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## East and West Coast Perspectives on Jan Sawka Now on View in New York and California Exhibitions

The Dorsky Museum in New Paltz is hosting the New York exhibition and symposium. The California exhibition and symposium are being held at RAFFMA in San Bernardino.



Polish Cultural Institute New York

March 4, 2020









Jan Sawka, "California Dream Pt. Sawka's Pleasure" (1977), oil on canvas, 40 x 72 inches (Olga Sawka Estate, photo by Camille Murphy). Featured in RAFFMA's *Golden West: Jan Sawka's California Dream* exhibition February 9–May 9, 2020.

This year, the late Polish-American artist Jan Sawka is the subject of two solo bicoastal exhibitions covering his legacy. On display at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at SUNY New Paltz until July 12 is *Jan Sawka: The Place of Memory (The Memory of Place)*, while *Golden West: Jan Sawka's California Dream* can be viewed at the Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art at California State University San Bernardino until May 9. Both exhibitions were co-curated by director and producer Hanna Maria Sawka (the artist's daughter) and Dr. Frank Boyer.

On March 28–29, the Jan Sawka Estate in collaboration with the Polish Cultural Institute New York is presenting a two-day symposium on *Jan Sawka: The Place of Memory (The Memory of Place)*. Day One will be held at the Dorsky in New Paltz, where the panel discussion "The Person and the Place" will focus on the biographical aspects of Jan Sawka's life. Panelists include Hanna Sawka (the artist's widow), Dr. Frank Boyer, and art collector Michael Solow.

Day Two will take place at the Kościuszko Foundation in New York City, where the panel "Invoking the Inner Landscape" will be accompanied by the launch of a thematic exhibition on Jan Sawka's work with the same title as the panel, on view March 29–May 15. The symposium at the Kościuszko Foundation will be an academic analysis of the art-historical and critical implications of Sawka's art practice. Special guests include Dr. Peter Schwenger, cultural critic and Resident Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism at the University of Western Ontario; Beth Wilson, art critic and the Art History Lecturer at SUNY New Paltz; Dr. Tom Wolf, Professor of Art History at Bard College; Ksenia Nouril, the Jensen Bryan Curator at The Print Center in Philadelphia; and exhibition co-curator Dr. Frank Boyer. Both this and the Dorsky panel will be moderated by Hanna Maria Sawka. Visit [polishculture-nyc.org](http://polishculture-nyc.org) for more details.

In San Bernardino on April 9, RAFFMA is hosting a symposium in response to *Golden West: Jan Sawka's California Dream*. In the panel "Sight Lines on a Visionary," Dr. Frank Boyer, Hanna Sawka, and art critic Peter Frank will discuss Jan Sawka's life and achievements as well as his connection to California, yielding a composite portrait of the artist.

*Jan Sawka: The Place of Memory (The Memory of Place)* features Sawka's paintings and etchings from the Dorsky's permanent collection as well as pieces from private collections. The work featured illuminates two aspects of his practice: Sawka's fascination with human consciousness and his interest in place. Similarly, *Golden West: Jan Sawka's California Dream* presents how the artist envisioned the American West prior to his exile from Poland up until his experience exhibiting in Los Angeles during the 1970s and '80s. Paintings and drypoint prints present visually cinematic explorations of commodification, exploitation, and the dual faces of a society that is quick to abandon the hyped-up novelties of just the day before.



Jan Sawka in the studio in 1991. (Photo by Raymond Konecny, image courtesy the Sawka family)

Jan Sawka was a visual artist, painter, printmaker, graphic artist, set designer, and architect. After moving to New York City with his family in 1977, he illustrated commentary for the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times* and designed graphics and sets for Off-Broadway theaters. In 1989, he designed a monumental set for the Grateful Dead's 25 Anniversary tour as a solution to Jerry Garcia's concern about stadiums being inhuman concert environments. He won major awards including the "Oscar de la Peinture" and "Special Prize of the President of France" at the International Festival of Painting in Cagnes-Sur-Mer in 1975, the Japanese Cultural Agency Award (1994), and the "Excellence in Architecture Award" from the American Institute of Architects (2010). Learn more at [jansawka.com](http://jansawka.com).

*Golden West: Jan Sawka's California Dream* is on view at The Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art at California State University San Bernardino (5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA) through May 9, 2020. The exhibition is curated by Hanna Maria Sawka and Dr. Frank Boyer, and organized in partnership with the Polish Cultural Institute New York.

*Jan Sawka: The Place of Memory (The Memory of Place)* continues at The Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at SUNY New Paltz (1 Hawk Drive, New Paltz, NY) through July 12, 2020. The exhibition is curated by Hanna Maria Sawka and Dr. Frank Boyer, and organized in partnership with the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art in SUNY New Paltz, the Polish Cultural Institute New York, the SUNY New Paltz Foundation, Inc., and The Kościuszko Foundation.

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