

NEON in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades presents:
The Palace at 4 a.m.
Archaeological Museum of Mykonos
18 May – 31 October 2019

Curated by Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director, Whitechapel Gallery
and Elina Kountouri, Director, NEON
Organised and commissioned by NEON

Lynda Benglis; Haris Epaminonda; Simone Fattal; Petrit Halilaj; Ian Law; Maria Loizidou;
Daria Martin; Duro Olowu; Zohra Opoku; Rena Paspasyrou; Stefania Strouza; Barthélémy

This exhibition of contemporary art is inspired by the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos. It takes its title from an iconic work by Alberto Giacometti. *The Palace at 4 a.m.* is a small wooden sculpture he created in 1932; like a theatre it features a dramatic encounter between a woman, a bird and a spinal column. Presiding over these protagonists is a mysterious deity. The scene is a palace before sunrise, a time of dreams, ghosts and secret assignments.

The exhibition draws on the strange drama of Giacometti's masterpiece to evoke the spirits, rituals and myths that haunt ancient archaeological sites such as Delos. The island's statues, architectural fragments, vessels and tombstones collected in the museum are attributes of a cosmopolitan citizenry that disappeared two millennia ago. Just as Delos once brought together people from across the ancient world, *The Palace at 4 a.m.* features a global roster of 13 artists.

Their work is juxtaposed with the museum's collection and additional treasures selected by the archaeologists of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades. Like a theatre curtain a monumental decorative drape newly commissioned from by **Duro Olowu**, which combines the richly decorated textiles from northern and southern hemispheres, provides the overture to the exhibition. An installation of artefacts - both platonic and erotic - has been composed by **Haris Epaminonda**. **Simone Fattal** presents her haiku-like ceramics evoking classical ruins and monsters; while **Rena Paspasyrou** magically transforms contemporary detritus into archaeological fragments. **Ian Law** enters the hallowed confines of the museum vitrine with votive figures that incorporate the ashes of the dead.

In the central gallery **Paloma Varga Weisz** pitches a beautifully carved contemplative female figure from the heavens; she is suspended in drapery that recalls the Baroque. Below her are two powerfully gestural ceramics, evoking landscape and habitat by renowned painter **Lynda Benglis**. Giacometti's work is evoked by **Daria Martin's** film *In the Palace* where she reconstructed his tiny sculpture as a full-scale stage set for a group of performers who take up the poses and gestures of avant garde Modernism. A spiral map of fragments by **Stefania Strouza** is arranged according to the wandering of Zeus' lover Leto across the islands of the Aegean, in a shrine to female goddesses.

In another wing of the museum the towering porcelain vessels of **Barthélémy Toguo** use delicate glazes to depict the deathly iconography of the virus in African society. Opposite hang self-portraits screened on Ghanaian textiles by **Zohra Opoku** her image metamorphosing from her botanical environment. Where the museum offers a retirement home for the vessels of antiquity, **Petrit Halilaj** brings resembled fragments of Neolithic pottery back to life by turning them into birds for whom he has

constructed two nests. Elsewhere he has installed the museum conservationist's deadliest enemy – a giant moth is suspended from the museum's ceiling, a metaphor for all those who can only reveal themselves under cover of night.

In the museum garden **Maria Loizidou** has suspended a huge pelt handwoven from a stainless-steel mesh, remnant of an entity that has either been hunted and skinned; or sloughed off its own skin to live again.

The comingling of ancient and contemporary exhibits will illustrate how the human need to impose order on a seemingly unruly universe produced ancient mythological creatures and sustains the animist beliefs that still dominate systems of belief in Africa, South East Asia and Central and South America today. Juxtaposing old and new works will draw out our shared vulnerabilities - how we stigmatize and imprint what we fear and at the same time expect.

Elina Kountouri, Director NEON

The juxtaposition of the artefacts of antiquity with works of art made today, reveals shared sensibilities, fears and desires. While technology extends our virtual reach around the world, it is through the objects we make and use in daily life that we are able to transcend time. They provide the tangible link between our lives and those of our forebears and, in turn, will be the memorials we leave for future generations.

Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director, Whitechapel Gallery

The Archaeological Museum of Mykonos will temporarily incorporate works of contemporary art in order to ultimately redefine the vital importance of monumental heritage as a constituent element and pillar of modern society. The past welcomes the present in its home, and the museum, from an enclave of memory, is transformed into a creative workshop of cultural encounters.

