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The Sacred and

the Naked

Undisciplined Research Mirroring Its Object

PWC (PUBLIC WORKS CHORA)'S DEMETRIIS TALIOITIS &
EVI TSELIKA IN CONVERSATION

The following text is a compulsive and compulsory research splinter concerning Cypriot public space, who claims it and who inhabits it, and the intense visual stamping that occurs on the territory and on the bodies of inhabitants. Through a methodology of exchange of findings and comparing seemingly absurd facts that prescribe the local, PWC probes into the concepts of urban space, ownership and accessibility, the contemporary art market and the idea of social engagement in Cyprus's highly fragmented spaces.

Fictional and factional figures acquired are utilised to examine the role and function of the Cypriot Orthodox Church, which

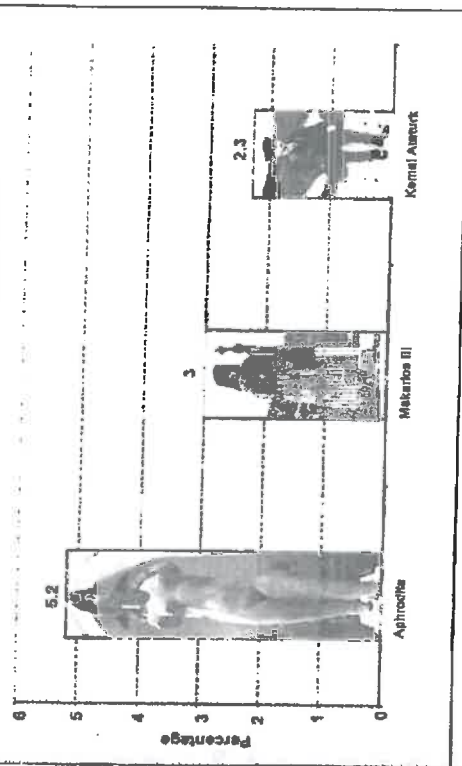
is the richest financial institution on the island.¹ A main character in this analysis is the activities of the autocephalous Church of Cyprus, a defining player in the production of public art, cultural identity and state wealth. Another is the metaphorical use of the tourist icon of Aphrodite, which the Cypriot state has adopted to promote itself as the island of love. This is ironic in the context of high levels of illegal prostitution and sex slavery that are found within urban and rural settings,² and further highlights the disparity in the representation of the sexes in both religious and high-level state management.

By actively quantifying unquantifiable notions that

are highly predominant both in the specific place and in its representation abroad, one more element brought into focus is the direct interplay between economy, market and cultural patterns and production. Through comparisons and direct use of quantifying graphs to speak in terms of visual ventures, social phenomena, ownership and the

idiosyncrasies that characterise the Cypriot locale, we aim to present the work of PWC in an innovative manner that plays with notions of the financial urban centre. This is not manifested as an analysis of the visual graphs but rather the graphs act as stepping stones for a discussion on increasingly prominent matters of critical global concern.

Cypriot Visual Representational Giants



Aphrodite – the patron goddess of the island, who seems to have been a reinterpretation of the Eastern Mediterranean goddess Astarte. The worship of Aphrodite, which spanned a period of thousands of years on the island, was manifested in the form of divine prostitution.

Archbishop Makarios III – the first president of the island, from 1960 up until his death in 1977. He was also the head of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Kemal Ataturk – the first president of Turkey and the person credited as the creator of the modern Turkish state. In North Cyprus his influence is highly present in the construction of the secular character of the social reality of Turkish Cypriots.

These three representational giants for the locale can be seen in busts and sculptures, images on walls, on key rings and t-shirts. All three speak of the notions of Greekness, Turkishness and Cypriotness: creating direct links and metaphors for the insistence on identity politics that define the island and maintain it in its position as a still not formed coherent state.

DT: When talking about Cyprus I always remember these lines from Seferis:

*And this island: who knows if
I've lived my life hearing names I've
never heard before ...³*

The onomasiology of public space could not have evaded Cyprus. That definition of land ownership via the proprietorship of names, later developed by the British empire into the land registry, has shaped the modern use and history of Cyprus as an island. Nonetheless, the Cypriot onomasiology of public space has remained minimal and liminal. Geographically restricted.

