

# Kalin Mihov

## Portfolio

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Treadmill series || performance, performative object, video art || Kalin Mihov, 2024

The Treadmill series is an ongoing series of video actions in which Mihov confronts his surroundings through interventions involving a treadmill-like object. These performances depict a surreal and absurd interaction with the landscape, reflecting on the Sisyphean struggle inherent in humanity's relationship with nature — one marked not by acceptance, symbiosis, or balance, but by relentless exploitation, domination, and conflict. The act of moving without advancing becomes a metaphor for the ecological crisis — where efforts to control or conquer nature only reinforces cycles of depletion and exhaustion. The *Treadmill series* invites reflection on the contradictions of human activity in the Anthropocene.

The titles of the performances hints to the mythical powers that the artist ascribes to the image of the treadmill in the series — *How many treadmills does it take to make a landslide* and *At the beginning of every river stands a treadmill*. Suggesting speculative conclusions — such as the idea that all landslides are caused by lunatics (like the artist himself) or that every river springs from the efforts of a dreamer — this symbolism emphasizes the awareness of the power of the human imprint - a recurring motif in Mihov's work.



*Treadmill series: How many treadmills does it take to make a landslide, still images from video performance, 2024*



*Treadmill series: At the beginning of every river there is a treadmill, still image from video performance, 2024*

*At the beginning of every river stands a treadmill* was created during the International Gabrovtzi ART-NATURE Symposium and is featuring the Treadmill object made from natural materials - tree trunks and branches with a working mechanism for running. The performance marks the tenth anniversary of a flood, which completely changed the river of Enyovitsa, where the performance was made. In recent years, the region has often experienced droughts, and problems with water infrastructure, leaving local residents without water. In the act, the artist tries to turn on the river using the treadmill.

*How many treadmills does it take to make a landslide* was created and showed at the medienfrische artist residency and festival in the summer of 2024 and features lighter treadmill shaped structure without mechanism and the artist is running on the landslide, using the motion of the falling rocks.

in a third video - *Lost Treadmill*, the artist brings the treadmill object into a gallery space. In which the previous function of the object as a catalyst for natural interventions is taken away, rendering it lost.

The video series was presented at Sofia Art Fair 2024.



*Treadmill series: Lost Treadmill, 2024*



*Lost Treadmill, still image from video performance, 2024*



*video stills from documentation*

*Self-care series* | | Site-specific happening, object with dimensions 150x80x15 cm | | Kalin Mihov; 2025

Self-care is a video performance project of landscape interventions in which the artist interacts with nature through augmented self-care tools. Back scratcher, scalp soother or body and foot massager; tools with which we take care for ourselves or our loved ones are taken and adapted to be used by the artist with the same concern for soothing the earth/soil.

The project aims to push the boundaries of our most personal care. By entering into such intimate contact, the project wants to rethink our position in relation to the Earth. A transition from the Earth as something external to utilize, to something internal to take care of. The conceptual framework of the project is based on the work of Bruno Latour - *After Lockdown: A Metamorphosis* (2021). In it, Latour offers a new reading of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, finding a parallel between the man who wakes up in lockdown with a greater understanding of the planetary consequence of his action and Kafka's character, who wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a giant insect-like creature.

The first video of the series, featuring a large body massager, was presented in the exhibition *Do You Really Self-Care?* at POSTA Gallery Space, Sofia, in 2025.



*Personal Trench War* | | site-specific installation, landscape intervention | | Kalin Mihov, 2025

In this work, the artist excavates a trench in the ground from which viewers are invited to contemplate the growth of a young acacia forest. The project displaces perspective: the point of view is removed from the upright human position and relocated to ground level.

Excavated in clay soil, the trench allows for a second intervention. A strong fire is lit inside it, and the trench is sealed with metal plates in order to retain high temperatures, fixing the clay walls and transforming the excavation into a durable, almost architectural structure. The fired trench establishes a stable point of observation from which growth unfolds.

The artwork was realised and presented during the fourteenth edition of the International Gabrovtsi ART-NATURE Symposium 2025.

