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PLUGGED IN:  
THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEDIA ART  
PRACTICES IN GREECE IN THE  
1970s AND 1980s

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requirements of the University of Sunderland for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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# Abstract

The research focuses on the discourse and practice of new media art produced and presented in Greece from the early 1970s to the early 1990s and aims to answer the following questions:

i) In what ways and under which circumstances new media art, in the form of art made with computers, video and communication networks, were introduced in artistic discourse and practice in Greece in the 1970s and 1980s?

ii) Which factors contributed to the marginalisation of such new media practices in Greek art history and practice?

iii) How does the dissemination of these practices relate to other national and international histories of new media art?

For answering these three questions and for the purposes of this research, documents, catalogues, artworks, earlier historicising attempts and canonical texts on the history of art in Greece were evaluated through a new media art scope for the first time. Most importantly, this research investigated unpublished documents located in public and personal archives throwing light into the aims and methods of new media artists and organisations active in Greece during the period in question. In addition to written sources, artists and organisers were interviewed through a series of oral history type interviews with the aim of recording their perspectives and opinions, their aims and their otherwise undocumented efforts in presenting, promoting and producing new media art. The original findings of this research include a new chronology of new media art in Greece, an evaluation of the role of institutions and public support, an account of the efforts of certain new media artists for connecting to a global network and market, as well as an attempt to delineate common characteristics of the works produced and presented during this period. In addition, these findings have been used to re-evaluate the individual practice of important pioneers of media art in Greece, in essays, exhibitions and events that have been realised, published or are currently under realisation in connection to my independent and institutional curatorial practice.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the research

“Never be friends with artists. Never buy works you have to plug in” was the professional advice of an established French gallerist to Manos Pavlidis when the latter was just about to inaugurate the Desmos Art Gallery (Tzirtzilakis, 1999, p.8). Manos Pavlidis and Eppi Protonotariou, co-directors of the Desmos Art Gallery, often attributed their successful operation between the early 1970s and early 1990s to disregarding this advice. The owners of Desmos did not avoid art that needed electricity to work, but as the aforementioned gallerist’s advice indicates, the majority of the art world did.



Figure 1. Tsivopoulos, S. (2007) *Untitled (The Remake)*, [HD digital video, colour, sound, duration 14'] (videostill). Courtesy of the artist.

In 2007 Stefanos Tsivopoulos presented the video installation *Untitled (The remake)* (2007) (Figure 1) in which images of actors silently restaging an early TV broadcast during the Greek junta of 1967–1974 are intercut with archive segments from the infamous militaristic celebrations of the colonels. The slow travelling of the camera over the recording and broadcasting apparatus of the era creates an emphasis asserting that the monitors, cameras, lights and microphones are as important as the actors in this restaging, if not the real protagonists. A studio monitor displays footage from the Apollo 11 landing—an image engraved into collective memory—revealing the disparity between the flow of world events

and the anachronistic military spectacles of the Greek junta (also known as the Regime of the Colonels or Junta of the colonels), which organised parades and sports events performed by soldiers, policemen and students dressed in ancient Greek military attire. The remake implemented in this work exemplifies how the television apparatus, during that moment in Greek history, was in effect a captured technology. During the seven years of the colonels' junta, the use of video technology, as a medium related to mass communication, was controlled by the system of censorship that scrutinised all forms of public expression, including media, journalism and art. The broadcasting equipment used in this re-enactment was borrowed from the Archive Museum of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) and in this work, it is used by an artist for artistic purposes for the first time, symbolically compensating for the lost opportunity of audio-visual experimentation during the years of the colonels' junta.

In my role as a Curator of New Media at the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, I was invited in 2013 by Festival Instants Vidéo to contribute a screening programme and an essay for the 26th edition of the festival celebrating 50 years of video art through a presentation of the different histories of video art around the globe (Mercier, 2013, p.3). After accepting this challenge, my first step was to search the museum's archive for the Greek term 'vínteotéchni' [video art]. The search resulted in just a single typewritten letter by Nikos Giannopoulos to the National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum curator Anna Kafetsi, dated 7/3/1989, in which the former enumerated the events related to the subject of video art realised during the period 1980–1989 (Giannopoulos, 1989). Although by that time I had been intensely studying art in Greece for almost a decade, I hardly recognised a couple of names in the list, realizing that most of the people active in the field of video art in the 1980s had not continued presenting their work in public.

Those three stories exemplify three problems in the field of new media art in Greece, which are issues also largely shared with the larger field of historiographic research in Greek art: a conservative reaction against emerging art forms, a period when artistic activity and its documentation was affected by the colonels' junta, and a lack of persistence in collective endeavours. As a curator and researcher at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, constantly trying to have a comprehensive overview of my field, I have been involved in several attempts to survey Greek art from the 1970s onwards. Apart from the few exceptions of artists whose work has been sufficiently studied through retrospective



exhibitions and monographs, I came to realise that the only way to compensate for the absence of bibliographical sources is primary research, navigating between an artist's oral or written narrative, published documents and unpublished personal notes. I consider this 'recapitulation' of those histories as the essential first step in making something public and this recovery and preservation of historical narratives as an essential part of my curatorial practice.

The present research has as its starting place the position that the history of contemporary art in Greece has been insufficiently researched and historicised. Among the few canonical attempts that systematically try to present a critically evaluated and historically accurate view of the history of contemporary art, practices that use technological media have suffered from biased and often uninformed treatment from critics, curators, art historians, galleries and institutions. In parallel to this ill-treatment of new media art practices from the aforementioned historicizing agents, the particular political and social history of Greece during the period of 1970s and 1980s provided certain obstacles in both the production, dissemination and examination of new media art. Nevertheless, as this research will attempt to prove, certain artists produced notable works during the 1970s and 1980s and all video practitioners formed a very dynamic but short-lived video art scene that was active during the 1980s.

## **1.2 Research aims and questions of the research**

This research aims to re-discover and map the history of new media art practised and produced in Greece from the early 1970s to the early 1990s embracing all artistic practices that made use of computer, video or other electronic apparatus as an integral part of the process, or as the final outcome. Both video and computers are technologies that disseminated with a different rhythm in different areas of the globe, depending on economic factors but also on the structure of television channels, of large corporations and the degree of liberty of different political systems.

### **1.2.1 Research questions**

Responding to an almost complete absence of the subject of new media art from Greek art history, this research attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

i) In what ways and under which circumstances new media art, in the form of art made with

computers, video and communication networks, was introduced in artistic discourse and practice in Greece in the 1970s and 1980s?

ii) Which factors contributed to the marginalisation of new media practices in Greek art history and practice?

iii) How does the dissemination of these practices relate to other national and international histories of new media art?

### 1.2.2 Research aims and objectives

In parallel to the abovementioned questions, this research has the following additional aims and objectives:

i) To investigate the chronology of new media art in Greece between 1970 and 1990.

ii) To explore the technology that was available to artists who were pursuing to work with new media during the period in question.

iii) To study the ways in which new media art related to artistic tradition in Greece during those two decades.

iv) To discover when and to which extent new media art appeared in arts education and art criticism.

v) To evaluate the ways in which existing institutions supported new media arts and indicate the organisations which were founded with the purpose of supporting new media arts.

vi) To unravel the ways in which artists networked within and outside the borders of Greece.

vii) To determine whether art produced in the framework examined by this research had any common characteristics.

To embark on such an undertaking, this research investigates art produced in the intersection of art, technology and science under the wider term new media art. Departing from the omissions of canonical texts, this research relies on primary sources and oral history type of interviews for filling the gaps in a common narrative, before proceeding into mapping the field and drawing conclusions.

## 1.3 Timespan of the research

### 1.3.1 Historical background

It is impossible to understand contemporary Greece and its history and culture without delving into the most traumatic aspects in its recent history, starting from the Nazi occupation (1941-1944) and the ensuing civil war (1946-1949) and partially ending with the

fall of the Junta of the colonels (1967-1974). As historian Giannis Voulgaris puts it: “History recorded this period as a passage from disaster to disaster: from the civil war to the junta” (Voulgaris, 2013, p. 32).

The contradicting spheres of influence and the ideological schism in the Greek social strata becomes violently apparent during WWII, when the dominant partisan militant group Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS), organised by the National Liberation Front (EAM), which in turn was ideologically allied to the Greek Communist Party, apart from fighting against the armed forces of the Axis, also fought against the anti-communist Security Battalions, Greek militia formed by the Nazi-controlled collaborationist Greek government (Liakos, 2019, pp.245-247, 298). During the retreat of the Nazi forces and the Greek liberation in 1944, EAM aspired to assume an important role in the process of rebuilding the country, but ELAS was soon asked to disband and disarm. During an EAM demonstration on the 3rd of December 1944, 11 participants were killed by police intervention, starting what was later named The December Events, a battle in Athens, between ELAS on one side and the British armed Forces, the Greek police and the Greek National Army hastily formed from conscripting the ex-collaborationists on the other side, leaving 5500 dead (Liakos, 2019, pp.270-274). It was obvious that Greece was a deeply divided nation, and after WWII, the country could never return to its former state (Liakos, 2019, pp.279-281). The subsequent vilification of the left militants by the Greek government, many of whom had retained their arms, soon escalated from vigilante violence towards communists and their families to a full-scale civil war between left militia and the army of the Greek state (Liakos, 2019, pp.316-320). The war ended after the brutal loss of ELAS, leaving a horrible record of displacement, orphanage, imprisonment, and death (Liakos, 2019, pp.322-327). During the following years, immigration flow outside Greece continued, as due to the two subsequent wars, the country had lost 70% of its pre-war wealth (Liakos, 2019, pp.337). The population of Greece was split between the winners and losers of a war and the army maintained its ideological dominance. Prison camps located in distant and barren islands continued to function up until 1963, receiving citizens that were deemed dangerous for social order, often accused for espionage. The mass dismissal of communist civil servants was also another reason that the government was under the complete control of the right (Voulgaris, 2013, pp.43-45).

Nevertheless, left ideology in Greece proved to be resilient despite systematic persecution. In the 1958 elections, the United Democratic Left (EDA), a party seeking to find a third way

between communism and cold war politics, emerged as the primary opposition party. Later, in 1964, the Union of the centre (EK) emerged as the major force that ceased the long-term political dominance of the right, expressing a centre-left ideology. When in July 1965 the elected government attempted to gain greater control of the army, the prime minister was expelled by the King. In the ensuing political crisis and paranoid anti-communist fear, a portion of the army took the opportunity to gain control through the coup of 1967 that established what is generally known as the junta of the colonels. With the pretext of democracy, the colonels returned the country back to the climate of fear and division of the previous decade, restarting the persecution of the left and reestablishing the dominance of the army (Voulgaris, 2013, pp.62-71).

The present research concentrates on two main periods: The first period (1970–1982) centres around key personalities and key works, such as Pantelis Xagoraris and the sculptor Theodoros who respectively pioneered the use of computer and mass media as an artistic medium in Greece. This part of the research also explores the amalgamation of Greek and international avant-gardist ideas from the 1930s with ancient and modern mathematics that inspired Xagoraris, but also Theodoros' systematic translation of every medium in sculptural terms. This is attempted through an approach that acknowledges and relates their technology-based practices with other non-figurative, conceptual and performative practices internationally. The second period (1978–1992) starts from the first art works using video and investigates the short-lived video art scene of the time, its main actors and the factors that affected its decline. This decline is by no means a disappearance of technology from the creative field. On the contrary, it coincides with its integration into mainstream artistic practice, its commercialisation and its demarginalisation exemplified by the foundation of the Fournos Center for Digital Culture in 1992, the introduction of video editing training in the Athens School of Fine Arts, the increasing appearance of video works in Athenian commercial art galleries as well as the realisation of exhibitions that included renowned international artists who worked with new media (e.g. *Push-ups* and *Everything that's Interesting is New: The Dakis Joannou Collection*, both of which were realised at the exhibition space of the Athens School of Fine Arts in 1996). These developments coincided with a wider assimilation of practices that were not formerly seen as marketable by the Greek art market, such as photography, which also met with an institutional canonisation during the same period (Moschovi, 2011, p.117).

The temporal and spatial outline of the research field, Greece from the 1970s to the 1990s, relates this research to four periods of Greek history that had an immediate and observable effect on every aspect of political, social and cultural activity, including, of course, visual art. This includes the Greek military junta of 1967–1974; the transition to democracy, or *Metapolitefsi*, 1974–2009;<sup>1</sup> the years of *Allagi* 1981–1989, when the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) political party won the 1981 national elections for the first time;<sup>2</sup> a period commencing with the licensing of private television channels in 1989, a change in legislation that had an immense cultural and political impact (Papathanassopoulos, 1990; Voulgaris, 2013, pp.120–124).

### 1.3.2 Junta, censorship and the new public, 1967–1974

In the abovementioned belligerent context, art was inseparable from ideology. Modernity, expressed through the work of a small circle of artists who established themselves as part of the pre-war so-called “Generation of the 30s”, was associated with bourgeois aesthetics. The other dominant tendency was social realism, depicting the people’s struggle in war and peace, reflecting the ideological split in the country (Hamalidi, Nikolopoulou, & Wallden, 2012, p.235). It was not until the 1960s that art practices with the characteristics of avant-garde appeared again in Greece, whereas during the same time art critics would review modernist art through the scope of left ideology (Hamalidi, Nikolopoulou, & Wallden, 2012, p.235). The flow of artistic developments stopped abruptly in 1967 with the imposition of the junta. As it has been pointed out by Bartomeu Mari the recent art history of countries in Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Iberian Peninsula lacks a canon due to the extensive censorship of dictatorial regimes (Mari, 2012, p.34). This is also the case in Greece. For almost two years after the coup, artists from every field fell in silence refusing to participate in cultural events. This stance of self-imposed silence, together with the censorship in every art form that lasted until the end of the colonels’ junta, are two factors that interfere with any attempts to write the history of this period even today. During the colonels’ junta, this recommencement of cultural activity in the field of literature and music took the form of a subcultural underground resistance among the student circles (Zorba, 2009, p.249) whereas, in the visual arts, when galleries recommenced regular operation, there was a new and different kind of audience seeking a different kind of art (Vakalo, 1985, p.83). This new

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<sup>1</sup> Often called “*metapolitefsi*” meaning “after the regime change”.

<sup>2</sup> “*Allagi*”, meaning “change”, was the political slogan of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) during the 1981 elections and promised extended social changes.

interest in visual arts continued to rise even after the fall of the colonels, with more galleries opening each year, some with strong international connections. This development was paired with more shows per year and with increased commercial activity (Christofoglou, 2003, p.280).