From *Κύπρις Αφροδίτη* (Cyprus Aphrodite) to Kibris, the naming, the ownership of space has firmly

remained within the remit of *blessed (μακάγια/ μακαρία)* sanctification. Between altar, church bell and minaret. Driving through Cyprus – who walks anyway? – one can see how the privatised space has been shaped by this relationship of land and sacredness. Domestic, commercial and state architecture roars with farcical attempts to mimic in order to partake in this patrimony.

This fixation with ownership, with the 'House' – only equalled by the Cypriot fixation with that Berlinesque division of the island, exemplified in Nicosia – has left a visible gap in any discussion of the public space in Nicosia as a public's space. Moreover, whereas the big guys – Makarios and Kemal – are everywhere to be seen and in a sense privatised, once more, any public space by providing it with either of their distinct community identities (community not communal), Aphrodite is either in the museum or on cabaret and strip club signs, or on coconut-scented beach towels, and as the logo of other controversial 'delights'.

ET: As one lies on a beach towel adorned with Aphrodite's curvy figure one cannot help but wonder how come there are no

Makarios-decorated towels to be found? I guess it would be too sacrilegious for naked tourist bodies to lie on the Ethnarch's face. The use of the image of the patron goddess of Cyprus in juxtaposition with the dominant male figures of Makarios III, who represents the Cypriot Orthodox church (an entity devoid of women), and Kemal Ataturk, who can be taken to represent the secular Turkish Army (another entity defined by female absence), is highlighted in the above graph and can be interpreted through the concepts of ethnicity, sex, gender and male/female balances and equilibriums.

An important element, and one that is largely understudied in the case of Cypriot discourse, is how the ethnic lines can also be interpreted as lines of gender. Far removed from times when woman worship described the island context, the local landscape is now quite largely embedded with the masculine stamping of ethno-nationalism. According to gender peace analysts, the bi-polar political system on the island is an expression of the male dominating power structure. The gender lines and inequality remain highly

prevalent. Due to the focus on the 'ethnic' problem, many social issues go unresolved. Cyprus, with its repeated representation as a young maiden who needs protection and its ardent relations with the two ethnic communities in the respective motherlands, depicts a set of gender relations that refer back to the structures of nationalist ideology that was passionately preached by both Makarios III and Kemal Ataturk. As Cynthia Cockburn indicates, "patriarchy and ethno-nationalism are partners in theory, sexism and racism are partners in practice";

DT: Talking of sexism, I also wonder how many nudes the Church of Cyprus art collection has? How many depictions of Aphrodite, Venus, whatever? It was the first public art collection on the island,⁶ initiated by Archbishop Makarios himself in 1963,⁷ and is still the only one accessible online – part of it at least.

Amongst Lefteris Economou's painting *Great Female Marches* 1989–1991 and portraits of the Greek royal family, do they have Aphroditisque nudes?

ET: The nude Cypriot female body is an absent notion.

The 'desirable nude body' is something reserved for the large numbers of foreign women who work in the gentlemen's nightclubs. What we used to be faced with instead was the use of the Cypriot female body as a means for political propaganda, which further maintained the myth of the maiden Cyprus that needs protection. The recurrent images of Greek Cypriot women becoming a wall of remembrance through the demonstrations up until the late 1990s, especially at the Ledra Palace checkpoint in Nicosia, and asking for the recovery of their missing persons,⁴ has now become a thing of the past, as the missing are being exhumed and people being put to rest. Cypriot women in Cyprus are minimally represented in the army, absent from the church's managerial ranks. Whereas foreign women in Cyprus are mostly treated as sex objects in the many strip clubs found in Nicosia, as well as being sexually harassed across the island.⁵ The large mono-cultural dominance within the two ethnically divided parts has resulted in patterns of racism that are now causing increasing problems as the migration levels are constantly rising and there

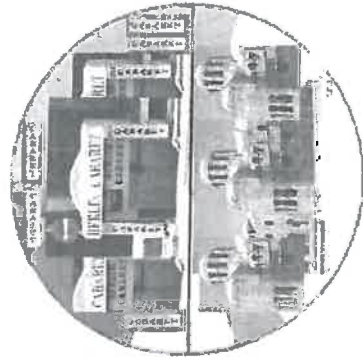
is minimal assistance from the state for the integration of these migrants and their children into Cypriot society.⁶ Cyprus at the present moment demonstrates a social scape that has come to be inscribed by multiculturalism. However, there is a persistent lack of state policy towards the smooth integration of its most recent inhabitants.⁷

DT: As the current President Christofias said during his locally infamous speech at the Brookings Institution in Washington in late 2010, Cyprus is one big geographical victim of rape, an Aphrodite deflowered: "So as you know, Cyprus is a very, very beautiful island. A whole island. But unfortunately, let me say it's been raped and we have to restore the visions of Cyprus. The island of Cyprus is famous as the island of love. It is the island of Aphrodite, as you know."

