

# SZPAKOWSKI, SZPAKOWSKI

06.04–11.05.2024

Although Marian Szpakowski (1926–1983) and Waclaw Szpakowski (1883–1973) had the same surnames, they were not related. Nor do the facts suggest they ever crossed paths.

Marian Szpakowski was born in Zaleszczyki, in what was the Tarnopol Voivodeship, in the eastern part of Polish lands. He studied at the arts academy in Krakow. After taking his diploma in 1954, motivated by a state call to resettle in the Recovered Territories and the promise of financial support, he moved to Zielona Góra.

There he served as a municipal visual artist, he was director of the BWA gallery, creator of the Złotego Grona Biennial, a leading figure in the local art scene, and above all, a very active artist. In 1965 he began creating a series of geometrical, abstract pictures, breaking with matter painting, which was in vogue at the time. He remained faithful to the language of geometry to the end of his life, and although he used minimalist means of expression, his works are marked by an intensity and a sense of drama. In these aspects of his paintings, we may find a distant echo of his many years of experience with physical disability—the artist suffered from advanced scoliosis.

He regularly exhibited in Switzerland, where he had access to Plexiglas. The present show features a series of works from the late 1970s in which he made use of this material, which was a novelty at the time.

Waclaw Szpakowski, who was older than Marian Szpakowski by over forty years, was born in Warsaw.

An architect by education, he studied at the Polytechnic Academy in Riga. After completing his studies, he returned to Warsaw, where he worked as an architect, and after the Second World War he and his family settled in Wrocław. He did not participate in the art scene, nor did he show any special interest in it, yet he made artworks for over fifty years of his life.

Waclaw Szpakowski's drawings come from years of observing the world around him, in which he perceived a recurring structure. He was inspired by the cycles of nature, rhythm in music, and mathematical order. The line he used was always one millimeter thick, and was unbroken in the space of the work, creating figures and ornamental shapes.

The story of two Szpakowskis is also two narratives of art history, two tales of artists' journeys, shifting from the periphery to the center of the art world. The work of Waclaw Szpakowski was noticed by major institutions promoting modern art, which led to it being included at the Inventing Abstraction (2012–2013) exhibition at New York's MoMA. In this way, Szpakowski's drawings were inscribed in the international narrative about the beginnings of abstract art in Europe and the United States. Meanwhile, Marian Szpakowski's tale of art still works more as a local story, tied to the history of the Złote Grono Biennial, remaining somewhat on the margins. The present exhibition is an attempt to alter this situation if only slightly, to show Szpakowski's painting outside of its local context, to patch it into a broader narrative about modernism and its migrations.

Marian Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1979  
plexiglas, plywood, wood, acrylic  
50 × 50 cm  
from Piotr Marzec collection

Marian Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1979  
plexiglas, plywood, wood, acrylic  
50 × 50 cm

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*untitled*, circa 1930  
ink on tracing paper  
26,1 × 56,6 cm

Marian Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1979  
plexiglas, plywood, wood, acrylic  
50 × 50 cm

Marian Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1979  
plexiglas, plywood, wood, acrylic  
50 × 50 cm

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*F1*, 1925–1926  
ink on tracing paper  
25,3 × 56,8 cm

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1969  
pencil, crayon, ink on paper  
18 × 21 cm

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*untitled*, circa 1952  
pencil, crayon, ink on paper  
20 × 35 cm

Marian Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1979  
plexiglas, plywood, wood, acrylic  
50 × 50 cm

Marian Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1979  
plexiglas, plywood, wood, acrylic  
50 × 50 cm

Marian Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1979  
plexiglas, plywood, wood, acrylic  
60 × 50 cm  
from Jana Waclawek collection

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1953–1954  
pencil on paper  
31,2 × 23,8 cm

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1953–1954  
pencil on paper  
31 × 22,8 cm

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1953–1954  
ink and pencil on paper  
24,2 × 23,4 cm

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1953–1954  
ink on paper  
23,5 × 21,7 cm

Marian Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1979  
plexiglas, plywood, wood, acrylic  
50 × 50 cm  
from Andrzej Skrzyński collection

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1953–1954  
ink and pencil on paper  
32,8 × 24,6 cm

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*untitled*, 1953–1954  
ink and pencil on paper  
31,1 × 24,3 cm

Waclaw Szpakowski  
*B10*, 1927  
ink on tracing paper  
21 × 52,5 cm

Office space:

Marian Szpakowski  
*untitled* (triptych), 1979  
plexiglas, plywood, wood, acrylic  
40 × 40 cm each