Looking Awry at the 50 Years of the Republic of Cyprus

BY ANTONIS DANOS

I Dreamt Cyprus was a Superpower [2007]

by Andreas Zerva

The flag of Cyprus has been ‘renewed’ into a gigantic banner, some meters wide and some thirty-three meters high. The area matches the pompous and wishful titles of the work. Yet the extrusion of grandeur is greatly undermined upon closer inspection: the grandeur of the ‘flag’ is reduced by the fragility of the material and the method of its making. It consists of yarn, with the separate threads at some distance from each other, creating a semi-transparent image. Additionally, the very process of the making, alludes to an age-long tradition of ‘female handcraft’ – that of spinning and weaving – that does not quite fit within the national, paternalistic (even phallocentric) discourse, within which such emblems and aspirations for ‘grandeur’ would normally be encased. Ultimately, and in view of the fragile condition of the island’s smallness, especially of the predicament of the ‘Cyprus problem’ with which Cypriots have been burdened almost from the very beginning of the country’s independence, any dream of superpower grandeur looms even more absurd and, undoubtedly, self-contradictory.

Like perspectives, which rightly gaud’ upon
Show nothing but confusion; oy! essay
Distinguish ing form.

[William Shakespeare, Richard II, Act II, Scene 2]

The above excerpt is derived from a short dialogue between the queen and Busby, the king’s servant, in William Shakespeare’s Richard II. Busby is trying to confuse the queen by taking her mind off of her beauty promotions she is having, after the king’s departure on a new expedition. In this, one of the many traps in the process, whereby a two-dimensional image was functioning as a window to the world (as it is, so to say), the flag of Cyprus has been fragmented, has been manipulated, turned into tortured, trapped, distorting, or mourning human figures. In Lost Aphrodite [2007-09] by Ntina Michaelidou, the Hellenic statuette of the goddess has been deconstructed into amputated limbs, that become bearers as well as witnesses of the tragic events of 1974. French actor Diane Rouge wrote in 1976: “Under the title Lost Aphrodite, the exhibition of the Cypriot artist Stella Michaelidou, invokes the heavy toll of 1974. Through her art, she makes a political stance of protest, but at the same time, she knows how to present, succinctly and movingly, the desperation of the enslaved and the attempted and consumed over the past fifty years.

I Dreamt Cyprus was a Superpower [2007] by Andreas Zerva

This installation, made up of photographs [prints and images], is put together by fragments of a much larger project, which was created in 1982. It was first presented and performed in that year, at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.


I Dreamt Cyprus was a Superpower [2007] by Andreas Zerva


Art is Justice [1992-2010]

by Marina Olympios

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...I quietly resisted against these values, like the big fish that ate all the small ones, and said to himself across the mountain with the five peaks, in order to rest.

...I limned clear and plotted the odyssey that the sea nurtured for centuries in her wart, and saw indiscernible that she was an ocean and not a rock. That they carry the strength which needs free space, and that the fetus is planted between their legs...

...My name is Marina and I dreamt in Cyprus, when I was six years old...

...This is a love story: a little boy and a 17-year old sidder were playing in the yellow fields, at strange hours. They walked together, on days, nights and mornings,...
Vulture Wreck [2010] by Alexea Antoniou

The artist comments that this composition was entirely created out of archival, sound material, mostly of public speeches by leading figures, who were or are still involved in the Cypriot political area of the past fifty years. Using various sound-recording techniques, a remarkable soundscape has been created, which at times breaks through its busy and abstract form, revealing, either momentarily or for longer intervals, its original sources. There is thus an intensification in the listener's perception between two levels – the realistic one (probably relating to the present and the ‘then’) (connected to an understanding of history, blurred by time). The piece develops a political stance, apparently critical of the “vulture-like” politics that has been dominating the public arena of the island, a form of politics that turns the country (that is, the people inhabiting the land) into a marketplace, especially cultural and political. The postcards, symbols of post-war materialism and philoxenia, as opposed to classical Hellenism – noted for its multiculturalism and philoxenia, as opposed to xenophobia. Yet, unfortunately and simultaneously, these remain also our primary homages to reactionary colonial ideology, aiming to provide a pretext for Western cultural superiority – by nature, exclusive and superficial. Herein lies the contradiction. It is thus digital, yet not surprising. That even once the small town became a metropolitan centre, a multicultural magnet, the local feel discomfort and contains. The pseudo-classical façades stand alien and also as the nurturing foodfloat nearly every Sunday, setting up their makeshift market place, shops and restaurants. With their plastic shopping bags and chairs, and Styrofoam cups, they seem powerless, invisible and transitory, and detached from the urban Metropolis, just as the architecture around them seems ephemeral and fake.

