

EVGENY
ANTUFIEV

Selected Press

Press

Bengi Ünsal's Top Picks from Frieze London Viewing Room 2023

frieze

EVGENY ANTUFIEV & LYUBOV NALOGINA

Untitled, 2022

Malachite, travertine, onyx, serpentine, cement,
130 × 56 × 5 cm

Presented by Emalin

I love how each mosaic piece in this work holds its own story of crossing borders, making it a beautifully intricate map of transition and movement. Antufiev's works evoke archaic folklore and cultural tradition yet speak to that innately human feeling of familiarity paired with a sense of "home", even if that isn't defined by a physical space. Mosaics very much remind me of my own home, Turkey, and the centuries of culture they represent.



Frieze, 18 October 2023
[extract]

Press

Soft Water Hard Stone at the New Museum — lost for words

FT FINANCIAL
TIMES

Soft Water Hard Stone, the New Museum's triennial exhibition of emerging artists, has a verbiage problem. I bristle when creators explain too much or curators do it for them, or when they swaddle abstract images in a bubble wrap of abstract language. The text panel-as-essay announces a lack of faith that the art speaks for itself. Read before ye look and ye shall understand (otherwise, forget it), all those densely printed labels seem to advise.

Trudging through galleries that clamoured to be passed over, I came to an unignorable installation by the Moscow-based Evgeny Antufiev. He has papered a wall in figures derived from a third-century Roman sarcophagus. The original is creepy enough: a parade of the robed but headless dead marches along carrying masks of torment. Antufiev magnifies the zombie-movie mixture of comedy and menace. The digitally stylised figures repeat at irregular intervals, so that you continuously feel as if you've met these people before somewhere. The masks are three-dimensional. Some, in bronze, have the look of ancient artefacts. Others, sewn together and stuffed, are almost goofy but no less sinister.

Once again, subtexts jangle together, resisting attempts to make them resolve. Antiquity and modernity merge, identity and avatar pull apart, emotions are frozen in theatrical symbols. One interpretation presents itself: in Putin's Russia, as in dictatorships through the ages, it's prudent to keep your true self veiled in distractions and misdirection. Or perhaps we should read this as a critique of those who disguise themselves by choice, unfurling a procession of grimly cheery Instagram posts while tucking the substance of their lives out of sight.

Text by Ariella Budick

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Financial Times, 23 November 2021
[extract]

‘New Museum Triennial Explores the Hidden Strengths of Soft Power’

The New York Times

A grab bag of forms and styles, the 2021 Triennial is that rare thing, a big contemporary survey with a cohesive mood.

The New Museum’s fifth Triennial exhibition, titled “Soft Water Hard Stone,” is largely a product of lockdown. Much of the work by 40 international artists and collectives was made during the past two pandemic-strapped years. And it has, overall, a hoarded, shut-in feel. Colors are muted. Materials are scrappy, unpretty. Scale is generally small, and of the few monumental pieces, most are sculptures or installations in break-downable formats.

Certain themes recur: impermanence, erosion, disease, survival. Political vibes are buzzing everywhere, but are rarely instantly readable as such. The eye-candy suavity found in the heavily marketed current wave of figure painting seen a lot in galleries finds no place here. Nor, for that matter, does any other single “look.” Yet, despite being a grab bag of forms and styles, the 2021 Triennial is that rare thing, a big contemporary survey — it fills three floors of the museum, plus its lobby — with a cohesive texture and mood.

The exhibition’s theme is adapted from a Brazilian proverb “Soft water on hard stone hits until it bores a hole” (“Água mole em pedra dura, tanto bate até que fura”). That piece of pop wisdom — the notion that persistent pressure eventually wears down resistance and creates change — is, of course, a staple of many cultures. And the show supplies a range of visual matches for it.

Most of the artists in the show — organized by Margot Norton, a curator at the New Museum, and Jamillah James, senior curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles — take a less literal approach to the dynamic of transformation, focusing their attention on the broader, often less tangible pressures exerted on

the world by time, nature and human intervention. And in their work, they demonstrate the many ways art can, through soft-power pressures of its own, add information, shape thinking and prevent loss.

Text by Holland Cotter



‘Top 50 most promising Russian artists’



The need for such a list, a cheat sheet for orientation in new names, is obvious: the Biennale of Young Art is taking place in Moscow. The youth fair held for the first time, gallery owners and auctioneers hunt for rising stars, and fresh names appear in any large exhibition. Who are they, the new heroes? The Art Newspaper Russia, with the participation of experts and a jury, studied the issue and made the top 50 young Russian artists under 35 years old.

Evgeny Antufiev (1986, Kyzyl)

Education: Institute of Contemporary Art (Moscow, 2009)

Awards, achievements: laureate of the Kandinsky Prize in the category “Young Artist” (2009), in the category “Project of the Year” (2019)

Solo exhibitions: Collezione Maramotti (Reggio Emilia), Moscow Museum of Modern Art (Moscow), Regional Archaeological Museum of Antonio Salinas (Palermo), Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA) (Antwerp), Multimedia Art Museum (Moscow), Creative Workshop C T. Konenkova (Moscow). The only Russian participant in Manifesta 11 (Zurich, 2016)

What it does: sculpture, installation, found objects

In this rating, perhaps, there is no other author who shuns so much of a stranger, someone else’s glance and assessment. Nevertheless, Evgeny Antufiev is consistently placed at the head of the ratings of promising artists. Because his world is inevitably attractive. Antufiev does not create more or less seductive images that resonate with reality - no, he serves as a guide to another reality, hidden and hidden. Here the author is like a medium. And “promising” is no longer about a career perspective, it’s about author’s poetics. The referent of Antufiev’s art

is mystery. Instead of banal consumption, the viewer is involved as if in a magical practice, where amulets, amulets, totems, and not “art objects” and where not an “installation”, but a sanctuary (not really, but close). Almost like in the mysteries: what you saw, what or who tried to tell you something, show, explain - let it remain misunderstood, incomprehensible, but into the white light from the white cube you come out transformed. A little - but this is already a lot.

