

Fragile Things

December 4 to 28, 2018

Artists:

Ariadna Arendt
Ivana Kralikova
Yumiko Ono
Mayana Nasybullova
Darya Neretina
Ivan Novikov
Alexander Povzner

Fragile Things brings together artists who work with clay and ceramics. Until the late 20th century, Western art history regarded and valued works of clay primarily as anthropological artefacts or in terms of craft and applied art. To a contemporary eye, such separation seems rather limiting. By now ceramics has established its presence in the contemporary art world and became a field for experiments and a medium of choice for many artists.

Above said however the current exhibition is not celebrating the medium itself, but is telling stories of objects and memories. One of the first thinkers to have studied collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs pointed out that '[o]ur physical surroundings bear our and others' imprint.' 'Our home—furniture and its arrangement, room décor,' he wrote, 'recalls family and friends whom we see frequently within this framework.' If we accept Halbwachs's theory and observe our immediate environment, we will easily find objects that carry particular value and symbolic meaning. Our contact with those objects can make us recollect our intimate personal memories as well as discover the reflections of the collective past.

Minimalist works created by **Yumiko Ono** (Japan) explore the architecture of Soviet modernism. Her two porcelain cups follow the shape of Rapla KEK, an administrative building in the Estonian town of Rapla built in 1977. A symbol of Soviet modernist utopia, this spaceship-shaped building also reminded Yumiko of the cityscapes in her native Japan.

Porcelain plants by **Darya Neretina** (Russia) carry the imprints of the summer garden, greens and herbs, memories of countryside hothouses and family dinners. In *Bouquet Garni* that borrows its name from a classical herb mix, Darya explores the transitory nature of memories and our attempts to preserve them, while the tomato-filled boxes in *Orangerie* translate the nostalgia of the time when people made their own home preserves.

Alexander Povzner (Russia) has translated the abstract idea of memory into matter by making a clay tablet. This object has previously carried ancient wisdoms and sacred commandments; tied the names of people and events to places and indicated the opening hours at administrative offices. In Povzner's work a tablet accepts a new role to become a reminder of the fleeting present moment for any viewer.

Mayana Nasybullova (Russia) explores the lived archaeology of public spaces by collecting pot plants that people have left in them. Giving the plants a new life, Mayana puts them into new clay homes and writes their stories on the clay surface. A clay book written by the artist contains her own memories.

The project by **Ariadna Arendt** (Russia/Montenegro) is a sort of a family altar devoted to her great grandmother of the same name—a famous Soviet animal sculptor. Working in the family studio and surrounded by her great-grandmother's work, using her tools, Ariadna has created a bestiary that replicates her sculptures.

Ivan Novikov's (Russia) project *Đà Nẵng, I Will Be Out in the Rain* shows a symbolic replica of the traditional Vietnamese pot for collecting water vase with a shipyard beam 'growing' out of its top. An homage to the architecture of New Holland Island in Saint Petersburg, where it was created, the work also reflects Ivan Novikov's interest in Southeast Asia. The history of the Vietnamese port of Da Nang, which was one of centers of the US military campaign in Vietnam in the 1960s, is revisited in the context of Russia's new industrial architecture of the 17th century.

Ivana Kralikova (Sweden) experiments with clay as a mineral and the process of molding. She will present the results of her research and demonstrate some of the possible uses of clay in audiovisual works.

Curated by Ekaterina Savchenko

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