

A vertical line of five black dots is positioned on the left side of the page, serving as a decorative element.

STEFAN NIKOLAEV

Portfolio



Deadline, 2020, engraved granite, gold leaf, bronze, 14 x 75 x 4 cm, unique work

STEFAN NIKOLAEV

—

Selected solo shows

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

BE YOURSELF NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY

2019

SARIEV

Plovdiv (BG)



Stefan Nikolaev, Be Yourself No Matter What They Say

The innocent eye sees nothing.

*„We constantly drift between the object and its demystification,
powerless to render its wholeness.*

*For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it, but we destroy it ; and
if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a
state which is still mystified.“*

Roland Barthes, „Mythologies“, 1957

The subject of this text is a number of artistic works collected in an exhibition with a certain title and concept, for whose presentation can be used a certain and tested art-history approach - a short iconological analysis of the works, accompanied by a commentary on the cultural context and the artist's overall work. For the fourth solo exhibition of artist Stefan Nikolaev in Sariev Contemporary gallery, this method, here rather convenient given the nature of the works (sculptural), turns out to be quite slippery in a sense. On the one hand, the symbolic load of the works does not originate so much from the intention of the author as from the viewer's eyes. Proof of this are the ironically-catchy titles that deviate more than they lead somewhere. And on the other hand, because the artist, more than ever in his exhibition, uses cultural mythologies to see where his experiments with the properties of sculpture can lead him to. Do these mythologies break down in their materialization or become tools for grasping modernity?

For the roaming around them, Stefan Nikolaev chooses an interesting Virgilian companion. Only an artist is, according to poet Charles Baudelaire, able to decipher the meaning of the analogies that allow the transition from the world of perceptions to that of ideas. The beginning

of Baudelaire's poem "Correspondances", quoted by Nikolaev, is like Dante's warning to the ones crossing the gallery's entrance. In the space of symbols created by the artist, they are as observant as they are observed, with a particularly "familiar and close look". The instantly recognizable outlines of a dove with a laurel twig in the beak, an upside-down horseshoe, the masks forever frozen into extreme expressions of happiness and sadness, the romantic sunset with flying birds in the sky are present in everyday life, in various material forms often brought to absurd kitsch. But beyond this undeniable and overflowing physical presence, they function as signs testifying to something else, immaterial and stretching over time, which makes them "myths" of a kind, regardless of their manifestations or rather because of them. It's namely this that re-surfaces also in Stefan Nikolaev's searches and connects the remains of history, legends, advertising strategies and mass consumption.

The dove of peace in the work "Dove" (2019) is also the one of Picasso. However, the common origin of the two images branches out with new uses all the way to its existence today in a unicode, that universal language that only computers seem capable of speaking under the U+1F54A formula. The red neon, in which Stefan Nikolaev encodes the image, besides fragility and efficacy also implies a strange warning. Just as unusual use of neon and copper, the artist also makes in "God save the hobby horse" (2019). The warning has become a kind of invitation to stop and enter. Instead of offering a specific answer "where", the title of the work returns to the artist's way of exploring the images and their shaping. "All pictures owe more to other pictures than they do to nature", writes Ernst Gombrich in his essay "Meditations on a Hobby Horse or the roots of the artistic form" (1963).

The meaning of the images may also be in their ability to gather each other, conceal and reveal at the same time, similar to masks in the ancient Greek theater, which allowed the actors to go on stage several times, i.e. to perform

several different roles. In "Ricchi e poveri" (2018) wealth and poverty, happiness and misfortune are the two faces of the same coin,

constantly thrown by the one who holds it. With their casting into cast iron, Stefan Nikolaev gives back to the masks their full weight, especially figurative, while gold is the necessary contrast to reflect the light. And it comes, romantic and infinite, from the hurriedly made but quite sufficient strokes of “Be yourself no matter what they say” (2019). The imagination oversaturated with images needs nothing more to get comfortable in front of the screen of its own existence. The positive and probably present in every motivational book title of the work becomes the one of the exhibition, with the typical for Stefan Nikolaev ironic look at clichés. The so-called individualism nowadays is often built on them.

Much more silent, free and conceptual is the beginning of the exhibition, which becomes its end too. “Nothing” (2018), written with the such sought after and appreciated gold on granite, speaks of one of the greatest fears of man and his attempts to deal with it. The existence, which as the sunset comes and goes away continuously, is also that of the images, constantly changing, until in the end nothing remains of them too.

Dessislava Mileva, May 2019





Be Yourself No Matter What They Say, exhibition view, SARIEV, Plovdiv - 2019



Be Yourself No Matter What They Say, exhibition view, SARIEV, Plovdiv - 2019



Dove, 2019, copper, bronze, neon, 65 x 71 x 16 cm, unique work



Be Yourself No Matter What They Say, exhibition view, SARIEV, Plovdiv - 2019



Be yourself no matter what they say, 2019, wrought iron, 112 x 80 x 1 cm, edition 3+2 AP



God save the hobby horse, 2019, bronze, copper, neon, 105 x 125 x 30 cm, unique work



Ricchi e poveri irony masks, 2018, iron cast, gold leaf, 43 x 40 x 13 cm, original multiple edition 8+2 AP



Nothing, 2018, engraved granite, gold leaf, 40 x 90 x 4 cm, unique work

STREETLIGHT

2018

FIAC Projects | Michel Rein, Paris/Brussels
Paris (FR)





Streetlight, 2018, aluminium, 46 led bulbs, glass, 400 x 250 x 250 cm, FIAC Projects, Paris



Streetlight, FIAC Projects, Paris - 2018



Streetlight, FIAC Projects, Paris - 2018



Streetlight, 2018, aluminium, 46 led bulbs, glass, 400 x 250 x 250 cm, private collection, Ramatuelle (FR)



Streetlight, 2018, aluminium, 46 led bulbs, glass, 400 x 250 x 250 cm, private collection, Ramatuelle (FR)

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

RIEN NE VA PLUS

2018

Michel Rein

Paris (FR)



Stefan Nikolaev, Rien ne va plus

«Rien ne va plus» are the words used at the gambling table which perfectly convey the artist's dialectical idea: a lucid appraisal of the state of the (art?) world and at the same time an illustration of the moment of grace and perfect balance when nothing can be removed or added, and when each one of the people involved feels they can walk off with all the money. A strange moment which conveys Stefan Nikolaev's interest in the relations between art and money. For the record, the title of his show at the gallery in 2013 was One for the Money Two for the Show. As if only a ghost prowling about in the exhibition (fate? chance?) could whisper in the visitor's ear the irreversible sentence, phonily pessimistic in its pink hues: "No more bets". So it is on the back of a form that we must imagine that the ball is fixed, as if our future were being played out in this split second. The installation of the artist's works in the gallery reminds the way gamblers playing roulette place their bets. The chips placed by the players, from the lowliest to the wealthiest, form a harmonious, coherent composition, which is being forever started all over again. Likewise, in the works on view, the forms and materials are mixed: from cast iron to bronze and gold. In an abstract form, the circularity of the diagrams (Testament, 2018 and Dreamwork, 2017) freezes proportions about which we don't know whether they are legacy shares, economic percentages, or the shrewd dosage of a secret composition.

Testament, 2018, cast aluminium, gold leaf, 190 x 170 x 20 cm The ghost might incidentally assume the form of the artisan caster whose modest bench which serves as his work seat becomes the sculpture itself, the unlikely and eternal bronze monument to the glory of the person we've never seen (Business, Model, Sculpture, 2018).

The masks inspired by the Commedia dell'arte (Ricchi e Poveri, 2018) are the ultimate expression of destiny, of a coin that you toss in the air and then falls back down, coming to rest like the roulette ball in the casino.

Michel Rein 2018





Rien ne va plus, exhibition view, Michel Rein, Paris - 2018



Rien ne va plus, exhibition view, Michel Rein, Paris - 2018



Rien ne va plus, exhibition view, Michel Rein, Paris - 2018



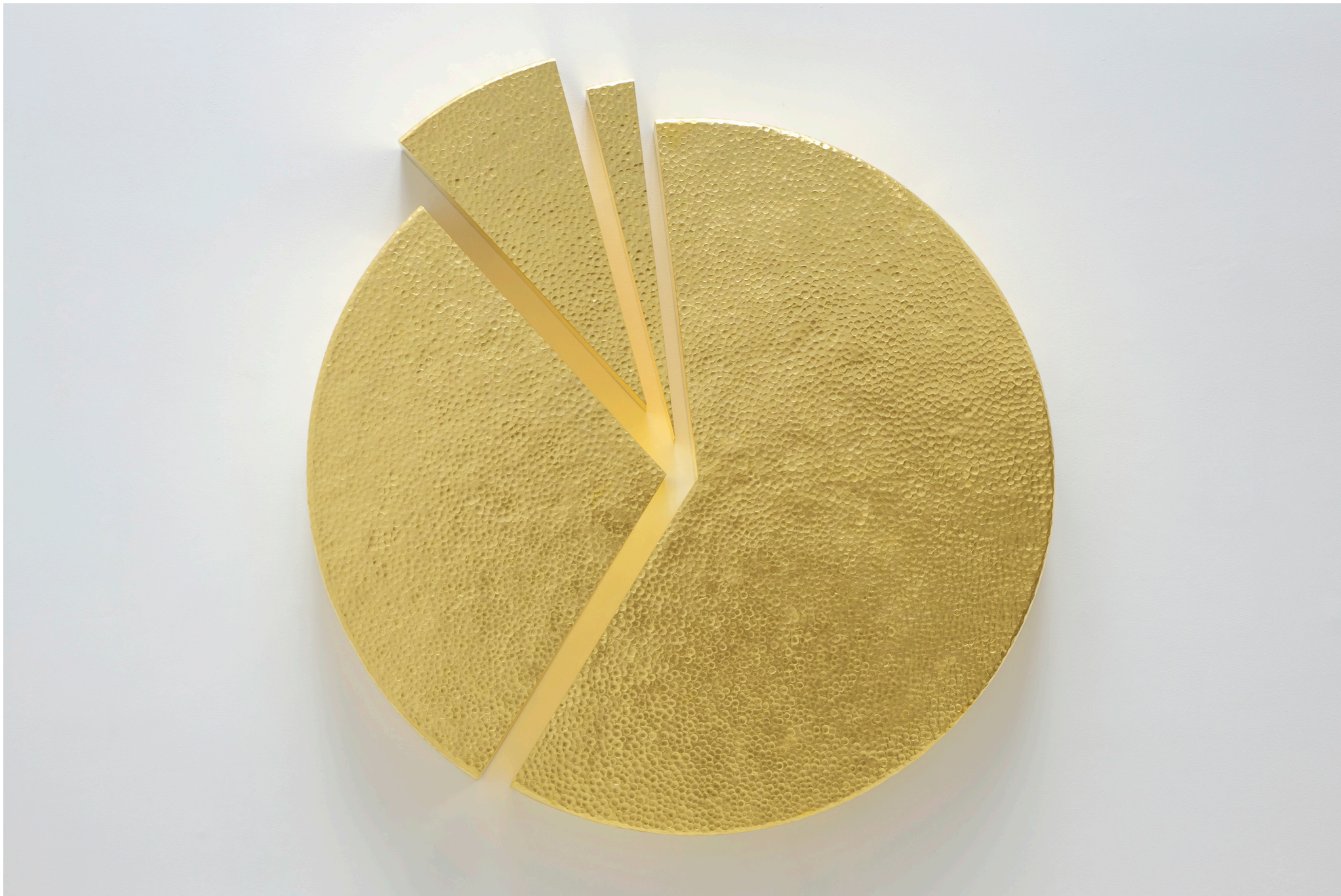
Rien ne va plus, exhibition view, Michel Rein, Paris - 2018



Business, Model, Sculpture, 2015, bronze, 55 x 105 x 47 cm, edition 5+2 AP



Ricchi e Poveri, 2018, iron cast, gold leaf, 50 x 40 x 15 cm, original multiple edition 8+2 AP



Testament, 2018, aluminium cast, gold leave, 190 x 170 x 20 cm, unique work



Plus rien, 2018, bronze, copper, neon, 60 x 162 x 25 cm, unique work



Dreamwork, 2017, enamelled ceramics, 55 x 48 x 6 cm, edition 3+2 AP



Dreamwork#3, 2018, enamelled ceramics, 30,7 x 32 x 6 cm, edition 3+2 AP

Stefan Nikolaev — Special project

CANDELABRAS

2018

Art Brussels Sculpture Project, Michel Rein, Paris/Brussels
Brussels (BE)





Candelabre, painted aluminium, electric bulbs, Diam. 75 cm H. 120 cm, edition 8+4 AP, Art Brussels Sculpture Project - 2018

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

I WALK A LABYRINTH WHICH IS A STRAIGHT LINE

2017

SARIEV and St. Joseph Church
Plovdiv (BG)



Stefan Nikolaev, I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line

*"To all appearances, the artist acts like a mediumistic being,
who from the labyrinth beyond time and space,
seeks his way out to a clearing."*

Marcel Duchamp, The Creative Act, 1957

The most harrowing and pernicious of all labyrinths, according to Borges, is the one in which you don't wonder in corridors, passages and tunnels, but you pass through a single rigid straight line.

Stefan Nikolaev has taken on such, unusual for him, dramatic route, but through out all of it he stares at the rear-view mirror in which he sees part of himself and everything that has passed - events, works, memories, dreams. His line of movement is just as straight and direct as the associative links between marble and sculpture, the painting and the frame, the reproduction and the original, the space and the function of the object. The paradoxes and the traps of the labyrinth appear with each shift of the gaze; ahead of its supposed exit or back to the path that one has already passed.

His journey appears very much like a retrospective, with works from the past nearly 15 years or even as an introspective self-analysis in which the author systematically arranges his experience in periods, titles, and percentages. And if Duchamp claims that the artist is immune to such analysis because his work is purely intuitive, then Stefan Nikolaev does the exact opposite, disjoining even his most intuitive and subconscious experiences into percentage diagrams. The contradictions, the verbal game, the quoting and the constant reconciliation with the past are not means unknown to the arts, but here, they are rather a part of the navigation. If the "father of the ready-made" takes away the function of the object - a bottle rack, Nikolaev returns it as an acting candelabrum. Through self-contradiction, he repeatedly overturns his concepts from image to object, to text, and to image again, and then reverses them again. His inscription of the

mystical insight about his way through the labyrinth is also shining in the back. In contrast to his unyielding linearity he has placed the whole hedonistic abundance of luxury, splendor and joy typical for his art.

Each step is both a waste of material, shine, color delight, and mystery, and, in its own way, a connection to the next one. Following Stefan Nikolaev through the labyrinth is almost like a divination between the past and the future with a dream dictionary in hand.

Come to Where the Flavor is (2004) may look like the end of the journey, but it is actually the beginning and one of the first works of a whole series "dimmed in tobacco smoke", produced by Stefan Nikolaev. The luxury brand cigarette box, monumentalized and turned into a tombstone, is one of the most famous personal uses of the ready-made strategy applied by the artist. The consumerist concept dealing with the iconography of mass culture has long since gained its own sentimental history in the form of a sculptural object, which draws it closer to a lyrical symbol of vanity rather than to the otherwise prosaic end in the dirt.

After Me (2017) (working title) is a replica of a work from the same period, following the same tobacco theme in Nikolaev's art. However, he now paints for the first time in a decade, re-creating the Poster Posterity poster from 2003 as a painting. The status of the work has been transformed, first from the reverse of reproduction to original, which is actually rather a pictorial reproduction of the original print, and then from a picture to a sculptural object that has become so only because of the burnt picture frame of brass. Equally paradoxical is the inscription 'I walk a labyrinth which is a straight line', which literally materializes and defends the name of the exhibition in gold and in the dizzying curves of the neon. The statement has expanded to a static and demanding object, again in contradiction with its own content, with the transience of the words and the movement.

"Mysteries should be simple," one of Borges' characters says. Stefan Nikolaev paraphrases that by making the form as simple as possible

and leaves the mystery in the text. The most romantic of all objects placed on the line is the geometric Dreamworks (2017) - a journal of dreams, insomnia, visions, fantasies, and nightmares. The chart presents a certain proportion of the time spent in such experiences, but as personal as it is, it's shared with everyone for his own emotional and life balance. Or it is literally and brutally consumed - in the form of chocolate. Nightmares (2017) is the dark half of this work and the most logical feedback to the beginning, where the taste is ... (Come Where the Flavor is)

If we subscribe to the old mathematical thesis that every straight line is actually an arc of an infinite circle, then the path through this maze probably does lead to its beginning. In the exhibition, however, this mystery is open for interpretation, the beginning and the end are divided into two spaces a few steps away - SARIEV Contemporary gallery and the almost unknown for the natives of the city Catholic church St. Joseph in Plovdiv, where the gallery presents an exhibition for the first time. Here begins or ends (it is up to you to decide) the journey through the labyrinth with a familiar clerical gesture that has acquired contradictory performativity. Stefan Nikolaev changes the function of the two candelabras by Duchamp from his Chelles Art Center project and crosses the boundary between object and action by perpetually repeating the purifying ritual of lighting a candle.

This is perhaps the most literary exhibition of Stefan Nikolaev, infinitely pure in form, but filled with text, symbols and references - from the Borges' kings, detectives and heroes, the Greek philosophers, the mythic centaurs, Alice, the medieval mysteries of Umberto Eco, the Kafkaesque obsession of the ball that rolls back and forth in the Chinese labyrinth to the Freudian interpretation of dreams, Jung and the Bible. Among all this, from the traditional images of doom, danger, insecurity and entrapments, the labyrinth becomes the most trusted art archetype and a safe haven for the artist.

