

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Preview: 10th – 12th of May  
10 am – 7 pm

Exhibition opening: 2 pm on 12th of May, Friday  
Giardini

Opening speech by  
Zoltán Balog, Minister of the Human Capacities,  
and Dr. Brigitte Franzen, Chairwomen and CEO  
of the Peter und Irene Ludwig Stiftung, Aachen.

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High resolution images and texts can be downloaded  
from the link below:  
[http://www.lumu.hu/U\\_biennale2017](http://www.lumu.hu/U_biennale2017)

[www.ludwigmuseum.hu](http://www.ludwigmuseum.hu)  
[www.varnaigyula.hu](http://www.varnaigyula.hu)

# GYULA VÁRNAI PEACE ON EARTH!

la Biennale di Venezia

57. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali



HUNGARIAN PAVILION 2017

*If you want to see a bright pigeon, which, on top of all, cheekily announces Peace on Earth, you must visit the Hungarian Pavilion in the Giardini. At Gyula Várnai's exhibition you can see a space city, a dismantled Ferris-wheel, but also eight thousand badges from the 70s. And what it is all about? Well, to rethink the future and to hope that art will help us change the unchangeable.*

Organizer: Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest  
[www.ludwigmuseum.hu](http://www.ludwigmuseum.hu)

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# PEACE ON EARTH

## EXHIBITION OF GYULA VÁRNAI 57. INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION OF LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA, 2017 HUNGARIAN PAVILION

National Commissioner: Julia Fabényi

Curator: Zsolt Petrányi

Organizer: Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest

The national pavilion will showcase a series of installations, interactive video works and sculptural pieces by the leading Hungarian contemporary artist. Drawing on the notion of futurology, Várnai's interactive installations evoke the promised utopias of the past and confronts them with the challenges of the present. Recreating the slogans and symbols of socialism, this commission critiques an idealised, futuristic vision using ordinary materials that transcend their everyday function.

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"Gyula Várnai's *Peace on Earth!* project is about the viability and necessity of utopias; about the fact that although our past conceptions of the future have not come true, new visions are required in every age in order for mankind to achieve its goals. As the current circumstances, including technological development, world politics, global economic and natural crises or the waves of migration keep posing new challenges, our conception of the future is changing faster than before. Although we could have reason to be pessimistic, Várnai offers a reassuring scenario to keep our faith in the coming of a better age.

Through his installations, Gyula Várnai's exhibition evokes the ideas of the futurology and the utopias of the past and confronts them with the challenges of the present. His sources are found material and visual elements, which he puts into new contexts in order to shed light on the fact that our vision of the future is the foundation of all the discourses of economics and power, no matter in which era we live in.

Using visual elements and objects from the past, he creates artworks with the most diverse techniques. In the socialist model city of Dunaújváros – named "Stalin City" in Hungarian when it was built – where he grew up and continues to live, his sources often include relics of the Cold War era or the aesthetic of industrial environment. Created using simple techniques, his montage-like works overwrite the stereotypical Eastern European world view with contemporary philosophical and literary allusions."

2 Zsolt Petrányi, curator

"Since my childhood I've been living in Dunaújváros, an industrial city which is only a few years older than me. This city was built as a result of a political decision. I believe that thanks to this rootlessness the present and the future got a special focus in the community. For us, the notion of tradition was unknown, it was replaced by the cognition and the exploration. We experienced the present as future. A very exciting present happening in the future. As a young man I wanted to explore the world and considered its exact apprehension happening sometime in the middle far future."

Gyula Várnai, artist



Gyula Várnai: E-Wars (detail), digital print, 2017

## GYULA VÁRNAI, ARTIST

Born in 1956, Kazincbarcika, Hungary. Gyula Várnai's influential practice is associated with a group of Hungarian neoconceptual artists who came to prominence in the 1990s. Known widely for his large scale installations, Várnai's background in mathematics and physics informs much of his practice. Várnai's works navigate along the fine line between the artistic and the quotidian, using everyday materials to create striking assemblages. His work has been shown widely in exhibitions across Europe and the United States. Recent solo and group exhibitions have been held in Budapest, Paris, Istanbul, and Cologne. Gyula Várnai lives and work in Dunaújváros, Hungary.

## ZSOLT PETRÁNYI, CURATOR

- 4 Born in 1966, Budapest, Hungary. He specialises in contemporary art of the nineties of Hungary. Petrányi has previously organised international projects when working as director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in Dunaújváros, an industrial city near Budapest. During this period, he was the curator of the controversial show of the group Little Warsaw at the La Biennale di Venezia in 2003. From 2005 till 2011, Petrányi acted as the director of the Kunsthalle Budapest, where he focused on big scale international solo and group exhibitions including Luc Tuymans, Michael Boremans and Thomas Ruff. Currently, Petrányi is the head of the Department of Contemporary Arts in the Hungarian National Gallery.

## JULIA FABÉNYI, NATIONAL COMMISSIONER

Born in 1953, Budapest, Hungary. Lived in Germany from 1972 until 1990, studying and later teaching at the Leipzig University (1983, Dr. phil.).

Art Historian, director of Kunsthalle Szombathely (in western Hungary) between 1996 and 2000. From 2000 until 2005, director of Kuntshalle Budapest and National Commissioner of the Hungarian Pavilion at the Venice Biennial. Between 2007 and 2013, director of Baranya County Museum Authority, Pécs, Hungary.

Since 2013, director of the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest. Curator of numerous exhibitions of international and Hungarian contemporary art.



Zsolt Petrányi, Julia Fabényi and Gyula Várnai

## CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by an unusual catalogue, entitled *Peace on Earth! Utopia References*. Both the text and the images follow an irregular editing format insofar as the catalogue's content is loosely and associatively connected to the work of the artist. The reason is that we deemed it important to reveal as much as possible about the environment in which Gyula Várnai lives and works, and the inspirations that influence his work.

The introductory essay by national commissioner Julia Fabényi relates the utopias of the age and its faith in peace with the frenzied construction and industrialisation characterizing Eastern European urbanization and city development after World War 2. Her essay is crucial to understanding the artist's work method, while giving a broader historical and local context to the interpretation of his works.

Curator Zsolt Petrányi places the exhibited works in a broader context, the references of which are in line with Gyula Várnai's interest in and up-to-date knowledge of current trends in pop culture and music as well as science. Petrányi's essay presents the exhibition's general concept and particular works in relation to this frame of reference.

New media researcher Cameran Ashraf writes about the nature of information and the historical as well as futurological aspects of knowledge transfer. His text is a useful supplement to the piece *I Want to Know Everything!* at the Biennale, unravelling more complex layers of meaning underlying this work.

Artist Tilo Schulz contributed to the publication with a special, literary piece. His writing is a personal letter to this artist, an artistic address giving us insight into the intellectual relationship between two creative

minds. His lines recall the development of Várnai's art, his earlier works and their interconnectedness.

The catalogue is closed by the Gyula Várnai's text, which is written for the videoproject *the Artist's Practice* of Biennale Arte 2017.

The format of the catalogue is reminiscent of a fanzine, with ample imagery to raise the reader's interest. The visual materials almost form a parallel thread leading through visual and intellectual associations related to the exhibition.

Published by the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art and edited by Zsolt Petrányi, the catalogue was issued in a Hungarian and an English edition. The graphic design of the project and the publication is the work of Zoltán Kerekes.







NOTES

Ferris-wheel at the Dunajváros Amusement Park, 1970s



Várnai's installation, the *5 minutes* at the Danube River Harbor



