

Andrius Arutiunian

Poison Paradise | 06/11/2025 - 10/01/2026

Curated by Sheida Ghomashchi

The world's longest continuously running laboratory experiment, the pitch drop experiment, is a long-term experiment that measures the flow of a piece of pitch over many years. "Pitch", most commonly bitumen. At room temperature, tar pitch flows at a very low rate, taking several years to form a single drop. Bitumen, one of the Earth's oldest sacred substances, seeps upward in black murmurs from beneath the crust.

In ancient Mesopotamia, these outflows were thought to be the breath of underworld spirits, the rumbling voices of Hārūt and Mārūt, celestial beings cast down for teaching humans forbidden arts: magic, intoxication, and fiction. Suspended below the surface, they whisper still, Hārūt and Mārūt's teachings buried within the mineral archive of the Earth. A thick, low, almost geological murmur rises from below, and Andrius Arutiunian descends into the sonorous layer of the earth to echo the voices of subterraneans. Through sculpture and sound, the exhibition studies the mythic, petrochemical, and magical dimensions of this material, reimagining ancient underworld cosmologies within the infrastructures of contemporary Extractivism.

Drawing on Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia*, the exhibition approaches oil and its derivatives as sentient, insurgent matter. Petroleum becomes both archive and oracle. Bitumen here is not inert matter but a viscous speaking body. In this subterranean narrative, bitumen snakes echo the *Kitāb al-Diryāq* (Book of Theriac) Medieval Arabic manuscripts on poisons and antidotes whose illustrated pages sought to visualize the thresholds between toxicity and cure, body and spell. The exhibition's materials thus oscillate between pharmakon and fossil, between sound and sediment, between language and the untranslatable murmur of the Earth.

The result is an entangled cosmology of oil, magic, myth, and matter uniting into a speculative archaeology of our moment. Arutiunian's work invites us to listen differently – to the ground, to its frequencies, to the invisible infrastructures that connect the political and the planetary, the sacred and the toxic. The ones who murmur in the dark are the ones who know.

eastcontemporary

Andrius Arutiunian (b. 1991, Lithuania) Andrius Arutiunian is an Armenian-Lithuanian artist and composer working with hybrid forms of listening, vernacular knowledges and contemporary cosmologies. His research often experiments with temporality, resonance, and alternate methods for world-ordering. Through playful investigation of hypnotic and enigmatic forms, Arutiunian's installations, films, and performances challenge the concepts of musical and political attunement.

Arutiunian graduated in Music Composition at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. In 2022 he participated in the 59th Venice Art Biennale representing Armenia with a solo show entitled *Gharīb*. Other biennial shows include the 14th Shanghai Biennale, the 15th Gwangju Biennale, the 17th Lyon Biennale, the 9th Asian Art Biennale, 2nd Riyadh Biennale and the 15th Baltic Triennial.

Selected shows include Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Centre Pompidou (Paris), M HKA (Antwerp), Stroom (The Hague), Kadist (Paris), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Pinchuk Art Centre (Kyiv), Survival Kit 13 (Riga), FACT (Liverpool), Memphis (Linz), Almaty Museum of Arts (Almaty), MO Museum and Contemporary Art Centre (Vilnius). In 2024 Arutiunian was selected for the Future Generation Art Prize shortlist. He was DAAD artist-in-residence fellow in 2023. Upcoming projects include participation in Performa 2025 in New York and La Biennale Gherdëina 2026. His works are in various collections including Centre Pompidou and KADIST.

Sheida Ghomashchi (b. 1980, Iran) Sheida Ghomashchi is an independent curator in Milan, Italy. She has been part of various projects including: DART Project: Curating the exhibition of the artist Marco Trinca Colonel and editing the book with the same title; co-curator of "Dixit Algorizmi, The Garden of Knowledge," the first national pavilion of Uzbekistan at the Venice Biennale of Art; co-Curator of "Dixit Algorizmi," International exhibition, CCA, Tashkent, Uzbekistan; fellow at Floating University, Forensic Architecture Group, Berlin, Germany; curator of "Archive Alive!", Exhibition of Ramak Fazel, Kandovan, Pejman Foundation, Tehran, Iran; fellow of "Ideas City – Detroit," New Museum of New York, USA, and the fellowship in Urban Research program, BAUHAUS, Dessau, Germany.

"Poison Paradise" is part of the Cultura Lituana in Italia 2025–2026 program. The Cultura Lituana in Italia 2025–2026 program is implemented by the Lithuanian Culture Institute and the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in the Italian Republic.