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"Writing Trauma:" Giving Voice to a Wound that Seems to Defy Representation in Contemporary Greek Cypriot Art

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INTRODUCTION

Cyprus was granted independence from British colonial rule in 1960. In the following years, inter-communal conflicts between Greek and Turkish Cypriots broke out. The volatile situation culminated in 1974 when a Greek Junta-led coup against President Archbishop Makarios was followed by Turkey's invasion of Cyprus. In addition to the substantial human, material, and economic costs of the war, the island has since been under a de facto division, whereby about 40 per cent of its territory remains under Turkish military occupation, with no jurisdiction by the legitimate authorities of the Republic of Cyprus. Some two hundred thousand Greek Cypriots were forced out of their towns and villages and were moved to the Greek Cypriot government controlled part of the island; there were also several thousand Turkish Cypriot refugees, who had to move to the north.

Along the so-called Green Line that has divided the island ever since, a buffer zone has been created, patrolled by U.N. soldiers, which has prevented the recommencement of war. The buffer zone, four miles wide in some areas but narrowing to only a few feet in others, cuts through farmlands and mountains, and divides Nicosia, the capital of the island, in two. It is lined with earthworks, barbed wire, trenches, bunkers and watchtowers, manned by troops with automatic weapons. Many of the deserted houses and shops have furniture and goods still stacked inside. Due to this division, artists – along with all other inhabitants of the island – have been forced to live between two spaces: the one they inhabit, and the other on the opposite side, which is "forbidden." Nevertheless, the tension of the in-between space has been a determining force, firstly in the construction of their identities and secondly as an influence in their artwork.[1]

The dramatic events of the summer of 1974 had a shattering impact on the course of contemporary Cypriot art. From the late 1950s through the early 1970s, a number of Greek Cypriot artists[2] engaged in a process of modernization of local art production, as well as in its synchronization with international developments.[3] This came to a violent halt in 1974:

> Amidst the impact of these events and the subsequent processes of reconstruction at all levels, both the country in general and its cultural production in particular followed new directions. In the arts, especially, several years would go by before the synchronization with international developments was once again put forward as a priority. Of greater urgency […in the post-war years] was the redefinition of both collective and individual identities, through processes that were more inward-looking and private, compared to the pre-1974, post-independence years.[4]

In this text we concentrate on how works produced by Greek Cypriot artists after the war significantly suggest the processing of post-traumatic memory, without affirming themselves to be about trauma. The post-war works do not figuratively or literally communicate an account of a trauma experienced by a particular individual, nor in most cases do they manifest a set of symptoms that could be definitively ascribed to the artist as a survivor of traumatic episodes. Drawing from Cathy Caruth's work on trauma, we advance the argument that trauma resists representation, and we show how this resistance can be traced in Cypriot art as a move toward abstraction. We investigate how these artists bear witness to extreme experiences that challenge the limits of visual language.

Caruth emphasizes how "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on."[5] For Caruth, the repeated possession of the event for the one who experiences it, is "the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits," and this essential "truth" of traumatic experience is only experienced "belatedly."[6] Caruth states: "What returns to haunt the victim […] is not the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known."[7] The crisis of a

survivor of a traumatic experience lies in the way the traumatic event causes an incision in time and in consciousness.

Stubbornly haunting its survivors, yet distinguished by the "historically ungraspable primal scene,"[8] we argue that trauma is essentially about losing one's ground in the familiar space of psychic and interpersonal history. Once a person's protective personalized space is violated due to a traumatic experience, one loses not only "the belief that one can be *oneself* in relation to others" but one "may lose the sense that [one] has any self at all."[9] "Trauma," in other words, "loosens this glue, crippling psychological life" and leaves survivors "plunged into a nightmare world of self-fragmentation in which sanity, indeed the very continuity of existence, can no longer be taken for granted."[10]

In the course of our investigation we have come to realize that the artists we examined not only confront the aesthetic potential of visual practice, but also address the theoretical and ethical impossibilities of such a practice. We try to show how Greek Cypriot artists enact a conception of another set of relations between representation and the 'unrepresentable,' where no aesthetic object will ever be right or appropriate to the historic trauma that it takes as its grounding subject.[11]

As the 'unrepresentable' is not located in narrative representation, following a Deleuzian line, we locate it in how the material passes into sensation, and in how this sensation affects the audience. Given our concerns with unacknowledged trauma, Gilles Deleuze helps us discuss the artworks not merely as visual stimuli to be received by the spectators, but as the transference of affect from the artwork to the spectator or as an experience which engages all the senses. To be more specific, we concentrate on what these pictures do (to the viewer). Our questioning is concerned with the pictures' power and operating mechanisms, as well as their power to affect our emotions and behaviour. In order to find a response to this question we shift the locus of discussion "from the picture as object to the event of picturing."[12]

In such an event, there is, according to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, a summoning forth in which "invisible forces […] of gravity, heaviness, rotation, the vortex, explosion, expansion, germination and time […] make perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world […]."[13] Our aim is to show how in contemporary Greek Cypriot art, the rhythms of lines, the flows and vectors, the eccentric positioning, the material interference, the animated colour, and the use of gravitational forces provoke the mind to further action, meaning to arouse a memory, an image or the awareness of a problem. Working in this frame, we have adopted the approach that art produces sensations, affects, and intensities as its mode of addressing problems.

