

FIRST 3 ISSUES FREE

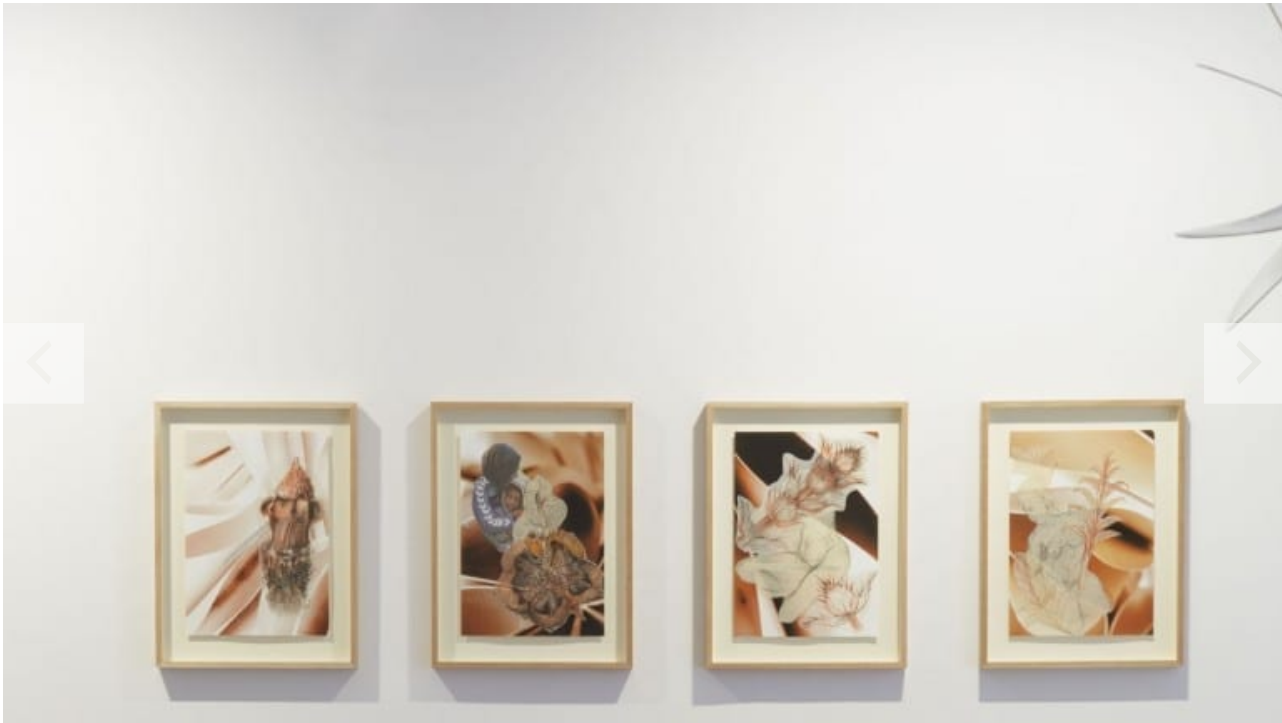
Subscribe & Save 50%



# Aesthetica

Magazine Shop Awards Directory Advertise

## Kalliopi Lemos' In Balance at Gazelli Art House



### Aesthetic

Aesthetica is destination for in-depth features on today's most influential practitioners of photography, music and film

Click

Sign up to the newsletter:

Your email

Seeds have been found to be a useful metaphor at many opportunities, despite their only two abilities being to scatter and grow. A key event in the history of seeds as metaphor is the inscription on the most famous of the medals minted to commemorate the defeat of the Spanish Armada: "Jehovah blew with His wind and they were scattered." This inscription is good because it emphasises the huge, unconquerable force doing the scattering, and is one of the few places where seeds are victims. In Yayoi Kusama's work, for example, the pumpkins and seed-forms are an expression of her creative flowering, an alter-ego of one woman's success and growth, yet in the hands of Kalliopi Lemos the similar butternut squash-form shapes of her *Stainless Steel Seed* series seem vulnerable, stranded, and have hardened against the world, scattered beyond their control.

The great body of Lemos' work has been dedicated to examining and raising questions about the processes and politics that cause forced migration and the impact that 'neo-capitalism and the irresponsibility of political powers' have on its victims, particularly women. Her work has historically centred on journeys and on displacement in a very direct, open sense. She took two small boats found abandoned floating on the Aegean and installed them in the park of Istanbul Bilgi University (since 2008), for example, talismans of the tragic end of doomed, hopeful illegal immigrants attempting to enter Europe. A further boat covered with tokens made from drinks cans and bearing the names of illegal immigrants who reached Greece has been permanently installed on Çanakkale harbour since Lemos created the work for the Biennale there in 2012.

