

Sensing the Familiar: Opening the Capacity for the Other to Express

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Layers of Visibility

NiMAC/University of Plymouth Artist Residencies 2013-2017

Exhibition

Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre | 19 October 2018 - 12 January 2019

Curators

Liz Wells and Yiannis Toumazis

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Preface

It is with great pleasure that we welcome this publication on the occasion of the exhibition featuring the work of artists from the University of Plymouth who participated in the residency programme of NiMAC.

The programme invites every year artists, researchers, curators and other cultural producers from different countries giving them the opportunity to spend a set period of time away from their country and to devote it to creative thinking, research and study in the Cypriot socio-political and cultural environment. The results of their research are presented in various forms, such as small exhibitions, lectures and participatory workshops.

The programme also encourages participants to explore their practice in another community and to engage creatively in local realities through a meaningful and multilevel cultural exchange, delving deeply into the local culture and understanding the art scene and production of Cyprus.

We believe that the long and extremely creative collaboration with the University of Plymouth is a particularly important moment for NiMAC's residency programme. On the one hand, the excellent quality of the final end result, presented in the exhibition, and, on

the other, the very close relationships that have been developed between the participants and local artists and cultural producers, justify NiMAC's efforts.

Congratulating Liz Wells and Yiannis Toumazis on their initiative, as well as all the participating artists for their work, we express our hope that this will be the beginning of a fruitful collaboration between the two institutions and we are certain that more creative synergies in the future will only be beneficial to the promotion and development of modern art in both Nicosia and Plymouth.

Constantinos Yiorkadjis
Mayor of Nicosia

Demetris Z. Pierides
President of the Pierides Foundation



connective potential of art as negotiator and transgressor of cultural and socio-political semiotics.

NiMAC has been and continues to be innovative and pioneering, providing, along with its exhibition programme, various multifaceted pedagogical activities. Apart from educational programmes, designed to enhance specific exhibitions, the Educational Centre for Children, which is housed in a renovated building of the Old Powerhouse complex and was inaugurated in 2008, offers children and youngsters specialised courses and workshops in Contemporary Art, Engraving, Cinema and the New Media.

NiMAC's Theatropolis, a small theatre and theatre Workshop, which opened its doors in 2016, is housed in a renovated industrial building across the road from the Centre's main premises. It aims to explore the relationship between visual and performing arts and seeks to promote research, experimentation and innovation in both of these fields.

Alongside the exhibitions, NiMAC regularly organises international conferences, round table discussions, screenings, lectures and

presentations with the participation of art professionals from Cyprus and abroad. It is closely associated with the International Association of Photography and Theory (IAPT) and has organised the 3rd and 4th International Symposia of Photography and Theory. Moreover, it has established annual programmes, such as *Open Call* and *Project Room*, which provide artists with the opportunity to execute large-scale installations or carry out research in experimental projects.

Since 2012, the Centre has been operating a Residency Programme for artists, scholars and cultural managers. As part of this programme an annual collaboration with the University of Plymouth in the United Kingdom has been established. NiMAC's residency also invites artists from the southeastern Mediterranean region. In addition, it initiated residency exchanges between Nicosia and Alexandria and Nicosia and Tel Aviv. The programme enables participants to spend a set period of time (usually one month) away from their country and to devote it to creative thinking, research and study in the Cypriot socio-political and cultural environment. The results of their research are presented in various forms, such as small exhibitions, lectures and participatory workshops.

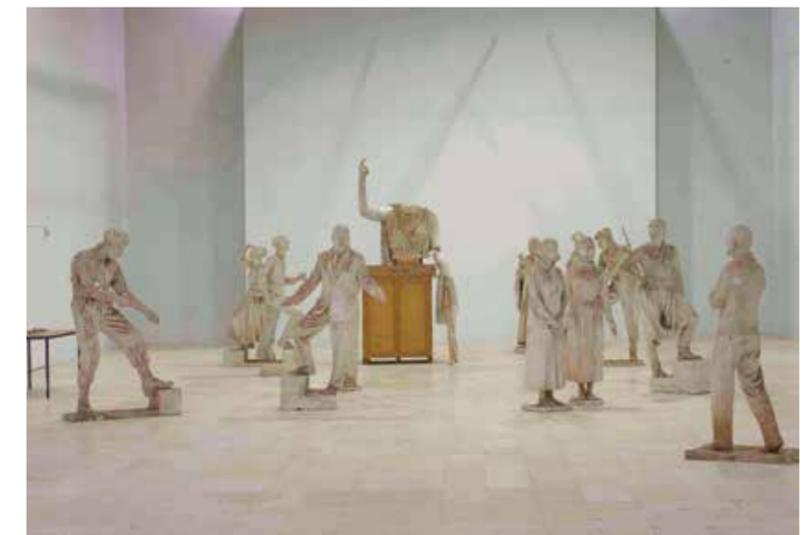


The building complex of NiMAC also houses the Demetrios Z. Pierides History of Art Library that features an extensive collection of books and rare art publications, such as the full series of *Cahiers d'Art*, *Minotaure* and *Flash Art*.

Through the Pierides Foundation, NiMAC has also initiated two major European cultural programmes: *Crossings: Movements of People, Movement of Cultures – Changes in the Mediterranean from Ancient to Modern Times* (2004-2007) and *Suspended Spaces* (2009-2011).

NiMAC is also the organiser of the Nicosia Pop Up Festival, which was recently awarded in Wiesbaden the EFFE label by the European Festivals Association, as one of the remarkable festivals of Europe. The major objective of the festival is to gather in the historical centre of Nicosia whatever innovative, inventive and creative exists today in the fields of entrepreneurship, entertainment and culture. Through the organisation of the festival, NiMAC aims at the revitalisation and revival of the Old Town of Nicosia by boosting entrepreneurship, either through commercial activity or through innovation, and the emergence of new talents through creation.

Yiannis Toumazis | Director of NiMAC
www.nimac.org.cy
www.facebook.com/kentrotehnon



Layers of Visibility

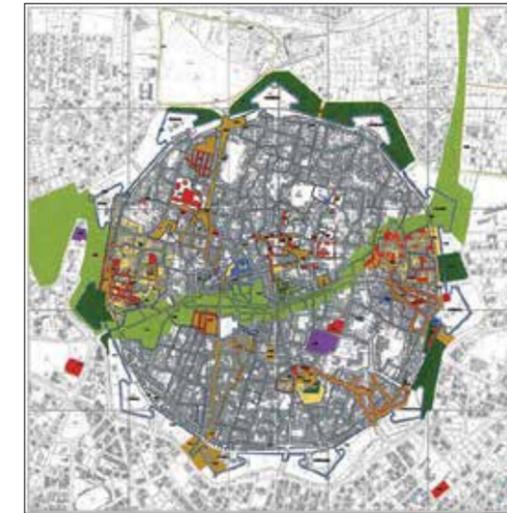
Curators

Liz Wells | Professor in Photographic Culture, University of Plymouth, UK

Yiannis Toumazis | Director, Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre, Cyprus

Cyprus appears in many guises. It is an island. A European island, albeit divided, which is closer to the Middle East than to the heart of Europe.

Nicosia is currently the only European capital city divided by a wall, the buffer zone, monitored by United Nations troops since 1964. Whilst simultaneously Oriental and Hellenic, legacies of British colonisation are also evident. Place is constituted through geography, history, memories and narratives that reflect cultural currencies, familial and personal lived experience. For those who live there, Cyprus is a land of complex tensions.



Nicosia Master Plan, Nicosia Old City
The New Vision for the Core of Nicosia

For many, Cyprus is better known as a holiday destination, whether sun, sand and Aphrodite's rock in the south, or hill-walking in the north, a region under development with new hotels, casinos and clubs signifying further expanses of pleasure realms. The economy is primarily centred on tourism and on agricultural production and export. Yet sandy inland areas, marked by small-scale industrial enterprise, suggest different stories and trajectories. For outsiders there is very much more to be discovered than that which first meets the eye.

Between 2013 and 2017, artists associated with the University of Plymouth, UK, responded to Cyprus through residencies at Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre. The works included in the exhibition and publication indicate a range of different responses to the island and to the complex layers of Cypriot culture, a place where historically the Hellenic and the Islamic were variously entangled and, along with legacies of British colonialism, remain marked now.

October 2018

“One can approach the horizon, which will always be faraway. One cannot cross it, but one can move it. It is therefore a spatial border, but not a temporal one. Each horizon bears new horizons. They are borders of delineation, but they are only temporary.”

Vanessa Joan Müller, *Flaka Haliti, Speculating on the Blue*. 2015. Sternberg Press

‘Shadow Drawings’, Olive trees, Nicosia, 26 cyanotypes unique images on paper | 50cm x 26.5cm, unframed. Full block, 1m x 344.5cm
In the path of the Winter River, B/W silver prints | 40.6cm x 50.8cm, unframed
Eucalyptus leaves, Pedieos River, Objectographs, B/W silver prints | 30.5cm x 49.6cm, Perspex boxes
Blue Notes/Green Line, Nicosia, 47 cyanotypes unique images on paper | various sizes, linear format, unframed

‘Shadow Drawings’, Olive trees, Nicosia

“A simple and elegant process, involving two chemical compounds: ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferrocyanide. The paper is then dried in the dark and is ready to be placed under a negative (to make a print) or a flat object (to make a photogram) and exposed to the rays of the sun. The only other chemical compound involved is one that is often taken for granted: water. Simply washing the exposed cyanotype brings out the rich blue colour and makes the print permanent.”¹

Anna Atkins, 1843

These works were developed as a response to the contested old city of Nicosia, known as Lefkōsia by the Greek Cypriots and Lefkoşa by the Turkish Cypriots. Today the sixteenth century Venetian walls encompass a city that exists in two halves, separated by an empty space; a void, known as the Green Line, patrolled by United Nations peacekeeping forces (UNFICYP). As a visitor, first to the south of the city, then passing through a border control to the north, the division was difficult to navigate. ‘Paradoxically borders divide at the same time they give contact.’² In the south the tourist maps do not depict the north, and vice versa, giving an incomplete picture of the city. What was once the city centre has become an edge, and Nicosia the capital city that was once in the middle of Cyprus is displaced, to the edge. The Green Line obstructs the flow of movement across the city creating dead ends; in the south narrow streets end abruptly in a barricade of oil drums or in the north there are more permanent metal barriers.

