

PRESS RELEASE

Athens, June 4, 2020

NEON CITY PROJECT 2020

The Athens & Epidaurus Festival and NEON present the first ever exhibition of contemporary art at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus

Dionisis Kavallieratos: *Disoriented dance / Mised planet*

Curated by Polina Kosmadaki, Art Historian & Curator, Benaki Museum, Athens

Commissioned by NEON

Odeon of Herodes Atticus, Athens

5 June – 3 July 2020

NEON and the Athens & Epidaurus Festival collaborate once again to present the first exhibition for the summer of 2020 at Odeon of Herodes Atticus from 5 June to 3 July 2020. The exhibition will be the first ever contemporary art exhibition to be staged in this ancient venue situated below the Acropolis.

Disoriented dance / Mised planet is a newly commissioned site-specific installation by Greek artist Dionisis Kavallieratos as part of NEON City Project 2020 curated by Art Historian and Benaki Museum curator, Polina Kosmadaki.

The new partnership with the Athens Festival comes amidst a challenging period for society and allows NEON to contribute to re-establishing the city's cultural activities and to reconnecting with artists and the public at the archaeological site.

Dionisis Kavallieratos works essentially and systematically as a sculptor. His art describes a harsh and disrupted world of amusing conventions, theatrical absurdity and indifference infused with doses of irony, sarcasm and self-reflexion.

Starting with the religious, physical and socio-political connotations of the circular dance – a ritual but also a motif that is already encountered in prehistoric times – Kavallieratos comments on the importance of community, companionship, friendship, laughter, gestures and physical expression.

Staged in the emblematic Odeon of Herodes Atticus theatre, the exhibition *Disoriented dance / Mised planet* is an in-situ installation of a circular dance of statues that develops on the main stage at different heights and scales. The installation of about 40 sculptures made of various materials (copper, clay, resin, wood, mirrors etc.), features a wide range of visual styles. Iconographically, these works are assemblages of formal elements that refer to different eras and cultures, referencing forms from prehistory and antiquity, modern art, dance, mass culture, folk art and more. We come across elements and objects (the Sphinx, Cycladic figurines, animals, fruits and everyday objects) that represent and reinvent characters from the western world such as the vagabond, the slave, the homeless man and the drunkard, while in others the autobiographical references are obvious.

Kavallieratos approaches the medium itself with both a sense of humour and a critical attitude. Using sculptural techniques (moulding, soldering, casting, carving), he joins together different members to create the paradoxical, bizarre figures of a *Disoriented dance*.

The members of this bizarre dance in our *Misled planet*, suggest a way of reflecting on the artist's work and the role of art on the one hand, and on the individual's relationship with politics, power, history, and everyday life on the other. Through questioning and overturning stereotypes, it functions to reflect the fears, prejudices, guilt and vanity of the modern world.

Dance by Dionisis Kavallieratos is directly connected to the types, rituals and kinesiology of Ancient Greek drama. The characters of the sculpture and the way they create relationships with each other, and with the theatre and the audience, refer to the primordial tradition of tragedy, specifically the dynamic relationship between the individuality of the actor and the collective action of the Dance.

This year, the Athens & Epidaurus Festival collaborates with NEON, to create a daring visual and curatorial project. It highlights connections between performing arts and visual arts, while also painting the iconic Odeon of Herodes Atticus in an entirely different, surprising light. It is with great joy that we contribute to this dialogue between contemporary Greek visual art and the Festival audiences through such a ground-breaking collaboration.

Katerina Evangelatos, Artistic Director, Athens & Epidaurus Festival

The seventh City Project commission brings the exhibition of Dionisis Kavallieratos into this, now-millenia-old, landmark of Athenian public space. Disoriented dance / Misled planet introduces visitors to a walking experience that crosses the historic centre of the city, leading them to a preeminent monument of antiquity and an encounter with contemporary art. I am very pleased it takes place now, during the resumption of sociability in the midst of this unprecedented situation, giving us the opportunity to reconnect with our city, to revive citizens' relationship with contemporary art, and to keep the dialogue with creators alive.

Elina Kountouri, Director, NEON

Set in motion by the installation in the Odeon, the sculptural process, study and ritual, dance and play, is transformed into a "sculptural performance". The stage of the Odeon allows us not only to visually connect with the work from various vantage points up close and from a distance, but also to participate in it through our presence, among the works. The dialogue between the "classical" monument and the humorous sculptures intensifies the contrasts and the encounters between the ancient ruins and the contemporary fragments.

Polina Kosmadaki, curator

The world-renowned Odeon of Herodes Atticus dominates the western end of the south slope of the Acropolis. The construction of the monument during the 2nd century AD was sponsored by Tiberius Claudius Herod Atticus, in memory of his wife Aspasia Annia Regilla. It hosted mainly musical festivals, seating up to 5,000 spectators. The monument was restored during 1952-1953 using marble from the Dionysus area, and since 1957 it has been the stage for artistic festivals of music, performances of ancient Greek drama, and more. It is the Athens & Epidaurus Festival's oldest and main performance venue, which, over the years has welcomed some of the world's greatest stars, boasting names such as Luciano Pavarotti, Frank Sinatra, Nana Mouskouri, Liza Minnelli and Maria Callas among those who have performed there.

