

## VYTENIS BUROKAS. LININGS

*Linings* is the first solo exhibition of Vytenis Burokas at Drifts Gallery, featuring previously unexhibited drawings and sculptural objects produced between 2019 and 2023 as well as newly created prints.

Linings are materials-mediators—they soften the contact between two objects or bodies and, by determining the conditions of friction, define what is considered the inside and the outside. But in this show, linings are something else. They can be pictured as a medium created by the plastic dynamics and the uncanny tension between the works presented, where the images, tossed around by constant repetition, never reach their final form. Each work is a preparatory sketch for the next one, and a stain in one drawing can become a facial feature or a life line in the palm of another. *Linings* is a space in plural, charged with the promise of an inevitable touch within the physical closeness of bodies; here, insides and outsides are not yet determined, while the *eros* and the *thanatos* are still connected by an eternal *et cetera*.

The exhibition abandons the usual protagonist and fictional narrative of Burokas' works. However, this lack is compensated by the excessive autonomy of his attributes - hairstyles, shoes and drinks. The gloomy playfulness of the works and the interrelationship of their plastic properties caricatures the logic of the exhibition itself, in a similar fashion as the traditional animation caricatures the physical world. In the late 1930s, the famous director and film theorist Sergei Eisenstein wrote about the work of his close friend Walt Disney, arguing that the alpha and omega of his approach was plasmaticity— a way of representing characters marked by a constant transformation of their form and an inevitable return to the original state of flux. There is nothing stable in Disney's animation, no two identical shapes can ever be perceived, objects take on impossible forms and pulsate with all their potential for change, promising to collapse into a restless, formless mass any second. Eisenstein was very well aware that the protagonist in animation is always movement itself, and that the mesmerising effect of plasmaticity activates the human ability—usually attributed to primitive consciousness—to discern life in inanimate nature. Therefore, the transformation of shapes, in animation created by new technologies and mastered by the dominant forces in culture, can become a dangerous instrument of control: by unnoticeably engaging the viewer's attention, it turns imagination into a resource.

Although the material state of Burokas' drawings, sculptures, prints and the objects they depict have easily recognisable animated qualities, their interactions are not subordinated to a narrative or programmed in time. Rather, these objects encode space with hints of movement, rhythmic repetitions and pauses, revealing the plastic potentiality of a visual event and giving control of meaning-making to the perceiver. The motifs in the works are recognisable yet disturbingly alienated, sometimes balancing on the edge of abstraction and marked by the ambition of monumentality blurred out by fragility; they lack representational definedness. However, this lack in the exhibition is employed to open up free space for the viewer's imagination.

The narrow repertoire of iconographic motifs developed in Burokas' practice is further reduced in the exhibition. Hairstyles, shoes and drinks not only suggest the contours of a fictional character, but also diversely comment on the cultural conventions, dissemination and perception of image production. For instance, the shoe drawings comment on Andy Warhol's advertisements for the I. Miller Shoes company, created in the 70s and printed weekly in *The New York Times* and later in *Harper's Bazaar*. Warhol, still a young illustrator at the time, grasped the importance of habit and dependence to advertising success, and fulfilled his task rather effortlessly: the elegant yet laconically commanding silhouette of the shoe, resembling the profile of an emperor on ancient Roman coins, suggested purchasing essentially the same thing every week. However, carelessly adorned in cheerful pop colours and accompanied by a sentence handwritten by Warhol's mother Julia (e.g. 'You can lead a shoe to water, but you can't make it drink'; 'Any one for shoes?'; 'Sunset and evening shoe') softened the straightforward message and made the addressee suddenly feel the lack of the item on offer—a feeling similar to the eager awaiting a new episode of one's favourite TV series.

Burokas' shoe drawings are a kind of antipode to the aforementioned principle. They have no clear origin, a spur and a heel become each other's parody, the shoes' silhouette is distorted by a nervous contour line, and the surface is smeared with sanguine or ochre. One of the more serious advertisements for I. Miller proclaimed: 'Our master craftsman, peeled away a whole layer of sole from heel to toe... the result... less shoe, more fashion.' In the meantime, what happens in Burokas' drawings is quite the opposite: fashion is peeled away to have at least some of the shoe left.

The other motifs in the exhibition also declare an unclear, hybrid identity and create an uncanny situation of interconnectedness. The hairstyles here function like living, portable sculptures, independent enough to sooner or later demand attention and care from their wearer, but essentially devoid of any foundational independence that would define them. Bottles and drinks, sparkling like fountains, become sketches for an architecture of fluids. The exhibition also includes objects or their fragments from earlier exhibitions, but they no longer play the role performed in the previous meaningful scenarios, rather becoming suspicious co-conspirators of the new works and disrupting their already fragile autonomy. The contingent interdependence of objects, exhibition inventory and space is balanced by introducing even more contingency: the exhibition features prints of two interiors, selected by a good friend of the author and the curator, which ambiguously reveal the intimate and secret space of the creative process and artistic production that always exists beyond the visible exhibition. At the same time, they also point to the unvoiced but concrete influences at play behind every supposedly spontaneous and autonomous creative gesture of an artist.

Vytenis Burokas has completed BA, MA, and art pedagogy studies in Contemporary Sculpture at the Vilnius Academy of Arts. Between 2013 and 2014, he took part in the *Rupert* educational programme. The artist's works have been displayed in both group and personal exhibitions, including *Tracing the Outlines of Ukrainian History: Louder* (Radvila Palace Museum of Art, Vilnius, 2022), *The Order of The Spur: These Boots Are Made for Walking* (apiece, Vilnius, 2022), *Growing Out? Growing Up? Contemporary Art Collecting in the Baltics* (Zuzeum, Riga, 2022), *Avoidance* (Futura, Prague, 2021), *Wanderings of Draught* (Editorial, Vilnius, 2020), *The Sea Monster; The Bear* (lītost, Prague, 2020), *Sanatorium* (Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, 2019), *Play within the Walls of Academy* (MOCÁK, Krakow, 2018).

Exhibition Curator Edgaras Gerasimovičius

Translation and Proofreading: Alexandra Bondarev, Aistis Žekevičius

Graphic Designer: Vytautas Volbekas

Production: Vaida Jonušytė, Ariel Ink

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