

Phantasma-agoria of/in crisis

Lens-based media and collective experience of the
political in performing 'image' and *agora*

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Abstract

In this practice-based research, I am investigating ways in which an art event can transform the public space from a consumerist topos into a place that enacts the *political*, disturbing the order of the 'seeable' and 'sayable' and opening new perspectives in the relationship between the artist and the audience. I particularly focus on the case of the art scene of Athens, Greece, where I live and produce my artwork, and the specific politics of aesthetics that it has promoted during the period of the socio-economic crisis. Specifically, during this period, documentary aesthetics and participatory practices that lacked visual experimentations and outcomes were promoted as more capable to address the *political* than other forms of creative practices that are presumed to support the culture of consumption.

To explore the above tensions between *visuality* and participatory practices, I critically employed the concept of *phantasmagoria*, which has been traditionally conceived as the symbol of the consumerist culture. In particular, I concentrated on *phantasmagoria* as a complex synthesis of the concepts 'image'/*phantasma* and *agora* to re-examine the practice of participation in relation to *politics* and *visuality*.

Combining lens-based media and digital technologies with participation and performance, the four creative projects of this research allow associations between 'image' and *agora* that enable *political* thinking and *praxis*. Taking into consideration that the word *crisis*, in Greek language means, among others, critical thinking, these projects together constitute the *Phantasma-agoria in crisis*, that is a critical approach of *phantasmagoria*. At the same time, they also constitute a *Phantasma-agoria of crisis*, as they refer to

the economic crisis in Greece and the ways that it framed new in/visibilities in the *agora*. In fact, each one of the projects explores visually different aspects of the *agora*: the articulation of the *agora* through speech and language, the articulation of the *agora* through collective action, the spatial politics of the *agora* in relation to the dichotomy between private (or domestic) and public space.

By conceptualizing the practice of participation through the idea of *agora*, *artist* and *participants* are engaged in a dialogue of political awareness. Depending on the case, the *artist* should be willing to take the risk and pass some of her authority to the *participants* and vice versa. Taking the risk builds trust and enables resistance against the normalizing practices of the commodification of culture, setting in motion the *political agora*.

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Introduction

Some years ago, I requested the Municipality of the City of Athens to grant me an official permission to organize and realize a public performance in a specific open-air market of the city. On hearing about the project, one of the Head representatives of the cultural department responded with great astonishment, wondering how it was possible that I, an artist with such a promising CV, would wish to organize an art event that involved the so-called 'κυράτσες'/rattlers¹ of the open-air market of the city. The conversation concerned the *Visibility* art project that I initiated, organized and curated in 2007 (See Appendix 8).

Visibility was a collaborative participatory public act/performance and installation (Fig.1) in which I attempted to explore the dynamics of communication between artists and audience in the public space. To that end, the neighbourhood of Attiki Square was selected for the performance as one of the most representative marginal sites of the city of Athens, inhabited mainly by working class Greeks and immigrants. In this project, the participants, most of whom were artists and art academicians (including myself) worked both collectively and individually on the concept of 'visibility'.

¹ (derog.-scorn.) *κυράτσες*: women of lower social and economic class who coarsely imitates a woman of higher social status in terms of cloths, speech and behaviour



Fig.1. Maria Paschalidou (2007) *Visibility*.
[Public Collective Performance].
Attiki Square, Athens.

The outcome was the production of a joint DVD which included these artworks and was sponsored by all the participants. Copies of the DVD were exchanged with products and/or goods people were willing to offer during the performance which took place at the street market of Attiki Square in September 2007 (See Appendix 8). The official permission for the use of this particular public space did not come from the Municipality. Further objections were raised based on the fact that the performance would be video-recorded and projected as part of the installation of the project in an art exhibition space.

Therefore, concern was expressed about the dialogues that would ensue between the artists and the people at the street market who were also expected to participate in the event. In fact, I was alerted to the possibility that during the performance people might start complaining about the ever-increasing prices of the goods and this would not be 'appropriate'. Yet, the performance was realized after all, thanks to the support of the Panhellenic Federation of Street Market Vendor Unions.

The above incident made me wonder why such an event coming from a group of emergent artists in a marginal neighbourhood of Athens appeared so threatening to the city's administration and the relevant institutions that govern the cultural life of the city.

Indeed, the specific art event challenged the commercial nature of the market: First of all, because the presence of the artists who, in their role as the market's vendors, remained at their 'merchandise' position, from early in the morning till late in the afternoon, changed the traditional function of the place. From a consumerist space of monetary transactions, the street market became a performative and collective topos of exchange without any use of money whatsoever. Furthermore, the performance disturbed the familiar routine and stability of the market as a working space, for the people of the neighbourhood along with the street vendors participated in the performative event with great enthusiasm and in a festive mood.

Yet, the above transformation of the open-air market was not really the concern of the administration of the city. The Head representative's comment about bringing art to the '*κυράτσες*'/rattlers of Attiki Square was a disciplinary reminder that art is a matter of bourgeoisie: Not the entire audience can be eligible to experience art; a part of it may virtually 'contaminate' it. Nevertheless, it was for this

reason that the city administrator suggested me instead to realize the public performance in the open-air market of Kolonaki, the most prestigious and high-class neighbourhood of Athens with the best quality of goods and not in the poor district of Attiki Square where 'second-class' transactions are made by 'second-class', 'ignorant' people.

In other words, the project appeared threatening because it was disrupting dominant discourses according to which art should be a privilege experienced only by upper-class people (Gans, 2011). Additionally, the concern expressed about possible discussions about the rising prices of basic goods reveals a deeper fear against another threat: the potentiality of the market to be transformed from a space of consumption into a political space, in other words into an *agora*.

I have referred to the above incidents that framed my older project, because they actually epitomize the questions I am dealing with in the present research as a creative practitioner and researcher.

In this research, I am investigating ways in which an art event can transform the public space from a consumerist topos into a place that enacts the *political*. Drawing from Jacques Rancière (1999), I consider *political* any action or process that disturbs certainties, defies hierarchies and undermines an established order that allows specific subjects to be visible rendering other invisible and specific voices to be heard and taken into consideration while others are ignored.

For the purpose of my investigation, I use as a starting point the concept of *phantasmagoria*, as it stands for a symbol of consumerism culture (Markus, 2001). In particular, I investigate the semantics of the word as a combination of *phantasma*, which as a product of imagination itself refers to 'image' (Papachristou, 2013), and *agora*,

which denotes public speech, collective action and 'assembly' (Damiris and Wild, 1997). I argue that specific uses of participation and performativity in visual arts allow associations between 'image' and *agora* that enable *political* thinking and praxis, or what Markus Miessen (2011) calls "political politics" (p.249).

The term *phantasmagoria* originally refers to the 18th and 19th century touring theatrical shows in which magical lanterns were used to project narratives reflecting the era's 'visible' concerns about death and the afterlife. Particularly, the projected depictions of ghosts and macabre dancing shows evoked awe and fear in their audiences (Fig. 2). The results were so exciting, so spectacular that they attracted huge audiences in the theatres, especially during the 19th century (Grau, 2007; Gunning, 2004; Roca and Sterling, 2007; Warner, 2008; Heard, 2006).



Fig. 2. Étienne-Gaspard Robertson (1797) *Phantasmagoria*. [Gravure]

As a visual artist, I was genuinely intrigued by the means used in the phantasmagoria shows, in which many contemporary scholars find the origins of lens-based practices such as photographic projections, moving image and cinema (Herbert, 2000). I was particularly

interested in the fictitious approaches of imaging and the fact that they are the first participatory theatrical endeavours that combine optical devices with other media (projection, text, sound, photography, etc.). This mode of participation was mostly based on the audience's demand to view/witness specific ghostly figures.² As a conceptual visual artist though, I was even more intrigued by the connotations inherent in the word *phantasmagoria*.

Specifically, as I shall present in more details later in the *Theoretical Research Context* chapter, the word *phantasmagoria* is often used to describe visual strategies that seduce and distract spectators in order to subject them to practices of the consumerism culture. In fact, intellectual thinkers, such as Walter Benjamin, described culture as a *phantasmagoric* spectacle of consumption (Britzolakis, 1999). The culture of consumption is realized through the objectionable transformation of the *agora* from a space of collective exercise of politics into a space of commodities (Riether, 2010). With regard to art, such a view implies that powerful institutions and dominant discourses continuously transform artwork into a commodity, the audience into consumers and the relationship between artist and audience into a relationship between a 'trader' of products and ideas and a 'customer'.

With the view expressed above in mind, however, questions such as the following emerge: What art practices can be used to prevent the degradation of *agora* to a space of mere consumption? Is there any space of resistance against this normalizing process? Do artist and audience become engaged with this process passively and

² For example it has been reported that during one of Robertson's phantasmagoria shows a man from the audience asked to see the ghost of the murdered Marat. Robertson created the ghost image and the man rushed up to grasp it to receive visually the 'response' of the ghost with its disappearance with a fearful grimace (Wynants, 2016, pp.207-208).

uncritically? Are there any choices or possibilities of active involvement? Is the cultural product of art only a matter of marketing, and finally can the relationship among artist-artwork-audience be only defined in terms of the market?

In order to address the above questions, I re-visited *phantasmagoria* pointing to specific aspects of this practice that were overlooked. Particularly, Benjamin perceives *phantasmagoria* as a symbol of the commodification of culture, because he notices that in the *phantasmagoria* shows, viewers were distracted to illusions as they did not have a visual access to the equipment producing this state (Cohen, 1989; Britzolakis, 1999; Berdet, 2010). In the commodity culture, objects, including artworks, are detached from their value as products of human labour and are defined by exchange value. However, as the media historian Tom Gunning (2004) notes, Étienne-Gaspard Robertson, the most influential practitioner of *phantasmagorias*, used to meet with the viewers before the shows, in a special exhibition room where he presented them his devices demonstrating their capacities in detail. Consequently, when they entered the central room of the performance, the spectators were aware about the ways these visual illusions were produced, despite the fact that during the show the magic lantern and the rest of the used apparatuses were hidden in the darkness. Thus, for Gunning (2004) *phantasmagoria* is a show of illusions, which nevertheless incorporates in its practices its own critique.³ In this sense *phantasmagoria* is a precursor informing about the struggles of the rising modern art which for more than a century moves between two poles, “a direct and overwhelming address to the senses on the one hand and the critique of illusion on the other” (Gunning, 2004, p.7).

³ As he states, “the radical possibilities of the *phantasmagoria* might be summarised by describing it as an art of total illusion that also contained its own critique” (Gunning, 2004, p.7).

Following Gunning's argument, I noticed that this tension among the perception of the senses and the reasonable thinking is also denoted in the semantics of *phantasmagoria*, as a synthesis of two words, *phantasma* and *agora*. *Phantasma* is directly connected to the 'image' and its perception by the senses while *agora* defines the public space where reasonable thinking is to be tested and ideas are to be supported by collective action. I decided to explore visually this tension between the 'image' and *agora*, because it was directly connected to my experience as an artist living and producing work during the austerity and socioeconomic crisis in Athens, Greece.

As I explain in detail in the *Social/Political Research Context* chapter, in this period of crisis there were significant shifts in the Athenian art scene. Most galleries, festivals and major institutions supported participatory projects that privileged theoretical interventions and panel discussions over visual experimentations and promoted mainly documentary aesthetics and strategies to address the political through a "clear gaze" (See details on p.33). Under this regime, *poetic*⁴ visualizations of reality were dismissed in many cases as non-trustworthy and distracting, participation was perceived as opposed to *visuality* and theoretical speech predominated over artistic practices.

Consequently, another question was raised: Can, and under which conditions, a combination of *poetic* 'image' with participation address the *political* transforming the public space into an *agora*? And furthermore, which would be the implications of such a case with regard to the relationship between the *artist* and the *participant*?

⁴ I use the term *poetic* to describe visual practices of aesthetics that combine fiction, metaphors and symbolism as modes of speaking about and re-configuring reality.

Being a visual artist and working mainly with photography, digital imaging, video and projections, I realized that during this period of time these media were mostly used as tools of reporting on the sufferings of the *agora*. For this reason, in this present research I decided to 'report' in a different way; I investigate the possibilities of lens-based media to expose the *political* when they are combined with staged 'image', performance and participatory practices.

I particularly focus on the dynamics of still and moving images as large projections in a dark installation space keeping a "phantom structure" of the scene (Payne and Lewis, 1988, p.61). Jacques Derrida in his interview to Andrew Payne and Mark Lewis (1988) states that new technologies such as film and television "inhabit as it were, a phantom structure. Cinema is the art of phantoms; it is neither image nor perception. It is unlike photography or perception. And a voice on the telephone also possesses a phantom aspect: something neither real nor unreal which recurs, is reproduced for you and in the final analysis, is reproduction" (ibid, p.61). Derrida seems to make a distinction between the ghostly cinema picture and the non-ghostly photograph connecting the ghostly figure with the reproduction. However, photography is intrinsically connected with reproduction. Thus, in my opinion, Derrida's particular distinction stands not just due to the reproducibility of the film/cinema, but due to the fact that cinema practices involve projection. For this reason, it is not accidental that the original phantasmagorias did not use photographs but projections of photographs in order to be able to speak about the ghosts of their era. Consequently, in the present research I used projections of both digital and analogue photographs in combination with video image so that to be able to produce a new *phantasmagoria* of different performed videos and speak about the ghosts, that is the visibilities and invisibilities which constitute the *agora* in the times of crisis.

The research ended up with the creation of four different projects which critically engage with *phantasmagoria* as a complex synthesis of the concepts 'image'/*phantasma* and *agora* to re-examine the practice of participation in relation to *politics* and *visuality*. Taking into consideration that the word *crisis* in Greek language means, among others, critical thinking, these projects together constitute the *Phantasma-agoria in crisis*, that is a critical approach of phantasmagoria. At the same time, these four creative works constitute also a *Phantasma-agoria of crisis*, as they are directly connected to the economic crisis in Greece and the ways that it framed new in/visibilities in the *agora*. In fact each one of the project explores visually different aspects of the *agora*: the articulation of the *agora* through speech and language, the articulation of the *agora* through collective action, the spatial politics of the *agora* in relation to the dichotomy between private (or domestic) and public space.

The present document is structured into nine chapters.

In the **first chapter**, I discuss the ways in which the questions and aims of this present research are informed by the social/political context of the time. Specifically, I describe the escalation of the social and economic crisis in Greece as it was determined by the choices of the various Greek governments and the decisions imposed by the institutions of the European Union and the IMF (International Monetary Fund). I refer to the grave consequences of the applied neoliberal policies of memoranda in people's daily lives, and the way they shaped the political conflicts and struggles in the Greek *agora*. I then explain how this particular political situation affected the art scene of Athens, where I reside and myself as an artist, art educator and researcher.

In the **second chapter**, I present various theoretical approaches of specific practices and concepts used in this research. Firstly, I discuss analytically the related critical discourses on the use of participatory practices in art. Particularly, I focus on Claire Bishop's views on the relationship between *participation* and *visuality* and their relevant critique by Grant Kester. Concentrating on the politics of participatory practices, I introduce Markus Miessen's (2010) conceptual distinction of participation into "consensual" and "conflictual", investigating the tensions between *participation* and *visuality* into a broader context.

Secondly, I report on the concept of *phantasmagoria*. I present the meanings that the word *phantasmagoria* bears into the Greek language and context. I, then, turn to its perception as a symbol of the commodification of culture by the philosophers Carl Marx, Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin. I highlight the importance of *phantasmagoria* as a paradigm of combining *visuality* and *participation*, and I present the reasons of my concentration on the semantics of its components, *phantasma* and *agora*.

Finally, I define how I use the term *political* in the framework of this research drawing from Jacques Rancière's theory of politics and aesthetics.

In the **third chapter**, I locate my art practices and methodologies in relation to the works of other creative practitioners. Among others, I discuss the ways that *phantasmagoria* has been approached by other artists paying special attention to Tony Oursler's relevant work; I state my position on image making relating it to practices of staged photography such as the ones offered by Jeff Wall and Cindy Sherman; I highlight particular paradigms of combining aesthetics with politics in participatory performances, creating a conversation

with the Situationists as well as with Suzanne Lacy and the duo Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla.

In the **fourth chapter**, I outline the basic strategies and various methods employed for the exploration of interrelations of 'image' with *agora*. I describe the ways that I used the methods of observation and collection of data in order to trace possible changes in the meanings of the words *phantasma* and *agora* in the social/political context of the Greek economic crisis. In addition, I explain the principles that conditioned the critical use of participation and performance in combination with fabricated photography, digital imaging and video in the creative projects of this research.

In the **fifth chapter**, I present the first stage of this practice-based research which deals with the articulation of the *agora* through speech. This process led to the production of the *Arbitrariness* (2012) interactive photography installation. In this project, I use participatory interactivity to explore how an art event can transform the physical exhibition space into a *political agora*. In this stage, I focus on the possibilities of creating a *political agora* by combining 'image' with written speech, using as a starting point Louise Bourgeois' juxtaposition of text and image in her art book *He Disappeared into Complete Silence* (1947). In fact, viewers' written interventions into the photographic image made visible the particular socio-political framework of the economic crisis.

The **sixth chapter** presents the second stage of this research in which I investigate the articulation of the *agora* through collective action and speech ending up with the production of the *Symposium* (2012) performed video. The performed video is based on a participatory public performance, which I related visually with excerpts from Albert Camus' novel *The Stranger* (1942). By

combining *participation* with *visuality*, the video reveals the politics of inclusions and exclusions involved in the constitution of the *agora*.

The **seventh chapter** describes the third stage of this research that led to the creation of the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* (2014) performed video. This project manifests the dynamics of a ritualistic praxis and its connotations to propose collective ways of performing the photographic evidence. It takes its leads from the previous two stages in which, among others, *agora* emerged as a traumatized entity following the severe attack of neoliberal policies against basic democratic procedures. It focuses on specific spatial practices of *participation* and *performance* that bring together 'image' and *agora* in a way that 'heals' the 'wound'.

The **eighth chapter** refers to the fourth stage of this research in which I explore the spatial politics of the *agora* producing the *Semiotics of the Protest* (2014) performed video. In this video, I visually combine an imaginary protest performed by a volunteering choreographer with participants' written responses on the words *phantasma* and *agora*. The performed video focuses on the polarity of private and public space and exposes the protest as a tool for enacting the *political* and the protester's body as a mobilizer of both 'image' and *agora*.

In the **ninth chapter**, I present some limitations that defined the production of the aforementioned creative research projects as well as some practical questions that I need to consider for the future.

By the end of this report, I discuss the outcomes in relation to the questions posed in the introduction emphasizing the ideas and practices I used in order to contribute to knowledge.

Furthermore, in a separate section, I present the publications and exhibitions of my research projects.

1. Social/Political Research Context

My decision to explore possible interrelations of 'image' and *agora* that undermine the culture of consumption was widely informed by the experience I had from the outbreak of the socioeconomic crisis in Greece, both as a citizen of the city of Athens and a visual artist. In fact, my position, questions and creative choices as a conceptual visual artist and researcher were defined by the specificities of the culture of consumption developed in the art scene at that particular moment of time. Therefore, at this point, it is imperative to outline the socio-political context within which the creative projects of this research were produced.

Specifically, I started my Ph.D. studies in 2012, when Greece was already suffering from the austerity measures of the memoranda imposed since 2009. Policies of austerity were the response of the Eurozone to the huge debt crisis, which starting from the United States in 2008, spread out in the next couple of years to the countries of the European Union. The European debt crisis was inevitable since the Eurozone has not been developed on the principle of shared wealth but as a pyramid of debt with countries such as Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain at its bottom (Varoufakis, 2016). Facing the possibility of the collapse of the bank system and driven by neoliberal ideas, European leaders chose to support harsh austerity instead of reform.

Neoliberalism views "society as a kind of universal market (and not, for example, a polis, a civil sphere or a kind of family) and of human beings as profit-and-loss calculators (and not bearers of grace, or of inalienable rights and duties)" (Metcalf, 2017, para.4). It favours a global financial elite minimizing the power of the welfare state and attacking people's fundamental social rights to full-time employment

and decent working conditions. Most importantly, though, it aims to a restructuring of the social life through the lens of the market promoting the idea that "competition is the only legitimate organising principle for human activity" (Metcalf, 2017, para.6). In the case of the European debt crisis, all these ideas were materialized through the imposition of economic adjustment programmes known as memoranda. Bounded by these memoranda the weakest countries were called to pay for the mistakes made by the bankers (Varoufakis, 2016). In order the injustices of the memoranda to be socially accepted, a huge propaganda was orchestrated by dominant European institutions, political leaders⁵ and the mass media, which represented the citizens of the 'failed' countries as lazy, irresponsible and non-productive and eventually transformed them to PIGS, a derogatory acronym referring to the countries of Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain (Chaulia, 2016, p.99). This acronym also appeared in a few months later as PIIGS including Italy to the list of the 'failed' economies.

Furthermore, as a consequence of the economic austerity imposed by neoliberal policies, European countries are experiencing the rise of neo-fascist movements. Specifically, in one of her interviews in 2017, Wendy Brown argues that xenophobic movements were developed in the western world as a reaction to neoliberalism, but, nevertheless, it was neoliberalism in the first hand that created the conditions for the rise of fascism. As she claims, "What we are seeing is not just reactions to immigrants, but also reactions to declining standards of living, lost jobs, lost pensions, declines in neighbourhoods, disintegrating infrastructure... all the things brought to us by 4 decades of neoliberalism's global race to the bottom in wages and in

⁵ Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the head of the eurozone's finance ministers claimed that "crisis-hit European countries had wasted their money on "drinks and women"" (Khan and McClean, 2017, para.1)

taxes and in other things that make working class and middle-class life bearable" (Brown in Burgum, Raza and Vasquez, 2017, para.10).

The imposition of the memoranda in Greece led to a humanitarian crisis of huge proportions which eventually made the rising of neo-Nazi movements, racism, xenophobia and neo-fascism possible. This phenomenon obtained greater significance when vast waves of refugees started arriving in the country since 2014, as a consequence of the war in Syria.

As the humanitarian crisis was escalating, people's experience became all the more valuable but at the same time equally invisible, as critical decisions were made on behalf of them without their active involvement therein. The debt crisis caused a political turmoil in which parliamentary elections (October 2009, May 2012, June 2012, January 2015, September 2015) happened one after the other as the elected governments, mostly originated from the right and centred wings, were implementing completely different programmes than the ones that had proposed to and the Greek people had elected them for. To add insult to injury, in 2011 a technocratic government was appointed without any parliamentary elections, which was led by the former European Central Bank vice-president Lucas Papademos (Smith, 2011, para.2). The failure of the elected governments to keep their promises as they kept signing and implementing new memoranda and other austerity programmes brought huge waves of people protesting in the streets in the years between 2010 and 2015. Promising to denounce the policies of memoranda, in January 2015 the leftwing party of *Syriza* gained the elections and formed the government with the cooperation of the rightwing party of *Independent Greeks*. In the summer of 2015 the prime minister Alexis Tsipras called for a referendum asking people to say 'no' to the austerity measurements imposed by the Eurozone elites and the IMF

(Traynor, Hooper, Smith, 2015). The Greek public voted 61% 'no' (Lowen, 2015) despite the fear and the uncertainty people were experiencing due to the capital controls applied to the Greek economy right after the announcement of the referendum. However, in contrary to the public decision, the Eurozone and the IMF ignored the results of the referendum and forced the Greek government to sign a new memorandum to avoid exiting the euro. Consequently, the public was divided once again with part of it blaming the European partners and the other one accusing the Greek government of betrayal (McEvers, 2015). While the opinions vary, the fact remains that the choices made by a government originated from the radical left-wing party, led people to huge disappointment and many activists to return home. Accordingly, all these years, the public space, *agora*, was traumatized by a systematic attack on all democratic processes.

Ignoring people's wishes in decision-making signified a severe blow against democracy combined with systematic strategies to immobilize *agora*; to reduce it to a matter of numbers; specific numbers that referred to salary cuts and debts; definitely, not to the numbers of people who were beaten by police forces in the streets while protesting against the harsh measures, thousands of whom had suddenly found themselves homeless, jobless and most of all not to the numbers of people who committed suicide.

It was under these bleak circumstances of the crisis taking 'phantasmagoric' dimensions in everyone's life that I chose to explore the relationship between *agora* and 'image'.

As a consequence, my research is inescapably historically and politically situated within the framework of the above-mentioned urgent and precarious circumstances. In fact, the systematic ignoring of people's experiences and voices, as well as their exclusion from

decision-making processes, makes me reflect on the politics of participation in my own creative practice. Thus, this contemplative process is embodied in particular strategies and methods I used in order to make interrelations between *artist-artwork-participant* visible. My intention was to explore this dynamic triangle in the most cohesive and meaningful way and expose its political dimension through the combination of intellectual, critical thinking and creative productions.

Furthermore, as the economic crisis was intensifying in Greece, I witnessed important shifts and paradoxes in the local art scene. Despite the difficult circumstances and the severe cuts in the state budget for the education and culture, the art scene was considered as vivid. This was not surprising as the Greek state had never been a great supporter of the arts neither had financially encouraged creative research. The state budget was always limited and most of the artists were used to produce and exhibit their artwork either by self-financing it or by getting support from private sponsors and institutions. Thus, the Greek reporter Georgia Keramari's (2013) view that the artists in Greece have always been in the state of crisis is not an exaggeration.

Therefore, when the economic crisis burst out, parallel to the activities of public and private art institutions which survived by supporting low budget productions, a plethora of small independent art spaces emerged in the centre of Athens, which were financially supported mostly by collectives and other volunteers, as well as artists' groups oriented to researching the terrain of crisis (Kuhnt, 2012). These emerging independent spaces and short life art collectives that flourished during the crisis gave the impression to some part of the Greek and international Press that art survived under the vast economic pressure. While the Guardian exemplifies the

Athenian art scene of the time by stating that it was because of the economic crisis that the art scene was flourishing (Cloughton, 2012, para.1), there were other voices in the local Press expressing different opinions. As Keramari (2013) describes, during the crisis many galleries closed while others were hardly surviving, a lot of art collectors vanished and most important of all,

... once again the great losers are the emerging artists. The galleries... promote the well-known, 'big' artists' names, leaving promising young people in the margins. Creativity exists, but its circulation lapses. The crisis 'crippled' the creative efforts of young artists. It terrorized them with the threat of the loss of material goods. It imprisoned them by the deprivation of free time, as they had to find alternative employment channels. The crisis endorsed a culture of compromise and perhaps sometimes promoted defeatism (para.17).

To add to Keramari's observations, there were not only the "emerging artists" that appear as "great losers" but, as I experienced it, particularly the visual artists. Indeed, for independent visual artists, such as myself, who need particular and expensive equipment (e.g. photographic and video cameras, projectors, lights, computers, screens, etc.) to produce and exhibit their artwork, it was hard to find a space for displaying even a self-funded project; not to mention the financial sources and the time to produce it.

Another significant shift that I also witnessed in the Athenian art scene during the crisis was that many exhibitions focused on documenting different aspects of the Greek society during the slump, making comparisons between earlier dark periods of the Modern Greek history and reporting on activism through the presentation of communal groups and emerging collectives at the time. In other words, at least within the field of visual arts from which I come from, the 'image' was perceived as a pure 'realism'.

An example of such an exhibition was the *Depression Era* that took place at the Benaki Museum from November 2014 to January 2015. The objective of this project that was developed through photographic images of daily life was to describe the transformation of the urban and social environment during the depression in Greece. As the collective states, "it seeks to do so with as clear a gaze as possible" (*Depression Era*, 2016).

Undoubtedly, the exhibition made sweeping political statements about the particular historical moment in Greece. Yet, I could not help but question the dominance of the documentary realism in all of the exhibited works and the certainty of the statement in which it was made explicit that a "clear gaze" is required to expose the 'political'. Such a certainty implies that there is a subject who resides outside discourse and from this position it supposedly has a clear view and speaks the truth. Postmodernist theory taught us that no such subject exists, or absolute 'truth' for that matter (St. Pierre, 2000). It is astonishing to see that, while the depression destroyed all certainties, a statement from a creative collective made reference to a "clear gaze". According to Halberstam (1998), when people are in a state of transition in time and space, they feel the need to secure boundaries. Indeed, under the regime of the prolonged Greek crisis, in which social structures and fabric collapsed, the whole country has experienced a state of transition to a clueless and uncertain future. From this point of view, the claim of a "clear gaze" creates a unique borderline on which people can hold themselves in order to achieve the transition.

This claim of a "clear gaze" captures the tendency of privileging documentary aesthetics that appeared at the Greek art scene the particular time. As a visual artist, I was intrigued by the fact that the *political* was mainly articulated through the literal representation of

'reality'. This fact surprisingly led me to recall a related statement made by the Greek music composer Manos Hatzidakis in an interview in 1988:

Those exhausted in rebellion have no time to produce eternal art. Not to mention that the time in which rebellion takes place does not sanction great art. Instead, it seeks slogans and journalistic writing (Hatzidakis, 1999, p.229).

Despite the elitism expressed in the phrases "eternal art" and "great art", this statement addresses eloquently the particular politics of aesthetics that defines times of crisis. Today, almost thirty years later similar concerns are expressed by many contemporary artists. For example in a public discussion that was held in 2016 at the Ukraine Crisis Media Center with the subject of *The role of art in times of crisis and social transformation in Ukraine*, the director and co-founder of *PostPlayTheater*, Anton Romanov, stated that the current Ukrainian theater exists in two types: "either it pretends that nothing happens and continues to stage usual light plays or resorts to "hurray patriotism", which is not very different from Soviet times, changing only "flags and anthems"" (Ukraine Crisis Media Center, 2016, para.4).

Similarly, in Athens, there were a lot of exhibitions supported mostly by major institutions with incredibly big budgets for the time, which staged "light plays". For example, the exhibition of the festival *Hypnos Project* organized by Onassis Cultural Centre in 2016 posed the questions: "What happens to the body during sleep? How do we spend one-third of our lives? During sleep our most secret and repressed self-emerges. At the same time, our body becomes vulnerable" (Onassis Centre, 2016, para.1). The exhibition focused on an existentialist approach to the concept of Hypnos keeping distance from the current socio-political situation. Even in the curatorial statement the word 'crisis' was avoided and insomnia appeared as a

symptom of the difficulties and anxieties of our time in general and not in relation to the particular time of crisis. The whole event appeared even lighter to me since it ended up with a pajama party at a period of time where numbers of homeless people have been 'sleeping' out in the Athenian streets. The *Hypnos* exhibition was a high budget event featuring artworks from Greek artists of previous generations in combination with contemporary ones. Defined by this lack of reference to the particular historical context within which it was produced, it was, nevertheless, a well-designed exhibition mostly focused on symbolic representations of the subject.

In contrast to the above event the Athens Biennial 4 (AB4), *Agora*, that took place three years earlier, in 2013, made a statement related to the political situation of the time by using as its main venue the former Athens Stock Exchange. Specifically, the curatorial statement explained: "Using the empty building of the former Athens Stock Exchange as its main venue, AB4 proposes AGORA not only as a place of exchange and interaction but also as an ideal setting for critique" (Athens Biennale, 2013, para.3). This art event was produced with little funding and with the assistance of many volunteers and developed in many levels aiming to bring together theorists and practitioners, including professionals from the academic and creative fields in a series of workshops, panel discussions and collective experimentations. Yet, I found the presented artworks literal rather than visually challenging. In general, there was a lack of visual experimentation at least in most of the exhibited lens-based media works.

As a viewer of the above three major exhibitions in the city of Athens, I witnessed a specific tension: When it was connected to the current political and historical context, the art event was dominated by a literal rather than symbolic visual language. When it was linked to

symbolic representation, a lack of reference to political and historical circumstances was evident. Yet, such being the case, what happens with art practices, that do not comply with this regime? What happens when patterns of visual experimentation, symbolic language and awareness of the political and historical context are simultaneously in the stage in the production of the visual subject? Furthermore, another question was also raised regarding the use of *participation* as an art practice. Both the *Depression Era* and *Hypnos* exhibitions were mostly based on non-participatory projects. In the contrary, the Athens Biennial 4 was dominated by participatory workshops and projects lacking though visual experimentation. These contradictions related to context and praxis led me to the question: What modes of participation allow the emergence of symbolic language in the 'image'?

The above observations were quite crucial and describe my complicated position as an artist in the Athenian art scene of the time. As a conceptual visual practitioner, I always aim to the dynamics of the constructed image to produce metaphors for 'reality', which mainly question, critique, comment, rearrange and/or reconstruct it. Thus, my creative work faced quite a trouble to fit in the specific conditions. It seemed that my symbolic visual language was not perceived as valid enough to represent 'reality' by dominant discourses such as the ones enforced by the *Depression era* or the *Agora* art events. On the other hand, my art productions could not – and I did not wish to – be included in events such as *Hypnos* since they always draw from the specificities of the political and historical context.

Considering the above, I wondered how the 'image' as an invented and *poetic* entity could survive under these circumstances that privilege literal representation?

As a researcher, I opted for the visual perspective that lies on the other side of this borderline: an alternative aesthetic practice that uses imaginary conditions and fiction to describe 'reality' in multiple and fragmented possibilities. By using performative strategies and juxtapositions of 'image' and *agora*, I focused on the constitution of a *political* visual subject through symbolism and visual metonymies developed at different places and stages, fabrications and participatory conditions. Considering that the "moment of absolute knowledge is, in effect, the totalizing closure of knowledge" (St. Pierre, 2000, p.495), in this research I did not seek certainties but posed questions to suggest a diversity of perspectives. Consequently, the problematic connection of *agora* to literal representation and the ways that audiences' interaction was used (or not) during this time led me to look for other modes of participation that allow a reconfiguration of the relationship of 'image' and *agora*.

Contemplating further on how my research has been informed by the particular socio-political circumstances, I have to refer to another significant aspect that defined the public space of Athens at the time: during these years, despite the harsh economic conditions, there has been an abundance of public lectures, discussions, seminars and conferences. Eminent philosophers, sociologists and activists that formulate essential parts of contemporary intellectual thinking visited Athens to share their views on crisis and resistance with their audience. Among others, Etienne Balibar, Slavoj Zizek, Judith Butler, Giorgio Agamben, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Wendy Brown and Alain Badiou expressed their solidarity to the masses of people fighting in the streets for the withdrawal of the memoranda. Although these lectures were the 'light in the darkness' by giving inspiration and the opportunity for critical discussions, they also defined the public terrain of the time. So, the *agora* was dominated by lectures and theories; in other words, logos and language were much more

privileged in relation to 'image' and art. In fact, there were many invitations to academics from the fields of Humanities to participate in art events by speaking and/or presenting a subject and less to artists for producing creative projects. This was not unexpected, considering the fact that speech, and particularly "action through speech" (Damiris and Wild, 1997, p.3) is a constituent element of the *agora*. Yet, this priority of theory over practice, and language over art troubled me a lot. Thus, during the first stage of my research, in *Arbitrariness*, I concentrated on the combinations of 'image' and language, in order to disturb this hierarchy by introducing participatory interactivity.

Furthermore, while events and repercussions of the economic and humanitarian crisis in Greece admittedly triggered a lot of questions and shaped the conceptual framework of this research, they also helped galvanise my devotion to this Ph.D. This commitment, then, serves as my personal mode of resistance against this attack of fear caused by the disciplinarian measures in the economy and the enormous cuts in cultural budgets, a fact that forced many creative producers to despair and inactivity. The theorist and activist Naomi Klein (2007) describes this idleness as a result of the application of the 'shock doctrine' by neoliberal policies of austerity. She argues that the exploitation of national crises by the free markets eventually leads to the physical and psychological exhaustion of the citizens, so they cannot resist the violation of their social and political rights. Therefore, in the light of Klein's theory, I regarded various interventions by groups of intellectuals and academics as 'antidotes'. Organized under the name "For the Defence of Society and Democracy", one of these groups presented a series of lectures called "ΚΡΙΣΗ-ΜΑ ΣΕΜΙΝΑΡΙΑ" (["Crisi-ma Seminaria" translation: critical seminars], 2012-14) which were open to the public and took place in the city of Athens. Their argument is explicitly stated in the title of the seminars in which the

spelling of the word 'crisis' is changed to denote the two contradictory meanings it has in the Greek language: a) A sharp aggravation of a problem, a tremendous unfortunate situation, b) Critical thinking and judgment (Babiniotis, 2002, p. 961).

Fighting against fear and the consequent idleness and focusing on the positive meaning of the word 'crisis', I decided to pursue and systematically work on the Ph.D. research despite the precariousness of the situation. I challenged myself by personally financing my studies, risking by getting loans in a period in which the social right to permanent employment has been abolished for most of the people in Greece. Naturally, the financial problems and the economic instability forced me to employ low budget creative productions in order to complete my research projects.

In addition, my decision to get involved with practice-based research reflects my broader disposition at that time to remain active as a creative practitioner and extroverted. Therefore, I used to work in multiple levels at the same time. I was teaching in an art college encouraging students, the majority of whom were young but because of the situation already depressed artists. Occasionally, I was participating in demonstrations; I kept observing as an 'outsider' visually recording evidence. As a matter of fact, I was an outsider towards the Athenian art scene as my artwork could not really fit into the particular dominant politics of aesthetics. Furthermore, as my practice-based research was developing, I reconsidered it as an enterprise to reflect on my experiences as a conceptual visual artist in times of crisis and locate myself in the broader intellectual and artistic community.

2. Theoretical Research Context

Art practices and concepts such as *participation* and *performed visualities*, *phantasmagoria*, *phantasma*, *image*, *agora* and the *political*, constitute cornerstones for my research. Thus, in this chapter I present the theoretical framework within which I use the specific terms. In other words this chapter composes the 'glossary' of my research.

- *Participation and performed visualities*

In this subsection, I present different theoretical perspectives for the term *participation* as well as the ways that these perspectives inform my research. I discuss analytically though, in the *Research Stages* chapter the modes of *participation* I used in each one of my creative projects.

My concerns about the lack of visual experimentation in the Athenian art scene of the time converse with the current discussion that has been developed in the wider art community regarding the key role of participatory practices in activist and social engaged art. As Bishop (2012) claims, since 1990 participatory art has been connected with the notion of democracy, however, eventually it becomes predictable because of the lack of any social and artistic target (pp.283-84). By the phrase 'artistic target', Bishop puts the question of *visuality* towards the results of participatory art today in which visual art is intentionally undermined. According to Bishop, in the name of becoming 'political' and 'critical' participatory art opposes itself to visual art, since the latter is trapped in the nets of the market system. Lacking *visuality*, though, participatory art loses its ability to motivate and "enlarge our capacity to imagine our world and our relations

anew" (Bishop, 2012, p.284). Bishop makes clear that participatory art needs always to be mediated by a third term in order to "have a purchase in the public imagery" (p.284) and defines this term as a visual object, a film, a video, even a spectacle.

I considered Bishop's observations quite relevant to my experience as a viewer and visual artist in the Athenian art scene in the time of the economic crisis. As I explained earlier the dominant aesthetics of the time was varying from a journalistic "clear gaze" (*Depression Era*, 2016) to participatory projects that claimed the political while lacking any visual experimentation (*Agora*, Athens Biennial, 2013). The social target of the presented art was also vague. Thriving workshops, collaborations and projects brought together a variety of people from the fields of art, sociology, social anthropology and philosophy, aiming to the development of polyphonic and collective spirit and claiming the democratic values. Nevertheless, they failed to overpass issues of visibility and invisibility, quite critical in the realization of democracy. In fact, they created new ones. Specific politics of exclusions and inclusions took place through a systematic ignoring of particular artists' proposals and productions. Art events such as *Monodrome* (Athens Biennial 3, 2011) co-curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, and *Agora* (Athens Biennial 4, 2013) using non transparent processes in the selection of the exhibited art projects, privileged collective art productions, setting aside a number of local artists that did not belong to specific groups or companies of 'friends'. 'Collective' spirit in some way became the flag, pushing in the margins the 'loners', in their majority visual artists.

Bishop's arguments seemed to respond to my concerns as a visual artist at that time in Athens, however, I could not ignore Grant Kester's (2011) critique on these views. Specifically, Kester argues that Bishop and Nicolas Bourriaud create a bold dichotomy between

'aesthetic' participatory projects which are challenging and uncomfortable, and activist or socially engaged works which are predictable and ineffectual. In this way the modernist scheme is revived. Activist art has to be dismissed as naïve and the artist has to remain somehow detached in order to be able to control the structure of the work and thus, not be consumed by the culture of propaganda. As Kester (2011) states,

Relational practice is thus characterized by a tension between two movements. One runs along a continuum from the specular to the haptic (the desire to literalize social interaction in nonvirtual space), and the other runs along a continuum from the work as a preconceived entity to the work as improvisational and situationally responsive. In order to preserve the legitimacy of relational practice as a hereditary expression of avant-garde art, it is necessary for critics like Bourriaud and Bishop to privilege the first movement over the second (p.32).

According to Kester, both Bishop and Bourriaud support projects in which the artist does not really give much autonomy to participants; the artist is the bearer of the true meaning and is capable of communicating it to the viewer, who "in short, can't be trusted" (Kester, 2011, p.33).

Following this debate on *participation*, a series of questions emerge: What constitutes the *political* in participatory projects? Why *visuality* and socially engaged art should exclude each other? Taking into consideration that every artistic position being that activist, collective, or independent, suggests particular choices of aesthetics, shouldn't it be more ethical or, at least for the sake of democracy, all to be presented and be part of the public dialogue? Is it possible to save the symbolic and poetic visual language while at the same time generate conditions in which *participants* have autonomy in relation to the *artist*?

In order to explore the above questions within this research context, I created conditions in which different modes of *participation* were accomplished. In fact, as I analytically explain in the *Research Stages* chapter, I experimented with modes of *participation* some of which were in Kester's (2011) words more "textual" (p.10), meaning that the *participants* did not have much control over the production of the artwork. Additionally, I investigated participatory practices in which *participants* had more autonomy. These cases can be better described by Miessen's (2011) conception of *participation* as a conflict.

Miessen (2011) criticizes modes of *participation* that rely on consensus. He argues that consensual modes of *participation* decrease interaction and manipulate collectiveness to passivity signifying "stasis" (p.83). Instead, he opts for "conflictual participation", i.e. an unconditioned *participation*, and explains:

When we look at conflict as opposed to innocent forms of participation, conflict is not to be understood as form of protest or contrary provocation; but rather, as a micro-political practice through which the participant becomes an active agent who insists on being an actor in the force field they are facing. Thus, participation becomes a form of critical engagement (p.93).

This kind of *participation* does not allow the artist to withdraw "from responsibility while still being technically in charge" (p.181). Furthermore, it allows ample space for the unexpected and goes against any consensus that could normalize differences and conflicts under the umbrella of the 'politically correct'. Therefore, Miessen (2011) argues, *participation* based on consensus is a romanticized pseudo-participation. It is the "conflictual participation" that allows a critical approach to the exposure of (in-)visibilities. It also creates space for the transformation of the 'politically correct' into the "political politics" (Miessen, 2011, p.249).

In addition, Miessen (2011) introduces the concept of the “distant outsider” as a prerequisite for the emergence of the “conflictual participation” (pp.96-97). The “distant outsider” is the architect who finds collaborators in different disciplines and with different levels of knowledge, and becomes able to work with conflicts since as an outsider s/he is not bound by the protocols of the specific disciplines. Following Miessen’s (2011) idea of the “distant outsider”, I decided for my research projects to engage *participants* who were not members of the art community. As ‘outsiders’, these *participants* were not familiar with the rules and protocols that may regulate artistic events, and even if they had been aware of them, they did not abide by them, nor did they have any personal interest in following them; in other words, they did not have any reason to behave ‘appropriately’ or ‘as expected to’.

Experimenting both with textual and conflictual modes allowed me to investigate the relationship between *visuality*, *performance* and *participation* from a wider perspective. At the same time, my engagement with these different modes brought critical ethical questions regarding the definition of the relationship between *artist* and *participant*. In fact, both in the textual and conflictual modes of *participation* that I used, none of the projects could have been realized without the active collaboration of the *participants*. Thus, in this sense, in my projects the notions of the *participant* and *collaborator* become identical.

Practically, *participants/collaborators* interact digitally in physical spaces contributing to the completion of the artwork (*Arbitrariness*, 2012); they also take part in collective performances out of which a performed video is produced (*Symposium*, 2012; *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, 2014). Finally, *participants’* narratives are used as part of the performance (*Semiotics of the Protest*, 2014). These modes of

participation lead to the creation of performed videos in which more visual elements are added to the imagery through the process of video editing creating finally a symbolic spectacle, the "third object" (Bishop, 2012, p.284). This object draws its dynamics from the ontological status of the participatory art as "not only a social activity but also a symbolic one, both embedded in the world *and* at once remove from it" (Bishop, 2012, p.7). It is a combination of participation, performance, photography and video imagery; in other words, a *performed visuality*.

- *Phantasmagoria: Phantasma/'Image', Agora*

Being a visual artist preoccupied with the tensions between *visuality* and participatory practices in times of crisis, I got interested in the term of *phantasmagoria*. Firstly, because in the Greek language among others, this word means a visual product that is impressive, beyond imagination, attractive, spectacular and occasionally connected with exaggeration, parody and allegory (Babiniotis, 2005, p.1869).

Indeed, the escalation of the crisis in Greek society was beyond any imagination. The social and economic networks started collapsing rapidly the one dragging the other in a chain reaction, and in a few months everything that used to be taken for granted was vanished for the majority of people while precariousness became the standard component of the daily life. The crisis took *phantasmagoric* dimensions entailing surprise, pain and awe of a horrific spectacle in which people, like ghosts, were caught in the middle, and while many got drown immediately, others were in denial to recognize that the 'ship' was sinking. At the same time, although in pain, the whole country and particularly the capital, became attractive; all kind of

people were visiting Athens, for conducting research, documenting, giving lectures, seeing with their own eyes, offering solidarity. Perceiving the whole situation as a *phantasmagoric* one, I looked into the origins of *phantasmagoria* focusing on the following three aspects:

- The spectacle that combines visual technologies with participation.
- Its conception as a symbol of the commodification of culture.
- Its semantics as a combination of two words, *phantasma* and *agora*.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the first *phantasmagorias* were visual spectacles based on projections using the device of the magic lantern while audience(s) could interact with the visual outcome during the show. Visual effects such as smoke, sounds from a glass harmonica, performance, speech and readings, also accompanied these early versions of the pre-cinema period in which static images generate motion⁶. Consequently, *phantasmagoria* was not only a slide show but also a kind of a multimedia participatory performance of the time. Thus, in these early forms of projected image, *visuality* and *participation* co-exist.

Following the aforementioned concerns about the lack of visual experimentation and the uses of participation in times of crisis, I revisited *phantasmagoria's* practices of participatory projections. So, in my research I used video projections in which I present fragments of participatory performances in combination with fictitious settings and symbolic elements. I considered *projection* as an important practice for presenting the *performed visualities* of this investigation as it creates the perception of an object that has "a distance from the

⁶ "No magic lantern show consisted of slides alone: there were always elements like music, audience participation, or the spoken word. Especially in the later nineteenth century, many slide producers published 'readings' giving a recitation, story, or lecture to accompany the slide images" (Mellby, 2017, para.1).

perceiving subject" (Kaplan, 1983, p.367). This distance though inaugurates mobility and a moving forward rather than alienation and stasis. As Adalaide Morris (1984) states, "From the verb meaning to throw forward, projection is the thrust that bridges two worlds. It is the movement across a borderline: between the mind and the wall, between the brain and the page, between inner and outer, between me and you, between states of being, across dimensions of time and space" (p.413).

Moreover, the immaterial projected image along with the required darkness and the lack of depth creates the illusion of a ghostly visual object trapped on a flat surface. Within the context of this research, this illusion though does not necessarily deceive the viewer; it may suggest multiple interpretations and possibilities for the visual subject. Furthermore, darkness hints the uncanny suggesting specific politics of the space; it demands caution, awareness and concentration from the viewers.

In fact the practice of *phantasmagoria* has been considered suspicious as it was based on illusionary projections. Taking place in dark spaces by the end of the 18th century, an era in which everything has to be illuminated following the demands of the French revolution, *phantasmagoria* shows were provocative as scandals (Gunning, 2004). Darkness against the order of Reason caused disorientation and confusion to the viewers. This effect was enhanced further as spirits and dancing ghosts were presented through optical devices hidden from the viewer's eye. Neither the magic lantern nor the glass harmonica was visible to the audience. Through these strategies the senses were over-stimulated and perception was controlled "dividing sensual experience from rational judgement" (Gunning, 2004, p.6).

