

Exhibition text

Press release

From the 2001 Venice Biennial

Henning Christiansen, Ursula Reuter Christiansen, Liza May Post, Sergei Shutov, Olga Chernysheva, Eliezer Sonnenschein, Minnette Vári

21 June – 18 August 2002

Private view Friday 21 June at 4 to 6 p.m.

The Venice Biennial has a decisive impact on the contemporary art scene.

Now, a selection of major contributions to the 2001 Venice Biennial are exhibited at Charlottenborg, Copenhagen.

Charlottenborg has invited Ursula Reuter Christiansen and Henning Christiansen to exhibit their common project: DERESTAURATION. This project is an all-embracing installation, incorporating painting, sculpture, sound, photography, and video. The Fluxus dictum 'Life is Art' (and art is life) is a key element in Ursula Reuter Christiansen and Henning Christiansen's project. At the exhibition, this is apparent in the playful treatment of conventions and in the oscillations between the banal and the sacrosanct. The artists have recreated their project for Charlottenborg, allowing visitors to experience the sense of moving around a house that gradually unveils opportunities for looking, listening ≠ or for contemplating life in the Zen garden.

From the Russian pavilion, Charlottenborg has invited Olga Chernysheva and her project Second Life, which is a photographic installation incorporating light boxes, birdsong, tree stumps, and artificial trees. The light boxes show the backs of fur-clad people heading down the metro.

'In Russia, a fur coat is not about breaking out of the crowd with wealth or glamour; it is about the warmth of belonging. To disguise oneself as a beast means to show oneself as a decent member of society. So, an army of busy human moles, gophers, and beavers parade through the subway.' In Second Life, Olga Chernysheva creates an enchanted space, suspended between reality and fiction.

Another contributor to the Russian pavilion will also grace the Copenhagen exhibition: Sergei Shutov, who presents the work Abacus. Abacus is an installation featuring 39 praying mechanical puppets, all of them almost human-sized. The kneeling figures say their prayers in various languages, appealing to people of different cultures and faiths, depending on whether they are seen as monks, Jedi knights, druids, or something else entirely. This work may seem controversial or provocative, but its intentions are ultimately conciliatory.

Liza May Post from the Dutch pavilion has been invited to present aspects of her oeuvre, which comprises performance art, film, video installations, and photography. Her works always involve some element of displacement and vulnerability.

At Charlottenborg, she will recreate the dusky atmosphere from the Dutch pavilion in Venice, allowing visitors to enter a theatrical scene conjured up by means of video and photography; a scene reminiscent of Beckett.

From the common Biennial exhibition, the Danish curators have invited Minnette Vári from South Africa. She will present the video piece Oracle, which the artist herself describes in the following terms: 'In Oracle I become a maniacal golem, cramming all the conflicting histories of present-day Africa into my mouth, in a fit of hunger that makes me gag. To re-incorporate the disparate truths into one body, to make it whole again, is an excruciating task. Unlike Saturn (or Chronos), the god of time who, in an

attempt to evade his fate, devoured his children, the figure in Oracle wants desperately to hasten her fate, to bite into, over and beyond time.'

Eliezer Sonnenschein, from Israel, has chosen to create a new work for the Charlottenborg exhibition. This new installation, Heaven Carwash, continues the artist's investigations of the contrast between his personal experiences and more global circumstances. The concepts of 'virtue' and 'evil' are addressed on the basis of current circumstances in Israel. The installation Heaven Carwash comprises gigantic computer-painted works printed on photographic paper, corresponding to his contribution to the Venice Biennial.

Two Danish artists, Kenneth A. Balfelt and FOS, have been invited to create an archive that includes presentations of the artists carried out by the artists themselves, detailing and documenting their work and sources of inspiration. The archive, which is at the disposal of all visitors, will provide opportunities for more personal insights into the oeuvres of the exhibiting artists.

Guided tours

Free guided tours of the exhibition are conducted on Sundays at 1 p.m. Interested parties can book a tour at other times; please call +45 33 13 40 22 for reservations. Tours cost DKK 450 when conducted within regular opening hours.

Catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by a 32-page catalogue with brief presentations of the participating artists. The catalogue has been designed by FOS as part of the archive project created by him and Kenneth Balfelt in connection with this exhibition. The catalogue is in Danish and English and costs DKK 30.

The press is invited to visit the exhibition on 21 June from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The artists will be present at this event, and Charlottenborg will provide light refreshments in the Café.

For more information, please contact Charlotte Brandt (tel. +45 33 13 40 22, e-mail charlotte@charlottenborg-art.dk), or visit www.charlottenborg-art.dk, where press photos are also available.

Best regards

Charlotte Brandt
Curator