

ZAK Eugeniusz (1884-1926), artist and painter. He was born on 15th December 1884 in the village of Mogilno, in the former Minsk governate. He was the son of Saweliusz Zak, an engineer and Adelina née Kronenblech.

He came from a polonised Jewish family. From the 17th century, his father's family had lived in the eastern territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Since childhood, he had from heart disease, spending his childhood in Kiev. Following his father's death in 1892, with his mother, he moved to Warsaw, where he completed his secondary education.

In 1901, together, they left for Paris. From the following year, he attended the École des Beaux Arts (the studio of Jean Léon Gérôme. However, after a few months, he moved to the private school Académie Colarossi, where he studied under the supervision of Alberta Besnard).

In 1903, he visited Rome, Florence, Pisa and Milan. He later continued his artistic studies in Munich. For six months, he studied in the private school of Slovenian painter Anton Ažbe.

In the autumn of 1904, he returned to Paris. He presented his works in the Autumn Salon (Salon d'Automne) in Paris. He systematically participated in that Salon's annual exhibitions until 1913. (In time, he became its prominent member and a judge in the drawing and painting sections.

In 1906-1913, he regularly exhibited at the Salon des Independants. From 1907, he took part in the displays in the National Salon of the Fine Arts Society in Paris. In 1906-1911, he travelled to Brittany many times. During his time in Paris, he maintained his artistic and social contacts in Poland. In 1910, he joined the Kraków "Sztuka" Society of Polish Artists. In 1911, he became a member of the Society of Polish Artists in Paris. In that year, he held his first solo exhibition at the Galerie Druet in Paris. In 1912, he achieved the status of "professor" in the private Paris school, the Académie La Palette. In 1913, along with Elie Nadelman, he was the only Pole to participate in the prestigious International Exhibition of Modern Art in New York (the "Armory Show").

In May 1913, in Paris, Eugeniusz Zak married a painting student Jadwiga Kohn, the daughter of → Edward Kohn, a Częstochowa doctor and philanthropist. The couple followed the Evangelical faith.

In 1912-1913. The artist regularly visited the south of France, the Varu valley, near Cagnes and Vence. At that time, he created a series of landscapes.

In 1914, Eugeniusz's son was born – Jan Andrzej Zak.

The artist also took part in the opening of the first Polish art school in Paris – the “Académie Polonaise”. Following the outbreak of World War I, together with his family, he moved to the south of France (Nice, Vence), then to Switzerland and in 1915, he returned to Poland.

In 1916, he lived with relatives in Częstochowa (at III Aleja 31), in his wife's home town. The artist rented a studio on ul. S. Staszica, which he shared with his wife's cousin → Jerzy Gelbard. During his time in Częstochowa, he often visited the “Cristal” café (at II Aleja 27), located not far from where he lived. During that time, among others, he came to know Leon and Olga Lipiński, owners of an estate near Częstochowa. His wife's home town remained as his place of residence until circa 1921.

At that time, he was also active in Warsaw and Kraków artistic circles. In January 1917, the first solo exhibition in Poland was held at the premises of the local Warsaw Publishing House. He began being active in the Polish Artistic Club in Warsaw and took part in several of its exhibitions - in 1917, 1918 and 1919. He also became a member of the “Polish Expressionists” (the “Formiści”). He took part in the exhibitions by the groups' members - the first in 1917 (Kraków) and the second in 1918 (Lwów).

In 1918, together with Roman Kramsztyk, Zygmunt Kamiński, Czesław Młodzianowski and Tadeusz Pruszkowski, he created “The Group of Five” (“The New Group”) and participated in the first exhibition of its members' works. In 1920-1921, he displayed his work at the exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts in Warsaw. In 1922, he became a co-founder and a member of the Warsaw “Rhythm” Society of Polish Artists.

In 1922, together with his family, he left for Berlin, where he created a decorative *panneau* for the villa of the Schapiro family. Then, in Bonn, he created wall decorations for the villa of architect Fritz August Breuhaus.

In 1923, he returned permanently to Paris. He took part in the exhibitions of the Autumn Salon (1923-1925) and the Tuileries Salon (1924 and 1925). In 1925, solo exhibitions of Eugeniusz Zaks' works were held in the Sam Salz's Galerie

Moderne in Cologne and also in the Galerie Devambez in Paris. The French, German and American press published many reviews, articles about the artist and interviews with him.

On 15th January 1926, in Paris, he died of a heart attack and was buried in the Montparnasse cemetery.

Eugeniusz Zak's artistic works were derived from his avant-garde research during the inter-war period. He combined inspirations drawn from various sources and created his own style. He reached for achievements and for aesthetic formulae which were developed by the "Old Masters" (including the Italian *quattrocento* and French classicism), as well as from contemporary artists (including members of the Pont-Aven group, symbolism, Nabism and Paul Cezanne's art and the early work of Pablo Picasso).

He was active in various artistic fields – easel painting, drawing and graphics. He combined various techniques (tempera, watercolour, gouache and pastel), but preferred, and most frequently used, oil. His favourite subjects were portraits, idyllic scenes, landscapes and inner representations of characters. He would often analyse the same motif, e.g., a fisherman, a miller, a puppet theatre or a dancer, creating several versions of the same subject.

Eugeniusz Zak's works can be found in private collections as well as in Polish and foreign museums, including at the;

- National Museum in Warsaw
- National Museum in Kraków
- Górnośląskie Museum in Bytom
- National Museum in Szczecin
- Lublin Museum
- National Museum in Kielce,
- Regional Museum in Tarnów
- National Museum in Poznań
- Regional Museum in Toruń, M
- Leon Wyczółkowski National Museum in Bydgoszcz,
- Museum of Art in Łódź
- National Museum in Wrocław,
- Śląsk Museum in Katowice
- Israel Museum in Jerusalem
- National Gallery of Art in Washington,
- Art Institute of Chicago,

- Von der Heydt Museum in Wuppertal,
- Musée du Petit Palais w Geneva,
- Centre Pompidou in Paris,
- Tel Aviv Museum of Art in Tel Aviv
- Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo.

The Częstochowa Museum has two of Zak's paintings - *Zamek* [Castle] (circa 1912–1913) and *Portret kobiety* [Portrait of a Woman] (his wife, Jadwig Kohn).

In 1913, he married Jadwiga née Kohn (→ Jadwiga Zak). They had a son Jan Andrzej (1914-1943?). His wife and son perished in the German concentration camp in Auschwitz.

Słownik Malarzy Polskich. Od dwudziestolecia międzywojennego do końca XX wieku, ed. M. Jendryczko, Warsaw 2001, p. 406. – B. Brus-Malinowska *Eugeniusz Zak 1884– 1926*, katalog wystawy, National Museum in Warsaw, Warsaw 2004. – T. Dobrowolski *Malarstwo polskie 1764–1964*, Wrocław 1968, pp. 389–390; J. Pollakówna, W. Rudzińska, *Malarstwo polskie między wojnami 1918–1939*, Warsaw 1982, pp. 383–384.

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