Text by Konstantin Agunovich & Milena Orlov
Originally published on: <http://www.theartnewspaper.ru/posts/8425/>

‘What Does It Mean to Be European?’

frieze

Europe is in crisis. Right-wing populisms are on the rise and have been for some time now. As the European Union’s once triumphant liberal hegemony sputters under the weight of its own contradictions, politicians such as Nigel Farage, Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini have seized on a generalized feeling of precariousness to address a more libidinal obsession with national identity, defined in opposition to the non-European other.

But, what does it mean to be European? This culturally and politically weighty question is posed by the exhibition ‘Jeunes Artistes en Europe. Les Métamorphoses’ (Metamorphosis. Art in Europe Now), on view in Paris at the Fondation Cartier. The show brings together works by 21 artists from 16 countries, all born between 1980 and 1994, but not necessarily in the European Union. ‘Europe was our framework,’ curator Thomas Delamarre tells me during an interview. ‘We wanted to show artists who were living and working here, but we were not looking for works on the subject of Europe; we didn’t want to organize an exhibition that examined the “European question”.’

Nevertheless, the ‘European question’ appears more than once in the exhibition. In the first room, for instance, Paris-based designer Benjamin Graindorge presents a high table with a map of Europe as a single landmass, without national borders, open to the free flow of ideas, people and commerce.

The next room is dominated by a confrontation between the Amsterdam-based, Italian design duo Formafantasma and Greek sculptor Kostas Lambridis on the subject of recycling. For their project Ore Streams (2017–19), Formafantasma created a line of sleek office furniture made entirely from recycled electronic waste. Two accompanying videos explain how policy changes

affecting hardware standardization could facilitate recycling, which would then render mining for raw materials obsolete by 2080. Their pragmatic approach contrasts with the intuitive patchwork furniture of Lambridis’s ‘Elemental’ series (2017), whose title alludes to Robert Rauschenberg’s c.1953 ‘Elemental Paintings’. Elemental Cabinet, for instance, is a pastiche of the famous 18th-century Florentine Badminton Cabinet, replacing the original’s rich, ebony facade and inlaid precious stones with ‘poor’ materials such as painted resin, plastic and concrete, set within an exposed metal-wire frame.

Downstairs, the first room presents mostly paintings, including a beguiling series of spectral figures, realized in saturated, glowing tones by George Rouy. Despite their technical prowess, many of these paintings are upstaged by the video installations nearby. I was particularly struck by A Brief History of Princess X (2016), directed by Gabriel Abrantes for the 100-year anniversary of Constantin Brâncuși’s eponymous sculpture. Mixing the absurd and the poignant, it recounts how the famous, enigmatic work went from plaster portrait of Princess Marie Bonaparte to a phallic, polished bronze abstraction.

The final room of the exhibition presents works that engage with folklore and the Neolithic world. These include Federsee (2013), a pseudo-ethnographic film by John Skoog about the otherworldly costumes of the Fasnet carnival, a folk tradition in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Meanwhile, works by Raphaela Vogel and Evgeny Antufiev – which incorporate animal hide and bone – play on ritual and primordial forms, evoking fetish objects and funerary statues.

The return to ancient folk traditions feels like a fitting conclusion to ‘Métamorphoses’, given our current political climate. And, indeed, many of the works here reflect on the perils facing an open and united Europe. While the exhibition attempts to include a diversity

of artists from across the continent, the ratio of male to female participants is exactly two-to-one. There is also a conspicuous paucity of artists of colour. Indeed, Swedish-born Lap-See Lam’s video Mother’s tongue (2017) is the only piece that mines the social and cultural dimensions of migration: it floats through digital renderings of Chinese restaurants in Stockholm while, in a voiceover, several generations of Lam’s family describe their complicated integration into European society.

While the Fondation Cartier has dedicated numerous solo and group shows to contemporary art from Asia, Africa and Latin America over the past several years, ‘Métamorphoses’ presents a limited view of art in Europe. The continued marginalization of artists who address the continent’s colonial past and postcolonial present is difficult to understand in our current political and cultural predicament, rooted in racism and xenophobia.

Then again, perhaps this majority white and male cross section of artists in Europe is closer to the current state of affairs than anyone would really like to admit.

Text by Wilson Tarbox.

Originally published on: <https://frieze.com/article/what-does-it-mean-be-european>

Tate Annual Report

2017/2018



Evgeny Antufiev's mask *Untitled 2015* brings together found materials both assembled by and made by the artist into an object that obliquely evokes the forms of Siberian shamans' masks. It is part of a group of sculptures and objects by Antufiev in Tate's collection that collectively reflect the breadth of his process-driven practice, in which he treats materials as symbolically charged and insists on accumulating bodies of knowledge that relate to the practices of carving wood, embroidery, casting metal and sculpting ceramic, in order to be able to craft all his pieces himself, without the support of assistants. The other works in the group are: *Untitled 2015*, a large carved wooden sculpture that depicts a figure sitting on a tree stump, its face fixed in an ambiguous expression with its mouth open (Tate T15062); *Untitled 2015*, a crowned head made of textile, bronze and amber that harnesses the symbolic potency that amber carries for the artist as a material that is fifty million years old and has 'lived' through momentous historic events (Tate T15061); *Untitled 2015*, a knife cast in bronze, with its pommel in the form of a sharp-toothed animal's head with its mouth open (Tate T15058); *Untitled 2015*, a brass chalice with three faces that look back at the viewer (Tate T15059); and *Untitled 2015*, a ceramic figure that has the appearance of an eroded old stone sculpture (Tate T15060). The works were first shown together as elements within Antufiev's solo exhibition-installation *Seven Underground Kings or the Brief History of the Shadow* in 2015 at Regina Gallery in Moscow, as part of the parallel programme of the 6th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art.

Antufiev is known for exploring the construction of myths and using symbolically charged materials that, through his own particular juxtapositions, are transformed into elements within his own idiosyncratic world order. His immersive installations consist of archetypes within the

language of myths: heroes, weapons, beasts, chalices, disguises, which together combine into a narrative structure. The critic Valentin Diaconov described Antufiev as a 'member of the class of artist-collectors' (Valentin Diaconov in *Evgeny Antufiev 2013*, p.11) who, by arranging material in an individual order through a highly individualised logic, creates emotionally and symbolically charged environments. The artist frequently references forms found in his native Siberia, as with this mask. The artist frequently references forms found in his native Siberia, as with this mask.

