

KALIN SERAPIONOV

Born 1967

About the artist:

Kalin Serapionov (born 1967) graduated in painting from the National Academy of Arts, Sofia. In the 1990s he was part of a strong young wave of contemporary artists in Bulgaria who embraced working with new media. Since 1998 he is an active member of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Sofia, led by curator Iara Boubnova. The Institute is an organization which brought together some of the most interesting artists of the time, among which Nedko Solakov, Pravdoljub Ivanov, Luchezar Boyadjiev, who shared an interest in contemporary art and in integrating it into the international art scene. Serapionov continues to be best known for his video works, in which he explores the capacity of video as a medium to generate suspense without sliding into the narrative devices of cinema. The relationship of video and video installations with space, the process of turning an image into meaning, the exploration of visual impact, together with Serapionov's technical mastery make some of the specificity of his work.

His projects are often related to context, time, circumstances, memory, locations and events and their significance. He explores different human attitudes, characters, communities, habits, behavior and relationships, contemporary cities and ways of life.

His works is striving to create powerful, high-impact vision that simultaneously make use of the achievements of modern society, but also subject the clichés that they create to critical treatment.

He has participated in group exhibitions such as:

After the Wall: Art and culture in post-communist Europe, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1999); Manifesta 4, Frankfurt/Main (2002); Blood & Honey. Future's in the Balkans, Essl Collection, Vienna (2003); In the Gorges of the Balkans, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel (2003); Neither a White Cube nor a Black Box. History in Present Time, Sofia Art Gallery (2006); Heterotopias, 1-st Biennial of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki (2007); Sounds & Visions. Artists' Films and Videos from Europe, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv (2009); Techniques, ICA Gallery, Sofia (2009); Indefinite Destinations, DEPO, Istanbul (2010); Site Inspection, Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2011); Grammar of Freedom / Five Lessons: Works from the Arteast 2000+ Collection, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2015); Art for Change, Sofia Art Gallery (2015); Let Them Draw, Sariev Contemporary, Plovdiv (2016); The Image is no Longer Available, Credo Bonum Gallery, Sofia (2017); Forms of Coexistence, Structura Gallery, Sofia (2018); Festival of the Regions 2019 – Social Warmth, The Region Perg-Strudengau, Austria; Open Art Files: Notes and Footnotes, Kapana Gallery, Plovdiv (2019)

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Wanted Category, 1996

Photo installation, 15 b/w photo portraits: 146x116 cm (2), 118x85 cm (1), 39x27 cm (12)

Ownership history: The Artist



KALIN SERAPIONOV, *Wanted Category*, 1996

About the work:

Wanted Category is among the most representative early works of Kalin Serapionov, testifying to his continuous interest in issues of otherness (as in his installation “Do you feel you are different?”, 1996), as well as in exploring his immediate community of artists and friends (the videos “The hot soup and my home community”, 1998 or “The Dessert”, 2019) or communities and humanity in general (as in his most recent large scale video installation “About the Walls Next to Me”, 2022). The installation consists of two portraits of the artist himself – with a naked torso and dressed as a woman, which are juxtaposed to a series of smaller images of his closest milieu of male colleagues at the time. Among them are artists such as Nedko Solakov, Pravdoljub Ivanov, Luchezar Boyadjiev, Rassim, Houben Tcherkelov, Krassimir Krastev – all present in this current proposal for donation.

“A huge black and white image of Serapionov’s delicate face and his protruding Adam’s apple. With minimal make-up. In the age of posthuman bodies, the gender binary pun is a mouldy cliché. But in the 1990s, the appearance of a man with female accessories and makeup is, in a sense, was an event. Tapping into the “homosexual panic” (Sedgwick), Serapionov combined opportunities to play up his own sexual ethos. With this gesture, he defies the medico-psychological demand that the man should not occupy the aesthetics and ethics of the woman. His image is too ephemeral to be called transvestite. The Baroque ornamentation of the terminator travesty of these times in mass culture - (the pop-folk singer) Aziz, contained an unsubstantiality of the image. The “Wanted category” sells flesh to the idea of the body and sexuality as a political idea.”

Ilyan Shehada

Published in „About the broken back of a meeting - I”, text written on the occasion of the exhibition “A few ways to win the world”, Sofia 2023

“The work investigates transvestism as a social and artistic problem that did not yet exist in the local context. It consisted of “eye-to-eye” photo-portraits of the artist’s male colleagues and self-portraits in various embodiments (drags). There was Him – as part of male professional community; Him – stripped down as an “ordinary” man; Him – as “the other” made-up in female make-up and a Blondie’s wig. The male portraits build-up the tone of perfect objectivity suitable for “Who’s Who” in the Bulgarian contemporary art scene at that time. The visual obsessiveness of the work lures the gaze towards the “retouched” image-insinuation that is not equal to the others in terms of meaning. It is outside of their dense ranks, it does not have the same type of existence as they do, it simply does not exist. The “wanted” personage in Kalin Serapionov’s work is a transvestite – an unclear and non-conventional figure for our cultural scene, the epitome of the most shocking concept of “otherness”.”

Iara Boubnova

Published in the catalogue *In Search of Balkania* 2002. Neue Galerie Graz