

MAUREEN PALEY.

press release

JAMES WELLING

PLANOGRAPH

23 November 2019 – 12 January 2020

private view: 22 November 2019, 6.30 – 8.30pm

Maureen Paley is pleased to present the fourth solo exhibition at the gallery by James Welling.

'Greek and Hellenistic antiquities are the subject of *Planograph*. I started photographing ancient objects in museums ten years ago and in June I visited Greece for the first time.

When I took up photography in my twenties, I thought of the medium as a time machine. This summer as I processed my digital camera files from Greece to mimic black and white 19th century film—white skies and dark earth tones—I realised that I was looping back to this early intuition about photography. Modelling 19th century technology is a form of time travel, a visual return to the albums of early archaeological expeditions, the first photographic imaginings of Greece.

Recently I discovered flexible plate lithography, a form of planographic printing. Planographic plates print from a flat surface, as opposed to relief printing, such as etching. I image my plates on a laser printer, sponge with water and ink with traditional artist's oil paint. Rather than printing the result, I present the inked surfaces as photographic objects.

I came to photography through books printed by such legendary houses as the Triton Press, Meridian Gravure and Rapoport Printing. In the matte tonalities and halftone dots of *Planograph*, I am paying tribute to the 20th century printers who introduced me to photographic seeing.'

- James Welling

For this exhibition, examples from the *Degrade* series have been added to punctuate the planographic works.

Portrait of Avidia Plautia, 2019

Avidia Plautia was a Roman noblewoman who lived in the first century A.D. Photographed in the Yale University Art Gallery.

Eleusis. Kallichoros (Well of the fair dances), 2019

In the Homeric Hymn, *To Demeter*, the goddess Demeter was discovered by the daughters of Queen Metaneira sitting beside the "Well of the fair dances" in Eleusis.

Athlete's torso, 2019

Photographed in the National Archaeological Museum.

Hephaisteion. Opisthodomos (inner shrine) from the east porch, 2019

I visited the Hephaisteion at dawn and peered into the inner shrine of Hephaistos, the god of artists and trades people.

Acropolis. Cloudburst and thunder, 2019

The eastern porch of the Erechtheion with the Parthenon in the middle distance.

Erechtheion. North porch. Sunset, 2019

Barely visible in the floor of the north porch is an aperture which reveals the mark of Poseidon's trident when he created a salt water spring on the Acropolis.

Erechtheion. Western façade. Sacred olive, karyatids and old temple of Athena Polias in foreground, 2019

Athena's gift to Athens was the olive tree planted on the western side of the Erechtheion. (The present tree was planted in 1950's.) The six Karyatids were thought to hold small vessels containing chthonic offerings to the mythical King Kekrops buried under the Erechtheion. Remains of the massive old temple of Athena Polias hug the southern flank of the Erechtheion.

Head of a goddess. 2nd century A. D. marble imitation of a 5th - 4th century B. C. chryselephantine (gold and ivory) sculpture, 2019

The tears are oxidation stains from bronze eyelashes. Photographed in the Acropolis Museum.

Parthenon. West pediment. Crowning akroterion (floral ornament), 2019

A four-meter high floral ornament adorned the top the Parthenon. Photographed in the Acropolis Museum.

National Garden. 7:34 AM, June 20th. Acanthus, 2019

The acanthus leaf is depicted on the Corinthian column and in Athens I saw it growing almost everywhere. Photographed in the National Garden.

Eleusis. Inner propylon. Mixed Doric and Ionic entablature fragments depicting a grain sheaf, rosette and the cista mystica, a basket for hidden sacred offerings, above dedicatory inscription in Latin, 2019

The Eleusian Mysteries, propitiation rites to the Goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone, celebrated fertility and agriculture. What transpired in the Mysteries is not known but grain was thought to have been venerated.

Propylaia. South pteron (wing) looking toward the Saronic Gulf, 2019

Of the three structures on the Acropolis, the Propylaia is the only one you can walk inside and experience spatially.