



CITY REPORT - 14 AUG 2017

# Summer of Love

Fifty years after the term was coined, a show in Samos reflects on 'the unlikely liaison between love and politics'

BY JENNIFER HIGGIE

In 1967, around 100,000 young people gathered on the streets of Haight Ashbury in San Francisco (or 'Hashbury' as Hunter S. Thompson dryly described it). For a few giddy months, they danced, talked, performed, got out of it and into it, united in the main by their rejection of government, materialism and militarism. To cope with the influx, locals formed The Council for the Summer of Love – and the catchphrase of an era was born. Come autumn, the kids had dispersed, but the legend lingered on, as did the echoes of psychologist writer and LSD-advocate Timothy Leary's famous invocation to 'turn on, tune in and drop out'.



Mikhail Karikis, *Love Is the Institution of Revolution*, 2014 wall text-painting, courtesy: the artist; Tomomi Itakura, *Untitled*, 2017, signposts, courtesy: Tomomi Itakura and Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Installation view, Art Space Pythagorion, Samos

In the 1960s and '70s, hippies flocked to Greece, attracted by the sunshine, unspoilt beaches and inexpensive way of life. On the island of Samos there's still a taverna called 'Hippy's' that was named after its clientele in the mid-1960s. Around 50 years later, in 2012, the Schwarz Foundation opened the non-profit Art Space Pythagorion on the island. The building, formally a derelict hotel, was renovated by local architects Peni Petrakou and Stelios Loulourgas. Each summer it stages an exhibition and hosts a fellowship and residency programme, a music festival, bazaars, film screenings and events. Throughout the rest of the year it also has a rich outreach education programme, including classes for refugee children: Samos is only 1.5km from the coast of Turkey and is one of four small Greek islands that, in recent years, have been landing points for thousands of refugees fleeing the horrors of the war in Syria and Afghanistan.



Mikhail Karakis, *The Politics of Love: An Audio-Library*, 2017, wooden amphitheatre, books, printed texts, record player, vinyl records, stereo sound. Courtesy: the artist

Last summer, Katerina Gregos, the Foundation's curator, put together '**A World Not Ours**' <http://www.schwarzfoundation.com/en/art-space-pythagorion/2016/movie.html> in response to the European refugee crisis. (It's currently on show at **La Kunsthalle Mulhouse** <http://kunsthallemulhouse.com/evenement/a-world-not-ours/> , Switzerland and runs until 27 August). This year, inspired by the 50th anniversary of the 'Summer of Love' she has organized a brilliant, intimate show at **Art Space Pythagorion** <http://www.schwarzfoundation.com/en/art-space-pythagorion/2016/summer-of-love.html> – which she describes as 'the unlikely liaison between love and politics' – that includes films, paintings, installation and sculpture by nine artists, along with posters from 1967 from the collection of the International Institute of Social History. Despite the breezy optimism of its title, the exhibition's atmosphere could best be described as thunder at a picnic. In 1967, hippies might have been putting flowers in their hair but it was also the year that marked the beginning of Greece's brutal seven-year military dictatorship and the Six-Day War between Israel and its neighbours, which resulted in the long-standing conflict in the Middle East.

In a nutshell, the question that hovers is: what has changed in the past 50 years and what have we learned? Let's see. Militarism? I am writing this on the day that Donald Trump has vowed to unleash 'fire and fury' on North Korea. Materialism? Rampant. Sexuality? Still confused. Feminism? Inching forward. Nationalism? Who's asking? That said, even when it rains, a picnic is still a get-together.



Marge Monko, *Lucy in the Sky (The More I Make Love, the More I Want To Make Revolution)*, 2017, photo wallpaper, vinyl wall sticker, magazines, custom-cut acrylic glass. Courtesy: the artist

Mikhail Karikis, would, I think, look on the bright side: his installation, *The Politics of Love: An Audio Library* (2017), is possibly the most optimistic work in the show. A convivial, green, orange and grey wooden amphitheatre next to windows overlooking the absurdly blue sea, it's a communal place to sit, talk, play records from a selection released in 1967 and read a selection of books by Roland Barthes, Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray and others on the subject of love. (There are also, of course, books in Greek. What they are about, I cannot tell you.) The installation faces Marge Monko's *Lucy in the Sky (The More I Make Love, the More I Want to Make Revolution)* (2017), a large wallpaper work comprising a blown-up 1960s advert featuring four glamorous people smoking, overlaid with a geographical timeline about the legalization of the contraceptive pill. Smoking and sex: fun activities that can kill, exploit or liberate you. Every cloud, etc?



