

CONCEPT

a) NAME OF THE PROJECT : MAUSOLEUM FOR A LIVING WORLD

Participants :

Marie-Laure DESJARDINS, Curator

Iglika CHRISTOVA, Visual artist

The project "Mausoleum for a Living World" is conceived as an open-ended process exploring the historical and cultural transformations in Bulgaria in their direct relation to the universal History. It is a deliberately global scrutiny and the choice of Lenin's figure to be at the centre of the project is an expression of the intention to explore the historic recurrence embodied in one of its most devastating myths: the desire for power. Having spent the last ten years trying to understand the living world through drawing, Iglika Christova sees in the accidentally found bust of the "Father of the Revolution", dumped on a street in Sofia, an opportunity for artistic reflection on the repetition in the fate of humanity. Is it inevitable? And how, through the artistic gesture, what could have been a mausoleum for the History repeated is transformed into a space of a unique living world. Each Lenin mask is colonized by bacteria that forever remove repetition to offer the sublime beauty of the singular and the plural. It is coupled with a drawing that graphically conveys the uniqueness of these "colonizations," representing the intersection of nature and culture. Iglika Christova's work convinces us that they do not exist in isolation, but represent a living organism in expansion. The artist is moved not by the reproduction, but by the constant movement of life inherent in the microscopic universes she observes and interprets in her drawings. The aim of this artistic proposal is to make the viewer feel part of a world where the boundaries between nature and culture, animate and inanimate, are blurred. To make him wonder how images of invisible life can change life itself? What is common between the proliferation of microorganisms, the living invisible world and the life of ideology? These are the issues addressed by the artist. In response, the exhibition proposes an «artistic inquiry» and «provides evidence» around the hypothesis of intersection between biological mechanisms and the collective process of idea dissemination. The artist turns to science not for plastic exploitation, but to get closer to the essence of what we are: an organism carrying other organisms within it, a living being, at once evanescent and eternal (genes), a set of interactions held in balance by other lives and invisible manifestations.

b) LIST OF PARTICIPATING ARTISTS AND MOTIVATION OF THE SELECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

- **Iglika Christova, Visual artist**

"I have been following since 2017 Iglika Christova's research conducted at the intersection of art and science. From the drop of water to the microcosm of the tree, through blood and recent projects exploring the biological life of archives, her drawings take us towards a fictional artistic inquiry where the infinitely small is next to the infinitely large, where the singular strives towards the universal. Iglika Christova's artistic research is at the same time an academic research. Representing her country at the Venice Biennale would give the artist the opportunity to deepen her reflection in the process of convergence between culture, nature and science; to declare her country in the Anthropocene debate. Convinced of the immense power of art, Iglika Christova paints a utopia whose aim is to conclude a new contract with the living world."

Marie-Laure Desjardins

Other participants:

- **Riccardo Nilny, composer**

The sound environment accompanying Igljka Hristova's installation will be an electroacoustic musical composition.

c) LIST OF ART WORK

- List and description of works already produced.

1. ***Viral 1***, 2022, evolving work, 43 x 25 x 17 cm, plaster, organic biocomposites, agar-agar, culture of microorganisms from the environment.

A plaster cast is created from a bust of Lenin on which are placed compresses impregnated with agar-agar. In this way, a "form-process" is generated showing the development of different types of microorganisms originating from soil, vegetation and air. The image changes under their uncontrolled development in a favourable conditions. Mould and bacteria spread over the entire surface of the volume.

2. ***Viral 4***- a drawing machine with microalgae and bacteria, 2017-2023, wooden construction, mass cultivation of microalgae in a glass container, lamp, images printed on glass plates, 90 x 120 x 60 cm. composition.

The microalgae and bacteria painting machine consists of two parts: the first is designed to maintain the culture of photosensitive microalgae, and the second is used to generate a live image using cultured microalgae and bacteria originating from the environment. A small amount of water of microalgae culture is placed on a transparent plate. The latter is placed on another plate on which an image of the aforementioned found bust of Lenin is already printed in negative. The two plates of the same size (50 x 50 cm) are placed one on top of the other (in a transparent glass box) on a especially designed wooden structure so that they are constantly illuminated by a light source. Micro-algae and bacteria grow and develop directly on the transparent plate in the illuminated areas, slowly generating a "living" and constantly changing image of the ideologue.

- List and description of the works that will be specially created for the project.

3. ***Viral 2***, consists of five "forms-in-process" with projected dimensions 30 cm (vertical height) x 90 cm (horizontal width) x 50 cm (depth). Each 'form-process' is placed on a wooden black table illuminated from the inside and covered with a transparent glasscover. The combination of 3D and biotechnology, creates five identical "forms-in-process" representing only the face of the aforementioned Lenin bust. The resulting five masks will be turned into a "home for microorganisms" by applying agar-agar compresses to their entire surface. In a scientific laboratory, specific non-pathogenic microorganisms will be selected in relation to the conceptual and plastic requirements of the works. A microbiologist will realize the inoculation with bacterial culture on the five 3D masks. Although they are identical, the microorganisms growing on them will provide a different and ever-changing look to each sculpture. After the biological death of the microorganisms, the "mold-process" stabilizes in a month-long duration showing the final visual aspect of the work.

4. ***Viral 3***, a series of five drawings (ink on paper) measuring 2 m. x 1 m. Opposite each of the five aforementioned "forms-in-process" (*Viral 2*), is one of the large format drawings which interprets the observed biological transformations on the work "Viral 2".

5. ***Viral 5***, a video (7 min.) showing an animated graphic interpretation of the observed biological transformations on the work *Viral 2*.

6. *Viral 6* is an *in situ* installation of 16 printed drawings on glass plates of different sizes (from the smallest 60 x 70 cm to the largest 90 x 100 cm). The glass plates are positioned in the middle of the garden, playing with the daylight, the transparency of the material and the cast shadows.

c) **RELATION OF THE PROJECT TO THE EXHIBITION SPACE**

Entering the inner garden, the viewer is greeted by *Viral 6*, an installation of drawings on glass plates showing invisible biological processes in osmosis with the transparency of the material and the light of the outer space. At the same time, by playing with the codes of the mausoleum space (blackout and direct lighting, structures reminiscent of sarcophagi, monumental art forms - visual and musical) the project achieves an immersive effect, transforming Titian Hall into a "Mausoleum for a Living World". The walls and windows are covered with black fabric stretched over wooden sub-frames. The bust of Lenin (*Viral 1*), is placed on a black pedestal under a transparent glass cover. Five masks, representing versions of Lenin's face colonized by bacteria, are placed on five black wooden tables opposite. Each "form-process" is placed in front of a large-format drawing (2 m. x 1 m.) descending freely from the ceiling. At the bottom of the room, a film is projected with footage of microscope observations of the organisms acting on the form-process and imaginative graphic interpretations. The cycle of demonstrations of biological processes and their interpretation through drawing is closed by the work *Viral 4* - a living drawing machine with microalgae and bacteria. Near the entrance, directly on the stretched black fabric, a mental map of the project is drawn in white.