

EVGENY ANTUFIEV

With a copper mask in one hand
and a vase full of secrets in
the other, my body will rest in a
sarcophagus guarded by twelve
specially trained monsters

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Emalin is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by the Russian artist Evgeny Antufiev, curated by Marina Dacci. This is the artist's first exhibition with the gallery, coinciding with his first UK institutional show, *Organic resistance: body and knife - crossing the border* at MOSTYN, Llandudno, Wales.

Exploring a contemporary space for myth and ritual, Evgeny Antufiev carves wood, boils bones, and stuffs and embroiders traditional Russian fabrics to supplement found curiosities and deposits of kitsch. Deeply invested in the cultural particularity and symbolic significance of materials, Antufiev's accumulations feel both prehistoric and personal: forms abandon their material functions and fantastical narratives are spun around objects that escape categorization or correlation. These displays of oddities veer between persiflage and plausibility: they recall the shamanic mysticism still vital in Southern Siberia, only to sever these ties and open up alternate realities altogether.

Evgeny Antufiev (b. 1986 in Kyzyl, Russia) lives and works in Moscow, Russia. He graduated from the Institute of Contemporary Art, Moscow in 2009, winning the 'Kandinsky Prize for the Young Artist: Project of the Year' during his studies. Selected exhibitions include *Immortality Forever*, M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (Antwerp, Belgium. 2017); Garage Triennial of Russian Contemporary Art, Garage (Moscow, Russia. 2017); *Cabaret Kultura*, with V·A·C Live (performance), Whitechapel Gallery (London, UK. 2017); *Eternal Garden*, Manifesta 11 (Zurich, Switzerland. 2016); *Twelve, wood, dolphin, knife, bowl, mask, crystal, bones and marble – fusion. Exploring materials*, Collezione Maramotti (Reggio Emilia, Italy. 2013); *Garden of Eden*, Palais de Tokyo (Paris, France. 2012); *Ostalgia*, New Museum (New York, USA. 2011).

Heading into the void does not mean vanishing.

Evgeny Antufiev's research has always focused on different explorations of the concept of immortality. Some years ago, the artist said: "I have always believed in things, graves and memorials. I should have lived in Ancient Egypt, where they paid much more attention to the construction of tombs than to the construction of palaces. What incredible intrigues I would have plotted to take a place next to the Pharaoh's tomb! I would have thought through the smallest details of the mosaics decorating the columns, would have sent expeditions after the rarest bones and most precious stones..."

For his first solo exhibition at Emalin, Antufiev stages the interior of a fictitious regal tomb where a body finds its celebratory resting place. Here, the artist brings into focus his research into a form of resistance against physical death: a resistive force embedded in the ritualistic presentation of both the body and the quotidian objects linked to that body's life in a way that shapes a future collective memory of it.

If we believe that artists materialize their story - that is, a story of objects and 'things' - in the work they produce, and see in a museum a space where the display of objects represents a recollection and the persistence of these beyond mortal life, then we can reimagine this body, ritualistically laid to rest in Antufiev's presentation, as the artist's own body. As such, the tomb can be rethought as a sacred museum space, where the artist projects his need to endure after physical existence. The gallery space becomes the site for staging the concept of the museum - and the objects that accumulate within this space, in turn, function to testify to the artist's survival and defiance of mortality.

Hybrids of cultures and styles, Antufiev's objects evoke ancient artefacts and relics that are capable of moving across time. Ranging from daggers to bowls and masks to snakes, these objects tell stories and embody archetypes linked to ideas of offering, change and regeneration. They aim to deny death while inevitably encompassing it... the object itself is as eternal as the emptiness that remains when it has vanished. Past and future things are no less real than present ones. Things *are*.

What then could the notion of the museum space be, if not a special mausoleum devoted to celebrating the artist's immortality and the eternity of the artworks he has produced? As a process of discovery, the viewer's curious experience of Antufiev's collection of artefacts consecrates this permanence, returning a beat to the artist's mortal heart.

Text by Marina Dacci

Marina Dacci is the Director of Collezione Maramotti in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Within this capacity, she curated Antufiev's first institutional solo exhibition in Europe at the Collezione Maramotti in 2013. Previously, she has acted as General Coordinator of the annual contemporary photography festival FOTOGRAFIA EUROPEA as well as the Head of Office of Culture at the City of Emilio Reggio.

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