Svetlana Kuyumdzieva 2017

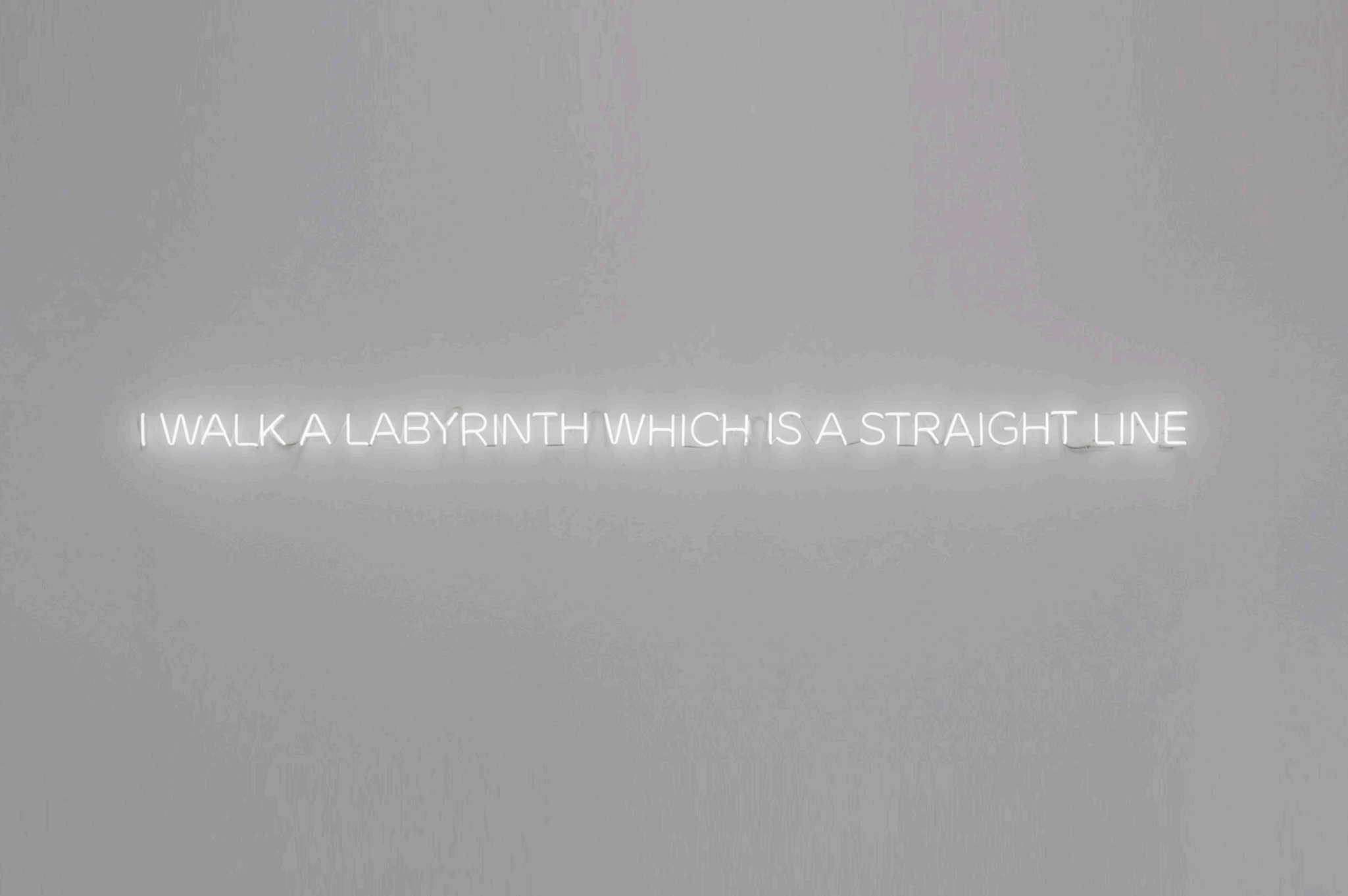




I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line, exhibition view, SARIEV, Plovdiv - 2017



After Me, 2017, oil on canvas, brass, 95 x 75 x 10 cm, unique work

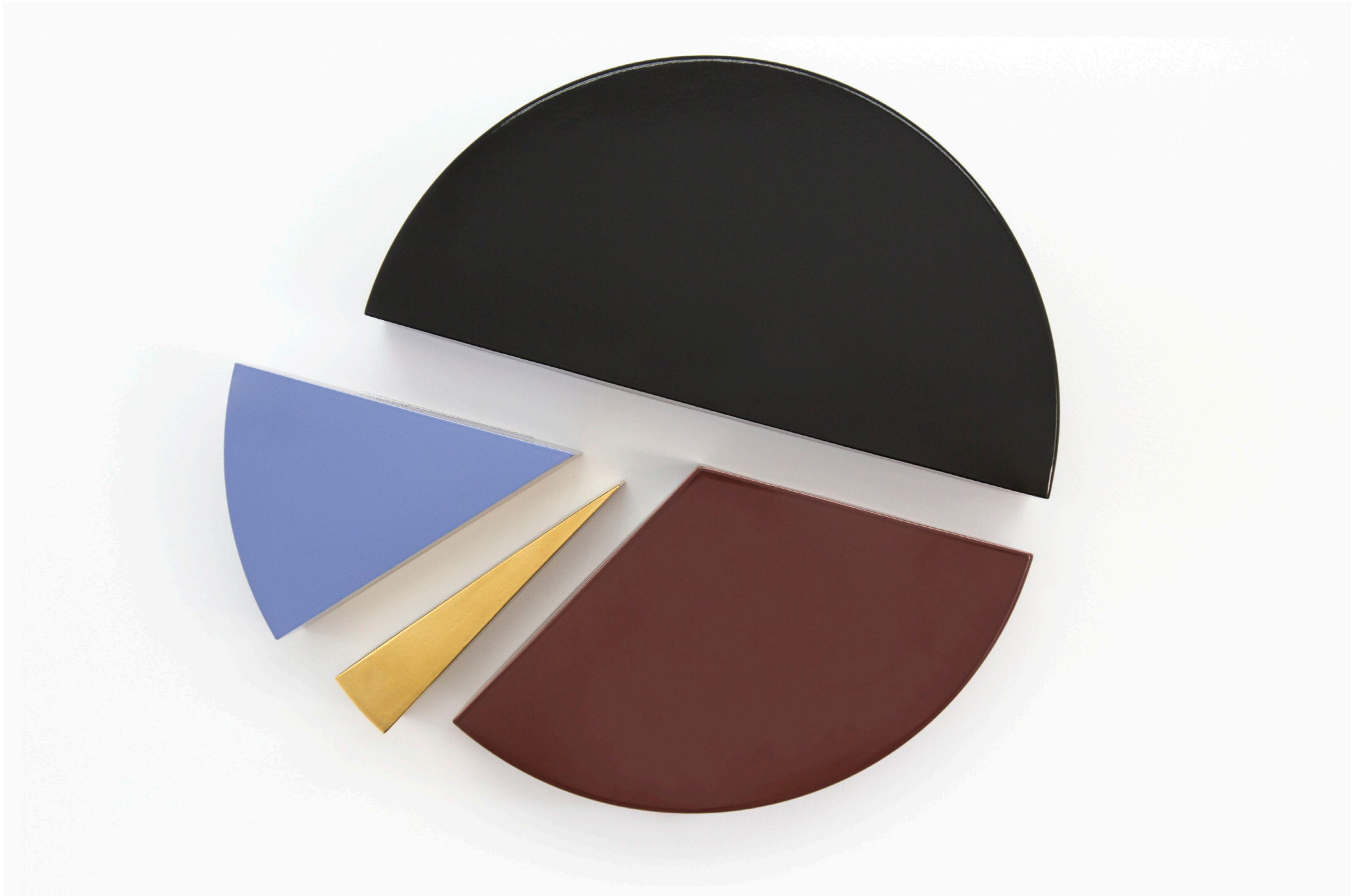


I WALK A LABYRINTH WHICH IS A STRAIGHT LINE

I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line, 2017, neon, 7.5 x 250 cm, edition 3+2 AP



I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line, exhibition view, SARIEV, Plovdiv - 2017



Dreamwork, 2017, enameled ceramics, 48 x 55 x 6 cm, edition 3+2 AP



Nightmare, 2017, chocolate, edition 50



I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line, exhibition view, St. Joseph Church , Plovdiv - 2017



I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line, exhibition view, St. Joseph Church , Plovdiv - 2017



I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line, exhibition view, St. Joseph Church , Plovdiv - 2017



Candelaber, 2017
brass, 120 x 75 cm, edition 3+2 AP



I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line, exhibition view, St. Joseph Church , Plovdiv - 2017

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

BRONZE, SWEAT AND TEARS

2016

Michel Rein

Brussels (BE)



Stefan Nikolaev, Bronze, Sweat and Tears

*What an extraordinary pleasure it was
to see things being devoured,
seeing them become black and transformed*
Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451

*All things are just the flame to
which they owe their existence*
Auguste Rodin

Fire is what results from a physical and chemical mechanism which shifts matter from a solid state to a gaseous state: as an event that was as spectacular as it was mysterious for the first human beings who undertook the task of mastering it, up until the pre-scientific period fire remained the source of countless speculation which gave rise to our modern chemistry. It may have gradually disappeared from our day-to-day environment, in which it continues to exist solely through the incomparable attraction of its merry flames which still symbolize the heyday of cosy living rooms, but it rarely occupies centre stage, except to resurrect certain kinds of ancient fascination that we thought had gone forever...

When it is placed in the foreground of an artistic process, however, it re-finds all its dazzle and all the power of its former symbolism. Playing with fire is nothing less than dangerous, as we are all well aware, above all when this involves attacking another no less powerful symbol, the book. If book burning has aroused so many horrified reactions in the course of history, this is perhaps because what was at issue was a historical fight between reason and instinct, refinement and brutality: the destruction of books by fire is never a good sign, it plunges us back into the darkest moments of History, invariably attesting to a defeat of literature, poetry and art. That a living artist in this early 21st century should want to re-appropriate this symbolism in order to get it to re-

enact a new chapter (Autofiction (process)) is indeed a sign that the spectacle of fire devouring the pages of a book is enough to plunge us back into ancient forms of abhorrence, echoes of primitive rituals always ready to surge forth again: when Islamic State jihadists want to get rid of the symbols of western society, they who live to the beat of “social networks”, it is by committing piles of “impure” books and magazines to the bonfire; when they want to ward off the power of the great Satan, it is again through fire, by burning American flags: an age-old reflex which illustrates an unchanged trust in the ancient deity, a paradoxical humanity which combines belief in the most primitive magic with the most developed technology of smartphones and satellites...

Needless to say, when Nikolaev proceeds with these “auto-autodafés”, what is involved is a tongue-in-cheek message, a thousand leagues from the message of those who hold free thought in contempt. The destruction of his own catalogues stems more from the liberating and celebratory act and from a questioning of the power of the book in the age of digital omnipotence. Burning a catalogue is, however, not altogether benign: there must certainly be a cost in terms of narcissism for sending up in smoke what represents the culmination of a complex artistic process and the symbol of an undeniable success; even if it is not a question of destroying the entirety of the stock, it is nevertheless a matter of admitting to yourself that this latter risked ended up in the dustbin of history... For all this, the artist’s gesture has nothing to do with any kind of feeling of bitterness; involved, on the contrary, is a re-injection of fuel inside a process which never stops, that of creation. The artist contrasts the creation of the lethal stabilization of a career which may be represented by the publication of a doorstop of a catalogue with the vitalist image of its fertilization and regeneration by way of fire. The book as fuel will serve to feed a hearth which will give birth to new pieces: nothing is lost in an artistic career, everything is re-created and everything is transformed--Lavoisier’s theory of the conservation of matter is taken up here in an artistic version. There is a similarity with the work of the great Scottish artist Simon

Starling, who also seems to draw inspiration from the theories of the famous French chemist. The successive changes to which Starling subjects his various vehicles, boats, bicycles, and machines of every kind, which he transforms into one another by re-creating their geopolitical itinerary, find a less dramatic echo in Nikolaev's work. But we find a sort of derision and craziness in these "mercantile exchanges" which is altogether foreign to the political ecology which informs the Scottish artist when, in his famous piece, Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No 2) produced in 2005, he used the wood of the boat on which he had embarked to feed the steam boiler propelling it. Nikolaev's fuel may permit him to metaphorically saw off the branch on which he is sitting, yet it will not give rise to any edifying fable, but rather to the metamorphosis of an ancient play into a new one, and to the shift from one medium to another, from 2D to 3D, from comic strip to sculpture, and from paper to bronze: this half of Vil coyote, the notorious antihero of the famous comic, whose volume he breaks up to create an unlikely wedge of books (Autofiction), thus comes about from the combustion/retrieval of the famous catalogues and will obviously be used to array these same volumes on his bookshelves: the loop thus comes full circle, with the eulogy of metempsychosis which moves the artist's mind from one form to another in a total disrespect of the high-tech/low-tech hierarchy being Nikolaev's trademark.

For this artist, in the end of the day, it is more a matter of minimizing the scope of an artistic trajectory while at the same time reinvigorating the form of the vanitas: the title itself, Bronze, Sweat and Tears, which revisits Churchill's famous words asking the English people to pull together in the war effort, is part of the ambient derision as well as of a diffused sense of the relativity of the power of art, not to mention the vanitas. We know that Nikolaev is often concerned with the idea of this latter which he has presented in many variants, in particular in those famous ceramic skull/ashtrays (What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, 2009): vanitas squared, vanitas 2.0? Isn't the production of "utilitarian" vanitas a way of making fun of them? Isn't burning a catalogue, in a gesture that is as iconoclastic as it is scandalous, an attempt to rewrite its inexhaustible history? Except that over the

idea of the "dry" vanitas, Nikolaev prefers that of the Phoenix being reborn from its ashes, a matter of extending a rich sequence rather than closing it. So just as the stock of sacrificed catalogues is part and parcel of the creation of new pieces, the embers which were used for another conflagration will act as a matrix for new bronzes—thoroughly original forms, to boot--, in a more than exaggerated endless duplication (mise en abyme) between the raw matter of the casting and the final form of the work (Hello Darkness); ditto for the burnt frames (Title to come shortly) which still fuel the same reflection. The most incongruous of these pieces, Business, model, sculpture, reverses this way of looking at the vanitas, to lend consistency and push into eternity what, on the face of it, seems to stem from the humblest humanity, the modest bench which the craftsman caster uses to sit his backside on...

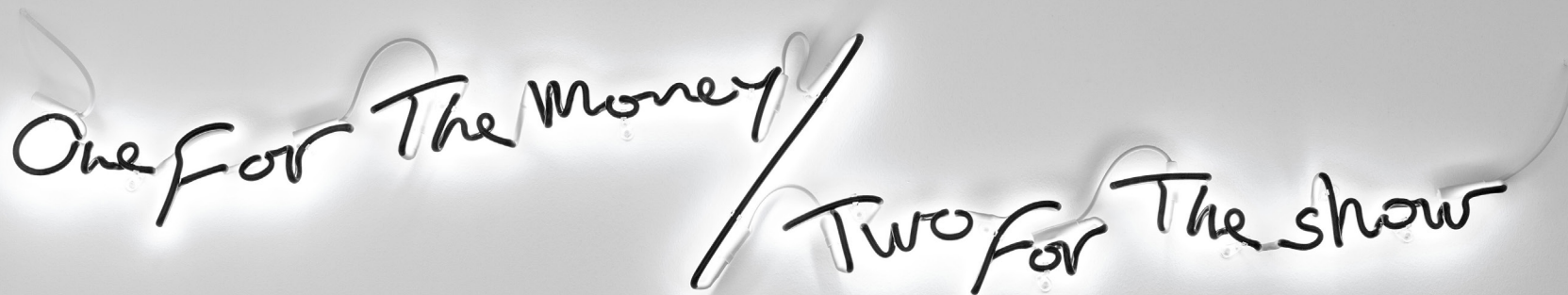
Patrice Joly
Paris, February 2016



Bronze, Sweat and Tears, exhibition view, Michel Rein, Brussels - 2016



TBC, 2016
bronze, 196 x 165 x 25 cm, unique work



One For The Money / Two For The Show

A neon artwork featuring the phrase "One For The Money / Two For The Show" in a cursive, handwritten style. The text is illuminated with a warm, yellowish-white glow. A single, continuous line of neon tubing forms the entire phrase, including the diagonal slash that separates the two parts. The background is a solid, light gray, which makes the glowing neon stand out.

One for the Money, Two for the Show, 2015, neon, 160 x 32 cm, edition 3+2 AP



Hello Darkness 1, 2015, bronze, 38 x 31 x 15 cm, edition 3+2 AP



Hello Darkness 2, 2015, bronze, 46 x 38 x 20 cm, edition 3+2 AP



Autofiction (process) 2015, exhibition view, Michel Rein, Brussels - 2016



Autofiction (process) 2015, archival inkjet print on baryta paper, mounted on aluminium composite board, framed, 47 x 35 cm, edition 8+4 AP



Autofiction (process) 2015, archival inkjet print on baryta paper, mounted on aluminium composite board, framed, 47 x 35 cm, edition 8+4 AP



Autofiction (process) 2015, archival inkjet print on baryta paper, mounted on aluminium composite board, framed, 47 x 35 cm, edition 8+4 AP



Autofiction (process) 2015, archival inkjet print on baryta paper, mounted on aluminium composite board, framed, 47 x 35 cm, edition 8+4 AP



Autofiction (process) 2015, archival inkjet print on baryta paper, mounted on aluminium composite board, framed, 47 x 35 cm, edition 8+4 AP



Autofiction, 2015, bronze, 30 x 20 x 24 cm, edition 8+4 AP



Autofiction, 2015, bronze, 30 x 20 x 24 cm, edition 8+4 AP

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

BUSINES, MODEL, SCLUPTURE

2015

SARIEV

Plovdiv (BG)



The Mercantile Model as Sculpture's Heart of Darkness

Years ago, I received a letter denouncing the activities of a certain Stefan Nikolaev, most of them conducted abroad. Fulfilling the role of henchman to something akin to a "capitalist realism", his art can be crushingly criticized through the following lines: "The reactionary ideology of imperialism, as we know, comes across in art in very varied forms, from the "innocent" absence of ideological principles, [...] from individual "revolutionary" rebellions to treason, pure and simple, against the people. [...] treacherous are the forms of outward a-politicism, behind which lurks devotion to the exploiters; forms of objectivism, expressing the most reactionary subjectivism; and forms of individualism, sold as a thrust or surge towards "creative freedom", and so on and so forth."

