

Marian Kratochwil - was born on 30 September 1906 in Kosovo in the Hutsul region. His father was a judge, and his mother an opera singer. Kratochwil developed a passion for music from childhood and very soon began to play the piano. Karol Szymanowski and the cellist Dezyderiusz Danczowski were frequent guests at the Kratochwil home, where musical evenings were held. Kratochwil attended grammar schools in Lwów and Złoczów. From 1926, he studied philosophy and history at Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów. As a young man, he took twelve drawing lessons from the battle painter Stanisław Batowski. From then on, he began to develop his drawing skills, spending his free time observing everyday life in the Borderlands: peasants, Jews, horses, markets, fairs and markets of feasts, recording his observations on the pages of sketchbooks, which have been preserved to this day. In 1930, Kratochwil began to paint oil pictures. Fascinated by Cervantes' Don Quixote, he began to create prints on this theme. In 1937, he enrolled at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, but abandoned his studies in favour of independent artistic pursuits. He received a gold medal for Farewell to Joy at an exhibition at the "Zachęta". After the outbreak of war, he joined the September campaign and then made his way to France via Hungary and Yugoslavia, where he joined the Polish Army in 1940. He went to Scotland, where he stayed until his demobilisation in 1947, where he became an assistant at the Infantry Training Centre attached to General Stanisław Maczek's division. In 1941, several of his works were shown at the Summer Exhibition of Polish Artists at the Scottish Royal Academy. At that time he created the copperplate series War. In 1944-1947 Kratochwil studied at the College of Art in Edinburgh. After demobilisation, he settled permanently in London, where he found the first years of his stay financially difficult, working as a display window decorator for a furniture design company. Things improved when his friend, the English painter Dame Ethel Walker, bequeathed him a number of paintings and part of her estate. In 1961, he married the painter Kathleen Browne, with whom they opened a painting school, where Kratochwil taught art theory and the basics of the painting workshop. The school was located in their apartment-studio, in London's prestigious Chelsea district. The artist simultaneously taught at the Epsom School of Art. His trips to Spain in the 1950s shaped Kratochwil's oeuvre and crystallised his own mature style. The artist completely changed his palette using vivid, highly expressive colour. After 1956, his paintings consisted mainly of Iberian seascapes, cities, villagers and Donkichot themes. From 1968, he exhibited his works, often together with his wife, in London. In Poland he exhibited at the National Museum in Krakow in 1970 and 1980, 1981 at the Zachęta Gallery and 1996 at the Jagiellonian Library. His Andalusian paintings were exhibited at the Santa Cruz Museum in Toledo in 1986. Kratochwil was recognised by the Spanish authorities, who awarded him the highest honour, the Order "Encomienda de Isabel La Católica", for his merits in the field of painting and artistic work, and he was also appointed a member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and Historical Sciences in Toledo. The painter did not visit Poland until 1965. Kratochwil donated part of his collection to Polish museum institutions - the National Museums in Krakow and Warsaw and the Jagiellonian Library. He died on 3 December 1997 and was buried in Kensington Cemetery.

The works on show are a gift from Ewa Gubała and Zbigniew Kratochwil