

**Videogallery | 8 > 20 October | Film screening*****No Time for Prophecies***

curated by Chiara Ianeselli with Davide Daninos

With works by **Heba Y. Amin, Carlo Benvenuto, Daniel Gustav Cramer, Rà di Martino, Cleo Fariselli, Marcos Lutyens, Virginia Mastrogiannaki and Elias Mamaliogias, Elena Mazzi, Michail Michailov, Ivan Moudov, Luigi Presicce, Yang Song, Luca Trevisani.**

Tell us this story, goddess daughter of Zeus, beginning at whatever point you will.  
(*The Odyssey*, I, 11-12)<sup>1</sup>

Accelerated time, elusive time, eternal present. Life seems to take place within an *extreme present*<sup>2</sup>, speeded by the technological evolution of communication tools, which force us to live in a perceived state of *perennial topicality*, as Baudrillard<sup>3</sup> suggested. Every moment is an event, and every event is instantly shared with the rest of the world. Immersed in an incessant flow, the present seems perpetual, irreversible, and the past fades, overshadowed by the constant exaltation of the instant.

Where does the sense of duration end? Of the natural progression and evolution of facts and thoughts? And yet, in front of a work of art, time reemerges, and reality recharges with new temporalities.

*No Time for Prophecies* brings together various practices and research to show different ways of being with time, reflecting the necessity of artists, inside and outside the Mediterraneans, to resist being overwhelmed by events, to find—while slowing down—the critical distance necessary to create. The project focuses on showing contemporary rituals, filmed and performative, immersed in the time of research or in the waters of the sea. All these moments are dedicated to contemplation: on one side, the time of isolation and creation, and on the other, the time of water, where the observation of waves, islands, and tides becomes a tool for meditation and for imagining new presents and futures.

In the ordinary time, events follow one another without interruption; this time, writes Mircea Eliade, has a beginning and an end, is irreversible, and flows in the direction of history; sacred time, on the other hand, is reversible, repeatable, and periodically renewed.<sup>4</sup> Leaving the ordinary time, one enters the time for myth, for the ritual element. In this gap, space emerges for the multiplication of the feeling of duration, through storytelling. Narration allows an expansion of the real, with the writing of the past, with the coincidence with the present, and with the imagination of the future, fostering a new attention to the passage of time.

The space of research is one between supposition and reality, between the anticipation and the arrival of dawn, between particles of dust and candles that never blow out, between stories of possible futures *ad absurdum*, slow archaeological and aesthetic investigations, the gradual disappearance of terracotta masks alongside the illusion of a star, passing through a session of hypnosis and submerged sculptures.

When time stretches and is defended between contemplation, narration, and divination, our gaze slows, and it is possible to perceive duration. Peter Handke wrote “the feeling of duration / as an event of attending to, / an event of contemplation, / an event of being embraced, / an event of being caught up, / by what?”<sup>5</sup> For Handke, therefore, “duration, it is the feeling for life,” of being with things, with others, with oneself, with time. When our gaze begins to touch these time-filled images, we start to perceive their duration. And only then can we hear the crickets of Cyprus chirping during the night, when there is no one left at MAXXI.

Note

1. Homer. *The Odyssey*, I, 11-12., translated by R. Fitzgerald, New York 1961.

2. S. Basar, D. Coupland, H.U. Obrist, *The Age of Earthquakes: A Guide to the Extreme Present*, Blue Rider Press, New York 2015.

3. J. Baudrillard, *Amérique*, Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, Paris 1986.

4. M. Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, A Harvest Book Harcourt, Brace & World, New York 1957.

5. P. Handke, *To Duration*, The Last Books, Amsterdam 2015.

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### Prologue. Awakenings

**Michail Michailov, *dust to dust#133*, 2024, colored pencil on paper, 77,6 x 119 cm.** Courtesy of the artist

In the isolation of their own studio, artists often find the critical distance needed to create, to protect the time and the space necessary to build their inner thoughts. Michail Michailov's drawing pays homage to this ally of artists, the studio, which directly and indirectly influences and is influenced by the artist's daily life. "In 2014, I started a series of drawings called *dust to dust*," the artist explains. "I draw the dust, hair and stains as well as useless plastic parts and mould. All things that accumulate by themselves in my studio... The unwanted, incidental product takes on new meaning and value as a crayon drawing." Installed near the entrance of the room, this drawing presents an opportunity to look at details, at the peripheries of the gaze and thought, slowing down the rush for images and thus helping us to open to different perceptions of time.

