

Mythhistories

Group Exhibition

May 25 – September 15, 2024

Poros

CITRONNE Gallery's summer season opens in Poros with "Myth-histories", an exhibition by nine visual artists, Alexandra Athanassiades, Lydia Delikoura, Iasonas Kampanis, Katerina Katsifaraki, Alekos Kyrarinis, Tassos Mantzavinos, Petros Moris, Nikos Podias and Nana Sachini. The artists delve into the layers of History and the decisive power of the Myth in the context of "Mare Nostrum", the Mediterranean Sea. Fragments of History meet primary myths and age-old myths are identified in historical events. Though their works, the artists narrate their personal selective approach to this topic.

Alexandra Athanassiades presents works from the series "Memories" and "Fragments", which refer to fragmented bits of personal and collective memory or random objects-finds. Her portrayal of visible and invisible realities is imbued with intensely reflected emotions. The starting point is the tangible manifestations of classical Antiquity and their place in the modern world, but also pieces or even bits from modern vessels and objects of everyday life, in which intentional inscriptions can be distinguished *ad hoc*. She portrays and recreates a present which, however, also comprises random materials of Memory, that is, of the past. She transforms perishable materials in order for them to acquire a new quality.

Lydia Delikoura uses nature as her starting point and tries to transmute it into a visual idiom. Thus, she establishes an intermediate reality between image and symbol in an effort to provide an artistic "interpretation" of the longstanding new. By association, primordial myths arise, such as those about the hedgehog, the Archilochus' reference, and –the more recent–

Schopenhauer's allegory. We recognize byzantine patterns in the "Braid", namely the chain with the austere geometric design reminiscent of traditional knitting. Myth and History are expressed as interdependent and alternating rings.

Iasonas Kampanis embarks on a long journey in the ancient Mediterranean civilization. The heads of the god Pan remind us of the symbolism of the Myth: everything, namely nature in its completeness, of which Man is also a part. Then is the leopard, as an exotic complex animal according to the Romans and as *genius loci*, a local protective spirit of a place. Finally, the work "and here shall your proud waves be stayed" leads the viewers to the biblical excerpt from Job and, at the same time, to the inexhaustible power of water, which will halt in order to create land as an integral element of nature. The depicted tree is also a reference to this relationship.

In the exhibited works by Katerina Katsifaraki the prickly pear is the essential material. This plant, originating from the Orient, is associated with archetypal myths that are present in the memory of the peoples of the region. Also, in the closing verses of his poem Hollow Men, T. S. Eliot makes a reference to the biblical prickly pear as a symbol of decadence. The artist investigates the space between idea and reality, between inspiration and creation. The "Prickly Pear Tissues" –altered by time– have turned into a faint web, a spider's web; an obvious and direct reference to the myth of the same name. This material is meticulously treated by the artist who has added gold leaves to it.

Alekos Kyrarinis participates in the exhibition with the sculptural work "Cycladic". The name is an obvious reference to the long cultural history of the Cyclades, which imbues all aspects of Language and Art. Creation is placed in the present time, but the references come from the far reaches of History and tradition. We recognise the artist's familiar motifs stemming from early Christian and Byzantine art. This work also reminds us of the oblations and votive offerings placed on miracle icons, the *ex voto*, the makeshift prayer books; at the same time, the artist's love for new currents and modernism is more than noticeable. Thus, the work suggests a distant folk starting point; however, it is permeated by an absolutely contemporary perception of artistic reality, among others.

Tassos Mantzavinos participates in the exhibition with the work “House of Ideas and Arts”. It is the dwelling of the artist’s psyche, the subconscious of life. Symbols, memories, and references from various stages of the artist’s personal trajectory are fused with folk tradition and its motifs. These archetypes –of pronouncedly Hellenic qualities– revolve around memory, experience and dreams within the context of the sea, the great archetype of Hellenism.

In his sculptural composition, Petros Moris presents the “Sphinx” as a loan from the Antiquity. It has been suggested that the word Sphinx is a Greek corruption of the Egyptian word “shesepankh”, which meant “Living Image” and it describes a mysterious female creature of Greek mythology who challenged those who encountered her to answer a riddle; those who solved it were spared of their lives, those who failed were killed. Given that the riddle concerns the very existence of man, it was directly linked with psychoanalysis. At the same time, in his work “Arrow”, the artist uses marble in which he integrates traces and colours reminiscent of graffiti.

Nikos Podias presents an armour. It is a “Cuirass” made of paper, a *contradictio in terminis*, a mutually cancelling composition. The –by default– robust cuirass becomes fragile because it is made of paper; therefore, the armour is also illusory. In another work he portrays a snakeskin on which the scales are visible and create remarkable formations bestowing brightness and colour to it. The armour stands above the ground and covers the upper part of the body; its purpose is to protect life and suspend death. The snake, the serpent, the eternal source of evil; it crawls the earth and hides in the darkness. At the same time, the serpent illustrates and symbolizes a whole universe of thought, philosophy and science: from Medicine to Theosophy (God-Serpent), as described by Kazantzakis. These works carry the weight of the past into the functional necessity of the present as age-old symbols-fragments.

In her works, Nana Sachini abides by the rule of the indivisibility between body, form, existence, politics, and poetry. Her starting point is the agate, a semi-precious stone associated with various traditions and beliefs. It is a symbol of fertility and good health, stability and composure. One of its formations resembles the “apotropaic eye” that averts evil, a particularly widespread image in the Orient. In this rock, the artist sees a connection between the

human body and the earth. Once again, myths and traditional beliefs engage in a dialogue with current realities.

These nine artists express locality as an echo of History and a figment of Myth.

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