

Intention for Chronology. Sariev → SARIEV Contemporary → Sarieva

I. Beginning(s) (2004–2010)

2004 – Establishment of Sariev Gallery in Plovdiv

The first gallery was founded by Katrin Sarieva, following her family's mission, which has been actively engaged in Bulgaria's cultural life for generations. Its initial focus was on contemporary ceramics and photography. The choice of the name "Sariev" (in masculine form) was made in honor of [Veselin Sariev](#) (1951–2003) — a poet, artist, and inspirer whose visual and experimental poetry from the 1980s and 1990s carries the idea of liberation, boundlessness, and a break from the status quo.

2005 – Launch of the Night / Plovdiv

Veselina Sarieva initiated a long-term strategy for building an audience for contemporary art and created the program [Night of Museums and Galleries – Plovdiv](#), which quickly became one of the most significant cultural events on a national scale, attracting over 40,000 visitors annually. [The first edition](#) was initiated by Veselina Sarieva and Sariev Gallery in 2005. The initiative functions as a catalyst for the transformation of the city of Plovdiv and sets a direction for its cultural development. Its concept introduced a new perspective on culture in Bulgaria, connecting "high" museum culture with "low" urban culture in a way that respects both, while integrating new and alternative venues, clubs, and others. From its very first edition, the project moved away from the traditional concept of a "night of museums" known worldwide, instead adopting a format strictly tailored to the city — one that evolves each year in response to the needs of its environment and a natural desire for expansion. By connecting culture, diverse audiences, and the city itself, "Night of Museums and Galleries – Plovdiv" cultivated new publics, transforming Plovdiv into a place with a new cultural model and creating the essential conditions for the city's candidacy as a [European Capital of Culture](#). The event took place annually from 2005 to 2019. In 2014, it was renamed *Night / Plovdiv*.

2007 – Establishment of the Open Arts Foundation

The organization aims to develop the contemporary cultural scene and cultural policy in Bulgaria. Before being separated into an independent legal entity and registered as the [Open Arts Foundation](#), between 2005 and 2007 the concept of "open arts" functioned as the non-commercial cultural policy program within the activities of Sariev Gallery. Under this concept, both the first and the subsequent second editions of the *Night of Museums and Galleries – Plovdiv* were initiated.

2008 – Establishment of artnewscafe and artnewscafe bulletin

Next to the gallery on Otets Paisiy Street in Plovdiv, [a community space](#) was opened — a café, library, and information center for art, lifestyle, and urban culture, with its own program as well as activities developed in partnership with the gallery and the foundation. In the same year, [artnewscafe bulletin](#) was launched as a monthly guide providing up-to-date information on exhibitions, talks, open calls, and other events from the contemporary art scene, primarily in Bulgaria and Europe. Between 2015 and 2019, it also developed as a platform for art critique, including a program supporting emerging authors.

2009 – Fifth anniversary of Sariev Gallery

Sariev Gallery marked its first five years with 43 realized exhibitions and a special celebratory publication, "5YSG" (*5 Years Sariev Gallery*), featuring analyses, interviews, and commentaries on the role of private galleries in Bulgaria. During this period, the gallery established a new standard for private galleries in the country, focusing on conceptual and artistic projects beyond commercial models.

II. From Sariev to SARIEV Contemporary. Consolidation and international expansion of the gallery's activity (2011–2019)

2011–2012 – Establishment of SARIEV Contemporary

Veselina Sarieva joined as co-director and, together with her mother Katrin Sarieva, developed the gallery into a professional international institution for contemporary art. The gallery was renamed from *Sariev* to *SARIEV Contemporary*. A new logo, visual identity, and website were created.

The gallery's program and focus expanded to include: building a list of represented Bulgarian and international artists; participation in international art fairs; and the development of educational and support initiatives for artists and collectors. Over the following seven years, the gallery evolved into a recognizable international brand.

Three influential exhibition strands were also developed: [Background: Young Artists](#), [Re-discovery](#), and [Let Them Draw](#). Artists who gradually joined the gallery's list include Pravidoliub Ivanov (2012), Rada Boukova (2012), Stefan Nikolaev (2013), Nedko Solakov (2014), Kamen Stoyanov (2017), Luchezar Boyadjiev (2018), among others. Alongside this, [public sculpture projects](#) were realized in Plovdiv and Sofia, as well as collaborations with international institutions.

