

Athens, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2001

## PRESS RELEASE

### THE 2001 DESTE PRIZE WAS AWARDED TO ARTIST GEORGIA SAGRI

*2001 Deste Prize Exhibition Dates: 8<sup>th</sup> June – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2001*

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

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 and emerging artists to the attention of a wider public. At the same time it aims to provide an opportunity for young artists to develop their potential and present their work. The artists selected to participate in the 2001 Deste Prize were: **Christos Athanasiades, Sia Kyriakakos, Dimitra Lazaridou, Eleni Lyra, Andreas Savva, Despina Christou and Georgia Sagri**.

For the purpose of participating in the 2001 Deste Prize competition and exhibition, **Georgia Sagri** carried out a performance entitled ***In the Shop-Window***, which took place between 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2001. For the demands of this performance Sagri moved the entire contents of her bedroom into the window of a store in central Athens and inhabited the vitrine, in a replica of her actual bedroom, thus exposing the most intimate side of her private life to public view. The performance was documented on video by the artist and this was the work with which she participated in the 2001 Deste Prize competition. Sagri's performance explores the complex and multifaceted issue of the way in which the limits of private and public life are becoming increasingly conflated and difficult to distinguish and how the two are being redefined today, as well as the personal and social problems that occur as a result. The drive to consume, the effort to adopt an identity and to belong to a wider social group through the construction of a "façade", a *shop-window* and the need for communication are some of the issues dealt with in her work. The question of surveillance, the increasing monitoring of our private life with the aid of technology and the lack of genuine interpersonal relations are also additional issues tackled by the performance. Sagri's work also comments on the commercial aspect of artistic creation and on the relation of the artist to the commercial side of art, but above all speaks about the need for genuine inter-personal communication.

The 2001 Deste Prize was awarded on 21<sup>st</sup> June by the minister of Culture, Mr. Evangelos Venizelos. The members of the jury, namely Dakis Joannou – President, Deste Foundation, Christos Joachimides – Exhibitions' Organiser, James Rondeau – Associate Curator, The Art Institute of Chicago, Alison Gingeras – Curator, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris and Jennifer Higgin – Reviews Editor, frieze magazine, London, issued the following statement:

*"The jury is pleased to award the Deste Prize 2001 to artist Georgia Sagri. We recognize her for an already accomplished and varied body of work, as well as for her promise as an emerging artist working in Greece today.*

*After careful consideration of this convincing and coherent exhibition of the talented finalists, we faced the difficult decision of selecting one artist whose work responds to the criteria set by the Selection Committee. While many of the artists in the exhibition contribute to a meaningful discussion in relation to larger currents in contemporary art, the work of Georgia Sagri most successfully explores questions of personal and national identity while engaging with the recent history of international art practices. We find her intuitive and independent inquiry into the nature of performance-based work both original and convincing. In discussing the work directly with the artist, we were unanimously impressed by her energy, imagination, and conceptual ambition.*

*We thank the artists for sharing their work with us, and acknowledge with gratitude the generous efforts of the Deste Foundation in advancing our awareness of contemporary Greek art."*

The 2001 Deste Prize is 2.500.000 drachmas and a travel grant.

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