**PRESS RELEASE**

**Light installation “Refugees Will Come” by legendary nomad artist Babi Badalov on Delta building**

*International artist who defies wars and situations forcing people to constant mass migrations develops his art in reaction to the brutality of wires and beatings at guarded borders.*

Even though the cultural and art programmes of Rijeka European Capital of Culture have been postponed until further notice due to the ban on public gatherings and other health precautions put in place because of the coronavirus epidemic, not all activities have been shut down, as evidenced by the light installation on the Delta 5 building, which touches upon migration as one of the important topics of the Kitchen of Diversity section of the ECoC programme.

The Kitchen of Diversity prepared several events in April, united by the common theme of *Migrant Day*, and the light installation was designed as a part of this programme.

Migrations that have shaped Rijeka almost continually throughout its past and present are one of the thematic backbones of the Rijeka ECoC programme, along with water and labour. As the number of people who are emigrating from Croatia in pursuit of a better life increases daily, and other people arrive in Rijeka and Croatia driven by the same goal, the Kitchen of Diversity presents the engaged artwork of Babi Badalov, dedicated to migrants and international migrations.

**Light installation by an international artist, designed in cooperation with master neonist Lucian Žigante from Matulji**

Babi Badalov is an Azerbaijan-born artist who lives and works in Paris. He comes from a multi-ethnic family from the border of the then USSR and Iran. In the early 1980s, he moved to Leningrad (St. Petersburg), where he became a leading underground artist. His work was featured in a number of international biennales, as well as in modern art centres in Nice, Utrecht, Paris, St. Petersburg, Prague, Budapest, Moscow, Helsinki, Antwerp...

Babi Badalov is an international author who draws inspiration for his art from the barriers and congruences of Eurasian languages, forced conflicts of cultures and their natural interrelations. It develops in reaction to the brutality of wires and beatings at guarded borders, and also in reaction to the sophistication of oppressive norms. His art defies wars and the interests of capital, which, in manufactured crisis situations, force peoples to constant mass migrations, driven by a single goal, but one that is impossible to attain: to get away from the current situation.

The light installation in Rijeka is a breakthrough in Babi Badalov’s work in terms of production, designed in cooperation with master neonist Lucian Žigante from Matulji.

The installation consists of the sign *Refugees Will Come*, which will, as a form of visual poetry, be lit during the night at the former Ivex Building at the Delta, from where it will be visible at several locations in Rijeka.

The installation will be lit as of Thursday, 19 March 2020.

**A modest and consistent artist, revolutionary, individualist and nomad**

In his masterly work, Badalov is modest and consistent in standing up to power from the position of an individualist revolutionary. He only uses his intellectual and manual work, utilising simple materials to create ornamental messages: sharp language and sign constructions on the walls and floors of international modern art centres.

This great artist discusses the problematic relationship between the international community, repressive state apparatuses and individuals from the perspective of a witness of colossal differences, a change of ideologies, and a crisis of two contrasting economic systems. He is concerned with categories such as borders, nationality and religious denomination, which he observes through the prism of inclusivity and exclusion.

Experimenting with words, Badalov fills canvases with obscure poetry combining languages and images from different cultures. His visual poetry often takes the form of diary entries with a powerful political message. As an artist who belongs to several minorities and a migrant for existential and worldview reasons, Badalov also discusses limitations of language and ability to communicate in his work. He is especially interested in how language can isolate a person from other people, if they speak different languages. The nomadic life of artists (or travellers, migrants or refugees) can make one a prisoner of language, and force them to go through a difficult period of adaptation and cultural integration.

Badalov was born in 1959 in Lerik, Azerbaijan. As the leading underground artist in Leningrad in the 1980s, he cooperated with artists from the TEII collective. His work was featured at a number of international biennales, such as Manifesta 8 in Murcia/Cartagena and modern arts centres in Nice, the CASCO in Utrecht, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the New Museum in St. Petersburg, the MUSAC in Leon, the Tranzit Display in Prag and Budapest, the MMOMA in Moscow, Museum Luigi Pecci in Prato, the CAC in Helsinki, and the Museum of Modern Arts in Antwerp. His work is included in a number of collections worldwide, including Frac île-de-france, FRAC Midi-Pyrénées les Abattoirs de Toulouse, The State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, the MuHKA Museum Contemporary Art in Antwerp and others. Due to his sexual orientation, Badalov was granted asylum in France and lives and works in Paris. However, although he was granted the right to live and work in France in 2011, Badalov continues to express his nomadic spirit through his performances, visual poetry and installations.