

ANTONIS PROTOPATSIS

Antonis Protopatsis: an audacious bashi-bazouk dilettante

The interwar period was a tremendously creative époque for the island of Lesvos. Having been incorporated in the Greek state only just in 1912 and having had accepted the influx of refugees a decade later on, the claim regarding the renovation of artistic life gets transformed within the vision of the 'Lesbian Spring'. A group of restless young men -among them Stratis Myrivilis, Stratis Paraskevaidis, Theielpis Lefkias, Maria Klonari and Miltos Kountouras- organize the so-called 'Horde of the bashi-bazouk'. The soul of the team and theoretical supporter of the Lesbian Spring was Antonis Protopatsis, the 'cosmopolitan of the company, from the island of Mytilene' ; a poet, painter and cartoonist, a visionary of the renaissance of popular culture and the opulent tradition of this land, first he collaborated with Greek newspapers and journals, then he settled in Paris, where he worked as a cartoonist and as a caricaturist for many French journals and finally he returned in Greece in 1939, initially in Mytilene and eventually in Athens, the place where he passed away in 1947. Sample of his devotion to the tradition of the island and of his faith to the rejuvenating breath that this place desired is his original study upon the poetry of Sappho that still remains unpublished, as well as the translation of the poems of Charles Baudelaire a private edition of 'Flowers of Evil'.

In 1912 Protopatsis was just fifteen years old. Without having yet a systematic arts education -he attends courses of the School of Fine Arts in Athens in 1914 -he fills his notebooks mainly with drawings, sketches of boys, portraits of friends and family members and he composes poems looking for an outlet to the restlessness of adolescence. Samples of these notebooks alongside with two paintings are exhibited in the 5th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art within the framework of the main programme with the title 'Identalterity', looking into the issue of gendered self-determination. Possibly there couldn't have been a better environment for the first presentation, a re-incorporation in a contemporary international framework of a disremembered artist and intellectual who approached with great sensitivity and boldness the explosion of the eroticism of adolescence, admittedly rather prematurely in his writings but most of all in his paintings.

His nudes with pencil depict unparalleled tenderness. Curved lines set the boundaries of the bodies in this critical turning point of the transition from childhood to adult life before even acquiring their adult forms. In his most complete works the young figures appear somehow untouched from the burden of the social and religious biases that incriminate nudity within an utopian, paradise synchronization with the natural environment. It reflects instinctively the fluidity of gender and sexuality, when eroticism is expressed naturally and spontaneously towards every direction,

free from the enforcement of obligatory heterosexuality that the societal principles set upon the bodies. Antonis Protopatsis evolved into a genius, bold spirit, and remained throughout his life a heretical nonconformist who loved passionate discussions, celebrations, disorder, while at the same time he used to compose original studies upon ancient lyric poetry. His portrait is outlined by his friend and writer Assimakis Panselenos in his well-known fictional autobiography with the title “When we used to live” and with the following wording:

Antonis Protopatsis is the cosmopolitan of the friendly group, a poet and a painter, his sketches though are something unsurpassed, as he used to seize characteristic moments of people and depicted them with tremendous mastery. He worked quite a lot, as a cartoonist, for ‘*Matin de Paris*’, and afterwards he felt nostalgic and gave it up. He was an esthète, with the good nuance of the word. He loved pranks and basket cases. He was familiar with all the various types of the island, the nutcases, the wackos, some kind of unrivalled lunatic old women of the aristocracy who he imitated and analyzed with a unique and authentic way. He was always updated on the international literary chitchat and he informed the astounded bashi-bazouk about André Gide, who with ‘*Corydon*’ justified homosexuality on a theoretical level ... At some point in the past, for a while, this Parisian dilettante used to dress up and walk in the traditional costume of Mytilene.