Nikolaev is about to display his works in the very heart of our progressive homeland, during an exhibition tellingly titled "Business, Model, Sculpture". This event amounts to an attempt to divert the fight against formalism towards some other reactionary goals. The artist's armchair exercises on show express a hidden subjectivism and negate the obligation to portray the wide spectrum of societal reality, often repudiating or misrepresenting mankind.

We can measure the resolute objectives of this desperate campaign by the fact that all works were specifically produced for the occasion, a fact disguised under the speculative market principles of the worship of novelty. His show-trial of class struggle and social progress begins with a neon sign spelling the title of the exhibition. This intervention is positioned in the front vitrine of the gallery, imitating on purpose a petty bourgeois boutique publicity sign. Day and night, it is thus visible by any passer-by: undereducated individuals insufficiently prepared for the merciless consumerist indoctrination; honest and sane workers who beyond doubt will protest against this shameful display; children.

A central tirade of this ensemble is a work congenitally titled the same as the exhibition: *Business, Model, Sculpture* (2015). In the outskirts of our capital city, there is an artwork-producing workshop manned by ordinary heroes of the collective labour. Nikolaev has cunningly abused their trust and has them manufacture a large number of his quasi-artistic creations. One day, he observed they were about to discard and put to fire an old wooden workbench, rendered obsolete by recent advances in our art and science. He criticized their rightful gesture and nostalgically "saved" the archaic object, in order to transform it into an unsightly, stuck in the past furniture-sculpture. Cast in bronze, the bench and its title throw abject negation on the workers' labour, assimilating the latter to a mercantile "business", promoting the antediluvian Platonist notion of an inescapable "model" – a proper obstruction to progress –, and sticking the label "sculpture" to this mechanical act, as if art didn't need enlightened ideas nor author. The bench thus implants a vision of national nihilism regarding this country's advancements and constitutes an unneeded distraction in the working process, almost as if it were some reactionary "strike of the objects".

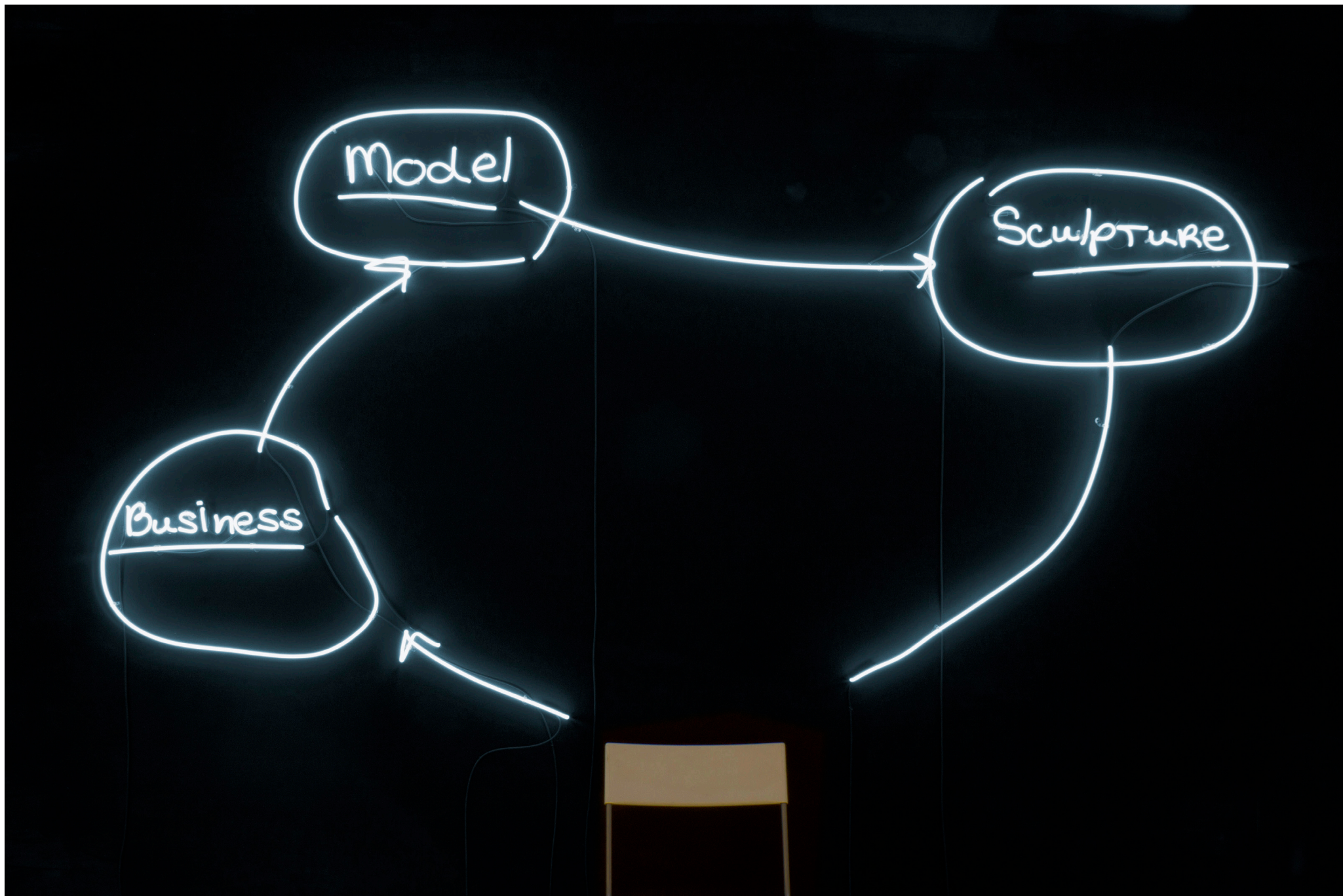
Further on, one wonders in front of something that can be characterized as the outlandish result of an aboriginal fire-dancing ritual. Autofiction (2015) has a connection with an extensive edition published in 2012 and encompassing the artists' body of works until that moment (Stefan Nikolaev: *One For The Money, Two For The Show*). We know Nikolaev has more than one string to his bow; on the present occasion he attempts to turn this self-glorying treaty of little interest to anyone else into a winning strategy. Taking it as a point of departure, the author has attempted a pseudoscientific zero-sum experiment: he puts to the bonfire copies of the books in question and with the heat thus produced, melts down some bronze into a shape reminding a printed volume. This gratuitously self-cynical and arsonist activity results in an object as useless as a paperweight; moreover, it is laughably incoherent in its disregard of basic scientific credibility. As Marx wrote, "All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the

essence of things directly coincided.”

The show finds its end, both metaphorically and literally, with Hello Darkness (2015), two bronze-cast arrays of pitch-black embers. The title of this misanthropic work comes from a socially sceptical American song, whose meaning was described by one of its authors as “the inability of people to communicate with each other, not particularly internationally but especially emotionally, so what you see around you are people unable to love each other.” The doubtful motives of the ensuing sculpture become apparent: it is an obscurantist longing for a primitive society where the natural elements were the focal point of community, a dark fixation unable to overcome the end of things, reminding times long ago superseded by the masses’ unstoppable advance towards the future.

B.R.

Paris, May 1st 2015



Model, 2015, neon, 160 x 310 cm, edition 3+2AP



Busines, model, sculpture, exhibition view, SARIEV, Plovdiv - 2015



Untitled, 2012, bronze, 83 x 30 x 7 cm, edition 8+2 AP

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

IF THINGS ARE NOT AS YOU WISH, WISH THEM AS THEY ARE

2013

Michel Rein

Paris (FR)



Stefan Nikolaev, *If Things Are Not As You Wish, Wish Them As They Are*

In the austere guise of a minimalist proposition, Stefan Nikolaev's new solo show develops a homogeneous set of works which are anything but easy to pigeonhole, taxonomically. Belonging, technically speaking, to the sculptural field, at first glance these objects made of patinated bronze nevertheless come across as if subordinate to painting: what is involved is castings of picture stretchers with different standardized dimensions. Arranged in small groups (calling to mind Mondrian's compositions), resting on the ground but leaning against the walls, the objects seem to float in an intermediate state accentuated by their not very eloquent discretion. Have we arrived before the showing or after the end credits of this curious Salon des Refusés and its empty frames, worthy of the Herald Tribune without photoengraving in 1987 (Jean-Luc Moulène, series of *Objets de grève* [Strike Objects])? The neon which takes up the exhibition's title would in all logic be a possible point of entry: If things are not as you wish, wish them as they are... As a proverb that exhorts a certain frugal restraint, are we thus faced with the admission of a pictorial failure, the premonition of a beneficent iconoclasm, or the conceptual excuse of a figurative vacantness? With a certain mistrust (verbal hijacking being, for this artist, a multi-recidivist practice), the repartee that springs to mind is somewhat sarcastic: Language is a dialect with an army and navy.¹

Because the pictorial reference here is articulated with a deliberately pronounced accent, it is thus not a matter of lunging for a dusty volume of *Le Bon Usage*, art division.² The exercise as such is not entirely novel: however, Stefan Nikolaev's objects, which are equidistant from the ontological rigour of *Supports/Surfaces* and the tautology inspired by McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message*, do not stem from transsubstantiation,³ but more from something transgenic. What should

probably be remembered is his way of using the referential power of painting so as to translate a pictorial dialect into a sculptural language.

Emile Ouroumov, 2013

Translated by Simon Pleasance

1 A remark attributed to the linguist Max Weinreich (1894-1969)

2 *Le Bon Usage*, known as *Le Grevisse*, is a descriptive grammar of the French language, a reference book for writers and proof-readers.

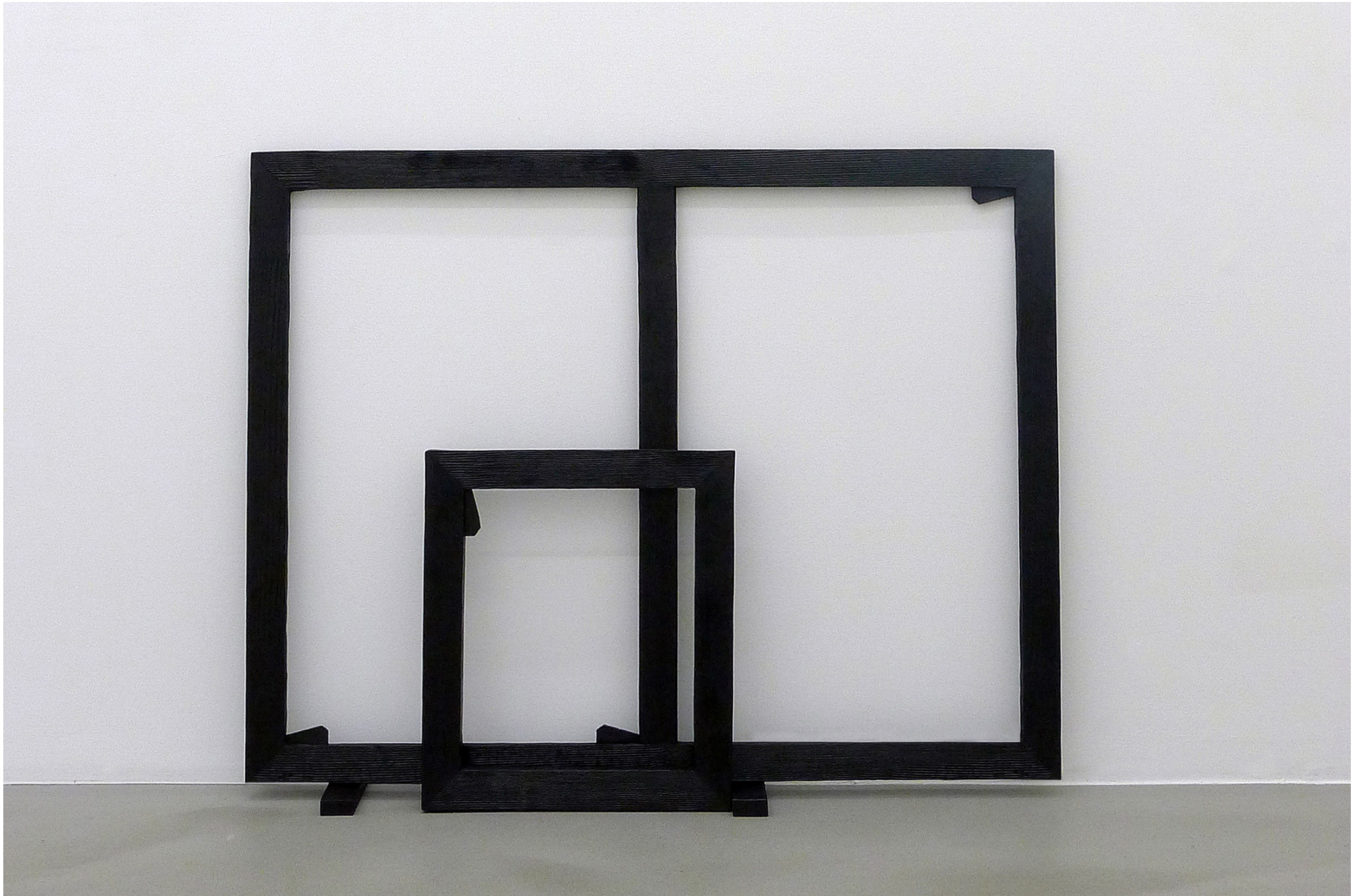
3 This involves, literally, the conversion of one substance into another. For some Christians, the term describes the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ during the Eucharist. So, by the consecration of the mass, bread and wine are "really, truly and substantially" transformed or converted into the body and blood of Christ, while keeping their physical characteristics and initial forms.



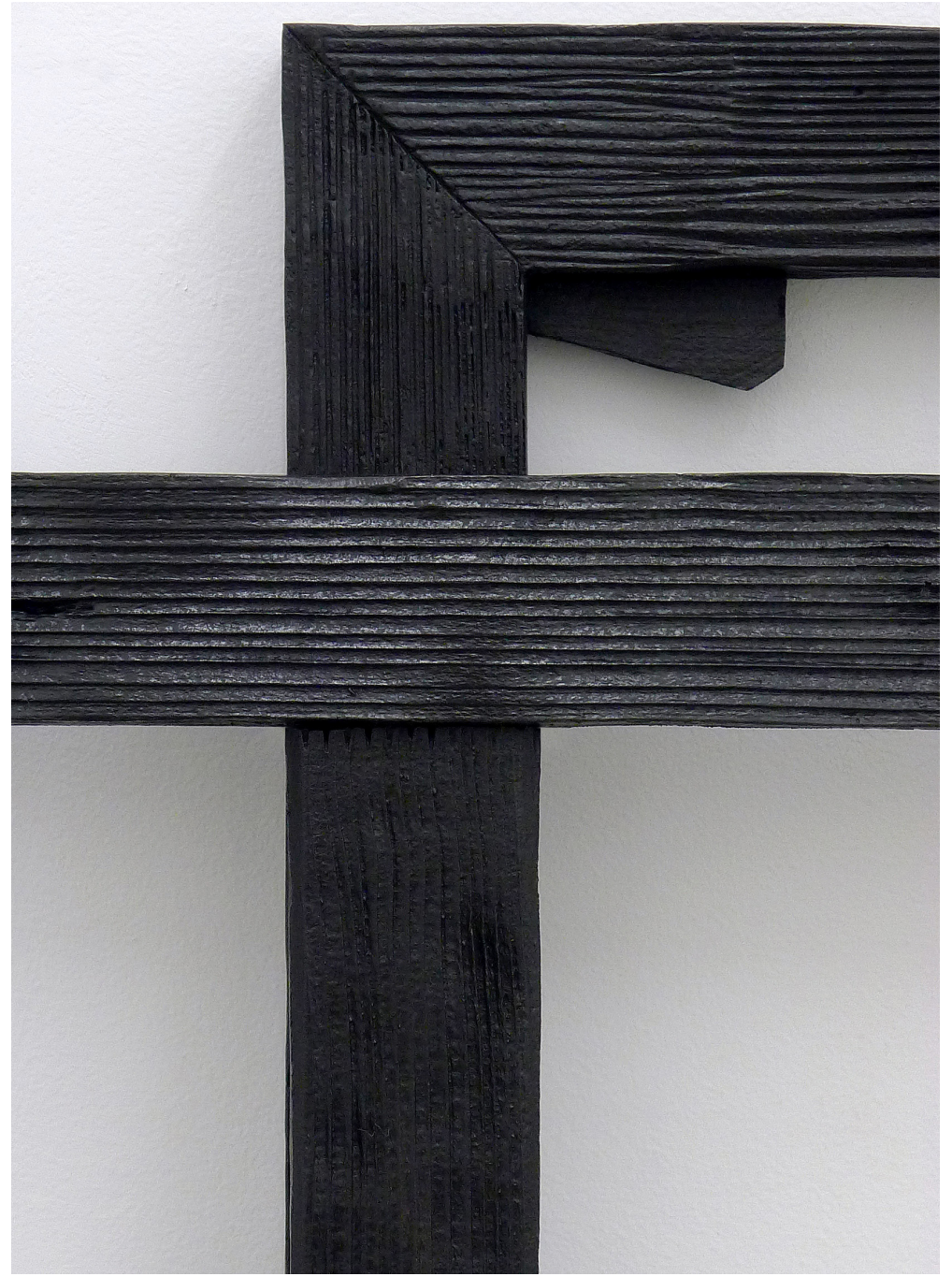
If Things Are Not As You Wish, Wish Them As They Are, exhibition view, Michel Rein, Paris - 2013



If Things Are Not As You Wish, Wish Them As They Are #1, 2013, bronze, 114,5 x 126,5 x 25,5 cm, unique artwork



If Things Are Not As You Wish, Wish Them As They Are #2, 2013, bronze, 73 x 92 x 11.5 cm, unique artwork



