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The Thessaloniki Biennale: The agendas and alternative potential(s) of a newly-founded biennial in the context of Greek governance

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5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the second key research question of this thesis: whether, besides its instrumental role, the Thessaloniki Biennale had any subversive or 'alternative' potential(s). The question as to whether the Thessaloniki Biennale actually had such potential(s), and how these were realised becomes even more urgent, given that the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, in particular, was hailed as a testimony 'to the resilience of art in the face of adversity' (Dezeuze, 2012, 28), as well as a biennial which 'proved just what such events can achieve in times of crisis' (Dannatt, 2011, 11). In order to address this question, Chapter 5 focuses on the artworks which were presented in the three editions of the art event, and analyses them using the framework of semiotics and cultural analysis.

'Alternative', here, is understood in a dual way. The first aspect of the Thessaloniki Biennale's 'alternative' potential involves the ways in which artistic practices from outside the so-called West were represented in the three editions of the art event. The first part of this chapter addresses the question whether the Thessaloniki Biennale confronted or resisted the Western, neoliberal tendency to market cultural difference in contemporary art exhibitions taking place in the so-called West. This issue might in some ways not seem to be as directly related to the official narrative of Greek governance and cultural policy as other aspects of the Biennale, although it does relate to the marketing of multiculturalism discussed in the previous chapter. It is necessary to address this phenomenon, because it constitutes an integral part of how this particular art event was constructed: the Thessaloniki Biennale clearly emphasised particular geographical and cultural areas outside the so-called West (in particular Africa, South America, the Middle East and the former Soviet States). This was reflected in the number of selected artists and in the curators' texts, which invoked issues pertaining to post-colonial critique and discussed the possibilities of challenging the hegemony of the so-called West in contemporary art world by including artists from 'outside' Europe.

The fact that the Thessaloniki Biennale addressed art from outside the so-called West relates to the broader discussion which has developed since the 1990s as regards researching, exhibiting and representing art from outside the so-called West by institutions located in the West. On the one hand, large-scale exhibitions of contemporary art, especially biennials, increasingly include more and more artists born outside the so-called West. On the other, writers have been skeptical of this tendency and have critically addressed it since the 1990s onwards, highlighting that disputing hierarchies and stereotypes through art exhibitions involves more than just including a greater number of artists born outside the so-called West (Ramirez, 1994; Yúdice, 1994, Fisher, 1994, Mosquera, 1994; Araeen, 2000a; 2000b; David, 2007, Demos, 2009b; Wu, 2007, 2009; Koleif, 2010**;** Petersen, 2012).

More important, perhaps, is the issue of how those artists and art practices can be represented without reaffirming the presumed intellectual hegemony of the so-called West. In this respect, Araeen's critical analysis of the process of 'positive stereotyping' in contemporary art exhibitions is crucial. According to Araeen, 'positive stereotyping' is the emphasis on the assumed cultural identities of the participating artists', which is often, manifest in exhibitions which focus on art from outside the so-called West (Araeen 2000b; 2005). The discourse of positive stereotyping is discriminatory, as it essentialises the roles of the artists who are being stereotyped in this way specifically in relation to the cultures they have originated from; it promotes their work on the basis of their cultural identity; and, it coerces some artists into internalising and fulfilling predetermined stereotypical roles (Araeen, 1989; 2000a; 2000b; Mosquera, 2001). The implicit assumption is that the creative energies of so-called ethnic minorities can only take place or flourish within their own cultural traditions (Araeen, 2000b, 63). Positive stereotyping pervades paradigms of discourse which exoticise and objectify non-Western cultures (Hassan and Oguibe, 2001), and is complicit with the global art market, which expands and diversifies, seeking the 'new', the 'different', and the 'exotic', while naturalising any radical demands (Ramirez, 1994; Yúdice, 1994; Araeen, 2005, Kholeif, 2010).

The Thessaloniki Biennale's critical potential lies in its reflection upon the conditions under which art from outside Europe can be included in European art events without being reduced to essentialist stereotypes about the cultures of the

regions in question nor fixed notions of identity which exclude alternative representations or discourses (David, 2007; Koleif, 2010; Santacattarina and Steyn, 2013); also without promoting practices which contribute to the exoticisation and commodification of the cultural particularities of participating artists (Vitali, 2004; Araeen, 2000; 2005; Conover, 2006). Although not unique in this respect and sometimes with limited and uneven success across its three editions, the Thessaloniki Biennale attempted to offer an alternative to exhibition practices which reinforce such stereotypes.

The second aspect of the art event's 'alternative' potential, as understood in this thesis, involves the potential of artistic and curatorial practices put forward by the Thessaloniki Biennale to offer an alternative narrative to the profit-oriented official written texts of the art event itself as well as the narrative of Greek governance, as examined in Chapter 4. These narratives were imbued with the neoliberal concept of using art and culture as an engine for economic growth, and sought to re-'brand' Thessaloniki for tourism and cultural diplomacy purposes. Moreover, they were implicitly xenophobic, as they framed the multicultural character of the city only under the light of its past, and completely omitted the realities of the present-day immigrants living in Thessaloniki. This chapter argues that some of the artworks presented in the three editions of the art event challenged and undermined the official narratives indicated above, by bringing forward issues which the official texts of the Thessaloniki Biennale and the governmental discourse concealed or diluted, such as immigration. In this way, the art works analysed below, to a certain extent challenged and problematised the official conceptualisations of Thessaloniki and the city's presumed 'multiculturalism'.

It has to be clarified, here, that the 'official written texts of the art event' involve the texts which the public and museum officials as well as the curators contributed to the exhibition catalogues. Parts of those texts were largely repeated in the press releases and the online material which officially promoted the event in the Thessaloniki Biennale's website as well as in the website of the Biennial Foundation. Although there were contradictory references to immigration, for example, in a few artists' texts, also published in the art event's catalogues, these are considered distinct from the aforementioned texts, as they were scarce, and not as conspicuously positioned

within the exhibition catalogues neither as broadly circulated in the promotional material of the art event.

5.2 Exhibiting Art From Regions Outside the So-called West

The following paragraphs focus on the interest which the Thessaloniki Biennale has manifested as regards art from outside Europe, and explore the ways in which this art event represented art practices from post-Soviet states, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. This interest from the part of the art event should initially be related to the need for this newly-founded biennial to construct a distinct identity for itself. Having emerged in a highly competitive art world with numerous biennials taking place all over the world, the Thessaloniki Biennale had to compete for audiences and international press attention, as well as justify its funding. Therefore, the art event needed a clear and powerful identity which would distinguish it from similar events and at the same time establish it as worth visiting. These themes were consistently repeated in the organisers' official written texts (Tsaras, 2007b; Zachopoulos, 2007; Tsiara, 2009b):

> Hence the 1st Biennale was methodically organized…in order to grant the Biennale a certain character which will set it apart from the multitude of biennales that are organized throughout Europe… (Zachopoulos, 2007, 13).

Syago Tsiaras' catalogue text for the 2nd edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale, part of which was also reproduced in the main press release promoting the event, moves a step further, as it does not simply state the need for the Thessaloniki Biennale to have an identity but also actively constructs it:

> It (the Thessaloniki Biennale) is an ambitious venture that does not aspire to reproduce the stereotypical structures of big international events; …Artists of different generations and acknowledgability coexist through their work in a creative dialogue, on an open communication platform' (Tsiara, 2009b, 43).

More specifically, the need to construct a distinct identity for the Thessaloniki Biennale which would involve giving voice to artists outside the so-called West was pinpointed by the SMCA officials, when they were interviewed by the researcher. The SMCA Public Relations Officer, Chryssa Zarkali, clearly stated that it was important for the organizers not to hold a mainstream Biennale, not to include already well known or well established artists but instead artists from countries, where there are not opportunities to participate in the 'mainstream' art system (Zarkali, 2007)[1]. Theodoros Markoglou, Assistant Curator for the SMCA and the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale, made a similar point, explaining that the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale aspired to present artists who weren't famous and well-established, artists from the so-called margins in geopolitical terms (Markoglou, 2007)[2].

The figures concerning each region's representation in the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale indicate that artists from Western Europe joined with North America had relatively low presence in the art event: twenty three out of eighty three in 2007, fourteen out of ninety one in 2009, and thirty one out eighty five in 2011[3]. Moreover, as regards permanent residence at the time of each edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale, the group of those artists who - irrespective of their country of origin - resided in Western Europe and North America was consistently the largest in relation to the other groups: thirty five out of eighty three in 2007, twenty two out

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[1] 'This was the rationale form the beginning, that this Biennale wouldn't be the mainstream Biennale, in which the names you see at Tate or other well known museums and super-hi galleries would be presented'…you would see artists from countries, where due to some reasons, social or political or geographical or else artists do not have access to central, mainstream structures in the art world….If you put on a global map which artists participated and where they came from, they were from every point of the world' (Zarkali, 2007). The original text in Greek: 'Αυτός ήταν ο γνώμονας από την αρχή, ότι αυτή η Μπιενάλε δεν θα είναι η mainstream Μπιενάλε, όπου θα εμφανιστούν δηλαδή τα ονόματα που θα δεις στην Tate, που θα δεις σε άλλα αναγνωρισμένα Μουσεία που θα δεις σε εκθέσεις σε σούπερ χάι γκαλερί κτλ. Θα έβλεπε κανείς τους καλλιτέχνες από χώρες τέτοιες οι οποίοι για κάποιους λόγους, είτε πολιτικούς είτε κοινωνικούς είτε γεωγραφικούς είτε τυχαίους δεν έχουν πρόσβαση σ'αυτούς τους κεντρικούς…σ' αυτά που παίζουν…ξέρεις…τα mainstream ρεύματα στα της τέχνης. …Αν βάλεις επάνω σε παγκόσμιο χάρτη τα σημεία ποιοι καλλιτέχνες συμμετείχαν και από πού ήτανε, ήταν από παντού ή τουλάχιστον απ 'όλα τα σημεία του κόσμου'.

[2] 'The character which the Thessaloniki Biennale had from the beginning was that of a biennial which would have artists from the so-called marginal countries. It is a biennial which will not have artists who are stars and circulate the biennials in general, but artists who come from these countries and, perhaps, have something different to say' (Markoglou, 2007). The original text in Greek: 'Η συγκεκριμένη Μπιενάλε της Θεσσαλονίκης, ο χαρακτήρας που από την αρχή είχε, ήταν μιας Μπιενάλε η οποία θα είχε καλλιτέχνες από τις λεγόμενες μέσα σε πολλά εισαγωγικά περιφερειακές χώρες. Ακριβώς και λόγω της θέσης της Θεσσαλονικης. ….είναι η Μπιενάλε η οποία δεν θα έχει καλλιτέχνες οι οποίοι είναι σταρς που κυκλοφορούν στις Μπιενάλε γενικά αλλά είναι καλλιτέχνες που είναι από αυτές τις χώρες και ίσως έχουν κάτι διαφορετικό να πούνε'.

[3] Artists from North America, namely USA, had consistently little representation in the Thessaloniki Biennale: three in 2007, three in 2009, and five in 2011.

of ninety one in 2009, and forty one out of eighty five in 2011. What is important, however, is the fact that the proportion in relation to the total remained below fifty per cent in all three editions.

The numbers above indicate that the Thessaloniki Biennale indeed put in effort to present art from regions outside Western Europe. In this way, the Thessaloniki Biennale inscribed itself in the string of biennial exhibitions (including the Kassel Documenta), which are located in Europe and have addressed the issue of exclusion of non-Western artists from the contemporary art world. Often being controversial themselves, these exhibitions focused on art from Africa, the Middle East as well as Eastern Europe, and post-Soviet States[4].

This tendency brings to mind the controversial discourse of 'institutional multiculturalism' adopted in the UK, the USA and other countries of the so-called West since the 1990s. Institutional multiculturalism has been much criticised for being the ideal form of ideology of global capitalism as well as for being a form of implicit racism, which perceives the Other as a self-enclosed 'authentic' community towards which the West maintains a distance rendered possible by its privileged and universal position (Žižek, 1997). The exaltation of difference and particularity has been considered as another form of cultural colonialism (Ramirez, 1994, 34), and has been associated with the tendency of consumer capitalism to operate through the marketing of the appearance of 'difference' and particularity (Yúdice, 1994).

The discourse of institutional multiculturalism in art institutions, in particular, perpetuates a hierarchy in which non-Western artists are only recognised as

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[4] The list of such exhibitions would be too long, and would include - to name but a few examples - Documenta 10 curated by David in 1997 (Craddock, 1997; David, 1997; Restany, 1997); Documenta 11 curated by Okwui Enwezor in 2002 (Downey, 2003; Wu, 2009); the *Authentic/Ex-Centric* exhibition in the 49th Venice Biennale curated by Salam, M. Hassan and Olu Oguibe (Hassan and Oguibe, 2001); *Fault Lines: Contemporary African Art and Shifting Landscapes* curated by Gilane Tawadros for the 50th Venice Biennale (Berns, 2003); the *Check List* exhibition in the 52nd Venice Biennale curated by Simon Njami and Fernando Alvim (2007), the *Against Exclusion* exhibition curated by Jean- HubertMartin, as part of the main programme of the 3rd Moscow Biennale (2009); the Manifesta Biennial, especially the 2010 edition which took place in Murcia, South-east Spain sub-titled *In Dialogue With Northern Africa*, curated by three collectives: Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum (based in Egypt), Chamber of Public Secrets (based in Scandinavia, Italy, the UK, and Lebanon), and transit.org (based in Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovenia); finally, reference should also be made to the Istanbul Biennial, which, since 1993, has consistently taken an interest in artists from Russia and South Caucasian countries, as well as the Balkan countries and the Middle East, and occasionally Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

representatives of the ethnic community and local culture to which they or their ancestors belong (Petersen, 2012, 197); it offers ready-made frameworks of identity for particular artistic groups smoothing over and masking their intrinsic diversities, and ultimately excluding alternative representations of identities (Ramirez, 1994, 34); finally, it fixes cultural, racial and sexual signs within the discourse of political correctness, thus depoliticising them and contributing to the commodification of ethnic and racial difference (Demos, 2009b, 79). Although prevalent in the 1990s, this discussion is still pertinent to contemporary exhibition practices today, as more and more mainstream art institutions based in the West, including European biennials, increasingly turn towards artists and art practices outside the so-called West.

Some of these encounters may implicitly sustain and perpetuate paradigms of exclusion, and reaffirm the hegemony of the West. For instance, although Documenta 11 (2002) was presented as 'the full emergence of the margins at the centre' (Enwezor, 2002, 47), in fact 76 per cent of the participating artists resided in Europe and North America (Wu, 2009). The persistence of a Western, possessive-individualist approach can also be felt in the tendency to critically analyse and interpret the work of non-Western artists exclusively based on a biographical approach, which renders the artists prisoner of their background, and interprets their work primarily through notions of ethnicity or by conflating it with the social and political circumstances of the artists' homelands.

Such an approach is not only reductive, but also contributes to the appropriation and commodification of art works and practices (Wu, 2007). Indeed, the global art market[5], dominated and controlled by Western art institutions - major museums and auction houses in the West, which Jonathan Harris addresses as 'powerful 'gatekeeper' players in the globalizing art world' (Harris, 2013a, 536) - expect from art to exhibit signs of 'authentic difference' that help brand it at the international marketplace (Harris, 2013b, 440).

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[5] Jonathan Harris describes the global art world as the 'systemic power network of interlinked economic, institutional and ideological-cultural relationships and inter-dependencies, founded on the economic and discursive power of Western art, its host societies, their legal systems, art discourses and infrastructures for the buying, selling, authentication and critical validation of artworks' (Harris, 2013a, 540).

The following paragraphs explore the Thessaloniki Biennale's commitment to exhibiting art from regions outside Europe, as well as the potential of this event to resist a Euro-centric perspective in art and the tendency to commercialise 'cultural diversity'. The analysis first addresses the catalogue texts; the number of artists from regions outside Europe included in each edition of the art event; and finally, the signification involved in the selection of particular artists, works and their arrangement in the venues. The aim is to explore a) whether the exhibitions presented in the Thessaloniki Biennale capitalised, and, in this respect, commodified the cultural particularities of the participating artists, and b) whether they promoted fixed and essentialised preconceptions about the art practices from the regions in question.

1st Thessaloniki Biennale

The 1st edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale clearly gave emphasis to artists from post-Soviet States, as it presented the work of twenty one artists (out of eighty three in total) from Armenia, Chechnya, Russia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Tajikistan. Out of those twenty one artists, fourteen were based in one of the post-Soviet States at the time when the Thessaloniki Biennale took place, three lived permanently in West-European countries, and four lived in both their respective home country and one of the countries of Western Europe. The artists from post-Soviet States were the largest group of participants in the 2007 edition, even though only slightly more than the group of artists from Western Europe (twenty). The 1st edition, also, included eleven artists from Greece, eleven from Africa (six from Northern Africa, including Egypt, and five from sub-Saharan countries), and seven from the Middle East (Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Iran).

Catherine David, co-curator of the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale, had particularly pronounced the rising interest in art and artists from outside the so-called West: art fairs, biennials, museums as well as the art market seem to be increasingly interested in the work of artists of non-European background (David, 2007a, 35). However, David is sceptical and warns that:

> The majority of exhibitions, art fairs and art periodicals tend to favour
> works that aestheticise clichés and stereotypes (of Africa or of Islam) that

fulfil the expectations of the western public and market to the detriment of more complex and less direct proposals. This should invite us to greater modesty and imagination in the method and manner of our collaboration (David, 2007a, 35).

David's text stresses the fact that it does not go without saying that just because an exhibition or event may focus on art outside the so-called West, it will necessarily avoid reproducing stereotypes about the regions and cultures the works come from. This implicitly sets an important parameter for the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale, which David co-curated: the challenge to present works from less well-researched geopolitical and cultural spheres avoiding the presumptions of a colonial and Orientalistic viewpoint. For David, the reason d'être of this particular biennial lies in the curators' conviction that:

It offers the opportunity to explore the conditions for a productive encounter between the contemporary aesthetic production of very diverse regions and cultures (David, 2007a, 35).

Although David writes from a broader perspective and makes little direct reference to the Thessaloniki Biennale itself, her text is crucial in the communication process performed by the event's catalogue. It frames the event theoretically and positions it in the kind of art practice which explores non-Western art. Moreover, through the criticism addressed to similarly themed exhibitions, it outlines the difference which this particular biennial aims to make: present art from non-Western regions without reaffirming the stereotypes initiated by a West-centred thought.

The majority of artists from post-Soviet States were included in one of the three exhibitions of the main programme, *Beholders of Other Spaces.* This exhibition was curated by Maria Tsantsanoglou, Director of the State Museum of Contemporary Art at the time and co-curator of the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale, whose background involved extensive cross-cultural research in Russian Literature and Culture. Her project, as well as those of her co-curators, was underlined by the concept of 'heterotopias', as discussed by Foucault in his lecture *Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias*,

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written in 1967 and reproduced in Greek and English translation in the catalogue of the 1ˢᵗ Thessaloniki Biennale (Foucault, 1984).

For Foucault, 'heterotopias' – which, as a term, derives from the Greek word 'heteros' which means 'other'/'different', and 'topos' which means 'place' – refers to the hidden presence of the sacred in contemporary space, which has not been entirely de-sanctified. 'Heterotopias', are distinct from utopias, which are unreal spaces, vary from culture to culture, and involve differential social spaces, which exist and operate in parallel with the official or dominant social space. Although isolated, they remain accessible and retain a function in relation to the official or dominant social space. According to Foucault, examples of heterotopias include the museum, the library, the cemetery, the psychiatric hospital, the prison, the garden, the brothel, and the colony (Foucault, 1984).

Tsantsanoglou uses as a starting point Foucault's conceptualisation of the museum as 'heterotopia', and inscribes the work of art itself into the theoretical framework of 'heterotopias' (Tsantsanoglou, 2007b, 142). In her thought, as in Foucault, 'heterotopias' do not refer to different geographical spaces or different national cultures; rather, they refer to different social spaces, identities and activities. In this context, the title of her project *Beholders of Other Spaces* refers to the participants in their capacity as artists, and not as non-residents of the West:

> *Beholders of Other Spaces* are artists from the USA, Europe, the former USSR and Central Asia. However, the heterotopian elements in their works are in way associated with the search for national identity (Tsantsanoglou, 2007b, 143).

Her desire to avoid presenting these artists and their works as exotic was also explicitly stated in her interview with the researcher:

> It was our agreement from the very beginning that our aim was not to mount an exhibition which would be exotic (Tsantsanoglou, 2007a).

Artists and artworks

The following paragraphs will explore how art practices from former-Soviet countries were represented in this exhibition, especially with regard to whether fixed and partial notions them were constructed. As regards the artworks selected by Tsantsanoglou for her project, three groups may be discerned: some pieces critically addressed pressing issues relevant to the particular political and social contexts they originated from; others made references to the cultural heritage or artistic traditions of the regions they came from in a celebratory tone; finally, the third group works made no overt references to the political or social realities nor the artistic traditions or cultural heritage of Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Uzbekistan and the rest of the participating countries from Central Asia. This diversity in the choice of works as regards their content is significant, as the following paragraphs will show.

The first group included Tursun Ali's and Victor An's photographs of Lake Aral, *Life in the Aral* (2006) and *Requiem* (1989) respectively, which were included in Tsantsanoglou's selection for the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale. Black and white and large-scale, these images deal with an issue particularly relevant to Uzbekistan: the grave ecological disaster of the Lake Aral. The chronicle of this disaster is intricately linked to the Soviet Union regime, which in order to irrigate its cotton plantations in the area back in the 1960s, diverted the rivers which fed the Lake, also known as 'Aral Sea', due to its size and salty water. Aral eventually dried up with grave environmental consequences for the local populations' health (Tsantsanoglou, 2007i, 146). *Life in the Aral* captures the vastness of the present-day desert which Aral has become. The sole human figure in the distance and its small scale in relation to the extended sea of sand beyond the horizon and the frame of the image attest to the unwelcoming character of Aral, and the apparent irreversibility of the present situation. An's *Requiem* both complements and juxtaposes the previous work, as it is a close-up of a carcass of a ship, one of the many left in the ship graveyard in Aral on the side of Uzbekistan. The abandoned ship is a reminder of death and decay, and implies the health risks faced by the populations who live around Aral.

Vahram Aghasyan's *Ghost Town* (2005) photographic series is themed around Mush, a small town adjacent to Gyumri in Armenia [17]. Mush was built by the Soviet government after the disastrous earthquake the area experienced in 1988. The

construction was never completed, as after the Soviet Union collapsed, there were no sufficient funds.

17. Vahram Aghasyan, 2005. *Ghost town*. **Photographs, 100x130cm.**

Mush, just at the outskirts of Guymri, is lifeless, a desert of incomplete and empty buildings left to decay (Tsantsanoglou, 2007g, 149). Aghasyan's digitally manipulated photographs are haunting; the uninhabited concrete blocks emerge out of water, which extends as far as the viewer's eye can reach, while no strip of dry land is anywhere to be seen. The complete absence of human figures and the buildings' trembling reflections in the water contribute to the eeriness and vulnerability these images convey.

 Salva Khakhanashvili's video and series of photographs titled *European Construction ...in Progress* (2007) is a poignant, ironic and humorous comment on the expansion of the European Union policies and ideals towards the East, as well as a reflection on the impact on and the negotiation of the conditions of such a rapprochement from the part of Turkey, Russia, and the countries of South Caucasus.

Andrei Fillipov's *Pila (Saw)* (2006) is a large-scale, open air installation which travelled to Gaza, and Berlin, before being displayed outside the Archaeological Museum of the city for the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale (Degot, 2007, 167). The saw suggests division, and the piece refers to major political and cultural schisms, such as Eastern/Western Europe, capitalism/communism, and more recently, Islam/the West,

in an ironic way. Finally, Ganjina Saripova's video titled *Farishta (Little Angels),* deals with the issue of child labour in poor and remote villages of Tajikistan. The video follows the trail of the children's everyday journey through the forest in order to collect firewood. The alternation of close-ups - often of flowers – with long distance shots, as well as the often blurred images aestheticise and soften the shocking and painful issue of child labour.

Games for Adults (2007) is an installation by Babi Badalov, an iconic figure of the Russian underground art scene during the 1990s, and, until recently, a refugee and asylum seeker himself in Western Europe, advocate of the rights of homosexuals in Azerbaijan (Badalov, 2014). The piece consists of numerous soft dolls, made of cloth, deliberately avoiding the use of any plastic in an environmentally-friendly gesture. The figures often bear referents to issues of gender and gender roles as well as references to Western philosophy (one of dolls has 'Foucault' stitched on its chest) as well as American popular culture. A blend of a personal journey to his childhood, cross-cultural references and avant-garde practices, Badalov's work refrains from any celebratory reference to Azeri heritage, and forms a telling contrast with works such as fellow Azeri, Teymur Daimi, *The Temple's Heart* mentioned below.

By choosing to exhibit the artworks mentioned above, the Thessaloniki Biennale allowed for critical reflection on social and political issues of concern in former-Soviet countries, whereas the 3rd Moscow Biennale, for instance, was criticised for failing to do so (Tikhonova, 2009; Kravtsova, 2010). The tendency to address pressing social (as in *Life in the Aral, Requiem*, *Ghost Town, Farishta/Little Angels*) and political issues (as in *European Construction ...in Progress, Pila /Saw*) was deepened and intensified by two further works, suggested by David: *Lonely Man* (2006) by Alexei Kallima and *The Khodorkovsky Series* (2005-2006) by Pavel Shevelev. The first is a series of charcoal drawings depicting Chechen autonomist warriors in moments of rest. The artist himself has declared his fervent interest in the conflict, clearly in favour of Chechnya, where he comes from: 'I am inspired by whatever is connected with Chechnya. I am inspired by the heroic men' (cited in Markoglou, 2007a, 52). Shevelev's series of watercolours record the Platon Ledbedev and Mikhail Khodorkovsky's trial in Moscow (2004-2005). Both men were involved in an infamous scandal of tax evasion and fraud involving the

MENATEP and the oil company YUKOS (Markoglou, 2007a, 52). The work raises the broader issue of corruption and dubious means of wealth accumulation in the post-Soviet Russia. Both these works added an openly political and polemical note in the representation of art from the former-Soviet States in the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale. This element was further advanced in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, through the radical practice of the collective Chto Delat?, and their elaborate and incisive critical analysis of the post-communism condition in their video installation *Perestroika-Songspiel, The Victory over the Coup* (2009)[6] .

18. Georgii Litichevskii, 2006. *Physicists and lyricists.* **Comics, installation.**

Works which referred to aspects of the artistic traditions and cultural heritage of the former Soviet States included Georgii Litichevskii's

Physicists and Lyricists (2006) [18]. The title of the installation refers to the distinction between physicists, in other words scholars of the natural sciences, and lyricists, who may be lyric poets, writers in general, and scholars of the humanities. The piece is by Georgii Litichevskii, a prominent figure of the Russian conceptual art and avant-garde scene of the 1980s and 1990s (Alaniz, 2006). In September 2005 the Café Scientifique in Moscow organised an event themed around Time and Space as part of the World Physics Year celebration, and brought together specialists in astrophysics, quantum mechanics, and cosmology, as well as science-fiction writers, in effort to address the same issues from cross- disciplinary perspectives (Alaniz, 2006). In Litichevkii's comic, humorous and cartoon-like figures of both physicists

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[6] For an illuminating and thorough analysis and explanation of Chto Delat? Project see Riff (2008) and Riff and Vilensky (2009).

and lyricists float together in space with a glowing galaxy, falling stars, and written text in Russian on the background. His work echoes the exploration of the relation between the nascent Soviet cybernetic theory, linguistics and art in Russian Conceptualism of the 1960s (Samman, 2011, 230). In a similar vein as in the 2005 Café Scientifique's event, the artist addresses the often biased opposition between science and the humanities, and raises the broader issue of the authority of knowledge and the relativity of the distinction of disciplines. At the same time, his dispute of dichotomies and hierarchies is also expanded on art forms, as comics have been considered as a low form of mass culture, and not meaningful art, and were banned by the Soviet regime (Alaniz, 2006).

In his audio-visual installation *Landscape of the City (Yerevan)* (2007), Arpine Tokmajyan recorded the noise in the streets of Yerevan, and took photographs of the same places. He then converted the sound of the street-noise into a vector. Based on the shape of the vector, he distorted the photographs accordingly, and created an unexpected city-scape of the Armenian capital, blurring diving lines between sound and vision, photography and music (Tsantsanoglou, 2007c, 201).