Syrago Tsiara

BORYANNA ROSSA

in collaboration with

OLEG MAVROMATTI

Re-enactment: Hammer and Sickle (1994)

2008-12

Video-Photographs

Courtesy of the artists

This multichannel video installation examines "gender performance" in film after the Cold War through re-enactments of scenes from selected cinematic works. These films are from USSR, Russia, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia and span the period from 1920s to the end of the 2000s. By reading these films through the lens of contemporary feminist and gender theory, Boryana Rossa seeks to understand some of the transformations of gender concepts in post-socialist countries. Working with actors, Rossa has created reenactments of the following films: Monday Morning (1966), Daisies (1967), Ladies Turn (1980), Hammer and Sickle (1994), Styliagi (2008), and Mission London (2010). In the installation, two video screens display both the original scene and the re-enactment.

The Perestroika period (mid-1980s to early 1990s) is a time of dramatic shifts in political and social values. When looking at the films from this period, Hammer and Sickle (1994) for example, there is visible a tendency to eliminate the varieties of previous socialist practices and to generalize the socialist period as "Stalinism." Negatives and positives of the Soviet era are joined together, depriving the viewer from having alternatives to the current form of neoliberalism that is promoted as being "married" to democracy. In this film, besides "Cold War-style" anti-communist propaganda, we see the presentation of three important "statements" that lead to: a regression in regards to women rights; a technological backwardness; and homophobia. These statements are against the use of technology by women (driving tractors, being scientist, or filmmaker); the participation of women in "male" professions viewed only as "masculinization of women"; and the representation of a sex reassignment surgery as an evil and "unnatural" experiment, only possible as a brainchild of diabolic leaders like Stalin.

CARLOS MOTTA

Gender Talents

2014

Video projection on wooden structure

Courtesy of Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon; Instituto de Visión, Bogotá; Mor.Charpentier Galerie, Paris.

GENDER TALENTS is a project by artist Carlos Motta that engages movements and discourses for gender self-determination within trans and intersex communities internationally.

GENDER TALENTS features an online archive of video portraits of trans and intersex activists who thoughtfully perform gender as a personal, social, and political opportunity rather than as a social condemnation. Based on in-depth interviews conducted in Colombia, Guatemala, India and the United States the portraits expose the ways that activists challenge the bio-cultural “foundations” of society and question gender norms from the perspective of sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, and disability.

GENDER TALENTS documents the ways in which society conditions and regulates bodies and how gender activists build politics of resistance and action. From Joggapa and trans communities in India, to sex workers in Colombia and Guatemala, to intersex activists in the United States, these individuals and organizations fight for state recognition, the right to self-determine their identities, self-govern their bodies, access to work, health benefits, and other pressing issues.

GENDER TALENTS is also an ongoing platform for physical events that reflect on alternative ways to think about the rigid nature of the gender binary as it is enforced in society.

DAVID HOCKNEY

Fourteen Poems by C.P. Cavafy
1966

Book with etchings with aquatint, complete set with 12 bound and one loose, published by Editions Alecto, London. Poems translated by Nikos Stangos and Stephen Spender

Private collection

By this work David Hockney comes to terms with Constantine P. Cavafy's homoerotic poetry. A new translation was produced by the poets Stephen Spender and Nikos Stangos, and published with the etchings in 1967. In early 1966 Hockney went to Beirut, which he saw as the contemporary equivalent of Cavafy's Alexandria, to research imagery for his prints. He also took inspiration from his own experience and environment and conceived the images as an updated version of Cavafy's imagery. Hockney did not intend to create illustrations of particular poems. Together with Stangos he assigned poems to the etchings only after the prints were done. Intended as visual equivalents to the mood and theme of all Cavafy's homoerotic poetry, Hockney's etchings depict variations on the theme of two men engaged in endless, anonymous pick-ups. Certain themes are found in the work of both Hockney and Cavafy: fleeting experiences, a nostalgia for the erotic, and a desire to be deeply involved in the lives of others while remaining a detached spectator.

DEBORAH KELLY & TINA FIVEASH

Hey Hetero!

2001-15

Digital photomedia

Courtesy of the artists

Hey, Hetero! is a collaboration between artist Deborah Kelly and photographer Tina Fiveash. The project's six pieces have appeared in public advertising spaces in the streets of Sydney, Melbourne, Wellington, Glasgow and Claremont; and in galleries, books and magazines around the world. Hey Hetero! won the major arts award of the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival 2001.

