

TERRAPOLIS

27 MAY - 26 JULY 2015

THE FRENCH SCHOOL AT ATHENS

Whitechapel Gallery

NEON

TERRAPOLIS

Caroline Achaintre

Allora & Calzadilla

Francis Alÿs

Athanasios Argianas

Joseph Beuys

Huma Bhabha

Reg Butler

Lynn Chadwick

Marcus Coates

William Cobbing

Enrico David

Charlotte Dumas

Angus Fairhurst

Studio Ghibli

Tue Greenfort

Asta Gröting

Lucy Gunning

Henrik Håkansson

Anthea Hamilton & Nicholas Byrne

Joan Jonas

Eleni Kamma

Markus Karstieß

Dionisis Kavallieratos

Yayoi Kusama

Oliver Laric

Richard Long

Sarah Lucas

Ruth Maclennan

Chris Marker

Marlie Mul

Katja Novitskova

Anatoly Osmolovsky

Aliki Palaska

Norbert Prangenberg

Ugo Rondinone

Kostas Sahpazis

Peter Wächtler

TERRAPOLIS

27 MAY - 26 JULY 2015

A lush, secluded garden in Athens provides the backdrop for works of art that reconnect the human with the animal. Echoing the satyrs, sphinxes and centaurs of Greek statuary, contemporary sculptures, installations and films draw on myth, drama and the animal kingdom to suggest a 'bioethics' for the 21st century.

TERRAPOLIS, a term proposed by science philosopher Donna Haraway, combines the Latin 'terra' for earth, with the Greek 'polis' for city or citizens. This show asks 'should we regard animals as citizens'? How do processes of nature, such as metamorphoses relate to the creation of art? How do mythic narratives resonate in contemporary society? And can we recalibrate our relationship with other species? The arcadian setting of a school dedicated to archaeological research provides the stage for works of art that also connect with the narratives and images of antiquity.

Figurative works in mediums ranging from bronze to ceramic by mid century and contemporary artists explore myth, drama, metamorphoses and bioethics.

Some artists have created totemic gods and monsters that symbolize animistic power, giving contemporary form to mythology. Ancient Greek tragedies were counterpoised with 'Satyr Plays', tragi-comic burlesques set in woodland where players wearing masks and animal skins, would mock authority and engage in licentious play. Masks

and animal avatars reveal human drives released from social convention. Dance, music and performance are central to many of the works in the exhibition and are further linked with activism.

The biological process of metamorphosis is mirrored by sculptural processes such as ceramics and bronze casting. The concept of metamorphosis in mythology also connects with eroticism and transformation through desire and passion.

Our epoch has been termed the 'Anthropocene', an era when human activities dominate and threaten the Earth's ecosystems and extinguish other species. Many of the artists in the exhibition counterpoint the fast moving and often destructive technologies of human civilization with the slow time of the natural world. They propose contemporary artefacts as historical relics, imagining the garden in a post-human era where we ourselves are fossils. Artists also represent species that are endangered or proliferating through a lack of predators. They show ecosystems that are imbalanced and images of a natural world that are becoming increasingly virtual.

Co-curated by Iwona Blazwick with Poppy Bowers, Elina Kountouri and NEON Organization for Culture and Development, this is the second in a three part series of outdoor art projects that bring significant artists from Greece and around the world into the public realm.

Caroline Achaintre

Born 1969 in Toulouse, France
Lives and works in London

Two stark geometric masks are poised against green foliage, like players on a stage. Known for her wall-mounted reliefs of ceramic or yarn, Achaintre's hand crafted works hover between abstraction and figuration. Here, the titles 'Pecker' and 'S.N.A.K.E.' refer to the profile of the metal stands being respectively bird like or serpentine – *S.N.A.K.E.* is also inspired by an early mobile phone game using a reptilian graphic. The mask has been used by humans in warfare, hunting and play-acting. Whether fiercely animal like, or comically exaggerated, masks hide the wearer's identity. Today we may see them as metaphors for the façade we present to society. The bold, angular style and monochrome design of these sculptures also links Achaintre to early modern art. Artists such as Brancusi, Matisse, Picasso or Kirchner were inspired by African and Oceanic tribal masks; paradoxically they embraced them as a truer, more vital form of figuration than conventional salon painting. Achaintre's standing masks encapsulate art history, drama and psychology.

Pecker, 2015
Ceramic, metal
194 x 85 x 41 cm
Courtesy the artist and Arcade Fine Arts

S.N.A.K.E., 2015
Ceramic, metal
210 x 100 x 27.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Arcade Fine Arts

Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla

Born 1974 in Philadelphia, USA and born 1971 in Havana, Cuba
Live and work in Puerto Rico

Working together since meeting as students in Florence in the 1990s, Allora and Calzadilla create interdisciplinary works that comprise filmed actions or sculptural environments also involving sound and music. Underlining the playful performativity of their work is an engagement with social issues inspired by the artists' own experience of US foreign policy in Latin America. The *Hope Hippo* was first presented in the 51st Venice Biennale. A slumbering hippopotamus created from mud has emerged from the earth. Sitting on the back of this sleepy Leviathan is a performer reading the daily newspaper. Every time they come across a story of social injustice they blow a whistle. Like a football referee or a traffic cop, the reader uses the whistle as a warning, interrupting the garden's tranquility in the hope that we will be startled into action. The hippo can also be read as a symbol of nature itself - if awoken by the whistle, it could rise and effortlessly shake off its puny human rider.

