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New York Art Galleries: The Virtual Experience

With most spaces shuttered, art galleries are getting creative about presenting work online. Here are two great shows viewable from home.

Ben Sakoguchi's "Towers" (2014), one of two powerful polyptychs in his show "Made in U.S.A." via Ortuzar Projects

Ben Sakoguchi

Through April 4. Ortuzar Projects, 9 White Street, Manhattan; 212-257-0033, ortuzarprojects.com. Call or visit the website for the latest updates.

Ben Sakoguchi, a Japanese-American painter born in 1938 in San Bernardino, Calif., spent several years of his early childhood in a World War II internment camp with his parents in Poston, Ariz. You can see him kneeling in suspenders and green shorts in the central canvas of "Towers," one of two powerful polyptychs in his show "Made in U.S.A." at Ortuzar Projects. It's a careful rendition of a portrait photograph of all the "Residents of Block 13," and it's surrounded by 14 smaller paintings of guard towers and barracks at other camps, from California to Arkansas. Combining dark historical content with a cheery, slightly whimsical style is a simple but incredibly effective choice. It cuts to the heart of our peculiarly naïve American idealism, with its willful amnesia and its exceedingly brutal shadow.

The technique is even more arresting in the artist's "Orange Crate Label" paintings, six of which are in the show. Imaginary citrus brands appearing in the works include a campy "Post-Modernism," adorned with a coffin for modern art, and "Nam," with a few musical notes as a nod to the influence that the catastrophic foreign war had on domestic rock music. But for me the winner is "Surf Nazis," which shows a cluster of blond young men holding a board decorated with a swastika. It alludes to an actual phenomenon, but you don't have to know about real-life "surf Nazis" — or even about Henry Ford's influence on Hitler — to experience the queasy feeling that there's something very apt about the image.

WILL HEINRICH