

***The Pink Dinosaur Against the Apparatus of Greekness***

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Sevasti, Despina. Performance *Is your figure less than Greek / is your mouth a little weak / when you open it to speak / are you smart?* Presented as part of Maelstrom Slow Dance: Dutch Art Institute Graduation Acts, at Huis Oostpool Theatre, Arnhem, 26 June 2017. Photography: Malcolm Kratz

The research trajectory articulated here came out of, and will return to, my artistic practice—specifically one continuing performance project—that takes issue with the intricate machinations through which normativity constructs and sustains itself via the ideology and aesthetics of ‘Greekness’. I call the apparatus that operates to (re)produce and sustain this eternal flow of normativity the *Photocopy Machine of Greekness*.

Giorgio Agamben defines the apparatus as that which fleshes out the heterogeneous network of practices and mechanisms that “appears at the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge”, enacting disciplined,

normative subjectifications.<sup>1</sup> In Agamben's words: "The term 'apparatus' designates that in which and through which one realizes a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being. This is the reason why apparatuses must always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject."<sup>2</sup> The apparatus of Greekness is meticulously fabricated by a network of "discourses, institutions, buildings, laws, police measures, philosophical propositions, and so on"<sup>3</sup> that have historically sustained Greek and Western civilizations' mutual dependency on a cosmology rooted in the foundational myth of Greekness. To question and queer this persistent athleticism of heteronormative Greek culture, this project is written with a critical spirit and produces and incites what Lauren Berlant calls "ironic noise", which "releases from the background that which haunts our double-binding encounters with the world where we orchestrate positive and negative valences."<sup>4</sup> For Berlant, who draws on Gayatri Spivak's notion of the double-bind<sup>5</sup> as the

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Agamben, Giorgio, *"What is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. pp. 2-8.

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Ibid.

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Ibid.

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Berlant, Lauren, 'Cruel Optimism, Becoming Event: A Response', in: *Public Feelings Salon with Lauren Berlant, April 12, 2011, New York*. 2011. <<http://bcrw.barnard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/Public-Feelings-Responses/Lauren-Berlant-Cruel-Optimism-Becoming-Event.pdf>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

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Spivak, Gayatri, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012. pp. 96-118.

experience of “staying with the trouble”<sup>6</sup>, staying with the aporia<sup>7</sup> and “the tension between the vital and the institutional”<sup>8</sup>, there is value in a radical aesthetic project that does not get “too celebratory about critical sovereignty” and instead acknowledges the value of the work of “making objects strange... (which) ought to include making ourselves strange in relation to the objects.”<sup>9</sup> To produce these object estrangements in my own performance work, and elaborate a critical, ironic, queer and multi-disciplined voice against humanist aesthetic norms, I developed the conceptual persona of the Pink Dinosaur. She is a figure that I present as being able to speak from the position of the artist and the archaeologist, the student and the teacher at the same time.

The Pink Dinosaur performs ironized knowledge production and noise, from/inside/between all the above-mentioned identities and their inter-relations. Importantly, the Pink Dinosaur is a monstrously archaic female body: she is trained in classical sports only to deconstruct patriarchal mythopoetics; she is an expert in the fictions generated by archaeology because she herself is a man-handled archaeological fiction; she has something to teach, which is unextractable from her ironically fossilized and awkward being, alongside other living fossils; and she is queerly located in Greekness as a fragmented body, living in a territory saturated by what Berlant calls the “commodity’s moral propping of a rhythm of accumulation and

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Haraway, Donna, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

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“It can only be described as an experience. It discloses itself in being crossed. For, as we know every day, even by supposedly not deciding, one of those two right or wrong decisions gets taken, and the aporia or double bind remains. Again, it must be insisted that this *is* the condition of possibility of deciding. In the aporia or the double bind, to decide is the burden of responsibility. The typecase of the ethical sentiment is regret, not self-congratulation.” Spivak, Gayatri, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012. pp. 104-105.

