

Title: SIS project

Artists: Iskra Blagoeva and Boryana Petkova

Curator: Snejana Krasteva

Concept:

SIS is an ongoing project by artists Boryana Petkova and Iskra Blagoeva in collaboration with an evergrowing number of women. Initiated by the two artists in 2021, it grew out of a common idea in devoting time and effort in the attempt to build a new, however temporary, form of sisterhood that would connect women across generations. The point of convergence for the two artists, each of whom have an individual practice (more bodily and performative in the case of Petkova, conceptual and activist in respect to Blagoeva) is a continuing inquiry into the concept of the body as a site for repository and production of knowledge practiced by women throughout centuries.

Materializing the invisible bond that connects women across race, nationality, and age, is a line tattooed on the body of the twenty-seven participants in the project to this date. Each of them selected and invited the next one, as a gesture of friendship and complicity which often reversed the roles from a professional or personal perspective between artist and curator, mother and daughter, author and performer, friend and colleague, and so on. Marking the start of the SIS project was Petkova's initiative to "correct" the interrupted lifeline of her palm by extending it with a tattoo. This act was taken up by Iskra Blagoeva who offered to continue the tattooed line on her own body as an act of trust and sharing between the two artists. More invitations followed and in 2023, the artists gathered nineteen of the participants together (many of whom didn't know each other) with the goal of assembling their bodies into a continuous line. Without any scenography and dispensing of chronology, "the contact between these bodies was always different - sometimes the touch was gentle and the line adjusted itself, sometimes the assembly of this line required pressure, force, manipulation of the foreign body bordering on aggression" – as the artists describe it. In the process of working on the project, several videos were shot and have been presented in various venues such as: Frac Picardie in Amiens, France, ARTAIS, Sono gallery, Paris, the National Gallery and Doza Gallery in Sofia.

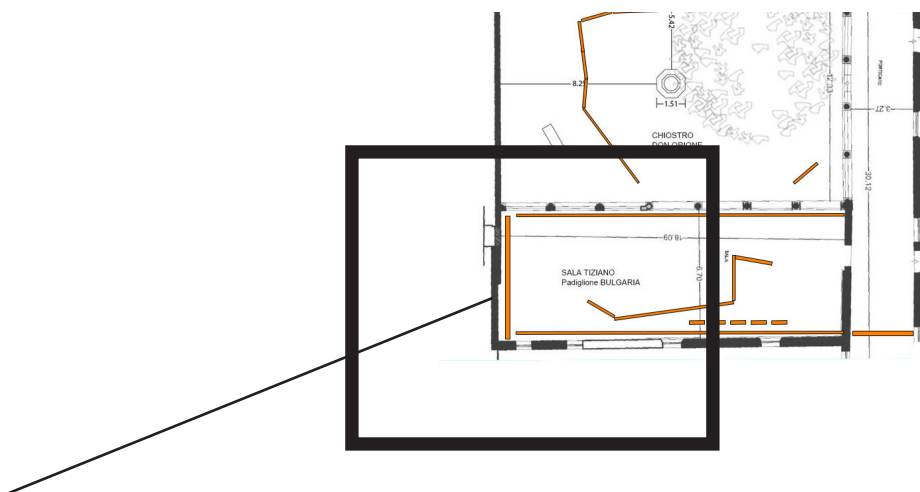
For the Bulgarian pavilion's participation at the Venice Biennale 2024, SIS project will take an ambitious shift in the impact it is meant to produce by bringing to the public the live performative element of it. Alongside a large-scale projection of the abovementioned video work, during the first five days of the opening week of the Biennale (17–22 April, 2024), ten of the female participants in the project will get together each day for five hours, assembling and dismantling the twenty-eight metal fragments (scaled up from the twenty-eight tattooed lines) produced for the exhibition as part of new performative sculptural work. The women will manipulate the elements of the line, move them, rotate them, fit them, loosen them, and physically occupy the entire space of the exhibition - both inside and outside. In this way, the line becomes "alive" through the repeated efforts of participants to connect, visualizing the powerful yet extremely fragile community-building attempt. Artist Nadezhda Oleg Lyahova will document the process, and the resulting documentation will be added to the exhibition in the form of monitors leaning against the wall. Beyond the opening week, the sculpture will be activated by the invigilators of the pavilion, who will continue each day to assemble the fragments. Each line will have an assembly point that allows the connection between them. In this way, the shape of the sculpture formed by joining the different elements will be constantly changing - the same thing happens with the line in the video - each time the women try to connect in a different way, which makes it an ever-changing, "open" and to some extent an almost impossible line drawing.

