

IT IS ALWAYS

SUMMER
SOMEWHERE

2018-2019



P O R
T F O
L I O



ESMERALDA KOSMATOPOULOS

“Lay not the blame on me, O sailor, but on the Winds.”

— **Aesop**, *The Shipwrecked Man and the Sea*

It Is Always Summer Somewhere

It Is Always Summer Somewhere constructs a contemporary mythology of exile around the Mediterranean Sea as passage and border. Developed on Lesbos in 2018, the project began when Kosmatopoulos stumbled over a fragment of an inflatable refugee boat half-buried on a tourist beach. Appearing as the final trace of a journey whose beginning remained unknown, the object led her to reconstruct its story backwards—from what survived on the shore towards the invisible crossing that had preceded it.

Throughout the project, the sea becomes a surface onto which radically different realities are projected. The same coastline is a place of leisure, livelihood, surveillance, departure and uncertain arrival. Repetition connects contemporary crossings with earlier displacements across these waters, including the forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923, without presenting these histories as equivalent. Through absence, fragments, circular time and the structure of Aesop's fables, the works question how stories and responsibilities are assigned to a landscape with no political identity. There is only one sea, but countless ways of crossing it.



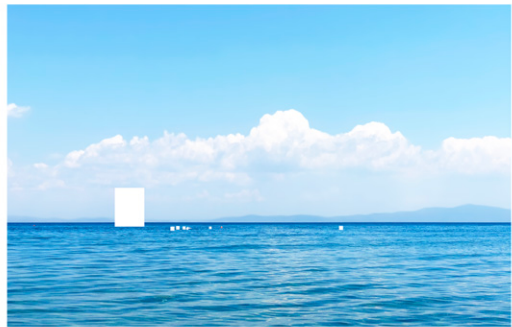
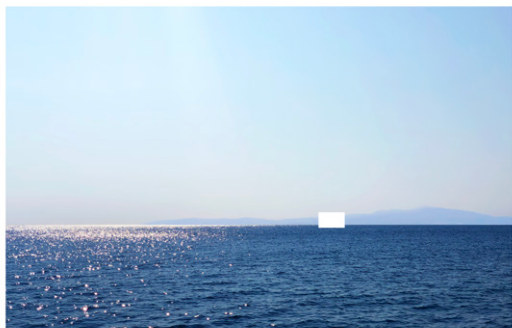
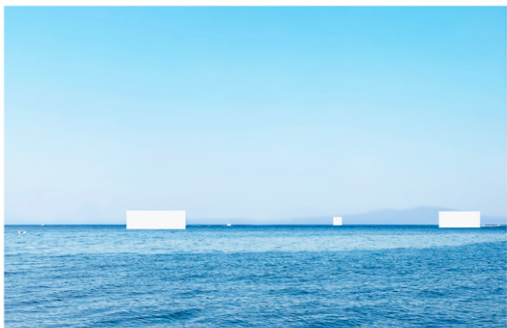
Les Juilletistes

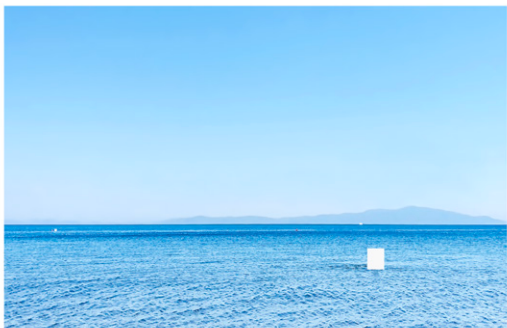
2019, Archival prints, dimensions variable

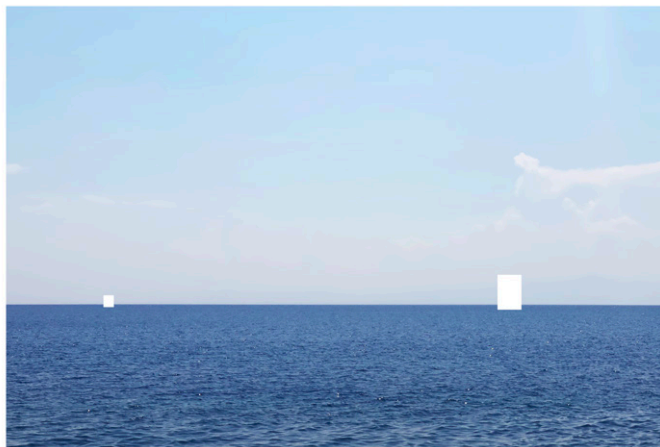
Les Juilletistes brings together 31 photographs taken from the same beach on Lesbos, one for each day of July 2018. Arranged as an oversized calendar, they evoke the regulated rhythm of summer tourism: departure, leisure and the certainty of returning home. Yet every swimmer and boat has been erased and replaced by a visible white rectangle. Tourists, residents, fishing boats and vessels crossing the same water become indistinguishable absences within the Mediterranean landscape.

Kosmatopoulos returned daily to the place where she had discovered the remains of a migrant boat and photographed the horizon, attempting to imagine the crossing that had preceded this abandoned trace. The calendar advances linearly, while the history of displacement circles back across the same geography. The white rectangles conceal what occupied each image while becoming projection surfaces for what the landscape no longer reveals: a holidaymaker, a migrant crossing or a body disappearing beneath the water. The calendar advances; history returns; the horizon remains.









