

LATENT COMMUNITY

Sotiris Tsiganos / Ionian Bisai

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vimeo.com/latentcommunityproject



Sotiris Tsiganos (1992, Athens, GR) and Ionian Bisai (1992, Saranda, AL) are visual artists and filmmakers based in Athens. They operate as an artistic duo in research-based projects, focusing on the critical reading of underexposed stories and how those twist through new contexts. Laboring in the age of augmented realities, the artist duo weaves social engagement and critique through participatory strategies and performative sequences, resulting in hybrid films and video installations.

Latent Community, founded by Tsiganos and Bisai, is an ongoing artistic investigation intertwining fieldwork and moving image in order to respond to contemporary judicial, social and ecological cases, creating conceptual and emotional experiences for imagining a more equal and sustainable future. Their work has been presented in several international exhibitions and festivals (Athens Biennale, Documenta14 – Public Programs, Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, PCAI - Polyeco Contemporary Art Initiative, Contemporary Art Museum of Crete, Recontemporary - Turin). Tsiganos and Bisai have been awarded by LOOP Barcelona and Sharjah Art Foundation and they are fellows of Onassis AiR - School of Infinite Rehearsals - 2020/21.

NEROMANNA

Video & two-channel video-installation
08:15, Full HD, Color, Sound, Dimensions variable
2017

<https://vimeo.com/328744654>



How does one recount the history of a place that no longer exists?

What does it mean when a community is dissolved and how can such a community be reconstituted, even temporarily?

The thematic basis of NEROMANNA is the story of Kallio in Fokida, a village that was expropriated in 1969 and was covered in 1981 by the waters of the artificial lake created by the Mornos dam for use as a reservoir for the city of Athens; this lake has been the main source of water for the Greek capital ever since. As a result the village community dissolved and relocated elsewhere. The aim of the project is to present the history of Kallio and to briefly reconstitute its lost community, through a combination of relational aesthetics strategies with the archival practice. The plaza across Varvakeios Agora will take the name of the village, by installing the “Kallio” sign to designate a new space where a public gathering will be summoned, a feast whose guests will include the members of the lost community. A relational environment of narratives and stories, based on the community’s experiences, will be created there. A public archive with documents and records, the majority of which has been provided by the village residents themselves, will also be presented.

By attempting to re-inhabit the drowned village at a new location, the project is proffered as a potentially ideal place for the practice of the social rituals of the community, while also seeking opportunities for a critical confrontation with contemporary social history.



