

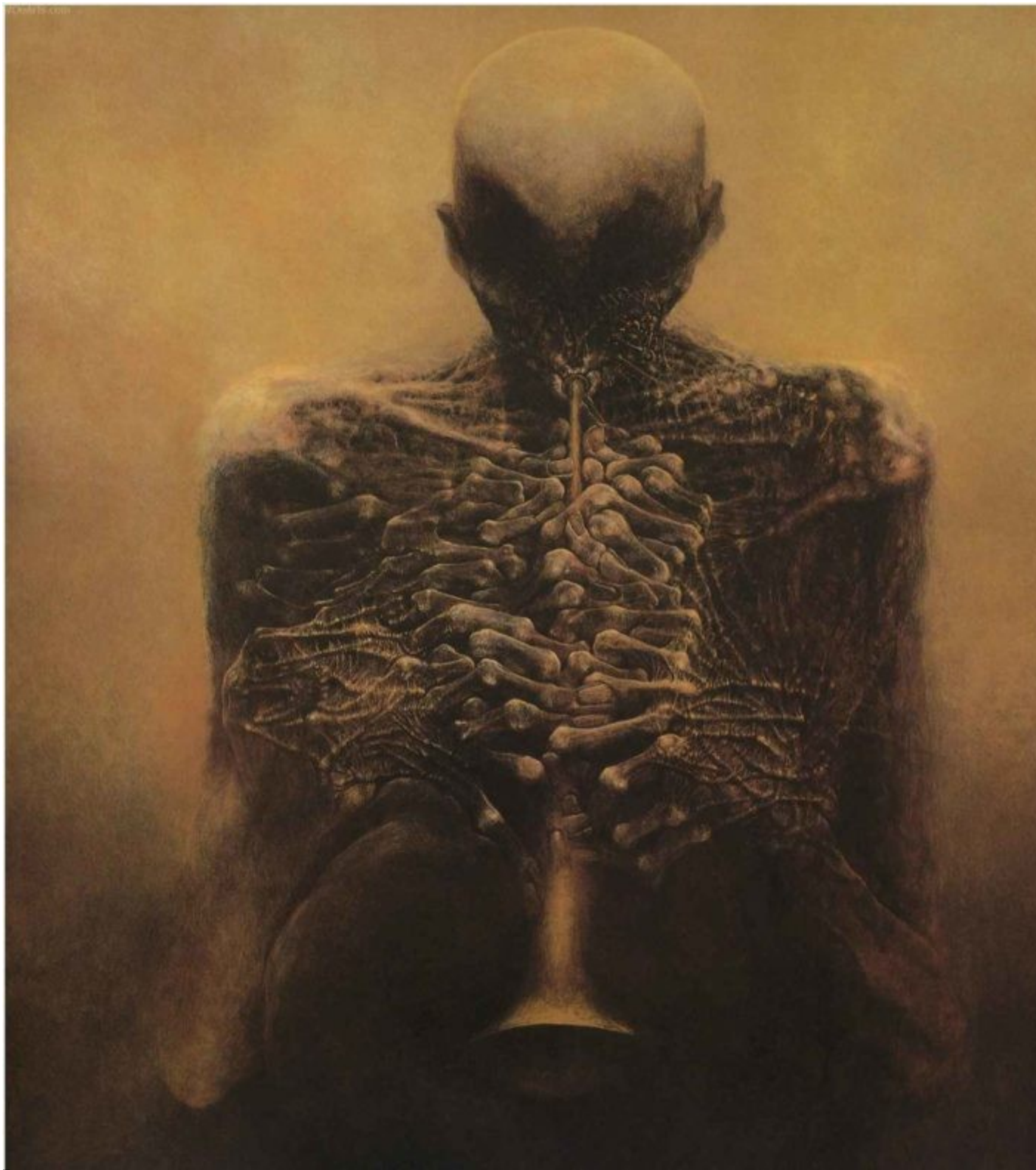


[CULTURE AND HISTORY](#)

# Zdzisław Beksiński: Polish Surrealist Whose Art Will Give You Nightmares

Probably the scariest paintings ever made...

by [Sara P.](#)



Zdzisław Beksiński

**Zdzisław Beksiński** was a Polish artist proficient in many fields, including architecture, photography, and sculpture. However, what really brought him his fame were his surrealistic paintings, dystopia and nightmares being the main motives behind his work. Once you explore his art you'll know beyond

the shadow of a doubt that he succeeded in this pursuit. Zdzisław Beksiński was born in 1929, in a southern Polish town named Sanok. He graduated in architecture in Krakow, but during his years in college, grew to hate the discipline.

He believed everything in architecture was planned and structured and that it doesn't allow him to truly unleash his creative power. Thus he began his artistic journey and started experimenting with photography and sculpture. His photographs depicted desert landscapes, distorted faces and peculiar scenes of people in various relations with the objects around them. Although these art fields didn't bring him much success, they influenced his future dystopian paintings to a large extent.

*His most famous quote perfectly describes his art, and it goes as follows:*

***“I wish to paint in such a manner as if I were  
photographing dreams.”***



## Paintings

A surprising fact, considering the quality of his work, is that Zdzisław didn't have any formal training in painting. He first started experimenting with abstract art but discovered surrealism in the sixties. This was a turning point for his art career as his recognizable style was born.

Zdzisław mostly painted with oil on cardboard and loved to listen to loud music while working. He was a big fan of classical music but would sometimes also enjoy some rock bands. His most popular works were created from the late sixties to the mid-eighties, in phase he liked to call a "fantastic period". He mainly focused on dystopic and eerie scenes with repeated motives of decay, death, disfigured creatures and desolate landscapes. He would often say that his paintings were misunderstood and that even he himself wasn't sure of their meaning. This is why most of his work remained untitled.

His next phase begun in the eighties and was much more minimalistic. He started using a colder and much more restricted color palette and depicted almost sculpture-like images, with simplified backgrounds.

He entered his third and last phase in the 90s when he discovered digital photo manipulation. He realized he could combine his paintings with his first love, photography, and continued to experiment with digital art until his death.

## Personal Life

Although his paintings were gloomy, nightmarish and dark, Zdzisław Beksiński was a friendly and fun person. However, he was also shy and suffered from OCD. Everything that separated him from his home would

trigger the disorder. Thus he tried to avoid as many travels and events as possible and didn't even attend the openings of his own exhibitions. As a matter of fact, he rarely went to any exhibitions and museums, thus commonly said he wasn't influenced by other artists at all. This could be a topic of a discussion, but even if he did have some influences, his art was undoubtedly unique when compared to other artists at the time.

Zdzisław's career was blooming and he reached a global success beyond his imagination. However, his personal life followed a different path, 1998 being a year when fate turned its back on him. His wife died of cancer, and only a year later his son, who was a famous journalist, committed suicide.

In 2005 Zdzislaw refused to loan about a 100\$ to Robert Kupiec, the young son of a lady who cleaned his apartment. Robert took this refusal to heart and visited Zdzisław with his accomplice a few days after.

Zdzisław was found dead in his apartment in February of 2005, with more than a dozen stab wounds on his body, two of which were fatal. Robert was convicted a year after and is still doing his time in prison for the crime.