

In celebration of the 120th anniversary of the birth of the painter and teacher Ján Polom, the exhibition offers a new interpretation of his unique drawings and watercolours from the Gallery's collection, placing a particular focus on the transitions undergone by the landscape over the course of the four seasons, in a dialogue with works by his teachers and pupils. Polom was a remarkably accomplished watercolourist who was able to capture subtle shifts in colour, the dynamism of light and the mercurial aspect of nature over time, all depicted with an inimitable lyricism and depth. Presented as part of the Jubilees / Spiš Artists cycles of exhibitions.

*"The Lord speaks to us through the voice of nature
- all that is needed is a receptive heart and a love
for the beauty of colour..."*

Ján Polom

Polom's earliest drawings are characterized by a mastery of precision, a quality which testifies to the artistic tutoring which he gained from Július Löw, **Jozef Hanula** and Ľudovít Čordák. The skills which he learned were applied in his studies of forest compositions, wooden cottages and suburban scenes. He was introduced to watercolours by the Prešov-based painter Július Török, and he was soon systematically familiarising himself with the expressive potential of the medium. An admirer of the watercolours of Alojz Struhár and **Ladislav Čemický**, he sought to visualize natural moods, intimacy and impressions of ephemerality in his own works. The transitional atmosphere of the changing seasons is a typical aspect of his paintings, as is the Spiš landscape, a constant source of inspiration throughout his life. The subtle use of glazing gives his paintings a glittering surface, while the colourful shading captures the atmosphere of the forest scenes as they fade away into the mist, meadows heavy with dew or thawing snowscapes. His drawings are also noteworthy for their documentary value, with his pencil and red ink works depicting the now-vanished architectural character of the nooks and crannies of his hometown. The subjective emotionalism which Polom brings to his work is highly resonant, and his unforced means of expression radiate a sense of melancholy.

As a painter, watercolourist and teacher, Polom played a pivotal role in influencing the development of subsequent generations of artists. He established the Department of Fine Art at the People's School of Art in Spišská Nová Ves, an institution which set many future artists on their creative path, including such renowned alumni as **Marián Hennel**, **Eva Melkovičová**, **Jana Kiselová-Siteková** and **František Žoldák**. **Tibor Gurin**, a well-known proponent of naive art, also studied under the guidance of Ján Polom in the 1960s.

The exhibition is complemented by works of artists which share the same inspirations and artistic background as Polom, while works by his former pupils exemplify the influence of his teaching activities. For many, Ján Polom was their first contact with the practice of art, and his tireless enthusiasm and commitment to his work remained an influence throughout their creative lives.

The many works by Polom which feature in the Gallery's collection offer an extensive overview of his creative journey. The thirty-eight landscape paintings, cityscapes and preparatory sketches map the development of his work from the 1920s to the mid-1980s, while more than twenty watercolours of landscape scenes capture his idiosyncratic painterly approach. Also represented in considerable numbers are his drawings documenting the period architecture and natural scenery of the Spiš region.

Mgr. Kamila Paceková,
exhibition curator

Ján Polom

Štyri ročné obdobia /
The Four Seasons



Ján Polom was born on August 19th 1905 in the Garbovňa district of Spišská Nová Ves. From 1917 to 1921 he studied at the State Boy's School in Spišská Nová Ves. Although he was fully committed to his vocation as a teacher, he also worked to deepen his knowledge in the field of art. He honed his skills in the studios of renowned artists, such as Július Löw, Jozef Hanula (from 1919 to 1925) and Ľudovít Čordák (in 1926). He was first exposed to watercolours during the time he spent with Július Török (from 1939 to 1941) and further developed his skills in this technique in Budapest with Ilona Barna. In 1944 he became a member of the Svojina association of East Slovak artists in Košice. He came into the public consciousness in the 1960s through his role as founder of the Department of Fine Art at the People's School of Art in Spišská Nová Ves, where he devoted himself passionately to developing the artistic potential of young artists. In 1968 he was awarded the Prize of the City of Spišská Nová Ves for his artistic activities. He held his first exhibition in 1926 at the Reduta in Spišská Nová Ves, but his work was exhibited in countless solo and group exhibitions in Spišská Nová Ves, Poprad, the High Tatras, Prague, Bratislava, Havlíčkův Brod and many other towns. He died on February 23rd 1993 in Spišská Nová Ves.

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jubilanti
jubilees



O výstave