Mediterranean Art and Education

COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION:
A Diversity of Voices

Volume 30

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Mediterranean Art and Education

Navigating Local, Regional and Global Imaginaries through the Lens of the Arts and Learning

Edited by

John Baldacchino
University of Dundee, UK

and

Raphael Vella
University of Malta, Malta

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JOHN BALDACCHINO & RAPHAEL VELLA

INTRODUCTION

Engaging with the arts and education in the Mediterranean is not unlike walking an intellectual tightrope. Or better still, such an undertaking could be compared to traversing a mesh made of scores of tightropes that intersect each other like a delicate weave, alternating between moments of respite and dizzying gaps or dilemmas. This network of tensions hovers over a space that simultaneously exists and does not exist, a space that can be located geographically quite easily but refuses to allow itself to be defined rationally. It is a space that is replete with collective and individual narratives and desires, yet the sheer number and diversity of its singularities obstruct a clear view of the 'whole picture'.

We know that the region that this small collection of essays attempts to engage with—the Mediterranean—is a dynamic and complex one. As Braudel wrote, this landlocked sea "cannot be contained within our measurements and classifications", while "no simple narrative of how things happened would be appropriate to its history" (Braudel, 1995, p. 17). We also know that the subjects we are studying within this geographical context—art and art education—are equally vast, varied and complex. The genealogies of art and the training of artists and their values vary widely across the Mediterranean and cannot be summarised without slipping into bias—that academic sin of omission that even the most scrupulous amongst us occasionally commit without being aware of it.

Writing about Egyptian artists in the first decade of the twenty-first century, for instance, one scholar argued that many European and American critics, curators and scholars still tend to assume that artists living in non-Western contexts can be assessed according to Western, generally secular, criteria and hierarchies of artistic value (despite their postmodernist or post-colonialist pretensions), and this predisposition leads many to conclude that artists and artistic production in Egypt and the Middle East "are not quite there yet" (Winegar, 2006, p. 4). Moreover, artists in North African countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria are often criticised for 'faking' Western art quite willingly, producing European ersatz works of art that Tunisian poet and novelist Abdelwahab Meddeb has described as "a submissive art, a by-product of Western painting, supported by ministers of culture" (Bernadac & Meddeb, 2007, p. 48). The real issue, however, is that so many heterogeneous realities that exist around the Arab world are still circumscribed by a reductive, colonial attitude that mentally lumps them all into a single artistic league. Works by artists based in 'marginal' contexts are also subjected to simplistic interpretations or appropriations that fit Western agendas—a strategy that could lead to a barely disguised "politically motivated colonisation of

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art and ideas" (Kholeif, 2012, p. 8), as may have been the case with the Egyptian media artist and art educator Ahmed Basiony, killed while protesting in Tahrir Square in January 2011 and presented that same year in the Egyptian pavilion of the Venice Biennial as a 'martyr'.

The towns and cities along the coasts of the Mediterranean display different facets of such imbalances of power and intellectual dilemmas: from perceived centres of the arts like Venice and Barcelona to vast, relatively neglected or misunderstood territories like Northern Africa and finally, places that in recent years have appeared in the media as new or even thriving art markets, like Istanbul. Such tensions, which typically express themselves as vexing choices between the new and the insular or between a perceived independence from market-driven, Western models and a more acquiescent submissiveness to them, are not experienced uniformly across the Mediterranean. These disparate experiences of the art world obviously hold sway over young people's aspirations and also affect curricular developments and educational systems, particularly the higher education sector. While some scholars believe that there are few, if any, crucial differences between the teaching of the visual arts in Islamic countries in the region and art education in the West (for example, Shaban, 2007, p. 195), the different cultural and political contexts as well as histories of artistic practices and status of disciplines such as art history and theory across the region present some very diverse frameworks in which educational methodologies are being applied, and therefore make it difficult for scholars to draw relevant conclusions about the region as a whole.

The power dynamics that are characteristic of the local/global dichotomy particularly in postcolonial contexts are hardly the only factors that restrict such comparisons. Different experiences of conflict in Mediterranean contexts incite further debates and considerations amongst art educators about ways of coming to terms with such struggles, and present us with distinct approaches that do not only vary between one country and another but also within the same context. Art educators in Israel, for example, have been found to follow quite different paths when confronted by their students' experiences of violence and grief, either evading these experiences altogether or addressing them directly or indirectly (Cohen-Evron, 2008).

Other contested areas that are experienced diversely and could be researched further for their relevance to art educators across the Mediterranean include faith, tourism, national identity, cultural diversity, immigration, educational policy and the role of art education in community development. While themes like cultural diversity appear rather frequently in national and even international studies, research that focuses specifically on art education in the Mediterranean macro context is relatively scarce. Comparative or comprehensive publications of a more global nature have appeared from time to time (Freedman & Hernández, 1998; Bamford, 2006; Bresler, 2007; Eça & Mason, 2008), yet tend to present national case studies or commentaries side by side rather than try to draw comparisons. Similarly, a publication on art education in the Mediterranean cannot smoothen out the region's inconsistencies by resorting to a positivist, reductive paradigm because

what is so intriguing about the Mediterranean is the plurality of practices, histories, languages and experiences that share its waters and "it is precisely the atonal, ultimately dissonant character of our region that holds out an emancipatory pedagogic promise" (Sultana, 2012, p. 24).

In this collection of essays, most of the contributors refer clearly to the paradox of attempting to condense a heterogeneous region like the Mediterranean into a single volume or 'aesthetic'. Elena Stylianou's chapter on two artists' works that formed part of a curated exhibition in an archaeological museum in Cyprus reminds us that the idea of the Mediterranean is a construction and that its socio-political and cultural borders are constantly shifting. The sea's evasiveness becomes a metaphor for the existence of Cyprus between the East and the West, which is itself mirrored in the artists Angelos Makrides and Phanos Kryiacou and their references to both Western ideas and more contextualised critiques. The artists' interventions around Cypriot artefacts in the context of a museum that was actually formed during colonial rule address and even subvert their own heritage and the ways in which this heritage has been framed by institutional conventions and imperialist narratives. Institutional, national or colonial narratives can also have an impact on educational processes, given that education has traditionally been considered to constitute one of the central goals of museums. The curatorial and artistic re-framing of the artefacts and the museological spaces during the exhibition described by Stylianou, therefore, offer possibilities of broadening the critical dimensions of museum education.

The chapter by Anabela Moura also discusses cultural heritage and its links with history, colonialism, education and identity. Based on a project that brought together academic teams from Portugal, England and Turkey, the chapter focuses on the Portuguese experience and analyses images and statements collected from art and non-art student teachers regarding their national identifications. Moura links these identifications with heroic notions disseminated by the educational system and the media, particularly with Portuguese expansionist aspirations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (euphemistically called 'Portuguese Discoveries' in school textbooks) and examples from popular culture. This is an intriguing aspect of this paper, because unlike some other contributions in this collection, it reflects the experience of colonisation from the colonisers' perspective. More modern 'heroes' picked by participants in this study included Portuguese singers and football players, and Moura concludes that the strong nationalistic tendencies expressed by their choices are socially constructed and would appear to show that young people in Portugal may not have fully appreciated the significance of living in a multicultural society.

Also contextualised in Portugal, the chapter by Sofia Marques da Silva similarly deals with the question of heritage and, like Elena Stylianou, with a deconstruction of cultural traditions. The focus on a relatively 'peripheral' location in northern Portugal easily adapts itself to similarly peripheral contexts around the Mediterranean, while the author's references to the relationship between emigration and unemployment will certainly be familiar to many readers from around the Mediterranean. Unlike Stylianou, who deals with the work of

contemporary visual artists, Sofia Marques da Silva studies the involvement of young people in a traditional dance. What singles out this chapter is the way the author weaves her analysis of the renovation of the dance into a redefinition of traditional gender roles as well as a regional struggle with one's identity and perceived threats to it. The dance of the 'Pauliteiros' becomes the dance of the 'Pauliteiras': young girls are teamed up to make a traditionally male domain their own, changing it and "dis-inheriting the heritage" in the process. Education here is a reconfiguration of identity and a challenge to the 'authority' of tradition.

The following three chapters engage in more philosophical reflections on art education in its contemporary and Mediterranean manifestations. Andri Savva's chapter uses different readings of the theoretical notions *khôra* and *topos* to explore the situatedness of art education, with particular reference to the Mediterranean. While examining the work of contemporary artists from Cyprus, Greece and Palestine like Kyriaki Costa, Maria Papadimitriou and Khalil Rabah, Savva offers insights into the relationships between place, artistic practice and education, reminding us—like other authors do in this collection—that the Mediterranean is an 'in-between' place which remains open-ended and dynamic. According to Savva, the region's particularities, especially the multiple and even contradictory social and political meanings that have accrued around specific localities, can potentially enrich the field of art education by making artists and educators reflect about the margins and histories of the spaces they inhabit and the possibility of democratic dialogue that may lead us beyond these margins and histories.

Raphael Vella's chapter explores the notions of understanding and disagreement in the realms of contemporary art and art education, against the backdrop of the Mediterranean (or 'Mediterraneans', as he calls them) and its specific geo-political, cultural, linguistic and other contexts. Vella applies the notion of *mésentente* in Jacques Rancière's work and that of the 'radicant' (Nicolas Bourriaud) to the field of art education, proposing a stance that does not reduce our relationship with the 'other' to a question of 'understanding'. Instead, contemporary art and art education constantly bring us face to face with enigmatic and unfamiliar realities and ideas, which are then translated and redefined in the new contexts they encounter. Referring to the work of contemporary artists from the Mediterranean and beyond, the author shows that by coming to terms with our misunderstandings with others, we also come to terms with how we misunderstand ourselves.

Informed by the writings of philosophers and poets as diverse as Eugenio Montale, John Dewey and Søren Kierkegaard, the final chapter by John Baldacchino starts by warning its readers to avoid falling into the identity 'trap' that would have us imagine a common aesthetic shared by communities inhabiting a region as diverse as the Mediterranean. This idea of the 'whole' is precisely what Baldacchino invites us to unlearn, just as the relentless stereotyping of particular territories, economies and peoples in southern Europe must constantly be resisted. Baldacchino argues that these stereotypes and identitarian notions of homogeneity have a common, colonial heritage that a Mediterranean pedagogical aesthetics must distance itself from, and concludes that the internal paradox of trying to define whatever characterises a Mediterranean imaginary cannot be erased because this

imaginary is paradoxically 'rooted' in the rootlessness of journeying. Perhaps the sea itself, this mobile site of a thousand journeys, is the most under-rated teacher in the Mediterranean.

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ELENA STYLIANOU

1. BROADENING MUSEUM PEDAGOGY

An art intervention at the Archaeological Museum of Cyprus by Angelos Makrides and Phanos Kyriacou

INTRODUCTION

Artists have been increasingly interested in looking at and investigating the museum, influenced by the museum's changing role as well as the diverse and alternative directions that art has taken over the last century (McShine, 1999; Rice, 2003; Gibbons, 2007). Artists, often "wrestling with the issue of their dependence on the museum to endorse their place in art history" (McShine, 1999, p. 11), are also more attuned to the power of the institution to define art, to influence their future career, and to make artworks accessible to wider audiences. Over the past few decades, artists have shown a certain degree of critical awareness regarding the authoritative power of the museum to form, but also to sustain and promote very specific and often stereotypical and limited understandings of world situations.

This tendency developed as the result of a more general and increasing mistrust of 'official History' and a critique against an 'accurate' and singular account of the past. It was also a reaction influenced by many poststructuralist claims that the museum was formed as a technology serving the colonial western gaze that defined the viewed 'other' object in relation to the viewing 'dominant' subject. These theories proposed that history be rephrased so that it includes the multiple and diverse accounts of the past and takes into consideration of the essentialised notions inscribed in western displays (Phillips, 2007). They also proposed that the classificatory systems used in museums be viewed in a more critical manner as problematic forms of categorisation defined by the colonial gaze. Due to this manifest awareness and eagerness to challenge issues otherwise concealed by museum orthodoxy, artists were in many cases called by museum curators to the task; they were invited to define, redefine, challenge, and criticise museum stories, and the ways in which museums choose to tell them.

This chapter is interested in the ways in which artists have criticised the museum's authoritative voice and the technology of the gaze, as these are structured and directed through the display of museum objects. In particular, it examines the ways in which artists have intervened in museums in order to shed light on the 'untold' or the 'hidden' stories of museum exhibits, making particular reference to a case study from Cyprus: an intervention at the Cyprus (Archaeological) Museum of Nicosia by artists Angelos Makrides and Phanos Kryiacou. The specific museum is quite unique in that, although it displays archaeological remnants from Cyprus, it remains a museum formed by the British

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during colonial times. Thus, beyond the conventional effect of framing the ways in which visitors' interact with museum objects and the ways in which the museum as an institution has traditionally defined aesthetic beauty, the Cyprus Museum is a case study, which stands as an example of Imperialist agendas.

The chapter will particularly examine the ways in which Angelos Makrides' and Phanos Kryiacou's intervention challenges the museum and its functions, while making reference to a wider museological framework developed in Central Europe and the US concerning objects and their interpretation, as well as to theories of Institutional Critique. Attempting to locate contemporary art interventions from Cyprus within the international art scene is a difficult, if not impossible task, since a consistent and coherent theoretical framework of art historiography is currently missing, especially one that deals with modern and contemporary art practices emerging on the island. As a result, art practices from Cyprus remain under theorised due to the lack of a clear trajectory of the socio-political, and other, conditions that have influenced their production. There is currently no substantial research to locate art practices from Cyprus in a wider context of art history, or to draw connections between the island's art practices and the particular developments that have come out of international movements in the West and the East. As art historian, Antonis Danos writes,

> Artistic creation from 1980 onwards, demonstrates a hitherto unknown degree of heterogeneity and pluralism. The term 'contemporary Cypriot art' lacks true substance, and it merely refers to the work of contemporary Cypriot artists, without the capability of defining some common traits of various 'generations', not even of groups. (2011a, p. 30)

Thus, attempting to locate an art practice as the one by Angelos Makrides and Phanos Kryiacou within a wider art historical framework is of great significance for beginning to develop a stronger and clearer understanding of the art produced on the island, as much as for the conditions that have influenced it historically, and which continue to do so. At the same time, the specific intervention can shed light on the ways artists have engaged with the narratives of museums.

Although the narratives produced by different museums vary, there are certain types of museums such as, ethnographic, archaeological or history museums, that have traditionally functioned as bastions of culture in the ways in which they often promote and sustain cultural heritage and provide a sense of collectivity among groups of people. Artists' interventions in these museums are viewed here not simply as 'events' that interfere with the nature and function of the museum, but also as political forces, which aim to bring about change. Furthermore, these events are potentially educational and have important implications for museum visitation, possibly also after informing the reader of the conditions of artistic production in many other areas of the Mediterranean basin.

THE "MEDITERRANEAN" CONDITION

Fernand Braudel in his seminal work *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World* in the Age of Philip II, argues:

> The Mediterranean as a unit, with its creative space, the amazing freedom of its sea-routes … with its many regions, so different yet so alike, its cities born on movement, its complementary populations, its congenital enmities, is the unceasing work of human hands. (Cited in Horden & Purcell, 2006, p. 724)

Although Braudel's claim is a reference to the actual formation of the region through struggles, fights with the land itself and other obstacles, as much as to the possibility of this land (or sea) to never actually have unchanging borders—its mass to be endlessly re-shaped—it is nonetheless useful for the present discussion. The notion that the Mediterranean is the work of human hands (and minds alike) is very relevant, beyond any claims made by Braudel, as it also allows one to understand the Mediterranean as a construction, and as such, it should not remain unquestioned.

It is within this understanding that the task of discussing an art practice as Mediterranean seems rather paradoxical: assuming a preexisting type of aesthetic that *is* Mediterranean and which thus has its own specific characteristics, as much as relying on the descriptive adjective 'Mediterranean' for an aesthetic, are equally problematic. But, perhaps these problematic aspects are relevant to the historical construction of the Mediterranean imaginary and to the local-specificity of such an aesthetic—if any at all—in art practices being shaped, and shaping, various areas of the Mediterranean basin, including the one discussed in this paper.

Moreover, it is worth being reminded that the Mediterranean as a constructed notion has been defined mostly by geopolitics and founded on difference rather than on a romanticised sense of a unified understanding and/or a shared habit or attitude. According to Claudio Focu, quite often a sense of *Mediterranean-ness* points to "the geographical consistency of the connection between sun, Mediterranean sea, and white-walls architecture", and is linked to "the diachronic consistency of climate and natural landscape across the Mediterranean area" (2008, p. 26). But as he continues, one needs to question whether *Mediterranean-ness* (*mediterraneità*) can be seen as anything other than a political strategy, convenient for creating a space of artistic practice that wishes to remain distinguishable from other political trends (in the case of his argument, the avant-garde Futurists used 'the Mediterranean' as a way to separate from Fascism) yet, continuing to feed locality (in the case of the Futurists, it was a sense of *Italianness*).

Other theorists studying the Mediterranean—arguably, more reflexively than Braudel—cannot but understand the Mediterranean as a concept born out of imperialism, "deployed in the service of politically undesirable master narratives" (Horden & Purcell, 2006, p. 725) characterised by *exceptionalism* and *exclusivism*: the fact that the Mediterranean served as the centre of Europe during the Renaissance is an example of such *exceptionalism*, whereas the assumed shared personality traits among individuals from the Mediterranean is an example of

exclusivism[i] (since it disregards those who do not share these traits). So, bearing this context in mind, asking whether *Mediterranean-ness* exists, and if so, in which ways, is probably more appropriate than attempts to take it for granted in discussions about art practices. Such questions apply to the analysis of the art intervention discussed in this paper, which seems more relevant to art practices developed in Central Europe and the US during the 20th century, rather than to a distinguishable Mediterranean character, conventionally defined by the "sun, Mediterranean sea, and white-walls architecture" (Focu, 2008). At the same time, this art intervention is characteristically Cypriot, referring to the artists' own locality and responding to the unique nature of the museum in which it took place.

Again, what needs to be stated at the outset of this paper is that the Mediterranean is viewed as a contested term—as much as its aesthetics is—referring to a constructed space rather than a specific location. The Mediterranean is characterised and influenced by exchanges and various encounters with the other; a landscape of diverse cultures, of what Chambers in, *Mediterranean Crossings,* claims to be a "mixed heritage" and a "complex inheritance" (2008, p. 45). I would like to argue, here, that the case of Cyprus is an example of such crossings. However, it is useful to adopt Focu's (2008) definition of the Mediterranean as a *medi-terra*—literally 'in between lands'—not simply as a reference to the sea, but to the fluidity of the impact of the socio-political and economic exchanges which take place here, and as a reminder that the Mediterranean should not be seen as a contained space with clear borders, but as a shifting space, frequently in the process of being defined.

Contemporary art practices or art history in Cyprus, are specific to the island's social and political history, its geographical location in the Mediterranean sea, and, indicative of the discontinuities witnessed historically in the production of a strong sense of identity due to the island's turbulent history and parallel existence in the margins of both the East and the West.[ii] Thus, the art intervention discussed here will not be viewed only as a result of the artists' influences from the West, especially because of the ways in which it intervenes in the stories produced by the Cyprus Museums, but it will also take into consideration the immediate mirroring of the artists' locale. At the same time, its relevance to things Mediterranean has to do with the notion of the *in-between* and how this is subverted or affirmed by the artists' critique.

PAST NARRATIVES: THE CASE OF THE CYPRUS MUSEUM

In January 2009, the sculptures of Angelos Makrides and Phanos Kyriacou were exhibited for a month alongside the artefacts of the Cyprus Museum in an event entitled *Synergy*. The title of this event indicated the intention of the curator of the exhibition, Yiannis Toumazis, to position these two artists in a dialogue. The artists did not work together physically for the preparation of their respective sculptures, as one might have expected. Instead, they worked independently in their studios to produce the work and later met at the museum where their work, curated by Yiannis Toumazis, was positioned in a dialogue, both with the artefacts on display

and in relation to each other. This interference was a venture to work within the museum architecture and space in order to challenge the stories promoted by the museum.

The Cyprus Museum was first established in 1882 by a group of British and Greek-Cypriot elite intellectuals during British rule in Cyprus (Bounia & Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). Finding its roots in similar occasions in Europe, most of which grew out of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Princely Collections that aimed to display the splendour and legitimacy of the prince's rule (Duncan, 1991) and to "symbolically [magnify] it in the public domain" (Bennett, 1995, p. 33), the specific museum could in similar ways be seen as an attempt by the British to endorse and safeguard their legitimacy on the island. Although the origins of the specific museum do not lie in a royal collection, one could still argue that the objective of the British to collect art during colonial times, or the interest of Royal Archaeology in excavating the past, and the Empire's eagerness to showcase the objects of its collections was in alignment with the aspiration of any imperial power to look powerful, progressive, and interested in providing for the common good.[iii]

Furthermore, the British believed that the Greek past was the cornerstone of Western civilisation. Thus, any connection with this past in the form of museum collections in the Cyprus Museum could further serve as a form of validation of European Imperialism (Bounia & Stylianou-Lambert, 2011, 2012). This validation was further achieved through the museum architecture. The exterior façade of the main entrance of the museum, originally built in 1908,[iv] is reminiscent of the Parthenon in its four columns of Ionic order supporting an entablature attached to the main building. As Carol Duncan suggests, the museum architecture's reference to

> a pre-Christian world of highly evolved civic institutions, [and] classical-looking buildings could well suggest secular, Enlightenment principles and purposes. But monumental classical forms also brought with them the space of rituals—corridors scaled for processionals and interior sanctuaries designed for awesome and potent effigies. (1991, p. 91)

Beyond any imperial agendas though, the visitor in the Cyprus Museum is facilitated into accessing the island's past: a greatly distant and often uninteresting past that has been excavated and left unattended for many years. The permanent collection of the Cyprus museum consists mainly of archaeological remains, displayed and often crowded in glass cases, while the dusty interiors of the museum carry a feeling of nostalgia for all things past, reflecting an insistence to safeguard this particular past as unquestionable, unproblematic and sacred, similar to the first cabinets of curiosities (*Wunderkammern*). These cabinets of curiosities aimed to promote a picture of *a* world through an almost encyclopedic ordering of objects (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Bennett, 1995; Garoian, 2001), which often also aimed to facilitate memory, *private* and *public*. As Hein points out, museums first developed "parallel with the advent of the nation-state", demonstrating mainly the power and wealth of the state (1998, p. 3). Although the Cyprus Museum was not

originally formed parallel with the island's existence as an independent state—on the contrary, it was mostly aligned with the aspirations of an empire—it still remained a space that the natives viewed positively since it potentially functioned as a site of identity formation.

More specifically, many Cypriots supported the development of the Cyprus museum with great enthusiasm, albeit for reasons entirely different to the ones driving the British. They invested in the museum's making, their hopes of liberation from both the British rule and, before that, Ottoman rule. They viewed the museum as a way of affirming the island's connection to *a* Greek past, thus supporting and justifying continuous efforts of unification with "motherland" Greece. One could argue that this kind of leaning is reflective of the more general aspirations of the late nineteenth century "philological-lexicographic revolution and the rise of intra European nationalist movements, themselves the products, not only of capitalism, but of the elephantiasis of the dynastic states" (Anderson, 2003, p. 83). As Benedict Anderson discusses in *Imagined Communities*, the nationalist ideal was increasingly gaining prestige during this time throughout Europe and "there was a discernible tendency among the Euro-Mediterranean monarchies to sidle towards a beckoning national identification" (2003, p. 85). As Anderson predicted in the same book, this tendency would not rest only on "sheer antiquity" but would instead pose dangers in Europe. Indeed, the rise of Greek nationalism in Cyprus would define later political events, such as the EOKA resistance to the British in the mid 1950s,[v] the conflicts between Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots in the 1960s, and the attempts of a militant coup to overthrow the president Archbishop Makarios of the then newly formed Republic, which would ultimately lead to the Turkish invasion in 1974.

Interestingly enough, although this museum held within it both the aspirations of the British Empire to legitimise its power and the hopes of Greek-Cypriots to safeguard their Greek origins, it never quite fulfilled its potential as a means to public education despite best efforts. Instead, the museum remained closed to the public for the first nine years of its life (Bounia & Stylianou-Lambert, 2012), while today typical visitors of the museum still tend to be tourists, professionals, or scholars interested in the museum as an exciting case study. In a way, the Cyprus museum never managed to escape the origins of the museum as a temple of authority, existing, therefore, only for a few experts and remaining a site of academic interest rather than a democratic and open space for public interaction. Although the museum's audiences are, ironically, different from—if not irrelevant to—the ones for which the museum initially seemed to favour, there has not been any substantial change of the aims, scopes or vision of the museum, at least not in practice, since in principle, currently, there are plans to renovate the museum space.

It is within this framework that a contemporary art intervention in the existing displays of the Cyprus Museum seems like a ground breaking event with much political and educational potential. Especially, when one accepts the proposition that most, if not all, artistic interventions of this kind are a form of interference and a way of reframing a museum's traditional authority. Thus, the museum's

authorisation for such an intervention might be indicative of the museum being on the verge of change, seeking to find alternative ways to revise its existence and have an impact on the island, following international attempts to radicalise museums and the museum experience. In addition, this intervention might be an indication that the Cyprus Museum is in fact aware of the contemporary art scene and other cases of institutional critique, and is willing to open its doors while acknowledging the displacing effect of such artistic interventions.

