

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM
OF MYKONOS

**THE
PALACE
AT
4 A.M.**

**18.05 –
31.10.2019**

Lynda Benglis
Haris Epaminonda
Simone Fattal
Petrit Halilaj
Ian Law
Maria Loizidou
Daria Martin
Duro Olowu
Zohra Opoku
Rena Papaspyrou
Stefania Strouza
Barthélémy Togo
Paloma Varga Weisz

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Archaeological Museum of Mykonos

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

The Palace at 4 a.m. is organized and commissioned by NEON Organization
for Culture and Development D.Daskalopoulos and presented
in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades.

OPENING HOURS

MON & WED & SUN: 09:00 – 16:00

THU-SAT: 09:00 – 21:00

TUE: CLOSED

THE ADMISSION TICKET SUPPORTS THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF MYKONOS

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Ephorate of
Antiquities
of Cyclades

The Archaeological Museum of Mykonos: when the past welcomes the present

Significant artists, from the four corners of the earth, were invited to install, alongside selected antiquities from the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos and its permanent collections, a new, hybrid museum synthesis with multiple readings.

Paying tribute to the cosmopolitan spirit of ancient Delos and especially that of modern-day Mykonos, the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades in cooperation with NEON, interposes an intriguing multicultural exhibition, *The Palace at 4 a.m.*, in one of the leading archeological museums of the Cyclades - holy arks of Greek cultural heritage. This brief respite from the museum's archaeognostic exhibitions alludes to the complex cultural landscape in which archaeological heritage is constantly called upon to confirm its position.

The Archaeological Museum of Mykonos, having established its position on the cultural map of the cosmopolitan island, 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

The Palace at 4 a.m.

The Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, in collaboration with NEON, present a contemporary art exhibition inspired by the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos. The show takes its title from an iconic sculpture by the modernist artist 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 totemic entity. 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. Its statues, architectural fragments, vessels and tombstones have been collected here, 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 thirteen artists. Their work is juxtaposed with the Museum's collection and additional treasures selected by the archaeologists of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades.

Giving contemporary form to ancient materials and symbols, the artists reveal commonalities that span millennia, cultures and continents. It is the everyday objects we create that attest to how we live, who or what we revere, and the cultural cross pollination that comes through our interactions with other societies. 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.

The works selected for *The Palace at 4 a.m.* will demonstrate how craftsmanship has always responded to and reflected daily concerns, practical needs and symbolic rituals – the impulse to imprint hand on clay, weave threads into patterns and piece together fragments into a coherent story. It will demonstrate how a community is altered and shaped by the movement of people, whether arriving as traders at the ancient port of Delos or as present day migrants fleeing their native lands. 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.

Many artisans and artists of the ancient world are anonymous and share a unified style and technique. By contrast, contemporary artists today are highly individualized with a distinct philosophy, methodology and aesthetic. Yet the juxtaposition of the artefacts of antiquity with works of art made today, reveals shared sensibilities, fears and desires. Multiple narratives abound – from human suffering, loss and memory to animism, metamorphosis and ritual, revealing a cosmos that is at once ancient and modern.

Iwona Blazwick and Elina Kountouri
Curators

Lynda Benglis

Living between her native America, and Greece and India, Lynda Benglis (b. 1941) is a revolutionary force in painting and in sexual politics. Just as she challenged the art world's male star system with a naked, dildo wielding self-portrait placed as an ad in Artforum magazine in 1974, she also took on the conventions of painting. Benglis liberated painting from its framed vertical surface by pouring it on the floor and letting its liquidity and pigmentation shape itself.

This gestural quality also characterises her ceramics. *Apache Mohave* writhes like a snake or an exploded tyre, its roughly frilled edges adding to its latent energy. While its yellow and brown glaze edged with blue suggests the deserts and skies of the American south-west, the title pays tribute to the indigenous people who once lived in harmony with the harsh environment of the Mojave. *ADIA* also expresses the heft and weight of clay and the action of shaping it. Although it is abstract, its arched form and pink glaze are like an adobe hut. Rather than using it to make vessels, Benglis transforms clay into performative sculpture that also expresses the terrain from which it comes.