In his installation *Δεν Υπάρχει/There Ain't None* (2007), Nikita Alexeyev explores the relationship between visual representation and language; he chooses to write the Greek phrase *Δεν Υπάρχει* on the banner and drawings of his installation, and proposes *There Ain't None* as its translation in English. As the artist explains, this phrase is a tribute to Gregory Palamas, an important Saint of Orthodox Christian Church, who lived in Thessaloniki during the 15th century, and proposed the method of negation as the most appropriate in order to tackle the difficult task of defining what God is (Tsantsanoglou, 2007f, 153). Both the reference to Saint Gregory Palamas and the choice of colours - red and golden - allude to the Byzantine religious art, and thus, further highlight Russia's Orthodox heritage, which the country shares with Greece.
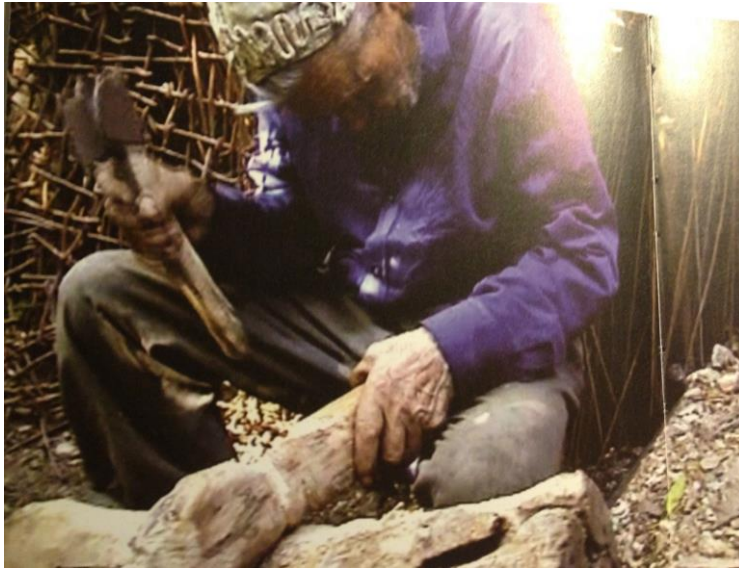
19. Elena Kambina, 2004, *The territory of the 'untouchable'.* **Video.**

The Territory of the 'Untouchable' (2004) is a video by Elena Kambina, which won a prize at The Video Identity Festival, organised by The Soros Centre for Contemporary Art in Kazakhstan, and is themed around the sacred places of Central Asia [19]. The video focuses on the life and work of Ravil Niyazbayev, a contemporary woodcarver, who follows Uzbekistan's long tradition of crafts (Tsantsanoglou, 2007d, 171). Images of the artist at work alternate with views of his final pieces. In Uzbekistan traditional woodcarving is considered and celebrated as part of the nation's cultural heritage. Taking into consideration the theme of the competition for which this video was created, it could be said that it identifies the Uzbek traditional artist with the sacred, and in this way, Kambina's work, too, celebrates Uzbekistan's cultural heritage. Finally, Teymur Daimi's *The Temple* (2005), a video about the spiritual journey of the believer and the nature of meditation and prayer, makes subtle references to Azerbaijan's Islamic heritage.

On the other hand, there were works in Tsantsanoglou's selection which did not make references either to the cultural, political or social realities of the artists' homelands nor to aspects of their artistic and cultural heritage, as the previous two groups did. By including such works, the Thessaloniki Biennale refrained from using the pressing socio-political issues which some former-Soviet states face as the sole lens through which to look at the art practices from those countries.

For instance, Yuri Albert's installation *Self Portrait with Closed Eyes* (1995-2007) consists of 88 white plates hanging on the wall as if they were paintings [20]. The plates bear descriptions of Van Gogh's paintings from his letters to his brother Teo written in Braille (Tsantsanoglou, 2007h, 151). A contradiction arises as, on the one hand, vision is essential as regards the perception of paintings, and, therefore, knowledge of Modern Art; on the other hand, in this instance, a blind visitor would be more likely to access the work than a so-called expert on art history. In this way, the piece subtly touches upon issues of authority and expertise as regards art.
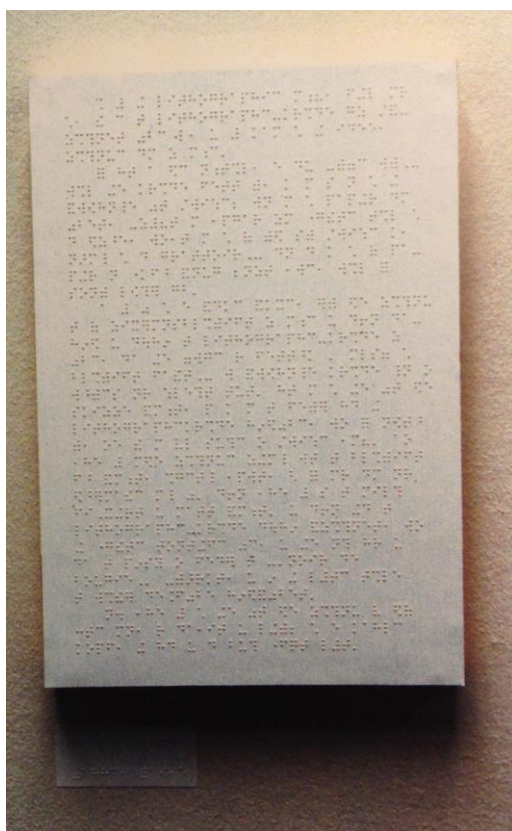
20. Yuri Albert, 1995-2007. *Self-portrait with closed eyes.* **Installation. Variable dimensions.**

In a similar vein, Andrei Roiter's paintings *The Big 'O'* (2007) and *New York Shadow* (2007) both from 2007 are subdues references to the artist's personal journeys and experience of the Diaspora. Guram Tsibakhasvhvili's series of digitally manipulated images, entitled *Interiors* (2000), captures unidentified, imposing interiors of large-scale, empty buildings with no trace of human presence. Ira Waldron, Russian émigré to Paris, presented her *Ladies with Dogs* installation (2006-2007), which consisted of thirteen drawings. Those were originally created by Adolf Hitler himself and depicted the women he loved – his mother, and his lovers – as well as his favourite dogs (Tsantsanoglou, 2007e, 205). In a subversive and ironic gesture, Waldron manipulated the drawings by adding Hitler's trademark moustache in all of the female figures, and rose issue of authenticity and authorship. Vadim Zacharov's installation *Black Birds* (2007) was site-specific to the atrium of the Byzantine Museum in Thessaloniki. In the light of intertextuality, the artist explores the identities and dispositions of the male figure through dense references to texts as diverse as Magritte's paintings, Homer's comic character Margites, Freud, and Jung's psychoanalytic theories.

Nearly all works by Russian artists selected for Tsantsanoglou' project bore elements and influences from the Moscow Conceptualism (Groys, 2006, 408, 409; Groys and Vidokle, 2006, 401-403), while a lot of the artists selected for her project (of Russian or other origin), were significant members of the Russian avant-garde and underground scene of the 1980s and 1990s, namely Vadim Zakharov (Groys and Vidokle, 2006, 401), Andrei Fillipov, the Ukrainian Georgii Litichevskii (Alaniz, 2006), Yuri Albert, Nikita Alexeyev (Misiano, 2006, 280), as well as the Azeri artist Babi Badalov. In this respect, Tsantsanoglou's selection followed a relatively safe pattern, including already established artists and focusing on a practice which was oppositional under the Soviet regime, but is critically acclaimed today (Degot, 2006; Misiano, 2006)[7]. Furthermore, Zakharov and Fillipov's works were displayed in conspicuous outdoor spots; the former in the atrium of the Byzantine Museum, and the latter outside the Archaeological Museum, very central and prestigious museums of the city. The prominent display of the compelling large-scale installations further celebrated Russian conceptual art, and privileged it in relation to the work of the artists from the rest of the former-Soviet States. However, the inclusion of six Russian artists in relation to fifteen artists from former-Soviet States indicates that the Thessaloniki Biennale resisted the tendency of the so-called West to focus on the Moscow-centred Russian art world, and marginalise the artistic worlds of the rest of the former Eastern bloc (James, 2008, 8), as was the case with the 3rd Moscow Biennale, for example (Kravtsova, 2010, 70-72).

As indicated in the analysis above, some of the selected works by artists based in former-Soviet States focused on a critical reflection on their Soviet past (*Life in Aral, Requiem, Ghost Town*), their homeland's contemporary identity (*Landscape of the City, Yerevan*), or on celebratory notes of their particular cultural heritage (*The Territory of the 'Untouchable', The Temple*). This is related to the effort of each former-Soviet country to consolidate its own national and culturally specific art and identity in a post-Soviet era (James, 2008, 10; Heartney, 2011, 50). At the same time, uncomfortable issues pertaining to the art scene of Central Asian countries were not raised in the exhibition. Such issues include the severe lack of arts infrastructure and

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[7] Indicative of this is the overwhelmingly positive critical reception and broad circulation of the work by Ilya Kabakov.

what this entails in terms of artists' access to opportunities for visibility and circulation (Heartney, 2011, 48-49; Fialova, 2012), censorship (Raza, 2010), as well as blunt processes of art's commercialisation (Nauruzbayeva, 2011, 375-380). In this respect, the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale complied with the tendency manifest in contemporary western art markets which expect that the artists from former-Soviet states should rediscover, redefine and manifest their alleged cultural identity, and demonstrate their uniqueness, but in a sanitised and politically 'safe' way (James, 2008, 8-10)[8].

2nd Thessaloniki Biennale

In the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale (2009) the emphasis deliberately shifted from Post Soviet States to Africa and Latin America. More specifically, the 2009 edition presented eight participations out of fifty six (or sixteen artists out of ninety one) from South Africa, Cameroun, Senegal, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt. Out of those sixteen artists, eleven resided in Africa, three in Western European countries, and two lived both in their respective home countries as well as in another country in Western Europe (Appendix, 176-177). Latin America was, also, emphasised in the 2009 edition, with sixteen participations out of fifty six (or sixteen artists out of ninety one1), from Cuba, Paraguay, Venezuela, Argentine, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile. The 2009 edition, also, included Western European artists (nine participations/eleven artists), Greek artists (six participations/eighteen artists), Asian artists (six participations/seven artists), and artists from the former-Soviet States (five participations/fifteen artists).

Moreover, two international curators were invited to co-curate the 2nd edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale, along with Syrago Tsiara, Director of the Centre of Contemporary Art: Gabriella Salgado, London-based curator of Latin American origin, with long experience in Latin American art, and Bisi Silva, Director of the Centre of Contemporary Art in Lagos, with substantial experience in African art. In this way, the focus on Africa and Latin America was reflected not only in the choice of artists as the figures above show, but also in the expertise of the invited curators.

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[8] For an interesting analysis of art practices in post-Soviet states in relation to the process of those countries' transition to capitalism and privatisation see Groys (2008).

It should be noted that the main curatorial concept of the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale was the exploration of art's potential for social intervention, as reflected in the edition's title *Praxis, Art in Times of Uncertainty,* as well as the curators' joint text:

> Perhaps this time of uncertainty could be the moment for the reconsideration of the intrinsic worth of artistic practice. The moment to explore art as a privileged space for relatively free expressions of ideas and for an alternative view of the world and the social environment (Salgado, Silva, Tsiara, 2008, 22-23).

However, the catalogue texts contributed by the two international curators, in particular, also consolidated the Thessaloniki Biennale's affiliation with the frameworks of post-colonial critique. Salgado refers to Joaquin Torres Garcia's drawing of the 1936, in which the artist put the map of South America upside down and entitled his work *Our North is the South* (Salgado, 2009, 27). Following Salgado's interpretation, the work made a radical ideological proposition: the redrawing of economic and social paradigms of South America, expressing the need for intellectual and cultural independence from the North (Salgado, 2009, 27).

Salgado links Torres Garcia's proposition with the proliferation of biennials in places 'beyond the mainstream countries':

> The emergence of medium and small size biennales in East, South and beyond the mainstream countries tends to signify a similar opportunity. The new cartographies attempted in the by now decades long initiatives might call for a regeneration of meaning, or the placing of emphasis in cultures off the radar (Salgado, 2009, 27).

Salgado sees a significant potential in the emergence of smaller-scale biennials in numerous places, beyond the financial centres of the so-called West; the potential to draw new cartographies, as Torres Garcia symbolically did, and thus challenge the hegemonies of the places considered as 'centres' until recently. At the same time, those newly emergent biennials have the potential to draw attention to what Salgado terms as 'cultures off the radar', that is cultures outside the so-called West. Salgado

goes on to explicitly link the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale with the possibilities outlined above. The geographical location of the host city, at the margins of the mega-biennial circuit, serves to firmly ground that relationship (Salgado, 2009, 27).

Salgado, also, highlights that Latin American art practice and its modernistic frameworks have been largely overlooked by art history and research in the so-called West (Salgado, 2009, 27). The sub-heading *Southern Histories,* which she chooses, implies convergence between South America, South Europe and Africa. Finally, the curator refers extensively to three emblematic figures of Latin American artistic modernism, Carlos Cruz Diez, Leon Ferrari, and Leticia Parente, all three included in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, and stresses the radical and experimental aspect of their work (Salgado, 2009, 29). The inclusion of these three artists in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale is a statement and a promise that the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale will address the omissions in Western histories of modern art.

However, the focus of the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale extends beyond Latin America, and encompasses art from the Caribbean, Africa and the Diaspora in an effort to trace 'the possibilities of generating an ideological relation between histories linked by a common colonial past' (Salgado, 2009, 27).

Sugar Cane Fields Forever, the sub-heading Salgado uses for this section of her text further highlights the colonial experience of the regions the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale focuses on. Sugar cane plantations were associated with the slave trade and the colonial brutal exploitation of dislocated African, Indian and Asian populations during colonialism. Moreover, *Sugar Cane Fields Forever* is the title of a song by Brazilian composer, singer and political activist Caetano Veloso, who has been associated with avant-garde art in Latin America during the 1960s as well as opposition to his county's junta. In this way, the potential for resistance and opposition inherent in those regions and cultures is also highlighted.

Bisi Silva, too, refers extensively to the omissions of Western accounts of art of the 20th century. The writer addresses African art after de-colonization and the effort of African artists, then, to challenge a colonial artistic legacy, which did not take their history, culture or contemporary reality into consideration. In particular, she refers to

Uche Okeke and his exploration of Uli Art, a traditional form of Nigerian art, in relation to a contemporary art context (Silva, 2009, 33).

Silva concludes by stressing how important the diversity of voices is as regards approaching history as well as the experience of the present day realities and draws a firm link between the issues she addresses related to post-colonial critiques and the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale: 'The current edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale invites the curators and artists to consider some of these issues' (Silva, 2009, 33). In this way, Silva, similarly to Salgado, inscribes the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale within the framework of post-colonial critique. It is interesting, therefore, to explore the relationship of the Thessaloniki Biennale with the framework of post-colonial critique, especially as regards the representation of art practices 'outside' Europe. This is considered from the perspective of how this art challenged or re-affirmed fixed notions of art from these regions and cultures; also, whether it reproduced exhibition practices which emphasise the cultural particularities of the participating artists, and contribute to the commodification of 'cultural diversity'. Key in the exploration of these questions is the choice of artists and artworks made from the part of the art event, as explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Artists and artworks

An important aspect of the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale's approach to exhibiting art form outside Europe was the fact that the artworks from artists of Latin American and African background were largely arranged around the main concept of the edition rather than the cultural identities of the artists or the regions in question. This was achieved by not segregating the works on the basis of their common geographical and cultural origin neither juxtaposing them in order to highlight their cultural differences. Instead the floor maps of the exhibition venues show that they were scattered across various venues and mingled with the works of the rest of the participants (Appendix, 180-185). In this way, the curators refrained from classifying the artworks shown according to their region of origin, and thus, avoided rendering particular artistic traits or themes as essentially Latin American or African.

As regards the representation of art from Latin America in particular, the following paragraphs explain how the artists and artworks, which were selected by the curators,

projected art practices from this region as having a long, although often overlooked, tradition in experimental forms and practices, as well as being critical and politically subversive, and socially engaged. Also, the following paragraphs explore whether these traits were rendered as inherent or exclusive to art from Latin American countries, thus constructing a fixed preconception, and a stereotype about them.

For instance, Salgado included three iconic figures of the historical avant-garde of Latin American art in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale: Carlos Cruz-Diez (born in 1923), León Ferrari (born in 1920), and Leticia Parente (1930-1991). As explained below, their work was also displayed in a prominent way.

Carlos Cruz-Diez's *Chromosaturation* installation (1965-2009) was exhibited in one of the enclosed rooms in the Old Ice Chambers, Pier 1, Thessaloniki Port [21]. The venue consists of several enclosed spaces, where, during most of the 20th century, products transported by the cargo ships stopping in Thessaloniki used to be temporarily stored. The venue, used for the main programme of the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, allowed for a linear and individualised display of projects and works. Cruz-Diez's installation consisted of

21. Carlos Cruz-Diez, 1965-2009. *Chromosaturation.* **Installation. Variable dimensions.**

three subsequent colour chambers, which, in complete contrast to the bare, industrial interior of the venue, immersed the viewer in an utter monochromy, first red, then green and, finally, blue. Intensity and vibration of colour interfered with the viewer's perception of space, as perspective and sense of orientation were distorted, while the viewer was free to navigate in the completely transformed space.

Cruz-Diez, is, often, hailed as one of the most significant figures in Latin American Art (Jiménez, 2010), as well as in experimental and politically informed art in
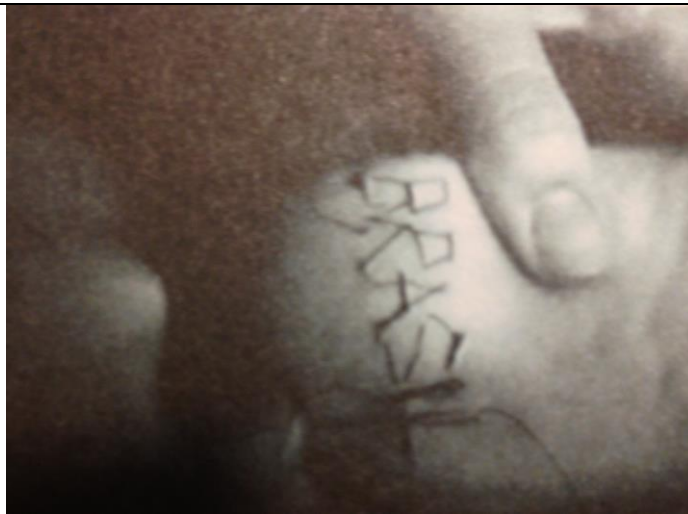
general (Plante, 2010; Ramirez and Olea, 2011). *Chromosaturation* has been an ongoing project for Cruz-Diez, since 1965 and is one of the artist's best-known and critically acclaimed ones. This installation has been part of the Kineticism project, the movement which according to Coco Fusco 'made Venezuela famous in 1960s' (Fusco, 2005, 1). Throughout the 1960s, Cruz-Diez, along with fellow artists Alejandro Otero, Jesus Soto and Julio Le Parc, explored the possibilities of kinetic art and viewers' physical engagement with the work, with the aim to challenge their perceptual certainties. Furthermore, Kineticism had a political dimension, as the dematerialisation of the work of art which it proposed, was seen as a symbolic attempt to create an alternative system to that of consumer society (Jiménez, 2010; Plante, 2010, 445-450).

León Ferrari is another well-known and celebrated Latin American artist. For the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, a mini-retrospective of the artist's diverse practice was mounted in the bookshop of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation. The venue, central and prestigious, was exclusively devoted to Ferrari's numerous collages from his *L' Osservatore Romano* series (2001), as well as his series of various images imprinted with Braille writing, and some of his small-scale board games installations. His innovative practice as well as his forceful criticism of oppression and violence from the part of the Argentinian dictatorship (1976-1983), and, more recently, the Christian Church, put Ferrari to the forefront of experimental as well as critical and politically engaged art (Bell, 2012, 253-263; Porterfield, 2013, 97-105).

Finally, four video performances by Leticia Parente - *Preparation 1* (1975)*, Trademark* (1975) [22]*, De Aflictibus (Ora pro Nobis)* (1979) and *TAREFA/ Task 1* (1982) - were shown in the upper level of Bezesteni, an Ottoman market, still in use today housing small shops. Parente, a diverse personality with academic and scientific as well as artistic activity, developed an experimental practice, which lay at the intersection of performance and video art, and, often, inscribed the artist's conceptual explorations directly onto her own body (Parente, 2011). Her works, associated with the rise of the feminist movement in Brazil in the 1970s, undercut stereotypes regarding gender roles. Moreover, her works had a significant political

aspect, as they often raised issues of cultural autonomy and emancipation in the context of a US backed dictatorship.

Parente is one of the most acclaimed artists in Latin American art discourse, and her work is associated with radicalised and subversive artistic practices (LaFerla, 2011). Parente has, also, been among the first video artist in Brazil back in the 1970s. Brazil has a significant tradition in video art, which includes *Videobrasil*. This electronic art festival was first established in 1983, and, especially since the 1990s, has established itself as an important platform for contemporary art production of the Southern axis, including other Latin American countries, as well as countries from Africa and the Middle East (Jesus, 2009, 269-275). The inclusion of videos by Parente - a *Videobrasil* participant herself in the festival's early days - in Salgado's selection for the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale,

22. Leticia Parente, 1970. *Trademark. Video.*

served to highlight Brazil's and, more broadly, Latin American art's significant tradition both in video art and subversive and critical practices.

The inclusion of Amilcar Packer's video series (2006-2008) and José Alejandro Restrepo's video *Viacrucis* (2004) in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale served to remind the continuation of this tradition well into the present-day art scenes of certain Latin American countries (the two aforementioned artists originate from Chile and Colombia respectively). The layout of the exhibition mounted in Bezesteni conveyed the same message, perhaps more forcefully. Parente's videos were joined by César Martinez-Silva's sculptural installations titled *The Other in Itself*, *The Idealised Body*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Temporary Present, Interactive Words* all from 2002. The Mexican artist has developed an interdisciplinary critical practice, which, often, involves activist interventions and participatory performances, and

23. View of the exhibition in Warehouse 13. 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale. The work on the right is by La Pocha Nostra and Guillermo Gómez-Peňa, 2006. *The Chi-Canarian expo series.* **Photographs. 142 x 103 cm (each).**

addresses world politics, capitalism, and environmental issues (Martinez, 2000, 175-177; Diaz, 2009, 208). In Bezesteni, the viewer encountered a series of rubber male and female human bodies; the figures were naked, and, with the aid of an air gun, they inflated and deflated in a pace indicative of the act of breathing. The installations in Bezesteni made subtle references to oxygen and life on the one hand, and the oil industry (artificial rubber is one of oil's by-products), on the other; their juxtaposition with Parente's videos from the 1970s, bridged the gap between contemporary art production and Latin American art of the 1970s. The inclusion of these artists and artworks in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale highlighted criticality and socio-political engagement as a crucial aspect of art practices from Latin America.

Similarly, the exhibition displayed in Warehouse 13, Pier 1, Thessaloniki Port, included *The Chi-Canarian Expo Series* (2006) by the group La Pocha Nostra and Guillermo Gómez-Peňa, an iconic figure of avant-garde and critical practice form Mexico [23]. Eight large photographs were displayed in sequence in one of the walls of the central and most spacious chamber of the venue. The work was part of a broader performing project, *Archi-Fronteras,* for which, Gómez-Peňa and a groups of fellow artists travelled to Las Palmas. The project explored the cultural relations between Chicanos and Canaries, highlighting issues of gender, sexuality, power relations, which are recurring themes in the artist's body of work (Jinorio, 2009, 181). Moreover, as in Gómez-Peňa's long-standing, radical practice of interactive 'living museums' and 'tableau vivants' (Fusco, 1989; 2000; Gómez-Peňa, 1992;), in *The Chi-Canarian Expo Series,* too, the critical analysis and parody of colonial practices of representation is present; it can be traced in the staging of the

compositions, the attire and paraphernalia of the participants and the strong references to cultural and racial identities. Apart from the *The Chi-Canarian Expo Series*, La Pocha Nostra and Gómez-Peňa, also, presented a performance especially staged for the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, *Five Psycho-magic Actions against Violence*, *a Performance for Thessaloniki.*

24. View of the exhibition in Bey Hamam. 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale. The work is by René Francisco, 2003. *Rosa's House.* Video.

The theme of social engagement and intervention was particularly highlighted in the three video projections by Cuban artist, René Francisco: *Rosa's House* (2003) [24], *Nin's Backyard* (2005-2006), and *Benita's Water* (2008-2009), which were projected in Bey Hamam. The first two videos were shown on large screens opposite to each other, in what used to be the introductory chamber of the bath, otherwise known as 'the cold chamber'. This is the most spacious room of the venue as well as the first which the visitor encounters. *Benita's Water* was projected in one of the smaller but intricately decorated and imposing chambers in what used to be the male sector of the facility. These videos documented in detail three different interventions made by the artist; for the first two, Francisco worked voluntarily to fix serious damage in the houses of two elderly women in Havana, and improve facilities making their lives more comfortable.

Benita's Water also included the production of a print booklet with photos documenting the artist's endeavor. The images in the booklet begin with Benita at her house trying to collect and store running water, available only once a week. The story continues with Benita being visited by a young girl dressed in white and bearing angel's wings. The photos are blurred creating the impression of a vision. The images that follow depict instances of the process during which Francisco's team of volunteers (all friends and relatives of the artist) work to renovate Benita's

house. The final ones show the results with the team being treated to a glass of water to celebrate the completion of their task. Benita is smiling in her repaired, clean kitchen. It is worth noting that *Benita's Water* was funded by the *Overtures* project[9], while the other two were realized with the artist's private means[10].

Francisco has a keen interest in socially engaged projects and works close to the community of Havana. In fact, his overall practice is inscribed in the discourse on community-based and socially engaged art, namely as regards the exploration of ways in which art could transcend official institutions and engage with the community, enabling artistic practice to be civic as well (Miller, 2002). Francisco himself is a proponent of art committed to social causes; in the booklet accompanying *Benita's Water,* he writes: 'This artistic experience belongs to that diffuse field where art attempts to enter into, or interfere, in every day life'. Moreover, in his contributory text in the Thessaloniki Biennale's catalogue he defines art's intervention into life and the social sphere as the very essence of artistic practice (Francisco, 2009, 136). Francisco's work further reinforces the configuration of the artistic practice of Latin American countries as indicated in the works mentioned above (critical, political, experimental, and, often, radical) by highlighting one more crucial element: Latin American art is socially engaged and community empowering.

The 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale highlighted also the element of critical reflection as an integral aspect of art practices from Latin America by displaying artworks which analysed the ways in which dominant representations of events, histories, identities and collective memory are constructed by the media and official institutions. For instance, the *Untitled* series of black and white photographs (2003-2005) by Fredi Casco, an artist from Paraguay, were included in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale [25]. Buying old photographs from the Sunday flea market of Asunción, Casco compiled an archive of official photographs dated from Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship in Paraguay (1954-1989), a time of violence, oppression, but, also, intense diplomatic activity for the country. These photographs document diplomats' visits, encounters

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[9] The Overtures project was an interdisciplinary project with an environmental focus, which dealt with water as resource and its imminent depletion. 'Benita's Water' was part of the third edition of Overtures and was curated by Juan Carlos Betancourt (Overtures, 2008).

[10] As explained in the booklet accompanying the video work.

between foreign dignitaries and local officials, receptions and social events (Escobar, 2006, 92-93).

25. Fredi Casco, 2003-2005. *Untitled.* **Photograph, 20 x 25 cm.**

Many of these images have been dismissed by official historic research and historiography as insignificant; however, Casco's archive embraces them in a subversive gesture towards the official institutions of knowledge production. The artist manipulates the photos digitally, and adds two disturbing narrative elements which undermine the initial representation: he clones one of the figures and inserts the double in the original image, or inserts an unidentified figure wearing a gas mask, referring to the nuclear threat of the Cold War period, during which these photos were taken. At the same time, the artist retains the original colour, tone and size. The effect is humorous, ironic and ultimately disturbing, as these photographs - a self-reflective study on the nature and power of photography and representation- achieve a profound and incisive critique of how official versions of history and events are constructed.

In a similar vein, a series of drawings and paintings by Diego Haboba, from Argentina, dating from 2004-2009, use as their starting point old photographs from the artist's family archive to raise issues of personal and collective memory. The artist creates snapshots of his family history, but disrupts the narrative by re-arranging the course of events, adding scenes that never happened, drawn from his speculation on the family members unfulfilled dreams and desires, as well as making subtle references to Argentinean recent history (Weschler, 2009, 153). Finally, José Alejandro Restrepo's video titled *Viacrucis* (2004), exhibited in a small dark room in Warehouse C in order to set a devout tone, addresses dominant systems of

representation in Colombian official media. Images of religious zealots in extreme and violent acts of faith alternate with extracts from popular shows and newscasts on violent events broadcast on TV. Violent practices, either political, military or religious, are inscribed on the human body, leaving it bleeding. In his video, Restrepo explores how the imagery and representational tradition of Catholicism is appropriated by Colombian media in order to inscribe political and social violence in a quasi-religious narrative of sacrifice and redemption; the aim is to naturalise terror and violence, and produce anaesthetized and submissive subjects (Medina, 2009, 245). The identification of the Church with official institutions of governance in terms of oppressiveness and manipulation exemplifies Restrepo's critical analysis of both hard and soft means of power, and the representations they construct and circulate, which is a recurrent theme in his practice (Gutiérrez, 2002, 54-57; Bernal, 2006, 119-120; Burgos-Bernal, 2011, 72-73).

It should be noted that the critical analysis of the mechanisms of representation, namely dominant representations of official histories, identities, events, and collective memory, is a recurring theme in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, raised not exclusively by Latin American artists. For instance, this theme is explored in Hassan Darsi's installation *Point Zero, Thessalonique Series* (2009), Paolo Chiasera's mutli-media installation *Forget the Heroes* (2007/2008), Giorgos Divaris' installation titled *Arrogance/Looking from Above* (2009), Khaled Hafez's video *The Third Vision, Around 1.00 pm* (2008), Despina Meimaroglou's multimedia installations *Till Death Do Us Part* (1994)*, Deposition* (1993), and *Witness for the Prosecution* (2009), to name but a few. The long list of works tackling this issue attests to the fact that, in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, the theme of critical enquiry into representation systems and power institutions, although highlighted as an integral aspect of art practices from Latin America, was not rendered as exclusive to those practices.

