

IF NOT ONE, THEN NONE

concept

Anton Stoianov's project *If Not One, Then None* explores the subtle mechanisms and micro-practices through which societies are not only sustained but continuously produced, regulated, and reproduced. The focus falls on forms of labour, care, and participation that are rarely articulated as political, yet through which social order is maintained, disciplined, and naturalised.

The project approaches power not as a centralised structure or institutional authority, but as a distributed network of bodily practices, habits, and repetitions operating below the threshold of visibility. In this sense, *If Not One, Then None* resonates with the conceptual framework of the 61st International Art Exhibition – *In Minor Keys* – developed by Koyo Kouoh and realised posthumously by the Biennale's curatorial team. The theme draws attention to the “quiet” registers of the social, where power functions not through command or prohibition, but through the organisation of time, bodies, and everyday gestures.

The work problematises the zone in which power converges with care, and where the maintenance of life becomes an instrument of its governance. Invisible labour and embodied participation appear here as part of a broader regime of biopower – the management of the social through the regulation of vital processes, without being explicitly recognised as control. In this field, the political does not emerge as conflict but as maintenance, repetition, and adaptation. As Jacques Rancière notes, “the distribution of the sensible defines what is visible and sayable, as well as who is entitled to speak and to have a share in the common.” *If Not One, Then None* operates precisely within the tension between this order of visibility and the Foucauldian logic of power, which functions most effectively where it is not recognised as such. The project does not aim to give voice to the invisible, but to expose the conditions that produce invisibility in the first place.

At its core, the project consists of a large-scale spatial installation with an

accompanying sound environment, constructed from industrial bar stools – serial, durable objects designed to bear weight without attracting attention. In everyday life, they inhabit spaces of transitory presence such as bars or roadside venues, participating in repetitive scenes of conversation, pause, and fatigue. Their function is not representational but supportive – they do not produce meaning, but create the conditions for it.

The sound environment is composed of recordings made during the construction process – sounds of touch, pressure, friction, and movement. These are processed into a restrained yet dense acoustic field that does not illustrate the installation but extends it temporally, transforming the space into a rhythm of repetition and tension.

