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**PRESS RELEASE:**

*Reflections on PSYCHEDELIA*

participating artists: Pius Fox, John Kleckner,  
Eleni Kotsoni, Yudi Noor, Dean Spunt, Yorgos Stamkopoulos

On Sunday 08.06.14 at 5pm  
there will be a live 15 minute performance by Dean Spunt  
(band member of experimental punk group NO AGE)

Duration: 13.05.14 - 14.06.14

Based upon a much more minimalistic visual language than that traditionally associated with "Psychedelic Art" and the concept of psychedelia in music, the show explores issues of spirituality and symbolism, such as faith, mythology, individual and collective perceptions of life and reality proposing a multi-cultural reading with religious, social and political references while looking at concepts of transformation and non-human perception through the visual arts.

As ubiquitous as it sounds, the term "psychedelic" has been extensively used the past fifty years in order to describe a whole subculture of people who used drugs such as LSD, mescaline or psilocybin in order to enter a state of intensified consciousness including hallucinations and extreme sensory perception. Whereas the mechanism for surrealists was the observance of dreams, psychedelic artists turned to drug induced hallucinatory experiences and since the late 60s associated themselves with revolutionary political, social and spiritual sentiments and a counterculture mostly related to rock music. However, although today the concept of psychedelia has been filtered and has gained common usage through pop culture, in art it has remained in essence almost untouched with exhibitions that tried to explore it, yet limited it to a specific historical time zone or mostly concentrated on consumer products such as posters, magazines, newspapers and album-cover art.

Starting from the very core of the term which derives from the ancient greek words ψυχή(=psuche) meaning mind/soul and δῆλος(=delos) which means to manifest, "psychedelic" most fittingly translates into "mind-manifesting" and thus by definition all artistic endeavors to depict the inner world of the psyche are dealing with "psychedelia".

Looking at the huge influence of the 60s movement, the exhibition at CAN gallery explores the role of "psychedelic art" within the contemporary aesthetic discourse and the notion of psychedelic sensibility as a spiritual search today through the work of six emerging and more established artists from Asia,



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Europe and America. Moving beyond a nostalgic reception of the term and the actual use of any substances, the show investigates its aesthetic and conceptual impact in contemporary art. All artists use the original creative and utopian potential of psychedelia to give form to realms of higher consciousness, using their imagination and creative tools in different media such as painting, collage, installation and performance.

**Eleni Kotsoni** (b.1967, Rhodes, Greece) presents the work "*Korumbo, Guardian Spirit*", a site-specific totem sculpture inspired by archetypal architectural spaces such as the Haus Tambaran in Oceania and Spirit Houses and House of the Words (Toguna) in Mali. Used as gathering spots, such spaces have an impressive experiential completeness. They serve as archive facilities, meeting points, resting and ritual venues, where ancestral spirits meet with history, art, life and science. In a free interpretation of the exotic atmosphere of these spaces, Kotsoni's sculpture stands as a guardian-angel, a symbolic composition that uses everyday material remains as color. In both her painting and sculptural installations, one finds this idea of fragment as a link to understanding a whole. The artist focuses more on an unrealistic rather than a purely abstract narrative, using cultural references and motifs, collected from dreams, travel and everyday life. Through the composition of material and color, she creates paths -defined by their parts or traces- as a greater system of images, knowledge and spiritual concepts.

**John Kleckner** (b.1978, Iowa, USA) presents a series of ink, acrylic, enamel and paper collages on vinyl LP records. His work signals the process of growth and evolution in his oeuvre from drawing and video into other media and marks his fluidity to work in more than one techniques. Even in his earlier interest in portraiture Kleckner, has always been about "wanting to depict mental states-orgasmic joy, crushing anger, dull depression, wonderful confusion, etc." Whether a fractured figure, a "broken" portrait or abstract visions provoked by words and sounds, his work has been driven by a force to metamorphose, transform, regenerate new images and build a visual system that constitutes a language. A result of continuous experimentation and research using books, magazines and photos as his source material, the collages form "a mediative union of carefully planned accidents and haphazard intentions." With no focal point, no beginning and no end and therefore no traditional or "western", linear way to read them, the compositions largely depend on the viewer's perception for impact and meaning. Whether viewed as menacing, magical nature-scapes, cosmic maps, or interstellar utopias, Kleckner's works on vinyl challenge the viewer's interpretative cognitive process and present the artist's visionary sensibility and interest towards an abstract pictorial idiom full of color, emotion and rhythm.