Both the artists involved in this intervention, Angelos Makrides and Phanos Kryiacou, work with sensitivity toward history, archaeology and tradition, even when they criticise it, and this is revealing of the degree to which the Cyprus Museum has demonstrated a turn towards a radical direction that will potentially have a great impact on museum education in Cyprus and could possibly inform other Mediterranean countries. At the same time, the curator's intelligent choice of involving two artists who represent distinct art historical periods on the island, and who demonstrate the different philosophies of their time, has worked creatively in opening the space for various forms of dialogue: namely, between the artists and the museum, between the two artists, between the artists and various audiences, and between the museum and its visitors.

SYNERGY, PART I: ANGELOS MAKRIDES

Angelos Makrides represents a period of modernity and post-war art in Cyprus and his work can be considered as connecting the archaeology of the island to contemporary practices. His work emerged in a period during which art—as everything else on the island—was struggling to resurface right after the island's independence in the early 1960s, during the immediate and turbulent years, between the 1960s and the early 1970s, and after the Turkish invasion in 1974. Continuous conflicts between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, economic deprivation after the war, destruction of the land, the loss of people and their land, and, the wave of refugees from one side of the island to the other, were all influential conditions for the future growth of the island. The once prosperous island had to struggle once again in a period of regeneration and the arts and culture were certainly the last thing on the new agenda. Instead, emphasis was placed on other disciplines that would potentially improve the living conditions on the island.

Angelos Makrides, originally born in the now Turkish occupied Yialousa, studied in Athens and lived in Paris in the 1960s. He decided to leave Cyprus in 1974 and to live in Athens for the next decade before returning back to Cyprus. Although it does not explicitly represent the island's political struggles, as most of the artworks produced during this period in Cyprus, Makrides' work is inherently influenced by his childhood memories and his later travels and studies. His works are very modern echoing the assemblage pieces of Jean Dubuffet, Picasso, and Rauschenberg; this is a term coined by Dubuffet, and given public currency at the exhibition, *The Art of Assemblage* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in

1961 (Cooper, 2009), and of which Makrides, living in Paris at the time, would certainly have been aware.

Makrides' sculptures, nonetheless, maintain a deep connection to the island of Cyprus through the use of materials which he adopts in ways that remind one of the unique landscape of the island: wood, bronze, stone from the island, iron, fabric, the gold leaves used in Byzantine iconography, as well as found readymade objects, are all incorporated in his practice. In a personal conversation with Makrides sometime last year, the artist remembered the time when as a young boy he used to punt a small stone from home to school, hiding it in a safe place as something precious, only to punt it back home after school. In this way, Makrides was not only marking his own path, but he was already developing a strong connection to the details of his land. These same stones he would later carve again and again in his art.

The similarity between the formal elements of Makrides' work and the artifacts on display at the museum can explain the reason that the museum allowed him—and only in the case of Makrides' sculptures—him to intervene in the museum's glass cases, by displaying some of the artist's small stone sculptures alongside the rest of the historical remnants (Figure 1). This illustrates a series of claims made by the specific museum, namely, that the glass case is sacred for all that it safeguards; that what is displayed in the glass case should remain at a distance from the viewer, both physically and conceptually; and, that Makrides' work is already part of this historical discourse of the island, which despite its critical character it has already been consumed and assimilated in the art historical narrative of Cyprus.

Figure 1. Angelos Makrides, installation view of Gathering *(1996), as part of* Synergy *exhibition at the Archaeological Museum of Cyprus, 2009 (dimensions variable). Courtesy of the artist and Yiannis Toumazis.*

In the specific art piece, entitled *Gathering* (1996), Makrides uses iron, bronze and stone to create five small figurine-like sculptures, which were then positioned around an archeological object already on display at the Cyprus Museum. The central piece can stand here as a symbol of the island and its history, heavily influenced but also controlled by external powers. In this particular display, the artist's specific understanding of the island's fate to always be under external rule is apparent in the way in which the five figures—made out of the same material as the piece they enclose—suffocate and control it, allowing little space for movement or independence. One of the figures is painted in the blue, red and white stars of the American flag; another has a swastika-like shape attached to it, the edges of which end up in little hands; and a third has the Jewish star pouring out of its eyes. These might refer to various details from the island's history. The American flag possibly refers to America's involvement in the Turkish invasion in 1974 and Turkey's subsequent occupation of a third of the island, when it allowed Turkey as a country of NATO to intervene in the internal conflicts between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. The swastika symbol as a reference to extreme nationalism might refer to the wave of Greek nationalism during the 1950s and the 1960s that led to the conflicts between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. Finally, the Jewish star might refer to Israel's geographical proximity to the island, while also functioning as a sign of a feeling of persecution felt by Cypriots (like Jews) since various powers have historically sought after controlling the island due to its strategic location between three continents.

This particular reading, of course, might have little to do with the artist's original intentions when creating the five figures, since they were selected and placed in this particular order and positioned by the curator of the exhibition rather than the artist himself. This in itself is telling of the curator's power to create and support certain stories in the museum as well as of its authoritative voice, but also of the artist's own contradictory rejection of this power by way of refusing to take part in the process of curating. More specifically, in many casual conversations with Makrides, he tends to be sceptical of the idea of both exhibiting at galleries and museums and of participating in the process of curating, reminding one of many artists—especially those working during the 1950s and the 1960s in Europe—who questioned "whether their work should be in a museum at all, feeling that to be included is to succumb to the establishment" (McShine, 1999, p. 11). As such, Makrides' work could be viewed within the wider artistic and theoretical tendency of the period when artists began to lose faith in the museum and in other social institutions (McShine, 1999) and began negotiating its authority.[vi] These artists' main concern was to question the highly codified space of the museum, as much as its neutralizing and/or acculturating force when presenting and displaying artworks. What was later named "Institutional Critique" was at the time a systematic form of inquiry by artists, aiming to expose the "ideological underpinnings" of the museum (McClellan, 2003, pp. 31-32). More specifically, they aimed at discussing the ways in which the museum often becomes a *dead* space, fixed in its own pre-conceptions (and misconceptions) about authenticity and authority, definitions of aesthetic superiority and artistic intentionality, or even

about the historical legitimacy of artworks. As Joan Gibbons affirms, these artists' reflections upon museums and galleries also echo a "preoccupation with the ways in which art is framed by the ideologies and agendas of institutions but also with the institutionalisation of knowledge itself" (2007, p.121).[vii]

Clearly, there is a lot up for debate in terms of these first attempts against the institutionalisation of art. For instance, when Marcel Broodthaers reversed the roles of the curator and the artist in his creation of the fictitious, *Museum of Modern Art: Department of Eagles*, he attempted to reveal how the frame (indicating the actual space of the physical architecture and also signifying the process of the work's presentation) *acculturates* heterogeneous objects and transcends them to the status of art. But this attempt in itself is also located, defined and shaped by that exact frame under question. As Hal Foster (1986) suggests, the institutional frame determines the production of that practice and because of that it is a de-limited one. Foster also argues that such practices, as Broodthaers' practice, posed within or against the institutional frame, adopt the same language and the same categories used by the museum and gallery for the definition of art, and regardless of the original purpose and form of the critique, these museum categories are "sustained even as they are demonstrated to be logically arbitrary, ideologically laden and/or historically obsolete" (Foster, 1986).

Yet the most important, perhaps, limitation which these first attempts helped reveal in regards to the underlying power structures of the museum as institutional frame, was the risk they all run of being relegated from attacking the institution to becoming part of its processes and yet another expert voice that defines the form of the frame. Makrides, by means of his decision to be absent from the process of the intervention at the museum, already makes a political statement relevant to his choice, namely, that he acknowledges the power of the museum to define the stories told by their displays and how problematic that is. By separating himself from the process of authentication and sacralisation of the object on display, he directly criticises this exact process, even if, in the end, his work is indeed exhibited as part of the exhibition at the museum in a much more integrated manner than that of Phanos Kyriacou's work—and inside the glass case—confirming once again the power of the museum to conventionalise the most radical works.

SYNERGY, PART II: PHANOS KYRIACOU

Phanos Kyriacou is a young artist who belongs to a generation of Cypriot artists who have studied either in the UK or the US (if not in other European art institutions) and who currently live and work in various international locations, in residencies, and participating in exhibitions elsewhere. This is a generation still concerned with its origins, yet often forcefully neglecting and criticising these origins as suffocating and conservative. His work, as others of his generation, although drawing from his experiences in Cyprus, rarely has any aimed or obvious connection to the island and its history. In this way, his work offers a rather fresh image of a country that is in search of its own identity, for the most part undefined,

and full of discontinuities and contradictions, fulfilling its heritage as a Mediterranean country 'in-between'. Such interventions do not only indicate the problematic nature of this imaginary, but possibly also the urge to review it.

Similar to other artistic practices taking place elsewhere, Angelos Makrides and Phanos Kryiacou create and practice within a wider context, not limited to their place of origin, influenced instead by undertakings relevant to more general social, political and artistic changes. The 1960s, when Makrides was still a young man working in Paris and in Athens, were a period of increased globalisation in the art world, but also a period of general distrust toward society (McShine, 1999). But like then, the first decade of this century is a period of an intense internationalisation of the art world and a revival period of serious critiques of social and political issues around the world, some of which involve America's neo-imperialist war interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan with the support of the British government, the economic crisis that currently threatens the whole of Europe and its union, as well as the intense marketability of art practices and the end of post-modernity, as we know it.

Kyriacou particularly deals with some of the issues raised above, especially the ones most relevant to both the museum and art. For *Synergy,* the sculptures he exhibited were replicas of classical sculptures, most of them cast from much smaller replicas that the artist found in souvenir shops in the old city of Nicosia. Upon closer inspection though, Kyriacou's replicas differ from their original reference. He breaks the cast sculptures into pieces and he then reassembles them in awkward yet humorous juxtapositions, creating a series of new narratives and stories relevant to art history, the power of the museum, and to the subjectivity of interpretation. In a set of three, two of these sculptures are missing their head whereas the other's head is covered (Figure 2). The choice of holding one's head, presenting it as a trophy almost, and suspended toward the viewer, becomes an act of projecting at once the ideal of classical beauty and the notion that this ideal is a construction that can be (re-)moved, eliminated, or changed at any time. At the same time, Kyriacou is making a case about the subjectivity of interpretation, of the historical definitions of beauty, and of the process of framing such archaeological objects after they have been unearthed.

Tony Bennett (1995) discusses in a similar manner the problematic nature of the meanings established by history museums. He claims that museum objects are never that which they were originally made for, but only signs or facsimiles of themselves "by virtue of the frame […] which encloses it [the object] and separates it off from the present" (Bennett, 1995, p. 129). Continuing, he argues that these objects "announce a distance between what they are and what they were throughtheir very function, once placed in a museum, of representing their own pastness and, thereby, a set of past social relations" (Bennett, 1995, p. 129). In the case of the Cyprus Museum, the archaeological remains are all signs of a particular past, yet none of them stand for what they used to be. Many objects for instance, used to be everyday, functional objects or objects of worship, but when put on a museum pedestal and are unavoidably detached from their original historical

Figure 2. Phanos Kyriacou, installation view of Statues in Crisis *(2009), as part of* Synergy *exhibition at the Archaeological Museum of Cyprus, 2009. Courtesy of the artist. Phanos Kyriacou,* Statues in Crisis *(detail), 2009, as part of* Synergy *exhibition at the Archaeological Museum of Cyprus, 2009 (165x38x38cm). Photo copyright: Andreas Koutas*

moment, they then are susceptible to represent narratives imposed upon them by the museum, the curator and the visitors. Kyriacou seems attuned to this process of framing archaeology. In a phone conversation in May 2010 he mentioned how he is particularly interested in precisely this type of museum presentation of objects and in the ways in which the museum display creates a meta-narrative about the object, its purpose, function and aesthetic potential. This is what Kyriacou described as a process of *forthcoming*, similar to the way in which his sculpture's head is offered to the viewer.

These three particular sculptures by Kryiacou are *Sculptures in Crisis*, as he calls them, indicating that losing their heads or covering them, is not only a metaphor for all the above mentioned associations, but also an act of despair or protest. They are in crisis because of their pre-defined future to be on a pedestal, isolated from their original function and framed by the museum in such a way as to always represent a singular narrative, buried in a function of cultural authentication. This brings to mind Faris, who, when discussing the exhibition, *ART/artifact* that opened in 1988 at the Centre for African Art in New York, stated that objects are often buried in "Our statement of Their function" (1988, p. 778). Certainly, such criticism towards the museum as a western device of mistakenly directing our understanding of 'other' cultures—in this case African—as a unified whole, also points towards the depth to which the museum can also be viewed as a

mechanism serving the colonial western gaze. Thus, artists' institutional critique could further undermine the museum as an institution of such motivations.

Kyriacou consciously chooses to camouflage his sculptures so that they become part of the museum, while indirectly challenging those same narratives that the museum seeks to produce by the display of these objects. His critical works within the institutional structure question more than the mere display of objects. He presents the viewer with the museum's relation to the imperial West bringing about a rupture to the museum's colonial history. His sculptures become an integral part of the museum, its colour and materials, while retaining their uniqueness; this is especially visible in Kyriacou's choice to display them on concrete plinths. The stability, strength and immovability of concrete illustrate another of Kyriacou's decisions to address the irony in museum narratives; and, although they are presented as fixed and unquestionable, they never cease to be fluid, subjective and subject to change, as much as to criticism.

Furthermore, the actual creative process of re-casting these sculptures from replicas found in souvenir shops is also indicative of the process of spectacularisation of classical antiquity to the point of turning it into a commodity: a process for which the museum is one of the institutions responsible. Guy Debord speaks of "the materialization of ideology in the form of the spectacle," (1995, p. 150) which could be considered the result of a successful system of production. Museums are such places in which ideology is materialised in the form of a spectacle on view. Douglas Crimp further claims that such processes have been well secured by the museum since the early nineteenth century; to include "the idealist conception of art, the classificatory systems imposed on it, the construction of a cultural history to contain it" (1993, p. 212). However, one could argue that the museum does that at the same time as it safeguards the past from damage or decay, and makes it widely accessible. Commodifying culture and protecting it from decay, although relevant processes, still have two different, often entirely conflicting effects. More so, they are both equally problematic.

On the one hand, the museum does indeed produce what Benjamin called "the disintegration of culture into commodities" (as cited in Crimp, 1993 p. 212), a thought aligned with Debord's arguments and one reflected in Kyriacou's choice of the kitsch sculptures found in souvenir shops. This is something especially relevant to various Mediterranean countries, including Cyprus, which used to produce such kitsch objects for the Western tourist, the implications of which are far more significant than Debord's observations. More specifically, when Crimp (1993) discusses Marcel Broodthaers' reference to "the transformation of art into merchantise" (p. 212), he points to a more general debate about art as a commodity. He does not refer to art or culture simply as something that one can purchase in the museum or souvenir shop (i.e. reproductions on mugs, calendars or kitsch sculptures), but rather to something even more problematic: to the complete shift of power and authority from the museum to the marketplace.

On the other hand, the museum's emphasis on safeguarding the past places the museum in a position of power, securing a level of authority. This is an issue that has been at the heart of museological debates over the last few decades, one that

has received much scrutiny by artists since the beginning of the twentieth century, and one that still demands reevaluation. The most important issue arising from this is the failure of the museum to be an educational and accessible space. Instead, the authority of the institution encourages the distance between the museum and its audiences, while the objects on display are stripped off any education potential since the emphasis is placed on their aesthetic and 'auratic' value. This is a rather widespread, albeit outdated in many countries, museological orthodoxy which insists on promoting aesthetic value over the significance of cultural production, divorcing the two and denying objects the potential to work as both art and artifact, as both the product of artistic intentionality and of cultural production at a very specific historical moment.[viii] At the same time, and to return to Phanos Kyriacou's sculpture, the fragmented form of museum objects reminds one of the problematic platonic distinction between body and mind, and suggests that we question, if not just dismiss such distinctions, as well as notions of 'beauty' and 'greatness' that have been historically and culturally constructed.

Responding to the above, Kyriacou created another piece during the intervention. He used a rectangular glass case that was also a mirror. It was only when the viewer approached the work that she was able to look inside (Figure 3). In this way, the viewer's image was captured by the glass case, transforming it into the object to be looked at, alongside the rest of the archaeological displays that were also reflected on the surface of the mirror-case. This mirrors the artist's belief that the museum objects should be for and about the viewers' history and past, and should be presented in such a way that they would eliminate the distance between their past and the present creating what Bennett (1995) calls the *representational effect*. This is relevant to the ways in which artefacts are organised in order to represent a relation and connection to the visitors' past. Bennett further argues that the organisation of artefacts is significant in shaping visitors' memory and expectations. To criticise this organisation, he says, does not mean, "calling them to task for their failure to accurately portray the past 'as it really was'. This is not to minimise the importance of the curatorial concern to regulate historical displays by ensuring the authenticity of the materials exhibited" (Bennett, 1995, p. 132).

Instead, to challenge the organisation of artefacts is similar to what Kyriacou also achieves here: to question the effects that these displays have on the viewer and to challenge the degree of continuity (or the lack of it) between the past and the present. Although, this might be relevant to other places, such (dis)-continuities are particularly pertinent to the Mediterranean imaginary, as discussed earlier. Especially in this museum, the past is presented as an entirely disconnected discourse from the present. In addition, this work also reminds the visitor that she is the one responsible for the definition and interpretation of this past, by projecting onto it her own ideas and beliefs. Certainly, the degree to which one is able to escape pre-determined ideologies and to reach an interpretation independently from the institution in which this occurs is questionable, and I will return to this later in the chapter.

Figure 3. Phanos Kyriacou, Statues in Crisis *(2009), as part of* Synergy *exhibition at the Archaeological Museum of Cyprus, 2009 (205x43x43cm). Courtesy of the artist.*

In the same piece by Kryiacou, when one approaches the mirror-case, one can witness another narrative. Inside the glass case, a sculpture of Aphrodite (Venus) voluntarily leans on the feet of Hephaestus, who is preparing to brutally take her head off with his hatchet (Figure 4). This is an act of sacrifice, violence and irony.

The artist himself is here symbolically transformed into Hephaestus, the god of creativity and art making, who challenges the pre-established definitions of beauty by sacrificing the symbol of beauty, Aphrodite (Venus), with which many Cypriots are familiar. At the same time, sacrificing through taking one's head is a violent way of sacrificing the predominant mythologies about the goddess Aphrodite (Venus). These are relevant to the birth of the island, and thus to its archaeology. Certainly, the sacrifice of Aphrodite can also be seen as a means of freeing the island from its doomed fate to always be dominated, similar to the goddess with which it identifies.[ix] Furthermore, the act of taking the sculpture's head—similar to the three other replicas on the plinths—is full of irony. The head, always pertinent to intelligence, thought, rationality and critique, is in all cases removed, or in the process as such, pointing toward both the ease with which this can occur, and most importantly, toward the visitors' unsuspecting tolerance of all the museum's narratives.

Figure 4. Phanos Kryiacou, Statues in Crisis *(detail) (2009), as part of* Synergy *exhibition at the Archaeological Museum of Cyprus, 2009 (205x43x43cm). Courtesy of the artist.*

In the end, the claims that both Angelos Makrides's and Phanos Kyriacou's works put on the museum demand the viewer to consider challenging historical narratives, the subjective nature of interpretation, the loss of grand narratives, and the multiple nature of interpretation. In other words, this intervention is about putting forward the agency of the visitor and questioning the technology of the gaze, and this holds great educational potential.

BROADENING MUSEUM PEDAGOGY

Tracing the history of museum education is not an easy endeavour since each museum has had different approaches to education and to the museum's respective audiences. At the same time, museums' goals and priorities have been historically influenced by other parallel social and political factors specific to the museum's location and context. What is commonly acknowledged though, is that education was a primary function of the museum since its inception (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991; Hein, 1998) and that despite the difference in museums' shifting directions, there are "certain basic and commonly accepted premises that museum educators share since the late nineteenth century" (Blume et al., 2008, p. 84). Such commonly held belief includes the idea that learning in museums is object-oriented—what Bennett calls the "culture of the artifact" (1995, p. 146)—and that this is a process that provides visitors with the opportunity to not only shape ideas and understandings, but also to shape "an aesthetic and cultural sensibility" (Blume et al., 2008, p. 84). Although Blume et al. refer to art museums similar arguments could be made for

historical and archaeological museums, in which learning does involve artefacts, objects of cultural and historical significance, and historical memorabilia.

Charles Garoian, elaborating on the educational implications of artefacts, argues that, "viewers' agency enables their use of museum culture as a source through which to imagine, create, and perform new cultural myths that are relevant to their personal identities" (2001, p. 235). However, the degree to which this might be possible is questionable. If one assumes that the stories constructed in the museum are indeed the result of a predetermined set of beliefs and ideologies, and that the museum experience is only a process through which these come to existence, then it would hardly be the case that the museum allows visitors to imagine and reflect on their own identities. For as Bennett affirms, "the artefact, once placed in a museum, itself becomes, inherently and irretrievably, a rhetorical object […] thickly lacquered with layers of interpretation" (1995, p. 146). Bennett (1995) goes on to argue that these interpretations are determined by other media, such as books, magazines, or television, that similarly influence the selection, organisation and display of objects. As Jeffers (2003) similarly argues, the ways in which one understands the museum and constructs knowledge about the museum and its objects is more dependent on social codes and norms, established by that elite minority and its interests, rather than on individual cognitive or psychological development. In other words, knowledge in and about the museum is not the result of personalised experience but an affirmation of an already established set of beliefs.

In the case of the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia, one could argue that a performance of identity could indeed take place, but for Greek-Cypriots this is tied strictly to *a* particular (Greek) past and its archaeological legitimacy. Similar to other cases, this museum is also structured in such a way as to emphasise the objects' historical authority and authenticity, thus providing little space for re-imagining, re-creating or performing identities in this space. For instance, the dusty interiors of the museum, especially the glass cases or the vitrines, build a distance between the objects and the viewer establishing the objects' authenticity, but also their sacredness. The vitrine, both a museum technology and an educational apparatus, was first used by the Orthodox Church to preserve the relics of Saints: "a practice that helped to enhance the powerful presence of the holy and sacred" (Putman, 2009, p. 14). Although the glass case is used mainly to provide protection over museum objects, it also functions in a similar manner to the one first adopted by the Church. Increasing the physical distance between the object on display and the viewer, as well as the preceding distance between present and historical time, seduces the viewer by compelling her to look "at the untouchable and the unattainable" (Putman, 2009, p. 15). This distance is almost necessary in order to accentuate a sense of sacredness in the objects which it imposes upon them, what Walter Benjamin (1969) called the *aura* of the original.

Benjamin also asserted that an object's aura should not be seen as entirely separate from the object's ritual function. Beyond the objects' uniqueness and authenticity, Carol Duncan (1995) argues that the museum's organisation, preservation and display of various representations that are connected to a specific

community, and its highest cultural values, is what transform the museum experience into one of ritual. As mentioned earlier, she maintains that museum visitation is a process similar to the one of rituals because visitors in museums enact some form of performance related to memory or identity. In such cases, the museum aims for what the curator of the Louvre, Germain Bazin, had recognised as "momentary cultural epiphanies" (cited in Duncan, 1995, p. 11). These epiphanies are not, of course, related to an *a priori* truth about the objects on display, nor are the objects inherently able to activate in the viewer such epiphanies at the moment of visitation. Instead, these so-called epiphanies are constructed narratives which museums are so successful in producing. In the case of the Cyprus Museum, these cultural epiphanies relate to an already constructed, well-circulated and established sense of continuity (or discontinuity) from the classical past to the present, defining the island's identity as a 'Mediterranean island', still in the process of 'finding' itself. Nonetheless, the museum remains ignorant to the developments of the island and the particular art intervention that occurred on its premises highlighted this urgent need for change.

The contemporary works which were positioned in a direct dialogue with the archaeological artefacts during the exhibition, *Synergy*, opened up a space for questioning what was otherwise impossible or invisible in the museum. While museums have traditionally functioned as spaces for contemplation, reflection and discussion, their educational mission and impact, although desired, remains less clear, especially in the ways in which museums promote inquiry (Jeffers, 2003). Instead, "as educative institutions, museums function largely as repositories of the *already known*. They are places for telling, once and again, the stories of our time, ones which have become *doxa* through their endless repetition" (Bennett, 1995, p. 147). Thus, it is imperative for a museum like the Cyprus Museum to find ways to become more dialectical, to promote probing, and to become more alert and attuned to the needs of the present social life and politics of Cyprus, especially after the financial implementation imposed by the IMF's austerity measures. More than ever, people's needs are changing, as much as their living conditions, since the consequences of the economic changes are increasingly becoming evident on the island. Museums as educational institutions are called to play a crucial role in these transformative and unstable times, providing people the space and the platform to connect their past with their present in meaningful and possibly inspiring ways that will allow them to creatively respond to these changes.

The intervention by Angelos Makrides and Phanos Kyriacou (and of Yiannis Toumazis) was an alternative educational tool that reformed the museum for the short time that it lasted. The direct dialogue between the 'old' and the 'new', the latter being an artistic interpretation of, and, a critique of the former, introduced a critical dimension to the process of looking which escapes mere aesthetics, challenges one's *doxa*, and destabilises the certainties otherwise fixed in the museum's space, offering, therefore, the opportunity for multiple readings which have little to do with the historically constructed 'Greco-Mediterranean' identity of the island. Surely, one might argue that empowering Cyprus' presence in Europe and the wider Mediterranean region should be the purpose of such a museum.

Nonetheless, the Cyprus Museum is among the few in the country which could potentially serve as a dynamic and informal educational resource, ultimately refining both the museum experience and one's relation to artefacts and the past. More so, through its openness to host the intervention by Angelos Makrides and Phanos Kyriacou, the Cyprus Museum has proved to be a foundation with great potential for re-defining a sense of collective identity that diverts from orthodox notions of locality and limited understandings of the Mediterranean imaginary.