**Virginia Mastrogiannaki and Elias Mamaliogas, *orthros (matins)*, 2018, 13'03".** Courtesy of the artists

Many thanks to many thanks to Orestis Mavroudis

The polyphony of bird songs, combined with the sounds of vegetation, begins to fill the Videogallery at MAXXI while we await the arrival of the first light of dawn as well as the first images on the screen. As minutes pass, we slowly begin to distinguish the outline of a young woman standing motionless in front of the entrance to Mount Athos, a sacred mountain famous for its prohibition against any feminine presence crossing its threshold, since 593 A.D. Virginia Mastrogiannaki is accustomed to portraying time in her films and performances. Through the apparent stillness of the performers, she emphasizes a duration that is always extended, slowed, and at the center of her works. As the artist explains, in this case the female figure silently maintains her morning liturgy, a form of silent resistance to the walls of social and religious conventions.

### Chapter I. Immersions

**Daniel Gustav Cramer, *Aphrodite*, 2017-2018, 5'37".** Courtesy of the artist and SpazioA, Pistoia

A day at the beach recalls memories of another landscape from another time: echoes of a childhood memory overlap with the present as the waves advance and retreat. The footage, shot in Cyprus at Aphrodite's bay, overlaps with sounds recorded at Formentor beach, in Mallorca. Thus, by following these different landscapes now united by the artist's narration, we can immerse ourselves in the time of the inner storytelling. A slow, expanded time made of memories anchored to the sounds of Mallorca and the rocks of Aphrodite.

**Elena Mazzi, *Spicule*, 2020, 3'40".** Courtesy of the artist and Fondazione Elpis

Director: Elena Mazzi. Music: Nicola di Croce. Producer: Fondazione Elpis

In her video, Elena Mazzi documents the immersion of four stone sculptures in the waters of the Italian sea next to the Liguria region. The submerged sculptures echo the mineral forms of spicules, the calcareous or siliceous structures that make up the skeletons of marine sponges. For the artist, this intervention is also a social tool for experiencing and reflecting on the coastal environment of Cervo (IM). The sculptures—visible to sailors through an early 20th century glass buoy and via a telescope placed by the town bastions—become a tool to bring Cervo's inhabitants and visitors closer to marine diversity, submerged in the waters, guiding us into new times and spaces for a collective dialogue.

**Yang Song, *Die*, 2014, 4'14".** Courtesy of the artist and Aye Gallery

A face, a head modeled in clay and immersed in water, slowly transforms upon contact with the liquid. This material dialogue between earth and water, matter for matter, dissolves and returns the portrait to shapeless mud. This game of gazes between sculpture and viewer leads us to follow this slow dissolution with empathy, as we too are immersed in the slow flow of the waters of time.

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## Chapter II. Narrations

**Carlo Benvenuto, *Senza titolo*, 2024, 5'.** Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Mazzoli, Modena, Berlin

In the red evocation of a sunset, the mirror becomes a lake surrounded by golden mountains on the territory of a Persian carpet, an ancient landscape adorned with flowers, almost writings. The mirror is the lake in which Narcissus cannot reflect because that glassy silvered water wants only emptiness. Or still, a liquid surface without waves that invites us to contemplation, to the "exploration of water" as soothsayers would say.

**Rä di Martino, *Petite histoire des plateaux abandonnés*, 2012, 8'23".**

Cinematography: Hilario Isola, Antonio Rovaldi. Editing: Rä di Martino. Sound: Enrico Ascoli. Production: Dugong Films – Nomas Foundation

Real ruins of fictional architecture, imagined stories and inhabited landscapes come together in this short story of abandoned film sets in Morocco. Inside we can find multiple overlapping temporalities: of the films once shot, the new daily life that keeps them activated and the dilated time of the imagination. "Morocco is an ideal place for film production", explains the artist. "Many great films have been set here. Its cinematic history includes numerous famous titles, from historical dramas like *Lawrence of Arabia* to horror films like *The Hills Have Eyes* to the award-winning *Kundun*. The region where these blockbusters were filmed still preserves the architectural and cultural traces of the movie sets. *Petite histoire des plateaux abandonnés* gives us a glimpse into this unstable representation of history with the biological decay of "ancient ruins" and the ability of local desert inhabitants to recite lines from the films from memory."

