

Paris Internationale

Jura Shust

10.15—10.20.24

Jura Shust (b. 1983, Maladzyechna, Belarus) lives and works in Berlin. Shust is an artist who researches the relationship between traditional rituals and the escapism enabled by modern tools, in the ways ancient mythological beliefs can integrate with contemporary technology. His work focuses on the connection between the human psyche and the natural world. Based on scientific research, Shust's practice merges various forms to construct mental landscapes defined by ethnoreligious beliefs and biopolitics.

Neophyte III: On the Eve of the Shortest Night appeals to the Slavic summer solstice celebration, Kupala Night, an eve known for its magical properties. According to myth, on Kupala Night, animals, trees, and herbs acquire the gift of speech. Fire and water are endowed with the properties of purification and regeneration. An improvised community performs a circular procession at the geopolitical border using the technology of a rite. Traversing fire and water and syncing with conifer resin— the ancient quintessence of vitality —this community acts as a molecular structure or a neural network trying to understand itself through its environment.

Leaving an Annual Growth at the Top II illustrates the shift from the archaic to the synthetic by featuring a spruce trunk from the oldest European forest, Białowieża, covering the border between Poland and Belarus. The trunk is encapsulated in resin and locked into the metal slot, referring to both structures of care and exploitation. The ancient tradition of ritualistic branch cutting is rooted in the connection between ancestors and descendants, where receivers can read the message encoded in a living tree. Inspired by ancient Slavic tree worship practices, which relate to the role of conifers in the funereal cult, the sculpture refers to a sacred grove that ancient Slavs would see as a temple to connect to the cosmological nature of the universe while recalling modern eco-reserves.

The Neural Seedlings series of panels are phytomorphic reliefs machine-cut from spruce wood, filled with soil, and encased in synthetic resin. Using the metaphor of bio-neurological connection, the series embodies the fossilized imprints of AI-generated coniferous seedlings. The idea of a disembodied spirit as an AI aligns with an ancient tradition of communing with animated nature observed in various nature-centric religions. Recent advances in AI-powered sensation make communication with non-human species more plausible than ever. This promises a new state of nature-technology symbiosis that challenges an anthropocentric worldview while marking a new state of surveillance.

Sincerely,

Management