



La Biennale di Venezia
Armenian Pavilion

THE HOST

CENTRO STUDI E DOCUMENTAZIONE DELLA CULTURA ARMENA

Established during the 1960's by a group of intellectuals in Milan, the Center for Study and Documentation of Armenian Culture and OEMME Edizioni propose to promote and to further recognition of non-dominating cultures, mostly of the Caucasus and the Middle East. Cultures that strive with difficulty to find room for their legitimate claims.

There have been many scientific and cultural activities fostered in these years. Of particular importance has been that of the collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture of Milan Polytechnic and the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. The fruit of this long work has been published in the series "Documents of Armenian Architecture". In addition, texts have also been published on politico-historic issues, music, literary criticism and illustrated books.

Center's headquarters presently is located in Venice, at Loggia del Temanza, an 18th century Palladian style "casin" library. A vast collection of literary as well as photographic and cartographic material has been made available at the loggia for scholars' and public use.

Presently activities of the Center are concentrated on development of programs of reconstruction of historic monuments of Armenia and their implementation. The program enjoys cooperation and support of international as well as governmental

THE ORGANIZERS

THE ARMENIAN CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL ART

Formation of ACCEA started in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia by group exhibition organized and curated by New York artist and poet Sonia Balassanian in 1992. It was registered as a non-profit Private Voluntary Organization in Yerevan and New York in 1995. Edward Balassanian is Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the organization. ACCEA is dedicated to promotion of Armenian avant-garde art.

The mission of ACCEA is:

- To encourage and facilitate uninhibited expression and creativity by providing venue and support for presentation of works by upcoming and aspiring artists.
- To support the process of search, discovery, and conquest of "new frontiers" in the arts, and experimentation in areas less known and visited before.
- To create an intellectual environment, for counteracting commercialization of the creative process.
- To present Armenian contemporary art at the international arena, and presentation of international avant-garde art in Armenia.
- To promote an interactive artistic community of Armenia proper and the Armenian Diaspora.
- To organize regular as well as occasional gatherings, seminars, conferences, etc., with eventual aim of creating a non-matriculated and free environment of learning and intellectual discourse.

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La Biennale di Venezia

50th International Art Exhibition

ARMENIAN PAVILION

DAVID KAREYAN
EVA KHACHATRIAN

Commissioner & Curator: Edward Balassanian

Artistic Adviser: Sonia Balassanian

Honorary Commissioner: Joan Agajanian Quinn

Under the Auspices of:

THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE,
YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Hosted by:

CENTRO STUDI E DOCUMENTAZIONE DELLA CULTURA ARMENIA

Organised by:

THE ARMENIAN CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL ART

June 15 – November 2, 2003

LOGGIA DEL TEMANZA

Dorsoduro, Venice



NO RETURN NO RETURN

An aura of uncertainty and wavering between conflicting values is overwhelming the new generation of intellectuals of nations, which have emerged from the ruins of the collapsed Empire. The clash between market and moral values—the pragmatic vs. Intellectual—is becoming more and more painful and difficult to comprehend and reconcile with. Commonly accepted means of exchange are being rejected and declined from... A slow-burning anger and rebellion is building up in the inner world of this generation. The work presented in this year's pavilion of the Republic of Armenia is reflective of this state of mind and psyche.

The piece is a multi-media project composed of video art projected on several screens, augmented with a choreographed performance. The work is based on turn-of-the-century Armenian revolutionary—political as well as literary—poet, Yeghishé Charents's following verse:

*"Look,
today
a burning steel laughter
is licking you..."*

In the piece words have been "transfigured" beyond recognition, even to the Armenians—the text is read backwards, from end to the front, and has been electronically reversed!

Artist David Kareyan explains:

"There are instances in life when words become useless, and it seems like the World has not been created by words, and it is possible to communicate by the most intimate language: language of the body..."

When mind does not get into conflict with body, and body starts to talk by giving information about itself, a super-communicative field is created, which reinstates the disrupted history of civilization and nature."

