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SIFF is glad to host the exhibition A WARE this year as an initiative to explore the intersecting worlds of art and film during the festival. Continuous with this year's theme of borders, including this show is meant to bring attention to questions around the many different forms the film medium can produce and the creativity it can inspire.

We wish to thank the curator of the exhibition, Kostas Stasinopoulos, and the participating artists.

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exhibition as part of
Syros International Film Festival
www.syrosfilmfestival.org

■ 26.7 - 1.8. 2014

2nd Elementary School of
Hermoupolis, Syros
(Moustakli Square)

W

■ opening times:
16:00 - 20:00

A

■ artists:

MONA HATOUM
ADELA JUŠIĆ
SILVIA KOLBOWSKI
PAKY VLASSOPOULOU

R

curated by:
Kostas Stasinopoulos

E

Projecting War

It has long been pressed, and is still argued, that psychoanalytic theory and artistic practice are ineffective in political resistance to war. Yet psychoanalysis has provided a body of work to the discourse of war that sparks heated and productive debates to this day.¹ What is more, as Mignon Nixon argues, “artistic resistance to war is often faulted for its futility. It is as if artistic responses to war succeeded only in stripping art, and its audience, of their political dignity”. The works in the exhibition explore different kinds of conflicts and offer the opportunity to look at recent artistic practice that reflects on the longstanding refusal to understand war in psychic terms.²

“What is there inside one that makes one know all about war”, asked Gertrude Stein in *Wars I Have Seen* in 1945; a question that still lingers on memories of times past and haunts conflicts yet to come.³ A WAR E brings together women artists whose work explores how the public and the private, the psychic and the social and the subjective and the material are frequently kept apart by authoritative divisions of historical and political narratives. Video, books, screens and tables are the main materials of the works in the exhibition, which takes place in an elementary school, a social field of knowledge and play. It is an environment of acute and varied awareness, in which critical thought and enquiry, as well as unconscious processes, are the primary objects of formative experience. The space becomes a stage from which to explore individual and social boundaries

¹ Key works include: Sigmund Freud, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* (1915), *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), *Why War?* (1933), Wilfred Bion, *War Memoirs* (1917 – 1919), D.W. Winnicott, *Discussion of War Aims* (1940), Franco Fornari, *The Psychoanalysis of War* (1966), Hanna Segal, *Psychoanalysis, Literature and War: Papers* (1972-1995), Jacqueline Rose, *Why War? Psychoanalysis, Politics, and the Return to Melanie Klein* (1993), Juliet Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria* (2000), *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (2003) and Adrienne Harris and Steven Botticelli, eds. *First Do No Harm: The Paradoxical Encounters of Psychoanalysis, Warmaking and Resistance* (2010)

² Mignon Nixon, 'Louise Lawler: No Drones' in *October* 147 (Winter 2014), p.23. For an insightful analysis of the skepticism surrounding psychoanalytic and artistic contributions to war discourse see also Rosalyn Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) and Mignon Nixon, 'War Inside/ War Outside: Feminist Critiques and the Politics of Psychoanalysis' in *Text zur Kunst* 17, no. 68, (December 2007), pp.65-75

³ Gertrude Stein, *Wars I Have Seen* (London: Brilliance Books, 1984), p.9

by allowing art that deals with the unconscious to be projected and observed. Projection, in psychoanalytic terms, is a defense mechanism whereby feelings and qualities which the subject refuses to accept and recognize in himself are expelled and attached onto another person or object. Using the technique of projection, literally and metaphorically, the works in the exhibition present us with surfaces, which through their psychic charge blur the boundaries of good and bad, self and Other, inside and outside. They allow us to benefit from an interval of reflection and to explore the reaches of the unconscious, our subjectivity in relation to history and what collective memory may claim and resist.

“When you talk about a feeling of fragmentation”

8 **Measures of Distance** (1988) is a structurally complex work. **Mona Hatoum** on a visit to Lebanon in 1981, at the time of the civil war, took pictures of her mother and recorded their conversation in the family bathroom. Hatoum, exiled in London, layered her mother’s photographs with letters she received from her over the years. The letters appear over the naked female body and the artist reads them in English in a distant yet sorrowful voice. Hearing the two women speak in a different language sets an additional perplexing pace to the work. Interwoven layers of information cause our awareness to shift and vibrate between registers. The viewer is made part of a private environment but narratives of war, bombing and loss destabilize this sense of intimacy and at the same time indicate how close war is to ‘home’.

