

13 December 2019

Whitechapel Gallery Announces Winner of the 2019 NEON Curatorial Award

Whitechapel Gallery is delighted to announce **Annika Thiems** as the winner of the 2019 NEON Curatorial Award.

Now in its eighth year, the annual NEON Curatorial Award invites emerging curators to devise an imaginary exhibition proposal drawing from the D.Daskalopoulos Collection, which includes over 500 contemporary artworks by 220 leading international and Greek artists. For this year's Award proposals were submitted by aspiring curators from Greece, as well as students and alumni from the following Masters programmes: Curating the Art Museum, Courtauld Institute of Art; Curating Contemporary Art, Royal College of Art, and Curating, Goldsmiths College.

Annika Thiems received the award from NEON's Founder Dimitris Daskalopoulos for her submission proposal, *On Air, On Water* at a ceremony held at the Whitechapel Gallery on Friday 13 December.

Thiems' proposed exhibition, *On Air, On Water* is a three-part radio broadcast that uses two understandings of the word 'wave' – as in water-based wave, and radio transmission wave, to open up a conversation around cultural identities in flux.

Taking the form of micro-residencies, the winning proposal selects three artists from the D. Daskalopoulos Collection: Rivane Neuenschwander; Navine G. Khan-Dossos; and Nadeem Din-Gabisi, to each develop, record and stream one episode for the series. The episodes would be broadcast live from Radio Athènes – a broadcaster of contemporary visual culture based in Athens.

The project conceptually centred around Neuenschwander's 2008 sculptural installation, *Continental* (2008), explores themes of cultural identity in a state of constant flux, and the centrality of site-specificity in the artists' practise.

The judging panel for the 2019 NEON Curatorial Award are:

Adelaide Bannerman, Curator at Tiwani Contemporary and Producer for International Curators Forum, London; **Galini Notti**, independent curator (Athens, Greece); **Catherine Wood**, Senior Curator of International Art (Performance) at Tate Modern; chaired by **Dr. Nayia Yiakoumaki**, Curator Archive Gallery, Head of Curatorial Studies and Project Manager of NEON Curatorial Exchange & Award.

Press Release

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Of the winning proposal the judging panel commented: Annika Thiems' proposal *On Air On Water* is innovative and to the point; it has a strong conceptual basis and the idea is excellently articulated in practice. Her proposal is grounded on the work *Continental* (2008), a large sculptural piece formed from a basin filled with cloudy water with smaller empty basins floating within it, by Rivane Neuenschwander in the D.Daskalopoulos Collection. In addition, it utilises an existing economy of a broadcast network, which is financially smart and extends the reach of the project by making it accessible well beyond the site. Annika chooses both material and immaterial ways to address a post-national condition and cultural identities in flux. The water provides a strong metaphor for this and the work *Continental* is ideal to initiate such conversations. These dialogues, which are in the form of radio broadcasts transmitted from the independent project space Radio Athènes in Athens, are produced through residencies and give great possibility for further expansion and outreach.

Elina Kountouri, NEON's Director commented: The NEON Curatorial Award encourages a younger generation of curators to submit ideas that explore the boundaries of the discipline and propose innovative exhibition formats. Annika Thiems' well-deserved winning proposal inspires a thoughtful and original way of experiencing art, whilst integrating Radio Athènes, an important Greek cultural organisation.

The NEON Curatorial Award was established in 2012 to champion curatorial excellence and is part of an ongoing partnership between the Whitechapel Gallery and NEON, a non-profit organisation in Athens. Building links between emerging curators in London and across Greece, the prize celebrates the exchange of ideas and innovations in the presentation of contemporary art.

Annika Thiems is a recent graduate from the MFA Curating at Goldsmiths College working across independent publishing, live events and public programming. With a background in Psychology, Thiems' projects demonstrate her passion for experimental formats and aim to carve out space for interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration. She is currently editing *Eloquent Imprint*, a collection of new writing that gets rid of associations of purity, accuracy and fluency clinging to the idea of "native speakers" with contributions by Rehana Zaman, Amy Suo Wu, Jasleen Kaur, Urok Shirhan and Ming Lin among others. Previous projects include *Skin-Contact* (2019), a transient shop at Enclave that offered limited artist editions in the form of temporary tattoos; and *Territorial Interludes* (2019), an evening of readings at Tenderbooks around the British landscape and the language of territory with texts by Imani Robinson, Jala Wahid, Rebecca Bellantoni and more. Thiems co-curated the event series *Loud Bodies* (2018) alongside Mika Rottenberg's solo show at the Goldsmiths CCA and contributed to book projects with the Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens and the University of the Arts, Berlin. Thiems forms part of Zak Group, a London-based design and publishing studio that regularly collaborates with established artists and cultural practitioners on books, limited editions and exhibitions.

Notes to Editors

- The NEON Curatorial Award is open to curators across Greece and London, including current and alumni students from The Courtauld Institute, Goldsmiths College and the Royal College of Art. The award builds on the Whitechapel Gallery's local and international networks with academic departments of curatorial studies.

- Since the Curatorial Exchange/Award programme began in 2012, a total of 161 curators from Greece and London have participated to date.
- The NEON Curatorial Award is part of the NEON Curatorial Exchange, in which curators benefit from a four-day study trip to Athens and London, including guided tours of the Athenian and London art scene. The exchange is designed to open up networking and professional development opportunities for young curators. The programme is organised by the Whitechapel Gallery and has been devised by Dr. Nayia Yiakoumaki, Curator and Head of Curatorial Studies at the Whitechapel Gallery and Project Manager of the NEON Curatorial Exchange and Award
Applications for next year's award will open in summer 2020.
- NEON works to bring contemporary culture closer to everyone. As a non-profit organisation it aims to create new conversations and a larger, informed society around the arts. It aspires to change perceptions and introduce a culturally relevant and cosmopolitan activity in Greece. Founded by art collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, and under the Directorship of Elina Kountouri, NEON breaks with the convention of a permanent space as the home of activities for a collector and instead acts on a multi-locality of initiatives, spaces, civic and social contexts, where activities are developed and public accessibility is encouraged. This constitutes a diverse and open space within society, where information is disseminated and the relationship between the city, the arts and its inhabitants is reflected.
- For over a century Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world-class artists from modern masters such as Frida Kahlo, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Walid Raad. With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, art courses, dining room and bookshop there is always something free to see. The Gallery is a touchstone for modern and contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.
- For further information on NEON please visit <http://neon.org.gr>
- For further information on the D.Daskalopoulos Collection please visit <http://ddcollection.org>

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