***Apache Mohave*, 1992**
Ceramic
33 x 38.1 x 35.6 cm
D.Daskalopoulos Collection

***ADIA*, 2013**
Glazed ceramic
40.6 x 53.3 x 27.9 cm
D.Daskalopoulos Collection

Haris Epaminonda

To walk through an installation by Haris Epaminonda (b.1980) is to enter a three dimensional still life, where objects are protagonists. Inspired by landscapes and interiors reproduced in found books and magazines, Epaminonda's environments, photographs and films range through the history of material culture. Based in Berlin the artist also draws inspiration from the terrain and artifacts of her native Cyprus. Here she juxtaposes modern objects that mimic antiquity and take an unexpected journey into female sexuality: an equestrian statuette; a snake coiling itself around the torso and arms of a naked woman; the page of a book illustrating a Greek vase where a woman pleasures herself with not one but two dildos. The feminine eros that crackles from these objects is counterpointed with the pure geometry of three spheres and the cool platonic forms of a column and a staircase, painted to look like marble. Like Giacometti, she unlocks the theatrical and surreal potential of museum furniture. The column is a stage for the gesturing statue; the bronze horse emerges dramatically from behind the white steps against a backdrop of the sky. An elegant composition in silhouette, colour, perspective and line, this installation is both painterly and poetic.

Untitled #01 g/j, 2018

Trompe l'oeil painting on wooden structures: column (115 x 20 x 20 cm), panel (180 x 90 x 1.8 cm), stairs (51 x 85 x 60 cm), metal spheres (23, 13 and 18 cm in diameter), bronze female figurine (25.7 x 8.5 x 8.5 cm), bronze horse figurine (19 x 19 x 8 cm), framed found book page (33.6 x 25.7 x 0.4 cm), small Japanese bronze vase (16.5 x 5.5 x 5.5 cm)
320 x 215 cm
Courtesy the artist and Rodeo, London/Piraeus

Simone Fattal

Simone Fattal (b. 1942) has an instinctive understanding of history as a continuous movement. Her very first clay sculpture of a man – standing, headless figure – reminded her both of the broken torsos of sculptures found on archaeological sites and also of war-torn Beirut where she grew up after her family moved there from Syria. This conjunction of ancient and modern, and of fragility and resilience, has informed her stoneware sculptures – both figurative and abstract – ever since. By placing her works on pedestals as if they were ruins recovered from an architectural dig, Fattal evokes an ecosystem of memory, fragility and displacement. She encourages the viewer to supply missing pieces from their imagination – to reinstate in their mind's eye the human torso of a centaur, or to conjure up the branches of a tree from the stump of its trunk, or the whole structure of a temple from a segment of a wall or a lone pillar. Fattal is also drawn to the way that glazes on clay create a colour and shiny patina that cannot be achieved in a painting. She uses them to reinvigorate our perception of ancient buildings and artefacts from which colour has often been leached by the passage of time.

Broken temple I, 2018

Glazed stoneware
30 x 33 x 14 cm
Courtesy the artist

Broken temple II, 2018

Glazed stoneware
32 x 42 x 34 cm
Courtesy the artist

Broken temple III, 2018

Glazed stoneware
8 x 32 x 18 cm
Courtesy the artist

Pyreus, 2018

Glazed stoneware
21 x 34 x 18 cm
Courtesy the artist

Centaur, 1999

Glazed stoneware
75 x 42 x 50 cm
Courtesy the artist and Karma International, Zurich/Los Angeles

Petrit Halilaj

Suspended in the corner of the museum is the enemy of all conservationists – a gigantic moth. Petrit Halilaj (b.1986) made this beautiful insect with his mother, using a Qilim carpet from his native Kosovo. A nocturnal creature drawn to the light, the moth can be seen as a metaphor for all those who, by virtue of their ethnicity or sexuality, can only be themselves under the cover of darkness. One of a series, his moths are also costumes that Halilaj wears in performance to metamorphose from human to animal. Having grown up as a refugee from the 1998-99 Kosovan civil war Halilaj, who lives between Berlin, Mantua and Runik in Kosovo, often uses natural materials and cultural artefacts from his homeland. Just as this museum is full of artefacts removed from the island of Delos, the sculptures Halilaj presents here are made from Neolithic vessels that were excavated from a site beneath his ancestral home. Halilaj has given the shards of pottery elegant spindly legs to transform them into birds. Flight and habitat are persistent motifs in his work. If the museum is a retirement home for the objects of the past he has installed its opposite – two giant earthy nests from which his Neolithic pottery birds can take flight into the future.