Video Still

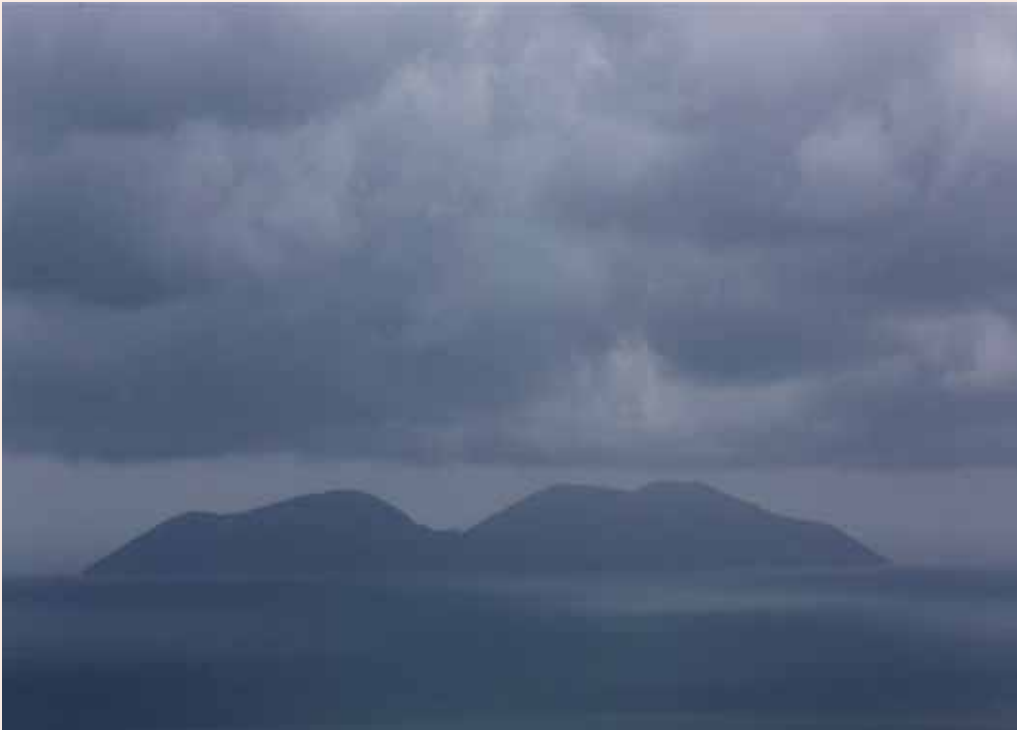


Installation View

OTRANTO

Film
24:41, Full HD, Color, Sound, DCP
2020

<https://vimeo.com/363993979>
otrantoextended2019



Katër i Radës, the first boat that sank in a naval blockade against migration flows in the Mediterranean Sea, is now a monument for global migration – established by the Italian state, the same authority which ordered its sinking.

During the civil war in Albania more and more people were seeking a way out. On 28 March 1997, at the port of Vlorë, Albania, 120 people boarded the vessel Katër i Radës bound for Italy. In the Otranto Canal, the Italian navy warship Sibilla intercepted the Albanian ship, using military manoeuvres. The military action was part of the Operation White Flags (operazione Bandiere Bianche), by mutual agreement of the Italian and Albanian state, which gave the Italian navy permission to patrol the entire Otranto Canal and prevent Albanians from escaping the country. The Albanian boat sank, causing the death of 81 people, including women and children; for which justice still has not been done.

In the film, the relatives of the victims perform a trip by crossing the Mediterranean Sea (from Vlore, Albania to Otranto, Italy), in order to investigate the traces of the event and the transformation of the shipwreck from evidence into a context-free sculpture decorating a public square in Italy. Kater i Rades became a mutant object: a bizarre abstract monument without memory or a contemporary relic for the Albanians, who are dispossessed of it. The film shows the ways in which the relatives of the victims, rallied around a tough-minded woman, are seeking the acknowledgment and justice of a migration tragedy without culprits.



Video Still



Video Still

TROPICAL HELL

Video
04:57, Full HD, Color, Sound
2019

<https://vimeo.com/347833264>
tropicalhell2019



TROPICAL HELL is a video work which explores eco poetics, the artificial nature and digitized landscapes.

The video investigates the relationship between extinction, survival, and evolution in a journey which feels like an eco-horror ride on a wounded earth with vulnerable livings on the verge of disappearance. TROPICAL HELL delves into unpredictable environments and natural phenomena, searching for living possibilities while floating in a suffocation feeling.

The main body of the project was produced in the Osnabrück Botanical Garden, an institution of Osnabrück University, Germany. Filmed inside a tropical glasshouse, in association with the institution's scientists and teachers, the project aims to combine research and artistic practice on how imagination, technology and ecology intertwine, focusing on current environmental anxieties. The video also includes footage of the artists' personal archive as well as 3D rendered mapping landscapes.

In TROPICAL HELL, the artists have converted the heterogeneous material into a toxic world that mixes primal habitats with emerging ecological realities into a time-based fluid archaeology. The audience is invited to be immersed into a journey that explores emotions, imagined futures and environmental anxieties, without being clear if this exploration is seen through a human, a plant or a machine.



Video Still



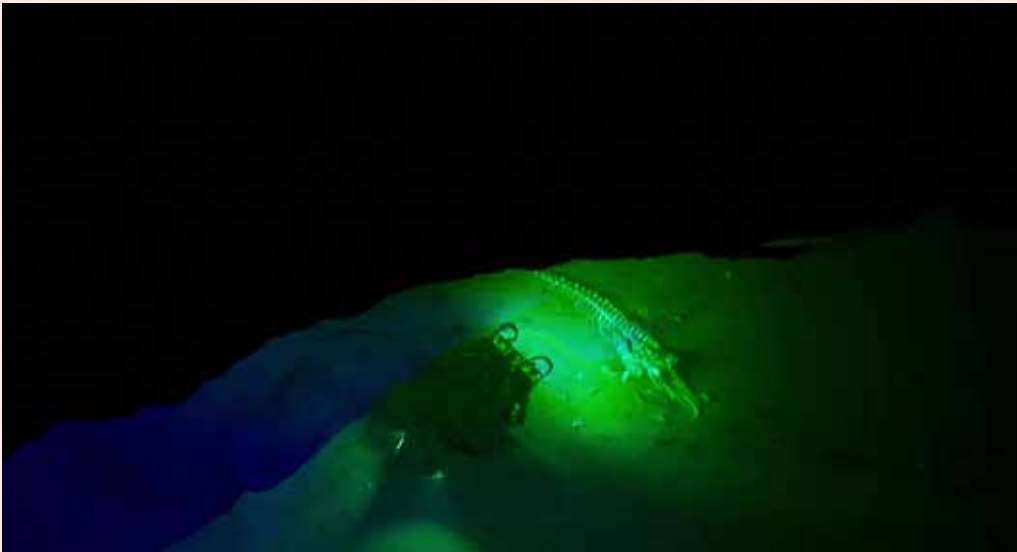
Video Still

Ocean is Future

(Working Title)

