

R E T U R N I N G T O



TERESA PAŃGOWSKA and JÓZEF CZAPSKI

**RETURNING TO NEW YORK:
JÓZEF CZAPSKI
AND TERESA PAĞOWSKA**

Curated by Marek Bartelik

Sławek Górecki

Gallery Director

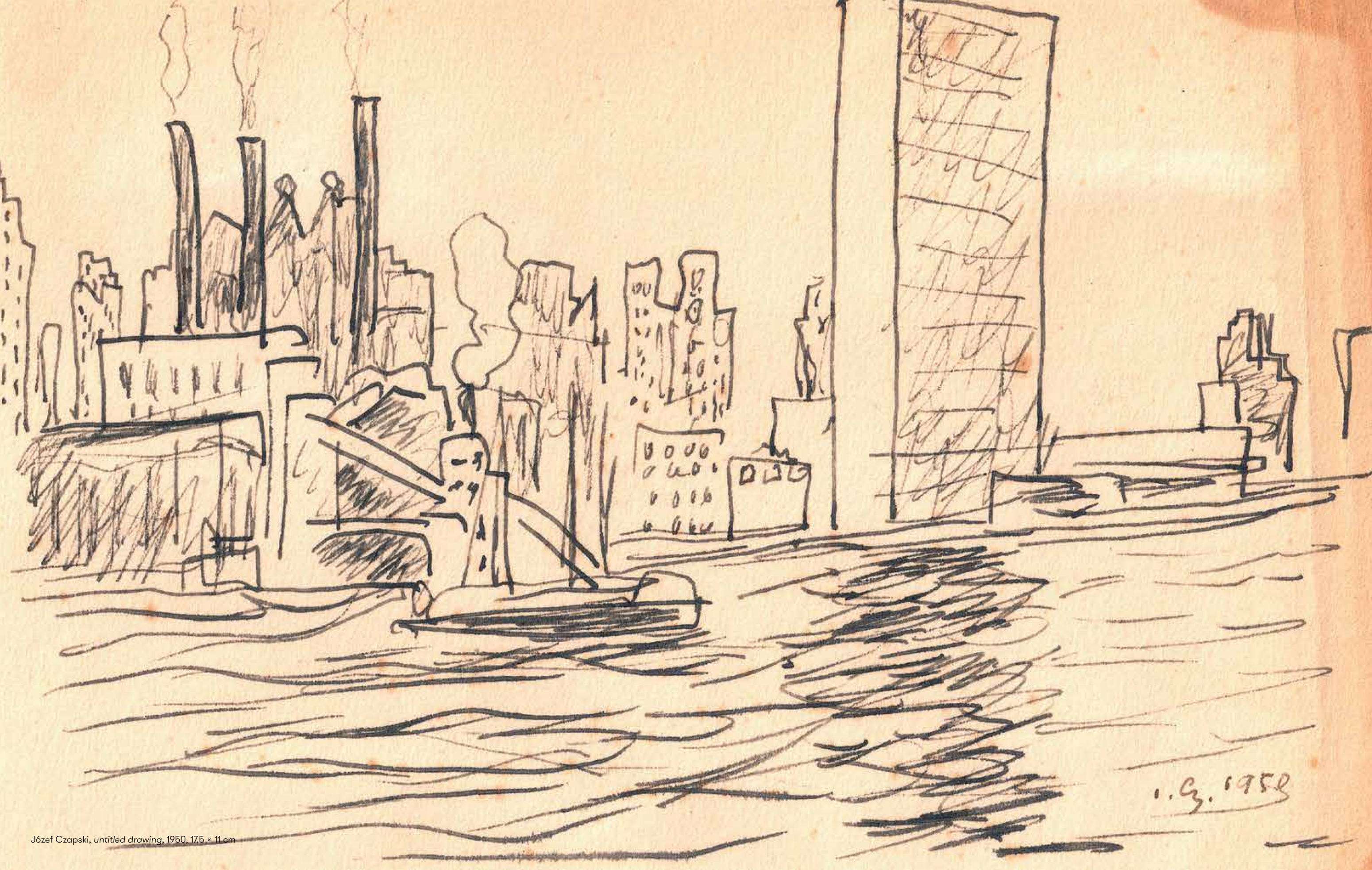
It is my great pleasure to invite you to view the exhibition of two distinguished Polish artists Józef Czapski and Teresa Pągowska at the Green Point Projects from mid-November until mid-December 2018.

With this exhibition we are celebrating our fourth season. Green Point Projects is a cultural initiative in Brooklyn, New York, founded in April 2017. It is located in a repurposed warehouse in an industrial part of Greenpoint on the border with Williamsburg. The up-and-coming neighborhood is quickly becoming one of New York's art hot spots, while still remaining a "Polish enclave" in Brooklyn, which makes our gallery a bridge between two worlds that don't often have the opportunity to meet in an artistic setting.

Our earlier exhibitions introduced to an American audience four seminal figures in Polish art: Magdalena Abakanowicz, Stanisław Fijałkowski, Stefan Krygier, and Eugeniusz Markowski. (Works of all of these artists were also featured in exhibitions at the Piękna Gallery in Warsaw, affiliated with Green Point Projects.) The current exhibition entitled "Returning to

New York: Józef Czapski and Teresa Pągowska" offers a unique opportunity to view in this country paintings by two of most celebrated Polish painters of the second part of the 20th century, each of whom embraced figuration in a highly original way. As the exhibition curator, Marek Bartelik, notes in his essay for this catalogue, "Quite unexpectedly, both artists have experienced a sort of comeback in the United States (rather than in Poland) in the last few years." A biography devoted to Czapski's art and life in the English language and two of his early books translated into English are being released by New York Book Review Publishers this fall. In 2012, on the occasion of Alina Szapocznikow's solo show at MoMA, in the exhibition catalogue Pągowska was identified, next to Szapocznikow and Magdalena Abakanowicz, to be one of the first women artists who consciously addressed the representation of the body in post-war Polish art.

I am very pleased to have a show of these two remarkable artists in our gallery at this time.



J.C. 1950

RETURNING TO NEW YORK: JÓZEF CZAPSKI AND TERESA PAŃGOWSKA

Marek Bartelik

One becomes lyrical when one's life beats to an essential rhythm and the experience is so intense that it synthesizes the entire meaning of one's personality.

EMIL CIORAN, ON BEING LYRICAL¹

“When I came to the United States for the first time in 1950,” the Polish painter, author, and art critic Józef Czapski (1896-1993) wrote, “—I was struck by the youthful attitude, trust, spontaneous and immediate friendliness.”² Czapski had traveled on a lecture tour to North America from Paris to fundraise for the publishing house *Instytut Literacki* (Literary Institute) and the literary review *Kultura* (Culture).³ He lectured to Polish émigrés and Polish-Americans (often called Polonia) mostly on the massacre at Katyń, but also on Joseph Stalin and the religious persecution in Soviet Russia, and even agreed to share his thoughts about student life in Paris when asked by an organization of businesswomen in Detroit.

“I was under the impression,” he wrote, “that I found myself in a powerful and naïve society, which does not doubt the sense [and] the nobility of its existence, in its existence's increasingly bright outlook on the future.”⁴ Czapski's impressions of America were mixed, filtered through his artistic sensitivity, in which close attention to and admiration for Nature were crucial. From the height of a Chicago skyscraper he saw miles of “gray and ugly houses,” and not a single tree.⁵ He noticed the same barren landscape in New York: “More and more frequently stuck in the ground, [rising] from the ground, is the black rock of Manhattan; frequently, among the unfinished buildings, warehouses and canals I see the earth, which is not the earth, but some dense material covered with garbage slag. Occasionally, very rarely, I see a tree...”⁷ In general, Czapski didn't like the American way of life, finding it too hectic and alienating, too technology- and advertisement-oriented. It was in the United States, where he expressed his fears that the world was being swallowed by the absurd and grotesque bureaucratization of life, mentioning in reference Franz Kafka's *The Castle*. Perhaps he saw a different face of an “inhuman land,”⁸ which he preferred to call, somewhat ironically, “almost a Heaven.”⁹

“How many times,” he wrote, “my reactions to American life and customs, my automatic outrage, must strike Americans as naïve and incomprehensible or irritating. But so what.”¹⁰ Czapski's opinion of Americans was, in fact, nuanced. “Here in America, there are a different body language, different symbols, different decorations,” he acknowledged.¹¹ He praised the Americans for their “youthfulness,” optimism, generosity, and enthusiasm.¹² When writing about Polish-Americans, his comments about them were sometimes harsh, sometimes very tender.¹³ He criticized them for



Józef Czapski, 1987, Photo: Anna Beata Bohdziewicz/REPORTER



Teresa Pągowska with one of her duchshunds, Sopot, 1962, Photo courtesy Filip Pągowski

being preoccupied with making money, their political naiveté, their lack of education, and their poor command of English and Polish alike. But he deeply sympathized with their fate as uprooted people, who often had a hard time accepting their Polish background, not the least because back then they were the subject of many ethnic jokes. When praising them, Czapski expressed his admiration for those first generation young men and women, who made the effort to learn about the culture and history of their parents, and to do so had often learned the Polish language first.¹⁴