### 1.3.3 Metapolitefsi, Allagi and the democratisation of public institutions, 1974–1989

The ensuing decade of the 1980s was characterised by the transformative policies of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) which came to power in 1981 as well as the entry of Greece into the European Economic Community which happened in the same year. In the past, following WWII and the ensuing civil war, Greek public cultural institutions were instruments of propagating the dominant national ideology and any progressive deviation was expelled and branded as communist (Zorba, 2009, p.246). The right-wing establishment provided a ‘national’ culture based on Greek cultural achievements of the past, and only rarely did allow space for contemporary culture. Following the fall of the colonels’ junta in 1974, national institutions underwent a democratisation process for the first time (Zorba, 2009, pp.249–250). The real change however took place during the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) government after 1981 under the guidance of Melina Mercouri (Athens, 1920–New York, 1994), who held the position of the Minister of Culture from 1981 to 1989 and from 1993 to 1994. Mercouri tried to harness the influx of ideas reaching the ministry after decades that voices of the left, of artists, cultural administrators, intellectuals and even unionists were excluded from dialogue with the ministry (Zorba, 2009, p.252). During this period, Greek society managed to advance towards the direction of a contemporary European society, through legal and institutional reformations that were hindered by the conservative governments of the past (Voulgaris, 2008, p.104). Art historians within the auspices of institutions, working with the support of the ministry of culture, or even independently, attempted for the first time in years to investigate the characteristics of Greek art and answer the question of whether there is a national identity in contemporary artistic production (Christofoglou, 2003, p.286). From the beginning of the decade of the 1980s, artists in Greece were exhibiting with increased frequency abroad whereas many artists from the Greek diaspora started to return home or exhibited in Greece with increased frequency (Christofoglou, 2003, pp.287–288). Exhibitions with a scholarly approach started appearing, such as *Perivallon – Drasi* [Environment – Action] organised by the Association of Greek Art Critics, approaching a larger audience (Pandi and Papadopoulou, 2011, p.50). It is also

during this period that the curator's important role was being reconsidered and accepted, with even more exhibitions being curated by independent curators (Pandi and Papadopoulou, 2011, p.50). Another effective policy was the decentralisation of culture, which allowed for many important exhibitions to take place in smaller cities across the whole of Greece, as well as Thessaloniki (Christofoglou, 2003, p.288). Despite the increased state interest in contemporary art, ministerial policy remained predominantly oriented to ancient culture and history (Christofoglou, 2003, p.286).

An important parameter that affected the discourse of art and new technologies in the 1980s was the promotion of the idea of technology as progress and as a means for financial growth. This idea was strongly supported by state initiatives such as the foundation of the Ministry of Research and Technology (Katsaridou, 2010, pp.149–150). Other initiatives include the announcement of the National Strategy for the Development of Information Technology in 1983, a plan to introduce information technology on large scale in Greece, but also with the foundation of the State Council for Information Technology in 1986, symbolically headed by the Prime Minister (Liakos, 2019, p.528). The Ministerial Department of Youth also supported the creative activity of young people through new technologies in several events throughout the 1980s, mostly in photography exhibitions but also through educative events about video, or conferences about art and technology, such as the *Art and Technology* conference realised in Chania in 1987 (Rigopoulou et al, 1988). The association of youth with technology was just one way of conveying the idea of progress, as both factors motivate social change (Katsaridou, 2010, p.160). Unfortunately, as art historian Argyri Katsaridou explicates about the field of photography, those claims did not correspond to actual policies, but rather the conveyance of the idea of progress for political purposes (Katsaridou, 2010, p.150).

#### 1.3.4 The 1990s and the multiplication of cultural institutions

Culture in Greece during the 1990s is marked by ideas of globalisation and of a lifestyle “apolitical” individualism, through the newly established mass media channels such as lifestyle magazines and private television (Sevastakis, 2004). In the visual arts, the 1990s is the decade of institutions, with international private institutions, such as the DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, founded in 1983, intensifying their activity in Greece, with new medium-scale private organisations, such as the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art

Center (founded in 1988), establishing their operation, and with new large-scale events taking place such as the Art Athina Art Fair. The latter, which started operating in 1993 under the direction of the Hellenic Art Galleries Association, is an example of the new role of private galleries and the art market. Public institutions also have an important part in the changing state of affairs with the production of survey exhibitions of major importance and unprecedented scale such as the exhibitions *Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience* and the *Russian Avant-Garde (1910–1930): The G. Kostakis Collection* produced by the National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum. In 1996 the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art presented the curated by John Stathatos' exhibition *Image and Icon: The New Greek Photography, 1975–1995* which established the term New Greek Photography, canonised the medium and expanded its institutional integration and marketing potential (Moschovi, 2011, p.117). Around this time in the mid-1990s, the city of Thessaloniki was elected as the 1997 Cultural Capital of Europe. In the context of upgrading its cultural infrastructures, the Cinema Museum was founded in 1995, but was later integrated with the Thessaloniki Film Festival. Last but not least, three important contemporary museums are funded by the same law in 1997: the State Museum of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki, the Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, and the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens.

#### **1.4 Terminology - What is new media art? Why an 'unsatisfactory' term is necessary**

This research considers the works and practices of artists who used a variety of technologies during different periods in time. Those technologies included some fundamentally different modes of computing, video recording, radio, sound recordings, film, television transmission, electronic circuits, laser, video projection, fax and even satellite telephone transmission. Some of this technology was considered a novelty at the time of use, some was completely experimental, whereas some was already obsolete or commonplace.

##### 1.4.1 Digital arts

The use of computer in art practices has been linked with several taxonomic categories such as computer art, computer graphics, digital art, multimedia art, cybernetic art etc. None of those terms was adopted by any of the artists in this research to specifically describe their practice. This is not a problem specific to how artists and critics in Greece perceived works made with the aid of a computer. Beryl Graham examines this parade of overlapping or



overspecialising terms regarding British new media art since the 1980s and concludes that apart from the need to be accurate and up to date, there was also a rejection of the term computer art due to its association with the obsolete value system of modernity (Graham, 2008, pp.405–406). Grant D. Taylor, in *When the Machine Made Art: The Troubled History of Computer Art* is also referring to “negative associations” clarifying that the negativity came from the artworld, and not from the general public which was interested in the capabilities of an emergent technology (Taylor, 2014, pp.2–4). For art history, computer art had a problematic assimilation as it prioritised technology over the cultural and ideological aspects of the artworks which shared a common context with, for example, geometric abstraction and conceptual art. (Taylor, 2014, pp.10–12). Christiane Paul’s introduction to the anthology *A Companion to Digital Art* begins with this exact admission, of the difficulty in writing the history of a discipline that constantly changes its name, from computer art in the 1960s to multimedia arts, cyber arts, digital arts and new media art (Paul, 2016, p.1).

Nevertheless, from an art historical perspective, the more specific a term is, the best suited it seems to be. Areti Adamopoulou’s ‘Uncomfortable Relationships: Digital Art and the Historiography of Art’ focuses on the generally accepted problematics of the historiographical process, such as the fluidity of taxonomy, the absence of art and technology subjects from academia as well as from art history canonical publications (Adamopoulou, 2009, p.11). This essay also exemplifies the incompatibility of art history with new media as it clearly outlines what is considered problematic by art historians. In this essay, hybridity is considered as an obstacle, artworks cannot be evaluated as there are not enough existing written sources by art historians, texts by curators and artists can not be considered as art historical sources and funding for the production of new media art and new media events is sourced from technological companies (Adamopoulou, 2009, pp.12–15).

#### 1.4.2 Audio-visual arts

Apart from video art, a term that was widely accepted in Greece by artists, exhibition organisers, critics, journalists and audiences, no other term was consistently used for the classification of works and practices within the scope of the present research. This is not to say that video art was a universally accepted term. Audiovisual arts have a constantly shifting taxonomy affecting the historiography of a largely hybrid practice. Video art, video installation, artist’s film, artist’s video, expanded cinema, moving image, guerrilla television,

artist's television, experimental video, were all terms used to describe various overlapping practices that used video as the means of presentation and dissemination of the artwork. As is also the case with computer art, a technology used for the production or presentation cannot be accurately used to define the wide spectrum of artistic practices that used it. As Chris Meigh-Andrews notes, video's formative period included influences from fluxism, performance art, body art, arte povera, pop art, minimalist sculpture, conceptual art, avant-garde music, experimental film, contemporary dance and theatre among others (Meigh-Andrews, 2014, p.2). The term also fell in misuse with changing technology affecting the way newer works were produced and older works were presented, through digital means that eradicated the difference between film and video (Meigh-Andrews, 2014, p.4). It is in this light that a renewed interest in video art is combined with the adoption of earlier terms such as Gene Youngblood's expanded cinema chosen for example by Andrew Uroskie in *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art* for its ability to reconcile the perceived as different histories of experimental film and video art (Uroskie, 2014, pp.234–238).<sup>3</sup> Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord in *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema* also adopt Youngblood's term for its prophetic correspondence with the reality shaped by digital converging media (Marchessault and Lord, 2007, pp.6–7). Another term that encompassed the fluidity and dynamism of audiovisual media was Raymond Bellour's "between-the-images", appearing in the collection of critical texts with the title *L'Entre-images: Photo, Cinéma, Vidéo* which was published in 1990 (Bellour, 1990). As discussed by Bellour in an interview with Gabriel Bortzmeyer and Alice LeRoy, this term provided a view of art beyond materials "passing through" the mediums and dispositifs of cinema, video and photography (Bortzmeyer and LeRoy, 2015, pp.138–142). By adopting the term "dispositif" used by Michel Foucault, Bellour refers to the relations between images and viewers in various settings which are affected by technology as well as context (Radner, 2018, p.75). "Moving image" is also a term that offers this wider view encompassing both film, video, installations and television, and is the term used in Tanya Leighton's *Art and the Moving Image*, allowing for a critical review of the relation between cinematography, visual arts, their practitioners and their institutions (Leighton, 2008, pp.7–13). Audio-visual technology, in the form of film and video, disrupted the modernist singular view of medium-

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<sup>3</sup> Gene Youngblood's term, coined originally in 1966 by Stan Vanderbeek in the article "'Culture: Intercom" and Expanded Cinema: A Proposal and Manifesto' (Vanderbeek, 1966, pp.15-18), refers to all moving image practices, such as film, video, television, computers and holography, but most importantly on how these technologies actually expand consciousness (Youngblood, 1970, p.41).

specificity and the notion that a work of art was attached to its material support. The critic Rosalind Krauss in her 2000 book *“A Voyage on the North Sea”: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, with the example of artist’s Marcel Broodthaers work *Museum of Modern Art, Eagles Department* introduces the concept of the post-medium condition attempting to theorise practices that were irreconcilable with modernity and exceeded strict modernist medium definitions: “even if video had a distinct technical support – its own apparatus, so to speak – it occupied a kind of discursive chaos, a heterogeneity of activities that could not be theorized as coherent or conceived of as having something like an essence or unifying core” (Krauss, 2000, p.31). This notion of the post-medium condition may have been articulated later than the art produced in the period examined in this research, but it sheds light on the reasons that artists used technology alongside other, traditionally established artistic mediums.

#### 1.4.3 Alternative taxonomies

Along the same lines, Sean Cubitt’s *The Practice of Light: A Genealogy of Visual Technologies from Prints to Pixels* also attempts an alternative genealogy through the consideration of technologies such as cathode ray tubes alongside searchlights, lasers, lithography and MPEG-4 (Cubitt, 2014). Helen Westgeest’s *Video Art Theory: A Comparative Approach*, while maintaining the term “video art”, also investigates the relation of video with other visual arts media such as sculpture, performance art and painting (Westgeest, 2016, p.1). More specialised approaches, such as Steve Dixon’s *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation* survey how a variety of media affect another genre (Dixon, 2007).

#### 1.4.4 New media: what, why, and how

All the above-mentioned methods add to our understanding of the multiple relations between art and technology but also to the radically different histories and interpretations that occur from slight shifts in perspective. The chosen taxonomy is not only a filter that allows different works to be included or excluded from a historical narrative but extends to a whole discourse and its associated methodological tools. For this reason, the term chosen for the present research is ‘new media’.

Why this term, which is ‘unsatisfactory’ (Graham and Cook, 2010 p.2) and ‘unfortunate’ (Paul, 2008, p.2) and which should be constantly redefined in order to remain up to date with technological evolution, is still in use today and why does it constitute a distinct field of research, sometimes within the boundaries of contemporary art but often as a parallel discipline? Why this term, which has been brought into common use in the 1990s, includes video and computer art, both of which emerged in the 1960s? When one could argue that the relation of art and technology is as old as art itself, why does this relation require specialised study? What are the advantages of using such an approach to the artworks examined within the present research, mostly works that made use of technology in Greece during the 1970s and 1980s? Since these works do not employ a wide spectrum of media and technological innovations, with technological tools largely unavailable to artists in Greece, why not choose or invent a term such as ‘electronic image’, which would suffice for describing the works that fall within the scope of this research?

New media art is a constantly redefined term used in relation to practices as disparate as genetics to kinetics and from video art to algorithms and systems, as seen in Beryl Graham’s *A Table of Categories of Digital Art* (Graham, 2004). Attempts at a strict definition like Lev Manovich's set of principles in *The Language of New Media* (Manovich, 2001), although not exclusively referring to art, exclude media such as video and television that have been an integral part of new media art discourse. In a subsequent essay titled ‘New Media from Borges to HTML’, Manovich widens the scope of new media by making eight propositions including “New Media as the Aesthetics that Accompanies the Early Stage of Every New Modern Media and Communication Technology” according to which new media is an “aesthetic strategy” that can be observed during the early phases of experimentation with a new medium, such as DV video making and cinéma vérité (Manovich, 2003 p.19–20). Even more inclusive and appropriate is new media art as described in *Rethinking Curating* by Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook where the emphasis is on behaviour rather than media and materials (Graham and Cook, 2010, p.2).

New media art is a term that incorporates a plethora of practices while allowing them to remain distinct. Sean Cubitt and Paul Thomas describe how media art history differs from the history of other avant-garde practices: “We argue that the practice of media art histories requires a combination of skills, knowledge, and critical perspectives that needs to be assembled from diverse sources” (Cubitt and Thomas, 2013, p.2). Its necessity as a term

relates to this multiplicity: “[...] knowledge of a broad network of technological histories and cultural forms, rather than of a single history or canon, is important for understanding new media art” (Graham and Cook, 2010, p.13). Shanken, referring to works in the intersection of art, science and technology, proposes a multidisciplinary approach that “would offer valuable insights into the historical relationship of art, science, and technology and provide a basis for understanding how that nexus, in turn, relates to other cultural forces (e.g., politics, economics, and so forth) that have shaped the unfolding of art” (Shanken, 2007, p.54). Among the questions which Shanken tries to answer in the process of historicising art and electronic media some relate to the classification of the multiple subgenres as well as the role of particular practices such as cybernetic and telematic art in defining this history (Shanken, 2007, p.60).