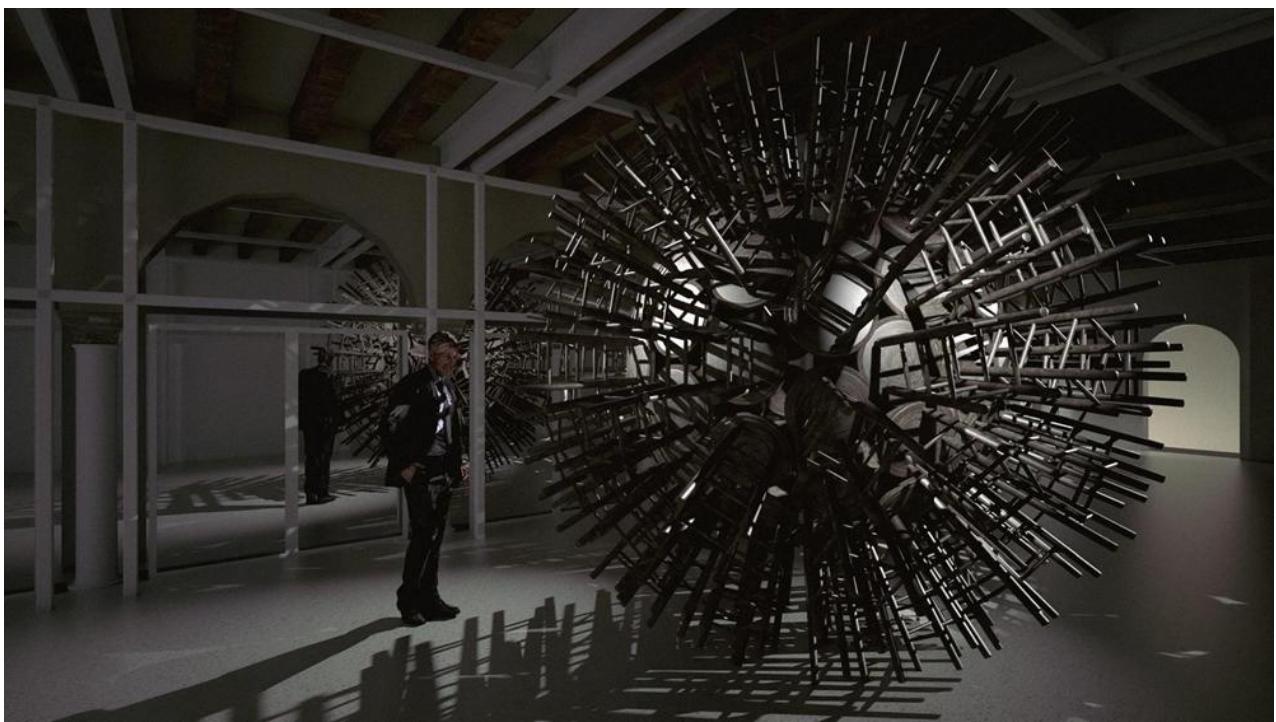
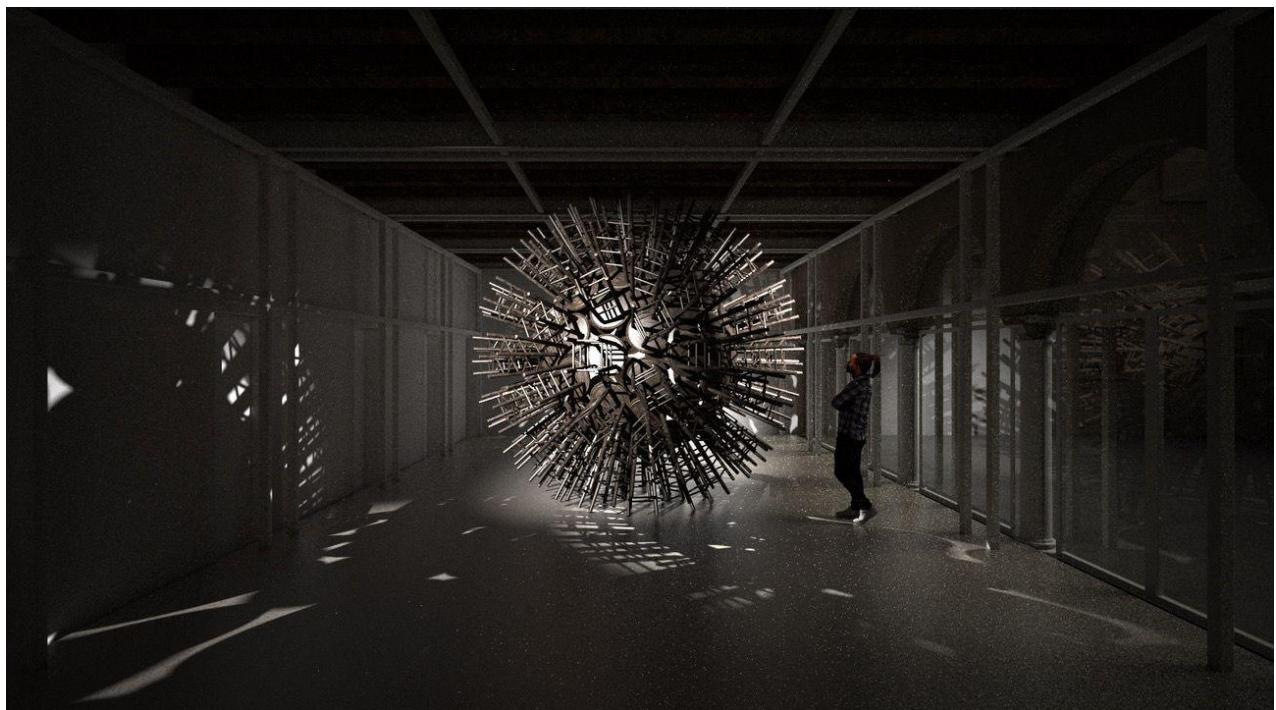
In Stoianov's work, the stools are extracted from habitual use and rearranged into a closed, taut configuration. They no longer offer a place to sit, but form a structure sustained by its own equilibrium. The seats turn inward toward an empty centre that functions as a boundary, while the legs trace a protective yet distancing perimeter. The form evokes a social configuration contracted in order to preserve itself – not an image of harmony, but a response to precarity. At its centre lies a decisive structural fact: the entire construction is supported by a single chair. Not as a visual effect, but as a condition of existence. One element carries the collective load, while all others endure through it.