Hope Hippo, 2005/2015
Polystyrene, resin, mud, plaster, sand, performer, newspapers, whistle
487.7 x 182.9 x 152.4 cm
Courtesy the artists

Francis Alÿs

Born 1959 in Antwerp, Belgium
Lives and works in Mexico City

Commissioned by the public art agency Artangel in 2004, Francis Alÿs created seven walks for London. One was undertaken by a fox, released overnight into the National Portrait Gallery. Its journey through the Tudor and Georgian rooms is captured by the museum's security cameras and witnessed by the portraits of aristocrats, generals and merchants that hang there. The title *Nightwatch* describes the fox's nocturnal adventure while also referring to Rembrandt's 1642 painting of a group of militia. Using an august national institution in a city with the world's densest proliferation of CCTV cameras, Alÿs exposes the mechanisms of our surveillance society. A wild creature that forages in cities and which, in traditional story-telling, represents the cunning trickster, is given freedom to trespass. Following the fox from one eerily empty room to the next, we are surprised to discover that art continues its hallowed existence without us. In a poignant epilogue, the fox curls asleep, oblivious to the cameras and our surveillance.

Nightwatch, 2004
Single channel video
17min 30sec
Courtesy David Zwirner, New York/London

Athanasios Argianas

Born 1976 in Athens, Greece
Lives and works in London, UK

Music as structure and language are linked with sculpture in three sonic and tactile works sited around the garden. They explore the sound of natural and cultural objects. Cast in metal they reverberate, sounding the tone and pattern inherent in their shape. A pebble cast in copper becomes a bell, oyster shells cast in bronze become cymbals, sun hats are transformed into gongs. Hollow silver casts of bones are strung together to chime. Some of the objects are inscribed with poetic texts or instructions. The texts inscribed on some ceramic discs or finger-cymbals, (much like *ostraka*, ancient Greek voting discs) are used as a score by performers animating the installation. They use the phonetic rhythm of each sentence as a musical phrase, 'sounding it' by tapping the objects. Previous works incorporate casts of animals that make percussive sounds, along with rudimentary instruments such as wind chimes. Recalling the myth of Orpheus, Argianas invites us to release the music of inanimate matter to break down boundaries between the body, nature and culture.

Silence Breakers Silence Shapers (Abberations on Percussion) series, no 9, 2015
electroformed copper, electroformed brass-plated copper, mussel shells, cast bronze, ceramic tiles, fired ceramic, laser-etched finger cymbals, 95 x 400 x 100 cm

Silence Breakers Silence Shapers (Abberations on Percussion) series, no 10, 2015
blackened steel, electroformed copper, electroformed silver-plated copper, electroformed brass-plated copper, chimes, cowbell, sheet copper, fixings. laser-etched finger cymbals, 120 x 170 x 140 cm

Silence Breakers Silence Shapers (Abberations on Percussion) series, no 11, 2015
blackened steel, electroformed copper, electroformed silver-plated copper, electroformed brass-plated copper, chimes, cowbell, sheet copper, fixings. laser-etched finger cymbals, 120 x 170 x 140 cm

Silence Breakers Silence Shapers (Abberations on Percussion) series, no 12, 2015
blackened steel, electroformed copper, electroformed silver-plated copper, electroformed brass-plated copper, chimes, cowbell, sheet copper, fixings. laser-etched finger cymbals, 120 x 170 x 140 cm

Reading Machine 4 (Stones) for Christian Wolff, 2015
brass, gravel, fired ceramic, laser-etched finger cymbals, 95 x 700 x 200 cm

Commissioned by NEON Organization for Culture and Development D.Daskalopoulos

Performers: Kostas Vazakas, Konstantinos Botinis

Joseph Beuys

Born 1921 in Krefeld, Germany
Lived and worked in Düsseldorf, Germany
Died 1986 in Düsseldorf, Germany

In May 1974 Joseph Beuys accepted an invitation to make an exhibition in New York; but in protest against the Vietnam War, only on condition that he would not set foot on American soil. Consequently on arrival from Germany he was carried from his plane on a stretcher and taken to the gallery by ambulance. This echoes his famous (unverified) account of his rescue by nomadic Tartars when his German fighter plane was shot down over Crimea during World War II. The nomads saved him from freezing to death by wrapping him in felt and fat, materials he subsequently used in his performances and sculptures. The ambulance took him to the René Block gallery, where over three days he was caged in a room with a live coyote for a total of eight hours. This film documents his peaceful co-existence with a potentially dangerous wild animal. Beuys wraps felt around himself to create a tee-pee like structure echoing nomadic habitats. For him the coyote, native to North America, also symbolised Native American peoples and their displacement and suffering at the hands of European colonisers.

I LIKE AMERICA AND AMERICA LIKES ME, 1974

One week's performance on the occasion of the opening of the René Block Gallery New York May 1974,
Film by Helmut Wietz 16mm, black-white, 37 min.
Production/Copyright 1981 by Galerie René Block und Helmut Wietz.
Courtesy Galerie René Block und Helmut Wietz. Copyright DACS 2015

Huma Bhabha

Born 1962 in Karachi, Pakistan
Lives and works in Poughkeepsie, USA

Bhabha is perhaps best known for her 'anthropo-theriomorphic' – or human and beast like sculptures. Her figures are made from materials salvaged from an industrial town in the Hudson River Valley in the north east of the USA. Despite being constructed from the detritus of manufacturing, *The Orientalist's* upright stature and throne-like seat recalls statues of monarchs such as the Gudea rulers (*ensi*) of Mesopotamia. The exaggerated hands and feet also denote the symbolism of religious statuary, suggesting a deity with both pre-modern and post-apocalyptic attributes. The figure was assembled from humble Styrofoam, wood, chicken wire and found objects and cast in bronze. Bhabha's figure is human and animalistic, authoritative and humorous. The title recalls Palestinian Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, where he defined Europe's symbolic relation with its Eastern colonies, characterized in terms of a primitive, exotic and erotic 'Other'. Created from the ruins of the west's industrial society, Bhabha's figure encapsulates both colonizer and colonized 'Other', ravaged but still potent.

