

Tomasz Kowalski is one of the most intriguing and versatile contemporary artists. His art defies straightforward classification: while grounded primarily in painting, it also encompasses installations, sculpture and music. He moves effortlessly between these media, treating each as a component in his consistently elaborated artistic narrative. This multi-layered discourse, rich in subtle references to art history, literature and personal experience, has become a distinctive mark of his artistic practice.

The exhibition at the Gdańsk City Gallery focuses on the years 2010–2015, a period that appears particularly significant in retrospect. During those years, Kowalski created a body of work that may be interpreted both as a record of intense experimentation with visual language and as evidence of the formation of his artistic identity. His paintings reveal oneiric visions, introspective reflection and gentle, quietly humorous distortions of the everyday – elements that open up new possibilities for perceiving and interpreting reality.

For the artist himself, however, that period was above all a time of vivid experience and affirmation – a moment of fascination with the process of creating, discovering and constructing private micro-worlds. It was accompanied by a sense of euphoria derived from being fully present, from openness to the multitude of influences, and from the freedom offered by each new engagement with the medium. What mattered was not coherence but observing how artworks functioned in their diversity – in their tensions, inconsistencies and differing approaches to image-making. An important point of reference during was also the aesthetics of past decades: the illustrative styles of the 1960s and 1970s, vinyl record covers, the Polish school of poster art, metalwork and late 20th-century painting. These references reached beyond the immediate context of the communist Poland, speaking more broadly to the experience of the political and cultural transformation and to the pre-digital era: a time in which image and imagination evolved at a different rhythm.

The paintings from that period often resemble fragments of dreams, with masked figures, ambiguous theatrical gestures and settings balancing on the verge of reality and fantasy. Kowalski explores the line between figuration and abstraction, drawing his viewers into a world in which the everyday dissolves into dreamlike visions. His

compositions are marked with a sense of introspection, reflection and subdued reverie – feelings that resonate even more strongly today through the distance of time. The presentation of his works not only enables us to trace the evolution of his artistic practice, but also to grasp the atmosphere of the moment in which they were created. It also reveals a hidden perspective: that of the viewer, who may find in these works an echo of their own memories, emotions and dreams.