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Butt, Danny, *Double-bound: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. 2014. <<http://dannybutt.net/spivak-aesthetic-education-globalization/>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

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Berlant, op.cit.

debt.”<sup>10</sup> Within a contemporary context, the Pink Dinosaur relates to the commodity status of being Greek and female. To understand Greekness as a historical metaphor, as heteronormative, macho, white ideological objectification, and as a material reality in the bio-geographical sense, is to recognize a being-commodity that is calling out to further critical interpretive and queered excavation practices, especially in relation to the ramifications of the current Greek debt crisis.

The Pink Dinosaur attempts to perform the “noise of attachment”<sup>11</sup> from within intractable material conditions and image economies. More vitally, I wear this costume to play the role of a woman surrounded by the ongoing relations of a late capitalist patriarchy that descends from deep time; a hegemonic Greekness that encompasses my working life (teaching and practicing art) as well as broader social relations in Greece. This is an un/tactful position of narration, a weapon against a representation of what constitutes the ‘authentic’, ‘indigenous’ Greek artist’s body and speech today. In that sense, the speech of the Pink Dinosaur is inseparable from a method of ‘associology’ of aesthetic criticism, as a scenic dealing with objects and embodiments of Greekness. Or as Berlant writes, “not a scene in suspension, but a noise aesthetics attached to dynamic figuration” and which in this way “reads for the demand of the incident that has dented her, the critic trying to think how to care for an attachment that traverses the proximate domains of life and art.”<sup>12</sup> This curious and urgent question of *how to care* crosses art and politics through the fragmented historiographies I am identifying here as in-forming culture, as aesthetic education in

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Ibid.

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Ibid. Berlant writes, “The political, the aesthetic, the pedagogical, and any attachment-love: these are all trainings in absorbing and refracting the otherwise, a virtuality that, by way of the immanent affectivity of form itself, siphons energy from the desire to foreclose that always haunts anchors in meaning. Recontextualization opens foreclosure against its own promise of interpretive and affective rest. Aesthetic criticism here—criticism that reads with the affective impacts of form and object that hold up a critic’s sense of the world—uses the encounter with art to perform what Latour would call “associology,” changing not only what kinds of tone and relation criticism can have, but how the newly scenified object organizes concepts, becoming a pulsating question that produces speculation, historical narratives, explanations, and more questions.”

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Ibid.

the present tense. To set the Pink Dinosaur to work against the (photo)copy machine is to theoretically and performatively interfere with the apparatus of power.

### **The School: Aesthetic Education, Uninterrupted. Where the Pink Dinosaur comes from**

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In her performances, the Pink Dinosaur addresses the apparatus reproducing an original<sup>13</sup> Greekness while speaking about the institutional, formal and reproductive particularities of university education that aspiring artists receive in Greece. Prospective students that aim to enter the Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA) spend one to five years in preparatory painting and drawing classes, where I teach. The ASFA entrance exams consist exclusively of live figurative painting, replicating plaster copies of ancient statues that are garnished with still life elements such as bottles, plastic fruit, dustpans, et cetera. Students draw for several hours a day, imitating white pristine statues such as the Venus de Milo, Hermes of Praxiteles, Apollon of Olympia and Kouros Aristodikos, as well as a selection of classical Renaissance examples. This process of imitating the ancient Greek ideals of human form, beauty and proportion is the foundation of the students' validation as artists across the country. It becomes firmly embedded in their conscious mind, as well as their unconscious. At one point or another, students who go through this procedure begin to dream of surreal struggles with the statues, given the hundreds of times

