



# WORDS OF TRANSITION

*Rites, circles, triangles and water*











Re Aphrodite\* + Athina Antonniadou

Words of Transition

Rites, circles, triangles and water

2017

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## **ABOUT THIS BOOK**

This book came out of conversations about learning and art, which somehow blended into discussions about Aphrodite and Yemanjá (and then Mother Kali, and then Panayia, Madonna, the Virgin) and at the same time, into a critical exchange around socially engaged art practices in Rio and Nicosia.

These may seem disparate threads, but they all seek, in some way, to understand transition: transition in terms of integration, amalgamation, transition or flow of belief systems and the rearticulation of religious rituals

through migration, and finally about the development of an active practice around these issues, with local immediacy in specific political contexts (what we found ourselves doing during our time off).

All this examined not towards an assertion or appreciation of 'multiculturalisms,' but towards a lived practice, a lived politics, in view and or perhaps, a realisation of existing practices of essential[ist] human continuities.

We have been interchangeably referring to the exchange that is included





here as rituals of writing. It has been shaped via an exploration of exchanges of shrines and habits in the Nicosia Municipal Garden (2016), in MAC Niterói (*Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters* Exhibition 2016) and in a kitchen at the Shelley residence in Pafos (*Plánetes* Exhibition, 2017).

It has been shaped through points of contact which allow us to ponder how different threads are interwoven, narrating *mulher* (woman), through *logos* (speech) and *eikona* (image).

Elements of ritualistic practices are

reflected in habits of political mobilisation, our performance of community, and of how we are in our everyday(s). This publication re-enacts its own transitional enquiry. Dialogues arise through the point of contact between places, deities and people, pointing to a translatability of ideas which considers the elusiveness of the commons in our language and in our experiences.





## **ON RE APHRODITE'S KITCHEN**

*Written by Alexandra Manglis  
for Plánetes Exhibition  
Catalogue. Exhibition Plánetes, Pafos  
European Cultural Capital, 2017.  
Curator Elena Parpa*

Periodically the instigators of Re Aphrodite make a space, unroofed, unwalled, temporarily tethered, and into it you and I and others arrive with our conversations, our listening, and our labour. A patchwork blanket gets thrown against a grassy patch in a central Nicosian park, on a beach or fishing village's pier in Rio, or under a tree in a downtown Pafos garden. It is centred by found and gifted objects that are piled into a shrine of kitsch and sacred. The blanket changes, as does the shrine: people arrive, sew things onto the blanket, offer to rearrange the shrine with new and old artifacts. There should be an incongruity to this layout, but instead the shrine and the sewn-together cloths form an amalgamation that by its very nature invites our on-going interventions.

There is strategy to the Re Aphrodite project, despite the way it feels impulsive and imminent. The locations are chosen in order to seek out access to the margins of society, especially to the communities that gather and reform the otherwise neglected commons of Re Aphrodite's chosen cities. This ritualistic process of community making (collecting, collating, collaborating) creates consecrated ground, even as it is fleeting, even as it then transitions into a folded cloth, packed, ready to unfold into a new time and location. In truth, consecration in transition is at the heart of Re Aphrodite, which takes its cue from the ever-evolving tradition of goddesses connected to and across water, feminine deities in migration, who transform themselves to fit their transitioning people's needs. As a result, by entering Re Aphrodite's space we give into its flux while simultaneously anchoring ourselves in its embrace. We emerge from it complicated, sometimes discomfited, sometimes comforted. Where we go, Re Aphrodite's ripples follow.





00

rites  
of writing:  
circles,  
webs,  
shrines  
& water





*We think of this as capturing a web of objects, people, and ideas, and at the same time, as a shrine.*

The shrine wasn't so personal at first, it became deeply so later on. Each of its distinct parts, each artefact or image, or text, coming with its own separate worlds and overlapping stories that we've been sharing again and again. We can also think of this as a visual novella, telling the story of how these different works came to be, and to be together, and these people. People who convene around different kinds of rituals. Inevitably this book contains an attempt to capture and conjunct ritual, reduce something about it in writing or different types of documentation.

Our friends in the park, on this cloth, were many. They come up in what follows in stories, and stories about stories, narratives and metanarratives, and occasionally pre-narratives: our documentation of the backstage, of the preparations around ritual, of its leftovers, or its gaps and in-betweens. These contain a series of discussions about lines of human difference and segregation, about population displacement and the transitions of faith and culture, and questions about public space, its control, and containment of acts of resistance: about labour conditions, about governmentality and different personal conceptions of freedom, about translation, inclusion, and responsibility to place, about respect or recovery of the commons, and about contemporary patterns of mobilisation. We observed how these concerns formed or were actively contained in our habits, and we shaped them into a cloth [the *colcha*], which became an investigation of the circle.

More humbly, this book is an attempt to write down what we've been doing, also because we need to understand it. She says she doesn't know how to start doing that.



*It's so personal.  
She's right.*

Ritual happens on a different register to \*this\*. Why would we try to put words to ritual? How can we put ritual in writing? Yes, come to think of it, there are different ways to write down ritual, spell-books, diaries, chants, music, and what else? But in writing, in this particular plane, perhaps it is wiser to move past any attempt to capture ritual, but give into the ritualities of this very act. writing on rituals and rituals of writing, rituals of writing rites of writing w-rights and w-rites (Stephanos writes about this...)

So perhaps this is an anthology of writing-rituals. A collection of many people's ritual writing. Rites of writing that in turn reveal different kinds of things about different kinds of rituals, which have something to do with the mother.

*The main thing in bringing the mother is the two kargam.*  
 Stephanides, S. (1988) Hail Mother Kali [documentary]

... early on, Re Aphrodite believed we



were entering a professional collaboration with Athina Antoniadou, an artist we knew had meaningfully purposed her work to the understanding of divinity and femininity.

It makes sense, now, that (Re) Aphrodite turned to Athina to understand ritual, and came to understand family: Hestia. And the shrines in the park became a kitchen. Before that they had all gone into a cloth. It makes sense



*With Elena Parpa at the beach underneath  
Aphrodite's Baths on 21/06/2016. Perhaps this was  
when she decided to give us Dr. Shelley's kitchen.*

now that this transition between the  
park and the kitchen, was through  
this cloth.

Metaphor or simile:

Journeys of transition of Aphrodite  
(Anatolian goddess blended with local  
fertility worship, celebrated in Cyprus  
for thousands of years) and Yemanjá  
(Yoruba female Orisha re-syncretised

in Brazil). Both goddesses are associ-  
ated with water.

Their discursive encounter acted as a  
metaphor to explore ritual in the form  
of shrines, and habits in the form of  
shaping or framing dialogues on how  
we respond collectively or communally.  
In turn this formed a narrative of  
contemporary female stories, which  
tried to shake us, even for a bit, out  
of the insulation of our own stories  
and realities.

Aphrodite, a goddess that comes from  
the sea, or is born out of it, symbol-  
ising her journey from the Near Ori-  
ent and her appropriation by Cypriots  
over thousand of years. The develop-  
ment of the faith of Aphrodite, the  
Olympian goddess of love, sex, beau-  
ty and dispute, born out of sea-foam,  
has roots that can be traced to the  
Assyrian and Babylonian goddess Ish-  
tar, the Sumerian Inanna, the Phoeni-  
cian Astarte (Ashtart), and even fur-  
ther back. Aphrodite arose through  
the subsequent blend of this Anato-





lian Goddess carried across sea water with the local fertility deities in prehistoric Cypriot cultures. Acts of sexual encounters are also included amongst other rituals to celebrate this goddess.

Yemanja, Yemoja is an Orisha, a Yoruba water deity and an African Mother Goddess, celebrated within Afro-Brazilian syncretic religions, such as Umbanda or Candomblé. Portuguese imperialism arrived to a Brazil that already demonstrated an amalgamation of indigenous spiritual practices, which they tried to superimpose with Catholicism. The same imperialist structures also imposed the transatlantic slave trade through a violent mass displacement from Africa, which brought with it belief systems, adapting deities and rituals from the old

continent with the new spirits of the land and disguising them under the facade of Christianity (Chapter 10).

Mary followed on from our initial evocation, which brought into conversation two water Goddesses, Aphrodite and Yemanja. My grand-mother always prayed to Mary -- *the panagia*--. For years I believed she was the most important of the holy triad. Then I realized she was not even included in it. Mary goes by many names on the island - Afroditissa; Sweet kisses; Milk bearer; Water bearer etc (Chapter 11). Costas Papageorgiou records 337 different names for Mary on the island (Papageorgiou 2008).

**Theodora meet Mary. Mary meet Aphrodite. Aphrodite meet Yemanja. Yemanja meet Ramancha...**

## GODDESSES- GARDEN

Let us begin to unpick the threads: without fear of repetition.

Stavros Karayannis makes a direct link between this migrant goddess of Cyprus and the migrant workers who live on the island. He writes that “rather than an indigenous deity” he imagines “Cypriot Aphrodite as a migrant goddess transported to the island of Cyprus by Phoenicians – traders, apparently, when trading provides a tidy and perfectly comprehensible as well as acceptable justification for travel (in contrast with today’s migrant workers whose journeys often motivated by poverty and persecution generate concern and anxiety)” (2012 58).

*The Garden gave rise to the Cloth and these two rise to the surface as protagonists of this Re Aphrodite story alongside the voices you hear in this book.*

Stitching together the feminine in the spiritual, the common in our cities and the social in our artistic practices, our initial clumsy ritualistic set-ups of objects outside, gave way to the use of the Nicosia Municipal Garden as a ground to allow for planned and chance encounters. This trans-



## **THE GARDEN** **PLAYING HOST** **TO MIGRATING** **GODDESSES**

Thinking of Translatability:  
Colcha - the round cloth as  
a garden of possibilities



Left to right:

Theodora, Yemanjá, Aphrodite, Mary. Nicosia Municipal Garden. May 2016.

Meet Demetra and her Sri Lankan food, Nicosia Municipal Garden, June 2016.

Krista Papista, known for her piece on *Modern Girlhood* (2016), performing at Cyprus Pride, 2016, with Pussy Riot's *Prayer* in the background.

Lina ☺ Hatsune Miku in the Nicosia Municipal Garden: we fantasised about our own avatar of the goddess, beyond but inspired by Yamaha's virtual deity.



formed to a travelling cloth, collaborations with new and old friends and community groups, learning from Niterói Contemporary Art Museum's (Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Niterói - MAC) methodologies and to a re-functioning kitchen in the old home of Dr Shelley, a British colonial doctor in Pafos. In this instance, I can only read what has been happening in the last year and a half, through a web like formation of inter-linkages and inter-connectivities between places, ideas and people, which are reiterations of their lived and virtual times. Together with the circle we made, the web seems an appropriate way to describe the way social movements, beliefs or art practices expand through intricate interlaced networks via journeys of transition. The idea of the web becomes central to our discussion. As how on earth can we read a park in Nicosia, a museum in Rio, and a colonial home in Pafos in the same thread of thoughts; how do the ideas of ritual and social mobilisation come together; and how are ethnography and social art practice interlaced?

Much used in the contemporary visual art analysis world, Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, developed within a context of social and technological studies, is presented as this understanding of how social fabrics operate through an ontology and social theory, which is described as web-like. Presenting the possibility of strength and resistance being "more easily achieved through netting, lacing, weaving, twisting, of ties that are weak by themselves, and that each tie, no matter how strong, is itself woven out of still weaker threads" (1996, p. 3), reveals a web-like system that can be related to peace-building activist and writer John-Paul Lederach's use of life in the web. Lederach indicates that the language used to describe the spider's web-making process is "a lexicon of building networks for strategic social change" (2005, p. 81). The image of creating linkages in space through a web-making process, allows us to imagine an outward



permutation which becomes stronger through its repeated reweaving.

We met Jessica Gogan and Luiz Guilherme Vergara a year or so before that, during work around learning and art, art and different definitions of education and art that engages communities. By some serendipitous turn, they found our call inviting critical perspectives on these topics (a big part of their practice in Brazil). This connected with Evi's previous work on continuities of religion in Latin America in relation to the Mediterranean, and Chrystalleni's compulsion to think more and...

*...more and more about water.*

Alexandra introduced us to Rosa. Together they joined us on the cloth in the garden more than once, and then in the kitchen in Pafos. We remember vividly talking to them on Buddha day, when Alexandra added a small fish on the colcha (cloth). The garden, in fact, is something that we have also often discussed with Natalie and the reason we met the Federation of Filipino Organisations Cyprus (FFOC). A green common open oasis in the city hosting its peoples. Different women and men joined us on the cloth in the garden and it is through their eyes that Evi started to realise how the garden as a common public space of possibilities of encounters shaped what Guilherme baptised *colcha de milagres cotidianos* [a quilt of everyday miracles].

*The Colcha- Cloth outside Shelley's residence, Plánetes Exhibition, Pafos European Cultural Capital, 2017. Curator, Elena Parpa. The cloth idea was sewn together by Christina Ramon, who arranged the colour sequence in a circular pattern.*



Jessica Gogan and Luiz Guilherme Vergara walking down Ipanema Beach, in July 2016.



**04/08/2016**

This is where we'll be installing tomorrow; bringing-"inside" work, that was put together (for) outside, and that developed during discussions around the politics of labour, of the where and when and how of contemporary mobilisation (in public spaces under various regimes of control / during time-off / considering the need to work outside, beyond or despite institutional affiliations and official hats / ... ). The MAC is an interesting place to help with this investigation, not only for its roundness, but for its social learning-oriented agenda, and also for the way that its director (Luiz Guilherme Vergara, who invited this project to Brazil) talks about institutional precariousness in relation to the current political climate (notably in conversation with Jessica Gogan of Instituto MESA, who has extremely interesting work across curation, education, and socially engaged art). Dizzying enough, no? At the same time, we're caught in a series of circles:

There's the circular cloth we made for a park in Nicosia, a ritual tool for understanding lines of difference, one that has allowed us to observe and begin to discuss (not least our own) inclusive and exclusive spatial practices. Bringing this process here, at this time, means having to respond to an expanded sense of these lines of difference, or these spatial practices of inclusion and exclusion, or of the conflict (no it isn't different here. It's the exact same thing) even on and about this cloth. So there's the circle of the cloth, the circle of the MAC, and the circles of the Olympics - complementary to the heaving of the favela, of the sea, and of the military. Oh and of facebook [more on that later]. At least some of it is in writing now -- let's see how the installation / this bringing-"inside" goes.

## **BRAZIL.** **A VAST COUNTRY.** **A RICH TROPICAL** **AND SUBTROPICAL** **LAND MASS**

Power relations positioned vis-à-vis racial politics was something we encountered and discussed, beyond our friends at the museum, with Cintia Guedes (Chapter 9) and Michelle



*Ευτυχώς που ήταν τζαι ο Αλέξ Ρίο και είδαμε και κανά φουσκωτό δελφίνι. Group selfie by Cintia Guedes, Mario Campagnani, Raphi Soifer, Evi Tselika, Athina Antoniadou, Michelle Mattiuzzi. Rio August 2017*

Mattiuzzi. Cintia is a friend of Aleks's and Aleks (Aleksander Aguilar, Chapter 10) is family. We cooked for them in their kitchen. We talked. Chrys-talleni insisted we give Michelle Rosa's garment after she had tried it on. Sitting down for dinner we spoke of racial politics, Afro-Brazilian culture, urban marginalisation and social movements. Brazilians of African descent are said to make up 44% of the total respective population and it forms the "single largest population of African descent people outside Nigeria" (Hanchard, 1994). Black consciousness movements in the country started to form a strong political and social shape in the 1970s, with contemporary Afro-Brazilian cultural movements reclaiming the rich African cultural heritage of the country and redefining the meanings of being a black Brazilian (Crook & Johnson, 1999).



In a corner of Guanabara Bay, underneath the museum, Christiane, a daughter of Yemanjá and one of MAC's team of educators, told us about samba, animism, ritual, movement and their coming from Africa.

Opposite MAC, is the Morro do Palácio community. We were taken there for a street party on the night of the Olympic opening ceremony celebration by residents who collaborate with MAC via the Macinho community centre, which is positioned at the edge of the morro facing the museum. We went there together with Nuno Sacramento and his team (Scottish Sculpture Workshop project - part of the exhibition at MAC, Chapter 2) who had worked with the Morro do Palácio community as part of a wider cooperation with the *Observatorio de Favelas*, which had been in development for two years. The communities have their constructed roots prior to the emancipation in Brazil, in 1888. Escaped slaves, predominantly of African or Afro-Brazilian heritage, resided in grouping clusters known as quilombos, and these were a frequent occurrence in the extended Rio area because of the sugar plantations. The word favela is associated with quilombo and refers to the living environments on the hills (morros) of the city, which were close by but harder to urbanise, and from where the inhabitants could access their jobs quickly (Campos, 2005). Rapid increases are noted in num-



Christiane and Chrystalleni, below MAC, Niterói, August 2017

bers later on in the 20th century, when large inflows of families arrived from the North and the North East of the country, in search of work and a better quality of life in the city. The unavailability of affordable housing meant people moved to the morros (hills) creating a distinction between the morros [clandestine, informal urban areas] and the asfalto (referring to the formal part of the city fabric). In Chapter 9, Cintia Guedes discusses how in the last few years and parallel to the large mega events Rio has been hosting, the *morros* become prime real estate and processes of gentrification, favela pacification, police violence, political instability and resistance surface with a force.

Chrystalleni:

**I'm always restless in a circle. I've been told off for breaking it too many times. For interrupting it with new elements and people, or by moving so much within it, that it doesn't settle and the ritual doesn't hold. I still don't understand this. The revelation for me was this discovery of the ritual in the mundane, its normality, its non-exceptionality, the already-there-ness of divinity, the goddess as implied.**

Evi:

**Perhaps then the web consumes the circle.**

Event we joined organised by Mario Campagnani who was involved in Rio 2016: *Os Jogos da Exclusão* (Games of Exclusion) activist actions, bringing together civic actors and activists. August 2016.

Scottish Sculpture Workshop receiving a football t-shirt gift from the Morro, during a late night party in the favela!





*Athina:*

**When I came back to Cyprus after my 3 years traveling in Peru, and my initiation with teacher plants by traditional shamans, I started looking for the routes of shamans/healers on the island. When I discovered Triona, who at this time lived in Pafos, I found out that she herself was traveling in Peru at an ayahuasca retreat in Iquitos. In this way the connection was made before we even met.**

**Triona works with the drum, the beat of the drum can induce an altered state of consciousness that allows us to travel to the upper world, the middle world and the underworld to seek answers and guidance. She does not work with teacher plants in her practice, but she teaches the ways of accessing our intuition in a lucid state of being. These states sharpen the participants' perception and realisation of his or her position in the world.**

**We sit in a circle, energising the centre and then closing the circle. Whatever is said in this circle stays in the circle.**

**This circular positioning of participants is void of hierarchies and is void of limitations, each participant can take his/her time to express and exhibit their insights, in turn and in order.**

**We do not interrupt...! In this way an understanding and a connection develops between the members which goes beyond our daily lives.**

**There are no straight lines in the universe, the circle, and the respect and understanding that is developed in the circle is our natural environment.**



**01**

**THE**

**MANUAL**

**IS**

**LOST,**

**THE**

**SOFTWARE**

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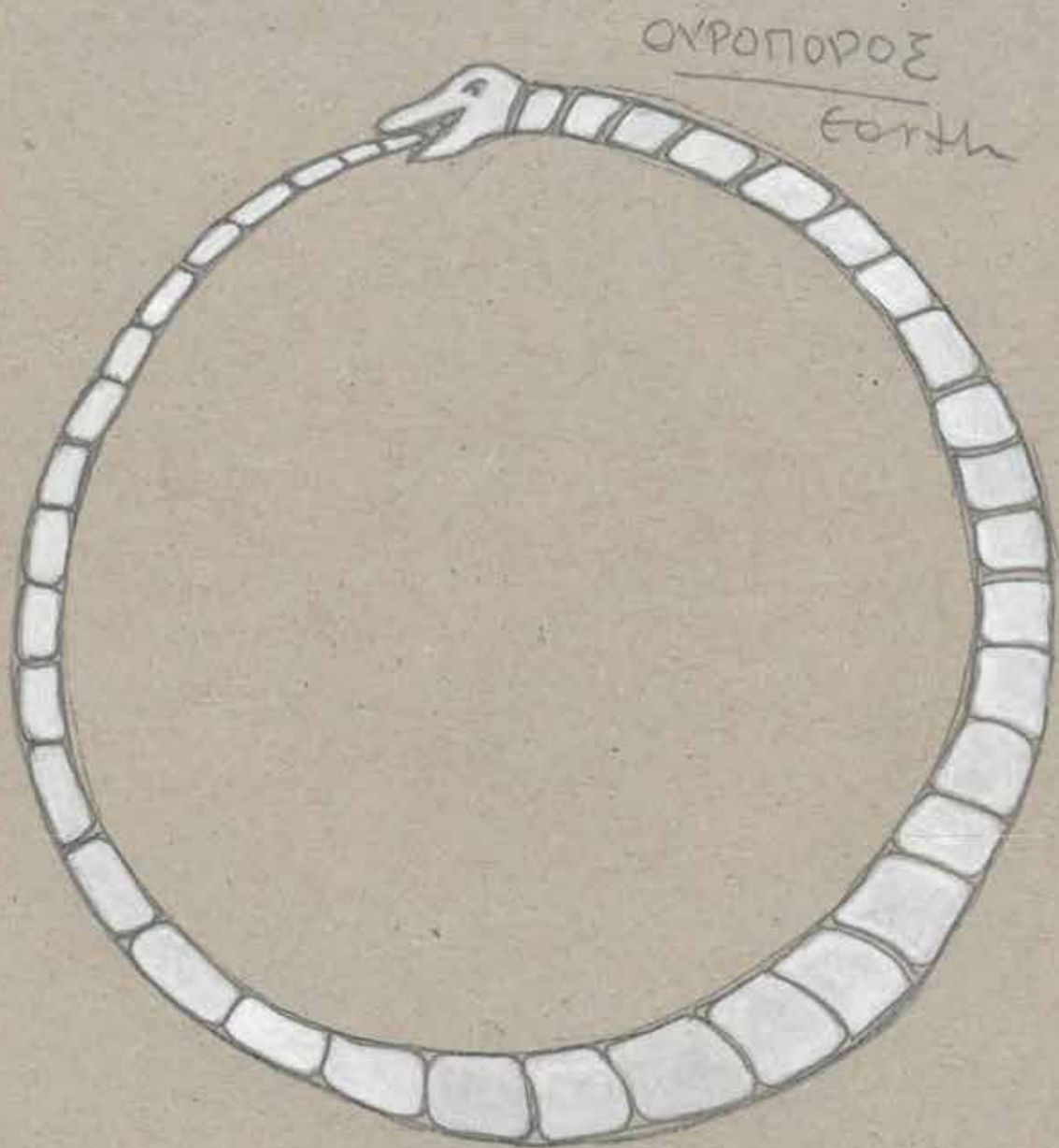
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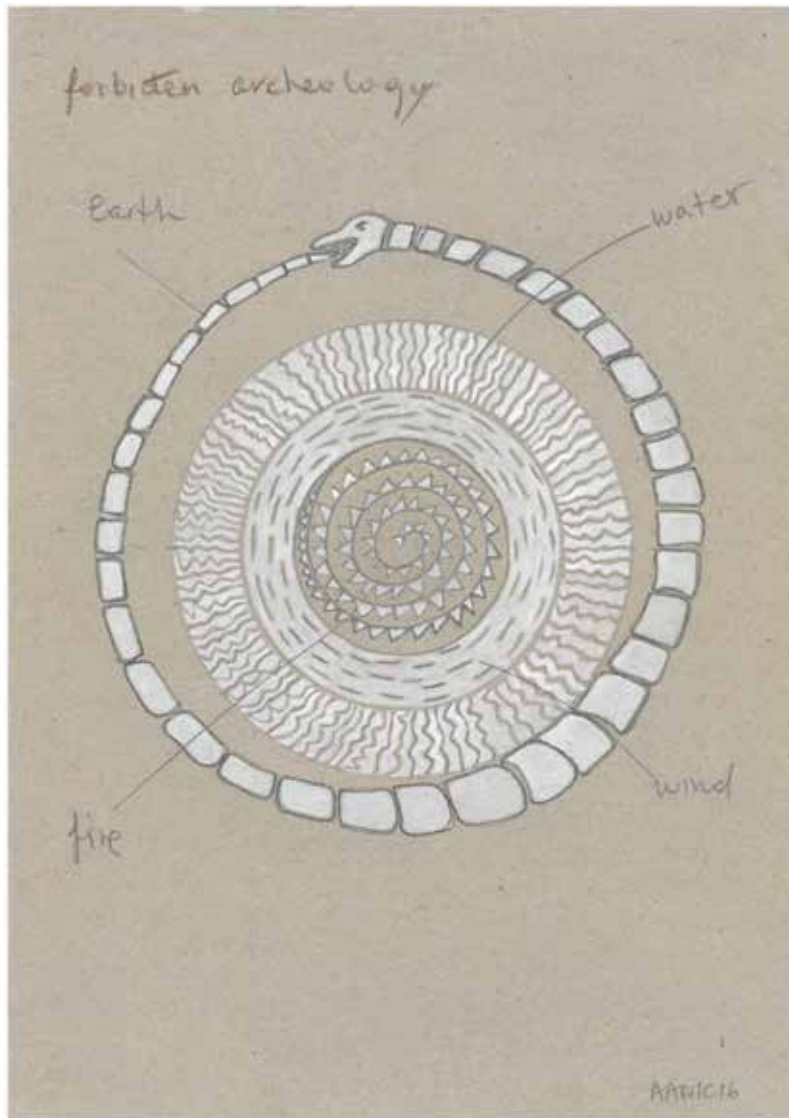
**PROGRAM HAS**

**BEEN HACKED**





Regeneration?



*"Art was a very sacred thing during antiquity; it was held as part of religion, of what was important and significant in life. It was an example of what was noble and beautiful, and gave strength to people in their everyday lives, induced growth and spiritual integrity. In its original form, art helped."*<sup>1</sup>

We are no longer artists, we are no longer shamans.

As we look back at our world, we see that certain things are left neglected, bits of history lost in translation, ideas with ecumenical overtones of values and deep human ethics are found

to be heavy and irrelevant even for the most contemporary of minds. "No sphere of high culture is implicated in the fall of the affluent society in the same way art is...which, so gleefully, the last 20 years, rejected anything that might tie it to the slow, patient, tedious stuff of real creativity.

The modern world has screwed itself and art had led the way, it has become the enemy of truth, the murderer of decency"<sup>2</sup>

What is finally the artistic endeavor... if not the "inventory of human condition" through the eyes of individuals

that can translate the untranslatable and reveal the unseen and undetectable?

"Symbols" are powerful, they talk to our subconscious in mysterious ways, they dictate ideas and behaviours that most of the time surprise and puzzle us.

Who are we?

Where did we come from?

What are we doing here?

Questions, questions that are deprived answers, questions that will stay forever questions.

We have been driven like sheep, into a deeper and deeper boxed-in reality, the web.....the Spider's Web....and there...the spider will do, what the spider does best....getting out of it, is not easy, some of us never make it, some of us never get it, we keep on swimming, just like the other fish, completing our traditions and quieting our suspicions.

There is no doubt that *"the knowledge given to us, by whomever put us on this earth, has been interrupted"*, (library of Alexandria, biblical editings)..., it would *"look like a very well planned objective to weaken the individual"*.<sup>3</sup>

But if we are lucky, we learn something new everyday.

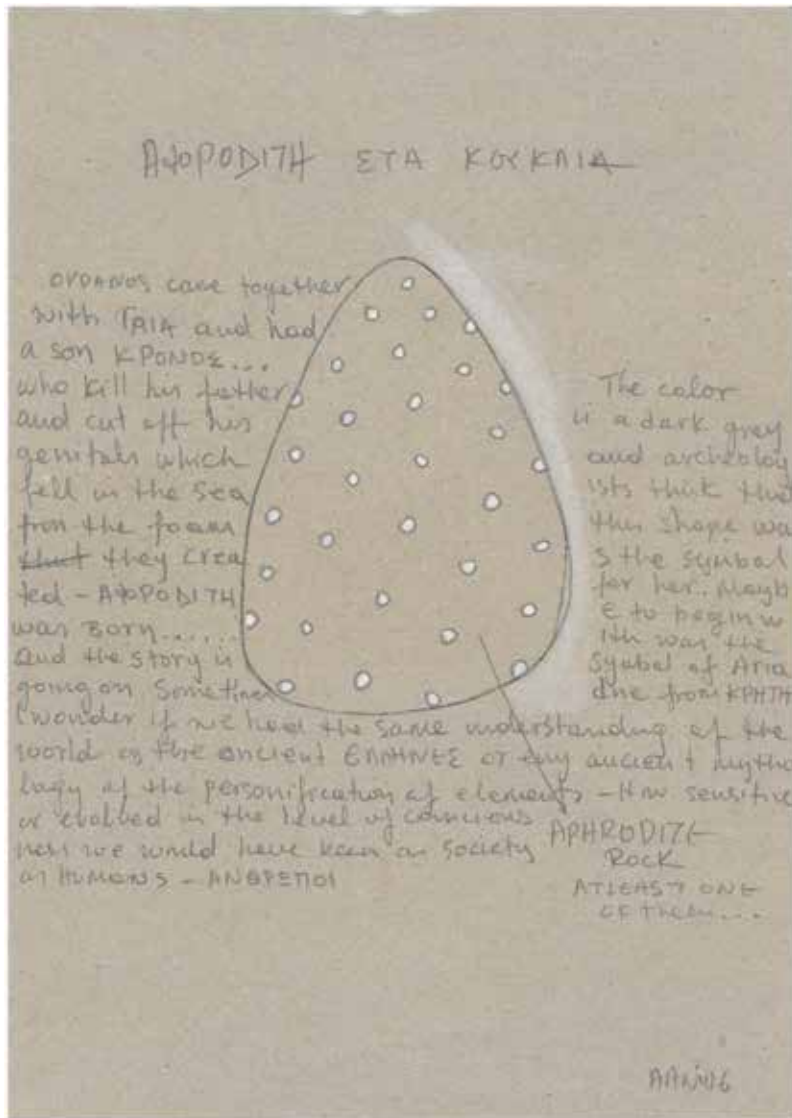
Something that could turn our world upside down in a moment, knowledge always has this danger, it can crash our well organised life....in a second.

