

**Bronisława (Bronka) Michałowska** - née Chądzyńska - was born in 1915 in Russia, in Tsarskoye Selo, into a family of borderland landowners. She was the daughter of Bronisław Chądzyński and Felicja, née Siemaszko. Bronisław Chądzyński graduated from the University of Dorpat and was one of the directors at the Belgian-Russian metal works in St Petersburg. In 1921, the Chądzyński family left Soviet Russia and, after a dramatic trek through Crimea, the island of Corfu and Serbia, arrived in Warsaw and from there in Vilnius. Here Bronisława spent her childhood and youth, attending the Nazareth Gymnasium and then the Prince Adam Czartoryski Gymnasium. In 1936, she began studying at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Stefan Batory University in Tymon Niesiolowski's studio, and married a year later. The outbreak of World War II forced her to interrupt her studies and leave Vilnius. In November 1939, she went to Kaunas, to her interned husband. After his release, they both made their way via Riga to Sweden, and then in January 1940 to France and from there to England. Bronisława, who had begun her studies in Vilnius, continued them at Pankiewicz's studio (she then began to use the abbreviated version of her name, Bronka), where the Parisian branch of the Krakow Academy was located, under the direction of painter Waclaw Zawadowski, and intermittently at the Glasgow School of Fine Arts, and at a London studio for young artists, subsidised by the Polish government in England. At the same time, Bronisława (Bronka) worked as a proofreader for the 'Dziennik Żołnierza' and collaborated with British Handicraft Export. In 1945, the artist graduated from the Courtauld Institute of Fine Arts (University of London). From 1945 to 1946 she and her husband had a well-known ceramic studio in London. In 1955, the painter emigrated to Canada, first to Montreal, then to Toronto. Here she worked in the porcelain department of the Eaton's Centre department store and taught evening courses in painting and drawing for adults. Thanks to the well-known graphic designer and art expert Alfred Birkenmayer, she was given a full-time lecturing position at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, where she taught interior design and decoration. After arriving in Canada, the artist purchased a ceramic kiln and began to specialise in the art of artistic ceramics, mainly painting on ceramic tiles. In creating these, she moved from small utilitarian forms to larger and more complex ones. The large compositions were suitable for both the decoration of private interiors and large spaces in public places. Her 'ceramic paintings' can be found in Polish and Canadian museums. A work made for Toronto's centenary is in the Royal Ontario Museum, and Horizon and Lake Ontario in Toronto's New City Hall. The largest composition - 150 tiles - was done for Gordon Jeweller in Yorkdale Plaza in 1974, a slightly smaller one for Abitibi Paper Co. in 1973 and for the Toronto Women's Hospital in 1986. Bronka Michałowska painted the previously glazed white tiles with a brush, cotton wool and her finger. She then fired the colours in a kiln, often each separately, at 750-800 °C.

Bronka Michałowska's artistic activity encompasses many areas of art: oil paintings, gouaches, drawings, watercolours, prints (linocuts), illustrations and painting on ceramic tiles. Her work is not manifest, it does not deal with any grand or programmatic themes. Her painting is an intimate, very feminine painting, in which elements of romanticism and melancholy are intertwined with human anxiety and abandonment. Bronka Michałowska has had a number of solo and group exhibitions, both in Canada, the United Kingdom and Poland. In 1995, she received the W. and N. Turzanski Foundation Award for lifetime achievement. Turzanski for lifetime achievement in the arts. She died in 2015 in Toronto.

The works on show are a gift from the artist