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PRESS RELEASE

## Artemis Potamianou

Solo exhibition

### Your history, it's not my story

**ENIA GALLERY** presents on **Friday 8 February 2019** the **solo exhibition «Your history, it's not my story»** of **Artemis Potamianou**.

According to Art Historian, Bia Papadopoulou: "Artemis Potamianou composes an environmental narrative on the female condition which unfolds in space and time. The defiance of social and artistic structures that characterizes her entire oeuvre continues to concern her as the exhibition title, "Your history, it's not my story" denotes.

The installation of a swing, immobilized in space, welcomes visitors providing them with the facts from the very beginning. The swing is accompanied by a carpet with the phrase "all in all" and a luminous industrial sign depicting the word "dream." The concept of confinement evoked here is combined with the artist's written information referring to the totality of female conditions, which she juxtaposes with the idea of the as yet unrealized dream of freedom and true equality.

The central exhibition area is metaphorically transformed into a cage that houses elaborate bird-cages which, in turn, host smaller cages. These images within the image, realities within reality, establish consecutive artificial worlds and layers of confinement. Sporadically placed iron railings, like fences or obstacles, reinforce the feeling of enclosure evoked by the "white cube." The cages, cells of imprisonment, reminding of Michel Foucault's Panopticon, function like items of division. They differentiate the inner from the outer field, trap viewers in the void intermediary gallery space while, at the same time, delineating labyrinthian routes of escape.

The strenuous manual wooden and thin metal rod constructions are inspired

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by elaborate bird-cages of by-gone eras that often faithfully reproduce actual buildings and mansions. Following the same line of thought, Potamianou deconstructs and then reconstructs existing buildings from the history of architecture in order to build new ornithological dwellings with dispersed historical references.

In paintings by old masters depicting cages and pet birds, the female iconography prevails, directly identifying the beautiful exotic birds with the fragile gender of women and with a peaceful domestic life. Potamianou suggests a reality different to the one portrayed in these idyllic scenes; a reality defying the social stereotypes that compose the classical mythology of women.

Appropriating the manly role of the curieux<sup>1</sup>, she infuses it with her own female substance. After extensive research she collects various objects from a plethora of different sources, choosing items directly associated with the female world. An antique children's game, a pair of a girl's velvet shoes, miniature doll's house furniture pieces from different epochs, dried butterflies as symbols of the psyche, artificial trees, keys, a ballet dancer sculpture by Degas, standing clocks, hourglasses, metronomes, and revolutionary literary masterpieces that question women's status-quo. In these dwellings, void of birds, Potamianou creates microcosms, three dimensional still-lives. The cages are transformed into Lilliputian theatrical scenes. Projections of women's conscious and unconscious. Files of archetypal memory.

The installation's overall title Which side are you on? poses precisely this question. Addressed to both genders, the question stimulates thought, initiating a voyage into the depths of consciousness as well as the field of ethics.

One more environmental cabinet of curiosities is installed in a separate room of the gallery space, hosting the last chapter of Potamianou's feminist story. The environment converses with two top literary works of the 19th century: Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu (The Unknown Masterpiece) by Honoré de Balzac –whence the installation's title– and Oscar Wild's The Portrait of Dorian Gray.

Potamianou once again selects female figures from well-known paintings by Goya, Da Vinci, Vermeer, Cranach, Christus, Freud and others. She edits

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these initial images with the use of a computer, eliminating the color and selectively lighting up the mouth and hands, the most expressive areas, preserving however, their female identity. The result is printed on canvas, wrapped in transparencies and fastened with rope like the sheaf hiding Man Ray's sewing machine.

The imprisoned women flood the room's entrance, functioning like an occult introduction to Potamianou's last chapter. They compose the materia prima of her alchemical experiments from which emerge the genetically modified fragments of art history. Fragments that also inhabit this cabinet of curiosities.

Applying the same logic as with the cages, -in what consists of the artist's usual artistic practice- Potamianou appropriates artistic masterpieces; she deconstructs them on her own dissecting table and then reconstructs them anew. She pastes collage elements of physiognomic details deriving from well-known portraits of men on the original/printed female portraits."

**Official opening:** Friday, 8 February 2019 at 20:00

**Duration:** 8 February until 4 May 2019

Admission to the exhibition is free.

**Opening hours:** Wednesday - Saturday 12:00 - 17:00

Thursday - Friday 12:00 - 19:00

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