

Robertas Narkus: Gut Feeling
Pavilion of Lithuania at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

23 April–27 November 2022

Press Preview 20–22 April

Opening: 21 April at 18.00

Address: Castello 3200 and 3206, Campo de le Gate 30122, Venezia

Website: www.gutfeeling.xyz

Commissioner: Kęstutis Kuizinas

Curator: Neringa Bumblienė

Fermentation Research: David Zilber

Development and Realisation: Evelina Bartusevičiūtė, Antanas Gerlikas, Gaetano di Gregorio, Albertas Mickėnas, Lukas Strolia, Erik Vojevodin

Visual Identity: Nerijus Rimkus, Vytautas Volbekas

Architectural Consultation: Petras Išora and Ona Lozuraitytė

Lighting: Martynas Kazimierėnas

On the occasion of the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Vilnius, is proud to present Robertas Narkus' new project for the Pavilion of Lithuania: Gut Feeling.

Gut Feeling is a complex and site-specific work, in which artist Robertas Narkus, manoeuvres between an honest desire to change the world, a persistent belief in the promise of collaboration, his egocentric ambitions, and a flirtation with financial structures, technological progress and humour. The term 'gut feeling' describes a sense of intuition, or, a hunch, which, according to half-forgotten folklore and recent scientific discoveries, links activities of the gut with the brain.

In collaboration with a renowned fermentation specialist, scientists, fellow artists, local residents and small businesses, R. Narkus has created a social sculpture in one of the last remaining non-gentrified piazzas in Venice's Castello district; producing a surrealist cooperative making a mysterious product from seaweed harvested from local waters. This species of algae, *Undaria pinnatifida*, also known as Wakame, is an invasive plant that has spread from Asia to the rest of the world – including Venice – as a result of globalisation. It is one of the most nutritious and rapidly renewable food sources, with ostensible potential to solve the imminent nutritional scarcity of Earth's rapidly growing population.

The Pavilion is divided in two. One part of the premises is dedicated to experiments and production, while the other is for representation and distribution: mimicking structures of capitalist production. The total-installation features distorted elements of laboratory, factory and shop, producing futuristic experiments made in situ with organic material and automated and programmed parts making repetitive gestures. It is intertwined and supplemented with photo collages, sculptures and videos.

Influenced by the collaborative and social engagements galvanising art practices in the 1990s, R. Narkus' work unfolds in the tension between the form of an artwork, the representation of conceptual basis, and the temporal, collective experience of its development and reception. Gut Feeling brings together and engages diverse social groups and individuals who have contradictory interests and aspirations – the project becoming a tool that provokes this type of encounter.

As an initiator of numerous experimental art, management and food production organisations, R. Narkus often draws inspiration from the world of business and start-ups. By juxtaposing the spirit of optimism and drive with the often invisible by-product – the bitterness of failure – he creates tragicomic works. In what may be viewed as an almost casual mash-up of fashionable objects and trends, fragments of the latest theories and the strategies of contemporary art, Robertas Narkus builds a multi-layered and deliberately hyperbolic reflection of our time.

Presented by the Lithuanian Council for Culture

Organised by the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius

Patrons: Justas Janauskas and Gabija Grušaitė, Lewben Art Foundation, JCDecaux Lithuania

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Robertas Narkus (b. 1983) lives and works in Vilnius. Narkus began a PhD at the Vilnius Academy of Arts in 2019 and embarked on a postgraduate programme at the Stockholm Royal Institute of Arts in Collective Practice Research 2020. In 2001, he obtained a Master's degree from the Department of Photography and Media Art of Vilnius Academy of Arts, and in 2015, a second Master's from the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. His solo exhibitions have been held at Gallery Vartai (Vilnius, 2020), David Dale Gallery (Glasgow, 2019), Contemporary Art Centre (Vilnius, 2017), Tenderpixel (London, 2015). Narkus's works have been presented in important international group projects at de Appel in Amsterdam, the 12th Baltic Triennial, Kaunas Biennial, and the 5th Marrakech Biennale. He has undertaken residencies at Iaspis in Stockholm and Delfina Foundation in London. Narkus is the founder of the Vilnius Institute of Pataphysics, the artist day care centre Autarkia, the experimental engineering camp eeKūlgrinda, and the restaurant Delta Mityba.

