



HELLENIC PARLIAMENT

NEON

Athens, 26 November 2021

PRESS RELEASE

Dimitris Papaioannou

***Sisyphus / Trans / Form* (2019)**

A series of performances as part of the group exhibition *Portals*

former Public Tobacco Factory – Hellenic Parliament Library and Printing House

27, 28, 29, 30 December 2021

NEON is proud to present a series of performances by internationally acclaimed Greek choreographer Dimitris Papaioannou at the former Public Tobacco Factory this December. *Sisyphus / Trans / Form* (2019) will take place as part of the exhibition *Portals* organised by NEON in collaboration with the Hellenic Parliament in June–December 2021.

Sisyphus / Trans / Form (2019), a piece for six performers, is based on the myth of Sisyphus, condemned by the gods to roll a rock up to the top of a mountain which then rolls back down again so that he endlessly has to repeat the exercise. In Papaioannou's interpretation mountain and rock become a single, vast rectangular stone slab: a burden for Sisyphus but also a frame for the performance and a portal through which the protagonist disappears and re-emerges. Sometimes Sisyphus staggers, leaning forward and dragging behind him the immense rock on his shoulders and back; sometimes, in a feat of physical theatre combining limbs of additional performers, he appears transformed, defying gravity, sliding and scrambling about on his stone frame; sometimes he fronts up to it with such force that his head smashes through it.

During the enactments of Sisyphus's struggle there are moments of pure slapstick. The sense of humour is dark and reminiscent of silent movies. At one point Sisyphus is castrated and his rock flattens him like a cartoon character. Once the emasculated Sisyphus has managed to stagger to his feet, he is trans/formed to a woman.

At its heart, *Sisyphus / Trans / Form* is a meditation on the absurd; the realisation, described by French philosopher and author Albert Camus as arising from the confrontation between the human need for happiness and reason and 'the unreasonable silence of the world'.¹ As Papaioannou says, 'making art is using your talent to meditate upon issues of human existence, whether pleasurable or not'.² Sisyphus's perpetual tussle with the rock resembles the repetitive routine of working people, a tribute to Papaioannou's own father who is a working class man, that results first in melancholy and then in metamorphosis. Rather than being an unbearable load, the daily grind – the rock – transforms into an awakening. As Camus wrote, 'crushing truths perish from being acknowledged'.³

Conceived, visualized + directed by Dimitris Papaioannou

Performers: Pavlina Andriopoulou, Dimitris Papaioannou, Kalliopi Simou, Drosos Skotis, Christos Strinopoulos, Michalis Theophanous.

¹ Albert Camus, 1942, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

² Sarah Crompton, 'Dimitris Papaioannou interview: the choreographer of *The Great Tamer* and how Pina Bausch changed my life', *The Sunday Times*, 14 October 2018

³ Albert Camus, 'ibid

Assistant Director + Creative Producer: Tina Papanikolaou
International Relations & Photographer: Julian Mommert
Technical Director: Manolis Vitsaxakis

Work created with the support of Megaron – The Athens Concert Hall and realized in collaboration with Collezione Maramotti + Max Mara. Produced by 2WORKS in collaboration with EdM Productions / Elisabetta Di Mambro and Simona Fremder
Commissioned by the Collezione Maramotti and I Teatri di Reggio Emilia.

Presented at the Tobacco Factory basement which has been transformed specifically for the performances.

Four performances will take place on 27, 28, 29, 30 December 2021 at 15:30 daily.

The performance includes nudity and is suitable for people aged 15 years and older.

Reservations open on 6 December via neon.artsvp.co.

Admission Free with a ticket booked in advance.

As part of its collaboration with the Hellenic Parliament, NEON renovated 6,500m² of the emblematic former Public Tobacco Factory building and created a new contemporary cultural centre in Athens, open to all. The space was inaugurated by the international group exhibition, *Portals*, taking place until 31 December, 2021, featuring 59 artists from 27 countries, curated by Elina Kountouri, Director, NEON and Madeleine Grynsztejn, Pritzker Director, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. *Portals* aspires to give rise to new messages, ideas, and reflections regarding contemporary artistic creation, through the prism of a newly formed reality composed of change and disruption.

Dimitris Papaioannou

***Sisyphus / Trans / Form* (2019)**

27-28-29-30 December 2021

Performance starts at 15:30

Arrival by 14:45

Pre-reservation is required via neon.artsvp.co (from 6 December 2021)

Exhibition *Portals*

former Public Tobacco Factory – Hellenic Parliament Library & Printing House.

218 Lenorman St., Kolonos, Athens

Exhibition Duration: 12 June – 31 December 2021

Exhibition Opening Hours

Monday, Tuesday: Closed

Wednesday, Friday, Sunday: 11:00 – 19:00

Thursday, Saturday: 12:00 – 20:00

Free Entrance via neon.artsvp.co

Health protocols in effect

More information at neon.org.gr

Notes to Editors

Dimitris Papaioannou (b. 1964, Athens, Greece) lives and works in Athens. He is a director, choreographer and performer who blends experimental dance, physical theatre and performance art in surreal, dreamlike and immersive performances. He has full command of the artistic vision of his works including set, costume and lighting design.

Papaioannou initially intended to be a visual artist. He studied under the renowned Greek painter Yannis Tsarouchis and at the Athens School of Fine Arts and went on to publish numerous comics and graphic novels, the first of their genre in Greece to include punk and hardcore homoerotic images. His artistic practice underwent a dramatic change after seeing *Café Müller* by German dancer and choreographer Pina Bausch.

Papaioannou caught the attention of the Athens art scene when he co-founded, with Angeliki Stellatou, the Edafos Dance Theatre which performed in an underground squat from 1986-2001 and later at the Epidaurus Ancient Greek theatre. In a stark contrast of venue and resources he was appointed Artistic Director of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games.

Papaioannou's first international, travelling co-production, *The Great Tamer* (2017), was the first Greek production to be performed at Sadler's Wells, London; Théâtre de la Ville, Paris; and BAM, New York, which was followed by *Since She* (2018) a tribute to his inspiration Pina Bausch, and performed by her Tanztheater Wuppertal.

Papaioannou's work has been presented at festivals and theatres in Europe, Asia, Australia and North and South America. He was nominated for Emmys in 2015 for both 'Outstanding Directing' and 'Outstanding Art Direction / Set Decoration / Scenic Design', was the first Greek to be awarded a Europe Theatre Prize in 2017 and was nominated for an Olivier Award in 2019.

His new work, the international co-production *Transverse Orientation*, is scheduled for a world tour, and *INK*, created during lockdown, will be presented at the 75th Festival d'Avignon during the summer of 2021.

NEON is a non-profit organisation 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 programmes of public and private institutions to enhance increased access and inventive interaction with contemporary art.

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