The Orientalist, 2007

Bronze
180 x 84.5 x 112 cm
Courtesy the artist, Stephen Friedman Gallery (London) and Salon 94 (New York)

Reg Butler

Born 1913 in Buntingford, UK
Lived and worked in London, UK
Died 1981 in Berkhamsted, UK

A noted public sculptor of the post war period, Reg Butler's *The Oracle* was commissioned for the foyer of a new college that was to give further education to under privileged British youth. *The Oracle* fuses modernist linear elements of lead and a rounded bronze form that recalls both clay 'amphora', vessels used by Bronze, Iron Age and Greco-Roman societies; and the tail of a dolphin that combines with the metal 'legs' to give an animistic vitality. Butler's career as a sculptor began in 1947 as an assistant to British artist, Henry Moore. Although influenced by Moore, rather than carving, he worked with metal casting. The title demonstrates his interest in Greek mythology – here the oracle predicts a new future shaped by learning. Butler drew inspiration from pre-history and modernity, including 'the earliest flying creatures, the pterodactyls, and the biomorphic aspect of the latest jet aircraft'. Butler believed that his interplay of forms expressed modern society.

The Oracle, 1952/3
Lead and bronze
182 x 57 x 83.8 cm
Courtesy the British Council Collection

Lynn Chadwick

Born 1914 in London, UK
Lived and worked in Gloucestershire, UK
Died 2003 in Gloucestershire, UK

The theme of dancing figures was a pre-occupation throughout Lynn Chadwick's career. Having lived through two World Wars, his work came to prominence in the Cold War era. Part of a movement in sculpture termed 'the geometry of fear' he created an infamous maquette to memorialize 'the unknown political prisoner', reflecting a widespread existential anxiety about post war society. Chadwick sought to connect with universal values and timeless rituals such as dance. His figures are often joined together, giving a formal balance to the sculpture but also an erotic charge to his dancers. In the 1960s, his figures became an increasing experiment of the interaction of shape and mass, resulting in an emblematic appearance that possesses a combination of intensity and intimacy. He once commented: 'The theme of two contrasting figures... balancing figures is more or less what I have always done, to make a sort of tension between two things'.

Dancers, 1967
Bronze
183 x 70 x 53 cm
Courtesy The Estate of Lynn Chadwick and Blain|Southern

Marcus Coates

Born 1968 in London, UK
Lives and works in London, UK

A group of residents are to be moved from a tower block in the UK city of Liverpool slated for demolition. Their high rise is poorly maintained and alienating but it has been home for many people and they mourn its destruction. Moved by their fate, the artist Marcus Coates invited them to attend a shamanic performance staged in the modest living room of one of the flats. He dons a deer hide and yelping, cawing and emitting guttural sounds, he invites his amused and bewildered audience to join him on a journey to 'the lower world' to seek redemption from animal spirits. Coates takes on the role of the shaman, an intermediary between the human and animal worlds, who is consulted by traditional communities to solve problems such as illness, or the depletion of resources. By relaying his encounters with birds and other animals, Coates helps the group to work through their own issues.

Journey to the Lower World, 2004
28 min 13 sec
Digital video
Courtesy the artist and Kate MacGarry, London

William Cobbing

Born 1974 in London, UK
Lives and works in London, UK

A large irregular sphere of clay is suspended from a rope. Like a living rock it is being shaped by single hands that are busy squeezing and moulding its surface. William Cobbing creates surreal figures and performances often using clay to give material form to psychic states. A series of cast metal figurative reliefs he installed at the Freud Museum in London titled *Gradiva* in 2008 also revealed his interest in how mythological stories have offered a vocabulary for describing the unconscious. This work reminds us of the myth of Prometheus who was said to have created human beings out of clay. These human hands have not only emerged from the clay, illustrating the process of metamorphoses – they are also remodelling it in a circular journey from birth to creativity.

Remake Remodel 4, 2014
Oil clay
87 x 81 x 90 cm
Courtesy the artist

Enrico David

Born 1966 in Ancona, Italy

Lives and works in London, UK and Berlin, Germany

Working in textiles, sculpture, painting and ceramics, Enrico David's multi-disciplinary work is characterised by his interest in the fictive and surreal potential of theatre, dance, puppetry and toys. *Study for a Body as a Dog's Training Camp* conjoins the human and the animal. A black rubber head looks like a tribal totem its single bronze eye adding a mystical quality. It rises up from a snake-like body that twists and winds in coils of black rubber. David's work often starts as a drawing and here a surreal doodle is made flesh, its serpentine hoops scaled up from rubber rings thrown for dogs to retrieve. The body of this strange creature, which can expand and contract according to where it is positioned, is proposed as part toy, part an obstacle course, not for the benefit of the human visitor but for our loyal, domesticated companion, the dog.

Study for a Body as a Dog's Training Camp, 2011

Urethane rubber, bronze

Dimensions variable

Courtesy Michael Werner Gallery, New York and London

Charlotte Dumas

Born 1977 in Vlaardingen, Netherlands

Lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands and New York, USA

Dutch filmmaker and photographer Charlotte Dumas portrays animals whose daily existence is interwoven with human society. *Anima* is a series of intimate portraits of the horses used in funeral processions at the Arlington national cemetery in Virginia, USA. These working horses continue a long-standing tradition of carrying the caskets of members of the armed services to be buried with full honors. Rather than capture the horses performing their ceremonial duties, Dumas chose to film them alone and at rest in their stable at night. Inspired by 17th century Dutch portraiture, she uses the technique of chiaroscuro to draw our attention to their muscular, beating bodies, heightened by the stillness of their surroundings. *Anima* is Latin for soul, and in these stripped-back portraits Dumas prompts us to consider the emotional landscapes that may connect human and animal.

Anima, 2012

HD video

14 min 33 sec

Courtesy the artist

Angus Fairhurst

Born 1966 in Pembury, Kent
Lived and worked in London, UK
Died 2008 in Bridge of Orchy, Scotland

A bronze gorilla gazing into an oval mirror is just one of a number of variously posed gorilla sculptures created by Fairhurst. For him gorillas are metaphors for the human consciousness, as he regards them as man's 'animal nature'. He also made performances dressed as a gorilla, a tragi-comic avatar for the artist. Each of his gorilla sculptures is accompanied by different objects, ranging from mirrors to bananas. Although animals may be associated with jokes and absurdity these are not comical figures but rather existential ones. The titles of his works hint at philosophical, cultural and mythological references often dealing with issues of consciousness, will and subjectivity. In *The Birth of Consistency*, the gorilla gazes into a mirror – its position on the ground fringed by long grasses is like the reflective surface of the lake that so entranced Narcissus that she fell to her death. The title hints at our inescapable tendency to self-absorption.