Indeed. Words have been abandoned as means of communication in this work. One does not understand the words—overwhelming majority of viewers in Venice would not understand the Armenian verse, anyway—but the rebellious spirit of the poet is there, and comes through loud and clear... Primitive drumbeats on the back of empty tar-barrels accompanied by shrieking sounds of vibrating metal sheets pierce the ear... In the background dramatic sounding "deformed verses" of Charents fill the air...



Video scenes projected on elevated screens depict "dancing" human torso with superimposed images of machines, fire, and frenzied crowds, while underneath, at the center of the space, black-robed figures drum the barrels. Another group criss-crosses the area, vehemently vibrating shiny metal sheets, while maintaining impressionless composure and posture.

Absent refined and meticulously produced art, one would perhaps feel transplanted into "Futurist" milieu of the turn of the century, where the scent of industrial sludge and burned fuel would be the order of the day. But this is not the case. Artists, as their forefather, rebel against tautology of words and denounce ideologies stemming from them. They defy standards and mores by stripping off these exponents of "civilization", and attempt to liberate from them.

The dichotomy between utopia and bitter reality is overwhelming... The idealist revolutionary, who was also often subversive and self-destructing—symbolized in the person of Yeghishé Charents—embodies the central theme of the work.

In this part of the World—the former Soviet Union—a new generation is emerging who has only theoretical—descriptive—information on the era just past. And this "blows their minds". Reverberations of the egalitarian social order advocated/propagated by the communist ideology, together with the horror stories of decadence and disappearance of standards of social and individual morality have reached this new generation only intellectually.

Yet, they see that the present—post Soviet—conditions are in essence not much different. They see and experience conditions, which appear to be reminiscent of the ones they have only heard of. They are not sure if they should aspire or negate them...

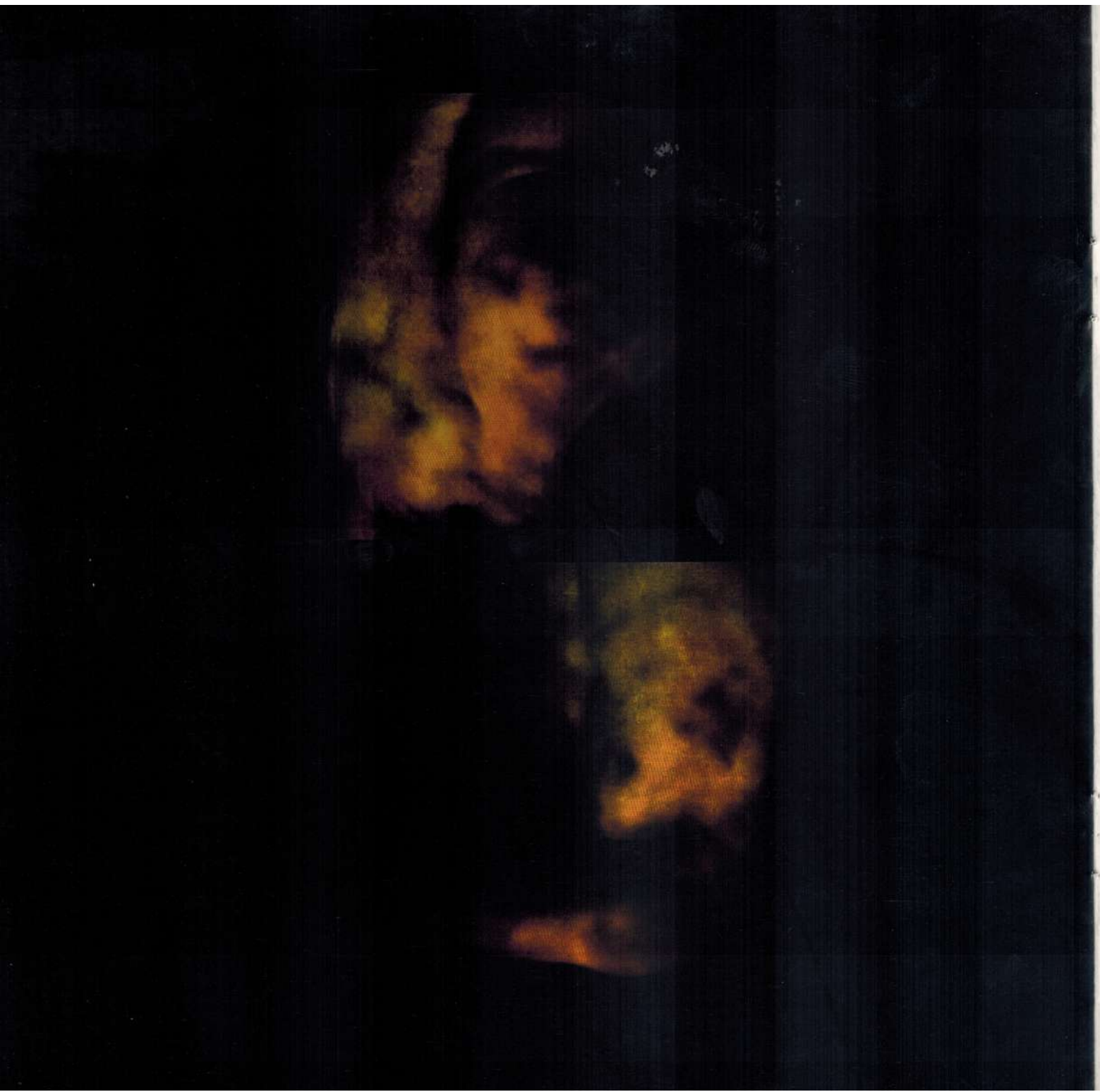
Hence, in desperation they utter words such as:

