

herbarium collection

What would the selection of museum specimens of the world culture look like if it were made by the artists and not by the art historians? How would each artist summarize his creativity in a space limited by physical parameters? How would one's own view of the personal field of artistic expression turn some research models upside down?

The word herbarium is a collective noun, a pin for pricking thoughts, emotions, memories, images that suddenly have lost importance, images that gradually have become essential, words, explosive joy of new ideas, later transformed into calm indifference and other documents that have gathered the energy of the creative act, whether it would be a momentary impulse or a precisely considered gesture.

The Herbarium project explores the work environment in the field of contemporary culture, in which ideas and concepts are created and exchanged. The „herbariumed“ objects in boxes create an unusual point of view to the creativity of the project participants.

The focus of the Herbarium is to create a traveling exhibition that captures in limited physical parameters the creative energy of different generations of artists around the world. The content of each box of the Herbarium collection, accompanied by a concept and a sound file with the author's voice, will be presented in the exhibition and at the project website. The artists invited by the curator of „Herbarium collection“ choose two new participants – so the project traces the connections and the movement of ideas between the artists. The development of the collection has no time limits, it grows exponentially with each new artist until the final exhibition is announced.

The information about the project development will be archived on the website herbariumcollection.com. All artists will be presented with their boxes for the collection, as well as with archival footage from their projects.

Films, in the creative environment of the artists, were shot especially for the project. In them, they talk about the work processes in shaping their ideas related to the nature of the world and people, the topics that interest them, the creative energy that makes them move forward.

This virtual archive will be available to anyone – researchers, curators, gallery owners, students or art lovers who are interested in the less visible mechanisms by which contemporary culture operates.

The first exposition of the Herbarium collection will take place in April 2021 in Sofia Arsenal – Museum of Contemporary Art, Sofia, after which the exhibition will be presented in different countries in partnerships with local exhibition spaces and organizations.

The project is implemented by Art Project Depot.

The films were made by MK Production in partnership with Art Project Depot.

Art Project Depot is a platform established in 2005 by Irina Batkova – writer, art consultant, independent curator. The focus of our activity are projects that reflect on the social environment and its political, economic, cultural and historical parameters, projects in public spaces, land art and new media. Art Project Depot supports new artistic research practices that provoke discussions on a wide range of topics and issues related to the contemporary world / www.artprojectdepot.com/

MK Production is a company founded in 1999 by Milena Kaneva (Actress, Journalist, Filmfestival creator and Artistic director of Danubefilm festival, Migrant film festival and Mestiere Cinema Festival, Documentary filmmaker and Producer). With her company she created award winning documentaries on human rights, as Total Denial a Vaclav Havel Humans rights Award winner, as well as many art reportage from the Biennale di Venezia and world exhibitions.



HERBARIUM collection

Curated by Irina Batkova

“The process of pressing and drying of specimens for preservation is extremely successful for long term conservation of plants, as the preserved specimens provide a stable foundation from the past for present and future research. Over its more than 400-year long history, the herbarium has become an institution. Besides information, each specimen also contains value, which depends on its completeness and data on the source of the material.” /Vascular Plant Systematics by A. E. Radford, W. C. Dickison, J.R. Massey and C. R. Bell, Harper and Row Publishers/

Modernity is subordinated to the digital image, to existence with the idea of universal accessibility to the virtual collections of fragments of being. Everything is conceivable here and now, it can be traced back to the global communications networks, but that does not make us more confident in structuring the future. The illusory accessibility of information is in fact limited to the technical parameters of the internet search engines, while the visual puzzle we live in includes details of a various nature and to assemble the wider picture turns out to be a rare and hard-to-achieve talent. The personal rituals of collecting strange objects and pieces of nature, associated with important memories and emotions, no longer correspond to today’s fast-paced existence. Visual details from the picture of someone’s success, sudden insight, emotional collapse or rise, our unique personal stories – are stored in the database of our mobile devices.



Takesada Matsutani (1937)



Sako Yachiyo



Krasimir Dobrev (1962)



Massimo Pulini (1958)



Marina Genova (1989)



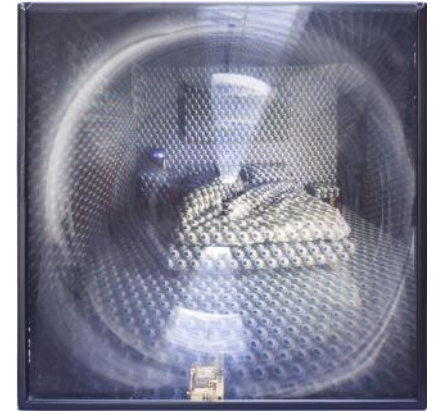
Moira Ricci (1977)

What would the selection of museum specimens of the world culture look like if it were made by the artists and not by the art historians? How would any artist sum up their creativity in a space limited in terms of physical parameters? How the personal reaction to the structured field of artistic expression would overturn the concept of researchers? There is no answer to these questions. The global picture of the development of art does not focus on self-reflection on personal creativity, but on the possibility that its content produces a long-term meaning that resists the dynamics of the development of society.

The *Herbarium Project* is a project of choice, namely what the invited visual artists to participate would capture in a frame of specific size. By joining the project, the participants perceive the dual role of *researched* and *researcher* proposing new participants and respectively new specimens for the selection.

The word *herbarium* is a collective noun, a pin for pricking thoughts, emotions, memories, images that suddenly have lost importance, images that gradually have become essential, words, explosive joy of new ideas, later transformed into calm indifference and other documents that have gathered the energy of the creative act, whether it would be a momentary impulse or a precisely considered gesture.

The purpose of “herbarium” objects is to preserve their integrity for the purposes of classification. It will be carried out in the process of collecting the samples, where the data on the source of the material and the contents of the box will be carefully described for each “specimen”. Thus the specimens will document the details of an entire organism and the numerous and complex interrelations leading to their occurrence. Their study will be long lasting, without a clear system given the indefinite validity and the diverse material. Yet, for each of the observers and participants in the project, the space-time continuum of the *herbarium* is a relative concept. Just like the individual ways of forming memories, the personal sense of how a creative act of rationalizing the world is taking place or the subjective notion that defines the concepts of beginning and end.



Kiril Cholakov (1964)



Bistra Leshevalier (1953)



Nadezhda Oleg Lyahova (1960)



Rositsa Getsova (1969)



Kate Van Houten (1940)

Photo credits: Rayna Teneva