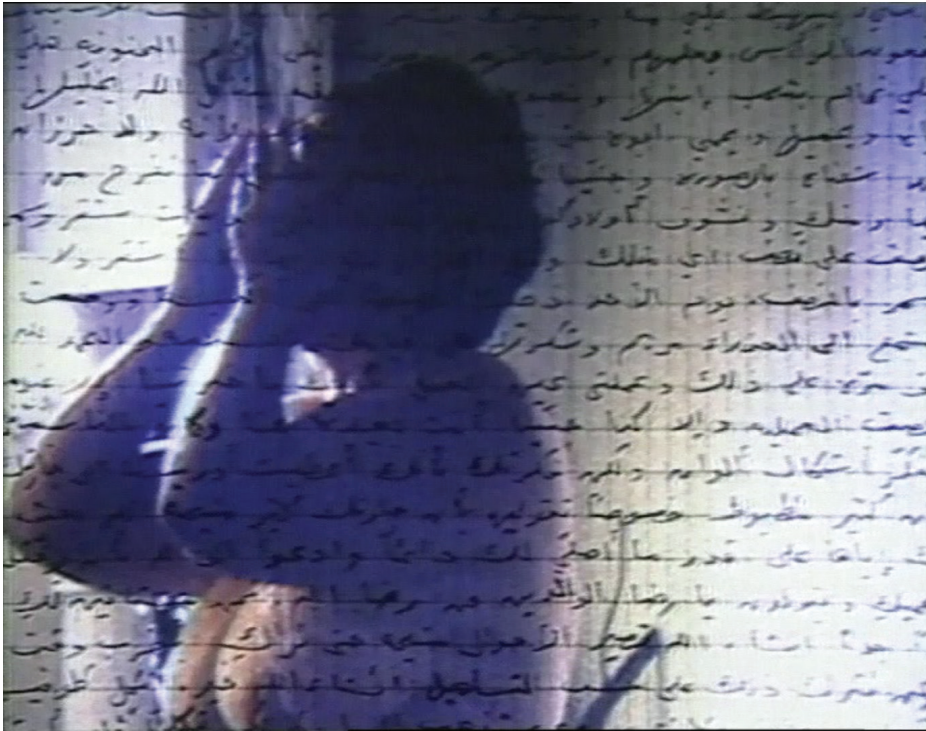
The Arabic script running above the naked female body of the photographs produces a barrier that alludes to barbed wire or a veil. The woman is

visually exposed, entrapped and surveyed, yet she is also wrapped in language; held tight by the kind of things a mother says to her daughter, breaking the dominance of the gaze. She speaks of love and sexuality, war and exile, pain and loss, and, as she says, “women’s nonsense”. Words written by a mother and read by a daughter became the primal matter for an artist. The psychic fragments of trauma are visually suspended in the frame and the polyphony of lived experience interacts with recorded and transmitted history. Overturning preconceptions of the woman as silent, non-sexual and passive, Hatoum “delved into the personal [and] contextualized the image, or this person, ‘my mother’, within a social-political context”.⁴ The insistence to enter this context, where access is still largely denied, is the textual fabric that encloses the female body in a work that appears both as cage and armor.

“One soldier, two soldiers”

9 In **The Sniper** (2007), as if leaning from above, we watch a hand resting on a white piece of paper. The silence and the white background of the frame sharpen our focus on a red circle that the hand starts to draw persistently. A woman begins to read what seems to be a diary and her tone is neutral, almost indifferent: “November the 2nd, one soldier; November the 3rd, one soldier, one truck driver; November the 4th, two soldiers”. The hand does not stop, the red circle grows bigger and the diary entries continue. Suddenly, the photograph of a man appears, superimposed on the white paper and hand, and the red circle is now drawn directly over the man’s eye. “One soldier, one soldier, one soldier, four soldiers, one truck driver”, we hear the voice say, as the listing of soldiers and civilians gets louder and faster. “December the 3rd, my father, the sniper, was shot by a sniper, into

⁴ Janine Antoni, ‘Interview with Mona Hatoum’ in *Bomb* 63, Spring 1998, vol.63, accessed 4 June 2014, <http://bombsite.com/issues/63/articles/2130>



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Mona Hatoum, *Measures of Distance* (1988)
courtesy of Mona Hatoum and LUX, London



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his right eye”, the woman plainly announces. The different elements fall into place and the mystery of the action is revealed. The red circle corresponds to murderous targets that spread terror on the streets of besieged Sarajevo in the early 1990s through the prevalent use of snipers by agents of war.

