

Augustas Serapinas

Physical Culture

06.06 – 06.09.26

Augustas Serapinas (b. 1990, Vilnius, Lithuania) is an artist working at the cross-section of sculpture, architecture and participatory installation. His practice is invested in recomposing public spaces in order to foreground and question the assumptions that shape them. Researching specifically each site his work appears in, he uncovers hidden dynamics of social hierarchy, economy and memory that dictate how institutions function, how people interact, who they pay attention to and which objects are passed unacknowledged.

Physical Culture is the artist's first institutional solo show in England, presenting existing work with new elements developed in Nottingham. Spanning two gallery spaces connected by a running track, the exhibition becomes a functional gym, where

conventional weights have been replaced by jesmonite sculpture casts. First developed in 2012, the gym installation is inspired by Serapinas' experience as a student at the National M. K. Čiurlionis School of Art in Vilnius, where art education follows classical traditions rooted in the canons of Western art history and formal arts education.

Revisiting the art school's archives, Serapinas has reconstructed copies of his own student work developed in line with his traditional university curriculum, tracing back to Ancient Greece. Featured on gym machines are casts such as portraits of his classmates, an earthworm, and an alien, as well as plaster models once used for drawing classes. Also included are replicas of Michelangelo's *David* (16th century) and the ear and eye of *Apollo Belvedere* (2nd century), long considered as exemplary sculptures of Classical Antiquity.

Situated along the running track are 10 hurdles incorporating replicas of Nottingham's Waverley Heads; sculptural heads of art historical figures that decorate the facade of the Waverley Building built to house Nottingham School of Art in 1865. The replicas feature notable artists from the 16th to 18th centuries including Raphael, Benvenuto Cellini, and William Hogarth. They posit an example of Nottingham's own art education histories as being set within the school's architectural frontage. These canonical figures raise the question of what and who were excluded from the institutionalised canon; including the staff and students resisting dominant narratives, organising collectively, and challenging the notions of 'the Old Master' to redefine the role of artistic practice outside of 'the History of Great Men'.

Mounting the sculptural casts on metal gym machine frames, Serapinas transforms the structure of a conventional art gallery and challenges its context, inviting the audience into a hybrid space of activity –

performance space; drawing studio; and operational gym.

Serapinas draws parallels between the rigorous routines of training the mind in traditional art school and those of sculpting the body in the gym, “Bodies are shaped not only by exercise but also by the ways we learn to look at them. Beauty has never been a fixed ideal - it shifts with time, culture, and context.”

Physical Culture offers a structure in which the audience is encouraged to reread and challenge Western art history through embodied engagement, investigate the dominant theoretical and physical methodologies within arts education, and question the broader collective cultural memory that often structures Western societies.

The exhibition will be regularly activated by a variety of performative and participatory mixed ability workout sessions, organised with Nottingham based personal

trainers and community groups, as well as student-led life drawing classes organised with Nottingham Trent University BA Fine Art students.

RELATED EVENTS

WALKTHROUGHS

Wed 17 Jun, 12pm

Welcome Walkthrough

Explore the exhibition with Sarogini Reddiar and our team followed by a creative workshop in Studio 1.

Wed 8 Jul, 1pm

Curators' Walkthrough

Join Nottingham Contemporary's curators for a tour of our summer exhibitions.

Wed 22 Jul, 1pm

BSL Exhibition Tour

With Jason Redwood, BSL tour guide for the Turner Contemporary & British Museum, BSL teacher & presenter.

Wed 29 Jul, 1pm

with Marta Marsicka, curator, researcher, and art historian engaging with East-Central European identity, migration, care, and the politics of representation in post-Brexit Britain.

Wed 2 Sep, 1pm

With July Styles, fitness and wellbeing coaching specialist. A trauma informed women's coaching specialist, July is a certified Strength and Conditioning coach who works with individuals to build strength and fitness, promote longevity and overall wellbeing.

INSTALLATION ACTIVATIONS

Watch local exercise groups activate the gym installation alongside life drawing classes run by The Square Gallery. Sign up to join a free life drawing class by visiting our website.

Fri 5 Jun, 6.30pm

With The Square Gallery and July Styles

Sat 18 Jul, 12pm

With The Square Gallery and Dominik Ozga

Sat 15 Aug, 12pm

With The Square Gallery and Dominik Ozga

Guided 1:1 Work Out Sessions organised by July Styles

Sign up to join a free public work out session by visiting our website.

Wed 24 Jun, 12 Aug & 19 Aug, 12pm

12.30 Talks

12.30pm every Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun, starting Tue 16 Jun

Join one of our friendly Gallery Assistants for a short exploration of one of our current exhibitions. For more details visit our website.

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the generous support of The Augustas Serapinas

Exhibition Circle: Ilma Nausedaite, Lithuanian Council for Culture, Lithuanian Culture Institute, APALAZZOGALLERY and Emalin, London.

The Nottingham Contemporary Commissioning Circle: Nissreen Darawish, Gabriela Galcerán, Il Posto, Rafik&Najoua, Hamza Serafi and Mercedes Vilardel.

Waverley Heads casting by Dr. Richard Arm and Andreea Pîslaru.

Waverley Heads loan courtesy of Nottingham Trent University Art Collection.

We would like to extend our deepest thanks to Tom Godfrey, NTU The Square Gallery, Jayni Patel, Rita Parmar, Dr. Paul Jones, Dr. Emily Strange, students and staff at Nottingham Trent University, Marta Marsicka, July Styles, Jason Redwood, Dominik Ozga, and Sarogini Reddiar. And finally, a very special thanks to the entire team at Nottingham Contemporary.

Exhibition graphics by Waste Studio.

Nottingham Contemporary is a registered charity and dependent on the generosity of our visitors, partners and supporters.

If you would like to use any alternative forms of interpretation, we have a range of accessible versions on our Access Wall beside Reception or alongside the wall text in the exhibition.

Next up in Autumn 2026: Julia Isídrez and Sarah Cunningham

For more information about the exhibition, related events and learning programmes, visit nottinghamcontemporary.org or scan here:

