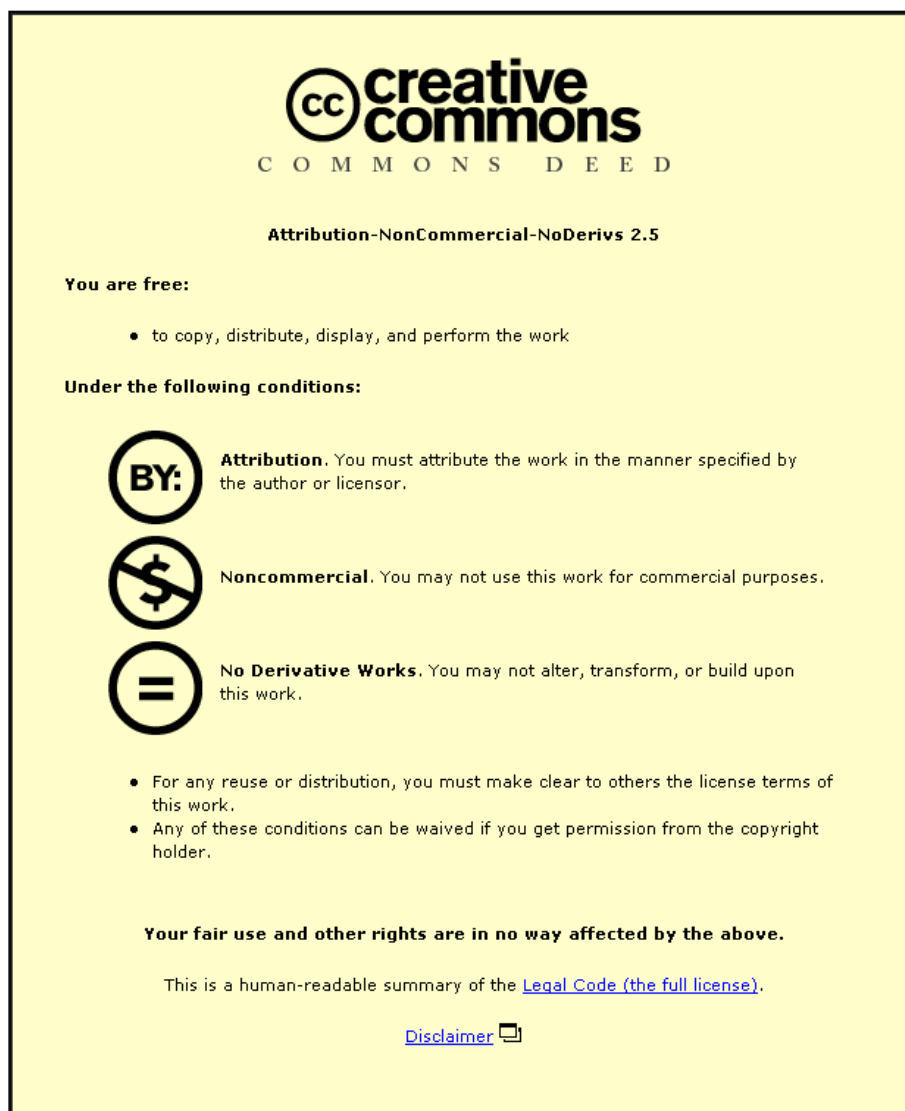


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**Rethinking the History of Cypriot Art:  
Greek Cypriot Women Artists in Cyprus**

by

Maria Photiou

Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

June 2012

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## **Abstract**

This thesis brings together women artists' art practices situated in five key periods of Cyprus' socio-political history: British colonial rule, anti-colonial struggle, 1960 Independent, the 1974 Turkish invasion and its aftermath of a divided Cyprus, which remains the case in the present day. Such study has not been done before, and for this, the current thesis aims to provide a critical knowledge of the richness and diversity of Greek Cypriot women's art practices that have frequently been marginalised and rarely been written about or researched. As the title suggests, this thesis engages in rethinking the history of Cypriot art by focusing on the art produced by women artists in Cyprus.

By focusing primarily on the work of Greek Cypriot women artists I am interested to explore the conditions within which, through which and against which, women negotiate political processes in Cyprus while making art that is predominantly engaged in specific politicised patterns. The meeting point for the artists is their awareness of being women artists living in a colonised, patriarchal country under Greek Cypriot nationality. While these artists assumed very different positions in their experience of the several phases of Cyprus history, they all negotiate in their practice territorial boundaries and specific identity patterns.

Significant to my thesis are a number of questions that I discuss in relation to women artists' professional careers and private lives: nationalism, militarism, patriarchy, male dominance, social and cultural codes, ethnic conflict, trauma, imposed displacement through war, memory and women's roles, especially as mothers, in modern and contemporary Cyprus. Thus, I address questions of how women artists in Cyprus experienced such phenomena and how these phenomena affected both their lives and their art practices.

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# **Rethinking the History of Cypriot Art: Greek Cypriot Women Artists in Cyprus**

## **Introduction**

I am not afraid. Nor do I expect anything.

I am calm and full of agony.

I take nothing. I give as the wild beast take.

I have to write a book in order to exist.

The history of Cyprus and its position is such at  
this moment that I am condemned by its history,  
my history in silence, in isolation.<sup>1</sup>

## **Approaches to Women's Art**

Since the 1970s the conditions of artistic production and reception of art history have greatly changed as a result of the systematic interventions of feminist art history, criticism and practice. Following the tradition of second-wave feminism, feminist art interventions challenged the dominant disciplinary boundaries of art history questioning of women's practices and the complex relation between class, gender, femininity, ethnicity, modernity, sexuality and psychoanalysis. Thanks to the efforts of a growing number of scholars, we know today about the work of women artists who have been omitted from the standard histories of art.

Feminism's approaches to women's art cannot be defined by a single method. Katy Deepwell describes feminism as a 'broad umbrella term for a diverse number of positions and strategies amongst women involved in the production, distribution

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<sup>1</sup> Rebelina, Elena. *Parallages tis Gis*. Greek Women's Press, 1981, p. 51.

and consumption of art'.<sup>2</sup> In 1986, Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock argued the 'necessary relation and interchange between practical strategies and strategic practices'.<sup>3</sup> This phrase summarises the shift from collective activities of feminists in art practice defined by particular strategies in 'enabling activities which encourage' women artists to make art and exhibit it to politicised strategies manifest in women's practices.<sup>4</sup> Pollock's suggestion to think of a 'feminist intervention in the histories of art' rather than a feminist art history aiming at the re-introduction of women or 'improvement' of art history has been one of the most productive critical insights for feminist art criticism in the 1990s and beyond.<sup>5</sup> Rosalind Krauss' examination of 'what evaluative criteria can be applied to women's art?' introduces new approaches on exploring women's intersections with the visual culture.<sup>6</sup>

Since the 1970s there has been a large expansion of feminist archival approaches seeking to add women to art history.<sup>7</sup> However, as Deborah Cherry points out:

Feminist interventions in the history of art have not been satisfied with the simple addition of women artists into existing accounts. The inscription of women's cultural production into the history of art has necessitated profound changes to the very foundations of the discipline, not only to its scholarly activities and curatorial

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<sup>2</sup> Deepwell, Katy. *New Feminist Art Criticism: Critical Strategies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Parker, Rozsika and Pollock, Griselda. *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-85*. London: Pandora, 1987, p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> Pollock, Griselda. *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*. London: Routledge, 1988, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Krauss, Rosalind. *Bachelors*. London: MIT Press, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Eleanor Tufts, *Our Hidden Heritage: Five Centuries of Women Artists*, London: Paddington Press Ltd, 1974; Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, New York: Rae Publishing Company, 1976; and Elsa Honing Fine, *Women and Art: A History of Women Painters and Sculptors from the Renaissance to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Montclair: Abner Schram LTD, 1978.

procedures, but also to its public diffusion through magazine articles and exhibitions.<sup>8</sup>

Feminism's varied approaches have challenged art history's ideologies. Significant work was done in addressing issues of class, gender, ethnicity, femininity, modernity and sexuality.<sup>9</sup> Some more radical approaches were characterised by psychobiography;<sup>10</sup> others have seen through the lenses of Marxism,<sup>11</sup> psychoanalysis<sup>12</sup> or corporeal feminism.<sup>13</sup> Significantly, all approaches to women's art need to map the changing definition of the category 'woman artist'. Pollock points out that:

If we lack this sense of the ways in which women have heterogeneously *negotiated* their differential position as women in the changing class and patriarchal social relations, any historical account for women, art and ideology which we produce will be devoid of political significance.<sup>14</sup>

Women's position in culture is subject to historical conditions which have determined ideological effects of sexual difference in cultural norms. Thus, feminist interventions demanded 'recognition of gender power relations, making visible the mechanisms of male power, the social construction of sexual difference and the

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<sup>8</sup> Cherry, Deborah. *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists*. London: Routledge, 1993, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Whitney Chadwick, *Women Art and Society*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1990; Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists*. London: Routledge, 1993; Gen Doy, *Women and the Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century France: 1800-1852*. London: Leicester University Press, 1998 and Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists and the Body*. London: Routledge, 1996.

<sup>10</sup>For example, Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art*. London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

<sup>11</sup>For example, Gen Doy, *Seeing and Consciousness: Women, Class and Representation*. Oxford: Berg, 1995 and Angela Dimitrakaki, *Gender, Geographies, Representation: Women, Painting and the Body in Britain and Greece, 1970 – 1990*. The University of Reading, (Unpublished PhD thesis), 2000.

<sup>12</sup>For example, Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*. London: Routledge, 1999.

<sup>13</sup>For example, Marsha Meskimmon, *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, op. cit., p. 24.

role of cultural representations in that construction'.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Parker and Pollock indicated in relation to stereotypes of women artists and their work that:

We can now recognise the reasons for and political importance of the persistent feminine stereotype within the structure of art history's ideological practices. In this stereotype women are presented negatively, as lacking in creativity, with nothing significant to contribute, and as having no influence on the course of art. [...] Women's practice in art has never been absolutely forbidden, discouraged or refused, but rather contained and limited in its function as the means by which masculinity gains and sustains its supremacy in the important sphere of cultural production.<sup>16</sup>

This thesis was conceived as a project which would engage with material so far insufficiently examined in feminist art history: the work of Greek Cypriot<sup>17</sup> women artists. This study is a product of the wide body of literature on the topic of women artists and feminist interventions in the histories of art.<sup>18</sup> Linda Nochlin's pioneering article of 1971, 'Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists', motivated a long women-oriented historiography establishing a scholarly tradition on women artists and their practices. The present research is indebted to feminist action<sup>19</sup> and the production of literature on feminist art practices in Britain and America.<sup>20</sup> To frame my premises I refer principally to women who are of Cypriot origin, have Greek as

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Parker, Rozsika and Pollock, Griselda. *Old Mistress: Women, Art and Ideology*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981, pp. 169-170.

<sup>17</sup> Greek Cypriot is a rather complicated concept. By using this term I mean those who are of Cypriot origin, have Greek as their mother tongue or share Greek culture and belong to the Greek Orthodox religion.

<sup>18</sup> The fact that this research is undertaken 30 years after the first feminist interventions is due to Cyprus' socio-political history and nature of society. I explain more in the discussion related to women and nationalism in Cyprus.

<sup>19</sup> I refer to important feminist events such as the 1972 *Feministo*; key publications such as *Women's Art Journal*, *MAKE*, *n.paradoxa* and major exhibitions such as the 1971 *Women's Liberation Art Group* exhibition at the Woodstock Gallery in London; the 1976 *Women Artists: 1550-1950* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Judy Chicago's 1979 *The Dinner Party* at the Brooklyn Museum.

<sup>20</sup> I particularly refer to the literature produced by Griselda Pollock, Whitney Chadwick and Marsha Meskimmon.

their mother tongue or share Greek culture and belong to the Greek Orthodox religion. In fact, the initial proposal for this study was entitled 'Why Have There Been No Great Cypriot Women Artists?', aiming to investigate the emergence of Greek Cypriot women artists in Cyprus.

In exploring women's position in art history we need to make a critical intervention and construct a conceptual framework to provide a method to connect the specific historical/geographical histories of women artists with the social and ideological formations which outline their practices.<sup>21</sup> Such a historical/geographical perspective can hopefully account for Greek Cypriot women's history and their artistic interventions in relation to the historical-social-cultural and political situation in Cyprus. Thus, this study involves primary research on Greek Cypriot women artists' practice situated in five key periods of Cypriot social-political history: British colonial rule, anti-colonial struggle, 1960s independence, the 1974 Turkish invasion and its aftermath of a divided Cyprus, which remains the case in the present day.

Such a study has not been carried out before, and therefore I sought to provide with this project a critical knowledge of the richness and diversity of Greek Cypriot women's art practices that exists in no other published literature. The work of these women artists has had scarce attention; the topic is both under-researched and commonly marginalised in mainstream work in the field. The basic question explored through my thesis is: how did women artists negotiate their (sometimes conflicting) experiences of being *women* and *professional*<sup>22</sup> artists in relation to the turbulent socio-political history of Cyprus, and how is this articulated within their practice? The emphasis on the connection of women's art practice with politicised struggles accounts for the argument made in the thesis that women's art offers an alternative view of these specific spaces.

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<sup>21</sup> Such approach was used by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock in *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*. New York: Patheon Books, 1981.

<sup>22</sup> I use the term 'professional' to define artists who chose to market and exhibit their works on regular basis. Throughout the thesis I refer to 'professional women artists' to emphasise women's position and approach in producing art against all odds.



This is the first attempt to bring together the broad range of women's artistic practices in Cyprus. The reason for choosing to write about it is simple: I wanted to understand the different positions and perspectives on the strategies of Greek Cypriot women artists throughout specific historical periods and distinct social-political events. Some of the questions I address are influenced by the construction of Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock constructed in *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*:

Have there been women artists? If so, what have they created? Why did they produce what they did? What factors conditioned their lives and works? What difficulties have women encountered and how did they overcome discrimination, denigration, devaluation, dismissal, in attempting to be an artist in a society which [...] has associated the divine right of creativity with men alone [...]?<sup>23</sup>

Significant to my thesis are a number of questions that I discuss in relation to women artists' professional careers and private lives: nationalism, militarism, patriarchy, male dominance, social and cultural codes, ethnic conflict, trauma, imposed displacement through war, memory and women's roles, especially as mothers, in modern and contemporary Cyprus. Thus, I address questions of how women artists in Cyprus experienced such phenomena and how these phenomena affected both their lives and their art practices.

As the making of art is an active process which takes place within the political, cultural and economic spaces of society, it is therefore vital to account women's association to the specific social institutions. Linda Nochlin points out in the conclusion of her article, in regard to the question of women artists and art making, that:

[...] the total situation of art making, both in terms of the development of the art maker and in the nature and quality of the work of art itself,

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<sup>23</sup> Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistress: Women, Art and Ideology*, op. cit., p. 1.

occur in a social situation, are integral elements of this social structure, and are mediated and determined by specific and definable social institutions, be they are academies, systems of patronage, mythologies of the divine creator, artist as he-man or social outcast.<sup>24</sup>

Without doubt, the category of 'woman artist' is problematic due to women's constant negotiations within the social boundaries established by the dominant ideologies of femininity. Thus, it is necessary to '[...] analyse the dialectic relation between being a person positioned as in the feminine within historical varying social orders and the historically specific ways in which [women] always exceed [their] placements'.<sup>25</sup>

Over the last ten years a globalised approach is noted in exploring women's art practices.<sup>26</sup> The emergence of feminist art journals was significant in establishing feminist interventions in the scholarly literature.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, recent years have witnessed some effective strategies for feminists in curatorship and a significant global development in the feminist blockbuster exhibition.<sup>28</sup> Feminist initiatives related to the international network on feminism,<sup>29</sup> alongside to the feminist blockbuster exhibition contribute greatly to feminist interventions in the academic domain. Addressing the formation of the global development in relationships between feminist art practices, curatorial practices and the museum, the 2013

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<sup>24</sup> Nochlin, Linda. 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', in Jones, Amelia. (ed.) *The Feminism And Visual Cultural Reader*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 232.

<sup>25</sup> Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Marion Arnold explores women's art in South Africa in *Women and Art in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1996 and Fran Lloyd explores the work of Arab women artists in *Dialogues of the Present: Women Artists of the Arab World*. London: Women's Art Library, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> For example, the *MAKE Magazine*, *Women's Art Journal* and *n.paradoxa*.

<sup>28</sup> For example, the exhibition *elles@centrepompidou*. See also Cornelia H. Butler and Lisa G. Mark, *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007; Amelia Jones, *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's "Dinner Party" in Feminist Art History*, London: University of California Press, 1996; and Catherine De Zegher, *Inside the Visible: an Elliptical Traverse of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art In, Of And From the Feminine*, London: MIT Press, 1996.

<sup>29</sup> Such as the *Transnational Perspectives on Women's Art, Feminist and Curating* which brings together institutes from North America, Europe and United Kingdom.

*Feminism Meets the Big Exhibition: 2005 Onwards*,<sup>30</sup> is necessarily central to the knowledge of a global approach in feminist interventions.

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<sup>30</sup> *Feminism Meets the Big Exhibition: 2005 Onwards*, in the 2013 CAA Conference 13-16 February 2013.

## **Approach and Aims of this Thesis**

One important aspect of the approach undertaken in this thesis is that it deals with the work of women artists. By focusing primarily on the work of Greek Cypriot women artists I wish to explore the conditions within which, through which and against which women negotiate political processes in Cyprus while making art that is predominantly engaged in specific politicised patterns. I want to emphasise women's politicised interventions while addressing the connection and the approaches and strategies with which they reflect the experience of being women artists in more than one time period in this thesis.

While this is the first research to consider a number of Greek Cypriot women artists together, it is not an inclusive survey of all of the women artists in Cyprus or a survey text on the available material. The artists do not represent all Greek Cypriot women artists or all histories of Cyprus. The meeting point for the artists is their awareness of being women artists living in a colonised, patriarchal country under Greek Cypriot nationality. While these artists assumed very different positions in their experience of the several phases of Cyprus' history, they all negotiate in their practice territorial boundaries and specific identity patterns.

This study aims to construct a conceptual framework to provide an approach connecting a selection of women artists with the socio-historical and political formations that shaped their interventions in their artistic practices. In selecting specific artists I am not making a case for who is the 'best'; rather, I am focusing on specific artists whose works offer politicised visuals of Cyprus' history. The selection is consciously made, considering that there is no stylistic consistency throughout the whole period and, significantly, artists do not always follow the mainstream of European or American art. Additionally, in choosing to focus upon some selected works, which are examined within a specific socio-historical-political framework, I seek to offer an alternative viewpoint from which to examine the history of Cypriot art and to introduce a diverse approach to writing the history of

Cypriot art: a history that articulates women's artistic interventions as producers of the 'political' in Cyprus.

The desire to document women's art and, hence, intervene in the making of histories is not the exclusive axis of the thesis. Examination of the identity 'woman artist' in Cyprus is also important to understand the gendered economies and the visibility/invisibility of women within the cultural practices/discourses, national traditions and institutional ideologies. In this, I do not wish to contrast art historians who privileged the generation of 'fatherhood' of Cypriot art, but to offer a radical reflection, understanding women artists' lives and practices in relation to specific socio-historical conditions. In particular, I am interested in their art, their careers, and their relation to politics; the way they were influenced by politics in Cyprus and how they represented the political upheavals of the time in their own art practice.

Addressing the national identity along the lines of gendered economies and visual representations in this study suggests an implicit intention to connect women with historical specificities and map the progress of reading certain female interventions (or their absence). This issue is further complicated because of the lack of a fixed concept of national cultural identity, particularly since the 1974 island's territorial division and the separation of the two communities into Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot. The distance between the two communities was significantly widened in a number of political processes (colonial, postcolonial, nationalist and international) and the two groups were eventually separated from each other both physically and socially.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, due to the various barriers (political separation, language and culture), I chose to focus on Greek Cypriot women artists.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For further information on gender and Cyprus's partition see Cockburn, Cynthia. *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*. London: Zed Books, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Turkish Cypriot art historian Netice Yildiz wrote extensively about the conditions of Turkish Cypriot women artists. According to her study, Turkish Cypriot women artists were educated mainly in Turkey. Turkish Cypriot women experienced the same obstacles common to Greek Cypriots: the lack of an art market, along with the lack of financial support, necessitated that artists work in education in order to make a living.

The years between 1930 and the 1980s are characterised by the increasing intervention of women artists in the arts, which coincided with specific turbulent political upheavals in Cyprus. Given the complexity of Cyprus' history, I set out to place women artists' experiences and art practice in the context of the socio-political situations from which they emerged. Important to my discussion is a matter that many contemporary Greek Cypriot sociologist feminist scholars explore in their research: patriarchal society and national politics left no space for women in Cyprus to struggle for women's rights or contest patriarchy, or to gain public visibility.<sup>33</sup> For women artists particularly, their exclusion from the cultural 'canon'<sup>34</sup> had long marginalised them, and no studies had been undertaken in regards to their legacy. Emphasising gendered discourses within each socio-political period offers a mechanism to explore how women artists negotiated their positions as makers of culture in Cyprus. To do this, I read women's art practice as bound up in politics in Cyprus – as a strategy to bring together particular constellations of visuals with my own interpretation in rethinking the history of Cypriot art. I hope to demonstrate that women artists became increasingly associated with politicised accounts of femininity – as a strategy of women's transition from tradition to modernity – as opposed to male representations of femininity performed within the socially ordained domestic and reproductive roles. To follow Parker and Pollock's argument, until recently, in Cyprus femininity was to be realised exclusively in 'child-bearing and child-raising. Artists who were women were not only subjected to the institutional restraints of the developing nuclear family but also to the assumption that [...] their art would take was the reflection of their domestic femininity'.<sup>35</sup>

Following Pollock's argument that 'in patriarchal ideologies of art the role ascribed to the feminine position is either as art's object, the model, or as its muse by virtue

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<sup>33</sup> See the work of Myria Vassiliadou and Maria Hadjipavlou.

<sup>34</sup> I employ the term canon as the art historical establishment of the foremost generation of 'fatherhood' in Cyprus art history.

<sup>35</sup> Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistress: Women, Art and Ideology*, op. cit., p. 99.

of a romantic affiliation with artist',<sup>36</sup> I explore women's role as the object of male Cypriot art to consider how ideologies of art are socially produced, particularly in terms of nationalistic processes and women's association with the nation. The work of Greek Cypriot women artists is informed by these social-political complexities, which have significantly shaped their access to art education and their relationship with artistic traditions in both a local and an international context. Women making art in Cyprus had to negotiate diverse socio-political, economic and cultural contexts. Located variously by age, class and economic status, their art is also created against and through specific narratives of identity which are part of the multi-faceted histories of women's art: the stereotypes of women's status in Cyprus in colonial and postcolonial times and the socio-political realities of their present, which include ethnic conflict, division and exile.

Stressing these multi-faceted spaces, or, to use Griselda Pollock's term, 'generations and geographies', I focus on women making art within a specific geographical context and references that act as agents of their location 'in time and space, in history and social location'.<sup>37</sup> Recognising these specific spaces in women's art practice is particularly important when addressing art-making as a 'form of historical agency' where, as Marsha Meskimmon argues, 'the visual and material arts can address history in ways that writing and speaking cannot; this is not to privilege art over other forms, but to recognise the specificity of its intervention'.<sup>38</sup> This study aims to evaluate specific spaces of historical/geographical conditions and explore how women artists and their struggles are accommodated within them, and how this is articulated in their practice in a national and international context.

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<sup>36</sup> Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>37</sup> Pollock, Griselda. *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*. London: Routledge, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Meskimmon, Marsha. *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 2003, p. 15.

## **Positioning and Introducing the Artists**

During the course of this research many have asked why a young scholar should be interested in the work of Greek Cypriot women artists, and particularly what would possess a researcher from a foreign institution to write a thesis on Cyprus. I have also been asked what compelled me to focus on women, with an emphasis on why I was particularly interested in women and why I did not wish to write on both women and men artists. The fact that my desire to focus on women's art was not considered 'normal' followed the assumption that I would not find sufficient material to justify a thesis engaged primarily with women's art legacy. For instance, there is no doubt in my mind that the project would have been significantly better accepted if I was employed by an institution based in Cyprus. Most importantly, I would have been perceived as 'local' and not 'other', since I would have been in my own political, social and critical location. While I was operating as interviewer I was often perceived as the 'other', the outsider, the one who comes from abroad to conduct research on a 'not-so-popular' subject. In fact, it was often enquired why a group of academics in Britain would show interest in the cultural matters of Cyprus. On the other side, I was again the 'other' in England, in a location where there is a long established academic interest in women's studies and facilities to conduct academic research.

Questions about positioning are central to understanding why I engaged in an exploration of the practices of women artists in Cyprus. I have consciously chosen to focus on women artists as a strategy to develop gender consciousness; an awareness of what it really means to be a woman living in a divided male-dominated country, where the division between private and public spheres still prevails, marginalising women's presence in important decision-making processes. As a young Greek Cypriot woman, a scholar, a feminist and a refugee's daughter I experienced intimately the impact of gendered conflict, particularly as I belong to the post-1980 generation of bearing witness to the 1974 war. In defining myself as a feminist I mean that I am aware of patriarchy as a powerful structure that



excludes and dominates women locally and globally. As a scholar I am focusing on the work of women artists as a conscious approach to begin the process of considering Cypriot art history through specific readings of women's works while analysing mechanisms of cultural interventions of women's art.

Significantly, most audiences in Cyprus know very little about modern and contemporary Cypriot art and know even less about Greek Cypriot women's art practice: its histories, its geography and the complexities of being *women* and *professional artists* in colonial and postcolonial spaces. In exploring how women artists negotiated their (sometimes conflicting) experiences of being *women* and *professional artists* in relation to the turbulent socio-political history of Cyprus, and how this is articulated within their practice, I wish to understand the configuration of cultural difference, representations and gender relations throughout the historical periods. Artists included in this thesis were carefully selected.<sup>39</sup> I focus on the work of women who produced art from both traditional and contemporary materials in a variety of different forms, including painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, video and installation.

Looking back to the first decades of the twentieth century we find the term 'fathers of modern Cypriot art',<sup>40</sup> a term that is still used by most art historians and writers. The fatherhood embodies two artists, Adamantios Diamantis (1900-1994) and Telemachos Kanthos (1910-1993) who, according to art historian Chrisanthos Christou, are the founders of Cypriot art.<sup>41</sup> Significantly, the establishment of such artistic affiliation allows little space for women to be associated, particularly within these limits of constructing the canon of Cypriot art history. Active during the same period as Diamantis and Kanthos, Loukia Nicolaidou (1909-1994) also produced a

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<sup>39</sup> Further analysis can be found in 'Methodology'.

<sup>40</sup> The term 'fathers of Cypriot art' was established by Chrisanthos Christou in 1977 in his book *A Brief History of Modern and Contemporary Cypriot Art*. Nicosia: Printko. Christou may have been influenced by Werner Hofmann and his 1966 book *Grundlager der Modernen Kunst*.

<sup>41</sup> Christou, Chrisanthos. *A Brief History of Modern and Contemporary Cypriot Art*. Nicosia: Printko, 1977, p. 16.

work that until recently was unknown to audiences and was excluded by the male-privileged sources of Cypriot art history.<sup>42</sup>

Significantly, Nicolaidou was not the only woman artist to be peripheral to Cypriot art; however, she was the first to get some publicity from the state's cultural services, years after her 1950s self-exile and the cessation of her professional career. I chose to analyse Nicolaidou's paintings because I found that her work offers a diversity of visuals made within colonial and postcolonial geographies. Taking a different perspective on Cypriot women, Nicolaidou reflects in her work a modernised aspect of Cypriot culture, something that was not shown by her contemporaries in Cyprus during British colonial rule. Throughout her practice, as I argue in Chapter 1, Nicolaidou negotiates female sexuality as a visual strategy to represent women's transition from tradition to modernisation.

In the discussion related to the anti-colonial struggle of 1955-59 I write about works that reflect women's conditions throughout the period of the struggle. An example of such is Nicolaidou's *Enosis – a Dream for Cyprus*, which reflects the nationalist identity of the 1955-59 anti-colonial struggle. Within the same context is Lenia Saveriadou's *The British Lion and EOKA*, a work that reflects the national trauma and losses of the struggle. This is the only time I refer to Saveriadou's work as it was not possible to locate any of her other work or further information about her life and career.

In providing information about the anti-colonial struggle and the ways that women were involved I introduce the work of Eleni Chariclidou (1926-1978), whose art is associated with domesticated spaces. What emerges from the anti-colonial/nationalist struggle is the absence of women artists in negotiating their status within the anti-colonial spaces. This changes radically in the postcolonial period, after Cyprus gains its independence in 1960 and becomes an autonomous state.

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<sup>42</sup> Nicolaidou was not the only woman artist to be marginalised in Cypriot art history. The work of Persephoni Tzirou-Xenaki (1908–2000) is also still unknown in Cyprus.

Rhea Bailey (b.1946) negotiates domesticity in representing the 'house' as a transitional device of tradition and modernity. In this context, Bailey employs a collection of black and white photographs from the family album which she re-works on canvas while articulating her personal narratives of memory and domestic experiences. Bailey's work offers a variety of paintings revealing a multiplicity of different cultures, identity and dislocation. Many of the women artists experienced imposed dislocation in 1974, and this is often reflected and reiterated in their work. Maria Tourou (b.1943) spent years abroad while accumulating cultural ideas from North and South America. Tourou was first to be identified as one of the key artists in this research, mostly due to the fact that I was interested in talking to an artist who, after 1974, refused for 20 years to return to Cyprus. The majority of her paintings represent abstract 'flying' figures.

Another artist who was greatly affected by the 1974 invasion is sculptor Nina Iacovou (b.1933), who I had met before starting this research. Iacovou's employment of traditional Cypriot sculpture resulted in a series of anti-war sculptures representing highly politicised images of Cypriot women. This particular series of emotive figures was the reason why I conducted the interview and visited the artist's house and studio. Katy Stephanides (1925-2012) is the only artist whose career and practice has been consistent throughout all the periods discussed. Her work consists of a variety of techniques and themes and this was the reason I chose to interview her, particularly after I saw her series of *Demonstrations*. An artist I greatly regret not interviewing is Stella Michaelidou (b.1941), who was not able to meet me due to health problems. While I found material from past interviews I wish I had been able to see more of her collection, particularly because her work offers readings of the socio-political anxieties of the period. The decision to interview Pauline Phedonos (b.1934), a British-born artist, was made because I wanted to understand how a non-Cypriot woman artist experienced the various transitions, particularly since she moved to Cyprus in 1959. Indeed, the interview was significantly beneficial and facilitated identification

of the contexts of the Cypriot culture and art milieu in the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Throughout the post-war decades there is a noted dynamic change in media and material in women's practices, marking its status in not only the local market but also the international art market. Cyprus's 2004 joining of the European Union offered women artists the opportunity to become involved in European activities and the ability to shift between tight domestic networks and the international community. In this regard the interview with Haris Epaminonda (b.1980) was of particular importance to gain insight into the conditions of the younger generation of women artists.

Significantly, in becoming artists, women in Cyprus challenged the socio-political and cultural codes of patriarchal society of Cyprus. Part of this challenge relates to language, which often embodies a certain gendered patriarchal formation, particularly with regard to the definition of the term 'artist' in Greek language. It is interesting that professions such as photographer (φωτογράφος) and painter (ζωγράφος) exist in Greek only as a male gender; if you refer to a woman you have to use a female article and the male noun. Nikos Stangos wondered if there were any hidden patriarchal rules that had invaded the Greek language, and it was anticipated that these professions were exclusive to men.<sup>43</sup> Thus, every time we want to refer to a woman writer, critic, philosopher, or historian in the Greek language, we have to use an androgynous gender. Moreover, according to Stangos, the major problem for women artists is not the need to increase their appreciation within the history of art, but the abolition of such prejudices within the Greek language: language is the instrument that enforces prejudice through the generations and should be modified, in order to challenge the stereotypes of the past.

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<sup>43</sup> Stangos, Nicos. 'Women, Art and Publications', in Art Group 4+ (eds.) *Gaps in History of Art: Women Creators*. Athens: Gkovostis, 1993, pp. 61-69.

To be an artist – a producer of art – in early twentieth-century Cyprus in a time where there was hardly any art market, and people often mocked (even men) artists, seems to be an impossible task.<sup>44</sup> Artist Stass Paraskos writes on the artists' struggles within social practices:

A few years back art was not considered a respectable profession. You couldn't persuade a bank manager to give you a loan if you were a painter or a sculptor. The late Mr Kanthos, as a young man in Famagusta, was embarrassed to say he was an artist and Diamantis, in early days, used to describe himself as a teacher.<sup>45</sup>

This was even more challenging for women, who were meant to be mothers and occupy the boundaries of domestic spaces. Undoubtedly, both men and women artists had to struggle with social practices in both the colonial and the post-colonial periods. However, from the outset women artists are confronted with a double burden: their social position, and as feminist art historians have pointed out, the long connection of art and male creativity that leaves women artists outside such canon. Unsurprisingly, Greek Cypriot women artists' work has been undervalued and is occluded in the historical construction of Cypriot art.

Having thus established some significant 'gaps' in the construction of art history in Cyprus, I found that the richness and diversity of the material by women artists is linked to certain socio-political notions that remained in place throughout all political periods. Such notions are of high importance to a consideration of women's practices, particularly because their lives and careers were influenced by colonial and postcolonial geographies and their structure within patriarchy and nationalism. Up until this point I have been using women's relations to patriarchy and nationalism without raising the question or attempting a definition of how is structured. I shall explain in the following discussion the significant linkages

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<sup>44</sup> Telemachos Kanthos (1910–1993) who is considered as one of the 'fathers' of Cypriot art used to hide his profession of artist and used to say he was working as a secretary at a company. Information was provided by his wife, Zoe Kanthou during interview.

<sup>45</sup> Paraskos, Stass. Preface from the exhibition invitation *Family Circle*, 2005.

between women and nation, tradition and religion that together act as devices of creating boundaries in women's art production. In each of the chapters I will explore how these notions change throughout each political period.

## Women and Nationalism in Cyprus

A Cypriot's relation to nationalism is very complex, as Cyprus has always been under foreign domination<sup>46</sup> and this has resulted in immense confusion about national identity and social structures. Cyprus obtained independence only in 1960; a series of subsequent political upheavals resulted in the 1974 Turkish invasion, which created further complications in terms of the formation of social structure and collective identity. I would tend to agree with Myria Vassiliadou that Cyprus is a place full of contradictions:

It is at the crossroads of Africa, Asia, and Europe and it is the cultural blend of all three continents. It is also influenced by Greece and the Hellenic civilisation, Turkey and Anatolia, Britain and colonialism/imperialism, Islam and Orthodoxy; and, by all the invaders of the last five million years. [...] This uniqueness expresses itself in an extraordinary blend of the 'East' with the 'West', an internalisation of opposing values, contradicting moralities, and a complex perception of the people's identity and culture.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the long and complex history of Cyprus's people,<sup>48</sup> Greek Cypriot women have been subjected to strong and contradictory influences from ethnic ideologies and nationalist practices. Their symbolic association to nationalism was mostly achieved through the symbols of Virgin Mary (where femininity symbolises purity, passivity, morality and empathy) and of 'mother' and 'nation' (a woman mourning her loss). There is a crucial parallel between the image of Cyprus and its women. Cyprus is said to be the island of Aphrodite, the Goddess of beauty; this image is used both locally and internationally for tourist campaigns. Cyprus's long

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<sup>46</sup> Cyprus's size and strategic geographical location was the reason for its continual invasion by foreign rulers. Cyprus's last two rulers were the Ottoman Empire, from 1570 to 1878, and the British Empire, from 1878 to 1960.

<sup>47</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria. *A Struggle for Independence: Attitudes and Practices of the women of Cyprus*, University of Kent at Canterbury. (Unpublished Ph.D thesis), 1999, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Cyprus consists of a large Greek Cypriot community, a smaller Turkish Cypriot community and Maronite and Armenian minorities.

history of invasions and oppression by bigger, more powerful states is similar to women's conditions under the patriarchal system. Following Vassiliadou's argument that 'Cyprus could be a woman', I would agree with her point that, similar to women, Cyprus 'is discouraged from having an independent voice but nevertheless struggles to exist and be accounted for'.<sup>49</sup> Thus, it is not surprising to find women involved in supporting the nationalist agenda during the ethnic conflict.

Cyprus is defined today in international law as one nation-state: as Floya Anthias explains, 'it contains within it two ethnic and religious communities which are territorially separated, six armies, a no-man's land, a foreign invader and an illegal second state which purports to represent the Turkish Cypriot community'.<sup>50</sup> In effect, the ethnic conflict between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots first emerged during the British colonial rule (1878-1960), in particular after the launch of the 1955-59 anti-colonial struggle in which Greek Cypriots demanded Enosis (union with Greece) while Turkish Cypriots favoured the island's partition. The Greek Cypriot community's cultural, historical and socio-political affiliation with the Greek civilisation has been heavily supported by the educational system and Orthodox religion and evolved into a nationalistic practice during the anti-colonial struggle.

Although Cyprus was granted formal independence in 1960 after EOKA's (Greek for National Organisation of Cypriot Struggle) national struggle, its constitutional government proved ineffectual. Cypriots never acknowledged a united nation-state, while bi-communalism composed the constitution: two separate communities, the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, were formally designated holding their specified political power. According to the constitution, the Greek Cypriot community comprises all citizens who are of Cypriot origin, have Greek as their mother tongue or share Greek culture and belong to the Greek Orthodox religion. Likewise, the Turkish Cypriot community comprises all citizens who are of

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<sup>49</sup> Vassiliadou, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Anthias, Floya. 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus' in Yuval-Davis, N. and Anthias, F. *Women-Nation-State*. Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1989, p. 150.



Cypriot origin and have Turkish as their mother tongue, or who share Turkish culture and are Muslims.

In 1963 inter-ethnic conflicts broke out; Turkish Cypriots withdrew from the constitutional government and established their own enclaves and a separate administration. The inter-ethnic clashes continued until 1974, when the fascist Junta in Greece staged, in collaboration with the Greek Cypriot extremist nationalist group EOKA B, a *coup d'état* in Cyprus. This was soon followed by the Turkish military invasion. Since 1974, Cyprus has been divided and the two communities have been hostile, particularly after the illegal proclamation in 1983 of the so-called 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus'.

Significantly, the status of Greek Cypriot women has long been predisposed from the problematic connection between women and the political state of affairs in Cyprus. Given the status of Cyprus as an ex-British colony, composed of two major communities, it is not surprising that the island's political-historical interpretation is based on nationalism and the processes of patriarchy within a traditional society. As Myria Vassiliadou explains:

Cypriot women's relationship to nationalism, within a context which reflects the politicization of ethnic differences on the island, forms part of the ethno-nationalist agenda of each community, and contributes to an understanding of the politics of separation and the exclusion of women from the political processes.<sup>51</sup>

For a long time women's perspectives were neglected and ignored under patriarchal discourses; even today, almost everything revolves around the ethnic conflict in Cyprus and the reconciliation process. Given the centrality of nationalism in the social-political history of Cyprus, it is not surprising that women's first political reactions emerged through it. This began in the 1950s, with their

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<sup>51</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria. 'Questioning Nationalism: The Patriarchal and National Struggles of Cypriot Women within a European Context', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 9, pp. 459-482, 2002, p. 460.

involvement in the national liberation struggle, and continued later with their demonstrations after the 1974 Turkish invasion.

Women's connection to nationalism is complicated, mostly because all nationalisms are gendered, with limited access to the resources and rights of the nation-state: 'no nation in the world grants women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state'.<sup>52</sup> According to Anne McClintock, a feminist theory of nationalism can be constructed by 'investigating the gendered formation of sanctioned male theories and bringing into historical visibility women's active cultural and political participation in national formations'.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, like all nationalisms, Cypriot women participated in Greek nationalism in two ways; first at a symbolic level, and then at a more practical level. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias identify in their book *Woman-Nation-State* five major ways in which women have been associated in nationalism:

- (1) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;
- (2) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups;
- (3) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;
- (4) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences;
- and (5) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.<sup>54</sup>

The dual implication, as both 'cultural carrier' and nationalised participator, constructs perplexity on identifying Cypriot women. Women's construction as symbolic signifier of 'mother' and 'nation' is found in many societies around the world, and Cypriot women form part of this construction. McClintock states that 'women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency'.<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, Cyprus' political

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<sup>52</sup> McClintock, Anne. 'No Longer in Future Heaven: Nationalism, Gender and Race', in Geoff Eley, and Ronald Suny. *Becoming National: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 260-284, p. 260.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>54</sup> Yuval-Davis, Nira and Anthias, Floya. *Women-Nation-State*. Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1989, p. 7.

<sup>55</sup> McClintock, op. cit., p. 261.

history was formulated by the notion of Cyprus as 'motherland' and the Cypriot nation has 'typically sprung from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope'.<sup>56</sup>

Within the Cypriot historical context, women are a symbolic figuration of the nation as a beloved woman threatened by foreign countries. As I will discuss later, the national liberation struggle called men to fight for the union of the 'daughter', Cyprus, with the 'motherland', Greece. With this in mind, it is not surprising that the actual structure of the national liberation struggle in Cyprus embodied a masculine nationalism towards the union of their female 'homeland' with their 'motherland'. In fact, the leadership of the struggle was male, but despite its masculine character (among 'brothers'), women contributed significantly to the struggle's success. Later, after the 1974 war, women's symbolic figuration became an 'anguished black-clothed woman, her face tormented and her clothes ragged', representing Cyprus as a 'woman mourning for her loss and the reality that actual women faced'.<sup>57</sup> I will consider in my discussion the ways in which visual representations embody symbolisms of Cyprus as a woman and the centrality of women in nationalistic discourses. Important to this is the fact that Greek Cypriot women, as was the case for women in other areas in the Mediterranean, had to conform to gendered traditions of female morality and religious customs that were, for a long time, reinforced by patriarchy.

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<sup>56</sup> Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas, Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. London: Pandora, 1989, p. 44.

<sup>57</sup> Anthias, Floya. op. cit., p. 155.

## Women and Patriarchy

Patriarchy, the institutionalised domination of society by men, had long been a part of Cypriot society, ensuring women's roles remained in accordance with the cultural, legal and religious practices that a woman in Cyprus was expected to adopt. Heidi Hartman defined the term patriarchy in her article 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism' as a social hierarchy of relationships among men in order to dominate women:

We can usefully define patriarchy as a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which though hierarchical, establish and create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women. Though patriarchy is hierarchical and men of different classes, races or ethnic groups have different places in the patriarchy, they are also united in the shared relationship of dominance over their women; they are dependent on each other to maintain that domination... The material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men's control over women's labour power. Men maintain control by excluding women from access to some essential productive resources (in capitalist societies, for example, jobs that pay living wages) and by restricting women's sexuality.<sup>58</sup>

Following Hartman's argument of male social union in subordinating women through exclusion from jobs and their submission through sexuality, I would point out that we find a strong formulation of this order within Cypriot society. Traditional social practices and customs in Cyprus entail men's dominance in the public sphere, defending his role as 'breadwinner', whereas women's roles are limited to domestic sphere: 'housewife' and 'caregiver'. I would tend to agree with the argument of Pollock that:

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<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, op. cit., p. 33.

In recent years another formation has been advanced which shifts the attention from sociologically defined sexual divisions in society based on given gender categories, men and women, to the idea that sexual divisions are the result of the construction of 'sexual difference' as a socially significant axis of meaning.<sup>59</sup>

A patriarchal structure existed before British rule commenced in 1878, and remained in place after the British left in 1960. Prior to British rule, Cyprus was under Ottoman occupation and Islamic conservatism severely affected Cypriot women's lives: their lives, their bodies, their activities and their spirit were 'crushed' by the restrictive society that required women to be hidden inside the house and completely cut off from the outside world.<sup>60</sup> In this sense, I would agree with Pollock's argument that patriarchy:

[...] does not [only] refer to the static, oppressive domination by one sex over another, but to a web of psychological relationships which institute a socially significant difference on the axis of sex which is so deeply located in our very sense of lived, sexual, identity that it appears to us as natural and unalterable.<sup>61</sup>

The oppressive nature of patriarchy in Cyprus produced a strong distinction between the categories of masculinity and femininity and had dominated all aspects of women's lives and social position. Within a patriarchal society, the national/ethnic conflict has historically overshadowed and disregarded women's issues while excluding them from important positions and decision making.

Significantly, women in Cyprus were as oppressed in the private sphere as they were in the public sphere. The 'culture of gossip'<sup>62</sup> is a product of the patriarchal structure, representing women's domination by men both in public and in private.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>60</sup> Pyrgos, Maria. *The Cypriot Woman at a Glance*. Nicosia: Pyrgos Public Relations, 1993, p. 39.

<sup>61</sup> Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>62</sup> I borrow this term from Myria Vassiliadou. *A Struggle for Independence: Attitudes and Practices of the women of Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 168.

Vassiliadou argues that ‘the “culture of gossip” concentrates around sexual morality, chastity, virginity, dowry, home cleanliness, upbringing of children, church going, dress code, weight, make-up, extra-marital affairs, and pre-marital affairs’.<sup>63</sup> Vassiliadou thus stresses gossip as an activity devised by patriarchy to control women’s attitudes and sexuality.

In addition, Cypriot culture embraces an interrelationship between patriarchy, the state and the Orthodox religion. A significant aspect of this is women’s symbolic association with the Virgin Mary and other female Saints such as Helen and Marina, who symbolise women as pure, sacrificing themselves to their husbands, their children, to God and society.<sup>64</sup> Such association served as a powerful device for women’s subordination, placing much importance on women’s chastity and consequently enforcing the social code of ‘honour and shame’ in Cypriot culture.

Jean Peristiany wrote of the phenomenon of ‘honour and shame’ in patriarchal Cyprus: ‘In a country where feminine honour is almost exclusively associated with sexual modesty this attitude assumes a particularly violent and socially significant form. Feminine honour involves not only a woman’s total personality but also that of the group she represents’.<sup>65</sup> Such phenomenon was strongly supported by religion and patriarchal conventions, which together reinforced women’s subordination to the male members of their family.

Until recently, a woman’s life was always linked to the male members of her family (her father and brothers and later her husband), who decided what was most suitable for her. This defined her position as an ‘inferior’, so little attention was given to her needs and wishes. Furthermore, the prejudice about women’s capacities limited their opportunity to get an education or work; the best thing that could happen to women (according to the patriarchal stereotype) was an early

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>64</sup> Roussou, Maria. ‘War in Cyprus: Patriarchy and the Penelope Myth’, in Ridd, R. and Callaway, H. *Caught up in Conflict: Women’s Response to Political Strife*. Houndmills, London: Macmillan Education, 1986, p. 31.

<sup>65</sup> Peristiany, G. Jean. *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965, p. 183.

marriage. Since the customs of society at the time required a dowry for a woman to get married – otherwise she would remain a spinster – the majority of fathers chose to educate only their sons and provide a dowry for their daughters. The institution of dowry became a practice in which parents provided a house and furniture for their daughters upon marriage. Cynthia Cockburn points out that this practice makes a woman ‘a marketable commodity and strengthens parental power, making her dependent on the economic status of her father’.<sup>66</sup>

Significantly, patriarchy is a powerful web that, in combination with a number of socio-political factors, dominates the lives of Greek Cypriot women, who had to struggle to negotiate their conditions at different periods. The construction of sexual identity, and its diversity and complexity is explored throughout this study in order to outline how gender is actually produced in Cyprus and how the conditions of sexual politics affected the practice of women artists, who had to negotiate their social position as wives and mothers with their professional career.

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<sup>66</sup> Cockburn, Cynthia. *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 119.

## Methodology

The research involved extensive travelling in Cyprus, Britain and Germany and has been based on:

- A literature review in Cyprus and Britain.
- Data collection of material offered in archives, museums and galleries, specific institutions such as the British Library, State Gallery Archives in Cyprus, Press and Information Office (PIO) in Cyprus, the Nicosia Municipal Art Centre and artists' personal archives.
- Interviews and discussions with artists and other individuals, especially art historians and/or critics. The interviews with artists provided practical information for this study and offered responses to the frequent lack of adequate documentation of material in literature.

One important aspect of the methodology undertaken in this thesis is that it deals with the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, particularly the interviews and artworks. In order to conduct these interviews I undertook various types of training.<sup>67</sup> Considering that I chose to conduct the interviews in Greek and translate them in English I am aware of language questions and the fact that some issues might not translate exactly into another language.

On reading the majority of sources related to art history in Cyprus it was clear that other researchers had addressed only a limited documentary on artist's lives and art practices. I found that these publications – the majority of which were exhibition

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<sup>67</sup>In preparation for the interviews I attended the 'Art and Design Postgraduate Training Day' organised by the British Library. I had the opportunity to attend the 'Oral History Collection' workshop, presented by Rob Perks (Curator Oral History) and Cathy Courtney (Project Officer Sound Archive). The workshop gave an overview of the BL Sound Archive's oral history collections and activities and gave examples of how existing oral history material can be used in postgraduate research.

Additionally, particular important to my training was the Postgraduate seminar, organised by Dr. Mo White at the School of the Arts, Loughborough University. The workshop highlighted practical approaches to oral history and some of the basic concepts for researchers to consider when recording oral history interviews (particularly on Ethics, Intellectual Property and Copyright).



catalogues – are scant and have the same structure, with the same limited information: date and place of the artist's birth, education, exhibitions and a brief description of the artworks.

It soon seemed clear that none of the editors were really interested in researching Cypriot art or offering constructive critique; only basic information was given in relation to the artists' biography. As a researcher I am particularly interested in understanding the choices women artists make, the opportunities they might – or might not – have, the social expectations with which they conform and the constraints they have to address and with which they have to deal. Most important to me was gaining an overview of their practice, not just viewing some samples found in galleries or images in exhibition catalogues. Clearly, not all these details can be found in any of the published resources; therefore, I engaged in interviews and studio visits to collect more empirical information.

During the course of the research my methodology developed critically. There is a methodological process of selection not only with the artists but the artworks and the interviews. The first part of the selection process was centred on finding women artists. In an early stage I focused on getting access to as many artists as I could find so that I could acquaint myself to what their work and career. Once I had enough material on their lives and careers I became aware of the fact that they had a marked relationship with the political history and I identified some patterns. The second part was driven by the information and patterns I was seeing emerging from the archival work. After establishing the chapters in particular chronological periods I started selecting works that are related to construction of femininity, gender and patriarchy in the particular political history and events. My approach in selecting works was based on finding works that were specific to women's conditions. In some cases what I found was very typical of what the artists produced. However, in other cases what I found was really unusual. After this double selection method (artists and works to represent these artists) my methodology comprised a critical process of interviewing the selected artists

and/or relatives and friends. After the selection process I established some patterns from the gathered material (archival data, works and interviews) and defined which artists and works would be included in the final thesis.

My initial interest was to interview the artists who were considered to be 'pioneering' in art history. During the course of my research I found that the work of these professional practitioners was created during colonialism; therefore, the British colonial period became the starting point of this research. Since most of these pioneering artists had already passed away, I conducted archival research that revealed a significant tendency for their art practice to be related to political upheaval. Hence, I decided it was necessary to examine and embrace all major political periods in modern Cyprus (British Rule, national struggle, Independence, 1974 war and post-1974 period).

In the early stages, artists' names were gathered from several sources: the member list of EKATE (the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts), archives, exhibition catalogues and recommendations from people involved in the arts. The selected interviewees represent a fair cross-section of professional practitioners whose life, career and practice set up together a site in making a rethinking of art history in Cyprus. I am particularly interested in exploring their careers, their work, their professional life and their domestic life as a way of viewing the political history and leading to a balance, including absences and presences.

While the task of gathering material and data on deceased artists active in the period before 1960 was greatly complicated, the post-1960 period offered its own challenge due to the phenomenal increase in the number of women artists who largely entered the educational domain. I chose to conduct a few interviews with artists whose works represent a distinct set of women's perspectives within a framework of negotiations between domesticity and the public sphere. Significantly, post-independent Cyprus offered little support for women artists, who had to work full-time in education as well as taking care of their children and the daily household chores. Was there a possibility that the husband could take care of

the children or do the chores so that the wife could have some time for art? Maybe, but within a patriarchal culture working women had to struggle, particularly within their problematic transitions between the private and public spheres.

I also examine the work of artists whom I have not met or interviewed. I chose works that both formally and subject-wise constitute a response to socio-political events; specifically, works that represent specific symbols as embodiments of local socio-political references. Bearing in mind the lack of archives and supportive resources, I acknowledge the possibility that there are other relevant works and artists which I have not included. Crucially, I am seeking to bring Greek Cypriot women's art together so that their connection and legacy becomes resonant. I avoid categorising artists into 'generations';<sup>68</sup> on the contrary, I seek to map the particular periods into a dialogue of women's perspectives within the specific socio-political periods.

I have chosen to conduct 11 interviews in total: six with active artists (as mentioned in above) and five with other persons who I felt would offer enlightenment in accounting for deceased women artists' lives and practice.<sup>69</sup> The interview with Aristides Koudounaris – Loukia Nicolaidou's cousin – provided me with retrospective knowledge of Nicolaidou's life in Cyprus, whereas the conversation with her daughter, Ioni Vassiliou, offered me an understanding of her life in Britain. In seeking to find out more about Nicolaidou I interviewed Eleni Nikita, who I believe has the most unbiased stance, since she has no relational bond with Nicolaidou and genuinely wished to find out about her as an artist. The correspondence with Marianna Christofides was particularly useful as it provided material and information that I used in my discussion in relation to the younger generation of women artists who operate in the international art community.

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<sup>68</sup> The majority of exhibitions catalogues are published according to generations.

<sup>69</sup> All participants signed a consent form that explained that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures were approved by the Loughborough University Ethical Advisory Committee. They all agreed to participate in the study and agreed that any information provided could be included and published in this PhD thesis, academic journals and conferences. Interviews, with the exception of Pauline Phedonos, were undertaken in Greek and have been recorded, transcribed and translated in English by Maria Photiou.

A particularly interesting interview was that carried out with Zoi Kanthou, who rarely agrees to interviews. As the wife of the late Telemachos Kanthos, she is often asked to discuss her husband and not her sister, artist Eleni Chariclidou. I must admit the interview started rather awkwardly, at the Kanthos Foundation, but it ended at Zoi Kanthou's house, where she showed me her private collection. Kanthou's reaction was similar to that of the artists I interviewed: at first they felt somewhat reluctant and did not understand the purpose of my research, but soon they felt the need to talk and share their experiences.

The artists and other interviewees felt that there is little appreciation for artists in Cyprus. In particular, the lack of a support system tends to isolate artists, who often feel neglected in Cypriot society. With poor art criticism and a lack of workspaces and exhibition venues there is little to aid professional growth as artists; this is particularly true of artists who had to work in education to gain a salary. It is worth noting that all artists I visited had studios within their house or as an extension in their yard. A further point that arose through the interviews was that after decades of practicing and exhibiting, artists have still not received acknowledgment for their contribution to Cyprus' culture. Art foundations and cultural centres do not support established artists; in order to show their work, the artists are obliged to pay themselves for private spaces and curators.

The interviews were all carried out in a similar way, although their outcomes varied because of the different socio-historical conditions of each period and the ages of the artists. All interviews were carried out in a conversational mode. The discussions primarily engaged the thesis's basic question: how did women artists negotiate their (sometimes conflicting) experiences of being *women* and *professional artists* in relation to the turbulent socio-political history of Cyprus, and how is this articulated within their practice? Therefore, questions engaged with the following issues: choice of location to receive art education; making a living as professional artists after graduation; their current situation; their career mapping; whether they were influenced by political conditions; if they think that their practice

has a politicised meaning; how they think their work relates to Greek culture; how their work is received by galleries and public; their status as Greek Cypriot professional women artists.

Following analysis of the interviews I set out to explore how their work is significantly linked to changing political climates and identify their visual cast on specific notions, such as tradition, domesticity, finance and internationalism. In analysing the interviews I set up patterns in positioning women in Cypriot culture and, therefore, constructing an oral history of women artist's history. Material on location such as place, history and memory, and negotiation of the present and the past are engendered in artists' interviews and practices.

Interviewing is a multifaceted methodology that often generates ambiguities regarding a fact's authenticity. The majority of the selected artists are in a late age, some with health problems, all distant from what they experienced in their early careers. I am aware that their responses could be a result of what they wish to convey and how they wish to construct themselves as 'artists'. The interviewees' subjectivity/objectivity is difficult to affirm or challenge since there is no other primary source available and discussions with third persons (such as artists' friends and relatives) often comprise their personal assumptions or expectations of how the artist should be represented. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study the interviews provide information on women's position as artists in five different periods of the socio-political history of Cyprus.

An important part of my methodology was the selection of the artworks. In most instances the works were selected from a diverse range.<sup>70</sup> For instance, Loukia Nicolaidou has a large range of artworks that are representative of her French education and a distinctive modernist technique. I chose to analyse Nicolaidou's paintings that reflect femininity – such as *Gazing* (c. 1933-37) and *Girls at the Seaside* (c. 1933-36) – and Greek Cypriot women's transition from tradition to

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<sup>70</sup> I write about the selection of artists and artworks in the earlier discussion 'Positioning and Introducing the Artists'.

modernisation – such as in *At the Fields* (c. 1933) and *Ecstasy* (1933). An atypical work is Nicolaidou's *Enosis* (c. 1956), which is very distinctive due to its national context and this was the main reason I chose to analyse this specific artwork in Chapter 2. This was also the case with Eleni Chariclidou's artwork; I chose to analyse her series *Houses* in my discussion on the depiction of the home. The works *Pallouriotisa* (c. 1959), *Composition of Houses* (c. 1958) and *Houses* (c. 1959) are very different from her other work which is mainly portraits and landscapes.

Most of the artists' work offers a multiplicity of different influences, techniques and themes. This is mostly noted in Rhea Bailey's work from which I chose specific paintings that represent different notions; for instance, *Fusion of Time* (1974), *Memories of the Yard* (1979) and *Diptych of life with Watermelon* (1969) were chosen as visual accounts of personal narrative, memory and domestic experiences. Other artworks, like *The Rubbish Bin* (1973) and *The Sixth Floor* (1974) were chosen due to a possible reference to the 1960-73 Cypriot Women's Movement and women's negotiation of their private and public roles. Certain paintings offered powerful depictions of women's conditions during wartime, for example *Karmi-July* (1974), *Cry* (1974), *Cypriot Refugees Visualising the Dream of Freedom* (1977) and *Cypriot Mother and her Orphans* (1975). Other artworks were chosen to emphasise their theme; the impact of the events of the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus on women and how it is addressed in different artworks, for example, *Missing Person* (c. 1976), *Heads in Closed Space* (1983), and *Loss* (1974). Particular sculptures made by Nina Iacovou were chosen for their highly politicised image of Cypriot women, something that is very typical in Iacovou's work.

Contemporary practices were chosen for their reference to Cyprus' partition and Greek Cypriot women artists' engagement in addressing both locally and globally the geo-political condition of Cyprus. Works like *A Wall of Roses* (2002), *Blank Mappings* (2010-11) and *Grade IV* (2007) were selected for their direct reference

to the Green Line and the partition between the two communities. Moreover, the work of the *Washing-Up Ladies* was selected due to the group's outrageous strategies in exposing gender discrimination and to support a discussion on contemporary Cypriot women artist's work. Exploring meanings of women's artworks forms a framework to rethink the art history and set up a deconstruction of the discourses and practices of art history itself, and the position of Greek Cypriot women within it.

## Literature Review

To discover the history of women and art is in part to account for the way art history is written. To expose its underlying values, its assumptions, its silences and its prejudices is also to understand that the way women artists are recorded and described is crucial to the definition of art and the artist in our society.<sup>71</sup>

This study has set out to explore the existing literature on Greek Cypriot women artists using a feminist perspective. In order for this research to be carried out, I have concentrated on primary sources, gathered during data collection and interviews. In addition to international literature on the given field, I used records and publications relating to Greek Cypriot women's lives and experiences. Secondary sources have been very constructive for my arguments, both in terms of the information provided and as a critical framework for women's conditions in Cyprus. Feminist works and literature produced on women from Greece have been very useful, and therefore throughout the thesis commonalities have been identified between the experiences of Greek Cypriot and Greek women.<sup>72</sup>

As it is not possible to discuss women artists' intervention in the history of Cypriot art without referring to women's social position, the literature review consists of a dual historical search: first, of the history of Cypriot art; second, of the available material related to Greek Cypriot women throughout the historical periods. The review examines the invisibility of Greek Cypriot women artists in both in local and international histories – particularly the frequent lack of adequate documentation of material in exhibition catalogues and general literature. This situation has proved particularly problematic for the study of women artists, as writers tend to repeat the same information (brief curriculum vitae and a few images of their work) in each of the new publications, without offering any criticism or analysis. This approach

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<sup>71</sup> Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistress: Women, Art and Ideology*, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Although literature on women artists in Greece is more extensive and detailed, it does not always apply to the case of Greek Cypriot women as Cyprus experienced a very different history.



simply augments the problematic position of women artists in Cyprus in histories of art, and their marginal position in the canon of Cypriot art.

Griselda Pollock, in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, defines 'canon' as 'a discursive formation which constitutes the objects/texts it selects as the product of artistic mastery and, thereby, contributes to the legitimation of white masculinity's exclusive identification with creativity and with culture'.<sup>73</sup> Following Pollock's argument that there is has never been a single canon in the history of art, I would tend to agree that the canon is not produced merely by the academy, but also by artists and art historians assuming a Western male historical canon. In this study I examine as 'canon' the establishment of the 'fatherhood of Cypriot art' and the systematic exclusion of women artists from the official version of art history. Significantly, the work of Greek Cypriot women artists has had scant attention; the topic is both under-researched and commonly marginalised in mainstream work in the field. The fact that women's practices appear mainly in exhibition catalogues has rendered women's work invisible to the audience.

Such a limited body of literature is to be expected when we consider that Greek Cypriot women artists have not experienced the publicity or systematic attention to their work that other postcolonial artists – for example, artists originated from India and Africa – have been privileged with.<sup>74</sup> In addition, the dominant form of art knowledge is provided by certain types of publications:

Artists generally maintain that the catalogue is more important than the exhibition itself. It gives particular permanence to temporary events, an authenticity in the form of historical testimony. Together with art books and magazines, exhibition catalogues constitute the

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<sup>73</sup> Pollock, Griselda. *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*. London: Routledge, 1999, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> Tina Sherwell accounts for such comparison in relation to Arab women artists in Lloyd, Fran. *Contemporary Arab Women's Art: Dialogues of the Present*. London: Women's Art Library, 1999, p. 58.

predominant forms of receiving, and, in a certain sense, possessing images of art.<sup>75</sup>

While searching the worldwide involvement of women in arts I found only two books that included Greek Cypriot artists: the first was *The International Who's Who of Women* by Elizabeth Sleeman (2002), which referred to Rhea Bailey (1946); the second was the catalogue *Women of the World: a Global Collection of Art*, curated by Claudia DeMonte (2000), and including the artist Marlen Karletidou (1961). Interestingly, in Delia Gaze's *Dictionary of Women Artists* (1997) no Cypriot artists were mentioned. After a thorough search I could not find any other information in international sources regarding Cypriot women artists; therefore, I concentrated on locating material relating to modern Cypriot art and Cypriot women artists.

The first official account of modern and contemporary Cypriot art was completed by the Greek art professor Chrisanthos Christou<sup>76</sup> in 1977 and was published in 1983 by the Cultural Services of Ministry of Education in Cyprus. Christou, in his book *Σύντομη ιστορία της νεότερης και Σύγχρονης Κυπριακής Τέχνης* (translated as 'A Brief History of Modern and Contemporary Cyprus Art'), attempts to record Cypriot art of the early twentieth century. Christou incorporates in his account references to a history of 'fathers of Cypriot art' and employs analysis in terms of an evolution of generations. This approach was probably adapted from German art historian Wilhelm Pinder's 1926 work *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas*. Similar to Pinder, Christou positions the artists (and consequently their practice) according to the generations in which they belong, assuming that they experienced the same conditions and shared the same problems. The lack of critical analysis or consideration of major European trends makes his account problematic, but it has greatly influenced other researchers' approaches to cultural production in Cyprus.

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<sup>75</sup> Kelly, Mary. 'Reviewing Modernist Criticism', in *Screen*, vol.22, no 3, 1981, pp. 56-60.

<sup>76</sup> Christou is considered to be the best-know Greek art historian and the 'founder of art history in Greece'.

From looking at the publications related to Cypriot art history, it is clear to see that Christou's book has been extremely influential to other writers. Although Christou's study is lacking in several elements, we have to keep in mind that when he wrote his book, there were no other books relating to modern Cypriot art or any artist's monographs. Thus, Christou grouped the artists into three generations according to the dates on which they were born: the first generation was born between 1900 and 1922, the second was born between 1922 and 1940, and the third were born after 1940.

According to Christou, it is extremely difficult to talk about modern Cypriot art because it has 'no history' – between the eighteenth century and the early twentieth century the only documented genres of produced art were Byzantine and popular art (such as broaders, woodcuts, ceramics). Christou recognises that modern Cypriot art was hugely affected by the Turkish invasion of 1974, when numerous artworks were destroyed, lost or stolen and artists were forced to relocate to the south part of Cyprus. The fact that Cyprus was preoccupied with politics and with the major problem of finding a political solution with Turkey regarding the division for many years after the invasion greatly affected the art sphere in all regions of Cyprus.

As mentioned earlier, according to Christou (and other writers who follow his example), the foremost Cypriot artists were Adamantios Diamantis (1900-1994) and Telemachos Kanthos (1910-1993); he refers to these as the 'fathers of modern Cypriot Art'. To date, the majority of writers and art historians have referred to the foremost Cypriot artists as the generation of 'fathers'; with this, women Cypriot artists are excluded. In his book Christou did not mention Loukia Nicolaidou (1909-1994), considered the first professional Cypriot woman artist, who studied art in Paris. It is possible that Nicolaidou was not renowned at the time; she had been absent from Cyprus for many years and thus Christou may not have been familiar with her work.

However, Christou refers to two women artists of the second generation (Vathoula Kouma and Stella Michaelidou) in his opening chapter, although no particular details are given. In his next chapter, he mentions three more women artists: Vera Gavrielidou-Hadjida (b.1936), Katy Stephanides- Phasiouliotou (1925-2012) and Christalla Dimitriou (b.1923). A few lines are written about these artists' studies and work. With regard to the third generation of artists, he refers to Gioulia Lakeridou (b.1940), Rhea Bailey (b.1946), Androulla Aggelidou (b.1947), Kerr Joachim Susan, Iro Macri-Nikolaidou, Gloria Maratheoutou, Niki Maragkou, Clara Gewrgiou, Elli Mitzi and Anna Konstantinou. There is a distinct difference in Christou's representations of women and men artists: he refers to women artists only briefly, providing details such as their names and where they studied; the men artists, meanwhile, are discussed in much greater detail.

It is significant that a considerable number of women artists stated in Christou's book are no longer active painters or we do not have sufficient information in relation to their early work. The question is a complicated one. In agreeing with Linda Nochlin that the question 'Why have there been no great women artists' is a meaningless one I consider now the possibility that there is a gender discrimination – either made (un)consciously or deliberately – in writing about women's art practice in Cyprus. In the absence of an art apologist to mediate between women artists and the public, how do we ensure that women artists receive appropriate historical recognition? And if there is no recognition – even if ephemeral – is this a factor for women's isolation and distance from the art sphere? For example, Loukia Nicolaidou is only mentioned in sources published after 1992, the year that her retrospective was held in Cyprus. When we consider the fact that during the 1930s and 1940s she was a pioneer in organising solo exhibitions in Cyprus and a number of articles praised her shows, we see that it took almost more than half a century for her to gain publicity in Cyprus.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Loukia Nicolaidou's work was revealed in 1992 by art historian Eleni Nikita.

Interestingly, I found that the period after the 1990s offered increased production of art books, particularly catalogues referring to the post-1960 generation of artists. While there are several catalogues referring to Cypriot artists, these all follow the same structure and contain the same information: date and place of birth, studies, exhibitions and a brief description of their works, alongside a few images. Such catalogues include the *State Gallery of Contemporary Cypriot Art* (1998), edited by art historian Eleni Nikita, the (2002) *Cypriot Artists of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium*, edited by art collector Michael Zampelas and the (2002) *1960-1974: Young Cypriot Artists at the Dawn of the Republic*, edited by Yiannis Toumazis (director of the Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre).

Given that the country has been producing art for more than a century, it is surprising that there is no art criticism to challenge and stimulate questions of art history and practice in Cyprus. However, what may be relevant to this is the fact that Cyprus's art community is relatively small having a minority interest and, therefore, the production of an unbiased critique is rather problematic. Certainly, it is important to look at who is publishing and who is producing art books in Cyprus. While in the past the majority of art publications were supported by the Cultural Services of Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, in recent years a number of private institutions – for example, bank foundation and cultural centres – have acted as sponsors, and we find more authors involved in writing art discourses.

An interesting publication is the 1997 *Η Εικαστική Κίνηση στην Κύπρο από τις Αρχές του Αιώνα μας μέχρι την Ανεξαρτησία* (translated as 'The Visual Arts Movement in Cyprus from the Beginning of the Century till Independence') by Eleni Nikita, which describes the art milieu in Cyprus and discusses the course of exhibitions organised in the country up to 1960. This publication stands as an outstanding source, since for the first time, material is collected from all newspaper archives and used in a unique volume to underline the people who contributed in the art sphere between 1930 and 1960.

The 2000 book *Travelling Artists in Cyprus 1700-1960*, which is in fact a published PhD thesis by the art historian Rita Severis, has been particularly useful to this thesis. Severis's book is a unique documentation of the artwork of more than 120 travellers of the period 1700–1960; the author examines 350 paintings from a range of artists and discusses how the socio-political condition of Cyprus influenced their work. Significantly, research related to Cypriot art is a rare phenomenon; even rarer is the production of feminist books, which are considered a 'minority' subject attracting small sales figures.

While the mainstream of publications represent primarily Greek Cypriot artists, the 2005 catalogue *Cyprus Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* included both Greek and Turkish Cypriots and was supported by the New Cyprus Association, an association that has functioned since 1975 as a nongovernmental organisation of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. This catalogue represents a small subsection in the field of art publishing in Cyprus that embraces a sole national curriculum of both communities into one single volume. In recent years an increasing number of projects have provided financial support to art-related publications.

Similar to books, art journals have proven substandard in their provision of criticism on Cyprus' visual arts. With only two art magazines – *ART.ION*, a four-monthly publication of the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts, and *Arteri*, a four-monthly magazine which, after financial difficulties, is now only published online – Cyprus lacks a consistent platform for scholars and practitioners to set up a dialogue on visual arts.

Yet recent publications have still operated as supportive sources for the respective exhibitions. The exhibition's catalogue *1960–80 (2009), Discourse with Contemporary Trends in Art and the Quest for Identity*, included two texts from Eleni Nikita and art historian Andri Michael alongside images and brief biographies to each artist's page. This is the first publication in which we find a certain analysis of artworks, and research on each artist's works. The catalogue includes the work

of 35 artists born between 1929 and 1949 and forms, as Nikita explains, a kind of tribute to the new generations of Cypriot artists:

Coming back from Europe where they studied, pledging for new theoretical, philosophical and artistic ideas, they try to consolidate their very presence as well as their different approach compared with their Cypriot masters and to attract society's interest in new forms of expression, further considerations, new way of thinking and further plastic expression forms.<sup>78</sup>

In 2010, EKATE organised a series of exhibitions in Cyprus and abroad, projecting the celebration of 50 years of Cyprus' Independence. Daphne Trimiklinioti, president of EKATE, described the exhibition *50 Years of Artistic Creation* as the biggest ever held in Cyprus. The exhibition contained three different parts, all interrelated: the first was Visual Arts Cyprus 1950-1973 – From the quest of national consciousness to division; the second part was 1974 – Landmark in Politics and Art; and the third part was Pancyprian Exhibition – Visual Arts Rhythms. This catalogue is probably the most accurate source of Cypriot art history and includes material published for the first time – for example, work from artist Lenia Saveriadou.

In contemporary Cyprus it is common to see exhibitions as part of celebrations of political anniversaries. For example the 2010 exhibition *Pioneer Women Artists in Greece and Cyprus* was part of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives supported the exhibition's organisation on the occasion of the Famagusta Lyceum Club's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The exhibition catalogue includes two parts: three texts are presented, followed by the artist's works. The first text is related to Greek women artists and written by the art critic and historian Athina Schina; the second text, *Pioneer Women Artists in Cyprus*, is written by art historian Eleni Nikita; the third is related to Greek women

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<sup>78</sup> Nikita, Eleni and Andri Michael. *1960-1980 Discourse with Contemporary Trends in Art and the Quest for Identity* exhibition catalogue. Nicosia: Chr. Nicolaou and Sons Ltd, 2009, p. 5.

artists in international exhibitions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and is written by researcher Dimitris Papageorgopoulos.

