

Spyros Aggelopoulos Blends Greek Folk Art with American Pop Culture in 'Donut Factory'



Spyros Aggelopoulos, California Über Alles, 2019 (detail). Acrylic on canvas, 180x160cm.

Mykonos, 11 July 2019 — Dio Horia is pleased to announce the first solo exhibition of Greek visual artist Spyros Aggelopoulos with the gallery at its Mykonos location. The exhibition *Donut Factory* includes paintings, puppets, a shadow-theatre installation and a video, and will be opening on July 25 in the presence of the artist.

Spyros Aggelopoulos is a visual artist who finds himself at the end of a lineage of storytellers that begins with Homer and goes through the Brothers Grimm, all the way to Terry Gilliam and Ridley Scott. His work is all about telling stories and shaking up preconceived narratives, through authentic expression and a playful yet irreverent clash between Greek folk art and American popular culture. His work generates paradoxes that are not easily resolved but at the same time attempt to provide answers to questions about what it means to live in the world we do today.

The donut is undoubtedly one of the most ubiquitous symbols of American culture. It has been described as the ultimate junk food, and was used to feed American armies during World War I. More recently, it has been associated with police violence through the stereotype of the white donut-munching police officer. Homer Simpson is notoriously feasting on donuts, and 24-hour donut shops in America are a staple in every



city. Donuts are sweet and delicious, but are also bad for you. They are in the shape of a ring, a loop without beginning or end, and as such they are traditionally consumed in parts of Europe during annual celebrations of rebirth and the cycle of the seasons. The donut has so many contrasting symbolisms around it that it makes it something of a cult object. Meanwhile, we might all be living inside one: scientists posit that the universe is probably in the shape of one enormous donut.

At *Donut Factory*, **Aggelopoulos** presents a group of paintings full of his very personal sense of humor and his love for the absurd and the unexpected. Painted in the free and spontaneous manner of Greek folk artists like Theofilos, Panagiotis Zografos and Evgenios Spatharis, his works deliberately eschew the rules of academic painting in favor of raw energy driven by emotion rather than intellect. Into this very localized and culturally specific visual language of Greek folk art, Aggelopoulos inserts the protagonists of American popular culture and the contemporary art world. At *Donut Factory*, visitors will encounter Ai Weiwei, Marina Abramovic, Superman, Donald Trump, the Hulk, Maradona, Bruce Lee, Catwoman and many other characters that find themselves in constant conflict. In the paintings, the Athenian working-class suburb of Nea Philadelphia is magically conflated with Sunset Boulevard as a way to talk about the artist's own experiences garnered while living both in Greece and California — and therefore to highlight the contrasts between East and West, the local and the global, the folk and the pop.

Parallel to the fictitious narratives of his paintings, **Aggelopoulos'** ongoing project *Amusementorium* was born out of his personal need as an artist to be independent. In a way, his puppets bring his paintings to life. For Aggelopoulos, shadow-puppet theatre is a democratic art form that enables individual expression and allows the manifestation of any creative idea with whatever means available. It is DIY and punk in its approach, yet nuanced and meticulously prepared in its execution. At *Donut Factory*, the artist's shadow-theatre set and his "troupe" of puppets are installed in the gallery as if ready to put up a show. A video documentation of an *Amusementorium* performance is also on display, to offer visitors a glimpse into the world of Spyros Aggelopoulos and the way he enjoys wearing many creative hats: from writing the script and directing the show to making each puppet by hand and performing all the parts himself.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

— **Spyros Aggelopoulos** is a Greek visual artist, actor and make-up artist. In his work he revisits the tradition of Greek shadow-puppet theatre to create functional puppets depicting pop-culture figures from film, literature, politics, art history and sports. These figures he then uses in his own shadow-puppet performances. He participated in the sixth Athens Biennial in 2018 and his work has been presented by ArtForum, Guardian and other media. He lives and works in Athens, Greece.



— **Dio Horia** is a gallery for contemporary art and culture that was inaugurated in 2015. Dio Horia Gallery strives to be at the forefront of cultural experimentation both in Greece and the world beyond, by representing young emerging artists from small peripheral countries. At the same time, Dio Horia is running an international residency program and also organizes group shows and publications with established and emerging artists that have not exhibited in Greece. Finally, Dio Horia engages in collaborative projects developed as a result of associations with artists, curators, non-profit organizations and cultural carriers. These fall into categories ranging from social, cultural and literary studies to music and performing arts. The gallery is based in Mykonos, Greece, and in the second half of 2019 it will open a new location in Athens. <http://www.diohoriam.com/>

— Exhibition info

Spyros Aggelopoulos: *Donut Factory*
Solo show
July 25 - August 16, 2019

Dio Horia Gallery

Panahra Square, 846 00 Mykonos, Greece
Tel: +30 2289026429
Email: info@diohoriam.com
<http://www.diohoriam.com/>

Hours:
Daily, 19:00-02:00

— Also showing at Dio Horia

Joakim Ojanen: *Island*
Solo & residency show
July 25 - August 23, 2019

Sam Friedman
Solo & residency show
July 25 - August 23, 2019

— Upcoming

Amir Fallah
Solo & residency show
August 23 - September 30, 2019

Hulda Guzmán
Solo show (Athens)
September-November 2019

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