Fund, project: 'Building the MNK design collection - Purchase of a clothing collection designed by Gosia Baczyńska,' inv. no. MNK XIX-12911.

© Anna Olchawska, Photographic Workshop of the National Museum in Krakow



Fig. 5

Sequin dress with thin straps. Printed on the bodice is a collage from Sandro Botticelli's painting *Madonna Magnificat*: the image of the Madonna is surrounded by silk tulle, 'Per aspera ad astra' collection, 2019, Gift 2024, National Museum in Krakow, inv. no. MNK XIX-12918.

© Anna Olchawska, Photographic Workshop of the National Museum in Krakow