**Heba Y. Amin, *Operation Sunken Sea: Relocating the Mediterranean, Inaugural Speech*, 2018, 18'21".** Courtesy the artist and Zilberman Gallery

Heba Y. Amin's *Sunken Sea* offers an *ad absurdum* narrative that provides a new reflection on the geopolitical state of the Mediterranean, no longer a meeting point of cultures but a territory of conflict, struggles, and humanitarian crises. To solve this impossible situation, in which our contemporaneity seems to have accepted a state of perpetual crisis, in a dystopian present *Operation Sunken Sea* is then presented: "an unprecedented large-scale infrastructure intervention: a new era of human progress will be inaugurated by draining and redirecting the Mediterranean Sea to unite Africa and Europe into a single supercontinent." Through the removal of the Mediterranean itself, the "operation promises to end terrorism and the migration crisis, provide employment and energy alternatives, and address the rise of fascism."

## Chapter III. Prophecies, Divinations

**Carlo Benvenuto, *Senza titolo*, 2024, 5'.** Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Mazzoli, Modena, Berlin

A lit candle illuminates and defines a space with its light, tracing a boundary that draws us in. That fragment of hypnotic, seductive, sacred fire is like a tear in the air, an extreme rarity, burning but not consuming time is suspended, and our gaze waits for something to happen.

**Marcos Lutyens, *The Bridge*, 2024, 5'.** Courtesy the artist and Galleria Alberta Pane, Paris, Venice

Director: Marcos Lutyens. Director of Photography and Editing: Jackson Roth. Voice: Marcos Lutyens. Choreography: Mamie Green. Dancers: Jolyn Lambey, Ryley Polak, Lily Solomon. Sound Design: Aaron Drake. Producer: Marcos Lutyens.

Marcos Lutyens uses the medium of video as a tool for hypnosis to offer viewers a state of relaxation and thus facilitate a heightened receptivity to every internal and external stimulus. This session is guided by the artist through the tone and modulation of his own voice and breath, particularly using his gaze as the first point of contact and access to the narrative. "The video explores the elasticity of time under hypnosis, where temporal flows expand and contract, creating an elastic sense of reality," explains the artist. "This notion of the eye as a gateway to the

subconscious enhances the sensory and emotional depth of *The Bridge*, linking trance states to an intensified perception of time, memory, and the self.”

**Luca Trevisani, *38° 11' 13.32" N 13° 21' 4.44" E*, 2018, 9'25"**. Courtesy of the artist, Pinksummer Contemporary Art Genoa, and Galerie Mehdi Chouakri Berlin

Director: Luca Trevisani. Music: Michael Kresna. Cinematography: Edoardo Bolli. 1st AC: Pietro Comini. Data Manager: Anisia Tomasoni. Color Correction: Michael Kresna. Editing: Luca Trevisani. Sound: Lorenzo Dal Ri. Gaffer: Michele Cressi.

Luca Trevisani translates the experience of visiting an archaeological site into an aesthetic experience, in which our interpretation of the rock carvings preserved in Sicilian caves is expanded in multiple directions. The film becomes an opportunity for the artist to create new images and thus reverberate the memory of ancient rituals into the future. “For some time now, I have been interested in the complex of the Addaura caves and the images they contain,” explains the artist. “The site is a complex of three natural caves located on the northeastern side of Mount Pellegrino in Palermo, Sicily. The incredible importance of the site is determined by the presence of rock carvings dating from the final Epigravettian to the Mesolithic. This is, in fact, the first known example of cave paintings, where around fourteen thousand years ago, humans depicted a ritual for the first time, representing communal gathering, society, and the feast. Whether it’s the depiction of an apotropaic ritual, erotic shamanism, or a spectacular historical forgery doesn’t matter much: these inscriptions are a molecular mystery we cannot fully understand, a cartography of the desire to be human, a collective future to remember.”