As regards works by artists from countries of Northern as well as sub-Saharan Africa included in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, the overall theme of the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale regarding art's potential for criticality and intervention into the social sphere was still present as the central axis around which the selection of works took place. Perhaps one of the most telling choices as regards addressing disturbing social problems, was Jodi Bieber's series of photographs titled *Las Canas* (2003), exhibited

in one of the Old Ice Chambers, Pier 1, Port [26]. Bieber, a South-African photojournalist who has been actively involved in Amnesty International projects, is well-known for her work's focus on critical social issues. Although her work has occasionally attracted criticism, for example concerning its relation to US foreign policies of invasion to Afghanistan (Mackie, 2012, 124-126), she has been the recipient of multiple World Press Photo of the

26. View of the exhibition in Old Ice Chambers. 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale. The work is by Jodi Bieber, 2003. *Las Canas.* Photographs. 65 x 65 cm each.

Year Awards. Her photographs are, often, themed around the harsh realities of marginalised groups living in the fringes of urban centres, as well as institutionally sanctioned and tolerated violence (Schuman, 2006, 14-17; Bieber, 2012, 20-21; Smyth, 2011, 28-33).

The *Las Canas* series captured the everyday realities in a Spanish dump, where approximately 100 people infested with problems such as drug abuse and HIV, live homeless and destitute. At the same time, *Las Canas* is a key spot for drug trafficking, with approximately 1000 people visiting the spot daily to buy drugs (Bieber, 2009, 72). The decision to include Bieber's work on the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale challenged the conception of clear-cut boundaries separating, art, photojournalism, and documentary, and further exclaimed the main concept of the art event. Moreover, it is interesting to note that, although Bieber is South-African, her works dealt with an acute problem taking place in Spanish territory; in other words, her work was not chosen on the grounds of dealing with an issue particular to the contexts of African countries.

In a similar vein of dealing with issues which transcend the particular contexts of African countries and link populations in critical and urgent ways, Bright Eke, from Nigeria, took up the issue of water. His installation *Confluence* (2009) was mounted in Warehouse 13, in the adjacent chamber to the central space [27]. A small screen was also included showing images of some of the artist's further installations, which also deal with the issue of water (*Shield,* 2006*, Water Drop,* 2008, *and Untitled* 2008). *Confluence* was made of water sachet patched into raincoats, suspended from the ceiling. The theme of water bears environmental as well as political connotations; water can be addressed as resource which is being depleted with fatal consequences to the planet as well as human life. Also, it can be explored as a referent to inequalities and power relations as regards access and exploitation of resources, and the financialisation of nature, which is integral to the project of neo-liberalism (Harvey, 2005; Smith, 2007), and can be inscribed in the artistic-activist campaign against corporate globalization (Demos, 2013c, 5).
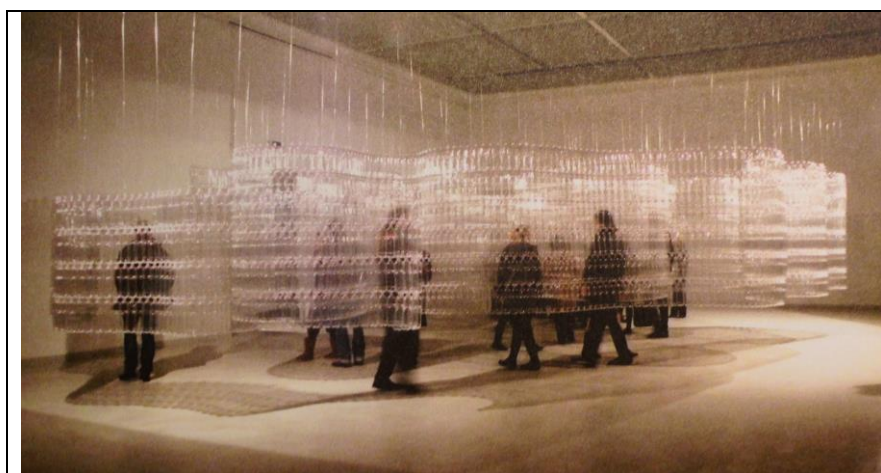
27. Bright Eke, 2009. *Confluence.* **Sculpture installation. Plastic water bottles. Variable size.**

The theme of water is particularly relevant to Nigeria, the artist's country of origin, as water – the Niger Delta – is of utmost importance in the country's prosperity; however, its biosphere is being irrevocably damaged due to a lack of environmental considerations in the business of oil prospecting and extraction in the region. After the much condemned execution of local activist and writer Ken Saro-Wiwa - who struggled to raise national and international awareness on the problem - by the government under false allegations against him, the region has also become a symbol of the assault on the environment and the assault on human rights' in the region (Nnamdi, Comba and Ugiomoh, 2013, 65-66). Nothing of all this is evoked in Eke's work; instead, his decision to approach

the issue of water as a 'universal' theme and ignore the cultural complexities and specificities involved, coupled with the light and playful form of his installation, aestheticise and obscure a very pressing issue. As regards the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, Eke's work was a 'safe' but politically weak choice, as it fitted the art event's main thematic strands, but was a work easy to encounter and digest, without evoking any of the painful realities its theme was linked to.

28. Emeka Okereke, 2008. *Bagamoyo-Photography and the Public Space.* **140 x 170 cm each.**

Emeka Okereke's project *Bagamoyo-Photography and the Public Space* (2008) consisted of a series of photographs capturing the everyday encounters and activities in Maputo Bay, Mozambique, where the Indian Ocean divides the city into two. Also, a video was shown in Warehouse C, Pier 1, Thessaloniki Port, documenting the process of this project. The photographs capture aspects of the everyday realities of local residents, traders and tourists, as they travel back and forth several times a day. *Bagamoyo,* the ferry boat which carries people and goods, stands for the interaction that takes place in Maputo Bay, which is represented as a social and cultural melting pot (Okereke, 2009, 220). The project exclaims its close relation to the particular place where it took place, Maputo Bay, and in this sense, is a site-specific project, which, however, travelled to numerous locations, other than Maputo, including the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale (2009), the Havana Biennial (2009) and the Parisian *Photoquai* Biennale (2009).

The outdoor exhibition of the photographs is an integral part of the project, which was initially exhibited along the bridge located at the banks of the Maputo River,

which enters the Maputo Bay from the south. In this way, hundreds of people included those who were photographed by Okereke had immediate access to the exhibition for free, as they crossed the bridge on their way to work. This is consistent with the artist's overall aspiration to break down the barriers often posed by official art institutions and reach out to populations, who wouldn't normally frequent museums or galleries. A similar display was attempted at the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, as the series of Okereke's photographs was displayed outdoors, along the waterfront in Pier 1, Thessaloniki Port, with the waters of Thermaikos Bay in the background [28]. However, as explained in Chapter 4, Pier 1 in Thessaloniki is the renovated historic port of the city, entirely devoted, now, to art and culture activities, and home to three museums. In this sense, it has become a space for leisure rather than a point often crossed by people on their way to their everyday activities, as was the case with the bridge in Maputo Bay. In this way, the reference to the concept of art reaching beyond the barriers of the official art museum and gallery was somewhat downplayed.

The curators' selection of art from African countries also included Mauro Pinto's series of photographs entitled *Ports of Convergence: Angola and the Departure of an African Legacy* (2005), exhibited in Warehouse C, Pier 1. The photographs captured aspects of the everyday life in the port of Angola's capital, Luanda. Although the photographs render the port as a site of labour as well as social interaction, both the title of the project as well as the text which accompanied it in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale catalogue highlight the long tradition of African Diaspora as well as the colonial experience of African populations, who were deported as slaves from their continent's ports to Europe and America (Brun, 2009, 236). Finally, the project *Aposteriori*, was exhibited in Warehouse 13, Pier 1. The project consisted of twelve videos by several artists of African origin, themed around the realities of various urban centres in Africa. Long distance shots of urban landscapes and traffic-jammed roads were, often, combined with close-ups of locals talking through their own experiences of these places. The various and often conflicting perspectives of both the filmmakers and the participants rendered the urban experience in African cities as contradictory, and diverse, and, thus, discouraged thinking about this aspect of African cultures in unifying and reductive terms.

As already mentioned, the artworks by artists of African origin were not segregated, on the basis of their origin; instead they were displayed based on their relation to the main concept of the art event, as the rest of the works included. In this respect, the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale was more successful than the 2007 *Check List* exhibition of African art at the 52nd Venice Biennale, which presented African artists as a separate group within the exhibition in the Arsenale, curated by Robert Storr, artistic director of the 52nd Venice Biennale. Nevertheless, the latter exhibition was hailed by some critics as 'giving unprecedented coverage to African artists and situating them as equals in international company' (Herbert, 2007, 87).

Furthermore, the selection of artworks by African artists in the Thessaloniki Biennale was not based on their inclusion in any large and well-known private collection, as was the case with the 52nd Venice Biennale's *Check List* exhibition, whose press releases emphasised that the exhibition highlighted works that belonged to the Sindika Dokolo Collection. The name of the owner of the Dokolo collection had been involved in an infamous scandal of corruption and blood diamonds. The choice to present his collection as representative of art practice and infrastructure in Africa was considered as encouraging the polishing of shady biographies and dirty money through art patronage, and was very much criticised (Chika Okeke-Agulu, 2007, 4-5). In this respect, the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale presented an alternative mode of selection and exhibition practice, which did not rely on or enhance the image of particular private patrons.

Another significant difference between the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale and the 2007 *Check List* exhibition at the 52nd Venice Biennale was the fact that the latter issued an open call for submissions, and required that any submission should include a budget and a list of the financing institutions and/or sponsors of their project exhibition. This meant that submitted proposals stood no chance without financial backing from some (African) institution, and constituted another way to filter and exclude particular projects and artists (Okeke-Agulu, 2007, 5). In the contrary, no such or other financial requirement from the participating artists was put forward by the Thessaloniki Biennale in any of its editions. Instead, the art event was responsible for covering the expenses of the artworks being transported and insured, and in this respect, allowed rather than restricted access.

On the other hand, the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale shared with the *Check List* exhibition a feature, for which the latter has attracted criticism: the fact that the exhibition was limited to sub-Saharan artists. This, according to art critic Okeke-Agulu reflected the colonial tendency of imagining sub-Sabaran Africa as the "real" Africa, since the northern regions had been "contaminated" by Islamic and Arab civilizations (Okeke-Agulu, 2007, 5). A similarly uneven ratio can also be traced in the selection made by the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, which presented twelve artists from sub-Saharan Africa, and only four from Northern Africa (Appendix, 176-177).

Moreover, the proportion of artists from Latin America and Africa, although significant, was balanced in relation to the percentage of artists from Western Europe, or Greece (Appendix, 173-177). As a result, the main programme of each edition was not 'inundated' with art from a particular geographical and cultural area, as is, usually, the case with all-inclusive exhibitions of the art of those regions - for instance the year-long celebratory event *Africa 05* (Binder, 2006, 86-88). In this, way the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale did not attempt a comprehensive or totalizing overview of art from Africa and Latin America.

Although the works presented in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, often, drew from their particular socio-political and cultural contexts, they did so from diverse perspectives and addressed different aspects of those contexts, without repeating a singular theme. Associating a particular region and its art practice with a particular theme - such as violence, and images of war with the Middle East, for instance (Kholeif, 2010; Santacattarina and Steyn, 2013), or multiculturalism, hybridism, fragmentation and heterogeneity with Latin America (Amor, 1994; Mosquera, 2001) - can reproduce reductive representations, and reinforce stereotypical interpretive frameworks (Martins, 2012, 1-4). The 2nd edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale offered glimpses – often conflicting - and not coherent or homogeneous accounts of what African and Latin American realities and cultures can be, while at the same time allowed for addressing the complexities, and various nuances and particularities of the contexts the artworks were associated with.

As indicated in Chapter 4, the official written texts of the Thessaloniki Biennale, embrace to a certain extent the discourses of the Greek government which reproduce neo-liberal values, such as the appropriation of art and culture for profit-making purposes. However, the reluctance from the part of the curators of the 2nd edition of the art event to exhibit the artworks using notions of their creators' cultural identities as markers of distinction and differentiation, distinguishes this art event, at least to an extent, from the approach to concepts of 'cultural identity' and 'cultural difference' associated with positive stereotyping (Araeen, 1989; 2000a; 2000b; 2005; Mosquera, 2001) and the demands of an art market which internalises the logic of neo-liberalism by commercialising 'cultural diversity' (Ramirez, 1994; Yúdice, 1994; Araeen, 2005, Kholeif, 2010).

3rd Thessaloniki Biennale

The 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale was officially themed around the city of Thessaloniki - as also explored in Chapter 4 of this thesis - and the Mediterranean. Katerina Koskina, Director of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale and President of the SMCA, explained in her catalogue contribution:

> Taking the 3rd Biennale as a starting point, the research focuses on the modern artistic production in the Mediterranean, especially in regions whose contribution to the art scene is not well (if at all) known…The Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art primarily aims to reinvigorate the dialogue and communication between the Mediterranean countries, as well as to showcase the new identity of the host city (Koskina, 2011, 14)

Contrary to the two previous editions, the focus of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale was geographically and culturally restricted and somewhat regional, perhaps giving the opportunity to address issues pertinent to the contemporary turbulence and crisis faced by Greece as well as countries of the Middle East.

The theme of crisis was indeed taken up by the 3rd edition as its main concept. The 2011 Thessaloniki Biennale was titled *A Rock and a Hard Place*, an idiom which is used to describe situations of personal, social and political dilemmas that present

choices with equally painfully alternatives. In their co-authored catalogue text, the three curators of the 3rd edition - Paolo Colombo, Mahita El Bacha Urieta and Marina Fokidis – explain:

> During a conversation about the current political situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, soon after our appointment as curators of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, we decided to take the idiom 'between a rock and a hard place' as our catchphrase to describe the quandary into which the region has fallen. …This is the condition we wanted to explore through the Biennale, especially given the current context of popular mobilisation and uprisings….We are at a turning point in history, brought about by the so-called 'Arab Spring', by decisions that could potentially affect the peace process, and by an unprecedented global economic crisis that is deeply affecting Greece and other countries facing the Mediterranean and causing widespread social and political turmoil (Colombo, Urieta and Fokidis, 2011, 20).

Although both extracts presented above situate the art event's focus on the Mediterranean, Koskina's text does not make any reference to the turbulences and crisis experienced by the regions in question. In this way, it addresses 'artistic practice' as autonomous and isolated from socio-political realities. In this way, it gestures towards an apolitical and unproblematic consideration of the art practices from Greece and the Middle East, which is in line with the official narrative put forward by the con-current *Thessaloniki: Cultural Crossroads* programme and the Hellenic Ministry's neo-liberal agenda of boosting tourism through art and culture.

On the other hand, the curators' text makes explicit reference to the current socio-political circumstances in Greece and countries in the Middle East, and considers these circumstances as an integral part of the exploration of artistic practices they attempt for the Thessaloniki Biennale. This opens up the possibility for the Thessaloniki Biennale to offer critical responses to the crises experienced in the regions in question. In this way, the question whether this was actually the case as well as whether the art event challenged the neo-liberal narrative of using art and culture as a boost for tourism, becomes even more urgent.

The 2011 edition shifted its focus to Greek artists (twenty six out of eighty five), West-European artists (twenty six out of eighty five), and artists from the Middle East (thirteen out of eighty five). In fact, the 3rd edition of the art event presented the largest number of participations from the Middle East in relation to the two previous editions, and the same applies to Greek artists (Appendix, 174-179). As regards the thirteen participating artists from the Middle East, nine resided in countries of the Middle East at the time of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, two both in countries of the Middle East and Western Europe, and two in countries of Western Europe. Moreover, there was a clear focus on the Lebanese art scene, as eight out of those thirteen artists were originally from Lebanon. Latin America and post-Soviet States fell to only one participating artist each, while the number of African artists, also, decreased to seven (six came from Northern Africa - this was consistent with the Thessaloniki Biennale's focus on the Mediterranean - and one from sub-Saharan Africa).

Although, in their texts for the 1st and 2nd editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale, curators David, Salgado and Silva made overt references to the frameworks of post-colonial critique, this was not the case with the catalogue texts of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale. However, it could still be said that the 3rd edition continued the art event's overall attempt to bring forward voices from geographical and cultural areas until recently marginalised by the so-called West. More specifically, this is reflected in the inclusion of a greater number of Greek artists, since Greece could be considered a case in point of what Petersen addresses as 'peripheral art scenes of the West' (Petersen, 2012, 202), in terms of economy, cultural infrastructure, as well as visibility and circulation of Greek artists in major art events of Western Europe. The emphasis given from the part of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale to Greek artists raises the question regarding how art practices from Greece were represented in the 2011 edition, and whether issues pertaining to the country's contemporary turbulence and crisis were reflected upon.

The interest in art from the Middle East from the part of Western-based art institutions is not new in the years from 2000 onwards. However, it is often problematic, as it takes the form of a current fashion sparked by war and conflicts

which bring international attention to those regions (David, 2007b, 100). Furthermore, exhibitions presenting art from the Middle East in the West may project the region as essentially war/violence-ridden (Santacatterina and Steyn, 2013, 281), produce restrictive accounts of the regions' art practices, predominantly read in relation to war and trauma (Demos, 2007, 113) and align themselves with the tendency of the official media to use war as the dominant frame through which the West perceives the region's social and cultural production (David, 2007b, 109). In this way, works from artists from the Middle East may be appropriated, fetishised and commercialised to serve a capitalist driven art market (Kholeif, 2012, 31).

Nonetheless, David is sceptical regarding the anti-orientalist discourse too, as it may also reproduce a certain number of received ideas of "the Orient," and "reinvent" it perversely (David, 2007b, 107). Perhaps, this is why curators and art practitioners from the regions in question challenge the very framing of the regions' art practices through identity, and the very notion of a fix regional or national identity (Behrman, 2006, 4). They point out that identity, in this context, may serve as a framework for artists from the Middle East in order to market their work (Tohme, 2007, 110; Salti, 2007, 112), or create sweeping and levelling survey-type shows, reducing the plural and contradictory meanings of the term 'Arab' (Salti, 2007, 110). The discussion on how art practices from the Middle East are represented in Western exhibitions is relevant to the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale due to the art event's focus on the region. In particular, the fact that the *Thessaloniki: Cultural Crossroads* programme (which was initiated by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism and encompassed the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale) focused itself on the Middle East makes the question regarding how art practices from that region were represented in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale even more urgent. For instance, did the representation of art practices in the Middle East revolve predominately around the themes of trauma and violence, obscuring other aspects of those cultures? The following paragraphs set out to explore this issue by analysing particular artworks displayed in the third edition of the art event.

Artworks and projects from the Middle East were concentrated - but not limited - mainly in two venues: Bey Hamam, a centrally-located Ottoman bath, and Yeni Djami, a former mosque. The choice of venues, both originally intended for cultural and religious practices associated with Islam, highlighted the artworks' origin from the 'East'. The works could be loosely distinguished into two groups (although there was some overlapping as in the case of the *Arab Image Foundation*): the first took up issues regarding cultural heritage, contemporary visual cultures, representations of identities and personal narratives in a critical way, often addressing the mechanisms which underpin history-writing and official knowledge-production; the second group addressed directly issues pertaining to crises which have taken place in the region. This diversity in the content of the works ensured that the Middle East was not exclusively constructed as war and violence-ridden, but also allowed for pressing problems and traumas in the region to be addressed.

The projects which dealt with histories, cultures and heritage of the Middle East were collective, required the viewer's participation, and were housed in Bey Hamam. In this way, the venue's original function as a public meeting point of discussion and interaction highlighted the discursive element of the pieces on display. The following works addressed the Middle East not as a closed and fixed entity framed primarily through the themes of war and violence, but allowed diverse aspects and experiences of the region to emerge.

 In Bey Hamam's first chamber – the most spacious and best-lit room of the monument - a few computers were installed so that visitors could access the online digital collection of the *Arab Image Foundation*, a non-profit organisation, established in 1997 in Beirut with the mission to collect and preserve photographs from the Middle East, North Africa and the Arab Diaspora. Currently the collection comprises of approximately 600,000 photographs, whose digitalisation is still in progress (Arab Image Foundation, 2009a). The *Arab Image Foundation* was established by artists Walid Raad and Akraam Zaatari, both prominent members of

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the Lebanese art scene, who have also exhibited internationally (Feldman, 2009; Magagnoli, 2011; Wroczynski, 2011; Westmoreland, 2013)[11].

The project transcends the spatial restrictions of the museum or gallery, as it can be experienced online anytime, and for free. At the same time, it creates opportunities for artistic and curatorial discourse, as it provides the material for further exhibitions and projects based on the images from the collection. A small number of

30. Arab Image Foundation: Chafic el Soussi, 1955. *Party at the Osseiran house.* **Silver gelatine negative on acetate base film. 5.6 x 8.7 cm.**

photographs were printed and exhibited in the same venue for the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale - all of which were related to aspects of everyday life, family and leisure of the 1950s and 1960s. However, the collection of the *Arab Image Foundation* requires the viewers' participation, as they are able to conduct their own searches using different criteria according to their own interests, and thus, create their own itinerary through the collection. However, the categories are pre-determined, and their taxonomy mobilises and raises issues of gender and class identities (Bowen, 2008).

It is interesting the fact that the collection hasn't been assembled by professional historians or archivists, but through research projects initiated mostly by artists, such as the *Hashem El Madani Collection* by Zaatari, *A Photographic Conversation from Burj al-Shamali Camp* by Yasmine Eid- Sabbagh - exhibited separately in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale – *Collections from Iraq* by Yto Barada to mention but a few.

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[11] For example Zaatari exhibited in MOMA, New York (2013) and the Venice Biennale (2007 and 2013).

Although contemporary material is not excluded, there is a clear emphasis on the history of photographic practices in the regions in question, as the majority of research projects focus on the first half of the 20th century up to the 1960s [30]. Family photographs, studio portraits, advertisements, self-portraits, nudes etc, from professional photographers as well as amateurs and anonymous photographers blur the lines between the private and public, the commercial and non-commercial, and capture innumerable glimpses of cultural practices related to gender, family, public life, the media, consumerism and so on, of the regions they come from. In this way, the representations of the regions in question, included in the collection, are diverse and multi-layered rather than restricted to singular or particular aspects of the regions' cultures and histories, and thus, resist reductive and homogenising constructions of the region.

This polyphony of signs coupled with the fact that the photographs are exclusively taken by photographers who originated and/or resided in the countries in question, and not by Westerners give an underlying political element to the project. This is the case, for example, with Zaatari's project *Palestine before '48,* which explores the use of photography through the family albums of Palestinians living in Jerusalem, Nablus, Ramallah and other cities before 1948. The project challenges the common Western-produced portrayals of Palestine at the time as void of structured and fully-functioning societies, which was, in turn, linked to the establishment of the state of Israel and the decision to incorporate part of Palestine's land, and displace Palestinians (Arab Image Foundation, 2009b). The exploration of the politics involved in photographic representations is in line with Zaatari's broader conviction that photography can interrogate and undermine official history-writing (Westmoreland, 2013, 61-62).

98 Weeks is a Beirut-based ongoing research project which looks at a different topic every 98 weeks - hence the title - by organising exhibitions, workshops, seminars and talks (98 weeks, 2009). The project has a permanent physical space, which is intended to function as an open platform, and is available for artists to present or talk about their work and ideas. It also houses an archive of artist books and historical and contemporary publications. *98 Weeks,* also participated in the exhibition *No Soul*

For Sale, which took place in Tate Modern in 2010, and was devoted to independent and non-profit artistic spaces.

For the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale *98 Weeks* ran a publications bazaar in Bey Hamam [29]. The bazaar presented material researched by *98 Weeks* project *On Publications,* which consisted of a re-reading of art and culture publications produced and circulated in the Arab world since the 1930s. Special attention was given to the literary magazine *Sh'ir*, and the art and culture oriented *Al Hilal* magazine. The viewers' participation was actively encouraged in Bey Hamam, as the visitors were able not only to browse through the material *98 Weeks* presented, but also to bring their own books and publication material, deemed for any reason as worthy of a broader circulation, and to sell or exchange them with material presented at the bazaar. In this way, the viewers were given the opportunity to actively contribute to the formation of the ongoing publications archive compiled by *98 Weeks.*

29. View of the exhibition in Bey Hamam. 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale: 98 Weeks. 2011. *On Publications.* **Installation. Variable dimensions.**

The archival projects presented in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale - such as the *Arab Image Foundation* and *98 Weeks* - differ from archival art pieces by artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn[12], Sam Durant[13] or Tacita Dean[14], in the sense that the latter are smaller-scale, and, function as public interventions, often in the form of street displays and market stalls. Also, the pieces by the aforementioned artists blur the line

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[12] For example, his pieces *Tränetisch* (1996), *Otto Freundlich Altar* (1998), *Ingeborg Bachmann Kiosk* (1999), and others, see Foster (2004).
[13] For his practice see Foster (2004, 17-20).
[14] For example, her film-and-text pieces *Girl Stowaway* (1994), *Teignmouth Electron* (2000), *Bubble House* (1999), and others, see Foster (2004).
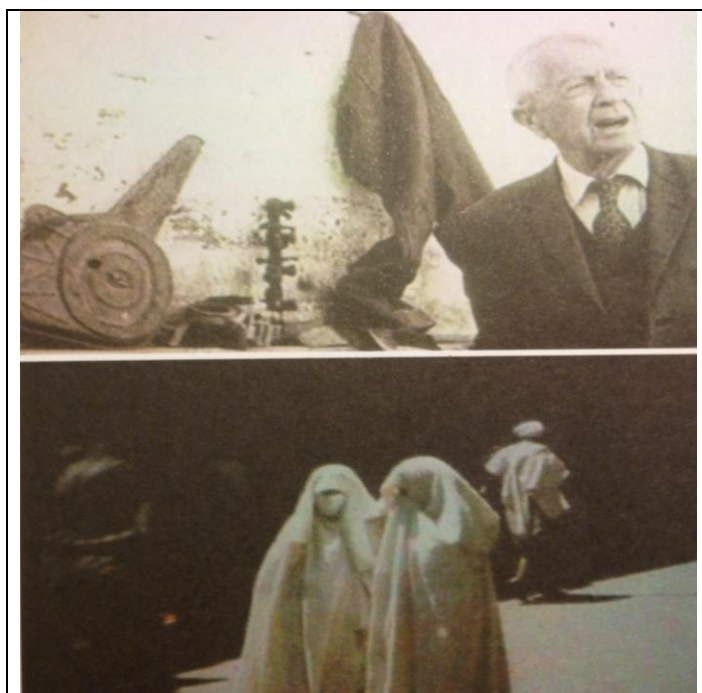
between fact and fiction far more by incorporating fictive elements as well as by bringing together elements not commonly associated (Foster, 2004). In this sense, they create 'perverse orders that aim to disturb the symbolic order at large' (Foster, 2004, 21).

The archival projects presented in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale were perhaps more driven by the fear of destruction and the desire to preserve what should not be lost (aspects of Arab cultural heritage, in the form of photographs or magazines and publications, and instances of discourse pertaining to the Lebanese civil war, such as the political posters of the time). However, they were subversive too. Many were developed as the result of collective research-projects curated by artists, and not by professional archivists or historians. In this way, they challenged the authoritative role of professional archivists and historians, and blurred the lines between disciplines. Also, they allowed the viewers significant freedom in the way they could navigate and experience them. The role of the users, thus, was far from passive, as they had to develop strategies to broach and to unfold the archival projects. In this way, an active dialogue between the creators of the archive and its users can be enacted, and this, according to Hannah Arendt, is essentially political, although not in the sense of literal mobilisation, but rather because this king of dialogue opens up the possibility for fixed hierarchies to be critically interrogated and reversed (Arendt, 1998).

IkonoMenasa a TV channel solely devoted to art was also presented in Bey Hamam for the 2011 Thessaloniki Biennale. It is part of the broader *Ikono TV* project, a TV production company which works solely with films on visual arts, and video art. *IkonoMenasa* broadcasts in the so-called Menasa countries, covering the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. The channel broadcasts videos and films with no narration or interruption, some of which exclusively produced for IkonoTV. The project aims to explore ways to use TV as a tool in order to make visual art accessible to broader audiences (IkonoTV, 2006). Although a lot of *Ikono TV* programmes are available online through its website and *Vimeo.com*, the project relies on technology - not affordable for everyone - in order to be viewed. Moreover, the fact that it is often available only through commercial, technologically advanced and on-demand telecom services provided by multinational corporations - for

example, in Lebanon *IkonoMenasa* can be viewed through Solidere IPTV Broadband Network, enabled by Orange Business Services, available to approximately 1,500 households only (IkonoTV, 2010) - makes the project's 'inclusive' agenda disputable; not everyone can afford these services or devices, not to mention the issues raised as regards art and culture's commodification and the promotion of neoliberal values through the involvement of multinational corporations. Still, it challenges the narrow limits of the conventional museum and gallery space, and provides an important platform for video and new media art to be broadcast and circulate.

31. Cinématèque de Tanger: Mohamed Ulad, 1993. *An American in Tangier.* **Video.**

A selection of mainly short films from the archive of the *Cinématèque de Tanger* was also shown in Bey Hamam [31]. Although geographically located in North Africa and not the Middle East, it is linked to the projects discussed above as its mission is to preserve and promote Arab film heritage and contemporary production. Its focus lies on documentary and experimental films as well as video art, and it aspires to counterbalance and challenge the dominant circulation and support of commercial movies in Moroccan film industry. The archive of the *Cinématèque* and the screenings take place in a historic movie theatre established in 1938, Cinema Rif; thus, this project also contributes to the preservation and re-use of a very interesting sample of the local urban architectural and cultural heritage (Cinématéque de Tanger, 2006).

