

Introduction

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Note:

*I thought up a room with three people in it. I thought of placing two of them side by side, and then, I thought of the other one, and I thought I should place that one in between them.
[...]*

Holdings is the name of an online publication I've edited since late 2022. Recently, looking back through my email threads, I realized that before this, it was the first title I gave this show (that has been in the works since 2021). The word, 'holdings,' I lifted from the following segment of Garielle Lutz's essay, 'The Sentence is a Lonely Place.'

"I had started to gravitate toward books only because a book was a kind of steadying accessory, a prop, something to grip, a simple occupation for my hands. (Much later, I was relieved to learn that librarians refer to the books and other printed matter in their collections as "holdings.")"

Back when I was first invited to think up a show, was a time when I had given up on making and showing art, in favor of writing fiction. The invitation arose from a vague desire in curating I would often talk about; not knowing at the time what that would really entail. My first decision – who I wanted to show – I made instinctually, choosing a group of people I held close to me, artistically and personally, and that all shared a familiar resistance to showing. Kyriakos, my best friend since childhood; Maya, my first real girlfriend; and Babak, the only tutor I really liked from college. With no specific works in mind, I was interested mostly in imagining them in relation to one another, so I asked them to do or make whatever they liked. Since then, the show has changed dates, locations, and artists, and in the meantime, I shifted my desire from curating to editing, and started making Holdings as an online publication. With each issue, I paired a piece of writing (short fiction, poem, essay, excerpt, or more) with imagery from an artist, or myself.

Addendum:

On the night of the opening, I began putting into words what had up to that point been mostly intuition, in the form of guided tours. Following is a written version of this tour.

Arriving through Radio Athènes' right-hand entrance, in the far end of the room, is a lone piece, Kyriakos' *Lacel*—a small maquette of a child's bedroom. Hung slightly below eye-level, my gaze reaches down into it, to a cutout of a young boy holding a toy gun to his reflection. In the corner, the bedroom's door is wide open. Another cut out, this time of Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* anxiously peeping in. I imagine the boy bears the same name as the piece, *Lacel*, a title Kyriakos thought of after seeing a work by Marcel Duchamp in a book, in which his name is scrawled separated in the halves 'Mar' and 'cel'. Cel, which Kyriakos transposes into his own title, he ties to the word célibataire, French for celibate. Kyriakos' interest in celibacy comes into the work as a form of conscious abstinence. To the boy's side is a small stool with a piece of lace on it. Later in the show, we'll see what the boy has made with the lace, something the mother has already discovered. She enters the room already worried, and her anxiety peaks as she ties what she's seen to the lace on her son's stool. Her son has abstained from a certain trajectory she has imagined for him. His drives are sublimated into other forms of creation. This is captured in the moment the maquette describes. Simultaneously, an identity is formed as *Lacel* gazes guiltily at his reflection.

Seen at a certain angle, *Lacel's* mirror reveals another work, in the corridor between the two main spaces, Maya's video *thinelegance 59*. To view it, I take a seat opposite the TV, on a couch usually found in Radio's hallway. In the beginning, a series of women smoke in eerie silence, each inhalation and exhalation meticulously repeated and focused on in the edit. This footage, Maya first found fragmented in multiple hours-long smoking fetish compilations. Amongst other videos following a standard formula of plain background and woman performatively smoking, this certain subset differed. Structurally, a unique logic pervades them, of tedious repetition, identical lighting, positions, backgrounds, and tense atmosphere. This videographer prods the women into a state he has exercised and controls. He asks them questions, playing into the larger lore of this fetish: the smoke is inhaled and enters their body, corroding their lungs, and health. Butchered together in edits by numerous authors, Maya recompiled this videographer's footage into her own single version of the film. And in its second half, Maya concentrates on the dialogue between the women and the videographer. Montaged into a single monologue, the women speak of their life intimately, unknowingly revealing genuine and fragile details about themselves, something more meaningful than what was asked for. Throughout Maya's edit, she illuminates moments of nervousness, anxious hesitance, and genuine beauty—something beyond what that community that framed them was interested in.

Entering the main room, Maya's *Photographs for a slide viewer* and *My Song* are placed highest; to reach them I take a step up onto a wooden base dirtied by the dusty footsteps of previous viewers. I insert a slide into the viewer. The glimmer of wet asphalt at night, the interaction of a cat's fur and couch's textile, the incandescent glow of a street lamp reflected on a parked car's mirror. As I edge closer towards them, a second room wraps itself around my vision, and the air becomes denser, thick from the heat of the lamp emanating behind the photograph. These conditions impress themselves on Maya's images in a way that is unique to this instrument. While photographing them, she guided her gaze with them in mind; what can be visualized this way that can't in any other. Textures invisible in print or on screen are suddenly visible, and new moments become fecund with this possibility. Through headphones, I listen to Maya's *My Song*, a series of five phone recordings, reporting to the ever-growing collections of recordings we each individually and privately amass. The first four are of a song Maya practiced and composed on and off over the course of almost a year. The last of this collection, a song coming into sync with the parking sensor beeping from the same stereo, keys the work to a broader scale. More like snapshots than deliberate performances, these moments were encountered fleetingly and recorded out of instinct.