If Things Are Not As You Wish, Wish Them As They Are, 2013, details



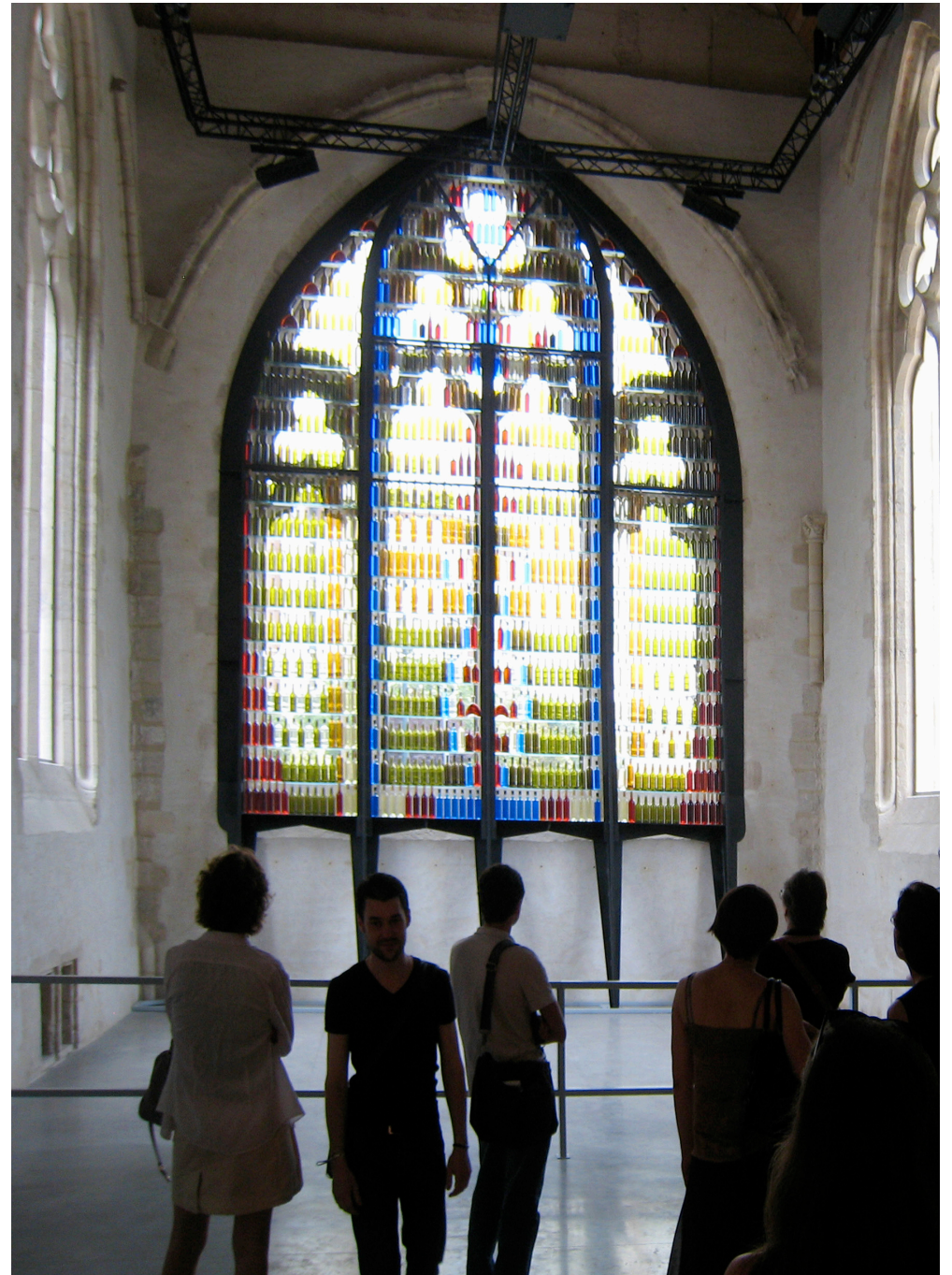
If Things Are Not As You Wish, Wish Them As They Are #4, 2013, bronze, 92,5 x 71,5 x 6,5 cm, unique artwork

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

HOLY SPIRIT RAIN DOWN

2010

Les Églises, centre d'art contemporain de la Ville de Chelles
Chelles (FR)



Stefan Nikolaev, Holy Spirit Rain Down

Art is like a bar kept open in the midst of ruins. At a time when human beliefs are verging on bankruptcy, visitors who have sobered up may still find the wherewithal therein to quench their thirst for hypotheses and their interest in a shared geometry. The bar serves on tap everything that may one day have led to both an elation of the senses and a knowledge of the mysteries of things living. It is a bar with no VIP nook; nor does it select its customers. For this reason, of course, it attracts few people—like old churches—far fewer, in any event, than night clubs. The crowd thinks it knows, right away, that it will barely meet more than the “dull gaze of the plaster of statues”, as the poet put it, and that it will not inhale the aromas of trance-inspired meat. As ever, the crowd is wrong. Stefan Nikolaev is one of those artists still young enough (he was born in 1970) to hang out in night clubs and believe at the same time in art as something that abstracts competitive atmospheres, merging paroxysm and pith aimed at caustic and nevertheless tempered consumption. His sculptures, with their finish befitting flawless knick-knacks, often offer the spectacular presence of monumental religious by-products, marrying industrial design with the luxury of handmade gold and silver work, idolatrous formalism with Pop icons, and commercial promotion with metaphysical disillusionment. His huge packets of cigarettes spring to mind, made of marble and engraved with gold, conjuring up, through their very size, kinds of advertising gravestones, brutally lending substance to the warning message printed in all cigarette packs. Or, more recently, his replica on the scale of an ATM galvanized with 24-carat gold, turning the cold cash-vending machine into a seductive medium of extravagance, a disturbing decoy for dazzled onlookers who are thus only able to remove the reflection of their eternally suspended and hor(au)rified greed... What can an artist give better—to borrow Lacan’s famous definition of the person in love—than what he does not have, and to people who do not want it? For his show at the Chelles art

centre, Stefan Nikolaev seems to have come up with the idea of giving us still more—supreme love? faith in art? The place definitely lends itself well to this: two adjoining old churches forming just a single nave through the action of cultural and patrimonial cement (and the intelligence of the designer Martin Szekely). In the first, the artist has made strange lights which turn the hackneyed motif of Duchamp’s bottlerack into candelabras in a “pop-clerical” style, if we may so put it. In the second, he has filled the empty space of the Gothic windows with more than a thousand full bottles of alcohol, of different hues and without labels, which, set on imperceptible shelves, filter the sun light just like multicoloured stained-glass windows. Is this remarkable iconoclastic master-glazier’s prowess the mystical enlightenment of a boozier? Is it a tribute to the readymade as a perfect intercessor of vision in our belief in art? Or alternatively, running counter to this first-communion-like mode which is at once profane and well-behaved, must every visitor jiggle his solitary shaker with the flavor of his imagined cocktail? And then must everything be drunk to believe it? Spiritually and spiritedly, or what?... is this not once more the immortal lesson of maestro Rabelais, the brilliant “abstractor of quint essence” that is being re-enacted here? Having reached the end of his initiation, and finally drinking at the fountain of the Dive Bouteille, everyone finds the wine-flavoured water they imagine, and when they switch imaginations, the water changes taste. “O heart, you will never pierce the mystery,/ Never will you illuminate the subtleties of the philosophers. / Make yourself a heaven of wine and a goblet, / For do you know if you will ever make your way into the real Heaven?” (Omar Khayyam)

Vincent Labaume 2010

Translated from the French by Simon Pleasance



Holy Spirit Rain Down, exhibition view, Les Églises, centre d'art contemporain de la Ville de Chelles - 2010



Holy Spirit Rain Down, 2010
Painted aluminium, glass shelves, 1200 bottles with alcohol.
900 x 600 x 15 cm.



Holy Spirit Rain Down, exhibition view, Les Églises, centre d'art contemporain de la Ville de Chelles - 2010



Holy Spirit Rain Down, exhibition view, Les Églises, centre d'art contemporain de la Ville de Chelles - 2010

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

NEW WORKS OLD DREAMS

2009

Michel Rein

Paris (FR)



Stefan Nikolaev, New Works Old Dreams

Object, Entity, Sculpture. His, Mine, Yours, Ours...

In his newest one-artist show Stefan Nikolaev is thinking exclusively through objects. This might be quite natural – after all in the world of today objects ever more tightly surround us. But it also might be because the object is one of the most obvious ways to hold on to memories, to capture both the past and the fast changing present, to involve our own selves with the above in a complex web of intertwined moments. It is through objects that we usually explore the world, learn about history, and imagine unknown circumstances. We often try to express feelings and thoughts through objects, we transform them into symbols, and we invest them with meanings and associations. We award prizes by giving objects, we use objects to commemorate, and objects are also a fact of vanity. Until recently the propaganda of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy was trying desperately to affirm the primacy of the spiritual over the material culture – the latter is obviously winning now while growing and expanding much faster than either our needs or desires. In the history of art the world of objects has offered just as much inspiration to artists as, for instance, the landscape or the human body. Take for example the wine glass in the works of Willem Heda, the copper vessels of Chardin or the famous *n'est pas une pipe* of René Magritte...

The objects of Stefan Nikolaev are just as diverse as history teaches us – from the heirlooms to the ATM, from the epergne to the “monument” of the comics’ coyote. The artist is mixing reality and artificiality in the world of objects; he is transgressing the elitist hierarchies between objects and does not pay attention to their spheres of origin and production. For instance, one of the gigantic rings titled “Nikola” (2009) is a copy of an actual piece of jewelry. It was on the finger of an Orthodox priest, the grandfather of the artist, when he died in bed

in the hands of a young woman, not his wife. This slightly amusing (though with a tragic ending) story has happened in a traditional Balkan society where people prefer to talk about the macho symbolism of the event rather than the specific circumstances of life. Thus the ring grows in importance to the levels worthy of an archaeological relic from an ancient epos. The materials used have similar connotations – they look like coming from the Stone or the Iron Age, from the times of heroes and titans!

Stefan Nikolaev is treating in a similar way, like a gigantic sculpture, another one of his personal amulets, which is provisionally titled “my grandmother’s ring”. It has an even more aggressive character with its powerful chthonic roots holding the stone – “Donka” (2009). One is reminded of the myth about the origins of the ring – from a link of the chain from which Prometheus was freed...

These huge “links” from the chain of family history would give a field day to a semiotics expert – they provide vast spaces for reading into the gender relations in the Bulgarian, Balkan society of the past, their current interpretation, connotations and symbols that are springing up in the works of contemporary artists almost subconsciously though quite persistently.

The human skulls that Stefan Nikolaev seems to be obsessed with – happen to become fruit bowls – “What Doesn’t Kill You Makes You Stronger. Fruits of the Loom” (2009), and are projecting quite different aesthetical impulses. The porcelain’s fragility, the pure whiteness of the material, the exquisite forms and delicate gilding of the objects – all these qualities could easily add up to a certain kind of “beauty” had it not been for the reference to a bone (the term “bone porcelain” is still used for the kind of material where bone ashes are mixed, though not human). Scientific research maintains that the ability of our brain to recognize and distinguish faces does not make us more “accustomed” to the sight of a skull. This is the reason why for most people a skull is a direct reference to death – Vanitas, all is transitory, all of us – too. Then why – the skull as a memento mori in the überdesigned life of the contemporary human being? Or maybe this is a reference to the times of the medieval Bulgarian Khan Krum (8 c. AD) who ordered a mug for wine to be carved out of the skull of the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros

Ist whom he defeated in battle? Although within the European Union questions concerning national identity are not always possible to settle through the copyright over *ratatouille*, for instance, still the specifics of the national cuisine and table arrangements do remain substantial. Maybe the porcelain skulls in the Stefan Nikolaev show are material evidences for the “clan” memory?

If this is the case then we can surmise that the professional memory of the artist is causing the appearance of the solid metal image of The Coyote (hero’s details here – Wile E. Coyote, the “bad guy” for The Road Runner).

Both characters invented by the animation director Chuck Jones for Warner Bros. are now over 60 years old) – “I Hate America and America Hates Me” (2009). Quite naturally any coyote in an exhibition room today will turn into a reincarnation of the famous roommate of Joseph Beuys from his “I like America and America Likes Me” performance (1974). Although Beuys managed to, formally, not set foot on the actual territory/ground of America during the realization of the event – he had been driven by an ambulance from the airport to the gallery and back, his performance has left an important mark on the artistic life of the country.

The experience of Stefan Nikolaev is a polar opposite – born in Sofia, Bulgaria, he has been living half of his life in Paris, France. It is possible that the differences between these two territories have been vanishing lately. However, the symbolic distance between the (still) brilliant cultural capital of the continent and the (still) attractive and repulsive with its exoticism *l’autre moitié de l’Europe* (as was the name of the first after the fall of the Berlin wall significant show of Eastern European contemporary art in Paris in 2000), may not be neglected. The artist is positioned between two cultures and traditions, two types of education and languages. Yet he still manages to interpret those and to “translate” himself into both languages while fixing his life impressions and consciously avoiding either the simplistic symbolism or the narrative. His coyote, wrapped in the recognizable felt blanket and shepherd’s staff, has replaced the artist-guru and exists in the space as an obvious question about the possibility of easy love from first sight between the different kinds of collective experiences.

The most luxurious and precious object in the show, both in its material substance and direct meaning, is the Cry Me a River (2009). The ATM replica is a focal point of the Stefan Nikolaev kind of cultural mix of iconoclasm and idolatry. It is not just a humble readymade transported into the temple of art; nor is it a simple darling little thing from everyday life though executed in a better material. It is not the typical for pop-art “stretching” of formal means over new objects of desire either; nor is its aesthetic shape the illusion for perfection of things that our memory tends to produce.

The exact replica of an ATM galvanized with 24-carat gold is a shiny altar for the cult that we cannot do without. The ironical title of the work should be seen, according to the artist, as a comment on the yet unclear future of the bidirectional dependence between the human and the machine; a comment on love and hate; on the need for prosthesis; on the fear of the oracle and his predictions. Of course, Oswald Spengler is right when claiming, “money is a category of thought”. At the same time it’s impossible to forget the inspirational verbal bang of Fidel Castro: “Capitalism is using its money; we socialists throw it away”.

Iara Boubnova 2009



New Works Old Dreams, exhibition view, Michel Rein, Paris - 2009



Cry me a river, 2009, 24K gold-plated copper, 55 x 48 x 18 cm, edition 3+1 AP



I Hate America and America Hates Me, 2009, bronze, 65 x 40 x 45 cm, edition 3+1 AP



I Hate America and America Hates Me, 2009, bronze, 65 x 40 x 45 cm, edition 3+1 AP



What Does Not Kill You Makes You Stronger, 2009, enamelled ceramics, gold-plated parts, 12 x 13 x 20 cm (each)



What Does Not Kill You Makes You Stronger Fruit of the Loom, 2009, painted aluminium cast, enameled ceramic, gold-plated parts, 145 x 60 x 50 cm



What Does Not Kill You Makes You Stronger, 2009, enamelled ceramic, gold-plated parts, 12 x 13 x 20 cm



What Does Not Kill You Makes You Stronger, 2009, enamelled ceramic, gold-plated parts, 12 x 13 x 20 cm



What Does Not Kill You Makes You Stronger, 2009, enamelled ceramic, gold-plated parts, 12 x 13 x 20 cm



Nikola, 2009, aluminium cast, granite, 65 x 52 x 70 cm, unique work



Donka, 2009, aluminium cast, granite, 30 x 55 x 75 cm, unique work

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

PRESTIGE
2007
ARC Projects
Sofia (BG)





I've Been Loving You Too Long, 2007, hand-blown glass, neon, black leather, cables, transformer, variable dimensions, unique work



I've Been Loving You Too Long, 2007 (details)



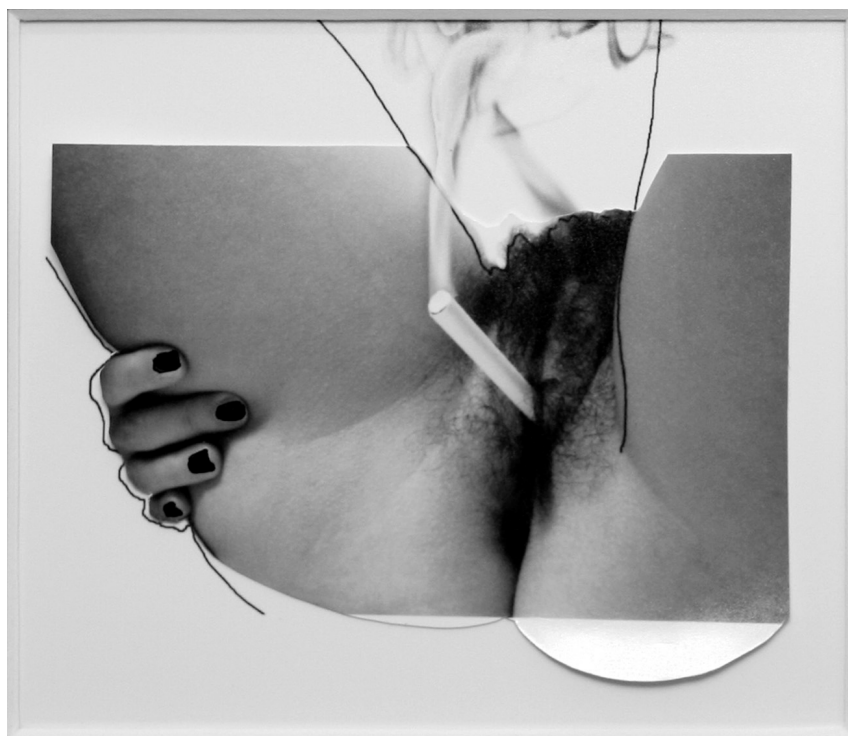


I've Been Loving You Too Long, 2007 (details)





Prestige, exhibition view, ARC Projects, Sofia - 2007



Storyboard After Courbet, 2007, photo collage, 10 x 10 cm, unique work



Storyboard After Courbet, 2007, photo collage, 7 x 7,5 cm, unique work



Storyboard After Courbet, 2007, photo collage, 7 x 7 cm, unique work



Storyboard After Courbet, 2007, photo collage, 9 x 9 cm, unique work

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

POWERFUL TIPS

2006

CCCOD

Tours (FR)



Stefan Nikolaev, Powerful Tips

This solo exhibition by Stefan Nikolaev contrasts two atmospheres. It articulates black and colour as the positive and negative poles of the Manichean world drawn by advertising marketing. Cigarettes are one of the artist's favourite motifs: throughout the exhibitions, he reveals its ambiguous connotations, between seduction and prohibition. This iconic object of the forbidden at a time tempted by the all-hygienist diffuses its poisonous atmosphere throughout the first room. A mural shows a prevention message written on cigarette packages. Enlarged to the scale of a manifesto, it appears as the derisory demand for individual freedom to be reclaimed. An unprecedented video installation delivers the image of an anonymous smoker embedded in the wall, which creates a disturbing ghostly presence, animated signage for a sulphurous and tempting poison. Finally, the oversized replicas of marble cigarette packets evoke grave markers while developing a classic sculptural vocabulary, luxurious and alluring.