RU, 2017

Qilim carpet from Kosovo, flokati, polyester, chenille wire, steel, brass;
installation with flickering light bulbs
210 x 160 x 28 cm, 860 x 160 x 28 cm
Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris/London

Do you realise there is a rainbow even if it's night!? (gold green), 2017

Objects reproducing Neolithic artefacts from the region of Runik, Kosovo.
Clay, plaster, resin, pigments, brass
Dimensions variable
Courtesy kamel mennour, Paris/London

Ian Law

The ceramic cineraria created by British artist Ian Law (b. 1984) resemble Etruscan funerary urns with a sculpture of the deceased adorning the lid of a small chest. Rather than placing ashes inside the chest Law instead combines them with clay and water to make a glaze for its exterior. For an earlier series of cineraria Law used ashes from a Victoria Plum tree that grew in his grandparents' garden to infuse the urns with their memory and allude to the branches of their family tree. This glazing technique means that Law's cineraria can simultaneously be repositories of ashes but still remain empty, suggesting those bereavements not memorialized and others yet to come. The main collection of the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos results from a number of 'purifications' executed by the city-state of Athens, transferring the entire contents of all the graves on Delos to a common grave, *Vothros Katharsis* ('purification pit') on the neighbouring island of Rheneia. Four times the size of its sister island Delos and separated from it by a small strait, Rheneia is also called *Great or Big Delos*. It was used as Delos's cemetery from 426/425 until 1 BC and its 'purification pit', covering an area of 400m² and containing hundreds of vessels and funerary offerings, was discovered and excavated by the Greek archaeologist Demetrios Stavropoulos between 1898 and 1900. In *The Palace at 4 a.m.* positioning Law's work next to urns retrieved from the 'purification pit' marks an historic moment - the first time a Greek archaeological museum has permitted contemporary art work to be exhibited alongside such precious, ancient artefacts.

Untitled, 2018

Reduced stoneware with Nuka glaze
57 x 23 x 11.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Rodeo, London/Piraeus

Untitled, 2018

Reduced stoneware with Nami Jiro glaze
42 x 18 x 11.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Rodeo, London/Piraeus

Untitled, 2018

Reduced stoneware with ash glaze
46 x 22.5 x 13 cm
Courtesy the artist and Rodeo, London/Piraeus

Maria Loizidou

Cypriot artist Maria Loizidou (b. 1958) makes her delicate, floating sculptures from a textile hand-woven from stainless steel and metallic thread. The repetitive motion involved in creating this material gives her work a sense of movement, continuity and ritual. As she suspends (using hooks attached to a metal structure) and sculpts it, she has in mind the primal form of a shelter. The title of the work, *Pelage*, means 'fur, hair or wool' signifying the protective layer between skin and the world yet the woven rigid metal 'skin' of Loizidou's sculptures also lets through the light suggesting fragility. At its centre, a splash of red - in a shade described by the artist as 'sanguine' - suggests the life force of blood ebbing away. Positioned outside in the courtyard, *Pelage* is exposed to the elements whose unpredictability is reflected in epitaphs inscribed on the Archaeological Museum's collection of marble headstones recording the death of people from Delos.

Loizidou's work questions the false division often made between craft and art. By combining the two in her work she emphasises how traditionally female domestic crafts such as weaving provide a vital link to the heritage of our past and contribute a unique contemporary sculptural language.

