

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 86

FOR RELEASE:

Tuesday, August 1, 1961

PRESS PREVIEW:

Monday, July 31, 1961

11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Fifteen Polish Painters, the first comprehensive exhibition in this country devoted to the vital new art movement in Poland, will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art from August 1 through October 1. Selected by Peter Selz, Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions, to represent the most important trends among the avant garde, the exhibition consists of 75 paintings from the late fifties to 1961.

Selz who went to Poland in 1959 and again in 1960 found Surrealism and Tachism the predominant influences in recent Polish art, which like postwar art everywhere, he says, is characterized by a new synthesis of rational and emotional aspects.

Most of the artists in the exhibition are between 30 and 40 years old. They came to maturity during the war and endured six years of Nazi occupation, concentration camps, slave labor and underground activity. Many of them took part in the "Arsenal Exhibition of Young Painters" organized in 1955 by students who were opposed to the socialist-realist officialdom which had clamped down on the first postwar abstract tendencies manifested about 10 years earlier in Cracow.

Since 1955, however, the Polish Government has sent works by these artists, along with others, to such important international art exhibitions as the São Paulo Bienal, the Venice Biennale, the First Paris Biennale, and Documenta II. Their work has also been shown in one-man and group shows in many countries throughout Europe. In America most of the artists represented in the current show were introduced along with other Polish artists by the Galerie Challette, French and Co., and the Saitenberg Gallery in New York, the Contemporary Art Gallery in Chicago and Gres Gallery in Washington, D. C. Several have been included in Guggenheim international award shows. All the works in the exhibition have been borrowed from these galleries and from private collections in the United States and Europe.

The Museum of Modern Art exhibition, initiated two years ago, will travel later to other museums throughout this country and Canada under the auspices of the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions.

In the catalog* accompanying the show Selz points out that current Polish work is the second wave of abstract art in that country. The first wave, in the 20s and 30s, began in 1922 with the formation, by a collaborator of Malevich, of the "Blok." This first movement of non-objective art was much under the influence of the Constructivists and Suprematists. "Praesens," composed of artists, architects and

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* FIFTEEN POLISH PAINTERS edited by Peter Selz. Paper; 64 pp.; 60 plates. Published by the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y. Distributed by Doubleday & Co., Inc. \$2.75

designers was founded a little later by Stezewski, an organizer of the "Blok," (b. 1894) who has carried purist construction into the present and is represented in the current exhibition by three works.

Another movement of the 20s represented in the show is the Paris Committee or "Kapist," whose members migrated to Paris where they particularly admired the work of Cézanne and Bonnard. Six paintings by Potworowski (b. 1898), who lived in Paris from 1920 to 1933 are shown. Potworowski escaped from Poland during World War II, and lived for 18 years in England where he exhibited regularly. In 1958 he returned home to become Professor at the Pictorial College of Fine Arts in Gdansk.

Of the younger artists who came to maturity during World War II, the first to emerge was Kantor (b. 1915), who founded and directed a clandestine vanguard theater group during the war. Selz characterizes his canvases as "thickly textured, frightening and savage, with images reminding us of crater landscapes desolated by the flow of burning lava." Brzozowski (b. 1918), who worked with Kantor in the wartime clandestine theater and is now the Director of the College of Visual Arts, is represented by six canvases. "Somewhere on the border between figurative and total abstraction, but even when almost totally abstract, he retains a profound feeling for the grotesque." Related to Brzozowski and also an original member of the Group of Cracow, Jerzy Tchorzewski (b. 1928), is represented by two gouaches.

One of the major figures of postwar Polish painting is Kobzdej, 40-year old Dean of Faculties at the Academy of Warsaw, whose work has been shown in many countries and at the Bienals in São Paulo and Venice. His paintings reveal "curious space, which often seems to exist behind the picture frame, implying an area hidden from the viewer....structures of restrained elegance." He is represented by seven works.

One of the youngest painters, Lebenstein (b. 1930), is represented by eleven works. Winner of a double prize at the First Biennale of Paris in 1959, he had participated in the important "Arsenal Exhibition of Young Painters" in 1955. Now represented in many collections here and abroad, his work is characterized by highly original imagery, axial yet asymmetrical figures that combine geometric and mechanical forms with organisms which resemble both plants and personages.

Two other members of the Cracow group in the exhibition are Rudowicz (b. 1928) and Warzecha (b. 1930), whose collages reveal the nostalgia of romanticism. Rudowicz's collages of scraps of old writing and bits of paper suggests the peeling and crumbling walls of Cracow's medieval buildings; Warzecha's work is characterized by taste and elegance belying its humble material.

