

# PHENOMENA EVOKING THEOSIS

Last year I started living in an isolated house somewhere in rural Greece. My idea at the beginning was to escape from a complicated urban activity that was entwined with a hyper-social artist's life. Then one could think I wanted to escape as much as possible the long-lasting effects of economic and environmental systems of late neoliberalism which is also true but deeper, it was more of a reaction to the existing facts of human existence and exploration for its new potentials. In this remote setting I longed to be working without distractions, but also to walk, read, write, or just do nothing and listen to the splendid "sound" of silence.

In my new life's quest for silence and purification, I had indeed fewer thoughts competing for my attention. I know it is impossible to be truly and authentically 'off the grid' nowadays. It is impossible to escape the attention economy as it is strongly rooted in capitalism and I am quoting writer Jenny Oddell who says "especially technologies that encourage a capitalist perception of time, place, self, and community". So located in this setting with the only exception of my Starlink connection-Elon Musk's satellite internet, the closeness to other people is mirrored there in closeness to nature and its frequent mysteries. The strong peace of mind I feel there cannot be dependent on anything and nobody.

Being silent is a romantic idea, it is an addictive quest for something profound that barely exists anymore, the sense of the eternal even if that's temporal, the fixation on a cathartic ritual that enhances the well-being from the "noise" of our hyper-connected life. Is silence a healing process against compulsive narcissistic individuation, especially towards technocratic singularities? Does a move towards the "land" a form of ecological resistance? In a broader sense Is this an action to resign this world or to reform it? Do similar gestures suggest another kind of communication more psychic or esoteric?

For Phenomena Evoking Theosis I choose works and artists whose work and lives blend with the idea of a quiet pastoral counterculture expanding with different media and spanning across different eras. These artists' works explore the connections between

physical or immaterial, non-gender specific or queer/feminist, biographical or contrived, and spiritual or technological. The show becomes a means to re-consider and re-imagine a momentary or a lifelong place of isolation considering different angles and themes like contemporary spirituality, technological decay, and social resilience.

There is no anxiety, no analysis, no happiness or sadness. The show becomes a space of pure contemplation. Silence in this way becomes another song of life.

Angelo Plessas (P.E.T. Projects), 2023

With works by:

**Eleni Bagaki**

**Alex Cecchetti**

**Alexandru Chira**

**Mary Beth Edelson**

**Hypercomf**

**Martin Kippenberger**

**Ana Maria Millan**

**Jonny Niesche**

**Maria Papadimitriou**

**Angelo Plessas**

**Vessel (Navine G.Dossos and James Bridle)**

**curated  
by**

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12.9. – 14.10. Wien  
2023 Vienna

**Eleni Bagaki** is an artist based in Athens.

Drawing inspiration from feminist approaches and practices, she uses her work to explore autobiography and its relationship to fiction through text, video, sound, painting, and sculpture. Through the reconstruction of personal experiences or the creation of imagined events, Bagaki explores issues surrounding erotic relationships, sexuality, gender representations, and the precarity that many of the younger generation experience in Greece. She had solo exhibitions at EMST (The National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens), Athens (2023); Chauffeur Gallery, Sydney; and Eleni Koroneou Gallery, Athens (2021); Palette Terre, Paris (2018); Radio Athènes, Athens (2017 & 2015); Signal Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö (2016); and NEW STUDIO, London (2015). Selected group exhibitions include PCAI, Athens; the 9th Syros International Film Festival; P.E.T. Projects, Athens; the DESTE Foundation and NEW MUSEUM, Athens. Bagaki is the recipient of the Artworks Fellowship, Niarchos Foundation (2020–21). Residencies include Hordaland Kunstsenter, Bergen (2020), Fogo Island Residency, Canada (2019), IASPIS, Stockholm (2018–19), Pivô, Sao Paulo (2018), and Kantor Foundation (2017).

**Alex Cecchetti** lives and works in Paris. He is an artist, poet, gardener, and choreographer. Difficult to classify, his work is at the same time spiritual and tactile, poetic and aesthetic. It creates mental and physical environments in which the spectators, as much as other beings, are often part of the work, all engaged in a visionary journey beyond the spectrum of human experience. The artist died for the first time in 2014 for unknown reasons, though he keeps producing new works, presenting new performances, publishing new poems, and giving talks. His last walk piece SENTIERO, is the winner of The Italian Council prize of the Italian Ministry of Culture, 2022, and has been presented in the Biennale Gherdeina 8, Taxispalais Innsbruck, IASPIS Stockholm, Somalgors Switzerland, MAXXI Aquila, Italy. Recent exhibitions and incantations include: MAXXI, Rome (2021), SEMA Seoul Museum of Art (Seoul, KOR) and Network Aalst with Laure Prouvost (2020), Serpentine Galleries London, and Castello di Rivoli (2019), Spike Island, Bristol, (2018). Palais de Tokyo, Paris; .