NOTES

[i] Horden and Purcell discuss extensively the notions of *exceptionalism* and *exclusivism* by making reference to the work of Herzfeld.

[ii] For a more detailed discussion on the notion of identity and the 'homeland' in other contemporary art practices from Cyprus, see Antonis Danos' paper 'The Little Land Fish' (2011b), published by *Kunapipi: Journal of Postcolonial Writing*.

[iii] Carol Duncan argues that the creation of public art museums functioned in such fashion in relation to the nation state. They 'made the state look good: progressive, concerned about the spiritual life of its citizens, a preserver of past achievements and a provider for the common good' (1991, p.93). I argue here that these are functions of museums in general, not just of the art museum, particularly museums created during colonial times.

[iv] The museum was originally housed in governmental offices until a new structure was built in 1908. The building was designed and constructed by architect N. Balanos, and supervised by curator of the museum at the time, George Everett Jeffery (Boumia & Stylianou-Lambert, 2011).

[v] EOKA stands for *National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters* and it was an organised attempt toward unification with motherland Greece and freedom from British colonial rule. The fights between EOKA and the British started in 1955 and lasted till 1959. A year later Cyprus was declared an independent country after the London-Zurich treaty. Archbishop Makarios III was elected the first president of the Republic of Cyprus.

[vi] For a theoretical discussion regarding Institutional Critique, see, among others: Frazer Ward's 'The Haunted Museum: Institutional Critique and Publicity' (1995); Benjamin Buchloh's essay 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions' (1999); Andrea Fraser's essay in *Artforum,* 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique' (2005).

[vii] For a more detailed discussion concerning the ways in which artists have addressed the ordering of knowledge in museums and galleries, see Gibbons (2007) chapter 6, 'The ordering of knowledge: Museum and Archives'. Michel Foucault's seminal text, *The Order of Things,* is also important in better understanding the classification and display system of museums.

[viii] Similar discussion on aesthetic value versus cultural production can be found in Karp and Lavine (1991).

[ix] For a more detailed discussion on 'Aphrodite' as a contested entity, metaphor and symbol relevant to the history of the island, see Yiannis Papadakis' paper 'Aphrodite delights' (2006). As he claims in the paper 'The symbolic uses of Aphrodite by British colonialism, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots alike offer revealing insights into the island's politics, as they encompass issues of colonialism, nationalism, historiography, gender and migration. Aphrodite, like Cyprus, is, and has been, a point of tension and contention' (2006, p. 238).

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ANABELA MOURA

2. CULTURAL SPACES AS SITES FOR IDENTITY FORMATION

A Portuguese case study

INTRODUCTION

Notions of ethnicity and identity have become highly politicised questions. In the theoretical discourse on these subjects they are either understood as being in a state of fragmentation or intensification. Modernisation is often associated with technological and economic development in the lives of states and it is also understood as a kind of threat to cultural identity, because of the thin line between promotion and exploitation of local, regional and national industries and culture, by global markets. Hannerz (1996) states, "Globalization is a matter of increasing long-distance interconnectedness … much of the world is now self-consciously one single field of persistent interaction and exchange" (pp. 17, 19). Globalisation is seen as an inevitable phenomenon that allows developments in several social sectors and technologies to provoke new forms of cultural production, consumption and social exchange. Portuguese ideas about culture and heritage, over the last eight hundred years, have shifted backwards and forwards from an emphasis on cultural transmission to one on cultural transformation and vice versa. Since heritage is a consequence of a dialectical relationship between human activity and the environment, it is not surprising that it continues to be an elusive concept. Although favourable ideological conditions since the revolution in 1974 have encouraged many studies of these concepts, in Portugal contradictory definitions have emerged. During the 25th April Revolution of 1974, forty-eight years of dictatorship were finally overthrown by a military coup and Portugal was ready to promote the democratisation of culture.

My review of related literature suggests that the notion of cultural heritage was typically linked to: (1) culturally established forms of aesthetic expression; or (2) intervention in terms of environmental change, not only with reference to high culture, but popular culture also (it definitely includes folklore and all the arts and crafts).

Some people associate heritage and culture exclusively with conservation of a limited range of historical works such as monumental sculpture, painting, and archaeological structures and remains, which are widely understood to have universal value historically, artistically, or scientifically (Barbosa, 1982, p. 13). Heritage here refers to every permanent record our ancestors and contemporaries

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leave behind which is judged essential to preserve for future generations. The central issue here is concerned with the fact that cultural heritage is commonly confused with fine arts and archaeology, which results in other cultural forms relating to everyday life (such as legends, dances, songs, oral traditions, social structure and crafts) being neglected.

The term 'culture' covers all aspects of human endeavour, which characterise a particular society, including its language, forms of knowledge, images, religions and the economics and politics which underpin attitudes, values and beliefs (Allison, 1992). Allison's anthropological-type definition of culture will be used throughout this chapter to explain the Portuguese concept of heritage, which has always been interpreted in a broad sense as covering all aspects of human endeavour. Allison explains art among other things as a phenomenon of culture or patrimony in the Portuguese sense and his definition has been selected because the review of literature on this topic suggested the concepts of patrimony and heritage education have always been indistinguishable from his concept of culture, although they have tended to be interpreted in an ethnocentric manner. When Portuguese experts speak about it they refer to many aspects of human endeavour including the man-made world and the values and beliefs that inform people's behaviours and attitudes to it, and the concept is not just restricted to aesthetic forms. The term 'cultural heritage education' has been used by art theorists and it has been adopted by art educators in Portugal (Moura, 1999) and many other world contexts (Boughton & Mason, 1999) to signify the need to include and analyse a range of cultural forms in art lessons and help students interpret their multiple meanings. In Portugal, art lessons typically embrace content and methods that are more characteristic of other school subjects like social studies in other countries. While the growth of globalisation is effecting aesthetic transformations in consumer societies everywhere, tradition and modernity co-exist and art teachers have an important role in this regard. Over the centuries, the landscape accumulated numerous traces, symbolic signs of people with whom Portugal came into contact. Worldwide, countries use these various symbolic signs and material culture as ways of expressing their identity: flags, songs, monuments are all ways to represent the people of a particular country.

At an international level, protection and preservation of heritage arises from recommendations of different organisations, such as the ICOM (International Council of Museums, website) (1987) and UNESCO (2000). Given the positive results of communities worldwide in this respect, one can observe that the political, economic and financial initiatives and social reforms are much more likely to be successful if, simultaneously, they take into account the cultural perspective and the wider aspirations and concerns of society (2000). Much of this is now in place or under discussion as we respond to the recommendations from international agencies in particular to integrate the cultural dimension into wider social, educational and economic development activities. However, despite these efforts, the evidence is that these actions alone are insufficient to address the existing gaps and their correlated needs (1998).

In this sense, when I began to work in an international project that involved Turkey and England during 2006 and 2007, I was aware of the importance of taking into account the diversity of interpretations about the concept of identity and how globalisation and new technologies have been influencing the way young people interpret and explain their own culture and identity, and my goal in this paper is to focus on the association between identity, local and impact of globalisation (Featherstone, 1995; Appadurai, 1991). Changes around the world affect, in many ways, local actions and interactions generated by global trends. With this "glocal" reality we are facing now, what do our students think about their own identity? How do they understand the interconnectedness and impact of history in our behaviours and values? The examination of Stuart Hall's (1997) contributions from both the social sciences and the humanities added new insights and questions about the way identity is constructed and represented in culture and in social relations, as did the work of Cahan and Kocur (1996) mentioned by Mason (2006) in her research.

CONTEXT AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

This paper draws upon findings from a case study carried out in Portugal, as part of an international project which involved Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo, Northern Portugal, Roehampton University at London, England and Mustafa Kemal University, Turkey. This case study took place at a Higher Education Institution, Escola Superior de Educação (Education College) of Viana do Castelo Polytechnic and one primary school. The aims of this small scale project were (i) To collect visual images and statements that convey student teachers' national identifications and values; (ii) To analyse their messages and meanings in the light of the literature about national identity in the respective countries; and (iii) To compare student teachers' conceptions of national identity in three countries.[i] Twenty-eight art and non-art student teachers and fourteen children aged eight years were asked to bring images that were related to their own identity and to explain them. All participants should explain where the image came from, why he/she chose it, and what it says about Portugal to him/her. The image could be a personal photo, an advertisement, a product wrapper, a postcard, an original drawing, from a magazine, from school manuals or other books, or an image from somewhere else. Once the pupils returned their images, they were analysed and their responses were coded and categorised by image type, source and subject of the image. The visual and verbal data were combined and interpreted thematically by each coordinator, so as to reveal the messages and meanings they communicated.

WHAT DO THE IMAGES REPRESENT?

The concept of identity is usually spelt out in the concept of patrimony and in this study we can verify that it is, above all, read and interpreted through history, culture and geography. A brief review of literature on the subject (Moura, 2000,

2008) found that the concept of cultural patrimony today tends to be associated with culturally established forms of aesthetic expression, or intervention in terms of environmental change, not only with reference to high culture but also to folk culture. Patrimony, therefore, undoubtedly includes folklore and a wide range of the arts and crafts.

From the fourteen answers of the Primary Education[ii] student teachers, four were related to history. They mentioned the flag, the armillary sphere, colonial sculpture, and a 15th century battle ship:

> The national flag was approved by the Government on the 29th of November 1910, although it was only recognised by the Constitutional Assembly on the 11th of June 1911. The Republic needed a new flag … (MC, BP, 2005)

Initially, Portuguese overseas expansionist policies in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were either directed towards the African west coast or towards the Atlantic Islands. According to C. R. Boxer (1988), Portuguese expansion was motivated by various factors, including the quest for precious metals and commercial wealth.

As the population of the country was small and the economy was weak, there were few possibilities of expansion into Europe. Thus expansion via the sea and the knowledge of a new world turned out to be the only alternative. The first phase of travels included the nearest coastline of Africa. The Portuguese then went on to various lands in the Orient and the third phase was the arrival in Brazil. During intercultural encounters the Portuguese again shaped their identity through communication with other peoples, and the historical period between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries is remembered historically as a golden period in Portuguese economic and artistic history. The income from the former colonies allowed for the construction of a large number of monuments built in a particular Gothic style known as 'Manuelino' (Galvão-Roxo, 1967). Later on, the baroque style was developed, which reached a peak in the gilded carved wood and stone of churches and palaces and in the highly-decorated tiles used in churches, fountains and other architectural details such as stairways (Araújo, 1962). One student, influenced by images in the media and in school manuals, argued in a very uncritical way the following:

> Every time I saw this symbol in school books, I related it to the history of my country … The sphere represents the Portuguese Discoveries and the trip made by Fernão Magalhães (Magellan).

On the other hand another student reinforced the heroic period of the Portuguese Expansion and selected as a Portuguese symbol the *Padrão dos Descobrimentos,* which is a colonial monument to the Discoveries:

> I chose this image because I believe it best identifies Portugal and evokes maritime expansion … I studied in France until the 10th grade and, consequently, when we studied the "Discoveries", I was very proud …

Another colleague chose a different image to portray the same period of history and said:

> The Portuguese "Discoveries" were a great step for mankind. Through them, the Portuguese discovered new lands and new traditions that nowadays influence Portuguese culture. For this reason, when we speak of Portugal, we speak of its ancestors, and its heroes, who will never be forgotten …

A look at the answers of the sample questioned on identity, shows that they relate identity and heritage to national symbols. Here are some examples related to the arts, language, music, sport and religion:

Table 1. National symbols.

	Number of answers	*Arts*	*Music*	*Geography*	*Language*	*Sport*	*Religion*	*Tradition*	*History*
Specialist Art		5	2	-	2	1	-	3	1
Generalist Non- Art		2	2	1	1	2	-	1	5
Children		3		1	-	-	2	8	-

RECURRING IMAGES

The analysis of the answers of the three groups leads us to the need for questions related to the group profile, the different dynamics of each group, the acquisition of skills, values, attitudes and knowledge necessary to approach such concepts related to culture.

We can verify that there are recurring images and that they are analysed in a similar way by all groups. One of them is related to the concept of *heroes*: in sport, literature, in history, and music. The relationship between images and national identity obliged the participants to engage with citizenship issues and stimulate their creativity through image-selection from a range of sources. Participants were encouraged to explore their own identities through the use of analytical and critical skills

Different images of heroes were shown to analyse the various representations and inherent meanings of the concept of identity: as a divinity (e.g. Jesus), as a poet (e.g. Camões, Pessoa), as adventurers (those that participated in the Portuguese expansion), as kings or queens of sport (e.g. Figo, Benfica) or

traditional singers (e.g. Amália, Mariza, Madredeus). Graça Moura presents the following definition (2004) of a hero: "a hero is born from the interpretation that a community makes in consensual terms of a certain human behavior" (p. 90). For this author, there is a need to bring out the hero that each one of us has deep down inside.

Table 2. Heroes.

HEROES	*Religion*	*Arts*	*Sport*	*Literature*	*History*	*Music*
Arts			National Football Team	Fernando Pessoa-Poetry	Adventurers of the colonial historical period — Sculpture	Amália Rodrigues *Fado*
Non Arts			Figo & Benfica Football Team	Camões — Poetry		(Amália & Mariza) *Fado* and Musical Group (Madredeus)
Children	Jesus	-				

EXPLANATION OF STUDENTS' CHOICES

What do students' choices tell us? The present day trend towards globalisation is leading nation states to promote preservation of identity and national roots. More and more this feeling is evident in these students' comments. They helped me to understand and interpret their choices within their culture and interpret their meanings, which basically consist of monuments glorifying conquerors: *colonial* monuments, *Fado* as an expression of sorrow, *football* as the collective drug that helps people not to have to think about the challenges of globalisation and about norms prescribed by universal values, *gastronomy* of a country whose countryside is becoming a desert … the heritage of a past that does not exist anymore.

The only two examples that reflect stereotypical representations in any way are the Barcelos rooster and Port wine; curiously these were both provided by children, but with possible parental guidance. The study investigated visual images selected by student art and non-art teachers and children as representative of the national identity in Portugal. Data was analysed to classify their perceptions of national identity. Most of the images were selected from internet and school manuals. The internet plays an important role as a powerful resource material for student teachers. Children used collage and selected images from newspapers and magazines. They also used drawing and painting for representing their culture.

The cultural identity of a nation reflects many fears, worries, needs and myths which have contributed to its formation over time and is forged by a range of acculturations, identifications and interactions. The individual and collective achievements of a nation, as shaped by history, acquire a particular significance for those who carry them out. But the arts, languages, music, sport and religion a country preserve are but small reflections of its identity and constitute the visible portion of a people's culture only (Cardoso, 1996). Here, their answers worked as an interlocutor between culture and participants' development in terms of personal and social expression. There are many images that present messages that society permanently spreads through reflection on the role of globalisation which has been causing fundamental changes in social and cultural terms, with consequences for the views of people of each nation. Tradition has been reinforced, because it meets the needs of a postmodern society that wants to use it as a powerful instrument that can help to reassure the singularity, or in other words, what is peculiar to a certain culture within diversity.

Both the art and non-art student teachers chose images linked to their specific area of training, so that the data clearly shows a preference in the art teachers for images from the arts, in all the manifestations—sports, literature, plastic arts, whereas the generalist student teachers tend toward culturally general images, mainly historical. The children, who attend a Catholic primary school and took part in this research project just before Christmas, reflected their strong religious upbringing in their choices. Moreover, common traditional images were related to Christmas decorations, Christian symbols such as the Nativity scene and typical Christmas desserts. Only one child drew images of traditional Portuguese products – cork and Port wine, and another chose to depict the stereotypical image of the Barcelos rooster.

RECURRING THEMES

Yes, it is clear that Portuguese identity was shaped by expansionist policies in the past and this marked Portuguese people's understanding of history and culture deeply. Our object of analysis is the nature of the answers that were given and their implications in the educational context. This means that there are recurring explanations that can be summarised in the following way: everything 'good' about our identity is related to the golden period of the Expansion, to the national heroes, to our imperial past, or in other words, to our history. But the positive elements of the present are a phenomenon of popular culture and of the media. This happens with the examples of singers and footballers. This statement by one teacher reinforces this idea:

> Portugal in present times is going through a bad financial crisis. The Portuguese find themselves depressed, stepped on and unappreciated. Even so, instead of choosing an image that reflects the misery our country has to offer, I prefer to choose a positive aspect and the best that we have to offer.

> We have a vast and rich culture and, despite the present scepticism of the Portuguese, we make a point of reinforcing this fact.

This student teacher chose two *Fado* singers (Amália Rodrigues and Mariza). Football, for instance, emerges also as an object of attention by some student teachers, because they feel it is an instrument, among others, used for shaping collective identity; it is an element of approximation of human relationships, not only because of its group strategy, but also because of the symbols and social behaviors that it embodies.

According to some statements, the national football team represents a nation when it plays inside or outside their country and people expect the same from it as they expect from their nation: courage, discipline and patriotism. On the other hand, although the heroes from the past belonged to an elite, in football players from all social classes and backgrounds come together and make it one of the most important popular expressions in the present day. The nationalist ideology that underpins some of these statements related to sports is the result of the population identifying with the players and them with the nation.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE NATIONAL IDENTIFICATIONS

Visual content analysis was the main research tool that was used to understand and analyse the messages and concepts within texts as well as their culture and times (Barthes, 1980; Feldman, 1982; Taylor, 1994; Prosser, 1998). Images are polysemic and their meaning must always be provisional, and need to be articulated in specific contexts. Image analysis challenges essentialist interpretations of images, which tend to consider them as a fixed relation between signifier and signified. According to Lynch (1989, p. 26) visual, linguistic, aesthetic and other creative competencies are needed in curriculum planning to enable dialogue and discourse within and across different cultures. I used art-based teaching-learning strategies and especially analysis of mass media images as a stimulus for the kind of dialogue enables the introduction of prejudice reduction strategies gradually over time. Kendall (1996, p. 137) states that "neither listening nor hearing is simple". I agree with this statement and have found that in teacher/student interactions, problems typically arise because teachers do not think about social and political dimensions. One of my greatest personal assets as a teacher in this small-scale study was my willingness to listen to participants' ideas when they were based on different systems of values and beliefs from my responses.

There is no totalising position from which final judgements could be made concerning the ideological significance of any image. In other words, a positive image is whatever serves as a point of identification for people and motivates them to succeed by giving them a sense of pride in the achievements of their people. I think that these answers, by Portuguese children and adult student teachers tend to be positive. There is no real difference between the answers of the art and non art student teachers in terms of image repertoires which ignore or misrepresent ethnic

minorities. Moreover, their answers empower alternative perspectives which are rooted in their notions of culture in an ethnocentric way. So, for example, an image which shows the colonial monument *Padrão dos Descobrimentos*, with several characters standing in a position of pride, courage and supremacy, tends to be a positive image because it confirms the positive association between the Portuguese conquerors, their own cultural heroes, who are everything they are not. On the other hand, images selected by non-art student teachers, which show a well-known singer of *Fado* or football player determine a positive effect on the viewer, because they show someone in a position of power and influence performing a civic duty:

> Luís Figo is a great athlete and is, therefore, recognised globally and exports the image of the country in which he was born, provoking an interest of the others in Portugal. In the present I think he is the person that best symbolises Portugal, because it is not only the sport with which he is connected, but he is also recognised for participating in various solidarity campaigns, giving him more fame.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Although significant differences do emerge from the answers of the three groups (Portuguese, British and Turkish), there is some consensus, at least implicitly, on a number of points. Cultures persist in their diversity, particularly in a time of increasing globalisation and this leads us to ask about what kind of theoretical models we can use to understand how identities are 'made'. From the comparison of the images and reasons given in the three countries, were we able to answer the question: Who then are we? The collected data has helped us to consider more effectively how identities have shaped the meaning, design and use of culture and how media reinforce a demystification of values and a consecutive production of heroes (Fernandes, 2003).

The answers of the three countries reflect the idea that modern nations, through their interventions in the arts, tend to reinforce cultural differentiation or cultural complexity. Another conclusion is that the Portuguese sample used culture as a way of reinforcing legitimacy and power. Analysis of the images collected by the three countries led me to see a closer relationship between Portuguese and Turkish perceptions, perhaps because these countries are much less culturally diverse than the UK sample, which is representative of that society. For example, the image of the milk bottle selected by a UK participant, might not have been chosen were it not for the fact that the student teacher in question was from Egypt and it marked her cultural adaptation to the UK. On the other hand the quintessential cup of tea was chosen principally by the 'British' participants.

These findings appear to be inconclusive, discontinuous, and it is evident this is important for rethinking the certainty expressed in other studies about the relationship between globalisation and national culture, national anxiety and cultural politics.

Nation was the only category that was strongly emphasised, but does not reflect its contacts with the world through Portugal. I think the way culture was interpreted again reflects a stereotypical way of analysing it. High culture was emphasised and interpreted as taste and high art. All of them reflect a strong nationalistic way of interpreting a culture that was shaped by diversity and difference. To be honest, I am not sure which of their answers gives me a clear idea of Portuguese national identity, if any of them do, but it is clear that identity is a term that begins to give us humans a sense of understanding of who we are.

Another finding from the analysis of the Portuguese answers is that it is with a modernist philosophy in mind that they discuss the influence of identity on their perceptions of contemporary culture. Although art is understood as being an element of culture it is still related to culture in a modernist way which means that it is isolated from historical, social, cultural and political influences. Although culture, heritage and identity are important concepts in Portuguese art education, this case study has shown that the theory and practice of Portuguese art education is still very ethnocentric. It is important to note that the 48 years of the regime founded by Salazar put above all in evidence the mythical and irrational aspects linked to the national identity, as if Portugal had a moral superiority in relation to other nations and countries and as if that had the privilege of legitimating its destiny against everything and everybody.

In Portugal, during the two last decades, these issues were only beginning to be explored. Although the government tested out some small-scale experiments, children continued to be educated within a framework of culturally biased and segregationist values. These problems only began to be addressed in the 1980s at a time when the numbers of immigrants from Africa in Portugal increased drastically. The little that has been done in terms of school practice reveals a pluralist orientation which has only been applied in schools with large numbers of ethnic minority children. Similar situations in other European contexts, according to Allison (1994), led to a critique by educators such as Troyna, of pluralist reform initiatives, which were referred to as ‘benevolent’ and criticised as merely local solutions to local problems. Much of this reflection has focused on the historical context of a country which is a young democracy and needs to re-evaluate its cultural and educational values accordingly.

There was also evidence that art teachers and children’s values do not reflect the multicultural society to which they belong. They neglect historical artistic heritage both past and present and do not deal with global issues. Their perceptions tend to reinforce negative social values and the stereotypes of others and, in doing so, run the risk of perpetuating social inequality. Like other European countries, Portugal is becoming increasingly multiracial. It is a fact of life that non-European students and children of migrants are marginalised and are failing in the educational system. During the last thirty years, many European countries have developed educational policies and practices aimed at increasing equality of opportunity for their ethnic minority members and raising awareness of cultural diversity.

Image analysis was understood as a good way of increasing students’ social understanding. By the use of questioning in particular, students were stimulated to

talk about how images produce meaning (Hall, 1997) and explained the semiotic concepts inherent to meaning production in visual images, such as signified, signifier and sign, through discussion of images of their school manuals and mass media examples. This was not new to either the teachers or students since these concepts are commonly introduced into language and VTE lessons in Portugal. It soon became clear that the students' ideas about history were very much influenced by mass media. Understanding symbolism was linked to a viewer's life experience, knowledge and level of visual literacy and it was suggested that many historical art works that celebrate conflict should be analysed critically. These students recognised the need for more training and historical information to be able to develop their critical and appreciative abilities. Finally, different perspectives are needed to help students to interpret meaning and to deconstruct visual images in order to ensure that they cannot only learn about the history of art, but also about the world history. This small-scale study operates on the fundamental premise that curricular trends in education that tend towards standardisation and homogeneity are still inappropriate. It also links strongly to research questions associated with social and political dimensions of cultural encounters but also overlaps with elements of cultural encounters over time and space. Visual analysis as a research tool is a process that requires creative and intuitive feelings as well as deep analysis and while the use of visual methods needs to bridge theory and practice. Based on these findings, I think future studies could focus on the effects of power in validating knowledge of art, use of deconstruction in analysing artwork and the recognition of the multiple codes that an artwork can possess (Efland et al., 1996).

IMPLICATIONS FOR ART TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

To conclude, based both on my experience as a researcher and that of other colleagues and students, I believe that it is no longer possible to ignore academic and intellectual debate on these issues which are often treated from different perspectives, depending on how societies and cultures feel and identify themselves in the world systems, how the changes have influenced their own images of themselves and what their past experiences were with regard to external powers and international relations. This small-scale project has revealed a new socially constructed reality and a platform and process for deriving new ways of seeing the world and our place within it. A lot of research has gone into detecting, decoding and replacing anything that might be thought offensive, by what are called positive images. This study reflects on the notion of identity as something that is socially constructed, rather than natural or essential. Consequently a need was identified for an art educator such as myself to continue a systematic comparative research in several countries and critically evaluate its educational implications for our national context, with a diasporic consciousness.

NOTES

[i] Data about national identifications was collected in the same way in the three countries. Groups of students were asked to select one image they felt was representative of Turkey, Portugal and/or Britain and bring it with them to the class together with a written statement giving reasons for their choice. They were told it could be a personal photo, an advertisement, a product wrapper, a postcard or an original drawing; it could be positive, critical, ambiguous or have multiple meanings about nationalism as long as it presented an aspect of it that was important to them personally. They were asked not to discuss their images and statements with anyone else before they brought them to class. The data was collected from the Polytechnic Art Education Department and from one Elementary School (age: 8 years old). According to the guidelines given by Rachel Mason, the British partner and coordinator of the Project, the task of choosing an image and writing about it was distributed at the end of one art education class and the images and texts were collected in at the end of the next one after they had shared them with each other and discussed their meanings, messages and choices as a group.

