



**Accompanying Programme:**

Guided tour with the curator and the artist:

Wednesday, 12. 2. 2020, at 5 pm

Artist and curator talk:

Wednesday, 18. 3. 2020, at 6 pm



**Exhibition Colophon:**

Tomaž Furlan, Breakfast on a Morning Train II  
29. 1.–29. 3. 2020

Ivan Grohar Gallery  
Škofja Loka Museum  
[www.loski-muzej.si](http://www.loski-muzej.si)

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Tomaž Furlan

*Breakfast on a Morning Train II*

Ivan Grohar Gallery  
29. 1.–29. 3. 2020

Exhibition Curator: Barbara Sterle Vurnik



Tomaž Furlan, intermedia artist, sculptor and restorer, has made a name for himself on the Slovenian and international art scene as an author who deals with the current state in contemporary society in a witty and humorous way. He incorporates the experience of classical sculpture into his works and interweaves these into various intermedia and conceptual projects. The exhibition *Breakfast on a Morning Train II* represents his latest project of the same title, which was created in 2019 and was first presented at the Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana in its first edition. It is now being upgraded in its second edition at the Ivan Grohar Gallery. The exhibition has been conceived by the artist specifically for the space and has also been adapted to the Škofja Loka arena, from which he hails himself – a place that co-shaped him during the time that he still lived and worked here, into the artist that we know today.

Ever since the 1990s, Furlan's work reached into the field of sculpture and the art object, but also into the field of video, performance, ambient art and site-specific installation. His artistic exploration illuminates various subjects and layers of social dynamics to which he is also personally connected. He is particularly interested in the everyday life of the individual and the concept of work and the worker. In doing so, he stems from his own experience of taking on various worker's roles – from physical labour in construction, stonemasonry, restoration, the work of a technician, to artistic creation. In this context, he deals with the various behavioural patterns of man, especially those we all know well and those that talk about the individual being trapped in a daily routine of performing countless, often never completed and meaningless tasks. He focuses primarily on human movement and the role of the body as man's fundamental tool in the work process. In his practice, Furlan raises the question of automation, robotisation, commenting on various banal situations in which man is becoming more and more like a machine, thus ironising the state of society. In this sense, one of the artist's most characteristic past projects is certainly the ongoing *Wear* project, which began during his years of study (2005) and still continues.

If in his past projects, Furlan used mostly simple, also used materials, made garments of sorts or mechanical extensions of the human body out of them, then wore them and used them in studio performances to stage the mechanical movement of the man-machine that carries out various non/sense tasks, filmed them and combined them into video objects – then all of this has been upgraded by the artist in his latest project. Namely, *Breakfast on a Morning Train II* expands the relationship of man's movement and the work process within an individual's daily life to the field of migration as a specific social phenomenon, where the said relationship acquires new connotations. The author raises questions about the border, the journey and man's transition from the intimate to the public space

and vice versa. In addition, he here highlights classical sculptural materials such as stone, sand, tufa, which were not the focus of his past art projects. Of course, he is not really interested in the material in terms of the symbolic, substantive sense this time either. He sees it as an element that has its own story, history, position in society, as well as status and political power – all this, that one does not normally notice or is unaware of. The material represents the concept to him, through which he can convey his narrative. He usually takes it out of some context and puts it in a new situation that can completely reverse the perception of the material, the object that he makes out of it and the subject which comes as a result. This time, there are also not so many readymades, as the artist chooses to create most of the works from primary materials in the classical sculptural manner, which, however, he later combines into intermedia entities.