[...] When I first thought of the room, I hadn't thought of myself in it, since I was doing the work of thinking it, but when I thought of this too, I think I was wrong.

Behind these works, mine are hung and taped at eye-level. I take a step down to meet them. First, *I Am Happy*, a row of four contact prints and beside them *Analysis of a Drawing*, a series of comic book style drawings; both series I hand printed in the darkroom. To make these works, I draw chiefly from two sources. One, a collection of over a thousand photographs my mother took of me during childhood. In her youth, she dreamed of becoming a photographer, but got caught up with family making. This desire of hers became sublimated in an obsessive documentation of me and my siblings' childhoods. The second is an equally extensive archive of divorce proceedings. These I associate more closely to my father, and a desire, however painfully, being met.

The last work is Kyriakos' again, *Heaven*. An LP, a bowl, a doorknob, a paintbrush, a spoon, and a porcelain cherub, all wrapped in the same lace found on *Lacel's* small stool. These, I imagine the boy making and then placing proudly high on a shelf. Laced up, the objects lose their use value, are castrated. The LP can no longer be listened to, you can not eat out of this bowl or with this spoon. In a way they become icons, figures traced by a sexual drive sublimated into artistic production. The mother's horror comes back into focus: her child is an artist.

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List of Works:

01. Kyriakos Kyriakides, *Lacel*, 2023, Mixed media
02. Maya Tounta, *thinelegance 59*, 2016-2024, Single-channel video, alternative edit of a film that was found in excerpts in fetish compilations online, alternating title taken from same compilations
03. Aristotelis Nikolas Mochloulis, *Analysis of a Drawing*, 2023, Silver gelatin contact prints of digitally edited drawings partially traced from childhood photographs, comics, and other sources
04. Maya Tounta, *Photographs for a slide viewer*, 2024, Kaiser Diascop 3, 15 color slides, wooden platform
05. Maya Tounta, *My Song*, 2022-ongoing, Ipod nano, earphones, audio recordings, New Recording 28, 29, 33, 35: song being composed and practiced on the piano, New Recording 38: car sound system playing Buddy Fo and his Group's 'When It's Time to Go' and parking sensor beep
06. Aristotelis Nikolas Mochloulis, *I Am Happy*, 2024, Silver gelatin contact prints of scanned childhood photographs and texts from divorce proceedings, UV glass, MDF, clips
07. Kyriakos Kyriakides, *Heaven*, 2023, Mixed media
08. Withhold nameof.me

Bios:

Aristotelis Nikolas Mochloulis (*1996, London) is an artist and writer who lives and works in Athens, Greece. He is the founder and editor of the publication Holdings. Exhibitions include: *To be out of love for you completely* (group), Nicosia (2023); *How do you live?* (solo), Athens (2023); *Park Activity* (group), Thkio Ppalies, Nicosia (2023); *My Degree Show* (solo), Children of Unhappiness, London (2020); *Someone Else's* (solo), Incest School, London (2020). His writing has been published in Hobart Pulp magazine (Toilet Story, 2022) and in Passe-Avant Journal (Relocations, 2022).

Kyriakos Kyriakides (* 1996, Nicosia) is an artist who lives and works in Nicosia, Cyprus. Exhibitions include: *To be out of love for you completely*, Nicosia (2023); *Park Activity*, Thkio Ppalies (off-site), Nicosia (2023); *Sem Lala, Private Collection, Jeff Wall Production*, Hot Wheels Athens (2023); *And all you see is glory*, The Island Club, Limassol (2022); *Phenomena*, Anafi (2021); *light gallows* with Marina Xenofontos, bologna cc, Amsterdam (2020); and *Actor* with Hannah Cass, H3art Gallery, London (2019).

Maya Tounta (*1990, Athens) is a curator who lives and works in Athens, Greece. She is currently the director of Akwa Ibom, Athens. At Akwa Ibom, Tounta has staged shows by Jason Dodge, NBA (Agency of New Way: Nick Bastis, Liudvikas Buklys, Gintaras Didžiapetris, Dalia Dūdėnaitė, Ona Kvintaitė, and Elena Narbutaitė) and Rosalind Nashashibi, Marina Xenofontos, Ellen Gallagher and Dora Economou, Nicole Gravier, Thanasis Totsikas, Christos Tzivelos, and George Tourkavasilis, among others. Most recently she has staged a group show departing from the work of fashion designer Kostas Murkudis with contributions by Murkudis, Jodie Barnes, Marietta Mavrokordatou, and Lenard Giller.