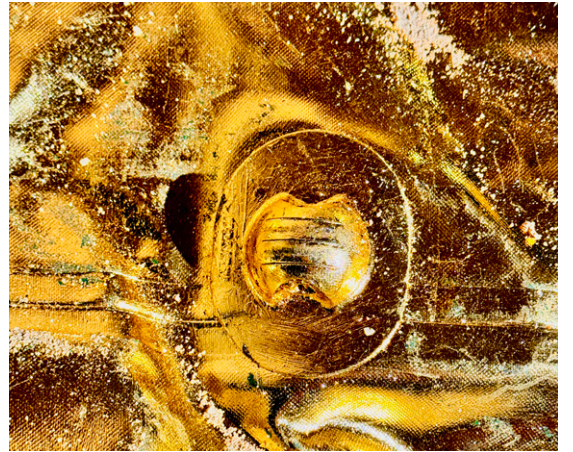
Tout ce qui brille...

2019, Rubber, gold leaf and sand

Tout ce qui brille... begins with fragments of an inflatable refugee boat discovered half-buried on a public beach in Lesbos. Kosmatopoulos gathered the torn rubber, covered it with gold leaf and returned it to the sand. She did not reconstruct the vessel or conceal its damage: every fragment retains the irregular edges and deformations left by the crossing and its abandonment.

The installation applies the familiar imagery of buried treasure to the remains of a journey whose passengers and circumstances are unknown. Gilding transforms discarded wreckage into something precious—part relic, part archaeological vestige—and suspends it between evidence of a recent event and the mythology through which that event might survive. Yet the fragile gold cracks across the rubber, allowing the dark material underneath to reappear. Its brilliance evokes the promise of another shore, an imagined Eldorado whose reality may prove far more fractured. The gold makes the remains visible without repairing them.









Monday–Friday

2019, Two-channel video and sound

Monday–Friday follows the daily tourist ferries travelling between Mytilene, on Lesbos, and Ayvalık, on the Turkish coast. Filmed over one week from the port of Mytilene, one channel records the morning departure of Greek tourists, while the other shows Turkish visitors returning from the opposite direction in the evening. The vessels appear almost interchangeable; their identities are determined primarily by the direction in which they travel.

These ferries retrace waters crossed during the compulsory population exchange of 1923 and, more recently, by refugees reaching Lesbos. The work does not equate tourism with forced displacement. Instead, it reveals how the same route can contain radically different experiences of time: the tourist journey is scheduled, circular and secured by return, while exile divides life into an irreversible before and after. Accompanied by Mikis Theodorakis's *Tou Mikrou Voria*, adapted from a poem by Odysseas Elytis, the installation transforms a familiar summer passage into a meditation on departure, repetition and loss.





Unlike the Grass

2020, LED

Unlike the Grass displaces the proverb “the grass is always greener on the other side” into the geography of the Mediterranean. On Lesbos, the “other side” is not an adjacent field or an abstract alternative, but another country and possible future—visible across the water, yet separated by a border whose crossing carries radically unequal risks and consequences.

Presented as an illuminated public statement, the familiar expression initially appears immediate and reassuring. Its meaning becomes less stable once private dissatisfaction is replaced by exile. The desire to reach another shore can no longer be dismissed as the illusion that life elsewhere must be better; it raises questions about what makes remaining impossible and who possesses the freedom to move. In dialogue with Aesop’s fable, the work also follows the displacement of responsibility between weather, sea, borders, governments and those undertaking the crossing. The opposite shore remains visible, but its promise is uncertain—and reaching it is another matter.

The sea is never bluer anywhere.

From 1 to 10

2019, Sound, 30 sec

From 1 to 10 acts as the prologue to *It Is Always Summer Somewhere*. The sound work begins with the familiar opening of a fable, “once upon a time,” before gradually disrupting its singularity through counting. Once becomes twice, then three times, until the beginning of one story becomes the beginning of many.

This progression transforms exile from an isolated event into a movement recurring across different lives, places and historical moments. Each displacement remains singular in its causes, losses and consequences, yet enters a longer history that began before it and will continue afterwards. The count appears to impose a temporary sequence upon this recurrence, but it can neither contain nor conclude it: ten may return to one, while another beginning may already be taking shape. Through the alteration of a familiar narrative formula, linear time becomes circular. “Once upon a time” is never only once.

Listen to the audio work:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/15-mtp9x6BmpKe4P2RyXFLzHi7IURP5Jv/view?usp=drive_link

La morale de l'histoire

2019, Sound, 3 min 31 sec

La morale de l'histoire borrows its structure from Aesop's fable of a shipwrecked man who accuses the sea of causing his misfortune. Appearing in the form of a woman, the sea rejects the blame and directs it towards the winds that disturb her waters. Responsibility passes from one force to another without ever finding a stable place to settle.

On Lesbos, where residents, tourists, migrants and European border patrols inhabit the same territory under profoundly unequal conditions, Kosmatopoulos reactivates this moral uncertainty. In a flat, monotonous voice, she recites the daily wind reports recorded throughout July 2018. The neutral vocabulary of meteorology replaces the expected narrative of shipwreck, transforming climatic data into an ambiguous account of cause and consequence. If the wind is responsible for the violence of the sea, where does responsibility begin—and where does it end? The work exposes how blame can be displaced until catastrophe appears natural and no one seems accountable.

Listen to the audio work:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/15FfKA1b8TbjAey9DGFBJR-Thsj55loCd/view?usp=drive_link

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