Aspects of the Lebanese cultural traditions and intangible heritage are explored from an intimate perspective in Maahmoud Kaabour's film *Teta, Alf Mara, (Grandma, a Thousand Times),* which was shown in Bey Hamam. Although the theme of the

piece is in a sense largely situated in the past, the technique of the film itself is groundbreaking. This is because, it reconsiders the form and style of documentary films by appropriating elements of 'magic realism', which blurs the lines between fact and fiction, the natural and the supernatural. Kaabour's Beirut-based grandmother narrates her life with her late husband, who was a violinist, through the lens of her memories and emotions, as an intimate confession to her grandson. Her husband's music, namely some of his original compositions and improvisations, features as the soundtrack of the film, and black-and-white original photographs of the deceased succeed one another in an animated-like fashion, and alternate with shots of Kaabour's elderly grandmother talking in the present. The film is an intimate tale of a couple's love seen and told through the eyes of its female central figure, who asserts her identity and her strength through her matriarchal role in her family and marriage.

32. Moataz Nasr, 2011. *Merge and Emerge.* **Video.**

Finally, Moataz Nasr's *Merge and Emerge* video (2011) showing three whirling Sufis was housed in Yeni Djami [32]. Whirling dance is associated with the practices of the Mevlevi order or otherwise known as 'whirling Dervishes', especially a formal ceremony during which participants reach religious ecstasy (Urieta, 2011, 105). The associations deriving from the original use of the monument - a sacred place of prayer for Dönmes, e.g. Jews who had converted to Islam but secretly observed Jewish practices - further highlighted the key theme of the piece, and probably contributed to the selection of this particular work for the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale: transcendence and spirituality, defiance of physical laws and materiality through meditation and faith. Urieta's interpretation of the work, as explained in her catalogue text, suggests that the piece puts forward a proposition for mutual respect, tolerance and peace (Urieta, 2011, 105). The fact that

the figures were three, a symbolic number signifying perfect balance (Njami, 2011, 111), coupled with their graceful and tranquil movement, indeed alluded to balance and harmony, expressing perhaps a wish for those qualities to be bestowed to the real world as well. On the other hand, 'whirling Dervishes' have become a popular attraction for Western tourists in the West, and, therefore, stand for an easily recognisable and familiar sign of Eastern mysticism to the eyes of Western audiences. The artists' choice to mobilise such a sign and stage a whirling dance performance especially for his piece ran the risk of aesthetising an intricate and nuanced religious and cultural practice, and reduce it to a mere exotic spectacle for the eyes and the delight of outsiders.

33. Signs of Conflict: Youssef Abdelkeh, 1984. *60ᵗʰ anniversary 1924-1984. Lebanese Communist Party.* **Poster. 70 x 49 cm.**

The second group of works from the Middle East exhibited in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale explored issues pertaining to crises in the region. The following paragraphs explore how the works selected from the part of the art event addressed the crises and socio-political conflicts which plague the region, and produced powerful and thought-provoking statements.

One of the works analysed to this purpose is *Signs of Conflict* (2008), a research project curated by Zeina Maasri, presented in the first room of the Bey Hamam [33, 34]. Maasri, Associate Professor of Graphic Design at American University of Beirut, has been hailed as a case in point of Lebanese designers playing an active role in addressing conflict and crisis. In particular, during the 2006 Israeli assault on Lebanon, Maasri produced daily PDF reports, mapping the locations bombed, as a response to the inadequate media coverage of the war's first week (Dheree, 2008, 28). *Signs of Conflict* explores and documents how political discourses were deployed in the visual culture of Lebanon during the country's civil war. More specifically, the project collects political posters produced by numerous conflicting factions and parties from 1975 to 1990, from a variety of sources: political party archives, personal collections of partisans, library collections in and outside Lebanon, and private collectors. The project also involves

a website/online resource, which provides an archive of the posters collected with annotations, as well as an archive of relevant exhibitions and publications. Visitors have free access to the posters which can bee downloaded for non-commercial uses (Signs of Conflict, Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War, 2003).

34. View of the exhibition in Bey Hamam. 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale. In the foreground: 98 Weeks. 2011. *On Publications.* Installation. Variable dimensions. In the background: Zeina Maasri, 2008. *Signs of Conflict.* Posters. Various dimensions.

A smaller-scale selection of the archive was presented in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale under the title *Between Belonging and Martyrdom*. As the title indicated, the concept of this selection highlighted two persistent issues as they emerged in the political posters of the time; 'belonging', in the sense of embracing particular ideologies, and 'martyrs'. The installation consisted of four panels onto which numerous posters were mounted. The central panel bore eight posters which visualised the narratives of several warring factions, which were involved in the socio-economic and sectarian struggles fuelling the Lebanese conflicts (Communist Party, Hizbullah/Islamic Resistance, Syrian Social Nationalist Party, Lebanese National Movement, Lebanese Forces, Amal Movement, Lebanese National Resistance Front). Both their form and content served each faction's ideologies and propaganda.

Those were surrounded and outnumbered by the so-called martyr posters, which were mounted on the three remaining panels. Each commemorated the death of a person, bearing an image of the deceased, as well as the name and date of birth and death. Contrary to the 'belonging' ones, the martyr posters relied significantly less on graphic design elements, and much more on the use of actual images of and factual information on people who belonged to various factions and were killed during the civil war. Although, the martyr posters, too, were initially intended to serve each faction's propaganda, their juxtaposition to the ones advocating political

messages and ideologies, added a subversive and critical dimension to their display in Bey Hamam; the martyr posters provided concrete evidence of the horrendous losses and blood-shedding that can take place in the name of ideologies. In this way, they revealed the hidden face of belonging to a particular ideology, which may involve killing and being killed in its name. At the same time, Maasri's project actively challenged the official Lebanese national narratives - which, since the end of the war, seek to conceal any trace or memory of it - by confronting this painful aspect of Lebanon's past and raising broader issues regarding the construction of official histories and representations of past events as well as collective memory and amnesia.


35. View of the exhibition in Yeni Djami. 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale. Marwan Sahmarani, 2008. *The Dictators-Studies for a Monument*. Oil stick on paper. 230 x 75 each.

Marwan Sahmarani's installation, *The Dictators-Studies for a Monument* (2008), was presented in the upper floor of Yeni Djami [35]. The piece consisted of tall paper sheets mounted on panels, which depicted twelve distorted human figures. The sketchy and abstractly-rendered forms as well as the choice of material - oil stick on paper - create the impression of preliminary drawings, as the title suggests, for a (public) monument. The figures are designated as dictators; the unrealistic use of colour, the choice of shades and hues of great intensity, the deformities of the figures and, their often, grotesque features capture the sense of terror and violence initiated by ruthless leaders. At the same time, the presence of absurd elements (as in the case of the dictator which the red hat) add some incoherence and irony to the

representation, thus ridiculing those figures of authority and undermining the sense of their total power.

Another piece which critically addressed pressing social concerns which plague not only Middle East but the broader area of South-East Mediterranean was Mounira Al Solh's installation *While Guy Debord Sleeps* (2011), especially commissioned for

the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale [36]. The installation involved a wooden construction, a separate room within Yeni Djami, inside which sheets of paper bore extracts from texts in English and Arabic, offering glimpse of the historical uses of electricity in Beirut,
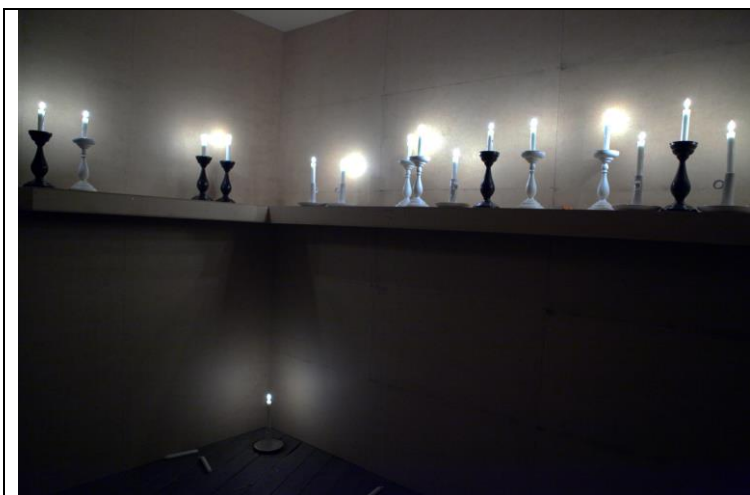
36. Mounira Al Solh, 2011. *While Guy Debord Sleeps.* **Installation. Wooden room, drawings on paper, and candles. Variable dimensions.**

Cyprus and Greece (Urieta, 2011, 105). As regards Greece, in particular, the text, which was written by Greek writer Zoi Karakosta, mentioned the historical use of electricity to torture political prisoners during the military junta (1967-1974), and gave special emphasis on DEH, the National Electricity Company of Greece, the dispute over its privatization and the string of strikes of its employees at the time of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, which resulted in recurrent black-outs. The issue of electricity provision and its lack was further highlighted by the fact that the interior of the installation was not lit and, the texts could be read only with candles provided. Moreover, the artist arranged for the power to be cut in Yeni Djami three times a week for an hour, alluding to the black-outs occurring in times of emergency and crisis, such as in wars or bombings, as well as in times of social crisis and unrest, as in Greece facing a severe financial and social crisis.

Yasmin Eid-Sabbagh's project *Re-immersion* (2006-2011) also took up the theme of crisis. The artist, who has a background in history and visual anthropology as well as

photography, from 2006 to 2011, the artist lived in Burj al-Shamali, a Palestinian refugee camp established in 1956 and located southeast of Tyre in Lebanon. *Re-immersion* is an ongoing project involving young Palestinian refugees (aged 10 to 16 years old) and exploring their cultures. The project is part of Eid-Sabbagh's broader involvement with Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, which accommodate approximately 300,000 people, often, in crammed conditions. For *Re-immersion,* the artist developed an extensive archive of family and studio photographs, as well as videos and audio recordings, often with the collaboration of the camp residents. The participants were interviewed in-depth about their private family photographs, but they were also given disposable cameras, so that they could capture aspects of their reality on their own, and be allowed the opportunity of self-representation (Eid-Sabbagh, Yasmine, no date). Eid-Sabbagh's practice - informed by the framework of postcolonial critique - raises issues regarding the use of image and archive in perpetuating hierarchies, official histories, and power relations. More specifically, it explores the potential of private informal photographs to offer alternative narratives in relation to the official iconography of the Palestinian refugees created through images mainly produced by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

As the analysis above indicates, the works which took up the theme of crisis were balanced with those which explored other aspects of social and cultural practices in the region. In doing so, the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale resisted the dominant representations of the Middle East in the mainstream media as inherently a zone of conflict (Demos, 2007, 113; Kholeif, 2012, 31; Santacatterina and Steyn, 2013, 281). By the same token, the art event allowed for pressing political issues in the region to be addressed, and, thus, resisted the tendency to invent a pacified and glossy image of the Middle East (David, 2007b, 109) as well as an apolitical 'universalism that treats national distinctions as an irrelevance' (Behrman, 2006, 2).

Moreover, the fact that the projects presented were predominantly archival and research-based highlighted the diversity of social and cultural practices in the region. The polyphony of signs and perspectives they allowed for enabled the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale to conceptualise art practices from the region as diverse and nuanced rather that coherent and unitary, and avoid reductive and simplistic accounts

of a so-called 'Middle Eastern cultural identity' which would be more easily marketable and commodified in accordance with the logic of neo-liberal capitalism (Harvey, 2005).

In conclusion, the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale explored art practices from the Middle East, without any attempt to produce a survey-type show, as the participation of artists from the Middle East and other regions was balanced. Also, nowhere in the art event's title or the curators' texts, was the aspiration to explore 'Arab cultures' expressed. Instead, art practices from the Middle East were framed under the art event's broader interest in the Mediterranean, and the works displayed, although largely concentrated in two venues, they were mingled with works by artists of different origin. In this way, the art event offered glimpses of art practices in the Middle East, avoiding reductive attempts at seemingly exhaustive surveys.

The limits

As regards exhibiting art from outside the so-called West, the Thessaloniki Biennale showed some potential to construct narratives that resisted the way in which neo-liberalist frameworks attempt to instrumentalise notions of 'cultural identity' and 'cultural difference'. This potential, realised through the selection of artworks as well as their display, was uneven across the three editions, with the 2nd and 3rd edition being, perhaps, more powerful in this respect. However, I argue that those critical gestures put forward by the Thessaloniki Biennale could be deepened if the art event democratised its practices, as regards the selection of artists, as well as the roles it ascribes to curators.

To unpack this conclusion in more detail, the 2nd and 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale invited curators who, apart from having extensive knowledge and experience as regards the regions in question – South America, Africa, Middle East - also originated themselves from those geographical and cultural contexts. Although this could reduce the chances of mistranslation - which is a significant concern of some non-Western artists when dealing with Western curators (Conover, 2006, 355) - it still might not suffice. Back in 1994, Mosquera, based on his observation that many exhibitions of non-Western art were being curated by Western institutions and curators, introduced the concept of 'inverted curating'; he suggested that the word is

divided in cultures that curate and cultures that are being curated, with the former imposing their Eurocentric vision on the latter (Mosquera, 1994).

Despite the legitimacy and poignancy of Mosquera's point – especially, in relation to the time that it was written – involving curators of a similar cultural background as the artists, whose works are exhibited, cannot be relied upon as the sole solution to the issues of the curator's intermediary, and often authoritative, role and the implications this role has in the representation of artists. Conover (2006) forcefully criticised the selection processes used for exhibitions of art from Easter Europe and the Balkan countries during the first half of the 2000s, on the basis of the authority they attributed to particular local curators, which sustained internal hierarchies and power relations, and existing exclusion practices:

> Every major city had a Soros Centre, and every Soros Centre (or its contemporary art space equivalent) had a doorman of international curatorial relations…But as with nightclubs, so with doormen. In every pocket, a list of names, a list of number ones…Over time, some of these cultural spaces became insider spaces controlled by brokers, who in the course of consolidating power became monopolists (Conover, 2006, 354).

Conover's points remind that the act of selection involves power, and that this power is unevenly distributed across a closed and elitist web of few privileged insiders. All three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale did not challenge the curator's authority in selection processes, and in this respect, they didn't broaden their scope beyond the choices that the particular curators made. This, coupled with the fact that a great number of artists were either already well-known, or, had participated before in exhibitions organised by Western art institutions, raises doubts regarding the assumed 'open' and 'inclusive' character of the art event, as constructed in the organisers' texts.

Finally, I am arguing here that the scope of the Thessaloniki Biennale, as well as its potential to function as an alternative mode of practice to established, larger-scale and mainstream art biennials could be broadened if the art event democratised and

radicalised its practices. Drawing loosely on Benjamin's suggestion that artists (in this case, art professionals in general) should adapt the apparatus of artistic production to the aims of the proletarian revolution (Benjamin, 1936), the Thessaloniki Biennale could rely less on institutionally sanctioned artists, and undertake more research on less well-known ones. Along with an interest in including artists from regions outside Europe, any discussion on disputing established hierarchies and exclusion practices should also actively challenge barriers that pertain to gender, social class, and inequality of wealth and opportunity across regions and cultures.

## 5.3 Alternative Representations of Thessaloniki's Identity

As explained in Chapter 4, the official texts of the Thessaloniki Biennale - namely the written texts by public and museum officials and, to a certain extent, those by curators - conceptualised Thessaloniki in particular ways: as a city with a long, and uninterrupted history, consistent and stable across time; as a multicultural city; and, as a centre of contemporary art and culture in the Balkan region and South-East Mediterranean. The way the city was constructed in the art event's texts was part of a broader effort to 're-brand' Thessaloniki, mainly for touristic and cultural diplomacy purposes. This effort was also reflected in the official governmental discourse as well as the texts by other state-funded cultural organisations of Thessaloniki also addressed in the previous chapter. This effort to 're-brand' Thessaloniki relied on a selective and reductive reading of the city's histories, which framed its presumed multicultural character on its past; the texts analysed in Chapter 4 made no reference to the fact that approximately 45,000 contemporary immigrants resided in Thessaloniki at the time of the art event, and completely obscured their realities and circumstances as well as the largely xenophobic attitudes towards these people.

However, it also included artworks, analysed below, which made critical gestures that undermine the official narratives, and it is in this sense that the alternative potential of the Thessaloniki Biennale is understood. These artworks address the issue of the city's identity in a different way in relation to the official written texts and undermine the privileged narrative; they bring forward aspects of the city ignored in the written texts, highlight the very fact that the city's identity as well as

dominant history is a construct, and put the city's multicultural character in the present by addressing contemporary immigration. Overall, they allow different and conflicting points of view to emerge, and draw attention the contradictions and frictions within the body of the institution's discourse.

Addressing overlooked aspects of the city's histories and identities

The works of Yevgenig (Zhenya) Fiks in the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale, and Hasan Darsi and Marios Spiliopoulos in the 2nd edition of the event, which are explained below, addressed the city's histories in a subversive way. The pieces undermined the way the city's past was conceptualised in the official narrative of the art event and the governmental discourse by highlighting aspects of that past which the official texts omitted or by exposing the processes through which the dominant versions of the city's history were constructed.
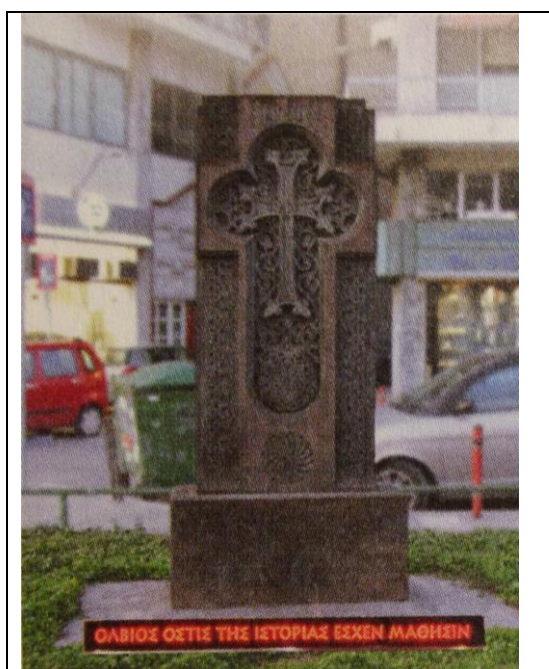
37. Marios Spiliopoulos, 2009. *Human Traces.* **Installation. Digital inscription on the basis of a historical monument.**

Marios Spiliopoulos' project *Human Traces* (2009) involved, in the first instance, a series of outdoor interventions in several historical monuments across the city; more specifically, the artist installed digitally an inscription on the basis of the monuments devoted to the Jewish, the Armenian and Pontiac communities of Thessaloniki, as well as the monument devoted to the leftish politician George Lambrakis who was assassinated in the 1960s shortly before the establishment of the military junta.

The inscription quoted Euripides, the ancient Greek tragedy writer: 'ΟΛΒΙΟΣ ΟΣΤΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑΣ ΕΣΧΕΝ ΜΑΘΗΣΙΝ', which translates in English, 'happy is the person who has knowledge of history' [37]. This particular reference announced the artist's conviction that history is both useful and essential, which underlined his entire project.
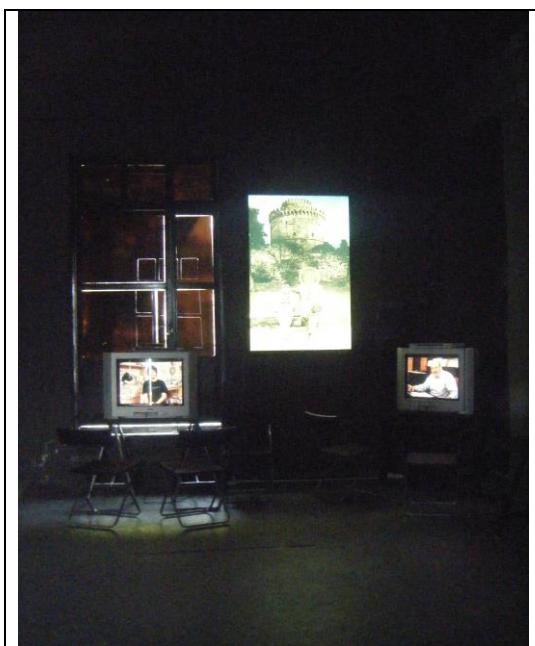
38. View of the exhibition in Old Pumping Station. 2ⁿᵈ Thessaloniki Biennale: Marios Spiliopoulos, 2009. *Human Traces.* Video and photograph installation.

The project also involved a multi-channeled video installation which was presented in Pier 1, Port, namely in the Old Pumping Station, a venue solely devoted to this piece [38]. The videos showed semi-structured interviews which the artist conducted with residents of Thessaloniki, people of various ages and in various capacities, including some of the artist's friends, actors, musicians, young students, the then Prefect of Thessaloniki, members of the Jewish and the Armenian communities of Thessaloniki, as well as the Turkish intellectual, Hakan Gürel, talking about the Turkish community of the city. The narratives exceeded eleven hours in duration and were themed around the city of Thessaloniki, and various aspects of its history. Through their personal experiences and memories of the city, their sentiments of love as well as their criticism, the interviewees presented different, highly personal and often contradictory accounts of the city's histories as well as its present identity.

Spiliopoulos' project challenged the official narrative constructed by the governmental discourse and the written texts of the Thessaloniki Biennale in more than one levels. As the interviewees shared their perspectives on the city, they brought forward aspects of the city's history which were completely omitted in the selective and reductive reading of Thessaloniki's past offered in the written texts of the art event as well as in the texts by the majority of the cultural organisations of Thessaloniki and the Municipality (as explained in Chapter 4). More specifically, *Human Traces* highlight aspects of the city's underground culture of the 1970s and 1980s, such as the city's rock music scene, experimental theatre, bars and open-air cinemas, and the gay and lesbian communities. Moreover, although the participants declared almost invariably their love for Thessaloniki, they also drew attention to

negative aspects of contemporary life in the city. In particular, they referred to traffic jams, unemployment, lack of green spaces, and the increasing political and social conservatism, elements entirely absent from the official brand of Thessaloniki, which projected a sanitised and exclusively positive image for the city.

Finally, the official written texts of the art event and the governmental discourse on the city branded Thessaloniki as multicultural, historical and an artistic and cultural centre in the region through a privileged narrative. Moreover, those texts sought to identify the reader with a clear authorial and authoritative conceptualisation of the city. On the contrary, Spiliopoulos' project is informed by the propositions of poststructuralist narrativism which dispenses with the traditional division of evidence into primary and secondary kinds, and disputes the very possibility of reconstructing the 'actual' past based on empirical evidence as well as the notion of a singular universal truth (Breisach, 2003, 72-75). Instead of focusing on major historical events or figures Spiliopoulos' project turns to ordinary people and their narratives in order to trace the city's multiple histories and identities. With minimal or no intervention at all from the part of the artist, and with no privileged positioning implying any kind of hierarchy, multiple voices present the viewer with their perspective, often contradictory or entirely different from the perspectives of the others. In this respect, Spiliopoulos' project is a polyphonic text in the Bakhtinian sense (Steinby, 2013, 37-42), and an interrogative text par excellence (Belsey, 2001, 75, 76) [15]. In fact, *Human Traces* undermines the very concept of an authoritative or privileged narrative and thus challenges the 'Thessaloniki brand' as constructed by the written texts of the art event and the governmental discourse.

Yevgenig (Zhenya) Fiks installation titled *Communist Tour of Thessaloniki* (2007), was especially commissioned for the *International Workshop of Young Artists,* as

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[15] According to Bakhtin, the polyphonic novel allows the characters to be autonomous subjects and not subdued to the author's definition. The polyphonic novel is polysubjective, in the sense that each individual's subjective viewpoint is presented without any intervention from the author. Also ,these voices are equal, the characters acknowledge to each other the same position of an autonomous subject that they themselves occupy and there is a genuine encounter among the various subjective points of view (Steinby, 2013, 37-42). According to Belsey, the 'interrogative' text refuses a single point of view and brings different points of view into unresolved collision or contradiction. Thus, it disrupts the unity of the reader by discouraging identification with a unified subject and it invites the reader to produce answers to the questions it implicitly or explicitly raises (Belsey, 2001, 75, 76).

part of the parallel programme of the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale. The piece consisted of a series of photographs (twenty five in total) capturing buildings, streets and landmarks of Thessaloniki, mounted on a red wall [39].

39. Yevgeniy (Zhenya) Fiks, 2007. *Communist Tour of Thessaloniki.* **Photo installation. Variable dimensions.**

The photographs traced key historical moments in the city's labour and communist movements, and challenged the official narrative of the art event and the governmental discourse, which read the city's histories selectively, and omitted painful aspects of its past, such as those documented in Fiks' project (for instance, the 1936 large-scale labour strikes during which protesters were killed by armed governmental forces, and the assassination of the leftist politician Gregory Lambrakis in the 1960s, shortly before the establishment of the military junta in 1967). The official written texts of the Thessaloniki Biennale as well as those by other state-funded cultural organisations, as analysed in Chapter 4, seek to re-brand the city in a politically safe and easily marketable way, relying mainly on the city's monuments and a sanitised reading of its past. This piece was highly subversive of such a narrative, as it explored the city's histories from an alternative perspective, completely overlooked by the official texts.

40. Hassan Darsi, 2009. *Point Zero, Thessalonique Series.* **Installation. Golden application.**

Hassan Darsi's intervention titled *Point Zero, Thessalonique Series* (2009) involved covering up public statues depicting figures, who are considered as iconic in Greek history, such as Eleftherios Venizelos [40]. Drawing on the oppositional concepts of veiling and unveiling, Darsi addressed public sculpture as utterance, part of a discourse which dictates what can and cannot be articulated, who can and who cannot be portrayed as a public statue, and in what artistic form (for instance, public statues of historical figures in Greece are predominantly figurative and realistic, rather than abstract or expressionist). The piece, also, highlighted the role of public statues in constructing collective memory as well as dominant versions of histories and events, by foregrounding some events and historical figures while omitting others. In this way, Darsi exposed the fact that collective memory and official history are constructs, and shed a critical light on the construction of the city's history as attempted by the official narrative of the Thessaloniki Biennale.

The works by Sanjar Djabbarov and Naoko Takahasi brought forward aspects of Thessaloniki's identity which were overlooked by or contradictory in relation to the official written texts of the art event and the governmental discourse. In particular, Sanjar Djabbarov's video installation title *The Unseen City* (2007) was exhibited in the *International Workshop of Young Artists,* which was part of the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale's parallel programme. The piece touched upon a very rarely addressed aspect of the city's realities: the everyday life of the blind of Thessaloniki. Images and interviews with some of the members of the blind community of Thessaloniki brought forward their experience of the city, and the difficulties and pleasures this entails. In this way, they constructed a portrayal of the city which was very different from the one projected in the official written texts of the art event as well as the

governmental discourse on Thessaloniki, as the latter did not address the perspectives of the blind or the disabled residents of the city.

Naoko Takahashi's installation titled *Our Gilded World in Progress* (2011) exhibited in Yeni Djami comprised of branches from Thessaloniki's trees, as well as gilded fallen leaves which the viewers were encouraged to restore to the branches. The tree functioned as an index, alluding to the concept of resilience and renewal. The incessant cycle of the leaves' death and renaissance reminded that nature is in a constant state of flux, never static or complete. By the same token, the piece implied that the city is in flux too, in transition and, in an optimistic tone, conveyed the hope that it would survive the crisis. By rendering the city's identity as in flux rather than fixed and stable, the Takahashi's installation contradicted the official narrative of Thessaloniki's identity as consistent and indisputable across time. The installation also consisted of a sound piece, a narration about the stray dogs living in Thessaloniki, and the group of animal lovers who look after them on a voluntary basis. As with Djabbarov's work mentioned above, Takahashi's sound piece brought forward unexpectedly an aspect of the city's life, which was completely absent from the official narratives, since it hadn't probably been considered such a strong point for the city's image and appeal as a tourist destination.

Finally, three works - Janis Rafailidou's installation and video *Under the City* (2009), the *Caravanserai Project* presented in the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale, and the *Inventory* project presented in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale - challenged the official narrative of Thessaloniki's cultural supremacy in relation to the cities of its neighboring countries. Rafailidou's installation and video consisted of an animated film showing a Yugo car - built by the Serbian Zastava corporation until 2008, and very popular in the Balkan countries including Greece during the 1980s and 1990s - travelling to and from Thessaloniki. Furthermore, a real-size Yugo had its front removed and was positioned in such a way as to give the impression that it was sinking, and starting its underground journey in the unseen areas of Thessaloniki implied in the title. The car's radio was tuned on a Turkish radio station. The very use of a car alluded to the concepts of mobility and interconnectedness. The choice of the Yugo model highlighted the ties linking Greece with its Balkan neighbours on a cultural but also financial and trading level, while the Turkish radio station implied

the links and affinities with Turkey. In this way, Greece's pronounced Western identity as constructed in the official governmental discourse (see Chapter 4) was undermined.