Mapping Landscapes Anew [2009-10] by Marianne Christodoulou

An installation of twelve collages comprised of old postcards dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. These postcards originated from all over the world except Cyprus, and depict landscapes with trees and plants in different physical environments. The same can be said of Cyprus as well, since nowhere is there a place what is believed to be a typical Cypriot landscape. In the extended context of the collage, the depicted landscapes transform into imaginary new grounds that could, however, appear to be indigenous to the island. The result is a heterogeneous collection, where the factual and the fictional flow together, similar to the principle of the collections which made up the curiosity cabinet of the past. The work reflects the process of re-composition of finds on a specific location, thus forming a new context for them. Depicted geographical locations are brought together under a common denominator, an idea that may also be thought as an attempt in crossing borders and challenging bounded national boundaries, resulting in a collage of various visual and textual elements, because of their relatively small format, which corresponds to the actual formats of the postcards. The participant needs to get closer – to stimulate the viewer contemplation – in order for the different parts that compose them to be revealed in them.

The Reluctant Metropolis [2007] by Yianna Economou

The artist writes about the work: “The small town brand inscription for its emancipation in the ideal of ancient Athens. Its city-centre is a provincial pastiche of classical architecture, paying homage to Classical Hellenism – noted for its multiculturalism and philoxenia, as opposed to xenophobia. Yet, unfortunately and simultaneously, these remain also our primary homages to reactionary colonial ideology, aiming to provide a pretext for Western cultural superiority – by nature, exclusive and superficial. Herein lies the contradiction. It is thus digital, yet not surprising. That even once the small town became a metropolitan centre, a multicultural magnet, the local feel discomfort and contains. The pseudo-classical façades stand alien and also as the nurturing foodfloat nearly every Sunday, setting up their makeshift market place, shops and restaurants. With their plastic shopping bags and chairs, and Styrofoam cups, they seem powerless, invisible and transitory, and detached from the urban Metropolis, just as the architecture around them seems ephemeral and fake.”

Colour Separation [2006] by Tselina Farenian

The artist comments: “This drawing installation deals with social and cultural prototypes; manifestations of forces and counter-forces within the multicultural Cypriot society and their psyche, where the dynamics of power appear in a range of social realities and conflicting architectural landscapes. In order to persuade the viewer to relate to an image and its deliberate message, the drawings, which almost a cartoonist feels to them, frame phantasmagoria by situating the problem in question within the context of everyday life. They are defined in such a way, as to reflect that of professional social painting, which involves the splitting of util-colour images into four separate, basic ink colour plates: cyan, magenta, yellow and black (CMYK). Ordinarily, each angle-colour layer is printed in turn, one on top of the other, to give the impression of infinite colours. In this case, however, each splash has been hand-drawn separately (with pens and ink on aluminum plates) making a direct reference to alienation, racism and prejudice, which unfortunately still exist within our society, where there is no concern to unify, and there is the perception that each individual gains matters.”

