

Zdzisław Beksiński

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[Jump to navigation](#)[Jump to search](#)

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Polish painter Zdzisław Beksiński

Born	24 February 1929 Sanok, Poland
Died	21 February 2005 (aged 75) Warsaw, Poland
Nationality	Polish
Known for	Painting , Sculpture , Photography
Awards	Order of Polonia Restituta
Website	wikiart.org/es/zdzislaw-beksinski

Zdzisław Beksiński (pronounced [ˈz̥d̪z̪iswaf bɛk ˈɕjɲski]; 24 February 1929 – 21 February 2005) was a [Polish painter](#), [photographer](#) and [sculptor](#), specializing in the field of [dystopian surrealism](#). Beksiński did his paintings and drawings in what he called either a 'Baroque' or a 'Gothic' manner. His creations were made mainly in two periods. The first period of work is generally considered to contain [expressionistic](#) color, with a strong style of "utopian realism" and surreal architecture, like a [doomsday](#) scenario. The second period contained more abstract style, with the main features of [formalism](#).^[1]

Beksiński was stabbed to death at his [Warsaw](#) apartment in February 2005 by a 19-year-old acquaintance from [Wołomin](#), reportedly because he refused to lend the teenager money.^[2]



Contents

- 1Life
 - 1.1Painting and drawing
 - 1.2Fantastic Realism
 - 1.3Later work
- 2Family tragedies and death
- 3Personality
- 4Artistic legacy
- 5In other media
- 6References
- 7Sources
- 8External links

Life[[edit](#)]



Beksiński as a young boy and a friend outside a destroyed Soviet bunker playing with ordnance, summer 1941, [Sanok](#)



Untitled drawing (1958)

Zdzisław Beksiński was born in Sanok, southern Poland. He studied architecture in Kraków. In 1955, he completed his studies and returned to Sanok, working as a construction site supervisor, but found out he did not enjoy it. During this period, he had an interest in montage photography, sculpting and painting. When he first started his sculpting, he would often use his construction site materials for his medium. His early photography would be a precursor to his later paintings often depicting peculiar wrinkles, desolate landscapes and still-life faces on rough surfaces. His paintings often depict anxiety, such as torn doll faces, faces erased or obscured by bandages wrapped around the portrait. His main focus was on abstract painting, although it seems his works in the 1960s were inspired by Surrealism.^[1]

Painting and drawing[[edit](#)]



1978 oil painting entitled AA78



1984 oil painting

Beksiński had no formal training as an artist. He was a graduate of the Faculty of Architecture at the [Kraków Polytechnic](#) with [M.Sc.](#) received in 1952.^[2] His paintings were mainly created using oil paint on hardboard panels which he personally prepared, although he also experimented with acrylic paints. He abhorred silence, and always listened to classical music while painting. Although he loved classical music, Beksiński also appreciated [rock music](#).

Fantastic Realism[[edit](#)]

An exhibition in [Warsaw](#) in 1964 was his first major success, as all his paintings were sold.

Beksiński undertook painting with a passion, working intensely and whilst listening to [classical music](#). He soon became the leading figure in contemporary [Polish art](#). In the late 1960s, Beksiński entered what he himself called his "fantastic period", which lasted up to the mid-1980s. This is his best-known period, during which he created very disturbing images, showing a gloomy,

surrealistic environment with very detailed scenes of death, decay, landscapes filled with skeletons, deformed figures and deserts. These paintings were quite detailed, painted with his trademark precision. At the time, Beksiński claimed, "I wish to paint in such a manner as if I were photographing dreams".

Despite the grim overtones, Beksiński claimed some of his works were misunderstood; in his opinion, they were rather optimistic or even humorous. For the most part Beksiński was adamant that even he did not know the meaning of his artworks and was uninterested in possible interpretations; in keeping with this, he refused to provide titles for any of his drawings or paintings. 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.

According to [Mexican](#) film director [Guillermo del Toro](#) "In the [medieval](#) tradition, Beksiński seems to believe art to be a forewarning about the fragility of the flesh – whatever pleasures we know are doomed to perish – thus, his paintings manage to evoke at once the process of decay and the ongoing struggle for life. They hold within them a secret poetry, stained with blood and rust."^[3]

Later work[[edit](#)]

The 1980s marked a transitory period for Beksiński. During this time, his works became more popular in France due to the endeavors of Piotr Dmochowski, and he achieved significant popularity in [Western Europe](#), the United States and Japan. His art in the late 1980s and early 1990s focused on monumental or sculpture-like images rendered in a restricted and often subdued colour palette, including a series of crosses. Paintings in this style, which often appear to have been sketched densely in coloured lines, were much less lavish than those known from his "fantastic period", but just as powerful. In 1994, Beksiński explained "I'm going in the direction of a greater simplification of the background, and at the same time a considerable degree of deformation in the figures, which are being painted without what's known as naturalistic light and shadow. What I'm after is for it to be obvious at first sight that this is a painting I made".

In the later part of the 1990s, he discovered computers, the [Internet](#), [digital photography](#) and [photo manipulation](#), a medium that he focused on until his death.

Family tragedies and death[[edit](#)]

The late 1990s were a very tragic time for Beksiński. His wife, Zofia, died in 1998; a year later, on [Christmas Eve](#) 1999, his son [Tomasz](#) (a popular radio presenter, music journalist and movie translator) committed [suicide](#). Beksiński 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.