The Birth of Consistency, 2004
Bronze, polished stainless steel
91.4 x 300 x 152 cm
Courtesy the Estate of Angus Fairhurst and Sadie Coles HQ, London

Studio Ghibli

Founded 1985 in Tokyo, Japan

Beautifully drawn with a hallucinatory spectrum of colours, *Spirited Away* is an animation directed by acclaimed film-maker Hayao Miyazaki. Ten-year-old Chirio Ogino and her parents get lost moving to a new house and enter a spirit world. While her parents are transformed into pigs, Chirio is captured to work in a Bath House which is both magical and dystopic. Here, she enters a cohort of fantastical creatures who cater for an extraordinary range of spirit guests. One of their filthiest clients is a polluted river. Combining hand drawn with digitised images *Spirited Away* addresses the loss of tradition and the impact of modernity. On her 'Alice in Wonderland' like adventures Chirio undertakes a rite of passage from the innocence of childhood to the fears, passions and acts of courage necessitated by adulthood. Throughout this epic film, produced by Japan's most pioneering animation studio, animals, spirits and humans interchange, stressing a holistic relation between the natural and the supernatural.

Spirited Away, 2001
Colour animation
125 min
Courtesy Studio Ghibli

Tue Greenfort

Born 1973 in Holbæk, Denmark
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

The diaphanous translucence of the jellyfish finds perfect expression in glass. These elegant sculptures of the *Pelagia Noctiluca* were commissioned by Tue Greenfort from the glass workshops of Murano, Venice. Despite their delicate pink and mauve hues and floating, ribbon-like tentacles, these creatures are dangerously toxic, hence being named after the sea monster Medusa whose gaze could turn men to stone. Greenfort makes site specific works about our impact on the environment. In 2007 at the Sharjah Art Museum he turned down the air conditioning and used the cost savings to acquire and protect part of the Ecuadorian rain forest. With rising sea temperatures and the extinction of predators through overfishing, the poisonous 'mauve stinger' is proliferating in the Mediterranean. While its beauty belies the sting of the jellyfish, the delicacy of the glass also symbolises the fragility of the whole ecosystem.

MEDUSA, 2007/14
Murano glass
51 x 42 x 40 cm

MEDUSA, 2007/14
Murano glass
37 x 42 x 40 cm

MEDUSA, 2007/14
Murano glass
59 x 42 x 40 cm

Courtesy the artist and König Galerie

Asta Gröting

Born 1961 in Herford, Germany
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

This circle of dancers is in fact a round of jackets stitched together with their sleeves performing as simian arms. They are made of lambskins that have travelled from the hillsides of Anatolia to the artist's studio in Berlin. Gröting creates sculptures cast from animal digestive tracts, car chassis and human figures; she has also worked with puppetry and ventriloquism to explore commonalities between biological, technological and social systems. Playing on the anthropomorphic qualities of clothing, Gröting also uses it to reveal globalised systems of labour and trade. Skinned and preserved by female tanners in rural Turkey, these hides were shipped to Istanbul, stitched into jackets, bartered for raw materials in Eastern Europe but eventually abandoned in Germany. This labour intensive artisanal product cannot compete with synthetic materials. The chain of production and global capitalist dissemination is symbolised in a circle of monkeys chasing each other's tails in a Sisyphian dance.

Monkey Dance 6, 2015
Leather, iron
60 x 200 x 200 cm
Courtesy the artist and Cartier | Gebauer

Lucy Gunning

Born 1964 in Newcastle, UK
Lives and works in London, UK

One night Gunning heard a horse neighing in the urban housing estate where she lived. On investigation she concluded that the sound was made by a human and advertised for the impressionist to come forward to be filmed. Although she never found her – it emerged that this is a female activity – so many other volunteers came forward Gunning was unable to accommodate them all. This film features five women of different ages and backgrounds who have, since childhood, pretended to be a horse. Some stand still to emit neighs and whinnies. Others canter, shaking their heads while blowing and snorting. Gunning film works explore how we create meaning through physical gestures - ranging from group exercises to breathing techniques for stammerers - and the psychic drives they manifest. Critic Kate Bush comments on the horse impressionists 'their utter seriousness, their absolute commitment to becoming the object of their desire, points to an enviably self-sufficient passion'¹.

¹ Kate Bush, 'Animal Instinct', *Frieze*, Issue 21, March-April 1995, Frieze Online Archive

The Horse Impressionists, 1994
Video
7 min 30 sec
Courtesy the artist and Matt's Gallery, London

Henrik Håkansson

Born 1968 in Helsingborg, Sweden
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany and Falkenberg, Sweden

A swarm of starlings appears to have invaded the auditorium. Suspended from a mobile they wheel through the air, uncharacteristically silent. The unnerving sensation of being with birds in a confined space combines with wonder at their uncanny proximity and sadness that they are in fact dead. Håkansson has commented, 'My whole approach depends on a general fascination with the search and documentation of basic biological structures'. His work draws on the close observation of different species and his use of technology to connect human with animal, such as his ambient music environment for frogs or the botanical transformation of a museum roof into a habitat for urban flora and fauna. Starlings swarm with an innate choreography creating extraordinary columns, folds and planes on their migratory flights. Håkansson freezes one such vertical structure for us to admire and to mourn. Populations of starlings, once a familiar sight over the rooftops of European cities are regarded as invasive, are now in decline.

