

Hilary Krzysztofiak - known as Hilary, painter, graphic artist and theatre stage designer, was born in Szopienice (now a district of Katowice) in 1926. He studied at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. He was a member of the avant-garde St-53 Group, graphic editor of the magazines "Po prostu" and "Ruch Muzyczny", among others. He participated in important artistic events, including the legendary All-Polish Exhibition of Young Visual Arts in the Arsenal in 1955, the 1st Plein-Air in Osieki, the Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elblag, exhibitions of the Krzywe Koło Gallery and the Salon of Modernity, playing an important role in shaping modern Polish art in the 1950s and 1960s. He also designed sets for many plays by, among others, Ionesco and Mrożek, with whom he was friends.

At the end of the 1960s, after one of his exhibitions abroad, he did not return to the country - he decided to emigrate, not finding enough space of freedom for himself and his art. After his departure, the artist's studio in Warsaw was sealed, then the paintings were thrown away, and the works on paper were burned by roofers under boilers with tar during the renovation of the roof over the 'Wisła' cinema.

In 1971, Krzysztofiak made his first trip to the United States, where he applied for American citizenship (he received it in 1977, at which time he changed his name to Christopher Hilary). A year later, his first American exhibition was held in South Orange. From the early 1970s, the artist continued to be an active artist in Germany and the United States. He participated in many group exhibitions and had more than a dozen solo exhibitions. In 1976, he received the A. Jurzykowski Foundation Award in New York. He was a well-known person in Polish émigré circles, including those of the Parisian "Kultura". J. Czapski, B. Palester, W. Odojewski and T. Nowakowski wrote about him. He died suddenly of a heart attack in 1979 in the United States, at the age of 52. In Poland, the censorship of the Polish People's Republic condemned him to non-existence. In an effort to restore his figure to the history of post-war Polish art, the National Museum in Warsaw presented a retrospective exhibition of Hilary's work at the Zachęta Gallery in March 1997. This retrospective was subsequently hosted by the Silesian Museum in Katowice and the Bunkier Sztuki Gallery in Krakow.

Hilary's paintings have been presented at many solo exhibitions abroad, including in Germany, the Netherlands, France, the USA and Switzerland. The artist's works can be found in museums and private collections in Europe and the United States.

The works on show are a gift from Krystyna Hilary