



## Félicia Pacanowska

Félicia Pacanowska was born on January 15, 1907, in Lodz, Poland — a major industrial city with a large Jewish population — into a family that recognized and encouraged her artistic gifts from an early age. After graduating from secondary school in Lodz, she was admitted to the School of Fine Arts in Warsaw, where she completed a five-year diploma in painting and engraving. Woodcut, etching on copper, and painting would remain central to her practice throughout her life.

In 1932, Pacanowska left Poland for Paris, joining the community of Jewish artists working within what became known as the *École de Paris* — a milieu that brought together painters and printmakers from Russia, Poland, and Central Europe who had fled antisemitism in their home countries. For several months she studied the engraving collections at the Cabinet des Estampes at the Louvre. Despite considerable hardship, she traveled to Italy and England in 1935, then returned briefly to Poland to exhibit fifty engravings and monotypes at the Institute of Art. It was the last time she would see her parents, who were later murdered by the Nazis.

Back in Paris in 1937, Pacanowska continued to refine her printmaking technique. When war broke out, she found work as a draughtsman in an aircraft factory. During the Occupation she endured the constant threat of persecution, and in 1942 she narrowly escaped the Vel' d'Hiv roundup — one of the most devastating mass arrests of Jews in occupied France. She survived the remainder of the war in precarious and dangerous circumstances, losing all of her artwork and tools in the process.

After the war, Pacanowska spent a year studying sculpture at the Academy of Rome before returning to Paris in 1947, where she resumed painting, drawing, etching, aquatinting, and pastel work — media she regarded as equally significant expressions of her practice. She became a regular presence at the major Paris salons: the Salon d'Automne, Salon des Indépendants, Salon de Mai, Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Jeune Gravure Contemporaine, and Estampes Contemporaines, among others. In 1956 she was awarded the Modigliani drawing prize in Livorno. Two years later she joined the juries of both the Salon d'Automne and the Salon Comparaison.

Recognition from public institutions followed. In 1962, the Musée National d'Art Moderne and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris each acquired works by Pacanowska. Her compositions, rigorously structured, move from figurative origins toward abstraction, with Cubist undercurrents in their spatial organization. Critics noted the precision of her line, the luminous balance of black and white in her prints, and an atmospheric subtlety that distinguished her work from that of her contemporaries.

Félicia Pacanowska died on March 9, 2002, in Rome, where part of her family lived. She was nearly 95. She is buried at the Cimitero Primaporta in Rome.

