

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

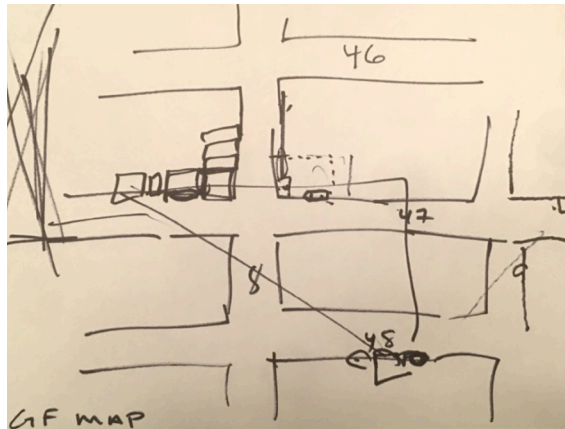
Gerasimos Floratos
'GRID MONK'

13 January – 25 February 2023

Preview: Thursday 12th January, 11–5pm

4654 W Washington Blvd, LA

A mysterious Pythagorean triangle connects a certain corner of Hell's Kitchen in Manhattan. Its lines traverse seemingly disparate and overlooked places: a local deli on West 47th Street bustling with Times Square-bound tourists and enduring neighbours; a squat tenement at 47th and 8th Avenue where, once upon a time, Victorian dwellers launched an occult revival; and Gerasimos Floratos's basement studio on West 48th Street, two blocks from where the artist grew up.



The artist's map of his neighborhood.

Andy's Deli is where Floratos worked the counter for his shopkeeper father. The tenement? In the 1870s, the New York press jokingly called the five-story building (today an Econo Lodge) "The Lamasery"—for the monasteries of Tibet; it was home to world-travelled occultist Madame H.P. Blavatsky and her nascent Theosophy movement. And Floratos's subterranean studio is where he envisioned the esoterically toned paintings and sculptures that makeup 'Grid Monk'.

Floratos was not fully aware of his neighbourhood's underground history—although he felt it instinctively until after completing the works for his new exhibition. It came quickly to him to draw a map of his immediate neighbourhood, run through with the ancient philosopher's signature triangle.

On the floor of Floratos's workshop sits a postcard from Grand Central Terminal, a few blocks east. Opened in 1913—when Midtown Manhattan remained a relative no-man's land of reservoirs, ash heaps, warehouses, random tenements and defunct farms—the megalith heralded the mythically styled architecture of the skyscrapers that soon rose up around it.

Above Grand Central's entry stands a tripartite statue of Mercury, Minerva, and Hercules designed by beaux arts master Jules-Félix Coutan. Lining the ceiling of the station's rotunda is a wonder-inspiring zodiac mural—revealing the dawn of the Age of Aquarius—by portraitist Paul Helleu. (A triangle similar to Floratos's is part of its makeup.) Tour guides snicker over Helleu's supposed gaffe in reversing his star map's east-west coordinates overlooking the possibility that the artist, who never spoke on the matter, intended to give viewers the impression of seeing the cosmos from above, like the deities guarding the station's entrance.

Magickal Midtown Manhattan is Floratos's unlikely home base, inspiration and wellspring. Indeed, when I began conducting walking tours of Occult New York, I never planned to focus on Midtown. I thought I'd be concentrating on the once-bohemian hub of Greenwich Village. But Midtown is where esoteric history goes to hide: back in the day, money and development were bunched downtown; outsider groups and people flocked north, eventually including Floratos's immigrant father.

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The artist is named for the Greek saint Gerasimos, protector of his family's home island of Kefalonia: a nobleman who became a monk. Floratos's works express a personal mythology of urban monastics, their thoughts both internal and extraphysical; street-focused but transcendent; their sneakers hitting the pavement but their psyches traversing other worlds, dimensions, territories and intersections of time.

His subjects dwell on the grid but their inner visions, like Gaudi strutting Midtown, bend geography and perception.

Back on the westside, most of the customers at Andy's Deli were and remain tourists, headed to or from Times Square, the neon backyard of Floratos's boyhood. He's fascinated with Times Square nearly as much as he is with its bigger sibling, Las Vegas, with its razzamatazz heightened to the ultimate.

That's why Floratos feels at home in his windowless, below-ground studio: like Vegas, it's brightly lit at all hours (in this case by chicken-coop clamp lights) causing visitor and artist alike to lose all sense of time. A brown, curved-brim Bellagio Hotel; Casino baseball cap keeps paint from Floratos's hair. Pigment-stained support beams run from floor to ceiling, looking a bit like sun-bleached Greek-Egyptian columns; many of his figures are composed of a similar shade of negative space.

Floratos's subjects are sometimes prayerful or meditative—often with headphones, almost like horizontal halos, they tune in to tune out: homing in on sounds, noise, music and messages known only to them. These seekers and seers create solitude within the shoulder-to-shoulder bustle of urban life. It's how you remain calm amid honking, shoving and flashing lights. Everything about Floratos's art—from its psychological and transcendental themes to the footsteps heard from the sidewalk above his workspace to the street-frantic settings of his pieces—is, in the strictest sense, from the neighbourhood.

Grid monks. Their demiurge knows them. Because he walks the path with them.

—Mitch Horowitz

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Gerasimos Floratos (born in 1986 in New York, lives and works between New York and Kefalonia, Greece). Recent solo exhibitions of his work include 'Hymn', Château de Boisgeloup, Gisors, France (2022); 'Maps', Almine Rech, Brussels (2022); 'Nodes', Pilar Corrias Gallery, London (2020); 'Psychogeography', Almine Rech, Paris (2020); 'Bismuth', Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York City (2020); 'There's a sidewalk inside this gut', Tanya Leighton, Berlin (2019); '1977', Eleni Koroneou Gallery, Athens (2018); 'Slangwich Motel' at Schloss, Oslo (2018); 'Soft Bone Journey' at Armada, Milan (2017); 'Big Town' at Pilar Corrias Gallery, London (2016) and 'Gerasimos Floratos', White Columns, New York (2016).

Selected group exhibitions of his work include 'Image Unavailable', Gallery Albany, New York (2022); 'Heliotropic: Gerasimos Floratos and Uman', Eleni Koroneou, Athens (2021); 'Different Strokes', curated by Marcus Jahmal, Almine Rech, London (2021); 'Good Luck', Shrine, New York (2020); 'Artists I Steal From', curated by Alvaro Barrington, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London (2019); 'Senior Coconut: Eddie Martinez, Gerasimos Floratos and Rafael Delacruz', Reyes-Finn, Detroit (2019); 'Slump Love: Christina Quarles and Gerasimos Floratos', Pilar Corrias Gallery, London (2018); 'New York By Night', curated by Spencer Sweeney, HDM Gallery, Beijing (2018); 'Gerasimos Floratos and Veronica Bruce', curated by Ida Ekblad, Schloss at Coast Contemporary, Norway (2017).

For further information and images please contact:
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The exhibition will be open Wednesday to Saturday,
11–6pm.

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