Cyprus, the rape victim in Christofias speech, is the Cyprus of the coup of 15 July 1974, the Greek junta coup, and of the subsequent Turkish invasion/peace operation on 20 July 1974. But other macho penis formations have been present for quite some time, before and after July 1974,

forcing themselves through and on the island as land. Geologically, Cyprus is characterised by arid valleys and eroding beaches. All of its urban centres can be either found by the sea or in the singular case of Nicosia across a plain. Architecturally, minarets and Greek Orthodox churches, Venetian walls and gothic cathedrals, tropical modernist¹⁴ blocks of flats and, most recently, nondescript hotel resorts (designed it seems especially to incorporate bulbous breasts and big, fat penises), all diametrically oppose the vernacular architecture of Cyprus with its low-ceiling, mud-brick buildings.

ET: The worship of Aphrodite in ancient Cyprus revolved around the notion of 'sacred prostitution'. This flourished on the island



during the classical period (475–325 BC). It is said that young girls would serve as priestesses in the temple of the goddess and wander the land offering themselves in the name of their goddess. It is also reported that all women would have to do this once in their life in honour of Aphrodite. They would sit in the outside public space with their hand extended waiting for a man to put in a coin, which would then lead to sexual intercourse and an offering. Another myth has it that as Paphos was the main centre for the worship of Aphrodite many would come there from other places and even before their boats docked at the harbour the women of the island would be taken onto the ships and offer themselves in honour of the goddess.¹⁵ Today, a far cry from the worship of the goddess, the sex workers on the

Gentleman's Clubs
and Cypriot cabarets
50%



Cypriot Orthodox
Churches under
construction
50%



island are predominantly from other countries mainly in Eastern Europe's ex-Soviet bloc, Asia, Latin America and the Near East. Prostitution is still to this day predominantly female and the Greek name for a sex worker or prostitute is *ierodouli*, a 'slave of the sacred'.

ET: It could be claimed that the Cypriot art historical legacy has long revolved around the church's murals, icons and paintings. As the richest institution on the island, the church owns huge amounts of artistic religious relics,¹⁴ which form part of its financial portfolio. Cyprus is also known as the 'island of the saints', a notion that is not surprising if one sees the number of churches that are to be found on its small territory. It is a number that is constantly increasing as church construction has been occurring at an unprecedented rate. With a new cathedral that will surpass 22 metres in height being planned in the old centre of Nicosia, the play of power seems to still constitute a firm reality in the landscape.

In the Nicosia suburb of Aglantzia, in one street that is three kilometres long there are three churches – one per kilometre.

The spiritual significance of this architectural symbolism is all but forgotten as they sprout in the landscape like mushrooms after the rain, and one cannot help but wonder what their function is in an increasingly secular island?¹⁵

DT: The secular is, though, another sacred notion. Another church-manifested notion. Archbishop Makarios was also the first president of the Republic and stayed there for 17 years. Of course there were democratic elections, but the percentage of Makarios approval was steadily in the high 90s, even after his death in 1977. Therefore the notion of the secular Cypriot state passes through the church of Cyprus. It was the archbishop's palace that was most heavily bombed during the coup, and it was there that they tried to assassinate Makarios in March 1971 – Makarios the president.

In a sense, the secular state is but the prostitute of the church, as the state is still highly co-dependent on the church in a variety of ways. A mode of transition from uber-Byzantinism to contemporary Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean politics. Authoritarian, leader-cattered and violent. The numerous

churches stand, spread out, not as reminders of the sacred but as indirect reminders of the state itself.

ET: And speaking of *secular prostitutes*, the focus shifts again to the contemporary sex industry of Cyprus. The island has become a major transit point for prostitutes in the Eastern Mediterranean and the EU authorities accuse the Cypriot state of being highly tolerant of illegal prostitution as it bears witness to the exploitation of countless young women from all over the world. Women are brought over for supposed jobs as waitresses or domestic workers and are then forced into the sex trade, either by their employer or through lack of other forms of work. Many are not allowed to move freely and are housed in groups in apartment blocks and managed strictly by their pimps. The cabaret venues that are plentiful in the city become much more prominent at night and if one walks in the main square of the old town in the early hours of the morning, the girls that work in the sex industry are all eating after the night's work. It is one of the few times that they seem to make a strong presence in the

public space. Sex trafficking occurs within a multitude of venues used by Cyprus's commercial sex industry, including cabarets, bars, pubs and massage parlours, often disguised as private apartments and located throughout both urban and rural settings.

