

## **PRESS RELEASE**

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania has the pleasure to announce the participation of the Republic of Albania at the 53<sup>rd</sup> International Art Exhibition in Venice (9 May 2015 – 22 November 2015), with *Albanian Trilogy: A Series of Devious Stratagems*, a project by Armando Lulaj, curated by Marco Scotini.

Lulaj's and Scotini's project was selected through an open call for proposals (21 August – 30 September 2014) announced by the Ministry of Culture, as the commissioner of the Albanian pavilion, a process that marks a first for the Albanian contemporary art scene. *Albanian Trilogy: A Series of Devious Stratagems* represents for Lulaj the conclusion of many years of research on the Cold War period in Albania and beyond, on the role of the past in the present; as well as on memory and historical experience – research conducted through archive material, and in particular the “trophy” and the gaps of the past. The first work in this series is the film *It Wears as It Grows*, whereas the second one is Lulaj's well known project *Never* – which has been widely exhibited internationally. The third work, *Recapitulation*, will be produced especially for the forthcoming Venice Biennial.

*Albanian Trilogy: A Series of Devious Stratagems* was selected unanimously by a prestigious international jury – composed of: Boris Groys, Kathrin Rhomberg, Adrian Paci, Albert Heta, and a representative of the Ministry of Culture – that convened in Tirana during 16 – 19 October 2014 for the occasion. The jury has motivated its decision as follows:

From among the number of thoroughly convincing artistic projects submitted for the forthcoming International Art Exhibition in Venice (9 May – 22 November 2015), the jury unanimously decided to recommend *Albanian Trilogy: A Series of Devious Stratagems* by Armando Lulaj, curated by Marco Scotini, to represent the Republic of Albania.

With *Albanian Trilogy: A Series of Devious Stratagems*, Armando Lulaj pursues the investigation of available readings of Albanian history from the Cold War to the present day by reintroducing once highly representative and politically charged images and narratives still ingrained in the people's visual memory, in a way that goes far beyond a subjective questioning of one nation's history to forcefully account for a general analysis of the ruins and failures of modernity.

Lulaj's ability to create connections and contexts that are not obvious but at the same time persuasive, the visual appeal of the works themselves (*It Wears as It Grows*, *Never* and *Recapitulation*) as well as the installation, which manages to be both playful and monumental at the same time – a rare achievement, ensure that *Albanian Trilogy: A Series of Devious Stratagems* will be able to engage a wider public, apart from those who are interested in and informed about Albanian history.

The pavilion of the Republic of Albania is commissioned by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania.

*Commissioner: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania*

*Artist: Armando Lulaj*

*Curator: Marco Scotini*

*Location: Arsenale di Venezia*

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## THE ARTIST:

**ARMANDO LULAJ** (1980) is an artist, playwright, and filmmaker living and working in Tirana, Albania. Following his expulsion from the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence in 2001, as a result of a series of actions aimed at freeing the institution from theoretical and academic conformism, he continued his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna, from where he subsequently also obtained an MFA.

His solo shows include *UNTITLED* (Bologna: Galleria Cavour, 2014); *Fiend* (Tirana: National Theatre, 2013); *Cold Wind* (Bologna: Art Fair, 2013; Basel: Volta8, 2012); *No More Feelings* (Rovereto: Paolo Maria Deanesi Gallery, 2012); *No Mercy* (Milan: Artra Gallery, 2011); *Silent Soziale Corruption* (Munich: Städtische Kunsthalle München, 2010); *Time Out of Joint* (New Zealand: Te Tuhi Center for the Arts, 2007); *Mainstream Dissent* (Milan: Artra Gallery, 2006); *Temporary Autonomous Zones* (Tirana: Insurgent Space, 2005).

