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ICE SONGS

Danae Stratou

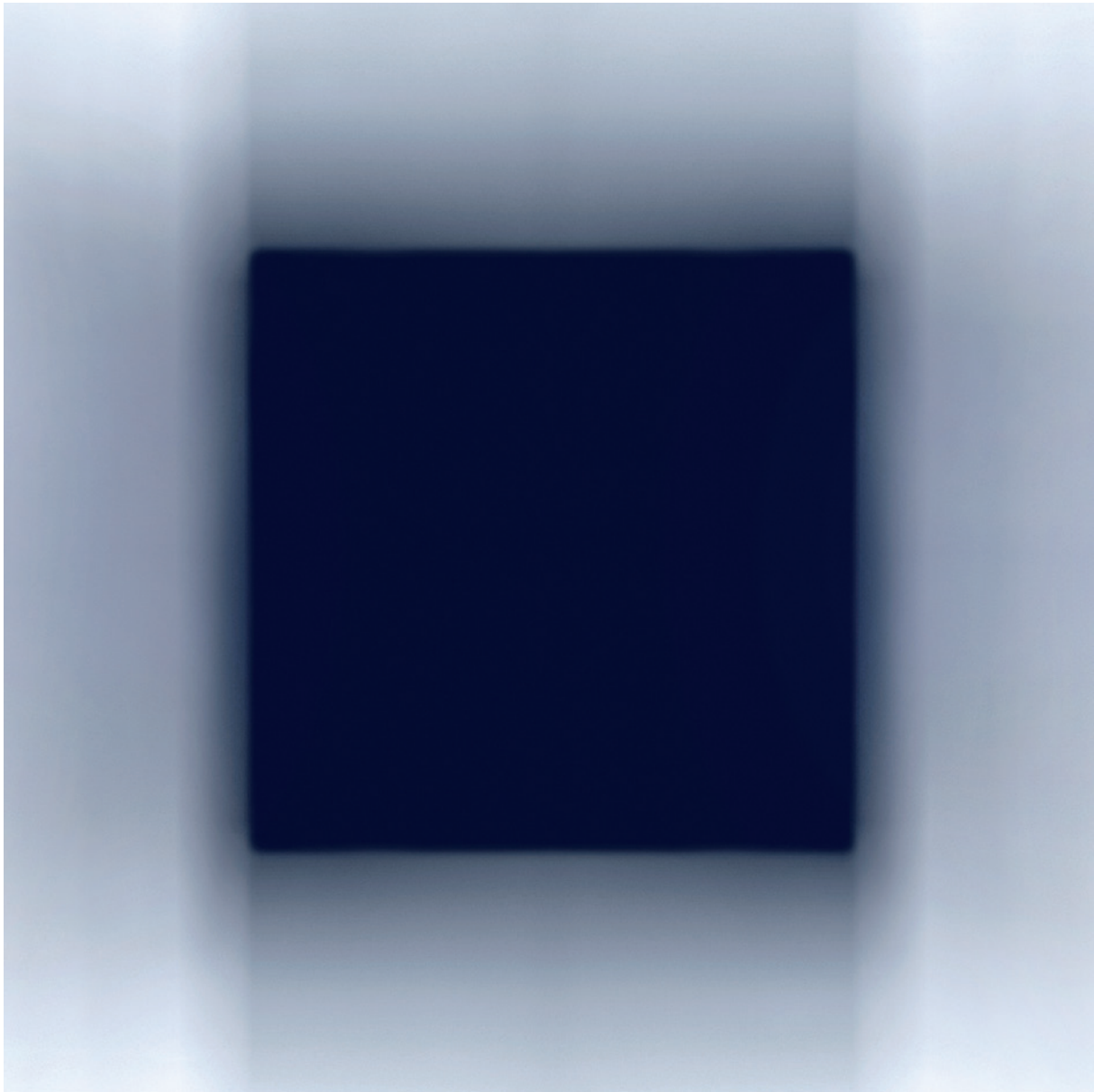
Exhibition
of Fondation d'entreprise Hermès
from 10 September to 16 October 2010

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An exhibition of  FONDATION D'ENTREPRISE **HERMÈS**



ICE SONGS

It was the Bedouins who chose the place. On the fringes of the Red Sea at the base of towering sand hills in the Egyptian Sahara, a young Greek artist – along with two women even younger than herself (Alexandra Stratou, industrial designer, and Stella Constantinides, architect), all three members of the D.A.ST. Arteam group – installed a Pharaonic work of art. More than one hundred cones in negative (craters) and positive (pyramids) formed a double logarithmic spiral. Using wet silt compacted with powerful construction instruments, this monumental installation took two years to complete. Opened on 7 March 1997 and designed to slowly “dissolve” into the dunes, it can still be seen today on Google Earth (27°22'52.26"N 33°37'55.26"E) and inspires worrisome questions on the part of awe-struck Internet users.