The tension between the art object and the object of ritual evoked by the individual forms of Antufiev's sculptures and meticulous display methods characterises much of his practice. Commenting on the first exhibition of these works, Antufiev stated that 'this is an exhibition about form, and what is more, it is about a flickering, unclear form' (Evgeny Antufiev in conversation with Anatoly Osmolovsky, 15 September 2015, <http://syg.ma/@furqat/miezhdu-ritualom-i-iskusstvom-anatolii-osmolovskii-i-ievghienii-antufiev-o-rabotie-smaterialom>, translated by Dina Akhmadeeva, accessed 22 May 2017). Antufiev's decision to leave his works untitled is a deliberate addition to this ambiguity. The objects frequently move between these two roles as the works take on new ritual functions when they are co-opted into the artist's performances. In his own invented absurdist game of bingo, *Dead Nation: Bingo Version* at the Whitechapel Gallery, London in 2016, Antufiev used his works as props, as well as offering them as gifts to audience members in return for performing certain actions.

Likewise, central to the artist's practice is the deliberate ambiguity of his works' temporal origins. Antufiev's choice of forms and materials convincingly take on the guise of the archaic in an attempt to disturb a linear chronology. The artist has explained, 'I like it when an exhibition turns into an archaeological object, when you



look and try to understand what these objects are for. You try to decipher the symbols. You take on the role of an archaeologist.' (Ibid.) Antufiev works with materials that carry a long history and a symbolic weight – wood, ceramics, bronze, brass, textiles, amber – and the labour-intensive nature of his practice is evident in his works. In this engagement with materials, craft, folklore and myth, Antufiev has established himself since 2009 as one of the leading artists of a generation of contemporary Russian practitioners that has returned to tradition through the lens of conceptualism. Curator Katya Inozemtseva has noted, 'Antufiev makes complex narrative structures, testing the very idea of the catalogue, the museum and museum forms of representation, memory, and history and, in the process, changing our attitudes to the collective and individual past.' (Inozemtseva, in *Garage Museum of Contemporary Art 2017*, p.86.)seva has noted, 'Antufiev makes complex narrative structures, testing the very idea of the catalogue, the museum and museum forms of representation, memory, and history and, in the process, changing our attitudes to the collective and individual past.' (Inozemtseva, in *Garage Museum of Contemporary Art 2017*, p.86.)

The group of objects in Tate's collection recreates on a smaller scale the narrative structure of Antufiev's sprawling installations, which rely on connections made between elements. The works can also be displayed separately.

Further reading

Evgeny Antufiev, *Evgeny Antufiev*, Milan 2013.

Katya Inozemtseva, 'Evgeny Antufiev', in Ruth Addison, Alexander Izvekoy, Nikolai Molok (eds.), *Garage Triennial of Russian Contemporary Art*, exhibition catalogue, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow 2017, pp.86–7.

Text by Dina Akhmadeeva.

Originally published on: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/antufiev-untitled-t14935>

'When art became part of the landscape. Chapter I'

ATP DIARY

At times we cannot separate art from landscape. As Roman statues became part of the landscape and Etruscan vases part of the subterranean world; marble columns grow like trees, Mounds become hills. The domes of Russian temples look like mushroom colonies, Scythian stone statues protected the steppes. Sight perceives ancient art as part of the landscape like lakes, rivers, mountains and valleys. Ancient art is organically built in the universe and becomes part of it.

Evgeny Antufiev

The regional Archaeological Museum Antonino Salinas in Palermo, in collaboration with the Collezione Maramotti in Reggio Emilia, presents a solo exhibition of the Russian artist Evgeny Antufiev: *When Art became part of the Landscape. Chapter I*.

The exhibition, curated by Giusi Diana, marks the collaboration between one of the most prestigious archaeological museums in the Mediterranean area and an important Italian private cultural institution devoted to contemporary art which was the first to bring the artist in Italy with a large exhibition in 2013 and continues to support his research.

The exhibition has been included in the Collateral Events of Manifesta 12 and represents an ideal link with the last edition of Manifesta 11, held in Zurich in 2016, where Antufiev, invited by curator Christian Jankowski, showed the complex installation, *Eternal Garden*, in Wasserkirche near Helmhaus and other works in the first floor of Löwenbräukunst.

The Archaeological Museum Salinas, the oldest in Sicily, is the most important public museum institution devoted to Greek and Punic art in Sicily. As stated by Francesca Spatafora, the Museum director: "The purported

detachment between the art from the past and the art of the present is only a misperception. As archaeological museum we guide visitors towards the erasing of this bias through the works of contemporary artists helping us to redefine the relationship with the artworks from antiquity through a novel awareness."

This statement is in line with Antufiev's words: "Only our obstinate will to discover something new, to feel different from what has preceded us, makes us believe that there are an ancient art and a contemporary art. Perhaps there are dead artists and living artists [...] but art is exactly what goes beyond the artist, his mere existence. Art is, in essence, only the work."

Evgeny Antufiev's works alongside the exhibition itinerary of the archaeological museum, intends to bring this approach to a fascinating and stimulating assessment. In this way the exhibition offers us a special revisitation of the very concept of archaeological collection becoming the premise and the extension of a contemporary artist. According to this vision, the archaeological museum becomes a real museum of contemporary art, because – in Antufiev's words – "We are contemporary of all the art that has seen the light and has been preserved."

The display itinerary of the exhibition will develop alongside the Chiostro Maggiore – the Big Cloister – under the loggia and inside the garden, to expand to the entire ground floor and to the recently inaugurated Agorà; in a sort of dialogue and counterpoint with the museum artifacts and finds, including the group of the lion-shaped eaves of the Victory Temple of Himera and the large mask of the Gorgon.

Thirty works are on display: from carved wood sculptures, castings, terracottas, all formally linked to symbolic images, found in religious and pagan rituals pertaining to archaic cultures. Special relevance is given to funerary iconography which Antufiev explores and reanimates with his personal gaze, by unfolding an "evoked immortality", a core element in all his artistic research.