*Breakfast on a Morning Train II* is developed in the exhibition through four works arranged as stations in a dramaturgical arc, where the tension of the narrative gradually rises to the futuristic pinnacle of the story. The set-up is conceived interactively and moves the viewer through Furlan's uniform story that tells of the different levels of human movement and travel across space and time. In the first, brighter space, the narrative begins in our banal everyday reality. *Barrow* refers to a traditional cart of simple production that once made it possible to move loads. It provided mobility to its user and could be made by anyone. Here, Furlan has indulged in his own typical game of ironising our conventional worldview and the many things that seem obvious at first glance. He has in such a way turned a simple artisanal product into a masterful object as he has unexpectedly used tufa, which requires a great amount of sculpting knowledge. The latter is at the same time heavy and fragile, which in itself prevents the basic function of the product, that is, movement. The sense of absurdity is further heightened by the built-in cooling fan.

The game of meanings, contradictions and meaninglessness (after "laboriously" bearing the load) continues on the *Bench*, the one on which one usually sits during walks or on the way to work. It is a "snapshot" of typical park benches in public spaces found in parks or squares. It acts as if it were cut off and moved to a gallery. It draws associations with the readymade, which it is not. In fact, he made it himself, in the classical sculpture manner with top-notch knowledge of the sculpting metier. It is intended for only one user to sit down and rest. The view from it is again unexpected because there is a screen before it, which, however, is even more meaningless, since it is made of stone material and allows "only" one static image to be gazed at. Here, Furlan wanted to establish a moment of man's loneliness in the mayhem of the urban rhythm of the city.

The last stop happens in the second part of the gallery, where we enter a darkened space. This is where the *Manual for Homemade Spaceship* is set up, in which Furlan toys with the idea of space travel. He creates a prototype of a kind of spacecraft, accompanied by on-screen instructions on how to make such a craft from everyday materials. The artist again plays with the importance of the material and its status in society. Unlike his previous works, he deliberately uses cheap material and found objects in his vessel, substituting the high technology that is usual for such vehicles. This again produces an absurd turn-around since such a vessel does not actually possess any chance of working. As with *Barrow* and *Bench*, here too, Furlan explores the role and status of the material in the context of movement. He is interested in whether something mobile can be made out of a certain material, how to do it and why to do it in the first place. He uses it in an attempt to simplify the big stories, ironise moments of banality and elevate under-rated elements. He does so in order to question the value system of society.

All three stations are interconnected by the piece *Border is not Working*, which – as the title itself suggests – illustrates that a border exists only in the minds of individuals, that it is an artificial construct. Furlan has created an installation on the floor that acts as a pavement. He made it out of broken stones and shells, which he had found on the Croatian coast. By collecting them in a foreign country and transporting them illegally across the border, and then making tiles in the manner of ancient *terrazzo*, he symbolically indicated the phenomenon of migration, which has always existed, exists and will continue to exist in the future. No matter how sturdy or high – or even if they are just paper – borders are passable, something we actually set up for ourselves. With this piece, spread across the gallery floor, he connected all three stations to each other, offering the viewer a journey from the everyday to a potential future. The work encourages one to not only tread on the pavement but to cross it and thus intersect, "violate" the borders – becoming a migrant, who breaks down the preconceptions about borders, hence transcending stereotypical worldviews.

*Breakfast on a Morning Train II* was conceived by Furlan as a result of his past experience of taking the train from Škofja Loka to Ljubljana while studying at the Academy. As a daily migrant, he experienced the everyday routine of travelling, the monotonous rhythm of the moving train, changing stations and looking out of the windows, which have left discernible traces on his creative work and worldview. If a kind of mechanical man, reminiscent of the characters from Chaplin's *Modern Times* and the historical avant-garde that dispelled the relationship between man and machine, was in the forefront in Furlan's early work, then *Breakfast on a Morning Train II* is a story of the "new

mobile man" of the present day. Its title, which alludes to something romantic tied to a comfortable, idle, (petty) bourgeois trip, is therefore deliberately misleading since the exhibition discloses a kind of romanticism precisely to the contrary. Particularly in the artist's insistence on the simple reality of the working man, the interesting banal moments of everyday life. Therefore, in this other, often overlooked, repressed, yet ever so present and intriguing aspect of our present-day society, fuelled by hyper technology and the digital world.

Barbara Sterle Vurnik