

### **Walking the dog on the salt**

**Group Exhibition of Contemporary Art in the context of "Routes in Marpissa 2018 – Salt"**

**August 24, 25, 26**

**Artists: Eleni Bagaki, Myrto Xanthopoulou, Erica Scourti, Elena Chantzis**

**Curated by Despina Zefkili**

#### Salt Flat

In 1968, Dennis Oppenheim, American conceptual artist, created a flat rectangular surface scattering 1,000 pounds of salt in an abandoned parking lot in New York letting the air, weather and traffic of passers-by and cars to wipe it out.

#### Salt March

In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi walked 240 miles to the Gujarat coast in India on a protest against the ban of the British colonial government to Indian peasants picking up salt on their own and the specific tax enforcement. Initially, he was followed by 78 people, who then became thousands. Getting to Gujarat, Gandhi picked up a handful of salt. The Salt March ended with the capture of about 60,000 people, including Gandhi, and is considered as an emblematic gesture for India's road to independence.

#### On the surface:

A film about a woman who goes to Paros to find salt and ends up looking for it at the pool of a hotel. A sculptural installation that starts from the whitewashed joints of the pavement of Marpissa. A song and a home-made scrub from local ingredients, where salt is an antidote to the "evil eye". A one-minute video-collage of 100 images with observations from Paros.

#### At the bottom:

The poetry of the lyric poet of Paros in the 7th century BC, Archilochus, whose heroes refuse to follow the ideals of heroism and masculinity as imposed by their society. The (salty) crying as a female affair and a sign of weakness. A friendly but also toxic gift that comments on the modern economy of the "natural beauty" and glorifies feminist killjoys, bitter (fake, salty) feminists and all those who refuse to follow the "Keep Calm and Carry On" motto. The search for a system, a logic, a rhythm in the details of the physical elements, but also an attempt to record the human preoccupation with the elusive and the invisible.

The exhibition "Walking the dog on the salt", which is being organised in the context of the festival "Routes in Marpissa", having as this year's theme "salt", it approaches salt as part of a system that includes both physical and social phenomena. The

quality of salt to reveal itself to the human eye only when the sea water has evaporated, its blurred nature, both visually and semantically (loaded with positive and negative meanings at the same time) but also the social, historical and gender-related aspects related to its production and use was the starting point for the research of the four artists who traveled to Marpissa and Paros and created a number of new projects specifically for the exhibition. In situ observations, research in different sources, folk traditions and personal experiences, such as the precariousness of artistic work and the traveling nature of the artists in residence, are intertwined. From the blurred quality of salt to the blurred human nature and the relationships of sovereignty, the works of the four female (coincidence?) artists create different levels of interpretations, which dissolve, evaporate, solidify and redissolve. Words play a role. Both in the initial selection of the participants (when I invited them I had in my mind the way in which they move from the text to the image and vice versa), as well as the elements of the presented works, either it is about a script, a lightbox, a verse, a title. Dogs do not need more salt than people may.

Despina Zefkili

Description of the works:

### **Eleni Bagaki, There, only feet matter, film, 2018**

The story of the film "There, only feet matter" is taking place in the pool of a hotel. A woman goes to Paros to find salt. She's looking for it at the pool of a hotel. Eventually instead of salt she finds feet.

The title of the work comes from a verse from Archilochus, lyric poet of Paros in the 7th century BC. Archilochus, son of an aristocrat and a slave, challenged the aristocracy and the traditions of the time. He was poor and served as a mercenary while writing about the war by overthrowing the heroic ideal and removing every element of its grandiosity, portraying with realism its uncertainty and misery. His heroes appear unconventional, question the ideals of heroism and masculinity, and do not hesitate to give up their shield to run for salvation. Eleni Bagaki's heroines travel to various places looking for something (or nothing).

### **Myrto Xanthopoulou, shelter (don't cry), installation, 2018**

The work consists of a sculpture that follows the whitewashed joints of the pavement (shelter), and a lightbox-footnote (don't cry). The sculpture refers to a less well-known aspect of the history of salt production in Greece, at the time when it was a state monopoly. Improvised salt evaporation ponds were made in areas with natural salt, an activity primarily feminine. Women took care of the needs of the community informally, manually and despite the necessity. The phrase "don't cry", the second part of the installation also suggests care, and at the same time affirmation and recognition of pain and weeping, which often has negative connotations as a female affair. In both parts of the project, readability coexists with the fact that reading escapes.

On the occasion of the theme “salt” and its infinite dimensions, the work attempts to touch blurred areas as far as the dominant is concerned, be it a monopoly or a fundamental human expression that has as much power as its generalized perception as a weakness.

### **Erica Scourti, Salve for the Salty Ones, performance and installation, 2018**

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Drawing inspiration from the therapeutic properties of salt, as well as the folk practices from Paros and beyond in which salt acts to ward off evil, Scourti will make her own home-made salt scrub using ingredients from Paros and nearby islands. For the performance, she will both use and distribute portions of the home-made mixture with the accompaniment of a vocal score spoken in Greek and English in cross-translation about the dissolution of toxins, both emotional and environmental. Playing on the shedding of skin and its renewal, this suggests the endless tasks of self improvement and evokes the historical uses of salt as payment in a wider economy where the individual psyche has become a commodity to be honed and perfected. Moulded pellets of the salt scrub will feature in the group exhibition, contributing to an olfactory and sensory environment. The title references the goddess of the sea Amphitrite, whose Roman counterpart, Salacia, literally translates as 'the salty one'- but also the adjective 'salty' which in English slang describes someone who is irritated, bitter or annoyed. It's therefore both a salve, relief for these characters (which may perhaps include the 'feminist killjoys' and others who refuse to 'Keep Calm and Carry On') and a celebration of them.

### **Elena Chantzis, Mathematics of Invisible Solutions, video, 2018**

The project consists of a series of moving pictures, a video collage. They come from more than a hundred video recordings, one minute each, taken with a cellphone and using maximum zoom, during six days on the island of Paros. The purpose was to create a collection of images, as little as possible descriptive, focusing on a single or no object, creating a pattern with memories from the island, where the theme of salt is always in the background. Starting from the four elements needed to naturally create sea salt in salt evaporation ponds (rock, seawater, wind and sun) and a fifth (the man who processes it) begins a journey exploring and imprinting these elements and derivatives either individually or in combination.

The title comes from the variation of Italo Calvino's phrase "matematica delle soluzioni singole" (mathematics of single solutions) from his book "Lezioni Americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio" (Six memos for the next millennium). Calvino refers to Robert Musil's thought, trying to combine it with the phrase "mathematics of simple solutions," in contrast to a single unique solution that describes reality.

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