Curiosity and the love for truth...just like any other great detective, are the main requirements.

So, I took off, with airplanes and boats, to find out what I am made off.

I was introduced to ayahuasca, the mother of all plants, brewed and consumed by shamans in the jungles of Peru, I walked those jungles; and the mountains; consuming beautiful, tall, green cactuses, fuelled by the warrior's song... in altitudes beyond imagination.





In the corridors of my mind, I entered with a thread, not to get lost, I thought...But if not lost... you can't be found... so of course, my world crashed; everything I thought I knew was wrong.

I knew nothing; I was overwhelmed by nothingness. No words, no words, no words for a while, until I realised that the whole world was made of words, and every word was truth.

(flashback)...back to Spain, where I lived in the early 90s, I remember heated debates about how academics were trying to turn art into a science.

There was a whole new language being created, new words, new world, which in turn created a whole new kind of artist, the kind that would grow along, almost parallel, with the creation of the contemporary art curator!

This scientification of art (the phenomenon of artists often not being able to understand what is written about their own work) breeds disconnection between the participants (academics - artist - public), which disturbs the flow of information because it demands translation and that is abstraction or maybe better, obstruction, that shouts exclusion, just like from any private club.

Terence McKenna, probably the most famous of the psychonauts, and a brilliantly poetic speaker, (some say he worked for the CIA promoting the mushroom), in one of his books, "Food of the Gods" he describes "the shaman" as the "closest relative to the artist and the poet, because, he can see the beginnings and the endings of things... and can communicate that vision", and that for him, "the cosmos, is a tale, that becomes true as it is told and as it tells itself"<sup>4</sup>

With other words, "language is not merely a device for communicating ideas about the world, but rather a tool for bringing the world into existence in the first place. Reality is not simply experienced or reflected in language, but instead is actually produced by language."<sup>5</sup>

And then, all of a sudden, The Book of Genesis makes even more sense, It literally tells us, that "the Logos existed at the beginning of time, The Word of God; and it was the Logos, that extracted the Order that we live in out of Chaos, and this idea is religious because it is fundamental, the ultimate idea in Christianity is the Logos, meaning carefully articulated. Truthful speech transforms chaos into habitable Order."<sup>6</sup>

And that is what constitutes a person with full individuality, the ability to create/articulate order out of chaos... if these "humans, with full individuality would regain group consciousness, they would have a Godly power to create and alter things on Earth."<sup>7</sup>

And that is the ultimate goal that an artist should aim for; because, as artists, we always had that little door of escape unlocked. That door of perception, of intuition, of inspiration, in spirit communication with something beyond, demanding to be articulated, created or sang.

We artists, usually travel on slower, winding roads, that give us time to smell the flowers and a certain distance, to have a clearer picture of our world and our humanity.

Not a lot of people understand that. Being an artist does not only entail fun and games, openings and parties, sex and Rock'n'Roll, it entails magic.

We are the magicians of our world; politics and business is not our concern, although we need to have a clear vision of it all to be able to counteract it, our job is to find and honour what is most beautiful in this world, and communicate that vision.

This requires the suspension of beliefs to the point that nothing is impossible, which helps us see the patterns in the streaming of it all, and understand, at least for a moment.

The expression of that understanding, is to be able to be translated into a language, which could consequently create a world, an atmosphere or a beautiful song.

This is a role that should be reclaimed by the artists, as they are the ones that can find that language and speak it.

Joseph Beuys was all in with the idea of the artist as shaman, as was Terence McKenna, who went a step further to give us a grave responsibility by saying in one of his lectures that, *"art's task is to save the soul of mankind, and anything less, is like dithering while Rome burns, because the art-*

ists, who are self selected for being able to journey into the Other, if the artists can not find the way, the way can not be found.”<sup>8</sup>

Am I going on and on about speech and words, responsibilities and truths; about sweet chocolate mousse and utopias of understanding in vain? are we damned if we do get it and damned if we don't?

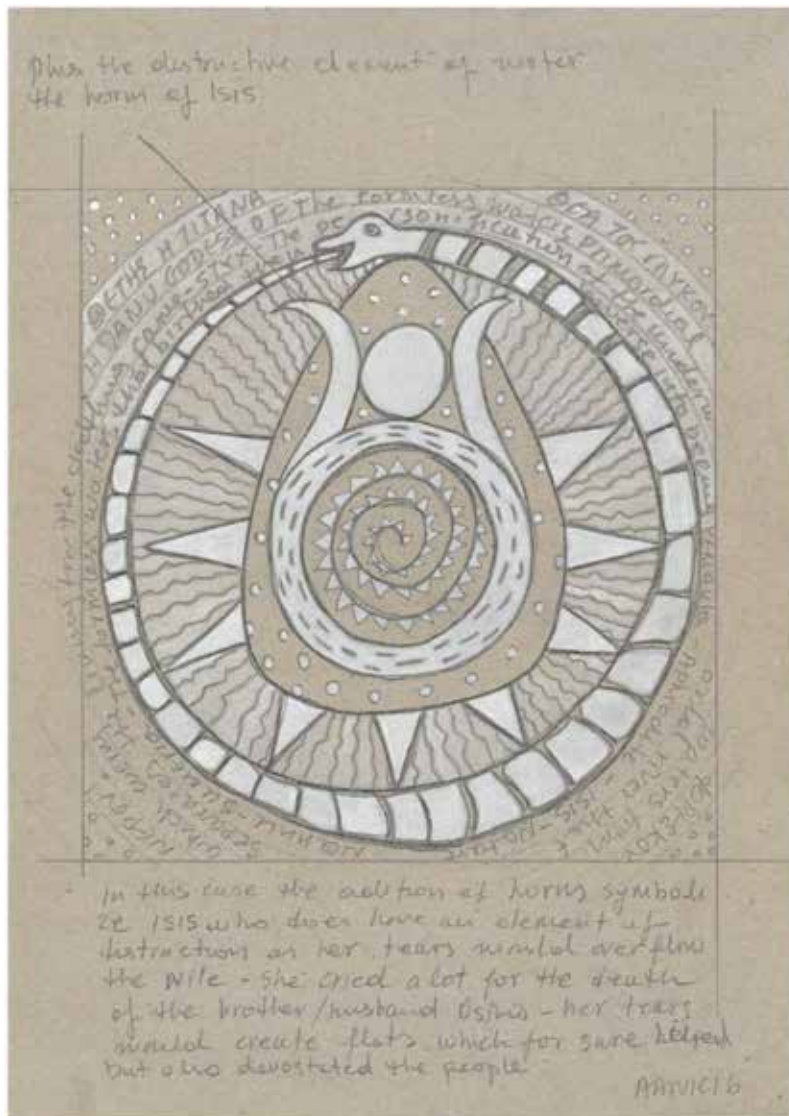
If I think though, of the cloth, our cloth “the cloth of everyday little miracles” (reaphrodite’s rituals/habits, 2016), that travelled to the end of the world and back, it always had that intention to me, of gathering, of conversing and negotiating the various implementations of these ideas. As a group this helped us come a little bit closer towards understanding the maybes of negotiation, the whys of confrontation and the means of the communication.

This allows us to articulate any other -ation that could come between us. Human nature was, and always will be, the same. It just gets manipulated and it mutates, either through actual physical operations (transgenderism / transhumanism), through alimentation (GMOs) and also by psychological “operations”, as would be, for example, politics and economics.

As Margaret Thatcher once said, "What's irritated me about the whole direction of politics in the last 30 years is that it's always been towards the collectivist society. People have forgotten about the personal society. And they say: do I count, do I matter? To which the short answer is, yes. And therefore, it isn't that I set out on economic policies; it's that I set out really to change the approach, and changing the economics is the means of changing that approach. If you change the approach you really are after the heart and soul of the nation..."<sup>9</sup>

How do we counteract that?

A further compartmentalisation of society, politically, sexually or racially, will lead us to unacceptable compromises and drive us further and further from... ourselves/nature.





We need to talk, we need to gather.

So yes, those gatherings, our gatherings, around and on the cloth gatherings, maybe all around the kitchen table, yes those conversations, yes, those were the ones. Uncensored expressions of fears and dreams, of human rituals and habits, not politically correct arrows which breaded little shocks along with nuts and tea....and many, many books.

We are the most powerful computer ever built and we have no idea how it (we) work(s)...

The manual is lost, the software are illegal and the program has been hacked.

#### NOTES

1. "Therapeutic Value of the Great Art" lecture by Manly P. Hall
2. Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian*, "How art killed our culture" 2009
3. Gregg Braden
4. Terence McKenna, "Food of the Gods", ISBN 9780712670388, RIDER
5. Misi Landau, "Narratives of Human Evolution" ISBN-13: 978-0300054316
6. Jordan B. Peterson, youtube: Logos - The Articulated Truth
7. Fosar and F. Bludorf "Vernetzte-Intelligenz" ISBN-10: 3930243237, ISBN-13: 978-3930243235
8. Terence McKenna, "Food of the Gods", ISBN 9780712670388, RIDER
9. Margaret Thatcher Interview for Sunday Times, May 1 Fr 1981











Hernandez José di Silva outside of his home







**02**

**A**  
**QUILT**  
**OF**  
**CONVERSATIONS**

**Recorded Dialogues:**

Discussion on the exhibition and project *Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters*

With: Rodrigo Braga, Pierre Crapez, Martha Niklaus, Mercedes Lachman, Lia do Rio, Regina de Paula, Ignes Albuquerque, Livia Moura, Diana Kolker, Christiane da Cunha and Breno Platais



Diana Kalker, Livia Moura and Ignes Albuquerque. Caixa de Pandora (Pandora's box), exhibition programme Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters, 2016 featuring Re-Aphrodite's Quilt of Everyday Miracles. Photo: Léo Zulluh

## **GUANABARA BAY: HIDDEN LIVES & WATERS**

The exhibition and project Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters, held from August 5 to November 6, 2016 at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Niterói (MAC), celebrated the museum's environmental vocation as part of its 20th anniversary. Amongst various influences and activist ideas, the project embraced the work of the Brazilian critic Mário Pedrosa, and artist Hélio Oiticica, who since the 1960s had conceptualised an environmental art inseparable from the world as a new ethic, as vital conceptual touchstones. Designed by the famous architect Oscar Niemeyer and located in the peripheral city of Niterói, the museum is perched on a small peninsula overlooking Rio de Janeiro's stunning Guanabara Bay. Like a sentinel or guardian committed to an ethical-esthetic vocation to place, MAC's circular form and context amidst the beauty of the landscape and the contradictions of contemporary city life – its social violence, inequalities, and pollution – operates both as a place to view and discuss such issues and as a catalyst for new possibilities of art and environmental action. These possibilities shaped the curatorial vision for the exhibition/project Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters embracing an ethical-esthetic publicness that brought together diverse artistic practices and socio-environmental actions, irradiating interventions and collaborations within various contexts and communities in the Guanabara Bay region.

Inspired by the spirit of encounter and conversation provoked by the collective Re-Aphrodite's *The Quilt of Everyday Miracles* (one of the works in the exhibition) the Rio based Instituto MESA – a transdisciplinary institute focusing on deepening connections between art and society – collaborated with MAC to produce a podcast featuring diverse perspectives of some of the artists, educators, and collaborators involved.

The following “quilt” of conversations was edited from the podcast.

Editors: Jessica Gogan and Luiz Guilherme Vergara. Acknowledgments and collaboration: Rodrigo Braga, Pierre Crapez, Martha Niklaus, Mercedes Lachman, Lia do Rio, Regina de Paula, Ignes Albuquerque, Livia Moura, Diana Kolker, Christiane da Cunha, Breno Platais, Cyro Cormack Neto (podcast audio editing) and Caroline Bellomo (transcription and copy editing in Portuguese). Thanks Denise Adams. Translation: Jessica Gogan.

### **PART 1 THE PATCHWORK**

Working with video, photography, and installation, Rodrigo Braga explores the limit zones of direct interaction and mutual belonging between body, culture, and nature. His video, *Florão da América* (Flower of America) 2016, specially made for MAC's exhibition, explores the horizons of Guanabara Bay around Paquetá Island, a small residential island within the Bay itself where no cars are allowed. The piece draws on the symbolic dimension of this landscape as a gateway for ships, conquests, and desires. Its title also refers to Brazil's national anthem and 500-year history.

**Rodrigo Braga:** I'm not an artist, even though a lot of people may say so, that works with nature, my issues are not only about nature, they are not just about ecology. They are much more about man and the interface between man and nature where things happen. So this is where I focus my attention. My relationship with Rio begins, as for almost everyone in the landscape, and the landscape as seen from MAC is one of the most interesting I have ever seen in my life, one that continues to surprise me. Guanabara Bay surprises me, captivates me, and makes me want to do something, always has. So when the invitation came to participate in the exhibition, I already had the intention of working in Paquetá. It's a place I go to

a lot. In the film I made I arrive alone navigating a small fisherman's boat, a wooden boat with oars, and I throw stones onto these islets, and as each one hits, I temporarily moor the boat and lay a flag. And I do this again, and again, all afternoon, laying a total of 40 flags each 2.5m in height. They are yellow-gold banners – a gold colour that literally as well as metaphorically reflects the wealth of Brazil, this stolen gold, so to speak.

Pierre Crapez, professor, artist, musician, and poet teaches in the art department at the Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF). His research focuses on contemporary artistic practices and urbanism through the study of geopoetics. For this exhibition he contributed the poem *Cosmocópio* (Cosmocopia), to accompany the installation of a telescope installed on MAC's varanda inviting visitors to look at and to be transported to the ecological sanctuary of Cagarras Islands located just outside the entrance to Guanabara Bay. The installation and poem converge the lenses of science and art.

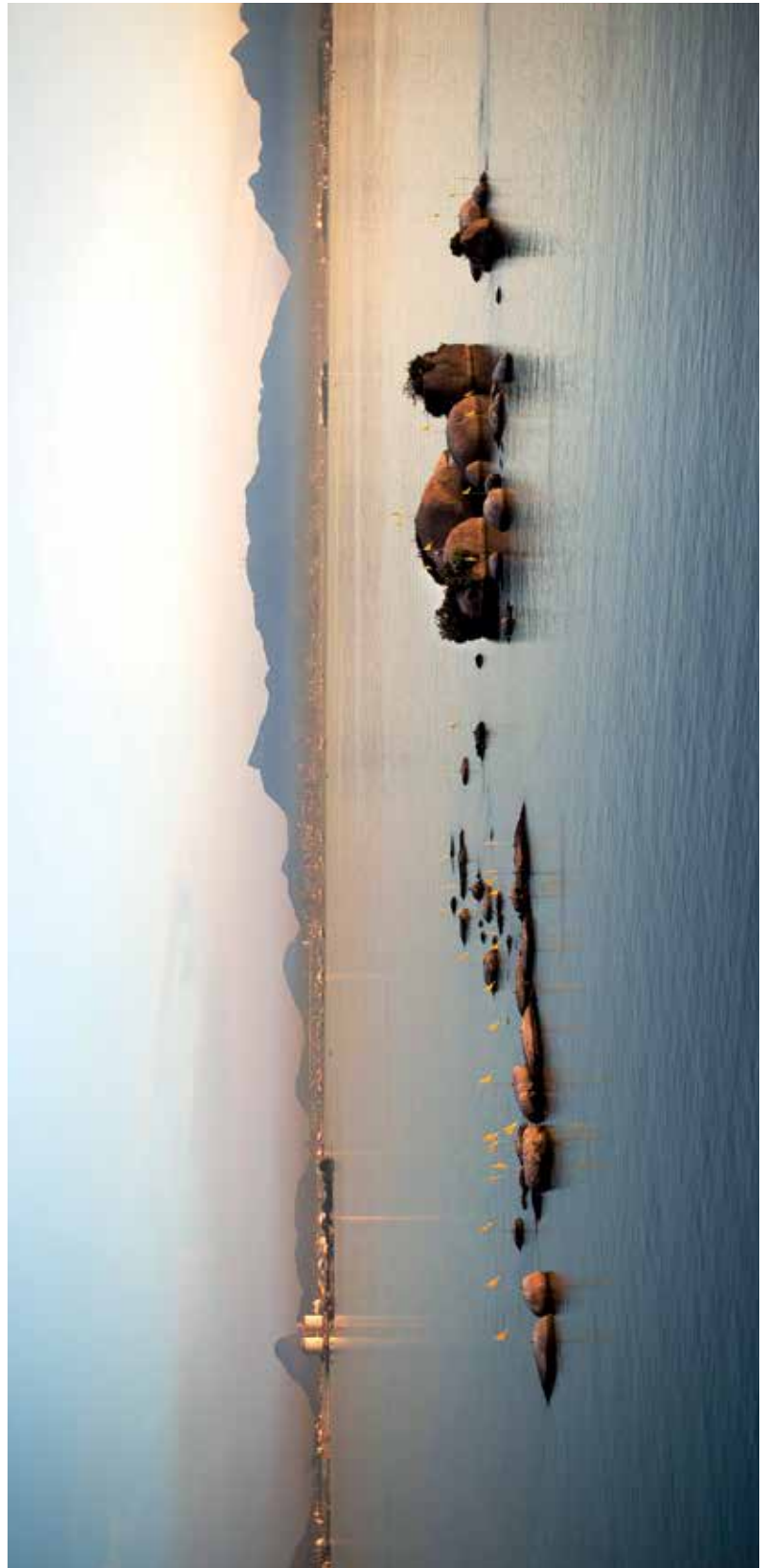
**Pierre Crapez:** I, Pierre, come from another horizon, from the distant European horizon and coming here to Brazil, years ago, I became aware of another landscape. In truth, I wanted to “dare” myself in this horizon, one that had reached my ears through the sounds of Brazilian music, in search of the different. This new landscape spread inside my eyes and revealed to me another self that was seeking to reconnect with this “obscure depth” that constitutes us, that shares something with the Universe. My first discovery was the faces of people of this deep Brazil where this landscape was stamped and I realised how much biology and landscape are mixed in the vision of the poet and that there is a mutual genesis between man and landscape. And so for me, to create is to seek out this rootedness, this reconnection with the land, with the place, with the landscape and to perceive that in opening up and becoming porous to place, the artist recon-



nects us with the cosmic matrix, this dimension that speaks of the world, speaks of the dwelling place of men.

*Educator and social entrepreneur Maria Ignês Albuquerque focuses on issues of sustainability via Gaia Education and environmental activism. For MAC's project/exhibition, together with Priscilla Grimberg, she created bridges between the museum and the process of social and environmental transformation occurring at the home of 86 year-old Hernandez José da Silva (Sr. Hernandez), a resident of Morro do Bumba favela in Niterói. Escultura Viva - Casa Museu - Rancho Verde (Living Structure - Home/Museum - Green Ranch) comprised an installation at MAC with elements from Sr. Hernandez's home and reliquaries he made from recycled materials and garbage painted green, as well as featuring actions at the Rancho Verde itself. The project, the result of a collaboration begun in 2010 as part of the Family in Transit programme of the Experimental Nucleus of Education and Art at the Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, focused on bringing to MAC the power of the Rancho as a place of encounter and collaboration and on drawing attention and contributing to the activist project of the house itself. One example of the latter was the 2016 documentary The Discarded, directed by Annie Costner and Carla Dauden, focusing on pollution in Guanabara Bay that featured the Rancho Verde as a key part of the film.*

**Ignês Albuquerque:** Today I see that everything we do has a tendency to diffuse borders, we easily mix one with the other - the artist, the work, the public, the social, the environmental, and the spiritual - and in these processes, at least in what we have experienced, we are seeing more and more the power of encounters. Some even seem magical, but we know this to be the result of confluences ...synergies ... between people's desires and dreams, where more and more they reflect ethical and aesthetic purposes in the work they are doing, be it an educational, artistic or social process. So, in fact, the



Rodrigo Braga. Florão da América (Flower of America), Video still, 2016.

work with Sr. Hernandez is neither his house itself as a model, nor the exhibition at MAC, but rather this living sculpture that is being created every day via a growing network of collaboration, which today is so rich and, at the same time, so simple. Perhaps it is in its very simplicity that people manage to keep meeting to contribute to the project, because the work structure allows each collaborator to relocate their knowledge and bring their own structures to (co) create the network, here remembering the ideas of [constructivist psychologist Lev] Vygotsky relative to the use of pre-existing structures. The sustainability of the process depends on this flow and this also means we do not have to create everything anew for something to happen. If a person has a body of knowledge, if they are already meeting, if they are part of a group, if they are already engaged with a circle of people, why not join together to do things? Why not seek out the experimental possibilities of a museum as a laboratory?

*Artist Regina de Paula draws on both the maritime landscape of her home in Rio de Janeiro and her experienc-*

*es of the desert in Jerusalem to inform her performances and installations. Her work presented at MAC featured photography of a performance at a shoreline in Rio, revealing and submerging particular texts and pages of the Bible. Sea, coast, beach, sand, text, Regina points to the liminal condition of the artist, life and work – as a zone of passage and transformation of meanings in the world. The poetic and symbolic relationship between desert and Bible, littoral and literature converge and dissolve in the movements of the waves.*

**Regina de Paula:** My production is affected by my experiences, by my being in the world, and by my encounter with certain places. The work I present in this exhibition is drawn from an action that happened on Arpoador beach [in Rio de Janeiro]. I always choose places with which I already have a relationship or with which I have had an encounter. In the case of this performance with the Bible, depicted in photographs, my intention to do this on the beach was to transport a biblical landscape from the desert to Rio de Janeiro. I can say that this work began earlier, starting with my

trip to Jerusalem. This trip launched a whole new process and gave a new dimension to my work featuring beach landscapes and the material of sand; elements that had existed before the trip but here gained another dimension, a historical dimension. I came to understand better what this landscape was, what sand meant to me that I always knew that went beyond the simplicity of the Carioca beach. [T.N. Carioca is a moniker for people/things from Rio de Janeiro].

Artist and curator, Martha Niklaus brought to MAC's varanda a manifesto based on an intervention with sailors and residents of the Marina da Glória protesting the aggressive and accelerated speculation impacting the Marina itself and Guanabara Bay. The intervention Horizonte Negro (Black Horizon) featured a collective performance sailing across the Bay with 26 boats equipped with black sails. MAC's installation comprised photographs, statements and a video of the event. Amidst the marvellous landscape of Rio and Guanabara Bay, Horizonte Negro denounces the appropriation of local resources by the dominant forces of global capitalism.



**Martha Niklaus:** Recently, I have been doing a lot of work in the city of Rio de Janeiro in connection with critical battles and political issues related to the rights of access and preservation of public space. At MAC, I present the work *Horizonte Negro* inspired by my involvement with the sailors at the Marina da Glória and their struggle to maintain the marina as a public resource for the city of Rio de Janeiro. At first my involvement was as a concerned citizen, yet this citizen is also indissociable from myself as artist citizen. My adherence to social movements is motivated by ethics and art is a response to this. At the time, the Marina da Glória was being privatised, creating an elitist space of exclusion where a public place was being threatened by capitalist greed. This had a great impact on me. I accompanied the sailors during each step of the emerging activist movement, going to public hearings, to meetings etc, and simply being supportive and believing in the need to fight. The performance/action in Guanabara Bay, *Horizonte Negro*, featured the participation of 26 sailors/sailboats and was seen as a manifesto. The event had a very strong im-

pact, including internationally. However, at the time, the city of Rio was living in a “state of exception” due to the permissiveness required for infrastructural works to facilitate hosting the 2016 Olympics. Here, in this context, the work completed at the Marina and its so-called new use, have been mischaracterised as representing a public nautical space. Up until today, the sailors continue to fight against this exploitation and unfortunately many have already had to leave the place.

*Artists Lia do Rio and Enrique Banfi created an installation for MAC's varanda, juxtaposing a reproduction of a painting by the 18<sup>th</sup> century artist Leandro Joaquim, Pesca da Baleia (Fishing of the Whale) with recordings of whale sounds bringing to the contemporary landscape a vision and sound of what we no longer see - the history, life and richness of whales in Guanabara Bay.*

**Lia do Rio:** My process as a whole had, at the beginning, several influences. I was struck by, for example, a work by Joseph Beuys for Documenta in 1982 where he placed thousands of stones on the lawn of Museum Frid-

ericianum that corresponded to deforestation with the goal that this would shrink each time a tree was planted. At the time, I didn't fully understand what this was. I thought: “in Brazil nobody would look at this work, because everything here is so disorganised, here it's necessary to organise.” So I went on to organise materials that I found on the street or wherever they were found, using forms dictated by the place, “to see what one was no longer able to see and to think about: the before, the during and the after.” In that way the question of temporality was already contained in the works. All of them --at least the majority and rare are the ones that are not-- have to do with the locality. Since the 1980s, I work in the landscape, that is, with the landscape and in the landscape, something that not everyone does. I mean, in Rio, artists work with the landscape, but not everyone works “in” the landscape, that is actually within it. Another influence that was important, at the beginning, was the work of Richard Long and the possibilities of land art. Here I thought, “that's it, that's the direction, my path is in this direction.” So my current project, also



Martha Niklaus. *Horizonte Negro* (Black Horizon). Performance in collaboration with sailors from Marina da Glória, Rio de Janeiro, 2015. Photo: Alice Kohler





linked to site specificity, arose because it emerged from an interaction with MAC, its landscape and history. And, I would add that in the current curatorial vision's embrace of art and related concerns, I see a commitment to environmental issues, one that is also evident in the museum's educational proposals.

*In her video Benção de Deus (God's Blessing), the artist Mercedes Lachmann traces the story of the extraction of a 1946 wooden boat from the sea and its various dislocations and re-installations in Rio and Niterói. The piece navigates and crosses different symbolic, existential, and environmental imaginaries from the encounter and rescue of the old boat from its submerged condition, decomposing at the bottom of the mud around Conceição Island, to its transtemporal rebirth as a public sculpture in the Campo de São Bento park in Niterói. Today the Benção de Deus is fully integrated into the life of the park, both as a place of playful activation of*

*children's imagination and as scenery for visitors' photography.*

**Mercedes Lachmann:** The environmental is everything that surrounds us: the human, living beings, things. I have always been close to environmental issues, questions of sustainability, and sustainable initiatives and when I started working as an artist I think this concern appeared naturally. The work done for MAC evolved from an in-depth research process that had aimed to unite the landscape and the public square together with a place permeated by (his)stories, that is Glória. I did a lot of research on this place that had been covered by the sea for many, many centuries and had been gradually reclaimed. From here began the work that would eventually culminate in the video created for MAC. After trying over the course of a year to return *Benção de Deus* to the sea, where it would reintegrate with the sea as a body, as part of the maritime nature, I had to give up, because I couldn't manage to secure the nec-

essary environmental licenses. The video then became a poetic re-reading of various dislocations of the boat and the landscapes it passed through. My real and subjective experience interwoven.

*Using video, ceramics, and other media, the artist Livia Moura explores the issues of the feminine, especially the transition between Neolithic non-violent societies that embraced collective, mutual, and matriarchal principles to those of the patriarchal world that shape our contemporary lives. Her video installation Pandorama, inspired by the myth of Pandora, features ceramic vases made by the artist referring to ancient mythological civilisations and a video realised at the Islands of Cagarras just outside of Guanabara Bay where the vases were symbolically returned to the ocean.*

**Livia Moura:** The archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, an important specialist in the Neolithic period who uses new technologies of dating, has ob-



served that about 6,000 years ago there was a transition from peaceful societies that worshiped feminine deities to ones that worshiped war. The myth of Pandora accompanies this transition. In ancient Greece Pandora was a “sacred vase” which, following social transformations evolved into an image of an oppressed woman who carries the vase, to eventually being the woman who opens the box and becomes guilty of original sin. So in the *Pandorama* video, made especially for this exhibition, ceramic vases appear that I made in southern Italy in 2010, during the period when I was deeply studying these subjects. I made these vases that camouflaged themselves with the ocean, like the hunt that swallows the hunter and to-

gether with collaborators I turned a dream into a reality by submerging those vases into the depths of Guanabara Bay. As part of the video I also recovered an installation-performance that I had done as part of the programme MAC Vazio [Empty MAC – a series of performances over a weekend when the museum was literally “empty” in-between exhibitions]. This was in 2006. The piece was called *Renda* [T.N. in Portuguese “renda” means both lace and income] and made a pun on the income of capital and that of the *rendeiras* (lace makers). Obsessively working at a sewing machine, sewing together plastic bags I produced what capital income produces: garbage. The obsessive operation and sound of the sew-

ing machine next to an ever-growing installation made of sewn plastic bags, created a monstrous and deformed audio-visual accumulation amidst the futuristic space of Oscar Niemeyer’s circular architecture. For *Pandorama*, as part of the ritual of the video, we temporarily brought these 2006 sewn garbage lace-nets into the ocean, rescuing as-it-were a contemporary Pandora who might then relocate us in the world. It ended up becoming a collective ritual. On the boat going out to the Islands we met Patricia Furtado de Mendonça, an apneist performer, who incarnated Pandora plunging with the plastic “income” (waste from an industrial age) in a state of apnea to push these “lace-plastic-nets” into the vases now on the seabed.

*Diana Kolker develops projects and actions at the interface between art and society, in partnership with institutions, most recently the Mercosul Contemporary Art Biennial [in Porto Alegre in the Southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul]. She is an artist, researcher, and member of Colectivo E and the research group Interfluxus: contemporary art and society (Postgraduate Program in Contemporary Art, UFF). Diana was invited to inhabit the museum and the exhibition, acting as a connecting force between artistic, educational, and curatorial practices.*

**Diana Kolker:** On institutional organisational charts I am usually located in the educational sector, but in practice, the actions I conceive are situated in a zone of convergence between artistic, educational, and curatorial practices, in an effort to cultivate spaces of encounter, affection, listening, and creation. In this convergence zone, I created and carried out various actions in the context of the exhibition *Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters*, in collaboration with the collective Re-Aphrodite and the artist Livia Moura. Both talk about issues related to constructions of the feminine gender, their potencies and weaknesses in a world beset by patriarchy, marking the lack of

Sr. Hernandez José da Silva, Igrês de Albuquerque and Priscila Grimberg, Rancho Verde. Installation shots Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters, 2016. Photo: Pat Kilgore.





distinction between the political and regimes of sensibility. My proposal, which I call “Pandora’s Box,” was presented with Lívia and the educator Ignes Albuquerque and took place on Re-Aphrodite’s “everyday miracle quilt” also presented in the exhibition. I developed the dynamic of the proposal in 2008, but at that time it was focused more on the training of educators, through the sharing of experiences and theatricalisation of situations, owing much to Augusto Boal’s practices from *The Theater of the Oppressed*. Beginning in 2015, I started to use this dynamic with women’s groups, still drawing on the practice of sharing experiences as the main activity, but now focusing on care – of oneself and the other. It is a care that is transversal and not vertical – neither the authority attributed to medical care or the subaltern nature of care in domestic settings. The dynamic is configured in a circular format, using a traditional talk circle (for the exhibition everyone was seated on the quilt created by Re-Aphrodite) to trigger questions elaborated by the participants themselves and to facilitate a collective withdrawal of the body from the regime of verticality, activating other modes of relationship. This activity at MAC was open to a general public and brought together about 15 women between the ages of 20 and 60 and together we addressed the question: What issues related to the feminine and/or motherhood in the contemporary world need to be discussed, welcomed, potentialised, debated, reviewed, deconstructed, destroyed, and (re) invented?