**Cleo Fariselli, *Me as a Star (Vallée Étroite)*, 2021, 10' (excerpt)**. Courtesy of the artist.

Like a mirage in the distance, we glimpse a shining light, animated with its own life and camouflaged in a mountain landscape. The artist Cleo Fariselli, wearing a costume made of reflective materials, uses her body to stage the dance of a star camouflaged on the horizon. “The peculiarity of this action is that it takes place at a distance from the camera such that my figure appears like a tiny point on the horizon, sparkling due to the sun’s reflection on the costume’s reflective fabric.” The artist thus becomes a source of light that, like a tireless star, shines without stopping. As long as the body moves, the star will continue, hinting at the arrival of night.

**Heba Y. Amin, *As Birds Flying (Kama Tohalleq al Teyour)*, 2016, 7'11"**. Courtesy the artist and Zilberman Gallery

The film *As Birds Flying* by Heba Y. Amin responds to the absurd accusations of espionage using animals as spies during moments of political tension. “The short allegorical film,” writes Pablo Larios, “is constructed out of found drone footage of aerial views of savannas and wetlands, including settlements in Galilea—sweeping views that seem to be taken by the ‘spy’ stork in the above story. *Seeing the country from the top is better than seeing it from below*, the voiceover soundtrack says, with footage of a bird soaring in the air.” Birds, through the absurd narrative typical of Amin’s work, become instruments of tension, unfulfilled prophecies, as divined by contemporary augurs.

**Luigi Presicce, *Tradurre l'incanto agli uccelli*, 2012, 1'36"**

Director: Luigi Presicce. Music: Oh Petroleum (Maurizio Vierucci). Producer: Luigi Presicce. Filming and Editing: Antonio di Loreto.

In his performances, Luigi Presicce usually combines multiple references, images, and narratives to create *tableaux vivants*—new images rich in stories and temporalities in which we can immerse ourselves for a few seconds. The video documentation lasts only as long as the few seconds granted to the spectators of the performance, who, one by one, found themselves in front of the artist’s attempt in “translating the enchantment to the birds.” In this new narrative, we find a tribute to the *Sermon to the Birds* from the cycle of saint Francis’ stories by Giotto, combined with Hittite cuneiform writing, prints of ornithology, and stuffed birds, while a character whistles Leonard Cohen’s *Hallelujah* to accompany this mysterious ritual.

**Epilogue. Night Awakenings**

**Daniel Gustav Cramer, *Pedoulas, night*, 2010-2024, 12 hours.** Courtesy of the artist and SpazioA, Pistoia

For several nights, a microphone was installed in the Troodos Mountains near the village of Pedoulas in Cyprus. The chirping of crickets, recorded this way, mixes with the sound of the mountain breeze. A new memory from another time, now quietly displaced in Rome. At MAXXI, the work will be activated only at night, only after the visitors have left the building and the exhibition hall lights have been turned off.

**XX Contemporary Art Day, October 12<sup>th</sup>, from 11 AM to 7 PM**

**Ivan Moudov, *Performing Time*, 2012-2024, 8 hours.** Courtesy the artist and Galleria Alberta Pane, Paris, Venice

By manually adjusting the hands of a non-motorized analog clock, the artist questions his perception of time. Relying solely on his intuition, without the aid of technological devices, Moudov measures the passing of minutes through his inner sense. For the entire duration of MAXXI opening hours, on October 12<sup>th</sup>, it will be the artist internal and subjective sense to dictates time of the Museum visitors.

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**Program:****October 8,**

Screenings from 12:00 PM, 2:00 PM

5:30 PM Talk with R  di Martino, Cleo Fariselli, Carlo Benvenuto, Chiara Ianeselli, Davide Daninos.

A selection from the screening program will follow

MAXXI Videogallery

**October 9-20, 2024**

Screenings from 12:00 PM, 3:00 PM

**October 12, 11:00 AM - 7:00 PM**

Performance by Ivan Moudov, *Performing Time*, 2012-2024

MAXXI Lobby

*No Time for Prophecies* expands the research initiated with *A Yellow Sun, A Green Sun, A Yellow Sun, A Red Sun, A Blue Sun. Echoes through the Mediterraneans*, the inaugural program of MAXXI Med, which anticipates the opening of the new museum hub in Messina. The Videogallery is powered by the Fondazione In Between Art Film.

Many thanks to Galleria Alberta Pane, Paris Venice; AYE Gallery; BBDB Studio; Anna Marion.

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