#### 1.4.5 New media art and historiography

During the last half of the century, the rapid increase in technologies available to artists as well as the equally rapid obsolescence of these technologies has radically changed this prehistoric relation between *techne* and technology. Artistic practices that utilise these technologies and are dealing with these technologies have been omitted from the main thread of art history due to a number of factors that include the reliance of history writing to art institutions and to existent written sources. Charlie Gere’s essay ‘New Media Art and the Gallery in the Digital Age’ offers an overview of the shortcomings of art institutions and how ill-equipped museums are for the display and preservation of electronic and digital artworks (Gere, 2008b, pp.13–25). Sara Diamond’s essay ‘Participation, Flow, Redistribution of Authorship’ mentions how collaborative models emerging from the co-authorship of artists and scientists or other specialists challenge the notion of the single creative individual as favoured from institutional curatorial practice for its convenient classification (Diamond, 2008, pp.139–141). Edward A. Shanken’s ‘Historicizing Art and Technology: Forging a Method and Firing a Canon’ also provides an overview of the omission of art and technology from canonical texts characteristically mentioning how until the mid-1990s the journal *Leonardo* published mostly texts from artists and scientists since art historians and critics did not write enough on the subject (Shanken, 2007, p.46). Although the resistance of museums, biennials and galleries against constantly evolving technologies has been observed from an early stage in this relation, it is only recently that the extent of the damage this exclusion has caused over an extended period of time has been understood

and being dealt with by an increasing number of specialised researchers, as in the example of Oliver Grau and his proposition of the new field of “media art histories” (Grau, 2007, pp.3–13).

Recent reevaluation attempts of older media practices begin from similar concerns, such as *White Heat Cold Logic: British Computer Art 1960–1980*:

[...] the aim of this book is to recount the history of the digital and computer-based arts in the United Kingdom from their origins to 1980. It also has a rather more polemical intention: to forcefully argue for the importance of such a history, which has otherwise been disregarded (Gere, 2008a, p.2).

Likewise, Taylor in *When the Machine Made Art: The Troubled History of Computer Art*, tries to re-introduce to art history a practice which “was long considered ‘non-art’” (Taylor, 2014, p.7) but also to find the reasons behind this exclusion (Taylor, 2014, pp.23–24). Margit Rosen’s introduction to *A Little-known Story about a Movement, a Magazine and the Computer’s Arrival in Art: New Tendencies and Bit International, 1961–1973* states that “Computer art had a past, but lacked a memory. History had not come to a standstill, as in 1984, because someone had erased all traces of the past; it simply had not been written” (Rosen et al., 2011, p.9).

New media was chosen over all other terms and descriptions of the field, for its fluidity, its toolbox of methodologies that bring back to life works made of obsolete technologies and recover works, artists and practices that have suffered from an art historical bias, and for its dynamic discourse that contains all technologies, attitudes and artistic strategies allowing for fruitful research on fields often perceived as separate. Applying this methodology in the case of art in Greece, where some technologies were not always available concurrently with other European countries and where for the largest part of recent history institutions and art organisations were non-existent, artists often resorted to hybrid D.I.Y. uses of a medium for the production of their work and self-organisation of events and exhibitions for its presentation. For both characteristics that affect the historiography of art and technology in Greece, new media provides solutions and paradigms.

## 1.5 Methodology

The change of technology constitutes a silent, great and radical transformation that leaves no traces in memory. When did I acquire a computer? When did I acquire a mobile phone? When did I make the transition from DOS to Windows? When did I start using e-mail? When did I switch to smartphones? I remember those events only if I relate them to other, extraneous, events. It is rarely the other way around. New technology erases its traces. Consequently, it is difficult to historicise. It concerns changes that are yet to end [my translation] (Liakos, 2019, p.527).

The research began by detecting the omissions in the historiography of new media art in Greece and identifying the causes. Was this history forgotten because technical or other reasons obstructed institutions from collecting new media works, as was often the case internationally (Grau, 2007, pp.3–10)? Was it because there were no institutions equipped to deal with new technologies neither on a discursive nor practical level? Was it because critics and curators did not consider these works as art or art that was good enough to be considered alongside other works? Was it because practitioners, coming from a variety of fields, did not consistently pursue a career in the arts?

The thesis attempts to restructure the lost history of art and technology in Greece through the wider scope of a new media approach. This is accomplished through research in public and private artists' archives, but also by compiling archives of artists' documents and conducting oral histories. It is often stated that institutions were biased against new media art. This was not the case in Greece, especially for the period in question, as there were no active relevant museums, institutions or any other organisations that could overlook new or any other media. As a result, in order to understand the full spectrum of media experimentation, it was necessary to collect dispersed documents from various and scattered sources, interview the artists and organisers themselves, and last but not least, examine the actual artworks, which have been out of public view for many years, and if still possible, do so in their original form.

Archival research is necessary for this process, but its effectiveness is as limited as the archive itself. In the essay 'The Power of the Archive and its Limits', Achille Mbembe

defines the archive as “the product of a process which converts a certain number of documents into items judged to be worthy of preserving and keeping in a public place, where they can be consulted according to well-established procedures and regulations” (Mbembe, 2002, p.20). The archives that are available for my research hardly fit into this definition: the most important archive and the starting point of my research, the Pantelis Xagoraris Archive at the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, consists of the accumulated documents, correspondence, photographs, slides, audio and videotapes and publications found in the late artist’s residence and donated to the museum in 2002. This archive maintains the structure bestowed by its creator, a structure not always discernible from the researcher, but one that roughly maintains a distinction between the compiler’s artworks, writings and teaching at the National Technical University of Athens. The 3000 items of the archive relate to the subjects of his interest, technology, mathematics and art, covering a span from the early 1940s to the late 1990s, including Greek and international publications and material relating to events that he watched closely as public, participant or organiser. The archive is also exceptional as an aid in understanding Pantelis Xagoraris’ work and thinking as well as the ideology underlying his focus on mathematics and art, linking his experiments with art and technology with major artistic demands of the interwar years in Greece. Although extended and relatively inclusive, this archive cannot be the single source for the history of media art in Greece.

The only other archive that could have been used is the archive of the Fournos Center for Digital Culture, which includes mostly material related to its activities after the mid-1990s. The archive is also a source for the artistic and organisational activity of its founders, Manthos and Dodo Santorineos, whose role was crucial in the dispersion of media arts in Greece. Unfortunately, due to lack of space and the organisation’s current focus in theatrical productions, the material related to its older programme had been inaccessible. Instead of full access to the archive, the Fournos Center for Digital Culture provided copies and original documents of selected events that took place in the organisation.

To compensate for this lack of publicly available archived material in relation to new media art, several additional sources were identified at the outset of this research. These were provided by individuals who had participated, either as artists or organisers in events relating to new media art. Original documents and copies or other items of interest from their personal files and libraries were collected and compiled in a working archive for the research.



I sought out and met, talked or corresponded with a number of artists and organisers (or their relatives in case they were deceased) and specifically the artists Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Marianne Strapatsakis, Costas Tsoclis, Aris Prodromidis, Dimosthenis Agrafiotis, Nikos Giannopoulos, George Papakonstantinou, Tassos Boulmetis, Margarita Ovidia, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Leda Papaconstantinou, Vouvoula Skoura, Thanasis Chondros, Alexandra Katsianni, Marianna Theodoridou, Eppi Protonotariou, the co-director of the Desmos Art Gallery, as well as Eleni Vernardaki wife of Nikos Papadakis, the publisher and editor of the art magazine *SIMA review* (Figure 2).

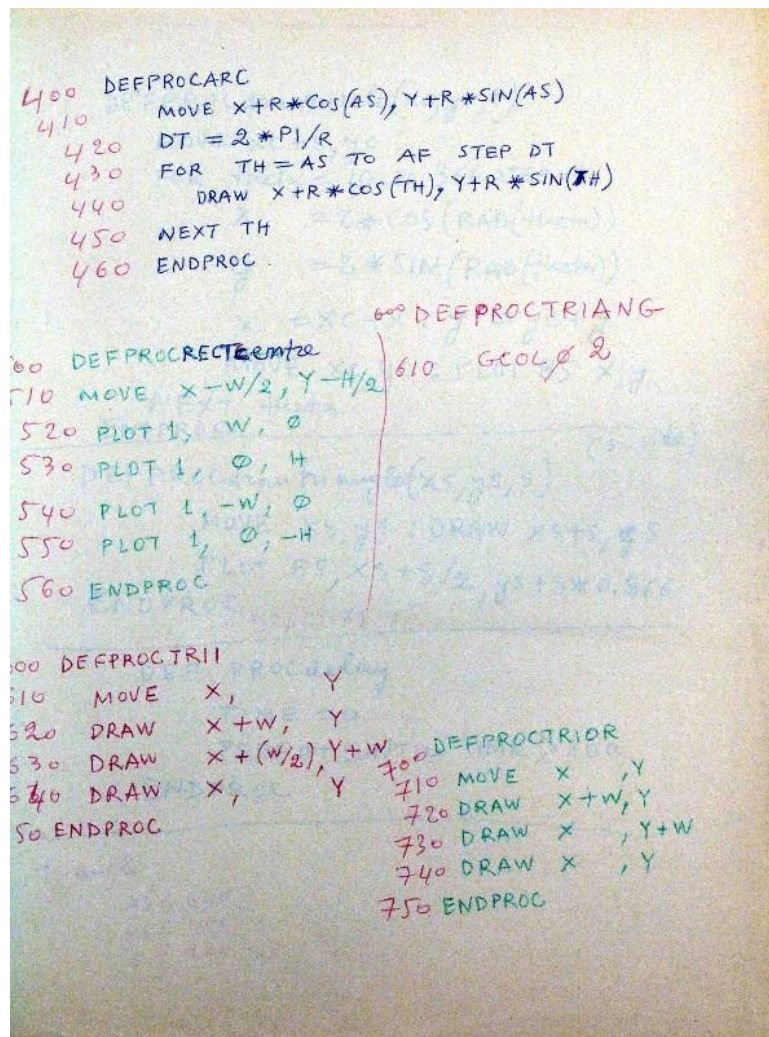


Figure 2. Papanicolopoulos, N. (n.d.) Page from the programming notebook of Nestoras Papanicolopoulos. Photo by the author.

Artworks sourced through this method are of special importance within this research, as criticism rarely reached into special depth regarding individual works and their content is largely unknown and undocumented. Moreover, whenever possible, those works would be viewed in their original format which was mostly VHS, the video medium that served as the material vector for the majority of audio-visual works considered as part of this research.

This is done in the conviction that the original technological vector of a work carries some of its distinct properties, in accordance with a ‘hands-on’ approach. This approach, as described by Nick Hall and John Ellis in the introduction of the anthology *Hands on Media History: A New Methodology in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, prioritises the involvement with the physical objects of older media that may now exist as digital immaterial copies, under the assumption of authenticity, meaning that the “physical object has properties that can hardly be reproduced in other media” and the assumption of the physical interaction is itself a form of knowledge (Hall and Ellis, 2020, p.3). In some cases, this method was impossible to realise. Another approach to view artworks within the context of this research was through emulation of the original process as a way to assess some of this knowledge. This was attempted specifically for the computer drawings of Pantelis Xagoraris whose programmes and plotting parameters were discovered in his archive but without a corresponding calculator and plotter. Some material, both artworks and audio-visual records in obsolete forms, like U-matic tape, Hi-8 videocassette and even 16mm motion film, was digitised for further safe viewing, through the funding and facilities of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens or with private means.

This research also makes selective use of an exhibition history approach, as the duration of an exhibition is often also the only short period of a work’s material existence. As is the case with new media works, unless exhibited, the works are not viewable, and unless collected or otherwise taken care of, they are slowly lost due to technical obsolescence. As described by Beryl Graham in ‘Exhibition Histories and Futures: The Importance of Participation and Audiences’, exhibition histories as a method targeting new media works and exhibitions, aims at the usually undocumented element of audience interaction (Graham, 2016, p.575). In Greece, as stated in a discussion between curators Tina Pandi and Bia Papadopoulou titled ‘Curating exhibitions in Greece in the 1980s’: “[...] there is a kind of amnesia as far as exhibition histories in Greece. Researching the history of exhibitions and especially of curating during the 1980s will allow for a new narrative on the art of the era” (Pandi and Papadopoulou, 2011, p.45). Consequently, information sourced through an exhibition history method cannot be as detailed as it could occur from researching the exhibition of an established and functioning art institution such as the Museum of Modern Art in Mary Anne Staniszewski’s case studies in *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Staniszewski, 1998). Nevertheless, approaching artists, curators and exhibition makers for information on relevant exhibitions and events is still a

valid and useful method for locating information around a work that does not exist or cannot be seen in its original form anymore.