The exhibition forms the best documented Greek Cypriot women artists' show with an illustrative catalogue of the work of these artists. I am particularly interested in Nikita's essay, since this is the first record of establishing 'pioneer' women artists in Cyprus, which includes names unknown to the Cypriot audience. Nikita refers to seven women artists who are no longer alive and who were born in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Therefore, I rely on this exhibition catalogue to explore, in Chapter 1, the emergence of the first women artists in Cyprus. Nikita produced a reading based on shared 'characteristics' among participating artists after adopting a 'socio-historical' approach.<sup>79</sup> She explains her position clearly: in her text she 'will not examine the widely discussed issue of the relationship between the female creation and the particular essence of women, and it will not argue on the divided views that emerge'.<sup>80</sup>

Nikita delivers little in relation to specific gendered economies, assuming that women in Cyprus experienced the same conditions as other women did internationally. She concludes that the exhibition 'does not aim to promote the "ghetto" of the creations by female artists, but rather to contribute to a more complete study of the history of art in Cyprus, by taking into consideration the parameter of the gender'.<sup>81</sup> The exhibition's approach of considering 'another parameter' – that of gender – provides a stage for introducing to the audience an alternative 'canon' by hosting a show of women who were until recently invisible from official histories of art. In addition, this 'women only' show is an instance of disruption in the canon of fatherhood, as it employs a term – 'pioneer' – that had previously been associated with an entirely male production. Nikita's interpretative

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<sup>79</sup> Nikita writes: 'My approach of the subject of a woman's creativity in Cyprus will be done through a socio-historical outlook, remaining closer to Rozsika Parker's saying "Art has no gender, artists do"'. Nikita, Eleni. 'Pioneer Women Artists in Cyprus', in *Pioneer Women Artists in Greece and Cyprus*. Nicosia: Alpha Art Publications, 2010, p. 30.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 31.



framework refers to the conditions of women artists and career patterns, but it does not refer to women's interventions in the development of Cypriot art. The fact that this exhibition and its catalogue have only emerged in 2010 assumes the perspective of gender-awareness into the formation of history of art.

A systematic study of art exhibitions reveals the gender bias of curatorial practice, even if this simply involves the proportional numbers of men/women artists. This bias is also noted in the artists' monographs, with the majority of publications being dedicated to men artists. In fact, only two monographs have been published in regard to the work of women artists: the first in 2002, in regard to Loukia Nicolaidou, and the second in 2009, in regard to Katy Stephanides. Typically, the area related to Greek Cypriot women's practice is still largely unknown, while the art sphere in Cyprus operates on the assumption that the norm of creativity is male, and therefore women's legacy is still neglected in art publishing. I would tend to agree with Pollock's statement, in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, that to produce a feminist intervention we must study women as producers within the socio-political and historical construction of the society:

Thus we proceed not from the assumption of a given essence of woman outside of, or partially immune to, social conditions but we have to analyse the dialectical relation between being a person positioned as in the feminine within historically varying social orders and the historically specific ways in which we always exceed our placements.<sup>82</sup>

Significantly, art history cannot be understood without a consideration of the social practices and dominant ideologies of each period. For this reason, I explore women artist's struggles against the definitions and ideologies of femininity and how they negotiated their situations in different periods in Cyprus. Pollock's

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<sup>82</sup> Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, op. cit., p. 10.

suggestion of a dual approach to understanding the meaning and effects of artistic practices has been very important for the development of this study:

First, the study must be located as part of the social struggles between classes, races and genders, articulating with other sites of representation. But second we must analyse what any specific practice is doing, what meaning is being produced and for whom.<sup>83</sup>

A particularly fruitful recourse for gender studies has been research related to feminist research and women's practices in Cyprus. The majority of this research included group meetings with women and interviews from an extensive age range. *The Cypriot Woman* was the first research project carried out by the Psycho-Sociological Research Group: it examined and analysed the ways that the Cypriot woman 'thinks, reacts and feels in certain fundamental aspects of life such as marriage, the role of the married woman in the family, equal rights, politics, relations with the opposite sex, sex, religion, problems, pleasures and aspirations'.<sup>84</sup> Mary A. Pyrgos conducted a fascinating research project exploring women's social position throughout time, from the Neolithic age until the 1990s.<sup>85</sup> Recently, women's studies have emerged in various academic disciplines, introducing feminist perspectives in Sociology and Political Science.<sup>86</sup> The 2005 establishment of the non-profit organisation MIGS (The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies) in Nicosia stated gender equality as their primary mission and has been involved in developing methods to protect women's rights effectively.

The present study constitutes only an initial attempt to explore the existing literature on Greek Cypriot women artists and think through the complex web of

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> Psycho-Sociological Research Group. *The Cypriot Woman*. Nicosia: P. & P. Intertype Co Ltd, 1986, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> This publication is a reference article rather than an analytical piece of work, as it is not footnoted and includes no bibliography. The published book is a summary of the three-volume history of Cypriot women, which as yet remains unpublished for financial reasons.

<sup>86</sup> See Myria Vassiliadou. *A Struggle for Independence: Attitudes and Practices of the women of Cyprus*, University of Kent at Canterbury, (Unpublished Ph.D thesis), 1999 and Maria Roussou. *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, University of London, Institute of Education, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), 1985.

relations which have shaped the form of art history in Cyprus. The prevailing male-dominated approach to the visual arts is being reproduced through exhibitions, publications, education and the press, maintaining the boundaries in history of art and the gap in gendered practices.

Following Pollock's example, I set out to consider feminist intervention as a strategy to connect women's practices in the history of Cypriot art. To achieve this, I explore specific histories of women artists and their artistic interventions in relation to their experiences and gendered encounters with colonialism, nationalism, ethnic conflict, the different conditions of art education and employment and the trauma of war and displacement. Structuring the chapters around five key socio-political periods sets out a discourse on the variety of practices in which women are actively engaged and the conditions which affected their personal life and professional career. Such conditions are those that have engendered women artists to claim professional status and to produce art against all odds while living in a patriarchal, nationalist and militaristic country.

## The Chapters

The thesis is divided into seven parts: Introduction, Chapters, Conclusion, Appendix I, Appendix II, Bibliography, a List of Illustrations and Illustrations. Appendix I incorporates interview material and Appendix II includes short biographies of the artists. Each of the chapters is structured around specific socio-political and historical periods in Cyprus. The five particular historical periods do not cover the entire history of Cyprus, but are selected to cover specific socio-political conditions. The material addressed within the chapters is selective, based on women artists' intervention in each of the periods. With the exception of Chapter 3, each chapter takes as its central theme a key moment of political upheaval and constructs a conceptual framework of connecting the specific histories with the ideologies and structures that have shaped both women's practices and their negotiations within these changing circumstances.

Chapter 1, *British Colonial Rule and Sexual Politics: the Emergence of Greek Cypriot Women Artists*, provides an overview of the British colonial period and the visual arts in Cyprus. Attention is paid to how the discourses of gender identity, modernism, nationalism, femininity and gendered economies defined the framework in which women artists approached art from the 1930s to the 1950s. A major issue identified is the association of colonialism, nationalism and the genesis of the ethnic conflict in Cyprus. I analyse British representations of Cyprus as opposed to the art production of Loukia Nicolaidou, a Greek Cypriot artist whose professional career and art practice is a key reference in establishing the emergence of women artists in Cyprus. I argue that British colonial rule, despite all the negative aspects of its colonialism, provided certain outlets for Greek Cypriot women to become professional artists.

Chapter 2, *Greek Cypriot Women Artists, the Image of Woman and the National Liberation Struggle 1955-1959*, considers the specific strategies employed by women artists in representing the national struggle as a gendered territory. By reading specific artworks I argue that women's approach to the struggle had in a

twofold strategy: first, direct politicised approach; and second, a less direct approach through their selection of subject-themes that deliver a powerful politicised cast. I am particularly concerned with male representations of the struggle and to highlight this I discuss women's symbolic association to the nation in men's images. Although women's participation in the struggle is marginalised, I argue that women did participate and were actively involved in the anti-colonial process, even if their involvement was more subtle (such as the kitchen struggle, I argue) than the armed struggle.

Chapter 3, *Greek Cypriot Women Artists and the Independent Republic of Cyprus 1965-1973*, considers women's transition between the domestic sphere and the public sphere throughout the years of Independence. I examine the channels that empowered women artists to enter the working domain and their negotiations of their private and public roles as wives, mothers, and caretakers of the household while teaching art in schools. I argue that despite the post-1960 propaganda of 'gender equality' in matters of law, education and the workforce, women artists had to struggle to balance their roles as mothers and wives while negotiating their careers as professional artists. In exploring women artists' transitions between the private and public phases, I analyse strategies employed by women artists and their negotiations in regard to a number of key issues: their decision to practise art professionally, their domestic role and their relation to the socio-economic politics of the period.

Chapter 4, *Greek Cypriot Artists and the 1974 Invasion*, considers women's conditions in the armed conflict, the aftermath of the military occupation and the tragedy of ethnic cleansing. I argue that the 1974 invasion was a gendered experience of a patriarchal war in which women were objectified as devices of nationalism. I analyse the different strategies employed by women artists in representing the war as a gendered experience, their negotiations in dealing with forced exile and their attempts to reclaim what once was their territory. Emphasis

is placed on women's loss, particularly the phenomenon of the loss of the house alongside the geographical and political division of Cyprus.

Chapter 5, *Greek Cypriot Women Artists and the post-1974 Geopolitical Partition*, considers the emergence of Greek Cypriot women artists in the international art market, particularly after Cyprus joined the EU in the 1990s. I argue that the Cyprus conflict has brought major changes in Greek Cypriot women's political consciousness and has politicised contemporary women artists. I explore the strategies employed by Greek Cypriot women artists in representing the post-1974 trauma and the double meaning of witnessing within the legacy of the trauma. I analyse the practice of artists based in Nicosia who experienced the geopolitical partition of the capital city and their various responses to this through the employment of new media, such as installations, moving images and performance.

## Chapter 1

### British Colonial Rule and Sexual Politics: The Emergence of Greek Cypriot Women Artists

#### Introduction

In 1878 at the beginning of the British Rule a new era dawned for Cyprus. The liberalism that blew from the West lifted Eastern despotism from the Cypriot people. The relief brought about this change was also felt by Cypriot women. The once locked doors of the houses now opened and women, timidly at first, and later more courageously, greeted the outside world with curiosity. [...] The most important thing was that they were no longer as isolated as before. The unexpected freedom seemingly brought about new customs and activities which affected all aspects of society.<sup>87</sup>

Chapter 1 examines the emergence of professional Greek Cypriot women artists – those who are today considered to be the pioneering women in Cypriot art history. As discussed in the Introduction, extensive archival research shows that the first appearance of professional Greek Cypriot women artists occurred between the 1930s and 1950s under British colonial rule in Cyprus. Therefore, I am arguing that British colonial rule, despite all the negative aspects of its colonialism, provided certain outlets for Greek Cypriot women to become professional artists.

Critical to my argument is the association of women's careers and practices with a set of changes that on the one hand were linked with radical political upheaval, and on the other have remained fairly constant in terms of certain patriarchal structures. Thus, it is essential to take into account the period in which the pioneering women emerged, what changed for women under British rule, and why they emerged during that particular time and not in an earlier/later period. For

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<sup>87</sup> Pyrgos, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

Cypriot women British rule offered for the most channels to retreat from their long seclusion women had experienced throughout the previous historical periods.<sup>88</sup> This makes the British colonial period a core moment in women's art history since we see for the first time a documented endeavour to leave a mark in the public domain.

In order to recognise the legacy of pioneering women artists it is necessary to understand the social-political circumstances from which they emerged. Before colonial Cyprus it was rare to meet a 'professional' Greek Cypriot woman, and even more rare to meet a professional woman artist. Even those women who eventually became pioneering artists were not considered to be professionals or taken seriously at the time; as a result, no studies were undertaken regarding their career and practice. Reasons for this negation can be found in the long history of women's marginalisation due to sexual politics and the perpetuation of patriarchal conventions about women's subordinate role in Cypriot society. Consequently, the first generation of professional Greek Cypriot women artists encountered a series of difficult socio-political conditions, including the political upheaval of the period, patriarchal restrictions regarding women's role and the British influence over Cypriot culture.

The first generation of Greek Cypriots women artists includes Persefoni T. Xenaki, Loukia Nicolaidou Vasisiliou, Thraki Rossidou Jones, Pavlina Pavlidou, Eleni Chariclidou, Elli Ioannou and Elli Mitzi. Their practice as professional artists has long been undervalued and for this archival documentation had mediated against them in having a legacy. Hence today, it is not possible to locate some of the works, and information on the artists' careers is limited. In tracing pioneering women's work it appeared that their career and practice is directly related to a series of political upheavals. Consequently, it is not surprising that women's careers were affected by the radical political upheaval that occurred during the colonial period in which they emerged and that their very own practice reflects this

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<sup>88</sup> The Ottoman Period (1571-1878) was an obscured period for Cypriot women with scarce historical sources. For more see Pyrgos, *op. cit.*, 39.



change. Therefore, as I am arguing, their careers, their practice and their professional and domestic lives are all agents through which to view the political history of Cyprus. The biggest challenge in discussing the relations between art practice and political history are the presences/absences of political events and the partial nature of data regarding women's art legacy.

To explore Greek Cypriot women artists' emergence I will discuss women's struggle for integration into the profession of artist. Despite the fact, as I am arguing, that pioneering women artists in Cyprus had to contend with patriarchal ideologies regarding femininity and 'honour' issues, their artistic careers were hindered by the social perception of women artists as 'eccentric', 'odd' and of dubious morality. In discussing their practice I am considering common patterns of their experiences in becoming artists and their approaches entering the art domain.

To understand the association of colonialism, nationalism and the genesis of the ethnic conflict I analyse the British representations of Cyprus created by British artists Gladys Peto, Keith Henderson and William Hawkins. In so doing, I am arguing that British representations of Cyprus convey a set of racial concepts that indicate attitudes established within the Orientalism framework<sup>89</sup>. I suggest that such attitudes and visual gestures affirm colonial visual strategies in portraying a united 'Cypriot nation' while justifying the British imperialism and hegemonic approaches seen in the twentieth century in Cyprus. The last discussion is on Loukia Nicolaidou, where I analyse representations of Cyprus created by a local artist. Here, I will argue that Nicolaidou's portrayal of women's gestures and attitudes challenge British Orientalist representations of Cyprus.

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<sup>89</sup> I am describing the British representations as 'orientalist' as these works adapt to the Orientalism framework. I am aware that the term 'Orientalism' was introduced in art in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) conferred contemporary critical meaning on the term.

## Struggle for Integration in ‘Men’s Tokens’: Women’s Approaches to Art

By the time I’d reached twenty-seven, my mother had grown weary of trying to find a match for me. I could at least have consented to stay, to grow old as a spinster next to my married sisters and let the demons of painting turn my wits till the end of my life, as she said to me every day. [...] But I wanted academies and laurels. Men’s tokens. To do what with them, she asked. With my dowry, I could find a good match any time I wanted, she went on, ignoring the fact that I had agreed with my father to pay for my maintenance from the capital of that dowry for as long as I would remain in Italy for my studies.<sup>90</sup>

Rhea Galanaki’s *Eleni, or Nobody* recounts the peculiar life of Greek artist Eleni Altamoura (1821-1900), a pioneering woman artist who, in 1840, confronted the traditional art canon after her admission to an advanced class of the Fine Art school in Rome. It was only after disguising herself as a man that Altamoura was able to benefit from the freedom of an exclusively male artistic environment, particularly the opportunity to study in the nude class.

The case of Altamoura could be representative of women artists in Cyprus who, in addition to patriarchal norms within the public sphere, also had to tackle the domestic influence derived from their familial environment; often, emotional pressure relating to the stereotype of a woman’s foremost duty forced women to remain in domesticity as the household caretakers and child-bearers. In this period, it was socially acceptable for urban women to get involved in arts within the domestic sphere, producing a certain ‘feminine’ art of still-life themes or portrayals. Considering that being an artist was, for a long time, not an acceptable career – or barely a choice – women’s approach to art as professional artists entering the

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<sup>90</sup> Galanaki, Rhea and Connolly, David. *Eleni, or, Nobody*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003, p. 46.

public sphere (academic education, exhibiting and selling their work) rather than as amateurs within the domestic sphere (practising art as a pleasurable pastime while taking care of the children) affected women artists' emergence in Cyprus and their involvement in art history.

The early twentieth century is marked by a significant presence of women from all over the world who flocked to Paris, where they were trained in the various Parisian academies. The publication of art magazines in this period was significant, operating as a communication platform between overseas artists and the European art centres. At the time in Cyprus, a popular platform was correspondence with the ABC school, from which art students received via post the school's magazine, together with the required coursework; after a period of distance attendance the ABC school provided a degree that allowed students to teach.<sup>91</sup> The ABC school operated from both London and Paris, offering English and French speaking artists abundant advice about the two art centres and their artistic associations. Interestingly, despite Cyprus' close connection to Britain, Loukia Nicolaidou chose to enrol for a year of study at the Parisian ABC. That year was significant for her artistic career, since the school's monthly magazine introduced her to European visual culture and the work of renowned artists of the time.<sup>92</sup>

In 1929, Nicolaidou temporarily moved to Paris to study art. Such a move was not easy to accomplish in early twentieth-century Cyprus; women were largely excluded from higher education and the prospect of being a professional artist was far from the social expectations regarding female domestic duties, particularly if we take into account the general ignorance about arts and the misperceptions associated with an artist's reputation. Nevertheless, despite all these obstacles, certain factors made it possible for Nicolaidou to travel abroad. Nicolaidou had established herself as a professional artist, a decision that was made significantly

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with Aristides Koudounaris, Nicosia, 24 March 2010.

<sup>92</sup> Nikita, Eleni, *Loukia Nicolaidou-Vasiliou: 1909-1994*, Nicosia: Marfin Laiki Cultural Centre, 2002.

easier by obtaining the necessary financial support from her family. Moreover, as I discuss throughout the chapter, British rule offered a gradual development of new customs and activities that affected Cypriot society and, consequently, women's position in colonial Cyprus. The development of Limassol (Nicolaidou's hometown) as Cyprus' largest port was significant as it operated as an urban platform of new approaches from foreign countries to be incorporated steadily in Cyprus' culture.

Significantly, those aspiring women who were interested in negotiating their role as professional artists had found in Paris the ground of a stimulating artistic atmosphere along to better opportunities for training and exhibiting than those available in other art centres.<sup>93</sup> According to Clive Holland in his 1903 review in *The Studio*, the private schools most attended by women artists were the Academie Julian and the Academie Colarossi. He writes:

The life of the schools is intensely interesting, often amusing, and sometimes even tragic. The stronger natures among the girl students will probably decide on attending one of the mixed classes, and there they will work shoulder to shoulder with their brother art students, drawing from the costume or the living model in a common spirit of student-hood and *camaraderie*[...]<sup>94</sup>

In 1929 Nicolaidou attended the Colarossi Academy. At the end of the year she transferred to the Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux-Arts, at Lucien Simon's<sup>95</sup> atelier, from which she graduated in 1933. At the Ecole, Nicolaidou produced her early works under the liberal guidance of her tutor, who never actually 'taught'; indeed, during his classes, Simon encouraged students to 'solve technical and pictorial problems' themselves, in order to find their own method of expression.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Perry, Gill. *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-garde*, Manchester University Press, 1995.

<sup>94</sup> Holland, Clive, 'Lady Art Students Life in Paris, in *The Studio*, Dec. 1903, pp.225-30.

<sup>95</sup> Lucien, J. Simon (1861-1945) was a post-Impressionist French painter and art teacher.

<sup>96</sup> Anath, Deepak. *Amrita Sher-Gil: An Indian Artist Family of the Twentieth Century*. Schirmer/Mosel: Munich, 2007, p.16.

Nicolaidou's time at Paris, the centre of the arts at the time, was spent experiencing a new style of living and developing her artistic style within the academic education: still-life, portraits and nudes all evince her figurative style, which continued after her academic education. Interestingly, Nicolaidou's early work is similar to the work of the Indian artist Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-1941), who also studied at the atelier during the same period. Nicolaidou's earliest surviving canvases from the academic period show the influence that Paris-based training had in her art practice. Two examples of Nicolaidou's work from this period (1930-33) are the oil paintings *Lucien Simon's Atelier*, fig. 1, and *Milliners*, fig. 2; both represent simplified figures in external spaces.

In *Lucien Simon's Atelier*, (c. 1930-33) Nicolaidou constructs the interior of Simon's studio, representing figures of her fellow students and the nude female model in black and white shades. The looseness of the brushwork reduces the figures to anonymous, faceless objects. Nicolaidou stages the space as a social sphere with an emphasis on the action of the figures, which are all concentrating on painting the model on their respective canvases. A similar space is represented in *Milliners*, (c. 1903-33) which shows a public interior in which five female figures try on some Parisian hats. Again here, the loose brushwork and the dark blue shades reveal the artist's interest in presenting her figures as objects within a public space. These two works reveal that during her training years Nicolaidou was developing a style influenced by post-Impressionist techniques while showing an interest in producing women's experiences in social spaces, something that – as I will discuss later – was developed into a strategy in exploring modernity and women's activities in colonial Cyprus.

Many artists who were trained in the 1930s in Paris became part of radical art movements (such as Fauvism and Cubism), published manifestos and involved themselves in the bohemian Parisian lifestyle. Although information from this

period related to Nicolaidou's involvement or artistic recognition is scarce, a critique in *Le Monde* newspaper provides evidence that Nicolaidou successfully submitted her work to a show: the reviewer gave to her work the full status of 'avant-garde' art.<sup>97</sup> Another significant source records that Nicolaidou exhibited at the 1932 *Salon d'Automne*, an outlet that offered lesser known artists the opportunity to exhibit alongside more established artists. Architect Franz Jourdain, first president of the Salon d' Automne, described their ambition in the *Salon's* 1983 catalogue:

I was obsessed with the idea of grouping together those modern artists who found it so difficult to gain the publicity they deserved. By offering the beginners, the misunderstood, the rebellious, a way of putting themselves on an equal footing with the ambitious and the pundits, there's a chance of shortening the sad and humiliating probation periods imposed on the innovators.<sup>98</sup>

Nicolaidou's 1932 *Young Norman Girl*, fig. 3, exhibited at the 1932 *Salon d'Automne*, was noticed by the progressive art critic Maurice Raynal, who wrote in his review in the *Intransigent*: 'Delightful compositions placed here and there, such as the one by Loukia Nicolaidou give a note of freshness'.<sup>99</sup>

The work and career of Loukia Nicolaidou offers an important (but not an exclusive) account of Greek Cypriot women artists' emergence in the early twentieth century. Her approach to her education and career stands as an exemplar of Greek Cypriot women's negotiations in establishing themselves as professional artists. When researching this study, I became especially interested in the gendered economies that were associated with the artists' backgrounds and

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<sup>97</sup> Interview with Aristides Koudounaris, Nicosia, 24 March 2010.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Perry, Gill. *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995, p. 44.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Nikita, Eleni. *Loukia Nicolaidou-Vasiliou 1909-1994*, op. cit, p.3.

their fate as professional artists. As I hope to show, leading women artists in Cyprus operated under similar domestic and professional patterns. Such specified patterns provide important information about the complicated relationship between women artists and the socio-political happenings of their time.

While the work of Nicolaidou has been acknowledged, albeit briefly, in recent publications, the work of most of the other Greek Cypriot women artists who emerged during British colonialism is still little known to Cypriots. These are artists who negotiated their role as professional artists in the public sphere, seeking an academic education and a professional qualification that only a foreign institution could offer at the time. While the artists featured all followed individual career patterns (due to age, class and political affiliation), the 2010 exhibition *Pioneer Women Artists in Greece and Cyprus*, shown in Cyprus, introduced collectively for the first time the work of seven Greek Cypriot artists: Persefoni T. Xenaki (1908-2000), Loukia Nicolaidou Vasiliou (1909-1994), Thraki Rossidou Jones (1920-2007), Pavlina Pavlidou (1922-1993), Eleni Chariclidou (1926-1978), Elli Ioannou (1929-2005) and Elli Mitzi (1930-1997).

The exhibition highlights the work of the foremost generation of women artists in Cyprus, a generation that had to negotiate the political processes and socio-political upheaval within colonial Cyprus and struggle against traditional patriarchal rituals. Not surprisingly, all seven artists came from a middle-class background and were financially supported by their families. Their urban backgrounds, and the support and security that these backgrounds afforded them as aspiring artists, provided some crucial influences on their future careers and personal lives. Hence, I am particularly interested in exploring how pioneering women artists experienced similar patterns in their career despite the diverse paths of their education and careers. Each one of these artists embedded in their practice notions of tradition, domesticity/publicity, finance and internationalism. Their legacy is marked by certain historical, socio-political and psychological agents and affected greatly by

the lack of interest in women's art. To understand more, a further discussion will follow regarding pioneering women's practice and their relation (absence/presence) to the history of art in Cyprus.

The emergence of Greek Cypriot women artists is marked by the socio-political upheavals that occurred during the colonial period in Cyprus. Persephoni Tzirou Xenaki (1908-2000) is considered to be the first woman artist in Cyprus. After a productive early period and education in London, Xenaki was a founder member of *the Board of Administrators of the Association of the Friends of Arts*, initiated by artist Adamantios Diamantis in 1943. Despite Xenaki's dynamic involvement in the Cypriot art sphere, her practice is omitted from subsequent histories of Cypriot culture. Xenaki's practice was represented by two oil works in the 2010 exhibition cited above: *Two Nuns* and *Marchland*, both undated.

It is common for Cypriot women artists' works to be found undated, untitled and on some occasions even unsigned. Such limited access to relevant artwork, and the lack of historical material from this period, has contributed significantly to the absence of detailed female art history. Similarly largely absent from art history are artists Elli Ioannou (1929-2005) and Elli Mitzi (1930-1997), both of whom were realist painters of traditional subjects such as landscapes, still life and portraits. Both Ioannou and Mitzi had an ample practice that was paused after the 1974 war, which affected their personal and professional lives. Clearly, politics played an important role not only in women's lives but also in their professional careers; especially in the case of those women who were established as professionals in the northern areas which were occupied in 1974. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, the tragic circumstances of 1974 created exile, trauma and interruption of any professional work.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the socio-political changes, personal circumstances also affected the professional lives of women artists. For example, Eleni Chariclidou's (1926-1978)

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<sup>100</sup> To this day, all artwork found in North Cyprus prior 1974 is impossible to locate or search.



career was relatively short due to a severe health condition. Despite a rough period involving frequent treatments, Chariclidou managed to graduate and continued her practice, which gradually evolved from realistic subjects to abstract compositions. Certainly, Chariclidou's medical trips to London influenced the course of her practice, providing progressive ideas on the representation of traditional subjects such as the *View of Nicosia*, which I will discuss in Chapter 2.

Thraki R. Jones's (1920-2007) life followed a different pattern. Art history has mitigated against her practice; to this day art historians usually dissociate her from the pattern of the 'ordinary' artist. Art historian Eleni Nikita writes that Jones 'belongs to a different category of artists, the category of the naive artists, as we often call them'.<sup>101</sup> Jones' categorisation as a naive artist is not related to any deficiency in her artistic education. On the contrary, Jones attended the Bilston College of Art in 1953. Therefore, her classification as a naive artist is purely related to Jones's subject matter and technique. Notwithstanding the fact that Jones is included in the first generation of women artists in Cyprus, she did not really practice art until the 1950s. Significant to Jones's career and practice is that the 1974 events found her in Famagusta where she was forced into exile. This migration affected her career, while her practice was paused for a long period. Her artistic comeback in the 1980s was not directly related to the invasion experience, as might have been expected. On the contrary, Jones represents local traditions from the perspective of a refugee while approaching her subjects as memories of the past.

In the same period emerged the first Greek Cypriot woman sculptor, Pavlina Pavlidou (1922-1993), who attended Camberwell College of Arts in London and continued her studies later in Rome. In 1961, Pavlidou moved to Paris in search of a broader artistic environment and an audience that appreciated art. Despite her absence from Cyprus, she played an important role in Cypriot culture through her practice and the 1967 organisation of the first sculpture exhibition in Cyprus. While

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<sup>101</sup> Nikita, Eleni. 'Pioneer Women Artists in Cyprus', in *Pioneer Women Artists in Greece and Cyprus*. Nicosia: Alpha Art Publications, 2010, p. 38.

at the time the mainstream of sculpture was associated with monumental works and busts of figures, Pavlidou introduced contemporary trends that – as expected – were not appreciated by the public. Indeed, Pavlidou stated, regarding public preferences: ‘I have noticed that the audience liked busts because it was used to seeing busts. Few people were attracted by the forms, although they constitute the most representative part of my work’.<sup>102</sup> Pavlidou’s words reveal the public’s tendency to favour a rather traditional kind of art in post-Independent Cyprus.

Loukia Nicolaidou (1909-1994) is the only woman artist from this period whose practice has been greatly privileged and whose work can be found in the State Gallery of Contemporary Cypriot art and various private collections. Not surprisingly, her legacy has been highlighted only in recent times, through her 1994 retrospective exhibition in Cyprus. Undoubtedly, Nicolaidou is a paradigmatic artist of the period whose persistent practice, with solo exhibitions in the 1930s, paved the way to a profession previously unavailable to women, that of artist. Soon after her training in Paris, Nicolaidou turned down the offer of a teaching job and developed her artistic activity; Nicolaidou’s participation in the island’s *Pankyprian* annual exhibition was soon followed by her three solo exhibitions, in 1934, 1935 and 1936.

Unlike other women artists, who participated exclusively in group exhibitions, Nicolaidou aspired to establish her professional status as an artist in the public perception. The experience of a Cypriot woman actually seeking to make a living through painting and exhibiting her work was somewhat difficult in patriarchal Cyprus, particularly since her shows happened during a period where no exhibiting facilities were available and the support of collectors and dealers was significantly scarce. Not surprisingly, the public remained indifferent towards Nicolaidou’s one-woman show. Nonetheless, the first ever one-woman show in Cyprus’ history, held in 1934 at Papadopoulos Hall (Nicosia), attracted the attention of intellectual reviewers, among them journalists Proinos and Pan. Proinos referred to Nicolaidou

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<sup>102</sup> Quoted in Nikita, Eleni. ‘Pioneer Women Artists in Cyprus’, op. cit., p. 36.

as a 'genuine artist of a genuine artistic talent'<sup>103</sup> who overcame the socio-cultural prejudices of the time in negotiating her status as professional artist.

According to the 1934 reviews, the exhibition included a large number of portraits, landscapes and compositions, and two female nudes. The public remained apathetic about the originality of Nicolaidou's technique and her ability to represent a range of subjects through the use of bright colours and bold brushwork. Journalist Pan attempted to explain the originality of her work, writing about the public's apathy:

The artist is disappointed. Seated all day long at a small sofa she observes the few visitors who come to see the exhibition and leave without showing any kind of appreciation to her. [...] Why the wealthy people, our elite class – the word has lost its meaning – are so ignorant, so unaware and so uncultured? [...] Who, of the wealthy ones, went to the exhibition to buy an outstanding and valuable work to decorate his lounge and replace his wife's pictures of actors? [...] No sirs. It is our mistake. We are unable to understand things that are superior to the ephemeral emotions of the cinema and football.<sup>104</sup>

Pan's article offers significant information about Nicolaidou's position as a woman artist in the colonial period and the art milieu of the time. According to Pan, the public (he is addressing wealthy people, who could actually afford to purchase art) remained apathetic towards a modernistic outlook that contrasted with what they preferred and were familiar with, such as landscapes and realistic portraits. The fact that Nicolaidou's practice did not follow the mainstream genres of the time was perceived as the artist's inadequacy with regard to mastering the academic canon. However, Nicolaidou was aware of the public's attitude and countered it by including in the 1934 exhibition two nudes of her early works, created during her study years. The two nudes were not part of the exhibition, and so were displayed

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<sup>103</sup> Proinos, 'A Genuine Artist', *Proini*, 22 April 1934. [Original text in Greek, translation mine].

<sup>104</sup> Pan, 'Painting', *Proini*, 26 April 1934. [Original text in Greek, translation mine].

unframed to demonstrate to the public that her practice was a product of academic training incorporated with individual modernism, positioning herself as a woman artist in a patriarchal society.

After her three solo exhibitions, Nicolaidou remained on the fringe of public perception. Therefore, in 1937 she reorganised her personal and professional life and moved to London, where her older sister was already based. In London she experienced what Paris had offered her during her training: a site of artistic exchange, spaces to exhibit and an audience to purchase her work.

Nicolaidou participated energetically in the London art scene, showing her work alongside that of established artists like Walter Sickert (1860-1942) and Augustus John (1878-1961). *Cypriot Girl*, fig. 4, painted while she was still in Cyprus (1933-37), introduced Nicolaidou to the London audience. The tactility of the surface of the painting, as a depiction of a Cypriot girl made with clear brushwork, made a quite an impression. In a 1939 article, the *Times* wrote: 'At least one of the names that are unknown, Mr or Miss L. Nicolaidou, made an impression with the work *Cypriot Girl*, for its firm drawing and its expressive line'.<sup>105</sup> In order to gain significant status and be able to exhibit within the London artistic sphere, it seems that Nicolaidou had displayed a high level of artistic production. Although Nicolaidou successfully participated in the flourishing London culture, she refused the 1939 offer of a one-show exhibition due to her wedding plans. Later, the Second World War led her to move away from London, and she gradually withdrew from artistic production.

While it is difficult to identify any response to the 1935 and 1936 exhibitions, a 1938 article points out the status of inertia that predominated in the art sphere in Cyprus and recalls past exhibitions, including Nicolaidou's:

Each year the Pankyprian exhibition was organised which – even if it did not embody what artists aspired to – was a reminder that such

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<sup>105</sup> Quoted in Nikita, Eleni. *Loukia Nicolaidou-Vasiliou 1909-1994*, op. cit, p. 5.

heroes live among us. This year even this exhibition was not organised. Four years ago a young artist – Ms Loukia Nicolaidou – [...] dared to organise [her] solo exhibitions. Now, it seems that there is no tendency for similar shows.<sup>106</sup>

In another article the same journalist articulates the fact that Nicolaidou made an impact on Cypriot art, introducing tendencies and movements that were never shown before in Cyprus. Referring to her absence from the annual exhibition, Anthias states: ‘Ms Nicolaidou with her modernist technique would represent the new tendencies of painting [...]’<sup>107</sup> These testimonies taken together show not only signs of Nicolaidou’s absence from Cyprus but also signs of the censorship of artistic production in colonial Cyprus.

Despite the increasing number of women entering art education and art practice, Cypriot women emerged as individual artists rather than a group or a movement. Hence, it is not surprising that – as was the experience of many other women artists worldwide – their practice was not readily accepted by the public at the time. This was also the case for a generation of men artists who, unlike women, were mostly from the rural class, and had to find employment and study at the same time.

However, what is striking is that until now, Cypriot women artists’ practice has been marginalised, without any patronage or acknowledgement of their contribution to and impact on Cypriot culture. The very fact that the practice of Nicolaidou was promoted and publicised only in the 1990s on a woman’s initiative (the art historian Eleni Nikita) affirms the active canon of male dominance throughout the years. Indeed, the dominant patrons of Cypriot art embraced rather traditional theme choices (such as realistic landscapes and ideal portraits). Because of this, Nicolaidou’s work was not taken seriously for a period of years:

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<sup>106</sup> Anthias, Teukros, ‘Painting in Cyprus’, *Eleutheria*, 28 January 1938, p.1-3 [Original text in Greek, translation mine].

<sup>107</sup> Anthias, Teukros, ‘The New Exhibition of Cypriot Art’ in *Eleftheria*, 7 April 1938, p.1-3 [Original text in Greek, translation mine].

this marginalisation had led to the artist's taking up a reclusive life and her later 'self-exile' in London.

While these artists assumed different positions and took up different education, certain markedly similar patterns within their professional careers and lives should be mentioned here. All of them gained art education in European academies, while in later life four of them (Xenaki, Chariclidou, Ioannou and Mitzi) worked in education as art tutors. Their employment in education greatly affected their practice and their further involvement in art. In fact, Persefoni T. Xenaki and Eleni Chariclidou had shown their work only in group exhibitions, whereas Ioannou organised two solo exhibitions at a late age, toward the end of her artistic career.<sup>108</sup> Elli Mitzi, however, took a different position, with frequent participation in group exhibitions and five solo exhibitions in Cyprus and abroad.<sup>109</sup>

Although all these artists experienced the British period in relatively different ways, they all have something in common: the fact that they were women living in a colonised, patriarchal country under Greek Cypriot nationality. In this we find common patterns in their private and professional life. Their actual choices were affected by society's expectations of what they should be: the model role of wife-mother. It is not surprising that of the six members of the foremost generation of pioneering Greek Cypriot women artists, three never got married (Pavlidou, Chariclidou, Mitzi), one (Ioannou) divorced at a young age and one (Xenaki) married at a late age.<sup>110</sup> Likewise, Nicolaidou, soon after her marriage, abandoned her promising career and was isolated in motherhood.

Arguably, within patriarchy, woman is a cultural construct. In Simone de Beauvoir's words: 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature [...] described as

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<sup>108</sup> Nikita, Eleni. 'Pioneer Women Artists in Cyprus', op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

feminine'.<sup>111</sup> To add to this, women's conditions in Cyprus were greatly affected by their association with nationalism, as an invisible and yet crucial connection to national practices and processes. Although some major changes took place during British colonialism which improved the social position of women, patriarchal cultural norms define women as the producers, reproducers and bearers of the collective national identity.<sup>112</sup> Significantly linked to this is the fact that the dowry system and the notion of 'honour' are also engaged with the same patriarchal social norms. According to Cynthia Cockburn, the notion of 'honour' is 'something that links men and patriarchy in the family with men and patriarchy in the nation and state'.<sup>113</sup>

During British rule, nationalism was mostly expressed against the colonialist regime and the demand for union with Greece. In these nationalist practices women were invoked to symbolise 'the nation' and the 'mother' (Mother Greece, Union of Daughter Cyprus to Mother Hellas). While the Greek Cypriot community was engaged in a national consciousness related to a union with Greece, the Turkish Cypriot community endeavoured to ensure that if the British should give up their colonial rule of Cyprus the island would be ceded to Turkey, as successor to the Ottoman Empire. Critical to the next discussion is the fact that the two communities lived in what has been described as a 'traditional co-existence'.<sup>114</sup> This 'traditional-co-existence' gradually evolved into a growing hostility, particularly after British strategies polarised the two communities, resulting in the growth of ethnic conflict in Cyprus.<sup>115</sup>

In the following discussion I argue that British representations of Cyprus, created during British rule by artists who were settled in Cyprus, were made within the

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<sup>111</sup> De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. London: Penguin, 1972, p. 295.

<sup>112</sup> As discussed in Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias in *Women-Nation-State*.

<sup>113</sup> Cockburn, Cynthia. *From Where we Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis*. London: Zed Books, 2007, p. 244.

<sup>114</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Kitromilides, Pachalis. 'From Co-existence to Confrontation: The Dynamic of Ethnic Conflict in Cyprus', in M. Attalides *Cyprus Reviewed*, 1977, pp. 35-70.

<sup>115</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Van Coufoudakis, *Essays on the Cyprus conflict*. New York: Pella Pub. Co, 1976.

framework of Orientalism. Thus, I discuss that the British failed to acknowledge the co-existence of two communities that had never fully integrated with each other, despite colonial strategic intentions.



## The British Influence on Cyprus

It is not surprising that the British created a false national awareness of what they found in Cyprus. Clearly, Cyprus was another country to be added to the British Empire which, due to its practical location, offered a strategic base from which to control other colonies. At the time it seemed rather easier to handle the island as a united nation than to accept the duality of the two communities. As the Turkish Cypriot negotiator Rauf Denktash stated in his book *The Cyprus Triangle*, 'there is not, and there has never been, a Cypriot nation. That may be the misfortune of Cyprus and indeed the root of its problem, but it is a reality which has to be faced and understood by all concerned'.<sup>116</sup>

During the British administration an uncertain period for the two communities began. According to the 1881 census, Cyprus' population was 73.9 per cent Greek Cypriot, 24.4 per cent Muslim and 1.7 other.<sup>117</sup> It is noteworthy that, the population was defined by British administrators according to religion rather than ethnicity.<sup>118</sup> Therefore I would point out that among British strategies was the fostering of a unique 'Cypriot identity' and a 'Cypriot nation' in order to avoid repeated requests from the Greek-Cypriots regarding the island's union with Greece.<sup>119</sup>

This 'Cypriot nation', as I am discussing, was made according to British terms, under colonial policies, while significantly, being Greek or Turk was not taken into consideration. Among the colonial policies of the British Government was presenting Cyprus as an exotic destination to attract tourists from its other colonies. At the time, tourists were 'not only [...] encouraged to come to Cyprus for a visit but to re-appropriate, to "take" valuable cultural assets back to Britain for

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<sup>116</sup> Denktas, Rauf. *The Cyprus Triangle*. London: Rustem, 1982, p.1.

<sup>117</sup> Armenian-Gregorian 0.1 per cent, Roman Catholics (Latins) 0.7 per cent, Maronites 0.4 per cent, Other 0.5 per cent.

<sup>118</sup> Vrikki, Dimitra. 'Language and Ethnicity in Cyprus under the British: A Linkage of Heightened Saliency', in Hubert Faustmann and Nicos Peristianis (eds.) *Britain in Cyprus: Colonialism and Post-Colonialism 1878-2006*. Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2006, p. 345.

<sup>119</sup> Severis, C. Rita. *Travelling Artists in Cyprus 1700-1960*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2000, p. 194.

personal acquisition'.<sup>120</sup> Consequently, the island became an attractive destination for British visitors, who could visit comfortably given the fact that Cyprus, as a new acquisition of the Empire, was adapting to British currency and language.

What is remarkable is the appearance of British artists, who painted impressions of Cyprus during their settlement. Arguably, these British artists were the first 'outsiders' representing Cyprus as *they* saw and experienced it during colonialism. Thus, these colonial observers were part of a vast group of British travellers who had documented visual and/or written accounts of colonial Cyprus. At this point I would discuss the relation between the observer-artists, participants-Cypriot people and audience (British market) of constructing a visual view of Cyprus.

Similar to other colonised countries, visual and textual representations of Cyprus adopt the orientalist perspective, explained by Edward Said in his pioneering book *Orientalism* as:

A collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans [...] indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures.<sup>121</sup>

Said classified the term 'Orientalism' as an imperialistic argument whose origin is the Western conception of Western superiority over the Oriental inferiority; this Western discrimination was the result of the prejudicial treatment of the Orient as the cultural 'other' to 'us' Occidentals. This supposed Western superiority justified the British – and French – colonization of the Orient. The term 'Orientalist' has been used as a negative characterization by Westerners since the nineteenth century and is based on the Western colonial conception of the Orient, not

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<sup>120</sup> Hadjimichael, Mike. 'Revisiting Thomson - The Colonial Eye and Cyprus' in Faustmann and Peristianis, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>121</sup> Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin, 1995, p. 7. (First published in 1978. Reprinted with a new Afterword.)

authentic experience of the Orient. The 'otherness' of the East created curiosity about the differences between Oriental traditions and Western culture and has been an inspiration to several European artists.<sup>122</sup>

I am referring to producers of British art as 'orientalists' despite the fact they were not considered so at the time.<sup>123</sup> I will argue in the next discussion that British representations are constructed through the imperialistic ideology of 'producing meanings', as Linda Nochlin writes in her (1983) article *The Imaginary Orient*.<sup>124</sup> Nochlin's notion is based on the absence of essential elements from Oriental artworks; particularly, the absence of history and the absence of the Western man. British artists constructed a visual image of Cyprus in terms of justifying imperial ideologies and hegemonic approaches to Cyprus as the site of 'imagined, experienced, remembered' experiences.<sup>125</sup> In this, British artists constructed their visual scenes including as participants-subjects the new 'acquisitions' of British Empire: the islanders, or 'Cypriotes' and 'Cyprians' as they were described in a publication from the period.<sup>126</sup>

It thus becomes clear why in the majority of the paintings Cypriots are represented as modest folk dressed in traditional costumes, labouring outside their houses. This tendency, in which British artists represent Cypriots as workers in traditional outfits while the British – when represented – are shown in modern garments, while amusing, can only denote one thing: British superiority and their status as rulers over the subordinated Cypriots. Therefore, I am arguing that this perpetual style of representation aims to satisfy its potential audience: the British elite who could afford to purchase these images. It is doubtful that any Cypriots would have

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<sup>122</sup> Western artists of the nineteenth century, such as Jean-Leon Gérôme, Eugene Delacroix, Jean-Auguste Ingres and Henriette Browne produced various works within the Orientalism framework.

<sup>123</sup> I am describing the British representations as 'orientalist' as these works adapt to the Orientalism framework (see note 89).

<sup>124</sup> Nochlin, Linda. *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century art and Society*. New York: Harper & Row, 1989.

<sup>125</sup> Thornton, Lynne, *The Orientalists: Painters-Travellers, 1828-1908*. Paris, 1983.

<sup>126</sup> Thomson, John. *Through Cyprus with the Camera in the Autumn of 1878, Vols 1 and 2*. London: Trigraph, 1985.

bought any of these artworks at the time, mainly due to the lack of both interest and funds.

In addition to presenting an image of the British as in control and powerful, artists depicted the imagined 'Cypriot nation' including both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, without the presence of the administrator. The Briton, as the creator, the viewer, and the one who has the power to control everything, does not require depiction in images of the 'Cypriot nation'. As Nochlin has put it: 'he is necessarily the controlling gaze, the gaze which brings the Oriental world into being, the gaze for which it is ultimately intended'.<sup>127</sup> Without doubt, the Briton has the control over access to commission, to create, to purchase. Thus, my argument could be seen as an extension of what Said discussed 'I doubt if it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India or Egypt in the later nineteenth century took an interest in those countries which was never far from their status in his mind as British colonies'.<sup>128</sup>

In the next part of the discussion I will introduce artworks made by British artists during their settlement in Cyprus. In reading their work I am suggesting that British artists represented Cyprus through a variety of styles and techniques, revealing colonial attitudes of the dominant western 'narration' of the 'other'. Therefore, I am arguing the extent to which works produced by foreign artists are rationalist assumptions of an imperialist imagination. In order to do this I refer to travellers' journals as a further perspective of the colonial gaze towards the 'Cypriot nation'.

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<sup>127</sup> Nochlin, Linda. *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century art and Society*, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>128</sup> Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. op. cit., p. 11.

## The 'Cypriot Nation' under the British Colonial Gaze

During British rule a range of travellers visited Cyprus, including diplomats, historians, military and civil personnel, many of whom represented Cyprus in visual scenes. Among these artists was Gladys Peto (1890-1977), an illustrator and writer whose husband C.L. Emmerson had a colonial governmental position in Cyprus. Her 1928 book *Malta and Cyprus* records her life in the two countries, written in a rather personalised fashion: Peto's book goes 'beyond the ordinary guide book, offering practical tips on life in Cyprus, such advice being sprinkled with lyrical descriptions, criticism and nostalgia [...] sentences are short and they incorporate local names and words thus bringing the reader closer to the country'.<sup>129</sup>

Peto's style of drawing, noticeably influenced by the Art Deco movement and the work of Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898), creates a personalised oriental visual representation of her experiences in Cyprus. Significant to this is Rita Severis' observation of Peto's 'chatty descriptions' and humorous style that 'often make[s] up for her lack of detailed knowledge of historical events'.<sup>130</sup> Peto created twelve images related to Cyprus, all with similar themes and style; contrasting black and white illustrations record Peto's impressions of Cyprus and its people (see figs. 5-7).

In her book, Peto describes Cypriots in urban areas as people who look exactly like those in the rest of the Mediterranean; Malta, Italy, Alexandria, Athens, Marseilles. She distinguishes the ones in the seaport towns, where young girls are:

Hatless, with the same bush of dark hair, the same small, fat feet, in the same very high – heeled shoes – the same, in 1927, very short skirt and coloured woollen scarves about their shoulders. Their brothers and other male relations sit at the tables outside the cafes,

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<sup>129</sup> Severis, C. Rita. 'With Pen, Brush and Palette', in Hadjigavriel, L. Loukia and Severis, C. Rita, *In the Footsteps of Women: Peregrinations in Cyprus* exhibition catalogue, Nicosia: J.G Cassouliades & Sons LTD, 2001, p. 85.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

in the same kind of straw hat and pointed shoes as their cousins, possibly their blood cousins, wear in Alexandria.<sup>131</sup>

This reveals that Peto had an inadequate knowledge of Cyprus' history and its origins. This possibly explains some of the oriental features of her illustrations. All of her twelve illustrations have a topographical theme of traditional edifices and trees with flowers decorating the scenes.

In *St. Andrew's Street*, fig. 5, Peto depicts, with black ink on white paper, a daily scene in the life of Cypriots in an Art Deco-style drawing. The street is a charming traditional alley where we can distinguish both Greek and Turkish Cypriot folk. The Turkish Cypriots, two men and one woman, are all walking in the same direction, distancing themselves from the central scene and the viewer. Peto, in her foreground scene, presents a woman outside her house holding a chicken while negotiating with a young boy about market products. Peto chooses to present both Greek and Turkish elements of Cyprus. This is obvious from the architectural elements depicted in the alley scene: all houses found on the left-hand side of the painting are in the Ottoman style, with covered balconies and round arches, whereas the ones on the right-hand side have the Western type of balcony, with open areas and doors.

At this point I argue that the architectural arrangement is strategically made to fit the colonial framework of a certain 'national order'. As Peto claims:

One has to be careful about the order in which one writes these nationalities – Greek, British and Turkish [...] for the Greek reads from left to right – so he is first and the Turk from right to left – so he is first – and the British remain in the middle.<sup>132</sup>

Peto's statement reveals that during the colonial period there was no united 'Cypriot nation', but, on the contrary, a growing conflict over control of power.

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

Perhaps this is why we find the Greek Cypriot woman in the St. Andrew's Street standing outside the Greek type of house, whereas Turkish Cypriot persons are walking close to the Ottoman houses. I propose that the work introduces to the viewer an invisible divisional line among the two communities; they co-existed as two communities but never as a united 'Cypriot nation'.

Colonial strategies adopted by Peto and other artists of the time have been employed in representations of the daily scenes of Cypriot life. The most significant approach appears in the conventional accounts of British superiority over the subordinated Cypriots. One example is *A Curious Habit of Patting you on the Cheek Which is Rather Disconcerting*, fig. 6, in which Peto illustrates a scene of a beautiful, young British lady in modern dress being surprised by a rather ugly old Cypriot woman in traditional dress patting her cheek. There is a significant distinction in the representations of the two women; the British one is elegant in high heels, a fashionable summer dress and hat, whereas the Cypriot looks rather unattractive in her long skirt and blouse. In the background of the image we see a man walking along with his donkey and a woman staring toward the central scene.

Peto offers to the viewer a series of records of what she saw and experienced in Cyprus, presenting landscape scenes along with describing the local people. In these works, the artist uses a picturesque effect and decorative style in order to emphasise the exoticism of the country and connotations of Cypriot 'subordination' as read through post-colonial studies on Orientalism. For this we find in her illustrations an 'orientalist' attitude in representing the status of two cultures. In her sketches we see Cypriots as the working class, wearing boots to protect them from snake-bites (as the artist explains), while animals are presented to show Cypriots' agricultural source of income and main means of transport. The British, on the other hand, are shown as the elite class, offering to Cyprus certain advantages; as Peto states, 'the Cypriots owe their educational facilities (of which they certainly

take advantage) to the British. Before the occupation few of them could read or write'.<sup>133</sup>

This attitude is significantly deployed in *The Hours after Dinner*, fig. 7. Here, Peto structures a scene in which diners seated on comfortable cane armchairs enjoy a relaxed night in an outside area of a country club, under the moonlight. The four diners are certainly British, dressed in the 1920s fashion: the two men are wearing smart bow-ties and smoking jackets, while the women are in elegant dresses and high heels. A male servant dressed in an oriental outfit serves drinks to the British. The servant's outfit is a foreign element and does not recall any traditional Cypriot dressing style; he is dressed in a Middle Eastern costume, with long pantaloons (in contrast to the traditional Cypriot ones, which end below the knee), an oriental decorated waistcoat and a tall fez. Possibly, this was an outfit that the British requested for its personnel, or perhaps Peto imposed an oriental garment on a Cypriot scene.

I argue that the foreign elements depicted in the image create a false image of Cyprus. While the background could mirror 1920s Cyprus (cypress trees, bushes, traditional houses), certain decorative elements are not authentically Cypriot. As Severi points out, foreign elements such as the small tree in the little wooden pot, the unfamiliar ceiling light and the glass carafe are all, together with the servant's garments, persuasive factors in questioning whether the scene is indeed related to Cyprus.<sup>134</sup> The choice of these foreign elements could lend itself to the critical question of what Peto sought to produce for her audience: a representation of Cyprus as she experienced it or an imitation to offer pleasure to the British spectator?

It is significant that British artists were fascinated by the dual aspect of Cypriot culture that they found; highlighting this, we see a variety of both Islamic and Byzantine architectural elements in their representations of Cyprus. Peristerona

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>134</sup> Severi, Rita. *Travelling Artists in Cyprus 1700-1960*, op. cit., p. 218.



village is an outstanding example of the two cultures' co-existence, with a five-dome Byzantine church standing next to an Islamic mosque. Images of the two buildings together were widely used in the past (on the old five Cypriot pound banknote, on several book covers and cards), reminiscences of the previous co-existence of the two communities.

Cyprus' village and countryside scenes were extensively used in posters and postcards promoting material of the British imperialism.<sup>135</sup> In the 1920s, British artists were employed to visit Cyprus and produce artworks including photographs, posters, postcards and films in order to promote colonialism and encourage commerce and tourism to the colony. Keith Henderson (1883-1961), a painter and illustrator who was educated at the Slade School in London and in Paris, was commissioned to record various 'visual' redundant views of Cyprus. Hence, Henderson created a series of oils related to Cyprus' landscape and its people. One such work is *Peristerona*, fig. 8, in which Peristerona village is presented as a background while eight children are positioned in the foreground.

The painting's composition emphasises with thick oil brushstrokes certain aspects of the village. Through an optical fusion of colours, Henderson captures the essence of the subject-theme rather than its details. A number of Peristerona houses are shown and the five domes of the Byzantine church are visible in the background. All the colours of the painting are neutral: fields are green, houses are amber and the sky is pallid, together creating a gloomy atmosphere. Henderson places the eight children in the foreground, standing right in front of the viewer, without any facial characteristics. Henderson depicts both communities; some of the children wear the Turkish fez. What is particularly interesting is the fact that Henderson did not include the mosque and its minaret which lay alongside to the church.

Clearly, Henderson acknowledged the Turkish presence in the village at the time; four boys in the image are wearing the fez, which is worn only by Muslims.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

Possibly, this work shows Henderson's view of the conflict between the two communities. Despite the fact that it was created before the conflict started, it still seems like Henderson predicted the future of the island.

The image recalls a theatrical stage, in which the background's buildings are horizontal, elongated shapes while the upright figures of the children are all positioned in line, one next to the other. The fact that the faceless children are all staring toward the viewer, or at something beyond the painting, raises questions. Are those children looking at something in particular, or are they waiting for something to happen? I propose that this representation manifests Henderson's prediction of *Peristerona*'s future status; these children will face an uncertain future, and the Turkish ones will be excluded from the village. Due to politics, those children will not be allowed to play together or have any kind of communication; the future for them requires their turning from neighbours into enemies living in the same country. Clearly, the colonial formation of the 'Cypriot nation' never succeeded.

Henderson was the first artist to exhibit in Cyprus and have a newspaper review his work. In 1928, the same year he produced *Peristerona*, the Greek Cypriot newspaper *Neos Kypriakos Fylax* praised him as the first foreign artist who was genuinely engaged in representing Cyprus, stating that for the first time Cyprus landscapes were being publicized in an exhibition.<sup>136</sup>

*Fire*, fig. 9, by William Hawkins (1845-1902), who arrived in Cyprus to cover the position of supervisor of the Government Printing Office, follows a similar pattern to *Peristerona*. Hawkins produced a series of paintings during his time in Cyprus but never exhibited or sold them: instead, he sent the works as gifts to his British acquaintances.<sup>137</sup> The structure of *Fire* is similar to Henderson's *Peristerona* (*Fire* was created fifty years earlier), representing both communities in a landscape scene of a fire in a village.

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<sup>136</sup> *Neos Kypriakos Fylax*, 12 December 1928.

<sup>137</sup> Severis, Rita. *Travelling Artists in Cyprus 1700-1960*, op. cit., p. 170.

Similar to *Peristerona*, *Fire* shows in the background houses in a village, while in the foreground ten figures are shown in an empty field. The image is made using a simplified technique that recalls Realism. Interestingly, seven of the presented persons are Turkish Cypriots, grouped in the left side of the image; all five men wear Ottoman outfits with fez, while the two women are swathed in a long, white-striped cloth. The Turkish group is facing toward the fields, with their back to the viewer, staring at the fire far away. The three Greek Cypriots found on the right of the image are sitting on the ground and eating, with their backs to the fire and the black clouds in the horizon. The group of Greeks appear to be unaware of the fire, or possibly to prefer to ignore it. What is particularly interesting in this image is Hawkins' approach to representing the two communities. He presents Cyprus as an open landscape including both communities, identifying each one via traditional factors such as outfits.

Significantly, both Henderson and Hawkins' representations took a similar approach to presenting Cyprus: wide empty landscapes, and the presence of Cypriots, both Greek and Turkish, all in line and expecting something. While Henderson presents Cypriot children as a combined group, Hawkins divides Cypriots into ethnic groups, Turkish on the left and Greeks on the right. This approach was also used by Peto in *St. Andrews*, where she divided the alley into two domains: Greek on the right-hand side and Turkish on the left-hand side. Notably, in all three compositions there is no indication of a British presence.

Looking at the British representations of Cyprus created during the colonialist period, a notable strategy can be seen in the work: Cypriots are always presented as villagers wearing traditional outfits in countryside locations. Western influence is absent; there is no colonial or touristic presence, implying an absence of history and change.<sup>138</sup> I propose that this strategy is clearly an attempt to distinguish the local people from the British (the 'civilised nation'). Cyprus is symbolically

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<sup>138</sup> Nochlin, Linda. *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century art and Society*, op. cit.

constructed in order to be 'dominated, devised and to be ruled'.<sup>139</sup> While the British are presented as following a privileged English lifestyle, with the facilities of the club reserved for the British community, Cypriots are presented as the employees. Significantly, all British artists distanced themselves from the local people, exposing in their practice a cultural and national distinctiveness. As John MacKenzie points out, these artists are never neutral observers: 'there is no such thing as the innocent eye or the objective lens'.<sup>140</sup>

Having examined the ways in which British artists represented the locals, it is important to consider the extent to which British representations authentically mirrored Cyprus' culture. While the British legacy in representations of Cyprus is based on a gendered spectacle promoting and justifying British imperialism, there is a convincingly cultural form of diversity in this legacy that defines Cypriots as the 'other' – the subordinate villagers – with the British portrayed as the cultivated participants in elite high culture. Cypriots are only shown as employees of the British, preserved in the colonial attitude of assuming them to be unprogressive despite the social-political and cultural changes that occurred in Cyprus during the time of colonialism.

Related to this, I will next discuss and analyse the practice of Loukia Nicolaidou, and particularly her work created during her residence in Cyprus between 1933 and 1937. Significantly, Nicolaidou's practice challenges the British stereotype of Cyprus' as an uncultured nation. Important to the discussion is the fact that Nicolaidou was among the few women to overcome the social-political restrictions of the period. Due to this, Nicolaidou is a paradigmatic artist of the period, and analysing her practice will facilitate the establishment of women's roles in colonial Cyprus and make explicit the different ways in which Cypriot women experienced modernity and their gradual transition in the public sphere.

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<sup>139</sup> Kabbani, Rana. *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule*, London, 1986.

<sup>140</sup> Mackenzie, John. *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, p. 53.

## **Loukia Nicolaidou: Artistic Strategies Employed by a Woman Artist during British Rule**

Loukia Nicolaidou's legacy embraces not only a long practice but most importantly a recorded venture in entering the public sphere while establishing a career as a pioneering professional woman artist. During the 1930s Nicolaidou introduced a radical art practice, something that was at the time different from the works created by the 'fathers' of Cypriot art. While in the majority of men's depictions, women are represented as mother/wife, in countrywoman roles, Nicolaidou presented a rather undomesticated side of women in Cyprus. Nicolaidou's practice constructed a distinctive approach to female representation; among her works are sensual nudes such as *Gazing*, (c. 1933-37), fig. 10, and depictions of bare-breasted women reposing at the beach such as *Girls at the Seaside*, (c. 1933-36), fig. 11.

Clearly, Nicolaidou's discourses around femininity and gender relations are in contrast to the traditional female image, in which patriarchal conventions restricted women to roles within the domestic sphere – the position of mother, wife and caretaker of the household. As previously mentioned, women's social roles changed during the British colonial period due to active intervention from a number of women who fought for women's rights in Cyprus. Hence, I propose that Nicolaidou's visual images embody politicised views of women's access to sites of modernity.

Soon after graduating, and after a long period of immersion in the European art scene and trends, Nicolaidou returned to Cyprus. Despite familial and social expectations that she would embark on an academic career as an art tutor, Nicolaidou refused the offered position of art teacher, making the decision to become a freelance artist instead. At the time artists were encountering unbearable economic problems; in fact, most male artists had to work elsewhere or to execute commissions to make a living. Nicolaidou was financially supported by her prosperous family; therefore, her decision to be an artist was made through personal preference.

Between 1933 and 1937 Nicolaidou spent her time in Cyprus producing several works with different artistic styles and themes. A large amount of her practice is themed on countryside scenes, after spending hours cycling with her sketchbook and paints. At the time, such activities (a young woman wandering outside alone) were criticised by society, especially by narrow-minded people.<sup>141</sup> Through her activities Nicolaidou repeatedly challenged the patriarchal stereotype that required women's restriction within the domestic domain, performing their duties in the household. In looking at her practice, Nicolaidou's commitment to representing the people and places she saw while seeking inspiration from what she was familiar with – everyday Cypriot life and landscapes – is clear.

*At the Fields*, (c. 1933/36), fig. 12, forms an example of Nicolaidou's approach to presenting the everyday life of Cypriot women in the 1930s. The painting, possibly influenced by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century French modernism, outlines a modern tendency, seeking to develop new methods of painting a Cypriot subject-matter. Some formal qualities, such as the blunt palette, heavy outline, brushwork, composition and theme recalls Paul Gauguin. The image is structured with a very clear background and foreground. At the background, five women, dressed in traditional Cypriot outfits (their bodies fully covered by long faded dresses, and a scarf around their heads) are walking away after working long hours in the fields. While the women in the background are represented with abstract facial characteristics, shown as tired from carrying the daily harvest, the foreground and central scene is focused on the presence of two girls.

The central scene is in opposition to the background one; the two girls are posing in light modern dresses, seemingly in a completely different world – a world of their own, far away from the other women in the painting. While one of the girls sits on a small stool eating watermelon, the other one lies on the ground in a sensual pose. I deduce that this pose recalls Jean Ingres's lounging odalisques in his Orientalist work. Here, the Cypriot girl is relaxing with one hand to her head while the other

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with Aristides Koudounaris, Nicosia, 24 March 2010.

one touches her, engaging the viewer with her gaze. The two girls seem to be sharing an intimate moment, distant from the other women in the image.

The foreground scene is depicted with neutral colours of tan and dark brown that balance with the white dress of the seated girl. Here, Nicolaidou emphasises the girl's femininity with loose corporeal outlines while drawing particularly expressive details on the girls' faces. Her method changes for the depiction of the women in the background, with the looseness of the brushwork reducing the figures to anonymous faceless objects. This technique is similar to Nicolaidou's earlier Post-Impressionist work (e.g. *Lucien Simon's Atelier and Milliners*) where she constructs a visual reference to her subject-matter, providing details of action (that is, working on the fields) rather than of the figures themselves.

This image reveals Nicolaidou's strategy in representing the social-political change that occurred during British rule. In this visual, Nicolaidou integrates the customary Cypriot everyday life of the working class with certain modern attitudes adopted by Cypriots during the colonial period. The background scene represents the older generation of women, the ones who lived in rural areas and followed the traditional customs according to the patriarchy. This is the generation that is greatly associated with the domestic sphere, with public appearances related only to religious functions or working in the family's fields. However, at the same time, Cypriot customs were undergoing gradual changes and a new lifestyle was being adopted by a number of Cypriot women. The two girls presented indicate this change – they represent the generation of women who will embark on education and employment in the public sphere. Undoubtedly, this image is a remarkable illustration of Greek Cypriot women's status, representing both the tradition and the modernity of Cypriot culture.

Countryside scenes such as that used in *At the Fields* are an interesting setting for representing encounters between tradition and modernity. Nicolaidou renders not only the differences between the generations of Cypriot women, but also, women's sexual liberation, their awakening in becoming more feminine alongside to their

transition to the public domain. The engagement of the viewer through the gaze of the sensual girl locates the spectator as an eyewitness to women's disjunction from patriarchal stereotypes.

Hence, Nicolaidou's visuals offer testimony to the social-economic changes occurring in Cyprus during British rule, and in particular women's attitudes to the foreign influence. Nicolaidou recognised and delivered through her work the indication that Cyprus was facing a period of change due to colonialism, something that British artists avoided representing in their visuals. Undoubtedly, the older generations would have faced difficulties in adapting to the new way of life, preferring to keep the lifestyle they were familiar with. However, a considerable amount of Greek Cypriot women kept pace with the latest European fashions – particularly the young girls and women who dressed in Victorian attire while they adjusted to the European living style. Mrs Esme Scott-Stevenson testified in 1879 that 'shops full of European goods have taken the place of the old bazaars; and one sees more people in English than Greek costume'.<sup>142</sup>

Women in Cypriot cities had the opportunity to experience customs within the public domain; they attended receptions, dances, and the races and exercised, rode and played tennis, among other things.<sup>143</sup> Probably the most significant change in the period was the status of relations between the two sexes. While in previous times the forces of patriarchal conservatism had forbidden any interaction between young women and men, the strength of such forces began to diminish in the 1920s, with boys and girls attending the same schools and socialising at family gatherings.

Nicolaidou's *Ecstasy*, (c. 1934), fig. 13, emphasises gender relations in the 1930s, providing a significant point of reference that challenges patriarchal norms. The image shows a group of four young people: two women and two men. The central figure of the scene appears to be the girl in a striped pink dress, playing the guitar

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<sup>142</sup> Quoted in Severis, Rita. *Travelling Artists in Cyprus 1700-1960*, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>143</sup> Pyrgos, Maria. op. cit., p. 48.



while staring at something the viewer is unaware outside the scene. Alongside her stands the second girl, presented in a long red furred coat and gazing in a different direction. Both girls are similarly presented, with notably pale skin and makeup, red lipstick and shadowed eyes. The two boys are presented in dark clothes and skin tones; one of them bends towards the seated girl with the guitar, while the second is seated with his gaze towards the viewer.

Here, Nicolaidou renders her figures with particular individual attention, presented in the same scene as listeners to the guitar's melody. While the couple in the middle are presented as sharing an intimate moment (we see this in the boy's tender approach), the other two figures are presented in individual moments of reflection, both looking melancholic. Nicolaidou's choice of colours for this image is particularly interesting, highlighting a strong contradiction between girls and boys: the boys are presented in dark shades; while the girls with pale skin and vivid clothes. Similar to other paintings, Nicolaidou gives particular details to facial characteristics which, together with the vivid colours, increase the intensity of expression, both emotional and physical.

Significant to Nicolaidou's practice is the influence of the style and aesthetics that were part of the Parisian avant-garde culture. Clearly, as a young student Nicolaidou embraced the academic tenets that came with Lucien Simon's post at one of the western mainstream centre of arts. Nicolaidou's practice includes a range of influences, styles, media and techniques. There is an obvious preference for painting with oil and particular employment of a specific shade of red that she was noted for using in her work.<sup>144</sup> Such employment is shown in *Ecstasy* and *The Good Fruits of Earth*, (c. 1933-36), fig. 14. Here, a woman appears in a long white sleeveless dress, embracing a young girl in a vivid red dress. The young girl is holding in one hand a basket containing fruit, while with the other arm she embraces the older woman. The obscured abstract background emphasises the

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<sup>144</sup> Aristides Koudounaris stated that artist Adamantios Diamantis was impressed by the red colour of Nicolaidou's paintings (see Koudounaris interview).

aesthetics of the symbolic representation of colours and the relationship of the two women.

Nicolaidou's images of Cypriot women challenge the British stereotypical representation of Cypriot women wearing specifically Greek garments and employed in various chores. The choice of clothes in *The Good Fruits of the Earth* and *Ecstasy* (pink dress and red coat with white fur), along with the girls' hairstyles and makeup, reveals a fashionable representation of the Cypriot 'woman' that is nothing like those offered by British or male Greek Cypriot artists. Here, women are presented in 'ecstasy', distancing themselves from traditional trends and experiencing pleasurable activities outside the domestic sphere.

While the majority of men's representations repeatedly present Cyprus and its people as traditional (as I will discuss later with regard to Adamantios Diamantis's work), Nicolaidou combines both tradition and modernism in one composition. Her role as an 'insider' – a young Greek Cypriot woman – but also an 'outsider' – an artist returned to Cyprus after experiencing European trends and life – is obvious in her representations of Cyprus. Nicolaidou's practice is influenced by European trends but is employed in the representation of localised themes. We see in her practice a tendency towards symbolism in representing women during colonialism in both indoor and outdoor spaces.

While Nicolaidou was not the only artist working in the colonial period, she was the only one to advocate her position as an active professional woman artist in colonial Cyprus. Nicolaidou became a symbol of women's emancipation, and a representative of the first generation of Cypriot women artists who emerged under British Rule. Arguably, her 1937 self-exile and ensuing absence from the Cypriot art scene left a big question mark regarding the impact her work could have had on Cypriot art if circumstances had been different. Undoubtedly, Nicolaidou's legacy is significant not only because she is a pioneering professional woman artist, but also – and moreover – because her practice offers substantial records of women's position in colonial Cyprus.

The paintings that have been examined in this chapter are representations of Cyprus, influenced by ideas of gender and culture, by both British and Greek Cypriot artists. It is a fact that during colonialism Cyprus faced major social changes that became the starting point for Cypriots' cultural awakening. This is clear in the work of Nicolaidou, who, as I suggested, represented in her practice the changes that Cypriot customs were undergoing alongside the new lifestyle adopted by women during the period. However, this cultural change was never shown in any of the British representations of Cyprus. On the contrary, the British persisted in representing the idea of the united 'Cypriot nation', something that was not depicted in the Greek Cypriots' work of the period.

Moreover, the fact that British artists always presented Greek and Turkish people together mirrors the colonial strategy of fostering a single Cypriot identity. This was mostly associated with the British point of view that there was only one *simple* difference between Cypriots – their religion:

The difference between such as are called respectively Turks and Greeks is often simply a difference of creed. [...] Whatever they call themselves, Cypriots in the main they are, and it will be well for them, at least, under their present impartial Government, to remain content to be so, and turn a deaf ear to interested Hellenizing agitators.<sup>145</sup>

The differences between the two ethnic groups were much more complicated than the British considered. Later events will show that it was not a simple matter of religion: Cyprus' politics were associated with a prevailing nationalism that the British failed to acknowledge. Clearly, the British never succeeded in developing the idea of the 'Cypriot nation'. To the contrary, neither Greeks nor Turks ever accepted the 'Cypriot nation' that the British imagined. Each nation had its own 'motherland', which was never Britain, no matter Cyprus' status as a British colony.

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<sup>145</sup> Solsten, Eric. *Cyprus: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1991, p. 22.

In fact the British policy later changed to a 'divide and rule' strategy, encouraging the two communities to develop hostile relations and conflicts with one another. However, the conflict was as much against the British as it was against each other. In 1931 the first Greek Cypriot revolt against British rule took place: the revolt spread all over Cyprus, with all cities and villages holding anti-colonial demonstrations. The British refusal to accredit Cyprus self-determination and union with Greece resulted in the genesis of EOKA, an anti-colonial nationalist organisation that aimed, through an armed campaign, to liberate Cyprus and unify it with Greece.

## Chapter 2

### Greek Cypriot Women Artists, the Image of Woman and the National Liberation Struggle 1955-59

#### Introduction

On my return to Cyprus the first thing I did was ask my brother Yiangos to make me a member of the organisation whose name I did not even know [...] But he laughed at the idea of including women in EOKA. I begged him but in vain [...] He [...] told me [...]: 'We don't need women for the time being'. I was not daunted by this initial setback. I wanted to work for the liberation of my country and nothing would stand in the way of that decision.

(Helenitsa Seraphim Loizou, EOKA Area Commander)<sup>146</sup>

Chapter 2 examines Greek Cypriot women artists' associations with the national liberation struggle. While throughout the struggle women artists' career patterns remained the same as in the earlier period, women's activities in relation to the struggle shifted dramatically toward political acts. Rosemary Ridd and Helen Callaway point out that in times of conflict, 'when an entire community is directly affected by public or institutionalised political goals, the lives of men and [...] women become more politically focused; but for women this experience can be the more intense when they encounter [...] the male domain'.<sup>147</sup>

In exploring how women experienced the period of the national struggle and the conditions of making politicised art that associates women with the struggle, I will argue that women artists employed two different strategies in representing the struggle. First, I refer to a direct strategy of representing Enosis (Greek for Union)

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<sup>146</sup> Loizou, Elenitsa. *The Cyprus Liberation Struggle 1955-1959 Through the Eyes of a Woman E.O.K.A Area Commander*. Nicosia: Epiphaniou Publications, 1999, p. 38.

<sup>147</sup> Ridd, Rosemary and Callaway, Helen. *Caught up in Conflict: Women's Response to Political Strife*. Houndmills, London: Macmillan Education, 1986, p. 1.

as a gendered struggle. Such a strategy is, I argue, employed by Loukia Nicolaidou in *Enosis – A Dream for Cyprus*, which I am comparing to the work of the male artist Naghi Bey in order to analyse the gendered territories of Enosis. The practice of Lenia Saveriadou is also part of this direct politicised strategy – particularly her artwork *The Lion of EOKA*, which I am examining as part of the discussion of national loss and trauma.

