

**Dialogue with Thalea Stefanidou**

1. Thalea: We met and first started working together on the occasion of your artwork presented at the Open 13 international exhibition, which is held every year at the Lido, Venice. The work was a pyramid installation, which was also presented in 2011 in Thessaloniki in the Biennale for Young Artists from the Mediterranean.

You have told me about an installation with pyramids you are currently working on, however this time in an indoor space. What do you think of including in this installation?

Alexandra: I will start by quoting an excerpt from a text by Borges, which I believe summarises - in a metaphorical manner - all the elements of this installation.

**JUDA LEON ARRANGED AND REARRANGED**

**THE LETTERS INTO DARK VARIATIONS**

**AND, AT LAST, PRONOUNCED THE NAME THAT IS THE KEY,  
THE DOOR, THE ECHO, THE GUEST AND THE PALACE..**

In a way, my intention is to produce a playful and at the same time cryptic universe; to construct crypts where structures/altars and impressions of the personal idiolect of an "intuitive channelling" will be arranged, as in an invisible dimension, which initiates processes of relaxation so as to harmonise conflicting internal forces.

I dare say this is a visual depiction of the almost architectural dimension of the artist's senses and delusions within an enclosed area of meditation, which reveals the meaning of paradise.

I am talking about pyramids constructed of "magnetic" materials and placed in a graded order: "AS ABOVE, SO BELOW", as well as secret arks with spray powder mappings and carbon prints, which mirror spectral figures or describe space-time routes along the "DIAMOND WAY" of the lamas.

Energy vortexes, like "trees of life", and hanging dream transmitters reproduce the colour gradations of the aura, while touch, and even breath, activate a system that disseminates blessings, thus causing therapeutic vibrations. I would like the general feeling to be that of the birth of light in the darkness, which contains hundreds of micro-universes, comparative to those brought about by philosophical archetypes at the theoretical level.

2. Thalea: Your answer reflected your affection or rather your inclination towards thought systems that arouse a certain cryptic language and esotericisms of all kinds. Please elaborate on those issues that appear to prevail in your work.

Alexandra: I will refer to an excerpt of an ontological nature, once again by Borges: **THE PATH IS... THE STONE**, and to another one from the *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino:

**... WITH CITIES, IT IS AS WITH DREAMS: EVERYTHING IMAGINABLE CAN BE DREAMED,  
BUT EVEN THE MOST UNEXPECTED DREAM IS A REBUS THAT CONCEALS A DESIRE OR, ITS**

**REVERSE, A FEAR... EVEN IF THE THREAD OF THEIR DISCOURSE IS SECRET, THEIR RULES ARE ABSURD, THEIR PERSPECTIVES DECEITFUL, AND EVERYTHING CONCEALS SOMETHING ELSE,** and to a third excerpt from Plato's *Phaedrus*: **BUT THERE IS ALSO A MADNESS WHICH IS A DIVINE GIFT, AND THE SOURCE OF THE CHIEFEST BLESSINGS GRANTED TO MEN.**

All three excerpts define - in an allegorical way - the creative process which comes to counter the fear of death and mortality. The tasks of painting or sculpting are none other than acts that "step" in the tracks of a secret language in order to cast out all fears and protect against nightmares through these practices. Something like the practices of Worship we see accompanying Faith in its different versions through the centuries. Man, as a creator, seems to function in the cosmic axis, between earth and sky, offering - through his art - a form of revelation similar to divination. It is a mystery approach such as that described through the images of the Major Arcana, images that convey the secret language of the subconscious.