Adela Jušić deals with personal loss and trauma and complicates the viewer’s expected narrative identifications. is structured by repetition; after a traumatic event and being at loss for words, certain actions are repeated, signifying the severity of the breaching event. Jušić repetitively draws a red mark, reminiscent of children’s drawings, yet goes beyond personal traumatic circumstances in a deathly identification with the aggressor, repeatedly counting his victims. She explores the danger of “yield[ing] to the compulsion to repeat, which [can] replace the impulsion to remember”.⁵ The counting and listing of war casualties become prominent and Jušić turns our attention to the uniformity of loss beyond ethnic, religious and sociopolitical issues. The numeracy of Jušić’s counting foregrounds lateral relationships (such as siblings, groups, peers, soldiers) in a psychosocial context and highlights that in war our enemies are those we have constructed to be different in order to manage our sameness; on paper and in death.⁶

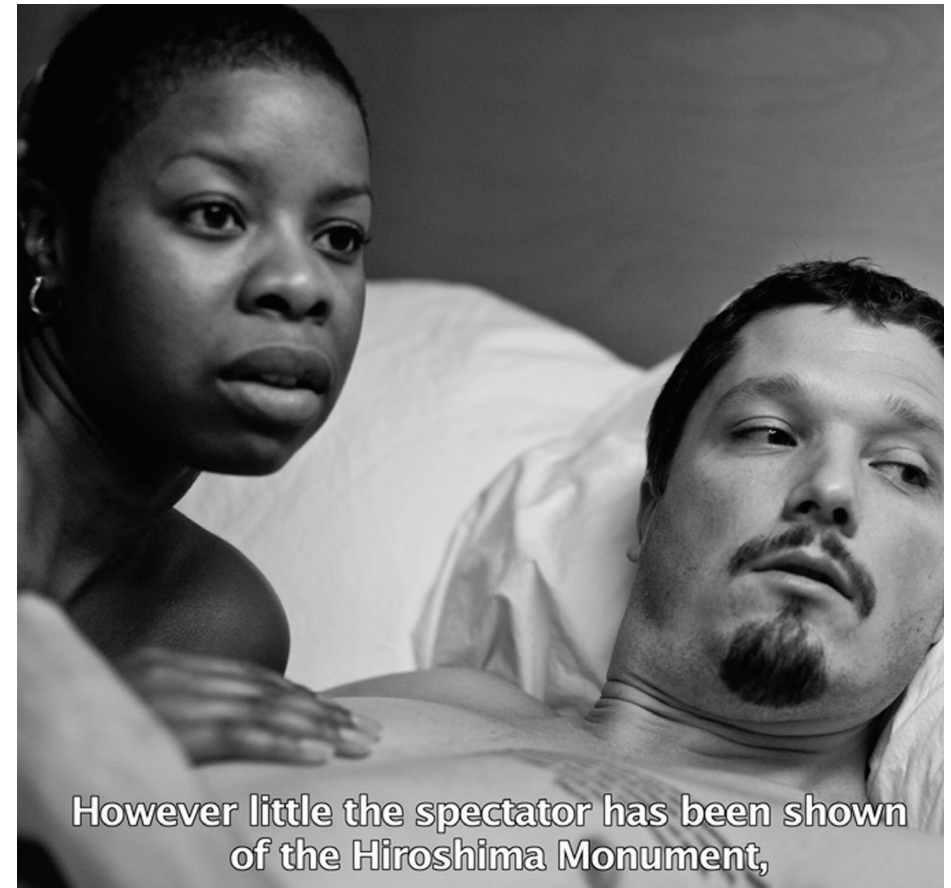
“Look how I’m forgetting you”

After Hiroshima Mon Amour (2008) actively resists categorization as a project and each viewing invites additional, deeper and more curious insights. It is a work full of iterations of love and aggression, memory and loss that undercut “the viewing subject’s certainty of sight and knowledge”.⁷ Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959), the celebrated film directed

⁵ Sigmund Freud, ‘Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through’ in Sigmund Freud, *Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works*, ed. Strachey, J., (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), p.151