A second strategy of women artists which I am discussing is art practice produced as an indirect approach towards the struggle. I am referring to this strategy as the ‘kitchen struggle’. I shall discuss the ways in which, during this period, images of the house embodied highly politicised venues due to the conditions of curfew and the secret domestic resistance offered by women. An example of such a strategy is found in the painting of Pallouriotisa houses produced by artist Eleni Chariclidou, which provides a new perspective on indoor anti-colonial activities. While some women were active members of EOKA (Greek for ‘National Organisation of Cypriot Struggle’), other women adapted to the conditions of the struggle and assisted the resistance from a more private condition. As Ridd and Callaway argue, ‘where [...] women do not appear to step out their domestic orientation in times of conflict, we may glimpse instances of their political powers, sometimes in covert, sometimes in symbolic forms’.<sup>148</sup>

Critical to my argument is the idea that women artists are making art in a territory in which the image of woman has become nationalised, as the stereotypical form of understanding nation, state and the relationship between Cyprus and Greece.<sup>149</sup> Thus, male artists’ work is used strategically in the *Demonstrations* section to discuss women’s reproductive role and symbolic association with the nation-state. I argue that the idea of the nation and state is a gendered visual concept and therefore analyse the work of male artists Takis Frangoudis, Christoforos Savvas

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<sup>148</sup> Ridd and Callaway, *Caught up in Conflict: Women's Response to Political Strife*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>149</sup> See Introduction for more details on women’s association with nationalism as biological and symbolical reproducers.

and George Georgiou, whose visuals offer a politicised reading through which to understand women and gender discourses in colonial Cyprus.

In arguing the obvious – that the struggle, like all national struggles, was gendered, under male domination – I shall point out that the struggle offered women the opportunity to renegotiate their roles and promote societal change. Clearly, this change was not radical and did not occur overnight, but, the struggle became an outlet through which women could shift from passivity to activity. Women's resistance through the 'kitchen struggle' captures the experience of emancipation in Cyprus.

EOKA, was seen, according to Stavros Panteli, as:

A chance to fight not only for national freedom but for social justice. Although EOKA was almost entirely a right-wing nationalist-led movement it had a proletarian base because it was seen to be carrying on an anti-imperialistic struggle.<sup>150</sup>

EOKA held together the struggle for national self-determination and Enosis with Greece. As Panteli concludes, 'EOKA was able to wage a fierce armed struggle against overwhelming odds only because of the mass support it received from the Greek Cypriot people'.<sup>151</sup>

Very little is known about women's presence in the struggle: at its end, the majority of women fighters retreated into anonymity. The definition of the struggle as a space in which women's role is not given due prominence can be understood as an indication of endangered masculinity within the years of the anti-colonial revolt. Several Cypriot women scholars emphasise that women's roles in the national struggle have rarely been given prominence in addressing issues of gender roles in social practices within political discourses. As Floya Anthias points out, 'none of the accolades given to ex-EOKA fighters during the post-independence period

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<sup>150</sup> Panteli, Stavros. *A History of Cyprus: From Foreign Domination to Troubled Independence*. London: East-West Publications, 2000, p. 230.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

were received by women. Significantly, only as mothers of fallen heroes (like Afxendiou and Pallikarides), were women publicly acclaimed'.<sup>152</sup>

However, the success of the EOKA was also dependent on the 'rear-guard' activities of women who stepped out of their domestic orientation in times of conflict and whose activities proved to be crucial for the duration of the struggle. In this chapter I shall discuss the conditions of struggle that provided women an outlet through which to transcend local boundaries and gain societal change and emancipation. In doing so, I will analyse visual works that embody women's political power, in both visible and symbolic forms.

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<sup>152</sup> Anthias, Floya. 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', op. cit., p. 159.



## **A Gendered Struggle: Enosis**

Just as the national struggle cannot happen without unity at the leadership level, neither can it occur without unity within the organization. The struggle will include all social strata among the people, from the worker to the aristocrat and from the poorest farmer to the propertied. It will include boys and girls, women in the factories and in public offices and banks and house-wives in the suburbs and apartments buildings.

(What is the National Liberation Front and What Does it Want)<sup>153</sup>

*Enosis – A Dream for Cyprus* (c. 1956), fig. 15, was produced by the self-exiled artist Loukia Nicolaidou shortly after the outbreak of the national liberation struggle. Despite the fact that Nicolaidou was a permanent resident of England at the time, the work reveals her engagement with the national struggle and her very own urge for Enosis. Since her 1937 self-exile, Nicolaidou had lived in London, where she married renowned Greek ship-owner Ioanni Vasiliou and gradually left her promising artistic career. *Enosis – A Dream for Cyprus*, a work that provides a gendered account of the national struggle, forms part of her last production.

*Enosis* is probably one of the most insightful and expressive visuals of Nicolaidou's career, representing two female figures in the fore scene and a group of people in its background. The work is composed on canvas with neutral colour shades of brown, black, white and green. Nicolaidou applies thick oil pigments to outline the two figures while large brushstrokes detach the two scenes and define the background. The subject-theme of two female figures is used to depict the ideology of Enosis in the sort of symbolic form that was often employed by nineteenth-century French Post-Impressionist artists.

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<sup>153</sup> Quoted in Hart, Janice. *New Voices in the Nation: Women and the Greek Resistance 1941-1964*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 137.

Significantly, the work was developed and created in absence; Nicolaidou produced *Enosis* while being on foreign terrain, living in the nation which Greek Cypriots were fighting against. As expected, British imperialists perceived the struggle as an act of terrorism; British propaganda came into play and a State of Emergency was declared in Cyprus.<sup>154</sup> Nicolaidou's affiliation with the Greek community was the main factor in her decision to become politically involved by illustrating the struggle in *Enosis*.

Nicolaidou's *Enosis* can be understood within the context of her commitment to the struggle and the involvement, particularly, of Cypriot women. To highlight this, I suggest that Nicolaidou constructed in *Enosis* a distinctive feminine approach to representing the struggle. The image is structured similarly to *At the Fields* (1933); both have very clear background and foreground scenes. The foreground of *Enosis* is taken up by the representation of two women: a dark-skinned, masculine woman embraces a young, fair-skinned girl. I suggest here that Nicolaidou's structuring of the scene is motivated by the idea of Enosis: the dark-skinned woman's face looks like an ancient Greek statue, suggesting a symbolic icon of Greece, while the fair-skinned woman has the face of a young girl and appears very fragile, just like Cyprus political/national state.

The two central figures engage the viewer with their intimate bond: 'motherland' Greece holds the hand of 'daughter' Cyprus. Nicolaidou employs here strategies used in her earlier practice: as in *At The Fields* Enosis' girl is in a sensual pose (again similar to Ingres's *Odalisques*) her face is extremely pale, reminiscent of 1933's *Ecstasy*. As in *At The Fields*, the background's image consists of a group of people: women, children and an old man are presented in the auburn, abstract terrain. While women in the background are presented wearing outfits that were traditional in 1950s Cyprus, the two key figures are presented in white tunics

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<sup>154</sup> See Solsten, Eric. *Cyprus: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1991 and Panteli, Stavros. *A History of Cyprus: From Foreign Domination to Troubled Independence*. London: East-West Publications, 2000.

(possibly a reference to the Ancient Greek tunic) emphasising their function as bearer icons of Enosis.

Nicolaidou's *Enosis* privileges women's involvement in EOKA not only as supporters but, most importantly, as active members, while indicating their bravery and ability to be 'more trustworthy and less talkative than men' throughout the struggle.<sup>155</sup> The fact that the British undervalued women's worth gave them the opportunity to participate; throughout the struggle women were employed as couriers as they were less likely to be body-searched while ferrying confidential correspondence and guns, writing slogans on public walls and participating in hazardous missions. Despite the fact that women's involvement in EOKA was largely overlooked, women's involvement can be found on all sides of the national struggle. Generally, their role has been associated with the idea of Greek motherhood within the nationalised Spartan adage 'Η ΤΑΝ 'Η ΕΠΙ ΤΑΣ' (literally translated as 'come back with your shield or on your shield'), a farewell offered to Spartan young by their mothers before leaving for war. The farewell reveals the significance of national victory and the society's abhorrence of any cowardly escape.

The Greek Cypriot mothers of the struggle gave similar farewells: their attitude towards the loss of their sons recalls the Greek mothers whose sons fought in 1821 against the Ottomans and in 1940 against the Italians during the Second World War. As Joan Connelly points out, in ancient Greece women were represented and participated in public affairs in ways that were considered by themselves and others as vital to the survival of their community.<sup>156</sup> This is particularly noticeable in Nicolaidou's *Enosis*, where the emblematic posture of the dark-skinned woman recalls the aspect of Greek motherhood blessing her Cypriot children, urging them not to flee but to stay and fight for Enosis.

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<sup>155</sup> Dighenis, Grivas. *Guerilla Warfare and EOKA's Struggle: a Politico-Military History*. London: Longmans, 1964, p. 143.

<sup>156</sup> Quoted in Ranchod-Nilsson, Sita. and Tetreault, M. Ann. *Women, States, and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation*. London: Routledge, 2000, p. 7.

This interrelationship between motherhood, nationalism and gender relations is rendered visible in Nicolaidou's painting. I propose that the power of the visual lies in the evocative symbolic relationship between Greece and Cyprus that was predominantly emphasised in all Greek Cypriot textbooks of the period. This applies within the national framework of 'motherland': that is, the image of 'a Mother Greece, living and breathing through the soil of Greek land, waiting to embrace her lost child as she had so many other lost island children'.<sup>157</sup> Hence, it was in the name of this familiar bond and the long desired 'marvellous reunion with the mother from whom they were kept apart' that all Greek Cypriot fighters, including teenagers and children, participated in the struggle which their parents were often reluctant to play take an active part in.<sup>158</sup> It is interesting that the general perception of the lost children of mother (Greece) is that they are male as it is strongly linked to the religious iconography of Mary and her lost son.

That a woman artist produced a work related to Enosis with a particular approach is significant, since she is representing the struggle in opposition to its masculine character. Nicolaidou articulates a different vision of the struggle, a struggle that does not always have to take the form of armed battle. It is significant that Nicolaidou incorporates in the background of *Enosis* a group of people. With this, I suggest that Nicolaidou is acknowledging the participation of a group of people who are not often active, nor expected to be active, in a conflict: elderly people and women with children.

Indeed, Nicolaidou's group comprises women with children and an elderly couple, one of whom carries a walking stick. However, as previously discussed, Enosis was supported by the majority of Greek Cypriots, whether active or non-active members of the struggle. Some people were involved in EOKA through 'passive resistance', which was executed in various forms. Initially, EOKA urged 'passive residence' via British economic sabotage in order to show to outsiders that the

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<sup>157</sup> Bryant, Rebecca. 'An Education in Honor: Patriotism and Rebellion in Greek Cypriot Schools', in Calotychos, Vangelis, *Cyprus and its People: Nation, Identity and Experience in an Unimaginable Community, 1955-1997*. Oxford: Westview Press, 1998, pp. 63-64.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

struggle's aim was widely accepted by all Cypriots and that this was not a 'case of fanatical extremists', as had been stated by British propaganda.<sup>159</sup> Grivas described the boycott of British goods and its consequences:

This was a powerful weapon which reinforced and supplemented the armed struggle. I know of no other case in which this method was [used] on such a wide scale and with so effective organisation, except in India under Mahatma Ghandi. My principal object in organising the boycott was [...] to make a moral impression on the British people [...] It is a fact that, as the result of our passive resistance, the Cyprus Government became bankrupt.<sup>160</sup>

In exploring the dynamic relationship between social and gender relations during EOKA, women's positions in the period must be considered. Nicolaidou's *Enosis* accounts for the female presence throughout the struggle. I argue that the image's site in an outdoors location functions to remind the viewer that in the 1950s the majority of women were situated in urban areas while their lives were continuously marginalised. While traditional gender policies imposed on women specific duties within the domestic sphere, or outdoors, working in the fields, a significant change was undertaken simultaneously to the national struggle. This change was an acceptance that their roles changed to meet the needs of the struggle, something that was for the most part left unrecorded both by history and by the patriarchal ideology of the struggle.

Enosis' cultural expression of 'freedom from British rule' and 'Union with Motherland Greece' manifests an extended view of the movement's patriarchal ideology and was articulated 'most forcefully by right wing and chauvinist elements'.<sup>161</sup> Floya Anthias notes that EOKA fighters were 'in the main young

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<sup>159</sup> Friedman, Herbert and Paschalides Ioannis (23<sup>rd</sup> June 2007). 'Cyprus 1954-59', Website, available from: <<http://www.psywarrior.com/cyprus.html>>10<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

<sup>160</sup> Dighenis, Grivas. *Guerilla Warfare and EOKA's Struggle: a Politico-Military History*, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>161</sup> Anthias, Floya. 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', op. cit., p. 159.

Cypriot men and women from both rural and urban backgrounds who were fired by the Enosis ideology'.<sup>162</sup> The roles of women as wives, mothers and caretakers of the home were changed by the active political intervention of a generation of women who fought for national liberation and won the right to engage in political action that transcended local boundaries and captured the experience of emancipation.

It is significant that the struggle was a gendered one, and the fact that it excluded women in the first place is striking. What is also striking is that women were not encouraged to form female guerrilla groups or 'go into hiding if necessary'. The masculine structure of the struggle endured even in post-struggle times; at the end of the struggle the majority of women fighters remained in anonymity and faced societal apathy toward their involvement in the struggle.<sup>163</sup> Given the masculine formation of the struggle, it is not surprising that women's role in EOKA is rarely given prominence. Only one book – written by Elenitsa Seraphim Loizou, the first woman EOKA area commander – emphasises women's role in the struggle.<sup>164</sup> Colonel Grivas writes in his memoirs about entrusting of crucial tasks to women all over Cyprus and adds that none of them ever let him down or betrayed the struggle.<sup>165</sup>

As the underground struggle progressed, women began to undertake more radical activities and carried out hazardous missions that were punishable by torture, long periods of imprisonment or even the death sentence. Women's role in EOKA was pivotal for the reason that their involvement had refigured social sanctions and helped them gain a kind of independence from the patriarchal nuclear family. Their

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> A case in point is Nitsa Xatzigeorgiou who was among the most active women in the struggle, assisted in many missions and suffered greatly in the detention camp without giving way under brutal interrogations. Xatzigeorgiou died young, at the age of 37. The state did not grant a ceremonial tomb for her or any other woman who participated in the struggle.

<sup>164</sup> Loizou was responsible for the sabotage that damaged the military installations at the Dekelia military base. After a year of camp detention – she was betrayed – Loizou was involved in other missions.

<sup>165</sup> According to various testimonies informers were all men, who gave way under interrogation or to chose to claim the British rewards.

role as foils for EOKA fighters would often require them to accompany men into the mountains or secret hide-outs; as Floya Anthias writes, 'in the context of Cypriot values this jeopardised their sexual honour since the company of strange men was frowned upon'.<sup>166</sup> In essence, this meant that once a woman joined EOKA and was sworn to total secrecy she could not account for her actions, even to family members. This period saw widespread societal changes first to social interactions and then to domestic regulations. Women's relationship with the patriarchal order of domesticity was in flux and the 'moral code of honour' was significantly destabilised. While before the 1950s the majority of Greek Cypriot women were 'legitimately' allowed in the public sphere only for specific duties, during the struggle years, women gained independence and the ability to act individually without needing to seek male permission.

Women who joined EOKA participated in some of the most dangerous activities in the struggle: ferrying guns and messages in their underclothes, writing slogans of protest and defiance on public walls,<sup>167</sup> they would receive the weapons used by EOKA fighters after an attack and some would actually throw bombs or participate in demonstrations. It is therefore highly significant that women were involved and had a political voice in the making of the national liberation struggle. Despite the gendered economies of the struggle, many women took an active role in the resistance that proved empowering for women who had grown up in a pre-struggle world of narrowly defined gender roles.

Unsurprisingly, given Cyprus' small population, EOKA affected the entire island. Where women were reluctant to join the struggle, we find the kind of politicised action embedded also in individual actions that I will discuss later as the 'kitchen struggle' – that is a resistance made at home. Naturally, EOKA's collective action had provoked international responses, some of which were sympathetic towards

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<sup>166</sup> Anthias, Floya. 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>167</sup> For example, *We want Greece even if we shall eat rocks, Greece-Cyprus-Enosis, We were born and will die Greeks* [Translation mine].

the struggle. Enosis' political ideology and its anti-colonial episodes had an intense impact on 1950s art, not only by Cypriot artists but, moreover, by foreigners.

Mohammed Naghi Bey (1888–1956), an artist originally from Egypt became associated with Cypriot culture upon his marriage to a Greek Cypriot in 1939. His interest in Cyprus' politics resulted in his own representation of *Enosis* (c.1955), fig. 16, a work that is very different from Nicolaidou's painting. To explore the different representations through which each artist negotiates Enosis I shall compare and analyse their visual language in presenting Enosis as gendered struggle. Nicolaidou produced *Enosis* with a particular approach, defying the conventions of the Cypriot masculine economy, in which the struggle was circulated as a symbol of male power. Naghi, to the contrary, structured *Enosis* as an exclusively masculine state, emphasising the character of the struggle as an armed political venture.

Naghi approaches his subject with rather aggressive, strong colours and an Impressionist technique of short and thick oil colours. Naghi's structure of *Enosis* is prominently a male-orientated one. This is obvious from the group of 15 men, all representing people engaged in Enosis in the period. The central scene is composed of the monumental image of Archbishop Makarios, presented in a ceremonial outfit, holding an imperial sceptre and a red tunic. On the right side of the image are depicted seven members of the Archbishop's Council; standing on the Archbishop's right side is General Grivas, holding a gun. Naghi's representation of Enosis is split in two. On one side – the side faced by Makarios – seven elite men are depicted in smart outfits with ties and spectacles. On the other side –Grivas' side – five men are shown, one of whom is young. This represents the increasing number of ordinary people engaged in EOKA.

Naghi visualises the nature of the struggle and its two leaders, Archbishop Makarios and Colonel Grivas: the two figures together form a powerful relationship that incorporated militarism, nationalism and religion in the struggle. Makarios, who embraced both, a clergy role as Archbishop and a role as a national leader of the



Greek Cypriot community, was initially reserved and sceptical regarding the violent side of the struggle; in fact, he preferred a much more tactful approach such as public plebiscite and petitions.<sup>168</sup> Colonel Grivas, however, was confident that only violent action would lead to Enosis.

Naghi considered himself as a historical painter; therefore, his representation of *Enosis* is based on what he experienced when visiting Cyprus. In a 1955 letter, he wrote:

I consider myself a painter of History. For this purpose I went to Cyprus in search of inspiration from the heroic struggle of its people. There I painted *Enosis*. This work is chiefly the result of my unshakeable belief in the right of the Cyprus people and the certainty of its final triumph.<sup>169</sup>

Naghi represents Enosis as a gendered struggle, emphasising the general public view of the national struggle as a masculine one carried out exclusively by men. I will refer again here to Cynthia Enloe's remark that nationalism has 'typically sprung from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope'.<sup>170</sup> Thus, I consider that Naghi's idea of a gendered struggle is shown by the presence of the aggressive group of men, while the symbolic presence of the Greek flag and the olive tree emphasises the hope for a male 'final triumph' of the national struggle.

Interestingly, no women are present within the group in Naghi's *Enosis*. The only female presence is found in the background image of the icon of Madonna holding Christ. The image of the Madonna recalls the representation of the Madonna in Greek Orthodox Church: it evokes the Byzantine tradition in terms of an icon, where the Madonna is represented in a cloak with the infant Jesus in her arms. The maternal image of the Madonna evokes the relationship between EOKA and

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<sup>168</sup> Foley, Christopher. *Island in Revolt*. London: Longmans, 1962.

<sup>169</sup> Quoted in Severis, Rita. *Travelling Artists in Cyprus 1700-1960*, op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>170</sup> Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas, Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, op. cit., p. 44.

the Orthodox Church (Archbishop Makarios was one of its leaders). Moreover, for a Greek Cypriot audience of the time it re-evokes patriarchy, particularly due to the fact that only as mothers of fallen heroes were women publicly acclaimed. Therefore, this image is strongly linked to the religious iconography of Mary and her lost son and women's symbolic association to nationalism through the symbol of Madonna.

While women gained new political awareness during the struggle and some did attempt to sustain the struggle, there is still a strong association of women's symbolic participation to the struggle. Maria Roussou describes the model of *Panagia* (Virgin Mary) and other female saints, which society and the Orthodox Church encourage Greek Cypriot women to follow the symbolic example of, as representations of 'women as chaste, loving, and invariably sacrificing themselves to their husbands, their children, to God and society'.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, the reference to Madonna as mother not only defines the association of Enosis with religion; moreover, it also unfolds the predominant icon of women as mothers of the fighters, willing to offer their beloved sons to the motherland.

The visual approaches taken by both artists consist of a clear realist aesthetic in representing the collective nature of Enosis. While Nicolaidou chooses a feminine perspective and a rather calm setting of neutral colours, Naghi employs vivid colours and aggressive gestures in representing the political ideology of the period. Significantly, both images transmit the visual language of nationalism in Cyprus. The definition of the struggle within the visual language of gendered economics is significant for understanding women as users of public spaces in colonial Cyprus.

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<sup>171</sup> Roussou, Maria. War in Cyprus: Patriarchy and the Penelope Myth', op. cit., p. 31.

## Demonstrations

Can we confine the productions of images, symbols and legends solely to the realm of ideology and see their controversies as no more than a 'deliberate political mystification'? Or should we enter into the sensibility and the collective mentalities of the activists in order to uncover the meaning and the power of the 'legend'?<sup>172</sup>

The 1950s were marked by the emergence of a 'whole cultural movement and moment'<sup>173</sup> in which politics, art and society were all connected to the collective action of Enosis. In fact, Enosis introduced a modern social interaction; Cyprus 'saw the rise of the social movement in the sense of a set of people who voluntarily and deliberately commit themselves to a shared identity, a unifying belief, a common program, and a collective struggle to realize that program'.<sup>174</sup> Consequently, the pursuit of Cyprus' liberty established a common ground that proved to be crucial for the struggle's endurance. In the name of Enosis Cypriot fighters commenced their anti-colonial struggle and gave Cypriots the impetus to strike, to hold assemblies, to demonstrate and to carry out sabotage activities.

*Student Demonstration during the Liberation Struggle*, fig. 17, was created in 1956 by the artist Takis Frangoudes (1901-1978) after his graduation from the painting course at the Superior School of Fine Arts in Athens. The work features a crowd of figures, painted with strong elements of Cubism and simplified brush lines in oil colours of blue, white and brown. The image is constructed through a visual code of Enosis incorporated in the representation of a mass of students that dominates the composition. Students are represented as especially active, all positioned in battle poses while holding stones, bottles, flags and the slogan 'Long Live Enosis'. I propose that Frangoudes deliberately represents students as abstract geometrical figures without facial characteristics in order to construct his demonstration as an un-gendered one. What is particularly significant here is his

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<sup>172</sup> Hart, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

employment of colour: shades of blue and white cover virtually everything, from students' school uniforms to the background's abstract composition. When the painting is looked at carefully, it is clear that the students' juxtaposition forms a massive Greek flag; students are aligned so that those dressed in white shirts form the cross, whereas the ones with blue shirts outline the flag as a whole.

Clearly, Frangoudis' work connotes the collective action of EOKA which was in large part adopted by students in the name of Enosis. That Enosis evolved into a highly politicised concept challenging social-political happenings is a fact that embodied Cyprus' social awakening during colonialism. In the image there is no element of British presence. However, it is quite obvious that the British are the factor that students are acting against – the British are now the 'other', that which the students' demonstrations aim to overthrow in order to achieve Enosis. In Frangoudis' demonstration the mass manifestation is represented at its peak, at the specific stage of collision between students and the British colonial force, accounting for students' commitment to sustain Enosis.

It is not surprising that students formed the core of EOKA's anti-colonial demonstrations. Soon after the United Nations of Cyprus' request for a referendum about Enosis in 1954, students were the first to spontaneously demonstrate.<sup>175</sup> While students' parents were reluctant to join the struggle, the students themselves were effectively 'organised en masse' by their teachers and priests, who 'had worked closely for years to prepare the groundwork for such an uprising'.<sup>176</sup> In fact, Greek Cypriot schools played the most significant role in the formation of 'young patriots' who, through their 'moral discipline' had the 'willingness to sacrifice and obey' and formed the 'most powerful weapon in the hands of EOKA'.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Foley, Christopher. *Island in Revolt*, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>176</sup> Bryant, Rebecca. op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

Unlike other decolonizing countries<sup>178</sup>, Cyprus did not suffer from any extreme social-economic problems that could be used as a reason to revolt against British rule.<sup>179</sup> It was on the whole the stimulus of a gendered idea on 'the level of romantic idealism' that developed the 'cliché that it is better to be poor with Mother Greece than rich with Stepmother England'.<sup>180</sup> Hence, EOKA leader Colonel Grivas ingeniously called upon students, who 'were most prone to take risks and join a struggle for purely patriotic and ideological reasons'.<sup>181</sup> It is not surprising that Grivas called on young people in the struggle, since he had experienced the loyalty of a youth movement during the Greek occupation in Second War World and the civil war in Greece.<sup>182</sup> For Grivas, the use of 'passionate youth' was of prime importance:

It is among the young people that one finds audacity, the love of taking risks and the thirst for great and difficult achievements. It was to the young of Cyprus that I made my main appeal and called on to give their all to the struggle [...] I assigned young people the task of forming groups of saboteurs, the manufacture of explosives, and the supervision and execution of orders concerning passive resistance [...] Schoolboys between the ages of fourteen and seventeen undertook dangerous missions such as the blowing up of aircraft at the British air bases, the laying of mines and the blowing up of police stations.<sup>183</sup>

However, Frangoudes' image does not simply illustrate the 'legend' of Enosis. I argue that the work itself is a political construction questioning the national identity of Cyprus. Clearly, the work speaks of a national identity based in a collective

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<sup>178</sup> Algeria, Russia and Cuba for example.

<sup>179</sup> Markides, Kyriacos. *The Rise and Fall of the Cyprus Republic*. London: Yale University Press, 1977, p. 17.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Dighenis, Grivas. and Foley, Christopher. *The Memoirs of General Grivas*. London: Longmans, 1964, p. 28.

<sup>183</sup> Dighenis, Grivas. *Guerilla Warfare and EOKA's Struggle: a Politico-Military History*, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

Greek spirit caged by imperialism and its disciplined rules. As Bryant explains, students 'were trained to fight for an ideal: not simply an ideal of justice, or for freedom, or for a better life, but an ideal of *enosis*, which encompassed all of these'.<sup>184</sup>

Undoubtedly, students were among the main activists who changed the political situation in Cyprus. EOKA's first major demonstration took place on 24 May 1955, when some seven hundred students launched a hail of stones at the British soldiers. As Grivas notes in his memoirs:

After that, nothing could hold the schools back. They learned to act as one in blind obedience to my orders and develop into one of the chief factors in our victory. The British were baffled to find that the enemy throwing bombs was a sixteen-year-old schoolboy, or that those distributing revolutionary leaflets were ten-year-olds from the primary schools.<sup>185</sup>

Throughout the struggle hundreds of students demonstrated against the British and, on many occasions, participated in dangerous missions. During the last two years of EOKA's struggle (1958-59), the periodical 'I Agoge ton Neon' (translated as 'The Training of the Young') was published for a readership of elementary school students. In one of its articles, titled 'We will acquire our freedom', the anonymous journalist refers to the history of Hellenism:

Do you understand what [history] will say after so many raids, so many conquests, so many vicissitudes will not ease us from the face of the earth, as have been so many other peoples, but we will continue to exist as Greeks, to speak the same language that our great forefathers spoke?<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Bryant, Rebecca. op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>185</sup> Dighenis and Foley. *The Memoirs of General Grivas*, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>186</sup> Bryant, Rebecca. *Imagining the Modern: the Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, p. 160.

EOKA has been described by some former members as not '[...] simply a struggle born of the insults, condescension and mismanagement of the British, but [...] a struggle rooted in a past which made their victory inevitable'.<sup>187</sup> This was apparent to the British on their arrival, when Greek Cypriots welcomed the new rule in the hope that it would soon lead to Enosis, as had been the case the Ionian Islands. In contrast, however, the British not only ignored the Cypriots' demands, but endeavoured to 'de-Hellenize' the Cypriots through a number of methods:

The prohibition of Greek maps which included Cyprus; pictures of the Greek royal family or other Greek personalities; the teaching of the Greek national anthem; the celebration of Greek independence day; the use of the Greek flag; and the use generally of anything which bore the blue and white colours of Greece and could be construed as symbolic of Greek nationalism.<sup>188</sup>

Throughout the struggle 30,000 British soldiers were assigned to combat EOKA and had attempted to 'dehellenize' the Greek Cypriots:

[...] many schools were closed because of the 'illegal' activities of the students, such as the raising of the Greek flag. When police and military measures failed to extinguish the sentiments and sympathies of the people for enosis, many teachers, students and other citizens were imprisoned or were detained in barbed-wire-surrounded camps without trials.<sup>189</sup>

For this reason, English was introduced in Greek schools, despite objections from both Church and Greek Cypriot leaders. It is interesting to compare this with the experience of other colonies, which, 'absorbed, subverted, and reinvented the

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<sup>187</sup> Bryant, Rebecca. 'An Education in Honor: Patriotism and Rebellion in Greek Cypriot Schools', op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>189</sup> Spyridakis, Constantinos. *A Brief History of Cyprus*. Nicosia: Zavallis Press LTD, 1974, p. 176.

cultures of the colonizers in order to use them as weapons'.<sup>190</sup> In contrast, Greek Cypriots accepted this only after English-language knowledge proved to be an economic necessity.<sup>191</sup> However, during their demonstrations students boosted the national spirit, with their persistent raising of Greek flags while shouting nationalist statements such as 'Long Live Enosis' and 'Greece-Cyprus-Enosis'. In addition to the Enosis demonstrations, students burned their English textbooks in order to demonstrate their patriotic detestation of the colonial rule.<sup>192</sup> Many of the students became later members of EOKA; although they were labelled as 'terrorists' and cited in the wanted list, their only aspiration was to live in a liberated country, and this became possible through the struggle.

Frangoudes' *Student Demonstration* emphasises the widespread national force of the struggle. The painting imposes its connection to national identity through the dynamic of colour and its shades of blue and white, both resembling the Greek flag. The rise of Greek nationalism was for the most part denoted through a national 'spectacle' and the use of national fetish symbols. Anne McClintock points out that nationalism takes shape 'through the visible, ritual organisation of fetishes objects – flags, uniforms [...] anthems [...] as well as through the organisation of collective fetish spectacle – in team sports, military displays, mass rallies, the myriad forms of popular culture and so on'.<sup>193</sup>

Such fetish objects within the artistic framework serve to convey the Greek nationalism of Cyprus. References to Greek flags in artworks evoke to the national character and/or reveal the conflict over the flags, given that the flying of the Greek flags was strictly forbidden. This serves to mock the absurd rules imposed by the

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<sup>190</sup> Bryant, Rebecca. 'An Education in Honor: Patriotism and Rebellion in Greek Cypriot Schools', op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>191</sup> Persianis, Panayiotis. *Church and State in Cyprus Education*. Nicosia: Violaris Printing Works, 1978, p. 167.

<sup>192</sup> Bryant, Rebecca. 'An Education in Honor: Patriotism and Rebellion in Greek Cypriot Schools', op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>193</sup> McClintock, Anne. 'No Longer in Future Heaven: Nationalism, Gender and Race', op. cit., p. 274.



British.<sup>194</sup> Petra Theodotou suggests four more national ‘fetishised’ objects: EOKA’s leaflets, stones, hearts and blood.<sup>195</sup> The first two symbolise the articulate force of Enosis; the other two connote ‘notions of the purity of blood, [a] quasi-religious sacrifice and a nationalist ‘blood and soil’ mentality is also salient’. Looking closer at the *Student Demonstration during the Liberation Struggle*, we see two such objects in the hands of students: stones and bottles. The power of Enosis is embodied in the students’ possession of Greek flags and panels holding the inscription ‘Long Live Enosis’. At this point I propose that the use of ‘anti-fetishised’ objects play a crucial part in the consideration of the conflict and Greek nationalism in Cyprus. Such objects, imposed by the British, include penalties (curfews, concentration camps and fines), masquerades (hooded informers working for the British) and the gallows. I suggest that all these objects together augmented anti-colonial sentiment and Cypriots’ faith in Enosis.

Similar to Frangoudis’s approach is Christoforos Savva’s<sup>196</sup> (1924-1968) *The Demonstration* (1955), fig. 18. Savva returned to Cyprus in 1954 after studying at St Martin’s School of Art in London and Andre Lhote’s Academy in Paris. Savva’s *Demonstration* is noticeably influenced by his French tutor’s Cubist work. Savva offers a close view of a demonstration scene, depicting the figures with abstract lines and shapes. There is a particular tendency to represent his main figures through geometric components of blue and brown oil colours. The image has a symmetrical composition in its representation of women demonstrating against the British. Here, the *Demonstration* is literally covered by representations of protesters, some of whom hold banners with inscriptions such as ‘Enosis’ and ‘Freedom to Prisoners’. Women are the only figures shown with a front view: the

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<sup>194</sup> Theodotou-Tournay, Petra. ‘The Empire Writes Back: Anti-colonial Nationalism in Costas Montis’ *Closed Doors* and Rodis Roufos’ *The Age of Bronze*’, in Hubert Faustmann and Nicos Peristianis (eds.). *Britain in Cyprus: Colonialism and Post-Colonialism 1878-2006*. Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2006, p. 376.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, p. 377.

<sup>196</sup> In 1960 Christoforos Savva founded the first gallery in Cyprus the *Apophysis Gallery*, with Welsh artist Glyn Hughes.

centralised scene shows a mother holding her toddler, while in the foreground scene another mother embraces her child.

I argue that the centralised image of the mother holding her child, both of them covered with a blue cloak, connotes to the bond between Greek nationalism and Church. The maternal image has a multifunctional aspect, reflecting women's participation in the national struggle that is similar to the Christian representation of Madonna's maternal cradling of Christ; women as mothers of the fighters, as supporters, as participants and as signifiers of the nation. The two central figures are the only ones represented with closed eyes; all other Cypriot figures have their eyes open. Savva's *Demonstration* reveals women's participation in the struggle: we find in Savva's image women at the front line, staring at the British soldiers, who are depicted as armed and faceless. The conflict is manifested intensely through the gaze of the two figures in the lower foreground, who stare at each other with dumb hatred: the armed soldier, with his arrogant posture, and the woman/mother, with 'fortitude and faith in the justice of her cause'.<sup>197</sup>

Both Frangoudis and Savva constructed in their images of demonstrations a powerful political visual assemblage against British rule. They both employ emotive visual language in order to convey the atmosphere of the conflict. While Frangoudis represents the student demonstration from a distance, employing nationalist symbols and colours, Savva represents a more realistic, politicised view of the demonstration, emphasising women's participation in the struggle. The demonstrations narrate the artists' experiences while negotiating the social-political conditions.

The role of the visual in the debate concerning women's participation in the struggle is clear: there was a definite female presence in the struggle, not only as support for the male fighters, but also as active members of society fighting for social justice. This presence is projected in both works; in Savva's case, women

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<sup>197</sup> Nikita, Eleni. *Christoforos Savva: His Life and Work*. Nicosia: Cultural Service, Ministry of Education, 1988, p. 45.

are shown as polarised between their struggle for national self-determination and their maternal role as the mothers of young martyrs.

Having discussed the role of demonstrations as part of the anti-colonial struggle, I will now move on to explore the notion of trauma and the approaches that artists employed to represent the national loss after the British restoration of law and order in Cyprus.

## National trauma and loss

EOKA's struggle was described as the 'reckoning between Cyprus and the mighty British Empire, a veritable David and Goliath conflict', in the words of Elenitza Seraphim Loizou, the first woman area commander in EOKA.<sup>198</sup> At the peak of the conflict, the British armed forces' presence in Cyprus numbered about 30,000 troops, in comparison with the 300 members of EOKA.

*British Lion and EOKA*, (c. 1955-59), fig. 19, produced during the anti-colonial struggle by artist Lenia Saveriadou (1901-1969), is one of the few works from EOKA's period of activity that have been preserved. Little is known of Saveriadou's life and career, whose work is probably missing in her hometown Famagusta.<sup>199</sup> She exhibited in 1957 at the Lyceum Famagusta Club and later in 1960 at the Forest Park and Ledra Palace Hotels. She was highly active at this time, motivated by the arrests of Greek Cypriot fighters. Her works from this period include *The Rounding of People*, which, similarly to *British Lion and EOKA*, visualises clear sympathy toward EOKA.

The *British Lion and EOKA* is a surrealist<sup>200</sup> vertical image. At the bottom of the image is a lion, with a white, four-level fountain containing fire attached to its head. Alongside the lion are three soldiers holding a large gun which is aimed at black stones: if we consider the EOKA sign on one stone, it becomes clear that the stones represent EOKA's fighters. These stones are aligned with lines that together form a path toward the top flame of the fountain. On the other side of the lion is a large hand holding a paper, on the top of which an eye is depicted. There is a paradox in the image, with various metaphors and symbolic objects. Similar to Surrealist works, Saveriadou constructs extraordinary juxtapositions of objects to

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<sup>198</sup> Loizou-Seraphim, Elenitza. *The Cyprus Liberation Struggle 1955-1959 Through the Eyes of a Woman E.O.K.A Area Commander*, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>199</sup> As will discuss in Chapter 4, artworks locate in North Cyprus are impossible to locate due to the 1974 war.

<sup>200</sup> I describe this image as 'surrealistic' as it adopts Surrealism's idea that 'one could combine inside the same frame, elements not normally found together to produce illogical and startling effects': Thomas Pynchon, *Slow Learner: Early Stories*, London: Cape 1984, p 20. I am aware that the main idea of the movement was associated with the use of dream analysis.

create a surreal absurdity. The gigantic lion and the other objects and soldiers are found in an environment of mountain and sea. Saveriadou's technique is simplified, using sharp lines of oil. Colours are orange, red, blue and yellow with a pale tones background that emphasises the presence of symbolic features.

Such features (flames, stones, the eye, and the lion's expression) give a surrealist character to the image, with strong metaphorical connotations. I consider that the flames recall the myth of the phoenix, the mythical bird that at the end of its life burns and is reborn from its ashes. Such symbolism has been extensively used in Greek history as a symbol of the perennial nature of Greek culture, especially when under foreign occupation. This image was probably produced in response to one of EOKA's leaflets which was hand-circulated at the time by young members. This particular leaflet, circulated in August 1958,<sup>201</sup> contains a drawing of a man who holds with one hand a lion's neck, while with his other hand he is trying to remove the lion's teeth. The black and white drawing offers explanation of the metaphor it contains: on the back of the man we find the inscription EOKA, whereas the lion has on its forehead the inscription Great Britain. The scene is in an outside setting, possibly near a seashore and a mountain. On the ground we see one of the lion's extracted teeth. Completing the scene is the leaflet's caption; in capital letters, 'I will extract them [the teeth] one by one'.<sup>202</sup>

Interestingly, Saveriadou's painting is very similar to that particular leaflet. Both scenes are presented against a similar background, with a similar subject-theme: the British represented by a lion, against EOKA. In Saveriadou's representation we find the British embodied by the furious lion, while the presence of EOKA is evident from the caption on the stones. I argue that such a metaphor reveals Saveriadou's engagement in the struggle, indicating that beyond the national trauma and loss of fighters she strongly supported EOKA's ideology. As evidence of this, we find the

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<sup>201</sup> Image found at Carter, David. (2008) 'Death of a Terrorist – Birth of a Legend: The Story of Gregoris Afxentiou', <http://britains-smallwars.com/cyprus/Davidcarter/manwhotalkedtogrivas/manwhotalkedtogrivas.html>

<sup>202</sup> Original caption in Greek, translation mine.

representations of national fetish objects like stones (symbolising EOKA) and the hand (symbolising the hand-distributed leaflets) that reinforced the national spirit to continue the fight against colonialism.

Greek Cypriots were virtually unarmed (especially at the beginning of the struggle, when EOKA possessed only a few outdated weapons and had only a small number of fighters), but had determination and faith in Enosis (symbolised by the flames in the image). The other side had mass power (symbolised by the big gun in the image) and numbered thirty thousand soldiers. However, just as in Saveriadou's image, Enosis ideology fired young Cypriot men and women, who decided to fight for the country's liberation.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, any reading of nationalist Cypriot art cannot be complete without a reference to the national fetish objects. Working within this sphere, it is not surprising that the anti-colonial conflict was visually constructed with religious connotations such as the parallel motif of Christ/hero and Madonna/mother of the hero. We find in this period that the relation of mother nation and the loss of children is powerfully linked to the religious iconography of Mary and her lost son. References to this idea are represented in the work of George Pol. Georgiou (1901-1972), a self-taught artist who studied law in London and who was politically engaged throughout the struggle period. Georgiou produced a series of works featuring the upheaval in Cyprus during the anti-colonial struggle. *Cypria Saga* (1956), fig. 20, Georgiou's first image related to the struggle, stands as a historical narration of the dramatic period, entangled with moments of heroism and betrayals.

The work is constructed through several scenes that together form references to historical events that marked the 1950s period. The image is divided in two, with its central axis the elongated figure of a monk. Georgiou employs symbolic metaphors to create a visual representation of the conditions of the struggle's first year. One such metaphor is the oversized representation of British soldiers on the right side of the painting, particularly their oversized hands and boots stepping on a leaflet.

On the left-hand side, two British soldiers are dragging along a student; a Greek Cypriot fighter positioned in reverse, with open hands, covers the upper left side of the work. Alongside the fighter is an image of the graves of EOKA's young dead, buried at the Central Prisons of Nicosia. Despite the emotive scenes, Georgiou employed neutral colours of blue, white and brown to emphasise the symbolic representation of the work.

The symbolic interpretation of the struggle in *Cypria Saga* has been compared by the British journalist George Clay to Picasso's *Guernica*, Goya's *Disasters of War* and the Hiroshima panels of Iri Maruki and Toshiko Akamatsu.<sup>203</sup> Clay's article 'Passion and Patriotism: Cyprus – A Study in Human Ordeal' reveals that despite the general perception of Cypriots as 'terrorists', a significant number of people around the world – and especially in England – supported the Cypriot struggle. As Clay affirms in his analysis of *Cypria Saga*, the British administration was, for a long time, violating Cypriot human rights:

The foot of one of the soldiers on the right stumbles awkwardly on 'The Voice of Cyprus', but from his clumsy boot three strands of barbed wire stretch across to the Charter of Human Rights for which the symbolic figure at the top left has fallen in the unending struggle for redemption.<sup>204</sup>

In *Cypria Saga* Georgiou illustrates the chaotic period through the construction of several narrative scenes. Georgiou employs, as the central figure of the composition, a 'petrified monk' standing in front of Byzantine church domes, suggesting 'a symbol of the faith of the Cypriot people fossilised with time to a rock-like endurance'.<sup>205</sup> The centralised location of the monk embodies the vital role of the Greek Orthodox Church throughout the struggle, and its patronage of Enosis. As Georgiou states:

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<sup>203</sup> Clay, George. 'Passion and Patriotism', in *The Observer*, 28 September 1958, p. 7.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

Through all the dark years of political bondage the Greek Cypriots kept their faith in the Autocephalous (the Independent Cyprus Church) for their redemption. But their murmurs of protest were lost in the clamour of imperialism until teenage raise its flag at the foot of the Autocephalous and Dighenis (symbolised as a masked peasant riding on a donkey) was reincarnated to call Cyprus to arms.<sup>206</sup>

Enosis is portrayed in every single element of Georgiou's panorama. EOKA's kernel is symbolically depicted by a flaming village oven and its members by masks formed from it and shaping a network around the picture. The upper left part of the composition is covered by the gigantic exposed silhouette of a young fighter who embraces the lower scenes, which consist of circulated leaflets and the arrest of a student by the British forces. A similar scene dominates the right section of the scenery. Adjacent is the donkey driven by Dighenis, which functions as a reminder of the humorous episode in which a donkey bearing the sign 'I surrender' was allowed to wander the streets as EOKA's reply to the British proposal for fighters to surrender.<sup>207</sup>

The two gigantic figures of the British soldiers dragging the student to a concentration camp symbolise the 'imperial bondage' and reinforce *Cypria Saga* as a symbolic representation of the Cyprus drama through the visual employment of people's identities: the mysterious appearance of the messenger with the envelope in his/her outstretched hand, the priest reading a newspaper next to anti-British slogans, a schoolboy reading a poster and the presence of mute women as a symbol of 'Cypriot motherhood'.<sup>208</sup> I consider that in *Cypria Saga*, the power of Enosis is signified by the dynamic action of national representations; student's demonstrations, distribution of pamphlets, curfews, arrests, detention camps, torture chambers and the most vengeful of all punishments, the death sentence.

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Panteli, Stavros. *The History of Modern Cyprus*. Herts: Topline Publishing, 2005, p. 195.

<sup>208</sup> Clay, George. 'Passion and Patriotism', op. cit., p. 8.



The first death sentence set British-Cypriot relations on a path of even greater confrontation. Cypriots had to face the new British attitude, which had little in common with the typical idea of the Englishman as 'the quixotic and fearless defender of right, the just and freedom-loving Englishman'.<sup>209</sup> The solid familiar status of British indifference was soon replaced by political violence which became a fact of daily life. Stavros Panteli described British restoration of law and order in Cyprus thus:

In Britain there was much distress at the strained relations with a country that had been its ally and friend. By permitting Harding to set up what was tantamount to a military dictatorship (reminiscent of Palmer's in the 1930s), and indulge in the jailing and whipping of schoolboys (a practice more associated with Hitler, Mussolini and Franco and one not approved by the British public), to impose collective fines on villages (after the manner of Nazi collective punishments), to carry out mass detentions and round up villagers behind barbed wire as though they were prisoners of war or criminals, the British had so deeply offended and embittered the kindly Greek Cypriots that [...] the goodwill of the local inhabitants, had been practically destroyed.<sup>210</sup>

It is interesting that despite the British government's emergency measures, the British public was sympathetic towards Cypriot people and the national struggle: in a 1956 article, *Time Magazine* wrote: '[...] but what made it heartbreaking is the fact that is a fight between friends. Greeks have fought beside Britons for freedom since Byron; they cannot understand now why the British should deny their fellow Greeks' desire for self-determination'.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Durrell, L. *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*. London: Faber & Faber, 1957, p. 260.

<sup>210</sup> Panteli, Stavros. *A History of Cyprus: From Foreign Domination to Troubled Independence*. London: East-West Publications, 2000, p. 245.

<sup>211</sup> Article, No author, (21<sup>st</sup> May 1956), 'Cyprus: Deepening Tragedy', *Time Magazine U.S.*, available from: <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,808483,00.html>> 8<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

Michalis Karaolis (1933-1956) was the first to be sentenced to death and hanged in 1956. The British proclamation of such a sentence and their refusal to give Karaolis' corpse to his family severed the bond between Greek Cypriots and the British. At the time, demonstrations against British rule were the subject of great debate among foreigners. Visual Enosis material was published around the world, provoking opposing reactions of sympathy and hostility. While some had emphasised the armed conflict and perceived the struggle as being undertaken by 'criminals' and 'terrorists', others saw in Enosis the aspiration for freedom that many previously colonised countries had fought to conquer. Among the supporters was the French philosopher Albert Camus, who requested clemency for Michael Karaolis. Camus's appeal was among the first cases of foreign sympathy and revealed Europe's awareness of Cyprus struggle for self-determination.

Cyprus' conflict was reminiscent of the occurrences that took place forty years earlier in another island under the British Empire – the Irish War of Independence. Helen O' Shea discusses in her (2009) PhD thesis, *The Irish Interaction with Empire: British Cyprus and the EOKA Insurgency, 1955-59*, some striking similarities between the two colonised countries and their conflicts with the British. O' Shea explains the parallels between the first two martyred heroes of EOKA and the IRA (Irish Republican Army). According to O'Shea, both Karaolis and Kevin Barry were 'young idealists, keen sportsmen, and neither belonged to what could be called the fringe of extremism'.<sup>212</sup> The British practiced similar policies in both countries, despite the conflicts occurring in different eras. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Irish people felt sympathy for Cypriots and supported their 'compatriots' through numerous resolutions. In June 1956, the *Dublin Opinion* published a sympathetic image of two women, representing Ireland and England, standing next to each other with the following caption: 'as one woman to another, I think you're making the same mistake with Cyprus that you made with me'.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> O'Shea, Helen. *The Irish Interaction with Empire: British Cyprus and the EOKA Insurgency, 1955-59*. University of Edinburgh. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), 2009, p. 87.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Cyprus's demand for self-determination, and the despotic British policy, had stimulated Cypriot nationalists who warned that they 'shall answer hanging with hanging and torture with torture'.<sup>214</sup> The same magazine equated the 1956 events with the earlier experience of Ireland: 'In 1916 we shot the leaders of the Easter Rebellion. By 1921 more Irishmen than ever were fighting us in the name of Pearse and Connolly, and the resentment which our action aroused had not died away'.<sup>215</sup> Likewise, the British policy of curfews, torture chambers and brutal executions reinforced Greek Cypriot loyalty toward Enosis.

In *For Ever* (1957), fig. 21, Georgiou represents the immolation of Grigoris Afxentiou (1928-1957), second in command in EOKA and at the time top of the British list of most wanted men. The image is stylistically and thematically very similar to *Cypria Saga*, constructed by a series of scenes that together narrate the 1957 event. A large part of the composition is taken up by a black and white church, depicted along with Greek flags and the figures of three women represented in blue dresses with black scarves around their heads. In the central scene we see the moment at which three EOKA fighters have surrendered while dozens of British soldiers aligned in several views of the image approach the flaming scene. As in his other anti-colonial visuals, Georgiou represents at the centre of the image graves of EOKA fighters and a leaflet in oversized form. Both elements are being stepped over by British soldiers. On the left side is depicted – on a much smaller scale – a seated priest surrounded by Greek Cypriot people. The whole imagery is situated outdoors, and we can see in the background some mountains and a distant church.

I suggest that Georgiou's visual symbolises the public's perception of the struggle: as previously mentioned, it was a 'veritable David and Goliath conflict'. Georgiou's image embodies the brutal British strategies against guerrilla fighters. The centric axis of the image is the blazing hideout in which Afxentiou was burned alive after

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<sup>214</sup> Article, available from: <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,808483,00.html>> 8<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

an eight-hour resistance. Dominating the visual is the image of British soldiers, who hesitate at the entrance of the hideout, lacking the boldness to enter it. At the centre is the image of Afxentiou's comrades, who had surrendered on his order. Afxentiou remained in the hideout, choosing to fight and die in a one-sided battle. His unexpected resistance confused the 60 British soldiers present and, despite their preponderance in numbers and abundance of weapons, chose to pour petrol into the hideout's entrance and set it alight. As David Carter points out, with this action, the 'death of a terrorist gave birth to a legend'.<sup>216</sup>

Within the same framework as *For Ever* is 1958's *The Imprisoned Graves*, fig. 22. The vertical visual represents the graves of EOKA's fighters within a wired fence. As in Georgiou's earlier works, graves are positioned in abstract forms, each inscribed with a fighter's name and his date of death. Alongside the graves is depicted a leaflet, while the background shows some flowers on the ground. While in his earlier works Georgiou represented full images of British soldiers, in *The Imprisoned Graves* he depicts only their feet while they step on the wired fence. As with *For Ever*, Georgiou situates his image, in a religious context with a church in the lower part of the image, alongside a Greek flag and three female figures whose presence embodies mourning of the loss.

Georgiou employs the same visual strategy to expose the national trauma and loss. I argue that the abstract icons (such as church, graves, faceless people) and neutral colour shades emphasise the meaning of the works as national reminiscence. The theme-subject of *The Imprisoned Graves* identifies a small cemetery located in the Central Jail of Nicosia, next to the National Struggle Museum, where the British hanged the young EOKA fighters. In this work Georgiou portrays ten of the imprisoned tombs. Nine of the men buried in these graves were hanged: Michalis Karaolis and Andreas Dimitriou on 10 May 1956; Andreas Zakos, Iakovos Patsatos and Harilaos Michael on 9 August 1956; and

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<sup>216</sup> Carter, David. (2008) 'Death of a Terrorist – Birth of a Legend: The Story of Gregoris Afxentiou', Website, available from: <<http://www.britainssmallwars.com/cyprus/Davidcarter/deathofaterrorist/deathofaterrorist.html>> 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

Michael Koutsoftas, Stelios Mauromatis and Andreas Panagides on 21 September 1956. Evagoras Pallikaridis was hanged on 14 March 1957. All cited dates are shown in Georgiou's image under each fighter's name, disclosing with this the importance of their death. All tombs – Georgiou included Afxentiou, who was buried in the same tomb as Pallikaridis despite having died in action – were constructed in the same area, next to the prisoner's cells and the guillotine's setting. The area is enclosed by tall stone walls and covered by wire fence and glass.

Similarly, Georgiou places the fighter's tombs within a wired fence. As in *Cypria Saga*, Georgiou transmits a symbolic representation of British violation of the Charter of Human Rights, with British boots are stepping on fighter's tombs. According to Alfred Simpson, the case of Pallikaridis – who was hanged aged 19 for the charge of possessing a weapon – violates the convention because:

The offence for which he was executed was that of possessing a weapon. It was a light machine gun, and it was not in a serviceable condition at the time he was apprehended. The real reason why he was not reprieved was that the authorities believed, but were unable to prove in a trial, that he had earlier murdered an elderly villager [...] who was suspected of collaboration with the security authorities. Plainly it could be argued that the reality of matters was that attaching the death penalty to the mere possession of a weapon, as this execution revealed, amounted in substance to a violation of the presumption of innocence.<sup>217</sup>

Georgiou was very influenced from the socio-political conditions of the period. In 1958, after he exhibited *The Imprisoned Graves*, he made an appeal to the British governor Sir Hugh Foot to return the bodies of the young fighters to their families. The British refused to return the bodies in the fear that the funerals would reinforce

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<sup>217</sup> Simpson, Alfred. *Human Rights and the End of Empire: Britain and the Genesis of the European Convention*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 876.

nationalist spirit and would lead to further demonstrations against colonial rule. All fighters were buried without a ceremonial funeral, without the presence of a priest and without the presence of their relatives. This imperialistic attitude was greatly offensive to traditional religious rituals, which require a memorial service and the presence of relatives. When Georgiou exhibited his work, the title of the work was adopted by the Greek Cypriot community who called the small cemetery as *Imprisoned Graves*.

The significant amount of political action undertaken by women during the anti-colonial struggle was given no eminence. I have previously discussed Greek Cypriot women's association with nationalism at both a symbolic and a more practical level. Within Cyprus' historical context, women are the symbolic representation of the nation – it is seen as a beloved woman who is threatened by foreign countries. The national liberation struggle called men to fight for the union of the 'daughter' Cyprus with the 'motherland' Greece. Having said this, it is not surprising that the actual structure of the national liberation struggle in Cyprus embodied a masculine nationalism towards the union of their female 'homeland' and its 'motherland'.

Even more importantly, women are remembered mostly as female relatives of the martyrs (e.g. Georgiou's work). Floya Anthias' conclusion is highly suggestive:

In the public consciousness, however, the image of women that predominated during this period was one of 'mother of our young martyrs', as tragic, black-clothed women, willing to offer their most precious possession, their sons, for the motherland. Concrete rewards were given neither to women fighters [...] after the struggle ended [...] and most of these women retreated into anonymity.<sup>218</sup>

Without a doubt the masculine character of the struggle (among 'brothers') predominated both the form of the struggle and its remembrance. All post-EOKA

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<sup>218</sup> Anthias, Floya. 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', op. cit., p. 160.

monuments and statues were exclusively dedicated to remembering men, entirely overlooking women's participation in the struggle. In the next discussion I will consider the 'rearguard' activities undertaken by women which greatly contributed to EOKA's success.

## Gendered Territories: The Kitchen Struggle

The 'kitchen struggle' was a term used by Philip Hallie in 1979 to describe the sheltering of Jewish refugees escaping from the Nazis during the Second World War.<sup>219</sup> Hallie's study records the chronicle of women who, in taking stranger refugees into their homes initiated a chain of activity of silent politicised action. In this discussion I am borrowing Hallie's term to consider a different aspect of EOKA's struggle: a struggle that, as I am arguing, was carried out by women away from the conventional approach of armed fighting. I am considering here the resistance that women expressed through sheltering EOKA fighters, and their attitudes throughout the struggle period, as the 'kitchen struggle', an informal silent network of 'rearguard' activities. Therefore, I am examining artist's practices that mirrored the resistance conditions as an attempt to mobilise women into political activity in Cyprus.

I am introducing in this discussion the practice of Eleni Chariclidou (1926-1978) who is remembered as one of Cyprus' most modest and enigmatic women artists. While she produced a considerable amount of work, it remains little known and is concealed by her reluctance to sign, date or title her paintings. Soon after completing her studies in Athens, Chariclidou moved back to her hometown of Nicosia, where she shared the studio of her brother-in-law, the prominent artist Telemachos Kanthos. While Chariclidou was for most of her career a realist painter of mainly landscapes and portraits, we encounter in her post-1955 practice new approaches to techniques and styles.<sup>220</sup>

While in Cyprus, Chariclidou produced a series of views based on Nicosia's scenery, all represented in simplified techniques that were extremely uncommon in visual works of the period. The series consists of representations of houses in the suburb Pallouriotisa, which Chariclidou depicts in a mixed visual code of colours

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<sup>219</sup> Quoted in Ridd and Callaway. *Caught up in Conflict: Women's Response to Political Strife*, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>220</sup> Chariclidou often visited London for medical treatment. Her work was possibly influenced by Early Modernist movements.



and abstract compositions. The first composition, *Pallouriotisa*,<sup>221</sup> (c. 1959), fig. 23, is composed of a line of houses and trees. Using large brushstrokes, Chariclidou creates circles of vivid green to abstractly represent trees, while she employs blue and white colours to represent Pallouriotisa's houses. The frontage of the houses are created with flat areas of blue, while roofs are outlined in intense red. I propose that the simplified combination of abstract curved and straight edges offers an expressive and very different approach to representing houses for the Cypriot audience.

In the *Composition of Houses*, (c. 1958), fig. 24, Chariclidou again presents a visual abstraction of the same subject-theme as *Pallouriotisa*. However, here, Chariclidou employs a more realistic aesthetic approach. The setting is now created with clear outlines of edges. Houses are shown in grey and yellow shades, with orange roofs against a grey background. Trees are again represented by curved areas of dark green. However, there is a distinctive difference between this and the first composition; here, Chariclidou depicts entrance doors to houses that are, notably, all black, whereas the *Pallouriotisa* shows none. While these two representations of Nicosia's suburbs are presented from a closer point of view, with a rather simplified technique and choice of colours, the third image significantly differs from that pattern.

In *Houses*, (c. 1959), fig. 25, the theme remains the same as the previous two works, but the context encounters a different scenario. In complete contrast to the close display of the previous works, *Houses* is presented from a distance. It also differs stylistically: here, Chariclidou takes a more realistic approach to depicting trees and houses. Thick brushwork outlines the details of the presented objects. Loosely formed trees with loose forms are found in the lower and right-parts of the image and houses are presented in neutral colours with certain details such as windows and flat roofs. Possibly the most significant difference between this and the earlier work is the optical angle that marks the work. Chariclidou employs a

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<sup>221</sup> All titles and names were given by Chariclidou's brother-in-law, artist Telemachos Kanthos, after her death.

specific detail to explore this: while the visual is presented from a distance, the brown edges that frame the work reveal that it was produced from an indoor environment.

Chariclidou introduces to the audience an idea of the 'house', which, between 1955 and 1959, evolved into a politicised channel of gendered strategic codes wherein women were able to gain a certain amount of active political participation. Hence, I am arguing that Chariclidou's sceneries are an account of the 'kitchen struggle', a struggle undertaken by Greek Cypriot women from their domestic location while risking the safety of their privacy in the name of the struggle. My understanding of Chariclidou's houses as visual icons in symbolic forms is within the context of passive resistance and 'rear-guard' activities which proved to be crucial for the struggle's success. I will refer again here Ridd and Callaway's argument that at certain times 'where [...] women do not appear to step out of their domestic orientation in times of conflict, we may glimpse instances of their political powers, sometimes in covert, sometimes in symbolic forms'.<sup>222</sup>

The various means of participation in the struggle are often acts of individual heroism performed by ordinary women, providing fugitives with food or shelter for men in danger, or hosting secret meetings with strangers in their homes. There are also cases that highlight the symbolic importance of particular episodes and emphasise how ordinary people were engaged in EOKA despite not being members of the organisation. Elenitsa Loizou narrates in her memoirs an event that occurred during the first months of EOKA, when the guerrilla possessed very old pistols that often misfired.<sup>223</sup> During an evening attack, seeing that a young fighter was in trouble after his pistol jammed, Margarita Costa ran out of her house holding her two children by the hands. Despite the informer's threats of shooting, she stood in front of the fighter, hid him behind her children and pulled him into her house, helping him to escape via the roof.

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<sup>222</sup> Ridd and Callaway. *Caught up in Conflict: Women's Response to Political Strife*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>223</sup> Loizou, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

Additionally, in some cases women would suddenly venture into resistance, often assisting men for whom the British had put out warrants. On many occasions they would accommodate strangers in their homes for days. This was a challenge for patriarchal society and its social restrictions regarding female sexual modesty. Floya Anthia points out that women's involvement in the struggle had implications for women's emancipation in Cyprus: 'many [women] prior to this had barely talked to a man let alone struck up common links'.<sup>224</sup> Women's engagement in the 'kitchen struggle' staged a powerful resistance as an informal, silent network that proved to be a crucial addition to the conventional armed network of men.

Colonial policies of torture chambers, detention camps and curfew were common to both men and women. At this point I propose that Chariclidou's commitment to representing houses as a subject-theme can be also understood within the atmosphere of the imposed curfew conditions. Critical to my argument is that Chariclidou's houses are structured as being attached to one another, all together, revealing a visual strategy of the curfew conditions through a very simplified painting technique. At the peak of the curfews, domesticated premises generated a certain political exchange in mobilising people for anti-colonial resistance. This was mostly experienced in houses located within Nicosia's Venetian walls. In his 1964 book *Closed Doors*, Costa Montis<sup>225</sup> writes on the conditions of curfew and the traumatic shadow of the gallows that were part of the daily life of Nicosia's residents during the struggle:

In August, the English hanged three other boys, and in September another three. Each time, Nicosia was unable to sleep the night before. The houses, walls, and people tossed and turned with restlessness [...] A crowd knelt in the area outside the prisons, and the voices from the cells sang the Greek anthem. Then came the

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<sup>224</sup> Anthias gathered this information through interviewing women who had been active in EOKA, in Anthias, 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus, op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>225</sup> Costas Montis (1914-2004) was an influential Greek Cypriot poet and novelist.

hopelessness, the silence, finally broke by the cry [...] It was after these hangings that the English institute[d] punitive curfews [...].

The curfew could last several days and for poor families who had little in their cupboards and no income except the daily wages of a father or brother it was a real hardship. When the curfews became regular events, the English would let the women go out for one or two hours to shop for food [...] Those who had no money had to run (if you could have seen with what anxiety they ran) to beg a loan from a relative or friend ('Just a few pounds for the children's sake') and then run again to purchase whatever they could find before the two hours was up.

[...] And it was not only hunger that the lower classes had to endure, but thirst as well. Many homes in Nicosia got their waters from public taps, and how could they all manage to draw what they needed in the space of two hours? And the strain of the curfew did not end with hunger and thirst. There was a nagging nervousness that affected everyone equally. It was a strain on the nerves similar at times to a breakdown. What, people would ask themselves, will I do if my child suddenly becomes sick during a curfew and I can't get a doctor or medicine? What if my pregnant wife needs attention? A thousand such cares ate at the mind.<sup>226</sup>

Montis' testimony is highly emotive, highlighting both the punitive curfew conditions and the changes in women's roles during the struggle. Women have now become the main providers of the household, the ones responsible for going outside and finding ways to supply the basic requirements of the whole family. In these conditions women were empowered to step outside the boundaries of traditional behaviour and redefine the position of gender roles in Cypriot society. I discussed

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<sup>226</sup> Press and Information Office. 'EOKA Anniversary'. Article, available from: [http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/moi/pio/pio.nsf/0/7492957989FBFC80C225708F00396EC5/\\$file/Cyprus%20Today%20%20April%20-June%202005.pdf](http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/moi/pio/pio.nsf/0/7492957989FBFC80C225708F00396EC5/$file/Cyprus%20Today%20%20April%20-June%202005.pdf) > 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

earlier how Chariclidou's series of images of Nicosia's houses encodes new meanings of indoor anti-colonial activities. While in the earlier part of the 1950s politics were conducted in places where women's presence was banned – such as the coffee shops – during the struggle the house emerged as a vital politicised venue of resistance.

Additionally, the house was politically significant due to the gendered political exchange established in women offering shelter to EOKA's wanted men. Whereas previously the traditional patriarchal system excluded women from its social-political structure, now the same system not only allowed women to venture outside, but used the domestic sphere for political functions. Even during the imposed curfews politicised activities took place in houses:

There the streets were narrow, and the houses were glued to each other [...] It was in the suburbs that the kites first appeared. During the curfews, you could see hundreds of kites in the air, flown not only by children but also by grown men and women.

Were the kites, as some foreign journalists suggested, a desperate attempt to escape from the curfew, so desperate as to almost laughable? Or was it just playing? You could see adults, even old women in black, enjoying their kites dancing in the sky and you feared that all of Nicosia had gone mad. Whatever the cause, the kites from the suburbs arrived over the houses within the walls of Nicosia and brought support and encouragement. The kites maintained contact between people separated by the curfew [...] Who knows for whom the old woman's kite was sent up? The kites were mostly blue and white. They would make their daily walk over the prison walls and offer greetings; they carried our souls above the gallows [...]

The English had to participate, to join that sky filled with Cypriot kites, when their children became jealous [...] Was this the reason that the English never dared forbid the kites, they were afraid to face the wrath of their own children?

Adding to the ridiculousness, during the worst of the emergency measures, they flew their children's kites while armed, a kite string in one hand and a sten gun or pistol in the other! (The kites of the British, I must tell you, were not like ours [...] In the Cypriot sky, among our blue and white kites, those foreign kites seemed like some strange migratory birds).<sup>227</sup>

This intriguing method of political exchange incorporated an interaction between those who were in the cells and those who were restricted within the house. Within this framework is the 1958 work *Curfew Nicosia*, fig. 26, produced by Adamantios Diamantis (1901-1992). In a Post-Impressionistic painting Diamantis portrays with large brushes an image of Nicosia. Diamantis chooses to present a narrow street surrounded by large buildings expanding within the image's skyline, all details of which are presented. Here, houses are composed of natural neutral colours of white, grey and brown, while in the background a church is visible, alongside to a mosque. Possibly the most interesting feature of the painting is the female figure in the foreground.

The figure is shown alone, standing half-concealed outside on a balcony while gazing towards the street with her back towards the viewer. Here, Diamantis's view is taken from a distance while positioning the viewer at the highest level of the picture accessing a panoramic view of Nicosia. The figure, represented in traditional dress with a scarf around her head,<sup>228</sup> shares the same view as the onlooker, while addressing the experience of women during the curfew. The emphasis on a sole female figure in an outside space is significant in relation to my

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> This type of representation of women is found in many of Diamantis' works.

argument about gendered territories. As previously discussed, the definition of spaces in which women were defined by patriarchy empowered them to access and control these spaces and what occurred in them; while participating in the processes of the struggle, they negotiated social changes.

Diamantis provides an intriguing detail in the work; near the woman we find the caption '6 p.m. CURFEW' with red capital letters. It is particularly important that Diamantis chose to write the word 'curfew' in English. This was also addressed by Costas Montis in *Closed Door*. as he explains, 'I use the English word because it is weighed down with such pain, blood and hurt, that it's not possible to find an equivalent to the cursed thing in Greek'.<sup>229</sup> It is also interesting that the woman is staring at what is happening at the narrow street. Armed British soldiers are shown walking in the street, probably undertaking a search of all houses of the neighbourhood. I consider that this image – of a woman watching the soldiers instead of staying indoors – reveals the fact that women made the conscious choice to enter the realm of the male-oriented struggle and through this choice, were able to gain new socio-political rights.

Both Chariclidou and Diamantis explore visual aspects of Nicosia in their work. While Chariclidou represents Nicosia's houses with abstract lines and vivid colours, Diamantis employs a more realistic representation. My understanding of Nicosia's houses as politicised platforms is as part of the processes for women's emancipation in Cyprus. For many of the women who experienced the national struggle, negotiations were involved in challenging the conservative social codes reasserted in Cypriot culture during the 1950s. Such negotiations were critical to women's emancipation in Cyprus in terms of their active participation within the struggle, and in some cases, their recognition of feminist goals within EOKA. Certainly for women the accommodation of the 'kitchen struggle' as a way of expressing nationalism empowered them not only to become a central factor in a revolutionary social movement but, moreover, to mark the popular consciousness

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<sup>229</sup> Press and Information Office. 'EOKA Anniversary'. op. cit.

regarding gendered political activities. However, unsurprisingly, women's participation in revolution, conflict and war is often viewed pessimistically. Janet Hart points out that:

Women are seen as pawns in a game that they have no hope of winning once the state of emergency is over. According to this view, male dominance is so firmly entrenched in the structure of politics and society that even if women join the fight, suffer along with the men, and sacrifice enthusiastically, ultimately their participation wins them no concessions and their spirits are destroyed by the backlash.<sup>230</sup>

This view was also adopted by contemporary feminists in Cyprus; for example, Myria Vassiliadou argues that the anti-colonial struggle 'was created by men, ordered by men, and carried out by men. It was a patriarchal struggle on a patriarchal island'.<sup>231</sup> All of this supports certain discourses of a generalised female absence from the struggle that are certainly not accurate, since there are a number of cases which prove that women *did* participate in the struggle – not only as supporters and assistants but also as active members in both the domestic and public spheres and in various roles, including bearing weapons. This is not to suggest that the struggle was not a gendered one; the struggle was by all means a masculine struggle. I have, however, discussed the ways in which women asserted themselves politically through their domestic position. The establishment of the 'kitchen struggle' provided to women certain venues within which to negotiate the gender economies of the social-political process in Cyprus and gradually to gain some power in the public domain in the post-war period.

As a result of the institutionalised domination of men in Cypriot society, women's participation in the national liberation struggle is repeatedly undervalued and their role is at risk of going unrecorded and ignored. EOKA succeeded in its goal of

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<sup>230</sup> Hart, Janet. op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>231</sup> Vassiliadou, 'Questioning Nationalism: The Patriarchal and National Struggles of Cypriot Women within a European Context', op. cit., p. 459.



decolonisation, though Enosis was never achieved. Enosis remained a dream for Cyprus and memories of EOKA are recorded in publications, songs, museums, a collection of artworks in the Municipal Art Gallery of Limassol and men's monuments that all together form a tribute to the struggle. In 2005, Cyprus celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the EOKA struggle. As part of the memorials, stamps were issued bearing the image of the 1994 oil painting *The Doorway*, fig. 27, produced by artist Kyriacos Koullis (b.1918). The work shows in a close capture a woman in tears leaving her house, with the house key in her hand. The door is a traditional one as would have been seen in the 1950s, with the captions EOKA, ENOSIS, DIGENIS and MAKARIOS on both sides. Unsurprisingly, the woman is dressed in a blue outfit with a white scarf. I suggest that this stamp, issued fifty years after the struggle, embodies a form of symbolic power that maintains the ideals of the notion of 'mother' and 'nation' and the continuity of the social order of the gendered struggle.

The national liberation struggle led to Independence in 1960 and Cyprus became a republic formed by two communities, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. As would be expected, the two communities had a problematic relationship after the British strategy of 'divide and rule'. Regardless of the hostility between the two communities, Independence commenced for the island with the introduction of a common Cypriot flag, far from the blue/cross of Hellenism and the red/crescent of Turkish. The national Cypriot flag chosen by President Makarios and Vice-President Fazil Kucuk was neutral and peaceful, displaying a map of the island in copper colour and two olive tree branches.

## Chapter 3

### Greek Cypriot Women Artists and the Independent Republic of Cyprus 1960-1973

#### Introduction

Women, Pateman claims, were not party to the original contract; rather they were incorporated into the private sphere through the marriage contract as wives subservient to their husbands, rather than individuals. The private sphere is a site of subjection, is part of civil society but separate from the 'civil' sphere; each gains meanings from the other and each is mutually dependent on the other.

(Ann Tickner, 2001)<sup>232</sup>

Chapter 3 examines the social, political, economic and emotional conditions of women artists as they experienced the 'systematic gender inequality'<sup>233</sup> of patriarchy in post-Independent Cyprus.<sup>234</sup> In exploring women artists' conditions I will draw on feminist research conducted by leading Greek Cypriot social and political feminist authors, as well as readings of women in the labour market.<sup>235</sup>

In this chapter I argue that despite the post-1960 propaganda of 'gender equality' in matters of law, education and the workforce, women artists had to struggle to balance their roles as mothers and wives while negotiating their careers as professional artists. In contrast with the other chapters – each of which takes as its

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<sup>232</sup> Quoted in Hadjipavlou, Maria. *Women and Change in Cyprus: Feminisms and Gender in Conflict*. London: I.B.Tauris., 2010, p. 99.