*3. Thalea: Let us recall our collaboration in a performance at the Technochoros art gallery in Athens. The basic element in this action caused a "contemplative loss" through a form of communication that placed weight on the rhythm of language as a system of voices, noises, harmony and musicality. An action that functioned in a particularly liberating way. This time, are you thinking of using sound in parallel with the purely artistic part of this work?*

**Alexandra: In a way I would say yes, because sound necessarily functions as a complement, a supplement or a derivative of the artistic statement. When one finds himself in the obscure, terraced universe with the crypts, he experiences a series of intermittent "echoes" that allude to a kind of spiritual voice/presence, which immediately manifested itself as a bright explosion with an echo and fire. This does not of course involve the enhancement or echo of sound, but the reforming of parallel actions. The perception of sound is based somewhat on the visitor's selective course as he moves between the "secret" passages. Also, this sense of sound is related to fortuitous events and to what Jung referred to as synchronicity.**

**A specific but not directly visible point appears to arouse the spiritual alertness of individuals, thus stimulating their perception of sound or music.**

*4. Thalea: Think of titles of your works or actions, which complement your artistic proposals.*

**Alexandra: Gardens and Mirrors, Pnoes, Transits, Dreamcatchers, Trees of Life, Hermetic Book, Equilibrium, EX-EL-I-X-IS**

**I have reordered them so as to plan a route... within the garden, at the pace of EXELIXIS.**

*5. Thalea: A geometric shape is a symbol in itself. It generates feelings and ideas, similarly to the theosophical views of Mondrian, the spiritual composition of shapes, colours and auras according to Kandinsky, or the archetypal patterns encountered in primitive arts. How do you interact with these timeless, cosmological systems of thought?*

**Alexandra: All of the shapes I have used form the FLOWER OF LIFE MATRIX. As they split up they form new interdependent clusters through the senses.**

**Horizontal and vertical lines determine the flow of matter and the spirit, and it is these centres that determine the energy positioning of the bodies in the**

place of initiation in a way that will bring about the "primary" harmony, strength, tranquillity and therapeutic flow.

The squares, but mainly the circles and spirals set the pace for the recycling of energy.

The temporary/ephemeral mounting of the work over a period of one month alludes to a Mandala, which is formed and then destroyed...

6. *Thalea: What is the relationship between your work and the view of being present in the specific space and time, like the ZEN experience, the here and now of the ZEN?*

Alexandra: In a place where energy flows in abundance, there grow points and gates that link - in an interactive way - the space-time realities of individuals in the present.

A ritual in a natural space interspersed with "Trees of Life" is like an extension of paradise.

The written recording of instantaneous desire in the "Akashic" record of the universe penetrates the "Trees of Life" like a breath of air, turning them into a source of energy in an earthly paradise.

The instant recreation of the world by the artist and his escape to paradise, as it rises from nothing, offers a unique euphoria and sense of pleasure. As stated by Huxley in the *Doors of Perception*: AT HIS ENTRY INTO THAT WORLD HE SAW A HOST OF STAR POINTS AND WHAT LOOKED LIKE FRAGMENTS OF STAINED GLASS. THEN CAME DELICATE FLOATING FILMS OF COLOUR. THESE WERE DISPLACED BY AN ABRUPT RUSH OF COUNTLESS POINTS OF WHITE LIGHT SWEEPING ACROSS THE FIELD OF VISION.

7. *Thalea: Give me a hint of your version of "Greekness" as a way of life, in other words as culture. Is it philosophical, ritualistic, a piece of global civilization that refers to the experience of reading/knowing the W(w)orld?*

Alexandra: To me "Greekness" is an empirical step taken through the artistic ritual, which in a way restores Heraclitus' view on enthusiasm and conquest.

I believe "Greekness" also means the connection between people and "Divine Forces" and the "Universal Mind".

It is also the equation of Hades and Dionysus, or meditation in the poetic areas of the pyramids...

"Greekness" is ultimately a perception of EX-EL-I-X-IS [evolution] going beyond the limits of any form of faith and any version of borders and restrictions, similar to the rationale behind Calvino's invisible cities: such as PYRRHA, as the beginning of experience, ARMILLA as conversation, MORIANA as a breath, LEONIA as strength, EUPHEMIA as earthly recognition, Chloe as a passage to the garden, and ARGIA as placidity.

8. *Thalea: To what extent does the core of your artistic work constitute a journal of experiences?*

Alexandra: Journals/chronicles of trips taken for purposes of isolation, concentration and soul-searching. I see to it that my travels and long-term stays are in places that have a special vibe... Kemijärvi Lapland, Istanbul to name just a few.

Two milestones in this last project, which carried me away as a visitor to temples, ritualistic events, cemeteries, gardens, crypts, fragrances, sounds, primeval and contemporary musical instruments.

