



Pavilion of Albania

At the 59th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia

Lumturi Blloshmi

from scratch

Curated by Adela Demetja

Inauguration: 21 April 2022, 12:15 pm

Arsenale Artiglierie

www.albanianpavilion2022.com

The Albanian Pavilion at the 59th edition of La Biennale di Venezia is represented by Lumturi Blloshmi. Blloshmi is the first female artist to represent Albania with a solo presentation in Venice and Adela Demetja the first Albanian female curator of the Albanian Pavilion. Demetja became friends with Blloshmi in 2016 and she was one of her closest collaborators until the end of the artist's life.

Born in 1944 in Tirana, Blloshmi was one of the most important Albanian visual artists of her time. Blloshmi's father, an Officer of King Zog's Army, was executed by the Communists when Lumturi was only two months old. At five years old she lost her hearing following an infection of meningitis. Blloshmi graduated from the Painting Department at the Academy of Arts in Tirana in 1968. Between 1974 and 1985, she was not allowed to continue her creative practice due to political reasons and she only had her first solo exhibition at the age of forty-four. Until 2004, Blloshmi worked in several institutions, including the National Gallery of Arts and Institute of Cultural Monuments in Tirana. Following this, she worked as an independent artist. Several of

her works are included in the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Tirana. Her works have been shown among others in group and solo exhibitions in institutions like the Chelsea Art Museum in New York, Municipal Art Gallery of Bydgoszcz Poland, Alexandria Biennale for Mediterranean Countries Egypt, Albania National Gallery of Arts, Kosovo National Gallery of Arts. Lumturi passed away on 27 November 2020 as a result of an infection with Covid-19.

Lumturi Blloshmi has a remarkable biography, a powerful personality and most importantly, a qualitative body of work which makes her unique and a reference point for the national and international contemporary art discourse.

Lumturi Blloshmi's body of work fits very well within this year's theme of the Venice Art Biennale titled "The Milk of Dreams". The title is borrowed from a book by Leonora Carrington, in which, as the curator of the Biennale Cecilia Alemani says; "the Surrealist artist describes a magical world where life is constantly re-envisioned through the prism of the imagination, and where everyone can change, be transformed, become something and someone else. The exhibition takes us on an imaginary journey through metamorphoses of the body and definitions of humanity."



Lumturi Blloshmi, Self-portrait, 1966, Oil on Canvas, 65 x 48.5cm, Photographer Albes Fusha, Courtesy of Lumturi Blloshmi Estate

Like almost all the artists of her generation, Lumturi Blloshmi painted in socialist realism style until the end of the '80s. After the '90s, she was nevertheless one of the few artists of her generation that managed to constantly reposition and transform herself and her work successfully until the end of her life. Her works in painting, photography, installation and performance are characterized by an ironic and satiric way of reflecting and overcoming the reality in which she lived. Blloshmi stood in the middle of her cosmos, not as a passive viewer but rather as an active participant.