In both the north and south it is prohibited to use a camera to take photographs in the vicinity of the Green Line, signs dominate and leave you in no doubt. I wonder would it be technically compliant to make photographs without a camera? The signs point to one reading, that the use of a camera is prohibited. In my mind there was an ambiguity of the definition of a photograph so I decided to make camera-less photographs, to test what such prints could convey of this city in conflict. Working with the historic photographic process of the cyanotype, also known as a ‘blue print’, the first series of cyanotypes were literally ‘photogenic drawings’ made in olive trees.

It was important to make cyanotypes in both the Turkish and Greek zones of Nicosia. The city’s weather is a shared experience; the same sun shone and the same wind blew on both sides of the Green Line, in both zones. The sun that ripened the olives created the shadows that made the ‘Shadow Drawings’. Whilst watching the light falling on the prepared paper (waiting for the prints to be exposed), the sounds of the city could be heard travelling across the Green Line from one side to the other. Working outside meant there was, inevitably, movement, sometimes the wind, sometimes a draft from a passing car. If there was too much movement the light would leak across the surface and erase the image.



In this unfamiliar and politicised city, I felt most comfortable working in public spaces; parks, car parks and street corners. These were strangely intimate places, nobody paid me or my actions much attention, they would come and go, getting on with their daily life, as if I was invisible, after all, I was an outsider. I wanted to engage with the act of close looking, observing and letting the atmosphere of this extraordinary place record itself.

Each cyanotype was made without a camera but at the same time could be described as a photographic print. Each cyanotype was exposed for minutes rather than fractions of a second, or a blink of the eye, or the snap of a camera shutter; each photograph is



unique, a physical object, they vary, each seems to hold something of the actual experience of duration. The individual acts of making the prints were cumulative, resulting in twenty-six cyanotypes but one work 'Shadow Drawings' of olive trees in Nicosia.

In the gallery, each print is attached to the wall, hanging directly next to another, side by side and in two horizontal lines without gaps. There is no disclosure of where the prints were made; in the north or the south. The intention is for the series of prints to be seen as a whole, one rectangular block as if the images appear to be undulating, shifting without ground. The blue is that of the sky, a moving flag.

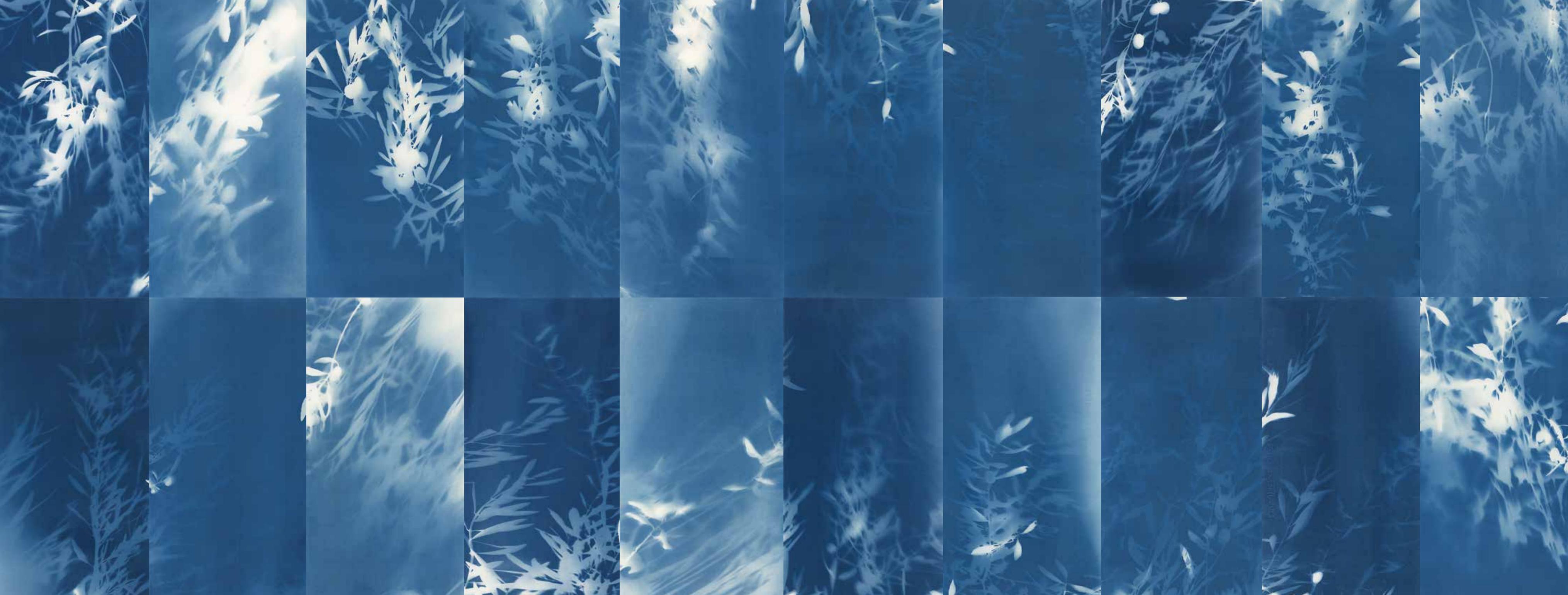


The Cypriot flag (adopted in 1960), has a silhouette of the undivided island with crossed olive branches beneath. A symbol of peace that dates from the 5th century BC. The olive tree is thought to be blessed and the oil from the olive believed to be sacred.

¹ Larry J Schaaf (1985) *Sun Gardens - Victorian Photographs* by Anna Atkins, Aperture publications

² Yiannis Papadakis (2015) 'Nicosia after 1960: A River, A Bridge and a Dead Zone', published in Giovanna Silva (ed) *Foxtrot Gate, Cyprus, No.3*. Mousse Publishing





In the path of the Winter River

*“Places remember events”*³

James Joyce, 1972

I would like to suggest that places do remember events. Photographing structures built by the Venetians drew me from the fortifications of the old city to Venetian bridges in rural settings. Structures with a different purpose, not to keep out invaders but to enable passage, crossing from one side of the river to the other. These bridges, now tourist attractions, are part of a nature trail of the Venetian rule (1487-1571) in Cyprus.

The experience of being based in a country that had been under British Colonial rule was uncomfortable, the British military presence was evident. Travelling to the Troodos mountains it was difficult to ignore the Mount Olympus Radar Station that can be seen from a distance, a large white ball, alien in the landscape. There were other less obvious reminders - the convenience of the British electric plug and the inconvenience of half day closing.

Whilst walking, mostly in the south of the city, I met men of an older generation, some who would have experienced Cyprus under British rule. There seemed to be no animosity, rather the opposite, but there was understandably a strong sense that they felt let down by the British. Conversations turned to recall places they remembered, to landscapes evoked by memories ‘of the most beautiful place in the world... where there were many trees; lemons and oranges... where you could drive from the village down to the sea through a



canopy of trees and you didn’t see the sun...’. These memories were of idyllic places that some felt they could no longer visit as a result of partition. Talking with people evoked a more commonplace ‘everyday’ understanding of how the troubles had impacted on individuals. Through observation and the process of photography I wanted to allow the place and the people to tell their own story. A subjective approach, the personal becoming the subject of the political, these narratives were bound up in a place that I wanted to understand.

Walking out of the old city I found the dry river bed of the Pedieos River, which in medieval times had flowed along a similar path to the Green Line. The river currently flows freely between the north and south. Below ground we see the ‘largest and most successful



project of bi-communal cooperation on the island after 1974 took place in Nicosia. The project involved the co-management of the sewer system for the city as a whole.’⁴

