

Ernestis Kļaviņš

## A Treat for a Connoisseur

Instead of a product, the connoisseur is offered “an experience” served as unique. As “experience businesses” become more prominent, the object of pleasure more often than not is intangible, and at times cannot be enjoyed in any physical form. And the members of the finer tastes club seem to be enthusiastically eating them up. One by one, these arbiters of taste collect various unforgettable experiences. Then they congregate to exchange second-hand stories of these mouthwatering “unique” experiences with one another or in groups. “Simply excellent!” or “World class!” are some of the phrases you will hear most frequently.

Historically, such enjoyment culminated in a purchase – an art lover walked into a salon to browse the most current objects of pleasure on offer. If something caught their eye, they likely opened their wallet to take this pleasure to its logical conclusion. This seems like a decent scenario where all parties benefit – both the connoisseur and the author of the coveted artwork. Today, the scenarios appear to be more perverse, for example - NFT (nonfungible token) art trade, where not a work of art but a record in a database is bought.

I have always been suspicious of the assertion that art must be enjoyed. Visiting a gallery seems to have become a throw-away suggestion you will find in nearly any lifestyle magazine. You might try to suggest that it has always been like this and that it is precisely pleasure that has allowed for major developments in art, gathering crowds eager to experience and enjoy art and lift their spirits. However, equating previous cultural processes to what is happening today seems irresponsible. Industries have been labeled creative for a while now, and the range of standardised objects of enjoyment produced by the cultural industry has never been so vast. Hence, the notion of pleasure has deformed over time.

Ernestis Kļaviņš does not hide the fact that his art is profane. His works don't showcase conscious desacralisation of art, but rather intellectual self-sufficiency manifested in confident and witty form. It is precisely the presence of intellect and unpretentious erudition that make his works packed with esthetics despite the seemingly anti-aesthetic approach. In terms of form, his art seems willingly awkward at first but it soon becomes apparent that he creates with tenacity. He does not try to embellish or wrap his art in palatable packaging. The sculptures displayed in this exhibition have been made out of simple, readily available materials. It is paint, construction foam and wood blocks cut in cubes and glued to form a coherent composition. The visible is not pretending to be something it isn't. Kļaviņš cares not about optical illusions or artful play on form. His form and artistic approach can be traced back to several major movements in 20th century art history. The current exhibition, for instance, has been created in a style resembling Arte Povera.

Tomass Pārups

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