[ii] Primary Education student teachers have a generalist training, and they are prepared to teach all subjects in the primary schools. On the other hand specialist art teachers only teach art in Middle Schools (children aged 10/12 years).

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SOFIA MARQUES DA SILVA

3. DISINHERITING THE HERITAGE AND THE CASE OF *PAULITEIRAS*

Young girls as newcomers in a traditional dance from the northeast of Portugal

INTRODUCTION

In an article entitled "La Méditerranée oubliée", Jean-François Devret (2003) holds that there is a southern feeling of dissymmetry and even deception arising from growing contrasts in society and economy. Within Southern and Mediterranean regions there are, however, other dissymmetries reinforcing the major ones. Those dissymmetries are being experienced and are happening in everyday lives, namely in young people's lives, and they bear witness to deep inequalities at social, cultural, economical and regional levels.

Portugal has been considered as a semi-peripheral context "which is a reference to the existence of socio-cultural and economic features that are typical of an intermediate level of development" (Rodrigues & Stoer, 2001, p. 134). This condition is also important to understand the tension within the equality of opportunities system, especially in what concerns access to education, citizenship and cultural rights (Stoer & Araújo, 2000).

The region where the research was carried out has been experiencing a dissymmetric geo-historical condition.[i] Located in the northern countryside of Portugal and difficult to reach, the preservation of cultural productions was only possible through particular strategies. In the past two decades better road and technology accesses and more investment in education, among others, brought about some changes at the local level. Nevertheless, the weight of living "behind the mountains"[ii] leads to several constraints.

The village continues to be a place where agriculture and construction activities prevail and unemployment rates soar. A few jobs in the third sector are available in a small city close to the village, but some young adults, mainly males, decided in the past decade to emigrate, mainly to Spain, to work in the construction sector. However, economic difficulties in that sector, due to global economic crises, obliged most of them to return home, facing life conditions with no future.

Like other rural places in the country, this small village has suffered social and economic changes since the 1970s. Some of them resulted from national and European measures with an impact at the local level. The relationship with agriculture changed and expectations and aspirations kept up with those changes, making some families invest in their children's education (Portela, 1997).

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The context where the research was carried out is located at the edge of a plateau and close to the *Douro* River. On the other side of the river valley is Spain. Even though interaction and similarities[iii] between populations from both sides has always existed, it was after the integration of Portugal and Spain in the European Union that interregional initiatives started to take place (Tiza, 2010).

Preliminary results and interpretations deduced during this ongoing research could only be accurately accomplished by bearing in mind that this particular place is located on the periphery of territories—real and symbolic ones. Its peripheral location comes from social, economic and geopolitical asymmetries. These asymmetries contribute to frame this place within a borderline condition, and for this reason it is a forgotten place (Devret, 2003).

This place is therefore struggling with its position on the periphery of a region; of a national territory; of a political territory; of the Mediterranean; and of Europe. These different types of distances have regulated and created different alterities and inequalities. People from less peripheral areas, like seaside and urban areas, still have a particular perception about rural areas. Considered as the "end of the world" or a romantic landscape, people from outside these areas have a paradoxical relationship with it. It seems, however, that people who inhabit more central areas need these borderline places in order to guarantee a *known world,* built up between historical asymmetries.

Accordingly, "[g]eographical proximity is therefore to be understood as subject to a larger cartography of knowledge, power relations and economic frameworks" (Albahari, 2008, pp. 148-149). Our understanding of citizenship balances between the place where we are located and the negotiation and value of differences and cultural diversity at national and local levels. However, in the context of inclusive participation in the political, economical and social life of a community, it is clear that the present concept of national citizenship is not fit to respond to the challenge of multiculturalism to which intercultural dialogue is addressed (Perini, 2010, p. 165).

Young people are aware of a perception of strangeness and otherness that is directed towards the region which they inhabit. They often say that young people from urban areas think that they are ignorant. Nevertheless, young people from that region and from that village in particular, themselves feel that they live on the edge of Portugal, or feel that they are forgotten. Some young people assert their sense of belonging to the village, but at the same time they do not believe that anything good for their future will come out of it. In fact, most of boys and girls that we met during this research are willing to move to urban areas, where they feel they will have more opportunities in education or work. However, if boys frequently mention a future return to the village, girls do not wish to go back, explaining that they have more freedom in the city.

In order to overcome constraints such as the lack of access to other educational opportunities, some families have been investing in their children's education. Young boys and girls move to big cities, aiming to finish secondary education with better grades. Therefore, some families are able to send their children to another city and to a private school. Some of them end up by going to University and some

never return to their homeland. However, many of them maintain a tight connection with the village, keeping close contact, through many ways, with family, friends and culture. Local heritage and traditions seem to play an important role in individual and collective attachment to a territory. As Marwa Ibrahim (Ibrahim, 2009, p. 153) wrote:

> Le territoire est donc une sort d'entredeux, un endroit où s'établit un patrimoine, un espace avec une Histoire, mais il est également un lieu de projets, où se counstruit un avenir.

We might argue that the girls involved in this type of cultural engagement are transforming their relation to space and relevant figures, like family or friends, creating an interconnectivity that results from a reappropriation of cultural meanings valued both by village and the dance group. By punctuating the territory with their participation in this type of art dance they are translating meanings and configuring their identity.

The involvement of some girls in the dance group *Pauliteiras* gives a sense of belonging and creates important bonds. They are dealing with a heritage, considered as cultural knowledge, which creates meanings between the past and the present in a given territory.

EXPLORING AN ARGUMENT

Portuguese historians do not agree on the origins of the traditional dance called *Pauliteiros*. It can, however, be traced back over many centuries. This traditional dance is part of the local art performances from this northeastern region of Portugal, a place where paradoxes between sacred and profane traditions are strong. Some relate this performance to a European type of cultural manifestation called "the dance of the spades" (Tiza, 2010); some relate it to warrior rituals, associated to the Greco-Roman pyrrhic wars, and others assert that this dance existed in the Iberian Peninsula long before the Roman Empire expansion. Therefore, some historians believe in Celtic origins related to agriculture and fertility rituals or to physical preparation for wars (Tiza, 2010).

Like António Tiza (2010), I believe that these different theses are not contradictory, because it is possible to relate this dance with "religious, festive and warrior elements" (Tiza, 2010, p. 94). The absence of certainties about the origins of the dance of *Pauliteiros*, can prove, perhaps, the existence of different cultures co-existing in Southern countries. This seems to be particularly true in the case of Portugal, being influenced by the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, by the Northern as well as the Southern regions. To define to which region Portugal belongs is as difficult as defining Southern or Mediterranean regions (Mayo, 2007). From a European perspective, regions are constructions (Sultana, 1996) and are differently conceptualized (Theophilides & Koutselini-Ioannidis, 1999), from an outsider or an insider perspective.

The dance of *Pauliteiros* was always predicated on rigid roles, especially as far as gender is concerned, following what might be called role desirability. During the

performance, eight dancers use sticks (*paus*), and despite having a common choreographic structure, each group from different parishes fights for its own identity, introducing small changes (Tiza, 2010). Choreographies are complex and demand a very strong body coordination and physical ability. Strength and virility are traditional requested skills that must be combined with a special outfit that includes white skirts and shirts, colourful scarves, ribbons and a hat.

In the region where this type of dance is traditionally stronger, the *Miranda do Douro* Plateau, "the dance is performed only by men, young and single" (Tiza, 2010, p. 94). However, due to the desertification that most of the Portuguese countryside is dealing with, or due to the fact that it is difficult to engage young boys in local educational activities, the participation of young girls and women, who traditionally were just observers or minor participants in this form of art, started to be allowed. One might argue that there is a trend to value natural and cultural patrimony in rural settings (Ferrão, 2000), while changes and newcomers in traditions are becoming more acceptable. The struggle is to keep some aspects of heritage as important dimensions of local identity in a global world:

> In a generally volatile economic and political climate, the issues of cultural property, arts and heritage are becoming the main arena of negotiation of identities and imaginary boundaries between cultures. (Hofman, 2008, p. 139)

Due to some local effects of globalisation, deeply experienced by young people, localisms have been reinforced and stimulated, proving that "global and local cultures are relational" (Featherstone, 2008, p. 181). Young people seem to play an important role in attempting to create dialogues between cultural paradoxes and contradictory worlds.

Differences between Southern, Mediterranean and Northern youths, as well as different amalgamations that young people produce, mean that we are not living a taken for granted unification of practices. The globalisation of some aspects of young people's lives does not eclipse the influence of local cultural dimensions (Nilan & Feixa, 2006). Young people from different places, namely from more peripheral places, are able to integrate different cultural influences in their experience and produce new interpretations. In order to make sense of what is happening, I am still inspired by Angela McRobbie (1993, p. 13): "How young people, male and female, experience the society around them and how they in turn express this experience, continue to be immensely important questions".

Globalised youth cultures and transitions may affect young people differently in different contexts (Bendit & Hahn-Bleibtreu, 2008). In other words, I agree with Walter Hornstein (2008, p. 43) when he calls our attention to the fact that the connection between youth and globalisation "can never mean that there is a homogeneous, globalised youth". Young people are not passive subjects, assimilating forms of culture; they recreate global information and processes, sometimes by integrating more traditional and local aspects. Those aspects are also part of their cultures as young people, including what might be seen as opposite belongings.

Although I might agree with the existence of global youth cultures, some groups of young people are facing local struggles besides global or European ones (Albahari, 2008). With less opportunities to become involved in other forms of participation, as associations, some youngsters find at the local level what seem to be relevant strategies for "being there". This can be considered a form of citizenship that "only comes into its own when it is exercised locally" (Pais, 2008, p. 233).

Some media and other public discourses claim that youth has no future, is lost and without a reference point. The participation of these young girls in this art form can be interesting in order to analyse how young people reconnect with unexpected localities. By doing this they are updating some principles and rules. Above all, they are creating a sense for their lives in the betweenness of different claims, cultures and expectations.

I do not wish to analyse their experience based on a concept of youth as a problem, or at risk. As a group, youth is socially constructed and marked by diversity. It is influenced by global cultures and able to recreate and integrate local forms of heritage from a new approach. The young participants in this study are dealing, as others in western countries, with the absence of linearity in what concerns transitions (Pais, 2000, 2003; Walther, 2006): from school to work or to adulthood. Therefore, they are facing vulnerable conditions caused by local dimensions—like interiority and rurality—and by global dimensions that cause vulnerabilities like unemployment or insecurity.

The ethnographically informed research in which I am involved aims to analyse and understand life experiences and educational pathways lived by young people in the countryside of Portugal. In this process I am trying to overcome some simplistic, caricatured, doomed or romantic views about living in a rural area in the interior part of Portugal.

In this paper I will try to discuss a small part of the project: the experiences of young girls in a local dance group called *Pauliteiras*. The data explored was collected during the offline ethnography,[iv] through participant-observation and ethnographic interviews. Girls' voices are important in this place, but attention to other voices was also paid: those who rehearse with the dance group and others in the local population.

Through theoretical perspectives from the sociology of education and anthropology this paper discusses the tension between heritage and dis-inheriting the heritage, as a global process, through the analysis of an artistic experience of a *Pauliteiras* dance group. Young girls seem to be able to incorporate new aspects in and from tradition, taking the dance as an expression of their own. This expression seems to be both a repository of a struggle for cultural recognition (Fraser, 1995, 1997) and meaningful collective interactions. It is relevant to analyse the "network of cooperation, as central to the analysis of art as a social phenomenon" (Becker, 1982, p. xi). This concept of art is not one which stresses art as "an atemporal reality separate from everyday life" (Chambers, 2008, p. 192). It is assumed that art is not separated from the world flow.

CHANGING HERITAGE AND GIRLS AS NEWCOMERS

Following the desire to keep alive the heritage of an old art form, local communities started to work on what seems to be a "manipulation of that heritage" (Albahari, 2008, p. 142). This can also be understood as a means of defining local interpretative maps of cultural affinity (Albahari, 2008). *Pauliteiras* can be seen as a result of 'misreading' the traditional rituals and performances. Fieldwork confronted us with questions of authenticity raised at the local level:

> I mentioned to the choreographer that, if I believed in tradition, girls would not be allowed to dance. He replied by saying: "a very important historian from this region points out that the 'stick dance' can only be performed by boys. Sometimes in some meetings this professor says that *Pauliteiras* shouldn't even exist". (Fieldnote, June, 2011)

Local communities are reinventing tradition through a process of translation. They try to keep some aspects of traditional local culture which are meaningful and not completely forgotten. As the choreographer says: "The group gives prestige to the village and girls take our own culture elsewhere". (Fieldnote, June, 2011) Locally there is the perception that young girls will transfer the heritage to future generations. When the group of girls started, the local population was very curious:

> We were behind closed doors during rehearsals and people often insisted that they wanted to attend them. They wanted to see this new group, the dance steps and whether girls could do it … (Ana, 20, University Student)

The traditional dance is part of a local narrative in which a new temporal dimension is created and different experiences are combined (HałLas, 2008). The dance group experiences different times (past, present and future) and the community also lives those different times through the group.

> I am curious about how the village received the group of *Pauliteiras*. The choreographer says that, "it was very well accepted. If it weren't for this group there would be nothing here. Through it, it is possible to keep the tradition alive". (Fieldnote, June, 2011)

Young girls and the community are trying new articulations between cultural memories, collective remembrances and forms of heritage. Through the mobilisation of new technologies (internet, mobile phones) and new contexts they are giving a new place to heritage.

Local engagements seem to emerge through the *Pauliteiras* dance group, reshaping girls' condition of *strangeness*, which has been framed by geo-historical position or by gender. They are strengthening cultural affinities through their investment in symbolic bonds to historical memories and geographical proximities. This involvement is keeping young girls who leave the village, for example, to study at University, connected with the local community:

> For me this group, although a bit different from its beginning, is very important. I am always waiting for weekends to go home and the rehearsal is

> very important. We are all together, doing something as a group. (Ana, 20, University Student)

Bonds with the village and the region still remain and this engagement interplays with their own identity. Some people from outside think that these experiences deserve to be valued. A person who left the village 40 years ago, and who still keeps contact with the village, considers that

> These activities, (like *Pauliteiras*) are an important link to create bonds and to keep young people involved in healthier activities. (Manuel, 54, Professor)

The dance group can be understood as a way of becoming affiliated in the community. This is happening not only by just borrowing old meanings, but by building new ones. Having a lack of space in this traditional artistic performance, these girls make new proposals to the community by creating new nets. Through this they can acquire skills gained through participation, negotiation and autonomy. These nets, however, are not organised in a sequential trajectory, but they are forged in a composite patchwork.

Belongings are constructed between simulated parts—performing a dance that is not traditionally taught to girls—and real parts—claiming changes that make sense from their standpoint as girls (Haraway, 1988). This negotiation with what can be performed and what is acceptable in the dance means that they are also negotiating their identity and place within the community.

Being a local initiative does not, however, restrict the experience to a local place. By using new technologies and communications they interact and are known not only at a local level. Rather than merely reinforce local conditions of remoteness, some local strategies can become a means to promote connections between local places to places beyond (Massey, 2008). A person can be attached to different places at the same time, feeling that he/she no longer belongs to a specific place.

Recognition at different levels and contexts, beside the local ones, seems to keep the tradition alive, strengthening local cultures. The global is not sweeping local practices, behaviours or tastes. On the contrary, this dialogue is the most important factor to foster bonds of belonging, some of them determined by artistic memories and local forms of heritage.

How does the community, and particularly, these girls, understand this legacy and their role in perpetuating these art forms? Ana tells us that:

> We try to carry on with the group so that the tradition does not come to an end. We want to continue what we started. It is sad that we started with three groups and now we just have this one. (Ana, 20, University Student)

If one considers that "culture tells us where we have come from and where we are going" (Pais, 2008, p. 236), one might conclude that these girls are trying to re-interpret the dance and simultaneously keep some of its recognisable dimensions. Through this process of re-interpretation – especially if one keeps in mind the perspective of gender and the fact that these girls are in a geopolitically marginal

place – one could say that they are resisting, even if the marginal process risks being absorbed by the establishment (Pais, 2008).

Girls involved in this art experience are creating dialogic cultures, integrating different senses of belonging and coping with diverse demands and contradictory life situations. They are keeping the tradition alive and participating in cultural dialogues.

KEEPING THE TRADITION AND GENDERED APPROPRIATIONS

Some women from the village, who were teenagers or young adults in the 1980s, started this re-interpretation of *Pauliteiros* by organising a new group only with girls. Two decades later these dissenters stimulated their daughters, now teenagers:

> The group choreographer tells me that the first group of *Pauliteiras* appeared in 1985: "Back then the dancers were these girls' mothers". That first group ended and it was only in 2006 that a group of girls showed an interest in dancing the "dance of the sticks". Yesterday, I spoke to a young female *Pauliteira* who told me that it was a woman from the original group who started to encourage this new group. The choreographer states that he was driven by this mother's enthusiasm: "I was astonished, because I had 36 young boys and girls from the village who showed an interest. It was enough to organise three groups: one with boys, and two with girls: adolescents and children". (Fieldnote, June, 2011)

By doing this, mothers, now adults, re-experienced their participation in a project that was a marginal project from its very beginning. One can speak about a gender trajectory related to their investment in a particular pathway and cultural practice. Nielsen (2004) calls our attention to the social process of change in what concerns gender:

> By gradually changing the norms for how gender, body, or sexuality can be represented in public space, by reframing sexuality in public as well as in private, young women over the last three generations have simultaneously carved spaces for new subjectivities that are not reducible to gender. (Nielsen, 2004, p. 9)

Apparently, the traditional *owners* of this dance—men and boys—are giving space to girls and are not concerned with these cultural and subversive changes: gender subversion. The choreographer tries to explain why young boys have given up participating in the *Pauliteiros* dance: "There were groups with boys, but they did not commit themselves or strive as they usually do with football" (Fieldnote, June, 2011).

This artistic expression through the dance led us to understand that girls are not expressing femininity in a masculine dance, but proving that they are able to dance like girls with a strong physicality. In fact they are challenging stereotypes and traditions.

> Girls dance as competently as boys. I don't feel I am inferior in relation to boys although I recognise that the original dance is theirs. The army was also just for men in the past but now women are there as well. (Patrícia, 18, High School student)

According to the choreographer, however, the dance with girls can be seen as a soft performance: "*Pauliteiros* is a warrior dance and there is more violence and aggression with boys" (Fieldnote, June, 2011).

It is impossible to ignore that the body plays an important role in the participation process. There is a symbolic and real investment in their bodies, by claiming a body performance through dance. In doing this they are demarcating their bodies (Pais, 2008) from gendered expectations, morality and normality. In some way, through the performance of a masculine warrior dance, they are trying to control their power over their bodies.

I could also add that their gender identities are able to integrate traditional and non-traditional features (Leid & Bulman, 2007) and this might be possible through some processes of resistance, agency and through learning an alternative gender possibility (Derné, 2002).

By inhabiting these art spaces, new rules and oppositional art forms are being created yet through disinheriting the heritage. The global is not swallowing local practices, but can be seen as a means for developing new attachments as well as for promoting local cultures (Gomart & Hennion, 1998). In fact, the access to different realities due to cultural globalisation might have contributed to the adoption of new femininities.

The fact that they raise their voices, in order to make their points of view heard and recognised, means that, even in small villages in hidden rural areas, girls are creating new subjectivities as girls and changing also tradition in what concerns gender.

For example, they initially used the traditional outfit and then they decided to ask a local friend to design a new one with other colours.

> I was chatting with Patrícia about her experience as a former *Pauliteira*. She mentions the outfit and how they decided to change it. She argues, saying that they were a new group and they were a group of girls. It was important to have a specific image. Meanwhile Joana tells me to wait a minute and when she returns she carries two outfits: the older one and traditional one; and the new one that includes girls' ideas. (Fieldnote, August, 2011)

The *subversion* of power relations gives space to the idea that dichotomies are simplistic means of explanations (Albahari, 2008). Some members of the village are aware of those changes:

> The group is composed only of girls. They wear white skirts, like boys, but sometimes they wear blue skirts instead, with a red ribbon, as well as put on whatever they choose. They were dancing here the other day and they were OK. It is strange but they are doing well. (Fieldnote, October, 2010)

Gender issues play an important role in the analysis of these phenomena. Being women and girls who traditionally were *strangers* to this type of performance, this dance was not symbolically their territory. Historically, men and boys are the owners of this performance. On this matter, Georg Simmel's perspective is of relevance:

> The stranger is by nature no "owner of soil"—soil not only in the physical, but also in the figurative sense of a life-substance which is fixed, if not in a point in space, at least in an ideal point of the social environment. (Simmel, 1950, p. 1)

There is still some resistance to this practice. As mentioned by a girl:

> There are people who are against girls being *Pauliteiras*. They don't accept it, because they say we do not belong to it. However, it is just a few people who have this opinion. Almost the whole community supports us. (Teresa, 18, High School student)

Girls are very clear in stating their relationship with the dance: "I am proud to say that I am following a tradition, even if it is not the tradition as it used to be, because we are girls and not boys" (Ana, 20, University student).

The involvement of girls in this experience shows that they can find different positions by fostering a distinctive relationship with a traditional art performance. The participation is not a mere reproduction; it also includes the reinvention of several dimensions associated to it, namely the introduction of some new movements and steps, as well as the clothes they dress. By doing this they are distinguishing their 'style' from the traditional one, redefining their action and power places in cultural borderlines.

GIRLS' PARTICIPATION AND SUBJECTIVITY

Trying to keep the heritage, as said before, through disinheriting the heritage, means that the local community is able to give meaning to these changes and that girls are participating in local forms of art, being recognised by their own subjectivity. Their subjectivity is visible through new trends of the group organisation and communication, relevant dimensions in "bridging the local and the global and in linking cultures and worlds across age, time and space" (Gadsden, 2008, p. 29). These links might also have repercussions related to these girls' biographical narratives and may affect their pathway to adulthood. Hence, it might be said that the "'work of culture' has also been the 'work of subjectivity'" (Nielsen, 2004, p. 9).

Machado Pais (2008, p. 230) states that it is necessary

> to explore youth movements expressed through culture, without forgetting the *feelings of belon*ging and the subjectivities invested in relations of sociability and leisure.

This aspect can be found in an ethnographic interview with Ana who was involved in the group since its creation in 2006:

> All girls were very close to each other. We used to go out and do other things together. We even decided, by ourselves, to organise an extra rehearsal to practice. The will to learn was very strong. (Ana, 20, University Student)

This group is a very important non-formal educational context. Different types of interaction are being learned as well as different types of participation. This enables us to reconsider what counts as learning and education. Girls are aware of different competencies that can come from this experience, which is also a leisure experience.

Through an education of the memory[v] these young girls' experiences give us information about their potentialities as individuals and as a group in an almost forgotten region of Portugal, and are hence less included in other structures of participation. They value what they learn and what they could learn from this experience. In this sense this knowledge can be seen as a capital (Graham, 2002):

> I think that this type of dance could be better performed if someone could teach us how it started or the function and meaning of each dance. We know some stuff: we have to think about the meaning of every step and movement. Also it would be important to clarify this to people from the community. It is important to learn to interpret things in a better way. This knowledge is important for other things. I care more about local history, our traditions. (Ana, 20, University Student)

The role of informal and non-formal education, through this form of art, allows us to understand how places of agency can be constructed in a global and changing world. Girls are creating spaces for autonomy through coexisting temporalities, which means that autonomy is not a condition but a process.

For these girls this type of participation means a pathway towards emancipation as they have experiences outside the village, participating in small festivals at regional and national level, overcoming their 'immobility' as young girls living in the countryside with less access to urban areas. This can also be seen as a support mechanism in their transitions from rural to urban life, as I have already mentioned through the experience of girls that pass on to University.

> When we have the opportunity to perform outside the village or the region we learn a lot. We return more grown up. We can see what other groups do, how they behave; we can see other places and learn from this. (Teresa, 18, student)

Their emancipation is not visible through the fact that they have a voice at some level, namely in the group's organisation, types of outfits, ways of using technologies to advertise their dance group. They are building bridges between generations and forms of heritage, the new and the old. However, if older generations still think about the dance from a nostalgic perspective, these girls have other reasons for being interested in maintaining the tradition. This is not the only

reason that keeps them involved. They are interested in new experiences and group interactions. This can be seen through their investment in increasing their popularity. This aim was very important since the group started:

> We wanted to go further. We became known at regional level and we wanted to be recognised. We had some invitations to perform in TV shows, in other small villages nearby, in Spain and even in Porto. (Ana, 20, University Student)

I can consider this as a form of empowering action as the girls are learning how to deal with and how to combine changes. They can combine being hard-working school girls with participation in the *Pauliteiras* dance group, with attending a Rave. Apparently, these different dimensions of their lives are not paradoxes.

They seem to have understood how to combine different ways of being in a very interesting and autonomous way. As Nielsen (2004, p. 23) points out, the "ability to combine new individualism with relational and responsible attitudes seems to be more prevalent among young women than young men". The participation in the dance as full members is integrated in their lives as young girls and gives reason to the idea that recognition is needed at cultural level (Fraser, 1997) and means a struggle for social and cultural justice.