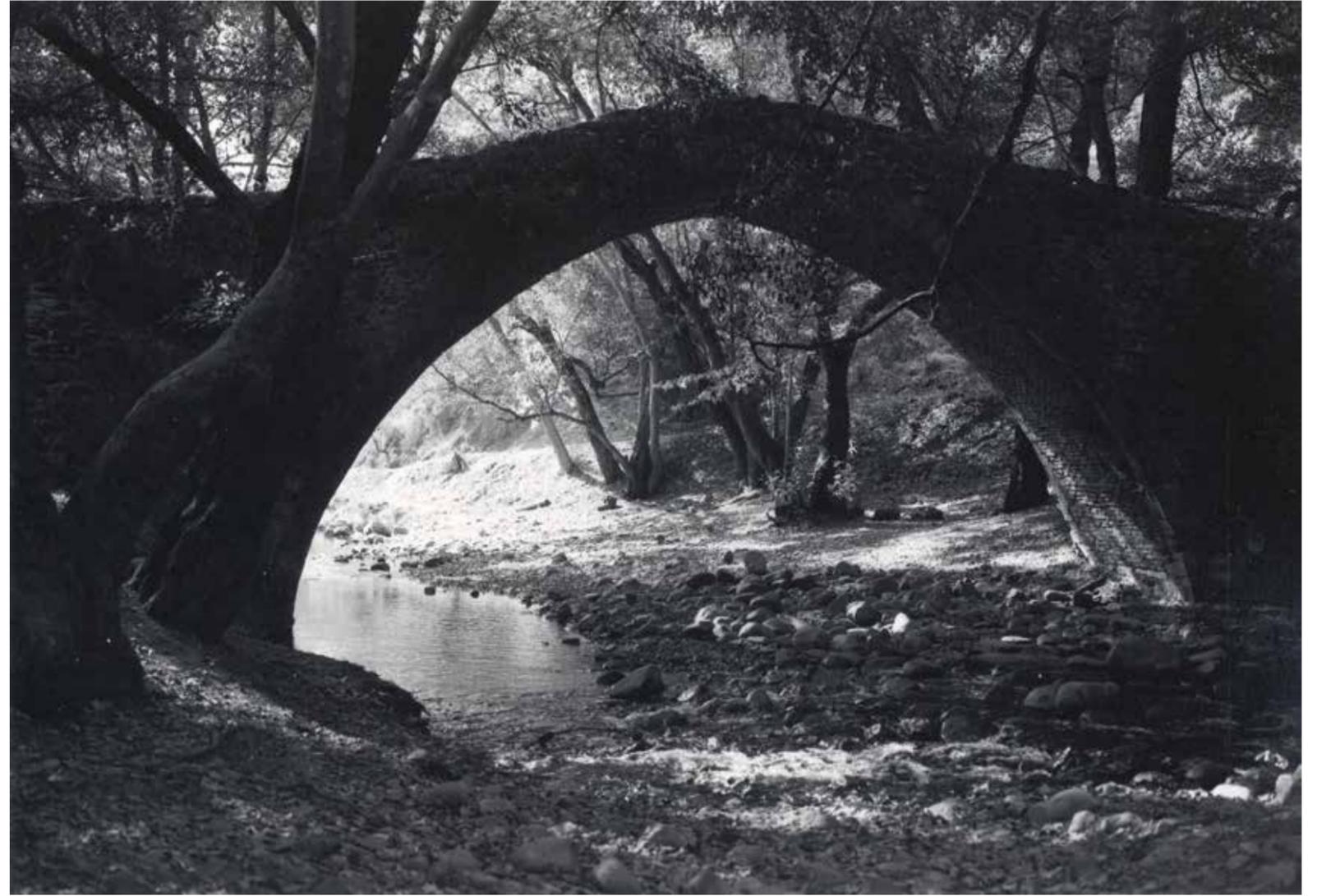
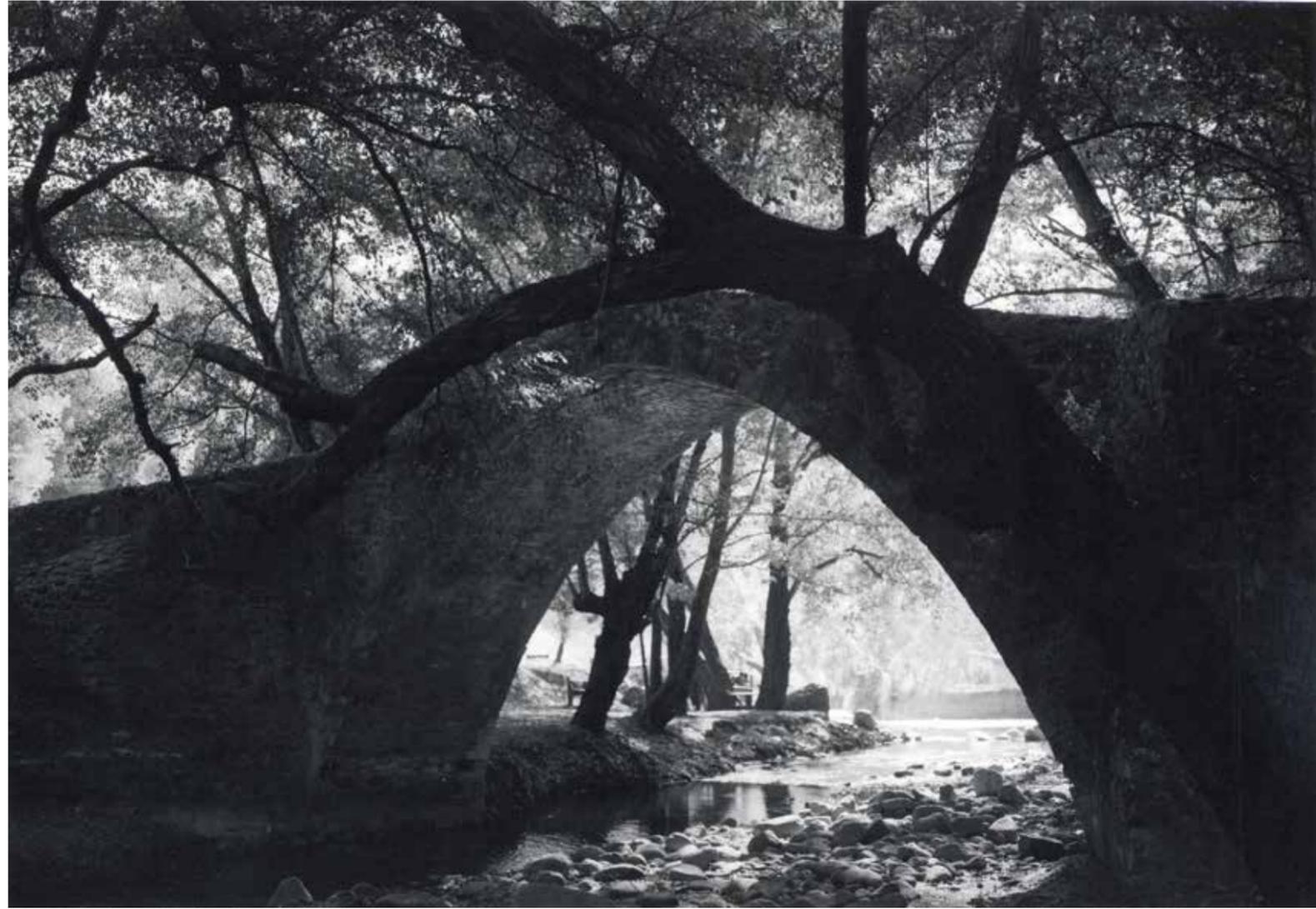
The area around the Pedieos River has been developed for contemporary living with walkways for running and cycling, shaded by large Eucalyptus trees. These trees were planted by the British to drain the swampy land, once a breeding ground for mosquitoes harbouring malaria. The river bed was covered by Eucalyptus leaves, a number of which I collected to use on my return in the darkroom. The river only flows in the winter after heavy rain, when it acts as an important drain for the urban area of Nicosia which is increasingly vulnerable to flooding. During my visits there were few signs of this



‘ephemeral river’, initially the river didn’t feature in my understanding of the city; it was missing. Nicosia, unlike many other cities did not have the river at its heart.

³ James Joyce, scribbled notes in the margins of *Ulysses*, British Museum, London

⁴ Yiannis Papadakis (2015) ‘Nicosia after 1960: A River, A Bridge and a Dead Zone’, Giovannia Silva Published in Foxtrot Gate, Cyprus, No.3. Mousse Publishing



Blue Notes/Green Line, Nicosia

*“Sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can become poetic.”*⁵

Francis Aljys, 1975

Ledra Palace crossing was opened in 2003, on the same site of The Ledra Palace Hotel, which allegedly was the most luxurious hotel in Nicosia, now it is the UN headquarters and home to the members of the peacekeeping forces. It is a pedestrian crossing point on the western side just outside the walled city and part of the Green Line (also known as the buffer zone) where it extends across the Island. The crossing is much wider here than the other central crossing at Ledra Street (opened in 2008) confined by narrow inner-city streets. Ledra Palace crossing is a point where diplomatic cars can pass between the north and south of the city, it is a site where many high level political meetings take place. Opposite the Palace and also within the Green Line is the ‘Home for Cooperation’, which in the troubles had been caught up in crossfire and half abandoned. As we see it today it has been renovated as a meeting place, that ‘aims to act as a bridge-builder between separated communities, memories and visions. It provides working spaces and opportunities for Non-Governmental Organisations and individuals to design and implement innovative projects.’⁶

The site of this crossing intrigued me; on one side the UN peace-keeping forces and on the other the ‘Home for Cooperation’ which was a ‘safe’ place to be. Although it was on the Green Line it was

a legitimate place to spend time made more so by the intercommunal events it organised and the very good café, all of which provided me (as a tourist) with an excuse to pause there. In response I presented a proposal to make cyanotypes of objects, plants and debris found within the Green Line. When permission was gained, time available to create the prints was limited, I had only two days in the field. I coated up paper in a variety of sizes; small, medium and large, some square, some rectangular to respond to the nature of the found objects. The first morning travelling in by taxi (to transport all the equipment) we were stopped at the check point and searched, apparently for bombs. The plan was to complete the whole process on location; to expose and wash the prints in situ so there would be no chance that they could be ruined or confiscated on my return passage through the checkpoint.

Based at the back of the building (looking north) keeping a low profile and out of sight of the main thoroughfare I began making cyanotypes of plants and objects. I found mostly weeds and several objects; including a comb, a child’s spoon and a piece of string. Nothing surprising except that many of the weeds were viciously sharp and serrated, even the plant I thought of as a common dandelion was of a spikey variety. There was evidence of a few

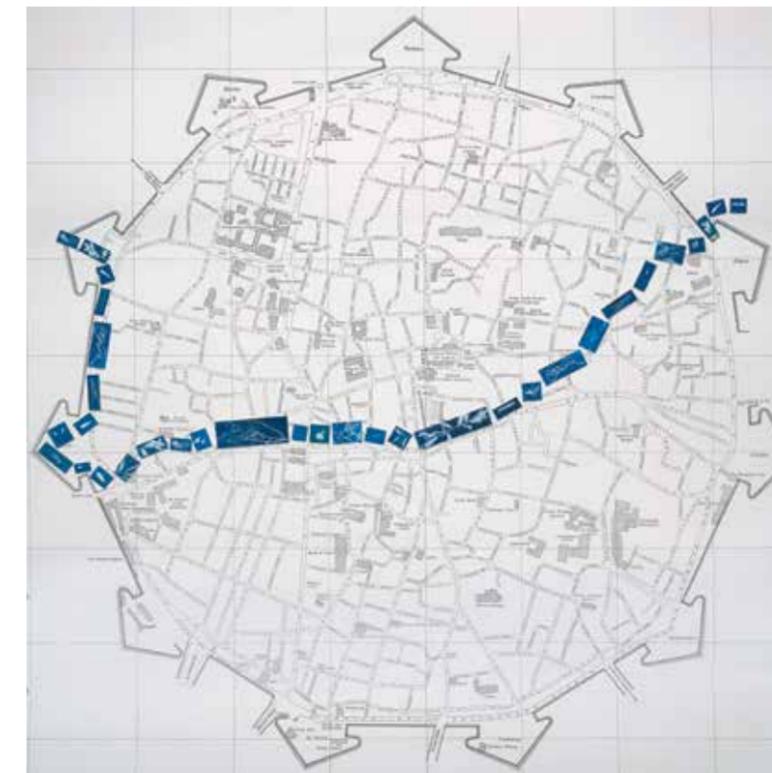
cultivated plants, mainly flowers that dropped over the hedge of Ledra Palace gardens. The Green Line named because a green chinagraph pencil was used to draw a ceasefire line on a map has become an actual green line of vegetation that now grows in the uninhabited void.

