
undercurrent

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WASTELAND /01.18–01.23.22

Opening Reception: January 18, Tuesday, 6–9 pm

Rafika Chawishe's all day performance: Sunday, January 23

Gallery hours: January 18–23, 1–7 pm

Greek artist's Michalis Argyrou interactive ice installation and Rafika Chawishe's long durational performance explores identity themes of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

Undercurrent and Greece in USA present *Wasteland*, a performance-based interactive installation by visual artist Michalis Argyrou and performance artist Rafika Chawishe.

The art installation and participatory event begins 2022 with a powerful piece to launch Greece in USA's new program Greece NOW, focusing on Greek artists who experiment with the politics of "nowness" and reflect upon the ubiquity and social ramifications of "nowness" in the digital age.

Wasteland echoes themes from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* on the 100th anniversary of one of the most iconic poems of the 20th century. The poem examines the decline of outdated certainties that held society together and what occurs when they break. There is no turning back, only transformation of those broken cultural fragments into something new.

The audience is invited to explore the latent meanings of Eliot's writings by experiencing the transitions and transformative life of a human figure encapsulated in a 3.5-ton ice installation created by Michalis Argyrou. The viewers are invited to participate by lighting a candle and placing it inside the holes of the sculpture. Then, as it melts, the ice figure is transformed, and the artistic vision of a collective reawakening is revealed.

As the new identity of the melted figure emerges, actress and performance artist Rafika Chawishe enacts notions of transition for eight hours in an intensive, long-form durational performance that symbolizes the human trapped inside the ice capsule. The piece alludes to Eliot's out-of-court settlement against the Canadian professor John Peter who argued that the "Waste Land" is an elegy dedicated to his beloved deceased Jean Verdenal.

The participatory installation *Wasteland* challenges notions of what is being wasted, calls attention to the temporal inertia and urges for renewal and regeneration. The figure's entrapment in the interactive installation by Michalis Argyrou alludes to our collective "wastelands" and the mundane.

*My friend, blood shaking in my heart/ The awful daring of a moment's surrender/ Which an age of prudence can never retreat/ By this and this only we have existed/ A secret which is not to be found in our obituaries/ Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider/ Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor/ In our empty rooms--*Excerpt from *What the Thunder Said* from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

Interactive Installation: Michalis Argyrou

Long-duration Performance: Rafika Chawishe

Curation: Dr. Sozita Goudouna for GREECE in USA

Wasteland is the inaugural project of the new program Greece NOW by the non-profit organization Greece in USA. Greece NOW showcases Greek artists who explore themes of "nowness" in their oeuvre, how it relates to social ramifications in the digital age, and how "nowness" relates to "newness" of aesthetic forms, modes of production, discourse, performance, technology, ecology, economy, and politics. The selected artists of Greece NOW utilize their artistic practice to envision new social actions, forms of community and imagine new worlds to overcome global concerns.

[/greeceinusa.com/](http://greeceinusa.com/)

For all press-related inquiries please contact publicist Cindy Sibilsky: cindysibilsky@gmail.com or (917) 587-1394

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