

Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion
at the 55th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia

Commissioners/Curators
Sarita Vujković and Irfan Hošić



la Biennale di Venezia

55. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni nazionali

Mladen Miljanović

THE GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

June 1 - November 24, 2013
at Palazzo Malipiero
3198 San Marco, Venice

Inaguration of the pavilion is on Thursday, May 30, 2013 at 7:30 pm

PRESS RELEASE

The artist Mladen Miljanovic, representing Bosnia and Herzegovina at the 55th International Art Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia, will present a solo exhibition of new works titled “The Garden of Delights” at Palazzo Malipiero in Venice from June 1 to November 24, 2013.

It is after a ten-year intermission that Bosnia-Herzegovina will participate again in the International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale. Its attendance in the 55th biennial event in Venice this year bears the heavy load of a new beginning, one that is expected to serve as a precedent for its national participation in the future. The initial impetus came from the Museum of Contemporary Art of the Republic of Srpska, which proposed a model intended to overcome the long-standing impasse at the state level. The participation model proposed by the initiating institution has been approved by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in agreement with the relevant ministries of the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Political disagreements continually made it impossible for local artists and projects to exhibit in this prestigious international event, and the adopted model will hopefully allow the country to finally present its art, despite all the internal political and economic impediments it has to encounter. And its art, although practically imperceptible from outside the country, abounds in both people and events.

The Garden of Delights

In that sense, the selected project, The Garden of Delights, is a highly socially engaged work of art, which seeks to create effects from multiple historical perspectives, and with strong connotations drawing on the socio-political, ethical, economic and cultural context of the Eastern European society, which the artists come from. The project ensemble consists of three interconnected smaller ensembles, a marble triptych, a video clip and an installation, and the artist, as its creator, posits himself as an activist whose practice and production impose themselves as a model in a highly specific way, making possible engagement originating in the local community, i.e. environment.

His knowledge of the global world, up-to-the-minute and relevant, filtered through the local context, creates a new, clear artistic insight, which is a significant determinant of the entire ensemble.

The idea behind the complete project of The Garden of Delights is that of people’s unbridled desires, of personal truths underneath the collective absurdity of the contemporaneity, as perceived across Bosnia. The conceptual framework of the project is reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch’s famous Renaissance triptych The Garden of Earthly Delights (c. 1500), and it is firmly rooted in today’s physical world of common people’s various experiences, as the most authentic and the most banal realities of post-transition society. Mystical and provocative even for today’s interpreters, the triptych by Hieronymus Bosch was the initial inspiration for the work of Mladen Miljanović; rather complex and materialised in a way which is, by comparison with contemporary art techniques, quite non-standard and atypical, his ensemble consists of drawings engraved on marble slabs, a stonework tradition commonly used in tombstone decoration in the Balkans.

For this work he said:

- The work emulates manual tombstone engraving, which I did before enrolling in the Academy of Arts.- The installation contains more than 100 tombstone motifs found and collected in the Central Balkans.
- People mainly choose these motifs as illustrations of their indulgences and because they wish to see them immortalised by means of the real.
- The emergence of this manner of representation coincided with the rise of the kitsch and turbo-folk culture in the 1980’s and 1990’s.
- The scenery as shown in the painting The Garden of Earthly Delights by the Renaissance painter Hieronymus Bosch provided the foundation for this work.
- The work is the outcome of a five-hundred-year-long debate and revises the notion of pleasure and its different contemporary representations as a stereotypical and pessimist vision of society.
- The form of the image of a personal indulgence becomes an expression of the collective absurd and disharmony.
- In this case, the graveyard is an area storing an encyclopaedia of images of individual lives joined into a garden of a collective eternity.

What awaits us in the future, what our reality is and how it is represented are the major issues found in this artificial post-communist paradise, in which art, according to Boris Groys, often appears innocent, insufficiently critical or radical, following the utopian logic of inclusion rather than the realist logic of exclusion, struggle and criticism. Spatial and temporal relations, their homogeneity and heterogeneity, are but formal aspects constituting the social particularities against which real life happens.

