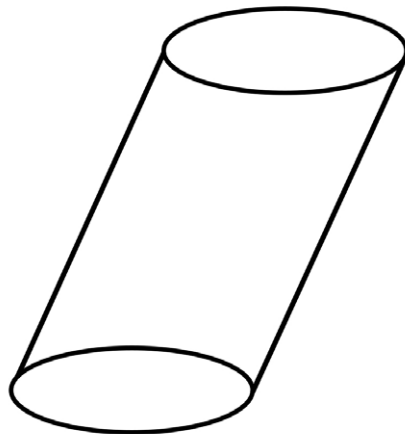


Τα παιδιά ρουφάν **Anastasia Douka**



03 April – 16 May 2026

Before I knew what the works in this exhibition would be, I was thinking about Anastasia's practice in search of a common thread. One of her works came to mind, a sculptural landscape formed by different gestures, entitled *How to hide* (2016). The title suits her. It resonates with her practice, which has an immediacy of construction holding multiple layers of conceptual and emotional connections articulated through materiality in a playful

way, with sensitivity and humor.

Anastasia says that if she thinks of something she wants to make and knows precisely how to make it, she no longer wants to make it. She believes that "everything constructed can break, be reconstructed and then break once again (or at least it has this potential)."

With this in mind, I find myself thinking

that, alongside the ability to construct and combine materials and references, the works carry an inherent tension. They possess a hidden or overt aspect through which they playfully stick their tongues out at themselves, challenging the constructed world by first challenging themselves. They embody both a fierce desire to come into being and, at the same time, the potential for their own undoing. It's like wanting someone with all your heart, yet recognizing the possibility of ultimately living without them. I also think of children, nurtured within and close to us, so that they may one day leave.

When Anastasia told me the title of the exhibition, *Kids blowing*¹, I knew exactly where it came from. I searched my email and found the photograph of that graffiti, she had sent it to me on March 18, 2018, with the subject line "On breastfeeding." At the time, we were both, three months apart, in that first intense period of discovering motherhood and exclusive breastfeeding. A period when we were serving someone else. Our children were literally sucking. When I received the image, I laughed, of course, but it also felt as if something internal had passed into the street, becoming a motto. It was a reality that resonated with the period we were going through, but also a mirror: a realization that we too, as children, must have passed through this phase, and that now we are on the other side, the one our parents referred to when they said: *if you have a child, you will understand*.

This photograph depicts a building that no

longer exists, it has since been demolished. It was in Neos Kosmos, near Stegi, where, if I remember correctly, she was working at the time on a performance for very young children, creating light sculptures in paper.

In contrast, or as a distant continuation of infancy, the handrail appears as a form of support. I came to understand its significance again through my parents, when they began to need it. This, and other such assistive objects that once seemed almost useless (perhaps I noticed them only as architectural or decorative elements) now feel essential. Aging shifts our view.

Handrails are tailored to the adult body, following the anatomy of the hand.

The handrail runs along the right side of the gallery space.

I wonder if it could also be seen as a timeline. It is divided by color, like periods or phases of life.

It begins in blue, like ink and carbon paper. Writes and copies. In some areas, there is a grid, or the paper is perforated, revealing the layer beneath. Copying as an educational exercise in writing through observation and repetition; copying as "cheating" within or beyond the educational process; copying as imitation.

As children grow, they become more complex and try to grasp the contradictions and nuances of things.

¹The exhibition title in Greek would literally translate as *Kids sucking/taking in*. Its English counterpart, *Kids blowing*, evokes the complementary act: the continuous inflow and outflow within a system, the bidirectional movement from outside to inside and back again.

"Experts" say, and it's probably true, that what you tell them matters less than what they see you do.

What is unwritten, yet collected, is made present through poetry in Dionne Brand's *The Blue Clerk*. Anastasia tells me about it. (Another reference to blue.) The blue clerk, "dressed in a blue ink coat,"² keeps the voluminous material that did not find its way into the author's written record, the right-hand, clean pages with the "presentable things, the beautiful things"³. The clerk "keeps account of cubic metres of senses, perceptions, and resistant facts"⁴ on the left-hand pages, without following the order or methodology imposed by coloniality. She "must develop a language to live outside of brutality."⁵ She uses color in paradoxical ways to convey new qualities, meanings, and images. "The blue clerk would like a blue language or a lemon language or a violet language."⁶

This reference to Dionne Brand emerged through the cylinder, a shape that has always been present in Anastasia's work: as a base, an internal structure, or part of the sculptures. The cylinder is a conduit. In the exhibition, it moves from the left-hand to the right-hand pages.

A ring takes shape in smoke in the work of another artist included in the exhibition. Other artists' work is often present within her own. In her series of sculptures *Animalier* With No Taste for the Sublime*

(2017) she creates paper casts of public sculptures. This time, she invites the work of an academic painter portraying a child smoking.

It is interesting that different phases of life are also depicted in the work of Georgios Iakovidis; he often paints children and the elderly.

