

Pravdoliub Ivanov

The Truth About the Truth

solo exhibition

13 March – 10 May 2025

Opening: 13 March, Thursday, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., in the presence of the artist

Sarieva/Gallery @ DOT Sofia

ul. Bratya Miladinovi 46, Women's Market, 1303 Sofia, Bulgaria

Visiting hours during shows: Wednesday – Saturday: 1:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., Sunday: 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Sarieva/Gallery is pleased to present Pravdoliub Ivanov's solo exhibition "The Truth About the Truth", which runs from 13 March to 10 May 2025 at the gallery's space in DOT Sofia. The exhibition includes side events and meetings with the artist.

With this exhibition, the gallery draws attention to one of the most significant and recognizable Bulgarian artists, with an international career and a strong social and political position – Pravdoliub Ivanov. The exhibition provides a key to understanding the artist's work and comes at the right time to present important but unseen works created in Bulgaria in different periods between 1998 and 2024. Although they have so far remained aloof from public debate, these artworks carry messages that resonate particularly strongly in the moment in which we live.

The exhibition is named after the work *Truth About the Truth* – a mirrored verbal absurdism pointing to the commonality between such disparate works, whose connection is the inversion of our notions of the obvious and a provocation to the stereotypes through which we often view the world and everyday life. The exhibition also focuses on a less visible aspect of art, the freedom of interpretation that art offers and the temporal fluidity of these interpretations.

The eponymous large-format ink drawing *The Truth About the Truth* (2012) dutifully depicts two objects, alien to each other, clinging to a strange dichotomy, almost like the famous quote from Lautréamont's *Songs of Maldoror*. The stillness that the two objects radiate makes us wonder if the projection apparatus is in fact projecting the machine that seems to be trying to destroy it.

On the floor in the centre of the room are "scattered" 100 metal wheels with photographs of passengers sleeping in the New York subway, *Vehicles Dream* (1998). It is in "the city that never sleeps" that the alienated and isolated "candid"¹ photographic portraits of 27 years ago unexpectedly take on political significance today. Their stasis and metaphysical helplessness make them a symbol of fatigue, isolation and oblivion.

On the wall to the left is a tangle of ribbons for orders and medals from various countries, *Winners and Losers* (2013). The striped textile holders of glory and honours (some given posthumously) are stretched out into an unrecognisable infinity, chaotically transitioning from verticals to horizontals. It is this upward and sideways movement in *Winners and Losers* that becomes a code for reading the work – ascension and resignation, passivity and activity, vital and mortal, in an otherwise colorful, vibrant abstract installation.

On the column in the middle there is a small neon sign as if installed backwards by mistake: "on the wrong side". The title of this 2016 work is *You re*. This is what a caption would look like, indicating to people that they are on the "wrong" side, but viewed from the "right" side.

The exhibition features an object in a framed-box that seems to have black cardboard pieces jumbled inside. With each installation, the work *Just Because-II* (2012) changes configuration within the box as the elements within are not fixed. There is a scrawled inscription with a blade on the surface, reminding us of the famous phrase during the time of McCarthyism: "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean you're not being watched". A phrase from a bygone era that seems to be making a comeback with the gravitation towards totalitarian regimes around the world and new surveillance and profiling technologies.

Among the drawings is an object with a broken porcelain plate on a black background, *Eclipse* (2022). Found on the street, the plate was broken in such a perfect way that the artist returned to collect it and create the work. "Eclipse, or Why the Hungry Don't Believe the Sith" is a white inscription on the black metal surface that subtly inverts the famous phrase about the sith and the hungry, giving a clue to the work or else a confusion in the almost astronomical vision of the broken plate.

Last to the entrance is the small installation *Égalité / Equality* (2019), a work named after one of the slogans of the "French Revolution" (1789–1799). The two watery lines of the mathematical sign for equality are made of salami. Seduced, we might not notice that these are not two salamis, just as in our own success we do not notice inequalities that do not concern us. The work can serve as utopian "instruction" to achieve equality, but also as a dislocation of the mechanisms of selfishness and duplicity. All this – if only the viewer is curious enough.

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Pravdoliub Ivanov, born in 1964 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, lives and works in Sofia. He graduated from the National Academy of Arts in Sofia and holds a Doctor of Arts degree in 2015. He is a co-founding member of the Institute of Contemporary Art – Sofia. His works were also presented at the 4th Istanbul Biennial (1995), Manifesta 14, Pristina (2022); Manifesta 3, Ljubljana, Slovenia (2000), the 14th Sydney Biennial, Australia (2004), and the 4th Berlin Biennial (2006). In 2007, together with Ivan Moudov and Stefan Nikolaev, he participated in the Bulgarian official representation at the 52nd Venice Biennale. He has participated in major international exhibitions in museums and institutions such as Fridericianum Museum, Kassel, Germany, Essl Collection, Klosterneuburg, Austria, Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen, Germany, Royal Academy of Arts, London, Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow, Poland, TANAS, Berlin, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, Villa Empain, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Triennale di Milano, Milan, Neues Museum, Nuremberg, Germany and Kunstmuseum Ravensburg, Germany. In 2019, Ivanov had his first solo museum exhibition, "The Life of Others is Somehow Easier" at the Arsenal Gallery, Poland. The works of Pravdoliub Ivanov are part of the following public collections: Kontakt-Collection of ERSTE Bank, Austria, Art Collection Telekom (Deutsche Telekom AG), ArtWorks – Collection (Deutsche Bank), Block Collection in Neues Museum, Nürnberg, Germany, Collection Europe Investment Bank, Luxembourg, Collection EPO-Europe, Munich, City Gallery, Sofia, ARTER Museum, Istanbul, Turkey and The National Art Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria. His works have been featured in magazines such as Frieze, Flash Art, Kunstforum, Artforum, as well as in publications such as East Art Map and Show Time – The Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art.

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For more information:

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¹ *Candid Camera is a hidden camera or a situation in which someone is filmed without their knowledge, usually in a funny or surprising context*