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Cecilia Dougherty, *Shanidar, Safe Return*
April 14 - May 26, 2024
on participantafterdark.art

PARTICIPANT INC is pleased to present the AFTER DARK launch of **Cecilia Dougherty**, *Shanidar, Safe Return*, an interactive web-based work of speculative fiction on participantafterdark.art.

Timeline: 40,000 years BCE. In *Shanidar, Safe Return*, a band of Neanderthals and their Cro-Magnon companions, Haizea, Esti, Oihana, Eneko and Uda, make an epic journey from what is now southern France to a place called Shanidar, a large cave in Iraqi Kurdistan, situated along tributaries of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Along the way they learn that humanity is blessed by its heritage of mixing and sharing everything, including genes. Like everything - like food, shelter, and love - it's a matter of survival. Their lion guide keeps them on the right path.

While writing *Shanidar*, Cecilia Dougherty did extensive research into Paleolithic Eurasia, the human species that lived there, their probable habits, foods, and methods of travel, as well as their music and art. Many of the graphics are Dougherty's versions of specific Paleolithic artworks, some of which the artist has seen in person, but many of which were based on the drawings of André Leroi-Gourhan's book *Gesture and Speech*, and other sources including photos and drawings in works by Jean Clottes, Marjia Gimbutas, and Max Rafael. Dougherty composed the music and recorded effects for the soundtrack, as well as borrowing, with credits, sound effects and music from other sources.

There are 138 passages to this story - you can follow it linearly, but the best way to read it is to wander through it, criss-crossing backwards and forwards until you've read the whole story.

Shanidar, Safe Return is speculative fiction. The artist has taken many liberties with the science in imagining the temperaments, relationships, joys, sorrows, fears, spirituality, and essential humanity of people living in the deep past.

PARTICIPANT INC
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Special thanks to Elise Gardella, Frances H. D. Stevens, Pat Swope, Karen Shertzer, Jamie Chan, Nancy Mackowsky, Joshua Thorson, Deville Cohen, and Azian Nurudin.

Cecilia Dougherty began working in video in the mid-1980s and has made over 30 video works in experimental narrative, documentary, and installation. Her most recent visual work is web-based interactive fiction (IF) for which she has written, illustrated, coded, and created original soundtracks. She has published numerous stories and essays as well as a book, *Space, Place, Authenticity, and Change* (2013), about connectivity and community. She has a PhD in Media Philosophy and her video works are archived at the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley Art Museum. She lives in New York.

Image: Cecilia Dougherty, drawing based on 40,000-year-old red ochre hand stencil at El Castillo cave complex, Puente Viesgo, Spain.

PARTICIPANT INC's exhibitions are made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature.

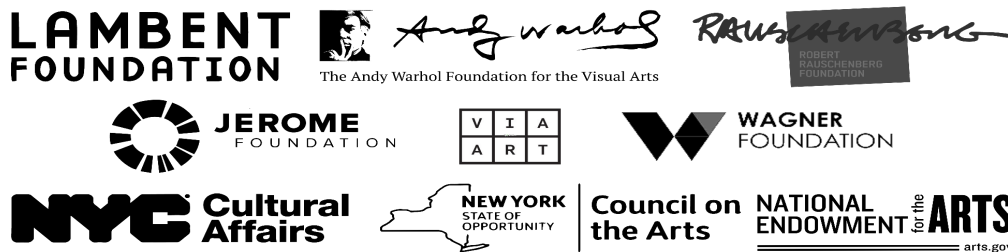
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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 116 Elizabeth Street, floor one, in Chinatown, between Broome and Grand Streets. The closest trains are the J/Z (Bowery) and the B/D (Grand); the closest wheelchair accessible stop is the 6 (Canal). Entry is on grade and the gallery is barrier free throughout with an all gender, wheelchair accessible bathroom. Service animals are welcome.