

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

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



**MICHAIL MICHAILOV
THERE YOU ARE**

23 April–27 November 2022

**Bulgarian Pavilion
Spazio Ravà
San Polo 1100 (near the Rialto Bridge)
Venice 30125**

Venice, Spazio Ravà. On 22 April, in the presence of Iliana Yotova, Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian pavilion was opened at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. Artist Michail Michailov's project, *There You Are*, curated by Irina Batkova, attracted a large number of international professionals and media representatives. Among the large crowd gathered at the entrance of Spazio Ravà, where the Bulgarian Pavilion is located, were many Bulgarian artists, curators and collectors, who patiently awaited the performances of Michail Michailov and Patrick Lammer.

The introductory words of the Commissioner for the Bulgarian participation, Iara Boubnova, were followed by the speech of welcome delivered by Ms Iliana Yotova, patron of the Bulgarian Pavilion. Irina Batkova concluded the official opening with a curatorial tour of the exhibition space and presented in detail the *There You Are* project to Vice President Iliana Yotova, her team, and HE Mr Todor Stoyanov, the Bulgarian Ambassador to Italy.

In his *There You Are* project, Michail Michailov connects the architecture of the space with his sculptures and drawings, and with the *Just Keep on Going* video, all reflecting the experiences of the artist throughout his extended isolation in the years of the pandemic. The exquisite drawings 'from nature' from the *Dust to Dust* series, capturing the course of everyday life in its almost invisible details, impressed visitors with their large format and virtuosity of execution.

Irina Batkova noted: 'The exhibition's illusory minimalism is filled with details that stimulate the public to play with them mentally and physically, to try to understand their function and use them. Their strangeness and seeming futility open our senses to analogies with the strangeness and futility in our lives.'

The specially designed performance space in the garden—*Headspacing*—allowed the artist to be present among the public and simultaneously to be an art object. ‘I often ask myself what is real and what is not, or what makes sense and what does not. What makes something ‘important’? In this context, I also ask myself what actually has value and why,’ stated Michailov.

The *There You Are* project at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia is accompanied by a publication that combines curatorial and poetic views on the essence of the visual objects included in the project. It has essays by Giorgio Agamben, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michail Michailov, and Irina Batkova, a speech of welcome by Iliana Yotova, and an introduction by Iara Boubnova. It was designed by Magdalina Stancheva, Poststudio.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Gallery are the organisers of the Bulgarian national exhibition at the the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

At the opening, the guests of the Bulgarian Pavilion had the opportunity to taste a selection of Bulgarian wines provided by AYA Estate Vineyards and Alexandra Winery & Vineyards.

Michail Michailov, born in 1978 in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, lives and works in Vienna and Paris. After completing his education in the arts, he worked for a few years with the artists’ group, Gelitin, in Vienna. In addition to his other awards, he won a prize at the 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 critic and independent curator living and working in Sofia. Her research areas are varied but focus on the crossover between contemporary art and design, architecture, performance, video, and new media practices. She has organised and curated projects at venues including the Sofia Arsenal – Museum of Contemporary Art; The State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow; the 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 arts and culture.

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