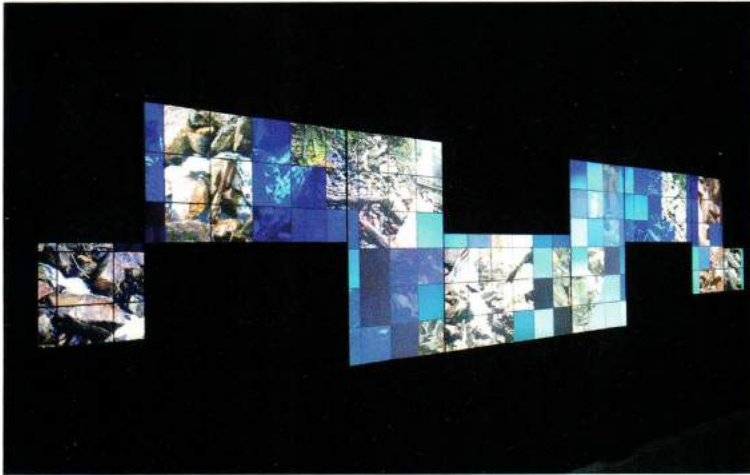


REVIEWS

Yorgo Alexopoulos

BRYCE WOLKOWITZ GALLERY

Talking to Yorgo Alexopoulos, it is clear that he regards himself as a painter, although his pictures are always on the move; they transform dynamically like cinema, which they are—high-tech cinema. He has traveled the earth to make the works in this show, shooting every place he's been, among them the sand dunes of the United Arab Emirates, the savannas of Namibia, and the mountains and forests of western Canada. He's interested in conflicted states of natural being, which he reconciles in his art. *Act of Nature: In Eight Chapters*, 2015–16—the grandest and key work in this exhibition of thirteen pieces—is



Yorgo Alexopoulos, *Act of Nature: In Eight Chapters*, 2015–16, digital animation on eight synchronized monitors, 10 minutes. Installation view.

exemplary. It is composed the same way all the works are: Using a playback system he designed himself, Alexopoulos digitally animates live-action footage of the sites he has visited, crafting it for a high-definition LED display installed in a metal container, usually made of steel and aluminum, with a glass cover that functions as a flatscreen. The container is displayed on the gallery wall, and the program—a sort of little theater of nature in action—runs infinitely on a roughly ten-minute-long loop.

The container is usually shallow (as in *Adrift at Night* and *Adrift at Dusk*, and in the seven-panel *Split Swell*, all 2016), but there are also a few deep-space dioramas with elaborate sculptural elements. Particularly noteworthy are the 2015–16 works *The Way to the Sky* and *The Way to the Sea*. In both, a piece of Thásos marble—Greek marble, Alexopoulos's way of acknowledging his ancestry—carved by an industrial robot juts out of the container. It is a sort of bridge between the space of the viewer and the space of the work, a conflation of seemingly irreconcilable states. This theme of integration, of hybridity, also comes across in Alexopoulos's placement of the hard marble so that it seems to flow like liquid from the animated picture of a waterfall in the diorama. Combining elements of prosaic mimesis, he has made a powerful poetic statement.

In the big-screen *Act of Nature*, geometric abstraction and gestural nature—for nature is a series of grand gestures in the work, as it is in works on display here—intersect, if they don't quite interact. Large rectangles, squares, triangles, all planes of translucent color, many transparent, drift across the natural scene, sometimes in slow motion, sometimes rapidly, sometimes dividing it into sections, sometimes obscuring it. Alexopoulos stages expressive segments—cross sections—

of nature to lyric as well as epic effect. He attempts to overcome the difference between geometric and gestural abstraction, to unite representational art and abstract art in a common aesthetic cause.

In spite of his focus on the earth's unspoiled natural beauty, Alexopoulos denies that his work is meant to convey a politics of environmentalism. Instead, he is concerned with the archetypal. His is a narrative, theatrical, sacred art, like that of the ancient Greeks. Even as Alexopoulos's work makes clear that the digital future has arrived, the past lives on—it is alive and well in the present.

—Donald Kuspit

Anri Sala

NEW MUSEUM

Occupying three floors of the New Museum, and fully energizing exhibition spaces that can ordinarily feel disproportionate, “Anri Sala: Answer Me” traced the reorientations within the Albanian-born video artist's practice. The survey, which was organized by Massimiliano Gioni, Margot Norton, and Natalie Bell, was dominated by work from the past decade, when Sala's ongoing ruminations on past versus present—initially expressed in a more-or-less straightforward documentary form—moved toward more elliptical studies of sited music renditions.

The large-scale installations reorganized early-twentieth-century classical-music compositions from a contemporary perspective. *Ravel Ravel*, 2013, a double-screen video, shows the tightly framed left hands of two pianists playing Maurice Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D Major (1929–30), a piece commissioned by pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who had lost his right arm fighting in World War I. Sala made variations in the score's tempo markings to generate occasional lags between the two performances, creating short delays and realignments reminiscent of Steve Reich's phase pieces; he also transformed the viewing room into a towering semi-anechoic chamber, buffering its high walls with dark foam wedges to eliminate natural echo. Down the hall, the accompanying *Unravel*, 2013, shot in the German pavilion of the 2013 Venice Biennale, found a DJ attempting to “correct” the imposed phase differences by manipulating two albums of the same performances on two turntables, her hand movements taking on an otherworldly quality through deft close-ups.

Sala's alterations of written music are even more drastic in *The Present Moment*, 2014. He isolated notes from Arnold Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night, 1899), reshuffled them according to the Austrian composer's twelve-tone system (which this late-Romantic-era