The cyanotypes are photograms – camera-less prints made directly by the sun, traces of objects. Again it was interesting to be making photographic prints in an area where the use of a camera was prohibited. This was part of the Green Line referred to as ‘no man’s land’ and sometimes as the ‘dead zone’. Here I made 47 cyanotypes; each a unique image, a trace of a found object, and of time. A record of the plants and history of that place. I would like to propose that just as ‘places remember events’, these cyanotypes bear traces of places.

In the gallery these Prussian blue cyanotypes are installed to replicate the path of the Green Line, a political line in a cartographic form, becoming a new blue line like that of the river that once flowed through the old city. When making these photograms I was working on a flat surface, the ground there has no ‘right way up’ and within each of these prints there is no horizon, no dividing line, but a space for imagination and dialogue.

⁵ Opening title from the video *The Green Line*, Francis Aljys, 1975

⁶ www.home4cooperation.info





Christopher Cook | *No Man's Flowers*

Graphite, oil and resin on coated paper | 102cm x 72cm

My current graphite images are based on 17th century Dutch Still Life painting, a preoccupation that began with simple transpositions of paintings by artists such as Bosschaert and van Aelst. The rendering of images of domestic beauty and plenitude into deadpan black and white gave an immediate ironic pleasure, and the sequence has now lasted more than two years.

A clear intention of the Dutch genre is as display of wealth and influence, and the more I looked, the more it seemed to represent a 'coming of age' of capitalism and materialism. This invited the insertion of modern elements to explore contemporary implications of the tradition. These elements - drones, plastic soldiers, temporary encampments, pylons, etc. were suggestive of capitalist discord: exploitation, conflict, protectionism. Using the graphite greyscale made the merging of historical and contemporary unsettlingly harmonious, and I want to maintain a balance between reverence for the original works and a destabilising tendency.

Having worked exclusively in monochrome for around 18 years now, I appreciate Odilon Redon's position that 'one must respect black, nothing prostitutes it. It does not please the eye and it awakens no sensuality. It is the agent of the mind far more than the most beautiful color of the palette or prism'.¹ Yet there were other reasons too - black and white allowed me to suspend decision-making for longer - providing a period of play in which colour association no longer stifled the evolution of the image. I inherit from Surrealism a belief in liberating the imagination through the action of painting. Some may look at this recent work and wonder about ideas of improvisation in relation to such a figurative image, but major

changes and shifts occurred as the work formed, including details 'improvised' from what is taking place before me. Some passages are inevitably more considered, though nuances of the medium and process carry more weight for me in deciding when an image is finished or successful. The symbolic references of the original paintings inform certain decisions, and I consulted Norman Bryson's old text *Looking at the Overlooked* for further insights. His concept of Rhopography - a genre that concerns itself with the intimate and domestic as opposed to the heroic - which he terms 'Megalography'² - proved key.

Associations with contemporary conflicts in my work prompted the proposal to NiMAC, an organisation which I'd noted had been addressing such concerns, particularly relating to the Mediterranean, through its artistic programming. The residency provided an opportunity to think more deeply into my subject matter in a specific situation, and created a dialogue between the unfamiliar domestic routine, and the political and military tensions in the divided city of Nicosia. This close proximity of Bryson's Rhopographic and Megalographic gave the work an unexpected autobiographical quality, and a new spatial inventiveness.

¹ Cited in The Museum of Modern Art, NY, Press Release, 14 February 1952

² Norman Bryson (2001) *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, Reaktion Books

Right: *DMZ Still Life*, 2017 (Courtesy Art First London)
Next page (left): *Figure 8 Wire*, 2018 (Courtesy Ryan Lee Gallery New York)
Next page (right): *Postcard from Nicosia*, 2017







Previous page (left): *Lookout Vase*, 2017
Previous page (right): *Flowers for No Man, Nicosia*, 2017
Right: *Minaret Vase*, 2017



On Being Out of Place

Liz Wells

Time, slowness, walking, reflection, and being out of place, are recurrent themes in comments and writings by artists, academics and environmentalists. In her essay, ‘The Mind at Three Miles an Hour’, Rebecca Solnit reminds us that many philosophers associate walking with thinking. Indeed, apparently Thomas Hobbes had a walking stick with an inkhorn built into it so that he could jot down ideas. Those familiar with her ruminations will know that she notes various types of walking, for instance, Wittgenstein’s habit of walking in silence up and down a room. He maintained a summer house by a lake in the remotes of the Norwegian mountains familiar, now, from Guy Moreton’s evocatively titled essay ‘Landscape as a mindscape: searching for a place to think’, in which he not only reflects on his photographic investigation of the site where Wittgenstein’s house stood, but also on W G Sebald’s *Ring of Saturn* which Moreton describes in terms of ‘melancholic wanderings through the East Anglian landscape’². Additionally Solnit reminds us of Rousseau’s engagement with nature and his interest in walking as both a simple pursuit and a space of contemplation. We might also think of Thoreau’s two years in the Walden woods, or of the various projects pursued by artists that involve extensive travel to previously unknown places – for instance, Alec Soth’s Mississippi river project, or Yan Preston’s Yangtze investigation, both of which involved numerous field trips over periods of several

years.³ These are forms of purposeful wandering, motivated by curiosity, a range of questions, and by the time and freedom to reflect in depth, through writing or, as in the latter examples, thinking through photographing.

But it is not walking that is our theme here. It is the creativity that can result from being *out of place*, working – and exploring – somewhere where phenomena are freshly observed, smelt or touched. Landscape painter, Michael Porter, commented that the title of a talk that he gave on ‘The Ramblings of a Landscape Painter’ could be taken ‘to refer to the physical act of walking in the countryside or alternatively the wandering thought process and bringing together of disassociated ideas’.⁴ He remarks that he never comes back from a walk without stones in his pocket. For ‘stones’ read objects, images, anecdotes, memories. I have yet to meet an artist or writer who doesn’t carry some form of notebook, bag or camera.

As projects develop, methods of working become more purposeful. In ‘Lost in the Horizon’ Ingrid Pollard reflected on her experiences of rural residencies. She remarks, ‘Spending days and nights on the Farne Islands gave me the profound experience of island life. Big open skies, star gazing, clouds and weather systems...I watched the watchers; the warders, who spent a large proportion of their

working time watching; watching the tourists, the westerlies, the birds, the skies, and the seas’.⁵ She talked of the scale of the horizon viewed from the islands, and of using a panoramic camera as it ‘echoes the way our eyes more readily scan a scene horizontally than vertically’, again, reminding us that however momentarily ‘lost’ artists nonetheless reflect, take note, and ensure that they have relevant technical equipment with them when exploring.⁶ Indeed, in thinking through artistic practice, the medium is a core component within the chosen method of enquiry; in Pollard’s case, her selection of camera determines the means of seeing photographically.

Artist residencies offer space to think ‘outside the box’. The pleasures of dis-location, and the possibilities that newly encountered spaces, histories and situations afford, stem from the voluntary nature of such residencies. Being displaced as a result of family tensions, politics, war or economic imperatives is an utterly different type of experience. For artists, writers or activists such disruption might turn out to be creatively or politically productive, but none the less forced migration, that is, *involuntary* relocation, is not at all the same thing as proactively taking time out.

This is not to say that residencies are easy. Travelling takes us away from the familiar and out of our comfort zone. What is normal to those resident in a particular location may be experienced by visitors as discomforting, *unheimlich*, although, of course, during the course of a residency the unfamiliar may be incorporated into everyday patterns – a route to and from a studio, a preferred coffee

shop or produce stall in a local food market. Living away from home for a short period of time fosters heightened awareness. Lives are lived in parallel; for local residents the presence of an outsider, a stranger, whether an artist or otherwise, may be merely incidental in terms of the course of daily life and cultural circumstances.

It is no wonder that artist residencies are highly sought; for artists, whether studio, street or land-based, time-out offers space for reflection. For many of us, reflections are pursued through practice. As a writer, I work things out by trying to make sense of them in words, whether academic or through some form of story-telling. Sketches, camera notes, collecting objects, noting personal responses to light, textures or smells, observing behaviour – human and non-human – are all a part of a process of familiarisation, of ‘getting to know’ somewhere. This deliberate approach – intentional, and via deliberation – informs our sense of place. Of course, this is not an objective experience. Robert Adams commented that landscape photography implicates biography, geography and metaphor (aesthetics).⁷ Residencies offer an opportunity to reflect on and learn from new observations and perceptions, but we make sense of historical information and current phenomena through reference to our previous knowledge, experience and understanding that, of course, reflects our specific cultural formations, psychologically and sociologically. In this respect, we are simultaneously out of place in that we are from somewhere, and ‘out of place’, elsewhere, dis-located.

Creative retreats, workshop and residency opportunities, come in various forms. In some instances, the space offers possibilities for developing or completing a pre-existing project, whether in a facilitated workshop environment or given a desk and/or studio and time to focus. Others may be entirely open. For example, the Wapping Project, originally based in East London, offers accommodation in Berlin, but it is stipulated that no work should be made. Some retreats are rural, away from academic or art market centres; others may be popular precisely because they are located in major capital cities where the making and exhibition of new work may attract interest from established critics and collectors.

However, residency proposals are most commonly project-led, with a statement of purpose and intentions as a part of the application process. They may be funded as much for the benefit of the sponsoring organisation as for the individual artist, as a means of the host organisation enhancing their engagement with contemporary practice, using artworks from residencies as a basis for exhibitions, events and publications, and perhaps to extend their art collection or library. Indeed, one of the drawbacks and artistic risks of residencies is an increasing emphasis on demonstrable outcomes, so that on the one hand, hosts have something to show funders and, on the other, given the Western work ethic, artists can demonstrate productive use of their time.

