



La Biennale di Venezia

58. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

EL FUTUR ÉS ARA

PHILIPPE SHANGTI

ANDORRA



THE
FUTURE
is
NOW

‘THE FUTURE IS NOW’

Andorra

La Biennale di Venezia

58. Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte

11 May – 24 November 2019

Istituto Santa Maria della Pietà,
Castello, 3701 Venezia

Artist

Philippe Shangti

Commissioner

Eva Martínez, “Zoe”

Curators

Ivan Sansa

Paolo De Grandis

Coordination in Andorra

Meritxell Blanco

Coordination in Venice

Carlotta Scarpa

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ANDORRA

PRESENTATION

Olga Gelabert Fàbrega,
Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports

For the second time since I became the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports for the Government of Andorra, it is my pleasure to accompany our country on this fantastic adventure, the Venice Biennale of art, the fifth time that Andorra takes part. I feel deeply grateful and proud for this chance for our small country to participate in this leading contemporary art event.

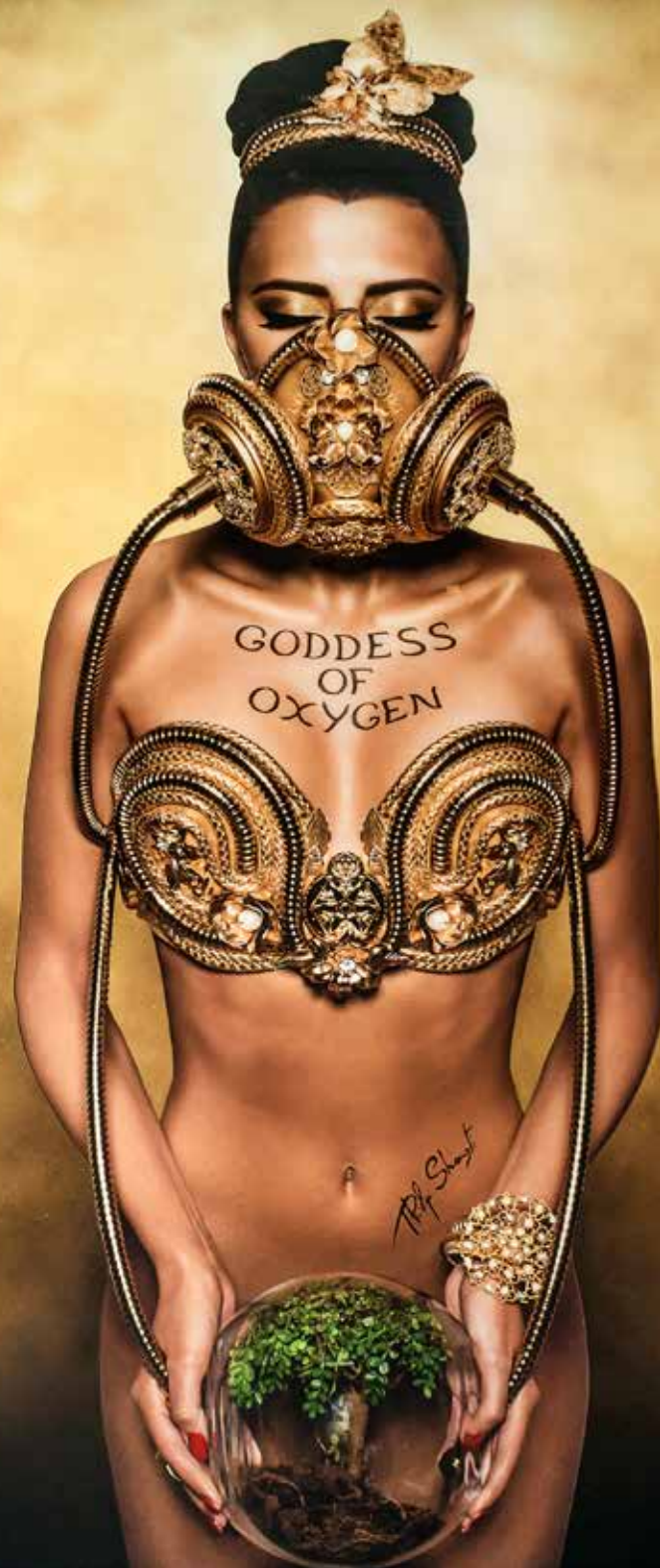
In this 58th year of the event, we have decided to continue the path we embarked on last year, focussing on the work of only one artist. We were keen for the proposal to be designed specifically for the space and totally integrated into it, so that visitors could wholly immerse themselves in a focussed exhibition project. In this way, we can offer the Andorran artist the opportunity to take on a challenge that is not always possible at home: working on a single concept in large format.

