

HELSINKI

Yane Calovski

Kohta

Pinpointing the intentions behind “Personal Object,” Skopje-based Yane Calovski’s arresting exhibition of heterogeneous works ranging widely across materials and possible subjects, proved challenging. The difficulties became immediately evident in *Embroidery* (2020), a striking and expansive painted wood sculpture. While a large upright triangle, buttressed by a pair of rectilinear extensions, and additional floor-bound triangles formed the core of the composition, a number of small, scattered satellite elements extended its reach. Detailed exploration produced an experience with a cinematic feel, as the spatial layout appeared to expand and contract, and evolving shifts in perspective highlighted the ambiguousness of the pared-down shapes. Various associations came to

mind: the upright triangle proposed a gable, and the small pyramidal form implied a view of rooftops, whereas elements intimating shelves, steps, and benches attested to an indoor setting. Likened by some observers to an architectural folly, the sculpture was more than decoration. Viewers could sit on its bench-like components, and it also functioned, in part, as a social space.

Embroidery shared its gallery with *Closet* (2020), a mini-retrospective, ensemble work made up of about two decades’ worth of drawings and other objects from Calovski’s archive. The selected works were displayed on wall-mounted plywood panels designed to represent sliding doors. Within the arrangement, *Drawing 3:2 (Embroidery by My Mother)* (c. 1972/2020)

stood out. The design, outlined in black thread almost 50 years ago, related to the main parts of the sculpture, while several solid rectangles, each one stitched in a strong monochromatic hue, mirrored the rectangular panels of *Embroidery*’s satellite elements. *Closet* also included landscape sketches, two gessoed, but unpainted icons, examples of poetry written by Calovski’s father, a text work dedicated to Paul Thek, and an unfinished drawing of a house, among other pieces. The absorbing juxtaposition of the sculpture and this collection of objects, images, and texts provided insight into Calovski’s experience growing up in the former Yugoslavia, his education (he studied art, architecture, literature, and anthropology in the U.S.), his influences, and his thought processes.

Three additional sculptures were installed in Kohta’s studio gallery. In the playful *Toy* (c. 1980/2020), small pieces of wood were set flat on the floor against the wall, their different lengths suggesting a promenade across time. A yellow patina distinguished half of the pieces, the others appeared to be made of new wood. The two tones met at the center, a focal point reinforced by the addition of simplified architectural references—a gabled roof

and a cylindrical, smoke-stack-like form. Across the room, Calovski used cut and layered foam panels to create the semi-abstract *Bed* (2020), a reference to his mother’s tendency to make things while lying on the floor. By highlighting the parent-child relationship, the pairing of these works evoked parity, security, and affection, as well as distance, absence, and loss. *Bed* was also bracketed by the two-part, wall-mounted *Personal Object* (2017–18), which again refers to Calovski’s mother, who largely abandoned her artistic calling to raise a family. The two metal hooks, installed on perpendicular walls, called attention to suspension, nullification, and sacrifice, exhibiting a certain harshness. While flecks of the mother’s foundation cream spilled down the wall from one hook, a pierced synthetic rubber fragment, recalling a lolling tongue, dangled from the other. A potent force imbued these materialized personal traces, and the effect, like that of the other works in the exhibition, was persistent. The haunting presence behind Calovski’s objects and compositions urged the viewer to consider the residues of personal experiences and then picture them, thereby gaining a better sense of the breadth of their importance and potential meanings.

—JOHN GAYER

YANE CALOVSKI
Embroidery,
2020.
Aspen, birchwood,
and paint,
dimensions variable.