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**Pius Fox's** (b.1983, Berlin, Germany) pieces could be perhaps most-closely described as post-hypnotic. His work largely constitutes of small scale abstract oil paintings on paper that demonstrate a strict, structured, almost architectural quality. Smaller formats give him greater control, which is essential in his pursuit of what he cryptically describes as "the endlessness of painting." Working primarily with pigment spread in spatulas, the artist is meticulously preoccupied with issues of space, depth, color and perspective. The son of a linguist mother and a musician father who performed with the legendary Leipzig band Klaus Renft Combo, sometimes referred to as "the bad boys of East German Rock'n'Roll", after repeated censure, the group –and Fox's family– emigrated to West Germany, where he was raised among artists, musicians and writers, many of whom were also refugees from the East. His music playing –as a guitarist alongside his father– has majorly influenced his idea of pictorial structure and flow. Furthermore, as a sitar performer, Fox often credits the raga, a melodic mode of Indian music whose fixed framework leaves plenty of room for improvisation. Characteristic qualities of music such as *tempo* have been translated to recurring sequences of layering or strong regularly repeated patterns of movement in his painting. Intrigued by what he terms a "color reality", a state of things that exists independent of subject or style, he strongly believes in that "Color doesn't just create a particular mood –it also prompts a particular kind of perception. A picture is only finished when the sum of its colors comprises a world unto itself."

**Yudi Noor** (b.1971, Bandung, Indonesia) presents a series of works made of various materials and objects such as textiles, embroidery, photos, adhesive tape, paper and glass and such diverse sources, histories and origins as folk tradition and industrial production. The regular use of the *ephemeral* in his work mirrors the idea that the spiritual has no form–just a reflection. His compositions are produced through a spontaneous and semi-autonomous daily ritual and pose a direct response to the fragmentation of cultural, political and religious ideologies as a result of globalization and modernization. His stance towards actual themes and tendencies of contemporary society share a lot with revolutionary political, social and spiritual sentiments referring to or inspired by other states of consciousness in "psychedelic art". At the moment the eye and the brain interact in the act of seeing, it is difficult to distinguish between seeing, thinking, feeling, and remembering. For Noor, the moment of that encounter (between the viewer and the artwork) is a moment of contemplation; of spiritual and meditative awareness. His work aims to create such a feeling and takes us to a mystic place



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between past and future, towards "movement" (departure and arrival), peace and "light".

**Yorgos Stamkopoulos** (b.1983, Katerini, Greece) presents intricate color compositions of acrylics on canvas that carry the poetic titles of the songs that inspired them. With bright, rich colors, fluorescent or in glaring contrast with each other - characteristic of psychedelic and hard-edge painting- all works share the key effect of *horror vacui/cenophobia* (Latin/Greek = "fear of empty space"). The artist uses color to bombard us with energy. He does not try to imitate nature; what he is trying to achieve through color, shape and composition is to create an experience that runs parallel to our optical reality. His approach of activating the picture surface involves building a system of apparent layers of colors, drips and drops, saturation and fading. The end-result may bear affinities to Jackson Pollock's drip painting technique and Frank Stella's exploration of fluorescent colors but it even more strikingly references Andy Warhol's pioneering psychedelic light shows of the mid'60s. Painting for Stamkopoulos as William C. Seitz described it when talking about the work of Bridget Riley, is "an organization, or manipulation of various abstract qualities that bear no relationship to the physical world". These complicated mosaics are visual sensations that reveal alternative ways of perception. They are deceptive and eye-shuttering.

**Dean Spunt** (b.1981, Los Angeles, USA) is an artist and musician from California. He was a founding member of the performance art punk group JEWS and band WIVES and in 2006 alongside Randy Randall he co-founded the band/project NO AGE. Spunt's recent solo practice has taken the form of sound performance. The artist has created a sound piece, a series of notes and will also perform live. His practice evolves sound generated into an immediate physical object with cassette players drowned in paint trapped inside vessels of glass. Hearing is not a purely mechanical phenomenon of wave propagation. It is also a sensory and perceptual event; what our ear receives as a signal then travels in the form of nerve pulses to our brain. His work reflects upon the psychedelic concept of metamorphosis exploring ideas of transformation and change. Notions of fragility, vulnerability, repetition and psychoacoustics inter-tangle. Since 2012 he has performed at various galleries and institutions such as the ICA in Philadelphia, the Public Fiction Gallery in Los Angeles, LAND (Los Angeles Nomadic Division) and PERFORMA in New York.