# ENG

## GABRIEL BULETSA

*Glory Hole in the Iron Curtain*, 2020

rusted metal sheet, oil paint, plywood

Gabriel Buletsa’s *Glory Hole in the Iron Curtain* leaves everything and nothing to the imagination. As the title suggests, the work speaks of the artist’s experience of the Soviet period, reimagining its restrictions as a space of erotic fantasy. The eroticism is contingent on our thwarted curiosity, as the very nature of the aperture is to conceal who, or what, is on which side of this visually blind but sensually condensed encounter. We are reduced to a biological apparatus for coupling, where our only existential question is that of sexual position. Is it we who must extend ourselves into the unknown pleasures of the other side? Or do we wait for the anonymous other to penetrate us? Although we can speculate about the actual existence of such a diversion, the artist’s fantasy is not only about a concrete past. The work rather asks us to think about space divided and the flight of human ingenuity whose passage can never be repressed.

Buletsa’s work inserts itself into our present with the reminder that even the most successful political border in human history failed to fully contain the minds of those it encircled. The reconstruction of this rude divide exposes the artist’s orientation towards liminal space. As a younger man, dual Ukrainian and Hungarian identity put Buletsa at the western edges of both the USSR and the Soviet bloc, while in the post-Soviet context he straddles the frontier of the EU. Here, seeming fixity is also flux, reminding us that in the summer of 1989, even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the first puncture in the structural corrosion of the Iron Curtain was the flight of East German holiday goers across the Hungarian border into Austria. Buletsa knows his history, and chooses to master it, rather than be mastered by it. Perhaps this is no simple barrier—could it be that this hole collapses space and time? Can this device help us choose at last if we really want to be fucked by our past, or take matters into our own hands, grunting out the breathy exclamation, “fuck... the... past!”