*Tourists go home – Tourists come back* || performance, video documentation || Kalin Mihov, 2024

*Tourists go home – Tourists come back* is a video series by Kalin Mihov, exploring the relationship between locals and tourists, which defines much of the social and cultural connections, movement and employment, housing, accommodation, landscape and nature in many destinations affected by seasonal tourism. A love-hate relationship that reminds the artist of the margarita game - *he loves me, he loves me not - tourists go home, tourists come back*.

In this work, Mihov examines social interactions within a small community, where he sought to replace his status as an artist and integrate into the group of seasonal workers. A neutral figure in this node who stands between locals and tourists and does not associate with either.

This small community had separate places for locals, tourists and seasonal workers to spend their leisure time. Each working day, Mihov would begin by passing through the workers' café, engaging in small talk, and at 8:30, he would proceed to the locations where he worked.

Through simple, repetitive actions, he cleaned part of the seashore in preparation for the new tourist season—mopping the jetty, scrubbing dirt from the rocky seaside, or carving out the perfect seat for tourists to use.

The video works were presented at the Jelsa Art Biennial during the summer of 2025.



*Tourists go home – Tourists come back, still images from video documentation, 2024*

I am the wild strawberry meadow || Body art; photography || Kalin Mihov, 2023

"I am the accessible monument  
(it's pleasant to say "I" once in a hundred years)  
M. Bodakov, 2018

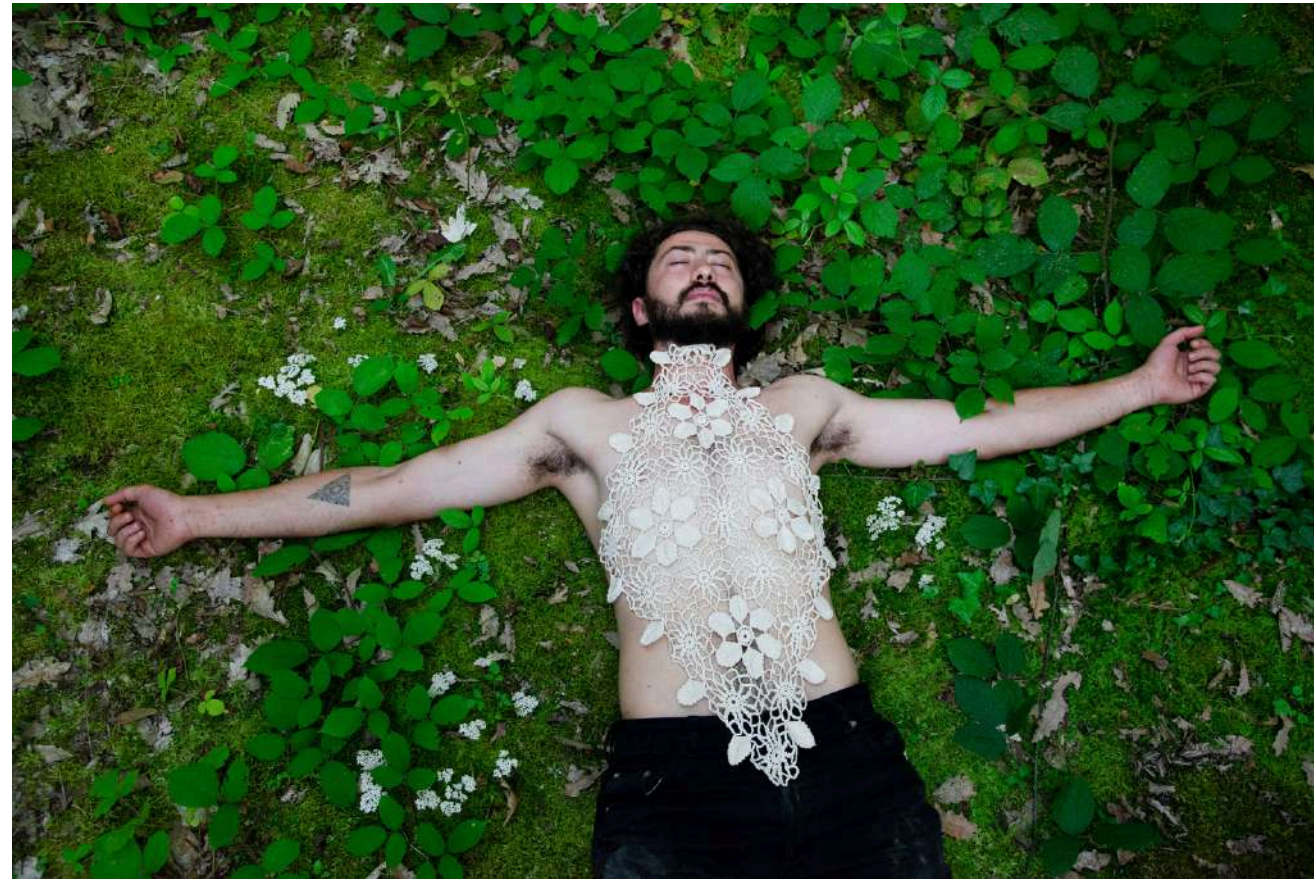
*I am the wild strawberry meadow* examines man's relationship with the passing of time through melancholy, surrendering to time and accepting its scars, reconciliation and the inevitable reckoning. For four hours, the artist subjects himself to direct sunburn, printing knitted lace with a pattern of strawberry leaves on his body. The project deals with the human-time-heritage relationship. The photographs show the beginning and the end of the work process and demonstrate (at least) two imprints – of the accumulated values of generations on the person and of physical time on the person.

