



**Title:** *The Yard of Fragile Onions*

**Urban Residency “Virtually Present, Physically Invisible”**

**Artist:** *Driant Zeneli*

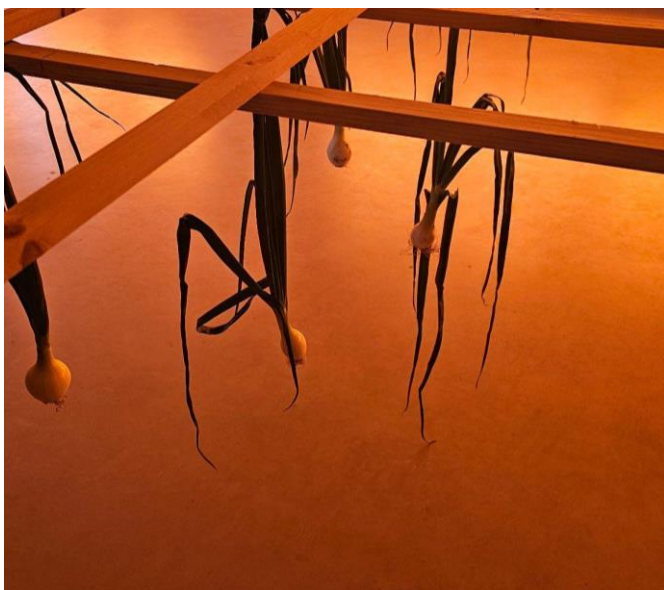
**Participants :** Alesia Fufi, Asterjola Qershori, Bernard Cysa, Ergi Salku, Erinda Çuku, Gesilda Gjergji, Klaudia Bitri, Laurela Mali, Megi Hoxha, Sarah Doka , *Savina Kajo*.

**The residency took place from 5th of February till 4th of July 2024**

***Installation and Exhibition***

***"Oborri i Qepëve të brishta - The Yard of Fragile Onions"***

**BARLETI University and Tirana Architecture Triennale In the framework of New Temporality Platform**



The installation and exhibition "*Oborri i Qepëve të brishta - The Yard of Fragile Onions*" conceived and created by Barleti University students in collaboration with visual art artist Driant Zeneli as part of the Urban Residency organized in the framework of the New Temporality Platform, during Tirana Architecture Triennale! The research and investigation of the Urban Residency responds to the theme of the Tirana Architecture Triennale “Virtually Present, Physically invisible” and starts from the theme of isolation as an emotional state but also often as a condition of physical survival where the relevant circumstances force you to experience it as not only mental but also physical isolation.



Together with the participants, we focused on a very fragile point of Albanian society, namely that of bloodshed where the element of isolation is the most important and invisible part of this tragic phenomenon.

Blood feud is a tradition of blood revenge and compensation according to old Albanian laws, used mainly by families in the highlands. If a family member is killed by someone, this tradition allows for the killing of a family member of that person who may be completely unrelated to the murder. Children are not exempt from this harsh custom. This means that if there is a blood feud, children must be confined to a safe place, unable to attend school freely, which leads to a lack of education and socialization. In addition, unemployment and lack of integration and health care are serious problems for these families.

Some research and a meeting in Shkodër with professor Liljana Luani, it was decisive that all the participants wanted to create a joint installation to dedicate to children and professors Liljana, who in her role outside of customs has given and gives her contribution to this community for more than 20 years voluntarily.



Based on some true stories of blood feud in the area in the north of New Albania , the students have created a new narrative, placing the image in the center of Liljana personified by a Lily flower and also two children who are represented by the Laurel (boy) and Violet (girl) flowers .

The story relates the relationship between two families who lived together in a yard surrounded by onions . The coexistence of children and families was poor. Two children grew up together, transforming their acquaintance into a lifelong and strong love for each other. Everything changed when one day the girl 's family decided to emigrate and sell the house together with the onion yard. From this day, the conflict between the two families started, which turned into a tragedy.



