

p o s t documenta

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

Artist Talk with Eva Giannakopoulou

In the frame of p o s t documenta: contemporary arts as territorial agencies

Screening materials

1. Eva Giannakopoulou, *Kin Baby*, work in progress

Video, Kin FUTURE N.O.W, Onassis-Stegi Foundation, Athens, Greece, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhfwWH4vgZc>

About: This world no longer exists. A nightclub is all that remains. On the Onassis-Stegi Main Stage, in Neos Kosmos (the “new world”), in a city once called Stegi. Here, what’s left of planet Earth’s biodiversity is renewing itself. Here, a new world order is coming into being, where microorganisms, bacteria, plants, animals, humanoids, and abiotic beings are evolving on an equal footing to establish a singular biopolitical environment.

Colorful neon lighting, flashing lights and bubbles, rave music, Australian didgeridoos, and drums. An amorphous composted mass gradually pushes forth diverse organisms that give themselves over to choreography that is erotic and intense. Non-gendered half-naked humanoids, hybrid objects, beings and bacteria of indeterminate form are all readying for the emergence of a new species. A creature that gives birth to performers who surrender themselves nervily to absurd actions, and two poets who expound interpretations of the new species coming into being. A rapper sings to us of the future, creating a music medley that serves as the work’s climax.

2. Eva Giannakopoulou, *Dogman’s Dream*, video, 3’23”, 2020

Commissioned for “THE RIGHT TO SILENCE?”, December 30, 2020 – July 31, 2021, Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery, John Jay College, CUNY
<https://vimeo.com/538591484>

About: “Dog dreams often have to do with the basic instinct towards friendship, loyalty, and protection. Sometimes the dog will represent you, the dreamer, while other times they will stand in for people in your life.” Gipsy Dream Dictionary. Flying up to the sky with weird creatures, landing on the dance floor of a death disco, howling with the wolves, becoming the animalesque subjectivity you always wanted to be. “Dogman’s Dream” is a

psychotropic and psychedelic proposal against the emotional tensions of self-isolation and self-confinement.

3. Most Mechanics Are Crooks, *Art Befriends Peoples!*, action in public space, 2019. Photo documentation, LiFo Cover, Athens, 2019.

About: The artistic collective of Most Mechanics Are Crooks suggests a way out of the impasse that occurred after the disagreement between the Greek Minister of Culture Myrsini Zorba and artist Costas Varotsos. In opposition to the hostile climate of the days, we believe that art is meant to bring citizens, political parties, cultures, peoples and nations together. We thus designed a proposal that bridges the contemporary and ancient civilization of the two peoples, meeting the expectation of all sides involved.

The proposal we submitted to the Greek Ministry of Culture introduces the contemporary aesthetics of post-digital retrofuturism to both Greece and Macedonia. The respective technical interventions on the existing artworks of Varotsos and the Macedonian sculptress Valentina Stefanovska will produce two complementary artworks – one for each place, one for each people. The two pieces will be named Post-human pasts/futures.

Will the official authorities provide this initiative with the support it deserves?



4. Most Mechanics Are Crooks, *The Manifesto of New Insincerity*, Video (teaser), 0'28", "The Route will be Recalculated" Kultursymposium, Goethe-Institut, Weimar, Germany, 2019

<https://vimeo.com/490102377> (PASSWORD: mmacweimar)

About: The performance "The Manifesto of New Insincerity" is a threefold ode to Xerxes as a screen of orientalist projection. The work's subtext draws from the homonymous Manifesto written by Most Mechanics Are Crooks in 2019. The greco-persian wars have become part of a western genealogy of European defense of culture and democratic ideals from Oriental expansionism. Adding to the fantasy of Western superiority, the Persian God-King Xerxes has been reintroduced into pop culture as a decadent exotic pansexual narcissist that commits hubris against the valiant defenders of the West, through the work of comic book artist Frank Miller.

The performance weaves four elements together: The mythology of western identity VS the "barbarian other" in recent Hollywoodian cinema, Frank Miller's production of comics on the story of Xerxes, and two contemporaneous manifestos that plead for a "New sincerity" in order to battle postmodern "irony", "moral relativism" and "cultural appropriation", purportedly exacerbated in the post-truth era. The four Mechanics distort today's pseudo-romantic calls for a return to sincerity and empathy to tell the story of the Oriental queer figure of Xerxes - half product of an orientalist gaze, partly experienced, partly fetishized. The first part refers to a young Xerxes, smeared as "barbarian" by Greek mothers. The second chapter presents the rise of Xerxes as a "metamodernist" hero, via adaptation and reworking of Frank Miller's iconography. Here, Xerxes (and the Mechanics) punish the sea of Hellespont to avenge the collapse of the bridges he built. The third chapter of the performance is crafted after the fashion of calming ASMR video clips (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response), featuring repetitive movements which produce rhythmic sounds.



