

# YOU ALWAYS NEED SOMEONE TO SPREAD PANIC

by Maria Cristina Didero

*“Apple bombs, venomous caramels, daily lies, false information; ultimately, Trojan throws, beds or horses that when inside a house destroy everything that surrounds them. We want to introduce to you everything that remains out of the door: the fabricated banality, intentional vulgarity, urban furniture, voracious dogs”.*

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At the beginning of the process that led to *The System of Objects* exhibition we decided to draw a map of keywords, concepts and antinomies that would function as a background to the project:

Desire Object Marginal Want Habit Problem Logic Passion Perversion Personal Relic Ideology ~~Marginal passion~~ ~~The System of Objects~~ Oedipus Complex The Myth of the Origin The Miracle of Buying The Unconscious System The Logic of Atmosphere ~~Marginal Desire~~ The End of Meaning Seduction Passage Prison Archive Dark Descent The Desert of the Real Purchase Archaeology Problems Ghosts Electric Labyrinth Escape Roof Passage Supercomputer Destroy Reloaded Rebirth Upside-down Blast Shady Memories Past/Present/Possible Future Collapse Redone Unseen Burst Faded Hidden Contrast Controversy Unknown Mislead Mistaken Lost Way out Cast away Dispersive Wasteful Explosion Confusion Dark Loss Dispersion Wasted resources Labyrinth Next to nothing Catastrophe Unexpected Unprecedented Unreal Ruins Narration Storytelling Myth Mythology Gothic Displacement Disorientation Vision.

Since its inception, the aim of *The System of Objects* was twofold: to show Dakis Joannou's attitude as a collector and his approach to creativity, here exemplarily expressed by his collaboration with architect Andreas Angelidakis.

*The System of Objects* originated in fact from the encounter of these two prominent figures of the international cultural scene active in Greece. Dakis Joannou's DESTE Foundation is based in Athens and is one of the world's most active institutions dedicated to innovative curatorial projects, also through the outstanding shows organized in its Athens headquarters and in Hydra, in the island's former slaughterhouse.

This show mirrors Joannou's whole world, merging his collections of art, design and fashion including the building he commissioned Jean Nouvel to build in Cyprus and the yacht he asked Jeff Koons to decorate for him. Less known than his art collection - although expressing the same strength and values - is the group of design pieces gathered in the last decades, mainly focused on the period of time from the mid-60s to the early '70s, now generally known as the era of *radical design*. The collection clearly shows Dakis Joannou's intention to represent that timeframe by grouping even different replicas of the same objects such as three Cini Boeri's *Serpentone* sofas from 1971 or a set of two *Pillola* Lamps by Cesare Casati and Emanuele Ponzio from 1968, for example. But of course emotions and imagination often overcome rules. This collection also includes cutting-edge contemporary furniture, such as the *Pane Chair* (2006), a seat cooked in an oven like a piece of bread by Japanese designer Tokujin Yoshioka which echoes the same freedom, cleverness and sense of surprise of the *historical* pieces, taking that spirit into the present. Ultimately this project aims to investigate the experience of art inside the depths of a private collection through an original and subjective experience.

Co-protagonist of *The System of Objects* is Andreas Angelidakis, one of the true originals of the international creative scene: an architect, designer, writer, and teacher, Angelidakis works in his experimental studio based in Athens to build, design, and speculate on contemporary ecosystems of screens and landscapes, questioning opposite practices and ideas: Art and Architecture, Virtual and Real, Building and Nature, Ruin and Construction. The word “speculating” tells a lot about his approach to creativity in general and architecture in particular. The way Angelidakis approaches his projects always leads to an unprecedented experience of visualization of buildings and spaces, often conceived as a personal challenge, with the specific aim of revolutionizing their status. His spontaneous and unrestrained attitude is concretely expressed in actions which take the form of videos, computer animations, 3D prints, functional spaces, and website activities – for him always essential as *the* space where places and interactions are redefined.

Joannou and Angelidakis have known each other for years, but this is the first time they have put their energies together to realize a project - maybe guided by something mysteriously cabalistic: Andreas Angelidakis was born in 1968, Jean Baudrillard's book which inspired the title of the show and traces its narrative was published in 1968; Dakis Joannou's favorite year in design is 1968.

