



# Nikos Arvanitis: Stones, Politics

**Nikos Arvanitis: Stones, Politics**  
a.antonopoulou.art gallery

January 10. - February 12. 2011

Nikos Arvanitis  
nikosarvanitis@gmx.at  
[www.nikosarvanitis.com](http://www.nikosarvanitis.com)



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The “Stones, Politics” body of work, comprises multi-edged natural landscapes, three-dimensional rocky mountains, flat volumes, and small “stone” sculptures. Through his work, Arvanitis suggests a contemporary visual allegory for the character of politics as formed in the societies of our era. It is an era marked by the decline of the 20th century political narratives, the disillusionment of grand social visions, and the dismantle of the related ideological and imaginary structures.

For certain, it is a transitional era. No longer is politics, both as form and content, characterized by social participation; nor does it express rival social goals and ideas. In its place, there stands what, one may call, non-politics.

Arvanitis’s allegory departs from within the natural world, namely from one of its most trivial materials: the stone. The stone is present with its natural and psychological attributes, its geographical formations, and its infinite figural manifestations. This long-lasting element, possibly the most archaic and abundant on our planet (along with water), becomes a conceptually useful symbol / tool. For the stone can signify (or even serve as a name for) nearly all the notable facets of a historical era.

Rather frequently, art, as a narrative form of space and time, may be seen as almost identical with the history of civilization and of societies; it may be seen as a long voyage from the local to the ecumenical, from longing to disappointment, from the ground of reality to the realm of the imaginary and, often, to absolute absurdity. Art is a relentless migration from the loci of realism to the isles of utopia and from there to the spheres of the non-place.

In his approach, Arvanitis utilizes various aesthetic practices, techniques, and media so as to materialize the gray zones wherein the virtual and the real, the rational and the irrational, the partial and the whole co-exist. In this manner, he interprets the post-political situation he is concerned with. His method is of all-embracing as well as meticulous observation. He intends to transform a visual approach to a viewpoint of social criticism. Arvanitis’s take on the negative prefix “non” of the non-place does not amount to a denial but rather to an affirmation driving to “the production of the new”.



**Site Rhetorics**

Installation, wood, synthetic plaster, sound, 300x100x120 cm.





## A Science-fiction Approach

by Theoni Fotopoulou

Every thing will begin, when every thing will end.

The era of unrestrained capitalism and negative globalization ended up with the formation of the One State. The One State managed to prevail everywhere due to a technological advancement, which allowed for the interconnecting of every thing with every thing via an immaterial web network. Later on, even this One State collapsed carrying adrift and smuggling away from Earth and its declining colonies every form of human structure. The collapse was caused by a phenomenon of entropy, which uncontrollably spread out on the closed system of the One State and resulted in the disintegration from within. In specific, the operating system responsible for maintaining stability in the One State began to express the disorder to the extent that it eventually destroyed its own creator. So sudden and violent was the phenomenon, that it could be called a “digital cataclysm”.

