

MAUREEN PALEY.



DEIMANTAS NARKEVIČIUS

*The Fifer*

12 January – 11 February 2024

private view: 12 January 2023, 5 – 7.30 pm

the artist will be present

Maureen Paley, 60 Three Colts Lane, London E2 6GQ

Maureen Paley is pleased to present the third solo exhibition in the gallery by Deimantas Narkevičius, *The Fifer*. His work examines the relationship between personal memories and political histories, particularly those of the post-Soviet era of his native country Lithuania. Employing documentary footage, voice-overs, interviews, re-enactments, and found photographs, his works submit historical events to the narrative structures of storytelling and cinema.

This exhibition centres around a project titled *The Fifer*, 2019, that will be shown in the UK for the first time. This installation materialises several states of sound across different media and is composed of a holographic screen, a bronze cast of a flute, two photographs, and a musical soundtrack. On the holographic screen a bird flutters in and out of vision, accompanied by the audio of a flute mimicking the melodies of birdsong. Alongside this, the internal cavities of a flute are cast in bronze, rendering the acoustic qualities of this instrument as a weighted thread of metal. The two photographs that complete the work depict a soldier playing the flute whilst facing away from a window. The first print is an archival image and the second is a digital reconstruction that imagines this scene from an exterior perspective. Flautists have historically been used by the military to provide an alternate means of communication that bypassed interceptable mediums such as morse code or the radio. *The Fifer* stages a dialogue between origin and artifice, denying a simplistic comprehension of an “authentic” sonic source.

The exhibition also includes his earlier film, *Europa 54° 54' – 25° 19'*, from 1997. This work shows Narkevičius navigating a journey from his former home in Vilnius to the Lithuanian countryside, whereupon he locates a plaque marking the geographic centre of Europe. In the voiceover, he announces that after years of travelling around the continent he has finally found out that the centre of Europe actually lies just outside the Lithuanian capital. *Europa 54° 54' – 25° 19'* challenges coherent definitions of the centre and periphery, opposing the Cold War tensions that had oscillated the centre of Europe between cities such as Brussels, Berlin, and Moscow. This geographic centre is itself disputed; 54° 54' – 25° 19' were coordinates determined by the Parisian Institut Géographique National in 1989, a figure contested by towns in both Belarus and Hungary who also have monuments declaring themselves the midpoint of the continent. Yet *Europa 54° 54' – 25° 19'* serves less as an appraisal of this location than a questioning of its importance.

The most recent work on display in the exhibition is a 2023 series of enlarged Polaroid prints that describe mythological stones in Lithuania. The national landscape is interspersed by immense and isolated stones that sit within otherwise green pastures. For centuries, people have questioned how these have appeared in great plains or dense forests. The stones feature in pagan legends and many act as altars and sanctuaries. These Polaroid prints meditate on how land is ascribed significance, in keeping with Narkevičius' broader interrogation of how geopolitical hierarchies are determined.

Deimantas Narkevičius (b. 1964, Utena, Lithuania) lives and works in Vilnius, Lithuania. Selected solo exhibitions include *Anachronisms*, Korschthal Esch, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg (2022); *The Fifer*, Base Progetti Per L'Arte, Florence, Italy (2021); *Rocking The State*, Łaźnia Center for Contemporary Art, Gdańsk, Poland (2018); *20 July.2015*, AuditoriumArte, Rome, Italy (2015); *Stains and Scratches*, National Gallery of Art, Vilnius, Lithuania (2017); *20 July.2015*, Maureen Paley, London, UK (2017); *Doubled Youth*, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2016); *Books on Shelves and Without Letters*, The Blank Contemporary Art, Bergamo, Italy (2016); *Archaeology of Memories*, Corner House, Riga, Latvia (2015); Maureen Paley, London, UK (2015). He represented Lithuania at the 49th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2001). Narkevičius' work is held in the collections of institutions including Muzej Suvremene Umjetnosti, Contemporary Art Museum, Croatia; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, France; Museum Folkwang, Germany; Museion, Italy; Centre for Contemporary Art, Latvia; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Norway; Van Abbemuseum, The Netherlands; Museum of Contemporary Art, Poland; Museo Reina Sofía, Spain; MACBA, Spain; Moderna Museet, Sweden; Tate Modern, UK.

image: Deimantas Narkevičius, *The Fifer*, 2019 (detail of installation), HD colour video with stereo sound (looped), holographic screen, archival black and white photograph, digitally produced black and white photograph, bronze cast object

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