In our negotiation of contemporary Greek Cypriot art, we became increasingly aware of the expressivity of the material, and came to the realisation that it plays a fundamental role in the uniqueness of the production of the works. This is how we turned to Deleuze to place our observations in a theoretical framework. Deleuze and Guattari's conception of an aesthetic plane of composition is not one of the relation between content and form. It is neither produced for the sake of technique nor for the purpose of communication. In their thought, art might be concerned with expression but it is not the expression of an artist's intention. It is the material that becomes expressive, not the artist.[14]

Moreover, we intertwine the Deleuzian approach to art with trauma theory – drawn mainly from Caruth – in order to suggest a certain set of relationships between art's formal properties and its capacity to speak the "unspeakable." This functions as a frame through which to see the endeavour of Cypriot artists to find a communicable language of sensation and affect by which to register something of the experience of a traumatic memory. Cypriot artists have attempted the im-possible (in the Lyotardian sense of unrepresentability within available sign systems)[15] by striving to bear witnesses to the loss and suffering experienced through the many catastrophes of their country.

Following Sigmund Freud, psychologists have characterised trauma as the overwhelming and normatively inconceivable nature of an event, which the person or people involved find unassimilable. The traumatic experience causes a distortion in the temporality of the survivor.[16] "The traumatized," Caruth notes, "carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess."[17]

Following this line, we open up the question of what art itself might tell us about the lived experience and memory of trauma, and what specific artworks trigger in the viewer. Where we see resemblance (in so far as an image is conceived as a representation of the world), Deleuze and Guattari ask the viewer to consider not what it is, but what are the conditions under which it operates.

Cypriot art reveals traumatic experiences through a winding vision; it affects viewers in ways that are non-narrative and non-cognitive. The re-enactment of traumatic experiences affects the structure of the viewer's response to the extent that the response becomes performative: it is a matter of enacting, in a participatory way. To comprehend Cypriot post-war art is to understand what it does (to the viewer), for to perceive the images is to enact their affectivity or activity of actualization. Along with the inevitable question of what pictures mean or signify, we already ask the question of what they do, and the focus of such questioning is concerned with the works' power to affect our emotions and behaviour.[18]

Our approach here is one that subscribes to the opinion that art produces sensations, affects, and intensities as its mode of addressing problems. This position emphasizes that art is of affect more than representation, a system of dynamic and impacting forces rather than a system of unique images that function under the regime of signs. The system of dynamic forces is what Deleuze has discussed systematically in *Francis Bacon and the Logic of Sensation*, where he indicates the close connection of a force and a sensation. "[F]or a sensation to exist, a force must be first exerted on a body, on a point of a wave," although he further points out that, "the sensation 'gives' something completely different from the forces that condition it."[19] An analogous system of dynamic forces and sensation is what we try to locate in our analysis.

With reference to post-1974 Cypriot artworks, we argue that producing art is an attempt to heal wounds by means of retaining information. The artistic reinterpretations of the events in the aftermath of the violence enacted the process of post-traumatic memory without declaring themselves to be about trauma; in many cases, they would appear to be about something else. It seems, therefore, that trauma can only ever be partially told; in its fragmented nature, trauma can be articulated in literary and artistic production.

THE "FIGURAL" REPLACES THE FIGURATIVE

Representation and trauma persist to be problematic, because trauma, as a missed encounter with the real, is elusive and impossible to grasp in a literal figuration. Contemporary Greek Cypriot artists coming face to face with a missed encounter concentrate on the ways in which bodily and emotional connections can be established. The post-war works are concerned above all with time that passes and with the virtuality that constitutes history in cultural and natural memory. In Deleuzian terms, the works are marked by a hybrid character, found in a territorializing and deterritorializing structure and process – hovering between the animal and the human, between place and territory. In the act of production, they implicate the viewer in an almost bodily way. We observe a fragmentation of the figure, provoking a creative exchange between work and viewer. In this process, the work has a performative function, by means of which the artwork actualizes itself.

It is not a direct representation of events; it is the creative process that is the actual event, the performance of the violent affectivity of the figure.

According to Jean-Francois Lyotard in *Discourse, figure*, the function of the artist is to render visible what can no longer be seen: to paint the forces of the world of sensation. But the artist must also deconstruct representation and invent "a space of the invisible, of the possible,"[20] and it is especially in the disclosure of such a space that Cypriot artists invest their creativity. If the latter is the case, then we could not avoid asking what this *invisible* that only painting can make visible is like, how it relates to what we normally see and how this informs the following artists' work. Is it through a break away from representation that the invisible comes across to the viewer? How is the space of the invisible possible? Deleuze establishes that the main object of the art of painting is the action and expression of invisible "forces;" the art of painting is as much a matter of affectivity as of visibility. More precisely, the art of painting becomes a matter of perceived visible figures and felt affects that are commanded by invisible forces. Deleuze argues that these new possibilities arise only out of the manual throw of paint ant thus escape the human organization of representation:

> It [the diagram] is like the assurgent appearance of another world. These marks, these strokes are irrational, involuntary, accidental, free, random. They are non-representative, non-illustrative, non-narrative. But they are no longer significant or signifying; they are asignifying lines.[21]

The artists examined below oscillate between representation and abstraction; they adopt the "figural." As Deleuze turns to painting in *Francis Bacon*, he makes frequent use of the concept of the "Figure," which he relates directly to Lyotard's notion of "the figural," but without any of the Freudian apparatus that Lyotard brings to his argument. The "figural" is one of the most important concepts in Deleuze's analysis of sensation in his discussion of Bacon's work, and it clearly stands in opposition to figuration or representation.

