

Hans Szym, Brandenburgian Landscape at Sunset, before 1929, oil on canvas, 52 x 72 cm, signed lower right "H Szymkowiak," illegible stamps on the back of the stretcher, unframed. Condition: Two small missing areas in the lower center, one patch with retouching, otherwise good for its age.

Hans (Johannes) Szymkowiak (Berlin-Spandau 1893 – 1961 Berlin-Spandau), who from 1929 onwards called himself simply Hans Szym, belonged to the so-called Lost Generation, i.e. the generation of artists whose careers were severely restricted or destroyed by the Nazis and whose art was denounced as "degenerate." Many of these artists' works were destroyed, so that today they are hardly known to a wider audience.

After completing a four-year apprenticeship as a lithographer, he began working as a draftsman for Märkische Elektrizitätswerke in 1914, but was drafted into military service in August of that year. After World War I, he studied from 1919 to 1921 at the teaching institute of the Berlin Museum of Decorative Arts under Emil Doeppler (1855–1922) and, at the same time, from 1920 to 1924 as a studio student under Johann Walter-Kurau (1869–1932). This was followed in 1924 by a longer study visit to Italy, including Naples. He then set up his own studio in Berlin and began working primarily as a freelance artist from 1927 onwards.

Between 1928 and 1932, he successfully established a lively exhibition activity, including at the Berlin Academy of Arts and the art associations of Hanover and Hamburg, and was accepted into the Berlin Secession in 1929. From this point on, he signed his works only with the more common short form "Szym." Nevertheless, from 1930 onwards, he was denied financial support from the Berlin Academy and a scholarship for a stay at the Villa Romana. His applications for the Grand State Prize of the Prussian Academy of Arts also failed at first. When he was finally nominated for this prize in 1932, it was not awarded to him in 1933 for political reasons. During the Nazi era, Szym was banned from exhibiting, some of his works were confiscated, and his studio was monitored. The exact background to this period has not yet been researched. From this time onwards, however, he seems to have intensively studied Goethe's theory of colors, which would be of significance for his further work.

After World War II, he participated in the first post-war art exhibition of Berlin artists in Berlin-Weißensee in 1946. In 1950, he became a founding member of the Professional Association of Visual Artists in Berlin, and in 1951 he joined the Berlin artists' association *Der Ring*, which also included Alfred Kubin (1877–1959), and until his death he participated in almost all of the Ring's art exhibitions, the jury-free art exhibitions in Berlin and Leverkusen, and, from 1959, the Great Berlin Art Exhibitions. His post-war works are clearly more oriented towards abstract painting. His students included Kurt Wendlandt (1917–1998) and Walter Wellenstein (1898–1970). Works by Hans Szym can now be found in the Museum Kunst der Verlorenen Generation (Museum of Lost Generation Art) in Salzburg, among other places, and his estate is owned by Spandau art collections.

The painting offered here must date from before 1929, as from then on the artist signed only with Hans Szym and not with his full name as here. It depicts the riot of colors of a day ending in sunset in earthy tones. The very impasto-painted tree skeletons on the small hill in the foreground, sparsely covered with leaves or needles, provide a view of a sandy heath landscape with only a small stream flowing through it and a narrow strip of dark forest in the background. It is likely to be a landscape from the Mark Brandenburg region around Berlin, the

artist's home in Brandenburg. In contrast to his post-war works, which are more oriented towards abstract painting, Szys's works from the 1920s are still influenced by Post-Impressionism. Works from this period are rarely found on the market due to their confiscation by the Nazis.