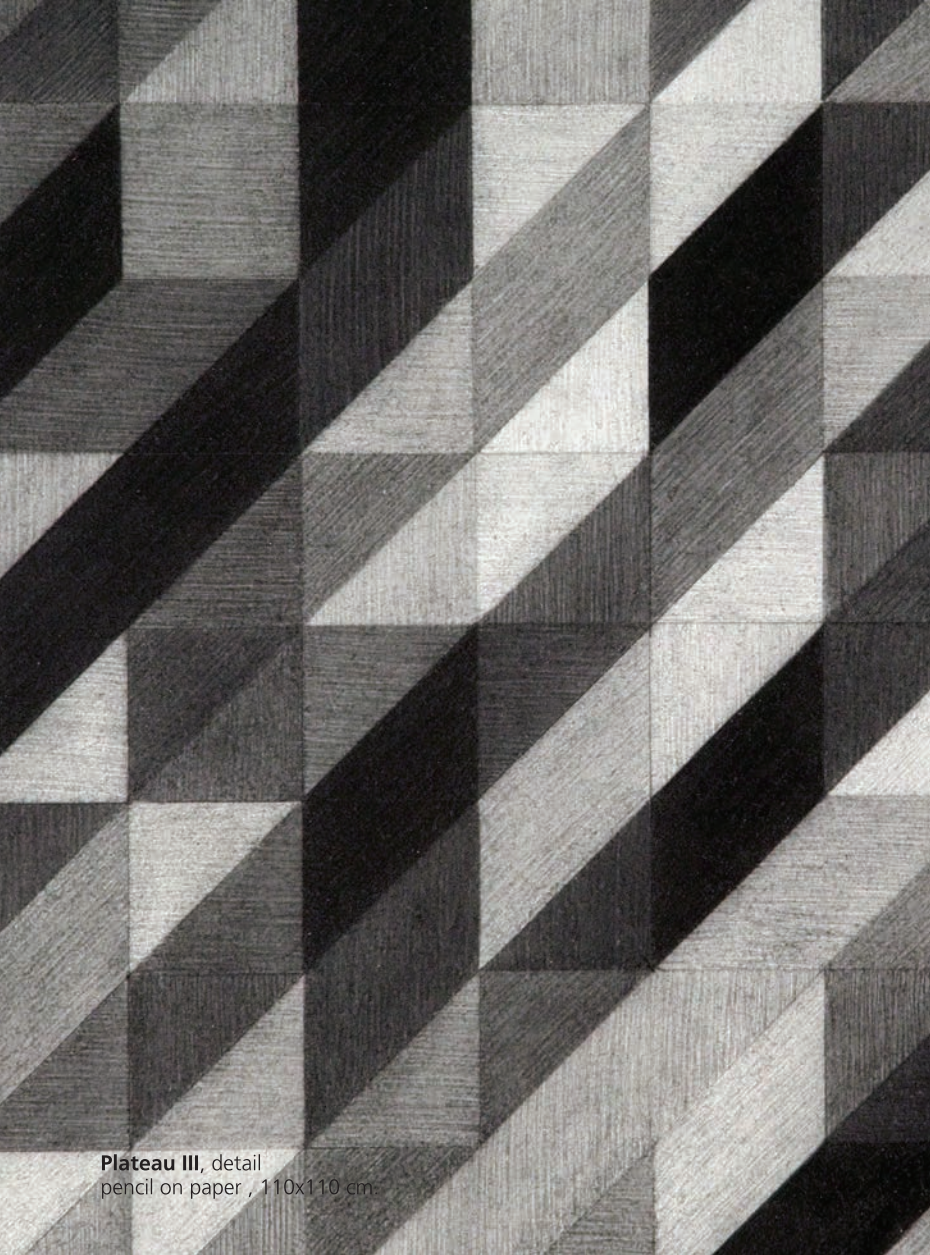
Like the fittest organisms who manage to adapt and survive after a natural disaster, the only element which survived was the primitive code of 0/1. The code succeeded in keeping itself active by means of the digital automation designed by its own creator, who was already annihilated. The code just operates without any memory or reason. It just executes. It does not act. It spits out combinations. 000100011110000. Think up a calculator that relentlessly executes a single operation: first, it adds the digit “1” and then it subtracts it. The digital becomes real and the real becomes digital, so that it is not possible anymore to distinguish the one from the other. This digital system, a relic of human civiliza-

**Site Rhetorics**, detail

Installation, wood, synthetic plaster, sound, 300x100x120 cm.



**Plateau I, II, III**  
pencil on paper , each 110x110 cm.



**Plateau III**, detail  
pencil on paper , 110x110 cm.

tion, sets up the “scenery” both on Earth and on its extra-terrestrial colonies.

So, here is how the digital system produces its field: the color spectrum has been shrunk into a digital scale ranging between black and white shades. Yet, despite all the outward appearances, color does not exist. What seems to be different mixtures of white and black is nothing but light interference in the field. In reality, there is not even colour, but just shadows. And shadows are mere projections of a thought never uttered. Shapes have been reduced to mere corner points and angles. They are triangles, squares, polygons, never circles or curves. Dimensions alternate and function beyond the Euclidean geometry. Yet they are subject to its own preconditions, since they are trapped in the common practice under which their creator happened to live. Planes evolve under a linear scale that expresses the 0 1 code. Digital masses either pile up shaping “mountains” and “hills”, or get leveled forming “plains” and “paths”. They give rise to a techno-nature whose manufacturing is autopoietic. The digital system outputs an “a-topia” devoid of anything physical. However, this does not mean that a-topia is nature-less. It is “a-topia”, because of neither time nor space exist. The co-ordinates by which every thing is tracked down have been eradicated. No action exists, since there is no one to take action. There only exists a system, which executes but does not act. The execution process structures the very state of the system. A timeless, damned, soulless, unfitting, disordered order. What the mankind had been vigorously trying to avoid and defeat throughout its history materializes right after its extinction: a “chaos” structured by a human originated code.

