

Ryszard Bilan - born in 1946 in Krakow, which he is not connected with, because the Bilan family, together with a wave of emigration from the Eastern Borderlands, moved to the regained territories after the war - they settled in Kłodzko. Here the artist spent his "rough-and-tumble" childhood years. At the age of just four, he lost contact with his mother, whose psyche, burdened by the tragic effects of the Shoah, could not cope with everyday life and she spent the rest of her life in a psychiatric hospital. Bilan's father ran an upholstery shop and, thanks to a good income, also a bar lifestyle. The future artist grew up alone. He sometimes helped his father in the workshop, rarely went to school, and spent his time playing and going to the cinema every day. He ran away from home, travelled alone - on foot, sometimes by train 'stowaway', learned about the world, people, experienced, starved. At the age of 14, he was placed in an orphanage, his wandering life stabilised and the caretakers of the institution placed an emphasis on education. It was at this time that they recognised his awakening artistic talent. As a teenager, he enrolled in a vocational school in Szczytno, learning glass and crystal processing. Here he met his master, Zbigniew Horbowy, who taught him drawing and encouraged him to study art (unsuccessfully at the time). After receiving his diploma as a glass cutter, he was employed at a glassworks. He took up residence in the Young Worker's House, where he again had to demonstrate his strength of character; he stood apart from the drunken company of workers by not drinking, smoking or taking part in vulgar libations. The artist often says that he was always a misfit. The year 1968 derailed his plans for a future of studying economics. For the first time, he experienced humiliation and persecution because of his Jewish roots. At the age of 22, he had to make a decision - whether to stay in the country and allow the harassment and psychological violence to continue, or emigrate. Deciding to leave Poland, he was forced to accept an exit passport and agree to lose his citizenship. In 1969, he and his then-partner left for Vienna and from there to Israel, where they had the chance to receive state assistance. Fate smiled on Bilan, he was given a flat in Israel and, although he did not speak the language, he began studying graphic design at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem. After the Yom Kippur War (1974), in which he took part, he was offered a scholarship in Berlin or Paris. He chose Paris, where he settled; he also began studying at the polytechnic to improve his financial situation. In parallel, he worked as an illustrator for animated films and also as a designer in the glass industry. In 1976, he created illustrations for a book entitled *The Shortsighted Camel*,, and for a series of poems by Andre Coryelle, and also designed covers. Art did not give him the chance to make a decent living as an émigré in Paris; he opened a repair and construction company, also working as a technician on the construction of electrical engineering laboratories. When he retired, he devoted himself exclusively to art.

After many years of absence, he returned to Poland in 1986; three years later, he began to write an autobiography entitled "Ejruw", published in Warsaw in 1995 in a small edition and practically unavailable. Ryszard Bilan is the recipient of many prestigious awards - in 1971 he was awarded the prize of the American-Israeli Cultural Foundation; in 1976 he won the first prize for graphic art in Orly, France; 1976 the Parisian gallery Du Haut-Pave awarded him an honorary prize; in 1988 he received the first prize for woodcuts at a competition in Elancourt, France; in 1991 he received the first prize for graphic art from the City of Lodz. The works of Ryszard Bilan have been exhibited at more than 50 exhibitions, including more than 30 solo and 20 group exhibitions in France, Israel, Poland, Switzerland and the USA, among others.

The works on show are a gift from the artist