

ART PAPERS, *Review of Venice biennale*, Text/Fatos Ostek, P63, OCT. 2013, CND

## ART PAPERS



oO  
THE CYPRUS/LITHUANIA PAVILIONS, VENICE, ITALY

n these works became increasingly apparent, is gazing from the images were not seeking —on the contrary. As if so injured to a situation underlying violence, they turn into the self; transferring to the photographer/viewer crises and emotions, and even subtle optical. Dashti doesn't question where all this will end; an answer is already in his images—if you are aware that there is a glimmer of hope. Works in *SubTehran* are tightly linked to the modern Iranian reality. Kashani notes that "The very art scene is engaged and conscious of the fate of our nation, and artists in fact draw inspiration from bold statements, which are the exhibition's spectators' undiluted. Among these are the valiant statements of Majid Biglar's *Dear Gift and Being in Your Mind*, two bomb-like, distinctly heavy, metal structures that are suspended in the air like the Sword of Damocles; the *Iran* is the population's constant feeling of being in the shadow of the always present threat of war in Iran, and a tension with respect to foreign relations. Two *Iran*—a red heart and the black shape of Mickey Mouse—are embossed on the surface of these devices, creating conceptual dissonance by objects capable of mass slaughter with more innocent objects. In the simple and sterile space of the gallery the artists manage to create a sense of high emotional tension by the contradictory past and present and its murky future. This unsettling atmosphere leads into a dialog, through which reflects the long political climate of the country. This was a free, and diverse selection of artists: it makes us rethink from whence the concepts and "justice" emanate.

—Vakhtang Urushadze

Acousmatic sounds accompany the visitor's journey through the door of the Palasport in Venice. The venue serves as the city gymnasium, which is additionally activated with a group exhibition of art objects, videos, and performances that comprise the joint Cyprus and Lithuania Pavilions of the 55th Venice Biennale (June 1–September 15, 2013). The entrance opens to a spacious aisle, and the stairs to reach the main arena are located on the right. While climbing up, their walls amplify the voices of young girls practicing in a room located somewhere in the building. Black-and-white images of gymnasts greet the visitor at the flights of stairs. Movement of bodies is a component of the exhibition. As the audience climbs the stairs, a non-dialogic subject appears from the corner, immersed in its body of work—vacuuming. An encouraged movement in nonlinear choreography finds its means as the visitor gathers pages of the exhibition guide from each stack in regard to their subjective choices. The stairs, squarely bisecting the floor of the building, lead to a hall: an opening to a world of new associations. This place for games and display of strengths has been inhabited by bodies of artworks colliding the ephemeral with the tangible. The artworks, ranging from paintings to photographs, installations to performances, surface in the gaze of the beholder as details of the ensemble. Two light bulbs, placed as a resemblance to eyes of a dog, merge into one when viewed at rear. Artworks displayed in singular or as a group infiltrate into the texture of the venue, while the performances—the programmed movement—adjoin to this pursuit of infiltration when they take place. The cut-out walls standing in the arena of the stadium are placed nonperpendicularly to one another and put to reuse prior to functions at different art institutions in Europe. The arena mothers unfamiliarities, placing artworks and artistic movements inhabiting gymnastic rhythms among the bleachers. At the house of aerobics and ball games, artists from several different countries share a symbiotic relationship with one another and with the venue. The scoreboard introduces a double bind of

use and uselessness: it announces the title of the exhibition, yet fails to deliver the scores of any games. The title of the exhibition is an interplay of combinations, an utterance projected into the mirror image with possible representations, hence the scoreboard reads as Oo, oO as well as oO and Oo, and so on. The exhibition blends props and actors, the scenery, and even the electronic equipment to one another. Theatricality attained through action is based on "a slightly asymmetrical structure conveying uneven, yet mutually open elements ... entailed by organizational surfing, drawing on interest in forms of organization rather than organization of forms," as the curator of the exhibition, Raimundas Malasauskas, puts it. Malasauskas resuscitates memories (of place, people, and contrivances) to the plane of resonating bodies (of artworks and performing artists) across the floors of the Palasport. The artists in action, some of whose works are described above, are Liudvikas Bukys, Gintaras Didžiapetris, Jason Dodge, Liu Haraki, Maria Hassabi, Phanos Kynacou, Myriam Lefkowitz, Gabriel Lester, Dexter Sinister, Morten Norbye Halvorsen, Elena Nerbutaitė, Algirdas Šeškus, Kazys Varnelis, Natalie Yasi, Constantinos Talots, and Vytaute Zimkate.

The international commission of the Venice Biennale has conferred a special mention to Lithuania and Cyprus for "an original curatorial format that brings together two countries in a singular experience." Malasauskas choreographed the exhibition in relation to its defining elements such as location, history, architecture, and use, while positioning artworks and artistic interventions as spatialization of the given architectural setting. The national pavilions of two countries merge into a stage of ideas while artistic practices unfold as characters of the exhibition. The timeline of the exhibition exceeds its normative borders of beginning and an end of a commission for a national pavilion in Venice, where Malasauskas blends the cross-centennial biography of Horace Goldin with the inauguration of the venue in the early 1970s into the contextual framework of oO. The artists, like actors in a play, take position and initiative to introduce ideas as forms, forms as experience, examples as scenery, thence catalyzing the exhibition's becoming. What actually happens is akin to a play on stage, where the liminal space of encounters proclaims poesis. Thence, poesis is the normative connectivity that inhales and exhales content. The visitor is entangled in a position of simultaneous part-taking, oscillating at the threshold of excitation for mutualism or commensalism depending upon the subjective levels of engagement.

Malasauskas' approach to exhibition-making incites a nascent dialogism around a new turn: the theatrical. The surfaces of artworks are no longer flat and malleable, but immersive and seeking. The experience is no longer bound to the territories of seeing and engagement, but expanded in space and time through historicity, narrating, movement, and action. A condition of multiple choices is embedded in the contextual abbreviations of the place of exhibition—manifested in coexistence with artworks while artists are engaged actively in the production of an exhibition in its "being."

—Fatos Ostek

INT COVER: Steinar Örn Guðmundsson during guided tour of oO, 2013 / ABOVE: exhibition view of oO on the main court; Gabriel Lester, *Cousins*, 2013, Cyprus and Lithuania Palasport Ananata, 55th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale (photos: Robertas Narkaus)

# LEO XU PROJECTS