He participated in many international group shows, such as: *Territories* (Graz: <rotor> centre for contemporary art, 2014); *Utopian Days* (South Korea: Total Museum of Contemporary Art, 2014); *Lost in Landscape* (Rovereto: MART Museum, 2014); *Les Rencontres Internationales* (Paris: Palais de Tokyo, 2014); *The Empty Pedestal* (Bologna: Museo Civico Archeologico, 2014); *The Aesthetics of the Small Act* (Thessaloniki: Action Field Kodra, 2013); *Off Side* (Locarno: La Rada Space for Contemporary Art, 2013); 63. Berlinale Film Festival (Berlin, 2013); 6th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art (Berlin, 2010); 8th Baltic Biennale of Contemporary Art (Szczecin, 2009); Italian Vision Film Festival (Bologna: Cineteca, 2007); *October. Art from the East* (Milan: Artra Gallery, 2007); 52th Venice Biennial, Albanian Pavilion (Venice: Palazzo Malipiero, 2007); 4th Gothenburg Biennial (Gothenburg: Roda Sten, 2007); Prague Biennial 3 (Prague, 2007); *Laws of Relativity* (Torino: Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, 2007); *Opening Hours* (Athens: Rebecca Cahmi Gallery, 2007); Onufri 06 (Tirana: National Gallery, 2006); *Bunker no Bunker* (Mexico: Ramis Barquet Gallery, 2006); *AYOR. No Man's Land* (Athens: Hellenic Foundation, 2006); *Action Field Kodra* (Thessaloniki: Boundary Lines, 2006); *Mini Tirana Biennial* (New York: Apexart, 2006); Tirana Biennale 3: *Episode 1 – Temptations & Episode 3 – Democracies* (Tirana: National Gallery, 2005); *Glokal* (Kosova: National Gallery, 2004); *Post-Albania* (Hamburg: Kunst Raum Gallery, 2004); Tirana Biennale 2: *U-Topos, Endurance-Transmigration* (Tirana: Debatikcenter of Contemporary Art); Prague Biennale 1 (Prague: Wetricki Palace, 2002); *Così lontani così vicini* (Firenze: Amerigo Vespucci Airport, 2002); Onufri 02: *Small Brother* (Tirana: National Gallery, 2002); *BalkanArt02* (Novi Sad: National Gallery, 2002); *Networking 1* (Siena: Magazini del Sale, 2002); *Rotte Metropolitane 3* (Firenze: Galleria Biaggiotti, 2001); *Till I Collapse* (Firenze: Gallery of Academy, 2001).

Short films include: *Living in Memory* (2004); *Problems with Relationship* (2005); *It Wears As It Grows* (2011), and *NEVER* (2012). His screenplays include: *The Tristidia Rhapsody* (2010); *Firefly* (2011), and *100 Euros* (2012).

Lulaj has been an artist in residence at <rotor> (Graz, 2014), *TICA – AIRLAB* (Tirana, 2012) *IASPIS* (Stockholm, 2010); *Villa Valberta* (Munich, 2009); *Action Field Kodra* (Thessaloniki, 2006). His work has been awarded first prizes at the Marco Magnani Prize, 2011; Premio Paolo Parati, 2011; Premio Carmen Silvestroni 2008; Onufri Prize 2006. In 2014 he was awarded with the Albanian prize for Visual Arts "Danish Jukniu".

## THE CURATOR:

**MARCO SCOTINI** is an independent curator and art critic based in Milan. He is the Director of the department of Visual Arts and Curatorial Studies at NABA in Milan. He is Editor-in-Chief of the magazine *No Order: Art in a Post-Fordist Society* (Archive Books, Berlin), and Director of the Gianni Colombo Archive (Milan). He has been recently appointed as Artistic Director of PAV in Turin for the year 2015. He is one of the founding members of Isola Art and Community Center in Milan.

His writings can be found in periodicals such as *Moscow Art Magazine*, *Springerin*, *Flash Art*, *Domus*, *Manifesta Journal*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Brumaria*, *Chto Delat?/What is to be done?*, *Open!*, *South as a State of Mind*, and *Alfabeta*. He is the editor of a book dedicated to film documentary and archive, *Politics of Memory* (Rome: DeriveApprodi, 2014; Archive Books, 2015) with contributions by John Akomfrah, Eric Baudelaire, Ursula Biemann, Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi, Khaled Jarrar, Lamia Joreige, Gintaras

Makarevicius, Angela Melitopoulos, Deimantas Narkevicius, Lisl Ponger, Florian Schneider, Eyal Sivan, Hito Steyerl, Jean-Marie Teno, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Wendelien van Oldenborgh, Clemens von Wedemeyer, Mohanad Yaqubi.

His most recent exhibitions include the ongoing project *Disobedience Archive* (Berlin, Mexico DF, Eindhoven, Karlsruhe, Nottingham, Bucharest, Riga, Zagreb, Atlanta, Boston, Umea, Copenhagen, Turin, Madrid, Istanbul 2005–2014); *Da Capo: Deimantas Narkevicius* (Zagreb: MSU, 2014); *Vegetation as a Political Agent* (Turin: PAV, 2014); *The Empty Pedestal: Ghosts from Eastern Europe* (Bologna: Archeological Museum, 2014); *A History of Irritated Material* (London: Raven Row, 2010) co-curated with Lars Bang Larsen and Gianni Colombo (Turin: Castello di Rivoli, 2009), co-curated with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. He is working on a major exhibition dedicated to art from the Middle East, *Too Early, Too Late* for Pinacoteca Bologna, 2015.

