

TUREEN

Łukasz Stokłosa: Cries & Whispers

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About his two year sabbatical in Italy, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once wrote that witnessing the beauty of Naples would be an ideal precursor to death. Not only was the place renowned for its otherworldly cityscape but it also lived in the consciousness of 18th Century Europe as a geographical and theoretical end of the continent, its proximity to Mount Vesuvius a macabre reminder of death's indifference to aesthetics. Łukasz Stokłosa's exhibition *Cries & Whispers* features a number of Naples landmarks, among others, in which he captures this pall of mortality over the most lavish surroundings. In these paintings the duality of such timeworn, literary bedfellows is reimagined by the artist's deft hand. As hazily as the trappings of cultural excess recede, their detail pierces through just as sharply—evidence of Stokłosa's interest in his work's own pictorial life and death inextricable from that of its subjects. The times through which he's lived and worked are not so far removed in tone from theirs.

A formative experience from Stokłosa's childhood was his family's visits to the Sanctuary of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska in his hometown near Kraków, Poland. It's nave and chancel are no less resplendent than the most Baroque interiors, though it sits within a town built to mirror the more humble location of Christ's Passion. Such dissonance is central to the paintings on view, imbued as they are with the violence of aesthetic ritual.

The exhibition is named after Ingmar Bergman's 1972 film *Cries and Whispers* in which two sisters watch over a third in the last agonizing days of her life. Set in the gilded, red-saturated rooms of their family castle, this story of the sisters' and, in turn, the house's indifference to suffering achieves the same dissonance in its adherence to ritual. Stokłosa's and Bergman's scenes share a filmic grandiosity and endeavor to capture within them the horrors of history that objects ignore. The gallery itself is implicated in this crimson-washing with a newly carpeted floor, its innards laid open in a camp bit of anthropomorphizing. This place too is the subject of idolatry.

Similar to his architectural details, the artist's depiction of homoeroticism in these new works embraces a darker tonality. Their accoutrements pair nicely with suffering as if these decisions go hand-in-hand with those of interior and fashion design. The cording and epaulettes on a military jacket maintain a like fetishism to studded leather, so too the moldings on a Corinthian column. Nonfigurative details are rendered with almost biomorphic individuality while men fucking become objects of indifference to human pain. Stokłosa's game of expectations with mortality is won by distillation of its visual treatment, a murky stylistic uniformity that achieves the same sense of wonder as Goethe's *Naples*.

