

Augustas Serapinas
Pine, Spruce and Aspen

Arsenal Gallery in Białystok
Arsenal Gallery Power Station
13 Elektryczna Street (entrance from Świętojańska Street), Białystok, Poland

15.11.2024 - 2.03.2025

Curators: Post Brothers & Katarzyna Różniak-Szabelska

Podlasie is one of the few regions in Poland where traditional wooden architecture has been preserved. However, such vernacular architecture has been disappearing in recent years from local cities, villages, and towns, as well as from the region's neighbor, Lithuania. Old log houses are deteriorating, are abandoned, sold off for lumber or firewood, or have undergone reconstructions and modernizations. In Białystok, they often suspiciously burn down to make way for investments by developers. At the same time, similar buildings end up in museums and open-air collections, where they become part of the region's tourist brand. Residents of the region are grappling with the tension between intentional destruction, natural transience and change, and the need to preserve this unique local architectural legacy. They face the question of how to acknowledge their own folk heritage without it being reduced to the stereotype of a romanticized, simple rural past. These are also some of the issues that Vilnius-based Lithuanian artist Augustas Serapinas has been tackling in recent years.

Serapinas's ongoing body of work involves the artist acquiring and dismantling unwanted wood buildings, displacing and reconstructing them in exhibition contexts. By breaking down the wooden constructions of old Lithuanian and Podlasiian houses and reconfiguring their elements, he accentuates the practicality of their design, as well as their modular and mobile construction. Like him, the creators of these buildings drew materials from their immediate surroundings to create simple and functional building systems. Serapinas is interested in the form following function. Four black squares of burnt roof, the massive body of a traditional shingle-covered installation and a geometric structure made of three interconnected wooden buildings draw attention to the legacy of pragmatic, pre-industrial minimalism and the bare materiality of pine, spruce and aspen wood.

Augustas Serapinas (b. 1990, Vilnius, Lithuania) graduated from the Vilnius Academy of Arts in 2013. His work has been part of numerous biennials, including the 57th Biennale di Venezia, Riboca2 and Toronto Biennial of Art. His work is represented in renowned public collections such as the Tate, Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Pinakothek der Moderne and M HKA. Upcoming solo shows include CAC Vilnius, ICA Milano and Bündner Kunstmuseum.

Collaboration: Society of Friends of the Open Air Museum in Koźliki, Open Air Museum in Białowieża, Emalin Gallery, London