Realized in the building of a former convent and orphanage, SIS project acquires a special kind of historical urgency in its scope. What started out as a collaborative exploration of forms of knowledge that are based on the body, takes a sharp stand in its underlying message that now, women (or people with a female reproductive system, which includes trans people) have to take their fate into their own hands. Powerful forms of alternative knowledge practiced by women for centuries are discarded to this day with few medical studies, still biased against the female body, both locally and globally. In this respect, the project also finds a special resonance with the main theme of the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia "Foreigners Everywhere". Here, the female body, the "queer" bonds that make up a community, a family of strangers united by a different, often stronger connection than mere blood, strongly relates to the focus of the biennale on the production of other related subjects, often relegated to the margins to this day.

4 Visual Material – Sample Exhibition Plan and Technical Information for its Implementation and Display, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the concept within the context of the already selected space (not exceeding 5 pages in A4 curator format).

3D Simulations of the space favor Panev and Christo Handjiiski

SIS VIDEO



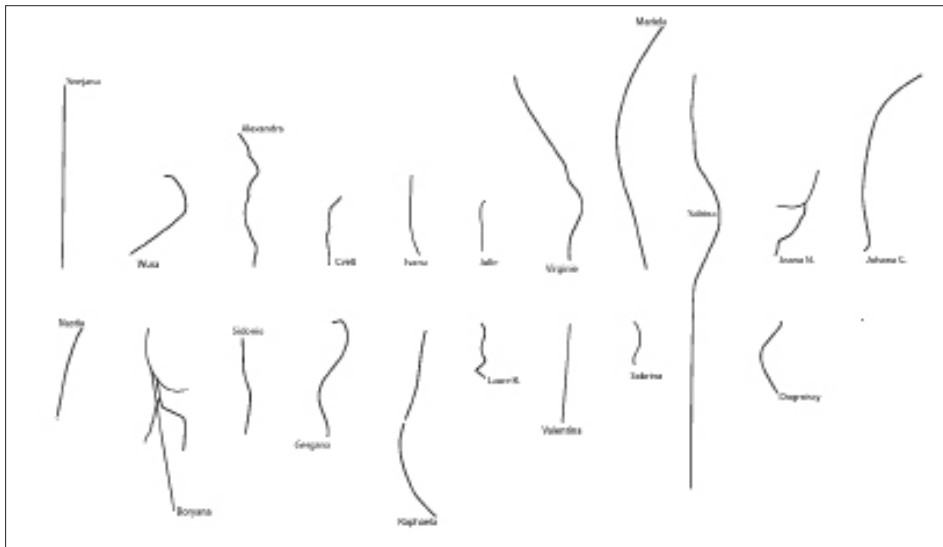
Simulation of the interior space of the pavilion.

The video will be projected using a BenQ SH753+ projector suspended with a stand at a height of around 3.50m. The video will be uploaded to a multimedia player, model KA Digital HK1 RBox X4S. The projection will cover the entire wall with dimensions of 6.80m / 3.50m. The thickness of the metal segments is similar to the line from the video. At certain moments, there is an effect of “connecting” the two works. In the left and right corners, 2 speakers for the video’s sound (sound of tattooing and a female humming voice) will be installed.