Deleuze proposes two ways of attaining the "sensation" directly: either by moving towards abstraction, or else by moving towards what Lyotard termed the "figural."[22] Several Cypriot artists have followed the "figural." Whereas "figuration" refers to a form that is related to an object it is supposed to represent (recognition), the "figural" is the form that is connected to a sensation, and conveys the violence of this sensation directly to the nervous system (the sign). They have followed this "middle path" between the two extremes of figuration-narration and pure abstraction. The "figural" is a deterritorialization of the figure, but as such, it needs the figure as its point of departure.[23]

How does the "figure" attain the "sensation" in Greek Cypriot trauma-related art? The generic standards of sensation are, at the same time, the principles of composition of the work of art, and conversely, it is the organization and structure of the work of art that reveals these conditions. This then is the task faced by the artist: how can the material used by the artist attain this level of forces? How can it become capable of "bearing" the sensation?

By following a middle path, Cypriot artists explore the navigation of space – whether topographical (landscape), mnemonic or empirical – to create a gateway to a locality where new aesthetic openings were manifested. Our analysis of artworks depends on their materiality, their situation, their process of making, their composition and their function in the context of abstraction. Cypriot artists working with "the figural" aim at producing an actualization of certain virtualities, that is, the realization of possible worlds – and at the same time, a *de*actualization of a certain reality. The paintings then produce/perform a different combination, a different *extraction*, from all the possibilities. It is this that gives them their political but also their ethical and aesthetic character. It is this that makes them endlessly affirming of life and not just acts of negation.[24]

GIVING VOICE TO A WOUND THAT SEEMS TO DEFY REPRESENTATION

1. Tassos Stephanides (1917 – 1996)

The absence of a person and the vanished layers of earth express the state of emergency created as a consequence of war. The absence of the body can be read as an expression of political power, a political presence, which brings about an absence. It is an expression of political interference in a living space. As a paradigm, the total absence of the figure in Tassos Stephanides' post-1974 works unambiguously declares the prominence of the wounded place and the abandonment of the human presence, as seen in *Nisos tis Estin* [*There is an Island*] (1979), (fig. 1). In order to depict his wounded place, he creates a tension between figuration and abstraction, rejecting the notion that the two are antithetical.

Figure 1
Tassos Stephanides, **Nisos tis Estin**, 1979,
acrylic on canvas, 58 x 68 cm.
Image courtesy of En Tipis Publications.

By eliminating the figure in his paintings, Stephanides treats the whole surface of the canvas as the body. He aims at expressing an intentional brutality. His style is thus analogous to what Deleuze calls "catastrophes" that disrupt the figurative. "It is through such catastrophes that another world opens up; it is through marks that are a-signifying that something new emerges."[25] These catastrophes give the eye of the viewer a different function from that given by figurative or optically ordered passages of painting.

In *Nisos tis Estin*, by stretching, deforming, and smearing over his figures and landscapes, Stephanides moves on the edge between creation and destruction, and he renders visible agonizing affections. He modifies chaotic forces into a kind of transformative "chaosmos," transmitting temporality and exposure. Stephanides' vision leads the viewers to experience and respond to his

images less with their eyes than with their bodily sensations. In undoing the "good form of representation" (by exaggeration and distortion), Stephanides engages invisible forces of deformation (those of the unconscious), which never become directly visible. Drawing from Lyotard, conventional visual representation represses the anomalies of sensation, the deformations, and violations of "good form" that disturb the eye. The ground for painting is the "figure-matrix" of fantasy – the scene of the invisible pulsations of the Id. Art does, therefore, engage the phenomenal rhythms of sensation, according to Lyotard, but it also discloses the rhythms of desire and the transgressive force of the unconscious.[26] The "space of the invisible of the possible," then, is an invented space traversed by unconscious forces that render visual Lyotard's "figural."

Stephanides escapes the symbolic and follows a formal visual strategy – the anomalies of sensation, the deformations and violations of "good form" – to expose collective trauma and loss. His forms are subjected to a number of deformations through a series of manual techniques: accidental marks, aggressive brushstrokes, smudging of paint on the canvas, lines dividing the painting, scrubbing or brushing the painting without following the contours of the shape. These techniques have a double effect: on the one hand, they undo the organic and extensive unity of the body and instead reveal what Deleuze calls its intensive and non-organic reality; on the other hand, "these marks also undo the optical organization of the painting itself, since this force is rendered in a precise sensation that does violence to the eye."[27]

Looking at Stephanides' work, the painting that is most captivating is the one with the overturned *Pentadactylos* (1979), (fig. 2). The mountain range, in the Cyprus' occupied territory, has been turned upside down. A painting upside down might seem agonizing and disconcerting. Nevertheless, it makes a visual image more intricate: you have to do more mental work to process what you are looking at. It was also a metaphor for Stephanides' contemporary world. Life, even painting, goes on – except that everything has been turned upside down.

Figure 2
Tassos Stephanides, *Pentadactylos*, 1979, acrylic on canvas, appr. 100 x 130 cm. Image courtesy of En Tipis Publications.

His handling and depiction were deliberately slovenly and inaccurate, but all the more richly expressive for being so. As Nicos Alexiou wrote about his work: "Violently but also whisperingly, beneath what is depicted, tormented Cyprus becomes a cloud, an explosion, mayhem. Suspended mountains, rootless, scarred by darkness and flames. Demolished houses, bright shimmering and heavy skies, overhanging, ready for dawn or for deluge."[28] The very forces and energies of the earth and all that populate it are summoned up and become sensations. Stephanides conceives of the image as a sensation of forces, rather than simply as a symbol. When the artist makes the leap from representation to abstraction and "thinks in painting" the creative capacities of painting are thus revealed: the bluish, fleshy colours of Pentadactylos are close to those of the decaying body.