The *Caravanserai Project-Thessaloniki Station,* which was presented in the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale, is an ongoing, travelling project which brings together artists and art projects from Eastern Europe, the Baltic Countries, the Black Sea, South Caucasus, and Central Asia in the form of exhibitions presented under the auspices of larger art events, (the Thessaloniki Biennale, the Tashkent Biennale and so on). Caravanserais were the roadside inns which offered accommodation to caravans of merchants, travellers and pilgrims during their journey on the so-called Silk Road. They were meeting points which allowed the flow of information, merchandise and people, facilitating encounters among different cultures (Khakhanashvili, 2007, 214-217). By choosing this particular title, the project alludes to the concepts of cultural mobility, exchange, and hospitality; it aims to create artistic networks and cultural links among artists from the regions mentioned above, and create opportunities for visibility within this network.

Chapter 4 examined how the official narrative of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the SMCA narrative in previous exhibitions (*Contemporary European Art. The Art of the Balkan Countries* in 2002 and *Cosmopolis 1* in 2008) actively constructed a leading role for Greece in the Balkan area and South East Mediterranean. However, nothing in the *Caravan Sarai Project* attempts to place Thessaloniki in a position of supremacy over the other participating cities or regions, rather its participatory and migratory elements highlight the potential for artistic and cultural associations in a non-hierarchical fashion. Moreover, the fact that Thessaloniki is included in a project with such a geographical focus highlights the city's ties with the cultural area of 'the East' rather than 'the West'. In this way, Thessaloniki's inclusion in the *Caravanserai Project* contradicts the official governmental narrative which bases Greece's assumed leading role in the area on its status as a Member State of the EU, and therefore, its closer relationship to Western Europe (see Chapter 4).

This is also the case with the archival project *Inventory* by the Archive Group (Francesca Boenzi, Paolo Caffoni, Chiara Figone, Ignas Petronis) presented in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale. *Inventory* researched on publications and printed material from Eastern and Middle Eastern regions, including cities like Prague, Budapest, Belgrade, Sofia, and Istanbul (Archive Kabinett, 2011). It brought together books, magazines, booklets, posters, newspapers, pamphlets as well video and audio documentation of the entire project, highlighting the diversity in the intellectual and ideological production of the participating areas rather than constructing a common thread that would link them in a simplistic way.

Putting the city's 'multiculturalism' into the present tense

The works analysed below addressed aspects of present-day immigration which were completely absent from the official narrative of the art event as well as the official governmental discourse, as explained in Chapter 4. It is worth to note that approximately 45,000 documented immigrants resided in Thessaloniki at the time of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, while their number has fallen to 33.172 in 2013 due to the severe financial crisis the country is experiencing. Those people face higher unemployment rates than locals, and this often results in the loss of their right to remain in the country, while their average income is 75% lower than that of a Greek citizen ('Immigrants Leave Thessaloniki', 2013). Nonetheless, the art event's catalogue texts, written by public and museum officials, and, to an extent by the curators too, consistently addressed Thessaloniki as multicultural through a selective reading of its past, and with no reference to the present-day immigrants residing in Thessaloniki. In this way, Thessaloniki was 'branded' as multicultural in a sanitised and politically 'safe' way which projected the city as an attractive tourist destination. The works addressed below brought forward this contradiction, and, thus, undermined the official narrative of both the art event as well as the other state-funded cultural organisations of Thessaloniki and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture.

41. View of the exhibition in Eptapyrgio/Yedi Kule: Vlassis Caniaris, 1973.
The Big Swing. **Installation. Mixed media. 330 x 410 x 150cm.**

The Big Swing by Vlassis Caniaris - part of a series of sculptural installations made in the 1970s under the title *Immigrants,* and presented in Berlin in 1974[16] - was included in the main programme of the 3rd edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale [41]. The piece was exhibited in Eptapyrgio/Genti Koule, and formed a statement on immigration, and a gesture towards the present-day immigrants living in Greece, and Thessaloniki, in particular. As soon as the viewers entered the Eptapyrgio/Genti Koule, they encountered a human figure in actual size, standing on a wooden swing against the backdrop of a blue curtain. The figure was dominant, as it occupied the centre of the installation[17], and wore a pair of old trousers and shoes; its torso was rendered nude, modelled with wire netting supported by metallic elements. The choice of materials and the use of found objects were consistent with the artist's association with Art Povera.

According to Foucault representations are constructed equally by the elements chosen to be included as well as those excluded (Foucault, 1966, 12 14; Hall, 1997,

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[16] The original title in German is «Gastarbeiter-Fremdarbeiter». The artist, himself an expatriate, as he fled Greece in 1969 due to the military junta, was touched by the influx of immigrants from the countries of Southern Europe to those of Northern Europe, especially Germany, and their plights (Caniaris, 1992, pp.21-22).

[17] Kress and van Leeuwen discuss a key spatial dimension, that of centre and margin. The composition of some visual images is based primarily on a dominant centre and a periphery: 'For something to be presented as Centre means that it is presented as the nucleus of the information on which all the other elements are in some sense subservient' (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, 206; 1998, 196–8).

59). Therefore, the absence of the head is important; the lack of a face and individualised features in *The Big Swing* hinders identification and particularity. Through its anonymity, the figure becomes harder to identify with a particular person and associated with a particular place and historical moment. Thus, it stands for the very condition of immigration (although it does not transcend issues of gender or class, since the figure can be clearly identified as a working class male). Moreover, Caniaris' choice to omit the head of the figure is consistent with the non-representational way the upper half of the figure is rendered. In effect, it contributes to the construction of a paired contrast, as regards the artist's handling of the form: non-representational/realistic[18].

The non-representational/realistic handling of the form is not the only opposition at play in the work; the swing evokes two further pairs of oppositional concepts: movement/immobility and leisure/labour. Although the swing implies the potential for movement, the installation remains static. The figure itself bends slightly forward in an unstable, and, therefore, vulnerable position, which stresses further the contradiction between movement and immobility. At the same time, the concept of the swing is associated with leisure time and entertainment. However, the wooden board which supports the figure could also be part of scaffolding. This as well as the worn-out pair of trousers and shoes can be seen as a reference to the manual labour, often underpaid and hazardous, which immigrants may undertake.

Although Caniaris' installation evokes pairs of oppositional concepts (non-representational/realistic, movement/immobility and leisure/labour) neither of the terms of the oppositional pairs identified is privileged as primary or semantically

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[18] Identifying binary or polar semantic oppositions in texts or signifying practices was the primary analytical method employed by structuralist semioticians, such as Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss. More specifically, for Roman Jakobson, binary oppositions form the basis of the structure of language and are essential for the generation of meaning. Jakobson also stressed the interconnectedness of the opposite terms which meant that when one appears, the other one, although absent, is evoked in thought (Jakobson, 1971b, 321). Claude Lévi – Strauss also asserted that every culture organises its view of the world through pairs of opposites, which they don't exist alone, in isolated pairs, rather they link up and align with other binary pairs to create both vertical and horizontal relationships (Lévi – Strauss, 1962; 1964). However, I chose to refrain from using the term 'binary opposition' because I share Jacques Derrida's dispute of binary oppositions, (Derrida, 1974). Instead, I borrow the term 'paired contrasts' from Daniel Chandler, who uses it to refer to what structuralist semioticians would call binary oppositions (Chandler 2007, 91, 93).

positive[19]. In this sense, the way in which the representation of the immigrant is constructed in Caniaris' installation brings to mind Derrida's dispute of the concept of binary oppositions[20]. In particular, the netting wire used to model the torso incorporates the space and void in the modelling of the form and imbues the figure with the sense of transparency and weightlessness. This is intensified by the fact that the figure is airborne, since it stands on the swing. Transparency, weightlessness and spread wings, all contribute to the impression of ethereality.

However, the contradiction implied by the worn-out attire of the figure creeps in, disputes the idealism the elements of the torso allude to, and leaves no doubt as to the social and financial deprivation of the immigrant. Moreover, the netting wire alludes to fencing and enclosure as well; enclosure, in turn, points to both inclusion and exclusion, the imagery of an ideal condition of immigration is shattered by the evocation of the immigrant's potential exclusion and deprivation. In this way, the figure suggests both freedom/hope through the implied potential for movement, while, at the same time, it is embedded in a harsh reality, implied by the worn-out clothes and the associations evoked by the netting wire. The possibility of representing a fixed and stable concept of the immigrant is, thus, undermined. Instead, the representation of the condition of immigration is ambivalent, as the immigrant is rendered suspended between the potential for movement and the potential for stagnation and exclusion.

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[19] According to the structuralist approach to binary oppositions, the terms of the pair are not equal. The paired signs consist of an 'unmarked' and a 'marked' term, which are bound to a hierarchical relationship to each other (Jakobson, 1971a, 599; 1972, 42). The unmarked term is primary, being given precedence and priority, while the marked term is treated as secondary or even suppressed as an 'absent signifier'. Moreover, the 'preferred sequence' or most common order of paired terms usually distinguishes the first as a semantically positive term and the second as a negative one (Lyons, 1971, 276).

[20] For Derrida, the process of meaning –making is based on the difference between the two component parts of the sign rather on the one being identical to the other. As a result, the sign is a structure of difference and this has serious implications in relation to the terms of binary oppositions, as they can only be defined in relation to each other. According to Derrida, the nature of the sign is strange, half of it always "not there" and the other half always "not that." The radically other within the sign is called 'trace' (Derrida, 1997, xvii). Signifiers signify not by reference to some imagined selfsame signified, a freestanding idea which is the independent product of consciousness, but instead on difference, and opposed meanings are never pure, pristine or autonomous (Belsey, 2001, 104). The implication of this is that the hierarchical relationship between the marked and the unmarked term in binary oppositions, assumed by structuralist thinking, proves untenable (Derrida, 1997, xix, xx).

The *Big Swing* is the only piece exhibited in the Eptapyrgio/Genti Koule project, and this is relatively rare in all three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale. The choice to mount a one-piece exhibition raises the question: why choose this particular work from Caniaris entire oeuvre, and why this particular monument as a venue? The choice of Eptaryrgio/Genti Koule was based on a paradigmatic rationale, as it meant excluding a series of alternative options[21]. Through the involvement of Eptapyrgio/Genti Koule, the history of this monument became an active element of the project. The historical use of Eptapyrgio/Genti Koule as a prison - where, among others, political prisoners were kept during the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas (1936-1940) and the military junta of 1967-1974, as well as the Greek Independence fighters during the Nazi occupation (1941-1945) - enacted associations related not only to enclosure and imprisonment but also to resistance and heroism[22].

The joining of *The Big Swing* with Eptapyrgio/Genti Koule allowed for the histories associated with the venue to be foregrounded in the visitor's experience of the work. This was further heightened by what Caniaris, as an artist, came to represent. The artist directly addressed the issue of resistance against the Nazis in his work. Moreover, he was personally involved in the resistance movement against the military junta of 1967-1974, and had expressed his critique towards the oppressive regime in his exhibitions before fleeing Greece. The interaction of the histories of the artist and the venue - the former as a fighter in real life and through his art, the latter commemorating the fighters for freedom imprisoned there – highlighted the underlying concepts of struggle, resistance and heroism and imbued the immigrant on the *Big Swing* with these qualities.

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[21] Structuralist semiotics address two kinds of relations in order to analyse structure: *syntagmatic* relations, which are possibilities of combination, and *paradigmatic relations*, which are functional contrasts, and involve differentiation and selection. A paradigm is a set of associated signifiers or signifieds which are all members of some defining category, but in which each is significantly different. Crucial in the structural analysis of paradigmatic relations is the commutation test, which involves selecting a particular signifier in a text, and, then, consideration of alternatives to this signifier. A variation of a term of the structure produces a change in the reading or usage of the particular structure, in other words, a substitution of a term would result in changing the meaning of the sign. (Barthes, 1967, 20). Chandler gives further examples of terms which could be replaced by alternative options form the same paradigm set, namely the use of a close-up rather than a mid-shot, a substitution in age, sex, class or ethnicity, a different caption for a photograph, and so on, as examples (Chandler, 2007, 89).

[22] For more information on the history of this particular monument see Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou and Tourta (1997, 24–26).

42. View of the exhibition in Warehouse C. 2ⁿᵈ Thessaloniki Biennale. In the foreground: Kader Attia, 2008. *Halam Tawaaf.* Installation with beer cans. Variable dimensions.

In the same line of critically highlighting issues of immigration were the installation *Halam Tawaaf* (2008) [42] and the photographic series *Rochers Carrés* (2009) [43] by Algerian-French artist Kader Attia, which were presented in the main programme of the 2ⁿᵈ Thessaloniki Biennale (2009). More particularly, the works were displayed in the upper floor of Warehouse C, Pier 1, Port, one of the main and most spacious venues of the 2009 Thessaloniki Biennale, where the official inauguration of the event took place. The positioning of the works in the upper floor of the venue followed a linear pattern, which displayed photographs in alternation with installations.

The first installation to encounter in this line of succession was Attia's *Halam Tawaaf* (2008) [42]. The artist used empty beer cans, which he bent at a 25 degree angle, to create multiple concentric circles, of which the outer has a diameter of five metres. The centre, which is void, is rectangular and, according to the artist, stands for Kaaba; Kaaba is the big black cube, set with a meteorite in the heart of the Big Mosque in Mecca, while *Tawaaf* refers to the march performed by pilgrims around Kaaba (Attia, 2009, 59). As Attia himself explains in his statement for the catalogue of the 2ⁿᵈ Thessaloniki Biennale, both Islam and alcohol/drug abuse are deeply embedded in the lives of many young people of Islamic background living in the banlieues of Paris, where the artist grew up, as well as in other European countries (Attia, 2009, 59). In this way, the choice of this particular material, or *object trouvè* becomes vital in the signification process involved in the art work. The empty beer can functions as an index in multiple ways: The arrangement and bent of the cans refer to Muslim worshipers, and metonymically to Islam; at the same time, the beer can is a synecdoche for alcohol consumption and abuse.

While Islam and alcohol are seemingly direct opposites, the two mutually exclusive concepts are condensed in the beer can sign. In this way, they allude to the ambivalence and contradiction inherent in the cultures and experiences of many Algerian immigrants to France, and highlight the exclusion and lack of opportunity often experienced by them. Both the use of everyday, disposable material, as well as the lack of any kind of device which could operate as a frame for the work, distinguishing it from the gallery space, point towards a gesture that challenges the concept of 'high art', and the separation of art from life that 'high art' implies. This further enhances the engagement of the work with the socio-political issues it raises.

43. View of the exhibition in Warehouse C. 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale. In the foreground: Kader Attia, 2009. Photographs. 80 x 100 cm each.

Attia's preoccupation with issues pertinent to Algerians and migration is also manifest in *Rochers Carrés* (2009)*,* also displayed in Warehouse C, Pier 1, Port, as part of the main programme of the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale [43]. Attia's photographic series capture the concrete block beach under the name *Rochers Carrés,* which was constructed in 1970s in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Algiers. *Rochers Carrés* is an example of governmental power being inscribed into public space and natural landscape with the aim to control population movement and prevent migration. More specifically the Algerian Socialist government at the time hoped to prevent locals - who would often try to reach the ferries, get inside, and go to Marseilles or Spain - from accessing Europe via the Mediterranean (Attia, 2010, 29).

The focus of the *Rochers Carrés* photos is the gigantic concrete blocks which take up almost the entire plane of the image, and extend beyond its frame. The low point of view, from which the image is taken, creates the impression that the blocks ascend,

leaving only a narrow strip of blue sky visible. In this way, the sea, which represents the fervent desire as well as the opportunity for a way out, is either completely invisible or barely seen, and thus remains unreachable. Due to the steep perspective, the viewer's gaze moves swiftly towards the background of the image, where the sea lies, only to collide forcefully on the aggressive, and threatening angular forms of the concrete blocks, and, ultimately be denied access to the sea. Human figures are visible, but only from a distance, in a small scale in relation to the blocks, and always looking towards the sea; never does the viewer's gaze meet theirs. Attia quotes the Harragas, people who attempt to cross the Mediterranean, and often perish in inadequate and inappropriate vessels: 'I would rather be eaten by fishes than by worms' (Attia, 2009, 61). This intense personal and collective desire for mobility reflected in the figures' exclusive positioning towards the sea, collides with the powerful grasp of state control, which prohibits freedom of movement. This tension, which is also echoed in the great difference between the scales of human figures and blocks, and the resulting sense of frustration, obstruction and confinement are captured in *Rochers Carrés.*

However, the concrete blocks in *Rochers Carrés* series are at the same time indexes, signifying the housing projects intended for immigrants in large European cities; in particular, they echo the concrete buildings of Parisian banlieues, where Attia himself grew up: 'This massive and strange construction imprisons them in their cruel reality, as it is also the case in French banlieues, where many immigrants end up' (Attia, 2009, 61). Thus, the bleak, barren and unwelcoming blocks allude to the hard conditions in Parisian banlieues. In this way, a powerful statement is made not only on the issue of crossing borders and freedom of mobility, but also on the harsh realities immigrants often face, when they reach their destination, such as racist attitudes, which represent them as dangerous to the resources of the welfare system and the socio-cultural stability of Europe, exploitation in the workplace, profound exclusion from any meaningful integration, and appalling conditions in detention centres (Cole, 2007; 2010).

Mircea Cantor's installation entitled *Stranieri* (2008) was displayed right next to Attia's *Rochers Carrés* in the upper floor of Warehouse C, Pier 1, Port during the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale [44]. The title means 'foreigners/strangers', and the piece

addresses issues pertaining to migration, which are recurrent themes is the artist's practice (Verhagen, 2013, 13-14). The installation consists of several loaves of bread scattered on the surface of a round wooden table. Each loaf is cut open in the middle with a knife which is stuck in it, and salt appears to gush from the breadcrumb. The combination of bread and salt refers to the concept of hospitality, as, in the artist's native Romania, it is customary to offer visitors/foreigners bread and salt. However, the presence of the knife creates ambivalence; as a kitchen utensil commonly used for the preparation of meals, it evokes familiarity. However, it can also be used as a weapon to injure or kill, and therefore, evokes threatening associations of violence and, even, the fear of castration.

44. View of the exhibition in Warehouse C. 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale. In the foreground: Mircea Cantor, 2008. *Stranieri.* Installation. Mixed media. 640 x 80 cm.

Salt further underscores this ambivalence, as it can be a remedy in small portions, due to its sanitising properties, but it can also inflict further pain, as in the expression 'rub salt in the wound'. This ambivalence, in turn, points to the mixed and, often, contradictory reception of foreigners/immigrants in a community, which is the central theme of the piece. The tension inherent in the reception of immigrants is also echoed in the pair of oppositional concepts created by the title of the work and the shape of the table; on the one hand, 'Stranieri' means 'foreigners/strangers' in Italian, and, on the other, the round shape of the table functions as an iconic symbol of the circle, and alludes to the concept of a closed community. The decision to position Cantor's installation next to and in dialogue with Attia's *Rochers Carrés* deepened the problematisation of the issues pertaining to immigration offered by both works.

45. View of the exhibition in Warehouse 13. 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale. Jens Haaning, 2009. *Albanian Pigeons.* **Reminiscent of the intervention.**

As part of the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, Jens Haaning made an intervention on the day of the official opening, under the title *Albanian Pigeons* (2009) [45]. The artist had travelled to Tirana, Albania specifically for the purposes of the intervention, where he collected approximately one hundred pigeons from the streets of the Albanian capital. He subsequently transported them back to Thessaloniki, where he released them Dikastirion Square, in the hope that they would mingle with the pigeons that already lived there. The reminiscent of Haaning's intervention – some posters advertising the intervention, a series of photographs documenting the latter, and a few boxes in which the artist transported the pigeons from Tirrana – were all displayed in Warehouse 13.

Unconventional practices with elements that derive from conceptual art, the commitment to challenge official art venues, and raising issues of crossing borders, xenophobia, cultural differences and the idea of the foreign, are all recurrent themes in Haaning's projects, such as *Arabic Jokes* (1994), *Turkish Jokes* (1994), *Ma'lesh* (2000), *Middelburg Summer* (1996) to name but a few of his interventions (Larsen, 1999; Jetzer, 2001; Pécoil, 2003). His intervention for the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale tackled the issue of migration and xenophobia in Thessaloniki in an unexpected and humorous way.

Two elements were crucial for what the work suggested: the choice to label the pigeons as 'Albanian', and the choice to realise the intervention in Dikastirion Square specifically. By designating the pigeons as Albanian, Haaning brought forward an issue both sensitive and particularly relevant to the city of Thessaloniki.

Albanian citizens represent approximately 60% of the total immigrant population in Greece, and almost 70% of the legal foreign population that resides in the country. Back in the early 1990s and throughout that decade, a massive crossing of the Greek-Albanian borders by Albanians took place, to which the Greek state responded with massive deportations (Triandafyllidou, 2010, 193, 199)[23]. Although recently official immigration policy changed towards a more integration-orientated model, over the previous years, an immigrant population of several thousands people has been left to survive without papers or rights, and has experienced social exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation. Unsurprisingly, a large portion of Greek citizens still hold xenophobic and racist attitudes with regard to immigrants (Triandafyllidou, 2010, 205).

By bringing pigeons from Tirana to Thessaloniki, Haaning alluded to the mass migration of Albanian citizens to Greece over the past 10 to 15 years. In this way, Haaning's project humorously confronted Greeks with their own prejudices and fears, as it raised the question whether they would want or allow pigeons from Albania to reside in 'their' square and fly in 'their' sky, as well as who is entitled to and who is excluded from public space. Also, the fact that the Albanian pigeons weren't that different from the Greek ones, and were impossible to distinguish after they had mingled, rendered even their designation as 'Albanian' absurd. However, this did not, necessarily, point to effacing cultural difference and particularity; rather it reminded that different groups and populations who live together, perhaps, have more to share than to divide.

The very choice of place for his intervention underscored the project's references: Dikastirion Square is one of the most central and well-known squares in Thessaloniki, currently a meeting point for the immigrants who live in the adjacent neighborhoods. Moreover, it is, historically, a site for social and political struggle; from the 1930s working class struggles to nowadays, it has been a common site for protests and the starting point of demonstrations against austerity measures and

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[23] The official Greek migration-management policies which have developed over the years have had as their main objective to limit immigration, and considered it as a liability for the country's economic prosperity and for its presumed cultural and ethnic 'purity' (Triandafyllidou, 2010, 193, 199).

unfair policies intent to tackle the crisis. The connotations of social struggle which the site evokes make the project's references to inclusion/exclusion, xenophobia and social equality issues more fervent.

Two further pieces addressed the issue of immigration in Thessaloniki directly by two artists who are originally from Thessaloniki: Aikaterini Gegisian's 2007 video titled *Passengers* and Hara Piperidou's 2009 installation *Female Thessaloniki, In the Grace of the Present.* Both pieces were especially commissioned for the International Workshop of Young Artists, as part of the parallel programme of the 1st and the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale respectively. Gegisian's *Passengers* captures the everyday realities of an immigrant community of Greek-Pontiac origin who migrated to Thessaloniki from Kazakhstan in the early 1990s. The piece was filmed in Nicopolis, a newly-built, rather marginalised, area in Thessaloniki (Gegisian, 2007, 32-33). Shots of derelict, out-of-use trains and the streets of the nearby neighborhoods are invested with voice-over narrations by members of the community about their experiences of exile within the Soviet Union, and their relocation to Greece.

Piperidou's piece juxtaposes aspects of the city's past to its present under a critical light. The installation personifies Thessaloniki as a queen who bears signifiers of the city's activity from ancient times to the present. The head of a sculpture stands for the city in antiquity. Regarding the city's present, the artist chose two themes to highlight: the present-day immigrants, and the financial and social crisis which has plagued the country, both very rarely addressed in the texts by public and museum officials published in the exhibition's catalogues. The broken, enlarged hand, which is rendered as disconnected from the tree branches – which, in turn, could be considered to stand for the social sphere – stand for the harsh circumstances experienced by present-day immigrants, who are often excluded and discriminated against. The artist raised this issue in her text for the exhibition catalogue (Piperidou, 2009, 57). At the same time, the photographs pinned on the figure's dress are snapshots of the civil unrest and protests which took place in December, 2008, as a response and symptom of the severe crisis which broke out in Greece. In this way, the work brings forward two crucial themes, largely omitted in the official texts of

the art event as well as the official governmental discourse on the city, both orientated at re-branding the city for touristic purposes.

46. View of the exhibition in Yeni Djami from the upper floor of the venue. 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale. On the right: Naoko Takahashi, 2011. *Our gilded world in progress.* Site specific installation. Mixed media and sound. Variable dimensions. In the centre: Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen, 2011. *Ode to the perished.* Installation. Concrete canvas. Variable dimensions.

The tragic aspects of undocumented migration and border-crossing was the key theme of Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen's installation, *Ode to the Perished*, which was specially commissioned by the Thessaloniki Biennale 3, and displayed in Yeni Djami mosque as part of the exhibition curated by Mahita El Bacha Urieta [46]. As the viewers entered Yeni Djami, Larsen's sculptural installation was the first piece their gaze encountered. Twelve cocoon-like objects were suspended from the dome's ceiling high above the rest of the works on display. A similar solitary object was also placed on the floor, at the left hand corner of the venue, right under a label providing information on the work.

The artist's consistent interest in the harsh conditions under which undocumented immigrants attempt to find refuge away from their homelands, as seen in his

installation, films and photographic series including, *Cloud* (2008), *Promised Land* (2011), *Memorial Series, Ramadan* (2012), and *End Of Season* (2013), pervades his piece for the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale. The objects were made of concrete canvasTM, a material used to build temporary shelters in battlefields or in disaster or war-stricken regions, and had been immersed in the Aegean Sea for months before being displayed in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale. Their lumpy, organic-matter-like, but vague form, as well as their sea and algae-corroded surface alluded to dead bodies of people perished at sea; in particular, the bodies of undocumented immigrants who have fallen prey to illegal human trafficking networks, and have been transported under inhumane and extremely dangerous conditions, resulting in their death. Both the artist's statement included in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale catalogue - which quoted a newspaper article, according to which, more than 34,000 immigrants drowned in the Mediterranean between 1988 and 2009 while trying to reach Europe (Larsen, 2011, 109) - as well as the explanatory label adjacent to the piece, (which quoted Kamron, a 19-year-old Afghani refugee in Calais, who narrated his perilous journey on a track and a speedboat as he was smuggled to Europe) underscored the piece's incisive probe into the threat that illegal human trafficking networks pose to the lives of undocumented immigrants. Strict border controls and policies of deportation leave immigrants vulnerable to human smugglers who profit from their despair, while the number of immigrants drowned in the Aegean and the Mediterranean is increasing.

The material used pointed to heavy concrete matter and contributed to an intensified sense of gravity. At the same time, the choice to suspend the objects from the dome of the venue, rather than place them on the ground, rendered them immaterial, and unearthly. Another pair of oppositional concepts was central in the installation's powerful signification: the objects alluding to the bodies of the dead immigrants suggested grave peril, but they were exhibited in a venue associated with introspection and contemplation (Yeni Djami was a site of praying, initially as a synagogue, and, subsequently, as a mosque). It could be said that, since these objects function as indexes of the immigrants and their tragic journey to what proved to be their death, their render as immaterial and unearthly, and their placement in a safe place of contemplation, finally gives them the refuge and security they were denied

in real life. At the same time, however, the suspended objects also point to floating drowned bodies, and constantly remind of the untimely and unfair death of those people. This ambivalence creeps in and annihilates any sense of gratification which might emerge over justice rendered posthumously.

The issue of immigration was also touched upon in Jean-François Boclé's *Everything Must Go* (2007)*,* an installation made with 2,500 plastic bags in the French Institute as part of the 1ˢᵗ Thessaloniki Biennale (Lundström, 2007a, 86). The installation alludes to sea itineraries people often follow in their effort to migrate: from the transatlantic slave trade to present-day immigrants. Moreover, *The Maghreb Connection*, *Movements of Life Across North Africa* (2005-2007) also shown during the T1st Thessaloniki Biennale initiated and curated by Ursula Biemann is a cross-cultural, collaborative art and research project themed around migration from sub-Saharan countries towards Europe, with the countries of North Africa (Maghreb) becoming a transit zone. The current gates, routes and modes of trans-Saharan migration, the risks of crossing the desert, the middle stages of this perilous venture, the people in key positions in this network, and the conditions of residence in the countries of North Africa (Maghreb refers to the countries of North Africa excluding Egypt) for sub-Saharan immigrants, are key themes in the videos and Armin Linke's photographs included in the project (Lundström, 2007b, 84).

Works which do not deal directly with the theme of immigration but are related to the ones previously mentioned include Mauro Pinto's series of photographs under the title *Ports of Convergence: Angola and the Departure of African Legacy* (2009) presented in the 2ⁿᵈ Thessaloniki Biennale, which deals with African Diaspora, and highlights African ports as key sites of African immigration. Moreover, Danai Stratou's *CUT-7, Diving Lines* (2007) photographic installation deals with the issue of artificial borderlines which are established due to political, ideological and nationalistic tensions, divide populations, and contain their freedom of movement. North – South Mitrovica in Kosovo, Belfast in Northern Ireland, Badme in the Ethiopia – Eritrea border, the Wall in Jerusalem, the line of control in Indian-Pakistani administered Kashmir, the Mexico-USA border fence and the Green Line in Cyprus are locations the artist visited and photographed from both ends of the

division. Fourteen photographs were mounted, each opposite its pair in a symbolic gesture of bridging the gap, and transcending the opposition. Finally, Francis Alÿs' *The Green Line* (2005) also addresses the issue of borderlines, and the restriction of one's right to cross them. The video installation documents the artist's action/performance, during which Alÿs performed a walk with a leaking can of green paint following the Green Line which runs through Jerusalem and divides Israel from Palestine.

