

## ISLANDS

### Curatorial statement

*ISLANDS* is a project by the international ensemble **Construction Choir Collective** and artist, social designer, and conductor Pavel Naydenov. The project departs from a shared contemporary condition of loneliness—personal, existential, political, and even cosmic—and proposes collective vocal practice as a temporary refuge and a tool for rebuilding community.

In an era of unprecedented connectivity, constant visibility, and algorithmic belonging, community appears both omnipresent and fragile. Despite the abundance of networks, channels, and platforms, social horizons continue to narrow, fear of the other intensifies, and belonging increasingly retreats into ever smaller units. *Islands* approaches loneliness not as an anomaly, but as a defining condition of our time.

At the core of the project lies choral singing as a radically simple, non-ideological form of togetherness. Reduced to voice, melody, pause, and silence, the choir offers a model of community that exists beyond political affiliation or identity, grounded instead in listening, synchronisation, and shared presence.

Construction Choir Collective presents choral music outside traditional concert venues, situating performances in urban space and engaging directly with the city, its architecture, and its social dynamics. Appearing unexpectedly and without announcement, performers dressed in blue workers' uniforms transform public space into a temporary construction site: the voice becomes the tool, and music becomes an act of collective building. During performances, singers and audience members collaboratively assemble, dismantle, and reconfigure the modular architectural structure *FRIEDERIKE* that functions interchangeably as shelter, projection surface, or communal gathering space.

The project proposes an exhibition featuring choir performances and a video installation of Pavel Naydenov's original composition *ISLANDS*. Visitors are invited to actively participate by wearing the choir's blue uniforms spread across the space and partake in the collective vocal practice and shared experience. The modular architectural structure *FRIEDERIKE* may extend into the interior and exterior spaces of the pavilion, hosting informal gatherings, rest, and unannounced performances throughout the exhibition period. Over the course of the biennale, the Construction Choir Collective will perform regularly both inside the pavilion and in public spaces, in formats that are alternately announced and unannounced.

The project aims to create a sense of community, even if only fleeting. Every aspect of it functions as an invitation to participate—from the opportunity to sing within the polyphony, through the act of dressing, to the transformation and relocation of the performative architecture *FRIEDERIKE* and the unexpected performances in the

urban environment. In this way, the project proposes not merely an exhibition, but a durational musical and participatory performance.

The notion of the choir is expanded to encompass a community brought together by music, regardless of differing voices, tonalities, and melodies. The Construction Choir Collective itself will likewise continue to expand and transform through the inclusion of new members on site in Venice; alongside regular performances in the pavilion, workshops and open rehearsals are also planned.

### **Artist statement by Pavel Naydenov**

The composition *ISLANDS* is a nostalgic reflection on the feeling of belonging and collective existence. At its heart lies one of the most ancient forms of musical expression: the blending of human voices. Choir singing serves as an all encompassing metaphor of the human condition itself. It is collective work, experience, and expression. A group of individuals creating one single body of sound - a community forming in spite of separation. In Bulgarian choir practice the word “спятост” (spyatost) describes this specific experience. It means a kind of trust, a connection that stems from a deep understanding of the voices that surround you. “Спятост” describes resonance on a musical as well as a deeply personal level, an experience of communal belonging growing from sound, breath and synchronicity.

The piece is composed as a triptych. It starts with ancient chants. In the second part it slowly moves away from harmony towards abstraction and dissonance, steadily growing into a cacophony. This part of *ISLANDS* extends an invitation to the audience: let your voice become part of the stream, join the community by weaving your own sound into the ever evolving tapestry. Part three forms the coda of the triptych where the chaos is fragmented to a lament. What’s been built is being torn down, what was swelling, flooding the space is dissolving. Where there was singing, there is now noise resonating the dynamic of our days, fragments, sound pixels, the hum of never ending acoustic pollution.