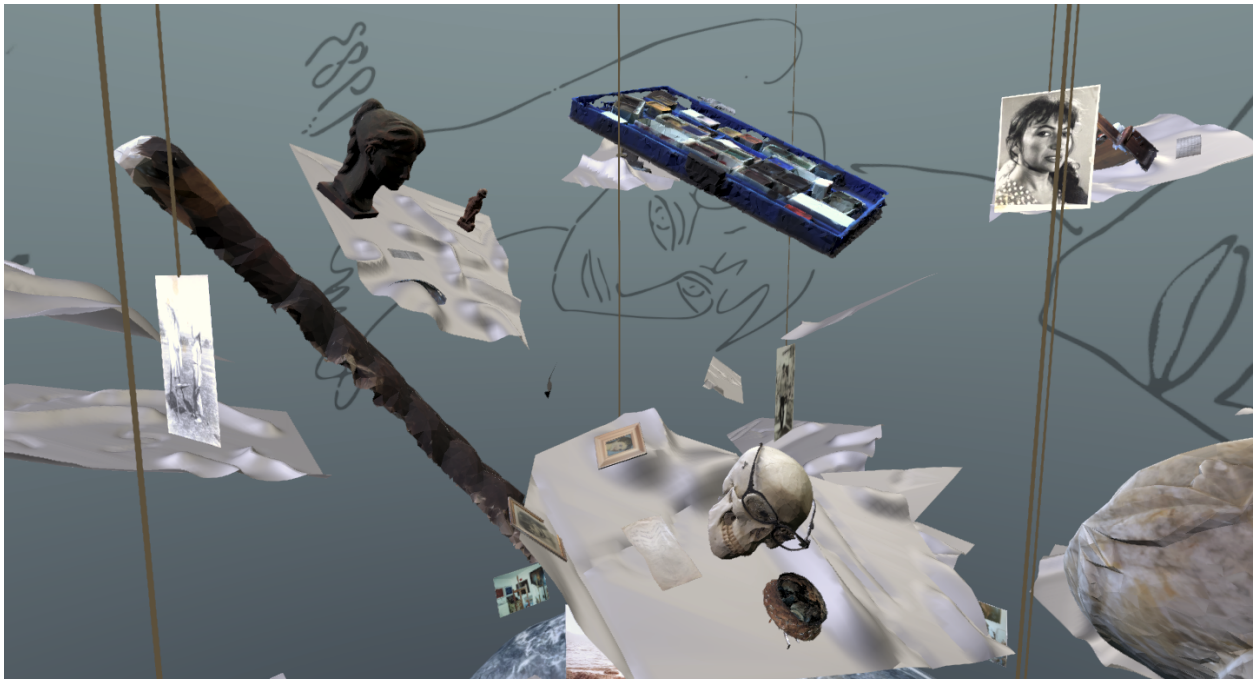
Lumturi Blloshmi, Ithaca, 1992, Oil on Canvas, 80 x 121cm, Photographer Albes Fusha, Courtesy of Lumturi Blloshmi Estate

This allowed her to openly express her perceptions about the art world and its mechanisms and the society which she was part of. Her view was that of a strong woman criticizing and provoking with humor the power establishment dominated by men. What makes her oeuvre remarkable is the symbolic simplicity and optimism she

uses when dealing with the harsh reality. Oftentimes Blloshmi depicted herself in her paintings, performances and photographs. By doing so, she clearly created, through subjectivity, a relationship between herself and the given social-political context, which allowed her and us to perceive history and reality from a self-defined and personal point of view. By cultivating and readopting an approach that goes beyond feminism, nationality and specific art styles, Blloshmi has tirelessly resisted different regimes and developments by building her work starting from her own personal experience and transiting from a certain type (Albanian, woman, politically persecuted, disabled) to a personality and becoming one of the most remarkable and innovative contemporary artists. Nevertheless, her oeuvre has not yet been fully explored and examined and it is still unknown for the international art world.

Therefore her practice informed by imagination and innovation intersects very well with the curated section of the Biennale that focuses on personal mythologies that try to imagine alternative models of coexistence and transformation that enable the re-enchantment of the world.

The presentation under the title “Lumturi Blloshmi. From scratch” will be conceived as an exhibition project aiming at researching, examining, presenting and positioning the work and life of Lumturi Blloshmi anew within the national and international art history. The presentation is conceived in three parts. The heart of the presentation consists of a selection of Blloshmi’s works from the 1960s until the 2010s, spanning self-portraits and compositions in painting and photography that say as much about Blloshmi’s aesthetic essence and personal reality as they do about the specific political and social context in which they were created. By remaining true to the unfiltered urge to express experience and awareness, Blloshmi constantly pushed the boundaries of media and formal styles by experimenting with materials and combinations of media to achieve what she called “a distinct tangible universe.” Formally situated within the boundaries of figuration, her oeuvre - strongly informed by imagination and innovation - at its core transmits and resonates a sense of universality and timelessness. The pavilion is conceived in such a way as to reflect Blloshmi’s tangible yet simultaneously ungraspable universe and its openness to interpretations. The exhibition architecture and display is closely created in collaboration between the curator and the German architect Johanna Meyer-Grohbrügge.



