

## STEFAN NIKOLAEV

Born 1970

### About the Artist:

Stefan Nikolaev was born in Bulgaria and lives and works in Paris and Sofia. He began his studies at the Fine Arts High School in his native city of Sofia (1983-1988), followed by a course at the Paris School of Fine Arts (1989-1994) and Winchester School of Art in England (1992). There have been numerous solo shows of his work, including “I Walk a Labyrinth Which is a Straight Line”, Sariev Contemporary, Plovdiv (2017); “Bronze, sweat and tears”, Michel Rein, Brussels (2016); “Business, Model, Sculpture”, Sariev Contemporary, Plovdiv (2015); “If Things Are Not As You Wish, Wish Them As They Are”, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris (2013); “Half-Life”, Sariev Contemporary, Plovdiv (2013); “Holy Spirit Rain Down”, Les Eglises contemporary art center, Chelles, France (2010). His work has also been shown in a large number of group shows in France, Belgium, Bulgaria, etc. He has taken part in the Lyon Biennial (2007) and presented Bulgaria in the Venice Biennial (2007, together with Ivan Moudov and Pravdoliub Ivanov), as well as the biennials at Gwangju, Korea and Cetinje, Montenegro (2004). His work has also been shown at various art fairs: ArtBasel, FIAC, The Armory Show, ARCO. For his work for the 4th Cetinje Biennial, Stefan Nikolaev was awarded the UNESCO art prize.

“Stefan Nikolaev’s body of work is quite obviously centered on the multiple transformations and crossovers between what we know about objects from everyday life and what the artist is making us reconsider when thinking about the new form and vision he invests in them. Under the visual surface of his works there is an on-going narrative about the complex relations that the artist has with life and death, time and space, consumerism and basic necessities of life.

...

The typical for Stefan Nikolaev design-related handling of form and ideas could be described as design with a twist—there is too much to read in his works, too much to associate and think about when in their presence rather than simply consider them in straight functional sense. “

Iara Boubnova

**STEFAN NIKOLAEV**

**1. *CANDELABRE*, 2010**

Painted aluminum, light bulbs

Diam. 70 cm, ht. 120 cm

**Edition:** edition 8+4AP

**Ownership history:** The Artist and Sarieva Gallery



**STEFAN NIKOLAEV, *CANDELABRE*, 2010**

**About the work:**

“Although the Bulgarian artist has spent much of the past two decades living in Paris, the east-west axis has been very apparent within his work, especially recently...Over the past ten years, Nikolaev has formed a dialogue with a team of fabricators in Bulgaria, working closely with this group of artisans in producing sculptures from his designs, preparing his work for exportation, primarily to the old west. As a latter-day incarnation of the ready-made, there is a withdrawal of the notion of artistic value as a stable form of individual expression embodied in material practice, with the resultant work manifesting itself as a rejection of the mimetic capacity of the artist to reflect social life through his own hand.”

Paul O'Neill, Bristol, August 2011

“- There’s possibly an ironical side to Candelabra, the bottle dryer with light bulbs? Through that object, Duchamp also rejected the countless bottles and the glass that are so ubiquitous in analytical Cubist painting. Do you have an ironical relationship with art history? In any event, the object conjures up a remix of Duchamp plus Felix Gonzales-Torres.

- In fact there is this unlikely mix of Torres and Duchamp. I really like the work of both those artists, who both produced rather little and at times very simple things. It’s possible to imagine an exhibition of Duchamp and Torres, that wouldn’t shock me. There’s a little dash of irony, but I think we always have respect for great artists. Duchamp himself certainly had respect for Leonardo da Vinci; L.H.O.O.Q. once and for all gives life back to the Mona Lisa in modern art. The appropriation reinforces the aura of the initial work. I don’t think I’m doing quite the same as Leonardo, but it’s a bit like this process of appropriation. Incidentally, I’d like to underline the fact that what is involved is not readymades— the candelabras are reproduced in aluminium and epoxy. In the end of the day they’re sculptures made with the means of sculpture, which lend a tremendously aesthetically effect to a very serious work; they are pushed into something that differs from the Duchampian readymades— in this concrete case it is definitely a question of a more emotional piece. “

“Half-Life”

Stefan Nikolaev in conversation with Emile Ouroumov

All texts from the catalogue **Stefan Nikolaev. One for the money, two for the show.**

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