

LUCHEZAR BOYADJIEV

Born 1957

About the Artist:

Luchezar Boyadjiev lives and works in Sofia. He graduated from the National Art Academy in Sofia in 1980 and is a Founding Member of ICA-Sofia.

“Luchezar Boyadjiev belongs to that first generation of artists who laid the groundwork for Bulgaria’s contemporary art scene during the mid-1980s. Trained as an art historian and theorist, Boyadjiev set out to create art that questions traditional symbols of power and religion as well as the social conditions in his home country with respect to global developments and the virtual world. His analysis of the situation in the Balkans as an interim zone or Lacanian “Other” moved him to problematize the notion of transparency in the region in his catalogue text for the 3rd Istanbul Biennial in 1992, which was the first in which Bulgarian artists participated. Ever since, Boyadjiev’s work has taken up ironically critical stances toward history and social deployment.

His works from the 1990s revolve around religious symbols and beliefs, which the artist deconstructs in a variety of installations. “Fortification of Faith” from 1991, for instance, tells the story of Jesus and his twin brother—thereby forming links with Bulgarian traditions and iconography. In his drawing series “Philosophical Cemetery” from 1992, Boyadjiev attributes coffins to different intellectuals and creates mythical symbols for those who influenced democratic as well as totalitarian modes of thinking. Boyadjiev also frequently constructs utopias out of the various belief systems, an undertaking that—especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall—led individuals to questioning their identities in search for a possible future. The latter is manifested in the photographic project based on the installation “Chairs and Symbols. A Project for Peaceful Co-identification” (1995–2001), a series of eleven color photographs in which constellations of red and black chairs are deployed in conference rooms to forms a cross, a sickle or a swastika, referring to media gatherings by denoting the agency of ideology as such.

Some recent works deal with changing urban structures in a globalized world, visualizing images and text inscribed by the artist into culturally significant sites. Here, Boyadjiev addresses the notion of billboards and other advertising in public space as present-day icons, surrogates for formerly religious beliefs. The advent of the Internet has also provided a means by which the artist has critically altered spatial paradigms: these are stripped of their ideological or monumental significance, but still remain as sites that reflect past, present and personal forms of belonging.”

Walter Seidl

Selected exhibitions are: “Luchezar Boyadjiev. Sic Transit Media Mundi /The Present is too Short and Rather Tight/”, MOMus Contemporary (MOMus - Metropolitan Organisation of Museums of Visual Arts of Thessaloniki, 2020), Thessaloniki, Greece, Curators: Syrago Tsiara, Theodore Markoglou, Iara Boubnova. the solo shows “Dystopian Cozy”, Sariev Contemporary, Plovdiv (2018); “Luchezar Boyadjiev. Sic transit media mundi /the present is too short and rather tight/”, Sofia City Art Gallery, Sofia (retro) (2018); “Not a Library Artist either”, SALT, Istanbul (2013); and the group shows in 2016-17 “Economize”, Ludwig Museum, Budapest, as well as “Symptoms of Society”, Guangdong Museum of Art (Guangzhou) and Zhejiang Art Museum (Zhejiang Sheng), China; in 2016 “Cold Wind from the Balkans”, PERA Museum, Istanbul; “Upside Down: Hosting the Critique”, MCA, Belgrade, and “Low-budget Utopias”, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana; in 2015 “Inside Out”, City Gallery, Ljubljana; “The Grammar of Freedom”, GARAGE Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, and “Art for Change 1985-2015”, City Art Gallery, Sofia; in 2014 “Disconsent”, CCA “Ancient Bath”, Plovdiv; in 2013 “Economics in Art”, MOCAP, Cracow; in 2012 “The Best of Times, the Worst of Times”, 1st Biennial, Kiev, and “The Eye Never Sees itself”, 2nd Biennial, Yekaterinburg; and in 2011 “The Global Contemporary”, ZKM, Karlsruhe.

