

ENG- LISH SUM- MA- RY

Roman NIECZYPOROWSKI

A SCHOOL WITH A VIEW OF THE SEA. THE GENESIS OF THE FINE ARTS ACADEMY IN GDANSK

In 2020, the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdansk celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary. History shows that the idea of establishing an art school in the so-called Trojmiasto (the joint name of the three cities: Gdansk, Sopot and Gdynia) in 1945 arose out of friendship and fascination with the sea. In the first post-war period, the most outstanding Polish artists taught at the College of Fine Arts in Gdansk (Panstwowa Wyższa Szkoła Sztuk Pięknych, based in Sopot). Among them were: Janusz Strzałecki, Juliusz and Krystyna Studnicki, Marian and Józefa Wnuk, Jacek and Hanna Żuławszy, Stefan Listowski, Włodzimierz Padlewski, Adam Haupt, Stanisław Teisseyre, Teresa Pągowska, Stanisław Horno-Popławski, Artur Nacht-Samborski, Aleksander Kobzdej, Rajmund Pietkiewicz, Stanisław Borysowski, Jan Cybis, and Piotr Potworowski. Before the War, they had their artistic internship abroad, mainly in France. A variety of acquaintances and friendships were made at that time, and persisted through the dark days of the Second World War. Thanks to this, the Sopot (Gdansk) Academy of Fine Arts remained in touch with the artistic avant-garde even in the worst times of

communism. It is significant that Piotr Potworowski, who came from England, and who sometimes complained about the artistic conservatism of Polish art, was settled in Sopot. There was an art-friendly climate in the Trojmiasto at that time. The founders of the school were linked by personal friendships, social relations and a community of artistic views. The considerable distance from the capital city meant that the artists working on the Gdansk Coast were often not as strongly constrained by the current politics as those operating in the centre of the country. The artists, mostly embedded in Sopot, which was not damaged by World War II, created an artistic milieu that went down in history under the name of the "Sopot School." From the very beginning, the college authorities aimed at achieving the status of an academy, hence the constant efforts to maintain a high level of education. The attempt to create a strong theoretical unit focused on the problems of theory and history of art, made at the end of the 1950s, was to serve this purpose. Political turmoil made this possible only later, just after the fall of communism in Poland. Today, the tradition of tolerance for artistic diversity and openness to creative exploration, which was based on old friendships, makes the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdansk remember about its great past, while at the same time opening up to the future and modernity, remembering that the master is recognized by the achievements of his students.