VIULife came into being thanks to the European project Radar, of which Venice International University was the leader.
Radar formed a human lab of 29 artists to examine the concept of a European city and the common points existing among diverse cultures and different life-styles in the places involved, also attempting to overcome the gaps that could be perceived between the various social categories.

The Radar experience made us understand two fundamental things: that creative processes, even when they are experimental and not readily understandable, if they are open and not restricted to elitist circles, may become a stimulus for re-thinking about ourselves and relationships with others and with the spaces we act in; that even people who are outside the art system are positively affected by similar procedures.

VIULife draws inspiration from these concepts and is an extra-curricular activity on creativity for the students at Venice International University. The first installment of VIULife was held at the end of 2005, on the occasion of the University's tenth birthday.

VIU invited the Bulgarian artists Boris Missirkov and Georgi Bogdanov, who had already created the large photographic billboards which inaugurated and closed Radar, for the purpose of their creating a series of photographic portraits of all those operating inside the institution.
The moments of ideation and organization prior to the snaps were inclusive operations, in the sense that the subjects portrayed could participate by making proposals and suggestions, besides deciding how to be shown. In this way, students, professors, researchers and staff – people who are even apparently far removed from artistic creativity – were able to follow the process and the many steps that transform an idea into a finished work of art from the inside.
The project also generated team-building work, favoring exchanges of ideas and a more profound acquaintance of the people who work inside the University, in all their so very diverse roles.
The final result: twelve large photographic billboards, printed on canvas, that show the university spaces inside the buildings on the island of San Servolo, relating study experience, research, teaching and daily work activities carried out at VIU in an ironic and, at the same time, accurate way.

It is an experience that – as often happens when objectives are pursued with passion – however demanding or difficult it may be, almost becomes a game.
And the creative process induced by the two artists was also a game – and much more than that at the same time: an open action that influenced all of those who were affected by it. Indeed: beyond the twelve images, which testify the internationality of the students at VIU and the splendor of the locations on the island, reflected almost as if through the filter of Alice's mirror; beyond the authors' irony and levity in narrating a fervid cultural melting pot in constant development; beyond the happy union between perspective innovation (obtained by digital monitoring) and a sense of beauty that is not so usual in contemporary art; yet, what really persists from this is the experience of creativity the artists transmitted to all those who chose to share it with them. We realized that this experience in many ways profoundly changed our lives inside VIU.

The vernissage of the project was planned as a moment of inauguration and inclusion. The anniversary celebration held for the University's tenth birthday therefore involved students of various nationalities, who prepared and presented typical food and drinks from their countries of origin; visual artists who, as veejays, filmed and edited the images of the evening; Italian and international deejays and musicians who added sound to the event; light designers, who re-contextualized the island's internal and external locations. In this event, Venice International University opened itself further to the city of Venice and to its residents and students, finally registering – although being on an island – the presence of over a thousand people.

VIULife: billboards was naturally only the first step in the dialogue between VIU and its students with artists, performers, designers, musicians and creative professionals. We hope this dialogue will be useful and lead to new discoveries, collaboration and a continuous assimilation of ideas, incentives and innovation.

Lorenzo Cinotti
Curator