

Irina Lotarevich—Tension Setting

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GOODBANK, Frankfurt am Main

Curated by Maja Lisewski

Irina Lotarevich works with hard, cold metal – a material long read as an emblem of control, rigid permanence and patriarchal attribution. Her artistic interventions unsettle such inherited associations, transforming materiality into a site for reflection on power, the body, bureaucracy and labour. Raised in New York, the artist combines an elaborate handling of raw matter – steel, bronze, brass and aluminium, subjected to cutting, bending, welding, grinding, forging and casting – with everyday objects as objets trouvés.

Lotarevich's minimalist sculptures extend into existing architectural structures and social narratives. They probe the ways in which bodies are inscribed into built environments, and how ideological systems take form through choices of material and construction. In a world marked by geopolitical upheaval and ecological crisis, she develops a sculptural language oscillating between froideur and fragility, between present tensions and uncertain futures. What emerges is a reflection of a precarious, anxiety-ridden corporeality – a condition crystallised in the exhibition title *Tension Setting*. The title gestures not only to this socio-political dimension but also to a technical register, evoking the physical properties and thresholds of the chosen materials.

The formal rigor and sensibility of Lotarevich's practice lies in the deconstruction of seemingly familiar architectural elements and utilitarian objects. Playing with scale and method of construction, her works retain an awareness of the human dimension. In *'Compressed Structure'* (2024), the compartmentalisation of brass boxes into a horizontally stretched wall-sculpture, industrial in its first impression, simultaneously reveals the artist's own fingerprints as intimate trace. Delicate chains appear as ornamental counterparts to butcher's hooks. At first glance, these works seem functional – metallic grids of keyholes, filing boxes, binders – but soon unravel as estranged realities. *'Housing Anxiety 8'* (2023), a vertical rectangular key rack, quickly transforms into a surreal dead end, an embodiment of the widespread sense of powerlessness pervading the housing market. As a wall-sculpture, the rectangular form, scaled to that of a server, references the infrastructure of the information age.

Within the premises of GOODBANK, this visual vocabulary and its systemic critique become immediately palpable in *'Binder with Skins 1'* and *'Binder with Skins 2'* (both 2023): aluminium casts of wrinkled, lived skin inserted into binders as if filed away as documents. The true scale of contemporary data collection – the archiving of the self in the digital era – remains almost impossible to apprehend. We seem too deeply embedded in the machinery of late capitalism to reflect on its consequences. That

the archive itself is a political, exclusionary institution was already articulated by Derrida in 'Archive Fever' (1995). Lotarevich's freestanding sculpture 'Storage Box A4 #1' (2021) renders the dehumanisation of archival and bureaucratic compulsion disquietingly tangible, by way of an ex negativo experience.

Democratising taxonomies and a society marked by polycrisis appear to have reached a threshold. The absurdities they contain are laid bare by Lotarevich's minimalist, conceptual and finely attuned, empathetic sculptures.

– Maja Lisewski

Born in 1991 in Rybinsk, Russia, **Irina Lotarevich** emigrated as a child to New York City. She studied art at Cornell University, Hunter College and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. She currently lives in Vienna, where she teaches metalworking at the University of Applied Arts. Recent solo exhibitions include Settings, Silke Lindner, New York (2025); SOPHIE TAPPEINER / Liste, Basel (2024); Modular Woman, SOPHIE TAPPEINER, Vienna (2023); Refinery, SOPHIE TAPPEINER, Vienna (2020); Galvanic Couple, FUTURA Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague; and Pensive State (duo with Anna Schachinger), SOPHIE TAPPEINER, Vienna (2019). Her work has recently been included in numerous group exhibitions, including N/A, organised by Ginny on Frederick, Seoul; Scherben, Good Weather, Chicago (2024); Belvedere 21, Vienna; Silke Lindner, New York; Centre d'art contemporain / Passages, Troyes (2023); HALLE FÜR KUNST, Graz; Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg; Kunstverein Bielefeld; mumok, Vienna (2022); and the Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna (2021), among others. Her works are held in the collections of mumok (Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig), Vienna; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; and the Wien Museum.