

### *ANATOMY OF POLITICAL MELANCHOLY*

ATHENS CONSERVATOIRE

28. 2. – 13. 4. 2019

Opening: Wednesday 27 February

19:00 – 22.00

Curated by Katerina Gregos

The Schwarz Foundation is pleased to announce its first major exhibition in Athens, following the opening of the Foundation's venue, Art Space Pythagorion, on the Greek island of Samos in 2012. Entitled *Anatomy of Political Melancholy* the exhibition was first presented in Samos last summer; for Athens it was enlarged to include 24 artists artists and one collective.

*Anatomy of Political Melancholy* probes the increasing and widespread loss of faith in politics and politicians today and examines how disillusionment with our present political condition has created a sense of impasse and malaise that manifests itself in different ways in our everyday lives and in the public domain. The artists in it delve into the human experience of this phenomenon and reveal its complexities, as well as reactions to it, translating it into resonant images. They explore the current political discontent, particularly in Europe at this critical moment for the continent, highlighting its effects on the older and the younger generation; on the human psyche as well physical body.

We are increasingly witnesses to the debasement of political language, the infantilisation and polarisation of political debate; the growth of a simplified discourse that panders to collective fears rather than addressing the real, pressing questions; the lack of accountability from politicians, and of course, 'fake truth' and 'alternative facts'. Welcome then to the heyday of 'psychopolitics' – the interaction between politics or political phenomena and human psychology. With Trump in the White House and Putin in the Kremlin, and Bolsonaro in the Brazilian National Congress 'psychopolitics' has taken on a new, frightening, meaning. No wonder, then, that so many of us feel disillusioned.

Philosopher Lieven de Caeter calls this phenomenon 'political melancholy': a sinking feeling borne from frustration, anger, despair, mistrust, sadness and hopelessness. This exhibition is inspired by his text *Small Anatomy of Political Melancholy*.

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Clearly there is something profoundly wrong with contemporary politics: it is not only a case of the moral and intellectual inadequacy of politicians, but also the gaping chasm between the aims of politicians and the needs of citizens. The foundations of democracy itself are at risk, not only from the rise of demagogic populism in Europe, but also from the grip of financial institutions and mega-corporations, which have the power to influence the political agenda. The education, culture, motives, capabilities and moral standing of politicians don't appear to bear much weight today. In the case of Greece, and other European countries bound by austerity politics, political melancholy is also inextricably tied to what has been called 'financial melancholy'.

The exhibition comes at a timely moment: both in Greece, with elections coming up in the country October this year; but also in Europe, with the continuing Brexit impasse as well as European Parliamentary elections in May. The latter are expected to change the EU's political dynamic, due to the rising number of disillusioned voters and those who are angry at what they perceive as the loss of national sovereignty and the disempowerment of national governments in a globalized world.

At a time when ideologies tend to divide people instead of uniting them; that condemn instead of bringing about understanding and respect, the exhibition attempts to map a contemporary pathology of politics. It aspires to encourage us to re-consider our political and civil responsibilities, to refrain from political apathy and instead restore our confidence in the power of both our individual as well as collective agency.

## ARTISTS

Katerina Apostolidou (Greece)  
Marc Bauer (Switzerland/Germany)  
Sara Sejin Chang [Sara Van der Heide]  
(Korea/Netherlands)  
Marianna Christofides (Cyprus)  
Depression Era (Greece)  
Eirene Efstathiou (Greece)  
Marina Gioti (Greece)  
Jan Peter Hammer (Germany)  
Sven Johne (Germany)  
Yorgos Karailias (Greece)  
Spiros Kokkonis (Greece)  
Ariane Loze (Belgium)  
Adrian Melis (Cuba/Spain)

Tom Molloy (Ireland /France)  
Dimitris Mytas (Greece)  
Jennifer Nelson (USA/Greece)  
Yorgos Prinos (Greece)  
Chrysa Romanos (Greece)  
Hans Rosenström (Finland)  
Georges Salameh (Lebanon / Greece)  
Nestori Syrjälä (Finland)  
Thu Van Tran (Vietnam / France)  
Dimitris Tsoumplekas (Greece)  
Bram Van Meervelde (Belgium)

*A publication designed by bus.group,  
Berlin, accompanies the exhibition.*

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## About the Schwarz Foundation

The Schwarz Foundation is a non-profit organization that supports contemporary cultural production. While based in Munich Germany, the Foundation operates an exhibition space, Art Space Pythagorion, on the island of Samos, where it also organizes an annual international, transcultural music festival, Samos Young Artists Festival.

