



ELENI PHYLA

It's Getting Hot in Here

Code Red

Catastrophe is never fully visible at close range. We know the universe wholly through our immediate physical and emotional sensations, not so much by our intellect. Even what we see is questionable. The things that affect us most are either too close or too far away, too big or too small. It is all a blur. The truth is that by the time disaster hits, it's too late. Artist Eleni Phyla's immersive show "It's Getting Hot in Here" conjures the mounting crisis in our illusory, sensate relationship with the natural environment.

Large-scale canvases inspired by geothermal maps evoke terrestrial forms in vivid haptic colors. *Heating Islands* (2020) mimics a scientific visualization of the extreme disparities in temperatures manifested by the proliferating conditions of climatic change; its livid hot spots, gradating from yellow and pink to dark red, float in a sea of cool to deep blues. The amoebic shapes nearly metamorphose before your eyes in a dynamic interplay that reflects the vital symbiosis that fuels the cosmos.

The hypnotic video loop *Climate Crisis 01* (2020) captures a flowering prickly pear transformed by pulsating flashes of artificial radioactive colors. Overlooking an endless seascape, the scene has a narcotic, trance-inducing beauty that trumps its sickly toxicity. We watch it like we stare at our computer screens, reading facts and figures reflecting the perils of the destructive industrial economy that sustains our modern lifestyle, but it seems a distant reality. When a crisis involves the self, all perspective is lost and logic thrown to the wind: Surveys indicate that more than half of smokers diagnosed with lung cancer keep smoking despite knowing their odds of survival would be greater if they stopped. Of course those with the smallest carbon footprint have front-row seats: populations in Africa and India subsisting on increasingly barren lands, often without electricity, are suffering most.

In the age of the Teflon mind, we (here) see everything through a screen (sitting in air-conditioned rooms)—using prophylactics like drugs and now masks, even romantic comedies—as alienated from our surroundings and selves as we are from everyone else. Human evolution is the history of survival, and we have cultivated and constructed the terrain to reflect our needs, as if gods. While the planet is shrinking as our collective footprint grows, it was always smaller than we thought. We now know that the eruption of Alaska's Okmok in 43 BC caused climatic cooling across the globe that led to the demise of both the Roman Republic and the Ptolemaic Kingdom. Sulfate aerosols produced by the volcanic belch altered precipitation patterns and triggered crop failure, famine, and social unrest in the critical wake of Julius Caesar's assassination, changing the course of Western history.

Cataclysmic events are reminders that in an instant everything can turn upside down, and nobody is immune. So much we have wrought has spiraled out of control, and it is turning back on us. Phyla's circular portrayals of a single delicate flowering plant, *Phacelia Tanacetifolia 1-6* (2020), in various glowing hues call to mind phosphorescent microbes or plankton viewed through a microscope—or the depiction of COVID-19 as a floral bud. Bacteria may be our fickle friends, often stabbing us in the back, but without them we would be dead. In fact the coronavirus can be seen as a symptom of the Earth's antibodies fighting against the disease of our existence. If the color red signifies fever, rapidly intensifying and expanding on interactive heat maps of the planet, the patient is clearly in critical condition. The question is: How red is too red?

Phylla Phyla: Together with all of the sentient beings in our ecosystem, we are part of a single, interdependent phylum crying out for solidarity. Anticipating the extinction of more and more species in the desertification process of Cyprus, the artist has documented native plants in the series "Φύλλα/Leaves" (2019) titled by their scientific names: *Cynara cingineria*, *Hedera cypria*, and *Pinus brutia*. Leaves are the Earth's lungs, and these spray-painted canvases suggest diagnostic X-rays, with color codes below representing stages of health, from green to pallid yellow. The images exhibit the intimate texture and sensuality of photograms—as if the plants have been pressed behind glass, still breathing.

We have domesticated ourselves, as much as the flora and fauna around us, to live in the concrete jungles we have created. Populating the microcosm of the exhibition space like desiccated human souls, *Calamus Aromatica* (2020) is a battalion of tall cane plants picked from a river near the artist's village and planted in cement bases, dying as the show progresses. The dreamy painting *Thermal Blossoms* (2020) makes a backdrop of fiery fluorescent nebulas bursting in an expanse of celestial pastel. These blooms are likely noxious fumes—think of the frightful candy-pink plumes of the explosion that destroyed Beirut—but in our self-delusion we see the landscape as if inhabited by distinct animate and inanimate things. When we feel the heat we can build arks, but there will be no place left to go. Now that we can no longer kiss each other safely, we ought to make sure we don't kiss the planet goodbye.

