

A collection of photographs and old postcards of Famagusta and some super 8 film strips were the starting point of this project. Encountering the forms of the modernist architects of the 60s and 70s in a parade of beach blocks, and taking into account the solitude of stillness that modern culture can sometimes instill, we were led to understand that this great bulk of cement on this thin strip of land –the beachfront of Varoshia– is in fact an organic and not an inanimate, lifeless construction.

Musing over the postcards invokes memories of happiness and abundance; memories of a very specific urban environment, images of how people went about their daily lives, enjoying their then modern city. Coming out of this snapshot mode, we come across the depiction of an urban settlement built on top of the ruins of the ancient city of Arsinoe*.

That which is created is a puzzle made out of plastic forms that have lost their geometry, assembled together as a short movie of that era. The narration continues beyond the melodramatic character of the solitary-single image, and, as it doubles, it alternates between observing you and inviting you to observe it, or both. Often this storytelling coexists with the elements, such as air, smoke, or water.

The romantic epic of representation, which dominates the depictions of memory, is broken into pieces of free writing. The image sprouting from the fields of landscape art is being experienced, choosing to either interact with you, or take up some of your space. The personal and specific use of the materials (oil colour, electricity, charcoal, acrylics) allows the passage from a dramatic past to the contemporary where the viewer partakes in a depiction of tenderness and destruction, where time is invalidated, is overturned, it is being reformed into composition.

“Feel the static past.”

Ammochostos is not the corpse of a dead city, she is a muse. A magical city, even though it's grown accustomed to living without us.

Stefanos Karababas

*City built by Ptolemaios Philadelfos in 247 B.C., in honor of his sister.

Since 2003 when one of the barricades was opened, I felt the need to get to know all the places that until then had been completely forbidden to us. I started an ambulatory work in the city of Nicosia where I grew up and where I live, which involved drawing, photographing and taking interviews. It was a way for me to discover the other half and to converse with it.

With regards to Ammochostos, things were completely different. Although my mother's family originates from the city and I thus grew up much connected to its memory, I never had the opportunity to experience life there, since I was born a few months before the war. I visited the area many times, stood on the beachfront looking at the wrecked buildings, swam in the waters, as far as it is permitted, drove all around its periphery. I took photos secretly; I listened to the scarce sounds. This image of complete desertion crushed me each time, the barbed wire going round the city kept me at a distance; I could not capture the city, establish a relationship with it.

And so I started to search for images of the time when Ammochostos was still a free city. Photographic albums that somehow managed to make it across the line, old family super 8 movies and old postcards.

The cooperation with Stefanos occurred naturally; he was as enchanted with the images of the city. We worked together creatively, each contributing to the image after the other. This helped at taking some distance from the weight of History and at approaching its depth.

We discovered an urban, progressive society, bestowed with humor, with a specific passion for all things relating to the sea and the arts. The image we see today of the wrecked grey buildings came to life with colours, and the longing, the love for the city begun to take on a new substance and meaning.

The snapshots of the life of Ammochostos were depicted monumentally not as sketches on paper or photomontages but with oil on canvas – a material that seems to suit the period and the depiction of an era that was and is no more. The fastidious transfer of the image of the postcard on a larger scale allowed the time for real

observation of the space, creating the illusion of observing a real cityscape.

The interventions on the chosen images as well as the rest of studies, collages and simple constructions, served in annihilating the time gap while also somehow filling the void of not having actually experienced the city. The interventions also helped us to render the playful mood of its society.

The horizontal lines gave us a step from which we could enter the space, and the circular geometric patterns like embroidery, like puffs of air, allowed us to travel through the image in a poetic mood.

This working process also functioned as a contemporary ritual of catharsis and reconnection to the place. Capturing the city through archive material and rendering its life today, with contemporary means, we managed to establish a certain kind of experiencing and connection.

Kyriakos Charalambides's poetry resonated within us. The verses of his poems came to meet our images most naturally. We thank the poet who so openheartedly encouraged us to use his words in the process of Capturing the City.

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