Arguably, this type of strong criticism of America was quite common among European intellectuals after the war, especially by those, who—like Czapski—continued to perceive Paris as the world’s cultural and artistic capital. He was a Francophile, fluent in French, who admired French literature and art from an early age. He wrote extensively about, among other Frenchman and Frenchwoman, Marcel Proust, Albert Camus, Simone Weil, and Paul Cézanne. But he was critical of certain French intellectuals celebrated in the French capital after World War II—Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in particular, as well as remained indifferent to the writings of such “provocateurs” among French literary figures as George Bataille. After World War II France became his *terre d’asile*, but he never fully integrated into French society. He never applied for citizenship and, as time passed by, he experienced growing alienation.¹⁵ For him post-war Paris was his “Paradise Lost.”¹⁶

Czapski had his “Polish Paris”, a place of exile for Ewelina Hańska, Fryderyk Szopen (Chopin), the Romantic poets Adam Mickiewicz and the neo-Romantic Cyprian Kamil, the scientist Maria Skłodowska-Curie, the artists Olga Boznańska, Moïse Kisling, his teacher Józef Pankiewicz, and many other famous Poles. After he settled down in the French capital in 1946, Czapski became

directly associated with the literary, artistic and intellectual milieu of émigrés gathered around *Kultura* and Instytut Literacki, which he co-founded. He also frequented the Biblioteka Polska (Polish Library) and the Galerie Lambert adjacent to the Bookstore Libella, both on the Île Saint-Louis.¹⁷ He followed closely what was happening in the arts and politics in his native country, remaining a strong opponent of the Communist regime imposed there after the war, and wrote on them in *Kultura* and other publications. One might say that living in exile Czapski was connected to Poland by an “invisible chain” (Czapski’s expression from the essay of the same title), with its strongest links being Polish language and culture.¹⁸ Exile might have offered to him, in fact, a possibility to embrace a “default-mode Polishness” (as opposed to both “direct” and “noble”), in which books and art played a crucial role in forming a bridge between his life in exile and his native country.¹⁹

Throughout his life, Czapski-the painter had many loyal admirers, both in Poland and abroad. Back in 1930, Gertrude Stein had bought his paintings from an exhibition at the Galerie Zak in Paris. His reputation as Poland’s leading pre-war artist led to having his work *Gofębnik* (Dovecote), 1938, included in an official exhibition of Polish art presented at the World’s Fair in New York in 1939.²⁰ After World War II, he had several highly devoted collectors, the Swiss philosopher of Jewish-Polish origins Jeanne Hersch being among them. When in 1967 he had a solo show at the Galerie Desbrière in Paris, journalist Maciej Morawski noted: “A great success. The American writer Mary McCarthy bought his first painting—it’s a very good sign.”²¹ In Poland, he became sort of a living legend, despite the fact that very few of his compatriots could have seen his paintings, unless they had traveled to France. In fact, Czapski was (still is) perceived as an exemplary Polish émigré: a patriot, an intellectual, a noble (of character and birth), and a Christian.²² Among his Polish admirers were



Józef Czapski i Krzysztof Jung, Instytut Literacki, Maisons-Laffitte, 1988 Photo: ZESZYTY LITERACKIE/FOTONOVA

the film director Andrzej Wajda and his wife, the set and costume designer and actress Krystyna Zachwatowicz, who after his death made a great effort to have Czapski's solo show organized by the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, which is yet to happen. In 1991, Czapski took part in a historic exhibition entitled "Jesteśmy (We Exist)," which featured art by over one hundred Polish and Polish-origin artists living abroad, some of whom exhibited in Poland for the first time.²³

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The artist Teresa Pągowska (1926-2007) spent her entire life in Poland, where she achieved a significant degree of recognition as painter from the mid-1950s on. In 1955, she participated in the famous "Ogólnopolska Wystawa Młodej Plastyki. Przeciw wojnie - przeciw faszyzmowi (All-state Exhibition of Young Art. Against the war—against fascism)" in Warsaw, which marked an important step in moving away from Socialist Realism in Polish art during the Polish Thaw.²⁴ From the early 1960s she made regular trips to Paris, where she took part in numerous exhibitions, including the First Biennale de Paris, "Salon de mai", "Salon des Réalités Nouvelles," and "Grands et Jeunes d'Aujourd'hui," all of them at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. She joined groups Réalités Nouvelles and Nouvelle École de Paris. In addition to being a respected painter, she was a respected art educator, teaching at various art academies, including the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts.

Pągowska met Czapski for the first time during her solo show at the Galerie Lambert in Paris in 1961.²⁵ She remembered well the opening: "[I]t's incredible! So many extraordinary people,

so many enriching encounters. Attended by the Czapskis [Józef and his sister Maria], [Jan] Kot, [Konstanty] Jeleński; the Wierzyńskis came as well. Jean Cassou met with me."²⁶ Being so impressed by the presence of those prominent Polish exiles that evening, Pągowska must have felt that she too belonged to *their* Paris, which, in fact, for centuries many Poles viewed as the cultural capital of their world, even when, as some argued, its prestige had already started to fade during World War II. The two artists continued to meet in Paris, including on the occasion of Czapski's participation in the Paris Biennale in 1985, which in some way culminated his career as an artist in Paris (he was soon to become 90 years old). On that occasion, the writer Konstanty Jeleński saw the show as an opportunity to finally recognize Czapski's talent as a painter—similarly how Czesław Miłosz and Witold Gombrowicz had been recognized as international writers.²⁷

Pągowska traveled to the United States twice, in 1979 and 1991, the second time to receive an award from the Alfred Jurzykowski Foundation, which Czapski had already received in 1965.²⁸ Prior to the 1979 trip, she had taken part in several exhibitions in America;²⁹ the most notable of these was *15 Polish Painters* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1961, the show that was described in the press materials as "the first comprehensive exhibition of postwar Polish painting in this country [the United States]".³⁰ She was one of only two female artists included, the second one being Teresa Rudowicz. Writing about Pągowska in the catalogue, curator Peter Selz stated:

Teresa Pągowska (born 1926) comes also [like Tadeusz Dominik, mentioned in Selz's essay earlier] from the Polish Colorist tradition and has, in addition, profited from [Piotr] Potworowski's stimulus since his return to Poland. Her abstractions seem to find their origin in the experience of nature, not as it is observed from a distance with a horizon, but experienced intimately: the steaming earth, solid stones, running water, the bark of trees, the graininess of sand—all seem to enter into her sphere and are expressed with a vigorous, yet sensitive spontaneity. Her personal feeling for the decorative is channeled by the physical quality of the paint and the application of the brush towards a rhythmic organization, which recalls the original experience or event³¹

Due to the tense relationship between the organizers at MoMA and the Polish government over the content of the show, none of the exhibited artists attended the opening, most likely because of the authorities' restrictions on their travels abroad.³² Following that historic exhibition, various attempts by commercial galleries in the United States to further attract the attention of the local audience and art critics to Polish art brought no visible results. In fact, when four years later the exhibition entitled *17 Polish Painters* opened at the D'Arcy Galleries in New York—which included several paintings by Pągowska—it drew criticism for poor selection of artists. But viewing that selection from today's perspective, there seems to be nothing particularly wrong with it; in fact, the majority of its participants were the same as in the MoMA show.³³ That criticism might have simply been generated by the fact that the show was organized in collaboration with the state-sponsored art enterprise called Desa and, therefore, had to be approved by the Polish government.³⁴ Hence the questioning of the choice of artists—which, in fact, amounted to the absence of abstract painters—might have simply been yet another example of how Polish art (and Eastern European art in general) was often caught in the politics of the Cold War when exhibited in the West.³⁵

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Today Czapski and Pągowska are seldom included in large exhibitions of Polish art abroad, and they are usually omitted in studies devoted to local modern and contemporary art written in languages other than Polish.³⁶ As a result, they are practically unknown outside of Poland—except for a small but loyal group of admirers of their works. Of course, the reasons for that exclusion are complex, and not necessary the same for each artist. With its blend of postimpressionism and expressionism based on direct observation, Czapski’s art might look anachronistic to those people inclined to think of artistic tendencies in progressive and teleological terms.³⁷ To this day in Poland, his name as an artist is mainly associated with a group of graduates from the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts, nicknamed “Kapists” (*kapisci* in Polish), active in Paris between late 1924 and the early 1930s, who practiced a variation of Colorism (dubbed *kapizm*), a figurative style influenced by, above all, Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, and Pierre Bonnard. And to a large degree, Czapski has been more appreciated as a writer on art and essayist than an artist.³⁸

On her part, Pągowska’s art has often been viewed as conventional, neither lyrical nor expressive enough to distinguish her from other artists working in various styles that fuse figuration and abstraction. Furthermore, the feminist aspects of it may be too “vague” to attract the attention of those who seek (and demand) that art carry a direct socio-political message, particularly a type of art with the explicit gender significance that preoccupies many curators and critics, both in Poland and abroad.