*"No more history...
You get up in the morning and you don't know what to do.
Life has become mechanical and unbearable.
You have lost your ideals.
To act for satisfaction is as senseless as not to act.
Nature does not obey you.
You grow old.
You strive for illusions, for forgetting reality, which is indifferent towards you.
You have appeared in the middle of a frantic storm.
You do not know how, and on whom to take revenge:
To become a terrorist or to commit suicide."*

And they conclude:

"If this emotional state is familiar to you, you are in a crisis of personality, you have reached an impasse, and are unable to distinguish wish from expediency".

Edward Balassanian
Commissioner and Curator







The project contextually is composed of contrasting parts: industry and nature; present and memory; reality and illusion... In the middle of this contradiction is the man, who, as embodiment of unconformity, does not see the future, and continuously turns to the past, by losing the present...

Such is the character of the contemporary man, who is yet to emancipate from his fears...

Often, fine arts, music, and literature, by addressing the same issue interweave with each other and create a more complete, and encompassing image. A synthetic genre, such as this project, emerges as a result.



Man, trying to reach accommodation and harmony with himself, may have destructive desires, and return to the roots by merging with nature...

Often he seeks refuge in religion. Sometimes he even resigns from all human attributes, but still is unable to find what he is looking for.

Figures dressed in religious robes accompany ritualistic movements with primitive and rough rhythms, as if calling their ancestors... These are the rhythms, which awaken animal instincts...

The other part of the music relates more to the present than the past; to the new means of communication. Loud samples of electronic and industrial sounds presented in the form of techno-music are heard.

On this background recitation of a verse is heard. One layer of this recitation is the text read backwards—from end to front—and the other layer is "electronically reversed" version of the same "backwards read" text. It conveys impression of a magical intonation. The only difference is that one usually does not comprehend reversed text, but wisdom of this one



comes through as general feeling of a beautiful poem.

Thus, while magic text is compiled of comprehensible words, it is the magic of poetry which makes impression.

Eva Khachatryan

I was born in one of forest-covered northern regions of Armenia, in the village of "Darpas". Darpas in Armenian means gate. Darpas did not resemble a village, it reminded more of an industrial center. A good number of poisonous chemical plants of the Soviet Union were built there. Overtime, some of the abandoned factory sites were turned into grazing grounds.

There, nature and industry coexisted in unusual, mutually destructive relation. The conflict became more apparent after the Spitak earthquake (December 1988) and during post-Soviet years, when the regime, which ignored nature, collapsed and with it



destroyed the industry as well as the nature. Social and economic turmoil of following years had major effect on my artistic vision. Tendency for avoiding natural and social disasters and drive for subsistence became more explicit in my art when in 1994 together with a group of artists we created the "Act Group". We were trying to make art serve the process of solving burning social problems.

