



The Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, Slovenia announces the curatorial concept for their 33rd edition, curated by Slavs and Tatars and entitled *Crack Up – Crack Down*.

Crack Up – Crack Down will take an expansive view of the genre of satire today, featuring works by historical and contemporary international artists, as well as interventions by activists, new media polemicists, performances by stand-up comedians, and others. For the 33rd edition of the Biennial, Slavs and Tatars consider ‘the graphic’ not as a medium, but as an agency. They question how graphic language engenders a form of infra-politics via irony and ridicule as a particularly resilient and contemporary form of critique. Purported to speak truth to power, satire has proven itself to be a petri dish in a world of post-truth bacteria.

Satire has been variably considered as a form of popular philosophy, biting critique, and a conservative genre prone to moralising inclinations. It thrives in periods of authoritarian rule: from the rich tradition of Communist humor in Central and Eastern Europe, to the many examples from the Middle East. Today, the return of strongman rule in the West has prompted a boom in various comedic forms. As the growth of print media brought about a proliferation of satirical periodicals in the early 20th century (Slovenia’s *Pavliha*, Germany’s *Simplicissimus*, the UK’s *Punch*, France’s *l’Assiette au Beurre*, and the Caucasus’ *Molla Nasreddin*, to name a few), so too has our digital age provided a particularly fertile graphic moment, via the meme and the protest poster. Today’s visual glut has spawned new aesthetic languages whose messages and discourse we often find distasteful. Though each enjoys a distinct history, both the graphic arts and satire claim to speak simultaneously for and to the people.

A publication will accompany the exhibition and serve as a compendium of the practices of satire and graphics acting both as a mediation guide and a reader on the topic with essays from leading scholars.

“With the rise of populism across the globe (not to mention reductive and revanchist forms of identity politics), there has been vigorous debate over who constitutes ‘the people.’ For more than a millennium, satire has been a particularly contested genre to explore such questions, via varying degrees of serious invective or jocular teasing. Is each joke, as George Orwell maintained, a tiny revolution? Or does laughter deflate the pressures and tension which could otherwise lead to political upheaval?”

Slavs and Tatars

Artists

Maintaining its global viewpoint, the 33rd Biennial will include a selection of artists from regional territories such as Slovenia, Poland, Ukraine, Georgia and Bulgaria, as well as international participants from China, Iran, United Kingdom and the United States of America.



The artists chosen by the curators, Slavs and Tatars, all employ a particular graphic language in their often wide-ranging practices. The work of German–Iraqi Lin May Saeed (9th Berlin Biennale and Köln Skulptur#9) addresses the liberation of animals from human captivity via a rare, mirthful activism.

Marlie Mul's work presents a graphic understanding of the abject in space through her sculptures and installations, such as *Cigarette Ends Here*, which presents the startling image of an unborn child smoking. This uneasy union of subject and medium is echoed in the hyper-sexualized sculptures of Swedish artist Anna Uddenberg, whose work offers a grotesque critique of gender roles and irascible consumption.

Flaka Haliti, a nominee for the prestigious 2019 Preis der Nationalgalerie, will present a series of works *Is that you, Joe?* on the use of avatars and stand-ins as vehicles for the excesses of public discourse

Woody de Othello, a young American artist, who works primarily in ceramic, is making new works for the Biennial focused on the notion of access, both in a literal as well as symbolic register. De Othello's pieces anthropomorphise everyday domestic objects with a carnivalesque absurdity and palette of bright colours.

Slovenian artist Stane Jagodič. Jagodič's effusive output—over five decades of work—foreshadows the meme-culture of our present. Co-founder of the June Group and the satire triennial Aritas, Jagodič's caricatures, aphorisms, and collages run alongside the history of the biennial itself.

