

**Pavilion of the Republic of Bulgaria
59th International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia**

**Under the patronage of Mrs. Iliana Yotova,
Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria**



**MICHAIL MICHAILOV
THERE YOU ARE**

April 23 – November 27, 2022

Official opening:

Friday, April 22, 3 pm – 6 pm

Mrs. Iliana Yotova, the Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria, will inaugurate the exhibition. A performative intervention will take place during the opening.

Bulgarian Pavilion

Spazio Ravà

San Polo 1100 (near the Rialto Bridge)

30125 Venezia

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Gallery, Sofia, have the pleasure of announcing the participation of Bulgaria at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. **Michail Michailov** presents the *There You Are* project, curated by **Irina Batkova**.

Michail Michailov is an artist who enlists the aid of various media (performance, drawing, video, sculpture, installation) to create meditative territories where the viewer apprehends unexpected aspects of being.

In the *There You Are* project, he explores Spazio Ravà to redesign the visible and invisible details that make up the exhibition interior in the context of the body and its interaction with its living environment. Following the geometry of the rooms, the cabinets already mounted on the walls, along with the space's architectural features, Michail Michailov takes up the accessible areas below and between them and positions the drawings from the *Dust to Dust* series. By building three-dimensional objects similar in shape and proportions to the furniture, the artist simultaneously creates a minimalist and absurd environment. This series, on which the artist began to work eight years ago, won first prize at the *2018 Drawing Now Art Fair* in Paris.

Michail Michailov explained his exploratory interest in the traces of human existence depicted in *Dust to Dust* as follows: "I draw the dust, stains, useless pieces of plastic and mold that accumulate in my studio. Things are generated through my existence and the existence of the people close to me – all those things we'd rather not see and usually choose to dispose of or hide. The drawing process takes almost as much time as it takes for the material to gather naturally. Looking for answers to what has real meaning in life, I realize how relative our answers may be. Just as relative as the viewer's perception, who, when looking at my drawings, often finds it hard to distinguish between the real and the drawn dust."

Developed over the years, this practice of tracking the not-so-visible accumulation of everyday human detritus has symbolically measured the time passing in human life. That is one of the aspects of our existence as a species destructive to its habitat and at the same time a challenge to our constant action of destroying it. Waste material, drawn with virtuosity and turned into a work of art and surreal sculptural objects, metaphorically constructs the continuous search for meaning in the narrative of everyday life. The white geometric bodies resembling museum pedestals included in the exhibition, with brushes, broom handles, and parts of vacuum cleaners attached, maintain a constant tension between presence and absence in the *There You Are* space.

The delicate color accents used by the artist in the depiction of human detritus are presented at the center of the predominantly white color in Michail Michailov's exhibitions. The white medical overalls, routinely worn for his performances, depersonalize the body, and the artist's gestures usually hide his face – a component of human identity. In this way, he becomes a mere element of the human cycle in a macro universe of birth and death.

The idea of repetition without beginning or end is embedded in the *Just Keep on Going* video series in the exhibition. These videos present the performing of cyclical actions, the meaning of which lies in the movement itself and not in the final result. They capture the artist's interaction with a fictional dystopian living environment and his constant effort to master it.

The largest window in Spazio Ravà, which overlooks a beautiful garden, is obscured by the *Headspacing* installation in the *There You Are* project. This structure only allows the view from the outside through a special opening into which the observer must place their head. The only way for the artist to physically become part of his exhibition is to perform at the pavilion's opening. His view through the *Headspacing* symbolizes the artist's reflection on the newly created space filled with imagined figures. This reflection is at the heart of the phenomenological bridge that allows us to transcend the interpretation of a particular work of art to search for the ontological truth at the heart of the impulse to create art.

The Pavilion of the Republic of Bulgaria at the 59th 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, with Commissioner **Iara Boubnova**.

Michail Michailov, born in 1978 in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, lives and works in Vienna and Paris. After studying art, he worked for a few years with the artists' group, Gelitin. In addition to several residences and awards, he won first prize at *2018 Drawing Now* Art Fair in Paris. Michailov uses his classical training in fine arts as the basis of a critical, experimental, process-based work that explores themes revolving around ideals of perfection and questions of existence.

Irina Batkova is a poet, critic, and independent curator living and working in Sofia. Her research areas are varied but focus on the crossover between contemporary art and architecture, design, performance, video, and new media practices. She has curated a wide range of exhibitions at venues including the Sofia Arsenal – Museum of Contemporary Art; The State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow; Basilica Cistern, Istanbul; The Ancient Baths Center for Contemporary Art, Plovdiv; Port Warehouse No. 5, Varna; the Vienna Künstlerhaus; and Akbank Sanat, Istanbul. Irina Batkova is the founder and curator of Art Project Depot, a platform for contemporary art and culture.

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