FINAL REMARKS

The traditional representation of youth given by youth studies has been of youths as dependents (Pais, 2008). This chapter aimed to give another perspective about a group of young girls that are moving towards citizenship. They are participating and recreating the concept of a dance group traditionally marked by gendered tight rules. The intention was to give a place to forgotten voices from rural and interior parts of a country: girls' voices, less considered in what concerns youth cultural studies; voices from the South and the Mediterranean. Above all, if I might discern a Mediterranean perspective underlying this chapter, it is that I strongly believe in the richness of cultural diversity. By attempting to hear these girls' voices it is possible, from an educational perspective, to move from a "subjugated knowledge" (Mayo, 2007, p. 5) to a "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988). This challenges us in educational terms to discuss simultaneous types of alterity. I believe, as youth researcher, that there is a need to increase awareness about diverse experiences, namely in rural areas, understanding particular and small struggles for avoiding otherness or for turning the *otherness* condition into a more powerful one.

During their everyday lives, these girls play with possibilities in the present and for the future. Through the construction of reflexive subjectivities (Nielsen, 2004) these girls are becoming more able to understand and make changes.

There is a belief that the phenomenon of *Pauliteiras* is symbolically an emerging trend allowing for the creation of new understandings not only about local youth cultures in a global age but also about local struggles for keeping simultaneous worlds.

These activities are a means to maintain ties, physical ones—with the place and people—or symbolic ones—with the past and tradition. The group *Pauliteiras* is a reinterpretation of a tradition and it is a context of networking different types of belonging.

By challenging gender boundaries and subverting memories and tradition; by occupying new spaces, they are making their small village, their region and contemporary life habitable. They need to maintain social and individual ties, living a kind of ubiquity (Kaufman, 2002) through the dance. I can also argue that "the sense of home is sustained by collective memory" (Featherstone, 2008, p. 177).

These girls are, like other young people, under pressure to "become someone" and "to cope with and to adapt to accelerated changes induced by globalization and modernization processes in all spheres" (Bendit, 2008a, p. 37). In a society with growing individualisation processes in many dimensions of social life, as education or labour market (Bendit, 2008a), there is also space for investment in collective practices.

Modern youth "includes a certain degree of autonomy for young people to create their own life styles and to generate a youth culture proclaiming independence, self-confidence and social competence" (Bendit, 2008b, p. 363). However, it is also important to state that this is not accomplished by young people through a solitary pathway, but by networking plural worlds (Nilan & Feixa, 2006): traditional and technological; global and local; online and offline.

These girls' value system orientations can be seen through their decision to form part of an active educational process and of a participative culture (Pais, 2008). A critical educational analysis could provide new insights on this type of non-formal education, knowing that it is subject to what Lynne Chisholm (2008, p. 146) explains as "'fuzzy discipline', appearing to offer autonomy and self-direction, but in return demanding intensive individual investment and demonstrable outcomes".

These art performances are a means of keeping the *South* heard in the *West*, or the local in the global, or the rural in the urban areas. But, above all, they seem to demonstrate that we need to keep in mind that not everything can be measured by dominant models.

Analysing deeply the type of recognition that these girls are fighting for appears to be an interesting line for further investigation. Following again Simmel's (1950) thought, no matter what type of changes and 'seductions' a stranger goes through, "as long as he [and she] is considered a stranger in the eyes of the other, he[and she] is not an 'owner of soil'". These girls are still in a familiar-strange type of relationship. From a national perspective, this region is seen as being characterised by some otherness and some strangeness, due to some rituals and Celtic traditions. It is interesting to see how this art expression can, or cannot, reinforce that strangeness. We are not in a borderless place or in a borderless world. Rather there are geographical and historical landmarks.

Besides a sense of belonging to a common heritage that exists among the Euro-Mediterranean population (Perini, 2010), there is space for diverse expressions at regional level. The involvement in this art form may impel us to figure out

different contributions that different European areas can make, by being places for intercultural communication and awareness (Pavan, 2009). Agreeing with Machado Pais, I consider the concept of grounded policies extremely important. Grounded policies are "policies which always keep a grip on the ground beneath their feet" (Pais, 2008, p. 239).

This study tries to explore the complexity inherent to global-local, new and traditional, inheriting and disinheriting, masculinity or femininity. Further analysis is needed to discuss how people, and especially young people, rather than being attached to an available standard identity, are *betraying* it and proposing something new.

NOTES

[i] This study started in October 2010 and is still underway

[ii] The province where the village is located is called *Trás-os-Montes*, which can be translated as "Behind the Mountains".

[iii] The dance of *Pauliteiros* also exists in Spain under another designation: *Paloteo*.

[iv] After one year of doing "classic" ethnography I started a new experience by doing online ethnography with the participants from the offline experience. Some authors call this multi-sited ethnography (Hannerz, 2003; Hine, 2007).

[v] In a recent study, António André Pinelo Tiza (2010) emphasizes the relevance of a cultural education that values local traditions and heritages. In this study the author analyses among other things students' perceptions about local cultures in two borderline regions of Spain and Portugal.

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ANDRI SAVVA

4. KHÔRA, TOPOS AND PRAXIS

Diverse concepts and meanings of contemporary art education

INTRODUCTION

Khôra (meaning space) and *topos* (meaning place)[i] could be described as concepts with multiple and diverse meanings in which personal, social-cultural, historical, and aesthetic dimensions coexist. It seems that no single theory or conceptualisation could exhaust the diversely rich implication of these concepts, especially in what might inform art education theory and research. This seems to remain the case even when most scholars who have done extensive studies of the concept of *place* (as *khôra* and/or *topos*) would possibly agree that understanding the multiple meanings of such concepts is key to understanding wider concepts about the world, including: our relationships with ourselves, with each other (across generations, distances, cultures) and with our surroundings.

This paper situates art education in contemporary discourse where *khôra* and *topos* are considered essential aspects of Mediterranean art and art education as praxis. It is argued that both concepts should be considered as essential components of Mediterranean art education as they have the potential to create a dialogue and form an independent voice. In the first part, philosophical considerations of *khôra* in a sense of belonging, based on *Timaeus* (Plato, 1975) and its current formulation by Jacques Derrida is discussed. Space-place is also examined in relation to its social cultural perspectives to support the human potential to transform spaces and places. It is argued that if according to Derrida et al. (1997) *khôra* is "the spacing which is the condition for everything to take place" (pp. 9-10), space and place are fundamentals for art and learning. Various perspectives connecting place, identity and cultural experiences put across the contextuality, subjectivity and multiplicity of meanings of *khôra* and *topos* that are exemplified through the work of three Mediterranean artists: Kyriaki Costa, Khalil Rabah and Maria Pademitriou. The second part of this paper refers to *khôra* and *topos* and their value to art education through learning processes that are based on praxis. An argument is made of an alternative "*third space*" in the Mediterranean area, giving the potential for a dynamic creation and recreation and its prospective to reinforce Mediterranean art education, creating the necessary conditions for change to occur.

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A SENSE OF BELONGING

Khôra has been an object of considerable philosophical reflection. In *Timaeus*, Plato (Malpas, 2004; Casey,1996; Kymäläinen & Lehtinen, 2010) uses the *khôra* in a sense that is close to a receptacle space or place in space (as a way in which things come to be). For Plato, becoming involves three elements: 'that which becomes, that which is the model for becoming and the *khôra*—the place for becoming (Cresswell, 2009; Plato, 1975). Derrida (1995) deconstructs the notion of *khôra* by negotiating concepts of spatiality, place and placing and by re-approaching and transforming previous meanings. When it comes to engage with the concept of *khôra* in art, the issue moves on that of creation and how art can be seen as a cultural form produced and reproduced in specific places and spaces (because it cannot be assumed as placeless). As Gregoriou (2005**)** explains, what "Derrida's deconstructive reading of Plato's *khôra* suggests is neither natural nor pure. The receptacle of cultural forms where the meanings of culture and cultural claims take form already bears previous imprints" (p. 596).

Khôra and *topos* could be regarded as abstract, but at the same time, also as concrete concepts that are interrelated and that invariably coexist. Accordingly, both terms provide a common property for every presence. It could be a place of appearance and disappearance, for the familiar and the unfamiliar, a terrestrial (visible) and a celestial (invisible) space or place. Plato introduced *khôra* to explain the passage from the intelligible to the sensible, that is, from the perfect world of unchanging forms and ideas to the imperfect world of change and becoming (Kymäläinen & Lehtinen, 2010). By going beyond the antithesis of intelligible and sensible, *khôra* establishes binary oppositions … it becomes a passage between the one and the other, and despite the various determinations and discourses that it receives "it is characterized by non-determination" (Kymäläinen & Lehtinen, 2010, p. 253). This is exactly what makes *khôra* function as a 'third space', a space 'in-between'. While according to Derrida et al (1997) *khôra "*is the spacing which is the condition for everything to take place" (p. 9-10) and thus it can be assumed that it is a prerequisite for art creation to take place, the question is whether art can provide an alternative for binaries and conflicts, a third space—another way of seeing life or "another way of changing the spatiality of human life" (Soja, 1996, pp. 10-11).

Plato's *khôra* is acknowledged as a significant condition for creation (Casey, 1996) and signs of it can be traced to humanistic thinking—taking the form *of an aestheticising* of a place or landscape (Tuan, 1974), and is identified by Derrida (1995) as a source of identity and life connected to motherhood, memory and community. Phenomenologically speaking, places provide a ground for direct human experience. This is supported by Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 55) who argues that place is embodied: "the sensible world is described as active, animate and in some curious manner alive … so that we may ultimately describe perception as mutual interaction and intercourse, a coition, so to speak, of my body with things". Similarly Casey (1996) suggests that, "we are not only in places but of them" (p. 19)—meaning that human beings are *placelings*, denoting a sense of place as the

sense of belonging, where one knows others and is known to others (Relph, 2000). Places are important as they represent sources of security and identity for individuals and groups (Judson, 2006). Our knowledge of being in the world emerges across generations by representing every person's practical engagement with his or her own surroundings in each space and place. It is not transmitted as readymade information. Rather, it is experienced through a continuous regeneration, a contextual rebirth.

Contextuality, subjectivity and the multiplicity of meanings reinsert *khôra* and *topos* as philosophical concepts, and as such influence artistic and educational thinking. In contemporary art, *khôra* and *topos* along with time have a connotation of location, history, politics and creativity respectively, implying an understanding of context and an attempt to enter or even create alternative sites or locations.

In her work *From roots to routes* (2008) (see Figure 1), the Cypriot artist Kyriaki Costa states: "I never saw myself as one of those women who should sit around circles, nattering and sowing. … My grandmother in particular, was exceptionally skilful … a master of the craft … It appears that the traditions were there, the roots were there, in my family and … It became the motive for turning roots (of knowledge) into routes (of artistic exploration). The old-new duality thus remains a central element of my work and is translated into a variety of symbolic and literal juxtapositions" (Costa, 2010, p. 32). Indeed, the artist's interest in places and time represents aspects of her national and personal identity, all these through juxtapositions of old and new, reality and imagination, tradition and innovation. Artists create and recreate spaces that allow channels between the one and the other, spaces that are in-between. In this case Costa's work opens up space to a more contemporary vision of traditional craft, a vision that is more about routes than roots.

Figure 1. Kyriaki Costa, My land *(2008) Embroidery. 68x95cm.*
(Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist)

The study of *khôra* and *topos* from the humanistic and social-cultural perspective can be related to the study of the sense of human spatial feelings and

the ideas that emerge from within the stream of experience. Experience is the mean by which we come to know the world: we know the world through sensation (feeling), perception and conception (Oakeshott, 1993). This is exemplified by Kyriakis Costa's work (*My House*, 2009), (see Figure 2) which distinguishes the outside from the inside world by bringing them together. The walls are "essentially a material and symbolic boundary" between the outside and the inside, and also "contributing to the definition of the bounded unit the family" (Costa, 2009,p 10). On these walls one finds a depiction of a certain part of the world that lies outside, which also forms part of the *Green Line* that divides the island of Cyprus into distinct spatial units.[ii]

Figure 2. Kyriaki Costa, My house *(2009) Tapestry. 60x40cm.*
(Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist)

Kyriaki Costa used the inside of her house to depict the political, outside place, representing herself in between the "inside" and the "outside", the absence and presence, the happiness and sadness, allowing passages and translations between the one and the other. It is the excluded middle, the third space, that deviates from the assumptions that "everything that cannot be included in binaries has to be excluded" (Emig, 1996, p. 16) or "that nothing can be one thing and its opposite at the same time" (Olsson, 2007, p. 88).

Places have been studied from historical and literary-artistic perspectives. A neighbourhood may become alive through those art practices that are combined with narratives, photographs and drawings. Art practices based on memory allow reflections, ideas and commodities that bind one place to another and create connections to the rest of the word. Places and spaces have also been studied as a necessary condition or medium for creation. This is what is evident in Plato's description of the receptacle as a space in which things happen and appear including the process of creation itself –how things come to be. Thus, while there

are a number of meanings associated with *khôra* and *topos,* both concepts have been deemed necessary for creation and recreation (Casey, 1996).

MEANING AND CONTEXT

Khôra and *topos* are valid and dynamic, reflecting multiple meanings, realities and values that result from philosophical, social, cultural and political processes. Meanings can be personal and connected to individuals and their personal biographies, but meanings are also shared and, in some ways, they are social (Cresswell, 2009).

Recent theorists have suggested that place is a concept that gives meaning to what we call space. Judson (2006) explains that, "an example of space is the physical structure of the house. In contrast, place applies to those spaces which are meaningful to individuals and to which they attach a sense of belonging"(p. 230). Clifford Geertz (1996) comments that "no one lives in the world in general" (p. 259). The locations of daily life through which human beings experience the world are centres of meanings. Gruenewald (2003) identifies the relationship between individuals as place makers and their lived spaces and places: "people make places and places make people" (p. 621). Making places or spatial meaning construction is a process in which all are engaged: "we are all place makers as we construct spatial meaning and thus create place through our interactions within and encounters and the terrain of our daily lives" (Judson, 2006, p. 231).

The connection between place, identity and cultural experience, as recognised by philosophers, historians, cultural theorists and artists is still a challenging concept in the Euro-Mediterranean region which embraces a multi dimensional tradition and diverse artistic practices by various Euro-Mediterranean communities (not just European traditions). Although it seems easier to find commonalities between Europeans than to determine who is and who feels Mediterranean (Rim, 2012), artists in the Mediterranean produce and reproduce art expanding their understandings of becoming and of being with others. The Mediterranean landscape is defined by its multi-layered interactions between physical, cultural, social, economical geographies and thus it becomes a critical space and place (Mongeli et al., 2012; Chambers, 2008). It is a place where one can trace the continuity or interruption of Western civilization but it can also consider a place among oppositions and contradictions, west and east, conflict and resolution, democracy and authoritarianism, war and peace, hope and tragedy, serenity and storm.

The Mediterranean area is much more than a geographical reference, it was and still is a crossing, an open gate, a constant changing milieu of ideas, meanings and appearances. It can appear as a place in-between opposing places, following from the assumption that "everything that cannot included in binaries has to be excluded" (Emig, 1995, p. 16). That is why the Mediterranean area has the potential and dynamics for creation and recreation. To make available a space for such processes means to support participation and give voice to diverse groups and their interpretations, to address the concerns and needs of the people of the

Mediterranean and allow these to co-exist among others. Mediterranean art and culture should be based on its authenticity and must be enacted by "active participation, creativity and actions" from "the full array of traditions presented in the Mediterranean communities" (Pace, 2005, pp. 428-429).

Take for example contemporary Mediterranean visual artists and their practices. The Palestinian artist Khalil Rabah works exclusively with installations, live and performance art. His installations have used objects emblematic of Palestinian identity: olive trees, olive oil, stones, silk embroidery threads, etc. He is the founder of The Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind (2003-ongoing). In his video installation *The 3rd Annual Wall Zone Auction* organised in 2004 by the Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind, he investigates an enormous catastrophe for life on earth. Eight items containing natural and unnatural material from the wall zone were auctioned in order to seek support for their preservation, developments and presentation in a show in the museum. Much of his work is focused on understanding the context of contemporary events that characterise the history of the earth and its inhabitants (*The Mediterranean Approach*, 2011, p. 11).

Khalil Rabah's work is about his biographical story and at the same time it is expanded to wider ideas … those of humankind, humans' relation to nature and suffering. His work it is national and political and at the same time is global and moral. "The overriding themes of displacement and replacement, context and identity are at once part of Rabah's personal history and that of his country" (Milan, 2003, p. 1). While Rabah's work is motivated by his motherland and its suffering, Maria Papadimitriou represents the pain of humans on the move. In her installation *Apparatus 2011* (see Figure 3) composed of glass sculptures and a stylise Revenue Guard Corps boat (taking up almost an entire room at Palazzo Zenobio), the Greek artist Maria Papadimitriou represents a metaphor of the travels undertaken by migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea: "a beach made with glass fragments evokes the often tragic destiny of the many lives broken in search of a better future" (*The Mediterranean Approach*, 2011, p. 10).

Figure 3. Maria Papadimitriou, Apparatus *(2011). Murano glass and boat. (Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist)*

The artist addresses another conception of place, a place through its relation to mobilities—to the dynamism and flow of objects and people (Cresswell, 2009). People who choose or are forced to live mobile lives (e.g. refugees, immigrants, travellers) may led to desperation or even death, and may appear out of place.

While both artists hold a humanistic perspective—developing rich ideas of place (in the Mediterranean region) they also have much to say about how power and politics is implicated in the construction and contestation of places and their meanings. Visual arts are practiced in places, and as such they carry and are attached to historical, cultural meanings embedded in those places. Artists also bring into being their aesthetic and ethical emotions linking their work to dilemmas and metaphors.

A space according to Cresswell (2009) becomes a place when it is used and lived in, and the meanings associated with these places are shared with others, and might also be assigned meanings by forces of power. Sociologists assert that places are social constructions (Gruenewald, 2003), and point out that we do not think of these places as cultural products, and likewise we fail to recognise that a place is an expression of culture and representing the outcome of human choices and decisions.

> Recognizing that places are what people make them-that people are place makers are a primarily artifact of human culture-suggests a more active role for schools in the study, care, and creation of places. If human beings are responsible for place making, then we must become conscious of ourselves as place makers and participants in the sociopolitical process of place making. (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 627)

Kamler (2001) states that power is present in the creation, possession, operation and control of space and in this sense these are never neutral. In most cases people develop an unconscious attitude toward place; they familiarise themselves with what is around them without thinking of the roles that they and others play in constructing them, and ignore the transformations and the realities that occur in a multi-blended present. Educationally, this means developing the connections with places that allow us to explore how they have been created and investing them with particular kinds of meaning.

One can trace artistic geographies in the Mediterranean region in order to map the places in which art was found, and how this was transformed through time, to focus upon the issues of meaning and the reasons behind their creation and how people interact with these creations in their everyday life. On many occasions art provided consciously or unconsciously, juxtapositions on what we count as beauty and by which we provoke discussions on democratic or social justice, as it allows creators and viewers to interact individually and collectively on ideas of the past, present and future and by which they construct their own meanings. Perhaps a new aesthetics will not be found anymore in museums (Gablik, 1991) as it has now moved and to some extent "given itself" to its environmental contexts by acknowledging the multiple relationships that might exist between artwork, artist, space, site, locality, exhibition and context (Morris & Cant, 2006). The

Mediterranean region often contains contradictions and divergences and requires a social-spatial process, in which artists and viewers will be able to interact and search their inner space in relation to the outside space. That is why any attempt to create requires the ownership of the effort and opportunities for everyone to participate.

For Freire (1987, 2000, p. 90) human beings and learners exist in a cultural context: "People as beings in a situation, find themselves rooted in temporal spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark". He asserts that acting on one's situationality—what Gruenewald, (2003) calls *decolonisation* and *reinhabitation*—makes one more human. Both terms can be considered as aspects of situationality and both are dependent on each other. Learning processes require a new frame of mind so that people would recognise the disruption, by which they would identify and change those ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people (through *decolonisation*), and by recovering and creating material spaces and places that help them learn how to live well (by means of *reinhabitation*). The process of decolonisation and reinhabitation enables artists to reframe, reconsider and recompose new images of the world they live in.

As a participant in the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe*, the artist Kyriaki Costa (2011) states: "The fact that I live in a country with a complex and perennial political problem is inevitably reflected in my work … I believe, however, that sometimes it is important to take a distance from one's own specific setting—in my case a small and relatively new country—and to interact, share views, exchange opinions, personal concerns and agonies within a wider artistic forum".

Similarly art education must be rooted within the concrete reality of individuals so that it invites learners to read and decode the images of their authentic-situated experiences with the world (Green, 1993; Trimis & Savva, 2005). This would allow learners to move outside of classrooms and take on the larger tasks that *reihabitation* and *decolonisation* demand in order to think and act in ways that would ameliorate their lives. It also creates a new frame of mind that would require forms of democratic and interactive contexts within which art learning is engaged at local and global levels.

In discussing the political dimension of place, Gruenewald (2003, 2004) asserts that educational treatments of place must be attentive to the life of the margin. In contemporary times, certain people, parts, places and ideas of the world are excluded, either because they are considered to be out of place (places are too fixed to accept heterogeneous identities) or because they are considered to be in the middle. Art, especially in the Mediterranean, participates in both parts of dichotomies: south and west, majority and minority, Muslim and Christian, poor and rich, literate and illiterate. By reinforcing art creation in the Mediterranean, it is possible to initiate and develop communication beyond the local. By supporting Mediterranean art education is possible to stimulate the thinking of people and expose their voices.

To enter into the political sphere of the margin, one needs to engage with the context of our places, regions, cities, neighborhoods and schools. In other words,

one needs to become more conscious of the spatial dimension of social relationships by continually asking: "Where are the margins?" and "What kind of place-makers do we educate through art in our schools?" Critical theory and critical pedagogy in art education calls attention to the situationality of a place and its social transformation (Atkinson, 2008; Addison, 2010; Burgess, 2010; Graham, 2007)**.** I argue that perhaps the best thing emerging from such an approach in art education is the particularity of a place (Greenwood, 2008) and the different people that inhabit the place and who provide a diverse platform of art inquiry and practices. What happened here and what is happening now? What needs to be restored and what needs to be transformed? Art education provides room for all those educators who are concerned deeply with humans to put their curriculum practice into context, blending local and global, environmental and aesthetic, social and cultural into a whole where art learning is above all meaningful. It suggests concrete and pragmatic ways based on different subjectivities, a parallax offering different and complex perspectives and standpoints, in order to create the necessary learning contexts and procedures for creative transformation and change to occur. For this reason, in the Mediterranean region it is essential to reinforce art education as praxis, through a collaborative-communicative effort with the civil society, and not to impose practices through a western perspective action plan. The process requires us to proceed by facing *khôra* as a space of belonging, in association with the Greek polis and the political and cultural life taking place in agoras (Olwig, 2006). As such, space is becoming *an* active place – polis, where art experiences become political and/or cultural, creating the conditions of a democratic dialogue. In this sense, Mediterranean art education is a learning space that has the potential to become a creative zone where differences interact and prepare people for dialogue and transformations in their lives.

ART EDUCATION AS PRAXIS: CURRICULAR SPACES FOR EXPLORING, CREATING AND REFLECTING

In their different ways, philosophers, phenomenologists, cultural critics, and educators show that places and spaces teach us who, what, and where we are as well as how we might live our lives (Addison, 2010; Green, 1993; Boughton et al., 2002; Kymäläinen, 2003; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The sense of space-place can be grounded by students in a sense of familiarity with the spaces they inhabit and the surroundings that define them. This is also where in art education courses this sense of familiarity could inform learning by fulfilling students' sense of security and belonging, to develop a spatial interaction with their environment, and where they are given the opportunities to create aesthetic juxtapositions (which turn the familiar to unfamiliar).

By looking at, and ultimately locating the concepts of *khôra* (space) and *topos* (place) as concepts of the art curriculum, we (as teachers and learners) would recognise the role of art in society and the role that schools play in the production of space (as a social context) through the education of students as place-makers (as

citizens). This will further enhance the role of art education in the development of critical creators-viewers (Gruenewald, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2010).

As Judson (2006) asserts, neglecting spatial issues in curriculum studies ignores the role of schools as active agents of place-making. Place-making is in essence a democratic process that allows critical reflection on the social, cultural and political nature of school spaces. It is also concerned with the individual's role as a place-maker in terms of the construction and enhancement of democratic ideals, forms of equality and empowerment. Those art educators who place the child at the centre of learning, acknowledge that learning experience is situated (Greene, 1993; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This situatedness also confirms that art praxis is not a coincidence. Rather, it provides connections and attachments to certain conventions, experiences and ideas that take place in certain spaces, such as rooms, locations, sites, regions, and countries. In this sense, I would make a strong argument for curricular spaces that are open and flexible to change; which are grounded to a sustainable and social-cultural perspective; and where our curricular understanding is based on viewing and producing art in specific localities and through an interconnection between place, people and objects. In this way discourses become *contextualised*—that is, "they are bound by our senses of locality, our histories, our language, our place" (Cheney, in Doll, 1993, p. 180).

This recalls Sobel (1996) who proposes a framework for a place–based curriculum that begins with fostering empathy for the familiar and moves out toward an exploration of the home range, leading to social action and reinhabitation. He regards acting on one's place for the sake of learning experiences as connections that could lead to inquiry, thinking and action. An art curriculum framework is also suggested by Trimis & Savva (2009) based on the concept of *chorotopos.*[iii] *Chorotopos* is linked to the school itself and its surrounding area, meaning the space inside and outside the school. It starts from the inside of the classroom and extends to the neighbourhood, the village, the community, and the town.

