

SARIEVA

JEANNE-CLAUDE FOR BEGINNERS (or Power Girls in Public Space)

Group exhibition and discussion

Part of CHRISTO FOR BEGINNERS by Luchezar Boyadjiev
Sarieva Open Arts Program

Maria Nalbantova, Sophia Grancharova, Iskra Blagoeva, Natalia Todorova-Lenz, Aksiniya Peicheva, Boryana Rossa, Selma Selman, Kalina Dimitrova, Dessislava Terzieva, Mariela Gemisheva, Ina Valentinova, Šejla Kamerić, Ana Prvački
Curated by Luchezar Boyadjiev

September 9th – October 9th, 2022
Opening: September 9th, 17:00 – 20:00
artnewscafe, Plovdiv

“Christo for Beginners” by Luchezar Boyadjiev is a project about what’s private and shared in both the physical space and the imagination. The artist engages with the public space and that involves the urban, the media, and the virtual environment. Luchezar Boyadjiev is activating them with artworks, visions, exhibition displays, actions and lectures while involving the collaboration of both his fellow citizens and colleagues. Luchezar Boyadjiev is a known expert on the projects, the practices and the methodologies developed and used by Christo and Jeanne-Claude. However, this is the first time he is implementing such a project as an artist, rather than as an art critic, a theoretician, a lecturer or a historian of art. “Christo for Beginners” is the pilot project of the Sarieva / Gallery and the Open Arts Foundation within the Sarieva Open Arts program.

A letter from Luchezar Boyadjiev to the artists featured in the exhibition:

Greetings! :)

With this message I am kindly asking you to take part in the second, and more important part of a project, which started with “Christo for Beginners” at Sarieva//Gallery, Plovdiv! Perhaps you have had a glimpse of this project on social media or at: <https://gallery.sarieva.org/christo-for-beginners/>

Here is the idea – “power girls in public space” (within the context of this conversation in Bulgaria, which is always shimmering but never flaming) are those “girls” who are doing publicly visible deeds, who are occupying publicly influential positions and indeed, who ARE a factor in the social domain without confirming to any pre-given roles, nor paying any attention to whatever, without waiting or expecting neither permission nor approval, without looking for a public image and yet gaining an image through their work and life/love. These are not activists; they rather are working for the cause in/with their lives. These girls ARE in the public sphere; they ARE observing the public sphere/environment and they DO NOT self-define as being “observed” (if we are to elaborate on John Berger’s thoughts, via Simone de Beauvoir, and that one... whatever his name was, her husband! See more on this at: <http://quarterly.politicsslashletters.org/ways-seeing-everything/>)

In the first part of the project, we were talking about the possibility and the locations in Plovdiv where there might be “feasible” to erect, after a project of mine, a 12-15 m high equestrian monument to Christo! (...take it easy, and

not all that seriously :). Thus, we started a post-mortem conversation about the way their work (Christo and Jeanne-Claude) impacts the debate about art in public space. The debate is still on and it goes on with the question about the absence of monuments dedicated to women – visible or not-so-visible in villages and cities. In general, the debate is about the image and the visibility of women in public space!

Around 2003-2006 and within the frames of the Visual Seminar project, we were saying that at the time, the image of the woman in the public space of Bulgaria is not only an image of advertisement and consumption, but is an image of a slut. (See: <https://ica-sofia.org/bg/arhiv/visual-seminar/item/70-interface-sofia> PDF file. My text in Bulgarian and English p.p.128-159). Within the hot phase of the vulgar advertisement campaigns (for vodka “Flirt”, “Peshtera” ouzo, etc., that was brutally obvious. It is no longer the case and yet even now a “power girl” is an object of comments, of smearing drives, of bad-

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mouthings, of cursing, and diminishing or humiliating treatment. It's not only concerning the "power girls" but almost any woman who has dared to self-empower and self-assert, to acquire a voice and visibility in the public space. We are talking here about the image of Bulgarian and/or non-Bulgarian women who ARE in the sphere of culture, not only in the sphere of politics.

Here is the link to Jeanne-Claude (or Jeanne-Claude van Dam, as those near her nicknamed her), via Jeanne d'Arc of course... But rather more via the image of the Mother-Goddess, via the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar, via the statue of Liberty in the city of Ruse in Bulgaria (the work of the Italian sculptor Arnaldo Zocchi who created the equestrian monument of Alexander II in Sofia, and many other monuments).

Beginners or not, we must have this conversation. It makes NO sense to ask: "Where is our Vladimira Dimitrova, The She-Master; or where is our Ivana Mileva; or where is our Iliitsa Beshkova, Svetlina Russeva, or even Neda Solakova?", so that we might erect a monument in her honor. It makes sense to put an end to prioritizing the male, be that as it may an artist or else, within the public sphere, in the history of art, and in general.

This is a mini-show with blitz-curating, which aims at kick starting an important debate. I am dreaming of your spontaneous reaction, without too much consideration... - prints of small exhibition copies, sound or video files to be played in space either real or virtual. I hope for images, texts, objects, sound or visuals, stills, etc. These could be old or new works, details from works, and frames from videos or photographs from performances, old or new thoughts, words, images, that kind of thing.

For us (myself as a "curator" and the team of Open Arts / Sarieva Gallery in Plovdiv, whose project is framing this initiative) the important thing is your participation and name! And we, myself and artnewscafe, the physical host of this "debate start-up" in Plovdiv, will print out and prepare your contributions for presentation; we will display, discuss and promote those in the upmost artistic/discursive manner! The debate/event will have on-line visibility and continuation with the hope that it might turn into a platform for voicing out, announcing, empowering, and bringing to life in the public sphere of a position that says – "I am here, I work, I live and give shape to the social and thus – I AM, which "AM" is neither a subject to legitimation, nor it needs any excuses, explanations nor any of the sort! And all that is none-negotiable! It just IS!"

LB, August 2022, Sofia – Kriva Reka district

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Upcoming:

>The Presence of Absence – Artistic project in public space by Luchezar Boyadjiev
September 11th, 2022, Plovdiv, Central Square, 20 meters in front of the Gyuro Mihaylov monument, 20:30

>Presentation and moderated conversation with the artist and experts
October 27th, 2022, public space in front of Sarieva / Gallery, Plovdiv, 18:30

>Presentation of the project and archive by Luchezar Boyadjiev and Vesselina Sarieva
November 30th, 2022, location and time TBA, Sofia

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The project is realized with the financial support of the National Culture Fund.

For updates and more information follow us on our website and social network profiles:

Sarieva/Gallery Website: gallery.sarieva.org / Facebook: [sarieva.gallery](https://www.facebook.com/sarieva.gallery) / Instagram: [sarieva.gallery](https://www.instagram.com/sarieva.gallery) / YouTube: SARIEVGALLERY

Open Arts Foundation Website: openarts.info / Facebook: [open.arts](https://www.facebook.com/open.arts) / Instagram: [openartsfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/openartsfoundation) / YouTube: TheOpenarts

Sarieva/Hub: Website: sarieva.org / Instagram: [sarieva.hub](https://www.instagram.com/sarieva.hub) / YouTube: SARIEVA / HUB

Sarieva / Gallery and Open Arts Foundation are part of Sarieva / Hub, along with artnewscafe and Кабинет.