⁶ For more on difference, lateral relationships and war psychoanalysis see Juliet Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) and *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria* (London: Penguin Books, 2000)

⁷ Rosalyn Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.21



by Alain Resnais and written by Marguerite Duras, initially meant to be a documentary about the atomic bomb, tells the love story of a French actress (She) and a Japanese architect and former soldier (He) in Hiroshima, twelve years after the bombing. The couple engages in long dialogues of obsessive repetition to explore the traumatic event, its commemoration and forgetfulness yet these efforts are often interjected and overruled: “You saw nothing in Hiroshima”; “You are not endowed with memory”. **Silvia Kolbowski** in *After Hiroshima Mon Amour* interferes with the title sequence of the original film and overlays her own, creating a deceiving expectation of synchronicity. The familiar image of the lovers’ ash-covered embrace is sped up and interrupted by a blurry video of American soldiers entering civilian homes in Iraq. Ten actors play the original couple of 1959, and throughout the film the two protagonists are exchanged as the actors interconnect, challenging race, ethnicity and gender. The changing ensemble cast engages in faithful remakes of the lovers’ black-and-white scenes from the original film interweaved with found footage of war-torn Iraq and abandoned New Orleans that Kolbowski has saturated with computer-generated color.

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The couple’s dialogue is largely silent while the soundtrack plays on out of sync with the images. These filmic complexities are infiltrated by Kolbowski’s text, comprised of mixed lines from Duras’ script and notes, which produces a complicated and non-linear narrative. Kolbowski explores the intersubjective relationship of historical, collective trauma and personal experience, as well as the fetishism associated with particular aspects or stages of trauma. *After Hiroshima Mon Amour* is a remake of a film, which is itself remaking a traumatic event. “It is also ‘after’ Hiroshima, an event that is not over: there is a continuity between the atomic bombing and the current situation of war”, Rosalyn Deutsche argues.⁸ Fascinated with the pathology of ‘postwar’ moments and using the techniques of

⁸ Rosalyn Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.21

disruption and fragmentation, Kolbowski created a work of perpetual remaking. Invested with creative ambivalence about historical time, alerts us to a past that is always before us and that “to remember is always to discover, never to recover”.⁹

“33,478”

Paky Vlassopoulou produced her installation **33,478** (2014) by collecting books and tearing all of their pages over a period of time to isolate their spines. A large wooden table with a clear surface holds these remnants in a state of arrested suspension. At first, the installation suggests the possibility of ‘reading’ it from left to right, following what has survived of the books across the table; except there is nothing to read. Each book has sustained an attack of the aggressive drive, yet some of the spines are carefully stitched together with a red thread. The book in *33,478* appears as an object of satisfaction and frustration. It is ripped and stitched, attacked and repaired and reduced to the part that supports its whole structure; the art object appears as part object.¹⁰ Thinking about the book as “an object of fetishism in Western tradition”, the artist offers as counterweight her own “bodily and experiential relationship with knowledge and matter”. Vlassopoulou, preoccupied with “associations of power and knowledge”, performs “an excavation on a symbol that concerns [her] personally”.¹¹

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Observing the spines closely, one notices that their texture forms little waves of paper across the horizontal table. It is a surface that is rough and active having absorbed the effect of the aggressive force, while its smooth counterpart is kept intact and inverted. What is usually hidden

⁹ Juliet Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p.315

¹⁰ The part object, in Melanie Klein’s theory, is initially comprehended in the infant’s mind by its function; it can be part of a person, such as the mother’s breast and that person is not recognized as a whole object. In this way, objects are perceived as good or bad according to the feelings of satisfaction or frustration they offer to the subject. Annette Michelson suggests that “there is a dominant trend toward the representation of a ‘body-in-pieces’, of what is in Kleinian theory termed the part object, that runs, like an insistent thread, a sustained subtext, through much [...] artistic production”. Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005), p.209

¹¹ Paky Vlassopoulou, Email conversation with the author, 6 June 2014



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and enclosed (the pages) has been ripped open and destroyed, while language remains hidden. For 33,478 “targets not just a symbol, or the idea of symbolism, but the very logic of the symbolic, and it does so from the level of the drives (the part-object), or by grounding the symbolic in the drives”.¹² The spines form a floating, undulating surface of unconscious investment. The structure of the table is simultaneously austere and precarious. The vertical legs support two horizontal axes that extend beyond the surface area and into the space. The wooden axes and the paper spines collide with the upright posture of the viewer and ground the work in “a lateral dimension of social experience”, where vertical and authoritative definitions of difference come at a cost.¹³ 33,478 examines a movement which art historian Rosalind Krauss has called “a retreat from language” to levels of experience that are “beyond or beneath speech”.¹⁴ In search for words to describe wars of a different kind, the viewers are invited to inhabit a deserted reading field and to embrace silence as resistance.

