



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Culture and Sports

HELLENIC REPUBLIC - MINISTRY OF CULTURE & SPORTS
MOMus
METROPOLITAN ORGANISATION OF MUSEUMS OF VISUAL ARTS OF THESSALONIKI



58. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte
Partecipazioni Nazionali

Press Release

**Pavilion of Greece
at the 58th International Art Exhibition
— La Biennale di Venezia**

Artists **Panos Charalambous, Eva Stefani, and Zafos Xagoraris**
represent Greece at the **Biennale Arte 2019**
in an exhibition titled ***Mr. Stigl***

curated by **Katerina Tselou**

May 11–November 24, 2019
Pre-opening: May 8–10, 2019
Inauguration: May 10, 2019, 2 p.m.
Giardini, Venice

Artists **Panos Charalambous, Eva Stefani, and Zafos Xagoraris** represent Greece at the 58th International Art Exhibition—La Biennale di Venezia (May 11–November 24, 2019) with new works and in situ installations, curated by **Katerina Tselou**.

Lining the Greek Pavilion in Venice—both inside and outside—with installations, images, and sound, the three artists highlight the different aspects of our political, social, and private lives. In the environment they create, there is an constant transposition occurring from grand narratives to personal stories. The unknown (or less known) details of history emerge, subverting the indisputable character of the official record in a playful manner.

Mr. Stigl, who lends his name to the title of the Greek Pavilion exhibition, is a historical paradox, a constructive misunderstanding, a fantastical hero of an unknown story whose poetics take us to the periphery of official history, but also of reality. He may be an ironic narrator who introduces us to a space of doubt, paraphrased sounds, and nonsensical identities and histories.

What does history rewrite and what does it conceal?

The voices introduced by **Panos Charalambous** reach us through the rich collection of vinyl records he has accumulated since the 1980s. By combining installations with sonic performances, Charalambous brings forward voices that have been forgotten or silenced, recomposing their orality through an idiosyncratic play of vinyl using eagle's claws, rose thorns, and agave leaves. His new work ***An Eagle Was Standing*** is an installation covering the Greek Pavilion floor with 20,000 drinking glasses upon which an ecstatic, "ultrasonic" dance is performed—a vortex of deep listening. The viewer is invited to walk on this transparent stage and leave behind an echo, a trace in the present. Two archival recordings from the artist's collection accompany the sounds emerging from the glass installation, transforming the listener-viewer into an "aficionado." His multisensorial installation forms a eulogy to the body held in contempt, a hymn to the Dionysian element of popular dance existing in the periphery of official history.

Eva Stefani has a different approach to official history. She uses the short narrative form traditionally associated with the periphery of history and thereby considered marginal. Her new work titled **Only Men** documents the everyday life of several middle-aged men; multiple narratives composed of “infinitesimally small” stories move between realism and paradox, outlining a man’s world in a very different, anti-heroic way, removed from the stereotypical depiction of masculinity. It is of no importance who these men are. They could be a poet, the owner of a taverna in Metaxourgeio, a retired tailor, or a builder meeting an immigrant in a coffee shop. Through **Window** she retells a different story, the story of time that does not pass and seems to have stopped. A woman sitting in a room references the significance of silence and nonaction as unrecorded history. Archival footage of parades and national celebrations is set against tiny pieces of text in the work titled **Mouth**. The text written by Stefani herself, subversively intertwines private and public speech. Like the pages of a diary containing different entries that are simultaneously bound together, Stefani’s heroes bear—without aiming to do so—the intimacy of the human condition through an unofficial telling of the past that casts light upon history.

Zafos Xagoraris transforms the architecture of the Greek Pavilion by reconstructing the military prison gate of Makronisos. His installation **The Concession** transports us back to 1948, connecting the Greek past (specifically the troubled years of the Civil War and concentration camps) with the movement of modernism and the figure of Peggy Guggenheim. That year, the Pavilion of Greece was offered to the American collector to show her pivotal collection of modern art for the first time on European soil, changing the history of the Biennale itself. During the opening, displaced soldiers and civilians were forced to build replicas of ancient Greek temples at the Makronisos concentration camp as part of a political and cultural “reformation.” The three-dimensional portrayal of a hybrid building inside of the Greek Pavilion references the architectural connection between the Pavilion and the buildings forcibly created by the exiled islanders, as if the outcome of a collision between two contradictory events occurring during the same period of history—a time that defined the collective memory of the land as well as the stories of people living apart.

The **Metropolitan Organisation of Museums of Visual Arts of Thessaloniki (MOMus)** has been appointed commissioner of Greece’s national participation by the **Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports**. The role of commissioner is undertaken by **Syrago Tsiara**, deputy director of the MOMus –Museum of Contemporary Art and MOMus–Experimental Center for the Arts. The project is funded by the **Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports**.

The project is powered by **Onassis Culture**, with the support of **NEON** Organization for Culture and Development, the **Greek National Tourism Organization** and **Aegean Airlines** as official air carrier sponsor.

Inauguration of the Greek Pavilion: Friday May 10, 2019, 2 p.m.