The project selected by the curator for this year, Eva Martínez “Zoe”, is “The future is now” by the artist Philippe Shangti, in the Pop Art style, which

expresses, in a very personal, colourful and striking language, a source of growing concern in the world: the squandering of natural resources. We felt that the treatment of such a serious, central issue from this stylistic perspective would be very interesting, for we must begin to discuss this issue seriously and seek solutions to resolve it as soon as possible.

This issue is especially important to Andorra, where only 5% of the national territory is developed and the rest is pure nature. Considering our incredibly rich heritage, the environment is clearly important to those of us who live here, as are the efforts invested by our government to preserve it. We cannot imagine a greater showcase than the Venice Biennale of art to draw attention to the issue and raise awareness among the thousands of people who visit it.

I hope that you will enjoy our proposal, which is of undeniable value, both artistically and conceptually, simply the expression of a global concern that is also specific to our country, Andorra.



Goddess of Oxygen, 2018
Photography
298 x 298 cm

‘THE FUTURE IS NOW’

Philippe Shangti

For the visitor the Andorran Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2019 is both a provocative and a glamorous surprise. In a setting of speculative fiction, through his expressive narrative Philippe Shangti seeks to rouse the collective consciousness. To do this he uses an altered vision of time, intertwining the dimensions of past, present and future.

With its paused scenography of immediate impact, *The Future is Now* leads us to Shangti's universe, to his vision of the world through art: it is a cosmology that transmits everything that perturbs him about the plague of consumerism and its effects.

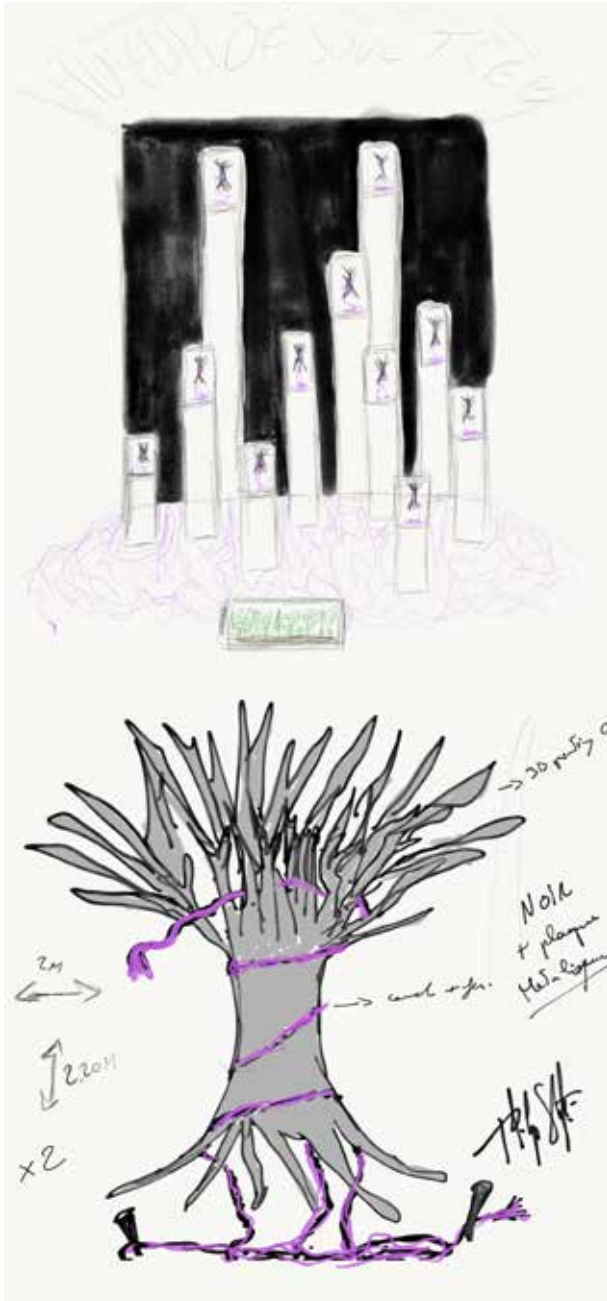
Philippe Shangti's proposal at the Biennale is conceived as a fragmented installation of bits and snatches which should be examined separately in order to understand just how complete this multidisciplinary project really is.

