

## **Wacław Szpakowski (1883-1973)**

### **Biography**

#### **1883**

Wacław Karol Szpakowski was born on the 9th of October in Warsaw, son of Sylwester Szpakowski, a topographer in the Russian army, and grandson of architect Karol Szpakowski. His mother Antonina gave birth to five children whom she educated at home until they entered secondary school.

#### **1897**

The family moves to Riga. Szpakowski is interested in atmospheric phenomena, studying hurricanes, cyclones and storms and recoding his observations in a notebook.

#### **1900**

Szpakowski takes his first photographs and begins to draw rhythmical lines. He is also interested in music and takes violin lessons.

#### **1902**

He enrolls in the Department of Architecture of the Technical University in Riga.

#### **1902-1911**

Szpakowski travels widely in Russia, in its northern parts, as well as in Siberia where he goes to visit his father in Irkutsk. He is interested in wooden architecture, collects ornamented belts (kontush sashes) and continues to investigate the form of rhythmical lines.

#### **1912-1914**

He moves to Warsaw and works in an architectural office. Collected his first group of drawings, made in 1913-14, into a portfolio comprising 17 loose sheets.

**1914** Evacuated with his office to Moscow and from there went to Arkhangelsk where he designed and built wooden docks. Started collecting kontush sashes (traditional woven belts)

**1918** Marries Aleksandra Siemiczajewska (1899-1981), granddaughter of a Polish irredentist deported to Siberia for participating in an uprising of 1863. They will have three daughters and a son between 1921 and 1931.

#### **1923-1933**

Szpakowski works for the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in Warsaw, then in Bydgoszcz. Creates ca. 70 drawings, of various sizes, from ca. 10x20 cm to ca. 70 x 120 cm., made on tracing paper using an ink pen.

### **1934**

Forced into retirement, settles in Zoliborz, works on occasional architectural commissions.

**1935** Becomes the architect of the town of Otwock. Develops the city's master plan, a school and an obelisk.

**1939-43** Made drawings of spirals, a total of 49 sheets, calling them the S series.

### **1941-1944**

Employed in the District Department of Architecture as a building inspector. Together with his son Wojtech joins the underground Home Army, fighting for Polish independence.

In 1943 occupation authorities make him transfer to Lvov. When he returns to Otwock in 1944 he is arrested by communist Security and kept several months in prison.

### **1944-1948**

Szpakowski moves with his family to Wrocław (former German city of Breslau) in order to protect his son from persecution. He manages to rescue his sketches and copies of drawings of rhythmical lines.

### **1952**

Heads Wrocław's building inspectorate and then the Building Department of the District headquarters of Post Offices and Telecommunications; then works at the Research and Design center of Road and Air Transport and then a designer. Introduces his linear patterns in the design of interiors: ceiling, monumental plafond and mural in a kindergarden.

1953-4 Made the album *Rhythmical Lines* where he included all his earlier "linear ideas" in the form of pencil drawings on gridded paper.

### **1958**

Retires at the age of seventy-five, on June 30th.

Writes his programmatic text "Rhythmical Lines," published in the monthly magazine *Odra* in 1969.

### **1973**

Wacław Szpakowski dies at the age of ninety on the 7th February in Wrocław.

## **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

Szpakowski never sought to exhibit his works and they were not publicly known during his lifetime.

2016 1979 Muzeum Miejskie Wrocławia – Pałac Królewski (City Museum of Wrocław). *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). Linie rytmiczne (Rhythmical Lines)*

2015 The exhibition featured twelve drawings by Szpakowski from the collections of Hendrik A. Berinson and the artist's family 2015 Galerie Berinson, Berlin.

Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). *The Infinity of the Line* was a series of monographic exhibitions curated by Janusz Zagrodzki between 1992 and 1998 were accompanied by a catalogue with texts in five languages (Dutch, German, Polish, English, and French). It was shown in Belgium, Germany, and Poland.

1998 Galeria Stara BWA, Lublin, Poland. *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). The Infinity of the Line*

1997 Session devoted to the work of Wacław Szpakowski organized at the Polish Center in Ottawa, Canada by the Association of Polish Engineers.