Two other young painters whose work was influenced by "Unism" of the 20s are Kierzkowski (b. 1924) and Gierowski (b. 1925). Kierzkowski's relief constructions of
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plaster and chicken wire, corrugated wire and material rescued from junk heaps, is more concerned with formal structure than with the significance of the material itself. Five of Gierowski's softly colored muted paintings of delicate texture are shown. He is President of the Council of Arts, the painting section of the Association of Polish Artists.

In the work of only two of the artists in the exhibition is the Polish colorist tradition apparent. Dominik (b. 1928), is closest to the international abstractionist style and is concerned with sensual rhythms of an emotionally apprehended world. Now an adjunct professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw he also took part in the Arsenal show. Pagowska (b. 1926), one of two women in the exhibition, also works in the colorist tradition. "Her abstractions," Selz says, "find their origin in the experience of nature, experienced intimately, in steaming earth, solid stones, running water, the bark of trees."

Fangor (b. 1922), who like many of the artists in the show holds an official position with a Polish college or university, is primarily interested in creating space environments rather than single easel pictures. His paintings consist of geometric images, blurred at their edges, creating an optical dialogue between the "figure" and ground. While most of the artists in the current exhibition show adherence to the international postwar idiom, Jerzy Nowosielski (b. 1923), paints in an entirely unique manner. Interested in ritual sects and little known religions he uses the human figure as a mysterious cipher in order to ask ambiguous questions. "There are certain primitive qualities in the work of Nowosielski but there is also a sophisticated atmosphere of secrecy."

For additional information and photographs contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director
Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.

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NEW YORK 19

11 WEST 53rd STREET
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CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

SPECIAL TO NEWARK ADVOCATE & AMERICAN TRIBUNE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 3, 1961

H. Landon Warner of Gambier has loaned a painting to the exhibition of recent Polish work now on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The show, which opened August 1, will be on view through October 1 and will then travel to other cities throughout the country.

The painting loaned by Mr. Warner is a 1960 oil by the 33 year old artist, Tadeusz Dominik. Dominik, a teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, was introduced to the United States as a Guggenheim award winner in 1958.

Fifteen Polish Painters, consisting of 75 works from the late fifties to 1961, is the first comprehensive exhibition in this country devoted to the vital new art movement in Poland. The paintings have been borrowed from American galleries and private collections here and abroad. Many of them are illustrated in a 62-page catalog by Peter Selz, the Museum curator who assembled the exhibition.

Photographs and further information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City, New York. Circle 5-8900.

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SPECIAL TO MONTREAL STAR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 3, 1961

Three paintings from the Larivière Collection in Montreal and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts have been loaned to the exhibition of recent Polish work now on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The show, which opened August 1, will be on view through October 1 prior to a tour of the United States and Canada. It is scheduled for showing at the National Gallery of Canada this November and at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in November of 1962.

Two oils by Tadeusz Kantor are on loan from the Larivière Collection. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has loaned a painting by Bronislaw Kierzkowski. Kantor had his first one-man show in the United States last year. Kierzkowski was introduced to this country in a group show held in New York last spring.

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Photographs and further information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City. CI 5-8900.

The Montreal Star, 245 St James St, W. Montreal, Que.

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SPECIAL TO WASHINGTON PAPERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 3, 1961

Three Washington collectors and the Gres Gallery have loaned nine paintings to the exhibition of recent Polish work now on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The show, which opened August 1 will be on view through October 1, and will then travel to other cities throughout the country.

Joseph Alsop has loaned "Blue Composition" by Jan Lebenstein; Judge and Mrs. Russell E. Train, a recent oil by Tadeusz Dominik. Mrs. Hart Perry has loaned a painting from her own private collection as well as six works by Brzozowski, Fangor and Kobzdej from the Gres Gallery.

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SPECIAL TO CHICAGO PAPERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 3, 1961

Chicago collectors and the Contemporary Art Gallery have lent 12 paintings to the current exhibition of recent Polish work now on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The show, which opened August 1 will be on view through October 1, and will then travel to other cities throughout the country.

Kazimierz Karpuszek, of Chicago, acted as consultant, interpreter and photographer for Peter Selz, the Museum Curator who assembled the exhibition, and accompanied him to Poland in 1959 and in 1960. He has lent two paintings from his own private collection and seven from the Contemporary Gallery.

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Maremont, of Winnetka, have lent a White Relief by Stazewski, Mr. and Mrs. David C. Ruttenberg, Chicago, have lent an oil by Pagowska, and Plato C. Foufas, also of Chicago, has lent a painting by a younger artist called Dominik.

The exhibition, which consists of 75 paintings by 15 artists, is the first comprehensive exhibition in this country devoted to the vital new art movement in Poland. A 62-page catalog by Mr. Selz has been published by the Museum illustrating many of the works on view.

Photographs and further information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City. CIRCLE 5-8900

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