<sup>233</sup> I borrow this term from Sylvia Walby, *Gender Transformations*, London: Routledge, 1997, p.6.

<sup>234</sup> Many of the early Cypriot feminists went abroad to study (United Kingdom and Greece) and on their return to Cyprus brought a ground-breaking character to the Cypriot women's struggle that becomes similar to the women's movement in the United States and the United Kingdom.

<sup>235</sup> For comprehensive discussions, see Maria Roussou, *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, University of London, Institute of Education, (Unpublished PhD. Thesis), 1985; Myria Vassiliadou, *A Struggle for Independence: Attitudes and Practices of the Women of Cyprus*, The University of Kent, (Unpublished PhD. Thesis), 1999 and Maria Hadjipavlou, *Women and Change in Cyprus: Feminism, Gender and Conflict*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

central theme a key moment of political upheaval – Chapter 3 does not feature any radical upheaval, revolution or armed conflict. Rather, Chapter 3 explores the radicalised gender struggle and the debate about whether women should have a career.

Critical to my discussion is the fact that Cypriot studies in gender-related practice is a burgeoning field, with very little research published as yet. Myria Vassiliadou points out that ‘women have been hidden from Cypriot history and it would be a distortion of history itself to assume that the course of social events has been directed by men’s activities alone’.<sup>236</sup> It is a fact that since the 1960s, Cypriot women have participated actively in civil society in both private and public spheres but their presence and achievements have not been acknowledged. As social feminist Maria Hadjipavlou highlights, ‘[women] have been denied the space in which to articulate [their achievements] and the resources with which to record them’.<sup>237</sup> To add to this, I will refer to what Simone De Beauvoir argued in *The Second Sex*: ‘it is not the inferiority of women that has caused their historical insignificance; it is rather their historical insignificance that has doomed them to inferiority’.<sup>238</sup>

Myria Vassiliadou argues that ‘tracing the history of oppressed, powerless groups is a very different task when information is based on government records, textbooks, or other official documents’, adding that ‘we are actually just beginning to find out how little we know and understand about half the human population – women’.<sup>239</sup> With this in mind, I have used interviews, in addition to the more official sources, to explore women artists’ conditions in the post-1960 period and their transition between the private and public spheres.

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<sup>236</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria. *A Struggle for Independence: Attitudes and Practices of the women of Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>237</sup> Hadjipavlou, Maria. *Women and Change in Cyprus: Feminisms and Gender in Conflict*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2010, p. 100.

<sup>238</sup> De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. London: Penguin, 1972, p. 163.

<sup>239</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria. *A Struggle for Independence: Attitudes and Practices of the women of Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 76.

While in the post-1960 period there was – and is – still a traditional tendency for women to preserve their domestic role, the new state endorsed full-time employment for women: through this, a transition in women’s roles became clear. Within this period, women artists negotiated their role as autonomous individuals simultaneously with the social expectations of their domestic roles. Therefore, in this chapter I discuss women artists’ negotiations of the transition between the private and public spheres, between tradition and modernity. I am particularly interested in how these women define themselves within their threefold position as artists, art teachers and house carers. To study this, I explore the approaches that Rhea Bailey, Kate Stephanides, Nina Iacovou and Pauline Phedonos employed in making a living in education alongside to their professional careers as artists.

In exploring women artists’ transitions between private-public phases, I analyse the domestic references employed by Rhea Bailey in her works *Fusion of Time*, *Memories of the Yard* and *Diptych of Life with Watermelon*, all of which reveal alternative views of women’s lives within patriarchal Cyprus. In doing so, I argue that the notion of the ‘dirty house’ in Bailey’s representations is a transitional device.

In exploring women artists’ access to the public sphere I analyse the practice of Maria Tourou and Stella Michaelidou and their strategies in establishing their positions as autonomous individuals in the civil arena. Significantly, both strategies are polemical in exploring the legacy of women artists practising throughout the independence period. I will, therefore, explore their negotiations of a number of key issues: their decision to practise art professionally, their domestic role and their relation to the socio-economic politics of the period.

## Women's Transition: New Roles and Identities

Contemporary sociologist feminist writer Maria Roussou wrote, in her 1985 thesis related to Greek Cypriot women in Cyprus:

Do we regret the disappearance of this world? Can it be replaced by a world in which there is more sharing, more equality between people? Can the passive mother figures and the innocent young girls of the painting be replaced by women who are active participants in the public life of Cyprus, involved in the decision making progresses that affect the affairs of the island?<sup>240</sup>

Roussou questions here women's passivity and the subordinated role presented in the monumental artwork *The World of Cyprus*, fig. 28, produced by artist Adamantios Diamantis between 1967 and 1972. Diamantis described his view of gender relations in his 1974 discussion of *The World of Cyprus*:

In the male-dominated *World of Cyprus* woman holds a second place. In Cyprus, she takes this place either because of man's arbitrariness or willingly. With wisdom and respect she holds this position of mother and mistress in the home.<sup>241</sup>

The monumental *World of Cyprus* is based on a series of drawings and sketches made during the artist's peregrinations around the island between 1931 and 1970. Undoubtedly, *The World of Cyprus* is a male construction of a male-dominated society presenting a traditional 'world of Cyprus' that was beginning to disappear in the 1960s, through Cyprus' Independence. The fact that Diamantis confirms in his narration women's inferiority to men reveals the social-political restrictions on women during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Likewise, in his work men are dominating factors within the large composition; women hold second place, barely

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<sup>240</sup> Roussou, Maria. *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>241</sup> Diamantis, Adamantios. *The World of Cyprus: A Narrative*. Nicosia: Kailas Printers & Lithographers LTD, 2002, p. 70.

visible in the background in their roles as mothers with their children or as young girls.

The traditional element in Diamantis' work is made clear by his choice of themes and colours. Diamantis' use of exclusively black and white shades is based on the traditional colours that Greek Cypriots were constrained to wear under the Ottoman Empire occupation. Consequently, through the occupation, the aesthetic tradition evolved into a radical consciousness of the 'other'; black garments for Greeks, red for Turks. Moreover, Diamantis' decision regarding the centralised scene is certainly not haphazardly made. Two outstanding images dominate the central canvas; one is the priest named Papaconstantinos who Diamantis describes as 'tall, bulky, proud and imposing [...] with the gravitas of the "cloth" and the priesthood [...] which is disappearing. The priest of the village, the master, the judge, severe perhaps but just, his opinion, his judgement always right and respected'.<sup>242</sup> Without doubt, the priest's image, along with the church representation in the background of the picture, reveals the close relationship between Greek Orthodox religion and society more generally. I argue that the representation of the church embodies all social classes – due to its functional structure, the church probably acts as the only public place in which a large number of people from various backgrounds gather together.

In the 1960s, coffee shops were the second most popular gathering place in Cyprus. Holding to this tradition Diamantis presented his work as the location of the place where until recently women were not allowed in Cyprus: the male-dominated traditional coffee shops. Diamantis presented in his *World of Cyprus* a world made of figures, people and buildings which, after the 1960 Independence, was gradually disappearing. In Diamantis's words, the changed world was:

Our world, the *World of Cyprus*, the world of the villages of Cyprus as they were, which is now being lost, adulterated and changed. Centuries and centuries of a life constrained under the will of others

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

[...] they remained silent and accepted their frugal lot. What they did not accept was the curtailing of the essence of the expression of their life. Language, church, virtue, sustenance, clothing, justice, friendship, marriage. These things they never agreed to renounce.<sup>243</sup>

There is no doubt that Diamantis produced an image of the world of Cyprus as he had viewed and experienced it over four decades of observing and generating drawings. It is interesting to examine the manner in which Diamantis dissociates himself from Cypriots, and his refusal to accept any of the modern aspects integrated in Cypriot society. As Diamantis affirms, 'this *World of Cyprus* is on its way of being lost. It is being swamped by new, ill-digested ideas and customs [...] I refuse to help with the change. In any case I have no more time'<sup>244</sup> Diamantis' narration delivers little room for social challenges and even less space for women who in Diamantis' words are 'in the margin, not humbled, but always obedient, ruling over their own domain with the great strength of the mother, always vital and dominant'.<sup>245</sup> Similar to other representations of women produced by men artists, Diamantis' narration places great importance on woman's role as a mother, rather than as an individual member of the world of Cyprus.

I consider that a number of male artists placed an emphasis on women's passive role in Cypriot society. A large number of Cypriot men artists<sup>246</sup> favoured the representation of women as mothers in their work. It would not be an exaggeration to say that their practice – their actual choice of themes and figures – forms a structural device of Cypriot society and social constrictions over women's roles; and to reiterate Diamantis' comment, 'woman holds a second place', restricted within the domestic walls while performing her dual role-identity as mother and mistress.

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., pp. 81-82.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> For example, Telemachos Kanthos, Christophoros Savva and George Georgiou.

I particularly refer to Diamantis's visual as an image that encodes gender roles in patriarchal Cyprus. This discourse, and the image, are ultimately indicative of the crossroads between women's traditional established role within domesticity and their new status as active participants in the public life of Cyprus. Undoubtedly, certain stereotypes regarding gender attitudes and behaviour were the focus of ongoing negotiations by women urging modernisation and equality. However, such negotiations were not easy to obtain, mainly due to the marriage mechanism – an abiding device that controls gender roles, legitimised by both state and church.

However, despite the fact that society has remained fairly constant in terms of certain patriarchal structures, post-independent Cyprus provided certain outlets for women to negotiate their status. Possibly the most significant factor was public education, which functioned as a fundamental mechanism for future generations to generate an awareness of women's issues while embarking on full-time employment. Considering that elementary education became compulsory only in 1962, and the first three years in secondary education became free of charge ten years later, it is remarkable that in 1974 Cyprus ranked amongst the countries with the highest rates of literacy.<sup>247</sup>

This change was initiated in previous periods. Significantly, the British period introduced to Cypriot women a Westernised culture that was broadly adopted (as I discussed previously in relation to Nicolaidou's practice), while women's participation in the anti-colonial struggle structured a fundamental channel for women to demand emancipation. For this, women's gaining a kind of independence from their family while exposing themselves to outside parameters signified a big departure from traditional conventions. As discussed in Chapter 2, women's participation in the national struggle presented a defining moment for Cypriot women to reconceptualise the power structure within gender relations and, by extension, their status within society. The aftermath of the struggle legitimised

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<sup>247</sup> Cyprus Social Research Centre. *Cypriot Woman Rise and Downfall*. Nicosia: Printing Office of the Republic of Cyprus, 1975, p. 7.



the presence of women in the public sphere, laying the foundation for women to be 'active citizens'.

In addition, women gained most from entering the work force after the massive rise in economic development following the independence of Cyprus. However, although women entered the public labour market in great numbers during the period it remained the case that women were six times less likely than men to be found in high positions.<sup>248</sup> Thus, the majority of working women were employed in lower-paid and less prestigious labour. Additionally, a large number of women received salaries equating to half of what men were paid, and there was no change in the societal expectation that a woman would stop working after marriage to adapt to the domestic labour involved in being a woman and a mother, and one can understand women's working situation. However, despite the continuation of traditional attitudes toward the stereotypes of women, working women began to define themselves as an active body of workers who gradually came to occupy high positions and command better paid salaries.

Nonetheless, despite the seemingly promising propaganda of gender equality in employment, women's subordinated role largely continued after the years of Independence. Significantly, beyond the social-political conversions that were introduced throughout the years of independence, Post-Independent Cyprus preserved the patriarchal structure, which was 'protected in particular by the relatively unaltered practical coherence of behaviours and discourses partially abstracted from time by ritual stereotyping, represent[ing] a paradigmatic form of the 'phallonic' vision and the androcentric cosmology which are common to all Mediterranean societies [...]'.<sup>249</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that, while traditional roles were being changed by a 'modernised' Westernised influence, gender relations preserved their identities as men = public and women = private, positioning women as the sole keepers of the household.

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. *Masculine Domination*. Cambridge: Polity, 2001, p. 6.

Thus, although women entered the public labour market, sharing the role of the 'breadwinner', their conditions at home remained the same. Thus, working women in Cyprus were consistently working double shifts: working full time professionally, while still being expected to maintain their domestic labour at home. Such a working pattern was common for the majority of working women who entered public employment after the state endorsed full-time employment for them. However, the state failed to develop a functional system that would support married women and mothers.

Within this period a significant number of women artists emerged in Cyprus who, in order to become artists, had to negotiate certain issues, such as their choice to practice art professionally, their relationship with their partners and the ongoing politics of the time.<sup>250</sup> Therefore, in the next discussion I examine some common working patterns negotiated by women artists in order to support themselves, their families and their art. I shall refer to the working pattern as the status of the 'Sunday artist' in Cyprus, a term I borrow from my interview of artist Rhea Bailey.

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<sup>250</sup> Male artists of the period also had to teach to make a living, as they could not make enough money through their art. However, unlike women artists, men did not have to concern themselves with the threat of their domestic life falling apart.

## The 'Sunday Artist' Status of Women

When I came back to Cyprus in 1970 I had to work in order to have an income. The only available work was to teach art. Once I graduated I was supposed to be a professional artist but being just that is not easy. Only if you are a really well known artist you can make a living, otherwise it is hard to survive exclusively from your art.

(Rhea Bailey, 2010)<sup>251</sup>

Rhea Bailey's (b.1946) words are especially revealing in relation to her working position as a woman artist in post-independent Cyprus. While women artists chose different locations in which to undertake education, their return to Cyprus followed the same pattern: financial necessities forced them to seek employment in education, as – particularly given the increase in school numbers – there was a significant demand for art teachers. Artist Katy Stephanides (1925–2012) recalls:

There was large demand for art teachers [...] The years that followed were creative but also tiring. I had to balance work at school with raising two children and painting [...] But they were not easy years. Working filled my need to earn a living; painting filled a need deep inside me. And there was also my family.<sup>252</sup>

Significantly, women's employment in education had a lasting effect on their art, particularly since there was limited time for them to dedicate to their practice. Their roles as full-time art teachers which outside office hours, was replaced by their occupations as full-time mothers and wives had effects on their artistic careers, since they could not practice methodically:

I used to travel around Cyprus for the teaching position and I detested it. I became a Sunday painter; the only day I could dedicate

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<sup>251</sup> Interview with Rhea Bailey. Nicosia, 21 September 2010.

<sup>252</sup> Stephanides, Marina. *Katy Phasouliotis Stephanides*. Nicosia: En Tipis Publications, 2009, p. 31.

to my art. I used to sketch during days and then work on it on Sundays or holidays. My work was no longer a spontaneous one, my paintings were made in stages and I was always adding elements on it. I remember one work was equivalent to one month. Within a year I had an average of twelve paintings. I used to feel odd about this [...] Then I was dealing with students and had to travel long distances that made me feel exhausted. I was not able to continue at the same pace as before. Teaching cost my focus in art.<sup>253</sup>

An analysis of personal interviews reveals the practical problem of subsistence which formed a major agent for the limitation of artistic production in Cyprus. This was common for both men and women artists, who had to take art teaching jobs in order to surpass their precarious economic situation. Additionally, modern post-Independent Cyprus, while fostering women's education and employment, failed to develop gender equality and harmony in partnerships in regard to domestic chores and the care-taking of children. British-born artist Pauline Phedonos (b.1934), who married a Cypriot man, emphasises the necessity of one's need for tranquillity in order to produce art:

I wanted very much to paint [...] I just didn't have the time to do it. That was the problem. When you have your mind all to the children and the house or you have to buy the shopping. This is one of the reasons why women have not produced so much in Cyprus [...] I think it's very difficult when you are doing all these other things to produce. You need energy. You need mental and physical energy to create. If you don't have it you can't create. That's the problem. Men do it. Men don't bother at all about anything. We have to put up with all these things in Cyprus.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Interview with Rhea Bailey. Nicosia, 21 September 2010.

<sup>254</sup> Interview with Pauline Phedonos. Nicosia, 30 December 2010.

At this point, I argue that the question of domesticity set up overarching tensions in how women operated as maternal artists. For a number of women artists the family is one of the major factors in how they establish themselves as professional artists. Significantly, if there is support within the domestic network it is easier for women artists to produce art:

After getting married, I was lucky to have a mother-in-law willing to take care of the house, so that I could dedicate time to pottery. I never really learned how to take care of my children; my mother-in-law used to take care of the children and to prepare meals for us. I used to play with the children and 'my clay'. She was young and she was enjoying taking care of the house, so I had the opportunity to work as a professional artist.<sup>255</sup>

On the other hand, if there is only limited support from the family, women artists must deal with some intriguing tensions between care taking and creativity. While certain patterns did change and women gained access to art education, the full status of the artist was not granted to them easily. Women's long association with the domestic sphere left little time for women artists to dedicate time to making art or establishing a career. Ukrainian artist Sonia Delaunay's (1885-1979) words reveal this tension: 'I have had three lives: one for Robert, one for my son and grandsons, and a shorter one for myself. I have no regrets for not having been more concerned with myself. I really didn't have the time'.<sup>256</sup> Likewise, women artists in Cyprus have little time to produce art due to domestic tensions:

The family supports you up to a point. They say they support you but then they say what are we having for dinner? And have you thought what are we having in the weekend? And shall we go to Mukta village? And you can say, 'no I want to paint' and then [family says] 'What? We have to go there; we can't let Mukta down' and this sort of

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<sup>255</sup> Interview with Nina Iacovou. Nicosia, 14 December 2009.

<sup>256</sup> Quoted in Grosenick, Uta. *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Century*, London: Taschen, p.98.

things. There is a problem with families for women; there is no doubt about it; a big problem.<sup>257</sup>

I deduce that social and private attitudes that 'women's primary place' is the domestic sphere act as obstacles to women's production and establishment of careers. As Virginia Woolf wrote in her 1929 *A Room of One's Own*<sup>258</sup> it is a necessity for a woman to have financial autonomy and a personal working space where she can work without distractions related to domestic chores. Phedonos describes the necessity of having a room of her own, without family interventions:

I built the house in Pafos which I did myself, I didn't show it to my husband until I had finished it even if he is an architect. Otherwise it would have been 'no, we do not need three bathrooms, no we do not need this or that'. I did it because I wanted to have a space somewhere that it was mine [...] The only thing was to build a place where I could feel that it was mine and I never let [my husband] use that room.<sup>259</sup>

Bailey, Stephanides, Phedonos and other women artists of the post-Independence generation discovered the difficulties in balancing home life and a professional career – a delicate balancing act made necessary by patriarchal constitutions that had left little space for women to negotiate their personal choices. For the most part, these choices were complicated by economic dependence and the requirement for personal time in which practice art. In the next discussion I explore women artists' negotiations of the transition between private and public sphere. In this, I analyse the strategies employed by Rhea Bailey to represent the house as a visual construction representing social attitudes and family structure in post-Independent Cyprus.

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<sup>257</sup> Interview with Pauline Phedonos. Nicosia, 30 December 2010.

<sup>258</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. London: Hogarth Press, 1929.

<sup>259</sup> Interview with Pauline Phedonos. Nicosia, 30 December 2010.

## Exploring Domestic Strategies: *The Threat of the Dirty House*<sup>260</sup>

Art happens above the personality. The soul evolves itself through art on a higher level of consciousness and can be an independent observer of personality (which depends on society, upbringing, heredity ...) working on its transformation in new awareness.<sup>261</sup>

For Rhea Bailey, an artist trained in the United Kingdom, art's contribution to life is a spiritual one. Through her practice, collective unconscious esoteric and metaphysical experiences that cannot be described are animated into visual shapes and colours.<sup>262</sup> Bailey strongly believes in 'maturing an idea' rather than in 'painting a picture'. Her practice seeks to express the intense emotional state created by an external event occurring in the past. In doing so, Bailey constructs visual codes through which to produce past powerful experiences:

Normally a painting is a synthesis of forms which are related to one another in a sensational way, as sequences. I put the elements together according to the sensations I get from them as I create them, out of the sensations that inner feelings create in me. These sensations are not especially personal but derive from the collective unconscious and become conscious through their transformation into matter.<sup>263</sup>

In this discussion I suggest that Bailey's practice reiterated domestic experiences as a response to gender relations in post-1960 Cyprus. These experiences are represented in a variation of visual images, such as *Fusion of Time* (1974), *Memories of the Yard* (1979) and *Diptych of Life with Watermelon* (1969), all revealing alternative views of women's lives within patriarchal Cyprus.

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<sup>260</sup> I borrow this title from Myria Vassiliadou, 'Women's Construction of Women: On Entering the Front Door, in *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol.5, 3, May 2004.

<sup>261</sup> Rhea Bailey Archive.

<sup>262</sup> Rhea Bailey Archive.

<sup>263</sup> Rhea Bailey Archive.

In *Fusion of Time*, fig. 29, a man, two plants and a cruciform shape article attached to a window are found together in various angles of the image. In the scene, the immobility of the figure and the austere symmetrical lines of the space introduce to the viewer what Bailey constructs as a *Fusion of Time*. The strategically structured composition offers a contradiction in the space; the white and pink walls narrow the space while the black corner extends the perspective of the image. The man sitting in the foreground of the image is situated in a quasi-empty space, possibly the inside of a house. Bailey's usage of vivid yellow, green and white indicates particular visual codes. I suggest that this work is bounded to a localised perspective of Cyprus: the use of bright yellow, green and white together recalls Cyprus' flag.

The image offers a powerful visual with which to identify women's position between the patriarchal tradition of the past and post-Independence modernity. Thus, *Fusion of Time* is a straightforward representational strategy to approach women's transition in patriarchal Cyprus. The work is produced as a construction of a large space within walls – boundaries of the private sphere – alongside a background setting that leads to a large dark Christian cross between black walls.

I am arguing that the man's image, along with the universal ecclesiastical icon, the cross, reveals the close relationship between Greek Orthodox religion and patriarchal society. Bailey's choice to represent the man in a darkish purple-black formal outfit (suit, gilet and tie) and clean, shining shoes connotes that the represented man belongs to the upper middle class. In addition to the man's formal appearance, the emphasis on his masculine moustache reveals a fusion of time caught between tradition and modernity.

Indeed, *Fusion of Time* is situated as a transition between traditional patriarchal Cyprus and post-Independent modernity; while in the past women in Cyprus held a passive and supportive role in relation to men, post-independent Cyprus endorsed full-time employment for women. This was a massive challenge for the patriarchal structure since it formulated an open channel for women to enter the public



sphere. While full-time employment set women in the public domain, at the same time it exposed them to the 'threat of the dirty house'; as Myria Vassiliadou notes:

Dilemmas are posed in these women's lives since they need to work in order both to contribute to the household income (and to be 'modern' and 'Western'), whereas at the same time the family needs to be looked after (by women) and the house to be kept clean.<sup>264</sup>

While entering the public domain and seeking a career-oriented future, women found themselves in a double role between the privacy of the house and the exposure of the street. Significantly, the function of the house as private and the street as public are 'interrelated and work in conjunction with one another, reflecting the dominant discourses on sexuality and morality'.<sup>265</sup>

It is significant to note that there is a specific strategy employed by Bailey in presenting the 'house' as a transition itself between tradition and modernity. Significantly, the man's posture recalls photography taken in 1960s studios. Such photographs were only taken by professional photographers in town, to be kept as memories in the family album. In referencing an image taken from the family album, Bailey indicates a past that is still breathing in some ways, for example in Bailey's memory. Bailey employs this strategy in several works, for example the 1975 *Memories of the Deserted Chapel*, in which she represents a figure of her grandfather taken from an old photo. Significantly, Bailey's strategy explores the politics of domestic duties while questioning gender discourses in modern Cyprus.

Though there is no female presence in *Fusion of Time*, the work bears feminine-constructed aspects. The centralised image of a side table with flower and embroidery suggests a link between women, nature and crafts. Rozsika Parker examines in *The Subversive Stitch* (1984) the making of embroidery as art/craft created in the domestic sphere, usually by women. Parker made a stirring

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<sup>264</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria. 'Women's Construction of Women: On Entering the Front Door', op. cit.. p

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

comparison of embroidery made by women in the domestic sphere for 'love' and painting produced mainly by men in the public sphere, as money is crucial in identifying 'different conditions of productions and different condition of receptions'.<sup>266</sup>

In particular, for centuries embroidery was synonymous with femininity – a signifier of 'the embroiderer [being] to be a deserving, worthy wife and mother' while 'displaying the value of a man's wife and the condition of his economic circumstances'.<sup>267</sup> Thus, I consider that in *Fusion of Time*, Bailey represents symbolically the female presence while challenging the male-dominated tradition in Cyprus. The figure of the man is shown alone in a large space occupied by two flowerpots and a side table. Bailey challenges academic tradition evoking traditional patterns of female-male relations. Her choice to represent a male figure within the domestic sphere (this is clear from the side walls) without company provokes attention to the norms of traditional art. Surely, images of men seated are not as often seen as women posed alone in interiors in artworks.

On a similar pattern is the 1979 *Memories of the Yard*, fig. 30, where Bailey structures a house's yard and four figures within its space. The composition, similarly to *Fusion of Time*, is composed of a young couple, a man and a girl are found along with various plants in the space of a house yard. As in *Fusion of Time*, high white-and-purple walls define the space while the elongated path leads to a black door. The image seems almost surreal if we compare the height of the house in comparison with its door and the represented figures. Here, in contrast to *Fusion of Time*, all figures are presented in shaded white and greyish colours, almost invisible in the image. The figures – a married couple shown on their wedding day, a seated adult man and a young girl – are all facing the viewer, in contrast to the man in *Fusion of Time*, who was looking towards the side of the scene.

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<sup>266</sup> Parker, Rozsika. *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: Women's Press, 1984, p. 5.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

All the figures seem to have been taken from photographs,<sup>268</sup> reminiscent of the traditional family album. Here, the couple is shown in wedding outfits, most probably from a photo taken on their wedding day, both standing and looking down upon the viewer. I propose here that, in presenting an image of a wedding and, in particular, the image of the white wedding dress, Bailey uses this strategy to portray a representation of one of the most important days in a woman's life: her marriage and consequently, her new role as wife and mother. The reference to the wedding is of particular importance if we consider the way in which partnership in Mediterranean cultures follows patriarchal conventions (female subordination) and traditional social codes of practices (women as child-bearers and women's subordinate role in Cypriot society). Significantly, the image of the seated man defines such patriarchal conventions, while the young girl's presence challenges traditional practices.

The large colour surface of the background, along with the intentional lack of details and decorative elements, indicates the course towards abstraction that Bailey employs in her later works. Parallel lines in both works recede to the background towards the vanishing point<sup>269</sup> that is the window in *Fusion of Time* and the door in *Memories of the Yard*.

While in *Fusion of Time* vivid colours and detailed stroke lines embodied a temporal stillness, in *Memories of the Yard* pastel tones and loose strokes suggest mobility. The complexity of identity and gender relations, as well as memory and domestic experiences, are interwoven in temporal private spaces. Bailey's past and her visual reconstruction of the past evolves into a strategy that is actually a construction of women's transition. Employing fragments of the past, Bailey creates a poetic tone and a powerful symbolism. Undoubtedly, Bailey negotiates here the struggle between tradition and modernity, a struggle to overcome patriarchal expectations through the marriage mechanism. The construction of the visual triangle – married couple, man and young girl – reframes gender roles and

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<sup>268</sup> In addition to the family album, Bailey uses photographs published in newspapers.

<sup>269</sup> I refer to the vanishing point as the point in an image in which parallel lines appear to converge.

behaviour while indicating the change in social practices and the ‘threat of the dirty house’.

Myria Vassiliadou indicates that in order to analyse women’s discourses ‘one has to enter their homes, into the so-called private sphere’.<sup>270</sup> Entering women’s homes – their secured private and familiar space – is ‘an act of particular importance in the case of Cyprus’ particularly since ‘the “house”, like the patriarchal, capitalist state is a structure of oppression and domination’.<sup>271</sup> I discussed in Chapter 1 the pre-1960s socio-political conditions that confined women to the private sphere as domestic workers and child-carers. The domestic sphere required a well-maintained house, and it was a woman’s responsibility to maintain the cleanliness of her house. Potential failure as a homemaker would have consequences with regard to the husband’s perceived honour while eliciting rumours about a wife’s sexual purity.

This is of particular importance due to the symbolic connotation, as Jill Dubisch puts it, of the house as ‘the special responsibility of the woman, and she [was] both functionally and symbolically associated with it [...] Ideally, a woman should be confined to the house, leaving its boundaries only as necessity demands and never for idle or frivolous reasons’.<sup>272</sup> The traditional house is a place of ‘cleanliness and order’, as opposed to the *street*, ‘a place of both dirt and immorality’:

Here, order and control are, to some extent at least, absent [...] In this outside world are forces that threaten order and family life. A common euphemism for adultery is to say that a woman deceives her husband ‘in the street’. By spending too much time outside the house, a woman is not only neglecting her domestic duties, but also

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<sup>270</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria. ‘Women’s Construction of Women: On Entering the Front Door’, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Dubisch, Jill. *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, p. 197.

may be engaging in polluting and destructive behaviour, such as illicit sexual activity [...] which can disrupt social relations and damage a family's reputation [...] Of course, this does not mean that a woman never leaves the house, for there are a variety of legitimate duties that may take her outside [...] But these are all activities connected with her role as maintainer of the house in both its physical and spiritual aspects. A woman who is not in her own home when her husband and children return and need her is neglecting her most important duties.<sup>273</sup>

The significance of a clean house implies in that fact that the woman who is keeping it clean is also perceived as clean, indicating her sexual purity.<sup>274</sup> Certainly, arguments on the antithesis of the domestic boundaries (house) to the broader area of public streets (society) supplement certain patriarchal institutional structures. In this, the house has an important place in the 'symbolism of gender and house' as a place of sanctuary, as opposed to the competitive and hostile outside sphere.<sup>275</sup> Consequently, a house's condition reflects the sexuality and morality of the woman responsible for it, while social codes of honour and shame impose upon women some of the most important functional and symbolic activities. As a result, a woman who fails or neglects to accomplish domesticated chores is subject to the socio-political context of rumours about the woman's sexual morality. Beyond this, however, I wish to examine Bailey's representation of the yard as a transitional space between the house and the public life:

Usually opening off the kitchen, it is more public in nature, for it is attached to the house yet outside it. Whether it fronts onto the street

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<sup>273</sup> Dubisch, Jill. *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>274</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria. 'Women's Construction of Women: On Entering the Front Door', op. cit., p.

53.

<sup>275</sup> Dubisch, op. cit., p. 200.

or faces other porches to the rear of the house, it serves as a means of connecting the house to public life.<sup>276</sup>

I will draw on Dubisch's explanation of the yard as an intermediate outlet between the private and public sphere to explore Bailey's 1968 *Dptych of Life with Watermelon*, fig. 31. Similar to *Memories of the Yard*, this work also represents a courtyard. Here, in two canvases assembled together, a scene is presented in which a nude figure with stretched hands faces the viewer, while another nude female figure is seated on the other side of the image. The entire image is constructed with rapid stroke lines and bold oil strokes of green, white and brown shades. As in the other works, Bailey depicts plants in the painting; in fact, here tree leaves dominate the right side of the diptych. The female figure on the right diptych is represented in an abstract form with a red flower on her hair. The other female image, in the left diptych is also represented in an abstract form, without any specific facial or corporeal characteristics.

Interestingly, the left diptych of the image is divided in two by a vertical line that divides the canvas into two scenes. The left-hand scene is composed of the seated female figure and an elongated path that leads to a door where we see a figure in black dress holding an infant. The two scenes are connected by the architectural arc of the house. In the middle of the painting we find a tablecloth with a watermelon on it. In the foreground we can see an abstract representation of a wooden stepladder that fades away in the fusion of the tree leaves. Another door is shown in the right-hand diptych, where a white shade creates the vanishing line of the image. Bailey employs muted green colours and saturated hue vivid red found in both the watermelon and the flower decorating the female figure's hair. I would propose that the red coloured elements have a formal, optical function which attracts attention and thus contributes to the meanings of forms within the pictorial structure.

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

I suggest that in this diptych Bailey presents possibly one of her most meaningful symbolic images, using memory as a narration while negotiating her theme-subjects as past events. Here, Bailey places herself as a teenager in the yard of her old house. In Bailey's words:

This work is a memory of our yard in St. Kassianos, the place I was born and lived until I was six years old. It shows the inner yard where many things took place. I placed myself as a teenager in that work even though I was not a teenager at that time.<sup>277</sup>

Obviously, this work visually joined Bailey's past as a child with her role as an artist. By using this visual arrangement and the form of the two scenes as one, Bailey challenges the generally subordinate image of women in a transitional space, the inner yard of her old house. Therefore, we find in the background, standing at the house's door, a maternal figure (possibly Bailey's grandmother) dressed in the traditional black outfit of mourning and holding an infant while looking towards the yard.<sup>278</sup> The viewer is positioned outside the scene through the visual conjunction of Bailey's narration, and is able to see the transition between the private and the public.

Significantly, Bailey represents herself at three different stages: as an infant cared for by her grandmother, as a teenager seated in a rather timid pose and as a young woman shown nude without any facial characteristics. I argue that the work indicates the significance of the politics of female emancipation to the concept of the post-1960 period. The representation of the female nude encodes signs of changes for women not only in the domestic space but also in outside spaces. The women represented in the painting are engaged fully in their own activities. The absence of a male figure in the image and the engagement of a visualisation of female sexuality suggest liberal attitudes towards the newly emergent social changes.

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<sup>277</sup> Interview with Rhea Bailey. Nicosia, 21 September 2010.

<sup>278</sup> In Cyprus, as in other Mediterranean countries, mourning practices require widowed women to wear black for the rest of their lives.

The works of Bailey and other women artists engaged with these complex debates of gender roles and cultural processes set up the operation of politicised strategies. Such strategies negotiate the interrelationships between private and public, the inside and the outside, the house and the street. In addition, such strategies seek to confront the complex structure of socio-political conceptions of gender in post-Independent Cyprus and the multifaceted nature of women's subordination, as well as the conditions affecting women artists' lives and careers.

Significantly, while entering the public domain as art teachers and seeking a career-orientated future, women artists found themselves taking on a double role between the privacy of the house and the exposure of the public. Although urban middle-class women artists might be less affected by cultural processes due to their more career-orientated status, they are certainly not excluded from 'the symbolic ideas and moral evaluations attached to the home, "proper" behaviour and femininity; rather, different facades for the *same* power discourses are constructed in order for them to be included'.<sup>279</sup>

In this discussion I explored the ways in which Bailey's practice negotiates the social changes being wrought in post-independent Cyprus. The process in which women artists produced art in the post-1960s period reflects conventional domestic tendencies and gender economies. However, having discussed representations of the house as a venue of employing domestic strategies, I now wish to explore women artists' strategies in entering the public domain and their negotiations with regard to choosing a career and the 'public-space' life.

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<sup>279</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria. 'Women's Construction of Women: On Entering the Front Door', op. cit., p. 54.



## Entering the Public Sphere: The Modernised World of Cyprus

After graduating I refused to teach. I wished nothing else but painting. After my studies, being around 22 years old, I wanted to travel around Europe and experience other cultures, to learn about life in a few words.<sup>280</sup>

Maria Tourou (b.1943) is an intriguing case: a Greek Cypriot woman artist who spent long periods travelling around the world after international training in London, Italy and the U.S. Tourou is among the few artists to have come to artistic maturity in the 1960s, thus faced with major changes, including the opportunity to become accommodated to a different way of living while practicing and exhibiting her work in international venues. Significantly, Tourou was a single woman: this allowed her to live for five years in Colombia and 16 years in the U.S, operating in an international art market:

I got used to a different way of living, painting all the time, exhibiting my work. It was a different life, full of adventures. It was not difficult because I was confident. I always found ways to survive because I believed in what I was doing.<sup>281</sup>

Tourou's practice reveals a distinctive signature style; all her visuals are composed with vivid colours, representing simplified figures floating on canvas. Examples are *Grand Prix* (1967) and *Eros* (1968), both of which present abstract figures in a mixture of colours. Tourou employs colours as an approach to represent figures that, as she explains, are always 'flying' in search of identity, something that emerges from her subconscious.

*Eros*, fig. 32, is a symbolic work composed of five abstract figures, all presented on a large white surface with the only representative elements a blue cloud and a yellow sun. The larger area is covered by blue colour and in its sphere a figure is

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<sup>280</sup> Interview with Maria Tourou. Lefkara, 17 September 2010.

<sup>281</sup> Interview with Maria Tourou. Lefkara, 17 September 2010.

shown in a long yellow dress, with blue wings. In the background a two-headed figure in a pink dress is shown along with a pair of abstract figures. On a different level is shown another figure, in pale colours, seemingly floating next to the sun and the blue cloud. Notably, all the figures are presented as calm except the one in the middle, which is open-mouthed and awkwardly posed.

In this image, Tourou employs structural elements to represent a subject-theme taken from Greek mythology. On a blank canvas, a mixture of oil and pastel technique form a structural element of colours which together with the figures, underline Tourou's approach of presenting a cyclical movement in the image. Considering the title of the work, *Eros*, I consider that the figure floating next to the cloud and sun is Eros, the Greek god of love. Here, Eros is represented with pale skin, playing the flute with one hand while holding some red flowers in the other. Significantly, Eros is presented outside the large blue area in which the other figures are placed.

In observing the central figure of the image, the awkwardly posed figure in a yellow dress, I propose that the facial expression recalls another mythological figure of Greek culture: the icon of Medusa. According to Jane Ellen Harrison Medusa's 'lovely terrible face had power to turn men into stone'.<sup>282</sup> Harrison argues:

It is equally apparent that in her essence Medusa is a head and nothing more; her potency only begins when her head is severed, and that potency resides in the head; she is in a word a mask with a body later appended.<sup>283</sup>

Representations of Medusa for the most part depict a typical ugly face with an open mouth and snakes rising from the head. Thus, we find in *Eros* a figure whose face evokes a veritable representation of Medusa's human head. The association of Eros and Medusa is interesting, particularly since Eros represents a relationship

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<sup>282</sup> Harrison, J. Ellen. *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 187.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

between two persons. In considering that in modern Cyprus a woman's most important day was that of her wedding, I suggest that the association of Eros and Medusa acts as a strategy against social stereotypes of women in post-1960 Cyprus.

Significantly, through the years, Medusa has been associated with discourses that are not directly related to the myth of the Gorgon monster. I am particularly interested in the adoption of the icon of Medusa by a number of feminists who recognise her as a facet of their own rage and as a source of women's power.<sup>284</sup>

I suggest that Tourou's employment of the Medusa iconography is a response to women's conditions in the post-1960 period; Medusa's constant malevolence forms a powerful symbolic device for women who sought to gain public power in Cyprus. Here, Tourou reassesses the icon of Medusa, representing the figure through a similar approach to that of the other represented figures; 'floating, without roots'.<sup>285</sup> According to Tourou, her figures are mirrors of herself: 'they are very similar to me. You will always find me travelling with just a luggage. Obviously, I know my roots are in Cyprus [...] Perhaps once my figures stop floating I will reside myself somewhere'.<sup>286</sup> Significantly, Tourou's choice to live abroad and practice as a full-time artist functions as a device which confounds the traditional expectations of a woman's role in Cypriot society.

In addition, Tourou's words emphasise her decision to be a full-time artist, turning away from the traditional norms of practicing art as a secondary source of income:

After living for sixteen years in Washington I came across artists who were thinking of getting a job to get a salary and pay for the expenses. They would take a job and then leave art. You cannot really carry out a practice if you have to do other work. You would not

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<sup>284</sup> For more see Wilk, Stephen, *Medusa: Solving the Mystery of the Gorgon*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>285</sup> Interview with Maria Tourou. Lefkara, 17 September 2010.

<sup>286</sup> Interview with Maria Tourou. Lefkara, 17 September 2010.

have the time or energy to do so. I used to tell them that I will carry on and eventually I managed to survive.<sup>287</sup>

In becoming a full-time artist Tourou situates herself among the liberated generation of women who resist the threat of the 'dirty house' and the social stigma of being a 'spinster'. Her affiliation with an international art market placed Tourou as an active participant in modernist practices, participating in exhibitions with eminent artists such as Mexican painter Rufino Tamayo (1899–1991) and meeting prominent figures in the twentieth century cultural scene, such as French artist Françoise Gilot (1921). Most significantly, in standing outside the social stereotypes of women's status, Tourou challenges the gendered economies associated within Greek Cypriot women's conditions in becoming artists.

As this chapter demonstrates, during the course of Independence, women challenged the private/public division while negotiating gender roles and social attitudes. Such negotiations were particularly made by women artists who positioned themselves both inside and outside social attitudes on women's primary position as care-givers within the domestic family structure. Pauline Phedonos explains the conditions for a woman artist's necessity to grow as a citizen and an autonomous individual:

I needed to feel that I was teaching art. I had to work because we needed the money. We had an apartment with just the basics and we needed some more furniture. Father in law wasn't going to help to get something; no one was going to help. It did me good that I was not in the house all the time, so for that, I had a maid, and so I was able to go out and work. I didn't want to not work. Because I think I would have stop the maid and again that would have meant I had no time to paint. At least, when I was teaching, I was in the environment of painting with children and everything. That was better for me than

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<sup>287</sup> Interview with Maria Tourou. Lefkara, 17 September 2010.

staying at home. I was trained to do that as a specialist teacher and we definitely needed the money.<sup>288</sup>

Significantly, here we have the case of a woman artist who, despite the fact that was associated to the Cypriot culture after getting married to a Greek Cypriot, had to confront both domestic and professional obstacles once she entered the labour domain. Being an 'outsider' and a woman with no dowry benefits, she encountered hostility within the private sphere – through lack of family support<sup>289</sup> – and a limited art practice due to teaching art classes:

A really big part of my life was the English School which is one of the reasons I never did much paintings until I finally decided to resign in 1982. I thought I have got to paint; I just cannot carry on teaching with no time to paint [...] That is why I left and organised my first exhibition in 1983.<sup>290</sup>

Despite social and psychological obstacles to women's participation in professional positions, the 1960 Cyprus constitution provided women with the right to vote and be nominated for elections.<sup>291</sup> Another result was the creation of a structure of compulsorily free education which permitted girls and boys to receive an equal level of education. This improved women's social and economic positions, given the increased scale of women graduating from overseas universities. Nonetheless, critical to this argument is the fact that as Maria Hadjipavlou points out:

[...] the social and psychological obstacles to women's participation in high professional positions, in politics and at the decision-making lever, include a social attitude that 'women's place is primarily in the home', inadequate education and training, few positions allocated for

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<sup>288</sup> Interview with Pauline Phedonos. Nicosia, 30 December 2010.

<sup>289</sup> For more details on Pauline's relationship with her parents in law, see Pauline Phedonos' interview.

<sup>290</sup> Interview with Pauline Phedonos. Nicosia, 30 December 2010.

<sup>291</sup> Pyrgos, Maria. *The Cypriot Woman at a Glance.*, op. cit., p. 55.

women, lack of support from other women and the family and a fear of handling power.<sup>292</sup>

Thus, despite the propaganda of gender equality, the perpetual endorsement of traditional gender roles set up tensions between care taking, working and creativity. In general, the majority of women artists had to operate within the 'double shift' debates, caught between social attitudes and personal choices.

Significantly, the generation of women artists to mature after Independence had experienced the cultural development of the island. During the 1960s, several foreign embassies formed their cultural centres; alongside the active British Institute were launched the American Institute, the Goethe Institute, the French Cultural Centre and the Soviet Cultural Centre. Without a doubt the establishment of these overseas cultural centres offered Cypriot women the opportunity to familiarise themselves with other countries and to experience new artistic scenes. Particularly significant was the 1964 establishment of E. KA. TE (The Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts) which operates as a non-profit organisation aiming to promote the arts in Cyprus. Among the 17 founders of E. KA. TE, only one woman artist was present at the first assembly in 1964: Elli Mitzi, whose work I discuss in Chapter 4.

For women artists of this period, the search for discursive strategies to define their access to the public sphere was undertaken in a range of different contexts. Stella Michaelidou (b.1941) is among the prominent artists of this period and one of the first women artists to be involved in art marketing, establishing two art galleries in Cyprus. Significantly, Michaelidou was among the first Cypriot women involved in experimental art, particularly in happenings. Nevertheless, Michaelidou considers herself primarily a painter and, therefore, employs a variety of medium and materials while experimenting with new techniques and styles. Examples are 1973's *Rubbish Bin* and the 1974 *The Sixth Floor*, where an obvious international

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<sup>292</sup> Hadjipavlou, Maria. *Women and Change in Cyprus: Feminisms and Gender in Conflict*, op. cit., p. 10.

influence can be seen, particularly from the years she spent in Paris while studying at Grande Chaumie Academy and the Ecole Estienne.

Significantly, Michaelidou, through *Rubbish Bin*, fig. 33, use in her work the technique of collage. The collage features a large yellow bin at the centre of the work that seems to be fixed on the grey wall. Above the bin is a yellow setting with the black-lettered inscription *Ne jetez rien a terre ces paniers sont a votre disposition*. The work is divided into two grey sections by a red line; the upper, larger section is composed of the yellow bin and the French inscription and the other section forms a collage of a pack of cigarettes, used matches, mints and used tickets, possibly collected from the French train line.

Michaelidou employed a composition with large areas of simple acrylic colours such as grey, yellow and red, possibly to produce a contemplative response from the viewer. In addition, the inscription 'Ne jetez rien a terre ces paniers sont a votre disposition' (translated as 'do not throw anything on ground, these baskets are at your disposal') gives an obvious instruction regarding the desired condition of the ground. What is particularly interesting is that despite the instructions given by the sign, Michaelidou's basket is empty and some litter is positioned on the ground. *Rubbish Bin* embodies a politicised irony, underlying the meaninglessness of modernity. Possibly influenced by artist Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) and his 'Combines' collages, Michaelidou's practice involves references of internationalism in using fragments of used objects.

Significantly, Michaelidou challenged the conventional artistic processes through subversive practice such as *Rubbish Bin*. I argue that Michaelidou's collage can be understood within the context of her direct approach to social-political matters in post-independent Cyprus. Her choice of a bin as the subject matter reveals a powerful strategy in response to the post-1960 political conditions. The visual structure that Michaelidou presents with her collage suggests a foreign presence in local politics while illustrating the political situation after the 1963 inter-ethnic conflicts, partly encouraged by the two 'motherlands', Greece and Turkey.

I consider that there is a strong metaphor in *Rubbish Bin* that undermines the threat of the 'dirty house'. Michaelidou's direct indication that people should 'use the bin and not leave litter on the ground' is, I suggest, a strategy to establish women's transition between tradition and modernity. In its use of the image of a rubbish bin which is usually found in public areas, Michaelidou's image sets up a negotiation on accessing the public sphere. What might be at risk here is women's self-definition with regard to this complicated transition, particularly in the troubled post-1960 period.

In the women-centred work *The Sixth Floor*, fig. 34, Michaelidou structures the space through a symmetrical composition. An austere structure composition is presented on the canvas, with an interaction of colours and forms. A corner is created with the combination of lines and large brushstrokes of acrylic blue and grey colours. The ground of the corner is depicted with red and black marks, which we also find in the upper left-hand corner of the painting. Michaelidou uses two red squares to create a new composition within the space. What is particularly interesting is the repetition of the horizontal object presented within the two squares. The repeated theme is formed by the curved shape of female breasts made with clean black lines and shades. The replicated subject-theme is presented without many details and with the only difference the colour: one is black whereas the other is blue.

I consider that Michaelidou's presentation of a repeated black-and-white subject-theme offers a new substance to representations of female nudes in post-Independent Cyprus. The different presentation, with an obvious modernist influence, offers the possibility to observe the object with a different perception and discover the neutrality of the form. Presenting the female body in an unusual pattern-shape marks a shift away from the expression of any sort of emotions and, particularly detaches the subject from any possible association with maternal images or pleasure poses.



The title of the painting may have been taken from the 1972 play *Sixieme Etage* (French for *Sixth Floor*) by the French writer Alfred Gehri (1895–1972) which had enormous worldwide success in that period.<sup>293</sup> The play's story takes place during the 1930s economic crisis: a group of people co-exist on the sixth floor of a Parisian building. There is an obvious influence from the Paris art scene – as in *Rubbish Bin* – employed in Michaelidou's work. This is apparent in the selected title and theme, which sets up women's experiences as the central point in *The Sixth Floor*. I suggest that Michaelidou's replication of the two female nudes represents women's transition between private and public lives and their dual role as house carers and artists. In representing women's presence in a replicated, simplified drawing, Michaelidou emphasises the renegotiation of the boundaries – the nude is presented within a square – between the public and private spheres, and the difficulties women faced in the post-1960 period.

As discussed throughout the chapter, women as makers of art challenged the public/private division while negotiating socio-economic changes with regard to the roles of women as domestic workers and the balance of home and career within the patriarchal system. It is a fact that women's dual activities caused great tension for women artists, who, in questioning the order of the household in post-1960 Cyprus, renegotiated their duties and responsibilities. Women artists negotiated their transition from the traditional roles of wife/mother and household carer, marking a 'modernisation' of public life and career that was established throughout the years of the Cyprus Republic.

This transition was greatly affected by the subsequent political events which positioned women as a military device of nationalistic discourse. Despite Cyprus' being granted formal independence in 1960, the constitutional arrangements proved unworkable. From 1960 to 1973, the ethno-political division widened around the island as Greece and Turkey 'were both using Cyprus as a pawn in

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<sup>293</sup> Considered the most successful of Gehri's plays, it was performed 20,000 times in 40 countries, produced on radio and television in 26 countries and was adapted into a film.

their long-running conflict'.<sup>294</sup> In 1963 Turkish Cypriots withdrew from the constitutional government and established their own administration in their own enclaves – this was the start of the physical separation of the two communities. In 1974, the Greek fascist junta attempted a military coup against Cyprus in support of the extremist nationalist Greek Cypriot group EOKA B. This was soon followed by a Turkish military invasion that resulted in the displacement of 200,000 Greek Cypriots and the occupation of 40 per cent of Cyprus' territory in the north. In the following discussion I will explore women's gendered experience of the 1974 and the strategies employed by women artists in representing the effects of the armed conflict, the aftermath of military occupation and the tragedy of ethnic cleansing.

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<sup>294</sup> Cockburn, Cynthia. *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 57.

## Chapter 4

### Greek Cypriot Women Artists and the 1974 Invasion

#### Introduction

Before 1974, in our village they (her two daughters) used to look after their houses, they had nice big houses that my husband I [sic] spent years and years of hard work to build. [...] They were 'queens' in their homes, now they have been living in barracks for such a long time. I look after the children so that they can go out to work and bring their wages for all of us. We are trying to build again two small houses for them and two rooms for me on a piece of land the government gave us here. [...] My daughters never worked for other people. If they had free time they used to work in our fields or with their husbands. Now, they are in the factory under the orders of that man... What can we do?

(Refugee grandmother)<sup>295</sup>

Chapter 4 examines the specific effects of the 1974 socio-political upheaval experienced by Greek Cypriot women artists during and in the aftermath of the war. In exploring visual patterns I am mostly concerned with women's conditions in the armed conflict, the aftermath of the military occupation and the tragedy of ethnic cleansing. Thus, I discuss the 1974 war as the phenomenon that had the biggest impact on women's art in Cyprus since the national liberation struggle.

In exploring the impact that the war had on women's art, I discuss strategies employed in representing women's positions in a conflict that is often surpassed by the sheer presence of male political power. For Cypriot women, living in a patriarchal culture, ruled thoroughly by men, had an impact on their own identities

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<sup>295</sup> Quoted in Roussou, Maria. *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, University of London, Institute of Education, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), 1985, p. 572.

as women. To highlight this, I discuss the 1974 invasion as a gendered experience of a patriarchal war in which women were objectified as devices of nationalism. Such experiences had an impact on the art of Bailey and Trimiklinioti, who represented in *Karmi* and *Lament for Tylliria* a woman-to-woman understanding of women's experiences. I analyse the work of Spyros Dimitriadis to explore the symbolic image of women as bearers of the nation.

In exploring women artists' deployment of the traumatic experience of loss, I analyse the images created by Bailey and Trimiklinioti and I introduce the work of Elli Mitzi. In discussing their practices I am exploring Greek Cypriot women's visual representations of loss and of their new status and identity as refugees. In exploring such visual legacy I shall draw on research conducted to understand women's experiences throughout the invasion.<sup>296</sup>

In this chapter I introduce the strategy of representing 'Lost Aphrodites' – employed by women artists in negotiating women's conditions and reclaiming Cyprus' loss. The employment of ancient Hellenic figures acts as a powerful device that forms, I argue, a new type of nationalism, deriving this time from women's part in an anti-war response. The last discussion in the chapter is of refugee artist Nina Iacovou. In this I explore the strategies employed to the traditional vessel *Koukkoumara* of Iacovou's hometown as narrations of Greek Cypriot women's physical, emotional and social conditions.

Critical to my argument are the nationalist practices that reinforced the gendered experience of the invasion even in its aftermath. As Maria Hadjipavlou puts it:

In the Greek Cypriot community many posters used in public spaces after the 1974 Turkish invasion depicted Greek Cypriot refugee women weeping and holding terrified babies or photographs of missing loved ones, all embodiments of the collective pain and

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<sup>296</sup> For comprehensive discussions, see Peter Loizos, *The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981 and Maria Roussou, *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, University of London, Institute of Education, (Unpublished PhD. Thesis), 1985.

suffering of Greek Cypriot refugees. Men were represented as fighters and heroes, with statues and war monuments erected in public places to honour them.<sup>297</sup>

Significantly, the majority of men's representations of the 1974 war adopt the symbolic description of Cyprus as a maternal female, producing symbolic images of women either mourning a loss or defending their children.<sup>298</sup> On the contrary, as I argue throughout the chapter, women artists engaged in representing women's experiences of the invasion through a far more direct approach.

Though many researchers tend to remain aloof and choose to describe the event in neutral terms, such as 'intervention',<sup>299</sup> the event itself is evidence of political bias between the two communities. While the 'intervention', is according to Greek Cypriots, clearly a 'Turkish invasion', this opposes Turkish Cypriots' view of it as a 'peace operation'. Despite the contrasting political codes, this research is devoted to the practice of Greek Cypriot women artists and, thus, the event is described from the perspective of invasion.

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<sup>297</sup> Hadjipavlou, Maria. *Women and Change in Cyprus: Feminisms and Gender in Conflict*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2010, p. 37.

<sup>298</sup> I discussed the idea of mother and nation in Chapter 2.

<sup>299</sup> Cockburn, Cynthia. *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 68.

## Women Caught up in Conflict

We left these things (meaning politics, war) to men and we had faith in them. They were our men who talked and talked for hours in the coffee shops about this politician and that, and the English and the American and the Turks. We used just to listen and hoped for the best... (She shakes her head, her voice becomes louder, she is angry and adds) They made a mess... We (women) shouldn't leave everything to the men. Men do not give birth and do not care much about killing people. We know, now what is peace and what is war.

(65-year old refugee woman)<sup>300</sup>

*Who Are We, Where Do We Come From, Where Are We Going To*, fig. 35, is unquestionably a social statement of Rhea Bailey's political convictions with regard to the events just before 1974. The 1974 work embodies a clear message of incisive socio-political satire, critically analysed by the artist. The work was initially based on a black and white newspaper image that had intrigued the artist and then became her own composition made by images that had provoked something in her subconscious. The artist confessed: 'I used many figures; images from old newspapers that used to be black and white and images which were not clear. I was creating my own collage. I was influenced by figures that provoked something in my subconscious'.<sup>301</sup> Around this period Bailey depicted various images of monkeys.<sup>302</sup> The image of *Who Are We, Where Do We Come From, Where Are We Going To* was taken from a photograph found in a newspaper; as Bailey said: 'it was taken from an image and I interpreted it like this, the grand monkey and the

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<sup>300</sup> Quoted in Roussou, Maria. *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, op. cit., p. 575.

<sup>301</sup> Interview with Rhea Bailey. Nicosia, 21 September 2010.

<sup>302</sup> It is interesting the fact that despite Bailey was herself reading the work as a social comment people close to her were able to read it as a personal comment as well. Bailey says in her interview: 'After the divorce, my ex-husband complained that all those monkeys were himself. But I never thought of this'. The misreading by Bailey's ex-husband is interesting in that he could identify himself with those kind of male monkey figures. Possibly this was the reason that he destroyed one of Bailey's artworks with an image of a monkey.

humanity. Isn't it always like that? Someone has the highest position and others are around him to take advantage'.<sup>303</sup>

The painting is a vertical image on a white background, representing in the front scene four monkeys, while in the background is shown a long line of other monkeys. All monkeys are depicted in suits and ties, and their shadows reflect images of animals on the white background. In this painting Bailey presents the monkeys in an outside space with the only decorative element being some black lines on the right-hand and in the upper part of the painting, which possibly represent gates. Here, Bailey employs three main colours – white, black and red – the latter of which is found only on the hat of the front monkey and on the upper part that separates the black gates from the rest of the image.

Bailey's satirical work contains a number of rather 'civilised' – or, at least, quasi-human – monkeys, standing in line in order to greet (in Bailey's words) the 'grand' monkey, the one who is in position of leadership. The appearance of the figures, all in suits, gives the impression that they are members of the middle and higher classes. Bailey's political position is clear; she symbolically depicts Cyprus' situation as a male-dominated country. The male monkeys' appearance does not seem to differ in any way; they have no facial expressions, no gestures and nothing to reveal their existence or attitude aside from their gaze towards their leader. This 'nothingness' is what makes the work so interesting and significant.

It is useful here to look again at the title of the work – *Who Are We, Where Do We Come From, Where Are We Going To* – which was initially used by Paul Gauguin in 1897. Obviously, there is a counterbalance of words – Gauguin's work is entitled *Where Do We Come From, What Are We, Where Are We Going* – and themes: Gauguin employs a Primitivism style in his Tahitian work, but Baileys' work is clearly far removed from Gauguin's primitive images of exotic women in Tahiti.

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<sup>303</sup> Interview with Rhea Bailey. Nicosia, 21 September 2010.

Gauguin's work is purely focused on women's representations whereas Bailey's cynical work is concerned with the male-dominated status of Cyprus.

I argue that Bailey's cynicism derives from the ambiguity of the national identity in relation to the ethnic conflict. She constructs a scene of male monkeys that strikes the viewer with the black figures, and their bizarre, animal-like shadows, against the white background. The central figure –the largest monkey – is presented differently from the other monkeys: he looks like an actual chimpanzee, presented with fur and no clothes. All monkey-figures are shown fully frontal, except the one in the front central scene. Here, Bailey depicts a hand-kissing gesture: the oversized monkey offers his hand with the palm facing downward; the other monkey bows towards the offered hand, which he holds, seeming likely to kiss it. Considering that hand-kissing is a gesture indicating respect among the conservative upper class and diplomats, I consider that Bailey constructs the image as a politicised response to the events that took place during the ethnic conflict.

Bailey's symbolic presentation of humans as monkeys reveals the political incomprehension of the time: 'monkeys as non-human [...] are unable to comprehend and appreciate adequately the human spirit's creation because the world of specifically human experience is closed for them. For them [it] is simply non-existent'.<sup>304</sup> Likewise, in reality, the indifference between the two communities became an agent of the ethnic conflict, which was supported by the incomprehension regarding cultural matters. At this point, I argue that Bailey's satirical response evolves into a strategy with universal significance. The artist's employment of monkey-figures within the framework of the maxim of the three wise monkeys – 'see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil' – confirms the western interpretation of the proverb: to turn a blind eye while at the same time refusing to acknowledge certain facts.

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<sup>304</sup> Gorny, Eugene. (March 1993) "The Anatomist" and "Monkeys as Critics" by Gabriel von Max', Article, available from <<http://www.netslova.ru/gorny/selected/max.htm>.> 12 July 2011.



An example of such a fact would be the bitter reality that Cyprus was:

[...] destined to be the location of multiple struggles for local and regional hegemony in order to fill the vacuum that imperialism had left behind. The settlement itself, which was supposed to achieve the fine balance required at the local and regional level, was in fact little more than what recently come to be known on the island as a 'non-paper'. This was due to local, regional and, indeed, global lack of will to safeguard the settlement on terms other than the preservation of the regional balance of power, the consequences for the local inhabitants notwithstanding.<sup>305</sup>

The local settlement came under threat soon after Cyprus' Independence; the balance of power was dependent on the question of which community had sovereignty over Cyprus. In addition, the island's political stability was defined by the 'cultural affinity between the two communities and their respective motherlands, and the motherlands' strategic calculations regarding the value of controlling Cyprus for their respective ends'.<sup>306</sup> Moreover, Oliver Richmond explains that given 'the absence of imperial control and the ideological stalemate of the superpowers, all four parties were provided with room for manoeuvre [...]'.<sup>307</sup>

Consequently, Cyprus's sovereignty was under the political power of the two 'motherlands' and the two communities shared a constitution in Cyprus' post-colonial period. However, political conflict gradually led to inter-communal violence and all four parties played the role of the 'wise monkey' that Bailey presents in her work. Bailey's construction places the viewer as directly involved in the scene – almost as if the viewer is also waiting to greet the leader in this parodic scene. Interestingly, this painting was produced in the same year as the Turkish military invasion of Cyprus.

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<sup>305</sup> Richmond, P. Oliver. 'Decolonisation and Post-Independence Causes of Conflict: The Case of Cyprus', in *Civil Wars*, Vol. 5, Issue 3, 2002, pp. 163-190, p. 176.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

Cynthia Cockburn, in asking the question 'how did Greek Cypriot women experience the troubled years of the 1960s?', points out that political histories are generally written by men and do not differentiate experiences by sex.<sup>308</sup> However, Greek Cypriot women who were caught up in the conflict<sup>309</sup> share doubts of what happened during the problematic years of the inter-communal fight. The political conditions that were predominantly controlled by men and were taken as read by earlier generations now led women to express an outrage towards politicians and diplomats of the period. Peter Loizos writes:

Why had they not heeded those leftists and assorted eccentrics who had argued that generosity to the Turkish Cypriots should be national policy? Why had Makarios not made a generous offer to the Turkish Cypriots during the five long years of the Inter-Communal Negotiations from 1968-73? [...] Why no 'olive branch' to the Turkish Cypriots in those years? 'What wouldn't we have given the Turks, just to stay in our properties?', they now said.<sup>310</sup>

Little is known of how women experienced the troubled post-Independence decade. Cynthia Cockburn, after interviewing Cypriot women – both Greek and Turkish Cypriots – who experienced the conflict as children, writes: 'many of these women say their parents had told them little about what was going on, out of a wish to shield youngsters from adult worries'.<sup>311</sup> Cockburn also concludes that: 'this meant, of course, that the children heard the shots and explosions in 1963 and experienced the new rules of caution and curfew, but usually had insufficient information to understand the new reality'.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Cockburn, *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>309</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the conflict during this period see Joseph Joseph, *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics: From Independence to the Threshold of the European Union*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985.

<sup>310</sup> Loizos, Peter. *The Heart Grown Bitter: a Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 134.

<sup>311</sup> Cockburn, *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

Daphne Trimikliniotti (b.1945) was 14 years old when she emigrated to London. During her studies at Hornsey College of Art, part of Middlesex University, she painted 1964's *Lament for Tylleria*, fig. 36. As in her other works, Trimikliniotti represents women's experiences with a key reference to the socio-political conditions in Cyprus. Thus, in *Lament for Tylleria*, she uses brown shades of oil colour on a wood surface, to represent the figure of a grieving woman. Using an expressionist technique, she employs large brush strokes to paint the woman's face and long neck from an unusual perspective. Woman's grief is highly emotive from the posture of her face – is facing up towards – and the facial expression – shut eyes and open jaws. Most importantly, is the body posture – the woman's hands are crossed at her chest. Trimikliniotti represents here the 1964 battle between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots that took place in the Tylleria area of Cyprus. After two days of battle, the Turkish Air Force intervened, attacking several populated locations with napalm bombs. In *Lament for Tylleria*, Trimikliniotti represents through the female figure women's agony at losing their family members, including civilians.

The generation of women artists who came to maturity in the political instability of the mid-1960s were significantly influenced by their Greek Cypriot schooling and family education in regard to the political division. The division which was first sketched in the mid-1960s was, as Cynthia Cockburn puts it, 'inscribed and over-inscribed on the island, turning cultures into interests, interests into enemies'.<sup>313</sup> The Turkish military invasion of 1974 resulted in the displacement of 200,000 Greek Cypriots and outlined the official division of Cyprus by the infamous Green Line. In the following section I discuss the 1974 invasion as a gendered experience and the effects of the war as gender-specific conditions.

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<sup>313</sup> Cockburn, *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 58.

## The Invasion as a Gendered Experience

Rhea Bailey's *Karmi, July 1974*, fig. 37, was produced one month after the invasion, and seems likely to have been the first visual representation of the tragic event. *Karmi* refers explicitly to women's subjectivity through the experience of forced migration during the first phase of the invasion, from 20 to 30 July 1974. In chapter 3 I introduced Bailey's paintings as a practice challenging past domesticated experiences as a response to gender relations in post-independent Cyprus. After 1974, Bailey's practice changed radically, in association with recent events and realities. For example, *Karmi* is located in northern Cyprus; two women wander outside with their children and an army tank is situated in the background.

In the foreground, five figures engage the viewer; two women holding two children by their hands and a young adolescent staring at the viewer. The work suggests that we are seeing a crucial moment of the war; we are viewing the excruciating moment of women experiencing a forced relocation. Bailey exposes in *Karmi* women's experiences through the centralised appearance of women: a mature woman, probably a grandmother, holding her grandchild and a young mother holding her child. The young woman holds a newborn who seems to be crying (the child's mouth is slightly open). The mother embraces the infant but does not console it; she is gazing towards the horizon and a feature that the viewer is unaware of. Likewise, looking towards the opposed direction of the first woman, the mature woman closely holds the male toddler. Both women's garments are black, indicating their grief and loss. The gestures and dress of the women, in addition to their converse direction from each other, set up the atmosphere of the war. The adolescent has its back turned to the other figures; it is the only figure looking out of the scene, and directly engages the viewer with its gaze. We cannot define the child's gender; it is positioned in a way that does not permit the viewer visual access to identify whether it is a girl or a boy. Certainly, however, we can define the horror in the child's big eyes, staring towards the viewer, and its slightly open mouth.

There is stillness between the three key images, all presented in pale colours as an indication of their exhaustion and defencelessness against the war. The two women seem lost in the black ambience – they have no place to hide and no one to save them and their children from the enemy approaching in the background. Here, the enemy is represented by the tank. Clearly, the representation of the tank is not based on the actual design of such a vehicle, which features a single calibre main gun. Bailey represents the enemy's tanks with four main guns, all shown in rotating turrets. The definition of a tank as an armoured fighting vehicle designed by the British during World War I for front-line combat, its effectiveness largely due to firepower, protection and mobility, is significant in relation to women's vulnerable position during the invasion. While in the picture the women's vulnerability is exposed in the gloomy setting, the attacker is moving tactically, preserving himself in the tank while identifying and attacking the enemy – which, in this case, consists of civilian women and children. Even though these figures have not taken up weapons, the tank spearheads the attack on them; a wave of smoke is visible, covering aspects of the figures and the child's face.

Bailey's decision to represent the tank as even more powerful than it is in reality implies her concerns over gendered power relations. The depicted tank is significantly bigger and armoured to ensure a complete collapse of the other side, the women's side. There is no doubt that the tank's target is the two women and the children. The battlefield scene is all black, exposing the women's vulnerability: they have no place to hide and are all alone, without their men's support in confronting the approaching enemy, who is fully prepared and armed. During the invasion many women found temporary asylum in the darkness of their basements or cellars, or abandoned their homes to find temporary shelter in areas they considered safer. In this work Bailey produces a notion of forced immigration developed within a close scene of women experiencing the attack. This idea is manifested strongly in the work's title: Karmi is a village on Kyrinia district which has been occupied by the Turkish armed forces since 1974. Karmi's people were among the first to experience the invasion as a twofold onslaught by sea and air.

By the end of the first week of the invasion's first phase the International Red Cross, based in Nicosia, had received the first victims, all of whom had suffered hideous experiences. A large number of the women had been raped.

Despite the fact that rape is a criminal act under the international humanitarian law, it flourishes as an effective tactic of warfare. Previous studies<sup>314</sup> observe that wartime propaganda reinforces the link between war and rape, placing women as 'peripheral, irrelevant to the world that counts, passive spectators to the action in the centre ring'.<sup>315</sup> Significantly, women's experiences are directly affected by institutionalised male-dominated political goals. This is common in all conflicts relating to all nationalities and locations. In times of war a universal pattern of gendered power is verified: men become heroes of war and women its victim, subject to male institutional power.

For Cypriot women, rape degraded of their social status, their role in safeguarding their own honour and, consequently, their familial respect. As previously discussed, conventional social practices in Cyprus embodied powerful cultural codes of honour and shame with regard to a woman's chastity. However, during war, the situation had even more impact due to the fact that rape was carried out by the enemy – and, on several occasions, that the rapes resulted in pregnancy. Maria Roussou describes men's reactions in 1974:

[...] Greek Cypriot males expressed their extreme worries about the fact of rape, the fact of the enemy blood in 'their women' [...] the implicit worry being the impurity of 'their nation'. They should not allow such children to be born; the abortion law was changed overnight and the rape-victims were provided with abortions [...].<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> For example, Sanda Raskovic, *Serbian Women as Victims of War*, 1994 and Catherine Niarchos, 'Women, War and Rape: Challenges Facing the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia' in *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 17, Issue 4, 1995, pp. 649-690.

<sup>315</sup> Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, p. 25.

<sup>316</sup> Roussou, *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, op. cit., p. 95.

In conservative Cypriot culture, abused women were reluctant to speak about their experiences; they 'went through a serious narcissistic traumatism, a traumatism of identity and self-respect'.<sup>317</sup> Each of these maltreated women was objectified; this affected their perceived identities as women and many suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. They were exposed to frustration: 'the loss of friends, a job, a home, material goods, the loss of so called femininity because of dirt, deprivation and hunger, the loss of loved ones'.<sup>318</sup>

Women's vulnerable status was confirmed when, a few months after the invasion, the first divorces were requested by husbands who simply 'could not accept their wives any more' as 'they just do not wanted them' or 'it's not easy for a man to be attracted to his wife again if he knows what has happened'.<sup>319</sup> While the state and society excused men for their requests for divorce they failed to see that women, *their* women, were victims of an invasion caused by *men*, for which women were blameless.

I argue that *Karmi* presents a feminine vision of the invasion. The women are dressed in black garments; their attitudes contain no seductive elements. Their social positions as both women and mothers set them at the front line of the enemy target; women's biological role as childbearers is loaded with an extreme political significance, as they 'possess [...] a military bomb for producing the next generation of fighters'.<sup>320</sup> *Karmi's* women are caught at their moment of escape; their embrace of the children is a gesture highlighting the maternal instinct to safeguard their family, while at the same time they anticipate that their identity as childbearing women will save their lives. Regardless of any anticipation and hopes otherwise, women's symbolic association with nationalism turned into a significant agent for their victimisation.

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<sup>317</sup> Raskovic, Sandra. 'Serbian Women as Victims of War', Report, available from: <<http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/documents/repuyug2.htm>> 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Roussou, *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>320</sup> Ridd, Rosemary and Callaway, Helen. *Caught up in Conflict: Women's Response to Political Strife*, op. cit., p. 21.

Women artists who chose to engage directly with the invasion employ a common pattern: they use the mother icon as a representation of women experiencing war. Similar to *Karmi* is the work *Cry* by Daphne Trimiklinioti, which was also produced soon after the 1974 events and represents women's experiences in facing the cruelty of war. In *Cry*, fig. 38, Trimiklinioti deploys a different visual code in order to express women's experiences throughout the invasion. In contrast to *Karmi*, *Cry* has no background. In this image, Trimiklinioti paints with oil on plywood a maternal image without any notion of the enemy. Here, Trimiklinioti structures a very direct image of maternity: a mother who holds her child with one hand, while the other is raised on an expression of the woman's rage. While Bailey uses a rather traditional realistic style in *Karmi*, Trimiklinioti employs a less featured image that draws on neutral colour and dark tones on the image's surface. Trimiklinioti's work is also different from that of Bailey for aesthetic reasons related to producing the notion of motherhood. Bailey's women are fragile, still, presented in a feminine mode. In contrast, Trimiklinioti presents the maternal figure as sturdy and almost genderless, with no specific feminine facial features. However, the mother's figure can be seen to feminine due to her breasts, black garments and scarf around the face.

I consider that the figure's look, shape and posture expresses protest against the invasion. Similar to Pablo Picasso's 1937 *Guernica*, Trimiklinioti's work acts as a visual anti-war statement: a response to the cruelty of war and at the same time a reminder of the tragedies wrought upon women by war. In both images, figures of mothers are represented in a similar way: both are screaming while holding their child in their hands, both experiencing the loss of their child. Clearly, the composition of both works, made in monochrome shades of black, white, grey and brown, augment the feeling of grief and loss. There is a common suffering in the figure's gestures; their hands curved and lips open, screaming in reaction to the injustice they have experienced. The experience of losing a child has depersonalised their identities as women and mothers. I suggest that for this



purpose, *Cry's* figure is represented without any prominent feminine characteristics; Trimiklinioti employs a straightforward stylised portrayal of grief.