**Alexandru Chira** (1947 - 2011) was an artist and Professor at the Painting Department of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Bucharest National University of Arts. When his home village Tauseni suffered a yearlong drought

during the 1990s Chira started to elaborate sophisticated land-and-weather improving art equipment, a series of symbolic installations of painted metal, wire, and concrete for the invocation of rain and rainbows. The ensemble De-signs towards the sky for the rain and the rainbow (1994 - 2004) is located on a hill in the middle of the village, surrounded by other hills and divided into 18 sub-ensembles. Chira's works have been presented in the context of various exhibitions including, Fitzpatrick Gallery, the Lisbon Architecture Triennale, Palácio Sinel de Cordes, Lisbon; The Sao Paulo Biennial Art Exhibition, Sao Paulo; The Visual Arts Museum, Galati; and The National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC), Bucharest, which presented a retrospective of the artist in 2015.

**Mary Beth Edelson** (6 February 1933 – 20 April 2021) was an American artist and pioneer of the feminist art movement, deemed one of the notable „first-generation feminist artists.“ Edelson was a printmaker, book artist, collage artist, painter, photographer, performance artist, and author. Her works have been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. She began her studies at the Art Institute of Chicago and continued as she pursued her Bachelor's and Master of Fine Arts degrees. Her art changed markedly in the 1970s when she shifted to performance and other forms of art, as well as how women are depicted in art. She helped found and was an active member of the Heresies Collective, which published the Heresies journal, to show and promote art made by women. She also joined the feminist cooperative gallery, A.I.R. Gallery (Artists In Residence), which held exhibits of Edelson's work, including The Memorial to the 9,000,000 Women Burned as Witches in the Christian Era.

**Hypercomf** is a multidisciplinary speculative design artist identity. Established as a fictitious company profile in Athens in 2017, it has since been based on Tinos island and has set out to explore the relationship between nature and culture, domestication, industry, and science. Hypercomf's practice fosters interdisciplinary collaborations and community engagement methods of production often including a range of biodiverse participants. These processes are manifested as space activations, multimedia artworks and sustainable design prototypes and objects, structured around dynamic narratives that feature both organic and inorganic protagonists.

**Martin Kippenberger** was born on 25 February 1953 in Dortmund and grew up in Essen. From 1972 to 1976 he studied with Arnold Hauser and Franz Erhard Walther at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Hamburg. In 1976 he spent some months in Florence; in 1977 he moved to Berlin where he and Gisela Capitain founded Kippenbergers Büro in 1978. He lived in Paris (1980), Vienna (1983), Cologne (1980s), Carmona/ Seville and Madrid (1988), Venice/Los Angeles (1989) and Frankfurt (1992); he also regularly went to stay in St Georgen (Black Forest) and on Syros (Greece). In 1989 his daughter Helena was born. In 1990 Martin Kippenberger was a guest professor at the Städelschule in Frankfurt; in 1992 he took up a post as professor at the Gesamthochschule in Kassel. In 1996 he married the photographer and artist Elfie Semotan. He spent the last two years of his life in Vienna and Burgenland, Austria, and died on 7 March 1997 in Vienna.

In 1993, Martin Kippenberger founds on the Greek Cycladic island of Syros in an allusion to one of the largest art museums in the world, the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA), the “Museum Of Modern Art Syros” and declared himself as its director. The “museum building” is an unfinished, concrete skeleton without walls. Every year Kippenberger invites artist friends such as Cosima von Bonin, Hubert Kiecol, Michel Majerus, Stephen Prina, Ulrich Strothjohann, Johannes Wohnseifer, Christopher Wool, and Heimo Zobernig to realize site-specific works. In the period from 1993 to 1997, eight exhibitions took place there, and Kippenberger commissioned Lukas Baumewerd, an architect, to draw up theoretical plans for finishing the museum so that it could become a fully-functioning venue including a bus terminal and a museum shop. The boundaries between a real museum operation and a fictional business, reality, and legend start to blur.