A sonic performance will be presented by Panos Charalambous during the inauguration (10 min.).

Press material and photos here:
mrstigl.com/press

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ARTWORKS

Panos Charalambous

***An Eagle Was Standing*, 2018–19**

Installation, dimensions variable; performance

20,000 drinking glasses, marble, two turntables, six loudspeakers, embalmed eagle, vinyl records

Sonic material:

"To paixnidi sou skiro" (Your game is tough) with T. Karnavas, amateur recording during the August 15 celebrations in Acarnania, 1987, "Lamenti de Epiro I, II" by Demetrio Stratos, *Metrodora* (Cramps Records, 1976)

The artwork is accompanied by a limited-edition double vinyl with recordings assembled by the artist (Rekem Records, 2019).

Eva Stefani

***Anaglyphs*, 2019**

Work includes:

***Only Men*, 2019**

16 mm, Hi8, VHS-C, HDV, color, sound
70 min.

***Window*, 2019**

Digital video, color, no sound
2 min.

***Mouth*, 2019**

Archival footage, black-and-white, no sound
3.5 min.

Zafos Xagoraris

***The Concession*, 2018–19**

Installation, dimensions variable

This installation comprises the reconstruction of the Greek Pavilion gate (950 cm x 1,250 cm x 150 cm), a three-dimensional depiction of a hybrid building (90 cm x 140 cm x 90 cm), and a display case with archival material from the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA), Athens; Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI), Athens; Venice Biennale Historical Archives, Venice; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York; and Peggy Guggenheim Collection Archives, Venice.

BIOGRAPHIES

Participating Artists

Panos Charalambous

Panos Charalambous (b. 1956, Acarnania, Greece) creates site-specific installations and public audiovisual presentations. Through in-progress units and sonic dance happenings, he is concerned with the "survival" potential of patterns, voices, sounds, ideas, feelings, and productive behaviors; "thinning" the prevalence of the present, and making new arrangements and distributions possible. Abdicating from the representational status quo, he pursues ionization through his own incidents of "en-act-ment." At the same time, he explores his expressive ability as a subject within the "minor Modern Greek scene" and "indigenous establishment" of a multicultural environment.

He has participated in international group exhibitions, including: *Voice-o-graph & Flatus Vocis*, documenta 14, Athens and Kassel, 2017; *Genii Loci: Greek Art from 1930 to the Present*, Saint Petersburg, 2016; Venice International Performance Art Week: *The Dream of Antigone*, Venice, 2016; White House Biennial, Varna, 2016; *Break-Through*, ARCO, Madrid, 2004; *Eidos*, Besançon, 2004; Copenhagen European Capital of Culture, 1996; *Ogrody*, Poznań, 1996; *Kunst-Europa: Visual European Landscape*, Berlin, 1991; Glasgow European Capital of Culture, 1990; *Out of Limits*, Poznań, 1990; and 3rd Biennial of Young Artists from Mediterranean Europe, Barcelona, 1987.

Solo shows include: *Aquis Submersus*, Athens, 2014–15; *Tobacco Area 1986–2011*, Athens, 2011; *Voice-O-Graph*, Athens, 2006–07; *Phonopolis*, Athens, 2003–04; *Psychagogia II*, Athens, 2001; *1496–2000 / como humo se va*, Athens, 1999–2000; *Psychagogia I: Recreation*, Athens and Thessaloniki, 1997; *ΙΧΘΥΣ*, Athens, 1995; *Concerning Fishing*, Athens, 1992; and *Story of Tobacco*, Berlin, 1991 and Athens, 1990, 1988.

He studied at the Athens School of Fine Arts in Greece under Nikos Kessanlis. Charalambous lives and works in Athens, where he is Rector of the School of Fine Arts.

panoscharalambous.com

Eva Stefani

Documentary filmmaker, visual artist, and poet, **Eva Stefani** (b. USA, 1964) uses video and super 8 film to make observational documentaries and short visual poems.

Selected filmography includes *Manuscript* (2017), *Virgin's Temple* (2017), *Dimitris Papaioannou* (2012), *Bathers* (2008), *What Time Is It?* (2007), *The Box* (2004), *Acropolis* (2001), and *Athene* (1995). She has been awarded international prizes, among: Principal Prize at the 64th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, National Quality Award from the Greek Ministry of Culture, International Film Critics Award (FIPRESCI), and 1st Prize for Short Documentary at Cinéma du Réel, Paris.

She has participated in international art exhibitions, most recently documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel (2017). She is the head of the Film Series at Patakis Publishers in Athens, as well as the author of two film books, *Documentary: The Observation Game* (Patakis, 2016) and *10 texts on Documentary* (Patakis, 2007), and a book of poetic prose, *Fin's Hair* (Polis, 2014).

