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To:
"Suspending Absence"
Site and Time Capsule for the
Lost Bergen Crisis Collective! 11th
SAR International Conference on
Artistic Research 2020

February 28, 2021

UPDATED PRESENTATION

Rehearsing memories - Naming the dead. Performative aspects of political loss

My proposal to the 11th SAR international conference was an online participatory presentation. Specifically, I would have presented video fragments of my postdoctoral research and invite the audience to share any relevant experience and/or memory of cases of political loss.

My postdoctoral research¹ deals with political loss and its public manifestation both as a social traumatic experience and a generator of collectiveness, solidarity and resistance. In the practical level, I create mnemonic performances using image-based digital media to expose the 'appearances' of the tragically wronged deceased in public memory, space and time. I have taken as a starting point the case of the 34-year-old anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas who was murdered by members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn on September 18, 2013, in Keratsini, a suburban area of Piraeus, Greece to address questions such as: How does this political loss produce temporalities of memory and mnemonic performance? What concerns and what needs arise in art from such an extreme act of censorship as that of the irreversible end of one of its people, of his political artwork and its aesthetic approach? Dealing with this political loss from the point of view of a visual artist/photographer and researcher, I explore these

¹ My postdoctoral research, "Performative aspects of political loss: Lethal censorships, haunting memories" is being developed in collaboration with the Department of Social Anthropology at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences under the supervision of Athena Athanasiou, Professor of Social Anthropology, Culture Theory and Gender Studies. It is co-funded by Greece and the European Union (European Social Fund-ESF) through the Operational Program "Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning", in the framework of the "Reinforcement of Postdoctoral Researchers - 2nd circle" (MIS-5033021) act implemented by the State Scholarships Foundation of Greece (IKY).

questions combining social theory with artistic performance and tracing the fact in the intricate field of the interrelations between aesthetics and politics.

Responding to the invitation for an online presentation of the Bergen SAR *Crisis Collective!* conference 2020 lost due to the pandemic, I reformulated my initial proposal to include the developments of my postdoctoral research under the circumstances of the current biopolitics of fear that infiltrates the battle against the coronavirus. The idea to act for saving the 'ruins' of a conference signifies an ethical command towards anything that is lost unjustly. In this sense, the concept of "Suspending Absence" is associated to the ethics I am dealing with in researching modes for mnemonic demonstrations.

In the online aspect of the conference and within the virtual one-page space defined by the electronic platform, I assembly two different modes of exposition:

1. A viewing of:
 - *The World Upside Down* (2020) video – duration, 11 minutes
 - the photographic documentation of the *Clepsydra* (2020) public mnemonic performance/ephemeral installation
2. An attempt to generate participatory interactivity by allowing/encouraging the visitors of the page to leave their own text comments

Specifically, considering the platform of this online presentation as a site of marking the absence of physical present, I invite the visitors to view the above visual evidence and contribute in transforming this web page to a virtual counter-monument for those who have been lost unjustly in racist and fascist attacks condemned thus, to a continuous absence. Thus, I ask visitors to share other political assassination cases they know of that have taken place either in their own country or elsewhere. Practically, participants may leave the name of the dead, their identity along with the time, place and cause of death at the comments' box.

Embracing the internet as a practice of a long-distance participation, my purpose is to map the trauma route through memorialized encounters of political *phantasma* [ghosts] and generate a conversation on how art research practices can respond to the urgencies and emergencies posed by the current rising of neo-fascist movements in Europe. Moreover, naming the dead is in a way a form of unearthing them, a political action reminding our responsibility towards them, the rise of racism, fascism, biopolitics and the violent attacks against our democracies. All the names mentioned by the visitors will be used at the final stage of this postdoctoral research and

in the form of an audio-visual installation. In this installation, the visitors' identity will remain anonymous.

DESCRIPTION OF THE VISUAL MATERIAL

- **The *World Upside Down*** (March 2020) performed video reconfigures time and space through encounters of traumatic experience with social resistance. It contains fragments of several mnemonic events in the forms of street protests, festivals and/or concerts related to the murdered musician Pavlos Fyssas. Produced in 2020, this single-channel digital video with sound, also includes certain image recordings and sound pieces from my conversation with the mother of the murdered rapper, Magda Fyssa and selected sound testimonies from my discussions with members of the anti-fascist audience of the trial against Golden Dawn.