*Since 2004, working in a multitude of media, Christiane da Cunha has participated in various exhibitions and held individual and collective performances integrating dance and visual arts focusing on recovering Afro-Brazilian roots. She has presented her work in several festivals, theatrical venues, and centres in Europe, Africa, and Brazil. Currently she is developing academic research on the transdisciplinary, transcultural, and multisensorial relationship between the body and art.*

**Christiane da Cunha:** As my contribution to the exhibition I collaborated with Re-Aphrodite, Diana Kolker and teachers from the Pro-Child day care centre to develop an activity with and for the children there. We gathered words in Portuguese with origins in the Greek language and the children had to produce a corporal gesture for each word. There was something mechanical about their gestures and when we reached the word ‘magic’, I noticed that all the children connected the word to the gesture of a hand waving a magic wand. Most of the children were of Afro-Brazilian origin and for me it was remarkable that none of them expressed a gesture of magic belonging to the Afro-Brazilian animist culture, particularly because some did capoeira [Afro-Brazilian form of martial art]. Such animist practices are intrinsically linked to “mandinga” [Afro-Brazilian magic and shamanism] and emerge as a kind of magic achieved through the knowledge of the invisible. What would the absence or disappearance of these gestures indicate? I then showed the children a “mandingueiro” [Someone who uses “mandinga”] gesture and kept watching. Soon after, when one of the students did not know how to react to the word “enthusiasm”, the teacher reminded him of his joy when he danced *passinho* [Afro-Brazilian urban dance style]. In a fraction of a second his face lit up and his whole body embodied what the word means: seemingly possessed by the essence of a God or divine inspiration. Finally, I saw a word incarnated as [Luiz Guilherme] Vergara has described, a fully embodied gesture, a presence that supplants absence – a capacity of the African diaspora that continues to surprise me. In delivering an offering to Yemênjá [Goddess of the Sea] a few days later with gifts that Re-Aphrodite had brought from Cyprus, we talked about the children and to the Sea as if talking to someone with whom one has intimacy and respect. This posture is not based on dogmas, but on a sensory ethic that recognises beings and the whole of the natural world. We talked with the

Sea and about the political ramifications that involve this ethic. The devaluation of such sensory ethics is at the crux of colonialism and therein lies the core of its repression, thus allowing the continuous exploration of these cultures and their environment.

*Breno Platais, coordinator of MACQuinho, a community cultural centre (formerly a satellite of MAC) in the neighbouring favela Morro do Palácio participated in the collaboration initiative Mesa Baldio (Common Table) also part of the Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters exhibition/project. “Terrenos baldios” in Brazilian Portuguese means abandoned land or empty city lots. In Portuguese from Portuguese “baldios” can also mean common land or at least land open to shared use, somewhat akin to the English “commons.” As such Portuguese Scottish based curator, Nuno Sacramento proposed the banquet project Mesa Baldio as a social sculpture created in collaboration with: Scottish Sculpture Workshop (where Sacramento was at the time director), MAC, MACQuinho, Observatório de Favelas (Favela Observatory in the Maré favela in Rio de Janeiro), Instituto Mesa and diverse artists, producers and social agents: Nance Klhem, Alda Lais, Nina Alexandrisky, Sr. Hernandez, Henrique Viviani, Ignes Albuquerque, Raquel Willadino, Marcia da Silva, and the community of Gradim, an outlying fisherman community of Guanabara Bay. MACQuinho was inaugurated in 2008, as a result of MAC’s long-standing initiative Arte Ação Ambiental (Environmental Art Action Project). The centre was reopened in 2014 as an Urban Digital Platform of the Municipal Department of Education, Science and Technology, at which time Breno assumed his role as the center’s coordinator.*

**Breno Platais:** I think this project that we all participated in – I won’t even say that I participated because it really was a whole group, the whole team at MACQuinho but not only MACQuinho, also MAC, Observatório de Favelas, communities of Gradim and Bumba. The idea was to create



a collective banquet where, together, we all made, not only the food, but the table, the cutlery etc, everything that was going to be needed or used to make and host the dinner. The table was designed and built at the Observatório de Favelas. The chairs in Bumba. The cups, plates and mugs were made by Campos Avançado in Ingá [neighbourhood of the museum] and also in workshops in Bumba. The cutlery came from Europe, and the placemats were made in Gradim. We made a compost area and then a vegetable garden on a small patch of land at the front of MACquinho, and the community began to harvest tomatoes. At last we held our banquet. Here we connected people, worlds, and inequalities. We made pizzas using an oven that was produced with a technique learned by one of our collaborators in prison. According to him, the prisoners had nothing to do and found that with aluminum foil from food containers, incandescent lamps that they took from the ceiling, and a cardboard box they were able to set up an oven and cook several things. So we tested this oven for the project and made pizza on MAC's patio using this large collective table. Everyone could eat together, the entire team,

everyone at MAC could eat a piece of pizza, including the security guards and tourists, visitors to the museum that afternoon. Everything was very tasty! The original idea of a banquet, with everyone seated, dinner plates and cutlery, well that died, because the table turned into a counter for everyone to create their pizza and put it in the oven. Luckily, we documented it all and the whole gang. It was a great afternoon. Everyone interacted really well.

## **PART 2** **THE QUILT**

*After the individual statements, we brought everyone together to discuss the shifting relationships between artists, environment, and institutions and the practices emerging from these dynamics. We asked: What is the role of the institution? What does it mean to exhibit? In 21<sup>st</sup> century contexts what schools do we need to both learn and unlearn? In what ways are trends pointing to what might be called an ethical pragmatism for art in the contemporary world? These generative questions acted as catalysts for the exchange that*

*follows. Here is a brief edited version of the conversation.*

**Pierre:** I feel that the very landscape here questions our way of inhabiting the earth. I became aware of this some time ago when I saw the paintings of the artists who came here, who documented the Brazilian coast in the past, and how these images reverberated in the social imaginary of France in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in England, to the point of promoting landscape in painting. So I think this vision of Boa Viagem as its very name makes clear, invites us to daydream, to reinvent a horizon for man beyond this illusion of a finite world, opening ourselves up to becoming.

[T.N.: Boa Viagem (Good Travel) refers to the neighbourhood surrounding MAC that encompasses the breathtaking view of Guanabara Bay and includes the Morro do Palácio favela. It is also the name of a small lookout and former missionary island, noted on maps of the area since 15<sup>th</sup> century, located a short distance from the museum.]

**Regina:** Landscape and architectural construction are for me equivalent.

It's not one thing separated from the other. I think places evoke things and I'm very interested in the kind of perception that a place can provoke in people, even independent of a knowledge that you may or may not have of the place. I am just as interested in contrasting that perception with the history of the place.

**Martha:** I believe that an art school should provide experiences, it should provide situations where you will re-sensitise, reconnect, and from there, naturally, this will be re-signified in poetic expression, because I think that creation comes from connection. I think one should embrace other cultures, opening yourself up to other cultures brings us an opportunity to have other ways of looking at life, of relating to one another, of categorising yourself.

**Rodrigo:** I think that this mode of thinking, that is, of objectifying the world and making things acquirable, is also a mode of thinking about work that takes for itself or privatises an area or shelter or, even individualises a public territory. Let's just say, and it's funny, as I was here listening to all of you and wanting to speak, I see that all the talk here is so consonant in the sense that what we really need is to move to bring other values back to the world. This world that is practically lost and that artists and ecologists see in a very utopian way, one that is not so much pragmatic, but more about the field of the sensible, the symbolic, and the small. What is possible for us also may not be for the world at large. That is one thing that is a mess. Today, seeing this mist (on this afternoon), this fog (also) of Brazil, which is in the landscape outside, I was looking at the glass window as an interface, here between the inside and the outside of the MAC, it's a membrane, it's a skin there that is the interface, why not let the air inside the museum, not letting the wind attack, the rain...somehow inhibits our relationship with our surroundings, even the beach. So these attempts to go beyond the physical space of the

museum, already assumed as the vocation of this ship that Vergara navigates, seems to me to be an open project. Here we started all this, a process that will continue and should unfold in other projects.

**Ignês:** Listening to you all talk is incredible because it seems to me that some of this is happening with the work in Bumba, which is really a 6 year long project with several phases. But I see that the whole process originated from the encounter of individual landscapes so-to-speak, when we first started to meet at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro and other spaces of the city, other museums. We were working with the Niterói Court of Justice exploring alternative sentences and community service programmes. Our movement in urban space was connected to the very nebulous landscapes of the lives of these people. So we came to this resident in the community of Bumba, who is Sr. Hernandez and his "Rancho Verde," where all the furniture, the universe of things, and reliquaries were collected from the street and taken as material for creation and recycling. There was also a

landscape very peculiar to the mourning of Sr. Hernandez as the "Rancho" started following the loss of his wife. So today it is a kind of meeting place where people in a certain way, unintentionally, without knowing it or even how, started a process of care, a very subtle, very delicate, very surgical care amidst an internal and unwell landscape. The alternative sentence group was a very complex one, people of different social and cultural strata, but united by a particular situation. And is it very interesting to see this encounter with art, between the court and art, and see what this might bring. What this might continue to bring. We do not know how things will evolve, but when we talk about the notion of school, it seems to me that a school has been naturally established there too. For example, Jefferson - I do not know if everyone knows him. Today he is one of the coordinators of art and citizenship at MACquinho. He lives in the Morro do Palácio favela, and was initiated into his educational and artistic life at MAC in 1999 at 17 as part of the Arte Ação Ambiental programme. He was a young man at the time, now in his 30s, a father, a wonderful artist and



Regina de Paula. *E fiquei de pé sobre a areia*, 2016. Photo: Leo Zulluh.



photographer with a special sensitivity, but above all a beautiful person. He has also been collaborating with Sr. Hernandez and our work at Bumba, as well as with Alda Lais and Nina Alexandrisky's workshop, in creating the ceramics dishes for the *Mesa Baldio* project. We hold workshops together, because everything we do always seems to become a form of workshop. Always fostering this workshop environment, school, learning, multiplying, and Jefferson was involved in this process and now he is helping there again. This is something that I want to emphasise as it speaks here of certain urgencies, certain urgencies of life, of survival, and not only in the natural aspect, but in the human aspect.

**Diana:** I think we should create more places to talk about these urgencies. Issues related to the environment, hidden lives and waters, gender, race, sexuality, childhood, and old age. Our ways of living, relating, working, producing, and sharing have been debated and lived in contemporary social relations, whether in domestic spaces, universities, in work environments, in leisure time, in the media, in social networks, in political manifestations. Why not in museums? I perceive *Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters* as something much more dense than an exhibition (though it has not completely abandoned this model). I see it as a curatorial programme that includes the art object, but also micro-political experiences, irradiations, in-

visible happenings, and the encounter with MAC's surrounding communities and with the environment in which it is located. I think museums need to offer a place for these conversations, ones that are not always tranquil and that not only happen through speech. And the work of Re-Aphrodite carries that power, that will of encounter, of affection, that we could experience in different ways. With "Pandora's Box," for example, we facilitated the encounter of about 15 women with very diverse experiences to open up a conversation about the feminine and motherhood in the contemporary world. "Pandora's Box" was transformed into a Pandora's Vase, with the collaboration of Livia's vases and Re-Aphrodite's patchwork quilt



Lia do Rio and Enrique Banfi. *Voices da Baleia (Whale's voices)*. Installation shot *Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters*, 2016 with Leandro Joaquim, View of Guanabara Bay with Whales c.18th. Photo: Pat Kilgore, 2016.

as a cosy place to sit and sew stories and secrets of women with very heterogeneous experiences. The floor of the museum received our bare feet, our bodies lying down, seated, our pains, uncertainties, dreams, and inventions.

**Livia:** Diana's invitation was a big coincidence. Her dynamic of "Pandora's Box" and my *Pandorama* piece and the Greek/Cypriot quilt was the perfect place to embody all these stories. Greece was the stage where these transformations in the collective imaginary happened. I mean it was the place of the passage from mythologies that worshiped peaceful societies to violent ones. And from there it spread throughout the

Western world, contaminating our way of thinking. It was very powerful to get to know Re-Aphrodite, because everything I believed was totally in line with their practices, coming from the source itself! And they brought remnants of what still remains from these archaic societies, this will to rescue feminine circles and these underground symbols and practices. These "new" practices are not so new ... I am certain that this vibration never ceased to exist anywhere in the world. There have always been and always will be people and places that practice or would like to live a life in communion with the environment. I think the myth of Pandora offers an interesting avenue to reflect on this: Is the only way to survive to dominate

the other? Have human organisations always been like this? And I would go deeper into this question to ask, can we guide our intra and interpersonal relationships so that they are not oppressive? I think this goes far beyond environmental ecology, how to get out of this logic of the predator's victim, why this logic goes through our body-field of internal and external action.

**Mercedes:** I understand that the world is totally exhausted and polluted, but I also have a sense that this has been reoccurring in cycles for a long time. If you have a historical outlook, how many past generations have felt in similar ways to how we feel, because those moments were also ones of exhaustion, they reached a maximum limit, and wars, revolutions and postwars happened. So I have an optimistic perspective with regards to the human being in this capacity and in this need to reinvent and reinvigorate, and I now perceive collaborations and this collaborative energy as very potent and very present in my life as an artist and around me. So at the same time that you have the horrors, you have unbelievable opportunities. It's what some of you have been talking about, people get together because they need it, there are urgencies in the micro, medium and macro, and they add up, and people suddenly make miracles happen - in a way, this is a small miracle here too. You do not have resources for a publication, but this podcast idea is a door that opens, it's a new record, in a new channel, in a new way. So I see the need to rethink and think about my work, my life, all the time, because I feel that it is necessary to invent ways, possibilities, spaces, mechanisms, combinations... I feel like a guerrilla in this sense, in a good way, committed to this construction that I believe in and that I try to do within my possibility.

**Christiane:** At this point in my journey I am questioning what it means to be an artist and what we call an



Mesa Baldio, 2016. Photo: Douglas Lopes.

Mercedes Lachmann. *Benção de Deus (God's blessing)*, 2016. Photo courtesy of the artist.

“animist” worldview that is a particular ethics in relation to nature. For me, the exhibition offers an opportunity for exchange, offering a variety of reflections in this regard. As soon as I met the artists of Re-Aphrodite, Chrystalleni asked me what she could do to get to know lemanjá better. I responded within the animistic principle of experience as knowledge: experience the sea. Observe your multiplicity and your concrete experience with it. For example, the character of water in the breaking waves is not the same as that found in the deep ocean. I am lemanjá's daughter but the frequency of the energy that I belong to is specifically in the encounter of the river with the sea. When you try to stand, stop, in such a place you feel inside an incredible propulsive force but that also acts with incredible softness. What we generally learn under the baton of patriarchy is that

strength and softness do not coexist, that they are opposites. But the sea teaches us sensorially to deconstruct such a vision, to experience, and to understand - and not always in the easiest way - another reality. Contrary to the traditional view of animism as a paradisiacal state of communion with nature or as a matter of “belief” about things, plants, and animals that contain (or not) a soul, animism is first and foremost a question of a different sensibility toward the real. In the last few decades, animism has returned to be the object of discursive attention and intellectual inquiry in both the sciences and in the arts, instigating discussions on ecology and sustainability. New questions and manifestations of this worldview in its (old) zone of contact with the arts have also contributed to a necessary decolonisation of thought. The quest for a less anthropocentric art is a quest to implode a

propagating logic of separations.

**Breno:** Yes. What I saw happening working with diverse communities realising the *Mesa Baldio* project and thinking about hidden lives and waters, thinking about Guanabara Bay and this whole thing, is something that is even in a publication of the Observatório de Favelas that refutes this idea of a [Rio de Janeiro as a] divided city, of having two worlds, rather there is just one, unequal as hell, very unequal. And we walked through this razor wire of inequality with a great provocation, because when Nuno Sacramento brought the idea of the “baldio,” as a potentially common land, an abandoned wasteland as a democratic space, as an idea to make a compost in the Morro do Palácio favela and put in front of MACquinho as a collective project, I said “man, it will not happen, because they will throw car oil, diapers, any kind of garbage inside, they will destroy it, they will steal the canvas for their homes, the wood to make a bonfire. This is not going to happen, because this space is really the wasteland we think it is.” Curiously MACquinho is actually built on land that used to house a dump, the favela soccer field was formerly a dump, and this idea of using it as a place to throw trash in the corner continues on the last remaining piece of land. I told him “man, I think it is very beautiful that you think in Europe that the baldio can be a collective space, it's a wonderful thing, but here in Brazil the reality is completely different.” But he said “no, we have to try, we have to try” and he read a book by Max Heindel if I'm not mistaken and came back to give an anthropology class here in MACquinho, saying that the *baldio* is a crisis of imagination and a crisis of power. We started to think about it a lot, until we came up with the idea that if in the baldio, even collective abandonment and collective destruction are possible, why is it impossible to think of anything else? Then it forces you to think about the reality of



the world, if this world that we live in is possible the way it is, [surely] any other world is possible, for anyone who thinks about it. Beginning to think about the world now and to come to this crazy world that we live in, this is something that disturbs anyone philosophically, how did we manage to create a world so unequal with so much hunger, with so much wealth accumulated in the hands of so few. People need a Congo to make Belgium, a Brazil to make Portugal. So we started to try and we put a compost in front of MACQuinho. The curious thing is that this terrain is about 35 meters or so and we put the compost in the middle of the terrain, a compost area of approx 5m<sup>3</sup>. From the door of MACQuinho to the compost area, we gained the land for the project. No one ever threw things there again, never. It was kept clean and we made a vegetable garden and everything. So we discovered that “baldio” can really be several things and that the best “baldio” can be a radically democratic process of territorial management - that’s what we ended up learning collectively.

**Martha:** And metaphorically, this all started with the composting process. That the compost is made of debris, that you build up and turn to create a fermentation process, to then create a fertilising compost.

**Breno:** Actually this thing of returning to land, we think about this based on consumption, consume correctly while there are a lot of people who do not consume. What does it mean to consume correctly, how is it that everyone consumes? Because it seems that the magic arrow of consumption ends when the person takes their package, brings it home and then everything disappears, the environmental consequence of all this is that we have this disastrous thing on the planet, in the Bay of Guanabara, our mirror here, our baldio.



Livia Moura. Pandorama, 2016. Photo: Livia Moura

Livia Moura. Pandorama. Installation shot Guanabara Bay: Hidden Lives and Waters. Photo: Denise Adams







**03**

**NOT(ES) ON**  
**PARTICIPATION**  
**IN THE**  
**CYPRIOT ARTS**

*An earlier version for this was written for NeMe.org in response to their Two Worlds project in mid-2016, a project that among other things, open-sourced sound archives regarding migration politics in Greece and Cyprus. It was written with a great sense of freedom and it became the base for a longer-term exploration of personal arts-writing, and of the argument that the personal is the/my one legitimate way to write about art, in this / the digital age. What follows connects thoughts about art, tech, and openness into a kind of politics of civic participation, locating experimental comments on this in the Cypriot arts.*

Instead of writing on participation, perhaps the thing to do here is participate: set aside academic pretenses or defenses and contribute as meaningfully as one can manage in a personal sense. By 'stepping in' to the fullest extent of one's skill, humility, experience, immediate resources, and time, without withholding or construing things behind which to hide. I begin with some notes on the participatory context for the piece you're reading. I then briefly outline a perspective on participation as an exercise of consensus. This perspective is articulated as a personal one, although it is roughly theorised in social-scientific terms. In the third part, I put down some auto-ethnographic notes and a local, micro-historical perspective on the politics of participation as I read these around me, in the arts, in Cyprus, and a little beyond that. And I finish with a reflection, rewritten for Re Aphrodite + Athina.

## **ON THE PARTICIPATORY POLITICS OF THIS, HERE**

The initial idea for this piece came from a discussion with Iannis Zannos who invited me to put down something like "Collaborative / Activist / Participatory Art initiatives: a Criti-

cal Overview". I agreed to participate despite the instinct to fly rather than fight with these particular keywords. I'd so far been able to stay relatively uninvolved with these terms and their respective discursive spheres. I've had the luxury of developing projects that explored participation in different ways, without having to explicitly engage in such vocabulary. This was also through my collaboration with Evi Tselika, who's been bringing into our partnership her own research on social arts practices. Through years of sustained creative synchronisation, Evi and I have maintained and occasionally externalised in project-form an intimate analysis of the politics of social arts practice, or of interesting, somehow legible social agendas as they come up in the Cypriot arts. Despite, or perhaps because of my participation in communities that experiment with principles of self-organisation in different tongues, I've been leaving it to others to handle the close processing of art-theory, and blessedly conceded any ambition to participate in participation-related contemporary arts discourse. Instead I went on thinking about more or less the same issues in my own terms: about the way publics are constantly defined, projected or construed, creatively, around us. And about the arts as just one of the fields where such investigations were playing out, or as a controlled environment for trying out models of political participation. Models that expand to other spheres of civic life and ultimately reflect on contemporary issues of governance. With the striking conclusion that if a participatory project went well, this was for no other reason than love between the participants, so it could no longer be considered a project, and they could no longer be considered participants.

## **ON PARTICIPATION AS THE MINDFUL EXERCISE OF CONSENSUS**

Now --and please feel free to skip to the next section-- this piece relies on the premise that investigating participation through art could, in the interesting cases, mean to explore basic social and political technologies. This piece (written with Umberto Eco's 1989 *The Open Work* next to the keyboard, a work that, among other things, gives grounds for thinking of a kind of openness as a creative principle) develops the perspective of a memory scholar. It sees participation politics as inseparable from memory structures or systems of information. It also prioritises a view of participation that has to do with our collective dependence on memory-related rituals or collective memory structures, seeing these as the backbone of social continuity and processes of community-building. And in the background there's a reflection on policy: the idea that memory structures are parallel or inherent to (material and other) commons management structures in broader terms, which comes from a diagnostic perspective that takes public art (or art that deals with the commons) as a crucial intersection of political effects and ideas. Or of group-construction. Or social / public consensus whatever that may mean. Or (again) the way in which memory-related rituals project or construct "publics".

With the above I refer to an adulteration of a Lefebvrian idea: that particular public offerings (from structures to rituals), whomever they may be staged by, function as both generators and products of a type of consensus that represents, or constructs, or identifies a social group. Lefebvre (1992) says something similar specifically about monumental space, which can be simplified like this, in the case of monuments and other public installations: these claim to represent a point of so-



cial consensus, at the same time that they attempt to generate one. A monument, for example, may proffer consensus around the significance of a particular historical event, as a condition of participation in the ethnic, national or other group it claims to represent. In fewer words, this idea strips the monument / the public art piece / the public performance / the participatory art project from its institutional contingencies and brings it back to the totem, a spatially central social magnet (something that literally produces space for community participation), or a physical anchor for an imagined system of values that are, for some, somehow, binding. Other public furniture or kinds of public offerings, or commons, can be considered in similar ways: as demanding that we conduct ourselves appropriately, or civically, in relation to them. That we respond to the way they arrange space and possibilities within it. That we participate in the way they aggregate or direct movement, traffic or human behaviour. What belies these types of behaviour is an act of consensus that both constructs and represents (once more:) a public.

All the above is to say that participation primarily relies on an agreement to be “there” in a certain way. What is presumed is our consensus to being addressed and defined as members of a group, in whatever way, case, or medium. We consent to step into the shoes, or put on the hat, of audience or consumer or receiver, or conductor, or “public” of a particular “text” in some way / Eco’s way. Arguably, this is the basic interesting thing about debates around participation or consensus in any social setting, whether it is explored through contemporary art in relation to political systems, or whether it is considered in distance from the arts, to do with civic participation, or in connection with tools like Foucault’s articulation of governmentality: the art of government, the conduct of conduct, or the mentalities by which we make ourselves governable. And further yet (perhaps in a way closer to the core of our communica-

tive impulses) or closer to Design, and to media theory, the same patterns of audience-formation or basic organisation may be found in the way that the simplest gesture (or the most socially theorised or theorising participatory art project) designs its consumption or reception, or its conduct as information, in some way, eventually. But beyond this reduction to communication, we can also think along the lines of institutional critique. We can think in terms of participation to investigate how organisations are positioned and how they tend to position certain types of always political creative output. Or we can investigate how certain works do this, how certain offerings are set-up for particular encounters. And we can think about whether and how sometimes, something of these encounters is absorbed into the fabric of the work. Or we can try and untangle the consensus-related presumptions and the types of control that underlie our ways of participation, not just with regard to artworks.

## **ON PARTICIPATION POLITICS IN THE ARTS, IN CYPRUS, AND A LITTLE BEYOND THAT**

Very briefly, and in my own effort to participate here fully, let me put down some thoughts on politically interesting ways of construing publics, as these are investigated around me, through art. Not to look for commonalities with an international ‘participatory art’ field in an art-historical sense, but only to point at a series of relational subversions, or types of work that intervene in presumptions about what participation (and meaningful social consensus) is or could be locally. These are examples that come up as meaningful for me “here”, in continuity with very specific local conditions and histories.

Let me begin with picknick (picknick-works.org) a group that in one instance, organised to gently address people in the supermarket (*The Ones I Love*, performance, 2013), and that took a mobile projector and threw images on discreetly located walls of Nicosia, observing the effect and types of temporal relationships that allowed people to wander and linger (*do delay*, public intervention series, 2014). They put a series of subtle visual interventions up on a mountain trail, which did a lot of things at the same time, while also communicating to the local art scene that we weren’t their intended or most valued audience (*Dandilands*, public installation series, 2014-2015). This kind of practice may be seen in terms of another exit from the gallery and as falling within a category of new genre public art and so on, but I think the important thing is to look at this kind of work in terms of its very local communicability and embeddedness, regarding the kinds of participation it may (not) ask for from the people who happen to be around. It might also be interesting to think about this kind of work as interventionist, or situationist, but I would like to focus on it as a series of investigations on how publics are projected: not only about how publics are to be engaged or involved in the arts, but how they can be born in different terms, under differently defined conditions. In their use of the supermarket, as well as the Post (*Symphonic Node*, 2016), and the airplane (*a splurge into intervals*, 2016) they very lightly, in a way very sensitive to their locality and its particular connectivities, and at the same time very subtle and clear in their projection of an in and out, go about not-projecting audiences in any of the predictable ways: they seem to be actively removing this kind of impulse from the centre of their performances, and with the calculated side-effect of making their production extremely difficult for art market consumption --which is again a reflection on their non-projection of an art-audience in any of the usual ways.

Simultaneously, close by but in a different setting, collectors and artists Vasso and Charalambos Sergiou have been inviting people to participate / interact with their work, without being especially interested in that distinction, but rather in exploring very tangibly a give-and-take, and their own personal abilities to open this up by capturing, historicising, and questioning local relationships, market conditions and art-value-systems in their various extensions (*change-ex-change*, interactive exhibition / durational participatory performance piece, 2014). They've opened their exhibitions to renewal through exchange by inviting people to bring in artworks from their home and to freely replace parts of their own exhibited art collection: a collection that documents key --occasionally fictitious or intentionally falsely attributed-- moments in the Cypriot arts. As part of my own spellbound participation in Sergiou's *change-ex-change* (a falsely attributed textual piece entitled "Chrystalleni Loizidou [1983] by Charalambos and Vaso Sergiou"), I wrote about this way of inviting others in, this type of blurring between the roles of artist, participant, audience, and consumer, as something the Sergious have been intently building up to in their work for a long time. They've been setting up a series of flippant encounters, designed to be enjoyable, socially conventional on the surface, while benignly confrontational, occasionally scathing, and always intimate (see for example their *Life is full of trade-offs* [2001], where they invited people to buy umbilical cords, and their follow-up Venice Biennale proposal *The Parasite* [2003], where the body language of participants holding the umbilical cord sculptures became the subject of psychoanalysis). These projects refined a method that lead to *change-ex-change*, and a participatory frenzy that relied on the Sergiou's own personal denunciation of authorship or ownership, along with a whole set of conventional artistic values (market value, proprietary or collecting impulses, accompanied by a confounding of the notion of art-his-

torical significance). The project was a deep reflection on our own small-scale, personal, discursive participation towards the construction of these values: an easy constructivist argument that is deeply political, not least in the artists' exploitation of the gallery to legitimise their instigation of its collapse, but also in their invitation that we reflexively reconsider our positions from collectors or consumers positioned within value systems, as participators in the construction of these value systems. Again, through the subversion of participatory presumptions as part and parcel of our very personal and politically legible relationships with art-ownership, with the art-encounter, and more generally with art, is another game for us to socialise around.

The *Two Worlds* project, for which this piece was initially written, processed participation differently from the above. It was an open source project that compelled one's participation in a different way (not only mine but this is a good example: all I did was turn up and the project and its material were completely open to me from that moment on). The project looked constantly, intensively for ways to open its entire development and material into an ever-broadening paradigm towards open re-appropriation. And it did this by processing a weighty debate around migration. The way I saw it, *Two Worlds* offered a counterpoint to types of contemporary structures of organisation and mediation that problematise migration. This counter-point came in the form of a participatory mentality that might have a chance at addressing migration not as a problem, but.. soundly. This is not only by open sourcing Yiannis Christides' collection of field-recordings of migrant voices, but also by investigating their retrievability and sharability through different open platforms. This was done by highlighting the complexities of their potential reconfigurations by a participating audience, and then by opening up the material and the technological and structural contingencies of its representation

even further through an algorithme: an essentialist making-transparent of retrieval and processing. There is a conceptual leap somewhere here, but I hope that the point about openness and the making-transparent of retrieval and processing, in relation to migration (in relation to the fluidities of community, or communities of fluidity), is clear enough.