2. Stella Angelidou (b. 1969) and Panayiotis Michael (b. 1966)

Contemporary Greek Cypriot artists grapple with the unassimilable trauma of the catastrophic losses of history, in a place which continues to be marked by experiences of separation and displacement, but which also connect the living to former and future lives. Being in the presence of a place that was important in the lives of loved ones may help individuals work through feelings of incompleteness – spectral traces that are passed through generations. This is what Stella Angelidou's marks, dividing lines, fences and borders, and Panayiotis Michael's wounded surfaces or injured skins are pointing to. They are references to places of pain and healing, where social networks and possible futures can be created, imagined and inhabited. These artworks constitute communal reminders of loss, and personal reserves for "constructive forgetting," both of which are central to mourning and embodied-social memory work.[29]

The spectral echoes of past actions can be seen on the heavily-worked surfaces of these artists' paintings, resulting in a unique, melancholy presence – a sense of the presence of absence. Within the spaces of absence, loss, and (dis)figuration in Angelidou's and Michael's works, a dialectic between meaningful forms and the grieving mind is enacted: in Steven Sacks' terms, "fictions of consolation" are constructed and identity is recomposed.[30] The traces of the erased forms, lines, and marks bear witness to their erasure and the passing of time – just as the disjunctive practice of memory, its traces and asymmetrical rhythms, suggest the existence of once "being there."

It is this connection between space and the existential dimension of humans that we emphasize here, in order to show how Angelidou's landscapes, and Michael's early series, *My Dearest Green Line*, can be seen as reflecting an existential space that serves as an index of the traumatic history of Cyprus. Through an extensive use of marks and lines, and natural materials (sand and sawdust), these artists reveal the natural environment but also its history, its culture, and its belief systems – as if they have looked at the countryside with such intensity that they have seen through its surface to the geological layers beneath the earth's skin. Once more, nothing is definite on the picture surface: lines express a feeling of incompleteness, of negotiating boundaries and spaces, of tension between absences and presences, speech and silence, body and landscape – a tension that points to an open wound. This is achieved with the application of diagrams, a layering of repetitive lines, and marks that indicate the thinking and rethinking of composition. Change is not produced through a process in which one form replaces another, but through deformation: as a form becomes scrambled, something new is suggested and a number of (formless) forces, presented by the diagram,[31] surface in one place. We are speaking of the actualization of form on the canvas' surface.

The marks, dividing lines, fences and borders in the work of Angelidou, act as an evidence-presence of the human body. In writing about Anselm Kiefer's landscapes, Lisa Saltzman suggests that traumatised landscapes and ruined buildings can also be read as standing for physical wounds that may never heal; captured on the distressed surfaces, they are distilled in time, never to be resolved but also never to be forgotten. The body, which marks the soil, gives evidence of the

human power inscribed in the land. The evidence of the human body on the land – as we see happening with Angelidou's marks and lines – is exactly what functions as legitimation of one's claims on the land: the evidence of the body in the soil.

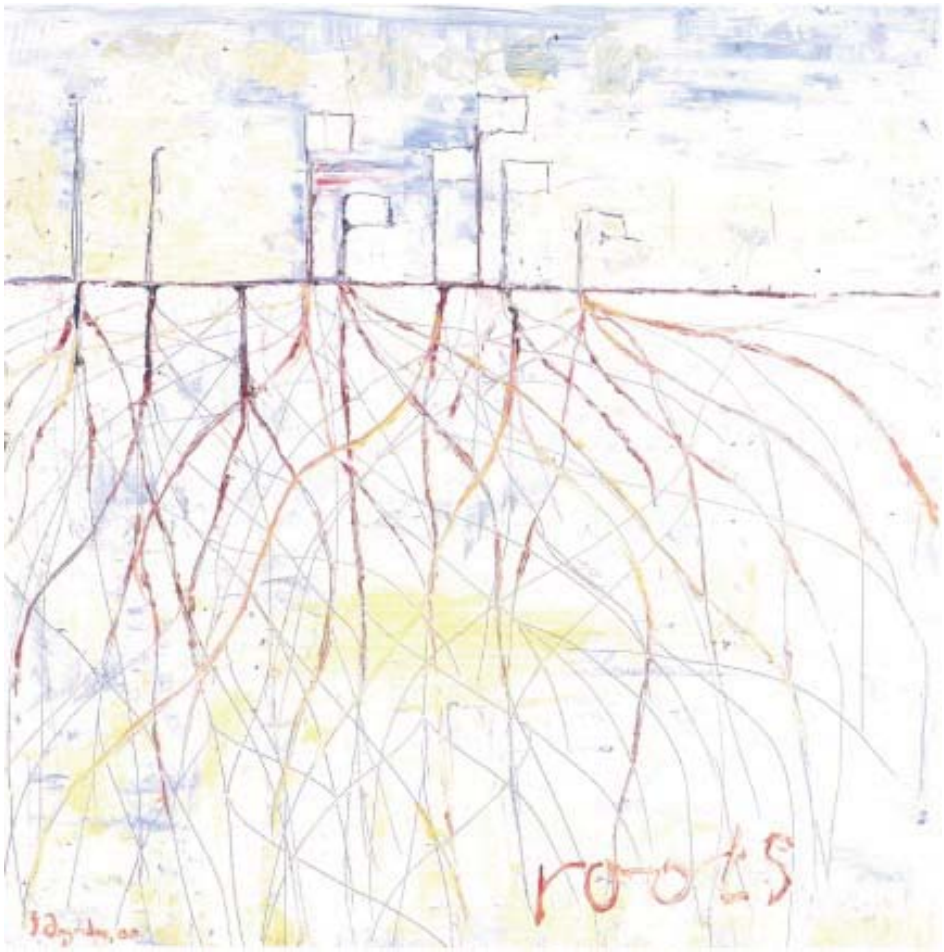

Figure 3
Stella Angelidou, *Roots*, 2000, oil on canvas, 75 x 75 cm.
Image courtesy of En Tipis Publications.