Connected to illusion and deception *phantasmagoria* has been used in critical philosophy as a metaphor for analysing the commodification of the culture by capitalism. Specifically, Carl Marx describes as phantasmagorical the "exchange value" which is attributed to the object transforming it to commodity fetish (Gunning, 2004, pp.9-10). Similarly to *phantasmagoria*, which creates false perceptions by hiding the function of its apparatuses from the common view, capitalism hides the social relationship among people and things, by replacing the value that each object has as a product of human labour, with exchange value. Elaborating further on Marx's argument, Theodor Adorno and Benjamin conceive the object as a phantasmagoric spectacle (Gunning, 2004). Deprived of their historicity as products of human labour, objects enter the market as transcendent, magical entities defined only by their outer appearance. For Adorno in particular, *phantasmagoria* does not simply hides the truth but most importantly it produces "the absolute reality of the unreal" (Adorno cited in Gunning, 2004, p.11).

In addition, Benjamin defines *phantasmagoria* as the "commodity-on-display" (Britzolakis, 1999, p. 73), a place that "people entered in order to be distracted" (Benjamin cited in Frisby, 1986, p.254). In the light of the era of industrialization, he argues that it signifies the commodification of people and life itself (Markus, 2001). For Benjamin *phantasmagoria* is a "collective dream" that generates myths about social classes, urban culture and history. It creates the illusion of a better world, "but it has always the ideological function to hide, protect and reproduce the social order" (Berdet, 2010, p.4).

Benjamin's argument and critique on the phantasmagoric practices of the consuming culture expresses eloquently his serious concerns about the intention of capitalism to transform public space from a space of political dialogue and struggle into a space of commodities;

from a space where citizens collectively argue about the common good into a privatized space determined by individuals who are there to serve their own interests (Damiris and Wild, 1997).

The above concerns are continuously posed by contemporary thinkers. For example, drawing from Benjamin and using Foucault's theory of governmentality⁷, Chaudhary (2005) asserts that *phantasmagoria* practices create a totalizing worldview eliminating people's differences and social injustices. Bob Jessop (2014) describes neoliberalism as a spectre that haunts Europe, and argues that neoliberal ideas resist and survive because they "function phantasmagorically, that is, as so many ghastly, ghostly, apparently free-floating symbols, images and icons" which hide the social and institutional practices that produced them initially (p.355). Apparently, in all these cases of philosophical thought, *phantasmagoria* is perceived as practice that supports illusion and fosters the mystification of the consumerism culture. In other words, *phantasmagoria* has been primarily conceived as the art of the fictitious and illusionary imagery, while other characteristics of the show have been overlooked. I am particularly referring here to *participation*, which was an important element, and yet it seems that has been ignored.

Questions such as which was the audience of *phantasmagoria* and how it participated in the show open a different discussion from which *phantasmagoria* emerges as a critique on the modern Western culture from the margins. In fact, *phantasmagoria* was never acknowledged as a 'serious' art practice by dominant discourse in the history of Western art. Employing various sceneries in shadowy spaces and combining scientific breakthroughs to produce illusion,

⁷ In governmentality, Foucault asserts that throughout history governments control over populations in many forms. Power exists in knowledge and uses different tools such as the benevolent institutions to educate populations and individuals to self-discipline (Foucault, 1991).

phantasmagoria engulfs darkness and ghosts, thus disturbing the certainties that the era of Enlightenment imposed. As Gunning (2004) states,

The nature of perception, the material bases of art works, the role of illusion, the stimulation of the senses, the convergence of realism and fantasy -- these issues so clearly posed by the Phantasmagoria not only represent essential questions of modern epistemology, but also questions that artists and art works ask with increasing frequency as we move into the twenty first century (p.5).

This fragility and ambivalence of *phantasmagoria*, as well as the horrific shadows it casts can be found in the first black & white horror movies of expressionism. As Marina Warner states, "Whereas the dioramas and panoramas concentrated on battles, modern cityscapes, or exotic scenery, customs, and people --they are the forerunners of the wide-screen epic films-- the *phantasmagoria* shadows forth the great silent movies like F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* [1922] and Robert Wiene's *The cabinet of Dr. Caligari* [1920]" (Warner cited in Cousineau, 2010, p.205).

Produced and projected for the masses, the ephemeral *phantasmagoria* was a show of 'low' quality for the dominant markets of art (Gunning, 2004, p.11). According to Corradi (2012), *phantasmagoria* was perceived as a popular form of entertainment and as such it "intertwined with the widespread misery and corruption of the lower social strata" (p.8). Yet, this quality becomes 'low' due to its contamination by the body of the 'ignorant' masses. Specifically, very often at the beginning of shows, showmen used to explain to their audiences that they were about to see illusionary effects based on the astonishing breakthroughs of scientific discoveries and experiments. Despite these announcements, though, viewers would still respond actively to the ghostly scenes and figures. As it has been described, this "novel effect truly shook up the audience, reportedly

causing women to faint and men to rise, striking out with their canes against the apparently threatening phantom" (Gunning, 2004, p.4). Therefore, contrary to the dominant discourse of the epoch that viewed them as 'irrational' and unqualified for experiencing other forms of more established art, these bodies of 'ignorant' masses resisted to a conception of the world only through Reason. From this point of view audiences' *participation* takes political meaning which I believe is reflected also upon the semantics of the word *phantasmagoria*.

As early as 1801, the French dramatist and writer Louis-Sébastien Mercier interpreted *phantasmagoria* as a "showing of fantastic images in public" (Cousineau, 2010, p.204) based on the etymological analysis of the word as a combination of the two ancient Greek words, *phantasma* and *agora*.

Phantasma in an ancient Greek language means "to show, to display, to shine" (Cousineau, 2010, p.204). It refers to the ghostly figure that challenges the relation between 'real' and 'unreal', 'visible' and 'invisible', life and death.

In fact, *phantasma* 'shows', 'displays', 'shines' the absence of the present⁸, contesting any reduction of 'real'/'unreal', 'visible'/'invisible', life/death to oversimplified dichotomies. It is through this ability to challenge dichotomies that it gained such prestige in the 19th century spiritual and gothic fiction, as well as in a big part of 20th century intellectual and artistic production in the fields of politics, literature,

⁸ Based on a series of short interviews, the 'Ghost Dance' film (1983) by the British filmmaker Ken McMullen links the term *phantasma* to issues of memory by exposing dialogues between the great 'ghosts' of knowledge (e.g. Kafka, Marx, Freud) and the contemporary philosophers. In the film, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida defines ghosts as the absence of the present to connect them finally with cinema and image representation itself.

art, philosophy and theory (Blanco and Peeren, 2013; Peeren, 2014; Sabol, 2007; Cohen, 1989; Markus, 2001; Moser, 2011; Shapins, 2009). Constituting the so-called "haunting culture" (Buse and Scott, 1999, p.1), the *phantasma* disturbs the enlightened rational *Man* of modernity. Furthermore, because of its ability to "show, to display, to shine", since classic antiquity, *phantasma* has been connected to image. Particularly, in Aristotle's *De Anima*, *phantasma* is the product of *phantasia*, which means imagination in the sense of "the ability to form mental images or to 'see with the mind's eye' " (Papachristou, 2013, p.32), the ability to create a visual imagery and, most significantly, imagination as "a type of motion (*κίνησις*) which is generated by actual perception" (p. 20) invoking simultaneously sensation, practical knowledge and opinion (p.30).

Phantasia "is the faculty/power by which a *phantasma* [(mental) representation] is presented to us" (Aristotle cited in Hicks, R.D., 1976, p. 428). In this sense, *phantasma* that is the 'image', the materialized motion, becomes directly connected to the visual artist.

As a term, the second component of *phantasmagoria*, *agora*, has its origins in the practices and uses of public space in the Athenian democracy since 600 B.C., and in the Golden age of Pericles. *Agora* was a physical space in the centre of the city where all public life was happening: a market place of shops and business transactions, an exhibition space for artists' creative works, a space for philosophical discussions and intellectual exchange, and, most importantly, an 'assembly' space, where the citizens⁹ were exercising their rights to free speech, decision-making, electing and being elected; in other words, a space where citizens, as equals among equals, were

⁹ Citizens in ancient Athens were considered only the men of Athenian descent. Women, slaves and *metics* (resident aliens) were not entitled to citizenship (Manville, 1990).

exercising democracy (Damiris and Wild, 1997; Tidwell, 1999). In modern capitalistic societies, though, the *agora* as the “sacred space of public life” (Damiris and Wild, 1997, p.2) and political debate has been transformed “into the market-place where commodities are traded and exchanged for money and development, which marks the beginning of the era of capital accumulation” (p.4).

So far, I have indicated that historically the term *phantasmagoria* has been used to describe the hidden mechanisms and deceiving practices through which capitalism and neoliberalism foster the commodification of culture and transform people to consumers of spectacles. However, if we go back to Mercier’s etymological analysis and re-consider *phantasmagoria* as combination of *phantasma* and *agora*, we open up different perspectives. Such a re-framing may signify a different *phantasmagoria* in which critical modes of *participation* may allow a reconfiguration of the ‘image’ as well as of the public, that is the audience, transforming the (exhibition) space from a space of consumption to a *political* one, an *agora*. In such a space demystification may go in both ways, referring to not only to the demystification of the ‘image’ but also to that of the audience. As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, in times of crisis, such as the one we have experienced in Greece, *participation* and collectivism becomes the canon creating new visibilities/invisibilities; yet, any form of rebellious art must go against the canons.

The above conceptualizations inform the specific research context in which *phantasma* is the ‘image’ of the inquiry, the visual subject that is formatted through visualizations, performances, installations and *participation* in relation to personal and public narratives. Moreover, *agora* refers to its origins as a symbol of democracy, and has been investigated as a space of fragmented staged conditions. It is conceived as an ‘assembly’ which involves collective acts and

collaboration and critically reflects upon the tensions between *agora* as *polis* and *political*, and *agora* as the merchandise, the market.

- *Political*

In this research, I investigate modes and combinations of visual experimentation with symbolic language and participation that address the political in times of crisis. Thus, at this point it is essential to clarify the meaning of the term political and how I use it within this particular research practice.

Firstly, I consider as *political* any activity that disturbs certainties, defies hierarchies and undermines normalizing processes that allow specific subjects and discourses to be visible rendering other invisible. My ideas draw from Jacques Rancière's (1999) theorisation of politics and aesthetics. For Rancière, "Politics is aesthetic in principle because it reconfigures the common field of what is seeable and sayable" (Hinderliter et al., 2009, p.8). This means that the choices made in any stage of the creative production constitute particular *political* praxes and positions of inclusion and exclusion. In this sense all the works of art can be defined as political. As the political philosopher Chantal Mouffe (2008) argues all art practices have a political dimension since they either "play role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order or in its challenging" (p.11).

According to Rancière (1999) societal processes establish a "police order", that is "an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and of the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as

discourse and another as noise" (p.29). Police order distributes the sensible, that which is allowed to be perceived by the senses, setting up inclusions and exclusions. The *political* is activated as soon as the excluded parties oppose the anti-political police order to achieve a redistribution of the sensible and bring equality.

Therefore, as the visual was almost underexposed and the symbolic language nearly ostracized, I considered that my position at this particular historical moment as a conceptual visual artist was to trust and support symbolic practices using participatory performances for expressing visually the *political*. Thus, the *political* in this research refers to specific choices I made for the creation of my *performed visualities*. It expresses my position towards the social political regime but also to the aesthetics, or as Mouffe (2008) would state the "given symbolic order", at the time.

Moreover, in this research the *political* presupposes mobility and action. As I shall explain analytically in the *Research Methods* chapter, for the participatory performances I invited *participants* who were not of high public profile in the sense that they did not form any kind of celebrity in the Greek society. I made this *political* decision in order to mobilise counter discourses rather than recite the hegemonic ones. Furthermore, I chose these performances to take place in rather marginal sites of the public space in order to orchestrate non-consensual conditions outside the framework of the institutionalised art of the time.

For Rancière, "The political lies in the endless renegotiation of the terms in which politics is staged and its subjects are determined" (Hinderliter et al., 2009, p.7). Consequently, I considered that it was *political* to create a different perspective for the *phantasmagoria of crisis* in which *participants' collaboration* and visual experimentation

co-exist to form an 'assembly' out of which the *political* 'image' emerges. Between the literal representation of 'reality' and the lack of visual experimentation I chose the symbolic representation for creating finally a 'mise en scène' for *phantasma* and *agora* at the specific historical moment of time. At that moment, in which quantitative approaches overwhelmed the society with numbers and austerity measurements, I risked to claim the imagination through the *poetic* and symbolic visual language for exposing the invisible and unheard, activating the *political*.

3. Art Practice Research Context

This chapter positions my practices in the contemporary field of visual arts by providing information about other practitioners' work and the ways that it may relate to my research projects. Specifically, I discuss paradigms of conceptualisations related to *phantasmagoria* and different art strategies of combining aesthetics with politics in participatory performances.

As I have indicated in the *Theoretical Research Context*, historically, the word *phantasmagoria* has been used by philosophers to signify the commodification of culture and the concealment of the social processes that produce it. By examining different examples of creative works and curatorial activities related to *phantasmagoria*, I found out that the use of the word in contemporary art discourses moves mainly in two directions. It either signifies the commodification of culture or it directly refers to the ghost imagery and its roots back to the original *phantasmagoria* show and the gothic culture.

An example of the first direction is a group exhibition of illustrators and custom designers entitled *Phantasmagoria* organized by the Forman's Smokehouse Gallery in London (2012). This exhibition tackles the term as a combination of different artworks expressed through a variety of media and intended to draw attention to the consumerist aspect of culture. The main concern here is the assimilation of sub-cultures' art by fashion and media to the point where it loses its social meaning (See Appendix 6). In other words, *phantasmagoria* is perceived as an illusion and distracting practice.

Similarly, started from Chicago in 2016 and curated by Will Brown, the iterative exhibition *Phantasmagoria* comments on the illusionary effects of the social media. Based on Benjamin's critical use of

phantasmagoria as metaphor for the commodification of culture, Brown (2016) states,

In our current moment, social media, and in particular image based services like Instagram, Snapchat, and Vine, play a role akin to the 18th century phantasmagoric images of the magic lantern. With the fleeting, and often hyper-constructed, posed, edited and even simulated scenes, actions or appearances, applications such as Instagram offer a shadowy glimpse into the worlds in which users wish to live and the selves they desire to be. These devices offer a steady stream of micro-fictions, part fantasy and part reality, as a series of self-projected illusions (para.4).

On the other hand, in the contemporary art discourse of *phantasmagoria* several art events concentrate on the metaphysical connotations of the word and its relation to the *phantasma*, horror and fantasy. For instance, curated by José Roca in 2007 the traveling exhibition *Phantasmagoria: Specters of Absence* (See Appendix 6) presents “a comparable trend” that “can be seen in works by some contemporary artists, who create ghostly images to reflect on notions of absence and loss, often using ephemeral immaterial mediums such as shadows, fog, mist, and breath” (Richards, 2007, p.7).

Furthermore, the *Phantasmagoria* free site responsive festival, which is located in the Bogong Village, Australia, and is curated by Madelynne Cornish and Philip Samartzis, “uses contemporary art practices to create illusion and spectacle in order to trace the vanishing individuals and communities that have marked the alpine region” (Cornish and Samartzis, 2017, para.2). Through a variety of video and sound installations, interactive artworks and performances the whole village is reconfigured as a “world of shadows, murmurs and dreams” (Cornish and Samartzis, 2017, para.2).

Consequently, in the last two examples the word *phantasmagoria* is used to describe conditions of loss, death and disappearance, taking as a reference themes and imagery of the original show. In this research, though, I propose a third use of the word *phantasmagoria*, which is based on its semantics as a composition of the words *phantasma* and *agora*. As I have already explained *phantasma* signifies the 'image' and as such it is directly related to the politics involved with the commodification of culture. Connecting with *agora* though expresses the dynamic of *collaboration* and *participation* in creating *visualities* and addressing invisible positions.

Apart from the use of *phantasmagoria* by several curators as a title for an art event, artists have also used it for naming their individual projects. Of particular interest is Tony Oursler's *Phantasmagoria* presented in 2013 at the *Musee des Arts Contemporains* in Belgium. The exhibition paid homage to the inventor of the 18th century *phantasmagoria*, Étienne-Gaspard Robertson. Perceiving that the original show signified a shift from the religious beliefs and superstitions of the past to the new era of scientific achievement and rational thought, Oursler (2013) attempts to "envision a contemporary phantasmagoria and to identify similar transitional moment in modern culture" (para.2). Using an array of large video projections, mirror and sound installations, combinations of sketches, still and moving images, the artist comments among others on the uses of contemporary technologies for military purposes, for identity theft and for boosting the surveillance state. For example, he presents a series of "police sketches of potential criminal, punctured by moving video images, making the connection between facial recognition systems and the omnipresent surveillance state" (Oursler, 2013, para.2). This conceptualisation leads to a political *phantasmagoria* in which social context is incorporated to the visual subject. If we return to my perception of *phantasmagoria*, as two entities, *phantasma* and

agora, we can say that Oursler's captive imagery raises awareness of the ways that new technologies are used to manipulate the *agora*. However, it is important to highlight the ways that Oursler's imagery differentiates in the making from the imagery of my research projects. Oursler stages a spectacle, in the first sight of which, viewers cannot resist wondering about the ways and mechanisms by which it was produced. Contrary to Robertson, Oursler conceals his devices mystifying his imagery and enchanting the viewer. Consequently, the decryption of the 'image' in Oursler's phantasmagoria is firstly focused on the magic apparatus while the social context of the project becomes a second thought. Following the artist Andreas Müller-Pohle's (1988; 1993) analysis of the staging strategies, though, Oursler may be considered as an inventor who stages his apparatus, in this case the video projector; he utilizes it "contrary to its pre-programmed function (its direction for use) or in association with other apparatus such as computers or lasers" (1988, para.7) "to explore its deviating dysfunctional possibilities" (1993, para.6). Thus, the technique seems to be an important element in Oursler's work as his spectacle concentrates more on the fascinating use of multiple optical devices.

In the case of my research projects I used different strategies of staging. Viewers in the installation space have visual access to all the equipment used for the projection of the imagery and the interactivity. For instance, in the exhibition space of *Arbitrariness* viewers were aware of all the apparatuses used for the projection of the 'image', the sound and the interactivity of the installation; despite the dim light of the space they could also have visual contact to other viewers' interaction (See, *Research Stages* chapter). Thus, in the first sight they deal with the concept of the imagery rather than the techniques through which it was produced. In other words, viewers are encouraged to reflect on what the image is 'saying' and not on

how it has been made. However, the rhetoric of the image is appealing both to the mind and the senses. Beauty is an integral part of the imagery in all of my research projects. Large projections of video and still images with vivid colours, emblematic B/W photographs, close up depictions, digital compositions and sounds create a *poetic* 'spectacle' aiming to stimulate viewers' senses and emotions. Yet, I do not use beauty to my imagery in order to create false ideas deceiving the audience and beautifying things that are morally wrong, as Arthur Danto (2006) perhaps would argue. I rather draw from Rancière's theory of aesthetics according to which, "aesthetics participates in the historical configuration of social and perceptual experience. At the same time, aesthetics does not simply replicate or structure political systems of power, but reconfigures them in ways that suggest a different division of social roles and forms of subjectivization" (Hinderliter et al., p.5). In this sense, I use beauty as a provocative tool for attracting viewers to look into visual objects and contemplate on matters that otherwise they would have never paid attention to (See, *Symposium*); and even more, for inviting viewers not only to pay attention to these objects and matters but to reconfigure them, to see them in a different perspective.

Part of the beauty of my imagery relies also on the fact that practically, the creative projects are meticulously staged. Acting from the position of the "photographer as inventor" (Müller-Pohle, 1993, para.1), in my research projects, I combined several of the staging strategies described by Müller-Pohle: I staged myself in front of the camera (See, *Semiotics of the Phantasma* and *Symposium*); I staged the apparatus by digitally intervene to still images and video sequences in all of the projects; I staged the object through several fabrications and participatory performances also in all of the projects; I staged the picture itself by transforming it into a multimedia form (See, *Arbitrariness* and *Semiotics of the Phantasma*). Similar staging

strategies and practices of beauty are also found in staged photography by conceptual artists such as Jeff Wall and Cindy Sherman. This is not accidental as my practices draw from paradigms of conceptual photography. While in conceptual art, in general, idea matters more than the work itself and therefore, the status of the visual object is reduced, in conceptual photography the idea is embedded to the *visuality* that is produced unavoidably by its apparatus (Wall, 2012). Being a visual artist that employs mainly optical means, I draw from the tradition of conceptualism and fabricated imagery where the product, its aesthetics and symbolism are important elements for communicating ideas to the viewer.

For example, Wall's fabricated images re-create everyday moments from what the artist has witnessed but did not photograph at the time. As he says "To not photograph... gives a certain freedom to then re-create or reshape what I saw [...] Not photographing gives me imaginative freedom that is crucial to the making of art. That, in fact, is what art is about - the freedom to do what we want" (O'Hagan, 2015, para.5-8). So, Wall's staging strategy involves the creation of images from memory. I do not re-create anything from memory. I rather seek to generate memories from the present time using either photography or video. In practice, though, similarly to Wall, I usually "do not photograph" or video record in order to depict 'reality'. I fabricate sceneries, which I then photograph, or, as in the case of the present research, I stage live (participatory) performances which I use as visual material for a video or digital installation. In the rare cases that I take pictures from the everyday indoors or outdoors social life, I keep them in my archives as references; later on I may incorporate them as fragments in new fabricated settings creating links between the present and the past. In any case, the created imagery is not pure representation of 'reality' but a result of conceptualising and editing processes, in which theory and practice

co-exist informing each other. Therefore, for the visualisation of any idea, I always look first in theory, the semiotics of a word, the politics involved and the impact that has in social life, before taking any decision for the image making. Moreover, my visual language is symbolic creating spaces for re-imagining and reconfiguring 'reality'; it moves against the obvious asking to be decrypted and certainly denying the claim for a 'clear gaze'.

For this reason, my creative works when presented in a physical space are always accompanied by an artist statement; it is my tactic of communicating with audience(s) through written and visual language. I do not use the artist statement as a linguistic tool to support the visual. I rather consider it as an autonomous written document that can dynamically hold another dimension of the creative work. It is an important practice that adds layers of interpretation to my symbolic projects. In this sense, my conception of the artist statement differentiates from the one offered by the conceptual artist Louise Bourgeois (Nakian et al., 1954):

An artist's words are always to be taken cautiously. The finished work is often a stranger to, and sometimes very much at odds with what the artist felt, or wished to express when he began. At best the artist does what he can rather than what he wants to do. After the battle is over and the damage faced up to, the result may be surprisingly dull—but sometimes it is surprisingly interesting. The mountain brought forth a mouse, but the bee will create a miracle of beauty and order. Asked to enlighten us on their creative process, both would be embarrassed, and probably uninterested. The artist who discusses the so-called meaning of his work is usually describing a literary side-issue. The core of his original impulse is to be found, if at all, in the work itself (p.18).

Bourgeois' argument does not allow different meanings and interpretations but only one, the supposedly "original impulse" that needs to be found in the work itself. In this sense, the idea of the

work speaking for itself and the claim of a 'clear gaze' are the opposite sides of the same coin. That being said, I consider the artist statement as a significant practice by which I take the full responsibility of the event, reminding at the same time that what I present is just another possibility among many. As a visual artist, my main tools of expertise rely on the image instead of writing. Thus, the act of writing is a statement by itself. It involves certain risk and exposure. I place myself and my work in a vulnerable position; viewers may complain that what they see in the images are not in line with what they read in my statement and vice versa; or that I am speaking of the obvious; or that I do not leave space for the 'magic' and so on. Yet, for me neither the image is omnipotent nor the language; they both always involve risks which I feel are worthy to take.

At this point, it is important to mention that in my statements I usually present concepts and personal thoughts as well as the social and historical context that inform the particular work. Occasionally, I refer to the practice and processes used for the production in an attempt to demystify the visual outcome. In overall, I would say that the statement forms a personal 'manifesto' in which my point of view is presented in writing to public discussion and scrutiny.

So far, I have been preoccupied with the first component of *phantasmagoria*, that is the *phantasma*, the 'image', and I explained how the ways that I constitute my imagery in the present research projects have been influenced by the practices of other visual practitioners. I will now present how my conception of *agora* as a *collaborative/participative* entity has been informed by other artists' uses of participatory practices.

As I have already claimed in the *Social/Political Research Context* the Athens Biennial 4, *Agora* (2013), was mainly based on participatory and collective projects in which language/theory prevailed over the visual experimentation. Investigating the ways that the concept of *agora* has been approached in the wider field of artistic creativity, I found out that the case of the particular exhibition was not a remote phenomenon. This tendency of ostracizing *visuality* from the art practices in an act of resistance and rebellion during periods of crisis is not new. We can trace its roots back in art movements that criticized the integration of avant-garde to the market system of capitalism. A good example is the case of the Situationist International Movement (SI), the manifesto and principles of which were celebrated by the revolution of May 1968 in France as well as by other emancipatory movements of resistance that took place throughout Europe and the United States. Criticizing the commodity fetish and, as Guy Debord (1967) stated, "the society of the spectacle", and "recognizing the failure and 'ideological confusion' of the avant-garde art, the Situationists drew a radical conclusion: to renounce the making of art entirely" (Puchner, 2004, p.6). For this purpose, they used a variety of practices taken mostly from theatre to create situations that would oppose the alienation and commodification of everyday life. Yet, in their terms, "the situation is conceived as the opposite of the art work" (*Internationale Situationiste* cited in Puchner, 2004, p.7).¹⁰

In practice, these situations were constructed to be lived by few people who were members of the SI movement and they were not open to broader audience(s). They were structured in hierarchical

¹⁰ Bishop sees in SI's ideas and practices a "nihilist romanticism: art is to be renounced, but for the sake of making everyday life as rich and thrilling as art, in order to overcome the crushing mediocrity of alienation" (Bishop, 2012, p.83).

scheme with a leader who organized the event and distributed roles to the other participants (Bishop, 2012, pp.86-7).

In the last couple of decades, basic principles of SI have been revived in the activities of many groups of artists and curators who work in the margins and against the art institutions, and in parallel to anti-globalization, anti-poverty and anti-war movements. Forming a neo-situationist movement themselves, they support the idea that art is realized by the time it abolishes itself (McKee, 2006). Disregarding any form of representation, they seek to place their activities mainly in the streets in an attempt to disrupt the everyday life. The curator Nato Thompson epitomized the work of many neo-situationist groups and collectives in *The Interventionists* exhibition that he organized at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in 2004. As he writes, "Instead of representing politics (whether through language or visual imagery) [interventionists]...enter physically; that is, they place their work into the heart of the political situation itself" (Thompson cited in McKee, 2006, para.7).

Similarly to the situationists, I aimed to orchestrate conditions that are politically meaningful. However, in my case the *situation* does not oppose the artwork. In contrary, it is staged to lead to a visual outcome, usually a *performed video* or a participatory installation. Thus, in my practices, the *political* is not to be found in the struggle of theory against art and vice versa, but on the critical and creative combination of the two. This idea leads to a synthesis of conditions in which *collaboration/participation* becomes a significant element for staging the production of the visual subject.

An example of such a synthesis is also found in the work of the collaborative duo Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla. Particularly, in the *Land Mark (Footprints) #12* (2001-04) series project the artists

collaborated with local activists in the island of Vieques in Puerto Rico who were struggling against its exploitation by the US army and NATO for military bombing exercises. The artists invited the activists to draw protest slogan and graphics, which then they engraved into the soles of the activists' shoes. In this way, their walking protest was marked on the sand; the artists photographed the ephemeral traces of the protestors' action generating the imagery of an everlasting praxis of resistance (Fig.3).



Fig. 3. Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla (2001)
Footprints from Landmark series. [Photography]

Combining *visuality* with *participation* and action, Allora and Calzadilla's photographic project "complicates the supposed shift from 'artistic "representation" to activist "presentation"' (McKee, 2006, para.9). According to my conception of *phantasmagoria* as *phantasma* and *agora*, the activists' performance forms the *agora* which is then gets embodied to the 'image'/*phantasma* of the shoe traces left on the sand. While the activists' performance itself enacted the *political* as it unsettled the space of the island questioning in the most imaginative way its military occupation, the re-presentation of the performance through the image of the fleeting footprints is symbolic

creating the possibility of re-enacting the *political* in new spatial and temporal contexts.

Similarly, as I will explain thoroughly in the next chapters, in my projects, *performance*, *participation/collaboration* and fabricated imagery are central practices of *visuality* that informs about an assembly that is shaped partly by fragments of collective actions. In contrary to the situationist practice, my reflexive interventions occur after the orchestrated event, digitally, in order to create unexpected narratives that are related to the political context of the site in a symbolic way. Furthermore, the imagery alone reveals only fragments of the 'original' story that re-presents. As in the case of Allora and Calzadilla's image of footprints, there is a hidden story behind my imagery. This vagueness does not necessarily reduce the *political* impact of the artwork. It rather indicates particular strategies and politics of aesthetics. Ambivalence is usually constituent element of a conceptual visual work. For example, referring to her self-portraits of female personas, Cindy Sherman states, "I want there to be hints of narrative everywhere in the image so that people can make up their own stories about them [...] But I don't want to have my own narrative and force it on to them. And it shouldn't seem so real that it looks like it was shot in a studio today. I want it to transcend time somehow" (Sherman cited in Adams, 2016, para.16).

In other words the ambivalence created by fragmented narratives in my research projects, as well as in Sherman's and Allora and Calzadilla's imagery, allows viewers to take up different subject positions towards a multidimensional work and, consequently, proposes a viewing that is less manipulative by the artist. Furthermore, while fragmented narratives are born within (or refer to) particular spatial and temporal sites/fields, at the same time they escape these sites exactly because they are fragmented; this fleeting

entails the promise of the *political*, particularly because it defies the borders of the site and creates space for “the claims of others on the margins of that field who do not necessarily identify with “us”” (McKee, 2006, para.14).

In overall, denying the claim to a ‘clear’ gaze, visualised fragmented narratives reduce the authority of the supposedly ‘knowledgeable’ *artist* over the ‘ignorant’, ‘passive’ audience and, in the case of participatory projects, re-work the involved politics of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, in the case of Allora and Calzadilla’s *Land Mark (Footprints) #12* image, they convey ambivalence regarding something that is being saved as memory and at the same time is escaping from it to become a new possibility. But also the *collective/participatory* action itself is ambivalent, as we see the marks but not the actual protestors/performers in the scenery of the photographic image (See, Fig.3). As far as we understand from the image alone, these marks could equally have been made by the artists themselves without the participation of the activists. In other words, the ambivalence disrupts the tensions between collectivity and individuality without disturbing the *political* impact of the ‘image’ and the action itself. I also introduce this kind of ambivalence in my research projects by re-presenting participatory actions in videos that are digitally intervened. It is important to note here that, in the same way as *Land Mark (Footprints) #12*, my projects are accompanied by particular texts (artist’s statements, personal notes, curators’ statements, etc.) in which *participants/collaborators’* credits are acknowledged with respect to their wish, so that the artwork to be presented in an ethically aware manner.

In general, *Land Mark (Footprints) #12* creates an exquisite example of combining *participation* with *visuality*. The participatory performance in the island of Vieques constituted already a visual

political statement: the ephemeral images and texts were engraved on the sand as the protestors were marching around. The re-presentation of the specific action through photography enhanced further the *political* impact of the original statement. From this point of view, it establishes a paradigm that questions the politics of representation tending to dominate the *agora* in times of crisis, which, as I have already explained, discards visual ambiguity, experimentation and aesthetics as non *political*.

The above example of public intervention with its political connotations differentiates from the neo-situationists' prioritisation of immediate action and physical presence over re-presentation (McKee, 2006) and comes closer to the tradition of the "new genre public art" as it has been defined and generated by the artist Suzanne Lacy (Kwon, 2002, p.82). Combining activism with performance and visual media, Lacy uses the power of aesthetics to raise social awareness and responsibility. For example, *The Crystal Quilt* (1985-87), a community-based research project that the artist was working on for more than two years, was focused on the lives and experiences of women of age and the ways that the media represents them. Lacy uses a variety of strategies to approach her subject including multiple events, lectures, workshops and film screenings. The project ended it up with *The Crystal Quilt* performance installation (1987) in which 430 women from Minnesota participated in the action along with invited artists. The action took place on Mother's Day in a shopping mall with a glass roof and was attended by 3000 people. The participants were sitting around dinner tables that had been placed on a huge rug designed in the pattern of a quilt. During the performance, pre-recorded women's personal narratives were presented in combination with relevant social analysis on aging through an audio system. Special sounds signalled every 10 minutes in order for the

participants to change the position of their hands on the table, altering thus the structure of the quilt.

I am particularly interested in the performativity of the above event. "Being an emblem of the traditional sharing of North American female experience" (Beaven, 2012, para.3), the quilt symbolizes the active and yet invisible and undervalued women's lives behind the walls of the household. *The Crystal Quilt* performance repeats women's act of making the quilt through their body, yet this time their experiences are heard and visible. This exact potential of performance to address invisibilities constitutes the central reason for which I employ it for the creation of the performed videos of this research.

In 2012, the visual outcome of *The Crystal Quilt* performance was presented in the Tanks at Tate Modern in the form of a video projection, photographs, sounds and a quilt. In the installation, the artist focuses on the shape of the performance tables which she materialises into a quilt giving in this way the possibility to the viewer to think other perspectives of her research project (Fig.4).

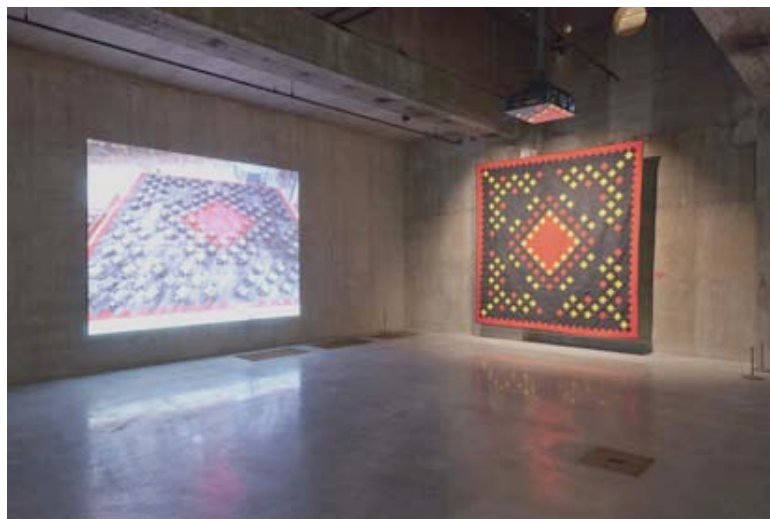


Fig. 4. Suzanne Lacy (1985-87) *The Crystal Quilt*.
[Performance Installation]

The performance being realized years ago, is now re-presented as a ghostly figure taking the form of a video.¹¹ Yet, it seems that this immaterial memory is stored and codified in the abstract but not random shapes of the quilt next to the video projection; these shapes are to be decoded by new viewers in new historical contexts.

Produced in different but turbulent historical contexts, *Land Mark (Footprints) #12* (2001) and *The Crystal Quilt* (1987) constitute cases of socially engaged art which combine *participation* and *visuality* in a way that enhances the *political* impact of the projects. As I have described previously such kind of experimentation was difficult to find a place in the Athenian art scene in the years of the economic crisis.

Remarkably though, this experimentation of connecting politics with aesthetics was manifested in the imagination of the people protesting in the streets; their actions globally produced *visualities* of resistance. Against the 'phantasmagoria' of neoliberalism, the masses of people in the streets, social demonstrations, the collective responses of people in movements such as *Occupy*, *Indignandos/Indignant*, *I don't pay* (Kourdis, 2012) prove that the tensions between *agora* as an 'assembly' and *polis* and between *agora* as market are always under negotiation. Through *participation*, and especially through a collective embodied presence in the streets, people articulated a *phantasmagoria* of resistance in which *agora* emerged as a creative process and 'image' as what it really is: the promising effect of imagination. Out of these processes, we witnessed bodies dressed as

¹¹ This idea draws from Jacques Derrida's view that "... contrary to what we might believe, the experience of ghosts is not tied to a bygone historical period, like the landscape of Scottish manors, etc., but on the contrary, is accentuated, accelerated by modern technologies like film, television, the telephone. These technologies inhabit, as it were, a phantom structure. Cinema is the art of phantoms; it is neither image nor perception. It is unlike photography or perception. And a voice on the telephone also possesses a phantom aspect: something neither real nor unreal which recurs, is reproduced for you and in the final analysis, is reproduction. When the very *first* perception of an image is linked to a structure of reproduction, then we are dealing with the realm of phantoms" (Payne and Lewis, 1988, p.61).

books moving around as 'mobile installations'¹², self-portraits of people wearing pieces of bread, plastic bottles or pots as helmets to protect their heads¹³, and performances with people standing silently and reading books in central squares¹⁴. And when such processes in the streets were proclaimed officially illegal, we saw the first virtual demonstration projected in the street as a hologram¹⁵; as a consequence, in this last case it is a spectre of the *agora* that is coming to the foreground and haunting Europe.

Taking into consideration the above contextualization, in this research, I examine possible interrelations of 'image'/*phantasma* and 'assembly'/*agora* by using different modes of *participation* and performativity in order to reconfigure *phantasmagoria* as a subversive practice of exposing dynamic narratives.

In this way, a different perspective arises based on the reinforcement of participatory acts towards the perception and construction of the visual subject. Through these acts I intend to disturb the narrative of the 'image', an image which is deceiving and immobilizing the *agora*. Instead, I am looking for possible interrelations that may arise from their common ability to move forward; the 'image' as a materialisation of imagination moves forward against the limits of 'reality' and *agora* as collective and embodied activation of the public

¹² The *Book-Bloc* movement: Rome, November, 2010 and London, December, 2010 (Flood and Grindon, 2014).

¹³ "Demonstrators in Cairo calling for Hosni Mubarak's removal are resorting to bottles, boxes, bits of foam and anything else they can find to protect themselves from rocks and other objects thrown by regime supporters" (the Guardian, 2011, para.1).

¹⁴ The Standing Man performance by the Turkish artist Erdem Gunduz in Taksim Square led to the development of the *Taksim Square Book Club* movement (Henton, 2013).

¹⁵ "In response to the controversial Citizen Safety Law, which will take effect on July 1, Spanish activists have staged the world's first ever virtual political demonstration. Organised by the group Holograms for Freedom, ghost-like figures holding placards took aim at the imminent draconian measures, arguing that holographic people are now afforded greater freedoms than their real-life counterparts" (Boren, 2015, para.1,5).

space, moves forward to challenge the status quo. Such a conceptualization may prove very useful in articulating creative *political* responses to the urgencies of the society in depression.

4. Research Methods

My research was developed in four stages that led to the production of four different creative projects, *Arbitrariness*, *Symposium*, *Semiotics of the Phantasma* and *Semiotics of the Protest* as well as of three parallel but not irrelevant projects, *Biography of the Bread*, *The Bankorgs* and *Shining on Traces of Escape* that I included in the Appendices section of this thesis document (See Appendix 4 and 5 respectively). For the realization of these projects, I employed various methods that explore interrelations of 'image' with *agora*. These methods include observation and collection of data and combinations of visualisation practices with participation and performance.

The transition from one to the next stage and the choices made for using the particular methods were based on critical reflexivity. Critical reflexivity permitted me "to "see through" existing data, texts and contexts so as to be open to alternative conceptions and imaginative options [...] to review conceptual strategies used and consider other approaches" (Sullivan, 2005, p. 101) and trace how my creative insight was informed by the work of other art practitioners and theorists.

Furthermore, self-reflexive practices allowed me to evaluate the ways that my personal story as an artist producing work in times of social crisis intervened in the articulation of the research questions, concepts and methods. They allowed me to be challenged by the new evidence I was gathering even if this information contradicted my own empirical understanding of the research field (See, *Arbitrariness*).

- Observing and collecting data

As I have already stated, this investigation is spatially and temporarily situated. It is informed by the experience I had as an artist and citizen of Athens from the consequences of the European social and economic crisis in Greece. In order to explore further the complicated relationship of *visuality* with *participation* in the particular social/political context, I used strategies of observing and collecting data.

Carole Gray and Julian Malins (2004) define the method of observation as “to watch something/someone/an environment/situation closely and accurately record in some way the activities/situation in order to capture data relevant to research project issues” (p.106). In the framework of my research, I particularly concentrated on the cultural productions by art practitioners as well as by academics, attending various lectures, exhibitions and participatory events. Also, I employed the photographic medium to record the decomposition of the Athenian urban space, keeping a visual diary, part of which I used as parallel video projection for one of my performances in Athens (See *Shining on Traces of Escape* Appendix 5). This visual diary consists of images of abandoned shops, malls and residences as well as of political public speeches and demonstrations (Fig.5-6). Thus, it captures a specific transition that took place in the public space during the economic crisis: the *agora* as a site of exchanging and consuming commodities was collapsing while at the same time it was emerging as a site of *political* conflicts with acts of resistance.



Fig. 5. Maria Paschalidou (25/09/2013) *We close down*.
Stoa Pasmazoglou, Athens [Photography]



Fig. 6. Maria Paschalidou (22/01/2015)
Political Speech at Omonoia Square, Athens [Photography]

Reflecting on this rapid change of the *agora*, I decided to trace the meanings of the words *agora* and *phantasma* in public discourses as well as in people's personal narratives. In this way, I would enrich my conception of *phantasmagoria* so that the visual research to be in tune with what was happening at the time.

In order to trace new definitions of the words *phantasma* and *agora*, I put together a questionnaire and circulated it to volunteers who live and work in Athens. These individuals come from the academic disciplines of humanities (philosophy, art, history, anthropology,

sociology, linguistics, literature, etc.). The research volunteers, men and women of different ages (between 30-50 years), are actively involved in education and are either tutors in elementary and high school education, or academic professors. The specific group was chosen because Education and Culture, the vitals of cultural development of a country, are violently attacked in times of austerity. For this reason, the investigation focused on individuals from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds and on the ways they perceive the words *phantasma* and *agora*.

The questionnaire was in Greek and English. The volunteers were required to describe the words *phantasma* and *agora* by using short narratives and single words in the form of an adjective and/or a verb. In addition, they were asked to represent them with a punctuation mark of their choice (i.e. quotation marks, hyphens, exclamation points, etc.). I asked of them to do this as I was interested in the visual effect of the punctuation marks that very often do not just specify meaning, but open up space for symbolic interpretations and new negotiations of meaning (Brody, 2008).

Interestingly enough, issues of (in-)visibility have appeared in some of the responses of the research volunteers (See Appendix 3):

- *Phantasma* is... *The one that is out of categorization; the intermediate (in-between); the unfamiliar, the non-existed, the other; a part of the projection for the imaginary on what we perceive as familiar and normal*
- Adjective for the word *phantasma*: *Indistinct*
- Verb for the word *phantasma*: *Appear; See; Project*
- *Agora* is... *A place that people speak; an open space of appearance; an open public space of collective action, expression and communication*

- Adjective for the word *agora*: *Multidimensional; Colourful; Communicative; Haunted*
- Verb for the word *agora*: *Speak and listen; Close down; Regulate (adjust) / to be regulated (adjusted)*

In general, the responses reveal the distressing reality the inhabitants in Athens are experiencing while weighed down under the regime of the current humanitarian crisis. They reflect on issues of communication pertaining to public space, thus defining *agora* as a tremendous topos haunted by invisible authorities. In this case, *agora* has lost its openness, the sine qua non of its original definition, and emphasizes emptiness and closeness caused by the austerity regularities.

As the above collected data formed the participants' personal narratives, I also explored the uses of the words *phantasma* and *agora* in the online Greek press. The press articulates significant aspects of public speech as it disseminates news, anguish and fear, while it also constructs temporal 'realities' to become finally a *phantasmagoria* of its own. My intention was to present personal and public narratives regarding these words, and investigate ways of their visual association.

From March to September 2013, I collected data from the following press sources:

- a. The electronic versions of three daily printed newspapers
- b. The electronic versions of two weekly printed news editions
- c. One online newspaper
- d. Two news portals

The selected news media represent more or less the left-wing and right-wing political spectrum in Greece, and the information mainly derives from daily headlines (See Appendix 3).

The collected press data were categorized in groups of adjectives, nouns, verbs, symbols and punctuation styles, as in the case of the questionnaire. Comparing the participants' personal narratives with public narratives expressed by the Greek online press, I noticed that:

- **Phantasma** often appears in participants' narratives as a fragile and weak entity, while in the press as a powerful one that controls through its invisibility:
 - *The ghost of Iraq still haunts the U.S.* (Kathimerini, 21/03/2013)
 - *The ghost of the unsolved Cyprus issue* (To Vima online, 24/03/2013)
 - *The ghost of German hegemony in Europe* (Kathimerini, 31/03/2013)
 - *Deflation-ghost* (Eleftherotypia, 21/04/2013)
 - *New York Times: "Money-ghost from CIA to Afghanistan"* (Athens Voice, 29/04/2013)
 - *The ghost of the South* (Kathimerini, 04/05/2013)
 - *Neo-Nazi ghosts in "the trial of the century"* (To Vima online, 04/05/2013)
 - *The "ghost-company" and the loads of gold* (Kathimerini, 26/05/2013)
 - *The "ghost of Weimar" and the "egg of the snake" in Greece* (Avgi, 26/09/2013)

- **Agora** appears to bear a variety of meanings, interpretations and emotions in the participants' narratives, while in the press it is defined exclusively as a term of economy:

- *Free market*
- *Black market*
- *Online market*
- *Informal market*
- *Developed market*
- *Predominant market*
- *The market freezes*
- *The markets dry up*

Additionally, in the press, 'markets' have the power of the *phantasma*, as they are entities that can only be heard but not seen. Hence, besides the 'visible' public space and experience that the word *agora* claims, there is another semiotic implication, a shift to an 'invisible' position. Such unseen entities, the so-called 'markets', appear as most capable of acting right at the core of society without presupposing visibility. On the other hand, *phantasma* appears stronger through its depersonalization, as it is now connected with institutions, companies, political issues and even whole countries (The "ghost of Iraq", The "ghost-company", The "ghost of German hegemony in Europe". See Appendix 3). Consequently, in such discourses *phantasma* and *agora* appear to switch their meaning.

Yet, while I was collecting the above data, aspects of the *agora* were gradually unravelling in the streets of Athens: Violent demonstrations and police attacks, the smell of tear gas all over the city, acts on the occupied Syntagma square, public suicides, the images of bankrupt shops, the academic lectures on political issues for free, occupied buildings, bread lines, the homeless, multiple minor collectives coming into existence, and of course activists. Indeed, most of the articles in global Press at the time seemed to agree on the fact that there had been a humanitarian crisis in Greece since 2010 (Politaki, 2013; The New York Times, 2015). Politaki (2013) emphasizes this

awkward situation: “European societies typically assume that humanitarian crises only take place in the aftermath of natural disasters, epidemics, wars or civil conflicts” (Politaki, 2013, para.1). However, in the case of the Greek crisis there is no natural disaster or war. A ghostly figure has risen as an unseen ‘enemy’, namely the *agora* as ‘markets’.

- Combinations of visualisation practices with participation and performance

Reflecting on the above shifts in the meaning of the words *phantasma* and *agora*, the lack of visual experimentation in exposing *political* statements and the temporal institutionalisation of participatory art practices in times of crisis, I decided to use the concept of *phantasmagoria* as a critique for both the ‘image’/*visuality* and *participation/agora*.

As I have already described in the *Research Context* chapter, during the economic crisis, the Greek art scene was dominated by participatory/collaborative projects while *visuality* was disregarded as non-trustworthy to address the *political*. Researching further, I realized that in the modern history visual representation was connected with the culture of consumption while participatory art practices were connected to the notion of democracy, resistance and social change.

Thus, in my *performed visualities*, I attempt to connect the *phantasma*/ ‘image’ with *participation* as a major tool for visualising and exposing the *agora*. In order for the *agora* to be mobilised it needs a space/site, *participation* and *action* through speech. Therefore, in my research projects I used speech in the form of oral

or written text, participatory activities and site specific performance to shape visually narratives of the *agora* in the particular context of crisis. In this way, I intended to produce simultaneously representations and enactments of the *agora*. As a consequence, 'image'/visuality becomes integral part of the *agora* and vice versa, the *agora* enhances the understanding and even exposing the limits of the 'image' (See, *Arbitrariness* and *Symposium*).

