

NINO MIER GALLERY

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Wall Street International

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Tomasz Kowalski

17 – 29 Nov 2018 at the Nino Mier Gallery in Los Angeles, United States

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Kowalski's work is enigmatic in nature – strange yet familiar scenes host an array of mysterious narratives: each work an intricate tableau collected from a fragmented reality. Figures navigate through peculiar landscapes, their bodies changing with the environments around them, consumed by space. Kowalski presents several mediums at once: oils on canvas, works on paper and the addition of handwoven wool tapestries done in collaboration with his mother Alicja Kowalska, a master textile artist. His body of work draws from German Expressionism, New Objectivity, Surrealism and Transavanguardia, along with the influence of psychedelia and Postmodern literature, all which play with the subconscious and our perceptions while keeping a tether to non-abstract realms.

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Kowalski often depicts figures on the fringes, some are barefoot, naked or dressed in rags – others melting into the walls, prone on the ground or crawling on the street. Despite their seemingly wretched state, there is also a shamanistic, magic quality to the figure's ability to exist and manipulate their surroundings while in a constant state of change. One man's limbs are multiplied and splayed while his soul hovers above, is he reproducing or distributing units of information? In another particularly striking tapestry, we see a Giorgio de Chirico-like metaphysical dreamscape. As we peer through a colonnaded atrium strewn with rubble, a single, massive eye glares back through the open ceiling above, while a row of gleaming white teeth appears in the reflecting pool below, as if an all-powerful giant god has suddenly crashed into his pagan house of worship.

In Kowalski's hallucinogenic world, there is a prevailing sense of darkness and urban anxiety, and the swirling color certainly recalls Edvard Munch's iconic oeuvre. In one work, a man walks along the street drawing stares, seemingly unaware that his chest is gaping with hollows, his body excavated to echo the horror of a screaming face. In another painting, two figures, perhaps father and son, melt down into the street gutter, embracing each other as their arms liquefy into flesh-toned puddles. Another work features a man-like rat, mimicking the seated pose of Rodin's Thinker - placing the rat on the same plane as human city-dwellers. Tomasz Kowalski, born in 1984, lives and works in Warsaw and Szczepieszyn. He works in paint, installation and sound and regularly collaborates with members of his family to produce works. His interests lie in the discrete hauntological aspects of the everyday, presented through parallel multiple narratives centered around the figure which dips in and out of Kowalski's vision. Solo exhibitions include Tomasz Kowalski, at the Contemporary Art Museum of St. Louis, A chimney sweeper on the church roof at Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowskie Castle, Warsaw. His works have featured in group shows in Museum Of Modern Art, Warsaw, Centre Pompidou, Paris, MUMOK, Wien, Kunsthalle Wien, S.M.A.K. Ghent, De Appel Amsterdam. His works appear in collections of Centre Pompidou, Paris, MOCAK, Cracow, and MUMOK, Wien among others.