***Pelage*, 2018**

Handwoven stainless steel surface, suspended from a metal structure

180 x 160 x 40 cm

Courtesy the artist and Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki

Daria Martin

An American artist who lives and works in London, Daria Martin (b. 1973) makes films that explore psychic states and the ghosts that haunt both people and cultures. *In the Palace* is one of her first moving image works and is part of a trilogy. It recreates Giacometti's *Palace at 4 a.m.* as a 7 metre high stage set. The artist imagines entering his tiny stage to direct a group of statuesque performers for whom she also created costumes. They strike dramatic poses that remind us of avant garde dance. In the artist's words, 'the performers in *In the Palace* parade degraded moments of 20th Century culture: the theatrical gestures of the Bauhaus, George Platt Lyne's lush photographs of the American Ballet Theater, the stylized choreography of *The Ballet Russe*, Martha Graham's *Lamentation*. *In the Palace* scrutinizes and releases these moments' weird merging of hyperbolic emotional content and rigorous formalism.' The vacant expressions of the performers and the sound of rain lend this elegiac film a melancholic atmosphere that resonates with our experience of ruins. Martin conjures the ghosts of 20th century Modernism and its unrealized dreams of utopia.

***In the Palace*, 2000**

16mm film, 7 minutes

© Daria Martin, Courtesy Maureen Paley, London

Original artwork: 16mm film. Presented here as a digital projection for the purposes of this screening

Duro Olowu

Nigerian born, London-based Duro Olowu (b. 1965) is a pioneering and inspiring fashion designer who believes in the ability of fabrics to cross borders and overcome barriers to tell universal stories. He combines fabrics and prints from different cultures in unexpected juxtapositions of pattern and texture to reflect a cosmopolitan and contemporary world.

Olowu develops this technique in a specially commissioned new work for *The Palace at 4 a.m.*, creating a textile mosaic or assemblage inspired by the mosaics in Delos, particularly the one found in the House of Dionysos. Almost half of the total number of Hellenistic mosaics that survive today are found on Delos dating back to the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BC. They are reminders of a time when Delos buzzed with creativity and commerce as craftsmen from different countries worked together on tessellated mosaics and merchants traded textiles, not only generating revenue but also spreading designs and techniques from their native lands to create a common visual language. Around 69BC Delos, no longer a vital commercial port, was largely abandoned but today Olowu again takes up the story of cohabitation, trade and collaboration. Using textiles from his personal collection sourced during extensive travels in Africa and Europe over the last 20 years he has created a dramatic double-sided drapery that unveils the exhibition. Here he pieces together disparate patterns, textures and colours from different times and distant places to create a new universal narrative of peaceful coexistence.

***Passions, Fictions, Demokratia*, 2019**

Fabric
355.6 x 195.58 cm
Courtesy the artist
Commissioned by NEON

***Six Months*, 2019**

Fabric
76 x 76 cm
Courtesy the artist
Commissioned by NEON

Zohra Opoku

Brought up in Germany, Zohra Opoku (b. 1976) now lives in Accra where she staged the 2015 intervention, *Who Is Wearing My T-Shirt: The Billboard Project*. By draping second-hand clothing on five billboards around the city Opoku highlighted global inequality and the waste inherent in the western fashion industry that results in bulk exports of discarded clothes to Africa and devastates the local textile industry.

In Opoku's photographic self-portraits she poses expressionless, with eyes and mouth closed, standing behind vegetation so that the viewer catches only glimpses of her and something always remains partially concealed. In one image we are able to see her high-necked white blouse but the top of her head is obscured by the branches of a rhododendron bush; in another her clothes are hard to discern, veiled by the grass-like leaves of cyperus papyrus.

Opoku screen-prints her images onto second-hand textiles including bed sheets and rougher textured cloths resembling the traditional woven Kente cloth of her Ghanaian heritage. Often the textiles are donated by members of her family so that from the very beginning her artistic investigations into collective memory and cultural identity unfold on materials already imbued with family history.