Uriel Orlow, *The Bitterlake Chronicles*, 2011, archival pigment print, dimensions variable, included in the installation *The Short and the Long of It*, 2010-17. Courtesy: the artist, LaVeronica, Modica, and MorCharpentier, Paris

Melanie Bonajo's disturbing, impressive video *Night Soil – Economy of Love* (2015) is a portrait of a group of Brooklyn-based female sex workers who see their job as a way of reclaiming their power in a patriarchal society. The sincerity with which they talk about themselves and their bodies is often startling and heartfelt. It also veers into a kind of kitsch earth-mother-goddess rhetoric that recalls the essentialist feminisms of the 1960s – something I have a lot of problems with. Liberation or just another form of enslavement? I'm still thinking about it. The four black-and-white films from 2012–15 by Nicolas Kozakis and Raoul Vaneigem – one of the founders of the Situationist International and the author of *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967) – also explore how to live in the world. The two artists have been collaborating since 2012: Kozakis shoots his silent, meditative films, which Vaneigem narrates: isolated, the sentences are a little ponderous – 'a grain of poetry in a desert of sand'; 'money men capitalize on our slow agony' – but the combination of exquisitely shot images of everyday scenes – birds swooping, workers digging, a mother braiding her child's hair – is mesmerizing and moving. God, it would seem, is still in the details, even if you're an atheist.

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Uriel Orlow's fascinating installation *The Short and Long of It* (2010–17) unearths the story of 14 international cargo ships that were stranded in the Suez Canal during the Six-Day War and held there for eight years. Orlow is interested in history's blind spots; like a good detective, he tracked down some of the sailors who had lived on the ships, many of whom were happy to give him photographs and Super-8 footage of their experience. It would seem that many of them had the time of their lives, turning their strange isolation into a self-contained society: they partied, swam, held drag parties and even designed their own postage stamps.

# NOIR ET BLANC

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## LES MÉDECINS PARLENT : DU NOUVEAU SUR LA PILULE

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Marge Monko, *Lucy in the Sky (The More I Make Love, the More I Want To Make Revolution)* (detail), 2017, photo wallpaper, vinyl wall sticker, magazines, custom-cut acrylic glass. Courtesy: the artist

Some of the work in 'Summer of Love' is more literal in its response to the 50th anniversary. Tomomi Itakura's *Untitled (Signs)* (2017) are a series of signposts on the footpaths outside the gallery which juxtapose the terminology of 1967 with that of 2017: free love versus sharing economy; hippies versus hipsters, etc. What's in a name? A lot. Similarly, Marko Mäetamm took a familiar, unauthored diagram from

1967 of a curly-headed character in round glasses in front of sun-rays and re-painted it again and again, emblazoned with contemporary slogans: 'people should not fear the government'; 'no ban no wall'; 'women have equal rights'. If only!



Johan Grimonprez, *Every day words disappear: Michael Hardt on the Politics of Love*, 2016, video still. Courtesy: ZAP-O-MATIK

The most affecting works in the show are by Johan Grimonprez. His 15-minute film, *Every day words disappear: Michael Hardt on the Politics of Love* (2016) juxtaposes an interview with the philosopher of the title, who advocates a new kind of love – one that expands beyond the conventions of the nuclear family and into the political realm – with excerpts from Jean-Luc Godard's great protest film, *Alphaville* (1965), which portrays a society that has outlawed certain words and emotions. Anna Karina, in one her most powerful roles, explains, with great pathos, that 'every day, words disappear ... weeping, autumn light and tenderness' – all are banned. Grimonprez's extraordinary feature-length film *Shadow World* (2016) – based on Andrew Feinstein's book of the same name from 2012 – is a portrait of the global arms trade. Screened in the outdoor cinema to coincide with the show, it's a brilliant, horrifying glimpse into an economy whose currency is death. In the middle of it, Hardt poses a deceptively simple question. 'What', he asks, 'would our world be like if it was run on love rather than fear?' It's a question that people were asking 50 years ago. It's tragic that we still don't know the answer.

**'Summer of Love'** <<http://www.schwarzfoundation.com/en/art-space-pythagorion/2016/summer-of-love.html>> , curated by Katerina Gregos, runs at Art Space Pythagorion, Samos, until 15 October, 2017.

Main image: Melanie Bonajo, *Night Soil – Economy of Love*, 2015, HD video still. Courtesy: the artist and AKINCI, Amsterdam