

**Pavilion of the Republic of Bulgaria
60th International Art Exhibition -
La Biennale di Venezia**

20 April - 24 November 2024

Inauguration on 19 April at 5 pm

**Sala Tiziano at the Centro Culturale Don Orione Artigianelli
Fondamenta Delle Zattere Ai Gesuiti 919, 30123 Venezia VE, Italy**

every day 11 am-7 pm, closed on Tuesday



La Biennale di Venezia

60. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

The Neighbours

Curator: Vasil Vladimirov

Artists: Krasimira Butseva, Julian Chehirian, Lilia Topouzova

Commissioner: Nadezhda Dzhakova, PhD



The Neighbours explores the silenced memories of survivors of political violence during Bulgaria's communist era (1945 to 1989). Employing found objects, video, and sound design, the installation conveys the stories of those who endured Bulgarian Gulag camps and prisons. This multidisciplinary project, rooted in extensive scholarly research and more than 40 interviews conducted by the practitioners, reimagines the survivors' homes —the spaces where the interviews occurred—inviting audiences to inhabit them and bear witness.

The exhibition focuses on the intricacies of the ways individuals remember and articulate their experiences in the aftermath of traumatic events. Dr Lilia Topouzova's theoretical framework identifies three methods of remembering that appear within the exhibition as three rooms—a living room, bedroom, and kitchen. In the living room are the voices of those who remember and are vocal about their experiences. The bedroom reflects the survivors who do not speak, whether out of fear or simply because they have never been asked. The third room is dedicated to those who do not remember and remain silent or never had the chance to speak.

The Neighbours examines how the period of socialism is publicly remembered, but also how some of these memories unfold distinctly in private spaces. In the absence thus far of Bulgarian institutional engagement with the history and legacy of state violence, the project plays a crucial role in the process of unsilencing. It also reflects on the evolving function of museums and cultural institutions in providing a platform for individual and minority stories, contributing to discussions on truth, reconciliation, and collective memory.

The installation enacts a space of care and collective healing, employing the language of absence to nurture remembrance as an act of resistance against oblivion. Video projections, ambient sounds, and recovered items from forced labour camps visually connect the material world of the camps with the space of the home, evoking the ways traumatic memories permeate daily existence.

Responding to the Biennale's theme of reflecting on the 'foreign', **The Neighbours** unveils the stories of 'domestic foreigners' who faced persecution for deviating from the regime's ideals. It serves as a poignant memorial and a site for reflection on the oppressive political climate of the past, while critically examining its enduring impact on the present and emphasising art's vital role in engaging with complex realities—fostering reconciliation and healing.

Organisers

The Pavilion of the Republic of Bulgaria at the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia is organized by the Ministry of Culture of Bulgaria. It is produced by the National Gallery, Sofia.



**NATIONAL
GALLERY**

REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
Ministry of Culture

Partners



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#ForeignersEverywhere