Alexander Walmsley & Adela Demetja, Lumturi Blloshmi: A personal Geography, 2022, Virtual interactive environment, accessible through tablets

Through a virtual constructed environment the viewer will have the possibility to get an overview and a feeling of Blloshmi's personal world and creative environment. This part aiming at creating a sort of virtual archive will be created in close collaboration between the curator and the British virtual reality artist Alexander Walmsley.

Albanian Pavilion Team

Curator: Adela Demetja

Assistant Curator: Eni Derhemi

Interactive Media Artist: Alexander Walmsley

Filmmaker: Tin Dirdamal

Exhibition Architect: Johanna Meyer-Grohbrügge

Legal representative of Lumturi Blloshmi: Ervin Blloshmi

Commissioner: Ministry of Culture of Albania

Supporters: Ministry of Culture of Albania, Gwärtler Foundation

Media Partner: Digitalb

Curator

Adela Demetja is a curator born in Tirana, living and working between Frankfurt/Main and Tirana. She holds a master's degree in "Curatorial and Critical Studies" from Städelschule and Goethe University, Frankfurt/Main, Germany. She is the director of Tirana Art Lab – Center for Contemporary Art, an independent art institution which she established in 2010. As an independent curator she has organized and curated numerous international exhibitions in Europe and the US.

Exhibition Architect

Johanna Meyer-Grohbrügge is a German architect who lives and works in Berlin. In her practice, Meyer-Grohbrügge, they are looking for simple spatial answers to complex questions. Developing new beliefs in exchange with clients determines the way they work. With a variety of projects ranging from residential buildings to many projects in the art world, furniture design and landscape architecture, they explore the possibilities of creating different ways of living together and to generate new Identities. She is teaching at DIA since 2010. She also taught at Columbia GSAPP, the Northeastern University Boston and the Washington University St. Louis.

<https://meyer-grohbruegge.com>

Interactive Media Artist

Alex Walmsley is a British virtual reality artist and developer based in Berlin. He is particularly interested in the relationship between the physical and virtual worlds, and how they are socially and technologically mediated. His work takes the form of interactive computer-generated environments, be they historic, speculative, or abstract, that make extensive use of digitised elements of the physical world. He comes from a background in archaeology and anthropology (University of Cambridge, University of Geneva). Alongside his artistic work, he is also currently a research associate for VR and 3D visualisation at the HafenCity University, Hamburg.

<https://www.alexanderwalmsley.co.uk>

Filmmaker

Tin Dirdamal born in 1982 in Mexico is a self-taught filmmaker and interdisciplinary artist with formal studies in engineering. He directed and produced No One (2005), Death in Arizona (2014) and Rivers of Men (2011). He has received grants from

Sundance Institute, Tribeca Film Institute and Rockefeller Media Artists. His films have been shown and awarded at Sundance, Visions du Réel, IDFA, La Mostra de Sao Paulo, BAFICI, FICUNAM, ARTE (TV). He is regularly invited to give lectures and workshops at venues and universities including UCLA, Yale, NYU, Hunter, Union Docs (Brooklyn) and DocLab (Hanoi). He currently lives in Albania.

Assistant Curator & Production Manager

Eni Derhemi is the assistant curator of the Albanian Pavilion 2022. Eni and Adela have known each other since 2016 and have been working together since then on different occasions. Eni Derhemi was born in 1992 in Tirana, she is an Albanian artist and curator. She holds a Bachelor Degree in Design & Arts from the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano and a Masters Degree in Visual Arts from the University of Bologna. Since 2010, she has lived and worked in the creative sphere between Albania, Italy and Germany. In 2020 she co-founded Ecumene Project, where she has the role of project director, curator and researcher.

Press inquiries

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