The inherent idea of afterlife representation as Miljanović sees it is conveyed using the ready-made aesthetics, borrowed from the mass media, the everyday and some popular aspects of life of Bosnian people. Their subversive sociological, ethnological and ritual characteristics are an image of the existent representations of a mass culture that has taken over post-transition society, reflecting the failure of its economy and privatisation, political paradoxes and intolerance, and the nontransparent nature of the new models of private ownership.

While realising his concept, Miljanović made a video to be used as an accompaniment to the exhibit, which he called *Sweet Harmony of the Absurd* and in which members of the Banja Luka Philharmonic simultaneously play their favourite pieces. The multiplicity of this melodious plurality, tinted with personal wishes, interests and lifestyles as found in society, reflects the heterogeneity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its cultural dynamics, at times synchronous and stimulating, at others crippling and disastrous to utter ruin. *Sweet Harmony of the Absurd* is an authentic representation of the ambivalent makeup of Bosnian and Herzegovinian society, marked by conflicting sentiments and attitudes. Integrated with *The Garden of Delights*, it rounds off Mladena Miljanović's peculiar artistic discourse, strongly marked by an awareness of constant affirmation, according to which human creativity is best stimulated by desire.

An extensive exhibition catalog will present reproductions of many earlier works of Mladen Miljanovic and provide artist's biography and professional texts.

Mladen Miljanović

participant/artist

Born in 1981 in Zenica. He graduated from the Academy of Art in Banja Luka. In 2007 Miljanovic receives the ZVONO price for best Bosnian young artist. Numerous international participations will follow, such as the Busan Biennial in South Korea in 2008, a show at Palazzo Forti in Verona, Italy, in 2009, the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (MUMOK) in Wien in 2010 and the 53rd Belgrade October Salon in 2011. In 2012 he was in Venice at A plus A Slovene Exhibition Centre with the solo show *Good Night - State of Body*. Solo exhibitions include: MC gallery, New York (USA), 2013, A plus A gallery, Venice (Italy), 2012, Marin gallery, Umag (Croatia), 2012, HDLU (New media gallery), Zagreb (Croatia), 2012, Antje Wachs gallery, Berlin (Germany), 2011, MUMOK, Museum Modern Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, (Austria), 2010, National Gallery of B&H - Sarajevo, (B&H), 2010, Le mur Saint Martin, Paris (France), 2010, Center in galerija P74, Ljubljana (Slovenia), 2009, Duplex gallery, Sarajevo (B&H), 2009, MOCA of RS, Banja Luka (B&H), Neue Galerie Graz, Graz (Austria), 2007, FABRIK culture – Hegenheim (France), 2007.

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Sarita Vujković

commissioner/curator

Born in Banja Luka in 1972. Holds a degree in the history of art from The Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. In 2008, she completed an interdisciplinary postgraduate course in the theory of art and media at The University of Arts in Belgrade, winning a master's degree. In 2011, she defended a doctoral dissertation entitled "Ideological, Aesthetic and Art Models in the Artworks of Bosnian and Herzegovinian Female Artists from 1945 until 2005" at The Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. Works at The Museum of Contemporary Art Republic of Srpska as a Museum Consultant in the Records and Exhibition Department. Author, curator and selector in a number of projects on contemporary art, media and gender. Author of professional and academic papers in the fields of museology, gender theory and contemporary art.

Author of the books *In the Civic Mirror: Female Identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Civic Culture 1878–1941*, MSURS, Banja Luka, 2009; and together with Bojana Pejić „*Mirostories: Contemporary female art and its post -2000 contexts*, MSURS, Banjaluka, 2012. Professor at The Faculty of Information Technology and Design Banja Luka. President of the ICOM National Committee Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Irfan Hošić

commissioner/curator

Born in Bihać in 1977. Holds a bachelor's degree from the Academy of Arts in Sarajevo and a master and doctoral degree from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, Department of History of Art. He currently teaches a group of subjects in the field of humanities at the Department of Textile Design of the Technical Faculty of Bihać University (Art History; History of Textile and Clothing; Sociology of Culture and Fashion). His research interests include contemporary art, architecture and clothing in conflict contexts, with a special focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina. Apart from academic work and research, he's author of a number of art reviews and texts published in magazines in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. From 2010 to 2012, Irfan Hošić wrote art reviews and texts for the Sarajevo weekly *DANI*, one of which won him the BIRN Award (Belgrade, Serbia). Curator and author of several curatorial projects.

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