In light of the fact that Europe is experiencing significant transformations which call for new ways of thinking, the Foundation's activities aim to contribute to this process of re-evaluation and re-thinking the continent, and particularly South-East Europe and its relation to its surrounds within a global context. The Foundation supports projects that relate to this geo-political space, including artistic productions, residencies for artists and musicians on Samos, a curatorial fellowship, symposiums, exhibitions and publications, in Greece as well as abroad.

Since 2016 Brussels-based Greek curator Katerina Gregos is head of the Foundation's visual arts programme. Her programme has featured a series of socio-politically oriented exhibitions that touch upon some of the most urgent issues of today. Starting with the exhibition *A World Not Ours* (2016), which examined the politics of representation of the refugee crisis (which travelled to the Kunsthalle Mulhouse [FR] in 2017) to the current exhibition *Anatomy of Political Melancholy*, which looks at this pivotal moment in and for Europe.

[www.schwarzfoundation.com](http://www.schwarzfoundation.com)

## About the Athens Conservatory

The Athens Conservatoire is the oldest educational institution for the performing arts in modern Greece. It was founded in 1871. Prominent personalities who were taught at Athens Conservatoire include soprano Maria Callas and composers Dimitri Mitropoulos Nikos Skalkottas and Mikis Theodorakis.

The Conservatoire is housed a stunning modernist building built by the well known Greek modernist architect Ioannis Despotopoulos [1902-1992] - also known as Jan Despo. The building's façade is 160 metres long while the whole building is 13,000 square meters in size. It is an exceptional example of Bauhaus architecture and the modern movement in Greece. (Despotopoulos himself was the only Greek architect to have studied under Bauhaus school founder Walter Gropius).

The Conservatoire is the only completed part of an ambitious large-scale cultural complex commissioned in 1959 by the then government for Athens, for which Despotopoulos earned the top architectural prize of its time. The construction begun in 1969 and stopped in 1976, due to a lack of funding, leaving the building unfinished. In 1980, the Greek state undertook the cost of completing the work in exchange for ownership of the conservatory's old headquarters on Pireos Street.

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The Conservatoire hosts a variety of cultural events and exhibitions; most recently it was one of the main venues of documenta (2017).

[www.athensconservatoire.gr](http://www.athensconservatoire.gr)

## About the curator

Katerina Gregos is a curator, lecturer and writer based in Brussels since 2006. Currently she is curator of the Croatian Pavilion for the next Venice Biennial. Recently she was chief curator of the 1<sup>st</sup> Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art (RIBOCA1): *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* (2018), which she also helped to set up. Since 2016 she has been curator of the Munich-based (non-profit) Schwarz Foundation.

Over the last 15 years her curatorial practice has consistently explored the relationship between art, society and politics with a particular view on questions of democracy, human rights, economy, crisis and changing global production circuits.

Gregos has curated numerous large-scale exhibitions and biennials including, among others, *The State is Not a Work of Art*, Tallinn Art Hall, the Art Hall Gallery and the City Gallery (2018); *A World Not Ours*, Kunsthalle Mulhouse, (2017); *Personne et les autres*, the Belgian Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennale; *Between the Pessimism of the Intellect and the Optimism of the Will*, the 5th Thessaloniki Biennial (2015); *The Politics of Play* for the Göteborg Biennial (2013). In 2012 she co-curated *Manifesta 9* and in 2011 she curated *Speech Matters*, the Danish Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennial.

Gregos also regularly publishes on art and artists in exhibition catalogues, journals and books, and is a visiting lecturer at HISK: the Higher Institute of Arts in Ghent and the Jan Van Eyck Academy, in Maastricht. She has participated in numerous international conferences and symposia. More than 200.000 viewers have seen her TEDx talk *Why Art Is Important*.

## General information

*Anatomy of Political Melancholy*

Organised by the Schwarz Foundation

Curated by Katerina Gregos

Assistant curator: Ioli Tzanetaki

Exhibition consultant: Dimitris Tsoublekas

Curator of education: Katerina Zacharopoulou

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## Venue

Athens Conservatoire 28.2 – 13.4.19  
Opening 27.2.19 from 19:00 until 22:00

## Address:

Vasileos Georgiou B 17-19  
Athens 106 75

## Opening Hours:

Tuesday – Sunday 12:00 – 20:00  
Friday 12:00 – 22:00  
Entrance is free to the public

## Press & PR

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## General enquiries:

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## Education programme

Tours are available upon request with the mediators present in the exhibition during opening hours. The education programme entitled "The Complaints Desk" will take place every Friday, 18:00 - 20:00 & from March 17 **also** every Sunday 12:00-14:00. During this time there will also be a guided tour of the exhibition by the curator of the education programme Katerina Zacharopoulou. Artist's tours will also be announced shortly.

## Enquiries about the Education Programme and Tours

Sergio Zalmas, Athens  
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