The figure of Liljana is central in all of this story, she is the one who tells us the story from the point of view of a flower that passes from one stage to another. The students have decided to create two rooms which are drawn by the objects that personify the room where each family lives in isolation.

The question always arises: do objects talk to each other in one step when we move away or fall silent ? What do they say, how do they live in isolation? Focusing on the concept of the object as an element and at the same time as a function of the subject, we thought, in this project which is still in development, to deal with the in bloodshed in a completely different form than what has been given to us until today.



**Methodology and Research Approach**

The methodology of the Urban Residency “Virtually Present, Physically Invisible” for The Yard of Fragile Onions unfolded through a multi-layered approach, integrating research, storytelling, and artistic expression. Here is an overview of the core methodology:

### 1. Field Research and Immersion

- Objective: To understand the social and emotional implications of isolation due to blood feuds in Northern Albania.
- Process: The residency participants conducted in-depth research on blood feud traditions and the socio-cultural context, guided by artist Driant Zeneli. They visited Shkodër and met with Professor Liljana Luani, who has extensive experience working with children affected by blood feuds, providing an authentic perspective on the isolation faced by families under these circumstances.

### 2. Narrative Creation and Symbolism

- Objective: To translate real experiences of isolation into a narrative that resonates with wider social implications.
- Process: Using Professor Liljana Luani as a focal figure and symbol of resilience, participants crafted a fictional yet emotionally grounded story, representing Liljana as a Lily flower and two affected children as Laurel and Violet flowers. This symbolization of characters as flowers in an onion-surrounded yard created a delicate, poetic metaphor for the fragility and resilience of those impacted by the blood feud tradition.
- Narrative Techniques: Through collective storytelling, the participants embedded themes of love, tragedy, and resilience, turning these elements into visual and spatial representations within the installation.

### 3. Installation Design and Object Interaction

- Objective: To explore the psychological and spatial isolation experienced by individuals and families.
- Process: Participants developed two distinct yet interconnected rooms that symbolize the isolation of each family. These rooms are designed with objects that embody the domestic spaces where families live under confinement. The objects themselves are seen as ‘silent witnesses’ to the isolation and act as metaphors for the people’s daily lives and struggles.
- Interaction of Objects: This layer of the methodology emphasizes questioning whether the objects interact or remain silent, exploring how isolation changes perceptions and relationships with one’s surroundings.

### 4. Collaborative Creation and Reflection

- Objective: To foster an environment where artistic collaboration leads to a shared understanding and empathy.
- Process: Participants worked collectively, not only with each other but with Zeneli and Professor Luani, to shape the installation. This collaboration served as a platform for discussing the complexities of cultural traditions like the Kanun and blood feuds, blending individual insights into a unified work of art.

### 5. Focus on Education as Activism

- Objective: To emphasize the role of education and awareness in overcoming cycles of isolation and violence.
- Process: Inspired by Professor Luani’s dedication to educating children in these circumstances, participants incorporated educational elements into their narrative and visual storytelling. This approach highlighted education as a transformative force against the backdrop of an isolating **tradition, drawing attention to both individual and collective agency in challenging the blood feud custom.**