In the last few years Antufiev has explored Magna Grecia and Etruscan cultures in Tuscany, Lazio and Sicily, by starting an interesting manufacturing of ceramic works in Italy – during a residence at the Zauli Museum – experimenting with different earths and firings, creating special patinas made only with organic materials. These artifacts will also be present in the exhibition.

The ceramics – like the objects in carved wood – play with special textures: oxidized and/or aged surfaces, evoking old discoveries which seem to us a "gift" found amidst the landscape, thus becoming part of Nature itself. The formal outcome is absolutely unique, intriguing and maze-like: his works take on hybrid identities, capable of generating resonances between diverse worlds and cultures, but inevitably filtered by the visual culture of his country of origin (Siberia) and Russia's handcraft tradition in his work with materials.

Text by Elena Bordignon

Originally published on: <http://atpdiary.com/evgeny-antufiev-museo-archeologico-salinas/>

‘Evgeny Antufiev: artists are all tied to their habitats’



Russian artist Evgeny Antufiev sits down with CFA to discuss about eternity, dreams, insects, ikigai and why artists shouldn't leave their own country.

What a nice surprise to find one day, in Reggio Emilia, an artist whose world compares to no other. Everything about Evgeny Antufiev is utterly uncommon. It was back in 2013 when he came to Italy and stayed for a 3-month residency to prepare his exhibition at Collezione Maramotti. "The exhibition was a journey into his mind," says curator Marina Dacci who closely followed his work from then until the recent exhibition at Emalin gallery in London that she curated. "Evgeny is some sort of a monad in the art system, and he is someone extremely visionary who has the great generosity to take you into his magical universe." Through a panoply of materials that he crafts in the most "rare ways", he reflects on archetypes and makes up veritable "environments" that live at the very intersection of his culture, pop culture and the culture of the place he happens to land in. "He's an extraordinary kitsch," she muses.

Born in 1986 in Kyzyl, Russia, where he currently lives and works, Evgeny Antufiev was awarded the Kandinsky Prize in 2009, and made his name exhibiting also at the New Museum in New York, at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, and most recently at the Triennial of Russian Contemporary Art. He is currently on show (until January 7th) at Strauhof in Zurich with his research about Leo Tolstoy. His curiosity has taken him into a journey of investigations into the life of personal heroes, experimentation with different materials and cultural alchemies; but if there is leitmotiv – and there is – it is what Marina Dacci calls "his magnificent obsession for immortality".

CFA: "Immortality forever" and "Eternal garden" are just a couple of titles of your exhibitions. The concept comes back again in the exhibition at Emalin gallery in London, where you have built a sort of mausoleum that is home

to man for all eternity. How comes your obsession with immortality, or eternity?

ANTUFIEV: Eternity is the most interesting dimension in the world. More interesting than length, width, height, space and time. I am not quite sure whether we can feel it, it's more like a gift that you feel through the wrapping. Trying to guess what's inside. You feel the outline, but what is inside? That's the riddle. I hope to find out. I think my passion for eternity comes from childhood. I never believed in the reality of actual things, I always felt like they were getting old and disappearing.

CFA: "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": where does this image come from? If you had to dismantle it, would you be able to say where the single pieces come from?

ANTUFIEV: It's like my personal "Tibetan Book of the Dead". Although this is no "Tibetan Book of the Dead", it is too revolutionary a product, more like the "Egyptian Book of the Dead". "The Egyptian Book of the Dead" is a collection of hymns, spells, strange poetry, and funeral speeches. It is bewitching in its naivety. Something in between the great wisdom and children chanting. I do have my own similar phrases or hymns that I want to carve in the walls of my tomb: they perfectly explain the reality, life and death. Many of them become the names of exhibitions, others turn into texts.

CFA: What is your favourite food for the soul?

ANTUFIEV: Most of all I like to read books. But now I have temporarily lost this ability. I open a book and the letters turn into insects that do not combine into words; I re-read each page many times, without success. It's probably because I am aging, but I find it very difficult to concentrate. Now my favourite pastime is dreaming, like snakes or crocodiles do. They sleep with their eyes open most of the time!



CFA: What got you started in art, did you have some sort of epiphany?

ANTUFIEV: There was no transition period. Everything I do, I have been doing all my life. I started to embroider in kindergarten. And, suddenly, at some point I was offered a solo exhibition.

CFA: Who do you consider your masters?

ANTUFIEV: All the ancient masters whose names we do not know.

CFA: Do you believe in the intelligibility of symbols?

ANTUFIEV: I do not believe in universal symbols. I think there are many universes around us and in each of them there is a system of symbols: sometimes they intersect, sometimes not. It's like water, it can take different shapes. But all the roads are fine and they all lead to a single goal.

CFA: Are you a collector at heart?

ANTUFIEV: All my life I have been collecting something. Coins, stamps, postcards, stones, bones, books. Many of my collections are still in my mother's house. Art gives me an excuse for collecting. Now I can keep buying things in stores or at auctions and pretend they are for my projects. Well, artists like to spend money, no matter what, for some rare treasures that no one else seems to need. At home I still have a box of rare metals which I have never actually used to cast anything, some rare bones, a box with an iron meteorite. The very presence of these things helps me somehow.

CFA: Do you go to sleep with your work?

ANTUFIEV: Previously, many things used to make their way into my bed. Knives, crystals, pieces of amber, favourite fragments of unfinished works. But since I got married (three years ago), my bed is a forbidden area for my little friends! It's a pity, but life flows forward like the Styx river. Everything changes.

CFA: Can you normally remember what you dreamt at night?

ANTUFIEV: Usually I remember everything. But I do not like it. My dream is dreamless sleep, just calm blackness, like at the bottom of a deep mountain lake.

CFA: Is there any dream you would like to share and recount to us?

ANTUFIEV: I'm afraid not. A person should hide his dreams as secret places of the body, like his heart, in a dark room guarded by specially trained monsters.

CFA: What has been your biggest disillusion?

