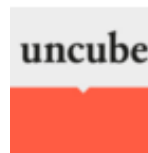


uncube, *Venice: The Ad-Hoc & The Kamikaze, New National Non-Pavilions*, Text / Elvia Wilk, June 5, 2013



NEWS REVIEW

05 JUN 2013

VENICE: THE AD-HOC & THE KAMIKAZE

NEW NATIONAL NON-PAVILIONS: LITHUANIA/CYPRUS, GEORGIA, THE MALDIVES, AND... PECKHAM?



1 | 15: THE JOINT LITHUANIA/CYPRUS PAVILION OCCUPIES THE PALASPORT ARSENALE, VENICE'S PREMIER SPORTS ARENA. (PHOTO: ROBERTAS NARKUS)

LEO XU PROJECTS

Cypriot and Lithuanian Pavilion: oO



THE NAME OF THE PAVILION IS "OO," - "A SLIGHTLY ASYMMETRICAL STRUCTURE CONVEYING UNEVEN, YET MUTUALLY OPEN ELEMENTS." (PHOTO: ROBERTAS NARKUS)

Described by Lithuanian curator Raimundas Malašauskas as "a slightly asymmetrical structure conveying uneven, yet mutually open elements," this mashup exhibition with the enigmatic title *oO* combines Cyprus and Lithuania into one mega-pavilion. It takes place in the Palasport Arsenale, Venice's premier sports venue, with 16 artists' work scattered throughout the cavernous building. The main-floor basketball court is the show's focal point, with an installation by Gabriel Lester serving as the scenography for a program of performances throughout the summer. Lester's installation, titled *Cousins*, is a maze-like arrangement of sections of drywall extracted from big-name cultural institutions across Europe, like the Van Gogh Museum and WIELS. The pavilion abounds with gestures like these: tongue-in-cheek flirtations with received notions of institutional/national legitimacy and twisted reflections on geographic marginalization. The sports arena is a perfect back-stage window to the Biennale, a free-form counterpart to the stiff institutional calisthenics of the Giardini and Arsenale. The scoreboard in the gymnasium (a work by Dexter Sinister) reads "oo00" - not a double loss in this case, but a double win: the jury awarded *oO* a Special Mention for National Participation.

LEO XU PROJECTS

Georgian Pavilion: *Kamikaze Loggia*



GEORGIA'S "KAMIKAZE" PAVILION IS A RAMSHACKLE TWO-STORY STRUCTURE ATTACHED TO AN OLD ARSENALE BUILDING. (PHOTO © GIO SUMBADZE)

"Kamikaze loggia" is a type of vernacular architecture widespread in Georgia's capital city of Tbilisi: ramshackle extensions tacked onto existing Soviet modernist apartment buildings, added by residents to increase living space. Their nickname "kamikaze," is a pun reflecting both their daredevil construction and uniquely Georgian character, as traditional Georgian surnames end in "-adze."

Documenting and embodying "informality, bottom-up solutions, and the concept of self-organization in Georgian art and architecture," (in the words of very-talented curator Joanna Warsza), Georgia's pavilion is indeed built kamikaze-style - it's a rickety-looking wooden structure on stilts leaning against an old building behind the Arsenale, holding site-specific works and texts by artists including sculptor Thea Djordjadze. The surrounding space was activated during preview days with a stream of performances by participating artists, such as the Bouillon Group's daily *Religious Aerobics*, acting out gestures of prayer from the world's major religions. As with *oO*, it could be concluded that staking a claim on space (cultural, physical, bienni-al) is a seriously athletic endeavor.

LEO XU PROJECTS

The Maldives Exodus Caravan Show



THE MALDIVES EXODUS CARAVAN SHOW: A MOBILE CARAVAN FOR EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS. (PHOTO: SOREN DAHLGAARD)

The Maldives: beach paradise. An international tourist destination known for its white sandy beaches, coral reefs, and high-class resorts. Yet behind the tourist ads lie complex and harrowing political and environmental situations, marked by an increasingly stringent dictatorship, rising political tensions, and rising water levels (which, left unchecked, will likely swallow most of the Maldives' land mass by 2080).

Danish artist/curator Soren Dahlgaard was commissioned by the Maldives' formerly democratic government to organize its national pavilion. However, following a political coup in early 2012, the new dictatorial regime became increasingly involved in the project, so Dahlgaard decided to split from the official program. Enter *The Maldives Exodus Caravan Show*: a mobile vehicle for manifold projects surrounding the topics of climate change and human rights, with a wide range of programming - film screenings, lectures, tv broadcasts - expressing solidarity with the large group of Maldivians who reject the dictatorship. Dahlgaard remarks on the decision to forge a Maldives non-pavilion: "we were aware that 'non-official' might be interpreted as 'oppositional.'" Yep. It could.