The independent scenes go beyond the present moment in time, beyond instantaneousness, to narrate collateral events connected with the misuse of the present to the detriment of a future that is already here. The artist spatters the space with a variety of attractive multidimensional surfaces in bright saturated colours so as to make them friendly to the visitor while sweetly reviling consumerism and its effects on the environment and on people's moral principles. Shangti presents clear universal topics with a direct impact in the purest camp style, showing an immediacy in his message that plainly contrasts with his extremely calm and meticulous production process. For Shangti, the impurities, vices and dross specific to wastage are not aesthetically beautiful or pleasing to gaze upon; for this reason

and in order to share the private everyday setting of his spectators, entering with his work into their homes, he seeks out agreeable representations, models and metaphors with perfect finishes, just as was once done by Helmut Newton, with whom he shares an idealized view of women and a taste for fetishistic things, luxury and exuberance. His art becomes captivating and clean, even though it is based on protest and provocation.

Art as provocation is not rare and for a number of years now it has been used to transgress the tranquillity of the collective. We find hundreds of denunciation works at specific historical moments which were first demonized but later came to be accepted with the evolution of society. There have been provocative artists with disparate intentions: militant denunciation, political propaganda, expression of moods, pure decoration or a search for fame. Shangti's motivation is innate and visceral. If he were not an artist, he would belong to a collective devoted to saving the human species and to denouncing the system.

Philippe Shangti's passion for photography arose at a very early age, when he was given his first camera. He made extensive use of it and soon came to understand the workings of its technical mechanisms. Later, his bold character and life itself led him to Saint-Tropez, where he found a world that took drugs and concealed itself in superficiality. He dared to portray it with a bittersweet criticism and disagreement. Shangti exhibited the female figure just as had been done by Man Ray's disciple, Guy Bourdin, who portrayed women confused between vulnerability and strength, and between



Working on Levitation Tree



Soul Tree Museum, 2018
Sculpture ensemble

mystery and exhibitionism, doing this with touches of Buñuel-like surrealism and humour. He echoes these dichotomies in the monumental photograph displayed in the centre of the Andorran Pavilion, called Goddess of Oxygen, which shows a woman tangled up between what is divine and that which is most purely materialistic, cashing in like a businesswoman trading in faith and in the very air we breathe.

Shangti builds a narrative aesthetic which reveals a story that has been thought out in all detail... a perturbing fiction, a unique scenography. It is not surprising, therefore, that his inspiration is drawn from pictures taken by James Bidgood or David LaChapelle, whose works also present an elaborate criticism of the society full of excesses and vanity in which we live.