Taking into consideration the aforementioned observations, I developed further strategies of visualising intersections of 'image' with *agora*. Despite their different methodological approaches, all the research stages involved *participation* and *performativity* in combination with fabricated imagery.

Participation, language and performativity are prerequisites for the enactment of the *agora* as a space of collective, embodied experience of the *political*. Thus, I used these practices to create spatial and temporal conditions that would facilitate the performance of *agora* within the framework of the art event. For this reason, multiple methods of visualisation such as photography, digital imaging, video, projections and installation were combined with *participation*, *interactivity* and *performance*.

My exploration led to the production of the aforementioned series of creative projects that are grounded on symbolic visual statements. These projects rely on *participants/collaborators* who either interact as active spectators in the physical exhibition space or contribute as volunteers in the constitution of the visual subject.

In the next four chapters, I describe in detail the various ways of *participation* used in order to approach the interrelations between 'image' and *agora* from many different points of view. However, at

this point it is essential that I clarify the main distinction between the mode of participation I used in the first stage (*Arbitrariness*) and the modes used in the stages that followed. In *Arbitrariness*, I used participatory interactivity. At the exhibition space the audience had to interact in order for the artwork to be 'completed'. I orchestrated this condition in order to explore how the *agora* informs the meaning of the 'image' in particular context and time. This condition created a shift in the relationship among *artist-artwork-audience* allowing the audience to incorporate their own perspective into the artwork.

At the next research stages participation was employed in the initial phases of the production of the artwork and took the form of collective performances in the public space. It was designed as "an event of participation", with the word 'event' meaning "that the work of art is no longer hermetic, but a component in a process or project" (Vickery, 2011, p.3). At the specific research stages, this 'event' took the form of a performance that led to the production of a series of performed videos.

As I mentioned in the *Theoretical Research Context* chapter, this means that I experimented both with textual (Kester, 2011) and conflictual (Miessen, 2011) modes of participation. Either way, I created participatory conditions, or in other words, as Bishop (2012) would state, I become the "producer of situations" (p.2). This fact, though, raises ethical questions as to what extent artists can 'use' participants for their own vision of the artwork. As Kester (2011) explains, "textual" participation is not invalid as an art practice as far as "the work remains mindful of the violence of community and of representation itself" (p.76). Thus, in *Symposium* and *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, before the performances I explained to the participants the concept and the goals of my research project. Similarly, with regard to *Semiotics of the Protest*, I had informed the

volunteers who responded to the questionnaire about the purpose of my research as well as about the fact that their responses would be incorporated as narratives in a creative project. In all cases, I had described the symbolic language I would use to approach the subject and stated my political position as a visual practitioner. In addition, I respected participants' wishes for keeping their anonymity.

Furthermore, for the realization of the performances, I paid special attention to the politics involved regarding their location. Actually, I chose these performances to take place without prior notification and in spaces that were not regulated by any art institution, so that again the participants would not be interrupted by institutional rules and/or any other authorities such as the press. Moreover, participants formulated a collaborative *agora* in which the creative process, the audio/visual recording, the chance to interact with the artwork and the collective staged action appeared as ritualistic praxes. Thus, the *participants/collaborators* of this research were willing and curious to become part of the creative practice considering it as a playful situation. In addition, at the time, this eagerness was also a result of the spirit of solidarity and the desire for active participation that had been developed in the street protests. There was a general desire for action within and against the daily disappointing and stressful situation. People were seeking for a different point of view in which they could be the protagonists of the play and from which they would be able to reconfigure the gloomy and precarious living conditions.

Taking into consideration the above, I would say that my encounter with the specific *participants/collaborators*, then, in terms of ethics can be described by O'Sullivan's (2010) Deleuzian definition of the notion of *affect*:

Affect names the intensive quality of life [...] For Deleuze-Spinoza, ethics would be the organisation of one's life so as to increase specifically joyful affects, those that increase our capacity to act in the world. This ethics will then involve certain kinds of encounter, for example when we come across an object with which we positively resonate, or when two or more individuals come together that essentially 'agree'... (p.198).

As O' Sullivan (2010) explains, sad affects "decrease our capacity to act in the world" (p.198) as in the case of the mass media which often use 'assemblage' practices to generate fear and terror immobilizing the public. On the contrary, art practices, and especially the collaborative ones, that produce joyful affects, transcend habitual "common sense" to create a "common notion" that goes against the alienation between subject and object (O'Sullivan, 2010, p.199), and in the case of my participatory performances the alienation between myself as an artist and the *participants/collaborators*. This joyful affect was evident not only during the performances and in the imagery of the videos but also in the discussions I had with the participants at the end of the performances as well as when they watched the produced edited videos.

Working from the margins, I chose to collaborate with volunteers/participants who were not of high public profile as individuals. They were mostly members of various activist groups who in the public space present themselves through collective rather than individual identities. As Eder (2009) argues, collective identities "are symbolic forms through which a world of social relations is mirrored" (p.430). Moreover, it is evident that through collective identities people participate, alternate and mobilize the *agora* (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). I believe that, by inviting the specific participants, I also appeal to the collective experience of the 'assembly'/*agora*. Furthermore, I deliberately decided not to invite 'prestigious' participants because their presence might have mobilized dominant,

or, if not dominant, familiar discourse regarding the occupation of the public space; this would have been distracting and would have corroborated the idea of *phantasmagoria* as a practice of commodification of the culture. Instead, I intended to enter into the discourse of *agora* "from below instead of from the perspective of 'great men' " (Flood and Grindon, 2014, p.8), addressing issues of 'visibility' and 'invisibility' and starting a conversation with the 'ghost'.

In order to visualise this conversation and despite the fact that participatory projects were privileged by many art associations of the time, I chose to work mainly outside the framework of an institution. Institutionalized spaces allow specific politics of the body, dictating particular gestures and movements and forbidding others, imposing dress codes, monitoring the senses, controlling the mind through the regulation of the body (Foucault, 1995). In the case of the art institution, visitors enter the space aware that it is a place devoted to the 'masters' of art from the present to the future, a kind of a temple in which they have to behave cautiously and respectfully. An example of such manifestation of the institution as a site policing the body is found in Tania Bruguera's performance *Tatlin's Whisper #5* that took place at Tate Modern in London (2008). In this performance two policemen mounted on horses directed the audience around the space, dividing them into smaller groups and controlling their movement. Using the medium of performance in combination with participation, Bruguera not only comments on the policing of the body in the public space but also visualizes the invisible power of an art institution in the regulation of the spectators' bodies. Moreover, visitors who enter the space, become willy-nilly the participants of the performance (Kelly, 2014). This transformation is not voluntary in the sense that it is happening without the permission of the audience. In the case of my research projects, *participation* occurs in a non-institutional environment and within a framework of *voluntary collaboration*.

Institutions, galleries and exhibition programs play a “central role... not only in delimiting the identities of those involved, but [also] in determining the nature of the collaborative relationship between them” (Kwon, 2002, p. 141-2)¹⁶. For this reason, I chose the participatory performances of my investigation to take place in particular public spaces inhabited by communities, minorities and activist groups.

Thus, in order to start a conversation with the ‘ghost’ and visualize it, I chose to meet the *participants* at ‘their’ place. In these public sites, I staged the performances in specific ways, as for example in the form of an acted picnic or a ritualistic praxis. I considered performance to be the essential means for the realization of active participation. Action and mobility are constituent elements of the *agora* as well as of the image. Images do not merely represent; they are also performative narratives of imagination, and as such they have the potential of imagining ‘assembly’/*agora*. I do not use the word ‘imagining’ here in an attempt to romanticize the power of image, or to overlook its potential to seduce. I rather draw from Snow (2010) who argues, “Imagining is not disembodied fantasizing. Nor is it absent daydreaming. It is rather an active capacity which can be trained and refined and utilized to creative ends” (p.81). Furthermore, *agora* is action, and very often “action through speech” (Damiris and Wild, 1997, p.2). Speech acts are performative in the same way as images are. Through such actions identities are performed and games of ‘visibilities’ and ‘invisibilities’ are played through in the public space (Butler, 1999). In addition, according to Goodman (2000) “performance is, and always was, a means by which discourses of

¹⁶ In the same line with Kwon, Peggy Phelan notes that “Institutions whose only function is to preserve and honor objects—traditional museums, archives, banks, and to some degree, universities—are intimately involved in the reproduction of the sterilizing binaries of self/other, possession/dispossession, men/women which are increasingly inadequate formulas for representation” (Phelan, 2005, p.165).

ideology and politics are communicated and promoted" (p.2). In this sense, I considered it to be the ideal practice for me to look for the politics involved in the relationships of 'image', 'speech' and 'assembly'. The 'speech' developed within particular staged conditions that involved language, participation and performativity. It was produced following the participants' responses to a given text or to a questionnaire, or the participants' performances.

Furthermore, for the production of the creative projects of this research, I used performance to suggest that the public space is performative rather than static. As I have already mentioned, these performances, in which I invited volunteers to participate, led to the production of 'performed videos'. In this process, I was aware that performance in its ontology resists any attempt of reproduction. By the time it is reproduced, it becomes something else (Phelan, 2005). However, it is exactly this something else that I am interested in exploring. Peggy Phelan (2005) argues that when an art critic writes about a performance, s/he is involved inescapably in a process that alters the event in its very essence. Yet, in this case, as Phelan notes, "The challenge raised by the ontological claims of performance for writing is to re-mark again the performative possibilities of writing itself" (p.148). Similarly, in my performed videos, I re-enact, or in Phelan's words, I "replot" (p.165) the performances in order to examine the performative possibilities of the still and moving image.

I use the term 'performed video' as an analogy to Philip Auslander's (2006) reference to "performed photography". Auslander distinguishes the documentation of a performance to two categories; the traditional *documentary* and the *theatrical one*. The traditional *documentary* presupposes a live action where audiences are present and which is used as an evidence of the event. The *theatrical* documentation involves performance as a staged condition which

usually does not have any audience as it was created only to be photographed. This second case of documentation is defined as "performed photography" and includes examples such as the artists Gregory Crewdson, Cindy Sherman and Nikki Lee who work with fictitious scenery and performance. Similarly, in my research projects, I orchestrate the setting of the performance in order to record it, and then re-enact it through particular choices of editing in the form of a video. In this way, in the video, each 'performer' constitutes a *fictional participant* who meets fictional characters in a new fictional time and space "conceptually removed from the real site of the performance" (Counsell, 2000, p.202). However, it is important to note here, that contrary to Sherman whose staged performance in front of the photographic camera does not have any audience, the performances I staged for my videos, although unannounced, did have audience, since they took place in the public space and consequently they were open to the view of passers-by; these random viewers most of the time watched the performances discreetly and from a distance.

Moreover, as the performances were recorded and transferred to a different medium, a time-based medium to be precise, they lost their ephemerality but still offered space for a "durational representation [...] which turns around our notions of the real, literally re-focusing our idea of our bodies and, consequently, ourselves" (Phillips cited in Goodman, 2000, p. 291).

Subsequently for the production of the performed videos, firstly, an assembly of people was organized and performed around a particular event that was video-recorded. Secondly, I re-organized the initial assembly through digital interventions and editing in order to complicate its taken for granted documentation and create an account for the invisible and unheard. In this sense my research projects are

related with 'assemblies' that occur both in the physical and digital space. These orchestrated 'events of participation' as performances are the essential material for the construction of the 'visual identity' of what I called the 'performed' videos of this research. As a matter of fact, this 'visual identity' is determined not only by the performative acts of the participants, but also by the decisions made for the post-production of the initial 'event'. As these decisions are crucial, I always take the responsibility of the editing process. With the exception of *Arbitrariness*, I also create the sounds for the videos.

Combining symbolic *visuality* with *participation*, in the performed videos the initial performance is interrupted by texts from literature, other artist's stories, sounds from political demonstrations, images from my archive and people's personal narratives. In this new imagery everything becomes *phantasmatic* opening *agora* to the possibilities of imagination. Here, it is important to note that through the digital manipulations of the initial participatory event the meaning of 'assembly' is developed in two ways. On the one hand it denotes the gathering of people and on the other hand the art practice of putting together different elements as in the form of an 'assemblage' that in the case of this exploration takes the form of an optical collage.

According to Markus and Saka (2006) assemblage "generates enduring puzzles about 'process' and 'relationship' " as it seems structural but "the intent in its aesthetic uses is precisely to undermine such ideas of structure" (p.102). Furthermore, Gilles Deleuze defines assemblage as "a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy' " (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p.52).

Similarly to the above ideas, I re-structure and re-organize the initial participatory performances in order to create a visual puzzle of different subjects and objects that mingle together for exposing multiplicity and complexity. My 'assemblages' are not object-based as for example in the case of works by Jim Lambie (1999), who transforms the exhibition space by applying vinyl tapes to its floors, or Cathy Wilkes (1990) who re-assembles different parts of the human body, materializing them as figurative entities. Yet, my 'assemblages' are materialized in the immaterial digital space of my computer screen, as I meticulously edit the video recordings of the performances by adding new layers of narratives, building symbiotic relations among such heterogeneous subjects and conditions as for example the image of a toy with the disturbing sound of a gunfire (See, *Symposium*) or a protestor's body acting in the serene space of a private terrace (See, *Semiotics of the Protest*).

The visual imagery of this research, produced by combinations of participation and performance with staged photography, video and digital imaging, does not constitute a "mere codeless analogue of reality" (Rau, 2006, p.296). It is rather conceived as a 'text' "dependent upon context and reading practices". Thus, in the presentation of the research stages in the following four chapters, I provide information regarding the discursive, spatial and temporal conditions in which each project was realized, in order to define its context. Furthermore, the 'reading practices' that constitute the imagery of the projects include visual metonymies rather than metaphors. Metonymy and metaphor are the two essential approaches of communicating meaning (Chandler, 2014). Metaphor is a technique of "conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding", while metonymy is "a referential process of using one entity to stand for another" (Fass, 1988, p.178). In addition, metonymy stands for the association of related concepts

that can be combined in order to form new ideas (Heffernan, 1985) and “can be applied to an object that is visibly present but which represents another object or subject to which it is related but which is absent” (Hayward, 1996, p.217). According to Phelan (2005), metaphors work to preserve hierarchies by eliminating differences and promoting homogeneity. Instead, metonymies function in additive ways marking associations. They work “to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement” (Phelan, 2005, p.150).

Therefore, the present research is metonymic, in the sense that it concentrates more on orchestrated staged conditions and replacements that reveal relations and potential links between ‘image’ and ‘assembly’. In fact, a series of replacements permeates all the projects, such as replacements of images with text, of images with rituals, of written text with oral speech and so on. Through these processes, the meanings and the associations of ‘image’ with *agora* are continuously deferred following Derrida’s (1982) conception of *différance*. In this manner, every attempt to represent associations of ‘image’ and *agora* can only constitute “temporary retrospective fixing” (Weedon cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p.481) that makes sense only within the discursive context in which it was produced.

Furthermore, based on symbolism and metonymies, the imagery of the performed videos is caught in a process of “mythopoesis” (O’Sullivan, p.203). It creates fictitious spaces within which ‘reality’ is manifested as a fiction itself; and “when we grasp the world as fiction in this way we begin to ‘see’ the limits of what is seeable/sayable and are thus able to gesture beyond these very limits” (O’Sullivan, p.203). In other words, being time and space specific, the research projects stand against myths that were heard, seen and worshipped to allow a glimpse to others that were dismissed and ignored.

In the next four chapters, I shall present one by one the research stages that led to the production of four different creative projects: *Arbitrariness*, *Symposium*, *Semiotics of the Phantasma* and *Semiotics of the Protest*. In each one of them I shall be referring to the specific questions I was preoccupied with in each project including the spatial and temporal context within which the project was developed, the methods I used to address the questions and the outcome.

5. *Arbitrariness*

Arbitrariness, produced in 2012, is the first of the four creative projects of this research. It is a digital installation in which I explore visually the articulation of the *agora* through speech and language, using as a starting point Louise Bourgeois' (1947) art book *He Disappeared into Complete Silence*, and the interactivity of audience(s) in the physical exhibition space. Working on the relationship between *phantasma* and *agora*, it brings together four elements, that is image, language, people and space. Practically, it combines photographic, digital images and texts with audience's participation in the physical exhibition space.

In particular, the project unravelled into phases within a framework of a play of chain responses. In the first phase and for reasons I explain later, I started a visual conversation with Bourgeois' artwork *He Disappeared into Complete Silence*, in which the artist juxtaposes nine engravings with parables in a printed book.¹⁷ I recorded my own response to Bourgeois' particular work by making ten photographic compositions over which I applied fragmented texts taken from the parables of her art book. Then, I presented my visual syntheses to the sound composer Manolis Manousakis inviting him to audio respond to them by creating sounds for each of the ten combined with text images. In the second phase, I conceptualized the idea of collecting audiences' responses as written text over my visual compositions. For this reason, I commissioned the programming and software developer Marinos Koutsomichalis to write the algorithmic code for a software that would allow viewers to interact by writing on to the imagery in the exhibition space.

¹⁷ The art book was published in 1947 by the Gemor Press in a limited edition of probably 54 copies. As of today it seems that only 12 copies are known to exist (Bourgeois, 2008).

As an outcome, *Arbitrariness* is presented in the physical space in the form of an interactive digital installation based on three large video projections of combined images, texts and sounds. The images' projection and the accompanying sounds come through the software which is installed on three computers connected with three video projectors respectively. These computers are placed on wooden bases along with the keyboards and the sound speakers. They form the 'participatory locations' as they establish viewing, listening and interactive paths. Via the computer keyboards viewers write/enter their own comments, thoughts and paraphrases creating new interpretations and multiple combinations of language and image. The images are looped giving the viewers the possibility to interact with all of them if they wish to do so. The spectators can have visual access to their writings as well as to other viewers' comments through the video projections (Fig.7-8). The projection has been selected not only as a methodological tool for replacing the printed art book, but also as a means that allows direct viewing of the written interpretations of the audience(s).

Moreover, the software has been designed to back-up all the combinations of words and images, record the written responses of the viewers and create a relevant electronic archival file. In addition, it has been designed to make it possible for the viewers to switch between the two languages, English and Greek, while it can easily be installed in any of the two platforms, Windows and Mac. In the duration of each picture, a certain amount of the sound was also programmed to be looped. When pictures change and participants interact, the sound environment changes too.



Fig. 7. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness*.
[Installation view]. CACT, Thessaloniki

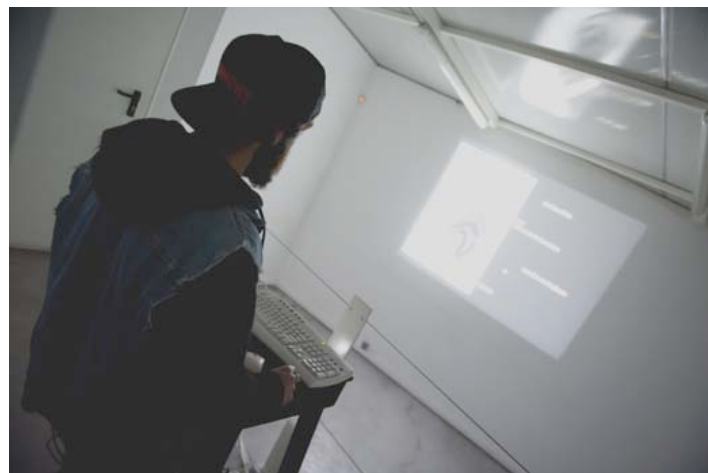


Fig. 8. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness*.
[Installation view]. Beton7, Athens

As I have already mentioned, in *Arbitrariness* I explore the relationship between image and language. Originally, my hypothesis was that this relationship was arbitrary and to some extent this was the reason that I called the installation *Arbitrariness*. My assumption drew from Saussure's implications of language as a system of multiple signs that are arbitrary (Monaghan et al., 2014). However, as the project was developing, and reflecting on various combinations of images and texts by other artists, I realized that the seemingly arbitrary relationship between image and language was far more

complicated. In fact, at least in the cases that I looked into, the relationship between image and language could better be described by Derrida's critique on Saussure's lingual system, according to which signs are not fixed but always referential; that is, they are "essentially and lawfully [...] inscribed in a chain or in a system", taking up their meaning through their reference to other words and signs of this chain, "by means of a systematic play of differences" (Derrida, 1982, p.11).

Nevertheless, I decided to keep the title *Arbitrariness* for the particular research project in an expression of sarcasm. In retrospect, I consider my insistence on this particular title as genuinely indicative of the historical momentum. Reflecting on the results, I have come to understand that my initial aim to look for 'arbitrary' association between image and text was not accidental. To a certain extent, it was a symptom as well as a reflection of the arbitrariness that dominated the political discourse and the social life in the particular historical moment in Greece. As I explained analytically in the *Social/Political Research Context* chapter, Greek governments in cooperation with the EU financial institutions and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were taking critical decisions arbitrarily without reporting to the people and ignoring their basic needs and socio-political rights.

While studying different creative projects that combine text and image, I was captured by Bourgeois' art book *He Disappeared into Complete Silence* (1947) (See Appendix 1) in which the artist juxtaposes written parables with engravings creating ambiguous meanings in the level of both the language and the imagery. Through uncanny associations of incidents and emotional narratives with unidentified objects and fictitious architectural structures, Bourgeois establishes a ghostly environment for the city and its inhabitants.

While in the written parables the human presence is manifested through the fragmented stories, in the imagery of the engravings this presence becomes absence defining the *agora* as an empty space. People's personal stories create a private space full of loneliness, pain and violence that seem to contrast the public space, the blatant emptiness of which reminds eerie futuristic spaces of science-fiction movies scenery. Seeing this drained of life and action public space in a broader context, we may argue that in a way this juxtaposition of image and language fulfils the capitalist project of the privatization of the public space that I mentioned earlier in the *Theoretical Research Context*. Ironically enough, the IMF starts its operation in 1947, with France to be the first country drawing from it (IMF, 2006), which is the same year that Bourgeois produced and published this printed work. It is worthy to mention that this same year the post-war French society suffering from economic depression and wage stagnation was in turbulence with huge waves of long duration strikes and hundreds of thousands of people in the streets (Calender, 1947; Shorter and Tilly, 1974).

Using symbolic modes of representation and further complicating their meaning by the allegoric language of the texts, Bourgeois creates an artwork that needs decoding and has political implications regarding the relation of private and public space/*agora* in the individualistic and consumerist western societies. Thus, I considered that Bourgeois' fictitious environments were in close proximity to my questionings and concerns about *visuality* and the politics of the public space in the present times of repression and depression. Consequently, I decided to use this particular work as a contextual reference for starting building my assemblages of *phantasma*/'image' and *agora*. In addition, I felt challenged to draw a parallel between her stories of

trauma located in the post-war urban space of Paris of 1947¹⁸ and the new ones produced, 65 years later, in *Arbitrariness* within the context of a rebellious *agora* situated in the city of Athens of 2012. Moreover, this choice reflected a personal interest to create a broader dialogue with Bourgeois' abstract visualizations and my conceptual work that also incorporates fiction and symbolic language.

In the new context within which I revisited Bourgeois' work though, in a first level, I inserted the element of participation and digital interactivity to create a new *agora* that responds actively to symbolic associations of images with text. Thus, the basic questions for this research project were: How does the audience interact within a framework of a collective act of writing following given multiple language-image ambiguous associations? What do these ways of digital interaction implicate for the *phantasma* and *agora* in the context of social crisis? And furthermore, how does this interactivity offer insights on the relationship between the artist, the event and the audience?

In the second level, I used new image technologies for replacing the engravings, a digital code for substituting the written text of the art-book and projected imagery instead of the book iconography. Thus, a second set of questions was raised. Do and in what ways the different media practices I used to generate new information regarding the relationship between image and text and consequently, the *phantasma* and *agora*?

In the third level, I conceptualized the act of reading a printed book as an open and collective activity, which involves also written responses on the surface of the projected images. Specifically,

¹⁸ Bourgeois created part of her prints at William Stanley Hayter's *Atelier 17* and part of them at her home in Paris (Bourgeois, Bewley and Lefebvre, 2008).

Bourgeois' visualizations evoke the individual act of reading a book in the private space, and thus, her combination of engravings and text and its political implications are products mainly for personal reflexivity. In *Arbitrariness* I moved the other way around. I produced an artwork in the privacy of my studio space, to open it to the public as a digital installation in the exhibition space. Furthermore, by adding the element of *interactive participation*, I opened the artwork to public debate and exchange. Thus, a third set of questions was raised. Can this interactivity change the politics of the exhibition space? Is it possible to transform it from a space of consuming art to a political *agora*? What conditions of *participation* are required to achieve such a goal?

In order to investigate the above questions, I decided to 'act' as 'audience' to Bourgeois' imagery and look into associations of image and text by inserting my own visual and conceptual responses to her artwork. Within this context, I used combinations of images from my personal photographic archive to 'replace' the initial engravings of her art book with my visual interpretations.

Evidently my own voice could not be enough for the embodiment of the *agora*. Therefore, I created participatory conditions, allowing dialogues to come to life between the audience's narratives and my artwork in the exhibition space. According to the sociologist Judy Wajcman exhibition spaces such as museums by hosting various activities, from educational lectures to interactive installations "have become a public space of debate and discussion" (Wajcman cited in Raga, 2016, para.2). In *Arbitrariness*, this public space was formulated in two different cultural sites, that of an established institution museum in Thessaloniki and a gallery which constitutes an alternative to the mainstream and commercial art scene in Athens. In this way, through participatory installation, I collected responses from

different audience(s) and examined the interactivity into two different in context places. Consequently, my visual approach brought together the three prerequisites for a possible emergence of the *agora*, i.e. language, a group of people and the public space.

I present the practices and methods I used to explore the aforementioned questions of this research project in the following subchapters.

5.1 PRACTICES OF COMBINING IMAGE WITH TEXT

Arbitrariness was produced as an interactive digital installation in the context of a participatory environment where the audience can engage in the original work through software that allows improvisations in writing.

As I explicated earlier, the art book *He disappeared into complete silence* (Bourgeois, 1947) served as my starting point before I embarked on the production of the *Arbitrariness* installation. This printed book consists of nine engravings, each one of which is accompanied by a text in the form of a short parable. This juxtaposition of images and text does not reveal any specific plot. However, it gives the possibility of creating multiple plots with different meanings and interpretations. The engravings express existential anxieties using the symbolic language of minimal structures to represent the urban environment and ghostly figures of its inhabitants (See Appendix 1).

Arbitrariness explores Bourgeois' 'readable' artwork as a case study of the 'sense object'. As I mentioned earlier, according to Aristotle (Aristotle. & Hicks, R.D., 1976 & Papachristou, 2013) the 'sense

object' applies to the image, the *phantasma*. Nonetheless, this argument implies that there is a strict dichotomy between language and image in which language is pure and clear while image is ambiguous and ghostly. In Bourgeois' case though, the text is encrypted in the same way as the engravings, constantly referring to each other for making 'sense'. As a consequence, the 'sense object' is caught inbetween image and text.

In *Arbitrariness* the 'sense object' is produced by multiple interpretations. It constitutes the sphere of 'phantasia' when text and images are digitally put together, while it is continuously relocated by the audience's written interventions. One of the main concerns of this project is to explore possible (in-)visibilities through various visualizations of *phantasma* and *agora* in a political framework that challenges their language definition. Practically, I digitally inserted text over photographic images and through particular software I invited the viewers to do the same.

In the history of Photography there has been a tradition of combining written text with the image which, as Rod Slemmons (2004) states, goes back to the 1930's with Walker Evans' first experimentations of associating advertising signs with photographs. During the 70's and 80's, this combination became a genre with many artists employing it to complicate the 'clear gaze' and consequently, stage their subjects. In many cases, artists give more complex combinations of text and image constituting "the other end of the spectrum from the publications of Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander and Walker Evans, where the photographs are carefully isolated from any kind of caption" (Slemmons, 2004, para.7). The various ways with which the text appears in the produced artworks lead to different conceptualizations, thoughts and feelings, yet they all challenge "our profoundly untested confidence to both text and image" (ibid,

para.12). For example, in 1970, Duane Michals started creating photo sequences of linear narratives in which text appears as subtitles of staged images in order to reveal stories behind the scene; stories that are invisible in one single photographic frame (Fig.9).

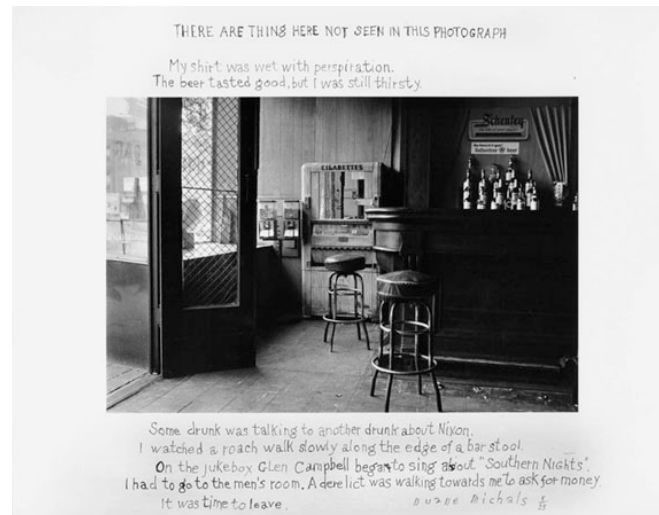


Fig. 9. Duane Michals (1977) *There are things here not seen in the photograph*. [Photography]

In *Arbitrariness*, I combined text with image in order to expose narratives and introduce associations between them, however I did not use text as a caption. I added it over the photographic image as in the case of the artists Barbara Kruger, Lorna Simpson and Endre Tót. In Kruger (1987) and Simpson (1991), words enter the space of the photographic image which otherwise would look indifferent (Fig.10) or 'innocent' and 'beautiful' (Fig.11) to produce hard political statements and expose racism and sexism.



Fig. 10. Barbara Kruger (1987) *Untitled (We Don't Need Another Hero)*. [Photo screen print on vinyl]

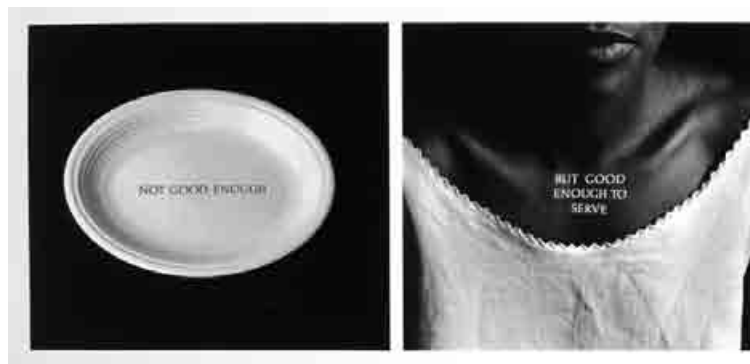


Fig. 11. Lorna Simpson (1991) *C-Rations*. [Gelatin silver print on paper]

Moreover, in Endre Tót's works (1971-78) the association of images, texts and graphic symbols challenges our perception of (im-)possibilities of reality. In *My Rain-Your Rain* (1971-78) postcards, Tót divides the picture of a place in two parts with opposite weather conditions and connects them respectively with the written declaration "my rain-your rain" (Fig.12).



Fig. 12. Endre Tót (1971-78) *My Rain-Your Rain*.
[Typewriting on postcard]

By such a paradoxical association, Tót challenges the taken for granted meaning of a word as simple as rain, making visible the role of perception and subjectivity in language and representation. Specifically, in *My Rain-Your Rain* the sign signifies different things from different temporal and spatial views and consequently it is manifested as a non fixed entity, implicating Derrida's critique of Saussure's lingual system (Daylight, 2012). *Arbitrariness* deals precisely with this issue: the forces that are released when the sign is viewed as an unstable and fragile entity. This perception of the non fixed sign allowed me to give my own interpretations of Bourgeois' artwork and allowed the audience to respond to these interpretations by putting forth their own interpretations and so on.

The above artists by inserting text as captions or over the image, they render words as images as well; words not only mean something but they are also sets of lines and shapes that add more elements to the visuality of the specific artworks, suggesting particular aesthetics to address socio-political issues. A paradigm of this aestheticized use of the words over the image is given by Jeffrey Wolin's photographic series *Written in memory: Portraits of the Holocaust* (1997). In this

series, Wolin collects stories from Holocaust survivors and applies them as a text over the image of their portraiture (Fig.13).

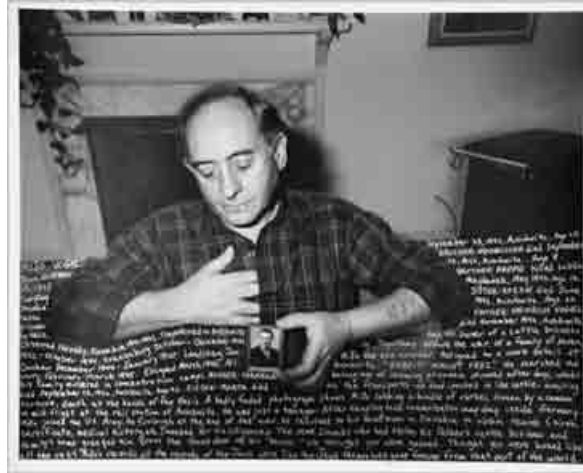


Fig. 13. Jeffrey Wolin (1997) *Written in memory: Portraits of the Holocaust*. [Photography]

Wolin's *Written in memory: Portraits of the Holocaust* was of particular interest to me as it incorporates the element of *participation* in the photographic practice. The survivors' portraits were determined both by the photographer's gaze and the survivors' voices.

However, Wolin as well as all the other artists I mentioned above, have full control over the final aesthetic results of the combination of text and image. In *Arbitrariness*, I provided part of this control to the audience through digital interactivity. In this manner, viewers could express their interpretations of the projected images by writing whatever and wherever they wanted over the space of the photographic image.

From this point of view, the way that I used participation with photography in *Arbitrariness* (Fig.15) has a proximity to Jim Goldberg's practice of inviting people to write directly over the printed image of their portraits. His invitation led to series of images over

which people critique either their lives or the photograph itself (Fig.14).

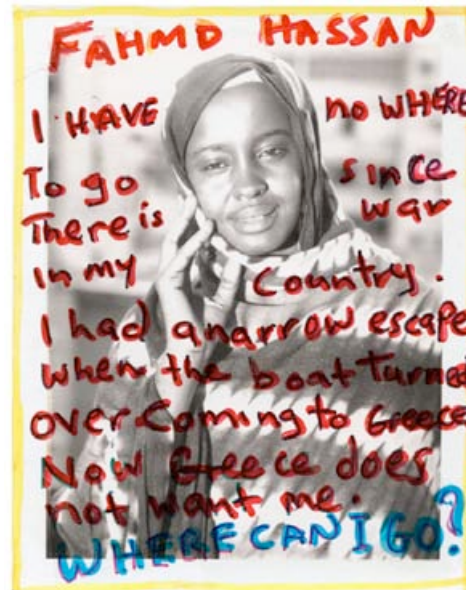


Fig. 14. Jim Goldberg (2005) *Fahmd HASSAN*. Greece. Athens. 2005 [Photography]



Fig. 15. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness: Image 8, Cut in small pieces*. [Projection still]

The texts in Goldberg's photographs and the imagery of *Arbitrariness* have different visual effects and connotations since in the first case they are products of handwriting while in the second they are products of typing, particularly keyboarding. Handwriting bears the sense of uniqueness leaving the writer's personal mark of memory,

constituting and even more, validating the writer's expression of identity (Hensher, 2012; Ivanič, 1998). Consequently, handwriting is documentation of the identity and from this point of view in Goldberg's photographs it reinforces the photographer's purpose of witnessing events through his practice. Typing and keyboarding though erase these personal marks, homogenizing the visual results in the form of particular fonts, predesigned by program developers. Nowadays, they have replaced handwriting in most cases of human communication and interaction. In *Arbitrariness*, I intended to recreate exactly these familiar daily conditions in which the majority of people interact with each other virtually by acts of writing through a computer, tablet or mobile keyboard, which usually are accompanied by images and/or vice versa.

Although, writing by hand has completely different visual impacts and conceptual connotations from writing via software, Goldberg's photographs and the imagery of *Arbitrariness* share the risk that they are, at least to some extent, at the *participants'* disposal.

In the following subchapters I present the methodological choices and practical steps I took in the development of the *Arbitrariness* research project.

5.2 INTERTEXTUALITY

Arbitrariness explores the relationship between image and text by using Bourgeois' art book *He disappeared into complete silence* as a point of departure. However, *Arbitrariness* is not a strictly typical example of a reproduction and/or imitation of an artwork as in the case of appropriation art. In the case of reproductive works by the "appropriation artists" (Hope and Ryan, 2014) Sherrie Levine (*After*

Walker Evans, 1981) (Fig.16), Yasumasa Morimura (*Vermeer Study: Looking Back (Mirror)*, 2008) (Fig.17) and Cindy Sherman (*History Portraits*, 1989) (Fig.18) there is always a visible reference to the initial work re-represented.



Walker Evans
Alabama Tenant Farmer Wife, 1936
Gelatin silver print



Sherrie Levine
After Walker Evans 1981

Fig. 16. Sherrie Levine (1981) *After Walker Evans*. [Photography]



Fig. 17. LEFT IMAGE: Johannes Vermeer (1665)
Girl with a Pearl Earring [Painting]
RIGHT IMAGE: Yasumasa Morimura (2008)
Vermeer Study: Looking Back (Mirror). [Photography]

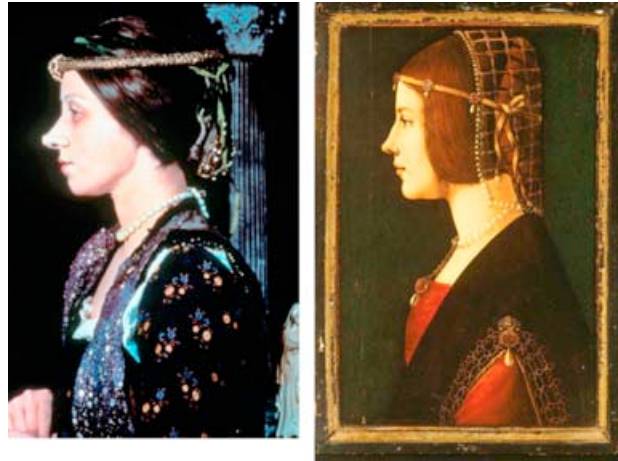


Fig. 18. LEFT IMAGE: Cindy Sherman (1989)
Untitled #212 [Photography]
 RIGHT IMAGE: Giovanni Ambrogio
 de Predis (1485-1500) *Lady with a Pearl
 Hairnet* [Painting]

In *Arbitrariness*, I re-interpreted an existing creative work by replacing its imagery instead of copying it. The new landscape consists of multiple syntheses of photographic images from the Athenian urban space (Fig.19-20).

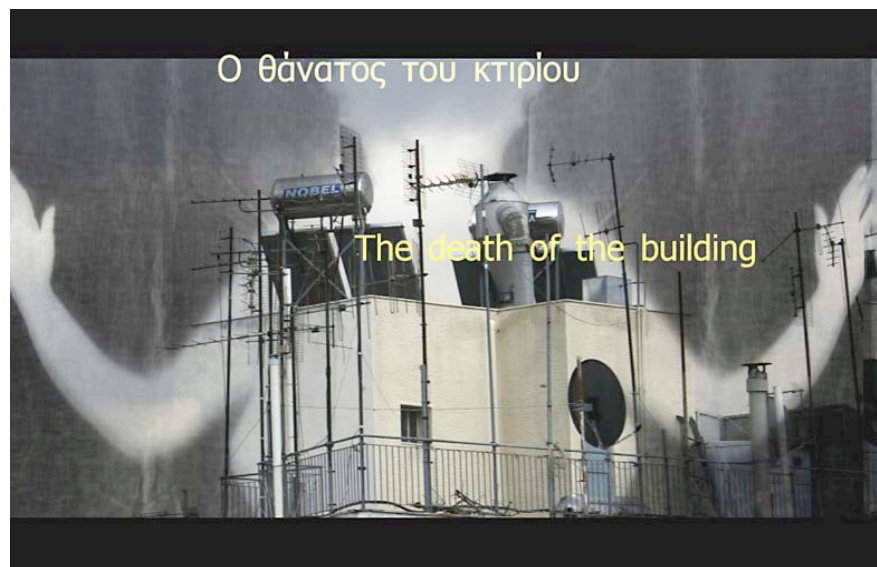


Fig. 19. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness:
 Image 3, The death of the building.* [Projection still]

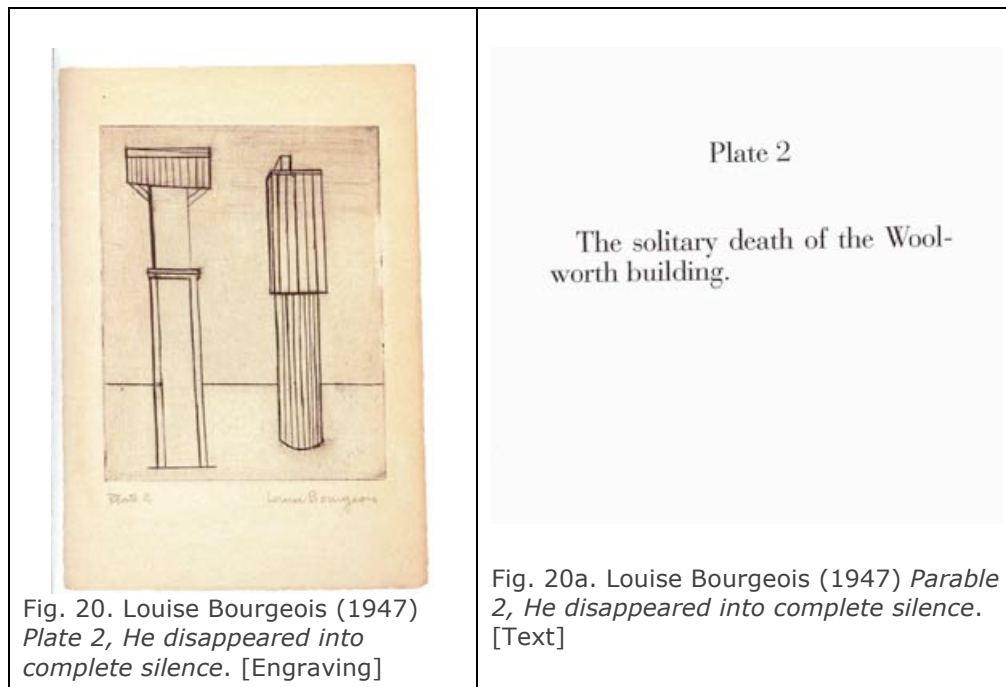


Image 3: The death of the building (Fig. 19)

Plate 2: Engraving (Fig. 20) - Plate 2: Parable (Fig. 20a)

The relation between *Arbitrariness* imagery and Bourgeois' artwork is not typically appropriative in the sense that it does not mimic the source scenery at least in a recognizable way. It is intertextual as I appropriated fragments of Bourgeois' text and inserted them into a new scenery.

The term intertextuality comes from the theories of literature according to which no text can claim originality; instead, every text develops borrowing the codes, systems of significations and modes of expression that were used in previous texts of literature. From this point of view "any text is intertext" (Barthes, 1981, p.39). Julia Kristeva, who coined the term firstly, suggested that the theory of intertextuality applies to all forms of creative arts, considering "art, music, drama, dance and literature in terms of a living mosaic, a dynamic intersection of textual surfaces" (Sanders, 2006, p.3). Her view is reflected in Sherrie Levine's words, "A picture is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture" (Levine,

2003, p.1039).

In *Arbitrariness* I worked with intertextuality perceiving Bourgeois' texts as voices from a past culture with anxieties and existential issues similar to the ones brought by the contemporary socioeconomic crisis. In this sense my use of appropriation is differentiated from the aforementioned appropriation artists.

Specifically, Sherman and Levine re-make prestigious artworks made by male artists in order to disturb the male canon in the art representational system (Levine, 2003; Marianacci, 2016). In this way, their appropriations introduce discontinuities in the discursive field of the male dominated history of art. In *Arbitrariness*, I worked in the opposite way, looking for building a bridge, open dialogues and suggest continuity between two artworks, two cultures, two different historical moments. The purpose was to generate dialogues between the ambiguous combinations of text and image of the 1947 art book and the contemporary re-interpretations expressed by the audience within the framework of the historical discourse of this research. The emphasis on destabilizing abilities of image and language when they appear together was quite striking in Bourgeois' art book reinforcing invisible conversations. Therefore, I decided to explore further how this emphasis can be re-staged through the use of digital media technologies as well as through the participation of the audience. Apparently, my purpose was not to challenge the 'authenticity' of the 'original' artwork, although it seems that any act of appropriation does this (Benjamin, 1935). Nevertheless, Bourgeois herself challenges the 'authenticity' of her 'original' work since she chooses to present it as a printed edition circulated in multiple copies. My intention though was to re-examine it through an interpretive combination of images and words but also in a new context in which the printed material this time is embedded in a digital interactive

environment where readers/viewers can share their thoughts openly and collectively as in the case of an assembly/*agora*.

My own dialogue with this particular art book escalated in a variety of aspects. First of all, I replaced the title. Noticing the use of the pronoun “He” in the title “He disappeared into complete silence”, I assumed that Bourgeois announces not just a death but the death of the male subject. Taking into consideration the hierarchical bipolar construction of gender into male and female, one may wonder what is happening to the subordinated female subject, if the hegemonic male subject is disappearing into silence. In an attempt to respond to this question visually, I created the first photographic composition giving the title *She who disappeared into shadows* (Fig. 21).



Fig. 21. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness: Image 1*, *She who disappeared into shadows*. [projection still]

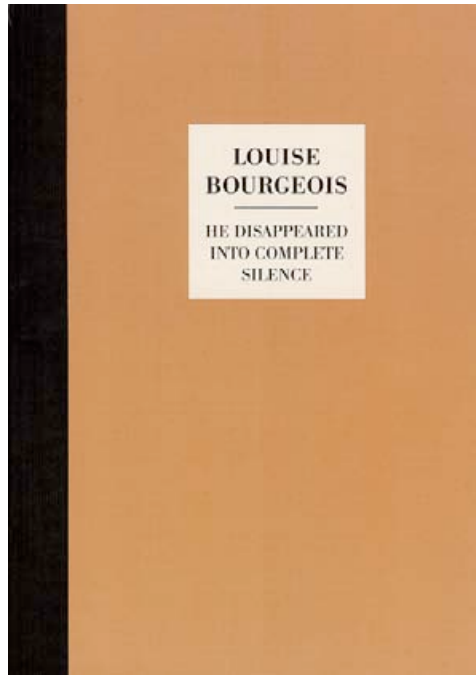


Fig. 22. Louise Bourgeois (1947)
He disappeared into complete silence. [Cover page]

Image 1 (Fig. 21) is the only image repeated onto the three projection screens of the *Arbitrariness* installation. It is a visual reference to the title of the art book. Two words, i.e. “He” and “Silence” have been replaced respectively by ‘She’ and ‘Shadows’:

Image 1: *She who disappeared into the shadows* (Fig. 21)

Bourgeois’ title: *He disappeared into complete silence* (Fig. 22)

Bourgeois’ title reference to the disappearance of the male subject “into complete silence” implies the previous history of the male as the one that actually spoke, that was visible and heard. My title accounts for the story of the *Other*, the female subject, who voiceless and invisible inhabited the shadows for as long as the male was dominating in all discourses and representations. Thus, *Image 1* (Fig. 21) reflects the intention to trace this *Other* into the fragile borders between image and text. This ambiguity constitutes the *phantasma* which is an *in-between* entity always understood in the margins of

bipolar structures, between absence and presence, life and death. With the male figures, who dominate the scenery of the image, (Fig.21) depicted as negative white silhouettes, the shadows of the female subject become visible through the positive image of a cage with a figure on the top.

The *Other* as a *phantasma* is not rational. It needs tropes of discourse that defy rationality such as symbolic expressions, metaphors and metonymies¹⁹ (White, 1997). Symbols and metonymies cast shadows upon rationality. In the next subchapter I describe the way that I used symbolism and visual metonymies to create digital assemblages of images with text.

5.3 CREATING DIGITAL ASSEMBLAGES OF IMAGES WITH TEXT

The imagery of the *Arbitrariness* installation consists of ten photographic and digital images on which short fragments, phrases and/or paraphrases of Bourgeois' text have digitally been ascribed in the Greek and English languages.

