

Press release

TOMASZ KOWALSKI

10.09. – 17.10.2009

Opening: Wednesday, September 9th, 2009 from 6-9pm

After the first presentation of his works in carlier | gebauer's project space at the 2008 gallery weekend, we are pleased to present the first large solo exhibition of works by the young Polish painter and sculptor Tomasz Kowalski in Berlin in September 2009. carlier | gebauer will be presenting a comprehensive overview of his new works from Wednesday 9th September at 6 p.m. We would be delighted to welcome you to this vernissage. On Tuesday, the 6th of October, there will also be a film screening and discussion with the artist; we shall send you a more detailed invitation to this event in due course.

In Tomasz Kowalski's new works, central aspects of his earlier oeuvre come together in new groupings. Kowalski continues to call into being a world of miniatures that take on a resonance far beyond their scale; he continues to open up glimpses of a parallel universe, an inner life of things, an organic world, composed of wooden, profoundly matt intertwining colours, beneath the surface of which a "night of reason" (G.W.F. Hegel) seems to be concealed. However, in contrast to his earlier works, Kowalski now forges even further ahead in dissecting his objects by assuming a more and more sculptural understanding of their presence. Using wood, wax, metal and other materials, he molds different sculptural turns emerging from his drawings, silhouettes and paintings, which sometimes materialize as lifesize wax figures, sometimes as seemingly dancing forms out of vaulted metalwire, sometimes milled, wooden bodyparts. All these objects generate a haunting presence in the exhibition space and it always seems to be their direct relation to the body of its beholder, through which these sculptures intensify their painterly counterparts. While the costumed ghosts of the 19th century seem to pass through the multiformed paintings, drawings and hung objects, like in Lewis Carroll's "Alice – Through the Looking Glass" their presence in the room appears to be disparately more spooky – as if we would have to fear the taking over of 'our' world by 'theirs'. Kowalski's new sculptures seem to observe their viewers. One of them is positioned aloof, standing lifesize in an adjoining room, a second one seems hardly to be able to break through the floor of a vitrine; only its hands and face are surfacing. Wax and plasticine are now also coating some of the paintings, on which the imprints of Kowalski's ghostworld seem to appear in the moment of their breach. In their surfaces, the passage from the wall into the room remains manifest at all moments.

Kowalski's figures, frequently evoking danse macabre motifs, thus find their niche within the history of Western European painting since Pieter Brueghel, in which the dance of the dead and charades have repeatedly served as the starting point to discover new unreal worlds, a process that in the 20th century ultimately assumed dense creative form in surrealist corpora, in Pierre Klossowski's zestful scenarios of violence and Hans Bellmer's strange tortured bodies. In Kowalski's works the violence of surrealist reconstructions is dissipated in intensified textures, materials, small figures animating the composition: with surfaces taking on depth. Whilst in the new paintings, drawings and cut-outs eerily long-limbed uniforms and hats, all in flight, disembodied and suspended, cluster together with masks, whose bodies seem to have gone astray, in the new sculptures these bodies emerge once again as disassembled, life-size wooden revenants. His figures all seem to be governed by their own sense of gravity, which appears to obey some playfully consistent dictate that nonetheless remains hidden from the viewer. The existence of Kowalski's worlds apparently hangs 'on a thread' and this sense of a dangerous abyss establishes a direct relationship between these universes and another earlier period of history, the Polish post-war avantgarde, linking them as well to the central figure in theatre in that context, Tadeusz Kantor, whose productions, paintings and performances created a whole world as the theatre of the absurd. Kowalski's new works have a close affinity to these pieces; they seem to conjure up the stage of a still absent performance, a world that rises up slowly, stemming from its own laws.

Parallel to the exhibition at carlier | gebauer, works by Tomasz Kowalski will be shown in Künstlerhaus Bethanien, where he is currently working as an artist in residence. Tomasz Kowalski received the Eastern Europe stipend of the Schering Stiftung 2009, part of which is his residency at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien.

For images and further information, please contact the gallery through mail@carliergebauer.com or by phone on +49 (0)30 2400 863 0.