***Cyperus Papyrus*, 2015**

Screenprint on grey cotton jersey
105 x 79 cm
Courtesy the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

***Dicksonia Antartica*, 2015**

Screenprint on creme cotton
105 x 79 cm
Courtesy the artist and Guillaume Clignet Collection

***Ficus Carica*, 2015**

Screenprint on beige satin
105 x 79 cm
Courtesy the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

***Life Oak Tree*, 2015**

Screenprint on rosé cotton jersey
105 x 79 cm
Courtesy the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

***Rhododendron*, 2015–2016**

Creme cotton canvas
105 x 79 cm
Courtesy the artist and Guillaume Clignet Collection

Rena Papaspyrou

During the 1970s Rena Papaspyrou (b. 1938) was part of an avant-garde movement that included Celia Daskopoulou, Bia Davou and Dioxanti and propelled female artists into the limelight in the previously male-dominated Greek art scene. During this time of political upheaval and oppression prior to the establishment of the Third Hellenic Republic, Papaspyrou found her artistic voice through assembling found materials in abstract collages. In *Small sampler from the Urban Landscape* Papaspyrou, trained in mosaic-making, carefully arranges her collection of discarded papers, scrapings from the walls of abandoned houses and pieces of wood and metal on plexiglass panels that become memory boards of her personal life and a tableau vivant of the life of the city; matter as a modern ruin.

Papaspyrou is fascinated by the impact of nature on the urban environment – how the elements affect colour and patina so that materials, even though mass-produced, become unique according to how and where they are used. She considers everyday materials to have such innate beauty that it is pointless to alter them except, perhaps, for the occasional addition of a pencil or pen mark.

Small sampler from the Urban Landscape, 2018-19

Wood, plexiglass
99 x 90 cm
Collection of the artist

Small sampler from the Urban Landscape, 1979-81

Various papers on plexiglass
100 x 100 cm
Private Collection, Athens

Small sampler from the Urban Landscape, 1979

Wall, plexiglass
100 x 100 cm
Private Collection, Athens

Small sampler from the Urban Landscape, 1979

Metal
100 x 100 cm
Private Collection

Stefania Strouza

*The centre will not hold*¹

Stefania Strouza's (b. 1982) sculptural map is a contemporary shrine to the female goddesses originating in her native Greece and beyond. It is constructed of irregular pieces resembling *baetyls*, the shapeless stones that were often objects of cult worship in ancient Middle East. Strouza creates her abstract work by first drawing shapes and patterns onto paper. She creates a mould by transferring the design onto a thin piece of clay and etching the patterns into its surface. This shape is cast in plaster so that the design appears in relief and Strouza then fills the background areas with liquid plastic. Once they have set Strouza, arranges the composite pieces on the wall, a process that resembles the careful ordering of excavated fragments on an archaeological site.

Strouza's spiral pattern represents the mythical wandering of Zeus's lover, the goddess Leto, across the islands and coastline of the Aegean Sea. At the centre of the spiral lies the island of Delos where Zeus, her lover, had arranged for Leto to find refuge so she could give birth to the twins Apollo, god of light and Artemis, goddess of the hunt, safe from the wrath of Zeus's wife Hera.

The lined design inscribed on the individual pieces refers to the journey of another goddess, Isis, whose cult as the protector of seafarers expanded from Egypt to the Mediterranean during Greco-Roman times due to the arrival of travelling merchants. Strouza sourced the image of Isis from a fragment found on Delos dating to the 2nd century AD showing her standing mast-like, on the prow of a ship, holding a *himation* – a cloak or wrap – as if it were a sail.

For Strouza Isis's travels represent just one of the many networks of exchange and trade that have criss-crossed the world for centuries.

¹ The title of this work refers to a line in the first verse of the poem 'The Second Coming' by W.B. Yeats.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

The center will not hold, 2019

Plaster, liquid plastic, pewter and acrylic paint
270 x 170 cm
Courtesy the artist and Antonopoulou Gallery
Commissioned by NEON

Barthélémy Toguo

Just as the figures on Greek vases picture the lives of the ancients, so Barthélémy Toguo's (b. 1967) elegant porcelain vessels depict aspects of life today, albeit tragic ones. Based in Paris, Toguo also works in his native Cameroon where he founded Bandjoun Station, an art workshop that promotes the creation and understanding of art and culture for local communities. The vases presented here are decorated with motifs drawn from the natural world, both visible and invisible – leaves, blossoms, a bat – and a virus. They are interlinked with the African body, as fragment and as figure. Their theme is the virus. Ebola, Dengue or AIDS are viruses that can decimate communities across the African continent. All are preventable. Yet, because of the inequality between north and south, the legacy of the colonial extraction of resources, the corruption of the ruling elites and civil war, the people continue to suffer. Toguo's delicate palette of red, blue and green on white relates these vases to a history of porcelain ware. Titled *Vanquish the virus!* they are also part of a family of textiles and packaging used in societies where there is low literacy to deliver educational or political messages.

