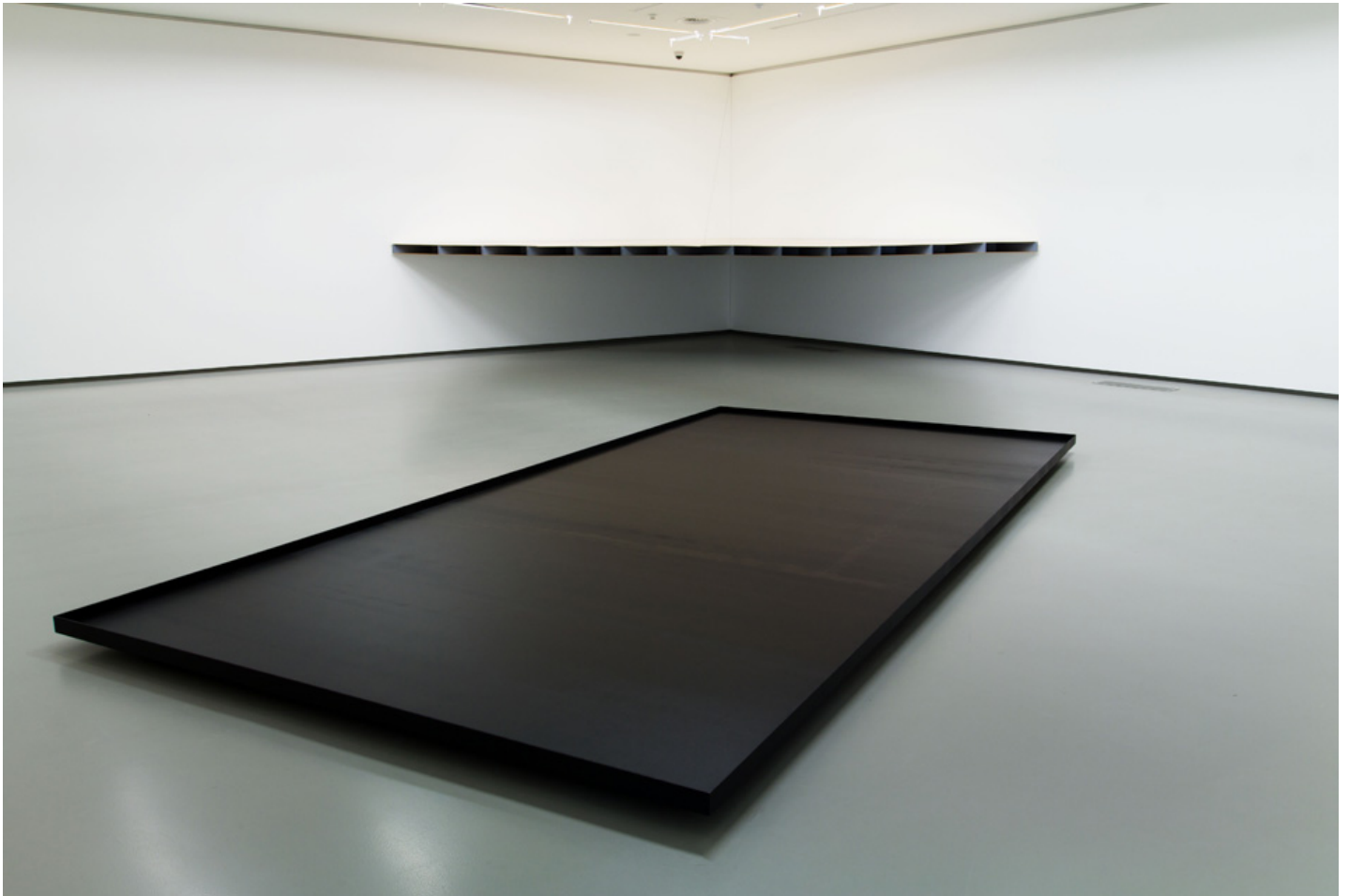


Solo exhibition by Michał Budny at the National Gallery of Art in Vilnius



Installation view. view. Photo: Tomas Kapočius

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2



VILNIUS.- From March 9 through April 29, 2012, the [National Gallery of Art](#) in Vilnius presents the solo exhibition 'Big Country' by Michał Budny.

Michał Budny (b. 1976) made his debut in the art world in 2003 with a show at the recently opened Raster Gallery in Warsaw. It was an unexpected exhibition by an artist who seemed to have emerged out of the blue. He was not a graduate of the Art Academy, and was not known at the time in the Warsaw art world. Since then, interest in his work has grown rapidly. He has participated in exhibitions in various European countries, and in 2009 had a solo show in Ujazdowski Castle, in one of Poland's most prominent contemporary art museums.

At first sight, Budny's elegant, formally laconic works may resemble abstract sculpture, which focuses on the search for pure form, or classic minimalism. This gives a particular prominence to the relationship between the object and the surrounding physical environment. It is impossible to deny the links between Michał Budny's work and these traditions, and yet Budny goes beyond them, coming back to the everyday world in various ways.

Objects from the everyday environment can make it into Budny's works through direct transfer, by being borrowed from their natural environment. The artist uses street ads, with their texts covered in abstract collages, and employs objects left by his friends, hidden in closed cardboard boxes, in his installations. His visually sparse works replicate architectural forms that are seen in everyday life: familiar, yet alienated. Widespread abstract graphic systems (statistical diagrams or lines that facilitate orientation on a map) lose their original purpose, turning into non-functional three-dimensional objects. The artist uses solid materials to make shadows or rain, natural phenomena which are essentially intangible, ephemeral and unstable. Budny's objects, with their elegant forms, seem to take the viewer away from objects and a clear, logic-based world, in order to remind the viewer of the existence of that logical world.

The National Gallery of Art invited Budny to put on an exhibition, due to the specific qualities of his work, its simple visual language and its conceptual content, in order to open up a dialogue between his works and the gallery as both a building and an institution. The result of this is Big Country, which extends through several of the gallery's halls, and presents works by the artist from recent years.

We can interpret the works featured in the exhibition by meditating on the processes that take place both within individuals (the viewer or the artist) and within communities (institutions, countries, and so on). The works exhibited on the first floor explore the possibilities of representation. Archive deals with questions of memory, layers of the past buried deep in an individual's or a society's subconscious, and the (im)possibility of revealing these objectively. Mirror, which reflects less than we expect, draws our attention to what we usually fail to notice when we focus on our own image. The exhibition continues in Hall 5, located between the halls of the permanent exhibition, where the viewer stumbles upon the wide and black, yet shallow, Abyss, an allusion to the paradoxes that lie at the core of crisis situations. Big Country, of gigantic proportions, hangs by a thread, reminding us that in large structures a balance is hard to reach. Cosmos highlights the inevitable disproportion between attention to oneself and attention to the surrounding environment, to the disadvantage of the latter. An untitled work, created in the gallery, connects the exhibition with the spatio-temporal context around it, hinting at what has happened in this space before, and what might possibly take place here in the future.

Paradox, deception and illusiveness are the key words that might help in understanding Michał Budny's work. Objects, phenomena and situations that come into the artist's view retain enough of their identity to be recognised, and yet at the same time they lose or question their fundamental traits or functions (or at least what we consider to be their fundamental traits or functions), thus disturbing and stopping us in the middle of the thinking process, which has become a mechanical habit for us.