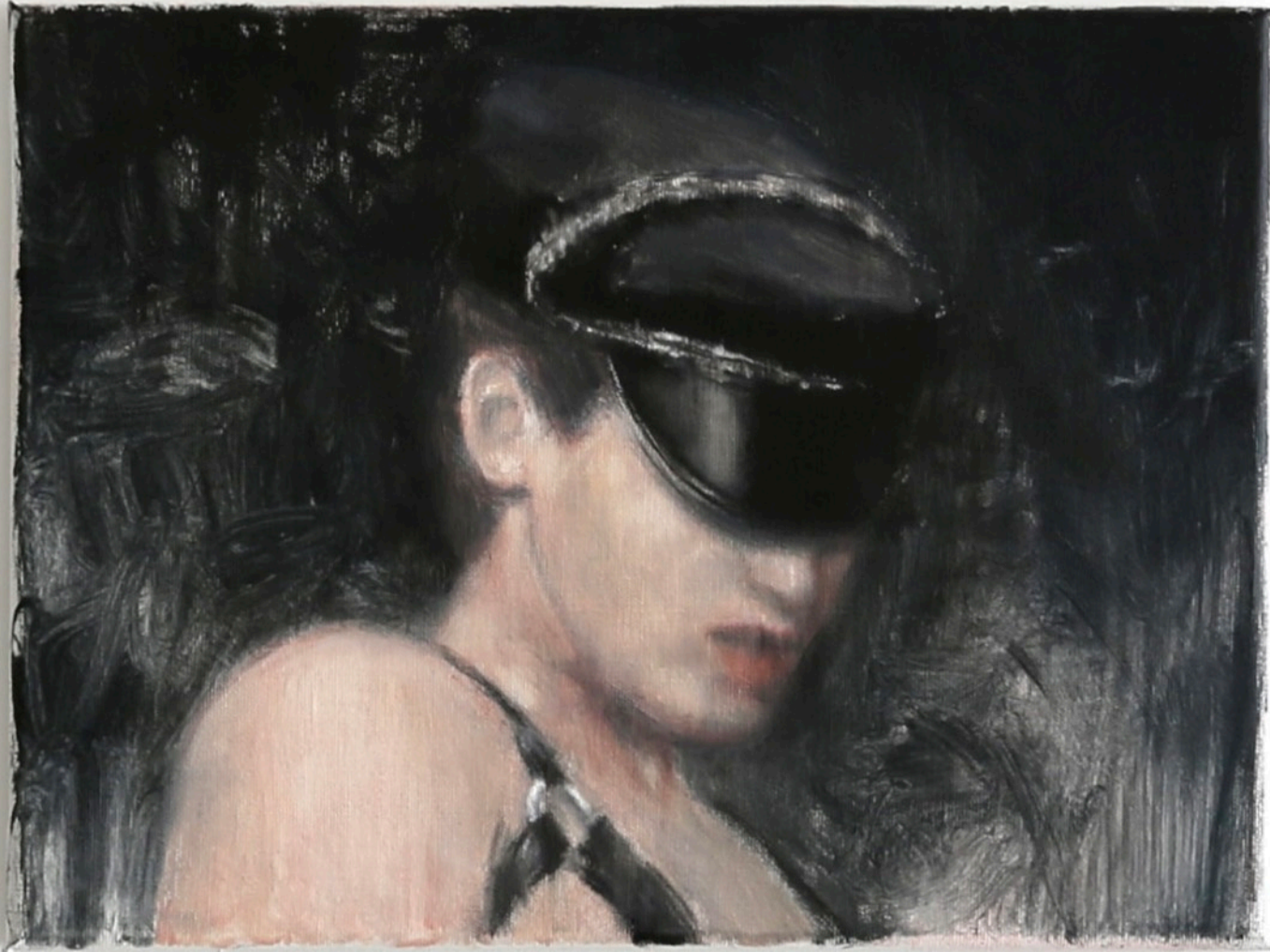
America in the 1980's also suffered a touch of the Baroque and casts perhaps an even more outsized influence on the artist's sensibility. As the government dealt with its part in the dissolution of the Soviet Union, its culture readily embraced the outlandish promise of that decade's capitalist fever dream. And there may be no greater evidence of this soft side of Perestroika than the national obsession with *Dynasty*, the American television show produced by Aaron Spelling. The outlandish gaud of its costumes, sets, scripts was embraced by the Polish people as the inevitable standard of living under their new economic regime, the Carrington Mansion a model for that century's renaissance. But while such fantasies never materialized in any tangible way, their visualities lingered in the consciousness.

The regalia in these paintings glint through a petroleum haze, their detail as impossibly faint as their empty promise. Limned by Stokłosa's obsession they persist no less ignorant of the devotion and disillusionment they inspire. So the artist's obsessive collection of these objects and places continues but without the same disregard for their theoretical implications. His works succeed in revelation where the things they depict fall short in withholding. The two-channel video on view features the male scion of the Carrington family fortune chasing his own image on horseback; the animal is a gift to his son that breaks its leg and is never ridden again. These subjects are neutered by their decorous historicity and Stokłosa's interpretations read immortal.









Untitled, 2023, Oil on canvas, 11¾ x 15¾ in., 30 x 40 cm, £S0010

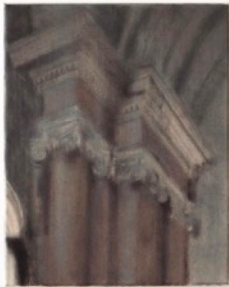






Warsow, 2023, Oil on canvas, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ in., 40.01 x 50.16 cm, £S0008







Caserta, 2023, 19¾ x 15¾ in., 50 x 40 cm, LS0006







Hotel des Invalides, 2023, Oil on canvas, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 23 $\frac{5}{8}$ in., 50 x 60 cm, EST0010