Works like *Karmi* and *Cry* are both images by women artists who chose to engage directly with women's experiences of the invasion. In contrast, various men artists preferred to produce a symbolic image of women to represent the tragic event. The work of Spyros Dimitriadis (b.1950) is an example of this symbolic representation. The 1988 *Rambo! Bring Back Our Missing Persons*, fig. 39, represents a masculine account of the invasion as a gendered experience. In a poster-style figurative image, Dimitriadis puts together three scenes: the largest part of the image is covered by the figure of Rambo, while the foreground scene shows four girls holding photographs of their missing family members. In the background is depicted a replica of the Turkish propaganda brochure entitled *Turkish Army in Cyprus* which was published and distributed in 1974. The image is coloured vivid red, which covers the background of all scenes. Contrasting with the redness is the yellow skin colour of the Rambo figure and of the heading, 'Rambo', found in the lower part of the image. Here, the main figure is based on the action film series *Rambo*, in which a Vietnam War veteran starts a one-man rescue mission. Influenced by the 1982 release of the first Rambo film *First Blood*, Dimitriadis employs the film's cover image to represent the hero. In a very similar image, Dimitriadis depicted the masculine Rambo ready for action, holding a large firearm. While in the film's cover image Rambo is presented in a position indicating readiness to fight, he is not really aiming and the ammo is around his torso. On the contrary, Dimitriadis' figure of Rambo is represented ready to fight, his gun loaded with ammo.

Dimitriadis represents Rambo as the fearless hero who will bring back the 2197 Greek Cypriot men and prisoners of war whose fate remained unknown. Indicating this, several captions are displayed in the painting, such as 'Please remember Cyprus', 'Bring my Daddy back to me', 'Bring my brother back to me' and 'Hell is on Earth'. The missing persons are represented in the photos which the girls are

holding; their faces show obvious expression of agony that is emphasised by Dimitriadis' employment of black and white pencil on a red background. Despite the fact that Dimitriadis chooses to depict girls, rather than women, I suggest this female fragility represents the symbolic processes between women and nation. As Floya Anthias writes:

Immediately after 1974 posters appeared everywhere in the south of the island depicting an anguished black-clothed woman, her face tormented and her clothes ragged, and underneath the words 'Our martyred Cyprus'. This representation contained both the symbolism of Cyprus as a woman mourning for her loss and the reality that actual women faced, whose sons and other family had been killed and whose homes were abandoned in the war.<sup>321</sup>

The depicted girls, shown as pure and innocent, are now devastated, holding photographs<sup>322</sup> of their male family members – the 'male kin protectors' on whom they were totally dependent.<sup>323</sup> Maria Roussou argues that:

[...] Greek Cypriot society requires certain forms of social control or moral regulation of women in order to maintain existing power structures. Cypriot women are brought up to depend upon male 'protection'; they are seen as pure and innocent, therefore to be kept away from the ugliness of public affairs. Women's compliance in this need for 'protection' entails their acceptance of a socially subordinate position.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Anthias, Floya. 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>322</sup> The photographs were taken for passport purposes, so that the missing persons could travel abroad to study.

<sup>323</sup> Maria Roussou points out that even during peacetime in Cyprus, women who lose their male family members find life extremely difficult due to social and religious practices. For more, see Maria Roussou, 'War in Cyprus: Patriarchy and the Penelope Myth', op. cit., p. 25-44.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

The aftermath of 1974 brought social negation of the 'false widows',<sup>325</sup> who became the most oppressed group in Greek Cypriot society.<sup>326</sup> The decades after the war saw much-needed social reform that allowed women to involve themselves outside the home in matters such as work in factories, participation in political matters such as setting up the committee for missing persons and involvement in weekly demonstrations at the Green Line barricades, holding photographs of the missing persons. The first demonstration against the Turkish occupation was organised by women in April 1975. Greek Cypriot women were joined by women members of Parliament from Greece, England, the United States and other countries and marched from Derinia barricades to occupied Famagusta. The march was internationally publicised and marked the women's initiative as the largest anti-war protest in Cyprus' history.

Significantly, the 1974 war brought to the surface problems derived from the patriarchal practices of state and church that were set against any social change: for example, the 'false widows' had no rights over their husbands' property, nor could they become legal guardians of their children.<sup>327</sup> Maria Roussou writes:

The experience of war politicised some women, first by making them aware that their passive stance towards the political problems of Cyprus was as harmful as that of those who acted wrongly and brought the enemy to the island, then by making them realise that violence and war created more problems for women than for men and that the men did not care about solving women's problems.<sup>328</sup>

In the years after the 1974 war no provisions were introduced by the state or the church to assist women in need. Male-oriented social patterns still prevailed in all

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<sup>325</sup> I borrow the term 'false widows' from Maria Roussou, *Ibid.* 'False widows' was the name informally given to the wives of the missing persons; state, society and church expected them to wait for their husbands to return from the war, even years after of the invasion, when their return had become a lost hope.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> Anthias, Floya. 'Women and Nationalism in Cyprus', *op. cit.*

<sup>328</sup> Roussou, Maria. 'War in Cyprus: Patriarchy and the Penelope Myth', *op. cit.*, p. 35.

social practices. I consider that this male-oriented pattern is embodied in Dimitriadis' painting. Girls are shown as passive members of the society holding images of the missing persons. They are left without male protection and this makes their integration very difficult, particularly '[...] for the woman who does not have a man through whom her place in the social world is defined'.<sup>329</sup>

Dimitriadis employs the male figure of a hero who will liberate the country and return to the girls their male family members. Considering that the painting was made more than a decade after the invasion, it confirms existing structures of male power and the patriarchal order in Cyprus. Although more men died during the invasion than women, the consequences of the war were experienced significantly more heavily by women than by men. This was particularly noticed by the majority of the wives of missing persons, who, in having become members of society with no 'male protector', found themselves facing social boundaries in the aftermath of the war.

The majority of men artists' representations of the war follow a similar pattern: they symbolise Cyprus as a maternal woman either mourning her loss or defending her children. Adamantios Diamantis, in his work *Woman with Stretched-Out Arms* (1983-84), fig. 40, constructs a colossal female image representing the 'mother' Cyprus defending her children. Diamantis does not represent the enemy in this abstract image; rather, he depicts a visual mixture of colours and abstract figures to represent the agony and chaos of the invasion. I have discussed in Chapter 2 the idea of women's construction as the symbolic bearers of the nation. It is therefore significant that throughout time, women's association with the nation and the state as a 'cultural carrier' has persevered without any changes being seen.

In an earlier work, created in 1975 – a year after the invasion – Diamantis drew on his painting *The World of Cyprus* to offer a response to the invasion. For this, he restructured his composition and changed the original title. *When the World of Cyprus First Heard the Bad News* acts as Diamantis' statement about the new

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<sup>329</sup> Roussou, Maria. 'War in Cyprus: Patriarchy and the Penelope Myth', op. cit., p. 36.

conditions in Cyprus. Now, the world of Cyprus is represented in action; Diamantis' figures are no longer seated in the coffee shop. In contrast, all figures are on their feet, reacting to the news of the invasion; some are wondering what has happened, others indicate scepticism and doubt about the news and some look furious. As in *The World of Cyprus*, this new account offers little reference to any feminine presence; a figure of a young girl is shown embracing her younger brother and some female silhouettes are visible in the far background.

In keeping with the other works discussed here, I would argue that the representation of the invasion as a gendered experience is based on the effects of the war, which were in many ways gender-specific. The fear – or reality – of rape as an act of war, the caretaking of children during the flight from what had been home and the agony of fearing what had happened to the missing male family members were all dreadful and gender-specific experiences. In addition to all this, women had to face a new and shocking reality: the loss of their dowry-houses and their new identity-status as refugees.

## Loss and the Refugee Identity

After 1974, I was living with just luggage; I did not want to buy a single thing.

(Maria Tourou, refugee artist)<sup>330</sup>

I feel as I was never born. I have no identity, no passport. My works were my own self and I was my work.

(Elli Ioannou, refugee artist)<sup>331</sup>

*Cypriot Refugees Visualising the Dream of Freedom*, fig. 41, was made in 1977 by artist Elli Mitzi, who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Vienna. While in her early career Mitzi – as I briefly noted in chapter 1 – was mostly interested in presenting landscapes and portraits, in post-1974 Cyprus she negotiates the loss while highlighting women experiencing trauma. Hence, in her work *Cypriot Refugees*, she composes an image of three women figures in an outside scene.

Two of the three women are seated in opposing directions with their hands held to their foreheads; the other stands alongside with her hands held in the direction of the two women. In this realistic painting Mitzi places the three women in the foreground scene of the image and all of them face directly forward. The women's clothes are painted in subdued, neutral oil colours, roughly and vigorously applied with large strokes of a full brush. The background shows some buildings, mountains and a blue cloudy sky, also painted in pale colours, but more thickly. The mood of the image is conveyed most obviously through the position and attitudes of the three women, whose expressions are highly emotive.

I argue that in this image Mitzi represents a narration of the conditions that women experienced in the aftermath of the war. Each woman embodies one of the three different stages of women who experienced loss: the mature black-clothed woman embodies social codes of mourning, the young woman embodies the 'false widow'

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<sup>330</sup> Interview with Maria Tourou, Lefkara, 17 September 2010.

<sup>331</sup> Quoted in Nikita, Eleni. *Pioneer Women Artists in Greece and Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 38.

who is waiting to hear news of her missing husband, and the young girl has lost her male protector. Their posture, particularly those of the two elder women, reveals the passivity of women who have lost everything – house, property, family members – and are now are utterly dependent on state welfare.

Mitzi represents in this painting women visualising the dream of freedom – as the title suggests – in an outside setting embodied with specific references to Cyprus' territory. The mountain shown in the background may embody the occupied Pentadaktilos mountain, while the buildings symbolise the temporary dwellings made for refugees. In the immediate aftermath of the mass displacement, some women had to live for months – or even years – in refugee camps while waiting for state assistance. Mitzi's reference to electricity is significant: this forms an important element of the development and modernisation of Cyprus, particularly since the Cyprus Electricity Authority was only established in 1952, after which electricity spread gradually throughout Cyprus' houses. However, the invasion created a long pause in Cyprus' development<sup>332</sup> and the economic effects of the war affected both men and women.

Women's loss might be considered greater than men's due to the fact that they lost their traditionally place of belonging – that is, the domestic sphere. Significantly, the loss of houses affected women more than men; it symbolised the loss of familiar values and traditions and the loss of a dowry-house, *their* dowry that their parents had offered as a wedding gift. More, it was a loss of their *home*, which had given the women a sense of independence and security. Homelessness was the most pressing problem refugee women had to face. With their dowry-houses gone, women were 'more dependent, vulnerable, exposed, like snails without shells'.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Among other matters causing this was the massive dislocation of the population (200,000 Greek Cypriots, i.e. 40% of the Greek Cypriot community). In all, 40,000 employed persons and 25,000 self-employed persons were left without a job (25.6% of labour force), while 70% of the productive potential, along with the major port (Famagusta) and airports, was occupied. (Cyprus Social Research Centre, op. cit., p.15.)

<sup>333</sup> Loizos, Petros. *The Heart Grown Bitter: a Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*, op. cit., p. 177.

Similar to *Cypriot Refugees Visualising the Dream of Freedom* is the 1975 *Cypriot Mother with Her Orphans*, fig. 42. Mitzi arranges the three figures – a mother and her two sons – in a very similar composition to the three women in *Cypriot Refugees*. The black-clothed mother is seated alongside of the two boys. It is interesting that the mother has the same facial features and outfit as the mature women in *Cypriot Refugees*. Also similar is the background of the image and the stylistic technique which Mitzi uses in representing her subject-themes. However, in the 1975 work there is no reference to dwelling or any other additional point of reference. In addition, all three figures face directly towards the viewer.

The title of the work – *Cypriot Mother with Her Orphans* – is significant, embodying one of the socio-economic effects of the war: wives of missing persons could not become legal guardians of their children. In the post-1974 period no provisions were made to establish women as legal representatives of the family or owners of their husbands' property.<sup>334</sup> Widows had to rely on relatives and raise their children on their own earnings alone; this had a huge effect on the class structure of Cypriot society.<sup>335</sup> In both works Mitzi emphasises women's experiences of loss and their new identity as refugees.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, women had to face their new identities as refugees and their accommodation in temporary refugee camps and, later, in refugee housing estates. This condition exposed women to an unknown environment and they had to adjust to the new social surroundings. Significantly, women's long absence from the public domain made it even more difficult for them to realise and accept their new conditions. They might have been offered by the state housing arrangements, relief foods, garments, small cash benefits and refugee identity cards, but, the nature of loss was also based on their way of living before 1974. Peter Loizos writes, in regard to the chronicles of Greek Cypriot refugees, that:

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<sup>334</sup> Roussou, Maria. 'War in Cyprus: Patriarchy and the Penelope Myth', op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>335</sup> Cockburn, Cynthia. *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 79.



Their loss was outside the provisions of conventional social structure and social organisation... There was no mourning ceremony for the loss of home, fields, village, and way of life. Not only that, but the public world of politics gave no support to the idea that the loss [...] might be a permanent one.<sup>336</sup>

In post-1974, the new social formation of refugee identity was introduced as a result of the forced immigration. Therefore, refugee identity cards were issued to exiled persons whose usual residence or property before the Turkish invasion was in a Turkish-occupied area. For women, refugee status signified the loss of their house and everything with which they had identified themselves before 1974. According to Peter Loizos:

Where refugees have become so without warning, they will generally need at least a year to come to terms with their new situations and some will require several years. During this time restlessness, apathy, indecisiveness, or even a sense of unreality may occur.<sup>337</sup>

Previous studies<sup>338</sup> have confirmed that women's experiences of loss followed a very different pattern to those of men – mostly due to women's close association with the house pre-1974. A man's thoughts confirm that the loss and the refugee life were gendered differently in experiential terms:

I'll certainly say this – the women have a worse time of refugee life because they are isolated in houses or tents from morning to night and think all the time about their homes and property. The men on the other hand are either at work or in the coffee shop or some bar

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<sup>336</sup> Loizos, Peter. *The Heart Grown Bitter: a Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugee*, op. cit., p.131.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>338</sup> Cyprus Social Research Centre. *Cypriot Woman Rise and Downfall*. Nicosia: Printing Office of the Republic of Cyprus, 1975; Peter Loizos, *The Heart Grown Bitter: a Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; Maria Roussou, *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, University of London, Institute of Education, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), 1985 and Cynthia Cockburn, *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*. London: Zed Books, 2004.

and when you get together in crowd you tend to forget a little bit while chatting and laughing, you forget temporary and relax a little. The women, isolated in their houses, suffer much more than we do.<sup>339</sup>

The traumatic experience of the loss greatly influenced women artists who had not experience the direct effects of the war. Rhea Bailey, Daphne Trimiklioti and Elli Mitzi are among such artists; they were based in the south of Cyprus and despite the fact that they did not experienced such loss, their 1970s work engages with the war conditions. In her 1976 exhibition at the Liverpool Academy Gallery, Rhea Bailey exhibited a series of works that had as their theme the 1974 war: images like *A Woman's Reflections of War* (1976), *The Agonies of the Refugees* (1975) and *Future Demonstrations* (1975) published the historic events of Cyprus' trauma in an international venue.<sup>340</sup> Moreover, one of her paintings was printed on posters and postcards which were publicised worldwide as part of Cyprus' appeal for justice.

*Cyprus 1974 – Appeal For Justice*, fig. 43, shows the figure of President Makarios, his right hand outstretched in a gesture of appeal for justice for all the loss and trauma caused by the 1974 invasion.<sup>341</sup> The image is composed of several scenes, together representing the remnants of the war. Bailey represents abstract figures of men, women and children, all without facial characteristics. The entirety of the scene has a profound symbolic meaning. Men are shown in line eating – possibly after they arrived in south Cyprus – while other men are shown in anguished postures. These may be the prisoners of war who were caught by Turkish soldiers while fleeing. Women are represented here as maternal figures, holding their children. Bailey does not depict the maternal images as black-clad mourning figures. Possibly the most symbolic icon in the image is the depiction of skulls in the lower part of the left-hand side and the Turkish flag that seems to fly alongside

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<sup>339</sup> Loizos, Peter. *The Heart Grown Bitter: a Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugee*, op. cit., p.126.

<sup>340</sup> The Minister of Education attended the exhibition, possibly as part of the process of the worldwide appeal for justice.

<sup>341</sup> According to journals of the time, the work made a 'particularly profound impression' and the English public's response was sympathetic (*Cyprus Today*, Sept-Dec 1976, Bailey's Archive).

the Turkish air force. Similar to *Karmi*, the enemy is represented by a tank gun looming from a mountain.

As in her other works, Bailey employs human figures to question situations, particularly women's experiences of oppression, fear and panic. Bailey says:

During these few days we felt we knew what panic was about. We realised what these people must have gone through. They were butchered. They are the survivors. The soldiers went into the villages raping and killing. They kept some, rounded them up in churches and sent them south. When the soldiers came into the villages nobody could control them.<sup>342</sup>

Such symbolic representation is also visible in *Future Demonstrations*, fig. 44, in which Bailey represents a demonstration she experienced herself on the Troodos mountain while teaching at a school in the same region. Using cold shades of blue and white, Bailey represents the mass of people who gathered together at the British radar station in Troodos Mountain to protest against British apathy toward the invasion that endorsed Turkey's occupation of the north side of Cyprus. All represented figures are shown with the same mask-style face and it is not possible to identify their gender. The painting emphasises the anxiety of people who protest holding placards. Bailey represents the demonstration's placards as all blank. In explaining her employment of such a strategy, Bailey says that such gesture [the protest] was both 'futile and too late'.

From the 1960s, Bailey was among the most active artists producing a significant number of politicised visuals.<sup>343</sup> Artists who were based in South Cyprus had the opportunity to produce a large number of works and establish a career. For the artists who had experienced alongside the loss of their house, the loss of their artworks, the invasion was not only a dreadful experience but also a division of life

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<sup>342</sup> Farrall, Margaret. 'An Island of Terror in An Artist's Eyes: Reflection of War' in *Liverpool Daily Post*, Friday 13 August, 1976 (Bailey's Archive).

<sup>343</sup> In fact, Margaret Farrall refers to Bailey as the 'foremost woman artist in Cyprus' in her 1976 article; see above reference.

and the pausing of an established career. The effects of the invasion were expressed by women artists in more than one way. For some women artists, the loss silenced their creativity and caused a long pause in their art practice. Others continued their art practice but only employed their war experiences within it after many years had passed. In the following section I shall discuss the strategy of the 'Lost Aphrodites' as a common pattern employed by women artists as a negotiation of their loss and women's conditions in post-war Cyprus.

## The Lost Aphrodites

I am much attached to my nation that [...] I fought for the past and will now continue fighting for through my art. [...] Certainly, today's history is the worst; there is no edifice from the Byzantine period or antiquity that has not been annihilated in the occupied areas. [...] But it is not just the annihilations and the larcenies, most important is the attempt to diminish the Greek component [of the island]. [...] Our island is being destroyed along with its Greekness [...]<sup>344</sup>

*Lost Aphrodites* is a series of paintings created by artist Stella Michaelidou shortly after the invasion. Exhibited in Galeries Mouffe, Paris, in 1976, the series consists of representations of ancient statues of the Goddess Aphrodite presented in an intricate style: the statues are broken; some have their hands in the air; some are turned upside down; others are chained and scarred. I borrow the title *Lost Aphrodites* to discuss the strategies employed by Greek Cypriot women artists who negotiated the political situation in post-1974 Cyprus – in particular, their engagement in representing the loss through the use of figures of ancient Greek statues. In this discussion I consider that this strategy forms a different type of nationalism, derived from women's side, employing female icons and figures as devices to reclaim the losses they experienced after the 1974 invasion.

Michaelidou's *Lost Aphrodites* exhibition included the paintings *Deterioration*, *Capture*, *Terror*, *Missing Person*, *Sacrilege*, *Protest* and *Shift*. In all these visuals, Michaelidou employs the figure of the marble statue *Aphrodite from Soli* (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C) located in the Archaeological Museum of Nicosia, Cyprus. I propose that in *Protest* (1976), Michaelidou treats a classical subject in a more unconventional manner. Against a blank background the figure of the statue is created with large brushstrokes of white and grey acrylic shades. The statue is headless, with her hands stretched up. Possibly the most significant element of the

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<sup>344</sup> Christos Charalampous, Interview with Stella Michaelidou, in Alithia Newspaper, 12 June 1994 [Original text in Greek, translation mine].

painting is the representation of barbed wire: two rows of wire run parallel to each other, with another crossways. The image uses predominately from neutral colours, with just one vivid representation: the red article attached to the barbed wire.

I consider that Michaelidou employs the figure of the statue to express her feelings about the traumatic conditions and to invite spectators to empathise.<sup>345</sup> As viewers, we are asked to empathise with this broken, chained statue. Michaelidou chooses to restructure the classical motif of the Aphrodite as a beauty icon, using aggressive effects to explore the complex conditions of trauma in post-1974 Cyprus. Michaelidou says of her employment of the Aphrodite tradition:

Since the time when was studying in Paris I was very concerned by the fact that we keep losing our treasures and so I did this work. In Paris, I studied extensively the history of art along with painting and engraving classes. I felt so indignant seeing all Cyprus' culture in foreign countries, away from their country, their roots. I was so concerned about this, and for this I used all these forms and heads or bodies from statues.<sup>346</sup>

The employment of the Aphrodite tradition is significant: according to the myth, Aphrodite is said to have been born on the shore of nearby Pafos in Cyprus. Thus, I argue that the manifestation of Aphrodite in an unexpected visual form evokes a past – and a present – which is by necessity fragmented, ruined. Such a message is articulated in all the works. Significantly, Aphrodite is not represented as the symbol of ideal beauty and female sexuality; on the contrary, she is used strategically as a symbol of mourning and protest. Michaelidou is not concerned with arranging a space, possibly, to emphasise the emotional despair of trauma. French art critic Denis Roger wrote in regard to Michaelidou's image arrangement

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<sup>345</sup> The painting won a prize at the 1979 Grand Prix of Monte Carlo.

<sup>346</sup> Charalambous, Christos. 'Artist Stella Michaelidou', *Agon* Newspaper, 18 May 1984. [Original text in Greek, translation mine].

that, 'many scenes co-exist in the same surface, scenes expressing equal number of restrained voices and comparisons between past and present'.<sup>347</sup>

This co-existence of scenes is obvious in both *Missing Person* and *Capture*. In *Missing Person* (c.1976), fig. 45, Michaelidou brings two scenes together. In the background is the scenery of Petra tou Romiou, the place where Aphrodite is said to have been born on the shore of Pafos. The other scene is that of a large golden frame with a small picture of Aphrodite. Possibly, the picture of Aphrodite is a photograph taken by Michaelidou of a black-and-white sea landscape – we can see clearly some small waves and a shop in the far background and the photograph is printed with a white border at its edges, typical of photographs of the 1970s. The photograph has been altered by the addition of Aphrodite's statue, painted –or attached as paper – in subtle lines. The entire work is painted in faint colours, with a simplified rendering of lines and brush strokes. Contrasting with the waves in the photograph is the stability of the sea in the image, represented as a large surface of a dark blue colour.

Similar to 1973's *Rubbish Bin*, in *Missing Person* Michaelidou employs a mixture of materials to represent her subject-theme. I consider that there is some irony in the representation of the missing person through the figure of Aphrodite. This irony forms a response to the political situation in Cyprus and the enslaved culture of the occupied areas. In negotiating this loss, Michaelidou employs the standard pose for her represented Aphrodite – armless, with the left knee bent. However, what is interesting is that Michaelidou re-arranges the pose on the opposite side: thus, Aphrodite in *Missing Person* has her right knee bent with her face facing the right-hand side, in opposition to the standard pose. This is shown also in *Capture*, fig. 46, where only the statue's head is represented in a display scene. Here, the Pentadactilos mountain is represented in an abstract form in the background. What is significantly different in this representation is the emotive expression in

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<sup>347</sup> State Gallery of Contemporary Art Archive.

Aphrodite's eyes. Michaelidou paints black lines around the eyes, emphasising with this approach the emotive visual motif.

Michaelidou employs a variety of strategies to create a critical space to negotiate Greek nationalism and reclaim what Cyprus has lost. The fact that Michaelidou uses the figure of Aphrodite's statue – the figure that is identified with Cyprus' culture in both the past and present – in a different form, distanced from its original representation, escapes from the conventions of traditional representations. The 'Lost Aphrodites' strategy acts as a political device operating within Cyprus' tradition to defeat the loss and evoke public empathy. A similar strategy was also used by Katy Stephanides in her series *Compositions* and by Maria Tourou in her *Loss* painting.



## Aphrodite in Exile

Katy Stephanides (1925-2012), an artist who studied painting in Greece, left a significant practice with a variety of styles and subject-themes. Her association with the international art scene took place during her attendance at St. Martin's School of London, where she had the opportunity to interact with other artists with international backgrounds and to extend her artistic education through repeated visits to galleries and museums in London and Paris: as she told art historian Antonis Danos, 'During these years, I saw more than I painted'.<sup>348</sup>

Her post-1974 practice comprises representations of ancient Greek statues, acting as political devices of renegotiating gendered economics in post-1974 Cyprus. An example of such practice is the series of compositions created between 1982 and 1985. The 1982-85 compositions are all dominated by female figures whose form recalls the Hellenistic statue of Aphrodite from Soloi now found in the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia. Such reference is clear in the 1983 *Heads in Closed Space II*, fig. 47, in which a large surface similar to a window frames a red tablecloth on top of which two halves of a statue's head are found next to some striped cloth. The two parts of the sculpture form together the head of the Aphrodite statue. While Aphrodite's head is shown broken, the only two elements which connect the two frames are the striped cloth and the representation of a mountain in the background.

This work is highly symbolic: bright, clear, flat colours of blue, green and red are of major importance here. The cloth colour is blue and white, leaving no doubt that Stephanides choose to structure the composition with specific Greek references. Moreover, the structure of a mountain in the background is a reference to Pentadaktilos mountain, which in post-1974, was not accessible to Greek Cypriots.

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<sup>348</sup> Danos, Antonis and Loizou, Tonia. *Cypriot Artists: The Second Generation*, Nicosia: Marfin Laiki Bank Cultural Centre, 2009, p. 46.

She structures the image as a still life composed by a broken head, against the background of a mountain that is now found on the 'other side'.<sup>349</sup>

While in previous discussions I have tended to suggest that red colours act as a reference to a Turkish element, I suggest here that the red colour is used to emphasise women's problematic position in post-1974 Cyprus. Stephanides explains her employment of female figures thus:

I added more colour and I engaged in the depiction of unidentified female figures. They are simply the women that suffered and mourned, during the war. Woman is always the witness of [such] events. At the same time, the rectilinearly framed 'stills' exude a sense of a limited (often claustrophobic) environment-world. Recent, local historical events are once again 'visualised' ('I was generally preoccupied with the gathered crowds and their sheltering in schools and halls, during the war'), as well as catholic, human agonies.<sup>350</sup>

Stephanides' representations of female figures are significant to understandings of woman-to-woman relationships, especially since in the aftermath of the war refugee women felt isolated and publicly ignored. The 1984 *Composition I*, fig. 48, emphasises the experiences of women facing isolation in the mid-1980s. The image, composed in a Pop Art style, represents seven female figures positioned in four blue boxes. Alongside them is a blue rotary dial telephone which in its middle has the image of the 'Stop' traffic sign. Similar to *Heads in Closed Space II*, the colours are clear and flat. The repetition of the same figure – only their hair colour is different – emphasises Stephanides' strategy of depicting unidentified female figures as a response to women's conditions.

In much of her mid-1980s work, Stephanides often employs symbolic codes, such as telephone appliances, numbers and traffic signs. Stephanides explains her employment of the telephone device thus:

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<sup>349</sup> Interview with Katy Stephanides, Nicosia, 25 March 2010.

<sup>350</sup> Quoted in Danos and Loizou, *Cypriot Artists: The Second Generation*, op. cit., p. 51.

I am affected by the state of things, the sad recent events in our country, especially, by the place of women. I want to allude to the perseverance of woman in the face of the conditions in which she finds herself trapped, which is why I place women in squares [boxes]. [...] Later on, in some pictures I include the telephone appliance, as a communication symbol. I wanted to break the boundaries of woman's entrapment, by placing next to her an object of daily communication. Women pursue communication. The telephone appliance becomes the symbol of the desire for breaking out of the enforced restrictions.<sup>351</sup>

Significantly, the representation of images of women in square boxes, alongside the symbolic representation of the telephone as a communication device, sets up the platform for much needed socio-political reform. Stephanides contrasts this with the 'stop' symbol on the telephone device to emphasise the boundaries that women faced in the post-war period. The telephone, as a communication device, is a power symbol that forms an attempt to renegotiate the gendered economies that confronted women in Cypriot society.

Within a similar pattern is Maria Tourou's *Loss* (1974), fig. 49, which gave visual form to women's conditions, particularly the refugee experience. In the image, Tourou mixes visual abstract effects to produce a gloomy atmosphere, using tones of grey with light azure and purple shades. Clearly, Tourou's work is a woman's centralised one; women's icons are visible in various positions and expressions. The visual structure of the work reinforces women's loss by integrating an antique Cypriot statuette estimated to have been created after the Chalcolithic period (3000-2500BC). The antique figurine, a cross-shaped idol called *Idol of Pomos*, represents a woman with her arms spread and her legs tied. It has been said that the antique statue represents a woman while the outstretched form of the arms

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

probably refers to its function as a fertility symbol. The cruciform statue is a characteristic motif of Cyprus' prehistoric art.

In *Loss*, Tourou utilises the idol as the central axis of the work. She constructs a large figure of the idol and, within its shape and in the background, places smaller versions of it. However, Tourou's duplication does not follow the idol's original cruciform shape; the idol's arms, rather than forming a cross, are placed in a position of surrender. The idol is presented with a human face and its nose and lips are distorted, partially covered by a cloudy film that spreads over the image. Repetitions of the idol's face are depicted in the centre of the image: only the one shown on the right-hand side recalls the actual face of the idol. The painting's mood creates a confusion that is emphasised by the combination of scenes and Tourou's technique, which combines brush strokes and spatula.

*Loss* forms a visual pattern to represent women's experiences as refugees. The mystifying tone of the image associated with the idol representing Cypriot culture visualise women's loss, both material and emotional. Women's loss of their homes, specific contents of which had been gained throughout the years of independence, and the loss of their 'compact' community of friends, relative and neighbours was for most a loss of 'familiar patterns of meaning'.<sup>352</sup> Moreover, it was a loss of all aspects of what had once composed their identity: their previous way of living, status, power, wealth, location and people.

I previously discussed Greek Cypriot patriarchal norms which confined women to the security of the house, engaged in chores and family duties. However, post-1974, refugee women had to work as wage-earners outside the home. As Peter Loizos points out, 'going out to work did not result in a lessening of their domestic drudgery'.<sup>353</sup> As women were generally paid at lower rates than men, in 1975 it was quite common to find refugee households in which the women were out working, but the men were unemployed:

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<sup>352</sup> Loizos, Petros. *The Heart Grown Bitter: a Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*, op. cit., p. 199.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

This was as humiliating for the men as it was exhausting for the women; but it did not result in a radical restructuring of the household, nor did men show signs of seeking out 'women's work' and competing with women to do it, by offering more work for the same rate as women received. Men did take jobs at lower wages than they had earned before the war, and they took jobs lower down the scale of *men's* tasks, but they did not rethink the sexual division of labour.<sup>354</sup>

However, despite all the traumatic changes caused by the war, there was one small benefit that women obtained from their new role. Greek Cypriot politician Antigoni Papadopoulou told to Cynthia Cockburn that: 'holding down a job, having a wage of your own and knowing others depend on your earning power brings a new self-respect. In a way it made us stronger'.<sup>355</sup> In concluding this chapter I will explore the practice and career of Nina Iacovou, a prominent artist who endured the chaos of subsequent political upheavals in Cyprus: first the British rule, succeeded by the national liberation struggle, and then the 1974 invasion, an event which marked both her life and professional career.

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<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>355</sup> Cockburn, Cynthia, *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 82.

## Remembering 1974: *Koukkoumara* as a Narration of Self-Expression

We experienced these political conditions and this is what I represent in my work. So, I continue my mission: I lived under these circumstances and I owe to represent them.

(Nina Iacovou)<sup>356</sup>

When the Turkish army occupied her hometown Famagusta in 1974, Nina Iacovou (b.1930) left behind 25 years of professional work; this included more than one thousand sculptures and a large collection of large-scale sculptures and ceramics installed in several hotels in Famagusta. Whilst in Famagusta, Iacovou had spent a lot of time drawing in the city's museum, where she learned about Famagusta's traditional pottery<sup>357</sup> of anthropomorphic vessels. Varosi, the Greek quarter of Famagusta, was best known for its production of hollow earthenware vessels called *Koukkoumara*.

*Koukkoumara* has been described as a 'wheel-made bottle which evokes a feminine body and bears a moulded face at the top, whereas the handles can be shaped like human arms'.<sup>358</sup> *Koukkoumara* feature a moulded face of a woman; some have on their shoulders, or on their head, little water jugs, and some have a formed outline of a skirt or apron that looks like lace. Other common decorations were birds and snakes. It is a fact that the transformation of a vessel into a female figure can be found in many cultures around the world. Famagusta's production of *Koukkoumara* was initially documented circa 1890; it ceased in the 1940s.<sup>359</sup>

*Koukkoumara*'s style and motives are influenced by the Archaic or Hellenistic periods. In addition to this, it is important to refer to the close links to Greece that

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<sup>356</sup> Interview with Nina Iacovou, Larnaca, 14 December 2009.

<sup>357</sup> Pottery is probably the most common artefact in Cyprus' culture, providing a great variety of objects for different purposes – the main one being household matters such as storage, cooking and water transport. For more see, Ionas, Ioannis. *Pottery in the Cyprus Tradition*. Nicosia: The Cyprus Research Centre, 1998.

<sup>358</sup> Ionas, Ioannis. *Pottery in the Cyprus Tradition*, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>359</sup> This is probably due to the commencement of World War II or the modernisation of Cyprus' water system.

Cyprus had at the time and the general environment of Hellenist influence. The revival of the ancient model came after British rule and foreign interest in the excavation of several archaeological places around the island. Moreover, after the British Museum's initiative and the Cyprus Exploration Fund, many British travelled to Cyprus and therefore established a market with high demand for *Koukkoumara* as a traditional souvenir.<sup>360</sup>

Around 1956, the *Koukkoumara* tradition was revived again by Iacovou who, after finding a picture of *Koukkoumara*, sought to find out more about her hometown's tradition. She came across the workshop of Petros Mousoupetros who, in the past, had produced *Koukkoumara*.<sup>361</sup> In Mousoupetros' workshop Iacovou created many artefacts; Mousoupetros turned the pot on the wheel and Iacovou designed the face, the decoration of the head and the dress. Soon, *Koukkoumara* became popular decorative objects, sold to tourists as souvenirs; local hotels commissioned Iacovou to produce large-scale sculptures. At the same time *Koukkoumara*'s traditional design was developed and incorporated into table lamp stands that were in high demand.

For years Iacovou's practice had mainly a decorative character and was the outcome of a traditional form which engaged new elements. Decorative elements like animals, birds, snakes and lace can be found on vessels from the early Bronze Age. Iacovou's employment of predominantly female figures is due to the following three reasons:

- a) for practical reasons as the wide skirt makes the figure much more steady;
- b) because of the long tradition of the Mother Goddesses that lasted to Aphrodite and then to the Mother of God; and
- c) as a continuation of the tradition of the votive idols that were usually

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<sup>360</sup> Thus, *Koukkoumara* can be found in several museums (like Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, Holland, Belgium) and private collections.

<sup>361</sup> At that time Mousoupetros was mostly producing flowerpots and water jugs.

women or priestesses carrying water jugs and birds to the temples.<sup>362</sup>

The image of women carrying water jugs is noted in old Cypriot customs from times where it was necessary for women to go to the nearest fountain every day and carry back a jug filled with fresh water. However, throughout her career, Iacovou has adapted traditional art while introducing new elements to the traditional pottery of the past.

When a society experiences a socio-political upheaval as massive as an invasion, effects are experienced by both men and women. Such effects dramatically affected what had been known as everyday life in pre-1974 Cyprus. Considering that the war had halted all Greek Cypriot cultural developments in North Cyprus,<sup>363</sup> it would have been expected that this would also affect the career and practices of individual artists. For Iacovou, restarting her career as a refugee, without any materials, tools or studio, was dreadfully difficult. However, despite the shattered reality of refugee status, facing an unknown environment and an uncertain future, Iacovou found the strength to start again in order to encourage her family.

In Larnaca, the town that became her new residence, Iacovou started working with *Koukkoumara* again 'in order to keep the tradition'.<sup>364</sup> To assist her new beginning Iacovou found Petro Mousoupetrou in a refugee camp. She was given an old potter's wheel which was very heavy and difficult to use without electricity. Of course, in these harsh conditions there could be no discussion of having a studio while living in a refugee block of flats. For this reason she placed the wheel under the staircase, where she would kick the lower part of the wheel while Mousoupetros shaped the vessels. During that time she had to keep the wet vessels indoors and, after decorating them had to carry them to Nicosia to be fired.

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<sup>362</sup> Iacovou, Nina. 'The Figurative Ceramics of Famagusta – Working Experience, in 3<sup>rd</sup> International Convention of Tourist Guide Lecture's Associations, 5-10 February, Nicosia, Cyprus, pp 55-56.

<sup>363</sup> For example, the first art college founded in Cyprus, in 1969, was the Cyprus College of Art, based in Famagusta, was forced to move to Pafos.

<sup>364</sup> Interview with Nina Iacovou, Larnaca, 14 December 2009.



Iacovou's practice contains many graphic memories of 1974. However, this has only been expressed in her recent practice, as the war conditions were so intense that she found the memories difficult to cope with. In the late 1990s, two decades after the invasion, Iacovou's first political response came into being. This launched a highly politicised practice in which Iacovou employs specific strategies on *Koukkoumara* to protest against the cruelty of war and the manipulations of politics. Significantly, Iacovou uses *Koukkoumara* as devices to establish a critical negotiation of human conditions during wartime. *Koukkoumara*, as a group of female figures, now carry new messages and reveal the specific experiences of women, such as their becoming refugees; losing their husbands or sons because of the war; and their status as widows or relatives of missing persons.

*Crying Koukkoumares*<sup>365</sup> (2004), fig. 50, features a group of four women made of clay. As a modern medium for sculpture, clay offers a range of possibilities due to its plastic state. In *Crying Koukkoumares* Iacovou forms four shapes of female figures into two groups. The figures are modelled in such a way that their bodies are connected. The shaping of the curved forms creates a smooth texture for the entire figure. The group is reminiscent of the traditional type of *Koukkoumara*. However, despite the familiarity with the traditional form of *Koukkoumara*, this sculpture does not simply duplicate the traditional figures but forms a new style and technique.

The new form of *Koukkoumares* has no decoration or inscriptions. In this work, Iacovou employs the past usage of the vessels' handles, shaped like human arms. However, the handle-arms are no longer used as a plastic decoration but as a strategy to represent the figures' grief. For this reason, their arms are placed on their heads or in a praying position; both approaches reveal their grief and desperation. In this work there is no suggestion of the female nature of the vessels – as was the case in previous *Koukkoumares* – through plastic breast decoration and the female faces.

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<sup>365</sup> *Koukkoumares* is, in Greek, the plural of *Koukkoumara*.

The *Crying Koukkoumares* are represented with missing facial characteristics; the only feature they have is a large hole, representing the emptiness felt after the 1974 invasion in which half of the island was occupied. The sculpture holds a special, deep meaning: these figures are found in a situation of tragedy without any possibility of assistance or hope. I consider that these figures are a personal response to the fragmentary role of 'false widows' within the post-1974 society and the societal patriarchal conventions that society imposed on them by stating they must dress in black, like widows, so that they did not attract other men, with the government confirming that their husbands were alive and would return.<sup>366</sup>

Iacovou is particularly interested in reflecting women's conditions during war; in this she draws upon memories which act as powerful metaphors. In *The Scream* (1999), fig. 51, Iacovou shapes the figures poignantly to represent four armless women. With sharp tool markings she models the figures and portrays the specific female human condition at hand: the tragedy of Greek Cypriot women who were unaware of the future of their sons' fate and had desperately searched in the countryside to find them, whether dead or alive. Here, the women's agony is represented by their half-missing arms, revealing the restrictions placed on their physical movement by their loss. Similar to the *Crying Koukkoumares*, all the figures have holes in their heads, suggesting their emptiness and loss.

Similar to *The Scream* is *Relatives of the Missing Persons* (1999), fig. 52. Both works outline Iacovou's strategy of using 'abstract' figures as metaphors for the war cruelty. *Relatives of the Missing Persons* features a group of five figures – four adults, possibly a couple, two women and one child – all modelled with the touch of fingertip marking. Here, Iacovou represents an object for the viewer that evokes the past and present for the people who experienced the agony of having a relative missing since the 1974 war<sup>367</sup>; two figures and the child hold a photograph of their

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<sup>366</sup> Roussou, Maria. *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>367</sup> The initial number of missing persons was 1619, all of whom disappeared during or after the Turkish invasion within areas captured by the Turkish troops: 116 were women and around 500 were non-combatants and children.

missing relatives. The emotional intensity is emphasised by the position of the elder couple, who are embracing and holding hands; the other woman is shown in a praying pose.

Undoubtedly, *Relatives of the Missing Persons* represents the most tragic figures of the war: the group of people that are often not active in conflict. This includes elders and women with children, who usually stay away from the front line and have to live with the acceptance that there is no way to know what has happened to their loved ones. In particular, for decades mothers of missing persons used to protest against the Turkish invasion, informing tourists who visited the occupied part of Cyprus about the conditions of the occupation. In *Relatives of the Missing Persons*, Iacovou portrays the tension of the relatives who hold the photograph of their missing family member, a reminiscence of the conditions in which people used to hold photos of their loved ones during their protests while persistently asking for information on their fate.

There is a tremendous, intimate vulnerability that speaks loudly of the human conditions in post-war times. The photography acts as a symbolic metaphor for the past – the missing person's plans for travel – juxtaposed with the present conditions, where within a few days all that was left of their loved ones were the photos which mothers, sisters, wives and children held for years. Iacovou's ability to use in *Koukkoumara* metaphors for specifically female human conditions is outstanding. Her work in *Koukkoumara* acts as a powerful metaphor for the physical, emotional and social restraint that women experienced in 1974.

Iacovou's practice itself forms a demonstration against the ongoing political conflict in Cyprus. While keeping some elements of traditional sculpture, Iacovou refined *Koukkoumara*; the new type of *Koukkoumara* is modelled without any decorative matrix or supplementary ornament. It is not surprising the need of simplifying artefacts. On the contrary, it would have been expected to change after such dreadful experience. For this reason, Iacovou's need to place into a surface her emotions became an inventive art of a living tradition. She works quickly on each

sculpture in order to put into the art her feelings of that moment. Thus, every piece of her work is created with exceptional composition and structure.

All of Iacovou's practice has the common matrix of motherhood and the female status in Cypriot society. Likewise, another maternal composition, *Keys of Our Houses*, fig. 53, represents five figures – possibly three women, a man and an infant – holding keys in their hands. Similar to the other works, the figures are lined up side by side. The poignancy of the closed gesture – arms folded, with keys in hands or embracing the newborn – work in a cumulative way to form and narrate an experience. The reference of the key has a strong connection with women and domesticity: the key, as a domestic object it is highly connected to the home and the viewer closely relates to it.

However, the reference to keys has a direct relationship with women's experiences in wartime. These particular keys represent the keys to the homes that they were forced to abandon in order to save their lives during the invasion. Most of the women, before leaving, locked their houses and kept the key in the hope that one day they would return. This is of high importance when we consider that mid-1970 Cypriot society's custom required a dowry system, in which newly married couples had to have their own house, which should have been built by the bride's parents as a wedding contribution. The familiar household was the most common loss for refugee women who, in losing their home, experienced both a 'material and symbolic deprivation': as Maria Roussou puts it,

In short all the material world they were acquainted with and which was theirs had been taken away overnight. Their flight from the bombing and fighting was so sudden that none of them was able to take any of their most precious movable belongings.<sup>368</sup>

Thus, the key to their home was the one thing that linked their new status as refugees to their past lives. After the invasion, the key to the home was the only

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<sup>368</sup> Roussou, Maria. *Greek Cypriot Women in Contemporary Cyprus with Special Reference to the 1974 War and its Consequences*, op. cit., p. 99.

material item that refugee mothers could offer as heritage and as a memory to their children. The abandoned house was a common cause of sorrow for all refugees. Indeed, for a long time hundreds of refugees used to gather together at the nearest barricade of Famagusta – the one in the Derinia area – just to gaze at their houses.

Iacovou's *The Stopped Route/Looking at Famagusta* (2000), fig. 54, represents the excruciating experience of the refugees' long hours spent gazing at their homes from afar. To show this, Iacovou constructed a group sculpture in which six figures – five adults and one child – are all looking towards Famagusta. Two of the figures have their hands held to their foreheads in order to shield them from direct sunlight (the invasion happened in summer under high temperature) while they look at their home. Like the previous works, all figures have holes in their heads; these could be interpreted as metaphors for the emptiness that war left in their lives and their desperation at not being able to return to their homes.

Iacovou explores in her work themes motivated by women's experiences in wartime. She produces ceramic figurative works as a personal response to war and politics. Her work is made with a range of clays – predominantly white clay – in low firing ranges in a small electric kiln.<sup>369</sup> Iacovou chooses not to add any further materials or colours to the surface to emphasise the meaning of her sculptures. The simplicity of *Koukkoumares* acts as a powerful device to narrate anti-war statements. Her work transmits to the viewer the grief and the conditions that herself and thousands of other women experienced in post-1974. Being politically active, Iacovou protested next to hundreds of women against the occupation and represented this dreadful experience in her work. All of her sculpted group figures reveal that such shocking experiences can be shared with someone who is also suffering; between these people there is a common understanding. As Peter Loizos put it, 'it takes a refugee to understand one'.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> For this reason all her work size is small to medium-scales.

<sup>370</sup> Loizos, Peter. *The Heart Grown Bitter: a Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*, op. cit., 127.

The aftermath of the war established a division of Cyprus. This political division was, as Iacovou describes this as a division of her life as much as a division of Cyprus.<sup>371</sup> In post-1974 times Iacovou had to work double shifts to support her family and build a new house:

I was providing an extra salary to the income of the house. When we came here without a penny, we had to buy a property and we had to build our house. I used to work in the mornings as a tourist guide and afterwards, until midnight, I used to work on the commissions I had. This is how we paid for the house: whatever my husband provided, I provided the same, if not more. It was difficult at the time but I was strong and willing to work.<sup>372</sup>

Iacovou's career never found the same level of recognition achieved in Famagusta. Only in recent years has the state had provided her with an appropriate pension; this came after much effort on the artist's side.<sup>373</sup> Famagusta remains under Turkish occupation and Iacovou's artefacts made before 1974 are still missing. Her work now sells as antique objects in the hands of traders. Recently a *Koukkoumara* object made pre-1974 was returned to her; however, the rest of her artefacts are still missing.

There is a distinct difference in women artists' representations of war conditions. While the first part of this discussion related to a direct representation of figures of women, the second part engaged with the symbolic representations of women as ancient figures. In both ways, women artists have embodied in their practice representations of women's conditions as a subject-theme, voicing in this way their position in the ethno-national conflict. I suggest that the employment of women's figures is politically significant, indicating the growing presence and power of women in the public sphere.

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<sup>371</sup> Interview with Nina Iacovou, Larnaca, 14 December 2009.

<sup>372</sup> Interview with Nina Iacovou, Larnaca, 14 December 2009.

<sup>373</sup> Iacovou's daughter provided her with a degree of financial assistance for years.

## Chapter 5

### Greek Cypriot Women Artists and the post-1974 Geopolitical Partition

#### Introduction

What strikes me about this scene is that the dividing line seems to be alive [...] This helps me to see how a geo-political partition is not just armoured fencing, it is also a line inside our heads, and in our hearts too. In fact, the physical fence is a manifestation of these more cognitive and emotional lines that shape our thoughts and feelings. The inner lines express who we think we are, and who is not us, whom we trust and of whom we are afraid. When we are very afraid or very angry [...] a line springs out plants itself in the earth as a barrier. It becomes The Line, and passage across it is controlled, by uniformed men, at a Checkpoint.

(Cynthia Cockburn, for Arianna Economou performance *Walking the Line*)<sup>374</sup>

Chapter 5 examines the emergence of Greek Cypriot women artists in the international art market, particularly after Cyprus joined the EU in the 1990s; in this period we find Greek Cypriot women artists' practices often appearing in international spaces, providing cosmopolitan audiences with the opportunity to see shows referring to a national context. There is no doubt that international spaces and events can function as both cultural celebrations and marketplaces. This chapter also examines the ways in which the division of Cyprus helped women artists to recognise their role in a male-oriented society. Thus, I am arguing in this chapter that the Cyprus conflict has brought major changes in Greek Cypriot women's political consciousness and it has politicised contemporary women artists. Therefore, this chapter explores the practice of artists based in Nicosia who experienced the geopolitical partition of the capital city and the various responses

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<sup>374</sup> Cockburn, Cynthia. *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*. op. cit., p. 1.

to this through the employment of new media, such as installations, moving images and performance.

The chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, I will discuss the career strategies that women artists used in relation to national representation in international venues, and their transition from a domestic network to the international art community. I am particularly interested in the practice and career map of Marianna Christofides and Haris Epaminonda, as representatives of the new generation of Germany-based Greek Cypriot women artists who employ in their practice new media referencing the Cypriot context. Significant is the case of Epaminonda who at the age of 32, has shown at some of the major international spaces, such as the Venice Biennale, Berlin Biennale, Tate Modern and MoMA.

In exploring strategies of the representation of post-1974 trauma and the double meaning of witnessing within the legacy of the trauma, I discuss specific visuals that embody the Green Line, the partition line that divides Cyprus' capital, Nicosia. I therefore explore the imagery produced by Nicosia-based artists Maria Loizidou and Klitsa Antoniou. I also discuss the work of Lia Lapithi, who produced visual representations of what is 'politically correct' in addressing nationalism, bearing witness and claiming political power in Cyprus. In introducing the notion of bearing witness I explore the work of Mariana Christofides, who is representative of the young generation of women artists.

The second part focuses on the 2007 emergence of the first feminist art group, *Washing-Up Ladies*, examining their outrageous strategies in exposing gender discrimination and the undervalued feminist issues in Cyprus. Crucially, the cases examined in this chapter challenge the embodied memory of the past and the dominant nationalistic discourses, and problematise what is 'politically correct' in times where the Line may be breached, but partition remains among the two communities.



Critical to my argument on the geopolitical partition is the desire to 'return' and the *I do not Forget* slogan. Throughout the post-1974 years in Cyprus, memories of the invasion and the ongoing occupation became a key reference point for artists who experienced the event and were significantly adapted by the following generation of Cypriot artists. The desire to 'return' to the occupied part was, and still is, for many artists a return associated with a specific territory, engaged greatly by the *myth of return*. As Roger Zetter points out, this myth 'evoke[s] a familiar, idealized past and sustain[s] the memory of collective loss' while it associates the 'concreteness of a familiar home or "point fixed in space" (e.g. the villages, farms and houses in the north of Cyprus)'.<sup>375</sup>

The *myth of return* was widely displayed by the Greek Cypriot government and became part of the lives not only of the artists who experienced the invasion but also of the new generation of women artists whose school education was permeated by the *I do not forget and I struggle* slogan. In fact, the phrase became the primary objective of the Greek Cypriot educational system, with an aim to educate the post-1974 generation about the occupied parts of the country and introduce a sense of longing for unification. Therefore, young artists were cultivated into a post-war nationalism while simultaneously bearing witness to the invasion: expected to 'not to forget' the occupied parts and carry on the struggle for unification. To support this, the educational curriculum incorporated in schools a series of nationalist ventures; classes were decorated with visuals of occupied locations while the slogan *I do not forget* defined a nationalist struggle similar to that of 1955-59. However, this struggle was not related to *Enosis* as was the anti-colonial struggle back in the 1950s. The 1974 events operated as a post-war nationalism and embodied the formulation of a unified Cyprus as an independent state.

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<sup>375</sup> Zetter, Roger. 'Reconceptualizing the Myth of Return: Continuity and Transition Amongst the Greek-Cypriot Refugees of 1974', in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, 1999, p. 4.

## Mapping Careers as International Professional Artists

Interestingly, it is only recently – within the past three decades – that Greek Cypriot women artists have notably emerged in the international art community. Since then, they have continued to operate in an international art market. While in previous periods there were some cases of women artists – for example Loukia Nicolaidou and Maria Tourou – who were able to participate in the international art market due to their private relationships (with family or friends able to offer financial support), in contemporary Cyprus, women artists participate in the state and work out their career strategies in relation to national representation in international venues.

Rather than assuming the state will invite them to exhibit in prominent venues the new generation take the initiative and submit applications for funding and residency. Rhea Bailey has discussed the lack of appreciation for the older generation of artists and the Nicosia Municipal Art Centre's (NIMAC) lack of interest in exhibiting her work:

After so many years they [NIMAC] never asked me to exhibit. They should have come to me and ask about it. Don't you think so? It is time to do something for the elder artists. They actually did once a collective exhibition from artists during the 1960s. That was a lovely exhibition. At that time they did remember me, there were lots of photographs and artworks from people, you lost track of their new work. That was all [...] As far as I remember only a few Cypriots had their work exhibited in NIMAC; [it would have been nice] to feel that we are in our own place, our home and we are using our own space. To feel that we are been appreciated, that we exist for someone.<sup>376</sup>

In setting up career patterns, the new generation of women artists operate in very different ways than previous generations. Their career strategies include

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<sup>376</sup> Interview with Rhea Bailey, Nicosia, 21 September 2010.

participation in international exhibitions, such as the Venice Biennale. In fact, three women have already represented Cyprus in the Venice Biennale: Marianna Christofides in 2011,<sup>377</sup> Haris Epaminonda<sup>378</sup> in 2007 and Maria Loizidou in 1986. Significantly, all three artists' participation boosted their careers. While Loizidou lives and works in Nicosia, Christofides and Epaminonda are both based in Germany (Cologne and Berlin respectively). For Epaminonda, participation in the Venice Biennale was effective not only because of the opportunity to show her work in a big venue to an international audience, but also, and largely, due to its after-effects: open communication was established with the audience, who were able to directly contact her,<sup>379</sup> and she later received proposals to do solo exhibitions in prominent spaces including Tate Modern in London and MoMA in New York.<sup>380</sup>

In the interesting article *The Venice Effect*, Olav Velthuis wrote, in regard to the impact that curators of the Venice Biennale have on the art market:

No matter how hard its curators have tried to deny it, the biennale's impact on the art market is notable: showing in Venice speeds up sales, gets artistic careers going, cranks up prices levels and helps artists land a dealer ranked higher in the market's hierarchy.<sup>381</sup>

Velthuis also points out some 'paradoxes', in his words, which define the Venice Biennale institution. He writes:

While in the past, inclusion in the Venice Biennale would crown the end of an artist's career, now it often marks its beginning. To show their independence from the market and their ability to spot new talent, the biennale's directors and curators have increasingly

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<sup>377</sup> Christofides co-represented Cyprus with Elizabeth Hoak-Doering, an American based in Cyprus.

<sup>378</sup> Epaminonda co-represented Cyprus with Mustafa Hulusi, a Turkish Cypriot based in London.

<sup>379</sup> Prior to her participation to Venice Biennale Epaminonda was represented via a gallery in London which offered no direct communication with her.

<sup>380</sup> Interview with Haris Epaminonda, Berlin, 10 January 2012.

<sup>381</sup> Velthuis, Olav, 'The Venice Effect', *The Art Newspaper*.

June 2011, <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/The-Venice-Effect/23951>. 12 April 2012.

focused on young artists who are not yet household names. In this competition to send out fresh quality signals, which has hotted up due to the worldwide proliferation of biennials, curators are now engaging in a reverse generational race. [...] The paradox is that the more virginal these young artist's curricula are, the stronger the Venice Effect will be for them.<sup>382</sup>

Another 'paradox' pointed to by Velthuis is the curators' increasing focus on work that is hard to sell, such as videos and installations. Considering that in 1968 the Biennale ended its sale policies,<sup>383</sup> it is striking that powerful art dealers are very interested in representing artists who create 'non-commodifiable' art; similar to curators, 'it allows them to prove that they not only want to make a quick buck from selling smart paintings and photographs or from trading on the secondary market. In other words, representing these artists produces symbolic capital for these dealers'.<sup>384</sup> It is significant that both Christofides and Epaminonda adapted to the Biennale's structure, by applying to participate at an early age/stage of career and creating installations/videos rather than traditional-media works. Both artists are dynamic members of the international art community: "international" is now a selling point in it-self.<sup>385</sup> The Biennale, as a temporary hosting-space of global art, presents an instant overview of contemporary art production. I would tend to agree with Velthuis' argument that 'the consumption (but not necessarily acquisition) of contemporary art is packaged as a social and cultural experience, livened up by the artistic performances, seminars and round table discussions of experts that have now become standard elements of [...] the biennale'.<sup>386</sup>

Cyprus' 2004 joining of the European Union offered women artists the opportunity to become involved in European activities and the ability to shift between tight

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> When the Venice Biennale was founded in 1895, one of its main goals was to establish a new market for contemporary art. For this, a sale service for which it charged 10% commission was established but ended after the 1968 protests.

<sup>384</sup> Velthuis, Olav, 'The Venice Effect', op. cit.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

domestic networks and the international community. Notably, in making a living merely from producing art – not from teaching art, as was discussed in previous chapters – is the fact that both Christofides and Epaminonda had to be based outside Cyprus to gain broader access to project funding and commissions. Clearly, such decision is at risk, without an established financial security for the future; in Christofides' words: 'I keep applying [for grants] and hoping for a positive reply but, nothing is granted, competition is high'.<sup>387</sup> For Epaminonda, who makes a living mainly from selling her work and commissions, Berlin is far more affordable than Cyprus.

The fact that both, Christofides and Epaminonda, had to compromise in living and working outside Cyprus, set up a different context in career making process. The situation of women artists within and outside Cyprus is notably different. Epaminonda explains the isolation that she experienced as a young professional artist living in Berlin:

For my work Berlin is the ideal place. I feel I can be isolated in my house without having to have contact with the outside. I have the possibility to go to openings, I can choose if I want to be isolated or not. In Cyprus it is different, you cannot choose, you are isolated.<sup>388</sup>

Adding to this isolation is the lack of professional galleries in Cyprus and the fact that there is no established network for young artists in the country.<sup>389</sup> With all that said, while Cyprus might not offer optimum conditions for a professional career, it does hold some advantages for artists. According to Epaminonda:

If you want to do a work made of wood or metal, there are so many carpenters in Cyprus that you can go to their place and ask for it. It is not complicated, nor expensive. People are willing to do things in Cyprus. Whereas abroad there is competition. Of course, Berlin has

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<sup>387</sup> Correspondence with Marianna Christofides, 2012.

<sup>388</sup> Interview with Haris Epaminonda, Berlin, 10 January 2012.

<sup>389</sup> EKATE's (The Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts) majority members are mature artists.

good carpenters, but they don't have time – for example if you ask something they will do it after a month. It is not easy. Now I have family but have no one to help. I don't have my mother around or my sisters, my cousins or friends. Life here is very different but it has other good things. I know if I go to Cyprus I will have certain facilities [like leaving her baby with her mother] and have all the time to do work. This is something that I don't have now.<sup>390</sup>

While Epaminonda's career might not be affected by 'Sunday Artist' status or the conditions of the 'threat of the dirty house' discussed in Chapter 3 there are still certain negotiations to be considered in the transition from a domestic network to a globalised European community space. There are some fundamental gendered changes between child care and a professional career, domestic assistance and the international community. For Epaminonda, her marriage to a German man offered a sharing part of domestic duties. Added to this is the fact that Epaminonda's mother often travels to assist with Epaminonda's child so that she can spend more time working. These gendered changes reveal the interesting dynamics in gains and losses seen by moving from domestic surroundings to the international art market.

I would like to emphasise the fact that at the age of 32, Epaminonda has shown at some of the major international venues, such as the Venice Biennale, Berlin Biennale, Tate Modern and MoMA. In her series of installations consisting mainly of moving images, collages and objects, she found references – even if they are at times oblique – to Cyprus and Greek culture. As Epaminonda explains:

In Cyprus we had a specific mentality and education. In schools we had taught about Greek history more than any other history, even the Cypriot one. At weekends TV showed Greek movies. All these are part of who we are. If you walk around Cyprus and visit places you will see. If a tourist wants to know about Cyprus' history will go

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<sup>390</sup> Interview with Haris Epaminonda, Berlin, 10 January 2012.

around and visit the famous places we have, such as Kourio, Aphrodite, the museum that is full from Greek sculpture. The majority of culture we have is Greek [...] I think you can see this togetherness in my work. My work is related to Mediterranean geography/territory. How could it not be?<sup>391</sup>

In all spaces Epaminonda constructs walls so that the audience can focus on one visual at a time. She explains this approach as a time travel installation where the viewer can focus on the projection. For installations she uses old objects collected from various markets, moving images taken with an 8mm Super camera and images from old books. In regard to the material she uses in her work, Epaminonda states:

I have worked with found footage taken from sources such as broadcast television and movies from the 60s, as well as a lot of material shot over the years with my Super 8 film camera. In my installations, I mainly use found images and objects, as well as constructed forms and support structures that all become interconnected to create rhythmical movement and pauses.<sup>392</sup>

I argue that the new generation of women artists operate using specific career strategies. They are actively involved in worldwide travel, visiting locations in advance to see the site of their exhibitions; they establish extended international communication through online personal galleries; and they are associated with both international and local art markets. Felicia Chan wrote an interesting article in relation to the international film festival and the making of a national cinema, on which I will draw to explore the making of international art shows:

The international [...] [shows] often appears to function as a cosmopolitan space in which spectators are encouraged to participate in a kind of concentrated cultural tour of the world; it is

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

also a space that regulates – in accordance with various social, economic, political and cultural forces – what is allowed to flow it. Apart from celebrating individual [...] [works and artists], [...] [exhibitions] often showcase various bodies of work defined as [...] [practice] emerging from particular nations, more usually referred to as ‘national’ [art] [...] <sup>393</sup>

Significantly, international shows not only function as both cultural celebrations and marketplaces but exist as ‘an alternative distribution network[s] ... providing audiences with opportunities to enjoy [...] [works] that most communities, even the most cosmopolitan, otherwise would not have the opportunity to see’ <sup>394</sup>

Part of their career strategy is the use of a diverse range of media and the bravery of their subject choice, representing the state as a key issue in their adaptation and adoption of international modern styles. In adapting to the international community, women artists operate not only individually but also in collective groups – for example the *Washing-Up Ladies*, who are influenced by the *Guerrilla Girls*. The *Washing-Up Ladies* follow the lead of the group who are ‘women artists and art professionals who fight discrimination. [...] [They] have produced over 80 posters, printed projects, and actions that expose sexism and racism in the art world and the culture at large’ <sup>395</sup>

Women artists of the post-1974 period are much more directly international practitioners, and there has been a radical shift in their attitudes and activities. Speaking to different audiences, artists like Maria Loizidou, Klitsa Antoniou and Lia Lapithi employ Cyprus’ geo-political partition as a subject matter through which to convey women’s experiences of trauma and memory. In addition, both Christofides

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<sup>393</sup> Chan, Felicia. ‘The International Film Festival and the Making of a National Cinema’, in *Screen*, Vol. 52, Issue 2, 2011, p. 253.

<sup>394</sup> Peranson Mark, ‘First You Get the Power, Then you get the Money: Two Models of Film Festivals’, quoted in Chan, Felicia. ‘The International Film Festival and the Making of a National Cinema’. op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>395</sup> The Guerilla Girls, *The Guerilla Girls’ Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art*, London: Penguin, 1998, p. 7.



and Epaminonda belong to the young, dynamic generation of Greek Cypriot artists who, despite their distance from Cyprus, engage within their practice issues of identity, history and memory. There is a politicised perspective in tracing and mapping data from past histories to create new narrative spaces for the audience to explore in the global art market. It is here that women's legacy in Cyprus makes an international appearance, via these art practices which overcome national, cultural and social borders. It is only in recent times that women artists have actually identified in their practice issues related to contemporary society and women. In locating women's activities in regard to the relationship between gender and the post-1974 geopolitical partition, I will explore representations of trauma and memory and the different strategies that women artists employ in responding to the socio-political conditions of contemporary Cyprus.

## ***I Do Not Forget: Visual Strategies of Representing Memory and Trauma in Cyprus***

### **Trauma**

Maria Loizidou (b.1958) is an artist who established a career based in Nicosia after studying Fine Arts in France. Her practice consists of a direct approach to representing Cyprus' socio-political conditions for a local and international audience. I consider that her work on situated visual images of trauma provides important insights into the post-1974 'polito-graphy', particularly on issues of space, borders (both physical and psychic), memory and trauma that are related to matters of nationalism, militarism, internationalism and politics.<sup>396</sup> A significant milestone in Loizidou's early career was her 1986 participation in the Venice Biennale, in which she showed the installation *The Myth of Ariadne in Three Acts* – a project that reveals Loizidou's tendency to employ Hellenic sources as a nationalist strategy to represent Cyprus within an international show. This marked Cyprus' first Venice Biennale participation after a long pause (1974–1984) due to the events of 1974.

I argue that Loizidou's 2000 *Trauma* exhibition at the Nicosia Municipal Art Centre re-embodied the idea of trauma as a creative agent in divided Cyprus. The tension mirrored in each article supports the dynamic interaction between past and present. The exhibition's premise is straightforward: Loizidou juxtaposed her experiences as a Greek Cypriot woman in a strategic narration of trauma, with close attention to particular articles, materials and ideas outlining a critical mechanism through which to recount women's experiences of post-war trauma. While the wider atmosphere of the exhibition is represented through unreal, grotesque stitched-together dolls and dresses that together represent the past history, a significant counterpoint reveals a positive narrative process in the present. Loizidou's multimedia installations attend to the specificity of local politics.

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<sup>396</sup> I borrow the term 'polito-graphy' from Navaro-Yashin, Yael, 'Life is Dead Here: Sensing the Political in 'No Man's Land'', in *Anthropological Theory*, 2003, Vol. 3, Issue 107, pp. 107-125.

This was exhibited during the period in which Cyprus was on the threshold of joining the European Union and society was embracing new realities, including the first identification of missing persons. For the *Trauma* exhibition Loizidou produced a set of installations evoking 1974's traumatic conditions of exile and trauma. Installations like *Passage of Time*, *Missing Persons*, *The Suspended flight*, *A Mountain Where I Hide my Dreams in a Tent*, *Twins or the Brotherly Enemy*, *Exhumation* and *Trauma* are – alongside her other work – engendering history in the present time.

Loizidou's exhibition *Trauma* consisted of twenty parts, located in such a way that each installation sited a visual remembrance of Cyprus' ethnic conflict. I propose that Loizidou's set of installations provides an especially significant visual strategy in negotiating the implications of post-war trauma. On entering the exhibition the audience is led to the wider space of the installations through *Passage of Time*, fig. 55, a narrow corridor made of white walls in which white fabric aprons hang from stainless steel hooks. All aprons are stained with red paint. After passing among the stained aprons, the audience enters the wider space and encounters the centrepiece of the space, a large installation in motion. Here, we face *Monument to the Dead*, fig. 56, a mechanical metal carousel constantly rotating what seem to be tailored dresses.

As a site of remembrance, Loizidou set up a powerful context for exploring trauma and mourning. I suggest Loizidou's negotiation of trauma as a memorial in an embodied, situated memory-installation articulates rational discourses in visualising exile and loss. The juxtaposition of the static-moving object and mechanism are corporeally significant. While it is worth considering the usage of aprons as an outer protective garment used widely in domestic chores, I rather associate them with a work category that is predominantly occupied by men: that of the butcher. A butcher is traditionally known as a person who slaughters animals and sells their meat. I consider that Loizidou employs the red-stained apron as a metaphor of past political agitations between the two communities. Loizidou's

aprons are aligned one beside another on both sides of the corridor. Their stillness calls to us as a reminder of the past, bringing together the corporeality of memory itself, as a crossing point of past and present, reality and imagination.

Griselda Pollock argues that trauma is 'a perpetual present, resilient in its persistent and timeless inhabitation of a subject who does not, and cannot, *know it*'.<sup>397</sup> She also points out two distinct strands of trauma theory: *structural* trauma and *historical* trauma.<sup>398</sup> According to Pollock:

Structural trauma refers to what is theorized by psychoanalytical tradition as inevitable events in the formation of subjectivity which are subjected to primal repression [...]. Trauma as event concerns the series of losses which mark and by which subjectivity is formed [...]. Historical trauma refers to overwhelming events or experiences by which we, having become subjects whether children or adults, may be afflicted in the course of our lives [...].<sup>399</sup>

The invasion, a trauma that caused exile, abuse and death, falls into the category of historical trauma. I suggest that the *Passage of Time* can be understood as 'a means of staging of encounter rather than the protected turning away from the fearful limit frontier'.<sup>400</sup>

To contrast the stillness of *Passage of Time*, *Monument to the Dead's* incessant rotation visualises a macabre awareness of the traumatic embodied situation. The slow movement of the long dresses, as 'bodies' whose corporeality is gone, evoke an awakening of a permanent absence. To take this further, I argue that the entire installation forms a visual strategy of national reminiscence. The work, as the site of national remembrance, trauma and mourning, is constructed in a surreal environment of white; all presented objects are white. In refusing to forget the

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<sup>397</sup> Pollock, Griselda. 'Art/Trauma/Representation', in *parallax*, Vol. 15, Issue. 1, 2009, p. 40.

<sup>398</sup> Dominick LaCapra also writes about this distinction in his article, 'Trauma, Absence, Loss', in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 25, Issue 4, 1999, pp. 696-727.

<sup>399</sup> Pollock, 'Art/Trauma/Representation'. op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

history of the island (*I do Not Forget*) Loizidou employs a narration of the 1974 trauma; animated articles remind us of the brutal military invasion while simultaneously enacting a gender-specific negotiation of memory and trauma.

An example of such strategy is *A Mountain Where I Hide My Dreams in a Tent*, fig. 57, an installation in motion where a white fabric tent is constantly lifted and lowered by a mechanism. The significance of the tents is critical to the meaning of narrating women's experiences; tents were transformed into provisional housing in 1974's refugee camps, which became a critical transitional point for refugee women who had, in the post-1974 period, lost everything with which they identified themselves. As I discussed in Chapter 4, most significant was their loss of home and everything that it represented: ancestral dowry, livelihood and connections. The historical power of the exilic trauma, as Cathy Caruth argues, 'is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that [it] is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all'.<sup>401</sup> Loizidou's strategies in representing trauma might be understood within Caruth's argument that 'since the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, another time'.<sup>402</sup> In looking carefully at Loizidou's work, a critical connection brings new perspectives to reiterating the trauma.

In her incisive installation *The Pillows of my Nightmare or the Bloody Years of the History of a War*, fig. 58, Loizidou reinscribes the national trauma in a symbolic narration. Various shaped white pillows are positioned in front of a video installation of parachute troops dropped by military aircrafts. Here, the pillows, symbols of comfort, are not serving their role as articles to support restful sleep. Their gigantic figures shapes cannot provide any solace or a restful escape during repose. Instead, the installation recalls the traumatic memories of the parachute troops landing on 20 July 1974. While those living on the north coast saw ships approaching the shore, those living in Nicosia saw parachutists falling from planes.

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<sup>401</sup> Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction' in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University press, 1995, p. 8.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

The military invasion had established since that time a 'polito-graphy' based on both physical and physic separation. As Gabriel Koureas puts it: 'the artist's anguish is transferred to the visitors who witnessed these events through somatic memories, stitched together with highly visible needlework so that the real appears unreal and the invisible prevails'.<sup>403</sup>

I would highlight at this point that through a twofold strategy, Loizidou articulates specific gendered differences in a history-making process. To contradict masculine trophies of past history (such as *War Machines*, *War Loot*, *Exhumation*) Loizidou employs a critical response to embody the present: images of women embroidering, weaving, moulding clay and baking are shown in a video in the background of the installation *Galapagos Nesominus Trifasciatus*. Loizidou offers the following account of the bird which the work is named after: 'Defends his land to death. He is not an easy character, there is no chance of conquering his area which he defends with his beak and claws'.<sup>404</sup>

By juxtaposing objects and presenting them alongside visual and textual information, Loizidou offers a critical space to valorise women's craft work. As Rozsika Parker has argued, women's relationship with embroidery is a twofold one; an educational device in the 'feminine ideal and stereotype' and a weapon of resistance to 'feminine constraints'.<sup>405</sup> I suggest that Loizidou's engagement in valorising women's craft work offers a unique sense of catharsis in dealing with the trauma through which the audience is invited to participate. It explores the deep meanings of traditional domestic customs which can be performed in the Diaspora as a negotiation connecting the past homeland with the current dwelling.

In the exhibition context, *Measure of Blows*, *Costume for All*, fig. 59, offers female-shaped mannequins shown in the form of punch-bags. Loizidou invites the

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<sup>403</sup> Koureas, Gabriel. 'Trauma, Space and Embodiment: The Sensorium of a Divided City', in *Journal of War and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1, Issue 3, 2008, p. 321.

<sup>404</sup> Loizidou, Maria. 'Maria Loizidou' website.

[http://www.marialoizidou.com/files/Catalogues/Trauma\\_gr\\_enr.pdf](http://www.marialoizidou.com/files/Catalogues/Trauma_gr_enr.pdf). Accessed 12 September 2011.

