

**Twelve, wood, dolphin, knife, bowl, mask, crystal, bones and marble-fusion.
Exploring materials**

A body has been given to me - what should I do with it,
So unified and so mine?
Osip Mandelstam

When the space of a shared myth has slammed shut, one's own cognition becomes the basis for creation and the perception of reality. However, despite the myth's having died, its body, its bones, are preserved, and they become a building material for artificial realities, akin to how some northern tribes construct their dwellings from the bones of whales. Consciousness always defends itself from reality, because, no matter how solid it may appear, it is of the nature of reality to be undependable.

Today, mythological consciousness is already not a form of overcoming ignorance (albeit imaginarily), but rather a means of painlessly submerging oneself in ignorance, the creation of one's own protected form of existence. Many means exist of defense against loss/assault/change, but it is possible to totally evade danger only when one's entire life and the space around it have been completely organized in a corresponding way.

It is necessary to place the bones of the myth inside one's flesh, make them parts of one's skeleton, to fully feel their radioactive effect. This dictates a special relationship to space and matter.

Space shrinks down to the dimensions of one's body, where terrifying processes occur. The surroundings change; at the first stage, this is an optical shift, a shift in perception, you cannot look at the sun without black glasses, it is stupid to look at reality without ripping out your eyes, without replacing them with wise reptilian eyes. The next stage is also a transformation of the body, an abolishing of the boundary between the body and reality. The gods and demons of antiquity knew this well; it is for a reason that suns and stars, animals and men, whole realities and subterranean kingdoms were born from their prostrate bodies.

In psychiatry (however banal it may be to turn to its experience), cases are described in which patients believe that their bodies contain "all the things of the world," or perhaps particular groups of objects. The body becomes "permeable" and "soft," wrapping itself around things and meanings, as a mollusk does with a pearl. These items, gleaming with a pearly light, can be extracted if one has a great desire to do so (the miracle of materialization).

It is for precisely this reason that an artist needs so agonizingly to heed the testimonials of spectators and critics, as if to listening to discussions of internal organs extracted from a body during an autopsy (the heart doesn't look bad, the lungs lack persuasive power, the trachea looks too commercial). At the same time, individual works evoke no emotion other than one of frightening rejection (what are these organs doing outside of my body?). Therefore, the task is not to remove individual organs, but to dissect the body and turn it inside out, so that all the microcosm within will appear in the external world.

For the artist, everything in the world is material. Lev Tolstoy wrote that what was important for him in a translation was not exactness, but only the sense, and so there is no point in searching for the exact texts that he translated. He comported himself toward an alien word as to formless wood, out of which he extracted the form that he needed. Anything, word, or idea, not just something physical, can be material. The artist can incorporate all of this into his own body. He gradually replaces his “fleshly” organs for something more perfect. His entire life is devoted to a search for secret connections that cannot be chosen by happenstance. The materials must possess internal correspondences. As in Russian fairy tales, a comb thrown over the left shoulder turns into a forest, or a handkerchief into a lake. It is obvious that a comb cannot change into a lake, or a handkerchief into a forest. Resemblance is one of the most important laws of myth.

This path is a dangerous one. The symbolic body expands, the simple principles of connections cease to operate, and ever-new ones need to be found. At some point, the links thin down to an extremely fine web.

My favorite form of perceiving information is as a maze, with paths that endlessly duplicate each other and sudden dead-ends. Let us consider this exhibition to be such a maze, made of bones, wood, crystals, cloth, snakeskin, smoke, and meteoric iron. Quotes have been torn from classic Russian literature and placed on the walls to show the way, and dolphins with eyes like liquid marble reside in the dead-ends. Sometimes, even I do not understand the mechanism by which this complex construction functions, or why precisely this tangled, unclear, glittering form is for me an ideal, maximally realistic reconstruction of the universe.

Evgeny Antufiev