Two-Channel Video-installation
Full HD, Color, Sound, Dimensions variable
In progress

<https://vimeo.com/495657522/750e5f18f9>



Ocean is Future is a deep dive in the depthiness of underwater geographies, reimagining human and more-than-human relationships attempting to destabilize traditional land-based modes of thinking and living and the structures that control them. The unexplored darkness of the oceans, this vast body of water which constitutes the largest habitat on this planet, has been a neglected arena of geopolitical, economic and cultural conflicts.

An oceanic worldview, informed by the concept of tidalectics, provides a range of different readings and interpretations of the entanglement between people, non-human communities and the environment as a living organism. Coined by the Barbadian poet-historian Kamau Brathwaite, the term tidalectics describes a worldview that draws on “the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic motion, rather than linear.”

In Ocean is Future (2020, in progress), the artists interweave imagery of a hidden world: the liquid subfloor, seamounts, hydrothermal vents and queer aquatic beings are encountered during bathymetric mapping from underwater vehicles in the deep ocean. With the sequences of images structured in a split-screen view and the narratives nested within one another, the video work reflects the rhythmic fluidity of water and the incessant swelling and receding of the tides. The submerging into this ancient but unexplored world allows us to think of hybridity and interconnectedness, fostering engaged ways of caring for the oceans.

This video work is an attempt to find new creative ways of digital research during an unprecedented global stasis, that of the pandemic. The footage is taken from various operations of E/V Nautilus, an exploration vessel ‘exploring unknown regions of the ocean seeking out new discoveries in biology, geology, and archaeology’. During the expeditions, E/V Nautilus offers the global public a remote exploration experience via live video, audio, and data feeds from the field.



Video Still

HORSES (Working Title)

Film, Video-installation
Full HD, Color, Sound, Dimensions variable
In progress

<https://vimeo.com/539537014/d273e63e32>



HORSES is a wild ride exploring ‘the question of the animal’ and poetic animism.

The film is a portrayal of the expressions of domination and pathos in the human-steed hybrid and a beyond language narrative on non-human rites and resistance. It is an attempt to re-evaluate our entanglement with nature, wilderness and non-human others and to explore new modes of coexistence between different forms of life. The film contrasts a post-ethnographic approach with magical realism, clashing human and animal bodies into a world of liminal beings, destabilizing anthropocentrism as a worldview through their hybrid nature.

The project floats between several different situations, in the island of Lesbos, swinging among communities identified by the local horse culture and organized around atypical horseraces, reflecting parts of the unseen Mediterranean contradictions. The film introduces an intimate human-animal choreography, where the camera turns into a common ground to channel a more-than-human spiritual communication. Filming becomes a performative act, a poetic relationship with the fleeting sensation of being ‘present in the world’ while creating a distance with reality through the lens of visual mutations.

It is a work approached from the vanishing point where human and non-human agents blend together. Drifting toward an ecofiction in the threshold between myth, legend and reality where racing creatures, resembling cowboys and centaurs, trace new forms of attention, care and symbiosis. Highlighting and dissolving representations of place, gender and the experience of collective imagination, the work tackles the understanding of animals as human analogies or metaphors.



Video Still

AVATO

Film, Video-installation
Full HD, Color, Sound, Dimensions variable
In progress

<https://vimeo.com/395792110>
avato2020



AVATO is a cinematic gospel that traces the real and imaginary routes which uncoil the unknown story of a remote black Greek community, through the eyes of three young Afrogreek rappers.

The project is entitled after the remote village of the Afrogreeks in the regional unit of Xanthi. Despite living there for over a century, the residents have lost their roots and the bond with their past. It is commonly believed that their ancestors were transported there as slaves during the Ottoman era, while some raise the prospect of lost afroasiatic fragments. In an attempt to get in touch with an imagined past, the residents of the village visit local archaeological museums and try to identify themselves through an inverted reading of the ancient artefacts. These heretic archaeological interpretations, made by the Afrogreeks of Avato, create space for an alternative reading of History, where authority can be replaced by ambiguity.