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Here I am borrowing a concept from Moten, Fred, and Harney, Stefano, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. Wivenhoe, UK & New York: Minor Compositions, 2013. p. 47: "Here is an anoriginary drive whose fateful internal difference (as opposed to fatal law) is that it brings regulation into existence, into a history irregularly punctuated by transformations that drive imposes upon regulation. Those transformative impositions show up for us now as compensation and surplus: as the payment of a massive and incalculable debt by the ones who not only never promised it; and as the massive and incalculable range of labored living, "the thing realized in things...the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc., created through universal exchange" that Marx called wealth. The anoriginary drive and the insistences it calls into being and moves through, that criminality that brings the law online, the runaway anarchic ground of unpayable debt and untold wealth, the fugal, internal world theater that shows up for a minute serially-poor but extravagant as opposed to frugal-is blackness which must be understood in its ontological difference from black people who are, nevertheless, (under)privileged insofar as they are given (to) an understanding of it."

they are required to reproduce them. Apart from these tasks, there is no other format of receiving validation as a candidate student of Fine Arts up until the present day. No portfolio or exhibition examinations, interviews or written statements are expected for the position of student at the Greek Fine Arts universities. The exam system that glorifies the ancient Greek statues, as erections of the perfect, canonical 'ancient human form', still functions to invest in icons of normativity and to measure artistic genius; assessment has not really evolved since the mid-nineteenth century when the Athens School of Fine Arts was founded. The only contemporary addition to ASFA's pedagogy in terms of the entry exams system was initiated in 2010 when students became required to additionally paint 'free paintings', in an imitative and hybridized late canonization of American abstract expressionism and 1970s Greek modernism, clearly perpetuating white masculine ideals of aesthetic universality.

Such historical apprenticeships to Greekness uncannily deliver key examples of the reproduction of not only skills, but culture and aesthetic training as apparatuses in themselves. The school as a reproductive or ideological apparatus is described in Louis Althusser's 1970 essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)'.<sup>14</sup> While Agamben's emphasis on subjectivization processes in the apparatus remains key, Althusser's articulation centres on the definitive element of the school or education system as what he calls "an ideological state apparatus" working precisely through silence, since "hardly anyone lends an ear to its music"<sup>15</sup> and the way it naturalizes, covers up and conceals its reproduction of a universally reigning ideology, such as Greekness in this case.

When I asked my students why we draw statues in order to assess whether we qualify to become artists, they appeared to be puzzled. I consider puzzlement as a valid reaction within this protracted institutionalization of Greekness. The agalmatophilic [statue-loving] examination process in Greek higher education is,

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Althusser, Louis, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. London, New York: Verso, 2014. pp. 232-272.

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Ibid., p. 251.

paradoxically, naturalized by such a blatant spirit of ancestor worship [progonoplexia]. My students' eventual answers to my questioning of the value of this assessment—reproducing these objects as their education—ranged from “they are very important” to “they are the epitome of human beauty”, to “the human form is the centre of everything”, and “it is our tradition, the tradition of ancient Greece”. At the same time, the rare voices of Greek art teachers interested in a more contemporary system of evaluation—for example by submission of a portfolio and an interview exam as happens in most art colleges internationally—usually focus on diversifying the variety of contemporary media available for skill development, and turn away from the problematics of reproducing Greekness as an ideological and aesthetic apparatus.

The Athens School of Fine Arts has several departments and syllabi, yet its core operations in terms of tutoring and research, as well as funding and institutional politics, revolve around its eleven painting and sculpture studios. The only female professor presently running her own core studio course is Afroditi Liti. The presence of a single female professor occupying this exceptional position is a tradition at ASFA. Rena Papaspyrou was the first and only woman to run her own core studio course from 1993 to 2005, so in the 180 years of the ASFA only two women in total have been heads of core studio courses. Female professors are less rare in the theory department of the School and in the assistants' ranks. Needless to say, there has never been a female Dean. The disparity of women who are art practice professors also persists, despite the fact that approximately 64% of the students are female compared to 36% male.<sup>16</sup>

For the past three years, ASFA was one of the three main partners of documenta 14 in Athens. ASFA hosted a major part of the exhibition as well as an elaborate programme of talks and workshops run by Documenta's education department, developed at the school facilities, also with the working title (later dropped) of 'Learning from Athens'. ASFA's dominant mode of production, its ancient