Neopol, 2019, Oil on canvas, 15¾ x 11¾ in., 40 x 30 cm, ŁS0003



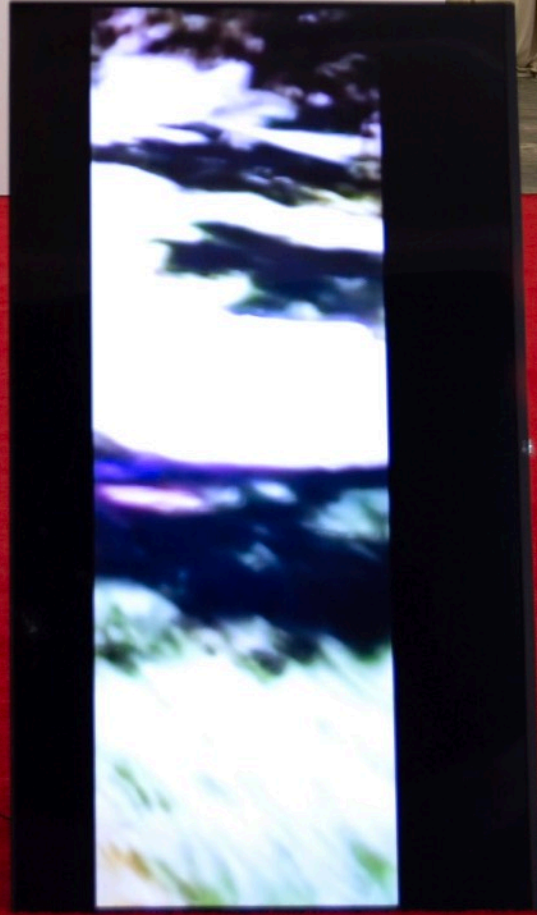
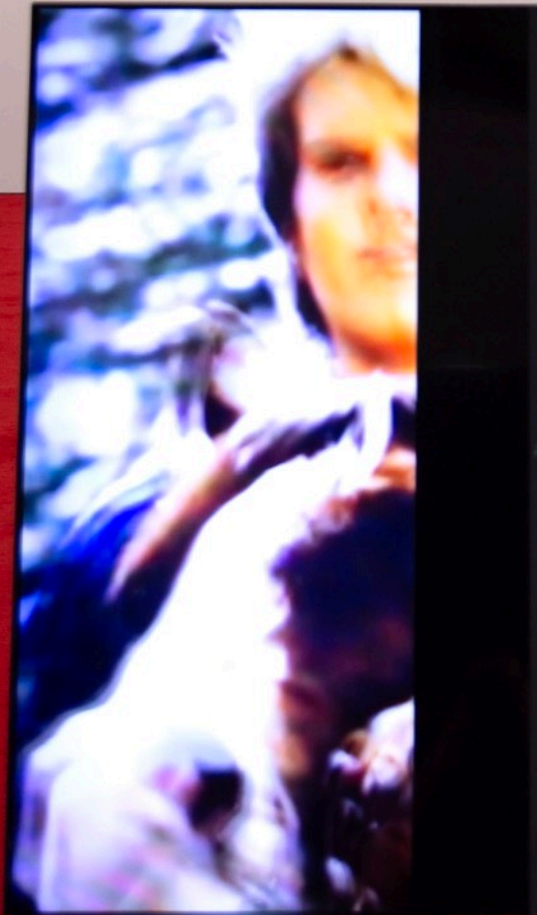


1971



Neapol, 2022, Oil on canvas, 31½ x 35⅜ in., 80 x 90 cm, LS0004









Untitled, 2023, Oil on canvas, 11¼ x 15¾ in., 30 x 40 cm, LS0013







Rome, 2023, Oil on canvas, 19³/₄ x 23⁵/₈ in., 50 x 60 cm, £S0012







Rome, 2023, Oil on canvas, 15³/₄ x 19³/₄ in., 40 x 50 cm, £S0005







Polazzo Reale di Napoli, 2023, Oil on canvas, 31½ x 35¾ in., 80 x 90 cm, LS0001







Bez Tytułu, 2023, Oil on canvas, 15¾ x 11¾ in., 40 x 30 cm, ŁS0009







Rome, 2020, Oil on canvas, 19³/₄ x 23⁵/₈ in., 50 x 60 cm, £S0002



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