4a. Eva Giannakopoulou, *at the Beach*, 2016, documented performance, 3'37"

<http://www.evagiannakopoulou.com/stin-Plaz>

About: I am at the beach of an island dressed with liturgical orthodox vestments, hugging my son and a video camera. Approaching the mother-son relationship as a necessary and ambiguous -yet implicit- erotic conjunction, I explore the limits between acceptable and unacceptable through "orthodox" formulations and audio stimulations. With a "self-managed" camera, in a deserted beach of an island, I attempt to question the sacredness-mother(ness) binary, making use of deviation and divergence

tactics, whilst adopting a motherhood ambivalent model under the light and the heat of the summer sun.

4b. Eva Giannakopoulou, *at the Beach 2*, Video / Experimental documentary, 27'37", 2017

Excerpt: <http://www.evagiannakopoulou.com/at-the-Beach-2>
<https://vimeo.com/250966665>

About: The videos "at the Beach 2" were shot during my summer holidays in Crete and Athens. Composed of interviews by three LGBTQI parents and a video shot by five-year-old German tourist Sophie Stapels, the work refers to notions of parenthood and childhood, family configurations and relational politics. The starting point of the work is the question of how and where does a LGBTQI parent spend their holidays with their children. The answers and the questions further risen revolve around the prevailing conceptualizations of motherhood and fatherhood, society's exclusion and inclusion mechanisms and the family structures -biological or not- of LGBTQI couples in a social and legal context. Considering tourism as a normative factor of summer holidays, I create a frame for rethinking "different parenthood" as a matrix where roles and identities become subjects of open and constant negotiation.

The idea for the second video of the installation, shot in its entirety by a five-year-old child, came about when I started filming a German family on holidays in the beach of Sougia in Crete, while I was there on vacation myself. Having already filmed children for that same work in various tourist destinations, I decided to give my camera over Sophie. In the context of a conceptual research and process of experimentation regarding the ambiguous power structures of the camera as a recording mechanism, and the respective positions of the observed and the observer, I attempt to indicate the shift taking place when a child stops being the "object" of filming and becomes the observer operating a camera.

4c. Eva Giannakopoulou, *at the Beach 3*

Video/experimental documentary, 24'46", 2019

<http://www.evagiannakopoulou.com/at-the-Beach-3>

About: *at the Beach 3*, is the end of a trilogy dedicated to "alternative" parenthood and its perpetual subtleties. Including dialogues with three friends of the artist, the work refers to a range of relational, emotional and LGBTQI politics connecting the participants with their children, their own body and the artist herself. The documentary, mainly filmed at the beach where limits are blurred and bodies prevail, aims to politicize parenthood, emotions and desire gazing a camping, a holiday house populated by witches, Calibans, and a black dog.

5. *Criss-Cross | Artist on artist convergencies*, curated and organised by Eva Giannakopoulou, Yiannis Melanitis and Panos Sklavenitis

Workshop with visual artists, curators and students of ASFA and the University of Western Macedonia, Department of Applied and Fine Arts – Florina, Hydra Island, Greece, 2018
<http://www.evagiannakopoulou.com/CRISS-CROSS-ARTIST-ON-ARTIST-CONVERGENCIES>
<https://artistonartistconvergences.tumblr.com/>
Video, 1'50", 2018 <https://vimeo.com/490033884> (PASSWORD: xcrossx)

About: *Criss-Cross | Artist on artist convergencies* is a project that attempts to examine the influential marks of encounters between artists, departing from relationships which determined the life and the creative development of the involved subjects, as well as the way that history of art is constructed. The project attempts to reflect experimentally on those meetings and re-examine their dimensions and importance. Longstanding collaborations, friendships and love affairs, momentary encounters or short conversations, spiritual proximities and rivalries, seem to have composed an alternative archive of 'relational' history of art.

Antonello da Messina meets Jan Van Eyck, Pier Paolo Pasolini interviews Ezra Pound, Robert Rauschenberg erases a Willem de Kooning's drawing, Joseph Beuys states the silence of Marcel Duchamp to be overrated. These registered or rumored encounters between historical figures are undoubtedly appealing; however, they are also political: they hold roles and authority, social class, race, gender and sexuality. The subjects performing those are poor or rich, black or white, homosexual or heterosexual, slim or fat, liberal or conservative, famous or unknown.

They might establish love or hate relationships, their encounters might be fateful, inevitable or even tragic: Camille Claudel dies in a psychiatric clinic and Ana Mendieta was found dead on the terrace of a delicatessen, 33 floors under the window of her apartment. The project *Criss cross | Artist on artist convergencies*' goal is to compose a wide network of collaborations between artists, art theorists and social scientists, attempting to create encounters accompanied by workshops, participatory or collective actions, performances and talks.

