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The New York Times

Rafal Bujnowski

Through June 16. Foxy Production, 2 East Broadway, Manhattan; 212-239-2758, foxyproduction.com.

In the late 1990s, a clique of young artists in Krakow shot to international attention with deadpan, schematic paintings that cast an alienated eye on the new capitalist Poland. They included Wilhelm Sasnal, Marcin Maciejowski and Rafal Bujnowski — the last of whom is now presenting a series of arresting new grisailles whose reticence gives them a paradoxical intensity.

VIA FOXY PRODUCTION

Mr. Bujnowski paints bathers by the seashore in glassy black and white oils; their jet-black bodies stand out from beaches rendered in gradients of white to light gray. Yet the artist’s wet-on-wet brushwork is so abrupt and so total that nearly no detail remains.

In five absorbing portraits, black whorls drown their subjects into featurelessness; a landscape is nothing more than striated black bands; paper towels on which the artist wipes his brushes exhibit Rorschach-like resonances of a face or a body but never properly cohere. (Even the gallery’s windows are obliterated; Mr. Bujnowski has painted over them with white stripes.) These paintings, though vacant, aren’t nihilistic — and they sure aren’t punk, despite the black-on-black color scheme. They are deliberate, haunted efforts to express the pitiful limits of contemporary human memory, always at risk of erasure in the shadow of history and the flood of the digital image stream.

Mr. Bujnowski has received shows across Europe, but this is, unbelievably, his first solo outing in New York in 15 years. Dear curators: When you are hunting for the next big thing, consider that he may already live in Warsaw!

JASON FARAGO