NeMe's *Two Worlds*, Sergiou's *change-ex-change*, and *picknick* works (taking the latter's cue to think more in terms of 'works', rather than 'projects'), all present themselves in very different ways, not least in the form of documentation, mediated towards some kind of credit or accumulative value. But thinking about these ways of working, aside from mapping out a participatory Cypriot 'state of the art,' is to also compare different theorisations of participation. They use different means to experiment with the way in which they construe their audience(s), how they experiment with how they ask to be consumed, and how they actively reflect on their own projection of a receptive public. In my mind, these works take debates around collaboration, activism, and participation, and locally induce them to a revelation about consensus technologies in an abstract sense. Taking technology, here, as logos about technique, a constructive mode, we can think of technologies of consensus-building as technologies of sharing, as technologies of community or group construction --again, with reference to migration as a massive challenge to these things. Returning to the perspective of a memory-historian, this is an identity-memory matter through and through. Again, *Two Worlds* articulated this beautifully: it opened up its database and pulled us into its source code, it offered itself not for consumption, but for contribution and participation through a reflexive approach to technological access and transparency. And this was a political proposal that commented on a number of things at once. On issues around the commodification of images of migration and its pain, as well as particular

journalistic narrative trends around contemporary migration as not-so challenging of dominant organisational structures and modes of governance. At the same time it reflected on surveillance capitalism as the wrong kind of transparency, it articulated a call to institutional dissidence and applied itself to debates around software freedom and the political urgency of developing new kinds of participatory production.

## **A REFLECTION, REWRITTEN FOR RE APHRODITE + ATHINA**

The above perspectives rely on my own unique participatory encounters with a number of artworks and so inevitably reflect personal political fantasies. I refer to these works as locally cumulative or progressively working through participation-politics for their own settings and communities. At the same time, my use of these projects is circular: I point at their ins and outs, their in-groups and out-groups, and their organisational porosities of 'group construction', first because I find them meaningful, fascinating, and radical contextually, or locally, but also in order to make a reflexive argument about participation in relation to arts writing. The above works, and this text, all seek deeper, clearer thinking about how we work with / engage / involve / help / step into things / ask for support / mobilise / choose how to participate and invite the participation of others constantly, fundamentally and socially, generating power-structures that must be just as closely examined, no matter where or in what scale they take place. From the above works, we learn that the way to understand this investigation or be mindful of its politics, is to keep thinking and improvising along personal but constantly informed theorisations of consensus as a basic organisational principle (we ask this of people constantly, and how we do it

really really matters). Now this contains massive political fictions, and again for someone interested in the workings of memory, it has everything to do with structures of information storage and recall, something the *Two Worlds* project experiments with actively and with great immediacy.

I conclude with a realisation brought on by *Two Worlds*. Yes, focusing on examples of participatory work from the contemporary arts, or through a vocabulary specific to contemporary arts writing, seems an unnecessary limitation, a troublesome detour towards a much plainer core. And yes, this is what this textual piece does, just as it protests it. But at the same time these works manage to defy the trapping of this discussion around participation in a contemporary art institutional set-up. Rather they each seem to state (or stage, or perform, or invite us into) an exit from this set-up as a form of critique. And this is also what is at stake in the debate around participation in the first place: this exit from established structures and formats in a fundamental organisation-theoretical sense. What I think this leads to isn't so much a reflection on the production of things that allow others to take part in them, but rather something closer to a reflection on presence. On choosing to be there. A reflection on our own cultivated ability to take part, to consent personally and meaningfully, as above: to shed intellectual or confrontational bluffs or defenses, attend to the fullest extent of our skill, experience, time, and humility, without withholding or construing things behind which to hide. And isn't a reflection on presence (along with a hint of how it might serve as a basis for a radical change in modes of production, or commons management, or governance) as something one takes away from a participatory art project, a wonderful thing? And isn't it more than enough?



example, rather than frame one's social agenda in participatory terms, doesn't it often seem more interesting to consider the cosmos as a 'self-organising community'?

2. I write this with warmth for Christos Hadjichristos, who held my hand as I was first coming to grips with these ideas, years and years ago, as part of a collaboration investigating "utopias, monuments, and their descendants" that resulted in two paper presentations, one at the Art and Social Justice: Media Connection conference, University of Nicosia (2011), and one at the 12th International Conference of the Utopian Studies Society, University of Cyprus.

3. In the spirit of contextualising things in terms of local socially engaged participation in things, I note that that my own relationship with Foucault's ideas around governmentality (developed in his Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983) peaked during an intense telephone conversation with gender studies scholar Zelia Gregoriou in 2013 who, at my invitation, part of the displays project at Point Centre for Contemporary Art, had written about the queer sexuality of Andreas' Karayan's paintings, their contradictory treatment as part of the Republic of Cyprus State Collection of Contemporary Art, and their popularity as decorations in the offices of government officials. Zelia's beautiful fury on the phone that day was on the politics of mistaking discussion of governmentality as accusations for state censorship, and then trying to censor these presumed accusations of censorship in a roundabout way: a non-incident that gorgeously layered contemporary queer discourse around Cypriot art with Foucauldian vocabulary into what one thinks of as a high point of local institutional critique.

4. I remember Andreas Vrahimis' admonition a while ago that one can never read enough Heidegger when writing about these things. Andreas also wrote a wonderful text entitled "Oikeiosis, friendship, and the work of art" for / with Nayia Savva's L.F.E. project, where he stood on the shoulders of Derrida, Zeno of Citium and the Stoics, and Bachelard among others, to write about Savva's blurring of artist, friend, audience, home and exhibition space, as she exhibited/invited people into her home to experience her hosting of/cohabitation with works by friends (a collaboration with Neoterismoi Toumazou that included work by Raissa Angeli, Phanos Kyriacou, Orestis Lazouras, Panagiotis Mina, Andreas Panagidis, Most Probably, Maria Toumazou, Marina Xenofontos, Natalie Yiayi, Stelios Kallinikou --reference to whose open-heartedness as a community I wish this volume could do more justice to). When I went to see Nayia we had ginger tea with Haris Pellapaisiotis and talked about how her gesture reflected on the generally disguised phenomenon / formally unacknowledged fact that art, and its associated credit and capital circulates mostly around local art-scenes where artists and friends help and rely on each other by buying or exchanging works, ideas and keywords. I love Nayia's notes on art in the home, and on art as 'my friends' shit' that I have to or choose to live with. I love that this reminds me that participation politics can also be thought of as life, and time on or off, or time of art production or consumption, or time of art writing, again, as simply living for and among friends who choose something similar.

#### NOTES

1. I've worked with and studied the hackerspace and unconference movements, crashed an burned repeatedly with self-organising and do-ocratic initiatives, and worked on participatory art projects where the notion of participation is admittedly marked by increasing sensitivity to the pretenses inherent in this kind of social experimentation: for







# 04

# GARDEN REALISMS

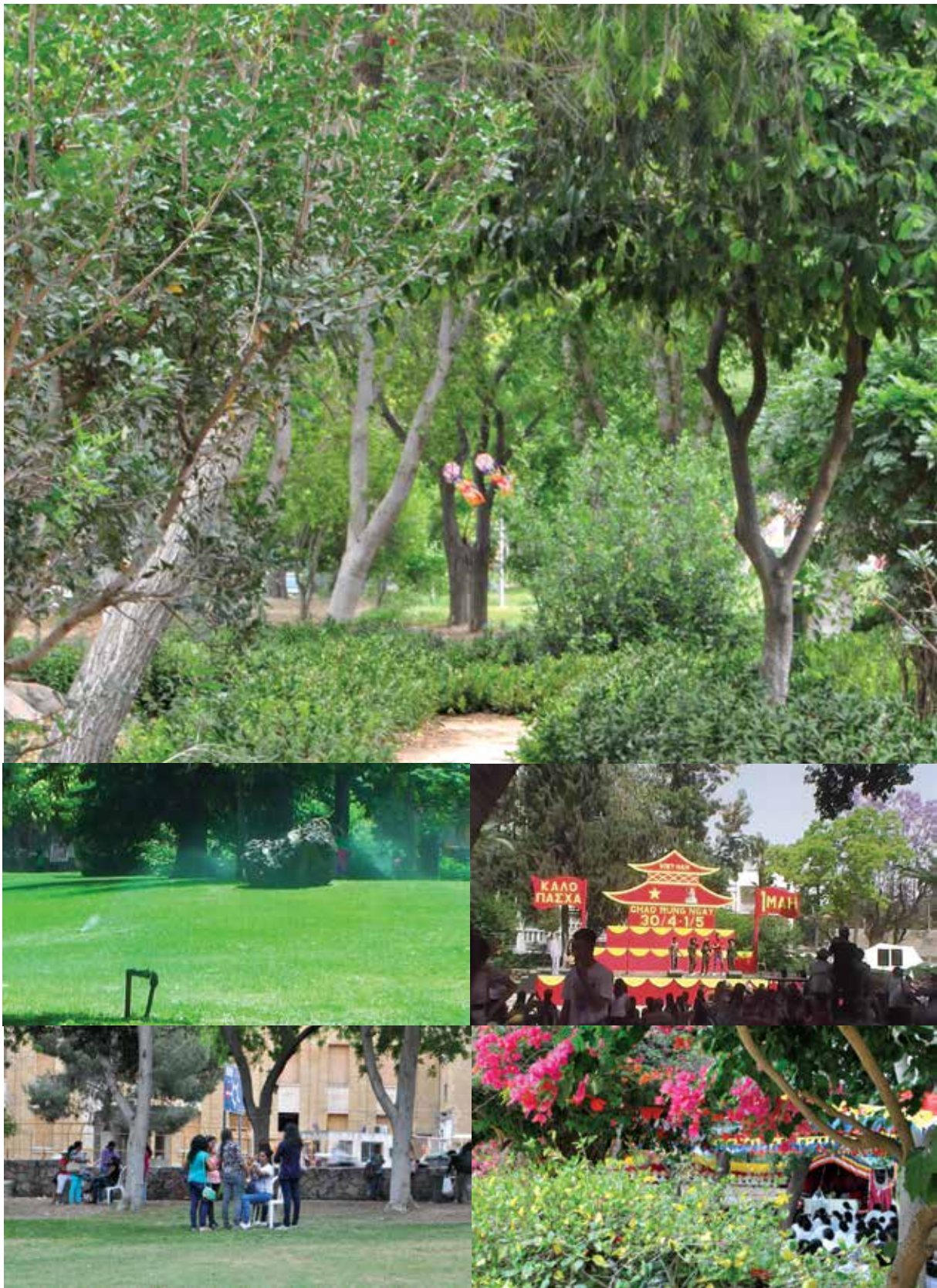
*We must not forget that in the Orient the garden, an astonishing creation that is now a thousand years old, had very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings.*

*The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. As for carpets, they were originally reproductions of gardens (the garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space). The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world.*

Michel Foucault (1967). 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias'. *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* (October 1984). Original *Des Espaces Autres*, conference presentation (1967), translated from French by Jay Miskowiec

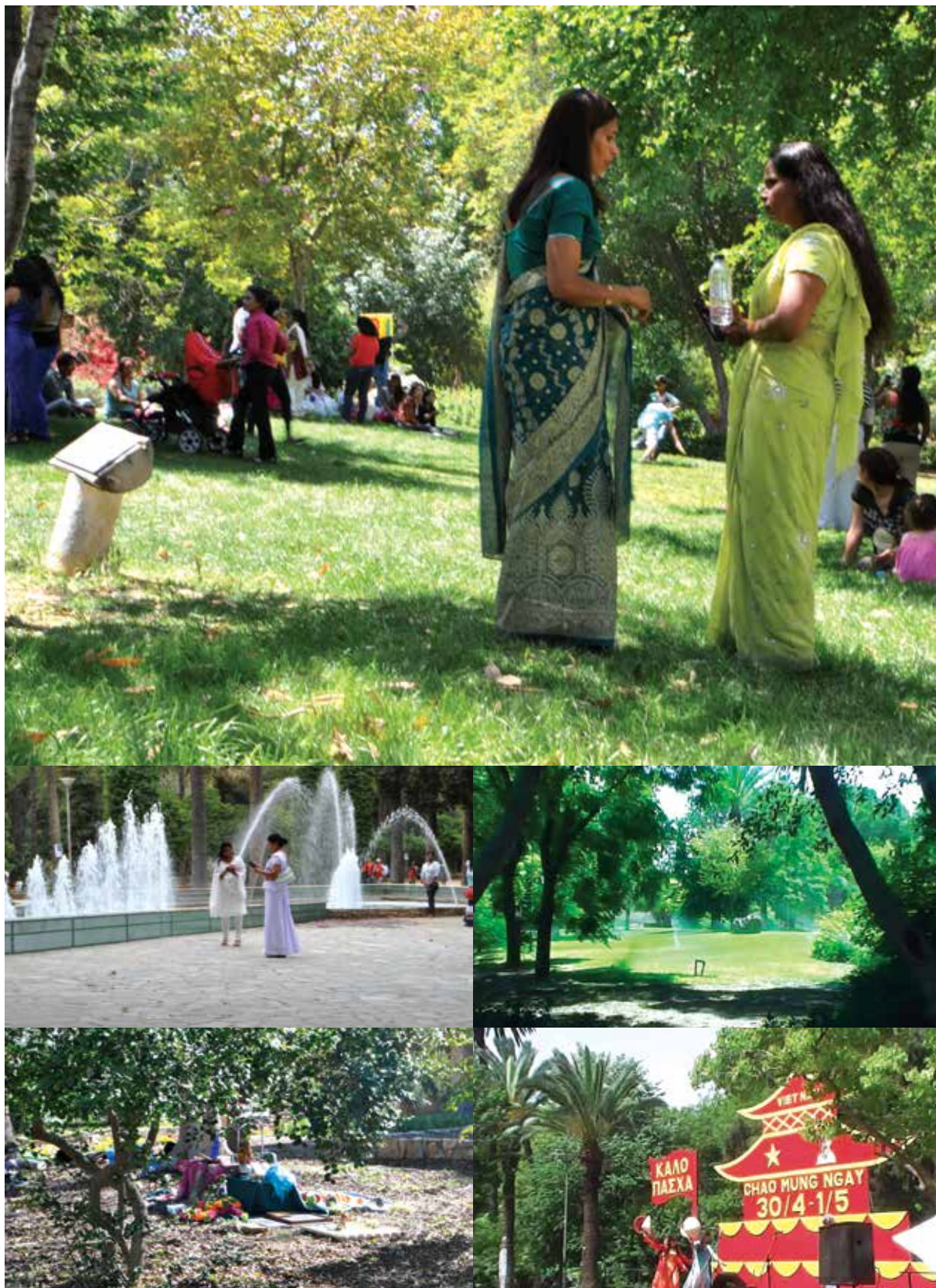






Nicosia Municipal Garden: January to July 2016 Weekly visits, shrine set ups, dialogue gatherings, taking part in organized community events.





## **THE GARDEN** **AS POSSIBILITIES** **OF ENCOUNTERS**

One never knows what to call this park right behind the Parliament. Is it the municipal garden, peace park, cyta park, parliament park? Or the δημόσιος ή δημοτικός κήπος (public or municipal garden)? Getting to know this park/garden allowed me to consider the space of the garden as this larger than life character, that becomes the set of our moments recurringly. The Nicosia Municipal Gardens (referred to here on as the garden) is a public space, accessible 24 hours a day, that is used by different communities, social groups and individuals for diverse purposes and social practices. From illicit sex behind the bushes, to zumba on Sunday morning, this garden also hosts events such as the Sinhalese New Year in April, Buddha day in May, the Filipino National Day in June, the Vietnamese Women's day in October and the Gay Pride in May.

In his 1959 book *The History of Nicosia*, Nearhos Clerides tells us that in the old municipal garden outside the "Pafos Gate and on the North side of the Municipal theatre, there is a small oldish room whose floor is lower than the surrounding ground area" (Clerides 1959, 15). He goes on to write that in this area, a small room could be found hosting two ritual sites - a monument of an Ottoman soldier and a shrine with oils burning and wax casts of body parts. A site that if we are to believe the source, used to host the church of Saint Demetrius and which was taken down in 1567 when the Venetians tore it apart in order to make the medieval fortification walls - one of the two remaining iconic landmarks of the city. We are told the area of the garden was used as a place of worship, a site for a πανηγύρι (fair) on Saint Demetrius Saint Day and as the place of gathering to lead an uprising towards the Sarayion in 1764 (ibid, 16). In 1902 the Municipality bought

this large piece of land outside Pafos Gate for 63 pounds and began constructing the garden (Michaelidou 1976, 104). The garden was dedicated both to the remembrance of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria and in memory of Queen Victoria herself who passed in 1901. With the passing of time, the colonial name of the Victoria Garden gave way to the rise of the Cypriot focused Municipal Garden still used to this day (ibid). The garden was redesigned by modernist architect Neoptolemos Michaelides in 1968, in which he re-landscaped the space and constructed a bird dome and a plant nursery (Katselli 2011). Photographer Orestis Lambrou, as part of his photographic capturing of Michaelide's architectural work in the city, has beautifully captured these structures found in the garden (Lambrou 2009). Michaelides plant nursery has been used since 2010 by the Visual Artists Association on loan by the Municipality (Phytorio 2017). In 2012, Elena Parpa (curator of *Plánetes*) curated the exhibition *How to Make a Garden* in which the notion of the garden and its cross-over with ideas of nation-building, identity, and memory, was investigated by contemporary Cypriot artists (Parpa 2012). The garden is also a central feature in Marianna Christofides' work *dies solis*. Sundays in Nicosia (2010); an experimental documentary in which the artist explores Sundays in Nicosia, as it is the one day off of the thousands of Asian labour migrants and their rituals, habits and social practices (Christofides 2017).

This garden thus of many names is one of the few public spaces in the city used by multiple collectives to perform community, identity-mobilise and at the same time by diverse individuals and groups for leisure. Considering the groups which become most apparent in the park on Sunday, not only the busiest day of this space, but also the day which it has been used by this project, issues of working life, leisure and class constantly circle my mind. The most visible park Sunday goers are predomi-

nantly Asian labourers, who live either short-medium or long term on the island for economic or other migration purposes. They bring with them not only customs, religious practices and foods, but also heritages of community organisation and cultural identity practices.

## **A GARDEN.**

**A public space which gathers these different social groups that perform community identities.**

We could not help but wonder. How do we articulate-visualise community identity in the public space? How is the garden as a public space used for mobilisation purposes? How is dialogue articulated? How is dialogue started?

To try and understand the use of the garden by different social groups, the dynamics of difference within the current socio-political context of mobilisation in Nicosia and the conflicting conversations that were triggered via the cloth in this space in time with the friends of this project, I went back to some old friends. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe argued in their 1985 book, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, that "the premise of 'society' as a sutured and self-defined totality" does not constitute a discourse, providing the reflective possibility that "there is no single underlying principle fixing - and hence constituting - the whole field of differences" (2001, 111). Belonging, or being internal to a collective social entity and belonging or being external to it, are presented in a non-resolvable tension. It is impossible for an entity to be totally internal in relation to its being and completely unchallenged by any exterior influences. The social is thus constructed on a marginal terrain of "interiority" and exteriority" and is not confined by a "fixed system of differences". [From a facebook conversation June 2017 in relation to gender - Re Aphrodite: Re Facebook]

The garden and later on the cloth al-





lowed me to consider this pattern of exteriority and interiority, how difference [as the multiple collective identities performed there] is articulated in this public common site and how a possible discursive context could be negotiated. Through my time off (or is it on?) spent in the Garden, at the demise of my own garden at home, I grew to see it as this anchor for a possibility of encounters. Meeting Ms Innah-Marie, whilst dancing one February Sunday morning was instinctive. Seeing a traditional mountain dance from the Philippines and entering when the audience was invited to join the dance, led to attending a beauty pageant opposite Saint Joseph's church - on a Sunday, having coffee at McDonalds on Ledra street- on a Sunday and to making a joint event in the park - on a Sunday with the Federation of Filipino Organizations Cyprus- FFOC). I/We became witness to that day of rest - that precious time away from our working selves - being spent to gather, to organise commu-

nity events, to interact, to mobilise, to assist in times of need, to provide a network of support for each other. I started then to see this common garden as the space in which people spend time off work... And grew to wonder if this is in fact our time on, and what time-off and -on means in

this era of informational digital bombardment that reformulates not just our practices, but our lives.

## **SHARING EVERYDAYNESS: ritual & social mobilisation**

Wake up, go to work, go back home. It's late.

No time to cook. Order food.

Eat, sleep. Repeat.

Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.

Repeat. Repeat.

Sunday comes.

What is work?

What is mobilisation?

What is my time off?

How do you use your time off?

How do I use my time on?

How do you use your time on?

How do other garden dwellers use their time on?

This coming together for 'work' with Athina and Chrystalleni - to talk, exchange and share our experiences, made me wonder as to how our everyday and our mundane are lived in relation to other people. The ritual of meeting with people, of talking, eating, debating and putting together situations where more people get together and repeating such patterns, is not unrelated to how social movements form and gather momentum.







Kalinga Community Group performing, FFOC - Re Aphrodite Joint Event- 03.07.2017. The Garden

Cypriot everydayness demonstrates a particular understanding of participation in civic society (largely related to a party structure system) and inclusive neighbourhood social spaces, community centres, grassroots organisations are not prevalent structures. You will surely see more people in church on a Sunday rather than a union meeting. The party system democratic political structure, which in its evolvement has acted as a way of bringing people together where everydayness, social mobilisation, civic involvement and life are shared,

has also kept different groups of people in the periphery of the political representational system. In the garden I heard this quite clearly by the members of FFOC amidst food, dance and dialogue. And it is exactly here, in this node amidst the talking, the dancing and the eating, in the backstage of our everydayness, that ritual and social mobilisation are seen practiced in our time off-on.

Thinking of time as on and off, speaks of a larger blurring between the boundaries of life and work, between our in-



ternet/virtual and physical selves, between the stage and the backstage. The backstage comes centre stage-and a tension is encountered in how we trigger interaction, which type of dialogue is triggered and who is the artist in this process? The mediator-the instigator? The facilitator? Meeting, spending time off together, talking, acting, eating, sharing, mobilizing all attest to patterns of ritual within a context of social mobilising. We can see this reflected in the way dance, song, pageants, rehearsal and performance are used in community organi-





Ritual Carpet Buddhist celebration in the Garden, May 2016

sation events by FFOC. Thinking of the notion of ritual through my own encounter with the Kalinga dancers on a February Sunday, which is the only free day for most of the members (a large percentage of whom work as domestic helpers and carers) and which they use to often performatively mobilise, carried over to the collaborative FFOC-Re Aphrodite event in July in the garden. First prayer by the groups, food, then dance, then talking.

By considering the elements of ritual/enactment of heritage observed in

the garden, that bring people together into communities that perform a cultural identity and collectively organise, the ideas of ritual and activism, which were triggers of this project, came together. Boaventura de Sousa Santos writes of a “rising presence of spirituality and religion in political struggles and of the ways [this] confronts the western critical tradition”; considering the reversibility of the secularisation of Western modernism and the role of the contribution of religion to social emancipation (2016, 355). With the migration

of groups and their subsequent regrouping in new locations - our lived experiences in a globalised and de-territorialised world shift, how we understand the nature of locality relationally (Apadurai 1996). Issues of representation and performance keep resurfacing as I sift through the images created in the last year. Image after image, after image, trying to capture moments of ritual and spontaneous collectivity. One thing that became evident through these processes of encounters is that when grouping occurs across differences



Ester Beatty, President of FFOC. Speaking at the start of the Filipino National Day March, June 2016



and antagonisms, multiple kinds of realisms are experienced. The actual, the virtual, the spatial, the communal, the ritual... all presented as elements of potentiality in trying to understand how we could read ritual and social mobilisation.

Appadurai, in discussing locality, noted that space and time in the context of the “social logic of ritual” are “localised through complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation and action” (1996, 180). Catherine Bell in 1992, examines ritual practices and different aspects of how it relates to power. Relating her analysis to Foucault’s analysis of the relationship between body and power, she presents the notion of ritualisation as a process which “produces and objectifies structures of power (via the schemes that organise its environment), which the social agent then embodies” (Bell, 1992, 206). She considers that ritualised agents experience schemes in the environment as “deriving powers or realities beyond the community and its activities, such as god or tradition, thereby depicting and testifying to the ultimate organisation of the cosmos (ibid, 206-207). Describing this through its mechanism of objectification, she considers that “relationships of power are drawn from the social body and then

re-appropriated by the social body” (ibid, 207).

**“We have already seen that since the creation of the federation there are a lot of requests for assistance. And we are new. We have just organised this federation in February (2016) and since then we have tried our very best to help as much as we can those Filipinos who came to us to seek assistance. Luckily, all the officers have created a chat group where we discuss, because we do not have the time to do face to face meetings. So we discuss a lot on what matters and what we need to do via chat group on Facebook. Thank god we have Facebook these days. Right?! What can we do nowadays without Facebook?”**

**So that’s what we do - a lot of discussions online. And thank goodness for the officers, most of them are here, they are actively participating in conversations whenever we discuss things. Two are in Pafos, three are in Limassol, Larnaca. So you can imagine it is very difficult to do a face to face meeting; so that is why we discuss everything, even during the preparation of our Independence Day we did almost all the meetings online, which is something that works well these days.”**

Esther Beatty, President of FFOC, Speaking at Federation of Filipino Organizations Cyprus, Re Aphrodite 03/07/2017



Ester Beatty, President of FFOC, Speaking at the FFOC- Re Aphrodite Event, July 2016



Experiencing the garden, the cloth and the kitchen encounters, a sense of wondering started developing as to what a sense of community is and how public, institutional, physical and virtual spaces affect its formation. The collaborative format of our working, the repeated contact and an emphasis on reflecting on the particularities of our differences when working together, sparked a sense of wonder as to how communities are formed.

Community... The word perplexed me.

Raymond Williams in his book *Keywords* 1976, tells us that the Latin root of the word community, appears in the English language in the fourteenth century, from the latin *communitatem*, and derived from *communis*- common (1983, 75). I like his relation to 19th century evolutions of the word as one that was normally chosen to describe alternative kinds of group-living. Thinking of the cloth, the garden, what we encountered in

Brazil, our exchanges with the *Centre of Gender History and Equality* and the *Genders and Power Festival* by Kai-maki and the way our kitchen in Pafos was reminiscent of a squat, the conversation on activism and art we had on the cloth, in the garden one hot July afternoon, allows for a window to consider community and how it relates to activism. Sarah Lambie in a re-reading of the word community in the collective edition, *Keywords for Radicals*, points out that activists in a world where we are experiencing a “diminishing sense of collective belonging”, the rhetoric is evoked “as a medium for social change and as a way to resist the alienation of contemporary modern life” (Lambie, 2016, 105). A place, at the turn of this century, of reprieve from neo-liberal capitalism by anti-globalisation activists and one which forms a shared sense of belonging. Whatever this elusive word might mean for me, the way Williams refers to it speaks to how I have been ex-

periencing community through working with the friends you see and read in this book, as it is very much associated with understanding how community functions and what it is... And perhaps I am oddly still romantic and feel that whatever we might call it, it could “be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships” (Williams, 1983, p.76).



***“We live in a world of many kinds of realism, some magical, some socialist, some capitalist and some that are yet to be named”***  
(Appadurai, 1996, 53)

Women workers sorting tobacco at the turn of the 20th century. Image rights and credit Pancyprrian Federation of Labour Archive



Greek and Turkish Cypriot Miners strike, 1948. With the participation of women and children. Image rights and credit Pancyprrian Federation of Labour Archive

The archival images were found by the author as part of a yearlong creative collaboration with Center for Gender Equality and History ([www.facebook.com/kiif.cy/](http://www.facebook.com/kiif.cy/)) and ΠΟΓΟ (POGO- Pancyprrian Organisation of Democratic Women: the oldest female rights organisation group in Cyprus).

It was presented at Exhibition Neurosis-Neme Contemporary Arts, November 2016 (<http://www.neme.org/events/neurosis>) and the contribution included a collectively made banner created using photographs from the POGO and PEO archives (focusing on female labour and mobilisation). A collaboration between Evi Tselika, Paraskevi Ioannidou, Irene Kyritsi, Thekla Kyritsi, Andri Kyprianou, Andria Neophytou, Elena Neophytou, Chrystalla Panayiotou and Yiota Panayiotou.

## NOTES

1. Instances of Interest amongst many different examples: Oda Projesi, Jeremy Deller, Pedro Reyes, Suzanne Lacy, Group Material, Theaster Gates, Tania Bruguera. Maria Pask- Beautiful city, Sculpture Munster 2007 where the space of a yurt was used for dialogues and speeches of diverse religious and spiritual beliefs to consider how to build a beautiful city. Also relevant co-living conditions of the much referred to Black Mountain college, to the creation of bars as spaces of encounters – see Hirschorn's Philosopher Monuments bars, to the idea of cafe philosophiques, to the creation of bars in Cypriot exhibition spaces (Demetris Taliotis & Constantinos Taliotis.)