Untitled Swarm (Sturnus Vulgaris) #3, 2011
Starlings, iron, nylon thread
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist and Galleria Franco Noero, Turin

Anthea Hamilton & Nicholas Byrne

Born 1978 in London, UK and born 1979 in Oldham, UK
Live and work in London, UK

In a series of large-scale inflatable sculptures originally installed in the disused Poplar Baths in East London during the 2012 Olympics, Hamilton, a sculptor and film maker and Byrne, a painter, mix pop culture and fine art icons. Collectively they reference the inflatable art and architecture of the 1960s, corporate advertising and a playful sexuality. The 1990s British pop rap singer Betty Boo, wearing a skintight, leopard-print unitard, towers over the peaceful setting of the garden of the French School at Athens. In contemporary culture female sexuality is associated with images of cats and the tactility of fur. Nearby *Torso of a Young Man*, based on Brancusi's sculpture, originally carved in maple and later translated into bronze relates the male torso to a tree trunk. These elisions of human and natural attributes echo Greek myths where gods take on animal or botanical forms to seduce or punish humans.

Betty Boo, 2012
PVC, Helium
650 x 225 x 150 cm approx.

Torso of a Young Man, 2012
PVC, Helium
192 x 298 x 130 cm approx.

Courtesy Anthea Hamilton and Nicholas Byrne

Joan Jonas

Born 1936 in New York City, USA
Lives and works in New York, USA and Nova Scotia, Canada

Often set in the pristine landscapes of the far north, Jonas' pioneering fusion of film, performance and installation draws on ancient songs and rituals to propose a holistic relation between humanity and nature. Her dramatis personae are figures often sidelined by mainstream culture – women, children and animals. In *Melancholia*, 2004/5 a woman is seated at the edge of a primordial glacier that is melting as a consequence of global warming. The title and the woman's posture echoes Albrecht Dürer's 15th century engraving of a woman contemplating a skull. A soundtrack of abstract, disconnected words accentuates a sense of hopelessness. However, the desolate physical and mental landscape is alleviated by gestural play with a dog, the symbolic incarnation of loyalty to humans. Perhaps this is also a critique – we love our pets but neglect the wider environment.

Melancholia, 2004/5
Colour video
5min 9sec
Courtesy the artist and Wilkinson Gallery, London

Eleni Kamma

Born 1973 in Athens, Greece

Lives and works in Brussels, Belgium and Maastricht, Netherlands

In the 16th century European colonisers and explorers would bring their wealthy patrons shells, seeds and animal horns from foreign lands to be encased in precious settings by craftsmen and displayed as exotic trophies in *Wunderkammer* or 'cabinets of curiosity'. Eleni Kamma creates a modern *Wunderkammer* for the French School at Athens, itself a centre for the study of archaeological remnants. Four wooden cabinets contain botanical specimens, tools, vessels and other found objects that are both banal and magical. Each contemporary artefact or organic fragment embodies a cosmos where the natural and the human overlap. Kamma also reveals unexpected connections between objects triggering narratives. Kamma is interested in how objects carry cultural and anthropological connotations and the way they are assimilated by contemporary society. She employs taxonomy to address complex issues, unfolding associations that connect nature, collective history and cultural identity. Her display of objects also foregrounds the tensions between organic cycles and the human pursuit for utility.

Enlever et Entretenir V, 2015

Four vitrines, books, natural and cultural objects, tools.

Dimensions variable

Commissioned by NEON Organization for Culture and Development D.Daskalopoulos

Courtesy the artist and Nadja Vilenne gallery

Markus Karstieß

Born 1971 in Rheinland, Germany

Lives and works in Solingen and Dusseldorf, Germany

Working primarily with ceramics, German sculptor Markus Karstieß creates totem like structures whose iridescent glazes and symmetrical outlines recall both the patterns of insects and the 'grotesque' style used in Renaissance architecture. Karstieß presses and shapes clay by hand – his fingerprints are clearly visible showing the importance of the artist's subjectivity. The works are then fired using a traditional Japanese technique and attached to steel poles. Capturing a transition between formed and unformed shapes, titles such as *Hieronymous-Leaf-Essence (Fetish)* – suggest a relation with the surreal medieval scenes of Hieronymous Bosch, anthropology and psychoanalysis – the fetish is a venerated object, that in Freudian terms stands in for erotic desire. The works have a demonic, Rorschach-like quality, displaying both animal and human characteristics. Also important to Karstieß is the interaction between each *Fetish* and its context. Located among the glades of trees and agapanthus fronds, they appear here like spirit entities.

Hieronymous-Leaf-Essence (Fetish), 2013

Ceramic, lustreware glaze, steel

199.5 x 46 x 46 cm

Isenheim-Ray-Essence (Fetish), 2015

Ceramic, lustreware glaze, steel

108 x 46 x 46 cm

Copper-Nothingness-Essence (Fetish), 2015

Ceramic, lustreware glaze, steel

108 x 46 x 46 cm

Satyr-Sheep-Essence (Fetish), 2015

Ceramic, lustreware glaze, steel

108 x 46 x 46 cm

Zardoz-Breath-Essence (Fetish), 2015

Ceramic, lustreware glaze, steel

108 x 46 x 46 cm

Courtesy Ancient & Modern, London and VAN HORN, Düsseldorf

Dionisis Kavallieratos

Born 1979 born in Athens, Greece
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Inspired by a colossal 12 metre high statue of Constantine in Rome, Kavallieratos has created pedestals for what initially appear to be dark, obscure fragments. On closer examination we can discern a head, a hand and a foot along with a ruined arch. Dramatically deformed there is a tragi-comic dimension to their appearance. The monstrous limbs were obviously once part of a larger entity; remnants of a hubristic past, a Leviathan that is doomed to lie in pieces. Glimpsed through the leaves of a shaded grove, this work is reminiscent of Roman and Greek statuary and architecture. Typically, however, archaeological ruins are bleached white by the sun. These remnants of a lost civilisation are painted black adding to the sense of doom. Known for his surrealistic and virtuoso crafted ceramic figurines, Kavallieratos uses irony to mock the structures and rituals of power. The coda to his title suggests that all civilisations, including our own, inevitably rise and fall.