The particular decisions made for the selection of these texts and the association with the images of the installation are grounded on semiotics. According to Winfried Noth, "the iconic signs are signs based on a similarity between the sign and its object" (Noth, 2001, p.4). In the *Arbitrariness* case, the signs of the parables have been translated into visual signs. Thus, the photographs become the icon of the text, and the text the icon of the photographs. The suggested

¹⁹ "Tropic is the shadow from which all realistic discourse tries to flee. This flight, however, is futile; for tropics is the process by which all discourse constitutes the objects which it pretends only to describe realistically and to analyze objectively" (White, 1997, p.2)

associations are based on iconic signs and the referential relationships between texts and pictures.

For example, *Image 6*, entitled *Stuck on waving* (Fig. 23), is a visual reference to the particular action described in Plate/parable 5 of the art book (Fig. 24a). Plate 5 describes a sad story about a man who was waving to his friend from the elevator and because of that suddenly “He stuck his head out and the ceiling cut it off”.



Fig. 23. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness: Image 6, Stuck on waving*. [Projection still]

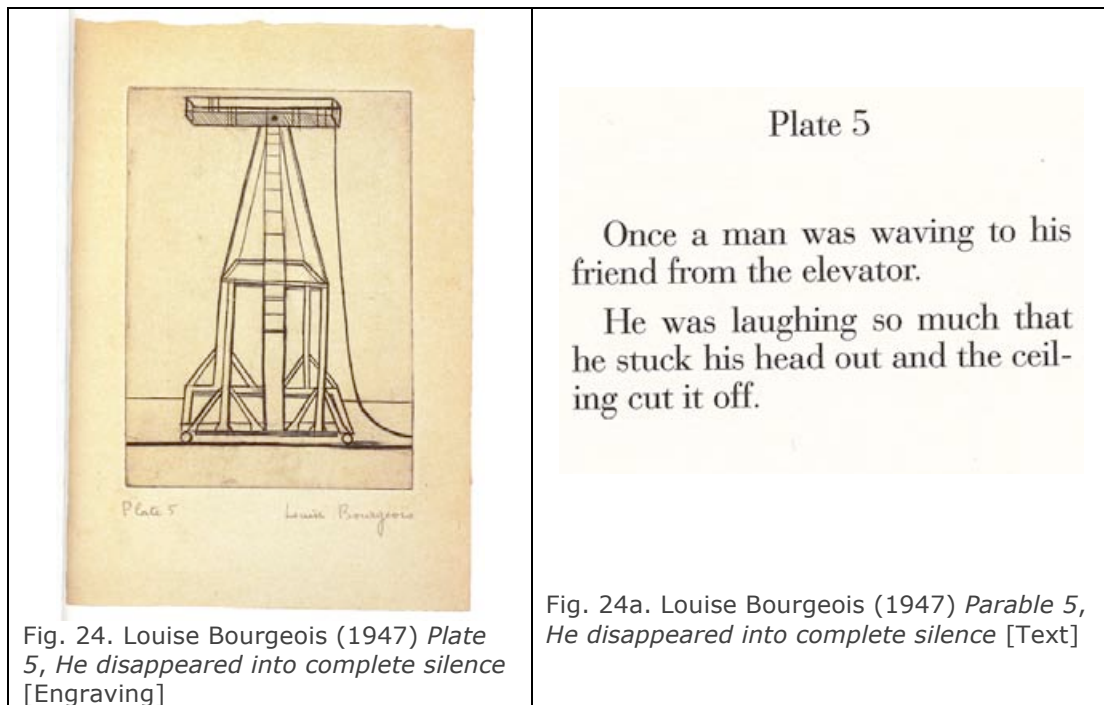


Image 6: Stuck on waving (Fig. 23)

Plate 5: Engraving (Fig. 24) - Plate 5: Parable (Fig. 24a)

In the digital image (Fig. 23) the original narrative of the tragic event has been changed. The subject is still alive and the visual representation of the act of waving does not imply any sign of disappearance. Yet, the incorporation of the particular text, *Stuck on waving*, conveys a sense of uneasiness with ambiguous meanings haunting the image. In this way, the tragic fact reflected on the particular written phrase has been translated into a repetitive act of obsession doomed to the stillness of the photographic frame. This immobility, which characterizes also a printed book, is meant to be disrupted by the audience's written responses on symbolic associations of image with text in the installation space.

Symbols, the principal means of symbolism, are connected with their objects "because of a habit of sign interpretation" (Pierce cited in Noth, 2001, p.6). Therefore, in order to be symbolic, images, texts and their combination have to rely on habitual associations.

“Habitual association means that we no longer need to be reminded of the name at all, when we see the picture” (Noth, 2001, p.6). For example, the *Image 4* (Fig. 25), entitled *Story told so fast that nobody understood it*, replaces the Plate 3, parable (Fig. 26a): “Once a man was telling a story, it was a very good story too, and it made him very happy, but he told it so fast that nobody understood it”. The referential objects of the *Image 4* (Fig. 25), that are the buildings, TV antennas and the unknown city inhabitants, expressed as silhouettes, become iconic signs for people’s inner communication.



Fig. 25. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness: Image 4*, *Story told so fast that nobody understood it*. [Projection still]

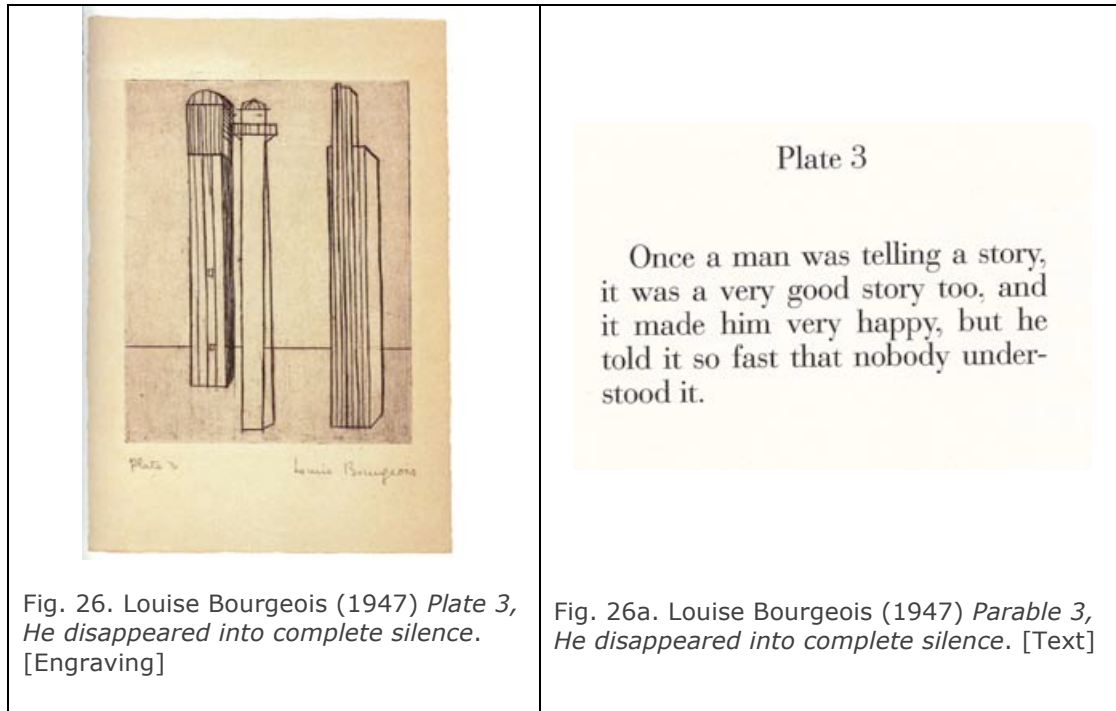


Image 4: Story told so fast that nobody understood it (Fig. 25)
Plate 3: Engraving (Fig. 26) - Plate 3: Parable (Fig. 26a)

By exposing the audience to habitual visual relations and encouraging their interaction with them, I seek the subjective meanings of the iconic signs produced by the new combinations of image, words and sounds. This subjectivity is crucial to my exploration of connecting visuality with participation and the *agora* of the time. As I explained in the *Social/Political Research Context* chapter, state authorities and institutions were systematically ignoring people's wishes and public opinion implementing severe measures and strategies to police the *agora*. Thus, my response as a visual artist was to generate conditions in which the audience contribute to the *visuality* and express their own voice towards it. In order to do so, I replaced the plates of Bourgeois' art book with digital assemblages of photographs and texts using manipulations and multiple syntheses for developing *poetic* forms of writing. Based on ambiguous combinations of recognizable signs with imaginary ones, the new imagery creates an

enigmatic atmosphere of 'presence' and 'absence' narrating non-linear stories and forms visual poems with which audience can interact. In practice, by using *poetic* strategies of abstraction, I highlighted affective words for describing the absence of the subject and dramatic gestures of human figures in manipulated B/W photographs. The images re-examine the visual meaning of Bourgeois' arrangements of words with images and project the atmosphere of mystery, loneliness and otherness into a new context built in a different urban space and historical discourse. This space replaces the urban minimal structures of Bourgeois' engravings with a contemporary and partial *agora* of the Athenian urban environment. This setting takes the *in-between* position implied by a dream, a nightmare and/or a delusion.

In this framework, digital assemblages were introduced to a given printed artwork transferring one époque to another and thus, producing new cultural meaning. Specifically, in the case of the traditional practice of assemblage, the processes of cutting, pasting and assembling that are followed for the creation of an art object are recognizable by the viewer. In the case of assemblages produced by digital technologies, the concept of assemblage as well as of collage "can now be used as a means of manipulation of images without the viewer realizing it" (Leibowich, 2007, para.9). In this sense digital assemblages function, in Benjamin's terms, *phantasmagorically*, since they hide the mechanisms through which they are produced. In *Arbitrariness*, though, there is a slight difference, since viewers participate in the process of assembling. In particular, through interactivity, they can digitally manipulate the visual result themselves by inserting their own texts anywhere on the projected image. Thus, in *Arbitrariness*, *phantasmagoria* is not conceived as a distracting practice but as a case in which the *phantasma* is formulated by visual poems giving space for the emergence of the *agora* as a collective *poetic* dialogue.

5.4 COMBINING PHOTOGRAPHY AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES WITH AUDIENCE'S PARTICIPATORY INTERACTIVITY

With regard to my initial question about what kind of information can be obtained from audience's interventions in relation to associations of image and text, in the *Arbitrariness* installation I combined photography and digital technologies with audience's participatory interactivity.

In this particular research project, photography replaces the engravings of the art book. This replacement is not accidental. Photography and engraving share an important similarity, namely that their product is reproducible. As Angela Cozea (1993) states, there is a historical parallel between engraving and photography, "between that form of art which used to produce copies before the advent of photography and photography as the principal means of reproduction at the turn of the twentieth century" (p.215). This correlation between the two media also defines their relationship to other forms of representation and prompts the discussion on issues such as originality and authority. Not having to refer back to an original in order to obtain value and meaningfulness, both photography and engraving are valued in contextual and/or discursive ways that enable performativity and create space for modification and change. The affinity of these specific media towards performativity allowed me to set up the *Arbitrariness* installation as a theatrical stage on which Bourgeois', my own, and the audience's narratives intersect creatively.

Moreover and from a different point of view, both engraving and photography report on the mechanization of the image. Specifically, they both responded to the demands for visual classification, one of the basic tools of articulating "scientific" knowledge in the light of modernity (Beegan, 1995; Lupton, 1998). As such, photography has

been established as the ideal medium for documenting reality although in the field of fine arts has also been used to record fictitious settings. In *Arbitrariness* I employ photography as a tool for recording staged and invented realities. Combining analogue photography and digital imaging, the ten images of the project, most of which are in black and white, re-interpret the fictitious and the estranged spaces that were initially suggested by Bourgeois' combination of image and text. Responding to the dark atmosphere of the engravings, I used the symbolism of shadows to describe both the fragmented moments of life scenes announced in Bourgeois' parables and the suggested constructed reality of the Athenian urban environment.

Furthermore, the ten images of the project are based on photographs I retrieved from my archive. As I have already mentioned in the *Art Practice Research Context* chapter, it is part of my practices to take photographs, keep them in my archive and re-use them as contextual material in particular projects in the future. Thus, this archive formulates a visual diary that traces my experiences as creative practitioner locating them in time and space. Produced in 2012, the *Arbitrariness* scenery combines fragments of photographs that I had created back in the years of 1992, 1994, 2006, 2009 and 2010. These earlier images are the result of visual experimentations that took place either inside my studio or outdoors, during wanderings in various urban environments including the city of Athens. For example, *Image 1, She who disappeared into shadows* (Fig.29) is the result of the digital combination of two images. I created the first one (Fig.27) in 1992, when I was visually exploring the areas around the port of Piraeus. The second one is part of a series of experimentations on cast shadows and lights which I staged and recorded inside my studio in 2010 (Fig.28).



Fig. 27. Maria Paschalidou (1992) *Zea Marina*.
[Silver print photograph produced by analogue camera]



Fig. 28. Maria Paschalidou (2010) *Untitled*.
[Photograph produced by digital camera]



Fig. 29. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Image 1: She who disappeared into shadows*.
[Combined photographs produced by digital manipulation]

Transferring earlier photographs into new settings, *Arbitrariness* creates links between the present and the past, building a non-linear narrative of my visual explorations. As such, it could be said that *Arbitrariness* has “affinities with Walter Benjamin’s conception of the “profane illumination” of experience transported out of an earlier age

to enliven creative insight in the present" (Hutton, 2016, p.25). Moreover, as an assemblage of visual experiences, it generates conversations between my conceptual approaches and Bourgeois' existential anguishes.

What's more, the installation's images express the uncertainty imposed by blending positive and negative B/W images together. This combination enforces a *poetic* view that blurs the boundaries between the possible and the impossible, the visible and the invisible. This impulse to capture the invisible, to prove the 'unreal' component inside 'reality', has been omnipresent in the history of the photographic medium, manifested in the trends of the early 19th century spirit photography²⁰ as much as in modern photograms and contemporary practices of multiple exposures, inversions, digital manipulations and three-dimensional versions of representation (holography, etc.).²¹

Following this tradition, in *Arbitrariness* I use multiple exposures, inversions and visual associations of analogue with digital photography and positive with negative image. Images such as *The death of the building* (Fig. 31) carry traces of a legacy that goes back to photographic works such as the portrait of *Mary Todds Lincoln with the ghost of her husband, Abraham Lincoln* (Fig.30) by William H. Mumler (1871) and Marat's and Robespierre's spectres in Robertson's *phantasmagoria* projections (Samuels, 2004, p.28).

²⁰ In 1860 the photographer William H. Mumler discovered the technique of double exposure and then he claimed that the photographic camera can depict ghosts or spirits (The American Museum of Photography, 2000).

²¹ See *Holography as an Art Medium* in the Special Double Issue of Leonardo Online (1989) in which Louis M. Brill explains how holography transforms still imagery to a three dimensional space.



Fig. 30. William H. Mumler (1871) *Mary Todd Lincoln with the ghost of her husband, Abraham Lincoln*. [Albumen print]



Fig. 31. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness: Image 3, The death of the building*. [Combined photographs produced by digital manipulation]

In Figure 31, the human presence appears as a negative image, a spectre that haunts the positive image of a building which is already distorted through digital manipulation. This juxtaposition of the negative image with digital technology inserts intensity into the scene. The negative image is the *phantasma* of the digital era. It is considered an anomaly as the digital process is always about direct positive image (Fleury, 2012). Specifically, in digital practices the negativity of the analogue photography is erased by a continuously positive process. As Byung-Chul Han (2015) notes, “Digital photography wipes out all negativity. It requires neither a darkroom

nor developing. No negative precedes it. It is purely positive. Becoming, aging and dying have all been erased” (p.10). Dominated by negative silhouettes, the *Arbitrariness* imagery reintroduces the sense of the passing time and mortality that the digital era seems to deny, conveying the mood of mourning that inevitably accompanies photography since “photography bears witness to what has been” (Han, 2015, p.11). Although produced by a photographic camera, these silhouettes in some cases (Fig. 32) remind the ethereal and ghostly entities of photograms such as the ones created by Adam Fuss (Fig. 33) or Len Lye (Fig. 34). It is worthy to mention that Figure 32 was produced in 1992 by an analogue photographic camera as a negative image and in 2012 I re-used it in combination with text for the purposes of the *Arbitrariness* project.



Fig. 32. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness: Image 2*, *I really mean that she was beautiful*. [Projection still]



Fig. 33. Adam Fuss (1995) *Untitled, Childs Profile*. [Silver print Photograph]



Fig. 34. Len Lye (1947) *Ann Lye* [Photogram]

In other images, though, of the *Arbitrariness* installation, the silhouettes are located in a constructed urban environment enforced by elements of exaggeration and absurdity echoing the dramatic scenery of the German expressionist cinema. For example, *Image 5, A hole in the ground* (Fig.35) is as much *poetic*, mysterious and scary as the actor Max Schreck's shadowy figure in *Nosferatu* film by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (Fig.36).



Fig. 35. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness: Image 5, A hole in the ground*. [Projection still]



Fig. 36. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1922)
Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens. [Film]

The *poetic* mood of the *Arbitrariness* imagery is enhanced by the sounds that accompany every single projected combination of image and text. Produced by the composer Manolis Manousakis, the audio of the installation is based on electroacoustic improvisations mixed with noises and aural fragments from the urban environment and its surrounding resonances. Manousakis treated each image as a separate theme that could generate new sound compositions.

By combining images, texts and digital sounds the *Arbitrariness* installation becomes a multimodal text that replaces the original text of Bourgeois' art book. The term 'multimodal' refers to those texts which substitute the print-based text and convey meaning by using multiple modes, such as written or spoken language, paper or electronic screen, digital images and sound (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). The multimodal text of *Arbitrariness* is presented in the physical space via three large video projections of combined texts, still images and fragments of sounds. Thus, in the installation Bourgeois' plates are substituted by the video screens (Fig.37-39) as digital interpretations of the original printed art book.

VIDEO SCREEN # 1



Fig. 37. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness*:
Video Screen # 1: Images 1,2,3,4. [Projection stills]

VIDEO SCREEN # 2

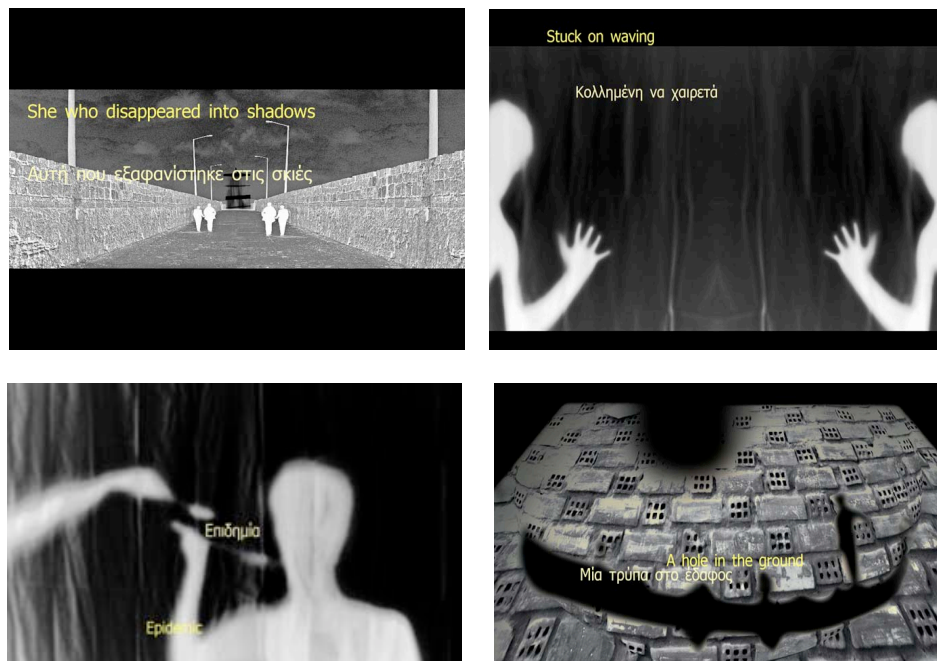


Fig. 38. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness*:
Video Screen # 2: Images 1,5,6,7. [Projection stills]

VIDEO SCREEN # 3



Fig. 39. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness*:
Video Screen # 3: Images 1,8,9,10. [Projection stills]

The practice of projection resembles early forms of phantasmagorias and it specifically refers to the magic lantern which was the main apparatus for the shows' projections. In the *Arbitrariness* case, the magic lantern has been replaced by a computer apparatus that can digitally project still images with texts and connect them with sounds.

So far, I have described my conceptual approaches and practices through which I built the imagery of *Arbitrariness*, the *phantasma*. I now, need to present the ways through which I combined *visuality* with *interactive participation* aiming to create conditions of the immersion of *agora*.

Considering the debate on the uses of interactivity and computer software in creative works, I intended the *Arbitrariness* installation to

support a performative human-computer interaction rather than an automated action.²²

Through my research in multiple creative projects of interactivity, particularly on those which incorporate text by using computer software, I was intrigued by Arnold Dreyblatt's (2002) *Recollection Mechanism* (See Appendix 7). By using special linguistic software, Dreyblatt created a dark 3D space of thousands of life stories that he found in the biographical dictionary *Who is Who in Central and Eastern Europe 1933*. The spectators could use two computers to find specific words or names which, then, would be marked on the projected and continuously moving virtual scroll and be read out by a male or female voice. The result is a monumental architecture of names, words and stories of the past "projected into the present", supporting the artist's statement that "Memory is not only a question of time but also of space for memories and archives. The texts are also images, objects, information" (Dreyblatt, 2002). In this case, the participants' interaction was limited to simply entering words into the database, as the purpose was to re-approach what was already there, documented as memory; it was about "automated" acts that were shaking up and rearticulating forgotten stories.

²² The term 'interactivity' is "in fact too vague and generic to describe any technical specificity. We can consider our interaction with infinite entities, subjects, objects or machines, more or less independent, autonomous or automatic. Even if "interactivity", due to its generalization, triggers less enthusiasm today, it still marks our idea of technical object, for there is certainly nothing more uninteresting, useless and obsolete than a technical object which is not interactive. With this we mean an object, conceived and designed to be seized (used, manipulated and even changed), according to the interests, conditions and aims of its user, opening a field of research as vast as that which goes from ergonomics to cognitive sciences, termed Human- Computer Interaction (HCI). This use of the term "interaction" is certainly the most specific and accepted in the context of technology and digital culture. Yet it is possible to argue that the questions of human-computer interaction have little relation with the computer itself or with computational sciences (computational systems, algorithms, programming and information)". Cruz T. M., "From Participatory Art Forms to Interactive Culture: Towards a Critique of the Aesthetic Economy", *International Journal of the Arts in Society*, Volume 4, Issue 3, pp.243-250.

A second intriguing case was Mair's (2012) interactive typographic installation *In Order to Control* (See Appendix 7). Mair uses software that video-transforms audiences to typographic silhouettes: The installation features a constant loop of selected text about "the threshold [of] ethics and morality. [...] As spectators step into the installation and read the projected content, their blackened silhouette covers the words on the floor and transfers them to the proximate wall" (Pinar, 2012). Therefore, the audience's interaction with this installation was based on their physical experiences projected via the designed automated activity of the software.

In order to build my own case, though, I aimed at ensuring an *active participation* of the viewers that would incorporate their own perceptions in the artwork. As I explained earlier my intention was to replace Bourgeois' printed book with an electronic version of combined images with texts and explore the possibilities of responsive readings by the viewers in a play of texting in public view. In order to do so, I proceeded in the conception of a software that has the capacity to collect different narratives from participants while they are interacting with the projected visual poems. I wanted viewers to have authorial control over the imagery of *Arbitrariness* by adding new text. Thus, I avoided the traditional reductive tree structure of interactive programmes, which is based on selection points (Rieser, 1997, p.11); participants do not have to choose between different suggested paths, but to create their own path of words over the image.

Consequently, I designed the structure of the software program to be simple in its function. Viewers can use the keyboards of the installed computers to write their comments on the projected imagery and the mouse to change the position of the texts over each image. All the key letters can be handled in the same way as with of any other case of electronic device that we use in our daily lives (computer, tablet,

mobile phone, etc.) and the only different thing that viewers need to know is the buttons for changing the language (F1 for English and F2 for Greek). In this way, in the physical exhibition space, the act of writing becomes a *participatory performance* that repeats the habitual circle of the contemporary responsive society of texting.

The programming and development of the particular software were commissioned to Marinos Koutsomichalis who wrote the algorithmic code following my directions with regard to the concept of the digital interaction and the aesthetics of its design. Specifically, I selected some of the projected images to be in full screen, others to be presented within a black frame in the centre of the screen and others in the right or left of it. All images remain stable in their position during the interaction contrary to the texts, which as I said, can be moved anywhere on the screen through the mouse. They are presented looped in slow time and programmed to freeze when the viewer presses any key of the keyboard to start interacting. The time allowed for each interaction was relatively long creating space for non-rushed responses. Furthermore, the font size of the written responses was programmed to be larger during the viewer's interaction and to become smaller afterwards so that the screen fits more responses.

Similarly to Dreyblatt's and Mair's projects, in *Arbitrariness*, the spectators' interaction was also achieved through software that was designed especially for this case. Using this software, the spectators actively ascribe performativity to photography and video through their acts of writing, recording and performing. Despite the automated approach in the conception of the installation, the viewers can make the choice whether to interact or not, while at the same time they become collaborators to the making of the art product, as without their participation the artwork remains incomplete. In other words, in

Arbitrariness “the process of participatory interaction itself is treated as a form of creative praxis” (Kester, 2011, p.9).

It is worthy to mention that viewers before entering the installation space had access to written materials informing about the event. These materials included my artist statement in which I presented the concepts of the project, the art historian and curator Syrago Tsiara’s commentary on the politics of my art practices as well as of the particular work and last but not least the printed version of Bourgeois’ art book (See Appendix 1).

In *Arbitrariness participation* is incorporated to *visuality*. The practice of projecting images has been enriched, as in this case it is not limited to “the act of throwing” (Morris, 1984, p. 413) but it incorporates the audience’s responses through interactivity. In this way Adalaide Morris’ (1984) conception of projection as “a movement across a borderline: between the mind and the wall, between the brain and the page, between me and you...” (p.413), that I mentioned earlier in the *Theoretical Research Context*, is materialized as a movement in the borderline between the artist and the participating audience. I purposely designed this visual spectacle intended to be changed by the audience’s interaction with the texts that accompany each of the projected digital images. In this way, the digital installation becomes the apparatus –a contemporary magic lantern– for exposing personal thoughts and narratives in the public space. It creates a participatory environment where the art product is still in progress waiting for the viewers’ written responses to be completed. This apparatus mirrors the Derridean perception as it takes the form of a visual spectacle of signs that are “in a constant state of flux” (Derrida cited in McNamara, 1994, p.1). Following the Derridean critique on Saussure, in which signs are not fixed entities as they could mean different things at different times, this interactive

installation invites spectators to participate in a playful but still thought provoking praxis of texting.

5.5 RESULTS

The *Arbitrariness* installation has been presented in two physical exhibition spaces. Firstly, it was exhibited in the framework of Photo Biennale 2012, "Logos", at the Contemporary Art Centre of Thessaloniki (CACT) between May 11 and June 17, 2012²³. Also, it was presented in Athens as a solo exhibition at Beton7 Gallery on March 14 -31, 2013.



Fig. 40. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness*. [Installation view] Beton7, Athens

As it was mentioned above, the installation's software saved all the combinations of the audience's written responses by creating different folders for each of the images' projection. Thus, the collected data

²³ Group exhibition title: *Beyond the limits of the gaze*, Photo Biennale 2012, "Logos". Contemporary Art Centre of Thessaloniki, Warehouse B1, Thessaloniki port, May 11 – June 17, 2012. Curators: Syrago Tsiara, Domna Gounari.

provide detailed information about the exact date and time of each written commentary.

The installation based on video projections and the permitted interactivity function as a condition in which a viewer's mind is projected on the wall.



Fig. 41. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness*. [Installation view] CACT, Thessaloniki

The viewers responded to the digital installation, as the video screens were walls on which they could express personal opinions. According to the collected data, the majority reflect concerns about the current unstable political situation in Greece during the humanitarian crisis.

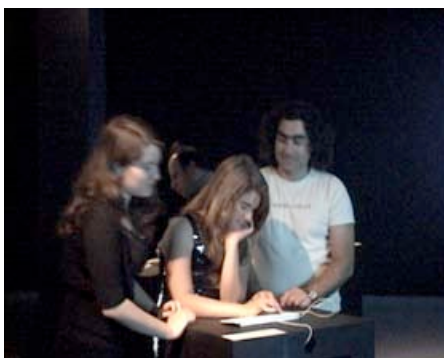


Fig. 42. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness*. [Audiences' participation] CACT, Thessaloniki

The data collected from the first presentation of this research project at the Contemporary Art Centre in Thessaloniki (CACT) were markedly defined by the socio-political context of that time. The exhibition took place exactly in the period between the two parliamentary elections in Greece. A legislative election was held on Sunday 6 May 2012, one week before the opening of the exhibition. However, no party won sufficient majority and the elections were rescheduled for June 17, 2012, on exactly the same day of the closing of the exhibition. The elections were extremely crucial for the Greeks, since the results would determine whether Greece would continue to be a member of the European Union.

The absurdity that characterized the period between the two elections, and people's social insecurity and anxiety affected the interaction of viewers with the *Arbitrariness* installation. Under those menacing circumstances, many viewers responded by writing caustic and politically oriented comments. In general, the audience's responses are evaluated in the context of the visual rhetoric that analyses images as pictorial entities which can reveal, connect, and even form cultural meaning (Ommen, 2016).

Specifically, the audience's responses were given in short phrases or in one single word (See Appendix 1) out of which:

- Some are related to the given text. For example, for *Image 1* (Fig.19) entitled *She who disappeared into shadows*:
... and became a shadow herself...
... she was haunted by the ghosts of the past
... she orchestrated her disappearance with sadistic meticulousness

For *Image 9* entitled *The middle ear*:

... I always listen to you!

- Some are related to the given imagery. For example, for *Image 2* entitled *I really mean that she was beautiful*:
... fetus
 For *Image 3* entitled *The Death of the Building*:
... The dove house of ghostdog samurai
 For *Image 8* entitled *Cut in small pieces*:
... Eros holds a cup above his head

- Some are responses to other viewers' responses generating short dialogues. For example, for *Image 6* (Fig.21) entitled *Stuck on waving*:
... Empty promises of hello
... Truth?
... Why?
 For *Image 9* entitled *The middle ear*:
... I always listen to you!
... She listens what she wants to. What she wants, knows, fears, imagines, desires and those and others

- Some are comments on political parties that participated in the parliamentary elections. For example, for *Image 10* entitled *She died but she did not know it*:
... Pasok²⁴ Died
 For *Image 5* entitled *A hole in the ground*:
... Vote to Golden Dawn²⁵ to 'purify' the country

²⁴ Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) [Greek: Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima]. Social-democratic political party in Greece. "The party was a part of the two coalition governments from 2011 to 2015 during which unprecedented austerity measures was taken in responds to crisis. In the Hellenic Parliament PASOK went from being the largest party with 160 mandates (43.92% of the popular vote) in the 2009 election to being the smallest party with 13 mandates (4.7% of the popular vote) in the January 2015 election, which later rose to 17 mandates (6.3% of the popular vote) in the September 2015 election" (Nordsieck, 2015, para.5).

²⁵ Golden Dawn (GD) is an extreme Neo-Nazi political party in Greece. "Since May 2010, when the loan agreement between the Greek Government and IMF/EU/ECB was signed, the previous political configurations have been altered radically. One of

- Some are plain numbers, single alphabet letters and punctuation marks.
- Some are poetic and metaphysical. For example, for *Image 7* entitled *Epidemic*:
 - ... *Fear*
 - ... *Existence*
 - ... *Otherness*
- Some are comments on the installation itself. For example, for *Image 4* (fig.23) entitled *Story told so fast that nobody understood it*:
 - ... *it's like I am playing in an empty theatre*
 - For *image 7* entitled *Epidemic*: ... *In real time and space.*

In addition, the collected data indicated that there were viewers who responded by simply pressing the 'enter' button many times without writing anything at all.

Furthermore, there were many written comments in English despite the fact that the two exhibitions were held in Greece.

The data collected from the second presentation of the project at Beton7 Centre for the Arts, in Athens, were similar to those collected from CACT in Thessaloniki. However, viewers at Beton7 interacted with the digital installation differently and more easily. Despite the turbulent socio-political terrain²⁶ that also defined the time of the

the main changes is the empowerment of the extreme Right. GD from 0.29 percent (circa 20,000 votes) in the parliamentary elections of 2009, in the elections of 2012 received circa 7 percent of votes (over 400,000)" (Dalakoglou, 2013, p.289).

²⁶ The majority of the Greek MPs voted for the second memorandum, many people lost their jobs while incidents of racism and fascism became much more visible in many of the Athenian neighbourhoods.

second exhibition, there were not so many political comments as in CACT's case in Thessaloniki.

Another thought-provoking point is that the viewers from Beton7 seem to have responded directly to the referential objects of the images by sharing thoughts and writing comments on the subject of each photographic image. It appeared that they somehow established a space for discussing the imagery and not only the texts (See Appendix 1).

5.6 EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Spending a considerable period of time in both of the exhibition spaces where *Arbitrariness* was presented, I could observe viewers' different reactions. In general, there were those who willingly and spontaneously responded, but also those who were undecided as to whether they would like to contribute. Different assumptions can be made for the undecidability of the latter. Perhaps they did not wish to join a collective praxis of writing in common view and/or they were not used to being asked to do so in a public exhibition space; perhaps they wanted to avoid this self exposure; perhaps they just felt like observing but not participating or they did not find the whole event interesting enough. In many cases, though, this undecidability was interrupted when they had visual access to other viewers' comments on the projection screens and this fact seemed to encourage or motivate them to get involved. No matter what reasons led others to participate and others not, the positive thing remains that the installation created a space where all attitudes were welcome.

In overall, within the installation space, viewers are involved either kinesthetically, as they walk around and look at other viewers' various

written interactions, or more drastically, as they contribute with their own comments to the digital visual poems projected on the video screens. Their contribution leads the narratives of the imagery in different directions ascribing non-linearity into the interactivity. Furthermore, by the time that each viewer intervenes in the story, "the story changes from being an account of events which have already taken place to the experience of events which are taking place in the present" (Cameron, 1995, para.20). Consequently, with viewers' contribution the "story time becomes real time" (ibid, para.20) and the interaction takes the form of a game in which participants interact not only with the artwork but also with each other. Thus, participants' interaction is not limited to a simple interpretation of – or a reaction to – the artwork. By adding their own words and ideas in the projected assemblages of image and text, they "intervene in a meaningful way within the representation itself" (ibid, para.3) taking the control of the interactive narrative. For example, some of the participants' written responses to *Image 2* (Fig.43), in which I represent a white genderless silhouette combined with the gendered phrase "I really mean that she was beautiful", included comments such as: "and clever", "by whose standards?", "what is beautiful?" (See Appendix 1).

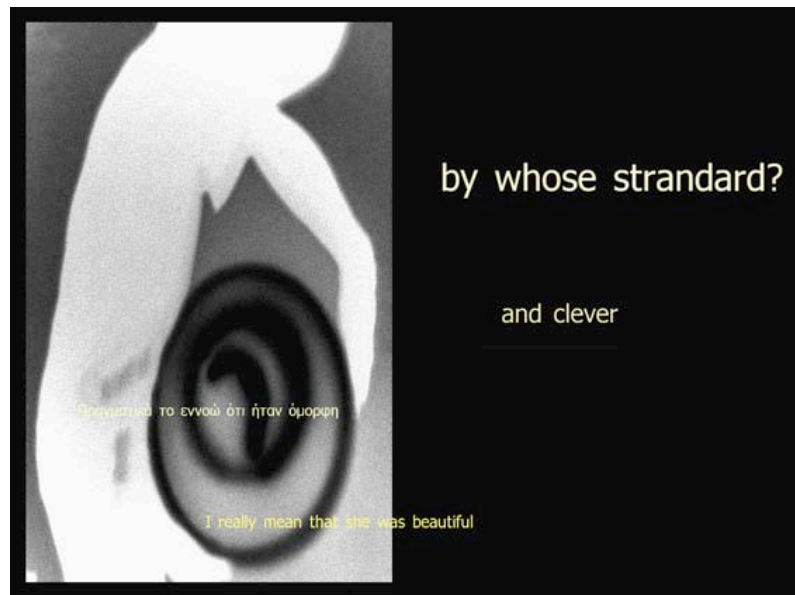


Fig. 43. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness: Image 2*,
I really mean that she was beautiful. [Projection still]

Thus, in this case participants' written responses developed in a very intriguing debate on the representational politics of the image, implicating on the one hand the stereotyped definition of women not in terms of intelligence but external appearance and on the other hand the normative discourses that determine what is beautiful and what is not in each society.

Another example of audience's reconfiguration of meanings is found in responses to the *Image 7* (Fig.44), a photographic composition of silhouettes combined with the word "epidemic". Comments such as "otherness", "φαντάσματα [ghosts]" and "life put a spoon in my mouth" put forward issues of representation of the *Other*, the stranger, as a threat, a source of epidemic, mingled poetically with emotions of hope, caring and tenderness.

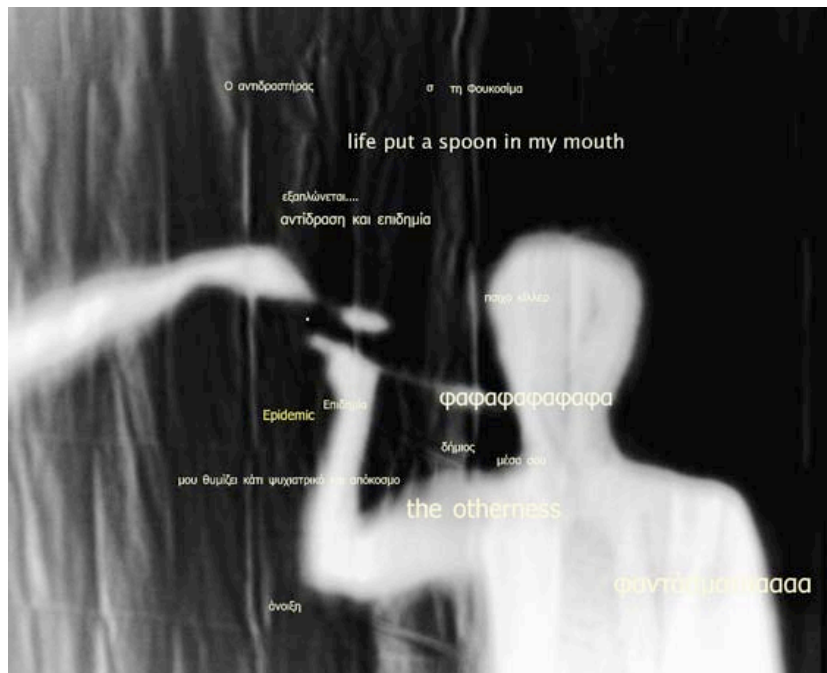


Fig. 44. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Arbitrariness: Image 7, Epidemic*. [Projection still]

The above examples do not constitute remote cases. Participants' meaningful intervention in the narratives of the *Arbitrariness* imagery is evident in all the collected by the software data (See for more in Appendix 1). For this reason, I purposely use the term 'participatory interactivity', instead of simply 'interactivity'; to describe the central role of audience's participation in the fulfilment of the project's goals in the exhibition space.

Furthermore, the *Arbitrariness* installation creates a digital environment of repeated acts of narrating and correlating speech/language, images and sound. Repetition is also traced in Bourgeois' art book. In the introduction of its latest edition, the poet and classicist Marius Bewley (2008) provides analytical accounts on the text that appears next to the engravings, stating: "Now these fables are just barely big enough to carry the plot, and it is always the same plot, repeated in a different way each time. They are tiny tragedies of human frustration, fear, and loneliness" (Bourgeois,

2008/1947).²⁷ *Arbitrariness*, too, uses repetition, but in different ways and degrees and with different results. First of all, the components of the digital installation, the software, the images with the text and the sound were designed to be looped in specific periods of time. Also, the viewers were invited to repeat in the public exhibition space similar habitual acts of their daily virtual and augmented reality, such as the act of writing, posting and sharing on individual blogs and social networks. As a result, *Arbitrariness* does not carry one or the same repeated plot. The plots emerging from the video screens are in a constant change through the audience's interactivity, always fragmented and open-ended. Taking into consideration the context and the collected data from the two exhibitions, these plots carry irregularities and create new perspectives regarding the relationship of text – image - *agora*, as well as the connection of artist - event - audience.

Specifically, as it is explained earlier, most of the written data collected from both of the exhibition spaces were direct responses either to the projected images, or to the texts of the projected images, or to both images and texts, always adding, or questioning, or contemplating on their meaning. This kind of interaction and any association with the 'aura' of images and texts (Robinson, 2013) were expected from the beginning, forming, thus, an element of regularity. Against this regularity, though, there were a number of responses that did not actually 'fit'. These were the political comments and thoughts on particular attitudes of the Greek political parties. These comments introduce irregularity while challenging the purity of the 'aura' of images and texts. The irregularity was most unexpected, as the digital installation was presented in an institutional event (Photo Biennale, Museum of Photography Thessaloniki) at an exhibition space

²⁷ For the specific quotation there is not any page to mention because the art book was designed to be produced in particular copies without page numbering.

(CACT) defined by the context of an established museum. It is worthy to mention here that during the opening of the exhibition artist colleagues approached discretely to alarm me that some viewers were 'spoiling' my artwork with their caustic comments. In other words, it seems that this irregularity signified some sort of transgression on behalf of the audience and it is within this framework of transgression that I now would like to examine the possibilities of the artwork to enact the *agora*.

In particular, in the *Arbitrariness* exhibition, most of the viewers, in a ritualized mode that resembles their everyday interaction with new technologies and virtual realities, combined the imagery of the installation with 'proper' texts complying with the hegemonic norms of the particular art event. However, there were those who used the same ritualized mode and introduced a political language that defied the discursive, spatial and temporal politics of the event. In this way, *Arbitrariness* developed in the exhibition as a performative event in which the spectators cited incidents, expressed criticism against the public political sphere and consequently transformed the installation space into the *agora*. This transformation is critical because it undermines the *inside/outside* dichotomy of two emerging spaces allowing for the 'sayable' to become 'seeable'.

As mentioned before, the exhibition at the CACT took place in the specific short time between the two elections. In this specificity of time, public life in Greece was determined merely by economic technocrats, while the Greek people were –and continue to be– ignored, dismissed as the lazy caricatures of Europe and presented as unworthy by the general media propaganda (ROAR magazine, 2011; BBC News, 2015; Greek News in English, 2017). As a consequence, the *agora*, the *outside* space where democracy functions, is

disappearing, while in the *inside* space defined by the installation, the *agora* emerges through the active audience's participatory interaction.

If "*the seeable is not sayable* is a philosophical thesis which may be applied as a limiting condition to Foucault's and every other philosophical, i.e., linguistic, presentation..." (Lilly, 2002, p. 55), then *Arbitrariness* is a case of the 'seeable' that becomes 'sayable' through acts of writing. The people's opinion in particular, which was expressed in massive street protests, became the *phantasma*, as it was not heard and respected, but in the exhibition space it turned out to be clearly visible through the digital equipment of the installation. It is within these spatial and temporal conditions of language, image and participation that the *phantasma-agoric* visual subject is formulated. Defining the public speech (*logos*), *agora* is usually connected to visibility, rationality and exteriority. On the other hand, image engages the *phantasma* and irrationality. In *Arbitrariness* these definitions change drastically. *Agora*, which becomes invisible in the exterior space due to the elimination of all democratic processes in the public life of Greece at the time, reappears as part of the imagery in the exhibition space of the installation due to the audience's written interventions on the video projections. As a result, the 'irrational' *phantasma* informs us in a very 'rational' way about the *agora*. Transforming the exhibition space into an *active agora*, the participants contested the arbitrariness by which the political system was functioning, ignoring their opinion and eliminating the processes of democracy.

Considering all these expected and unexpected results, the particular mode of participatory interaction in *Arbitrariness* reveals the relationship of image and language as contextual and situational. Furthermore, participants' introduction of irregularities into the specific art project reinforced displacements in the relation of the triad

artist – event – audience. The artist Baumgartner states in his doctoral research, *The Artist's place in the structure and presentation of a work of art* (2008): "I look at the painting, and the painting looks back at me. Its gaze determines my place in time and space" (p. 28). In my case, it was the gaze of the audience that determined my place in time and space. *Arbitrariness* generated processes of restructuring experience suggesting a space of knowledge for both the creator and the audience. Through the participatory condition, the event generated improvisations that were deployed in repetitive acts of responding and demonstrated the subjective relation of vision and language. Participants' interventions made visible the institutional discourses of the exhibition space as well as the broader political context that shaped the connections of images and texts projected on the video screens. In other words, they made visible the political implications of the participatory interactive installation. Taking into consideration Kester's critique that many participatory projects have a textual status leaving very little autonomy to *collaborators/participants* and conveying the message that 'the viewer, in short, can't be trusted", I would say that *Arbitrariness* suggests that the viewer can be trusted!

At this point, it is important to highlight the political decisions that I took for the mode of participatory interactivity which finally, created the conditions for the emergence of the *agora* in the exhibition space. Specifically, I invited the audience to respond to given associations of images and texts projected on video screens without posing any restrictions or exercising any kind of censorship to their ways of expression. There was not any control of derogatory words by the programme and viewers were free to write anything they wanted anywhere onto the projected image. Although I felt uneasy to the idea that the audience would intervene into my images in such a way,

nevertheless, I decided to take the risk so that to form a favourable condition for the unexpected to be revealed.

Consequently, *Arbitrariness* is differentiated from other cases of participatory projects in which fixed questions monitor answers from the viewers. For instance, *Before I Die* (Chang, 2011) is a creative project that employs writing as the main participatory condition. Participants are invited to complete the sentence "Before I die I want to _____" written with chalkboard paint and stencilled by the artist on the exterior wall of an abandoned house (See Appendix 7). In the case of *Arbitrariness* the participants are invited to improvise without following any particular instructions or guidelines, a fact that revealed the politics involved in the relation of words and images.

For the same reason, *Arbitrariness* participatory interactive installation is completely different from the so-called audio-visual 'poetry machines' where participants compose visual poems following specific menu directions and using exclusively given words and phrases from the database of a computer software (Huhtamo, 1995). An example of such a case is Bill Seaman's *Passage Sets/One Pulls Pivots at the Tip of the Tongue* (1994-95), a poem generator installation, where viewers are invited to choose words from scrolling lists, which then become part of an ever-changing text at the bottom of screens with audio-video and other image projections (Seaman, 1995). In *Arbitrariness*, viewers do not draw words from databases; they use their own words, expression and imagination to respond to the projected imagery; in many cases this act of texting develops to a collective experience in which participants answer to each other's comments on the screen in *poetic* dialogues merging politics with aesthetics.

Additionally, the digital installation profiled a partial truth from the audience-members of a suppressed economy. It provided a space for the expression of feelings, personal thoughts and hidden reactions towards the political situation of a particular historic moment in time. Within this context, still images combined with text acted as catalysts for the performance of personal narratives developed either through choice, necessity, dilemma and/or indifference, creating nonetheless new interpretations and multiple combinations for the evolving creative work.

In this first research creative project, I examined one aspect of the semantics of the words *phantasma* and *agora*, which relates the former to 'image' and the latter to language (*logos*). In order to achieve this, I employed symbolism, participation and digital technologies. Evaluating the significance of the audience's participation in the developing of the *Arbitrariness* project, I decided that at the next stages of this practical research I should explore the possibilities of the use of different aspects of participation in addressing the complexity of the association of *phantasma* and *agora*.

6. *Symposium*

Reflecting on the visual rhetoric of *Arbitrariness*, I produced the second project of this research, the *Symposium* installation (2012). In *Arbitrariness*, participatory interactivity allowed the audience(s) to act as agents at the exhibition space revealing the contextual relation between image and text. Questioning the artist's authority as a bearer of truth (Kester, 2011, pp.1-17), they elaborated on the representational politics of the artwork as well as of the exhibition space itself. These shifts also brought into light redefinitions of the words *phantasma* and *agora* determined by the particular historical moment in Greece.

The relation between image and text is also examined in *Symposium*, but this time it is explored in relation to the socio-political context as it is defined by the severe economic and political crisis in Greece, a fact that became visible in the *Arbitrariness* case. However, in *Symposium* a different mode of *participation* has been employed. *Participants* become parts of the imagery and they have no knowledge of or control over the text.

