

Driton Selmani

BIOGRAPHY

Selmani approaches the idea of perceived reality by deconstructing formations of social, political, and cultural topics that have been embodied around him. At a young age, he was told to worship a country that no longer existed, which caused him to form a basis of skepticism towards any supposedly given reality. He later used this as a beneficial tool to reconstruct his beliefs into visual artifacts. In 1999, old simulacra were replaced by new simulacra; the ornaments of a previous space were refurbished to unfold with new meanings but also new uncertainties. Selmani confronts himself as a spectator of this “ongoing event”, and positions himself as an *actor*, enacting his performances based on his personal histories, beliefs, and doubts.

Selected Works
2008–2025

THE SKY IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE ON EARTH (2025)

Galvanized Steel tubes, stainless poles,
Dimensions: 1600 x 60 x 10 cm
Installation View: The Read Goat, Prishtina
Courtesy of the Artist & Maden Group ©
Images: Ferdi Limani

This sculptural work by Driton Selmani is more than a phrase suspended above a home — it is a quiet, weightless collaboration between three artists across generations, media, and forms of expression.

The title originates from a verse by the renowned painter and poet Rexhep Ferri, a figure who, as Selmani's former professor, played a formative role in his artistic education.

The same line was once repurposed into a painting by Ferri's son, the celebrated artist Jakup Ferri, whose early works deeply influenced Selmani's own beginnings in drawing and visual narrative.

Now, in a third gesture, the phrase is released into the sky, materialized as a sculpture installed on the flat roof of a private home. It is here, on the last untouched horizontal planes of Prishtina's shifting architecture, that Selmani finds space to express something fleeting yet urgent: a thought, a dream, a utopia.

The sky is full of dreams, and the earth is full of shadows.

— Charles Baudelaire

Referencing Charles Baudelaire's poetic longing to escape the mundane — to flee toward the sky as a space of ideals, freedom, and infinite possibility — the work takes that ambition literally. The sky becomes not just a metaphor but a site; not a backdrop, but the ultimate destination for ideas too big to be grounded.

In this triadic collaboration — Rexhep, Jakup, Driton — words become image, image becomes sculpture, and sculpture becomes atmosphere.

The work is a homage, a continuation, and a quiet rebellion: a reminder that even in a rapidly transforming city, the sky remains open — the last frontier for unspoken thoughts and collective imagination.

Text by: Alex F. Koenig

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE ON EARTH.





Driton Selmani – *The Sky Is The Most Beautiful Place On Earth*, 2025
Galvanized Steel tubes, stainless poles, Dimensions: 1600 x 60 x 10 cm
Installation View: The Read Goat, Prishtina
Courtesy of the Artist & Maden Group ©
Images: Ferdi Limani



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Installation View: The Read Goat, Prishtina
Courtesy of the Artist & Maden Group ©
Images: Ferdi Limani



Driton Selmani — *Blue Like Deep Blue*, 2025
Acrylic on high-density polyethylene plastic bag
Dimensions: 46 × 33 cm, Frame: 65 x 55 x 5 cm
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez



Driton Selmani — *Only Time Will Tell*, 2019–2025
Projection on the historical façade of MuseumsQuartier Vienna
Installation view: MuseumsQuartier Vienna, 2024–2025
Photo: Paul Pibernig



Driton Selmani – *Only Time Will Tell*, 2019–2025
LED Plexiglass, CNC cut letters, metal holder, 300 × 70 × 160 cm
Installation view: Museums Quartier Vienna (2024–2025)
Photo: Paul Pibernig

Reflecting on Time: A Conversation with Driton Selmani 22.12.2024–21.04.2025

The Kosovan artist Driton Selmani uses poetic and humorous works to deconstruct our perception of reality. In doing so, he does not shy away from major concepts such as time, space, politics and history. His light installation ‘Only Time Will Tell’ can be seen in the MQ Main Courtyard until 21 April. MQ Journal spoke to him about it’s background.

Driton, your installation „Only Time Will Tell“ was described as a call to get actively involved and help shape the present and future. Where should we start?

"Only Time Will Tell" examines the idea that time exists only through the human mind's perception. Each moment is merely a fragment—real only until it passes, while the future exists solely in anticipation. For me, this understanding reveals how time is a construct of our imagination. Ultimately, it feels more cyclical than linear—a realization that encourages us to rethink our relationship with the present and how we shape what's to come...

Your works often engage in themes of identity and belonging. How much of yourself is in your “Only Time Will Tell” installation?

The installation reflects a personal connection, yet it transcends individual experience to become a 'rendezvous of experiences' for others, thus addressing broader themes of identity and belonging. It is both an intimate monument to personal histories and a deliberate statement, inviting viewers to reflect on their own sense of time, place, and the complexities of political and historical contexts.

My perspective on time resonates with the empiricist philosophies of thinkers like David Hume and George Berkeley, who posited that our reality is filtered through individual observation, and what we perceive may not align with any objective truth.

“Only Time Will Tell” embodies this ambiguity, inviting viewers to confront the fluid boundaries between personal memory and collective history. In this way, the work reflects a part of me—my preoccupation with the limits of understanding and how we attempt to reconcile the subjective with the universal.

Words play a central role in you work – are there any poets you look at for inspiration?

"Only Time Will Tell" examines the idea that time exists only through the human mind's perception. Each moment is merely a fragment—real only until it passes, while the future exists solely in anticipation. For me, this understanding reveals how time is a construct of our imagination. Ultimately, it feels more cyclical than linear—a realization that encourages us to rethink our relationship with the present and how we shape what's to come.

I wouldn't say poets, but I'm drawn to the unknown—it excites me. I Don't Believe In Poets, But In Poems, Yes. My use of language isn't about providing definitive descriptions but rather exploring the mystery and complexity inherent in words and their meanings.

I often investigate the pre-alphabet era, where hearing was believing. The introduction of the phonetic alphabet shifted this dynamic, replacing the magical world of the ear with the neutral, analytical world of the eye. As William Wordsworth wrote:

"The eye—it cannot choose but see; We cannot bid the ear be still; Our bodies feel, where'er they be, Against or with our will."

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For me, language is a powerful medium to provoke thought, evoke emotion, and challenge societal norms. Words are my primary artistic tool, used in diverse formats and contexts to engage audiences viscerally. They encourage a reconsideration of assumptions about time and experience, embracing paradoxes that reveal the elusiveness of reality. Ultimately, words have the potential to reshape perception, spark reflection, and even challenge the simulated realities we often find ourselves trapped within.

One of your works reads “I wish you were a plastic bag so that you could be eternal”. How do current concerns about ecology play into your art?

Ecological concerns are inescapable in the geography I inhabit. I didn't choose plastic as a medium—it's simply everywhere. But I observe, listen, feel, remember, and question,* recontextualizing it in contrast to Peter Handke's approach towards tragedies and silence.

*Quote by Peter Handke

Driton Selmani — *Only Time Will Tell*, 2019–2025

Curator: Verena Kaspar-Eisert

Exhibition duration: until 24.04.2025 | MQ Main Courtyard

Installation view: Museums Quartier Vienna (2024–2025)

A Conversation with Hisko Hulsing



Driton Selmani – *Only Time Will Tell*, 2019–2025
LED Plexiglass, CNC cut letters, metal holder, 300 × 70 × 160 cm
Installation view: Museums Quartier Vienna (2024–2025)
Photo: Paul Pibernig

Driton Selmani

From Here To Everywhere, 2025

Welded steel, Dimensions: 600 x 280 x 400 cm
Installation view: Arbëria Stairs, Prishtina
Courtesy of the Artist Municipality of Prishtina ©

FROM HERE TO EVERYWHERE is a circular sculptural structure for public space, where language, movement, and environment merge into a single, immersive experience. The phrase wraps endlessly around the top ring—offering a visual and conceptual gesture of openness, optimism, and connection across cultures.

The circle evokes perfection, unity, and continuity. It subtly echoes the twelve-star ring of the European Union flag, symbolizing solidarity in diversity. Here, the form becomes a local interpretation of a shared European ideal, inviting reflection on identity, belonging, and collective futures.

Suspended beneath the ring are swings, inviting people of all ages to interact. The movement brings the sculpture to life, turning a moment of play into a moment of thought, as the words above gently frame the sky.

Set in a natural or urban setting, the work becomes part of everyday life, infusing public space with both lightness and depth.

Poetic Presence in Public Space: More than a structure, it acts as a living punctuation mark in the city—a site where form, language, and human presence intersect. Still or in motion, alone or together, visitors find space for joy, pause, and shared meaning.

FROM HERE TO EVERYWHERE
WORDS MOVE.
CIRCLES SPEAK.
SWINGS THINK.
UNITY MOVES.
THE CITY LISTENS.

Driton Selmani – *From Here To Everywhere*, 2025
Welded steel, Dimensions: 600 x 280 x 400 cm
Installation view: Arbëria Stairs, Prishtina
Courtesy of the Artist & Municipality of Prishtina ©



Driton Selmani – *From Here To Everywhere*, 2025
Welded steel, Dimensions: 600 x 280 x 400 cm
Installation view: Arbëria Stairs, Prishtina
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Driton Selmani — *From Here To Everywhere*, 2025

Welded steel, Dimensions: 600 x 280 x 400 cm

Installation view: Arbëria Stairs, Prishtina

Images: Ferdi Limani





Driton Selmani — A Man Thinking He Is A Great Man (2025)
Needle embroidery on textile, Dimensions: 60 × 60 × 5 cm
Installation view: 32 Nadežda Petrović Memorial, Cacak
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, Courtesy of the Artist ©



"Planet Earth is old news.

It's the house we are discarding.

We definitely don't love her.

We almost believe we don't need her.

Because the price for

the love

that will save

her

would reach

an almost impossible

level"

The Wall Or The Tilted Promise

Driton Selmani

"The Wall Or The Tilted Promise" is a public project responding to the relationship between nature and humanity, utilizing recycled plastic as a symbolic medium to narrate and encapsulate the zeitgeist of our era.

The work embodies a "rendezvous of experiences," where its material and form, along with its colossal dimensions, serve as both a crucial lesson and a stark reminder of the power dynamics inherent in our commitments, often leading to the detriment of our environment.

The project probes into the hidden costs we are unwilling to pay. Constructed as a barrier wall along Prishtina Square's busiest thoroughfare, it aims to leverage the interplay between the barrier itself and its reflective qualities, provoking contemplation on humanity's indispensable role in the delicate balance between man and nature amidst our hurried pace towards where ?

Its purpose is to diminish human influence, showcasing our impermeability as a monument. This deliberate stripping of illusion encourages viewers to engage with space on a physical rather than solely optical level. "The Wall Or The Tilted Promise" seeks pragmatic solutions, steering away from dwelling on the consequences of our overproduction, which often lead to dead ends or obsolete alternatives with devastating effects on our environment, damaging the sustainability of our own existence.

The work takes a less confrontational approach, creating an unstable diagonal space into which viewers are invited, where they may experience discomfort yet paradoxically find a sense of refuge. The wall becomes a pilgrimage site for a peculiar encounter, mirroring our destructive tendencies towards nature and serving as a vital testament and lesson to recalibrate the future's narrative between humanity and the natural world.

The Wall does not serve as a mere object for passive observation. Traditionally, placing a sculpture on a pedestal has aimed to create a distance between the artwork and the viewer. However, my focus lies in crafting a dynamic environment where the viewer engages directly with the sculpture within its surroundings, fostering a more interactive and immersive experience in the understanding of our promise, which is tilting as a result of our authority towards everything not human while we've reached a point that Planet Earth is old news. It's the house we are discarding. We definitely don't love her. We almost believe we don't need her. Because the price for the love that will save her would reach an almost impossible level.¹

The Wall Or The Tilted Promise, 2024

Installation view: The National Library of Kosovo, Prishtina
Images: Agon Nimani, Courtesy of the artist ©

1. 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts N°006: Etel Adnan The Cost for Love We Are Not Willing to Pay
DOCUMENTA (13), 9/6/2012 – 16/9/2012





Driton Selmani — *The Wall Or The Tilted Promise*, 2024
Installation view: The National Library of Kosovo, Prishtina
Images: Agon Nimani, Courtesy of the artist ©



Driton Selmani – *The Wall Or The Tilted Promise*, 2024
 Installation view: The National Library of Kosovo, Prishtina
 Images: Agon Nimani, Courtesy of the artist ©





Driton Selmani — *The Wall Or The Tilted Promise*, 2024
Installation view: The National Library of Kosovo, Prishtina
Images: Agon Nimani, Courtesy of the artist ©

Driton Selmani – *LOST FOR WORDS* (2024)

Steel tubes, stainless poles, wind rotating mechanism

Dimensions 15 x 350 x 50 cm

Beaufort Triennale / 27.03–03.11.2024

Courtesy of the Artist & Beaufort Triennale ©

Images: Ann-Sophie Deldycke

When Driton Selmani, accustomed to constant noise in his home country of Kosovo, first arrived on site in Blankenberge, he was struck by the tranquillity of the dune path's entrance. The silence immediately offers a fierce contrast in experience, sound, and view compared to the bustling, festively fizzing promenade. As if drawn towards a lighthouse or a beacon of hope, we find ourselves captivated by the rotating artwork *Lost For Words* by Driton Selmani. In the quest for poetry amidst challenging times, this piece becomes a weather vane for empathy. The artist believes that the residents of Blankenberge can not only connect with each other, but also aspire to higher goals by tapping into the emotions lingering in the air. The intention is to evoke a profound sensation in the viewer, transcending the limits of rationality.

Driton Selmani's art is intricately tied to the geopolitical nuances of his roots: Kosovo, a place on the brink of international recognition. Different languages and cultures coexist in isolation, often polarised – not due to the residents' unwillingness, but due to political intrigue. Within this context, Driton Selmani's body of work emerges as a dialogue. In *Lost For Words*, he navigates this complex terrain with finesse, employing his artistic language to temper the harsh tones of difference. His work transcends the political swamp, and aspires to offer an experience rather than a rational observation.

Valerie De Witte



Driton Selmani – *LOST FOR WORDS*, 2024

Steel tubes, stainless poles, wind rotating mechanism Dimensions 15 x 350 x 50 cm

Beaufort Triennale, Curated by Els Wuyts / 27.03–03.11.2024,

Courtesy of the Artist & Beaufort Triennale ©

Images: Westtoer – Ann-Sophie Deldycke:



Driton Selmani – *LOST FOR WORDS*, 2024
BEAUFORT24, 27.03–03.11.2024
Courtesy of the Artist & Beaufort Triennale ©
Images: Ann-Sophie Deldycke



Driton Selmani – *LOST FOR WORDS*, 2024
BEAUFORT24, 27.03–03.11.2024
Courtesy of the Artist & Beaufort Triennale ©
Images: Ann-Sophie Deldycke

Driton Selmani – Unseen Rituals Of Radical Transparency (2023)

Horizontal LED board with white diodes and black housing
Dimensions: 300 x 800 x 15 cm
Courtesy of the artist & Lëvizja FOL ©

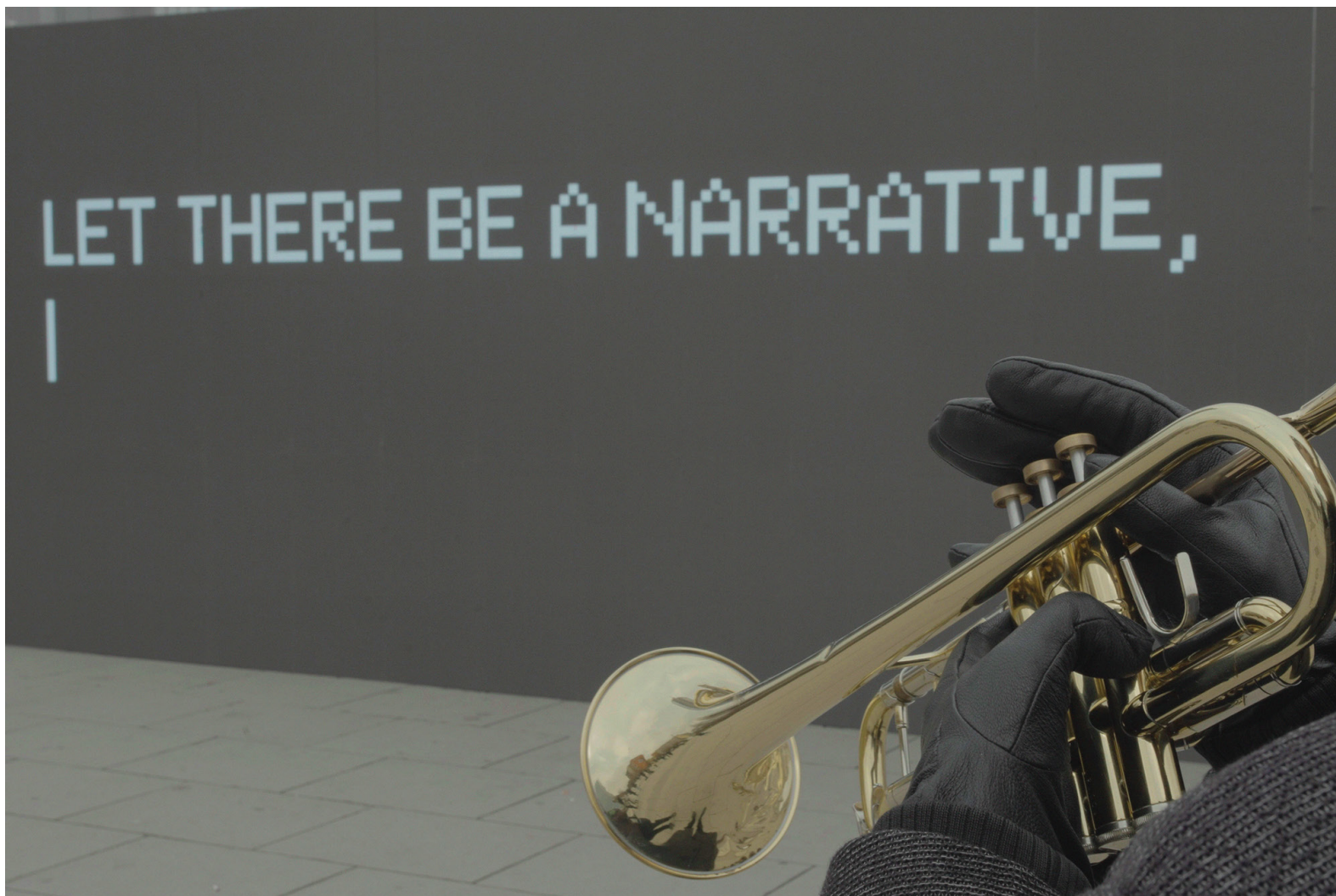
Selmani's mastery of word and light unfolds in this striking temporary light installation—an emblematic continuation of a practice that has long grappled with the poetics of public language, its failure, and its potential. Known for his monumental text interventions across buildings, landscapes, and cityscapes, Selmani sets the stage here for a forceful examination of the distance between language and reality. Through a language both assertive and elliptical, he subverts the familiar visual codes of power by reimagining their presence through nontraditional, ephemeral forms. The video work at the heart of this presentation does not merely present language; it interrogates it—dissecting the disconcerting narrative of broken promises and the illusion of authority.

Selmani's text-based aesthetics, unmistakably direct yet layered with irony and nuance, deploy the optative mood—a grammatical form of longing, hope, and unattained possibility—to lay bare the emptiness that often sits beneath official declarations. In doing so, he invites us not only to read his words but to witness their collapse and reverberation within the structures they once propped up.

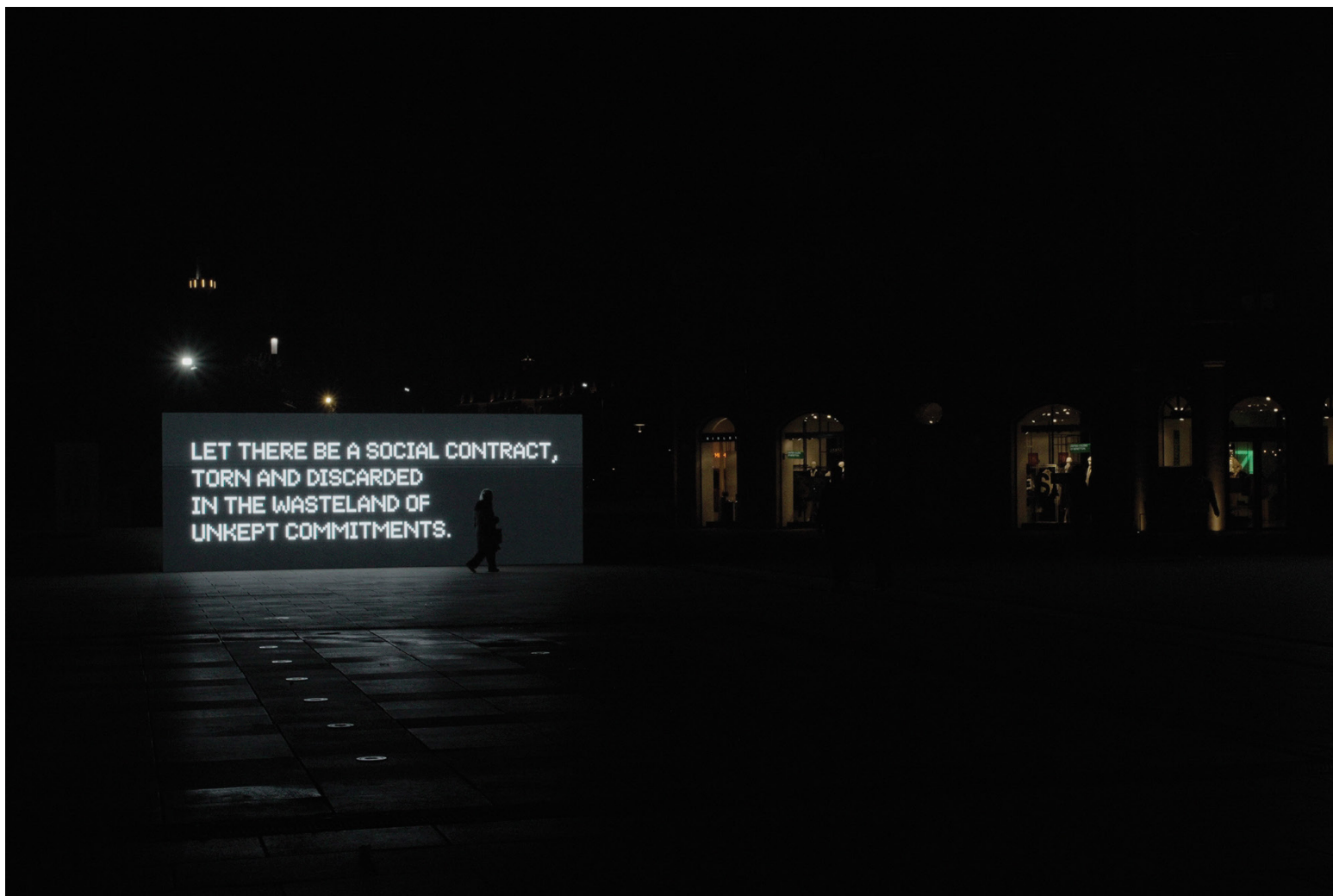
This linguistic disillusionment is amplified through the haunting sound of a solitary trumpet, recorded live on-site. The music does not serve as accompaniment—it is contradiction, resistance, and lament. The trumpet becomes a sonic monument of its own, echoing the weight of failed intentions while offering an emotional counterpoint to the stasis of language. The landscape captured in the film, marked by neglect, uneven development, and symbolic ruins, mirrors the frayed condition of democratic ideals. What we are shown is not only a site, but a condition: of abandonment, of civic erosion, and of the urgent need for social reconstitution.

The work culminates in the stark phrase *Let There Be Drones*, a chilling twist on divine proclamation that opens up a new axis of critique. Here, Selmani stages a radical choreography—part satire, part requiem—on the spectacle of transparency and its technological decay. The viewer is left to confront a terrain populated by the ghosts of broken systems, exposed not through rhetoric, but through visual and sonic rupture.

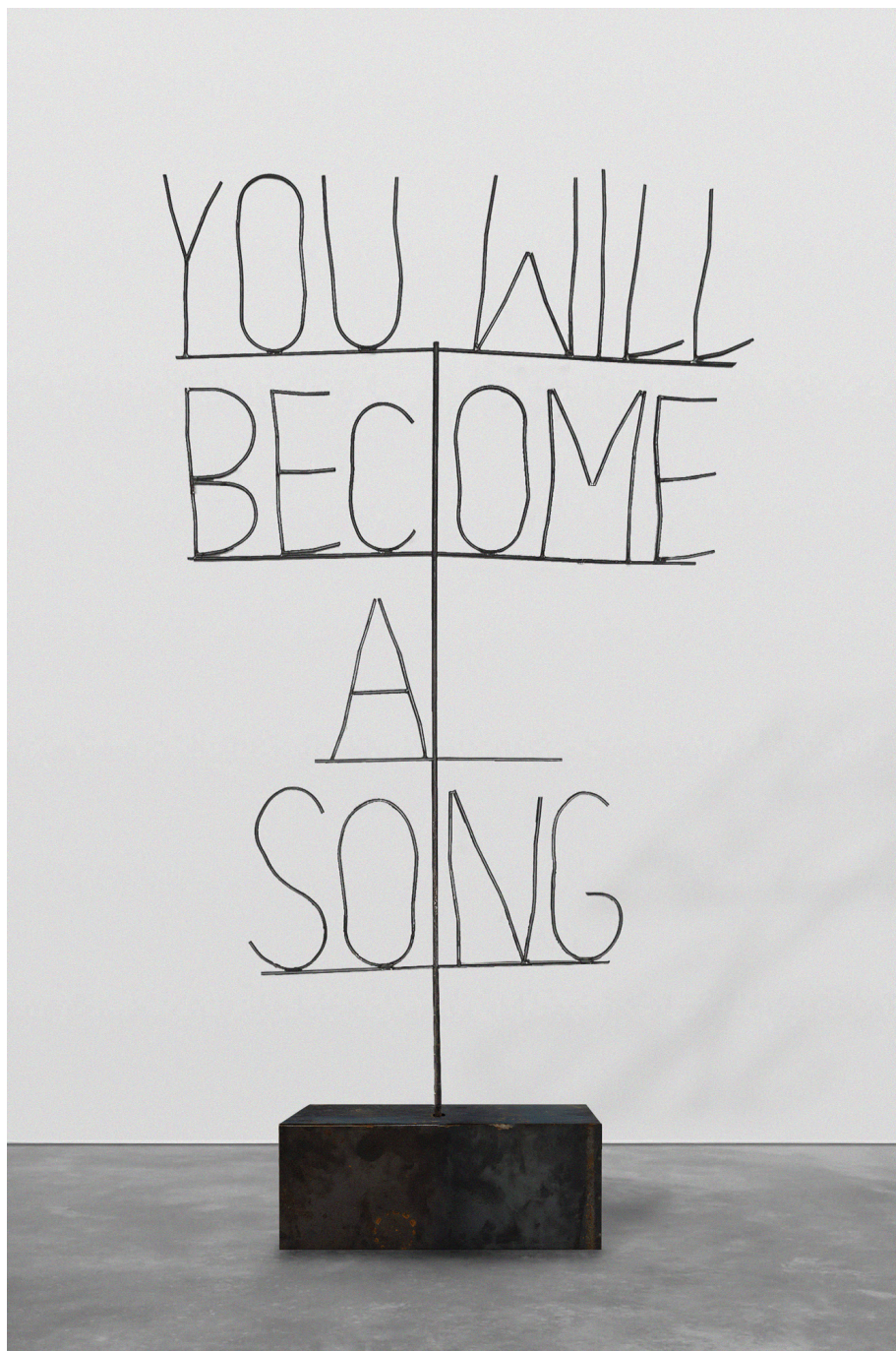
Through this ambitious installation, Selmani offers not resolution, but exposure. A clear-eyed confrontation with the symbolic residue of failed language, authority, and the ideologies they cloak. Lëvizja FOL has entrusted Selmani with full curatorial freedom for this work—an endorsement of his singular voice and uncompromising vision. This project not only marks a significant moment in his artistic trajectory, but also extends a vital invitation to reflect on the relationship between words and systems, light and obfuscation, presence and disappearance.



Driton Selmani — *Unseen Rituals Of Radical Transparency*, 2023
Horizontal LED board with white diodes and black housing
Dimensions: 300 x 800 x 15 cm
Courtesy of the artist & Lëvizja FOL ©



Driton Selmani – *Unseen Rituals Of Radical Transparency*, 2023
Horizontal LED board with white diodes and black housing
Dimensions: 300 x 800 x 15 cm
Courtesy of the artist & Lëvizja FOL ©



Driton Selmani — *Prrallē*, 2023
Welded steel, electric rotating mechanism
Dimensions: 250 x 200 x 200 cm
Installation view: apiece, Vilnius, Courtesy of the Artist ©
Photo: Laurynas Skeisgiela

Driton Selmani — *Prrallë*, 2023
Welded steel, electric rotating mechanism
Dimensions: 250 x 200 x 200 cm
Installation view: apiece, Vilnius, Courtesy of the Artist ©
Photo: Laurynas Skeisgiela





Driton Selmani — *Prrallë*, 2023
Welded steel, electric rotating mechanism
Dimensions: 250 x 200 x 200 cm
Installation view: apiece, Vilnius, Courtesy of the Artist ©
Photo: Laurynas Skeisgiela



Driton Selmani — *Alchemy*, 2023
Digital print on textile Dimensions: 850 x 600 cm
Courtesy of the Artist ©
Photo: Valentijn Goethals

Driton Selmani – *LET IT BE* (2023)

Installation view: Roskilde Festival
Museet for Samtidskunst / 28.06–01.07.2023
Courtesy of the Artist & Museet for Samtidskunst ©
Images: Rie Neuchs

Who controls who?

Two fast-rising talents, Esben Weile Kjær and Maja Malou Lyse, have teamed up to create a brand new piece for the exhibition, subtly and humorously inverting the power dynamic between audience and performers. The festival screen shows the two artists fighting, playing and clinging to the surface separating them from the audience, as the scene is continuously interrupted by messages telling the audience what to do. Pressure Pictures asks a simple question: Who controls who?

Elsewhere at the festival, seemingly at random, the crowd is introduced to performance artist Filip Vest's no less than 48 pop song suggestions. Imperfect Pitch: 48 Ideas for a Pop Song is a hesitant manifesto for a new alternative pop song for a changing world. The songs range from hopeful to cynical. One is about starting at the bottom and staying there. Another gives you back the time you have lost. And one never stops. Vest's work reveals the troubled and enchanting nature of pop songs in the world we live in today.

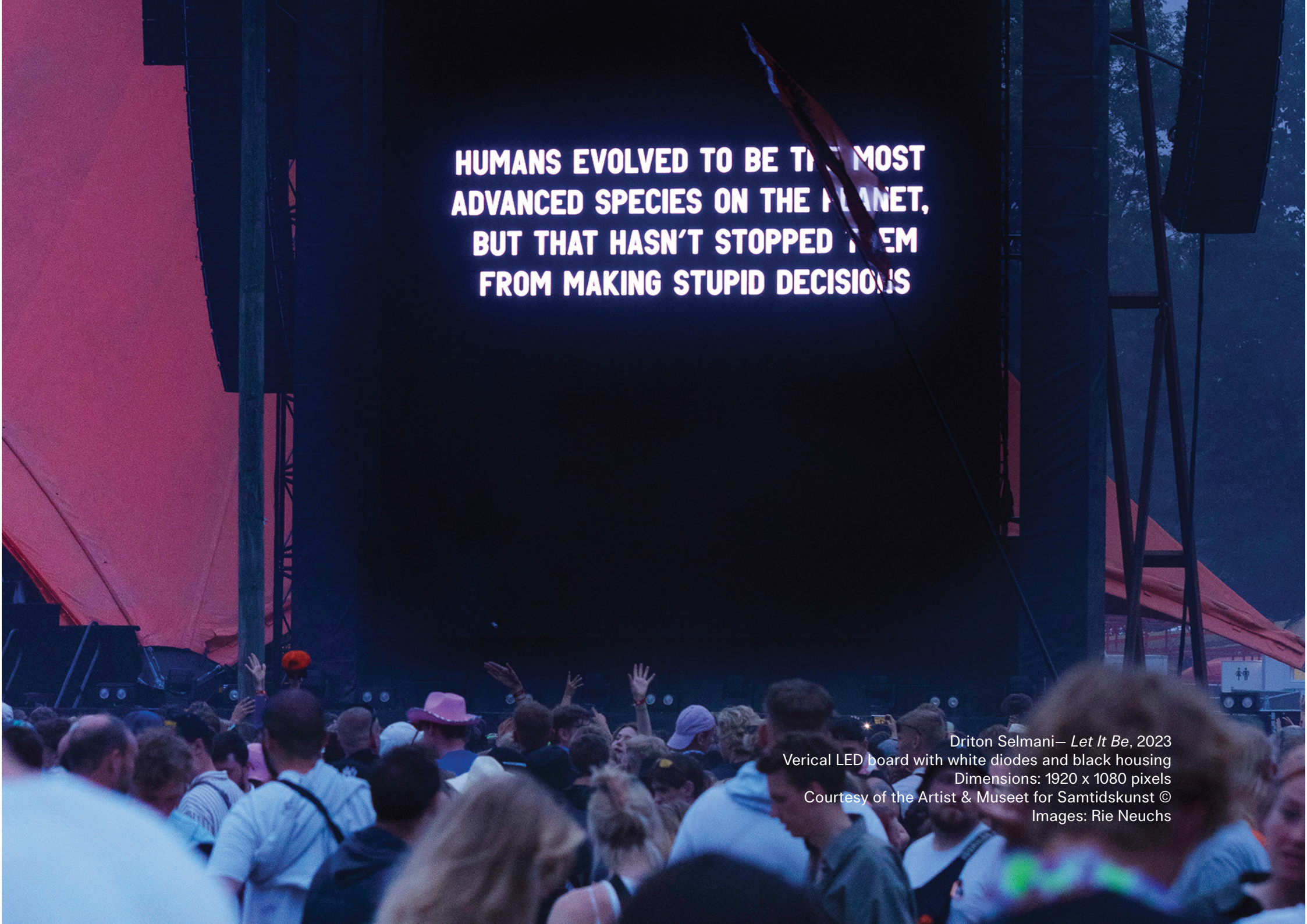
A dystopian thought experiment

One of the exhibition's two international contributions comes courtesy of the Apparatus 22 artist collective inviting us into a dystopian universe. In this thought experiment, bones are the last remaining vestige of imagination, since artificial intelligence has rendered human thoughts and feelings redundant. Deceptively humorous, *We Found the Bones of FICTION* is a rallying cry wrapped in 10 questions urging us to hold on to fiction and fantasy. That's where hope is found in a tumultuous world.

Finally, the audience is confronted with statements by the Kosovar artist Driton Selmani. Liberatingly direct, his work *Let It Be* points at the contrast between human hubris and self-regard and our vanishingly small significance in the universe at large. In the face of these bleak facts, we realize that uncertainty and mystery are what make life exciting and worth living.

Text: Christian Skovbjerg Jensen

Ideal, ideal, ideal,
Knowledge, knowledge, knowledge,
Boomboom, boomboom, boomboom...

A large crowd of people is gathered at night, looking up at a large LED screen. The screen displays the text: HUMANS EVOLVED TO BE THE MOST ADVANCED SPECIES ON THE PLANET, BUT THAT HASN'T STOPPED THEM FROM MAKING STUPID DECISIONS. The scene is illuminated by stage lights, with a red tent visible in the background.

**HUMANS EVOLVED TO BE THE MOST
ADVANCED SPECIES ON THE PLANET,
BUT THAT HASN'T STOPPED THEM
FROM MAKING STUPID DECISIONS**

Driton Selmani— *Let It Be*, 2023
Verical LED board with white diodes and black housing
Dimensions: 1920 x 1080 pixels
Courtesy of the Artist & Museet for Samtidskunst ©
Images: Rie Neuchs

Driton Selmani – *Geisters or Vice Versa* (2019/2023)

Billboard installation, 504 × 238 cm each
Installed across multiple outdoor locations in five districts
of Vienna, Austria

Geisters or Vice Versa (2019/2023) reflects on the complexity and gaps between time, memory and place. The clothes (coats and hoodies) in the photographs, taken by the artist, belong to Mr Ismail (b. 1944 in Kosovo), a family relative of the artist. Mr Ismail randomly positioned them as scarecrows throughout his vegetable garden in his native village Doganaj (Kosovo), after returning back home from Gstaad (Switzerland) and Paznaun-Ischgl (Austria), where he lived for the past 45 years. Mr Ismail's scarecrows, designed to frighten predatory birds, represent or rather document the physical and mental journey of his “Gastarbeiter” migration history from his native village to the West and, after decades, back home¹. While adapting to the foreign environment, Mr Ismail struggled financially to secure a living, including buying new clothes. Now the same coverings serve as ghost artefacts, self-made monuments of his economic status and fashion taste, and of his endurance; remembrances of his past life in a home away from home.

¹ - Duration is ineffable, it cannot be apprehended by the rational intellect or conceptual understanding, and only be shown indirectly through images that can never reveal a complete picture. It can only be grasped through a simple intuition of the imagination. Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 1934

* The artistic interventions are positioned on advertising surfaces in the five following locations in Vienna:

- Hellwagstraße, bei Bahnunterführung
- Taborstraße gü. Nr. 102-108
- Rotenkreuzgasse 9 Ecke Haidgasse 11
- Währinger Str. 23, Oben
- Taborstraße 95, bei Einfahrt zum Nordwestbahnhof

Everything We Do is Really, Really Brilliant
Driton Selmani, curated by Hana Ostan Ožbolt
Kahán Art Space, Vienna, Austria
7 June – 27 August 2023



Driton Selmani – *Geisters or Vice Versa*, 2019
Dimensions: 504 x 238 cm
Location of installation: Hellwagstraße 50, Vienna
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, Courtesy of the Arist & Kahán Art Space



Driton Selmani – *Geisters or Vice Versa*, 2019
 Dimensions: 504 x 238 cm
 Location of installation: Währinger Str. 23, Vienna
 Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, Courtesy of the Arist & Kahán Art Space



Driton Selmani – *Geisters or Vice Versa*, 2019
Dimensions: 504 x 238 cm
Location of installation: Taborstraße 95, Vienna
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, Courtesy of the Arist & Kahán Art Space

Driton Selmani: *Everything We Do Is Really, Really Brilliant*
Curated by Hana Ostan Ožbolt
Eva Kahan Art Space Vienna, Austria
07.06–27.08.2023

Driton Selmani's first solo exhibition in the German-speaking region combines a selection of his older (2012), more recent (2018– 2020), and new works exhibited for the first time. While Selmani's older projects are seminal for the understanding of the Kosovar artist's practice, selected new works also respond to the exhibition context site-specifically: *You, Yes You, Lucky You (2022)* is positioned at the entrance façade of the Kahan Art Space, whereas a set of interventions on billboards in public space, *Geisters or Vice Versa (2019/2023)*, inhabits the immediate surrounding of the exhibition space in the 2nd, 9th and 20th Viennese districts.

"I have been frustrated by the fact that my country is so often omitted from the world map. If I ordered things via Amazon, I could not select Kosovo as a shipping option. Or, if I purchased plane tickets, I had no place to fly to when I wanted to fly back home," I vividly remember Selmani telling me when we first met in 2018. Born in 1987 in the former Yugoslav province of Kosovo as an ethnic Albanian, the artist was originally an inhabitant of a country that split into several new states, marked by the Balkan wars and much political and social unrest. Following Kosovo's partial independence and renaming it into the Republic of Kosovo in 1989/99, the country declared its independence almost ten years later, in 2008. Born in 1987 in the former Yugoslav province of Kosovo as an ethnic Albanian, the artist was originally an inhabitant of a country that split into several new states, marked by the Balkan wars and much political and social unrest.

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The personal and the political cannot be separated from each other, and even if one could define this as one of the characteristics of the vital Kosovo art scene that has recently received widespread international attention (*Manifesta 14*), Selmani seems to be moving from the geopolitics to “geoselves”³—ongoingly, even obsessively, with humour, he documents and questions our banalities, uncertainties, longings, and belongings. He pokes fun at our screen time, right-swiping, updates and upgrades, filters and fillers, our comments sections. At the forefront of his media-diverse practice are therefore not solely issues of duality between the individual and collective, or of memory and history (revisionist tendencies in the context of political correctness), which particularly marked his early work, but more so the notion of contradiction and possibility in itself, especially in the building up of a (semiotic) relation between word and image. Handwritten with markers, Semani’s one-sentence pronouncements read: “Past Resent Future” / “Never Say No To Yes” “Whatever You Do, Don’t Do It”... Freedom as possibility, as potentiality, as capacity (exemplified in the freedom of choice) is the best antidote to actual freedom; it has become a signifier of oppression, writes Alenka Zupančič.⁴ In this “freedom”, where we are surrounded by maxims such as “Intentionally act like the person you want to become!”, “It’s not how good you are, but how good you want to be!” or “If you can dream it, you can do it!”, the as if (als ob) modality as such tells us how to act. Still, it falls short of providing the real “push” (Triebfeder) that would, in fact, make it practically possible for us to act in this way.

Once I effectively act as if I have already had what I wanted, the question remains: how do I get to act as if I have actually received what I wanted? There seems to be a small, but significant gap here; Zupančič writes that this is precisely how freedom as oppression works in practice—“you can, therefore you must”. “Possibilities are here to be taken and realized by all means and at any price. You can do it, therefore you must! The culture (and economy) of possibilities is not suffocating simply because there are so many possibilities, but because we are supposed not to miss out on any of them.”⁵

An ongoing and extensive series of seemingly fleeting notes and drawings on found plastic bags, titled *Love Letters (2018–)*, plays a crucial role in Selmani’s oeuvre. Inspired by his wife’s shopping lists (for him and the children) as small daily gestures of care, his letters to everyone and no one will remain forever—plastic endures, even more so than love. Never directly intended as a critique of a contemporary consumer or a political statement, it was for Selmani a somehow natural decision to work with the material so present on the streets of Prishtina. For years almost manically collecting and storing the bags he either finds, gets, or is gifted, he uses them to vocalize and preserve his daily thoughts. On view are also three single works from the new series, *Fig. Drawings (2023)*, in which Selmani returns to working together with his mother (like at the beginning of his artistic path), who crafts embroideries after his initial digital drawings, sewing in his work also her time and touch. Furthermore, the exhibition extends into public space. The project *Geisters or Vice Versa (2019/2023)* consists of artistic interventions on advertising surfaces in various locations in Vienna, reflecting on the complexity and gaps between time, memory, and place. It documents and...It documents and represents the physical and mental journey of the artist’s relative, Mr. Ismail S., and his “Gastarbeiter-er” migration history from the native Kosovo village to the West (Gstaad, Switzerland, and Paznaun-Ischgl, Austria) and, after decades, back home.

1 Although the United States and most members of the European Union (EU) recognized Kosovo’s declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008, Serbia, Russia, and a significant number of other countries, including several EU members (Spain, Slovakia, Cyprus, Romania, and Greece) did not. Given this lack of international consensus, Kosovo was not immediately admitted to the United Nations (UN). In 2010 the International Court of Justice ruled that Kosovo’s declaration of independence did not violate international law.

2 The proverb is, for example, similar to the Persian version “You can’t pick up two watermelons with one hand.”

3 Shumon Basar, Douglas Coupland, Hans Ulrich Obrist, *The Extreme Self: Age of You*, König Verlag, 2020.

4 Alenka Zupančič, “The End”, in: *Provocations*, Issue 1, 2016. Thanking Alenka Zupančič for her guidance within the psychoanalytical realm.

5 Ibid.



Driton Selmani— *Everything We Do Is Really, Really Brilliant*
Curated by Hana Ostan Ožbolt
Installation view: Kahan Art Space, Vienna
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez

Driton Selmani – *Fig. Drawings* (2023)

Needle embroidery on textile

Dimensions: 60 × 60 cm × 5 cm

Installation view: Kahán Art Space, Vienna

Driton Selmani's latest series emerges as a compelling testament to his deft manipulation of artistic collaboration and material exploration. Comprising of three needle-embroidered drawings, the series stands as an evocative convergence of Selmani's digital prowess and his maternal lineage. This symbiotic endeavor transcends mere intergenerational collaboration; it encapsulates an intricate choreography of artistic trajectories.

At the heart of this series lies an intimate partnership between Selmani and his mother. With meticulous precision, she undertakes the translation of his digital drawings into tactile embroideries. This transformative process is not merely a transposition of mediums, but an intricate interweaving of identities and experiences. Each delicate thread serves as a conduit, channeling not only Selmani's conceptual underpinnings but also his mother's investment of time and touch. The resulting pieces bear witness to a tactile dialogue that spans generations, an alchemical fusion of creativity and heritage.

The union of digital and embroidered forms engenders a visual paradox—a dynamic coalescence of the contemporary and the traditional, the ephemeral and the enduring.

As Selmani's ethereal digital visions are transmuted into tangible embroidered artifacts, an enchanting tension between the virtual and the tactile emerges. The confluence of these worlds within a singular spatial realm elicits a sensorial experience that is at once poetic and poignant.

In this series, Selmani orchestrates a delicate dance of transformation, inviting viewers to traverse the liminal space between artistic mediums and generational narratives. The seamless fusion of materials and meanings resonates as a masterstroke, inviting contemplation on the very essence of artistic metamorphosis. "*Fig. Drawings (2023)*" stands as a nuanced exploration of transition, encapsulating the spirit of collaboration, the resonance of touch, and the timeless passage of creativity across temporal bounds.



Driton Selmani – *Fig. Drawings*, 2023
 Needle embroidery on textile, Dimensions: 60 × 60 × 5 cm
 Installation view: Kahán Art Space, Vienna
 Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, Courtesy of the Artist ©



Driton Selmani – *Fig. 2.3*, 2023
Needle embroidery on textile, Dimensions: 60 × 60 × 5 cm
Installation view: Kahán Art Space, Vienna
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, Courtesy of the Artist ©



Driton Selmani – *Fig. 2.8*, 2023
Needle embroidery on textile
Dimensions: 60 × 60 × 5 cm
Installation view: Kahán Art Space, Vienna
Courtesy of the Artist ©



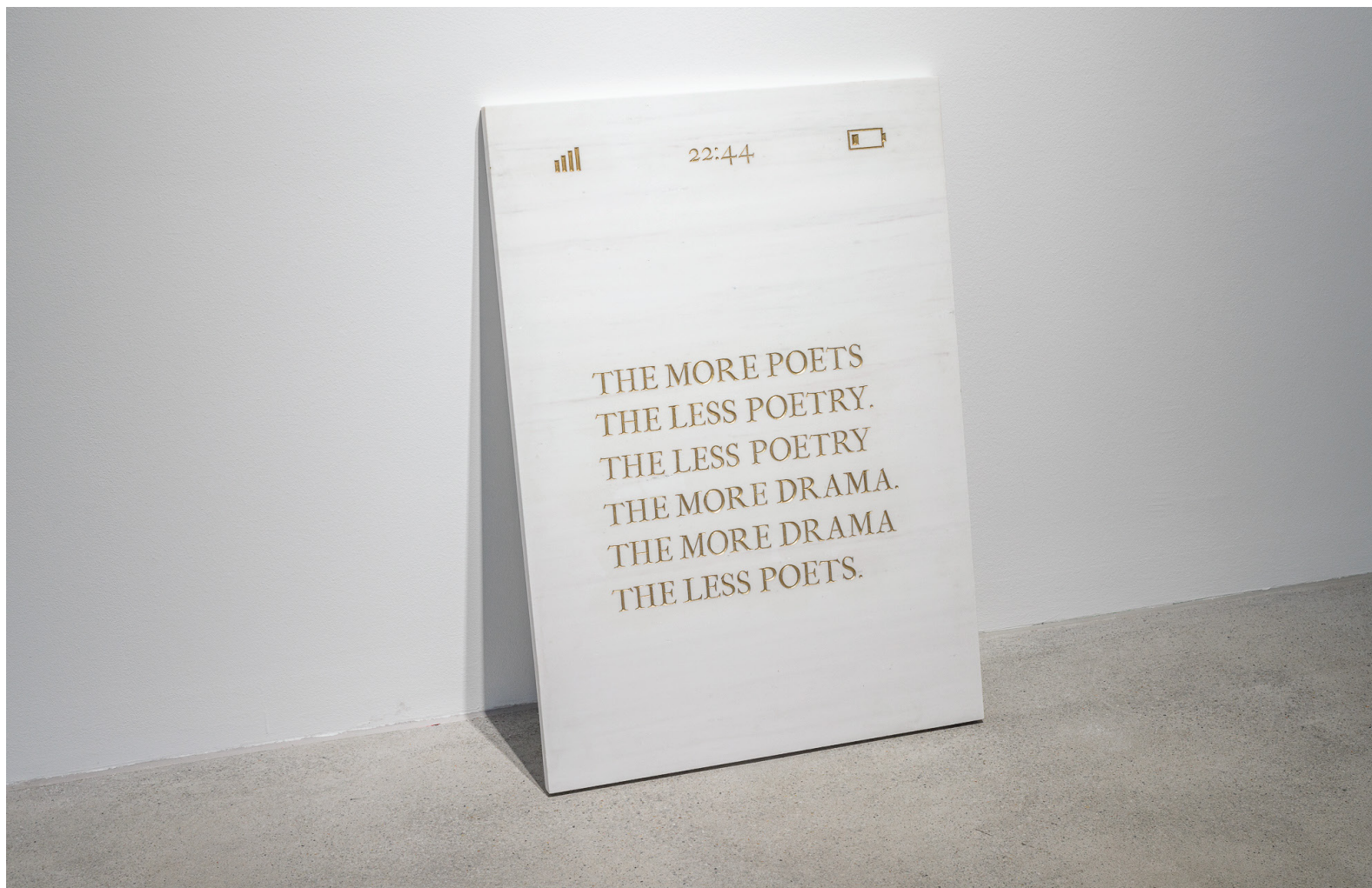
Driton Selmani – *Fig. 4.2*, 2023
Needle embroidery on textile
Dimensions: 60 × 60 × 5 cm
Installation view: Kahán Art Space, Vienna
Courtesy of the Artist ©



Driton Selmani — *You, Yes You, Lucky You*, 2022
Embroidery, textile, 200 x 150 cm
Installation view: Kahan Art Space, Vienna
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez



Driton Selmani – *Binum Silentium*, 2021
Hermann tortoise shells, 34 × 17 cm
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez



Driton Selmani — *Howl*, 2021
Engraving on white marble
100 × 70 × 5 cm
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez





Driton Selmani — *Zeitgeist*, 2019
Handcrafted oak cane, gear shift knob, rubber tip,
101 x 85 x 5 cm
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez



Driton Selmani — *Unknown Proverb*, 2023
Lithography from aluminium plates on Daunendruck 300gm² paper
100 × 70 cm
Edition of 45 + 5 AP (each ed. numbered and signed)
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez



Driton Selmani — *Three Times Yes*, 2023
Acrylic on high-density polyethylene plastic bag
75 × 55 × 5 cm (framed)
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez

Driton Selmani — *Past, Resent, Future*, 2021
Marker on high-density polyethylene plastic bag
75 × 55 × 5 cm (framed)
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez



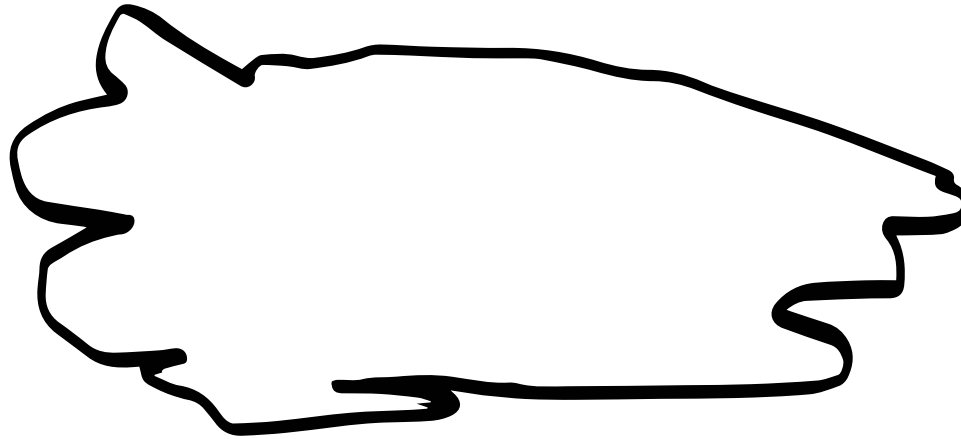


Driton Selmani – *They Say You Can't Hold Two Watermelons In One Hand*, 2012
C-Print on aluminium, 150 x 100 cm
Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez



Driton Selmani — *Archeology No# 87*, 2023
C-Print on aluminium, 40 x 40 cm, found objects
LambdaLambdaLambda, Prishtina, Kosovo
Photo: Majlinda Hoxha

Well! What do you love,
extraordinary stranger?



I love the clouds,...the clouds that pass,
comme ci, comme ça...
above and beyond..
the wonderful clouds!”

Driton Selmani: *The Barking Of The Clouds Does Not Hurt The Dogs*
Curated by Vladimir Janchevski
MoCa, Museum Of Contemporary Art,
Skopje, North Macedonia
04.11.2022–25.02.2023

The contemporary world often reveals to us as paradoxical, so this is why contemporary art, that through unrelated objects, small adaptations, unusual arrangements and specific juxtapositions can thoughtfully open a door toward understanding the complexities and contradictions of everyday life.

'A door must be either opened or closed' Art usually responds to such statements with a new challenge. The year is 1927. Exactly 85 years ago, (our mutual great-grandfather) Marcel Duchamp decided to problematize this arrogant truism, and the result is one strange but practical solution for the door in his Paris studio, at 11 rue Larrey.

Watermelons, plastic bags, a neon sign with text, school blackboard, old family photo, a knife, a coat... What is the relationship between all these things? The knife has an eraser, the coat has a double pair of sleeves, the bags have carefully inscriptions, as 'Love Letters'... They are all connected by the interventions of the artist Driton Selmani. The starting point in the conceptualization of the exhibition was defined by several parameters: the exhibition space and the specific moment in the artist's career, the notable rise of the art scene that he belongs to, as well as the MoCA-Skopje strategy for the future. The title piece, which was specifically made for the roof of the glass atrium space of the Museum, also corresponds to the paradoxical position of being both inside and outside at the same time. Thus, the placelessness of any wayward wandering international emancipated spirit is metaphorically depicted, just as Baudelaire depicts freedom as unboundedness in his poem 'The Stranger'.

The video *These stories* (2018), is conceived as a simple contrast of the image and the text, as a dialogue with the unequal distribution of the future. Interestingly, the narration is connected with the opening part of the novel "The Stubborn Ones" by Slavko Janevski, written in the same year of 1969.

Two other works are exhibited for the first time at this exhibition. "Doppelschlag (Double blow)", a family photo that, although small in size, creates a secondary but strong family connection with Skopje. The canvas titled *Sinister Hand* is a warning image, which, in relation to the other works, anchors the exhibition very strongly in the current moment, when the redrawing of maps and the threats of expansion of the theatre of conflict is greater.

Presenting a diversity of works in a selection of already existing works and a site-specific intervention in the space of the MoCA-Skopje, the exhibition of text-based works, objects and video, tries to establish new relations in the given context, clearly showing the ways in which Selmani wittily uses a specific form of humor to investigate and question the familiarity of everyday, usually bound in absurd traditions and hierarchical structures.

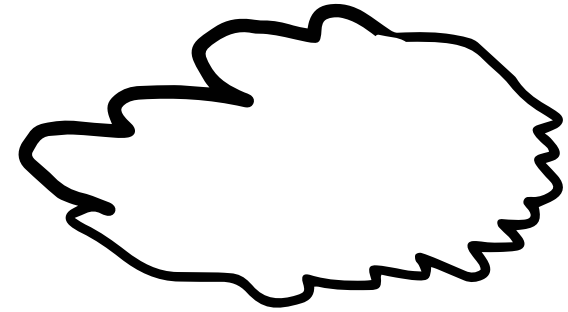
Selmani's wide array of works focusing on diverse issues of our contemporary predicament ranging from popular culture, to the dominant discourses of power that are shaping our lives, questioning historical narratives, stereotypes, the sense of belonging and exclusion.

Driton Selmani's works are always constructed as an imaginary dialog, either with an audience, or even with oneself, as a series of short statements, or probing rhetorical questions, opening new perspectives to our understanding of ourselves, the commons, and different aspects of contemporary life.

The very title of the show, makes it clear how Selmani uses unexpected juxtapositions and irony - twisting a Berber proverb, with a reference to a verse from one of his favorite poems, *Stranger (L'Etranger)* by Charles Baudelaire.

In fact, he deliberately seeks and finds the points where language breaks, it opens a gap, a crack between the things, the words and the newly constructed image, transforming the familiar into a weirdly unique situation, and then back from the fictitious to the understanding of the everyday.

Intervening in the realm of language, from old popular wisdom to poetry and children songs, Selmani's practice touches upon the fears, troubles and worries expressed by ordinary people. He aims at deconstructing the underlying structures and the internalized cultural constructs in order to understand them, thus offering us a unique possibility to stand together and be confronted with powerful visual works with masterful simplicity. Dwelling in this state of strangeness where the poetic and the political intersect he is far from being a stranger, but instead finds his home.



Are you gonna bark all
day, little cloud?
On the paradox of being
both inside and
outside

*The Barking of the Clouds does not Hurt the Dogs, is the title of Driton Selmani's first solo show in the Republic of North Macedonia opening at the Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje. The exhibition is a result of the MoCA-Skopje 2021, XIII Biennial Award given to Driton Selmani in the form of a solo exhibition.





Driton Selmani — *Barking Of The Clouds Does Not Hurt The Dogs*, 2022
Welded Steel Sculpture, Dimensions: 730 × 60 × 5 cm
Courtesy of the Artist & MoCa, Museum Of Contemporary Art, Skopje
Photo: Denis Saraginovski



Driton Selmani — *Doppelschlag*, 2022
Polaroid Photography, 15 × 10 cm
Courtesy of the Artist



Driton Selmani — *Calm Before The Storm*, 2022
Vinyl on aluminium traffic sign, Dimensions: 250 × 200 cm
Courtesy of the Artist & MoCa, Museum Of Contemporary Art, Skopje
Photo: Denis Saraginovski

Driton Selmani — EVERYTHING WE DO IS REALLY, REALLY BRILLIANT (2022)

Single-channel video installation
Duration: 15min 53sec, Shooting format: HD,
Screening ratio: 16:9 Sound: stereo

The work starts and delves into the intricate aspects of humanity's position and the weight it carries in an uncertain future. It offers a thought-provoking exploration of our often surprising predictions regarding the consequences of the algorithms we create, while simultaneously disregarding their potential impact on the surrounding environment. Entitled "Everything We Do Is Really, Really, Brilliant," this work emerges as a poignant warning, shedding light on the transformative trajectory of the human species.

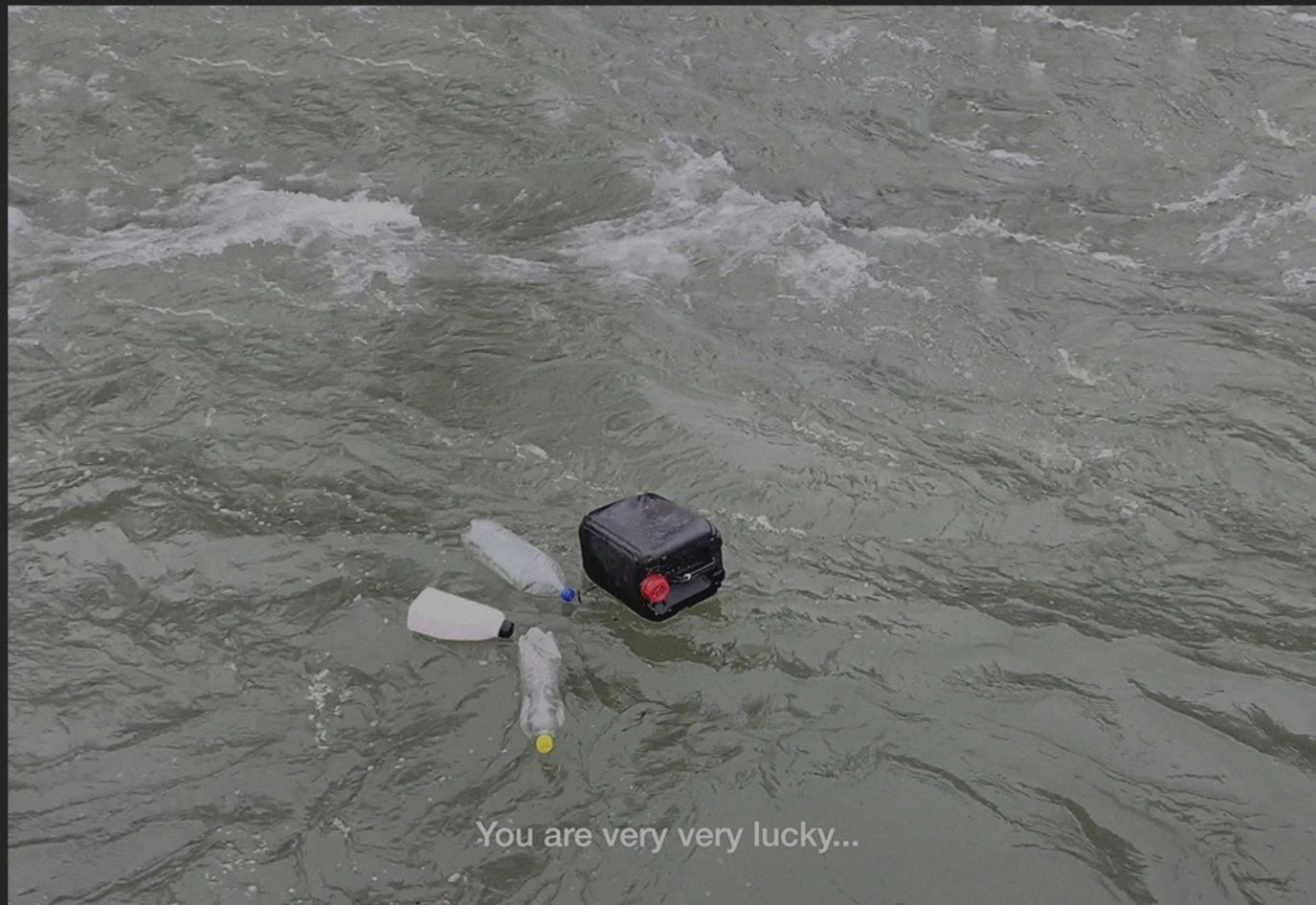
Within the installation, the work presents a profound examination of the evolving nature of our relationship with the natural world. It exposes the unsettling shift from a deep-seated fear of nature to an unprecedented desire for control, even extending to the manipulation of nature itself. This narrative unveils a disconcerting truth: the very complexity that defines us as a species also renders us the least accountable for the consequences of our actions.

The centerpiece of this artistic endeavor is a captivating video installation that meticulously documents the powerful current of the Lepenc River, known for being the fastest-flowing river in Kosovo. By a twist of fate, the once pristine clarity of the river becomes obfuscated, serving as a metaphorical catalyst for questioning the future that lies ahead.

This visual exploration seamlessly weaves together our collective fantasies and anxieties, converging them into a singular response: as beings situated on the precipice between the human and the divine, we, the human race, bear an immense responsibility for the days yet to come.

It is through this introspective journey that the installation beckons viewers to confront the intricacies of our existence and the implications of our actions. Even the simplest dance of our residual presence in the river assumes a profound significance, resembling a somber and symbolic ritual, perhaps even a final farewell. It emphasizes our deep-rooted connection to the natural world and underscores the weight of our role as custodians of the future. Ultimately, the work transcends its visual and conceptual dimensions, assuming the role of a curatorial vessel that carries the weight of contemplation and self-reflection. It invites viewers to engage in a dialogue with their own complicity in shaping the path ahead, inspiring a renewed sense of responsibility and a heightened awareness of the intricate interplay between humanity, nature, and the divine.

* The artist (Driton Selmani) worked on a unique performance in collaboration with actor & performer: Tristan Halilaj, who produced a site-specific soundtrack for the video on the trumpet upon request.



You are very very lucky...

Driton Selmani – *Everything We Do Is Really, Really Brilliant*, 2022
Single-channel video installation
Duration: 15min 53sec, Shooting format: HD, Screening ratio: 16:9
Sound: stereo, Photo: Alban Nuhiu



Driton Selmani – *Untitled*, 2018
Handmade knife, rubber eraser, 21 × 5 × 6 cm
Courtesy of the Artist
Photo: Denis Saraginovski

Grass has overtaken the soil where the traces and proof lie.

Driton Selmani— *The Grave Is Better Than Not Knowing*

Curated by Blerta Hoçia

(18.11.2021 – 31.01.2022)

The Palace Of The Youth, Prishtina, Kosovo

This exhibition, which commemorates the 1622 people who disappeared during the armed conflict in Kosovo and the period immediately after it including the years 1998 and 2000 comes at a time of denunciations and long suspected mass graves discovered on Serbian land. *The grave that is better than not knowing* is a fragment extracted from a conversation with Kumrije Jahmurataj, one of the many relatives of the disappeared who still wait for their loved ones. This phrase echoes just as mournfully as the indefinite wait of family members, which takes the shape of a macabre hope. The details of the 1622 persons revealed in this exhibition are not the details of missing or disappeared persons, but rather the details of people who were abducted, disappeared by force, executed, and hidden in mass graves, which over the course of more than 20 years after the crimes that were committed against the people of Kosovo have been obscured, thus making the search and as a result their discovery more and more complicated.

Grass has overtaken the soil where the traces and proof lie.

Within the space that this exhibition takes role; due to a multitude of gaps and absences, it becomes a temporary grave that does not contain a human, but only his or her memory. The past always comprises absence, first an absence of presence, and it is this very enigma that forms the base for the work of artist Driton Selmani. Enigma is the presentation of absence and manifestations of a past that is now behind us, of something that is preserved in memory and is essentially indestructible. Following and adjusting this context around the thoughts of philosopher Paul Ricoeur on Memory, History, and Forgetting,

we see that “the trauma remains even though it is inaccessible, unavailable. In its place arise phenomena of substitution, symptoms which mask the return of the repressed” and that “in particular circumstances, entire sections of the reputedly forgotten past can return” (P.R 2004). While material traces and physical memory in the form of documents and archives, in the form of bodies, flesh, and bones are degradable and unidentifiable and as a result lost, the traces imprinted on the cerebral cortex, which manifest as memories, perceptions, or reawakening of the unconscious, manage to survive. And it is precisely this memory which this artistic intervention is dedicated to the living, indestructible memory of those who do not forget. In fact, the stones and the time of the installation merge with each other’s mission and become equivalent. A stone is, in essence, a multitude of elements and minerals that, together with time, allow for the formation of petrological mass. Stones are, much more so than anything else, witnesses of time, because they themselves contain time, whereas the latter is a witness and steward of every layer of this petrological mass. These two elements contain the disintegrated shards of this barbaric humanity where the shared civil body remains the final battlefield of modern conflicts. The amnesty tendered from time to time by international and local institutions during the past two decades has led to episodes of collective general amnesia, which remains eternally unresolved. It is a structured act of forgetting, with a layered bureaucracy that extends to all levels of everyday life, killing the victims anew and annihilating the disappeared over and over again. And finally, forgetting that the family members and loved ones of the forcefully disappeared, who live their lives seeking and waiting for answers, are the real victims who resist with the strength of these stones while also waiting in turn for a stone, that is for resolution, a cure for their indescribable anxiety and the possibility to weep over the grass that will sprout.

* According to the most recent data on the International Committee of the Red Cross’s list, the number is 1622. Date: October 11, 2021

[Blerta Hoçia]



Driton Selmani — *The Grave is better Than Not Knowing*, 2021
Natural carved stones, LED panels, electronic clock, Dimensions variable
Installation view: Atelier Hall, Palace Of The Youth, Prishtina
Courtesy of the Artist & Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo
Photo: Atthe Mulla

8265:4:54:39

8185:22:54:58

8267:21:54:35





8185:22:51:36

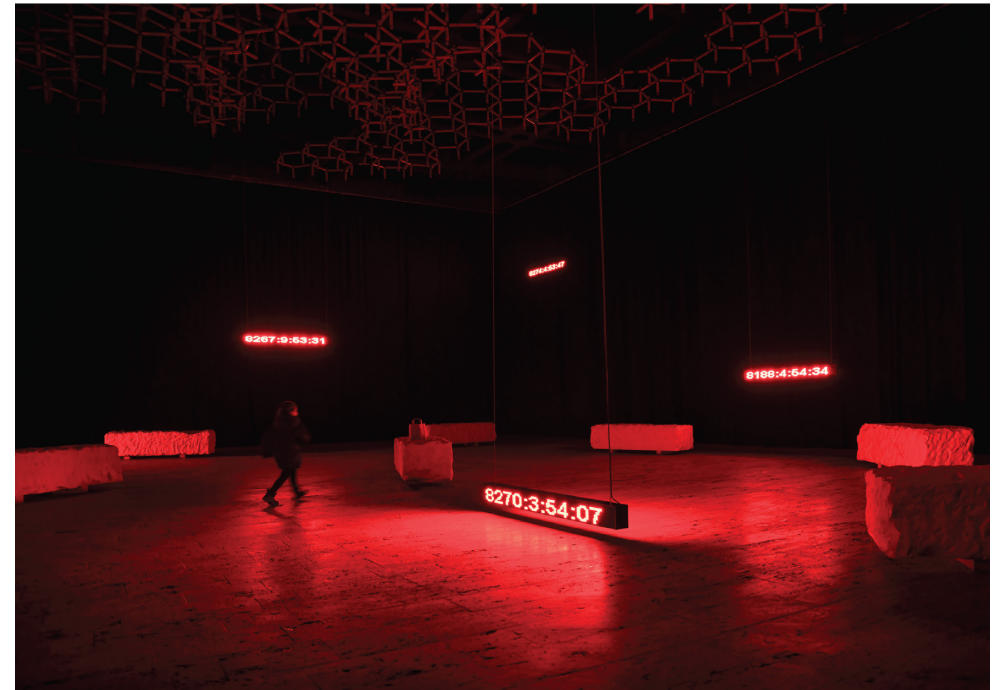
8265:4:51:17

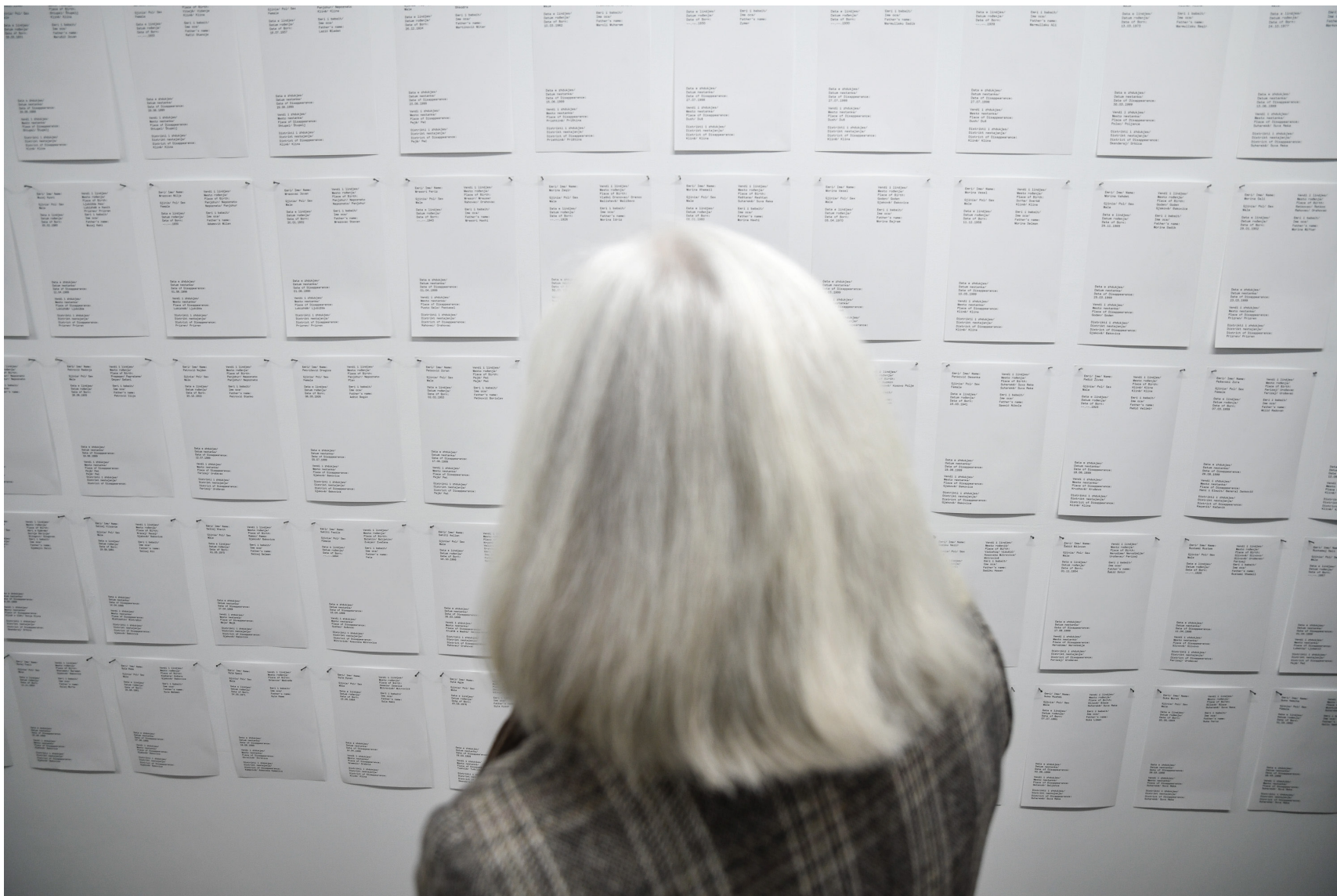
8196:22:51:41

8267:21:51:13



Driton Selmani – *The Grave is better Than Not Knowing*, 2021
 Natural carved stones, LED panels, electronic clock, Dimensions variable
 Installation view: Atelier Hall, Palace Of The Youth, Prishtina
 Courtesy of the Artist & Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo
 Images: Atdhe Mulla, Courtesy of the artist ©





Driton Selmani – *The Grave is better Than Not Knowing*, 2021
 Natural carved stones, LED panels, electronic clock, Dimensions variable
 Installation view: Atelier Hall, Palace Of The Youth, Prishtina
 Courtesy of the Artist & Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo
 Photo: Ferdi Limani

Driton Selmani — *Love Letters* (2018—ongoing)

Grand Scheme of Things / On Love
I Should Begin Telling You How I'm Feeling
22.07 – 30.10.2022 / Manifesta 14,
Grand Hotel Prishtina

"I wish you were a plastic bag so that you could be eternal".
Coined by Driton Selmani, this epigram is one of hundreds to fill the pages of his notebooks. At the moment he transferred it to a plastic bag, it became a love letter, one of the multitude of missives to everyone and no one the artist has been composing since 2018. The thematic scope of these plastic *Love Letters* is nothing short of panoramic. Through them, Selmani traverses landscapes of politics and ecology, delves into the realm of art and philosophy, and unearths the recesses of human desire and anxiety. The plastic becomes a resilient canvas, bearing witness to the inked chronicles of quotidian epiphanies and speculative postulations, an enduring testimony to the ebb and flow of everyday existence.

In essence, Selmani's plastic *Love Letters* unfurl as a testament to the enduring quest of art: to transmute the transient into the eternal. These unassuming vessels become time capsules, poised to withstand the ravages of time for millennia to come, chronicling the nuances of human connection, contemplation, and longing. As we engage with these artifacts, we engage not only with the artist's sentiments but with the very essence of what it means to be human—entangled within the paradoxes of life, encapsulated in the elegance of a plastic embrace.

I wish you were a plastic bag so that
you could be eternal”.



Driton Selmani – *Love Letters*, 2018, ongoing
 Grand Scheme of Things | On Love, I Should Begin Telling You How I'm Feeling
 22.07 – 30.10.2022 / Manifesta 14, Grand Hotel Prishtina
 Photo: Atdhe Mulla



Driton Selmani — *In Dreams, You Will Lose Your Heartaches*, 2022
Acrylic on high-density polyethylene plastic bag, dimensions: 75 × 55 × 5 cm (framed)
Installation view: Manifesta 14, Grand Hotel Prishtina
Photo: Atdhe Mulla



Driton Selmani – *Love Letters*, 2018, ongoing
Grand Scheme of Things | On Love, I Should Begin Telling You How I'm Feeling
22.07 – 30.10.2022 / Manifesta 14, Grand Hotel Prishtina
Photo: Atdhe Mulla

Driton Selmani — *Weather Forecast* (2021/2023)

Used school blackboards, white acrylic paint, timber panels. Dimensions 350 x 250 cm

Installation View: Taukbahqe Park Prishtina, Kosovo & Virtual Museum of Dotrščina, Zagreb, Croatia

Planet Earth is old news. It's the house we are discarding. We definitely don't love her. We almost believe we don't need her.¹

It looks as though forests appear to be hidden books, where each tree composites a white clean page. Waiting for another poem to be written on them as the “testimony” and the basis for any narrative concerning the past² Getting into the middle of the relationship between nature and people, and using the deep forest as the referential form to confess and construct the history of our time, the project questions the cost of what we are not willing to pay. Installing used school blackboards, along the depths of the forest, where records of historical or even personal events will be a guide for keeping the memory alive, for a complex generation, but also making the writings on them non-erasable. As evidence and necessary lessons to balance the history of the future between man and nature itself.

1. 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts / No006: Etel Adnan, The Cost for Love We Are Not Willing to Pay, (dOCUMENTA 13, 2011)

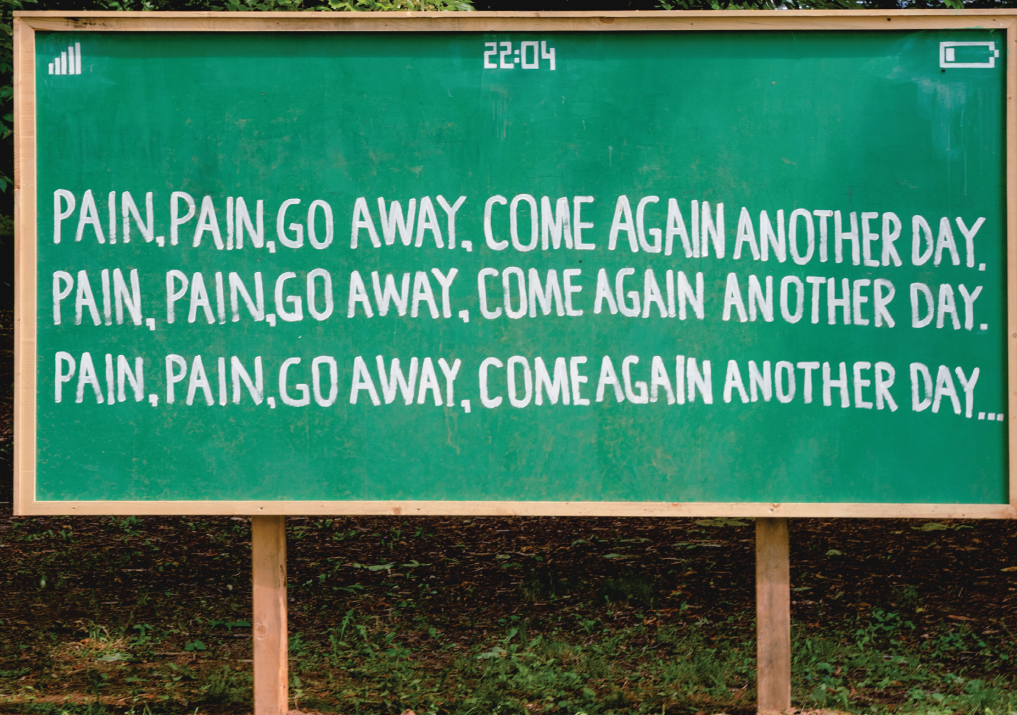
2. Paul Ricoeur, La Mémoire, l'Histoire, l'Oublie (Paris: Seuil, 2000)

001. Driton Selmani — *Weather Forecast*, 2022
Installation View: Taukbahqe Park Prishtina, Kosovo
Public Art Festival, 24.05–31.07.2022
Photo: Agon Mehmeti

002. Driton Selmani — *EVERYTHING*, 2021
Installation view: Virtual Museum of Dotrščina, Zagreb, Croatia
Photo: Katarina Zlatec

003. Driton Selmani — *Descendent of Memory*, 2021, 2021
Installation view: Virtual Museum of Dotrščina, Zagreb, Croatia
Photo: Katarina Zlatec

004. Driton Selmani — *Future Deserts*, 2021
Installation view: Virtual Museum of Dotrščina, Zagreb, Croatia
Photo: Katarina Zlatec



Driton Selmani — *Weather Forecast*, 2022
Used blackboard, white acrylic paint, timber panels. Dimensions 350 x 250 cm
Installation View: Taukbahqe Park Prishtina
Public Art Festival, 24.05–31.07.2022
Photo: Agon Mehmeti



Driton Selmani – *EVERYTHING*, 2021
Used blackboard, white acrylic paint, timber panels. Dimensions 350 x 250 cm
Installation view: Virtual Museum of Dotrščina, Zagreb, Croatia
Photo: Katarina Zlatec



Driton Selmani – *Descendent of Memory*, 2021
Used blackboard, white acrylic paint, timber panels. Dimensions 350 x 250 cm
Installation view: Virtual Museum of Dotrščina, Zagreb, Croatia
Photo: Katarina Zlatec



Driton Selmani — *Future Deserts*, 2021
Used blackboard, white acrylic paint, timber panels. Dimensions 350 x 250 cm
Installation view: Virtual Museum of Dotrščina, Zagreb, Croatia
Photo: Katarina Zlatec



Driton Selmani — *Hopes & Fears*, 2021
Tailor-made coat, metal rack. Dimensions: 200 × 150 cm
Installation view: Contemporary Art Centre, Podgorica, Montenegro
Photo: Duško Miljanić

Driton Selmani — *Our Past Is Our Common Future*, 2019
Acrylic on high-density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic bag
45 × 33 cm, Frame: 65 × 45 × 5 cm
Courtesy of the Artist
Photo: Rilind Beqa





Driton Selmani — *Milk Of Dreams*, 2021
Recycled ceramic mosaic, 100 x 70 cm
On View: Isle Of Thorns, Galeria e Bregdetit, Vlorë, Albania
Photo: Julia Dajçi



Driton Selmani – *Flag Of Tmrrw*, 2020

Welded steel, rotating mechanism

Dimensions: 250 x 300 cm

Installation View: Almissa Almissa 11, Omiš, Croatia

Photo: Toni Meštrović



Driton Selmani – *WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T DO IT*, 2019
Site-specific installation, Vinyl cut letters on vurrier van
Installation View: More And More Thoughts About Other Thoughts,
U10, Belgrade, Serbia, Photo: Ivan Zupancic



Driton Selmani — *But No But (or vice versa)*, 2019
Steel sculpture, Dimensions: 300 × 30 × 85 × 115 cm
Installation View: More And More Thoughts About Other Thoughts, U10, Belgrade, Serbia
Photo: Ivan Zupancic

Driton Selmani – *Only Time Will Tell* (2019)

LED Plexiglass, CNC cut letters, metal holder,
Dimensions: 300 × 70 × 160 cm
Installation view: Double Wall of Silence, Škuc Gallery,
Ljubljana, Slovenia

The gallery's inner courtyard comes alive with a luminous inscription: "Only Time Will Tell" (2019), a proclamation that beckons contemplation. This installation becomes the threshold to an arena of contemplative discourse—a space where dialogues unfurl like tendrils of possibility. Here, within this interstice, Driton Selmani (1987, Kosovo) positions himself, poised to engage in the art of conversation through his evocative practice. Selmani, a master of this liminal realm, has ingeniously harnessed his artistic vantage to navigate this indistinct domain. In recent times, his artistic repertoire has burgeoned into a vibrant tapestry of playful narratives, tinged with irony and often laced with confessional undertones. His creative gambits have seamlessly intertwined with everyday objects and public spaces, offering him a stage to project his profound yet fleeting expressions. Each of his one-sentence proclamations or seemingly ephemeral jests embarks on a quest for attention, unveiling a persistent undercurrent of skepticism. They emerge as a chorus of voices echoing through the ether—voices that unveil the artist's ongoing wrestle with doubt.

Within the contours of Selmani's work, one discovers not only his own intimate musings but also collective hopes and fears, intricately interwoven with the socio-political fabric of his native country. Kosovo, the crucible of his upbringing, leaves an indelible mark, infusing his art with the nuanced interplay of personal narrative and communal experience.

His creations become mirrors that reflect the resonances of a collective memory, a shared history, and the multifaceted hues of contemporary society.

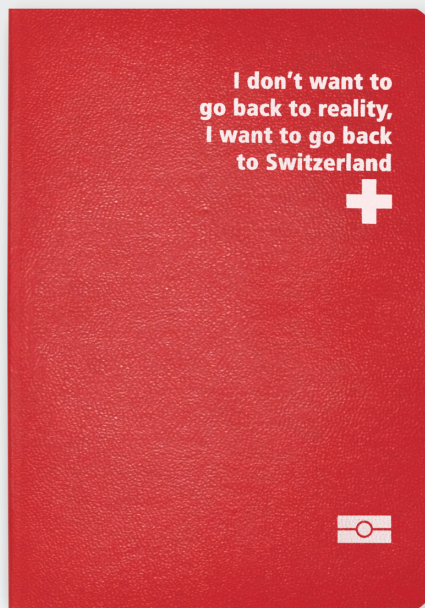
Only Time Will Tell, 2019 stands as more than a mere installation; it evolves into an evocative conduit. The luminous inscription, the very embodiment of temporality, evokes introspection. As visitors traverse this threshold, they are invited to pause, to ponder the mutable nature of time and its ever-uncertain revelations. Selmani, in his role as an artistic mediator, navigates this terrain with finesse, prompting viewers to consider their own positioning within this ceaseless continuum. In this dynamic interplay between space, inscription, and audience, Selmani crafts an experience that transcends the boundaries of the gallery, merging the artistic and the existential, the contemplative and the interactive.

Who is the speaker and who is the listener? How much time – and silence does it take for the nameless to become a speaker, and how much for the listener to be able to fully hear the undesirable testimony?¹

1. Dan Bar On, *Legacy of Silence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994)



Driton Selmani — *Only Time Will Tell*, 2019
LED Plexiglass, CNC cut letters, metal holder, 300 × 70 × 160 cm
Installation view: Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana
Photo: Klemen Llovár



Driton Selmani – *ZigZag*, 2019
Hardcover | 32 pages | 125 × 85 mm
Offset Edition of 100 signed copies
Photo: Moderne Archives, Courtesy of the Artist





Driton Selmani — *When They Came*, 2019
Embroidery / Collage on textile. Dimensions: 200 × 150 cm
Installation view: We're Not Like Them, MMSU Rijeka
Photo: Damir Žižić

Driton Selmani — *Can Not Navigate*, 2019
Acrylic drawing on paper, Dimensions: 45 × 35 cm
Installation view: We're Not Like Them, MMSU Rijeka
Photo: Damir Žižić



Driton Selmani – *These Stories* (2018)

Single-channel video Installation, Duration: 7min 23sec

Screening ratio: 4:3, Sound: stereo

Installation view: Places We Leave Behind, Ljubljana Slovenia

These Stories is a lucid dream that reflects upon the complexities and contradictions of reality, atmosphere, place, loss, and hope. The work is a mind and memory puzzle. It uses narrative language to juxtapose an uncanny¹ symbiosis of events, a doubling of memory and presence, an invitation to see between the lines of what is in front of us, and what might be there. The Video Installation combines the original Apollo 11 mission video footage, and the audio narration of *Sadik Cena* b.1956, a close family member of mine. His story relates to the same period of NASA's Lunar Mission. A radical change occurred in the lives of many families around Kosovo, including mine. At the same time, Neil A. Armstrong stepped on the surface of the Moon, the electricity network reached our village, thus benefiting very late from the electrification process during the ex-Yugoslav economic development program. The work questions the importance of these two separate events, by merging the Memory into a single History. While the video shows perhaps the highest achievement of humanity, the audio voice reflects on the parallel impact of something just as important as the first one, starting from the very personal history. Doubting not only the Moon mission but also its importance in a given space and time.

1. Freud defines the uncanny as a realm of aesthetics that pertains not to a theory of beauty, but rather a theory of feeling – in particular, to the feeling of repulsion and distress. "The uncanny", Freud writes, "is that class of terrifying that leads back to something that is once hidden, but that subsequently, and disturbingly, comes to light."

The Americans said: "We go."
The Russians said: "We Go."
And I don't believe NON of them
has gone to the Moon or wherever!





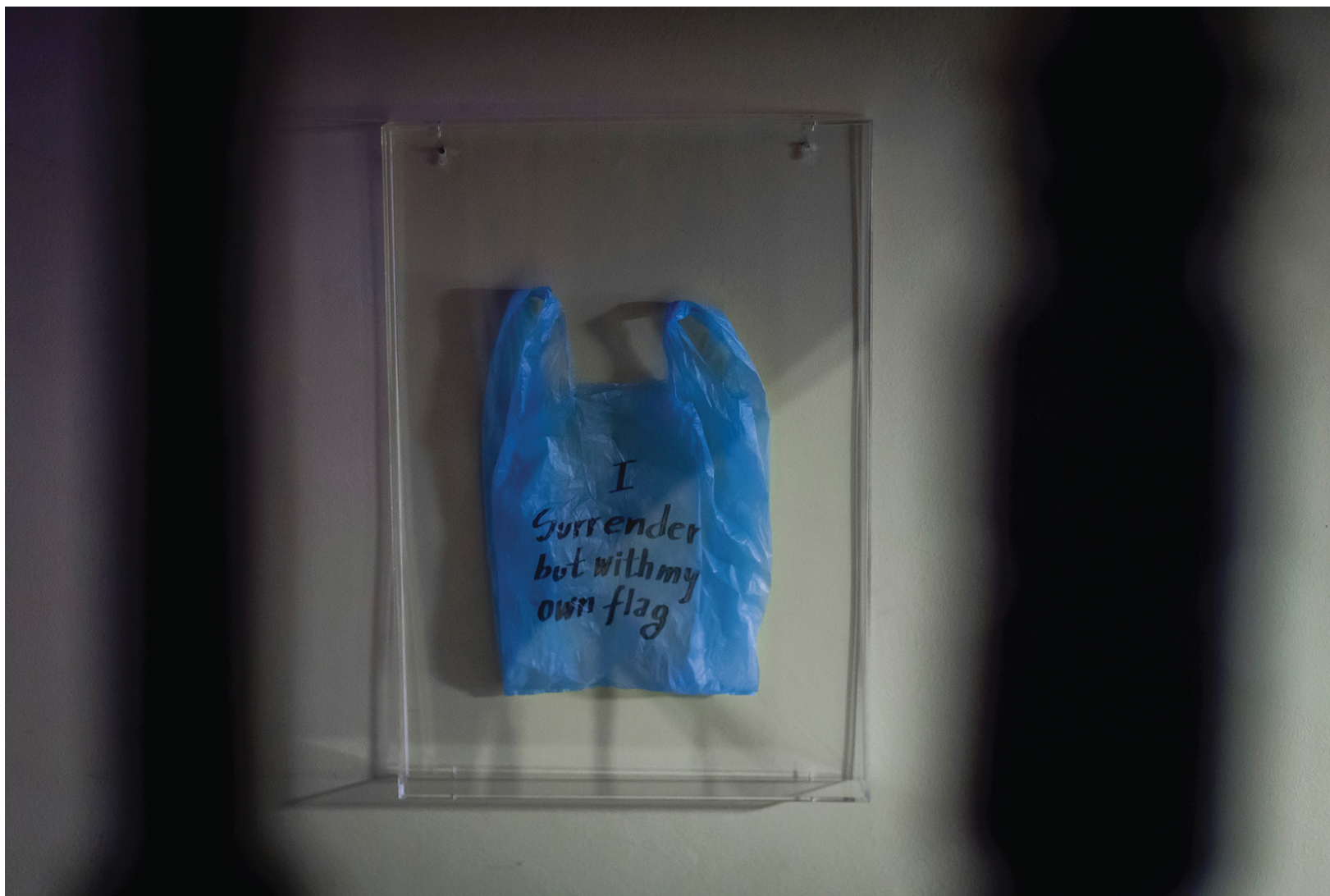
Because we are far away from these stories...



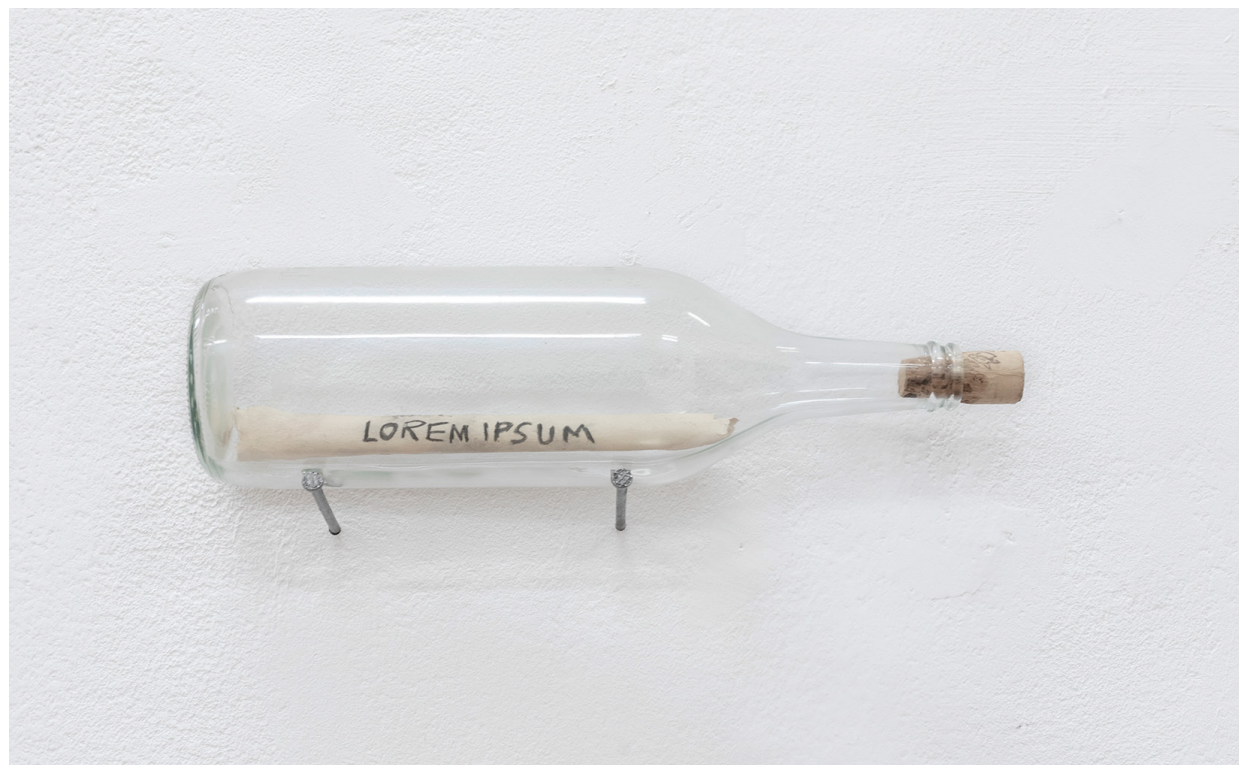
Driton Selmani — *Landlocked Deep Desires*, 2019
Plexiglas, LED lights, 1700 x 105 x 25 cm
Installation view: Lumbardhi Cinema / Nuit Blanche, Prizren
Photo: Alban Nuhiu

Driton Selmani – *Landlocked Deep Desires*, 2019
Plexiglas, LED lights, 1700 x 105 x 25 cm
Installation view: Lumbardhi Cinema / Nuit Blanche, Prizren
Photo: Gëzim Paqarizi

LANDLOCKED DEEP DESIRES



Driton Selmani – *I Surrender*, 2019
Permanent marker on plastic bag, Dimensions: 60x45 cm
Installation View: Slovene Writers Association, Ljubljana
Photo: Kristina Bursać



Driton Selmani – *Lorem Ipsum*, 2019
glass bottle, recycled paper, charcoal
Dimensions: 30 × 10 × 5 cm
Installation view: Salon Galič, Split, Croatia
Photo: Zaklina Antonijević



Driton Selmani — *It's All In Your Head* 2016, ongoing
Incognito tab, Mixed media framed drawing on paper,
Homesick, Mixed media framed drawing on paper
Dimensions: 36 × 40 × 3 cm (framed)
Installation view: U10, Belgrade, Serbia,
Photo: Ivan Zupancic

Driton Selmani – Places We Leave Behind
Curated by Hana Ostan Ožbolt
Slovene Writers' Association,
Ljubljana, Slovenia
15.05–6.06. 2019

Places We Leave Behind marks Driton Selmani's first solo exhibition in Ljubljana, Slovenia. After meeting him for the first time a couple of months before, I was immediately taken away by his work and artistic persona. Direct, witty, smart, and self-confident, he was screaming for attention—just like his work. I was still finishing my master's thesis at that time and working as an emerging freelance curator, eager to find different ways to organize exhibitions outside the established gallery spaces in Ljubljana. Aiming to bring contemporary art closer to the general public while striving for the cultural enrichment of public spaces, I initiated HOoST, a series of emerging artists' exhibitions outside the gallery/institutional premises. In its framework, I organized and curated exhibitions as well as presentations of the younger generation of artists from November 2018 onwards, Selmani's presentation being the last one. What follows was written for that particular exhibition and has been updated for this publication.

In finding the right location (not a “white cube”) for the exhibition, I decided to collaborate with one of the main Slovenian literature festivals, Slovenian Book Days. In its 24th edition, the space of language gained its reverberation for the first time also within the field of contemporary art; often marked by traditionalism, the festival's organizers decided to widen its frame.

I positioned Selmani's exhibition in the house of the Slovene Writers' Association, the famous building in which the Slovene consciousness as a nation and state was built and established. The Association was originally founded in 1872 in Ljubljana to support writers and their families and was later dissolved in 1915 by the Austrian authorities to be re-established in 1920. In the early 1980s, the Slovene Writers' Association (a member of the Writers' Association of Yugoslavia) became more involved in social questions: particularly issues concerning nationality, creative freedom, and political pluralism (during this period a commission for the protection of writing and thinking functioned within the framework of the Association, and—with help from external experts—participated in measures to change the Constitution). It played an important role in Slovenia gaining independence.

The exhibition *Places We Leave Behind* was set and intervened in the building, the daily routines of the people working there, and its immediate surroundings, using it as a pavilion of sorts.

* Three interventions have also been made with the thought of the Ljubljana exhibition. *Tears Don't Cry* (2019) is a site-specific installation, located in the basement spaces of the house. *Our Past Is Our Common Future* (2019) is “moveable” and stands in one of the streets near the Association, while *I Cannot Be Myself All the Time* (2019) is positioned in the garden behind the house. At the same time, the work acts as a “black box” within which the video *These Stories* (2018) can be viewed.