Following the collapse of the Communist government in Poland in the late 1980s, the history of Polish art has been written by art critics and historians, whose principal interests lie elsewhere than the “uncommitted art” produced by Pągowska and Czapski. This might look quite odd, recalling how much “political art” was privileged in Polish People’s Republic, but, of course, we are talking about a different type of politics (and political correctness) today. Still, both artists have benefitted from the historic changes in Eastern Europe and Russia, which took place nearly three decades ago. In 1992, Czapski had a major exhibition at the National Museums in Kraków, Poznań, and Warsaw.³⁹ (Due to poor health, he did not travel to the opening and, in fact, didn’t go back to his native country afterwards.) Following his death in 1993, Czapski’s paintings and drawings continued to be included in various exhibitions in his native country, triggering great interest among the public in general, but mostly indifference, or reservations as far as their artistic value is concerned, from critics and scholars, especially the younger ones.⁴⁰ In 2016, the Józef Czapski Pavilion—which hosts a permanent exhibition documenting the artist’s life and work, both as a writer and a painter—opened as a branch of the National Museum in Kraków. After 1990, Pągowska continued to show in Poland, having over twenty solo exhibitions at, among other venues, the Zachęta-National Gallery of Art and the National Museum in Poznań. And the same year Czapski participated in “Jesteśmy” in Warsaw, Pągowska’s paintings were included in “Voices of Freedom: Polish Women Artists and the Avant-Garde 1880-1990” at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. in 1991, where, as the title indicates, they were presented within the feminist framework.⁴¹

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Quite unexpectedly, both artists have experienced a sort of *comeback* in the United States (rather than in Poland) in the last few years. The critic and curator Cornelia Butler discussed Pągowska’s paintings in the catalogue of Alina Szapocznikow’s exhibition at MoMA, crediting her with being one of the first Polish women artists who as early as the early 1960s had addressed the issue of the female body



Teresa Pągowska with her husband Henryk Tomaszewski and an anonymous sheriff during her trip to San Francisco in 1979. Photo courtesy of Filip Pągowski

in Polish art in a conscious way—without adopting an overt feminist perspective.⁴² I would further argue that what united “unconventional” Szapocznikow and “conventional” Pągowska was not so much their *refusal* to embrace feminism in their work, as their ability to *bypass* having it interpreted as about women, or, for that matter, made by a woman.⁴³ “I am not a specialist in [painting] the sea, women or men, or animals,” Pągowska once said in an interview—dissociating herself from any equating her personally with the subject of her works.⁴⁴

Czapski’s comeback has been as a writer mainly. This fall, a biography devoted to Czapski’s art and life in the English language and two of his early books translated into English are being released by New York Book Review Publishers.⁴⁵ “Józef Czapski, a figure largely unknown to American readers and artists, lived many lives in his ninety-six years—soldier, public figure, historical witness, memoirist, essayist, painter,” introduces him the biography’s author Eric Karpeles.⁴⁶ To acknowledge the fundamental importance of painting for Czapski, he is described on the biography’s back jacket as “a towering public figure,” for whom “painting gave meaning to his life.

“It is very difficult to judge people justly,” Pągowska once said, quoting the Hungarian writer Sándor Márai.⁴⁷ It might be useful to note that just as Pągowska refused to fit comfortably into a feminist mold, Czapski, who was gay, viewed his sexual orientation as a highly private matter. When it came to addressing any differences other than political and artistic in his writings, he usually chose silence over argument, and his art supports that position. One might say that art for him was a supreme expression of universal humanism, rather than a vehicle to communicate a specific identity.⁴⁸ He expressed his objections toward equating meaning in art with personal life on many occasions, including in his writing about Chaim Soutine in 1959. In that text, Czapski

categorically rejected any theory that would psycho-sexualize experience and existence, including those of Sigmund Freud (and Jacques Lacan). For Czapski, the direct application of Freud’s concept of sexual repression, which he called in French *refoulement*, only obscured what was fundamental in Soutine life: his view of the artist’s experience and work as a quest of the absolute. “Everything that I was able to read or to hear about Soutine’s inner life is so small, so uncertain in comparison to his canvases—the confessions of a mute man, the canvases that he painted with passion and fury,” Czapski concluded his essay.⁴⁹ He might have been writing about himself.⁵⁰

What Czapski and Pągowska shared was their deep attachment to the “mute” medium of painting. They rejected the notion of progress in art, although they were very aware of the art movements of their time, while admiring Great Masters. “We are not a beginning, but a continuation,” Pągowska observed.⁵¹ One might think of Pągowska’s and Czapski’s art as a form of diary, in which the inner life is visually expressed as enigmatic (both tragic and joyful) and transformed, or transfigured, into *petites sensations*, as Czapski might have called (after his favorite painter Cézanne) those light moments of giving shape to the outer world. For both artists those small sensations enabled them to record the “littleness” of existence and experience, taking into account those endless difficulties and ethical and aesthetic conundrums that challenge our dignity daily, in art and in life alike. “Perfection is on everybody’s lips,” Pągowska observed, “Personally, I have a taste for defects or blemishes which, when skillfully accumulated, may acquire their special power. With my permission and in compliance with my will, they add the picture its character.”⁵²

ENDNOTES:

- ↑ In E. M. Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair*, transl. by Ilinca Zerifopol-Johnson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992). p. 4.
- ↑ “Americans,” in *Swoboda tajemna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Pomost, 1991), p. 89. The article originally appeared in the conservative *National Review*, commissioned by James Burnham and translated from the Polish by Gill Darcy. It was published in the late 1950s (?). Czapski wrote extensively about his visit in 1950-1951 in the “Notatki amerykańskie [Notes from America]”, a series of essays first published in *Kultura*, and later reprinted in various collections of his writings.
- ↑ Founded in 1946 in Rome, the Literary Institute was a publishing house, which specialized in books by Polish authors in exile, Czesław Miłosz, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, Witold Gombrowicz, Leszek Kołakowski, and Czapski, among the most prominent. Through its existence the Institute also released the first Polish editions of books by Albert Camus, Raymond Aron, Simone Weil, Graham Greene, James Burnham, Arthur Koestler, Bertrand Russell, Boris Pasternak, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. *Kultura* was a literary review launched in France in 1947 by a tight group of Polish émigré writers and journalists, Czapski among them, who had landed in exile in France immediately after World War II. Since the launching of the first issue in June 1947 Czapski assumed the position of its main art critic, which he held practically to his death in 1993, but he also contributed to it numerous articles on literature and politics. In addition to a fundraising campaign for Kutura and Instytut Literacki, the official purpose of his visit was to collect the funds to establish in the West a university for young people from Eastern Europe.
- ↑ Katyń (near Smolensk, Russia) was a place where in the spring of 1940 the Soviet secret police (known by the acronym NKVD, for the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, in Russian) carried in the nearby forest the mass extermination of about 20,000 Poles, including the elite army officers, doctors, and clergy.
- ↑ “Americans,” p. 91.
- ↑ Józef Czapski, “Prawie Niebo,” in his *Tumult i widma* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1988), p. 68.
- ↑ Józef Czapski, “Dzwonki,” in *Tumult i widma*, p. 116.
- ↑ Czapski’s *Inhuman Land* was first released in Polish by the Instytut Literacki in 1949, three years after Czapski’s settling down for good in France. The book focuses on his time in Russia after he was released from the prisoner-of-war camp in Gryzovets (the third camp he had been imprisoned since September 1939) in October 1941. He spent his remaining time in Russia on tracing the fate for the Polish prisoners-of-war, the overwhelming majority of whom were exterminated by the Soviets. Its book ends with his departure from Russia with the General Anders’s Polish Army in late 1942, which would take him to Rome, and, then, to Paris.
- ↑ In his essay “Prawie Niebo”, Czapski recalled a conversation in a restaurant in Chicago with a Polish woman, who had immigrated to America years back, during which she called the United States “almost a Heaven.” See, “Prawie Niebo”, p. 70.
- ↑ “Czarne lusterko,” in *Tumult i widma*, p. 73.
- ↑ Ibid, p. 79.
- ↑ For example, Czapski remembered a young activist from Michigan who left his studies at Harvard to work for the labor union Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America because he wanted to help people live better lives. Ibid, pp. 93 and 96.
- ↑ Czapski criticized Polish-Americans in a similar manner Henry Miller was critical of Greek-Americans in his *The Colossus of Maroussi*, the book Czapski mentions in one of his articles about his trip to America.
- ↑ For a detailed account of Czapski’s 1950-1951 trip to America in English, see, Eric Karpeles, *Almost Nothing: The 20th-Century Art and Life of Józef Czapski* (New York: New York Review Books, 2018), pp. 270-284.
- ↑ At first, Czapski carried all kinds of temporary French IDs, then, from 1955 he obtained a “Titre de voyage” issued in France to political refugees to serve as an equivalent document to a national passport, which allowed him to travel internationally, except to his native country. He obtained a “carte de séjour de resident privilégié” (and equivalent of a green card with a special status) in 1974.
- ↑ “Paradise Lost [Raj utracony]” is the title of an article he published in June 1947, after Bonnard’s death, in which Czapski laments the disappearance of the old world associated with the French capital.
- ↑ *Libella. Galerie Lambert. Szkice i wspomnienia*, ed. Mirosław A. Supruniuk (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 1998), and of the same author: “Nowe rozdanie. Polskie artystki w Galerie Lambert Zofii i Kazimierza Romanowiczów,” *Archiwa Emigracji: Studia, szkice, dokumenty*, vol. 1-2 (16-17), 2012, pp. 142-154.
- ↑ “łańcuch niewidzialny [An Invisible Chain]” is a title of one of his essays in “Notatki amerykańskie.”
- ↑ On his father’s maternal side Czapski was a descendent of the Meyendorff family from the Royal Prussia, and the von Thun und Hohenstein family belonging to the old German aristocracy relocated to Prague on his mother’s side. It is important to note that while many Poles, especially those strongly opposed to the Communist regime in their country, considered aristocratic background to be one of the main pillars of the Polishness of Polish society, others saw it as a remnant of Polish conservatism. Czesław Miłosz called Czapski a “vieux Polonais” in his late diary *A Year of the Hunter*.
- ↑ Due to the war, the works featured in that exhibition remained in the United States. Czapski’s painting ended up at the Polish Museum in Chicago, where, in fact, Czapski would see it in 1950.

