

PRESS RELEASE

Friday 2 May 2014

NEON and the Whitechapel Gallery Present Work by Over Thirty Artists in Their First Major Collaboration

Adrián Villar Rojas, From the series Return of the World, 2012

A THOUSAND DOORS

Curated by Iwona Blazwick, Director, Whitechapel Gallery

4 May – 30 June 2014

The Gennadius Library

The American School of Classical Studies at Athens

Edward Allington | Matthew Barney | Christian Boltanski | Pavel Büchler | Michael Dean | Nina Fischer and Maroan el Sani | Ceal Floyer | Isa Genzken | Shuruq Harb | Nigel Henderson | Georg Herold | Susan Hiller | Hannah Höch | Kostas Ioannidis | Valentina Karga | Jannis Kounellis | John Latham | Mark Manders | Juan Muñoz | Nikos Navridis | Giuseppe Penone | Elizabeth Price | Michael Rakowitz | Annie Ratti | Meriç Algün Ringborg | Daniel Silver | Francis Upritchard | Adrián Villar Rojas | Paky Vlassopoulou | Jane and Louise Wilson

NEON and the Whitechapel Gallery are proud to present A THOUSAND DOORS, the first major collaboration in Athens between the two organizations. NEON work to widen access to contemporary art and are committed to contributing to the vital cultural activity in Athens.

A THOUSAND DOORS is an introduction to site-specific art. Over thirty artists have been selected to participate in the show, with each work reflecting the ideological foundations of Greek civilization and mythology on which the Gennadius Library's gardens and interiors were built. Housing over 120,000 books and archives, the exhibition will lead visitors from the library into the gardens.

Five Greek artists of different generations have been commissioned by NEON to create works inspired by the gardens and libraries. **Kostas Ioannidis's** *Dawn Chorus* (2014) is a sound installation that uses recordings of birds collated by a public library in America. The chorus of birdsong will begin at 5.30pm every day, triggering the birds in the gardens to respond at the wrong time of day and heralding a new dawn. **Valentina Karga** will revive Aristotle's Peripatetic School in an interactive piece where visitors are invited

to take part in a walking university titled *Exercises of Walking and Talking* (2014). Karga will walk through the gardens with participants discussing education and looking towards the future. The conversations will then be transcribed by the artist from memory, typed-up as a record of the work.

Nikos Navridis has created 100 books from filo pastry, inferring the ways that knowledge can sustain us whilst remaining a fragile tool. **Paky Vlassopoulou's** sculptural installation will fill one of the rooms in the neo-classical library. Her equestrian statues are created using newspaper, rags and plaster and challenge the horse in Greek mythology as a symbol of strength and masculine power often associated with war. A site-specific installation by **Jannis Kounellis** will fill one of the library windows with books, blocking the light and suggesting that the books need to be opened and knowledge accessed to allow the light in. Within the library, **Isa Genzken's** *I Love New York, Crazy City* (1995-6) holds a mirror to society and the make-up of a particular city, while **Pavel Büchler's** *What the Cleaner's Found* (1996) offers an insight in to the life of the artist. These will be displayed alongside works by **Mark Manders** and **Michael Dean** that have been created using the book as a formal element in their sculptures. **Georg Herold's** *Bent Poetry* (1987) is a poem transcribed on to wood and suspended amongst the books in the permanent collection to create an interaction between the literary works displayed and housed in the interiors.

Works by **Meriç Algün Ringborg** and **Michael Rakowitz** address the disappearance, destruction and subsequent retrieval of knowledge. Ringborg's *The Library of Unborrowed Books* (2014) is an installation created by inviting the librarians to highlight books in the Gennadius collection which have never been loaned out. His presentation of these volumes in a display case demonstrates the power we have to resurrect knowledge.

Confronting recent history, Michael Rakowitz's sculpture *What Dust Will Rise?* (2012) includes facsimiles of books recovering those destroyed in the city of Kassel and recreated using stone from Bamayan. The site is known now as the cultural location where the Bamayan Buddhas were destroyed by the Taliban. Rakowitz worked with local stonemasons to revive the ancient craft form, which was temporarily banned, and each sculpture is accompanied by a text on the burning of books.

