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12 Dec 2024

Ivan  
Gorshkov



V—A—C

Generator  
of Happy  
Accidents

30 Mar 2025

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The exhibition *Generator of Happy Accidents* is the outcome of time spent by the artist Ivan Gorshkov in the workshops of the Vaults Centre for Artistic Production. Ivan creates total installations, “incredible realities,” based on materials: what the work is made of is the starting point, setting the emotional background of the work and “shaping the vector of its perception by the viewer,” as Gorshkov himself says. Processing of the material refines the concept. *Generator of Happy Accidents* occurred to Ivan as an apt description of how a project develops in unexpected ways, depending on the behaviour of the material and its response to the tool. In this approach, the workshop becomes a research laboratory, and the creation of a work is an experiment with unpredictable results. For Ivan, the Vaults workshops were a laboratory, where happy accidents occurred with the help of high-tech machines.

Amazement is the first reaction upon encountering Ivan Gorshkov’s phantasmagorical world. Then comes a desire to understand how this world came about. Grooves created by a machine on the complex natural shape of a tree stump fold into an intricate pattern. The pattern was clearly not created by human hand, but how exactly it was created is hard to understand. An ornament resembling the hairstyle of characters from a Japanese anime merges organically into the texture of the wood, where it has no place to be. The effect is a glitch, the breakthrough of an artificial, digital form into a natural form. The usual order is reversed: instead of a digitised version of the physical world, a digital image is transferred to a physical medium—a wooden slab. The artist uses durable material to create objects that are unstable and mobile, a metamorphosis that becomes visible to the viewer as they change their angle of view. Like classical sculpture, Gorshkov’s works have to be seen in the round, and then we grasp how the abstract becomes figurative, how a tree stump becomes a fairy-tale character. Ivan decants his own visual language by combining different textures and forms in a single object.

Gorshkov comes from an academic art background and quotes from art history, but he does so using different materials and techniques, toning down the pathos and creating works that are more emotional and human. The slabs on show at the exhibition hint at Flemish still lifes, but the food items are plastic fridge magnets. Perhaps, like Pop Art sculptor Claes Oldenburg, Gorshkov is questioning whether familiar objects become art when placed in the gallery space. The trellised, densely arranged silkscreen works evoke salon exhibitions of the past centuries, but also the apartment shows of the Soviet underground. Fragments of images, some from home archives, incorporated in the silkscreen posters, recall the performance footage of Viennese actionists.

The artist calls his method “semi-abstract expressionism.” But the illusionism and dynamism, the mix of techniques, the variety of devices and unusual subjects evokes the Baroque. Tree stumps, slabs, and silkscreens are visually united by their method of creation, which is collage and the superimposition of images. Like Baroque ensembles,

the objects create their own space and draw the viewer into it. And just as the Baroque is sometimes contrasted with the notions of harmony and beauty inherent to Classicism, Ivan's work can be understood as a subversion, an ironic play on the clichés of modern art.

The workshops at the Vaults Centre for Artistic Production host the continuous creation of new culture, from idea to exhibition. More than a place where objects are made, the Vaults are a venue for the formation and development of artistic language. Trying out the new technologies, which the Vaults offers, Ivan Gorshkov remains, as he puts it, "kindly lord of the material," but finds ways to inject even more vitality into his works. The objects that Ivan creates entice and intrigue or frighten and repel, but, most of all, they evoke an emotional response, bringing artist and viewer closer together.

### About the artist

Ivan Gorshkov (b. 1986) is an artist. He graduated from the Art Education Faculty at Voronezh State Pedagogical University and founded the Voronezh Center for Contemporary Art (2009–2018). He was a beneficiary of the grant programme for contemporary artists at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow in 2014. Accolades include Cosmospow Artist of the Year (2017), winner of the 15th Innovation State Prize for Contemporary Art in the Artist of the Year category (2020), and Kandinsky Prize short list in the New Generation category (2021). Ivan took part in the *CoLLab* programme at the Vaults Centre for Artistic Production in 2022. Selected exhibitions include: *Parcours* (START Platform for Young Art, Moscow, 2010), *Instant Bliss* (Knoll Galerie, Vienna, 2013), *The Way of King's Pie* (DiehlCUBE, Berlin, 2015), *Crème Brûlée* (New Holland, Saint Petersburg, 2018), *The Fountain of Everything* (Moscow Museum of Modern Art, 2019), and *This Is Life* (H.L.A.M. Gallery, Voronezh, 2020). Ivan lives and works in Voronezh.