Reflection cannot be measured in terms of productivity. This does not mean it shouldn't be valued. Nor does it mean that we should

be skeptical about project-led proposals wherein specific intentions are suggested and questions are set up as starting points for wanderings and wonderings, along with some clear intentions in terms of medium and materials. We need some sense of purpose and the writing of a proposal in itself fosters reflection – exactly what is it that I want to think about, do or achieve? This seems fine as long as there is space for ideas to develop and for a project to be refined in response to actual experiences of places.



As a capital city with several schools and universities – although no specific fine art college – Nicosia seems familiar in numerous respects. People generally speak excellent English, and NiMAC itself, as a former electricity generating station, has much in common with culturally re-purposed power plants and industrial buildings internationally, from the Tate Modern, London to the Power Station of Art, Shanghai (both former riverside power plants). Yet, the accommodation for the residencies from which the various projects generated in the context of the Plymouth/NiMAC collaboration is about 100m from the south wall of the Buffer Zone; armed border guards are visibly present, although in the last few years crossing

from south to north within the city has been unrestricted, at least for those of us who appear as tourists. Dis-located geographically and removed from normal everyday demands and commitments, the professional creative challenge for artists as temporary residents lies in working out how to respond conceptually and phenomenologically to this, in some respects, very different political and social environment.

Residencies offering opportunities for enquiry through creative practice are valued as spaces of philosophical investigation and critical reflection. This Plymouth/NiMAC residency programme is possibly unique as an international partnership between a University and an arts centre that enables artists based in an academic context to pursue practice-led research. Given the exigencies of work, productivity, and survival now, certainly for artists in the UK, Europe and North America, residencies act as one of few types of generative space offering time and freedom for creative reflection. Core to this is the value of the 'uncertainty' associated with new contexts, events and encounters that enhances critical and creative reflexivity in ways that become manifest through art resulting from the experience, challenges and opportunities offered through being *out of place*.

October 2018

“The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.”

John Berger | *Ways of Seeing* (1972)

¹ Rebecca Solnit (2001) 'The Mind at Three Miles an Hour' in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. London: Verso

² Guy Moreton (2007) 'Landscape as a mindscape: searching for a place to think', in Liz Wells and Simon Standing eds., (2009) *Relic*. Plymouth: UPP Land/Water and the Visual Arts symposium series, p50

³ Alec Soth (2008) *Sleeping by the Mississippi*. Göttingen, Germany: Steidl; Yan Preston (2018) *Mother River*. Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag GmbH

⁴ Michael Porter (2005) 'The Ramblings of a Landscape Painter', in Liz Wells and Simon Standing eds., (2007) *Change*. Plymouth: UPP Land/Water and the Visual Arts symposium series, p50

⁵ Ingrid Pollard (2004) 'Lost in the Horizon', in Liz Wells and Simon Standing eds., (2005) *Surface*. Plymouth: UPP Land/Water and the Visual Arts symposium series, p60

⁶ loc cit, p61

⁷ Robert Adams (1996) 'Truth in Landscape' in *Beauty in Photography*. New York: Aperture, p14

Simon Standing | *Transitions I - IV*

Transitions I | Digital archive prints, 53cm x 54cm
Transitions II & III | Digital archive prints, 53cm x 74cm
Transitions IV | Looped time-based transition on monitor

In his famous nineteenth century publication *The Stones of Venice* John Ruskin reflects on the relation between thought and craft and the importance of architecture in asserting the aspirations of a society.¹

My proposal for the residency started from my interest in the impact of the Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) roughly 40 years on from its initial instigation which, in itself, was a development programme reflecting the aspirations of the then recently-divided city. So when exploring within the walled city at the outset of the residency in 2017, the context of Ruskin's premise seemed particularly apt. I was pointing my camera at buildings and spaces many of which had been part of the original master plan as well as subsequent aspirational restoration programmes.

Sacred and secular architecture and urban development has been at the heart of my photographic practice for nearly 30 years. This interest in our urban environment stems not only from a shared vision with Ruskin but also, as the architectural theorist Juhani Palasmaa argues, from the importance of buildings and urban spaces being fundamental to our understanding of ourselves, our relationship to the world in which we live, and of our sense of connection to the past.²

These elements of understanding, relationship and connection became key to my response to the urban fabric that I encountered whilst on the island. Initially, walking through the walled city and following the geography of the NMPs targeted areas, the research

I undertook prior to arriving resonated. This was first evident when responding to the worn and damaged façades of homes, some of which had been renovated, others not. This fascination became *Transitions I (The Stones of Nicosia)*.

The pattern of walking, looking and photographically responding then became the method of production throughout the early part of the residency. After exploring within the walls I moved out into the greater city and, again, began to notice distinct architectural phenomena, such as the single storey properties that connect the city to its colonial past that became *Transitions II* and infer what Palasmaa references as a sense of solitude and silence, a 'remembering silence', manifest in old houses.³

Hiring a car and travelling further afield, during the latter part of the residency, a number of both sacred and secular developments were explored that emerged as *Transitions III* and *Transitions IV*. These broader excursions eventually culminated in a body of work that reflects aspects of the past, indicates the current, and heralds the future of the transitioning urban landscape of this contested island.

¹ John Ruskin *The Stones of Venice*, original publication in three volumes, London, 1851-1853

² Juhani Palasmaa (2005) *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. English edition, John Wiley & Sons, Sussex, pp71-72

³ loc cit, pp51-52

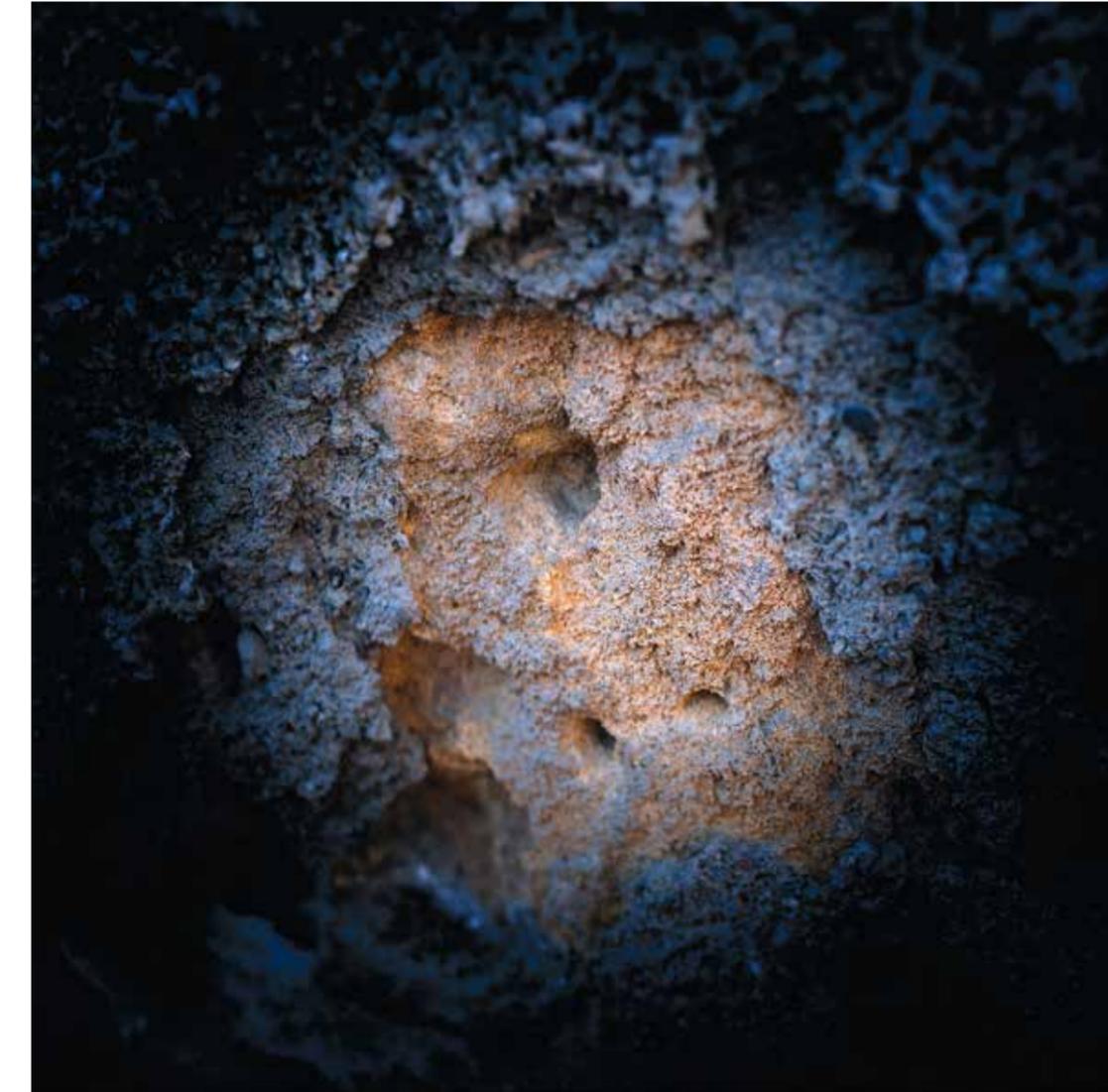
Transitions I (The Stones of Nicosia)

Façade development is something of a contested practice in urban redevelopment. In the context of Nicosia 'The restoration of façades of privately owned buildings is conceived as a trigger that will motivate the owners to continue the restoration with their own means, supported by the substantial governmental incentives and subsidies for listed buildings.'¹ However, this EU report then goes on: '...there is concern that the 'scenographic' choice – to rehabilitate only façades as if the area were a theatre set – will lead to the rapid deterioration of the repair works, especially in the case of empty dilapidated buildings, but also in the case of low-income owners and residents who do not have the means to complete the restoration.'²

These surfaces seemed to take on various properties, not only of the aspects referred to above, but also more ambiguous referential elements of conflict, separation and division.

¹ Title page of the *EU Commission Projects* website 'The walled city of Nicosia' accessed at ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/best-practices/cyprus/2651

² EU Commission full Case Study 'CY-Nicosia' [online], March 2012, p10, accessed at ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/best-practices/cyprus/2651





Transitions II

“Old houses take us back to the slow time and silence of the past. The silence of architecture is a responsive, remembering silence. A powerful architectural experience silences all external noise; it focuses our attention on our very existence, and as with all art, it makes us aware of our fundamental solitude.”

