

NEON

PRESS RELEASE

Athens, 12 September 2018

CITY PROJECT 2018

***Prosaic Origins* – an installation by Andreas Lolis**

Commissioned by NEON

The British School at Athens

12 September – 14 November 2018

For the fifth edition of their annual CITY PROJECT, NEON is delighted to present a major site-specific installation by Athens-based artist Andreas Lolis, at the British School at Athens (BSA). The exhibition, entitled *Prosaic Origins*, is curated by Nayia Yiakoumaki, Curator & Head of Curatorial studies at Whitechapel Gallery.

CITY PROJECT is an initiative for public art and the city, conceived and commissioned annually by NEON to a Greek artist. NEON aims to activate public and historical places through contemporary art, contributing to the interaction of art, society and the city. Now in its fifth year of CITY PROJECT, NEON has previously presented Aemilia Papaphilippou (2014), Maria Loizidou (2015), Zafos Xagoraris (2016) and Kostis Velonis (2017).

Andreas Lolis is a sculptor who works with marble, one of the noblest materials in the history of art. Like the sculptors of the Classical era, he carves 'realistic' objects from marble blocks, resembling the original model in shape and scale. Cardboard boxes, ladders and planks of wood become marble effigies of precarious, transitory and unnoticed original objects. Through this traditional method, he elevates the everyday world of abandoned partial objects, makeshift constructions and ordinary things to the status of statues.

Lolis's largest public installation to date, *Prosaic Origins* will take over the BSA and its gardens to become a site for a series of new works that enable us to rethink his practice.

The BSA was established in 1886 as part of a wider political and cultural movement that used as its foundation the model of 'foreign' educational institutions originating in developed western countries, and offered a base in Greece for people to study all aspects of Hellenic culture, ancient, medieval and modern.

For this historical setting, Lolis has created sculptures that collide with the western idealisation of Classical Greek heritage; two large works, constructed for particular locations in the garden, and over 20 smaller works, are placed throughout the exterior and interior spaces of the BSA. These site-specific sculptures are installed in such a way as if they had always been there, abandoned objects, disrupting previously bucolic appreciations of the urban garden and the harmonious equilibrium of the BSA's neoclassical architecture.

Lolis skilfully represents objects that surround us but which go mostly unnoticed, as if his artistic mission was to freeze in marble the precarious, the unremarkable and the useless that remain almost invisible. Objects such as carved rubbish bags or goods palettes mark the material and logistical world of consumption, waste and trade; the transitory, yet endless, world of circulation and reproduction. It is within that framework that these objects are frequently reused, re-entering a new cycle: a cardboard box used as material for a shelter, a palette left out at the back of a warehouse has the potential to become a

seat, a makeshift ladder and so on. Sometimes the ephemeral life of these objects lasts longer through their new functions. They are certainly part of the 'landscape of crisis' of contemporary Greece, indicating at the same time the resourcefulness and the lack of material means of those worst affected by the current economic situation.

Tapping into the notion of mimesis as an ancient Greek ideal associated with art, the pieces are both a copy of nature and a monument to human craft. And yet, it is not idealised nature as the archetype of 'beauty' that is cast into the marble sculptures, but human made objects with a short economic life.

Literally placed on the grounds of the BSA without any marker of their status as sculptures, no base or plinth, they displace the very principles of artistic mimesis, returning the now petrified object to its possible original location.

Lolis uses the same material and technique as traditional sculptors of the ancient times, not to idealise the Classical past, but to reminisce and to attest, staging a controversy around the notion of artistic value, what to keep as objects of contemplation. By working with marble, he is not only soliciting us to take these prosaic objects as meaningful and aesthetically interesting, but is also displacing the heavy historical weight of marble sculpture, making it a means of petrification of the precarious and transitory dimension of modern life. These works are monuments of precarity and crisis, but also of reinvention and possibility.

