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HELLENIC MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM
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ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΗΣ
ΤΕΧΝΗΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ
THESSALONIKI CENTER
OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Thessaloniki, March 21, 2012

Press Release

“MYSTERIA” exhibition / Chryse Tsiota, Vasilis Zografos

Duration: March 27 – May 2, 2012

**Venue: Contemporary Art Center of Thessaloniki | Warehouse B1,
Thessaloniki Port, Greece**

Opening: Tuesday March 27, 2012, 20.00

MYSTERIA

“MYSTERIA” is the title of the new exhibition by **Chryse Tsiota** and **Vasilis Zografos**, which will be presented at the **Contemporary Art Center of Thessaloniki of the State Museum of Contemporary Art, at Warehouse B1 of the Thessaloniki Port, from March 27 until May 2, 2012** (*Opening: Tuesday March, 2012, 20:00. Exhibition opening: Tuesday-Saturday 10:00-18:00, Sunday 11:00-15:00, Monday closed*). The exhibition, which was specifically designed for the venue of CACT, combines the mediums of photography, painting, video and sound. The exhibition, which is co-curated by the two artists and SMCA curator **Anna Mykoniati**, focuses on the role played by images in the construction of the mental illness known as hysteria. The consolidation of these images as stereotypes fundamentally influenced the history of art and the way the images were viewed over time.

The French poets Louis Aragon and André Breton claimed that Hysteria was “the single greatest poetic discovery of the late 19th century”. Many psychiatrists believed hysteria was a nosological limbo of all women-related diseases; frightened therapists transformed their bewilderment into a diagnosis and named every “female-related” behavior as a “symptom”. They called it “Mysteria”.

The works of the two artists converse and challenge each other, in a theatrical atmosphere, which features many elements taken from the earliest psychiatric asylums. The artists have also processed archival and historic material, offering audiences the chance to confirm for themselves what Aragon and Breton, as well as Georges Didi-Huberman in his book “Invention of Hysteria”, have suggested, namely that hysteria was “something” almost like art.

Tsiota and **Zografos** believe that dialogue is necessary, even when it does not aim at the immediate discovery of solutions. Behind the images they present there is action, and behind action there is emotion - feelings and meaning are inseparable, the self and the other are not two distinct objects, and there is no strict demarcation of the limits of the individual's intellectual identity.

Hysteria

Hysteria, a term known since antiquity, was constructed as a disease in the 19th century. It followed a parallel course with the development of the patriarchal - capitalistic system. At the Salpêtrière clinic (one of the largest Paris asylums), the famous neurologist Jean - Martin Charcot revisits the concept of hysteria, taking pictures he theatrically staged with his willing “patients”, transforming this invented disease into a spectacle, a process common to the theatre and painting. Hysteria became a battleground of gender conflict in medicine: it was registered as a specifically female-related disease, until similar symptoms were recorded in the cases of working class men, especially during the time of industrialization and the First World War. In order to avoid any kind of identification with the “female” disease of hysteria, the medical establishment termed this new disease neurasthenia. In essence, the history of hysteria was written by men for women and it was a mixture of science, sexuality and sensationalism.

The artists in the exhibition

Chryse Tsiota, based on the premise that the dominant viewpoint in the production of images is male while the object of the images is female - the latter being identified with all things weak, unorthodox or “effeminate” - examines how female sexuality and intelligence become objects of manipulation and an excuse to construct the “model” of “female nature”, subjugated, as it were, to male fantasy and narcissism. Tsiota examines gender roles in photographic representation, constructs images of seclusion and escape, phantasies in which manic copies of herself operate as incommunicable substitutes of other, submissive selves. She produces metaphors of physical distress which are manifested with “frozen” landscapes and internal “horrors” in the background. She invents a character who operates and behaves “hysterically”, a pain wishing to be defined, as a spectacle and an image, to the extent that it eventually manages to be created in a miraculous way through the image.

Using the history of male hysteria as his background, **Vasilis Zografos** implies rather than explains through his paintings. He firmly believes that many important truths can be impressed on our consciousness only if they have been moulded using sensory-emotional materials, so he documents the profile of the “man past his prime”, recalling images depicting male role models and stereotypical images which relate to the male psyche. The artist examines male role expectations as determined by capitalism, a system which imposes an arbitrary measure of what is desirable and what is not. In his works, Zografos studies the mental state caused by the symptoms of hysteria in modern times, such as: rage outbursts accompanied by the feeling of lack of fulfillment, superficiality with elements of showing off, the intense eroticism which excludes the sexual act, male narcissism, panic crises, and, generally speaking, all the “male theatrics” which characterize modern men. His paintings seem to express the stance of men towards themselves; his images are in sharp contrast to the traditional methodology of painting, which focused on showcasing the promise of male power (moral, physical, idiosyncratic, financial, social, sexual...) and identified the depiction of females with the spectacle. Zografos neither illustrates nor describes - rather, he creates atmospheres for what we might call an interpretation of the process and act of painting as a way of simulating reality - in this context, the artist considers Art itself as a “hysterical” issue .

The artists

Chryse Tsiota was born in Thessaloniki in 1972. She studied Graphic Design at the Athens Technological Educational Institute and Fine Arts at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts de Bourges, in France. From 1998 until 2007 she taught photography as a visiting professor at the Ecole Regionale des Beaux Arts de St. Etienne. She is currently living and working in Thessaloniki. Her work has been exhibited in many

individual and group exhibitions and contemporary art Biennales in Greece and abroad. Works by Tsiota are part of the collections of the State Museum of Contemporary Art (Thessaloniki), the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art (Thessaloniki) and private collections in Greece and abroad. (<http://www.fictio.gr>)

Vasilis Zografos was born in Mytilene in 1965. He studied at the School of Fine Arts of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (1987-1992) and continued his studies at the postgraduate department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Groningen, the Netherlands. In 2002 he completed a multi-discipline Masters Course at the Polytechnic School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, specializing in the Preservation, Conservation and Restoration of Art Works. Between 2002 and 2007 he taught Painting and Drawing at the Ecole Régionale de Beaux Arts de St. Etienne. He currently lives and works in Thessaloniki. He collaborates with the “Batagianni” gallery in Athens. (<http://www.vasiliszografos.com>)

Guided tours

On April 8 & 22, at 12:00, one can join the guided tours by the exhibition curators. The participation is open, with the exhibition ticket. In addition, guided tours will be given to secondary school and university students, and to groups. Information: SMCA Educational programmes department, tel. (+30) 2310 589222, email education@greekstatemuseum.com.

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“MYSTERIA” Exhibition / Chryse Tsiota, Vasilis Zografos

Opening: 27 March 2012, 20.00

27 March – 2 May 2012

Thessaloniki Centre of Contemporary Art, Warehouse B1, Thessaloniki Port

Opening hours:: Tuesday-Saturday 10:00-18:00, Sunday 11:00-15:00, Monday closed

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