

**THE NATIONAL GALLERY**  
**Sofia Arsenal – Museum of Contemporary Art**

and

**Art Project Depot**

present

**THE HERBARIUM AS A PLACE FOR STORING IDEAS**

8 April–30 May 2021

Vernissage on Thursday, 8 April, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.,  
observing all anti-epidemic measures and with controlled access

SAMCA, 2, Cherni Vrah Blvd., Sofia

The Herbarium Project, created by Irina Batkova, explores the working environment in contemporary culture where ideas are born and exchanged. The focus of Herbarium is to create a collection sealing, in 40 x 40 x 10 cm, or 20 x 40 x 10 cm boxes, the creative energy of different generations of artists from all over the world. The contents of each box, accompanied by a description and an audio file with the artist's voice, will be presented both in the exhibition and on the project's website. The artists invited by the curator of Herbarium choose two new participants—thus, the project tracks creative contacts in the world of art. The development of the collection has no time limits and grows exponentially with each new participant until the final exhibition is announced.

The Herbarium Collection documents the energy of the creative act, irrespective of whether it is a fixed momentary impulse or a precisely considered gesture. 'Herbarising' is an action of imprinting memories, emotions, words; images that have lost their significance, images that have gradually become essential; the explosive joy of new ideas and its transformation into calm indifference or—in a nutshell—the permanent human strive towards seeking the meaning of life in all its dimensions. What would the selection of museum specimens of world culture look like if it were made by artists and not by art historians? How would each artist summarise his creativity in a space limited by physical parameters? How would one's own view of the personal field of artistic expression turn certain research models on their head?

The entire information gathered in the process of developing the archives will be published on the website: [herbariumcollection.com](http://herbariumcollection.com). All the artists will be presented both with their boxes for the collection, and with an additional selection of photos from exhibitions and of works of theirs. This virtual database will be available to anyone—researchers, curators, gallerists, students or art lovers—interested in the less visible mechanisms by which contemporary culture functions.

The H Talks series of video portraits was shot by Milena Kaneva in the working milieu of the visual artists, as part of the Herbarium Project archive. In these short films, the artists describe the creative process behind the realisation of their ideas and concepts of the world and people, the topics that moved them, and the creative energy that drove them to press forward.

The first exposition of the Herbarium Collection will be held at Sofia Arsenal – Museum of Contemporary Art. It includes 55 artists from Bulgaria, Italy, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Finland, Turkey and Austria. Subsequent editions will be presented in different countries in partnerships with local exhibition venues, organisations and institutions.

The videos were realised by MK Production in partnership with Art Project Depot.

*Art Project Depot is an independent platform established in 2005 by Irina Batkova, writer, curator and art consultant. It focuses on projects exploring the contemporary world and its political, economic, cultural and historical parameters.*

Art Project Depot supports new artistic research practices that stimulate discussions on a wide range of topics and issues relating to the state of contemporary culture and the arts. The work programme includes exhibitions aimed at promoting different generations of contemporary Bulgarian artists, as well as partnerships for joint productions with foreign artists and independent organisations.

MK Production is a company established in 1999 by Milena Kaneva, actor, journalist, founder and art director of Danubefilm Festival, the Migrant Film Festival and the Mestiere Cinema Festival, documentary film director and producer. The company has produced documentaries including *Total Denial* (winner of the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize), as well as numerous examples of art reportage from the Biennale di Venezia and other international exhibitions.

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Takesada Matsutani (1937)



Kate Van Houten (1940)



Bistra Lechevalier (1953)



Moira Ricci (1977)



Kiril Cholakov (1964)



Nadezhda Oleg Lyahova (1960)

Фото кредити: Райна Тенева