

SCHWARZ

CONTEMPORARY

Mindaugas Navakas – China

October 16 – November 14, 2026

We are extremely happy to announce Mindaugas Navakas' first show with the gallery in Berlin. The solo exhibition 'China' brings together six sculptures of the renowned, Vilnius-based artist and will be on view until November 14, 2026.

Mindaugas Navakas (*1952) is one of the most prominent figures in Lithuanian contemporary sculpture. His work played a significant role in transforming sculptural practice during the 1980s and the 1990s and in shaping the development of contemporary art in Lithuania. His artistic practice is distinguished by its attention to materiality, scale, and the relationship between the object and its environment. Throughout his career, Navakas has consistently explored the possibilities of sculpture by combining diverse materials, forms, and cultural contexts. Monumental forms, precise construction, and a sensitive engagement with architectural and urban environments remain defining characteristics of his work. The artist's sculptures have been exhibited extensively and internationally in public spaces, with many becoming integral elements of urban landscapes. The exhibition marks Navakas' symbolic return to Berlin: in 1998, the artist placed monumental attic outdoor sculptures such as obelisks and crater vases at the roof corners of flat buildings in Berlin-Hellersdorf and named this installation 'Reconnaissance'.

With 'China', the artist presents sculptures made of porcelain. Porcelain has become a significant constant in his recent practice, and continues his exploration of the connections between material, form, and cultural traditions. In Navakas' works, hard-paste porcelain, historically associated with Eastern ceramic traditions, refinement, and craftsmanship, is transformed into massive structures that are usually characteristic of Western industrial life and classical architecture. This tension between the origin of the material and its form becomes the central point of the exhibition, where Eastern and Western aesthetic concepts, and the cultural canons they have shaped, collide.

At the same time, there is an element of irony in Navakas' approach to the use of porcelain in everyday Western environments, questioning the alleged stability of aesthetic canons and revealing their inherent fluidity. While in Eastern tradition, the material is associated with decorative vases and luxury tableware, in the West it is

often linked to utilitarian and sterile environments. In his work, he dissolves this contrast through gilded details and decorative motifs that evoke traditional ornamentation, here appearing in the context of industrial and classical architecture. In the sculptures, the forms, symbols, and values of both traditions intertwine, revealing the continuous transformation of cultures, in which aesthetic canons lose their fixed boundaries and reveal new meanings.

Mindaugas Navakas has been actively exhibiting both in Lithuania and internationally since 1977. For many years, he was professor in the Sculpture Department at the Vilnius Academy of Arts. Among numerous international appearances, his work was presented at the inaugural Gwangju Biennale in 1995, and in 1999, he co-represented Lithuania, together with Eglė Rakauskaitė, at the 48th Venice Biennale, where Lithuania presented its first official pavilion. Navakas received the Herder Prize in 1995, the Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts in 1999, and the Baltic Assembly Prize in 2004. His works are held in the collections of major museums in Lithuania and abroad, including the Lithuanian National Museum of Art and MO Museum in Lithuania, as well as museums and collections in Finland, Latvia, the United States, and elsewhere.

The presentation of Mindaugas Navakas' solo show is part of an international exchange project between SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY and (AV17) Gallery in Vilnius, both established in 2011. (AV17) Gallery is the only Lithuanian gallery exclusively exhibiting contemporary objects, sculptures, and installations.

The project is generously supported by the Vilnius City Municipality.

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