Outside in the gardens visitors will encounter *Conversation Piece II* (2001) by **Juan Muñoz**, who described himself as a storyteller. Muñoz encouraged interaction with the figures that form his work, enticing viewers in to the scene and yet isolating them from the action – concealing the perceived conversations and whispers. **Adrián Villar Rojas** also seeks to tell his audience a story – *Return of the World* is a series produced in 2012 which creates a world of ruins that question history and how relics of the past shape ideas relating to the future. The fragility of the clay used by Villar Rojas in the sculptures points to how fleeting history can be.

Daniel Silver's *Dig* (2013) appears to be the remnants of an archaeological survey, with broken, seemingly unearthed figures accompanying the marble busts placed nearby. Are the sculptures of men now long forgotten or renderings of gods once worshiped?

Giuseppe Penone's *Spazio di Luce* (2008) continues his career-long reflection on the passing of time and the contact between man and nature. The bronze and gold leaf sculpture is a cast of a tree Penone found in the mountains which rests on the twigs protruding from the hollowed trunk. The work, which was also presented at the Whitechapel Gallery in 2012, celebrates the natural environment surrounding us which is often overlooked in an increasingly urbanized society and serves as a reminder of the power inherent in the world.

These works were all commissioned for a particular location but visitors to the exhibition are invited to view the sculptures anew and reflect upon what it means to see them situated in a new context amidst the history of Hellenic culture.

Free and open daily, this is the first time that the Gennadius Library will be used to present works of art.

A THOUSAND DOORS is curated by Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director, Whitechapel Gallery. NEON and the Whitechapel Gallery also work together on an annual curatorial award and exchange programme between London and Athens.

Notes for Editors

- The Gennadius Library of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens is one of Greece's national treasures. Located in an historic building in central Athens, the Library houses a richly diverse collection of books and rare bindings, archives, manuscripts, and works of art illuminating Hellenic culture and civilization from antiquity to modern times. Internationally re-nowned as a research centre, the Library also plays an active role in the cultural life of Greece. In 1922, John Gennadius offered his 26,000-volume collection to the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Designed by American architects John Van Pelt and W. Stuart Thompson, and funded by the Carnegie Foundation, the Main Building—now a national landmark—was opened in 1926. Since then the collections have grown to more than 120,000 volumes, both rare books and a research collection, hundreds of scholarly journals, and numerous archives.
- NEON is a non-profit organization based in Athens that works to widen access to contemporary art and culture. Taking its name from the Greek word for 'new', NEON is committed to broadening the appreciation, understanding, and creation of contemporary art in Greece and abroad in the firm belief that it is a tool for growth and development. Founded by art collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, and under the Directorship of Elina Kountouri, NEON breaks with the convention that a contemporary art organization should occupy a single space. Instead, NEON employs the open and diverse areas within society to carry out its program. NEON engages with a large, public audience and acts on a variety of projects to expose contemporary art's ability to stimulate and inspire society at large.
- For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world-class artists from modern masters such as Pablo Picasso, Gerhard Richter and Cy Twombly to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Isa Genzken. With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, café/bar and bookshop, the Gallery is open all year round, so there is always something free to see. The Gallery is a touchstone for 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. whitechapelgallery.org
- The exhibition will be accompanied by a dedicated publication.

Visitor Information

A THOUSAND DOORS, NEON and the Whitechapel Gallery at The Gennadius Library of The American School of Classical Studies at Athens in Greece.

T +30 213 01 87700

E contact@neon.org.gr

W neon.org.gr

Open 4 May – 30 June 2014

Monday and Tuesday: 9am – 5pm

Wednesday – Saturday: 9am – 9pm

Sunday: 12–6pm

Press Information

For further press information please contact: Sara Macdonald at Sutton PR

T +44 (0) 20 7183 3577 or sara@suttonpr.com

Rachel Mapplebeck at the Whitechapel Gallery

+44 (0) 20 7522 7880, +44(0)7881 456806 or RachelMapplebeck@whitechapelgallery.org

Or Alex O'Neill at the Whitechapel Gallery

+44 (0)20 7539 3360 or AlexONeill@whitechapelgallery.org

whitechapelgallery.org
neon.org.gr