

**Sofia Queer Forum 2020:  
BULGARIAN DRAG HISTORY**

An artist project by Yassen Zgurovski and Boryana Rossa

Opening: Monday, December 28, 2020 online in ZOOM!

ZOOM: 950 5058 3330

<https://syracuseuniversity.zoom.us/j/95050583330>

An online tour of the project by Zgurovski and Rossa  
and Q&A moderated by Stanimir Panayotov

Streaming live on Sofia Queer Forum's facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/sofiaqueerforum>

The exhibition at Structura Gallery, which will show only part of the project, will not have an in-person opening due to the pandemic, but the exposition will be open for visitors after January 5, 2021, for a month.

<https://sofiaqueerforum.org> | <https://structura.gallery>

[www.facebook.com/sofiaqueerforum](http://www.facebook.com/sofiaqueerforum) | [www.facebook.com/events/2931571417065963](http://www.facebook.com/events/2931571417065963)



*What to expect on December 28?*

"Bulgarian Drag History" is primarily an online archival project, which will be gradually built by the end of May, 2021 at: <http://dragbg.sofiaqueerforum.org>.

On December 28, 2020, Yassen Zgurovski and Boryana Rossa will present their project and the first contributions in the online archive. The full version of the archive, as well as the printed catalogue of the project, will be presented at an event in May 2021, which we hope to be in person. On December 28, the artists will make an online tour in the upcoming exhibition at Structura Gallery, with participating artists Voin de Voin, Ivo Dimchev, Yassen Zgurovski, Daniela Kostova, Lubri, Boryana Rossa, Kalin Serapionov, Kristian Chalakov and Mihail Vuchkov, including a short version of the interviews with drag queens and with artists, while the full versions will be published later in the online archive. Boryana Rossa will present "The Rhizome of Disguise" - a speculative scheme consisting of 15 portraits of drag queens and artists, showing the relationships and the contrasts between the drag scene and the arts. This presentation of the archive will be followed by a discussion moderated by the philosopher Stanimir Panayotov, during which you will be able to ask your questions.

#### *What does the online archive consist of?*

- Video interviews with drag queens and kings of different generations and with artists who use transdressing and focus on gender performance. These interviews draw parallels or create contrasts between these different transfigurations, where sometimes a direct relation between the arts and the drag culture can be drawn, and in other cases the art of transdressing and transfiguration is related to the history of the theater, ritual, folklore, or even the development of technology. Among the interviewees are the drag queens Elza Parini, Julieta Intergalactica, Jennifer Benediction, Engima Chadel, Miss Boni (Borislav Sokolov), Ursula (Borislav Sapundzhiev), the facecontrol Keshisheva, the designer Mariela Gemisheva, the artists Yassen Zgurovski, Kalin Serapionov and Boryana Rossa, the theater directors Vazkresiya Viharova and Ani Vasseva, the actor Leonid Yovchev, the art critic Boris Kostadinov and others, as well as representatives of the youngest generation of drag and queer activists from Queer Carousel - Gloria Filipova, Galina Bezlova and Lea Mancheva.
- Archival photos and videos, which will be gradually published on the project website. Analytical texts based on archival materials will also be published in the planned catalog.
- The forum will be accompanied by two discussions, which will take place until May 2021 and will be published in the online archive.

#### *What is the idea of "Bulgarian Drag History"?*

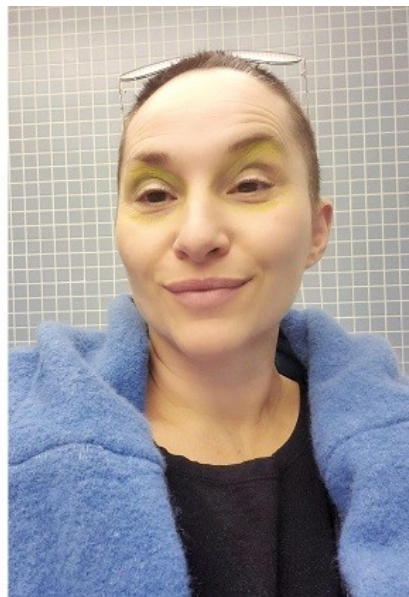
Bulgarian Drag History is dedicated to the history of the drag performance in Bulgaria with a focus on the 1990s and aims to create a widely accessible information database that will provoke a conversation between generations of drag performers and those who are inspired by them, by including the centers of drag performance across the country.