Furthermore, considering the question of this research about the possible interconnections between *phantasma* and *agora*, at this stage, I focused on the concept of *agora* as an assembly.

The concept of assembly presupposes connectivity and gathering, while it is embodied in the public space through participatory activities (Damiris and Wild, 1997). Thus, in *Symposium* I combined a participatory group performance in the public space with video and text.

The video performance is based on a staged action-picnic held at the park of Plato's Academy in September 2012. Specifically, the project was developed in two stages. In the first stage, members of art and social collectives were invited to participate as 'dinner guests' in a staged picnic where food was offered on plastic plates in a simulation of a table decorated with various toys and small gadgets (Fig.45-47).



Fig. 45. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*. [The performance table]



Fig. 46. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*. [The performance objects/toys]



Fig. 47. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[The performance objects/toys]

These 'latest' kids' toys, games and 'smart' gifts are usually circulated by street vendors, the so-called 'strangers', in the streets of Athens and other public gathering places such as cafés, restaurants, etc. By the end of the performance participants left taking with them a toy of their choice. The performance was not announced in the press, lasted for about three hours and was videotaped (Fig.48).



Fig. 48. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[Video still from the performance]

In the second stage, I created a video of 3 minutes duration in which I combined fragments of the performance with excerpts from the novel of Albert Camus' *The Stranger* (French: *L'Étranger*) (1942). These excerpts appear in the form of subtitles over selected video frames (Fig.49-50).



Fig. 49. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*. [Video still]



Fig. 50. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*. [Video still]

While *Arbitrariness* was based on the digital replacement of existing printed artwork and its further development with the audience's interaction, *Symposium* engages given text in the plot of the video, inserted after the performance during the editing process.

The practice of assembly involves issues of presence and absence, visibility and invisibility depending on who are, or not, entitled to participate in it. Thus, during the production of the *Symposium* more questions were raised:

- What means can be used to visualize presence and absence, visibility and invisibility?
- If *agora* is "action through speech" (Damiris and Wild, 1997, p.3), what kind of association between image and text can be used to describe or account for the speechless?
- In what ways can this association of video and text imagery generate connections to the socio-political context?
- What form of participation could be the most effective for exploring the image-assembly association?
- How does this research project offer insight into the relationship between the artist, the event and the participants?

Symposium was a site-specific project produced for the invitational group exhibition, *Visual Dialogues 2012*. The exhibition took place at the public archaeological park of Plato's Academy in Athens from December 16, 2012 to February 10, 2013. It was organized by *The Alexander S. Onassis Foundation Cultural Centre* and curated by Marilena Karra. The exhibition aimed at drawing attention to:

- A. "The financial, political and state crisis as a challenge for democracy and arts.
- B. Social factors, such as unemployment, the risk of state bankruptcy and immigration, as a motive for artistic action and reaction" (Onassis Centre, 2012, para.2).

The specific neighbourhood with the park that hosted the exhibition takes its name from the Academy of Plato, the renowned philosophical

school which was founded there by Plato in 387 BC. It is situated 2 miles NW of the centre of the city of Athens. Its archaeological remains are considered some of the most important ones as they signify the birthplace of Western education (Leonard, 2010). For many years though, this region was mainly an industrial area and was not used as an archaeological site open for the public to visit. Since 1985, many small industries have been closed one after the other and the ghostly figures of the abandoned buildings dominated the surrounding area.

The modern-day park is quasi-urban, quasi-archaeological and is located in a poor neighbourhood named Akademia Platonos. Situated in the fringes of Athens, the archaeological park is nowadays used by the public for various activities: physical exercise, relaxed strolls, activists' gatherings for discussions on socio-political issues, etc. The residents and/or other collectives of the neighbourhood and of adjacent regions mostly improvise these new practices of social interaction. What is of great interest in all these practices is that in most cases they are accompanied by picnics. Despite the depressive conditions in society and economics, or to be more precise, because of these conditions, such picnics have been established as essential occasions of socializing in the margins of a downgraded multicultural area.

During this period the picnic emerged as a common form of entertainment in many neighbourhoods of Athens. Suffering from the austerity measures, most people improvised 'dinners' in public squares, as they could not afford the 'luxury' of a restaurant and/or even a traditional small Greek tavern. People used to share their homemade food in the open public space as an activity that encouraged bonding, friendship, solidarity and self-empowerment. Finally, the emerging phenomenon of multiple picnics transforms the

gathering for eating together into an anti-depressive praxis of sharing and communicating.



Fig. 51. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *View of the park in Plato's Academy* [photography]

On the other hand and under the severity of the economic depression, this phenomenon signifies transformations in the ranks of the social classes and their access to food. Specifically, the lower middle class moved from the bars and restaurants to cheap home-made picnics, while working class people could not afford even this. The lowest and weakest –and they were thousands– ended up forming huge breadlines living in the streets or in their homes with no electricity and hot water. In particular, the dark side of this situation is reflected on these endless breadlines that started appearing at that specific time in the poor, usually former industrial neighbourhoods. It is worthy to mention here that this attack on fundamental people's right for food has been the subject matter for the *Biography of the Bread* installation which I realized during the present research and is presented analytically in Appendix 4.²⁸

In Akademia Platonos, the 'custom' of picnics becomes all the more thought-provoking, because it is ascribed on the activities of

²⁸ I present the *Biography of the Bread* project in the section of the Appendices, following the VIVA examiners' recommendation to remove it from the main document so that to have more space to elaborate on the other research projects.

alternative human and social rights groups and it is marked by vehement political and intellectual discourses and by actions of solidarity, such as the exchange of used books, clothes, foods, even toys for children and other necessities that had become unaffordable to many.²⁹ All these activities and social exchanges transform the area of the park into an *agora*; they promote social cohesion through the celebration of diversity, constituting a strong counter discourse against the populism of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn, which has a lot of voters in the area.

The vivid presence of Golden Dawn in most of the working-class neighbourhoods of Athens, such as Kolonos, Sepolia, Akademia Platonos, Kypseli and Patissia, has been directly related to the economic crisis and the consequences of the implementations of the memoranda. Specifically, the bad economy, the increasing impoverishment of the middle-class, the rapid influx of immigrants in certain downtown areas, the continuous degradation of the centre of Athens and the populism of certain news media have caused a rupture in the Greek society out of which the political party of the fascist Golden Dawn emerged and gradually established itself as the third power in Greek politics (Versendaal, 2014). Golden Dawn took advantage of the poor living conditions of the above urban districts and promoted its racist agenda by organizing protest rallies and food drives exclusively for Greeks, and offered 'protection' services, including violent attacks against theatrical performances, activists, immigrants and homosexuals (Mason, 2012).³⁰ So, issues of

²⁹ ""Solidarity for All" was developed as a collective [...] and has the ambition to become one more pebble in the struggle for a life without austerity memoranda, poverty, exploitation, fascism or racism, striving to create the conditions for a radical policy for the overthrowing of the current regime and for social transformation" (Solidarity for All, 2011, p.21).

³⁰ Golden Dawn holds responsible for a series of atrocities such as the murder of the anti-fascist rapper singer Pavlos Fyssas on September 17, 2013 in Keratsini, Piraeus; the violent demonstration against the gay friendly performance *Corpus Crhisti* at the Chytirio theatre, in Votanikos, Athens, in October 2012, which ended

xenophobia and homophobia appeared in every neighbourhood including Akademia Platonos since almost the beginning of the crisis. A good example of the emerging relations, the social distance and the struggle for cohesion is *Akademia Platonos*, a film directed by Filippos Tsitos (2009). This film addresses issues of nationalism in regard to the specific area exposing the political with considerable insight and humour.³¹

Akademia Platonos, a region of many contradictions but also manifestations of solidarity, forms the geographical and social terrain of the *Symposium* performance and video installation. Nevertheless, the title of this installation also draws its context from the history of the particular region. It specifically indicates an intellectual discussion, as it makes use of the idea of symposium, an essential part of the ancient Greek culture, which dates back to the 7th century BC. The word symposium (Greek: *συμπόσιον*, symposion) implies the sense of togetherness. It literally means, "to drink together". However, during an ancient symposium more activities would also occur, such as "the singing of drinking songs, the telling of riddles and fables, and the recitation of verse from the classics, or recent drama" (Naugle, 2010, p.2). In such male aristocratic gatherings the invited participants could also exchange views about specific subjects that were related to their époque (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Greek and Roman Art, 2002).

up with the cancellation of the event as serious threats were expressed against the lives of the artists that took part in the performance; the violent attacks against immigrants with motorbikes in central streets of the city of Athens in June 2012; the life threatening attacks against immigrants working in various open air markets all over Greece since 2012; the beating of members of the Syriza Party in Kolonos, Athens in April 2014; the beating of members of the Communist Party of Greece who were workers in Perama, Piraeus in September 2013. These are just a few examples of the criminal actions of Golden Dawn (Athens Indymedia, 2013; Left.gr, 2013; TVXS-TV Χωρίς Σύνορα, 2014).

³¹ "Filippos Tsitos' "Akademia Platonos" is a short tale of a proudly nationalistic Greek man who discovers that he might actually be Albanian, a situation that causes trouble to his family and friends" (Bennett, 2009, para.1).



Fig. 52. *Symposium* (470 BC) [Painting]

With time, a 'symposium literature' was inspired to ensure the written documentation of those discussions and activities (Naugle, 2010). Thus, the word "symposium" also refers to the theoretical conversations included in Plato's philosophical text "The Symposium" dated between 385-370 BC. This text describes a gathering party of many philosophers³² of the époque hosted by the tragic poet Agathon. At that gathering, as it was also the case with many other symposia, the guests were expected to contribute by delivering a speech on the theme of love (Vlastos, 1978).

The *Symposium* project of my research, though, is based on a completely different concept from the ancient Platonic symposium. Visiting the archaeological park on a number of occasions, walking in the specific neighbourhood and interacting with its citizens, I soon came to realize that what was happening there with the picnics was a reversed ritual of the ancient symposium. The "symposium" now does not happen in the interior of a luxurious house where only intellectual and privileged people can participate. It takes place in the public

³² There were seven major speeches delivered by: Phaedrus (an Athenian aristocrat associated with the inner-circle of the philosopher Socrates), Pausanias (the legal expert), Eryximachus (a physician), Aristophanes (the eminent comic playwright), Agathon (a tragic poet, host of the banquet, that celebrates the triumph of his first tragedy), Socrates (the eminent philosopher and Plato's teacher), Alcibiades (a prominent Athenian statesman, orator and general). (Howatson and Sheffield, 2008).

space in the simple form of a picnic and as part of communal activities, which, as I explained earlier, stand against the conditions brought about by the economic depression. Thus, I chose to use the term “symposium” to specifically reflect this inversion, and furthermore to transform the trivial picnic into something “that matters” (Butler, 1993), indicating its political significance at this particular time and space.

In the next subchapters I present the practical steps and the methods used for the production of the *Symposium* performed video and installation.

6.1 CONDUCTING AND REALIZING THE PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE

As I have already explained, *Symposium* explores the relationship between image and assembly using participatory practices. Realizing the political connotations of the picnics in *Akademia Platonos*, I decided to use them as a paradigm of assembly, since they combine gathering of people in public, action and exchange. Following Jeffrey Alexander (2009), as cultural structures these picnics involve symbolic representation and are conceptualized as “social performances of social actors” (Snow, 2010, p.79). Thus, I believed the medium of performance would be the most appropriate method to refer visually to the association of image and assembly. In this framework, image and assembly are conceptualized as temporal and spatial symptoms of an orchestrated live event.



Fig. 53. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*. [Video stills from the performance]

The performance was held on Sunday, 30 September 2012 at 2:00 p.m. and was accomplished with the contribution of twenty-seven invited participants and myself. For the realization of the performance, members of creative and social collectives were invited to participate as representatives of the image of collectiveness in that specific moment of time. Those individuals, men and women, were of different backgrounds including workers, educators, students and activists. Some of them knew each other already, as they had collaborated in different events. The choice of inviting the particular participants was made after I had visited many alternative places and discussed with people who were involved in collective social and political groups in Athens. The performance participants were members of: the Women's basketball team *Nekranastasi*, Carpenters' women collective *Saraki*, Artists' collective *Kinisi Mavili* and *Educators against homophobia*. The picnic was partially supported by the *Synergatiko kafeneio*³³. Most of those groups flourished during the humanitarian crisis in Greece in order to suggest and encourage alternative ways of social resistance by collective thinking, acting and trading in the most collaborative ways.

³³ The *Synergatiko kafeneio* is located a few miles away from the main entrance of the archaeological park at the Plato's Academy. It is a café that promotes the idea of alternative trade dedicated to social and supportive economy with products that respect the worker, the land and the environment (Solidarity for all, 2011).

All the participants were informed about the specificities of the action. So, during the performance they would drink, eat and discuss various subjects of their choice. They were encouraged to behave routinely, as they did in real life or as such, as Derrida suggests the performance becomes “a kind of “redo” of “real life” (Jones, 2011, p.24). They were also asked and agreed upon the documentation of the performance and that the material would be used for the production of a short video.

6.2 THE SETTING OF THE PERFORMANCE: PROPS AND TOYS

Just a few hours before the performance, I set the stage at the archaeological park. The performance setting consisted of a colourful plastic cloth placed on the ground to be used as a ‘table’ by the participants. Several stones of the archaeological park were used to ensure the stability of the cloth on the ground (Fig. 54).



Fig. 54. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*. [The performance table]

On the cloth I placed disposable white plastic plates and transparent plastic glasses. The plastic was selected as the most appropriate material for two main reasons: first, to stress the simplicity of the occasion, i.e. a common picnic, and second to encapsulate visually the contradiction between the triviality of plastic and the solid history of the archaeological remains.

Each of the performance plates contained an object in the form of a toy or gadget, such as a moving speaking parrot (Fig.55), a colourful flashing butterfly (Fig.56), a mini portable megaphone for street protests (Fig.57), a night light bulb in the form of a Christian cross (Fig.58), a mini battery fan in the shape of a flower (Fig.59), a dolphin toothpick (Fig.60), a light and music battery operated peacock (Fig.61) and so on. In total, the toys were twenty-seven, that is as many as the participants.



Fig. 55. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[The performance objects/toys]



Fig. 56. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[The performance objects/toys]



Fig. 57. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[The performance objects/toys]



Fig. 58. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[The performance objects/toys]



Fig. 59. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[The performance objects/toys]



Fig. 60. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[The performance objects/toys]



Fig. 61. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[The performance objects/toys]

These small objects/toys carry significant cultural meanings and connotations. Made of toxic and non-recyclable materials, these objects constitute a threat against the environment while are connected with global capitalism and mass production, excessive labour hours and cruel working conditions (Walsh, 2007; Deutsche Welle, 2018). In the particular time of crisis in Greece, though, these objects have an even darker connotation besides the above. They directly signify the people who circulate them in the streets, the ξένοι in Greek, which means 'strangers' or foreigners. These ξένοι are the so-called "unwelcome guests" (Human Rights Watch, 2013, para.3), a phrase that defines the xenophobic movements and the police authorities' temper against the street vendors around the centre of Athens and other public gathering places.³⁴ Most of these vendors are unemployed, homeless or immigrants and refugees who are constantly on the move to escape possible imprisonment, as they do not have a licence to trade in the streets. In the margins of a metropolitan city that seems to be still holding out, these vendors constitute the city's "bare life" (Agamben, 1998). Having lost any economic, social and political status, they are treated as disposable 'items' in the same way as the toys they are trading. They find themselves at the core of ethnocentric and/or racist discourse, and lead lives that have no other quality or qualification than just "the biological fact of life" (Buchanan, 2010, p.41).³⁵ Agamben's 'figure of the refugee', along with the newly formed figures of the homeless,

³⁴ "On August 8, 2012, 6,000 people had already been rounded up—Human Rights Watch issued a press release urging authorities to avoid discrimination based on race or ethnicity, arbitrary detention, and inhuman and degrading treatment" (Human Rights Watch, 2013, para.3).

³⁵ "The term originates in Agamben's observation that the Ancient Greeks had two different words for what in contemporary European languages is simply referred to as 'life': bios (the form or manner in which life is lived) and zoē (the biological fact of life). His argument is that the loss of this distinction obscures the fact that in a political context, the word 'life' refers more or less exclusively to the biological dimension or zoē and implies no guarantees about the quality of the life lived. Bare life refers then to a conception of life in which the sheer biological fact of life is given priority over the way a life is lived, by which Agamben means its possibilities and potentialities" (Buchanan, 2010, p.41).

the hopeless and the jobless, due to the Greek economic crisis, are “as exemplary as the symbolic representation of social and political reality” (Owens, 2009, p. 567). Consequently, the stories of these ξένοι are closely related to the aforementioned toys and in the eyes of the people residing in Greece these objects are not any toys but the toys the ξένοι sell.

Conversely, these small products are amiable by nature. They imply people’s joyfulness in obtaining affordable minor gifts, even if they are aware of their trivial value. They are imaginative and attract attention due to their unexpected and often spectacular functionalities. For example, when it is at the ‘on’ position, the moving parrot (Fig.55) repeats exactly the words of anyone talking nearby.

Attractive enough to hide the hard conditions in which they have been produced and even more circulated, these objects/toys are *phantasmagoric* in Benjamin’s terms. Undermining their commodification, in *Symposium* I use these ‘smart’ products as metonymies for the presence of the *Other*. As central props of the performance table, the toys denote the ξένοι/‘strangers’, the *Other* who becomes both present and absent like a *phantasma*. As outcasts, the ξένοι are physically absent from any social activities in the city including the picnics and yet in *Symposium* they become symbolically present through the toys.

Such being the case, the toys in this research project are playful and eerie at the same time, similarly to Mike Kelley’s stuffed animals in the series entitled *Arenas* (1981-1990). In the particular work, though, Kelley generates an inner world for his toys setting them in explicit positions and internal conversations (Fig.62). In this world, viewers cannot but take the position of the observer.



Fig. 62. Mike Kelley (1990) *Arena #7 (Bears)*.
[Stuffed animals on blanket]



Fig. 63. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*.
[Video still from the performance]

In *Symposium*, the toys do not live independently in their own close world; they are visually and discursively related both to the performance, the participants and the physical site as well as to a dark story – Camus' story – that ends up with a murder. Being exposed in a bizarre conversation, the toys lose their innocence as childish objects and become part of a performing drama (Fig.64-65).



Fig. 64. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*. [Video still]



Fig. 65. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*. [Video still]

The plates with the toys were arranged to shape an imperfect isosceles triangle on the tablecloth. This selected pattern connects the performance with the space at which it happened. As it is known, triangles communicate fundamental meanings for philosophy, metaphysics and spiritualism. These shapes are not limited to geometry, as they were used by Plato to describe the conception of the "perfect Idea" (Macintosh, 2012, para.5). Plato's paradigm of the "perfect Triangle" implicates people's efforts to redefine the "Form" or "Idea" accordingly to provide a "perfect example" thereof (Macintosh, 2012, para.5). Made with disposable glasses and plates, my imperfect isosceles triangle materializes Plato's idea of the "perfect Triangle" in

a completely different way. Here, his “perfect Triangle” of the purest ideas and certainties has been replaced by the imperfect scheme contaminated by the disposable objects that denote the ξένοι/‘strangers’. In this case, the irregular pattern conveys the inadequate and designates a space of multiplicity and absurdity. It is dominated by the physical presence of the participants and the silent entities of the ‘smart’ products/‘strangers’. Particularly, this asymmetrical shape resonates uncomfortably with the idea of a ‘perfect’ example, suggesting that there is no absolute truth –or, in Plato’s terms, a “perfect idea”- that lies outside the complexity and heterogeneity of the social life.

In addition, the selected pattern for the performance table resembles Judy Chicago’s dinner table at the *Dinner Party* triangle installation (1974-79). In *Symposium* though, I contrasted Chicago’s carefully composed settings on the heavy triangular dinner table with a triangle of trivial materials. In this sense, the relation of *Symposium*’s imperfect triangle to Chicago’s stable triangle becomes metonymical. This replacement signifies the urgent need for the invisible “strangers” to be acknowledged as lives worthy to be lived (Butler, 2006). Taking into consideration Chicago’s (1996) earlier demand that “female heroes are equally worthy [as male heroes] of commemoration” (p.3), I moved her argument one step further. Specifically, with my triangle of trivial materials, I purpose to challenge the concept of heroship itself and point to the critical question of what is happening to/with those who are not ‘heroes’.

Furthermore, taking into consideration the temporal and spatial context of *Symposium*, the replacement of Chicago’s stable dinner table with the disposable dinner cloth signifies the sense of ephemerality that was produced by the current severe instability and

insecurity and affected to the worse the lives of people in middle and lower social classes under the regime of the economic crisis.

These recognizable toys as ξένοι/'strangers' were intentionally positioned on the plates waiting for the participants to arrive. This symbolic arrangement replaces the food temporarily to address the mere fact of daily life at least in Athens, that eating in public is inseparable from encountering people selling various toys and smart gadgets of mass production. Furthermore, by positioning these particular objects, the symbol of ξένοι, on the plastic plates, a symbol of mass production, I convey the idea that capitalism cannot survive without exploiting, devouring, the unprivileged. Thus, this temporary replacement of food engages symbolic signs of survival related to the contradictory feelings of joyfulness and violence simultaneously implied in sustenance.

At the beginning of the performance the dinner guests took their positions at the 'table' according to the triangle scheme and following their choice of a toy which was in front of them on the plate. Attracted by the little objects, they started playing with them and with one another. After a while, food and drinks were served. Part of the food was homemade by me and part of it was generously offered by the collective Synergatiko Kafeneio. The performance lasted three hours and was video-recorded. The camera was set right in front of the 'table' and recorded all the participants' activities and discussions. Finally and as the performance was developing, the participants deviated from the triangular shape to formulate their own 'imperfect forms'.

At the end of this action-picnic, the toys were offered to the participants who picked one of their choice and left. This last gesture imitates the way that social gatherings involving food and drinks such

as picnics, or dinners at taverns usually end; the convives leave the place and take with them these kinds of 'smart' gifts that may have bought from the wandering vendors. Seen in a different perspective though, this gesture carries a specific symbolism. It implies the participants' connection to the ξένοι, as they are both targeted in public life by the neo-racist and fascist movements. Specifically, as activists and bearing no prejudice against the *Other*, participants are among those who fight for the human, social and political rights of the ξένοι in the public space, expressing their solidarity and friendship. In the framework of the prevailing ethnocentric discourse, these activists are considered as 'dangerous' as the ξένοι whom they support. Therefore, both participants and the ξένοι have received multiple attacks by the Neo-nazis of Golden Dawn who perceive the first as 'traitors' and the latter as a threat against the cohesion and 'purity' of the Greek society (See Footnote 28).

6.3 THE PERFORMED VIDEO: COMBINING VIDEO IMAGERY WITH TEXT

The performance was recorded to form part of the *Symposium* video. Thus, the video does not serve as a documentation of the performance; it is a 'performed video', as I explained earlier in the *Research Methods* chapter, in which fragments of the live event are used in combination with text and fictitious settings to create new narratives.

The three-minute single-channel HD *Symposium* video comprises edited fragments of the performance and Camus' novel *The Stranger* (1942) in the form of subtitles. Particularly, the video presents only a few selected fragments of the public performance and includes fifteen chosen phrases from Camus' novel (See Appendix 2).

As the editor of the *Symposium* video, in order to corroborate visual interconnections and associate subjects and objects with time, I used particular editing practices such as overlapping, reversing, combining images and texts, inserting black and white scenes, as well as positive and negative imagery. These montage processes interrupt the continuity of the video imagery and the documentation of the performance itself. The audio of the video blends the recording sounds of the performance with the surrounding resonances of the archaeological park and audio noises I had particularly put to use to emphasize on tensions imposed by the selected excerpts of the novel. Interconnecting fiction with documentary and relating visual elements with literature and performative participation, the video creates a contemporary symposium based on associations of space, ambient sounds, imagery and text with toys as the 'silent' significations of the ξένοι/'strangers'.

The *Symposium* video was looped for the installation to be projected in two versions, in Greek and English. Being a site-specific creative project addressed to a multi-ethnic neighbourhood, the video was also produced in English intended to be comprehensible to a wider audience.

Albert Camus' *The Stranger* (1942), translated in the Greek edition with the title *Ο ξένος* (the singular of the word ξένοι/'strangers'), was selected as it was deemed the most appropriate work for exploring associations of image, text and assembly with the related issues of presence/absence and visibility/invisibility.

The philosophical novel *The Stranger* depicts the atmosphere of the French colonialism in the mid 1940s and poses significant questions with regard to the discursive production of otherness. Thus, this particular text had the potential to evoke dynamic dialogue with the

conditions of the poor multi-ethnic Athenian neighbourhood of Akademia Platonos and the increasing racist violence.

The plot of Camus' novel serves as a space where conflicting sides can converse. The novel describes an ordinary office worker, a French Algerian man, who kills an Arab while on vacation with his friends. The absurdity of this story relies on the fact that there is no specific reason for the murderer to commit such a crime, other than the hot weather on that particular summer day: "I said that I had no intention of killing the Arab"; "I tried to explain that it was because of the sun" (Camus, 1946, p.64). Camus's fiction emphasizes the character of the office worker Meursault, who is sentenced to death by the Franco-Algerian state for refusing to express regret. "This is a philosophical exploration of what Camus called "the tender indifference of the world"" (Robinson, 2012, para.2).

Meursault's journey calls for the acknowledgement of the absurd. It reflects on Camus' idea that "human beings live in an essentially meaningless universe where –as part of that 'living'– they are compelled to search for (and often demand) some sort of essential meaning" (Davies, 2013, para.15). This absurdity is exposed through the excerpts of the novel that I inserted in the form of subtitles in the *Symposium* video (See Appendix 2). For example, Meursault's memories of Algiers and of "a life which offered... the most subtle but most persistent of joys: the scent of summer, the neighbourhood that [he] loved, a certain type of sky at night..." (Smith cited in Robinson, 2012, para.2), are visually connected to the sunny archaeological park of the poor Athenian neighbourhood and the unreasonable explanation of his crime, "I tried to explain that it was because of the sun" (Fig. 66).



Fig. 66. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*: "I tried to explain that it was because of the sun". [Video still]

In *Symposium* I juxtapose specific fragments from Camus' novel with specific moments of the performance and particularly with scenes of toys as main protagonists. In this way the ξένοι/'strangers' become the medium for understanding Camus' sentences. For example, the scene with the talking parrot has the subtitle "Why did you pose between the first and the second shot?" (Fig.67). In Camus' story this question was addressed to Meursault by the judge in the court. Yet, even if we do not know this, we can assume that such a meticulously posed question must have been asked by a person of authority, a judge in a court, an interrogator or a policeman. In the video this person is represented as a moving parrot, suggesting the ways that subjects are trapped in roles and conventions embedded into the system like rings in an inescapable chain of subordination and alienation. To be clear, the ξένοι/toy does not represent the judge but it offers the medium through which to understand and conceptualize the figure of the judge in Camus' story as framed by convention and hypocrisy.

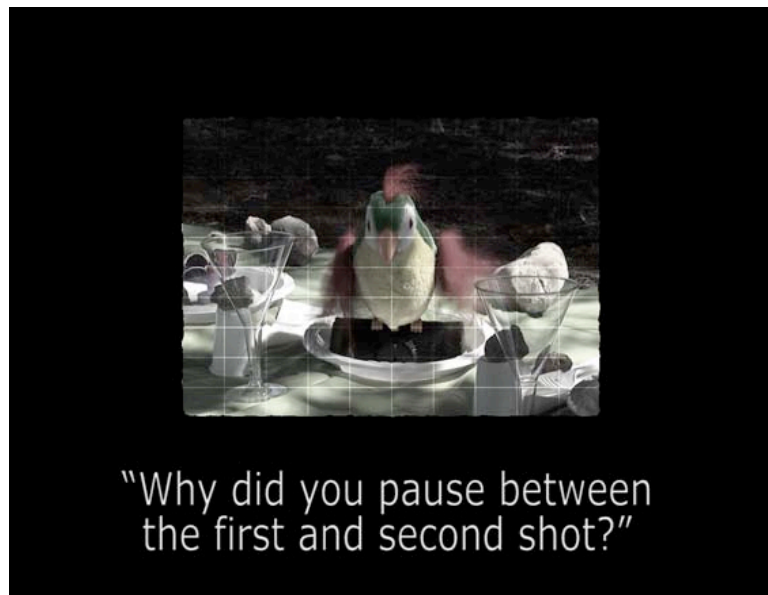


Fig. 67. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*: "Why did you pause between the first and second shot?". [Video still]

In other cases, Camus' excerpts are juxtaposed with scenes with the participants eating and discussing among various toys, in ways that intensify the meanings conveyed by the text and/or the imagery to such an extent that they become uncanny. For example, in Figure 68, Meursault's denial to confess to the priest who visited him in the prison before his execution is connected with a serene and 'sinless' scenery of people enjoying each other's company in a public food gathering under the same intensity of the sunny weather in Camus' story. Seeing this peaceful image of the sinless picnic combined with the phrase "I told him that I wasn't conscious of any "sin", viewers may then get suspicious if there was actually a sin.



Fig. 68. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*: "I told him that I wasn't conscious of any "sin". [Video still]

A similar case of juxtaposing image with text is also found in Bertolt Brecht's book (1955) *War primer* (See Appendix 7). The book is a collection of what Brecht calls "photo-epigrams" in which he combines images from the Press with his poems (Long, 2008). In these particular "photo-epigrams", Brecht takes newspaper photos from World War II and replaces and/or accompanies their captions with poems written by him specifically for these images. This word-and-image composite relates the practice used in *Symposium* with Brecht's "photo-epigrams". Brecht's association of image and text provides "contextual information without which the poems would be incomprehensible" (Long, 2008, p.208).

Similarly, in *Symposium* the text provides "contextual information without which" the video imagery of people sharing food and company while surrounded by toys "would be incomprehensible". *Symposium* and *War Primer* though have different starting points. In *War Primer* the photographs were supposed to document what 'really' happened in the war. Brecht disturbs this certainty that defines 'real' events by ascribing poetic language and thus, symbolism to 'realism'. In *Symposium* the imagery is symbolic from the beginning and involves

the association of 'realistic' with fictitious elements. The introduction of Camus' symbolic language is a vehicle by means of which the symbolic imagery of the video is decoded. In *War Primer*, symbolism undermines the fixity of the photographs. The vast numbers of war photos circulated repeatedly by the news media and the press have had a naturalizing effect on the concept of violence, suggesting that this is the 'natural' outcome of war. By ascribing his poems to these photos, Brecht denaturalizes the depicted violence, introducing performativity, as he invites readers to critically reflect on the tremendous disaster and contemplate on the responsibilities.

In *Symposium* violence is not obvious. It is encoded in the toys which denote the ξένοι/'strangers'. Violence is decoded through ascribing Camus' narrative of the murder to the imagery. In this way, a different kind of violence is described: one which does not bear a resemblance to that of war, but lurks in the margins of a 'peaceful' society where discursive practices normalize the regime of "bare life" (Agamben, 1998). In the video the objects appear to be delivering their own speech. Each single battery toy is activated to demonstrate its ability. With their electrical power on, some of the toys make funny noises; others can move, while some others only emit colourful lights. Thus, the silent entities, the ξένοι/'strangers', become audible and visible. Their demo is visually associated with specific phrases from the novel. For example, I used the most fancy product, the flashing butterfly (Fig.69), to address not only the "tender indifference" (Robinson, 2012), but also the traces of solidarity.



Fig. 69. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*: "They explained to me how to lay out my sleeping mat". [Video still]

I selected this tiny but bright object to relate it to a particular phrase that recounts a crucial moment for the plot of the novel. This is when the accused for murdering an Arab enters the prison, realizes the consequences of his crime but still gets the assistance of his Arab inmates to place his sleeping mat in the cell.

Relying on a participatory performance realized by non-professionals, the *Symposium* video can be contextualized in the framework of Bishop's (2012) "provisional typology" (p.220) of delegated performances. Specifically, Bishop distinguishes three modes. The first one involves participants who are non-professionals in the art fields and are invited to perform aspects of their identity in the exhibition space. The second mode engages participants who are professionals from other fields of expertise. The third mode refers to performances that comprise "situations constructed for video and film" (ibid, p. 226). In this third case the artist stages the situation and invites the participants to perform themselves. As Bishop notes, in this case the artist's editorial role is strong, and the produced artwork, video or film, may "trouble the border between live and

mediated to the point where audiences are unsure of the degree to which an event has been staged or scripted" (ibid, p.226).

One of the examples that Bishop includes in the third type is the video installation *They Shoot Horses* produced by the British artist Phil Collins in 2004 (Fig.70).



Fig. 70. Phil Collins (2004) *They Shoot Horses*. [Video still]

For the production of the particular work, Collins auditioned teenagers from Ramallah in Palestine to end up with nine selected participants who under payment performed for eight hours a disco dancing marathon with songs from 1960s to 2000s in front of a pink wall with two yellow stripes on the top. The result of this performance is a two-channel video in which the participants appear to dance in the sound of pop music but the viewers cannot hear them talking. In addition, viewers get informed about the site of the performance and the ethnic identity of the participants in the ending titles of the video.

Evidently, the *Symposium* performed video converses with Bishop's description of the third mode of delegated performances and Phil Collins's particular example. Specifically, I invited participants to perform themselves in a constructed situation that of the public

picnic. However, I did not conduct any audition to be assured for participants' performing skills and contrary to most cases of delegated performances I did not hire any of the participants. It is a fact that in the cases of delegated performances, there is a serious debate on ethics, with many parties to argue that artists exploit participants for their own interest and promotion. For this reason artists usually employ participants under payment. A second ethical problem refers to the given credits. For example Collins was criticized widely for not naming his participants at the credit list (Bishop, 2012, p.226).

In *Symposium* ethics were played out differently. Being mainly activists, participants volunteered to contribute because they were in agreement with the concept of the project, realising especially the connotations of the particular toys used, and they felt that we shared similar political causes. This sharing of common ideas, mutual trust and social awareness was reflected also in the performance since I denied the position of the observer to participate performing myself in the same way that the invited participants did. Furthermore, participants were not interested in having their names in the credentials preferring to be presented through their collective identities in the ending titles of the video, as it was discussed.

Additionally, I was not able to pay the participants for their contribution, since the budget was barely enough to cover the expenses for the renting of the technical equipment (professional video camera and sound equipment for recording outdoors), the assistant's payment, the purchase of the toys and the rest of the props, the food and some other miscellaneous. Yet, no question or demand was expressed by any of the volunteers on the matter. Due to the political connotations of the project, participants viewed their contribution to it as another praxis of activism and, in this framework,

any monetary exchange not only was unwanted but also seemed unethical to them.

Continuing the conversation with Collins' particular artwork, it is worthy to focus on its site-specificity. Although Collins produced this project in Ramallah there is no any evidence in the video from which viewers could recognize either the space or the ethnic identity of the participants; the viewers are informed about them only when they see the ending titles of the video. This lack of visual evidence does not necessarily mean that the video is inadequate in terms of communicating its connotations and transmitting political messages. As Bishop (2012) notes, "the Occupied Territories are never shown explicitly but are ever-present as a frame or *hors cadre* [...] In subjecting the teenagers to an onslaught of Western pop, Collins [...] depicts them as generic globalised teenagers; the more usual media representation of Palestinians is that of victim or fundamentalist (hence Collins' use of the 'usual suspects' backdrop, akin to a police line-up)" (p.226-7).

Similarly, in *Symposium*, viewers get in the ending titles of the video all the information needed for the contextualization of the work, the specificity of the space, the participants' identities and the use of Camus's text. In addition, viewers entering the installation space could find this information in my artist statement placed in photocopies at the entrance. In this artist statement, I also refer to the toys and their association to the ξένοι/'strangers' for those viewers who are not familiar with the connotations of the particular objects in the Greek context (See Appendix 2).

6.4 RESULTS

Symposium was presented in the *Visual Dialogues 2012* exhibition between December 2012 and February 2013.³⁶ Ten creative projects were selected after the submission of relevant proposals to be presented in this group exhibition; all of them were for the first time on public display within the context of the *Visual Dialogues 2012*. These creative works were produced using new media technologies (video art, projection of digital images, animation etc.), and were exhibited as installations in self-contained architectural structures inside the archaeological park. The ten kiosks were designed by an architect to fit the natural surroundings and host the video installations. This arrangement allowed visitors to wander through the park and discover for themselves the series of these presentations. The *Symposium* installation occupied a large video projection on a constructed wooden wall inside one of these kiosks (Fig. 71). The sound of the video was perceptible through two large pairs of speakers.

³⁶ *Visual Dialogues 2012* was curated by Marilena Karra. The exhibition was organized by the Alexander S. Onassis Foundation Cultural Centre at the archaeological park of Plato's Academy (Akademia Platonos, Athens, December 16, 2012 – February 10, 2013). The Onassis Cultural Centre is a new cultural foundation in Athens hosting events and actions across the whole spectrum of the arts, from theatre, dance, music and the visual arts to the written word, with an emphasis on contemporary cultural expression (Onassis Centre, 2012).



Fig. 71. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Symposium*. [Installation].
Archaeological park of the Plato's Academy.

In its long duration, the exhibition attracted a great number of visitors not only from the Akademia Platonos neighbourhood but also from many other Athenian areas. The architectural constructions which contained the installations appealed to the curiosity of spectators who could access the space from early in the morning to late evening. In this way, the archaeological park was swarming with visitors. It is worth mentioning that admission to the exhibition was free for the public, a fact that allowed those interested to revisit it as often as they wished.

Within the conceptual framework of the exhibition, the educational department of the Onassis Foundation Cultural Centre organized a series of artists' lectures in collaboration with local schools of primary and secondary education.

The artist's lecture for the *Symposium* video installation was delivered at the end of January 2013 and the audience comprised of about 60 pupils from the 66th Public Junior High School of Athens in the age of twelve to fourteen years old. From the conversations with the pupils it became evident that the video imagery did touch 'sensitive' issues

related to the particular neighbourhood. Familiar to the site of the performance and recognizing the image of the toys, they started debating with one another about the ξένοι/"strangers". While some of them expressed negative thoughts and rather violent feelings, others were more receptive and flexible driving the conversation to further positive and collective paths.

6.5 EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Symposium provides a space for a contemporary conversation on the absurdity of 'togetherness' and 'otherness'. It reflects the meeting points of imagery and language referring to the 'familiar' and 'unfamiliar', the 'present' and 'absent', the 'domestic' and 'other'. The conceptualizations and practices employed for constructing the visual subject of this project are based on symbiotic relationships of performance, literature (language), images and politics. Thus, in this case, a political visual subject emerges exposing (in-)/visible positions and silent entities (*phantasmas*) in the specific public-*agora*.

In particular, *Symposium* started as a staged situation, a theatrical act of mimesis, in an attempt to reconfigure the interrelation of image, text and assembly. The act of mimesis is productive, for every time that something is mimicked it follows that it is produced anew, acquiring new meaning due to the different spatial, temporal context within which it was reproduced. According to Derrida, every act of mimesis is supplement and thus it is different from the one it mimics (Gebauer, Wulf and Reneau, 1996). Mimesis at the heart of the performance art (Ubersfeld, 2003) enacts a space for re-conceptualizing human experience and imagining. As Snow (2010) states "imaginary enactments [...] hold cultures up to scrutiny, they

admonish them, reflect them, celebrate them, confirm them, transform them, and, most significantly, they create them” (p.85).

In *Symposium* the participants were invited to engage in a picnic-like experience and by doing so they per-formed an assembly. In this new context though, the convives of the picnic were not the only actors. The performance enacted a displacement, which allowed toys to emerge as a second set of actors. Specifically, ‘toys’ no longer acted as toys signifying a presence through an absence, i.e. the body of ξένοι/‘strangers’. This displacement was further renegotiated through the video editing of the performance with the introduction of Camus’ text in the subtitles. In this way, different social geographies are engaged to produce imaginary visual conversations with the ξένοι/‘strangers’ of the city of Athens and the ξένος/*Stranger* of the particular existentialist novel of Albert Camus’.

The uneasiness caused by the contradictory image of the joyful toys with the announcement of the murder in the video subtitles and the relevant sound of shooting re-signified further the image of the toys itself; while for some people toys mean joy, for others like the illegal street vendors in the Athenian streets, they mean violence and its manifestations such as beating, desperate running in the streets, imprisonment, and even murder. Thus, the image of the toys is not fixed, nor is the image of the *agora*, the assembly. In effect, within the combination of image, text and sounds, the assembly, i.e. *agora*, emerges not as a cohesive entity but rather as a product of discursive practices of inclusions and exclusions.

As a result, in *Symposium*, through participatory performance the interrelation of image, text and *agora* is not revealed as opposing but as citational. According to Nakassis (2013),

The citation is an act that re-presents some other event of discourse and marks that re-presentation as not(-quite) what it presences. The citation is a play of sameness and difference, identity and alterity, an interdiscursive calibration of an event of citing and a cited event, and is reflexive about that very fact" (p.51).

In the video, Camus' text "re-presents" the image of the toys and "marks that re-presentation as not quite what it presents": Toys, too, signify 'otherness'. In a similar way, the image of toys "re-presents" the *agora* not as the supposed accessible entity but as a claustrophobic and xenophobic symptom of the current humanitarian crisis in Greece.

The key feature that prompted symbolism in *Symposium* was the fact that the performance was participatory. In contrast to *Arbitrariness*, in which audiences actively contributed to the 'completion' of the final creative product, in *Symposium* the participants are volunteering 'actors' who do not have access to the final product. However, their performative presence in the video communicates the collective experience, which is a significant composite in the assemblage of the spatial, temporal, visual/audio and textual elements of this research project. This seems to be the benefit of the delegated performance. Specifically, as Bishop (2012) notes, in delegated performance, delegation moves in a two-way direction. The artist delegates power to performers who are entrusted for the execution of the performance and "in turn, the performers also delegate something to the artist: a guarantee of authenticity, through their proximity to everyday social reality, conventionally denied to the artist who deals merely in representations" (p.237). In the *Symposium* case, the participants' presence allowed me, as an artist to engage with the discourses of assembly/*agora* in the particular historical moment of time.

7. Semiotics of the Phantasma

In view of the results of the two previous research stages, *Arbitrariness* and *Symposium*, I produced the third project, the video performance *Semiotics of the Phantasma*.

In *Arbitrariness* and *Symposium* the use of participation exposed the relationship between *phantasma* and *agora* as much more complicated than a simple polarity. Specifically in *Arbitrariness*, image and text emerged as situational and contextual entities connected directly to the socio-political situation in Greece. Within the framework of the particular digital interaction, audience's participation made visible (in fact, re-enacted) into the imagery the *agora*, which in the public space was failing due to the severe attack of neoliberal policies against fundamental democratic procedures and the consequent blatant disregard for people's voice. This attack against democracy is also manifested by the Press and the news media at the time:

"I've been engaged with issues of external debt for 35 years, and I can tell you that never in the past did I see a national economy shrinking to such a degree and for such a long time span... such a big shrinkage cannot possibly continue for long in any democratic society". Charles Dalara, a representative of IIF (Institute of International Finance), in an interview to the National Service of the «Voice of America», 7.12.2012 (Dalara cited in Solidarity for All, 2011, p.2).

Close up, in other words, the social and political outcome of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and EU (European Union) austerity programme, and of the implosion of mainstream politics in Greece, looks like a catastrophe for democracy, BBC News (Mason, 2012).

The questionable function of *agora* in the specific time of crisis was further exposed in *Symposium*. Under these depressing and oppressive circumstances, it became evident that *agora* formed a

network of visibilities and invisibilities, presences and absences leading to the production of “bare life” (Agamben, 1998). Thus, *agora*, the basic manifestation of democratic values, in its association with the ‘image’/*phantasma*, emerged in these two research projects as suffering from a severe ‘trauma’. This trauma originated from the systematic ignorance of people’s speech and needs, the violent repression of protesters in the streets and the policing of the ξένοι/‘strangers’ in the public space. To locate this situation into the wider socio-political context, it is important to note that this trauma got deteriorated as the state refused to persecute for quite a long time the criminal activities of the Golden Dawn; the latter was systematically trying to take the control of the *agora* urging people not to fight for their own rights but attack against other people’s fundamental rights.³⁷ Furthermore, at the same time mainstream private news media by negatively ‘advertising’ the activities of members of this neo-Nazi party transformed them into ‘celebrities’ (Ignatiou, 2012).

Consequently, at this third stage, a critical question was raised: Is it possible for a creative combination of image and assembly to suggest a ‘cure’ for this ‘trauma’?

Reflecting on ‘cure’ and trauma’, I recalled a number of photographic images I took in 2009, in which I documented the result of a ritual, called ‘tzatzala’, that had been happening for years on the island of Lesbos and the purpose of which was to heal from illnesses. In 2012, I reworked on the specific photos by digitally intervening in the photographic documents. Following this digital manipulation, the

³⁷ It was after the blatant murder of the anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas’ by members of Golden Dawn on 13/09/2013, that the government of the time decided to prosecute the party for a series of violent and criminal activities (Euronews, 2013).

series *Tzatzala* was produced pertaining to the theme of healing as a collective praxis that leaves a visual mark in the public space.

Consequently, I explored the potential of this visual material to use it as a starting point for the exploration of the relation between 'image'/'assembly' and the emerging urgency for 'healing' the 'wound'. As a result, in 2014, I produced the *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, which interrelates practices of photography, digital imaging, participatory performance and video. To this end, I invited volunteers to participate with me in a public performance in which the original cultural custom of 'tzatzala' would be re-enacted. The performance took place in Eressos, a seaside village of Lesbos, and it was video-recorded. Similarly, in the case of *Symposium* the result was the production of a performed video. However, there is a significant difference as in this case I actively involved my own body in the performance, becoming inscribed within the 'assembly' that the participants formed.

Thus, at this third stage a different mode of participation was necessitated for the production of the performed video, which gave rise to further questions: Does the 'acting' artist along with the 'actors' bring any new information regarding the relation of 'image'/'assembly'? If this is the case, how does this new information shape the relationships among the *artist*, the *participants* and the *event*?

As I have already explicated, the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* project takes its lead from a particular cultural ceremony that has been practised on the island of Lesbos. To begin with, a few kilometres away from the city of Mytilene, the capital of Lesbos, there was a grove of wild olive trees on the branches of which for hundreds of years, since 1800, people used to hang pieces of clothing, the so-called 'tzatzala'. They would traditionally do so to express a wish for

healing from any kind of illness, injury and/or other traumatic human experience.

The particular tradition in Lesvos was never openly approved. This ritual would ordinarily take place among the local people and had never gained any further publicity. There must be several explanations for this fact, the most important one though is that local people avoid referring to this tradition because of its paganistic elements which are incongruous with the dominant Greek Orthodox tradition.³⁸

The pieces of clothing were exposed to public view and as years went by, they were increasing to shape an outlandish assemblage of layers of timeworn and new multi-coloured clothing hanging together on the branches of the olive trees (Fig. 72).



Fig. 72. Maria Paschalidou (2009) [Photographic documentation of the cultural custom of 'tatzala']

³⁸ As a matter of fact the Greek Orthodox Church has built a small chapel right across the branch of these particular olive trees with the clothing. As Nicolaos Moutsopoulos (2000) notes, it is a strategy of the Greek Orthodox Church to built such chapels in certain locations where paganistic customs are still performed. Being unable to stop people from practicing these customs, the Church 'sanctifies' the spaces in which these ritualistic activities are being exercised.

Generated from diverse participation in the ritual for many years, these offerings reflect the urge for healing from external forces. In fact, it is a materialization of 'personal' anguish and fears that denotes the collective hopelessness for the magical power of transfer, for it is with the exposure of the garment that the disease becomes externalized and visible. When the disease is communicable and transmitted to the branches of the trees and the open air, then it is considered to be curable. In addition, the 'actors' of this ritualistic praxis never looked back at their offerings for fear of the "return of the disease" (Moutsopoulos, 2000, p.54).

In 2009, I just happened to hear that the local authorities had decided to cut down the trees with the 'tzatzala' as part of the developing works for the widening of the Mytilene highway. So, I travelled to the island and I managed to document them just a few days before their destruction. These first documentary images portray the chaotic, messy, dirty and time-worn clothing hanging from the trees (Fig. 72, 73).



Fig. 73. Maria Paschalidou (2009) [Photographic documentation of the cultural custom of 'tzatzala']

In 2012, I started experimenting with these images in order to produce the photographic installation *Tzatzala*. In the digitally manipulated photographs, through multiple repetitions of specific parts of the trees in the composition of each image, I intend to expose the ritualistic procedure emphasizing on the idea of an assemblage formulated by unknown participants (Fig. 74).