The knitted lace is an object associated with the leisure labor of mothers and grandmothers, serving as a celebration of the mark they have left behind. In reality, everyone carries this imprint. In this act, the artist chooses to make their mark visible.

The artwork was presented as part of the group exhibition *Made in Leshten* at Little Bird Place, Sofia, Bulgaria (2023).



*I am the wild strawberry meadow I, 2023*



*I am the wild strawberry meadow II, 2023*



*I am the wild strawberry meadow III, 2023*

*Hiding from the Highway* || Performance and Installation||  
Mediterranean cane, twine. 300 x 80 x 70 cm || Kalin Mihov, 2023

Using his own body as material, Kalin Mihov lowers himself to the edge of the mountain, building a niche in which to rest, meditate and live as a hermit. All this in front of the panorama of the motorway, a post-industrial giant horror that presents itself as a sort of stain in the panorama of the San Jachiddu Ecological Park.

In a world where natural places are increasingly rare and forced to coexist with advancing civilization, the artist decided to show the process by which a hermit is created, building a real hideout from the modern world.

The figure of the hermit is for us like an ideal, something pure and uncontaminated. Through the performance, however, it is possible to see the difficulty that lies in choosing the hermit life: a difficulty that is not only personal or ideal, but also material.

Working the land sometimes means engaging in a battle with it. But it is only through this war that man can find peace, adapting nature to himself and allowing it to grow in the best possible way. For men, this war translated into a desire for domination that ended up destroying nature in an attempt to domesticate and dominate it. The hermit, on the other hand, is first and foremost the one who understands the need for pacification, who inhabits a place to take care of it, elevate it and let it express all its potential.

For this reason the performance is accompanied by a sculpture representing a chrysalis. A natural symbol of transformation, it is placed by analogy next to the working man, to indicate two homologous processes that occur in opposite ways: one through rest and unconsciousness, the other through activity and fatigue. It thus represents the hermit's objective: because in nature everything is transformation, there is nothing but becoming.

Text: Leonardo Sforza



*Working process and installation view*



*working process*

*Riverman* | | sandstone, granite, video on loop | | Kalin Mihov, 2023

*Riverman* – an act in which Kalin Mihov dedicatedly repeats the simple act of hardly rubbing a dense stone into another larger, softer sandstone every day in the span of a week, until it leaves a significant mark on the surface and body of the second, just as running water would do over it in the course of decades. The project evokes a multilayered set of interpretations, both inwards and outwards looking – it represents the humanistic idea that man can challenge the elements (water, earth, wind, fire), that there is no difference between them and that man is an element himself – something Mihov sincerely believes. Or it can also be seen as a metaphor and an opposition to the hectic, fully optimized, and mentally exhausting world of today, questioning what is the significance of one's efforts in everyday activities.