ANTUFIEV: In my childhood it seemed that everything was possible. Now it seems to me that half of the things are possible. I hope this downward trend will not continue. In fact, I don't think I have experienced a big disappointment yet. Only in a few people, but that is normal. Man's heart is deceitful above all things, who can know it?

CFA: In Japanese there is a word, "ikigai", which means "something that you live for" or "something that gives you the energy to wake up in the morning". We don't have one word in romance languages to say it. Do you have a word in Russian that means the same?

ANTUFIEV: No, we haven't got one either. Actually, I think that sleeping is the most interesting thing in life. So it's better not to wake up, but unfortunately our body need to come to reality sometimes.

CFA: And do you know what your "ikigai" is?

ANTUFIEV: It is difficult to formulate. Usually it's just a sense of the need to do something. If it was not for the workshop where I work, I think I really would sleep all the time. So, I think it's my workshop.

CFA: You don't believe artists should leave their own country; why?

ANTUFIEV: Artists are like insects. They are different kind of insects: some are spiders, some are butterflies. But they are all tied to their habitats. Miracles do not happen and insects do not leave their climatic zones. And when they leave, nothing good can come of it.

CFA: Sometimes while growing up we reject the culture we have grown up with, and then we take it back again later in life. You are still young, but has it happened to you?

ANTUFIEV: I never felt young. I felt old from elementary school. I never played with other children. Actually, my arm got broken while I was playing football once. After that, I did not believe in group games anymore.

My friends were books and the old ladies from the libraries. They gave me "old kings". One of them gave me James Joyce's "Ulysses" when I was 11. Another gave me a book with a story set in the late 18th century, where a variety of strange cases were described. Lovely, dusty books. I'm not sure that youth is so important. Even in my short life, so many things have changed, and so many people have aged and become ripe.

CFA: You have spent years in field trials to study the life and collect the artifacts of prominent figures from Russian culture. Does it make you feel like a "detective"?

ANTUFIEV: Yes, of course, a detective or an archaeologist. It's the principle that matters. Ancient kings in their tombs or Russian writers in their memorial museums – is there a big difference? Eternity is wrapped around them like a warm blanket. I like to follow in the footsteps of writers, to visit graves in Israel, spend the night in the same hotel rooms where they slept, collect minute details and signs. In Russia we have some sort of cult for the benches where writers liked to sit. Can you imagine anything more weird?

Do you ever wish you had lived before the social media era?

I think we can spend our time on earth in better ways than on social media. Like spending it with our favourite films and books, within arm's reach, so we can travel without leaving home. I would not trade this time for anything else.

Interviewed by Marta Galli

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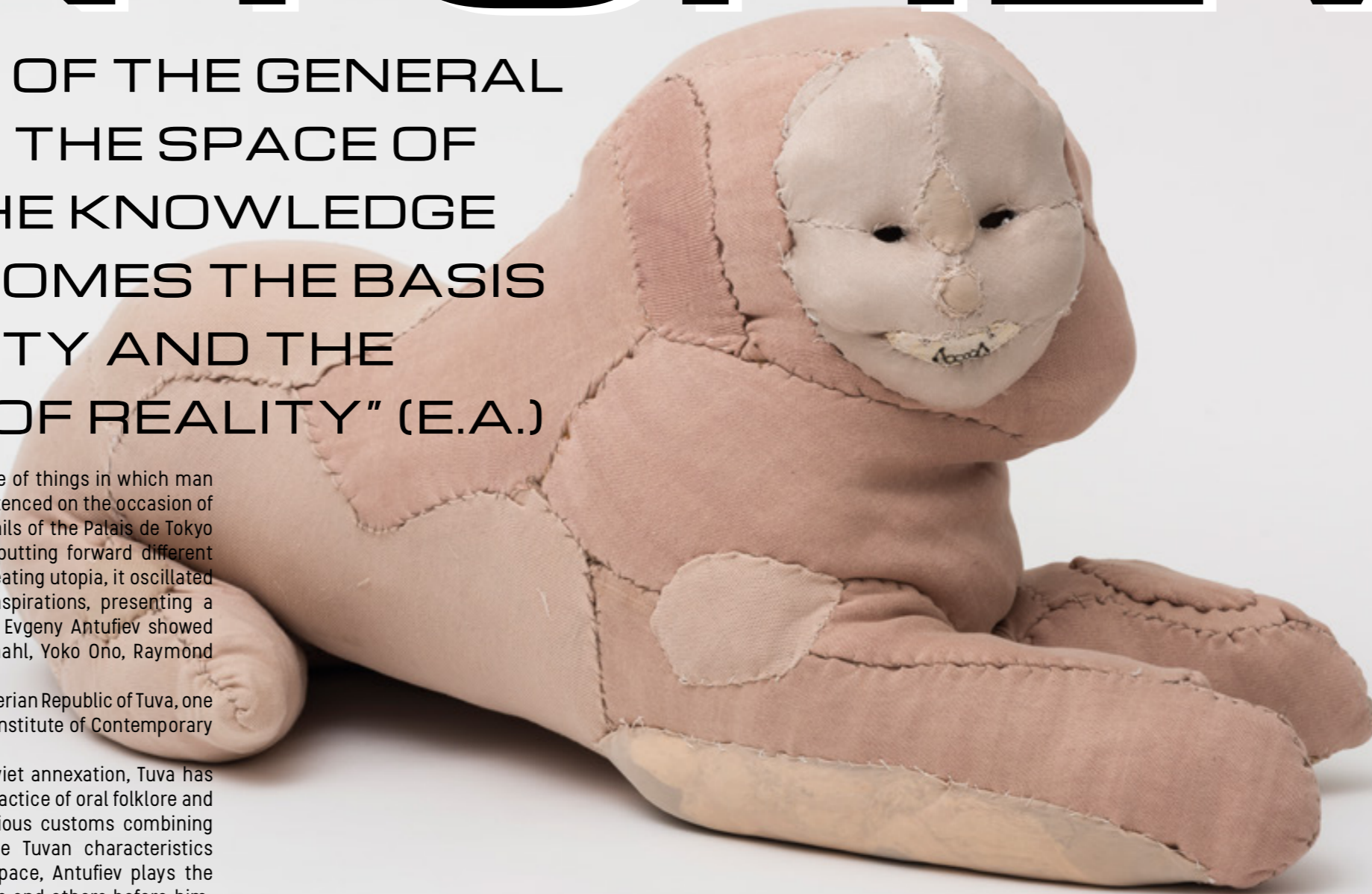
ON NEVGENY ANTUFIEV

"IN THE WAKE OF THE GENERAL COLLAPSE OF THE SPACE OF THE MYTH, THE KNOWLEDGE OF MYTH BECOMES THE BASIS FOR CREATIVITY AND THE PERCEPTION OF REALITY" (E.A.)

