



**9th Syros International Film Festival (SIF)
Off Season**

**Marina Gioti
LAUNCHING CEREMONY**

**Site-specific audiovisual installation in public space
Commissioned by the Syros International Film Festival
realized with the support of NEON Organization for Culture and Development
in partnership with the Greek Film Archive**

Tarsanas Shipyard, Hermoupolis, Syros

**Friday, July 23, 21:00
Opening and live music performance by May Roosevelt**

**Duration: July 24–26, 2021
Visiting hours: 20:00-22:00**

Although humans live their lives and build their institutions on land, they seek to understand the course of their existence through the allegory of a sea voyage. Our everyday communication is rich in nautical terms, with the sea itself being a powerful metaphor for describing the human condition. Maritime metaphorical vocabulary includes the journey to a destination and the return, the port and the foreign shore, anchorage and sailing, storms and shipwrecks. Sea navigation involves the transgression of human limits, and the conquest of the unknown, uninhabited world that the sea represents.

If a shipwreck represents the end of a vessel's life cycle, the launching or christening signifies its "birth" and represents the other most significant milestone in a ship's life. Traditionally, the ship naming and launching ceremony constituted a blessing practice that called for the good fortune and safety of the new ship, its crew, and passengers. The ceremony is held at a shipyard when a new ship is ready to sail out once its construction has been completed. The master of ceremony (a "sponsor" in nautical terms) is usually a woman who, acting as the ship's godmother, breaks a bottle of champagne to bless the ship with luck in the presence of important guests - at times with an orchestra playing in the background. Such grand ceremonial launchings are not so common in our days anymore; when they do happen, they take place quietly, without mobilizing large crowds.

Launching Ceremony is a site-specific installation that focuses on this initial milestone, the ceremonial launch of a new vessel. Centrepiece to the work is a new film that consists of a montage of mid century archival footage from Greek and international newsreels. By playing back memories of past launching ceremonies, the work aims to bring an intentional anachronism face to face with the present moment, in order to awaken spirits of the island's anthropogeography through a nightly reactivation of Syros's historic Tarsanas Shipyard in Hermoupolis.

The work will take-over the shipyard over the course of four evenings in July, projecting filmic presences from times past that will set the stage for visitors to gather in the quiet of the night and experience a period of collective waiting. This waiting period leads to a hopeful act that is the beginning of a journey. Thessaloniki-based composer and thereminist May Roosevelt composes the film's score, which will be performed live at the day of the opening. Roosevelt's ability to appropriate and transform lost-in-time traditional music themes into imaginative electronic music compositions expands the installation's visual component into an immersive and haunting sonic realm.

Hosted in and reflecting on the location of a shipyard, the installation enters into dialogue with both landscape and communities working in and around these spaces, as well as broader maritime and social histories and customs, while also serving as an invitation to view the landscape differently. Rather than a nostalgia for a particular, idealized past, the work aspires through a reanimation of history to offer a space for its visitors to contemplate and reflect on themes, hopes and desires related to travel and free movement in an increasingly entrenched post-pandemic world.

Marina Gioti is a filmmaker and visual artist born and based in Athens, Greece. In her works, which are comprised of films and installations, she often revisits historical eras and stories offering parallel re-readings to dominant narratives. Her work has been presented worldwide at festivals, including Berlinale, Toronto, Viennale, CPH:DOX, Transmediale; and at museum shows and biennials such as the 5th Thessaloniki Biennial, the Wroclaw Media Art Biennial and the 1st Anren Biennial in China. In 2017, she was a participating artist at documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel, and a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, Germany. In 2019, she completed the audiovisual project *Atlas: A Sound Cartography of Europe*, a joint commission by IRCAM-Centre Pompidou, ZKM Karlsruhe and Onassis Stegi.

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