

Little Big Horse (Corpus Equorum on vacation)

Artist: Luchezar Boyadjiev

Curators: Joanna Warsza and Övül Ö. Durmusoglu

Project for Bulgaria's national pavilion at "In Minor Keys," 61st Venice Biennial, 2026, Sala Tiziano

The project adapts (according to the space of *Sala Tiziano*) and presents in Venice – 61/2026 (according to the theme of the Biennial) the exhibition “On Vacation... Corpus Equorum” (artist Luchezar Boyadjiev and curators Övül Ö. Durmusoglu and Joanna Warsza). The exhibition (July 10–September 28, 2025, National Gallery-Kvadrat 500, Sofia) presented for the first time in its completed form the cycle of digitally manipulated photographs/prints by Luchezar Boyadjiev, entitled “On Vacation...” (2004-2024, in progress).

The title of the project is inspired by the film “Little Big Man” (1970, dir. Arthur Penn), which is one of the first cinematic masterpieces deconstructing the colonial narrative. Recently, LB has been criticized that it is actually the HORSES, not the characters from the series “On Vacation...”, who need a vacation. The project “*Little Big Horse (Corpus Equorum...)*” restores justice—every “horse” from “On Vacation...” has a story to share—in an exhibition and lectures on site, on a website and in a catalog, in rumors and gossip locally and around the world. Imagined as a monument, the Little Big Horse would look like this – see page 38 of the *Urban Daydreaming* catalogue (BKIC, Skopje, 2025) by LB, attached to the application.

The anti-monumental and de-heroizing charge of “On Vacation...” is well aligned with the “minor” message of the curatorial project of the Venice Biennial 61-2026. The anti-colonial and anti-expansionist ideas of the cycle appeal to the international audience, which, while viewing the pavilions of their countries, will also discover something of their own city and history in the space of the Bulgarian pavilion. Just as the audience at the exhibition in Sofia enjoyed a significant number of visitors from abroad during the summer tourist season. These “recognized” themselves and their cities in the works from the series (e.g., young people from Burgos in Spain or from Lupiac in France, who happened to be at the exhibition with the author, and many others —see photos).

The cycle “On Vacation...” relies on a simple yet radical visual gesture that achieves a global effect of “grounding” the heroism, of recognition as content, and of communal identification of audiences around the world. This would be the first massive and impactful showing of the entire cycle, which began with a local joke in Sofia (2003); which over the years has been shown here and there in groups of about 10-20 images; to acquiring global dimensions today, seeking contact with audiences around the world.

More on the exhibition at:

<https://nationalgallery.bg/bg/exhibitions/lachezar-boyadjiev-on-vacation-corpus-equorum/>

“On Vacation... Corpus Equorum”:

- The exhibition at NG-Kvadrat 500 consisted of 329 prints (of approx. 390 readied for July 1, 2025).
- The cycle “On Vacation...” (2004–2024 in progress) contains over 500 digital files-images, ready for printing on material suitable for long-term display and viewing by the public in specific conditions.

The source photographs (digitally transformed by the author from 2003 to 2025) fall into three categories:

a) photographs taken by LB during working trips and travels around the world – approx. 120.

b/ photographs taken on LB's instructions by friends and colleagues, whose names are mentioned in each print as part of the signage - approx. 100.

c/ photographs sourced for the purposes of the project from the Internet – Creative Commons / Wikipedia / Wikimedia, which are explicitly marked on each print, handwritten by the author LB, with the following information – a signature for the terms of use of the file, e.g. “CC-BY-SA 4.0”, which level of sharing gives full authorization to use the file in any way, provided that the name of the photographer is mentioned, e.g. Darafsh, and that it is explicitly stated that the source has been “changed” to make it clear that the person who made the initial photo is not responsible for the changes.

These terms are strictly observed and noted on each print by hand, by the artist LB. The same information accompanies each image from the series when it is published in various formats and for various purposes.

When images from the series are republished on the Internet, the relevant copyright and sharing conditions under Creative Commons are observed.

The selection of photographs is motivated: by the subject – equestrian monuments from around the world; the file size; the angle and framing; and, above all, that they were taken with the idea of capturing tourist moments.

The tools used for shooting, digital processing, and preparation for printing have varied since 2003—cameras, software, printing technologies, methods for exhibiting contemporary art as a narrative in the space for the visitor's eye/body. The tools follow the development of the author's technique and practice over the decades too. The final authorship and responsibility for the realization and exhibition of the works from the cycle belongs to LB.

In the last phase of the realization of the exhibition in Sofia, an attempt was made to apply AI-type tools. This turned out to be an extremely unsuccessful experiment. The final image file for printing is always the result of LB's manual work in Photoshop. Special thanks to Kees van Tilburg's online database!

<https://equestrianstatue.org/>

From the curatorial concept for the exhibition in Sofia:

"Luchezar Boyadzhiev is driven by curiosity about what lies behind the most visible. In the context of a project engaged with the discriminatory representation of the Roma minority in the then polarized Bulgarian public environment – both media and urban – in the fall of 2003, the artist 'removed' the human figure from (a photograph of) the equestrian monument to Alexander II, Tsar Liberator in the center of Sofia. We live in a time of polarization, when some monuments fall, and others are protected with 'cushions' during war.