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21 Quoted after http://www.jozefczapski.pl/wystawy-sesje-naukowe/.

22 Czapski’s attachment to Roman Catholicism was more philosophical than ecumenical. While he often stressed the historic importance of Roman Catholicism for maintaining the collective identity of Poles, he also saw it as a form of “consciousness of history.”

23 “Jesteśmy: wystawa artystów polskich tworzących za granicą,” curated by Elżbieta Dzikowska and Wiesława Wierzchowska, took place at the Zachęta-National Gallery of Art in September-November 1991.

24 The Polish Thaw was a period of limited freedom between the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 and the Polish (and Hungarian) revolt of 1956.

25 In 1961, Czapski exhibited his works at Sagittarius Gallery in New York and Pągowska’s works were included in the exhibition “Brzozowski, Dominik, Kowalski, Nowosielski, Pągowska, Ziemiński” at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Chicago.

26 Zbigniew Florczak, “Galeria Lambert,” *Przegląd katolicki*, nr. 17,1988, p. 3.

27 Mentioned in Czapski’s biography posted on a website devoted to the artist: http://www.jozefczapski.pl/wystawy-sesje-naukowe/.

28 The Alfred Jurzykowski Foundation Awards were devoted to Polish scientists, writers, philosophers, and artists between 1964 and 1998. For more about the awards see, Czesław Karkowski, *Nagrody Fundacji Jurzykowskiego w Nowym Jorku* (New York: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015, second edition).

29 In 1977, she participated in an exhibition featuring the works donated by artists for the Center for Blind Children in Laski near Warsaw, which was presented at The Copley Society of Boston, Boston, The American Institute of Architects, Washington D.C., and the Kościuszko Foundation in New York. She would also take part in “Contemporary Polish Master Works,” at the Edith Barrett Art Gallery, Utica College of Syracuse University in 1986.

30 Quoted from, https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_326242.pdf.

31 *15 Polish painters*, exh. cat. (New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1961), p. 10. In retrospect, Peter Selz’s analysis of Pągowska’s work is simplistic—relying on clichés about art made by women: sensitive, decorative, attached to Nature.

32 The initiative of organizing this exhibition sprang from Vice President Richard Nixon’s visit to Poland in August of 1959. Peter Selz (in collaboration with MoMA’s head of the international exhibition program Porter McCray) was appointed its curator. Selz visited Poland during the AICA Congress in 1960. In the end, a disagreement over the choice of artists between the curator and the Polish government resulted in the withdrawal of the official Polish support. The MoMA exhibition consisted mainly of the works from private collections (individuals and galleries). For more on this subject see, Konrad Niemira, “Much Ado About Nothing? Political Contexts of the 15 Polish Painters Exhibition (MoMA, 1961),” *Ikonotheka*, vol. 26 [2016], pp. 167-191.

33 The artists participating in the show were: T. Brzozowski, T. Dominik, S. Gierowski, Z. Gostomski, Z. Kierzkowski, A. Lenica, Z. Makowski, A. Mazurkiewicz, E. Markowski, K. Mikulski. J. Nowosielski, T. Pągowska, H. Stażewski, J. Tarasin, J. Tchórzewski, and R. Ziemiński. From the MoMA artists, the selection didn’t include A. Kobzdej, J. Lebenstein, J. Nowosielski, P. Potworowski, T. Rudowicz, and M. Warzecha.

34 See, John Canaday, “Contemporary Polish Painters; D’Arcy’s Gallery Show Omits First Raters,” *The New York Times*, December 11, 1965, p. 29.

35 For more on the subject of the Cold War politics in the West versus art from the East and vice versa, see *Divided Dreamlands? The Cultural Cold War in East and West*, Peter Romijn, Giles Scott-Smith, Joes Segal, eds. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

36 See, for example, *Polish! Contemporary Art from Poland* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011). Lately, Czapski and Pągowska have been included in a show entitled “Co po Cybisie? [Beyond Cybis?]” at the Zachęta-National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, in which their art is presented in relations to the most famous of the Polish Colorists, Jan Cybis, who had returned from Paris to Poland in 1931, and stayed there for the rest of his life. Czapski and Pągowska received, in 1990 and 2000 respectively, the prestigious Cybis Prize, awarded yearly to Polish painters for their lifetime achievements.

37 For a discussion of Czapski’s approach to abstraction see, Piotr Majewski, “Czapski wobec abstrakcji,” *Quart*, Vol. 2/28 (2013), pp. 39-45.

38 Kapists’ importance, as artist as well as art educators, grew after World War II, when after a few years of the imposition of Socialist Realism in the late 1940s and early 1950s, they became the most dominant presence in Polish painting, representing Poland at major international events, which displeased many younger Polish artists and art critics.

39 Exhibition “Józef Czapski: malarstwo ze zbiorów szwajcarskich.” In 1991, he had a show “Dziennik Józefa Czapskiego” at the National Museum in Poznań, as well as lesser exhibitions in Nowy Sącz and Warsaw in the previous year. Prior to those shows, he had an exhibition at the National Museum in Poznań and the Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych [Society of Friends of the Fine Arts] in Kraków in 1957. In 1986, he had a solo show at the Archdiocesan Museum in Warsaw.

40 In Poland in the recent years, Czapski has been increasingly mentioned in the context of “gay art.” Discussion around Czapski’s sexual orientation intensified with publication of several books containing his private correspondence with close male friends, such as the intimate letters to and from Ludwig Hering. See, *Czapski-Hering listy*, vol. 1 and *Czapski-Hering listy*, vol. 2 (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2016 and 2017). On the subject see for example, “Pierwszy homoseksualista emigracji,” *queer.pl* (November 5, 2013), https://queer.pl/artyku/186181. He has also been mentioned in discussions of other Polish gay artists, such as Krzysztof Jung; see Paweł Leszkowicz, “Sztuka gejowska? Chłopcy z tamtych lat,” *Obieg* (August 19, 2010); http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/artmix/18288, where he is mentioned as belonging to the „gay milieu of Kutura,” and Karol Sienkiewicz, “Artysta, faun, gej,” dwutygodnik.com; https://www.dwutygodnik.com/artyku/6822-artysta-faun-gej.html?print=1.

41 Writing about the artist in the catalogue of “Voices of Freedom: Polish Women Artists and the Avant-Garde 1880-1990,” the exhibition curator Agnieszka Morawińska argued: “A different range of feminine experience is expressed in paintings of Teresa Pągowska (b. 1929). Her symbolic, dynamic silhouettes are at once human figures and mood-filled shadows. Carrying feminine props—bits of clothing, colored ribbons, high-high shoes—they seem to stroke poses characteristic of women./ This kind of feminine projection, once conscious, became a subject of bitter contestation among women artist themselves.” “Voices of Freedom: Polish Women Artists and the Avant-Garde 1880-1990”, exh. cat., (Washington D.C: National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1991), p. 35. Indeed, compared to other artists in the show, such as Maria Pinińska-Bereś, Zofia Kulik, and, later, Katarzyna Kozyra and Julita Wójcik, Pągowska’s relationship to the female form in her paintings was much “softer” and less explicit, or dialectical, for it expressed a gender fluidity much subtler than the aforementioned artists. In that respect, her work is closer to that of Magdalena Abakanowicz (as Butler noted), who also fits with difficulties into a feminist discourse.

42 Butler wrote: “If Szapocznikow moved quickly from conventional representation of ‘woman’ in the late 1950s to a kind of embodied abstraction that began to reflect Surrealism reanimated by an exploration of sexuality and eroticism in the early 1960s, Polish contemporaries like Magdalena Abakanowicz and Teresa Pągowska were also working prior to a feminist language or discourse, but clearly interrogating how the integrity of the modernist body might be undone.” Cornelia Butler, “Soft Body/ Soft Sculpture: the Gendered Surrealism of Alina Szapocznikow,” in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955-1972*, exh. cat.. The Museum of Modern Art in New [October 7, 2012-January 28, 2013], p. 40.

43 Janusz Bogucki noted astutely that by being violent and, at the same time, very composed stylistically Pągowska’s expressiveness might have more to do with that of Francis Bacon. See Janusz Bogucki, *Sztuka Polski Ludowej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1983), p. 249.

44 Quoted after http://wyborcza.pl/1,157232,1712544.html. When asked by Elżbieta Dzikowska about her resentment to be labeled a woman artist, Pągowska answered: “Many things shape us: our physicality, cultural legacy, education. When I was a child, we were told ‘boys don’t cry.’ Those words applied to both, my brother and me. I read somewhere that a woman is created to serve. Do we have to reject this assumption? It is wonderful to be a woman, create ambiance at home, emotionally unite the family, give herself to them. I feel free inside and all that accept voluntarily. A defense from the world with its multitude of small and big affairs, from what prevents us from being oneself, is difficult not just for women. Everybody defends something. Some have succeeded, others haven’t.” Elżbieta Dzikowska, *Artyści mówią: wywiady z mistrzami malarstwa* (Warsaw: Rusikon Press, 2011), pp. 178-179. Still, Pągowska was highly aware of the disadvantages women artists have to face in the art world, which she discussed in “Koniec z lekką delikatnością,” conversation with Katarzyna Soltan published in *Art & Business*, nr. 11 (2008), pp. 24-28.