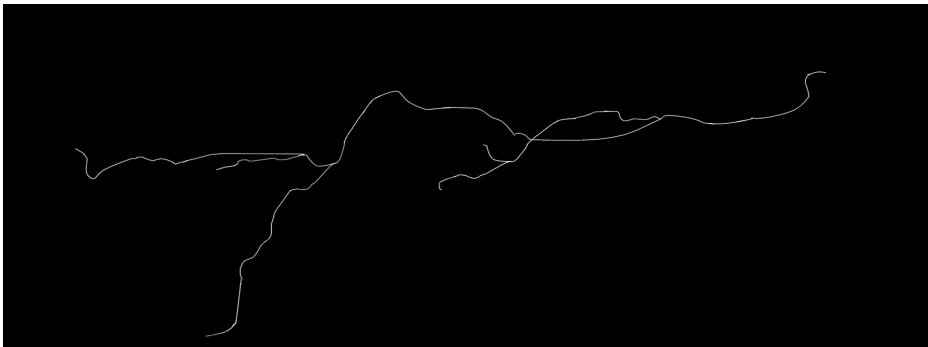
SIS SCULPTURE PERFORMATIVE



SIS tattoo lines - each woman chose the place and the size of her line



SIS vectorised lines



SIS line made by combining different segments

SIS performative sculpture

It consists of 28 elements - the 28 tattooed lines. All of them are made of reinforcing iron. The total length of all tattoos is 3.90m. When scaled up 1:20, the total length of the metal segments becomes 77.90m, with a thickness of 10mm. Thus, the shortest segment will be 0.90m, and the longest 9.12m. Each line has a joint that allows connection between them. In this way, the form of the sculpture formed by the combination of different elements is constantly changing.



Simulation of the interior space of the pavilion.

The two long sides of the room will be entirely covered with white, dense curtains (length 18m, height 3.50m). They will be hung on cornices mounted on the metal supporting structure in the space. On the wall to the left of the entrance, five monitors will be leaning and fixed, presenting documentation from the five days of the performance. Tesla LED monitors 43S635SFS, 43" (108 cm).

The sculpture will be activated throughout the pavilion space - both in the interior and the exterior - courtyard, colonnade.