In 2013 she staged an exhibition using the abandoned Ioakimion Greek High School for Girls in Fener, Istanbul, placing a series of surreal sculptures based on animals in each of the well-preserved classrooms together with texts relating to human rights issues on each of the school desks. *In Balance*, her first show at Gazelli Art House, presents more allusive, symbolic work, for which she has adopted the seed. In the title pieces *In Balance Stainless Steel Sculptures 1 and 2* (2016) they hang on opposite sides of a balance beam

decorated with flanged, club-like forms of shining steel, surgical and medieval. *In Balance, Yellow* (2013) is a seed made from segments of bright yellow, enticing plastic, that on closer inspection are contrasted with segments made from cut reeds. They struggle and they have travelled; they don't find balance so much as hang in the balance.

Yet in both of those senses the works in *In Balance* are more to do with individual humans or objects than about society or social forces – the effect of the wind on one seed rather than on a whole bunch – which then attempt to stand as synecdoche for the whole of society. This represents something of a change for Lemos. Her works here examine the 'day-to-day struggles and the pursuit of personal freedom and self-fulfilment'. They are about human rights – a shift from her earlier pieces which discuss them directly. *In Balance* is a show of artworks, in a traditional sense. It is a visual rather than a conceptual exhibition, and it speaks in symbols rather than names. There are collage drawings featuring English-language newspaper headlines about said 'crisis'; there are well-executed, impastoed wax and oil paint studies of distorted heads; there are contorted papier mâché figures that brush the language of Anglo-French post-war sculpture, the material stuck onto the fragile armature as in Germaine Richier or Reg Butler. There is a wonderful sense throughout that *In Balance* is only just maintaining its poise – that Lemos is straining against the limits of what can be done politically in a gallery space, and what can be done politically by an individual object.

The video installation *At the Centre of the World* (2015) provides the highlight of the show. A girl sits cross-legged in a small, spherical cage only just big enough for her, and the cage rolls around freely on a smooth, clinic-like warehouse floor. Inside, the girl wages a very physical struggle to control the movement of the cage which, due to the distribution of her weight inside it, tends to roll and place her on her back like a capsized tortoise. It is a futile, energetic struggle for her just to sit upright. There is only so much one seed can do, even if they are at the centre of the world.

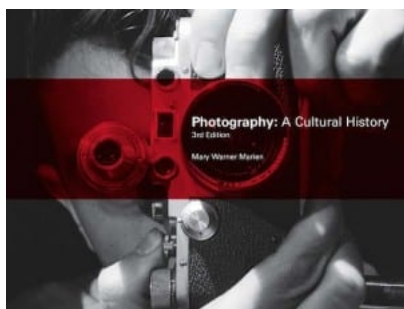
Jack Castle

#### Credits:

1. Kalliopi Lemos: *In Balance* – Installation shot, Courtesy of Gazelli Art House, 2016. Photography: Oskar Proctor

Posted on 26 March 2016

[Tweet](#) [Share](#) [Reblog](#) [Pin](#)



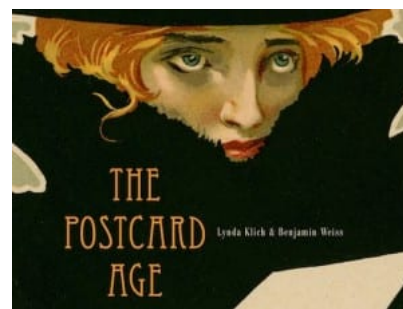
#### Photography: A Cultural History

Marien traces the steps from daguerreotype to digital with zeal looking at portraiture, documentary, war, mass market, advertising and art photography.



#### You Only Live Once

Based loosely on the Bonnie and Clyde legend, *You Only Live Once* follows serial criminal Eddie Taylor on his most recent release from prison, as he attempts to make good for himself and his girl.



#### The Postcard Age

Drawing on one of the finest and most comprehensive collections anywhere in the world, *The Postcard Age* presents 400 postcards from the decades around 1900.

Aesthetica Magazine  
PO Box 371  
York  
YO23 1WL  
(+44) 1904 629 137

Art & Design  
Architecture  
Fashion  
Film  
Music  
Performance  
Photography

Shop  
Subscribe  
Stockists  
Advertise  
Directory  
Policy  
Jobs

Twitter  
Facebook  
Pinterest  
Instagram  
LinkedIn  
iTunes