Cathryn Drake

Augmented Temperature, 2020
Acrylic on canvas | 189 x 219 cm





Thermal Blossom, 2020
Acrylic and spray on canvas | 158 x 148 cm



Islands Endangered, 2020
Acrylic on canvas | 255 x 150 cm



Phacelia Tanacetifolia 6, 2020
Acrylic and spray on canvas | Ø 70 cm



Phacelia Tanacetifolia 3, 2020
Acrylic and spray on canvas | Ø 70 cm



Phacella Tanacetifolia 4, 2020
Acrylic and spray on canvas | Ø 70 cm



Phacella Tanacetifolia 4, 2020
Acrylic and spray on canvas | Ø 70 cm



Phacelia Tanacetifolia 2, 2020
Acrylic and spray on canvas | Ø 70 cm



Phacelia Tanacetifolia 1, 2020
Acrylic and spray on canvas | Ø 70 cm



Calamus Aromatica, 2020

Water cane, acrylic spray, water varnish | dimensions variable



Heat Stroke 01, 2020
Acrylic on canvas | 93 x 93 cm



Heat Stroke 02, 2020
Acrylic on canvas | 93 x 90 cm



Heat Stroke 03, 2020
Acrylic on canvas | 93 x 93 cm



Heat Stroke 04, 2020
Acrylic on canvas | 93 x 90 cm



Cynara Cingineria, 2019
Spray on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



Pinus Brutia, 2019
Spray on canvas | 80 x 100 cm



Climate crisis, Video loop, 2020

*Video still of frame 01 offered as digital print

Climate crisis 01, 2019

Edition of 20

Giclée Fine Art Print printed on Acid free, 100% cotton fibre,
310 gsm matte Fine Art Paper, with archival, pigmented inks | 54 x 40 cm



Kitty cat, 2019

Edition of 50,

Giclée Fine Art Print printed on Acid free, 100% cotton fibre,
300 gsm matte Fine Art Paper, with archival, pigmented inks | 18 x 18 cm



Eleni Phyla (b. 1988) was born in Nicosia, Cyprus. Graduated from Athens School of Fine Arts (2015) also studied at the School of Fine and Applied Arts of Thessaloniki (2007-9), and at the École National Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris with Erasmus grand (2011-12).

Exhibitions

2019 Another One, The Edit gallery, Limassol, Cyprus
2019 RUNONART, Cyprus short film documentary, Mayfair, London
2019 SUMMER.2019, The Edit gallery, Limassol, Cyprus
2019 Artworks selected for display at French Embassy, Nicosia, Cyprus
2019 Trait d'Union, French Institute Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
2019 Artists Are The New Athletes, The Edit gallery, Limassol, Cyprus
2018 local6@142, Studio 142, Nicosia, Cyprus
2018 Painting Notes, Artseen, Nicosia, Cyprus
2018 Imago Mundi, Salone degli Incanti, Trieste, Italy
2018 The Presence Of Absence OR The Catastrophe Theory, Nimac, Nicosia, Cyprus
2018 Life, PASYKAF charity, Paphos/Limassol/Nicosia, Cyprus
2017 Displacement as a state of mind, Korai, Nicosia, Cyprus
2017 Kathodon, action at old 'Lachanagora', Heraklion, Greece
2017 Antikrista, Cultural Centre, Heraklion, Greece
2016 Aegean Arts Festival, Episkopi, Heraklion, Greece
2016 TpOPICAL, Circuits and Currents, Athens, Greece
2016 OLA KALA, Centre d'Art Contemporain de St Restitut, Drôme provençale, France
2015 Air Sale - Inside/Outside, Stoa 44, Athens, Greece
2015 Sphinx 2015 | the hidden THEBES festival, Thebes, Greece
2015 Cloud, 3 137, Athens, Greece

Workshops / Residencies / Initiatives

2019 RUN ON ART, film interviews of Cypriot artists, initiator and director Efi Spyrou
2018 Let's Reclaim it! Everydayness in common, workshop/dinner, organised by AA&U
2018 Civilian Sencitivities, Workshop organised by Nimac, curated by Sigal Barkai and Yiannis Toumazis, Nimac, Nicosia, Cyprus
2015 Superglue, workshop by Danja Vasiliev, Athens digital Festival, Greece, Athens
2015 Stimulating synapse, Workshop/ Residency, organised by Confrontation through Art, curated by Branko Franceschi, Cyprus, Nicosia
2014 Restreet - New Babylon, Workshop, organised by Space Under / Goethe Institut, run by James Stevens, Antonios Galanopoulos, Adnan Hadzi, Greece, Athens
2014 Moment Grec, Workshop, organised by Emmanuel Saulnier in collaboration with École des Beaux Arts Paris and French Institute Athens, around Greece