In this situation, the code, with its infinite combinations, intrudes on every thing: a digital DNA, creeping all over, only set





**Gray Zone (BodyStone) I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII**  
synthetic plaster, each 15x25x4 cm.

to auto-produce the field wherein it subsists. In its turn, the field reproduces itself by means of the code. The linear operation of the code overshadows everything. Yet, a combination, quite unexpectedly, gains digital autonomy. Namely, what? The combination in question halts the ever-evolving linear operation and self-refers. Its autonomy primarily originates from hacking its own code. The case seems to be that of an auto-immune virus. If it is still proper to come up with a name, this hacking combination will be called Deucalion<sup>1</sup>. Deucalion brings forth conscience; he makes thoughts.

“First shot,  
background, indefinite interaction of dynamic instability, and he is the very paradoxical interaction himself –neither form nor background but the still wave in between them”<sup>2</sup>: Deucalion

“Second shot,  
environment, alternating colorings of a digital pixel shade, and rocks of digital mass forming alternating fields”:  
Deucalion.

“Third shot,  
‘Deucalion’ , thought”:  
Deucalion.

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1. In Greek mythology, Deucalion was the son of Prometheus. According to the myth, when Zeus decided to put an end to the mankind setting loose a deluge like the one Noe suffered, Prometheus, in order to save his son, managed quick enough to inform Deucalion about the imminent doom. Deucalion and his wife (or sister), Pyrrha, embarked on a chest to escape from Zeus's rage. Only when the floods had stopped their foot on solid ground ,on what is said to be Mount Parnassus.

2. Norman Spinrad. Bug Jack Barron.

Having at last gained conscience, Deucalion engages into a quest for his historicity: he goes back to the network seeking for signs leading to the creator. Deucalion wonders:  
“Who then could be the creator? Is he a god? Is he the God? Is he a man? Is he the Man?”