*Riverman* was shown in the 1m<sup>2</sup> Art exhibition project, TaM Veliko Tarnovo, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria (2023), curated by Martina Yordanova.

Pillow work: Day 4 Pillow Fight | | participatory art, installation, happening | | pillows | | Collaboration Marieke Leene & Kalin Mihov, 2024

Marieke Leene and Kalin Mihov organized a five-day event to mark the end of their joint residency at Jelsa Art Hub. The event included a series of happenings, performative acts and temporary installations that engaged the local community.

During the week, they collaborated with middle school students to create an ephemeral land art installation in the city park, they cleaned sections of the city's infrastructure in a day-long performance and they spend one day in carrying load of pillows around key locations of the city to explore in detail the notion of \*pillow work.

On the fourth day, they marked an arena in the city's central square, inviting locals and guests to take part in a therapeutic pillow fight. Open to participants of all ages, the activity served as a playful means of releasing energy and stress. An unexpected ending to the event was a pillow fight between all the cafe owners in the square

\*pillow work is a feeling which manifests itself when the worker is faced with hard work, which, however, remains unreachable to him. It lies between the worker on one side who perceives this work as not hard enough and is dissatisfied with the impossibility of associating himself with genuinely hard work, however he does not regret taking it easy and would not raise the issue. On the other side, the contractor, for various reasons, also does not assign the worker the aforementioned hard work. These reasons could be because the worker (and the coiner of this definition) is perceived as a guest, a tourist or a sensitive person and might actually not be capable of the job mentioned.



*video stills from the documentation of the event*

*Dump yard Inventory* || site-specific installation, happening ||  
Found objects, lime, 12x16 meters, 2022

Kalin Mihov's installation "Dump yard Inventory" systematizes pictorial compositions of various materials, textures and colors, created on the site of an unregulated landfill near the village of Gorno Pestene located in North-west region of Bulgaria - the poorest region in Europe. The individual components and the interrelationships accumulated over time between them are carefully classified into a new, non-place-specific structural unity, essentially nothing is added and nothing is taken away from the place, only the nature and function of the objects is changed.

In the form of a happening, with the support of residents of the village, the landfill is sorted into a table with an area of 192 square meters, in which each cell contains a different type of found waste. Focusing in this way on the chronic problems for peripheral areas in Bulgaria - the lack of good infrastructure and logistics for regular garbage collection, limited or absent access to the possibility of separate collection of waste and its recycling -, "Landfill Inventory" also refers to more central questions for the contemporary man: over-consumption, the human footprint on nature, waste management and climate change.

Bird's-eye documentation summarizes the author's intervention in the space.



*Bird's eye detail*



*Bird's eye detail*



*Bird's eye view of the installation*



*Cell with objects that were considered as "treasures" by participants*



*Working process*



*Detail*



*Working process*



*Moss doppelgangers, moss on casts of found objects, 2023*

## Description of practice

Kalin Mihov (b. 1995, Haskovo, Bulgaria) is an installation and video artist based in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria. His work explores the human imprint on Nature and the Environment, the Sisyphean nature of labor, and it's often created within peripheral and transitional spaces. Working across video art, performance, land art, and site-specific installation, Mihov's practice centers on landscape interventions — simple, gestural, and ephemeral acts in which the artist enters into a dialogue with his surrounding environment.

His work is often connected with local communities and is strongly context dependant. The social aspect of his practice comes from a deep human curiosity about the ways communities form, endure, and dissolve in this era of advanced globalization, marked by the continual shifting of perspectives and identities within a metamodern world.

Since 2022 he is part of Duppini Art Group, organizer of International Gabrovtsi ART-NATURE Symposium, a forum that gives local and international artists the opportunity to create in the fields of land art, site-specific and nature art in the village of Gabrovtsi, Veliko Tarnovo .