

Athens, 21 May 2001

PRESS RELEASE

2ND DESTE PRIZE 2001

June 8 - September 30 2001

Christos ATHANASSIADES
Sia KYRIAKAKOS
Dimitra LAZARIDOU
Eleni LYRA
Andreas SAVVA
Georgia SAGRI
Despina CHRISTOU

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One of the primary aims of the DESTE Foundation is to support and promote the production of contemporary Greek art as well as to increase the audience for contemporary art in Greece. To this end, in 1999 the Foundation decided to institute an award for contemporary Greek art, the DESTE Prize, to be given to a young Greek artist every two years.

The Prize intends to encourage and reinforce the spirit of innovation in contemporary art and to highlight the latest developments, bringing the achievements of young artists to the attention of a wider public. The **thematic axes** of artistic creation which are of particular interest are:

- (a) the relation of national identity (cultural as well as social) to international realities and the phenomenon of globalisation
- (b) contemporary reality in Greece
- (c) the question of personal identity.

The **2nd DESTE Prize** will be awarded on **21st June** to the artist whose work attempts to open up new ways for art and contribute to the discourse and the development of contemporary art in our country according to the above criteria. **The DESTE Prize is 3.000.000 drachmas and a travel grant.** In his video installation *Cinema Stories-Fragments*, **Christos Athanassiades** explores the interaction between the languages of painting and cinema in order to plough the extent to which personal

and collective experience overlap. Here, fragments from film scenes which remain vivid in the artist's memory flow into the space of the video installation along with video sequences of over-painted images, in a frenetic race of vision and memory. His *Cinema Stories* relate snapshots of multiple every day experiences, and a varied set of intertwined relations where the real and the imaginary, the mundane and the sublime, the ephemeral and the eternal constantly supply one another. The interactive installations and the performances of **Sia Kyriakakos** explore the incessant changes on the world's cultural map and the ensuing identity crises that are the result of globalisation. Her diaphanous house *Efrossyni*, is a symbol of her cultural heritage and identity, deals with this host of changes and losses while demonstrating that tradition and personal experience still resist the increasing homogenisation. Kyriakakos explores the evolutionary process of communication and the development of new relations in a constantly changing environment. Her comprehensive exploration of the incessant interaction between language, behaviour, the present, memory, loss, progress and man's new destinations is reflected in all her works as she attempts to bridge the gaps between different peoples and individuals. In a series of photographs called *Sacred Shadows*, **Dimitra Lazaridou** records the nocturnal landscape of desolate, industrial parts of the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. These images explore what lies under the surface, where all visible things may look obvious but their identity remains ambiguous. Lazaridou focuses on the psychological and social aspects of this impregnated landscape, and all its political and mental parameters. Without being narrative, these mysterious nocturnal views of deserted urban spots function like charged tableaux which hint at a host of stories. The characteristic lack of human presence reinforces the enigma exuded by these dramatic views of a frequently forgotten aspect of the city.

Eleni Lyra works with staged, digitally manipulated photography to produce anthropocentric virtual environments dealing with the issues of both image and space. Lyra's art could be described as digital fresco - monumental murals with the mosaic pebbles replaced by the pixels of virtual imagery. The artist attempts to express a metaphysical aesthetics like the painters of Byzantine and medieval art, using photography and the new media to create a series of painterly tapestries. She approaches traditional forms and models using a modern methodology and arriving at a new imagery, yet she is not encumbered by any anxiety to innovate.

The installations of **Andreas Savva** generate complex impressions which explore a variety of issues such as the role of the artwork, beauty

and aesthetics, the value of money and everyday life, without overlooking the importance of representation. His measurements and calculations result in ideas which reflect the complexities of life without ending up as cold intellectual mathematics. Savva employs everyday, mundane materials to re-examine the established forms of contemporary art and articulate his concerns over social reality, the ephemeral human existence and man's effort to transcend his physical and intellectual limitations.

Georgia Sagri participates in the 2001 DESTE Prize with the video from her performance *In the Shop Window*, presented in May 2001 in the window of a shop in central Athens. Sagri moved the contents of her bedroom in the shop window and lived there for a week, exposing the most intimate aspect of her private life to public view. The work explores the boundaries between public and private life as they are redefined in our time. The ever-increasing phenomenon of surveillance, the monitoring of our private life with the aid of technology and the lack of meaningful human relations are the thematic axes of her performance, which also functions as a comment on the commodification of art and the relationship that artists have with the commercial side of art.

The figurative tableaux of **Despina Christou** function as theatrical dramas which probe the emotional and psychological depth of urban living. Christou selects her subjects through a penetrating observation of the urban landscape and its visual stimuli. Her paintings focus on the marginalized, ignored elements of Athenian reality, not in a dogmatic or didactic way but with genuine empathy and complete identification. Her desire is to pay tribute to those who were born in the wrong place, at the wrong time and with the wrong people around them. The Selection Committee also decided that Special Mention be made to the work of **Elias Cohen**, who presented a proposal of a series of interventions to a Metro station, on CD-Rom. The committee considered this proposal to be a visually and functionally thorough approach to the question of art in public spaces. For this reason, it was decided that this work be proposed for consideration to ATTIKO METRO S.A., the company operating the new Athens subway. The **Selection Committee** for the 2001 Deste Prize consisted of **Katerina Gregos** - Director of the Deste Foundation's Centre for Contemporary Art; **Nikos Xydakis** - Art Critic; **Sania Papa** - Director of the Thessaloniki Centre for Contemporary art; **Effi Strouza** - Curator; and **Nikos Tranos** - Assistant Professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts.

The winner, to be announced on 21st June, will be selected by an **international jury** consisting of: **Dakis Joannou** - President of the Deste Foundation; **Christos M. Joachimides** - Exhibitions Organiser; **James Rondeau** - Associate Curator of Contemporary Art of the Art Institute of Chicago; **Alison Gingeras** - Curator of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and **Jennifer Higgle** - Reviews Editor of Frieze magazine, London

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