



## 'WHEN THE GOLDEN SUN IS SINKING', INDRE SERPYTYTE

Rugby Art Gallery & Museum, 7 May – 22 June 2019

Indre Serpytyte (b. 1983 in Palanga, Lithuania) is an artist living and working in London, UK. Serpytyte is concerned with the impact of conflict and war on history and perception. She works with photography, sculpture and installation.

GRAIN Projects commissioned Serpytyte to collaborate on research and make new work. This new project will be exhibited in partnership with Rugby Art Gallery & Museum.

It is estimated that throughout both World Wars, the Ministry of Munitions employed around a million female munitions workers in thousands of arms factories. These women played a crucial role in Britain's strategy of "total war". especially after Britain's shell crisis in 1915 when there was a severe

shortage of artillery shells on the front line. The women worked extremely long hours as production was focused on a 24-hour shift pattern with only one day off a week.

Using archive material from Midlands collections as well as from the Imperial War Museum Serpytyte has examined the relationship between widely publicised propaganda images of the female factory workforce, as part of a political project of moral boosting, and the images, accounts and ephemera that tell the largely hidden and forgotten story of the so-called 'munitionettes.' In her work she will look at the history of female work and life in the context of war, violence and political strategy as well as the home as a place of waiting, loss and a repository for memory and objects. Domestic objects on shelves and mantelpieces provided keep sakes as well as reminders of lives and death. Most unsettling are the vases made from spent ammunition shells, many of which were made by women in munitions factories, decorated by soldiers and sent home for ornamentation.

In her work Serpytyte will use these vases as a way to explore the complex relationship between domesticity, ornament, labour, class, gender, war and trauma. The work will explore the objects and materials of war.

### **Artist Talk**

21st May | 6pm | The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum | £3 / £5 |

For more information [www.grainphotographyhub.org.uk](http://www.grainphotographyhub.org.uk)

Image credit: *'When the Golden Sun is Sinking (2019.04)'* (c) Indre Serpytyte

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Indre Serpytyte**

Working primarily with photography, but also employing archives, sculpture, film, audio and choreography, the work of the Lithuanian artist Indrė Šerpytytė (born 1983) explores issues of history and trauma. Much of her work has addressed the recent past of Lithuania, in particular the years of the Second World War, the Cold War, the decades of Soviet control and the so-called 'war after the war'. Yet despite dealing with very specific historical circumstances Šerpytytė achieves a remarkable openness in the work. Her themes are universal: the ways in which the past affects the present, the ways in which the political influences the personal, the importance of memory. Šerpytytė states: 'In my work I treat photography as an emotional expression rather than a documentation process. Through my images I attempt to reconstruct my inherited memory in the attempt to make the past more tangible. By rebuilding the inherited history I try to reclaim it.'

The series *A State of Silence* (2006) creates an ambiguous archive of relics, combining personal possessions with seeming remnants of bureaucracy. Denying a coherent narrative, the work questions official accounts of the untimely death of the artist's father, a government official, in an apparent car accident.

The series *1944-1991* (2009-) depicts buildings in Lithuania – many now in domestic use - that were used by the Soviet secret services, including the KGB. Accessing declassified government records Šerpytytė developed an archive of the buildings and then visited the sites and photographed them. She then commissioned a traditional Lithuanian woodcarver to make models of the buildings. Finally, Šerpytytė photographed the models in black and white. Her cool and austere presentation of the resulting images – removed from the original sites of trauma by several steps of mediation – opens up a rich space for contemplation. As Simon Baker has written: 'Šerpytytė's glacial photographs stand in stark contrast to the brutal and unthinking character of both the traumatic events and the unacceptable memorial failure to which they refer and, finally, represent. But rather than sealing off these sites from their unwanted associations with an absentminded history of political oppression, coercion and violence, each sequential link in the chain of the process opens

up a little more breathing space and lets in a little more light; just enough room for the flitting wing-beat of the irrational and the chance of recognition that comes with it.'

Indrė Šerpytytė was born in Lithuania in 1983. She studied at the University of Brighton and the Royal College of Art, London. Serpytyte's work has been exhibited internationally. Recent solo exhibitions include Still House Group, New York (2016), the Museum of Contemporary Art, Krakow (2015), Ffotogallery, Cardiff (2013) and the Photographers Association, London (2011). Important recent group exhibitions include Ocean of Images: New Photography 2015 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015), Conflict, Time, Photography at Tate Modern and the Museum Folkwang, Essen (2014-15) and the National Gallery, Vilnius (2013). Serpytyte is represented by Parafin Gallery, London.

### **About GRAIN**

GRAIN creates, facilitates and delivers ambitious, engaging and high quality arts projects which take photography as their start and/or end point. GRAIN commission, curate and exhibit new work with a broad range of partners to reach new audiences, tell important stories and create new opportunities. For more information [www.grainphotographyhub.co.uk](http://www.grainphotographyhub.co.uk)



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