Fig. 1: *How to accept it*, video still, *The World Upside Down* © Maria Paschalidou 2020

- ***Clepsydra*** public mnemonic performance/ephemeral installation, which I realized at the outdoor theatre of Lipasmata Drapetsonas (Drapetsona, Piraeus, October 2020), interrelates Pavlos Fyssas' murder with other twenty selected cases of blatant political violence in Greece during the years of 1978-2020, a period of Metapolitefsi which marks the regime transition from dictatorship to democracy. Some of the memorialized lethal incidents were the result of state racism that identifies enemies outside the population, as in the cases of economic immigrants and/or refugees; others who lost their lives to the state executive mechanism (police / special forces) attacking either in the form of groups or

individually; cases of nationalist hate and racist violence to death by citizens attacking either in groups or as individuals.



Fig. 2: *Clepsydra* © Maria Paschalidou 2020; photo-documentation, Lambros Papanikolatos



Fig. 3: *Clepsydra* © Maria Paschalidou 2020; photo-documentation, Lambros Papanikolatos

The twenty-one cases memorialized in *Clepsydra*:

YEAR	NAME	AGE	IDENTITY	PLACE	CAUSE
2020	Azizel Nteniroglou	42	Armenian woman prisoner	Eleonas Prison, Thiva	Left to die helpless after heavy coronavirus symptoms
	Muhammad al-Arab	-	Refugee from Syria	Evros/Meriç river delta	Shot by the Greek authorities on the side of the Greek border
	Fatma Hakim Isik	-	Refugee from Syria	Evros/Meriç river	Had been missing since February 2020 and presumed dead after she and her husband had been separated from their six children while attempting to cross the river
2018	Zak Kostopoulos / Zackie Oh	33	Queer performer and activist	Omonoia, Athens	Savagely beaten by two men, in broad daylight, in full view of the passers-by who did absolutely nothing.
	Petrit Zifle	63	Worker from Albania	Lefkimmi County of Corfu	Killed by a Greek representative of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn.
	Eleni Topaloudi	21	Student	Rhodes	Her murder has been characterized as femicide as her body was brutalised beyond recognition.
2015	Vangelis Giakoumakis	20	Student	Dairy School of Ioannina	Physically, verbally and psychologically tortured by his fellow students since they found his gender performance unacceptable and inconsistent with the dominant expression of masculinity.
2013	Shehzad Luqman	27	Worker from Pakistan	Petalona, Athens	Murdered by members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn.
	Pavlos Fyssas	34	Anti-fascist rapper musician	Keratsini, Piraeus	Murdered by members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn.
2012	Anonymous	19	Iraqi immigrant	Omonoia Square, Athens	Fatally injured by members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn.
2011	Alim Abdul Manan	21	Immigrant from Bangladesh	Kato Patissia, Athens	After being chased by fascist groups on motorcycles was stabbed to death.

2008	Alexandros Grigoropoulos	15	High-school student	Exarchia, Athens	Fatally shot by a member of the special guard unit of the Greek police.
2006	Alex Mechisvili	11	Elementary-school student	Veria	He was bullied, tortured and killed by his co-pupils and his body was never found.
2004	Gramoz Palushi	20	Albanian worker	Tsivili, Zakynthos	He was celebrating the victory of the Albanian national football team over the Greek team and was stabbed to death by a Greek during a fight after the end of the match.
1996	Fantil Nabuzi	20	Economic migrant from Albania	Karditsa	Shot by a police officer as he was attempting to steal two watermelons.
	Christoforos Marinos	29	Greek activist anarchist	Ship Pegasus; Serifos to Athens	Found dead in the cabin of a ship as he was transported by the police.
1991	Nikos Temponeras	34	High-school teacher	Patras	Fatally attacked with iron bars, rods and concrete blocks by members of ONNED (a right-wing youth union).
1985	Michalis Kaltezas	15	High-school student	Exarchia, Athens	Shot at the back of the head by a police officer.
1980	Stamatina Kanellopoulou	21	Worker	Panepistimiou Street, centre of Athens	Fell unconscious from the repeated beatings of police clubs while she was marching in the memorial protest as a tribute to the victims of the Athens Polytechnic Uprising of 1973.
	Iakovos Koumis	24	Cypriot student	Syntagma Square, Athens	He participated in the same aforementioned protest and was attacked to death in by the MAT, a special division of the Greek Police.
1978	Vasilis Tsironis	49	Doctor	Palaio Faliro, Piraeus	Shot by the commandos of National Security Units in his house.