Dr. Demetrios Athanasoulis, Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades

NOTES TO EDITORS

Artist biographies

Lynda Benglis

Born in 1941, Lake Charles, Louisiana, Lynda Benglis is based in New York and lives between the US, Greece and India. She is known for her process based abstract paintings and ceramics and has been exhibiting since the 1970s.

Haris Epaminonda

Born in 1980 in Nicosia, Cyprus, Haris Epaminonda lives and works in Berlin and Cyprus. She creates sculptural installations, photographs and films and has been exhibiting since the 2000s.

Simone Fattal

Born in 1942 in Damascus, Syria, Simone Fattal lives and works in Paris. Having started her career as a painter, poet and filmmaker she is now celebrated for her work in ceramics. Fattal has been exhibiting since the 1970s.

Petrit Halilaj

Petrit Halilaj was born in 1986 in Kosterc, Kosovo and lives and works between Germany, Kosovo and Italy. He has been showing his sculptures and works on paper as installations since the 2010s.

Ian Law

Born in 1984 in the United Kingdom, Ian Law lives and works in London. He uses ceramic to create sculptures and has been showing his work since 2010.

Maria Loizidou

Maria Loizidou was born in Cyprus in 1958 and lives and works in Nicosia. She creates sculptures and environments in public space and has been exhibiting since the 1980s.

Daria Martin

Born in 1973 in San Francisco Daria Martin lives and works in London. She is celebrated for her award-winning moving image works which she has been showing since the 2000s.

Duro Olowu

Born in 1965 in Lagos, Nigeria, Duro Olowu lives and works in London and is renowned as a designer and curator. He has been showing his collections and curating projects since the 2000s.

Zohra Opoku

Zohra Opoku was born in Germany in 1976 and lives and works in Accra. She works with photography and textiles and has been showing her work since the 2010s.

Rena Papaspyrou

Born in Athens in 1938 Rena Papaspyrou lives and works in Athens. She is known for her ready-made conceptual paintings and has exhibited since the 1980s.

Stefania Strouza

Stefania Strouza was born in Greece in 1982 and takes a research based, conceptual approach to the creation of sculptural installations. She has been exhibiting since the 2010s.

Barthélémy Toguo

Born in 1967 in M'Balmayo, Cameroon, Barthélémy Toguo lives and works in Paris and Cameroon, where he founded the Bandjoun Station art centre. He creates performances and sculptures and has shown his projects since the 1990s.

Paloma Varga Weisz

Paloma Varga Weisz was born in 1966 in Mannheim, Germany and lives and works in Dusseldorf. She is renowned for her sculptures in wood, ceramics and metal and has exhibited since the 2000s.

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 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. www.neon.org.gr

The Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades constitutes a Directorate of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports. It is responsible for all the material remains that have been brought to light or are preserved in the territory of the island complex of the Cyclades. These evidences of human presence date back to Early Prehistory and continue until the establishment of the Modern Greek State, in AD 1830. Such a broad chronological context incorporates many different expressions of the cultural heritage of the area: archaeological sites, monuments, castles, traditional settlements and of course a whole world of movable finds and relics that are selectively presented in the Ephorate's museums and collections.

During recent years, the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades has developed an extensive action plan aiming to manage the voluminous cultural capital under its responsibility. The protection and the thorough documentation of the archaeological, architectural, and historical data of the monuments are the primary, essential act of this initiative. Having successfully attracted important donations and funding through competitive European programmes, the Ephorate is working towards the conservation, restoration, and promotion of important archaeological sites and monuments. The work of the Ephorate is also

focused on communicating its work, engaging with the local community, keeping an active presence in international scientific and museological fora, and implementing new ways of expression. In line with these efforts, this summer the Ephorate opens up towards the world of contemporary art, wishing to underline the revitalizing force of the form and timeless inspiration, and the need for a dialogue between the 'established' past and contemporary artistic expression.

EXHIBITION INFORMATION:

Exhibition dates: 17 May - 31 October 2019

OPENING HOURS:

Mon, Wed, Sun: 09.00-16.00

Thu-Sat: 09.00-21.00

Tue: Closed

All proceeds support the activities of the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos.

PRESS ENQUIRIES:

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