45 Eric Karpeles, *Almost Nothing: The 20th-Century Art and Life of Józef Czapski*; Józef Czapski, *Inhuman Land: A Wartime Journey Through the USSR*, transl. Antonia Lloyd-Jones; Józef Czapski, *Lectures on Proust in a Soviet Prison Camp*, transl. Eric Karpeles.

46 Karpeles, *Almost Nothing: The 20th-Century Art and Life of Józef Czapski*, p. 15.

47 “Koniec z lekką delikatnością,” conversation with Katarzyna Soltan, quoted from a reprint of fragments in *Co po Cybisie?*, exh. cat., Michał Jachula and Małgorzata Jurkiewicz eds. (Warsaw: Zachęta-Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, 2018), p. 207.

48 “In everything that Camus writes there is the raw sound of purity,” Czapski wrote in 1947, viewing “purity” as a sign of his great humanism. “La Peste,” in his *Czytając* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1990), p. 76. In his writings, Camus, as Czapski, called “absurd” the idea of progress in art.

49 “Derwiz,” in Józef Czapski, *Patrząc* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1983), p. 247.

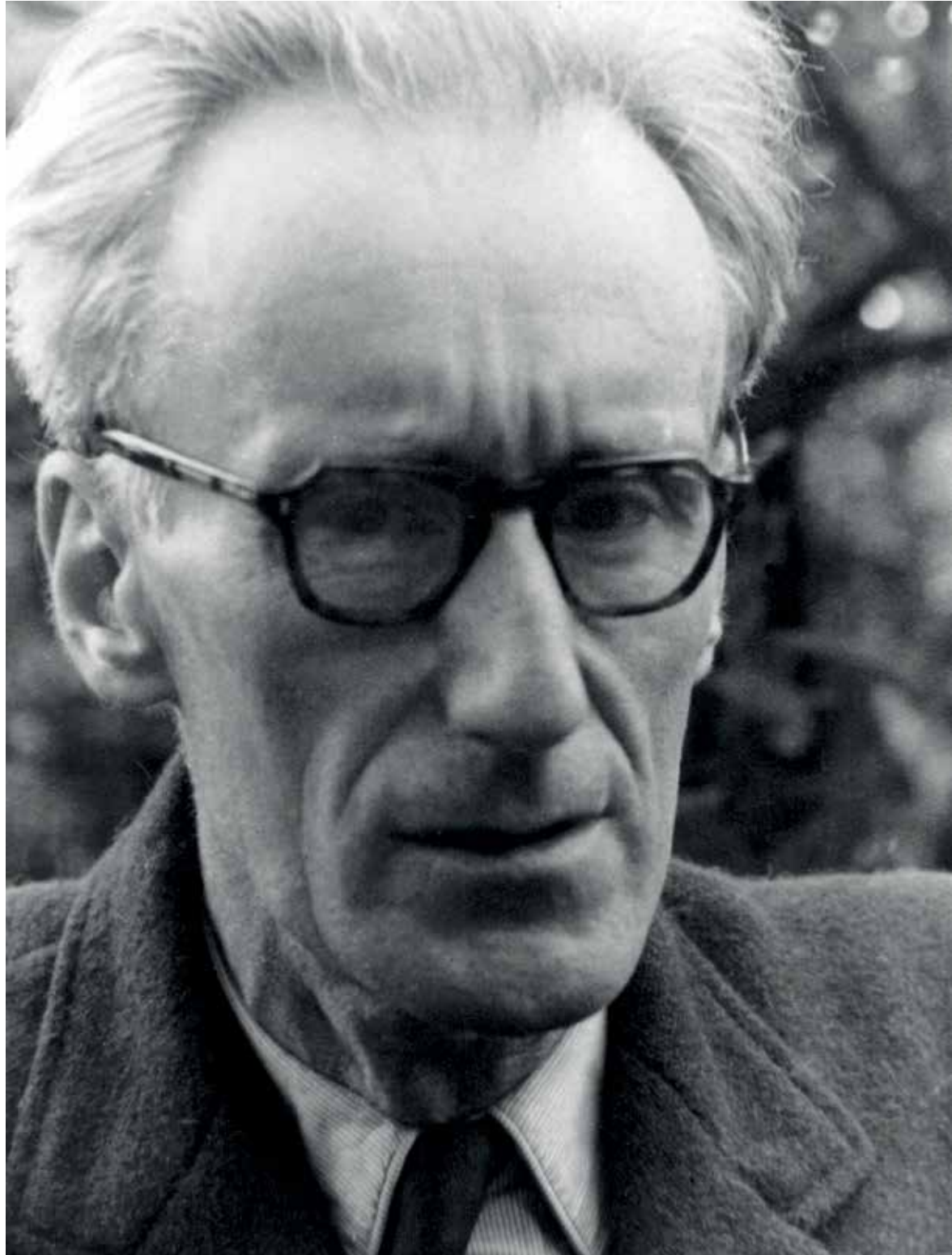
50 One has to wonder if a similar “fury”—toward psychoanalysis, but also any theory or praxis that exposed the “hidden aspects” of the human psyche and various aspects of sexuality in the context of art— was what motivated Czapski to throw a book by Georges Bataille out the window of a moving train, after reading just a few pages. Mentioned in, Wojciech Karpiński, *Portret Czapkiego* (Warsaw: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2007).

51 “Koniec z lekką delikatnością,” p. 207.

52 Quoted by Cornelia Butler in “Soft Body/ Soft Sculpture…,” p. 38; after, *Teresa Pągowska*, ed. Bożena Grochola (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1996), p. 6.

15

JÓZEF CZAPSKI



Józef Czapski (1896 – 1993)

From his father's maternal side Czapski was a descendent of the Meyendorff family from the Royal Prussia, and the von Thun und Hohenstein family belonging to the old German aristocracy relocated to Prague on his mother's side.

Beginning in October 1918, Czapski studied at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts in the studio of Stanisław Lentz. In 1920, he transferred to the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, where he took classes with, among others, Wojciech Weiss and Józef Pankiewicz. In 1923, he joined the *Komitet Paryski* (Paris Committee), along Jan Cybis, Hanna Rudzka-Cybis, Zygmunt Waliszewski, Piotr Potworowski, and Artur Nacht-Samborski, and they all went to the French capital in late 1924. He remained there until early 1930s, having several shows in France and Switzerland.

During World War II, Czapski was in a prisoner of war in Russia. He wrote about that experience in *Wspomnienia Starobielskie* (Reminiscences of Starobyelsk) and *Proust w Gрязowcu* (English title: *Lost Time: Lectures on Proust in a Soviet Prison Camp*). Upon his release, he joined the army of General Anders, and he was put in charge of determining the faith of the Polish officers captured by the Soviets. The result of this investigation was his *Na nieludzkiej ziemi* (Inhuman Land), first published in Polish in 1949. He left Russia and stayed for a short period of time in Rome immediately after the war then, he moved to Paris, where he settled for good. In Paris, he co-founded the *Instytut Literacki* (Literary Institute) and the literary review *Kultura* (Culture). He also returned to painting. He exhibited in France, Switzerland, England, the United States, among other places. In 1985, his works were included in the Biennale de Paris. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, he also head several shows in Poland.