The limits

The works analysed above addressed aspects of immigration that were completely absent from the official narrative of the Thessaloniki Biennale, although the official texts consistently addressed Thessaloniki as multicultural. The works brought forward this contradiction, and, thus, in some ways undermined the art event's official narrative, which was in line with the official narrative of the Ministry of Culture, branding Thessaloniki as an attractive tourist destination. At the same time, however, with the exception of Haaning's *Albanian Pigeons,* the artworks presented, although incisive and critical, did not address aspects of immigration in Thessaloniki or Greece in particular. In this way, the urgent issues pertaining to the lives of immigrant populations residing in Thessaloniki were largely left untouched, and immigration was rendered as a concept somewhat distanced and deterritorialised. The same could be said about the fact that the number of the works addressing aspects of immigration was relatively small (thirteen out of approximately two hundred and fifty works presented in the main programme of the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale) and there was no separate exhibition in any of the three editions exclusively devoted to this theme. Their small number did not invalidate these works as critical gestures; however, it rendered their 'alternative' narrative as less pronounced.

The fact that the Thessaloniki Biennale was organised and presented largely under the auspices of the State Museum of Contemporary Art, raises the issue of the museum's social responsibility to contribute to the construction of more inclusive and equitable societies, without becoming government tools for social engineering

and control (Sandell, 2002, 4, 17). As Lola Young has indicated, 'inclusion' at a deeper level means:

> … abandoning linear notions of control, and allowing people, previously disconnected and alienated, to be involved in decision making processes, and the kind of subject matter deemed appropriate for exhibitions, research, resources and so on, so that the status-quo is challenged and the balance of power shifted (Young, 2002, 210-211).

Although the Thessaloniki Biennale organised an extensive educational program addressed to the schools of the city, it did not organise outreach programs for immigrants - or even other socially deprived groups - and, thus, perpetuated their exclusion from official art and cultural events. Also, there was no opportunity for self-representation; immigrants in Thessaloniki were not given the chance to talk for themselves, which might have been possible through community-orientated projects and workshops. In the first instance, it would be helpful to conduct a survey on the art event's audiences, including exact figures and visitors' profiles, a step which was not taken for any of the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale (Ioannou, 2013). This could be a starting point for the Thessaloniki Biennale to engage more actively with the local communities, immigrant or not, and take their interest, and needs into account.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

The two main aspects of the Thessaloniki Biennale's 'alternative' potential explored in this chapter involves: first, how the event challenged, to an extent, pre-conceptions and stereotypical interpretative frameworks as regards art practice in regions outside the so-called West; also, how, in some ways, the Thessaloniki Biennale avoided exhibition practices which are underpinned by positive stereotyping, and contribute to the commercialisation of 'cultural difference'. The second aspect of the Thessaloniki Biennale's 'alternative' potential involves how certain artworks undermined the privileged narrative on the city's identity, by highlighting aspects of the city and its history which were largely ignored in the official written texts of the art event (for instance, immigration).

Typically, writers who put forward arguments on the potential of art biennials also acknowledge the criticisms addressed to these events, as well as their limitations (Gioni, 2005, 227; Hanru, 2005; Muller, 2005, 221; Sheikh, 2009/2010, 78; Gardner and Green, 2013; 444, 455). So is the case with the Thessaloniki Biennale; the answer as regards its subversive potential cannot be a straightforward yes or no. As the analysis of the artworks and exhibitions above indicated, although some 'alternative' potential indeed existed in the Thessaloniki Biennale, it was realised to a limited extent.

The key reason why the art event did not radicalise its practices was because it perpetuated some problematic patterns of the official Greek cultural administration, and thus did not avoid its incorporation into and its instrumentalisation by the interests and agendas of official Greek cultural policy, as explained in Chapter 4. This ambivalence as regards the Thessaloniki Biennale's potential for subversion becomes obvious when the art event is compared to biennials with a more explicitly subversive agenda, limited or no budget and no affiliation to a government, official body or corporate organisation, such as the Emergency Biennial (2005), (Jouanno, 2013, 78, 81), Land Art Mongolia 360º with its clear environmental focus (Scmitz, 2013, 82), and the Tbilisi Triennial which brings together informal, unaccredited and experimental art education initiatives (Tsereteli, 2013, 83).

Although this chapter primarily explored the two key themes mentioned above, the concluding remarks briefly gesture towards other themes which also existed, namely art's potential for social intervention. This theme is also important because it challenges the official neo-liberal narrative of Greek governance and Greek cultural policy which, as explained in Chapter 4, conceptualises art and culture as resources for economic growth. Art's potential for social intervention was explored in the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale primarily through artworks which commented on pressing socio-political issues, such as immigration, and political conflicts and crises.

Take for instance, the *Pawnshop* project set up and co-ordinated by e-flux (Julieta Aranda, Liz Linden and Anton Vidokle) initially in New York in 2008, and in Thessaloniki in 2011 [47].

47. View of the exhibition in Dynamo project space. 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale: E-flux, 2011. *Pawnshop.* **Project and installation.**

The project draws on the concept of a short-term loan business which retains objects in exchange for cash. E-flux's *Pawnshop* addresses artists and involves exchanging artworks for cash. If after, 30 days the artworks have not been retrieved by their original owners, they become available for sale. The project highlights issues of financial strain in a country severely hit by the global recession; pawnshops are usually found in distressed neighbourhoods or near gambling sites, and are associated with the urgent need for cash, as the people who resort to these services, often have to give up their valuables for a price much lower than their monetary value (E-flux, 2007). In Greece, in particular, advertisements for pawnshops as well as for selling golden items at 'good prices' have proliferated since the crisis broke out. Moreover, e-flux's project is an ironic comment on the rules and functions of contemporary art market, by highlighting the process of art's commodification.

48. View of the exhibition in Bey Hamam. 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale: PrismTV, 2010. *Prism Greece2010.* **Video.**

Another example would be the collective, multimedia project *Prism Greece2010* (2010) by PrismTV [48]. The projects involved 27 short films by 14 photojournalists and filmmakers and was directed and produced

by Nikos Katsaounis and Nina-Maria Paschalidou, Greek documentary filmmakers. The films *addressed pressing socio-political* problems which have tormented Greece for long, while some have intensified due to the recession (PrismTV, 2011). The multiplicity of themes, perspectives and styles avoids a reductive and moralistic account of the country's crises. Moreover, by bringing forward uncomfortable situations and analysing complex Greek realities in an insightful and poignant way, the piece challenges both the sanitised, politically 'safe' and exoticised portrayals of Greece, which brand the country for touristic purposes, as well as the particularly negative stereotypes on Greeks circulated by the mass media.

The themes addressed included the ineffective construction and maintenance of Greek highways, which combined with road rage, result in fatal car accidents, constantly reminded of by the small relics at the side of the highways. Greek highways have also become associated with social struggle and political opposition as they are the site for the 'I refuse to pay!' movement, which has emerged recently in Greece (citizens block tollbooths and encourage other motorists and commuters to avoid paying the highway tolls, on the basis that they have already been taxed for them, as well as a form of protest for the expensive tolls, and high casualties). Other issues involve sexual trafficking, the tension between Greece and Turkey, as well as the consequences of the financial crisis and the massive bailout loan for the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, addressing corruption, political inefficiency, and the large-scale emigration of the country's educated youth in search of better prospects.

Highlighting pressing socio-political issues was the case, for example, with works which addressed crises in the Middle East (such as Mounira Al Solh's *While Guy Debord Sleeps*, 2011 and Marwan Sahmarani's *The Dictators*, 2008); the critical assessment of Russia's transition to a capitalist model of production (Pavel Shevelev's *The Khodorkonsky Series,* 2005-2006, Chot Delat's *Perestroika-Songspiel,* 2009); political conflicts and traumas (Alexei Kallima's *Lonely Man,* 2006, Danai Stratou's, *CUT 7- Dividing Lines, 2007,* Sheela Gowda's *Loss,* 2008, Francis Alÿs' *The Green Line,* 2005); oppression, state violence, and the violation of human rights (Sheng Qi's *RedArmy and Me* 2007, *Anti-terroristic,* 2008, Barthélémy Toguo's *In the Turkish Jail,* 2001, and *Lawless, 2007);* the phobia towards Islam,

fuelled by the so-called 'war on terror' (Imran Qureshi's *Moderate Enlightenment*, 2009, and Maria Kheirkhah's *I made this,* 2009); HIV (Churchill Madikida's *Virus,* 2005 and Jodi Bieber's *Las Canas,* 2003); and grave environmental issues (Tursun Ali's *Life in the Aral,* 2006, and Bright Eke's *Confluence,* 2009).

However, art's potential for social intervention was also explored through the attempt to bring art into the social sphere more forcefully, either through community-oriented projects (Rene Francisco's *Rosa's House*, 2003, *Nin's Backyard*, 2006, and *Benita's Water,* 2009) or by expanding and transcending the conventional limits of the art gallery and museum (Zoë Walker and Neil Bromwich's *Celestial Radio, Thessaloniki,* 2009, Emeka Okereke's *Bagamoyo - Photography and the Public Space,* 2008, Jens Haaning, Hasan Darsi and Marios Spilipoulos' interventions in public spaces, Costantin Xenakis' unconventional newspaper supplement, 2011).

Finally, deconstructing the process of representation and exposing official versions of histories, events, identities and collective memory as constructs was a common theme addressed by many artworks presented in the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale. This can also be considered as an aspect of art's potential for social intervention through the space it creates for critical thought and dispute of dominant versions of 'reality'. As regards the Thessaloniki Biennale in particular, these works introduced a self-reflexive critical comment towards the art event itself, which reinforced the attempt to undermine its official narrative on the city's identity, and 'multicultural character' in particular, by the artworks and projects analysed in the previous section.

**49.   Constantin Xenakis, 2011.   *To Vima tis Kiriakis.*
Intervention: Newspaper supplement.**

For example, Greek artist Constantin Xenakis, re-staged an action he first presented in Zagreb in 1971 (Fokidis, 2011, 243). In 2011 and as part of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, he created a supplement for the newspaper *To Vima tis Kiriakis,* one of the most prestigious and widely circulated newspapers in Greece. This unorthodox newspaper supplement draws on the artist's broader interest in writing systems and language signs. Letters from the Greek, Latin, Phoenician, Arabic and Hebrew alphabets are combined with Egyptian hieroglyphics, as well as signs of systems as varied as the traffic signs, alchemy, astrology, mathematics and chemistry, in an entirely unexpected and unconventional way [49]. The artist addressed the concepts of language and signs, disputed the very possibility of effective communication, and highlighted how arbitrary systems/codes of communication are. In particular, his critique is addressed to the representations constructed and circulated by the media, as his intervention took place through a newspaper.

Other examples of works which address and critically analyse the very process of representation include Fredi Casco's *Untitled* photographic series (2003-2005), Diego Haboba's drawings and paintings (2004-2009), Hassan Darsi's installation *Point Zero, Thessalonique Series* (2009), Paolo Chiasera's multi-media installation *Forget the Heroes* (2007/2008), Giorgos Divaris' installation titled *Arrogance/Looking from Above* (2009), Khaled Hafez's video *The Third Vision, Around 1.00 pm* (2008), Mad For Real's *Dou-pi-gai: Struggle, Criticise, Reform* performance, Despina Meimaroglou's multimedia installations *Till Death Do Us Part* (1994)*, Deposition* (1993), and *Witness for the Prosecution* (2009), Vazgen Pahlavuni-Tadevosyan's installation *Circles of Return* (2000), as well as his drawings titled *Contemporary Bestiary* (2008), Marios Spiliopoulos installation

Human Traces (2009)*,* Jinoos Taghizadeh's *Letters I Never Wrote* (2008-2009), Clemens Von Wedemeyer and Maya Schweizer's video *Metropolis, Report From China* (2007)*,* and finally, Mary Zygouri's installation *The Fattening Cells* (2007).

Moreover, the archival projects presented in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale - such as the *Arab Image Foundation, Belonging and Martyrdom and 98 Weeks* bring forward aspects of the histories and cultures in the region, which are often deliberately obscured (as in the case of the Lebanese civil war), or viewpoints which would not normally bother official history-writing (for instance, gender roles as captured in private studio photographs in the case of the *Arab Image Foundation*). In this way, they subvert the normative, restrictive and exclusive function of the archive - as analysed by Foucault (Foucault, 1969) - by expanding what can actually be included, articulated, represented. In doing so, they challenge official history-writing, and highlight the power relations involved in constructing representations of people, events and identities. Thus, they introduce a self-reflexive comment on the representations constructed by the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale itself, including those regarding the city of Thessaloniki as constructed in the art event's official written texts as well as the broader official narrative by Greek governance, as explored in Chapter 4.

Although the Thessaloniki Biennale addressed pressing socio-political issues through the artworks it presented, it has to be noted that the references made to the financial and social problems which Greece faced due to the severe recession which has hit the country since 2007 were surprisingly few in the catalogue texts as well as the main programmes of the art event. This omission was even more pronounced in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, which took place at a time when the crisis had fully unfolded. The references to the crisis were scarce and limited to the curators' texts only (Colombo, Urieta and Fokidis, 2011, 20) rather than the public and museum officials. Moreover, the works presented largely refrained from taking up this issue. Few exceptions included Mounira Al Solh's *While Guy Debord Sleeps* - which made references to the dispute over the privatization of the National Electricity Company of Greece, and the string of strikes by its employees - the *Pawnshop* project by e-flux and the *Prism GR2010* project mentioned above.

Moreover, as the analysis in the first section of this chapter indicated, the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale emphasised archival projects. This could have been an opportunity to present interesting archival projects by Greek artists such as Stefanos Tsivopoulos, Nayia Yiakoumaki, Lina Theodorou and Gregorios Pharmakis, and Yiota Sotiropoulou who, through incorporating archival art practices in their work, have addressed openly and with complexity issues pertaining to the Greek crisis (Karamba, 2013). Instead, archival practices from the part of Greece were represented in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale by ELIA., the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive, first founded in 1980, which is now part of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation. The project focuses on collecting, preserving and researching printed material which relates to the 19th and 20th century history and culture of Greece. Although ELIA. is an extensive and valuable source for cross-disciplinary research and documentation, its character is primarily historical, and does not involve contemporary socio-political issues.

Thus, the issue of the country's contemporary harsh realities and crises largely remained untouched. Although socio-political crises were addressed in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, this was done to a far greater extent by the artworks from the Middle East. In this respect, the art event did not engage with local (Greek) issues in a more profound and meaningful way, and gave the message that it is easier to reflect upon and talk about crisis, conflict, and trauma, when these take place elsewhere.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis explored two main hypotheses: the first is that the Thessaloniki Biennale fulfils an instrumental role linked to financial and political interests, particularly tourism and cultural diplomacy. The second hypothesis concerns the possibility that the Thessaloniki Biennale may have alternative potential(s), and explores to what extent and in what ways this was realised.

As regards the first hypothesis, the analysis in Chapter 4 indicated that the Thessaloniki Biennale was partly a manifestation of the shift of interest towards contemporary art from the part of the Greek state; also, that it could be broadly associated with the official governmental discourse which, in line with the official EU guidelines, conceptualised art and culture as engines for economic growth and tools of cultural diplomacy. In particular, it demonstrated exactly how the Thessaloniki Biennale was intricately linked to official Greek cultural policy, and how it became more explicitly connected with the agenda of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, when it was incorporated into the Ministry's *Thessaloniki Cultural Crossroads* programme in 2011. This agenda included boosting tourism in Northern Greece (especially cultural tourism) as well as issues related to cultural diplomacy, namely projecting Thessaloniki as a metropolitan centre with a leading role in Balkan area, and South-Europe.

The analysis of the art event's catalogue texts, press releases, as well as choice of venues showed that the Thessaloniki Biennale attempted to 're-brand' Thessaloniki as historical and multicultural, as well as a centre of contemporary art. In this way, it contributed to enhancing the city's competitiveness and attractiveness as an urban and cultural destination in order to boost its tourism and influence, and thus, it embraced, to an extent, the priorities of Greek cultural policy and the Ministry of Culture.

As regards the way Thessaloniki was branded in the official written texts of the Thessaloniki Biennale, this involved three key themes: 1. The city's dominant history 2. The city's multicultural character and 3. The city's aspired role as a metropolitan /

leading centre in the Balkan area and South-East Europe. The analysis of texts by other official, state-funded cultural organisations based in Thessaloniki as well as official documents of the Ministry of Culture indicated that the way the art event conceptualised Thessaloniki was closely linked to previous texts and discourses. In fact, the texts of the Thessaloniki Biennale echoed those by Greek governance and other official cultural organisations, especially as regards the historical continuity which was claimed for the city's multiculturalism in order to project this aspect of the city's identity as 'authoritative' and 'indisputable' through the centuries.

The Thessaloniki Biennale was closely related to a set of pre-existing agendas as regards the city's development, and the promotion of a particular identity for it abroad. This was manifest in its use of the city's historical monuments and Pier 1, Old Port. In line with the policies promoted by the Regulatory Scheme of Thessaloniki, the Organisation of Thessaloniki, the Organisation of the Cultural Capital of Europe 1997, and the Technical Chamber of Greece - the Thessaloniki Biennale highlighted the historical centre of the city, and the city's heritage overall. In relation to Pier 1, in particular, the Thessaloniki Biennale aimed at reinforcing visibility and intensifying life and activity in the area. However, it reproduced a pattern of top-down planned and consumption-oriented clusters (Mommaas, 2004, 516-517).

Moreover, the Thessaloniki Biennale recycled certain institutional patterns of the highly centralised official Greek cultural administration. More specifically, it adopted a hierarchical and top-down approach as regards the selection of participating artists and projects, and, thus, reproduced the exclusivist and elitist character of the formulation of Greek cultural policy and administration. This, in combination with the fact that the Thessaloniki Biennale promoted a fixed image of the city with an emphasis on its monuments and its histories undermined the art event's potential for opposition, and facilitated its instrumentalisation in line with the official governmental discourse, which promoted the utilisation of contemporary art for profit-making purposes.

For instance, the official narrative of the Thessaloniki Biennale constructed the city's 'multiculturalism' through a selective reading of its past, and excluded any reference

to the harsh realities of the present-day immigrants - approximately 45,000 people in 2011. In this respect, it was related to the discourse of 'corporate multiculturalism', which evokes multicultural diversity for profit-making purposes, while at the same time continuing to reinforce structural and racialised inequalities. As a result, it remained conservative and politically 'sanitised' and, thus, further allowed the possibility to become instrumentalised in relation to the agendas mentioned above.

It should be noted, though, that the art event did not embrace the explicitly nationalistic perspective on the city's contemporary character (which considered the co-existence of Greek residents with immigrants from other countries as threatening and detrimental to the city's Greek identity). However, it should have made a clearer and more powerful statement against racism. Such a gesture was and is still very urgent especially in the context of the force which neo-fascism is gaining in Greece, as the alarming rise of the neo-fascist Golden Dawn party shows.

For all these reasons, this thesis argues that the Thessaloniki Biennale could be regarded as a case in point of the concept of the expedient uses of art and culture, especially for socio-political and economic ends (Yúdice, 1999, 17; 2003, 9). In particular, the analysis of the Thessaloniki Biennale provides more empirical evidence to support the arguments put forward about the instrumental function of biennials, especially as regards their connection with tourism and city-development agendas (León 2001, 71; Stallabrass 2004, 37), their role in highlighting the uniqueness of a particular place and branding a city (Sheikh 2009, 71, 72), as well as their contribution to the advancement of cultural diplomacy agendas (Mosquera, 2010, 202). In this way, this thesis further expands the debates around the instrumentalisation of culture by highlighting the role of art biennials in this process, as well as by linking art biennials with the discourse of creative economy and cultural and creative industries.

In relation to the second research question addressed in this thesis – the subversive potential the Thessaloniki Biennale might have - this thesis relates the Thessaloniki Biennale to the broader discussions on art's potential for subversion and resistance, and the conditions under which this can be realised, as outlined in Chapter 2. In fact, it takes a stance in relation to these debates which are fuelled, on one hand, by art

activism and institutional critique discourses, which call for art practices to be overtly socially engaged, align with social movements, and deploy tactic media strategies (Dufou, 2002; Milohnic, 2003; BAVO, 2008; Sholette, 2008; Stallabrass, 2008; Holmes, 2009; Raunig, 2009; Grindon, 2010). On the other hand, art historians critics such as T. J. Demos (2008), and Claire Bishop (2006; 2008; 2012) drawing on Jacques Rancière theory on art's political and emancipatory potential (Rancière 2006; 2007), warn against the danger of reducing art to politics, and of submitting art to sociological and bureaucratic assessment based on demonstrable outcomes (T. J. Demos, 2008, 34; Bishop, 2012, 23). My analysis of the artworks addressed in this thesis relies on the conviction that art's potential for subversion lies in its ability to create space for critical reflection and oppositional discourse, and, thus challenge hierarchies and preconceptions, even if it does not necessarily border 'direct' activism.

This thesis explores the art event's 'alternative' potential from two viewpoints: first, how the event challenged, to an extent, pre-conceptions and stereotypical interpretative frameworks as regards art practice in regions outside the so-called West; also, how, in some ways, the Thessaloniki Biennale avoided exhibition practices which are underpinned by positive stereotyping, and contribute to the commercialisation of 'cultural difference'. Second, how certain artworks undermined the privileged narrative on the city's identity (as constructed in the art event's official written texts and by Greek governance), by highlighting aspects of the city and its history which were largely ignored in the official written texts of the art event (for instance, immigration).

The Thessaloniki Biennale has manifested an interest in art from 'outside' Europe. The figures concerning each region's representation in the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale indicate that artists from Western Europe joined with North America had relatively low presence in the art event, while the proportion of those artists who - irrespective of their country of origin - resided in Western Europe and North America in relation to the total remained below fifty per cent in all three editions. This thesis explored how the largest group in each edition was represented through analysing the choice of artists and the exhibition layout.

The 1st edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale clearly gave emphasis to artists from former-Soviet States, included in the exhibition curated by Maria Tsantsanoglou, Director of the State Museum of Contemporary Art. Nearly all works included in Tsantsanoglou's project bore elements and influences from the Moscow Conceptualism (Groys, 2006, 408, 409; Groys and Vidokle, 2006, 401-403), while a lot of the artists selected for her project (of Russian or other origin), were significant members of the Russian avant-garde and underground scene of the 1980s and 1990s. In this respect, Tsantsanoglou's selection followed a relatively safe pattern, including already established artists and focusing on a practice which was oppositional under the Soviet regime, but is critically acclaimed today (Degot, 2006; Misiano, 2006). The prominent display of the compelling large-scale installations by Zakharov and Fillipov further celebrated Russian conceptual art, and privileged it in relation to the work of the artists from the rest of the former-Soviet States. However, the inclusion of six Russian artists in relation to fifteen artists from former-Soviet States resisted the tendency of the so-called West to focus on the Moscow-centred Russian art world, and marginalise the artistic worlds of the rest of the former Eastern bloc (James, 2008, 8), as was the case with the 3rd Moscow Biennale (Kravtsova, 2010).

Furthermore, some of the selected works by artists based in former-Soviet States focused on a critical reflection on their Soviet past (*Life in Aral, Requiem, Ghost Town*), their homeland's contemporary identity (*Landscape of the City, Yerevan*), or on celebratory notes of their particular cultural heritage (*The Territory of the 'Untouchable', The Temple*). This is related to the effort of each former-Soviet country to consolidate its own national and culturally specific art and identity in a post-Soviet era (James, 2008, 10; Heartney, 2011, 50). At the same time, uncomfortable issues pertaining to the art scene of Central Asian countries were not raised in the exhibition. Such issues include the severe lack of arts infrastructure and what this entails in terms of artists' access to opportunities for visibility and circulation (Heartney, 2011, 48-49; Fialova, 2012), censorship (Raza, 2010), as well as blunt processes of art's commercialisation (Nauruzbayeva, 2011). In this respect, the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale complied with the tendency manifest in contemporary western art markets which expect that the artists from former-Soviet states should rediscover, redefine and manifest their alleged cultural identity, and demonstrate their uniqueness, but in a sanitised and politically 'safe' way (James, 2008).

In the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale (2009) the emphasis deliberately shifted from Post Soviet States to Africa and Latin America. The artworks from artists of Latin American and African background were largely arranged around the main concept of the edition rather than the cultural identities of the artists or the regions in question. This was achieved by not segregating the works on the basis of their common geographical and cultural origin neither juxtaposing them in order to highlight their cultural differences. Instead the floor maps of the exhibition venues show that they were scattered across various venues and mingled with the works of the rest of the participants. In this way, the curators refrained from classifying the artworks shown according to their region of origin, and thus, avoided rendering particular artistic traits or themes as essentially Latin American or African.

Moreover, the proportion of artists from Latin America and Africa, although significant, was balanced in relation to the percentage of artists from Western Europe, or Greece. As a result, the main programme of each edition was not 'inundated' with art from a particular geographical and cultural area, as is, usually, the case with all-inclusive exhibitions of the art of those regions - for instance the year-long celebratory event *Africa 05* (Binder, 2006, 86-88). In this, way the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale did not attempt a comprehensive or totalizing overview of art from Africa and Latin America.

The selection of artworks by African artists in the Thessaloniki Biennale was not based on their inclusion in any large and well-known private collection, as was the case with the 52nd Venice Biennale's *Check List* exhibition, whose press releases emphasised that the exhibition highlighted works that belonged to the Sindika Dokolo Collection. In this respect, the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale presented an alternative model of selection and exhibition practice, which did not rely on or enhance the image of particular private patrons. Moreover, the Thessaloniki Biennale did not require that any submission of work should include budget, sponsors or financial backing other than the art event itself, contrary to the 52nd Venice Biennale's *Check List*. Instead, the art event was responsible for covering the expenses of the artworks being transported and insured, and in this respect, allowed rather than restricted access. On the other hand, the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale was

limited to sub-Saharan artists, which according to some critics, this could reflect the colonial tendency of imagining sub-Sabaran Africa as the "real" Africa, since the northern regions had been "contaminated" by Islamic and Arab civilizations (Okeke-Agulu, 2007, 5).

Although the works presented in the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, often, drew from their particular socio-political and cultural contexts, they did so from diverse perspectives and addressed different aspects of those contexts, without repeating a singular theme. Associating a particular region and its art practice with a particular theme - such as violence, and images of war with the Middle East, for instance (Kholeif, 2010; Santacattarina and Steyn, 2013), or multiculturalism, hybridism, fragmentation and heterogeneity with Latin America (Amor, 1994; Mosquera, 2001) - can reproduce reductive representations, and reinforce stereotypical interpretive frameworks (Martins, 2012). The 2nd edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale offered glimpses – often conflicting - and not coherent or homogeneous accounts of what African and Latin American realities and cultures can be, while at the same time allowed for addressing the complexities, and various nuances and particularities of the contexts the artworks were associated with.

The reluctance from the part of the curators of the 2nd edition of the art event to exhibit the artworks using notions of their creators' cultural identities as markers of distinction and differentiation, distinguishes this art event, at least to an extent, from the approach to concepts of 'cultural identity' and 'cultural difference' associated with positive stereotyping (Araeen, 1989; 2000a; 2000b; 2005; Mosquera, 2001) and the demands of an art market which internalises the logic of neo-liberalism by commercialising 'cultural diversity' (Ramirez, 1994; Yúdice, 1994; Araeen, 2005, Kholeif, 2010).

Contrary to the two previous editions, the focus of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale was geographically and culturally restricted and somewhat regional, perhaps giving the opportunity to address issues pertinent to the contemporary turbulence and crisis faced by Greece as well as countries of the Middle East. However, the works which took up the theme of crisis were balanced with those which explored other aspects of social and cultural practices in the region. In doing so, the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale,

on the one hand, resisted the dominant representations of the Middle East in the mainstream media as inherently a zone of conflict (Demos, 2007, 113; Kholeif, 2012, 31; Santacatterina and Steyn, 2013, 281). By the same token, the art event allowed for pressing political issues in the region to be addressed, and, thus, resisted the tendency to invent a pacified and glossy image of the Middle East (David, 2007b, 109) as well as an apolitical 'universalism that treats national distinctions as an irrelevance' (Behrman, 2006, 2).

Moreover, the fact that the projects presented were predominantly archival and research-based highlighted the diversity of social and cultural practices in the region. The polyphony of signs and perspectives they allowed for enabled the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale to conceptualise art practices from the region as diverse and nuanced rather that coherent and unitary; also, to avoid reductive and simplistic accounts of a so-called 'Middle Eastern cultural identity' which would be more easily marketable and commodified in accordance with the logic of neo-liberal capitalism (Harvey, 2005).

However, those critical gestures put forward by the Thessaloniki Biennale could be deepened if the art event radicalises its practices, as regards issues pertaining to the selection of artists, as well as the roles it ascribes to curators. The act of selection involves power, and this power is unevenly distributed across a closed and elitist web of few privileged insiders (Conover, 2006, 354). All three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale did not challenge the curator's authority in selection processes, and in this respect, they didn't broaden their scope beyond the choices that the particular curators made. This, coupled with the fact that a great number of artists were either already well-known, or, had participated before in exhibitions organised by Western art institutions, raises doubts regarding the assumed 'open' and 'inclusive' character of the art event, as constructed in the organisers' texts. Along with an interest in including artists from regions outside Europe, any discussion on disputing established hierarchies and exclusion practices should also actively challenge barriers that pertain to gender, social class, and inequality of wealth and opportunity across regions and cultures.

