

Robertas Narkus

The board

15/03 - 11/04/2023

Robertas Narkus exhibition 'The board' presents an installation of human-sized photographs and scattered objects that occupy the entire space of the gallery. Playing with references to recent art history, fragments of the object-oriented ontology and challenges of the post-Covid society, the artist creates his own bricolage universe.

At the core of the exhibition are still-life-like images constructed from wires, cords, building materials and remnants of artworks collected from the artist's studio and the gallery. The return to the genre of photography is no coincidence. The artist, who has been working in industrial photography for years, demonstrates his mastery: large-scale hyper-realistic photographs baffle with their brutal detail, inviting us to take another closer look at and celebrate unadorned reality. With recognition, ease and a smile, Narkus provokes the viewer. Illuminated by bright and steady light, the promiscuous assemblages in the photographs are depicted as if seated, resemble living creatures; some new and still nameless life form. Perhaps they are members of a clandestine organisation, committee or board, deciding our fate in a never-ending video conference.

Narkus often draws inspiration from the world of business and start-ups. By juxtaposing the spirit of optimism, drive and the bitterness of disappointment, not only he creates tragicomic installations, videos and collages, but is also a founder and board member of several cultural and business organisations. Even though there is often a certain amount of humour in Narkus's work, this irony is highly ambiguous as the artist admits to being just a rebellious cog in the omnipresent neo-liberal system.

Neringa Bumblienė

Dear Board,

The enlightened satraps, chairman, grand master, your excellences, internet providers and masters of protocol, guardians of justice and morals, commission of commissions, masters of ceremonies, priestess of the flame, DJ's, elders, seers, council of mothers, shareholder meeting, presidium, one and ninety nine percent, members of the inner circle, advisor, consul, world managers, admiral, marketing director, sales manager, public relations specialist, revolutionaries, oh go-go dancer, anarchists and le ftists. Welcome to the meeting!

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Fuck the war! Fuck the data, rising prices and worsening statistics! There are times when I reflect too much on things, over analyzing and overthinking them. Today I want to celebrate. Although celebrating is hard - you can't grumble, hide or run away. I want to celebrate coincidences and little choices. Yes, we want to hear that we will get away with it. There is the Lithuanian folk belief that animals in barns talk about the future on Christmas Eve, but you mustn't listen to them because if you do, you'll be struck dead. I remember when I was a child, we were celebrating in the village, and I snuck out of the house and walked around in the squeaking snow - thinking I might hear something. That time I got away with it.

It's uncomfortable to confess. I am privileged and blessed, but this assembly completes a difficult stage. This summer, which I spent by the sea trying to chill out and stuff, nearly finished me off. Now I realize I was listening to conversations and wanted answers that were not for me to know.

Scientists say there is a 99 percent probability that we are living in a simulation and as soon as we turn our backs, a powerful universe computer stops rendering a reality that no one sees. Maybe when no one's looking, things start to dance and smooch, and when you turn back around, they pretend everything's normal. But where do our sock's and key's go? I don't think we need to explain that because of their physiological properties they simply don't manage to get back to their places in time.

Robertas Narkus

Robertas Narkus (b. 1983, Vilnius, Lithuania) lives and works in Vilnius.

Robertas Narkus is an interdisciplinary artist graduated from the Vilnius Academy of Arts. Employing performance, new media, humour and entrepreneurship, he brings together the ordinary and the absurd to explore notions of technology and human desires. Leveraging existing systems of societal functioning, he uses them as strategies aimed at creating an aesthetic, relational, or performative product. He recently exhibited at the CAC Vilnius, XII Baltic Triennial, KIM? in Riga, de Appel Art Center, Stedelijk Museum, Whitechapel Gallery, Ballroom Marfa and David Dale Gallery in Glasgow, among others. Narkus is the founder of the Institute for Pataphysics in Vilnius and artist day care center "Autarkia". In 2022 Robertas Narkus represented Lithuania at the 59th Venice Biennale.

The exhibition was organised with the support of the Lithuanian Cultural Institute in Rome.