Fig. 74. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Tzatzala*. [Digital Photography]

In the pictures, the irregular shapes of the multiple rags denote the various meanings the word 'tzatzala' takes in the Greek language. Specifically, apart from clothes, for the local people of Lesvos - but also in the Greek slang in general - the word 'tzatzala' means multiple useless little things that are messy, scattered everywhere and so mixed up that you can hardly distinguish one from the other. Another fascinating interpretation of the word 'tzatzala' relies on its connection to the Italian '*cencio*' (= rag) and its origins from the Latin '*Cynici*' (=cynics) (Babiniotis, 2002, p. 1761). The cynic philosophers in ancient Greece rejected numerous traditional customs and the celebrated style of life. They used to wear rags, speak about the virtue of poverty and mock the rich (Desmond, 2008).

Taking into consideration these meanings, I called the installation *Tzatzala*, in order to emphasize the sense of multiplicity, disorder and chaos that the word denotes.

In 2014, and as I was proceeding to the third stage of my research, I decided to use the photographic series *Tzatzala* as visual material for the participatory performance *Semiotics of the Phantasma*. The performance took place in Eressos, a seaside village and summer resort in the Western part of Lesbos.

The specific place has a particularly fascinating history: It is believed to be the birthplace of the ancient lyric poet Sappho.³⁹ Thus, since the late '70s, a feminist and lesbian discourse has emerged in the area as a lot of women had visited the place tracing Sappho's legends and legacy. Nowadays, a summer-only lesbian community is formed by women coming mostly from Greece, Western Europe and United States (Kantsa, 2000).

Considering the above history, I decided to relocate the ritualistic praxis of 'tzatzala' and realize the performance in Eressos. In that way, the 'assembly' of the participants would be enacted in – and, at the same time, would enact – a space with strong political connotations, such as the social condemnation of particular sexual and gender behaviours. In fact, Eressos has been quite a contradictory place. As a summer resort, the place is a tourist attraction and ideal for relaxation. On the other hand, though, the area has a long history of conflicts taking place from time to time between women visitors and the locals.⁴⁰ Such conflicts reflect specific

³⁹ Sappho was a Greek lyric poet from antiquity. She was born around 615 B.C. and is very well known for the academy she founded for unmarried women. Sappho's school "devoted itself to the cult of Aphrodite and Eros, and Sappho earned great prominence as a dedicated teacher and poet" (Academy of American Poets, 2000, para.1).

⁴⁰ In the decades of 80's and early 90's it has been reported that many lesbian women were vocally and physically attacked by the locals during the night in their summer holidays. Especially young men used to raid their free camping on the beach stealing money and passports from their tents and destroying their motorbikes (Pseudonimou, 1992). In the next decades things got better; many locals have been reconciled with the idea of the lesbians' presence in their village, others have completely accepted their lifestyles and others just tolerate them

socio-cultural contexts shaped by the intertwining of local traditional culture with other western cultures and lifestyles (Kantsa, 2000).

In the following subchapters, I shall be discussing the conceptualization and methods used for the investigation of the aforementioned questions.

7.1 EMBODYING THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE INTO A PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE

Semiotics of the Phantasma correlates the practices of photography, digital imaging and performance. It engages the dynamics of a ritualistic praxis and its connotations to propose collective modes of performing the photographic image. Its starting point is the visual material of the digitally manipulated photographic images that I call *Tzatzala*.

The imagery of *Tzatzala* represents a collective expression of wishing for healing. It accounts for a performative praxis of resistance to time, illness and death. Through the dynamics of digital imaging, I incorporate my own perspective in the legacy of the custom. *Tzatzala's* symmetrical views and repetitions consolidate the visual effect of the ritualistic trees and account for my viewing of the original trees as an improvised, work-in-progress installation that will actually last for years.

Tzatzala manifests the presence of absence, an unfinished conversation between life and death, as it is not possible to know if the sufferers, whose clothes are hanged on the trees, eventually healed or passed away. Nevertheless, it still provides a vocabulary for

because they have touristic businesses that profit from them (Pseudonimou, 1992; Kantsa, 2010).

'reading' the stories of the *phantasma* through the hanged rags. Specifically, each particular piece of cloth, narrates the 'trauma' in an individual way: a baby's bib implies that the baby was the sufferer; the sleeves indicate that the hands were ill; the slippers clearly manifest there was an issue with the feet; the bra possibly suggests breast cancer (Fig. 75, 76).



Fig. 75. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Tzatzala*. [Digital Photography]

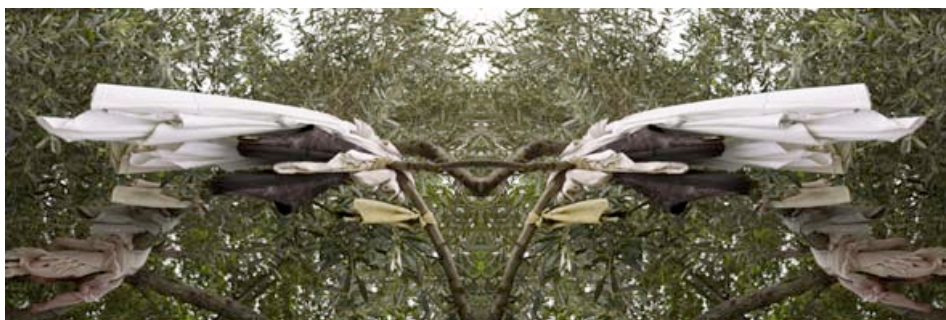


Fig. 76. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Tzatzala*. [Digital Photography]

Considering *Tzatzala* as a means for reading stories of trauma, I decided to associate it with the *agora* and produce a participatory performance in which I would embody the particular imagery. Because *Tzatzala* provides a vocabulary for ghostly stories, I decided

to name the performance *Semiotics of the Phantasma*. The title echoes Martha Rosler's choice of title for the performance *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) in which she presents kitchen utensils in an alphabetical order and shapes the letters with her own body in order to create a new vocabulary to address women's oppression (Eiblmayr, 1982). In the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* though, the language and vocabulary of *Tzatzala* intend to narrate the 'trauma' of the *agora*. Nevertheless, this is the reason for simulating the ritual through a participatory performance, as "performance practice can address trauma, [...] can be a critical frame for considering trauma in culture" and furthermore may feature trauma "as a potentially potent creative force" (Wallis and Duggan, 2011, p.1).

The *Semiotics of the Phantasma* performance re-enacts the photographic image of *Tzatzala*, with the artist/body standing still, like a tree, while the participants are hanging pieces of clothing thereon. For the realization of the performance, I looked for volunteers in the aforementioned summer-only women's community. Eleven women accepted my invitation, and they were of various nationalities (from Greece, Germany, Israel, Turkish Cyprus and Azerbaijan).

The participants had been previously informed about the context of the performance and they willingly volunteered to participate therein both during the preparation stages and in the act of the performance. Although the majority of them had previous knowledge of the cultural custom, as they were regular visitors to the island before the performance, I also showed them the digitally manipulated images as references of the ritualistic praxis. I decided to present the digital manifestations instead of my initial documentary photographs in order to facilitate our dialogue and communicate the idea that the ritual is continuously being re-modelled. Furthermore, the digital images

contain only indexical fragments of the custom; consequently, they “possess the potential of *punctum*, and thus have a psychological resonance for individual viewers”. [...] They “may still be able to possess or prick them” (Golding, 2011, p.194).⁴¹ This means that the participants are not invited to ‘see’ the custom, but to reimagine it, incorporating their own personal view and idea of themselves into its narratives (Golding, 2011).

At the preparation stage and one day before the actual performance, the ‘assembly’ was gathered in order to cut clothes in smaller pieces (Fig. 77). Most of the clothing belonged to the participants and myself, and the procedure was quite vibrant since a lot of the participants felt like sharing stories and memories about the clothes they brought in. The preparation stage was also video-recorded.



Fig. 77. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Phantasma*.
[Video still, Preparation stage of the performance]

⁴¹ According to Roland Barthes the photographic meaning consists of two elements, the *studium* and the *punctum*. *Studium* refers to the general interest that the subject of a photograph may have for an average viewer. *Punctum*, though, is this element of the photograph that has the potential to capture an individual viewer’s attention and engaged him or her with the subject of the photograph in a unique way (Fried, 2005, p.539). In other words, the *punctum* satisfies a personalized “taste or liking for a certain kind of picture” (Heffernan, 2006, p.313).

The performance started the next day, on the afternoon of July 21st, 2014. It happened on the beach, right in front of the sea and in public view. My body was facing the audience and the participants, while my back was turned to the sea. In front of me, on the sand, I had placed a big pile of rags formed by the multi-coloured pieces of clothing, with which the participants eventually covered my body. The performance lasted for approximately 30 minutes and it was open to the public.

By using my own body as a replacement (Fig.78) of the main subject of the ritual, I intended to revive the photographic image (Fig.79) and bring it into a new spatial and temporal context. This staged revival along with the fact that the pieces of clothing belong to the *artist* and the *participants* create the conditions for the possible emergence of new narratives of trauma.



Fig. 78. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Phantasma*.
[Video still from the performance]



Fig. 79. Maria Paschalidou (2012) *Tzatzala*. [Digital photography]

In addition, the decision to make myself the focal subject is in dialogue with the medium of the performance, which is “about the ‘real-life’ presence of the artist [...]. Nothing stands between spectator and performer” (Catherine Elwes in Jones, 2011, p.17). My question though is how this works with the spectator and the photographic image.

There is only one case in which it is possible for a photographer to be present, and this is when she/he incarnates the visual subject. Under these circumstances, my “decisive moment” (Bresson, 1952) relies on the experience of the photographic image in a collective way and with the contribution of the spectators. Therefore, in the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* there is no distance between the visual subject and the viewer. The participants together with the artist/‘photographer’ incarnate the visual subject of the photographic image, knowing in advance that it does not exist as such anymore.

7.2 TRANSFORMING THE BODY INTO A RITUALISTIC EVENT

For the performance, I decided my female body to take the position of the *Vitruvian man* for the ideal proportions of a human body as illustrated by Leonardo Da Vinci (1490) (Fig. 80).



Fig. 80. Leonardo Da Vinci (1490)
Vitruvian Man [Drawing]

This anatomical drawing of Da Vinci's represents Vitruvius' geometrical measurements for the human body in relation to a perfect perception of the architectural structure. However, "It is the male anatomy whose ideal measurements Vitruvius subjects to a rigid taxonomy" (Lico, 2001, p.33).



Fig. 81. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Phantasma*.
[Video still from the performance]

At the beginning of the performing act, I stood naked with hands and feet stretched (Fig. 81). My position incorporates the 'other' body in this conversation and creates an image that evokes the gendered architectural appropriation of the space (Lico, 2001). Furthermore, it opposes, in general, the anthropocentric appropriation of space by western civilization as represented in Da Vinci's sketch. Instead, my position relocates the human body into the spatial and temporal discourses of the geography of the performance. At the same time, it is from this position that the body also refers to the metaphysical aspects of the ritual echoing the fear of disease and the anguish of death. From this point of view, my self-representation of the naked body in the particular position converses with the Cuban artist Marta Maria Perez Bravo's choices of symbolic representation. Specifically, the body as metaphysical site and spiritual path also emerges in Bravo's self portraits (Fig.82) in which, the artist renegotiates and 'heals' traumas of colonialism and female oppression, by transforming her body into an altar of votive offerings and a sacred vessel (Camnitzer, 2003; Shohat, 2001).



Fig. 82. Marta Maria Perez Bravo (2000)
Cuanto encuentro para vencer. [Photography]

In *Semiotics of the Phantasma* the geometrical position of the body denotes a vulnerable 'architectural' space in which human existence is dependant on the desired positive effects of a ceremonial process. During the performance, I was not distracted by any pre-designed plan of how to deliberately hide the need to put my arms down because of the pain I felt while being in such an uncomfortable geometrical position for a long period of time. I deliberately did not make a rehearsal before the performance to exercise and prepare my body accordingly, as my intention was not to formulate a perfect visual image of a durable body that does something extraordinary, a particularly difficult task that would attract the audience's attention. I focused on my initial purpose of performing myself as a tree which also moves its branches to the force of the wind and/or any other action towards it. Therefore, my discomfort is evident in the video and the performative act is marked with the spontaneity of a raw material.

The participants repeated the same acts. They went over and over again to the pile of rags in front of me and took pieces of clothing to cover parts of my body (Fig. 83). Following these "procedural repetitions" (Legare and Souza, 2012, p.9) the performance takes the form of a ritualistic praxis.



Fig. 83. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Phantasma*.
[Video still from the performance]

Yet, this repetition is not “a mindless action in sequence” (Jennings, 1982, p.123) but a fully conscious collective effort to re-enact the ritual activity by transforming the artist/body. Furthermore, this repetitive action holds the promise of ‘healing’ since as the performance artist Lucy R. Lippard (2000) states “ritual is about *repetition* and *death* is not, so repeating instead of synopsisizing or paraphrasing seems an affirmative way to look ahead” (p.326). Eventually, participants reconstructed the photographic image creating at the same time, in an “affirmative” manner, a new figure according to their aesthetic choices.

The gradual transformation of my body was happening in both a dramatic and visual way. I was in a vulnerable position, absolutely accessible to the desires of the participants, while also exposed to the spectators who happened to be there and discretely attended the event from a distance. However, the procedure of this collective performative act was genuinely powerful as it revealed various tensions as well as tendencies.

There were specific moments when I felt that my body was in the centre of a battlefield. Some of the participants tied the rags with unexpected force covering my nose, eyes and mouth, thus preventing my vision and making breathing difficult. At the same time, others were carefully undoing those strong knots. Apparently, the participants expressed their own complexities at the very scene of the performance. However, as time passed their gestures became less violent. Probably, this happened because of the emergence of a novel image of the body, which I could only feel but not see. As the body was being modified with the pieces of clothing, the participants became the spectators of an embodied transformation produced by themselves. They could watch the plot unfolding before their eyes with their own active participation; they actually had the control of that plot and its possible outcomes.

By the end of the performance and under the heavy weight of all those rags, I turned my back to the participants and spectators and began to sink my transformed body into the sea (Fig. 84, 85).



Fig. 84. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Phantasma*.
[Video still from the performance]



Fig. 85. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Phantasma*.
[Video still from the performance]

This act lasted for a few minutes following my need to take regular breaths. I decided to sink my newly formed body covered in rags into the sea in order to find catharsis and release myself from “negative affect” (Meisiek, 2004, p.298). Catharsis involves awareness and presupposes reaction and deliverance. Hence, the allegorical submergence of my body into the sea; for water is believed to have a cleansing as well as redeeming power.

The term catharsis has assumed various interpretations over the centuries depending on the historical context and tradition. Until the 4th century BC, it was purely associated with medicine, and particularly with relevant rituals and feasts. However, Aristotle (384–322 BC) introduced the notion of catharsis in drama: it “elicits the emotions of pity (*eleos*) and fear (*phobos*) in the audience, thus also releasing them from the associated effects” (Meisiek, 2004, p. 800). The cathartic action of my body entering the seawater attempts to connect the performance with drama as in theatre, where the protagonist needs to be released from sorrow and fear, and eventually purged, which is deemed fundamental in ancient tragedy. “Catharsis in theatre is not only analogous with medicine, it also has

the same effects. [...] Bernays defines catharsis as the treatment of uneasiness" (Meisiek, 2004, p. 801). The uneasiness my posture caused me determined the performance along with the feelings of pain, pity (*eleos*) and fear (*phobos*). Particularly in the first fifteen minutes, I had to deal with the violent gestures of some participants. Clearly, I experienced pain and fear; I was completely exposed to and at the mercy of the performing 'actors'. As the performance was escalating and the participants' gestures became softer, I started feeling overwhelmed by the weight of the rags. It was then that my body became the metaphor of the tree that carries the burden of the stories hidden in the clothes; stories that I was not familiar with, since most of the rags did not belong to me. It was at that moment that the *Other* entered the scene and was embraced into the *artist's* body. At that particular time, I also realized that the beach had gone still and the audience unexpectedly hushed. A while later, my body left its uncomfortable position to walk into the sea. Despite the relieving effect of the cool water, the limits of my body were challenged yet again, since the rags became even heavier and were dragging my body deeper into the water.

The performance ended upon my return from the sea. Lying on the sand, I was quietly waiting for the participants to relieve the sense of heaviness by cutting the wet rags using both hands and the same pairs of scissors used at the preparation stage (Fig. 86).



Fig. 86. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Phantasma*.
[Video still from the performance]

This phase was entirely different to the first stage of the performance. Now, the participants reacted more sensitively as they carefully cut the knots of the rags and uncovering parts of my body in a more tender way. This was a crucial moment, when the catharsis came with the relief of the artist/body from all discomfort and a feeling of trust overwhelmed the scene; although I could feel the participants' difficulty to cut the wet knots, I entrusted them that they would do so without hurting me.

Entrusting the participants is also the key point in Yoko Ono's performance *Cut Piece*. Ono first performed *Cut Piece* in 1964 in Kyoto, Japan and since then the performance has been re-enacted many times in different locations. In the performance, Ono sat on the stage wearing her finest clothes and invited the members of the audience to approach one by one, cut a small piece from her garment with a pair of scissors and keep it for themselves. Similarly to the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* performance, *Cut Piece* was also tentative. It has been reported that one member of the audience threatened Yoko Ono raising the pair of scissors above her head. Ono remained calm and motionless avoiding "feeding this man's negative energy

with fear” (Rothbart, 2004, para.3) and as a result the performance ended up with no incident. Years later and after many re-enactments, Ono states, “It [*Cut Piece*] is a frightening piece to perform. Very tense, but I wanted to show that we have to trust each other. If I’m going to say that, I have to do it myself. I have to trust people myself. It could be a bit dangerous” (Ono, 2013, para.12). Conversely, in the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* performance, despite participants’ frightening reactions on my body, I had to trust the ‘assembly’/agora and the visual outcome that it would produce. In other words, the performance implicates *trust* as the necessary ingredient that narrows the distance between the *self/artist* and the *Other/participant* and enables the constitution of the collective spirit transforming the space into a *political agora*.

Semiotics of the Phantasma shares a proximity not only with Ono’s *Cut Piece* but also with other performances where participants/collaborators intervene in the artist’s body by ‘dressing’ and/or ‘undressing’ it. A relevant example is Paula Garcia’s *Noise Body Series #8* performance (2014). In this performance the artist collaborates with other fellow performers who dressed in the same black clothing, help her apply to her body an armour made of magnets and iron scraps. When the artist’s body is fully covered with this material, the performers start violently throwing nails at her, which stick to the armour with heavy noises. The performers continue this act until the body is totally unrecognizable. When it becomes visible that the artist can no longer bear this heavy material, they begin to ‘undress’ her by removing one by one the metal pieces until she becomes free and recognizable again. (Fig.87).



Fig. 87. Paula Garcia (2014) *Noise Body Series #8*.
[Performance at Beyeler Foundation, Basel, Switzerland]

Cut Piece, *Semiotics of the Phantasma* and *Noise Body Series #8* performances deal with forces exercised by others directly onto the artists' bodies. However, the nature of participation employed in these events is different. Garcia collaborates with professional performers who are aware of the challenges of the body by the specific art practice and execute the performance following her instructions. Garcia puts herself in a stressful situation testing her physical limits but without taking the same risk as Yoko Ono in *Cut Piece*, who chose the transforming process of her body to be realized by an unknown audience. Thus, in Garcia's case the trust is not an issue, something that has to be gained as an experience by both the participants and the performer during the event. In *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, as I have already explained, I invited participants who are neither art professionals nor spectators from a wider audience but particular volunteers who had previously been informed about the context of the event and seen the digitally manipulated image of the 'tatzala' ritual before the performance. Moreover, the day before the performance we gathered all together bringing clothes of our own to cut them in pieces. This gathering took place in a non-institutional space and in a friendly atmosphere in which personal stories related to the specific clothes were exchanged in a spontaneous manner.

Consequently, participants got engaged with the performance in a more personal and emotional way. This difference in the nature of participation in *Semiotics of the Phantasma* is also reflected in the clothes that participants wear during the performance. In Garcia's project, participants are dressed in homogenous black clothes that recall uniforms producing visual marks of distance and erasing identity differences; in my case the participants were free to wear whatever they liked to and felt comfortable with.

The video contains the documentation of the performance. Through its trivial realism, this audio-visual material creates new evidence based on the iconic image of the participants' movements and the body transformation. Its fidelity to what it really happened causes it to serve as "a message without a code" (Barthes cited in Auslander, 2006, p.1). In this sense, its practice is more related to the photographic image and the illusion of the "exact correspondence between the signifier and the signified" (Gilbert, 1998, p.18). Yet, relying on the spontaneity of the physical presence of both the artist and the participants, the actual performance stands for its own dynamics.

However, the video forms a new material per se: a performed video which captures critical moments of the performance and creates its own narrative of what happened.

7.3 RESULTS

As I have already discussed, at this third stage of the research I was searching for the relation between image and *agora* in the socio-political context of the escalating Greek economic and humanitarian crisis, within which *agora* appears to be suffering from a severe 'trauma'.

Combining photography, digital manifestations and participatory performance, the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* constitutes a collective simulation of a ritual. It attempts to reconstruct the tradition of the original cultural custom by delving into its dynamics and using it as the apparatus for a communal experience of 'healing' in a particular geopolitical context.

With the simulation of the ritual, I intended to infuse into the performance the feelings of the initial ritualistic praxis, those of the 'other participants' who, in their desperate praxis of seeking help from the 'tzatzala', had remained unseen and anonymous. As time was passing, the only remembrance of their human presence was what they had left behind on the branches of the trees: small pieces of clothing and rags, representatives of those parts of the body that were in pain and in need –literally and/or metaphorically– of medical treatment. After the demolition of the trees, those ghosts of pain and suffering existed only as a memory in the imagery of the photographic series *Tzatzala*. In the simulation of the ritual, I was expecting these ghostly figures to re-emerge. Yet, when the performance of the ritual started with myself acting the 'tree' and the participants putting their pieces of clothing on 'it', different narratives emerged in which the participants and I were confronted with our own 'ghosts'. Thus, the performance resulted in the genesis of a space where new hidden stories were developed.

During the performance though, I could only be aware of my own 'ghosts'. My confrontation started from the fact that a significant prerequisite for the performance, previously discussed with the participants, was not respected. To be more precise, I had explicitly stated that the participants were not to cover my eyes or nose with clothes. However, some of them did not act accordingly and eventually covered them. On the one hand, this kind of violation (virtually, a form of violence) left me completely vulnerable. On the other hand, it made me realize the intrinsic vulnerability of my allegorical embodiment of the ritualistic 'tree'. Thus, despite my fear of such reactions, I did not interrupt the performance; instead, I remained in the position of the ritualistic actor. In fact, I had to take the responsibility of my wilful choice to realize the performance in an open space which was not protected by any institutional authority. That was a political choice I had made from the beginning. Consequently, I did not announce the participatory performance officially in the press.

Yet, there was a deeper level of confrontation: By placing myself in the position of the tree, I differentiated myself from the *others*. Thus, the *agora* in the performance was established from the beginning based on a dichotomy between *self* and *others*, or between *artist* and *participants*. This dichotomy was further enforced when I stipulated the aforementioned condition that nobody was to cover my eyes or nose. The very fact of enforcing the rule activated the condition of its violence. As Foucault explained, power does not emerge alone but together with resistance, and resistance is not in an external relation to power; instead it forms its very condition (Foucault and Hurley, 1998). Rules express the limits of power and at the same time set the condition for its subversion (Halperin, 1997). Thus, this was the reason why during the performance one of the participants whispered to me and asked for my forgiveness, as she was closing my eyes: "I

am sorry but I am going to have to close your eyes". This sentence shows that she was aware of the rule; however, she somehow felt compelled to break it. Indeed, you cannot meet the *other* on your own conditions or while in safety. By planting the rules, I unconsciously placed myself at the mercy of the *others*; fortunately, mercy came, because *other* participants untied the tight knots.

It was plain to see: some of the participants questioned my authority as an *artist* to set the rules of the performance rendering me in a way accountable to the 'assembly'. Yet, "authority can no longer be imposed on passive subjects" (Woods, 2014, para.3). The spatial and temporal conditions of the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* performance allowed participants to emerge as "collaborative agents" (Woods, 2014, para.3). Thus, their freedom to question the *artist's* position and break the rules was provided by the context and the space of the performance. Therefore, the very essence of the action, the 'assembly', would not have materialized in the safe environment of any institutional space where 'annoying' or 'unruly' participants would have possibly been removed discreetly by security guards. A good example of such a safeguarded space was the *As One* (2016) performance exhibition that was realized at the Benaki Museum in Athens. The exhibition consisted of the Abramović Method⁴² and newly commissioned performance pieces from several Greek performers (*As One*, 2016). However, this excellent idea of

⁴² "Developed over many years and in many iterations, The Abramović Method, is a public participatory experience for large groups. Participants engage with a series of exercises in a communal space to connect with themselves, each other and the present moment. As part of AS ONE The Abramović Method will take place on the ground floor of the Benaki Museum, Pireos. Visitors entering the Method are requested to deposit personal belongings – such as watches, phones and cameras – in a locker. They will then be led by trained facilitators through a series of warm up exercises, designed to wake up the senses, stretch the body and center the mind. This preparation will allow participants to focus on being present, still and connected. Throughout the experience, visitors will be able to choose how they engage with the work and will have ample space to explore and discover the possibilities of this unique environment" (NEON, 2016, para.3-4).

assembling different practices of performances in one place was interrupted by the established rigidity of the exhibition institution, the clean and almost antiseptic spaces designated to be accessed by the viewers, and the ubiquitous protection of the museum's security guards.

Although there are clearly several risks involved outside a safe environment, the open public space was selected to be the central site of the 'assembly' for the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* performance. Selecting this type of space defined the reactions of the participants towards the *artist/body* and vice versa.

On the other hand, the participants' confrontation with their own 'ghosts' became evident not only during the performance but also after it in a short conversation I had with them which was also video-recorded.

Specifically, during the performance there were women who used the rags not only as ways to transform the body but also as 'weapons' by means of which they silently expressed cultural dialogues and political statements. Such tensions were distinct to me through the tight knots of clothing over my body and especially the hard pressure on my eyes, nose and mouth.

After the performance and during our discussion, the participants among others expressed their feelings about the event and the ways in which they had acted towards the embodied simulation of the ritual. They also debated about their collective experience and the issues raised after some of the participants had broken the rules. In fact, that kind of violation triggered political conflicts. A participant from Azerbaijan considered that the Israeli women were extremely 'aggressive' as they kept tightening pieces of clothes in my eyes, nose

and mouth making me vulnerable. For this reason, as she explained, during the performance she changed her clothes to wear a traditional Arabic headscarf in order to declare her opposition towards what she considered was the typical aggressive Israeli behaviour.

Consequently, the replay of the cultural practice revealed identities and subject positions (Hall, 1997) as conflicting terrains that were negotiated in the performance.

7.4 EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

In *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, I explored the possibilities of creative combinations between 'image' and assembly in relation to the emerging 'trauma' of the *agora* under the regime of the economic crisis. To begin with, I used a specific ritualistic custom related to healing and the digital images *Tzatzala* that I produced from the photographic documentation of the ritual. Then, I went on to organize a participatory public performance in which the assembly of voluntary participants and myself enacted the images thus, producing a simulation of the healing custom.

During the performance, *agora* emerged as a conflicting terrain haunted by relations of power. Such relations were developed at two levels: the first one refers to the relation of the *artist* with the *participants*, and the second to socio-political norms and categories, such as gender and ethnicity, that defined the position of the participants. The supposed familiarity that participants share as part – more or less– of the summer-only women's community was not taken for granted anymore. From this point of view, the *Symposium's* 'stranger' re-emerged in *The Semiotics of the Phantasma* performance, but not in the margins of the *agora*. The 'stranger'

emerged at the heart of it playing an active role by exposing the complicated “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1991) of identity categories. However, within the specific framework of the performance the differences were negotiated to finally reach the catharsis. This became obvious by the gradual retreat of violence over my body and the deep silence that dominated the beach from the middle of the performance to the end of it. That silence denoted a certain moment of the collective action when differences were divested of their significance and the ‘assembly’ got in tune with the rhythm of the ritual and was enthralled by the unexpected transformation of the body into a multifaceted ‘creature’, an ever-changing image. It was at that point that *participants* became the *artist*, the *artist* became a *work of art*, and *agora* an intrinsically ever-changing creative process.

Consequently, in this combination of ‘image’ and assembly a certain kind of healing ensued which was related to the wounds in identity and politics. Ironically, in the original ritualistic custom the wounds are expected to heal with the contribution of external forces. In the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* simulation of the ritual, healing came not from external forces, but from within the dynamics of the assembly itself and the use of the public space in a way that let differences manifest themselves and be re-negotiated in a collaborative process. After the performance, participants were very excited about what had happened and had been achieved, expressed positive thoughts and emphasized on the soothing and refreshing effect on them.

Moreover, on a second level, the ritualistic energy of the simulated custom was intensified by the historicity of the specific time and space. The performance happened in the summer of 2014, when the second memorandum was signed and more austerity measures were imposed on the Greek people as part of the new treatment for the ‘disease’.

The majority of related articles in the Press and the media indicate the medicalization of the crisis. The whole country is the patient and the austerity measures define the prescribed medicine for the healing of the symptoms (Donario and Daley, 2012; Polychroniou, 2015). However, the medication in question seems to have failed (Hellenic News, 2015) and the patient requires new treatment (Gonzalez and Goodman, 2015).

This medicalization of the crisis presupposes that 'specialists' cure the 'patient'. Such rationale gives 'specialists' carte blanche to experiment with multiple types of prescriptions until they come up with the most effective one. In this process, the 'patient' is dismissed as ignorant and has no say in the suggestion of potential remedies. Subsequently, within this particular context of the medicalization discourse the 'trauma' is introduced. Against the dominance of this medicalization of the crisis, *Semiotics of the Phantasma* accounts for what Foucault (1978) called "reverse discourse" (p.101). Foucault explains this term by using the example of the categorization of homosexuality in the 19th century. In that specific time, dominant medical discourse categorized homosexuals in order to stigmatize and/or suppress that orientation. Yet, that dominant discourse culminated in a "reverse discourse" and homosexuals appropriated its power to their own benefit. As Foucault (1978) states within the framework of the "reverse discourse", "homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories/categorization by which it was medically disqualified" (p.101). Similarly, *Semiotics of the Phantasma* appropriates the power of the dominant discourse of curing to indicate a different path. In this different path, healing is intrinsic to the collaborative practices of the people in the *agora*.

In the *Semiotics of the Phantasma* video, the displacements in the relations among *artist-participant-artwork* are quite visible. Nonetheless, identity conflicts, various tensions between the *participants* and the *artist*, as well as all those negotiations that have been instrumental in bringing the catharsis cannot possibly be grasped by the viewer of the video, or by the audience of the physical performance. These were sensible only to the participants, including myself. From this point of view, in *Semiotics of the Phantasma* the association between image and assembly is defined by the performative action that brought these two entities together in the first place. In the form of a video though, this action is transformed into a *punctum* for the viewers, as it conveys “a feeling of life, a life, in all the singularity of its having had no choice but to follow the generic life path toward death in its own unique and unreproducible way” (Massumi, 2011, p.57). This performed video signifies also a bridge between the performance and the events that follow next.

It is clear that the performance was realized in a critical period of time, when the first wave of immigrants and refugees caused by the war in Syria began to flood into the island of Lesbos. Ironically enough, the pieces of clothing that were floating in the sea by the end of my performance (Fig.88) eerily foreshadowed the upcoming tragedy. One year later, in the summer of 2015, the image of this escalating crisis is found in the vast number of plastic boats, life jackets and torn pieces of clothes that belonged to those who did not make it; shreds washed up on the island’s beaches, dominating its shores in a ghostly way (Fig.89). These abandoned materials became striking symbols of new wounds that needed to be healed.



Fig. 88. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Phantasma*.
[After the performance]



Fig. 89. Plomari News (2015) *Refugees arrival at the beach Patos, Plomari, Lesvos*. [Photography]

8. *Semiotics of the Protest*

At the third research stage, *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, the association between image and assembly was defined by the performative action that brought these two entities together. The healing of the 'trauma' came from within the dynamics of the assembly itself and the use of public space in a way that did not police but instead let differences be played out and renegotiated in collaborative and ritualistic modes. In the *Semiotics of the Protest* performed video, I visually explore the action itself and the ways with which this action makes possible the convergence of image and *agora*/assembly. I particularly focused on the action of street protest, a vital tool by means of which people reclaim public space and activate *agora* as a political terrain. Notwithstanding that *agora* has been severely 'traumatized' by the violation of fundamental democratic principles during the economic crisis, it still stands due to public resistance of people in the streets.

The *Semiotics of the Protest* video relies on an in situ performance realized on the terrace of a private apartment by the professional performer and dance choreographer Grigoris Gaitanaros. The performance is based on the performer's bodily responses to sounds coming from street demonstrations against the memoranda and austerity measures. Furthermore, it incorporates a text in the form of a manifesto read out loud by the performer. Applying participatory practices facilitated the creation of such a text.

In specific, as I explained in the *Research Methods* chapter, in order to investigate further redefinitions of the words *phantasma* and *agora* determined by the particular historical moment in Greece, in August 2013, I invited participants to give their own definition of these two words by responding to a specific questionnaire that I had prepared

for this reason. Understanding that these responses are personal narratives, I decided to look into how and where exactly the 'personal' and public narratives of the *agora* met. Thus, during a seven-month period (March - September 2013) I also collected related data from the Greek Press and media. It was out of the written material collected from the participants that I created the script for the video performance *Semiotics of the Protest*. Furthermore, during this seven-month period I also collected sounds of street protests around the world from various Internet sources. I used fragments of these sounds to create part of the audio of the performed video.

In *Semiotics of the Protest* I explore the spatial politics of the *agora* in relation to the dichotomy between private (or domestic) and public space. Through convergences of 'image' and *agora*, I conceptualise protest as choreography using participants' personal narratives as a script for a video performance. In the next chapter, I shall be discussing in detail the methodological strategies and practices I used for the creation of this research project.

8.1 PROTEST AS CHOREOGRAPHY

The *Semiotics of the Protest* performance took place on August 21, 2014 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. in Retsina, a formerly industrial neighbourhood in Piraeus. Although a lot of industries flourished there, the specific area got its name from the Retsina Brothers' textile mill which had been founded in 1872 and operated until 1981. The Retsina's factory offered work to thousands of people; however, it was well known for its authoritative administration and the maltreatment of the workers who, in their majority, were women and children (Papanelopoulou, 2010).

This time the performance location was chosen to be the terrace of an apartment building, a place that has a panoramic view of Retsina working-class neighbourhood (Fig. 90).



Fig. 90. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Protest*. [Video still]

The terrace was chosen as the most appropriate site for exposing the urban landscape. Moreover, my intention was clearly to create a narrative between the inside and the outside space and in particular, to communicate an association between the private space of the home and the public space.

Such associations between inside and outside space have been explored by other artists as well. I have already mentioned Tania Bruguera's performance *Tatlin's Whisper #5* (2008) in which the artist transfers to the interior space of the museum an act that typically takes place in the exterior public space such as the control of the movements of the bodies by the police forces. In *Semiotics of the Protest*, I transfer a typical act that happens in the public space, the street protest to the scene of a private home instead of an institution space. My purpose to use the scenery of the private terrace was determined by the facts of that particular time. Two of the most

important and widely-used protest slogans at the time referring to private space were: *get out of your sofa* and *no one left alone*. The former urged people to give up their routine and actively fight for their rights in the streets. Nevertheless, it was the latter that carried a greater significance: It expressed collective solidarity with and caring for each other, recalling the desperation of those who had committed suicide alone in their homes.⁴³ Ultimately, this slogan implicated the domestic/private space as dangerous instead of ensuring safety to its inhabitants. For this reason, I decided to transfer the actions of the streets into the open but still private space of the terrace, in order to highlight exactly this switch in the meanings of public and private spaces during the crisis and because of the austerity. Despite the fights, beatings and tear gas, the public space is deemed as safer than the private one. In the public space people were supporting each other fighting back in any way they could, encouraging and giving hope to each other, in other words they were resisting transforming their depression into action. Staying isolated at home proved to be a precarious state that often led to negative thoughts, feelings of despair, helplessness and lack of dignity, depression and even suicide (Mpompoula, 2016). Thus, to many people home ceased from being the safe sanctuary that used to be.

It is worth reminding here the case of the 'Apt- Art' (apartment art) phenomenon that appeared in 1970s and 1980s in countries of the Cold War Eastern Bloc in which artists realize exhibitions and performances in the privacy of their homes and among trusted friends

⁴³ "Spending cuts in Greece caused a rise in male suicides, according to research that attempts to highlight the health costs of austerity. Echoing official statistics in the UK showing suicide rates are still higher than before the crisis, researchers at the University of Portsmouth have found a correlation between spending cuts and suicides in Greece. According to the research, every 1% fall in government spending in Greece led to a 0.43% rise in suicides among men – after controlling for other characteristics that might lead to suicide, 551 men killed themselves "solely because of fiscal austerity" between 2009 and 2010, said the paper's co-author Nikolaos Antonakakis" (Allen, 2014, para.2).

in order to avoid state surveillance and persecution (Bishop, 2012, pp.129-153). The same phenomenon and for the same reasons of survival and protection appeared also in the Chinese contemporary art of the last four decades, with many underground and avant-garde artists presenting their work away from institution spaces, inside houses and private salons, and without any financial support (Minglu, 2008).

Thus, the specific chosen location of the *Semiotics of the Protest* performance on a private terrace becomes a significant *site*. Although private, the *site* as a terrace was open to the public view in an uncontrollable way. During the performance we could feel the eyes of people attending the event from the terraces and/or discreetly from their windows nearby. The performer was 'protesting' in front of the camera, however, many times he turned his back (Fig.90) to address his gestures to this unknown audience consisting of visible but mostly invisible spectators from the neighbouring balconies.

Another example that uses the balcony as a *site* for a performance is Uruguayan artist Martín Sastre's *Eva: Volveré y seré performers* [*Eva: I will return and I will be performers*] (2015). In this participatory performance, visitors stand on the balcony of *Casa Rosada*, Argentina's Government House, for thirty seconds, in commemoration of Eva Perón's (Evita) last speech on May 1st, 1952 (Abdusalamova, 2015). From this specific point, participants have the opportunity to take the step and address in public their thoughts, feelings and gestures to the passers by the *Plaza de Mayo* (Vales, 2015). It is important to note here the difference in the level between the participant that gives the speech from the upper level of the balcony to the audience beneath, a difference that transforms the participant to a 'leader' and the audience to possible 'followers'. In the case of *Semiotics of the Protest*, there is not such a difference in the level.

The performer addresses his gestures occasionally to the viewers from a more or less equal level; he wishes to communicate with them rather than playing the leader. In this way, the private terrace signifies the domestic realm as extrovert and open to communication on equal terms, whereas the balcony of the public governmental building in Sastre's performance shapes different power relationships between the participants and the audience.⁴⁴

As in the *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, the title of the *Semiotics of the Protest* is also in conversation with Martha Rosler's (1975) title *Semiotics of the Kitchen*. Rosler though, uses her own body to build a new vocabulary to reveal women's oppression in the private sphere. In the *Semiotics of the Protest*, I invited the volunteer to mimic public gestures of resistance against oppression, exposing the key significance of the body and its language for the materialization of the *agora* in times of crisis. The performance is not developed in relation to the letters of the alphabet as in Rosler's performance. It traces the semiotics of the body language⁴⁵ as it is articulated through the movements of the resisting body in the street protests.

Considering the questions and the new definitions of the term *agora*, this performance refers to the uses of public space as the main space for social resistance and protest. In street demonstrations, people reclaim the public space on their own terms, particularly through their physical presence and embodied collective actions. As the choreographer Susan Foster (2003) notes, these actions have either been conceptualized as spontaneous and uncontrolled outbursts of

⁴⁴ Nevertheless, it was for this reason that Sastre chose the particular *site* for this performance to produce his political statement. As he states the performance *I will return and I will be performers* "put the people in the place of power, in that place that is only reserved for leaders and have the experience, at least, of a minute of being Eva Perón" (Vales, 2015, para.7).

⁴⁵ By the term 'body language', I refer to the non-verbal process of communicating meaning by using body gestures, gaze and/or facial expressions (Givens, 2002, p.33; Crystal, 2008, p.261).

anger or as opportunistic attempts that serve individual interests and promote particular agendas. Within these theoretical frameworks, bodies are represented as either irrational entities that compel their owners to move and behave as an unpredictable chaotic mob or as plain instruments that assist in the achievement of goals. In both cases the body is dismissed since “neither hypothesizes the body as an articulate signified agent, and neither seriously considers the tactics implemented in the protest itself” (Foster, 2003, p.396). In fact, a closer investigation of the semiotics of the body in an act of resistance such as a demonstration proves that the protesting body executes specific movements and gestures, and it emerges “as a reservoir of signs and symbols” (ibid, p.395). *Semiotics of the Protest* reworks on these gestures and movements. Specifically, the performer mimics the protesting body when it moves forward marching with a flag and cheerfully clapping hands and/or when it moves back to retreat, when it attacks and when it is attacked, when it runs, falls or is arrested.

Moreover, for the sake of the performance I used multiple simulations of protestors’ necessary masquerades and improvised weapons (under violent circumstances): carton boxes, medical masks, helmets, handkerchief, etc. (Fig. 91). Such items of everyday life, in political demonstrations are transformed into objects of resistance or “disobedient objects” as they were defined in the framework of the exhibition *Disobedient Objects* at Victoria and Albert Museum (London, July 26, 2014- February 1, 2015). These objects account for “the dynamics of disobedience, the spark behind all knowledge” (Bachelard cited in Flood and Grindon, 2014, p.7). They play their own significant role in the constitution of the protesting body. For example, during the period of the mass street demonstrations in Athens, if you were found by the police to carry in your bag a medical

mask, you could be arrested on suspicion of involvement into aggressive actions against the police forces during the street protest.



Fig. 91. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Protest*. [Video still]

In the performed video, the body movements of the performer are not random. I regarded the demonstration as a choreography of bodies; a non-verbal expression that trusts visual communication. Analysing protest as choreographic tactics disrupts the dominant discourses of the irrational and uncontrollable body. As the scholar and choreographer Anusha Kedhar (2014) states "the actions of the protesters are carefully rehearsed and choreographed; they are intentional gestural acts deployed to protest the status quo and effect change" (para.9). Nonetheless, it was for this reason that I invited a dance performer to execute the performance in the first place, asking him to bodily respond to specific fragments of sounds from multiple street demonstrations.

8.2 PERSONAL NARRATIVES AS A SCRIPT FOR A VIDEO PERFORMANCE

The narrative of the *Semiotics of the Protest* performed video was developed both through body gestures and the act of speech. Specifically, at some point during the performance, the performer was asked to read aloud a given text. This text consisted of selected fragments from the participants' narratives on the words *phantasma* and *agora* that I had collected from the aforementioned questionnaire (See Appendix 3). These narratives are considered personal because they "mediate experience even when they promise a factual account" (Langellier, 1989, p.251).

The participants' personal narratives are exposed through the speech act of the performer, while intense body gestures transform the text into a manifesto. Specifically, the actor is staring at an imaginary audience and is reading out loud the participants' narratives from a piece of paper that he is holding in his one hand. At the same time, he keeps raising his other hand either clenched in a fist or pointing up with his index finger (Fig. 92).

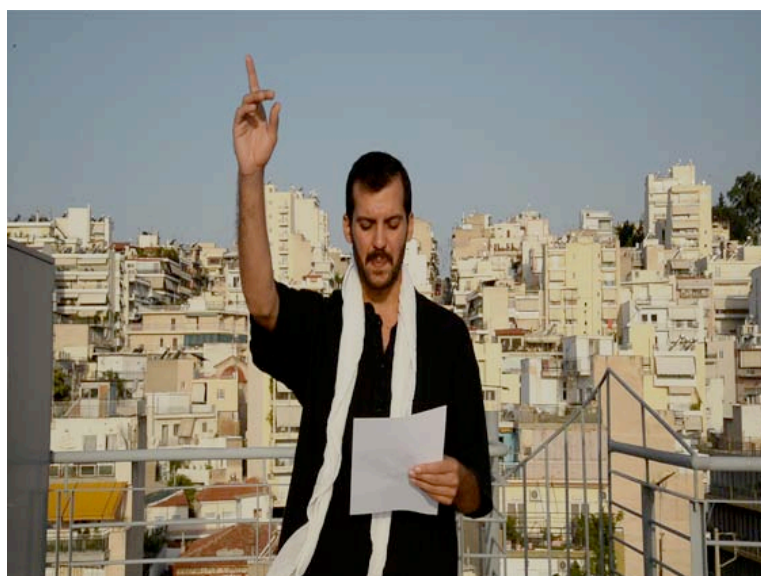


Fig. 92. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Semiotics of the Protest*. [Video still]

While making the above body gestures, the actor is reading the following text:

The starving and thirsty ghosts of the markets generate ghost-countries and envision individuals without imagination.
I ignore.

People lecture, buy or speculate. Multidimensional market. I wonder or re-contemplate.

Ominous!

The uncategorized; the intermediate; the living dead; the unfamiliar.

An image that reflects versions of reality.

The object in an expanded sense beyond conventional limits.

I speak and listen.

An open-air, public space of collective action, expression and communication.

I congregate.

The alarming image of the unfamiliar. Part of a projection of the imaginary, for what we can not perceive as familiar and/or normal.

A vision of another dimension.

I project.

An incomplete story.

I circulate.

I choose.

I suppress.

I suffer.

I close down.

Closed and abandoned stores.

I have been misled.

Taking the form of a manifesto in the video performance, the participants' personal narratives replace the usual slogans uttered in political demonstrations. I use the term 'manifesto' here to describe this mode of speech that is emphatic and declarative expressing political statements. According to speech act theory, personal narratives are considered "second-order speech acts" (Langellier, 1989, p.251) of everyday life that bear only "local significance" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986, p.48). All "second-order speech acts", though, can be elevated to "serious speech acts" or "statements", "if one sets up the necessary validation procedures, community experts and so on" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986, p.48). By transforming the participants' personal narratives into a manifesto, *Semiotics of the Protest* elevates them into "serious speech acts", and as such it acknowledges them as bearers of "truth".

From this point of view, *Semiotics of the Protest* transcends the public versus private dichotomy echoing the rallying slogan and argument of the second wave feminism in the 1960s "the personal (or private) is political" (McCann, 2013, p.191).

8.3 RESULTS

In *Semiotics of the Protest*, space and time seem discontinuous, as the private replaces the usual site of the street protest; the fast-forward moving of the protest opposes the hypothetical serenity and stillness of the private space. Thus, the performed video echoes Markares' interpretation of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* technique as *paraxenisma* which in English means alienation. Markares "translated the *Verfremdungseffekt* with the Greek term of *paraxenisma* (*παραξένισμα*), the technique of making reality seem unusual and unfamiliar instead of ordinary and of subjecting this reality to an

(unconventional) passing of time" (Van Steen and Van Steen, 2015, p.254). In the video, the protest is domesticized. This kind of alienation of the protest from its initial 'physical' space disturbs its solidity as a public event to enforce its mobility to the sphere of private and personal. By incorporating an ostensibly irrelevant space for what I call the *performed protest*, I introduce the element of surprise while associating the private with the public.

Moreover, the body gestures of the performance expose the protester as a dancer who, listening to the sounds of protests, experiments with different movements, in the form of a rehearsal. This kind of 'dancing' conveys Lepecki's (2013) conceptualization of protest as "choreopolitics". As he claims: "choreopolitics requires a redistribution and reinvention of bodies, affects, and senses through which one may learn how to move politically, how to invent, activate, seek, or experiment with a movement whose only sense (meaning and direction) is the experimental exercise of freedom" (p.20). With similar performative actions, *Semiotics of the Protest* becomes a statement of the acting disobedient/political body. It is this acting that materializes the *agora* and restores the political. I chose this acting to be realized by a male body, as it describes the dominant image of a protesting man who runs and fights in the streets (Kolarova, 2004). Men are entitled to serious speech acts, while women are allowed to express the personal (Biber and Burges, 2000; Baxter, 2006, p.xiii-xviii). In *Semiotics of the Protest*, the male performer is rehearsing a text of personal stories that transcend the boundaries associating women with the private/personal and men with the public. Demanding truce between the tensions of private and personal space, he is waving the white flag (Fig. 90). Notwithstanding his male body, he also states that the problem of private/public dichotomy should preoccupy all genders, not only women.