Two years later, Danae Stratou, the artist behind this work, Desert Breath, represented Greece at the 48th Venice Biennale – the first woman in thirty

years – and again in 2001 at the Valence Biennale in Spain. For the Olympics in 2004 in Athens, her piece The River of Life was a part of the “Transcultures” project, which brought together the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, Bill Viola, Gary Hill, Yannis Kounellis, Mona Hatoum, Do Ho Suh, etc. Danae Stratou's contribution showed seven videos on seven large screens in a circular room. Seven films shot over ten months of seven major rivers, from the Ganges to the Nile, from the Danube to the Mississippi, from sunrise to sunset with the camera fixed in the same position, to capture the uninterrupted flow, the shared rhythm, the eternal cycle, the universal course of life. For the artist, “rivers are like the world's veins, like the breathing of the earth. Their calm current unifies the different civilisations, the different landscapes that make up the planet.” A few years beforehand, she had installed a floor of reddish earth with a palpitating centre. another

Invitation
Danae Stratou

form of respiration ("Breathe", Valencia Biennale 2001). For a public commission in an Athens school, she had created a 20 m x 7,5 m concrete wall on which she had had the word "breathe" engraved in about forty languages.

Nothing being impossible for a willing heart, the young Greek artist decided in 2007 to set off to photograph seven of the so-called security walls that divide populations, difficult to get near, but Danae Stratou is nothing if not intrepid. For this project, "Cut- 7 dividing lines", she covered 60,000 kilometres with her partner Yanis Varoufakis,

Légende





Professor of Economics at the University of Athens. These large, very beautiful and disquieting photographs which were exhibited two-sided at her gallery, Zoumboulakis in Athens, paradoxically illuminated the unity of human experience (people are identical on both sides of the wall). At the same time, says Yanis Varoufakis "they confront them with the divisions that well up in the background of our supposedly unified lives, bringing our own contradictions to the fore." Danae Stratou declares "And these breaches, these cracks deepen and spread just at a period that was supposed to see them disappear, after Berlin."

Légende

With unwavering idealism and exemplary precision, this determined warrior of art fears for the planet, and is concerned about changes in the weather and space. Always on the lookout, Danae Stratou combs the countryside, interrogates scientists, psychologists, economists, and specialists in human migration. After dozens of more-or-less large-scale projects realised worldwide, she now takes on a new crusade. This crusade, "Vital Space-projects", is on a planetary scale and addresses environmental questions, the meaning of life, and "tempo" as discussed by Paul Virilio in *L'Administration de la peur*.

A version was installed in Tophane, a district of Istanbul, in 2010 and, starting in 2012, another one will be installed in its entirety in Greece, Australia and most likely in other locations as well as this is a research project open to all ecological, artistic and humanist initiatives.

Icesongs, the first phase of "Vital Space-projects", was on view at La Verrière in September 2010. In the same way as Danae Stratou wanted to measure passing time through the slow disintegration of her installation in the desert, she became intrigued by the research of Australian scientists who, for years now, have been working on the melting of the glaciers. *Dr Alexander Gavrilov and **Dr Jason Gedamke use underwater microphones to record the rubbing of these glaciers and their muffled booms, like the palpitations of the planet's heart. They were very happy to share these echoes with Danae Stratou. You could hear a preview of the recording at her exhibition in Brussels. The artist, whose work targets the senses and the conscience, wanted the visitor to take off their shoes to walk on the immense sheet of water at the centre of the installation ("paddling barefoot in the exhibition is an aid to understanding"). The water reflects La Verrière, and the audio provides the

geological, subterranean, crushing throbbing of dying glaciers. Like the Jakobshavn in Greenland, like "Yala" and "Axio" in spite of being at an altitude of 5,000 metres in Nepal. Or like the glacier that "lost" an enormous block of ice in Alaska in August 2011, sowing panic among tourists on a nearby ship. They have been constantly receding for at least forty years and the current climate could cause their disappearance. Just when everyone has the vague sense of dancing on a volcano, when the accidental is becoming common, in a world that is in poor shape, Danae Stratou launches a salutary warning and a way to link the everyday to outer space.