Hey Hetero! returns the gaze at heterosexuality: the privileged sexuality which makes gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender movements both possible and necessary. Simulating mainstream advertisements, the artwork invites heterosexuality into public discourse.

Note: No heterosexuals were harmed in the creation of this project.

HECTOR DE GREGORIO

De Gregorio graduated from London's Royal College of Art in 2009, with a Master's Degree in Printmaking, where he developed his labour-intensive way of working. Each image involves extensive research and costume making, photography, digital imaging and hand-finishing. Hector de Gregorio photographs his friends, often in his studio against a blank wall, dressed in elaborate costumes he has designed and made. He takes a number of photographs from the initial shoot, stitches them together to distort the perspective of the finished image, adding elements such as a parchment-coloured backdrop, Latin phrases, and other motifs, often with religious or mythical connotations. The finished images are then printed onto fine art paper or canvas, and overlaid with oils, waxes, gold leaf and varnish.

Hector de Gregorio is interested in European art, and particularly the representation of ecstasy, whether this is the sensuality of the Renaissance painter Lippi, the realist style of Caravaggio, the macabre of Bosch or the metaphysical of Dali's surrealist works. Other influences include his mother, who was a dressmaker and taught a young de Gregorio how to design and make clothes, and his Catholic upbringing, which seeded a further interest in religious and devotional art from all religions. All these elements are combined in these portraits that have often been described as having a medieval feel, and therefore they are utterly familiar and rooted firmly in the past, yet are completely contemporary.

IGOR GRUBIC

East Side Story

2006-08

Double channel video installation 14'

Courtesy of the artist

The aim of the project "East Side Story" was to tackle the question of the rights of sexual minorities in the society that shows a violent reaction to diversity. I was horrified by the cruel response of citizens to the activist's efforts in demanding equal rights for homosexuals during the Gay Parades in Belgrade in 2001 and Zagreb in 2002. Going afterwards through the documented material, I could hardly believe what I saw, terrified by the force of brutality spread among the people only because of their difference. I decided to have the dancers performed on the very spots of the events, in both cities. This was a way of suggesting the presence of a vivid, creative force very much alike the resistance movement that is trying to change the intolerant, conservative society into a better one.

KOSTIS FOKAS

I'm not malfunctioning, you are!

2014

Photography

Courtesy of the artist

Long fascinated with imperfection in a world that is seemingly always desperate for order, I allow my models to interact freely in bizarre ways, capturing moments of beauty in the ludicrous poses and situations that I form. I create an alternate universe where my everyday objects become curious props and subjects shrouded by strange disguises .My world is somewhere between reality and fantasy and what is hidden is as important as what you see. Through my photos and this project I wish to present a new take on the human body and explore its infinite capabilities. The use of quirky and sometimes hidden faces communicates exactly that. Unlike photography that seeks to reveal the feelings of the objects portrayed through the use of faces and expressions, I shift my focus on the complete freedom pertained to the image of a human body. Stripped from its clothes, I leave it fully exposed and completely surrendered.

LYNDA BENGLIS

Female Sensibility

1973

Video 13':13"

Private Collection Courtesy of Kalfayan Galleries, Athens -
Thessaloniki

During the 1970s, Lynda Benglis engaged in dialogues relating to the feminist movement through her pioneer art of video work. Benglis' performance-based videos confront issues of gender and identity by referencing the societal representation and construction of women and their sexuality as well as the interaction between viewer and artist. In her 1973 piece, 'Female Sensibility', two heavily made-up women take turns directing each other and submitting to kisses and caresses. The audio consists of a montage of radio programming, including discussions about male-female relationships, country music, a discussion about parapsychology, and advertisements for keeping America beautiful. Read against feminist film theory of the "male gaze", the action becomes a highly charged statement of the sexual politics of viewing and role-playing putting the viewer into an unequivocal confrontation with the role of voyeur.