Constantine the Great / All roads lead to Hell, 2007/2015
Styrofoam, plaster, polyester
300 x 700 x 120 cm
Commissioned by NEON Organization for Culture and Development D.Daskalopoulos

Yayoi Kusama

Born 1929 in Matsumoto City, Japan
Lives and works in Tokyo, Japan

The pumpkin is a recurring motif in Kusama's oeuvre, a fascination inspired by her family's business cultivating seeds. Her admiration of its bulbous form, tough skin and humble ubiquity, has led her to identify with its image, remarking, "'Pumpkin head' was an epithet used to disparage ugly, ignorant men and the phrase 'Put eyes and a nose on a pumpkin' evoked a pudgy and unattractive woman... pumpkins do not inspire much respect. But I was enchanted by their charming and winsome form... (and) the pumpkin's generous unpretentiousness. That and its solid spiritual base"¹. Given the gravitas of a bronze monument, this pumpkin is also decorated with Kusama's signature dots, a visual mesh she sees covering all things. In a European context this modest vegetable is also a vehicle of enchantment, magically transformed by Cinderella's Fairy Godmother into a carriage to transport her to the Prince's Ball.

¹ Yayoi Kusama, *Infinity Net: The Autobiography of Yayoi Kusama*, trans. Ralph McCarthy, London 2011, p.76

Pumpkin (M), 2014
Bronze
187 x 182 x 182 cm
Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro, London

Oliver Laric

Born 1981 in Innsbruck, Austria
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

From Aesop's Fables to Grimms' Fairy Tales, animals have been central to storytelling. In the 20th century these narrative traditions translated into animated cartoons. Oliver Laric's film raids the history of animation to create a bestiary of beings – part animal, part human, part super hero – who morph and shape shift in dazzling colours and fluid lines against a luminous white background. Laric is known for his bas relief figures from antiquity made from composites of ancient and contemporary materials such as bronze and polyurethane, 'linking the classical past to the digital present'¹. He uses the internet as a treasure trove of images that, regardless of where and when they originated, are all available in a simultaneous present. The process of mutation from one creature to the next mirrors biological systems – of growth through metamorphoses, camouflage as survival strategy and evolution itself dramatically accelerated. An elegiac sound track adds an emotional base-line to his fantastical protagonists.

¹ Rachel Wetzler, 'Oliver Laric', *Surround Audience*, exhib. cat. New Museum, New York, 2014 pg. 213

Untitled, 2014
4K video, colour, sound
5 min 55 sec
Courtesy the artist and Tanya Leighton, Berlin

Richard Long

Born 1945 in Bristol, UK
Lives and works in Bristol, UK

This evocative wall text recounts the animals and artifacts encountered by the artist on a 21-day walk in South Africa; presented in a circle, it is a list with no beginning or end. Throughout his oeuvre, Long has traversed the great geological contours of the earth. He maps mountains, deserts and valleys by walking and through texts and photographs, creating a remarkable form of landscape art. Characterized by simplicity, precision and economy, Long explores complex ideas about our relation to and impact on the land and reflects on the nature of space and time, making him a pioneer both in Land and Conceptual art. One side of this circle lists plants and animals evoking the slow time of nature. The other side listing traces of human settlement ranging from axes to oil drums, marks the fast time of our swiftly evolving and increasingly invasive technologies.

Human Nature Walk, 2011
Text work; 2 parts
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York

Sarah Lucas

Born 1962 in London, UK
Lives and works in Suffolk, UK

Throughout her career, Lucas has used common but highly associative found objects – furniture, tabloid newspapers, nylon tights, toilets and cigarettes – to intimate disembodied and gesturing limbs, genitalia and other corporeal fragments. The origins of this gleaming bronze sculpture lie in a pair of nylon tights being stuffed with cotton wool and tied and contorted to suggest a figure locked in a passionate embrace. Erotically suggestive and unexpectedly poignant, the snaking and contorted form of *Nahuiolin* has both phallic and breast like elements. Echoing the biomorphic primitivism of British Modernists such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, Lucas introduces a bawdy sexuality to the abstracted figure. *Nahuiolin* draws its title from the sobriquet of Carmen Mondragón (1893-1978), a painter, poet and artist's model who was the lover of Mexican painter and muralist Diego Rivera. With its intimations of a synthesis of sexual power, Lucas creates a 21st century goddess.

Nahuiolin, 2013
Cast bronze
48 x 64.5 x 43.5 cm
Courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London

Ruth MacLennan

Born 1969 in London, UK
Lives and works in London, UK

Falconry allegedly started in the ancient region of Mesopotamia in 2000 BC, spreading across the central Asian mountains and steppe to Europe. This video documents the artist's visit to south-east Kazakhstan to film a type of falconry practiced by the traditional Kazakh eagle hunters. Her journey documents the financial and logistical negotiations necessary for an outsider to gain access to this ancient ritual, eventually filming a group of hunters with their young eagle in a vast, empty canyon. The footage captures the relationship of trust between the hunter and bird against a backdrop of rapid economic and political change. The hunter's attire, once a uniform of fur and animal skin, is now a mass-produced tracksuit worn globally, and the variety of languages spoken by the party, from Russian – historically the colonial language – to Kazakh and English, contribute to a complex human portrait of this region. The film ends with the camera attached to the eagle, capturing the animal's experience in this event and confronting us with a visual order that exists outside our own.