***Vaincre le virus! II*, 2016**

Porcelaine
200 x 50 cm
© Barthélémy Toguo/Courtesy Galerie
Lelong & Co. and Bandjoun Station

***Vaincre le virus! III*, 2016**

Porcelaine
200 x 50 cm
© Barthélémy Toguo/Courtesy Galerie
Lelong & Co. and Bandjoun Station

***Vaincre le virus! VIII*, 2016**

Porcelaine
200 x 50 cm
© Barthélémy Toguo/Courtesy Galerie
Lelong & Co. and Bandjoun Station

***Vaincre le virus! XI*, 2016**

Porcelaine
200 x 50 cm
© Barthélémy Toguo/Courtesy Galerie
Lelong & Co. and Bandjoun Station

Paloma Varga Weisz

Paloma Varga Weisz (b. 1966) who lives and works in Germany, trained in drama and later in woodcarving – a method typical of north European Renaissance statuary. Her wooden, bronze and ceramic figures often fuse the human with the animal and the botanical in a way that recalls Greek myths of metamorphoses. Like the Greek gods this figure is also from the heavens, but she is tumbling towards earth, literally overturning the classical conventions of the standing figure. *The Falling Woman* is held by swathes of fabric that suggest the drapery and celestial cloudscapes of baroque painting. Her calm contemplative face and balletic hands give her an atmosphere of serene resignation. She may be yearning to leave Mount Olympus to live among humans. She may be Eve falling from paradise because she has eaten from the tree of knowledge. This sculpture may also represent falling from consciousness towards a dream state. Varga Weisz's beautiful statuary gestures toward both universal mythologies and psychic states of being.

***Fallen Frau, Doppelköpfig (Falling Woman, Double headed)*, 2004**

Carved limewood and fabric,
220 x 76 x 38 cm
The Rachofsky Collection

The Archaeological Museum of Mykonos and its exhibits

The Purification of Delos

In the winter of 426-5 BC, according to an oracle, as referred to in Thucydides (3.104), the Athenians purified Delos: they exhumed all the dead, carried the bones and the burial gifts that accompanied them to the neighbouring island of Rheneia and buried them in a pit. This pit was located and excavated in 1898-1900 by Demetrios Stavropoulos, the first Greek Ephor of Antiquities of Delos/Mykonos, who named it the *Purification Bothros* (Pit). Gathered in the pit were thousands of finds, mainly vases, but also a variety of other small objects, dating from the Geometric period (9th-8th century BC) to 426-425 BC, which offered valuable information on early Delos.

But besides the purification, the oracle also had a second, perhaps more important, part, as it forbade anyone from being born or dying on Delos. At a time when, as the funerary steles irrefutably affirm, people were also identified – in addition to their name and surname – by their place of origin, and at a time when the Athenians boasted of their indigeneity, the prohibition of births and deaths effectively made the inhabitants of Delos *polisless* – people without a city.

In this way the Athenians succeeded in securing the unrivalled control of the great Sanctuary of Apollo. At the same time, however, this prohibition was inextricably linked to the sanctity of Delos. Thus, it was maintained, and the inhabitants of Delos continued to be transferred to Rheneia for their last moments until the end of the ancient world.

Rheneia and the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos

In 1897, Demetrios Stavropoulos, the then Ephorate of Delos/Mykonos, began excavating Rheneia. Soon after, in the southern part of the island, just across from the coast of Delos, he uncovered the Purification Pit, while in the surrounding area he discovered the extensive necropolis with the graves of the inhabitants of Delos who, after 426-425 BC and until Roman times, steadily continued to be buried there.

