

Kamen Stoyanov

Town of Shadows
solo exhibition

6 September – 30 November 2024

Opening: 6 September, Friday, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., in the presence of the artist

Sarieva/Gallery, Plovdiv
40 Otets Paisiy Str
Visiting hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 2 p.m. – 6.30 p.m.

Sarieva/Gallery is pleased to open its autumn season with the solo show *Town of Shadows* by Kamen Stoyanov, which will take place between 6 September and 30 November, 2024. The exhibition symbolically marks the 20th anniversary of the opening of Katrin and Vesselina Sarieva's first gallery in Plovdiv on Otets Paisiy Str in 2004.

Kamen Stoyanov is a Bulgarian-Austrian artist based in Vienna and Sofia. He teaches at the University of Applied Arts Vienna in the Department of Painting.

His work spans multiple media, including film, photography, video, performance, drawing and installation. One of the highlights of his work is his research of the period 1945–1989 and how it impacts the contemporary socio-political context of today.

The exhibition *Town of Shadows* explores the subject of identity through representations of the urban. The gallery will present new monochrome paintings created especially for the exhibition, as well as the author's 16mm film "The Town of the People" (2024).

Kamen Stoyanov studies the town in its intermediary mode of being between an "ideological project" and an attempt at a common "place to live". His inspiration is the town of Dimitrovgrad named after Georgi Dimitrov, the first totalitarian leader of the former People's Republic of Bulgaria. Its construction project started in 1947 and was carried out by about 50 000 volunteers on farmlands and three villages. Over the years, the town underwent significant transformation, and after the fall of the totalitarian regime in the 1990s it became famous for its marketplace and the emergence and heyday of "chalga" music.

The paintings presented in the exhibition recreate architectural and artistic details, symbols and images that have survived to this day ever since the first years of the town's construction, all of them bearing the mark of the totalitarian propaganda stock-in-trade. Stoyanov chooses painting as the main means of expression. In this way, he forms connections with the narrative traditions of medieval Orthodox iconography.

In addition to the paintings, the exhibition includes the experimental film "The Town of the People", which represents a kind of symphony about the town as a protagonist, and not just as a setting. Dimitrovgrad – the town of the people as a symbol of both collective voluntary work and the downfall of a dream and an ideology, a symbol void of life and human presence. In dissonance with the introductory architectural still frames, the film ends with townspeople wandering around the Sunday open-air marketplace.

The exhibition departs from Kamen Stoyanov's several years of research in Dimitrovgrad, within which he initiated the restoration of "Kinoklub 57 – Dimitrovgrad", the first amateur cinema club in Bulgaria. In his approach to the subjects the author combines the artistic with the amateur and the historical with the everyday, posing questions such as: Do totalitarian ideologies diverge from the way the population perceives its own origins? Is there any stimulus to preserve the memory? Is there any intra-historical excess that drags us forward? What is museumization and what does it serve? To whom does the town speak?

With Kamen Stoyanov's exhibition Town of Shadows Sarieva/Gallery manifests a gesture of respect to the parallel program of the 30th Week of Contemporary Art in Plovdiv.

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Kamen Stoyanov was born in 1977 in Russe, Bulgaria, and currently lives and works in Vienna and Sofia. He studied painting at the National Academy of Art Sofia, visual arts at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and film directing at the New Bulgarian University. His artistic practice is diverse and multimedia, encompassing film, video, performance, installation, painting, and drawing.

Over the years, Stoyanov's work has been showcased in numerous prestigious exhibitions, biennials, festivals and institutions worldwide such as: 17th Biennale of Sydney; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia; Aichi Triennial (Japan); Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia, Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (Germany); Kunstverein Salzburg; MANIFESTA 7 (Trentino, Italy); MANIFESTA 11 (Zurich, Switzerland); MAK Center for Art and Architecture (Los Angeles, USA); Media Biennale Wroclaw (Poland); MUMOK – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien; Museum of Humour and Satire (Gabrovo, Bulgaria); 5th Mardin Bienali (Turkey); National Art Gallery (Sofia, Bulgaria).

He was awarded, among others the following prizes: The Sovereign European Art Prize (2011), Otto Mauer Prize (2011), Alexander Resnikov Award (2010), Kunstpreis Europas Zukunft, (Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig, 2008) MUMOK Prize for the Zone1 at the VIENNAFAIR (2007), Prize for Visual Arts of the City of Vienna (2007) and the MAK Schindler Artists and Architects-in-Residence Program in Los Angeles (2012). He won the award Best Experimental at the Dumbo Film Festival (2020) and was nominated for Best Experimental at the Long Story Shorts International Film Festival in Bucharest (2020). In 2024, with the support of the National Film Center, Kamen Stoyanov directed "Zvezda," his first feature-length film.

Kamen Stoyanov's works are part of public collections such as Lentos, Austria; MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts; MUMOK, Austria; MUSA, Public Collection of the Austrian Government; Sofia City Art Gallery, Bulgaria, and private collections such as ESSL MUSEUM, Austria; EVN Collection, Austria; DOM MUSSEUM, Austria.

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