Full artist list:

Alenka Pirman with KULA

Amanda Ross-Ho

Anja Wutej

Anna Uddenberg

Arthur Fournier with Raphael Koenig

Augustin Maurs

Boštjan Gorenc (aka Pižama)

Cevdet Ereğ

Dozie Kanu

Ella Kruglyanskaya

Endre Tot

Ferdinand Kriwet

Flaka Haliti

Giorgi Xaniashvili

Hamja Ahsan

Hinko Smrekar



Honza Zamojski
Lawrence Abu Hamdan
Lin May Saeed
Marlie Mul
Martina Vacheva
Martine Gutierrez
Nicole Wermers
Pablo Bronstein
Sachiko Kazama
Stane Jagodič
Tala Madani
Woody de Othello
XIYADIE
Zhanna Kadyrova

Venues:

The 33rd edition of the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts will be spread across 9 venues, in a parcours across the city. Beginning with the main venue of the International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC), the exhibition will build upon and highlight crucial networks of contemporary culture in Ljubljana's vibrant creative landscape, including non-profit spaces, commercial galleries and artist-run initiatives.

MGLC - The International Centre of Graphic Arts
MGLC - Švicarija
National Gallery of Slovenia
The National Library of Slovenia
Equrna Gallery
Gallery ZVKDS
ISIS Gallery
DUM Project Space
Dobra Vaga

Notes to editors:

Credit line: 33rd Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, Curated by Slavs and Tatars, 7th June 2019 – 29th September 2019, various venues in Ljubljana, Slovenia, www.mglc-lj.si



About Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts

The Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, one of the oldest biennials in the world, was founded in 1955 and led by Zoran Kržišnik. The Biennial established itself as an event that presents art in a “global” context during the post-war decades, regularly hosting artists from both sides of the Iron Curtain and, very early on, transcending the Eurocentric viewpoint by showing art works from the Third World, in particular the non-aligned countries.

At a local level, the Biennial has been a significant inspiration and support to Slovene artists, bringing them closer to international cultural developments. It was in the context of such close ties that the Ljubljana Graphic School developed.

The Biennial took shape during a period when Pop art was coming to the fore in both Great Britain and the United States when printmaking and its reproductive techniques perfectly captured the disposition of art and society in general. Post-war capitalism, consumer society and the loose division between so-called high and low culture greatly affected the production of art.

In the 1990s, the global and local political landscape changed, as well as new cultural and technological developments, the Biennial extended beyond the boundaries of the printmaking medium and today includes various modes of artistic expression.

About Slavs and Tatars

Slavs and Tatars is an internationally-renowned art collective devoted to an area east of the former Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China known as Eurasia. The collective’s practice is based on three activities: exhibitions, publications and lecture-performances. Their work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, NY; Salt, Istanbul; Vienna Secession, Kunsthalle Zurich; Albertinum, Dresden; and Ujazdowski Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw; among others. Their public lectures have been presented at leading universities including Stanford University, Princeton University, University of Warsaw, Columbia University, and University of Tehran. In addition to their translation of the legendary Azerbaijani satirical periodical *Molla Nasreddin* (currently in its 2nd edition with I.B Tauris), Slavs and Tatars have published ten books to date, most recently *Wripped Scripped* (Hatje Cantz, 2018) on the politics of alphabets and transliteration. The 33rd edition of the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts is their curatorial debut.

[To download the image sheet, please click here](#)

Press contacts

Pelham Communications

Alice Haguener, alice@pelhamcommunications.com

Lily Bryant, lily@pelhamcommunications.com

*Translation of a text on the art work by Hinko Smrekar: "Who knows, such an exhibition of Slovenian art might even be pleasing, after all?"



Instagram: [@mglcljubljana](https://www.instagram.com/mglcljubljana)

Facebook: [facebook.com/mglc.ljubljana](https://www.facebook.com/mglc.ljubljana)

Twitter: [@mglc_ljubljana](https://twitter.com/mglc_ljubljana)

#LjubljanaBiennial

#SlavsAndTatars

#CrackUpCrackDown

#MGLCLjubljana