She studied political science at University of Athens (BA); documentary filmmaking at Ateliers Varan, Paris; Cinema Studies at New York University (MA); and documentary at National Film & TV School,

London. She finished her PhD on Ethnographic Filmmaking in 1997 at Panteion University, Athens. Stefani is Associate Professor of History and Theory of Cinema, Faculty of Theatre Studies, University of Athens, and a Visiting Professor at Freie Universität Berlin.

evastefani.gr

Zafos Xagoraris

In his work, **Zafos Xagoraris** (b. Athens, 1963) often refers to historical details or disregarded events that he shifts to the present as if breathing life into a ghost. His research starts in situ or within the exhibition context.

He has participated in various exhibitions such as *Have We Met? Dialogues on Memory and Desire*, Stamps Gallery, Ann Arbor, 2018; documenta 14, Athens and Kassel, 2017; *Politiche della Natura*, Fondazione Zimei, Pescara, 2016; *PIGS*, Artium, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2016; *No Country for Young Men*, Bozar, Brussels, 2014; 4th Athens Biennale, 2013; *Sotto Quale Cielo*, Museo Riso, Palermo, 2011; Manifesta 7, Rovereto, 2008; 1st Thessaloniki Biennale, 2007; 1st Bienal del Fin del Mundo, Ushuaia, 2007; and 27th São Paulo Biennial, 2006. In 2015, he presented the outdoor installation *Downhill Classroom* commissioned by the Benaki Museum, Athens, and in 2016, *The Performance* for NEON City Project, Athens. During 2017–19, he organized the educational project *Dismantling Devices* with the collaboration of Onassis Cultural Centre at six elementary schools in Athens. He has been invited to present his work at universities, including: Luav, Venice; School of Visual Arts, New York; Academy of Fine Arts, Munich; Academy of Fine Arts, Palermo; University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; and School of the Art Institute, Chicago.

He was one of the curators of the Greek Pavilion at the 9th Venice Biennale of Architecture (2004), and the 2nd Athens Biennial (2009). He has been a Visiting Professor at Universities of Sassari and Patras, a Visiting Fulbright Scholar at Columbia University, and a Roman J. Witt Artist in Residence at University of Michigan. He is currently Professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts.

He studied at the Athens School of Fine Arts and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) under an Onassis Foundation scholarship. He was awarded his PhD on the construction of miracles by the “Hero of Alexandria,” National Technical University of Athens. Xagoraris lives and works in Athens.

zafosxagoraris.net

Curator

Katerina Tselou

Katerina Tselou (b. Athens, 1974) studied Literature and Art History at the University of Athens, and then moved to Paris for her postgraduate studies of Art Theory at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS).

She was Curatorial Advisor at documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel, as well as Assistant to the Artistic Director Adam Szymczyk (2014–17). She was a co-curator at the 4th Athens Biennale in 2013. From 2009 to 2013 she was the curator of the visual arts program at the National Theatre of Greece, and from 2007 to 2008 she worked as Exhibition Coordinator at Argos Centre for Art and Media in Brussels. She has also organized projects as an independent curator in Greece, collaborating with institutions such as the Athens School of Fine Arts, the Department of Architecture at the University of Thessaly, the European Film Festival, and Notos Theatre. Tselou lives and works in Athens.

Commissioner

Syrago Tsiara

Syrago Tsiara (b. Larissa, 1968) completed her studies in History and Archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and continued with an MA in Social History of Art at the University of Leeds. Her PhD dissertation was on art in public space and the formation of national identity and memory.

Since 2000, she has been working as a curator at the State Museum of Contemporary Art (now MOMus–Museum of Modern Art–Costakis Collection), organizing exhibitions, conferences and multidisciplinary events, and since 2007, she is the director of the Thessaloniki Centre of Contemporary Art (now MOMus–Experimental Center for the Arts). She has been responsible for staging numerous exhibitions, including: *Masquerades: Femininity, Masculinity and Other Certainties*; *Genius Seculi: Despina Meimaroglou and Deimantas Narkevičius*; *Leda Papaconstantinou: In the name of*; *Public Screen*; and *Ident-alter-ity* (co-curation).

She has taught Art in Public Space, Avant-Garde and Modernism in Europe, Greek Art (nineteenth and twentieth centuries), and Contemporary Art Theory and Methodology at the University of Thessaly from 2004–08, and in 2009, she co-curated the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art titled *Praxis: Art in Times of Uncertainty* with Gabriela Salgado and Bisi Silva. She is also the Director of the 6th and 7th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (2017 / 2019). Tsiara is the Deputy Director of MOMus–Museum of Contemporary Art and MOMus–Experimental Center for the Arts, and the National Commissioner of the Pavilion of Greece at the 58th International Art Exhibition—La Biennale di Venezia.

BIENNALE ARTE 2019

58th International Art Exhibition—La Biennale di Venezia titled *May You Live in Interesting Times* is curated by Ralph Rugoff.

PRE OPENING

The pre-opening for accredited press and professionals takes place on May 8–10, 2019.

The exhibition is open to the public from May 11 to November 24, 2019.

Closed on Mondays (except May 13, September 2, November 18, 2019)

Opening hours: 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Venue: Giardini, Venice

Inauguration of the Greek Pavilion: Friday May 10, 2019, 2 p.m.

A sonic performance will be presented by Panos Charalambous during the inauguration (10 min.).

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