My works emerged on the spot; it is logical for the aura of the natural and urban landscape to have a strong effect on them. I always put a lot of work into the atmosphere of my works.

The Kemijärvi drawings are placed in arks. They are dark and cold and are surrounded by solitude, since their elements are sparsely placed in their spaces, thus conveying the feeling of the place where they were conceived and completed.

The days on earth and nights in the sky appear to mirror each other, since the absence of arctic night in the summer is strongly felt. I work with movement, touch, tiers, labyrinths, crypts, transparency, hazy surfaces, light and shadows on the drawings. "Diamondism" resulted from my long-term stay in Istanbul.

Works are like PNOES [breaths], they "evaporate" along with their place of conception.

It is the Here and the Now, the uniqueness of moments. Something like the atmosphere and Pamuk's fantasy regarding the interpretation of the real: *IF SHE WAS INDEED FROM THIS WORLD, SHE SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN CREATED FROM MEMORIES. IF SHE WAS FROM THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE, SHE CARRIED THE FEARS AND SADNESS OF THAT WORLD.. I WATCHED HER, WITHOUT REALISING THAT I WAS LOOKING AT HER.. I WAS AFRAID SHE WOULD BECOME REAL IF I LOOKED AT HER LONGER..*

The spirals were created by me in Venice using Murano glass, at a fleeting moment in time five years ago, not yet knowing their destination. At some point they were incorporated into this installation as necessary elements thereof.

The reflectors and crystals multiplied after my stay last summer in Istanbul, a city with elaborate decorative elements, in order to function as elements of perceptiveness in the crypts, as the therapeutic reflection of the aura, in other words the extension of energy centres. They become instruments for the restructuring of cryptic language and are condensers of energy. Passages to parallel universes, where the invisible becomes visible through the mirror of memory.

9. *Thalea: Alteration/copying/transfer: this is more or less how I perceive collective memory, as the foundation of every creative act. However, I believe that art's past creates a certain "tradition" (in every sense of the word) for the artist, i.e. his duty to make a new and different start involving, not a fruitless survival, which is the hypocritical form of oblivion, but an effective recovery, which is the noble form of memory. Do you accept this? Would you like to comment?*

Alexandra: The Shaman who sleepwalks, applying a certain visionary practice in order to map his visions in the order in which they appear to him like veils, is a parabolic image of the creative act and its sources. And this is a donation from the universe, going beyond historical time, where the indigo blue of Yves Klein or the "Divine Water" of the alchemists, along with Klee's square microcosms, as well as the movements of celestial bodies, all - as a selective recollection - decipher the Chakras. We are thus talking about a complex series of shadings and flashes capable of recreating images of collective memory through purely personal experiences.

10. Thalea: Alexandra, how would you define the modern-day artist?

Alexandra: ... someone for everybody and nobody at the same time. I also apply this perception to the definition of the artist through time.

"The artist carries Death within him, like a good priest his breviary" (H. Böll).

A visionary who - while creating - expands his consciousness and can see beyond the boundaries of existence, as if death penetrates him. He himself turns into a work (the work as the self). He is the matter which turns into energy and is never lost, which remains eternal, suspended in the hereafter, without the need to survive in the worldly social setting.

The modern-day artist must be a heretical experimenter who opens the doors to other realities such as the parallel universes of the subconscious. He must be a transformer of the real lives of others, but also of his own life. He must be completely loyal and dedicated to his unbending choices, the version of a "saint" who is giving and compassionate.

By visually peeling off the layers covering my painted surfaces, I am led to a certain meditation technique in order to taste the charm of the metallic hues, the iridescent diamondisms of blue and green, with swirls of an energy that is constantly transforming.

I think the visual arts are perhaps the one form of art that completely sets free creative power without limitations, far more than writing or music composition does... As W. B. YEATS uniquely put it: ...*I SEEK AN IMAGE, NOT A BOOK...I CALL TO THE MYSTERIOUS ONE WHO YET SHALL WALK THE WET SANDS BY THE EDGE OF THE STREAM AND LOOK MOST LIKE ME, BEING INDEED MY DOUBLE...*