

Ruofan Chen
Dull ache
20.05–10.06.2026

Some forms of violence resist the spectacle. They remain hidden until something breaks down, or until one has unwittingly had more than it could have been endured.

Any enclosed space utilizes materials that eventually remain concealed to set the inside and the outside apart. But what happens upon direct, raw encounter?

Fiberglass works its way through the skin; dust settles within the lungs; fumes from toxic adhesives drift across confined spaces. And so it comes to pass that absorption precedes awareness. The body continues to carry the effects of materials even after they are no longer exposed to them. Something becomes a part of the body without announcing itself as such. Much of the work emerges at the brink of this threshold of intrinsic sedimentation, where harm lingers; the harm is itself delayed, still, and elusive.

April 21st was my first day in Tbilisi. When I first walked into this semi-abandoned space, a surge of excitement took hold of me. The traces of time were manifesting in the space with a natural, unhurried grace. As I explored further, I came across a block of discarded glass wool—a common construction insulation material—lying in a small room. In the center of this cubic mass was a deep indentation, clearly a bed formed by an animal that had curled up there for a long time to rest. In that instant, a visceral, physiological discomfort stung me: Sleeping on that must have been so painful...*

Nothing seems to begin, yet something persists. In this field of what remains invisible and within reach, the sculpture takes the form of a diaphragm. Rarely seen but always at work, it holds the space where breath and pressure converge. It regulates the passage of air between the inside and the outside; breathing dwells in continuous motion, there is no room for rest. With each breath, pressure blends into flow, and blood is drawn back to the heart.

The body proceeds through these rhythms even when the conditions encircling it are precarious. Not everything that seeps into it finds a resolution, nor does it withdraw. The body adjusts; it persists through. Within this ceaseless flow, dull ache hangs in the air.

* Words from Ruofan Chen.

Works

1.

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Vessels, 2026

fuel feed line, sawdust, woodchip

400 × 27 × 45

400 × 110 × 35 cm
2.

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It must hurt., 2026

mineral wool, georgian wool

120 × 70 × 55 cm

120 × 70 × 78 cm
3.

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Penetration, 2026

silicone, georgian wool, canned cat food, sawdust, wood, bamboo

Dimensions variable
4.

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Almost stagnant, 2026

silicone-modified plaster, recycled georgian wood, aluminum alloy

160 × 117 × 155 cm

160 × 35 × 130 cm