"The disappearance of utopia leads to a static state of things in which man himself is no longer any more than a thing" was sentenced on the occasion of 'THE GARDEN OF EDEN', a project located in the entrails of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in fall 2012 suggesting other worlds and putting forward different models of thought and action. A space for a self-creating utopia, it oscillated between skepticism and destruction, hope and aspirations, presenting a hypothetical contemporary Garden of Eden, where Evgeny Antufiev showed his work together with Cecile B. Evans, Rainer Ganahl, Yoko Ono, Raymond Pettibon, Thomas Schütte, Erwin Wurm and more.

Evgeny Antufiev was born in Kyzyl, in the southern Siberian Republic of Tuva, one of Russia's most remote regions. He studied at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Moscow.

Isolated by its geography and half a century of Soviet annexation, Tuva has maintained its ties to local traditions through the practice of oral folklore and trance-like throat singing, as well as unique religious customs combining native shamanism with Tibetan Buddhism. These Tuvan characteristics inform Antufiev's practice—in a real but mythic space, Antufiev plays the role of the artistic shaman, much like Joseph Beuys and others before him.



An incubator of ancient rituals, ancestral ghosts, and nameless gods, Antufiev creates talismanic, doll-like figures and fashions occult-like arrangements of dried flowers and boiled bones.

Evgeny Antufiev took part in 'Ostalgia' at New Museum in New York in 2011, an exhibition that paid particular attention to the unique place that artists came to occupy in the Socialist countries, acting simultaneously as outcasts, visionaries, and witnesses. Some of the preoccupations

"...RESEMBLANCE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT LAWS OF MYTH"

that united the artists in 'Ostalgia' were a romantic belief in the power of art as a transformative, almost curative agent; an obsession with language; the conception of a new aesthetic of the body; a fascination with the ruins of history as represented by monuments and architectural vestiges; and an understanding of artwork as a form of sentimental documentary that mediates between cultural pressures and individual anxieties. The exhibition traced a psychological landscape in which

individuals and entire societies must negotiate new relationships to history, geography, and ideology.

For the artist's show 'Twelve, wood, dolphin, knife, bowl, mask, crystal, bones and marble - fusion. Exploring materials' at the Italian Collezione Maramotti in 2013, after a residence in Reggio Emilia, the variety of objects and materials he made constant use of show no immediate relationship to one another, but fuse with one another within his installations and find themselves transformed: they come to be involved in a process that is reminiscent of alchemy—where the image is again endowed with the power to effect our reconnection with an alternate reality in which to pursue the construction of our identity and our relationship with the world. The artist uses his own two hands for the realization of everything he does, making this take on the value of a rite.

Antufiev's attempt to *place the world on display* speaks of a nostalgia for an eschatology where every aspect of the plane of the human finds its correspondence on the plane of the divine, and where the creative gesture of the human being can catalyze an energy into a state of constant mutation that holds the power to evoke an immortality, understood not as survival, but as the "persistence of meaning".

From the artist's words on his work exhibited in that occasion: "The body becomes *permeable* and *soft*, wrapping itself around things and meanings, as a mollusk does with a pearl. These items, gleaming with a pearly light, can be extracted if one has a great desire to do so (the miracle of materialization)". "The artist (...)



gradually replaces his *fleshy* organs for something more perfect. His entire life is devoted to a search for secret connections that cannot be chosen by happenstance. The materials must possess internal correspondences. (...) Resemblance is one of the most important laws of myth".

Compelled by the oblique connections formed when species are named after deceased famous figures, for his project at Manifesta 11 in Zurich in summer 2016, Antufiev adorned the Wasserkirche with bowls of roses named after literary greats, while a giant rendering of a butterfly is suspended from the ceiling - an ode to Vladimir Nabokov's other respected career in lepidopteroLOGY—a theme the artist revisited for his solo show at Z20 Sara Zanin gallery in Rome last spring.

'Immortality forever', his exhibition at M HKA in Antwerp held this year, gathers reflections about the legendary ballerina Anna Pavlova, including a real rose and porcelain replicas of different versions of the Pavlova dessert, named after her. The Russian writer Leo Tolstoy is evoked in - on one hand - a collection of postcards of his forest grave and - on the other - a video of an encounter of this international branched family at their family castle.

Evgeny Antufiev's highly personal and labyrinthine course of research opens out onto multiple planes of vision which together permit the need for a restoration of the order and meaning of the physical and symbolic world to find a confluence with the need to interpret its "laws".

Martina Alemani



EVERY ASPECT OF THE PLANE

A NOSTALGIA FOR AN ESCHATOLOGY WHERE



ON THE PLANE OF THE DIVINE

OF THE HUMAN FINDS ITS CORRESPONDENCE

Evgeny Antufiev (Russian, b. 1966) is an artist who lives and works in Moscow. He is represented by Z20 Sara Zanin gallery, Rome; Pechersky Gallery and Artwin Gallery, Moscow; and Emalin, London. Evgeny Antufiev's upcoming projects include his first solo exhibition at Emalin as well as his first UK museum exhibition at MOSTYN, Wales, both in November 2017. Images: *Untitled*, 2016. Courtesy of the artist and Emalin, London.

'Evgeny Antufiev at Emalin'

"With a copper mask in one hand and a vase full of secrets in the other one, my body will rest in a sarcophagus guarded by twelve specially trained monsters" – a solo show at Emalin, Shoreditch, East London.