This concentration of weight turns the form into a diagnosis – an image of social systems that appear stable yet rest on someone's invisible labour, care, or responsibility. Within the logic of *In Minor Keys*, this becomes a minor moment of truth: not a heroic gesture, but a quiet dependency that holds the world together. The chairs carry a material and bodily memory of labour. They function not as readymades or nostalgic relics, but as witnesses – bearers of use, wear, and time.

Stoianov treats material as an active participant rather than a neutral resource. The chairs are not “used” but listened to, not subordinated to form but incorporated into it. They operate as a textless archive – an archive of gestures, bodies, and repetitions. In this way, the work connects different temporal layers: the time of labour and the time of contemplation, the time of community and the time of its disintegration.

If Not One, Then None does not illustrate a theme but performs a critical gesture. It maps the architecture of maintenance – the material, bodily, and temporal conditions through which communities exist and reproduce themselves, while the labour that sustains them remains outside the categories of value, authorship, and political action. Between weight and emptiness, endurance and exhaustion, the project opens a space to think not about the end of the common, but about its fragile, still-possible forms.

VISUALISATIONS



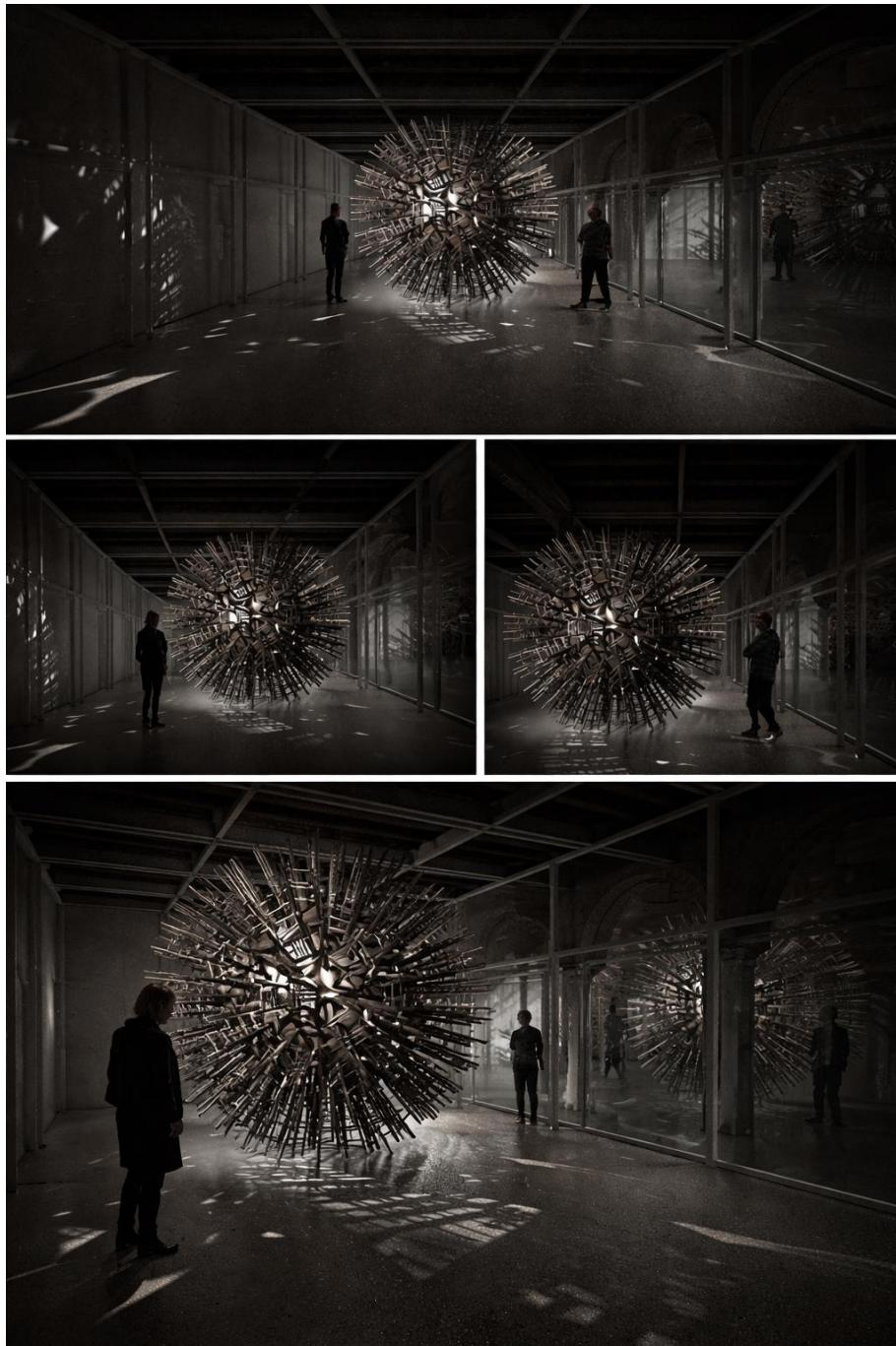
Spatial installation with a sound environment, composed of 92 bar stools and a metal supporting structure.