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These statistics are based on the census study *Athens School of Fine Arts. Το προφίλ του απόφοιτου της Ανώτατης Σχολής Καλών Τεχνών* [‘The profile of the graduate programme of the Athens School of Fine Arts’], conducted by the Career Office of the Athens School of Fine Arts, 2005. <[http://www.dasta.asfa.gr/files4users/files/meletes\\_ereynes/to\\_profil\\_tou\\_apofoitou\\_tis\\_askt.pdf](http://www.dasta.asfa.gr/files4users/files/meletes_ereynes/to_profil_tou_apofoitou_tis_askt.pdf)> (Greek only). Accessed 10 August 2017. Although it only registered the graduates' gender within the period of 1993-2005, it is my estimation based on the yearly ASFA entrance exams results that these percentages remain as such up until the present day (2018).

canon repetitions, its persistently white cis male teacher prototypes, and the agalmatophilic and patriotic exam system, have not at all been questioned by Documenta's own programmatic valorization of southern, decolonized and queer practices, which were articulated as the contemporaneity of the project.

At the other end of this schizoid (non-)contemporaneity, following a long tradition of unacknowledged reproductive labour performed by women in the field of Greek art education, my own job is performed on a thoroughly precarious basis, usually without substantial contracts, social benefits or any paid leave and most importantly, in a context that demands a great amount of emotional labour. I find myself among students coming from a devastating political vacuum regarding anything that relates to identity politics or even empiricist history per se, especially non-Greek history, not to mention postmodern developments such as deconstructive or emancipative theory, feminisms, queer theory, et cetera. More often than not, my classes therefore become the very first place where students come across any of these contexts, processes, and possibilities, and can empower themselves, explore the past, the present and their positions through making art.

To my knowledge, there is no discourse up to today in Greece addressing the political and ideological repercussions of this exam system, nor its entanglement with the gendered composition of professorships within the Greek art scene. It was only at the third Athens Biennale 2011, titled *Monodrome*, that several of these plaster statue copies together with drawings in the ASFA exam format were exhibited on the second floor of the main exhibition venue (Diplareios School), curatorially contextualized by the narrative of the construction of modern Greece.<sup>17</sup> The statues were gathered around a screen that played a selection of Greek sporting victories from the 1980s to the apotheosis of Greekness at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. Nevertheless, even this exhibition moment, which was depicted in quite a

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See the curatorial statement of the Athens Biennale *Monodrome*, 2011. <<http://athensbiennale.org/en/ab3-monodrome/>> Accessed 10 August 2017. Exhibition views of the statues: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyxNa8SJJEY>> Accessed 14 June 2018.



few articles about *Monodrome* and the Athenian art scene,<sup>18</sup> did not spark any recorded discussion on the subject of the exams and the art education apparatus as a tool for social reproductions of Greekness and whiteness. The image of the compilation of statue copies also adorned the cover of Dimitris Plantzos' recent book *Το πρόσφατο μέλλον. Η κλασική αρχαιότητα ως βιοπολιτικό εργαλείο* ('Recent Futures. Classical Antiquity and Modern Greek Biopolitics').<sup>19</sup> Although Plantzos praised *Monodrome* as a rare example of working through the obsession with ancient Greece, he doesn't take into consideration the context of ASFA and the specific conditions of this reproduction, together with the ASFA exam format statue drawings on the opposite wall. It is safe to say that the project was largely received as another generic exhibit of the obsessive leitmotif of ancient Greece/Greekness<sup>20</sup> on a more abstract aesthetic level.

