

Music to the Eyes

Luchozar Boyadjiev, Tsvetomira Borisova, Sophia Grancharova, Pravdoliub Ivanov, Stefan Nikolaev
group exhibition

13 December 2024 – March 2025

Opening: 13 December 2024, 5 pm – 8 pm

Sarieva/Gallery, Plovdiv
40, Otets Paisiy str.

Sarieva / Gallery, Plovdiv is pleased to present "*Music to the Eyes*" a group exhibition of works by Luchozar Boyadjiev, Tsvetomira Borisova, Sophia Grancharova, Pravdoliub Ivanov and Stefan Nikolaev, which will be held at Sarieva/Gallery, Plovdiv from December 13, 2024 to March 2025.

"Music to the Eyes" presents works inspired by songs, musicians or objects related to sound, none of them being audio-visual works. The exhibition expands the visual experience, stimulating personal interpretations and exploring how our associations are formed. It includes mostly previously unseen works by artists from the 1990s to the present. Diverse in nature, these works are key to stereotypes or behaviours.

The exhibit borrows its name from an early work, "*Music to the Eyes (Favorite Rock Acts)*", 1997 by Luchozar Boyadjiev, which interprets the names of twenty popular rock and pop bands into symbols. The artist says: "It turned out that the names of my most popular or favourite bands were actually some objects, animals or birds, characters with iconic references, etc. – all visually easy to objectify things. One can 'listen' to one's favourite tracks even just by looking at the iconic images that remind one of favourite bands, e.g. Dire Straits, The Police, Prince, Madonna". Made during the artist's residency at The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) in Philadelphia, the work uses the repetitiveness of screen printing on fabric to create a vivid visual language. Interestingly, around the same time, the artist produced a T-shirt featuring the face of a gently-smiling Christ, just before Christmas 1997, for the FWM gift shop. Then and now, the image of Christ and rock music are intertwined.

In the same vein, the frontally placed work in the Sarieva/Gallery exhibition "*Don't You Get Me Wrong*", 2024 by Stefan Nikolaev presents an enlarged size of a cross – a jewel for a chain. The work is inspired by the refrain of the song "Superstar" from Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's "Jesus Christ Superstar", a revolutionary rock opera for its time. The musical piece explores the human side of Jesus, his inner doubts and the tension between him and his disciples. Nikolaev's work combines hammered and patinated copper, bronze and neon to create a hybrid between religious and pop culture and advertising symbolism. The title and materiality hint at the tension between the sacred and the profane, nostalgia and modernity. Jesus, Superstar, neon and patina open up the question of our own role as spectators in a world of constant media interpretation. Stefan Nikolaev's "*Don't You Get Me Wrong*", 2024 clicks in our minds connections to fashion, rock music, superstition, and personal space. After "Jesus Christ Superstar", the next track is Depeche Mode's "Personal Jesus", Madonna with "Like a Prayer" or one of George Michael's tracks, in whose MTV video he appears with his symbolic 90s cross earring.

While the male artists in the exhibition represent symbols and signs, the female artists in the exhibition are more concerned with the experiences and embodiments of the female body with music. Sophia Grancharova's *"I like dancing at the disco I want blisters, you're my leader"*, 2024 uses a title inspired by Goldfrapp's song "Ride a White Horse" to explore femininity and its complex roles. A fragment from a 1960s French magazine features a bikini-clad female figure in a kneeling pose, devoid of face and emotion. This absence reinforces the ambiguity: submission or inner strength, helplessness or provocative confidence? Two brass lamps symmetrically illuminate the areas of the figure where a hidden message seems to lurk, and the transparent silicone adds a corporeality and volume that highlights the tension between materiality and emotionality. The work continues the artist's practice of taking images from the public realm and, in the 'quote', blurring meaning and context.

Two sculptures by Tsvetomira Borisova are presented in the exhibition: *"Joe Cocker's Summer In The City"*, 2024 and *"Self-Made Shadow"*, 2024 created for the BAZA Young Artist Award exhibition, which the artist subsequently won. The exhibition takes place during the hottest period of the year in Bulgaria. Tsvetomira's heroines are frozen in languor and tense silence brought on by the heat of the city. The bodies are fragile, languid, but firm in their right to experience the moment in this particular way. As in the lyrics, the day is harsh and shrouded in the rhythm of urban bustle, while the night promises freedom and revitalization. The songwriter says, *"Joe Cocker's Summer In The City, is a dirty, lusty and downtrodden sounding song that came right along with the choice of subject matter, and it's been going round and round for a few days... The relaxation, the heat, the heaviness, the big weightless female body jamming the comically small car. All the Americana came from Joe Cocker, the music and lyrics"*

Along these lines, we might ask: What do the cities we know sound like, do we know cities through music? And how much does the media or technological channel through which we receive sound determine our perceptions of them? Do Rome, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Lyon, Florence, Dresden sound the same on different devices – screen, phone, turntable, radio? With his work in the exhibition *"Music to the Eyes"*, artist Pravdoliub Ivanov traverses these cities and other territories as radio-landscapes.

Pravdoliub Ivanov's *"Rudioscape"*, 2016–2017 in the exhibition is part of the series *"Study of Bivalent Objects"*. Created on paper with tempera and ink, it depicts the protective glass of an old radio receiver. The inscriptions of cities on this glass are portals to imaginary journeys, and the interplay between radio waves, history and geography brings us back to a forgotten medium, its specific sound and personal experiences. The artist says, "As a child I imagined going to these towns staring in the light that streamed from their names as I moved the needle on my grandfather's radio," and adds, "the painting is only a cause for interpretations and thoughts, if of course the viewer recognizes the subject."

The exhibition *"Music to the Eyes"* is a shared space of recognition and opportunity for joy with which Sarieva/Gallery encourages dialogue between different generations of artists and audiences.

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