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Zdzisław Beksiński

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A Beksiński painting showing elements of [surrealism](#), the [post-apocalyptic](#) and immense attention to detail.

Zdzisław Beksiński ([24 February 1929](#) – [22 February 2005](#)) was a renowned [Polish painter](#), [photographer](#), and [fantasy artist](#).

He was born in the town of [Sanok](#) in southern [Poland](#). After studying [architecture](#) in [Kraków](#), he returned to Sanok in [1955](#). Subsequent to this education he spent several years as a [construction site supervisor](#), a job he hated. At that time he became interested in artistic photography and [photomontage](#), [sculpture](#) and painting. He was a very innovative artist, especially for one working in a [Communist](#) country. He made his sculptures of [plaster](#), [metal](#) and [wire](#). His photography offered a taste of things to come in his future paintings, presenting wrinkled faces, landscapes; objects with a very bumpy texture which he attempted to emphasise, especially by manipulating [lights](#) and [shadows](#). His photography also depicted [disturbing images](#), such as a mutilated [baby doll](#) with its face torn off, portraits of people without faces or with their faces wrapped in bandages.

Later, he concentrated on painting. His first paintings were [abstract art](#), but throughout the sixties he made his surrealist inspirations more visible. In the 1970s he entered what he himself called his "fantastic period", which lasted

up to the late 1980s. This is his best known period, during which he created very disturbing images, showing a surrealistic, post-apocalyptic environment with very detailed scenes of death, decay, landscapes filled with skeletons, deformed figures, deserts, all very detailed, painted with his trademark precision, particularly when it came to rough, bumpy surfaces. His highly detailed drawings are often quite large, and may remind some of the works of [Ernst Fuchs](#) in their intricate, and nearly obsessive rendering. Despite the grim overtones, he claimed some of these paintings were misunderstood, as they were rather optimistic, or even humouristic.

His exhibitions almost always proved very successful. A prestigious exhibition in Warsaw in 1964 proved to be his first major success, as all his paintings were sold. In the 1980s his works gained on popularity in France due to the endeavours of Piotr Dmochowski, and he gained significant popularity in



Polish painter Zdzisław Beksiński

Beksiński eventually threw himself into painting with a passion, and worked constantly, always to the strains of [classical music](#). He soon became the leading figure in contemporary [Polish art](#).

Before moving to [Warsaw](#) in 1977 he burned a selection of his works in his own backyard, without leaving any documentation on them. He later claimed that some of those works were "too personal", while others were unsatisfactory, and he didn't want people to see them. The 1980s marked a transitory period for Beksiński. His art in the early 1990s consisted mainly of a series of surreal portraits and a series of crosses. Paintings in these series were much less lavish than those known from his "fantastic period", but just

as powerful. In the latter part of the 1990s he discovered computers, the internet, and digital photography, on which he focused on until his death.

Beksiński always executed his paintings and drawings in either of two manners, which he respectively calls '[Baroque](#)' and '[Gothic](#)'. The first is dominated by representation, the second by form. Among the paintings produced during the past five years, those executed in the 'Gothic' manner have become more and more frequent, so much so that pictures in the other style have almost disappeared.

The late 1990s were a very trying time for Beksiński. His wife, Zofia, died in 1998, and a year later, on Christmas Eve 1999, his son Tomasz (a popular radio presenter, music journalist and movie translator) committed suicide. It was Beksiński who discovered his son's body. Unable to come to terms with his son's death, he kept an envelope "For Tomek in case I kick the bucket" pinned to his wall.

In 2003 his official site was designed by [Kubicki](#) and friends and was open in Warsaw by Beksiński's friend, agent Mr. Valdemar R. Plusa who looks after the site and owns [Belvedere Gallery](#) presenting Beksiński's Work and selling various art pieces related to His Art.

On [22 February 2005](#) he was found dead in his flat in Warsaw with 17 stab wounds on his body, two of which were fatal. The teenage son of his long time caretaker, who later plead guilty, and a friend were arrested shortly after the crime. It is known that Beksiński had recently refused a loan to the young man.

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Trivia

- Beksiński's art was gloomy and grim, though he himself was known to be a pleasant person, and though somewhat shy, took enjoyment from conversation.
- He never gave titles to his works.
- He painted his paintings on boards prepared by himself.
- He listened to classical music while painting and abhorred silence.
- His son was a great fan of the band [The Legendary Pink Dots](#). After his son's suicide the bands albums' Polish editions and reissues were graced by Beksiński's digital art employed as covers, dedicated to the memory of [Tomasz Beksiński](#).

- He is the only modern Polish artist to have had an exhibition in the [Osaka Museum of Art](#) in [Japan](#).
- He himself shunned art, almost never visiting [museums](#) or exhibitions.

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Sources

- Gryglewicz, Tomasz: *Beksiński*. Bosz Art 1999
- Gazeta Wyborcza, an interview with Zdzisław Beksiński: [\[1\]](#)

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External links

- <http://www.Beksinski.pl/> – Official website
- <http://www.Beksinski.pl/masterlist.htm>
- <http://www.belvederegallery.com/Bex>
- http://www.gnosis.art.pl/iluminatornia/sztuka_o_inspiracji/zdzislaw_beksinski/zdzislaw_beksinski.htm – Gallery

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