Neringa Bumblienė is a curator, critic, and art adviser. Since 2014, she has been working as a curator at the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) in Vilnius, Lithuania.

She has graduated from the Vilnius Academy of Arts with a Master's degree in Curatorial Studies, and from the curatorial school École du Magasin in Grenoble, France. Throughout her career, she has worked on numerous contemporary art projects from large-scale international group exhibitions, such as Head with Many Thoughts (co-curated, more than 50 participating artists, 2020) and the 13th Baltic Triennial Give Up the Ghost (co-curated, 70 participating artists, four venues in four different countries, 2017-2018) to solo presentations of established

and emerging artists. Her recent curatorial projects include the following solo exhibitions: *The Board* by Robertas Narkus at Gallery Vartai in Vilnius (2020); *Return* by Michael Rakowitz (2020), *Tactics & Techniques* by Alejandro Cesarco (2019), *Phantom* by Daniel Steegmann Mangrané (2018), and *The Light is no Brighter at the Centre* by Liam Gillick (2017), the latter four having taken place at the CAC in Vilnius. She is the curator of the Lithuanian Pavilion at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia with the project *Gut Feeling* by Robertas Narkus (2022) and Artistic Director of the 1st Vilnius Biennial for Performance Art to be held in 2023.

Selected publications with Bumblienė's texts include *Baltic Triennial 13: Give Up the Ghost* (published by CAC and CURA BOOKS, 2018), *Random Rapid Heartbeats: Selected projects from the CAC Vilnius programme* (published by CAC, 2016), and *Liam Gillick From Nineteen Ninety A to Nineteen Ninety D* (published by JRP | RINGIER, 2015).

She is an expert on contemporary art at the Lithuanian Council for Culture, a Board Member of the IKT – International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art, and the art fair ArtVilnius. She is also a member of the Lithuanian Interdisciplinary Artists' Association.

Kęstutis Kuizinas is the Founding Director of the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Vilnius, having led the institution from its founding stages in the early post-Soviet 1990s through to its current position of international prominence. He was responsible as both Artistic Director and as one of the curators (1998) for internationalising the Soviet-era Baltic Triennial and growing it into one of Central and Eastern Europe's most prominent contemporary art festival events. In 2009, Kuizinas was co-curating the 10th Baltic Triennial entitled *Urban Stories* together with a Belgian curator and Director of De Appel, Ann Demeester. Under his leadership, the CAC has become globally renowned for its constant development and experimentalism associated with dynamic architectural displays and facilities, including a Reading Room (founded in 2009), the CAC Cinema (founded in 2012) and a Sculpture Yard (founded in 2017), and the expansion of the programme, now including magazine publishing with the quarterly publication *CAC Intervu*, and a TV project *CAC TV* that aired on the national Lithuanian broadcaster in 2004-2007. As a curator, Kuizinas has organised exhibitions all over the world, including commissioning the Lithuanian Pavilion with Deimantas Narkevičius at the 49th Venice Biennale (2001) and the Lithuanian presentation at the 26th Biennial of Sao Paulo (2004). As a recognition of his career, in 2006 he was nominated for the Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement (USA), has been part of numerous international boards and juries, and in 2009 was the chairman of the Prix de Rome (NL) and the Innovation Prize (RU) juries. In 2011, Kęstutis Kuizinas was a Commissioner of the Pavilion of Lithuania at the 54th Venice Biennial, presenting the project *Behind the White Curtain* by artist Darius Mikšys, which was awarded a Special Mention by the Prize Jury of the Biennale.

David Zilber is a professional chef, fermenter, butcher and photographer originally from Toronto, Canada. He has worked in some of the world's top kitchens since 2004 and worked as the director of the world-renowned Fermentation Lab at Restaurant Noma in 2016-2020, employing microbes to transform foodstuffs into new bold ingredients. During his time there, he wrote the New York Times bestseller *The Noma Guide to Fermentation*. He has since then become a voice for science communication for a new generation of cooks and enthusiasts in the

world of food and fermentation, currently working from Copenhagen as a food scientist striving to build a more sustainable food system for everyone.