The encounter with *The Little Struggler* occurred by chance. While she was working on the exhibition, we visited *Fernweb, or Nostalgia for Unknown Lands*, curated by Katerina Hadji, featuring works from the Irini Y. Panagopoulos Collection. We must have opened nearly every sliding rail where the works were displayed and stored. Toward the end of the exhibition, Anastasia paused in front of *The Little Struggler (The Smoker or A Fine Kind)* (1887), both the oil painting and the graphite drawing. Perhaps something internal resonated once more with something external. The drawing felt more immediate, freer than the painting. A working child, holding baskets, smoking and blowing rings of smoke as if in play. Childlikeness and carefreeness coexist with signs of premature adulthood, expressed through labor and the act of smoking.

The oral stage is the first phase in Freud's theory of psychosexual development. Breastfeeding is typically associated with it. Fixation at this stage can be

² Dionne Brand, *The Blue Clerk: Ars Poetica in 59 Versos* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 4.

³ Brand, *The Blue Clerk*, 6.

⁴ Brand, *The Blue Clerk*, 4.

⁵ Dionne Brand, "The Blue Clerk: A Reading with Dionne Brand followed by a Conversation with Saidiya Hartman," YouTube video, uploaded by Barnard Center for Research on Women, October 30, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt-yRZgrCOW>

⁶ Brand, *The Blue Clerk*, 79.

linked to behaviors such as smoking in adult life. Beyond psychoanalysis, smoking may appear as imitative behavior, an enactment of adulthood.

How does adulthood happen?

The drawer of commercial espresso machines, where used coffee grounds are discarded, contains a cylinder. Watching it, one can almost hear the portafilter being knocked against it to empty, continuously, you see the line of people waiting for coffee and the employee preparing one cup after another. Coffee may be to adults what breast milk is to babies. The person making the coffee, repeating the same motion, is like a factory worker.

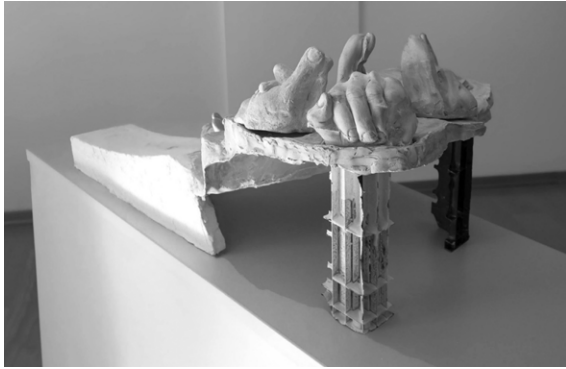
The available means shape the production of the work. Most works in the exhibition are made of paper. Although commonly considered fragile, it is very resilient.

In another field, shoemaking, a machine called channel closer is used. It closes the holes left by stitching in the soles. Anastasia

made a paper cast of this machine, which had been replaced by its more advanced successor, when she was a resident at the workshop of John Lobb & Co. Its opposite and complementary counterpart, the cast of the *Channel opener* (2016), is at the Fondation d'Entreprise Hermès. Between them, runs a flow, a channel. A connection through which each acquires its meaning. It brings to mind her work *Turnover* (2022). A permanent inscription on the bridge connecting the two banks of the Kifissos River. And her drawing *The drift* (2013). It asks: "as a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?" She answers, along with two friends. To the right and left lie the shores, and the river runs between them. Labor as a fantasy of adulthood and a retrospection on childhood.

curatorial text by
Galini Noti

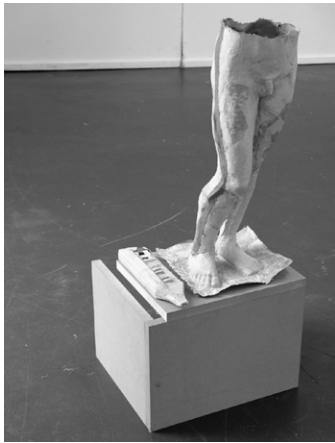
Anastasia Douka would like to thank: Eleni and Haris Doukas, Yiannis Kolovos, Irene Y. Panagopoulos, Sofia Simaki, Katerina Hadji



How to hide, 2016, plaster casts, plastic, photography: Charalambos Kourkoulis



Animalier (Athena Mesolora by Michael Tombros, 1954), 2015, paper cast, dental wax, photography: Anastasia Douka



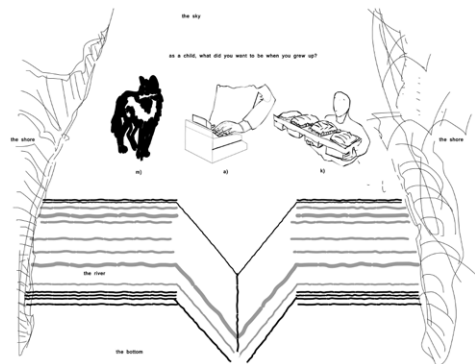
Marathon runner's melodica ("In memory of Spiros Louis" by Nikos Peradinos 1989), 2017, paper mold, melodica by Hohner, photography: Christos Chrissopoulos



Channel opener, Channel closer, 2016, paper casts, photography: Tadzio



Turnover, 2022, plywood, text on Kifissos river bridge pedestal, photography: Anastasia Douka



The drift, 2013, digital drawing