

*Avaton | Adyton*

Angie Drakopoulos and Daniel Hill

2022, two video projections, wooden boxes, polymer clay, field recordings of cicadas, tree frogs, spring peepers, speakers, electronics.

Dimensions variable.

Reality Check: Inner Sanctum

curated by Dr. Kostas Prapoglou

We are truly a species with amnesia, forgetting who we are and how to live in harmony with the world around us. For countless generations, humanity has waged war with nature- slashing, burning, and paving instead of harmonizing and integrating. This disconnect is even reflected in our architecture, as we choose to live within cubic rectangles instead of biomimetic structures. And now, increasingly, one can see humanity not even living in the physical world at all- but instead within a digital simulacrum several times removed from the actual forms, structures, patterns, and processes of nature. To remain out of synch with these cycles could be defined as neurosis, for just as neuroscience has shown the mind and body are in fact not divided, humanity also is not isolated- but is thoroughly interconnected with nature.

In an evolutionary sense, we humans have also inherited ingrained neurological tendencies for cultural and personal mythologies expressed with symbol and metaphor through visual art, music, ritual, and stories. Yet the juggernaut of science has disregarded these subjective elements as useless relics from a more ignorant past, thus setting the stage for a palpable sense of something vital now missing. As the creative fields representing these tendencies are now in steep decline- if not headed toward complete cultural extinction- and a survey of current society revealing profound and alarming *dis-ease*, one can't help but wonder if this broad stroke of dismissal may have banished essential and potent tools to the trash bin. We seem spellbound by technology, blindly forgetting it should simplify, not complicate and powerful new tools always carry harmful consequences if misused. Yet depression and anxiety disorders increase lockstep with technology- and since the pandemic, the problem has been defined as a devastating mental health crisis. Something indeed is missing. Could it be that a lack of meaning in one's life- the type of meaning delivered through a deep personal relationship with creativity and nature- is so essential to the fulfilled happy human life that its absence can be considered the equivalent of disease?

*Avaton | Adyton* is the third collaborative video/sound installation by artists Angie Drakopoulos and Daniel Hill. This two-room installation represents the physical and inner journey toward the mystery of more fully understanding oneself, the natural world, and the interconnection of the two. This work is a conscious reclaiming of our neurological inheritance for cultural and personal mythologies expressed with symbol and metaphor and embodied in the vehicles of visual art and sound. This immersive environment is both intended to generate creative cognitive states but is also a documentation of many decades steeped in creativity intertwined with close observation of nature and deep listening.

In this work, the artists wanted to acknowledge the ancient Eleusinian Mysteries (1450 BCE to 392 CE) due to the exhibition site being located directly on the Sacred Way or road to Eleusis. On this road- every September for nearly two thousand years - initiates would walk the twenty-two kilometers (14 miles) from Athens to Eleusis to be shown some life changing mystery. As the initiates enacted their ritual walk, they left offerings- small objects or sculptures- in niches carved out of the rock ledge along the road. Once at Eleusis they would enter the inner sanctum of the Telesterion and here were shown a profound mystery said to bring deep personal meaning and contentment. As the initiates were under oath and penalty of death to not disclose the specifics of this mystery, more than a thousand six hundred years later, the mystery remains a mystery.

The first room of *Avaton | Adyton* represents the road or passageway to the inner room. Here small wooden boxes are hung sporadically on the walls left and right- each containing an organic form resembling something naturally made but eluding specific identification. Intermingled among these boxes are small wooden speaker boxes playing biophonic loops of cicadas, tree frogs, and spring peepers. The second room is a darkened room with two video projections on the left and right walls: one based on images of the sun and the other of water/earth. This is the sacred inner room- the chthonic otherworld itself- a coalescing catalyst for a reunification with nature and therefore ourselves.

If we are indeed neurologically wired for these elements, it is foolish to fight the genetic momentum of millennia. Through the invention of new ritual, we may return to returning- and fearlessly gaze into the luminescent mirror- for only by accepting our proper role within the meta- entity of nature can we transform ourselves- not into what we think we want to be, but to who we already are, but have forgotten.

Daniel Hill