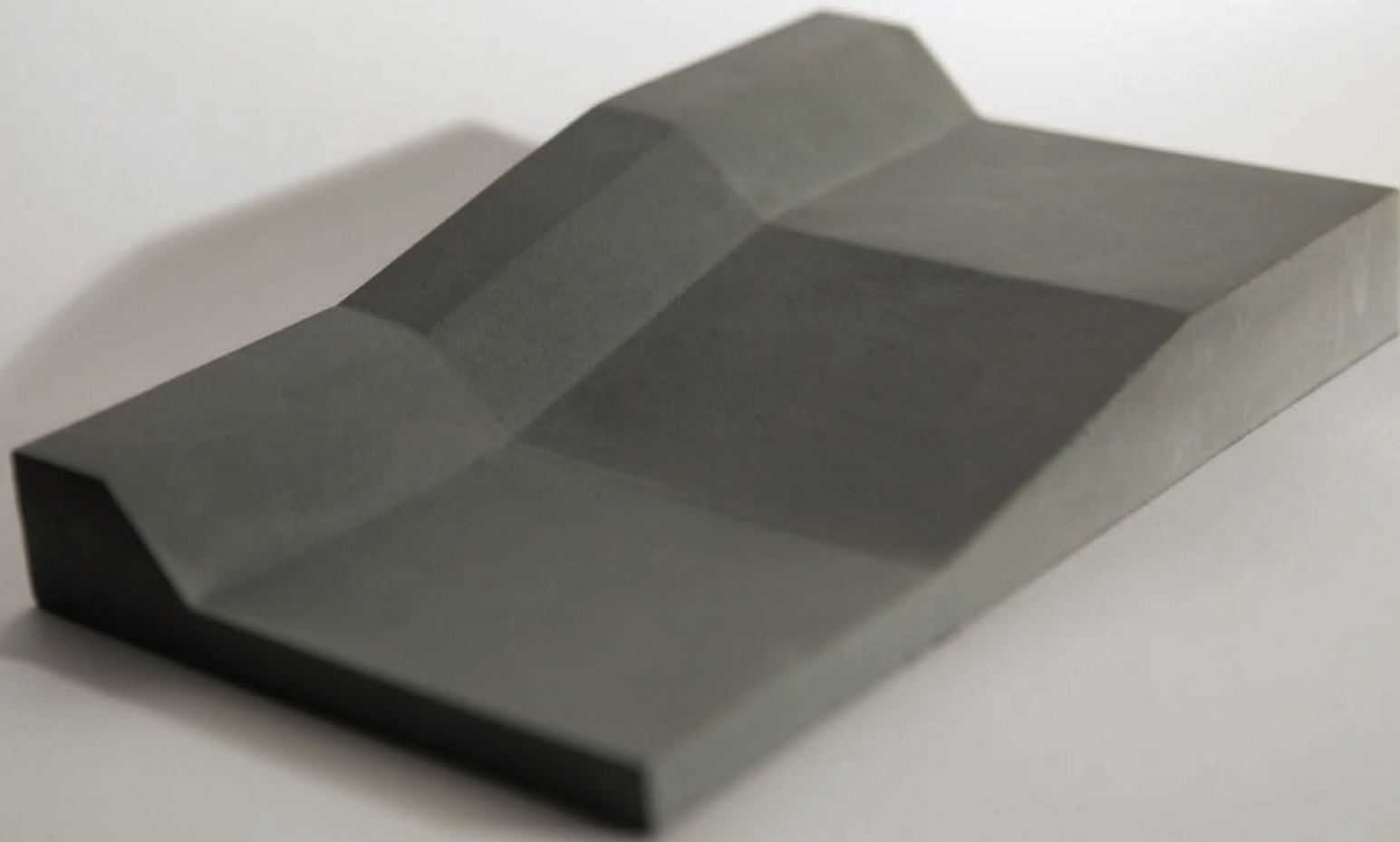
When the system reads traces of digital memory, it crushes and automatically forwards these traces back to combination “Deucalion”. Deucalion through the network transports conscience to an adjacent combination labeled Pyrrha. He aims at diving into the depths of the network in order to decode the raw digital data retrieved from the system. Pyrrha becomes Deucalion's Trojan Horse<sup>3</sup>. So that Deucalion sinks into the network ocean and discovers at the ocean floors an archeology designating the structure of Pyrrha's and his primordial “being”. Pyrrha and Deucalion are the very first pair of inter-conversing combinations that try to build the chart of their lost historicity. By this time, Pyrrha digs out from digital memory junk a phrase sounding like an oracle:

“Depart hence,  
and with veiled heads and loosened robes  
throw behind you the bones of your great mother!”<sup>4</sup>

