

Studio Zgorecki Kasimir Zgorecki

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Photographic archives of Polish immigration to the coal basin of northern France, in the 1920s / 1930s.

Born in 1904 in the industrial region of the Ruhr (Germany) to parents originally from Poland, Kasimir Zgorecki emigrated to the North of France with his family at the age of 18. A background minor for some six months, he then turned to professional photography and in 1924 took over his brother-in-law's studio in Rouvroy, in Pas-de-Calais. His career focused mainly on portraits of the region's Polish population – whose immigration was linked to the heavy coal and steel industry – soon flourished. Zgorecki is particularly involved in identity photography, which became mandatory on the cards of foreigners working in France in 1917.

This activity provides him with an important source of income: he strategically uses a single glass negative for several portraits, having his subjects pose in front of a neutral background. In contrast, the style of his family portraits is often more staged. Working both in his studio, outdoors or in his clients' homes, Zgorecki photographs the Polish community on different occasions, providing work of an anthropological nature.

This book brings together more than 150 photographs covering the period from 1924 to 1947 and discusses the role of studio photography in the 1920s and 1930s. This bilingual edition, reflecting the course of the exhibition, is intended to be the first in-depth study of the work of the photographer.

Exhibition by Kasimir Zgorecki, presented at the Jeu de Paume
– Château de Tours from October 30, 2020 to May 25, 2021

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