He has curated more than 100 solo shows or retrospective exhibitions of artists such as: Santiago Sierra, Deimantas Narkevicius, Jaan Toomik, Ion Grigorescu, Regina José Galindo, Gianni Motti, Anibal Lopez, Said Atabekov, Alimian Jorobaev, Vangelis Vlahos, Maria Papadimitriou, Armando Lulaj, Bert Theis, and many others. He has also dedicated numerous exhibitions to the artistic scene from Eastern Europe, including: *A Sense of Wellbeing: Loss, History and Desires* (Karlovy Vary: Palace of the Imperial Thermal Baths, 2001); *Revolutions Reloaded* (with Mihnea Mircan, Berlin & Milan, 2003–2004) *Der Prozess: Collective Memory and Social History* (Prague Biennale 3, 2007); *October: Exit, Memory and Desire* (with Andris Brinkmanis, Milan, 2007); *The Empty Pedestal: Ghosts from Eastern Europe* (Bologna: Archeological Museum, 2014). His collaboration with Armando Lulaj lasts since 2001 and he has supported and collaborated with the artist ever since.

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#### **THE JURY:**

**Boris Groys** is a philosopher, essayist, art critic, media theorist, and an internationally acclaimed expert on late-Soviet postmodern art and literature, as well as on the Russian avant-garde. He is the author of many influential books including, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, *Art Power*, *The Communist Postscript*, *Going Public*, *An Introduction to Antiphilosophy*, *On the New*, *Under Suspicion: A Phenomenology of Media*, etc. Groys has worked at many prestigious universities throughout his career and is currently Full Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at New York University, New York, and Senior Research Fellow at the Academy of Design, Karlsruhe, Germany.

**Kathrin Rhomberg** is an independent curator. From 1990 to 2001 she was the curator and head of the exhibition office at Secession, Vienna; and from 2002 to 2007, the director of the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne. She is the co-founder (with Maria Hlavajova) of tranzit, a network that supports the exchange of contemporary art practices in Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania. She was the curator of the Czech and Slovak Pavilion (Loop, Roman Ondák) at the 53rd Venice Biennial, 2009 and of Pavilion of the Republic of Kosovo (Petrit Halilaj) at the 55th Venice Biennial, 2013. Other recent curatorial projects include: *The Bauhaus in Calcutta – A Cosmopolitan Avant-garde Encounter*, Bauhaus Dessau, 2013 (with Regina Bittner, Partha Mitter, Boris Friedewald, and Sria Chatterjee); *Former West – Documents, Constellations, Prospects*, HKW, Berlin, 2012 (with Maria Hlavajova); *Christoph Schlingensief – Fear in the Core of Things*, BAK (basis voor actuele kunst), Utrecht, and Galerija Novi, Zagreb, 2012; and *what is waiting out there*, 6th Berlin Biennial, 2010. She is currently a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. She lives in Vienna.

**Adrian Paci** (1969) studied painting at the Academy of Art of Tirana. In 1997 he moved to Milan where he lives and works. Throughout his career he has held numerous solo shows in various international institutions such as: Trondheim Kunstmuseum, Norway (2014); Röda Sten Konsthall, Göteborg (2014); MAC, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal (2014); Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea – PAC, Milan (2014); Jeu de Paume, Paris (2013); National Gallery of Kosovo, Prishtina (2012); Kunsthau Zurich, Zurich (2010); Bloomberg Space, London (2010); The Center for Contemporary Art – CCA, Tel Aviv (2009); Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund (2007); MoMA PS1, New York (2006) and Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (2005).

Amongst the various group shows, Adrian Paci's work has also been featured in the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (2014); in the 48th and the 51st edition of the International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (respectively in 1999 and 2005); in the 15th Biennale of Sydney (2006); in the 15th Quadriennale di Roma, where he won first prize (2008); in the Biennale de Lyon (2009); and in the 4th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (2013).

**Albert Heta** (1974) works as an artist, designer, curator and art manager. Heta's works are often simple acts of intervention in an existing social condition, responses to a given situation, or rethinking of existing objects. His notable works *It's time to go visiting: No visa required*, a public intervention on British Airways billboards in Prishtina (2003), *Embassy of the Republic of Kosova in Cetinje, SCG* (2004) for the Cetinje Biennale or his *Kosovar Pavilion Venice Biennial 2005* (2005) distributed in collaboration with e-flux, are not merely the installations or acts of appropriation, but also acts of engagements with the conditions under which the works were accepted by the curators, media, politicians, and the public. Heta's work has been exhibited in a wide international context including: Apexart, New York, MARCO, Vigo, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Gallery Nova, Zagreb etc. Since 2006, his work is also channeled through a collaborative intervention, project institution Stacion - Center for Contemporary Art Prishtina.