Valley of Castles (Hunting Eagles), 2007
Colour video, Stereo
19 min
Courtesy Ruth MacLennan and LUX, London

Chris Marker

Born 1921 in Nanterre, France
Lived and worked in Paris, France
Died 2012 in Paris, France

The experimental essay-film *Sans Soleil* (Sunless, 1983), highlights Chris Marker's skill with the travelogue form. The film splices together footage ranging from temples in Tokyo devoted to cats to frozen flowers in a Siberian science station. Marker expertly displays ancient and modern rituals – from visiting shrines to protesting on the streets. Also, included in the essay-film is found footage as well as fragments from previous films and advertisements. Marker's use of other film-makers in *Sans Soleil* is typical of a period where he refrains from adding authorship to his works. Interwoven throughout the travelogue are sounds of everyday life, as well as a narrator reading letters she has supposedly received from her travelling cameraman. His footage offers an anthropological study of the late 20th century.

Sans Soleil, 1983
Colour video
100 min
Courtesy Argos Films

Marlie Mul

Born 1980 in Utrecht, Netherlands
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

A series of oily puddles contain fragments of organic and man-made waste ranging from a twig to a paper clip. Normally we would ignore these abject residues that pool under cars or in cracked pavements; yet in the idyll of the garden they are a jarring presence. Yet each puddle is as significant as any other archaeological fragment, bearing clues to a past entity or event. The oily quality of the puddles combines with the manufactured detritus to identify them as residues of modernity, footprints of an industrialised consumer society; we ourselves are reflected in their shiny surface. Mul has also installed cigarette butts and boxes of popcorn as flotsam from social occasions, echoing a renowned Greek mosaic known as the *Unswep House*. Created in the 2nd century BC by Sosus of Pergamon, it features the remains of a feast dropped on the floor. Across the centuries both artists offer an evocative portrait of cultural excess.

Puddle (Bag), 2015
Sand, resin
2 x 109 x 98 cm

Puddle (Brown Glass, Twig), 2015
Sand, resin
2 x 105 x 89 cm

Puddle (Green Grit), 2015
Sand, resin
2 x 65 x 76 cm

Puddle (Paperclip), 2015
Sand, resin
2 x 72 x 61 cm

Puddle (Stones), 2015
Sand, resin
2 x 112 x 65 cm

Courtesy Vilma Gold, London

Katja Novitskova

Born 1984 in Tallinn, Estonia

Lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands and Berlin, Germany

The scale, vivid iridescent plumage and flat profiles of Novitskova's tropical birds give them an uncanny presence. The extraordinary colours and dramatic crests and tails of exotic birds have always captured the western imagination, emblematic of a tropical paradise. Novitskova has appropriated the birds from the internet where their distinguishing characteristics are reduced into glowing two dimensional images – indeed they are titled 'approximations'. For the artist the online digital world is itself an exotic ecosystem that exists in parallel with the natural environment: 'My main interest is the ecological and anthropological consequences of information technologies and related markets around the globe'. She has juxtaposed enlarged cut out photographs of animals with floor to ceiling images of handbags. The eye catching beauty, billboard scale and two dimensionality of these birds, combines with associations of escapism to situate them in the realms of nature and of advertising.

Approximation (Loro), 2014,

Digital print on aluminium, cut-out display

160 x 114 x 35 cm

Approximation (Toucan), 2014,

Digital print on aluminium, cut-out display

140 x 219 x 35 cm

Courtesy the artist and Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin

Anatoly Osmolovsky

Born 1969 in Moscow, Russia

Lives and works in Moscow, Russia

Three gigantic husks lie scattered on the ground. Cast from bronze their surfaces undulate with fine lines resembling human skin. They are conceived as the remains of a giant figure, fragments perhaps of the hollow knuckles of a bronze colossus. The title 'Rot' or red front refers to the Russian revolution – the remnants of its corpse lie here. This work is also a reminder of how the huge statues of Lenin, Stalin and other hubristic modern leaders such as Saddam Hussein have been overturned and destroyed by their angry subjects. Osmolovsky is an iconoclast who continues to challenge political and aesthetic orthodoxies through performances and satirical installations. This contemporary memorial to a grandly ambitious yet failed political revolution stands in for the triumphalism of all monuments to power. The fragments of Pharaohs, Emperors, Kings and Queens that are scattered through history and gathered in the world's museums are reminders of the inevitable rise and fall of all civilisations.

Rot Front – Remains, 2010

Bronze

37 x 207 x 50 cm

25 x 180 x 51 cm

26 x 180 x 52 cm

Courtesy V-A-C Foundation, Moscow

Aliki Palaska

Born 1962 in Athens, Greece
Lives and works in Athens, Greece

Palaska takes casts from her own and other people's bellies using a multitude of organic and man-made materials, each with its own formal and associative properties. They include tree bark, insect nests, pieces of fern and beeswax alongside traditional sculptural materials such as cement and clay. The play-off between organic and inorganic is particularly resonant with an urban garden where nature combines with culture. Arranged across the wall like heraldic plaques, or the findings of an archaeological dig, the 'bellies' offer a remarkable visual play of texture, colour and association. Palaska has previously made sculptures from fragments of old china figurines to create surreal assemblages. Her choice here of this particular part of the human anatomy is a poignant one—it is the locus not only of absorbing nourishment, but also of deep-seated emotions, of visceral feelings. And it is caught in the instant that the belly extends at its most primal function—breathing life-giving air.

Breathing Space, 2015
Mixed media
Dimensions variable
Commissioned by NEON Organization for Culture and Development D.Daskalopoulos

Norbert Prangenberg

Born 1949 in Rommerskirchen-Nettesheim, Germany
Lived and worked in Munich and Niederambach, Germany
Died 2012 in Krefeld, Germany

Located both inside the auditorium and outdoors are a series of biomorphic ceramics. Drawing on his training as a glass blower and thirty years as an abstract painter, Prangenberg made vessel like forms extruded into waves, petals or body parts and animated by brightly coloured glazes. Kneaded, prodded and pulled, the clay bares traces of its own making. Using the majolica technique, the artist applied colour onto a white glaze with meticulous strokes but also allowed it to dribble and splash. The intrinsic properties of clay and paint contributed to the final look of each piece as if they were living things. Although these works appear abstract they are called 'Figur' drawing attention to their anthropomorphic qualities. Prangenberg's large scale sculpture of 2005, sited against the backdrop of the garden's verdant shrubs and trees, suggests an intricate matrix of vegetation. At the same time, it looks as if limbs are sprouting from the earth recalling Ovid's epic poem, *Metamorphosis* where the pursuit of love or power can lead to transformations between human, plant and animal.