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**05**

**BAST**  
**FOOK**  
**SEVEN**

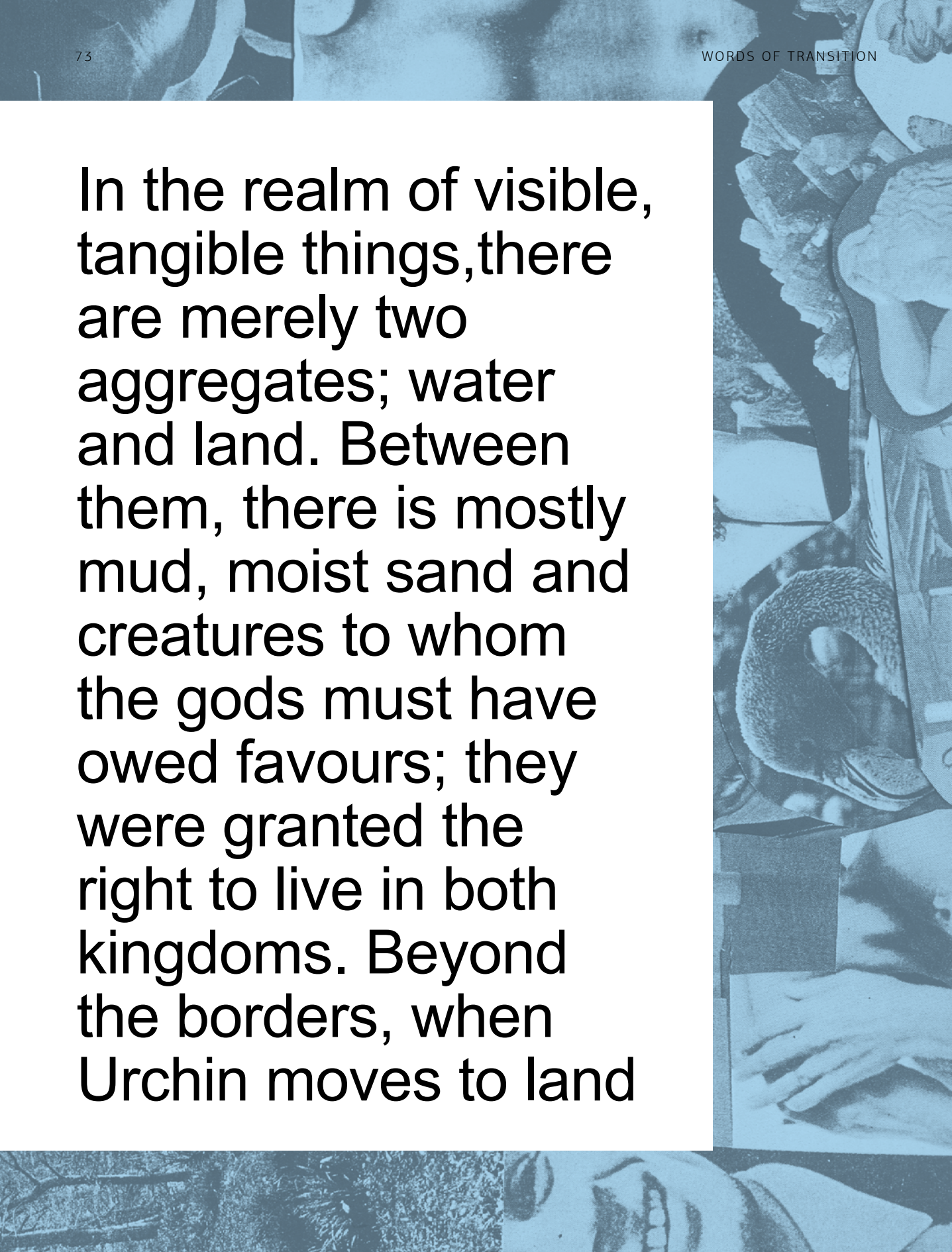








In the realm of visible, tangible things, there are merely two aggregates; water and land. Between them, there is mostly mud, moist sand and creatures to whom the gods must have owed favours; they were granted the right to live in both kingdoms. Beyond the borders, when Urchin moves to land





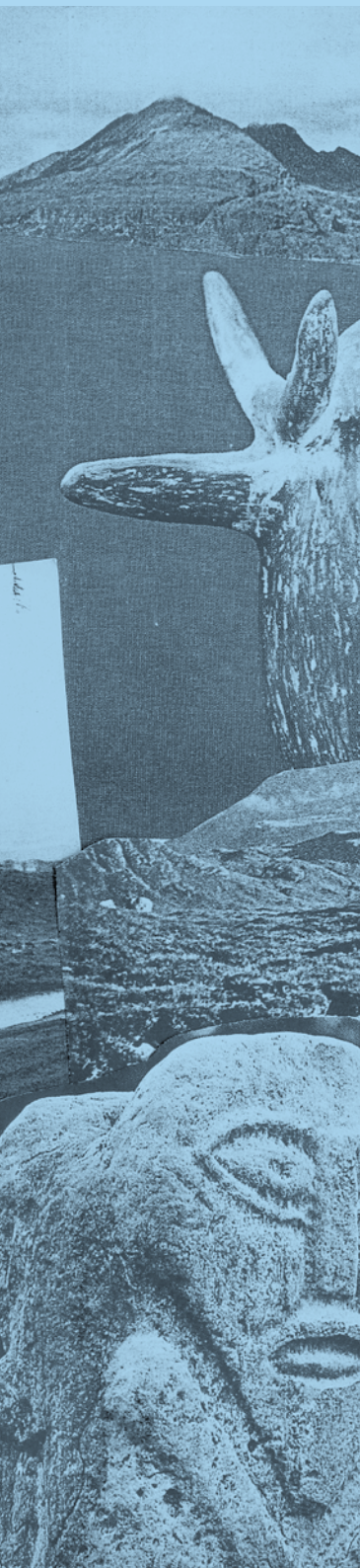
*my dissent about anything has mutated  
into just another Status Update but more often takes the form of a Like.*

becomes Hedgehog  
or Cactus; Shrimp  
turns into Cockroach;  
Sponge transforms  
into Cypress Tree;  
Manta Ray flies with  
the body of Eagle;  
Octopus finds itself  
living the adventures  
of Tarantula and so  
on and so forth and  
vice versa. Ultimately,  
everything comes  
from the 'same bowl'.  
Everything,

*maybe there are  
many universes and in each one there is only one thing alive at a time.*



except the visitors,  
the masters, the  
conquerors, the  
inventors, the  
explorers, the mighty  
creators. The ones  
that drown in water  
and get burned by the  
sun. The ones whose  
backs ache from  
gravity and whose  
entrance to life comes  
after unbearable,  
long-lasting pain.  
The ones that look so



*we only get wood from trees.  
I look around me and there are so many wooden things in this world.*



alien in comparison to everything else on this planet -the tarantula, the shrimp, the cypress tree- that they might as well have fallen to this planet from elsewhere.

And thus, they behave like insatiable hotel guests who never switch off the lights or the ac and demand clean towels every single day.





The words spilled out of his mouth in the voice of Britney Spears and he bore a striking resemblance to Jamie Oliver. At the beginning I thought it was kind of funny, but the more he talked, the more I realised that what was going on was insidiously scary and creepy:

And then he added:

*With a long, silver spoon, dig a deep hole until you reach the crust of the earth. Fill the hole with crunchy plants and fresh carcasses. Cover with a dash-ton of soil, set the timer for 650 million years and wait.*

*Spill me.  
Spoil me.  
Oil me.*







**Shrine**

Shiner

Shine

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Sher

Hers

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His


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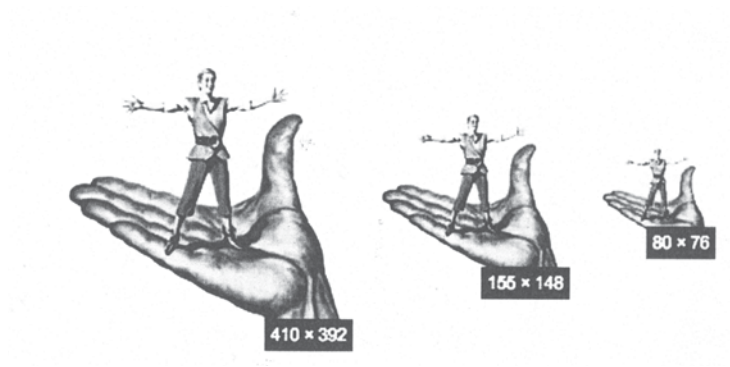
t

## Rise and Shine





how  
many  
pixels  
would  
you say  
you are  
today?



upon leaving a european council meeting on Brexit, president decided to evade a question by a reporter. raping the english accent by shamelessly slamming his consonants he said to her:



you  
arre  
ttoo  
ccute!

president enthusiastically shared  
his realisation with everyone at the  
fundraising event:

it's not  
only  
men;  
women  
think as  
well!

...everything.





re  
discovering  
our old staff  
again, stuff  
that served  
us -staff.







## **06**

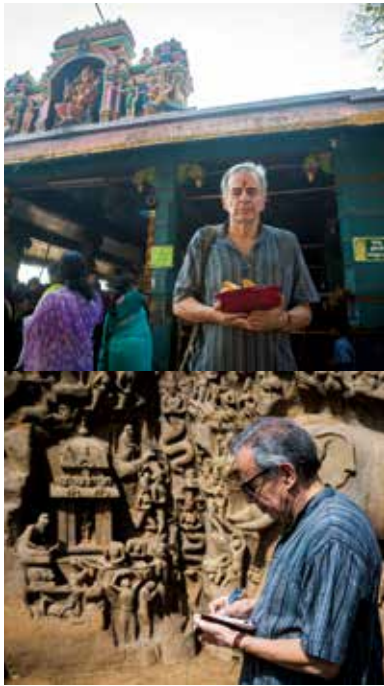
# **TRAVELLING** **GODDESSES** **AND** **ORACLES**





This personal literary essay was first written about a decade ago, for an audience with interest in Indo-caribbean literature "with the title "(W)riting Literature in the Field", and was recently updated and renewed in the context of this project.

Stephanos Stephanides at Mariamma Temple, Madurai and Mahabalipuram in India, 2016. Taken by Faik Iraz



In early 2016, the Ministry of Tourism of the Government of India, offered me the opportunity to visit India and I felt the invitation was like a kind of boon to me from the Hindu goddess in one of her many forms. Indeed, while I had made several trips to India over the last two decades to different parts of the country for personal and professional reasons as a writer and literary scholar, I always felt the goddess had something to do with this. On this occasion, I was given a choice of region, and I chose Tamil Nadu. In addition to its treasure of Unesco world heritage monuments, I wanted to pay tribute to the Goddess Mariamma. The land of the Tamils was in the forefront of my imagination ever since I first encountered the Tamil Goddess Mariamma in Guyana, South America, in early 1981. She had travelled there with Indian indentured labourers who were taken there from India during the British colonial period to fill a labour

gap on the sugar plantations after the emancipation of slaves. A minority of these labourers came from the south (then known as the Madras Presidency) taking with them the worship of the goddess Mariamma often seen as a southern incarnation of the more well-known goddess Kali. Mariamma worship in Guyana became known as Kali Puja. My own peregrination that took me from the Mediterranean to the Caribbean and Latin America has the making of another story, which I will save for another occasion. My forays into the rural areas of Guyana were not part of an anthropological or literary project initially, but part of the process of living and learning about the country where I had come to live and work and whose landscape, language and multilayered cultural expression would leave an indelible mark on my life and work. My involvement in the Kali Puja was first an intimate and personal experience; only later did it become a project for film and publication, which opened a lifelong interest in Indian culture and civilisation. For the moment it might suffice to say that I was looking for a *theoria* albeit inadvertently.

The original Greek meaning of the word *theoria* is contemplation or perception of beauty, especially as a moral faculty. In Eastern Orthodoxy, *theoria* takes on a number of meanings that pertain to the vision and relationship to the divine as is implied in its etymology, and its meaning is related to the Sanskrit word *darsana* (*darshan*). Both words are rooted in seeing, in the sense of an instance of vision or beholding, like an epiphany: to see with reverence or devotion. The consonant cluster *drs* is the root of the verb to see. One may receive "*darshan*" of the deity in the temple. In Greek to *theion* means the divine and *thoro* means to see. The word *thea* is also the feminine of deity (i.e. goddess). The Goddess Kali in Greek is called *Thea Kali*. Ian Rutherford relates the word *theoria* to pilgrimage-related phenomena in classical Greece, when people went to sanctuaries to consult oracles, attend festivals, make sacrifices, or seek

cures for illness.<sup>1</sup> *Theoria* is beyond rational knowledge and so is the way we move through time into an unforeseeable future. In my contemplation of *Thea Kali* over the years I have used a variety of modes and discourses including descriptive, analytical, theoretical, poetical, as well as field notes, stories and anecdotes. This was a way of opening meaning to both this and that, or more appropriately not this nor that, following the *via negativa* of apophatic *theoria* that we find in the tradition of the *Upanishads* expressed in the mantra "*neti neti*" (not this, nor this). Here I would like to share another layer of my *theoria* or *darshan* in the mode of personal reflection and brief memoir, which may complement (or negate if you like) *theorias* I have used in my films and book on Kali.

The first Kali Puja I ever attended was at the temple on Albion Estate in Berbice, which was at that time led by the late Pujari Jamsie Naidoo. Under his renowned leadership, Kali worship was thriving in Guyana and enjoying renewed life. I often visited Berbice province and was told by some of my Berbician students at the University of Guyana that I would find the Kali Puja very interesting. I was introduced to Pujari Naidoo who gave me instructions for dieting and made arrangements for me to stay at the temple for three days and nights at the time of Big Puja. Many people gathered from the estate and nearby villages. Many came from afar, and some had come from Trinidad eager to learn from Pujari Naidoo's way of doing the puja. Many slept on the temple grounds, and with my hammock tied between two trees I slept there too. I was immediately drawn into the energy of the puja and I was encouraged to be a participant rather than a mere spectator. We began our day with ritual ablutions in the river at the crack of dawn. Every task was a ritual task. One of the first tasks assigned to me after bathing was to clap the hot roti (paratha) at the end of the roti-making chain, before sharing them out to devotees and visitors. Throughout the day, in between the various ritual movements

of the dance drama, from the high emotional intensity of entrancement to more quiet meditative moments, everyone was ready to share with me stories and experiences. At night, after the final ritual act, devotees would play music, sing and chant, before settling to sleep on rice sacks or hammocks around the temple. There was hardly an hour of stillness and silence before everyone would stir again for morning ablutions and another day of ritual activities. At the end of the third and final night, as many devotees were dancing in trance, I was told that the Goddess wanted to speak to me, and I was taken before one of her players dancing in trance. That player-devotee was called Sago. He brushed me with a bunch of *neem* and poured dye water over my head and then spoke. He was not one of the many devotees I had managed to speak to before that night, although he had caught my attention with his intense and deep look, long hair and beard, and graceful dancing movements when in a trance. In his role as Mother, he transmitted his message to me in a vibrating voice. Some of the devotees I met on that occasion I became kith and kin with over the years and particularly a few families, most notably those of Basdeo Mangal, Dorothy Kuarlall, and Sago Gansaw. They were the lifeline of Blairmont Temple with Pujari Basdeo in the lead, and I very quickly became deeply imbued with the Kalimai worldview. I wanted to learn everything I could about the ritual, the community, the culture, and I spent as much time as possible in Berbice.

I participated in many pujas in the 80s and I always remember when driving back to Georgetown, despite the fatigue and lack of sleep, I felt enthralled and exhilarated by the ritual experience as if evacuated and filled again with a new and deep feeling of plenitude.

As a literary scholar and poet I inevitably began to probe the boundaries of the literary as I had hitherto understood it. Kalimai religion was not simply a belief or dogma but a poetic

mode of being in the world expressed through festive pleasure and involving complex modes of artistic expression including dance, drama, storytelling, musical and lyrical composition, making of images and musical instruments. This was a great source of aesthetic and spiritual inspiration and pleasure for me and I set out to understand its poetics and its philosophy. My intense dialogue with Karna Singh, with his eye for detail and knowledge of Indo-Caribbean folk cultures as well as years living in India, provided me with many valuable insights. The ritual process and how this relates to art were fundamental to my exploration, and this opened up possibilities of probing the relationship between rite and write or the rites of writing. The dance drama as incorporated in the ritual process and spectacle expressed a cosmology of destruction and creation, a philosophy of time, history, and destiny. Key concepts such as *leela* (divine play), *maya* (the illusion of the phenomenal world), and *karma* (action and subsequent reaction) are articulated in individual and collective desire and imagination, and in their interplay with historical contingency.

I was excited by this way of seeing the world and it informed my way of approaching the private world of reading and writing fiction. In *Translating Kali's Feast*, I explore this approach in the counterpoint and interweaving of readings of three literary giants: Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipaul, and R.K. Narayan. One or two reviewers of my book questioned the place of Narayan, an Indian novelist, in a book on Indo-Caribbean culture. I read all of Narayan avidly, as he evoked for me the world I was experiencing in my life in Berbice. His cultural and mythical landscape seemed all too familiar in the way it combined the surface of everyday life and its interconnectivity with the affective value of space and vision of garden, grove, temple, home, puja room, river, and pond, as sites where the subject is generated and where deities and spirits seem about to implode in the people who occupy the narratives. While he is not a Ca-

ribbean writer, the transferences and counter-transferences that inhere in the cultural imaginary suggest that geography is situated along the trajectory of desire. Why else would Naipaul engage with him only to dismiss him as a fabulist? This made an important starting point for my discussion of Naipaul. Naipaul's writing is extremely compelling in the way that his imagination carries the abjection of the coolie, and the way he reveals how the experience of abjection affects the production of culture. Kalimai culture, often seen as the liminal among the liminal, is metonymical of that abjection in Indo-Caribbean narrative. I was seeking ways of averting or mitigating the fixity of Naipaul's gaze – a gaze born of his own anxiety as an Indian in the Caribbean. The rites of Kali are primarily a healing process, and the question for me was what indigenous



Film stills from Stephanides, S. (dir.) (1988). *Hail Mother Kali* [documentary]

means of cultural, artistic, and spiritual expression did the community have or seek for self-healing. This concern is particularly relevant to Wilson Harris who, although a difficult writer, made my task easier. While his approach to Indo-Guyanese culture is metaphorical and the texture of everyday life is not salient in his work, there is much theorising and reflection in his essays and novels that address the very issues I was thinking about. For example, he brings the novel and the ritual process together in one striking metaphor defining the narrative process as he perceives it: Odysseus tied to the mast listening to the sirens is the entranced dancer dancing on one leg. When I had almost finished writing the manuscript for *Translating Kali's Feast*, Harris's *Jonestown* was published. Kali features extensively in this work and the novel provided inspiration and a rich source for another chapter, and gave new depth to my exploration of trance and trans- (trans-latability and trans-culture). My conversations with Wilson and David Dabydeen in Cyprus in 1998 helped me put the final touches to the book.

I dealt only briefly with a few of the younger generation of Indo-Caribbean writers, for example, Sonny Ladoo, David Dabydeen, Arnold Itwaru. I wrote about some of the new writers in conference papers, yet in a sense I felt too close and affectively involved with many of them and I was not yet ready to step back and write about them as I did with the established and canonical authors. There was a burgeoning circle of Guyanese writers, artists and intellectuals with whom I interacted, and who became intrigued – with varying sympathy – with my involvement with Kali. Perhaps I was burgeoning with them and the wealth of our personal relationships and artistic interactions no doubt affected my sensibility, and nuanced the approach of my thinking and writing. Because of my partisanship in the Kalimai way of seeing the world, I found myself amid cross-currents of contending ideologies and contesting cultures – high culture versus low-caste culture, hinduisation

versus creolisation, socialists, progressives, rationalists, cultural materialists, Christian converts. This made translating Kali's Feast a challenging prospect. At the York University Conference on Indo-Caribbean Studies in Toronto, 1988, I grew hesitant to show my film *Hail Mother Kali* as I began to sense that some pandits would be offended by some of the scenes, such as the goat sacrifice. Another group rallied around me and pressed me to show the film – whoever doesn't want to see it, doesn't have to see it, they said. Arnold Itwaru expressed admiration for my passion for the grassroots culture, whereas others like Sasenarine Persaud thought I was misled and felt I should give my attention to Hindu high culture. Persaud chose not to watch the film. I, too, love Hindu classical culture, but I was deeply interested in how a cast-off yet vibrant culture had negotiated its way through dislocation and colonialism and the ways in which it was now finding a path into global modernity. Just a few months ago, Sasenarine sent me a collection of his poetry through a common friend. In dedicating the book, he thanked me for my contribution to Indo-Caribbean culture.

Sometimes my partisanship to the Kali way of seeing the world affected the way I related to the writers and friends in my circle. My good friend, the late Mahadai Das, on a visit back to Guyana from New York, told me with amusement that the story had got around that I had "gone native", and asked to accompany Karna Singh and myself on one of our trips to Berbice. By the second night, she had grown tired of the whole thing and quite clearly did not share my fascination or my ability to become almost oblivious to the ant and mosquito bites. I talked of the virtues of walking barefoot and eating with your hands. It brings you closer to the energy of the earth and to the food, I said, as she listened unconvinced. As I settled into the gentle sway of my hammock way past midnight and began to sleep, Karna came to tell me that Mahadai was ready to go back to Georgetown. I was never

ready to go back to Georgetown but I did not wish to seem ungracious. We drove back silently through the night and arrived in Georgetown with day-clean. If I had gone native, she had gone New York, I thought. The goddess had come between us, and our friendship chilled, and we grew apart for a while. A few years later, in the mid-1980s when I was in the US, I heard that she suffered a stroke in Chicago, so I quickly got in touch with her while she was in hospital and tried to give her courage to recover. I remembered my admiration and affection for her, her brothers and sisters, her work and her difficult life. Her mother died leaving her to take care of the family when she was only 17, the eldest of ten children. Yet she had her moments of grace from the goddesses; recognised as a talented poet she was encouraged by Rajkumari Singh who drew her into her poetry circles. Rajkumari's son, the late Gora Singh, the dancer, trained her to walk with a dancer's grace to enhance her natural beauty and prepared her to be crowned Diwali Queen. I was deeply saddened by her early death at the age of 48 in 2003. I sometimes think of that trip to Berbice when I read one of my favourite poems of hers: "Deceived or Deceiving". "I want this day to finish quickly," the poem begins. "Gods do not listen./ [...] [I] swirl incense round fixed heads,/ touch holy fires to my forehead as instructed./ Yet they are dumb./ Their lips may be broken with a hammer."<sup>2</sup>

My first encounters with Rooplall Monar in the early '80s could be turned into a Rabelaisian carnivalising banter. Roy Brummell, storyteller and broadcaster, told me that a spirit had possessed the body of a man called Rooplall who lived in a nearby village on the East Coast. He wanted me to meet him because as a Kalimai man I had become conversant with the spirit world, and because the spirit claimed that in life he had been a Greek doctor named Agrippa and he had now come to the village to heal the people. I spoke to the spirit in Greek and he chanted back in what I was sure was Sanskrit. The spirit claimed he had



lived seven centuries earlier and because of language change, he said, we could no longer communicate in Greek. I asked him to put the lighted camphor in his mouth to take an oath and prove he was not lying and that he really was a spirit, but he said he did not go for such tricks. A week later, Roy invited both Rooplall and me to his radio talk show to talk about the spirit who was visiting the village. Since during our first meeting I spoke to Agrippa not Rooplall, Rooplall showed no sign of having met me before. I claimed that the spirit who called himself Agrippa was an impostor – the spirit, mind you, not Rooplall – he was no Greek doctor, just a local jumbie “playing joke” on the villagers, I said. I suggested that I take Rooplall to a Kali pujari to clear the mischievous spirit from his body but he did not take up my invitation. Roy later told me that Rooplall was a good storyteller and a couple of years later I came across his published stories and poetry and found the same verve I enjoyed in our first encounters in the village and on the radio. My housekeeper Veronica, a keen listener to everything I had to say, and always ready to counter it with her perspective, was of the opinion that it was not Rooplall but I who had a mad coolie jumbie inside me. What else could be driving me to Berbice at all times of day or night in my rickety old car that was breaking down every other day? She offered to take me to an Afro-Guyanese bottom-house church she frequented to have the spirit diagnosed and cleared away. I accepted, as I was always ready to get another insight and perspective into spirit lore. I won’t go into the story of what happened there – just to say that it didn’t stop my journeys to Berbice as I knew it wouldn’t. But Veronica’s prognosis that I would end up stranded on the road proved right. Karna and I got stuck on the road between rice fields somewhere beyond Maihacony Creek. We were listening in hope for a car to pass but the only sound we heard the whole night was that of mosquitoes buzzing round our ears like jet planes. The story passed into the oral tradition of the community. More than 20 years later

in Brooklyn Maha Kali Mandir, Anil, who was a boy at the time and was now a pujari in his thirties, retold the event from his childhood memory with a good dose of Guyanese tantalising as he praised me to the congregation and welcomed me back among them: Bhaiji Stef, a man of great devotion. Nothing would stop him from going to the Mother’s temple, he proclaimed as he described how Karna and I turned up one morning (a day later than expected) with our white kurtas covered in car grease and our faces and arms swollen with mosquito bites.

On another radio chat show, while I was collaborating on a workshop with poet and performer Marc Matthews, the interviewer asked what I was seeking in Berbice – as by that time I had become known as a regular visitor there. Before I had a chance to reply, Marc quickly responded: “He los’ the oracle at Delphi, so he goin’ to Berbice to find it.” Years later I smiled when Wilson Harris wrote in *Jonestown*: “I speak as a Carnival oracle, Francisco. Not Delphic oracle.”<sup>3</sup> There was truth in Marc’s quip. I had left Cyprus with a sense of loss and dislocation. I now think of my time in Guyana as my second Odyssey. The tradition of the second Odyssey tells of Odysseus deciding not to go back to Ithaca or going back and deciding not to stay. Instead he decides to go on another journey, through the straits of Gibraltar and beyond Hesperia, beyond the known world. I went back to Cyprus in 1977 but within three months I knew I could not live there anymore. The pre-modern village of my childhood was north of the partition line – or ceasefire line – set up after the war of 1974 and inaccessible to me. I felt I no longer belonged there. Nationalism had torn the place apart. I moved to Barcelona and decided from there I would go beyond Hesperia to South America.

I eventually returned to Cyprus in 1991 where I am still living. Over the years many of my friends from the Kalimai community had migrated to North America. I learnt how they established a temple first in a garage, then in a



basement, and eventually acquired a warehouse in Brooklyn. I decided to visit them in 2002. I approached with a deep feeling of melancholy as I was always anxious that, although they had survived colonialism, global capitalism would swallow them up. I could not imagine a windowless warehouse replacing the open-air temple, a garden with its sacred groves. As soon as I entered, there was the familiar intense smell of *neem* and a small tree brought from Florida stood in the corner. There was communication and

exchange with temples in the warmer climes. A beach in Queens served as a substitute Ganges. A lawyer had helped them negotiate issues regarding health and fire hazards so they could operate within the laws of New York. There was a new set of cross-cultural and artistic relations in the new environment especially through the US-born younger generation and with migrants from India. I decided to film Big Puja at the Brooklyn Temple in the summer of 2003 to complement the 1988 documentary of the Blairmont Big Puja. At one moment during filming I stood in front of the temple eating *kanchi* rice with my hands after it had been tasted and approved by five widows as is the tradition. Across the road, people were coming out of McDonald's with their food. As they heard the intense drum rhythms, they were inevitably curious and would look over and see devotees swirling and vibrating in trance, placing lighted camphor in their mouths. Would this peaceful coexistence continue or would corporate capitalism eventually swallow up this ancient rite? Or perhaps corporate capitalism would be swallowed up in the goddess's perennial stomach.

It was moving to see Basdeo's children grown up and taking leading roles in the temple. Since 2003 I always visit the temple whenever I am in New York and I have developed a close relationship with Basdeo's son Anil who now leads the temple in Brooklyn. His wife Romanee Kallicharran is fully involved in temple life and as a performance artist and dancer, she brings together her Indo-Guyanese and Puerto Rican heritage into the public space. Basdeo's elder son Sunil still keeps the temple at Blairmont alive. The two temples maintain a close relationship through their leadership. I had the privilege of seeing Pujari Basdeo for the last time just a few days before he passed away in New York in August 2016. His memory will live on in the rich legacy kept alive in the temples he founded.

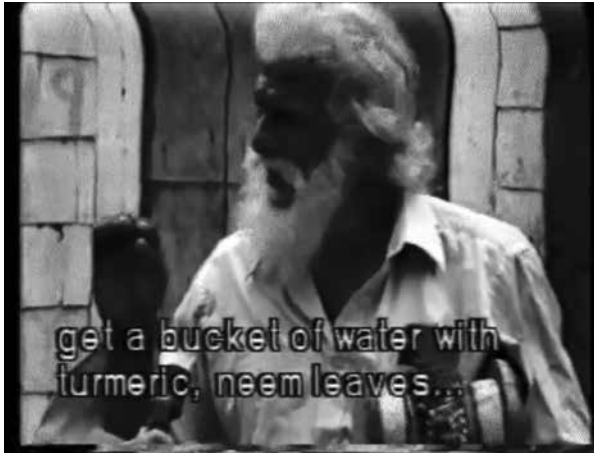
I had never shown the films about the Kali Puja in Cyprus until a few years

ago when one of the art houses in Nicosia wanted to organise a showing. No one will want to see them here, I said, except my lunatic fringe of friends who have already seen them privately. I decided to give it a try. I was overwhelmed to see how the place filled up, and there were people standing and sitting up and down the stairs. It was like Big Puja. Turkish Cypriot friends came from the north. Their presence would have been impossible before 2003 when the checkpoints opened. I would like to think that the partial opening of the partition line was not only a collusion of the EU's and Turkey's interests but had something to do with the alchemical imagination too. When he was in Cyprus, Wilson Harris suggested that this too was necessary if we were to bring down the walls dividing us. We still have a long way to go to bring down the walls altogether. Perhaps all these people were looking for the oracle. I stood there daunted as I was looking for words to introduce the film. Would I tell them I found the oracle in Berbice? And how would I translate it into their tongue?

Perhaps I was waiting for a moment of *darshan*, a *theoria*. After participating and experiencing many Kali Pujas, I came to realise that *darshan* did not mean seeing the deity, but the deity seeing you. There is a special moment in the ritual of the annual Big Kali Puja when the eyes are painted in on the image of the deity. It is the last act after cleansing and redressing the image. This takes place while the image is hidden behind a saffron cloth. After the eyes are painted in, the cloth is removed, and the new eyes, the heretofore unseen eyes, behold you leaving a trace of their gaze in our apprehension of being in the world. The ritual seems to rehearse and reclaim for us the disquiet and awe we experience as humans in the contingency of our (hi) stories and the relentless sensuality of nature. I have attempted to write and translate this gaze, *theoria* or *darshan*, into poetry. Each time I attempted to capture on film the unveiling of the goddess during Big Puja, in Blairmont

and in Brooklyn, I failed. The cameraman I had with me was either distracted or not there on time. Of course I was expecting too much to want to film it. After all, one may experience the goddess' invisible gaze only when she chooses to look your way.