With **City Project**, NEON aims to activate public and historical places through contemporary art, contributing to the interaction of art, society and the city. NEON's previous City Projects include Aemilia Papaphilippou at the Ancient Agora of Athens (2014), Maria Loizidou at the Kerameikos Archaeological Site and Museum (2015), Zafos Xagoraris at a parking space in Athens behind the historic Athinaion theatre (2016), Kostis Velonis at a historical residence at 11 Kaplanon Street (2017), Andreas Lolis at the British School at Athens (2018) and Panos Kokkinias at a former office space in 4 Sofokleous Street (2019).

NOTES TO EDITORS

Dionisis Kavallieratos was born in 1979 in Athens. He lives and works in Berlin. He graduated from the School of Fine Arts (2002) and completed the Radar Project (residency) in Venice and Krakow (2003-2004). Kavallieratos' flexible artistic practice includes small and large-scale sculptures in wood, clay or mixed media and drawings in pencil and charcoal. His work reveals a dazzling inner world - a personal universe through a humorous and ironic style. Recent exhibitions include: *The Same River Twice: Contemporary Art in Athens*, a collaboration between Deste Foundation, New Museum and Benaki Museum, Benaki Museum, Athens (2019) *Hypnos Project*, Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens (2016), *This which all want, none shall ever have*, Bernier/Eliades,

Athens (2016), *TERRAPOLIS*, NEON Organization, curated by Iwona Blazwick (2015), *No Country for Young Men*, Bozar, Brussels (2014), *The Mediterranean Experience*, Macedonian Museum of modern Art, Thessaloniki (2013), *Faces*, Onassis Cultural Centre Athens (2012), *The son of the eagle breaks his legs. The son of the eagle walks on his hands*, Bernier/Eliades, Athens (2012).

Polina Kosmadaki is an art historian living and working in Athens. She holds a Ph.D in Art History from the University of Paris-IV-La Sorbonne. She is currently Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art and Head of the Department of Paintings of the Benaki Museum, Athens and a Lecturer of Art History in the European Studies program of the Hellenic Open University. Since 2008 she is an associate researcher of the French School at Athens' Modern Section, currently the Head Researcher of a project on the editor and art critic Christian Zervos and his journal *Cahiers d'art*. Her research interests lie in the avant-garde periodicals and exhibitions of the interwar period, the reception of Antiquity in contemporary art, institutional critique and exhibition history, the ethnographic turn of contemporary art, craft as critique.

She has curated numerous exhibitions both for the Benaki Museum and as an independent curator: *Christian Zervos & Cahiers d'art*, Benaki Museum, Musée Zervos Vézelay, École Française d'Athènes 2019, *Jannis Varelas, Anima I*, 2019, *Liquid Antiquity*, DESTE & Benaki Museum 2017, *Ametria*, Deste & Benaki Museum, 2015, *George Lappas, Happy Birthday*, Deste & Benaki Museum 2016. Since 2011 she is running the commissions program «Artists in dialogue with the Benaki Museum» (Andy Holden, Adam Chodzko, Ciara Philips, Zafos Xagoraris, Antonis Pittas), in collaboration with the British Council, Greece.

The Athens & Epidaurus Festival is the foremost public cultural organisation in Greece and one of the oldest active festivals in Europe. Spanning 65 years, the Festival has welcomed some of the greatest music, dance and theatre artists of the international and local scene, attracting large audiences from around the world.

Up to the year 2005, the Festival was held exclusively at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in Athens and the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus. In the summer of 2006, five brand-new theatre stages were launched at the Peiraios 260 industrial venue which has since emerged as a major springboard for contemporary art. Furthermore, artistic productions and site-specific performances are presented in other venues all over the Attica region, under the banner of the Festival.

Nowadays, the Odeon of Herodes Atticus focuses on music, with special emphasis on celebrated orchestras and famous soloists, while the Peiraios 260 venue highlights the latest trends in theatre and dance, inviting internationally acclaimed, avant-garde creative teams, and commissioning new works by talented Greek artists.

The Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus features primarily ancient tragedies and comedies by established Greek and international directors. Meanwhile, the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus, whose reins were gradually handed over to the Athens & Epidaurus Festival by the Friends of Music Society in the early 2000s, focuses on experimental music and musical/theatrical performances. Under its current Artistic Director Katerina Evangelatos, the Athens & Epidaurus Festival aims to expand its international scope through co-productions with world-renowned theatre and dance companies, as well as showcasing Greek artists, supporting artistic research in the area of performing arts, and connecting research with audience development.

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

NEON City Project 2020 | Dionisis Kavalieratos
Curator | Polina Kosmadaki, Art Historian & Curator, Benaki Museum, Athens
Exhibition Dates | 5 June – 3 July 2020
Odeon of Herod Atticus, Athens

Opening Hours

Tue – Sun: 17.00 – 20:30

Mon: Closed

Free Entrance

VISITOR INSTRUCTIONS

In accordance with the health authorities' advice on social distancing, the exhibition will have a maximum capacity of 20 people, with entry permitted every twenty minutes.

Pre-booking is essential.

Please book date and time of visit [here](#).

INTERNATIONAL PRESS ENQUIRIES

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