

“The Talisman of All Beings” is a neon work and the outcome of a research I conducted on symbols inspired by the Ancient Greek, Mesopotamian, Lapponian, and Buddhist iconographies, while some of these symbols have been appropriated by the internet culture.

The work, due to its vantage point in the city, may remind us of a colorful ‘talisman’, while in parallel it will comprise the spontaneous unfolding of a story or the lifecycle of a being. The ‘pasted’ symbols on the wall (moons, eyes, hands, animals, etc.) are related to primordial concepts, such as healing, wisdom, body rejuvenation, as well as contemporary terms, such as connectivity, reconciliation, equity, and ecology. The installation is further based on a color system, which reflects the aforementioned traits; for example, the orange being the color for health.

### Angelo Plessa in a conversation with George Bekirakis and Afroditi Panagiotakou

Looking at “The Talisman of All Beings,” we are gazing at rays of light in a positive universe, amidst a healthy reality.

What does a ‘talisman’ mean for you in a world where distorted aspects of reason and faith prevail?

A talisman is like a multimedial form for all kinds of hope, wish, or even a positive thought. For me, the power of the talisman revolves around the power of self-concentration, focus, and autosuggestion. In the current era, where our attention stands fragmented by the amount of information, concentration arrives as an instance of redemption. Moreover, we observe that many issues cannot be apprehended through a materialistic approach, but rather are explained now from a spiritual side, based on novel beliefs for what is actually happening within the world, where everything changes in the last years at such a frantic pace.

The word talisman is a re-borrowing, which, among other things, meant ‘amulet’ in late antiquity. During the last years, you are interested in the notion of the talisman. Would you like to share with me how this came about?

Some years ago, I came upon a proverb by Thales of Miletus, where he was saying that “all things are filled with gods” and somehow I linked this to the concept of the talisman and its relationship with Hylozoism, the view that all matter and energy are inseparably connected. Moreover, Plato, Aristotle, even Democritus, who was a mathematician and technocrat, dealt extensively with alternative cosmologies, like the one of the talisman. In parallel, we are sharing our life with thousands of people through social media, we are being seen by many eyes and a new techno-superstition is starting to take place, something I took note of during the early days of Facebook's popularity in 2007. Talismans, as triggers and stimuli for positive thoughts and a sense of protection around us, may be a positive contagious habit, especially in this era where fake news,

online aggressiveness, bullying, and any kind of extremism, prevail. ☹️ We live in a completely uncertain and distorted reality, so optimism should be something uniting us.

✚ This is the third in a row talisman in the public space – the first one is at the facade of The Breeder Gallery, Athens, and the second one at the City Hall of Naturno in northern Italy. Their symbols and colors are different this time. How did you choose them and what do they represent?

✳️ All three pieces are different. For the specific one at Alexandras avenue, I took into consideration everything that existed around the chosen area. 🏠 Opposite the installation, there is the General Anti-Cancer Hospital 'Agios Savvas', where people fight for their lives everyday. 🏥 With this in mind, I do hope that someone will see the installation from the window of his hospital room and might think of something positive, seeing all those symbols I collected from different civilizations all over the world – with each one of them covering a specific trait and subject. 🗺️ At the center of the circle is a face that looks like an emoji, but also like a symbol inspired from the Lapponian mythology. This 'thumbnail' might be us or a loved person and it is surrounded by the following seven symbols: 🐦 the blue bird is a symbol of happiness, while in the early polytheistic religions, it is also a symbol of the sky and always brings news from the future – see the Twitter symbol. 👁️ Then, the little yellow eye bearing the Asian Yin Yang is a symbol of co-dependence, with yellow being the color of intellect. 🌙 Next, we find the two pink moons, a symbol of pansexuality and a reference to contemporary issues, such as sexual identity. 🖐️ Right after, we find an orange hand, a symbol of power, while the orange color also stands for health and vigor. 🍀 Following, we encounter a symbol, both of Celtic and African origin, which stands for love and peace, but is also the symbol of the Command key in the Apple keyboard. 🐍 Then, we see a purple snake inside a glass, which signifies medical treatment and physical robustness, with purple also signifying spirituality, 🍄 Finally, the green mushroom has recently been used as a symbol for mental therapy (against depression for example), but also recycling and infinite creativity, with the green color interpreting notions of harmony and affluence.

✍️ What kind of effect do you think the talisman works you create in public space can have on people?

☀️ Even without knowing that the work is based on the idea of the talisman, I believe that the colorful rays of light and the slightly familiar symbols will subconsciously provide an instant positive aura to this rather emotionally charged area, which is surrounded by the General Anti-Cancer Hospital 'Agios Savvas', the Hellenic Police Attica Headquarters, and the football stadium of Panathinaikos. 🗑️ I was thinking about the cancer patients, the football fans, the policemen and the detainees, as well as all kinds of Athenians, the refugees, the LGBTQ citizens, the animals, the plants, and everything that exists and surrounds us in this city, that everything changes and we are all fleeting and that no one is immortal or safe from harm. 🏠 On the other side, if someone believes that a certain mental fortification, either a talisman or a therapy technique, may protect or even cure them, then there is a high chance of protecting themselves by means of their own capacity to self-protect.

☐ Your work in general resembles an immersion of the self into meditation. In this specific case, it comprises a collective experience in public space. How do you believe this will work out?

Ⓢ Either as a common or individual experience, I hope that the work will function as a ritual for experiencing through these selected symbols the beauty and power of our interconnection with all expressions of life, but also our disconnection from those. 🗿 I believe that the public placement of the work lends it a new status, which will not just interact with the specific place, but will be a new place in the city itself.

○ From what do you wish to protect people and cities?

☁ I guess protecting cities from people and people from cities? (*laughing*) ❤️ I do hope that this work will call upon more symbiotic feelings, as those of peace, compassion and love, since no one is non-perishable and safe from harm. It is wonderful that in times of difficult emotional issues, like the period of our confinement during COVID-19, we need such artistic gestures, perhaps a bit more soothing. \* In addition, our current ecological conflict with nature and loneliness remain very serious issues.