

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.

2017

Muzeum Okręgowego im. Leona Wyczółkowskiego w Bydgoszczy (Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum in Bydgoszcz). *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973). Linie rytmiczne (Rhythmical Lines)*

2016

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

2015

Galerie Berinson, Berlin. *Wacław Szpakowski (1883–1973)*. The exhibition featured twelve drawings by Szpakowski from the collections of Hendrik A. Berinson and the artist's family.

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.

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

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*

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*

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

Œ, Museum Sztuki, Łódź, Poland

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

2016

The Museum of Rhythm, Museum Sztuki, Łódź, Poland

2012

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

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

The Intelligible Non-Violent Art, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel

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

The Intelligible Non-Violent Art, Atlas Sztuki, Łódź, Poland

Fotoobrazy. Gest plastyczny w fotografii (Photoimages. Plastic Gesture in Photography) Museum of Art in Łódź, Poland

2004

Labirynth – Labirynt 2 Gallery Presents Contemporary Polish Art, Folly Gallery, Lancaster, England

Labirynt – Galeria Labirynt 2 prezentuje współczesną sztukę polską, BWA – Galeria Stara, Lublin, Poland

2003

Europe – Concrete – Reductiv, Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, Poland

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

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 Łódź, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France

1979

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