



La Biennale di Venezia

60. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

Pavilion of Serbia
60th International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia

EXPOSITION COLONIALE

Artist: **Aleksandar Denić**
Curator: **Ksenija Samardžija**

Commissioner: **Jelena Medaković**, Director of the Belgrade City Museum
Catalogue text: **Ksenija Samardžija, Stevan Vuković, Christopher Yggdre**
Construction Management: **CDPC doo Belgrade, Arch. Rade Mihajlović**
Project Art department assistant: **Danilo Mladjenović**
Artist assistant: **Nebojsa Antešević**
Exhibition Designer: **Isidora Nikolić**
Special Project Adviser: **Christopher Yggdre**
Organization and Production: **Belgrade City Museum**
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Venue: Giardini della Biennale, Venice

April 20 – November 24, 2024
Pre-opening Days: April 17–18–19, 2024

“In any case, in addition to the official history of memory, there exists an unofficial history of remembrance, as a supplement to the former and its critique. Because history is not only what happened to states, nations, and their institutions, but also how these events have been reflected and expressed in the souls and spirit of individuals: from the external, history becomes internal, an event becomes an experience, and history becomes a biography.”

Đuro Šušnjić

Exposition Coloniale, in its visual abundance, deals with spaces and places of transit – temporary residence, which become social *memorabilia* or the anxiety left by a society in which “*wherever you go and wherever you are, you will always encounter strangers – they/we are everywhere.*” Placed in a National Pavilion that architecturally includes a monumental façade inscription – *Yugoslavia*; the territory that was geo-politically dissolved as a result of the conflicts that ravaged the region in the early 1990s. In this case, architecture becomes an emotive sequence, confirming that is not just about form and function, but also about the social and cultural context in which it exists. In this way, the National Pavilion becomes not only a representative building, but a living monument of the fragmented county and its lost identity. Entering the Serbian pavilion, you immediately feel like a foreigner in your own country. In this zone of reflective discomfort, Aleksandar Denić intervenes, as a foreigner himself, as an artist who professionally, is permanently *displaced* in Germany and German-speaking areas.

The curator of the *Exposition Coloniale*, Ksenija Samardžija, elucidates that the central concept guiding the artist throughout the project revolves around the use of the "place." The exhibition pavilion is conceived as a *heterotopia*, a concept expounded by Foucault through the interplay of space with accumulated evocative elements. In the words of the curator "Denić is a master of manipulating spatial elements to create a distinct dialectic, resulting in an architectural situation that is both visually striking and conceptually provoking. Through manipulation of spatial elements, he creates a tension that is not solely derived from the physical work itself, but rather from the interaction between the viewer and the multi-layered narrative. The inclusion of music and sounds, lights, heating systems, and other sensory elements adds to the complexity and further blurs and disturbs the boundaries between the physical and emotional realms.

The result is a dynamic and engaging spatial experience, that relies on realistic components that are completely reinterpreted and originally built. Denić's installations do not refer to a specific place and time, but rather are loaded with familiar patterns that resonate with everyone, and could belong everywhere. He creates a dialectic between the pure realm and the surreal, both monumental but fragile and intimate in details, instilling an impression of uncertainty or discomfort, like a *déjà vu* or a strong lived memory that unsettles us. The experience of reality lived through unrest or tension is directly related to Heiner Müller's thesis on the constant need to question the system of thought and values through the function of art to make reality impossible."

Aleksandar Denić

Aleksandar Denić (born 31 October 1963, in Belgrade) is a Serbian visual artist, stage designer and film production designer. He is known as a scenographer of feature films, as well as for his work at major theatres and opera houses including Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Bayreuth, Paris, Zurich, Wien, Salzburg, Köln, Munich, Geneva, Athens. Denić graduated from the Academy of Applied Arts of the University of the Arts in Belgrade in painting, film and set design. He worked after graduation mainly as a production designer for film projects, including the film *Underground* by Emir Kusturica. From 2011 closely collaborate with Frank Castorf. In the past decade, he became one of the busiest European scenographers. In his visual interpretations of dramatic texts, the scene becomes a peculiar and elaborate semiotic system that considers postmodernism through artistic means, everyday life, history, identity, the relationship between the theatrical and the media spectacle, as well as social tasks and opportunities of art itself. It is for this reason that Denić's stage designs represent some of the most successful and critically acclaimed European and global visual dramaturgies that self-consciously explore their own communication potentials.

He is the recipient of numerous awards.

Ksenija Samardžija

Upon completing a degree in Art History at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade and successfully passing the curatorial exam at the National Museum in Belgrade, Ksenija Samardžija has established the artistic association PODR.UM in 2013. This initiative becomes instrumental in organising a variety of exhibitions, art residency programmes, presentations, and other endeavours that facilitate meaningful interaction between artists and the public; continued collaboration on international projects is noteworthy for promoting contemporary artists and creating outlets for the production and display of new work. Ksenija's tenure at the Heritage House (Belgrade) has further honed her skills in curatorial duties, collection management, and understanding of market conditions.

Since 2019, Ksenija has served as the director of the Foundation Saša Marčeta, which operates within the Bioskop Balkan (formerly a cinema hall housed in a grand 19th-century building) to carry out its activities. Her dedication to the field and keen insights have solidified her reputation as a trustful leader in the art world, and her work continues to have a lasting impact on the artistic community.

A catalogue is in the process of being published, with **Stevan Vuković** handling the catalog text and contributions from **Christophet Yggdre**.

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