AVATO is a creative synergy between the artist duo Latent Community, the residents of Avato and an Athenian rap community. The film, co-directed with the participants, interweaves the vérité style with staged scenes and expands the creative process which takes a new form and meaning by providing the conditions in which the people perform as themselves or reimagine themselves. Negros Tou Moria, Kareem Kalokoh and Moose - Athenians of African origin - undertake a different storytelling of contemporary Greece. The lyricism of the rap rhyme and spoken word, combined with the visual language of the music video, become the narrative tools that make up the portrait of Avato and unveil its unspoken story. The project pulls the trigger on a new reading of the history and the experience of black communities in Greece.

Spanning between documentary, music video and artist film, AVATO draws from magical realism to connect Black Athens with the Avato village and bring to the foreground the narratives and representation of Afrogreek communities.



Video Still

DARK SOURCE

Film, Video-installation
Full HD, Color, Sound, Dimensions variable
In progress

<https://vimeo.com/498255767/92c7c7857d>



Dark Source is a critical audiovisual study on extractivism or a possible non-human archaeological report from the future.

The film is titled after the dark brown to black combustible mineral formed over millions of years, found in open-pit mines and it performs as an analogy to the blackened earth, the haunted ecosystems and the damaged planet we are entangled with. The film is based on fieldwork in Western Macedonia, where massive volumes of land have been excavated to feed the power plants with lignite. The result of this practice is the desertification of the land, the menace of non-human livability and the displacement of the local communities. Dark Source functions as an invitation to rethink overlooked ecologies and explore the damaged landscapes.

For a long time, the “ecological crisis” was discussed as a distant problem and was perceived as happening elsewhere and in another time zone. Dark Source aims to assist the overturn of this disengagement in time and place by shifting proximities. The film depicts the collapsing stage on which humanity performs itself, in order to raise questions on eco-poetics, geocide and environmental justice.



Video Still

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Education

2016 Department of Fine
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Ionian Bisai

1992, Saranda, Albania
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Education

2018 Athens School of Fine
Arts
2020- Royal College of Art

AWARDS

ARTWORKS - Stavros Niarchos Foundation Artist Fellowship Award
Sharjah Film Platform 2st Edition- Jury Prize
LOOP DISCOVER AWARD 2019- Audience Award

RESIDENCY PROGRAMS – FELLOWSHIPS

Onassis AiR- School of Infinite Rehearsals- 2020/21, ONASSIS Foundation,
Athens, GR
Arts-based Ethnography in Lesvos (UiA, Norway/University of the Aegean,
Greece), Lesvos, GR
Fellowship START – Create Cultural Change, Robert Bosch Stiftung, DE
Lab Europe, Hase29, Osnabrück, DE

PARTICIPATIONS

- 2020** 22nd Thessaloniki Documentary Festival – Official Selection
Visions du Réel- Media Library, Nyon, CH
ANTHROPOCENE ON HOLD, PCAI- Polyeco Contemporary Art Initiative, Online
Athens International Film Festival
- 2019** Sharjah Film Platform 2st Edition, Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE
Becoming Future, Recontemporary, Torino, IT
GlogauAIR, Berlin, DE
IDFA Docs for Sale 2019, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam,
Amsterdam, NL
Blind Date: Versions of artistic citizenship , Contemporary Art Museum of Crete, Rethymnon,
GR
LOOP Barcelona: Making the City, Convent de Sant Agustí, Barcelona, ES
Sharjah Film Platform 1st Edition, Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE
- 2018** Garden Walk: A Performative Guided Tour,
SAFETY FIRST, Hase29, Osnabrück, DE
Reform ist nicht real, Public Screening, Theater Magdeburg, DE
Fellowship START – Create Cultural Change, Robert Bosch Stiftung, DE
- 2017** Latent Community / NEROMANNA, Athens Biennale, Athens, GR;
Screening, Athens School of Fine Arts, Athens, GR;
Screening, The School of Everything, KMMN, Interim am Kulturbahnhof, Documenta14 -
Public Programs, Kassel, DE;
Room-State, Perform Interdependency, Circuits and Currents, Documenta14 - Public
Education, Athens, GR;
Room-State, Perform Interdependency, KMMN, Interim am Kulturbahnhof, Documenta14 –
Public Education, Kassel, DE
- 2016** HOW Assemblies Matter? , National Technical University of Athens, Athens Biennale
OMONOIA, Athens, GR

