



Pavilion of the Republic of Kosovo  
at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

## PRESS RELEASE

**Artist:** Alban Muja

**Curator:** Vincent Honoré

**Assistant Curator:** Anya Harrison

**Commissioner:** Arta Agani - Director of The National Gallery of Kosovo

**Organization:** The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo

**Venue:** Arsenale (Sale d'Armi), Venice

**Press and VIP opening:** Thursday 9 May, 2pm

The Republic of Kosovo is taking part for the fourth time in the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia with a major solo exhibition of new work by Alban Muja, opening on 11 May 2019 and running through to 24 November 2019.

The Kosovo Pavilion will be curated by Vincent Honoré, Director of Exhibitions at Montpellier Contemporain (MoCo), and the presentation will take place in the Arsenale.

Muja's work, which takes the form of video installation, short films and documentaries, drawing, painting and performance, is largely influenced by the ongoing processes of social, political and economic transformation in his native Kosovo and across the wider region of the Balkans. Through his practice, he investigates history and socio-political themes, and links them to his position in Kosovo today.

For the Kosovo Pavilion, Muja will present a new video installation that digs deep into personal and collective memories of the Kosovo War (1998-1999) and interrogates the role that images and the media have in constructing and shaping narrative, identity and history, especially in times of conflict.

This year marks 20 years since the end of the armed conflict in Kosovo, the last war to have been fought on European soil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the continent's youngest country, which saw 90% of its population displaced during the fighting. At the starting point of Muja's project lies a selection of photographs of child refugees taken during the war, images that were published in newspapers and on news sites around the world, and which became synonymous with the war, emblematic of the chaos, trauma and pain communicated to the public by the global media. 20 years on, Muja tracks down the individuals, now adults, captured in these frames to delve both into the way in which the ensuing images act as carriers of personal memory and in how they helped craft a wider political and media story beyond the control of the subjects represented.

Given that 20 years on the world faces new and ever-growing hotspots of conflict and an acute refugee crisis, whose experience and reality are contingent on the proliferation and dissemination of accompanying documentary images, Muja's project for the Kosovo Pavilion opens up a wider field of questioning about the relationship between aesthetics and politics, between subject and narrator.

The Kosovo Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2019 is commissioned by Arta Agani, Director of the National Gallery of Kosovo and the Pavilion's curator at the 2017 Venice Biennale.

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## **Notes to Editors**

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### **Bios**

**Alban MUJA** was born in Mitrovica, Kosovo in 1980. He graduated with a Bachelor and Master's degree from the Faculty of Arts, University of Pristina, and lives and works in Pristina.

Selected solo and group exhibitions include: Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn; Guangdong Museum of Art; Museum Of Contemporary Art - Skopje; MeetFactory, Prague; Forum Stadpark, Graz; James Gallery, New York; Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou; Museum of Fine Art, Split; Trieste Contemporanea; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka; Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; Austrian Cultural Forum, New York; Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana; National Gallery of Kosovo, Pristina; Ludwig Museum, Budapest; Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills; Slovak National Gallery; Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden; 28th Ljubljana Graphic Biennale; nGbK, Berlin; Cetinje Biennale and others.

He has been the recipient of numerous residencies and fellowships, including: Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris; quartier21, MuseumsQuartier, Vienna; Tobacna Center/City Museum, Ljubljana; Kuda-Center for New Media, Novi Sad, Serbia; International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP), New York; and Apartment Project, Istanbul.

[www.albanmuja.com](http://www.albanmuja.com)

**Vincent HONORÉ** is Director of Exhibitions and Programmes at MOCO. Montpellier Contemporain, a multisite contemporary art institution based in the south of France.

He was part of the curatorial team opening the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2001-2004), and later a member of the curatorial department at Tate Modern in London (2004-2007).

In 2007, he became the founding Director and Chief Curator of DRAF (David Roberts Art Foundation), where he led the exhibitions programme, including multi-disciplinary performances and live events, and a dynamic education program, working with emerging and established artists, such as Laure Prouvost, Liv Wynter, Ryan Gander, Eddie Peake, John Stezaker, Charles Avery, Phyllida Barlow, Zoe Williams, Haroon Mirza, Sarah Lucas and Jamila Johnson-Small.

In 2011, Honoré co-founded the publishing house *Drawing Room Confessions*, for which he acts as chief editor, publishing books on Luis Camnitzer, Bruce McLean, David Lamelas, Rosalind Nashashibi, Charles Avery, Sarah Lucas and Stuart Brisley.

In 2017-2018, Honoré was Artistic Director of the 13<sup>th</sup> Baltic Triennial, which took place across Vilnius, Tallinn, Riga and London.

Most recently, he served as Senior Curator at the Hayward Gallery (2017-2019), where his projects have included 'DO DISTURB', a co-programmed festival of performances at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, an evening of performances for Art Night 2018, and 'DRAG: Self-portraits and Body Politics'.

**Arta AGANI** is Director of the National Gallery of Kosovo and Professor of Typography at Akademia Evolucion for Communication Design in Prishtina. She holds a Master's Degree in Graphic Design at the Faculty of Arts, University of Prishtina and majored in Graphic Design at UP.

During her work at the National Gallery of Kosovo, Agani has worked with numerous acclaimed artists and curators, such as Thomas Hirschhorn, Grayson Perry, Rosemarie Trockel, Alfredo Cramerotti, Dirk Snauwaert, Jerome Sans, Iara Boubnova as well as others, and has curated several exhibitions. In 2017 she curated a solo presentation of work by Sislej Xhafa for the Kosovo Pavilion at the 57<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

**Anya HARRISON** is an independent curator and writer; and Curator at MOCO. Montpellier Contemporain, a multisite contemporary art institution based in the south of France.

In 2017-2018, she was part of the curatorial team for the 13<sup>th</sup> Baltic Triennial, which took place across Vilnius, Tallinn, Riga and London. Other recent exhibitions and

projects include 'The Return of Memory' (co-curated), HOME, Manchester; and 'Ceremony', a major new live commission and film by artist Phil Collins for Manchester International Festival '17, on which she worked as Associate Curator.

In 2015, she was one of the founders of the film programme 'New East Cinema' at Calvert 22 and the Barbican in London. Previously, she worked at Garage Museum of Contemporary Art where she realised exhibitions, performances and events by William Kentridge, Marina Abramovic, Carsten Höller and The Museum of Everything.

Her writing on contemporary art and cinema has appeared in *Frieze*, *Flash Art International*, *Modern Painters*, *Garage*, *The Calvert Journal*, *Moscow Art Magazine* and in exhibition catalogues.

### **About the Kosovo Pavilion**

The Republic of Kosovo has been participating at the International Art exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia with a national pavilion since 2013. Past presentations were composed of solo presentations of work by Petrit Halilaj (2013), Flaka Haliti (2015) and Sislej Xhafa (2017).