

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

REPEAT AFTER ME II

Exhibitors: **Open Group (Yuriy Biley, Pavlo Kovach, Anton Varga)**

Curator: **Marta Czyż**

Commissioner: **Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz, Minister of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland**

Interim Director of the Zachęta — National Gallery of Art: **Justyna Szyłman**

Polish Pavilion office: **Michał Kubiak (deputy commissioner), Anna Kowalska**

April 20 – November 24, 2024

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

Opening Ceremony: April 18 at 11am

***Repeat after Me II* is a collective portrait of witnesses to the ongoing war in Ukraine, presented in the form of an audiovisual video installation. The protagonists of the film at the Polish Pavilion are civilians with refugee experience, speaking about the war through the sounds of weapons they recall, which they invite the audience to repeat. The Open Group art collective and curator Marta Czyż have thus created a military karaoke of the future, joining the public and war witnesses in dialogue.**

Repeat after Me II is an installation by the Ukrainian Open Group collective, made up of two films. These videos were created in 2022 and 2024. All the people they feature are refugees, speaking of their war experiences through the sounds of weapons they recall, then encouraging the audience to follow their lead. The artist use the karaoke format. Yet here the accompaniment is not hit songs, but shots, missiles, howling and explosions, and the lyrics are descriptions of deadly weapons. This is the soundtrack of a war.

The juxtaposition of these works from 2022 and 2024 shows the drastic continuity of memory, as well as the changes in war technology. The first video was shot in a camp near Lviv for people resettled within the country. The second work was made outside of Ukraine, in the countries of Western Europe, which are a haven for the participants. Yet even now, beyond the reach of the endless sirens, the sounds of war remain part of their trauma and symbolically spread their range.

The audience can repeat the sounds of the weapons after the witnesses, learning the language of their experiences, or step back into the safe space designed to look like a karaoke bar. Yet this is no ordinary bar, it is a karaoke instruction site for a military future that threatens all of us.

A few weeks before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Strategic Communications and Security Information Centre of the Ministry of Culture and Information Politics began distributing brochures called *In Case of Emergency or War*, explaining how to behave in a war zone. The instructions vary depending on whether the attack in question is automatic rifle fire, artillery shelling, rocket launchers, or an air raid. The ability to tell between them can save your life. *Repeat after Me II* portrays war as a collective experience — crossing age, ethnicity, professional and social status — giving the floor to witnesses and calling attention to the individual experiences of catastrophe.

The caretaker of the Polish Pavilion and organiser of the exhibition at the 60th International Art Exhibition — La Biennale di Venezia is Zachęta — National Gallery of Art. Poland has participated in the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia with its own pavilion since 1932.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Marta Czyż is an art historian, an independent curator and critic. She lives and works in Warsaw. She is the curator of the Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2024 (featuring Ukraine's Open Group collective). Her practice uses archives and breaking events in art history that affect cultures and social movements. She researches the history of exhibitions in Poland and issues in the curator profession. She regularly publishes in the art and trend-setting press (*Dwutygodnik*, *Vogue Polska*, *Polityka*, *miejmiejsc.com*, *Wysokie Obcasy*, *Camera Austria*, *follow.art*). In 2015, she and Julia Wielgus published a book called *W ramach wystawy — rozmowy z kuratorami* [in the frame of the Exhibition — Conversations with Curators]. She has received a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (2018) and is a member of the Board of the Polish Section of AICA.

The **Open Group** collective was founded in August 2012 in Lviv by six Ukrainian artists. The make-up of the group has changed over the years; at present, its permanent members are Yuriy Biley, Pavlo Kovach and Anton Varga. The structure of Open Group is built around the study of the idea of collective work while involving people from different fields for the period of time to work on projects together. The group's work is based on exploring interactions between people and contextual spaces, creating the so-called "open situations". Since 2011, the group members have been running independent art spaces, such as Detenpyla gallery and Efremova26 (2013–14) in Lviv. In 2013 they received mentions for the PinchukArtCentre Prize, and in 2015, the main award. Their works have been presented at the Ukrainian Pavilion at the 56th International Art Exhibition — La Biennale di Venezia (2015). In 2016, the Open Group artists were curators of the *Degree of Contingency: Collective Practices of Young Ukrainian Artists 2000–2016* exhibition at BWA Wrocław. In the Biennale Arte 2017, they exhibited for the Collateral Event *Future Generation Art Prize@Venice 2017*. At the Biennale Arte 2019 the collective curated the exhibition at the Ukrainian Pavilion.

ORGANISER

Zachęta — National Gallery of Art (pronunciation: [za'xěnta])

Zachęta — National Gallery of Art is an institution whose mission is to popularise contemporary art in all its current manifestations, as a crucial part of cultural and social life. It is a place where the most exciting phenomena of twentieth and twenty-first century art are presented. The gallery organises temporary exhibitions as well. Its century-old interiors have hosted the works of such outstanding Polish and foreign artists as Paweł Althamer, Marlene Dumas, Luc Tuymans, Jan Lebenstein, Zbigniew Libera, Daniel Libeskind, Tadeusz Kantor, Katarzyna Kozyra, Yayoi Kusama, Niki de Saint Phalle, Wilhelm Sasnal, Alina Szapocznikow, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Jerzy Nowosielski. Zachęta also hosts widely discussed issue-based exhibitions, such as: *Twentieth-Century Classics; Revolutions 1968; Gender Check. Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe; In God We Trust; Progress and Hygiene; Cannibalism? On Appropriation in Art*, and *Just after the War*. Some works created for particular exhibitions end up in the Zachęta collection. The gallery also runs educational activities for children and young people, as well as for adults, publishes books on contemporary art, and collects information on the Polish art scene after 1945.

THE POLISH PAVILION

Poland has been participating at the International Art Exhibition — La Biennale di Venezia since 1932, and at the International Architecture Exhibition since 1991. The construction of the Polish Pavilion in Venice was financed in the 1930s by the Polish government, whose property it remains to this day. Zachęta — National Gallery of Art is the caretaker of the Polish Pavilion and the organiser of exhibitions at the Biennale Arte and Biennale Architettura of La Biennale di Venezia.

POLISH PAVILION AT THE 60TH INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION — LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

Organiser: Zachęta — National Gallery of Art

Media strategy: Zofia Bugajna-Kasdepke

Sponsor: ORLEN

Patron: Paradyż

Exhibition partners: Adam Mickiewicz Institute, dela.art collection, DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program

Co-operation: Polish Institute in Rome

Poland's participation in the 60th International Art Exhibition — La Biennale di Venezia is financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland

LINKS:

Polish Pavilion: <https://labiennale.art.pl/>

Zachęta — National Gallery of Art: <https://zacheta.art.pl/en/>

Open Group: <http://open-group.org.ua/en/about-us>

Follow updates on the #PolishPavilion via: <https://www.facebook.com/polishpavilion/>

Hashtags: #PolishPavilionVenice #PolishPavilion #RepeatAfterMe

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THE 60TH INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION — LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

20 April–24 November 2024

more about the Biennale: biennale.org

preview days in Venice: 17-19.04.2024

press accreditation: <https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2024/accreditation>

