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The exhibition being organised by the DESTE Foundation at the House of Cyprus (10 Irakleitou St. Athens) from 20 June to 15 September takes "Artificial Nature" as its theme.

Under this title and with reference to a whole constellation of contemporary artists with international reputations, such as Ashley Bickerton, Clegg and Guttmann, Walter de Maria, Laura Grisi, Martin Kippenberger, Jeff Koons, Liz Larner, Tatsuo Miyajima, Peter Nagy, Pino Pascali, Herman Pitz, Edward Ruscha, Manuel Saiz, Robert Smithson, William Stone, Thanassis Totsikas, Meg Webster and Andy Warhol, the introduction to the exhibition, written by Jeffrey Deitch, raises certain questions in its attempt to interpret the thinking which emerges from the works on display.

Where exactly does the truth lie - the truth that contemporary artists are so assiduously seeking?

Nature and Art have been seen, ever since Man still lived in caves, as functions which, for the creative artist, are inextricably bound up with each other. It is the relation of one to the other that those artists have always striven to formulate in their expression, while at the same time hinting at human values which underlie the artists themselves. As can be seen from the evolution of forms and aesthetics, each artist has attempted, in a reproductive manner, to imitate natural phenomena and the world around him; sometimes in pragmatic or fantastic terms, sometimes with intellectual, idealising or rational interpretations, artists have stated in their works a reflection of man's relationships and awareness, taking as their starting point the mysterious, nutritive and vital force concealed or manifested by nature.

ΔΕΣΤΕ DESTE FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

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Today, in an age when we live with the developments of biotechnology and the progress made in genetic "improvement", we have had to adapt to the new living conditions imposed by the verisimilitude of television pictures, by the green revolution of highpowered natural food - on the one hand - and, on the other, by pollution, industrial waste and the greenhouse effect. Nature is becoming less and less of a direct experience for mankind, while our indirect experience of it tends to focus more and more on its artificial aspect.

Furthermore, new media of communication, with their electronically coded languages, have replaced the old methods, intervening in and moulding even our private lives.

The products of the consumer culture, with their refinements and our own options, have dictated recent ideas about aesthetics, presenting new models to replace the old order of things. Today the representation of nature is created, each in their own way, by teams of geneticists, computer programmers, building contractors and plastic surgeons. Man has come face to face with tragic dilemmas at a moment at which profound changes are occurring in his life, changes reminiscent of the revolutions caused in the past by the invention of the car or of the aeroplane.

Jeffrey Deitch underlines the capacity which contemporary art has for responding to this new and challenging reality by raising the question of whether the truth of nature (and what might that be, one wonders?) lies below the deposit of human action and exploitation of whether its essence, which has been replaced by the phenomenology of new data, suggests that it has many faces or perhaps none.

The bilingual catalogue which accompanies the exhibition was designed by Dan Friedman. The concept of the exhibition has taken the form of a combination of image and text capable, by interpretation, of extending the function of each to intervene in the other.

On Tuesday 19 June, at 12.30 p.m. - the day before the exhibition opens - a press conference attended by all the basic contributors to "Artificial Nature" will be held in the exhibition hall. More information can be obtained from the offices of the Foundation.

For the DESTE Foundation
Athena Schina
Art Historian and Critic

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