

The AZERBAIJAN PAVILION
at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia

presents two exhibitions

Beyond the Line



Tofik Javadov *Oil Workers*, 1958-1959, oil on canvas, Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Baku, Azerbaijan. Photo: Mirnaib Hasanov.

Image courtesy of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation

Vita Vitale



Mircea Cantor *Untitled (Unpredictable Future)*, 2004. Light box. Courtesy of the Rennie Collection

presents the following exhibitions

Beyond the Line

Commissioner: Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Baku, Azerbaijan

Curators: de Pury de Pury, Emin Mammadov

Participants: Ashraf Murad, Javad Mirjavadov, Tofik Javadov, Rasim Babayev, Fazil Najafov, Huseyn Hagverdi, Shamil Najafzada

Venue: Palazzo Lezze, Campo S. Stefano, San Marco 2949

Official opening: May 6th

Vita Vitale

Commissioner: Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Baku, Azerbaijan

Created by: IDEA (International Dialogue for Environmental Action)

Curators: Artwise: Susie Allen, Laura Culpan, Dea Vanagan

Participants: Edward Burtynsky, Mircea Cantor, Loris Cecchini, Gordon Cheung, Khalil Chishtee, Tony Cragg, Laura Ford, Noemie Goudal, Siobhán Hapaska, Paul Huxley, IDEA laboratory and Leyla Aliyeva, Chris Jordan with Rebecca Clark and Helena S.Eitel, Tania Kovats, Aida Mahmudova, Sayyora Muin, Jacco Olivier, Julian Opie, Julian Perry, Mike Perry, Bas Princen, Stephanie Quayle, Ugo Rondinone, Graham Stevens, Diana Thater, Andy Warhol, Bill Woodrow, Erwin Wurm, Rose Wylie

Venue: Ca' Garzoni, San Marco 3416, 30124

Official opening: May 6th

Beyond the Line and Vita Vitale

presented by Azerbaijan

This year marks Azerbaijan's second participation in the **56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia**, supported by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. For **Biennale Arte 2015**, Azerbaijan presents two exhibitions for international audiences that celebrate the voices of artists addressing social, political, and ecological questions of global relevance.

de Pury de Pury and Emin Mammadov curate the first exhibition, *Beyond the Line*, which spotlights the resilient spirit of artists whose lives and work were overshadowed by the repressive Soviet regime of the mid 20th century.

Susie Allen, Laura Culpan, and Dea Vanagan of Artwise curate the second exhibition, *Vita Vitale*, in which Azerbaijan brings together international contemporary artists whose work expresses concerns about our planet's destiny. When viewed jointly, the two exhibitions reveal a country contemplating its past and its future, as well as the impact of 20th-century social and industrial transformations upon its own soil, and that of the world. *Beyond the Line* revisits a crucial moment within Azerbaijan's history, and returns their voices to the nation's mid-century artists, who were silenced or ignored under Soviet rule.

With *Vita Vitale*, Azerbaijan looks forward, and beyond its geographic borders, providing a platform for international artists and scientists who grapple with the ecological challenges we face globally today and tomorrow as a result of our technological advances, and the consequent rise in consumerism.

Both exhibitions showcase the gravity of the artist's voice on the social and environmental issues that define not only the past, present, and future of Azerbaijan, but of the planet.

Beyond the Line

Art can speak about environmental circumstances directly or allegorically. The Azerbaijani avant-garde artists of the mid-twentieth century, working in strictly controlled conditions, often resorted to the use of allegory. By the 1960s, artists who displayed 'rebellious' personal attitudes that deviated from Communist ideology were no longer arrested, executed, or banished. They were punished differently. Their works were ignored, they could not hold exhibitions, and they were not permitted to travel abroad. They were thus refused the guardianship of state structures regulating official art. Azerbaijan proudly presents their works in *Beyond the Line*, which showcases the Soviet period artwork of the non-conformist artists Javad Mirjavadov, Tofik Javadov, Ashraf Murad, Rasim Babayev, and sculptor Fazil Najafov. The exhibition also includes the film 'Stepping over the Horizon' directed by Shamil Najafzada as well as an installation by Huseyn Hagverdi, whose career suffered under Soviet rule, but whose creativity nevertheless blossomed. These displays by hitherto obscure artists represents the victory of their indestructible spirit. Today, they speak about their epoch from the heart, symbolizing 'the ecology of the human soul.' *Beyond the Line* acts as a counterpoint to the international exhibition *Vita Vitale* (Vital Life), Azerbaijan's second pavilion at the **56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia**.

Vita Vitale

Vita Vitale examines the delicate balance of our planet's ecosystem and the human impact on the natural world. It brings together contemporary artists from Austria, Canada, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Pakistan, Romania, Switzerland, UK, USA, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan — a presentation spanning the borders of language, cultural heritage, and geography — to raise awareness about our environment and the global transformation of the planet through human activity. Multimedia works and installations by international artists — including Mircea Cantor, Loris Cecchini, Tony Cragg, Jacco Olivier, Julian Opie, Graham Stevens, Diana Thater, and Andy Warhol — the IDEA Laboratory, a site for developing imaginative solutions for future life, and the

accompanying salon programme draw links between cutting-edge research in science and art, powerfully demonstrating how technological progress has resulted in a natural world beset by deforestation, burning fossil fuels, and ocean pollution. The exhibition motivates us to reflect on our own integral roles in both the disruption and preservation of the ecology, asking us to confront the potential dangers of ignoring the messages that their works convey, while simultaneously suggesting creative tools and ideas for securing 'all the world's futures.'

Emin Mammadov, Artistic Advisor of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation is the largest non-governmental organization in Azerbaijan; it was established in 2004 and has since implemented large-scale programs and projects both in the country and abroad. The main goal of the Foundation is safeguarding national and spiritual values, the widespread promotion of Azerbaijani culture, the implementation of various programs and projects ensuring the development of science, education, healthcare and social sphere, as well as promoting the international image of the country worldwide.

The Foundation has therefore engaged in prestigious international exhibitions in Baku, presenting Andy Warhol, Tony Cragg, Bernard Buffet, the promotion of contemporary Azerbaijani artists abroad in *Fly to Baku. Contemporary art from Azerbaijan*, which was exhibited in some of the most significant cultural areas around the world – the Heydar Aliyev Center, Baku, Azerbaijan; Kunsthistorisches museum - Neue Burg, Vienna, Austria; Spazio D - Maxxi building National Museum of XXI Century arts, Rome, Italy; Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, Russia; me Collectors Room, Berlin, Germany; Hotel Salomon de Rothschild, Paris, France; Phillips de Pury & Company, London, UK. Moreover, the Foundation contributed generous funds for the restoration of Chiesa della Pietà in Venice.

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