Finally, the second point of view from which the Thessaloniki Biennale's 'alternative' potential was examined involved the choice of particular artworks, which could be thought of as critical gestures, undermining the art event's privileged narrative on the city's 'multicultural character'. They did so by bringing forward aspects of the city ignored in the written texts, highlighting the very fact that the city's identity as well as dominant history is a construct, and putting the city's multicultural character in the present by addressing contemporary immigration. Overall, they allowed different and conflicting points of view to emerge, and drew attention to the contradictions and frictions within the body of the institution's discourse.

More specifically, works such as Marios Spiliopoulos's *Human Traces* (2009), Yevgenig (Zhenya) Fiks *Communist Tour of Thessaloniki (2007),* Hassan Darsi's *Point Zero, Thessalonique Series* (2009), to name but a few examples, undermined the way the city's past and present were conceptualised in the official narrative of the art event and the governmental discourse. They did so by highlighting aspects past which the official texts omitted or by exposing the processes through which the dominant versions of the city's history were constructed.

Other works, such as *The Big Swing* by Vlassis Caniaris (1974), *Halam Tawaaf* (2008) and *Rochers Carrés* (2009) by Kader Attia, Mircea Cantor's installation entitled *Stranieri* (2008), Jens Haaning *Albanian Pigeons,* addressed aspects of present-day immigration which were completely absent from the official narrative of the art event as well as the official governmental discourse. The art event's catalogue texts written by public and museum officials, as well as the other state-funded cultural organisations of Thessaloniki and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, consistently addressed Thessaloniki as multicultural through a selective reading of its past, and with no reference to the present-day immigrants residing in Thessaloniki. The art works analysed, however, brought forward this contradiction, and, thus, undermined the official narrative of the art event.

At the same time, however, with the exception of Haaning's *Albanian Pigeons,* the artworks presented, although incisive and critical, did not address aspects of immigration in Thessaloniki or Greece in particular. In this way, the urgent issues

pertaining to the lives of immigrant populations residing in Thessaloniki were largely left untouched, and immigration was rendered as a concept somewhat distanced and deterritorialised. The same could be said about the fact that the number of the works addressing aspects of immigration was relatively small (thirteen out of approximately two hundred and fifty works presented in the main programme of the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale) and there was no separate exhibition in any of the three editions exclusively devoted to this theme. Their small number did not invalidate these works as critical gestures; however, it rendered their 'alternative' narrative as less pronounced.

Finally, some of the works presented in the Thessaloniki Biennale addressed the issue of art's potential for social intervention. This theme is also important because it challenges the official neo-liberal narrative of Greek governance and Greek cultural policy which, as explained in Chapter 4, conceptualises art and culture as resources for economic growth. Art's potential for social intervention was explored in the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale primarily through artworks which commented on pressing socio-political issues: *Pawnshop* project set up and co-ordinated by e-flux initially in New York in 2008, *Prism Greece2010* by PrismTV (2010), Pavel Shevelev's *The Khodorkonsky Series* (2005-2006) and Chot Delat's *Perestroika-Songspiel* (2009); political conflicts and traumas: Alexei Kallima's *Lonely Man* (2006) Danai Stratou's, *CUT 7- Dividing Lines* (2007) Sheela Gowda's *Loss* (2008)*,* Francis Alÿs' *The Green Line* (2005); oppression, state violence, and the violation of human rights (Sheng Qi's *RedArmy and Me* (2007)*, Anti-terroristic* (2008)*,* Barthélémy Toguo's *In the Turkish Jail* (2001) and *Lawless Zone* (2007)*,* to name but few examples.

Art's potential for social intervention was also explored through the attempt to bring art into the social sphere more forcefully, either through community-oriented projects (Rene Francisco's *Rosa's House*, *Nin's Backyard*, and *Benita's Water*) or by expanding and transcend the conventional limits of the art gallery and museum: Zoë Walker and Neil Bromwich's *Celestial Radio, Thessaloniki* (2009)*,* Emeka Okereke's *Bagamoyo - Photography and the Public Space* (2008)*,* Jens Haaning,

Hasan Darsi and Marios Spilipoulos' interventions in public spaces examined earlier, Costantin Xenakis' unconventional newspaper supplement (2011).

Finally, deconstructing the process of representation and exposing official versions of histories, events, identities and collective memory as constructs was a common theme addressed by many artworks presented in the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale. This can also be considered as an aspect of art's potential for social intervention through the space it creates for critical thought and dispute of dominant versions of 'reality'. As regards the Thessaloniki Biennale in particular, these works introduced a self-reflexive critical comment towards the art event itself (for instance, Fredi Casco's *Untitled* photographic series (2003-2005), Diego Haboba's drawings and paintings (2004-2009), Hassan Darsi's installation *Point Zero, Thessalonique Series* (2009), as well as the archival projects presented in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale.

On the other hand, although the Thessaloniki Biennale addressed pressing socio-political issues through the artworks it presented, it has to be noted that the references made to the financial and social problems which Greece faced due the severe recession which has hit the country since 2007 were surprisingly few in the catalogue texts as well as the main programmes of the art event. Consequently, the issue of the country's contemporary harsh realities and crises largely remained untouched. Although socio-political crises were addressed in the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, this was done to a far greater extent by the artworks from the Middle East. In this respect, the art event did not engage with local (Greek) issues in a more profound and meaningful way, and gave the message that it is easier to reflect upon and talk about crisis, conflict, and trauma, when these take place elsewhere.

The answer to whether the Thessaloniki Biennale had subversive potential cannot, therefore, be a straightforward yes or no. As the analysis of the artworks and exhibitions indicated, although some 'alternative' potential indeed existed in the Thessaloniki Biennale, it was not often capaciously realised. A key reason for this was that the art event did not democratise its practices, in the sense that it perpetuated certain problematic hierarchical patterns of the official Greek cultural administration, and thus did not avoid its incorporation into and its

instrumentalisation by the interests and agendas of official Greek cultural policy. The art event's potential for criticality and subversion as explored in Chapter 5 could be deepened, expanded and realised to a greater extent if the Thessaloniki Biennale becomes more open as an institution,. This could be achieved by democratising the processes of selection of participating artists, key themes and curators, and by working more closely with independent artistic groups as well as citizen and activist groups. Also, the Thessaloniki Biennale's potential for subversion could be strengthened by including more works and projects which powerfully address local issues of concern.

It is, however, important to stress that the art event included many critical gestures which, although not as pronounced as its privileged narrative, were still powerful, and undermined to some extent the neo-liberal narrative which the commodification of 'cultural difference'. In this way, it presented an important opportunity for the Greek art and culture scene[24]. In other words, perhaps even art biennials which are closely associated with official cultural policies and governments, should not be dismissed uncritically as completely instrumentalised, as they too may have some subversive potential - even if not fully realised - which lies in the choice of art works, and the space for critical reflection these create. In this sense, the two dominant interpretative frameworks which Anthony Gardner and Charles Green identify in the literature on biennials as antithetical or oppositional (Gardner and Green, 2013, 442-443) may be joined in an approach which utilises aspects from both. This thesis contributes further towards this direction.

In conclusion, the in-depth analysis of the context (pre-existing policies and agendas of official Greek cultural policy and governance) in which the Thessaloniki Biennale is situated as well as the critical discourse, which was produced through the art works presented under its auspices, sheds light to the particularities of this biennial. In doing so, it provides a wealth of analytical argument and empirical evidence from, and about, a biennale in a transitional geographical zone in a time of creative economy discourse and financial crisis, one which can contribute to the literature on

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[24] I argued that the Thessaloniki Biennale could be considered as an opportunity for the Greek art and cultural scene, though in a more tentative way in Karavida (2009).

the perspectives and experiences of biennials in the context of the study of art events and cultural practices.

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Appendix

<u>**Dates of the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale**</u>

Thessaloniki Biennale 1: 21st May - 30th September 2007

Thessaloniki Biennale 2: 24th May – 27th Sept 2009

Thessaloniki Biennale 3: 18th Sept – 18th Dec 2011

<u>**Main and Parallel Programmes of the 3 Editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale:
Projects and Events.**</u>

The data for the appendix were drawn from the Thessaloniki Biennale publications and promotional material, namely the three exhibition catalogues, the Thessaloniki Biennale brochures, leaflets, invitation cards and press releases. The presentation of the events is chronological, the grouping and labelling of the events as 'main', 'parallel', 'special' or 'guest' has been preserved as in the original material. Information regarding the organising institution, venues and curators is also mentioned as available.

Thessaloniki Biennale 1: 21st May - 30th September 2007

Parallel Programme events before the opening of the TB1

March - May: Educational Programme, Curated by Syrago Tsiara, Venues: Thessaloniki's High Schools.

25th April - 17th June: The 3rd Children's Biennale, Collaborating Institutions: Society of Macedonian Studies, Museum and Academy of Children's Art, Venue: Gallery of the Society of Macedonian Studies.

27th April – 13th May: 'The Invisible Thread. A Retrospective on the work of Alexandros Tobazis', 'Architectural Issues, 40 Years. The Work of Orestis Doumanis', 'Atelier 66: The Architectural Work of Dimitris and Suzanne Antonakaki', Production: Department of Architecture of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greek Institute of Architecture, Architectural School of National Technical University of Athens. Venue: Teloglion Foundation of Arts,

7th May – 20th May: International Workshop of Young Artists (First Stage).

Events during the TB1 official dates:

21st May – 30th Sept: Exhibition 'Heterotopias: di/visions, (from here and from elsewhere), Curated by Catherine David, Venues: Warehouse B1, Warehouses C, Port.

21st May – 30th Sept: Exhibition 'Heterotopias: Beholders of Other Places', Curated by: Maria Tsantsanoglou, Venues: Warehouse C, Port.

21st May – 30th Sept: 21st May – 30th Nov: 'Farkadona' project, Curated by: Hariklia Hari, Venue: Old Pump House and Container, Port.

22nd May – 30th Sept: Exhibition 'Heterotopias: Society Must Be Defended', Curated by: Jan – Erik Lundstrom, Venues: Teloglion Foundation of Arts.

22nd May - 30th Sept: Exhibition - A joint project by C. David, J.E. Lundstrom and M. Tsantsanoglou, Venue: Museum of Byzantine Culture.

22nd May – 20th July: International Workshop of Young Artists (Second Stage).

22nd May: 'Bitter Destiny', Performance by Barthelemy Toguo, Venue: Teloglio.

23rd May – 30th Sept: 'Double Cube' part of the exhibition 'Heterotopias: Beholders of Other Places', Curated by M. Tsantsanoglou, Venue: Bazaar Hamam.

23rd May: Round Table 'Contemporary Art Biennale: Developing the Potential', Coordination: Katerina Mavromichali, Venue: Warehouse C, Port.

23rd May – 24th June: Exhibition 'Heterotopias-Heterotypies'.

24th May – 30th Sept: Exhibition 'Heterotopias: di/visions, (from here and from elsewhere), Curated by Catherine David, and exhibition 'Heterotopias: Beholders of Other Places', Curated by M. Tsantsanoglou, Venue: SMCA, Moni Lazariston.

24th May – 12th Sept: Exhibition 'Heterotopias: di/visions, (from here and from elsewhere), Curated by Catherine David, Venue: Yeni Djami.

25th May – 12th Sept: Exhibition 'Recreation – *Maid* in Greece', Curated by Thalea Stefanidou, Aladja Imaret.

25th May – 29th July: Exhibition 'Who is there?', curated by: Denys Zacharopoulos-Artistic Director of Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art with the cooperation of: Vangelis Ioakimidis and Thouli Misirloglou, Production: Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Venue: Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art.

1st – 2nd Jun: 'Demonstrate For Nothing', Performance by Stephen Us, University campus and Port.

1st June: Homer's 'Illiada (First Raphsody)', Theatrical Happening by 'Illiadahomero' (Curitiba – Brasil) group, Venue: Roma Agora.

13th June: Project 'Ouf!' (performance): Curated by: Dorothea Konteletzidou, venue: Warehouse C, Port.

22nd June – 29 July: Exhibition 'A Place without a Place', Curated by Hercules Papaioannou, Exhibition 'Secret Gardens', Curated by: Vangelis Ioakimidis – Director of Thessaloniki Museum of Photography', Venue: Thessaloniki Museum of Photography.

1st – 14th July: Workshop as a parallel activity for the exhibition 'Who is there?', Curated by Denys Zacharopoulos, Artistic Director of Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art with the cooperation of: Vangelis Ioakimidis and Thouli Misirloglou, Production: Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Venue: Genti Koule, Eptapyrgio.

4th July: 'Deja Vue', Performance by Nadine Jolianne, Venue: Warehouse C, Port.

10th July (to 30th Sept): Outdoor Installation 'Pila' [Saw], as part of the exhibition 'Heterotopias: Beholders of Other Spaces', Curated by M. Tsantsanglou, Venue: Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki.

11th July (to 30th Sept): Opening of the exhibition 'Tout Doit Disparaitre' and 'Tu Me Copieras', as part of 'Heterotopias: Society Must Be Defended', Curated by J. E. Lundstrom, Venue: French Institute of Thessaloniki.

12th July: Piano Concert by Galina Chystiakova, Venue: Museum of Byzantine Culture.

2nd Aug: Open Air Cinema in Moni Lazariston (opening date – throughout August), Production: Sate Museum of Contemporary Art.

1st Sept: Lecture on and presentation of the work by Leda Papakonstantinou, Guest Artist, Venue: Action Field Kodra, Municipality of Kalamaria.

11 Sept – 12 Oct: Exhibition 'Other Spaces', Curator: Andreas Kalfopoulos, Venue: Old Ice Chambers, Port.

11th Sept: Baroque Music Event, 'Follie e Stavaganze', Old Ice Chambers, Port.

14th Sept: Initiation of the Project Public Screen, Curated by: Syrago Tsiara, Venue: Action Field Kodra, Municipality of Kalamaria.

17th – 30th Sept: Project Public Screen, Curated by: Syrago Tsiara, Venue: Thessaloniki Museum of Photography.

20th – 21st Sept: Happening 'The Concept of Symposium', Direction: Isavella Martzopoulos, Venue: Navarino square and Warehouse C, Port.

21st Sept: Graffiti Happening as part of the PPCT/ Farkadona Project, Venue: Old Pump House, Pier A, Port.

21st Sept: Stencil Happening as part of the PPCT/ Farkadona Project, Venue: Old Pump House, Pier A, Port.

21st Sept: 'In The Name of', performance by Leda Papakonstantinou, Guest Artist, Curated by Syrago Tsiara, Venue: Warehouse B1, Port.

21st Sept: closing Multi-Disciplinary Conference 'The Meaning of the Heterotopia in the Arts', Co-ordination: Katerina Mavromichali, Venue: Warehouse D, Port.

22nd Sept: Music-Dance Happening in the exhibition 'Other Spaces', Old Ice Chambers, Port.

Biennale related events after the end of the TB1:

September to November: Educational Programme.

8th Oct – 10th Nov: 'In the Name of' by Leda Papakonstantinou and Project 'Public Screen', Venue: Warehouse B1: Port.

26th Jan – end of March 2008: Exhibition 'Meeting Heterotopias, Selection from the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art', Municipal Gallery of Larissa.

Thessaloniki Biennale 2: 24th May – 27th Sept 2009

Main Programme:

24th May – 27th Sept: Exhibition 'Praxis: Art In Times of Uncertainty', Curated by: Gabriela Salgado, Bisi Silva, Syrago Tsiara, Venues: Port Area - Warehouse C, Warehouse 13, Old Ice – Chambers building, Pumping Station. City – Bezesteni, Bookstore of the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation, Bazaar Hamam (Louloudadika area), Bei Hamam (Paradeisos Baths), Museum of Byzantine Culture, Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, Teloglio Foundation of the Arts, Mount Athos Centre, Eleftherias Square, Bar-restaurant, ES.

Parallel Programme:

20th Feb: Symposium: *Making Art for or with the Public? Collective Projects in the Public Space.* Warehouse C, Thessaloniki, Pier 1, Port. Curator; Syrago Tsiara.

May – June (end of school year): Educational Programme 'Biennale goes to …school!', Organising Institution: State Museum of Contemporary Art.

16th May – 31st July: Exhibition 'Eugenia Apostolou, Works 1984-2009', Curated by Denys Zacharopoulos, Artistic Director of Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Organising Institution: Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Venue: Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art.

20th May – 10th June: Exhibition 'E-Mobile Art', Curated by: Annick Bureaud, Nina Czegledy, Christiana Galanopoulou. Coordination: Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Laboratory of New Technologies in Education, Communication and Mass Media, National and Kapodistriakon University of Athens and State Museum of Contemporary Art, Venue: Warehouse B1, Port.

21st – 22nd May: Symposium: 'E-Mobile Art', Warehouse C, Pier 1, Port.

24th – 30th May: Performance Festival, Curated by: Demosthenes Agrafiotis, Eirini Papakonstantinou, Venues: Various.

24th May – 31st July: Exhibition 'PAINT-ID', Curated by: Sotiris Bahtsetzis, Organising Institution: Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Venue: Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art.

25th May – 31st July: 'DISCLOSURE / UNDERLINED MEMORY, A Review of Contemporary Serbian Art', Curated by: Aleksandra Estela, Bjelica Mladenovic, Co-ordination: Theodore Markoglou, Organising Institutions: Cultural Centre of Belgrade and the City of Belgrade, Collaborating Institution: Museum of Byzantine Culture, Venue: Museum of Byzantine Culture.

25th May – 15th Sept: Exhibition Face to Face (Face a Faces), Curated by Angeliki Grammatikopoulou – Barbaut, Isabelle de Montfumat, Collaborating Institutions: Institut Francais de Thessalonique and Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, Venue: Institut Francais de Thessalonique (Part 1: from 25th May to 15th July) and Thessaloniki Museum of Photography (Part 2: from 16th July to 15th Sept).

15th – 21st Jun and 23rd Sept – end Oct: Young Artists' Workshop, Curated by: Anna Mykoniati, Collaborating Institution: Municipality of Thermi, Venues: (Part 1: from 15th to 21st Jun, Municipality of Thermi and Part 2: from 23rd Sept to the end Oct, Artforum Vilka Gallery).

17th June – 30th Aug: Exhibition 'Electros', Curated by: Yiannis Bolis, Venue: Warehouse B1, Port.

18th June – 12th Sept: Exhibition 'Greek Printmaking – An Overview', Curated by: Tzeni Markaki, Co-ordination: Kleoniki Christoforidou, Collaborating Institutions: Chambers of Fine Arts of Greece, Municipality of Thessaloniki, Municipal Art Gallery of Thessaloniki, Venue: cultural Centre of the Municipality if Thessaloniki.

Sept: Educational Programme 'Biennale goes to …school!', Organising Institution: State Museum of Contemporary Art,

Thessaloniki Biennale 3: 18th Sept – 18th Dec 2011

Main Programme:

18th Sept – 18th Dec: Exhibition: 'A Rock and A Hard Place', Curated by: Paolo Colombo, Mahita El Bacha Urieta, Marina Fokidis, Venues: SMCA – Moni Lazariston, Contemporary Art Centre of Thessaloniki – Warehouse B1, Port, Casa Bianca, Alatza Imaret, Yeni Djami, Bey Hamam, Eptapyrgio, Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum of Byzantine Cutlure, Archaeological Museum of Thessalnoiki, Teloglion Foundation of Art, Dynamo Project Space.

Special events:

18th Sept: Meet the Artist, Costantin Xenakis – To Vima Newspapaer, Venue: Contemporary Art Centre of Thessaloniki.

18th Sept: Performance 'The Ballad of Bradley Manning', Elena Krasaki and Elliot Sharp, Venue: Eptapyrgio.

18th Sept: Concert by Solon Lekkas, Venue: Alatza Imaret.

19th Sept: 'dOCUMENTA (13) Notebook Series '100 Notes – 100 Thoughts', Discussion: Chus Martinez, Yannis Stavrakakis.

19th and 20th Sept: Performance ' Re – immersion', Yasmine Eid – Sabbagh, Venue: SMCA.

Parallel programme:

18th – 30th Sept: Exhibitions 'The Jews in Thessaloniki. Indelible marks in space', Production: Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki and Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, Venue: Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki.

18th Sept – 18th Dec: Exhibition 'Russian Avant-Garde and the Synthesis of the Arts, Selected Themes From the Costakis Collection', Production: SMCA, Venue: SMCA.

18th Sept: Exhibition 'Brain Models and Drawings by Jean Fabre', Production: SMCA, Venue: Thessaloniki Concert Hall.

18th Sept – 8th Jan 2012: Exhibition 'Roaming Images. Crossroads of Greek and Arab Culture Through the Eyes of Contemporary Artists', Production: Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Venue: Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art.

19th – 25th Sept: Thessaloniki Performance Festival.

19th Sept – 30th Sept: Guest of Honour: ORLAN, Screenings, Venue: Thessaloniki Concert Hall - 19th Sept: Presentation – Discussion, Venue: Thessaloniki Concert Hall.

Oct 2011 – Jan 2012: Exhibition 'Byzantium and the Arabs', Production: Museum of Byzantine Culture, Venue: Museum of Byzantine Culture.

4th Nov 2011 – 28th Jan 2012: Exhibition 'Pieces and Fragments From Fustat, Islamic Art From Egypt, 8th – 14th Century', Production: Teloglion Foundation of Arts in collaboration with Benaki Museum, Athens, Venue: Teloglion Foundation of Arts.

18th Sept – 7th Oct: International Young Artists' Workshop 'Domino' (workshop), Venue: ex military camp 'Pavlos Melas'.

7th Oct – 7th Nov: International Young Artists' Workshop 'Domino' (exhibition), Venue: ex military camp 'Pavlos Melas'.

3rd Dec: Symposium: *Meeting of the Mediterranean Cultural Parliament.* Museum of Byzantine Culture. Presentations by Michelangelo Pistoletto (President of the Mediterranean Cultural Parliament), Rasheed Araeen (artist and writer), Gennaro Migliore (Head of Communication and Cultural affairs for Sinistra Ecologia e Libertá), and Dr Byson Pissalidis (pecialising in Intercultural Communication and Multicultural Management and former Director of the Centre of Intercultural Communication and Logos).

Guest Events:

22nd Sept – 15th Dec: Exhibition 'Reference, Representation', Curated by: Vassilis Vassilakakis, Christos Venetis, Vangelis Gokas and Kostas Christopoulos, Venue: Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki.

18th Sept – 3rd Nov: Exhibition 'Facing Mirrors', Curated by: Vangelis Ioakimidis and Alexandra Athanasiadou, Venue: Thessaloniki Museum of Photography.

The International Young Artists' Workshops:

Thessaloniki Biennale 1

Dates: 7th – 20th May 2007 (workshop)

22nd May – 20th July 2007 (exhibition)

Venue: An empty shopping mall provided by the Municipality of Thermi (workshop). Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki (exhibition).

Title: *Heterotopias*.

Artists: Aikaterini Gegisian (lives and works in Bristol, UK), Barbad Golshiri (lives and works in Tehran, Iran), Grigoris Goudelias (lives and works in Thessaloniki, Greece), Rania Emmanouilidou (lives and works in Thessaloniki, Greece), Irina Korina (lives and works in Moscow), Christos Kountouras (lives and works in Thessaloniki), Evangelia Basdekis (lives and works in London, UK), Gaston Damag (lives and works in Paris, France), Damian Deroubaix (lives and works in Berlin, Germany) , Theo Prodromidis (lives and works in London, UK), Lynda Sophia Rezaik (lives and works in Saint-Etienne, France), Behrang Samadzadegan (lives and works in Tehran, Iran), Assan Smati (lives and works in Saint – Etienne, France), Mkrtich Tonoyan (lives and works in Yerevan, Armenia), Chryse Tsiota (lives and works in Thessalnoiki, Greece), Ulrika Ferm (lives and works in Vaasa, Finland and Berlin, Germany), Yevgeniy (Zenya) Fiks (lives and works in New York, USA), Wafa Hourani (lives and works in Ramala, Palestine).

Programme:

7/5/2007: (first day) Visit to the Archaeological Museum and the historical centre of Thessaloniki.

8 / 5/ / 2007: (second day) Guided tour in Vergina and Dion[25].

9/5/2007 to 20/5/2007: production of works.

Thessaloniki Biennale 2

Dates: 15-21.06.2009 (workshop)

23.09-25.10.2009 (exhibition)

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[25] Two well-known archaeological sites outside Thessaloniki.

Venue: Vilka Artforum Gallery, *NOESIS Center for Science and Technology Museum (10.02-24.03.2010), an art installation was exhibited at the Mediterranean Cosmos shopping mall (07.10-21.10.2009)*

Title: *Multiculturalism: Same Place-Different Times.*

Artists: Hamra Abbas (lives and works in Boston, USA and Rawalpindi, Pakistan), Sanjar Djabbarov (lives and works in Tashkent, Uzbekistan), Savros Ditsios (lives and works in Thessaloniki, Greece), Glaudio Gobbi (lives and works in Paris, France), Dylan Graham (lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlnds), Jerom Loisy (lives and works in St. Etienne, France), Vasiliki Matta (lives and works in Thessaloniki), Hara Piperidou (lives and works in Athens), Wilfredo Prieto (lives and works in Habana, Cuba and Barcelona, Spain), Janis Rafailidou (Lives and works in the UK), Ng. Bidyut Singha (Bobby) (lives and works in Australia), Yang Yonglang (lives and works in China).

Programme:

15/6/09: an info-kit on Thessaloniki was given to the participating artists. A short tour to the city. Visit to the library of the Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Thermi. Meeting with the director of the SMCA and the Biennale, Ms. Maria Tsantsanoglou.

16/6/09: Visit to the centre of Thessaloniki, tours to the White Tower, the Archaeological Museum, and part of the Biennale.

17/6/09: Tour of a selection of Roman and Byzantine monuments of Thessaloniki: Tower Triangle Genti Koules, Moni Vlatadon, St.Dimitrius, Rotonda, Kamara, Palace, St. Sofia. The rest of the day was free for personal exploration of the city.

18/6/09: Visit to the theatre of the Cultural Centre Thermi and presentation of the municipality's cultural activity. Lecture on the SMCA, TB, the workshop, and the Russian Avant - garde and the Kostakis Collection[26].

Frid.19/6/09: Tour of the Roman Forum and Biennale venues. Lecture on "The diachronic history of Thessaloniki as seen in the downtown area bounded by routes Egnatia, Chalkeon, Metropoliti Gennadius and Cassander".

20/6/09: Day excursion to Vergina (guided tour) and Mount Olympus.

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[26] The Kostakis Collection, which consists of numerous works of the Russian Avant Garde and is one of the most comprehensive collections of the kind, is the main collection of the State Museum of Contemporary Art.

21/6/09: Morning visit to the SMCA "Popova Rotsenko" exhibition. End of the first phase of the workshop.

16-23.09.2009: Production of the artworks. The artists returned to their country of residence, worked on their projects for two months and arrived in Thessaloniki mid-Sept for the preparation of the exhibition.

Thessaloniki Biennale 3:

Dates: 18th Sept – 7th Oct 2011 (Workshop).

7th Oct – 7th Nov 2011 (Exhibition).

Title: 'Domino'.

Venue: ex military Camp 'Pavlos Melas'.

Artists: Dimitris Ameladiotis (Grece), Nadia Ayari (Tunisia), Sirine Fatouh (Lebanon), The Fleetgroup (Georgia), Andre Gonçalves (Portugal), Nader Sadek (Egypt), Elina Ioannou (Cyprus), Nader Sadek (Egypt).

Programme: During the first phase of the workshop, the artists attended a series of guided tours, lectures and visits to museums and other cultural institutions of the city. The production of works took place during the artists' stay in Thessaloniki.

Information on the venues and the cultural organisations involved in the Thessaloniki Biennale

Alatza Imaret: It is a Muslim mosque, built in 1484, which also served as a hospice for the destitute. Its style was influenced by Byzantine architecture. 'Alatza' means colourful and refers to the multi-coloured stones and tiles which covered the mosque. Currently, it serves as an art and culture venue (Paisidou, 2006, 2-3).

Bey Hamam: The Bey Hamam Ottoman Bath was built in 1444 and retained its original use until 1968. The bath consisted of two main but separate sections, each intended for the female and male bathers. The male section is larger and lasher, comprising 3 intricately decorated rooms. Bey Hamam is situated in the centre of Thessaloniki and is a prominent Ottoman monument - the oldest in the city, dating back to the 15th century, and the biggest surviving one in the country - attesting to the

city's multicultural past. The building served as public baths until recently, 1968, but in 1972 came under the Greek Ministry of Culture. Ever since, it has been managed by the 9th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities[27], has been open to visitors and tourists and has served as a venue for cultural and art exhibitions, given for free to the cultural organisations and the museums of the city to hold their events (Paisidou, 2006, 4-5).

Bazaar Hamam: Also known as Jachounti Hamam, it is situated in the former Jew area. One of the 76 in total Ottoman public baths that remain in Greece, Bazaar Hamam was built in the first half of the 16th century and retained its original use until the early 20th century. Situated right in the heart of the modern open-air market, it had been incorporated to it for the largest part of the 20th century. Currently, it belongs to the Municipality of Thessaloniki and is occasionally used as an exhibition venue (Paisidou, 2006, 7).

Bezesteni: A covered Ottoman market, built in 1455 - 1459, consists of six separate spaces, has four entrances and bears six leaded domes. Currently, it is still in use, housing small, textile and jewellery shops (Paisidou, 2006, 9).

Yeni Djami: It is a two store building, of the eclectic architectural style. It was designed by the Italian architect Vitaliano Poselli and built in 1902. It was initially used by the so- called Donmehs (Jews that convert to Islam). This part of population was sent to exile in 1924 and the building housed the Archaeological Museum until 1968, when the Archeological Museum was moved to its present premises. Currently, it belongs to the Municipality of Thessaloniki and it is used as an art and culture venue.