Juhani Palasmaa | *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*

Transitions II moves out into the modern city, where further evidence of transitioning residential neighbourhoods can be seen, for instance in the often empty single storey dwellings overlooked by later apartment blocks, a dynamic of the lack of planning regulations in 20c urban development in the city.



Transitions III

Before arriving in Cyprus I was made aware of a number of urban developments in various sites across the island particularly, but not exclusively, in the north. For example there was the infamous ghost town of Varosha in Famagusta, the casinos, nightclubs, hotels and mosque-building in the north and the social housing projects for displaced communities constructed south of Nicosia.

Transitions III draws together a series of images made around Kyrenia, Famagusta and the outskirts of Nicosia. They are more distanced views and further indicate what became the overarching focus of my attentions, that is, my interest in representing ideas of home, neighbourhood and nationhood that are such vital elements in the landscapes of Cyprus. In this series we see the dynamics of a variety of urban relationships: of nightclubs (which are in fact brothels) overlooking residential neighbourhoods; of the historic apartments and hotels of Varosha overlooking the contemporary children's play area; of halted housing developments in the slopes of the Pentadaktylos mountains; of a view through lush trees towards the consumerist industrial parks south of Nicosia from the edge of a social housing development; of the small and large-scale mosques being built in the north.



“The timeless task of architecture is to create embodied and lived existential metaphors that concretise and structure our being in the world. Architecture reflects, materialises and eternalises ideas and images of ideal life. Buildings and towns enable us to structure, understand and remember the shapeless flow of reality and, ultimately, to recognise and remember who we are. Architecture enables us to perceive and understand the dialectics of permanence and change, to settle ourselves in the world, and to place ourselves in the continuum of culture and time.”









Transitions IV

Transitions IV relates directly to the effects of light in relation to architecture. Light is, of course, integral to photo-graphic processes, and therefore is central to photographic observation and expression. My attention had been arrested by a truly dominant edifice, namely the Hala Sultan Mosque, that transforms into a light show each night, and is yet another evocation of the evolving landscape of this contested island. I visited this mosque on more than one occasion but when the residency was drawing to a close I revisited the site for one final photographic intervention. This became a set of images that has been resolved as a monitor-based work of single, time-sequenced photographs, that records the aesthetic affect and related symbolic effects of the way in which the mosque is transformed through the fading light.



A website set-up in England for the adoption of Cypriot rescue puppies¹ made me first aware, three years prior to my residency, of the world of Cyprus rescue. I came to know Cyprus not as the island of Aphrodite, nor through its tourist destinations of Paphos and Limassol and Ayia Napa; the places I 'knew' were Dali, Paralimni, Oroklini, Pegeia – those containing municipal pounds. As I was drawn into the multi-layered world of abandonment and emancipation I became fascinated by the apparent extremes on the island; stories of unscrupulous and brutal dog-catchers, of nightly raids on pounds to steal hunting dogs, of pets poisoned by neighbours, alongside stories of the most selfless generosity and kindness. When the Plymouth/NiMAC residency arose I knew that I would like to investigate this world further; to meet those whom I'd only met virtually and to see the places that had become mythologised in my mind.

Dogs roamed freely around the island of Cyprus prior to 1971 when a dog control scheme was introduced, ostensibly to eradicate disease, resulting in the extermination of almost 86,000 dogs, mass spaying and compulsory registration, leaving an estimated 16,810 dogs on the island.²

Sensing the Familiar is an evolving work. Its focus is the 'nonhuman' animal; immediately here language fails us, able only to indicate these beings by reference to something they are not. Massumi writes that re-thinking the relation of animals and humans, placing them on a continuum rather than a hierarchy, has political implications. Our image of ourselves as 'standing apart from other animals... [and] our assumed species identity, based on the specious

grounds of our sole proprietorship of language, thought and creativity'³ must be dismantled and reconstructed.

My 'Critical Realist'⁴ practice is 'socially engaged' and investigative; lying between art and documentary and employing diverse perspectives and strategies to dialectically traverse the territory under scrutiny thereby uncovering synergies, contradictions and paradoxes in the social fabric. Its ultimate aim is to expand ways of thinking about the non-human and to provoke challenge to social policy and practices. Photography, in its mimetic relationship to reality, suits this form of social critique; although not realistic in itself, it 'arises from reality',⁵ and thereby invites reflection on the nature of that reality. The photograph itself cannot tell us the history of dog control, nor of its socio-political imperatives, but it can point to its consequences, alerting us to realities of lives lived today, and together with polyvocal fragments of text, can engage us in metaphysical, epistemological and moral reflection.

My ambition is for the work to affect the viewer, '...the person who experiences the force produced by an affect...can retain this force and be changed as a result of their experience.'⁶ It is my belief that art can change people and subsequently lead to action in the world.

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1435567746659562/>

² Kyriacos Polydorou (1983) 'Stray-dog control in Cyprus: Primitive and humane methods'. *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems*, 4(2), pp146-151

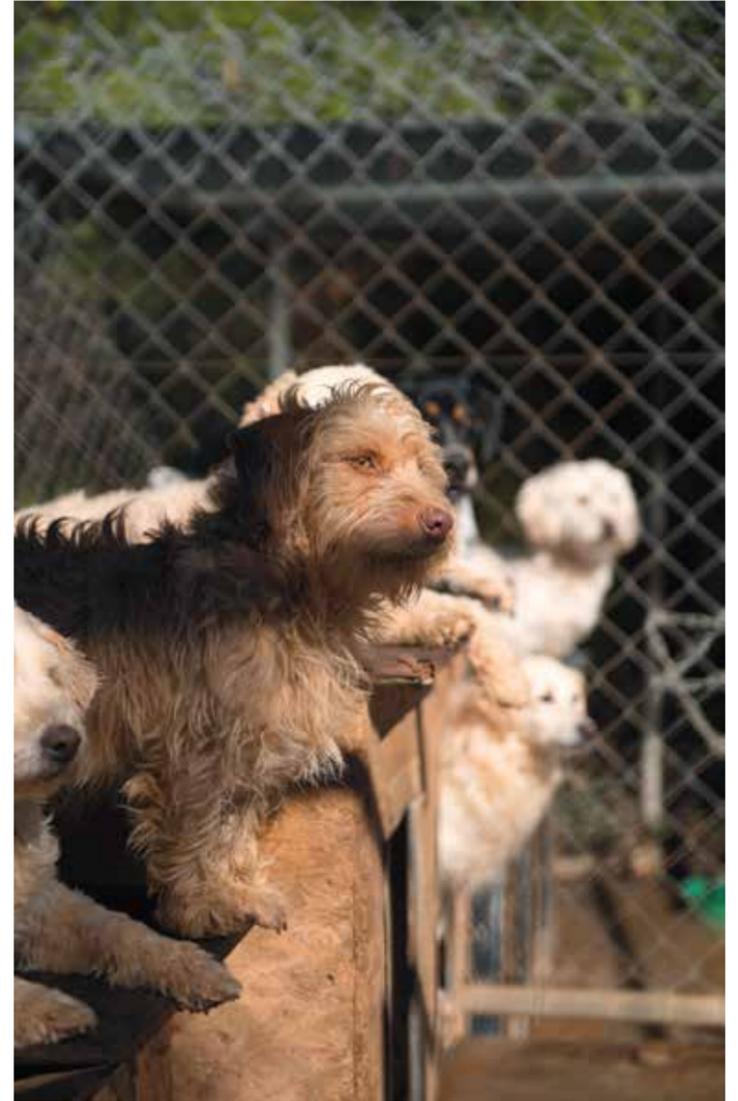
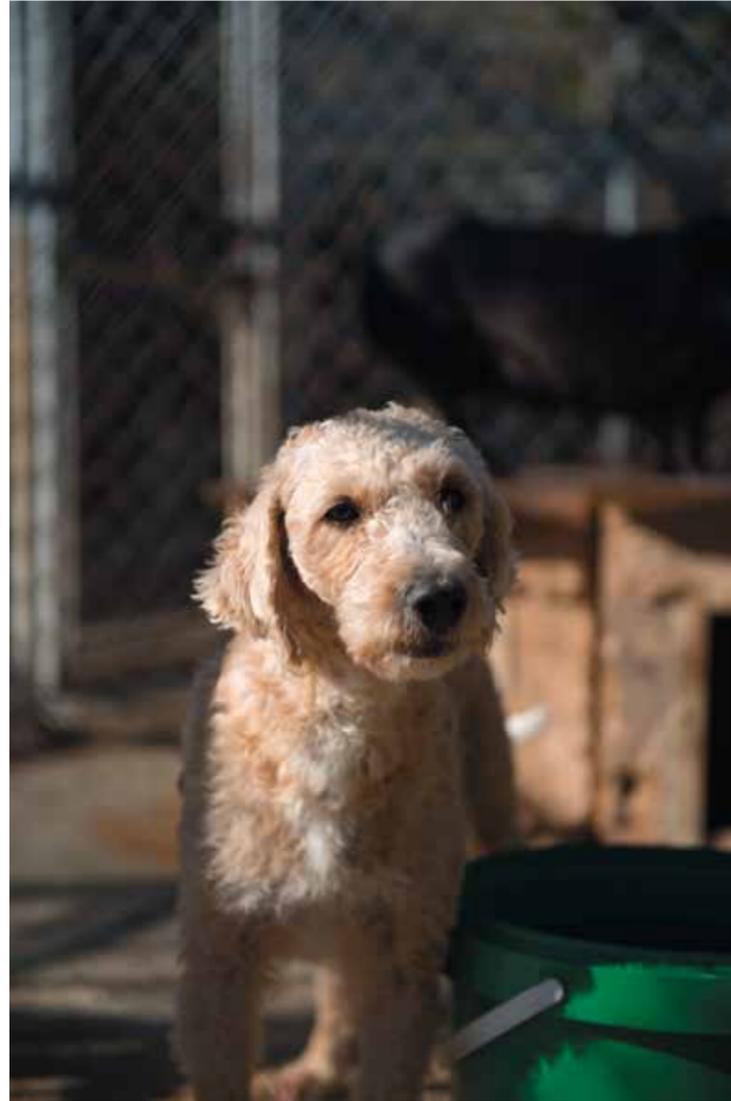
³ Brian Massumi (2014) *What Animals Teach us about Politics*, Duke University Press, p3

⁴ Jan Baetens & Hilde van Gelder (2007) *Critical Realism in Contemporary Art: around Allan Sekula's Photography*, Leuven University Press

⁵ loc cit, p9

⁶ Coleman, R and Ringrose, J (ed) (2013) *Deleuze and Research Methodologies* Edinburgh University Press, p89









“When a thing is named by another, the affects of power are foregrounded and the capacity for the named being to be able to express itself freely is diminished because the other’s difference exists now in isomorphic relation with the one who names, the one who evaluates and signifies.”









