

capital, as his works had already sold well there. So, with his wife Zofia and his son Tomasz, he moved to a housing complex in the Sluzew area of Warsaw. He and his wife occupied one room together, while his son lived in a common housing complex located several doors away. Before Beksinski left Sanok, he decided to donate all of his own works to the Historical Museum in Sanok. But due a lack of exhibit space, the people in charge of that museum decided to give his works to the National Museum in Wroclaw. These works were mainly his photographs with no reliefs or sculptures included. Beksinski burned all of his other early works in the backyard of his home.

Along with his move to Warsaw, Beksinski almost completely stopped producing drawings as an independent style. His subsequent drawings were entirely meant to be sketches in preparation for paintings, thus he considered the naturally resulting paintings to be his truly completed works.

For a time between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970 s, Beksinski associated himself a number of groups involved in esoteric Buddhism, Zen and alchemy. In subsequent years, he joyfully told how entranced he was with these involvements at the time. In those days, he read copiously, preferring writings on visions and prophecies by people who had achieved mystical enlightenment. And it was the esoteric knowledge that he found in these writings that he considered necessary for everything that he wanted to express in his paintings. He himself explains it in the following words. "Beginning at around that time, my art became paranoid, placing me under a certain form of compulsive pressure. And it was due to my resultant method of expressing the world that my works took on this particular form."

It can be said that, at least partially, the mysticism of Beksinski was the result of the influence of his association with a group of Silesia region artists including Henryk Waniek and Urszula Broll. They were entranced by Oriental philosophy and after the war, they discovered and began reading the writings of occultist Hadyana, and some of them even practiced meditation. Andrzej Urbanowicz was one of the members of this group. But Beksinski ridiculed members like Urbanowicz who seriously insisted that Far East Asian silk clothing was necessary for meditation, rejecting the silk produced in Milanowek (a silk-producing area of Poland) . There were even people in the group who even began using narcotics to enter a state of trance. But Beksinski said that they made him feeling like he had "a sack full of wriggling spiders under his skin." Beksinski's imagination did not require such easy methods as doping to obtain

his fantastic chill-inducing visions.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Beksinski developed an increasingly strong fascination for the art of the past (Renaissance, Baroque, and late 19 th century art). The general art lover considers the 19 th century painting style to be the epitome of "true art" or "real art." Beksinski purposefully approached the painting traditions and concepts that he observed during his childhood in churches and dwellings. In order to realize his purpose he began to abandon all other tools outside of these elements to achieve his painting concepts. He insisted that "All paintings that are hung on walls, that utilize geometric forms of expression, that are put into frames, that are appreciated and commented upon are themselves apodoses of traditions." On the other hand, in contrast to the art of the past, Beksinski's style consisted of painting images from his own imagination rather from nature.

The most important thing for Beksinski was to paint beautiful pictures. It is paradoxical that his works seek after beauty in subjects that clearly reveal a repulsive ugliness. He said, "What I think of as the essence of beautiful painting is most likely that found in the art of the Baroque period, or in gigantic 19 th century altar paintings, or in family portraits and scenery paintings that are prevalent in old mansions. And the works of Vermeer are definitely included . . . To me the highest words of praise that anyone can give me would be "your paintings are sick." I am strongly attracted to disease, and what I mean by "disease" in this context is not fascination with runny noses, but the extreme morbidity of the 19 th century."

There was also a period when Beksinski was fascinated with the neo-mannerism of Vienna, and it was during this time that unrealistic skulls began to appear in his paintings, that look as though they have been "torn out" of manneristic altars or portraits.

The following are some of the aspects that lend a sense of horror or atrocity to his paintings: scenery devoid of human beings that seem to exist between life and death, wide expanses of water and sky, canvases covered with fog or a secretive atmosphere, a world view such as that found in the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, scenes inside buildings with Gothic style windows, human figures-most of which are fragmentary or are disintegrating voluminous costumes, dripping textiles, birds, and ceremonial tools in the style of ancient civilizations. Cemetery scenes with disintegrating coffins, tombstones burgeoning forth to fall into valleys, skeletons crawling up out of their graves also appear