The passage to the second room plunges us abruptly into the vitamin atmosphere of "Powerful Tips". This paint, designed in collaboration with the company Actiforces *, includes the components of its logo: the triangle, the colour green and the idea of power conveyed by its name. Stefan Nikolaev converts these symbols from the field of communication into abstract painting with a decorative spirit. Using the "tips" given by a guide for communication professionals, he establishes this transmutation towards the field of art, at the risk of producing, as the text accompanying the set indicates, undesirable euphoric effects on the viewer ...

AJL 2006





Smokers Die Younger, 2006, tar wall painting, 800 x 120 cm, unique work



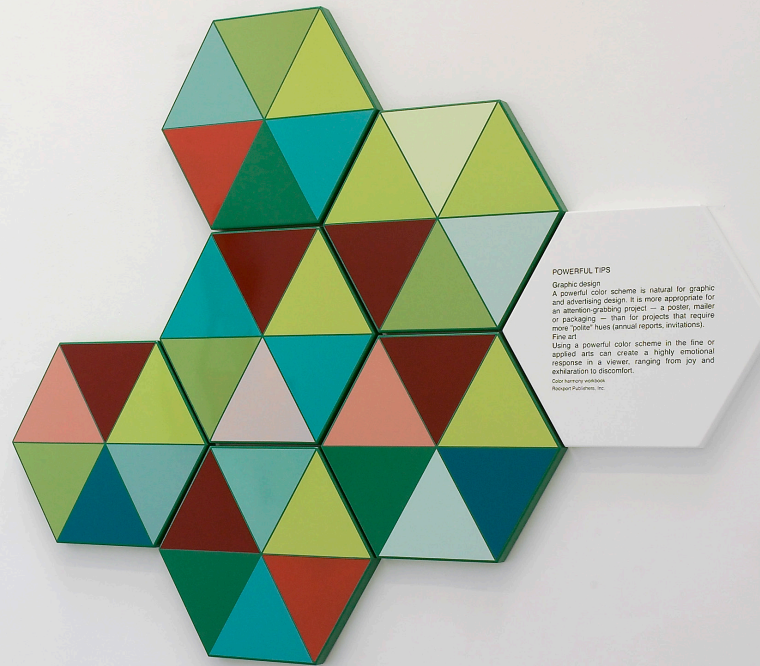
Come Where the Flavour is, 2004, engraved marble, gold, soil, 125 x 75 x 30 cm, unique work



Return to Glory, 2005, engraved granite, gold, 120 x 77 x 30,5 cm, unique work



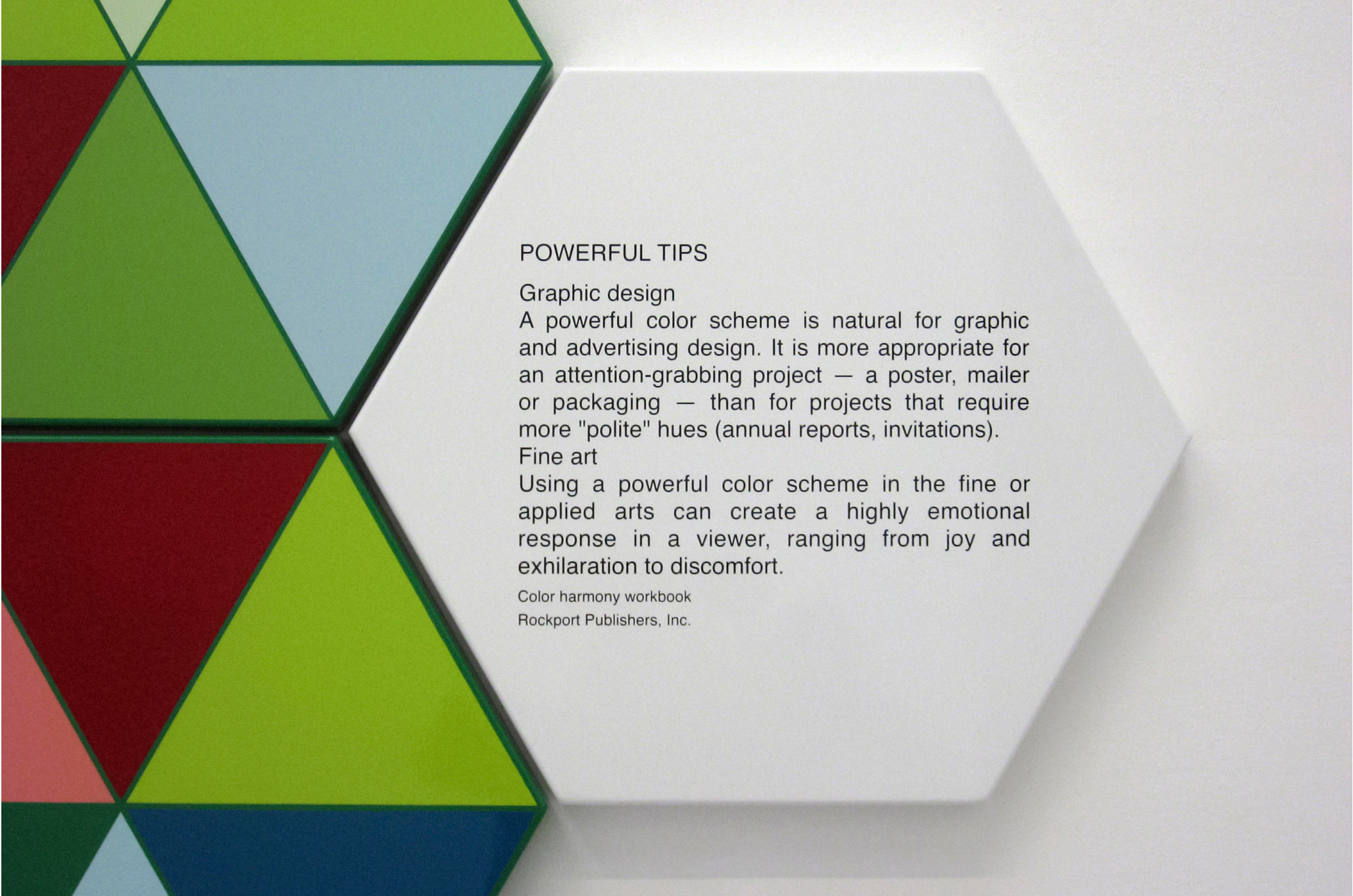
Dark Sider, 2006, flat screen video display, black paint, variable dimensions



Powerful Tips, 2006, paint on aluminium, variable dimensions, unique work

Powerful Tips, 2006,
paint on aluminium, variable dimensions, , unique work





POWERFUL TIPS

Graphic design

A powerful color scheme is natural for graphic and advertising design. It is more appropriate for an attention-grabbing project — a poster, mailer or packaging — than for projects that require more "polite" hues (annual reports, invitations).

Fine art

Using a powerful color scheme in the fine or applied arts can create a highly emotional response in a viewer, ranging from joy and exhilaration to discomfort.

Color harmony workbook
Rockport Publishers, Inc.

RIDING THE GRAVY PLANE

2005

FIAC Projects | O2 Magazine
Paris (FR)



*"All aboard. The Gravy Plane is an artwork by Stefan Nikolaev that offers you the one and only chance to take a "smokers only" cross-Atlantic flight. With your ticket you will receive an artwork by the artist and the chance to smoke at altitude on a flight from New York to Europe. To receive all the information you need and dates of departure please email us at: thegravityplane@noos.fr
The Gravy Plane: an artwork, an expression of freedom in a world gone mad or the ride of your life. This is your chance to decide."*

Paul O'Neill 2005

Riding the Gravy Plane was a project I submitted to Jennifer Flay and Martin Bethenod, directors of the Fiac. The proposal was to make an artwork edition that will act as a flying ticket for a flight from JFK to CDG airport. The main difference with any other regular flight between New York and Paris would be the possibility to smoke anywhere on board of the flight "except at takeoff and landing". On the whole, a flight backwards to times of casual collective unconsciousness and cheap luxury that was somehow supposed to make time fly beautifully. It also had the practical advantage of "attracting" more American collectors, art critics, museum directors... to reach the Fiac. The reply of the Fiac directors was extremely positive. They were ready to collaborate and show the work in a special booth at the fair, offer VIP treatment and passes to all of the participating persons in the project, etc... Following those optimistic beginnings, the project did involve a team including a NY based lawyer and partners and a Paris based team working on the funding of the project, a figure that amounted to approximately 150 000€ for the flight of 100 passengers. Unfortunately, the outcome was that eventually, the American authorities were totally unwilling to let takeoff or land a smoking flight on US territory.

Stefan Nikolaev 2005



Riding the Gravy Plane, project for a smoking flight NY/Paris, poster, 2005



FIAC 2005:
Paris, 6-10 Octobre 2005

Monsieur Stefan Nikolaev
47, Boulevard St Jacques
75014 Paris

Paris, le 28 juin 2005

Cher Stefan,

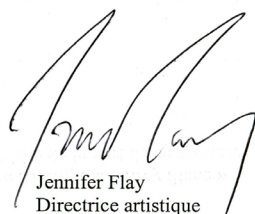
Nous tenons à vous confirmer tout l'intérêt que nous portons à votre projet « Riding the Gravy Plane » et notre souhait de voir ce projet associé à la prochaine édition de la FIAC. Nous serions, à ce titre, notamment intéressés que puisse être présenté, dans un espace à déterminer, le matériel (documentation, vidéo, multiples...) constitué à son occasion. Nous serions également favorables à ce que les passagers du vol soient bénéficiaires de notre carte d'invité d'honneur (VIP), et prêts à faire bénéficier l'ensemble du projet de nos outils de communication.

Je vous rappelle également que, dans l'hypothèse où le projet « Riding the Gravy Plane » ferait l'objet du soutien d'une compagnie de tabacs, toute visibilité de la part de ce sponsor devrait se conformer strictement à la réglementation en vigueur.

Dans l'attente du plaisir de vous revoir, nous vous prions de croire, cher Stefan, à l'assurance de nos sentiments les plus amicaux.

Amicalement, et ... bon vol !


Martin Bethenod
Commissaire général


Jennifer Flay
Directrice artistique

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Paris, June 28, 2005

Dear Stefan

We are most interested in your project "Riding the Gravy Plane", and are very keen to see it associated with the next edition of FIAC. In this regard, we would be interested to have the material (documentation, video, multiples...) put together for its exhibition presented in a space to be decided upon. We would also be in favour of the passengers on the flight having our VIP card; and we are prepared for the entire project to take full advantage of our communication tools.

May I also remind you that, on the hypothesis that the project "Riding the Gravy Plane" would be backed by a tobacco company, all visibility on the part of this sponsor should comply strictly with the rules and regulations in effect. Looking forward to seeing you again.

Best regards

Martin Bethenod
General Commissioner

Jennifer Flay
Artistic director



RIDING THE GRAVY PLANE

"Board the airplane
Settle yourself in the large comfortable armchair
Fasten your seat belt for a long ride
Call the stewardess for a 21 years old scotch.
See her glamorous look and begin to chat up
Have a thin cigarette: enjoy your position.
Put your dark glasses on and start dreaming.
Welcome to the gravy plane..."

Riding the Gravy Plane a project by STEFAN NIKOLAEV
inviting you to get on board of the one and only smoking flight.
To receive all the information please email us at thegravyplane@noos.fr

REVUE 02. **ArtIN** Katia Bernard art consulting
Photo: Eric Tabuchi

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

COME TO WHERE THE FLAVOUR IS

2005

CCA Glasgow

Glasgow (GB-SCT)



Stefan Nikolaev

Come To Where The Flavour is

Whether time - time passing, but time passed perhaps even more so - be cyclical or linear, literal or metaphorical, it almost totally informs the work of Stefan Nikolaev. It is not possible to discuss this artist's work without making reference to that nowadays ghostlike time of the 1970s and 1980s in the East bloc which represents his reference time - the time based on which he develops a body of work whose coherence and unusualness we discover little by little. The proof of time and distance. The experience of remoteness. There is no doubt that what is involved is nostalgia. Not that well-worn nostalgia that might be quite conveniently associated with the Slavic soul, but rather a hybrid form, adapted to western taste, which we might call "cool nostalgia". Cool nostalgia or unlikely product of the clash between cold war and American taste. By merging these two antagonistic temperaments, Stefan Nikolaev attempts the daring wager of a dreamlike materialism, the way we might look forward to the invigorating freshness of a "Kool" cigarette. Stefan Nikolaev's works may be organized around a memory, but they are formally included within the prosaic time of western everydayness. He is a traveller in transit. His world : a duty free shop. And in referring to the idea of "fast time", his work introduces us to an "intermediate time", a time of expectation and waiting. Between mother tongue and adopted language, and based on the international vocabulary of objects and brands, the artist develops his own language, his own communicational tool, but the effectiveness of this coded language, be it real or fantasized, must not disguise the complexity of the text which it is supposed to sum up. Just as the smoker lurking behind his cigarette betrays his nervousness, the over-use that Stefan Nikolaev makes of the signs of western mundaneness basically reveals a real aloofness from this latter. And it is probably the carefully presented failure of this strategy of dissimulation which

enables Stefan Nikolaev's work to sidestep the albeit seductive superfluosness of the predictable look of "cool disillusionment". In the video installation The Screensaver/ the hardisk/ the disk, the same principles hold sway. Using a remote control, a character turns on a stereo playing pop songs from the 1970s and 1980s (Bee Gees, The Mamas and the Papas, Sylvie Vartan, Imagination...) as well as well-known film music. Here, the soundtrack acts as "reference time". Right away, the blind-test effect is at work - we recognize these pieces of music, and yet there is a lapse, and the words are alien to us. What is involved here is repeats performed by Bulgarian groups over original orchestrations. So what ought to be familiar to us becomes alien to us, and time - the time to which these tunes refer us - bears us away into an indeterminate place. "By settling in Paris, in the late 1980s, I experienced this situation when the radio played tunes which I had only known in Bulgarian up until then. Today, I'm trying to share this experience by putting this pattern back together the other way round". Likewise for PosterPosterity* (Bordeaux, Montreal, 2003), in the guise of a bus shelter poster, what is involved is indeed a poster (let us bear in mind those scantily clad blondes posing on choppers) : an object of fantasy, where just the object remains. A hybrid image, neither really decorative nor really informative : a crepuscular Grand Canyon blocked by a "No Smoking" sign, escape from yesterday, prophylaxis of today. As a variant of PosterPosterity, Extra Light (neon) literally illustrates the dual meaning of a title which, as is often the case in Stefan Nikolaev's work, is itself a readymade. But what might be no more than a "cool" process - in other words, the refusal of the literary as a literary process - possibly has to be seen in a different way. It is actually impossible to rule out a certain opportunism in the choice of these anglicisms, it seems just as accurate to see a kind of new Esperanto in the infiniteness of the poetic horizons opened up by descriptive and advertising language. The "super light" (meaning the opposite of both heavy and dark) of the neon as a sign of cool nostalgia and the vague regret of heavy Balkan smokers.

Eric Tabuchi 2005



Come to Where the Flavour Is, exhibition view, CCA, Glasgow - 2005

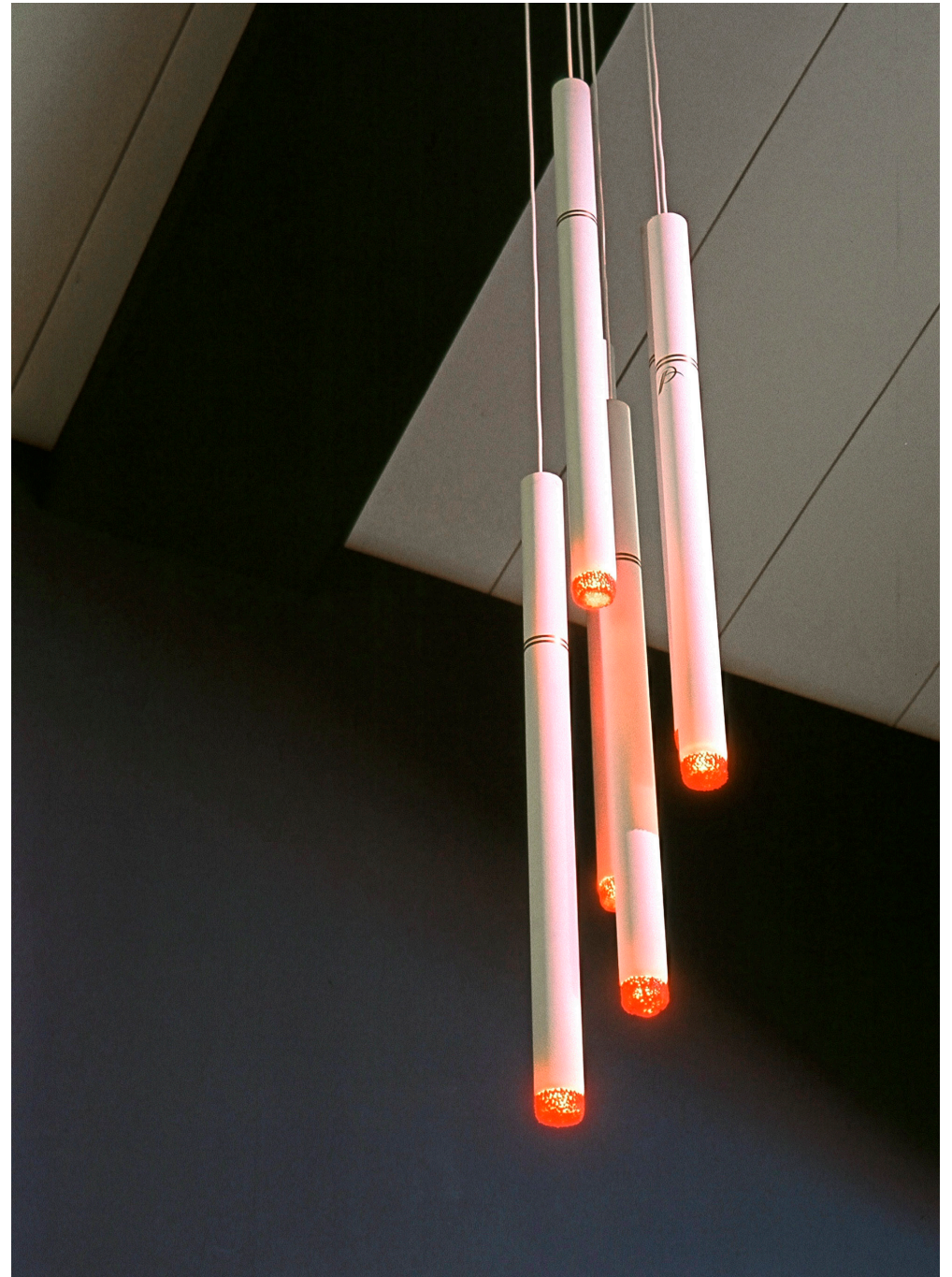


KOOL, 2000, video color, 12' 56", edition 3+1 AP.

