

EMΣΤ

National Museum
of Contemporary Art Athens



Xirómero/Dryland

Pavilion of Greece at the 60th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia

Xirómero/Dryland
April 20–November 24, 2024
Preview days: April 17–19
Giardini
30122 Venice
Italy

Opening hours: Tuesday-Sunday 11 am - 7 pm (from 20 April to 30 September)
Opening hours: 10 am - 6 pm (from 1 October to 24 November)

Xirómero/Dryland, which will be representing Greece at the 60th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, is an interdisciplinary collective work conceived by Thanasis Deligiannis and Yannis Michalopoulos, and created along with the artists Elia Kalogianni, Yorgos Kyvernitis, Kostas Chaikalis and Fotis Sagonas. The participation of Greek artists was curated by Panos Giannikopoulos. The work consists of a piece of agricultural irrigation equipment that synchronizes the installation's sound, video and lighting in real time. The artists investigate the experience of a village festival by following its course from the village square all the way to the outskirts and surrounding land. More specifically, they draw their inspiration from the experience of the *panigyria* -local festivals- of mainland Greece, Thessaly and the area of Xirómero, in Western Greece, which lends the work its title.

The artists behind the work refer to water as a prism —a way of seeing and thinking— focusing on its scarcity or abundance, on how it is needed or wasted, as well as on its social connotations. The exhaustion of resources is linked here to physical and financial exhaustion. The work navigates the political potential of sound and music, and the impact of technology on rural landscapes and cultural diversity.

The *panigyri* conveys information and meaning through ritual and entertainment. It is connected to agricultural work; it is born from - but also begets - the community's internal time cycle, which tracks the pace of irrigation and other agricultural tasks and

helps each community form an image of itself. But at the same time, it allows contradictory notions to coalesce: viewers become participants, on-stage becomes off-stage, and the performative gives way to the everyday.

This incessant interaction between 'representation' and reality is reproduced within the work itself. *Xirómero/Dryland* also uses the particular architectural features of the Pavilion of Greece to associatively evoke images of agricultural warehouses and religious architecture that is so often the *panigyri's* backdrop. The watering equipment at the centre of the Pavilion defines a circular perimeter that is the actual space of the installation. The work serves to bring the outdoor space - where the community comes together, the village square, a place of public assembly - indoors. As the watering system comes on, it initiates a specific rhythmical pattern, measuring time like a clock or a cassette tape playing, suggesting specific routes for the viewers to follow and encouraging viewpoint shifts along the way. *Xirómero/Dryland* steers clear of an aesthetic approach, emphasizing instead the emotional immediacy of the encounter with objects, sounds and images.

By observing gender relations in the context of the *panigyri*, we can examine the various possibilities of presenting the self, the different versions of femininity and the manner in which the female body is either revealed or concealed, but also the ambivalent gesture by the subject that chooses to withdraw, opting for absence and exclusion from the festivities.

Xirómero/Dryland attempts to create associations between a geographically contextualized experience and the global condition; to facilitate shifts of perspective between dominant and marginalized cultural subjects as a means of opening up a liminal space for the emergence of new meanings.

**Xirómero [ksir 'omero], a historic area of Aetolia-Acarnania, is known for its festivals. Today, it is one of the municipalities in the regional unit of Western Greece.*

Research for the purposes of the installation *Xirómero/Dryland* that will be representing Greece at the 60th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia was commissioned by the Onassis Foundation and conducted in the context of the Margaroni Residency by Onassis AiR Fellows interdisciplinary artist and composer Thanasis Deligiannis, and dramaturge and philologist Yannis Michalopoulos. Both brought together a team that includes visual artist and filmmaker Elia Kalogianni, photographer and documentary filmmaker Yorgos Kyvernitis, sound engineer and designer Kostas Chaikalis, and visual artist and architect Fotis Sagonas.

The project and its presentation in Venice have been funded by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture. EMΣT / National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens is the commissioner of Greece's national participation and in charge of planning, production and promotion. Panos Giannikopoulos is the curator of the Pavilion of Greece.

Greece's participation in the 60th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia is powered by Onassis Culture. The project is also supported by the Thessaloniki

International Film Festival, the Athens-Epidauros Festival and the Greek National Tourism Organization. Support from ARTWORKS was provided through a founding grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF). Additional support was made possible by NEON Culture and Development Organization, by Outset and the Qualco Foundation. AEGEAN is the official air carrier sponsor and the project has been placed under the auspices of the City of Xirómero.

ABOUT

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Artistic Collaborators:

Fotini Papachristopoulou, Vassiliki-Maria Plavou, Marios Stamatis

Curated by: Panos Giannikopoulos

<https://pavilionofgreece2024.emst.gr>

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