MAJIDA KHATTARI

Odalisque au bouquet

2009-10

Silver print

Courtesy of the artist

The complex web of neo-orientalist mechanisms of voyeurism that structure the politics of gender gaze is on the center of Majida Khattari's performance and photography. In the series "Orientalisms", Khattari sets up voluptuous scenes with contemporary attractive odalisques, reviving, in a critical disposition, the historically structured distinction between West and East, and the construction of East as a field for the projection of western fantasies, inhibitions and desires. Once more, in the 21st century that time, the 'women of the East', covered with valuable velvets and silks, confirm the stereotypes of sexual availability, voluntary lust, and the unpunished pleasure exercised by the dominant male western gaze.

However, Khattari's artistic practice challenges the rules of the orientalist spectacle: her odalisques are not willing to surrender unconditionally to the lustful desires of the viewers; they turn their gaze provocatively beyond the frame, claiming the unhindered expression of their bisexual eroticism.

MARIANNE DARLEN SOLHAUGSTRAND

All artists are hermaphrodites

2012-13

Watercolor, ink, plastic paper

Courtesy of the artist

Art as a way to challenge gender dichotomy

As an Artist I have since the late nineties worked on a theme and with a use of materials that have had the aim of investigating the possibility of an autonomous "woman glance." Here I use man as the object of desire for works of Art that examines erotification as a power strategy and the relationship subject-object. I have focused on various forms of aestheticizing of the male body, and through a variety of exhibits, this study's play with both historical, religious and cultural stereotypes is aimed to open up for reflection on notions of gender and interpretation.

After working for several years with objectification of men and erotification as a power strategy, I now choose to look at men who represents themselves as feminine, while at the same time posing to accentuate their male genitals. My interpretation of this self fetishising puts what perhaps began as an individual identity project over to also be about the painting as a physical object.

By playing with stereotypes and painting methods, I hope to open up for reflection on notions of both gender and gorgeous. As artists we are involved in perception on different levels, and exploration of social and collective dimensions is an important part of this.

Roles are assigned and we take on different roles more or less unconsciously in different situations. The theme in my contribution to the "Ident-alter-ity" exhibition circuits around the issue if an artist's contribution can ever emerge as asexual, and whether the sex can be transcended.

MILICA TOMIC

I am Milica Tomić

1999

Video installation, sound 9'58"

Courtesy of the artist

“Every community is an imaginary one, but only imaginary communities are real”, says a quotation from Etienne Balibar, which opens a web-site with Milica’s work entitled I am Milica Tomic (1998/9). This work, actually a series of works in different media, particularly explores theoretical consequences of identification. In all versions of this work, everything evolves around Milica’s appearance and the series of statements she pronounces (in the video) or are written across her face on her web-sites. The statements proceed in the following pattern: “I am Milica Tomic, I am Korean”, “I am Milica Tomic, I am Norwegian”, and so forth. Initially, one can observe that every sentence contains a true and a false statement: yes, that is Milica Tomic, but she is neither Korean nor Norwegian, nor Austrian for that matter. What is explored here is the very formation, the very making of an identity. It is now almost commonly accepted that linguistic experience governs our “inner structure”, that this structure maps linguistic conceptualizings. Therefore, to state, to pronounce one’s identity makes one’s identity. We acquire personal identity by acquiring the name, and it is significant here that Milica Tomic does not dispute that form of identity in all its arbitrariness. On the other hand she problematizes the making of an ethnic or national identity, which she sees also as an arbitrary declaration.

By amounting identification acts to arbitrary declarations she is creating an identity through agglomeration of declared identities, i.e. creating an imaginary community out of her primary narcissistic identification, in so far as “community always exists through the imaging of the group of which one conceives oneself a member”. Therefore, in Milica’s work different identities are not projected upon herself but her image is projected upon these identities, she is not making some kind of a ‘new age’ statement about her participation in a harmonious ideal of the global community of nations but aiming at the very split within an act of identification, and the very agglomeration of identities as a hysterical symptom. In one and the same process this work questions both paranoid spaces of particular national identities (leading to xenophobia, discrimination, violence) and hysterical spaces of new globalization (representational overexcitation that turns the world into image). However, what has been here overlooked so far, is the very action which occurs when one of her statements is spoken or spread over the screen: at all these instances a different bleeding wound appears linking the act of identification with assertion of a lack at the root of any identity. In psychoanalytic theory, original lack is represented by castration anxiety, and the woman’s sex is constructed as a lack: instead of a penis there is a cut, a wound. Every identification act attempts to

