

# Kowalsky

## DIRECTOR STATEMENT

You might call *Kowalsky* an “exercice de style”. The first impulse was a formal one. After my last short film *Superhero*, I had the urge to do something completely different, explore other flavors, another visual language. I wanted to create a world that’s artificial, orchestrated and somewhat camp – and play with those facades, if you will. I wanted to have fun with style, textures and palettes, and mash together a tasty blend of genres. I used to work as a cartoonist for newspapers when I was a teenager, so I have a thing for dark humor.

At the same time, that Hitchcockian grammar for suspense is something that excites me enormously. *Psycho* had a huge impact on me. I think it shows. As did *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* by Robert Aldrich. *Kowalsky* owes a lot to the “Hagsploitation” genre (I prefer the term “Grande Dame Guignol”.) During the writing process I kept going back to these films, especially the early 1960’s era. They were cheap and dirty and evil, but just so much fun. There’s definitely some of Bette Davis and Joan Crawford in the character of *Mimi Kowalsky*.

On a deeper level, the characters are based on people near and dear to me. Most of what happens in this film is rooted in my own family, and actual tragi-comic occurrences. I know these characters and their situations very well. Until recently, that’s what I thought they were – caricatures of my relatives. In retrospect, I realize that it was actually about my own fears and what I was going through at the time. I had to poke fun of my demons, in a way. For a long time, I had such high expectations of myself that it became paralyzing. Nothing I did was good enough, and my self-criticism could get really mean at times. I must have been too much of a coward to confront these fears head-on, so it had to happen in a playful manner. It’s like a wacky cathartic nightmare where deep-rooted problems bubble up as symbols and metaphors. It’s about moving out of that toxic relationship with one’s own critic, that rotting house we sometimes live in.

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