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Strength and Beauty – Kowalewski's solo show in Israel

April 27, 2015



Pawel Kowalewski

An exhibition of work by Polish artist Pawel Kowalewski in Tel Aviv addresses joint Polish-Israeli history and the trauma of the Holocaust.

Entitled Strength and Beauty, the exhibition focuses on a group of beautiful, young women who endured and survived the Holocaust and raised families.

The exhibition features 10 large prints—portraits of the women.

Born in Warsaw in 1958, Kowalewski took his first steps as an artist during Poland's transition from communism to democracy. In 1983, Kowalewski was one of the founders of Gruppa, a group of six young artists who rebelled against the communist regime in Poland. In 1991, Kowalewski founded an advertising agency, Communication Unlimited, in Warsaw.

Kowalewski is an Expressionist artist. His style is swift and intuitive, while his work spans various genres and is seasoned with humorous and ironic punch lines.

The exhibition follows the recent death of Kowalewski's mother, which impacted the artist in a big way. Zofia, who was not Jewish, lived in Warsaw and served as a soldier of the Polish underground during WW II.

"The memory of our mothers' generation and also an attempt to protect this memory are the main themes of this exhibition," says Kowalewski. "The exhibition is also an attempt to reconsider the definition of true identity as well as the question of our readiness to know it. My exhibition is in fact in a perverse way about ... our readiness to grow up and accept the baggage and stigma of totalitarianism."

The photographs of the women who featured in the exhibition were taken from travel documents that were used by them during the war. Kowalewski then printed the images of their faces on large sheets of paper placed on aluminum (195 x 140 cm). He used a unique printing technique that incorporates three different colors, generating a special effect that allows each work to be seen differently from various angles.

The fluorescent color used by the artist will cause the figures to dissolve within a few months, ultimately leaving a dim trace of an image, concealed under an air-proof coating layer.

Kowalewski focuses on what exists beyond the visible spectrum, while he portrays his figures as mythical beings by gently and touchingly manipulating their esthetic image. As a feminist, he identifies a female voice and glorifies the great maternal archetype.

Kowalewski allows himself to adore the women who survived a horrifying plague of human evil by representing them as larger-than-life icons. Consequently, he rebels against totalitarian regimes and mocks their expected impact on the human psyche.

The Strength and Beauty exhibition of work by Pawel Kowalewski will be on view at The Artist's House in Tel Aviv from April 23 to May 16.y 16.

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