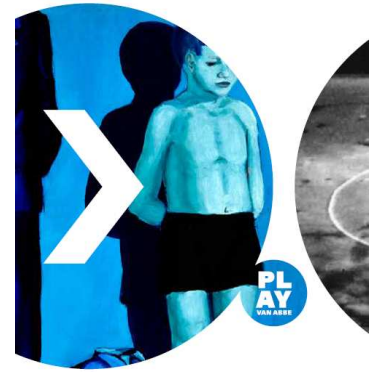


A painter in post-war Europe

To the Margin and Back - Andrzej Wróblewski

10/04 – 15/08/2010



To the Margin and Back – Andrzej Wróblewski is the first large scale retrospective exhibition of Andrzej Wróblewski outside Poland. With this show, the Van Abbemuseum seeks to broaden the usually limited geographic understanding of the history of modern art. Wróblewski's work demonstrates that artistic experiment in post-war Poland had the same intensity and problematics as that in north-western Europe after 1945.

The exhibition belongs to Part 2 of *Play Van Abbe*, called *Time Machines*.

Wróblewski is an exemplary figure of a fragmented Europe, in which a generation tried to build a new society from the debris of the Second World War and the face of overwhelming influence from the US or the Soviet Union. Artists and intellectuals were looking for ways to represent both the trauma of Nazism and war as well as depict a way forward for an ethically destroyed society. Wróblewski's early work presents both tendencies in full. It includes a vivid series of execution paintings, produced almost concurrently with idealistic, abstract works that reach out towards a universal language of art. The two ambitions meet in one extraordinary painting – *Execution VI - with Gestapo Man* (1949) - where one side of the canvas describes a wartime atrocity while the other has a formal, abstract composition made just a year before. In his short life, Wróblewski took on many guises, going to extremes to unite realism and idealism in a way that became singular for Polish art and important for our understanding of European identity and artistic tradition.

To the Margin and Back opens with the painting *Blue Chauffeur* (1948) and presents the oeuvre of Wróblewski both as metaphorical and real journey. In 1947 he travelled through western Europe (including the Netherlands), and in 1956 he visited Yugoslavia. These journeys were defining for his artistic development. Metaphorically he also travelled in his work, passing through different artistic movements and observing the restless, problematic political landscape of post-war Poland. As such he travelled from abstraction to figuration, from dream image to reality and from trauma to utopia, and back.

In his short life, Wróblewski – also an art historian and art critic – left a remarkably rich body of work of which the exhibition shows around 70 pieces, comprising oil paintings, monotypes, lithographs, watercolours and gouaches. The exhibition also includes several works made in the short period when he worked within the parameters of the social realist doctrine that briefly held sway in Poland. Wróblewski broke with communism as a

disillusioned figure in the mid-1950s, writing a valuable text called *Confessions of a Discredited Former Communist!*. Showing this development is not only important for an understanding of his art, but also confronts us with what we expect of artists. At a time when many in the West were also proclaiming a commitment to communism, how much was understood of the artistic processes in the real existing version in a country like Poland? How does that reflect on the interplay between individual artistic choices and ideology in any given society including our own today?

Time Machines

Introducing a broadly unknown artist to a new public can be read as a classic device of a museum, announcing a new position to art history. Thus this exhibition performs a role in the typology of shows organised in *Play Van Abbe part 2*. It also directly addresses a gap in the museum's collection in which Wróblewski is absent, even though his work sheds crucial light on the positions of the CoBrA artists or the Ecole de Paris in trying to represent the post-1945 reality. Can we talk of a shared artistic condition beyond the political divide of the period or is this divide now enshrined in our different historic collections? How do we begin rethink European (and global) art history and understand the nature of often temporary cultural divisions today?

By looking back in time and bridging the old, assumed divide between east and west Europe, the exhibition explores the thematics of *Time Machines*, the second part of *Play Van Abbe* in which we question how (art) history can be rewritten. In this spirit, *To the Margin and Back* is augmented by two rooms in which we reflect on the history, role and meaning of the one person museum exhibition as such.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, which – for the first time – discloses the history of Wróblewski to an international public. The volume includes two critical

Press release
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texts addressing his artistic practice written by art historians Andrzej Kostolowski and Joanna Kordjak, a historical statement by the artist and photographer Zbigniew Dłubak. The essential part of the book offers a comprehensive selection of the artist's writings (most of which were published in Polish as press articles, ranging from critiques aimed at the system of fine art academies to comments and remarks on exhibitions), as well as private notes, short texts, film scripts and letters.

Opening

Saturday afternoon 10 April 4 pm as a component of the opening of *Play Van Abbe*, part 2: *Time Machines*.

Curator

Magdalena Ziolkowska

Sponsors

Play Van Abbe is made possible by contributions from The Mondriaan Stichting, BankGiro Loterij, Province Noord-Brabant, VSBfonds and SNS REAAL Fonds.



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The Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven is one of the first public museums for contemporary art to be established in Europe. The museum's collection of around 2700 works of art includes key works and archives by Lissitzky, Picasso, Kokoschka, Chagall, Beuys, McCarthy, Daniëls and Körmeling. The museum has an experimental approach towards art's role in society. Openness, hospitality and knowledge exchange are important. We challenge ourselves and our visitors to think about art and its place in the world, covering a range of subjects, including the role of the collection as a cultural 'memory' and the museum as a public site. International collaboration and exchange have made the Van Abbemuseum a place for creative cross-fertilisation and a source of surprise, inspiration and imagination for its visitors and participants.

Van Abbemuseum

Bilderdijklaan 10
Eindhoven, The Netherlands
For more information, please visit www.vanabbemuseum.nl

Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday 11:00 – 17:00
Thursday 11:00 - 21:00
On Thursdays, entrance to the museum is free from 17:00

Entrance

Adults: € 9,00
Groups of 15 persons or more, senior citizens: € 6,50
Students; holders of the Dutch young people's cultural pass (CJP): € 4
Thursdays from 17:00 - 21:00: free entrance (until 31/12/2010)

For more information please look at our website www.vanabbemuseum.nl

For the editors

Press opening

Friday 9 April, 11 am – 2 pm.

More information and images can be downloaded from:
www.vanabbemuseum.nl/pers.

Or contact:

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Andrzej Wróblewski, *Execution VI with Gestapo Man*, 1949, private collection.