### About the Vaults Centre for Artistic Production

The Vaults Centre for Artistic Production comprises eight workshops fitted out with equipment for experimenting with wood, metal, plastic, ceramics, textile, and other materials. The facilities are available for use by participants of the Centre's programmes and master classes.

My artistic practice is an immersion in total collage, combining different materials and striving to maximise the palette of techniques. The strategy is to build a “machine of circumstance.” And, of course, to reflect.

### 1–5 **Milling a circular sculpture with a KUKA robotic arm**

In 2021 and 2022, I discovered new technologies and combinations of materials. The opportunity to use the range of equipment offered at the Vaults was very helpful. Working with the KUKA robotic arm was the most demanding and ambitious project I undertook at the Vaults. I needed to figure out how to use this high-tech equipment effectively. It occurred to me that one does not have to use the arm to carve a sculpture from a solid, homogeneous mass of material, as is usually done, but that one could use it upon a form already complex. I took some large oak tree stumps and added sharply contrasting elements while partly preserving their natural shape. I achieved this by scanning the stumps with a 3D scanner and then integrating fragments resembling 3D anime into the resulting files. This provided a model for the milling work.

The device is a combination of two forms, natural and digital. The effect is a “glitch in the matrix”: the found form is visible through the natural one, like an archaeological find in the earth. It tells a story that could overturn our concept of reality. We see tangible, physically embodied objects that were previously unimaginable. It is important to me that we can distinguish different milling “fractions” on the surface of the sculptures: fractional and shallow, with large grooves, and almost perfectly polished. This creates a sense of the object’s mobility and changeability.

### 6–10 **CNC relief milling**

Here I was working with slabs—cuts of wood of sufficient thickness—so an initial form that was flat instead of volumetric. The slabs (these were ash) preserve the noble texture of the wood: all the fibres, knots, and cracks are visible. Misshapen things, human figures, and faces break through or emerge from the texture. The result was unthinkable but nonetheless real images that came from random pictures, which had been modified and incorporated into the milling model.

### 11–15 **MDF milling with auto enamelling and addition of plastic elements**

The processing technique for MDF slabs is partly dictated by the material itself: MDF does not have the natural texture I wanted to preserve when working with ash wood. So I took it as given that

the main thing when working with MDF slabs would be complex colouring and special effects: gradients, mixed colours, “chameleons.” I added some readymades—imitation foods made from moulded plastic. From a distance, they look like contrasting spots of colour—it’s unclear what they are, so they arouse interest and draw you closer. This is a kind of absurdist element in my project, which returns us to the question of the status of the artwork.

## 16 **Silkscreen**

The silkscreen work was a continuation of my experiments with “found images”: stickers, patches, digital printing on canvas. I created over eighty silkscreen prints, some of which are in the exhibition. Importantly, they are not print runs; they are variations from a set of pre-made stencil images, refined with pencils and felt-tip pens. I collected a series of anime-styled images, my own childhood drawings, my son’s drawings, patches of colour, and photographs of friends, transferring them onto grid stencils for silkscreen printing. Collaging the images and experimenting with colour and composition generated a universal visual language capable of depicting any situation and telling any story.

Ivan Gorshkov

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**Artist**

Ivan Gorshkov

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**Lighting**

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The exhibited works were created as part of the *Collab* and *Friends of the Vaults* programmes at the Vaults Centre for Artistic Production

**Special thanks to**Katerina Zueva, producer of the *Collab* programme (2022)**Film producer, director,  
camera operator, editor**

Ilya Komarov

**Video production  
supervisor**

Sofya Korotaeva