

[Close](#)

Support Global Voices

To stay independent, free, and sustainable, our community needs the help of friends and readers like you.

[Donate now »](#)



Western Balkan countries look at the past and the future at the Venice Biennale 2019

La Biennale di Venezia welcomes visitors from May 11-November 24, 2019.

Written by Ardi Pulaj

Posted 20 May 2019 2:35 GMT



Pavilion of North Macedonia, 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, May You Live In Interesting Times. Photo: La Biennale di Venezia, used with permission.

It is that time of the year: the setting is the Italian city of [Venice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice) and the subject is the art, in all of its forms.

The 2019 Venice Biennale, or the 58th International Art Exhibition, is [titled](https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019) “May You Live In Interesting Times”. The title is a phrase of English invention that has long been mistakenly cited as an ancient Chinese curse that invokes periods of uncertainty, crisis, and turmoil.

The Biennale features artists from 89 countries whose works are exhibited in the historical Pavilions at the Giardini, the Arsenale and in the historic city center of Venice. Among them, there are Western Balkan countries which see the exhibition as an excellent opportunity to showcase their artists beyond their borders.

Oftentimes, modern art might seem “too much” for societies in these countries, who used to favor [socialist-realism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_realism) art, a legacy from their communist past.

This is not the case at the Venice Biennale, where art has no limits.



The carcass of a ship hauled off the sea bed four years ago off the coast of Libya, with hundreds of bodies of migrants, has also gone on display. Barca Nostra, Shipwreck 18th of April 2015 by Swiss-Icelandic artist Christoph Büchel. Photo: La Biennale di Venezia, used with permission.

... and one that's particularly poignant for the city of Venice: the global warming.



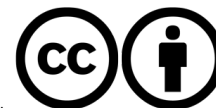
Lithuania created a gigantic man made beach with an immersive live sound performance. The Pavilion also summed up the host city and its inhabitants, highlighting the coastal environment of Venice. Sun & Sea (Marina) portrays people in a humanized everyday role battling shifting climate change. Photo: La Biennale di Venezia, used with permission.

Support our work

Global Voices stands out as one of the earliest and strongest examples of how media committed to building community and defending human rights can positively influence how people experience events happening beyond their own communities and national borders.

Please consider making a donation to help us continue this work.

[Donate now](#)



This site is licensed as Creative Commons Attribution 3.0. Please read our attribution policy to learn about freely redistributing our work

Some Rights Reserved





Pavilion of Albania, 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, May You Live In Interesting Times. Photo: La Biennale di Venezia, used with permission.


The past meets the future in the present

Albania is represented in the Biennale by Driant Zeneli, who brings a sculptural video installation titled “Maybe the cosmos is not so extraordinary”. As the official Biennale site [describes](https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/albania) [https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/albania]:


It develops from a two-channel film set in the mines of [Bulqizë](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulqiz%C3%AB), a city in the northeast of the country where, since 1918, the chrome mineral has been extracted. The film stages a group of teenagers discovering a cosmic capsule which follows the journey of chrome, from its extraction and processing inside the factory to its exportation and worldwide exploitation. This ‘geopolitical’ space travel thus turns this shady and dramatic industrial environment into an ambivalent space for collapse and takeoff.





La Biennale di Venezia 
@la_Biennale



#BiennaleArte2019 #NationalParticipations
@2019Albanian #AlbanianPavilion “Maybe the cosmos is not so extraordinary” opens now at #Arsenale. @driant_zeneli realized a sculptural video installation, a ‘geopolitical’ space travel through shady and dramatic industrial environment.

2:00 PM · May 10, 2019


 40
 See La Biennale di Venezia’s other Tweets

Danica Dakić is representing Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Biennale. The official site [says](https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/bosnia-and-herzegovina) [https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/bosnia-and-herzegovina] of her installation:

[It] reflects on the poetics of human existence against the background of contemporary post-transition reality in the city of [Zenica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zenica) [\[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zenica\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zenica), while collaborating with some of its protagonists. At one time the symbol of Yugoslav modernist progress, Zenica was left struggling after the [Bosnian War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnian_War) [\[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnian_War\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnian_War). Dakić investigates the heritage of modernity, from Bauhaus to the utopian paradigms of international and [Yugoslav](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_Yugoslavia) [\[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_Yugoslavia\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_Yugoslavia) socialist modernism. The three-video works dissolve the divisions between stage and audience, the real and the imagined city.



Pavilion of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, May You Live In Interesting Times. Photo: La Biennale di Venezia, used with permission.

Dakić is the first woman artist to represent Bosnia and Herzegovina at the international art exhibition.