"Anyone can be a statue, but for that your life must matter," wrote the philosopher Paul B. Preciado in response to the iconoclastic gestures on monuments in the US, Europe and the UK after 2020. Whose life matters or whose life is more important than the lives of others – these are fundamental questions that have defined the global political agenda in recent decades.

In Luchezar Boyadzhiev's large-scale cycle of digitally manipulated photographs, human figures are removed from pictures of equestrian monuments in public spaces in various cities around the world. The artistically erased subjects are mostly men, depicted heroically, riding their horses somewhere "up there" high. Our goal was to reach 500 of them with the help of researchers, colleagues and friends in the respective countries, as well as with the use of open databases from the Internet and shared files in Creative Commons.

The exhibition features approx. 400. We rely on the massive presence of a "corpus" of works, rather than the cognitive side of each monument. The cycle is displayed in a way that demonstrates evidentiary material in forensics and is reminiscent of how in analogue studios in the past, photo prints were hung to dry. The installation is inspired both by 19th century art salons – something that gave rise to contemporary art exhibitions – and by the investigative gaze of the "criminalist" in order to reinforce the specific humor of the presentation.

Övül Ö. Durmusoglu and Joanna Warsza, curators of the exhibition".

Media coverage of the exhibition in Sofia (selected):

1/ review by Prof. Alexander Kiossev

<https://kultura.bg/web/%d0%ba%d0%be%d0%bd%d0%b5-%d0%b8-%d0%b3%d0%b5%d1%80%d0%be%d0%b8/>

2/ review by Assoc. Prof. Georgi Lozanov

<https://spisaniekino.com/archive-kino/%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B8-2025/%D0%B3%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0->

<https://bnt.bg/news/izlozhbata-vav-vakanciya%E2%80%A6-corpus-equorum-na-lachezar-boyajiev-v398303-342223news.html?page=101>

3/ Bulgarian National TV, Kultura.bg, 24.09.2025

<https://bnt.bg/news/izlozhbata-vav-vakanciya%E2%80%A6-corpus-equorum-na-lachezar-boyajiev-v398303-342223news.html?page=101>

Exhibition and adaptation of the cycle in the (limited) space of Sala Tiziano

It is a curious fact that **Tiziano**, the great Renaissance artist from Venice, created some of the most memorable equestrian portraits of nobles in the history of art. Although the “On Vacation...” cycle only deals with equestrian monuments in public, open spaces, there is a parallel to be made!

As in Sofia, the exhibition will use **methods for displaying photographs** – with stretchers, 0.2 cm metal cords, and clips at the top and bottom of each print. The area of each wall should be optimally distributed between horizontal and vertical prints in order to achieve dense saturation of the available space. Perpendicular to the length of the space, in the uppermost register, there should be lines of hanging prints that can be viewed in the same way as a horse statue from close up – with your head raised.

Specially made **display tables** for the prints – tables tilted at about 45 degrees, on which thematically selected groups of prints are displayed in the form of albums for browsing. Annotations and QR code links to each group in the form of a mini-tour-lecture.

Given the specific display and climate conditions in Venice, it is planned **to print a new set of prints in a reduced size (72x54cm, 90% of those in Kvadrat500 or smaller) and on new material** (see budget) in a way that allows the prints to be hung and leafed through without deformation or damage, while being resistant to light, moisture, etc.

Thematic lines to the attention of the audience in walk-throughs, debates and online – e.g. overview of the history of equestrian monuments – from Marcus Aurelius in Rome; Gattamelata in Padua and Colleoni in Venice; Peter the Great in St. Petersburg; Henry IV and Joan of Arc in Paris; Alexander II in Sofia and Garibaldi in Bologna; Juan de Oñate in El Paso, Texas; Genghis Khan in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; Benkovski in Panagyurishte, to the new monuments in Bulgaria – Pop Nedelyo in the village of Mirkovo and Kazaka Matey in the village of Tsarevo. In a separate topic – equestrian monuments to female heroes, which are far fewer in number... In a separate topic – monuments related to the colonial past, among which the most instructive is the case of the monument to Leopold II, King of Belgium, who turned today’s DR Congo into his personal domain. Erected in the capital Kinshasa, after the independence of the DR Congo, the monument was “kindly” sent back (but not destroyed) to Belgium as a sign of anti-colonial payback, to be exhibited today in a park in Brussels.

The vast amount of material on history, urbanism, and art covered in the series “On Vacation...” should be organized into **a website**—open for additions, comments, and sharing—something that the severely limited budget for the exhibition in Sofia did not allow. The website is a crucial part of the project, without which the “geometric progression” and effect in the promotion and sharing of the whole would not be achieved.

Twice a month, **podcast segments are produced and uploaded** to the project website for public access and commentary. These segments consist **of thematic lectures with video and audio on topics specified in the project documentation**.

Sofia, December 2025

Luchezar Boyadjiev / Joanna Warsza / Övül Ö. Durmusoglu