The works by **Jonny Niesche**, born in Sydney, where he lives and works today, exude a seductive allure that at first sight seems to play with the idea of glamour. Behind the colorful, enchanting surfaces that Niesche offers to his public in ever new color combinations like a veritable seductor, however, hides a level that puts fundamental experiences like beauty, longing and contemplation in the center. Half reflective and half permeable, the planes of his paintings transform themselves in the beholders' gaze, so that they always experience new states of them. It is a fascinating oscillation between a static painting and a performance; the artist uses digital tools like photoshop and printers that work with thermodynamics; but also unusual materials like mirrors and veils. Jonny Niesche graduated with a Master of Visual Arts,

from Sydney University, AU in 2013, after completing Heimo Zobernig's Masters class in sculpture at the Academy Fine Arts, Vienna, AT in 2012. Major solo and group exhibitions include: Zeller van Almsick, Vienna, AT; Museum of Contemporary Art, Commission for Vivid festival, Sydney; Virtual Vibration' Collaboration with Mark Pritchard and Spinifex, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Sculpture Garden, Vienna, AT; ENTKUNSTUNG/VERKUNSTUNG, Austrian Cultural Forum Berlin; February 2, ARTSPACE, Sydney; Shut up and Paint, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; The Kaleidoscopic Turn. His works can be found in the permanent collections of Art Gallery of South Australia; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; National Gallery of Victoria; M.O.N.A. Museum of New and Old Art, Hobart; ARTBANK AU and private collections internationally.

The work of **Ana María Millán** addresses the politics of animation and technique in relation to digital cultures and subcultures, magic, and propaganda. She has developed techniques based on role-playing and reenactment as a methodology to make a series of plays that end in the form of narrative films and video games. Her work has been shown in CARA, NY 2023, 13th Gwangju Biennale. 2021; Art Encounters Biennial, Timișoara, Romania 2019; Kunstinstituut Melly (solo), Rotterdam; FRAC Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur, Marseille 2017; Savvy Contemporary, Berlin 2016; ; Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin 2009; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris 2005.

**Maria Papadimitriou** lives and works in Athens, Greece. She is known as an artist for her ability to investigate participatory projects and collective activities that highlight the interconnection between art and social reality. A major part of her work has been developed through collaboration with artists. For 4 years she had a continuous dialogue with Martin Kippenberger, who had put her in charge of the realization of MOMAS, Syros Island. She is a Professor of Art and environment at the Dept. of Architecture, University of Thessaly and she is the founder of T.A.M.A. (Temporary Autonomous Museum for All) 1998 and SOUZY TROS Art Canteen. Since 2017 she is the co-leader artist at Victoria Square Project in collaboration with the American artist Rick Lowe. In 2003 she won the DESTÉ prize for contemporary Greek Art. Her most recent solo shows include exhibitions at the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens; the Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens; Reina Sofia Museum,

Madrid and Olivetti Foundation, Rome. Papadimitriou's works have been presented in group exhibitions at Benaki Museum, Athens; DESTE Foundation, Athens; the 4th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki Greece; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK; 10th Lyon Biennial, Lyon, France; Kunsthaus, Graz, Austria; and Manifesta 04 Frankfurt, Germany.

**Angelo Plessas** lives and works between Athens and Kymi, Greece. He is an artist, educator, curator, and founder of the independent artist's "shelter" P.E.T. Projects in Athens. His work investigates the ambiguous approach of spirituality with technology delving into a broad set of cosmologies, activating modes of communal interconnectivity, social relations, and semiotics of ancient and cybernetic worlds. Plessas' activities become technoshamanic performances to artist residencies; from self-publishing to interactive websites; from quilted sculptures to live-stream events and educational projects. Over the last few years, he has organized the annual, weeklong gatherings of the Eternal Internet Brotherhood/Sisterhood and Experimental Education Protocol in different remote places in the world. His work has been exhibited internationally such as at the 13th Gwangju Biennale, S. Korea, documenta 14, both in Kassel and Athens; The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Jeu de Paume, Paris; the DESTE Foundation, and the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens. Plessas is a Fulbright alumnus, and he has been awarded the DESTE Prize in 2015.

**Vessel** (Navine G. Khan-Dossos & James Bridle) is a collective studio, arts, and event space on the island of Aegina, Greece. It is home to a range of practitioners working across the arts in painting, print-making, film-making, photography, curation, and conservation. We work together to build ecological and embodied relationships with the more-than-human world and the places we find ourselves.

*As the waves come and go, as the days come and go, as the seasons come and go, and as the sun and the moon come and go, and as passions, pleasures and pains come and go, we also come and go. To go and come back, this is the magical pastime of life. One day we will leave, and another day we will return, but if after having gone, I happen to come back, I would like to come back as a dolphin.*

*Alex Cecchetti*