structures. Expressionism was certain/y a very particular manifestation of "the spirit of the time". /n that period it prevailed in art in genera/ and especially in Po/and, which in the mid-fifties experienced the era of the so-called political "thaw" linked with the events of October 1956. Art, dominated until then by the doctrine of socielrea/ism, started to liberate itself from the bonds of orders and interdictions. Nove/ties from the world were quickly penetrating into the Polish artistic milieu, which was a/ways ready to assimilate them. Consequent/y young painters proposed expressionist painting which was distinguished by the richness of colours and facture treatment, and at times clearly referred to abstract tendencies.

Touched by the "spirit of the times" Beksinski became for a certain period a fervent spokesman of these changes. Later on he was to admit that like most enthusiastic beginners at the time hehad been influenced by a "fashio~(:>

This submission to a "fashion" is perhaps most evident in his first works created at. the tum of the fifties and sixties and in the early sixties. This is-when he produced a number of purely abstract compositions, using various artistic procedures: drawings, paintings, reliefs in plastic materials, but a/so in wire and sheet-iron, sculptures and /ow-reliefs in plaster.

Beksinski tried different forms and different materials, in compliance with the demands of the period, but a/so in accord with his inner predispositions. For the works in sheet-iron and wire as well as the reliefs in plaster, though abstract in form, left him free nevertheless to remain expressionist. The artist, unable to stand geometric abstraction, achieved wonders in terms of technique, density and complication of plastic materials, always serving expression. The sheet-iron and wire were treated with acid, heated and forged until they reached an extraordinary density. Because his works were made by superposition, according to the rules of low-relief, the author obtained such a variety of effects, that a/ready in this period his creations were felt by the public to possess narrative features. Critics discerned in them images of bombed cities, landscapes of death and destruction. Thus the terminology of a misunderstanding which would henceforward growapace, was already established. Of course in the atmosphere of the recently ended war a literary interpretation of Beksinski's works was only half surprising. But already the author felt the need to sweep away such interpretations since, as he puts it, he had never intended any such meanings.

/t was only his first true "fine art" exhibition in Warsaw in 1964, presenting mainly drawings, that made Beksinski known as an artist with a fully developed artistic personality. The exposition provoked many critical opinions, but nevertheless aroused some genuine enthusiasm.

Although Bekinski had belonged already for a number of years to the Union of Polish Artists and Designers, he remained practically unknown to art lovers. It is true that he displayed his reliefs during the Poznan exhibitions in 1958. But if at that time he existed at all in the minds of the public, it was rather as an architect. Even more so since the exhibition in question took place in the premises of the Architects' Association.

But it was only the next exhibition, which took place three years later in 1967 in the capital of Poland, that distinguished Beksinski in the eyes of the public and the critics as he is seen and recognized to this very day. On this occasion the artist presented his drawings which were firm both in terms of construction and content, but very different from the semi-abstract forms of the pencil drawings created in the fifties and early sixties. These drawings, executed mainly in pen and black ball-point, were now - without exception - figurative. Reproduced since then in numerous catalogues, newspapers and other publications, they have become representative and characteristic of the "true" Beksinski; works which at first sight can be identified as being in the "Beksinski style".