A Guest + A Host = The Cyprus Ghost

Yiannis Toumazis

The title of this text alludes to a 1953 obscure work by Marcel Duchamp. *A Guest + A Host = A Ghost* consisted of foil candy wrappers that the artist handed out to the guests at the opening of Bill Copley's Parisian show. The above pun was printed on the shiny, crinkled surface of the wrappers of the candies.

Sixty years later, in 2012, at a Photography and Theory conference held at Ayia Napa, Cyprus, a Guest (Liz Wells, University of Plymouth, UK) and a Host (Yiannis Toumazis, NiMAC, Cyprus) agreed to explore hospitality in the form of artist residencies.

Six years after the first artist from Plymouth was hosted at the Old Powerhouse of Nicosia, where NiMAC is housed, just a few metres from the infamous 'Green Line', the British artists who worked in Cyprus between 2013 and 2017, present *Layers of Visibility*, an exhibition reflecting their Cypriot experiences.

Cyprus has a long and dominant historical past, constant geopolitical turmoil and incessant crises: social, religious, political and financial, which continue to affect present and future. Lying at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, in this region of osmosis between East and West, it could not avoid its geopolitical 'destiny' in shaping the current post-colonial realities; a destiny, which is underlain by a narrative of 'partitions'. Indeed, today, we once again experience 'partitioned times', as Ranabir Samaddar, professor of South Asia Studies known for his

critical work on justice and human rights, claims.¹ Not only geographical and political divisions, but also social, racial, economic, and cultural ones define the international order, despite the spirit of globalisation. Since 1974, the island-state of Cyprus has also been divided, with approximately 36% of its territory under Turkish army occupation. Despite continuous efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus Issue, the buffer zone, also known as the 'Green Line', still dissects the island into a northern and a southern part. Moreover, in 2013 a financial collapse of the state created an ongoing economic crisis. In parallel, the tragedies currently taking place in the broader region bring again to the fore the importance of the Mediterranean, this enclosed sea, a 'liquid continent' that is an extremely political and politicised space.

How did the artists from Plymouth experience this loaded context and the complex realities of Cyprus and the southeastern Mediterranean? How did the sense of place affect their creative gaze? How did Duchamp's 'Ghost' –this hybridisation between Cyprus and Plymouth– spark novel ways of seeing and understanding? Which were the poignant results of these brief migrations, albeit peaceful and much anticipated?

Liz Nicol was the first artist to come to Nicosia in 2013, amidst the worst financial crisis this island has ever experienced. Nicol chose to work in situ with olive trees, in locations both in the northern and the southern part of the Cypriot divide. She used a very old technique –that of the cyanotype–, a process developed by Sir John Herschel around 1842

alluding to the origins of photography. As she explains, in order to make the cyanotypes the paper was coated (in the dark) and transported to the scene in black bags. To make the '*Shadow Drawings*', *Olive trees*, *Nicosia*, the paper was hung on olive trees then revealed to the sun. The bluish image produced by this prolonged exposure to daylight is eerily out of focus as the paper is gently moved by the wind.

A further work, *Blue Notes/Green Line, Nicosia*, was actually made in the buffer zone, where photography is strictly prohibited by the military. The photographs were made by placing discarded objects, mostly weeds and some cultivated plants, onto the surface of the paper, exposed to the sun and washed to complete the process.

These wraithlike monochromatic imprints of olive tree branches –the olive branch is obviously the symbol of peace since antiquity– as well as the cyan portraits of the buffer zone plants, somehow create a visual elegy of pride and sorrow for the island. These ghostly, vegetal compositions are of an ambiguous and ambivalent nature. On the one hand, they seem to glorify the beauty of this contested place: nature survives and thrives, intact and unharmed and ignoring the divide. On the other hand, these olive branches seem to interpret a *danse macabre*, a *memento mori* of the impasse and the fragility of the foundations of our glorious earthly systems.

Carole Baker, resident artist in 2015, tackles the very serious issue of animal welfare in Cyprus. Her series of photographs under the title *Sensing the Familiar* has emerged from multiple journeys across the northern and the southern parts of Cyprus, from remote pounds and sanctuaries to affective encounters with canine captives and human

rescuers. According to the artist, the work constitutes a critical response to the stray dog policies currently operating on the island, and their enforcement through identification, incarceration and ultimately death.

More than 200,000 dogs, including newborns and puppies, are being abandoned each year in Cyprus. Moreover, according to the Cyprus Voice for Animals, approximately 20,000 healthy or non-healthy dogs of all ages are killed by euthanasia each year by the authorities and some shelters due to overpopulation. These macabre statistics reveal the deficits of the island's socio-political structures, but also the indifference, ignorance and cruelty towards non-human animals.

The artist empathises with the situation and its victims and becomes an active eyewitness as she visits pounds and shelters across the island, engaging with the people in charge and investigating these haunting issues. Most importantly, she patiently relates to her canine acquaintances, and produces masterly photographic portraits of them, dignifying their marginalised psyche and honouring their silent otherness. This work is an activist testimony to the ways in which art and empathy not only could dynamically coexist, but could also activate and energise social consciousness, which more often than not lies dormant and remains lethargic to the ever-increasing global threats.

A treaty signed in Nicosia on 16 August 1960 by the United Kingdom, Greece, Turkey and representatives of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, granted independence to the Crown colony of Cyprus and established the Republic of Cyprus. According to the treaty, two areas of the Cypriot territory remained under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom. These two areas are referred to as the Akrotiri and the

Dhekelia Sovereign Base Areas. This sovereign British military territory, strategically located in the easternmost edge of the Mediterranean basin, still serves as an important and vital station for signals intelligence and it is also a staging point for western forces sent to military operations in the Middle East and Asia.

The RAF (Royal Air Force) station located at Troodos is the oldest British military base in Cyprus, dating back to 1878, but also one of the most important British overseas military installations. Declassified government documents indicate that the Troodos station was intercepting satellite communications on behalf of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), while documents leaked by Edward Snowden show that the programme still continues, funded by the US National Security Service.

In 2016, Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker began *Father-land*, an essay film scrutinising the colonial and post-colonial social and political realities of Cyprus. As the artists lived just a few metres from the buffer zone, they had the unique opportunity to experience first-hand the ongoing partition of the island and its everyday consequences. Both artists were 'RAF children', with childhood links to Cyprus through fathers stationed there with the Royal Air Force. To make the film, they draw from their formative experiences and their collective past, being uprooted from one country to another.

What is most interesting in *Father-land* is that it challenges a patriarchal, colonial aspect of an island where the dependence on the motherlands, Greece and Turkey, and also the desired annexation to the latter, constituted a key argument for both sides for a series of violent and

bloody incidents, climaxing in the Turkish invasion of July 1974 and the continuing division of Cyprus.

During his residency in 2017, Christopher Cook created *No Man's Flowers*, a series of drawings on paper, with graphite and resin. These black and white drawings are reminiscent of *Vanitas*, the Dutch still life genre, which became popular in the seventeenth century, in a religious age when almost everyone believed that life on earth was merely a preparation for an afterlife. These paintings remind the viewer of the shortness and fragility of life and include symbols such as skulls and extinguished candles. *Vanitas* also include other symbols such as musical instruments, wine and books to remind us the worthlessness of worldly pleasures and goods.

Cook sees the Dutch 17th century still life tradition as 'a cradle of materialism, in which colonialist domination is expressed via artefacts.' His beautiful drawings ironically devoid of colour resemble to hand-crafted ghostly x-rays of a long-lost abundance. Furthermore, and on a closer look, these arrays of symbolical objects of the past incorporate other unexpected and unfamiliar miniaturised elements: filaments of barbed wire, flying drones, migrant encampments, a military outpost..

These otherworldly, contemporary *Vanitas* remind the modern-day viewer not only of the fragility of earthly life but also of its persistent absurdity: The world is faced daily with a multitude of rapid changes. More often than not, reality outruns social consciousness: political, social and economic turmoil on a local and international level, inequalities and corruption, oppression and exploitation, racism and xenophobia, continuous and mainly violent movements of populations and incessant

persecutions of people. Large-scale natural and climatic changes daily redefine the data for the continuation of life on the planet. Furthermore, human self-alienation has reached such a level that, as Walter Benjamin concludes in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, mankind '[...] can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order.²

Transitions is the general title for four series of photographic works by Simon Standing, who also came to Cyprus in 2017. Standing is interested in human edifices –secular or religious buildings– and their relation to the anticipated reunification of the island. The photographic works initially began as a response to the ambitions of initiatives such as the Nicosia Master Plan and the Partnership for the Future under the banner of the U.N. Development Plan (UNDP).

Standing is a methodical observer and a forensic archaeologist of the Cypriot [urban] landscape. After choosing his subject, in the north or in the south, he patiently observes its continuous transformations due to physical conditions or human interventions. Besides the actual material structures, the artist captures through his photos notions of nationhood and nationalism, home and displacement as well as the constant failures of an 'imagined' (prosperous) future for the inhabitants of the island. Through his observations, Standing senses that with each failed attempt to find a solution to 'The Cyprus Problem' there is a potentially greater sense of segregation or separation appearing. Indeed, he grasps the essence of the continuous stalemate embodied on this island. The ghost city of Famagusta, the urbanisation of Nicosia, the reality of the refugee settlements, the Islamisation of the north, the cement carcasses of potential holiday villas: ugly evidence of an unavoidable reality,

inscribed on the natural landscape. According to W.J.T. Mitchell, the appreciation of landscape as an aesthetic object cannot be an occasion for complacency or untroubled contemplation; rather it must be the focus of a historical, political and aesthetic alertness to the violence and evil written on the land.³ In Simon Standing's gaze this alertness is more than evident and alarming at the same time.