Angelidou creates abstracted landscapes that, in a sense, are impossible to move through, as one can discover in *Roots* (2000), (fig. 3), and *Fire* (2000), (fig. 4).
The clear indication of frontiers, borders, and barbed wire fences gives the viewer a sense of finitude, limits and limitedness. It is impossible to move further, as it is impossible to move further the dividing Green Line. These signposts refer to the artist's life's experience, of the continuous sight of borders, or of the impact on her own identity.

Figure 4
Stella Angelidou, *Fire*, 2000, oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm.
Image courtesy of En Tipis Publications.

Whatever the signposts, they indicate that Angelidou's personal landscapes are as much inward as outward bound. Placed in the centre of fire, the small tank (fig. 4) stands as a reference to the war scenery and its traumatic aftermath. Paint is used pictorially to figure the perspective of the landscape and expressively to create a sense of violent recession, which is superimposed on a series of vertical, violently executed black lines, signifying a type of fencing or borders, often turning into abstract gestures. As suggested above, it is through such catastrophes (of paint) that another world opens up; it is through marks that are asignifying (chaotic and not representational) that something new emerges.

Angelidou places her lines in a suspending situation: lingering between a type of fencing or borders, and random marks or a-signifying lines. Most interestingly, her paintings are divided into two plateaux: the strictly limited spaces, above and below, suggest a possible future deterritorialization.

Michael's series *My Dearest Green Line* (1998 [figs. 5, 6]), a group of paintings in thick layered material (paint mixed with saw-dust and sand), full of dissections and scars, constitute either (abstract) wounded landscapes or (abstract) wounded bodies.

Figure 5
Panayiotis Michael, *My Dearest Green Line*, 1998, oil and sawdust on canvas, 120 x 120 cm.
Image courtesy of En Tipis Publications.

Michael comprehends and approaches his place as material evidence of unspoken pain, in Caruth's words, crying wounds that demand justice and find expression in the work as if through a kind of skin.[32] Through silent acts of witnessing and listening, like those traced in Michael's artworks, wounded places allow individuals and groups to begin the difficult work of mourning.[33]

Figure 6
Panayiotis Michael, *My Dearest Green Line*, 1998, oil and sawdust on canvas, 120 x 120 cm.
Image courtesy of En Tipis Publications.

Paintings are like close-ups that isolate the image of the world, or part of that image, from its space and time context. As such, Michael managed to distort the narrative frame of representational space. Here, the landscape is without focus: a composition, not a form, that acts directly on the nervous system working as a disruptive, imaginary space, "a pure, absolutely deterritorialized landscape."[34]

In Michael's work, the reference to the Green Line in his title alludes to the state of partition in Cyprus, which is, additionally, rendered formally and compositionally in the repeated lines, the boundaries between planes, the multiple axes, and the overlapping inter-planar relationships: they are markers of the tension and the negotiation of geographical and political boundaries in his home country. He formulates tropes like subtle colour shifts (he paints almost monochromatically), moments of camouflage (layering), deposits in paint where the bottom colour peers through the top

one, two edges of colour butted up to create a boundary, flawed brushwork, and a disordered/random application of material. These tricks are repeated and repurposed throughout the paintings to give the work a sense of both duration and temporality. The texture extends itself from the first layer of paint to the surface. The top surface acts as a system that parallels and competes with the first layer. It is, however, symbiotically bound to it. Both systems/layers entirely depend on each other for 'survival' in order to create depth.

Michael's wounded surfaces or injured skins resemble walls that have been scuffed and marred by human intervention and the passage of time. Characterised by a skin of ochre and umber colours and by the gouge and puncture marks in the dense stratum, these walls suggest violence. They recall graffiti in public spaces, slogans and images of protest – allusions to the dividing wall in the town of Nicosia.

In Angelidou's and Michael's work, lines constitute a reference to their physical presence on the land, marking and defining spaces. Using a layering of repetitive lines, an application of diagrams and marks indicating the thinking and rethinking of composition, these artists have succeeded in expressing a feeling of incompleteness, while negotiating limits and confines, and while producing a tension between absences and spaces.

3. Klitsa Antoniou (b. 1968)

People who survive a shocking tragedy suffer tremendously from their guilt about their survival due to the "moral dimension inherent in all conflict and suffering."[35] Cathy Caruth has suggested that at the heart of traumatic narrative there is "a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life; between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival."[36] Indeed, Ernst van Alphen considers that perhaps it is only through what he calls the imaginative discourses of art and literature that certain historical functions might take place.[37] It is only afterwards, in repetition, that trauma becomes an experienced event.

This becomes evident in Klitsa Antoniou's visual work. She examines matters of memory loss – in particular, the dilemma of the intentional obliteration of memory, the resistance to remember and the force of forgetting. It could be argued that through her own practice, Antoniou has re-enacted dislocation, she has recreated the experience of transportability of space and memory, and she has foregrounded the question of erasure and oblivion versus the perseverance of memory.[38] For example, a discomfort lingering between the terror of losing one's personal past and an almost unmanageable need not to forget is manifested in *Tracing Homeness* (2002), (fig. 7), and *A-lethe Hydor* (2005), (fig. 8).

Tracing Homeness consists of a steel carriage, which is full of rolled pieces of flooring, wrapped up and stacked on top of each other like used rugs. Two of them lie flat on the floor implying a process of folding and unfolding. The surfaces are made from slightly tinted rubber and latex, which at first sight give the impression of abstract shapes and outlines. On a closer look, one observes that, layer upon layer, domestic objects or pieces of furniture are cast on the surface, impressing their fading traces, informing the actual objects' non-existence, and ultimately forming an uncanny and eerie mosaic blueprint of a previous life. On these manipulated/scarified surfaces, we observe a move against figuration – understood as narration and illustration, as one of the key tropes of representation. We observe a deterritorialization of the figure, but, as such, we need the figure (prints of objects) as its point of departure.[39] Antoniou uses the Deleuzian diagram by making an intentional layering of marks to allow the "figural" to emerge from the figure.