DT: Since 2009, to legally get a job in the cabarets – and by extension in the massage parlours – you need to have at least a ballet school diploma. This came about after the claims of cabaret owners – whose businesses are often housed in church-owned property – that what the cabarets offer and promote is art. Again, via names, playing with the word 'artiste' (ἀρτίσταν του καραπέ, a cabaret artist), they made a most impressive conjectural leap. This wasn't prostitution, and if it was it was in the name of art. As with any conjecture, this too allowed for a multiplicity of proposals, from a multitude of sources, as to what a cabaret is and how it is supposed to work – not the best business practice when you are trying to control a secretive and tightly knit organisation like sex trafficking, and in conjunction with some high-profile Viagra-related deaths albeit urban legend ones

(Mr Kamougiaros, one of the most famous cabaret owners and 'artiste' agents in Cyprus, apparently died after consuming one blue pill too many), the cabaret industry started experiencing a decline. The outcome of this decline was that the South East Asian immigrant community, who up to that point had been meeting in the few public gardens and even fewer social support centres on their days off, rented out these former cabarets and turned them into 'ethnic' clubs.

ET: Cyprus's fragmented public space, sphere and realm all seem to highlight the male/female interplay as it is witnessed

vis-à-vis the economic structures of the local. Two very prominent money-makers are compared and contrasted here: the Orthodox Church and the Cypriot sex industry. One claims to be the producer of culture, the other of artistic performance. What both industries unquestionably produce is huge amounts of yearly profit. Profit that is sedulously concealed, in both cases, from the opinion of the Cypriot public. There appears to be very little willingness to accept criticality in this heavily indoctrinated and nepotism-defined social landscape.

DT: Regardless of all the talk of Cyprus having an orderly, if violated, public space – both partly



The Cypriot Merman, July 2009, EVANTHIA TSELIKA

due to its position as an ex-colony in the Eastern Mediterranean – it is very difficult to talk about this space in a concrete way, to academically research it. It is a haphazard social phenomenon, an unresearchable, scattered and unclassifiable conglomeration. The role of the church is, of course, a primary factor – historically, socially, politically – but if one wants to further any research into Cypriot public space the only way is by embracing this space's

absurdity, its eroding porosity and its jumping jacks flashing in every other empty lot, churchyard and pavement. Yes, the public space of Cyprus mirrors international trends; yes, it is layered, but it is also boiling, overflowing, hidden and found in bibliographies and data one cannot even start imagining! Can such a 'thing' qualify as a topic for an academic discipline of research? Does such research even need to be disciplined?

1. "The total economic wealth of the Cyprus Church, which includes the revenue of all its episcopacies and Monasteries amounts to 8,470,976 Euros. The total income in 2008 amounted to 46,012,584 Euros, while total expenditure to 46,167,043 Euros. The Church of Cyprus's income include 970,000 Euros from liturgical income (such as petty cash donations from church goers, candles etc), approximately 10 million Euros from the state towards the priests' salaries, 17 million Euros from investments and rents, roughly 1.3 million Euros from other activities and 1.5 million Euros from stocks." Fiscal audit of the Church of Cyprus, 2008, p. 24.
2. See H. Klaitipis, N. Ioannou and I. Nicolaou (eds), *The Trade of Girls* (Nicosia: Ekseliksi Publishers, 2004).
3. George Seferis, 'Helen', *Log Book III* (1955).
4. This is a conjectural, textual reference to his beatitude Archbishop Makarios III, aka Archbishop The Blessed III.
5. Cynthia Cockburn, *The Limer: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus* (London and New York: ZED Books, 2004) p. 198.
6. For more information on the politics and contents of this collection, see <http://www.makarlosfoundation.org.cy/>.
7. 1963, three years after the independence of Cyprus as a republic, was also the year when ethnic bi-communal troubles amongst Greek and Turkish Cypriots became violent, the focus of which was the December events on the west of the island.
8. One of the human tragedies and urban myths of the 1974 Turkish invasion/peace operation is the number of male persons who were never accounted for. These were assumed to be alive and captured by the Turkish army, numbering to approximately 1,619. This number is under constant renegotiation after the recent finds of mass graves on both sides of the island but particularly in the military graveyard of Nicosia. On 28 April 2011 the number of still unaccounted for 'missing persons' is believed to be around 500.
9. See, for example, the experience of Alice Wang, a Chinese American Fulbright scholar

living in Limassol, Cyprus, <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/opinions/aphrodite-s-home-crue-place/2011033>.