Researching through printed material might be an adequate method for identifying exhibited works, key events and actors. But it is very unlikely for one to find amongst the documents any information about the underlying sense of purpose, the ideology and the training of artists. It is unlikely that one will find detailed information about specific works, about the relation between cooperating individuals. To investigate all of the above I conducted a series of oral history type of interviews. It may seem paradoxical when investigating the history of a practice that includes established artists and prominent academics to adopt a method that has been associated with the historiography of anonymous people, lower social classes and societies that do not use written languages, or as mentioned in the introduction of *The Oral History Reader* “the most distinctive contribution of oral history has been to include within the historical record the experiences and perspectives of groups of people who might otherwise have been ‘hidden from history’” (Perks and Thomson, 1998, p.ix). However, new media art practices in Greece during the 1970s and 1980s are twice marginal, firstly in the sense that most art from that time has been lost from public memory for lack of historiography, documentation and research, and secondly because new media art practices were marginal compared to traditional media in the first place, often being denied their status as art. In addition, oral history as a method turns out to be especially productive in relation to artworks that involve multiple elements aiming at the viewers’ unique experience or which involve elements of performance that can never be adequately documented. The outstanding example of its successful use as an art historical source is the Oral Histories of the Archives of American Art, initiated in 1954 by the Detroit Institute of Arts and currently hosted at the Smithsonian Institution (Smithsonian Institution, 2015). On a much smaller scale, the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens initiated an oral history programme in 2005, prioritizing a historical generation of Greek artists and gallerists that became active during the 1960s and 1970s. During the first year of the programme, the four members of the oral history working group, of which I was a part, collected more than 70 hours of video and sound recordings from 28 personalities from art in Greece. Among the participants were artists like Dimitris Alithinos, the sculptor Theodoros, Costas Tsoclis, Dimitris Fatouros as well as the Desmos founders and directors Eppi Protonotariou and Manos Pavlidis (Marinos and Schizakis, 2016, p.79). As noted in a published interview of the author with curator Christopher Marinos who coordinated the programme, this method allowed for the recovery

of two large gaps in the history of art in Greece: sufficient bibliography of detailed monographs, as well as the history of the artistic milieu “with its collective vision and failures, the artistic issues, the political tensions, interpersonal relations, rumours and gossip that affected to a smaller and larger extent the art history in this country” (Marinos and Schizakis, 2016, p.79–80). Another aspect of this method that is of use in this research is the ability of oral history to recover information about ephemeral and destroyed works of artists that have been long forgotten. An example is the case of Maria Karavela, an artist who participated in this programme and whose political work—part performance, part installation, part community project—lifted her to prominence in the 1970s but seemed outdated in the 1980s when political tensions were not as acute. As her work was destroyed when her studio caught fire, her practice is now known through her spoken word and photographs from newspaper clippings. Her narrative is indicative of her artistic aims, as it overlooks the form of objects and the order of actions but focuses instead on the social and political tension that was the essence of her work (Marinos and Schizakis, 2016, p.82). Art historian Areti Adamopoulou also suggests a similar methodology for ephemeral works in the domain of art history in Greece. Her paper ‘Sto Pedío tou Ephímerou: Sképsis yia ti Methodoloyía tis Erevnas stin Ellinikí Ikastikí Skiní Metá to 1960’ [In the Fields of the Ephemeral: Thoughts on the Methodology of Research in the Greek Art Scene after 1960] highlights the difficulty of the historiography of ephemeral art works, installations and performances: “The lack of orderly archives, research centres, libraries, quality translations, publications of theoretical texts and of museums of contemporary art definitely determinates the quality of historical and scientific discourse” (Adamopoulou, 2003, p.98). For those reasons, Adamopoulou suggests that the only source available to the researcher are the artists themselves, who, through personal interviews can offer a description of the exhibition conditions, of the ideological content of the work as well as their form (Adamopoulou, 2003, p.98–99).

As it has been argued by Heike Roms and Rebecca Edwards in ‘Oral History as Site-Specific Practice: Locating the History of Performance Art in Wales’, oral histories as an embodied and dialectic practice proves to be a fruitful method for researching artistic practices that include physical expression, collective authorship and audience participation (Roms and Edwards, 2016, p.173). Among the major purposes of oral histories, as stated by Patricia Leavy in *Oral History, Understanding Qualitative Research*, is “filling in the historical record”, “understanding people’s subjective experiences of historical periods or periods of social change”, “understanding people’s subjective experiences of current or recent events”

and “contributing to the understanding of topical areas” (Leavy, 2011, pp.21–22) which strongly relate to the aims and area of my research. Among the typology of interviews mentioned in oral history literature, there are the “life-histories” (Ritchie, 2015, p.27) which consist of a full life account of the interviewee, from the earliest memory to the time of the interview. A researcher can also choose to record an “in-depth interview” focused on a specific topic, or a “structured interview” that will have standardised questions intended for a large number of participants, a very helpful method for making comparisons but also for reaching general conclusions (Leavy, 2011, pp.21). In order to combine this method with the archival research but also for reasons of brevity and manageability of the produced information I adapted my approach to different sources depending on the information already available for each interviewee and their estimated importance within the scope of the research. Specifically, I prepared three types of interviews:

a) A structured in-depth interview with questions specific to the use of new media and technologies in art practice. This was directed towards individuals about whom there is already existing material on their life and work, for example, artists who had already participated in the Museum’s oral history programme, or who have realised large retrospective exhibitions. This interview includes questions on the chosen technological media, their relation to other art practices, influences, gallery and commercial representation if any, the response from the public, from critics and from fellow artists, always in relation to specific works. Artists in this research whose work and existing literature justify this treatment were only the sculptor Theodoros and Costas Tsoclis.

b) An open-ended and extensive full life interview which apart from the previous questions includes enquiries about education and family life, artistic development and exhibition activity. I assigned this type of interview to individuals who had an important role in the introduction and practice of new media art in Greece, such as Marianne Strapatsakis, Manthos Santorineos, Aris Prodromidis, Nikos Giannopoulos and the gallerist co-director of the Desmos Art Gallery, Eppi Protonotariou ([Figure 3](#))



Figure 3. Images from oral history interviews of the author with Theodoros, Eppi Protonotariou, Angelos Skourtis, Nikos Giannopoulos, Costas Tsoclis, Marianne Strapatsakis, Aris Prodromidis and Manthos Santorineos, (during the period 2005–2020) (videostills).

c) A brief version of the first type of interview, together with basic biographical information. My intention was to address these questions to a large number of artists who included even briefly, new media in their art practice or who participated in new media festivals, even once. This included Angelos Skourtis who was interviewed, but also included George Papakonstantinou, Mit Mitropoulos, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Tassos Boulmetis, Eva Stefani and Vouvoula Skoura, all of whom I met or came in contact with but did not interview,

having found answers to most of the interview questions in the material they provided, such as texts, biographical notes, tapes and digitised videos. Among my plans was to interview Yioulia Gazetopoulou who unfortunately passed away during the course of this research. Among these people quite a few are no longer active in the field of the visual arts but have followed different professions in education, commercial cinema or television, and this type of interview included questions relating to their reason of involvement with media arts, as well as the reasons this interest ceased. In the course of this research, this version of the interview seemed unnecessary as most of the crucial questions about their work and life could be deducted from existing material such as published biographical notes or unpublished *curricula vitae*.

The term ‘oral history’ would be a misuse if the interview is not made publicly accessible through an appropriate organisation. As part of my intention to cover a missing part of both art history and new media art history in Greece, following the submission of this thesis and according to the ‘Principles and Best Practices for Oral History of the Oral History Association’ (Ritchie, 2015, pp.273–276), I will obtain a signed Agreement of Gift to the Public Domain, where possible, in order to donate the audio-visual material together with any collected documents and digitised viewing copies of artworks to the artist archives of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, or to another public institution. With this contribution, I hope that my research will be publicly available to future scholars of new media art history in Greece.

## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

The present thesis retains the structure of the research. It comprises six chapters divided into two chronological parts and it begins with a review of the existing literature on art and technology within the recent history of art in Greece. Through the assessment of this literature, the research validates the view that this subject has been insufficiently addressed so far in histories of art, exhibition catalogues and private and public collections. Through this overview of the subject of contemporary art in Greece, one is also able to discern the changing perspectives in historiography in Greece as time progresses as well as the changing institutional landscape. Last but not least, through Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of the thesis, I outline the extent of the problem as well as those persons, events and places that offer the key to the solution.

Part I (1970–1982), comprising of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, looks in detail the life and work of two important artists who almost exclusively contributed to the practice and discourse of media and new technologies in the 1970s each one in their own radically different way. Pantelis Xagoraris (Piraeus, 1929–Athens, 2000) and Theodoros Papadimitriou (Agrinio, 1931–Athens, 2018), also known as Theodoros, sculptor or the sculptor Theodoros. Those chapters investigate the life, influences and ideology of each personality in relation to their artistic practice, with a special emphasis on the role of technology in their perspective oeuvres. Although both artists had an interest in technology from early on in their careers and maintained this interest until the end of their lives, Part I focuses on their major contribution to the issue within the period from 1970 to 1982.

Part II (1980–1992) consists of the Chapter 5, which attempts to cover the fundamentally different period 1980–1992, characterised by a pluralism of video-centred practices by multiple artists and the fervent activity of numerous small and short-lived organisations founded by artists to support their work. Chapter 5 also includes information on how existing institutions and organisations supported media arts, on how media art was mediated to the public and what were its characteristics. Chapter 5 includes the slightly distinct case of Nestoras Papanicolopoulos (Athens, 1928), an artist active since the 1960s, who started making animations and hybrid works through the use of a personal computer during the 1980s—when video dominated the discourse on art and technology in Greece—and who often joined video artists in video art events for the presentation of his work.

Chapter 6 consists of the conclusions and findings of the research, in relation to chronology, technology, institutions, networking and the market as well as the reoccurring themes of tradition and education, all of which together emerge as the unique characteristics of the introduction of media arts in Greece.



# Chapter 2: Contextual review

## 2.1 Outline of the research field

As established in the introduction of this research, new media art in Greece has been overlooked by historians through a double bias, one that has to do with the history of Greek art not being adequately documented, researched and written, and another which has to do with new media being rarely or awkwardly integrated within the few canonical texts. This chapter will attempt to map the ways that the history of art in Greece has been written for the period in question and assess the degree and the modes that new media has been included or excluded from those canonical attempts. It will also overview the few predating specialised attempts to write the history of new media art in Greece. This chapter also includes an outline of the institutions, organisations and commercial and non-commercial spaces that allowed for new media art to be produced, presented and documented for the future and the bibliographical sources through which new media art discourse developed and which proved to be of valuable help in the process of this research.

### 2.1.1 Canons in the history of art in Greece

Canons in art history are usually evoked in order to be partially disputed and corrected. Nevertheless, it is through their existence that discourse is made possible, as discourse requires a common ground. As argued by Edward Shanken, canons are the common ground of art history, in the form of generally accepted “objects, actors and moments”, and this collection is admitted by “art critics, art historians, curators, dealers, and collectors and the institutions they represent: journals, the academy, museums, commercial galleries, auction houses, and collectors” (Shanken, 2007, p.55).

The common ground for art historical discourse regarding art within the borders of the modern Greek state usually includes, as its starting point, the Neo-classical painters, influenced by the “Munich School” (that is painters trained in the Münchner Akademie der Bildenden Künste), who continued this academic tradition through the foundation of the Athens School of Fine Arts in 1837 (Strousa, 2005, p.24). An important milestone is the so-called “Generation of the 30s”, which refers to artists of the interwar years who amalgamated modernist styles with an iconography perceived as related to national identity (Strousa, 2005, p.30). Not all art historical accounts include the art of the present but often stop a few decades

earlier, retaining some safe “historical distance”. Contemporary art in Greece—artists, works and events after the 1960s—is being systematically researched and written only during the last 15 years as revealed by the increasing number of specialised publications.

Some standard attempts to write the history of art in Greece take the form of encyclopaedias or artist dictionaries, where each author avoids the task of combining all the loose biographies or articles into a unifying historical thread or risk any form of evaluation. Often the principles behind the selection of the content are obscure or arbitrary. The most extensive publication of this type is the *Lexikó Ellínon Kallitechnón: Zográphoi, Glíptes, Charáktes; 16os – 20os aiónas* [Dictionary of Greek Artists: Painters, Sculptors, Engravers; 16th–20th Century], updated and reprinted regularly. Its 1997 edition includes categories such as video art and computer art and includes some of the most well-known practitioners such as Marianne Strapatsakis, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos and Manthos Santorineos (Komini-Dialeti, 1997). Another example is *Protásis yia tin Istoría tis Neoellinikís Téchnis* [Proposal for the History of Neo-Hellenic Art] by critic and diplomat Alexander Xydis, published in 1976. It consists of republished articles on artists and artistic tendencies in Greece and not a history that is written from the beginning as such. It does include information about Pantelis Xagoraris and the sculptor Theodoros (Xydis, 1976).

One of the first bold attempts to writing a critical art history was the four-volume work titled *I Physiognomía tis Metapolemikís Téchnis stin Elláda* [The Physiognomy of Postwar Art in Greece], written between 1981 and 1985, and authored by the prominent art critic (and poet) Eleni Vakalo (Istanbul, 1921–Athens, 2001). In this work, Vakalo tries to identify, explore and explain the basic tendencies that appear in Greek art from the end of WWII to the time of writing. The final volume, titled *Meta tin Afairesi* [After Abstraction] is an attempt to navigate among the multitude of artistic practices that emerged in Greece after the decline of the modernist avant-gardes and the dominance of abstract painting. It is split into chapters that follow different paths of artistic evolution and includes a chapter describing the changes within the professional and social aspect of art during and right after the colonels’ junta in a sober manner, devoid of excessive heroism (Vakalo, 1985, pp.83–87). Vakalo also briefly mentions the role of the foreign cultural institutions that were known to offer diplomatic protection for exhibitions and happenings with political sub-context realised under their auspices. It is important to note that it is this historical moment and these conditions that mark the beginning of my research period when key figures that contributed to the subject

of art and technology, such as Pantelis Xagoraris and the sculptor Theodoros, made significant progress with their work. Vakalo gives special attention to the work of Xagoraris whose work she considers a continuation of Bauhaus mathematical applications in art and distinguishes him as the person responsible for the dissemination of constructivist ideas from an international context to Greek discourse. Regardless of her appreciation for Xagoraris, she also misinterpreted his work as she mentioned that he relied on a computer for the “realisation of theoretical views” which “in the beginning made us feel alienated and we instantly placed them outside the field of art [...] since there was no hope of any contact with the public” [my translation] (Vakalo, 1985, p.26). Regarding all other mentions of art and technology, the only mention of the medium of video is alongside film for its ability to record events in a creative way, in connection with the performative work of Yioulia Gazetopoulou and Angelos Skourtis/Li Likoudi: “In this amalgamation of arts video now is also added, a medium used equally by cinematographers and visual artists. For the artists, it allows for the recording of movement which is not considered an essential element for many art forms” [my translation] (Vakalo, 1985, p.111). Indicative of its impact, this study also developed into an exhibition, also realised in four parts, and was exhibited from 1981 to 1985 in Athens, Thessaloniki and Rhodes, before being exhibited in its totality at the Athens Municipal Gallery in 1986.

Around the same period, specifically in 1983, Tony Spiteris’ *I Téchni stin Elláda Metá to 1945* [Art in Greece After 1945] is published. An art critic and art historian, founder of the Association of Greek Critics which later became the Greek section of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA-Hellas), Tony Spiteris focuses on artists that left their mark during the 1950s and 1960s and categorises their work in basic tendencies like abstraction and neo-realism or other traits such as being active outside Greece. Pantelis Xagoraris is mentioned as a new tendency in sculpture for his kinetic works and advanced geometric three-dimensional objects, with a passing reference on computers “He later progressed his research by using electronic computers” (Spiteris, 1983, p.89). The only instance where technology is mentioned as part of the interpretation of a work is in regards to Bia Davou (Spiteris, 1983, p.59), an artist who often referred to cybernetic languages, flowcharts and circuit boards, but always used a manual process to create her works (Pandi and Schizakis, 2008).

