

URBANCONNECTIONS

CARAVANSARAI – STATION THESSALONICA

Presentation

Symbole of mobility, hospitality and exchange, *caravansarai* traditionally was the place for meetings of caravans and merchants coming from the East and West across the ancient *Silk Road*. It was a materialisation of the cultural link, bringing together different regions geographically situated far from each other and so close at the same time – because of commercial contacts first of all, but most important – human relationship during the centuries. This link, interrupted by the history several times, is a thread of common national memories in construction from Istanbul to Bichkek and Tashkent, through Tbilissi and Baku.

The Program Caravansarai intends to support the creation and development of cultural and artistic infrastructures coming from different states by attracting the potential from all the regions - proposing multiple possibilities for their representation internationally. In the meantime, this ambitious Program intends to support the artistic creations and development of artistic network linking together Baltic Sea (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), Eastern European States (Poland, Bielorrussia, Ukraine, and Moldova), Black Sea Bassein States (Turkey, Bulgaria, Roumania, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia) with the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia), Caspian Sea and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan and Tadjikistan).

During each season, the yearly Caravansarai Program compounds of International Forum of Visual Arts&Art Events moving across the ancient *Silk Road*. In order to restore The Silk Road to his traditional status (mostly known as trading/economical road) as a corridor linking together Europe and Asia by means of cultural and artistic exchanges, Caravansarai Program intends to circulate the International Forum of Visual Arts & Art Events along a "New Silk Route" linking together Kiev, Chisinau, Tbilisi, Baku, Tashkent and Almaty with Istanbul, Thessalonica, Paris, Strasbourg and Bruxelles. The emergence of these "new cultural pipeline" for contemporary art distribution is most likely to propose one more international platforme for visibility and allow various artists to get on the International art stage.

Programme Caravansarai stresses on local initiatives, while taking into account national, regional particularities and proposing through diverse partnerships to support artistic creation for its opening into international distribution circuits.

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Context

The project entitled *Caravansarai – Station Paris* was presented during the White Nights, in the center of Paris last October. There were presented multidisciplinary works of video art. The selection of 20 artists coming from different states and regions (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Greece, France, Spain, Ukraina, Russia, Uzbekistan, Taiwan and Japan) were placed side to side, creating the solid unity of projection.

The continuity of Caravansarai programme this year 2007 looks more than exciting, passing through Istanbul (Karsi Sanat), Tashkent Festival (House of Photography, Academy of Arts), Tbilissi (State Museum of Arts), Thessalonica Biennale etc. There will be:

- Exposition of art photography, installations, video art and performances under the concept of URBANCONNECTIONS & BODYCONNECTIONS, focusing on diverse issues of cultural, social, ecological and urban aspects of modern city.
- The joint seminaire / FORUM could be held together with local artists under the thematic of "artistic cooperation – now".

Concept

Culture circulates on the continent, taking the ancient ways made by the nomades and merchants. The territories crossed from East to West, through Central Asia and Caucasus, Anatoly and Balkans. The very task and intention of the programme is to reestablish these multiple connections existing since the millenaires, giving the possibilities to the contemporary artists undertake the roads traced by their ancestors.

The circulation on these roads, know as "Silk Road" were often interrupted by the bouleversements politics of XX century. Some new cities developed in the valleys and peoples settled in the urbanised zones of the cities - changing their traditional activities and new national roads have developed linking formerly inaccessible regions. But, if there is an active circulation of transport and goods, still artistic exchanges is waiting to be given the necessary attention by international community as an important tool for re-establishing the interrupted dialogue between different communities and promote international cooperation between different cultures.

Thematic chosen for this year is "the city", under the title *Urbanconnections* - which should permit the wider public to react on different visions how to live together in the urban space, show the differences not between the countries, but the places and looks. Multiple approaches by various artists coming from different parts of the world, some of them from smaller or bigger cities, to the similar aspects as ecological, urban, political, social and cultural life in every modern city would display the large panorama under the attentive eye of artists.

Caravansarai – the space in the space.

Like the very first *Station* project, created during the "On the Other Side of History" (produced by Apollonia and curated by Anne Tronch) and realised in 2002 at the Ferme de Buisson, Paris – the Caravansarai – Station Thessalonica will create a space within the space. Station 0 was the project (Niko Tsetsakhladze & Shalva Khakhanashvili) of photos, videos and sound installation. The very object of the installation was to "confront us with what we see daily and do not quite knowhow to overcome". "The Loneliness of the individual in the public space, the noise which drowns out words, the indifference wich builds a monotonous, vaguely wooly universe, where the freedom to shout has probably dissapeared", Anne Tronch, the curator of exhibition was writing in the catalogue.

The part of the "Heterotopias" (Maria Tsantsanoglou) is called "Beholders of Other Places" and it includes around 30 artists showing works that have to do with real places where people are obliged to function within certain rules or systems (airports, hospitals, the Kremlin, borders etc.). The Caravansarai – Station Thessalonica is a "stop" in the line, but connected with the other places, or an "exhibition in the exhibition" as it shows the movement process which is also something that has to do with different places.

The programme *Caravansarai - Station Thessalonica* and most particularly the projects URBANCONNECTIONS & BODYCONNECTIONS ones produced would move further... "on the road" and circulate first around Turkey, later on passing the neighbouring Georgia, Azerbaidjan and Uzbekistan, on the other side of Caspian Sea.

Participants :

Photo artists: Eduard de Pazzi, Alexandre Yterce, Florence Gonot, Bruno Fournier & Jacques Crenn (France), Babi Badalov (Azerbaijan), Gul Ilgaz, Nadir Ede, Denizhan Ozer, Murat Germen, Sitki Kosemen (Turkey), Iliko Zautashvili (Georgia), Oksana Shatalova (Kazakhstan), Anton Solomukha (Ukraine), Anzor Selidjanov, Anastasia Shadieva, Alexandre Shishov, Ernest Kurtveliev (Uzbekistan);

Video artists: Danae Stratou (Greece), Koka Ramishvili (Georgia), François Daireaux (France), Yun Aiyong (Korea), Midori Sakurai (Japan), Natalya Lyakh (Russia), Ernest Kurtveliev (Uzbekistan) & Oksana Shatalova (Kazakhstan);

Exposition from the Tashkent House of Photography (director Shahnoza Karimbabaeva) & documentation of the 1st Actual Photo & Video Festival: **East – West. Tashkent Crossroad.** Max Penson, Hamdam Shorahmedov, Murat Germen, Shalva Khakhanashvili, Anton Solomukha & Sergei Abaturov - **Streetconnections.**