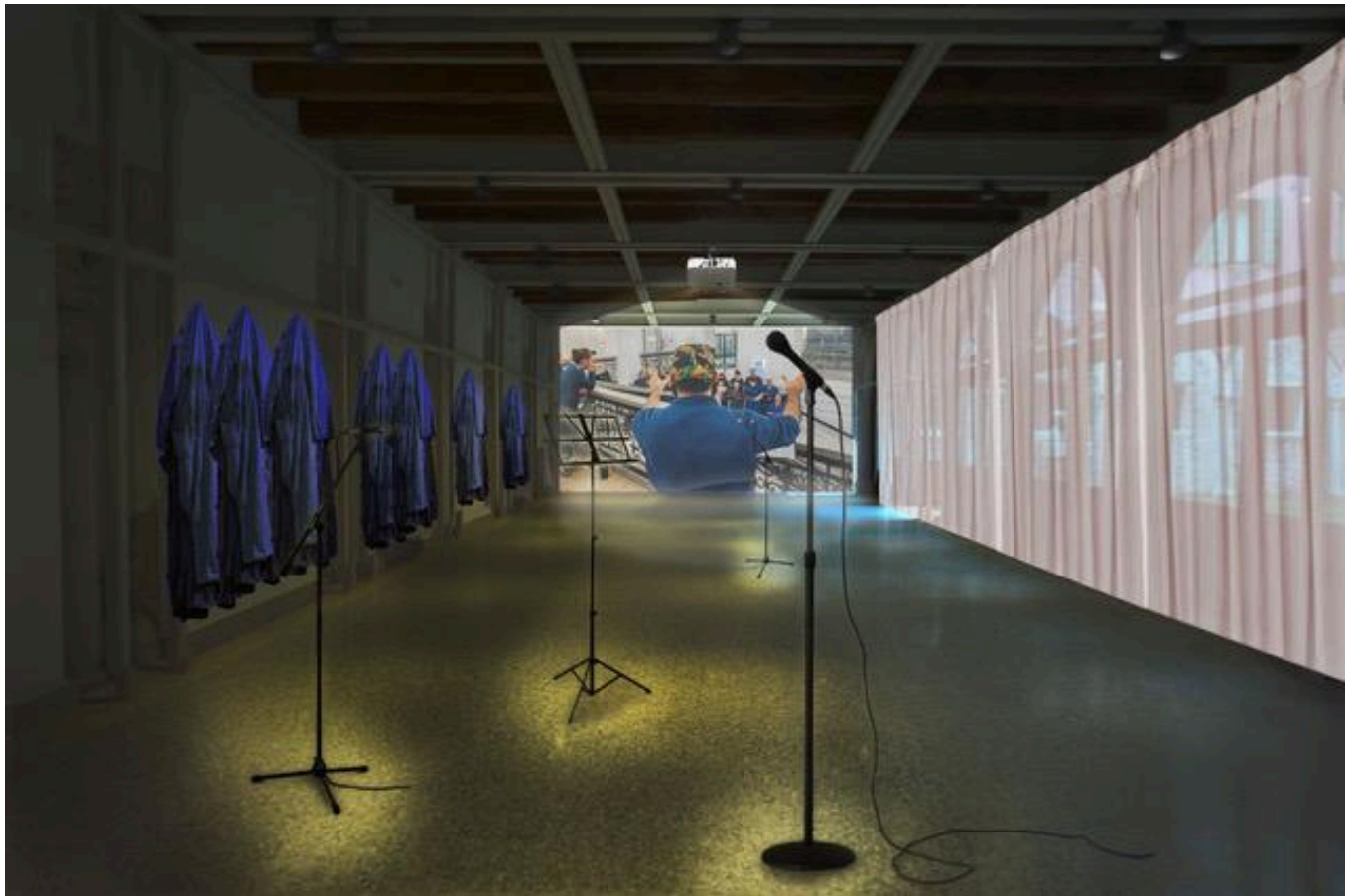


Image 1: Video installation, view when no performance is taking place



Image 2: View during a performance





Image 3: View during a performance



Image 4: Spontaneous / unannounced performance in an urban environment





Image 5: Spontaneous / unannounced performance in an urban environment







Images 6 and 7: The modular and performative structure FRIEDERIKE

The ultralight membrane construction is conceived as an extension of the human body and as a collective tool that can be erected, moved, and dismantled by a small number of people in a very short time. The processes of assembly and disassembly themselves are part of the artistic process—performative architecture.

FRIEDERIKE has approximate dimensions of  $7 \times 7$  m and consists of an ultralight rod structure (steel or carbon fiber) connected by three-dimensionally movable nodes into an intelligent system. This mobile and adaptable skeleton is covered with a dynamically designed membrane and, through the interaction of tensile forces (the membrane) and compressive forces (the rod skeleton), forms a stable yet easily transformable spatial system. The entire structure is secured against wind loads with point weights (e.g., water tanks) and can be quickly and easily dismantled, and just as spontaneously reassembled.