The 4 May 2017 episode of 'Η Εποχή των Εικόνων' (The Era of the Images), a series on state television by Katerina Zacharopoulou, titled 'Η ΑΣΚΤ σήμερα' (ASFA today)<sup>21</sup> attempted to sketch "the new shape of the School in the twenty-first century" in light of documenta 14 coming to Athens and the recent opening of the new ASFA library. Zacharopoulou made this portrait of the school by interviewing four male professors: the current Dean Panos Haralambous, the ex-

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Kuhnt, Sara, 'Beyond the Crisis: On Greece's Burgeoning Art Scene', in: *Afterall*, 2012. <<https://www.afterall.org/online/beyond-the-crisis-on-greece-s-burgeoning-contemporary-art-scene>> Accessed 10 August 2017. Also see: Zefkili, Despina, '3rd Athens Biennale', in: *Frieze*, 2012. <<https://frieze.com/article/3rd-athens-biennale>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

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Plantzos, Dimitris, *Το πρόσφατο μέλλον. Η κλασική αρχαιότητα ως βιοπολιτικό εργαλείο*. (Recent Futures. Classical Antiquity and Modern Greek Biopolitics). Athens: Nefeli Editions, 2016.

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This observation comes from my position as the Head of Communications of the third Athens Biennale, *Monodrome*, thus having a first-hand overview of the reactions and discourses that this Biennale initiated. *Monodrome* attempted to address issues of Greekness and the Greek debt crisis in the middle of fierce demonstrations and riots in Athens that were sparked by the first Memorandums. An interesting review of the third Athens Biennale can be found at: Bailey, Stephanie, 'Monodrome: Third Athens Biennale', in: *Artwrit*, 2011. <<http://www.artwrit.com/article/monodrome-3rd-athens-biennale/>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

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Zacharopoulou, Katerina. *Η Εποχή των Εικόνων. Η ΑΣΚΤ σήμερα*. (The Era of Images. The Athens School of Fine Arts today). *EPT webtv*, 2017. <<http://webtv.ert.gr/ert2/i-epochi-ton-ikonon/04mar2017-i-epochi-ton-ikonon/>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

Dean George Harvalias, and professors Nikos Tranos and Nikos Navridis. The only female beings (artists, teachers, theorists, or school employees from Greece or abroad) mentioned in the one-hour discussion about ASFA's past and future and art education and contemporary art internationally, are Niki Zachioti and Marina Komboliti who run ASFA's library. In between the interviews, the camera sometimes briefly cuts to short instances of 'actual teaching': a male art teacher addressing rows of students, predominantly female, most of whom I have taught for several years in the past, that we never hear speaking.

The dominance of the ideology of the male artist genius in the Greek art sphere and its systematic congealment and reproduction via the apparatus of Greekness couldn't be illustrated better than by the words of the Arte Povera pioneer Jannis Kounellis. Kounellis never taught at ASFA, as he emigrated to Italy at a young age, led by his self-described need as a Greek to "fill the void of the Renaissance that only Italy can supply to a Greek".<sup>22</sup> Yet Kounellis is considered one of the most accomplished Greek artists of all time and his status within the Greek art scene and education system is almost mythical. When he passed away at the age of 80 on 16 February 2017, he was hailed as a legendary Greek, a pioneer, deemed an unconventional genius both by the Greek and international press.<sup>23</sup>

Kounellis always insisted on the civilizing qualities of Western humanism, starting with the Greeks and developing through the Renaissance: "Western thought gives human beings a central role. Everything needs to be centred on humanity,

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Karloroulos, Yannis, 'Είμαι ένας τυφλός ζωγράφος»: Όταν ο Γιάννης Κουνέλλης είχε μιλήσει συναρπαστικά στο περιοδικό 01' ("I am a blind painter": Yannis Kounellis's fascinating interview in the 01 magazine), in: *LiFO*, 2011. <[http://www.lifo.gr/articles/arxeio\\_articles/133813](http://www.lifo.gr/articles/arxeio_articles/133813)> Accessed 10 August 2017.