Even though he often uses or takes advantage of a certain nudity and the classic canon of beauty, however, he does so just because he feels like it and nothing more, and because he venerates the shapes of women like a splendid canvas on which to paint. Having reached this point, a discussion of nudity in aesthetics would be very lengthy indeed.

If only to make an allusion to the history of art, we may recall the myriad of innocent Madonnas produced from the Gothic period to the Baroque who nurse their son with a naked breast in a blend of what is maternal with what is sacred and what is perturbing.

Presented in the nude is the gigantic resin Gate of Lost Paradise Park, which goes beyond the threshold of time, from an infernal present to a lost paradise of payment. Something about it reminds me of The Garden of Earthly Delights, although Shangti's apocalyptic vision differs from Hieronymus Bosch's transit of worlds.



Also shining forth is the lost soul buried in silver chromate of the legion of authentic bonsais, the Soul Tree Museum, to criticise deforestation, in the purest style of Jeff Koons' Equilibrium series.

In this rebellion of sorts against the consumer society's side effects, *The Future is Now* could perfectly well be said to belong to the pop art tradition of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. Indeed, Shangti appropriates the brands, figures, symbols and icons of materialism, presenting two-dimensional works like *No Vandalism Here* and *The Babies' Hope*.

The saturated colours and compositions are conceived to criticise the First World's commodification and hegemony to the detriment of the planet in a way similar to the Australian artist Ben Frost's *Know Your Product*.

To have done this culture jamming, something must have influenced him in his beginnings as a stage designer and a producer of shows on the French Riviera. Along this line, maxed out from hearing the Anglo-Saxon tourists' polysemous fuck, he added it to his work in a manner that lies halfway between hilarious and absurd with his painting called *Fuck Who Doesn't Like my Vision*.

–“I need to have the spectator understand my message clearly and I love to go right to what is essential without being aggressive”, explains the artist.

The use of writing in his work –his tags– implies ubiquity since their message is conveyed with great celerity and interdisciplinarity, calling for more than a basic knowledge of various techniques. In this way, in addition to using photography and sculpture, he also moves in the audiovisual world.

His work entitled *Prison for Spender Addict* is a video-sculpture that may be associated with the works of Dan Graham and Bill Viola, although Shangti pivots



more closely around the kitsch concept and the comical and eccentric intentionality specific to B films.

The Future is Now situates us in two times, between which escapes a fleeting present that warns us of our vandalism. Indeed, this is precisely something that we can witness on the column in the Andorran Pavilion's exhibition hall.

Philippe Shangti's project stands within the framework of the metalanguage of art and it draws us closer to the keys to the contemporary aesthetic. Consequently, it is complex, sensitive and in no way superficial because it invites us to reconsider the way in which today's society confronts its day-by-day advance towards a precarious future that is already all too near...



Gate of Lost Paradise Park, 2018
Sculpture and printed drawing
200 x 303,5 cm





ARTIST

Philippe Shangti

A self-taught photographer and sculptor, Philippe Shangti hails from Toulouse and now lives in Andorra. His visually provocative and very striking work is intended to denounce different problems affecting society today.

Philippe's work is displayed in a number of countries and important galleries in Europe, Asia and the United States. Bearing the mark of his unique personal aesthetic, his proposal for the Art Workshops-Venice Art Biennale project deals with specific aspects of Andorra's reality.



COMMISSIONER

Eva Martínez "Zoe"

An artist and a teacher, she holds a degree in art history and has trained in a wide range of other fields including architecture, the fine arts and cultural governance. She also works as an art therapist and as a holistic creativity coach.

As an artist she has held numerous individual and group exhibitions in Andorra, France and Spain. Likewise, she has been chosen to take part in the Art Workshops project on several occasions, including in 2016 when she was a finalist in the competition to represent Andorra at the 57th Venice Art Biennale. Her paintings have appeared in various films and she has designed wine labels for different wineries.



Prison for Spender Addict, 2019
Video sculpture
140 x 251 cm

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Maig - Novembre 2019



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