Forget Not [2003] by Vicky Papadouci

The artist comments: “The work focuses on the dynamics of personal experiences and, by extension, with our neo-psychosocial in concern to the political and social means of expressing and dealing with a collectively traumatic experience through time. The Do Not Forget slogan marked, on many levels and in various forms, the psyche of the Greek-Cypriot population after the tragic events of 1974, with a winding call to arms. The years which followed found my own generation in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, the heritage, the past, the roots, the sense of ‘homelessness’ and its identity, and the language with which all these are being communicated. Over these decades, one’s candidate-reflection with respect to such meanings in a socio-political society would, until recently, most likely bring about internal conflict and a guilt complex. On the other hand, the inevitable movement towards the ‘new’, calls for this legacy to be negotiated and accepted towards current realities and priorities, both within a collective and an individual framework. Out of such processes and needs, the Do Not Forget design has been transformed into a blaring, shining badge. The new composition takes over the entire surface, in a provocative and guillotine manner, aiming to overwhelm the viewer to accuse or propagandize nor to stand as a distant ‘museum-educator’. It could probably be dealt with as an ‘experience’ or an ‘educational tool’, which may appeal to the listener that his/her role in such an event is to be aware for the surface to be your personal andGuillotine manner, aiming to overwhelm the viewer to accuse or propagandize nor to stand as a distant ‘museum-educator’.

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Tourist Walk [2007-08] by Christina Solomou

The artist comments on her work “This ongoing project investigates the social condition of the periphery so vastlyCarl’s argument to the exhibition Looking Awry: Views of an Anniversary. Six contemporary video artists deal with the ancient mythos of homesickness and the search for a new home... The focus of this project an exploration of the idea that everything is based on the interpretation and representation of reality in order to create new connections and translations, which have relevance to contemporary reality. The ancient whisper of these powerful mythos becomes a tool for the exploration of the understanding that the human body is a continuous negotiation of interaction, where present social consciousness can not be isolated from historical heritage.”

The participating artists are Natalie Demetriou, Yianna Economou, Yiannos Ioannou, Nicolas Ioannou, Nezrine Khodr, and Guli Silberstein. The project is presented by the Independent Museum of Contemporary Art (IMCA), initiated by Yiannos Economou and Yiannos Ioannou.

White Spots in Culture [2010] by Mustafa Erkan

The artist’s series: “As with all repeated tragedies, there has ultimately turned into a comedy. The bridges that are placed at places where tragedies turn too close to our realities are not for passing but for not passing; they are not for going but for staying. Your identity has turned into a problematic one, because of the compulsory identities. The compulsory identities are in your birthdate and your problemmatic identity remains in your heart and your...” Your own turn into “mythology”, because when your total number of identities is multiplied by zero, you are reduced to zero. And nothing. Nothing. Nothing. However, the outcasts will nevertheless be the ones who will be the centre of the objective, because the empress is a wound, and you will have to show your wound to those who ask for your identity.”
There Will Be No Homecomings [2010]

By Lisa Lapth

During the dance, plates – the same ones that are on the living room table – are passed around. Lisa Lapth comments that, “Rembetics, is a term used today to designate originally disparate kinds of urban Greek folk music. Its lyrics reflect the harsher realities of a marginalized suburb’s lifestyle. Breaking plates is an ancient Greek tradition. It’s a way of mourning the deceased. After the commemorative feast, the guests would smash their plates as a way of breaking curses and freeing the deceased. After the commemorative feast, the guests would smash their plates as a way of breaking curses and freeing the deceased.”

The Looking Away exhibition includes continuous screening of five short films, which amount to an hour and a quarter in length. The Looking Away exhibition includes continuous screening of five short films, which amount to an hour and a quarter in length.

Inessa locks herself in the toilet of the cabaret where she is working. She just needs a few minutes alone to talk to her clients. If she is even luckier, she might return home alive.

In the exhibition Looking Away, Alysis Kazak is presenting three videos: What You Were Not Here [2004], The Never Ending Game [2006] and Drinking Game [2010]. They all utilise a direct, unpolished visual language, with generous portions of humour – at times, subversive or even ‘bizarre’ – to comment on the absurdity of Cyprus’ continuous division, and on the clichés and rhetoric that are continuously reproduced and consumed, thus perpetuating the status quo.