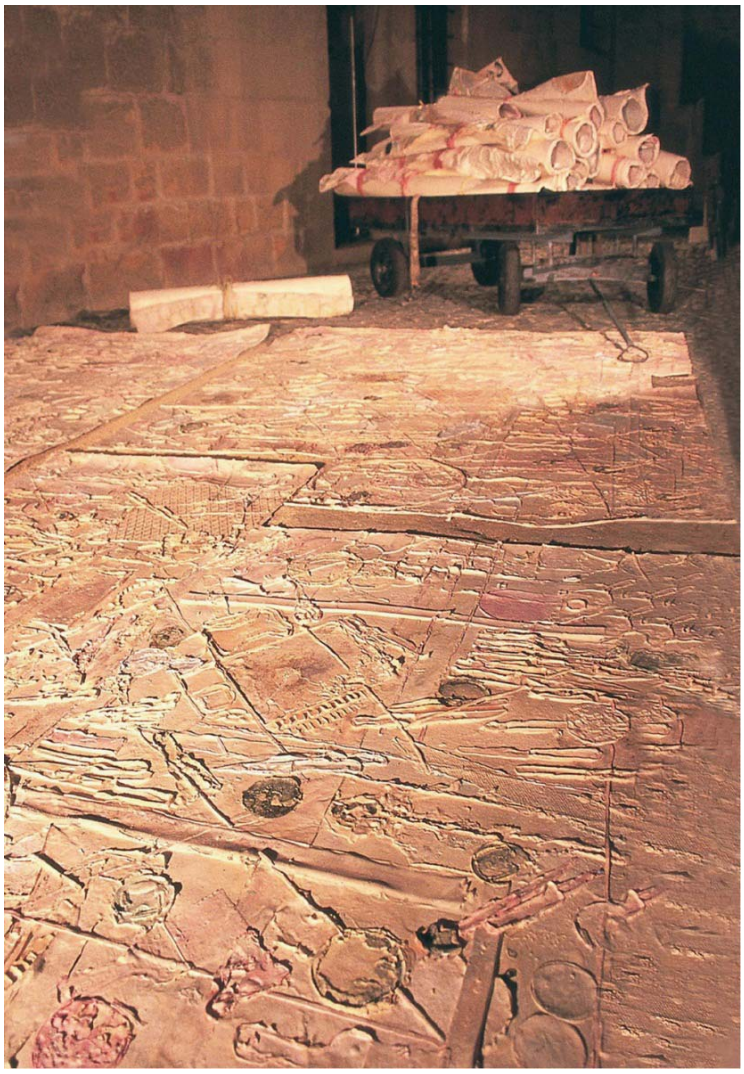

Figure 7
Klitsa Antoniou, *Tracing Homeness*, 2002, latex, rubber and metal, variable dimensions.
Image courtesy of En Tipis Publications.

Tracing Homeness speaks about the practice of disruption and dislocation, and the issue of which things to take with you and what to leave behind. What is left on the surface is not the physicality of the objects but an abstraction (via an indexical relationship between objects and time), fragmented recollections and memoirs, and the accumulation of past experiences lived in these suspended spaces. This obsessively tedious layering transmits an anxious gesture of urgently and desperately trying to rescue particular objects, only to realize that one can only preserve their traces. The packaging appears futile and an irony is evoked by the eternal absence of the house. Even if one has found a place, the sense of belonging remains elsewhere: inscribed on the surface, like some indelible scar. Writing on Antoniou's work, Stephan Tiron employs the phantom limb syndrome: "In the process of moving away and of moving towards something new, strange connections bring forth lost sensations. Thus, touching parts of the face, the sensation may feel like it's coming from the missing limb."[40]

A-lethe Hydor likewise explores memory, trauma, loss, and the trace of human existence. It is an installation that consists of four huge 'walls' made of dozens of old picture frames, hanging from a square metal structure. Facing us are the frames' backs, covered with a variety of wallpapers, like a patchwork of prints.

> Familiarity – despite the overwhelming size – invites us to step into the interior space where layers of seaweeds grow out of the picture frames. A claustrophobic, enclosed space, womb-like and containing; yet, obstructing and forbidding. Familiarity and estrangement, passage and blockage, remembrance and forgetfulness co-exist and, thus, resist closure, fulfilment or arrival – we are only visiting.[41]

The intimate relation between a form and an anti-form, or an image and its concealment, mirrors the relationship between presence and absence, matter and emptiness. Antoniou approaches the void/emptiness/abstraction as an active agent. It is mentally difficult to imagine the void as an object constituting a negation of the existing or the visible or a negation of any representational

form. Rather, the void is precisely what makes a thing perceptible, and therefore a thing of material importance. Antoniou's empty frames can be seen as the absence of a thing: a thing, however, that in turn lends fundamental meaning to this void. A tension exists in her work, whereby the viewer experiences perceptual and cognitive ambivalence. Through formal subtleties, she captures the nature of dynamic emptiness and gives room for a new inquiry: Is the sense of the 'void' or emptiness created through an absence of the physical form, or does the emptiness, in some strange manner, constitute part of the form?

Figure 8
Klitsa Antoniou, *A-lethe Hydor*, 2005, installation with frames, seaweed, wallpaper prints, string, and metal frame, 350 x 250 x 250 cm.
Image by authors.