<sup>405</sup> Parker, Rozsika. *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: Women's Press, 1984.

audience to interact with the mannequins, to react, to punch the mannequins as a device of catharsis. As a site of national remembrance, the exhibition projects a tactical mechanism engaged in a participatory practice; audience is invited to recall the past atrocities through the *Passage of Time*, to scrutinise with scepticism political interventions and to (re)act. Such (re)action (freely punching the mannequins) is similar to the constant embroidering involved in women's crafts; a repeated action that articulates a positive visual approach towards a catharsis of the 'passage of time'.

It is remarkable how women artists adapt to international art trends and draw on materials and structures which are close to their domestic surroundings. In the next discussion I will explore the work of Klitsa Antoniou and her strategy of employing domestic materials as a scene of violence, a subversive scene using kitchen materials that create a distressing scene of the domestic for contemporary audiences.

## **A Subversive Passage of Time: *A Wall of Roses***

Roses with their ephemeral and worldly nature, reveal the passage of time and its effects. Something like the idyllic metaphor of love and beauty that fades, gradually overtaken by death and deterioration.

(Klitsa Antoniou, on her installation *A Wall of Roses*, 2002)<sup>406</sup>

As a refugee, Klitsa Antoniou (b.1968) embraces in her work the trauma of displacement and the division of her birthplace, Nicosia. The 2002 exhibition *Traces of Memory* framed the installation *A Wall of Roses*, fig. 60, in which several roses composed a wall in vertical oblong lines. The roses are all hanging upside down, with their shrivelled buds pointing towards the ground, where there stands a row of cooking utensils filled with a red-coloured fluid. Plates, pans and pots are all positioned in line, formulating a divisional line made of household objects. The wall of roses outlines a frame beyond which we can scrutinise a whole other setting. Here, several tables are positioned in the wider area of the space alongside the screen of roses. The tables are painted white, with visible imprinted signs made of a thick paste of household objects – scissors, knives, an iron, hair brushes – on their surfaces. To add to all this, a ceiling fan pierced with rose stems and a small wooden gate door comprise vital fragments of the installation.

What is interesting in Antoniou's installation is the dynamics of historical narration deployed through a visual intervention; our position as viewers is bounded by the wall of roses, which evokes memories associated with images that are significantly engaged in a particular geo-political context. There is a strong sense of paradox in the space, where everything is white apart from the red roses and the vessels' contents. Lucy Watson argues that 'the colour red flows though the work like a rivulet of blood connecting the sculptures, collages and installations together to form a passionate body of pieces sharing a common theme; the trauma and

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<sup>406</sup> Diatopos Gallery. *Traces of Memory*, Nicosia: ENTIPIS V.K Publications LTD, 2002, p. 8.



injustice of displacement'.<sup>407</sup> These visual codes through which Antoniou negotiates memory are a powerful device in questioning national fragments of trauma.

In visualising traces of memory, Antoniou imprints her individual memories on the surface of the tables, which turn into what Gabriel Koureas identifies as 'tortured surfaces'.<sup>408</sup> Such 'tortured' objects embody traces of memory of ordinary household articles which have been preserved on the surfaces used in the work. I consider that Antoniou's engagement of domestic objects (iron, scissors, knives) forms a powerful strategy in re-negotiating the post-1974 trauma. In arguing this I draw on Watson's argument that Antoniou subverts domestic articles, changing them from 'beloved mementoes to ominous reminders' in a visual strategy through which to challenge the audience *not to forget*. 'our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting'.<sup>409</sup> Antoniou's evocative strategy is precise; she transforms household utensils into reminder-instruments that act as metaphors of trauma and nostalgia. The fact that she preserves the corporeality of each object through its preservation in layers of latex, wax and plaster de-associates their domestic function to make them political devices. Most importantly, she replaces the domesticated meaning of ordinary utensils with a cultural code of remembrance, a strategy used extensively by Mona Hatoum.

Through her unusual visual mixture of domestic tools, Antoniou addresses a polemical aspect of the conflict. A recurrent device is the usage of roses embodying the notion of vulnerability and nostalgia throughout the exhibition. Watson points out that 'preserved as such, the buds are transformed to become something else – a memory of their former selves and the love and beauty they once symbolised'.<sup>410</sup> The construction of a wall made of roses and the vessels beneath project cultural mechanisms derived from earlier women's art practices.

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<sup>407</sup> Watson, Lucy. 'Inviting Personal Reflection', in *Klitsa Antoniou: Traces of Memory* exhibition catalogue, Nicosia: ENTIPIIS V.K Publications, 2002, p. 23.

<sup>408</sup> Koureas, op. cit., p. 321.

<sup>409</sup> Watson, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

We are familiar with the 1970s feminist cultural deconstruction of femininity. I would refer to Martha Rosler's (1975) *Semiotics of the Kitchen* and to Birgit Jurgenssen's (1975) *Hausfrauen-Kuchenschrze* (translated as *Housewife's Kitchen Apron*), both of which employ kitchen utensils to deconstruct the prevailing limited cultural and social conditioning of women around the world. As oppose to *Semiotics of the Kitchen* which features Rosler as a cooking host in a video performance piece and the *Housewife's Kitchen Apron* which features Jurgenseen carrying a stove around her neck, Antoniou does not used her body as a strategy to represent the trauma.

In Antoniou's installation, the multiple manoeuvring of domestic objects maps out critically the empirical knowledge of trauma. Here, plates, pans and pots are not used as traditional utensils for the preparation and serving of meals. I propose that Antoniou utilises these domestic articles as a recurrent politicised device which acts, according to her, as 'both a map and a metaphor' of the conditions of trauma. Such tactile metaphor embraces a strong sense of the distressing memories behind it; the fact that all the vessels contain red fluid cannot but remind us of the 1974 trauma. These particular visuals have now become synonymous of the conflict: the *Wall of Roses* reproduces the hostile militaristic environment of the Green Line.

The Green Line dividing Cyprus is in fact a double line, with an area of 'no man's land' between two parallel fences. The line that Greek Cypriots call the 'dead zone' is one of the most militarised areas of the world in relation to its population; posters that read *Dead Zone; No Entry: Occupied Zone; Beware Mine Fields; Buffer UN Zone* are found across the Green Line. The flags of five armies are seen in various locations: the Cyprus Republic flag, the Greek flag, the Turkish flag, the TRMC flag, the UN flag and, more recently, the EU flag all act as reminders of the prevailing national identity of the island. Antoniou does not employ such powerful national symbols. On the contrary, she exposes the vulnerability that the Green Line imposed in the post-1974 period. Such vulnerability is obvious in the

installation's stillness: the stilled fan pierced through with rose stems, the open drawers of the desks, the imprinted surfaces. Faced with this vulnerability, the installation could be seen as what Walton described as an act of 'exorcism of dark and distressing memories'.<sup>411</sup>

Loizidou and Antoniou are not the only artists questioning ethnic separatism in the post-1974 period. I described in Chapters 3 and 4 women's consciousness of gender issues and the methods through which they evolved strategies to transgress the hierarchy of patriarchy. While this social condition still prevails, women artists challenge the line of partition with regard to both ethno-national and gender relations. This is particularly notable in the practice of the artists based in Nicosia, where they experienced a geopolitical partition imposed by the ethnic division. In exploring this, I wish to examine women's art practices in relation to their approach to challenging the conflict and their cultural intervention regarding what is 'politically correct' in a society where new generations, under the influences of the state, the media, the family and their schooling, form an imaginary image of the 'other' and bear witness to an event they never experienced.

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

## **Grade IV**

*Grade IV* (3mins, film, 2007) by Lia Lapithi, figs. 61–63, addresses the post-1974 conflict conditions across the differences of ethnicity, culture and history. The film acts as a dynamic interaction between the politics and visuals of national remembrance and the focus on bearing witness embedded in new generations' education. The opening scene shows a school notebook. Its front cover shows an image of occupied city Kerynia's port and the slogan *I do not Forget* as an identifying title: the back cover shows a photo of Apostole Andreas monastery. This is followed by a black screen with the message 'Δεν Ξεχνώ', a slogan literally translated as *I don't forget*, whose objective is to support the national long-term struggle against Turkish occupation. Next is a white screen displaying the proverb 'Good fences make good neighbours'. Subsequently, the camera films the interior of a school classroom decorated with drawings of traditional vessels and an icon of the Madonna embracing Christ. There, in the school a boy is seen alone in an empty classroom writing in his notebook.

Whilst the camera focuses on the boy, he stops writing, puts a pair of headphones on and continues writing while listening to the lyrics of the 1970 song *Deja Vu*:

[...] If I had ever been here before I would probably know what to do, don't you?. If I had ever been here before on another time around the wheel I would probably know just how to deal with all of you, and I feel like I've been here before and you know it makes me wonder what's going on.

(Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young)

The camera observes the boy from behind as he repeatedly writes the sentence 'I shall love my neighbour' on several pages on the notebook. The song then pauses abruptly; while the boy tidies the objects on the desk and leaves the classroom.

For Lia Lapithi (b.1963), a refugee artist, the making of *Grade IV* functioned as a means of demonstrating and elaborating speculations about the concept of exile and the nationalist elements in education in post-1974 Cyprus. Significantly, Lapithi is among the first film-makers who emerged in Cyprus influenced by the 1960s–70s legacy of political film-making. After an international education in California, USA, and Lancaster, Kent and Wales in the UK, Lapithi produced and directed a series of politically motivated films focusing on social-political discrimination in both local and international matters. Her filmography includes the short experimental film *Marinated Crushed Olives* (2006) which is now is part of the collection at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. The film brings to public attention the unsolved political problem of Cyprus; here, Lapithi represents the country as an olive which is, as she explains, ‘crushed, then left to marinate in salt water to remove its bitterness, and then marinating in its oil while waiting for a solution to its problem to come’.<sup>412</sup>

In *Grade IV* Lapithi employs traditional experimental documentary techniques to address political narrations of trauma and its embodiment in the younger generations who bear witness to the past. Obviously, the boy presented in *Grade IV* belongs to the post-1974 generation subjected to a long training of cultural process that has been identified as ‘malignant shame’.<sup>413</sup> This ‘malignant shame’ has been transmitted to new generations by the institutions of government, education, family and religion and, I suggest, has reinforced the national struggle and the hostility in relations between the two communities.

There is a difference in witnessing trauma as testimony to ‘bearing witness’ for something you haven’t actually perpetrated but you bear responsibility for. Kelly Oliver defines *witnessing* as having a twofold meaning: ‘*eyewitness* testimony based on first-hand knowledge, on the one hand, and *bearing witness* to

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<sup>412</sup> Lapithi, Lia. ‘Lia Lapithi Shukuroglou’ website. <http://www.lialapithi.com/index.asp?section=films>. 20 April 2011.

<sup>413</sup> O’Connor, Garret. ‘Recognising and Healing Malignant Shame’, in Ziff, T. (ed.) *Distant Relations: Chicano, Irish, Mexican Art and Critical Writing*, New York: Smart Art Press, 1996.

something beyond recognition that can't be seen, on the other hand – is the heart of subjectivity'.<sup>414</sup>

This double meaning of witnessing is alluded to in *Grade IV*, where the protagonist, a Greek Cypriot boy, bears witness to something he himself had not experienced: the conditions that caused the trauma. However, the boy is bearing witness to what cannot be seen, to something he had never experienced and cannot see with his own eyes. It is useful to note here Oliver's comment that there is 'a juridical sense of bearing witness to what you know from firsthand knowledge as an eyewitness and the religious sense of bearing witness to what you believe through faith'.<sup>415</sup> The boy is bearing witness to the trauma that has been transmitted unwittingly to post-1974 generations through the policies of nationalism in Cyprus.

The nationalistic processes incorporated in elementary school education embrace the *I do not Forget* notion; children aged six to twelve are given the same sort of notebook as the one Lapithi displays in *Grade IV*. This is of high importance if we consider that such nationalistic strategies evolve into a chronic mechanism, using the notebook to project ideological messages that become, as Lapithi argues, a 'second-hand memory' for the new generations. Cyprus' state employs education to infuse the ideal of Greek nationalism while schooling ideas of Greek identity, the history of a noble Greek past, the country's half-occupation by the Turkish who are identified as the 'other' – those who are occupying *their* territory – and their duty to struggle and liberate Cyprus from the enemy.

Lapithi exposes in *Grade IV* metaphors of documentary practice; location and time provide certain alternative ways to perceive the notion of witnessing. The production of such performative gesture embraces the past and present together and brings them into a vital connection with the future, linking the space of the film (classroom) with the notion of territory in the past (photos of occupied places),

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<sup>414</sup> Oliver, Kelly. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. 16.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

present (political complexity) and future ('I shall love my neighbour'). Taken together, this connection negotiates the post-1974 myth of return in combination with the post-2003 radical adaption of school textbooks, a shifted strategy in developing a solution to the Cyprus problem. Post-war Cyprus constructed a perpetual arena presenting a narrow national history, recorded by partial concepts of the past.

In this work, Lapithi negotiates what is 'politically correct' – that is, whether elementary-school children are too young to comprehend the meaning of an idealised nationalism based on hatred for the 'neighbour' who lives across the Green Line. The boy's action in repeating the same text recalls the old method of compulsory punishment – repeating phrases as a method of 'learning a lesson'. Here, the boy is observed writing, tens of times, the phrase 'I shall love my neighbour', an action that could signify both homework and/or punishment. Lapithi criticises in *Grade IV* the post-1974 educational ideology that glorified its own nationalism while instructing young students about the occupation and their upcoming duty to fight for their country's liberation and unification. Significant to this is the 24 months of compulsory military service for which boys are recruited immediately after secondary school. The military training inculcates nationalism and hatred for the 'other':

[In our family] we don't advocate any kind of violence! I mean. We don't step on ants if they get in our way, you know! And I saw my seventeen-year-old go into the army, a child! And each time he came out, he was a bit harder, and a bit more aggressive, and a bit more hatred had been fed into him about the other seventeen-year-old children on the other side of the Green Line, that he was being taught how to wound or kill... I can't even find words for it!<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Sue Lartides in Cockburn, Cynthia. *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus*. op. cit., p. 115.

Lapithi's practice deploys both the domestic and public domains, demonstrating the inter-relation of the private and public spheres, the mother and the artist. Through her role as mother she observes society's intervention in education and its long-term influence on personal choices, particularly those of children at a fragile young age. The use of a classroom and the title of the film are not coincidental – they highlight a transition of age and education; a transition that the film's protagonist is called to negotiate even though he has no experience of the past events (as evinced in the words of the song: 'if I had ever been here before I would know probably what to do...'). The boy is expected to not to forget an event he has not experienced and territories he never visited; certainly, he cannot recall a memory that society stipulates that he must not 'forget', because, simply, it is not his past. As is shown in the words of the song, he is uncertain how to deal with *all of you*.

In addition, the proverb displayed in Lapithi's film, 'Good fences make good neighbours', (from Robert Frost's well known poem, *Mending Wall*) challenges the boy's assertion that 'I shall love my neighbour'. This again challenges the notion of the myth of return and the struggle of return, particularly after the reopening of checkpoints and the state's shifted strategy advocating Turkish Cypriots as 'neighbours' and 'brothers' rather than their old identification as 'enemies'. However, this fence – or, in official language, the Green Line, established after the 1965 troubles – is still safeguarded by the United Nations.

Lapithi uses autobiographical formats in producing experimental filmmaking that becomes part of a dialogue between post-war nationalism and the changed politics of the present since the 2003 reopening of Cyprus' barricades. Lapithi has presented throughout her long practice a direct tactical approach, loaded with symbols and contradictions, together provoking public thoughts on what is 'politically correct' in contemporary Cyprus. Clearly, as I suggest, Lapithi's series of films are all directly associated with the ongoing political situation in Cyprus, with key reference to its territory and nostalgia for the past.



A useful starting point from which to read Lapithi's film practice is the notion of dialogue, a straightforward venue in which to stage contemporary politics in Cyprus. Lapithi's films are very short – three 3 minutes maximum – mapping Cyprus through visuals, materials and ideas that circulate traditional elements of the island. Interestingly, these films were produced of these after the reopening of the *Ledra's* barricade, which provided Lapithi and other women artists with the opportunity to access a formerly banned territory – a territory that for over three decades was accessible solely through memory. Therefore, I suggest that Lapithi's practice is based not only on memory, but also on rediscovering old familiar territory and space after thirty years of being a refugee, having experienced forced exile as a child.

Certainly, the time that Lapithi spent in exile was a period of negotiating the new reality of the ambiguous refugee identity: 'a triangular set of relationships express the continuity between the past and the future, mediated by the present... the continuity of the triangle has become fragmented since they [refugees] are cut off from the physical and symbolic representation of the past – their homes, land, villages and sense of place.'<sup>417</sup> Nevertheless, the decades of exile have profoundly reformulated the social-political-economical status of refugees; 'the coping strategies of 'cultural involution' and dependency have been augmented to by a constantly changing social kaleidoscope – autonomy, alienation, nationalism, incorporation and, in some cases, seamless integration in the south'.<sup>418</sup> The incorporation in the south pressured refugee artists to adapt to new realities and create a new economical, social and cultural milieu.

Mediation between the myth of return and its actual reality reinforced the dislocated artists' attitudes about what is 'politically correct' in post-1974 Cyprus. Lapithi's work crosses several film boundaries, including autobiography, documentary and experimental filmmaking. She is best known for her intricate, ironic, rhythmic editing of sound and footage combined with direct critiques of

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<sup>417</sup> Zetter, op. cit., p. 301.

<sup>418</sup> Zetter, op. cit., p. 305.

contemporary cultural stereotypes and matters such as feminism and politics in Cyprus. Thus, it is not surprising that Lapithi introduces to the audience new subject matters and devices while employing specific strategies to expose social, political and cultural issues. Her films offer points of view on issues like patriarchy, militarism and witnessing and sexuality and gender roles in contemporary Cyprus.

### ***Filoxenia***

In the forecourt of my own 'nest' I pay for a Turkish flag to invade it every evening, brightly lit...

I live in a surrealist country... At 8pm all through every night this extravaganza begins

Lia Lapithi (*Electricity*, 2006 short video)

*Electricity* (2.30mins, film, 2006), figs. 64–66, forms a political narration of Lia Lapithi's role as a refugee facing the present status quo of ownership and return to contemporary Cyprus. The short experimental film starts with a daylight screening of the enormous flag of the 'Turkish Cypriot state', located in the occupied *Pentadactilos* Mountain. Significant to this is the music, titled 'My Occupied Mountain', recalling a Greek melody. While the music plays, Google Maps screenshots are shown, zooming to the mountain where the artist measures the flag's length: 1000 km, possibly the largest flag to be seen worldwide. The film changes to offer images of the electricity station, under which are heard sounds of electricity manufacturing; a sign says 'Electricity, Authority of Cyprus, No Admittance, Danger, Κίνδυνος, Tehlike, 132,000 Volts'. Next are images of the electricity station and the following text: 'From 1963 to 1974 the Turkish Cypriots were given free electricity. This continued also after the invasion of the Turkish army in 1974 at a cost of US \$343 million, even though apart from the Turkish Cypriots the consumers now included the Turkish occupation forces. The Cypriot authorities still supply the occupied areas and their army with their energy needs'.

Pentadactilos mountain is shown again; a clouded image of the flag appears, and it lights up at twilight to the sound of an Ottoman military march beat. The film ends with the text 'I live in a surrealist country [...] At 8pm all through every night this extravaganza begins'. The 'extravaganza' to which Lapithi refers is the lighting up of the flag, which, ironically is funded by the Greek Cypriots' income and taxes.

The flag stands as a reminder not only of the conflicted political situation in Cyprus, but also of the ongoing sovereignty control of the two communities over the unresolved Cyprus problem. The flag is an everyday reminder of the invasion and of the loss for the ones who were forced to migrate and their return is postponed. The film states clearly that the electricity supply is under the authority of Cyprus, the legitimate state: however, Greek Cypriots undergo daily the 'extravaganza' of the invading forces: 'the last time I felt sad was when [...] was placed in my back garden [...] the Turkish National flag and has written underneath 'so happy to be a Turk' [...] this flag all through every night at 8pm lights up and is extremely provocative [...]']

In negotiating this trauma Lapithi constructs an innovative passage for her practice: an online site<sup>419</sup> in which she welcomes the explorer with the phrase 'You are a Guest in my House'. The representation of Lapithi's website as her house suggests a radical change in Lapithi's contemporary art practice. The online site offers a worldwide access to her practice and is clearly a big media shift of practicing while embarking permanent on the public sphere. In chapter 4 I discussed the loss of a large amount of refugee artists' practice; works were left in houses, galleries and studios. Lapithi displays all her practice through a mobile mechanism that encounters the notion of 'filoxenia' (hospitality).

This online mechanism acts as an elaboration of the paradox that all refugees experience: they can return to their homes only as guests. Jacques Derrida, defines ethics as hospitality and hospitality as ethics: 'hospitality is not removed

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<sup>419</sup> Lapithi, Lia. 'Lia Lapithi Shukuroglou' website. <http://www.lialapithi.com>. Accessed 20 April 2011.

from ethics, nor is it a specific area of ethics. It is the foundation, or the “whole and the principle of ethics”.<sup>420</sup> Furthermore, Derrida argues, ‘the law of hospitality, the express law that governs the general concept of hospitality, appears in a paradoxical law, pervertible and perverting. It seems to dictate that absolute hospitality should break with the law of hospitality as right of duty [...]’.<sup>421</sup> Mark Westmoreland draws on Derrida’s discussion and writes:

The master of the home, the host, must welcome in foreigner, a stranger, a guest, without any qualifications, including having never been given an invitation. Such an invitation as a host offering his or hers home to a guest implies a sort of exchange between the two – “the most inhospitable exchange possible”.<sup>422</sup>

The current occupants cannot be seen as guests – they were never invited to that space – but in the current political situation, Greek Cypriots’ homes are occupied by ‘xenos’ (foreigner). This becomes intriguing when we take into account the traditional Greek culture of hospitality: ‘xenos’ is a guest, therefore a cordial welcome is expected. What happens though when this ‘xenos’ was not invited but, on the contrary, invaded the dwelling of someone else? Maria Hadjipavlou explains, in a dialogue with Lapithi, her return visit to her parent’s house:

It is even worse because I realise it is not only the physical space that is occupied by complete strangers from another country [...] who I assume are indifferent to my story and emotional connection but also I experience this double bind. Unknowingly, these strangers have invaded my memories, my own private world which they could never know. I go and I find them using what I am not allowed to have as a consequence of force. I feel angry, ambivalent, sad,

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<sup>420</sup> Quoted in Mark W. Westmoreland, ‘Interruptions: Derrida and Hospitality’, in *Kritike*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2008, pp. 1-10, p. 2.

<sup>421</sup> Derrida, Jaques. *Of Hospitality*, trans. by Rachel Bowlby, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, p. 25.

<sup>422</sup> Westmoreland, op. cit., p. 4.

embarrassed, empathetic to the other, and keep hoping that one day we shall find a resolution to what 'filoxenia' means in a situation where I, the real owner, feel I am a stranger and an intruder.<sup>423</sup>

According to Maria Hadjipavlou, 'the property issue is the most complex and significant one in the Cyprus conflict because of its connection to identity, justice and family history'.<sup>424</sup> The same space, a house, symbolises past and present realities for both parties. Hadjipavlou offers testimony of an exchange between two men after a Greek Cypriot owner visited his home, which post-1974 was inhabited by a young Turkish Cypriot family:

*GC: This is my home. I was born and I lived here until 1974 when I was 23. I want to return and have my property back.*

*TC: This is my house too. I was born there thirty years ago and I want to live here on this side. I feel it home too.*

Considering that both parties legitimately claim the property to be their own, the issue of memory and trauma takes on a crucial role in the reconciliation process. Can a judicial process find a solution to please both parties in relation to the same land, particularly after a military invasion imposed exile on the original owner and offered the land to the present one? How can both parties come to a satisfactory settlement without experiencing a new dislocation? After the Greek Cypriot community's 2004 refusal of the Anan Plan Referendum,<sup>425</sup> ordinary people sought to approach their old lands. The 2003 reopening of the barricades enacted 'crossings' to the other part of the island, where people can renegotiate through a different approach who is the 'xenos' and who is the 'guest'. Maria Hadjipavlou

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<sup>423</sup> Lapithi Lia. <http://www.lialapithi.com/Guest.htm>. 20 April 2011.

<sup>424</sup> Hadjipavlou, Maria. 'Multiple Stories: The 'crossings' as part of citizens' reconciliation efforts in Cyprus?', in *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, Vol. 20, Issue 1, 2007, pp. 53-73, p. 64.

<sup>425</sup> Available at [www.un.org/cyprus/annan](http://www.un.org/cyprus/annan). 75.38% of Greek Cypriots voted against it, whereas 64.91% of Turkish Cypriots voted in favour. 22 April 2011.

describes another exchange,<sup>426</sup> this time when a Turkish Cypriot owner visited his house in the south which is presently owned by a Greek Cypriot:

*GC: Do you hate me for living in your house all these years? You can have your house back and I don't want any money for the changes and repairs I have made.*

*TC: No, I don't hate you. I also live in a Greek house [...] but unlike you I had no money to make any repairs. I also do not feel the house and orchard belong to me although I was given a title by our administrator. It is not your fault for what happened but neither was mine. Thank you for taking care of my home and property all these years. You can visit me too. I am ready to give back the keys of the house to the Greek owners.*

A new social history is in the making: one that offers the possibility for renegotiation of the past trauma. Contemporary Cyprus is still negotiating its division and the reconciliation between the two communities. The city of Nicosia becomes a space for negotiation of the young artists who experienced its division, the dead end of the streets and the geo-political partition. In the next section I will discuss how the new generation of women artists negotiates this division and the visual strategies through which they represent the other in conversing with the geo-political partition.

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<sup>426</sup> Hadjipavlou, 'Multiple Stories: The 'crossings' as part of citizens'. op. cit., p. 64.

## ***Mapping the Geo-political Partition***

Reference to the absence/presence of a territory, its people and the national identity characterise Marianna Christofides's practice. Born in 1980 in Nicosia, she experienced the instability of the divided capital, while during her studies in Germany, Athens and London she experienced worldwide art culture. Despite the fact that Christofides is currently resident in Cologne, Germany, she employs Cyprus' geo-political partition in her practice. Christofides' engagement of specific visuals embodies narrations of her life as a Greek-Cypriot woman living and producing art in a divided city. Christofides' installation *Blank Mappings*, shown at the Cyprus Pavilion at the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (2011), is an unusual artwork consisting of what I consider to be an 'imaginary' map. The installation's title gives an obvious signal of what to expect from the project: visual maps.

Within the dark space of *Blank Mappings*, figs. 67–70, three backlit worktables are found in the centre, illuminating the gloomy area. Interestingly, all worktables are united and oriented towards the north. On the surface of the tables are three laser-engraved plans-view of the old city of Nicosia. These laser engravings are, literally, gleaming from the illuminating surface of the plexiglass sheets. There is a fascinating paradox in these engravings; Christofides juxtaposes at the centre an aerial view of Nicosia and at the side two variations of the city plan, alternative views from the north (Turkish Cypriots) and the South (Greek Cypriots).

The paradox of the installation is significantly embedded in the missing part of the maps; the white surface reveals the two sides of the capital as Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot. This complexity of a divided territory marked by the other's presence in a white spot is what Christofidou states to be 'an imprint of a void, a mapped blank which manifests an exposed mastery and harnessing of space. A charted record of absence and negation [...]'<sup>427</sup> Thus, I propose that the installation

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<sup>427</sup> Christofides, Marianna. 'Marianna Christofides' Website, <http://www.mariannachristofides.com/index.php?/2010/blank-mappings/>. 4 April 2011.

presents an aesthetic negotiation of national military borders, memory and the present.

*Blank Mappings* enacts a historical topography that, taken together with the projected compass rose, provides an evocative memory of the status of Cyprus. The Venetians erected the wall surrounding the old city of Nicosia in the sixteenth century in order to protect the capital from foreign invasion. Today, the wall symbolises the colonialism of the past in times where Cyprus constituted a united country embracing a variety of cultures, languages and religions. Interestingly, the vast Venetian wall provides an eye-catching image, whereas The Line is almost invisible from aerial views.

Christofides negotiates an interrogation between present and past topography. Marcia Brennan questions whether the white areas on Christofides' maps form spaces of 'conjunctive overlap' or 'disjunctive division'.<sup>428</sup> Christofides employs the present reality: we cannot find a map of Nicosia as a whole city, only as segments. Gabriel Koureas explains:

This need to contain and control the fear of the 'Other' and impose totalising nationalistic and hegemonic discourses on to the landscape of Nicosia that is also very much evident in the maps of the city since its official division in 1974 by the infamous 'Green Line': both communities are represented as segments of the whole[...].<sup>429</sup>

While Nicosia was initially mapped under Venetian rule, it was under British rule that more systematic mapping occurred. In post-1974 Cyprus, Nicosia was re-mapped by the two communities into two sections. Christofidou's mutation of maps into laser-engravings embodies the division between the two communities, creating an imaginary map without the presence of the 'other'. A void exists in the

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<sup>428</sup> Brennan, Marcia. 'Meta-Media and the Multiple Presence: Beyond the Between in the Works of Marianna Christofides and Elisabeth Hoak-Doering', in *Temporary Taxonomy* exhibition catalogue. Nicosia: Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011, p. 44.

<sup>429</sup> Koureas, op. cit., p. 312.



presence/absence of each of the two communities that is clearly represented within the design of each map.

Unsurprisingly, this is associated with the perpetual instruction *I Do not Forget*, along with the desire for return and the re-unification of Cyprus. This, however, overlooks a crucial factor: to have a unified country the two communities must re-unify. On the contrary, both communities are engaged in their own vision of their 'imagined community', employing absence/presence of national identity symbols. Indeed, the Greek Cypriot community employed the myth of return, visualising their 'imagined community' through Turkish Cypriot absence/presence; all Turkish quarters maintained their former names. Even though the Turkish Cypriot presence was invisible Greek Cypriots carried on 'imagining' their presence on road signs, business signs or postage stamps.<sup>430</sup>

While Greek Cypriots had publicly maintained the presence of the Turkish Cypriot community, the Turkish Cypriots abolished every aspect of Greek Cypriot presence from the occupied areas. Roads were renamed, churches were turned into stables and a 'hyper-presence of Turkishness' marked the community.<sup>431</sup> The Turkish presence in the occupied areas obscured its preceding character, excessively exhibiting its new identity through Turkish symbols (such as the Turkish flag on *Pentadaktilos* mountain, which I discussed earlier in regard to Lapithi's work). Such politicised patterns that each community exposes in their 'imaginary community' through the 'other's' absence/presence leave little space to negotiate a solution to peaceful re-unification of the island.

Imaginary communities are based on twofold oppositions; Greek/Turkish, us/them, north/south, absence/presence. Likewise, Christofides, in *Blank Mappings*, exposes the present time in two different versions (both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot) of reality, negotiating division and reunification. Christofides negotiates the present political conditions (the void in recognition of the other community's

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<sup>430</sup> Christou, Miranda. 'A Double Imagination: Memory and Education in Cyprus', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 24, Issue 2, 2006, pp. 285-306.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

existence) in a common 'ground-surface' while simultaneously providing to the audience an aerial photo that embodies Nicosia as a whole.

The aerial photo operates as a territory without presence/absence, without the division of the 'other' imaginary community. Christofides negotiates the binary opposition of the imaginary communities, operating through a multiple presence affectively linked to an ambitious territory. Interestingly, Christofides positions her imaginary maps on the common surface (rather than three different ones) – or, as Marcia Brennan points out, a common ground: 'the worktables provide the underpinning illumination that makes visible the maps' varied and fragmented surfaces, while at the same time forming a single base that lights a common ground'.<sup>432</sup>

In setting up this common ground, Christofides employs a divided territory and its people, embracing both communities. While negotiating the long partition, Christofides utilises a complete map as a constructed re-orientation of the present conditions. Such re-orientation takes us back to times when there was no division between the two communities. This strategy is obvious in the 2011 installation *Approaching the Line*, fig. 71, where Christofides mounts a green transparent film on a plexiglass sheet and adjusts it in front of a window pane. A white bookshelf blocks the window and on it stands –almost out of reach – a series of Cyprus travel guides published before 1974. Near the window, a dissected postcard is framed, giving the impression that mainland and water are drifting apart. Christofides explains her work thus:

I seek to liberate the images and documents from their initial and pragmatic context and in doing so allow them to generate expanded narratives that oscillate between fact and fiction. By relocating imagery from the past in a present-day context I would like to redefine the temporal element associated with specific artefacts and

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<sup>432</sup> Brennan, Marcia. op. cit., p. 44.

at the same time undermine the legitimacy of documentary material as an unmediated record of reality.<sup>433</sup>

Christofides uses aesthetic strategies to reconfigure the legacy of The Line as a dynamic, changing situation. Employing past material (a map of Nicosia as a whole, the pre-1974 travel guides and postcard), Christofides articulates a site of encounter for both communities. Most importantly, such employment recognises the presence of the 'other' as it was before the division in 1974. I consider that the act in which Christofides reconnects the current situation to the past – using the bookshelf in *Approaching the Line*, which is almost out of reach – embodies a process of reconciliation between the two communities. Christofidou belongs to the generation who bore witness to the 1974 invasion and experienced the conditions of the divided Nicosia. Christofidou's own assessment of her work is fascinating in the context of a process of observing, collecting, classifying and recording:

Witnessing abrupt fissures and shifts alongside smooth transitions in the function of the components of an urban environment is essential for my approach of activating time intervals between historical junctures. How can one read documents which have actually lost their original meaning and resonance and generate new spatial relations and correspondences?<sup>434</sup>

The work thus engages with history itself, utilising past imagery to create new narrative spaces in the present time. Christofides' poetic imagery embodies a narration of the geo-political partition challenging the Line between fact and fiction, in past and present time, without any specific gender strategy. The 2011 political mapping of Nicosia in Cyprus' participation in the Venice Biennale demonstrates the powerful socio-political process of renegotiating space, time and history and the geo-political conditions that still prevail today.

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<sup>433</sup> Correspondence with Marianna Christofides, 2012.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

In the next part I will discuss specific approaches that the first feminist group, *Washing-Up Ladies*, employ to study on what is politically correct with regard to women's status quo in contemporary Cyprus.

## Gender Issues in Contemporary Cyprus: The Emerge of the *Washing-Up Ladies*

### *Washing-Up Ladies at Front Line*<sup>435</sup>

Gender discrimination today is subtle but pervasive, and stems from unconscious ways of thinking that have been socialised into all of us, men and women alike. Our purpose is to bring public attention to still unresolved gender issues, highlighting reminders of ongoing and Cypriot (domestic) women's issues: 1. With self-sarcasm, lightness and humour + sincere humbleness. 2. With uninhibitedly female preoccupations taking the role of subtle commentator.<sup>436</sup>

In 2006, during the Nicosia Urban Souls Festival, *Washing-Up Ladies* introduced to the Cypriot audience their first feminist artistic practice: Lia Lapithi and Marianna Kafaridou, after years of individual practice, grouped together to form the first feminist act over gender discrimination. In doing so, *Washing-Up Ladies* staged a platform of radical manifestation, having as an initial device an extension of their very own identity: a washing machine, which is possibly one of the most useful appliances in the household.

The group introduced their 2006 project via a unique combination of visuals and text that exposes feminist perspectives through a sarcastic approach. The public were invited (women were charged one euro; men two) to bash a washing machine with a pickaxe. This happened until the appliance was reduced to metal pieces. During the same period, *Washing-Up Ladies* recorded the short video *Hurting the Washing Machine*, figs.72 and 73, in which the two artists violently bashed and eventually demolished the washing machine. For audiences who never experienced feminist happenings in Cyprus, *Hurting the Washing Machine* is, quite simply, outrageous.

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<sup>435</sup> Title is taken from Andri Michael Sueur's text in *Washing-Up Ladies* catalogue.

<sup>436</sup> *Washing-Up Ladies*, 'Washing-Up Ladies' Blog, <http://www.washing-up-ladies.blogspot.com/>. 15 February 2012.

The source of such outrage is the video's visuals and sound. The audience is confronted by two women who battle together against the washing machine, an action that is recorded until the final minutes of the video. For the majority of the video, the camera records the two women bashing the machine with pickaxes. Towards the final minutes of the video, the two artists put aside the hammers and begin to manually *hurt the machine*, ripping apart its inner parts. For seven minutes, constant violent action is the focus of the camera. In fact, the action is structured to be recorded from a specific unconventional view; the viewers watch from a central position the *hurting* of the machine by two people whose identity is half-concealed. Until the end, the camera's lens remains still throughout the happening, never showing the two women's faces, only shots of their bodies.

The juxtaposition of the two women demands an unconventional kind of viewer engagement. While their faces are not visible to the camera, feminine corporeal morphology confirms the gender of the two women. In addition to this, the film's narrative is supported by the women's clothing: they both wear black, with one in jeans and the other in a short dress; both wear rubber boots. However, the most outrageous element of the video is the sound. The appearance of the images is not supported by any musical soundtrack. On the contrary, the sound of the action is a fundamental part of the video's attitude; the women are quiet during the video recording, and the only sound perceived by the audience is the bashed metal of the washing machine.

The usage of a washing machine embodies significations of modernisation while, simultaneously, situates women at a crucial place in patriarchy which enables them to protest against the 'women's work' social stereotype. Interestingly, for patriarchal society, the washing machine contributes greatly to women's emancipation; women are obliged to be grateful for the invention of such a domestic appliance. In fact, in 2009, the official Vatican newspaper *Osservatore Romano* – in an article entitled 'The washing machine and the emancipation of women: put in the powder, close the lid and relax' – questioned what had

contributed most to the emancipation of Western women: 'the debate is still open. Some say it was the pill, others the liberation of abortion, or being able to work outside the home. Others go even further: the washing machine'.<sup>437</sup>

'Hurting' the washing machine, which according to the patriarchal view is to a great extent a signifier of modernisation and women's emancipation, brings into question issues of gender and enlightenment in contemporary Cyprus. In 'hurting' the washing machine, a device apparently invented exclusively for female use, *Washing-Up Ladies* not only challenge certain patriarchal conventions of gender norms, but also establish a platform to expose feminist issues. I argue here that the creation of a politically challenging space through a series of happenings forms a strategic device of exploring female subjectivity. Female embodiment and the power of collective enunciation in *Hurting the Washing Machine* and the 2010 *Sorry to Burst Your Bubble But Gender Issues Still Unresolved Today* sustain and delineate the role of *Washing-Up Ladies* as educators in Cyprus.

The strategic embodiment of female subjectivity enables *Washing-Up Ladies* to elaborate a number of devices to establish their feminist platform; all devices function as 'reminders' of unresolved gender issues in Cyprus. Such a reminder forms *Hurting the Washing Machine*, where the two artists fervently knock the washing machine until it is destroyed and no longer functional. It is interesting to think that, although the invention of the washing machine improved everyday living conditions, in a paradoxical way it also reinforced women's domestication due simply to social anticipation of the gender of the washing-up person. The two artists' collective action in banding together to destroy the object of their rage is, certainly, a protest against all domesticated stereotypes dictated by patriarchal conventions. As Maria Hadjipavlou and Zelia Gregoriou put it:

In their effort to introduce a visual feminist discourse in an island where the concept "feminism" still evokes threatening connotations,

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<sup>437</sup> Bryant, Miranda. 'The Washing Machine 'liberated' women', in *The Independent*, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/the-washing-machine-liberated-women-1640134.html>. Accessed 10 May 2011.

the two artists have used a popular mass culture object, the washing machine. This machine which – when used programmatically – turns dirty and soiled clothes into clean ones becomes a metaphor for the desocialisation process needed in Cyprus.<sup>438</sup>

Spectators thus encounter in this performance symbolic devices of the much-needed de-socialisation process in Cyprus. Like artists in the 1950s–60s, *Washing-Up Ladies* use performance to re-examine cultural codes within specific historical parameters. Andri Michael associates *Hurting the Washing Machine* with the 1963 car demolition with axes during Jean-Jacques Lebel's *Dechirex* happening at the American Centre on Raspail Street in Paris.<sup>439</sup> In these terms, both the washing machine and car were violently demolished by the artists and the audience participating in the happenings. In 1963 the happening destroyed a trope of elite culture (the car as a symbolic container of masculinity and professional recognition); similarly, the 2006 happening 'hurt' a trope associated with domestic labour and women's 'work'.

What is fascinating is that *Washing-Up Ladies* bring together social, political and ideological frameworks which have encoded female subjectivity in Cyprus. Significantly, their performance draws upon the work of many other women artists (Cindy Sherman, Judy Chicago, Barbara Kruger, to name a few) and, of course, the collective activism of *Guerilla Girls*. *Washing-Up Ladies*' 2006 work can by all means be seen as a response to *Guerilla Girls*' appeal for global feminist action<sup>440</sup>: 'use us as a model: think up your own name and your own outrageous identity and put up a couple of posters about an issue that is important to you'.<sup>441</sup> Such tactical devices develop a very different construction of women's experiences, specific to

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<sup>438</sup> Hadjipavlou, Maria and Gregoriou, Zelia. 'The Washing-Up Ladies', in *Washing-Up Ladies Catalogue*. Nicosia: Kailas Printers Ltd, 2010, p. 72.

<sup>439</sup> Michael, Andri. 'Washing-Up Ladies at Front Line', in *Washing-Up Ladies Exhibition Catalogue*. Nicosia: Kailas Printers Ltd, 2010, p. 64.

<sup>440</sup> Costa, Nic. 'Guerrilla Girls... and an Interview with the Washing Up Ladies, in *Arteri*, 2007, pp. 20-27.

<sup>441</sup> Guerilla Girls, 'Guerilla Girls' Website, <http://www.guerrillagirls.com/interview/faq.shtml>. Accessed 12 February 2012.



the historical moment. In 2007, Cyprus was ranked 82<sup>nd</sup> of 128 countries in the *Global Gender Gap* report.<sup>442</sup>

Attending to the circulation of a global protest against social embodiments, *Washing-Up Ladies* endeavour to re-educate or simply to remind – and renegotiate – some simple facts relating to gender issues. One such educational device is the 2006 *Care Labels* project (five banners, 90x300cm each), fig. 74, which offers a rather innovative re-imagining of the traditional care labels used as instructions for the washing machine. In doing so, the group replaced traditional washing instructions with ones that are *politically correct*. Such renegotiations delineate women's stereotype in Cyprus: 'washing is not a *solo* activity' and 'womanhood is wasted' dispense – together with other similar slogans – tactical devices with which to negotiate the myth of washing-up as a female duty. Such visual concepts re-cast women's objectivity as situated in Cypriot culture. Care labels are no longer hidden in manuals or within the kitchen space; on the contrary, now, they are found in a space accessible to the audience. Spectators are invited to watch, observe, participate, re-consider and interpret what *Washing-Up Ladies* 'reflect' in their educational de-socialisation process.

Again in 2006, *Washing-Up Ladies* emphasised the process of social re-education in the *Role Playing Washing Machine* (consisted of two thousand boxes of detergent powder), fig. 75, which functions as a toy-device washing machine, designed for use by boys only. The box gives instructions on use by boys aged two to 99. *Role Playing Washing Machine* stands as another reminder of the traditional socio-political perspectives on women's 'roles' in Cyprus. As Hadjipavlou and Gregoriou write:

By inverting and exaggerating the normative genderization of the washing machine – *for boys only* – the artists expose, embarrass and parody the identity of the male user. In “protecting” vocally the “male

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<sup>442</sup> The Global Gender Gap Index 2007, <https://members.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/index2007.pdf>.

only” identity of the toy-user, the artists are actually exposing the constructiveness masculine privileges and the potential fragility of masculinity.<sup>443</sup>

*Washing-Up Ladies'* commitment to the introduction of a visual perception of feminist issues in a patriarchal society where the concept of 'feminism' recalls awkward 'foreign' influences is certainly an immense challenge. As I have discussed thoroughly in each chapter, this phenomenon is mostly due to the long-established boundaries between the domestic sphere (private and invisible) and the public sphere (political and visible). I would agree at this point with Hadjipavlou and Gregoriou's argument that, '[...] this boundary is not always so static and sharp in all cultures'.<sup>444</sup> Considering the location of the washing machine within the Cypriot household – visible only within the kitchen space – it is not surprising that the machine outlines the indivisible connection of women's social spaces. In this sense, we find that the washing machine serves as a site of feminist action and a politicised alert of gender issues in Cyprus.

### ***A Politicised Bubble Burst***

I want to suggest that *Washing-Up Ladies'* public project engages in a twofold politicised action: first, de-construction of the pre-established female role as the house-carer; second, elaboration of a solid platform to address matters around women's issues. *Washing-Up Ladies'* are not mocking certain stereotypes at a distance; their action is direct, emphasising that the two women are speaking from a particular, local, political situation. In their most recent (2010) video *Sorry to Burst Your Bubble but Gender Issues Still Unresolved Today*, fig. 76, *Washing-Up Ladies* are again dressed up, with short dresses and high-heeled shoes, in a pink room filled with pink balloons. For the duration of the video (10 minutes) the two artists wander around the pink room bursting dozens of pink balloons with their shoes. The video records the action of the two women, initially stable, mainly

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<sup>443</sup> Hadjipavlou and Gregoriou, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

shooting the artists' legs at a distance. Later, the camera moves slowly to a close-up shot of the legs' actions allowing viewers to see the particular movements of the artists bursting the balloons in a slow and almost theatrical action. The video *Sorry to Burst Your Bubble but...* significantly differs from the *Hurting the Washing Machine*. While both videos show aggressive actions, focusing on the corporeal action, *Sorry to Burst Your Bubble but...* is a video, without the participation of an audience.

In *Sorry to Burst Your Bubble but...* there is an obvious emphasis in the aesthetics of the narration. Two women, one blonde and the other dark-haired, with similar features, (body type and hair length) are found in a pink room filled with balloons of the same colour. With similar outfits – short red dresses and high-heeled shoes (in contrast to the black outfits and rubber boots of *Hurting the Washing Machine*) – the two women represent the stereotype of female beauty and femininity. During the filming the camera focuses on the two pairs of slender legs in high heels, resembling Marie Legros' 1997 video *Marcher sur les choses*, where the viewer watches a woman in high-heeled shoes stepping on various household objects.

There is an interesting parallel between *Sorry to Burst Your Bubble but...* and *Hurting the Washing Machine*: neither video has a soundtrack other than the sounds of the actions. This absence is significant. It emphasises the sound of the action; in this case the sound of the balloons bursting. Each balloon's burst sounds like gunfire and the constant bursting forms an outrageous performance for the audience. I consider that such powerful articulation – the use of high heels as guns, bursting, or rather destroying, the targets (in this case the balloons) – establishes *Washing-Up Ladies* as cultural producers of feminist art in Cyprus.

To take this idea further, I will refer to Niki de Saint-Phalle's 1960s series, *Tir a volonte* in which the artist fires a rifle at colour-filled balloons embedded in canvases and sculptures. By pulling the trigger each bullet explodes a balloon, splashing red, blue and yellow paint across the artwork. De Saint-Phalle aims and shoots, and the work bleeds and dies. Significantly, de Saint-Phalle's shots

reclaimed women's role as cultural producers a decade before the women's movement gained momentum. As de Saint-Phalle wrote:

The shots preceded the movement for the liberation of women. Indeed, it was more scandalous for one to see a charming young woman firing with a shotgun and being enraged at men in her interviews. Should I have been ugly, they would have suggested that I had a complex and I would have been forgotten.<sup>445</sup>

Fifty years after de Saint-Phalle's shots,<sup>446</sup> *Washing-Up Ladies* use their own bodies through a progressive strategy in a culture in which women are constantly objectified. They employ Performance Art to reclaim gender equality, taking into account the plethora of women's performance production in the 1960s–70s. Crucially to this (and other) work is the statement made by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock in *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-85*, that 'performance offers the possibility for women to make new meanings because it is more open, without an overwhelming history, without prescribed material, or matters of content.'<sup>447</sup>

The fact that *Washing-Up Ladies* employ Performance to 'play' the role of living dolls trapped within the space of the pink room operates as a visual strategy of mapping gender issues. *Washing-Up Ladies* challenge notions of normality in relation to body politics. Their strategy of burst-attacks with stiletto heels (rather than using a hammer, as they did in the *Hurting the Washing Machine*) is a powerful operation to subvert cultural and social stereotypes. Employment of stilettos – symbol of the femme fatale and male pleasure spectatorship – de-

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<sup>445</sup> Niki de Saint-Phalle, 'Lettre a Pontus Hulten', in *Niki de Saint-Phalle*, Exhibition Catalogue, Paris, Municipality of Paris Museum of Modern Art, June-September, 1993, quoted in Michael Antri 'Washing-Up Ladies at Front Line', op. cit., p. 66..

<sup>446</sup> Weaponry was also used by Valia Export in her 1969 performance *Aktionshoe: Genitalpanik* (Action Pants: Genital Panic).

<sup>447</sup> Parker and Pollock, *Framing Feminism*, *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-85*, op. cit., p. 39.

construct female objectification; the stiletto is now acting as a killer weapon against the social catechism of certain 'female social roles' in a 'pink' world:

Pink is the colour of frivolity, identified with the so-called 'weaker sex' and principally with young girls. It is the colour that dominates girl's rooms... aimed at the timely nursing of the girl in the social role that they obliged to perform later. Girls grow up in a pink world, in a pink bubble which, just like any other bubble, will at some point, and by definition, burst.<sup>448</sup>

*Washing-Up Ladies'* visual strategies employ a sarcastic attitude; public declarations such as 'sorry to burst your bubble but gender issues still unresolved today' acknowledge gender diversity and women's socio-political alienation. I propose that such visual strategies establish a visual conversation which empowers and encourages us to consider whether we accept the 'female' roles of a society that imposes discrimination against women.

### ***Feminist Issues Still Not At Front Line***

To conclude the chapter I refer to the *Feminist Issues Still Not At Front Line* installation, fig. 77, that was literally produced at the Green Line in 2007. In a photograph taken in front of the barricade at Ledra Street in Nicosia, *Washing-Up Ladies* are seated on stools playing backgammon while drinking cold coffee. A surrealistic dialogue is displayed in the photograph's captions:

Marianna Kafaridou: *I though the showers were behind this paravan.*

Lia Lapithi: *No dear, the Cyprus Problem is still not settled.*

This scene takes place alongside a Greek Cypriot soldier's watch box and the ladies' floral tent. On the lower part of the banner is the text: *Feminist Issues Still not at Front Line*. If we focus on the scene with the two ladies, it seems like they

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<sup>448</sup> Vatsella, Christina. 'Washing-Up Ladies: on the Vestiges of Feminist Art, in *Washing-Up Ladies*, Nicosia: Kailas Printers Ltd, 2010, p. 58.

are on a camping holiday trip. Wearing vivid floral clothes to match their tent, the two ladies do not seem to notice the young soldier who is staring at them from his post. This paradoxical photograph, transformed into a 17-foot poster, was part of an installation with *The To Do List* (video, five minutes, loop), fig. 78, at Eleftheria Square in Nicosia. Alongside the banner was installed the same floral tent, which enclosed a TV showing the *To Do List*, fig. 79, a video in which a woman's hand is shown writing her list of things to do in a notebook. The list is a long one, including taking care of the children (*prepare kids school snacks, drive son to judo*), executing domestic chores (*mop the floor, iron clothes*), pampering herself (*book appointment with beautician*), performing social duties (*do community work*) and performing political activities (*go to antiwar demonstration*).

The installation confuses the audience: what are these two ladies doing in front of the Green Line? Are they camping? Are they protesting? *Is this a generation gap, those who lived through the war and the post-war generation of 'live and let live'?*<sup>449</sup> What exactly is the *Washing-Up Ladies'* point here? As in their earlier work, *Washing-Up Ladies* construct a stage to interrogate the boundaries of gender issues and political conditions. The stage here is set up in front of the very thing that symbolises Cyprus' problem: the division embodied in the Green Line. We see in the background the Turkish Cypriot part of Nicosia, where two flags (of Turkey and TRNC) are visible alongside a banner displaying the text: *To those who are watching from the wall of shame! This is the bridge of peace!* The two ladies are playing backgammon – a traditionally male game in Cyprus – in the only location along the Green Line where photography is allowed: the end of the Greek Cypriot pedestrian street, Ledra street.

Clearly, the semi-stage photograph engages history, culture, politics and media imagery. As *Washing-Up Ladies* put it:

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<sup>449</sup> *Washing-Up Ladies*, 'Artists notes' in *Washing-Up Ladies* blog. <http://washing-up-ladies.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2010-06-17T19:36:00%2B03:00&max-results=100>.

Avoiding photomontage and image manipulation (except for the on-looking soldier guard), with Humour Irony and Laughter they take on the general idea of context and conflict, of the legal and the illegal, of truth and falsity and of kitsch via an intervention into loaded spaces of the city.<sup>450</sup>

The work negotiates the division not as a nationalist discourse but by considering its impact in women's lives after the long historical overshadowing of women's issues. Significant is the fact that political action is considered to be a male advantage and duty. Women are not expected to get politically involved; these 'serious' matters are not any of their interest and it is certainly not their premeditated role to consider them:

People are always expecting us to conform to designated roles [...] then we start backtracking immediately: one wants to accomplish big things but in the end it doesn't happen, in the end we are just perceived as just attention seeking females [...] A confrontation of the notion that 'women should not meddle with serious political issues?!'<sup>451</sup>

I propose that *Washing-Up Ladies* enact a dialogue to advocate local feminist issues over nationalistic discourses and the ongoing Cyprus problem. In doing so, *Washing-Up Ladies* expose the ongoing gender discrimination and undervaluing of feminist issues in Cyprus. Their strategy is a straightforward one: having as reference the 'brainwashing' into acceptance of many female roles which they – like most women in Cyprus – have experienced, they reverse certain conditions. Instead of staying at home performing their 'to do list', they set up a stage at one of the most politicised spaces of Nicosia, which embodies the division that has long monopolised socio-political conditions.

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

Like their previous projects, the installation highlights women's passive acceptance of their socio-political dissociation from important decisions. The powerful imagery challenges women in acknowledging responsibilities of the conditions of the 'bubble' world and placing themselves at the front line, as key figures in political decisions and not followers of male agendas. Significantly, the first Cypriot feminist art group should not be considered merely representatives of contemporary Greek Cypriot women artists, but, moreover, agents of the global feminist art movement inherited from women's negotiations of the definition of 'woman' in their own terms, in the past and in the present.



## Conclusion

### **Who are We, Where do We Come From, Where are We Going To?**<sup>452</sup>

When embarking on research for this study, my main hypothesis was to explore the conditions which women encounter in making career patterns as artists and how this is articulated within their practice. I started with the classic 'where have these artists been?' and, therefore, I began to trace them in archives hoping to find some common career patterns. After the first phase of finding material on their careers, I noted a very strong line developing a social history of women artists' careers and location of practice. There was an emphasis on how women artists manage to have a career and this became the first strand of my research. This included questions concerning their access to education, and their choices to marry and/or have children, domestic lives, child-care and work.

After establishing ideas on their careers patterns I moved onto what material and images they had produced. Finding and exploring their work had significant moments of surprise, as I did not expect to find such a rich range of work related to the socio-political events of each period. This reflected to a change in my own thinking as I moved into a more detailed analysis of the works in relation to what was happening (particularly in my analysis of works like Rhea Bailey's *Karmi*). Another surprise was the evidence of personal experience and awareness of events in Cyprus both being encoded in some works (particularly in Bailey and Iacovou's work). For this, one of the strategies I was using was the intersection of the personal and the political in the life and careers of the artists.

A disappointing moment of surprise was when I realised that prominent practices have never had their historical significance acknowledged. I particularly refer to Bailey and Iacovou, whose work embodies women artists' personal as well as social experience and this is still today unknown to the wider public. For this reason the interviews have been invaluable; not only did I find art which was not in

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<sup>452</sup> I borrow the title from Rhea Bailey's 1974 painting.

the public realm, but I gained access to women artists' practices and memories. Information and memories yielded in interviews have played a significant role in my interpretation, particularly as this is not fixed and many of the works analysed in the thesis embody both the women artists' personal as well as social experience.

The work of the thesis shows that it is imperative for women artists to negotiate between the two in order to successfully tread the fine line between their social conditions and their identity as women artists. This thesis has thus been an exploration of women's experiences in relation to the turbulent socio-political history of Cyprus and how women artists operate in the specific spaces where they are expected to be passive and submissive. Significantly, these women's struggles did not exist only in relation to male domination within Cyprus, but also in relation to international politics and Greek cultural hegemonies.

The generations of women artists examined here learned to identify with Greek nationalism through their schooling, their family, the state and the Orthodox religion of Cyprus. Following the argument of Vassiliadou, that women are 'trapped' by the conception of Greek nationalism and the 'ultimate obsession and pride with their past and their historical and religious background'.<sup>453</sup> It is not surprising to find specific nationalistic strategies articulated in the practice of women artists. Angela Dimitrakaki wrote, on the over-identification of Greek culture:

[...] a concrete 'Greek' culture had been colonised [...] by an imperial power, and this imperial power was identified with the 'Orient', the Ottoman Empire. In this scenario of fantasised national continuity, the colonised West (Greece) identified with the position of the other in the dominant culture of the imperial Orient (the Ottoman Empire). Consequently, the processes of dis-identification that continue to this

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<sup>453</sup> Vassiliadou, Myria. *A Struggle for Independence: Attitudes and Practices of the women of Cyprus*. op. cit., p. 7.

date have involved an over-identification with whatever is perceived as a Western cultural framework.<sup>454</sup>

I would follow Dimitrakaki's lead and suggest that the dis-identification from the other – which, in Cyprus' case resides on the other side of the Green Line – and over-identification with Greece have involved an extremely complex set of practices. Nevertheless, Anthias and Yuval-Davis, write about the possibility of Cyprus' national reinvention in recent times:

Cypriots may be divided, on the one hand, between the different categories of Greek or Turkish under the sway of colonialism and right-wing nationalism. But they may be beginning to reinvent themselves as a Cypriot people that can encompass both Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the pursuit of a solution to the Cyprus problem.<sup>455</sup>

Given the fact that this research draws on British feminist art history, it is important to note that it has been carried out under the guidance of a British academic institution. Despite the fact that this study focuses on Cypriot women artists, it could have not been undertaken in Cyprus, where a significant amount of time is expected to separate research and its object. To make my point clear, only a few studies have been undertaken in relation to the work of artists (mostly men), and it was undertaken when the artists were elderly. To conduct research on living artists is somewhat uncommon, as study in relation to their life and work is usually undertaken after their death.<sup>456</sup>

One important outcome of this thesis was artists' reluctance to identify a distinctive political cast in their work. During interviews, the majority of artists answered in the

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<sup>454</sup> Dimitrakaki, Angela. *Gender, Geographies, Representation: Women, Painting and the Body in Britain and Greece, 1970 – 1990*. op. cit., p. 305.

<sup>455</sup> Anthias, Floya and Yuval-Davis, Nira. *Racialized Boundaries Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle*. London: Routledge, 1992, p. 9.

<sup>456</sup> For example, artist Nina Iacovou has repeatedly asked for photographic material in relation to her work prior to 1974 which is now in the Cultural Services archive, but as yet has not granted access to it. As she commented during the interview, 'perhaps only after my death they will search for them'.

negative to questions about whether they were involved or influenced by politics. This was mostly due to the general perception in Cyprus that if one talks about politics he/she implies support of the right-wing or left-wing parties. I had to explain that by 'politics' I meant British rule, national struggle, invasion, nationalism, feminism etc. Particularly problematic were the terms 'nationalism' and 'feminism'; they still provoke odd connotations, and I had to explain that these terms are not always associated with negative meanings and that I found strong reference to these in the artists' work.

Once I explained that I could see very direct references to events in their work, with very particular use of symbols and colours, they accepted the possibility of reading their work in this way. It appeared to be problematic for them as it was the first time that an art critic (myself) had attempted to define a new perspective for looking at women's art. Considering that previous studies maintained an uncritical reference and a striking lack of theoretical context, it was somewhat new to examine their work in relation to gender politics and socio-historical events. This is the case whether they identify themselves as feminist artists or not. Almost 30 years ago, Gerrish Nunn argued: 'however easy it is to look for elements of feminism in the art of past [women] artists, it is very difficult to identify such elements, and even harder to evaluate them properly when you think you have discovered them'.<sup>457</sup> Despite the fact that the women examined here do not identify themselves as feminist artists,<sup>458</sup> I discuss their work in terms of posing a significant challenge to patriarchal norms and the canon's representative structure.

I am now in a position to confirm the remarkable, dynamic changes of media and material in women artists' practices and struggles, and their changed conditions as professional artists. Taking into account the women's emergence as individual artists rather than as group or movement, the present study departed from how historical periods shaped women artists' situations and their practices. This study

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<sup>457</sup> Quoted in Dimitrakaki. op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>458</sup> With the exception of the *Washing-Up Ladies*.

accepts the historical fact that women artists originally emerged between the 1930s and 1950s. It also accepts that the lack of art schools in Cyprus had the effect of isolating Cypriots from the radical European movements, and artists had no other choice but to emigrate to other European countries. In fact, it was only after the return of emigrant artists that the art establishment was in position to incorporate a – limited – art market and art education in schools. Zoi Kanthou's account of the 1950s conditions is:

No one used to buy art. No one could survive from art. It was an early stage for art. Kanthos had to do commercial art for an advertisement office. No one knew or was interested in arts. They paved the way, they organised exhibitions, they taught at schools, they provoke the Cypriots' interest. They were the pioneers who formatted art in Cyprus.<sup>459</sup>

Despite the fact that Kanthou was mainly referring to her husband Telemachos Kanthos – and the other 'fathers' of Cypriot art – this thesis uncovers the fact that during the 1930s, Loukia Nicolaidou was already working on the elements of introducing art to the wider public in Cyprus. Nicolaidou explored the experience of 'being a woman' and an 'artist' in a patriarchal society. Due to patriarchal norms, Nicolaidou chose self-exile in England, a place where she could exhibit and collaborate with other artists.<sup>460</sup>

Because of its extremely strong tradition and presence in Cypriot art, painting was central to the practices in which an exploration of modernity and femininity was articulated. Nicolaidou's paintings *At the Fields* and *Gazing* are emblematic of women's claiming their femininity, as well as their transition from tradition to modernity. Nicolaidou was probably the first artist who, at least for a certain period, consciously worked as a modernist. To produce female representations in such a

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<sup>459</sup> Interview with Zoi Kanthou. Nicosia, 31 March 2010.

<sup>460</sup> Nicolaidou sought exile for better working experiences, but also for sentimental reasons after her husband-to-be married another woman. This probably caused a double pressure due to the social customs of gossiping about unmarried women.

distinctive approach assumes a strategy of working against the dominant codes of the art establishment in Cyprus and men artists' female representations. Given the fact that there was no established art support or market, and the audience preferred more traditional subjects, working as a modernist entailed a form of isolation.

I examined here the work of 15 artists over a period of 80 years in a consecutive way – from the 1930s forward. Until the 1970s there was a strong presence of women producing painting and sculpture. The traumatic experience of the 1974 invasion changed artistic orientations and redefined women's identities and positions. This change was momentous and demanded employment of new media. Women artists' lives were changed at a fundamental level by their experiences of war, forced exile and the post-1974 trauma. The effects of these events were particular to their role as women and artists; the loss of home and of an established career impacted upon their approaches and strategies towards art. Certain recognisable patterns begin to emerge across the broad range of new themes and approaches to representing politicised subjects.

While in paintings, artists were limited to expressing their strategies through symbolic representations and particular colours (as in the artworks I examined in Chapters 1, 2 and 3), in recent practices a direct approach is noted, with installations, moving images and performance. It is particularly important to note that recent practices adopt a straightforward approach and present to the audience their individual understanding and articulation of a specific signifying practice. The patterns which emerge are fascinating instances of the conjunctions of memory and trauma in post-war Cyprus. From women artists' status as exiles, and their experience of having to look from a distance at what happened in the past or remembering a place that is so close to them (across the Greek Line), but also so un-accessible, emerges a pattern of mediated distance. The similarity in this pattern is their situation as women artists negotiating the geopolitical partition of their country.

The extent to which women artists include domestic materials in their art practices is significant. Artists such as Maria Loizou, Klitsa Antoniou and Lia Lapithi often display domestic articles that contemporary audience can easily recognise; for example, kitchen material or scenes from schools. Their strategy of showing to the audience a recognisable subject, while at the same time distancing it from its original form by presenting it as a scene of violence or a shocking, distressing scene, marks the distinction of their intervention in art histories. It is also very important that the shift of media and material in women's practices marked their presence not only in the local market, but also in the international market. Adapting to international trends, women artists adopt styles and present a diversity of media based on a challenging choice of subject matter. We find Greek Cypriot women undertaking an approach not only in relation to their styles, media and subject matter, but also in relation to their attitudes and activities.

Looking at all the material, the radical change in women's attitudes towards promoting their artwork becomes clear. While with traditional media (painting and sculpture) works would be commonly located in galleries or private collections, artists are now promoting their work through online websites and occupying a place in the international art market. Therefore, the audience of today has direct access to the artists and the possibility to look at their work at any time from any location globally. The transition to a globalised European community space has also radically changed the relationship between women artists and the state. As I argued in Chapter 5, young women artists, rather than assuming the state will invite them to exhibit in prominent venues, take the initiative and submit applications for funding and residencies within the European community. Young artists such as Haris Epaminondas and Marianna Christofides often travel in advance to see the international sites of exhibitions before finalising their shows. Their experience is radically different to that of the earlier generation of women artists who, in order to be able to participate in the international art market, were obliged to rely upon private relationships (family or friends able to offer financial support). Contemporary women artists are able to participate in the international

community and work out their career strategies in relation to national representation in international venues.

The configuration of career patterns involves some gendered debates. This is particularly problematic as maternal artists still have to negotiate overarching issues in establishing a career. The complexity of having children and establishing a professional career still exists today; however, I would speculate that there is a change in the way in which artists are operating now. The 'threat of the dirty house' discussed in Chapter 3 might not be as strong now as it was in the 1960s and 1970s; however, some kind of negotiation on women's part is still required. For example, Haris Epaminonda operates in the international community but requires the domestic assistance of her mother, who travels to look after Epaminonda's child. There are some interesting dynamics of the gains and losses from moving from a domestic network to the international community. The difference in operating in the international community did not change domestic relations, but rather set up a changed pattern where an artist can show in big venues and international exhibitions and still have assistance from her mother.

When looking at an interlocking set of conditions, as I have done in this thesis, specific outcomes should be highlighted. Though there is no documentary evidence to prove this, I would speculate that the artists examined here were more willing to take risks in terms of their work than might be the case in men's careers. We see women such as the *Washing-Up Ladies*, who produce work both independently and as a group. In addition, women artists consciously develop an understanding of their social position and try consciously to change it. In this way, references to specific subjects such as domestic articles, school images, maps and so on became politicised interventions in historical processes. Following feminist examples, the *Washing-Up Ladies* engage with the body to shape particular debates on women's position and the tension of sexual politics.

These interventions are part of women's struggle against patriarchy and the outright male chauvinism imposed by the art establishment. In 2004, during Katy



Stephanides' exhibition, a man refused to buy her work, telling the gallery owner that while he liked the work, 'unfortunately the artist was a woman'.<sup>461</sup> Clearly, this struggle is still ongoing and artists operate within it and against it. Following the argument of Nunn that 'often, a clearer picture of an artist's feminism emerges from looking at the artist herself, rather than her art [...]',<sup>462</sup> I would emphasise that occasionally women artists operate (un)consciously with a feminist approach in contradiction to patriarchal norms. For instance, Rhea Bailey has written outside her house 'Here lives and works artist Rhea Bailey'. The tradition of stating outside a house that someone had lived there is mainly used in the case of deceased male contributors to society. Bailey interacts with the tradition and produces new meanings with which to establish herself as an artist.

The feminist perspective adopted for this thesis has challenged the pre-existing patriarchal frameworks of the limited literature on the histories of art. My strategy of reading women's art practices as bound up in politics in Cyprus has demonstrated that women artists became associated with politicised accounts of femininity – as a strategy of women's transition from modernity to modernity – and as makers of culture and the 'political'. In retrospect, I would make a comparison between two women artists whose experiences are patterned somewhat similarly across their respective periods. Loukia Nicolaidou, as a young artist during British rule, chose to emigrate to England to benefit from the established art milieu of the time. While Nicolaidou was excluded – as I argued in Chapter 1 – from the local art market and was not acknowledged by art historians, she was treated equally into the foreign country and her work was shown alongside that of established artists such as Walter Sickert and Augustus John. Similarly, Epaminonda, in contemporary Cyprus, had to enter the international art community to benefit from funding and international shows. Both artists refused to teach art as a profession and operated in an international market, employing as career strategies the showing of national elements. However, in addition to these similarities there is one particularly distinct

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<sup>461</sup> Interview with Katy Stephanides. Nicosia, 25 March 2010.

<sup>462</sup> Quoted in Dimitrakaki. *op. cit.*, p. 104.

difference between their situations: Nicolaidou had to abandon art in order to adapt to her maternal and spousal duties, whereas Epaminonda has negotiated a balance between domestic duties and professional career.

In addition, in both periods, Cyprus was part of a bigger domain – first as part of the British Empire and later as a member of the European Union. Significantly, British rule failed to acknowledge the importance of the ethnic conflict and the differences among Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. This became obvious again in 2006 when the European Biennale of Contemporary Art *Manifesta 6* was cancelled three months before its opening. The curators – independent curator Mai Abu EIDahab, Russian-born New York artist Anton Vidokle and German curator, critic and editor Florian Waldvogel – intended to form an experimental art school in Nicosia. The three curators, in response to the lack of an art academy in Cyprus, proposed setting up an art school as a central project, involving some 90 participants from multiple disciplines. The problem arose when curators modelled the art school as tripartite, with one of its sites to be located in the Turkish-occupied part of Nicosia. While the Manifesta Foundation worked only with Greek Cypriot authorities in Nicosia, the curators had an over-optimistic assessment that Greek Cypriot funding would support an event deliberately held in Turkish occupied areas. Augustine Zenakos, art critic based in Athens, comments about the exhibition:

The scheme went off track after the curators insisted that the school operate in both [...] sector[s] Though the Greek-Cypriots organisers had agreed that Manifesta 6 would take place in both sectors, the plan to establish something so formal as a new art school in the Turkish-controlled part was too much for the biennale's Greek-Cypriot sponsors.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Zenakos, Augustine. 'Manifesta no More', <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/news/zenakos/zenakos6-5-06.asp>. 25 April 2012.

Anton Vidokle failed to see the implications of the conflict between the two communities. After his decision to found a school department in occupied Nicosia, Yiannis Toumazis – director of the Nicosia for Arts (NFA) organisation that sponsored the exhibition – announced that a school in the north was illegal. By contrast, Mai Eidahab chose to site her project only in the Greek Cypriot sector precisely because of NFA's role as financial sponsor. As she stated, the Manifesta 'would always be subject to its [NFA] political will. For myself this parameter was always clear'.<sup>464</sup> Toumazis explained NFA's decision to cancel the Biennale:

[...] the Greek Cypriot organisers had agreed that Manifesta 6 would be bi-communal. We proved this by organising events in the occupied part of Nicosia and by planning to organise more. But this is something totally different than founding a school department in occupied territory. [...] A bi-communal project is one thing, but the building of infrastructure in an illegal state is quite another. We have never agreed to this.<sup>465</sup>

Clearly the core problem for *Manifesta 6*'s administration was the inadequate communication, misunderstandings and the sensitive political realities of Cyprus. Zenakos writes on this situation:

[...] did the three people in charge of organising Manifesta 6 [...] really know what they were getting into? Planning an art exhibition for a place where barbed wire is still an everyday reality was a bold move. The local politics are complicated, and becoming entangled in them could be risky. In the end, the curators did the only thing outsiders can do in such a situation: They tried to deal with the politics without taking sides. But if such a thing were truly possible, then Cyprus would not be a place where people have to show their passports to cross the Greek Line, where both Greek and Turkish Cypriots are still

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<sup>464</sup> Herbert, Martin. 'School's Out', *frieze*. September 2006.  
[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/schools\\_out/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/schools_out/). April 2012.

<sup>465</sup> Zenakos, Augustine. 'Manifesta no More', *op. cit.*

missing, where UN troops still patrol in combat uniforms, and where mosques and churches fight it out every day with their prayers and bells.<sup>466</sup>

The withdrawal of *Manifesta 6* uncovers the fact that the idealism of art and art institutions cannot simply transcend or unify political/ethnic differences and territorial occupation. It also confirms that the politics of the European Union cannot manage to overcome one of the most persistent conflicts in international relations. The over-simplification on the curators' part and their distance from local politics proved problematic and not realisable within Cyprus' political atmosphere. To conclude this discussion I would refer to critic Martin Herbert's points:

Its furious complications raise obvious questions regarding the role contemporary art has to play in contested regions. Do the liberal pieties that undergird it have any place in such zones? What new shapes may art and artistic events have to assume in order to be more than a transiently applied, easily removed, sticking plaster? [...] 'Maybe this failure will teach all of us a lesson,' says Waldvogel, 'that we need to rethink the idea of globalizing a Western approach to art.'<sup>467</sup>

In my understanding, projects which bring international publicity to the situation of Cyprus cannot be realised without political factors or without an understanding of the true situation of the Cyprus problem. Cyprus is still in a reconciliation progress and the establishment of an art school – or any other activity – by an external institution in the occupied areas would be a political mistake, as the so-called 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' is not recognised by international law.<sup>468</sup> Nevertheless, various bi-communal projects are taking place in both parts of

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Herbert, Martin. 'School's Out', *frieze*. September 2006.

[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/schools\\_out/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/schools_out/). Accessed 24 April 2012.