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Regina [2004]

Alfio Antonacci

Artists Eleftherioudes writes: “As thought abandoned in the midst of a working place, the work regales a highly stylized exhibiting character. A photograph of a naked woman as seen from behind lies plainly on two wooden tripod legs, offered to the gaze of the viewer. Her arms are folded behind, in a shy gesture to hide her nakedness, emphasised by the harsh, natural light. What is rather difficult to notice is that under the table-like construction, a historical map of the Mediterranean is placed. Surprisingly, the island of Cyprus assumes the same position as the woman’s sexual inaugural. … The two-dimensional depiction of the island is surrounded by the powerful presence of seaweed, a common natural element of the island’s sea coast, suggesting public hair shown from the lying figure. Constant political turmoil and successive occupations by a series of foreign states has marked, in the present, the island’s history and identity. Beside the search for the belonging and position of Cyprus in geographical maps of Western origin, Antonacci juxtaposes the understanding of the female body – or better, her own body – as a cultural sign searching for its own parameters of sexuality and identity. The female body – her body – becomes the battleground of desire and rejection, in the same way as the island becomes the territory in which Cyprotics are still struggling to comprehend and define their multiple roles and identities.”

Fear is a Man’s Best Friend [2010]

By Yenios Economou

The work suggests that fear paralyses reason and prevents people and societies from moving forward into freedom. The apparently obvious, by modern warfare standards, fecklessness scattered around the island create a claustrophobic landscape. The sounds of nearbyNature disintegrates silently into white noise, as the only outlet appears to be the nonsensical and threatening images from TV sets, the chaos of unfiltered data, which is impossible to become information, knowledge and ultimately enlightenment. But as

Capsule: Pain and Therapy [2010 version]

By Andreas Savva

School books are wrapped in bandages, making an unusual sculptural piece. Books, as bearers of the official discourse that has raised generations and generations of schoolchildren, who go on to become the adult citizens of the country. Much of it amounts to ideological constructs of which collective myths are made – myths of inclusion and exclusion, of [our] good and [their] evil. But, as with every ailment, therapy can be prescribed and, for a time, amusing. But it is necessary, if the healing of the wounds is to be achieved...
This how will you [2009] be

The artist comments: “The work uses as a reference point an image from a series of paintings, all portraits of young boys and girls in alternating version, most probably done by Italian painter Bruno Alfieri, also known as Bignon. The paintings were widely distributed from the 1920s onwards, as mass-produced prints in postwar Europe. Urgently enough, they had circulated widely, although they were not the product of political propaganda, nor they have any intrinsic artistic value. These images have been denouncing a large number of issues in post-1974 Cyprus, an emotionally charged period due to the political and social conditions. The violent interventions, reflect on this post-war era, which reproduces a kind of tearful young boys and girls in alternating versions, by Vicky Pericleous

My Fatherland’s Flag [2010]
by Evgenia Vasiloude
About a year ago, a serial graffiti appeared on several walls in the old Nicosia area. It showed an interesting variation on the emblem of the Republic of Cyprus: the dove that is normally shown on the escutcheon [shield] bearing a long branch with a mouth, was now portrayed

The artists comments: “This work is meant to mimic the Middle Eastern art of turkish coffee cups, where the origins of which stem from the ancient Chinese art of tea ceremony, and our immediate culture. The cup, leaf reading. Ordinarily, the patterns formed on the inside of the cup left by coffee residue are considered to hold visual and symbolic significance, representing from the external environment and our ancestry. The interpretation of these psychological patterns are emerging from the world of art, and usually based on knowledge and part patination. The artists practiced interaction and experimentation in the local social environment, as well as the ‘newspaper’ world – ever since the first such cases, in Palaeolithic times. I was forty-two, and this is my job – I know no other way of making a living by producing wood coal, for centuries.

Exoticisms and Other Acts Art: Act 1: circa 1960; Act 2: Cabana by the Beach [2007-2010]
by Vicky Petridou

The book a new version of some of the videos that were included in the emblematic event for the celebration of the 50 years of the Republic of Cyprus, which took place on October 1st for this year. It was part of the anniversaries and ceremonies of the day of Freedom, of November 17th, the day of the National Mobilization, and November 20th, the day of the National Mobilization of Cyprus.