Well that certainly has to be one of the art show titles of the year, Emalin's presentation of Evgeny Antufiev at Frieze this year was certainly one of the highlights of that vast vast art fair – that mouth that dared you to come in, that glimpse of Antufiev's world (or worlds), his mystery, his art that throws up far more questions than answers, who is this guy? What is going on? How far into that cheek is his tongue? Emalin's presentation at Frieze was one of the braver aspects of what was on the whole a rather conservative fair, that giant mouth in the corner was a welcome bit of attitude or challenge or danger or something or other in there amongst all the brightly lit politeness and the all too obvious lack of artistic adventure. At the time, as part of the Organ round up of Frieze 2017 we said "Emalin Gallery's mouth had a bit of wit about it, as does the semi-playful ceramic work of Moscow-based Russian artist Evgeny Antufiev – Emalin are one of the more rewarding of the current signless London galleries, there's a rather interesting Nicholas Cheveldave show in their Shoreditch space right now if you can work out where the actual door to the gallery is, they also put that brilliant Kembra Pfahlar show last year".

We went on to say that "apparently it is important that we know the artist is from somewhere called Kyzyl (in the Tuva Republic) and not from the big city of Moscow. that he carves wood, boils bones, hides in the woods (he's rather like those Liars) there's all kinds of symbolic significance, fantastical narratives, oddities, you're not quite sure if he's playing with you or not, bits of shamanic playfulness (was it playfulness?), is he paying with us? Apparently Kyzyl is located exactly in the geographical centre of Asia. While every other gallery and artist in the vast Frieze pavilion is intent of being deadly serious, to view Antufiev's very tactile work – objects made of metal, wood, ceramics, textiles, bone and who know what else – to view his work you need to walk through

the mouth of a giant cardboard monster he's constructed to separate himself from the rest of the fair. He's back at Emalin, here in East London, there's a solo show in November, and he's off to the Mostyn in North Wales as well, wonder what they'll make of his monsters there?"

And, with Frieze already fading away and with the year almost at an end, the Evgeny Antufiev solo show at Emalin's own space had to be caught (and caught on the eve of the turning of the season, that seemed right). Off to that strange almost hidden warehouse building with an ever changing gallery space that's almost hidden inside the bland looking brick building. And they've actually got a sign on the door outside now, they're no longer hiding in the warehouse space over from that Boxpark nightmare by Shoreditch railway station.,,

Will it be as powerful without all that polite Frieze art to bounce off? Will he still threaten to drag you off to the woods, hit you on the head, hide you in a bag (and yes, as you wonder around in the silence of that contemporary white-walled gallery with your white shoe covers on, those Liars do start quietly playing in your head again). What to make of Evgeny Antufiev? What to make of his snakes and his monsters, his clay pots and his words scrawled on his walls and why did we need to put on shoe covers to enter the exhibition anyway? He is without doubt an artist who excites, who's head you do really want to get inside of, you really don't know how much of his art is really from the forests or woods or from the Asian borders of Russia, what kind of creature do they have there anyway? What is going on here? Really don't want an answer to any of the questions, really don't want anyone to come along and attempt to explain him or that bowl of snakeskin or that dagger on the wall or what that piece is over there and how does that pot relate to that head? Really don't want anyone to mess with his mystery, really really don't want to know, and that mystery and that edge and that darkness is even more powerful in the silence and the peace and quiet here (really pleased I missed the opening and got to see it all in complete silence by myself, to see it without the noise and people and the





wine and the art talk). Really really don't want to know that much about who Evgeny Antufiev, I rather like my own interpretation of his various realities (not that any of my interpretations make any sense). Why are those pots over there? What has Michael Jackson got to do with anything? How do we read that one? What is he spinning? Why am I wearing covers on my shoes?

"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..."

Truth is I have no idea who or what or where Evgeny Antufiev really is, I have no idea how seriously he wants us to take all this? I have no idea what all these things mean? I think I take him very seriously indeed, this certainly is a solo show to take very seriously – "Antufiev has transformed the gallery space into a cavernous tomb that houses a selection of uncategorisable objects that undercut the historical plausibility of the site. The use of carved wood,

boiled bones and embroideries in traditional Russian fabrics throughout the artists work reflects his interest in the cultural particularity and symbolic significance of materials" – I really don't want to be told too much about the fascinating world of Evgeny Antufiev, is this a reconstruction of some ritual he came across out there in the Russian forest? A "cavernous tomb" we've enter with show protectors on? A ritual? I want to explore it all myself, I don't want those words on the the outside explained or the darkness of that dagger or what to expect next, I don't want to meet him or talk to the curator about the show or to have the thought behind those textiles explained or any of that, I just don't want to know, I love it, I love all these hits of ritual and darkness and myth and the hint of a "cavernous tomb" and who knows what? What is that bowl of snakeskin doing there? Loved it, loved every bit of it, including the shoe covers, what were the shoe covers about? Were we in a warehouse in Shoreditch or were we in a tomb in a forest with....? Whoever he is and wherever we were, he has to be one of the artists of 2017, and Emalin have to be one of the galleries or curating teams of the year, loved it, loved it all, art excites.

Text by Sean Worrall

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'Artists talk: Taus Mahachev and Evgeny Antufiev'

Harper's
BAZAAR

The dialogue of Kandinsky prize laureates on role models, meaninglessness of art awards and lack of fear or being forgotten.

Taus Makhacheva became a winner of the 10th Kandinsky prize in the "Young artist" category. We have invited a 30-year old Evgeny Antufiev, who won the same prize 10 years ago, to have a dialogue with Taus. Both of them are young and successful Russian artists, well known abroad.

In their works they arise different problems, using completely different artistic languages. Masks embroidered with pearls, hand-made dolls of the size of a human, ancient looking wooden figures – mystical esthetics of Antufiev attracts collectors and western museums, while video-installations by Taus, dedicated to the search for self-identification, memory and the perception of geography are popular within curators of biennials and group shows all over the world.

T.M: I remember how we met. I have graduated from Goldsmiths and returned to Moscow. For a year I was working as a photo editor in Afisha. Later, I have realized that I should be doing Arts and entered Moscow Institute of Contemporary Art. We were studying in the same group and I remember that you never listen to anything, never made any notes; you were sewing during the lectures. I was scared of everyone and scared of you, too.

