

kolya kotov
bruises of those who side hustle as muses
9.-25.8.2024

*Eros, limb-loosening, whirls me about again,
that bittersweet, implacable creature.*
-Sappho

In the original fragment by Sappho, Eros—literally meaning love and desire—is described as crawling on all fours, sapping all the strength from whoever encounters them. Sappho, also known as the “Tenth Muse,” joining the nine goddesses of literature, science, and arts, was one of the first Greek poets to use the lyrical subject—or lyrical I—in her writing, offering the viewpoint of a single narrator rather than writing from the vantage point of gods.

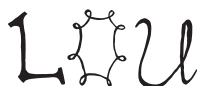
Someone—if not the author—is experiencing all of *this*

bruises of those who side hustle as muses is the last line of a poem written by the artist kolya kotov, the poem itself being a starting point that led to the process of this exhibition. Now hanging on the gallery wall, the verse is tattooed on a practice skin that mimics the feel and responsiveness of human skin—without pain or blood.

The works in the exhibition are inextricably rooted in the artist’s own life. They could be described autotheoretical: kotov’s practice is positioned at the intersections of identity, subjective embodiment, and lived experience, with an affirmative connection to theory, self- and world-making attempts, and speculative thinking.

The self-portrait printed on textile contains references to various forces that shape and reorganise ideas about gender, animality, and the expectations and boundaries attached to them. The limblike forms, moving with motors programmed with the help of an AI, bear images of the artist’s body parts manipulated beyond recognition. The works both fragment the subjects they represent and highlight the chains of meaning broken by the dehumanisation and objectification of trans and queer bodies, as well as non-human animals.

“When I write ‘the body’ I see nothing in particular. To write ‘my body’ plunges me into lived experience, particularity: I see scars, disfigurements, discolorations, damages, losses, as well as what pleases me” Adrienne Rich writes. Contrary to autobiographical works, which focus on seemingly unique experiences and sensibilities, in autotheoretical endeavors the author situates themselves deeply enmeshed with other lives, histories, and shared oppression and experiences, *through* their particularities.



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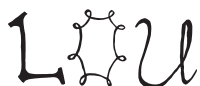
Who gets to have a body, one that is experienced with a past, subjectivity, and autonomy? A body that is pushing, twisting, swinging, pulling, bending, rotating, squatting, lunging, throwing—a cyborg, a machinebeing, an animal, a human, a technology, an Other.

Eros can exist because certain boundaries do; between glances and words and time, lastly the inevitable being “the boundary of flesh and self between you and me”, writes Anne Carson. Right in the moment of wanting to cross a boundary, it becomes an inescapable actuality.

References:

- Sappho, fragment 130. Translated by Sarah Nooter
Anne Carson: Eros the Bittersweet (1986)
Adrienne Rich: Notes towards a Politics of Location (1984)

Helsinki-based artist **kolya kotov** creates intimate and thought-provoking narratives through their work. Their artistic practice is deeply autobiographical, exploring themes of queerness and personal transformation. Working primarily with textiles, photography, and kinetic objects, they construct installations challenging conventional perceptions of reality and identity. kotov studied fashion design at the Moscow Institute of Art and Design and holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Academy of Fine Arts.



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