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Grimes, William, 'Jannis Kounellis, Leader in '60s "Poor Art" Movement, Dies at 80' in: *New York Times*, 2017. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/21/arts/design/jannis-kounellis-died-sculptor.html>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

otherwise there's a great risk of falling into decadence."<sup>24</sup> When the journalist asked Kounellis about the blurry impression of what constitutes Greekness within the arts, he replied: "For me Greek identity is the Parthenon with its values."

Furthermore, Kounellis claims in this interview that, since Greece did not ever experience the Renaissance but rather jumped from the Byzantine Empire to 'nothingness' (meaning the four centuries of the Ottoman Empire), it was the Italian Renaissance that saved Greekness. In other words, his investment in his own artishood depends on a fictional linearity stretching from ancient Greece to Renaissance Italy, bypassing the Ottoman Empire in order to retain continuous Greekness. This is the stereotypical myth at the basis of the Philhellenic movement of the nineteenth century, which was ideologically and materially bound up with the construction of the modern Greek state. The four hundred years of the Ottoman Empire were conceived as a barbaric aberration to the clean and superior lineage of Greekness, despite the fact that there was no such a thing as 'Greece' up until the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This archaeolatric<sup>25</sup> linear history that brings together Westernness and Greekness via the Renaissance is the dominant historical narrative that is taught in the Greek education system until today.<sup>26</sup> I argue that this psychic and aesthetic investment in linear Greekness vis-a-vis the anthropocentric male genius sheds light on the kind of humanism the apparatus produces, not just distorted with regard to historiographic facts, but enmeshed with the violence of patriarchy.

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"I came to Italy because I was interested in painters such as Masaccio—a revolutionary artist [who] changed from the idiom of the Middle Ages. He was not only a great painter, but also had a great intuition. His art was not classical, but humanistic. And I was born in the country that invented humanism." (...) "I have the mindset of a painter. That's my identity. I couldn't abandon that even if I wanted to. In Greek the word for painter is zōgraphos, which means someone who draws life. The Greek is much more precise. It's a matter of living experience." Gayford, Martin, 'Everything needs to be centred on humanity': Jannis Kounellis, 1936–2017', in: *Apollo Magazine*, 2017. <<https://www.apollo-magazine.com/everything-needs-to-be-centred-on-humanity/>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

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"Archaeolatry, archeolatry (s) (noun); archaeolatries, archeolatries (pl). The devotion to or the worship of ancient customs, expressions, objects, etc." *Word Information*, an English dictionary about English vocabulary words and etymologies derived primarily from Latin and Greek word origins. <<http://wordinfo.info/unit/2564/ip:2/il:O>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

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Karlopoulos, op. cit.

To exemplify this point, consider an excerpt from a conversation Kounellis had with the influential international curator Denys Zacharopoulos and the prestigious Bernier/Eliades Gallery owners Marina Eliades & Jean Bernier.<sup>27</sup> They are discussing what is a great artist, what that artist is motivated to do, and how he creates. Kounellis answers this question in 2010 by citing the renowned sculpture of Laocoön—the Greek model of the male genius from the renowned Hellenistic baroque sculpture *Laocoön and His Sons*, excavated in Rome in 1506 and on display at the Vatican Museum. The sculpture depicts the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons Antiphantes and Thymbraeus as they are attacked by sea serpents. It is considered "the prototypical icon of human agony"<sup>28</sup> in Western art but unlike the iconic Christian sculptures showing the Passion of Jesus and martyrs, its manly suffering is considered to have no redemptive power or reward. Kounellis relates the sculpture's tragic and sublime patriarchal/homosocial Greekness to a timeless hymn of male artistic genius by connecting in one breath the story of Kouros, the first man in classical Greek sculpture, to the sublime manliness of Laocoön, to Picasso, which supposedly explains the historical achievements of the modernist revolution in art: "It is about moving. In everything, the most important thing is movement. You see, the Laocoön is born within the Kouros. There is a minimal distance between them, not at all great. Kouros was meant as a Laocoön. Laocoön is well aware that he belongs to this family—he sprang from, he came from Kouros. Picasso, when he was painting the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, had locked his model—a girl—into the loft and he went out for drinks with his friends. I once said to a feminist in Paris that if he hadn't locked up the girl, the work would not have been made. She did not respond

