

## Potemkin Palace

A selection of artists who have been nominees or winners of the Prix Fondation d'entreprise Ricard

Mathieu K. Abonnenc, Bertille Bak, Stéphane Barbier Bouvet, Julien Bismuth, Cyprien Gaillard, Louise Hervé & Chloé Maillot, Adrien Missika, Stefan Nikolaev, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Jimmy Robert, Bruno Serralongue, Marie Voignier

Curator: Émile Ouroumov

National Gallery / The Palace, Sofia

Exhibition from 19 May to 20 August 2017

Opening: Thursday 18 May 2017, 6-9pm

After a series of exhibitions of works by winners of the Prix Fondation d'entreprise Ricard in Moscow (2008), Seoul (2014) and Mexico City (2016), in 2017 the foundation will present the exhibition "Palais Potemkine" ["Potemkin Palace"] at the National Gallery / The Palace in Sofia, Bulgaria. For the first time in this international series, the exhibition will also include artists nominated for this prize, which was created in 1999\*.

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*Bulgaria's Communist leaders were eager to show the West that their country was prosperous and dynamic. So we art students were sent to tell the farmers along the Orient Express tracks where they should park their combines and pile their hay to give the misleading impression of prosperity.*

Christo Javacheff, interview, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 2, 1995

A contemporary art prize often operates at the intersection of two movements: a cohesion effect (identifying and defining a national art scene) and a competition effect (singling out and rewarding one particular voice out of a multiplicity). At the end of this process, and through the practice of a dozen winners or nominees, the exhibition "Potemkin Palace" highlights the polysemy of this community of minds and approaches, and assembles it around a shared question: what is art's relationship with contemporary social issues; what role does an art institution play at the heart of the city; how can an exhibition be constructed in relation to its context?

The title of the project opens this analysis through a reference to "Potemkin villages", an expression referring to deceptions that serve purposes of propaganda. The setting of the exhibition is the building housing the National Gallery / The Palace in Sofia, an old royal palace that witnessed or participated in all of the upheavals of the history of modern Bulgaria: Ottoman domination; independence and the monarchy's political blunders; the proclamation of the republic and Soviet satellization; the rise of democracy tempered by a period of unbridled capitalism. Today, at a time when social



and political reference points seem unstable, this building teeming with historical and political meaning, conceived and realized by foreign architects, artists and craftsmen, can serve as a creative tool for analyzing the state of society, the historical and contemporary role of cultural exchanges and institutions.

The very practice of these artists from the French scene enriches the notion of a “scene” and places it in perspective. The plurality of their concerns defies the compartmentalization of geographic, stylistic or thematic boundaries that might try to homogenize their approach. Though they are united by their various connections to France, they are nonetheless citizens of a global art community. Their research and collaborations lead them to former Eastern Bloc countries, to France’s overseas territories, to former colonies, and to urban or remote areas in France and around the world. They tackle colonial history, boundary lines, political upheavals, the role of monuments and urban planning, the construction of national narratives, museum displays, the backdrop of the information society, media discourse, access to public voice and opinion, the analysis of gestures, the alterity of bodies, and the inequality between individuals.

“Potemkin Palace” is above all an invitation for artists and the public to take part in a process of establishing and revealing the foundations of society.

—Emile Ouroumov, January 2017.

*\* The Fondation d’entreprise Ricard is a place of experimentation, creation and meetings, dedicated to art in its most contemporary expressions. Its mission is to support French contemporary art and spread awareness of it in France and abroad. Created in 1999, the Prix Fondation d’entreprise Ricard was the first prize to reward emerging talent on the contemporary scene. Every year, an independent curator is invited to organize an exhibition at the foundation, presenting a group of emerging artists from the French scene. The prize is then awarded to one the artists, selected by a jury made up of collectors, museum directors, as well as curators of previous editions of the Prix Fondation d’entreprise Ricard. A work by the winner is purchased and then donated to the Centre Pompidou, where it is exhibited in its permanent collections, and the prize also provides the winner with financing for a project abroad.*

The exhibition is organized by Pernod Ricard Bulgaria, the Fondation d’entreprise Ricard and the National Gallery / The Palace in Sofia, and is supported by the Institut Français.

The catalogue of the exhibition will be published in early July 2017.



Pernod Ricard Bulgaria

NATIONAL  
GALLERY  
/ THE PALACE

Talks programme *Introduction to contemporary art: Potemkin villages, home and abroad*,  
with Open Arts Foundation and gallery SARIEV Contemporary  
Performances

20.05.2017 (Saturday)

14:00–17:30

Artist talks: Stefan Nikolaev, Bruno Serralongue

Performances: Julien Bismuth, *Slapdash*; Louise Hervé & Chloé Maillot, *A side*, w/ Stefan Dodurov

20:00 / 21:00 / 22:00 (European Night of Museums)

Performances: Louise Hervé & Chloé Maillot, *A side*, w/ Stefan Dodurov

1.07.2017 (Saturday)

15:30–18:00

Artist talks: Mathieu K. Abonnenc

Performances: Louise Hervé & Chloé Maillot, *A side*, w/ Stefan Dodurov

Talks with curators: Svetlana Kuyumdzhieva, artistic director of Plovdiv 2019

2.07.2017 (Sunday)

14:00–18:00

Artist talks: Marie Voignier, Stéphane Barbier-Bouvet

Performances: Jimmy Robert, *Figure de style*

Talks with curators: Pierre Bal-Blanc, curator of the Documenta 2017 Athens-Kassel team

Round table discussion

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RICARD

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FRANÇAIS

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