

# Edi Muka - curator and critic, director of the 2nd Tirana Biennale, pioneer of contemporary art in Albania

Razgovor vodila: Tanja Ostojić

**Tanja Ostojić:** Edi, can you please give me a references concerning the concept of the next Tirana Biennale?

**Edi Muka:** The concept of the next Tirana Biennale comes out of the situation and circumstances in which this biennale is taking place and according to which we judge that second issue of Tirana Biennale is the challenge, a bigger challenge than the first one actually. This idea of Challenge will actually constitute the main theme of the B. not only because of the under which it is going to take place. The situation the international art scene is going through right now has something to do with repetitiveness; nothing new is coming up; things have been circulated from older to younger artists regarding not only content but also mediums. Therefore idea would be: Put up challenge for the artists, and in front of ourselves as art professionals. I think we're living through a new situation now, with what has happened with this sort of historical 11th of September; things and perspectives should change now; how people see the world, how artists see the world... and, I think that a new challenge is in front of the artworld as well. So, the basic idea of the Biennial would be the challenge which is in front of the art world and the artists themselves.

**T.O:** I am very curious about how Biennale will profile it's self regarding the fact that this is going to be second edition. Not in the direction, I guess, as the Western ones are, but more in the direction of "art revolution"?

**E.M:** Actually, we can not pretend to have biennale in Tirana which matches or imitates the standards of big and expensive biennials around the world. This is not the case at all. And not only because of this fact, I am not seeing the reason of having another biennial with the same standards. As experience of last Tirana Biennale show, we will again focus on young artists, mostly. It will be the connecting point where opportunities are given to the younger people which deal with art, which have their proposals, which haven't had much chances to get to the system or to exhibit, or to make their work known. The focus of the next Biennial will be towards this direction and I think it remains different and interesting comparing to other biennials.

**T.O:** I see interesting potential with T. B., ArtIst magazine from Istanbul, Rotor association from Graz, Brener's activity together with Barbara Schurz... Do you think it's just my own construction or do you see it also as a potential which can be sort of balance to what's going on on big market, late capitalistic art&art events production?

**E.M:** I think that there is dialectical relationship between the art market system and non

art market system. They kind of need each other. I do not opt for one of them separately in any case. I think that they have to coexist together and they can only coexist together cause otherwise you have only one of them and that's the same thing. But I think it is very important, the cases you've mentioned... Actually one of the sections of new Tirana Biennale will be presentational section in which we will offer space to non institutional initiatives to be presented during the time span of the exhibition.

**T.O:** Through mails exchanged with Gian Carlo Politi and with Fliori I got sort of impression that process or creating Biennale is already a creative and communicative process, what I like very much; this thinking together with different people...

**E.M:** I have to precise that second Biennale is not in the connection with Gian Carlo Politi, it is totally different ...

Good, good, good

G.C.P. is going to do Tirana B. in the capital of the Czech Republic, Tirana, formerly known as Prague. He is free to do it...

Ha ha ha,

We will do our own Tirana Biennale

O.K.

Actually the structure of new Tirana Biennale will be the similar to the first one, but not in total, because we (me as biennale director) will have more or less 4 different parts in this show... In proposing I will contact group of 10 international curators to bring there proposals and the artists according to the main title of the biennial. So it'll be 10 curators and let's say 10 artists as curators to bring there own artists. So, this idea of challenge is somehow also expended in different perspectives of curatorial devices which reflects in a way things that are developing nowadays in the art world. And then it will be the third section with free proposals which we already have

started to receive: ideas from individuals or individuals who want to propose a group of artists; or curators that want to propose a group of artists; and we will have selection. We will not show them all; out of this, there will be a selection. And the fourth one will be the presentational space that I've mentioned before.

**T.O:** How was 1. Tirana Biennale reflected on local art scene and how was it received by local society? How do you expected 2. Tirana Biennale to influence Albanian art scene and do you expect it to help communication between different scenes on Balkans...?

**E.M:** The impact of 1. Tirana Biennale in the local scene and public I have to say has been the most amazing surprise to me. We had never witnessed such an influx of visitors in an art show. I believe that there were many reasons for that, not because the Albanian public is close to contemporary art, not at all. But because of various public discussions that happened in the mean time regarding artistic representation of different kind (remember the fake Toscani story and the controversial artists "he invited"), and also because of a good publicity campaign we did locally, the interest was raised naturally, and I think it has become some sort of trademark which will work on its own on the second edition.

Regarding the second part of your question, I have to say that Tirana Biennale is not aiming in a limited way in only increasing the communication between different scenes on the Balkans, because otherwise it should have been a Balkan Biennale. Indeed it has a much wider range of involvement in geo-political and socio-cultural aspect, and therefore I believe it substantially does help in these regards too. There have been several events done in Tirana focusing on the communication on the Balkans, or others where the Balkan art scene has been very present, but

Tirana Biennale, even if it is not focusing precisely on that it is a big point of attraction, and as we witnessed with the first one, shall raise for sure the interest of the neighboring countries and establish new connections, so crucial to what we all do in the region.