ALICE MORGAINE
Art Director, La Verrière

* Centre for Marine Science and Technology, Curtin University.

** Marine Mammal Research Program, Australian Antarctic Division.

Légende



Lives and works in Athens (Greece).

SOLO EXHIBITIONS & INSTALLATIONS (selection)

- 2010** *Icesongs*, La Verrière-Hermès, Brussels. Curator: Alice Morgaine.
- 2008** *Breathing Circle*, Sani Festival in collaboration with Athens' State Museum of Contemporary Art, Halkidiki (Greece), Curators: Areti Leopolulou & Theodore Markoglou.
Inhale, Visual art performance in collaboration with Landscape Dance Company, Technopolis, Athens.
The Imagine Wall, Permanent installation. Private collection, Athens.
- 2007** *Cut – 7 dividing lines*, Zoumboulakis Galleries, Athens. Curator: Maria Maragou.
- 2005** *See Through*, Zoumboulakis Galleries, Athens. Curator: Nadia Argyropoulou.
- 2003** *Sunflowerscape*, Permanent installation, commissioned by The Public School Building Authority, Pireus (Greece).
- 2002** *Breathe Wall*, Permanent outdoor installation, commissioned by The Public School Building Authority, Athens.
- 2000** *Breathe / Water Section*, Flour Mills C. Sarantopoulos, Athens. Organised by Zoumboulakis Galleries Curator: Efi Strousa.
- 1997** *Desert Breath*, Earthwork by D.A.ST. Arteam, (D. Stratou, A. Stratou, St. Constantinides), El Gouna (Egypt).

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

- 2010** *Lives and Works in Istanbul*, Istanbul Cultural Capital of Europe 2010, Istanbul.
- 2008-** *Water/Currents*, Museum of Photography, Thessaloniki (Greece).
- 2009** *Art + Nature: Environment Action'08*, Villa Kazouli, State Museum of Contemporary Art & Hellenic Ministry of Public Works and the Environment, Athens.

- 2008** *Transexperiences Greece 2008*, Organised by Athens' National Museum of Contemporary Art, 798 Space, Beijing.
Material Links, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai.
- 2007** *Bare Life*, Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem.
Topoi, Benaki Museum, Athens.
Places in Zone D, Zone D Gallery. Texts: Dr K. Minioudaki, Athens.
1st Thessaloniki Biennale, Thessaloniki.
Tashkent: East and West Crossroad, Tashkent House of Photography, Tashkent (Uzbekistan).
- 2006** *Nuit blanche*, Paris.
Scarecrow, E. Averoff Museum, Metsovo (Greece).
5th International Biennale of Contemporary Art, Gyumri Center for Contemporary Art (Armenia).
- 2005** *Bida 2005*, International Biennale of Sports and Art, Las Atarazanas Reales, Seville.
Caravansarai 2005, International Forum of Visual Arts & Arts Events, Tbilisi (Georgia).
- 2004** *Transcultures*, National Museum of Contemporary Art & Cultural Olympiad, Athens.
Athina by Art, The Municipality of Athens & AICA Hellas (2004 Olympic Games), Athens.
- 2001** *Passions*, 1st Valencia Biennale (Spain). Participation in the main exhibition *Body and Sin*.
Memories of Nature, Contemporary Art Museum, Raleigh (North Carolina, USA).
- 2000** *Communications – Synopsis 1*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens.
Open 2000, International Exhibition of Sculptures and Installations, Lido, Venice.
- 1999** *48th Biennale di Venezia*, Giardini, Greek Pavilion, Venice.

Danae Stratou is represented in Athens by Zoumboulakis Galleries (daphne@zoumboulakis.gr).

The Hermès Foundation was created in April 2008.

In its commitment to support art, it is responsible for event programming for each of the six Hermès exhibition spaces worldwide, including La Verrière in Brussels, and produces the exhibitions held there. This network of galleries, dedicated to contemporary artwork and photography, is completed by H Box, a nomad structure reserved exclusively for video art.

The foundation is also a committed sponsor of many other social as well as cultural projects.

www.fondationdentreprisehermes.org

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SPECIAL THANKS

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PHOTOS

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