

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS



Augustas Serapinas, *Housewarming* (detail), 2016
wood, stove, safe, rope, cast metal, 100 x 90 x 95".

LONDON

Augustas Serapinas
EMALIN

Unit 4, Huntingdon Estate, Bethnal Green
Road Shoreditch
September 28 - October 29

Over the past twenty years, gentrification has been slowly but surely consuming East London. Local communities are often forced to relocate due to increasing rent. Augustas Serapinas's current exhibition highlights this problem. The artist uses the story of a former locksmith evicted from the very site that the gallery temporarily occupies, before it is converted into high-end apartments.

Serapinas creates a kind of *mise en abyme*, a smaller replica of the building—with identical windows and door. Peering inside, you discover a functioning sauna, complete with hot coals, towels, hanging chairs, and more. The work's title, *Housewarming*, 2016, is multilayered, obviously alluding to the sweltering steam room itself and to this venue's celebratory inaugural exhibition, as well as to the financial pressure cooker that frequently causes low-income tenants of East London to be evicted.

For this work, the artist appropriated the locksmith's abandoned items and transformed them: He converted a safe into a stove, made some file drawers into a locker for personal belongings, and melted down hundreds of keys to create the sauna door's handle, in addition to its water bucket and ladle. Serapinas links past and present by exploring the social relations that art engenders—he even based all the cast metalwork designs on a neighborhood local's drawings. Some arguments suggest that politicized practices such as Serapinas's simply raise awareness of social injustices while the art world continues to sip champagne at private viewings attended by the 1 percent. But, after a while, the artist's work becomes too sultry to handle, and you want to flee the building—just don't forget your stashed valuables in the locker on the way out.

—Louisa Elderton