2011 – Establishment of the educational platform *Introduction to Contemporary Art* and the *Collectors Forum*

In collaboration with the Open Arts Foundation, [an educational platform](#) was created in partnership with curators and art historians. Its aim was to expand the audience interested in contemporary art in Bulgaria and to cultivate a new one by providing deeper knowledge and engagement with artists and the specificities of the local scene. It also sought to present international best practices, movements, and artistic approaches, while fostering a context for the development of contemporary art and collecting in the country. The platform later evolved into an annual (until 2017) series of lectures, artist talks, and discussions, held in Sofia and/or Plovdiv. In the same year, the [Collectors Forum](#) was established — a project that gives visibility to established private and corporate collecting practices, guides and encourages emerging collectors in building and managing collections, and creates a communication environment. 2011 also marked the gallery's first participation in an international art fair — VIENNAFAIR — making it the first Bulgarian gallery to present its activity in such a context. In the same year, it also participated in Contemporary Istanbul.

2012 – Participation in the contemporary art fairs ROMA Contemporary, SH Contemporary (Shanghai), and Contemporary Istanbul

2013 – Transformation of the gallery space

On the occasion of Stefan Nikolaev's solo exhibition [Half-Life](#), the gallery space was transformed into a white cube. This configuration remained unchanged until the establishment of "Sarieva" Gallery in 2021. The gallery also participated in VIENNAFAIR.

2014–2015 – Establishment of *Sariev Project Space*

[Sariev Project Space](#) was opened in the Kapana district. During its operation, four exhibition projects were realized — two solo exhibitions and two accompanying projects linked to exhibitions in the main gallery.

2014–2015 – Participation in the art fairs Artinternational Istanbul (both years), VIENNAFAIR, and Art Brussels

2016 – FLUCA: Austrian Cultural Pavilion

[A mobile platform for contemporary art and culture](#) was launched, featuring an active summer program within the artistic microclimate of *Otets Paisiy* Street in Plovdiv, transforming urban space into a stage. The container also functioned as an alternative to the gallery space. The project was realized in collaboration with the Austrian Embassy and other Austrian partners.

2016 – Participation in the art fairs Art Rotterdam, Art Brussels, and Art Cologne

2017 – [Opening of SARIEV Studio Sofia](#)

In 2014, the gallery acquired the studio of the renowned Bulgarian sculptor Dimitar Boykov – Hesapa, located in the emblematic area of Zhenski Pazar in Sofia. Veselina Sarieva and Katrin Sarieva transformed the former sculpture studio into more than just a gallery space – into a space for collectors, a salon for discovering and exploring new artists and artworks through personal encounters accessible by invitation only. [SARIEV Studio Sofia](#) officially opened at the end of 2017, offering a new type of environment for intimate exhibitions, artist presentations, lively discussions, and gatherings for collectors and art enthusiasts.

2017 – Participation in the art fairs Art Rotterdam, Art Cologne, and VIENNA CONTEMPORARY

2018 – [The book *Introduction to Bulgarian Contemporary Art \(1982–2015\)*](#)

The Open Arts Foundation, together with the publishing house Janet 45, published [the first comprehensive history of Bulgarian art from the late 20th and early 21st century](#), authored by Vesela Nozharova. The book is based on a series of lectures delivered by Nozharova in Plovdiv and Sofia as part of the educational platform of the foundation and SARIEV Contemporary Gallery.

2018 – Participation in the art fairs VIENNA CONTEMPORARY and Artissima

2018–2019 – [Open Art Files](#)

[Open Art Files](#) is a bilingual (Bulgarian and English) website functioning as a database and digital archive of contemporary Bulgarian art, an online library and platform for art critique, as well as a program of exhibitions and lectures within the framework of Plovdiv – European Capital of Culture 2019.

2019 – Participation in the art fairs Art Brussels, LISTE, and Art-O-Rama

III. [Beginning of the gradual transformation of the gallery's name and profile \(2019–2020\)](#)

2019 – [Change of name](#)

The removal of “Contemporary” from the gallery’s name and the introduction of a new visual identity and logo – where the name appears entirely in lowercase (“sariev”) – marked a new approach to art and served as a transition toward an upcoming transformation. The visual concept is based on the experimental and non-conservative structure of the gallery. It aims to present a system that communicates freely and removes hierarchy.