Balkan Insight ✓
@BalkanInsight



To mark the opening of the 58th Venice Biennale to the public today, revisit our interview with Danica Dakic, the first woman artist to represent Bosnia at the international art exhibition:

[#BiennaleArte2019](#)



Yugoslav Industrial Symbol Inspires Bosnia's Biennal...
Danica Dakic, the first woman artist to represent Bosnia at the Venice Biennale, has taken the drastic ...
balkaninsight.com

9:00 AM · May 11, 2019 i


❤️ 10
👤 See Balkan Insight's other Tweets

Alban Muja brings to the Venice Biennale memories of the [Kosovo War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo_War) [\[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo_War\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo_War), with a video installation named “Family Album.” The official Biennale website [says](https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/kosovo-republic) [\[https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/kosovo-republic\]](https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/kosovo-republic):


[It] questions the role that images and the media play in constructing and shaping narrative, identity, and history, especially in times of conflict. Twenty years after the end of the war, Muja invites four young adults to ruminate on childhood photos taken by [photojournalists](https://www.google.com/search?q=kosovo+war&source=lms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKFwjuLL3b25viAhWHIiAKHVliBAUQ_AUIDigB&biw=1357&bih=656) [\[https://www.google.com/search?q=kosovo+war&source=lms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKFwjuLL3b25viAhWHIiAKHVliBAUQ_AUIDigB&biw=1357&bih=656\]](https://www.google.com/search?q=kosovo+war&source=lms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKFwjuLL3b25viAhWHIiAKHVliBAUQ_AUIDigB&biw=1357&bih=656) that show them fleeing their homes. The faces on the screen react not so much to history as it actually happened, but as it was represented.



Pavilion of Kosovo, 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, May You Live In Interesting Times. Photo: La Biennale di Venezia, used with permission.



Alban Muja
@albanmuja



#washingtonpost

Kosovo's pavilion is a simple, direct and passionate space, with video screens showing interviews with young adults who share harrowing memories of being children during the 1998-1999 Kosovo War"

Perspective | Venice Biennale: After long days filled with contemporary... Day Three exploring the world's most prestigious art event, and experiencing some of the best moments apart from the two main sites.
[washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com)

4:07 PM · May 13, 2019 from Kosovo




♥ 4


👤 See Alban Muja's other Tweets

An Odyssey by Vesko Gagović of Montenegro is inspired by Stanley Kubrick's [2001: A Space Odyssey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001:_A_Space_Odyssey_(film)). This is the [description](https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/montenegro) of the official Biennale site:

It leads us through time, through spiritual expanses from prehistory to the present. The artist's inspiration found its starting point in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey.



Arshake
@arshake_com



ow.ly/ELVX50u7nnc

In conversation with Dobrila De Negri, Vesko Gagović talks about his intervention at @la_Biennale for the Pavillon of #Montenegro. His project ODISEJA unfolds from the film "2001: Space Odyssey"

#INTERVIEW #BiennaleArte2019
#MayYouLiveInInterestingTimes



Conversation between Dobrila Denegri and Vesko G...
In conversation with Dobrila De Negri, artist Vesko
Gagović talks about his project inspired by "2001: A ...
[arshake.com](#)

1:25 PM · May 11, 2019



See Arshake's other Tweets



Pavilion of Montenegro, 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, May You Live In Interesting Times. Photo: La Biennale di Venezia, used with permission.

Artist Nada Prlja of North Macedonia revisits concepts of [Marxist theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism) and aspects of [Modernism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism) with a series of installations. The official Biennale site [describes](https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/north-macedonia-republic) her project, which is named “Subversion to Red”:

While enabling a subversion of both the harsh nature of capitalism and the rigidity of socialist times, artist Nada Prlja of North Macedonia employs artistic and non-artistic methodologies, including a performance-based debate (featuring key political theorists) and installations which redefine a number of socialist-era artworks.



La Biennale di Venezia ✓
@la_Biennale



#BiennaleArte2019 #NationalParticipations
#MacedonianPavilion is presenting "Subversion to Red" by
@Prlja_Nada at Palazzo Rota Ivancich, Castello 4421. The
project searches for alternative forms of art and society, by
revisiting specific artworks and theories from the past.

6:30 PM · May 8, 2019



7 See La Biennale di Venezia's other Tweets

Regaining Memory Loss by Djordje Ozbolt of Serbia presents new paintings and sculptures that address personal and collective memory. The official website [describes them](https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/serbia) (<https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2019/national-participations/serbia>):

The works in themselves are interpretations, a subjective view of the past from the perspective of the present moment. Ozbolt questions the role of the artwork in distilling the truth: in its imagined unreality, the works reveal their memory to be false, however as artistic representation, they are true.



Pavilion of Serbia, 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, May You Live In Interesting Times. Photo: La Biennale di Venezia, used with permission.

This Twitter user felt some [Yugonostalgia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugo-nostalgia) (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugo-nostalgia>), while visiting the Serbian pavilion.



Marko Čeperković
@markocepherkovic



Spent the last four days at [@la_Biennale](#) in Venice as a guest of the Serbian delegation. [#DjordjeOzbolt](#) created the works inside what used to be the Yugoslav pavilion and what Serbia uses today. During my stay I couldn't help but feel some [#Yugonostalgia](#).

9:37 AM · May 12, 2019



9

See Marko Čeperković's other Tweets

La Biennale di Venezia (as it is known in Italian), which opened on May 11, will welcome visitors until November 24, 2019.

The themes of this year's edition include among others, international crises, such as migration: