

Project Title: BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

Participants:

Milena Blazhieva (curator), Anna Tsolovska, Bisera Valeva, Penka Mincheva, Regina Dalkalacheva.

Works:

Bisera Valeva – a series of paintings *Chronicle of the Days* (in progress). The central work, yet to be completed, will measure approximately 140 × 100 cm (?), while the remaining 7 or 8 works will have a maximum size of up to 50 cm on their longer side. The central painting depicts an elderly woman, while the other works develop the theme of different states of womanhood, at different ages and in different situations.

Anna Tsolovska – a version of the sculptures *Bull* and *Bride*, previously shown within the framework of an exhibition. The sculptures are conceived in an expressive manner, with the compositions incorporating various elements of industrial origin. *Bride*, conditionally speaking, takes the form of a “bust”: the depicted figure has a face reminiscent of a sheep’s muzzle, a black veil, and a silvery crown. This “bust” will be placed on a pedestal approximately 80 cm high, with a total height of around 170 cm.

Penka Mincheva – photographs and video *Beautification*, part of the project *Eternal Beauty*, first presented to the public in 2012. In the video (slightly over 6 minutes in duration), the artist transforms the face into a mask, applying the elements of makeup using a stamp bearing the inscription *ETERNAL BEAUTY*.

Regina Dalkalacheva – 6 prints that are variations of works from the series *Blazon*, shown at Sofia Press Gallery in 2023. The prints, which will be produced especially for the Biennale in 2026, will measure 160 × 100 cm. The leading motif is the imagery of mannequins from luxury shop windows, associated with the imposition of certain stereotypes regarding the social position and social role of the contemporary woman.

Project Concept:

The project *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow* is a visual narrative and reflection on the social role and social status of women in the contemporary world. Since the publication of *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949, and following the movements for equal rights in the 1960s and 1970s, Western societies have lived with the self-confidence that gender equality has been achieved. All the more so given that, at present, a number of key political positions worldwide are held by women. All this creates the illusion that the problem of inequality has been resolved once and for all.

In reality, however, while the West (somewhat hypocritically) raises the issue of discriminatory attitudes toward women in various societies around the world, within its own core women are rapidly losing part of the rights gained in previous decades. This includes legislative changes (usually adopted by male-dominated legislative bodies) that

restrict women's rights to decide their own destiny. The tip of the iceberg is the legislative restrictions on the right to abortion in some European countries and in certain U.S. states.

Part of this unspoken policy is also the phenomenon of the "glass ceiling," which in fact acknowledges that women face artificial barriers and invisible obstacles that prevent them from reaching decision-making and leadership positions—regardless of their level of education and professional experience. Inequality between men and women in terms of pay also continues to exist.

In the decades following the fall of the Berlin Wall, a new danger has emerged for women, linked to changes in social attitudes toward their place and role in society. Through various media formats, an image of woman is imposed not as a subject shaping her own destiny, but as an object whose participation in this process is reduced to a minimum. We increasingly witness a refusal on the part of women themselves to strive to be free-spirited individuals.

The proposed project, however, is artistic in nature, and within the curatorial concept the emphasis is placed on presenting the narrative of women's fate in a purely artistic format, in which metaphor plays a key role.

The project is deliberately eclectic. It includes works related to the format of classical painting; works that stand on the boundary between sculpture and art installation; video art, photography, and digital print. This eclecticism is evidence that the narrative of women's fate can be told through different means, yet in its essence the story remains the same.

The section *Chronicle of the Days*, which serves as the introduction to the exhibition, is a melancholic narrative about the complex struggle of a woman seeking balance between the different planes of her existence—between life confined to the domestic sphere and self-realization as a social being with personal ambitions and interests.

The next segment of the exhibition includes, on the one hand, *Bull* (Anna Tsolovska) as a metaphorical reference to all those social attitudes and obstacles (including the recently growing misogyny) that stand in a woman's way in her striving for freedom. This segment also includes the video and photo installation *Eternal Beauty* (Penka Mincheva), which addresses the problem of the clash between expectations imposed on women to accept the role of object in their own lives and their response to this externally imposed role.

The third segment of the exhibition contains the prints from the series *Blazon* (Regina Dalkalacheva), focusing on the destructive aspiration of a large part of contemporary young women to assume the role not merely of an object deprived of free will, but of a thing—dreaming of becoming a trophy and an ornament placed on the "periphery of the male world" (in the words of Simone de Beauvoir). In the same segment, Penka Mincheva's *Eternal Beauty* masks will most likely also be displayed. The concluding accent of the exhibition is *Bride* (Anna Tsolovska)—a sarcastic take on the stereotype that imposes a contemptuous attitude toward women striving for professional careers.

and personal autonomy (self-forgetful “sheep” who refuse to accept the role assigned to them).

The project is a purely artistic expression of the profound anxiety generated by the growing conservatism worldwide and by the refusal of many women from younger generations to be authors of their own destiny. This anxiety, as well as the melancholy for lost freedoms, resonates with the theme *In Minor Keys*, proposed by Koyo Kouoh. The project proposal is dedicated to Koyo Kouoh herself, who passed away prematurely at the end of May 2025, and whose life and professional path are a vivid illustration of the challenges faced by contemporary women.

Milena Blazhieva, Curator