<sup>468</sup> 'TRNC' is only recognised by Turkey, which since 1974, has had a deliberate policy of colonialism by settlers – mostly poor people from Anatolia – who are in culture and tradition very different from the Turkish Cypriots of Cyprus.

Nicosia, such as the Open Studios which, since 2006 has brought together Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot artists. This annual event takes place inside the old city of Nicosia and offers the opportunity for the audience to visit and see artworks from both sides of the city.

### **Future Research**

The development of the research uncovered challenging practices and an engagement with new media that I wish to develop critically in the future. I have noted a significantly increased number of practices engaged with post-war trauma and the double meaning of witnessing within the legacy of the trauma; in further research I wish to examine these. In this thesis I focused mainly on the work of Greek Cypriot women artists, principally due to the difficulties of defining 'national cultural identity' in any meaningful way without acceding to the limits of the geopolitical barriers that have arisen particularly since the island's 1974 territorial division and the separation of the two communities, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot. These various barriers (political separation, language, culture) created some of the reasons why my thesis was not able to incorporate material on Turkish Cypriot women artists. Nonetheless, considering the current specific historical and political conditions it is a matter of urgency to bring together the practices of women artists from both communities, to review an interactive process of cultural production in Cyprus. My future research will begin the process of investigating how the practices of women artists from each community resonate, relate and differ from one another.

I am particularly interested in exploring the post-1974 Turkish Cypriots' cultural making: the multiple effects of colonialism, the different conditions of art education, and how women artists locate themselves after the war trauma and displacement. I am also interested in exploring the imagery of the conflict and nationalistic processes associated with the renegotiation of cultural identity. In regard to Greek Cypriot women artists' work, femininity was central in exploring sexual politics and gendered territories such as the national struggle. Therefore, certain questions

should be addressed: Did Turkish Cypriot women artists adopt a similar approach to Greek Cypriot women? How did they experience British colonialism and what impact did this upheaval have on their practice? Did they experience a struggle similar to the 'kitchen struggle'? How did they account for the division and the socio-political history of Cyprus? What are their negotiations as women artists in Cyprus?

### **Afterthoughts**

The progress of describing and analysing the data and material which I collected over the period of this research has been a challenging task. In broad terms, I examined the history of gendered cultural production in Cyprus. Particular focus was given to paintings as references to women's negotiations and the historical transition from tradition to modernity. In this analysis, 'history' has been defined by institutional traditions, ideologies, social positions and the operation of women within radical political motives. As such, this 'history' has been necessarily selective; the selection process was based on women artists' construction of identity/social position and their artistic interventions. Particular emphasis was given to women's symbolic identification with the nation and women's roles subjected to patriarchal norms. My own readings of the specific works have been integrated within the framework of the analysis, which requires a rethinking of history as we know it. My readings of women artists' work place Greek Cypriot women in a central position from which to explore the production of histories in the specific periods. To conclude, the images and histories examined here provide an approach from which to look at the social/historical processes of women artists' 'visibility/invisibility' and their cultural production from the 1930s onwards. I hope this thesis will contribute to a continuous production of Cypriot women's interventions in art histories.

## Appendix I: Interviews

Note:

These interviews' importance to the research is explained in the thesis Introduction. Given the scarcity of documentation on Greek Cypriot women artists, meeting the artists (and other people) was essential so as to acquire a general idea of the existing material and so that it could be decided whether their work was or was not relevant to the aims of the thesis. The work of artist Haris Epaminonda, interviewed in Berlin, was not finally included in the study, because her practice was not relevant to its perspective and arguments. This was also the case with the British artist Pauline Phedonos; I am nevertheless grateful for the material and information she offered.

The discussions with the artists (and other people) were always helpful and I am deeply indebted to them for agreeing to meet me. The artists Dora Orphanou-Farmaka and Stella Michaelidou were contacted but were unable to meet me. I did not manage to arrange meetings with Daphne Trimikliniotis, Maria Loizidou, Klitsa Antoniou and Lia Lapithi, but I hope to do so in the near future. Also, I was unable to locate any further work or documentation of the work of Leina Saveriadou, Elli Mitzi and Vera Gavrielidou-Hadjida.

The interviews were all carried out in a similar way, though the outcomes varied because of the different socio-historical conditions of each period and the artist's ages. All interviews were carried out in a conversational mode. The discussions primarily engaged the thesis' basic question: how did women artists negotiate their (sometimes conflicting) experiences of being *women* and *professional artists* in relation to the turbulent socio-political history of Cyprus, and how is this articulated within their practice? Therefore, questions engaged with the following issues: choice of location of receiving art education; making a living as professional artists after graduation; their current situation; their career mapping; whether they were

influenced by political conditions; if they think that their practice has a politicised meaning; how they think their work relates to Greek culture; how their work is received by galleries and the public; and their status as Greek Cypriot professional women artists.

### **Interviews**

Bailey, Rhea, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2010, Nicosia.

Epaminonda, Haris, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012, Berlin.

Iacovou, Nina, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2009, Larnaca.

Kanthou, Zoe, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010, Nicosia.

Koudounaris, Aristides, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010, Nicosia.

Nikita, Eleni, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2010, Nicosia.

Severis, Rita, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008, Nicosia.

Stephanides, Katy, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010, Nicosia.

Toumazis, Yiannis, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2009, Nicosia.

Tourou, Maria, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010, Lefkara.

Phedonos, Pauline, 30<sup>th</sup> December 2010, Nicosia.

### **Correspondence**

Christofides, Marianna, January 2012, email communication.

Vasiliou, Ioni, May 2010, telephone conversation (not included).



## **Interview with artist Rhea Athanassiades Bailey (b.1946)**

Interview took place at Rhea Bailey's studio on 21 September 2010, 10am

**Maria Photiou:** *Talk to me about your decision to study art. Did you have in your family someone involved in arts?*

**Rhea Bailey:** No. Actually my mother used to play the mandolin and we used to sing. When I was a child I used to enjoy playing the piano. When I was sixteen I changed direction – from music studies I followed art. Before, I was planning to become a music teacher. I used to draw and decorate the walls of my house. A family friend saw my paintings and talked to Lefteris Oikonomou [a well known artist]. Then I started art lessons [at Gregoriou]. At sixteen I decided that I was a painter. My family used to visit exhibitions; they used to love art and music. My family knew Kanthos and my mother was close friends with Maria Michaelidou [painter]. Our friends included educated people [Votsis, Pauline Phaidonos and Glyn Huge] who suggested that I should study art. I got training to gain the GCE A Level qualifications in art.

**MP:** *Your family had accepted easily your decision to study art?*

**RB:** Yes. At first they hoped I would become a music teacher. Afterwards, there was the new establishment of art teaching and everyone was suggesting I should study art. So within art teaching I could make a living, like Lefteris, Votsis and others did before me. Although I never really wanted to teach I accepted since I would be doing what I wanted full time: art. But in the end I was obliged to teach after returning to Cyprus.

**MP:** *Why did you choose the UK for your studies?*

**RB:** Since May 1964 I had been applying to colleges and I had a placement at the Liverpool College of Art. My parents themselves wanted to leave Cyprus for England as they wished to be closer to other family members who were living already in London. So, mostly due to Cyprus' troubled times, my family preferred to

move to London, where I went for one year and studied at the Sir John Cass School of London. Afterwards, I applied again to other schools and ended up in Liverpool, where I had initially wished to study. At the Sir John Cass School [Bailey went there on L. Oikonomou's suggestion, as he had studied there] there was a classic type of education. I needed this kind of education considering the background I had. On the contrary, Liverpool College used to deliver classes in a more modern mode. I met my ex-husband there [artist] David Bailey and later my parents moved to Liverpool where my father found a really good job in a shipping company. So I got married, gave birth to my daughter Veronica, and at the same time was a student with two more years before graduation from the college. After nine months my parents had returned to Cyprus [her mother was homesick and detested England]. During the first nine months I had my mother helping me with the baby. After she left, I used to take my daughter to the nursery. I graduated with an honours degree; I used to study in the library during lunch breaks while other students used to rest. I managed to cope with many things at the same time.

When I came back to Cyprus in 1970 I had to work in order to have an income. The only available job was to teach art. When I graduated I was told to be a professional artist but being just that is not easy. Only if you are a really well known artist can you survive; otherwise it is hard to survive merely through your art. I used to travel around Cyprus for the teaching position and I detested it. I became a Sunday painter; this was the only day I could dedicate to my art. I used to sketch during weekdays and then work on it on Sundays or holidays. My work was no longer spontaneous; my paintings were made in stages and I was always adding elements to them. I remember one work was equivalent to one month. Within a year I had an average of twelve paintings. I used to feel odd about this since during the six years of studies, I used to spend long hours working in the studio. Then I was dealing with students and had to travel long distances that made me feel exhausted. I was not able to continue at the same pace as before. Teaching cost my focus on art.

**MP:** *When did you have your first solo exhibition?*

**RB:** In 1971 at Hilton Gallery. My first group exhibition was when I was 16-17 at the first Pankiprian [Cypriot collective] exhibition in Cyprus, alongside professionals. I remember it was organized by a Bishop and Kanthos suggested that I should participate. I remember it like a dream. I don't know what happened to that work. Even at Liverpool I don't know what happened to my final project. I met a couple who told me that they keep students' works so that they can sell them if someone gets famous later. I lost many works in exhibitions where they didn't say what had happened to my works. I would like to know about all my works so that in case of a retrospective I will represent all my work. Even just to take a photo of the works or just to know where the works are. Once I found one of my works online. It was an auction of a 1946 work with my signature R. A. Bailey. I remember that work was bought from my exhibition by an old English man who was leaving for Iraq. It seems that the man died and his belongings went to auction.

**MP:** *How was your first exhibition? Was your work sold?*

**RB:** Of course. It is from the first exhibition of an artist that people mostly buy. At the time there were not many exhibitions. It was even announced on the daily news on television. It used to be an important event, especially if Makarios was the one to inaugurate the exhibition. It used to be significant since television would show the works. At the time we were just a few people and we knew each other. Everyone knew the artists and had direct contact with them since there were no intercessors. The artist used to invite people and people would buy the work from the artist. Now, with the intercessors [gallery owners], things are complicated. If only we had suitable halls. I used to have large canvases and they [the municipality] could not find me a place without paying rent. They told me about Kasteliotissa Hall, which was free of charge, but there was no way to hang my works. So I constructed something to support my works, since I had three panels of two metres each. We do not have appropriate places to organise exhibitions. It would be useful if EKATE [Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts] had an appropriate large

hall for artists to use as they want without paying much in expenses. Or even to be free of charge since it would be EKATE's place. Despite EKATE's efforts, they have not achieved this or arranged something. Perhaps they cannot do much since galleries would lose by such acts.

There is the NIMAC [Nicosia Municipal Art Centre], but they decide themselves about exhibitions, they mostly invite foreign artists or host temporary exhibitions. That is a good place for one to exhibit. After so many years they never asked me to exhibit. I talked once to Toumazis [director of NIMAC] about exhibiting my series of *Circles* there. He replied that he would come to see that work. He never came. I don't think it is right or appropriate for someone of my age to ask for an exhibition. They should have come to me and asked about it. Don't you think so? It is time to do something for the elder artists. They actually once did a collective exhibition from artists during the 1960s. That was a lovely exhibition. At that time they did remember me, there were lots of photographs and artworks from people; you lost track of their new work. That was all. They organised a retrospective of A. Makrides a long time ago, and of the sculptor T. Gregoriou. As far as I remember only a few Cypriots had their work exhibited in NIMAC; it would be nice to feel that we are at our own place, our home and we are using our own space. To feel that we are been appreciated, that we exist for someone.

Exhibiting in galleries is quite costly, with the rental fee and a minimum 25% commission. If someone sells only 2-3 works it is not possible to make a living out of it and cover all the exhibition's expenses. Recently I had an exhibition where expenses I never knew about [post stamps etc] had been added to the invoice and in the end the gallery had profited much more than me, who created the works. I don't want this. I have this space [her studio] that I occasionally use but now I use it for storage of my recent work. It is no longer used as a gallery.

**MP:** *Were you influenced by politics?*

**RB:** Yes. I remember as a child the school closing and curfews during the EOKA period. Later the Independence, the 1963 troubles; I left in 1964 and was away during the 1967 troubles, but came back in 1970 when we had the events with EOKA B. Many of my works are influenced by all these. I used many figures; images from old newspapers that used to be black and white and images which were not clear. I was creating my own collage. I was influenced by figures that provoked something in my subconscious.

**MP:** *I think the use of such figures it is quite obvious in your work 'Who are We, Where do we Come From, Where are we Going To'.*

**RB:** Yes, it was taken from an image and I interpreted it like this@ the 'grand' monkey and the humanity. Isn't always like that? Someone has the highest position and others are around him to take advantage.

**MP:** *Your work has a deep meaning that is far from commercial works.*

**RB:** This is my life while I was still in England. It was my own personal drama. The work *Dptych of Life with Watermelon* (1969) is a memory of our yard in St. Kassianos, the place I was born and lived until I was six years old. It was the inner yard where many things took place. I placed myself as a teenager in that work even though I was not a teenage at that time. Then there is one's crucifixion [referring to the work *Fusion of Time*], you endure sometimes later in life. You can interpret it as you like, I don't want to give an explanation of it. I was deeply influenced by all these and that's why I created these works. I had to paint them in order to see them and understand what I feel. It's a proceeding like a feedback. My feelings were really strong while I was producing these works. I was missing Cyprus a lot while in England. Moreover, I feel that I lost my colour [in her work]. While I was a teenager I had vivid colours and after being in England I lost my colour. I made many efforts to get the colour back. Only recently I have found my colour again, but it's not the same as it used to be when I was young. I no longer have my early works. I lost all of them during transportations [her artworks were

left behind after Bailey left England for Cyprus with her baby – her husband forgot all the works in the house storage]. All this was in the name of motherhood. When we [Bailey and her friend] went back to ask for my works, the new owners told us that they had burned them. I asked ‘why, you could have decorated the house?’ Their answer was that the works were not theirs and so they had burned all of them. They could have told the agent about it. They were barbarians, they were unable to understand. Ruth Kesisian [owner of a bookshop] told me that those works have integrated into my other works.

[While showing her work]

**RB:** This work [*Appeal to Justice*] was reproduced as a poster and postcard and was shown all over the world. I produced many works related to the invasion. At a Liverpool exhibition I participated with the work *A Woman’s Reflections of War* (1976). Another one is *The Agonies of the Refugees*. [Showing a cover of Daily Post and the article ‘An Island in Terror...’]. All these are related to political events. At the time educated people used to attend exhibitions. At the time you needed to be certain of your artistic capacities in order to exhibit your work. You had to feel confident that your work had a meaning. Nowadays, everyone can call himself/herself an artist and exhibit his/her work without any embarrassment. At that time, for someone to go abroad and study, especially for a woman to study *art*, you had to be really talented in order to convince your parents to pay for and invest in it. Now, it has become a fashion, people think that is something easy. Perhaps colleges are no longer demanding as they used to be. I often say, instead of colonies they [British] have universities. All the former colonies now study in British universities [Cypriots, Indians, etc].

[Showing her work]

**RB:** Imagine how we felt after the invasion. Like this painting called *Contemporary Crucifixion*. I was still teaching while I did this works. I was teaching until 1977.

Then, I worked for PIO [Press and Information Office], where it was more relaxed. Now the politics are no longer important, it is the person that is.

I depicted various monkeys. After the divorce, my ex-husband complained that all those monkeys were himself. But I never thought of this.

This work is also taken from a newspaper photo. It depicts the hands of refugees. Afterwards, I no longer used images. This work [*Authority*] has been destroyed by my husband. Because of him many works have been lost. But never mind, you still have found me. This was after the play of the swan and they took the king away. I placed the monkey with his gold box; he seems worriless in a stage-looking background.

**MP:** *Why it has been destroyed?*

**RB:** I left it to him [ex-husband] because he used to like it – but never mind; long story. Look at this, it is so interesting [*Memories of the Deserted Chapel*]. It was made in 1975 and it shows a Turkish woman, bought by Niki Maragkou. The depicted person is my grandfather. You can find in it my own memories. At the municipal gallery there is my work *Memories of the Yard*, which was initially wrongly translated as ‘Memories from the Yard’, whereas it was the yard remembering. Even my name was wrongly written, saying that the translator was responsible for it.

Another work is this of Makarios called *Death*, it was after I visited his grave.

This is an interview I had with an American [Constant Stash]. She was quite nervous and asked me if I faced any problem being a woman. I told her that I never felt such thing in Cyprus. I must say I was embraced by others; there were only a small number of artists who really loved art and wanted new people. Art is not necessary male. I must say that men used to get more involved in participating and selling. I personally feel sad to sell my work, like many other artists.

## **Interview with artist Haris Epaminonda (b.1980)**

Interview took place at Epaminonda's studio (in Berlin) on 10 January 2012, 18.00 pm

**Maria Photiou:** *Tell me about your education.*

**Haris Epaminonda:** I started art lessons as a hobby when I was around five to seven years old. Around 13 I begin intensive courses since, I knew I wanted to do this and I had to prepare a portfolio to study abroad.

**MP:** *Why did you choose to study at the Chelsea College in the UK?*

**HE:** When I started the art classes, my tutors suggested some colleges that I applied for. One of the colleges that I got an acceptance letter from was Chelsea College; after research I decided that it was a good university to attend. Of course at the time I didn't know what direction to take, I was interested in many things and I didn't know if I would be a fine artist, an illustrator, a fashion designer or an interior designer. I was interested in everything. For this, I did a foundation course. I had good communication with some tutors who supported illustration and because of this I chose illustration.

Then I applied for a BA at Kingston University, which at the time was considered to be a good university for illustration studies. So I attended Kingston for 3 years. It was a good experience for me since I was liberated to do what I want. The tutors at the time – now they are all retired and the course is completely changed – were very open. At a point I realised I did not like to have someone telling me what to do, and the tutors realised themselves that I was more creative when I was doing things by myself, so they let me be free to do what I wanted. So during those three years I did a lot of experimentation.

Then I decided to do an MA in Fine Art at Royal College. I was a fine artist between sculpture, print making, and painting; though I did like it, I believed I did not have the skills. I realised print making was much more 'loose'; it was not as



strict. In the final shows I saw before, students were making videos and sculpture, so I decided to try it. So I spend two years at the Royal College. It was quite a challenging course and I was not quite happy with the course. I found that a tutor that was like the 'guru' there – he was an external tutor and was doing dissertation supervisions – helped us [the artist and her future husband, Daniel] to find our own direction. I was so 'lost' at the time; I was on a course with people much older than me, I was 21 and others were in their forties, and I was so lost. The tutor helped us to find a way, to see more clearly what we wanted to do. There was a lot of competition but also many interesting lectures and seminars. This is what I gained from that time. I wasn't attending the course; my final show was a video that was outside the course's structure.

Then I started a path outside university, like everyone else; I was lost, I did not know what to do next. I stayed in London until 2004 [for seven years].

**MP:** *What you were doing in London*

**HE:** I was working, in order to survive, in several retail shops and coffee shops.

**MP:** *Did you manage to carry on your practice at the same time?*

**HE:** No and for this I left it. I was waking up at five o'clock in the morning. I used to carry boxes at work, unpack them and then place things in order. Then I decided to go back to Cyprus. I had missed being in Cyprus and I wanted to make a new start. So in 2004 I went back to Cyprus. Like everyone else from Cyprus who goes abroad to study and then returns, I found it difficult to re-settle. It took me around two years to get used to it and see things positively. Again, I was working in retail shops to be able to pay my rent.

**MP:** *You did not want to deliver art classes?*

**HE:** No, because I knew if I chose to do it I would give everything to it, and I would not do any of my practice. My priority was to develop what I started in my studies.

**MP:** *Have you considered art education?*

**HE:** No, I knew I would not be an art teacher, because it was a permanent position and then you forget a career abroad and many other things. It was not what I wanted. So, I refused this route. I worked at a newspaper for some time and then found work at Frederick College as an art teacher. I did it for some months until I found an opportunity in Berlin for an art residency. At the time, there was no open position for someone from Cyprus. I knew that the residency was a good place so I contacted the director asking for information on how to apply. The director asked me to send my portfolio and so I did. Then, he told me they would accept me as long as I could get funding. I applied to several organisations in Cyprus but no one showed interest. Some never answered; some wanted more time. I could not afford to pay for it myself, and two friends decided to support me. So I found support from private funding.

So I came to Berlin for one year. Daniel was already here. I found that I liked Berlin and that I could create here. Of course it was difficult to leave Cyprus after I had stayed for three and a half years. I found the good that Cyprus offers, I found ways to work; but I knew it would take a long time. Even the teaching at Frederick was taking so much of my energy, I had no time to do art. For example, after work in the afternoon I could not do work in the studio. I knew that the only thing I wanted to do is to do practice; I decided to struggle so that I could survive from my work. I got tired of doing other jobs in order to survive. For example, in Cyprus I worked in a pub until 3am to be able to pay the rent.

So I came to Berlin. Coming here I met people, people got to see my work and so I got more opportunities. I've been here for five and a half year.

**MP:** *You plan to stay in Berlin?*

**HE:** Look, I don't see me staying for ever here, but as you can see I have my studio here, and my family. For my work, Berlin is the ideal place. I feel I can be isolated in my house without having to have contact with the outside. I have the

possibility to go to openings, I can choose if I want to be isolated or not. In Cyprus it is different, you cannot choose, you are isolated.

**MP:** *From your exhibitions, was the Venice Biennale the one that had introduced you to the audience?*

**HE:** Yes. The Biennale was a big opportunity for me. I feel that it was a big opportunity and a lot of luck considering the time-stage of my career. It was at the very start of my career and I was given the opportunity to show my work to an international audience. Other artists are much older; I was just 27. I was lucky. From my start at Biennale it was much easier for me. People were communicating directly with me, to praise my work, to do studio visits. It is very important to the art world to have this communication with people, with curators.

**MP:** *What you were doing before the Biennale?*

**HE:** Before the Biennale, I was with a gallery in London that approached both of us [she and Daniel] after graduation. You graduate thinking 'why not', but with time we realised the gallery was not the right one for us so we left it. The gallery did not represent us as we wanted. Leaving the gallery opened more opportunities. No one could communicate with me; if anyone wanted to they had to do it via the gallery and the gallery would decide yes or no. So the gallery had always the control. But as an artist you cannot feel you are under control.

**MP:** *Tell me about Tate Modern.*

**HE:** After the Venice Biennale I was given the opportunity to show my work at Berlin Biennale. It was a challenging project for me because it was at a location [the National Gallery] which I was very interested in the architecture of. One thing led to another, it was a route where I built one thing on top of another. Then it was Sweden and it was a large space; I worked with some creative and helpful people. I was given the opportunity to do something new. I was lucky to do always new things; I never wanted to repeat my work but to always take one step forward. So

my work was developed through these steps. In each exhibition I was doing something site-specific. Then I had an exhibition at Istanbul and then came the Tate project. They had followed my work and proposed to do something. It is a work that is part of a development that I will work on once I visit the place. I am never sure of what I will show, how it will develop, if the outcome is good or not and if it works within the space.

**MP:** *So you went to Tate before to see the space.*

**HE:** Yes, I always go in advance to have time to work, it's like I have a canvas and colours and I paint it as I want. Of course I work on the space's architecture in advance; I want to create intimate spaces so that I show my work in a particular way and then I work on the project at the place. I have some ideas in my mind but nothing is fixed.

**MP:** *And now you are exhibiting at MoMa. Have you visited the place?*

**HE:** No I haven't. I went to the Tate twice to see the place, but none in New York. I had to work from plans and it was for the most part in my imagination. I did not have the possibility to go, I was in bed most of the time, I could not move. It took me a long time because it's like creating a new environment. I received a large amount of photographic material that I did virtually on my PC and I worked on that way. At the last minute, I decided to change a video installation and fortunately it worked. I am very happy with the result.

**MP:** *How was MoMa's approach?*

**HE:** In 2009, I exhibited in Frame (with Frieze) a solo presentation. The curator of MoMa came after sending me an email to see if I would be in London. We met and she wanted to see more of my work etc. A year later, she contacted me saying: 'I have good news. I spoke with the committee and we want to show your work next year'. Obviously I was so happy. So things just happen, people contacted me to ask if I would be interested in having an exhibition.

**MP:** *Tate and MoMa. Do you realise you are probably the only artist from Cyprus with such a promising career?*

**HE:** No I don't really think of it, I just do my work. I always wanted to show my work 'widely', not only within Cyprus. But I never knew to what extent my work could reach.

**MP:** *Do you think there are opportunities for artists in Cyprus?*

**HE:** It depends on what you mean by opportunities. If you're referring to a career, it's very difficult. But I think that one creates opportunities. If you want something you can have it in Cyprus. For example you have facilities in Cyprus you cannot have abroad. You can take advantage of some things that Cyprus offers.

**MP:** *Could you give an example?*

**HE:** For example, if you want to do a work made of wood or metal. There are so many carpenters in Cyprus and you can go to their place and ask for it. It is not complicated, nor expensive. People are willing to do things in Cyprus, whereas abroad there is competition. Of course Berlin has good carpenters, but they don't have time: for example, if you ask for something they will do it after a month. It is not easy. Now I have family and have no one to help. I don't have my mum around or my sisters, my cousins or friends. Life here is very different, but it has other good things. I know if I go to Cyprus I will have certain facilities – like leaving the baby with my mother – and have all my time to do work. This is something that I don't have now.

About galleries, forget it. Galleries in Cyprus do not work professionally. First of all they are not interested into international careers and therefore would not promote their artists abroad in an appropriate way. For me, a Cypriot artist who wants to have a career abroad has to also live abroad and have Cyprus as a basis for certain things that Cyprus can provide. For example, I think of Cyprus constantly, the things I create are much related to Cyprus even if it's not obvious. I appreciate

Cyprus much more now than when I lived there – its landscapes, its colours, its history. When you are there you are surrounded by the everyday things and you cannot see things from a distance. This distance helps me to see things more clearly.

**MP:** *Are you in contact with artists from your generation? Is there a supportive network in Cyprus?*

**HE:** I know many artists in Cyprus but have no communication with them. My network in Cyprus is not related to arts. I meet artists in Cyprus occasionally. I haven't lived long enough in Cyprus to have established a network with other artists. For 15 years I have lived abroad. I go for holidays but that's it.

**MP:** *How do you survive in Berlin?*

**HE:** For now I sell my work through my collaboration with the gallery in Istanbul. The gallery gets some commission from selling my work. I survive on my work and the exhibitions. Another of the good things about Berlin is that it is affordable. I could not have this flat and this studio in Cyprus. No chance. Cyprus is far more expensive.

**MP:** *When did you start making films?*

**HE:** During the illustration course I did some experiments. Then my dissertation was related to text and shown as a video. In 2003 I did my first film and then in 2005 I began a series of films, which I have continued. I plan to do a film in Cyprus during the summer, with actors etc, and this is something new for me.

**MP:** *How do you work on your films?*

**HE:** I work with 8mm film because I do not have the budget. Now I will start with 16mm for the first time. This is because I have a larger budget to work with and also because the movie requires it. With the 8mm I could travel, since it's a small object and affordable for me. I can carry it on my trips – and because the films I made are related to travelling, that medium was very approachable to me. I could

not do it with a 35mm. If you work with a 35mm you spend a lot with every click you do. I don't like the pressure of feeling that I am wasting my film; it does not help me. Whereas with the 8mm I am free. The 35mm you need to pre-plan, to think in advance and prepare it. This is because it cost a lot just to play around with it.

**MP:** *Shall we have a look at what you are showing at MoMa?*

**HE:** Yes. I would start from the Sheffield exhibition because it is related to the series *Chronicles*. The sound was made by a couple who work on experimental music. The girl plays the flute and the guy creates the rest of the sounds. I saw their work in *Wired* magazine. I was touched the first time I listened to their music because I felt that the music they create is close to the visual images I create. So, I contacted them and we started to collaborate two years ago. They did the sound at the Tate exhibition, and at the Sheffield too. Sheffield had small projections. For me it's important that the viewer sees no more than two projections at time. The installation was made in a specific way. I had to create walls so that I could make this effect possible; that you go in the space and you can focus on one video and then you turn around and you watch the other one. It was like you are entering time travel and you react to the moving image you watch. I had four projections in one room and one projection in a smaller room that was soundless. So I had the same sound for all four.

**MP:** *What do you use in your videos? Do you use any old photographs?*

**HE:** No. They are action films. I started recording these films in 2004 and I had filed them. I did not know what I could do with them.

**MP:** *This capture (Parthenon, Athens in Chronicles) looks very old – what is it? Was it taken from another old movie?*

**HE:** No, I captured this. It looks old because it is a Kodak film. My first films were all on existing material.

**MP:** *Your work is quite confusing. Where was this capture taken?*

**HE:** This is the Acropolis, Parthenon. I wanted to find a point of view in which you cannot define when it was recorded. It could be in the 50s, 60s or 70s. It gives you the impression of timelessness and non-time-specificity.

**MP:** *It almost looks like fake, like an old photograph.*

**HE:** Yes, because of the scale.

**MP:** *Is the trembling made by you?*

**HE:** No, this is the film's' quality, the 8mm camera. This is how it used to be. Now everything is digital. Previously we had photo films on a roll that we had to put in the camera. The film camera is similar, and every time it makes the 'click' it trembles. I like this flickering feeling.

**MP:** *So you created all the films in the Chronicles series?*

**HE:** Yes. I understand what you are saying, a lot of people is asking if it's my material or if it's archival material. Even people who know film studies cannot be sure if this is something shot by me.

**MP:** *The films seem so old – do you work on them?*

**HE:** No. This is the beauty of the film. We are so used to digital film and the quality it captures. Films used to be this kind of quality. Kodak announced a few days ago that they have gone bankrupt. I hope I will be able to carry on my project. But everything is up to the companies.

[Looking at her work]

**HE:** This is in North Cyprus, where I went in 2005-06. I don't remember where it was, but I came across this scene. It seemed so odd to me that this car was carrying the olive tree in circles. I never understood what they were up to. I found it so odd and attractive at the same time: the smoke that moves/creates along to the



movement. There was this dog that was following the car. At a point there was a family of stray dogs also staring at the scene. It was like we were all watching cinema and wondering what was going on.

This project is made of pieces from Acropolis, some parts of a wall. This is again in occupied Cyprus, I think in Morfou. I went again to villages. I liked this scene with the two palm trees that are moving in the air. It seems to me like a choreography of the two palm trees.

For this project I used several objects that I usually exhibit and have collected for many years. I made them as a still life and left as an element of chance the sun, which was creating shadows. At times it was cloudy, at times it was gone. In a way it was like giving life to the objects. These objects that I collect from markets are very old. I do not care about the object's provenance. What interests me is that all these objects come from all around the world and are things that humanity created. These objects used to have a usage that they now no longer have. It's like I am bringing these objects back to life (by exposing them in front of the camera). The music created an atmosphere in the space. You can hear the wind, you can connect music to the images you see.

After Parthenon, I have some shots in Pompeii that are made from books. A large amount of my work is made of images taken from books that I shot in film. I was interested in this – that you cannot be sure if I was there and – if it's reality, as you mentioned before. For example, in the Pompeii scene you think it might be an image from a book, and then suddenly you see two people entering the scene. So you know it's a real scene. So these four projections were together.

Here I created a study of time. I use this book that in times I am taking a closer up look. Many scenes remind me of Cyprus. This could be a donkey from Cyprus. I link them to Persian miniatures that have similar scenes (with animals etc). I link things together from different cultures.

This is from a circus I went to Cyprus five years ago. I was interested in the circular movement (like the car carrying the olive tree was making a loop). Similarly, here, everything is happening within this circus ring. This is related to science fiction; it has something to do with the post-human situation (aliens). Again, the donkey I was very touched by, not only because it reminds me of Cyprus but, also due to its link with religion. After I saw a film that was based on the story of a donkey and a woman I got more interested in this animal. During the show I felt like I was living in the nineteenth century.

**MP:** *Does any of your work have direct reference to Cyprus?*

**HE:** It does not have direct reference to Cyprus. But many of my sources are from Cyprus. Many of my films were shot in Cyprus due to the sunshine.

**MP:** *What you are showing at MoMa?*

**HE:** At MoMa again I created walls within the space. I had built three different rooms. I made it like a temple. Like in the Tate I created walls, I covered windows. In the Tate I wanted the public to have no access to the outside except for the small window I created.

At MoMa I showed five videos, three of which were the ones I showed in Sheffield (Acropolis, the one with the objects and the palm trees). The new work I did was the installation and the compositions, which for me were very connected to the moving image. It was like you were moving from a static world to a moving world. This was at the end of the corridor in the last room.

For example, I use the column as a point of departure. I worked more on architectural structure. What remains from the ancient buildings is the support structures, e.g. the columns. I work to have a balance in the space. So if you are in the space it is like you are in the work. The work is the space and the objects. I repeated the window I did in the Tate, but here I added the stairs.

Here is the image of a viewer watching a female nude sculpture. Opposite is an image of a woman who sees the abduction of a woman (ancient sculpture). I liked the connection of the two images: red colours, both looking at something. There was a tension between the two images.

In the past I worked with images from Greek books. I took images as they were and added geometric forms. Again, I was giving life to the sculptures by adding these details. I used many images from Greece. And now I am going to do the film in Cyprus. The usage of colours is related to Cyprus. I could not work in the same way if I was not born in Cyprus – a place with such sunshine and saturated colours, which has such history with so many ancient Greek places, so many eras and different cultures that have all left their mark. I feel all this is reflected in my work. I don't think I reflect any political views in my work. I am interested in Cyprus more as a mental space, like a landscape, sometimes even without people. Cyprus as it is without political troubles, without the tourism and all the things that in a way destroyed things in Cyprus.

**MP:** *You might not realise it but all this influence from Greek sources could form a politicised view in your work. Producing a politicised work is not always negative.*

**HE:** I have no opposition to this. It does not bother me. In Cyprus we had a specific mentality and education. In schools we were taught about Greek history more than any other, even Cypriot history. At weekends TV was showing Greek movies. All these are part of who we are. If you walk around Cyprus and visit places, you will see. If a tourist wants to know about Cyprus' history they will go around and visit the famous places we have, such as Kourio, Aphrodite, the museum that is full of Greek sculpture. The majority of culture we have is Greek. We have also influences from other cultures. You might see it in my work too. I use Turkish miniatures in *Chronicles*. The film I plan to do is based on a movie directed by an Armenian director. So I use many images and symbols; not only Christian symbols but also Muslim, it's a mixture of both. I think you can see this togetherness in my

work. My work is related to Mediterranean geography/territory. How could it not be?

I use many objects from Africa and China. I am interested in many links, for example why you can find pyramids in Egypt and also in Asia. I want to emphasise humanity, our evolution, what we are, where are we going. In my work there are references to many cultures.

**MP:** *Are there any particular artists/filmmakers you are looking at or whose work has influenced you?*

**HE:** I cannot really say. There are many artists whose work I find interesting and inspiring. But cannot give names at the moment, they are not necessarily contemporary artists. I am mostly influenced by filmmakers. One is Paradjanov Sergio – my movie will be based on his work. The movie is also based on Dante's *Divine Comedia*. It will be related to Paradise and Hell, like the book. It will be filmed in various locations like Christian churches and Muslim mosques. If I get permission I will also film in ancient Greek locations.

**MP:** *Where you will show the film?*

**HE:** In 2013 three exhibitions that show it (Zurich, Oxford and Trento, Italy). All three museums are interested in supporting the movie.

[Showing more of her work]

**HE:** These are stills from films from each movie.

**MP:** *Was this one at Venice Biennial?*

**HE:** Yes, this film was also shown recently at the retrospective of Cyprus participations at Venice Biennial. Unfortunately, I could not go to install it myself. I am not sure if it was installed the right way, and this work needs to be set up right in order to work. I think my show there was a disaster, taken from the comments I received from friends who saw it. This was named *Tarachi* and was taken from

Greek movies. It was created after I had visited Cairo for a project. During my stay at the hotel I watched many soap operas. I found it very interesting – particularly the acting; it was ‘over the top’, the actors were overreacting. So I recorded what I was watching on the TV and will work later on the material. There is always a tension in what is going on in these movies. That’s why I called it *Tarachi*. Also, tarachi as a word doesn’t seem Greek – someone who doesn’t know might think it seems to be more an Arabic word. There is an element of surrealism in my work.

In a different project I decided to search on Google the word Cyprus, to find out what images came out from the search appliance. So I created a tunnel with a car getting into it and all the images around. It was again like a travel machine, travelling back in time.

This is when I went to Morfou and I went to Solous theatre. At the top of the location you can see this landscape. Instead of filming the ancient theatre I decided to record the landscape. It seems like nature took over, it’s like an exotic island with all the plants.

#### **Interview with artist Nina Iacovou (b.1933)**

Interview took place at Nina Iacovou’s house on 14 December 2009, 10.30am

**Maria Photiou:** *Mrs Iacovou, you have been identified as a key artist who emerged during the British rule of Cyprus. The fact that there is no written history of yourself and other similar women artists was the reason behind me asking you to participate in this research. You worked as a professional artist during a time that was difficult for women.*

**Nina Iacovou:** Let me tell you something: I am almost the first woman who professionally worked with sculpture and ceramics. However, the very first woman was an older woman named Paulette Pavlidou, the daughter of Sir Paul Pavlides: she did not live in Cyprus, however; she worked in Europe, particularly Paris. I have met her and her work is really good. She lived for most of her life in Paris,

where she worked alongside great artists like Epstein. She travelled around the world and left marvellous works in bronze, as she was rich. She was the very first Cypriot sculptor. Do you know about Nikolaidou? She is considered as being the first, as far as people are aware, painter.

**MP:** *Yes I do know about her. How did your interest in art begin?*

**NI:** I never had the opportunity to be taught either drawing or sculpture in school. However, I used to draw as a child: my father was a teacher and I had uncles who used to paint Byzantine icons. I used to observe them and I remember once, when I found some clay, I immediately took some and created my first work. I used to draw a lot as a kid; my father used to bring home the magazine *Child's Education* and I used to draw the pictures inside and then cut them out as I liked to see the figure. In primary school we used to paint and then, in high school, I began to draw: myself and a friend also used to do the stage decorations at a theatre. At the time my father was proud but terrified at the same time, as he did not want me to continue in the arts. When I graduated from high school, I was 17 years old and took a job in an office. My professors encouraged me to study but my father couldn't afford it and so he never encouraged me. He didn't want me to study to become a teacher or something similar; he only wanted me to get married. My brother got all the attention and, even though my sister was talented, she too never got the opportunity to study. So, when I was 17 I started working and later, when I was 21, I began my studies.

After saving some money and after a big battle with my parents, they agreed to give me some money from my father's pension and sold the garden of our home to raise funds. I wanted them to sell the whole house to get funds for my studies. Afterwards, I went to Athens without knowing much. I had to take exams at the school of Fine Arts, where I lived in halls for female students.<sup>469</sup> I did not succeed

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<sup>469</sup> Admission to the School of Fine Arts in Athens was always limited to a small number of Cypriots. Even today, the School's criteria is high and there are rumours of candidates gaining admission through bribery. However, it is a fact that getting into the school is difficult: all students have to attempt the exams at least twice and prepare for the admission exam for more than three years.

in being admitted into the School of Fine Arts; I was quite negative towards the way they taught and was not prepared at all to follow their system. I would have had to prepare for 1-2 years before being admitted into the school, in addition to studying there for four years: this was unthinkable in my mind and in the psychology of the time. I felt I had to learn as much as possible but I could not stay in Athens for such a long amount of time. At the time, only four students were admitted each year and you had to know someone to help you get in.

I never achieved admission into the school as a student, but they accepted me as a listener by my paying a small amount of money. In short, I was a student but did not sit the final exams of each year. However, I did not learn what I know from art school: my knowledge was derived from the private lessons I used to attend. I spent all the money that my father used to send me on tutorials, seeing 3-4 teachers until I found the most appropriate for me, which was Serafianos. He taught in a classic way and recommended me to his friend Giorgi Georgiou, who was one of the greatest sculptors of the time. At the time he was young and very poor and he accepted me as a student without me paying a penny. After school, I used to work in his studio until midnight and this is where I gained all my knowledge of the art. After failing my exams [for the second time], I returned to Cyprus with the things my teacher gave me [easel and art materials]. My father, in order to convince me to stay, modified a room in his house into a studio. He was hoping to arrange a marriage for me and, in the end, he succeeded. I got engaged when I was 22 and got married a year later. At 24 I delivered my first daughter: Maria Iakovou, who is professor of archaeology at the University of Cyprus.

**MP:** *After coming to Cyprus, you started practicing?*

**NI:** Yes, as soon as I returned I started sculpting. My father supplied me with the clay and I started my work immediately. After getting married, I was lucky to have a mother-in-law willing to take care of the house, so that I could dedicate my time to my 'clays'. I never really learned how to take care of my children; my mother-in-law used to take care of them and cooked for us. I used to play with them and 'my

clay'. She was young and she was enjoying taking care of the house, so I had the opportunity to work as a professional artist.

After getting married – we didn't have much money and lived in the house my father gave to me – my husband introduced me to his friend Mousoupetros, who was a 'kouzaris' [maker of traditional jars] as I spent my free time [while not working with clay] in the museum of Famagusta, which was near my house. I used to draw all the time in the museum of Famagusta whereas, before getting married, I used to draw at the museum of Nicosia. Whilst at the museum, I had an idea upon seeing the traditional potter there: to transform such pots into anthropomorphic forms. Furthermore, I had the idea of fretworking the pots [engraving them with anaglyphs]. Once, the director of the gallery of Famagusta [Giorgos Pierides] saw me there and said something about my work that I still remember today: 'your idea to introduce art to the humble Cypriot potters counts a lot'. At the time, I had some samples of my work; i.e., portraits and sculptures. It was during the struggle of 1955 and I had produced some amazing dramatic works. RIK [the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation] did a really good documentary on my work, which was shown on TV [presented by Maro Theodossiadou]. You can imagine the situation at the time: I created mothers crying for their sons; miserable figures with their arms trying to reach something.

Unfortunately, with the war [the 1974 Turkish invasion] everything was destroyed, and probably the documentary as well. I really don't know if someday this documentary will be available again. The photographer who worked on the documentary came later and took some really good photos of my work – even when I was married I was trying to get a scholarship – and when I applied for my scholarship I sent these photos. I am wondering now if these photos perhaps still exist in the archive of Cultural Services: who knows? Perhaps only after my death will they search for them. I did not succeed in my scholarship application: the sculptor Dimiotis, who taught, was working with marble, whereas I was 'nothing', even if they knew me as an artist. Thus, I began my struggle to get into the School



of Fine Arts and, in the hope of getting into the school, travelled to Athens. Kanthos, Diamantis and Panagiotis Sergis came with me to the airport and gave me a small scholarship from Cultural Services. They bade me go and take my diploma.

In Athens I showed samples [photos] of my work to the professors and they were surprised at my work, but I had experience of this with my previous tutor. I continued with the same attitude as before and failed the exams again, due to my psychology. I attended for a further year as a listener and then returned to Cyprus. In Cyprus I had many commissions; you could find pieces of my work anywhere in Cyprus.

**MP:** *How were the earnings? Were they sufficient for the time?*

**NI:** I used to take any amount they were willing to give. Firstly, I was in need of work, so I used to undertake all commissions. Secondly, I loved my work so I used to spend many hours on it: I had help in the house from my mother-in-law and I knew I could rely on her. I left a large amount of work [before the war] which, nowadays, is marketed by Turks at high prices: they sometimes sell them as ancient pieces. That piece *Koukoumara*<sup>470</sup> was in a Limassol market and a friend bought it from some Turks and gave it to me: it was from my house there. He gave it to me around the time I held my first exhibition at Gloria Gallery (2002).

I did more than one hundred *Koukoumara* pieces for hotels and each one was different. I used to work many hours in various studios and I was fortunate that my husband was the director of a company dealing cars. I always had someone to drive and take me wherever it was necessary.

After the war the whole family came here [South Cyprus] with just our car and lived in Limassol for a year. In 1975 we moved to Larnaca and I immediately started working with *Koukoumara*, in order to keep the tradition.

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<sup>470</sup> *Koukoumara* is the name of a special jar that was used to carry water and keep it cool.

**MP:** *Did you have your own kiln?*

**NI:** No, I had to use others peoples' kilns in Nicosia. I bought an oven after my first exhibition. It's a small one.

**MP:** *How did other artists respond? Was their attitude positive or negative? Did they support you?*

**NI:** I wasn't looking for anyone's support.

**MP:** *Did you participate in any exhibitions organised by the British administrator?*

**NI:** I did participate in one exhibition in Famagusta but I am not sure if the organisers were Cypriot or British.

**MP:** *How did you find out about the exhibition? Was it through an announcement or calling?*

**NI:** I really don't remember. Even nowadays, if someone does not come here and take the artworks, I will not do it myself. When my husband was alive he used to do it or I sometimes paid for transport; now I have no-one to help, as it is really expensive to do. My daughter helps me by providing some finance and she encourages me to continue my work. Otherwise, at present, I could not support myself.

**MP:** *It is obvious you were deeply influenced by politics.*

**NI:** I feel really touched seeing the drama a war can create. A recent series of my work is named *Cry my Eyes for Losing my Country*.

**MP:** *Which pieces do you still have from Famagusta before 1974?*

**NI:** The *Koukoumara* over there and one work my daughter has, which was only saved because I sent it to Canada for an exhibition and it was returned after the war. I have nothing else from Famagusta. When we found out about the seller in Limassol, we tried to contact him to find out who was supplying him with my work.

It was impossible, as he only tried to sell me more work: my own work. Then we went to court to find out how who was promoting the work I left in Famagusta at the time of the war. I left more than 1000 artworks there. I spent my whole life there, up until I was 40 years old.

**MP:** *Did the struggle of 1955 influence your work in any way?*

**NI:** Yes, I did a series of influenced works, such as *The Crying Mothers* and *The Missing Persons*.

**MP:** *Did British people buy your work?*

**NI:** Some did; they used to buy *Koukoumara*. Tourists used to buy some traditional works and ask for their portraits.

Have you seen *Koukoumara*? She is based on poetry.

**MP:** *Have you participated in the struggle against British rule?*

**NI:** No, I was not a member of EOKA. However, I did support them, even though no-one approached me. I was following events but I couldn't do much else, as I had my children at that time.

**MP:** *Did anything change in the arts after the independence of Cyprus?*

**NI:** Yes, things changed, but only for a short period, as we had the war in 1974. Around 1964, I became a tour guide. After going through several phases of studies, artwork and commissions, I felt the need to know more about my country. In becoming a tour guide, I got to know my country better: it helped me with my art as well.

My children might not remember me as a mother who spent a lot of time in the kitchen, but they do remember me as one who worked. They knew from an early

age about drawing and sculpture; this explains why my daughter studied archaeology.

**MP:** *Did your family support you and your work?*

**NI:** Yes, and they appreciated it a great deal. I was providing an extra salary to the income of the house. When we came here without a penny, we had to buy a property and so we built our house. I used to work in the mornings as a tourist guide and afterwards, until midnight, I used to work on the commissions I had. This is how we paid for the house: whatever my husband provided, I provided the same, if not more. It was difficult at the time but I was strong and willing to work. After my husband died, I was getting anxious about the tours: every day, I had to explain to tourists the problems Cyprus was experiencing. When I held my exhibition in which I exhibited all my work relating to the protest, many foreigners asked about them and I told them why I created such works: they understood more from seeing my work than from reading books about Cyprus. They asked me about Cyprus and could not believe that these things actually happened, that we lived under such political conditions and that I represent these times through clay. So, I continue my mission: I lived under these circumstances and I have to represent them.

**Interview with Zoe Kanthou** (sister of Eleni Chariclidou)

Interview took place at the Telemachos Kanthos Foundation on 31 March 2010, 11.00am

**Maria Photiou:** *Thank you for agreeing to meet me and do this interview. Let's talk about your sister Eleni and her art.*

**Zoe Kanthou:** Due to a severe health problem, Eleni could never attend classes within the usual way.<sup>471</sup> She could not finish in the expected time, e.g. in 5-6 years. She had to interrupt her studies due to her health condition. When it was possible

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<sup>471</sup> She had cancer a while before starting her studies.

for her, she continued her studies. But she had many study breaks in order to undergo therapy. We went together to Athens in 1946.

**MP:** *Was Eleni influenced by the political happenings, e.g. EOKA?*

**ZK:** No. First of all, she was not in Cyprus during that time. She had to travel often to do her therapy.

**MP:** *When did she decide to go to England for a postgraduate course?*

**ZK:** Eleni did the postgraduate course a long time after her first degree. However, every summer she used to go to London, Paris and Italy. Getting information about art was in her daily schedule.

**MP:** *What was the public's response like? Was there an art market?*

**ZK:** At the time, people did not buy art at all. Not even for well-known artists, let alone for students. Eleni never sought a professional career, to sell in the market. Especially given her health problems – she used to work for a while in Cyprus and then travel to Athens or London for her therapy.

**MP:** *She never sought a professional career due to her health problems?*

**ZK:** At that time people used to mock artists. Even Kanthos used to say that he was working as a secretary in a company.<sup>472</sup> The majority of people in Cyprus had no idea of art and when Kanthos used to tell them he was an artist they always laughed at him. Of course, my sister was a few years later and people were more informed about arts.

However, during 1950 no one used to buy art. No one could survive from art. It was an early stage for art. Kanthos had to do commercial art for an advertisement office. No one knew or was interested in arts. They [Kanthos and the other 'fathers of Cypriot art'] paved the way, they organised exhibitions, they taught at schools,

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<sup>472</sup> Zoe Kanthou is the wife of Telemachos Kanthos who is considered one of the 'fathers' of Cypriot art.

they provoked the Cypriots' interest. They were the pioneers who formatted art in Cyprus.

**MP:** *Did you have any other members in family who had an interest in arts?*

**ZK:** Yes, our grandfathers were painters of Byzantine art. My father's job was to engrave the gravestones and he used to do good work. After Eleni graduated and returned to Cyprus, my father asked her to bring materials so that he would start art. He was a good technician. When he was 60 years old he also started producing art, after he saw Eleni's work.

**MP:** *Why she chose Athens and not London or some other country?*

**ZK:** It was 1946. And we are *Greeks*. The first choice is always, in everything, *your own place*. When she asked for permission from British rule they asked her why she was not going to London instead. We both went to study in Greece.

**MP:** *You said earlier people used to laugh at artists. What was your family's reaction? Did they support Eleni's decision to study art?*

**ZK:** My father was a clever man. Eleni's art teacher [G. Fasouliotis] told him that he should provide education to his daughter; that was enough. He was intelligent and open-minded.

**Interview with Aristides Koudounaris** (cousin of Loukia Nicolaidou)

Interview took place at Aristides Koudounaris' house on 24 March 2010, 18.00pm.

**Maria Photiou:** *Thank you for agreeing to meet and talk about Loukia Nicolaidou.*

**Aristides Koudounaris:** There is something that I never talked about before: about a love affair she had which made her run from Cyprus. But we need to take things from the start. Loukia was born in Limassol in 1909. She died at Penn, outside London, in 1994. Her parents were Loizos Nicolaides and Elpida Nicolaidou – who were from the old family of Mauros Koufides from Pedoula. They were merchants in Limassol, her father was the director of the Laiki Bank at

Limassol for many years, and therefore, she had the opportunity to go abroad and study.

First she studied at the Private School of Foreign Languages and Greek Subjects of Ms Atheanides. It was at that school that she expressed her love for painting. After she finished her studies at the school she enrolled at the ABC School of Paris.

**MP:** *Do you know how she found out about this school?*

**AK:** At that time in Limassol, art professors used to recommend the ABC school to their students as, by correspondence, you could get lessons and gain a qualification. It was very common at that time – I knew many persons who studied at ABC. The school used to send what was required by post and then the learners had to send back the requested drawings. After a few years of attendance, the school provided a degree that allowed students to teach.

Instead of taking the ABC from London [which was the most common], Loukia preferred the one from Paris; she had lessons for one year. Due to her previous studies she was able to talk both English and French. The school [the Private School of Foreign Languages and Greek Subjects] was equivalent to the French Nun's School. After that, she went – her father sent her<sup>473</sup> – to the Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux-Arts, at the Atelier of the professor Lucien Simon. Loukia used to refer to him often; it seems he was quite important in the area of arts and she felt lucky to be his student. After her return to Cyprus in 1933 she organised three solo exhibitions in Nicosia and Limassol in 1934, 1935 and 1936; these exhibitions must be considered as the very first exhibitions of art in Cyprus. Before coming to Cyprus, she had a critique in the *Le Monte* newspaper by a famous professor. She had sent that critique to her family – at the time her family used to

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<sup>473</sup> A common expression in Cypriot dialect when the parents, especially the father, agree with what the children want to do and support them.

go to the Enosis Club that reputable ladies used to meet and among other activities used to organise exhibitions. The first exhibitions at Limassol took place at the Enosis Club. So they used to get informed about European happenings from newspapers and magazines. They got to know about the critique of Loukia's work; that her work was avant-garde, she was influenced a great deal by Gauguin and she deserved support. If I remember it correctly, Loukia sent this article to her parents.

Her father talked about it at the Enosis Club. It was before the exile of the Nicodimos Milonas<sup>474</sup> [who, at the time, was eparch of Limassol town], who was votary of the arts. Milonas always supported Loukia and used to say how important it was to have a representative who honours Cyprus in France. He had power and could impose his will since he was educated and people had respect for him. He was not like the common priests who just chanted the liturgy. He was passionate about arts and rebellion. He loved Limassol and preferred to live there since there was an appeal for enlightenment; all newspapers and magazines used to be in Limassol [*Alithia*, *Salpix*, *Laiko Vima*, *Xronos*, *Paratiritis*] and all these gave a different aspect of education and culture to the town. This was the atmosphere in Limassol [also, *To Gelio* was published by Fasouliotis]: there was a good ground for arts. Loukia came with her degrees and her critiques and she was welcomed by everyone in Limassol. A large number of people had commissioned her to do paintings. She did numerous portraits; some considered them a big success and others did not like the Gauguin influence. People were discussing her; she used to go around with her bicycle and her materials [sketch book and colours]. Since we were living in a conservative society people did not like the fact that she was wandering around. On one side the cultured people knew and respected her; on the other, reserved people could not accept the fact that a woman cycled all alone around the city and the fields. Loukia continued her work and the evidence of this

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<sup>474</sup> The exile happened in 1931, so probably L.Nicolaidou sent the article between 1929 and 1931.



is that the majority of the houses in Limassol had her work. She had the respect of the older people, like the painter Vasilis Vrionides.

Loukia had – how shall I name it – bad luck, or fate, since it played an important role in her life. She fell in love with someone; it was a feeling she had as a teenage student that she never let go. After she returned from Paris she met the young man again; he was a lawyer and later a judge, and his name was Lefkios Zinon. For personal reasons L. Zinon married another woman, named Ypetia Pavlidou, who apparently was very rich in comparison to Loukia, who had nothing to give besides her paintings. Loukia's disappointment was enormous; her family tried to comfort her. From the moment in which Lefkios ignored her she stopped her art; it was a big shock for her. She had two married sisters; the older one, Nina, was married to a 'small' ship-owner named Milidi, in England. When the family realised that Loukia was not willing to do another marriage – she was only willing to marry Lefkio, whom she loved deeply – they asked her to start teaching, but she refused, since she was in such despair. Her sister Nina asked her to join her in England in order to change surroundings. Loukia went to England where she met her husband Vasiliou – he was from Syro Island and a well-known ship-owner. After their marriage they lived in Penn, where they had three daughters. I think none of them got married. They used to come to Cyprus when they were younger and used to stay with my sisters in Limassol. Apparently Loukia's husband never encouraged her to continue her work, although she set up the garage as a studio. Her daughters have many works from a different period, in which she is not the person I knew; she is a different Loukia.

I think she had one exhibition in London where she received good feedback, but she was away from the patterns she had learnt while she was in Paris. She had the marriage, that offered her a prosperous life and children, but all this 'ruined' her art. She never had forgotten Cyprus and Lefkio. This is her life in brief, and I think that love was the biggest handicap in her life since she never managed to get over

it. What she did in Cyprus was very important, but people did not know about her. One day I was at the Cultural Services, where I talked to Nico Panagiotou<sup>475</sup> about Loukia. The Cultural Services had researched and published material about artists who learn about colours from Loukia but there was no study of her art. Diamantis<sup>476</sup> used to tell me that Loukia's work was valuable and he could not forget the red colour of her paintings. Loukia's work was vivid.

Panagiotou asked me about her, and I told him that he could find her in Penn town, outside London. I used to ask Loukia's mother about her often. Her mother would say that Loukia was good often sent gifts. However, I knew that inside her, Loukia was never again the person we used to know. She believed Lefkios' promises of marriage, but unfortunately this never happened, and this broke her heart. Perhaps this was the reason she never returned to Cyprus – she used to send her daughters for holidays.

**MP:** *Do you know if she gave the paintings their titles, or if Eleni Nikita did it?*

**AK:** Nikita had visited her in Penn. In fact Loukia was very pleased that she was still remembered in Cyprus, since Nikita met her when she was quite old. Nikita held her arm and had a walk in the garden and Loukia said how touched she was that Cyprus remembered her. When I talked about Loukia to Panagiotou I wanted to bring to light the old moments from Limassol, the first period of Loukia. I gave all the details to Nikita so she could trace and find Loukia, who ended up being a different Loukia; she was not the Loukia of Cyprus who used to go around with her bicycle and draw her images. In England she was Ms Vasiliou, the wife of the ship-owner, who had few people around her and no time for art because of the three daughters she had. Her daughters must have her work from England. Look for Vasiliou at Penn town; it should be under one of the daughters' names. I came to

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<sup>475</sup> Director of Cultural Services.

<sup>476</sup> One of the leading Cypriot artists and 'father of Cypriot art'.

know about Vasiliou's death from *The Times*, because they announced that he left 3-4 million pounds to be taxed.

Let me see my old agenda if I still have her address. Family members in Athens must have her details since they used to meet with her and Loukia used to send money through them to her aunts, who were unmarried – Loukia supported them with money. Loukia never suffered from poverty, but her soul suffered from the love she had for Lefkio.

[Calling his sister Louisa]

Her daughters are: Janine, a member of the Young Conservative in Penn; Nika (from Niki), a housewife; Ioni, who used to do ballet but never succeeded in it. I had the address in Penn and gave it to Nikita, who started contact with her in order to do a retrospective exhibition of her work. Loukia managed to get revenge on Lefkio, since her exhibition in Limassol took place at the house of Lefkio and Ipatia. Ipatia Zinonos gave that house to charity, to become a cultural centre. When people from cultural services voted for the exhibition to take place there, they had not known or imagined that Lefkios was the reason why Loukia left Cyprus. Therefore even after her death, Loukia took her revenge by having her exhibition at Lefkio's house. What an irony of life. Lefkios could never imagine that his wife would give away his house as cultural centre, and that the first exhibition would be Loukia's.

I believe that Loukia's work is worth a lot. At that time everyone in Limassol, artists – like Vassili Vrionides, Giorgos Fasouliotis and Victora Ioanidi – and people who were into arts appreciated her a lot. Even Diamantis had told me that 'Loukia's red has never surpassed me. I am afraid of it like nothing in the world. The work I do might be substandard to Loukia's red'. You see, Loukia had an obsession with red colours. I don't know why, perhaps it was derived from her passion.

**MP:** *What happened to her house in Limassol and the paintings she left there?*

**AK:** When Loukia left Cyprus she took along her unmarried sister Olivia, and they stayed together. When Loukia died, Nina took Olivia with her to keep her company. The other sister was Maria and her brother was Diogenis. Diogenis was a civil engineer; then there was Nina, who married Diomides the ship-owner; then there was Maria, who married Yiango Makrides in Nicosia. When Olivia died, everything was sold quickly, including the house. Among other furniture was a big credenza – no one had opened it to see if there was something inside it. The doctor Korais bought it and when they sent it for repair they found all the first drawings of poor Loukia. Korais started selling the drawings at auction, but no one was buying drawings. Unfortunately I was away, otherwise I would never let them to sell that antique piece. Loukia used to place her first drawings in the Turkish bath, so that she would not bother anyone since they were not using it – the family was using the new European bath. When she left they placed her work in the drawer so that they wouldn't get damaged by the humidity. There are many works of Loukia's in Limassol; some were unfinished, and a number were kept in her mother's house.

You should locate her daughters. I think they still live in Penn, I doubt if they got married. I met them a few times and they used to be weird, all dressed in old-fashioned style. I used to meet Loukia in London and she was changed, she became like our old aunts, dressed in large long dresses and her hair all up. All this was new for me. I never saw her like that before. She looked like her aunt Kalipso. Perhaps happiness plays an important role to people – she had 'decayed' totally by the last time I met her. She did not care anymore, especially after she found out about the death of Lefkios. Her life was destroyed by all this. It was wrong what Lefkios did; he promised to marry her and then married Ypatia, the rich daughter of Gio Pavlides, who was incapacitated. He just married her for the money, and left his love for Loukia behind. Loukia was insulted; everyone in town

knew about it, so she had to leave. No one would dare to go close to her. Before this many wanted to get married to her but after this none did. Society was very conservative and Loukia was a victim of it. Perhaps Nikita has photos of her studio in Penn.

**MP:** *Did you have anyone in the family who practiced art before Loukia?*

**AK:** We had a cousin who used to paint in his free time – Charalampos Theodosiou, who was a volunteer in the army. He was close with Loukia.

**MP:** *How did the family perceive the fact that Loukia wanted to study art?*

**AK:** They accepted it since they were quite wealthy at that time [her father was director of a bank for years]. The family was noble, with a nice house and furniture from Beirut, and everyone in the house was educated. They had contacts with foreign people, so Loukia was influenced by them. Loukia was clever and her presence in Europe helped her to know things. The critique she had at *Le Monde* and the propaganda Milonas did for her was a big thing for the time. Milonas had bought one of her works and the club *Enosis* did as well.

[Looking at his collection of Nicoladiou's work]

**AK:** Loukia did a large number of portraits since she wanted to become well-known. Everyone in the family wanted to help her. My aunt gave her £5 for her portrait.

**MP:** *Do you know if she was influenced by politics?*

**AK:** No, I don't think so. She was never a rebel person.

**MP:** *What about this painting entitled 'Enosis'?*

**AK:** This must be from the England period, being far away in that garage-studio. I really don't know if she participated by painting.

**MP:** *After her studies did she ever teach art or choose to practice art?*

**AK:** She preferred painting. It was a big thing for a woman to paint. They advised her to start teaching but she was not pleased by it.

**MP:** *How did she survive? Did she gain enough money from her work or did her family help her?*

**AK:** Her family helped her. They had money to send her abroad to study and then supported her, getting her a bicycle so she could go around and paint. Also, art materials.

**MP:** *Did she have a studio in Limassol?*

**AK:** She had a room of the house to use as a studio. It was a bathroom. Stelios Milonas has a portrait of her in her studio. Loukia was a great person, her work deserves to be highlighted. At the time it was a big thing for a woman to choose art.

Aliki Arxontidou [who is 97 years old] was good friends with Loukia since childhood; perhaps she will agree to talk to you about her.

### **Interview with art historian Eleni Nikita**

Interview took place at Eleni Nikita's house on 27 September 2010, 17.00 pm

**Maria Photiou:** *You were the first to discover Nicolaidou's work in a club located in Limassol.*

**Eleni Nikita:** Yes, the *Enosis* club or the *Isotis* one. You can find it in my book. They used to be two separate clubs but later they merged into one club. I discovered one of her works there and then begin my research into finding out more about her. All this is stated in my book. So, I found her in England in where I spent one day with her. She was quite old at the time. I visited her at Penn; I went early in the morning and left late in the evening. All the information she gave me is the material I used and wrote about in the catalogue for her retrospective

exhibition. I used all those details I had from her. Loukia was old and secluded in Penn, with no one showing any interest in her art. The first hours in Penn were so frustrating; it was so difficult to get her to talk about the past. I knew she was not willing to talk about certain things, since her three daughters were all sitting with us. She was not saying what she really wanted or felt but what she wanted to show on the outside, a different image of what she was. She wanted to prove that she was OK, that she was not disturbed by the isolation, her distance from art that was basically caused by her husband. Before her marriage she was in London, where she participated in an exhibition at Legers Gallery. The *Intransigent* newspaper wrote about her work and it was very important to be distinguished by such a newspaper. N. Raynal was quite famous and it is important that he noted her work and wrote something about it. No, sorry, this was not in London but in Paris – when she exhibited as a student. However in London she was again noted – I do not remember much detail, you can find it in my book.

So Loukia changed after her marriage and her husband's influence. I could tell by the way she answered several of my questions. I came to know that her husband did not wish her to be involved any more within the artists' category. After her marriage she became the wife of a wealthy Greek ship-owner. She belonged to a different world after her marriage to that man. So Loukia tried to convince herself that things were all right. Until the 1950s she was still practicing art but she never showed her work or participated in any exhibitions. After our meeting we kept contact by calling each other and via letters. But I really do not know much about her. She was not willing to share or reveal many details. I wrote in my book everything I came to know about her.

**MP:** *Was she practicing art during the 1960s-70s?*

**EN:** No, not at all. She stopped practicing and as she told me she started gardening. The house does not longer belong to the family; they sold it after her death. She had a really nice house with a beautiful garden.

**MP:** *Do you still have the address of the house?*

**EN:** The house was sold. I don't know if the house is still the same as it was. Basically, her daughters never esteemed their mother as an artist. No one did. It was after I talked to them that they started realising it. After Loukia's death her daughters gave her work to friends and neighbours as a remembrance of their mother. When I asked them why they did that they replied that these people were Loukia's friends and they wanted to keep a memory of her. They never thought that her work was valuable and should be kept together as a collection. It was after my own efforts that they agreed to give some works to the Nicosia Gallery and some on permanent loan, to the Greek House in London. I even convinced them to sell some work to the Nicosia Gallery. Actually, I wished they had sold more artworks to the gallery but they refused saying they preferred to give them to their friends so that they could keep Loukia's memory through her work. This is how the daughters felt. They never realised how important Loukia's work was. Given her distance from the art scene in London, no one knew about her. I tried to make them realise that their mother did not belong to London. She belonged to Cyprus, where she was of very significant importance. The four years she lived in Cyprus between 1934-37, and her exhibitions, are milestones for Cyprus' culture. I really don't know if they ever realised this. Perhaps they now realise how important it was.

I felt very sorry when they sold the house. Her studio was a large room in the garden. I remember in the studio two wrapped, old, large canvases. When I had unwrapped them, both were in bad condition. These were old works she did in Cyprus and had transfer, like many other, to England. I admired them and she gave one of them to me. I managed to conserve it in Cyprus and took a photo of the other one [a photographer was with Nikita]. After some time I searched for it; it was a symbolic work and I had sent a photo of that work to the daughters asking about it, with the intention of buying it for the Gallery. They could not find it and said they had looked but it was impossible for them to locate it. I think they threw



away many of her things. It was a large studio with many works in it. Perhaps they never realised the importance and the value of that work. I really believe that they had not kept her things, especially since they moved from a huge house to a small apartment. It would have been impossible for them to keep all her things.

**MP:** *Why did they sell the house?*

**EN:** Their father left them a big fortune which is run by the family lawyer. None of them work, they all have a monthly income from the fortune and they are all involved in several charities. One acts as a volunteer in a children's hospital, the other one in a church; they are all doing benefactions supported by their father's fortune. I believe they thought it would be better to moved to a smaller house, since none of them married. It was not a money issue since they have enough money even for after life. They probably wanted something more modern and practical than the old house.

I was really impressed by Loukias' shift of behaviour. After her studies, she refused entering education – as was expected, and like many others did at that time – and had great zeal to do practice and to exhibit her work. It is obvious that she worked hard, from her three exhibitions. I wonder how she managed to take herself away from all these. She talked a lot about her friends in Monte Carlo. It seems like she swapped her art for the good life.

**MP:** *Were the titles of her works given by you or Loukia?*

**EN:** We entitled them together. I had asked her to give some titles. She gave some titles; for others we just discussed it. We used to call each other and chat. After a while, when she realised that I was really interested in her work and I did some things to promote her, she felt more comfortable and felt the need to share more things with me. We met just once but we used to talk a lot over the phone. What did we talk about? For the most part it was about Loukia's present life rather than her past life.

**MP:** *It must have been so difficult for her to share matters in which she believed in the past so strongly. I tried to contact her eldest daughter but she refused to meet me. I felt she was quite eccentric and did not want to insist on meeting her.*

**EN:** All three daughters are very eccentric. I don't know why, but everything was so weird. They hardly know details of their mother or her life in Cyprus. All information about her exhibitions was gathered from newspapers and some friends in Cyprus. But unfortunately most of the friends were quite old and could not share much about her. She had two sisters, both of whom got married and lived abroad. Her brother's wife was still alive when I started researching Loukia. She was the one who gave me the address at Penn and some more information. However, she did not know much about Loukia as an artist. Everyone was giving the same information about how she used to spend a lot of time painting, but none of them actually offered any real facts.

**MP:** *I know that for the retrospective exhibition the eldest daughter came to Cyprus. How did Loukia react to the news of her retrospective?*

**EN:** She was extremely pleased about it. You cannot imagine how happy she was. After the exhibition she had sent more works to me. Imagine after her death, I was the first person who her daughter called to tell about her death. I was so impressed that I was the very first person she called.

Recently they wanted to do something in Cyprus, since in 2009 it had been a century since Loukia's birth date. They thought of offering a scholarship and we had discussed it together. Since there wasn't a department of Arts at the Cyprus University, I suggested giving it to TEPAK (Cyprus University of Technology). They really wanted it and I started the proceedings, but their lawyer did not agree to it. I don't know the real reason for not doing it, but their lawyer was neglected in doing it. I told them it was outstanding what they thought of keeping the memory of their mother throughout a scholarship at TEPAK. I will try to talk to them about it.

**MP:** This is *an amazing idea to remember her by* – *students will begin to search out details of who Nicolaidou was. What about the public – how did Cypriots perceive her retrospective?*

**EN:** I will never forget the artists' reaction – especially that of artist Angelos Makrides, who visited the exhibition several times. He was so excited about it and used to say that this woman changed the image of the first generation of Cypriot artists. We knew all the men artists [Diamantis, Kanthos, Frangoudis, etc], but she was something different. She really brought to Cyprus new artistic trends. I remember all artists' excitement about her work. I believe that the public appreciate her work because they could really understand it. But the ones who really valued her work were the artists. Markides used to say that he could not believe there was such art in Cyprus during the 1930s. But you saw in my book what I wrote about Anthias' article. In 1934 Cypriots could not understand her work and thought she could not paint. She had to place in the exhibition some works made during her studies to show that she had academic skills but had chosen not to follow the canon and to do her own experiments. Now, sixty years after, Cypriots can understand her work. Where Cypriots cannot understand abstract and conceptual art, they can understand Loukia's work. After a big gap, Cypriots can understand the European modern trends of that time [Expressionism, Fauvism etc]. But it was always this condition. The same happened in Europe during the 1950s when people really began to understand 1890s Impressionism. I think her work was well received by the public. You can see this from the auctions, now her works are being sold.

**MP:** *Did her family in Cyprus have had a similar attitude towards her art?*

**EN:** At that time it was complicated due to women's position. I wrote in several articles that after looking at the family background of Cypriot women artists, we can see that all originated from urban families and all were educated and wealthy. Women's emancipation started in the urban class in Cyprus. In contrary, men are mostly from the rural class; the majority of them were from villages and had to

emigrate to England, where they studied art along to their work. For example, Christoforos Savva never thought of becoming an artist; he discovered his passion for art it came after he went to England. He enrolled in art school without any qualifications [he didn't have a school certificate]. But he went to England for work, like many other artists of his generation – all had to work and study art at the same time.

**MP:** *You refer to some critiques in your articles. Did you find them yourself or did Loukia give the papers to you? Had she kept an archive?*

**EN:** Loukia gave the papers to me – the *Intransigent* one and the other, I think it was the *Times* one. She kept an archive but it was in bad condition and not organised. It was just the cited article within a paper that someone had posted to her. It was just the two journal critiques. It seems like she did not have any other critiques, just those two. In England she never sold any of her works. I don't know if she sold any work at the exhibitions at the Legers Gallery, where she exhibited two works.

**MP:** *What you know regarding the Enosis painting?*

**EN:** She told me that at the time of the painting she was influenced by the desire for Enosis. While in England she felt a strong wish for Enosis.

**MP:** *Had she created any other work influenced by Enosis?*

**EN:** Not as far as I know.

**MP:** *What about the Invasion?*

**EN:** No, at that time she was not practicing art at all. She stopped during the 1950s. She got married around the 1940s. Until the late 1950s she was still practicing – she had in fact changed her style, moving towards cubism.

**MP:** *Did she note any dates in her works?*

**EN:** Almost no work had a date, and it was quite difficult to figure it out. It was easy to distinguish the work made in Cyprus due to the different style and her signature of L. Nicolaidou, whereas after her marriage she used L. Vasiliou. Of course some are not signed, but the majority of them are.

**MP:** *What was the reason you think she left Cyprus? Was it for personal reasons [a love delusion she had] or was she seeking a better artistic ambience?*

**EN:** She never really talked to me about her decision to leave Cyprus. I came to know about it from her friends. However all this information is just hearsay from people who knew her. While Loukia was in Paris she was in love with Lefkios Zinonos, who was in Paris studying at the same time. It seems like she was expecting to get married to him after their return to Cyprus. Lefkios' family belonged to the elite class. Loukia's family was quite wealthy too. At the time Lefkios' family had some financial problems and for this reason his parents wanted him to get married to Ipatia Pavlidou, who was very wealthy; this was to cover their financial problems. So he got married to Ipatia and for this reason Loukia was deeply disappointed.