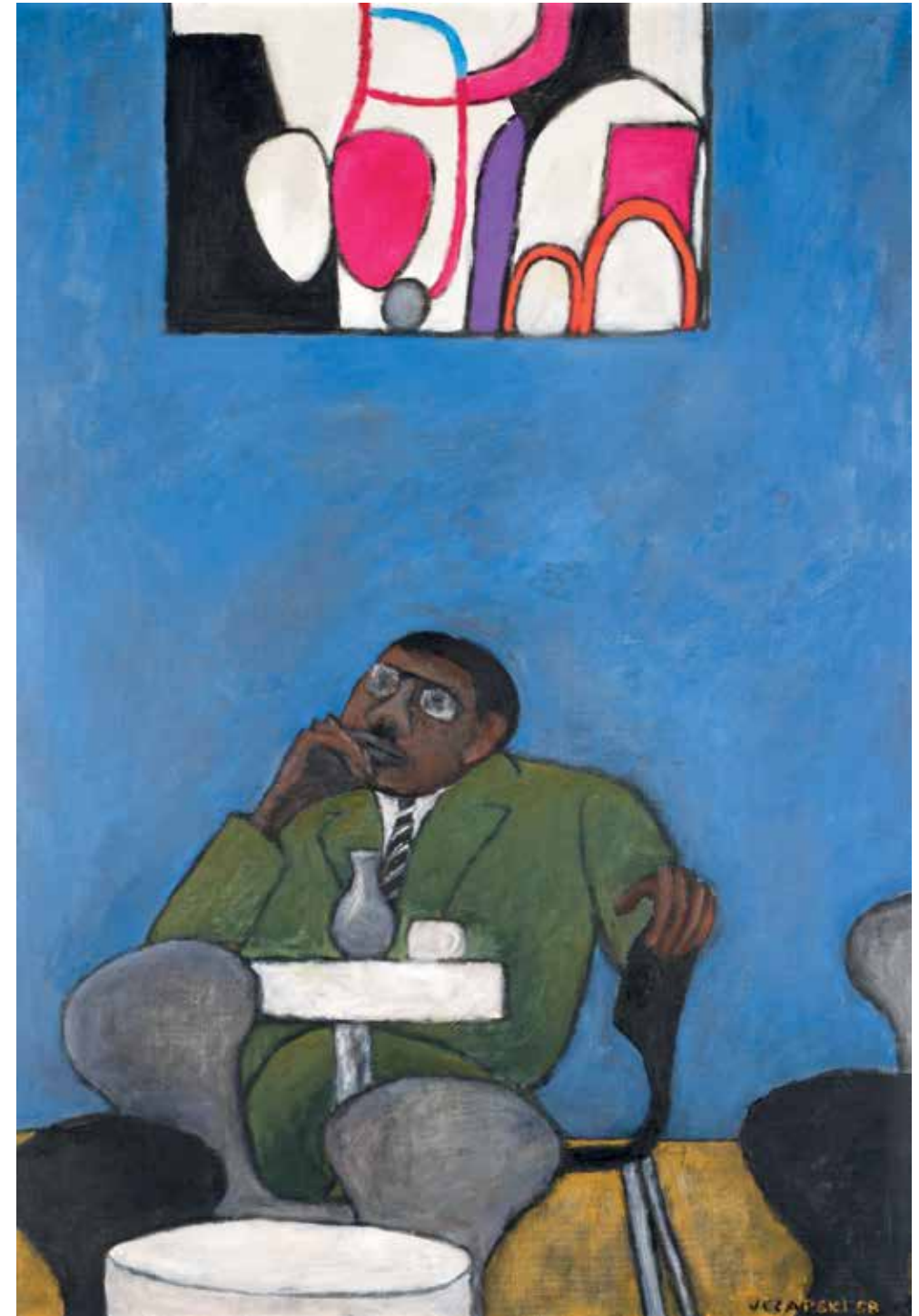
Czapski was also an important essayist on art, literature, and politics. His main collections of essays include: *Tumult i widma* (Tumult and specters), *Patrząc* (Looking), and *Czytając* (Reading). Recently, his private correspondence with his intimate friend Ludwig Hering was released under the title *Czapski-Hering listy* (Czapski-Hering letters) vol. 1 and 2.

In 2016, the Józef Czapski Pavilion—which hosts a permanent exhibition documenting the artist's life and work, both as a writer and a painter—opened as a branch of the National Museum in Kraków.