Pujari Jamsie Naidoo, 1988 Guyana (Film still)



Pujari Basdeo Mangal, 2003 New York (Film still)



Stephanos ☉ Pujari Anil Mangal, 2016 New York. Taken by Lars T. Rodseth

#### NOTES

1. Ian Rutherford, "Theoria and Darsan: Pilgrimage and Vision in Greece and India", *Classical Quarterly* 50.1 (2000): 133-46
2. Mahadai Das, "Deceived or Deceiving", in *Bones* (1988), rept. in *A Leaf in His Ear: Collected Poems* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2010), p. 77
3. Wilson Harris, *Jonestown* (London: Faber, 1996), p.130



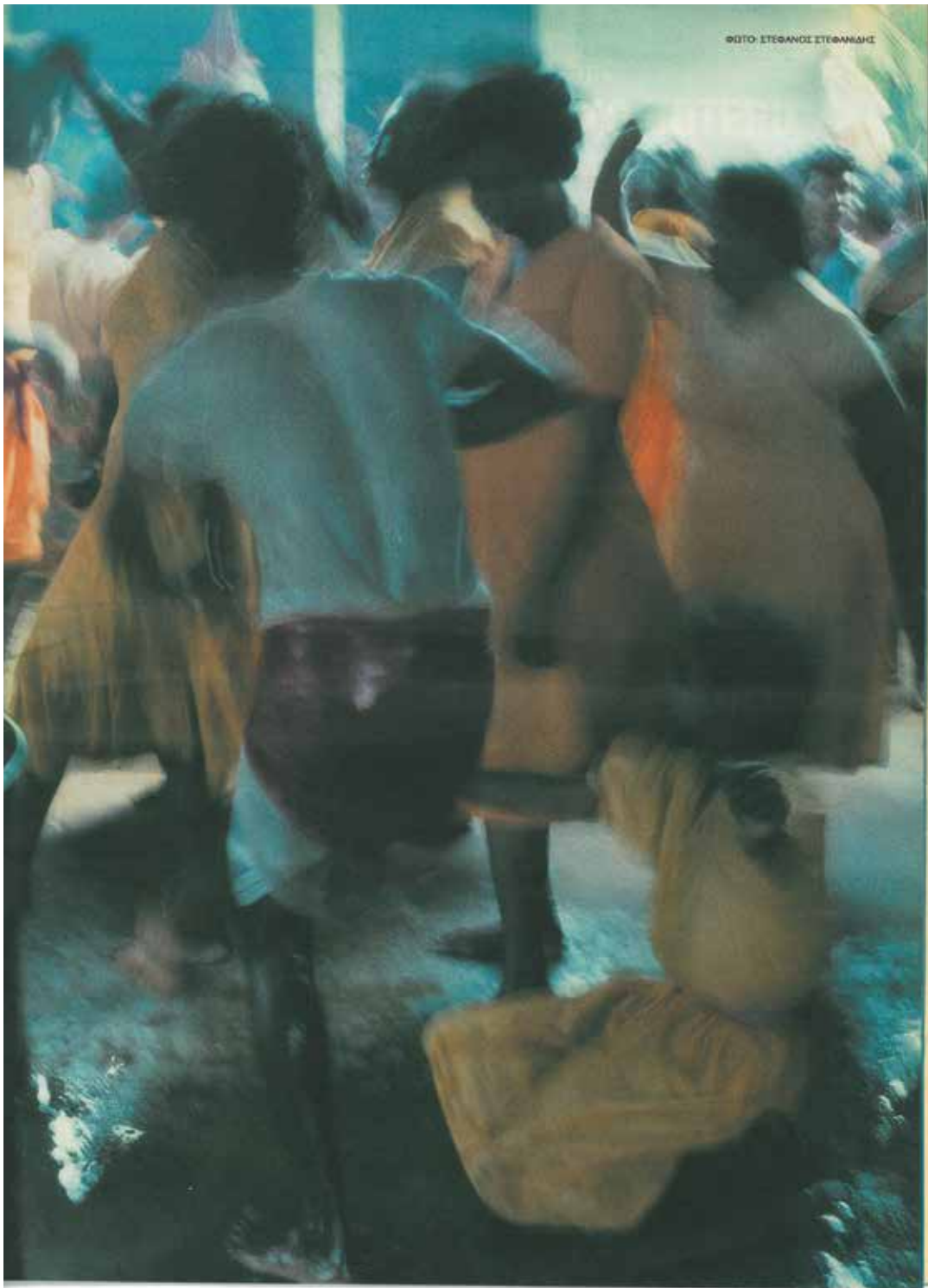


*Stephanos talking about his contributions to Re Aphrodite shrine in the Nicosia Municipal Garden, January 10th 2016.*



*Scattering ashes at Marina beach, Chennai, in 2016. Taken by Faik Iraz*

Devotees in trance, Blairmont Temple, Guyana, 1988.





Quarry workers Akamas Region 1924. Image rights and credit Pancyprrian Federation of Labour Archive



# 07

# HELENE; INTERLOCUTOR

"There are traces  
of blood in a fairy tale"  
Susan Howe, *Singularities*

I read and write fiction under the suspension of disbelief, drawn up above me like an umbrella. With disbelief held this high I can allow for the impossible to take place. So I am taken aback when I come to the National Geographic's 1928 and 1954 features on Cyprus: "Unspoiled Cyprus: The Traditional Island Birthplace of Venus Is One of the Least Sophisticated of Mediterranean Lands" by Maynard Owen Williams and "Cyprus: Idyllic Island in a Troubled Sea" by Jean and Franc Shor. I am taken aback because I find that in their non-fictional accounts, I am asked to suspend my disbelief as if reading a work of fiction. Only in this case, to do so, would be to give into a carefully woven narrative trying to pass itself off as true [I cannot subscribe to this purported recording of Cypriot reality] [What colonial bunk is this?]. And so, in this case, I keep a firm grip onto my disbelief when looking through their photographs and captions. I remain consciously incredulous in the face of their authoritative voices. I refuse, further, to acknowledge this as some kind of well-meaning elegiac mythologising.

I am witnessing a fiction, I realise, peddled under the auspices of cultural expansionism, a gross process of supposed beautification and elevation. And the only way through this archive is in its undoing: a conceptual shredding, a necessarily violent defacing. This fictional depiction of Cyprus is in itself an act of violence, albeit hidden behind the bumbling antics of supposedly sincere, interested travellers. Central to their narratives is the claiming of a Cypriot girl, Helene, who becomes the lodestone in their carefully woven colonial myth: a twelve-year-old, who spends her days breaking rocks with her bare hands for the British to make roads with, is "discovered" as the last remaining link to the island's patron goddess, Aphrodite, due to her as yet "unspoiled" beauty.

Williams bemoans her "horny hands" but praises her "fine spirit", thrilled to have found, after all his searching, a rural Renaissance-like Aphrodite. Meanwhile the Shors seek her out again in 1952 and depict her as a happy fulfilled mother of seven who has lost her goddess-like appeal but lives a simple life that we should all aspire to. They take a picture of her surrounded by flowers to replicate the 1928 photograph of her slight young body posed in a field of poppies.

In the 1952 issue, the Shors are in a taxi in Nicosia and the driver takes a sharp turn, accidentally hitting a cyclist who falls into a farmer who in turn falls against a loaded donkey. The donkey jumps aside and in doing so crashes into a shop window. Chaos and yelling ensues. It's a moment of levity for the travellers, and a perfect example for them to evidence to their readers what a topsy-turvy place Cyprus is, a wonderful illustration, they feel, of East meeting West, of different stratas of civilisation colliding against one another. It is an exotic othering, a frisson of excitement for the educated, taxi-riding, Americans who call this collision "violent" but who blindly refuse to recognize the violence that inhabits Cyprus' fraught political reality in the 50's. Even more disconcerting to me, more pivotal to my act of unfolding that comes in the pages that follow, is a searing presence in that road accident that the narrators simply cannot see: It is, of course, their precious Helene, the maker of the road. Helene who spent her youth breaking big rocks into smaller ones with her mother so that the British can build roads, roads like the one that National Geographic's intrepid journalists can be taxi'd around on. The disconnect is so wildly unmissable that I barely know what to do with the frayed pages in my hand that wilfully ignore it. On the one hand is the Helene that Williams created and the Shors perpetuate, and on the other hand is the Helene who is directly involved in the building of the British empire's infrastructure, her body a physical means of

production, her body hardened and tired from the labour the journalists can only lament, as if the wearing down of her Renaissance beauty has nothing to do with a globalised system of oppression and impossible labour conditions that their narratives explicitly belie. Helene, the shrouded interlocutor.

The whole narrative is so riddled with fictions that, when I put it all down on the page, I find multitudes of collisions, ones without levity, ones that contain only violence.

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pedestrian

baggy

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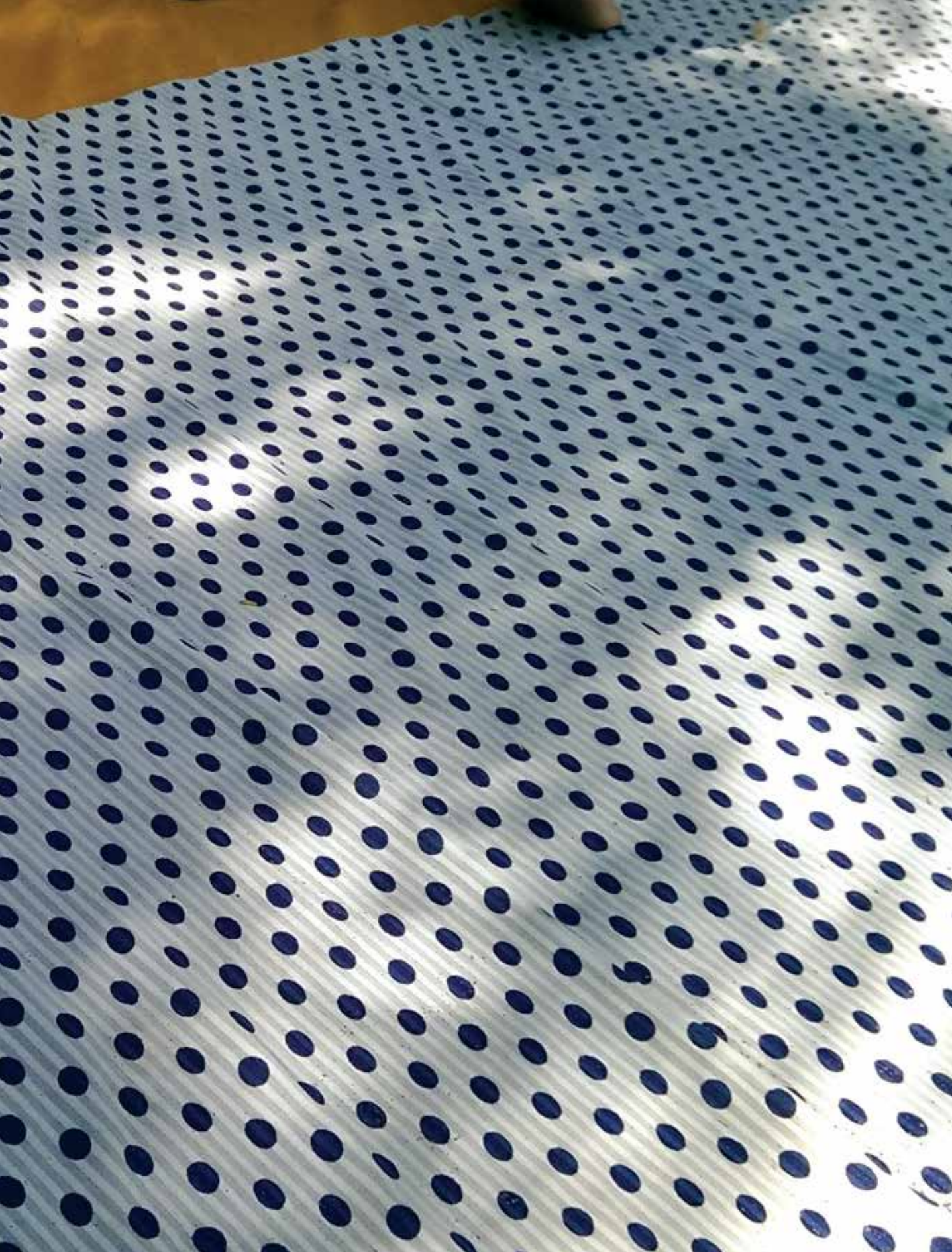
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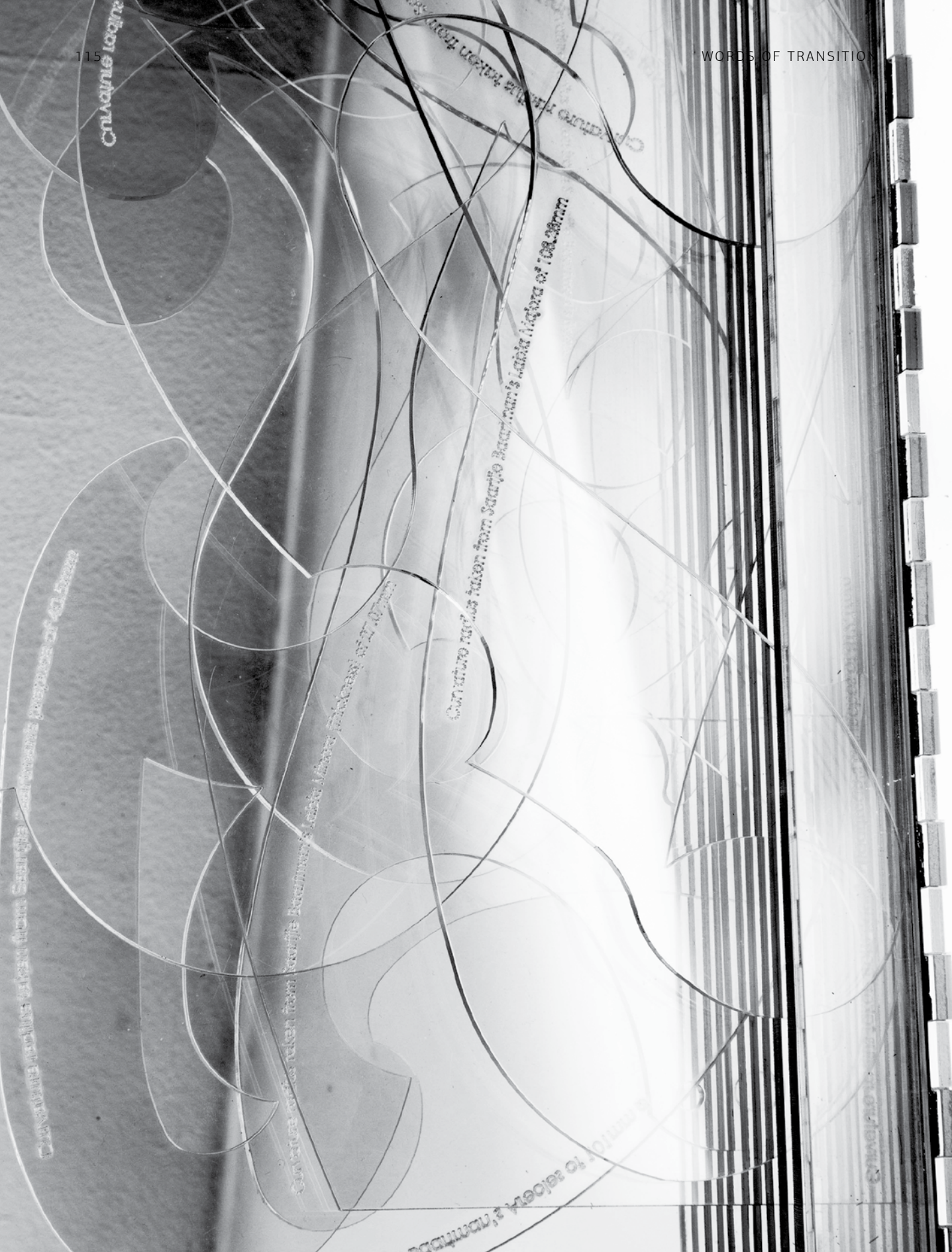
**08**

**HEIR**

**OF**

**PAFFETINE**







## PRE-BRAZIL PART I

### 1. THE TOOLS

'*The Science of Mensuration – The Hottentot Curves*', completed in 2013, is a set of French curves derived from the deconstruction of the measurements and words of zoologist, Georges Cuvier during Sarah Baartman's 'autopsy' in 1817.

Baartman, a woman belonging to the Khoikhoi people of South Africa in the early 19th century, became a human-zoo celebrity as *The Hottentot Venus* as she was toured across London and Paris, exhibited for her 'exotic' bodily form, elongated genitals and Steatopygia.

Following her death, Parisian zoologist, Georges Cuvier obtained her body in the name of Science, taking in-depth measurements recorded in an autopsy of medical curiosity in 1817 entitled, '*Extracts of observations made on the Body of a woman known in Paris and London by the name of Venus Hottentot*'.

Until the late 1970s, Baartman's skeleton, cast of her body, brain and genitalia stood in case 33 at the Musée de L'Homme in Paris, after which she was archived until Mandela's release in 1994, when he requested the return of her remains to her South African homeland. Much to the dismay of the French National Assembly, and in the words of Philippe Mennequier, assistant curator at the Musée de L'Homme, he argued the importance of retaining her remains as; "*We never know what science will be able to tell us in the future. If she is buried, this chance will be lost...for us (France) she remains a very important treasure.*" [Webster, 2000]

On the 9<sup>th</sup> August 2002, Sarah Baartman was buried in South Africa, 214 years after her birth.

*The Hottentot Curves* (2013) use Cuvier's measurements to create a new

set of *standard* French Curves, banishing the legitimacy of mensuration (science of measurement). Baartman is no longer recognised for her physical attributes, her exotic and sexualised silhouette an object of curiosity. Instead she becomes the 'norm', the '0', the significant starting and ending point of measure.

### 2. BAARTMAN AS VENUS RE: APHRODITE 2016

Re:turning Baartman to her stage name, as *Venus*, allows for the elevation of the black female corporal body from the historical belief that collectively we are powerless, ugly, primitive, and censored – to being strong, visible, beautiful and limitless. As *Venus*, Baartman joins a network of Venuses, Aphrodites and Oshuns trans-globally and trans-culturally, who share her stories, attributes and rituals that are socially valued.

Aspiring to employ my *Hottentot Curves* as tools to re:address and re:identify the image of the Hottentot Venus, I designed a series of wearable pieces. Aiming to re:introduce Baartman's title as *Venus*, denouncing the stereotypes previously pinned to her body, exposing alternative values and visions, and thus reminding the wearer of the normality found in the black female body.

Growing up as a mixed race child within a black family has always highlighted my differences, most clearly vocalised by the comparison of my *European* hair with that of my cousins Afro. Sunday afternoons sitting cross-legged on the floor whilst my grandmother hovered over my head, pulling and teasing at my scalp, plaiting my hair neatly into cornrows was an experience I *only ever* experienced as an observer from across the room. However, it was the unexpected voice of my grandfather one day, who reminded me that despite my differences, I too had a black body - '*your hair, it's just like my mothers was, long, dark and fine – you look just like her*'.

My exploration of Baartman's body

as a self-identifying *mixed race*, black, woman of colour, has created a personal shift in my project: I have now become re:centralised within it. The use of my *Hottentot Curves* as a means of re:introducing Baartman as *Venus* still remains at the forefront of my project, however the black female body I speak of now also includes my own.

### 3. HAIR OF PAFFETINE - Paffetine, my great-grandmother - Carib by descent.

Swapping my tailor's tools for my *Hottentot Curves*, I have created wearable artifacts that are rooted within Baartman's very being. The initial decoding, giving the tools their form, was a preliminary process to freeing Baartman from the centuries of Eurocentric, patriarchal and scientific gaze to which she was subjected. She is no longer open to their measurement; instead she offers us an alternative.

Despite bearing strong and confident silhouettes, these garments are wearable artifacts and *not* costumes, a key aspect to re:turning Baartman's gaze. Complexity in the guise of minimalism allows these garments to stir conversation whilst being non-illustrative. They project Baartman's presence over the wearer in a vapour-like form, retaining the wearers 'self' so that both become visible. A series of box pleats across the chest, back and arms imitate ideas of a continuous moving cycle of opening and closing. Exposed seams worn on the outside of the garments mirror Baartman's corporal and emotional dissection. Emphasis on the garments shoulders and elbows are a reminder of Baartman's re:affirmed *Venus* status, as they replicate *Venus de Milo's* imperfect yet regal form.

Born in 1788, Baartman's presence spans 214 years, of which she is silenced, hidden and ignored. Preserving a firm grasp on being 'present', she becomes limitless, timeless and boundary-less allowing her silent legacy to take on aspects of Afrofuturism. A timeline runs down the spine of the

white garment, marking world events that occurred during these 214 years.

#### 4. DEAR, WEARER

My process of deconstructing, deciphering and reworking the corporal measurements of the *Hottentot Venus* has reassigned her positioning as the powerful 'O'. Despite the garments be-

## **POST-BRAZIL** **PART II**

*Dear Michelle Mattiuzzi,*

*You don't know me, and unfortunately I don't know you, but I've Googled your name, watched your interviews and performances on YouTube and followed you*

*photo, the more I saw, and the sharper the pinch grew.*

*When I look at your photograph, I see me - and for that I thank you,*

*Rosa*

As an unfamiliar black female body in the image, Mattiuzzi's strong presence



ing fashioned from the decoded measurements, reflective of an infamously destructive history inflicted on Baartman, the importance of the garments accessibility to an all-inclusive audience is paramount.

*attentively on Facebook. So much so that in August I saw an image of you wearing a piece from my project 'Hair of Paffetine', and ever since then, something inside me has screamed.*

*At first I only allowed myself to briefly register the photo, dismissing its existence and ignoring the significance in the sharp pinch it handed me at each glance - But I listened to the scream within, and the more I returned to the*

reminds me of the familiar black bodies I know and love so well, that of my mothers, my aunties and cousins, and in doing so acknowledges the question that if these very different looking bodies are accepted as 'black bodies', then why isn't mine?

## POST-BRAZIL PART III

'Black what?' 'Black how?' 'Black who?' 'Black why?'

Identity is a twofold notion built from the bricks of assumptions and misassumptions the outside world agrees to place on you, mortared with the way in which you choose to self-identify. As the world hands out identities to those phenotypically defined and positioned in society as black or white, who in turn either reject or accept such subjectivities, the autonomy to self-identify as *mixed race* isn't one that is afforded to us - It is given.

Identifying as a *mixed race* woman, this twofold notion of identity rarely matches up. Ignoring normal everyday niceties, I am bestowed a history fully carpeted with 'what are you?' 'Where are you from?' 'No, but where are you really from?' 'Wow, you're so tanned already' 'So you're half-caste' 'I'd need to see your parents to believe that'...and 'Are you sure?'

For the majority of my life, I have identified 'simply' as "mixed race", a term I've always felt safe behind but most importantly, a term I felt assuaged the world around me - not too complex, not too deep, on the surface none confrontational but illustrative enough for the woven carpet of questions to ease in tension.

My experience of how the world views me, and therefore identifies me, fluctuates within the subjective context of place, people and culture. As a child I learnt that my face offers no legible indicators of my heritage, an imperative factor when "mixed race" identity is so physically varied and therefore studied with a purely titillating and aesthetically based perspective. Visually ambiguous, my corporal features lend no clues; my hair a mass of fuzzy confusion - not a 'fro but unruly in demeanor, perhaps *European* to the touch, un-braid-able to my grandmother, the *Good Hair* to my grandfa-

ther, but never that 'real' "mixed race" hair we see on the television.

Never black enough to be black, and too black to be white, or *carrying the key to the best of both worlds* - as I'm so often told and retold, my "mixed race" identity in fact carries a dual burden. The constant hopscotch played between racial persecution and privilege, has for the majority of my life ensured that I remain silenced against the stereotypes of my "mixed race" being. Reminded by black communities and members of my family that my lighter skin, *good* hair and ability to be culturally digested, invalidates my hurt and right to express the racial struggle I experience.

Being "mixed race" *IS* a black experience.

This juggling act between persecution and privilege has been globally hinted at through film and literature since the 19th century, with the introduction of the *Tragic Mulatto*. A fictional character often female, who is mixed raced, but almost always played by a black-faced white actress. Her story is that of *passing* for white, the privilege that a white status gifts her and the heavy oppression that occurs when she is finally *outed* as black. Emotionally unhinged, perplexed by her self-identity and apprehensive about her position between a black and white world, the *Tragic Mulatto* is ultimately a propaganda stunt warning the audience about the threat that mixed race relationships, and thus babies, pose when the *colour line* begins to blur.

Mixed race female bodies hold a strong footing in the world's media, they are quite literally *en vogue*, offering the male gaze a primitive, exotic and sexual object due to her blackness and yet able to harness a reminder that her whiteness allows her social elevation, respect and perhaps even a glimpse of *normality*.

The *Tragic Mulatto* in the twenty first century graces our screens as the acceptable black female body, a portal

between black and white worlds - she is most notably crowned as the *Video Vixen*. Her presence openly celebrated and degraded by the likes of rapper Kayne West, when expressing how mixed race women continue to be a prized exotic temptress; "*If it wasn't for race mixing there'd be no video girls. Me and most of our friends like mutts a lot. Yeah, in the hood they call 'em mutts'*". (Kayne West, 2006)

Commentary like West's supports ideas of colourism and the idea that black features on not-so-black bodies sell, allowing the world to continually pitch mixed race women up against that of their darker curlier haired black female counterparts.

## POST-BRAZIL PART IV

"*Heir of Paffetine*"

Digesting Mattiuzzi's photograph has become a difficult, lengthy and internal process, a clichéd *journey to self-discovery* in reclaiming my ability to self-identify as a Black Mixed Race woman - despite how the world chooses to see me. At times I have become the teary *Tragic Mulatto*, head-in-hands unwittingly emulating the cinematically perplexed. And at other times I have been able to hold my clenched fist high above my frizzy head. '*Heir of Paffetine*' is a response piece to Michelle Mattiuzzi, a Brazilian performance artist who I have never met, and yet has stirred and empowered so much inside of me.

Littered with allegories, '*Heir of Paffetine*' is a self-portrait of myself embracing the multitude of ways my Black identity is voiced, read, misread and more often rejected. Centered within the photograph, I stand poised, Venus-like, wearing the '*Hair of Paffetine*', my eyes and camera remote, parallel to one another, gazing squarely at the viewer.

At my feet a pile of presumed oranges mark the racial questioning I am party



to. Their skin assuming the appearance of a citrus fruit, when peeled and tasted one quickly realises that they are in fact bitter oranges. A strange fruit containing tricks and fallacies; reflective of a deep seated feeling within me, that my indecipherable identity demands authorising.

*'Hair of Paffetine'* is a declaration of defiance. Self styled yet universal, it invites you to exercise your curiosity, to compare and contrast the black female body - Sarah Baartman, Michelle Mattiuzzi, Rosa Couloute - and in reality conclude, there is no difference. All women who choose to define *themselves*, as Black Women are all *'Heir(s) of Paffetine.'*

HEIR OF PAFFETTINE









Rio de Janeiro, 01 de Agosto 2016.

Saímos aproximadamente às 18:30 da casa 24, ca  
minhamos em direção ao clube de gapi eira (Elithe).  
Essa foi o primeiro trajeto com uso de Hair of Paratone  
de Rosa Couloute's. Estávamos à caminho ~~da~~  
de um evento que designaria a candidatura de  
uma ativista militante e puta Indiana Siquei  
ra... um momento histórico e contraditório por tra  
tar de uma crise no cenário político representativo  
brasileiro, mas a importância de militantes ocu  
parem os espaços patriarcal faz-se necessário.  
Falar por 1 minuto sem iniciar um ato performá  
tico ou artístico. A roupa transparente foi  
um ato subversivo, todas as trans elogiaram  
o figurado, todas as mulheres vibraram por  
minha nudez transparente....

Michelle Mattuzzi

- Ao usar a roupa preta foi neces  
~~rio~~ sário (~~utilizar~~) retirar a etiqueta

- Realizamos uma intervenção no  
situação para desacralizar o  
o de objeto de arte.

Propomos um sentido relacional  
afetivo ao utilizar Haij Passione  
espaço social (rua, escaida, lugares de passagem)  
(Casa Nem

**09**

**DREAMING**

**IN A**

**COLONIAL/**

**POST-Olympic**

**CITY**



Rio de Janeiro - Brazil, 2016: it has been claimed the most important one of the last 8 years. The Olympics Games were about to begin. During the New Year's party, among the boats throwing fireworks, we were able to see some words floating on the Copacabana sea: *2016, the year that came to stay*. The statement was used by the government to promote the biggest sporting event of the world. The city was about to change forever, but we know it had been changed a lot already.

For people like me, who read that as a threat, the situation was getting worse over the months. The state had been bankrupted because of a huge corruption crisis and the government used the games to justify the increasing repression against the black and poor people. There was also a continuous process of gentrification, thousands of families have been forced to leave their houses since 2009, sometimes to make way for to building parking<sup>1</sup>; bus lines that connected the periphery to downtown and to the rich zone started to be extinct, the military forces lifted barricades at some favelas, a wall that hides the Favela da Maré from the avenue where tourists have to pass when they land at the international airport no longer had the protest inscriptions that make it's function evident, but instead was decorated with a sporting motif.

We have our own wall of shame...

Before I try to connect my memories and dreams to this context, it's important to mention a group of renowned intellectuals who worked hard during the 19th century to build a myth that we live in a 'racial democracy'. During the dictatorship (1964-84), especially during the 70's, the black movement started the struggle against this myth.

In the formulation of 'racial democracy', they argued that we didn't have segregation laws, and they also mobilised the idea of that 'miscegenation'

that composes our society, this mix of white European, black Africans and indigenous people, who wish for whiter skin colours and phenotypes. They celebrate miscegenation also because it was supposed to come with 'the enlightenment' of the European civilisation. Once the whiteness is understood as dominant genetically and culturally, they could manage the idea of miscegenation as a political trap, a tool to erase the "black stain".