▶ [PLAY VIDEO](#)



Come to Where the Flavour Is, exhibition view, CCA, Glasgow - 2005



Prestige, glass, led, 1m x diam 6 cm each



Marlboro Boxes, 2004, silkscreen, plywood, paint, 30 x 45 x 25 cm, edition 10+2 AP

Балканти н

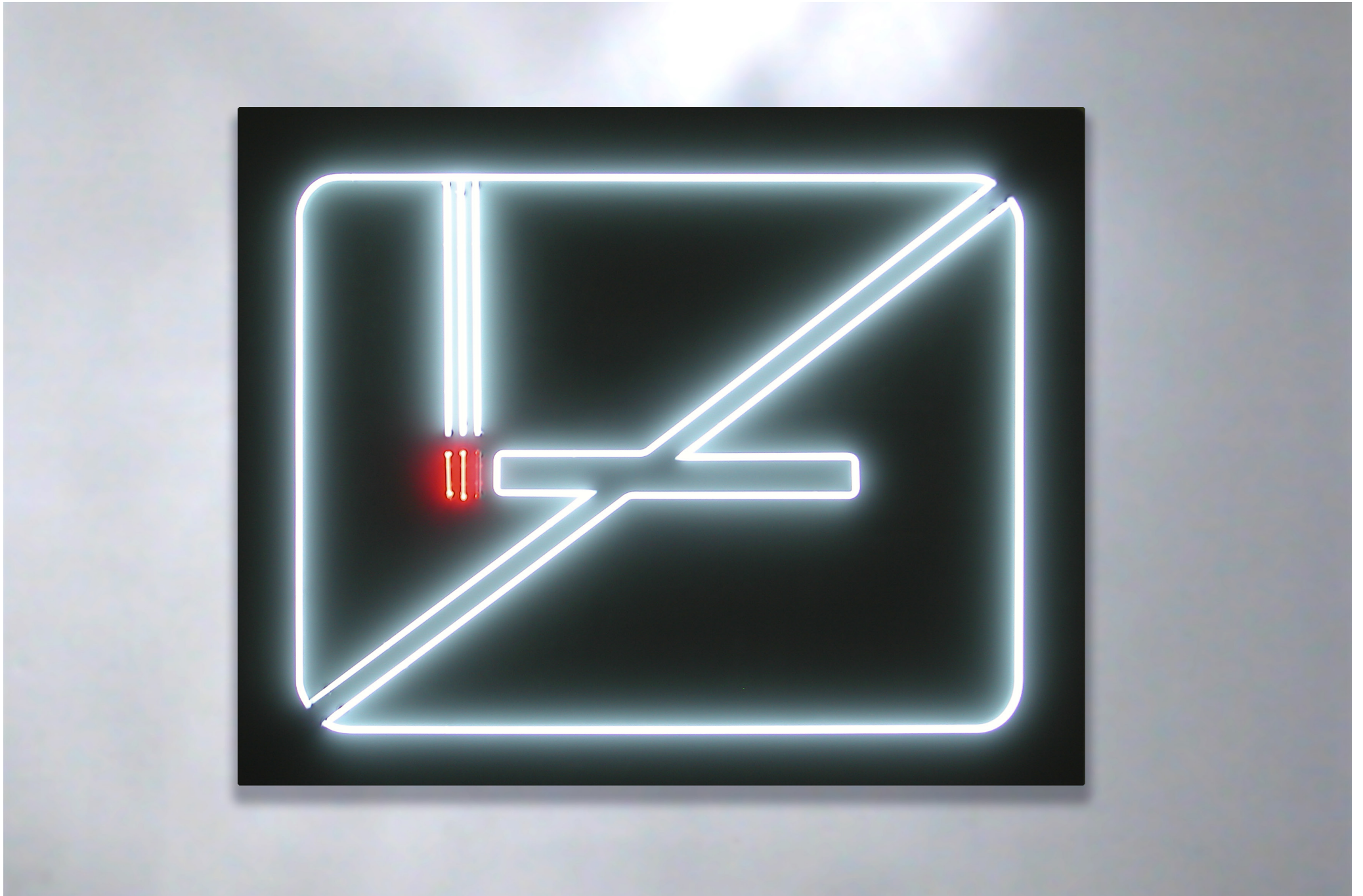


Balkanton, 2004, neon, light box, 15 x 100 cm, edition 3+1 AP

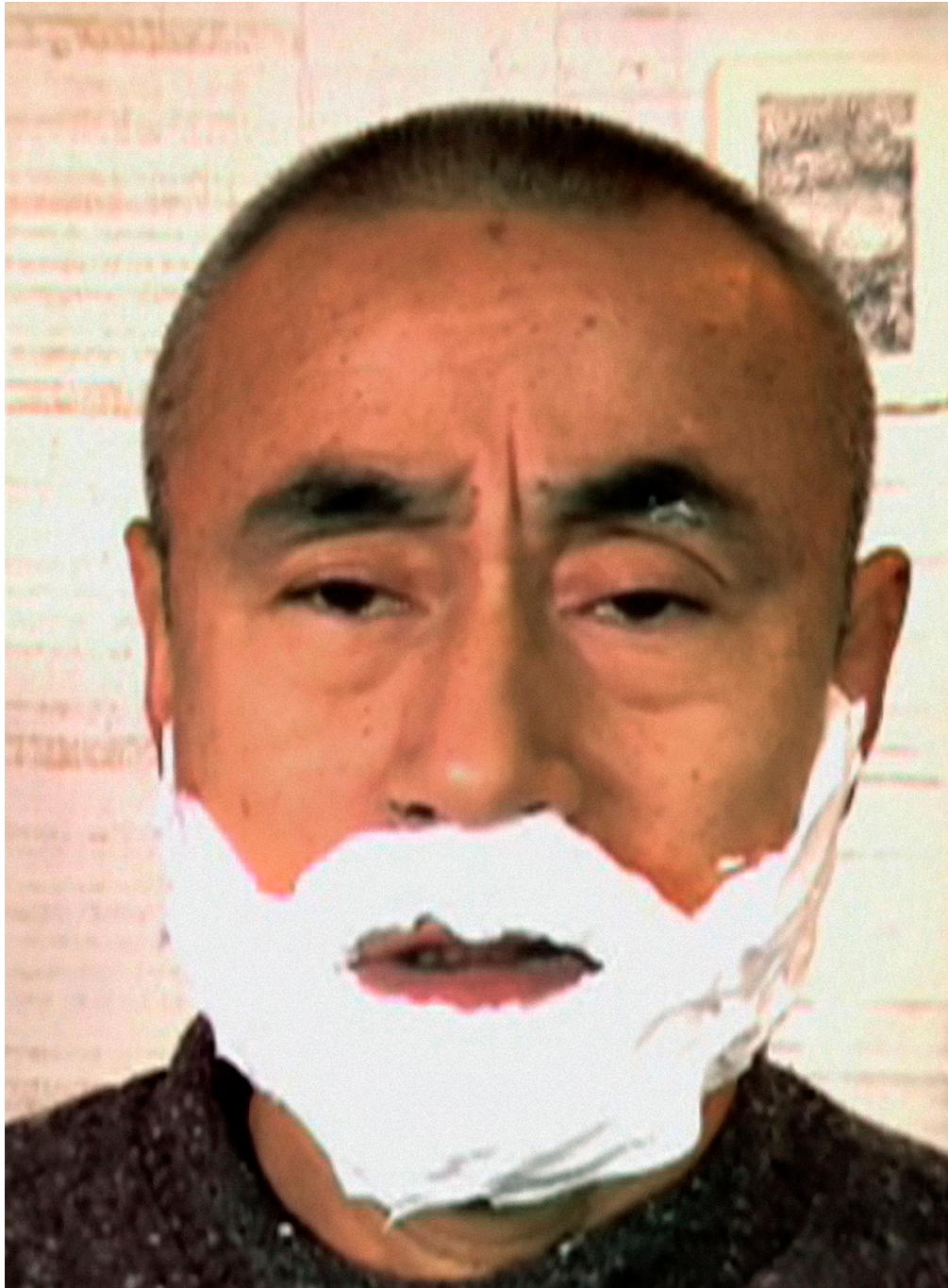


The Screensaver / The Hard Disk / The Disk, 2003, video, color, sound, 16'30", edition 3+1 AP

▶ [PLAY VIDEO](#)



Extra Light, 2003, neon, plexiglass, 147 x 183 x 16 cm, unique work



Pallmall, 1999, video, color, 12'07"

▶ [PLAY VIDEO](#)

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

BAD LUX

2005

Zoo Galerie

Nantes (FR)



Bad Lux

Formally, Stefan Nikolaev's work is organized around the recreation and revisiting of emblematic objects of consumer society: the exaggerated formalism of his productions, bordering in places on mannerism, addresses the shifting contours of fetishism. Around the cigarettes, the favourite object of his work which symbolizes a dying civilization and a way of life condemned by the health society, a whole production of pieces is developing which reappropriates the products deriving from the generic object: ashtrays, a box of cigarettes, lamps, etc... The objects/sculptures designed in this perspective have strong links with Pop Art (his cigarette boxes inevitably make one think of Warhol's Brillo boxes) while bringing an additional dimension, that of design and the boundary between sculpture and furniture. Where Pop Art magnifies the object of mass consumption by "revealing" it while preserving its outlines, Stefan Nikolaev reactivates its formal bases to develop a more or less effective functionality. In his latest exhibitions (as in Glasgow this summer), the artist has tried to recreate enveloping interiors that enclose the viewer in a visual and symbolic trap. Where society tends to make it disappear from the landscape, physically but also by infiltrating guilt reflexes, Stefan Nikolaev turns the tide by recreating domestic universes where the hold of cigarettes becomes overwhelming with its over-presence. His tombstones in the shape of a package by JPS or Davidoff act as ironic and painful counterpoints to this fascination. If the cigarette is so important it is because it catalyzes the questions of prohibition, permissiveness but also of glamour and pleasure, as well as all the paradoxes of a society which persists in destroying the indices of a valuation now defended (Cf: the Marlboro cowboy, the symbol of US virility). Stefan Nikolaev's work can also be understood as a work (of mourning) on perishable mythologies, the archaeology of a very near past in the service of a growing nostalgia.

Ptrice Jolie 2005

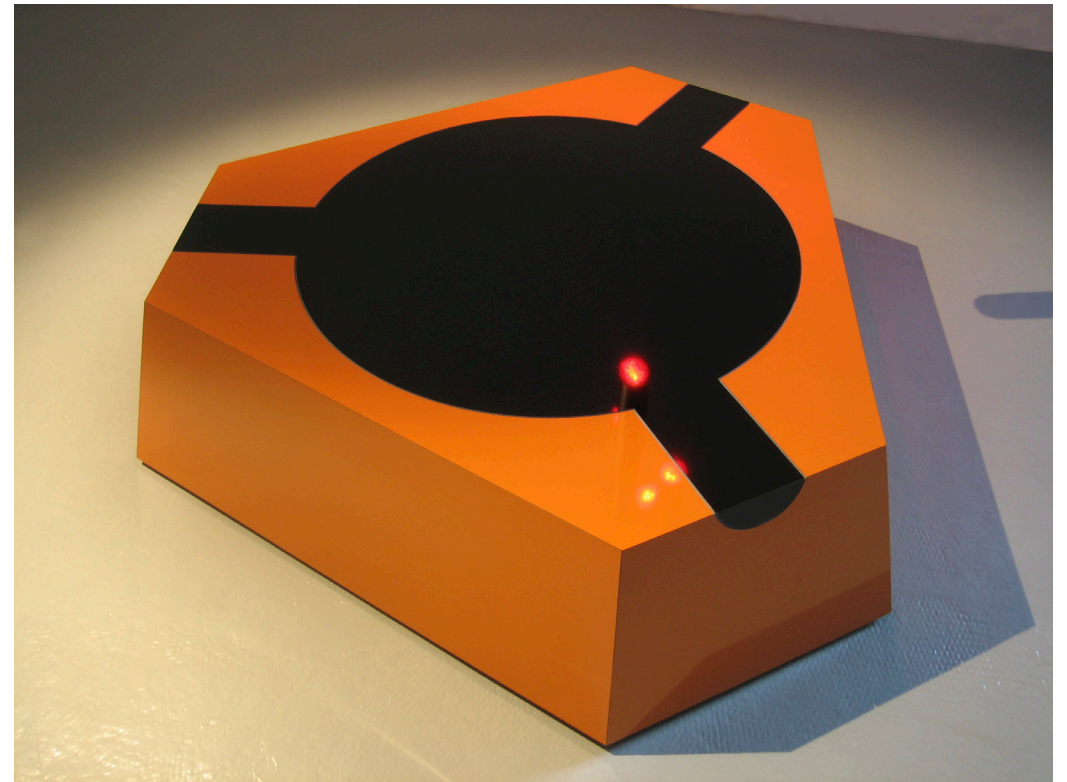
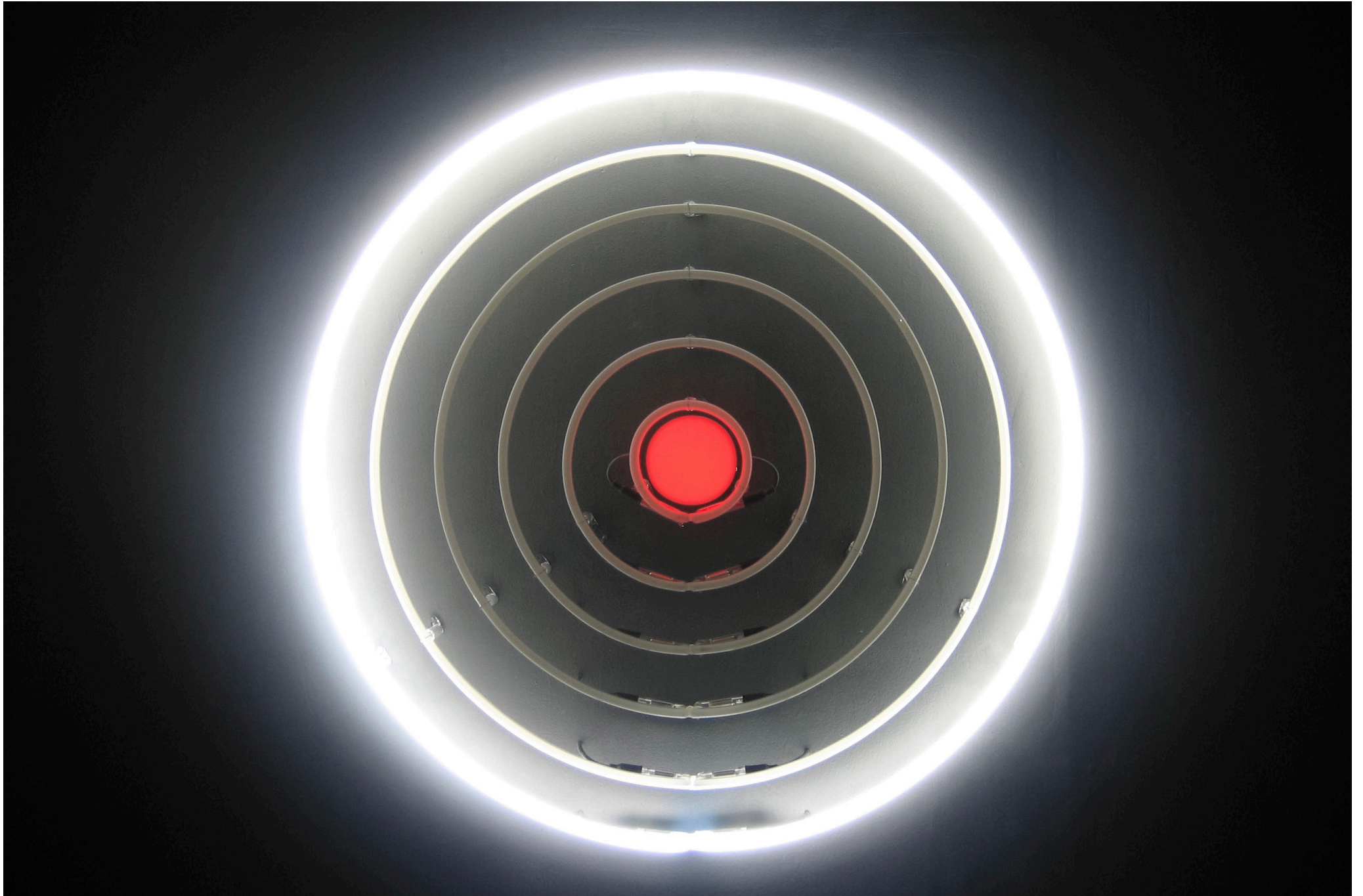