Driton Selmani — *I CANNOT BE MYSELF ALL THE TIME*. 2019
Site-specific installation, Vinyl cut letters on courier van
Installation View: Slovene Writers' Association, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Photo: Kristina Bursac



Driton Selmani — *Tears Don't Cry*, 2019
Site-specific installation, three chairs, old broom
Dimensions: 250 x 250 cm
Photo: Jaka Babnik

Driton Selmani — *Call It Fate, Call It Karma*, 2015
Custom-made Shoe & trousers.
Dimensions: 220 x 140 cm
Photo: Jaka Babnik





Driton Selmani — *OUR PAST IS OUR COMMON FUTURE*, 2019
Site-specific installation, Vinyl cut letters on courier van
Installation View: Slovene Writers' Association, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Photo: Kristina Bursac



Driton Selmani – *If I Was God*, 2018
Blue pen on plastic bag, Dimensions: 48×28 cm
Installation View: Mundane, Eugster || Belgrade
Photo: Nemanja Knežević

Driton Selmani – *SECRETLY KISSING EACH OTHER*, 2018
C-Print on Aluminum, Dimensions: 150x100cm
Courtesy of the Artist & Eugster || Belgrade
Photo: Nemanja Knežević



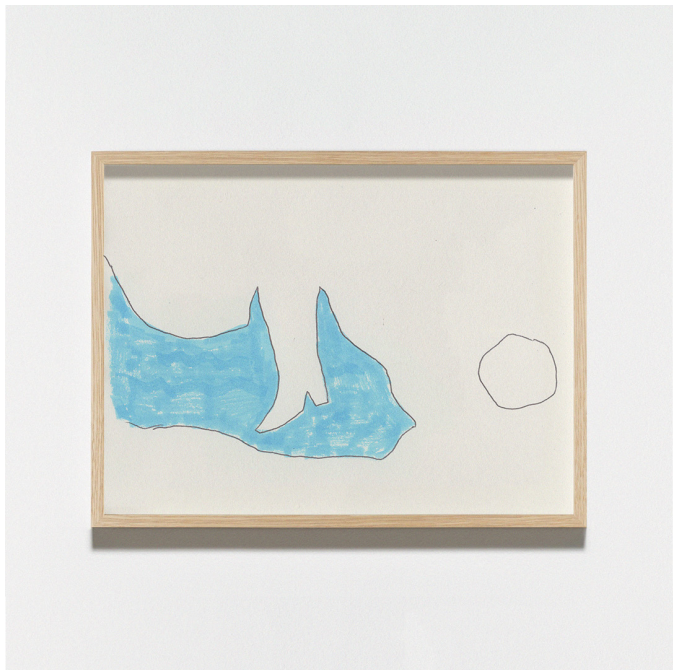
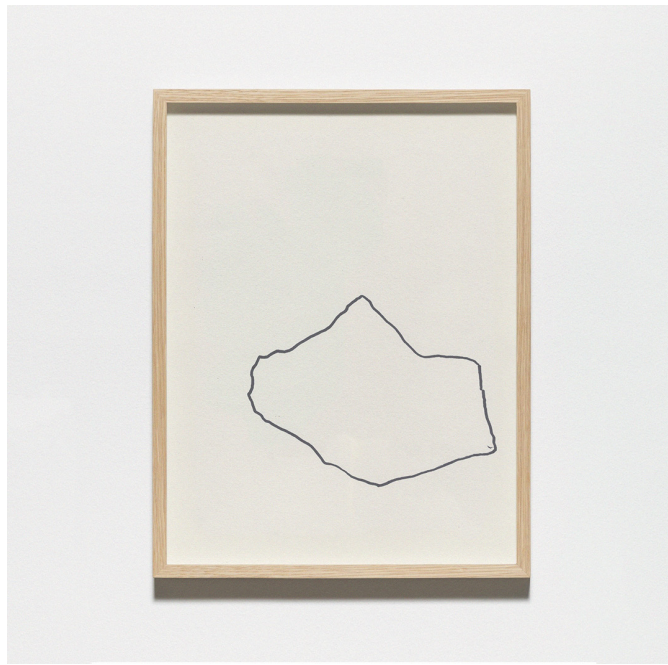
Driton Selmani – *Tell Me Where I Am From ?* (2012)

When I was first invited to visit Kosovo, in January 2018, the plane could not land because of the thick fog. This set well with the joke I had for Kosovo - that it does not exist – which began when I found out that Israel does not recognize the sovereignty of Kosovo. What does it mean to be a partially recognized state as Kosovo is? What does it mean to be a territory under dispute? I suggested curating an exhibition that doesn't exist, with artists that do not exist, in a gallery that doesn't exist. Funny enough I saw an older work by Driton Selmani, titled *Tell Me Where I Am From?* (2012). The work was made while Selmani was staying in a residency program in the UK where he asked nine of the residents, artists from different places in the world (Brazil, Poland, Portugal, Japan, Cyprus & UK), to draw a map of Kosovo and its location in the world map. The answers were far from reality, including one that thought that Kosovo was an Island and another that named the state Kosobo. Alongside the nine different maps that the residents drew, Selmani's mom used, at his request, a needle embroidery on fabric to create an image of the world's map where Kosovo is missing, like a hole in the globe. Yet the metaphor of "an exhibition that doesn't exist, with artists that do not exist, in a state that does not exist" asked to open a sphere of political imagination where anything is possible and anything can happen. Where one does not have to obey any rule or category of reality, not even gravity! It asked us to think about the National Gallery of Kosovo as a non-place or an ex-territory, a hallucinatory sphere that exists outside of the radar and can open new points of view and new ways of acting in our ambiguous reality.

Driton Selmani – *Tell Me Where I Am From?*, 2012
Needle embroidery on textile, 90 x 60 cm
Marker drawings on paper, 32 x 24 cm
Installation view: Fog, National Gallery of Kosovo

The NON places,
are the PLACES my dear.





Driton Selmani – *Tell Me Where I Am From?*, 2012
Marker drawings on paper, 32 x 24 cm
Photo: Majlina Hoxha



Driton Selmani – *Tell Me Where I Am From?*, 2012
Marker drawings on paper, 32 x 24 cm
Photo: Majlina Hoxha



Driton Selmani – *Red Tape*, (2018)

Public Space Intervention, Pristina, Kosovo
Printed Textile Flag, Dimensions: 600 x 400 cm
Installation View: Bigger than Myself – Heroic Voices from
ex Yugoslavia Curated by Zdenka Badovinac
MAXXI Museum, Rome
Courtesy of the artist & MAXXI Museum ©

Offside – adjective, adverb
off·side

Illegally beyond a prescribed line or area or in advance of the ball at the beginning of or during play or a play.

Flags have always been used by individuals and societies to shape identities. They create a sense of fellowship, foster hope and optimism, evoke feelings of pride, construct narratives, and instill a shared belief. This has consistently been the case, and we can reasonably anticipate its continuity. *Red Tape* serves as a contemplation on how flags are wielded as tools to probe cultural, political, and social sensibilities. It refrains from offering an opinion or issuing calls to action; instead, it starkly mirrors the prevailing dynamics within our realities. Flags do not exclusively ascend to signify victory, conquest, or accomplishment. They are also hoisted to denote a transfer, a defeat on the battlefield, or even an acknowledgment of another's triumph over an individual or society. Frequently, flags become symbolic of the erosion of pride, trust, and optimism. In the present landscape, locating nations that have not undergone such capitulation is an arduous endeavor. *Red Tape* undertakes an incessant quest to capture the authentic image where notions of pride and optimism appear to be subsumed within the undertow of the '*game*'.

Consequently, the flag in question interpellates the environing actuality and offers an apt portrayal of the political, economic, and social milieu. It manifests as the standard of despondency, an emblem of exclusion, and a manifestation of the dearth of pride in the state, its institutions, and its symbols. It vocalizes a narrative of disconnect and disenchantment, encapsulating the complex interplay of emotions within the prevailing sociopolitical landscape.



Driton Selmani — *Red Tape*, 2018
Public Space Intervention, Prishtina, Kosovo
Installation view: MAXXI Museum, Rome 2021
Photo Roberto Luigi Apa, Courtesy Fondazione MAXXI & The Artist



Driton Selmani – *Eye To Eye*, (2017)

Metal, LED lights, fiberglass, special halo system,
11 meters high, 3.5 meters wide

Dimensions: 11 meters high, 3.5 meters wide

Installation view: Amsterdam Light Festival

Courtesy of the Artist & Light Art Collection ©

Driton Selmani's installation "*Eye to Eye*" emerges as a testament to the artist's ingenuity in transmuting iconic symbols into vehicles of profound contemplation. The heart of this installation is an imposing amulet, its contours echoing the shape of a colossal eye. This transformation of a seemingly mundane pop culture motif into an emblem of spiritual protection and contemplation underscores Selmani's ability to imbue the quotidian with layers of meaning.

The amulet's symbolism finds its roots in the belief of safeguarding against the malevolent "evil eye." However, Selmani's vision extends beyond individual protection, encompassing an altruistic shield that embraces humanity, animals, and the very landscape that cradles them. This expansion of purpose speaks to the artist's endeavor to create a work that resonates on a communal level, transcending the individual to embrace a broader, collective safety net.

Amsterdam, the chosen site for "*Eye to Eye*," becomes both a canvas and a guardian. The installation, colossal in scale, metamorphoses the urban landscape into a sanctuary guarded by the vigilant gaze of the amulet. Selmani deftly reinterprets the notion of protection, expanding it to encompass not only the perils of the "evil eye" but also the myriad forces of darkness that cast their shadows upon the human experience.

Beyond its role as a guardian, "*Eye to Eye*" assumes a role as a sentinel of introspection. Its immense gaze becomes a mirror, inviting viewers to engage in a dialogue with their innermost selves. The act of standing in the presence of the amulet becomes a communion—an exchange that traverses the realms of the tangible and the metaphysical. The installation's gaze, piercing yet introspective, beckons visitors to confront their own fears, uncertainties, and hopes.

As a curatorial landmark, *The Eye* etches itself into the fabric of Amsterdam's urban narrative. It becomes a touchstone that, through its iconicity, opens avenues of dialogue between the public and their environment. Selmani's artistic intervention transcends the realm of the purely visual, inviting viewers to forge connections not only with the installation but with their own internal landscapes.

In "*Eye to Eye*," Selmani orchestrates a symphony of meanings—an evocative homage to tradition, a shield against darkness, and a portal to self-contemplation. Through the artist's transformative vision, an ordinary motif is magnified into an emblem that watches over us, not just as a guardian of the tangible but as a custodian of our profoundest reflections.

Text: Roos Hollander



Driton Selmani – *Eye to Eye*, 2017–2018
Metal, LED lights, fiberglass, special halo system, Dimensions: 11 meters high, 3.5 meters wide
Installation view: Amsterdam Light Festival, Courtesy of the Artist & Light Art Collection
Photo: Janus van den Eijnden



Driton Selmani – *Eye to Eye*, 2017–2018

Metal, LED lights, fiberglass, special halo system, 11 meters high, 3.5 meters wide

Dimensions: 11 meters high, 3.5 meters wide

Installation view: Amsterdam Light Festival

Courtesy of the Artist & Light Art Collection

Photo: Konstantin Guz



Driton Selmani — *Wanderlust*, 2016
Custom made life vest, dimensions: 120x170 cm
Intervention on Domenico Modugno statue, Polignano a Mare, Italy
Video performance, 1920 × 1080 HD video 1:59 minutes

Driton Selmani — *Teardrop* (2012)

Single-channel video, Duration: 1min 25sec

Shooting format: HD, Screening ratio: 16:9, Sound: stereo

Location: Bournemouth, United Kingdom

The resonant cry for a sense of belonging reverberates throughout Driton Selmani's compelling work titled "*Teardrop*." Within this artistic creation, Selmani confronts the complexities of his own nascent identity as an emerging artist within the unfamiliar contours of a foreign land. The potency of this exploration is encapsulated in his masterful conjuring of an astonishing parallel—an audacious juxtaposition of entities diametrically opposed yet bound by a common thread: that of protection and sanctuary.

"Teardrop" unfurls as a mesmerizing video composition where Selmani, perched on the precipice of a cliff, gazes out across the sea's expanse—a vast tableau of 'foreign soil' that was the crucible of his education. It is in this moment of contemplation that he utters two words, laden with profound significance: "**Mama**" and "**MOMA**." This linguistic duality becomes a potent metaphor, embodying the contradictory currents that shape his artistic journey. The dichotomy that unfolds is multi-faceted. "Mama," resonating with intimacy, nurturance, and security, assumes the mantle of an emblem—an embodiment of the artist's longing for a sanctuary of acceptance within the creative realm. Simultaneously, the acronym "**MOMA**," signifying the revered Museum of Modern Art, stands as an icon of artistic institutionalization and belonging. Yet, as these two seemingly disparate notions collide, they meld and dissolve into one another against the backdrop of the natural world, underscoring the inherent fluidity of human aspirations.

This convergence—of the personal and the institutional, of intimate sanctuary and established artistic system—evokes a profound sense of futility. Selmani's shout, caught by the winds, dissipates into the endless horizon, a poignant visual metaphor for the challenges faced by artists seeking to establish themselves within an unfamiliar cultural milieu. The elemental forces of nature, in their ceaseless motion, serve as a mirror for the ever-shifting currents of identity and belonging.

"*Teardrop*." is a contemplative symphony—a manifestation of Selmani's acute ability to articulate complex emotions within the confines of a visual medium. The composition becomes an allegory for the artist's journey, a pilgrimage undertaken not only in physical landscapes but through the corridors of identity, aspiration, and artistic maturation. In summoning his ancestral refuge and an icon of artistic establishment, Selmani amplifies his voice into the winds of uncertainty, underscoring the yearning for a sense of place and purpose within the intricate tapestry of contemporary art.

Text: Jasmina šarić

MoMA?

...

Mama?

...



Teardrop, 2012
Single-channel video, Duration: 1min 25sec
Shooting format: HD, Screening ratio: 16:9, Sound: stereo
Installation view: CMP—Podgorica, Montenegro



Driton Selmani – *My Country On My Back*, 2012
6 Handcrafted knives, 6 Helium balloons, 400 cm wide, variable heights
Installation view: Exchiesetta, Polignano a Mare, Italy
Photo: Michele Giacobelli



Driton Selmani — *Off*, 2015
Custom-made concrete pots, metal parts, hand-crafted and plastered EPS buildings, soil, grass, 100 cm high, 300cm wide
Installation view: *The Whale That Was a Submarine*, Ludwig Múzeum, Budapest
Photo: Dániel Végel

Driton Selmani – *Untitled Union*, 2012
Collage textile cut from flags, handcrafted scythe tale
Installation view: The Whale That Was a Submarine,
Ludwig Múzeum, Budapest, Photo: Dániel Végel





Driton Selmani – *Utopia, The Place That Doesn't Exist*, 2009
Intervention on public space, Prishtina, Kosovo
Single-channel video Installation, Shooting format: miniDV,
Duration: 1min 59sec, Screening ratio: 16:9, Sound: stereo
Date of production: March, 2009



Driton Selmani –Deaf, 2009
Traditional wedding music instrument, electric guitar cable
Dimensions variable,
Installation view: Lukas Feichtner Galerie, Vienna
Photo: Tim Auerbach



Driton Selmani — *For God's Sake*, 2008
 Intervention on Mother Teresa square, Prishtina
 Digital Photography, dimensions variable
 Date of production: June 2008
 Photo: Elmaz Krasniqi

Driton Selmani
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