The vases and the small objects from the Purification Pit, as well as the findings from the later Delian necropolis, the rich gifts (vases, jewellery, personal articles, etc.) and, above all, the numerous funerary steles and funerary statues, which make up one of the most complete collections of funerary sculpture of the Hellenistic period, dictated the urgent need for a Museum where they would be housed.

In 1899, construction began on the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos. It was completed – not without problems – in 1902, making it the State Archaeological Service's oldest museum building in the Cyclades and one of the oldest museums nationwide. With modifications and additions over time, the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos continues to fascinate with the stories of the necropolis of Delos and it is the only museum whose collection is mainly devoted not to exhibits from its archaeologically rich home of Mykonos, but to artefacts from what is today the uninhabited neighbouring island of Rheneia.

The nuptial *lebetes* from the Purification Pit

Among the numerous and good quality Attic red-figure vases found in the Purification Pit are three fragmentary nuptial *lebetes* (*lebetes gamikoi*) with long stands.

The most famous of them has been associated with one of the most important vase painters of the Attic Kerameikos, the *Syriskos Painter*, who carefully and accurately rendered a dance scene featuring beautifully dressed women, dancing hand-in-hand to the sounds of Apollo's lyre. The god is also present in the scene at a second level. The other two identical vases are decorated with scenes from the world of women and the matroneum, revealing details of the clothing, adornment and daily habits of 5th century BC Athenian women.

Vases of this type were primarily used in rituals. They would be carried to wedding ceremonies filled with water to be used in the nuptial bath. For this reason, they are often decorated with scenes from the world of women, such as these examples from Mykonos.

That these three vases were discovered in the Purification Pit is not surprising, as the nuptial *lebetes* are quite often found in cemeteries. It is indicative of how important they were to the women to which they belonged that they accompanied them on their final voyage.

Figurine of a dancer

Standing out among the finds excavated at Rheneia is the figurine of a dancer dressed in a long-sleeved garment, trousers and a Phrygian cap. The dancer has her arms raised above the head, which seems to be shaking vigorously as the body moves.

Figurines of this type are fairly common in the Hellenistic world and are usually associated with the *oklasma* [ὀκλασμα] – a dance which is so called because the dancer squatted [ὀκλάζω] – or with the *igdisma* [ἰγδισμα] – so called due to the dancer's bending down to take the shape of a pestle [ἰγδιον]. A particularly intense dance, it is thought to be of Persian origin and is closely linked to the world of women, since it was often danced exclusively by women in the ceremonies of the Thesmophoria.

The Mykonos Pithos

The most well-known vase in the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos is a pithos (storage vessel) from the early 7th century BC, attributed to the relief pottery workshops of the island of Tenos. The 1.35-metre-tall pithos was found in the town of Mykonos and had been used for the pot burial of adults. The theme of its impressive decoration, in the form of metopes on the neck and body of the vase, is the Fall of Troy and is inspired by the epic poetry of that period.

On the neck, in one of its earliest representations in Ancient Greek art, the Trojan Horse is depicted: the horse is standing on wheels, while in the small squares along its body – in the form of windows – one can make out the Achaean warriors hiding inside; some of their comrades, who have already climbed out, don their armour in preparation to attack.

The scenes on the body of the pithos depict the violence and horror of war in a dramatic way, as the attacking Achaeans seize the Trojan women and kill young children before the eyes of their mothers who plead in vain for their salvation. The little boy that the Achaean warrior has grabbed by the ankles in front of his mother's outstretched arms is identified as Astyanax, the son of Hector. Other figures are identified – with greater or lesser certainty – as Menelaus and Helen, Cassandra and Deiphobus.

The overall composition of the representation, the first “Guernica” of history as it has aptly been described, sends a powerful and enduring anti-war message, which is as topical today as ever.

Maria Koutsoumpou

Archaeologist, Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades

Artists' 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 film-maker she is now celebrated for her work in ceramics. Fattal has been showing 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 makes actions 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

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.

The Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades

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 the 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 programs, 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 contributors

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Barthélémy Toguo, Paloma Varga Weisz by Iwona Blazwick
Texts on Simone Fattal, Ian Law, Maria Loizidou, Duro Olowu, Zohra Opoku,
Rena Papaspyrou, Stefania Strouza by Elina Kountouri

NEON

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