

Julian Stanczak

[1928-2017, Borownica, Poland/Seven Hills, Ohio]

Julian Stanczak was born in Borownica, Poland. During World War II, Julian spent his teenage years in a Polish refugee camp in Uganda. It was there, in Africa, that he learned to write and was profoundly affected by the African light, the intensely colored sunsets and what he called “the immense visual energy” of the fauna and flora.

At the end of the war, from 1948 to 1950, Julian and his family relocated to the Chekendon Camp outside London, England. He studied book illustration at the Borough Polytechnic Institute. The family emigrated to Cleveland, Ohio in 1950. He studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art and later trained under Josef Albers at Yale University where he received his Master of Fine Arts in 1956. He became a US citizen in 1957.

Influenced by his teacher Josef Albers, Russian Suprematism and Constructivism, Stanczak was interested in the uplifting experience that vibrant color can evoke in the viewer. He once said that his style was an attempt to forget about his war traumas. “I did not want to be bombarded daily by the past,” he said. “I looked for anonymity of actions through nonreferential abstract art.”

The term Op Art itself was popularized by Time magazine after his first major show, “Julian Stanczak: Optical Paintings,” in 1964 at the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York. In 1965, his work was included in the seminal exhibition “The Responsive Eye” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Currently more than 100 museum collections all over the world have Stanczak’s works in their holdings.