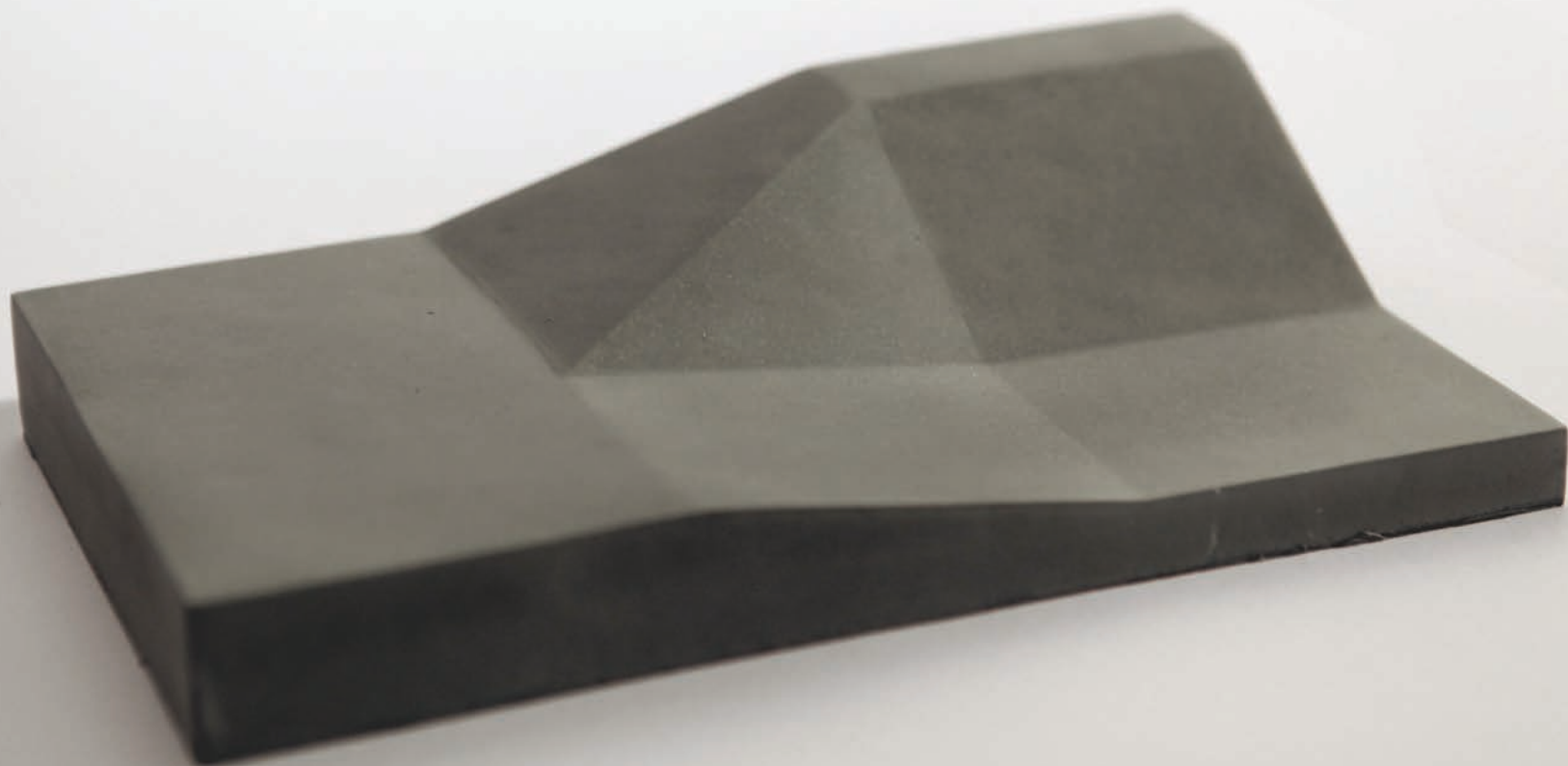
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3. In computing, a Trojan horse, is malware installed into the operating system of a computer without the user's consent. The user ignores the fact and the Trojan gains unauthorized access to the user's captivated machine.

4. Miller 1956 i, 21-31: Obid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 259 – 415, excerpts, adapted. According to the ancient myth, this oracle was given by goddess Themis to Deucalion and Pyrrha, when they turned to her to ask for the rebirth of human race. Upon Themis's consultation, they started to throw rocks behind their backs. The stones formed people. Deucalion's became men; Pyrrha's became women.



**Gray Zone (BodyStone) II**  
synthetic plaster, 15x25x4 cm.



**Gray Zone (BodyStone) III**  
synthetic plaster, 15x25x4 cm.



The “great mother” is but the field in which the code spreads and the network evolves. The “bones” are but the digital combinations that have to be rolled back into the network. Pyrrah’s and Deucalion’s task is to execute this rolling back and infuse new “life” to the combinations. While Deucalion is about to sow the digital field with the seeds of new life (as if he were the digital reincarnation of an ancient myth), he starts doubting.

“I am the one who can do every thing, give rebirth to every thing, every thing...I am the center of a world without center. I am the one who could be any one, who could be everything. Do I want to be the one, the one who-will-first-throw-the-digital-stones; those crystallizations of life whose resurrection is about to happen?<sup>5</sup> Do I want to be the one who will take the first step to the new? Well, is all this nothing but another illusion? Creation just for creation? The new just for the sake of being new?