An important contribution to the history of postwar art in Greece is in the form of two extensive articles by Martha Christofoglou. The first is titled ‘Ο Εξσινκρονισμός τισ Νεοελληνικός Τέχνης και ι Μεγάλες Διαμάκες (1950–1980)’ [The Modernisation of Neohellenic Art and the Great Disputes (1950–1980)] (Christofoglou, 1995). The second is titled ‘Ι Ικαστικός Τέχνης 1974–2000’ [Visual Arts 1974–2000] part of the ten-volume *History of New Hellenism 1770–2000* (Christofoglou, 2003). The first article concentrates on the ideological debates between conservative voices committed to ideas of academicism, Hellenism and classicism and progressive entities proclaiming modernity, abstraction and artistic freedom. Although it is an invaluable description of the ideological clashes, dormant but still active in contemporary art in Greece, there is no mention of new technologies in Christofoglou’s argument. ‘Ι Ικαστικός Τέχνης 1974–2000’ [Visual Arts 1974–2000] begins with an evaluation of the transition to democracy for cultural institutions, but also of the collective endeavours of Greek artists, including artist’s groups such as Processes/Systems, of importance for this research for the participation of Pantelis Xagoraris (Christofoglou, 2003, p.279). It also provides an account of the development of new spaces for art after the colonels’ junta, as well as the effect on the newly formed audience, on important new publications and magazines (Christofoglou, 2003, pp.280–281). This is one of the few texts that considers the changing policy of the ministry of culture and its effect on the institutions of art, but also the changing perspectives of critics, curators and art historians (Christofoglou, 2003, pp.286–287). The article is another example of how media arts were usually excluded from visual arts: “The Greek participation (of the Biennial of Young Artists from Mediterranean Europe) in the visual arts section, without taking into account the sections on photography, design, illustration and video, was rich in participants” (Christofoglou, 2003, p.290).

An ambitious canonical text is Miltiadis Papanikolaou’s *Istoría tís Téchnis stin Elláda: Zographikí kai Glyptikí tou 20ou Aíóna* [History of Art in Greece: Painting and Sculpture of the 20th Century] published in 1999, first part of a two-volume publication. It is a history that begins with the presumption that Greek artistic production is peripheral and tries to link artists to styles and movements of the western canon, as their abstract “echo”. This is not followed up to the final chapters about the postwar period when artistic movements and tendencies cannot be clearly defined. Although the final chapter is titled ‘Από τα Ζογραφικά Ανάγλυφα και τισ Εικαστικός Παρεμβάσεις stis Κataskeués kai τισ Engatastáσεις. Téchni kai Technología’ [From the Painterly Embosses to Visual Interventions in Installations and

Constructions. Art and Technology], the artists that are included are mostly discussed for their use of light, motor mechanisms and non-traditional materials (Papanikolaou, 1999, p.354). A single reference to video installation regards the 1985 Greek participation in the Venice Biennial and the work of Costas Tsoclis *Portraits* (1986) and *Harpooned Fish* (1985) (Papanikolaou, 1999, p.249). Pantelis Xagoraris' early work is related to op art and neo-constructivism and the use of a computer is characterised as a practice that enriched "the potential of visual communication and gave new form to the aesthetic of information" (Papanikolaou, 1999 p.260). Papanikolaou also attempts to explain the reason that no other artists in Greece followed Xagoraris' example "due to the diminished role of imagination" in his practice (Papanikolaou, 1999 p.260). The final section of the book contains one more new media work, Alexandros Psychoulis' *Black Box* (1997), an award-winning interactive installation that utilised voice-to-text software and which was part of the Greek participation in the 1997 Venice Biennale (Papanikolaou, 1999, p.353).

A more specialised history is Areti Adamopoulou's *Ellenikí Metapolemikí Téchni: Eikastikés Paremváseis sto Chóro* [Greek Postwar Art: Visual Interventions in Space], published in 2000. Even though its special focus on sculptural and installation practices limit its status as a historical overview, it covers a wide period from the 1950s to the 1990s and includes information on artists that included video projections as part of their practice always in relation to their artistic intention. This art history book is rare among the curatorial and critical texts mentioned in this literature review for its academic standards, pointing to numerous references and sources. Among the reasons that the book is of special importance in this research is that the author thoroughly examines the work of three artists who worked with technology, the sculptor Theodoros, Aris Prodromidis and Marianne Strapatsakis. Nevertheless, in the cases of the sculptor Theodoros and Aris Prodromidis, who both included video elements in their installations and performances, the emphasis is on the use of space (which is the subject of Adamopoulou's research), whereas the use of video is overlooked. Interestingly, the author mentions how Theodoros perceived his writing, television presence and teaching at the National Technical University as part of his work (Adamopoulou, 2000a, p.69). On the contrary, although video was an integral part of Prodromidis' work for several years, Adamopoulou's assessment mentions it only as a documentation medium (Adamopoulou, 2000a, p.103). There is a completely different approach in the case of Marianne Strapatsakis who is mentioned in relation to video art, and

specifically about how her mixed media practice relates to video and how her work integrates video image and sound in various ways (Adamopoulou, 2000a, p.110–112).

Another exceptional recent history of art with a special focus on performance in Greece is Irene Gerogianni's *I Perphórmans stin Elláda, 1968–1986* [Performance Art in Greece, 1968–1986] published in 2019. The book is the outcome of extensive research, and as such is also rich in sources and references, indicative of the recent academic and publishing interest in recent and contemporary art. It has an inclusive approach, where many works that have live and performative elements are discussed. It contains information on the performances of the sculptor Theodoros, Aris Prodromidis and Thanasis Chondros and Alexandra Katsiani among others, providing the context and content for many of the performances that are also part of this research. Nevertheless, issues of technology are overlooked or insufficiently addressed: Theodoros' *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show* (1982), his first work that uses video as a means to integrate the performance within an installation but also as an essential conceptualisation element of the work, is not included in the text. *Tele-manipulation* (1976), which includes the first broadcast performance for Greek television, is not discussed in detail, whereas the term video is used in relation to several performances made for film that are described as “videoperformances”. Interestingly, almost all uses of the term video are in relation to recorded moving images that have been originally shot and edited in film (Gerogianni, 2019, pp.53, 110, 125–127). On the contrary, actual video or interdisciplinary performances such as the ones by Nikos Giannopoulos, Yioulia Gazetopoulou and Marianne Strapatsakis are not mentioned, either because of lack of information or because of different classification.

### 2.1.2 The historiographic function of exhibitions in Greece

As expected, historical accounts of art include sparse information about contemporary art, because current affairs are simply not the object of history. Information on the contemporary art of each time is now clearly expected from the curatorial texts of contemporary art exhibitions. This was not as clear in Greece during the 1970s and the 1980s as curatorial interpretations of the works presented in an exhibition were uncommon. One of the early examples of such curatorial attempts was the exhibition *I Physiognomía tis Metapolemikís Téchnis stin Elláda* [The Physiognomy of Postwar Art in Greece] by Eleni Vakalo based on her history of art. Another example is the exhibition *Reminiscences – Transformations –*

*Quests*, curated by a committee titled Committee of Fine Arts of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sciences, which attempts such an interpretation and, like Eleni Vakalo who is also a member of the committee, looks at art in Greece with its own peculiarities without trying to make connections with recent and contemporary art from Europe and the United States (Committee of Fine Arts of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sciences, 1985, p.21). As mentioned in the catalogue text: “‘The whole world’, according to M. McLuhan, ‘is a global electronic village’ [...] The dialogue between the present and history seems to be more important for the artists than the one with the future” [my translation] (Committee of Fine Arts of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sciences, 1985, p.25). Strangely, this exhibition presented only works of painting, engraving and sculpture.

A key contribution towards understanding the context of Greek contemporary art is the exhibition *Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience*. Although it created controversy in 1992, it is now considered an exceptional exhibition as it attempted to view the advent of the idea of modernity over a century of Greek art; an exhibition that sparked a lively public debate at its time regarding the way history of art is written as well as about the roles of institutions and curators (Theodoropoulou, 2011, pp.98–101). The exhibition became a reference point for the way institutions can affect the formation of historical perspectives, but also became a target of fierce critique for years to come, mostly by celebrated commercial artists not fitting the curatorial criteria, but also justifiably, for not including any works of photography (Stathatos, 2000, pp.XLIII–XLIV). The curator of the exhibition, Anna Kafetsi, outlines her approach in the introductory text, as one that tries to explore the “gradations” of the “rift” with tradition and representation by adopting a view of modernism as a notion beyond place and age. The curator does not relate artists with international avant-garde movements through superficial similarities but attempts to investigate the reasons that led to similar aesthetic choices (Kafetsi, 1992, p.17). Traditional art historians working with pre-established historical interpretations failed to see the curatorial validity of such an approach. Within this exhibition, works employing technological media are discussed in the framework of broader artistic developments and are related to artistic intent, such as in the sixth chapter of the catalogue, titled ‘From Sculpture to Energy’ where technology and art, in the work of Pantelis Xagoraris, Takis, Chryssa and Stephen Antonakos, are mentioned as something that follows artistic intent but cannot alter the essence of the art product by itself (Kafetsi, 1992, p.179). Likewise, in the seventh chapter ‘From the work to the process’ the curator mentions that the computer and “other

related means”, like video and photography, become “(inter)media(ries)” that affect the relation between creator and artwork and which, to a certain degree, define the artistic result (Kafetsi, 1992, p.191).

Another institutional exhibition with the scope of reviewing the history of art in Greece is *The Years of Defiance: The Art of the '70s in Greece*, a 2005 exhibition, organised by the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens and curated by Bia Papadopoulou, that deals specifically with the decade of 1970. This exhibition came as a result of extensive research and attempted to revisit the era that came “after the modern” through the work of more than fifty artists. The catalogue is complementary to the exhibition since it includes additional material in the form of a chronology, detailed biographies, an anthology of key texts that convey the key issues discussed among the artists and critics of the 1970s and five recent texts relating to Greek contemporary art of the 1970s with developments in international art and to the political and social situation in Greece during and after the colonels’ junta. The curator’s text avoids standard categorisation in terms of style, theme or practice but instead attempts to offer a fresh approach based on the issues that emerged from the exhibited works in relation to the social and political reality, to artistic processes and to ideas of structure and form. Thus, Theodoros’ work is read as a “debunking of the political demagogy of art” (Papadopoulou, 2005, p.33) and Xagoraris is among the artists who switch the focus from the completed object to the process (Papadopoulou, 2005, p.107).

### 2.1.3 Private collections and historical narratives

Parallel to curatorial and art historical attempts to narrate and interpret the particularities of art in Greece and its history, some private collectors have also set a similar aim through a systematic collection of historical and contemporary Greek artists. Some of those collections have been publicly exhibited, in private exhibition spaces, temporary or permanently, accompanied by luxurious publications edited by some of the most prominent curators and art historians active in Greece. Possibly the most important such case is the collection and publication *Silloví Emfietzóglou: Neóteri kai Síkhroni Ellinikí Téchni* [Emfietzoglou Collection: Modern and Contemporary Greek Art] which was firstly published in 1999 and republished as an expanded version in 2005 following the systematic acquisition of over 600 works by Greek artists since the 19th century collected by construction entrepreneur Prodromos Emfietzoglou (Strousa, 2005, p.15). The catalogue text narrates the history of art



in Greece since the foundation of the modern Greek state through themes and artistic concerns such as the Greek identity, abstraction, gestural painting, the avant-gardes and postmodernism. New technology is not a distinct subject, but part of the issues concerning the younger artists working from the 1990s on: “Technological culture is approached as the development of the wider humanist tradition, which, in the hands of the artist is subjected to selective use, in this way suggesting the freedom of choice of expressive media as a privilege of a moral nature in art” [my translation] (Strousa, 2005, p.84). The 1999 version of the catalogue has no mention of newer artistic practices, and the only technological element is considered the electricity in the work of Takis, Chryssa, and Antonakos (Strousa, 1999). On the contrary, the second edition includes a few photographic and video works, such as works by artists Nikos Navridis and Giorgos Gyparakis, and mentions Alexandros Psychouli’s 1997 computer-powered interactive installation *Black Box* (1997).

*The Beltsios Collection – The Pioneers, a View of Art in Greece During the Second Half of 20th Century* is an exhibition catalogue of a show of a private collection, consisting of 329 works dating from 1960 to 2000 created by 39 Greek artists born from 1922 to 1960. The curator Dennys Zacharopoulos adopts the idea of the ‘pioneer’ by means of which, the collection, the exhibition and its catalogue evaluate groups of works from each artist as a “complete artistic proposition within history and art” [my translation] (Zacharopoulos, 2004, pp.376–377). The curatorial approach is mostly focused on the ideological, political and social struggles of the selected pioneering artists within the context of their time and the relation of their work to the constantly shifting political environment in Greece and worldwide, from the 1930s to the 1970s. The Beltsios collection as exhibited for the purposes of *The Pioneers* did not include any media works, and the catalogue text, although it conveys the empirical knowledge of the curator, it reads like a memoir, without any specific references to works and artists in my research.

A smaller initiative is the private collection of Giorgos Vogiatzoglou spanning from 1870 to the present, divided into the following three areas: painting, sculpture and new media from 2000 to the present. Nevertheless, the catalogue does not include any new media works (Kipreou and Vogiatzoglou, 2013, p.28). Equally lacking in new media works is the Alpha Bank collection, which comprises the collection of three former banking organisations that systematically collected art, from 1880 to the present day. Although the collection includes artists from the pioneering generation of the 1960s and 1970s, it does so through works of

traditional media. Again, there is no mention of new media in the text written by curator Irini Orati (Orati, 2008). Private collections are often accumulated as an investment and not as a record, lacking media works that are considered a risky investment due to their volatile nature.

#### 2.1.4 Art museums and public collections in Greece

Public collections often have statutory aims that predefine the scope of their collection and often have aims that include the historical record. As a result, public collections are slightly better in terms of media inclusivity. The oldest contemporary art museum in Greece, the Macedonian Centre for Contemporary Art, which was later renamed Macedonian Museum for Contemporary Art, operates in Thessaloniki since 1979 as a private not for profit organisation whereas only recently it was unified with the State Museum of Contemporary Art. Three catalogues of the collection, published in 1992, 1999 and 2003, offer no historical insight on the collection itself, its acquisition policy, its content and its aims but only comprise of information on artworks and artists, on several works donated by Alexander Iolas, as well as other works with different provenance. The 1992 publication includes no new media works at all (although there are some kinetic works). The 1999 publication of the collection includes three video installations among the works collected: by Cypriot artist Theodoulos Grigoriou, by Manthos Santorineos and by Leda Papaconstantinou. Areti Adamopoulou's interpretative texts include interesting references to Manthos Santorineos' inspiration in pop subcultures, his background in photography and the interdisciplinary aspect of many of his works (Adamopoulou, 1999, pp.331–332). It also includes a thorough description of Leda Papaconstantinou's emotional and personal installation *Genet's Toaster* (1997) (Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999, p.284). The 2003 catalogue, published on the occasion of Alexander and Dorothy Xydi's donation, similarly lacks any context. The collection comprises works by artists mostly emerging in the 1960s and 1970s and only a few artists emerging later. The only mention of technology is a very ambiguous piece of text that compares the work of Pantelis Xagoraris to Naum Gabo, with the latter being evaluated as superior because he used manual tools. Among the merits of Xagoraris, Xydis concludes that although using machines he also has complete control over his tools (Xydis, 2003, pp.232–235).