6. Square + Open Call: Square

i. Open Call: Square

Performance/participatory action, in the context of "Open form", Syntagma Square, Athens, Greece, 2017

<http://www.evagiannakopoulou.com/Open-Call-Square>

About: Eva Giannakopoulou returned to Syntagma Square, a sociopolitical landmark and microcosm of Athens that has served as an integral part of her artistic practice and research for years. Through her performance and engagement with regular visitors of the square, curious passerby, as well as an open call to anyone who wished to commonly formulate the action, she aimed to activate the intersections between the public, the political, the

personal and the collective, whilst filming how these spheres are shifting within a square that is constantly changing.

ii. Square

Mixed media installation and film 23' 6", Action Field Kodra – “What we want”, Thessaloniki, Greece, 2012

<http://www.evagiannakopoulou.com/Square>

Video (Square), 11'48": <https://vimeo.com/98521182/f7a714beb5>

(PASSWORD: sydagma)

Video (4 Acts of Political Conspiracy), 4'45": <https://vimeo.com/97665962>

About: The project "Square" is the result of a ten-month fieldwork I completed in Syntagma Square at the centre of Athens, and of my personal engagement with the area and its people. The work consists of audiovisual material which I collected primarily from interviews with acquaintances or strangers, regulars of Syntagma Square or passerby, while I was posing them a constant and repetitive question: why they were in the square at the time. Having a video camera as an extension of my hand and my senses, I attempted to approach different stories of social, political and personal paradoxes, using methods of provocation in a provocative and tense environment.

With this film, I intend to approach the various dimensions and parameters of a Space “in crisis” taking into account my personal position in a constantly re-defined Public Sphere. In this case, the role of the camera as a medium, was catalytic. It enforced the terms of an endless repetition, a repeated viewing of an event that made “fluid” my physical presence in the square.

7. Eva Giannakopoulou and Maria Nikiforaki, *Omonoia Erotics*

Performance, in the context of *GOMENES I by Netting The Work*, part of the Athens Biennale 2015-2017 OMONOIA, Athens, Greece, 2016

<http://www.evagiannakopoulou.com/Omonoia-Erotics>

Video, 3'51": <https://vimeo.com/166615716> (PASSWORD: eroticomonioa)

About: Dogs, megaphones and women. Stray dogs of Athens and “skiladika”*, animal rights, women versus political correctness and social pretentiousness, stand as a trigger to initiate a discussion about females, nature and politics. Five erotic terrorism proclamations are thrown at the centre of Omonoia Square for the passersby who have been used to glimpse at porn stars’ big posters placed on the cinema facades. Texts printed on the female body dictating the “urban soundscape”, personal narratives imposed on the public territory, political narratives written on the private body. Sexual desire, love stories, the birth of a national bank and that of a breastfeeding child, juxtaposed as regulating flows towards the female body, in an attempt to exorcise monogamy, body politics and sustainability in an Athenian landscape heavily charged with symbolisms of the binary; routine – eccentricity.

**Skiladiko is a derogatory term to describe a genre of Modern Greek music and particular nightclubs in Greece in which a form of popular music culture is performed. It also refers to the so-called "decadent" type of popular songs. Derives from the Greek word 'dog' (σκύλος, skilos), meaning "doggish" or "doghouse".*

8. Eva Giannakopoulou, *Germany Loves Greece Greece Loves Germany*

Video, 6' 40", Video Loops/Video Performance

Presented at ASFA BBQ, Athens, Greece, 2015

<http://www.evagiannakopoulou.com/Germany-Loves-Greece-Greece-Loves-Germany>

Video: <https://vimeo.com/200889690> (PASSWORD: eternallove)

About: I was there when Prime Minister Tsipras met Chancellor Merkel in Berlin on the 23rd of March 2015. Behind the camera my body was squeezed by the demonstrators and journalists who were present right outside the Chancellor's building. Germans and Greeks exchanged passionate kisses and hugs, singing and dancing, shaking hands and delivering messages against European Austerity measures. My hand was shaking carrying the camera, political tears of Love.

9. Eva Giannakopoulou, *Germany Arrival Departure*

Performance, Video, 7' 53",

Presented at "Temptation of a Self Portrait", Pontoporos Gallery, Paros, 2011

<http://www.evagiannakopoulou.com/Arrival-Departure>

Video: <https://vimeo.com/97209376> (PASSWORD: arrivaldeparture)

About: This video shows my participation in the protest against the Citizen Card; a demonstration organized by radical religious groups, held in the centre of Athens (2011). It is an extract of an ethnographic research I carried out focusing on sectarianism, radical and political speech, whilst examining the transition process of the observer from her/his own space to another, that of the observed subjects during the fieldwork.

Changing clothes, diversity and gender issues, degree of participation, arrival, return. These are some of the elements I have dealt with, in the belief that they constitute the spatial and personal margins of a space oscillating between intimate and public.