

## **Republic of Cyprus**

### **La Biennale di Venezia**

#### **51. International Exhibition of Contemporary Art**

Curator's text, Official Catalogue

##### *GRAVY PLANET*

*A world drawing by Konstantia Sofokleous and Panayiotis Michael*

The German philosopher Niklas Luhmann claimed that each person is always "partially displaced", because each one of us plays a multitude of roles and does so in an infinite number of settings. And that we constantly feel "partially excluded", because of the multitude of voices and projects competing against each other, and the demands urging us to make use of them at all times and in all places. We always feel the here and now as an ephemeral situation. We are a chance permanent transitory "I", and our whole life could be thought of as a storehouse of identities that have not managed to reach completion.

The Cyprus pavilion for this year's Venice Biennale is headed by Konstantia Sofokleous (1974) and Panayiotis Michael (1966), two artists whose work to fill the pavilion space comprises drawings on paper, wall interventions and animations. Although their work is based on two individual presentations, the full project must be seen from the viewpoint of a shared aim: to investigate mechanisms that allow us to locate our universe of private worries within the public sphere. By working in a very personal manner and based on the study of how each of us perceives and acts in the socio-political and geographical situations, making up our context and defining the references that determine our lives daily, both artists have striven to find meaningful resources in order to create a space where new values acquire form.

"Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and a "Popular Children's Poem" are the two animated pieces on which Konstantia Sofokleous' installation is based, while Panayiotis Michael -under the general title of "I promise, you will love me forever"- has chosen to combine different works on paper and wall murals that represent a reinvention of concerns expressed in his previous work, but this time from a totally new perspective. Konstantia Sofokleous' work is based on the episodic, extravagant and even neurotic stories inhabiting and making up the world of children, but that are also determining the life of every individual. The artist has created a new world based on universal material and has invented new ways of interpreting it, in order to make more evident the constant game that each story creates in terms of control, success and failure.

The work of Panayiotis Michael is based on an investigation into political imagination and how a relationship can be established between life actions and artistic practice within the socio-historic coordinates of which we are all an integral part. In developed countries, this is based on the idea that individual freedom can only result from collective work, but it can also be claimed that the group colonises our private space. Panayiotis Michael

focuses his drawings on that strange border where a complete process that could be defined as the "privatisation of utopia" takes place.

Beyond therapy and beyond etymological redundancy when tackling the present, both artists present works capable of conspiring against the apathy of the imagination; of creating a planet without a centre. As opposed to looking for collective remedies in our society based on the search for groups with which to close ranks, GRAVY PLANET could be thought of as an endless accumulation of possible answers, of shared worlds and personal visions that are born and circulate in an autonomous society.

Chus Martinez  
Curator