‘Collectability’ is a concept that collectors and collection administrators understand very well, as the capacity of an object to maintain its properties, material or other, intact for a long period of time. For private collectors, this is often linked to financial investment, whereas museums tend to consider, apart from the historical capital, their ability to exercise their responsibility, i.e. to preserve an artwork for as long as possible. Museums are very unlikely to acquire a work, either as purchase or donation, when its survival is unlikely. The capacity to preserve new media as well as any other media depends on institutional structure and specialisation. Most museums employ conservators of traditional media, thus employing new media specialists that can deal with the specific issues arising from the use of technology is simply a matter of institutional perspective.

The 1997 founding law of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens includes a new media department as well as an audio-visual and digital media production lab (Hellenic Government Gazette: FEK 2557/A/24.12.1997). From the outset of its collection activity, the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens started collecting video, video installations and multimedia CD-ROMs, whereas it now includes about 300 items in the Photography and New Media section of the collection, including, apart from video and photography, an online multiplayer computer game and an interactive map. Those works are regularly or not so regularly updated, remastered, re-digitised, transmigrated and generally taken care of by the author of this research, in a fashion that follows rules and guidelines of *Matters in Media Art* (Gawlinski, 2015) and *Variable Media Approach* (Depocas et al., 2003). The collection sector predominantly consists of single-channel video works from U.S. distributors such as Electronic Arts Intermix and Video Data Bank, i.e. in other words works that already form a canon in the history of video art and are mostly from American video and performance artists. However, even from the first years of the collection, the museum started acquiring important video works by Greek artists, such as six works from the *Living Painting* cycle of Costas Tsoclis which were made in the 1980s and 1990s, and Makis Faros’ Macromedia Director animation *Incubation-Collapse Process* (2002). In the years that followed, the museum collected important works from some of the pioneering artists who worked with video in Greece, such as Marianne Strapatsakis and Aris Prodromidis, and avant-garde animator Michalis Arfaras’ *Wochenschau* (1982), not to mention the numerous videos and video installations from artists working from the late 1990s onwards. It is important to note how there are new media works in other sectors of the collection as well, such as the work of Pantelis Xagoraris and the sculptor Theodoros, both of whom are

important entities in this research, but are classified under drawing and sculpture respectively. This has to do with the intention of both artists to contribute artistically to those fields but also the fact that the final object that is collected is an artwork in traditional media. This pluralism in media collected by the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens is reflected in all its publications, either temporary exhibitions or exhibitions with works from the permanent collection, as well as in the online catalogue of the collection.<sup>4</sup>

As it is evident from the publications cited, chosen for being close to what one would call “canon”, or for claiming to provide a version of the history of art in a specific time and place, issues of art and technology or the introduction of new media practice are mostly absent. This of course is not unique to the history of Greek contemporary art and as exemplified by E. A. Shanken in ‘Historicizing Art and Technology: Forging a Method and Firing a Canon’ (Shanken, 2007, p.45), most important “canonical” publications blatantly ignore the subject of art and technology. Within the histories of Greek contemporary art, the few artists working systematically or ad hoc with new media in the 1970s do not constitute a tendency strong enough in an era dominated by political struggle to attract critical attention, and as for the 1980s and after, there has been no significant historicising attempt yet.

## **2.2 Relevant literature predating this research**

Among the few attempts to write the history of new media in Greece was in the now offline webpage *ArtUp Media Art in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*, an initiative of the Goethe-Institut. Among the hosted essays, ‘Media art in Greece’ by Anna Hatziyannaki, written in 2012, was a mapping of different practices and agents of media arts with an emphasis on the last two decades: “the interdisciplinary approach to art started to widely concern Greek artists and some art theorists, only from the 1990s onwards, when we can talk about Media art in Greece” (Hatziyannaki, 2012). Nevertheless, Hatziyannaki’s historical account mentions some milestones in the history of media art in Greece, such as the video lab in Polyplano, Costas Tsoclis video installation in the 1985 Venice Biennial and some key personalities that contributed in various ways to the media arts in Greece such as Marianne

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<sup>4</sup> As for example in the catalogue of the exhibitions *Acquisitions 2001-2002* (Kafetsi, 2002), *Videographies: the Early Decades: From the EMST Collection* (Kafetsi, 2005), *Politics of Art: From the EMST Collection* (Kafetsi, 2010), *Urgent Conversations: Athens – Antwerp* (De Baere and Koskina, 2016), *Antidoron: The EMST Collection* (Koskina, 2017), as well as the Collection section of the museum’s webpage (<http://collection.emst.gr/en>).

Strapatsakis, Manthos Santorineos, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos and Pantelis Xagoraris. Although the text tries to relate artistic experimentation from various fields, such as music, with technological developments within Greece, it fails to acknowledge the importance of personalities who did not define themselves strictly as visual artists, such as Nikos Giannopoulos and several TV producers and cinematographers, as well as the involvement of artists primarily known for their work with other media, such as Aris Prodromidis and the sculptor Theodoros. In fact, even for the artists included within this text, there is no mention of how their use of new media relates to other art practices also within their oeuvre.

An older, more thorough and extensive text but with video art as its single focus is Areti Adamopoulou's 'Video Art: Hi-tech kai Téchni stin Elláda [Video art: High tech and Art in Greece] (Adamopoulou, 2000b). This key essay offers significant information on established artists who used video in Greece from the 1970s onwards and positions video within their general practice. However, possibly due to its strict art-historical criteria, the essay includes only artists graduates of art schools who worked with video within established artistic spaces. Written in 2000, this essay is proof of how quickly memory fades, as the text makes no mention of the rich contribution of people from other artistic fields and by artists working outside established artistic spaces such as festivals and cinema screenings and who were still active in the early 1990s. Unlike their peers recognised by the professional art circuit, their contribution was neither accompanied by exhibition catalogues, press releases and curatorial texts nor was followed by an ongoing artistic practice. Their work, at best documented in screening programmes and small brochures, was soon forgotten.

The most important contribution to the history of new media art in Greece at the time of writing (November 2021) is Thanassis Moutsopoulos and Konstantinos Vasileiou's *I Epokhí tou Diastímatos: Ilektrikí kai Ilektronikí Téchni stin Elláda 1957–1989* [The Age of Space: Electric and Electronic Art in Greece 1957–1989], published in June 2017 in conjunction with an exhibition with the same title. Unfortunately, the exhibition fails to offer any real insight by co-presenting dissimilar approaches under the theme of space conquest. The publication however is an entirely different case, as it is not a catalogue of an exhibition but a collection of essays. It includes an essay by Manos Stefanidis titled 'Erga Téchnis stin Príza. Líga Prágmata pou den Xérame Gia Autá' [Artworks Plugged in. A Few Things we Didn't Know] which enumerates contributions to art and technology by Greek figures like Takis, Stephen Antonakos, Chryssa, Costis and Pantelis Xagoraris. Stefanidis' text is quite

inclusive and refers to works by artists that are not often viewed in this context, like Nikos Alexiou or Christos Tzivelos who used electric mechanisms and light (Stefanidis, 2017, pp.75–90). Another essay related to this subject is Anna Hatziyannaki’s essay ‘Ellines Protopóroi tis Ilektronikís Téchnis 1957–1989’ [Greek Pioneers of Electronic Art 1957–1989] is an adaptation of her 2012 essay ‘Media Art in Greece’ which is mentioned above (Hatziyannaki, 2017, pp.91–111). The most relevant essay in the anthology is ‘Vinteotéchnē: I diamórphosi tou peribállontos gia ton diálogo téchnis kai technolias stin Elláda’ [Videoart: The Formation of the Context for a Dialogue between Art and Technology in Greece] by Nefeli Dimitriadi which is the most detailed article about the history of video art in Greece to date. The text refers to specific techniques adopted by the artists but also to distinct works with an emphasis on Manthos Santorineos, the programme of the short-lived Art and Technology Sector of the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center and the early activities of the Fournos Center for Digital Culture. Although there is an attempt to explore the different approaches in the use of video, the author makes a distinction of video art from uses of video by visual artists (which she terms “visual art video”). This results in omissions from this account, as well as in a distinction that was hardly in effect during the period in question (Dimitriadi, 2017, pp.113–135).

Related to the subject are also three essays: Nektarios Papadimitriou’s ‘Mia Periliptikí Eisagogí stín Epanástasi tou Ilektrikoú kai Ilektronikoú Ichou’ [A Concise Introduction to the Revolution of Electric and Electronic Sound] (Papadimitriou, 2017), Yiorgis Sakellariou’s ‘Periplanéseis se ena Ilektrikó Ichitikó Símpan’ [Wandering in an Electric Sonic Universe] (Sakellariou, 2017) and by the Contemporary Music Research Center also known as KSYME titled ‘35 Khrónia Parousías’ [35 Years of Presence] (KSYME, 2017). These essays focus on electronic music experimentation and the activity of Greek pioneering musicians and music organisations from the end of the 1950s in the context of global advancements. Apart from the contributions of acclaimed composers such as Iannis Xenakis, Anestis Logothetis and Janis Christou, all three essays include important information on the activities of Ioannis Papaioannou, a musicologist largely responsible for organizing and disseminating the work of Greek and international contemporary composers in Greece (and who was a close associate of Pantelis Xagoraris), as well as about Michalis Adamis, Stefanos Vassileiadis and Argyris Kounadis, musicians who all had collaborated with visual artists during the 1970s. Papadimitriou’s text also makes reference to the purchase of VCS-3 and EMS Synthi 100 equipment by Michalis Adamis and the Electronic Music Workshop which

he founded in 1965 but also on Pantelis Xagoraris' membership on the 1986 foundation of the Contemporary Music Research Centre (Papadimitriou, 2017, p.220). As it is obvious from these essays, information about experimental music in Greece is much more available, researched and published than new media art. This is mainly due to KSYME being continuously active since the 1980s and by being related to earlier organisations through its members and board members.

### **2.3 Key organisations and institutions**

In order to deal with the absence of histories and the lack of integration of new media practices in the history of art in Greece, one has to find the documents and primary sources from the people, the institutions and organisations that facilitated the development of this field. By examining the aforementioned canonical texts through a new media scope, we can increase our understanding of the extent that new media art was actually practised, but excluded from art history and criticism.

#### 2.3.1 Private organisations

##### 2.3.1.1 Athens Technological Organisation

Xagoraris collaborated with the Athens Technological Organisation as a teacher but also for the realisation of his first solo exhibition in 1967, and for the realisation of his first computer-printed work, *Symmetries of the Cube* (1971) in 1971, in an exhibition co-organised by the Goethe-Institut Athen and the Athens Center of Ekistics (an organisation that together with the Athens Technological Organisation was also under the umbrella of the Doxiadis Associates) ([Figure 4](#)). Unfortunately, none of those events was accompanied by a catalogue. At least, the institute produced a folder with several typed A4 pages with extensive information on both events, which were either intended as a press release or for visitor information and which were fortunately found in the Pantelis Xagoraris Archive (Athens Technological Organisation, 1967; Athens Center of Ekistics, 1971a; Athens Center of Ekistics, 1971b).



Figure 4. Xagoraris, P. (1971) Photograph of Pantelis Xagoraris printing *Symmetries of the Cube* with the UNIVAC printer unit of the Athens Center of Ekistics, Archive No. 3437, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001.

#### 2.3.1.2 The Contemporary Art Workshop of the Goethe-Institut, Athen

The Goethe-Institut is a global foundation promoting the German language and culture through teaching and cultural events. The Athens branch was the first of its global network and was founded in 1952, initially for the teaching of German language lessons. By the time of the colonels' junta in Greece, the Goethe-Institut Athen had grown into an important



cultural hub, and, since it was a foreign organisation, it could operate in relative freedom until its director, Johannes Weissert, was transferred to the Goethe-Institut annex in London in 1973 following political pressure (Kokkini, 2005, p.223). During the 1970s, apart from staging exhibitions and events by Greek artists such as Constantin Xenakis and Stathis Logothetis. Despite its small exhibition space, the Goethe-Institut presented a rich cultural programme that included travelling thematic exhibitions with international artists making accessible to the public of Athens the geometric and abstract tendencies emerging at that time. Through the Goethe-Institut Pantelis Xagoraris realised his second and fourth solo exhibition in 1971 and 1974 respectively (*Transformations 2 and 4*), and the sculptor Theodoros realised the exhibition *Sculpture for Sculpture for Public Participation – Participation Prohibited* in 1970. Xagoraris published catalogues for both exhibitions, with photographs of the works and introductory texts by Dimitris Fatouros for the first one (Xagoraris, 1971a) and himself for the second one (Xagoraris, 1974a). Theodoros also published the catalogue *Gliptikí yia ti Simmetokhí tou Kinoú - Apagorévetai i Simmetokhí* [Sculpture for Public Participation – Participation Prohibited] (Theodoros, 1970).

### 2.3.1.3 Fournos Center for Digital Culture

The Fournos Center for Digital Culture was founded in 1993 by Manthos and Dodo Santorineos and coincides with the end of the period of this research when video, the computer and all new media had started being integrated within the mainstream of art production, presentation and perception. Also functioning as a small theatre and video production stage, Fournos hosted (and is still hosting) multidisciplinary events combining poetry, music, theatre, visual arts and dance. It also screened and staged video works by Greek and international artists. It attracted the financial support of the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Greek Ministry of Development (Santorineos, 1998). In 1998, Fournos organised the First Greek Festival for Art and Technology, which was later renamed Medi@terra Festival, functioning annually until 2006. In its first edition, the festival presented 52 videos, as well as computer graphics and animation, CD-ROMs, websites and digital photographs by established artists and students, proof that the state of affairs in regard to education and production of digital and analogue works had radically changed in the mid-1990s.