In "Art Demonstration" (1995), "Beautiful Progress" (1996), and other performances and "actions" we were scoring bureaucratic and totalitarian postures, which opted to disregard the

Difference between wisdom and insanity. However, since 1997, utilization of art as clean means of propaganda, for me seized to be really effective and convincing.

"Crisis" (1999) and "Civic Commotion" (2000), exhibitions I organized at the Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art—"NPAK" in Armenian acronym—in my opinion were more fitting to the role of the artist, and contemporary vision of art.

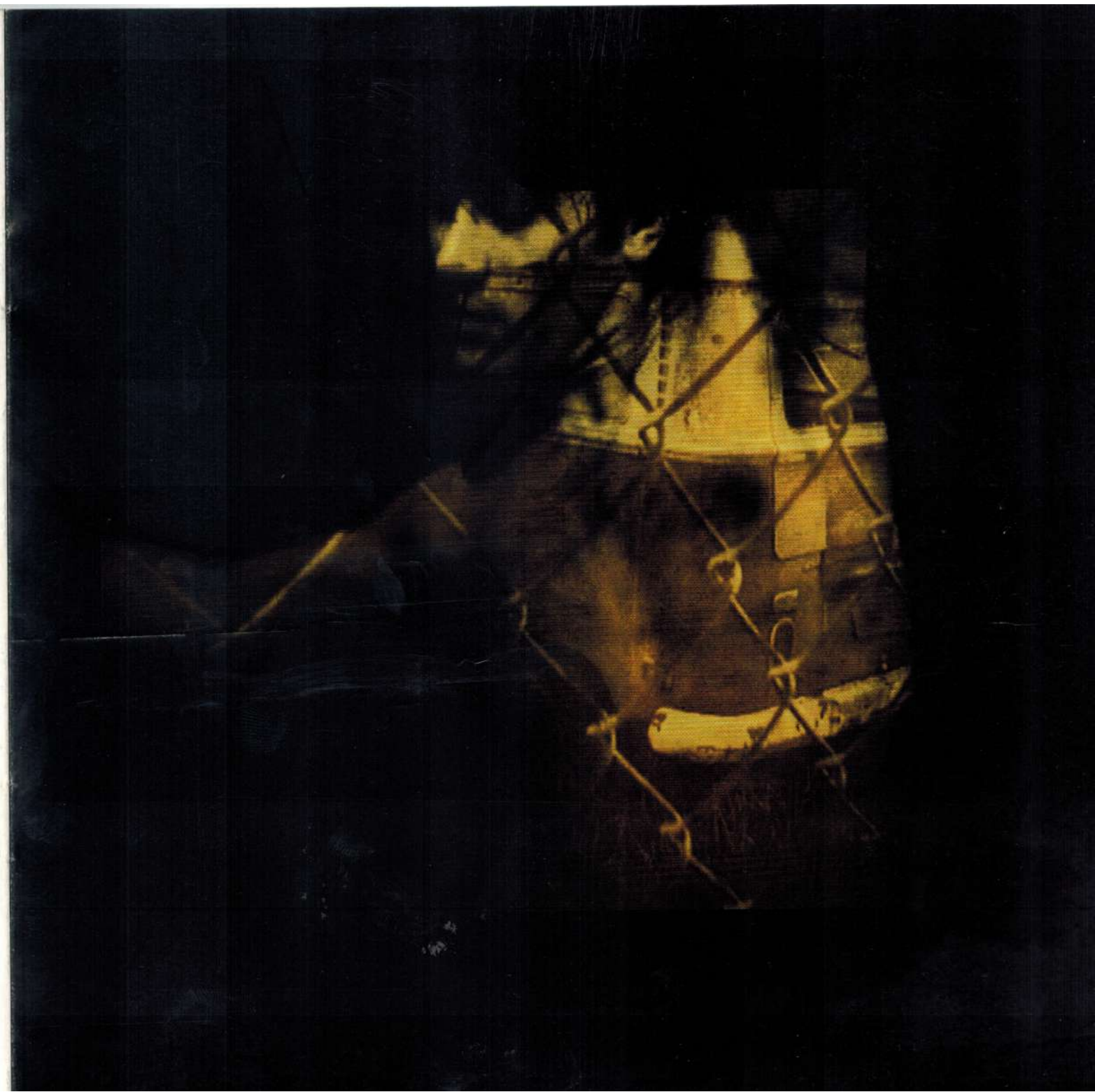
During creative process I search for images, which by means of direct impact awaken deep and long forgotten fantasies, and reinstate those horrifying feelings.



