



"War Witness Archive" is about the person acting as a conscious and concerned 'witness' to the phenomena whose characteristics are timeless: war, conflict, pain of other, suffering and uncertainty of the future; he is no longer an indifferent 'passer-by' or sightseer. The heterotopias are the spaces in which memory, time and historical gaps in the global landscape of modernity are generated, transforming a platform of the 'living present' into the 'memories of the past'. The visitor encounters the photographic and historical archives of global events, the catastrophic nature of which can only be completely understood in retrospection. It asks, 'Can the person of today become a witness of these historical events, and add some form of clarity to them?' By trying to understand global wars, the viewer becomes a party to them, projecting his current reactions and individual perceptions onto the historical archive. By embedding his reaction within the project, the participant creates a record, a 'new history' of its present and future development; participation determines its connection to the past for the future.

In particular, this witness becomes a key figure in the project, gradually acquiring the characteristics of a contributing author to the work: actively engaging in the identification of the past, expressing his vision of both "the current state of things" and the "appearance of things", outlining possible futures and developing possible scenarios surrounding the events. The Archive is a meeting point for events with the author who observes and commits to writing what he has 'seen'; his words become a testimony, a 'witness statement'. The witness is the person becomes the mouthpiece of, the spokesperson for the person who can no longer communicate, who no longer exists. The words of this modern scribe or storyteller are decorated and punctuated with the symbols and metaphors and are thus transformed into mosaic-like, fragmented "places of memory". What is created is a sort of myth but a myth which does not prettify or exaggerate reality; works not by resorting to conceited or pretentious narratives, but through understanding compassionate attempt to appreciate of what he has inherited.

Content of the project is framed by an Information system which delivers an ability to watch, touch, listen, speak and respond.

"The space of communication" in the project operates from a photographic archive of a turning point in the twentieth century, one of the most remembered events in history: World War I. Removing a time frame, documentary photography becomes a means of communication between people,. This photographic evidence is the starting point for the formation of a "polyphonic" narrative: the Meta-Archive, an archive of contextual fields of the project.

Olga Rybchinskaya
Aleksei Shinkarenko

Republic of Belarus pavilion on 56th Venice biennale

Title of the exhibition: War Witness Archive

Pavilion space: Castello 2145

Opening date: 6th of May, 6pm, 2015

Exhibition dates: May, 7 – September, 14, 2015, open daily (except Monday), 10am-6pm

Project web-site: www.wwa.by

Project e-mail: press@wwa.by

Commissioner: Natallia Sharanhovich

Curators group: Aleksei Shinkarenko, Olga Rybchinskaya

International Management: Alena Vasileuskaya

Assistant Commissioner: Kamilia Yanushkevich

Courtesy:

National History Museum of the Republic of Belarus,

Grodno State Historical and Archaeological Museum,

Lida Historical and Art Museum,

Kobrin Military History Museum named after Alexandr Suvorov,

Slonim Local Lore Museum named after Iosif Stabrouski,

Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle,

Central Scientific Library named after Yakub Kolas of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus,

Bahdanau Uladzimir, private collector

Project team:

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With participation of: Konstantin Selikhanov

Organizers:

Center of Contemporary Arts, Belarus

Minsk Center of Photography

With the patronage of:

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Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in Italy

Museum of modern Fine Art

VMP Vlasova Mikhel & Partners