Table-Ashtray, 2005, laminated wood, 140 x 140 x 37 cm, unique work



Bad Lux, exhibition view, Zoo Galerie, Nantes - 2005



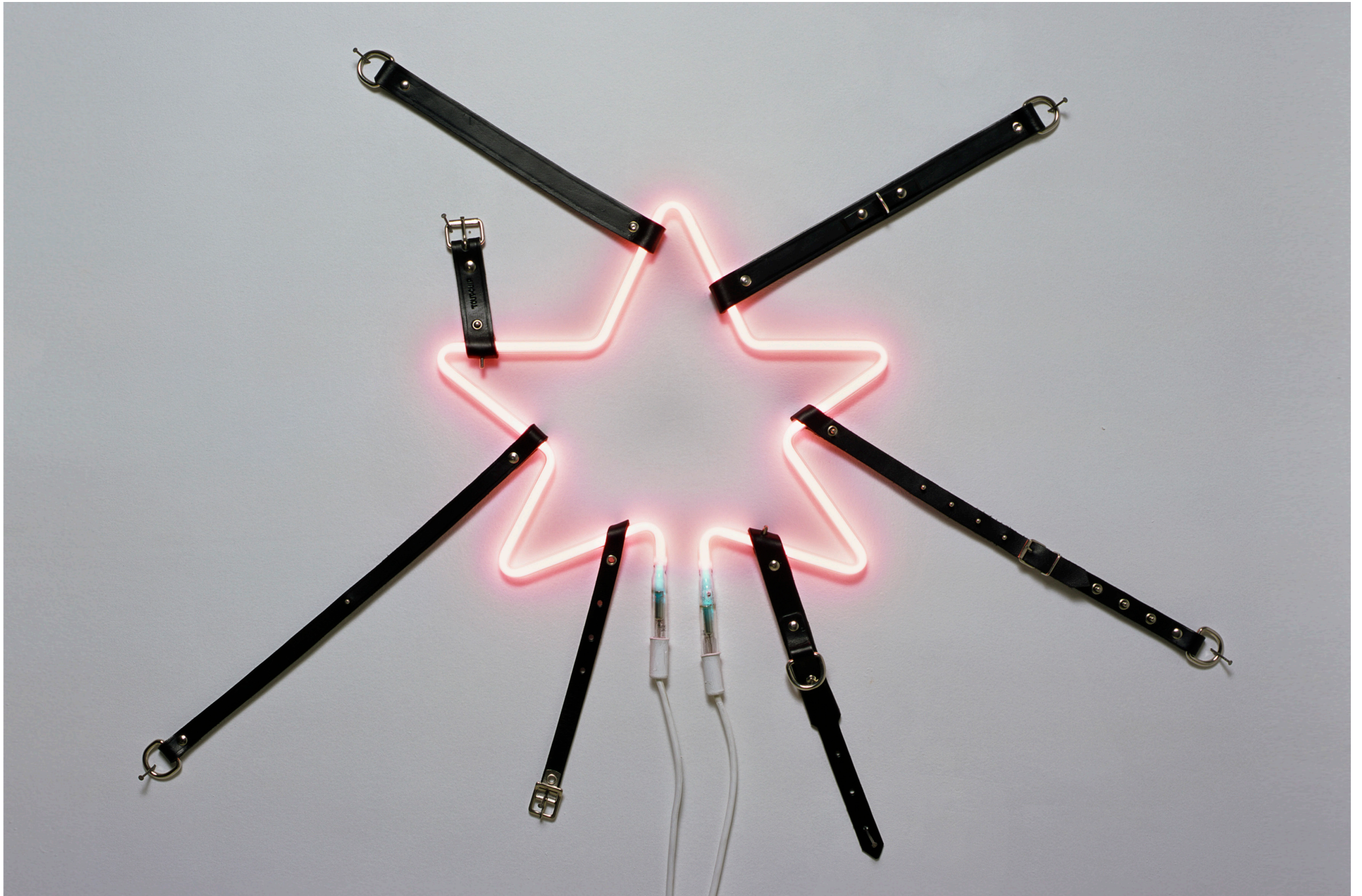
Lucky you, 2005, neon, aluminum box, electrical material, diam. 100 cm x 15cm, dimmer, edition of 3 + 1 AP



More, 2005, glass, electrical material, 120 cm x diam. 7 cm each, unique work



Poster Posterity, 2003, billboard. 173 x 120 cm



Pink and Black Star, 2002, neon, leather, metal, 82 x 75 cm, edition 3+1AP

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

MONUMENT TO MONUMENT

2003

Chur (CH)



Monument to Monument

In the installation “Monument to Monument” (2003), or the “visit” of one specific monument of the national hero Christo Botev (one of the first Bulgarian public sculptures, produced in Vienna and inaugurated in Vratsa more than 100 years ago with the money of the hero’s compatriots) to the monument of his local counterpart Benedict Fontana in the Swiss city of Chur. What’s happening is absurd and funny but also symbolic. It seems that our society is manifesting that it does not need monuments on a daily basis. In their function of memory, the monuments are unwelcome no matter what they are, questionable or not. They are complicating life in spite of the patriotic appeals or complaints. The erasure is actually easy whether through the distortion of memory or through neglect, which is naturally followed by disrespect. Given the fact that “in the turmoil of change” our memory is simply melting down (at times literally in the melting ovens, as it happened to a multitude of actual Bulgarian monuments), isn’t it logical that the monument “liberated” from memory should start on a journey? But where should it go? The propaganda of the reinstatement of the damaged identity sounds false, meaningless and speculative. However, is disappearance the only option once the memory has already left us? Stefan Nikolaev is offering another variation – monuments are of kin, they can be close to each other. Even though they are from different centuries and their heroes belong to different epochs, their time in the history of each nation is compatible – they all come from a moment of construction, of attempts to materialize memory. Even their gestures are similar regardless of what exactly they have in their hands – the drive of the gesture is the same. Of course, as it happens in every family, some heroes/monuments are luckier than others. It is a question of memory. However, in a meeting like “Monument to Monument,” there is no inequality and the closeness

prevails. These monuments obviously do get along together and lead the way in the reading, recognition and ultimately, the overlapping of history. I would say that on the Bulgarian side things are actually rather good – one of the country’s main “monument” heroes has stayed forever as a great poet.

No artist has ever performed such a simple act of demonstrating how typical could be the local heroic mythologies and how arbitrary could be the uniqueness of the symbols of national identity (with all due respect to personalities and facts!). The confusion of location and time, the confrontation in public space between “responsible” art and joke is producing a wide field of associations with the TV costume dramas, computer games, illustrated kid’s books and other accessible sources of identity construction. The attraction of Stefan Nikolaev’s project is above the familiar clichés while making the debate about the globalized world and the preservation of the local roots challenging once again...

Iara Boubnova 2003



Monument of Benedict Fontana, Chur (CH)



Monument of Christo Botev, Vratsa (BG)



Monument to Monument, 2003, Unmounting, Vratsa



Monument to Monument, 2003, Unmounting, Vratsa



Monument to Monument, 2003, installation, Chur



Monument to Monument, 2003, installation, Chur



Monument to Monument, installation view, Chur - 2003

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

RUNNING WITH THE KING (performance)

1992

Winchester Art Gallery

Winchester (UK)





Running with the King, performance, Winchester Art Gallery, Winchester, UK - 1992



Running with the King, performance, Winchester Art Gallery, Winchester, UK - 1992

Stefan Nikolaev — Solo show

HLM

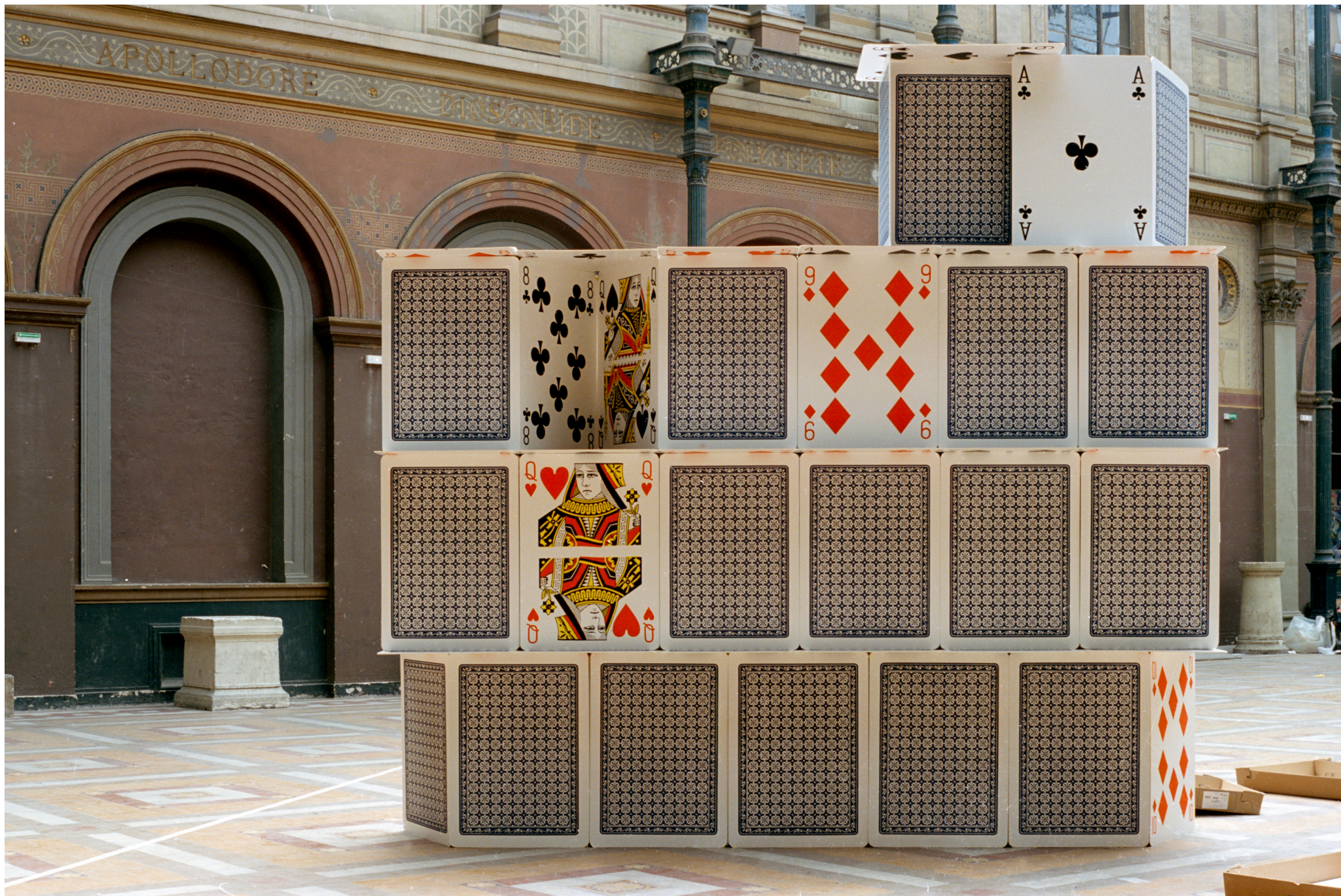
1994

l'École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts
Paris (FR)





HLM, Screen print on cadapac, 400 x 500 x 70 cm, ENSBA, Paris - 1994



HLM, Screen print on cadapac, 400 x 500 x 70 cm, ENSBA, Paris - 1994



HLM, Screen print on cadapac, 400 x 500 x 70 cm, ENSBA, Paris - 1994

STEFAN NIKOLAEV

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Selected goup shows

Stefan Nikolaev — Group show

OH LES BEAUX JOURS (HAPPY DAYS)

2020

Michel Rein

Paris (FR)





Oh les beaux jours (Happy Days), exhibition view, Michel Rein - 2020



Candelabra #5024, 2018
painted aluminium RAL5024, electric bulbs, Diam. 75 cm H. 120 cm,
unique work

Candélabre, 2010
painted aluminium, electric bulbs, Diam. 75 cm H. 120 cm, edition 8+4 AP



Stefan Nikolaev — Group show

25 YEARS AND 5 THEMES LATER, ICA-SOFIA RETROSPECTIVE

2020

National Gallery / The Palace

Sofia (BG)





25 years and 5 themes later, Ica-Sofia retrospective, exhibition view, National Gallery / The Palace, Sofia - 2020



25 years and 5 themes later, Ica-Sofia retrospective, exhibition view, National Gallery / The Palace, Sofia - 2020

▶ [PLAY VIDEO](#)

Stefan Nikolaev — Group show

SMOKE. TOBACCO STORIES

2019

SKLAD

Plovdiv (BG)





Smoke. Tobacco stories, exhibition view, SKLAD, Plovdiv - 2019



Sickkiss, 2006, 35-mm film, colour, sound, 6'25", edition 3+2 AP.

► [PLAY VIDEO](#)

Stefan Nikolaev — Group show

POTEMKIN PALACE

A selection of artists who have been nominees or winners
of the Prix Fondation d'entreprise Ricard
2017
National Gallery / The Palace
Sofia (BG)



Under Deconstruction, 2017

Reactivation of the presented in 2002 at Cetinje Biennale action. The installation's name embodies a play of words (originally "Under Reconstruction" where a DE prefix replaces the RE in the new version "Under Deconstruction"). The worker helmets placed throughout the hall are a throwback to the various helmets having crossed the Balkans over the years: Nazi, Soviet, Bleu ones...and in present days the worker's helmets, which represents the quickly changing regional context and landscape.

Emile Ouromov 2017





Under Deconstruction, 2017, exhibition view, Potemkin Palace, National Gallery / The Palace, Sofia

Stefan Nikolaev — Group show

N MINUTES VIDEO ART FESTIVAL
2011
Shanghai (CHN)



Minouk, le poisson peintre

The Golden Fish in the water tank keeps on swimming and spreading colored pigment in the water until the saturating red color becomes monochrome and hides her entirely. The work of Stefan Nikolaev is a hypnotically captivating aesthetic sight where there is something for everyone – from the philosophical simplicity of minimalist painting to the ironical tricks of Fluxus as well as a distant echo from the debate on the nature of creativity and all of that blended by the media of the video.

Iara Boubnova 2007





Minouk, le poisson peintre, 1994/2003, video, color, 17'35'', edition 3+1 AP.

▶ [PLAY VIDEO](#)

Stefan Nikolaev — Group show

A PLACE YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN BEFORE

2007

Bulgarian Pavilion, 52° Biennale di Venezia
Venezia (IT)





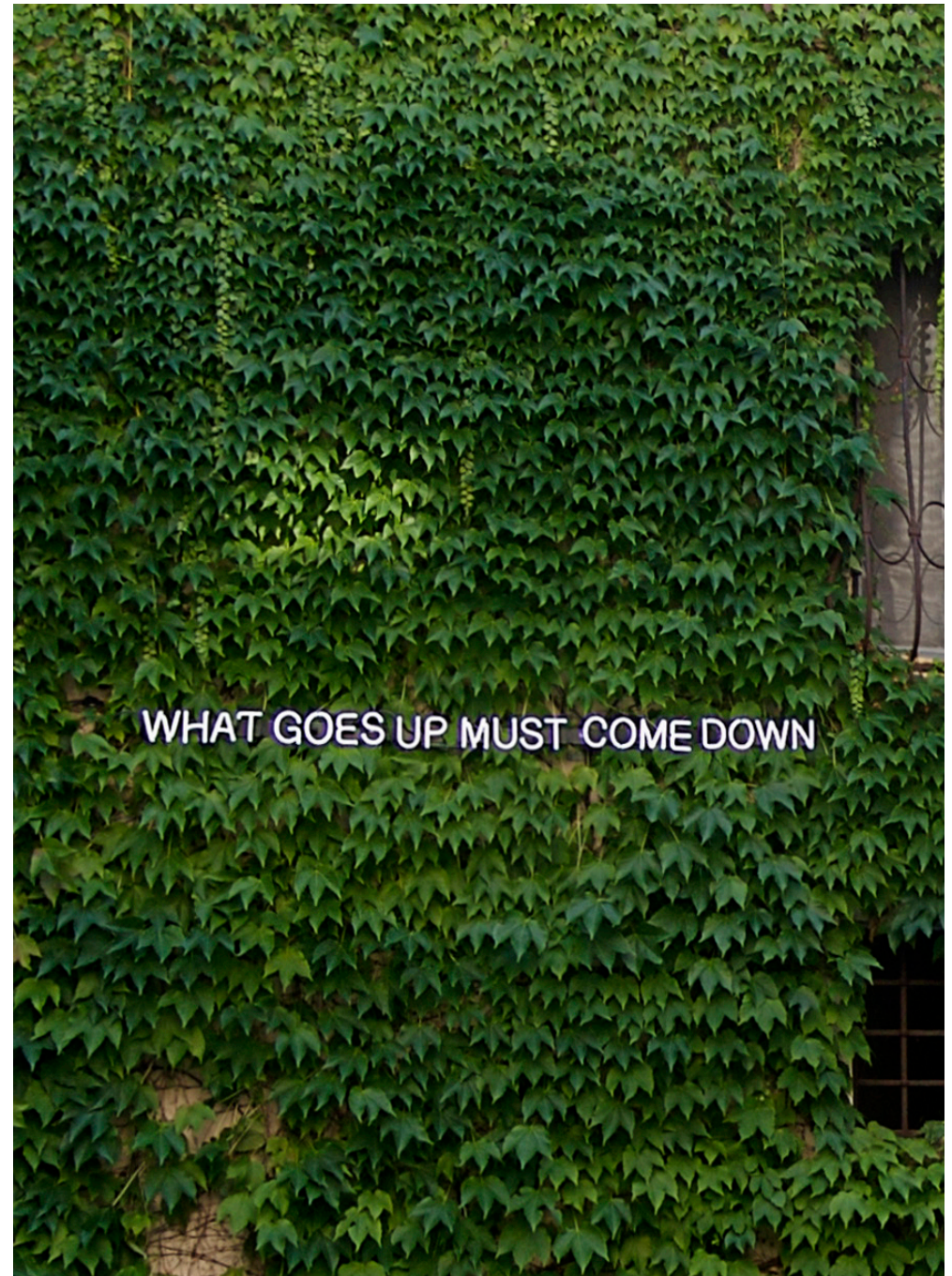
What Goes Up Must Come Down, exhibition view Bulgarian Pavilion, Palazzo Zorzi, 52° Biennale di Venezia - 2007

What Goes Up Must Come Down

For Stefan Nikolaev the act and fact of smoking has become an immensely fertile field for investigating visual metaphors and conceptual associations. Limiting the means and concentrating the language of his visual thinking, Stefan Nikolaev's contribution to the Bulgarian pavilion in the 52nd Venice Biennial in 2007 is a monumental installation in which the artist's mode of reductive thinking and contrasting opposites reaches a climax. Positioned in the courtyard of Palazzo Zorzi in central Venice, the composition included in its background, over the ivy covered walls, a textual neon sign. Providing the title of the work, it reads "What goes up must come down" (2007). Once again it is a reminder of the artist's proficiency with words and titles – his are most often than not transformed advertisement slogans (or sounding like ones) or lyrics from popular tunes; almost always they represent an ironical attitude to life and death camouflaged with humour, wit, and a sense for the punch line.

