

Roof from Rūdninkai Augustas Serapinas

Exhibition

19 Aug – 17 Sep 2023

With *Roof from Rūdninkai*, Augustas Serapinas presents a new site-specific installation at Klosterruine Berlin. The starting point of his expansive work is an empty house from rural Lithuania. Rūdninkai is a village in south-east of the country that was once a center of small-scale mining and iron production, whose industrial history has shaped its material environment¹. Many of the wooden houses which were built primarily in the early 20th century using traditional construction methods have become obsolete as a result of social and economic change and are now deserted.

Discarded materials, especially from buildings, are often the basis of Augustas Serapinas' works, in which he creates narratives that intertwine with the particularities of places, individuals, and memories. A starting point for his sculptural intervention at Klosterruine Berlin was the absence of the roof, which was destroyed in bombing raids in 1945. His work recreates the upper part of a shingle-covered wooden roof from Rūdninkai, which the artist acquired through online classifieds. There, complete houses are sometimes given away on the condition that all materials be removed from the owner's property, or are sold as firewood. The condition of these houses varies, with their original structure partly overwritten by changes from the Soviet era, such as the use of asbestos sheets as roof coverings.

Serapinas' sculpture is not a faithful replica of a roof, but an object in its own right, its shape and size determined by its new purpose and context. *Roof from Rūdninkai*, on the one hand, pays tribute to the aesthetics and technique of traditional architecture and, on the other, allows the object to become a kind of container that holds a multitude of stories. Through the (re)appropriation of its constituent materials, the roof is not fixed as an artifact, but offers a reading of cultural traditions as undergoing a constant evolution.

¹ The name Rūdninkai derives from the word for iron ore (rūda in Lithuanian, derived from the word for red or rusty). Before World War II, Rūdninkai was governed by Poland, which is why it remained unaffected by the agricultural reforms of independent Lithuania, which abolished large-scale land ownership and displaced the rural population from traditional, densely built villages to smaller separate farmsteads.

klosterruine berlin

Serapinas' works that engage with traditional architecture reference both contemporary history and recent art history. In earlier works, he used fragments of abandoned houses to create abstract objects that enter into a dialogue with the history of Minimal Art. In contrast to the use of anonymous industrial materials, Serpinas' wooden elements and shingles carry clear markers of history, place, and use. His works defy an unambiguous reading, referencing different, sometimes contradictory or parallel realities, while asserting their autonomy as works of art.

Augustas Serapinas approaches places and situations through the people who use and shape them. He is interested in the personal relationships, the in-between-spaces, as well as often overlooked aspects within built environments. His works engage with the immediate environments in which they are presented, revealing hidden institutional, hierarchical, and economic implications of architectural forms. Serapinas' work can thus be understood as a gesture that speaks of places and their change, of labor and exchange, and the structures we build to preserve experiences.

Roof from Rūdninkai is the first solo exhibition of Augustas Serapinas (*1990 in Vilnius) in Germany. He lives and works in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Augustas Serapinas' works have been part of numerous biennials and group exhibitions, including the 57th Biennale di Venezia, Riboca2, Riga; and steirischer herbst, Graz. He has also presented solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Wien, SALTS, Birsfelden; CCA, Tel Aviv; P/////AKT, Amsterdam; and Fogo Island Arts, Newfoundland, among others. His work is represented in public collections, including Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; the M HKA, the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp; Tate, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and others.

Roof from Rūdninkai, 2023
Reclaimed wooden shingle roof
200 x 1600 x 270 cm