Angelidakis is renowned for his imaginative and unconventional approach to architecture so the idea of Joannou of giving him complete freedom with no rules nor limits meant that he would actually turn upside down not only the venue of DESTE itself but also the perception of the entire collection. Translation = Joannou's universe.

Angelidakis' view and manner are controversial and provocative, strong and captivating; he accepted enthusiastically the challenge and without any hesitations decided to destroy walls, open up windows where they did not exist, create peep-holes and *woods of cages*. The result is a groundbreaking look at an exceptional patrimony of moments in time: the exhibition turns out to be extremely emotional and seems to be conceived through paths of surprises, a dungeon itinerary with obstacles and barricades, almost transforming the *container* into a work of art in itself. White walls and white cubes are a standard spatial typology for art spaces. As collections are precise accumulations of acquisitions, the exhibition of a collection is a focused selection from that accumulation, which could be unveiled or disguised. It is a silent amassing of proposals and intentions which could speak loud with no sound. The *System of Objects* project intends to look at Dakis Joannou's collection and to its established casquet as a chaotic and misleading path where we get lost and cast away rather than acquiring information. The collection acts here as amassed ghosts from the past imprisoned in a contemporary roll-cage even when the works are carefully selected and create a specific and well planned drama. The visitor is obliged to face the unexpected; the more we walk through the exhibition the more we find ourselves next to nothing and close to everything. We are misled into some sort of dark and aseptic wonderland (where wonder stays here for the un-real and the un-natural). Along this path of exploration, the project stumbles upon seminal works from the early shows of the '80s and '90s and meets brand-new acquisitions never exhibited before. Private sections of the design collection - such as the Cypriot antiquities and the extensive series of 1968 pieces - are placed next to archival material and the extensive publication activities of DESTE Foundation, in-between forgotten fragments from seminal prophetic exhibitions such as *Cultural Geometry*, *Psychological Abstraction*, and *Artificial Nature*.

The *System of Objects* reconfigures the DESTE Foundation as an exhibition device at the service of the collection itself, a spatial experience aligned with the works themselves. Obscure, provocative, sexual, and uplifting, the unique spirit of this exhibition guides visitors through a complex journey in the building along an articulated and intense route, never obvious, maybe frightening. We pass through dark and narrow corridors wondering, perhaps even afraid, of where the walking is going to take us. Climbing up staircases sometimes we can see the sunlight before going down to darkness again. For the first time we are allowed to penetrate sections of the building never visited before. This journey questions what it means to look at an artwork, what it means to display it - sometimes a tunnel of horrors, sometimes a Garden of Eden, from a new and uncomfortable point of view. No artworks are placed merely on display: they either have their own private space or they are part of a richer dialogue between space and visitors. *The System of Objects* fosters a *suspension of disbelief*. There are cages that you cannot access and there are lengthened macro-peep holes at the bottom of which you can barely understand there is a something to look at. We enter rooms in unconventional ways, we are obliged to re-appropriate functions and to re-think relations. Instinctively we draw a personal labyrinth in our mind. We cut through floors, shifted exhibition rooms away, removed walls from the building; we feel like tomb raiders inside a living and breathing accumulation of names and titles; we become uninvited trespassers inside a rich history and clouds of ideas; we found ourselves digging into the mountain of the collector's private thoughts, decided to be transformed into a publicly accessible accumulation. Along the way we discover forgotten suburban antechambers, curiosities, and pulsating hypothalamus of intentions. Visitors will stop asking themselves if there is a right itinerary or not: only by navigating through the density of creations do we begin to treat the spatial experience as an integral part of Joannou's world. It happens that we find ourselves in the middle of an overcrowded forest of objects or sometimes a clear-cut distance is created between us and the works, a space of inaccessibility. Is the collection here to be seen or to be disguised? Why all these tortuous and convoluted routes?

Andreas Angelidakis' reload of Dakis Joannou's collections reverses for the first time the relationship between an exhibition space and the works it contains: in *The System of Objects* the collector's vision is kaleidoscopically fragmented by a radical hand.

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