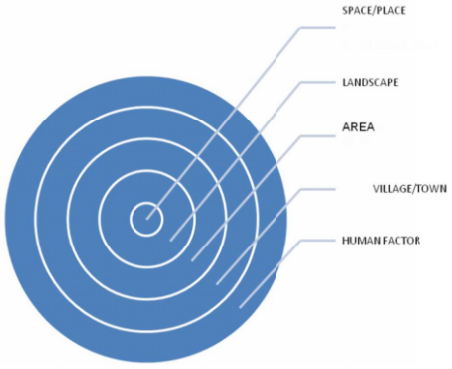

Figure 4. The concept of chorotopos.

In a broad sense *chorotopos* refers to the place, the landscape, the neighbourhood, the region, the area, the village, the city where the school is situated, and the human factor that ultimately emerges from it. More specifically it refers to the natural and manmade environment of the immediate space-place of the school (Trimis, 2004; Trimis & Savva, 2009). It enables students and teachers to observe, search, reflect, and criticise their place-space, how it is made and used. Ecological, social-cultural, political aspects could be explored during the implementation of artistic activities and actions in specific settings, but these are determined by the *chorotopos*. Generally, it aims to help teachers to involve themselves and students in artistic activities in various contexts and stimulates learning through art in order to enable them (a) to construct their knowledge about the world they live and experience; and (b) to reposition themselves within the environment by consciously reflecting on their surroundings (Trimis & Savva, 2009).

It is argued that place meanings have a remarkable value in education (e.g. Baldacchino, 2009; Kessler, 2000; Savva, Trimis, & Zachariou, 2004; Sobel, 2004; Trimis & Savva, 2009; Riley-Taylor, 2002). Art is often a way of communication. It is about relationships and what happens when it is embodied in place (Gradle, 2007). The concept of *topos* is therefore important as it applies to those spaces which are meaningful to humans. It is a fusion between our surroundings, perception and artistic actions, offering a space for exploration, reflection and creation. This exploration has validity, because it deals with what we and others actually feel and think about the world (Anderson & Milbrant, 2005). Art experiences help us remember the history of our homes, to see the ties that bind one place to another, motivate our engagement in thinking and act in favour of our lives. The sense of place has been widely accepted as a special component of art learning (Anderson & Milbrant, 2005; Boughton et al., 2002; Graham, 2007; Neperud & King, 1995). Graham (2007, p. 377) introduced the ingredients of critical place-based pedagogy in art education "that combines the ecological forces of place based education with the social focus of critical theory". Boughton et al (2002, p. 1) state that visual culture " reflects and contributes to the construction of identity, knowledge, history, sense of place, notions of citizenship and agency and quality of life". I argue that as significant as *khôra* is for any art creation, it is equally important for art learning. It is the "spacing which is the condition for everything to take place" (Derrida et al., 1995, pp. 94-95). The creative processes taking place in *khôra* and *topos* can be the place of the excluded middle, the third space and they may include the reconstruction of binary oppositions: the local and global, tragedy and hope, male and female. Such approaches in Mediterranean art education should be based on a search for meanings and alternatives and include the traditions and ways of life, the artefacts of everyday life and visual culture as contenders for study (Bowers, 1993; Lai & Ball, 2002).

To take an example, that of digital stories produced by students and the reflections that emerge from such stories. These refer particularly to those authentic places that are linked with feelings, narratives and physical spaces and always include others, usually family members, grandparents, mother, and friends.

Figure 5. Photo, 10x15cm.

Figure 6. Photo, 10x15cm.

(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

As one can see from these students' reflection on their art work:

> … I grew up with my grandparents … my home was near their home … everything was linked to my grandparents and their own place. Their house was filled with real stories (funny and horror stories), a space filled with objects, tools and handicrafts that I play with … And those were crazy and playful places that I enjoyed. (Student 1, see Figure 5)

> I know those places physically … The yard has been covered with concrete cement but they left a large part where we had trees and plants … I remember myself on a bicycle going round and round a big table … on the concrete floor cement. I remember myself hiding behind the bush and play with water and soil … then I remember the smell. (Student 2, see Figure 6)

But how could art education address this kind of art learning? How could we envision an art education that cultivates the sense of *khôra* and *topos* allowing multiple meanings and ways of belonging to be apparent?

The process requires an awareness of how place is created not only by a scientific or technical process but through human narratives and practices. This requires that we depict what is observed through one's own and through other individuals' perspectives. In this way one's emotions, experiences and questions are incorporated and fully engaged with what, how and why we experience such emotions and questions.

For instance, reflecting on her art, Student 3 shared and expressed her views on how others are placed in a traditional Cypriot bazaar as follows: "Old and Young, Christian and Muslims, green-red and yellow … Parts of what has been left … Doubts of its future existence" (Student 3, see Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7. Photo, 10x15cm. *Figure 8. Photo, 10x15cm.*
(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

In *A Sand County Almanac,* Leopold (1966) wrote:

> No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change of our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections and convictions (p. 246) … Art has the potential to redirect attention and to educate our capacity to care. This capacity to care and act responsibly is cultivated culturally. (p. 333)

Art enables us to remember our histories and discern the ties (historical, biophysical, social and political) that bind one place to another. The ability to care is learned and culturally mediated through art experiences. Situated cognition studies tell us that people come to know in relation to human and environmental contexts, where emotional relationships between people, space-place and objects play a central role in how they construct their knowledge and identities (Freedman, 2003; Lave, & Wenger, 1991; Smith-Shank, 1995).

Key processes in art learning are based on the interactive character of viewing-observing and making. These enable individuals to interact with specific spaces-places, objects and humans, while awakening them to their surroundings. For example, when a group of students were given the opportunity to reflect on their immediate place by documenting observations of their own environment (the city centre in Nicosia, Cyprus), their reflections reveal processes of identifying, questioning and expressing meanings of their world (see Figures 9, 10 and 11).

> We often pass through those places that existed in our history centuries ago so quick, we live through them and we never imagine ourselves apart from them … In any case when you freeze the image you realise that you are also part of what have been left there, across generations and cultures. I am asking my self—What happened … where do you belong? (Student 4, see Figure 9)

Figure 9. Photo, 15x10cm.

Figure 10. Photo, 13x18cm.

(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

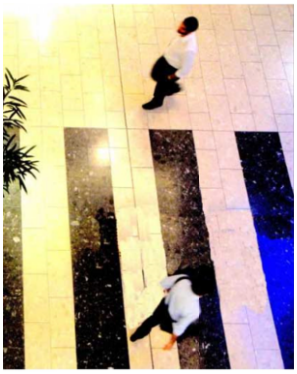

Figure 11. Photo, 15x10cm.
(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

Another student said: "Sometimes I wonder if you are what 'dominant others' want you to be …" (Student 5, Figure 11).

These processes enable individuals to empathise with the (natural, human, social) world around them, by which they discover that they can affect this through their actions (Savva, Trimis, & Zachariou, 2004) and by which they are in turn engaged in a dialogue about their values and choices. Here it becomes clearer how art praxis could help us develop a sophisticated awareness of our *khôra* and *topos*, not only by approaching nature but by engaging with those stories that are embedded in the world around us, by acquiring an identity, by exploring and doubting, by giving form to our thinking, by making meaning of the past in the

present and by creating and recreating belongings and social communities through democratic engagement.

Leading educationalists like Vygotsky (1986) and Freire (1970, 1995) have long recognised that learners live and learn within a cultural context that is in a continuous state of change, as new experiences are mediated through social contexts that are encountered and interpreted (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Vygotsky argues that in most cases learning is not only affected by the specific context but is driven by it. Freire (1995) though does not thoroughly explore the spatial concepts demonstrated by the importance of "situationality" in critical pedagogy. He advocates "reading the world" as his central pedagogical strategy (Freire & Mocedo, 1987).

A central strategy that art educators must adopt is to read art as a "text" where students and teachers are asked to decode the images of their own concrete, situated experiences. In this context, teachers and learners alike are challenged to read the text of their life, to question themselves and others, and are urged to look for those marks, imprints, origins and codes of meaning which these images represent. This process requires a strategy for inquiry, where juxtapositions, play and wonderment remain crucial. In practice, philosophical concepts such as spaces-places, identities, images, society and communities could include concrete aspects of individuals' realities. They would serve as entry points and make connections with cultural, historical, personal, political and environmental issues. They can infuse concrete ideas about our spaces (such as homes, forms of shelter, the neighbourhood, and the landscape) and our selves (us as corporeal presence, our bodies, and others, such as the people one meets in a public space). These will serve as motivating points for making, inquiry and action. As Gruenewald (2003) argues "reflecting on one's situation corresponds to reflecting on the space(s) one inhabits, acting ones situations often corresponds to changing ones relationship to a place".

This is a process which moves one's thinking from the concrete to the symbolic and the conceptual; from the simple to the complex; from the narrow to the wide, from the superficial to the critical. It is a process where one creates compositions and one's thoughts consciously or unconsciously. For example, drawing an image of oneself on a document (such as a newspaper, report, or book cover) may well include concrete, abstract, multimodal, real or imaginative qualities (see Figures 12 and 13). A placed art practice would include forms of expression, acts that intervene, an ability to deconstruct previous or accepted notions (see Figure 14).

> Who am I? I am my religion … I am asking myself: Is it valuable? … It belongs to the concrete parts of myself and it is inside and around me.
>
> Who am I? I am a story living in a world that makes me wonder what is real and what is not real. (Students 5 and 6, see Figures 12 and 13)
>
> What is democracy if you feel that your thoughts cannot be expressed? …if you must comply with actions that are unfair to others? If the different is not acceptable because is different? … if your country is not defined as your

place, if you don't know what is true and what is untruth?. (Student 7, see Figure 14)

Figure 12. Photo images, watercolour, 29x21cm.
Figure 13. Photo images, charcoal and watercolour, 42x30cm.
(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

Figure 14. Photo, 13x18cm.
(Produced with the kind permission of the participant students from the Department of Education, University of Cyprus)

From these examples one can see how art education becomes a vibrant force in society, as it offers opportunities to viewers and creators to be in-between spaces, ideas, thoughts or meanings, to approach and re-approach their selves—their inner space and in relation to their *khôra* and *topos*—and to construct or reconstruct meanings of one's everyday living in the world by critically reflecting on human actions and values. In order to move from what we call "art experiences" to "art praxis" we need to "incorporate reflection upon the idea of experience and then

translate it into purposeful action" (Breunig, 2005, p. 111). Art praxis is meaningful and contextual but it is through reflection and action that it becomes alive. This view is corroborated by art educators who view art education as forming part of a dynamic field. In this context, these art educators also contend that art can significantly contribute to the world by influencing perceptions, behaviours and actions.

CONCLUSION

Increasingly, theorists and philosophers in a wide range of fields of study continue to refer to learning as an activity that is grounded within artistic thinking and practice. This has never been more obvious than in contemporary society where values, concepts, meanings tend to privilege subjective views that remain dependent on time, place and context (Sullivan, 1993). The complexity of contemporary art cannot be included under any universal principles. This raises a direct awareness of those contextual factors that are implied in any critical approach. In this sense, Mediterranean art education should not imitate the worldwide conventions but should be given an independent voice and space. It should be recognised for its entity and links to so many aspects of people's lives in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Khôra and *topos* embrace the experience of being human in connection with others and the world (human, natural and manmade). It is thus essential to create experiences where people can build relationships with others and the places they inhabit; where they can reflect and envision a transformation (by which they can restore and transform the world for future generations). What I am here calling a placed art education has the potential to create the necessary democratic and therefore situated experiences and visions by which individuals can think and act in a broader cultural, social and sustainable way (Hicks & King, 2007). Artistic concepts that emerge from the articulation of *khôra* and *topos* could offer an opportunity to art educators to engage with a more meaningful art learning. It can be significant for awakening people in the Mediterranean region to what happened and what is happening around them. More so, it would help people establish and identify who is taking the role of a *place-maker* (physically, geographically, and historically) and how we would then create places for ourselves and for each other. It opens up a third space for dialogue in the Mediterranean region and introduce people to something that is relevant to their lives and identities.

If art education is to be connected with art and life it has to be meaningful to each student. It has to be grounded to authentic practice, connected to Mediterranean cultural life and it should create the necessary space for those art learning communities who can be critical-reflective and can act in the future as agents of change.

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NOTES

[i] "Etymologically *Khôra* is rooted to the Greek place, homeplace, habited place or marked place in particular" (Kymäläinen & Lehtinen, 2010, p. 252). *Khôra* is still used in the everyday language implying the town (polis), the village, castles, monasteries, birth place. According to Lukerman (1961) *Khôra* should never be translated as space (*choros*), instead it entails meanings related to area, region, country, landscape, country "which does not exclude the presence of a body or things chora may receives" (Lukerman, 1961, p. 252).

[ii] *Green Line*: Since Turkish invasion in Cyprus 1974, the United Nations buffer zone has functioned as a barrier between the Greek and Turkish population. The Green Line is in fact a double line with an area, no man's land between two parallel fences. In April 2003 Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots were given the opportunity to see their homelands through specific crossing points-borders. Howerer, the political situation didn't change. The green line still exists, and citizens from both sides act as visitors to their places.

[iii] The term chorotopos originates from the same Greek roots of *chôra* (*khôra*) and *topos*. It is linked to the school itself and its surrounding area meaning the space inside and outside the school.

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RAPHAEL VELLA

5. TRANSLATING THE 'MEDITERRANEANS'

Art, education and understanding 'between the lands'

Still from Ulysses, Burner of Borders and the White Sea *in the middle, a film by Algerian director Malek Bensmail premiered as part of* Méditerranées *in Marseille.*
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INTRODUCTION: THE 'MEDITERRANEANS' THAT SURROUND US

> Known in English and the romance languages as the sea 'between the lands', the Mediterranean goes and has gone by many names: 'Our Sea' for the Romans, the White Sea (*Akdeniz*) for the Turks, the 'Great Sea' (*Yam gadol*) for the Jews, the 'Middle Sea' (*Mittelmeer*) for the Germans, and more doubtfully the 'Great Green' of the ancient Egyptians. Modern writers have added to the vocabulary, coining epithets such as the 'Inner Sea', the 'Encircled Sea', the 'Friendly Sea', the 'Faithful Sea' of several religions, the 'Bitter Sea' of the Second World War, the 'Corrupting Sea' of dozens of micro-ecologies transformed by their relationship with neighbours who supply what they lack, and to which they can offer their own surpluses; the 'Liquid Continent' that, like a real continent, embraces many peoples, cultures and economies within a space with precise edges. (Abulafia, 2011, p. xxiii)

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Described as a huge 'exhibition-fiction', *Méditerranées: Des grandes cités d'hier aux hommes d'aujourd'hui* was one of the major events organised for the opening of the European Capital of Culture in Marseille in January, 2013. When I visited the exhibition in a very industrial-looking building known as J1 at place de la Joliette a few days after its inauguration, I was immediately struck both by its appropriate siting near the sea and by its very unusual layout: several black ship containers filled a massive open space, providing the organisers with convenient zones for mini-exhibitions and inviting spectators to venture through doorways cut into each container to discover different stages in a complex series of narratives. Short, fictional films about a contemporary Ulysses (an irregular immigrant), creative animations and contemporary photographs were woven into a dense structure made of 171 museum pieces, textual histories and personal narratives that told different stories about a sea that diverse peoples inhabit. The different components of the exhibition were transformed into fascinating pieces of cargo, bringing to life the fact that the story of the sea is not only about an exchange of commodities but also a commerce of ideas.

Yet, what stood out most prominently, perhaps, is that this sea that so many different people inhabit is simultaneously the same and not the same sea, hence the plural title *Méditerranées*. As the historian David Abulafia reminds us, the Mediterranean we think we know is a sea with many names: an in-between sea or sea 'between the lands'. Alternatively, as he writes elsewhere, the world has several 'Mediterraneans', all of which present us with vast, empty spaces like a sea or a desert that have helped to bring into contact with each other very different cultures. Such regions—as distant from each other as the 'real' Mediterranean and Japan - share "a fundamental characteristic … the relative proximity of opposing shores, but the clear separation between shores" (Abulafia, 2005, p. 92).

In a parallel fashion, several related questions about proximity and separation came to mind as I traversed the dark containers at J1 in Marseille. Do the histories highlighted by the different segments of the exhibition overlap or do they merely illustrate vast gaps between separate civilisations? And do the filmic fictions in the exhibition bring us any closer to understanding ourselves and those whose homes are built on "opposing shores"? Can art help to teach, learn or 'understand' the Mediterranean or 'Mediterraneans' that surround us?

ART, POLITICS AND DISAGREEMENT

When we cross art with the concept of 'understanding', we easily run into clichés: from the over-optimistic notion of art as a tool for universal understanding to the hackneyed, romantic idea of the artist as a misunderstood recluse. The place of understanding in the developing trajectories of art and education has probably become more conspicuous and yet more complex than ever, surfacing regularly in the discourses of multiculturalism and policies of inclusion in the educational and wider political arenas. At the same time, the disruptive aspirations of modern and contemporary art never disappear from the horizon, always ready to question that arrogant sense of confidence that leads some to imagine that by 'understanding' the

other's art, we also 'understand' the other. Art challenges this series of simplistic linkages between art, understanding and the other in various ways. There is firstly the problem of 'understanding' in the field of art appreciation or critique, that unstable bridge linking a piece of art to an audience. One can think of this facet of the problem as the focal point of a discord between two essentially heterogeneous domains: between the wild, artistic gesture of the painter Karel Appel, for instance, and Jean-François Lyotard's insistence on the difficulty or even the impossibility of converting that gesture into commentary (Lyotard, Parret and Buci-Glucksmann, 2009). There is something in the visual that inevitably disrupts the structures of discourse we may be accustomed to, something that refuses the directness of a decoding exercise, something that challenges every possibility of 'this' agreeing with 'that'. Writing about art is not a way of understanding it, but a way of coming to terms with our misunderstanding of 'that'. As Lyotard states when he writes about the French artist Marcel Duchamp: "In what you say about Duchamp, the aim would be not to try to understand and to show what you've understood, but rather the opposite, to try not to understand and to show that you haven't understood" (Lyotard, 1990, p. 12). What attracts Lyotard to Duchamp's work is precisely its renunciation of the universality of understanding and good taste, its transformation of the field (*du champ*) in a way that threatens to render art unrecognizable.

Yet, the predicament that hovers in the gap between two different domains like painting and language expresses only one aspect of the problem. What if this lack of understanding does not revolve around a misconstruction or misunderstanding of the specificity of another domain, but rather around a disagreement within a single domain or within the very grounds that are common to two or more separate entities? Jacques Rancière describes this as a situation "in which one of the interlocutors at once understands and does not understand what the other is saying". He continues:

> Disagreement (*mésentente*) is not the conflict between one who says white and another who says black. It is the conflict between one who says white and another who also says white but does not understand the same thing by it or does not understand that the other is saying the same thing in the name of whiteness. (Rancière, 1999, p. x)

Rancière explains that language—traditionally perceived as an anthropological invariant that supposedly permits different political groups or persons to arrive at some sort of consensual understanding—is always already a disputed space. In fact, not even 'understanding' can guarantee equality. Referring to a work by an ancient Mediterranean thinker—Aristotle's *Politics*—Rancière shows how the Greek philosopher relates speech to the human ability to distinguish between the just and the unjust, or in short, the ability to be a political animal. Other animals also have a voice but only use it to express pleasure and pain. For Aristotle, however, this distinction does not set apart *all* human beings from animals; it does not apply to slaves, for instance. Slaves in ancient Greece were also capable of making sounds, of course, and those at the top of the social order even understood

that these sounds functioned as some sort of language, but the sounds alone could not secure a more egalitarian relationship because, according to Aristotle, slaves could only perceive reason in others but did not possess it themselves. The 'disagreement' here is about the very basis of human communication and its affinity with a political or apolitical existence. Slaves may have understood language just like others in the social hierarchy but the existence of institutionalised social divisions in ancient Greece did not permit others to recognise their equality or the real political significance of their voices.

How can art express such a *mésentente*? By way of example, I shall turn to the work of John Latham, an artist known especially in Britain for the radical book-sculptures he produced in the 1960s and also for his influence on the younger generation of British artists in the following decades. In late 2005, a few weeks before his death, I visited Latham at his home in Peckham in south-east London to talk with him about his fascination with books and especially about an exhibition dedicated to his work that was being shown during this period at Tate Britain. The exhibition had made the headlines, not quite because of the work that was displayed on the gallery's walls but because the organisers had decided to exclude one of Latham's works from the show. The excluded work belonged to Latham's *God is Great* series, and was made of copies of the Bible, the Koran and the Talmud embedded in a sheet of glass. During the construction of the piece, the artist had cut each book in two in order to make them appear like they actually traversed the transparent glass. Given the tense atmosphere in London following the suicide bombings that occurred on 7th July 2005, this work was seen as being potentially offensive by the administration of Tate Britain and as a result, was removed from the display. Furious at this omission, Latham lashed out at Tate Britain, calling the decision an act of "cowardice" (Smith, 2005). His anger was very palpable even when I spoke to him at his home: he described the exclusion as a huge "misunderstanding" of his artistic concept, which in his view was actually more ecumenical than a cursory view of his work might have suggested. If, as Terry Eagleton suggested, suicide bombing is a deliberately shocking act of freedom (the freedom to choose one's own death) that is also a "murderous version of the artistic avant-garde" (Eagleton, 2005, pp. 92, 96), then the exclusion of *God is Great* in the aftermath of the London bombings would appear to represent the ironic defeat of art at the hands of its wicked impersonator or travesty.

The controversy surrounding the exclusion of Latham's *God is Great* could plausibly be understood as a simple problem of interpretation, highlighting the gap between the artist's rather utopian intentions and the gallery's misrepresentation of the piece as a possible affront to religious sentiments. Yet, it would be far more fruitful to engage with the deeper *mésentente* that the work itself expresses, possibly in spite of the artist's intentions. It is a 'disagreement' which resonates with strong Mediterranean undertones, witnessed by the three monotheistic religions that the artist refers to and the religious and socio-political connotations that inevitably surface when faced by works like this. Since around 1990, Latham had been preoccupied with these three faiths and the way each religion "proclaims important features that are mutually exclusive, so that laws, cultures and customs

to be followed are found mutually unacceptable at critical points" (Iles & Elliott, 1991, p. 115). Even though the ensuing decade was described by Latham as a period during which "Arabic Muslim militants were simply getting at anybody who wasn't into their ideas" (Hunt, 2005, p. 29), he clearly did not consider his work to represent anti-Islamic views. Quite the contrary, his thoughts aspired toward a rather idealistic social scenario in which the world would be relieved of the religious or ideological "divided state disease" highlighted by the actions of suicidal fundamentalists (Moorhouse, 2005). According to Latham, life presents us with a single reality that has metamorphosed into different interpretations, political ideas and faiths over time, and he saw his art as an attempt to re-establish a connection with the original point of departure. In fact, given that Latham linked his own artistic ideals to a transformation of human life in which "all the peoples of the world should subscribe to a single model of reality" (Walker, 1995, p. 165), it is perhaps not surprising that some critics have compared his utopian outlook to the work and ideas of Joseph Beuys (for example, Hunt, 2005, p. 30), or even that some have remarked that Latham's emphatically modernist position makes him "the last avant-gardist" (Walker, 1995, p. 3).

In *God is Great*, Latham's single point of origin together with his desire for a more inclusive society are articulated by the pane of glass on which the book segments are attached. When I asked about Latham's use of glass during my interview with the artist, he passionately described it as "a primary impulse, which we call God, or Allah, or whatever … a genetic background which is giving the instructions … the source of all the events that we spin stories about" (Vella, 2006, p. 127). He went on to explain that for him this 'negative', colourless material predates the white canvas, and is therefore comparable to—yet even more minimal—than Malevich's 'zero of form'. However, despite Latham's convictions about the absolute necessity of re-discovering the simplicity as well as the strength of origins, it is precisely around this transparent sheet of glass that the *mésentente* in *God is Great* revolves. Latham assumes, optimistically, that starting from the same basic assumptions will help to achieve a more unified world view and hence liberate humanity from the fragmentation of knowledge that the many books in Latham's works of art can be seen to represent. For Rancière, however, "the "common" is always contested at the most immediate level" and cannot be deduced from a human so-called 'invariant' like language, as Aristotle (wrongly) assumed. In his words, "the world presupposes a quarrel over what is common", while some form of egalitarian understanding can "occur only through a forcing, that is, the instituting of a quarrel that challenges the incorporated, perceptible evidence of an inegalitarian logic" (Rancière, 2004, p. 5). In other words, consensus is not a 'norm' afflicted by perverse situations like political upheaval, fundamentalism, and conflicts that reflect an older way of thinking, but its logic is actually their cause. The logic of consensus is not politics at all; it is the reinterpretation of politics as a managerial task, in which every conflict is quelled and every person is assigned his or her 'proper' place in the name of some sort of political emancipation. Seeking a consensual point of origin in a neutral spatio-temporal dimension, therefore, as Latham seems to do in *God is Great*, represents a

position that risks aligning itself with the policing side of power. The existence of politics, on the contrary, depends on disruptive forces or disorienting reconfigurations of the sensible or 'natural' order of things. Rancière calls this force dissensus, which is a "dispute over what is given and about the frame within which we sense something is given" (Ranciére, 2010, p. 69).