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Zacharopoulos, Denys; Iliadi, Marina; Bernier, Jean, 'Ο Γιάννης Κουνέλλης μιλά στη LiFO: "Πάψε να φτιάχνεις, και παύεις να υπάρχεις!" Ο σπουδαίος καλλιτέχνης συζητά με τον Ντένη Ζαχαρόπουλο, τη Μαρίνα Ηλιάδη και τον Jean Bernier' ('Yannis Kounellis talks with Denis Zacharopoulos, Marina Iliadi and Jean Bernier on LiFO: "Stop making and you will stop living"'), in: *LiFO*, 2010. <<http://www.lifo.gr/mag/features/2407>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

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Boxer, Sarah, 'The Formula For Portraying Pain in Art; Building Chairs or Forging Tools to Ease Suffering Can Transform It Into a Creative Force', in: *New York Times*, 2001. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/15/arts/formula-for-portraying-pain-art-building-chairs-forging-tools-ease-suffering-can.html>> Accessed 10 August 2017.

—in fact, she never spoke to me again. Either you are wild (a savage) or you are not. You either make or you don't. Stop making, and you stop existing.”<sup>29</sup>

Whether or not this tale of the fantastic beginnings of Cubism—in a painting in which the distorted faces of female sex workers are compared to African masks—is true, the work that remains is to interrupt the assumptions and reproductions associated with this male artistic being that is constantly excavated to appear as the master of history and beauty: an enlightened forceful genius who dominates art and politics, aesthetic and political education, riding on ancient statues to the captured female bodies that submit to his modernist fervour. Ironically, a more diffractive attention to art history and archaeology's own constructedness, which refuses to reinstate any essence of representative originality, may tell us more about what this notion of Greekness in history and aesthetics actually is.

### **My queer Pink Dinosaur & the revenge of Amalthea**

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Before I invented the conceptual persona of the Pink Dinosaur at the Dutch Art Institute, my aesthetic education had for many years been developed in Greek stadiums, within a family saturated with classical sports and Greek ruins; but also very much through the study of archaeology, and only later fine art and theory. What appears to be at stake in these disciplinary trainings are quite *different* “spacetimematterings”,<sup>30</sup> a different physics, which might be grasped diffractively, away from the assumed availabilities that exist.

In my performances I introduce the Pink Dinosaur as the descendant of Amalthea, the feminine Nymph/goat figure that nursed baby Zeus in the cave where he was hiding. Admittedly, Amalthea herself is a figure from Greek mythology, yet a largely effaced one, a muted, mutilated and passive animalistic body that only served

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<sup>29</sup>

Zacharopoulos, op.cit. The translation is my own.

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“Diffraction owes as much to a thick legacy of feminist theorizing about difference as it does to physics. As such, I want to begin by re-turning—not by returning as in reflecting on or going back to a past that was, but re-turning as in turning it over and over again—iteratively intra-acting, re-diffracting, diffracting anew, in the making of new temporalities (spacetimematterings), new diffraction patterns”. Barad, Karen, ‘Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart’, in: *Parallax*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2014. pp. 168-187.

as a tool and provider for the endless empowerment of the male sovereign performed by Zeus. Her severed horn historically fuelled cornucopian fantasies and entitlements of all kinds of colonial submissions and supremacist stratifications within ongoing Western white world-makings. Reclaiming Amalthea's body and voice via the Pink Dinosaur's persona is an attempt to refuse this destructive, forged apparatus, not by transposing an authentic, female self, reborn from the depths of ancient Greek fairy tales, but on the contrary, to expose the visceral abstractions performed by the cornucopianisms of the apparatus of Greekness, the immaterial labour and the paraded living statues that safeguard the sovereignty of the apparatus, and as queer theorist Jack Halberstam asserts, "to refuse interpellation and the re-instantiation of the law."<sup>31</sup> The Pink Dinosaur is not fixing a historical, representational and philological error but enacting a play-through for all to see.