Curator Nayia Yiakoumaki remarks: *"Having these works displayed at the BSA is a statement in its own right. This historical institution, whose scope is to support and enhance research in archaeology, becomes the territory for the installation of objects that defy erosion, the foundation of a future archaeological site. As archaeology for the future, these pieces register the invisible dimensions of contemporary everyday life but also the artistic magical gesture of turning the fleeting into the permanent"*.

NEON would like to thank the British School at Athens for their collaboration.

Notes to editors

Andreas Lolis (b. 1970) lives and works in Athens and is a graduate of the Athens School of Fine Arts and the Carrara Academy of Fine Arts. His selected solo exhibitions include: "Undercurrents" at The Breeder in Athens (2015), The Breeder Monaco (2013) and at Münchner Künstlerhaus (2011). Selected group shows include: *Antidoron*, The EMST Collection, Friedericianum, Kassel, documenta 14 (2017); *New Acquisitions 2014-2017*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (2017); Thessaloniki Biennial 2017 curated by Sirago Tsiara (2017); *The Body, the Soul, The Place*, National Art Museum of China, 7th Beijing Biennial of Contemporary Art (2017); *Yoko Ono Lumiere De L'Aube*, at Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon (2016), 13th Biennale de Lyon La Vie Moderne, curated by Ralph Rugoff (2015); *Hell As Pavillion*, curated by Nadia Argyropoulou in Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2013) and *Monodrome*, the 3rd Athens Biennial, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, Xenia Kalpaktoglou and Poka Yio (2011). Andreas Lolis teaches at the Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Art (2016-2018). Andreas Lolis is represented by The Breeder, Athens

Nayia Yiakoumaki is Curator and Head of Curatorial studies at Whitechapel Gallery UK, where she developed an innovative programme of research exhibitions. Yiakoumaki annually devises the NEON Curatorial Exchange & Award, an initiative which fosters professional relationships for emerging curators, founded by NEON organization and delivered by the Whitechapel Gallery. Yiakoumaki co-directed the Athens Biennale organisation 2016 – 2017 as Director of Research and International Networks. She has conceived several exhibitions and commissions, including *John Latham: Anarchive* (2010), *Rothko in Britain* (2012), *Aspen Magazine: 1965-1971* (2012), *Black Eyes & Lemonade: Curating Popular Art* (2013), *Stephen Willats: Concerning Our Present Way of Living* (2014), *Intellectual Barbarians: The Kibbo Kift Kindred* (2015-2016), *Imprint 93* (2016), *Guerrilla Girls: Is it even worse in Europe?* (2016-2017). Yiakoumaki is currently working on *Killed Negatives: Unseen Images of 1930s America* (2018) and *Staging Jackson Pollock 1958* (2018).

The British School at Athens (BSA) was founded in 1886 to promote the study of Greece in all its aspects. Through the extensive collections in its Library and Archive, the state-of-the-art equipment in the Marc and Ismene Fitch Laboratory,

and the expertise of its Athens staff, the BSA provides facilities for those engaged in research into the anthropology, archaeology, archaeometry, architecture, art, environment, geography, history, language, literature, philosophy, religion and topography of Greek lands in all periods including modern times.

Greece, the BSA has always espoused a broader vision of Hellenic studies. Today, research promoted and facilitated by the BSA reflects this broad vision of Hellenic studies: recent projects include study of the post-Ottoman Balkans and Turkey, ethnography among forced migrants, anthropological exploration of the visual expression of the 'crisis' and of the construction of memory, examination of the legal aspects of contemporary forced migration, alongside the more familiar areas of ancient history, archaeology, epigraphy, literature and philosophy. Art too has long played an important role in the BSA's activities. Since 2001 the BSA has offered an annual Arts Bursary to give artists the opportunity to develop and enhance their work by spending three months in Greece.

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. NEON's space is the city. 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.

Exhibition information

Exhibition dates: 12 September – 14 November 2018

Opening Hours

13 - 30 September 2018 | WED-SUN: 12.00-20.00

3 October - 14 November 2018 | WED-SUN: 10.00-18.00

Free Entrance

Press Enquiries

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