

# Polish Co

16 June – 27 September

**Directors lecture**  
*Thursday 18 June*  
12.30/Linbury Room  
Free, no booking



## **POLSKA! YEAR**

Last year, I was approached by Antoni Malinowski, a distinguished expatriate Polish artist living in London, with an idea – to celebrate this extraordinary Polish connection with a bold concept that linked Dulwich with Warsaw, old masters with contemporary art, history with now. Antoni specialises in colour; and in architectural interventions. He will paint directly on the walls of Gallery 10 and – excitingly – create an outdoor painting to fit within the giant arch on the outside of the Gallery at the south end of the east front.

His painting would take its inspiration from another crucial element of the project – a group of state portraits of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski himself, borrowed from the Royal Castle and National Museum in Warsaw. We will also mark out those paintings within the Collection (some of the best) that we think were originally intended for Poland; the king will have the delayed pleasure of presiding over his royal-collection-that-never-was – for a short time only!

In Warsaw, the Royal Castle is playing host to the second part of Antoni's ambitious project – an enormous artwork created within a newly-reconstructed building along the river below the castle.

This exhibition is part of a year-long cultural celebration **POLSKA! YEAR**, which will see hundreds of Polish-themed events right across the country. It is entirely right and proper that Dulwich Picture Gallery, with its remarkable links with Poland's last king, should join in this great celebration, and it has been a real pleasure to meet with and work alongside our Polish colleagues in Warsaw.

Meanwhile, visitors will have the chance to watch Antoni creating his artwork within the Gallery from 9–11 June.



# nnnection

Antoni Malinowski is the first artist ever to be commissioned by Dulwich Picture Gallery and to paint directly on its walls. He talks about light, space and his site-specific work, with its related performance art.



Photo: Rebecca Portsmouth

## **My paintings extend onto the wall and the architecture**

I never frame my work; I want it to extend onto, and into, the wall and the architecture.

I follow the Venetian approach of a composition extending into space — this is something used and developed by Veronese and Tiepolo.

I start with a structure in mind — structure and flow are the two key elements. Then I let go and the painting takes me to an unknown and new place.

Clearly, then, my work inside the Dulwich Gallery will be spontaneous, but this spontaneity is the product of a very long gestation of ideas.



Photo: Rebecca Portsmouth

Below: Malinowski installation at the Architectural Association



I love this Gallery, but – as with every love – this feeling is composed of very different emotions. For me, it represents everything that art is about, but to define what that is exactly would be both very difficult and inappropriate. Some things are best when left undefined.

## **Transition between art and architecture should be seamless**

This is an ancient concept, as for example, with an Etruscan tomb and its wall painting: the one cannot exist without the other.

Architects were the first people to buy my paintings. They saw in them the same spatial problems and issues that they are dealing with in their work. It seems natural to me that I often work on large architectural projects.

Light is the essence of painting. Architecture is a vessel for light. For example, Tiepolo focuses on this in his frescoes in Venice. Light and space, there is no separation between the two.



**Inside and out, old and new, Dulwich and Warsaw**

There will be a large painted panel filling one of the blind arches on the outside of the Gallery. I will also create a linear work directly on the other side of this wall, the far wall of Gallery 10. This wall drawing will set up a dynamic interaction with the Gallery walls and will alter the viewer's perception of that space. I also hope that the juxtaposition of the Warsaw portraits and the wall drawing will encourage visitors to look at the old paintings in a new way.

Three portraits of King Stanislaus Augustus, seen for the first time ever outside Warsaw castle, will hang in Gallery 10. The King's gaze will be carried and extended by the lines that I create on the far wall: they will instigate an invisible bridge between Dulwich and Warsaw.

Above: Malinowski at work at the Royal Court Theatre

**Dance is a spatial art**

Architecture and dance are a kind of choreography – an expression of movement in stillness. In this case, the dancer's movements realise my two dimensional wall drawings in a three-dimensional ambiance.

A new dance will be specially choreographed for the Dulwich exhibition.

**Colour is a language**

I am fascinated by pigments, micro-structures that reflect light. I allow the pigments to speak for themselves by using a light binder where they are on the surface, unlike oil, in which they drown.

The essence of this exhibition is light. Outside, I am using dichromatic pigments that respond to light. They alter continually as they reflect the changing sky.

At Dulwich, I have used a reduced palette with just four pigments, whereas in the linked exhibition in Warsaw, a group of wall panels will cover the whole spectrum. The vermilion arch evokes the ephemeral pavilions built in the past for royal heads of state visiting foreign lands. The raw umber in the under-painting reflects the London brick of the Gallery's facade.

**Computer manipulated poetry**

Finally, a sound piece will accompany the dance. It will feature an abstract poem consisting of Polish and English words relating to the project – these words are spoken, recorded and then computer manipulated. The words are barely recognisable – each one produces a cascade of notes. We are working on this with the composer Rolf Gehlhaar.

The conceptual quality of the installation, the paintings, the dance and the music will produce a shower of possibilities, challenging visitors to come up with active individual interpretations.

**The Artist**

Antoni Malinowski trained as a painter in Warsaw and at the Chelsea College of Art in London. He works both on canvas and on site-specific projects, where his painting and drawing installations are inspired by their architectural context. His paintings hover on the cusp of figuration and abstraction, but tend to focus on colour. To achieve this aim, he makes his own paints and is always searching for the most appropriate pigments. He has exhibited widely in Europe, the Far East and the UK including the Vermilion Wall at the Royal Court Theatre in Sloane Square.

Below: Bridging Lines in Milan, 2005.



Photo: Mauro Valle

Below: Measuring the arch in February 2009.



Photo: Kate Knowles

Photo: Rebecca Portsmouth



*By Peter Belchamber and Ingrid Beazley*