From a material perspective the empty/abstract space may be void, but it is transformed in the moment of being filled. The absent form gives rise to the emergence of the physical memory of violence. The performative nature of the site-specific installations relies on the inscriptive quality of the open space that becomes the space of "an act of memory".[42] Antoniou is not presenting us a work about amnesia, but rather a performative ritual where memory can be reclaimed by opening the wound to full exposure. She gives no clues as to what has happened, no immediate references to a historical event, yet his work testifies to an in-between state of place, where insecurity and instability rule.

It is in the title that the meaning of the work is to be comprehended. *A-lethe Hydor* literally translates into Water of Truth. The word *Alithia* (truth) derives from the word 'a' (meaning absence) and the word 'lethe' (forgetting). The water of forgetting, in Greek mythology, refers to the water the dead drank to forget life on earth. Therefore, the concept of truth linguistically derived from a conscious process of remembering, and 'truth' becomes synonymous with the resistance to forgetting. The covered photos forming abstract shapes represent the unhealed wounds and scars of pain, preserved by those who are persistently waiting for and mourning the missing, and who are simultaneously tempted to forget and continue with their lives.

Always in reference to how the present self is perceived, one recalls and verifies these prompted memories; otherwise, memories are either invented anew, or their recollection is blocked altogether through the natural or intentional course of forgetting.

EPILOGUE

Analysing some Greek Cypriot artists' works, we have argued that the experience of trauma resists being turned into a "finished product." Memories of traumatic events are often unutterably and surprisingly evoked by body language, visual images, verbal and written words, sound, or even silence. Ultimately, not only do these artists' works throw into relief the aesthetic potential of visual practice, but they also address the theoretical and ethical "im-possibilities" of such a practice. Using materials and concepts, these artists investigate the aesthetic and ethical predicaments of their memory and re-collection after the war, where history and the belated or deferred confrontation with it happen within excruciating social, cultural and artistic processes. Thus, Cypriot post-war art, by virtue of its performative nature as "a speech-act," contributes to the remaking of the self. "*Saying* something about a traumatic memory *does* something to it," remarks Susan J. Brison.[43] If desymbolization and fragmentation is integral to the traumatized self, these visual and literal forms of expression can be a significant means through which the self deals with its traumatic past and tormenting memory.

Our argument has been that Greek Cypriot artists' works, in their engagement with trauma, rely on processes of abstraction, destruction, fragmentation, territorialization, deterritorialization, sedimentation and decay. We have inscribed the possibility of representation in the Cypriot artists' works within a Lyotardian metaphor of im-possibility, where no aesthetic object is ever right or appropriate to the historic trauma that it takes as its grounding subject. Greek Cypriot artists are faced with a history directed towards the *immemorial*, to that which cannot either be remembered (represented) or forgotten (erased), a history which evokes the figures that haunt the claims of historical representation – 'haunt,' in the sense that they are neither present to them nor absent from them.

As is evidenced in Cypriot artists' projects, the awareness of this collapse of representation, or im-possibility, does not diminish the desire to try to commemorate, to strive to do the im-possible. The obligation to work is also an undertow of the inwardness of the melancholic, and so

these artists continue to work and to produce and, if not to mourn, then at least to confront deferred and traumatic history.[44] To borrow Caruth's expression, they have difficulty "awakening to life" after "surviving their trauma without knowing it."[45] Greek Cypriot artists' works can be viewed as yet-to-be-completed, as resisting the intention for wholeness, conclusion, and resolution, and instead sustaining it as desire. An issue in their works is the effort to sustain the memories at the level of desire, to live out the dislocations with some impression of reflexivity, and to present a layering of im-possibilities. Art is therefore a realm that opens up the world, unfolding it towards that which we are unable to represent. In their works, the artists discussed seem to enact a conception of another set of relations between representation and the 'unrepresentable' (the "figural"), which is articulated in Deleuze's discussion of sensation, "that which is directly transmitted and which avoids the boredom of a story to be told."[46] As the 'unrepresentable' is not located in an image of violence, we have tried to locate it in the connection between the work and the audience. The direct action upon the nervous system constitutes part of a mode of representation, which would allow this violence of sensation to take place. It will not fit in the frame of figuration. Instead, it demands a different mode of representation to accommodate itself.

The cause of the violence, the fragmented (or fractured) sensory experience, and the unpredictable and persistent temporality of trauma and memory in contemporary Greek Cypriot art are invisible but present – they constitute a force which makes its presence known. Suffering from a burden of historical belatedness, Cypriot artists attempt the im-possible in striving to bear witnesses to the loss and suffering experienced not only through a past loss, but rather to something at once more general and more devastating: namely to the loss inscribed in the movement of temporality itself. There is an intense awareness of a traumatic past, but also an expectant openness: a void waiting to be filled by worlds yet to be born, worlds that could be equally doubtful, painful, insecure and uncertain.

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[1] The Green Line "scenery" comprises both an element and a backdrop of daily life, especially for the people living in Nicosia. For Greek Cypriots in particular, the humongous Turkish flag painted on Pentadactylos Mountain, is a regular yet constantly upsetting sight.

[2] The *de facto* geographical and population partition of the island has greatly limited access to Turkish Cypriot artworks for research south of the Green Line, while the few bibliographical overviews of twentieth-century Cypriot art contain practically no worthwhile analysis of works by Turkish Cypriot artists. Inevitably, our research has focused on the work of Greek Cypriot artists, and our analysis concerns the Greek Cypriot experience in general.

[3] The achievement of independence in 1960, following decades of British colonial rule, resulted in a feeling of optimism and the strong desire for modernization (of the hitherto largely agrarian society), especially within the cultural scene, including the visual arts.

[4] Antonis Danos, "Twentieth-Century Greek Cypriot Art: An 'Other' Modernism on the Periphery," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 32.2 (October 2014), 25.