mask that lack but it constantly reaffirms it. This is certainly the case with the only identity of Milica Tomic that both she and the viewers of her work take for granted, that is the identity of a woman. In effect, the place of this work within the feminist debates is pivotal for the dilemma whether to retain and identify with attributes of one's biological self (which incorporates a sense of loss) or just to assert that these attributes gain their meaning only through patriarchal organization of the society.

Yvonne Volkart

NATASHA PAPADOPOULOU

Natasha Papadopoulou works with video, photography and performance. Her work deals with the margins of reality and absurdity, aiming to question the position of women in the post-feminist era to today. She lives and works between Athens, Greece and New York, USA.

In her performance entitled *M My Me # 3* she attempts a post-feminist reading of gender gaze, female sexuality and representation in the age of technological communication. Two women approach each other with slow movements projecting the image of a naked female body one onto the body of the other with the soundtrack of cliché erotic songs. As the distance between them decreases, the projected image loses its sharpness, becomes a collage of body parts. In the process, the roles are reversed: the projector changes direction and the image of the naked female body is projected on the viewers' bodies, so they also become part of the spectacle. The work questions the mechanisms of voyeurism and the expression of sexuality in the age of contactless eroticism, when erotic call is reduced to narcissistic selfies and video posting.

A deconstruction of the stereotypical image of female beauty is attempted through the photo series *Caroatid*, where limbs are converted into carrots, twisted and interlaced, as this hybrid woman tries to protect her nudity from the voracious gazes in an act of theatrical contraction. In the end, pleasure at looking gets lost due to the ironic hybrid the artist manufactures.

PAULINE BOUDRY & RENATE LORENZ

Toxic

2012

Video installation with documents and sequined curtain, 13'

Performance by: Ginger Brooks Takahashi and Werner Hirsch

Courtesy of Marcelle Alix, Paris

Toxic explores ideas of the toxic, and of toxicity – substances and people that threaten and destabilise conventional notions of purity and stability. The film, shot on 16mm, shows two performers in an undated time: a punk figure in glitter (Ginger Brooks Takahashi) and a drag queen (Werner Hirsch), both of unclear gender and origin. They linger in an environment of glossy remains, of toxic plants against a backdrop of re-enacted ethnographic and police photography. While the punk gives a speech on toxicity and a performance referencing early feminist works, the drag queen re-enacts an interview of novelist and playwright Jean Genet from the '80s and blames the filmmakers for exposing her to the police interrogation format of being framed and filmed. The camera turns and depicts the space-off, the space outside the frame, insidiously proposing a question: what happens if film and photography, instead of chemical substances, are understood from a perspective of toxicity?

The installation also comprises of 15 forensic photographs of arrested 'pédérastes', transvestites and homosexuals in Paris in the 1870s. The images were taken at a time when the state institutions had not yet developed the mug-shot and other visualising methods of documenting its criminal subjects in order to produce and secure social hierarchies. The 'pédérastes', many of whom had been arrested on repeated occasions were taken to commercial photographic studios and photographed in decorative settings. In the pictures, we see them with the same poses of pride and peacocky self-presentation, which had been developed as means of status and recognition by the bourgeoisie. The archives seem to feed a central and lingering question: if the discourse on toxicity installs violent hierarchies might it also be able to introduce new subjectivities and social queer bonds?

SLAVA MOGUTIN

Slava Mogutin is a Siberian-born artist, writer and filmmaker exiled from Russia for his outspoken queer writings and activism. A third-generation writer and self-taught journalist and photographer, he became the first Russian to be granted political asylum in the US on the grounds of homophobic persecution. In 2000, he was awarded the Andrei Bely Prize for Poetry, one of the most prestigious literary awards in Russia. He is a vocal critic of President Vladimir Putin and his recent anti-gay policies.

