

Cezary Poniatowski: Vaults and Swellings

Curator: Caroline Krzyszton

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Centre for Contemporary Art FUTURA, Holečkova 49, Praha 5

Cezary Poniatowski's works could be better defined by what they are missing than what they do contain. Their content seem in fact to be accessible only through the prism of memory, symbolism of materiality, distorted and inverted perspective.

The artist's emblematic reliefs made out from Central Europe socialist-era carpets are indeed sewn inside up, revealing their underside as the only visible membrane of a structureless volume, disorientating the viewer, as whether to what he sees is a negative or a positive version of the object. But the change of perspective here is more than a simple inversion. It is rather the exposition of something hidden, the materialization of a spectral presence captured within the apparent emptiness, captured traces within the outlines of invisible shapes.

In this show however for the first time, Poniatowski's reliefs are not only present in the sculptures themselves, but they also extend through the whole space, reflected not only in the numerous architectonic levels and irregularities (vaults) of FUTURA's underground spaces but also carved in the floor itself, as some objects seem to be partially hiding under a temporary parked wooden floor, co-existing in our reality and an unaccessible dimension.

But for Cezary Poniatowski, the invisible is no absence. Instead, the unseen is heavily and systematically replaced by the affects related to its mere notion, as «fear», «anger», «revolt», «trauma», «renunciation» or «resignation».

The suggested feelings are here echoing the viewer's own experience, as it is him who progressively fills the gaps of the shape from its remembrances, repressed or unconscious feelings triggered by the insolent familiarity of the materials and environment. Sharp lines, almost scars in the matter, draw sardonic smiles throughout the whole exhibition, haunting him and mocking his efforts to escape the quite claustrophobic situation. And as the visit continues, more and more associated imagery seem to resurface, as anxiety and paranoia enter their paroxysm when numerous eyes and binoculars focus in his direction.

Later however, when entering the last room, angles soften and shapes slightly collapse. Reliefs, a little swollen as the skin reacts after it's wounded, seem to enter a healing process, stimulated by the repetitive and curative sound of crickets in the background. Cezary Poniatowski's typical black repelling sculptures remain far away and echo more silently from the very first rooms at the beginning of the exhibition. Here the domestic yellow tones dominate and lull the viewer, making him think the time has come to make peace, and recover from his traumatic past. Or is it a lure?

As the last majestic piece is hanging towards the exit – A Room with a View – the last smiles, wide-open now as they would loudly giggle, remind the eternal laughter of

Democritus, who firmly distrusted the ability for change, let alone the possibility to forget the weakness of human nature and indelible stains from its actions.

– Caroline Krzyszton

Cezary Poniatoski (b. 1987 in Olsztyn, PL) Graduated in 2012 from the Graphic Design studio at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. The artist specializes in graphic techniques, painting, and installations. His graphic works and paintings complement each other and, combined, reflect the world as observed by the artist. He participated to solo/ duo exhibitions such as Hearth at Jan Kaps in Cologne (2020), Hereafter at Mélange in Cologne (2019) together with Sami Schlichting, Sick-box at Stereo in Warsaw (2018), Guard at JIL in Warsaw (2018), Compost at Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw (2017), True Romance Zona at Sztuki Aktualnej, in Szczecin (2017) with Dominika Olszowy, No Center No Edges at Piktogram in Warsaw (2016).