E.A: I think I also was a sociopath back then. It is interesting how we were studying together, but never talked, missed each other and became friends much later then we both already were doing well. I can tell that you are one of the artists, who ever surprised me – you grew quickly to the international level. It rarely happens, so I have a special connection to you. We are of the same generation of artists, who started everything at the same time.

T.M: Success gives you a chance to love other people.

E.A: Which success are you talking about? Discount cards is a blessing for the artist.

E.A: When we were invited for this interview, we were addressed as "young Russian artists, known abroad". Let's talk about youth. I don't think that we are young, on the contrary, we are already formed. Of course, in relation to Kabakov we are nowhere, there is no such artist in Russia, who got even close to his level of recognition and involvement in the art society.

T.M: That takes us to the question of a role model.

E.A: My role model is Zurab Tsereteli. I am a big fan of his. He has an enormous amount of personal museums, dedicated to his art. Only in Moscow there are three of them. I would also like to have this amount of museums, dedicated to me – the creation of an artist shouldn't be shy. But I don't have such force yet.

E.A: I like archaic art – Egyptian, Babylonian, Scythian. Because what is the real problem of contemporary art? It becomes old too soon. In the 60-es projections, kinetic installations were on the edge of the time, now in the era of iPhones they look pathetic, old-school. Old masters these days look more modern than the arts of the second half of the 20th century. My works can't get old, because they got old long ago.

E.A: I like rare materials; I buy them often, but don't always use them in the end. For example, galium is a super low-melting metal, it cost me 100,000 rubles, but I never used it. For one of my past shows I worked with amber, it's expensive. Basically, the production of a work always brings huge spendings. I never had a profitable show. It's always a minus. Artists, for some reason, think that they will now do a show and make some money, it is nearly impossible. Exhibitions are always expenses.



'In conversation with Evgeny Antufiev'

Interview

Originally from Tuva, the artist Evgeny Antufiev is opening his new exhibition in Pechersky Gallery on the 25th of October. Together with the world-famous cardiac surgeon Mikhail Alshibaya he discusses immortality, garbage, the uniqueness of amber, hoarding and other issues of the day.

ALSHIBAYA: Gena, can you define what art is today?

ANTUFIEV: No comment. (Both laughing.)

ALSHIBAYA: And the artist? In the second half of the 20th century it became clear that the role of the author is dead, that it could be taken over by the viewer. What do you think about this idea?

ANTUFIEV: I do not like the viewers. My audience is my mom, sister and a few friends. However, I got married a week ago, and now my main audience is my wife. And the viewers... I like putting pressure on them. For my last three exhibitions I made a rule: they could only go to see the show after putting shoe covers on. I try to put the viewer in the most uncomfortable state possible to show him that he is not a co-author.

ALSHIBAYA: There is an easy way to reject any participation in exhibitions. Mikhail Shvartsman has a saying "An exhibition is a tragedy". He created a myth around himself and worked in a quiet studio where only the chosen ones were allowed in: friends, family.

ANTUFIEV: That's a great risk for your career. For example, Pavel Filonov, in my opinion, was more interesting than Kandinsky but he isn't known that well in the West, simply because he didn't exhibit much and did not sell his work.

ALSHIBAYA: You're right. I once asked the collector Pierre Brochet about how to choose artworks in today's world. He looked at me and said: "Misha, are you out of your mind? Those that you and I buy will be real artists." The

theorist Walter Benjamin had the idea that the best way to create a library is to write all of the books in it yourself.

ANTUFIEV: The act of owning is important to me itself. Members of staff at the Museum in Reggio Emilia (where I had a show two years ago) often remember how I asked them for some super expensive materials, such as airgel, which is usually used in the aerospace industry, or gallium, the world's most fusible metal. I did not use them in the end, I didn't find the strength to give them away. There is a video on YouTube of how in order to enter one woman's apartment after her death, people literally had to climb over mountains of things.

ALSHIBAYA: This is, by the way, how the great Russian artist Vasily Sitnikov died. After emigrating to New York, he found lots of different things in the scrapyards, things which were priceless from his Soviet point of view. He kept it all at his place where he was later found dead. It is the collector, in my opinion, who takes over the central position in the history of the arts. For example, Cosimo Medici collected Botticelli and other contemporary artists he liked. Perhaps the very concept of art is imposed on us by these people and their sick accumulation?

ANTUFIEV: Maybe. The Japanese have recently discovered a fish that draws some sort of labyrinths at the bottom of the ocean with its body. For a long time, they were wondering why it was doing this. Turns out the fish was just attracting females. Birds singing, animals dancing - everything in nature is founded on attracting females. Collectors are the "females" in art.

ALSHIBAYA: Eros is, of course, the driving force, but what about thanatos?

ANTUFIEV: I do not believe in death. But let's talk about the materials. They change everything. Fabric or ceramics are about bringing things together. Wood, on the other hand, is about cutting off the excess. Very often one material brings in another one. Teffi has a story ("Life and a collar") about a woman who bought a collar. The



collar demanded a new blouse. The blouse demanded a striped sofa. As a result, the woman had to break up with her husband. It is the same with materials. As soon as I started working with wood, it demanded amber and amber demanded copper, copper demanded wax...

ALSHIBAYA: Wood and amber seem to be completely heterogeneous substances, but they do have something in common. What do you think it is?

ANTUFIEV: They are ancient. Amber is generally the first polymer known to mankind. Old materials take the shapes of old forms. I like art that has no movement. Frozen. Did you know, by the way, that almost all amber is concentrated in Russia?

Also, I am interested in beauty as an object. The French writer Gabriel Wittkop said that there are no surfaces in the world as luxurious as the skin of an ill human being. She was fascinated by it in an aesthetic, baroque way. We are scared of diseases that we can not control.

ALSHIBAYA: That's very interesting. Gena, it seems that you were lying when you said that the theme of death does not touch you.

ANTUFIEV: I am touched by the theme of immortality, because I believe in it. In childhood, before going to bed, I often designed my tomb - how it should look, how should I protect it so it stays in absolute eternity, immobility. Each of my exhibitions is such a tomb. A perfect memorial.

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