## 2.3.2 Galleries

### 2.3.2.1 Desmos Art Gallery

The Desmos Art Gallery was founded in 1971 by public relations expert Manos Pavlidis and artist, educator and puppeteer Eppi Protonotariou. Desmos presents a unique case of a commercial gallery that exceeded its commercial purposes by “partaking in the development of art and most importantly by cultivating the taste of the audience” often by exhibiting art that could not be sold (Marinos, 2019, p.2–3). Desmos had a pivotal role in bringing new artistic practices closer to the public as its programme included performances, talks, music events, group and solo exhibitions and short-duration artistic and curatorial projects. As mentioned by Yorghos Tzirtzilakis in the catalogue of the exhibition *P+P=D, New Art from the 1970s and 1980s; Selections from “Desmos”*:

Manos Pavlidis and Eppi Protonotariou played a catalytic role, having introduced through “Desmos” a series of “experimental” rather than “commercial” events. They created a remarkable, evolving collection and, more importantly, they rekindled the notion of artistic avant-garde in this country. [...] In general, we could say that the emphasis was on communication and certain elements of rupture that liberated Greek art from the obsolete obsession with “nationality” in an original and unprecedented way for the standards of the ’70s (Tzirtzilakis, 1999, p.15–17).

The Desmos Art Gallery is known for its support in artistic practices that emerged in Greece in the 1970s, and in fact, had a pivotal role in their development. For example, in 1972 the sculptor Theodoros presented a book with a printed text instead of a sculpture, titled *Instead of a Sculpture*, while the same year Dimitris Alithinos presented in his first solo exhibition installations activated by performers. In 1974 Yiorgos Tugias presented *Anti-myth*, a gallery-sized sculptural installation activated with the projection of slides and electronic music by Argyris Kounadis. In 1976, Valerios Caloutsis presented the exhibition *Naturmatic* which included assemblages mixing natural objects with their artificial imitation, often with the support of purpose-made circuit-controlled light and sound (Figure 5). In addition, the gallery also hosted a series of evenings dedicated to electroacoustic music composition presented by the musicologist John G. Papaioannou during the period 1973–1976 (Alexaki, 2015, p.53). The Desmos Art Gallery is a relatively well researched and documented case in the history

of Greek art, as its importance was appreciated early on in the exhibition and catalogue *P+P=D, New Art from the 1970s and 1980s; Selections from "Desmos"* in 1999 organised by the DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art.

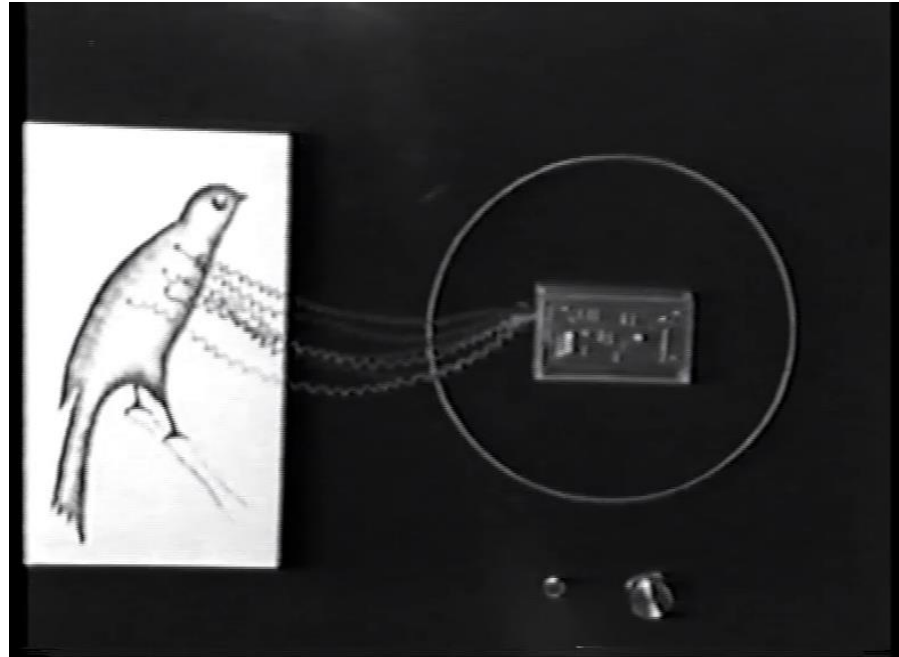


Figure 5. Caloutsis, V. (1976) Work from the *Naturmatic* exhibition realised in the Desmos Art Gallery in October 1976. Archive No. 3569, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001 (Film still from the documentation of the exhibition, displaying a work in which the public can control the sound).

The owners were conscious of their contribution to the history of art: Manos Pavlidis and Eppi Protonotariou took care of and documented most of their exhibitions and events in 16mm film and photographs which were archived. Invitations, brochures or small catalogues, press releases and artwork lists, sometimes with details, were also printed and were easily available through the archives of the Contemporary Greek Art Institute (ISET) and the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens.

#### 2.3.2.2 Polyplano Gallery

An important milestone in the history of the introduction of new media discourse in Greece is without doubt the issues of *SIMA* review and the parallel activity of the associated gallery Polyplano, both owned and directed by Nikos Papadakis. One of the most important figures in the dissemination of video art in Greece, Papadakis organised a video editing lab in his gallery, offered equipment for rent and hosted some of the first video art screenings in 1980. Among the pages of the *SIMA* review, one can see announcements for the video events

hosted in Polyplano such as the first video art screening programme in June 1980, with works by Les Levine, Eleanor Antin, Dennis Oppenheim and Allan Karpow in collaboration with Anna Canepa Video, New York. It is after a few years that Papadakis' succeeded in providing video technology to Greek artists, with two performances that integrate video technology, one by Yioulia Gazetopoulou, titled *Found Concept* (1983) (Papadakis and Gazetopoulou, 1983) and another by Nikos Giannopoulos, titled *A Bit Before 1984* (1983) (Giannopoulos and Sliomis, 1983), both of which took place in Polyplano Gallery. Unfortunately, after Papadakis' death, the archives of both the magazine and of the gallery were dispersed.

### 2.3.2.3 Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center

The Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center was founded by the gallerist Ileana Tounta in 1988 and its activities extended those of a privately-owned gallery into numerous non-commercial activities such as talks, book presentations, music performances etc. During its first years, the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center collaborated with Manthos Santorineos for the operation of an Art and Technology Department. Among the important events of this period was the week-long *Téchni Díkhos Síhora: Mia Evdomáda Apheroméni stin Téchni kai Technolyía* [Art without Borders - A Week Dedicated to Art and Technology] (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Brochure cover for the event *Art without Borders* realised in the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center in 1989.

The event took place in 1989 at the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center marking the beginning of its Art and Technology Sector. It included daily talks, music performances, exhibitions, screenings, equipment demonstration, magazines. The rich list of participants maps out the entities that were active in each respective field (like music, visual arts, computers, even technical education). Apart from the video screenings, there is an exhibition of artworks that were made with the use of technology without discriminating between visual and new media artists. Pantelis Xagoraris contributed with a talk on fractals, on art and technology in Greece, as well as an exhibition exploring art and technology with artefacts from his archive (Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, 1989a). The centre had a strong interest in new art and new technologies, especially during the first years of its operation, with its opening exhibition *4 Critical Reviews* including an extensive presentation of Pantelis Xagoraris as well as a substantial interview of the artist with curator Anna Kafetsi in the exhibition catalogue (Kafetsi et al., 1988). The centre continued its involvement with the presentation of video art screenings in collaboration with the European Media Art Festival: Osnabrück (Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, 1989b) and later the same year with screenings of *Avance sur Image*, the video art broadcast of the French channel Canal+ in 1989 (Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, 1989c). In 1991, the centre together with Manthos Santorineos and Dimosthenis Agrafiotis became an institutional partner of the European programme FAST (Prediction and Evaluation of Science and Technology) and organised a working meeting for the members in Athens with the support of the General Secretariat of Research and Technology of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Technology and the European Commission (Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, 1991).

### 2.3.3 Journals

#### 2.3.3.1 *SIMA* review

As mentioned earlier in this chapter in relation to Polyplano Gallery, Nikos Papadakis, was the publisher and editor of the art review *SIMA* [Signal]. Some of the earliest mentions on video art in Greek bibliography appear through its pages, and Papadakis characteristically dedicated two issues to video art, in 1980 and 1981. His editorial text titled ‘Eisagogí sti Vinteotéchni’ [Introduction to Video Art] for the 3rd issue of *Neo SIMA* [New signal] which was published concurrently with the inauguration of the Polyplano video workshop emphasised the complex relationship between folk tradition and mass culture. Papadakis argued that widespread education on the language of mass media would be a necessary step

for the aesthetic revival of Greece plagued by bad quality television and help overcome a bias against the “photo-technological” image (Papadakis, 1980, pp.1-11). This specific issue of the usually text-heavy magazine (which was also a literary magazine) included only the editorial text whereas the remaining pages reproduce video stills, installation photographs and descriptions of works by artists such as Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, Woody Vasulka, Elanor Antin, Peter Campus, Bill Viola, Nam June Paik, Lynda Benglis, Joan Jonas, Gary Hill to name a few. The following year Papadakis published a magazine dedicated to video titled *Video SIMA* [Video signal] which circulated only two issues and had extensive information on video technology, editing techniques and video art, announcing through its pages a series of exhibitions and events for amateur videographers. Among the pages of the magazine, there is not a single mention of any artist in Greece working with video.

#### 2.3.3.2 *Diplí Ikóna* Journal

*Diplí Ikóna* [Double Image] was a bi-monthly journal on visual arts that was edited by art historian Dimitris Deligiannis and published between 1984 and 1987. The April 1986 issue was dedicated to art and technology (Deligiannis, 1986). It contains the announcement for an exhibition co-organised by the General Secretariat for Youth at Gallery F, with works on the theme of Art-Science-Technology, including live presentation of computer art by Costis Akritidis, laser projections by Pantelis Xagoraris, computer graphics by Nestoras Papanicolopoulos and video art by Marianne Strapatsakis. Most importantly, the issue contains a series of articles on the same subject, by art historian Martha Christofoglou, by historian Nikos Svoronos, Dimosthenis Agrafiotis in his capacity as a theorist (because he is also a poet, a performer and intermedia artist), as well as by the artists Costis Akritidis, Pantelis Xagoraris, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos and Marianne Strapatsakis. Christofoglou’s text is a review of the relation of art and technology and science since antiquity, with only a hint to “the recent very advanced uses of technology by artists” (Christofoglou, 1986, p.18). Agrafiotis comments on the relation of cinema with technology and art through various examples (Agrafiotis, 1986, pp.37–41). Svoronos’ text delved into the issue of technology and society with no mention of art (Svoronos, 1986, pp.43–45). Interestingly, none of the aforementioned texts includes any reference to specific living artists whose artistic practice included technological media. Xagoraris wrote about his work in detail including the first comment on his laser works (Xagoraris, 1986a, pp.19–24), Nestoras Papanicolopoulos wrote about the potential of computer graphics and concluded on the importance of introducing

computer graphics training in the Athens School of Fine Arts (Papanicolopoulos, 1986, pp.25–28), Marianne Strapatsakis commented on the ability of video to capture time which is an essential element of her work (Strapatsakis, 1986, pp.29–32), and Costis Akritidis, with an example of his transition from photography to computer graphics, explains in detail the logic behind bitmap graphics and their possibilities (Akritidis, 1986, pp.33–35).

#### 2.3.4 Exhibitions and festivals

Of great significance in this research was a multitude of documents that were sourced from the artists or in the archives of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST) and the Contemporary Greek Art Institute (ISET). These were brochures from smaller festival and events, such as the ones organised in Heraklion in 1989 and 1992 (Kafetsi, 1989; Katsivelaki, 1992), and in Patras in 1989 (Municipality of Patras, 1989) but also from events at cultural space Evmaros, photocopied catalogues of performances and exhibitions, typewritten unpublished notes, biographies and letters from artists, critics and various organisations and most importantly, magazine articles, interviews and newspaper clippings that relate to individual artists or group events. By evaluating these documents, the following events and festivals appeared as the most significant, in terms of bringing together artists and works or for otherwise activating this milieu.

##### 2.3.4.1 2nd Biennale of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean

The 2nd Biennale of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean took place in Thessaloniki in 1986. The catalogue contains hardly any information on the overall character, format and aim of the event, but it includes all participants with short bios. The selection committee for video consisted of Mit Mitropoulos and the cinematographer Lefteris Xanthopoulos who selected 11 artists. This was the first time that video art was exhibited alongside other artforms in Greece, even though it still was categorised as something separate (Ministry of Culture, General Secretariat for Youth; Municipality of Thessaloniki, 1986). With the scope of the biennial being the creativity of young people, the selection included a mixture of amateurs, photojournalists, cinematographers, architects, designers and visual artists from Athens and Thessaloniki who use video, many of whom never participated in any other related event.

#### 2.3.4.2 28th Greek Thessaloniki Film Festival

The following year, in 1987, the 28th Greek Thessaloniki Film Festival, also in Thessaloniki, included an extensive video section. The separate 60-page catalogue of the event provides information on the 20 participants, their works, and the screening schedule. It also includes four texts about video and computer art by George Papakonstantinou, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Tassos Boulmetis, and Nikos Giannopoulos, as well as details on the Belgian, French, Italian and American participations (Baganas, 1987). The festival also included an international section, indicative of the European outlook of public institutions following Greece's entrance into the European Union. It also had an educative/introductory character, with texts explaining the artistic potential of video and computers, a theme that was accompanied by an on-site round table discussion. The catalogue and programme of the event clearly show the intention of a public institution to get involved with a new art form (but also to convey the idea of progress).

#### 2.3.4.3 1988 European Media Art Festival: Osnabrück

The catalogue of the 1988 European Media Art Festival: Osnabrück is also a valuable resource, as it includes the Greek national representation of film and video, in separate categories, selected and introduced by Nikos Giannopoulos (Giannopoulos, 1988). The catalogue also includes detailed information on works that in other publications appear only as titles. Although this research does not concern new media art produced and presented outside Greece, the catalogue includes an evaluative attempt and an overview of the medium's short history in Greece, written by Giannopoulos.

#### 2.3.4.4 European Meeting for Art/New Technologies

A source that recapitulates the whole decade of the 1980s is the catalogue of the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies in 1990. Organised by Nikos Giannopoulos, George Papakonstantinou and Nikos Patiniotis, it encapsulates the decade long struggle of few people to create a supportive framework for new media art (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990). In the 150 pages of the guide one can find among the participants a multitude of entities that somehow contributed to media arts in Greece in various ways, such as the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, video production companies, galleries that exhibited video works, university computer centres and private information technology companies. Overall, the international scope of the event included 42 participants,



representatives of museums, television channels, production companies, festivals and video distributors from 12 mainly European countries but also from Canada and the U.S. A conference on the subject of the distribution of electronic arts was also part of it. The festival showcased more than 300 works, videotapes and video installations exhibited in various venues (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990). The next and last edition of the festival was realised in 1993 in Thessaloniki at an evidently smaller scale, but with a programme that was still rich in multidisciplinary collaborations (Georgiou et al., 1993).