[5] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

[6] Cathy Caruth, ed. and intro. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 5.

[7] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative and History,* 6.

[8] Shoshana Felman, "The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*," *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, eds. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), 224.

[9] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 86.

[10] Doris Brothers, *Falling Backwards: An Exploration of Trust and Self-Experience* (New York: Norton, 1995), 56.

[11] Such strategies by Greek Cypriot artists – which constitute their negotiation of trauma as 'response' to the 1974 events – do not seem to differentiate in terms of generational variances.

[12] Barbara Bolt, "Unimaginable Happenings: Material Movements in a Plane of Composition," *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, ed. Stephen Zepke and Simon O'Sullivan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 266.

[13] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press 1994), 181-2.

[14] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 196.

[15] Jean-Francois Lyotard compared Auschwitz to an earthquake that destroyed all seismographic devices and therefore cannot be measured and represented within the applicable sign systems, and only leaves powerful yet imprecise traces of its magnitude. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 56. Lyotard contends that if one is to represent the Holocaust as part of history then it becomes just one more atrocity among others in the long history of man's inhumanity to man. In a similar manner to Theodor Adorno, he believes that in order to respect the impossibility of atonement, of coming to terms with horror by representing it, one must write a history that will testify to the 'unrepresentable' horror without representing it. This amounts to the deconstruction of the binary opposition between voice and silence, history and the unhistorical, remembering and forgetting. See Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Arts and Politics* (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 1991), 62.
[16] Caruth's crucial idea of belatedness draws on two interrelated Freudian concepts: *Nachträglichkeit* ("deferred action", "afterward-ness") and latency. The idea of latency is partly based on PTSD symptomatology.
[17] Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations In Memory*, 5.
[18] W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Pictures* (2006), quoted in Bolt, "Unimaginable Happenings: Material Movements in a Plane of Composition," 266.
[19] Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: Logic of Sensation*, trans. D. W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2004), 56.
[20] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Discours, figure*, trans. Mary Lydon (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 237.
[21] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 71.
[22] Simon O'Sullivan points out that this is, however, not all without its dangers: "Indeed, for Deleuze-Bacon there are two 'wrong' positions as it were, which the middle way of the "figural" must avoid. Figuration […], but also the *absolute* deterritorialization of the figure (the move to total abstraction). We might call these the twin dangers of moving *too* slow – of remaining within representation – but also of moving too fast and ultimately following a line of abolition. […] The "figural" involves a not-too-fast but also a not-too-slow deterritorialization of the figure – a rupturing of the latter so as to allow something else to appear, or to be heard 'behind' the figure as it were." "From Stuttering and Stammering to the Diagram: Deleuze, Bacon and Contemporary Art Practice," *Deleuze Studies* 3 (2009), 256.
[23] Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 59.
[24] O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation*, 130.
[25] David Burrows, "An Art Scene as Big as the Ritz: The Logic of the Scenes," *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, 160.
[26] Ronald Bogue, "Gilles Deleuze: the aesthetic of Force," *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 260.
[27] David Sylvester*, The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon* (23); quoted in Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality," *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, 44.
[28] From a 1981 article [in Greek], quoted in Antonis Danos, "Tassos Stephanides," *Cypriot Artists: The Second Generation*, vol. 1 (Nicosia: The Marfin Laiki Bank Cultural Centre, 2009), 11.
[29] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
[30] Igrid de Kok, "Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition," *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, eds. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 56-71.
[31] For Deleuze, the diagram is the operative set of a-signifying lines, and the rhizome is a network of lines and zones which is not final but suggestive of something, of new relations of forms. When it comes to painting, he argues that the diagram is not sufficient on its own as successful painting: the diagrammatic marks must be utilised in some way to disrupt figuration. In this, Deleuze argues for the diagram in painting as a localization of random traits and events. Burrows, "An Art Scene as Big as the Ritz," 160.
[32] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 4.
[33] See Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 108.
[34] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987), 301.
[35] Robert Jay Lifton, *The Broken Connection* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 172. See also Bruno Bettleheim, *Surviving and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), especially, the essay, "Surviving."
[36] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 7.
[37] Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature and Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 36-38.
[38] One of the pitfalls that Antoniou wanted to avoid in creating these works was the fetishization of the subject matter. She wishes to work on an affective level, which does not in any way directly reference those events, but deals with them tangentially and in an indirect reference to the war trauma.

[39] O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation*, 59.
[40] Stefan Tiron, "Phantom Limbs in a Cart: The Tracings of Klitsa Antoniou," *Klitsa Antoniou: Tracing Homeness, Venice Open 2002* (Nicosia: Ministry of Culture 2002), 9
[41] Antonis Danos, "Preface: Siting an Exhibition," *Somatópia: Mapping Sites, Siting Bodies* (Nicosia: Ministry of Education and Culture, 2005), 9.
[42] Lars Bang Larsen and Suely Rolnik, "A conversation on Lygia Clark's Structuring the self," *Afterall Magazine* 16 (Autumn/Winter 2007). What is crucial here is the introduction of a term that the Brazilian psychoanalyst and curator Suely Rolnik has loosely identified as the state of "invisible memory:" a state experienced by many Brazilian artists whose creative force was stifled by the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964 – 1985).
[43] Susan J. Brison, "Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self," *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crew, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 38-39; Susan J. Brison, "Outliving Oneself: Trauma, Memory, and Personal Identity," *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana Tjetjens Meyers (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 25.
[44] Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn* (London: Vintage Press, 1996), 126.
[45] Cathy Caruth, "Traumatic Departures: Survival and History in Freud," *Trauma and Self*, eds. Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996), 34.
[46] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 18.