

Aleksander Werner - born 30.09.1920 in Brwinów, sculptor, painter, graphic artist and pedagogue, born into a family with artistic roots dating back to the 17th century, was associated in his youth with Toruń, Legionowo and Lviv. After the outbreak of the Second World War, he was deported deep into the Soviet Union and imprisoned in a labour camp. In 1941, after the Sikorski-Mayski agreement, he joined the Polish Army in the Middle East under the command of General Władysław Anders. With the 2nd Corps, he travelled through the Middle East and Egypt, from where he ended up in Italy, where he fought at Monte Cassino. In 1945, he took up painting studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, founded by Professor Marian Bohusz-Szyszko, Section of Artists and Students of Fine Arts of the Soldiers of the 2nd Corps Borderland Company. A year later he left for the UK, where he continued his studies with Bohusz-Szyszko at the Sudbury and Kingwood Common camps - as part of the Painting and Applied Graphic Arts Study. He furthered his graphic design studies at Sir John Cass' School of Art. in London, and was subsequently employed at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts. He was a co-founder of the so-called Group 49, a grouping of Polish visual artists.

During his early years in Britain, Werner concentrated on painting and printmaking, and his intricate woodcuts were exhibited in London, Switzerland, Italy and the United States. In 1954-55, Werner was chosen to represent Britain in the Victoria and Albert Museum's exhibition of coloured woodcuts. "The 'dramatic' style he developed made his woodcuts popular in the 1950s as illustrations for jacket books. Werner participated in British and international exhibitions of woodcuts until 1963. He also taught wood engraving. In the early 1960s Werner turned to sculpture, and from 1976 he began to create fused glass sculptures. In a major solo exhibition of his work (1972) held at the Drian Gallery, run by Halima Nalecz in London, he exhibited 50 dynamic pieces in fired clay. He has also been involved in collage, interior design including the 'Kon-Tiki' café, advertising including 'Marocco' and 'Africa' posters for Air France, cover and layout design for books including *Seaforth Mackenzie*, *Dead men rising*, 1951, *Robert Ardrey*, *African Genesis*. A personal investigation into the Animal Origins and nature of Man, 1961. He has completed several major commissions in London - in the late 1960s the artist created a monumental aluminium bas-relief for the offices of Acton CAV Ltd, in 1971 he completed a ceramic mural at TESCO's head office, produced a gilded bas-relief set in front of the tabernacle in a church in Manchester. He had been in hospital since suffering a stroke in 1996, which left him partially paralysed and with limited contact with his surroundings. He died in 2011 - shortly before turning 91. He had many solo exhibitions at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, among others.

The works on show are a gift from the artist