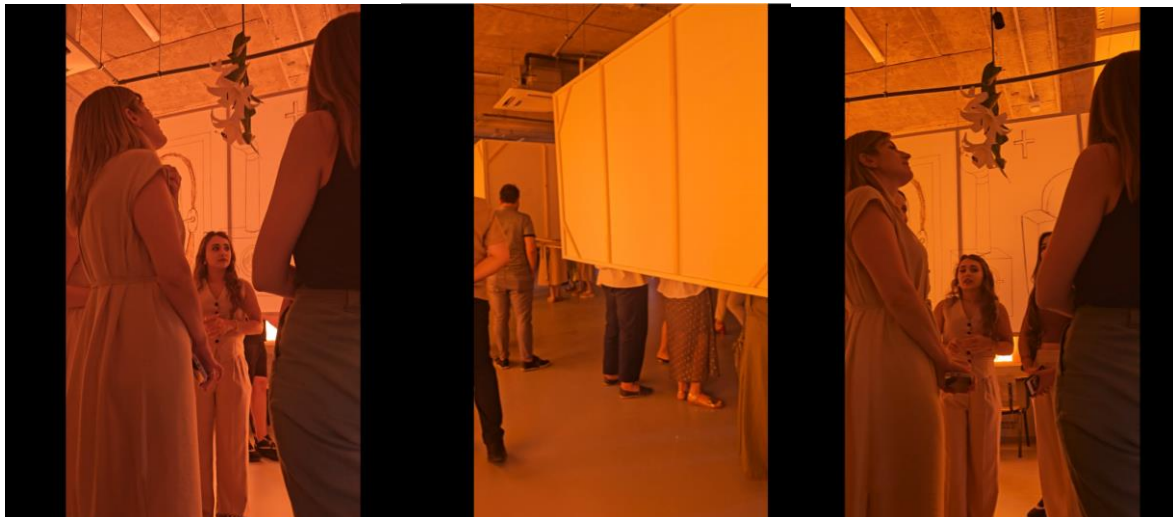
## 6. Platform for Social Awareness and Dialogue

- Objective: To use the installation as a medium to engage the public in dialogue on cultural and social issues.
- Process: By presenting The Yard of Fragile Onions at the Tirana Architecture Triennale, participants aimed to raise awareness about blood feuds and the need for communal and governmental support. The installation invites viewers to reflect on isolation beyond physical boundaries, encouraging societal recognition and empathy for those affected.

This layered methodology allowed the residency to delve into the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of isolation and blood feuds, transforming them into a compelling installation that speaks to both individual experience and collective memory. The creative process exemplifies the intersection of art and social activism, offering a unique narrative that honors Professor Luani's work and the resilience of affected children and families.

### Notes :

Liljana is convinced that the education of these children is the strongest weapon in the fight against this disaster. Since 2005, Liljana has volunteered her time to educate children whose families are involved in blood feuds. In addition to working with children, she also works as an activist with the families of these affected children, especially with their mothers as she strongly believes that mothers are the key factor in fostering the education of their children and teaching tolerance, forgiveness and to make them believe and follow the law.



She began gathering information about locked-out children who did not go to school, and after work went door-to-door volunteering to teach them. The needs of these children have been heard for the first time by the government due to Liljana Luani's persistence and many children have been able to take exams under police escort due to her efforts when they would not have been able to do so otherwise. .

She has been honored with several awards and certificates for her work with children and families trapped by the blood feud phenomenon. In 2012 he was honored with the Universal Peace Ambassador Award and in 2013 with the Golden Rose Award in the field of Education. Later, in 2017, she was honored with the Woman of Courage Award, presented by Ambassador Donald Lu on behalf of the US Secretary of State. In October 2018, she was awarded the National Teacher of the Year award in Albania. Later in the same year (December 2018), she was selected as one of the 50 best teachers in the world by the organizers of the world-renowned Global Teacher Award.

The Kanun is a traditional customary law of Northern Albania. Divided into twelve books, it was originally oral and was published only in the 20th century, when the Ottoman Empire left Albania. Its origins may date back to the Middle Ages or even the Bronze Age. Laws evolved over time as a way to bring order to these lands. It governs



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all aspects of mountain life, economic organization of the home, hospitality, brotherhood, extended families, boundaries, work, marriage, land, reciprocity, etc.

The personal honor of the faith is of primary importance in the code as the cornerstone of personal and social behavior. The canon applies to both Christian and Muslim Albanians. Some of the more controversial rules of the Canon specify how killing should be handled, which in the past (and sometimes even now) would lead to blood feuds that last forever. In situations of murder, the law provides for the principle of life for life where the family members of the victim are obliged to seek blood revenge (blood revenge).

These rules reappeared in the 1990s in Northern Albania, as people who had no faith in the power of government had done. There are organizations that try to mediate between feuding families and try to get them to "pardon the blood", but often the only result is that the old men stay in their homes, which are considered sacred, i.e. a refuge or safe from the Canon. Until forgiveness is granted.