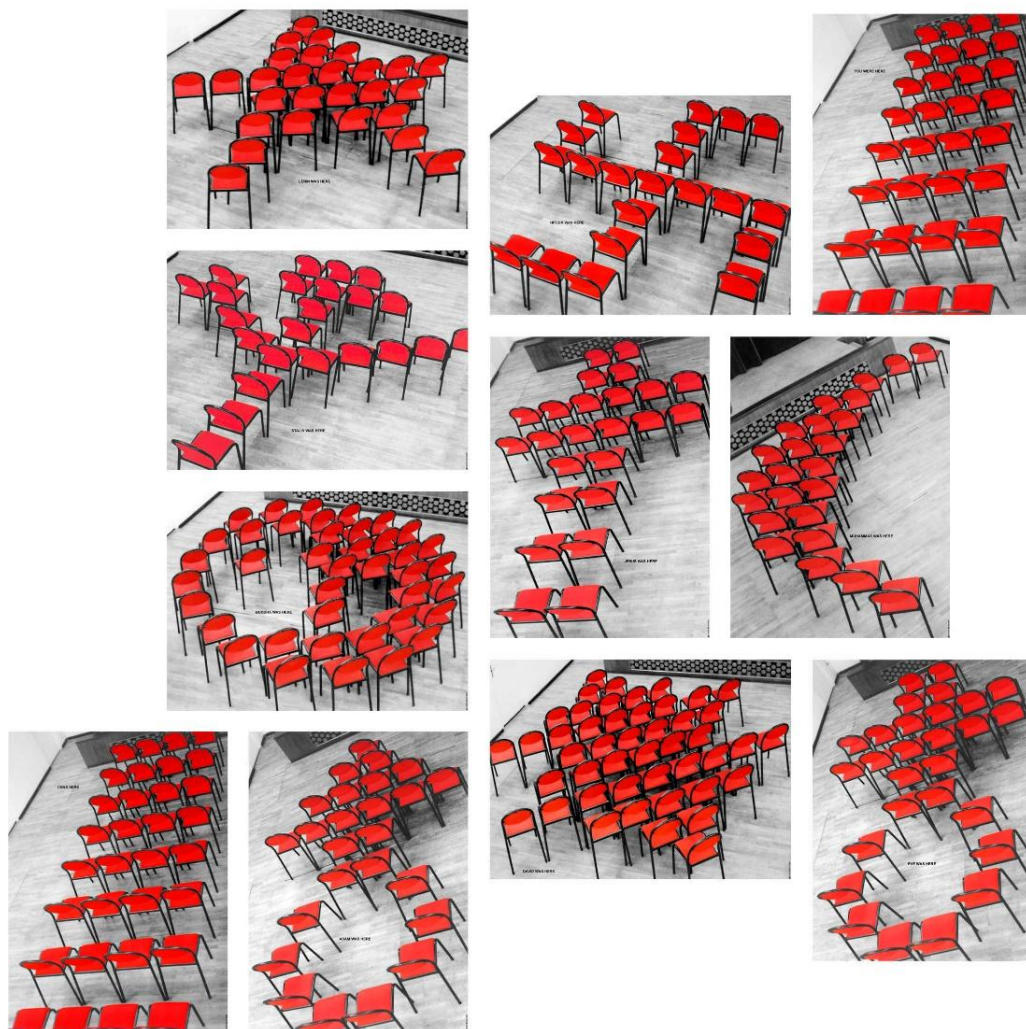
LUCHEZAR BOYADJIEV

Chairs and Symbols (A project for peaceful co-identification). The Prints, 1995-2001

Series of 11 ink-jet prints on 300g Arches watercolor paper
each one 56.5 x 78 or 78 x 56.5 cm

Edition: 2+2AP

Ownership history: The artist



LUCHEZAR BOYADJIEV, *Chairs and Symbols (A project for peaceful co-identification). The Prints*, 1995-2001

About the work:

The work references the notion of peaceful co-existence from the time of the Cold War. However, here the idea is to have a peaceful co-identification – we are all responsible for what happens in the world as we are all here and now together, like it or not; instead of “stepping into somebody else’s shoes the work urges identification-by-sitting into somebody else’s symbol. The symbols that divide people – from the male-female duo, to the religious and totalitarian symbols might also serve as a reminder that we are or have been or will be in this world together, for good and bad.

“When people meet for public events or gatherings they are usually seated in chairs arranged in straight abstract rows. I thought: what would it be like if people sit in chairs arranged in such a way so that the groups of chairs resemble in their shape some specific, well known symbols, which have been used throughout the ages for identification? In such a context when one chooses a group of chairs to sit in, one is actually selecting what to identify with and the choice becomes immediately visible. One may also choose to sit in a group/symbol of chairs he/she doesn’t necessarily identify with... As in “step into somebody else’s shoes” or in this case “sit into somebody else’s identification symbol”... The premise is that we are all responsible for what is happening in the world because we all are, or have been, here in this world, even those persons who are known as mythological figures only.

I made the source photographs of groups of chairs arranged like symbols in March 1995 using the set up – a high up projection room that I used as a point to photograph from; and the chairs in the auditorium of the (then) French Institute in Sofia – black metal frame, red upholstery. Initially the purpose was to document the idea as a project for a future installation. It has never been done with real chairs. Initially I was exhibiting the source photographs; these are no longer used but remain as a source material and documentation.

The 2001 version of the set of 11 prints is the only group of images that I consider to be the original work since that time. They are exhibited on a Lenin-red colored wall in a specific configuration – the most divisive symbols are the highest up, etc., which was first introduced as an installation by Harald Szeemann in his exhibition: “Blood & Honey / Future’s in the Balkans”, The Essl Collection, Klosterneuburg, Vienna. 2003. I use the same composition and wall color ever since. “

Luchezar Boyadjiev

LUCHEZAR BOYADJIEV, *Chairs and Symbols (A project for peaceful co-identification). The Prints*, 1995-2001

Recent Exhibitions:

2020 - “Luchezar Boyadjiev. Re-building the World of Images. 1991-2019”. MOMus Contemporary, Thessaloniki, Greece. April 7th - June 21, 2020 (curators Syrago Tsiara, Theodore Markoglou, Iara Boubnova)

2019 - “So far, So Right: A Study of Reforms and Transitions across Borders”, Display, Prague (curators Fang Yen Hsiang, Zbyněk Baladrán)