What the Pink Dinosaur is trying to narrate is how, in all historical instances, whether it is the beginning of the tiny poor state of Greece in the nineteenth century, or the triumphal days of the Athens Olympic Games of 2004, or the current crisis era when Greece is labeled as 'the south', the apparatus of Greekness is always the entry point, and it is always in operation.

The Pink Dinosaur performs to badly and awkwardly cannibalize the identities of Greekness, from the position of a former athlete, former archaeologist, a teacher and artist, such that she is stuttering with entanglements, haunting the present with all that is continually left out of normative figures of artishood and aesthetic and political education. She performs as a creative violation, and also as the joke of the gendered repeating part which has no part. While the white bodies of Greek patriarchal society and aesthetics continue to be copied and disseminated, Amalthea as the appropriated mythic core of plenty in and through a planetary reproduction, as ever assumed, is now in crisis. This meta-crisis of capitalism itself is even further traumatizing the image of abundance beyond its situatedness and nationalistic containment. This 'planetarity' of the crisis continues to disappear from Greekness and from art. Against her disappearance and decreation, including in the contemporary schools, the woman artist, archaeologist and educator will work to be

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Halberstam, Judith, 'The Wild Beyond. With and for the Undercommons', in: Moten, Fred; Harney, Stefano, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. Wivenhoe, UK & New York: Minor Compositions, 2013. p. 9.

impossibly re-invented and re-created in the past and present, as a kind of Pink Dinosaur, the symbol of which is machinically interruptive and humorously haunting.

What is posed by the Pink Dinosaur is another way of thinking Greekness, a way in which ancient, classical, the modern state's and contemporary investments in things themselves and the attachments to them, all come together performed, wound up, bastardized, through a queer intersectional pedagogy of/against/away from Greekness. She plays the queering and absurd role of conveying and correcting without fixing or curing or renaturalizing a more material and imaginative knowledge of and openness to history; in ways that show that the canon itself is fabricated, and therefore totally plastic, but we are in any case fully entangled in it. Otherwise, as Halberstam wrote, women and women artists bound to the photocopy machine of Greekness deal with a lineage in which "(t)he whole model of 'passing down' knowledge from mother to daughter is quite clearly invested in white, gendered, and heteronormativity; indeed the system inevitably stalls in the face of these racialized and heterosexualized scenes of difference."<sup>32</sup> The point therefore is not to try to instate another canon in its place, but to try to perform a kind of un-teaching, or miseducation, wearing a ridiculously fluffy fluorescent costume, and thus to be, in Halberstam's words, "disorganized, unprofessional, uncollegial, passionate and disloyal"<sup>33</sup> all at the same time. In 'The Queer Art of Failure' Halberstam also writes in a similar vein, "(r)ather than searching for ways around death and disappointment, the queer art of failure involves the acceptance of the finite, the embrace of the absurd, the silly, and the hopelessly goofy." It is this goofiness that the Pink Dinosaur

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Halberstam, Judith, *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011. p. 124.

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Halberstam 2013, op. cit. pp. 8-9. "Moten and Harney also study what it would mean to refuse what they term "the call to order." [...] "The subversive intellectual, we learn, is unprofessional, uncollegial, passionate and disloyal. The subversive intellectual is neither trying to extend the university nor change the university, the subversive intellectual is not toiling in misery and from this place of misery articulating a "general antagonism." In fact, the subversive intellectual enjoys the ride and wants it to be faster and wilder; she does not want a room of his or her own, she wants to be in the world, in the world with others and making the world anew."

both is and deploys, so that “(r)ather than resisting endings and limits, let(s) us instead revel in and cleave to all of our own inevitable fantastic failures.”<sup>34</sup>

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Halberstam 2011 op. cit. p. 187.