Seeing that a private space constitutes the imagery of the protest, and that the audio of the video functions as a metonymy of *agora*, I understand that the performer's body becomes a point of convergence of *image* and *agora*.

9. Research Limitations and Considerations for the future

After presenting and evaluating each one of the research stages, at this point I have to refer to some limitations and questions that emerged regarding the creative practices I used.

The *Arbitrariness* installation stands for my first attempt to combine interactivity with photography and text. The installation created a space in which the spectators could express their comments in writing publicly. Their interaction with the photographic images was mediated by a pre-designed computer code. I was expected to record more comments from the viewers, since the specific software 'mimics' daily life which is dominated by acts of writing in social networks, sms, e-mails, etc. Nevertheless, this did not happen. Although the written comments expressed and displayed in the installation space were sufficient for the purposes of my research, they were not as many as I had expected. Therefore, I felt the need to experiment more with the digital participatory interactive potential of the still image with text.

Semiotics of the Phantasma and *Symposium* were two performances that took place in the public space in order to be video-recorded and presented as performed videos. While this practice proved to be effective in combining performativity with lens-based media and in exposing the spatial politics that determines the particular creative works, it entails a risk regarding its publicity. For example, the *Symposium* project was officially published and exhibited as a video installation two months after the public performance. Moreover, in both cases, as these were public events, probably, there were many other viewers that captured the performances on their mobiles. This was a fact that cautioned me about issues of 'authorship' and copyright. On the other hand, I have to acknowledge that such a risk

signified an attitude of disobedience, as I placed the creative work openly out in the *agora* with no market regulations or institutional protection for my presence as an *artist* in the public space.

Furthermore, at this point, it is also essential that I address the limitations posed to the production of the particular creative research projects due to lack of time and funding. Trapped in the precariousness caused by the economic crisis, I had to work extremely long hours on a full-time basis with poor benefits in order to support the productions of my creative projects. Consequently, there was limited time left to evaluate proposals for funding and no budget to support the costs of my transport and participation in relevant international conferences and events. Having to think constantly in a time-wise and money-wise manner was quite frustrating. Under these adversities, however, I am very content for I have finally managed not only to produce significant creative work tuned in to the objectives of my research, but also to present a fairly large part of it to central venues in Greece and abroad.

Conclusion

In this practice-based research I aimed to investigate ways in which an art event can transform the public space from a consumerist topos to a space that enacts the *political* disturbing the order of the 'seeable' and 'sayable' (Rancière, 1999). In order to do so, I proposed a different conceptualization of the practice of *phantasmagoria*, which concentrates on the semantics of the word as a synthesis of *phantasma* and *agora*. Due to this conceptualization, I was able to move away from the idea of phantasmagoria as a symbol of consumerism and commodification of the culture, and work visually with the critical relationship between *phantasma* as 'image' and *agora* as a space of public speech and collective action. I was able, then, to link this relationship with the tensions between *visuality* and participatory practices and the way they were manifested in the Greek art scene in the particular time of the socio-economic crisis.

As I have explained in the introduction of the present document, the aims of my research were framed by the questions:

What art practices can be used to prevent the degradation of *agora* to a space of mere consumption? Is there any space of resistance against this normalizing process? As far as the art is concerned, do artist and audience become engaged with this process passively and uncritically? Are there any choices or possibilities of active involvement? Is the cultural product of art only a matter of marketing, and finally can the relationship among artist-artwork-audience be only defined in terms of the market?

Situating my research into the particular context of the Athenian art scene during the time of the socio-economic crisis, I also posed the questions:

Can, and under which conditions, a combination of *poetic* 'image' with participation address the *political* transforming the public space into an *agora*? And furthermore, which would be the implications of such a case with regard to the relationship between the *artist* and the *participant*?

In order to address the research questions I realized four creative projects: *Arbitrariness*, *Symposium*, *Semiotics of the Phantasma* and *Semiotics of the Protest*. Combining lens-based media with participatory practice and performance, these projects associate 'image' and *agora* in ways that enact the *political*.

In particular, based on a participatory interactive digital installation, the first research project, *Arbitrariness*, explored the relation between 'image' and *agora* focusing on the articulation of the latter through speech and language. In their interaction with the photographic installation, viewers via their written speech transformed the exhibition from a consuming space to a *political agora*. As their 'vulgar' political comments appeared on the projection screens, they allowed for the emergence of the *agora* in the 'image', defying the 'seriousness' of the exhibition space and reorienting the attention to the public affairs of the time. People's ignored voices and wishes due to the repression of democratic processes in public life, became visible on the imagery of the digital installation.

Combining participation with performance and video image, the second research project, *Symposium*, examined associations of 'image' and *agora* concentrating on the idea of the last as an assembly, a gathering of people for a common purpose. The *Symposium* performance took place in a park mainly used for recreational activities and picnics during leisure time. This public site is defined, thus, as a space of consumption and it was used as such in

the performance since participants were invited there to literally consume food mimicking a picnic. In the imagery of the video, the park is transformed into a *political agora* as the performing assembly mingles with the toys of the ξένοι/'strangers' and the fragments of Camus' narratives remarking the politics of inclusion and exclusion that define the public space; while for some the public space is not only safe but also entertaining and revitalizing for others it can be dangerous and even life-threatening. In fact the video imagery enacts the *political* by the time that interrogates the culture of consumption; in order some people to be able to enjoy themselves by consuming goods, some others, the ξένοι/'strangers' in the case of *Symposium*, have to be 'consumed'.

Combining photography, participatory performance and video, the third creative project, *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, investigated the relation between 'image' and *agora* focusing on the articulation of the latter through collective action. The *Semiotics of the Phantasma* performance took place in a beach, again a recreational site where people consume touristic luxuries (they let room in hotels, they buy swimming accessories, coffees, beers etc.). The particular beach though, carries significant political implications since it hosts, among others, a summer-only multinational lesbian community. During the performance, participants, being all women, had to renegotiate ethnic, gender and sexual identities, revealing conflicts and struggles within their 'assembly'. Thus, for the participants, the place was temporarily transformed from consumerist to *political*. Furthermore, this intervention alarmed the heteronormative discourses of the specific beach: tying with all these knots a naked female body, these 'lesbians' were up to something 'weird' again.

The fourth research project, *Semiotics of the Protest*, combines 'image', text and speech focusing on the spatial politics that

determine *agora*. Through a performed video the acting body, i.e. the *performing protester*, produces the 'image' in which *agora* is an entity mobilized by the disobedient body. At this stage, I examined the relation of the private to the public space. Private space is conceived not as an individual's shelter but as a space in which the body is practising and preparing to act with other bodies in the *agora* and at the same time to set the *agora* in motion. Thus, the imagery exposes a necessity for the body to move against the privatization of public space, the basic tool with which the public is transformed from a political space into a space of consumption. In other words, in this case 'image' and performative speech collaborated to reinstate the *political* in the *agora*.

Taking place in the framework of the Greek socio-economic crisis, the above four projects addressed the *political* by staging live events and combining *visuality* with participatory practices. My choice to use participatory performance in combination with lens-based media conditioned a convergence between *visuality* and *participation*. Using lens-based media to support symbolic image and language, the research projects defied the regime of the "clear gaze" that dominated the Athenian art scene of the time; a regime in which participatory practices that lacked visual experimentation were promoted and documentary approaches and aesthetics were preferred as more trustworthy to enact the *political* than any other form of creative expression.

Resisting the above regime, the four creative projects of the research employed various forms of experimenting visually with participation. In *Arbitrariness*, I conceived *visuality* as a participatory process, in which viewers interact with photographic images using software based on an algorithmic code particularly created for the project. The stillness of the projected photographic images is challenged by

audience's continuous written interventions on them. Through this process, the image is transformed into a 'wall' similar to those of social media, creating space for the viewers to express and share thoughts and opinions. This transformation was of particular importance as it situated the project in the socio-political context of the time. Because all the TV media channels and the mainstream newspapers literally embraced the policies of austerity abolishing every opposite opinion, people turned to the social media to circulate news, exchange ideas and inform each other about ways of resistance in the street.

In *Symposium*, I approached *participation* as a staged and collective performance in the public space. Staging participation in the particular setting of the triangular 'table' with plastic plates and toys, established a symbolic language which was further developed in the produced video. In the video the performance is assembled together with sounds from the surrounded area of the park and Camus' text in a way that produces a shift to the content of participation. While in the original performance at the park, participants were the protagonists, in the performed video the toys become the protagonists with participants taking up the role of the supporting actors. It is this shift in the content of *participation* through visual experimentation that exposed the *agora* as a space of inclusions and exclusions enacting the *political*.

In *Semiotics of the Phantasma* I used *participation* as a practice of reviving the photographic image into a performative event. In this visual exploration, *artist* and *participants* have different roles with the latter acting upon the body of the former creating space for the re-negotiation of conflicts.

In *Semiotics of the Protest* participants' written personal narratives were combined to form the script for the video performance. Thus, participation here is explored not only in terms of *visuality* but also of audibility. The performing protester is practising in the private terrace by listening and bodily responding to fragments of sounds and basically unintelligible slogans from various street demonstrations. At some point, he also reads out loud a manifesto formed by the participants' personal narratives. The crystal clear sound of the manifesto personalizes the chaotic and unintelligible protest sounds in the background of the video, creating associations between the private and the public space. The protester moves his body according to the sounds of the protest; yet, it is the claims, statements, feelings and anxieties expressed in the manifesto that render his movements meaningful and purposeful.

Combining *visuality* and *participation*, this research conceived *phantasmagoria* as a *poetic* synthesis of *phantasma* and *agora* in order to address the *political*. The four creative projects are highly politicized due to their direct connection with public discourse; I might even say they are amalgams that come into place through relationships of power and aesthetics and never cease to pose questions of what is seen and what remains unseen ('image'), which voice is listened to and which one is not (*agora*). In their ambiguity, they do not document 'reality'; they speak of 'reality' through fiction, multiple symbolic acts, metonymies and performativity; or, in a broader sense, they speak of 'reality' as contingent and open to change.

Consequently, my research projects suggest that *participation* and *visuality* do not necessarily oppose each other. In contrary they may complement each other for exposing the *political* in the consumerist culture. In fact, the conditions that enabled the transformation of the

space into a *political agora* were determined by specific choices I made with regard to the modes of *participation* used. Specifically, in *Arbitrariness* and *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, I appropriated visually the mode of “conflictual participation”, an unconditioned and non-consensual participation, as it has been described by Miessen (2011, p.96).

In *Arbitrariness* there was not any pre-designed consensus that conditioned the interactivity of the participants with the digital installation. The participants could express their thoughts unconditionally, as there were not any specific guidelines to follow or questions to answer. Furthermore, the software was designed to allow all written interactions without digitally blocking ‘inappropriate’ phrases or words. This orchestrated condition allowed participants to give responses that defied both the *artist’s* authority and the institutional framework of the exhibition space. Political and sarcastic comments emerged on the imagery: the *agora* that was under attack in the public space appeared uncensored in the inside space of the exhibition.

In *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, my initial intention to create a consensus on the basis of which no participant was to cover my eyes or nose, failed. My choices to realize the project outside of an institutional framework that would monitor participants’ behaviour as well as to use “distant outsiders” (Miessen, 2011, pp.96-97) as participants instead of fellow artists and colleagues, allowed the participants to resist manipulation. In this way, tensions and conflicts floated on the surface; on the one hand, they questioned the power relationships between *artist* and *participants*, while on the other hand, they made visible the discontinuities in the construction of identities and exposed the heterogeneity of the assembly/collective. During the performance, participants dealt with these tensions by making

different interventions in the *artist's* body, but most importantly by trying to undo or modify other participants' interventions. By doing so, they became empowered enough to build an unexpected ever-changing creature out of the *artist's* body. Thus, conflictual participation enabled the emergence of a *political agora* while at the same time brought a displacement in the relationship among *artist*, *artwork* and *participants*. In this orchestrated event the *artist* becomes the *artwork* and the *participants* become the *artist*.

While in the above creative projects the participants had the opportunity to intervene in the development of the art event, in the cases of the *Symposium* and *Semiotics of the Protest*, the mode of participation I used was more "textual" (Kester, 2011, p.10). This means that in both cases participants did not have any particular control over the final visual outcomes of the projects. Nevertheless, in both cases their contribution was decisive, because it was their physical presence in the *Symposium* performance and their written narratives in the *Semiotics of the Protest* that provided the space within which I was able to approach the idea of *agora* in the sense of an 'assembly'. In fact, in these both cases, it was my conception of *participation* through the idea of the *agora* that enabled the *political* to emerge in the video imagery.

In *Arbitrariness* and *Semiotics of the Phantasma* the *political agora* emerged when participants questioned the authority of the *artist*. Yet, in *Symposium* and *Semiotics of the Protest* the textual mode of participation used conditioned representations of the *agora* which were further investigated by the *artist* visually through the video editing process. In other words in the first two projects, participants form an *assembly* that questions the *artist*, while in the two latter the *artist* questions the *assembly* of the *participants*. Consequently, the four projects together reflect on the relationship between the

collective/agora and the *individual*; every *individual* should be accountable to (and take the responsibility for) the *agora*, and vice versa, the *agora* should be accountable to (and be responsible for) every *individual*.

The above modes of *participation* create serious implications regarding the relationship between the *artist/individual* and *participants/collective* raising issues of responsibility and trust.

In particular, in *Arbitrariness* I left participants to intervene over the imagery despite the uneasiness I experienced as a visual artist to 'abandon' my images 'unprotected' in the installation space. This choice of mine created space to the viewer to get engaged with the artwork in a critical way; they took the chance to express their opinion to what they were seeing, to question my ideas and the authority of the museum. In the introduction, I described the way that art institutions and dominant discourses degrade the *agora* to a space of mere consumption. Artists and audience, though, do not engage with this process passively. They certainly engage in critical thinking, the first when they create their work and the latter when they see and experience it in the exhibition space. What is different in *Arbitrariness* is that it creates space for this critical thinking to become visible in common view at the exhibition space and, thus, become part of the public discussion; it is when critical thinking is tested in the public dialogue that the *political* is enacted in the *agora*.

Furthermore, realizing the participatory performance *Semiotics of the Phantasma* outside of an institutional exhibition space, created the conditions under which *participants* questioned the authority of the *artist*. Moreover, the participants were not artists and as such, they were not bound by 'protocols' and/or 'rules' that often regulate an art

event. This was also a factor that enabled participants' critical approach to the performance.

In both cases, as a visual artist, I took risks. In *Arbitrariness* I risked the 'authenticity' of my imagery and in *Semiotics of the Phantasma* I ran the risk to get hurt by participants' violent gestures on my body. Nevertheless, I took the responsibility of my choices and I *trusted* the participants.

The relationship between the *artist* and the *participants* was developed differently in the *Symposium* and *Semiotics of the Protest* projects. In these two cases, I, as an *artist*, asked the *participants* to *trust* me and contribute to my research despite the fact that they would not have any control over the final visual outcomes. In order to build their *trust* in me, I explained analytically the concept, research purposes and my creative practices. Being mainly activists fighting from the margins and questioning (in)visibilities, participants met me who as an artist was troubled by (in)visibilities created by the regime of the "clear gaze" that regulated the aesthetics of the crisis. It was an assembly that produced "joyful affect" (O'Sullivan, 2010), the feeling we experience "when we come across an object with which we positively resonate" or when we come together with other individuals with whom we "essentially 'agree'..." (ibid, p.198). Being attuned to the political connotations of the projects, participants embraced them in a collective spirit, and this embracing signified the moment that the *assembly*, that is the *participants*, took the responsibility and risk for the *individual*, that is the *artist*; in fact, the *assembly* passed some of its authority to the *artist*; and because there was no money involved, the developed *trust* was genuine.

Consequently, the four creative projects of this research suggest a relationship between the artist and the audience that is not defined in

terms of the market anymore. The *artist* is not just the active producer and the *audience/participants* just the passive consumer of art commodities. By conceptualizing the practice of *participation* through the idea of *agora*, *artist* and *participants* are engaged in a dialogue of political awareness. Depending on the case, the *artist* should be willing to take the risk and pass some of her authority to the *participants* and vice versa. Taking the risk builds trust and enables resistance against the normalizing practices of the commodification of culture, setting in motion the *political agora*. These exchanges of power between the *artist/individual* and *participants/collective* reveal that neither the first nor the latter are the bearers of absolute knowledge.

From this point of view, using *participation* through the concept of the *agora* constitutes a novel method within the research, as it brings new perspectives in the debate on *visuality* and activist or socially engaged art mainly shaped by Bishop and Kester. As I have mentioned in the *Theoretical Research Context*, on the one hand, Bishop criticizes activist art for lack of imagination; activist art dismisses *visuality* because it is connected to the culture of consumption, rendering the visual artist as a suspect supporting the system. On the other hand, Kester argues that Bishop's (as well as Bourriaud's) views render activist art as naïve, the artist as the most valid source of knowledge and the audience as non-trustworthy. Constructing on this debate, my conceptualization of *participation* through *agora* provides a framework within which visual practices and *poetic* language co-exist with participatory practices, in a way that acknowledges both the *artist* and the *participants/audience* as trustworthy sources of knowledge.

In this context, this practice-based research suggests a *poetic* challenge on the regulatory knowledge that involves associations and allows expressions of "hybrid formations of knowledge" (Busch, 2009,

p.5). If 'hybrid' is the outcome of the combination of different things (Winterbottom, 2016, pp.2-3), then, in this research, my contribution to knowledge are the visualization processes by which I associated the 'image' with the *agora* and by extension, the *artist* with the *participants/collaborators* in order to expose the *political* in times of crisis.

Publications/Exhibitions

Arbitrariness

EXHIBITIONS:

Arbitrariness (2013) [Exhibition]. Beton7 Gallery, Athens. 14-31 March 2013.

Beyond the limits of the gaze (2012) [Exhibition]. Contemporary Art Centre of Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki. 11 May – 17 June 2012.

LECTURES:

Paschalidou, M. 2014, *Installation as a space of re-making, participating and meta-commenting*, presentation, Fine Art Practices/Photography Research Group Conference, School of Arts; Art, Design and Humanities, De Montfort University, delivered 26 June 2014.

Paschalidou, M. 2014, *Decentering the visual subject: Participation as an art practice*, lecture, MA Photography Guuset Lecture Program; School of Media and Communication; Art, Design and Humanities, De Montfort University, delivered 25 March 2014.

Paschalidou, M. 2014, *Arbitrariness Interactive Photography Installation*, lecture, Textual, Visual & Digital Cultures Conference, Art, Design and Humanities, De Montfort University, 21 February 2014.

PUBLICATIONS:

Paschalidou, M. (2015) *Arbitrariness, Narratives on A Gynaecological Exam Table, The Balloons Prose Poem*. In: Simmons, M. (ed.) *Making Photographs*. 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury, pp.151-53.

Symposium

PRESENTATIONS - EXHIBITIONS:

Visual Dialogues (2013) [Exhibition]. Onassis Cultural Centre, Plato's Academy, Athens. 4 December 2012 – 10 February 2013.

Symposium (2012) [Public Performance]. Archaeological Park of Plato's Academy, Athens. 30 September 2012.

LECTURES:

Paschalidou, M. 2014, *Installation as a space of re-making, participating and meta-commenting*, presentation, Fine Art Practices/Photography Research Group Conference, School of Arts; Art, Design and Humanities, De Montfort University, delivered 26 June 2014.

Paschalidou, M. 2014, *Decentering the visual subject: Participation as an art practice*, lecture, MA Photography Guuset Lecture Program; School of Media and Communication; Art, Design and Humanities, De Montfort University, delivered 25 March 2014.

Semiotics of the Phantasma**PRESENTATIONS - EXHIBITIONS:**

Semiotics of the Phantasma (2014) [Public Performance]. Eressos, Lesvos. 21 July 2014.

The Symptom 03, To the limits of "togetherness"; Tzatzala (2012) [Exhibition]. Amfissa. 6-21 October 2012.

An Eye for an Ear; Tzatzala (2012) [Exhibition]. Arles Photography Open Salon, Galerie Huit. Arles. 2 July – 5 September 2012.

PUBLICATIONS:

Paschalidou, M. (2017) *Bodies Under Investigation, Biography of the Bread, Semiotics of the Phantasma*. In: Simmons, M. and Read, S. (ed.) *Photographers and Research: The role of research in contemporary photographic practice*. 1st ed. London: Focal Press, pp.196-203

Paschalidou, M. (2012) *Tzatzala*. In: Karas, V. (ed.) *An eye for an ear*. 1st ed. London: UBYU, p.84

Semiotics of the Protest**PRESENTATIONS - EXHIBITIONS:**

Semiotics of the Protest (2014) [Performance]. Retsina, Piraeus. 21 August 2014.

Biography of the Bread

PRESENTATIONS - EXHIBITIONS:

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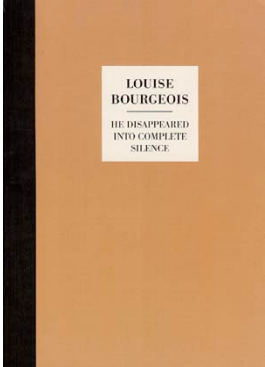


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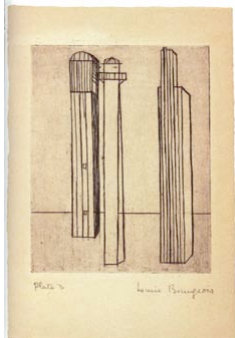

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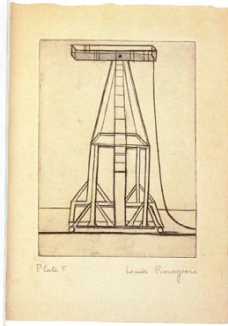
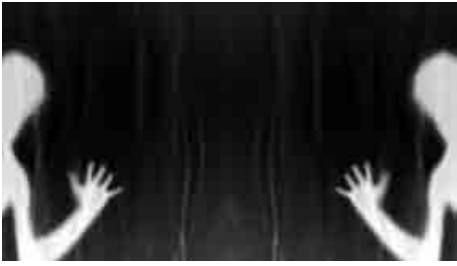
APPENDICES

I. Appendix 1: *Arbitrariness*





- INDICATIVE COLLECTED SOFTWARE DATA





Louise Bourgeois, "He disappeared into complete silence", 1947	<i>Arbitrariness</i> , 2012	Selected audiences' written responses
 <p>"He disappeared into complete silence"</p>	 <p>1. "She who disappeared into shadows"</p> <p>(this specific image is repeated on each one of the three projections)</p>	<p>... Most people will probably ... What is at the end of the tunnel? ... haunted by the ghosts of the past ... farewell my shadow... ... and became a shadow herself... ... she orchestrated her disappearance with sadistic meticulousness ... wearing those beautiful earrings ... dark sound ... walking distance from the ship ... Now was present, afterwhile is before ... dark boulevard ... no escape ... impossible is something</p>
Louise Bourgeois, "He disappeared into complete silence", 1947	<i>Arbitrariness</i> , 2012	Selected audiences' written responses
 <p>Plate 1</p>		<p>... and clever ... By whose standards? ... but I said what I really meant ... fetus ... I was afraid of her, so I attacked ... I cannot hide. I can have no trust ... what is beautiful?</p>

<p>Once there was a girl and she loved a man. They had a date next to the eighth street station of the sixth avenue subway. She had put on her good clothes and a new hat. Somehow he could not come. So the purpose of this picture is to show how beautiful shw was. I really mean that she was beautiful.</p>	 <p>2. I really mean that she was beautiful</p>	
<p>Louise Bourgeois, "He disappeared into complete silence", 1947</p>	<p><i>Arbitrariness, 2012</i></p>	<p>Selected audiences' written responses</p>
 <p>Plate 2 The solitary death of the Wool-worth building.</p>	 <p>3. The death of the building</p>	<p>... the dovehouse of ghostdog samuray</p> <p>... it happened after the reconstruction of the urban society</p> <p>... the end of the story</p> <p>... it was a symbolic death of recall memories</p> <p>... symbolism will die after the disappearance</p> <p>... the building had a skin</p>
 <p>Plate 3 Once a man was telling</p>	 <p>4. Story told so fast that nobody</p>	<p>... Who is there?</p> <p>... Trapped. So trapped.</p> <p>... parallel words</p> <p>... a dark room, two chairs, a prostitute and one invitation</p> <p>... it's like I am playing in an empty</p>

<p>a story, it was a very good story too, and it made him very happy, but he told it so fast that nobody understood it.</p>	<p>understood it</p>	<p>theatre</p>
<p>Louise Bourgeois, "He disappeared into complete silence", 1947</p>	<p><i>Arbitrariness, 2012</i></p>	<p>Selected audiences' written responses</p>
 <p>Plate 4 In the mountains of central France forty years ago, sugar was a rare product. Children got one piece of it at Christmas time. A little girl that I knew when she was my mother used to be very fond and very jealous of it. She made a hole in the ground and hid her sugar in, and she always forgot that the earth is damp.</p>	 <p>5. A hole in the ground</p>	<p>... Experiment ... sadfffg, fstfgfafsxdgdx ... a meteor falls to earth ... it's necessary for me to leave. Where are you going? ... the journey ... breathe ... what is the hole? ... vote to Golden Dawn⁴⁶ for 'cleaning' the country ... a serious hole from a big earthquake, somenones see it and others not ... Do not afraid it's a small one ... Holes give life ... so many holes so little ground</p>
 <p>Plate 5 Once a man was waving to his friend</p>	 <p>6. Stuck on waving</p>	<p>... Empry promises of Hello ... truth? ... why? ... is this the wrong place? ... she was just crying out for help ... not waving, but drowning ... stuck on waving to those that they never become visible</p>

⁴⁶ Golden Dawn is an extreme Neo-Nazi political party in Greece.

<p>from the elevator. He was laughing so much that he stuck his head out and the ceiling cut it off.</p>		<p>... silent scream</p>
<p>Louise Bourgeois, "He disappeared into complete silence", 1947</p>	<p><i>Arbitrariness, 2012</i></p>	<p>Selected audiences' written responses</p>
<p></p> <p>Plate 6 Leprosarium, Louisiana.</p>	<p></p> <p>7. Epidemic</p>	<p>... the otherness ... in real time and space ... lust... pleasure ... existence ... mercy... death ... fear ... establishing the distance ... life put a spoon in my mouth ... the museums' day ... joy-sadness-love-revolution ... the communication of knowledge is what epidemic is ... illness and lie ... Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear ... Power Plant</p>
<p></p> <p>Plate 7 Once a man was angry at his wife, he cut her in small pieces, made a stew of her. Then he telephoned to his friends and asked them for a cocktail-and-stew party. They all came and had a good time.</p>	<p></p> <p>8. Cut in small pieces</p>	<p>... broken self feeling lost ... the gaps in between will be united soon ... natassa, zetta, sophie ... again, the desert is not enough for everyone ... tension ... eros holds a cup above his head ... no essential visible</p>

Louise Bourgeois, "He disappeared into complete silence", 1947	<i>Arbitrariness, 2012</i>	Selected audiences' written responses
 <p>Plate 8</p> <p>Once an American man who had been in the army for three years became sick in one ear. His middle ear became almost hard. Through the bone of the skull back of the said ear a passage was bored. From then on he heard the voice of his friend twice, first in a high pitch and then in a low pitch. Later on the middle ear grew completely hard and he became cut off from part of the world.</p>	 <p>9. The middle ear</p>	<p>... perception</p> <p>... visible in darkness</p> <p>... I always listening to you!</p> <p>... she listens what she wants to. What she wants, knows, fears, imagines desires and those and others</p> <p>... whisperings... silence</p>
Louise Bourgeois, "He disappeared into complete silence", 1947	<i>Arbitrariness, 2012</i>	Selected audiences' written responses
 <p>Plate 9</p> <p>Once there was the mother of a son. She loved him with a</p>	 <p>10. She died but she did not know it</p>	<p>... who died and when?</p> <p>... meta</p> <p>... but she didn't enjoy it for very long, did she?</p> <p>... and where is she now?</p> <p>... one lives only if lives spiritually</p> <p>... fragmenetd dreams</p> <p>... she was reborn and she knew it very well</p>

<p>complete devotion. And she protected him because she knew how sad and wicked this world is. He was of a quiet nature and rather intelligent but he was not interested in being loved or protected because he was interested in something else. Consequently at an early age he slammed the door and never came back. Later on she died but he did not know it.</p>		<p>... she will live when she dies ... exit ... extreme violence ... does life exists before death? ... she couldn't recognize her beloved ones ... how familiar! ... and we, and others, and you ... the hidden face of the city ... PASOK⁴⁷ died</p>
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- ARTIST STATEMENT

"Arbitrariness explores the fragile and unforeseeable relation between image and language taking as a reference an art/book produced in 1947 (Louise Bourgeois, "He disappeared into complete silence"). It seeks to map dialogues between the present and the past by re-writing and re-visualizing the absence and presence represented and described in the initial art/book. The interactive installation creates a participatory environment where audiences' can re-interpret the original work. The software allows improvisations in writing making possible the connections from the past to the present; from the printed material to the digital; from the digital to the interactive. It gives the possibility for viewers to interact with the texts, which accompany each projected photographic image. Viewers can use a computer keyboard to put in writing their own comments, thoughts, paraphrases creating new interpretations and multiple combinations of language and image. Moreover, the software has been designed to back-up all the combinations and record all the written responses of the viewers.

The installation consists of ten photographic images and texts accompanied by sounds, which are projected in the exhibition room through the software designated to allow audiences' interaction with the artwork".

Maria Paschalidou 2012

⁴⁷ Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), Greek Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima, social democratic political party in Greece

- **STATEMENT BY SYRAGO TSIARA** (curator, art historian and Director of the Thessaloniki Center of Contemporary Art, part of the State Museum of Contemporary Art – Costakis Collection)

“Versions of visibility intended to encourage viewing”

“By the use of diverse expressions, media and techniques, Maria Paschalidou’s work is consistently aligned towards the human body’s involvement in the public sphere, the influence from the urban environment and the changes effected by the body’s action therein.

From the projection-embedment of urban images in the 1998 photo-series *Body and City*, to the public, participatory action entitled *Visibility* which was organized in 2007 as an alternative of production, circulation or exchange of artistic work outside the established norms of the art market, Maria Paschalidou never ceases to put to the test the acknowledged aspects of organizing the urban economy of bodies, the methods of capturing, representing and decoding physical experience in different milieus.

It is always the reference context that defines the kind of speech produced after shifting the conceptual ground of her conceptualizations: in *Bodies Under Investigation* (2003), for example, medical jargon and the relevant technological means shape to a great extent the representation of the body, rendering it as an exercise field for the powers of control, observation and evaluation, powers to which the body resists as it projects the remains of images that radioscopic methods have concealed. In *Narratives On A Gynaecological Exam Table* (2009), the obstetric bed is transformed from a medical examination table to a setting where personal stories are revealed. The audience does not remain uninvolved while following the narratives; it literally assumes the position of the narrator who is disclosing personal experiences, for the audience is invited to take the same, awkward position of the patient under examination on the bed.

In her latest work entitled *Arbitrariness* (2012), Maria Paschalidou consciously expands the horizon of the viewer’s involvement in her project. The site-specific interactive photo installation hosted on the ground floor of the Centre of Contemporary Art at the port of Thessaloniki invites the viewers to act for themselves and individually define the way the exhibited project will unfold by freely combining a set of images and words available. The installation’s original material comprises ten photos –shadows of human bodies in conversation with details or overall views of buildings– while the fragmentary and random phraseology is inspired from Louise Bourgeois’ work *He disappeared into complete silence*, which “arbitrarily” translates into “She who disappeared into shadows”.

The individual parts of the installation (image, text, programming, sound) have been independently processed as they are intended to serve the collective project according to the artist’s plan, yet the conclusion remains at all times up to the user’s free will, action and effect. Apart from being a condition of production, participation in the form of the ‘Do it yourself’ practice that has recently emerged in international art is also a sine qua non for the completion of Maria Paschalidou’s work which is planned in such a way as to encourage personal judgement and choice.

The artist makes use of the potential of modern technology to create a ‘user-friendly’ digital context, and thus puts under constant negotiation the limits between the controlled and the random, the associative recollection of internalized visual experiences and the arbitrary parallel of signifier-signified”.

Syrago Tsiara
April 2012

II. Appendix 2: *Symposium*

- ARTIST STATEMENT

Symposium

single channel video, 3 min

Despite the depressive conditions of the economic crisis new forms of communication emerge in many of the Athenian neighbourhoods. Such forms are the customary picnics in the archaeological park of the Plato's Academy improvised by residents and/or other collectives in the neighbourhood. The video *Symposium* presents a staged action-picnic held at the park of the Plato's Academy in September 2012. For the realization of the action, members of art and social collectives were invited to participate as 'dinner guests' in the staged picnic. The toys appear in the video are being circulated by street vendors, the so-called "foreigners", in the streets of Athens and other public gathering places such as café, restaurants, etc. The texts shown in subtitles are excerpts from the work of Albert Camus "The Stranger". The video creates a space for a contemporary symposium that discusses the absurdity of 'togetherness' and 'otherness'. It displays meeting points for imagery and literacy narrative referring to the 'familiar' and 'unfamiliar', the 'present' and 'absent', the 'domestic' and 'otherness'.

Note: The video is programmed to appear alternately in Greek and English language subtitles.

- THE TEXT IN THE VIDEO / SUBTITLES

*** All the texts are excerpts from the book *The stranger* by Albert Camus (1946).

... Even in the prisoner's dock, to hear oneself being talked about (Camus, 1946, 62)

I said that I had no intention of killing the Arab (Camus, 1946, 64)

It struck me that all I had to do was to turn, walk away, and think no more about it (Camus, 1946, 38)

I knew it. I wouldn't get out of the sun by moving on a yard or so. But I took that step, just one step, forward (Camus, 1946, 38)

The trigger gave. I shook off my sweat and the clinging veil of light. Then I fired four shots more into the inert body (Camus, 1946, 39)

I tried to explain that it was because of the sun (Camus, 1946, 64)

"Why did you pause between the first and second shot?" (Camus, 1946, 43)

"I ask you 'Why?' I insist on your telling me" (Camus, 1946, 43)

As a matter of fact, I had already told him (Camus, 1946, 42)

I went over it all again, the beach, our swim, the fight. Then the beach again, and the five shots I'd fired (Camus, 1946, 42)

I remembered it was a Sunday, and that put me off. I fried some eggs and ate them off the pan. I did without bread as I couldn't be bothered going down to buy it (Camus, 1946, 15)

"I'm on *your* side". "I shall pray for you" (Camus, 1946, 74)

I told him that I wasn't conscious of any "sin"; all I knew was that I'd been guilty (Camus, 1946, 73)

They put me in a biggish room with several other prisoners, mostly Arabs. I told them I'd killed an Arab, and they kept mum for a while. They explained to me how to lay out my sleeping mat. By rolling up one end one makes a sort of bolster (Camus, 1946, 46)

For all to be accomplished, for me to feel less lonely, all that remained to hope was that on the day of my execution there should be a huge crowd of spectators and that they should greet me with howls of execration (Camus, 1946, 76)

III. Appendix 3: *Semiotics of the Protest*

- Questionnaire

A. SUMMARY OF THE COLLECTED DATA (August 2013)

	<i>Phantasma</i>	<i>Agora</i>
Incomplete phrase	<p><i>Phantasma is ...</i></p> <p><i>A creature of imagination (fantasy) that is usually connected with our unconscious and undiscovered fears</i></p> <p><i>The one that is out of categorization; the intermediate (in-between) and the probable; The living dead, between presence and absence</i></p> <p><i>Something that is hovering between past and present</i></p> <p><i>Liquid, Green</i></p> <p><i>The repressed desire</i></p> <p><i>An unfinished story</i></p> <p><i>A vision that comes from another dimension. It can be frightening, outraged and/or may be a little consolation</i></p> <p><i>The scary image of the unfamiliar, the non-existent, the other. It's a part of the projection for the imaginary on what we perceive as familiar and normal</i></p>	<p><i>Agora is ...</i></p> <p><i>A place that people speak (lecture), purchase or speculate</i></p> <p><i>'Agora' as open space of appearance and relational enactment ... 'Agora' (as market) is the norm (and the seduction) of power ... and the competitive survival. Market as assessable norm, bottom-line efficiency...</i></p> <p><i>It's a place that one can buy or juice up selling products</i></p> <p><i>A noisy place</i></p> <p><i>My nightmare</i></p> <p><i>To sell fishes at the open-air market and customers come back to tell you how tasty were the fishes you sold them the last time</i></p> <p><i>A place but also the process of selling goods</i></p>

	Phantasma	Agora
Incomplete phrase	<p>Phantasma is ...</p> <p><i>It's another aspect of reality, or an idol that reflects versions of reality, or an expanded sense that goes beyond the defined limitations of sense; It may be dreamy</i></p>	<p>Agora is ...</p> <p><i>A place of assembly and communication and later on the space for commercial trades for the citizens of ancient Greece</i></p> <p><i>It's an open public space of collective action, expression and communication where everyone can participate freely and creatively</i></p>
Punctuation style	<p>«»</p> <p>?</p> <p>...</p> <p>?</p> <p>,</p> <p>: ...</p> <p>!</p> <p>!</p> <p>; (?)</p>	<p>; (?)</p> <p>.</p> <p>«»</p> <p>!</p> <p>!</p> <p>.</p> <p>; (?)</p> <p>...</p> <p>:</p>
Adjective	<p><i>Tremendous</i></p> <p><i>Unfamiliar</i></p> <p><i>Constant</i></p> <p><i>Permeable</i></p> <p><i>Indistinct</i></p>	<p><i>Multidimensional</i></p> <p><i>Competitive</i></p> <p><i>Endless</i></p> <p><i>Colourful</i></p> <p><i>Ephemeral</i></p>

	<i>Phantasma</i>	<i>Agora</i>
Adjective	<i>Liquid</i> <i>Scary</i> <i>Scary</i> <i>Elusive, unfamiliar</i>	<i>Haunted</i> <i>Colourful</i> <i>Communicative</i> <i>Endless</i>
Verb	<i>Ignore</i> <i>Appear</i> <i>Circulate</i> <i>Trembling</i> <i>Smelling</i> <i>Protect</i> <i>See</i> <i>Project</i> <i>Wondering or re-contemplate</i>	<i>Wondering</i> <i>Regulate (adjust) / to be regulated (adjusted)</i> <i>Choose</i> <i>Close down</i> <i>Suffering</i> <i>It would be exchange but now is suppress</i> <i>Choose</i> <i>Congregate</i> <i>Speak and listen</i>

B. THE QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Volunteers Participation in a research activity / Συμμετοχή σε έρευνα

Country (Born) / Τόπος γέννησης

Current Residence / Τωρινός τόπος διαμονής

Gender / Φύλο

Year of birth / Χρονολογία γέννησης

Studies / Σπουδές Τριτοβάθμια Εκπαίδευση

Current Job / Τωρινή επαγγελματική απασχόληση

Other than job activities / Άλλες δραστηριότητες

Familiar with the following cultural area(s) - On a scale of 1-5 (1 being the less familiar and 5 being the most) please rate the following / Εξοικείωση με τους παρακάτω πολιτιστικούς τομείς - Παρακαλώ καταγράψτε την εξοικείωσή σας σε μία κλίμακα από 1-5 (όπου το 1 αντιπροσωπεύει τη λιγότερη εξοικείωση ενώ το 5 τη μεγαλύτερη):

Performing Arts / Θέατρο, χορός	
Performance art / Τέχνη της επιτέλεσης	
Cultural Institutions (museums, libraries, archives, etc.) / Πολιτιστικά ιδρύματα (μουσεία, οργανισμοί διαχείρισης αρχείων, βιβλιοθήκες, κλπ.)	
Visual Arts / Οπτικές Τέχνες	
Music / Μουσική	
Sound Art / Τέχνη του ήχου	
Literature / Λογοτεχνία	
Design and Applied Arts / Σχέδιο και Εφαρμοσμένες Τέχνες	
Interactive art / Διαδραστική τέχνη	
Installation art / Τέχνη της εγκατάστασης	
Other (please specify) - Άλλο (παρακαλώ συμπληρώστε):	

Please fill out the following incomplete phrase (you can only use the designated space for your response) / Παρακαλώ συμπληρώστε την ακόλουθη ημιτελή φράση (χρησιμοποιείτε μόνο το σχεδιασμένο χώρο για τη γραπτή σας απάντηση)

'Phantasma' is... / 'Φάντασμα' είναι...

Please share a short story and/or mention any incident you think it may be related to the word 'phantasma' in your daily life (you can only use the designated space for your response) / Παρακαλώ μοιραστείτε μία σύντομη ιστορία ή και αναφέρετε ένα περιστατικό που νομίζετε πως σχετίζεται με τη λέξη 'φάντασμα' στην καθημερινότητά σας (χρησιμοποιείτε μόνο το σχεδιασμένο χώρο για τη γραπτή σας απάντηση)

Please add into the following box a punctuation style that you choose for the word 'phantasma' / Παρακαλώ προσθέστε στο παρακάτω τετράγωνο ένα σημείο στίξης που επιλέγετε για τη λέξη 'φάντασμα'

What adjective would you choose for the word 'phantasma'? / Ποιο επίθετο νομίζετε ότι ταιριάζει στη λέξη 'φάντασμα';

What verb would you choose for the word 'phantasma'? / Ποιο ρήμα νομίζετε ότι ταιριάζει στη λέξη 'φάντασμα';

Please fill out the following incomplete phrase (you can only use the designated space for your response) / Παρακαλώ συμπληρώστε την ακόλουθη ημιτελή φράση (χρησιμοποιείτε μόνο το σχεδιασμένο χώρο για τη γραπτή σας απάντηση)

'Agora' is... / 'Αγορά' είναι...

Please share a short story and/or mention any incident you think it may be related to the word 'agora' in your daily life (you can only use the designated space for your response) / Παρακαλώ μοιραστείτε μία σύντομη ιστορία ή και αναφέρετε ένα περιστατικό που νομίζετε πως σχετίζεται με τη λέξη 'αγορά' στην καθημερινότητά σας (χρησιμοποιείτε μόνο το σχεδιασμένο χώρο για τη γραπτή σας απάντηση)

Please add into the following box a punctuation style that you choose for the word 'agora' / Παρακαλώ προσθέστε στο παρακάτω τετράγωνο ένα σημείο στίξης που επιλέγετε για τη λέξη 'αγορά'

What adjective would you choose for the word 'agora'? / Ποιο επίθετο νομίζετε ότι ταιριάζει στη λέξη 'αγορά';

What verb would you choose for the word 'agora'? / Ποιο ρήμα νομίζετε ότι ταιριάζει στη λέξη 'αγορά';

- Online Greek Press

A. SUMMARY OF THE COLLECTED DATA (March – September 2013)

	<i>Phantasma</i>	<i>Agora</i>
Adjective	<p>"Ghost-message" from the European Commission to Greece (To Vima online, 02/03/2013)</p> <p>They identified a particle ghost (Kathimerini, 15/03/2013)</p> <p>The ghost of Iraq still haunts the U.S. (Kathimerini, 21/03/2013)</p> <p>The ghost of the unsolved Cyprus issue (To Vima online, 24/03/2013)</p> <p>The ghost of German hegemony in Europe (Kathimerini, 31/03/2013)</p> <p>Google has mapped the ghost-town (Lifo, 01/04/2013)</p> <p>The spectre of populism (Avgi, 03/04/2013)</p> <p>People ghosts (Eleftherotypia, 07/04/2013)</p> <p>Ghosts of war (To Vima online, 14/04/2013)</p> <p>The ghosts of Makronisos (To Vima online, 14/04/2013)</p> <p>American Press: The spectre of terrorism returns (Avgi, 17/04/2013)</p> <p>Deflation-ghost (Eleftherotypia, 21/04/2013)</p> <p>Faced with the spectre of "lonely wolves" (Kathimerini, 28/04/2013)</p> <p>New York Times: "Money-ghost from CIA to Afghanistan" (Athens Voice, 29/04/2013)</p> <p>The ghost of the South (Kathimerini, 04/05/2013)</p> <p>Neo-Nazi ghosts in "the trial of the</p>	<p>Why the fanatics of the free market believe that 2013 will be a better year (Red Notebook, 02/03/2013)</p> <p>Busts in the black market (Kathimerini, 24/03/2013)</p> <p>Increasing of the European online market for commercials despite the crisis (In.gr, 24/05/2013)</p> <p>End the informal market at Syntagma metro (Athens Voice, 29/05/2013)</p> <p>Greece has been the first developed market that is downgraded to emerging (Lifo, 16/06/2013)</p> <p>Liquid: Hoping for market liquidity (In.gr, 26/06/2013)</p> <p>The central food market of Thessaloniki on sale (Lifo, 25/08/2013)</p> <p>Australia, a country of the predominant market (Red Notebook, 02/09/2013)</p> <p>Failed: The failure of the free market (To Vima online, 15/09/2013)</p> <p>Controlled: New control rules of the markets suggests the EU (To Vima online, 18/09/2013)</p>

	<p>century" (To Vima online, 04/05/2013) <i>The "ghost-company" and the loads of gold</i> (Kathimerini, 26/05/2013)</p> <p>The specter of anti-Semitism in Europe (To Vima online, 02/06/2013)</p> <p><i>The "ghost" of Egypt in Turkey</i> (Eleftherotypia, 03/06/2013)</p> <p>BBC: The ghost of the Paris Commune shades the Taksim square (To Vima online, 04/06/2013)</p> <p><i>The ghosts of the Roman Empire chasing EU</i> (To Vima online, 11/06/2013)</p> <p><i>They set the "government-ghost"</i> (Avgi, 22/06/2013)</p> <p><i>The ghost of the operetta</i> (Kathimerini, 14/07/2013)</p> <p>Left: ghost, nightmare or vision? (To Vima online, 14/07/2013)</p> <p><i>Schäuble, the ghost-town and the Dawn</i> (Avgi, 18/07/2013)</p> <p>FBI and "ghosts" in Greek police (To Vima online, 26/07/2013)</p> <p><i>The ghost of the disappeared mayor lingering throughout Strehlen</i> (In.gr, 31/07/2013)</p> <p><i>The ghost of the city</i> (Lifo, 16/08/2013)</p> <p><i>The ghost of the civil war lingering throughout Egypt</i> (Kathimerini, 18/08/2013)</p> <p><i>A ghost-building opens its doors to the public</i> (Lifo, 11/09/2013)</p> <p><i>The ghost of the language issue</i> (Kathimerini, 13/09/2013)</p> <p><i>A quiet roommate was the "ghost" in the apartment in Ohio</i> (In.gr, 19/09/2013)</p> <p><i>The ghost of walls</i> (Lifo, 19/09/2013)</p>	
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	<i>The "ghost of Weimar" and the "egg of the snake" in Greece (Avgi, 26/09/2013)</i>	
	Phantasma	Agora
Verb	<p><i>The ghost of Iraq still haunts the U.S. (Kathimerini, 21/03/2013)</i></p> <p>Awaken the ghosts that scares Germany (To Vima online, 13/04/2013)</p> <p><i>American Press: The spectre of terrorism returns (Avgi, 17/04/2013)</i></p> <p><i>BBC: The ghost of the Paris Commune shades the Taksim square (To Vima online, 04/06/2013)</i></p> <p><i>The ghosts of the Roman Empire chasing EU (To Vima online, 11/06/2013)</i></p> <p><i>The ghost in the machine is grown up (Avgi, 23/06/2013)</i></p> <p><i>He "enlisted" a ghost to wake up his partner (In.gr, 09/07/2013)</i></p> <p><i>The ghost of the disappeared mayor lingering throughout Strehlen (In.gr, 31/07/2013)</i></p> <p><i>The ghost of the civil war lingering throughout Egypt (Kathimerini, 18/08/2013)</i></p>	<p><i>Germany: To fight down the markets (Avgi, 05/03/2013)</i></p> <p><i>The markets prove wrong the concerns about the political instability at Caracas (Avgi, 07/03/2013)</i></p> <p><i>The market freezes (Kathimerini, 21/03/2013)</i></p> <p><i>The markets dry up the development (Avgi, 09/04/2013)</i></p> <p><i>It's better for the property market to collapse instead of having a civil war (In. gr, 13/08/2013)</i></p> <p><i>EU integrates the telecommunications market (To Vima online, 10/09/2013)</i></p> <p><i>The market freezes after the transfer of Viohalco to Belgium (To Vima online, 17/09/2013)</i></p>
Punctuation style	<p>«» ("Ghost-message", To Vima online, 02/03/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Lonely wolves", Kathimerini, 28/04/2013)</p> <p>«» ("The trial of the century", To Vima online, 04/05/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Ghost-company", Kathimerini, 26/05/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Ghost", Eleftherotypia, 03/06/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Government-ghost", Avgi, 22/06/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Enlisted", In.gr, 09/07/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Ghost", In.gr, 19/09/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Ghost of Weimar", Avgi, 26/09/2013)</p>	<p>«» ("Fight down", Avgi, 05/03/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Prove wrong", Avgi, 07/03/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Freezes", Kathimerini, 21/03/2013)</p> <p>«» ("Freezes", To Vima online, 17/09/2013)</p>

B. SOURCES

I have collected references for the two words, *phantasma* and *agora*, from the following sources:

- a. the electronic versions of three daily printed newspapers
- b. the electronic versions of two weekly printed news editions
- c. one online newspaper
- d. two news portal

a. **Electronic versions of three daily printed newspapers:**

1. *I Avgi* ['The Dawn', «Η Αυγή»], <http://www.avgi.gr/>
2. *Kathimerini* ['Daily', «Καθημερινή»], <http://www.kathimerini.gr/>
3. *Eleftherotypia* ['Freedom of the Press', «Ελευθεροτυπία»], <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el>

b. **Electronic versions of two weekly printed news editions:**

1. *Lifo*, <http://www.lifo.gr/>
2. *Athens Voice*, <http://www.athensvoice.gr/>

c. **One online newspaper:**

1. *To Vima Online*, <http://www.tovima.gr/>

d. **Two news portal:**

1. *In.gr*, <http://www.in.gr/>
2. *Red Notebook*, <http://rednotebook.gr/>

IV. Appendix 4: *Biography of the Bread*

In *Semiotics of the Protest*, I traced the new definitions that the words *phantasma* and *agora* assumed in the context of the crisis-stricken Greece. It revealed that *agora* signified both the activation of the public space through violent protests and street conflicts, and the emergence of a ghostly figure, an unseen 'enemy', the so-called 'markets'. Thus, in this research project, *Biography of the Bread*, I explore possible combinations of 'image' and *agora* that would initiate praxes of resistance exposing the 'markets' in their own invisibility.

