

Selection Rationale

The committee unanimously selected the proposal ‘On a wildflower-lined gravel track off a quiet thoroughfare...,’ submitted by the artist duo LLC, the artist collective Endrosia, and the artist Haig Aivazian, to represent Cyprus at the Venice Biennale in 2024. The proposal is refreshing, multilayered and dynamic, adopting or pushing forward current ideas to bring both a local microhistory and the broader postcolonial experience to the forefront. The chosen concept of ‘ghosting’ in the framework of social theory poses questions that concern, among others, how past or current social powers control our daily lives. This notion holds an important place in the proposal, which provides innovative and timely methodologies that engage with pertinent issues, using a multi-media, visitor-centred approach, and an engagement with local communities. Furthermore, the proposal exhibits a collaborative inter-generational approach that breaks away from the conventional model of a single curator and artist format. It provides a decentralized curation whose power lies in its methodology, the collaborative experience of artistic practice, and in its inclusive vision. In the words of the group:

«[...]Taking ‘ghosting’ as a methodological entry point into a larger network of social realities and ghostly matters, we will refocus them onto local histories and mythologies, and collaboratively diffract through them the themes to which our practices are committed: decoloniality, extractivism and development, technophilia and social justice [...]».

The selected project is notable for a conscious commitment to the modes of collaboration out of which it was formed. Each member has extensive experience with collective and community-building processes, as can be seen in the individual and group portfolios of the participants. These attributes created a cutting-edge collective approach, which affirmed the timeliness of the proposal and gave it the lead.

Overall, the Committee was very pleased and excited about the wide response to this year’s Open Call as well as the quality of the proposals submitted, many of which demonstrated a high standard of artistic, curatorial and conceptual

thinking, reflecting the outstanding level on which contemporary artistic practices in and from Cyprus are developing.

The **60th edition of the Venice Biennale**, directed by **Adriano Pedrosa**, will unfold under the general theme “**Foreigners Everywhere**” – a reference to the Turin anarchist collective of the same name, which at the turn of the millennium addressed racism and xenophobia, highlighting the estrangement of being foreign everywhere in a global society. In Pedrosa’s words, “[...] *The Biennale itself – an international event with numerous official participations by different countries – has always been a platform for the exhibition of works by foreigners from all over the world. Thus, the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, the Biennale Arte 2024, will be a celebration of the foreign, the distant, the outsider, the queer, as well as the indigenous. [...]*”.

In the upcoming edition, the Cyprus pavilion will be housed as before at **Associazione Culturale Spiazzi, Castello 3865, 30124 Venezia**, close to the Arsenale - one of the two main exhibition venues of the Venice Biennale. Complete exhibition programme to follow.

The 60th edition of the event opens on 17 April 2024 for the Media and accredited professionals and on 20 April for the general public.

Photo credit: Forbes, 2019, "Multimillionaire Spyware Dealer and His \$9 Million WhatsApp Hacking Van".

Biographies

LLC

Peter Eramian

www.petereramian.com

Emiddio Vasquez

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The Lower Levant Company (LLC) is a project by Emiddio Vasquez and Peter Eramian that investigates Cyprus' geo-political/economic activities and affiliations across the Levant and beyond. The Levant Company, after which the project is named, served as a model for first wave capitalism in the Levant region, establishing factories at strategic trading centers in the Eastern Mediterranean such as Aleppo, Smyrna, Cairo, Algiers, Larnaca and Salonica in the late 16th century. The inclusion of "lower" in the name denotes the project's commitment to the struggles of the Global South and an orientation towards subterranean activities, drillings and extractivism. In response to more recent persistent westernising narratives which exclude Cyprus from the Levant, the project seeks to recalibrate the island's cultural compass by traversing micro/macro scales and rethinking agencies.

Endrosia

Alexandros Xenophontos, Andreas Andronikou, Doris Mari Demetriadou, Irimi

Khenkin, Marina Ashioti, Niki Charalambous, Kyriaki Rafaelia Tsiridou

www.endrosiacollective.com

En-dro-sha/ a Cypriot phrase that implicitly expresses a sense of relief prompted by a cool breeze. This 'drosia' haphazardly seeps through the humidity that is characteristic of our climate. Our mission is informed by our experience of the local, while we share the unequivocally political position of a decolonised, united, and multi-cultural Cyprus, we are looking for anti-racist, pro-migrant, queer, feminist assemblages of thought, not pillars of truth. In the pursuit of interdisciplinary, collective research, and action, we generate a

network of relations that services the need for imaginative speculation and fluid experimentation. This space for critique, refusal and speculation is productive in bringing marginalised discourse to the foreground. A breeze makes itself felt, be it arbitrarily, even in the most asphyxiating temperatures, a reminder that humidity is not always impenetrable.

Haig Aivazian

www.haiqaivazian.com

Haig Aivazian is an artist living in Beirut. Working across a range of media and modes of address, he delves into the ways in which power embeds, affects and moves people, objects, animals, landscape and architecture. Aivazian explores apparatuses of control and sovereignty in sports, museums, the office, music and anywhere else they may be at work. From 2020 to 2022, Aivazian was Artistic Director of Beirut Art Center (BAC) where he was founding editor of thederivative.org, among several other projects he initiated.