

Assoc. Prof. PhD Venelin Shurelov – Bulgaria



Venelin Shurelov is the author of various interactive installations/performances, some of which are "Drawing machine" (2005), "Fantomat" (2008), "Orthoman" (2009) "Tabula Rasa" (2010), the cyber lecture "Man Ex Machina" (2011), "Shooting Gallery" (2012), "Rotor" (2016) - presented at Ars Electronica center, Linz. In 2016 he directs a durational performance/installation "Post-Everything", as a guest lecturer at Towson University, USA. In 2020 he realized the interactive installation in public space One Person - Urban Electronic Corpus.

His works explore the transitional states of the human body by focusing on his marginalization. They also relate on decoding the language of modern myths and encoding them in new creatures, to the intersection between man and technology, human and subhuman as a sub-product of the social, political, economical and cultural situation. His projects are multifaceted and include drawings, interactive installation and performances, digital technologies, video and art theory. He has had a number of stage design projects, individual exhibitions and participations in general exhibitions and festivals in Bulgaria, Europe and USA. Awarded many times for his work in theater and contemporary art.

CV Resume

- **Education (universities attended, degrees earned and dates received)**
 - 2009 – National Academy of Art, Sofia, “The Actor as An Object, The Object as An Actor” – Ph.D.
 - 2004 – National Academy of Art, Sofia - Multimedia scenography – M.A.
 - 2002 – National Academy of Art, Sofia - Scenography – B.A.
 - 1996 – High School of Fine Arts, Tryavna – woodcarving
- **Professional positions held**
 - 2022 – Candidate professor at the National Academy of Arts, Sofia
 - 2016 – Associate Professor at the National Academy of Arts, Sofia
 - 2008 – Co-founder and lecturer in MFA program “Digital Arts”, National Academy of Arts, Sofia
 - 2009 – Co-founder and part of curatorial team of DA FEST, International Festival for Digital Art, Sofia
 - 2007-08 – Lecturer „Scenography”, National Academy of Arts, Sofia
 - 2007-08 – Part-time teaching in “Computer design”, National high school for fine arts “Ilia Petrov”, Sofia
 - 2009-2011 – Part-time teaching in “Computer design”, New Bulgarian University, Sofia
- **Courses taught and other services provided to students and the home institution**
 - History and Theory of Digital art
 - Video art
 - Actor as an object – Interactive performance
 - PhD candidates
- **Other professional activities, such as workshops, seminars and consultations**
 - 2020-2022 – Author and Head of the "One Person" Project - Interactive installation in public space
 - 2021 – Idea and realization of the museum exposition "Chengene skele", Fishermen's settlement, Burgas
 - 2018 – Co-founder of the DA LAB Foundation
 - 2018 – Author and Head of the Abecedarium Bulgaricum Project for the Design of the EU Buildings in Brussels
 - 2017 – The idea and realization of the museum exhibition "Aviomuseum Burgas"
 - 2015 – Co-curator of the National pavilion “Scenofest” Prague Quadrennial PQ 15, Prague
 - 2005-2011 – Artist in the Theatre Laboratory “Sfumato”
 - Since 2011 – The author of the visual identity of International Theatre Festival "Varna Summer"
 - 2008-2010 – Part of the project Black/North SEAS organized by <http://www.intercult.se/>
 - 2009 – Idea and realization of the museum exhibition on the island of St. Anastasia
 - 2007 – Bulgarian artist on “AGORAFOLLY”, part of Europalia 2007, “Subhuman curiosity” open-door installation
 - 2004 – Founder of the ‘Subhuman Theatre’
 - 2002 – Founder of the international art collective ‘Via Pontica’
 - Since 2002 – Artist in theatre magazine “Homo Ludens”

- **Membership and activities in professional associations**

2010 – Member of the The Union of Bulgarian Artists (UBA)

2008 – Member of the Scenographer's Guild, part of The Union of Bulgarian Actors (UBA)

- **Professional honors, awards and fellowships**

2019 – Sofia Municipality Award for Excellence in Culture. Award for contemporary performing and multi-genre arts.