2020 – Period of pandemic and internal transformation

On March 27, the *sariev* gallery launched its long-term (until mid-May) online project [#sarievselfisolation](#) in response to the conditions of self-isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, the gallery adapted to the crisis by temporarily transforming into an art studio. The project [Artist's Studio at Sariev](#) functioned as a laboratory that redefined the perception of gallery space and provided artists with the opportunity to gain experience in a new environment—both challenging and supportive of their creative process. This marked the beginning of the “dismantling” of the white cube—both physically (architecturally) and conceptually. The project had two further editions in 2022, including a residency for graphic designers. In 2020, the project “*Night of Museums and Galleries – Plovdiv*” was discontinued.

2020 – Participation in the art fair LISTE / Showtime

IV. From the “White Cube” to a “Living Gallery Situation.” A new name, new philosophy, new working model (2021–2022)

2021 – From Sariev to Sarieva

After years of expansion and leadership, the team undertook a brief pause and a process of rethinking. Veselina Sarieva became director (until the return of Katrin Sarieva in 2023) and introduced a new working principle—horizontal, collaborative, more human.

The change materialized in the addition of a single “a” to the name—from *Sariev* to *Sarieva*. This “a” symbolizes the feminine voice, empathy, and sharedness—a transition from a “masculine” model of growth to a more introspective and sustainable one.

In the same year, a process of architectural transformation of the space began: dismantling the drywall, revealing the original walls, and partially exposing the façade. This act became a metaphor for opening up—a transition from the “white cube” to a “living gallery situation.”

With the change in the roster of represented artists, new authors joined while others gradually stepped away. A new, dynamic, and (self-)reflective institution emerged, inheriting and expanding exhibition strands, projects, and logics developed by *SARIEV Contemporary / sariev* and the Open Arts Foundation.

2021 – The multi-genre situation *FUTURE UNFORGETTABLE*

[FUTURE UNFORGETTABLE](#), curated by Veselina Sarieva, is a multi-genre situation within the field of visual arts. It creates an environment in which major exhibitions, satellite exhibition gestures, a documentary video series, a program of screenings, artist talks, spatial situations and interventions, open discussions, exhibition tours, collection visits, and thematic publications are realized. Through curatorial analysis and selection, it addresses themes such as Bulgarian contemporary art from the 1980s to the present, art collecting, mapping current art spaces in Bulgaria, contemporary institutional practices, and hypotheses about the past and future of art. The process of architectural and conceptual “self-dismantling” of the gallery space was also brought to completion. The same year marked the final edition of the project *FLUCA: Austrian Cultural Pavilion*.

2021 – Online participation in the art fair LISTE / Showtime

2022 – Establishment of Sarieva/Hub

A new, experimental, and non-institutional model for organizing the activities of the gallery, the foundation, the café, and a newly created adjacent space (next to the gallery and café on Otets Paisiy Street) was developed, along with [\[kabinèt\]](#) — a platform and community for collectors with a mission to support intentional collecting, provide консултация, education, and encourage philanthropy in the field of contemporary art. *Sarieva/Hub* is the first hybrid environment of its kind in Bulgaria, created to improve the culture of living, perception, and accessibility to contemporary art. It is characterized by a multi-genre

and multifunctional nature, combining the activities of established organizations and spaces with their own programs and focal points. This hybrid environment establishes a multilayered connection, dissolving boundaries between art, the public sphere, professionals, collectors, enthusiasts, and broader audiences. The idea of a roofless cultural center, located along *Otets Paisiy* Street as a parallel alternative to the city's main commercial street, was fully conceptualized. The previously developed educational line shifted from large-scale events and projects toward more intimate, tête-à-tête experiences. In the same year, the Plovdiv office of the Open Arts Foundation ceased its activities.

V. Expansion of activities, decentralization, and new spaces (2023–2025)

2023 – Sarieva begins operating as a network of spaces and initiatives

Sarieva started functioning as a network of spaces and initiatives, with a main space in Plovdiv and an active independent program in the gallery's new branch in Sofia, located within the building of DOT Sofia — a natural continuation of a collaboration dating back to 2019, aimed at developing a creative concept and building a collection.

2023–2024 – Participation in the art fairs Art Brussels (2023) and VIENNACONTEMPORARY (2024)

2024 – Closure of artnewscafe in Plovdiv

2023–2025 – Development of collaborations with collectors

Collaborations with collectors for building collections and temporary spaces were developed, including AYA Estate Winery.