The main item in this composition is an imposing (4.40 meters high) and impressively positioned bronze replica of a Dupont cigarette lighter. Its cap is up and the lighter is ignited with a gas generated flame which is continually burning (in these biennial circumstances, within the opening hours of the pavilion). It references the eternal flame that burns in memorial monuments dedicated to war heroes and soldiers, known or unknown, who have fallen for a just cause. It is interesting to note that in spite of the simple, quotidian cigarette lighter shape of the "monument", the whole composition reads and feels indeed like a true memorial to an unknown cause; in an act of upgrade the lighter has become a monument. It also brings on associations with works by Claes Oldenburg; but unlike Pop-art in Nikolaev's work the existential aspect is on the foreground. However, it does not make the work less funny or communicative and finally – optimistic.

Iara Boubnova 2009



What Goes Up Must Come Down, 2007, neon, 230 x 10 cm



What Goes Up Must Come Down, 2007, gas generated flame, 440 x 230 x 230 cm



What Goes Up Must Come Down, 2007 (detail)

Stefan Nikolaev — Group show

RECONSTRUCTION

2002

4th Cetinje Biennial
Cetinje (MNE)



Under Reconstruction, 2002, Cetinje

“...Stefan Nikolaev is not an artist known for too much attention given to history. His interest is rather in the possibility to shuffle history for the sake of today – as a process of renewal, as a process of moving along, as a process of reconstruction – as the title of his action at the 4th Cetinje Biennial in Montenegro (2002) specifies. The action titled “Under Reconstruction” (2002) involved the production of thousands of yellow hard hats (helmets for construction workers) with the inscription “Under Reconstruction” stenciled above the visor. These helmets were distributed by hand by the artist to the visitors at the opening of the Biennial (and during the course of the biennial) titled “Reconstruction”. The real-life action of handing out objects that were in fact very useful for that particular period in the life of Montenegro, transformed the whole art event – from a metaphorical conglomeration of art works talking to the man on the streets in a language of their own, into a none-metaphorical gesture of intervention in the actual process of reconstruction of a country that had just gotten out of the period when ex-Yugoslavia was falling apart in wars and tragedy...”

Stefan Nikolaev: best before (and after) 1970
Iara Boubnova 2013





Under Reconstruction, phase 1, exhibition view, Michel Rein, Paris - 2002



Under Reconstruction, distribution of 5000 branded helmets, 4th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje - 2002



Under Reconstruction, distribution of 5000 branded helmets, 4th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje - 2002



Under Reconstruction, distribution of 5000 branded helmets, 4th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje - 2002



Under Reconstruction, distribution of 5000 branded helmets, 4th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje - 2002



Under Reconstruction, 4th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje - 2002

STEFAN NIKOLAEV

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Biography

Born in 1970, Sofia, Bulgaria
Lives and works in Paris & Sofia

EDUCATION

- 1989–94** École supérieure nationale des Beaux-Arts de Paris
1992 Winchester School of Art, Winchester University
2002 UNESCO Prize for the Art, 4th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje, Montenegro

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2020** *I dream I work I dream work*, Michel Rein, Brussels, Belgium
2019 *Be Yourself No Matter What They Say*, Sariev, Plovdiv Bulgaria
2018 *Rien ne va plus*, Michel Rein, Paris
Sculpture Project, Art Brussels, Tours & Taxi | Michel Rein Brussels, Belgium,
FIAC Projects | Michel Rein, Paris, Paris (FR)
2017 *I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line*, Sariev Contemporary, Plovdiv
2016 *Bronze, sweat and tears*, Michel Rein, Brussels, Belgium
2015 *Business, Model, Sculpture*, SARIEV Contemporary, Plovdiv, Bulgaria
2013 *Half-Life*, SARIEV Contemporary, Plovdiv, Bulgaria
(cur. Emile Ouroumov)
If things are not as you wish, wish them as they are, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris
2010 *Holy Spirit Rain Down*, Les Églises, contemporary art center, Chelles, France
I hate America and America hates me, Galerie Traversée, Munich, Germany
2009 *NEW WORKS OLD DREAMS*, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris, France
2007 *Prestige*, ARC Projects, Sofia, Bulgaria
Minouk, le poisson peintre, (1994–2005), The Crouch(klek)-Art Basement Project,
Sofia, Bulgaria
2006 *Powerful Tips*, Centre de Création Contemporaine, Tours, France
Sickkiss, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris
More, Galerie Traversée, München, Germany
2005 *Bad Lux*, Zoo Galerie, Nantes, France
Come to Where the Flavour Is, CCA, Glasgow, Scotland
2004 *My Room*, Centre de Création Contemporaine, Tours, France
Balkanton, Gallery ATA, Sofia, Bulgaria (cur. Hou Hanru)
2003 *Frontalunterricht*, Espace Paul Ricard, Paris (with Robert Stadler)
One for the Money Two for the Show, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris
2002 *Perfect Day*, Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, Ireland
Under Reconstruction, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris
Ket Muvesz - Ket Kurator / Two Artists - Two Curators

- Budapest, VIII. Brody Sandor u. 15. fszt. 6. Hungary
2001 *A Studio Remix Bravo Party*, Gallery By Night, Budapest, Hungary
2000 VTO Gallery, London, England
Zwemmer Art, London, England
1998 *Next Stop*, Kunstmuseum Thun, Thun, Switzerland
(cur. Claire Schneider)
1997 Musée des Cartes. Inauguration du nouveau Musée français de la carte à jouer,
Issy-les-Moulineaux, France
1994 *Running with the King*, Winchester Art Gallery, Winchester, England
1990 *Phone your friend*, Galerie Artemide, Paris

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2020** *Glass, gas and electricity*, Sariev, Plovdiv Bulgaria
25 years and 5 themes later, Ica-Sofia retrospective, National Gallery / The
Palace, Sofia, Bulgaria
Openning K11 MUSEA, Victoria Dosckside, Hong Kong
Oh les beaux jours (Happy Days), Michel Rein, Paris, France
Toutes les lignes droites sont courbes (cur. Yolande De Bondtridder), Villa
Carpentier, Ronse-Renaix, Belgium
2019 *Open Art Files: Notes and footnotes*, Kapana gallery, Plovdiv, organized and
initiated by Open Arts Foundation (cur. Vera Mlechevska)*
Smoke. Tobacco stories, SKLAD, Plovdiv (cur. Vessella Nozharova)
Pas de printemps pour Marnie, GDM, Paris
2018 *THE GIFT*, ICA Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria
Parcours Saint-Germain, Paris, France
On a clear day you can see forever, Galerie - Goethe-Institut Bulgarien, Sofia,
Bulgaria (cur. Carolina Valentina Lio)
Present, Musée & Jardins Van Buuren, Uccle, Belgium (cur. Michel Van Dyck)
Sculpture now, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria (cur. Vessella Nozharova)
2017 *A Show without a title but in the holiday spirit*, ICA Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria
Toyphilia and toy phobia, ICA Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria
2016 *Transformation*, works from The K11 Kollektion at CoBo, Hong Kong.
2015 *Remember Me*, Galerie Michel Rein, Brussels, Belgium
SUMMERTIME LOVE 2, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris
LUX, Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai
(cur. Michel Nuridsany)
GROUP SHOW, Sariev Contemporary, Plovdiv, Bulgaria
2014 *Beyond The Grid*, Galerie Michel Rein, Brussels, Belgium
LUX, Le Fresnoy, Tourcoing, France (cur. Michel Nuridsany)

	<i>Know Thyself</i> , Institut of Contemporary Art – Sofia, Sofia, Bulgaria (Cur. Iara Boubnova)		52° Biennale di Venezia, Bulgarian Pavilion, Italy (cur. Vessela Nozharova)
	<i>Mais avant de mourir, j'aimerais savoir qui vous êtes</i> , Cortex Athletico, Bordeaux, France		Sélest'Art, 17 ^e biennale d'art contemporain, Sélestat (cur. Philippe Piguet)
2013	<i>Dress up</i> , ICA Gallery, Sofia	2006	<i>Sublimes Objets/Sublime Objects/Objective Sublime</i> , Collections sans frontières VI, (cur. Mihnea Mircan), Muzeul National de Arta Contemporanea, Bucarest, Romania
	<i>Si l'art de la parure m'était conté</i> , Château du Rivau, France		<i>Important Announcement</i> , Sofia Art Gallery, Bulgaria (cur. Maria Vassileva & Daniela Radeva)
	<i>Walk on the Wild Side</i> , GDM, Paris		<i>Verstehst du das?</i> Neue-Medien-Kunst aus Südosteuropa, Ausstellungshalle Zeitgenössische Kunst Münster, Germany (cur. Necmi Sönmez)
2012	<i>Talkie Walkie</i> , Galerie Michel Rein, Paris		<i>Vidéothèque mobile</i> , special programmation of Le Plateau, Espace Landowski, Boulogne-Billancourt, France
	<i>Suddenly Last Year</i> , GDM Tokyo, Palais de Tokyo, Paris		<i>Transat vidéo</i> , Église du Vieux Saint-Sauveur, Caen, France (cur. Brent Klinkum)
	<i>A Possible History</i> , Sofia Art Gallery, Bulgaria (cur. Maria Vassileva)		<i>Same Same but Different</i> , Tina b., festival of contemporary art, Prague, Czech Republic (cur. Pascal Beausse)
	<i>Un Bel Été</i> , Un Cabinet d'amateur, Olivier Boissier LTD, Sofia, Bulgaria		<i>Sol System</i> , Centre d'art Passerelle, Brest (cur. Patrice Joly & Jean-Max Colard)
	GDM, <i>Pop Up Store</i> , Galerie des Galeries, Paris		Institut français de Barcelone, Barcelona, Spain
	<i>Works...</i> , Un Cabinet d'amateur, Olivier Boissier LTD, Sofia, Bulgaria	2005	<i>Joy</i> , Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg (cur. Iara Boubnova & Enrico Lunghi)
	<i>Why Duchamp</i> , Sofia Arsenal – Museum for Contemporary Art, Bulgaria (cur. Maria Vassileva)		<i>Acid Rain</i> , Galerie Michel Rein, Paris (cur. Vincent Honoré)
2011	<i>Multiples & Co</i> , Centre d'art contemporain La Villa du Parc, Annemasse, France (cur. galerie de multiples)		<i>Coalesce: the remix</i> , Redux, London, England (cur. Paul O'Neill)
	<i>Liberté/Vabadus</i> , Château d'Asnières, France (cur. Kaia Kiik)		Parker's International Art Market, Brooklyn, New York, USA
	<i>Accrochage</i> , Galerie Traversée, Munich, Germany		<i>Donumenta</i> , Regensburg, Germany
	Festival APART, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France		<i>Statement</i> , opening exhibition, Galerie Traversée, Munich, Germany
	<i>After the Flight</i> , Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia, Bulgaria (cur. Iara Boubnova)		<i>Ça ne se représentera plus</i> , École des beaux-arts de Rennes, France
	<i>Berlin-Paris</i> , Galerie Florent Tosin, Berlin, Germany	2004	<i>Prosismic</i> , Espace Paul Ricard, Paris (cur. Evelyne Jouanno)
2010	<i>Museum Souvenirs</i> , Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia, Bulgaria		<i>Self-Portrait Part 2</i> , Galerie Michel Rein, Paris
	<i>Beyond Credit</i> , Antrepo 4, Istanbul, Turkey (cur. Iara Boubnova, Maria Vassileva & Luchezar Boyadjiev)		<i>Playlist</i> , Palais de Tokyo, Paris (cur. Nicolas Bourriaud)
	<i>Breaking Walls – Building Networks</i> , Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, Greece (cur. Iara Boubnova)		<i>Tonight</i> , Studio Voltaire, London (cur. Paul O'Neill)
2009	<i>Periodic table</i> , Galerie Traversée, Munich, Germany (cur. Katalin Timar)		<i>Shifting Time/ Space</i> , Kunstraum Walcheturm, Zürich, Switzerland (cur. Patrick Huber)
	<i>From Ideology to Economy</i> . Contemporary Bulgarian Art – 20 years later (cur. Iara Boubnova),	2003	<i>Transit</i> , Chur, Switzerland (cur. Patrick Huber)
	The State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia, Moscow		<i>Smoking/No Smoking</i> , Kunsthall, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (cur. Benno Tempel)
	<i>Technics</i> , ICA Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria (cur. Iara Boubnova & Maria Vassileva)	2002	<i>Double Bind</i> , Irida Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria (cur. Iara Boubnova)
	<i>Rideaux sur Loire</i> , Candes-Saint-Martin et Montsoreau, France		4th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje, Montenegro (cur. Iara Boubnova)
2008	Le Mois de l'image: <i>L'Image fabriquée</i> , Musée des beaux-arts, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (cur. Philippe Piguet, Nguyen Xuan Khanh & Bertrand Peret)*		<i>20/20 The Show</i> , Deptford X, London, England
	<i>WATCH YOUR STEP!</i> , Sofia University St. Kliment of Ohrid, Institute of Contemporary Art, Sofia, Bulgaria (cur. Iara Boubnova)		Jacques Damase collector, Passage de Retz, Paris, France (cur. Jacques Damase)
	<i>Transfert</i> , Lyon Septembre de la Photographie, BF15, Lyon, France (cur. Iara Boubnova)		Gwangju Biennale 2002, Gwangju, South Korea (with Glassbox) (cur. Charles Esche & Hou Hanru)
	<i>MoleculART</i> , Galerie Raiko Alexiev, Sofia, Bulgaria (cur. Boris Kostadinov)	2001	<i>Domino Party</i> , Attitudes, Geneva, Switzerland
2007	<i>Promenade au Zoo</i> , Biennale de Lyon 2007 (cur. Valérie Chartrain & Saâdane Afif)		<i>Double Vie</i> , Galerie Clark, Montreal, Québec, Canada
	<i>Du Machinique et du Vivant</i> , La Réserve, Pacy-sur-Eure (cur. Régis Durand)		<i>A Timely Place, or, getting back to somewhere</i> , London Print Gallery, London, England (cur. Paul O'Neill)
	<i>Roomers</i> , Galerie Traversée, Munich, Germany	2000	<i>Oktoberfest</i> , VTO Gallery, London, England (Cur. Jari Lager)
			<i>La Nuit américaine</i> , Rappersvil, Switzerland

- High Fidelity*, White Box, Downtown Arts Festival, New York, USA (cur. Julien Fronsacq)
- A Shot in The Head*, Lisson Gallery, London, England
- Psycho Park*, École des beaux-arts de Nantes, France (Glassbox)
- 1999** *Nous nous sommes tant aimés*, Ensba, Paris (Glassbox)
- Vidéotheque auf Zeit*, Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen, Germany
- ZAC 99*, ARC Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris (with Glassbox) (cur. Stéphanie Moisdon-Tremblay)
- Côte Ouest - Global Motion*, University Art Museum, Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, USA
- Heartbreak Hotel*, Thune, Switzerland (cur. Claire Schneider)
- Anderswo 2*, Attitudes, Kaskadenkondensator, Basel, Switzerland
- Clin d'œil*, Gallery Fotohof, Salzburg, Austria (cur. Sabine Schaschl)
- Glassbau*, Soirées Nomades, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris
- 1998** *Multiples*, Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, Ireland (cur. Paul O'Neill)
- Les Folies du quotidien*, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, Germany (cur. Inke Arns)
- Vidéotheque auf Zeit*, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany
- Vidéotheque auf Zeit*, Medienhaus für Kunst & Kultur, Hanover, Germany
- In vitro e altro*, Cabinet des estampes, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, Switzerland (cur. Gianni Motti)
- Andere Sichten, In Vitro*, Kunsthau Zurich, Concept Field, Switzerland
- Ascension*, Glassbox, Paris
- Messagers du XXI^e siècle*, travelling exhibition, Chronopost, France
- 1997** *Ne me quitte pas*, Glassbox, Paris
- 1996** *Video Flash*, Gallery Hohenthal und Bergen, Cologne, Germany
- Caravan 96*, Taegu Art & Culture Hall, Taegu, South Korea
- The Richard Demarco European Art Foundation, Edinburgh, Scotland
- 1994** *Pause*, Duck Won Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea

* catalogue

STEFAN NIKOLAEV

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Bibliography

"Oh les beaux jours chez Michel Rein", Philippe Dagen, Le Monde, June 12, 2020
 "The 12 most spectacular works spotted at FIAC", Manon Garrigues VOGUE, October 17, 2019
 "Special Feature", Jeong, Song, Public art magazine, N° 152, May 2019
 "Stefan Nikolaev", The Art Newspaper Daily, June 5th, 2018
 "Fiac 2018: l'art prend l'air à Paris", Le Figaro, Béatrice de Rochebouët and Valérie Duponchelle, october 10, 2018
 "A candelabra in front of Grand Palais", Mila Manolova, 24 Hours, October 11, 2018
 "Bon cru pour Art Brussels", Le Quotidien de l'Art, April 23, 2018 - N° 1483
 "When Labyrinths become shape", Svetlana Kuiumdjieva, Culture N° 26 (2906) July 7, 2017
 "Plovdiv on the eve of the European Night of Museums", Vij, May 18, 2017
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