

NEON

PRESS RELEASE

Athens, 15 November 2016

Flying over the Abyss

NEON presents the works of 34 contemporary artists and the manuscript of *The Saviors of God* for the first time in Athens at the Athens Conservatoire

18 November 2016 – 29 January 2017

NEON presents the exhibition '*Flying over the Abyss*' at the new cultural space of the Athens Conservatoire, from 18 November 2016 to 29 January 2017.

The exhibition refers to a major cultural asset of Greece, the thinker Nikos Kazantzakis, bringing his book *The Saviors of God* into a dialogue with works by Greek and foreign contemporary artists.

Athens is the third stop for the exhibition in two years, after Rethymnon at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Crete and Thessaloniki at the Contemporary Art Centre of the State Museum of Contemporary Art.

The Athens Conservatoire was refurbished and financed by NEON and was handed over to the Conservatoire with the aim of enhancing the Athenian scene and host art and culture events.

Curated jointly by art historian Dimitris Paleocrassas and Maria Marangou, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Crete, *Flying over the Abyss* traces man's course from life to death, 'following' and drawing inspiration from *The Saviors of God* of the great thinker Nikos Kazantzakis. Also, with the synergy of NEON and the Nikos Kazantzakis Museum, the exhibition will be hosting the manuscript of the book, shown for the first time in Athens and for the first time in interaction with contemporary art.

34 artists will present works in dialogue among themselves as well as with *The Saviors of God*, shedding light on the course of human life from the trauma of birth through the struggle for life and creativity and unto death.

For its third presentation in Athens the exhibition is enriched with a new commissioned work by NEON by composers Giorgos Koumendakis and Stavros Gasparatos that marks the collaboration between NEON and the Alternative Stage of the Greek National Opera in the context of this show.

Specifically, this is the sound installation *Passage through the Abyss*. Musical themes by Giorgos Koumendakis and Stavros Gasparatos communicate with the sound of the building of the Athens Conservatoire as well as the surrounding

areas, underlining and recording the path between the sound of life and the void. The sound installation communicates with the five stages of being, which forms the backbone of the exhibition, but is placed in an independent sixth space. The spaces of the Athens Conservatoire are wired and recorded so that their endpoints interact with each other as well as with the musical themes, creating an installation which aims to create a new space-time in the rambling building of the Athens Conservatoire.

The exhibition includes works by the following artists: Marina Abramović, Alexis Akrihakis, Matthew Barney, Hans Bellmer, Lynda Benglis, John Bock, Louise Bourgeois, Heidi Bucher, Vlassis Caniaris, Paul Chan, Savvas Christodoulides, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Stavros Gasparatos, Gilbert & George, Robert Gober, Asta Gröting, Jenny Holzer, Kostas Ioannidis, Mike Kelley, Martin Kippenberger, Giorgos Koumendakis, Sherrie Levine, Stathis Logothetis, Ana Mendieta, Maro Michalakakos, Bruce Nauman, Alike Palaska, Ioanna Pantazopoulou, Doris Salcedo, Kiki Smith, Paul Thek, Costas Tsoclis, Mark Wallinger, Gary Webb.

Educational programmes in the context of the exhibition will be run by the Hellenic Children's Museum on weekends.

As stated by **curator Maria Marangou, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Crete**, *"The exhibition Flying over the Abyss in an Athens heroically wounded and trying to overcome its own suffering comes at the most critical moment. Although the book that the exhibition is inspired of and the qualities of the artworks presented are timeless, the role of this exhibition is to be a powerful ontological testimony that defends the city's right to its own cry before the current events. And in this sense, the exhibition is deeply political"*.

According to **curator Dimitris Paleocrassas, art historian**, *"The enduring concern about human existence is the element that links the work of the great Cretan poet Nikos Kazantzakis and those by 34 international and Greek contemporary artists. 'Flying over the Abyss' is about the arduous struggle over the course of life, from birth to death. It is a course that carries the burden and the imperfection of our mortal nature, and at the same time contains the way to give meaning to this struggle and elevate it: the element of creativity, of human relations and works that can shine eternally and lead to an escape from the abyss at the end of the course"*.

Our warm thanks to the D.Daskalopoulos Collection and the Nikos Kazantzakis Museum for the loan of the works.

Exhibition 'Flying over the Abyss'

Duration: 18 November 2016 – 29 January 2017

Official opening: 18 November 2016 at 19.00

Opening hours:

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 12.00 – 20.00

Saturday-Sunday 11.00-19.00

Mondays & Tuesdays closed

Also closed on: 24-26 Dec 2016, 31 Dec 2016, 1-4 Jan 2017, 6 Jan 2017

Free Entrance

Educational programmes available on Saturdays and Sundays; for information contact the Hellenic Children's Museum, tel. no. 210 3312995.

Athens Conservatoire

17 Vassileos Georgiou B' Avenue, Athens

More information on: neon.org.gr

Notes for Editors

NEON is a nonprofit organization that works to bring contemporary culture closer to everyone. It is committed to broadening the appreciation, understanding, and creation of contemporary art in Greece and to the firm belief that this is a key tool for growth and development.

NEON, founded in 2013 by collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, breaks with the convention that limits the contemporary art foundation of a collector to a single place. It acts on a multitude of initiatives, spaces, and civic and social contexts. It seeks to expose the ability contemporary art has to stimulate, inspire, and affect the individual and society at large. NEON constructively collaborates with cultural institutions and supports the programs of public and private institutions to enhance increased access and inventive interaction with contemporary art.

The **Athens Conservatoire** was founded in 1871 and is the country's oldest educational institution for music and drama. In its almost one-and-a-half century of operation the Athens Conservatoire has had as students or teachers such major figures of international acclaim as Spyros Samaras, Dimitris Mitropoulos, Nikos Skalkotas, Maria Callas, Gina Bachauer, Alexandra Trianti, Mikis Theodorakis, Loukas Karytinis, Dimitris Sgouros and many others. Since 1871 the Athens Conservatoire has had a major contribution in Drama as well, operating the first and oldest drama school in Greece; its teachers over the years include such prominent theatre people as Emiliios Veakis, Dimitris Rontiris, Costas Mousouris, Dimitris Myrat, etc., and this great tradition is continued to this day.

The Athens Conservatoire is housed in the emblematic building by architect and Professor Ioannis Despotopoulos, a student of Walter Gropius in Weimar, and was the only part of his ambitious plan for the Cultural Centre of Athens to be realized. His design won the first prize in the national architectural competition of 1959, and ranks among the top expressions of the radically modern spirit of Bauhaus. The Athens Conservatoire is currently making a great effort for this important building, which remains unfinished, to be completed and assume its rightful place and prestige among the city's architectural heritage, with the aid of the State and through national, EU as well as private funds.

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