Beksiński's family vault at [Sanok](#)

On 21 February 2005, Beksiński was found dead in his flat in Warsaw with 17 stab wounds on his body; two of the wounds were determined to have been fatal. Robert Kupiec, the teenage son of his longtime caretaker, and a friend were arrested shortly after the crime. On 9 November 2006 Robert Kupiec was sentenced to 25 years in prison, and his accomplice, Łukasz Kupiec, to 5 years by the court of Warsaw. Before his death, Beksiński had refused to loan Robert Kupiec a few hundred [złoty](#) (approximately \$100 USD).

Personality[[edit](#)]

Although Beksiński's art was often grim, he himself was known to be a pleasant person who took enjoyment from conversation and had a keen sense of humor. He was modest and somewhat shy, avoiding public events such as the openings of his own exhibitions. He credited music as his main source of inspiration. He claimed not to be much influenced by literature, cinema or the work of other artists, and almost never visited [museums](#) or exhibitions. Beksiński avoided concrete analysis of the content of his work, saying "I cannot conceive of a sensible statement on painting". He was especially dismissive of those who sought or offered simple answers to what his work 'meant'.

Artistic legacy[[edit](#)]

The town of Sanok, Poland, houses a museum dedicated to Beksiński. A [Beksiński museum](#) housing 50 paintings and 120 drawings from the Dmochowski collection (who owns the biggest private collection of Beksiński's art^[4]), opened in 2006 in the City Art Gallery of Częstochowa, Poland. On 18 May 2012 with the participation of Minister of Regional Development [Elżbieta Bieńkowska](#) and others took place ceremonial opening of [The New Gallery of Zdzisław Beksiński](#) in the rebuilt wing of the castle. On 19 May 2012 The New Gallery has been opened for the public. A '[Beksiński cross](#)', in the characteristic T-shape frequently employed by the artist, was installed for [Burning Man](#).

In other media[[edit](#)]



A cover art of *Omen* featuring "The Trumpeter" painting

The [unblack metal](#) band [Antestor](#) used "The Trumpeter" as cover art for their album [Omen](#).^[5] Antestor explained that they chose "The Trumpeter" because "Our music represents the more broken and monster-like feelings of our humanity, like the apparition in this picture."^[6]

Beksiński's works also inspired the surrealist imagery in [William Mallone's](#) 2008 [horror film](#) [Parasomnia](#).^[7]

Czech [death metal](#) band Pandemia used Beksinski's artwork as the cover of their second album "Personal Demon", released in 2002.

UK's drone metal band Bong uses Beksinski's artwork as the cover of their album "Stoner Rock" (2014).

The [industrial](#) band [Ice Ages](#) used the untitled painting from 1984 portraying the two skeletons in their album "This Killing Emptiness".

Canadian [black metal](#) band [Incandescence](#) used Beksiński's work for the cover of their album "Abstractionnisme" (2013).

The Norwegian Black metal band [Kampfar](#) also used Beksiński's work for the covers of their albums "Djevelmakt" (2014) and "Profan" (2015).

American [black metal](#) band [Ashdautas](#) also used Beksiński's work for the cover of their EP *Where the Sun Is Silent...* (2007).

American [ambient black metal](#) [Leviathan](#) used Beksiński's work for the cover of the compilation album "[Verräter](#)" (2002) and on the "Sic Luceat Lux" (2009) split with the Greek black metal band Acherontas.

In 2016, [Polish](#) filmmaker Jan P. Matuszyński directed a critically acclaimed film [The Last Family](#) based on the life of Zdzisław Beksiński and his son Tomasz. The film won the Golden Lions Award at the 2016 [Gdynia Film Festival](#).

[Rishloo](#), an independent band from Seattle, released an album in 2007 titled *Eidolon*, which contains a song titled *Zdzislaw*. The song is believed to be a reference to him, as the album art seems to be influenced by his own as well as the imagery the album's lyrics seem to create.^[8]

The 2011 game [E.Y.E.: Divine Cybermancy](#) features levels partially inspired by his works.

[Lust for Darkness](#), a PC game released in 2018 by Movie Games Lunarium, sees the player character travel through a "perverse land" which, according to the developers, is directly inspired by the paintings of Zdzisław Beksiński.^[9]

Polish artist Rafael Mielczarek is well known for his drawings inspired by Zdzisław Beksiński ^[10]

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External links^{[[edit](#)]}



Wikimedia Commons has media related to *[Zdzisław Beksiński](#)*.

- [Zdzisław Beksiński](#) at Culture.pl
- [Zdzisław Beksiński virtual museum](#) (in Polish) (in German) (in English) (in French)
- [Zdzisław Beksiński gallery](#) (in Polish)
- *An Artist does not live anymore. In memoriam for Zdzisław Beksiński* by a film director Piotr Andrejew, KINO, no. 6/2005 (in Polish)
- [Documentary crowdfunding](#) Crowdfunder to finance a feature-length documentary on Beksiński's life

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- [1929 births](#)
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- [People from Sanok](#)
- [20th-century Polish painters](#)
- [21st-century Polish painters](#)
- [Polish photographers](#)
- [Murdered artists](#)
- [Polish murder victims](#)
- [People murdered in Poland](#)
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