

GEORGI GOSPODINOV

Born 1968

About the Artist:

Georgi Gospodinov is the International Booker Prize winning author of *Time Shelter* for 2023. The novel is published in more than 30 languages. „It's the most exquisite kind of literature,“ according to Olga Tokarczuk, the Nobel Prize winning writer. 'Could not be more timely... A writer of great warmth as well as skill' (Guardian). In 2022, *Time Shelter* was *The New Yorker*, *Guardian* and *Financial Times* book of the year. Georgi Gospodinov became internationally known with his previous novels, *Natural Novel* and *The Physics of Sorrow* (both translated in more than 30 languages).

He is the winner of the Premio Strega Europeo (2021), the Central European Angelus Award (2019), the Jan Michalski Prize (2016), etc.

Gospodinov's works include poetry, nonfiction, essays, theatre plays, and many other. "The Crevices of the Cannon. Provinces, airplanes, and lexicons" is his book of essays in literary history and sociology of literature. His complex narratives are engaged with the memory of the recent Eastern-European past and the present anxieties of Europe and the world.

Georgi Gospodinov has a longstanding interest in the visual arts. He is the author of the visual artworks *The Slap Factory* and *Future Cancelled*, and has been the co-curator of museum exhibitions such as "The Afternoon of an Ideology" (Sofia City Gallery, 2016) and "The Story of Money" (Regional History Museum, Sofia, 2015).

Gospodinov is associate professor at the Institute for Literature, BAS, Sofia. He teaches creative writing at the Sofia University and was awarded a number of fellowships in Europe and in the USA, among which the one at the Cullman Center (NYPL), at the Columbia/Harriman institute and at the Wissenschaftskolleg (Berlin).

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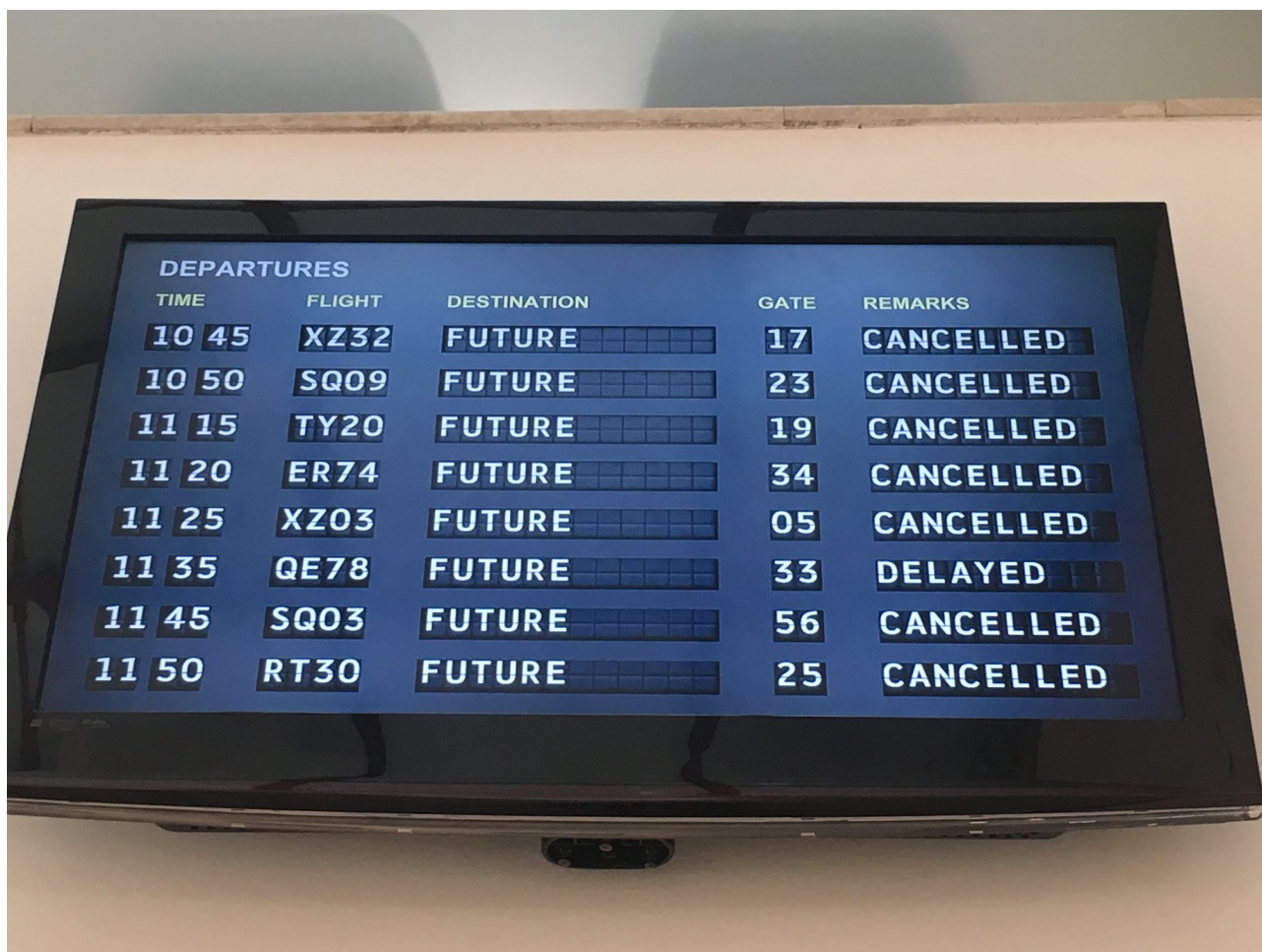
1. *Future Cancelled*, 2018