Józef Czapski, Photo: LASKI DIFFUSION/ EAST NEWS

Cafe in the Gallery, 1968

oil on canvas, 114 cm x 78 cm



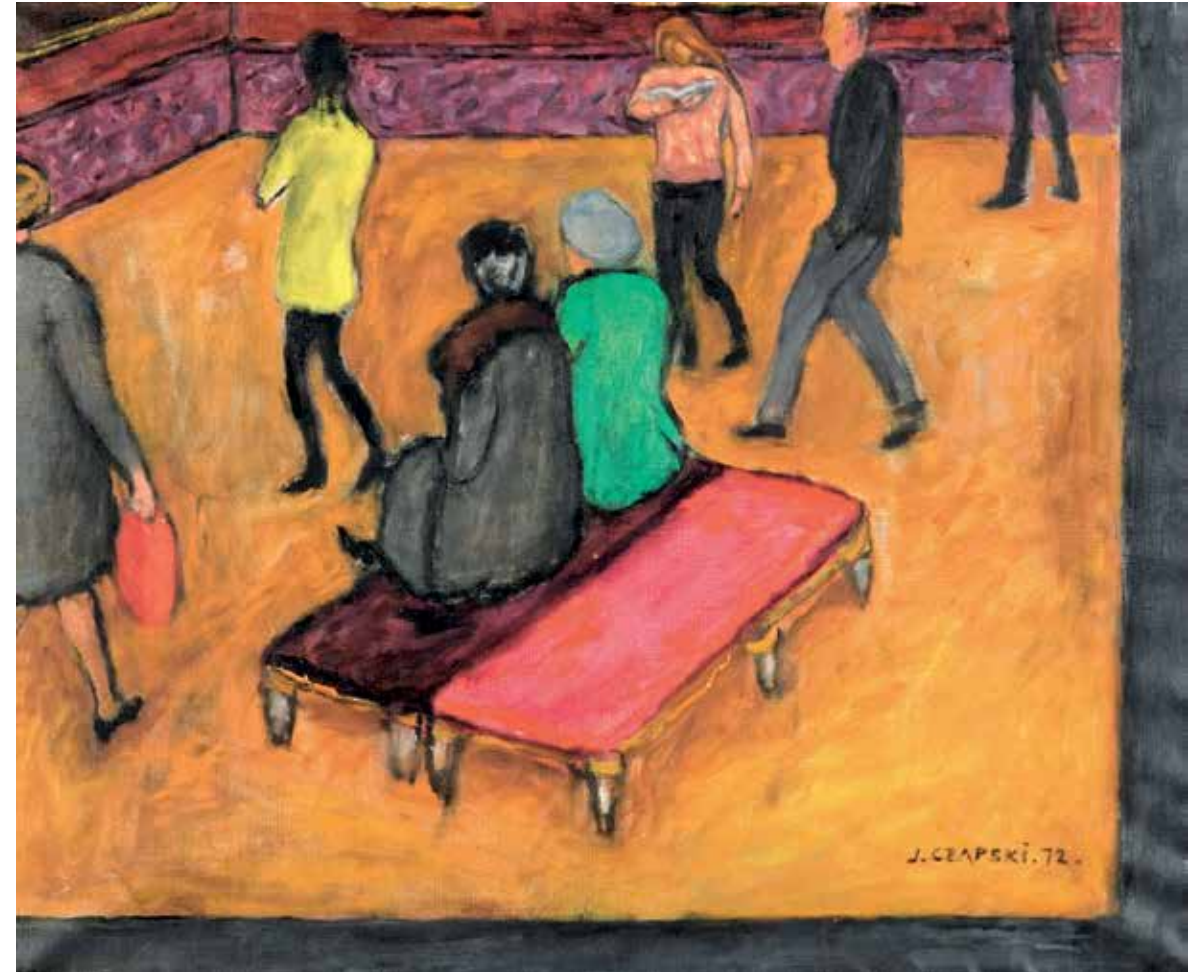
Still life with lemons, 1971

oil on canvas, 27 cm x 46 cm



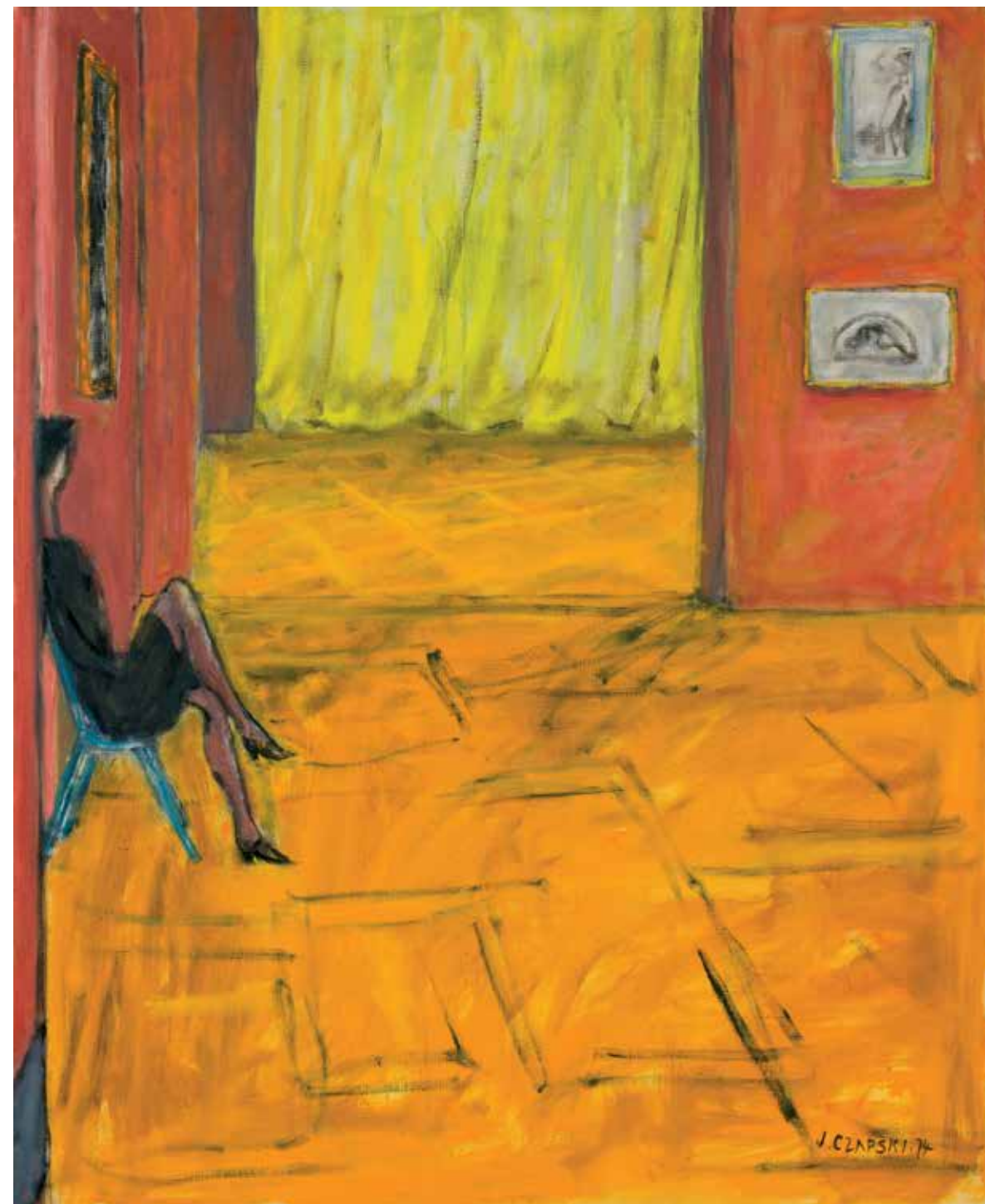
Exhibition in Petit Palais, 1972

oil on canvas, 59,5 cm x 72 cm



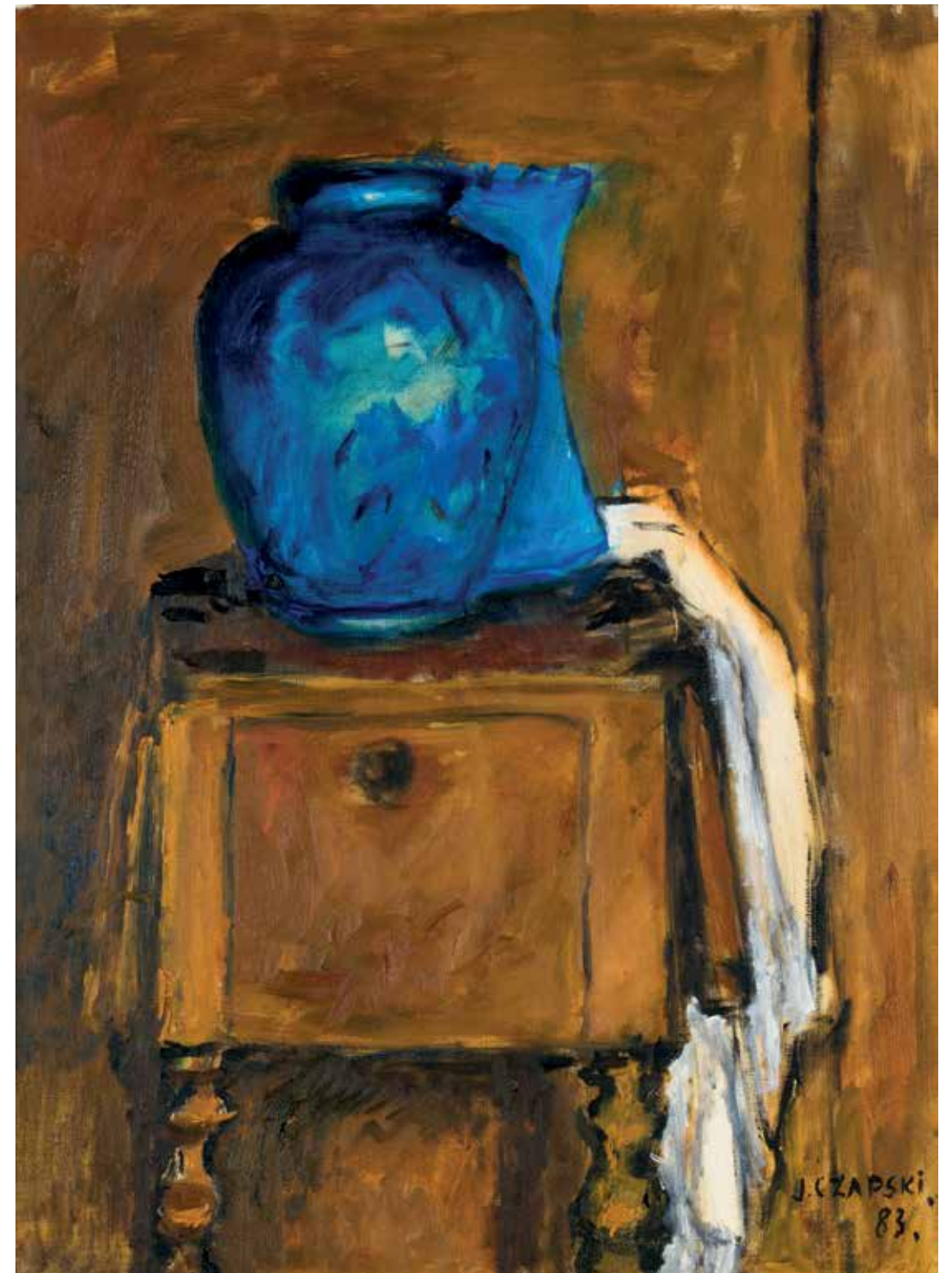
Yellow exhibition, 1974

oil on canvas, 100 cm x 81 cm



Still life with a vase, 1983

oil on canvas, 73 cm x 54 cm



TERESA PAŁOWSKA



Teresa Pałowska in her studio, Photo courtesy Filip Pałowski

Teresa Pałowska (1926 – 2007)

Graduated from the State College of Fine Arts (PWSP) in Poznań, obtaining a diploma in the Department of Painting and Murals under the supervision of Waław Taranczewski in 1951.

She participated in “All-state Exhibition of Young Artists. Against the war - against fascism” in the Warsaw’s “Arsenal” in 1955, where she presented genre scenes painted in vivid colors. In the years 1958 - 1964, Pałowska turned to non-representational painting, limiting her palette to black, white and earth colors, and introducing sand, pieces of fabric and thickly laid resins into the surface of her paintings. She presented those works at the first Biennale de Paris in 1959 and in “15 Polish painters” in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1961. After this abstract period, Pałowska returned to figurative painting, but in a different way than before 1958: the human figure (mostly female) was deformed, the vivid color returned, but mostly as an accent, and the artist’s hallmark became unprimed canvas, which enriches the composition with texture and warmth. She was praised as a new voice in the so-called New Figuration. She further developed her approach to the figure in the series “Days”, “Monochromates” and “Magic Figures.” From the 1990s on Pałowska incorporated objects and animals into her scenes.

Pałowska had a distinguished career of an art educator. Between 1950-1964 she was a teacher at PWSSP in Gdańsk (the Sopot branch), which she ran independently after 1962. For a short period of time she taught at the PWSSP in Łódź, then, between, 1973 and 1992, she was in charge of a Painting and Drawing studio at the Department of Graphic Arts of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. In 1988 she received the title of full professor.

Today, Teresa Pałowska remains one of the most important artists of Polish post-war art and is considered in her native country to be a “classic.” Her work does not easily fit into the simple categories of “New Figuration” or, more so, into “women’s art”, for it approaches the human figure in painting in a highly original way.

The artist was a recipient of the Alfred Jurzykowski Foundation Award in 1990 and of the Jan Cybis Award in 2000.