In the photographic series entitled *Lost Boys* the artist photographs young Russians in various locations inside and outside, presenting symbols, expressions, postures and appearances that make them undoubtedly partakers of contemporary Russian culture and way of life but also of a universal youthful liveliness. These portraits apply an immediate criticism, disdain even, to Russian values and institutions like the army whereas at the same time they speak directly about the sexuality, honesty and frankness of man, beyond any kind of power or oppression.

URSULA BIEMANN

Performing the border

1999

Video – essay, 43'

Courtesy of the artist

The video essay is set in the Mexican-US frontier town Ciudad Juarez where the US industries assemble their electronic appliances in rows of Maquiladoras. It is a place of unstable identity resulting from migration to this hostile desert geography on a border that cannot be transgressed.

Adolescent girls come from central Mexico to the border to start a life from scratch. The video addresses the fragility of their new situation caught between the assembly line of high technology and a life in the desert slums. Their experience charts the feminization of international labor of the information society.

Sex work is a major trade in this border town. Juana, a former prostitute from Torreon, gives us her perspective on the transformations of the trade. There are crossovers with the Maquila women who need to complement their income on weekends with prostitution. On the other hand, the reversal of income pattern is obvious in the nightclubs, where the entertainment is catering mainly to young women with male shows. Relationship patterns are being remapped quite drastically on the border.

The rapid modernization of the town laid ground for another urban phenomena: serial killings. Since 1993, close to 150 young women have been raped and killed in Juarez according to the same pattern. The video brings the compulsive, repetitive character of the crimes in relation with the mass technologies and looks at the entanglement between intimacy and technology in the setting. The border is presented as a metaphor for marginalization and the artificial maintenance of subjective boundaries at a moment when the distinctions between body and machine, reproduction and production, female and male have become more fluid than ever.

WOLFGANG TILLMANS

“I believe in all hallucinations. I believe in all mythologies, memories, lies, fantasies and evasions. I believe in the mystery and melancholy of a hand, in the kindness of trees, in the wisdom of light.”

JG Ballard, 1984

It is in this spirit that the artist’s work emerges from a place of honesty and intensity. Tillmans openly presents his ongoing friendship and unrequited love that is compelling, adventurous and vulnerable in equal measure.

“Making a portrait is a fundamental artistic act and the process of it is a very direct human exchange. The dynamics of vulnerability, exposure, embarrassment and honesty do not change, ever. I’ve found that portraiture is a good levelling instrument for me and it always sends me back to square one.”

Wolfgang Tillmans, 2001

Having pioneered a conceptual approach to the production and installation of photographic material for over two decades his most recent work experiments with new developments in inkjet printing that allow the incredible sharpness of his images to look hyper-real and yet painterly. The colour tones he is now able to achieve reflect the glossy, metallic and unreal Ballardian landscapes of our times and his often, huge digital prints present a world that is both mundane and dramatic, familiar and alien. Tillmans illuminates the quotidian and shows us the world as it is, highlighting its often overlooked strangeness and beauty.

YEVGENIY FIKS

Moscow

2008

Photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Russian artist and photographer Yevgeniy Fiks, who participated in many of SMCA's exhibitions as well as in the 1st International Workshop of Young Artists at the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, is presenting a series of photographs (31) of open spaces-public squares, where they used to be places where homosexuals gathered in Moscow.

"This project deals with the historical promise of the October Revolution towards the homosexual community and it reflects that experience in Soviet Russia" as the artist writes in the book that was published with the aforementioned photographs. The cruising areas that are being photographed were very much alive from 1920 till 1980 and where places of constructing that homosexual identity of the citizens whereas they are being dealt with from the artist as a mourning-site for the lives of suppressed individuals. They are empty without human presence. They are being shot with a rather "clinical" way on purpose, refusing to objectify and to make a spectacle out of human sexuality and they just bring the public space into light.

In the book and the exhibition there is, as a supplement, a letter from May 1934 of a Scottish homosexual journalist member of the Communist Party to Stalin asking the General Secretary whether homosexuality and Communism is compatible, along of course with other matters and questions that show the views of those times.