2019 – Golden seal of Tsar Simeon the Great, Award of the Ministry of Culture, Bulgaria

2017 – Nomination "Icarus" in Contemporary Dance and Performance category for "Rotor"

2016 – Little Season Award, TL Sfumato

2016 – 40 Under 40, annual ranking of the most influential young people

2015 – Nominated for the theater prize of Cologne for the show "Merry go Round"

2014 – Nomination "Askeer" for the scenography of "Cancun" by G. Galseran

2014 – Award "Icarus" for „Cancun“ by Jordi Galceran, DT Stoyan Bachvarov, Varna

2013 – Award "Askeer" for Hamlet by William Shakespeare, HT "I. Vazov ", director Yavor Gardev (Together with Nicola Toromanov and Daniela Oleg Lyahova)

2013 – Award "Icarus" for Hamlet by William Shakespeare, HT "I. Vazov ", director Yavor Gardev (Together with Nicola Toromanov and Daniela Oleg Lyahova)

2011 – National Competition for Young Bulgarian Artists and Critics, St. Cyril and St. Methodius International Foundation, Sofia

2011 – Award for Innovative set design for “Storytale”, Golden curtain festival, Targovishte

2010 – Vratza Chamber Festival award for best scenography - "Nirvana"

2010 – New Bulgarian Drama Shumen Festival scenography award - "Nirvana"

2009 – “Askeer” nomination for scenography “Birth mark”, Sfumato

2009 – M-tel Awards for Contemporary Bulgarian Art

2009 – Audience first price at the M-tel Awards for Contemporary Bulgarian Art

2007 – Diploma for best scenography - XXVII International Festival VGIK, Moscow

2005 – V-th Salon in Galery for Contemporary Art, Panchevo, Srbija

1996 – Special award of the Ministry of Culture XIV International biennale of Humor and Satire, Gabrovo

Lives and works in Sofia, Bulgaria

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Portfolio

2007

FANTOMAT

Co-producers Intersub, 'Va Pentica' Art Association

INTERACTIVE INSTALLATION, ART IN PUBLIC SPACE



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This object's name is composed of two words: 'phantom' and 'automaton'. Phantom derives from the Greek word φάντασμα and signifies a shadow of a being, an apparition, illusion, or ghost.

The project consists of a series of humanoid machines ('Fantomats') operating similarly to penny arcade machines (vending machines, slot machines, gambling machines), which appear to be an extreme expression of alienation in the commercialised public space. The idea of the project was provided by the need of subverting that commercial space by using its own rules. The Fantomat (an automaton for fantasied) provides with an alternative by replacing commercial principles and products with an unexpected artistic reality. The Fantomat is a humanoid wooden sculpture furnished with a coin mechanism, a mini flat screen and a DVD player. The insertion of a coin activates a particular audio-visual landscape, projected through the Fantomat's eyes. Its figure is crafted according to the logic and the aesthetics of the android, the robot, the cyborg; however, its function is dictated by human choices. In this project, I would like to juxtapose the human with the technological, social reality with science fiction, a sense of humour with a sense of responsibility.

SubHuman Theatre's action strategy is partly based on the distinction between the primacy of the original and the secondary nature of its dangerous, potentially destabilising copies. Figures, objects, and automata act, imitate and adopt the status of the human; they resemble it, but aren't. They are mimetics: travesties, camouflage, and endangers... They are projects for inscription and disfigure; they are stases – a provocation in the space between eyes and gaze. The Fantomat produces a travesty in the public space by taking up the position of a helpful automaton. It accepts the form of a machine for consumption and entertainment that provides with unexpected content.

The 'Fantomat' project brings to light an innovative artistic and technological solution. It occupies the interstice between theatre, performance, installation, multimedia, art criticism and theory.