A Sitter, 1970

oil on canvas, 145 cm x 130 cm



Monochrome XXXXC, 1975

oil on canvas, 120 cm x 130 cm



Washing head II (from the series **Magic Figures**), 1976

oil on canvas, 150 cm x 130 cm



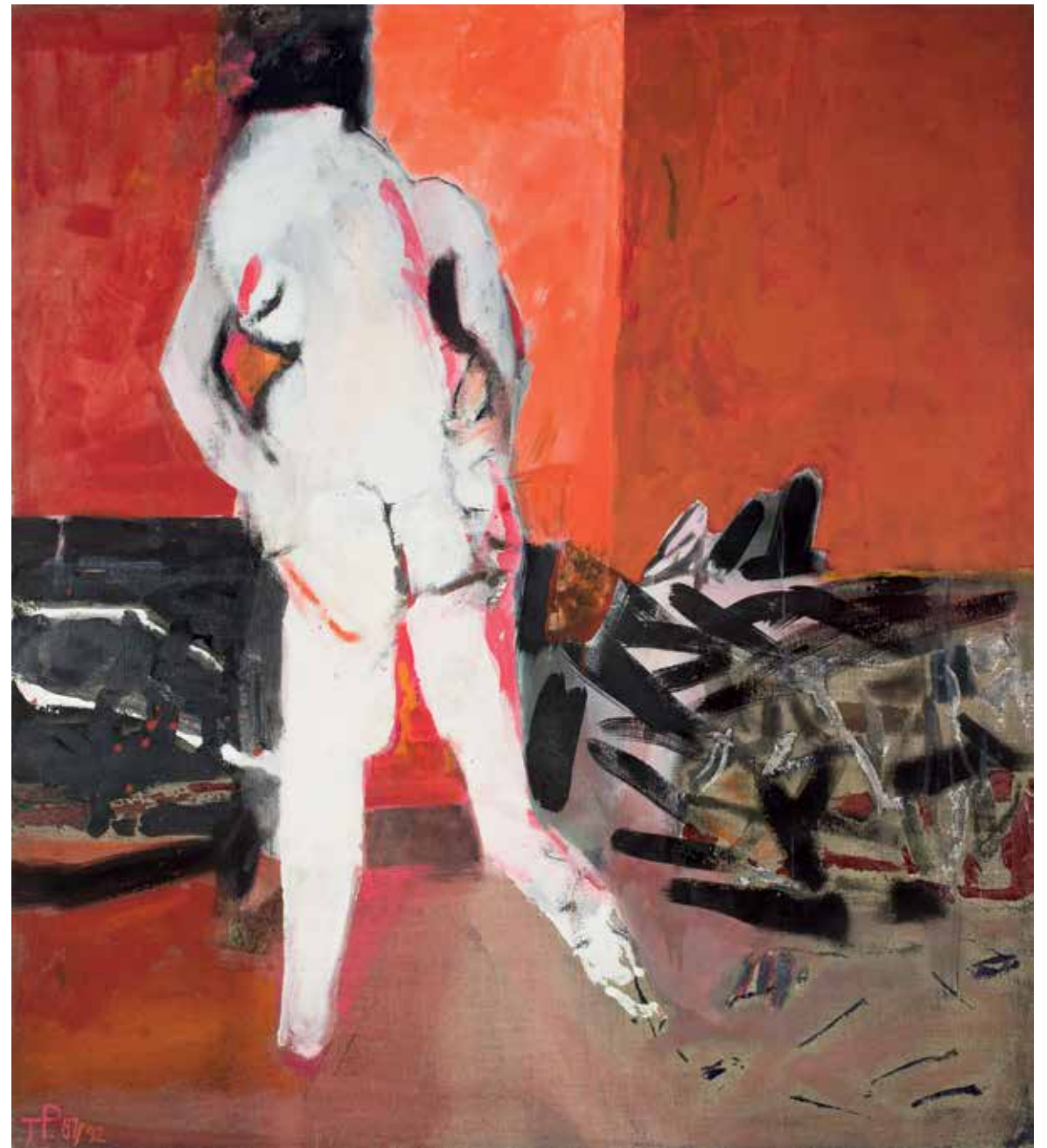
Cheerful erotic (from the series ***Magic Figures***), 1980

oil on canvas, 130 cm x 120 cm



Nude figure in a red room, 1992

oil on canvas, 145 cm x 130 cm



The Beach, 1990

oil on canvas, 140 cm x 160 cm



Measuring the time, 2000

oil on canvas, 145 cm x 130 cm



Dream about empty room, 2002

oil on canvas, 140 cm x 130 cm



Drying the sheets, 2004

oil on canvas, 130 cm x 140 cm



Mosquitos, 2006

oil on canvas, 140 cm x 130 cm



Gulliver, 2006

oil on canvas, 140 cm x 130 cm



Black figure dancing and a dog, 2006

oil on canvas, 2006, 160 cm x 140 cm



Józef Czapski

Selected individual exhibitions:

1932: "Józef Czapski", Galerie Vignon, Paris
1957: "Józef Czapski", National Museum, Poznań
1951: "Józef Czapski", Galerie Motte, Geneva
1952: "Józef Czapski", Galerie M. Bénézit, Paris
1952: "Józef Czapski", Grabowski Gallery, London
1961: Czapski's exhibition, Sagittarius Gallery, New York
1971: "Exposition rétrospective", Galerie M. Motte, Geneva
1974: "Józef Czapski", Galerie Lambert, Paris
1978: "Józef Czapski", Galerie Briance, Paris
1990: "Joseph Czapski. Rétrospective", Musée Jenisch, Vevey, Switzerland
1990: "Józef Czapski. Malarstwo", Kordegarda Gallery, Warsaw
1991: "Dzienniki Józefa Czapskiego", National Museum, Poznań
1992: "Józef Czapski. Malarstwo ze zbiorów szwajcarskich", National Museums in Kraków, Warsaw, Poznań
1996: "Wnętrze. Człowiek i miejsce. Józef Czapski w stulecie urodzin", National Museum in Kraków
1999: "Obrazy Józefa Czapskiego z kolekcji Wojciecha Fibaka", National Museum, Szczeci:
2000: "Józef Czapski. Widzenie życia", National Museum, Gdańsk
2007: "Józef Czapski. Wokół kolekcji Aeschlimanna", Zachęta-National Gallery of Art

Selected groupe exhibitions:

1930: Kapists' exhibition, Gallery Zak, Paris
1931: Kapists' exhibition, Moss Galerie, Geneva;
1931: Kapists' exhibition, Polish Art Club, Warsaw
1938: World's Fair, New York
1985: Biennale de Paris, Paris
1994/95: Cybis, Czapski, Nacht-Samborski", Polish Institute, Paris
2008: "Portret, pejzaż, martwa natura: Od Siemiradzkiego do Czapskiego. The Krzysztof Musiał Collection", Zachęta-National Gallery of Art, Warsaw

Teresa Pągowska

Selected individual exhibitions:

1956: "Teresa Pągowska", BWA Sopot
1961: "Pągowska", Galerie Lambert, Paris
1962: "Teresa Pągowska", Quadrante. Studio d'Arte Contemporanea di Matilde Giorgini, Florence
1962: "Teresa Pągowska", Gallerie il Canale, Venice
1964: "Pągowska. Peinture Contemporaine Polonaise", Galerie Numaga, Auvernier
1966: "Teresa Pągowska. Malarstwo", CBWA Zachęta, Warsaw
1974: "Teresa Pągowska. Bilder", Neue Berliner Kunstverein, Rathaus Reinickendorf, Berlin
1976: "Teresa Pągowska", BWA Gallery, Lublin; BWA Gallery, Białystok; BWA Gallery, Olsztyn
1980: "Teresa Pągowska. Wystawa prac malarskich", Studio Gallery, Warsaw
1984: "Teresa Pągowska. Huiles", Calart Art Contemporain, Geneva
1990: "Teresa Pągowska. Paintings", Persons & Lindell Gallery, Helsinki
1992: "Teresa Pągowska. Malarstwo", Kordegarda Gallery, Warsaw
1993: "Teresa Pągowska", Starmach Gallery, Cracow
1997: "Teresa Pągowska", Zachęta-National Gallery of Art, Warsaw
2003: "Teresa Pągowska. Obrazy z lat 1960 – 1970", Fibak Büchner Gallery, Warsaw
2003: "Teresa Pągowska. Malarstwo", National Museum, Poznań
2008: "Teresa Pągowska. Malerei", Galerie des Polnischen Instituts, Düsseldorf
2008: "Teresa Pągowska. Figury magiczne, obrazy z lat 1972 – 2006", Piotr Nowicki Gallery, Warsaw
2008: "Przesypywanie czasu", aTAK Gallery, Warsaw
2013: "Teresa Pągowska Obrazy i kolaże z lat 1960- 1980", Bocheńska Gallery, Warsaw
2017: "Teresa Pągowska. Malarstwo", Piękna Gallery, Warsaw
2018: "Teresa Pągowska, Opera Gallery, Warsaw

Selected group exhibitions:

1950: "I Ogólnopolska Wystawa Plastyki", National Museum in Warsaw
1955: "Ogólnopolska Wystawa Młodej Plastyki. Przeciw wojnie – przeciw faszyzmowi", Arsenal, Warsaw
1956: "Junge Generation – Polnische Kunstausstellung", Berlin, Lipsk
1956: "Polish art exhibition", New Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay
1956: "Dix Peintres Polonais", Galerie Georges Giroux, Brussels
1959: "Pologne 50 ans de Peinture", Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva
1959: "Mostra di Pittura Polacca Contemporanea", Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna, Venice
1959: "Première Biennale de Paris", Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris
1961: "Brzozowski, Dominik, Kowalski, Nowosielski, Pągowska, Ziemiński", Contemporary Art Gallery, Chicago
1961: "15 Polish Painters", Museum of Modern Art, New York
1963: "La Nuova Figurazione", Mostra Mercato Nazionale d'Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence
1963: "Ecole de Paris 1963", Galerie Charpentier, Paris
1964: "Salon des Réalités Nouvelles", Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris
1966: "17 Polish Painters", D'Arcy Galleries, New York
1971: "12 Polish Painters", Günther Goletzki Galerie, Stuttgart
1975: "Polonia en Mexico. Festival de las Formas Pintura Contemporanea", Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico
1977: "Works donated for the Blind Center in Laski", The Copley Society of Boston, Boston; The American Institute of Architects, Washington D.C.; The Kosciuszko Foundation, New York
1986: "Contemporary Polish Master Works", Edith Barrett Art Gallery, Utica College of Syracuse University
1986: "The Richard Demarco Gallery 20th Anniversary. Exhibition for the 40th Edinburgh International Festival", The New Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh
1991: "Artystki polskie", National Museum, Warsaw
1991: "Voices of Freedom. Polish Women Artists and the Avant Garde 1880 – 1990", National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C.
1994: "Ars erotica", National Museum, Warsaw
2010: "Gender check – Sprawdzam płeć!", Zachęta-National Gallery of Art, Warsaw
2017, "TU jesteście. Wybrane prace polskiej sztuki po 1945 roku z kolekcji Krzysztofa Musiała," Centre of Contemporary Art, Toruń
2018: "Sztuka współczesna z kolekcji Wojciecha Fibaka", Regional Museum in Bydgoszcz
2018: "Co po Cybisie", Zachęta-National Gallery of Art, Warsaw

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Curated by Marek Bartelik

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RETURNING TO

YAMAHA

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