And, the end is this instant in which Deucalion vacillates; and time, all of it, becomes this uttermost critical instant just before Deucalion is supposed to press the enter key; time, all of it, becomes the doubt accompanying the act.

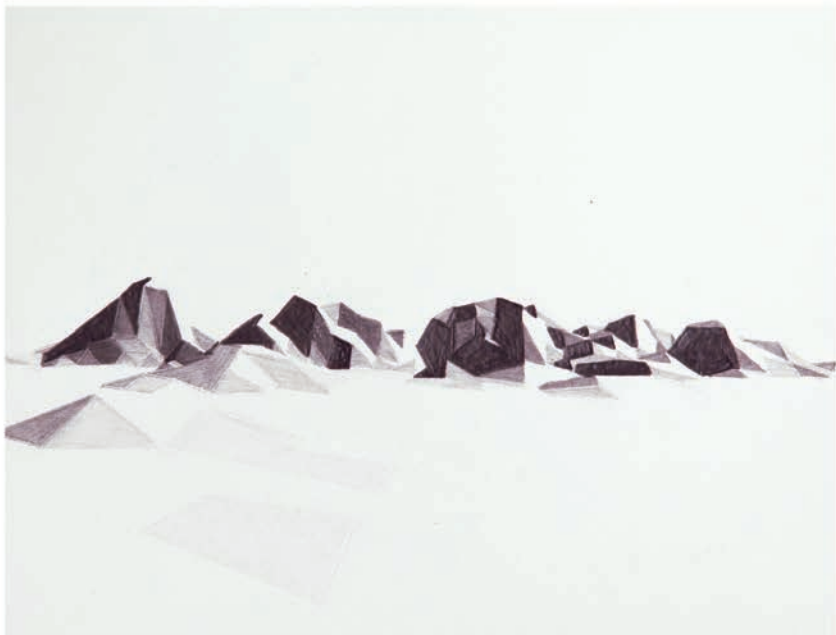
Every thing will end, when every thing will begin.

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5. “Stone / Rock” in Ancient Greek is “ἄσας”. Quite a few of its derivatives are found in Modern Greek; e.g. “ἄσξέω” (to chisel) or “ἄσμεο” (quarry). It is conjectured that “ἄσας” and “ἄσας” (the people) are etymologically connected.



**Transparent Gaze I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII**  
pencil on paper , each 20x26 cm.



**Transparent Gaze I**  
pencil on paper, each 20x26 cm.



**Transparent Gaze III**  
pencil on paper, each 20x26 cm.







**Reaching the Surface II**  
collage, sandpaper on wood, 50x70 cm.

Photography by Nikos Alexopoulos and Alina Lefa  
Translations by Effixix

Nikos Arvanitis  
nikosarvanitis@gmx.at  
www.nikosarvanitis.com

a.antonopoulou.art  
20, Aristofanous St., 4th Floor  
Psyri, Athens 10554, Greece  
tel. 0030 210 3214994  
www.aaart.gr

Nikos Arvanitis (b. 1979, Athens, GR) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, A, at the Athens School of Fine Arts, Athens, GR (Erasmus scholarship) and at the MFA course "Public Art and new artistic Strategies" at the Bauhaus University of Weimar, DE with scholarships from the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and the A. S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation. He won the first prize on the "ZeitGenosse Schiller" Competition for public art, Weimar, DE, 2005, was nominated for the "5th DESTE Prize" of the DESTE Foundation, Athens, GR, 2007, and he won the 2nd Prize of the Spyropoulos Foundation Award, Athens, GR, 2009. In 2009 he participated at the 2nd Athens Biennial, Greece and in 2010 at the 2nd Rennes Biennial, France. His Work has been exhibited in Austria, Greece, Cyprus, Iceland, Germany, Poland, USA, Sweden, Serbia, France, Egypt and Belgium. Arvanitis co-founded the artist-duo Barking Dogs United with Naomi Tereza Salmon in 2005.

Theoni Fotopoulou studied Philosophy (Department of Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology, University of Athens, 2006) and Contemporary Art Theory (MA Contemporary Art Theory, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2007). She is currently Phd candidate in Department of Communication, Media and Culture, in Panteion University, Athens. She has participated in workshops, group exhibitions and conferences while her texts and essays have been published in Greece and abroad.