Figur, 2003
Majolika
15 x 40 x 25 cm

Figur, 2003
Majolika
37 x 35 x 35 cm

Figur, 2003
Majolika
55 x 40 x 40 cm

Figur, 2008
Fayence
27.5 x 27.7 x 14.6 cm

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne

Figur, 2005
Glazed ceramic
175 x 110 x 85 cm

Courtesy Estate Norbert Prangenberg, Rommerskirchen, Germany and Ancient & Modern, London

Ugo Rondinone

Born 1964 in Brunnen, Switzerland
Lives and works in New York, USA

SUNRISE. east. features a series of totem-like figures, each representing a month of the year. This particular sculpture represents the month of October, while the totality of the series forms a metaphor for the cyclic nature of time. The human figure and its distortion plays a key role in Rondinone's work as an explanatory tool for the creation and circulation of cultural meaning. In this case, he distorts the human face and brings it to a mask-like form, and plays in each sculpture of the series with changes in the expression of these simplified faces. The sculptures seem to emerge from a child's dream or potentially a civilization long lost, or yet to come, directing the viewer to travel to this imaginary world.

SUNRISE. east. october, 2005
Cast bronze, silver car paint, concrete plinth
200 x 130 x 150 cm
Courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London

Kostas Sahpazis

Born 1977 in Drama, Greece
Lives and works in Athens, Greece

Kostas Sahpazis is a master craftsman of materials. He creates agglomerations of textiles, wood and metal, which on first sight appear abstract but which are magically evocative. This sculpture is inspired by the way bark peels off as a tree grows, or by the skin shed by a reptile. Compressing layers of wood, fabric and rubber he has then used an electric current and acid process to copperplate the elements, using the metal to bind them like a shell. Sahpazis typically employs complex organic and chemical processes and allows them to follow the cardinal rule of physics – entropy. At the same time, his associative forms and dynamic structures give a vivacious presence to his inanimate objects. This sense of their being alive is emphasized in this commission as the work leads a migratory existence, moving from one location to another during its stay in the garden of the French School at Athens.

The Animal's Turn, 2015
Copper, fabric, rubber, resin, wood, paint
60 x 60 x 100 cm
Commissioned by NEON Organization for Culture and Development D.Daskalopoulos

Peter Wächtler

Born 1979 in Hannover, Germany
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

The magical innocence of the cartoon – a genre associated with children – is given a nightmarish undertone in this tale of a rat who endures the deprivations and existential crisis of the hobo. The power of Wächtler's work lies in his ability to express adult experience and melancholic states of being, with the simplicity and humour of a children's film. Using a variety of media that also include ceramics, drawing, painting and installation, Wächtler builds an enchanted parallel universe where animals, wizards and anthropomorphic props like crutches enact the tribulations and tragedies of the real world. The dark, expressionist interiors of this hand drawn film contrast with the laconic commentary of the rat who also bursts into a capella rendition of Bruce Springsteen's *The River*. Boredom, personal failure and regret come to stand in for collective experience in a tragicomic allegory of contemporary life.

Untitled (Rat), 2013

Video HD

14 min

Courtesy the artist and dépendance, Brussels

ARTIST:

Caroline Achaintre
Allora & Calzadilla
Francis Alijs (Film)
Athanasios Argianas
Joseph Beuys (Film)
Huma Bhabha
Reg Butler
Lynn Chadwick
Marcus Coates (Film)
William Cobbing
Enrico David
Charlotte Dumas (Film)
Angus Fairhurst
Studio Ghibli (Film)
Tue Greenfort
Asta Gröting
Lucy Gunning
Henrik Håkansson
Anthea Hamilton & Nicholas Byrne
Joan Jonas (Film)
Eleni Kamma
Markus Karstiess
Dionisis Kavallieratos
Yayoi Kusama
Oliver Laric (Film)
Richard Long
Sarah Lucas
Ruth Maclennan (Film)
Chris Marker (Film)
Marlie Mul
Katja Novistkova
Anatoly Osmolovsky
Aliki Palaska
Norbert Prangenberg
Ugo Rondinone
Kostas Sahpazis
Peter Wachtler (Film)

TEXT WRITTEN BY:

Poppy Bowers
Elina Kountouri
Dimitris Paleocrassas
Elina kountouri
Dimitris Paleocrassas
Elina Kountouri
Thomas Kennedy
Irene Kalliga
Lydia Yee
Iwona Blazwick
Rebecca Edwards
Poppy Bowers
Irene kalliga
Thomas Kennedy
Iwona Blazwick
Dimitris Paleocrassas
Iwona Blazwick
Dimitris Paleocrassas
Lydia Yee
Dimitris Paleocrassas
Alex Alonsodiaz
Thomas Kennedy
Thomas Stokmans
Irene Kalliga
Iwona Blazwick
Irene Kalliga
Dimitris paleocrassas
Poppy Bowers
Thomas Kennedy
Alejandro Ball
Seamus McCormack
Iwona Blazwick
Dimitris Paleocrassas
Seamus McCormack
Irene Kalliga
Dimitris Paleocrassas
Caterina Berardi

CONTRIBUTORS

Alex Alonsodiaz
Alejandro Ball
Caterina Berardi
Poppy Bowers
Iwona Blazwick
Rebecca Edwards
Irene Kalliga
Thomas Kennedy
Elina Kountouri
Seamus McCormack
Dimitris Paleocrassas
Thomas Stokmans
Lydia Yee

We would like to thank and extend our gratitude to the French School of Athens, the Director Alexandre Farnoux, the scholars and the entire administration for their warm hospitality and constructive collaboration.

Whitechapel Gallery

whitechapelgallery.org

NEON

neon.org.gr