

have ever attained.

During the years 1965-66 Beksinski studied oil painting. It took him a long time to master this pictorial technique and to attain the degree of perfection to which he aspires in everything he does. He resolved to present his works in oil at the "Contemporary Gallery" in Warsaw in 1970, after as much as five years of studies. Organized by the untiring enthusiasts of his art, Mr and Mrs Bogucki (who were the first to discover his talent), the exhibition made a deep impression on the public, who at last saw the entire work of Beksinski. His oeuvre continued to provoke strong controversy and from then on was to divide people forever into his devoted followers and his sworn adversaries.

All through the seventies Beksinski exhibited his works several times, each time with increasing success. Very quickly he became one of the leading figures in Polish contemporary art. His works would now be sought by collectors, bought by museums and private artlovers. No longer did anybody doubt that his painting was a remarkable manifestation of the art of our times.

In 1978 one of the last great exhibitions of Beksinski's work (in the organization of which he personally participated, and also one of the last in Poland, took place in the "STU" theatre in Cracow. Henceforward the artist ceased to exhibit his paintings in public. Nevertheless the "Wahl Gallery" presented several of them in 1981 and in 1987. A collector of his paintings, Renzo Margonari, organized a few exhibitions in Mantua in Italy. Piotr Dmochowski presented the paintings of Beksinski in Paris, Metz, Dusseldorf and Antwerp in 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989. \* But anyone interested in the works of Beksinski will find the best opportunity to see them in Poland, in all the big museums as well as in the museum in Sanok, his native town where a representative quantity is gathered and systematically completed by the artist himself. To justify his refusal to exhibit, Beksinski claims that he fears to have his paintings damaged or spoiled during various removals. Of course that is only part of the truth ... However it is certain that like every perfectionist he attaches great importance to the technical quality and solidity of his works. He chooses the material which he has many times scrupulously tested and which he absolutely trusts: fibre-board. He dips it in various resins to guarantee its resistance and longevity. In the same way he personally prepares and executes simple handy frames of tested solidity. In this extreme care for the qualities of craftsmanship, technique and material in his works, he claims to find a glimpse of hope that they will survive and leave a trace of his presence on earth.

When we look at his paintings we first of all have the impression of a spiritual and aesthetic attitude of exceptional coherence. Both in subject and form this art perceptibly turns to the past and refers to the great classic models. The solidity of his technique confirms this link with tradition and increases its value. Each of his paintings is a material proof of the nonconformity of his ideas, passions and artistic convictions, which are at odds with the artistic conceptions of the 20th century. That is not all: this art is also a challenge to the overhasty, bungled, evanescent workmanship of many so-called "modern" creations. In those terms the art of Beksinski appears as anachronistic. But it would appear that the nineteen-eighties confirm that his ideas were well founded. After a long period of the supremacy of the avant-garde, a period of "instinct", "gesture", "spontaneity", artists are learning once again that Great Art is great work, great suffering, great skill in technique and technology and patient effort in craftsmanship. Professional solidity is becoming - or reasserting itself as - a quality in demand.

Finally the interior life of the artist consists of, as in the past, a field for artistic penetration. It may be that with his specific anachronism, Beksinski is confirming his role as a precursor of ideas which seem to be awakening as the end of our century approaches.

However a closer examination of his work reveals that this anachronism is but a partial return to classical art. For in many ways