Abdias do Nascimento compiles and criticises those formulations in his book "O Genocídio do Povo Negro Brasileiro", a research that was rejected in 1979 for the *Segundo Festival de Artes e Culturas Negras* in Nigeria, where the official Brazilian delegation was supporting the idea of racial democracy. In his book, Nascimento points out that 'miscegenation' as a project to support the myth of 'racial democracy', also performs an assimilation of black people that are invited to try to seem less black, which means a promise of social mobility and access.

Miscegenation, this biological (and cultural) mixing of black Africans, white Portuguese and indigenous people, was claimed the original and specific formation of the Brazilian context of colonisation that should to ensure the absence of racism in Brazil. Anyhow, despite all of the presumed mobility, the black person will always be positioned as a guest of the dominant white elite.

In one word: colonisation.

With the idea of 'racial democracy' still at work, racist acts, like exotification and condescension, are observed but are usually deemed as cordial. A person at the receiving end of an act of racism is able to accuse the person of defamatory speech. According to a survey carried out, 89% of people believe that racism does exist in Brazil, but 97% of the same people do not believe that they are racist<sup>2</sup>. Any person caught in an act of racism is able

to accuse the person who points out of a defamatory speech. But racism isn't just a institutional issue, it has a body which performs it. This myth still works in order to bury not only our history as black people below the colonial narrative, for black subjectivities, it also makes it impossible for our personal histories to be perceived in a political sense.

The symbolic and material borders that I find in Rio show that, for some of us, there are no connections between the territories of the city, some bodies are not allowed to cross or to be visible everywhere. But somehow, crossing the territory of the city and perceiving their borders and monuments, we can start a process of re-acquainting our own body as a territory inhabited by memory and dreams.

I moved to Rio at the end of 2013 and by this point, there were big demonstrations all over the country. Hundreds of thousands of people asking for free public transportation, and protesting against the increase of prices for using the buses, the trains and the metro. Quickly the marches adopted progressive political guidelines, including a mobilisation against the public expense on the two sportive mega-events: the FIFA World Cup that happened in 2014 and The Olympic Games in 2016. Rio was literally on fire.

I spent the majority of my life in the northeast region of the country. I was born in Campina Grande, a medium-sized city of a province called Paraíba. Migration movements from the state got more intense between the 1950s and the 1970s, when people from the region were forced to move to cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to escape large periods of drought. This kind of migration is not so usual nowadays, although it can still happen for different reasons. After all, the financial centre of the country is still the southeast.

Our bodies carry the marks of this historical processes of national mi-

gration, and I give mention to that, to add this local migration mark to the ancestral one, the mark made by the international traffic of African people from Africa to America, the mark that every black Brazilian body has to deal with: “the plantation memory” as Grada Kilomba would say.

In Rio, I started to think about how these marks are re-actualised: How these processes of colonialism still shape our experiences? How the moving between/into territories can move our perception of our own identity? From those historical processes of transiting between territories, some bodies produce, on one hand, collectivities --connecting people one to another-- and on the other hand, singularities --making us look after our own background as a historical and political process. The task that I want to take into account here, is wondering how memory can be drawn with the simple act of staying alive in a colonial city.

I think it's important to use my broken English to share how my body, as a black female from Brazilian north-east, experienced the process of subjectivation of what I'm calling colonial and post-Olympic city, trying to bring up some questions that are contextual, but have to do with a global context of imperialism and colonialism, and connecting with the anti-racism struggles all around the world, politicising the micro relation we have with the city, with the others and with our memory.

In order to do that, I activate the gesture of stitching memories. I know that it is not possible to make a crash in the colonial history, and I'm not trying to use my personal experience as a representation of all black females in the northeast. What I do wish is to manage some memories to, somehow, recuperate my body lost several times in the monumental history, torn by the forces that cross me when I walk in the colonial city: Writing down is sewing thread, the exercise of finding some intensity to make my body a

political territory<sup>3</sup>.

The forgetfulness intends to be definitive to support the colonial history, but if you are a marked body, if you have scars and are aware, you can notice that forgetfulness is in a composition with what is remembered by the official history. I carry this buried memory as a sensation of blurry vision, choking, and hoarseness. At the same time, it produces a feeling of courage to embody the risk of been alive.

I write to not forget, looking for vitality. In that sense, remembering is the act of unearthing our dead ancestors, finding out how they can speak with me. Remembering is also the act of excavating and look for injuries that were buried, because these injuries reverberate in my body, informing me about the present: the sensations of risk, of anger of depression, among others.

**Rio was the capital when Brazil was an empire. Instead of been mesmerised, I felt uncomfortable that now and then one can stumble now and then upon colonial monuments.**

**The Municipal theatre is bathed in gold, who worked in the mines?**

Once, I stopped at Tiradentes square to carefully examine the equestrian sculpture of D. Pedro I. Made in bronze, molten in Paris, the Portuguese king that first came to Brazil (running from Napoleão Bonaparte, and then declared the independence of the country becoming our first emperor), rides a horse elegantly. Below him the representation of indigenous people: heads down, pacified, beaten, riding and surrounded by tapirs, armadillos and others wild animals. The monument also has the representation of the four big rivers of the country: Amazonas, Madeira, São Francisco e Paraná. The sculpture, which was a tribute from D. Pedro II to celebrate the anniversary of declaration of “independence”, clearly represents that Portuguese submit-

ted the indigenous and conquered the territory.

Near that square, the black leader Zumbi dos Palmares is also honoured, but we can only see his head. The description of the monument underlines that it is not a bust, it's not even a sculpture, it's only a head and this head is supposed to act as a reminder of his life. The monument was built just after the official ending of the dictatorship. Left-wing politicians and intellectuals were involved. Anyway, it alludes only to the decapitation, and was placed between two expressways, at Presidente Vargas Avenue, hardly a place to pass by on foot, and rarely a place to stay.

Even when official history is supposed to honour the black resistance, the tribute is made to praise the history of the winners. The body that fights is missing, and the black body of resistance is dismembered. Zumbi was decapitated because after more than 15 years heading a victorious resistance against the colonial forces from Portugal at the *Quilombo dos Palmares*, the black people started to believe that he was immortal. The Portuguese crown decided to make an exhibit of his head in a public square. It is the same place where D. Pedro displays nowadays his immortality, except that it happened in the northeast.

No wonder why this gesture – the decapitation – is caught as a memory to be edify: a expropriation of memory says not only about the sequester of our memory of fight, of the body fighting, but also of our ability to imagine collectively our myths.

As Cheryl Clarke asserts: “is fruitful for our colonizers to confine our bodies and alienate us from our own vitals processes, as was fruitful for europeans enslave african people and demolish all the previous memory of freedom and autodetermination” (1988, p.101)<sup>4</sup>.

Walking through the city, it's not only

what pop up before my eyes that torments me. Some memories rest under my feet almost unnoticed, and it's hard to find official data for them. We still don't know how many were buried in the cemetery for black people who were enslaved. When I first went to IPN (Instituto dos Pretos Novos – Institute of New Black), I got surprised by the precarity of the place. It is estimated that somewhere between 20 and 30 thousand people who were forced to come from Africa were buried there in mass graves.

I mean, between 20 and 30 thousand. The margin of error is as big as the secular forgetfulness. The thing that devastated me the most during the visit was the fact that graves had been turned to make way for the construction of the unfinished VLT (Veículo Leve sobre Trilhos – our Light Rail). It should have been ready for the Olympics but continues as a ruin, the dust was taking over the street even after the games in that place and in some other places that the government of Eduardo Paes considered less touristic. And it's incomparable to the investment they did to build two museums located less than a kilometre from IPN. MAR (Museu de Arte do Rio) and the Museu do Amanhã, that figure as highlights of the revitalisation project and are located near the seaport where the big cruises arrived. Less than a year after the games, in April 2017, the IPN announced that it is about to close as a cultural centre because there is no state investment in the place.

As a black woman, I have no choice but to experience those territories as zones of intensities. It has to do with visibility and invisibility, how white supremacy organises the territory and it affects my body. Even if I'm a postgraduate student, which means that I have more transit than the majority of black northeast women who live here, I still feel buried. I walk on the streets more carefully than white people. The surveillance schemes, made to protect stores, banks and public spaces, as the subway, are

watching me more now, it increased during and after the Olympics, when they justified the purchase of weapons from Israel<sup>5</sup>, to ensure that the protests wouldn't disturb the games. Those weapons are still on the streets pointed right to the black young boy: my brothers, my fathers, my sons. The Olympic dream, the promise of total integration that came along, ends at an abyss that prevents a lot of possibilities of relationships between some bodies and the city. But from that an affective territory can also emerge, where the racial marks don't appear as an original background, but as a tool one can use to access and fabulate memory.

From now on, I write from the movements of remembering in order to compose an articulation of fragments taken from my diary when I talk about dreaming. I first started to think about dreams in the workshop, that me and Angela Donini, Camila Bastos and Sara Elton Panamby managed during the first semester of 2016, just before the Olympics began. During the workshop<sup>6</sup> we tried to perform one gesture: the autopsy, a process where we not only built the thinking about our bodies, but made the body itself. I repeat this gesture here: to look by myself making deep cuts, looking after the marks, finding the injuries that are open, occupying our own ruins.

Certainly there are many ways to create bodies. During the workshop, we chose to begin every meeting by performing the action of dreaming. Dreaming and remembering dreams. The proposition we called deep sleep was an invitation to start a connection between us, in order to not bring to our place all the frequencies that were so powerful those days, when the city was dropped into a pre-Olympic/paranoiac daily life that lasted for months, I would say years. The deep sleep was an invitation to be apart from this business city and from the noise of the stone crushers that were building on the burial ground that precedes the monument and raises

the borders that protect it.

Doing the exercise every week during three months, my body started to notice that the borders and ruins that I was experiencing continuously are not only accessed via consciousness, and that access isn't only a intentional movement. Before I had a full consciousness that I had to look after the process of been buried and be able to elaborate about it, there was a feeling of being buried together with the body of the city: the sadness, the fear, the anxiety, the vigilance and insomnia. I was a body in a coma.<sup>7</sup> I notice that *my sleep is bad, my dreaming doesn't come soon*<sup>8</sup>.

#### **Diary note, July 2014, about the absence of dreaming:**

*The sleep hugs me as it does with depressed people. After a period when it appeared too much, but came with nightmares, during the past weeks something wakes me up always after 5 hours of rest, sometimes after 3 hours, and trying to sleep again never works. I don't dream, not even the nightmares. Awake, I notice that the sadness caught me as a illness. As if the whole world, the Cup, the politics, my injured rib, the asthma, the family and the death were been showing their unconquerable face. Face to face with them, my body can't handle itself.*

This was written during the world Cup, I couldn't dream. Two years later at the workshop, with unperceived movements, I reorganised the dynamics by which my memories are built, trying to find the ruins. Barefoot and laid down, my memory fabulated a dreaming that has been forgotten for sometime.

Diary note, June 2016, remembering a recent dream:

*T is a black woman reared "as a daughter" by the mom of my grandma. She is silent and discreet, and they told me she was family, but she was the only one who had specific domestic tasks in the house. In my dream, T laid down above me, we were both with our belly up. I feel tickling when her afro hair*



*touches my face. I also felt her tears coming to my face: “- I have 98 years old, I’ll only be alive for more 2”, she warned me. “I don’t want to die serving”. We keep lying down one above another, I can feel the little weight of her skinny body as a warm hug, then I woke up.*

When I was born, T already was 56 years old. We lived together, me, my mom, father, aunt A (blood sister of my grandma) and my grandma. All members of the family, also cousins, uncles, aunts, are white, except me, my dad (who was adopted) and T. T was, for a long time, the only black woman that I had intimacy with.

I remember of one the June parties, which are big in my hometown, I was with T and, while we were watching the folklorical dances, some teenagers felt ok to touch T’s hair trying to make different shapes with her afro.’- Seems cotton candy’, they laughed. She didn’t respond, just smiled shyly. Only after she turned 90 years old, T started to refuse to give money to my grandma, who had a much greater retirement than hers, but spends a lot on charity.

When I was little, I always asked T if she never thought about marriage, she always answered an emphatic ‘- nooooo’, almost singing, and smiling the same way she did for the boys at the party. Now I know that was never a possibility for her.

I don’t remember her complaining about the numerous oppressive situations that I witnessed happening to her. I also know now that she had experiences of collectivities outside of the house that was almost hers, but wasn’t: the group of elderly, where she is the oldest person and everybody shows respect to her, the trips she started to make after retirement; she was never paid for the domestic service she did, instead she is called sister.

T is not a unique case. The situation in which a family is almost a family

of women, majoritarily black, that are running away from poverty, still works cruising sexism and racism, updating slavery relations. When I was a child I used to play detective trying to prove that T was the biological mother of my dad, looking for some ancestry in my environment, which seemed impossible at the time. Now I understand that ancestry is not a biological essence, or a genealogical tree, but a tool that allows me to connect with T and other black women that came before me. Ancestry is a tool to look to the past to help me with the injuries that hurt me in the present.

In the colonial city, my body does not belong to me, there is always a process of recovery to be done. With the memory of T, I keep trying to abandon the desire to always be friendly and welcoming, because despite my behavior, the materiality of my body carries marks that can be visible in some spaces: the market, the university, banks, hospitals... there are a lot of territories asking for my silence and smile.

Grada Kilomba, a writer, poetess, psychologist, in the last chapter of her book *Plantation Memories* (2010), asserts: “Slavery and colonialism may be seen as things of the past, but they are intimately bound to the present”, and referring the work of Jenny Sharp in *Ghosts of Slavery* (2003), Grada says “our history haunts us because it has improperly buried. Writing is, in this sense, a way to resuscitate a trauma experience and bury it properly”<sup>9</sup>.

Looking for memories and dreams I have this task: to capture a traumatic event of an individual and to join it to the colonial collective history of trauma. We have to think about what racism does to the subjectivities, as an injury and in relation to territory.

The movement of the body over itself is a political gesture, in this case, it is part of the *reescritura* of the memory of the colonial plantation. As Jota Mombaça notes, the violence against

the black enslaved was never taken as a tool to destabilise the paradigms of the concept of humanity and human as the holocaust, properly, was<sup>10</sup>. Again with Grada, the non inscription of slavery as a traumatic process guarantees that the scenario of white supremacy continuous working, keeping our wounds, made by everyday racism, open.

By dealing with the actualisation of slavery relations in my familiar environment, I notice that what I called *unconquerable*, at the first note on the absence of dreaming, is the improper burial of my memories.

Slowly I’m trying to stop dreaming about myself and about things I know already, maybe new dreams can help me make another body, as a fossil or a projectile. A needle to bind times and fabulate a new future.





Assorti em Dólar  
**Kidendê**

Assorti em Dólar  
**Kidendê**





**10**

**A SAINT**  
**IS NOT**  
**AN ORIXA:**

*Cosmopolitics, faiths and struggles in Latin America*





Recife is the capital of Brazil's north-eastern state of Pernambuco. It is the city I have been living in, with some on's and off's, since 2011 when I arrived here from London where I had spent the previous six years. I had never stepped foot in the city before I decided to come live in this place surrounded by waters, with the open sea of the Atlantic Ocean embracing its urban topography and many rivers cutting across its geographies. Every year on the 16th of July, Recife dresses in yellow, or at least most of its Catholic practitioners do so, as part of the celebration of the patron saint of the city: Nossa Senhora do Carmo (Our Lady of Carmo). The practitioners of the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religion, especially those who belong to the Nagô tradition -- the most pronounced thread of the faith in Recife -- also dress in yellow on this day -- but to pay tribute to another deity: Oxum, whose colour is also yellow.

Even though Alexandre Alberto Santos de Oliveira, best known as Alexandre L'Omi L'Odô, has Oxum as his Ori [the spiritual guide of one's life in the Candomblé cosmological view] he prefers not to take part in this show of faith. This is due to his own criticism of the syncretism discourse that he points to being a tool that "white culture" can use today to divert the Brazilian black and indigenous ethnicities from being self and politically conscious and openly outspoken in regards to their own culture. In the Yorubá language L'Omi L'Odô means "River Waters" and he adopted this name in honour of Oxum. He talks of the *povo de terreiro* (practitioners of Candomblé and Jurema in Brazil) and the terreiro, which refers to the sacred yard where the rituals of those faiths take place, as being the ones who inherited the power of resistance against white colonisation. Religious syncretism, as it was interpreted during the times of slavery throughout Brazil, is then presented as a way that the captive black communities used to fool their dominator in order to maintain the worship of their African deities. By kneeling before an image of a Catholic saint -- but praying in their own languages -- they were actually worshipping orixás, voduns, inkises, and thus managed to somehow

retain their original faith, associating saints to orixás. Because this syncretism is no longer needed in the present moment the *povo de terreiro* need to free themselves from its current form since it can be used, and in fact it actually is used, to "whiten" people's minds.

L'Omi L'Odô is a *juremeiro* and *candomblecista* who holds a degree in History, and a masters in Religious Studies, both obtained by the way, in a Catholic university in Pernambuco. In August 2017, I had the opportunity of attending the academic assessment panel of his masters' dissertation entitled "Juremology: an ethnographic search for the systematisation of the cosmological views and principles of the sacred Jurema" (translated freely from Portuguese into English). Besides being a member of the Brazilian National Committee for Respect to Religious Diversity, he coordinates the Quilombo Malunguinho, a Jurema terreiro in Recife and the Kipupa Malunguinho, an annual national gathering of Jurema practitioners that takes place in the rural areas of the metropolitan area of Recife, in what are considered to be the sacred woods of the town of Abreu e Lima.

Although the Kipupa gathering is referred to as a national event, the Jurema, as this mix of black and indigenous spiritual practices, such as Toré and Catimbó, is arguably only encountered in the North-eastern regions of Brazil. It is mostly practiced in Pernambuco, Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte, which are the states of the Brazilian Federation where the Tupinambá tribe ruled before colonisation. Jurema refers to a tree (*Mimosa hostilis*, the black jurema, and *Mimosa Verrucosa*, the white jurema) whose leaves are used to prepare a ritually consumed infusion that allows for a trance state. Its barks and leaves can be also smoked in large pipes during rituals. One of the main Jurema deities is Malunguinho, an ancestral former slave who fought the system and settled and led a quilombo -- a refuge camp of escaped slaves -- in the woods of Abreu e Lima, whose spirit, following his death, became considered sacred. Most of the Jurema practitioners are black and low income residents of rural or urban Bra-

zilian Northeastern suburbs with precarious living conditions.

I am certainly not an 'academic expert' of any sort on Afro-Brazilian religions, nor do I intend to be one, so I am not speaking on behalf of anyone, but because of the opportunities I have had in gathering first-hand experiences from such rituals, that triggered comparative reflections and problematisations in relation to relevant theoretical concepts. As a current proud resident of these tropical lands of Recife and being respectfully intrigued and motivated in getting to know more of the cosmological views held here -- particularly related to the intellectual debates on the concept of cosmopolitics -- I have been following events, open rituals, celebrations and political gatherings of the traditions of Candomblé Nagô and Jurema, ever since I moved to the city. Doing so, I have had the opportunity to learn powerful stories, make outstanding friends and witness impressive political and faith-based collective actions.

I then posed L'Omi L'Odô a question: **How are elements of our sacred ritualistic practices are, or can be, reflected in our political mobilisation in a large scale-process and in our communitarian living, which affects our everyday life?**

This is what he answered me:

*"I believe the lack of rooting in a black-indigenous ancestral memory and origins of our people, who politically organise themselves within social movements, causes harm to what ought to be the right pace of our social struggles. This absence of self-consciousness diminishes the collective potential of groups and institutions of our civil society in the socio-political battlefield. I see the Marxist ideas still strongly pervade the people's thinking of these movements. As valid as part of those ideas may be, it divorces the people from the traditional black-indigenous religions and thus*



*causes a negative effect in many ways. For instance, as paradoxical as it sounds, they repeatedly say they must go grassroots, that is, the struggles at the community grassroots level are rhetorically prioritised. But often the most resilient and representative expression of this symbolic expression of free-for-alls is left aside in the religious practices of terreiros, Candomblé and Jurema. I believe most of the social movements should start taking part in a truly rooted community living, supporting liberating socio-political struggles besides the terreiros”.*

Alexandre L’Omi L’Odò , August 2017

If we are to understand ‘transition’ in terms of integration, we must understand how the flow of belief systems and how the articulation of religious rituals work, so as to have a firm grip on the development of these issues with local immediacy in specific political contexts. Even though these seem very different issues as they are interpreted in different contexts, there are common points in relation to the influence of religion, and the size of its socio-political role.

Yemanjá/Aphrodite, cosmopolitics and decolonisation

*“Iyemojáis for me the beauty of the world. The enchantment of the waters, ‘the wet force that never dries up’. ÒgúntéMi is the queen of my Nagô tradition. Ògúnté is the path, the force, the protection that offers shelter with flowers. Iyemojá Ògúnté Miis the greatness, the endless richness of my faith”.*

Alexandre L’Omi L’Odò

Yemanjá, the goddess of the sea, which is part of the faith of Candomblé journeys from Africa to the American Continent, from the 16th to the 19th century during the African slave trade carried out by European powers. She then be-

comes associated with various distinct characteristics that engendered her complex image of mother, virgin, siren and saint. She carries with her past and mystical practices, but also reflects the fetishisation of Oriental and Indo Occidental cultures and their representation in cultural and tourist practice – quite similar in ways and manners of the use and abuse of the symbol of the ancient Mediterranean deity Aphrodite. Intrigued by this Evanthia and I initiated a process of reflection on these issues and a dialogue between Aphrodite and Yemanjá through the platform Latinter-ranean, which in 2012 presented an art work as part of the exhibition Re Aphrodite at Maroudia’s in Nicosia. This idea and collaboration, which is still evolving, is based on trying to better understand the way cultural generalisations are interpreted and how they demonstrate the variety of worlds that exist within a certain geographical area, which due to particular historical and political impositions have begun to be referred to as ‘region’ in the world-system.

In these first decades of the twenty-first century Brazil has been seeing and facing an increasingly poisonous quarrel with a multitude of blunt and shamelessly radical neo-Pentecostal preachers. Brazil’s reputation as an open and tolerant ‘rainbow nation’ is undermined by some of these more and more politically powerful pastors who besides the strength that they exhibit in Congress, have enormous influence on the everyday life of many peripheral urban communities throughout the country. They conduct exorcisms of homosexual people and pronounce African-Brazilian religions to be the work of the devil. For a long time such practices and discourses had not been taken seriously and advanced silently. Only lately have they demonstrated and revealed how loud and broad their political forces have become.

*As Alexandre L’Omi L’Odò also states, “poverty and social injustice also triggers the loss of self-esteem and confidence in the black-indigenous faiths. Today many prefer to*

*stick to the ‘prosperity theology’ of the Pentecostalism, in believing that a Western-Christian god will bless us all by providing financial means, rather than assuming faith as a place for our personal and balanced spiritual well-being”.* (2017)

This allows for a prism through which to consider theoretical reflections, such as cosmopolitanism for instance. Cosmopolitanism is one of the great traditions of political philosophy, human rights and international law and it has been elaborated upon by theorists from Immanuel Kant to Ulrich Beck. Its variants and controversies revolve and involve disputes over how we organise socio-politically and it is criticised of its privileged position that ignores the obligations and affiliations that constrain nation-bound lives.

This allows us to connect it to the notion of cosmopolitics, which is exemplified in the philosophical work of Isabelle Stengers, posing itself as a necessary problem and that Bruno Latour refers to as the “progressive composition of a common world”. She elaborates on this concept arguing for an ‘ecology of practices’, which demands that competing practices and interests be taken seriously rather than merely (and often condescendingly) tolerated. This poses a profound political and ethical challenge since it considers that a politics that does not refer to a cosmos is unsettled and that a cosmos detached from politics is irrelevant. We should then integrate not only the influence of peoples but recognise the systems, comprised of human and non-human actors, which enhance our ability to govern.

Post-colonialist approaches, on the other hand, have argued that this project fails to apprehend the experiences of subjects marginalised by scientific and political structures of representation, indicating it does not adequately politicise the partially autonomous reality of those excluded from the ‘common world’. Moreover if we are to consider the difference between post-colonial and de-colonial thinking we face specific





difficulties in regards to questions related to Latin-America. De-colonial theory, closely tied to the Grupo Modernidad/Decolonialidad which includes people such as Walter Dignolo or Anibal Quijano, proposes the notion of "Coloniality of power". Supporting that colonialism did not end with colonisation goes to say that the Modern capitalist World-system imposes a racial/ethnic classification of people around the world as a basis of its power structures, which directly relates to international division of labour. Coloniality is thus presented as "the other side of the coin" of the European Modernism project when we consider, as Santiago Castro-Gomez, states that culture and political economy are always intertwined, one is not derived from the other.

The notion and belief of nation-states is then, in its current and hegemonic western-liberal form, still revealing itself as a relevant issue; especially when we take into account the work and opinions of subaltern epistemologies, such as that of Mayan communitarian feminism. Indigenous women intellectuals that come from territories within the Guatemalan nation-state, such as Lorena Cabnal and Gladys Tzul, have been calling for a different sense of politics; "a collective and community one, not a liberal one, which stresses the struggle that occurs

between indigenous local forms of government and state authority".

In their views, the political power of state apparatuses is nothing more than one of a privileged class that wants to regulate life within a market framework, negating other ways of conducting politics. That is why, in the Guatemalan state's ambition of a single nation, indigenous peoples are only played upon because of the value of their identity as cultural product. Currently, however, there is a political process to reframe the perspective of how we see the world initiated by female collectives – efforts by Mam, Ixil, Kakchiquel, Kiche women for instance– who counter such cultural expropriation.

If a complex amalgamation of places, peoples and deities are brought together as a serious strategy to generate points of contact and new paths of thinking, proposing and interpreting the 'commons', we must also accept the responsibility in dealing with all the theoretical difficulties and political heaviness that this invokes.



*Semana Santa Alfombras (Holly Week Carpets) part of the procession in Antigua Guatemala. Made of coloured sawdust, leaves, plants and flowers the carpets are walked upon by the procession. Images from 2008 by Aleksander Aguilar*







# 11

# MARY

# FORBIDDEN

Sylvat Aziz, *Mary Forbidden*, 13"x19" print/pigment/drawing 2016-17

Qanitah; Siddiqah; Sajidah;  
Raki'ah; Tahirah; Mustafiah; Sa'imah

The perfect woman by any descriptive. She is the only woman identified by name in the entire text of the Quran... a text that proclaims to exalt her above all other women. The mystery of Mary propagates itself in the most unique place by this mention in the Book, the centrality of Islamic thought.

Her body being sacred, remains inviolate even while being visually exposed. The sacred and the profane separated by an impenetrable thread of light.

A question that is antithetical to both world philosophies. And fascinating to

me. Why, indeed a faith of the new order was willing to allocate the most precious station and exclusive space in its revealed text to Mary herself, unless it was with reason and benefit? Political, strategic or another exigency?

The advent of the Jesuits at the Mughal court in the 16th century, and the influence of Christian iconography in the art of the time, changed the local perception of a 'visual' Mary significantly at this time and for its conventional acceptance, ie. the bared breast of a female figure as a recognisable and a major religious figure.

Mary emerged as a focus for a study here when her reverence in two seem-

ingly opposed religio-political systems seemed to be in concordance.

Our Mary (of the Kitchen), in my search for answers, emerges as an enigmatic personage when men are excluded by the acolyte sect of Collyridians (Mari-ans) offering cakes/breads (basic kitchen production) as offerings in worship to the Virgin and raising the ire of Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, who argued against the worship of the Virgin. But seemingly, inexplicably supported the worship of icons. He is again, even more inexplicably, historically sought by iconoclasts to make their divergent case. This is but the start of the improbable/forbidden journey for answers.



**12**

**ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΕΣ**  
**ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΕΣ**  
**ΤΕΧΝΙΚΕΣ**

*Cypriot spiritual techniques*





Μέσα στους τους αιώνες η Κύπρος υπήρξε πάντοτε τόπος μεγάλης πνευματικής ενέργειας καθώς στο νησί λατρεύονταν ανέκαθεν και με μεγάλες τελετές αρχαίες θεότητες και αργότερα ο μονοθεϊσμός. Στην καθημερινότητα τους οι κάτοικοί της Κύπρου αναπτύξαν δικές τους πνευματικές τεχνικές με τις πιο γνωστές μέχρι σήμερα να έχουν σημείο αναφοράς την χριστιανική πίστη και να χρησιμοποιούνται σ' αυτές υλικά του τόπου όπως φύλλα ελιάς και ροδόσταγμα.

Η πιο γνωστή απ' αυτές τις τεχνικές είναι το ξεμάτιασμα δηλαδή η αποβολή της κακής ενέργειας που έχει κυριαρχήσει το άτομο και η οποία έχει επέλθει από ένα άλλο άτομο μέσω του φθόνου του τελευταίου. Το «ματιασμένο άτομο» νιώθει σωματική και ψυχική κατάπτωση, πονοκεφάλους και με ότι κι αν καταπιαστεί δεν έχει θετικό αποτέλεσμα. Στο ξεμάτιασμα χρησιμοποιείται το ελαιόλαδο, το ροδόσταγμα και αγιασμός τα οποία και αναμιγνύονται όλα μαζί και ακολούθως μ' ένα κομμάτι ύφασμα ή βαμβάκι τοποθετούνται στο μέτωπο του ματιασμένου ατόμου, ακριβώς στο σημείο του τρίτου ματιού. Τότε αρχίζουν οι προσευχές που ο κάθε θεραπευτής έχει επιλέξει για την συγκεκριμένη τεχνική και λέγονται

3 φορές. Για παράδειγμα μια δυνατή σε ενέργεια προσευχή είναι η «Ιησούς Χριστός νικά και όλα τα κακά σκορπά». Αφού τελειώσουν οι προσευχές ο θεραπευτής σχηματίζει ένα σταυρό στο μέτωπο με το ύφασμα ή το βαμβάκι ανάλογα που κρατάει και σφραγίζει με τον τρόπο αυτό το ξεμάτιασμα.

