

**Pavilion of Montenegro**  
**at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di**  
**Venezia**

**«Odiseja -An Odyssey -Un'odissea»**



**PRESS RELEASE**

Montenegro will participate at the International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia for the sixth time since the renewal of its independence. In 2009, there was Miodrag Dado Đurić with *The Zorzi Elegies*; in 2011 Marina Abramović presented the project *The Fridge Factory and Clear Waters* and artists Natalija Vujošević and Ilija Šoškić; in 2013 Irena Lagator Pejović with the project *Image Think*; in 2015 Aleksandar Đuravčević with *Ti ricordi / Sjećaš li se / You Remember*; and in 2017 Ivana Radovanović and Adin Rastoder presented *Man / Uomo / Human*.

This year, Montenegro is represented by Vesko Gagović and his project *Odiseja / An Odyssey / Un'odissea*, while Montenegrin pavilion is located in Palazzo Malipiero, in close proximity to Palazzo Grassi.

The sponsor of the Montenegrin participation at the 58<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia is the Ministry of Culture, while it is produced by the Contemporary Art Center of Montenegro, with Nenad Šoškić as commissioner and art historian Petrica Duletić as curator of the exhibition.

Questions about the origin of the world and fate of the universe arouse the interest of a great number of people. The age in which we live is akin to a great crossroads of our civilization, perhaps of our species, too. Whichever way we go, our fate is inextricably linked to science. Artist Vesko Gagović reconciles seeing and the seen with the very experience of reality. He avoids straightforward stimuli presented by reality but rather retracts into form, using it to bear witness to the ontological principles of art. By associating aesthetic contemplation with the object's setting, Gagović makes formal choices based on their morphological manifestations, and structures like this his specific artistic expressions.

By the paradigmatic confrontation and permeation of the (objective) macrocosm and the (subjective) microcosm, Gagović creates an illusionistic image that transforms reality, becoming therefore a reality in itself. He examines novel linguistic possibilities to express his relationship to the world that, by changing, had caused changes in his sensibility. He closely listens to the generating mental vibrations, and tries to visualize within different materials and sophisticated technologies the evanescent world of ideas.

Vesko Gagović's creativity is steeped in conceptual art, and recognizable by its intellectual independence, critical attitude towards unilateral positions on the role of the

conceptualization of the creative process, as well as by a tendency to transform everyday life. His work evades narrativity, rather focusing on comparison and analysis through an array of conceptual procedures.

The project *Odiseja / An Odyssey / Un'odissea* leads us through time, through spiritual expanses from prehistory to the present. Artist's inspiration has found its starting point in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which deals with human evolution, the idea of the existence of intelligent extra-terrestrial life, and its possible impact on life on Earth. The Monolith symbolizes the highest human ideal whose boundaries are always out of reach, but which always drives the inspiration to progress and to do one's best to reach it. It represents a monumental transition in human evolution from cavemen to superhuman. Inspired by the process of socialization and by social relations, as well as by massive developments in technology and its impact on human life – especially in the field of communication development – artist Vesko Gagović creates a work that conveys his thoughts on the subject, with possible solutions and causes, as well as interpersonal relationships. Form is a primary element in this work, which, coloured, summarizes plastic, conceptual, and associative meanings, and establishes the relationship between the tangible and the intangible, the real and the fantastic. Visually and formally simple and rather reduced, the manifested world of primal forms defies the gravitational pulls of the Earth thanks to its ethereality and lightness, irresistibly rising to the heavenly heights of human spirit. With its reduced mass and volume, shape becomes the symbol and the carrier of the energy field that, in correlation with the space, maintains the unity of idea and expression, subject and object.

The concept of the setting involves four different spaces with monumental objects, which take up the exposition space and are marked by tonalities of metallized gold, silver and black. In their associative narrative, these object-elements refer to the Sun, Moon and Earth – cosmic bodies that have been the fixation of modern civilizations when creating perspectives of the future of the civilizations to come. Neon light emanates from their interior, achieving in this way a powerful sense of illusiveness. Objects are empty inside – the emptiness is experienced as a space of spirit, contemplation, and knowledge of the beauty of transience. It represents a unity of the absent space, its metaphysical qualities, and the separation of the spirit from the material world.

The setting complements the ensemble of monumental compositional structures so that each segment can be viewed independently, as a sight for itself.

Vesko Gagović places particular importance on spatial and visual condensation, minimalism of vision, and most of all on the meditative and contemplative dimension of his art.

His artistic evolution passed through different phases – cycles that followed each other in the spirit of pluralistic aesthetics of visual arts of our times, following the rhythms of artist's sensibility and his need to explore new possibilities of artistic expression through painting, drawing, and collage, and, in parallel, through art objects and installations.

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