

Marina Xenofontos
Public Domain
6 October/31 December

Marina Xenofontos,
Twice upon a while, 2020
MDF, wood, metal, mirror.
Courtesy of the artist and Hot Wheels Athens



Marina Xenofontos (b. 1988, Limassol, Cyprus) lives and works in Athens, Greece. Recipient of the 2022 Camden Art Centre Emerging Artist Prize at Frieze, this autumn Xenofontos responds to the architecture, light and space of Camden's spaces in an ambitious new commission that marks her first institutional solo exhibition in the UK. Conceived as a series of gestures that activate a certain kind of memory—at once personal and collective, specific and more enigmatic—Xenofontos' work examines the way ideology and cultural knowledge surface in personal histories and material forms.

The exhibition's title sets up a tension between images and objects that are in free circulation in both the real and virtual worlds, and the often deeply personal content explored in the work. It speaks to the ubiquitous and often overlooked cultural materials that contribute to the fabric of civic life, and the sense in which modern social relations are largely mediated by representations that come to replace directly-lived experience. Some of these mass-produced objects feature in the exhibition, each withdrawn from an undifferentiated realm of circulation, singled out and salvaged by the artist who invests them with personal significance, elevating their status in the exhibition site.

The entrance to Gallery Three is reconfigured with an aluminium security door removed and imported from Cyprus and adjusted to the gallery where it will remain for the duration of the exhibition. Commonly found in working class neighborhoods from the late 1970s and onwards, these silver-and-gold-anodized doors had once symbolised middle class aspirations of wealth, class mobility, success and potential. Losing their status in the span of two decades they became associated with the decline and eventual demise of those hopes. Titled *Class Memorial*, this intervention alludes to the socio-political reality encoded in commonplace features, and the cyclical failure in the functionality of such symbols. In another work, *The Queen*, the artist has retrieved castaway Monobloc chairs, designed in 'The Queen' style. Considered the world's most common plastic chair, it epitomises global ubiquity with almost a billion distributed in Europe alone. Produced quickly and inexpensively by injection molding, Xenofontos has reclaimed units usually discarded due to the pigment marbling caused by the progression from one colourway to the next; a necessary 'error' in the manufacturing process. *King, oh King, with your 12 swords! What work do you have for us today? Laziness, the King demands, and the children all reply, Let's get to work!* is a kinetic sculpture reaching from floor to vaulted ceiling—two bronze-cast, silver-plated, columns rotate in opposite directions. Their forms are cast from modest wooden walking canes, stacked end to end, recalling the sticks that the artist's grandfather used to make. Hung beside each other, their rotation brings them close enough to almost touch, before ebbing back away, describing a solemn choreography of proximity and distance. The work serves as an ancestral monument of sorts, conveying duty over animism, modesty over spectacle. An installation in the Reading Room will include a new group of *Evacuation Plan*, an ongoing series which takes its form from various institutional maps and plans used to evacuate schools, public offices and apartment blocks. Arduino Nano control boards are surfaced with images of the artist's body taken in 2005 and adorned with LED lights in abstract pathways. Sound and light sensors feed their inputs to

the board, which then organises them into patterns, triggering the lights in sequences affected by environmental inputs, indicating possible routes for escape.

The poetic register of Xenofontos' work resists straightforward interpretation or reduction to a singular meaning. Overlaying the anecdotal and the monumental, the material and the digital, the work somehow approaches the feeling of a world lived simultaneously in physical and virtual spaces, the past and the present; an entanglement of cultural histories, symbols and imaginings of a future, held in the materials, images and memories that populate and agitate the world around us. In each of the works that feature in *Public Domain*, the quotidian substance of the material world is made strange with an elegance and depth that speaks to the artist's biography and reflects on notions of protection, support, familial life and home—the most intimate and personal of domains.

Public Programme

Game Launch: *Twice Upon a While*

Over the last four years Xenofontos has been world-building in the virtual realm, developing a video game featuring a digital avatar named Twice who has appeared in sculptural form in various previous works, as well as another new character—Fire Boy. Xenofontos will launch this major new work as part of the exhibition with a special event in November, situating the game as a counterpoint to the material sensibility of Gallery Three's sculptural installation - a labyrinthine inner landscape of loopholes and dead ends, rife with ambivalence, speculation and projection.

Notes to editors

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About The Emerging Art Prize

The Camden Art Centre Emerging Artist Prize at Frieze offers a UK or international artist, selected from Frieze Focus, the opportunity to deliver a solo exhibition at Camden Art Centre and achieve the critical milestone of their first institutional show in London. Marina Xenofontos is the fourth recipient. Previous winners include: Wong Ping (2018); Julien Creuzet (2019); Tenant of Culture (2020).

The prize is generously supported by a significant group of international collectors including lead supporters Alexandra Economou and Noach Vander Beken, and prize supporters Nicola & Julian Blake, Anne-Pierre d'Albis, Suling Mead, Batia Ofer, Ralph Segreti, Ronald & Sophie Sofer, Alma Zevi, and Indira Ziyabek. With special thanks to Frieze, London and Hot Wheels Athens.

Camden Art Centre

Camden Art Centre is a place for world-class contemporary art exhibitions and education. Situated in Hampstead, North London (charity number 1065829) Camden Art Centre is a place for art and artists; a place for the curious, the novice and the expert alike. It's a place to see, to make, to learn and to talk about contemporary art, whether in our building, attending off-site projects or via our digital forums. Founded by artists in 1965, the Centre continues to be a space for the most vital and diverse mix of practices and ideas and is dedicated to supporting artists at every stage of their careers.

Biography

Marina Xenofontos (b.1988, Limassol, Cyprus) lives and works in Athens, Greece. Recent solo exhibitions include: *In Practice*, SculptureCenter, New York (2023); *failed cache*, Hot Wheels Athens (2023); *Safe Spaces*, Ermes Ermes, Rome (2022); *Certain Character Index*, A Maior, Viseu (2022); Frieze London, with Hot Wheels Athens, London (2022); *Carousel*, AKWA IBOM, Athens (2022); *I heard that there are many things in life that we can go beyond*, La Plage, Paris (2022); *I don't sleep, I dream*, The Island Club, Limassol (2021). Her work has been exhibited at Eva Presenhuber Gallery, Zurich; Sweetwater, Berlin; Phenomenon Biennale, Anafi; Scheusal, Berlin; Sala Impasti, Milan; Charim Gallery, Vienna; gb agency, Paris; and Deste Foundation, amongst others. Xenofontos is represented by Hot Wheels Athens and was one of the founding members of the collective and artist-run project space Neoterismoï Toumazou.