“It is a central tenet of psychoanalysis that if we can tolerate what is most disorienting – disillusioning – about our own unconscious, we are less likely to act on it, less inclined to strike out in a desperate attempt to assign the horrors of the world to someone, or somewhere else. It is not, therefore the impulse that is dangerous, but the ruthlessness of our attempts to be rid of it”, Jacqueline Rose argues. This tolerance, of course, is not solely tied to personal circumstance; it is also referring to desperate attempts of dominant narratives to condemn or shield off access to our collective unconscious and provide conventional justifications for social trauma grounded in linear, progressive and unjust accounts of historical experience. Tracing the war phenomenon to the unconscious, the exhibition shifts our awareness to identities that “harden like iron in response to the ills of the world”.¹⁵ Screens and tables

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¹² Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005), p.237

¹³ Juliet Mitchell, Mignon Nixon and Tamar Garb, ‘A Conversation with Juliet Mitchell in *October* 113 (Summer 2005), p.20

¹⁴ In her discussion of Eva Hesse’s *Contigent* (1969) Rosalind Krauss suggests that the work ‘delivered a message of privacy, of a retreat from language, of a withdrawal into those extremely personal reaches of experience that are beyond, or beneath, speech’. Rosalind Krauss, ‘Eva Hesse: Contingent’ in *Eva Hesse*, Nixon, M., ed., (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002), p.28.

¹⁵ Jacqueline Rose, *The Last Resistance* (London: Verso, 2007), p.7

provide the exhibition with surfaces that are invested with a sense of psychic and political urgency. Each work creates a setting of palindromic projection, parallel to that of the psychoanalytic scene, where viewers are invited to explore the conditions of recognition and expulsion of what is deemed unbearable in personal and public testimony. Creating an environment of analytical promise, these sites of conflict invite us to an anxious introspective experience and propose a creative way of remembering, “of staying in relation to history without being consumed by it”.¹⁶ Staging what historian Eric Hobsbawm has called “a protest against forgetting”, the works in the exhibition recognize the shadows cast on our social lives by renunciations of our psychic and cultural realities and invite us to consider what it means to be aware of war, inside and outside.

Kostas Stasinopoulos
Art Historian

¹⁶Lyndsey Stonebridge, *The Writing of Anxiety*, 2007, quoted in Henrietta Stanford, “Staying Anxious”: Encountering Ulrike Meinhof in Silvia Kolbowski’s *A Few Howls Again?*, <http://www.silviakolbowski.com/projectarticles/Stanford%20on%20AFHA.pdf>, date accessed 6 June 2014.



courtesy of Mona Hatoum and LUX, London

Mona Hatoum was born into a Palestinian family in Beirut, Lebanon in 1952. She lives and works in London and Berlin. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions including The Turner Prize (1995), Venice Biennale (1995 and 2005), Documenta XI, Kassel, 2002, Biennale of Sydney (2006), the Istanbul Biennial (1995 and 2011) and The Fifth Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2013). Solo exhibitions include Centre Pompidou, Paris (1994), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1997), The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1998), Castello di Rivoli, Turin (1999), Tate Britain, London (2000), Hamburger Kunsthalle, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Magasin 3, Stockholm (2004) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2005). Recent exhibitions include Measures of Entanglement, UCCA, Beijing (2009), Interior Landscape, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice (2009), Witness, Beirut Art Center, Beirut (2010), Le Grand Monde, Fundaciòn Marcelino Botìn, Santander (2010) and as the winner of the 2011 Joan Miró Prize, she held a solo exhibition at Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona in 2012. In 2013-2014 she was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Kunstmuseum St Gallen and the largest survey of her work to be shown in the Arab world was recently held at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha.