Video installation, 32 min., loop, sound

Variable dimensions

Edition: 5+1 AP

Ownership history: The Artist



GEORGI GOSPODINOV, *Future Cancelled*, 2018

About the Work:

The Story Behind the “Future Cancelled” Video Installation

Everything started with a text, of course. More than ten years ago *Capital* newspaper invited me to write about how I imagined the near future. I'm not a huge fan of the future and futurology. I don't really see myself leaping clumsily on the Moon, nor do I care much about Mars or Musk. Besides, I think what we dreamt about as a future either didn't happen at all or happened in a pretty unpleasant way. Nevertheless, I got to thinking about how our past was far more full of future than our present is.

And so the short essay entitled “Future Cancelled” was born. In a certain sense, the idea of an airport with cancelled flights as an analogy to a cancelled future arose back then. When at the end of 2017 or the beginning of 2018 the curator Vesela Nozharova invited me to take part in an exhibition at Credo Bonum Gallery, this was the first thing that popped into my mind. I clearly envisioned a big black display board from an airport, one of the old-school ones where the letters would flip mechanically until they spelled out the name of the destination and the status of the flight. There was a particular chaos in the spinning of the letters until the name settled into place. And that specific sound we all remember. So the idea was to put one of those boards in the gallery, starting with cities and destinations spelled out normally, from a normal world – Madrid, Beijing, Moscow, Paris, Rome... for flights arriving on time or delayed. After that, the names would spin with that memorable sound, and we would finally end up with “Future” lined up on the left, while on the right was “Cancelled,” as well as one “Delayed.” For the technical implementation of all this, I am grateful to the visual artist Kalin Serapionov.

The installation was created in the spring of 2018, a relatively sunny period before the world closed during the pandemic and lockdown, before all flights at the airport were cancelled.

We live with the feeling that things happen to us all of a sudden, but this is not exactly the case. Before every storm there is a gathering of clouds, there is an anxiety that can be felt in the air, something is no longer the same. Right after September 11, 2001, it became clear that something in the future was broken. They say that after that date, people started going to galleries and museums more often, lingering in the wings with classic art. We,

Eastern Europeans, come from a culture that had its gaze fixed on the future, with anticipation, with some utopian or anti-utopian projects. My sense is that in the past ten or twelve years, the future has ceased to be a dreamed-about place. We have stopped inventing it, we don't expect anything from it, fear of the future has gotten the upper hand over hope. If you ask me, 2016 was another watershed year when things suddenly got worse, and the future grew farther away. But if in 2018 the video installation "Future Cancelled" might have seemed a bit premature and far-fetched, later, in 2020, for example, or today in 2023, it appears to have found its time and place.

While I was creating the installation, I was already working on my novel *Time Shelter*, which came out in early 2020. (In 2023, it won the International Booker Prize). It, too, largely deals with the theme: how can we live when the future has been denied to us, but the present is no longer our home? And could this deficit of future, with its closed-off destinations, perhaps explain our current feverish search for a shelter in the past? We can only hope that the flight in time is merely delayed, and not cancelled.

Georgi Gospodinov

Translated from the Bulgarian
by Angela Rodel

Exhibition history:

"Pavillon of Tomorrow", group exhibition, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia 2018. Curated by Vessela Nozharova