1997 Galeria Miejska Arsenał, Poznań, Poland. *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). The Infinity of the Line*

1997 Galeria Willa, Łódź, Poland. *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). The Infinity of the Line*

1994 Bałtycka Galeria Sztuki (Baltic Gallery of Art), Ustka, Poland. *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). The Infinity of the Line*

1994 Galeria Awangarda BWA, Wrocław, Poland. *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). The Infinity of the Line*

1993 Wilhelm Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen, Germany. *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). The Infinity of the Line*

1993 Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie (National Museum in Warsaw). *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). The Infinity of the Line*

1992 Galeria Atelier 340 in Brussels *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). The Infinity of the Line*

The first two exhibitions of Wacław Szpakowski's drawings were curated by Janusz Zagrodzki who also edited the exhibition catalogue, present Szpakowski as a pioneer of Polish avant-garde and precursor of Geometrical Abstraction, Minimal Art and Op Art.

1979 Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu (Museum of Architecture in Wrocław). *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). Linie rytmiczne (Rhythmical Lines)*

1978 Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi (Art Museum in Łódź). *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). Linie rytmiczne (Rhythmical Lines)*

## **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

2017 *Grounding Vision: Wacław Szpakowski*, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York

2012 *Inventing Abstraction, 1910–1925*, Museum of Modern Art, New York

2012 *Front Wschodni* (Eastern Front), Atlas Sztuki, Łódź, Poland

2011 *Ornamentika – szerialitás / Ornament – Seriality*, Vasarely Múzeum, Budapest

2007 *The Intelligible Non-Violent Art*, Kunststation, Kleinsassen, Hofbieber-Kleinsassen, Germany

- 2007 *The Intelligible Non-Violent Art*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
- 2007 *Prawie 100 lat sztuki awangardowej w Polsce – medium: fotografia* (Almost a Century of Avant-Garde Art in Poland) Muzeum Sztuki Współczesnej w Radomiu (Contemporary Art Museum in Radom)
- 2006 *Les Avant-gardes polonaises. Dialogues historiques depuis Malévitch*, Musée Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France
- 2006 *The Intelligible Non-Violent Art*, Atlas Sztuki, Łódź, Poland
- 2006 *Fotoobrazy. Gest plastyczny w fotografii* (Photoimages. Plastic Gesture in Photography) Museum of Art in Łódź, Poland
- 2004 *Labirynt – Labirynt 2 Gallery Presents Contemporary Polish Art*, Folly Gallery, Lancaster, England
- 2004 *Labirynt – Galeria Labirynt 2 prezentuje współczesną sztukę polską*, BWA – Galeria Stara, Lublin, Poland
- 2003 *Europe – Concrete – Reductiv*, Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, Poland
- 2003 *Labirynt – Labirynt 2 Gallery Presents Contemporary Polish Art*, UH Galleries – Art and Design Gallery, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, England
- 2002 *Europe – Concrete – Reductiv*, Hünfeld, Germany
- 2001 *Postawy – szczególne powołanie artysty* (Attitudes. The Artist's Special Vocation), BWA – Galeria Grodzka, Lublin, Poland
- 2000 *Autoportrety* (Self-Portraits), BWA – Galeria Grodzka, Lublin, Poland
- 1999 *Niekończąca się linia* (Neverending Line), Muzeum Sztuki Reduktywnej, Świeradów Zdrój, Poland
- 1999 *Multimedialna kolekcja Galerii Wymiany Józefa Robakowskiego* (Multimedia Art in the Collection of Józef Robakowski's Galeria Wymiany – Exchange Gallery), BWA Zielona Góra, Poland
- 1996 *Vonal*, Ernst Múzeum, Budapest
- 1992 *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi 1931–1992* (Museum of Art In Łódź 1931–1992), Musée d'art contemporain, Lyon. 1996 – 2015
- 1991 *Kolekcja sztuki XX wieku w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi* (20th-Century Art in the Collection of the Museum of Art in Łódź), CBWA Zachęta Gallery, Warsaw
- 1989 *Konstruktivizmus Lengyelországban* (Polish Constructivism), Magyar Nemzeti Galéria (National Gallery), Budapest, Hungary
- 1983 *Présences Polonaises, l'art vivant autour du Musée de Lodz*, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France

1979 *Polish Photography 1839–1979*, International Center of Photography, New York