Looking Away: Views of an Anniversary

Edited-in-Chief-Tests Editor: Antonis Daris
Art Direction and Design: Spyros Aravos

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Turkish Coffee [2009]
by Tassos Forsanak

The artists comments: “This work is meant to mimic the Middle Eastern art of turkish coffee cups, where the origins of which stem from the ancient Chinese art of tea ceremony, and our immediate culture. The cup, leaf reading. Ordinarily, the patterns formed on the inside of the cup left by coffee residue are considered to hold visual and symbolic significance, representing from the external environment and our ancestry. The interpretation of these psychological patterns are emerging from the world of art, and usually based on knowledge and part patination. The artists practiced interaction and experimentation in the local social environment, as well as the ‘newspaper’ world – ever since the first such cases, in Palaeolithic times.

The 2006 newly-established Republic of Cyprus embarked on – what it hoped for, in an overly optimistic slogan – a course to become a modernized state on the European map, but part of – politician after politician. Since the political turmoil of that decade, it made obvious that the road to modernity was not going to be easy. The tragic events of 1974 brought about a major branch on the island’s progress, in financial, social and cultural terms. From 1980 onwards, however, a new economic flourishing occurred, along with a certain, though of a lesser degree, process of cultural renewal. Yet, during all these years down to the present, social change and progress have been much slower – such as with regard to gender-equality and the rights of women. Most is interesting is the so-called Cyprus problem (referring to the on-again-offagain of the island following Turkey’s military invasion 35 years ago) has greedy-borated as a kind of ad absurdum: ‘It send’ the island’s icon goes with regard to human rights and other social issues. Feminist issue still not Front Line [2007] by the Washing-Up-Ladies

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Freedom Square I, II [1979-2010] by Nicos Kouroussis

Urban point of reference, traffic junction, continuous message space for pedestrians and a meeting place, Nicosia’s Freedom Square (Παλαιό Ίλλιο) is the meeting place of Andreas Karayan’s paintings, ‘Young Man in Yellow Taffeta, Bus Stop and A Certain Lack’. They were made in 1979-80, as half of which had been painted anew for the Looking Away exhibition. The work’s aim is to convey the idea that the political, social sphere where the scenes take place, is reinforced by the painted political posters and leaflets, which make up the background against which several male figures are presented. These potentially banal excerpts of daily urban routines, contain hints of a more ‘private’ interaction or communication: erotic images are being exchanged between the figures (4 A Certain Lack),是 erotic images (Bus Stop), or are directed toward the viewer (Young Man in Yellow Taffeta). The totality and thresholded upon the dominant, pedopornographic romas, the social and political revolution that is referred to in the ‘censorship’ process. The present work is looking towards revealing the subversive power of an emblem that may not have been spoken to an equal in the wider political horizon, but in face appears and guiltlessly demands to be accepted, in a public space which itself validates to freedom.

Reconstructing a Land(0)mine [2010] by Nicos Syrmis

The work a new version of some of the videos that were included in the emblematic event for the celebration of the 50 years of the Republic of Cyprus, which took place on October 1st for this year. It was part of the anniversaries and ceremonies of the day of Freedom, of November 17th, the day of the National Mobilization, and November 20th, the day of the National Mobilization of Cyprus.

Renoma’s Landparts


Organizing: Against Toutsing, Opening night performance directed by Glenda Gerakari, Noush’s Lean, Marilena Chronopoulou, Yorgos Vasilopoulos, Vassilis Iliopoulos, Myrto Vassilopoulou, Thanos Iliopoulos. Supported by the Cyprus University of Technology and the Cyprus Cultural Foundation.

A Certain Lack’s Bus Stop

The actual garment, a little flower-patterned dress that I was wearing during the 1974 war in Cyprus, is the key image of Experimental Storytelling. As far as lies – attempt to lead the path to the fortune of the little dress, without the knowledge that this was my dress when I was a child – they conduct the story of an unknown person who is me. Paradoxically it is about everyday, a personal story, which in this context could be factual, perceived or totally invented.