In Latham's work, this "given" is the sheet of glass, which signifies for the artist the possibility of a deeper unity and hence, also signifies a possible emancipation from religious and political divisions. It is not a coincidence that the artist has associated his artistic aims with the aims of education—traditionally conceived as the surest method for achieving emancipation from human ignorance. When I asked him how he compares his own destructive actions carried out on books with similar actions carried out by religious fanatics and political dictatorships, he replied very succinctly, stating simply that the artistic variety is "an educational act which is to inform, the other is to prevent education" (Vella, 2006, p. 129). Yet, this pedagogical mode that 'informs' its listeners or spectators where and how to achieve emancipation assumes two direct relations: firstly, the relation between the artist's intentions and the public's experience of the work (a pedagogy that 'informs' assumes that Latham's intentions are transparent to all, much like the glass he uses), and secondly, the relation between the work of art and emancipation as such. Rancière stresses that an "art is emancipated and emancipating when it renounces the authority of the imposed message, the target audience, and the univocal mode of explicating the world, when, in other words, it stops *wanting* to emancipate us" (Rancière, 2007a, p. 258). He also reminds us that the use of works of art or literature to raise consciousness about social issues or injustices cannot guarantee the mobilisation of people in the name of greater social justice: "There is no straight path from the viewing of a spectacle to an understanding of the state of the world, and none from intellectual awareness to political action" (Rancière, 2010, p. 143). Indeed, one cannot measure or predict with any degree of accuracy the effect a work can have on its audience.

Therefore, the parameters of Latham's interpretation of the colourless 'common' ground in *God is Great* could be problematic for two reasons: first of all, because the sharing of the same point of origin, the same home, the same territory, or the same God does not necessarily provide us with a basis for greater understanding but is actually the root of different forms of contestations or *mésententes*, and secondly, because the idea of a single beginning should not be confused with a single law for interpreting it (there can be no direct relation between cause and effect). Actually, the power of Latham's glass is probably its open-endedness, its refusal to illustrate and define. The cold, reflective surface as well as its possible destruction can and must subvert all programmed responses. Interestingly, in one of his later pieces (*God is Great #4*, 2005), Latham created an installation with the same three sacred books scattered on the ground amidst thousands of fragments of shattered glass. This loss of the common denominator or death of God is possibly Latham's exasperated, modern equivalent of the broken Tables of the Ten Commandments … and yet, paradoxically (or ironically) the title still proclaims God's 'greatness'. When I asked the artist about the ecumenical failure that seems

to be so tangible in this piece, he replied with a question that was directed not so much at me as his interviewer but at a generic audience: "Is this what you want?" (Vella, 2006, p. 129).

DIVISIONS AND CONNECTIONS

The force and fragility of John Latham's glass with its bookish appendages easily become an analogy for a vast conglomeration of lands divided, and simultaneously connected, by an ancient sea—the Mediterranean. Writing about the Mediterranean, Iain Chambers refers to this

> simultaneous sense of *division*—in particular, the sea as a seemingly divisive barrier between, on the one hand, Europe and the modern "north" of the world, and, on the one hand, Africa, Asia and the south of the planet—and *connection*; after all, so much of the formation of Europe was, and is, intrinsically dependent upon this negated elsewhere. (Chambers, 2005, p. 313)

Latham's glassy "genetic background" corresponds with this complex sea, which has served as a mode of transportation for centuries as much as it has functioned as a politicised and polylinguistic source of cultural kinships and disagreements. Since the end of the eighteenth century, the Mediterranean, or rather, the 'idea of the Mediterranean' has also served as a cultural construct in the European imaginary, mentally and romantically connecting this region to its classical past or to Orientalist discourse (Jirat-Wasiutyński, 2007). In reality, it is a sea circumscribed by borders and shared by different ethnicities, national self-images, ideologies and creeds. Its various, recent histories are characterised by political transformations, displacements, revolutions and conflicts in which borders have been constantly drawn and redrawn: from the birth of nation-states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the rise of the Palestinian question, the growth of the European Union, the political division of the Yugoslav federation, the plight of African immigrants in European countries and the Arab Spring. These borders do not simply define and separate the mapped territories of different countries around the Mediterranean; they also refer to social and economic boundaries and practices that cut across territorial frontiers, ushering in notions of identity and exclusion and simultaneously coming to terms with various processes of globalisation. As a result of these constantly shifting parameters, the Mediterranean can be thought of as the "transmediterranean", composed of transversal and diasporic relations that elude a common cultural 'essence' and bring forth "dynamic, transformative and heterogeneous figurations that connect back to this geopolitical locus, even as they dis/locate and reinvent its histories, legacies and cultural affiliations" (Pugliese, 2010, p. 11). Homogenising narratives persist, of course, and are not confined to specific localities—the Islamic *Umma* is a case in point. But the policing of the borders of one's identity is increasingly being called into question, and the Mediterranean is in fact a good place to start to investigate the relationship between identity, borders, education and art.

Historically, varying geographical, political and colonial scenarios in the Mediterranean have also left very different impacts on the teaching of art, the status of artists and local cultural productions, and the relationship between artists in neighbouring countries and cultures that are further afield. For example, art education on the island of Malta had an ambivalent attitude toward modernism between the 1920s and the 1950s due to artists' mixed loyalties towards Italy as a spiritual homeland and Britain as the head of an Empire that Malta formed part of (Vella, 2007). On the other hand, art education in Morocco for much of the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by a French cultural hegemony, and this served to downplay the significance of local crafts and forms of art (Irbouh, 2005). In fact, the training of artists in various countries with a largely Islamic population in the Mediterranean and beyond seems to have followed largely Western models and aesthetics (Ali, 1989, p. xii), and while it would be incorrect to assume that cultural influence is a one-way process, it is true that many contemporary and emerging artists based in different, including so-called, peripheral Mediterranean contexts, tend to develop strategies for locating their work in more global, rather than national, networks. At the same time, paradoxically, artists especially from poorer countries or countries outside the mainstream, cultural 'centres' still seek national representation in large events like biennials because this helps them to gain access to the international art world (Bydler, 2010, pp. 390-391). Contemporary art is increasingly a site of exchange and translation of ideas rather than a platform for the celebration of defined or national identities.

To consider the role of cultural learning in the artistic and educational spheres in such a geopolitical context is crucial. Its educational significance could be summed up by asking whether art education in the Mediterranean can afford to restrict its remit to 'problems' within the discipline of art itself or else bring learners in art classrooms face to face with trauma, violence and homelessness—all of which are closely associated with the recent history of the region. Yet, it is important not to interpret this role as a facile call to smoothen out the region's continued relationship with friction, disagreements and fluid identities by simply finding a 'common' ground. It is equally important to discover ways of allowing learning to persist in a state of *becoming* (Atkinson, 2012) rather than understand politics in art education merely as an education 'about' politics and identity. How can art in education or an education through art present diverse 'Mediterraneans' in a way that preserves what each Mediterranean lacks? How can it avoid to essentialise roots and identities and remain true to this most Mediterranean of contradictions—the co-existence of proximity and separation, or division and connection?

THE RADICANT NATURE OF ART EDUCATION

Art education approaches that attend to more pluralistic understandings of forms of art and aesthetics often aim for a more expansive recognition of cultural diversity, sometimes by focusing on learners' appreciation of 'national' characteristics like food (for example, Fukumoto, 2007) or by using comparative methods that bring

two or more very different cultures face to face in the classroom (for example, Shin and Willis, 2010). More generally, such approaches are often associated with multiculturalist methodologies that aim to broaden curricula by raising awareness about cultures, values and traditions that exist outside the West or about racist and/or stereotypical views about non-Western cultures and societies (Blocker, 2004).

While this struggle against political, sexist, racist or other discriminations and exclusions may be commendable, many art educators feel uncomfortable about teaching diversity because of the risk of misrepresenting other cultures, while those who do attempt to develop more multiculturalist curricula may ignore the heterogeneous and uneven character of culture (see Gall, 2006, 2008). Identity cannot be treated as a static, innate code; rather, much like the cargo containers in the exhibition *Méditerranées*, it is more like an assemblage that is composed and recomposed as new ideas and values are imported, exchanged or negotiated. This does not mean that affiliations based on ethnicity or so-called national characteristics are false, but it "implies that we place less emphasis upon a curriculum that is grounded in representation (of cultural traditions, practices, rituals and values, etc.,) towards one that is grounded in becoming" (Atkinson, 2011, p. 144). Informed by Nicolas Bourriaud's ideas about the 'radicant', Atkinson warns against sedentary understandings of the other in art education and articulates a pedagogy in which learners are involved in a dynamic dialogue with cultures and avoid a "metaphysics of the root" (Bourriaud quoted in Atkinson, 2011, p. 148). According to Bourriaud, contemporary artists increasingly betray their own roots and desire to be more like active networks. Like a radicant organism that sprouts new roots as it grows in different directions, the artist-wanderer picks up signs from various contexts and transposes them in different environments, displacing these signs by translating them and placing them in new chains of signification. For Bourriaud, artists are translators, taking signs for a walk:

> Artists become semionauts, the surveyors of a hypertext world that is no longer the classical flat space but a network infinite in time as well as space; and not so much the producers of forms as the agents of their viatorization, of the regulation of their historical and geographic displacement. (Bourriaud, 2009, p. 184)

Thus, in one work by the contemporary Turkish artist Halil Altindere *(No Man's Land*, 2012), for instance, an astronaut finds himself astride a white horse in an Anatolian landscape. In an earlier work by the same artist—*My Mother Likes Pop Art, because Pop Art is Colorful* (1998)—an elderly, smiling woman in traditional dress is photographed sitting in bed as she leafs through a large book on Pop Art with Andy Warhol's *Marilyn* (1964) gracing its cover. These unfamiliar combinations deliberately confuse our expectations about cultural identity and illustrate how artists are now closer in spirit to radicant organisms than mirrors of identitarian affiliations. If this is really the case, then perhaps we need to reflect more carefully about educational policies that urge us to understand the other. In

Altindere's images, indeed, who is the other? Is it the woman in Turkish dress or is it the colourful book she holds (from a Western perspective, the book and what it represents becomes the other's 'other')? Should we even attempt to understand or explain this woman's 'identity'?

For Atkinson, this incitement to 'understand' in education "is the liberal fallacy"; instead, we need "to accept the tension between distance and working together" (Atkinson, 2011, p. 145). He proposes an anti-identitarian pedagogy that, following Rancière, helps "to create new distributions of the sensible, … new aesthetic translations, new ways of perceiving and experiencing our worlds that dissolve current distributions of interests and identifications" (Atkinson, 2011, p. 150). The effects of these re-distributions of the sensible cannot and should not be anticipated by educators, because determining a political outcome (like 'understanding our neighbours in the Mediterranean') runs the risk of reducing education to a series of learning outcomes that essentialise the other and possibly even treating students and audiences as passive onlookers or "poor morons of the society of the spectacle" (Rancière, 2007b, p. 28). Moreover, art is always faced by the predicament of being co-opted by the very systems it sets out to challenge. Rather, it is the very rupture that exists between the forms utilised by an artist and their political efficiency that constitutes the force of art: for instance, the gap between John Latham's hopes for a common religious denominator represented by the negativity of glass and the difficulty of directing that primary impulse toward a common, peaceful end. Art challenges us by disrupting our sense of what is 'proper' to a particular situation, by instituting a gap between the preconceived idea that *this* form leads to *that* action or result. As one writer has remarked about Rancière's "pedagogical relation" and politics, "art can be said to have a political effect not when the artist succeeds in convincing the viewer about a political issue or what should be done about it, but rather when art contests the existing order without seeking to prescribe how the viewer should respond" (Ruitenberg, 2011, p. 219).

Mieke Bal and Shahram Entekhabi. GLUB *installation view at Etagji Art Center, Saint Petersburg, Russia, April 16-June 1, 2010. (Photo by Mishaka)*

TRANSITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

If art in education really must be 'political', it can only present a site like the Mediterranean as a radicant network of meanings, hierarchies and interpretations, not as a static explanation of different cultures and identities that relies on a single, dominant viewpoint. Art in educational contexts can be political by listening to learners, not by informing them. Whenever a member of an audience or a learner suggests a new position or 'understanding' of the order of things, the pedagogical relationship between teacher and learner is changed if not reversed altogether, and a new political relation opens up. The political strength of such a pedagogy is derived from a response to various artistic stimuli that are often unfamiliar to those who experience them. For example, a work called *Glub* (Hearts) produced in 2004 by Dutch scholar and artist Mieke Bal and Iranian video and installation artist Shahram Entekhabi, revolves around the gap between a common eating habit among people from North Africa and the Middle East and Western attitudes towards this habit. In a thirty-minute film that forms part of *Glub*, filmed mainly in Berlin, individuals speak about this habit of buying bags of seeds like pumpkin and sunflower seeds in order to shell and eat them during informal conversations with family and friends. Eight monitors with videos that accompany this film show individuals who are largely unaccustomed to this habit as they self-consciously try to consume the seeds. Baskets of seeds were also available at the installation for the audience to consume. Members of the audience, particularly Western members, could therefore choose to watch the film which documented this 'exotic' custom or watch individuals like themselves trying to make sense of this custom:

> (T)he visitor must negotiate between two ways of responding: either just to see and hear about a habit that is probably unfamiliar, or to see and hear about a habit that is unfamiliar while simultaneously adopting an unfamiliar way of looking and listening. (Aydemir, 2007, p. 307)

It is possible that many visitors to this installation had seen this practice before without actually seeing it, i.e. without actually becoming aware of its being part of the daily lives of so many people and simultaneously aware of its 'strangeness' from their own perspective. Being subjected to a situation where one needed to crack the seeds' shells with one's teeth and spit them out before munching the seeds brought these individuals into a direct confrontation with two phenomena: the other's unfamiliar eating habits, and the inevitable translation of these habits into some sort of recognizable or familiar code by the new consumer of seeds. In fact, it is likely that the new consumer would never fully grasp what the custom really means on the 'other side'; he or she would not be able to disentangle the 'original' or 'native' experience from its various translations. Migrants' 'invisible' eating practices were made visible through direct experience, transforming this work into an example of "migratory aesthetics", which "suggests the various processes of becoming that are triggered by the movement of people and peoples: experiences of transition as well as the transition of experience itself into new modalities, new art work, new ways of being" (Durrant & Lord, 2007, pp. 11-12).

Coming to terms with new practices like this is not so much a question of 'understanding' but a question of listening and becoming, particularly the latter, because translation does not only transform the original practice; it also transforms the translator.

Zineb Sedira, Mother Tongue *(2002). Top: Mother and I (France); Middle: Daughter and I (England); Bottom: Grandmother and Granddaughter (Algeria). 3 plasma screens, 3 headphones, 3 videos. 5 min (each video). © Zineb Sedira. (Courtesy Zineb Sedira and Kamel Mennour, Paris)*

Importantly, this "transition of experience" should not be interpreted as a move from one definite position to another (opposing) position, like a straightforward internalisation of the other's experience. A pedagogy of the Mediterranean, if such

a pedagogy can be said to exist at all, cannot be founded on a simple transmission of knowledge about others' cultures, norms or political 'problems', but must take into account the fact that learners are engaged in a radicant process of becoming that also makes themselves and their closest ones 'unknown' to themselves. The journeys of a contemporary Ulysses do not bring people into contact only with foreign lands and cultures, but help them to discern an inner mobility and sense of dis/location within themselves.

This fractured situation is embodied in the work of many contemporary artists, but we can use the work of a single artist with a Mediterranean heritage to expand on it. Zineb Sedira was born to Algerian parents who had emigrated to France, then went on to study in different art colleges in London, where she still lives. Her work in video, photography and installation often highlights her fascination with the sea: for instance, her photographic *Shipwreck Series* (2008), or her single screen projection *MiddleSea* (2008), where we see a lone man on a deserted ship crossing the Mediterranean between Algiers and Marseille, telling a silent story that has been told from time immemorial—the story of a departure, a transition of the self. Yet, this problematic sense of diaspora and shifting identity is probably nowhere more in evidence than in Sedira's earlier triptych of videos entitled *Mother Tongue* (2002). On the first screen, the artist and her mother speak about their school experiences. The mother uses her mother tongue, Arabic, and the artist replies in French. In the second video, the artist speaks about schooling with her own daughter, who was brought up in England. Here, the spoken languages are respectively French and English. Despite the use of different languages in these two videos, communication is still possible, because both daughters can understand their respective mothers' mother tongue. Yet, in the third video, the artist's daughter meets her grandmother in Algeria, and it becomes painfully clear that the English-Arabic combination is much less successful and is punctuated by long pauses. The grandmother turns her eyes to the camera and whispers in Arabic that she can't understand.

In a deliberately juxtaposed, documentary format, the three videos in *Mother Tongue* bring to the fore a number of inter-related issues that have been discussed in this paper. Like the glass in John Latham's *God is Great* series, consanguinity in *Mother Tongue* is a fragile bond that cannot guarantee 'understanding' between the three players (three books in *God is Great*, three family members in *Mother Tongue*). We can discern some physical resemblance between these three representatives of different generations in Sedira's work, but the women and girl also have different linguistic roots and experiences of schooling that express the singularity of each person, rather than some shared identity or 'consensus'. The absence of subtitles in the videos also confronts many viewers with very direct feelings of foreignness, because it is likely that many will not be fluent in all three languages. Viewers are put into a disorienting situation where they constantly need to reconfigure their linguistic and cultural frameworks. They are faced by the "simultaneous sense of division … and connection" that Chambers associates with the Mediterranean sea and by the need to re-negotiate their understandings of family, ethnicity, and learning. They simultaneously feel the necessity and the

challenge of translation: the need to make the other's words yours and the challenge of accepting a new in-between location as translator. Art is experienced as a precarious and transitory moment; what it shares with translation is that it is "an act of displacement" that "causes the meaning of a text to move from one linguistic form to another and puts the associated tremors on display" (Bourriaud, 2009, p. 54). A work like *Mother Tongue* invades your certainties with a sense of bewilderment, for what it makes you come to terms with is not just the fact that there are others in the world, but also that you probably barely know yourself and your closest relatives.

This sense of doubt can, and perhaps should, invade a pedagogy that wants to make sense of a complex region like the Mediterranean. In Sedira's third video showing the Algerian grandmother and English-speaking granddaughter separated by a bare, white wall, neither of the two individuals dominates the screen or conversation. Due to linguistic barriers, a pedagogy of information or explication will not work in this context. Neither of them will 'emancipate' the other. Like Joseph Jacotot's Flemish-speaking students in Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991), Sedira's daughter and mother will learn by 'translating', using the same intelligence that helped them to grasp their own different mother tongues during their childhood. There will be no master pedagogue, "no language of the master, no language of the language whose words and sentences are able to speak the reason of the words and sentences of a text"; there is no need for the master's language because "(u)nderstanding is never more than translating" (Rancière, 1991, pp. 9-10). You can only emancipate yourself by developing practices that disrupt established frameworks of knowledge and understanding, including the "explicative order" of traditional schooling, and this can be achieved by accepting the idea that learners will translate thoughts and forms from various, even unfamiliar, sources: from the centres and the peripheries, from neighbouring and opposing shores, from mother tongues and languages spoken by others. If a 'new world' can be imagined through art education, it will not be determined in advance; we can only learn about it as we proceed step by step, learner by learner, shore by shore.

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JOHN BALDACCHINO

6. THALASSIC LESSONS

Pedagogical aesthetics and the Mediterranean

At night by the sea, the desolate sea,
Doth a young man stand,
His head full of doubt, his heart full of anguish,
And with livid lips he questions the billows:

— Heinrich Heine (1948, The North Sea. Second Cycle. §VII Questions)

You could at least oblige
in my struggling rhythm
some of your ramble;
given that you could match
your voices, with my stammering talk:

— Eugenio Montale (1990, Mediterraneo. §VIII)

With some trepidation the poets plead to their sea. Their only hope is that the sea—the *thalassa*—offers a lesson. This expectation exudes a sense of liturgy and sacrifice. Not unlike a presbyter, the poet's ritual seeks to mediate the world with the myriad singular experiences that make it.

Heinrich Heine demands an answer from the North Sea by recalling the gods of Hellas in an effort to resurrect its ability to conjoin death with life. He is the presbyter who demands most. In contrast, in the presence of *his* sea, Montale sees himself as a mere mortal. He could only engage in a strange rhythm as he carefully traces back his upbringing along the Mediterranean coast. In the cycle of poems *Mediterraneo* Montale-the-poet encounters the limits of Montale-the-man. His liturgy happens every day, as it struggles with his poetic craft, looking for appropriate words that would somehow represent his bewildered sense of loss, fear and desolation as an individual. Overwhelmed by a presence that far exceeds what the brain thinks or his voice could utter, Montale-the-man is reconciled with Montale-the-poet by surrendering in a "struggling rhythm" to the limits of what the rest of his senses could feel, taste and hear in a sea that portends the weight of universality.

While Heine enthusiastically hails the North Sea with: "Thalatta! Thalatta! | I hail thee, O Sea, thou Ancient of Days! (…) Homestead-desiring, calamity-

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mastering, | World-renowned bold Grecian hearts" (Heine, 1948, §I), Montale feels deeply restrained. He calls upon the Mediterranean, looking up to the sea as an exiled prodigal son who, upon returning to his father, would state: "Thus, father, from your restraint | one avows, upon seeing you, to a severe law" (Montale, 1990, *Mediterraneo*, §IV). In Heine's and Montale's respective odes to their seas one senses a contrast of liturgies that speak to different communities, ambitions and world-views.

VANTAGE POINTS

The recourse to a poetic construct—as an assumption of *representation*, or *mythos*—confirms how the only way to communicate with the sea must take several steps back. Art hesitates to presume any form of direct communication. It casts doubt on the efficacy of the *word* as some sort of universal *logos* on which everything is founded. The poets' questions are real, but on one condition. They remain mediated by a number of mimetic forms that gain us all a reasonably practical aesthetic vantage point. This is how art, as a sacrificial (mediating) process projects our singular experiences into a universal semblance that we all read, but which we assume, interpret and enact differently.

Pedagogically speaking, an *aesthetic* vantage point is both pragmatic and critical. It is pragmatic because we know that knowledge is never assumed or given even when it appears to be grasped before any experience (hence our need to pose it *a priori* as if to say that we have an ability to assume what we do not yet know). It is critical, because the experience that we invoke (and from which we claim to *learn*) is never a matter of mechanistic acquisition or incremental wisdom. Knowledge is anticipated by the myriad mistakes, delusions and desires that continuously prompt us to seek it, and ultimately the arts continue to confirm that we can only learn through unlearning (see Baldacchino, 2013a, 2013b).

Such a vantage point is aesthetic because the artistic-pedagogical forms by which we deem it as *reasonably practical* often have no choice but to assume an artistic structure. They cannot be otherwise because then they would be something else and would demand different procedures that may or may not fall within what Lukács calls art's "special 'world'" (Lukács, 1971, p. 180). Yet without expecting to feel or express more than we can afford to be or understand, we must also bear in mind that all that these artistic forms could afford us are those ways by which we express and feel what we encounter in our everyday life as a *necessarily contingent* reality.

In the context of an essay that builds its argument around Mediterranean narratives, one cannot avoid the question: Is this aesthetic vantage point exclusive to the sea of the Mediterranean peoples? Although, like everyone else, the Mediterraneans (i.e. the peoples of the Mediterranean) tend to express divergent notions of "identity" that are expressly linked to their common sea, these expressions and convictions remain strictly geo-politically positioned. Furthermore, like any narrative of identity this divergent span of imaginaries ranges from inclusive to exclusive statements of nationality, culture, ethnicity,

faith, politics, etc. In view of such boundaries, any pedagogical argument that is linked to forms of aesthetic identity must also carry the responsibility of transcending the parochial traps to which any discourse on identity remains prone.

"THIS 'INLAND SEA' OF IDEALS"

This might begin to explain the urge to create a realm of autonomous forms that are identified with the Mediterranean region and its fluctuating populations. Such an urge would only signify a means of projecting what we cannot understand, rather than what Mediterraneans think is *theirs* by dint of the gods of the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Hellenes, Romans, Christians, Jews or Muslims. In other words, the assumption of a Mediterranean identity reflects a constructivist need that is somehow posed as a form of redemption (hence the poetics of sacrifice and the liturgy as forms of artistic mediation), when in effect such a hope is doomed from the start—which is where the stories that we tell about the Mediterranean find both their origin and assert their need to keep returning in various guises. As Nietzsche famously declares in full poetic jest in *The Gay Science*:

> Anyone whose soul thirsts to experience the whole range of previous values and aspirations, to sail around all the coasts of this 'inland sea' (*Mittelmeer* [Mediterranean]) of ideals, anyone who wants to know from the adventures of his own experience how it feels to be the discoverer or conqueror of an ideal, or to be an artist, a saint, a lawmaker, a sage, a pious man, a soothsayer, an old-style divine loner—any such person needs one thing above all—*the great health*, a health that one doesn't only have, but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up! (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 246)

The claimants to the Mediterranean narrative often miss what in actual fact continues to terrify them. Nietzsche's is a call for sacrifice, as he recognises the imaginary that lies behind the image of an inner sea and how "the great health" of such an ideal image comes from giving it up, "again and again". The ominous nature of the Mediterranean is found in the ruse of its histories; histories that are continuously spun by those who consider themselves as citizens of an *epic* space where heroes, saints, crusaders and corsairs, have ruthlessly indulged in the delusional *tragedy* of the Whole. This "'inland sea' of ideals" could only presume a degree of universality insofar as it reflects a stage where our epistemological horizon remains limited to what is possibly known at the time.

This is not because the Mediterranean is a unique geographical experience of pluralities that somehow offer a synthesis to a forced or willed dialectic of *otherness*. On the contrary, it is because the Mediterranean offers a conveniently closed but a vast enough space that remains relational in the minds of those who inhabit it, and whose construction of time is often rendered irrelevant. There is nothing unique about a geographical space that has and continues to accumulate so much representational capital by which too much power has been wrenched and millions of individuals have been slaughtered in the name of one myth or another.

As we reverse the language of myth by understanding its pragmatic truths, we must also bear in mind that in their forms of representation, artists seek to *construct* (by way of *mimicking*) the deception of a *total* reality. The craving for the whole may be explained by the need to surpass the limits found in the sheer physicality of a geographic space like the Mediterranean. However, as we have seen in the poet's question, the whole comes to represent a deadly presence. Thus on our behalf, the poet has no choice but to conceal our fear of mortality and surrenders to this presence by listening to the Mediterranean's thalassic lessons.