Eptapyrgio: 'Eptapyrgio' which is Greek means seven towers is part of the city's byzantine fortification walls and it is situated inside the acropolis, at the Northern – Eastern edge of the walls. It is also known under the Ottoman name Yedi Kule. In 1890s, a new structure was added to the walls and started to serve as a prison, where, among others, political prisoners were also kept during the dictatorship of Ioannis

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[27]Archaeological Ephorates are the local departments of Antiquities of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture.

Metaxas (1936– 1940) and the military junta of 1967 – 1974 as well as Greek Independence fighters during the Nazi occupation (1941 – 1945). In 1989, the prison was transferred and the building was attached to the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou and Tourta, 1997, 24-26).

Casa Bianca: Casa Bianca, a sample of the eclectic architectural style in Thessaloniki with Art – Nouveau elements, was designed by Piero Arrigoni and built in 1912. It belonged to Dino Fernadez – Diaz, a wealthy and prominent member of the city's Jewish community. In 1990, Casa Bianca became part of the Municipality of Thessaloniki and has, since, been extensively restored (Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2012).

SMCA, Moni Lazariston: The name 'Moni Lazariston', which currently houses the SMCA, actually means Monastery of monks of Saint Lazare. The monastery's history dates back to the mid 19th century, when catholic monks of Saint Paul Vincent – better known through their headquarters in the church of Saint – Lazare settled down to Thessaloniki with the aim to spread Catholicism, especially among the Bulgarian habitants of Thessaloniki. In 1886 a complex consisting of several buildings was erected and its various uses reflect the turbulent historical events which took place in the area. The building served as the base of the monks, as well as school for the Bulgarian Catholic monks and priests up to 1913, when it was closed. In 1916, it was used by the French army as a hospital, in 1917, a large number of the people who were left homeless due to the great fire of the same year found shelter in the premises of Moni Lazariston. In 1922 refugees from Minor Asia arrived in Thessaloniki. Amongst them there were some Catholics, mainly Armenian, who settled down in Moni Lazariston. By 1930, the building housed approximately 500 people. During the Nazi Occupation, the building was commandeered and during the Greek civil severely damaged. After the end of the civil war Moni Lazariston was inhabited by 10 families, some of which Catholics, and also housed a small catholic chapel. Due to the big earthquake that took place in 1978, the building was severely damaged and evacuated. In 1980 it was acknowledged as Heritage site and was eventually bought by the Greek government and was renowned as the Cultural Centre of West Thessaloniki in 1983 (as the celebration the 2300 years of the city's

history. The building was fully restored under the auspices of the organisation for Thessaloniki European Capital of Culture 1997 and inaugurated the same year.

In 1998 the Non - profit organization of Moni Lazariston was founded. Today, the complex accommodates five cultural organizations, considered to be amongst the most significant ones in Thessalonica: the National Theatre of Northern Greece, the State Museum of Contemporary Art – the organizer of the 1st Thessaloniki Biennale - The Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra, the Cultural Centre of Thessaloniki and the Drama School of the National Theatre. Moni Lazariston also organizes and hosts an annual cultural festival that bears its name. It was in 1992 that Moni Lazariston was used for the first time to host a concert of Greek contemporary music and this was slowly developed into the Moni Lazariston Festival (State Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008c).

SMCA: In 1997, when Thessaloniki was designated as European Capital of Culture, Evaggelos Venizelos¸ Minister of Culture at the time, passed a law in the Greek Parliament for the museum's foundation. The museum was housed in Moni Lazariston and in 2000 acquired the Costakis Collection, a collection of Russian avant-garde art of the three first decades of the 20th century, comprising 1,275 works of art. The collection cost 41.7 million Euros. SMCA is supervised by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports (State Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008c).

Pier 1, Port: (Warehouse C, Warehouse D, Warehouse 13, Warehouse B1 – Centre of Contemporary Art, Old Ice Chambers, Old Pump House and Container). When Thessaloniki was designated as the Cultural Capital of Europe in 1997, a substantial part of the funds provided were used for the regeneration of Pier 1 of Thessaloniki's Port. The area was designated mainly for cultural activities, and an effort was made to retain the architectural character of the old warehouses, the Ice Chambers and the Pumping Station. The warehouses on Pier 1 were turned into cultural venues, housing the Thessaloniki Cinema Museum, the Photography Museum, the Centre of Contemporary Art (Warehouse B1). Warehouses C and D serve as exhibition, concert and social events venues. Some of the events organised by the Thessaloniki Film Festival are hosted in Pier 1 as well as other cultural activities. Also, 'Pier', a cultural periodical publication, promotes the program of the 3 museums based there

and the art and culture activities taking place at the port's premises (Thessaloniki Port Authority, 2014).

Archaeological Museum: The Ephorate of Antiquities was amongst the first public services to be founded when Thessaloniki was incorporated in the Greek Modern State in 1912, with no premises, however. From 1925 to 1962, the Archaeological Museum was housed in Yeni Djami. Since 1962, it has been in its present central location, next to the International Fair grounds. The Archaeological Museum was designed by Patroklos Karantinos, a prominent figure of modern style in Greek architecture. During the six decades of its operation, the museum was expanded and renovated and its permanent collection has been re-designed and re-exhibited. Its collections consist of artefacts dating from prehistoric times to the 4th century AD and include pottery, mosaics, wall-paintings, sculpture, metalwork and coins. The material was found during excavations not only in Thessaloniki but in numerous locations in Macedonia and Thrace. The museum has been very active in organising temporary and travelling exhibitions as well as publishing a comprehensive annual review of the excavation and overall archaeological activity in Macedonia and Thrace since 1988 (Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, 2013).

Teloglion Foundation of Arts - AUth: Teloglion Art Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 1972 when, Aliki Telloglou and her husband Nestor Teloglou, donated their art collection and their property to the Aristotle University. They were both of Minor Asia origin, their families having settled in Thessaloniki initially as refugees. A team of architects won the 1982 competition for designing the building that would house Teloglion (Konstantakatou, Lamprou, Marda, Moraiti) and implemented a modern design. The building was inaugurated in 1999 and is situated very centrally and very close to the University campus. It is affiliated to the Aristotle University; the President of the Board of members, Ioannis Mylopoulos, is the Rector of Aristotle University (AUTH), and its board members are Professors in AUTH. Teloglous' art collection which formed the foundation's core, was soon enriched by other donations and today it comprises a sample of Greek art of the 19th and 20th centuries, approximately up to 1970, including mainly paintings and prints (Teloglion Foundation of Art, 2014).

Museum of Byzantine Culture: Although, the creation of a central Byzantine Museum was decided upon as early as 1913, a year after the city's independence of the Ottoman Empire and its incorporation into the Greek Modern State, the Museum was not founded until 1989. The building was not completed until 1993 and the museum was inaugurated in 1994. The same year, the wealth of byzantine artefacts from the city, which had been transported to the Byzantine Museum in Athens in 1916, returned to Thessaloniki's museum and constituted its opening exhibition. The architect, Kyriakos Krokos was responsible for designing the museum, combining a modernist approach with elements from the Greek architectural heritage. In 2001, the museum building was declared a historically listed monument, and a wok of art, and in 2005 the museum was awarded the Council of Europe Museum Prize. There are 2,900 artefacts on display as part of the museum's main collection, which date from $3^{rd} - 4^{th}$ Century AD to 19th century, and include frescoes, mosaics, icons, marble architectural members, integrally detached frescoed early Christian burials, valuable ecclesiastic utensils, objects of personal ornament, functional objects of everyday use, attesting to the organisation of religious and social life Byzantium, the artistic and intellectual production as well as private and everyday life. The museum has been active in terms of organising temporary exhibitions, educational programmes and publishing annually the Museum of Byzantine Culture Journal since 1994 (Museum of Byzantine Culture, 2012).

Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art (MMCA): The museum started as a cultural association under the name Macedonia Centre of Contemporary Art, Architecture and Industrial Design, established in 1979 in Thessaloniki. In 1993, the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art was founded. Alexander Iolas' donation of 47 art works by Greek and international artists of the 1960s and 1970s constituted the core of the museum's collection, which gradually expanded through donations of artworks by artists and collectors, and focuses on contemporary art. MMCA has relied primarily on private sponsorship but has also received support from the Greek state as well. The museum's 1999 – 2002 expansion was partly funded by the Thessaloniki European Cultural Capital '97 organisation, the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) via the European Investment Bank as well as the Hellenic Ministries of Finance and Culture. The Greek government has also supported the museum through

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the 3rd CSF Operational Programme 'Culture 2000 – 2008' and the 'Information Society' programme (Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, 2012).

Thessaloniki Museum of Photography: The museum was officially founded in 1997, the year that Thessaloniki was the Cultural Capital of Europe, and was housed in Warehouse A, Pier 1, Thessaloniki Port in 2001. The museum received funding from the 3rd CSF, Operational Programme 'Culture' to ameliorate its exhibition space, as well as from the European Union Programme 'Information Society', for the digitisation of its material. It is the only state-run museum, supervised by the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports, which is dedicated to photography. Its collection consists of approximately 2,000 photographic works from the 1970s onwards. Form 1998 to 2008, the museum organised 'Photosynkyria', an annual international festival dedicated to photography. In 2008, 'Photosynkyria' developed into 'Photobiennale', a biannual event organised by the museum and co -funded by the Greek state and the EU's 2007-2013 Community Support Framework (Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, 2013).

Society for Macedonian Studies: The society was founded in 1939 with the aim to collect, document and preserve material related to the region of Macedonia, Greece and encourage the study and publication of its history and culture. Today, the society comprises a library of 70,000 books which focus on the history of art, culture and language of the region of Macedonia and Thrace. It also published 230 books and continues to publish two annual journals which promote the research and study of Macedonia, Greece, as well as organising international conferences with a similar scope (Society for Macedonian Studies, 2012).

Participating artists: Country of origin and country of residence.

Artists, who participated in the main programme of the three editions of the Thessaloniki Biennale, are counted and grouped according to the region of their origin and the region of their residence at the time each edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale took place. The decision as to which countries should be included in each geographical category, as well as the formulation of those categories, is essentially underpinned by the question of what the so-called 'West' involves, as well as

distinctions such as 'East', 'Middle East', 'Latin America' and so on. Moreover, as regards Greek artists, in particular, their classification itself raises questions about Greece's cultural and geo-political identity and positioning in relation to the West, the East and the Mediterranean. In my classification, Greek artists are excluded from the group of Western Europe and form an independent group for two reasons: first, because the art event takes place in Greece and is organised by Greek institutions, therefore, it would be interesting to examine how the local artistic scene and production are addressed; secondly, because Greek artists are marginalised to an extent in art institutions and exhibitions in Western Europe, and Greece could be considered what Petersen addresses as 'peripheral art scenes of the West' (Petersen, 2012, 202).

This thesis classifies the artists on the basis of geographical criteria out of necessity, although it takes into consideration that geographical distinctions are underpinned by cultural assumptions, and are, often, tentative (Bôas, 2012). Moreover, it should be noted that, although beyond the breadth of this project, the discussion regarding issues of inclusion and exclusion of artists in contemporary art exhibitions, apart from geographical criteria (origin and location) should also address the artists' education, mobility and travels abroad, previous participation in biennials, and other large-scale international exhibitions, solo exhibitions, and so on, which in turn, pertain to issues of class, class barriers, and inequality of wealth and opportunity.

THESSSALONIKI BIENNALE 1 (2007): 83 artists in the main programme

Geographical area of origin

Greece: 11

Balkan Countries (Serbia, FYROM, Bulgaria): 3

Western Europe (Switzerland, Germany, UK, Denmark, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Portugal, France): 20

North America (USA): 3

Post Soviet States (Armenia, Chechnya, Russia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Tajikistan): 21

Middle East (Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Iran): 7

Northern Africa (Morocco, Egypt, Algeria): 6

Sub-Saharan Africa (Angola, South Africa, Cameroun): 5

The Caribbean (Martinique): 1

Latin America (Argentina, Colombia): 3

Asia (Pakistan, Turkey): 3

Geographical area of residence at the time of Thessaloniki Biennale 1

Greece: 12 (Lydia Dambassina lives in both France and Greece).

Balkan Countries (Serbia, FYROM, Bulgaria): 3

Western Europe (Switzerland, France, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Portugal, France, UK): 33 (Maryan Jafri lives both in New York and Copenhagen but was counted only for Caopenhagen, Andrei Roiter from Russia lives both in New York and Amsterdam).

North America (USA): 2.

Post Soviet States (Russia, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Georgia): 14 (Yuri Albert lives in both Russia and Germany, Georgii Litichevskii from Ukraine lives in Russia and Germany and was counted for Russia, Ira Waldon from russia lives in both Russia and Paris, and was counted for Russia, Vadim Zacharov lives both in Germany and Russia, and was counted for Russia).

Middle East (Palestine, Lebanon, Iran): 5 (Taysir Batniji lives in both France and Palestine).

North Africa (Egypt): 3

Sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa): 3

Latin America (Argentina, Colombia): 3 (Francois Boucher lines in both Berlin and Bogota).

Asia (Turkey): 1

THESSALONIKI BIENNALE 2 (2009): 56 participations in the main programme/91 individual artists[28].

Geographical area of origin:

Greece: 6 participations – 18 artists.

Balkan Countries: 0

Western Europe (France, UK, Italy, Denmark): 9 participations – 11 artists.

North America (USA): 2 participations – 3 artists.

Post Soviet States (Russia, Kyrgystan, Ukraine, Armenia): 5 participations – 15 artists.

Middle East (Iran, Cyprus): 3 participations – 3 artists.

Central Europe (Romania): 1 participation – 1 artist.

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[28] Some works were by artistic groups; for the purposes of this research artists were counted individually, even when they formed artistic groups.

Africa (South Africa, Cameroun, Senegal, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt): 8 participations – 16 artists.

Latin America (Cuba, Paraguay, Venezuela, Argentine, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Chile):16 participations – 17 artists.

Asia (China, Philippines, India): 6 participations – 7 artists

<u>Geographical area of residence at the time of the Thessaloniki Biennale 2 (the figures below concern individual artists, 91 in total):</u>

Greece: 18

Balkan Countries: 1

Western Europe (France, UK, Italy, Denmark): 19

North America (USA): 3

Post Soviet States (Russia, Kyrgystan, Ukraine, Armenia): 13 (one lives both in Armenia and France)

Middle East (Iran, Cyprus): 2

Africa: 11 in Africa (3 in European countries, 2 reside both in their respective home-countries in Africa as well in one European country).

Latin America (Cuba, Paraguay, Venezuela, Argentine, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Chile): 13 (two more live both in Mexico and the UK and the USA respectively).

Asia: 3 (2 more live in both China and the UK).

THESSALONIKI BIENNALE 3 (2011): 85 artists in total[29].

Geographical area of origin:

Greece: 26

Balkan Countries: 0

Western Europe: 26

North America: 5

Post Soviet States: 1

Middle East: 13

Northern Africa, including Egypt: 6

Sub-Saharan Africa: 1

Latin America: 1

Asia: 5

Geographical area of residence at the time of the Thessaloniki Biennale 3:

Costantin Xenakis (Greece-Greece/France, Manfredi Beninati (Italy – Italy/USA), Abu Ali (Spain – Morocco/Spain), Jean-Marc Rochette (France-France/Germany), Anton Vidokle (Russia-New York/Berlin), Mounira Al Sol (Lebanon-Lebanon /Netherlands), Mounir Fatmi (Morocco-France/Morocco), Julieta Aranda (Mexico – Germany/USA).

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[29] Slavs and Tartars did not mention their individual members nor their country of origin or their basis. Therefore they could not be classified in groups according to country of origin or residence.

Greece: 16

Balkan Countries: 0

Western Europe (Germany, Italy, France, UK, Iceland, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain): 33

Central Europe (Czech Republic): 1

North America (USA): 8

Post Soviet States (Georgia): 1

Middle East (Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, United Arab Emirates): 9

Northern Africa, including Egypt (Morocco, Egypt): 3

Sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa): 1

Latin America (Mexico): 1

Asia (Turkey, Pakistan): 3

<u>**Thessaloniki Biennale 2. Main Programme: Floor maps.**</u>

The designs were drawn by the researcher based on the venues actual floor maps provided by the State Museum of Contemporary Art. Also, the floor plan of Bey Hamam is courtesy of the State Museum of Contemporary Art.

Warehouse C – Ground Floor
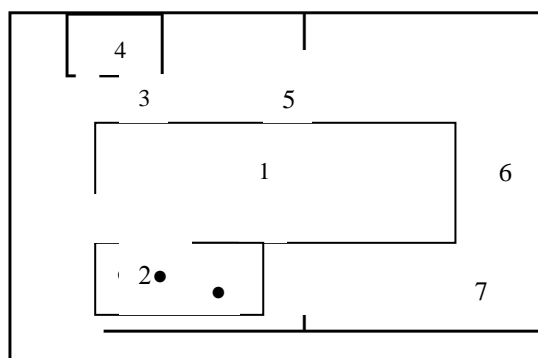
1. Hew Locke, 'Kingdom of the Blind', Mixed Media, size figures, 213 to 402 cm high, Commissioned by Iniva (11 figures suspended on the walls and placed along the perimeter of the enclosed space), 2008

2. Despina Meimaroglou, Installation comprising of 9 large coloured prints, 8 of which mounted on canvases, a printed text on the installation floor and a video projection in a separate dark space: 'Till Death Do Us Apart' (1994, Xerox and printing inks on brown paper, 115 x 144,5 cm), 'Deposition' (1993, Xerox and printing inks on brown paper mounted on canvas, 110 x 120 cm), Witness for the Prosecution (2009, Continuous, six frames video projection).

3. Emeka Okereke, video projection documenting the process of creation and display of his series of photographs: 'Bayamyo – Photography and the Public Space', approximately 11 black and white photographs, printed on vinyl, 140 x 170 cm, 2008.

4. Jose Alejandro Restrepo, 'Viacrucis', video, approximately 20 minutes, 2004

5. Sheng Qi, a series of large scale paintings, acrylic on canvas: 'Anti terroristic', 100 x 120 cm, 2008 / 'Red Army and Me', 300 x 400 cm, 2007 / Tao Jing', 120 x 100 cm, 2008 / 'Baby', 200 x 150 cm, 'Clear Square', 200 x 150 cm, 2008, 'Hi', 110 x 130 cm, 2009

6. Mario Pinto, 'Ports of Convergence: Angola and the departure of an African Legacy', series of 12 black and white photographs.

7. Qiu Anxiong, 'The new Book of Mountains and Seas Part 1', video installation, approximately 30 min, 2006

Warehouse C – First Floor

1	2	3	4	5	6		7a	7b
		balcony				8		
16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	
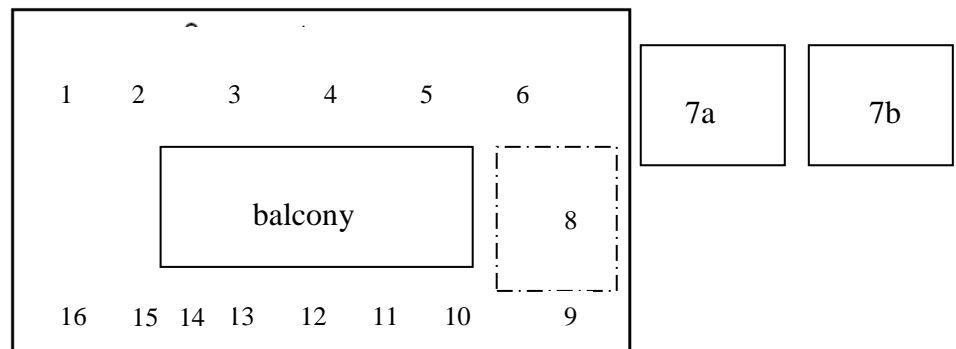
1. Khaled Hafez, 'The Third Vision, 7 – minute video, stills, 2008

2. Sheela Gowda, 'Crime Fiction', Diptych, Inkjet print on paper, glass beads, 40 x 55, 25 cm and 40 x 50,5 cm, 2008

3. Kader Attia, 'Halam Tawaaf', Installation with beer cans, variable dimensions, 2008

4. Samba Fall, 'Alphabet', installation made up of design particles and video / animation installation, 700 cm x 40 cm, 2008

5. Kader Attia, 'Rochers Carres', photographs, 80 x 100 cm, 2009

6. Mircea Cantor, 'Stranieri (The Strangers)', installation with bread, knives, salt and hand –made wooden table, 640cm x 80 cm, 2008

7a. 'Chto Delat?' Group, video installatin and newspaper collage, 2009

7b. 'Chto Delat?' Group, 'Perestroika – Songspiel, The Victory over the Coup', video, 2009

8. Megan and Murray McMillan, 'The Listening Array', video, 2008

9. Lilibeth Cuence -Rasmussen, 'Never Mind Pollock', performance and installation, 2009

10.Sheela Gowda, 'Line Up', installation, concrete, wood, inkjet print on paper, variable size, 2008

11. Sheela Gowda, 'Loss', 6 photographs, Inkjet print on paper, watercolour, various dimensions, 2008

12. Maria Loizidou, 'La dentelliere', paper, wire mesh, 2,5 x 1,3 x 1,2 m, 2009

13. Giorgos Divaris, 'Arrogance / Looking from above 2', installation (metal table with a photograph printed on its surface and print on a cloth banner), 2009

14. Alexandre Arrechea, 'Home', two watercolours on paper, 2008

15. Alexandre Arrechea, 'White Corner', installation-video projection, 2006

16. Mircea Cantor, 'Airplanes and Angels', Hand woven wool carpet, 198 x 300 cm, 2008

Warehouse 13
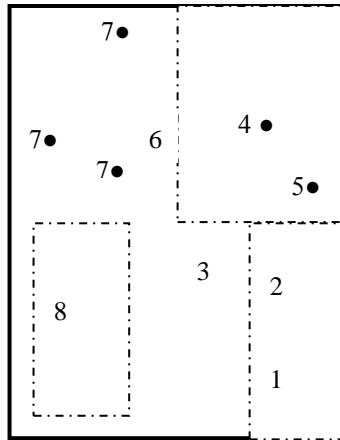
1. Azat Sargsyan, 'Public Constructivism', 5 photos, 80 x 60 cm, 2008

2. Jens Haaning, 'Albanian Pigeons, Intervention, 2009

3. Magdalena Jitrik, 20 paintings (the titles mentioned in the exhibition catalogue: 'Bund', 'Jean Pierre Leaud y Francois Truffaut', 'Renate Laske 1930', 'Pair', 'Marriane Lasker 1930', Reveca Jitrik', 'Back Cross', 'Detras de esas mentiras impudicas hay algo muy serio organizado', 'Two Circles', 'Letter', 'Chasqui', 'Entrance') oil in canvas, various dimensions, 1997-2007

4. Bright Eke, 'Shield' Sculpture installation, water sachet, 2006

5. Bright Eke, video showing some of the artist's work exhibited elsewhere. It include stills from the 'Shield' and the installation entitled 'Confluenece' (sculpture installation, plastic water bottles, variable size), 2009

6. Guillermo Gómez – Pena, 'The Chi- Canarian Expo Series', 7 photographs, 142 x 103 cm, 2006

7.Paolo Chiasera, 'Forget the Heroes', multimedia installation (15 drawings, video, wood, clay), variable dimensions, 2007/2008

8. Aposteriori 'Forms and Topographies: African Cityscape in Flux', video series. It includes: Bouchra Khalili, 'Mapping Journey # 2', France', 2008 – Achilleka Komguem, 'Precarite, Cameroun', 2006 – Luc Fosther Diop, 'Around and Around, Cameroun', 2005 – Guy Bertrand Wouete Lotchouang, 'Mirroir, cameroun', 2005, also videos by Emido Josine, Dicko Saidou, Nicene Kossentini, Moshekw Langa, Piniang, Essombe2Sawa.

Old Ice Chambers

11	10 9	6 5	4	1

|	8	7	3	2

Main entrance
←

↑

Back
Side
Entrance
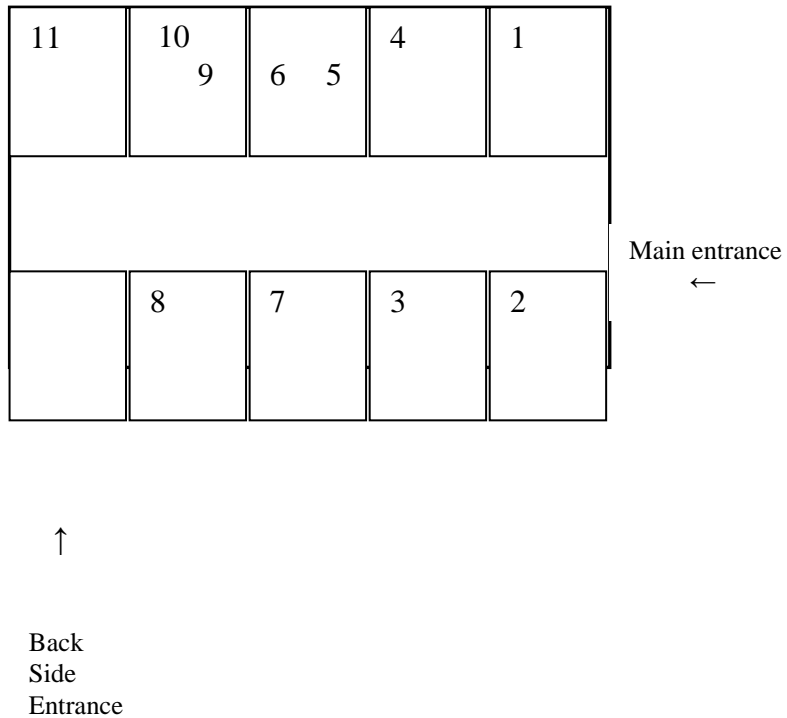
1. Mark Boulos, 'All that is solid melts into air', video, 15 min, 2008

2. Sonia Boyce, 'Crop Over', Double screen video installation, 2007

3. S. Biachini, 'What's more with many?', interactive installation, 2006

4. Jodi Bieber, 'Las Cans series', photographs, 65 x 65 cm each, 2003

5. Gulnara Kasmalieva and Muratbek Djumaliev, 'A new ilk road: Algorithm of survival and hope', 5 channel video installation with photographs, 2007

6. Before Light, 'I see no sea', light installation, variable dimensions, 2008

7. Carlos Cruz Diez, 'Chromosaturation', installation (1965 – 2009)

8. Marigo Kassi, Vally Nomidou, Spyridoula Politi, Mary Christea, 'Indoors is moving out', action, 2008

9. Alla Georgieva, 'Tales of Love, Great and Small', painting installation, 2008 ('Spring is here', oil on canvas, 60 cm diameter – 'French Coffee', oil on canvas, 70

x 110 cm – 'A boat trip', oil on canvas, 70 x 110 cm, 'Guess who is here' oil on canvas, 70 x 110 cm – 'Happy family', oil on canvas, 70 x 110 cm).

10. Hasan Darsi, 'Point Zero, Thessaloniki Series', golden application –Maquette 1 – 2, Installation, 2009

11. Amilcar Packer, Video # 10', 2006 – 'Video # 11', 2008 – 'Video # 14', 2006, 'Circuit', 2006

Bey Hamam
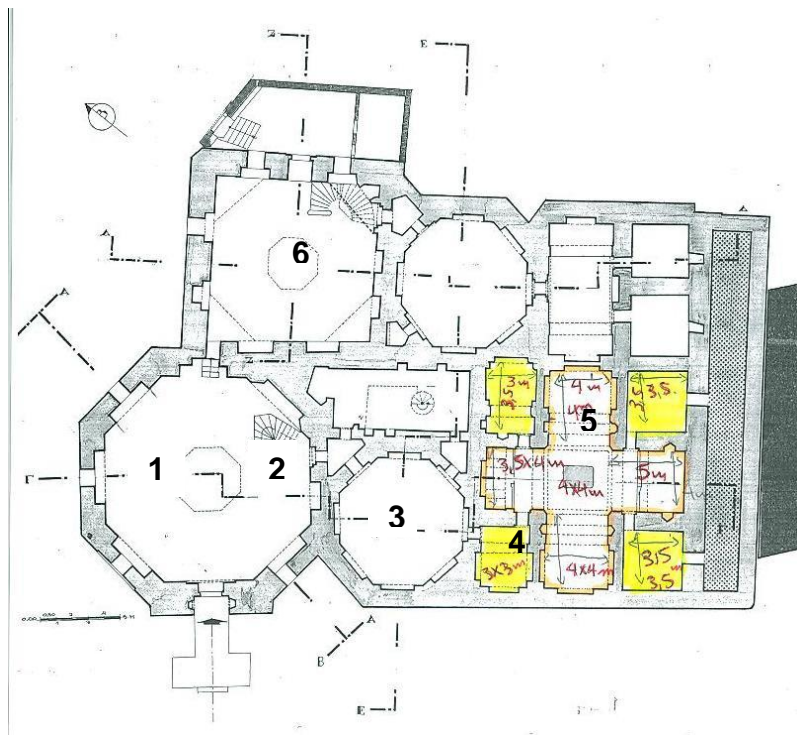
1. Rene Francisco, 'Rosa's House (17 min), Video- documentation, 2003

2. Rene Francisco, Nin's backyard (7 min), Video- documentation, 2005 -2006

3. Melanie Manchot, Dream Collector, 5 channel video installation, 2008

4. Rene Francisco, 'Benita's water', Video-documentation, 18 min, 2008 - 2009

5. Kimsooja, 'Mumbai: A Laundry Field', video installation, 4 projections, 10: 25 min, 2007 - 2008

6. Mary Zygouri, 'The Fattening Cells, Installation – drawings, 2006-2009