



PRESS RELEASE

Nikos Samaras

Solo show

Esotopes

DL Gallery presents on Friday 20 October 2023 the solo exhibition “Esotopes” of Nikos Samaras; a project that comprises installation, video projections, sound files as well as painting on canvas and aluminium.

Giorgos Alexandros Samaras notes about the show:

In his new *ESOTOPES* exhibition of October 2023, Nikos Samaras presents a set of paintings as part of a broader series to which the artist keeps returning over the years to reform and develop it.

The core and the axis around which it revolves is a certain moment in time when the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant coincided with my birth.

My place, by definition on the artist’s side since that day, has made me a witness of his life and work. If nothing else, precisely this place makes my view of his work emotionally similar to his own, and this is a good reason for me not to attempt an analysis of the painterly or technical aspects and merits of his oeuvre.

If one tried to understand the motive power behind the artist’s production, one could conclude that the moment in time when the events of April 1986 take place is the beginning of a rhythmic pattern, a leitmotif that acts as a metronome in the overall work of Nikos Samaras and not just as a source of inspiration in the evolution of his themes.

His persistence on a subject is not meant solely to raise the viewers' awareness of issues around ecological destruction, irresponsibility or the reckless use of technology, which sets this work in the realm of a staunchly militant art.

Whether by design or by circumstance, the *Esotopes* series seems to evolve over time in much the same way as a radioactive material transmutes.

Half-life is defined as the interval of time required for half the quantity of a radioactive material to change spontaneously into other nuclear species by emitting particles and energy; perhaps we could use this to describe the pace at which the artist returns to this part of his art—a pace which is at once a natural phenomenon and a probability formula.

The amount of a material that has decayed cannot be measured with certainty at any time other than within the finite span of its half-life; similarly, in the work of Nikos Samaras this repetition is perhaps the moment of transmutation into a new form, releasing a measurable amount of energy to which he is exposed and then attempts to expose the viewer to it as well.

Esotopes is the atomic clock that reminds the artist of the constant need to seek the energy called art in his work, and it is what re-introduces him to his public.

Giorgos Alexandros Samaras, architect

October 2023

On the first version of *Isotopes* at the Municipal Gallery of Larissa - G. I. Katsigras Museum in December 1996, art historian **Athena Schina**, curator of the exhibition, wrote in *ARTI magazine* no. 34:

On the tenth anniversary of the tragic nuclear accident of Chernobyl, the artist processed his idea on many levels and presented it via his *Esotopes* body of work. Combining lingual, conceptual, symbolic and metaphorical patterns and using mixed media and techniques, Nikos Samaras produced a series of washstands.

The washstands with their features formed out of sculptural parts, painting and neon tubes are accompanied by canvases with processed documentary photos, drawings, imprinted entries and creative gestures. The works were carefully laid out in the room, in a cohesive and evidently balanced way. A balance of views and concepts, of symbolisms and allegories, of documentary evidence and the correlations and associations it triggers, of the 'history' of the drama, the 'prehistory' of allusions and myths, the 'meta-history' of the magnitude of the significance and the dangers from a monumental technological lapse.

Nikos Samaras chose—far from randomly but out of a critical necessity—these washstands as the key cores of conceptualisation in his works. Children's washstands like those usually found at nursery schools. Small in size to underscore the difference of scale and time in one's observation, memory and recall. Wash basins that could be those for radioactive materials or from a toy which is sometimes timelessly dangerous; wash basins for shedding responsibility, like that of Pontius Pilate.

So these are washstands of exculpation and pharisaic exoneration, with the time of the tragic accident electronically imprinted and repeated with a persistent, unresolved guilt to remind of the destruction of nature around the globe, the genetic mutations, the human loss, the collapse of any attendant ideology, the cracks that opened up and still remain gaping, unexplained and with their justifications overruled. As 'isotopes' of radioactivity, these washstands with their electronic time stuck at the moment of the explosion persistently leak time and the consequences that transpired during this decade. A decade of high speed, multiple images and overpowering noise. The 'isotopes' of a radioactive nature and the unchecked laws act in the conscience of the civilised world as a latter-day 'original sin', mostly for those responsible and the subsequent generations that receive the relevant 'mandates'.

Athena Schina, art historian

Opening: Friday 20/10/2023 at 19:00

Duration: From 20/10/2023 to 16/03/2024

Opening hours: Thursday 12:00 – 20:00
Friday 12:00 – 20:00
Saturday 12:00 – 16:00

Admission to the exhibition is free