> In the sea caves
> for whole days I gazed into your eyes
> and I didn't know you nor did you know me. (Seferis, 1995, p. 100)

The sea may seem benign to those who celebrate its blue skies and clear waters. But this is an Odyssean ruse that leads to the deep scars of war, the dark pits of genocide, and the tragedy of the refugee who dares its deadly currents in pursuit of a better life elsewhere. There is nothing benign in the Mediterranean, just as there is nothing quaintly true or ideally good in the poetic beauty bestowed on the epic battles by which Homer and Virgil depict the rise and fall of the "great" narratives on which we sustain our political dystopias and by which we adorn the façades of power in our cities. In such narratives we quickly assume a "birthright", claiming to be the descendants of the Greek *polis*, the recipients of Roman Law and the diligent students of *paedeia* as an uninterrupted lineage where, in our legal-democratic fantasies, we dream of an education of women and men that somehow satiates humanity's thirsty questions.

In these claims one finds a pedagogical aesthetic that constructs a series of historical myths by way of an opportunity to re-write what was shaped in our own self-serving political image. For better or worse, the Mediterranean becomes a vast canvas on which we paint and impose our bodies as images of a world that serve as an excuse for our excess. Likewise, within the identifiable parameters of this ecological polity we try to lodge specific forms of representation (and therefore power) that makes us dependent on a socio-economic palliative by which we take comfort in the collective bourgeois ambition of our Greco-Roman law.

By the reaffirmation of such forms of representation, we assume that learning would somehow represent a way by which we seamlessly move from the legislative grounds on which we have tailored our myths, to a spatial reality that is inhabited at will in the image of a perennially extended agora. In this pedagogical spectacle we often presume that the history of education is schooled in the political spaces of *anamnesis*, *praxis* and *phronesis* where we freely recollect, critically act, and intelligently construe the habits of our minds. By this we pretend to remember a world of origins. We heed to the ancients, convincing ourselves that we have always inhabited a space of forms that would somehow absolve us from our sinful existence.

As we realise that myth is only another tier of signification that is far more ironic than irenic, and which affords no politics of heavenly bliss, we panic and resort to the State asking for its violent protection against the foreigner, the

immigrant, the barbarian, or anyone who appears to be invading this sea of ours from distant lands and alien cultures.

> Why did our emperor get up so early,
> and why is he sitting at the city's main gate
> on his throne, in state, wearing the crown?
> Because the barbarians are coming today
> (Cavafy, 1992, p. 18)

DOING, UNDERGOING AND LIVING DELIBERATELY

The arts confirm that we cannot speak of the event of learning without recognizing the primacy of unlearning. I do not regard unlearning as a mechanistic reversal or rejection of what one learns, but as a relational act that comes to terms with what Dewey sees as our doing's relationship with what we undergo. "Experience is limited by all the causes which interfere with perception of the relations between undergoing and doing", says Dewey. "There may be interference because of excess on the side of doing or of excess on the side of receptivity, of undergoing. Unbalance on either side blurs the perception of relations and leaves the experience partial and distorted, with scant or false meaning" (Dewey, 2005, p. 46).

Anamnesis, *praxis* and *phronesis* are only terms adorning a narrative we seek to construct for ourselves in order to make sense of the limits that historical contingency throws at us. But the value of contingency will be blurred unless we understand its relational quality in terms of how we experience doing and undergoing. Here we are not dealing with a dualism between acting and receiving as a sort of suspended notion of experience. To be conscious of contingency is to have a pragmatic understanding of experience as being relational (without, however, falling foul of simplistic relativism). Viewing this from an aesthetic vantage point, we begin to understand how unlearning is an articulation of the relational quality of our contingent experiences.

Unlearning also reveals that any pedagogical narrative that we might construct out of a geographical location for the sake of a presumed historical absolute (as we often do with the idea of a Mediterranean *oneness*) cannot suit our self-fulfilling prophecies.

In terms of what Alfred Schutz (1970) and later Maxine Greene (1977, 1978, ND) call a *wide-awakeness*, we are urged to reflect on the extents of what a pedagogical aesthetics could represent as a practice that reflects what it appears to say and as a ground on which we build what we presume to do and to be. Discussing wide-awakeness as an argument for the arts and humanities, and in reference to Thoreau's *Walden*, Greene argues that "The point of this kind of writing is not simply to describe one man's experiment with living in the woods; it is to move others to elevate their lives by a 'conscious endeavor', to arouse others to discover—each in his or her own terms—what it would mean to 'live deliberately'" (Greene, 1977, p. 120).

If, as we are proposing here, wide-awakeness is read in terms of pedagogical aesthetics (which is broadly what Greene has done in most of her work [see Baldacchino, 2008]), and if we were to assume a plural identity such as the Mediterranean's as a possible horizon for this kind of approach, then we have a task that goes beyond the limits of a politics of identity. More specifically we would need to explore and ultimately explain what, if any, are the thalassic lessons—the lessons of the sea—that the *Mediterranean* as an aesthetic and pedagogical narrative might represent.

This would invariably lead to a wide-awakeness by which we seek to live deliberately. Before citing Thoreau, Greene approaches Schutz's concept of wide-awakeness by offering a commentary on Kierkegaard's authorial decision to refuse to simply engage in simplistic benefaction or philanthropy, and instead make things harder for people. Greene explains how for Kierkegaard, "human reality—the lived reality—could only be understood as a difficult, indeed a dreadful freedom. To make things harder for people meant awakening them to their freedom" (Greene, 1977, pp. 119-120). The concept of deliberate living emerging from Thoreau's partial exiting from an agreeably human world begins to make sense vis-à-vis an awakening towards freedom.

Discussing Schutz, Greene makes a bold statement: "My argument, as has been suggested, has to do with *wide-awakeness* not with the glowing abstractions—the True, the Beautiful, and the Good. Like Nick Henry in Ernest Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*, I am embarrassed by 'Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow …' Wide-awakeness has a concreteness; it is related, as the philosopher Alfred Schutz suggests, to being in the world" (1977, pp. 120-121).

Schutz's concept of wide-awakeness can be summed up as a heightened state of consciousness. He defines it as "a plane of consciousness of highest tension" (1970, p. 69). One might add that the interventions we make in the world by such a plane of consciousness are not simple acts of doing or receiving. Though I am not aware of any specific connection made by Schutz between his concept of wide-awakeness and Dewey's discussion of the relationship between doing and undergoing, one could argue that a heightened state of conscious experience cannot avoid bringing to the discussion a criticality that would have to contextualise this relationship.

CULTURE, REVOLT AND COLONISED ECONOMIES

The current political and socio-economic developments around the Mediterranean more than suggest a heightened state of consciousness. To start with we are still trying to make sense of what North Africa's inauguration of the so-called Arab Spring really means and what lies in store for these new republics. On the other hand, in almost all Southern European countries we keep witnessing massive acts of protest and resistance that are clearly rejecting what many would regard as the imposition of political economic homogeneity, which, some would argue, is not short of a new form of colonization. If we can call the Arab Spring and the Southern European protests moments of wide-awakeness, these events must be

recognised in diversity and divergence. Some of these narratives of revolt may enjoy expressed forms of consensus and agreement within diverse groups. However, we are increasingly witnessing violent confrontations that erupt between factions and groups that a few months ago, fought side by side against a common enemy.

Tracing back what brings a diversity of groups and individuals together in the first place, one finds a common will, which could be perceived as a desire to live deliberately—although when one begins to qualify what this means, it appears to sustain opposite meanings that often belong to specific ideologies or faiths. Examples are found in the violent clashes between Christian and Muslim communities in post-Mubarak Egypt, and in tribal clashes in the new Libyan republic. (As I finalise this essay we are witnessing this kind of crisis in Egypt, which some commentators, rightly or wrongly, regard as the making of civil war). Be that as it may, when such signs of deliberate living begin to surface on the horizon of the politics of aesthetics, then the formative sensibilities by which we all learn how to survive the chaos of revolt gain an even higher priority in the order of commonplace necessities, wherever they come from and however we define them.

Yet, as the Mediterranean context is laden by so many divergent histories, any pedagogical assumption that we might take to explain or legitimise our diverse ambitions to 'live deliberately', is implicitly conditioned by external perceptions which interfere and blur the relational character of our cultural, formative and aesthetic experiences. As we do and undergo the political struggle by which we want to lay claim to our freedom, we increasingly become actors on a stage that has to confront increasing interference both from within as well as beyond its walls.

An immediate interference that comes to mind is the stereotypification of those Mediterranean economies that, as we speak, are constantly denounced as inefficient and often corrupt by their northern European partners. This manipulative form of blurring is not so different from the romanticised colonial discourses that depicted the Mediterranean as a ground of exotic divergence bursting with orientalist expressions of liminality. Those who spoke on behalf of Empire (and these included both the colonisers and many of those who were colonised) somehow presumed a culture whose "simple" expectations deliberately signalled a willingness to "receive" colonisation. There has always been a displaced assumption that the colonised somehow harboured a degree of admiration towards countries and cultures that appeared more powerful than theirs.

Sadly such constructs of cultural submission attracted more disdain than gratitude from the part of the colonisers. The racist typification of the "lazy Arab", or the dubious "Greek bearing gifts", the "dark faced" Turk kidnapping "our" virgins, the laid-back Italian, or the procrastinating Spaniard, not to forget the denigration of "the Jew" and the historic lineage of anti-Semitism … all sound like echoes from a distant colonial past. However when one hears commentators accusing southern Europeans as being incapable of running their economies in the light of the most recent economic crisis, what often qualifies this argument resorts to these very same colonial concepts, albeit differently worded.

Any middle school pupil coming from countries with a colonial past would recognise this discourse in their own formative years. Those who were born before or immediately after the periods of independence in the 1950s and 1960s would in all probability have been schooled on textbooks that inculcated them in such cultural hierarchies. As Leila Ahmed recalls in *A Border Passage*:

> When I began to look in my academic work at issues of colonialism and began to unmask the colonialist perspectives and racism embedded in texts on Arabs and on the colonized, steeping myself in writings on internalized colonialism, I began to realize that it was not only in texts that these hidden messages were inscribed but that they were there, too, in my childhood and in the very roots of my consciousness. (Ahmed, 1999, p. 25)

Some would say that even now, in what is often deemed to be a post-colonialist context, the same latent acceptance of Empire is being covertly constructed from under the ashes left behind the Arab Spring, while the economies in southern Europe become increasingly dependent on the might of the political homogeneity imposed by their northern counterparts.

It seems that one of the lessons that the Mediterranean proffers is that colonialism continues to revive itself under the guise of the same impersonal homogeneity which Kierkegaard wanted to reject in his retorting to "make life more difficult" for people. The ironic pedagogical suggestion made by Kierkegaard goes to reveal how any talk of pedagogical aesthetics must have a non-identitarian edge that bears the methods of indirect communication (see Poole, 1993). Another thalassic lesson would begin to explain how the elites of yesteryear have continued to reinforce a language of homogeneity. This is a language that the Mediterranean publics must resist by preserving their right to autonomous thought and living. Tragically, however, within such publics there are those who are adopting the myth of homogeneity as a reactionary discourse against immigrants and refugees whom they see as "invaders" from the East and the South.

Somehow, what we are witnessing in the Mediterranean is an imposed struggle between (i) the accusation over a perceived chaos of non-structures by which the South has always been distorted and "celebrated" by colonialists and colonised alike as an easy territory to be taken and used; and (ii) an enforced myth of order and structure, presented by "other" polities as a redemptive narrative which willingly imposes itself as the final teacher and arbiter of an economy of deliverance. Yet this latently structuralist imposition fails to recall what Sartre once remarked; that "structures are created by activity which has no structure, but suffers its result as a structure" (Sartre, 2008, p. 55).

To this effect, what appears to be the myth of a homogeneous structured discipline imposed on the so-called "undisciplined" Mediterranean cultures and markets, is only reinforcing the hegemonic chaos of a political economy that in the first place went out of hand while sustaining the fallacy of a presumed rational order. It gets worse when the same publics who have been colonised on such cultural and economic pretexts are now speaking like their past masters when it

comes to those whom they see as foreign or even barbarian and on whom they look down with disdain.

AN AESTHETIC SENSE OF BELONGING

If we are to make some sense of the notion of a Mediterranean pedagogical aesthetics it must be distanced from the political convenience that comes with the internalised histories of colonial narratives. Conversely, one could argue that *Mediterraneity* as a notion of deliberate living based on autonomous communities of doing and undergoing, could denote a form of resistance to the same histories by which Mediterraneans and non-Mediterraneans presume to have been educated, and of which they speak through what Barthes (1973) rightly defines as the language of myth, and therefore of empty signification.

Such communities of doing and undergoing are relational by dint of human experience and the ambitions that we all have towards living deliberately. In terms of the artistic and cultural histories of the Mediterranean, such communities take shape in the forms of identifiable concepts that are often shared across different cultures, creeds and philosophies. Narratives like those of nostalgia, journey and doubt tend to articulate forms of understanding that permeate several aesthetic experiences characterised by those who settled around North Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans and Southern Europe. Though such concepts are not exclusive to the Mediterranean region, they tend to shape its cultural and aesthetic imaginaries. This is what Abulafia identifies in how the inhabitants of opposing shores interact across the sea, and by which their plurality creates several constructs of the Mediterranean (see Abulafia, 2005 p. 65ff).

The aesthetic imaginary which articulates this connectedness is evident in the myriad works of visual, performing, musical, literary and all forms of art that are identified with a Mediterranean "aesthetics" by will or attribution. Whether it has to do with Salvador Dalí's work inspired by the shores of Port Lligat; Pablo Picasso's 1937 sea paintings like *La Baignade* and *Femme assise sur la plage*; Ismail Shammout's paintings of Palestinian women and children in a Suk adjoining a refugee camp; Umm Khalthum's legendary performance of Ahmad Shafiq Kamel's and Mohamed Abd El Wahab's Arabic song *Enta Omri* and its newer renditions over so many decades, including that of contemporary popular Israeli singer Sarit Hadat; the performance of a Turkish *makam* that translates in Greek music through their shared Byzantine heritage … in this wide aesthetic landscape one finds that way before any methodological concept of *rhizome* or *fold* were popularised, the horizon over which a Mediterranean aesthetic identity continues to perform itself, has retained continuity through the essentially *aporetic* nature of its artistic imaginaries.

Against this backdrop I see a Mediterranean pedagogical aesthetics as having a dual role. The first takes that of a critical gadfly—call it Socratic if you like—that continuously questions the historical constructs of *Mediterraneity* by way of recollection and forgetfulness, discovery and error. The second role awakens us to the pragmatic expression of a quasi-space of paradoxical possibilities, where as a

third order that cannot be rendered into word or representation, this adopts the undefined nature of a *khôra* as a 'space' that moves away from the dyadic perimeters of word and representation. Both criticality and the third genre of the *khôra* (Derrida, 1993; Plato, 1989) provide a passage through the questionable notions of political and aesthetic identities by which the Mediterranean's histories are told, written, painted and performed throughout the centuries.

The concept of *aesthetics*—and more specifically that of a *Mediterranean* aesthetic—represents a paradoxical terrain of ambiguities and challenges in terms of how we could approach it. Fernand Braudel (1992, 2001) comprehensively discusses the Mediterranean in all its dimensions as a "vast presence". Yet to be conscious of the paradox that this "vast presence" represents is to carry a heavy burden. Beyond the limits of ethnic pride or cultural-centrism the burden of being Mediterranean comes with the attempt to define what this "being" or "sense of belonging" really means.

"To belong" is an ambiguous statement. This ambiguity is, strangely enough, a source of inspiration to those who see themselves as being more than citizens of one closed Nation but indeed as part of a wider diversity of communities. However this sense of inspiration is more *desired* than *realised*. It is a projection. It comes from the assumption that ideals must exist in order to beat the contingency that in effect makes us what we are. So the notion of *belonging* must be handled with great care, because throughout history, *to belong* often meant to cast judgement on those who are perceived as *not belonging*.

While Mediterraneans continue to argue for a sense of *nóstos*—a homecoming, in the sense of returning to where one purportedly *belongs*—from where the idea of nostalgia becomes so poignant in the Mediterranean aesthetic imagination; this same nostalgic narrative is often qualified as an excuse for oppression. To journey through the notion of a Mediterranean aesthetic is to trek a path riddled with pitfalls, perils, contradictions, and unanswerable questions. It is like setting for oneself a never-ending research-question that could not be solved.

To use an old idealist distinction that came down to us from Eleatic philosophy one could say that the Mediterranean is *real* but it does not *exist.* In many cases the reality of the Mediterranean is found in one's *being* Mediterranean rather than one's being *in* the Mediterranean. Not unlike the estranged characters that one keeps encountering in Albert Camus's novels, one's sense of being is marked by peculiar absurdities that define what is meant by being one rather than another. The paradox of being Mediterranean could begin anywhere. This begins to make sense when one recognises his Mediterranean origins while living in New York, Melbourne, Toronto, London or Buenos Aires.

In effect, when we speak of a Mediterranean aesthetic we also speak of the domains within which a Mediterranean reality belongs to the human desire to *move* from one place to another with the intent of returning, one day, but not just yet. Rather than being located—rather than being *in* the Mediterranean—being Mediterranean implies the need to take a journey without having to arrive anywhere specific. Thus Naguib Mahfouz concludes his *Journey of Ibn Fattouma*:

> The man agreed to undertake the task, so I made him a present of a hundred dinars and we recited together the opening chapter of the Quran to seal the agreement. After that, freeing myself of my misgivings, I made ready for the final adventure with unabated determination.
>
> (…)
>
> Will one day a further manuscript be found describing his last journey? Knowledge of all this lies with the Knower of what is unseen and of what is seen. (Mahfouz, 1992, p. 148)

The journey that we speak of in the Mediterranean desire to move is distinctly ambiguous. As the Alexandrian poet Konstantin Kavafis tells us, the destination is only an excuse that starts the journey (Cavafy, 1992, p. 36). This implies that the journey is a way of living and being *in continuity* for which one does not desire to find an end, except of course, in that of journeying per se, which recalls what was cited earlier in Nietzsche's reference to "this 'inner sea' of ideals" in *The Gay Science* where, "health that one doesn't only have, but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up" (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 246). This constructs an ever-changing sense of identity, where one might call oneself Maltese, Cypriot, Croatian, Turkish, Lebanese, Libyan, Sicilian, Corsican, Sardinian, Israeli, Palestinian, French, Egyptian, Syrian, or Spanish … but where one can also consider herself as being Mediterranean, especially when the idea of the expanse of the journey becomes pressing.

FINDING "GAPS"

This pressing sense of definition is never sure of itself. Its desire is nowhere clear. Like other forms of desire it is full of anxiety and hope, guilt and pride, sorrow and euphoria. But in terms of the arts, this can never stop because it is entitled to the paradox that makes art what it is and which gives men and women a deep sense of autonomy.

In my book *Makings of the Sea, Journey Doubt and Nostalgia*, I begin to visit and revisit the several angles through which a possible notion of a Mediterranean aesthetics could make some sense, where—at least to me—this seems to come together through art's sense of autonomy. From George Seferis to Eugenio Montale, from Constantin Kavafis to Nikos Kazantzakis, from Federico Garcia Lorca to Luigi Pirandello and from Renato Guttuso to Salvador Dalí, I kept finding the same iteration of the ambiguous and the drift and tension between one's need to belong to reality and the sense of having to deal and engage with the contingencies of existence.

Admittedly this is common to all artists and the question that keeps nagging anyone who engages with Mediterranean artists is the lingering doubt that ultimately there is nothing distinctly different in what they do when compared to other 'non-Mediterranean' artists. Yet, the challenge remains because the assumption that one could term 'an aesthetic' that is bracketed within a region or a

community tends to defy the transcendence by which the aesthetic imaginary itself allows us to defy the immediacy of existence.

Towards the end of *Makings of the Sea,* I have come to the conclusion that although an argument for a Mediterranean imaginary may well lead to *another* metanarrative, on a closer look the notion of a metanarrative always amounts to nonsense because of its inherently tautologous nature. In trying to elaborate a notion of Mediterranean aesthetics, the model of a metanarrative does not hold because any contradiction that sustains the critique of metanarratives relies on the performative character by which metanarratives remain self-referential. This basically neuters any notion of longevity or groundedness, and turns the very notion of a metanarrative into a self-iterating statement (see Baldacchino, 2010 p. 148ff).

This is why a Mediterranean aesthetic has no choice but to defy the idea of a metanarrative in principle. To say that there is a Mediterranean aesthetics is to assert that in effect there cannot be a specific Mediterranean aesthetic, or art, or sense of being. To argue that the latter is just another Hegelian ruse is to avoid the real question that lies at the root of the paradox that anyone engaging with the Mediterranean has to confront. When one looks at how the Mediterranean imaginary is characterised by the desire of constant journeying, one cannot accommodate the same concept within mere progressive systems without having to leave gaps or contracting oneself. If anything, this recalls Adorno (1991 p. 81), who in *Minima Moralia*, in a section he titles "Gaps", he states that, "If a life fulfilled its vocation directly, it would miss it. Anyone who died old and in the consciousness of seemingly blameless success, would secretly be the model schoolboy who reels off all life's stages without gaps or omissions, an invisible satchel on his back".

The discourse of a Mediterranean *imaginary* implies the *gaps* that make the argument for it. While resisting the idea of constructing metanarratives (because, as we have seen, they lend themselves to nonsense) to talk about Mediterranean aesthetics is to talk about *being* Mediterranean while also *not being* Mediterranean—whether this implies living in a village in Cyprus, a city in Croatia, or on the shores of Gaza and Tel Aviv; or whether it is a claim that one makes from within a neighbourhood in Astoria in New York, St Albans in Melbourne, or where the journey has taken her.

As in the case of journeying, what matters here is not the actual destination of a distilled and elegant definition, but the journey, which in terms of aesthetics, is essentially a process in constant struggle with itself and others.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

John Baldacchino is Chair of Arts Education at the University of Dundee. His work focuses on the intersections that occur between the arts, philosophy and education. He was Professor & Associate Dean at Falmouth University; Associate Professor at Columbia University's Teachers College; Reader at Gray's School of Art, and Lecturer at the University of Warwick. Published widely through many papers and chapters, his books include *Post-Marxist Marxism* (1996), *Easels of Utopia* (1998), *Avant-Nostalgia* (2002); *Education Beyond Education* (2009), *Makings of the Sea* (2010), *Art's Way Out* (2012), *John Dewey* (2013), and *Democracy without Confession* (with Kenneth Wain) (2013).

Raphael Vella is Senior Lecturer in Art Education at the University of Malta. His research focuses on the relationship between theories and practices of contemporary art and education. His books include *On Art and Art Education in Malta* (2007), *Cross-Currents: Critical Essays on Art and Culture in Malta* (2008) and *Shooting Society: Documenting Contemporary Life in Malta* (with Carmel Borg, 2012). He frequently collaborates with contemporary artists and has curated several exhibitions in different venues, including Muzeul de Arta in Cluj-Napoca, Romania and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta. He is also a practising artist and has shown his work internationally, including Modern Art Oxford and the Venice Biennial.

Sofia Marques da Silva is currently a lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto and researcher at CIIE, the *Educational Research and Intervention Centre*. She holds a PhD in Educational Sciences and focuses on ethnographic research on youth cultures, gender and education. Lately she has been involved in online and offline ethnography with young people from rural areas. Her research spans across national and international projects. Amongst other, she teaches Research methodologies, Sociology of Education and Youth Cultures. She is co-convener of *Network 19* (Ethnography) and *Network 5* (Children and Youth at Risk in Urban Education) of the European Educational Research Association (EERA).

Anabela Moura is Professor of Art Education at Viana do Castelo Polytechnic, Portugal. She has collaborated with European and non-European art education researchers in England, Brazil, Taiwan, Poland, Czech Republic, Spain and Angola. Her books include *Changing the World: Social, Cultural and Political Pedagogies in Civic Education* (with Campion, Pabis, Camargo, & Coquet, 2013) and *Dialogues with Arts* (with Coquet, 2009). Her papers on art, culture and pedagogy are published in international books such as "Using Qualitative Methods In Portuguese Art Education", in *Vizuální Gramotnost* (by Přikrylová, 2010), "Arte como Instrumento de Educação Social e de Desenvolvimento Cívico", in Oliveira,

M. (ed.). *Arte, Educação e Cultura*. São Paulo (with Cachadinha, 2007) and *Beyond Multicultural Art Education: International Perspectives* (edited by Mason & Boughton, 1999). She has directed some funded research projects.

Andri Savva is a Teaching Fellow in the Department of Education, University of Cyprus where she lectures on courses related to visual arts education to primary and pre primary teachers. Her recent research work draws attention on a broad theoretical framework of contemporary art education exploring the arts through play, place-space approaches in art education, and art as praxis and its implications for active citizenship. She is a member of various arts and education organizations (CySEA, InSEA, AEC, CiCe) and a member of the *National Committee for the Visual Arts Curriculum of Cyprus Public Schools*.

Elena Stylianou is Assistant Professor in Art History and Theory at the European University Cyprus. She held a research postdoctoral fellowship at the University of London, Institute of Education, UK (2007-2009) and earned her Doctorate from Teachers College, Columbia University, NY (2004-2007). She has taught in well-known museums in New York, such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Museum of the City of New York. She is recipient of numerous fellowships and awards and has published widely on contemporary art, museums, and photography. She is currently the principal investigator of the funded research project 'The political potential of curatorial practices and educational paradigms'.