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Adela Jušić was born in 1982 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where she lives and works. She is a founder and member of the Association for Culture and Art CRVENA. She graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Sarajevo in 2007 and completed a masters degree in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe, at Sarajevo and Bologna University in 2013. Jušić is the recipient of several artist awards, including YVAA Zvono for best Bosnian young artist in 2010, Henkel Young Artists Prize CEE in 2011 and the 54th October Salon Special Award, in 2013. Jušić has participated in numerous exhibitions such as: *CONFLICT: Art and War*, curated by Midge Palley, Contemporary Art Society, London 2014; *SHARE – too much history, MORE future*, curated by Annemarie Tuerk, Bosnian National Gallery, Sarajevo, 2014; *BONE 16*, Performance Art Festival, Stadtgalerie, Bern, 2013; *...Was is Kunst?... Resuming a fragmented history*, curated by Sandro Droschl and Christian Egger, Kunstlerhaus, Halle fur Kunst and Medien, Graz, 2013; *GOOD GIRLS - MEMORY, DESIRE, POWER*, curated by Bojana Pejić and Olivia Nitis, National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) u Bucharest, 2013; *Conflicted Memories*, curated by Gwendolyn Sasse and Helen Waters, Alan Cristea Gallery, London, 2013; and *Image Counter Image*, curated by Patrizia Dander, Leon Krempel, Julienne Lorz, Ulrich Wilmes, Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2012.



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Silvia Kolbowski is an artist working with time-based media whose scope of address includes questions of historicization, political resistance, and the unconscious. Her work has been exhibited in many international venues and contexts, including The Tapei Biennial, The Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, the Center for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, the Villa Arson, Nice, The Whitney Biennial, The Hammer Museum, The Secession, Vienna, LAX<>ART, and others. Kolbowski is on the advisory board of October journal, where she was a co-editor between 1993 and 2000. She has taught at The Whitney Museum Independent Study Program, the CCC program of the Ecole Supérieure d'Art Visuel, Geneva, the Architecture Department of Parsons The New School for Design, NY, and the School of Art at The Cooper Union. Kolbowski has lectured widely, and her writings have been included in many publications, including Artforum, Texte zur Kunst, Documents, Parachute, and October.



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Paky Vlassopoulou was born in Athens in 1985. She studied sculpture at the University of Ioannina in the Plastic Arts and Art Sciences Department. Vlassopoulou recently graduated from the MFA course of the Athens School of Fine Art. Along with her colleagues and fellow artists, Chrysanthi Koumianaki and Kosmas Nikolaou, she runs an independent project space called 3 137, in Exarcheia, Athens. Her work explores the relationship of materiality and emotion in art and everyday life. Vlassopoulou's artworks are invested with an intense handmade nature that traces the limits of vulnerability and precariousness. Her main concerns include concepts such as contemporaneity, our relationship with the past and the intermediate space between personal and collective narrative. Recent exhibitions include *A Thousand Doors*, Gennadius Library/The American School of Classical Studies, Athens, Greece, curated by Iwona Blazwick, 2014; *Afresh, A new Generation of Greek Artists*, EMST, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece, curated by Daphne Vitali, Tina Pandi, Daphne Dragona, 2013; *Desk Issues*, 3 137 artist run space at Sluice Art Fair, London, UK, 2013; *If Sports is the brother of labour, then art is the cousin of unemployment*, Hotel Pindaros, CAMP!, Athens, Greece, curated by Panos Papadopoulos, Nino Stelzi, 2013; *Versailles*, 3 137, Athens, Greece, 2012; *Chain reaction*, TAF The Art Foundation, Athens, Greece, curated by Evangelia Ledaki, Galini Notti, Evita Tsokanta, 2011; *The Visit*, Angelos and Lito Katakouzinos Foundation, Athens, Greece, curated by Kosmas Nikolaou, 2010; *Fresh*, Action Field Kodra, Thessaloniki, Greece, curated by Nikos Mikoniatis, 2009; *Un-built*, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens, Greece, 2008.

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Kostas Stasinopoulos is an art historian and a PhD candidate with the University of York. His research is supported by The Onassis Foundation and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the United Kingdom. He holds a Masters degree in History of Art from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and has worked for art institutions such as the Whitechapel Gallery, Serpentine Gallery, White Cube and the Athens Biennale. He lives and works in London and Athens.

Artists: Mona Hatoum, Adela Jušić, Silvia Kolbowski, Paky Vlassopoulou
Curated by Kostas Stasinopoulos
Poster and catalogue design by Danai Tsouloufa

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