



The Art of Seeing. Nowosielski and others

5 December 2023 – 3 March 2024

The Royal Castle in Warsaw, in cooperation with the Mazovian Centre for Contemporary Art “Elektrownia” in Radom, has prepared an exhibition dedicated to Jerzy Nowosielski, one of the most interesting modern Polish painters. Exhibition *The Art of Seeing. Nowosielski and others*, organised on the 100th anniversary of the artist’s birth, is an attempt to place his work in the broader context of Polish art of the second half of the 20th century and invite the audience to the common act of seeing, and thus creating.

In the work of Jerzy Nowosielski, one can find both a fascination with Byzantine art, and most importantly the metaphysics of icons, and avant-garde art. The artist, associated with the Second Cracow Group and Tadeusz Kantor, developed his own individual style, drawing formally from surrealism and abstractionism, while at the level of meanings referring primarily to the universal human yearning for metaphysics. In his figurative representations, the recurring motif was most often the female body.

These ways of seeing, imaging, and commenting on the world also appeared in the works of artists who, like him, experienced the trauma of World War II, but also in representatives of subsequent generations of artists.

In the exhibition *The Art of Seeing. Nowosielski and others* at the Royal Castle in Warsaw audience will encounter, among other things, the poetics of surrealism, disturbing eroticism, irrationalism and dreamy metaphor, which clearly echoed in many of the artist’s works.

The exhibition of paintings by Jerzy Nowosielski is an extraordinary event itself, because we are dealing with a phenomenon that is very expressive and easily noticeable. The exhibition The Art of Seeing. Nowosielski and others is first of all a selection of works from the most recent period of Polish painting. The presented set can be described as “Nowosielski on the background,” whereby in this case the background is neither a supplement nor an appendix to the artist’s work but is an attempt to show a representative panorama of Polish art of recent times. At the same time, the juxtaposition of Nowosielski’s works with dazzling works created in parallel, painted at the same time, makes this exhibition not only interesting and inspiring, but also rich in experience, says Prof. Wojciech Fałkowski, director of the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

One of the points of reference for the castle exhibition became the phrase with which Nowosielski’s work was described by one of his greatest apologists, Prof. Mieczysław



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Porębski, a prominent art historian, critic and theoretician. Stretched, according to his words, “between the sanctity of the icon and the corporeality of the matter,” it was meant to be an emanation of eschatological realism. This essential and capacious term has been extended by the scholar over time to include the work of many other members of the Second Cracow Group and subsequent generations of artists who, like Nowosielski, created art that responded to man’s metaphysical hunger.

The exhibition *The Art of Seeing. Nowosielski and others* is divided into four narrative circles that can be distinguished in the artist’s work: surrealism, corporeality, eschatology and abstraction. Within each of them, selected paintings and drawings by Jerzy Nowosielski, quotations from his speeches, as well as preserved film footage provide a kind of essential context or even an interpretative key to the presented works of other prominent artists undertaking similar themes. Among them are listed: Wojciech Fangor, Stefan Gierowski, Władysław Hasior, Maria Jarema, Jadwiga Sawicka, Teresa Pągowska and others. The specific dialogue of the artists among themselves, and at the same time with the audience, resulting from the compilation of works in the exhibition makes this exhibition unique.

We end the year 2023 at the Royal Castle in Warsaw by commemorating one of the most recognisable artists of the 20th century, whose art is seen as a unique phenomenon, boldly combining the spheres of the sacred and the profane.

The exhibition is curated by Monika Przytkowska of the Royal Castle in Warsaw and Paweł Witkowski of the Mazovian Centre for Contemporary Art “Elektrownia” in Radom. The exhibition is accompanied by a rich educational programme, beginning with an inaugural lecture by Dr Krystyna Czerni *Painter of Icons as an Icon. Jerzy Nowosielski - hero and victim of pop culture*. The educational and artistic offer of the Royal Castle in Warsaw also includes meetings with exhibition curators and joint tours of the exhibition, as well as workshops, lessons for schools and activities for children, teenagers, and adults, prepared on the basis of Jerzy Nowosielski’s work.

More photographic and graphic materials available upon request, we invite you to editorial cooperation.

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