Μια άλλη τεχνική είναι αυτή του καθαρισμού του χώρου από την αρνητική ενέργεια και προστασίας του χώρου από αυτή. Αυτή η τεχνική εφαρμόζεται συνήθως στον ιδιωτικό χώρο του ατόμου δηλαδή στην οικεία του και χρησιμοποιούνται φύλλα ελιάς. Την Κυριακή των Βαΐων το άτομο παίρνει το δέμα του με φύλλα ελιάς και τα διαβάζει ο ιερέας μετά την καθιερωμένη λειτουργία. Ακολούθως φυλάγονται στην εκκλησία για σαράντα μέρες και μετά το πέρας αυτής της περιόδου το άτομο παίρνει το δέμα του στο σπίτι του. Για τον καθαρισμό μαδάει μέσα σε καπνιστήρι τα φύλλα ελιάς, βάζει λιβάνι και ανάβει καρβουνάκι. Κρατώντας το καπνιστήρι αρχίζει να «καπνίζει» περνώντας από όλα τα δωμάτια του σπιτιού λέγοντας προσευχές. Ακολούθως, ανοίγει την εξώπορτα και «καπνίζει» στο χώρο της εισόδου στο σπίτι και τελειώνει με το «κάπνισμα» θρησκευτικών εικόνων στην περίπτωση που

αυτές υπάρχουν στο χώρο του. Αυτή η τεχνική καλό είναι να γίνεται στην ανατολή ή την δύση του ήλιου δηλαδή είτε πολύ πρωί ή αργά το απόγευμα.

Η τελευταία τεχνική ονομάζεται «το έβγαλμα του φόβου» ή όπως ονομάζεται στην κυπριακή διάλεκτο «έβκαρμαν του φόου». Η τεχνική αυτή σκοπό έχει να απελευθερώσει το άτομο από τον φόβο που το διακατέχει για κάτι συγκεκριμένο όπως φόβος για κάποιο ζώο ή έντομο, είτε για κάτι ακαθόριστο όπως ψυχικό εμπόδιο. Στην τεχνική αυτή χρησιμοποιείται αλάτι το οποίο τοποθετείται επίπεδα σε λαμαρίνα και κάτω από λαμαρίνα ανάβουμε φωτιά. Ο θεραπευτής αρχίζει να λέει προσευχές και να το άτομο γυρίζει γύρω από την λαμαρίνα τρεις φορές τις στιγμές που του υποδείχνει ο θεραπευτής. Στο τέλος ο θεραπευτής επικαλείται μια ανώτερη δύναμη και συνήθως η επίκληση είναι προς την Παναγία της οποίας ζητά να βγάλει τον φόβο από το άτομο. Ακολούθως λέει στο άτομο να πηδήξει πάνω από την λαμαρίνα τρεις φορές και αφού το κάνει εμφανίζεται πάνω στο αλάτι ένα σχέδιο. Αυτός είναι ο φόβος του ατόμου ο οποίος έχει φύγει από πάνω του και το άτομο σταματά πλέον να φοβάται ενώ ταυτόχρονα νιώθει μια μεγάλη ανακούφιση.

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ΓΕΝΑΙΤΖΙΣΗΜΕΣ  
ΚΟΥΒΕΝΤΕΣ

Women talk

Shrine assembled by Nurtane Karagil in Re Aphrodite's Kitchen at at  
Dr Shelley's Residence in Ktima, Pafos. Exhibition Plánetes [wanderers].

Re Aphrodite's Kitchen. Exhibition Plánetes [wanderers].







At Stephanos Stephanides presentation in Re Aphrodite's Kitchen. Exhibition Plánetes [wanderers].

### **PARK-LABOUR, KITCHEN-LEISURE, AND COFFEE- MATRIARCHIES**

*Written by Avyi Tryfonos*

Watching Chrystalleni, Evi and Athina working in the same kitchen is truly inspirational. Never before, have I witnessed three different Cypriot women sharing a kitchen with such grace and ease. It almost seems like they are executing a masterfully orchestrated choreography as they move around each other, in a minimum amount of space, without getting in each other's way, going about their respective tasks. There is music playing as pans and plates change hands and the sound of chopping and running water complete the set. They ask each other for different ingredients using short questions and the objects magically appear in their hands, without any disruption of their flowing rhythm.

"I need a good peeling knife", "Where is the salt?", "Pass me a plate will you?"

Trivial requests that are instantly fulfilled without any other verbal indications, as the sound of traditional Brazilian songs echoes in the background. A culinary ritual takes place, with outmost respect to the good use of existing ingredients, creating a comfy, homey atmosphere, a flavoursome meal and an inviting environment. The table is set effortlessly, while they sway to the beat of the music, as they add cutlery, plates and glasses.

Lastly, they sit down around the rectangular table, which is draped with a burgundy, flowery cloth and they finally start talking to each other as if nothing out of the ordinary had just happened. As they continue their discussion about art and future projects, their goals and plans, I feel as if I was watching them like a fly on the wall this whole time. I observed this spell

they had cast on one another that required no words, just by being near each other seemed to be enough to set their energies in motion. I was given a once in a lifetime opportunity, to see a private performance by these three amazingly gifted women and be a part of their group. I'm truly thankful to all three of them, to Chrystalleni for introducing me to the group and to Evi and Athina for making me feel welcome.

[Chrystalleni: "You must have seen other women in harmonious kitchen collaboration! Try to remember.."] Avyi called me back to talk rather than edit, she talked about memories of family, of kitchen dynamics as ones of tight matriarchy, of control by the eldest, of the better cook, of the keeper of handed down ingredient-based rituals, of closely guarded roles and balances of delegation and hierarchies of tasks. I think she's right. I remember trying very hard to please my grandmother by doing chores, I remember ask-

We found this message in Mary of Aphrodite (worship stone) at Aphrodite's Temple at PalaiPafos-Kouklia. Someone's undecipherable wish, or spell? Is this too personal to publish?

ing her if constantly stirring the coffee would make it taste better, she said yes but now I suspect she may have said this to keep the over-eager little girl occupied and out of the way!].



Mary Plant in her kitchen with circles, Kouklia, 20/06/2016



An embrace in Evi's cup, Pafos 20/06/2016

## GENDER AND MAGIC

Excerpt from Terry Pratchett's talk "Why Gandalf Never Married", 1985

"While I was plundering the fantasy world for the next cliché to pull a few laughs from, I found one which was so deeply ingrained that you hardly notice it is there at all. In fact it struck me so vividly that I actually began to look at it seriously. That's the generally very clear division between magic done by women and magic done by men. Let's talk about wizards and witches. There is a tendency to talk of them in one breath, as though they were simply different sexual labels for the same job. It isn't true. In the fantasy world there

is no such thing as a male witch. Warlocks, I hear you cry, but it's true. Oh, I'll accept you can postulate them for a particular story, but I'm talking here about the general tendency. There certainly isn't such a thing as a female wizard. Sorceress? Just a better class of witch. Enchantress? Just a witch with good legs. The fantasy world, in fact, is overdue for a visit from the Equal Opportunities people because, in the fantasy world, magic done by women is usually of poor quality, third-rate, negative stuff, while the wizards are usually cerebral, clever, powerful, and wise. Strangely enough, that's also the case in this world. You don't have to believe in magic to notice that. Wizards get to do a better class of magic, while witches give you warts."



An embrace in Evi's cup, Pafos 20/06/2016



**«Απογοητευμένη η Τζέην διέκοψε την μαλακία και, αφήνοντας το φόρεμα της να καλύψει το εκτεθειμένον αιδοίον της και να καταπέσουν τα υπόλοιπα άνθη επί του εδάφους, έσπευσε προς την κατεύθυνσην όπου είχε εξαφανισθεί ο πάστωρ.»**



## Συζητώντας... μεταξύ μας



Φύλλες αναγνώστριες γειά σας,

...Δυνατός, ανεξάρτητος, αυτάρκης, λογικός, προσηγυμένος, εξουσιαστής; Νά λίγα από τὰ χιλιάδες επίθετα πού συνοδεύαν κι εξακολουθούν νά συνοδεύουν τή λέξη *άντρας*.

Γιά πολλούς αιώνες, οι άντρες αντιμετώπιζονταν μέ δύο, κυρίως, τρόπους. "Η σά θύτες ή σά θύματα. "Η θά εξουσίαζαν άπόλυτα κι όριστικά τίς γυναίκες ή θά εξουσιαζόντουσαν άπ' αυτές μέ τό γνωστό «υπόγειο» τρόπο.

Δέ θά μιλήσουμε σήμερα γιά μάς τίς γυναίκες, γιά τό πόσα ύποφέραμε, τό πώς άγωνιστήκαμε καί τό πώς πρέπει ν' άγωνιστούμε γιά τά δικαιώματά μας. Θά δούμε, άπό μία κάπως διαφορετική σκοπιά, αυτό τό έξίσου παρεξηγημένο μέ μάς πλάσμα, τόν άντρα.

Ο ρόλος του Αφέντη είναι ένας ρόλος όπωσδήποτε κατακριτέος, άπό κάθε άποψη. "Εχουμε σκεφτεί, όμως, ποτέ, πώς γιά νά πάρουν οι άρσενικοί αυτό τό ρόλο βοήθησαν συχνά παράγοντες ανεξάρτητοι άπ' αύτούς, ανεξάρτητοι άπό τή θέλησή τους; "Εξάλλου, όπως καί νά 'χει τό πράγμα, ή έξουσία είναι πάντα δικόπο μαχαίρι. Γιά νά τή διατηρήσεις, πρέπει νά πληρώσεις ένα μεγάλο αντίτιμο.

Ο Αφέντης είναι δυνατός, άπαγορεύεται νά κλαίει, νά λογίζει, νά ενεργεί σύμφωνα μέ τά συναισθηματά του. Καί γιά νά γίνει άξιος του τίτλου του, πρέπει άπό μικρό παιδί νά συνηθίσει σ' όλ' αυτά. Απολαμβάνει βέβαια τίς ύπηρεσίες των άλλων, αλλά έχει καί τήν ευθύνη τους. Αυτός προστάζει, αυτός προστατεύει άπό μικρό άγόρι μαθαίνει πώς δέ φτάνει νά μπορεί νά είναι υπεύθυνος γιά τόν έαυτό του. Όταν θά κάνει οικογένεια, θά έπωμιστεί τίς ευθύνες άλλων.

Καί γιά νά μήν ντροπιάσει τό γένος του, πρέπει νά είναι πάντα σκληρός, ποτέ κουρασμένος, ποτέ άπογοητευμένος άπό τή ζωή. Έμεις οι γυναίκες μιλάμε έλεύθερα, τώρα πιά, γιά τά «καταπιεσμένα αισθήματά μας». Αγωνιζόμαστε νά τά βγάλουμε στην έπιφάνεια, νά έλευθερωθούμε άπό αυτά, γιά νά βρούμε τήν πορεία μας σάν άτομα. Στούς άντρες άπαγορεύεται νά μιλούν γιά τέτοιου είδους αισθήματα. Γιατί, άπλούστατα, άπαγορεύεται νά τά έχουν.

Πολεμάμε - έχοντας τό δικιο μέ τό μέρος μας - γιά τήν ισοότητα. Πολεμάμε τούς άντρες. Γνωρίζουμε όμως τό πραγματικό πρόσωπο του αντίπαλου μας; Σκύωμε νά δούμε τί κρύβεται πίσω άπό τή βιτρίνα; Μήπως ό πόλεμος θά μπορούσε νά μετατραπεί σέ συνεργασία άν άνακαλύπταμε πώς πίσω άπό τή σκληρή έπιφάνεια κρύβεται ένα πλάσμα φοβισμένο, άπογοητευμένο κι ευάισθητο, όσο κι έμείς;

Μέ άγάπη  
Μαρίνα Στρατή

ΤΗΛΕΦΩΝΟ: 503127  
ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΗ: ΙΠΠΟΚΡΑΤΟΥΣ 57 • ΤΤ 144

Image from a 1975 protest, calling for a reevaluation of the church's position towards reasons for divorce, the positioning of women within this process and their effect on women. Image from the archive of the Pancyprrian Democratic Women Association -POGO- [Παγκύπρια Οργάνωση Δημοκρατικών Γυναικών- ΠΟΓΟ]



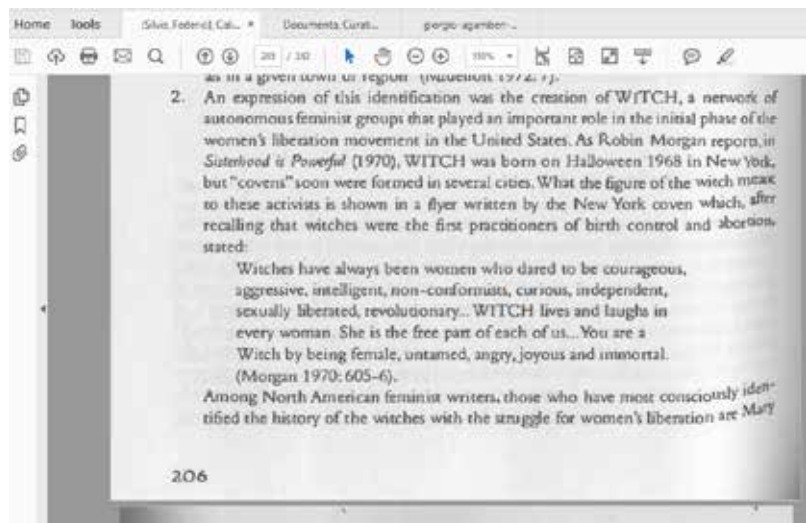
## **A MARRIAGE WITH DEFIANCE**

Forms of resistance are encountered in how women have mobilised in Cyprus since the early feminist awakenings of the women teacher movement in the 19th century. In the 1930s and 1940s the Working Women Unions were set up, putting together strikes, meetings, educational activities and so forth. In 1950 the first Pancyprrian Women's Association --PODG-- (Παγκύπρια Ομοσπονδία Γυναικείων Οργανώσεων, ΠΟΔΓ) is formed. From 1960 onwards, POGO, which is affiliated with the leftist party AKEL, was set up, followed by other party affiliated women associations.

Despite female acts of resistance, for years we were faced with recurrent images of Cypriot women's bodies being used as a means of ethnic

propaganda, the repercussions of the war literally projected on their persistent bodies at the border, asking for their lost sons, husbands, brothers and fathers (Hoak-Doering 2014). Still, the most sanctuous position for a Cypriot woman is to be cast in the

role of the mother. Parallel to this, the bodies of the non-Cypriot women arriving en masse to the island of love in the 1990s have been greatly sexualised, admired and abused (Re Aphrodite: Alice in Otherland, 2011).





## **LORENA ALVES MONTEIRO'S PERFORMANCE AT FLUMINENSE UNIVERSITY, NITERÓI, BRAZIL, JULY 2017**



Response to a controversy / in support of a performance waxing of public hair outside MAC Niterói.



I was performer and object and site,



I got nude painted in bloodred head to toes, i wanted to be absorbed by the space and yet not be able to be just an object. When i posed, i was object, but i stare peoples eyes, you know when You feel like theres someone looking at you, and then, like telepathy, you search for it, and now i am body, You see the form, and will fill it with whatever intentions, inner tensions, between us. We got to exchange meanings at some point at iacs "beach". It was contextual.



My body got meanings, i got bodies inside and outside, What is your creation of me? Am i a woman? Does it look like blood to you? What does that mean? Is it art? By now im not sure, it was an intervention experiment. My object-body can draw your eyes attention to it and speak for itself. "Theres a naked woman painted in red posing around the campus" you think.. now i am, devir, dont know the word in english for that, é o devir!



Dont know if im making it clear to you

From Chrystalleni and Lorena's discussion on line after returning from Brazil (2017)



## **TWO DOGS, THE VIRGIN, AND SOME GENDER ANXIETY WALK INTO A PARK**

On my 33rd birthday, in the park, Theodora rustled with another dog (Lola) near our shrine and they stepped on the Mary from Moscow (could this be the one Pussy Riot were praying to?). We'd gone minimal that day and left the icon out of the installation so it was just lying around on the ground. I thought that perhaps the other dog's human might have been offended by

this, our off-hand treatment of Mary, or of such a clearly valuable artefact. I suddenly sensed a superciliousness about our interventions, έναν άκυρον arguably superficial extravagance / οι πелλές με τα μασκαραλλικούθηκία. The Catholic Filipinas and Sri Lankans can't have appreciated this treatment of Mary, I thought. Might we have thought we were integrating, while in fact we were alienating? While reducing sacred things into something empty; into Cultural Services-funded 'socially-engaged' 'art'? I took the icon and placed it against the stone, and took photos to send to the other one ('I can't stay here all Sunday, I have things to do') I was blaming for these new realisations: wasn't this supposed to be life rather than work? Hadn't she been the one insisting that we use this project to re-conceptualise feminine labour and leisure?. A while later a man walked down the path in front of the stone, and did a double take at the propped-up Russian Mary. He stood there a few seconds, seemingly dazed, and then started moving rapidly away. I ran after him and asked him what he thought, whether it was weird finding her there. He was skin-



ny with blackened teeth and haunted blue eyes. He said nothing about the Mary. Instead he talked about “the perverts in the bushes” p(r)aying on younger guys. I sensed an attempt to dislocate shame, an outburst generated by the unexpected encounter with the icon. Again, I was struck by the presumptuousness of our intervention, its unintentional offensiveness, the risks of social disconnectedness in our arguably conceited discursive-activistic celebration of queerness and cruising culture, our ignorance of the violences and dark-nesses they may have reminded others of. Months later I would think of the LGBT+ Pride Parade as performing a similar violence to the park’s most vulnerable humanities: the ladies who spent their Sundays there couldn’t afford queerness, they did not need to question their genders and sexualities. These already contained more than enough activism, they were designed for survival, they had nothing to learn from our performances, and we had everything to learn from theirs.

*When a movement stops asking questions, of itself, of the world, it becomes orthodoxy - an idea that has run out of ideas. It becomes fixed, static, brittle, rather than fluid. Water can resist the most savage of blows, ice shatters. It is only armed with our questions that we can change history.*

(Notes from Nowhere, 2003, p.499)

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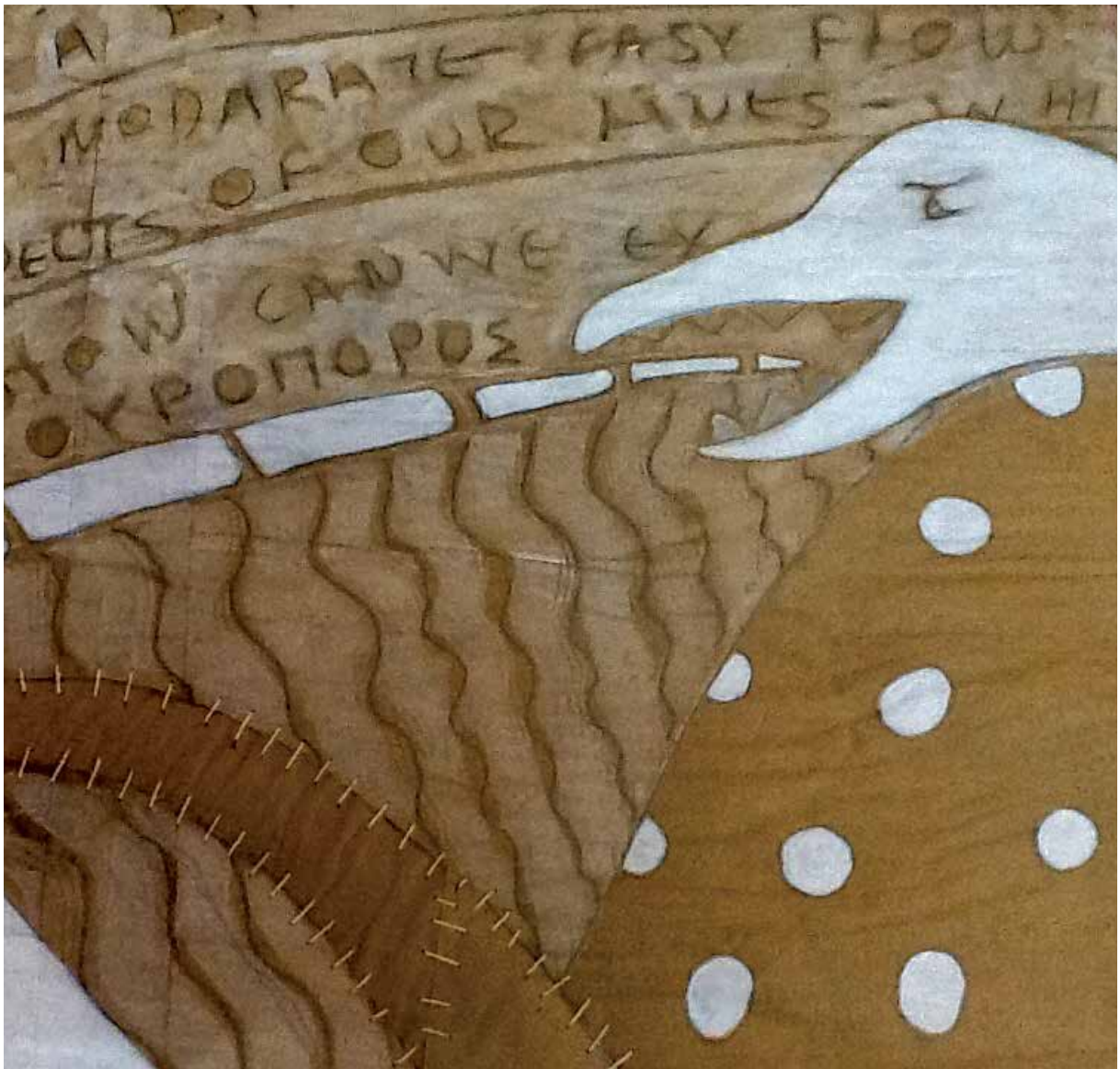


## ON LOVE

Nasty Cat Cafe, spontaneous capture after Re Aphrodite+Athina was interviewed on the subject of love by Yo Love, May 2017







Athina Antoniadou, *Detail Beauty and Destruction* (2016), Acrylic on brown paper 2.40m x2.40m, Exhibition *Hidden Lives and Waters*, MAC Niterói, 2017

This book has been an open ended research of a multiplicity of themes, questions and people's rituals and habits, that we have worked on individually, collectively and collaboratively. It is an evocation to never stop wondering and working together with others, to reflect on the never ending realisms that describe the fluidity and complexity of our existences.

#### Re Aphrodite Incantations

Re Aphrodite in this book is Evanthia (Evi) Tselika, Chrystalleni Loizidou, Athina Antoniadou, Stephanos Stephanides, Rosa Couloute, Sylvat Aziz, Michelle Mattiuzzi, Natalie Yiaxi, Federation of Filipino Organisations in Cyprus, Jessica Gogan - Luiz Guilherme Vergara with Rodrigo Braga, Pierre Crapez, Martha Niklaus, Mercedes Lachman, Lia do Rio, Regina de Paula, Ignes Albuquerque, Lívia Moura, Diana Kolker, Christiane da Cunha, Breno Platais

**Athina Antoniadou** studied at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland from 1981-1985. She has been described as an artist, a non-feminist and a conspiracy theorist. Her practice has dealt with the prohibition of nature and the artist-traveller, in an attempt to understand the human condition and the core commonalities of human nature. She ran away from a Ph.D. in Fine Art in Madrid, Spain 1989-1993, and later co-ran KITA, an underground artist community in Berlin, where she lived from 2000-2013, before exploring shamanism in Africa, Latin America and Cyprus. For 2 years she co-directed Argo Gallery in Nicosia, Cyprus, with the intent to explore these ideas of journeying and nature for the redefining of the artistic responsibility.

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**Aleksander Aguilar** Brazilian-Salvadoran national, social scientist, journalist and linguist who is currently a Post-doctoral researcher at the Costa Rica University (UCR) through the Latin America Sociology Association Program (ALAS) "Pueblos en Movimiento". He works on the key areas of collective organisation, political identity and conflictive territories, which are conducted trans-disciplinary at the interface of the fields of International Relations, Political Anthropology and Cultural Studies. Researcher-member of the Working Group "The Central American isthmus rethinking the center" of the Latin America Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) and founder and coordinator of the platform "O Istmo".

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**Sylvat Aziz** trained in graduate work in Printmaking and Painting at Pratt Institute, NYC; Visual Arts at Concordia University, Montreal and in Comparative Literature from GCU, Lahore. She is currently a tenured associate

professor at Queen's University, Kingston Ontario affiliated with Visual Arts, Cultural Studies and Gender Studies. She has been a practicing painter/printmaker and a studio instructor with a research focus on material culture and political/social currents in the Islamic mainstream and has exhibited widely internationally and nationally and is represented by major galleries and museums in Canada, UK and Pakistan. Her studio research builds upon a premise created by an observer/participant vantage: A critical examination of popular culture, tradition, social custom and practices that reflect political, religious and most importantly the material/visual fallout of socio-cultural positions. She is affiliated with several arts/educational institutions in Pakistan, UK, US, India and recently Cyprus. [sylvat.aziz@queensu.ca](mailto:sylvat.aziz@queensu.ca)

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**Rosa Couloute** born in Leicester, England, the granddaughter of Post-Colonial migrant workers, Rosa has used such sensibilities to subvert the conventions of architecture to include discourses on race and feminist identities. A graduate of Greenwich University, Rosa was nominated for the RIBA Silver Medal Award in 2013, and has also exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts, Summer Show, with a piece that straddles the conventional setting of an art gallery, but located within the walls of the Architecture Room. More recently, what began as a hobbyist pursuit in the form of sewing, has given Rosa another means of subverting the craft of dressmaking into an expression of black female corporality and strength.

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**Cíntia Guedes** was born in Paraíba, studied in Bahia, and now holds a PhD in the School of Communication of UFRJ. Her research interests cross the feminisms anti-racist and diversity of bodies that inhabit such struggles, the approximations between artistic performance and gender performativity,

that is, when art touches daily life and the production of subjectivity.

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**Jessica Gogan** is a curator and educator and director of Instituto MESA, Rio de Janeiro ([www.institutomesa.org](http://www.institutomesa.org)). Her research and projects focus on socially engaged art, curatorship and pedagogy and her Ph.D. in Art History at the University of Pittsburgh addressed these issues in specifically Brazilian institutional contexts.

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**Luiz Guilherme Vergara** is a curator and a professor in the Department of Art at the Federal Fluminense University (UFF), teaching in the graduate programs: Contemporary Studies in Art and Culture and Territoriality. Vergara was formerly curator/director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Niterói, Brazil (2005-2008) and (2013-2016). His research interests focus on the interface between art, museums and society.

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**Together Gogan & Vergara** co-edited Instituto MESA's bilingual digital periodical Revista MESA. [http://institutomesa.org/RevistaMesa/edicoes\\_en.html](http://institutomesa.org/RevistaMesa/edicoes_en.html). A forthcoming issue will address the theme "hidden lives and waters" the focus of the edited conversational contribution to this book. Brief biographies of collaborators introduce each participant within the text.

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**Marina Konstans** was born in Nicosia, Cyprus. She studied Logistics and Supply Chain Management in the UK and worked as a purchasing executive for 10 years before she changed her career path to focus in her psychic charisma. She now works as a healer, offering her services to those in need. Among other things, she gave life again to ancient Cypriot spiritual techniques, which she uses in her therapies as her main tools.

**Chrystalleni Loizidou** researches and writes about art, technology, and the commons. She studied philosophy, art history, design, and cultural studies, and holds a doctoral degree from the London Consortium (TATE, ICA, AA, Science Museum, University of London) for her study of public space, memory, and governance through microhistory and media theory. Her recent publications, curatorial work, and co-ordination, focus on local commons-related discourses in art and technology.  
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**Alexandra Manglis** is a writer, editor, and reader. She holds a DPhil in English from the University of Oxford, and was founder and editor of the experimenting journal, *Wave Composition*, until 2016. Her work has been published at *The Oxonian Review*, the *LA Review of Books*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, and *The Millions*. She is currently editing an anthology of essays by contemporary poets on C19 American literature coming out with Milkweed Press (2019). At the same time she has begun forays into science fiction and fantasy, publishing her debut short story in the *SFF magazine Strange Horizons*. She was recently invited to study at the Clarion West Writers Workshop for Science Fiction and Fantasy under the Susan C Petrey Scholarship Fund.  
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**Stephanos Stephanides** is a Cypriot-born author, poet, translator, critic, ethnographer, and documentary filmmaker and Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Cyprus. His early migration from Cyprus to the United Kingdom and subsequent work and travel in many countries has been influential in shaping the transcultural character of his work. As a young lecturer at the University of Guyana, he became deeply interested in Caribbean cultural expression and his fieldwork with the descendant

of Indian indentured labourers in Guyanese villages and sugar plantations gave rise to various projects including two documentary films: *Hail Mother Kali* (1988) and *Kali in the Americas* (2003). He was awarded first prize for poetry from the American Anthropological Association, 1988, and first prize for video poetry for his film *Poets in No Man's Land* at the Nicosia International Film Festival. Representative publications include *Translating Kali's Feast: the Goddess in Indo-Caribbean Ritual and Fiction* (2000), *Blue Moon in Rajasthan* and other poems (2005).  
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**Evanthia Tselika** is a visual arts researcher, producer and educator. She is assistant professor and programme coordinator of the Fine Art programme, University of Nicosia. Her doctoral dissertation was focused on the role of conflict in relation to socially engaged art practices within segregated urban contexts. She has extended research and practical experience in socially engaged and pedagogical art practices with a focus on conflict related contemporary art turn and dialogical structures within the context of divided cities. She has worked, exhibited and collaborated with various galleries and museums in London, El Salvador, Cyprus, Greece, Mexico and Brazil, including the Municipal Arts Centre in Nicosia, October Gallery in London, the Modern Art Museum of El Salvador, and MAC Niterói, Brazil, amongst others.  
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**Natalie Yiaxi** was born in Nicosia and attended Coventry University, receiving an B.A. in Communication, Culture and Media in 2003 and UAL, receiving an M.A. in Visual Arts/Book Arts in 2010. Her body of work ranges from Artist's Books and publishing projects such as *Bast Fooks* (2016–17), to sound, video and small-scale sculpture. Since 2011, her projects have been ex-

hibited in Cyprus and abroad, including *The Garden Sees*, 2017, Megaron/The Athens Garden Hall, GR, *Solid Plans*, 2016, Solo show at Thkio Ppalies Artist-run Space, Nicosia, Cy, *The Equilibrists*, 2016, organised by the New Museum, New York and the DESTE Foundation Athens, Benaki Museum, GR, DESTE Prize, 2015, *Cycladic Museum*, GR, *Non-Standard Testimonials*, 2014, David Dale Gallery, Glasgow, UK, *oO*, The Cyprus-Lithuania Joint Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, IT.  
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