



The Deste Foundation

Centre For Contemporary Art
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The name DESTE is derived from the Greek verb "to see". The Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art was established in 1983 by international art collector Dakis Joannou, and is based in both Athens and Geneva.

Deste is a non-profit Foundation that organises exhibitions and supports publications exploring the relationship between contemporary art and contemporary culture. From its inception until 1998, when it moved to its permanent quarters, Deste organised thirteen exhibitions in Greece and Cyprus and funded seven cultural events in Geneva, Venice and Athens. The highlight of these was Everything That's Interesting is New, held in 1996 at The Factory of the Athens School of Fine Arts. This major exhibition contained 200 works from the Dakis Joannou Collection by approximately 100 artists of international repute, including Duchamp, Warhol, Koons, Kippenberger, as well as the younger generation of artists who emerged during the 90s.

Since May 1998, the Foundation's Centre for Contemporary Art has hosted temporary exhibitions and events that present contemporary Greek and foreign artists and record current tendencies in contemporary art.

The Foundation aims to broaden the audience for contemporary art, to enhance opportunities for young artists, and to establish a dialogue across generations through an exhibition programme that promotes both emerging and established artists. At the same time, it is developing strategies to invigorate the Athens art scene and promote contemporary creative expression through multi-disciplinary events that venture to open new areas of dialogue among the visual arts and other creative manifestations. Deste's programme is not limited to exhibitions of visual art; it also extends to curatorial projects and special events that examine the relationship of art to fashion, music, film, architecture, design, and to pop culture in general.

With its state-of-the-art exhibition space and communications facilities, Deste is a vital locus of contemporary art and thinking in Athens, a city which only recently acquired a museum of contemporary art. The Foundation, therefore, plays a significant role in promoting dialogue and exchange between Greece and other countries. Its exhibition programme helps establish Athens' place on the international art scene: it provides the Greek audience with the opportunity to experience works by major international artists while introducing the international art community to contemporary Greek art. The Foundation has no collection of its own. In addition to internal exhibitions organised by Centre for Contemporary Art, the Deste Foundation collaborates with guest curators and other cultural institutions. It operates as an independent Centre to augment the polyphony and pluralism comprising today's cultural landscape.

The video selected

BALKAN MOMENTS (Part One: The Book of Miracles, Part Two: Tirana, Part Three: Gallipoli)
by Morgan Showalter
8;55 seconds
was
originally shot on miniDV, NTSC format.

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Description:
Video taped moments. Scenes from everyday life, gestures, and actions. Chance encounters. Sounds and images woven together to make broader statements referencing politics and history. Moments that are specific to time and place, yet universal.

The Book of Miracles contrasts scenes from five different Balkan countries illustrating the differences between traditional and contemporary lifestyles. For example, in Macedonia, a crowd dances in the street to a regional gypsy band as the scene shifts to a group in discussion, wearing beach clothes but apparently from the upper class. The man in the center of this discussion is the symbolic prince of this Yugoslavian region. In Greece a priest in a darkened monastery room reads from a book of recorded miracles. This is contrasted to a shot of a man begging for money in an Athens street. He has no hands, and as is usually the case for those who do this in Athens, he is not Greek but a foreigner, easily identified as Albanian.

In Tirana, five scenes are presented, all shot within three blocks on the main street of the Albanian capital. Totally chance encounters, the people shown become characters in a mini urban drama. Each with their own story.

Previous Screenings:

The Balkan Moments videos are designed to be shown as one complete work or in parts within the same viewing venue. All three parts have yet to be screened together in public.

Part One: The Book of Miracles was originally shown in 2002 as part of the exhibition "Piece of Cake" at the Galerie photo du PÙle Image Haute-Normandie in Rouen, France. It was part of an installation that included a charcoal wall drawing from one of the video stills.

A segment of this video appeared in the exhibition Aesthesis at the Technopolis Arts Center of the City of Athens, Athens, Greece, in 2002.
In 2003, the video was projected on the opening night

of the event Dia-Roes, at the Roes Dance Theater in Athens, Greece.

Part Two: Tirana is an edited version of a video created for the exhibition Onufri 2003, Small Brother at the National Gallery of Art in Tirana, Albania. The video was part of an installation that included a large exterior wall drawing. The video is also part of my contribution to "The Making of Balkan Wars: The Game" as part of the Athens based group Personal Cinema. This project is currently included in exhibition In The Gorges of the Balkans, curated by Rene Block at the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel, Germany and was presented at The Forum 2003 in Thessaloniki, Greece .

Part Three: Gallipoli has yet to be shown in public. Gallipoli presents various scenes from Greece and Turkey. The moments are linked through their varied depictions of or references to conflict. Some are pedestrian and interpersonal, others relate to the ancient and tumultuous history between the two countries, and some scenes to more contemporary and international hostilities.