

44 *Ah, This!*

Marietta Mavrokordatou, Polys Peslikas, Sarah Rapson,
George Tourkovasilis
Curated by Helena Papadopoulos

Which aspect of “The Neutral” is relevant for the exhibition you are curating?

Several threads and digressions within the seminars—the idea of Suspended Time which Barthes posits as a definition of The Neutral, the idea of Sleep, as a time when nothing happens, sleep as an unproductive time that triggers a resistance. I tried to play The Chinese Portrait and replace Barthes’ answers: What would The Neutral be if it were a drawing? Maybe Polys Peslikas’ inks of eyes, suns, Centaurs, dissolving on heavy paper. What would it be if it were a person: Perhaps the bewigged Sarah Rapson and the checklists she writes. What would The Neutral be if it were a place? Maybe George Tourkovasilis’ armchair in his studio/house, the only place that was not covered by photos, manuscripts, books, tapes, cd’s and records. What would it be if it were light: Maybe the one casting a female figure’s shadow in Marietta Mavrokordatou’s photo suite.

How would you describe your curatorial practice?

I think a lot about what my contemporaries make, but am also interested in flashbacks and eclipses, and in approaching exhibitions as unfinished projects, in the sense that everything is “to be continued” and take another form: a book, a record, a conversation, a trip, a friendship, another text.

How did you decide on the artist(s) you invited?

Recently, through Radio Athènes and in collaboration with Akwa Ibom and Melas Martinos I got involved with the Estate of George Tourkovasilis (1944–2021), an artist and thinker who lived in Athens, London and Paris and had rarely exhibited during his lifetime. When Felix Gaudlitz invited me to organize a show in the context of curated by, we both thought that his approach was close to the desire for The Neutral, as Barthes describes his two-year seminar at the Collège de France. His photography, his writing, but also his life sidestepped oppositions, did not fall easily into any category. Closer to an affect than a concept, the exhibition started to form within a few weeks. My invitation to Polys Peslikas came on the heels of our collaboration on his solo show at Radio Athènes, it felt like the conversation hadn’t finished. Marietta Mavrokordatou is an artist whose work was introduced to me by Aris Mochloulis and Maya Tounta, and as chance has it, she had also helped Polys this past spring make the silver gelatin prints we showed. I was looking at her fictional narrative in which she follows and photographs a girl called Claudia, in the course of a single walk on a hot mid-summer day. Then I couldn’t stop thinking that the work of Sarah Rapson is the embodiment of the Barthean Neutral. I slept over it. When I woke up these four sequences—Marietta’s 24 photos that comprise her project “Our Misfortune,” Poly’s 20 drawings made on the island of Kastellorizo and shown for the first time in a former clinic in Cyprus under the title “Silver,” Sarah Rapson’s Super 8 film “Sufficient Fortune,” and a new selection of photos from the George Tourkovasilis archive appeared as a shimmer, a twinkle. Or to borrow a phrase I really liked in the press release written for Marietta’s original presentation of the suite: “In the process of building the narrative, a vocabulary consisting of experiential or personal associations is gathered, and then used for the purpose of being ignored, escaped, re-written.

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What motivates you to curate exhibitions?

Artists and the objects or non-objects they create. The desire to write a "text" through associations or create a stage on which materials and ideas can perform.