Typical of the unisex and techno aesthetics of the 1990s, this drag cultural scene is widespread as a commercial trend in fashion and music and defines the profile of the new and youthful of those years worldwide. What is specific for the Bulgarian scene is that despite the subcultural nature of the drag scene, it is widely accepted and, unlike elsewhere, is not typical only for queer circles. "Spartacus" in Sofia and Varna, "Caligula" in Plovdiv, "Oscar Wilde" and "Alexander" in Varna are not just "gay bars": they are frequented by heterosexual people, and the community of club goers is further created by the choice of the face control at the entrance, who assesses whether one's appearance suits the queer and drag atmosphere inside, without necessarily referring to the sexuality of each of the visitors. The extravagant and often exaggerated incarnations of the opposite sex are highly valued and included. Due to this

inclusion, the scene is highly inspiring for generations of artists and cultural figures who began their careers in the 1990s, and marks the beginning of artistic expression and a way of life bearing its influence to this very day.

The topic of cross-dressing has always been relevant and is present in many different layers of Bulgarian culture for centuries. Examples are the folk traditions of men crossdressing as women and women as men from the time of the Thracians, unique to our country and almost unrepresented in our neighboring cultures. These traditions continue to be widely represented in Bulgarian folklore and religious rites during Babinden (Grandma's Day), the Sovoyunitsa ritual and the Kukers' festivities. Such rituals and their comparative consideration of today reflect not only the plasticity of human sexuality, but also the polyvalence of gender roles in society.

*Who are the curators?*



Yasen Zgurovski is an artist working in the areas of illustration, poster design and painting. He has made illustrations for various editions of FAME Cards, the magazines *Edno*, *Egoist*, *Insight*, *Capital*, *The Sofia Echo*, club flyers, comixes, posters for the Fine Acts initiatives and Plakat Kombinat. He has 12 individual exhibitions and multiple participations in group shows locally and internationally, and his works have been shown in galleries such as Art Center Hugo Voeten, Belgium; Vaska Emanouilova Flery, Sofia; Academia Gallery, Sofia; Chelsea Bow Tie Cinemas, Manhattan; Haus Wittgenstein, Vienna; Galerie BKL, Prague; Marx-Halle, Vienna; Institute for Performance and Theory, Sofia; National Art Gallery, Sofia; Casa del Cinema, Roma; Sofia City Art Gallery, Sofia; European Commission, Brussels; Space SSee, Daejeon, South Korea; MBC, Daejeon, South Korea; the fridge, Sofia; Sofia Arsenal Museum of Contemporary Arts, Sofia; Rayko Alexiev Gallery, Sofia; National Gallery, Warsaw; Union of Bulgarian Artists, Sofia; Red Bull Space, NYC; Goethe Institute, Sofia; Museum Gallery of Modern Art, Sofia; Zurab Tsereteli Museum of Modern Art, Tbilisi, Georgia; One Stand Night Gallery, Sofia.

<https://yasenz.tumblr.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/yasenzz>

Julieta Intergalactica is a fictional character created by the artist Yasen Zgurovski. Her star rises with the opening of the cult night club Spartacus at the end of the 1990s, when, together with Miss Boni, Medea, Cecile, La Costa, Rebecca and Ursula they found the drag culture in Bulgaria, bringing a new sense of glamour in the club life.

[www.facebook.com/julietaintergalactica](http://www.facebook.com/julietaintergalactica)

Boryana Rossa, Ph.D., is an interdisciplinary artist and curator who lives and works between Sofia and New York. Her works are situated on the cross-section of electronic arts and biological arts, film, video, performance and photography. Associate Professor in Transmedia, School of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University, NY. In 2004, together with the Russian artist and film maker Oleg Mavromatti, Rossa establishes UTRAFUTURO – an international group of artists engaged with issues of technology, science and their social implications from intersectional cyber feminist perspective. In 2012, Rossa has finished her Ph.D. on Post Cold-War Gender Performances, in the Department of Arts, at Rensselaer, Troy, NY. In 2014 she is a fellow of New York Foundation for the Arts, category Media Arts, together with Oleg Maromatti. Most of Rossa's works have been shown internationally at venues such as Brooklyn Museum, NY; GARAGE Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow; Museum of Contemporary Art (MUMOK) Vienna; Zacheta Gallery, Warsaw; steirischer herbst, Graz; National Gallery of Fine Arts, Sofia; 1st Balkan Biennale, Thessaloniki; Kunstwerke and Akademie der Kunste, Berlin; The 1st Moscow Biennial; Sofia City Art Gallery; Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa, Israel; Centro Cultural Montehermoso Kulturunea Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain. Her works are in numerous public and private collections such as Art Collection of Erste Bank-Group; Thessaloniki Museum of Contemporary Art; Sofia City Art Gallery: Sofia Arsenal – Museum of Contemporary Art; Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, NY, etc.

<http://boryanarossa.com>

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Organizational and media partners:  
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