10. For an analysis of migration in the south part of Nicosia, see the 2008 report *Migrant Cities Research, Nicosia South* by Olga Demetriou. This can be accessed at <http://www.prio.no/Cyprus/Publications/>.

11. Cyprus geographically can be found at the crossroads of three continents and it is the easternmost entry point into the European Union. In 2010 and 2011 there have occurred various instances of clashes in Cyprus amongst Cypriot locals and migrants of varying nationalities (mostly from South East Asia, Africa and the Middle East), both adults and teenagers within educational establishments. A fact that characterises the treatment of migrants even at the hands of the police is an illegal Pakistani immigrant's choice to jump out of the window, something that proved fatal, rather than face the policemen (<http://www.inews.gr/135/kypros-pakistanos-protimise-to-thanato-apo-ti-syllipsi.htm>).

12. Tropical Architecture is not a style but rather an approach to architecture that asks for design to be conceived in response to the needs and opportunities of a specific region – although it is not inherently opposed to global potentials. A tropical modernist architecture is defined by its location. An excellent example of this is the work of Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. See Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre and Bruno Slegno (eds), *Tropical Architecture: Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization* (London: Wiley Academic, 2001).

13. See Nickie Roberts, *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society* (London: Harper Collins, 1992).

14. The Archbishop's palace houses three museums within its Nicosia foundation; see <http://www.makariosfoundation.org.cy/>. Kykkos Monastery is the richest one on the island, both in term of monetary income and artefact ownership; see <http://www.kykkos-museum.cy.net/index2.html>.

15. Orthodox Church (87.9% of the Greek Cypriot population) attendance remains quite high throughout generations with 37.9% of frequent churchgoers. However this is lower than the 46.2% of the previous generation, as well as being much more for social reasons rather than spiritual. For figures and further analysis see *Survey on Political and National Perceptions*, http://docs.google.com/viewer?e=v&q=cache:DatLjdzBX3cj:www.prio.no/misc/Download.spx%3Ffile%3D%252Fecsw%252Frd%252FReplication%2BData%252Ffile49645_survey.com.bined.doc+church+attendance+cyprus&hl=en&gl=uk&pid=bl&rcid=ADGESHXgiCmlpStqoWf9UorbQlB5_ivGymTwKZHh6jV-oYTA9wKjA4seMgHXZ7CAchTabkY1W6cjbl6_QxEpZasYsSXOVhZ6dwAPwGQkdetoL5kOBYq-mPmh_Ss8AFpQONVv98stlg-AHTEb5SPqXBO7C9GfFApLH_2.1zUrGlz2eQ.

PINK

The Art of Being Confident

NANNA NIELSEN & TRENTON OLDFIELD

If you had any interest in the people who worked in or around the financial services industries in the previous decade, it was difficult not to notice the concentration and number of men wearing pink shirts and pink ties. In an attempt to better understand a little of the shrouded mechanisms of the City of London and the confidence of the men who choose to wear pink to work, we set out to create a photographic archive of this time and phenomenon.

Exactly why and when men started wearing pink coloured shirts to work in the financial districts of cities remains ambiguous. Pink is a colour often associated with Barbie dresses, pre-pubescent girls' bedrooms or even 'pink movies' – femininity. According to our research, in the past men were most often seen to wear pink shirts or jackets when they were hunting. Perhaps unsurprisingly the narrative of pink shirts is now intertwined with a global corporate retail clothing chain store established in the 1980s called PINK, which suggests it is named after a supposedly well-known 18th-century tailor, Thomas Pink, who may have made pink hunting jackets.

The summer of 2006, the period in which we took the photographs, was exceptional in many ways. If you look back over news archives, you will see much of it was taken up with celebrity gossip and launches of new technologies such as mobile devices, online social networking platforms and the world's largest jumbo jets. There were reports of occasional, though not catastrophic, natural disasters alongside detailed reports of ongoing economic growth of nations and across the globe. Britain, despite funding at least two significant wars abroad, was experiencing its longest period of economic growth on record. The financial services industries and the City of London, where these men we photographed worked, in spite of being onerously understudied,