Biography of the Bread incorporates practices of photography, performance, audio video and participation. This time I organized a performance that took place in my own home-studio which I video-recorded. In this performance, I repeatedly penetrate a round loaf of bread with large metal nails. Out of this performance, I created a performed video and a performed photographic image as integral parts of an installation in the physical space. Furthermore, I created postcards with the specific photographic image which carried the incomplete phrase: *To live as a human being I need...* At the exhibition space viewers would be invited to complete the phrase. The collected postcards were supposed to be sent to major institutions that support the 'markets'.

For reasons I intend to explain later on, I consider the specific project an experimentation that is still in progress.

Biography of the Bread was created in the framework of the project *BreadMatters IV - Crossing Boundaries Intersecting the Grain*. Specifically, in 2014, I was invited by the artist, curator and researcher Inês R. Amado to submit a proposal for the particular exhibition programme. This is an interdisciplinary and intercultural platform that "focuses on issues around bread and its importance in the history of humankind" (Amado and Menano, 2015, p.79). My contribution to this project was the production of *Biography of the Bread*, a creative work related to my exploration and the main issues of this research context.

For the production of the *Biography of the Bread*, I concentrated on the symbolic and political connotations of bread as an essential nutrition substance. Bread as a fundamental material for the preservation of life symbolizes political struggles related to the basic human right of having access to food. Living in a city in which for the last eight years bread lines have dominated the urban environment, it was obvious to me that bread was already a *phantasma*. Thus, bread as a substance shaped the 'image' and the political stakes of this stage of the research. This performative 'image' outlined the politics involved in the state of food, particularly, under the precarious conditions of the economic crisis.

Symbolizing the nourishment of life, it is not merely a coincidence that bread plays such a significant role in various cultural and religious traditions. For instance, in Christianity bread represents the holy body: "To eat God in the Eucharist was a kind of audacious deification, a becoming of the flesh that, in its agony, fed and saved the world" (Bynum, 1992, p.3). Bread also signifies labour, suffering and nourishing. It emerges poetically as a symbol of resistance in Jean Valjean's story in *Les*

Miserables by Victor Hugo (1862). Not being able to lay his hands on even a small piece of bread dooms him to living a “bare life” (Agamben, 1998).

- RESEARCH METHODS

Biography of the Bread is a performed video based on an eleven-minute performative action I organized in my home-studio in September 2014. During the performance, in a specially designed setting, I placed 230 metal nails in a 40-cm diameter round loaf of bread (Fig. 93). I particularly chose to use nails since they are common improvised weapons during violent street conflicts and political protests.



Fig. 93. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Biography of the Bread*.
[Video still from the performance]

I also selected a circular loaf, as it is representative of various ritualistic uses of bread in the Greek tradition⁴⁸. Moreover, because a circle suggests a space of communication and interaction; a topos where beginning and end merge that refers to the idea of a continuously expanding universe. However, the bread in the performance reports on a traumatized universe which is hopelessly trapped in an endless circle. Thus, the round loaf of bread re-expresses itself in a new context as a topos of struggle and it serves as a metonymy for the ritualistic praxis of the performance. Out of this performance I created a fabricated photographic image and a performed video, which I then combined to formulate an installation.

The photographic image of the installation is a digital mimesis of an icon. It is printed on bronze coating in a way similar to Christian icons (Fig.94). It represents a round loaf of bread stabbed with large nails.

⁴⁸ Round loaves of bread are used for several ceremonial occasions (religious worship, wedding celebrations, memorials, funerals, etc.). In the case of the installation, I ordered the round loaf of bread in the specific diameter of 40cm from a local bakery in Athens.



Fig. 94. Maria Paschalidou (2014)
Biography of the Bread. [Installation image]

In the installation, the photograph adds to the ritual a new element, that of martyrdom, and becomes the iconic sign of worship. In this case, the bread that signifies the necessity for living has replaced the sacred body once shot at with arrows as in many depictions in western religious icons (Fig. 95, 96).



Fig. 95. Sandro Botticelli (1474)
San Sebastiano. [Painting]

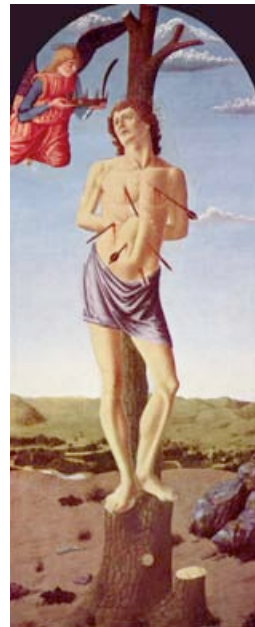


Fig. 96. Francesco Botticini (post
1474) *San Sebastiano*.
[Painting]

Thus, in *Biography of the Bread*, the bread, and by extension life itself, has taken the place of the martyr, and as such bread, and in a broader sense life, needs to be worshipped.

The produced audio video concentrates on the movements of the one hand which in slow and sadistic motion repeatedly penetrates the 'holy' bread implying pain, suffering, misery and sorrow. The audio of the video consists of sounds of political street protests in combination with byzantine ecclesiastic hymns.

I chose to mingle protest sounds with ecclesiastic hymns in order to reinforce the process of sanctification of the bread and make the performative act tormenting. I collected the protest sounds from various electronic sources. These sounds are resonances of disobedience mingling sounds of spraying chemical gases and attacking with rhythmic protest slogans where the word 'bread' is repeated.⁴⁹ For the production of the audio I collaborated with Vassilis Theodorou who specializes in sound mix.

The *Biography of the Bread* installation combines photography and the performed video with sound. It is designed to occupy a remote, dark space for a large projection of the performed video with its sound loud enough to convey the atmosphere of struggle, violence, pain and resistance. Following the byzantine tradition of presenting icons, the photographic image is meant to be placed on a pedestal covered with a dark blue velvet fabric right in front of the entrance of the projection room and to be dimmed with a spotlight (Fig. 97).



Fig. 97. Maria Paschalidou (2014)
Biography of the Bread. [Installation image]

To generate participatory conditions for the *Biography of the Bread*, I used practices of combining image with text. Therefore, I produced and printed 100 copies/postcards of the photographic image of the installation utilizing the exact

⁴⁹ For example, "Bread and Dignity", Egypt revolution, 2011, "Bread-Education-Freedom", Greek protests, 1973 and 2010.

10X15 cm size of a postcard. The image was printed on the front side of the postcard, while on the back side an incomplete phrase was printed: *To live as a human being I need...* (Fig. 98-99). The postcard was designed similar to a regular mail card with the designated positions for a stamp and the address of the recipient.



Fig. 98. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Biography of the Bread*. [Front side of the postcard]



Fig. 99. Maria Paschalidou (2014) *Biography of the Bread*. [Back side of the postcard]

On November 12, 2014, during the opening of the exhibition *BreadMatters IV: BreadMatters – Crossing Boundaries Intersecting the Grain* at ARTos Foundation in Nicosia, I gave out these postcards to the visitors of the exhibition space. By approaching each one of them and discussing the main concepts of the project, I asked them to write on the back of the postcard their personal thoughts about the essentials of a human being without revealing their name. I noticed, though, that

some of the participants had their signatures next to their responses. This happened in three cases in Nicosia.

After the exhibition, I decided to give out the same postcards to my students both at BA (Photography and Fine Arts) and MA levels (Art & Design) in Athens.

- RESULTS

Biography of the Bread creates a ritualistic space for exposing iconic obsession with the bread imposed by its fundamentality as the necessity of living, and the political games of lacking or being granted the right to it. In this context, the substance of bread has been visualized as the battlefield of exercising power and of contradicting political, cultural and/or religious ideologies.

My initial purpose at this research stage was to engage participation by collecting as many completed postcards as possible and then post them as 'protest' postcards to various institutions that support the invisible 'markets'. This did not happen... for a number of reasons. In order for this action to be effective, thousands of postcards should have been collected and a considerable budget would have been required to cover the mailing costs.

Nevertheless, I decided to experiment with the idea of the postcards to explore further the audience's responses to the juxtaposition of image with text and examine the possibilities of such a mode of participation. Thus, I distributed the postcards to 'participants' without asking them to fill in the recipient's address.

Comparing the responses collected from 'participants' in the exhibition space to the ones that I had collected from my students, I realized that they were similar. Although they came from physical locations that are different geographically and socio-politically, the collected responses shared the similarity of not associating the living necessities with the literal notion of bread as nourishment. They rather took the opportunity to comment on human needs that go beyond the basic necessities of living.

In addition, most of the written responses did not show any relevance with the image on the postcard. This fact implies a 'failure' of the particular association of 'image' and text in terms of participation. In the beginning, I attributed this 'failure' to the incomplete phrase questioning its structure and wondered if it was too open or general. However, contemplating on the context of this research and the results of the previous research stages, in which I had not used closed monitoring questions and practices when engaging *participants* either, I realized that the problem was not the structure of the specific phrase. The problem was that the way I presented this phrase on the postcard without addressing the recipient, for the reasons I explained earlier, decontextualized and depoliticized the specific combination of image and text. Participants were invited to complete a postcard that was addressed to no one and was going nowhere; in other words, they were asked to take part in a passive activity. *Agora* cannot emerge through a stasis; on the contrary, it presupposes mobility. It is very possible that the participants would have reacted differently if they had known that their responses would be sent by

hundreds to institutions and 'important' people responsible for the current crisis. Yet, every failure leads to new knowledge. As Miessen (2011) notes, "Thinking about failure and conflict from the point of view of process, the most infertile situation that can occur is to let the fear of failure lead to inaction. It is the act of production that allows us to revise, tweak, rethink, and change" (pp.188-89). What became obvious to me from this state of 'failure' is the reinforcement of my argument that the *phantasma*/'image' needs to meet the *agora* in political terms in order to transform the space from consumerist to *political*.

In general, *Biography of the Bread*, dealt with the new definitions of the *agora* in the particular historical moment in Greece, according to which the word *agora* refers also to the international markets, an unseen enemy, the intentions of which threaten both private and public life. Using a performed video and a protesting card, the project experiments on the potential of the image to activate a political agora that would readily expose the markets and defy their invisibility. The participatory conditions I initiated 'failed' to reach their target, and through their 'failure' they reconfirmed the findings of the previous projects that, in order to activate the *political*, both 'image' and agora should be conceived as situational and contextual. Nevertheless, this incomplete project makes a serious proposition for a collective act of resistance in the future.

Consequently, I consider *Biography of the Bread* still a work in progress which I will conclude under the proper temporal and spatial circumstances in the future when I have access to alternative resources and collaborations. As the times we are living in are critical not only for those who live in Greece but also for the whole world, I believe that my protest card will somehow find ways to reach its recipients eventually.

- VIDEO PERFORMANCE SOUNDS FROM:

A. Protests in:

Athens, Greece (17/11/1973 - 30/05/2011)
 Tahrir, Turkey (26/11/2011)
 Lisbon, Portugal (14/11/2012 - 06/03/2014)
 Rome, Italy (14/12/2010 - 12/04/2014)
 Cairo, Egypt (25/01/2011)
 Buenos Aires, Argentine (06/12/2011)
 London, UK (20/10/2012)
 Madrid, Spain (16/04/2014)
 Manama, Bahrain (05/08/2011 - 14/02/2013)
 Melbourne, Sydney, Australia (30/05/2009 - 21/05/2014)

B. Byzantine ecclesiastic hymns

V. Appendix 5: *The Bankorgs & Shining on Traces of Escape*

In 2015 I realized two projects in parallel with this PhD research. The first one, *The Bankorgs*, stands for a curatorial activity that I undertook upon request. It was a long performance realized with the contribution of twenty-one participants. The second project is the video *Shining on Traces of Escape* which I presented in combination with my performance at *The Bankorgs* event. As they were based on a curatorial activity, these two interrelated projects pose further questions that go beyond the context of the present research. However, I present them as they both drew from the conceptual framework of this research and were inspired by the association of 'image' with *agora* through the politicization of the visual subject in combination with participatory modes.

- *The Bankorgs*

In May 2015, I was invited by *The Subjectivity & Feminisms Research Group* (S&F) of Chelsea College of Arts, London, to organize the *Performance Dinners* in Athens. To be more specific, I was invited to select the theme of the project for 2015 and curate the relevant event in Athens.

The *Performance Dinners* is a research project organized by the S&F group and is based on a series of dinners provided by the organizers for approximately 25 artists/academics who are invited to make a five minute contribution in which they 'perform' their response to the theme of that particular dinner in a way which is relevant to their own practice and/or contemporary discourse on subjectivity (Throp, 2015). Each dinner draws its theme from a particular feminist theory. The dinners are not open to the public and they typically take place in an academic institutional environment. As the S&F explains, "the dinner unfolds as interactive and participatory – we are all at the same time producers, spectators and consumers; everyone involved in a productive process specifically related to this venue and this theme" (Throp, 2015, para.8). Furthermore, artists participating in these dinners do not know each other's presentations beforehand.

Considering the depressing economic situation in Greece which had already been going on for more than seven years, a fact that caused a tremendous humanistic crisis leaving thousands of people homeless in the streets, I proposed corresponding significant changes in the ways that *Performance Dinners No 8* would be realized in Athens. As the sight of people queuing up on bread lines prevailed in the centre of the city of Athens where most of the art venues are located, I suggested not having any food and/or drinks on the table of the *Performance Dinners No 8 in Athens*. Instead, a dinner table with empty dishes and glasses should be used, thus making a political statement. In this case, we, the participants, would be "all at the same time producers, spectators" but not "consumers".

In addition, I proposed that the performance be open to the public for three important reasons:

- a. The majority of the participants I invited to the event were using creative practices that could clearly express a strong opposition to the dominance of the documentary aesthetics in the Athenian art scene at the time. As

Miessen (2011) notes, curatorial “by default presents us with the opposite of what one might call “the romantic participatory,” as it embodies decision-making from the outside – some might say top-down: it is about exclusion and the act of “ruling out”; rather than thinking about what to show, it is about what not to show” (p. 49). Thus, the decision-making in my case was to make a different and more dramatic approach to the representation of the crisis and open up to the public for further discussions and negotiations, ruling out those practices which supported hegemonic discourse.

- b. During these years of the escalating crisis, the importance of collective action has been re-evaluated. As I described in *Symposium* (See p.158), different activist groups and social networks have emerged under these circumstances with the intention of supporting the weaker and working on alternative ways to struggle against the crisis. Reflecting on this fact, I proposed that the experience of the performance be shared with a broader audience.
- c. One of the strongest demands of the Greek society these years has been transparency in all aspects of public life. Therefore, I wanted to respond to this demand by keeping the doors open for everyone who wished to attend *The Bankorgs, Performance Dinners No 8 in Athens*.

Furthermore, my proposal regarding the theme of the event directly reflects on the title I conceived for this performative event. Specifically, *The Bankorgs* drew inspiration from Donna Haraway’s (1991) essay *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-feminism in the last twentieth Century* (pp. 149-181). I came up with the concept of the performance by paraphrasing the word “cyborg” and replacing it with the word *bankorg* to comment on the appearance of a new entity. I conceived this imaginary entity, the *bankorg*, as a hybrid organism that has been affected and deeply transformed by the current dominance of the economic institutions and the banks in multiple socio-political terrains. By introducing the concept of *bankorg*, I intended to put together a vocabulary to address questions on survival and sacrifice. As more and more people felt depressed due to the lack of not only jobs, but also accommodation and basic food, the question of survival per se is now at stake. At the same time, against international neoliberal demands, a second question is also posed: how many people and lives should be sacrificed in order to ‘save’ the banks?

At this point, it should also be noted that my decision to make this new vocabulary of the *bankorg* was also informed by the semiotics of the word *bank* in the Greek language which is *τράπεζα* [trapeza]. Specifically, trapeza has the following meanings:

- A bank
- A huge table that serves particular purposes (a dinner, a business meeting, an internal conference, discussions, etc.)
- The altar inside the chancel of a typical Greek Orthodox Church. Women are forbidden to enter this part of the church and see, let alone touch, the altar (Babiniotis, 2002, p.1786).

The performance entitled *The Bankorgs* opened to the public on December 4, 2015, at the theatrical stage of BIOS Centre in Athens. It was a long performance

consisting of a five-minute individual acting for each of the 21 participants. The participants were: Katerina Athanasiou / Tzeni Argyriou / Maria Adromachi Chatzinikolaou / Myrto Farmaki / Grigoris Gaitanaros / Dimitris Halatsis / Fotis Karageorgiou / Eleni Lyra / Catherine Maffioletti / Georgia Mavragani / Despina Meimaroglou / Ioulia Mermigka / Vassilis Noulas - Kostas Tzimoulis / Leda Papaconstantinou / Maria Paschalidou / PASHIAS / Lea Petrou / Annetta Spanoudaki Mo Throp / Syrago Tsiara

The performance started at 7:00 p.m. and finished at 9:30 p.m. without intermission. The participants realized the performance in a space packed with almost two hundred viewers. This was surprisingly unexpected, as there had only been announcements of the event in the press, which otherwise expressed no interest in further coverage despite the fact that among the participants there were some 'well-known' Greek artists. Furthermore, it is important to mention that despite my efforts in Greece and the efforts of S&F group in UK, we could not find any financial support. Nonetheless, I finally managed to book a spacious theatrical stage for the performance for free. Other than that, the expenses for the production of the event (i.e. the props, light supporting, the translations from English to Greek and vice versa and the video editing of the documentation of the performance) were covered by myself and one of the members of the S&F group. I should also point out that the acting performers, the graphic designer as well as the photographer and the two video artists who documented the event were all volunteers in the sense that they did not receive any payment for their work. Additionally, the entrance to the performance was free for the public.

The set of the performance was minimal (Fig.100). During the performance, the participants sat around a rectangular table and deposited into the empty plates in front of them objects of their choice that symbolized survival and/or resistance.



Fig. 100. Maria Paschalidou (2015) *The Bankorgs: Performance Dinners No 8 in Athens*. [Photo: Tasos Frangou]

Then, one by one they presented an individual performance sitting or standing in front of the table and using any media of their choice, i.e. photography, video projection, sounds, music, songs, participatory performance and so on (Fig.101).



Fig. 101. Maria Paschalidou (2015) *Leda Papaconstantinou's performance, The Bankorgs: Performance Dinners No 8 in Athens*. [Photo: Tasos Frangou]

At this point, I have to discuss another parameter of the curatorial decision-making: the synthesis of the particular 'assembly'. The twenty-one participants of the performance were mostly creative practitioners, fine and visual artists, choreographers, film and theatre directors, art researchers, curators, art historians and performers. It was a mixed group of diverse political and creative views, of artists of different generations and in different phases in their career. Far from being romantic or consensual (Miessen, 2011), the mode of participation I chose brought up conflictual views due to the fact that the participants ranged from activists, leftists and anarchists to those with more 'conventional' expressions. The element of surprise was part of the conflictual participation, as there had been no previous rehearsal of the individual performances; except for the curator, no one else actually knew the content of the five-minute individual performances. As I mentioned above, it is beyond the limits of this thesis to further analyse each one of the participants' contributions; however, in order to outline the mode of conflictual participation developed here, I would at least like to refer to one particular example.

One of the participating artists, Dimitris Halatsis unexpectedly changed his performance to state the following:

I intended to do something, but I decided not to because I participated in yesterday's strike, the general strike, so I shall need these five minutes to strike. Allow me to say a few things about the artists who are not able to strike. I mean, I think yesterday artists did not strike, and since we are having here a sort of production, like a line of production of a cultural product, and since an incredibly great cultural capital is produced, a capital that is essentially as we all know a disguised key capital, I believe today I should be doing exactly what I am doing. Artists in Greece, especially visual artists, don't have any rights. To a large extent there are volunteers, unpaid work and the harshest work relationships. And because in the next two to three years in Greece, Athens to be more specific, different things will happen with regard to art etc., and because this will become prevalent, it will continue and get deeper, I believe that we, artists, should take a stance in this, therefore for the next couple of minutes I am asking you to ponder this, and anybody who wants can say a few things.

For almost two minutes not a sound was heard either from the audience or the performance participants. Silence and awkwardness followed. By the end of the two

minutes, someone from the audience stated: "All I can say is that this silence is the best or the worst there can be". This statement sounded ambiguous, as the whole two-minute situation suggested the following: Artist and artwork were not taken for granted any more; the notion of time became relative too, as the artist was both literally and allegorically performing the general strike of the previous day; the notion of performance itself became equally ambiguous: the artist was performing the act of not performing. What ethical dilemmas were raised for the other participants who were performing instead of striking? Or, for the artist himself for that matter, who agreed to participate in a performance but eventually did nothing, or then again, perhaps something? Furthermore, by inviting the participants and the audience to contribute mentally on the matter, Halatsis extended the right of speech to the audience, transforming that 'dinner' occasion into an agora; in fact, by extending the right of speech, he simultaneously urged the audience to take a stance.

All in all, *The Bankorgs* was based on variations of practices that I had used at the previous research stages. For instance, I used text as in the cases of *Arbitrariness* and *Symposium*; however, this time I explored the impact of a theoretical text on the formation of 'image' and *agora*. Moreover, the practice of replacement was also used productively here, since from the concept of "cyborg" a new one was born, the *bankorg*. Nevertheless, while in Haraway's (1991) analysis some aspects of the "cyborg" may be promising in terms of disturbing identity categories, in the case of the *bankorg* all aspects are gloomy.

Furthermore, as in the cases of *Arbitrariness* and *Semiotics of the Phantasma*, the conflictual participation in *The Bankorgs* allowed for the emergence of the *agora* within the 'image' on the condition that both artists and audience assume responsibility.

In general, the curatorial *The Bankorgs* aimed to present art practices that were defined by the dominance of theory and the reduction of 'image' to mere literal representation during the times that the *agora* of the city of Athens, and of other cities in Greece, was actually resisting hard against the imposition of the memoranda and neoliberal policies on the people. Undermining dichotomies such as theory versus praxis and logos versus 'image', *The Bankorgs* suggested a reconfiguration of a theoretical text provided by Donna Haraway out of which a new concept came to the foreground to be used as the basis for a series of performative acts. In other words, instead of opposing each other, in the case of *The Bankorgs* theory and art practice supported and informed each other. Furthermore, through participation and performativity it revealed that assuming responsibility by both audience and artists is a significant factor that allows for the political to emerge out of the combination of 'image' and *agora*.

The event was video-recorded. Besides the curatorial concept, my contribution to this event was a personal performance I presented in combination with a video projection entitled *Shining on Traces of Escape*.

- *Shining on Traces of Escape*

I completed the production of the video *Shining On Traces Of Escape* in November 2015. The video is based on the selection of a vast amount of photographic images I made in the centre of the city of Athens during this research. These images compile a visual journal from my regular walking in the streets of several Athenian neighbourhoods such as Ampelokipoi, Exarcheia, Monastiraki and Psyrri. They report on traces of the crisis impressed on the image of the city. Focusing on the urban environment, I portrayed multiple signs of decay in the most unexpected and visible sights of the city. All these photographic images constitute a reflective diary of the various changes caused to the urban space, namely the *agora* of the city of Athens, in this milieu of unrelenting austerity (Fig.102-104).



Fig. 102. Maria Paschalidou (2015)
Shining On Traces of Escape. [Photography]



Fig. 103. Maria Paschalidou (2015)
Shining On Traces of Escape. [Photography]



Fig. 104. Maria Paschalidou (2015)
Shining On Traces of Escape. [Photography]

These photographs constitute the imagery of the audio video projection that accompanied my performance *Shining on Traces of Escape* that I produced for *The Bankorgs, Performance Dinners No8 in Athens*.

In the performance, I am sitting in front of the table polishing a pair of boots that I had placed in my plate as a token of resistance. I came up with this idea when I looked at a particular photograph I had taken in Monastiraki neighbourhood on April 17, 2015. This image depicts suitcases positioned almost up into the sky (Fig. 105).



Fig. 105. Maria Paschalidou (2015)
Shining On Traces of Escape. [Photography]

On the ground floor of this derelict building there is a shop selling travelling equipment. Nevertheless, the condition of the displayed suitcases bears signs of wear. It seems that importance here lies in the notion of traveling itself rather than the good condition of the equipment. This hyperrealistic image in the centre of Athens reminded me of the number of nearly 500.000 Greek people of various ages who had been forced to migrate searching for jobs in more favourable economies (Chrysopoulos, 2016). Most importantly though, the specific image mirrored also the feeling of entrapment that I and other people have experienced due to the radical austerity measures and the continuous salary cuts that make it hard for us to even travel inside the country.

Because I wanted to express this condition of compulsory spatial and social immobility, I presented the performance in which I polished my own shoes, the specific pair of boots I use in winter. The performance props were as follows:

- Shoes (my personal pair of shoes)
- Gloves (white plastic disposable)
- Brush
- Cloth
- Polish

Furthermore, I decided to follow exactly the guidelines I had gathered from web sources on how to polish shoes. Thus, during my performance I followed specific steps:

1. Remove dirt with brush.
2. Apply a small amount of polish to shoes in small circles.
3. Brush the whole shoe vigorously.
4. Breathe hard onto shoes and immediately brush vigorously to give them extra shine.
5. Buff the whole shoe hard with a cloth.

The performance was combined with a large video projection on the wall behind the dinner table. In the video, the images intersected with each other presenting the public space of the Athenian *agora* in sheer dismal and ghostliness. Empty houses and markets, broken roads, graffiti, even on the windows of the houses, and damaged buildings describe visually the absurdity of these traces of abandonment (Fig. 106-107). The loud sound of the video is based on previous audio recordings of myself polishing shoes.



Fig. 106. Maria Paschalidou (2015)
Shining On Traces of Escape. [Photography]



Fig. 107. Maria Paschalidou (2015)
Shining On Traces of Escape. [Photography]

During the performance, the viewers were able to simultaneously watch the projection and me shining the shoes, as well as hear the persistent and annoying sounds of brushing. In this way, my performance creates associations between the act of cleaning and the traces of abandonment in the imagery of the video. This obsessive act of sanitation has also been used by art in many cases to address certain inequalities. For example, in her performances Mierle Laderman Ukeles cleans and scrubs to address the invisibility and undervalue of women's domestic work and of people working in public maintenance (Jackson, 2011). In my performance, though, the purpose was not to reflect on the value of bootblack's work which is unquestionable, but rather to describe symbolically an act of resistance against the imposed regime of compulsory immobility. In this sense, the performance relates closely to *Semiotics of the Protest*, as it also expresses the necessity of being, in Jack Kerouac's words, "on the road" (2008).

Concluding on the description, explanation, analysis and evaluation of each of the research stages, in the next chapter I shall be referring to some limitations that determined the process of the production of the creative projects as well as other practical issues that need further consideration.

- ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROJECTS

The video *Shining On Traces Of Escape* was presented as part of the performance *The Bankorgs* realized within the framework of Performance Dinners No8 in Athens (The Subjectivity & Feminisms Research Group (S&F) of Chelsea College of Arts, London). For the Performance Dinners No 8 in Athens, the S&F invited the artist/researcher Maria Paschalidou to select the theme of the project for that year and curate the related creative event in Athens.

PRESS RELEASE OF THE PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

You are cordially invited to attend the Performance Dinners No 8 in Athens, "The Bankorgs" on Friday the 4th of December 2015; 7:30 p.m. at the BIOS Athens Centre for today's art and cross media, 84 Peiraios St., Athens. This long duration performance, consists of short individual performances, and draws inspiration from Donna Haraway's essay "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-feminism in the last twentieth Century". Twenty-one participants, who we will meet each other just a few hours before the event, have been invited to creatively respond to Haraway's notion of the 'cyborg' in relation to the emergence of an imaginary entity that of the 'bankorg', an organism that has been affected and deeply transformed by the current dominance of the banks on multiple socio-political terrains. The performance participants, mostly creative practitioners, fine and visual artists, choreographers, film directors, art researchers, curators, art historians and performers will deposit in the dinner table objects of their choice that symbolize survival and/or resistance under the regime of the 'bankorg'. After the performance the audience may participate by contributing to the dinner table their own choices of objects. The performance event will be video recorded. The event is part of the research project Performance Dinners organized by The Subjectivity & Feminisms Research Group (S&F) of Chelsea College of Arts, London. For the Performance Dinners No 8 in Athens, the S&F has invited the artist/researcher Maria Paschalidou to select the theme of the project this year and curate the related creative event in Athens.

PERFORMANCE PARTICIPANTS

Katerina Athanasiou | Tzeni Argyriou | Grigoris Gaitanaros Fotis Karageorgiou | Eleni Lyra | Catherine Maffioletti Georgia Mavragani / Despina Meimaroglou Ioulia Mermigka & Kyrck | Vassilis Noulas - Kostas Tzimoulis Leda Papaconstantinou | Maria Paschalidou | PASHIAS | Lea Petrou Annetta Spanoudaki | Syrago Tsiara | Mo Throp | Myrto Farmaki | Dimitris Halatsis | Maria Adromachi Chatzinikolaou
 Video documentation of the performance: Takis Lyras, Aris Aggelou
 Photo documentation of the performance: Tasos Frangou



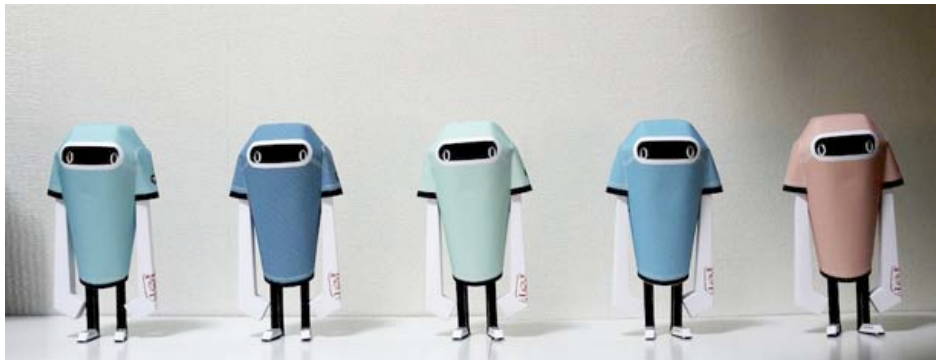
Graphic designing by Nicolas Kouniniotis

VI. Appendix 6: Examples of Creative works and curatorial activities related to the word *phantasmagoria*

Phantasmagoria exhibition

Forman's Smokehouse gallery, London,
February 09 - February 26 2012

<http://www.computerarts.co.uk/blog/phantasmagoria-exhibition-122887>, (2/3/12)
" ... the group show Phantasmagoria features the work of Jon Burgerman, Boicut and Shin Tanaka - illustrators and custom designers whose very unique work is often mass produced on consumer items yet feels handmade and authentic. David Marchant and Sara Kwiecinski are curating the event. "The concern with this is that in order for capitalism to work, people have to keep buying new things, so commodities have to be disposable things, but at the same time appeal to a society that demands meaningful objects," points out Marchant. "When consumers discover their items to be void of authenticity they will seek something new. Art that is a counter reaction to consumer culture is too often used by the same culture it is challenging, and usually distorted."



Shin Tanaka (2012) shirt-toy-robots [Online image].
Available from <http://www.creativebloq.com/computer-arts/phantasmagoria-exhibition-1128271> [Accessed 2/6/2017]

The curators hope that designers and illustrators visiting the show will come away not just inspired, but thinking about some of the contradictions between art and consumerism. Marchant continues: "Creatives working in consumer advertising, in my opinion, should consider what they are referencing more, research the cultures they are drawing from more appropriately, and not distort or abuse meaningful visual information that owes itself to history and social cultures. Hopefully the exhibition concept and the artist's work will inspire some interesting debate amongst creatives."

Phantasmagoria: Specters of Absence

Curator: José Roca

Artists: Christian Boltanski, Jim Campbell, Michel Delacroix, Laurent Grasso, Jeppe Hein, William Kentridge, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Teresa Margolles, Oscar Muñoz, Julie Nord, Rosângela Rennó, Regina Silveira

- Salina Art Center, Salina, Kansas
December 11, 2008 - February 15, 2009
- USC Fisher Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California
September 3, 2008 - November 8, 2008
- The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art
Sarasota, Florida, May 22, 2008 - August 10, 2008
- McColl Center for Visual Art, Charlotte, North Carolina
February 8, 2008 - April 26, 2008
- The Contemporary Museum Honolulu, Hawaii
September 1, 2007 - November 25, 2007
- Museo de Arte del Banco de la República Bogotá, Colombia
March 7, 2007 - June 11, 2007

http://curatorsintl.org/exhibitions/phantasmagoria_specters_of_absence, (2/3/12)

"Phantasmagoria: Specters of Absence is a traveling exhibition co-organized by iCI (Independent Curators International), New York, and the Museo de Arte del Banco de la Republica, Bogota, Colombia, and circulated by iCI. The guest curator for the exhibition is Jose Roca.



William Kentridge (1999) *Shadow Procession*,
Single-channel projection. [Online image]. Available from
<http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/news/ntm2/ntm3-1-4.asp>
[Accessed 6/1/2018]

Long before large art exhibitions and blockbuster shows, crowds were awed by traveling shows called "phantasmagoria" in which familiar scenes and stories were performed with the use of magic lanterns and rear projections to create dancing shadows and frightening theatrical effects. These lively, interactive events incorporated storytelling, mythology, and theater in a single art form that entertained while providing a space for thinking about the otherworldly—playing with the viewers' anxieties regarding death and the afterlife. A comparable trend can be seen in works by contemporary artists who create ghostly images to reflect on notions of absence and loss, using spectral effects and immaterial mediums such as shadows, fog, mist, and breath. These artists' approaches range from the festive to the ironic, counterbalancing the emotionally charged, often somber implications of their subject matter. The shadow—literally, the absence of light—represents something that is beyond the object yet inseparable from it. In many of the works

in Phantasmagoria, shadows are used to allude to death, the obscure, and the unnamable, and to construct allegories of loss and disappearance. In several of these pieces, the artists evoke the history of the shadow theater, as in a video animation by South African artist William Kentridge, and in the shape-shifting shadow cast by French artist Christian Boltanski's revolving doll, recalling imagery from the carnival as well as figurines used to celebrate the Mexican day of the dead. Mist, breath, and fog are often associated with mystery; in their double status as perceptible yet almost non-existent phenomena, they suggest evanescence or absence. For instance, one senses the fleeting yet precise way that memories arise in the spectacular work by Brazilian artist Rosngela Renno, which shows video images of anonymous family-album photos projected onto intermittent effusions of vapor. In Danish artist Jeppe Hein's work, viewers sitting on a bench are unexpectedly enveloped in a sudden cloud of mist. Throughout the installations presented here, artists' use of shadows or actual fog evokes the alluring enigma and magic of Phantasmagoria."

Tony Oursler "Phantasmagoria"

<http://www.mac-s.be/en/8/58/> (7/1/2018)



Tony Oursler (2013) *Phantasmagoria*, video projection. [Online image]. Available from <http://www.mac-s.be/en/8/58/> [Accessed 6/1/2018]

The Modern Art Museum of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation invites you to Belgium's first ever monographic museum exhibition dedicated to Tony Oursler. By departing from the predefined framework when dreaming up his projections, Tony Oursler revolutionised the art of the video, notably with his "sculpture-screen" concept. Today he is one of the greatest American visual artists of our era and is the man behind, amongst others, David Bowie's *Where are we now?* video. His art takes us to unexpected universes where fragments of bodies, ghosts and dolls mingle. Charmed by the Grand-Hornu as a place of remembrance, as well as by the architectural spaces occupied by the Modern Art Museum of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation – MAC's, the artist came up with two new works especially for the occasion. In the first he invests the tombs in the mausoleum of the De Gorge family, founder of the site, in the second he pays homage to Étienne-Gaspard Robertson, the Liège scholar who invented phantasmagory back in the 18th century. The rest of the exhibition, which does not aspire to be a retrospective, will be dedicated to significant earlier works from his creative universe".

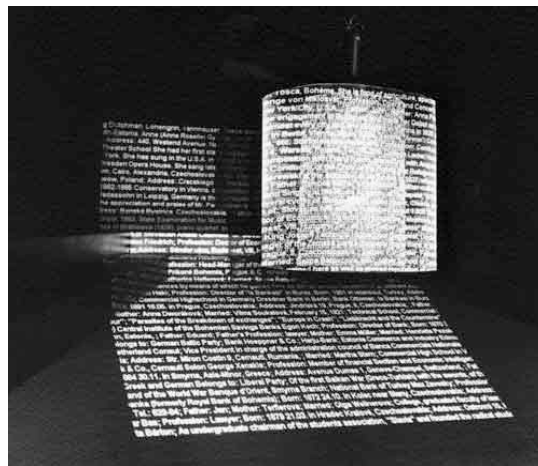
VII. Appendix 7: Examples of creative works using combinations of text and images

- *The Re-Collection Mechanism*

The Jewish Museum

September 9, 2001 - February 10, 2002

"In 1985, after finding a copy of *Who's Who* in Central and Eastern Europe 1933, Dreyblatt became obsessed with the text's content and meaning. Dreyblatt has created a mechanical instrument that explores how we locate and sort historical information. The *Re-Collection Mechanism's* computers randomly pick a word from a list that Dreyblatt has prepared, then search through a database of the *Who's Who*. Implicitly, it questions the purpose of building archives and collecting information. As a reconstruction of events and facts, memory itself becomes a random and faulty operation. The darkened space of *The Re-Collection Mechanism* envelops the viewer in text and sound. In this dreamlike environment, location becomes vague. Time seems to stand still. The installation is a container of a vast and mysterious series of spoken and projected words that recall Central and Eastern European lives in 1933".



Arnold Dreyblatt (2002) *The Re-Collection Mechanism* installation projection of digital information into space [Online image]. Available from http://www.arteinmemoria.it/english/opere/Dreyblatt_t.htm [Accessed 2/6/2017]

Who's Who in Central and Eastern Europe 1933 contains biographies of significant individuals, many of whom are now forgotten. *The Re-Collection Mechanism's* random selection of text converts our notion of "biography" from a unique story of an individual's life to a fragmented presentation of a public record. Implicitly, it questions the purpose of building archives and collecting information.

As a reconstruction of events and facts, memory itself becomes a random and faulty operation. Born in New York City in 1953, Arnold Dreyblatt is an artist and composer. He moved to Berlin in 1984. During extensive travel and research in Eastern Europe in 1985, he found a copy of *Who's Who* in Central and East Europe 1933. For the past fifteen years, he has been dissecting and reconstructing this text and others as the basis of many projects, including opera, interactive performances, and installations.

- ***In Order to Control***

Whistles, 2011

Exhibition Venue: Nutrecht Rail Factory & Trouw Amsterdam
Freemote'11 & Fiber Festival / Netherlands

Project Management: BurakGölge

Art Director: AyşegülKantarıcı

Installation Design: Tevfik R. Gözlükçü

Concept: Murat Can Oğuz

Synopsis: Murat Can Oğuz, AyşegülKantarıcı

Translation and Adaptation: BegümAvar



Nota Bene, Mair (2012) *In Order to Control* interactive installation[Online image].

Available from

<https://www.visualnews.com/2012/06/05/in-order-to-control-typography-shadows/>

[Accessed 2/6/2017]

"A text discussing about the threshold on ethics and morality was looping on the floor, people who step on the typographic area to read it, realize themselves on the wall and the interaction process starts. Everything that's legal is not always fair. Everything that's fair is not always legal". NOTA BENE Visual is a multi-disciplinary studio based in Istanbul, specialized in digital experiences with the newest technology for global brands & artistic platforms by focussing on video projection mapping, interactive experiences and installations".

- ***Before I Die***

"*Before I Die* is a global art project that invites people to contemplate death and reflect on their lives. Originally created by the artist Candy Chang on an abandoned house in New Orleans after she lost someone she loved, today there are over 2,000 walls around the world.

SIX YEARS AFTER the first *Before I Die* wall appeared in New Orleans, there are now over two thousands walls in seventy-six countries and thirty-eight languages. During this time, we've had the honor to read through aspirations of all kinds, from writing a book to repairing a relationship to giving back to a community. Or running

a race, running for office, or simply finding some kind of peace. And we began to wonder: how often are these dreams fulfilled? If you've completed something you once wrote on a *Before I Die* wall, we would love to hear about it. Fill out the form below, and we'll begin sharing these stories in the weeks to come".



Candy Chang (2011) *Before I Die* [Online image]. Available from <http://beforeidie.city/walls/new-orleans/> [Accessed 2/6/2017]

- War Primer

By 1940, already many years into his long exile from Hitler's Germany, Brecht had begun to clip photos of war from newspapers and magazines, and to write terse and fierce four-line poems to accompany the images. He mounted the photos and poems on paper, creating what he called "photo-epigrams". *War Primer* is a collection of these photo-epigrams, which Brecht worked on as he and his family moved from country to country, "changing countries more often than our shoes," trying to stay ahead of Hitler's invasions".



Bertolt Brecht (1940-47) *War Primer* [Online image]. Available from <https://theredanimalproject.wordpress.com/2011/02/21/war-primer-by-bertolt-brecht/> [Accessed 2/6/2017]

*Those you see lying here, buried in mud
As if they lay already in their grave—
They're merely sleeping, are not really dead
Yet, not asleep, would still not be awake.*

In 1941, Brecht lived in Sweden, Finland and Russia before arriving in the United States, where he would remain for six years. Throughout World War II and its aftermath, Brecht continued to work on *War Primer*, while writing some of his greatest plays, including *Mother Courage*, *The Good Person of Setzuan* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. He completed *War Primer* in 1947, the same year he testified before the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities (HUAC).

VIII. Appendix 8: Earlier personal creative projects reported on this research

Visibility

Collective Performance in the public space | Installation

© Maria Paschalidou 2007

Public Act/Performance *Visibility*, Street Market of Attiki Square, Athens, Saturday 29, September 2007 | Duration of public act: 07:00 a.m. – 14:30 p.m. | E-edition: *Visibility DVD*, Athens 2007. Project idea | Coordination | Curatorial: Maria Paschalidou

Visibility Installation, Cheap Art gallery, Athens, Sep. 29–Oct. 1, 2007. Curator: Maria Paschalidou

Participating artists and academics: Nikos bubaris & Yiannis Christakos / Marianna Nikolaou / Maria Nymfiadi / Constantinos Papadoukas / Zoi Pappa / Maria Paschalidou / Lea Petrou / Giorgos Tserionis / Adonis Volanakis

Visibility is an art project, which explores the dynamics of communication between artists and audience(s) in the public space. In this project, the participating artists and the art academicians worked both collectively and individually so as to create not only a physical but also a quasi-virtual environment in which the presence/visibility of the artists, of the art product as well as that of the audience(s) was under negotiation. Since November 2006, the participants were working on the production of a joint DVD/art product. Copies of the DVD was exchanged with products and/or goods people were willing to offer, during the public act/performance which took place in the market of Attiki Square, in autumn 2007. The public performance, the conversations and dialogues between the artists and the people in the market, were video recorded and broadcast live in the physical exhibition space.

PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITIONS:

Visibility, Public Performance of 10 artists and art academics in the Street Market of Attiki Square, Athens, Sep. 29, 2007. Concept, Coordination, Curatorial: Maria Paschalidou

Visibility Installation. Gallery cheapart, Athens, Sep. 29–Oct. 1, 2007. Concept, Coordination, Curatorial: Maria Paschalidou

PUBLICATIONS:

Maria Paschalidou, "On Visibility and Exchange: *Visibility*, Public Performance of Artists in the Street Market of Attiki Square" [Peri Oratotitas kai Antallagis: *Visibility*, Dimosia Drasi Kallitehnon sti Layki Agora tis Plateias Attikis]; Contemporary Art Centre of Thessaloniki, "From Bazaar to Hamam. Art Outdoors"; Conference proceedings, pp. 61-80; Thessaloniki, Jan. 19, 2008

LECTURES:

Lecture at the Meeting "From Bazaar to Hamam. Art Outdoors". Parallel Action of the Visual Arts in Greece 2 / 2007, Contemporary Art Center of Thessaloniki; Pier A, Warehouse B1, Port of Thessaloniki, Jan. 19, 2008. (Maria Paschalidou, *On Visibility and Exchange: Visibility, Public Performance of Artists in the Street Market of Attiki Square*)



You are kindly invited to the 1st Public Act/Performance of Artists and Academics in a Street Market.

Since November 2006, the participants have been working on the production of a joint DVD/art product. Copies of the DVD will be exchanged with any products and/or goods people are willing to offer, during the public act/performance, which takes place in the Street Market of Attiki Square (Athens, Greece). The public performance, the conversations and dialogues between the artists and the people in the market, are video recorded and broadcast both in the exhibition space (CHEAP ART Gallery) and on the Internet.

Visibility is an art project, which explores the dynamics of communication between artists and audiences in the public space.

In this project, the participating artists and academics worked both collectively and individually so as to create not only a physical but also a quasi-virtual environment in which the presence/visibility of the artists, of the art product as well as that of the audiences is under negotiation.

Visibility is carried into effect on two parallel levels.

On the first level, the project addresses the issue of our artists' visibility along with that of our artwork. We move away from the "familiar, safe, art environment" of a typical exhibition space so as to meet broader and possibly less known audiences. Our objective is to negotiate our visibility and redefine our role within the frame of an urban environment where daily activities occur.

On the second level a particular neighborhood of the city of Athens comes on the scene. The overcrowded area of Attiki Square, in which populations, cultures, customs and commercial products are mixed, plays its own part in the game of visibility versus invisibility.

The project Visibility aims to explore the terrain of public art through artistic experimentation, differentiated art practices, collaboration and performative acts.

Concept | Project Coordination | Curatorial

Maria Paschalidou

Participating Artists and Academics

Nikos Bubaris & Yiannis Christakos | Marianna Nikolaou | Maria Nymfiadi | Constantinos Papadoukas | Zoi Pappa | Maria Paschalidou | Lea Petrou | Giorgos Tserionis | Adonis Volanakis

Public Act/Performance Visibility

Street Market of Attiki Square (Alkamenous & Pipinou) | Saturday 29, September 2007
Duration of public act: 07:00 a.m. – 14:00 p.m. | Nearest Metro Station: Attiki

Exhibition /Visibility Installation

Gallery: CHEAP ART, Themistokleous & A. Metaxa 25, Exarchia, 106 81 Athens | Tel #: 210 38 17 517
Nearest Metro Station: Omonoia

Exhibition Duration

Saturday 29, September 2007 – Monday 1, October 2007 | Gallery Hours: 18:30 p.m. – 22:30 p.m.

Opening Reception: Saturday 29, September 2007, 20:30 p.m.

More info at: <http://www.vsbtl.com>