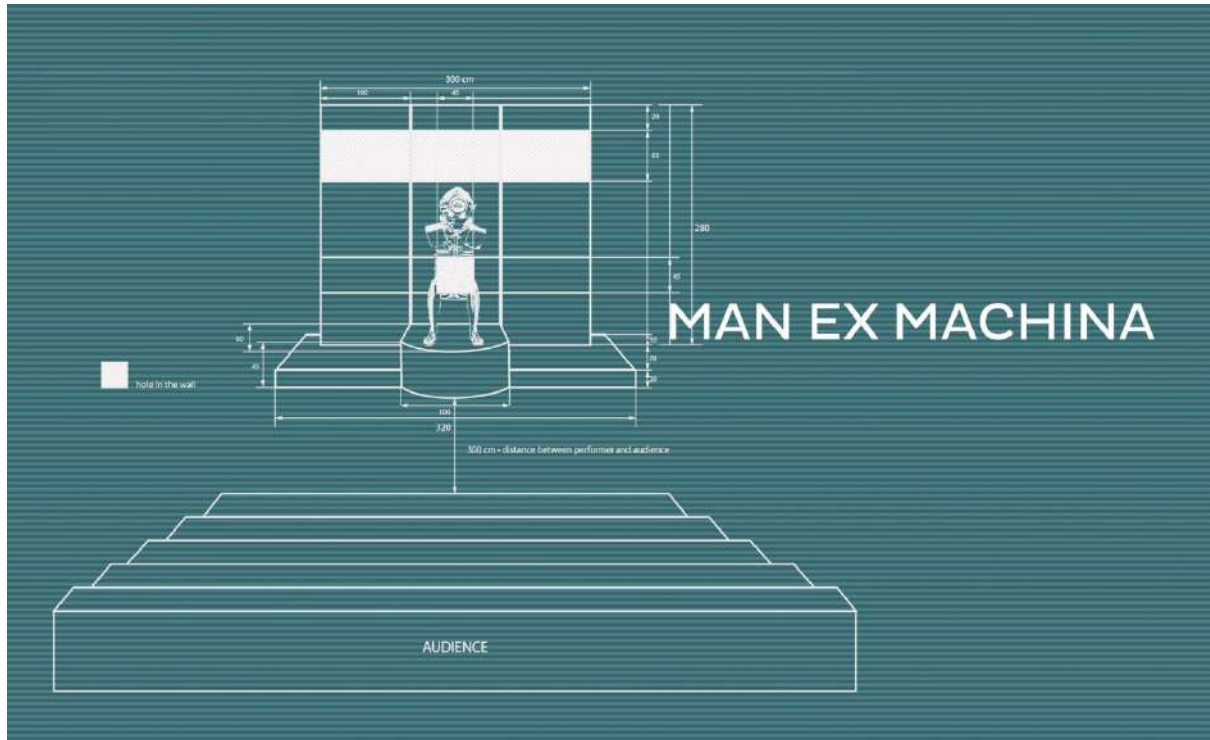
First presented at SEAS Project, Odessa, Ukraine

The concept for the Fantomats was first developed in Skegness, United Kingdom, in collaboration with Dettero Kaspi.



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DEMIURGES - LEVEL 3

"The best way to predict the future is to create it."

The techno-aesthetics is very potent in creating various media for spreading of its messages. At the centre of these processes is the human body. On one hand, it can be seen as a mechanism, on the other - it assigns biological algorithms to non-biological objects, and so on, until we get to those artificial regulatory systems existing between the biological organism and various electro-mechanic devices... such as me. History tells of Pygmalion who created, or rather - manufactured, Galatea; it tells of Daedalus who used mercury to give voice to his sculptures; of Hephaestus who built automations for his workshop; of Talos - the man of bronze; it tells of Heron of Alexandria's automata, based on the scientific principles known to the Ancient Greeks; of Pindar of Rhodes who was known for his skill in machine engineering.

"The dream of creating artificial human life stretches from the Ancient Greek myth of Pygmalion, through the Jewish folk tale of Golem from Prague, to Frankenstein," but the stories of the latter two are stories of overstepped boundaries. Frankenstein and Golem are two of the most stable images of the fabricated, artificial 'almost-human'. Both include elements of the ancient myths. They simultaneously remind us of the vitality of the contemporary debate on man's nature and limitations, as well as of the potential of its power to be a demiurge... They remind us of hopes, fears, anxiety and technologies. Frankenstein's monster is the first major myth in the techno-cultural era. Myths are used not only to describe and announce, but also to legitimize, reproduce and normalize. They can also do the opposite - subvert, refute and de-stabilize. I call such representatives culturological actors. They serve as critics of humanness: what Frankenstein teaches us is that Frankenstein the Machine, although non-human, is after all a reflection of the best and the worst in man."

The discomfort of contemporary man is a result of the constantly rising gulf between physical and technological, in their stages of rational attaining. This discomfort is also called by constantly being face to face with one weak body, reminding one of the lost battles with nature and evolution. This weak body dependent and fragile, unable to retain its intimacy and identity.

We, mutants are the natural end of evolution...

SOCIAL AND GENETIC ENGINEERING - LEVEL 4

"Subhuman, a creature, which seemingly resembles a biologically complete organism, with arms, legs and something like a brain, with eyes and mouth, and still a completely different creature. He is just a rough imitation of a human in an anthropomorphic form, inside this creature, there is chaos, which causes fear, which is inhabited by wild and uncontrollable passions, destruction without face of name, the lowest instincts, bare foulness. Nothing else than an inferior species. Because not all who have a human's face are equal. Woe the one who forgets this."