I think Loukia left Cyprus for a number of reasons: first, due to Lefkios' marriage to someone else; second, due to her disappointment about the public's misunderstanding of her work; and third, because of her sister's suggestion to visit her in London. I think all together played an important role for in her leaving. She needed to be in a new environment with an established art milieu. For this reason, as soon as she went to London, she participated in the exhibition at Legers Gallery. Actually she was selected to participate. It was significant to exhibit next to W.R. Sickert and Augustus John. She never told me about it but I think that she must have showed her work at the gallery and got selected. This means that she did tried to get involved in London. At the same time, it seems that her married sister made arrangements for Loukia to get married. At that time marriage was women's main purpose, as it was for men. If one was not married, he or she was considered to be a non-equal member of the society. So, Loukia was very lucky to

married to a wealthy ship-owner. Perhaps she left Cyprus to get over the love delusion but in due course she accepted what her family wanted; this was to get married.

**MP:** *Did she ever express any wish to stay in Paris after her studies?*

**EN:** No, she came to Cyprus. Probably she returned with the expectation of getting married to Lefkios. It must have been a big shock for her. But all this is said by people in Limassol. I think this is how things happened.

**MP:** *After her studies she expected to work as a professional artist?*

**EN:** At that time there were some vacancies for art teachers. Though she was qualified, she never got interested in teaching. She lived for four years in Cyprus and worked really hard. She used to travel around Cyprus and was practicing all the time. She travelled around Cyprus to produce work. Moreover, she was organising exhibitions. In four years she organised three exhibitions. She had also participated in the Pankiprian art exhibition. All this, together, reveals that she was seriously engaged in it – she loved art. However all these are just assumptions. I believe that Loukia was frustrated and wanted to show an image of her being happy, that things were as she wished to be. But I think deep inside she was missing art. This is what I felt while getting to know her. As said, she was not very talkative regarding her past life.

### **Interview with art historian and art collector Rita Severis**

Interview took place at Rita Severis' house on 19 December 2008, 10.30 am

**Maria Photiou:** *When and why did you purchase the painting *Platres*, by Loukia Nicolaidou?*

**Rita Severis:** I bought it 10-12 years ago from a charity auction. I wanted to complete my art collection and show what kind of influence the British School had

on the first Cypriot artists. I also wanted to show how Cypriot art came about, and that is why I purchased a selection of paintings by the pioneer Cypriot artists.

**MP:** *Was the price of Platres higher or lower than that of other works in the auction? [The painting was sold for 750 Cypriot Pounds].*

**RS:** It was one of the highest.

**MP:** *Why were women artists not known at the start of their career?*

**RS:** There are two or three reasons: firstly, the concept of art, as a decoration element on the wall, was not in painting. Art was associated with embroidery; the king's portraits and the Greek heroes (in print, of course). Secondly, the concept of an artist had rather negative connotations, especially for women; it was not seen as something woman could do. Women were simply not viewed as artists and they could not practice art as a profession. Also, Cypriots could not afford to buy paintings, especially local paintings by unrecognised artists. Thirdly, there was a prejudicial belief that women should stay at home and raise children. There were no great Cypriot female artists who undertook painting as a profession; they preferred to work in more traditional roles, such as schoolteacher and nurse.

**MP:** *Do you believe that they did try to become well-known?*

**RS:** Of course, all artists wish to become famous, but it was simply not possible at the time. Even Apostolos Geralis [one of the most famous Greek artists], who was a teacher in Cyprus, had to exchange his paintings for food, and a painting by Kounelakis [one of the first great Greek artists] was sold at a Cypriot auction for only two pounds: Cypriots simply did not have an interest in art. The only mitigating factor we have is that we are rather a new country and thus we have not matured in the arts.

**MP:** *Were the women artists involved in politics?*

**RS:** Not as far as I know. Cypriot women made their first appearance in politics during the 1950s, when they were active members of the EOKA liberation struggle. Before this, I do not think that they were influenced by politics. From the work of Nikolaidou and other women artists, I have not seen any works with reference to politics or to Cyprus liberation.

**MP:** *Do you know if they worked as freelance artists or whether they worked under commission?*

**RS:** They worked as freelance artists. I do not think that they were even aware of working under commission at that time; Nikolaidou had done some portraits in this manner, but this was on very relaxed terms. We should not forget that, in Cyprus, the growth of art was not important. Only after 1950 did the development of Cypriot art start, when Cypriot artists began to emulate the British artists.

**MP:** *Were there any changes in art after Cyprus' independence?*

**RS:** When Cyprus became independent, everything changed. The Cypriot Art School was launched and the first artists went abroad to study: when they returned, they were taken more seriously and became professional artists. Before, artists and art teachers were intertwined; now we have artists who are not also professors. We have seen the major appearance of women artists; art has become accessible and available, and we have started to embrace European art. However, I cannot say that we could create something visibly Cypriot, that would represent Cypriot art and which would be recognised as a part of Cypriot art. Almost all artworks are imported, with very few exceptions. Before 1960, artists produced



works that reflected characteristics from their biomes and mirrored the influence of the British Watercolour School of the late nineteenth century.

### **Interview with artist Katy Stephanides (1925-2012)**

Interview took place at Katy Stephanides' house, on 25 March 2010, 10am.

**Maria Photiou:** *Talk to me about your decision to study art.*

**Katy Stephanides:** Since childhood I was fond of painting and later I decided to study art despite some of my fears of not succeeding. My uncle George Fasouliotis was a cartoonist and used to publish *The Gelio* [translated as *The Laugh*] magazine in Limassol. My family supported my decision to study art, particularly my mother. My father was a journalist – he published the *O Paratiritis* [translated as *The Observer*] newspaper in Limassol – and my mother was educated: she graduated from the female school. I actually remember Loukia Nicolaidou: I used to see her work but never got to know her, since she left for England.

**MP:** *Why did you choose Athens and not somewhere else?*

**KS:** Initially I wanted to go to America, since I had an uncle there. After thinking about it I realised my lack of English language skills at that time. I had applied to some American universities but they only offered BA of Arts, including art history, etc, whereas I only wanted art. This was the same for Athens, so eventually I chose Athens. It was difficult to gain admission due to the preliminary exams. My first attempt failed since I was not adequately prepared for the exams. Afterwards, I stayed in Athens, where I undertook art classes with Mitso Oikonomides. Eleni Chariclidou was with me during the classes. After one year of foundation we both succeeded in the exams. It was an awful time – after the war – but I managed to graduate.

After my graduation I came back to Cyprus for a year; afterwards I went to London where I stayed for four years. I wasn't planning to get into any school since I was

tired from the Athens one. I wasn't planning to come back to Cyprus so I enrolled at St. Martin's School, where, alongside art, I was taught graphics in order to find a related job and stay in the country. I was following the arts in London, visiting exhibitions and often travelling to Paris for this reason. I used to work at a printing office and my family supported me. Soon, I found out that I had asthma. So I had to return to Cyprus, where, at that time, a number of vacancies were available for art teachers. I worked for two years in Limassol, then got married and moved to Nicosia. I was dedicated to my work despite the fact that I had children.

**MP:** *How was the art environment at the time?*

**KS:** At that time there was no art market or artistic activities in Limassol. However, in Nicosia things were better. Due to the fact that my husband was also an artist, he helped me to get some contacts. There were many group exhibitions in which I participated. However, there was a limited market at that time. It took a while to have an artistic atmosphere in Nicosia. Initially it started with Christophoros Savva, Glyn Hüge and some other artists like Botsis, Chrisochos etc. The progress was slow to develop, with small shifts, like exhibitions and the increasing interest from the public.

**MP:** *Did you face any discrimination being a woman artist?*

**KS:** I never faced any discrimination from other artists, but I felt it strongly from the buyers. During my exhibition of 2003 a man told the gallery owner that he liked my work but 'unfortunately the artist was a woman'. Just goes to show what mentality some people still have. However, things have changed: women are being accepted nowadays. At that time it was quite difficult. I was never really bothered about it since I never cared to sell: mostly I wanted to paint and express my feelings. My first solo exhibition was in 1971 and I exhibited some abstract geometrical works. Some people liked it but I am sure the majority had not really understood my art or what I intended to transmit through with my work.

**MP:** *Were you influenced by the anti-colonial struggle of 1955-59?*

**KS:** No, at that time I was still in Athens. Or I had just returned from Athens. Later, by the events of 1974, I was. All artists were influenced by the events of 1974.

[Showing her work].

**KS:** I started with realistic work, some landscapes and portraits. I never exhibited this work. After I had worked for some time I exhibited my first work, with a geometrical theme. These works are influenced by the events. These female figures have a decorative character but are also the figures of women who suffered a lot and used to gather in churches to protect themselves from Turks. All this is shown in an artistic way. This one is similar to destroyed houses; this other one has with broken heads. You can see in a symbolic way – I don't know if I really thought of this in this way but this is how I positioned it – a broken head in a still life, with a background of the Pentadaktilos Mountain, which is the other side. You can say it is the side of divided Cyprus. Then, is a series of signs, no entry, no communication, phones, etc, which you can interpret as you like. Then there are the series of Demonstrations.

**MP:** *Are the Demonstrations related to the invasion?*

**KS:** I don't know. Usually artists expose what they feel inside, it is up to others to provide the meaning of the work or give it a title. After I completed this series, someone advised me to entitle them Demonstrations. Indeed, they form demonstrations. It's a series that was appreciated and many works were sold. These series end as nonfigurative little humans. I started from very figurative work and ended with abstract art. From figurative art comes the abstract.

You can see geometrical elements in all my work. It was when the building of tall courts began. I used to love big courts and the antithesis of the light created by the shadows. I liked the element of contrasted shades and colours so I developed it. I am interested in colour and synthesis; I cannot work without synthesis. There is a motion in my work. Afterwards, time changed and the little man altered into an angel with wings. My latest work involves butterflies.

**MP:** *Tell me more about your residence in London and your return to Cyprus.*

**KS:** I used to travel a lot during that time. I had even bought my own house, with the thought of staying there. But I had to come back for health issues, and started teaching in schools. Fortunately I was practising my art at the same time. After my retirement from education I opened my atelier, where I taught art to students who wanted to study art abroad, especially in Greece. My husband died in 1996, my children were both in Athens, and so I was forced to close the atelier and went to Athens to be with my family. Afterwards, my daughter found a job in Cyprus and so we moved back here. All this was 15 years back.

**MP:** *When you first decided to study art was it to become a professional artist or to teach art?*

**KS:** What it means as a profession? I studied art because I liked painting. I thought I would be a painter. The fact that I became an art teacher came later. When I first went abroad to study I never thought of teaching in schools; I just wanted to go abroad and to experience what is art. During my studies in Athens things were very restrained, there was not even one gallery. Only *Parnassos* was available in which to rent a space, and it was only for small-sized exhibitions. Before I left Athens, its first gallery, *Armos* opened. Some artists, such as Gaitis, exhibited here. At that time Athens was taking its first steps in art.

In Cyprus, there first appeared a woman art teacher who taught us how to measure with the pencil but never publicised her work. Afterwards came L. Nicolaidou and then it was me and Eleni Chariclidou. These were the things at that time. Later, people could get a scholarship and go to Italy and France to study. From them, art in Greece was revised. In Cyprus were the fathers Diamantis and Kanthos and, later, many others who created an art milieu in Nicosia. Now things are going really well, especially if you consider the small size of Cyprus.

**Interview with Giannis Toumazi** (director of the Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre)

The interview took place at the Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre, on 8 January 2009, 10 am.

**Maria Photiou:** *What do you know about Loukia Nicolaidou?*

**Giannis Toumazis:** I don't know much, but I do know the historian Aristides Koudounaris, who knew her: she also has some relatives in Limassol, if you want more biographical information about her. For the time, Nicolaidou had really high-quality studies, and her work is really worthy and innovative.

**MP:** *Do you know whether the first generation of women artists were involved in politics?*

**GT:** Some of them. Of course, not in organised groups, but according to their environment, education or background at that specific time. I think it was more a personal situation than a phenomenon of the time.

**MP:** *Were the next generation of women artists aware of Nicolaidou's work?*

**GT:** No, I don't think many people knew about her. We have only recently had a retrospective of her work; some of her paintings were discovered by coincidence in the wardrobe of her house, after relatives sold the house to a doctor. Loukia lived for many years in London with her family and never attended any Cypriot art events. During the past 20 years, however, she has become renowned.

**MP:** *Were there any galleries that supported the artists?*

**GT:** There were no galleries, but exhibitions used to take place in various locations. Around 1960, Christophoros Savva opened the first art gallery in old Nicosia; prior to this, there was little progress in Cypriot art, due to British rule. Art

in Cyprus enjoyed something of a revival after independence, and when the second generation of Cypriots artists returned from studying abroad. The 1960s saw the launch of arts in Cyprus and we had the major appearance of women artists.

**MP:** *Why did women artists not get the same recognition as men artists?*

**GT:** Because of the socio-political conditions of the time. Cyprus, after so many years of

Ottoman occupation and British rule, was a conservative society, under the influence of the church: unlike men, women were oppressed in this society. Studying art was a luxury in that it was very expensive, so no family was willing to send their children to art school. Most women's desire was to have a lovely wedding and then raise children; the thought of women studying art was not even entertained: what later purpose would this serve? Rather, art was largely a pastime for girls from wealthy families.

**Interview with artist Maria Tourou (b.1943)**

Interview took place at Maria Tourou's house on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010, 10pm

**Maria Photiou:** *You are an interesting case of an artist, not only due to your practice, but mostly due to the fact that you have lived abroad for a long period.*

**Maria Tourou:** Yes, I was away for thirty years. I have seen many things during that time. Imagine, after 1974, I was living with just one luggage; I did not want to buy a single thing. After my graduation I refused to teach. I only wanted to draw. After my studies, being around 22 years old, I wanted to travel around Europe and experience the various countries, to learn about life in a few words. The first time I had taught was after I returned to Cyprus, in 1970. I was employed in countryside

areas, which I really enjoyed. Before me was my friend Rhea Bailey, who did not have any power over her students. With me it was different, and students came to see this. We had our jokes but I could discipline them. There were some boys who used to hate art and did not want to draw. With time and my efforts they became my most dedicated students and made an incredible practice. I had a large collection of their work which is now lost. My class was something new, given the time; I used to take students out in the countryside to paint and students used to love it. I loved that time. As a student I had no time or opportunity to get to know Cyprus. After my studies I came to know about Cyprus. Before that, I showed no interest in it. We could go at odd hours to pick snails or mushrooms – something you cannot do in London. Those years were the best time for me in Cyprus.

Then, in 1972, I got an invitation to participate in an exhibition in California at *La Jolla*. I took leave and went there: I ended up staying for a year. I came to know a lot of people. You cannot imagine. I met the artist Françoise Gilot at a dinner of just four people. I also met Francis Crick, who won the Nobel Prize for discovering the details of DNA. We had common friends so I came to know these people. I also did exhibitions with important artists like the Mexican artist Tamayo. Anyway, after a year I came back to Cyprus and got employed in Nicosia. I wanted countryside schools. So I got another two years in countryside areas and had in total three years of teaching. As I said, in 1974 I went away and did not want to teach again. I got used to a different way of living, painting all the time, exhibiting my work. It was a different life, full of adventures. It was not difficult because I was confident. I always found ways to get money because I believed in what I was doing. After living for 16 years in Washington I came across artists who were thinking of getting a job to get a salary and pay for expenses. They would take a job and then leave art. You cannot really carry out a practice if you have to do other work. You would not have the time or energy to do so. I used to tell them that I will carry on and eventually I managed to survive. In order to do so I was lucky to be supported by really good friends. My friends were well off, having houses on Embassy Road in Washington, and I had the opportunity to take the upper floor. I had a studio and a

dark room for photographs. I was very lucky. In return, I gave them artworks. They used to tell me that they only wanted me to produce works.

**MP:** *They must have believed in you.*

**MT:** Yes. I must say I have good friends around the world and we have faith in each other.

**MP:** *Was your practice influenced by politics? The invasion?*

**MT:** I only produced a few works related to the invasion. As a person I digest things but I represent them later. Some artists had it as a theme at the time. I was away and many things came out later and I did not know about it. After thinking and analysing I realized that for all those years I was searching for identity. The major thing of my relation to politics was this long-lasting search; the flying figures; not knowing where you belong. My return in Cyprus happened in stages. I thought I should come occasionally, do some exhibitions, so that people won't forget about me. I came in 1982 for the first time, then in 1984, 1988, every four years or something like that. I remember a woman suggesting applying to get a house [all Greek Cypriot refugees may legitimately apply for a house]. At least I would not be like as a gipsy, staying with friends all the time. I was not aware of the refugee plan. When they asked whereabouts I wanted to stay, I told them in a village. I started looking around Cyprus looking for a Turkish house, as I wanted a Turkish one. It would be nice to get a Greek house, but since the Turkish left theirs I ended up here in Lefkara, where I fell in love with the view. So I started coming here for 1-2 months a year, while the rest of the year I was in the US. For three years I haven't left here. This was my return to Cyprus.

**MP:** *Did your family support your decision to study art?*

**MT:** They were OK. We were seven children and my father was keen to provide us education. Since I was five years old I was painting, and when I announced my



decision to study art my father accepted it. Before I left he took me to Dora Orphanou, who was already teaching art.

**MP:** *Why did you choose British education, not somewhere else?*

**MT:** We were students at the English school in Famagusta, where lessons were delivered in English. Moreover, I had a cousin working for the BBC and married to a British woman. So my family suggested living with them. I didn't really know how things worked at that time. I was late as I went to the UK in November and could not get admission – everywhere was fully booked. Eventually I found a place at Hammersmith School of Art. After graduating I returned to Cyprus and Christoforos Savva was the only person to come and see my work. My work was quite different: even during courses I was not following the academic way of teaching, and this almost cost me expulsion from the school. During my third year a tutor advised me to show my work to a gallery. I did not have the courage to go to the gallery and lost the opportunity.

[Showing her work]

**MT:** This work is entitled *Afentrika*, where you can see my uncertainties about identity. There is confusion in my work. This is *Premonition*, which I made just before leaving. I wasn't sure why I did it. I never wanted to sell it so I kept it. They are these people that are forced to leave their land. I was wandering around the world with this work. My later work is influenced by meditation. In 1978 I started abstract work, though I exhibited it much later in 1990.

This is the work I will send for the exhibition of the Anniversary of 50 years of the Republic of Cyprus. It's one of the works made after 1974, called *Loss*. As soon as I made it I never touched it again. It is an unfinished work, made with oil on plywood; I did not want to work on it any more. Many of my works have been transported around the world. I use the earth colours of Cyprus but also vivid colours from Latin America.

**Interview with artist Pauline Phedonos (b.1934)**

Interview took place at Pauline Phedonos' house on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2010, 3pm.

**Maria Photiou:** *You came to Cyprus in 1959.*

**Pauline Phedonos:** Yes, that's right. When I came I was very very young, with two babies. I was still a student while I was pregnant with my first one. I met George [her husband] while we were both still students and then took my fifth year – the final year of the Diploma of Teaching which is equivalent to a Master Degree now. At the time there weren't any Degrees of Fine Art, it was a diploma in Design specialising in a, b, c or whatever. There was the Art Teaching Diploma, which a lot of people didn't take; I took it at Sheffield University. I must say it was difficult, because I was quite pregnant at the time. I had Paul [her son] and then I obtained a scholarship to the School of Engraving at the Royal College of Art. But four months after Paul was born I was expecting a second baby, so I never did get there. I had my second baby and when he was six months old we came to Cyprus. So Paul was 18 months old and Jacob was six months old. So it was quite difficult.

While we were still in England George said to me to take all my material with me [brushes, plates, etc], saying that I would not find any of these things in Cyprus. I told him we had enough stuff to take anyway. I did not know what kind of place Cyprus was but I was quite sure we would find everything here, so I did not bring much stuff with me. The hardest thing was trying to find canvas to paint on. What we were using was sort of raft cotton – which we were stretching ourselves, of course, and then painting to make it flat. Later on, we discovered that the linen they were using for Lefkaritiko was the best because they were selling it in large quantities and we were saving money. In a way it was working quite cheaply at that time. It is not so cheap any longer.

But I did not realise that it was going to be such a problem. No one paints, no this, no that: nothing was imported. I mean, stretchers had to be made, you had to show how to make stretchers, and my husband – who is an architect – had to do drawings so the carpenter could do it. Then I came across John Corbridge who studied with me: I did not know he had married a Cypriot girl. I came across him in 1961 when he had his first exhibition in what was then the Museum. There was no gallery at the time, it was just the museum. I said it can't be two John Corbridge, it must be the one I knew. He was living in Limassol with his first wife, who was very rich and related to the Kakoyiannis family: he was getting all his stretchers made by a carpenter who was quite expensive but did it well. John had stretchers made for me there by his carpenter, some of which were really big ones. But it was quite a problem. I really think I might have not stayed in Cyprus if I had not got that job at the English School. I was living in Larnaca with my in-laws and my mother-in-law was ver,y very unkind to me. She is French and was very very nasty: she used to beat me and all sort of things like that; terrible. Anyway, I used to take the babies for a walk every afternoon and there was an English couple living further up the road. One day I looked at their *Cyprus Mail* newspaper and I saw this advert for the English School. So I sent a letter in response to the advert and I heard nothing for six months. I thought it probably never got there and I was just about to forget about it when I got a letter calling me for an interview. That was my first time in Nicosia, it was August the 12<sup>th</sup> I think, and it was boiling hot. I thought I was going to die of heat because it was terrible. That's how I came to have that job at the English School. That saved me leaving, I think. I really think I would have left. My mother-in-law was so awful to me and I was losing weight, getting skinnier and skinnier. The only reason I knew I didn't want to leave was that I knew they wouldn't let me take the babies with me. They would have stopped me. Let's don't forget that at that time it was very odd for someone to divorce. Now, it is very odd for someone not to divorce.

When I got the job at the school it was wonderful. Ok it was hard work at first because I had no car, I was living quite a long way from the school, I had to leave

at 7 in the morning and it was very tiring. The maid would come before 7.30. I was teaching 31 hours: it was a lot of work because I was teaching English as well. Eventually the maid would leave at around 2 o'clock and then I was sort of left with the children for the rest of the day. I must say it was very, very tiring. I didn't have a car at the time and I didn't know how to drive. But I think when you are young you can do all sorts of things. I used to sing at night while I was washing the plates and people used to record me along the road and say this is you singing, Polly, and ask why I was singing. I used to sing because my mother used to sing: we always used to sing around the house. Quite artistic in a way, all of us. My father was quite artistic: he was an Irishman. My mother played the piano and it was always been in my background – something artistic. I write poetry.

The English School was a really big part of my life, which is one of the reasons I never did much painting until I finally I decided to resign in 1982. I thought I have got to paint; I just cannot carry on teaching with no time to paint. So I said to the headmaster that I had to resign and he said 'what have we done?' I said 'you work me too hard'. I was teaching a class of 72 children, after they cut down one teacher: they chucked Mr Hugh out for not having the same qualifications as me. They said 'you could go back to England if you wanted to' [referring to G. Hugh]. So, I was left at the school on my own, doing double work at the time. I said I just can't stay any longer and teach classes. That's why I left and organised my first exhibition in 1983.

**MP:** *You did not practice art at all during your teaching years?*

**PP:** I did one or two works [similar of Diamantis work]. I did around six paintings in all that time.

**MP:** *Was it due to the lack of time?*

**PP:** I wanted very much to paint, and in fact I did two large abstracts which were sold a long time ago while I was teaching. I just didn't have the time to do it. That was the problem. When you have your mind all on the children and the house, or

you have to buy the shopping. This is one of the reasons why women have not produced so much in Cyprus. I mean, Rhea Bailey left Bailey; the only way she could cope was to leave Bailey and she left him and did not give a damn about it, staying with him. I used to teach her private lessons before she went to study in England. A lot of people, like Lia Lapithi, she couldn't cope with the first marriage at all. I think it's very difficult when you are doing all these other things to produce. You need energy. You need mental and physical energy to create. If you don't have it you can't create. That's the problem. Men do it. Men don't bother at all about anything. We have to put up with all these things in Cyprus. Being in the UK I would be creating more, yes. I should have been here because I wanted to be. The sunshine and all these things inspired me. But I couldn't because I didn't have the time.

**MP:** *It is essential for women artists in Cyprus to have their family's support.*

**PP:** The family supports you up to a point. They say they support you but then they say what are we having for dinner? And have you thought what are we having at the weekend? And shall we go to the village to the Mukta? And you say 'no, I want to paint', and then [the family says 'What? We have to go there; we can't let Mukta down' and this sort of thing. There is a problem with families for women, there is no doubt about it; a big problem. I think that's the reason why so many women haven't got married or haven't stayed married. We always have been that way. George himself is an architect, a quite sensitive chap – you would think since he is not as French and he is not as strict as Cypriot, you would think he would be easier to manipulate. He is not that easy. His father was a very stubborn doctor in Larnaca and was detained by the British for five years in Pyla. It was a very difficult situation to begin with. George never had a chance to do what he wanted to do: he wanted to be a doctor but his father told him 'no, don't be a doctor, be an architect'. My son wanted to be a veterinary surgeon because he loves animals but my husband said 'no, be an architect'. They are trying to interfere all the time, unfortunately, Cypriot men. I hate to say this because I am running them down. I

am not running them down: they do interfere a lot. I am sure if I would have been in England I would have been out building myself a studio. I built the house in Pafos myself: I didn't show it to my husband until I had finished it, even though he is an architect. Otherwise it would have been 'no, we do not need three bathrooms; no, we do not need this or that'. I did it because I wanted to have a space somewhere that was mine. I have got a bedroom here which I could work in it except it's for my youngest son, Jack, who is in Kenya. The only thing was to build a place where I could feel that it was mine, and I never let him use that room. Before that I used to rent old houses, but you can't do that now due to the high rents.

But the village is a nice village. Again, we have a problem because my husband is saying 'have you been next door to see Mrs Maria?' I know Mrs Maria, she is fond of me and I am fond of her, but I can't keep running backwards and forwards just to say hello because she can't talk properly now. I don't understand what she is saying and I know it sounds cruel, but this is another way to interfere, you see. My husband is very interfering. And yet, you wouldn't expect him to be like that because he seems so easygoing when you meet him.

**MP:** *How was the Cypriot art scene at that time?*

**PP:** At that time, we were exhibiting with EKATE. I think we were only 16 of us at first. I was not on the committee or anything of that sort. I was very young and busy, just every now and then putting in a painting if I had one. Sometimes I had one in every three years running or something like that. But it was going slowly, slowly, and Diamantis was a good friend and was a great craftsman. Also, of course I had John Corbridge around, who I studied with, and who was a wonderful artist too.

The art scene in Cyprus involved quite a bit of copying someone else's work. I remember in one of my exhibitions somebody coming and photographing all the work and remember seeing around three years later a work very similar to that

particular exhibition work, with the same idea of nudes becoming rocks in the water. This other person was doing something similar. I think there is a lot of this copying work going on. If you think of someone who is creative, an innovator, like Kouroussis, there is Lia Lapithi. She is an innovator. She tries. But then of course Lia Lapithi has money behind her, she's got Shoukouroglou [her second husband]. Other artists maybe don't have that chance to do it and at her age she has got that chance. But at least she is taking the chance and she is taking the opportunity.

My main interest has always been the human figure. I think one of the biggest problems now in training an artist is that they are not taught anatomy. In my opinion, unless you learn to look at something from the inside out you can never really abstract it.

**MP:** *At the time did you face any discrimination due to being not just a woman artist, but also British?*

**PP:** Yes. In fact very often I came across it. Still. Not so obviously as in the past, but there is the feeling that you don't have to be included necessarily in decisions; we will make the decisions and will translate them afterwards, and this sort of thing. Although I do speak Greek.

**MP:** *At the time you came were there any other known women artists in Cyprus?*

**PP:** No, I don't think they were any. Not since a woman's work had come to light: I have forgotten her name, she died some time ago.

**MP:** *Are you referring to Loukia Nicolaidou?*

**PP:** Yes, she painted nudes I think. She wasn't sort of the scene at the time, you know what I mean?

[Showing her work]

**MP:** *Are you mainly using your studio at Pafos?*

**PP:** I have managed to get my husband to let me use one of the rooms in his office. He has seven rooms in his office, all full of rubbish. It's a pity that he didn't let me have the room before. I didn't want to rent again and teach privately now: I have had enough of teaching. Though I must say I love teaching. So many things happened at the English School.

**MP:** *If you had stayed in England do you think you would have taught or concentrated on your practice?*

**PP:** I think I would have been teaching because I have the teaching diploma, but I think I would have had much more chances to paint because I would have been in contact with all my ex-student friends. You see, what happened when I came to Cyprus, my mother-in-law, among other things, she took away my address book with all my friends' addresses and telephone numbers and she took away my passport which she threw in a bucket of water. I lost all contact with people I studied with; I couldn't find John Hoyland for years. Hoyland is one of the top artists in Britain now. He teaches fine art at the Royal Academy School. I lost track of all them because she took away my address book. So had I been in England I think I would have seen all these people and we could have influenced and talked to each other about our work and produced more. It's just a question of being unfortunate in that respect of not being able to contact them. Perhaps if I was able to contact them I would have been better off, I would have been able to discuss things in a letter. We used to write a lot of letters in those days. But I had no contacts at all.

**MP:** *You didn't have this environment in Cyprus?*

**PP:** No. There were mostly men at the English School – women were quite old in comparison to my age, I was twenty, and they were too old to seem friendly. Two things kept me going in Cyprus. One is keeping a sense of humour. That I think really kept me going. If I hadn't had a sense of humour I would have gone down



long ago, but I was also able to laugh at myself. And also interested in people, I love people; that's why I love drawing them.

**MP:** *You decided to teach to earn money or to keep yourself busy with something?*

**PP:** I think up to a point it was a bit of both. I needed to feel that I was teaching art. I had to work because we needed the cash. We had an apartment with just the basics and we needed furniture. My father-in-law wasn't going to help to get something; no one was going to help. It did me good that I was not in the house all the time, so I did have a maid so that I was able to go out and work. I didn't want to not work. Because I think I would have stopped the maid and again that would have meant I had no time to paint. At least when I was teaching I was in the environment of painting with children and everything. It was better for me than staying at home. I was trained to do that as a specialist teacher and we definitely needed the money. When we were living with my in-laws, my mother-in-law wrote down everything I ate – one apple, etc – everything was written down on a list. When we left there was a bill of 270 pounds or something, which was quite a lot for me.

**MP:** *At your first exhibition, was your work sold?*

**PP:** Yes. There was a lot of reporting in the *Sunday Mail*, *Cyprus Weekly*, etc. It was very successful because everyone was waiting. Everybody knew me and was waiting to see what I had in my first exhibition. It was a big exhibition and it combined many materials – oil painting, drawings; there was a variety of work. I did sell quite a lot in that.

One of the things that was very exciting in Cyprus when I first came was after the 1963 problems, when the United Nation forces came. We got invited to attend all embassy parties as they told us a lot of Cypriot people didn't know how to behave with the diplomats. We didn't really know anything about diplomacy but we were diplomatic; they knew they could trust us. That was a great time for us in Cyprus because I got to know lots of people, and so many people got to know me and the

fact that I was a teacher. In those days if you were a teacher you were somebody, since the English School was the only foreign school at the time. Because I was working there I was considered to be one of the best or better people.

**MP:** *You use quite vivid colours. Is this due to the sun in Cyprus?*

**PP:** Yes, I think so. The first thing I noticed when I came to Cyprus was the sun and the strong shadows, because we hardly ever saw shadows. In fact Huge Glyn once said that my shadows were painted with colour rather than with a dark shade of the original colour. When I studied in Sheffield it still hadn't had a smoke ban and the whole place was dark: it was like night time; it was terrible. I came to Cyprus and I saw the blue sea and the blue sky. I have never been abroad before, or anywhere like Cyprus. Everyone was getting over the Second World War in England and people had an awful time.

**MP:** *Were you influenced by the invasion?*

**PP:** Yes, I painted two works which are now in a house in Mosfiloti. Perhaps it represents people who were leaving on that side of the wall. You see artists who lived in Famagusta at the time went fluid after a point, the experience of it.

**MP:** *The two works have female figures?*

**PP:** Yes, both of them; two women on a red background. I must have a photograph somewhere in Pafos which I will post to you.

[Note: After the interview, Pauline said she 'was probably the first artist in Cyprus to use strong colour ... my first show created a stir because of these colours'].

### **Communication with artist Marianna Christofides (b.1980)**

**Maria Photiou:** *Why did you choose to study in three different locations (Halle, Athens, London, Cologne)? What did each institution offer? What did you find useful in your education/development as an artist and what was not?*

**Marianna Christofides:** Three countries, four very different educational systems that functioned complementary to each other and, I would say, had a positive impact on the development of my work altogether. Encounters, exchange, access to knowledge and technical facilities, experimentation and discipline were factors that shaped my visual language throughout my studies.

**MP:** *What did you do after your graduation? Many artists had to deliver art lessons in order to survive. Was this the case for you? Did you manage to 'survive' just from your work or did you have to work elsewhere to make a living? If you were working, did you manage to carry on your practice at the same time? Have you considered art education as a profession or do you prefer just to practice?*

**MC:** Perhaps it sounds a bit strange, but I was studying for 12 years and I had the luck to be able to finance this time through scholarships and prizes – nonetheless, my family were a great support, especially in the first years. I graduated one and a half years ago and I'm very happy to have received a further project grant for 2012. After that I really don't know what will happen: I keep applying and hope for a positive reply – nothing is sure, competition is high. So I cannot speak of any financial security for the future. Art education is not an easy thing, I believe: neither can it be a way to cover one's living, being at the same time able to keep up with one's art practice.

**MP:** *Why did you choose to be based in Cologne? Was a personal reason (partner, family) involved or was it for professional reasons? Why not Cyprus or somewhere else?*

**MC:** I actually moved to Cologne for a postgraduate degree and then stayed here. I was abroad anyway in the past years because of my studies, so I thought it was worth a try to stay here.

**MP:** *How do you survive now? (for example, by selling your work? Funding?) Do you think it's easier to live in Cologne rather than Cyprus?*

**MC:** Currently I live on grants and funding. This isn't, however, an everlasting way to survive. I guess you should ask me if art is a viable career in five years' time: at the moment I'm not very sure that it is.

**MP:** *Do you have a studio? Is it easier to have a studio in Cologne rather than somewhere else? Why?*

**MC:** I'll have to confess that at the moment I don't really have a studio of my own. I've received a studio grant from the Kölnischer Kunstverein, which will take effect in the coming April, so for the time being I'm working in a small studio of a friend who's currently in Brussels.

**MP:** *From your exhibitions, was the Venice Biennale the one that had introduced you to the international audience? How did you feel when your work was chosen?*

**MC:** The Venice Biennale was surely the biggest venue I've shown my work at to date.

**MP:** *What you were doing before the Venice Biennale?*

**MC:** I was working and exhibiting my work mainly in Germany and Cyprus, and took part in various international film festivals. I had spent over a year shooting and editing my film *dies solis* and since 2009 I've been also collaborating with Alexandra Waierstall in the development of the visual concept of her dance performances.

**MP:** *How was your career after Venice Biennale? Do you have more opportunities to exhibit/get funding? How do galleries approach you?*

**MC:** One shouldn't believe that the Biennale has an absolute boosting effect in an artist's career: things don't change from one day to the next, at least not for me at the moment. There have been of course some challenging invitations for participation in group shows for the next year and most importantly, many visitors had the chance to see my work in this context.

**MP:** *If you get proposals to exhibit, do you visit the location in advance to see the space? Do you have ideas or you develop them after you see the space?*

**MC:** It depends – sometimes I do site specific works: that is develop a work for a specific space. Other times I exhibit an existing work, in which case I try to visit the exhibition space in advance to get a feel of how a work would function best in the given space.

**MP:** *Do you think there are opportunities for artists in Cyprus in relation to their practice and collaboration with galleries? Also in relation to production, financial projects, distribution?*

**MC:** I believe that an artist can be based in Cyprus and still have many, if not equal, opportunities to exhibit abroad or finance projects. If, however, one depends solely on what is offered in respect to production and distribution in Cyprus, this can become quite restrictive.

**MP:** *Do you think galleries in Cyprus work professionally?*

**MC:** There are some, but very few.

**MP:** *What things can Cyprus provide? What can't you find in Cyprus?*

**MC:** Cyprus can provide lots of things. In many aspects it's less bureaucratic and sources can be more easily accessible: what I'm often missing, though, is a professional approach to production standards, technical assistance and know-how and technology. Art practice is not taken that seriously and one has to compromise constantly.

**MP:** *Are you in contact with artists from your generation? Is there a supportive network in Cyprus?*

**MC:** Unfortunately I don't have so much contact with artists from Cyprus, mainly because I have lived abroad for many years.

**MP:** *Do you have influences in your work from Cyprus? Please give examples. Also, when did you start making films?*

**MC:** As a matter of fact, the School where I completed my postgraduate degree in Cologne is basically a film school, so it is there that I began to make my first films. I had also been working with video during my studies in Athens and London.

**MP:** *How do you work on your films? What media (camera) do you use?*

**MC:** When I was doing the film *dies solis*, I could only work on that piece, as I was filming, editing and planning the next shooting pretty much simultaneously over a year. As for other installations, I mostly develop them parallel with each other – I think that each project benefits from this 'cross-fertilisation'.

Regarding filming, I don't usually work in a big team: I mostly shoot, record sound and edit the footage myself, most of the time using an HD-camera. I tend to spend a lot of time editing both image and sound, and I often use text and voice in the off.

**MP:** *Has any of your work direct reference to Cyprus?*

**MC:** Actually, quite a few – certainly the works you mention later on, but also *dies solis*, *Blank Mappings*, *Mapping Landscapes Anew* and *Pathways in the dust*. Cyprus plays a central role in many of my works in different ways – its geology and landscape, its colonial past and socio-political condition, the island's visual representation over the course of time; all these aspects intertwine, blend and are addressed in the aforementioned works.

**MP:** *What material/sources do you use in your videos? Do you think your work is politicised by Cyprus' political condition? Please give examples.*

**MC:** I tend to take as a starting point for my research diffused traces on physical objects, such as maps, old postcards and magic lantern glass slides, to reveal references and analogies with biographical, cultural and historical trajectories.

Considering the map itself as a boundary layer, it conceals and reveals at the same time all the stratifications and folds that make up time. Thus it comes to be an imprint of innumerable thresholds and passages, a condition which incites constantly new, open-ended and not predetermined journeys across its surface. Similarly to these multiple and interwoven functions of a map, each work entails the potential to generate questions about political and social situations.

**MP:** *Are there any particular artists/filmmakers you are looking at or whose work has influenced you?*

**MC:** There're a lot of artists and filmmakers whose work I respect and admire. Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, Robert Bresson, Chantal Akermann, Straub-Huillet, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, to mention a few, are to me very inspiring filmmakers.

**MP:** *Please explain your works *Panorama d'Athenes*, *Approaching the Line* and *Along the G-Line*. What did you want to show?*

**MC:** I primarily work with found images and documents. *For the work *Panorama d'Athènes** it was a nineteenth-century French engraving depicting the panorama view of Athens from the Lycabettus hill which led me to the site last September. There I was confronted with the usual swarm of tourists from around the world scanning the cityscape beneath them in search of the sites of interest mentioned in their guide books. Little notice was given to the barely perceivable echo of the demonstrations in the centre of Athens. An over f50-years-old marble plate with engraved pictographs of the most representative edifices of the time served as a point of reference to identify them from above. On closer view of the plate I realised that most of the inscriptions had been wiped out by time and weathering: the marble, though, was constantly carved anew by people leaving a trace of their presence. Dates, names and places obtained thereby the same validity as the sites themselves. A graphite frottage was made in situ whilst recording at the same

time the surrounding soundscape – an intermingling of languages, worlds, intentions and perceptions.

In *Approaching the Line* I mounted a green transparent film on a plexiglass sheet and adjusted it in front of a window pane. The external 'filtered' environment seems to be seen through a coloured magic lantern slide and the tempo of movement appears to be slowed down. A bookshelf blocks the window and on it stands – almost out of reach – a series of obsolete guide books on Cyprus which date back to the time before the divide. These are mainly tourist guides published before 1974. A postcard has been dissected along the pictured bank, the two parts moved upwards and downwards respectively and mounted separately on cardboard, giving the impression that mainland and water are drifting apart – in effect extending the thin line of a bankside and transforming it into a liminal zone. I think that places have their constitution date – the time of their formation, the period of their effect and impact, but also their due date, when their function has quasi lapsed. Witnessing abrupt fissures and shifts alongside smooth transitions in the function of the components of an urban environment is essential to my approach of activating time intervals between historical junctures. How can one read documents which have actually lost their original meaning and resonance, but generate however new spatial relations and correspondences?

Processes like observing, collecting, classifying and recording underlie my work. In such collections I seek to liberate the images and documents from their initial and pragmatic context and in doing so allow them to generate expanded narratives that oscillate between fact and fiction. By relocating imagery from the past in a present-day context I would like to redefine the temporal element associated with specific artefacts and at the same time undermine the legitimacy of documentary material as an unmediated record of reality.

In the video *Along the G-Line* a seven-year-old boy is turning cartwheels along the UN-Buffer zone dividing Nicosia. The movement of the body through the successive images marks points on a line parallel to that of the border – both being



illusionary mental structures, yet leaving tangible traces in space and time. Through this odd juxtaposition the jumping boy turns into a kind of scale measuring space in another manner. At the same time he transforms a place solidified in its historicity into an active present-day space. The otherwise given continuity in the perception and experience of an urban space is constantly being interrupted in Nicosia; through the fast and seamless editing mode that I chose for this work I wanted to give the impression of a never-ending, continuous movement of the boy along the divide, a situation that cannot take place as shown, despite its realistic nature and its documentary approach.

## Appendix II: Artists' Biographies

- **Loukia Nicolaidou – Vassiliou (b.1909-1993)**

Born in Limassol, Cyprus. She was among the first Cypriots to study art – Paris, at Colarossi Academy (1929) and the Higher National Fine Arts School (1930-1933), at Lucien Simon's Atelier. In 1933, returned to Cyprus, embarking on a period of rich artistic creativity. She was one of the first artists to organise solo exhibition in Cyprus. In 1937, emigrated to United Kingdom, where she got married and stayed until her death.

Presented her work in three one-woman exhibitions (1934, Nicosia – Papadopoulos Hall; 1935, Limassol – Enosis Club; 1936, Limassol – Gallery No 217) and in some group exhibitions (1932, Paris – Salon d' Automne; 1937, Nicosia – *Pancypria Art Exhibition*; 1939, London – Leger Galleries). In 1992 the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus organised a retrospective exhibition of her work at the State Gallery of Contemporary Cypriot Art.

Her work can be found in Cyprus (State Gallery of Contemporary Cypriot Art, Municipal Gallery of Limassol, and Popular Bank Cultural Centre) and in private collections in Cyprus and United Kingdom.

- **Eleni Chariclidou (b.1929-1978)**

Born in Limassol, Cyprus. Studied painting at the Higher School of Fine Arts in Athens (1946-1951). From 1955 onwards taught art in secondary schools. In 1970, received a scholarship from the British Council for postgraduate studies in art teaching at Bretton Hall of Wakefield in England.

She showed her work in group exhibitions, Cyprus and abroad.

- **Rhea Bailey (b. 1946)**

Born in Nicosia, Cyprus. Studied fine arts in United Kingdom, at Sir John Cass School of Art, London (1964-1965) and at Liverpool College of Art (1963-1969). Taught art in secondary schools in Cyprus (1970-1977). Later, she was assigned to the P.I.O. (Press and Information Office) (1977-1981) and to the State Gallery (1981- 1985).

From 1971 onwards has shown her work in various solo exhibitions (Cyprus, Liverpool, New York, Boston, Athens and Madrid) and in group exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad). She participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Alexandria (1974) and the Paris' Young Artists' Biennale (1980).

Her work can be found in Cyprus, Greece, Jordan, France, Bulgaria, Tunisia and private collections (Cyprus, Greece, England, France, Sweden, U.S.A., Holland, Canada, Ireland, Switzerland and Japan.

Now lives and works in Nicosia, Cyprus.

- **Maria Tourou (b. 1943)**

Born in Famagusta, Cyprus. Studied fine arts in London, at Hammersmith School of Art (1960-1966), painting in Italy, at the Positano Art Workshop (1962-1963) and doing lithography in U.S.A., at the Corcoran School of Art, Washington D.C. From 1963-1970 lived in various European countries, until 1970 when she returned to Cyprus and taught in secondary schools. From 1974-1978 settled in Colombia, South America and from 1978-1988 lived and worked in various cities in America.

From 1966 onwards has shown her work in various solo exhibitions (Cyprus, California, Colombia, Washington D.C.) and has participated in group exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad).

Her work can be found in Cyprus, Europe, South and North America and private collections, such as Sir Francis Crick, L. Hansen and M. Snyolen.

Now lives and works at Lefkara village, Cyprus.

- **Stella Michaelidou (b. 1941)**

Born in Limassol, Cyprus. Studied stage design, theatre costume, graphic arts, painting and sculpture in Athens, at the Technological Institute and painting in Paris, at the Ecole Estiennes. After her return in Cyprus, taught in schools.

From 1962 onwards has shown her work in various solo exhibitions (Cyprus, Greece, U.S.A.) and has participated in group exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad).

Her work can be found in the Municipal Gallery of Limassol and the artist's collection.

- **Daphne Trimikliniotti (b. 1945)**

Born in Limassol, Cyprus. In 1959, emigrated to England, where she lived for 35 years. Studied art at London, at the Hornsey College of Art. In 1996, she returned to Cyprus.

From 1980 onwards has shown her work in various solo exhibitions (Cyprus, Greece and London) and has participated in group exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad).

- **Elli Mitzi (1930-1997)**

Born in Larnaca, Cyprus. Studied painting and print making in Vienna, at the Academy of Fine Arts. From 1960 onwards has taught in schools in Cyprus.

Has shown her work in 5 solo exhibitions (Cyprus, Athens, Paris and London) and has participated in various group exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad).

- **Katy Stephanides (b.1925-2012)**

Born in Limassol, Cyprus. Studied painting in Athens, at the Higher School of Fine Arts and in United Kingdom, at the St. Martin's School of Arts.

From 1972 onwards showed her work in various solo exhibitions in Cyprus and participated in group exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad).

Her work can be found in Cyprus (State Gallery of Contemporary Cypriot Art), Greece and in private collections in Cyprus, Greece and London.

- **Nina Iacovou (b. 1933)**

Born in Famagusta, Cyprus. Studied ceramics in Athens (1953-1954 and 1967). In 1974 was forced to immigrated to Larnaca. Has shown her work in various exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad). In 2005, the Municipal Gallery of Larnaca organised a retrospective exhibition of her work.

- **Maria Loizidou (b. 1958)**

Born in Limassol, Cyprus. Studied plastic arts in France, at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts de Lyon (1976-1981).

From 1984 onwards, has shown her work in various solo exhibitions (Cyprus, Greece and Paris) and has participated in group exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad). She has participated in various worldwide Biennales. In 1986, she represented Cyprus at the International Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Venice.

Her work can be found in various collections in Cyprus and abroad.

Now lives and works in Nicosia, Cyprus.

- **Klitsa Antontiou (b. 1968)**

Born in Nicosia, Cyprus. Studied for a foundation course at the Wimbledon School of Art (1987-1988), studied fine arts at the Central St. Martin's School of Art and Design (1988-1991) and at the Pratt Institute, New York (1991-1993).

From 1993 onwards, has shown her work in various solo exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad) and since 2007 had participated in various group exhibitions.

Has won various scholarships and awards.

Now lives and works in Nicosia, Cyprus.

- **Lia Lapithi (b. 1963)**

Born in Nicosia, Cyprus. Studied art and environmental studies/design in California, at the University of California, Santa Cruz (1979-1983), art at the University of Lancaster (1984), architecture at the Kent Institute of Art and Design – Canterbury School of Architecture (1989-1991) and education at the University of Wales (1994).

From 1983 onwards, has shown her work in various solo exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad) and has participated in group exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad).

Her work can be found in various collections in Cyprus and abroad (Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria and Museum Centre Pompidou, Paris, France).

Now lives and works in Nicosia, Cyprus.

- **Marianna Christofides (b. 1980)**

Born in Nicosia, Cyprus. Studied visual arts at Burg, Giebichenstein University of Art and Design, Halle (1998-1999) and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Athens (2000-2006). She studied media arts at Slade School of Fine Arts in London (2005) and in Academy of Media Arts in Cologne (2007-2010).

From 2005 onwards, has shown her work in various group exhibitions (Cyprus and abroad) and since 2010 has shown in solo exhibitions. In 2011, she represented Cyprus at the 54<sup>th</sup> International Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Venice (a two-person show). Since 2005 has won various scholarships and residencies.

Now lives and works in Cologne, Germany.

- **Haris Epaminonda (b. 1980)**

Born in Nicosia, Cyprus. Studied at Chelsea College of Art and Design, London (1997-1998), at Kingston University, London (1998-2001) and at Royal College of Art, London (2001-2203). From 2003 onwards, showed her work in various group exhibitions and since 2007 have exhibited in solo exhibitions. In 2007, she represented Cyprus at the 52<sup>nd</sup> International Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Venice (a two-person show). Since 2001 has won various awards and residencies.

Now lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

- ***Washing-Up Ladies***

A collaboration between artists Lia Lapithi and Marianna Kafaridou. From 2006 onwards Washing-Up Ladies has shown their work in exhibitions and festivals.

The group lives and works in Nicosia, Cyprus.

## Illustrations

### Chapter 1

Image Copyright

Fig. 1 Loukia Nicolaidou, *Lucien Simon's Atelier* (c. 1930-33)

Image Copyright

Fig. 2 Loukia Nicolaidou, *Milliners* (c. 1930-33)

Image copyright

Fig. 3 Loukia Nicolaidou, *Young Norman Girl* (1932)

Image copyright

Fig. 4 Loukia Nicolaidou, *Cypriot Girl* (c. 1933-37)



Image copyright

Image copyright

Fig. 5 Glady Peto, *St' Andrews Street*  
(1926)

Fig. 7 Glady Peto, *The Hours After  
Dinner* (1926)

Image copyright

Fig. 6 Glady Peto, *A Curious Habit* (1926)

Image copyright

Fig. 8 Keith Henderson, *Peristerona* (c. 1928)

Image copyright

Fig. 9 William Hawkins, *Fire* (1878)

Image copyright

Fig. 10 Loukia Nicolaidou, *Gazing* (c. 1933-37)

Image copyright

Fig. 11 Loukia Nicolaidou, *Girls at the Seaside* (c. 1933-36)

Image copyright

Fig. 12 Loukia Nicolaidou, *At the Fields* (c.1933)

Image copyright

Fig. 13 Loukia Nicolaidou, *Ecstasy* (1933)

Image copyright

Fig. 14 Loukia Nicolaidou, *The Good Fruits of Earth* (c. 1933-36)

## Chapter 2

Image copyright

Fig. 15 Loukia Nicolaidou, *Enosis* (c.1956)

Image copyright

Fig. 16 Mohammed Naghi Bay, *Enosis* (1955)

Image copyright

Fig. 17 Takis Frangoudis, *Student Demonstration During the Liberation Struggle*  
(1956)

Image copyright

Fig. 18 Christoforos Savva, *The Demonstration* (1955)

Image copyright

Fig. 19 Lenia Saveriadou, *British Lion and EOKA* (c. 1955-59)

Image copyright

Fig. 20 George Paul Georgiou, *Cypria Saga* (1956)



Image copyright

Fig. 21 George Paul Georgiou, *For Ever* (1957)

Image copyright

Fig. 22 George Paul Georgiou, *Imprisoned Graves* (1958)

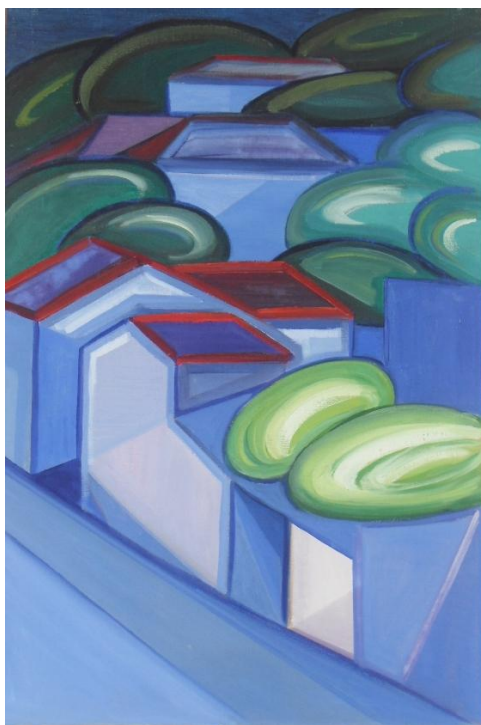


Fig. 23 Eleni Chariclidou, *Pallouriotisa* (c. 1959)



Fig. 24 Eleni Chariclidou, *Composition of Houses* (c. 1958)



Fig. 25 Eleni Chariclidou, *Houses*

Image copyright

Fig. 26 Adamantios Diamantis, *Curfew Nicosia* (1958)

Image copyright

Fig. 27 Kyriacos Koullis, *The Doorway* (c. 1994)

### Chapter 3

Image copyright

Fig. 28 Adamantios Diamantis, *The World of Cyprus* (1967-72)



Fig. 29 Rhea Bailey, *Fusion of Time* (1974)



Fig. 30 Rhea Bailey, *Memories of the Yard* (1979)

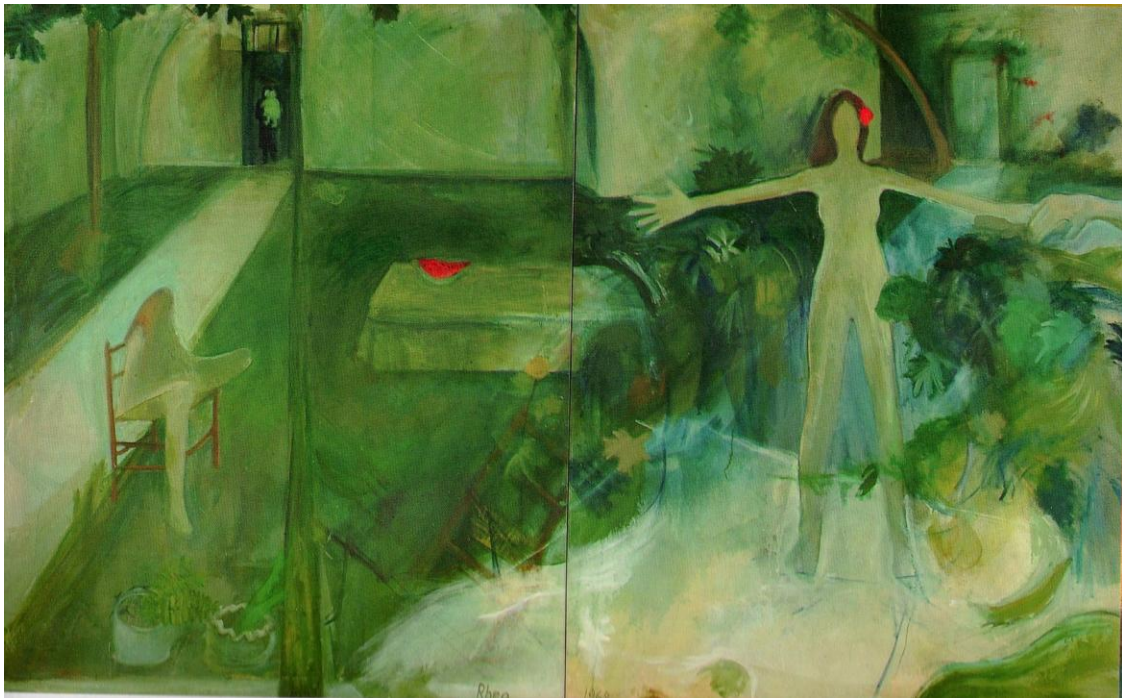


Fig. 31 Rhea Bailey, *Diptych of Life with Watermelon* (1969)



Fig. 32 Maria Tourou, *Eros*

Image copyright

Fig. 33 Stella Michaelidou, *The Rubbish Bin* (1973)

Image copyright

Fig. 34 Stella Michaelidou, *The Sixth Floor* (1974)

#### Chapter 4



Fig. 35 Rhea Bailey, *Who Are We, Where Do We Come From, Where Are We Going To* (1974)

Image copyright

Fig. 36 Daphni Trimikliniotti, *Lament for Tylleria* (1964)



Fig. 37 Rhea Bailey, *Karmi July* (1974)



Image copyright

Fig. 38 Daphni Trimiklinioti, *Cry* (1974)

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Fig. 39 Spyros Dimitriadis, *Rambo* (1988)

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Fig. 40 Adamantios Diamantis, *Woman With Stretched-Out Arms* (1983/84)

Image copyright

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Fig. 41 Elli Mitzi, *Cypriot Refugees Visualising the Dream of Freedom* (1977)

Fig. 42 Elli Mitzi, *Cypriot Mother and her Orphans* (1975)

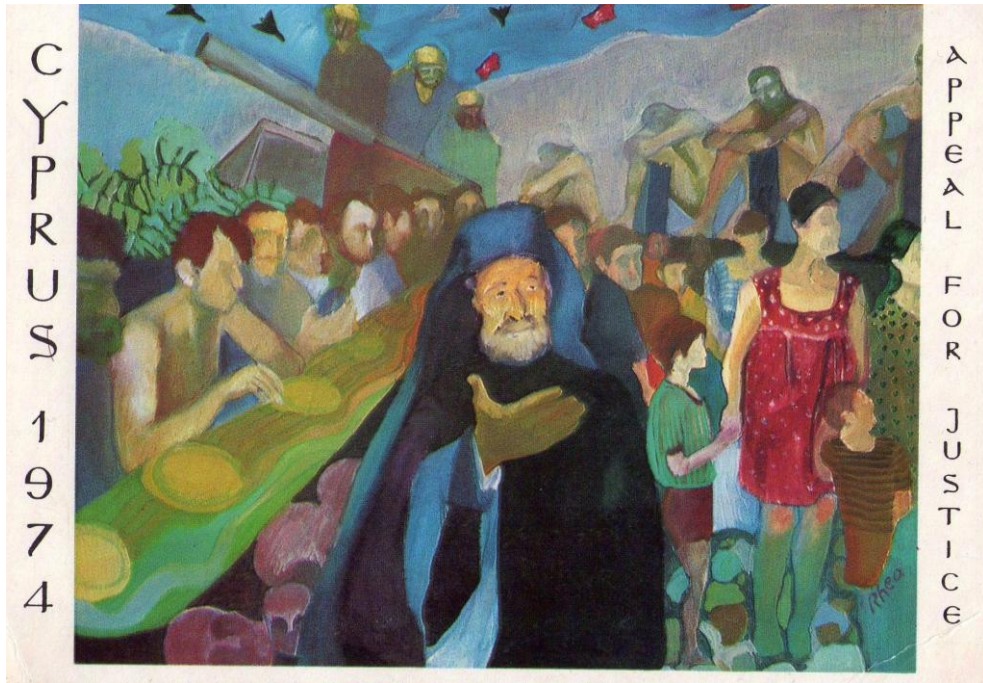


Fig. 43 Rhea Bailey, *Cyprus 1974 – Appeal For Justice* (1974)



Fig. 44 Rhea Bailey, *Future Demonstrations*

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Fig. 45 Stella Michaelidou, *Missing Person* (c.1976)

Image copyright

Fig. 46 Stella Michaelidou, *Capture*



Fig. 47 Katy Stephanides, *Heads in Closed Space* (1983)



Fig. 48 Katy Stephanides, *Composition I* (1984)



Fig. 49 Maria Tourou, *Loss* (1974)



Fig. 50 Nina Iacovou, *Crying Koukkoumares* (2004)



Fig. 51 N. Iacovou, *The Scream*



Fig. 52 Nina Iacovou, *Relatives of the Missing Persons* (1999)



Fig. 53 Nina Iacovou, *Keys of our Houses*



Fig. 54 Nina Iacovou, *Interrupted March/Looking at Famagusta (2000)*



## Chapter 5

Image copyright

Fig. 55 Maria Loizidou, *Passage of Time* (2000)

Image copyright

Fig. 56 Maria Loizidou, *Monument to the Dead* (2000)

Image copyright

Fig. 57 Maria Loizidou, *A Mountain Where I Hide My Dreams in a Tent* (2000)

Image copyright

Fig. 58 Maria Loizidou, *The Pillows of my Nightmare or the Bloody Years of the History of a War* (2000)

Image copyright

Fig. 59 Maria Loizidou, *Measure of Blows, Costume for All* (2000)



Fig. 60 Klitsa Antoniou, *A Wall of Roses* (2002)



Fig. 61 Lia Lapithi, *Grade IV* (2007)

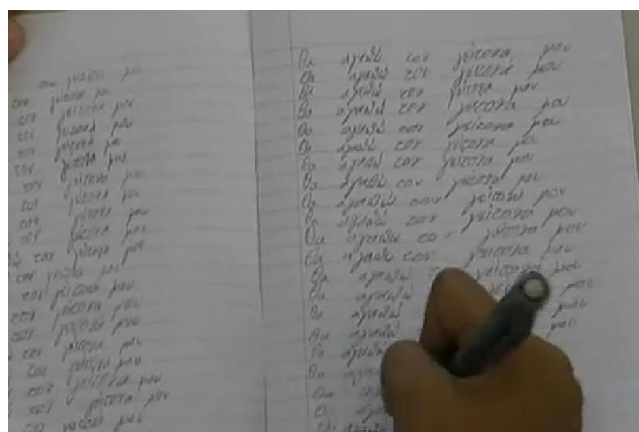


Fig. 62 Lia Lapithi, *Grade IV* (2007)

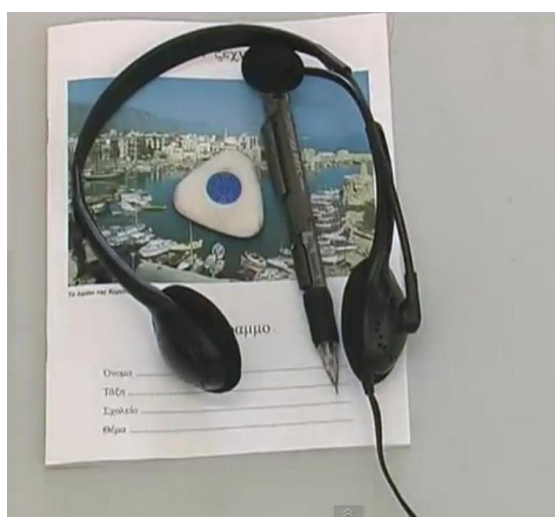


Fig. 63 Lia Lapithi, *Grade IV* (2007)



Fig. 64 Lia Lapithi, *Electricity* (2006)



Fig. 65 Lia Lapithi, *Electricity* (2006)



Fig. 66 Lia Lapithi, *Electricity* (2006)



Fig. 67 Marianna Christofides, *Blank Mappings* (2010-11)

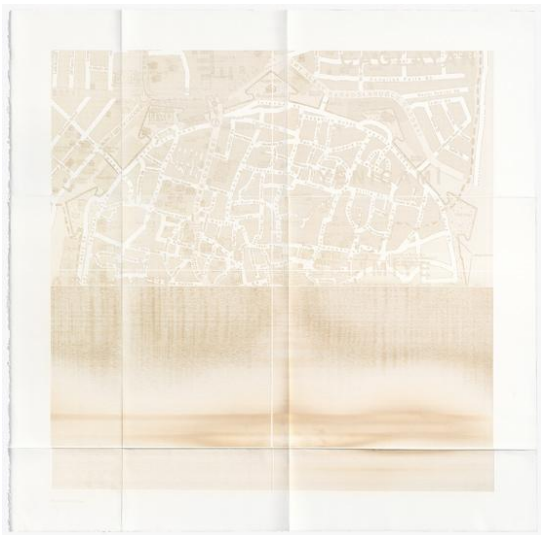


Fig. 68 Marianna Christofides,  
*Blank Mappings* (2010-11)



Fig. 69 Marianna Christofides,  
*Blank Mappings* (2010/11)



Fig. 70 Marianna Christofides, *Blank Mappings* (2010/11)



Fig. 71 Marianna Christofides, *Approaching the Line* (2011)



Fig. 72 Washing-Up Ladies, *Hurting the Washing Machine* (2006)

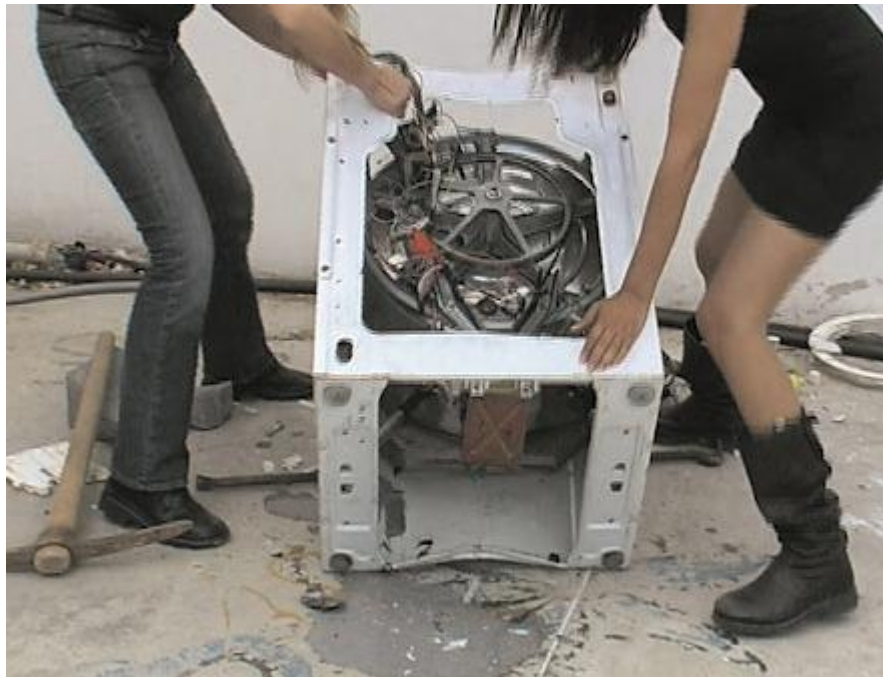


Fig. 73 Washing-Up Ladies, *Hurting the Washing Machine* (2006)



### 4

**Washing-Up Ladies**

The dots of public products depend on the item content and their structure used.

Colours...too many bright colours together are vulgar.

Dark colours. Use black as if its a colour.

**Caucasian/Black/Asian...**

Black shades. Pink and fluffy, dark and gloomy.

Become an artificial blond, show your dark roots.

For eventual removals or when the machine is left standing for long periods in unheated rooms, the drain hose should be emptied of all remaining water. (Not necessary for the mediterranean countries).

### 5

#### SPECIAL TREATMENT

**How to remove stains**

This product is created with a special treatment that gives each garment its specific, unique look. Therefore, each garment can have variations in colour, shading and/or hand feel which is indicative of this process, but enhances its character with wear. Turn garment inside out and wash separately. Body warmth may also cause the fabric to bleed, therefore it is necessary to use caution with light coloured upholstery and light garments (e.g. underwear).

Focus on **wrinkle resistance** [watch out for the number of lines of each sign].

Feed the washing machine. Say what's in your mind. Superficial. Honesty. Womanhood is wasted. Follow the dots! Become incoherent. Sound intelligent, worn-out. . . . .

For Wash Coldproof  
 30°C/86°F 40°C/104°F 60°C/142°F

Six dots = Four dots = Three dots = Two dots = One dot  
 = Six dots = Four dots = Three dots = Two dots = One dot  
 = One dot = Six dots = Four dots = Three dots = Two dots  
 = One dot = Six dots = Four dots = Three dots = Two dots

Instead of bringing you together...it makes you withdraw.

**Washing is not a solo activity**

Washing is not a solo activity

Six dots = 95 C/203 F    Five dots = 95 C/203 F  
 Four dots = 75 C/165 F    Four dots = 45 C/113 F  
 Three dots = 45 C/113 F    Three dots = 45 C/113 F  
 Two dots = 45 C/113 F    Two dots = 45 C/113 F  
 One dot = 35 C/95 F    One dot = 35 C/95 F

**GOD IS IN THE DETAILS**  
SIT DOWN AND COLLECT DUST

Fig. 74 Washing-Up Ladies, Care Labels



Fig. 75 Washing-Up Ladies, Role Playing Washing Machine (2006)



Fig. 76 Washing-Up Ladies, *Sorry to Burst Your Bubble but Gender Issues Still Unresolved Today* (2010)

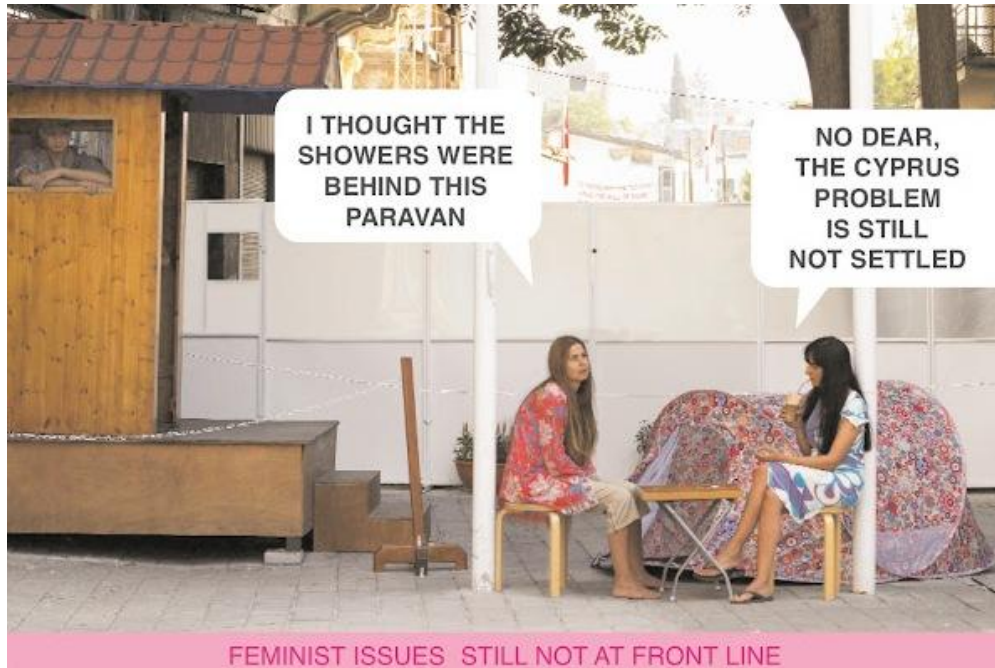


Fig. 77 Washing-Up Ladies, *Feminist Issues Still Not At Front Line* (2007)

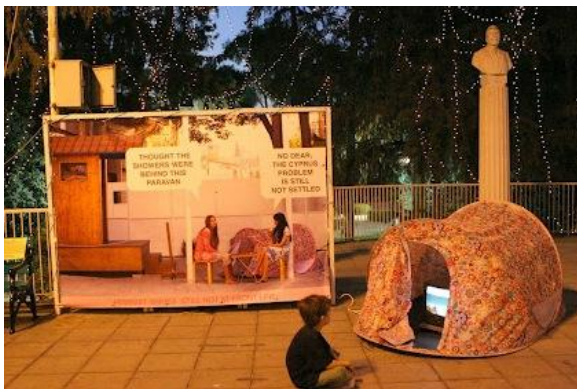


Fig. 78 Washing-Up Ladies,  
*Feminist Issues Still Not At Front Line*  
(2007)

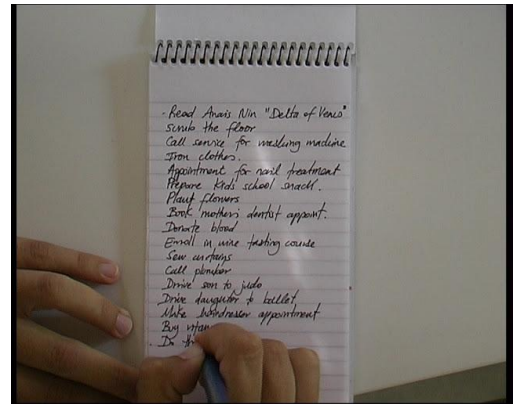


Fig. 79 Washing-Up Ladies, *To Do List*  
(2007)

- Read Anais Nin "Delta of Venus"
- scrub the floor
- call service for washing machine
- steam clothes
- Appointment for nail treatment
- Prepare kid's school snack
- Plant flowers
- Book mother's dentist appoint.
- Donate blood
- Enroll in more history course
- Sew curtains
- Call plumber
- Drive son to side
- Drive daughter to ballet
- Make veterinarian appointment
- Buy wine
- Do...

## **Bibliography**

### **Note:**

Large part of research undertaken for this thesis was done at source – in artist's homes and studios or family members and friends, through interviews and correspondence. When the title of a Greek publication is bi-lingual (Greek-English), it is cited in English. Translation of Greek quotations in the text and Greek titles in Bibliography are mine unless otherwise stated. Certain publications which are not cited in the text but which have been consulted in the course of this research and are particularly relevant to its overall perspective are included in Bibliography. Articles and exhibition material included in personal archives (such as artists' archives) and other archives (such as State's Gallery Archive, PIO and Municipals Art Centre) cited in the text have been excluded from Bibliography.

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