

Stanisław Dróżdź Biography

ESTA Gallery - Voiceover

Stanisław Dróżdź is one of the most important Polish contemporary artists and the most significant artists of Polish 20th-century avant-garde as well as the most remarkable author of **concrete poetry**.

He was born on 15th May, 1939 in Sławków. In the year 1955 he moved to Wrocław where he graduated from the Economical Secondary Technical School in the year 1959 and Polish Philology at the University of Wrocław (which he studied in the years 1959-1964). Till the end of his life he lived and carried out his artistic activity in Wrocław. He died on 29th March, 2009.

During his studies and soon after he wrote **traditional poems** (linguistic poems) published in the magazine 'The Ark'. Information Bulletin of Artistic Youth Club of Polish Students' Association. They were awarded a number of prizes at poetic contests. In the year 1965 he received the main prize – the Cristal Lion at 4th Kłodzko Poetic Spring. In the year 1967 He started creating concrete poems named by him from the very beginning 'concept-shapes'. One year after, he presented them at the exhibitions held in Wrocław the County and City Public Library in February and in the Gallery 'Pod Moną Lisą' in December. During the former exhibition he published in the monthly 'Odra' (issue: 1968, no 12) his **text** *Concept-Shapes* being a kind of artistic manifesto presenting his basic ideas and principles of his creative work.

Concept-shapes are the text and the image at the same time: *they concretize the material shape of a given concept in a visual (graphic) way [...] they are – likewise the ideograms – codifiers of reality synthetic in terms of their form and content which integrate science (Mathematics, Logics), Art (Poetry, Visual Arts)*. This extremely simplified notation, austere in its form and content maximizes an associative effect. Concrete poetry conceived as the language of radical shortcut provides an impulse for the reader *whose contribution determines the complexity of the reception based on 'creating a poetic text' paved on the basis of the 'notation'* (S. Dróżdź, *Concept-Shapes*).

From the year 1971 he was in a continuous cooperation with the Gallery 'Foksal' in Warsaw which housed most of the first presentations of his works. From the year 1975 he belonged to the Polish Visual Artists' Association.

Out of the words, letters, digits and symbols Dróżdź created the projects implemented later in the forms of typescripts, photographic prints, computer printouts, objects, spatial installations and interactive pieces of art organized as single works and as cycles or complicated systems composed of many elements. Despite the variety of their implementations concept-shapes constitute a complete oeuvre implemented consistently throughout the whole life of their author in accordance with the idea developed by him at the beginning of his creative activity.

The oeuvre by Stanisław Dróżdź exists mainly in the realms of art classified usually as conceptual art. However, its author considered himself to be a poet because the key source of his inspirations was the language, mathematics and other sign systems. *I feel as a poet, more as a poet than as an artist. [...]. My poetry is closer to science than to art* – he admitted during his conversation with Natalia Kaliś („A4”, Magazine, 2008, nr 56) *Concrete poetry is a completely integral field of activity which may use the means of expression from other fields (but not from poetry) but in spite of that it does not cease to be concrete poetry*, he said during his conversation with Małgorzata Dawidek Gryglicka – Stanisław Dróżdź, *beginend. Concept-Shapes. Concrete Poetry. Works from the Years 1967-2007*, Wrocław 2009, exhibition catalogue).

The poet's works in their expository format were realized according to the author's ideas and designs, in collaboration with experts from various fields. They were realized by fine artists, typographers, computer scientists and technicians.

Dróżdź actively promoted the area of his creative activity. He inspired and **animated** the movement of concrete poetry in Poland. He organized a number of exhibitions where he presented the works of Polish and foreign artists such as Václav Havel and Ian Hamilton Finlay. He also organized in the years 1979-1990 five scientific sessions on this movement. He is the author of Polish anthology of concrete poetry: *Concrete Poetry. The Selection of Polish Texts the Documentation from the Years 1967-1977*, published in the year 1978. This publication was the basis of his Master Thesis defended in the year 1979.

During his almost 40-year creative work he was awarded a number of **prizes and honors**. In the year 2002 he received the prize of the Nowosielscy's Foundation 'for creative and visionary combination of two spiritual fields: art and poetry in his work'.

He participated in approximately 300 **individual and collective exhibitions** in Poland and abroad. He represented Poland in the most important presentations of concrete poetry, contemporary art and conceptual art abroad such as *sound text – ? concrete poetry – visual texts* held in Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1970-1972), *50th Art Biennale in Venice* (2003) and *Beyond Geometry, Experiments in Form, 1940s-1970s* organized in Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles (2004).

The works by Stanisław Dróżdź are held in numerous **collections** in Poland and abroad.