

Zdzislaw Beksinski 3

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Drawings

After his drawing exhibition at the national theatre during the 1960s, Beksinski was dubbed a "scandalist," as the works he exhibited there were inspired by an anthology of illustrations on the theme of sexual perversion that had been published during the 1920s. Beksinski explains, "At the time I was interested in psychology and sexology, as a result of which I came into contact with a book of pictures of nymphomaniacs put out by an old German publishing company. While the pictures were extremely naive drawings by amateurs, I was absolutely dazzled by the huge volume of psychological emotions exuded by them. So, I made up my mind to abandon all sense of shame, to express everything that had taken root in my mind. This resulted in a number of erotic drawings that contained a certain amount of deception due to my inherent shyness that made me resist total exposure of my feelings. At the time, I had taken an abstractionist stance which made it necessary for me to break through various stereotypes that derived from not only my sense of shame but also from the viewpoint of my own concepts for displaying my works to the public. At the same time, it was also due to the fact that I had arrived at an artistic style in the context of which I was able to express myself. .. "

The eroticism of his drawings of this period is so intense, aggressive, and biologically explicit that they are almost pure pornography.

Beksinski utilized highly specialized human bodies, such as decomposing corpses with the flesh dropping away from the bonds, or with bones protruding from scorched skin, or skin that gives the impression of splitting into tiny fragments and falling off the body. Sometimes, the skin resembles spider webs that seem to have a vivid life of their own, independent of the skin itself. In other cases, the arteries and capillaries are entirely exposed, or they are clearly visible just under the skin, or they resemble ropes that are tied around the body, and in some cases they are drawn in such a way that it is quite literally impossible to

differentiate between the blood vessels and ropes. It is of interest to note in passing that there was one episode in which he reserved a number of these drawings for the viewing of critics only, in spite of the fact that it is the critics who are supposed to be the very people who make the public aware of a scandal.

After the 1960s, a new genre of works was born, centered on sculpture (huge human figures made of sheet metal and a series of ten-some "head" sculptures made of plaster covered with verdigris) . This was followed by reliefs that are constructed of boards bearing skeletons that have been dug up from their graves. And next came a series of extremely complex drawings and works (such are monotype prints with line drawings) that were produced using a mixture of techniques, including the same heliography as that utilized in the drawings

It is necessary to make mention here of Beksinski's first successful exhibition that was produced by Janusz Bogucki at the Old Organgerie in Warsaw in 1964. It elicited high praise and attracted buyers. Then during the single year of 1968, three drawing exhibitions were held in the cities of Lodz, Poznan, Katowice.

Period of Fantasy

The last exhibition produced by Janusz Bogucki at the contemporary gallery in Warsaw in 1972, marked the beginning of a time of extreme success that continued until Beksinski's death in 2005, during which all of his exhibited paintings sold out. Up until that time, in spite of the fact that Beksinski's life was definitely not economically blessed, he offered his works at extremely low prices. During this same period, most artists of his rank sold their works for more than PLN 13 ,000, while Beksinski sold his for PLN 2,500 to 3,000. But along with the passage of time, he was able to raise the prices of his works, because people stopped asking him what the prices were. And he was still able to sell all his exhibited paintings. These exhibitions all