rebar



connection

SIS- LIVE PERFORMANCE

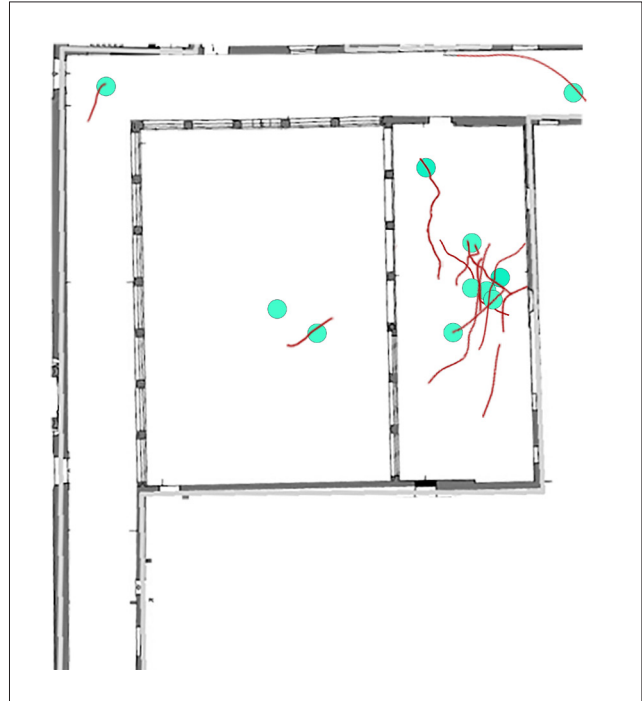
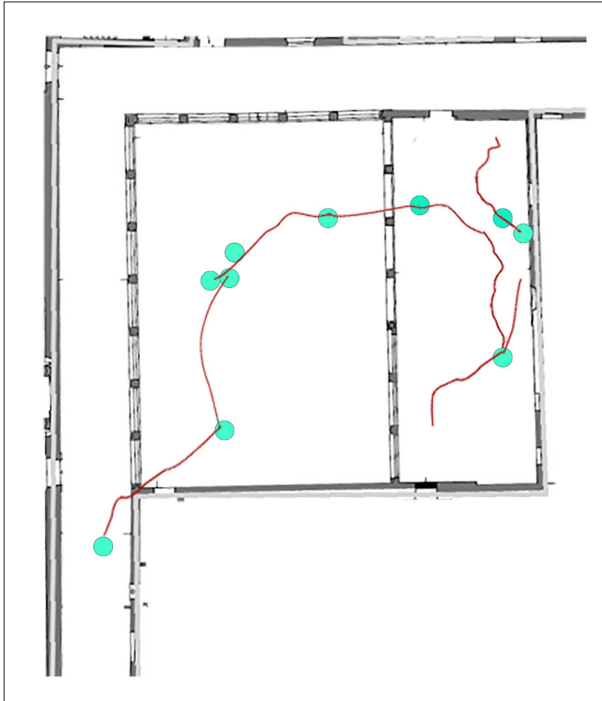
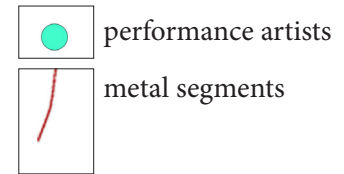
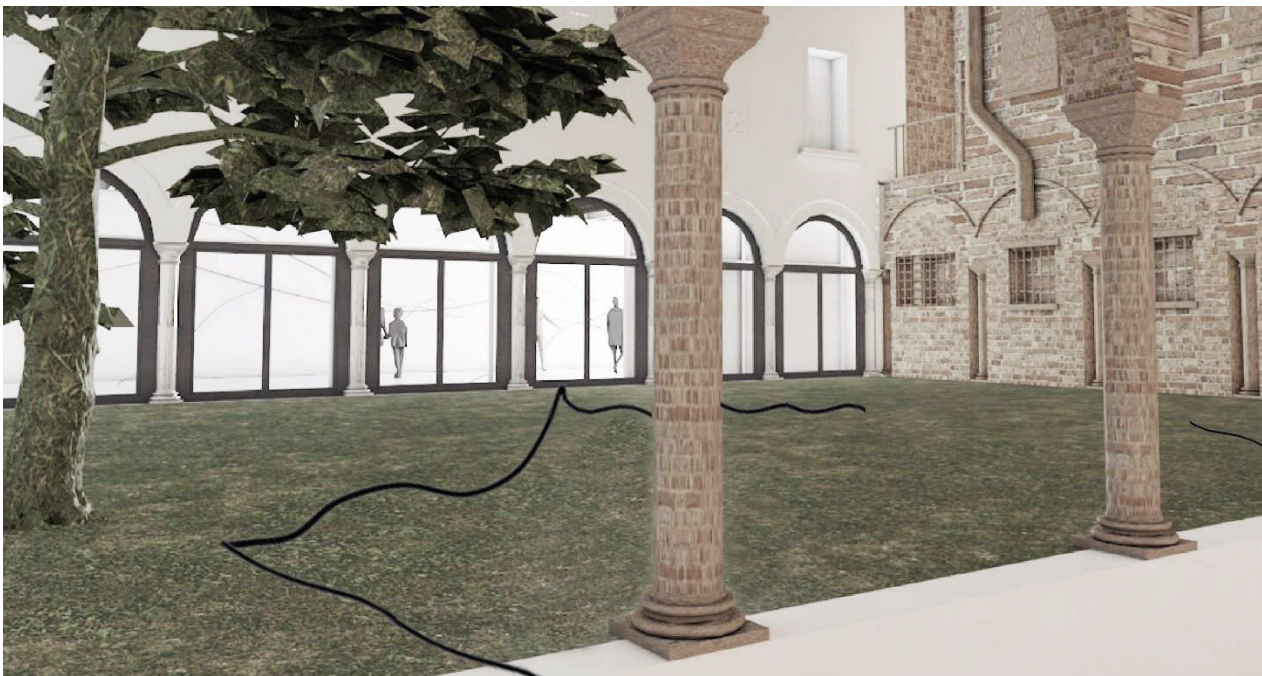
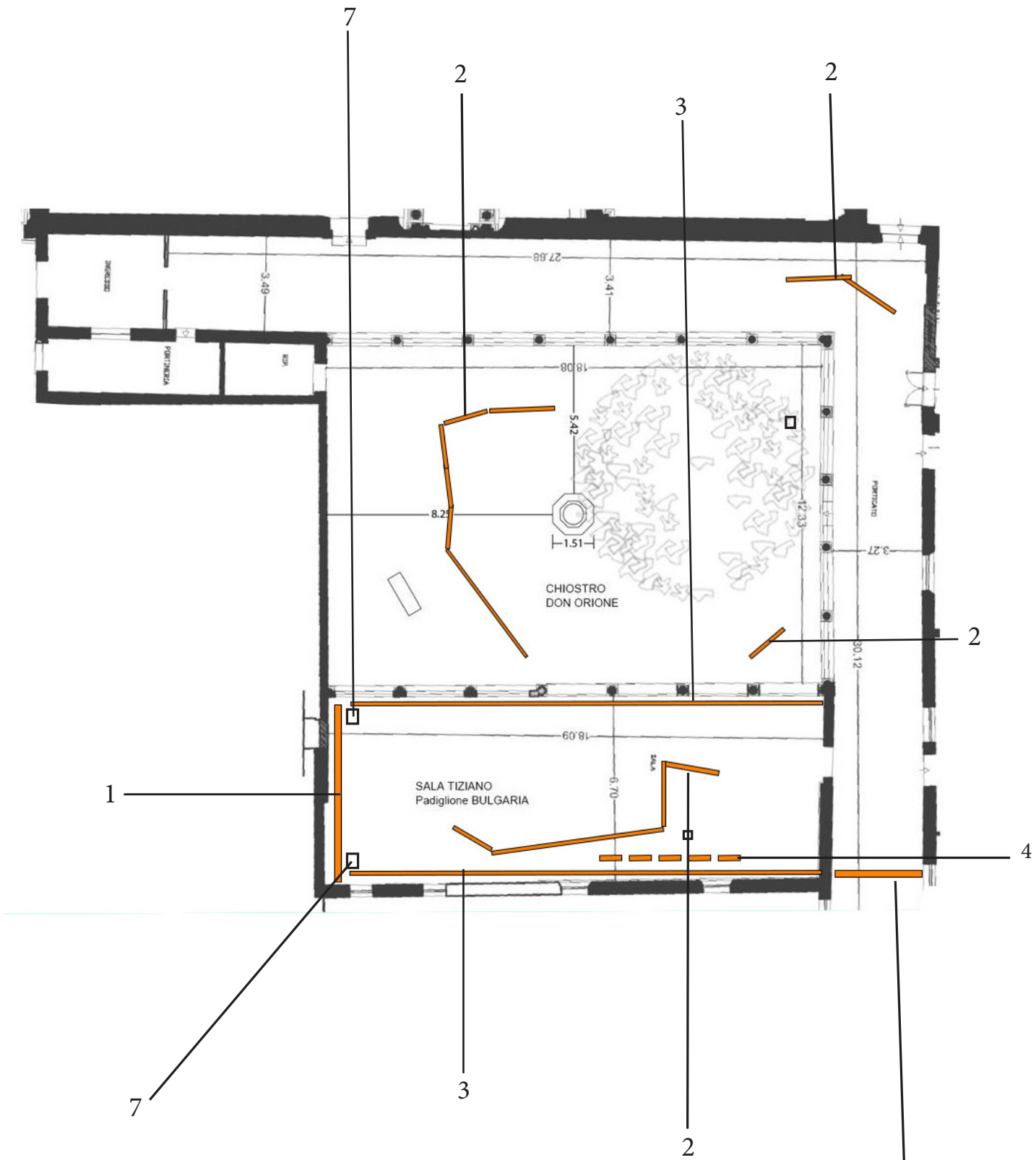


Diagram for a live performance - connected line and divided line

Ten women, participants in the project, will spend 5 hours each day in the pavilion, assembling and dis-assembling the metal sculpture. They will physically occupy the entire exhibition space - both indoors and outdoors.



Simulation of the courtyard space during the performance.



- 1 The video will be projected onto the entire frontal wall in the interior space.
- 2 Sculpture made of 28 metal fragments that can be assembled in various configurations.
- 3 Curtains.
- 4 Five flat screens displaying documentation from the five-day performance.
- 5 Curatorial text.
- 6 Sound (the sound of the needle touching the skin during tattooing and a humming female voice) will fill both the gallery and the external courtyard space.