Layers of Visibility proposes a genuine and multifaceted interaction between artists from the University of Plymouth and the island of Cyprus. The Duchampian Ghost, this hybrid of Plymouth and Nicosia, incarnates in a number of ways and allows us to discover and explore multiple layers of existing contested realities, progenies of successive and devastating imperialisms and nationalisms. In the turbulent times in which we live, perhaps this exhibition could light paths towards transcendence and transformation, action and reaction, empathy, and resistance.

October 2018

¹ Ranabir Samaddar, ed., (1997) *Reflections on Partition in the East. New Delhi and Calcutta*: Vikas Publishing House & Calcutta Research Group

² Walter Benjamin, (1936) 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in Hannah Arendt, ed., (1999) *Illuminations*. London: Pimlico, p235

⁴ W. J. T. Mitchell, (2002) 'Imperial Landscape', in *Landscape and Power*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, pp29-30

Stuart Moore and Kayla Parker | *Father-land*

Father-land, 2018, film projection, 20 mins

Cinema 4K 24fps digital video, stereo sound
(Projection formats: C2K DCP, C2K, 4K UHD and HD digital files and HD Blu-ray disc).
20mins.

An essay film investigating notions of home and (dis)placement in the divided island of Cyprus. Political and social histories, the legacies of colonialism, occupation, and the Cold War, resonate culturally and also biographically for the artists as both had childhood links with Cyprus through fathers stationed there with the Royal Air Force. NiMAC, in Old Nicosia, is close to the Green Line, the demilitarized Buffer Zone still patrolled by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force that separates the Turkish-occupied northern section of the island from the Greek Cypriot south. Living and filming near the Buffer Zone became a quiet reflection on the uneasy stasis of the unresolved conflict which tore the island in two over forty years ago. In making sense of their collective past, the film-makers draw on their formative experiences of both being 'RAF children', uprooted from one country to another – patriarchal baggage moved by external forces.



“Sometimes, as a family, we’d be kind of packed up... with our lives put into boxes. And you’d get - depending on your rank in the RAF - you’d get a certain number of boxes. And so these ones you’d take... whatever you could fit, and then this was moved out to another place or another country. And then eventually they’d all arrive, and you’d unpack your stuff and unpack yourself. And then you’d be living in these places until your father was moved on to another posting.”

Narration extract from the film *Father-land*



“It’s quite a strange feeling, with the Buffer Zone... and thinking about my father coming here several times with the RAF, back in the 1970s, and thinking what was going on then. And then coming myself, and living next to the Buffer Zone. Something which feels... quite strange in a way, quite interesting. But something which you’re not really experiencing - you’re just beside it, so you’re ‘without experience’.”

Narration extract from the film *Father-land*

Father-land: view through apartment window in the walled city of Nicosia, close to the Buffer Zone. Film Still.



Father-land: view north over the Buffer Zone in Nicosia towards the Pentadaktylos mountains. Film Still.



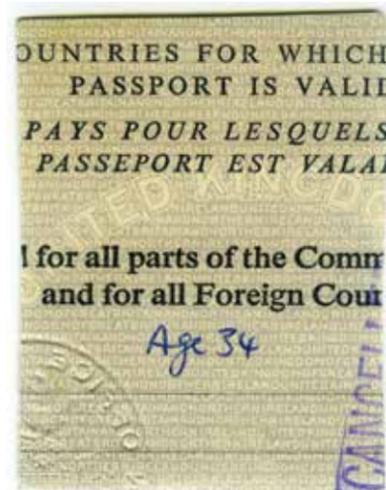
Father-land: view north over the Buffer Zone in Nicosia. Film Still.



Douglas Parker with his daughter Kayla.



John Moore's passport photo



Stuart at RAF Seletar swimming pool, Singapore.



Kayla on a trip to the beach in a United Nations convoy, Cyprus.



“One thing that you’re always reminded of is of the conflict that happened many decades ago, but the remnants of it are still here today - they haven’t been removed; they’re just here. Although you don’t really notice them when you’re walking around, you learn to either ignore them or you just don’t notice them.”

Narration extract from the film *Father-land*

Father-land: traces of empire - Tempon Street, Old Nicosia, close to the Buffer Zone. Film Still.

The Privileged Outsider

Is it possible, or even desirable, to return to a point of origin in our past? In (re)visiting the sites of memory, we (re)experience the dislocation of exile, feeling uprooted from home, family, ourselves – baggage that has gone astray in transit, lost luggage that cannot be reclaimed.

The residency has provided us with an opportunity to think about ideas of marginalisation, exclusion and expropriation; to reflect on (re)turning – turning back time, rewinding the clock, travelling back to the mythic scene of idyllic oneness, a rounded wholeness of self. And also informs our ethical approach. We embark on our journey, knowing that we will never reach our destination.

The Algerian-French writer Hélène Cixous writes about departing ‘so as not to arrive’, positioning scenes of expulsion as ‘the very form ... of our relationship to the world.’¹ She uses the term *arrivante de toujours* for:

a position of non appropriation of and nonbelonging in a place. That figure retains the ethical dimension of uprootedness, claims only to visit or pass through the land or home of others, and puts into question the stance of the privileged outsider.²

¹ Brigitte Weltman-Aron (2015) ‘Introduction’ in *Algerian Imprints: Ethical Space in the Work of Assia Djebar and Hélène Cixous*. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, p xiv

² loc cit



Father-land: view of disused Nicosia International Airport in the Buffer Zone. Film Still.



Father-land: eucalyptus tree in the Buffer Zone, Old Nicosia. Film Still.

Land/Water and the Visual Arts

The Arts Institute

University of Plymouth

Founded 25 years ago, **Land/Water and the Visual Arts** operates as a forum for the interrogation of nature and culture, aesthetics and representation. We support visual artists, writers and curators within academia through fostering individual and collaborative practices that question, reconsider and renew the nature and use of visual language through developing international networks that promote creative work.

Questioning imagery and practices relating to land, landscape and place is central to our ethos. As artists, writers, curators we work individually, exploring space and place as a point of departure for experimenting in new modes of communication through picturing. We generate work that addresses a range of issues. These include environmental change, sustainability, journey, site and regional specificity.

Research group initiatives have included publications, exhibitions, peer-reviewed conferences and other events such as our annual summer symposium, international artist-in-residence programmes, collaborative research initiatives including occasional collaborations with the UK *Land2* research network on various initiatives, and regular visiting artists' talks and research seminars.



The Plymouth-Nicosia link developed by chance, as professional partnerships often do. Within the context of research in Land/Water and the Visual Arts (University of Plymouth), it became possible to negotiate funding for colleagues to spend a month in Nicosia. It was determined that the initiative should be based on project proposals that in some respect engage with Cyprus, but were also of value individually in relating to colleagues' specific research interests.

We are committed to further developing the Plymouth-Nicosia partnership in future years.

Heidi Morstang | Convener, Land/Water and the Visual Arts

www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/landwater

¹ In 2010, Liz Wells was invited to speak at a photography conference in Cyprus. Yiannis Toumazis, as Director of Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre (NiMAC) had been commissioned to curate the Cyprus Pavilion, Venice Biennale, 2011, and invited her to contribute an exhibition catalogue essay. In 2012, Liz stayed briefly in the newly completed artist residency flat in the courtyard above the café-restaurant at NiMAC, a visit that generated the artist-residency collaboration.

² Residencies have been jointly funded by NiMAC and the School of Art, Design and Architecture (formerly School of Art and Media), University of Plymouth, UK.

Biographies

Dr Carole Baker is a practice based researcher exploring posthumanist and phenomenological debates around the non-human animal through a Critical Realist photographic practice. Her current work *Sensing the Familiar* juxtaposes the social realities of Cyprus dog rescue with philosophical reflections on the nature of alterity, being, power and knowledge.

Christopher Cook is a painter who employs broadly surrealist processes and a specific monochrome medium to interrogate a range of themes, including genetic modification, sacred and profane architecture, and migration/protectionism. His work questions the relationship between painting and photographic reproduction, and between surrealist approaches and Eastern philosophies.

Stuart Moore is a film-maker and sound artist based in Plymouth. Stuart's work screens internationally and he has won awards from London Short Film Festival and two South West Media Innovation Awards. He is currently a 3D3 AHRC-funded doctoral researcher at Digital Cultures Research Centre, UWE, whose PhD inquiry focuses on personal archives, film and memory.

Liz Nicol's projects are about sites of conflict from memorials of the Great War to the environs of the Venetian Lagoon. Investigating place through the processes of photography with high and low tech cameras and camera-less image making, depictions of place are brought together in her preferred exhibition format.

Dr Kayla Parker is an artist film-maker who creates innovative works for cinema, gallery, public and online spaces using film-based and digital technologies. Her research interests centre around subjectivity and place, embodiment and technological mediation, from feminist perspectives, with a particular interest in the interrelationship between still and moving image, and new materialism.

Dr Simon Standing explores our relationship to sacred and secular architectural environments through photographic research. Current projects focus on urban development on Cyprus undertaken within the recent artist residency. Further research explores his relationship with Gothic cathedrals that have been a very particular element of his personal and photographic identity over the last 30 years.

Dr Yiannis Toumazis, writer, curator, Director of NiMAC and the Pierides Foundation, and Chair of the Cyprus Theatre Organisation, is also an assistant professor at Frederick University, Nicosia. In 2011 he acted as curator for the Cypriot Pavillion, Venice Biennale.

Professor Liz Wells writes and lectures on photographic histories and practices, and curates exhibitions on land and environment. She co-edits *photographies* journal and is series editor for *Photography, Place, Environment*, Bloomsbury Academic Press (forthcoming). She is an elected member of the Board of Directors, Society for Photographic Education, and in 2017 was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by University of Gothenberg.

Layers of Visibility

Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre, 19, Palias Ilektrikis, 1016 Nicosia

19 October 2018 – 12 January 2019

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