VISUALISATIONS



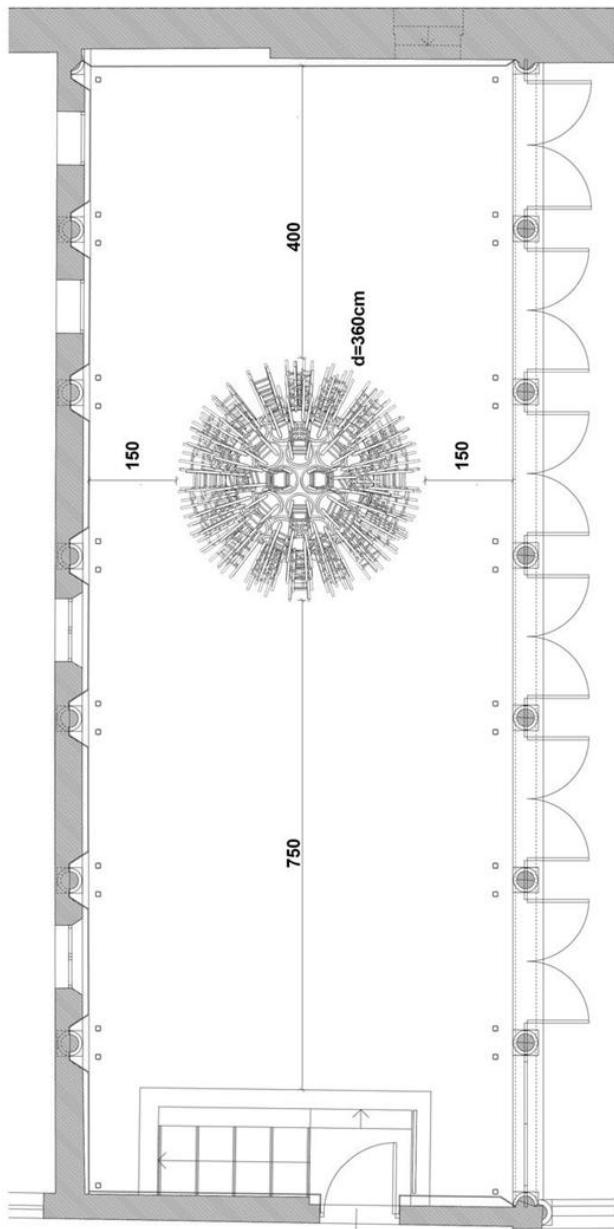
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Floor plan indicating the placement of the installation.

EXHIBITION PLAN AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Spatial Configuration

The installation is composed of 92 bar stools arranged into a self-supporting structure with a diameter of 3.6 m and a height of 3.6 m. The seats are oriented inward, while the legs face outward, forming a closed volume with an internal void. The structure is self-standing and does not require fixation to the floor or walls. Viewers do not enter the object but perceive it by moving around it and through shifts in viewpoint. The windows are covered with mirrored, opaque film that interrupts the visual connection with the exterior. From the inside, the surface reflects the object, the viewers, and their movement within the space, creating an enclosed visual environment that intensifies the sense of concentration and isolation.

Sound environment

The sound layer is composed of recordings made during the process of construction itself - sounds of touch, friction, and tension between materials. It is structured as an autonomous, looping environment with low dynamic range. The sound functions as a spatial presence, reinforcing the sense of weight, duration, and concentration. Playback is achieved through discreetly positioned low-power loudspeakers, adapted to the acoustics of the space.