The fear emanating from transformation of social systems, which is apparent in post-Soviet countries, in my deepest conviction is related with horrors of disintegration. Post Cold-War man is anxiously searching for boundaries, points of reference and sense of belonging.

These are precisely the causes of egoism, nationalism and chauvinism, which I try to address in my art.

David Kareyan



DAVID KAREYAN



Born 1973, Village of Darpas, Armenia

Education

1993-1999 Academy of Fine Art, Yerevan, Armenia

1989-1993 College of Arts, Yerevan, Armenia

Selected group exhibitions

2002 Contemporary Art of Armenia, organized by ACCEA, House of artist, Teheran, Iran

2001 49 Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy

2000 Festival Est-ouest, Die, France

2000 Collapse of Illusion, ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia

2000 International Biennale of Giumry, Giumry, Armenia

2000 Parallel Realities, Armenian Austrian Joint Exhibition, Hay-art, Yerevan

1999 Crisis, ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia

1999 Three Tendencies, Hay-Art, Yerevan, Armenia

1997 Post Factum, "Inscription", ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia

1995 Question of Ark, ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia

1995 Contemporary Art of Armenia 80-95, CHA, Moscow, Russia

1995 Act, Ex-Voto Gallery, Yerevan, Armenia

1995 Rediscovery Space, Bochum, Germany

1993 P.S., Art Gallery, Yerevan, Armenia

Selected one-person exhibitions

2003 Are There Visible Things Impossible to Show?, ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia

Selected grants

2002 CEC international partners, NY, USA

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EVA KHACHATRIAN



Born 1977, Yerevan, Armenia

Education

1996-2001 Conservatory, Faculty of Music Theory, Yerevan, Armenia

2001 Postgraduate, Music Theorist

Professional Experience

2002 Contemporary Art of Armenia, organized by ACCEA, House of artist, Teheran, Iran

2002 Collaborative curatorial work in "Affirmative Art" exhibition, ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia

2001 Curator of the exhibition "Sound and Space", ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia

2000 Musical performance in the church, International Biennale Of Giumry, Giumry, Armenia

2000 Lecture "Minimalism In Music", ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia

2000 - Present Coordinator of Avant-Garde Music ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia

2000 Collaborative Curatorial work in Festival of Alternative Art "Civic Commotion", Yerevan, Armenia

Publications

Article "Avant-Garde Music in Armenia" in catalog "Civic Commotion" 2000

Article "Love Summer and Incest" review on Rock Festival 2001 "Armenian Time" newspaper

Participation in international projects, events, programs

2002 Seminar "Professional Standards in Curatorial Practice 2: Curating in Transition", Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, Serbia

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Special thanks to:

Most Rev. Fr. Jacques (Harutiun) Bezdikian for his relentless support and coordination of pavilion affairs in Venice.

Mrs. Joan Agajanian Quinn and Mrs. Sonia Balassanian for organizing the fund-raising for the Armenian Pavilion, 2003.

THE ARMENIAN PAVILION COUNCIL 2003 50TH INTERNATIONAL ART BIENNALE OF VENICE

Since 1995, for five consecutive Biennales, international committees under the name of "The Armenian Pavilion Council" were formed to facilitate raising funds for realization of pavilions of Armenia.

Armenian community leaders, public officials, and prominent professionals in the fields of arts, literature, science and business were invited as members of the Honorary Board of the Council, who lent their unconditional support, and helped us realize the project. These individuals are ardent supporters of art, steadfast friends of Armenia, and advocates of its proper exposure on the international arena.

Together, we have done everything humanly possible to see this project through, and to elevate the image of Armenia and its rich and unique culture.

We shall keep the good work going...

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1995 - George Garo M. Beyerlian

Nina Hovnanian

Alice Kirikjian

1997 - Ani Boyajian

1999 & 2001 - Joan Agajanian Quinn

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