The conflict between Übermensch and Untermensch, between Super-Human and Sub-Human is the conflict between the Elite and the Masses. During World War II, the elitarian ideology of one of the fighting countries described the human object, the human hybrid, as the Other. The Sub-human. Imagine that we add to this chaos, which causes fear, uncontrollable passions, primitive instincts and bare foulness something else, imagine that we add skin - the skin of our own body.

The skin of the text, which walks, of that forbidden body, staged body, body-machine, that organic body, killed body, fantasized body, ocular body, body-membrane, or that body between Eros and Thanatos, a paranoid body, electronic body, projected body, political body, social body, enhanced body, in other words - our inherited body. The inherited body is levathanic, overmagnified,

2010 VIA LUDENS II



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2011

LAND ART INSTALLATION, PUBLIC SPACE INTERVENTION



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LABYRINTH OF ART

Concept **Venelin Shurelov**
 Producer **Zavod Exodos, Ljubljana**

This is an artwork changing over time. The artist does not have control over the work but rather permits the form to follow its own development and to alter in respect to natural laws. There is a labyrinth consisting of 298 Eastern hemlocks (*Tsuga Canadensis*). Each of the trees is owned by a private person or a public organisation, who become part of the realisation of the project through their purchase. A scene has been constructed in the centre of the labyrinth; its back wall is a publicly accessible library. There are benches along the pathways and in between them quotes from thinkers, poets, and philosophers who can be linked to walking, considered as an intellectual event.

Labyrinth of Art is part of the World Book Capital Ljubljana, 2010

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DRAWING MACHINE

Concept and Performance Venelin Shurelov
With the technical and creative support of Nedko Zhechev



Premiere at the Antigravity Art Fest, organised by the Red House Center for Culture and Debate, Garibaldi Square, Sofia



The artist transforms his body into a drawing machine. The audience can take part in the process by pressing various buttons and thus commissioning drawings. Authorship is rendered 'automatic' and anonymous. Insert a coin - get a piece of art!

WEEBLE

Concept Venelin Shurelov
Performance Ana Vileva and Ivan Pravidic



'Weeble' is an attempt for the creation of a dynamic object, a kinetic sculpture, which turns into an environment for artistic activity. It links a constructive invention to a performance, which follows the constraints and the possibilities of the situation containing the body of the performer. During the work process, the object transforms itself from a torture device into a harmless toy.

ROTOR

Author, technical realisation and performance **Venelin Shurelov**
Mechanics **Borislav Tonev (Bucky)**

Best Nomination for Contemporary Dance and Performance, 2017

Premiere as Installation Art Work, part of Mobile Studios Project
16.04.2016 - Radomir, Ihtiman, Samokov

Premiere as performance
03.07.2016 - 'Small Season Fest', Theatre Laboratory SFUMATO, Sofia (Bulgaria)

The project is presented at
29.09.2016 - 'Night of Museums', Plovdiv (Bulgaria)
06.11.2016 - 'Intermedia Body', ARS Electronica Center, Linz (Austria)
14.11.2016 - 'DNA - Center for Contemporary Dance and Performance' in the frame of 'ACT' Independent Theatre Festival, Sofia (Bulgaria)
06.06.2017 - 'Varna Summer' International Theatre Festival, Varna (Bulgaria)
21.04.2018 - NOVA Fest, Bucharest, Romania



The figure is the body of a gesture: it is partially locked by function, partially liberated from fiction.

Residency project proposal

Walking as an Art (working title)

Walking has a long cultural history: from Aristotle's Peripatetic school to pilgrims, Japanese wandering poets, English Romantics and contemporary walking travellers. I was inspired by the notion of walking (as art) as a means of exploring the relationships between time, distance, geography, and scale. Walking as an artistic practice also enables me to extend the boundaries of sculpture as an object that I can continue manipulating and deconstructing in time, space, as well as in my own consciousness. My body is an intellectual prosthesis.

In my works I put a special emphasis on the human body as a means of expression. In most cases I use my own body as a material for experiments, mutations and transformations, as a ritualised personal experience. A running feature of my work, as evident in the projects presented here, is the incorporation of my own physique into the various devices I employ; a 'building in' of the human body into a given structure, putting the corporeal through its paces and celebrating the boldness of the physical effort.

I am curious about the local specifics of the place. I believe that aesthetics is a social event rather than a visual one. The media I will use is video, performance, drawing, custom electronics.