#### 2.3.4.5 Television y Video de Creacion en la Comunidad Europea / Madrid Cultural Capital of Europe 1992

In 1992 George Papakonstantinou was invited to select works for the Greek section of the event *Television y Video de Creacion en la Comunidad Europea* in the context of Madrid Cultural Capital of Europe 1992. Apart from a list of the participating videos, the catalogue includes an overview of Greek video art by George Papakonstantinou titled 'La Busca de Identidad del Videoarte Griego' [Video Art in Greece: In Search of an Identity]. Unlike earlier attempts to give an overview of what was happening in terms of media arts in Greece, in the present tense, this is a thoroughly researched essay that looks at the subject in retrospect, considering the work of Pantelis Xagoraris and the sculptor Theodoros as well as the reasons there was no video art in the early 1970s before reaching to conclusions about the current situation. In this key text, Papakonstantinou attempted to examine the history and physiognomy of video art in Greece and concluded to what can be summarised with the following:

- i) Most of the artists working with video studied or lived abroad for a period of their lives, used video during this time and many of them did not have access to equipment after their return to Greece.
- ii) The dictatorship contributed to an artistic isolation from global art movements.
- iii) Early attempts at using video like the recording of performances or Tsoclis' *Living Painting* works were mostly cinematic as no manipulation of electronic image was involved.
- iv) There was no infrastructure, no sponsoring and the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation was indifferent or even hostile to the new medium.

- v) The complete absence of electronic arts education from art schools and the absence of a contemporary art museum was also part of this problem.
- vi) After the mid-1980s there was active involvement of cultural institutions like Goethe-Institut, Institute Français and the British Council in supporting video art, as well as an increase in Greek video art screened internationally. Although there were positive developments like the foundation of the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, video creation in Greece was rather poor and with many difficulties which did not allow for the development of original expression (Papakonstantinou, 1992, pp.218–225).

## 2.4 Conclusion

From the sources reviewed in this chapter, it is evident that there are two parallel histories that rarely meet, and which are often antagonistic. One historical narrative emerging from art history books, private collections and museums, claiming to be the canon of art history in Greece, and another parallel chronicle, whose actors are aware of their exclusion but also certain of their future appreciation. During the period in question, only a few curators, art historians and critics actively supported new media in their practice: Efi Strousa curated Aris Prodromidis' first exhibition with video, Anna Kafetsi curated Pantelis Xagoraris' section in *4 Critical Reviews*, Andreas Ioannidis wrote the text for Marianne Strapatsakis' presentation of *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past*, Dimitris Deligiannis published an issue of *Dipli Ikona* dedicated to art and technology. Also, the association of Greek art critics organised the exhibition *Perivallon – Drasi* [Environment – Action] surveying emerging installation and performance-based practices which included works documented in video. These instances are revelatory of the awkward involvement of art professionals with technology through their academic toolkit. The most common option was to ignore or avoid any examination of the technological factor in the interpretation or critique of the artwork or exhibition. Examples of this are the texts written for the exhibition of Aris Prodromidis (Strousa, 1981) and the work of Marianne Strapatsakis (Ioannidis, 1989) where the author makes no mention of video.

The reasoning that becomes most transparent was by Anna Kafetsi, who participated in the 1989 *Art without Borders* event in the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center and later published her presentation in *Spira* journal. She appears fully informed about everything that

had happened with computers and video in Greece during the previous two decades but also very well informed of the history of video art internationally. However, she puts forward strict criteria: “even if some works have or appear to have a potential, it would be very early to evaluate Greek video production on a collective basis. Instead, this should be the case for distinct works” [my translation] (Kafetsi, 1990, p.167). Kafetsi also puts forward the issue of the audience: “which is the public of video art? That of the museum or that of television?” [my translation] (Kafetsi, 1990, p.169). In her preface to the festival catalogue of the 1st Video Art Festival of Heraklion, the same year, it is apparent that her approach to video art is one that views it as a critique of television and its language, through semiotics, a tendency that had only exceptionally been practised among the artists using video in Greece (Kafetsi, 1989, p.3).

From this exceptional case of an institutional curator evaluating art and technology in Greece concurrently with the developments within the timespan examined in this research I can draw several conclusions:

- Visual artists, like Pantelis Xagoraris, Theodoros and Tsoclis, had a different status and their contribution to the issue of art and technology was acknowledged by their contemporaries. Theodoros, who did not pursue any recognition in this field (his aim, after all, was its criticism) was soon left out of historical surveys on the subject.
- Even if video artists aspired to the wider audience of television, a museum collection or a specialised organisation will allow art historians to study video art, ensuring that those works will remain accessible in the long-term.
- Some visual artists and art historians closely watched their younger peers working with new media.
- Given that all artists felt somewhat neglected by the state and its institutions, the visual arts milieu did not acknowledge additional difficulties for new media artists.

As it has been made evident from this review of the most important histories of art in Greece, as well as from the specialised attempts to narrate the history of artistic practices within the spectrum of new media art, there is a blatant omission of art and new technologies from the historical canon as it is being constituted in the last 50 years. What is more important, most attempts to historicise art and technology as it has been practised in Greece, focus on its different manifestations like video or the computer and fail to grasp the wider spectrum of practices that can be fruitfully discussed under the umbrella of new media art. By examining

in detail the work of Pantelis Xagoraris and the sculptor Theodoros, two artists who dedicated a large part of their work in the investigation of the relation of art with technology, together with the multitude of artists and practices from a variety of fields that emerged during the 1980s, this thesis aims to join all manifestations of art and technology in a single chronology that will allow for a new narrative to emerge.

**Part I:**  
**1970-1982**  
**Individual pioneering practitioners**

## Chapter 3:

# Pantelis Xagoraris, Plato and the plotter

### 3.1 Introduction

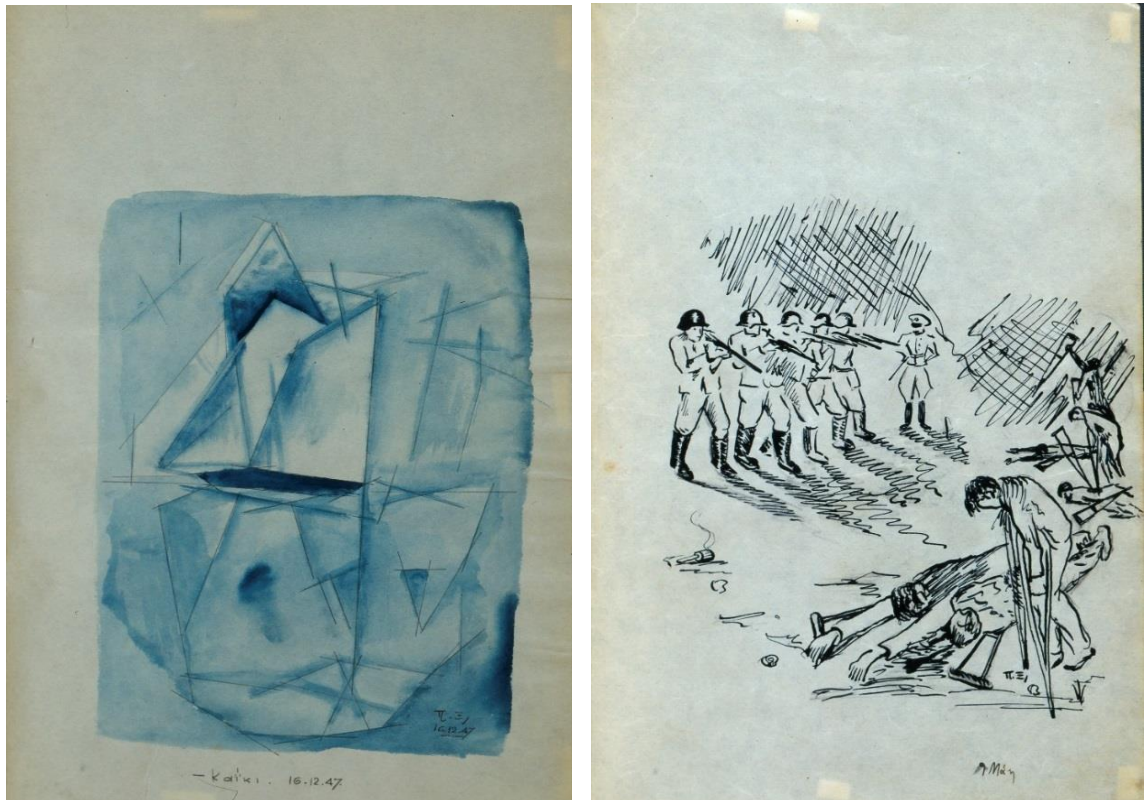
Pantelis Xagoraris began studying at the Athens School of Fine Arts in 1948 under the tutelage of painter Yannis Moralis while also studying Mathematics at the University of Athens from which he later graduated. Apart from creating a rich body of paintings, drawings, sculptures and installations, Xagoraris taught mathematics and geometry, while regularly publishing and lecturing on issues related to art. Xagoraris' thought relied on the philosophy, art and mathematics of ancient Greece, on Greek and international pre-war avant-garde artistic movements as well as the advancements in cybernetics, mathematics and information technology of his contemporaries. Through his practice, Xagoraris aimed to prove the unseen order of natural laws and aesthetics. The titles of his works were sourced from the world of mathematics and were often directly referencing the principle behind the work's construction. Seeking to create forms of greater complexity, Xagoraris started using computers for his work. The computer and the plotter (or the monitor on certain occasions) were the tools that allowed Xagoraris to experiment with the numeric composition of a geometrical surface or space. Moreover, Xagoraris associated his practice with those computer artistic practices of his time that furthered the aims of certain pre-war avant-garde movements, such as the Bauhaus and Constructivism.

Xagoraris realised only a few solo exhibitions during his lifetime and collaborated with the few exhibition spaces in Athens and Thessaloniki that supported the intermingling of art with technology. The novelty of computer use often overshadowed the conceptual foundations of his work. This chapter seeks to map Xagoraris' influences, investigate the technology available to him, outline the progress of his oeuvre, assess the critical reception of his work and attempt a reevaluation and recontextualisation of his contribution in relation to current new media art history. Most importantly, this chapter attempts an evaluation of Xagoraris' contribution to the discourse around art and technology through his works, writings and his views on art, philosophy, mathematics and science. Grounded on Platonic thought, Xagoraris aimed to develop conceptual and digital tools for making images and

objects that would be “beautiful in themselves”, made possible through contemporary mathematics and information technology.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.2 Influences

Xagoraris’ earlier known works are two sketch notebooks, dated 1946 and 1948 respectively, which include drawings and watercolours of everyday scenes, landscapes, caricatures and events from the German occupation of Athens (1941–1944) rendered in a variety of styles (Figures 7 and 8).



Figures 7 and 8. Pages from the album titled *Painting – Pantelis Xagoraris and Pantelis Xagoraris – Collection (Caricatures, Drafts and Sketches)*, Archive Nos. 3460 and 3459, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, Album, Donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001.

Through these images, it is evident that Xagoraris was fluent in the languages of avant-garde movements and could switch between different styles of drawing ever since he was still a high school student, before beginning his studies in the notoriously conservative Athens School of Fine Arts. During his student days at the Athens School of Fine Arts, Xagoraris was considered by his peers as very knowledgeable, because his awareness of art history and

<sup>5</sup> Xagoraris often quoted the Platonic dialogue of Philebus and its argument on beauty that is non-relative (Plato, 1975, p.121).

contemporary art exceeded what was taught at the time at the Athens School of Fine Arts.<sup>6</sup> When he started presenting his work in group exhibitions in Athens and Thessaloniki, around 1957, his painting style leaned towards expressionism.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, his lecturing and writing on art, commencing from the outset of his artistic career, was about geometrical analogies such as the golden section in the work of El Greco, Georges Seurat, Ferdinand Leger and Piet Mondrian, thus revealing a gap between his theoretical interests and his pictorial and expressionistic style of painting. Years later, Xagoraris stated in an interview: “I needed many years to cover the gap between my artistic work and my theoretical pursuits. Especially useful in this direction was the discovery of a catalogue from an exhibition by Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner at the Museum of Modern Art, New York” (Xagoraris et al., 1984, p.7).

Xagoraris was very open about all his influences and eager to place himself in relation to other artists and movements. The numerous artists and thinkers that affected Xagoraris’ thought and practice are often cited names in his several articles and lectures.<sup>8</sup> One of those names is of the Romanian diplomat and polymath Matila Ghyka and his writings, the artists Antoine Pevsner and Naum Gabo, as well as the architects Le Corbusier, Iannis Xenakis and Felix Candela and their architectural designs and buildings. Xagoraris also often mentioned the artistic movements of Bauhaus and Constructivism and their legacy, as well as the journal

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<sup>6</sup> Eppi Protonotariou often mentioned an anecdote about Xagoraris as an example of his knowledge of art history but also as an example of the lack of art history from the Athens School of Fine Arts syllabus: “We were friends with Xagoraris before I graduated from the school (of fine arts) and once he mentioned ‘Malevich’, and I asked ‘What is Malevich? Is it a mountain?’” [my translation]. She also mentions this anecdote during the oral history interview (Schizakis, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> One review describes Xagoraris’ work in the following manner: “Pantelis Xagoraris attempts to express his troubled inner world with an expressionist technique. Whichever the subject, portrait, landscape or composition with figures, the meaning does not change and remains a personal confession [...]” (Spiteris, 1957, p.12).

<sup>8</sup> This evaluation considers specifically the following articles: ‘Armonikés Kharáxis kai Analoyíes sti Zographikí’ [Harmonious Outlines and Analogies in Painting] published in *Zygos* journal issue 45, 1959 (Xagoraris, 1996, pp.15-24), ‘Analisi kai Síntesi ton Zographikón Stikhíon’ [Analyses and Synthesis of Painterly Elements] originally published in *Zygos* journal issue 59, 1960 (Xagoraris, 1996, pp.25-37), ‘Télia Stereá kai Sínhroni Plastiki’ [Perfect Solids and Contemporary Plastic Arts] published in *Zygos* journal issue 80, 1962 (Xagoraris, 1996, pp.38-58), ‘To Bauhaus kai i Simasía tou’ [Bauhaus and its Importance] published in *Zygos* journal issues 94-95, 1963 (Xagoraris, 1996, pp.59-94), ‘Mia Akóma Tási, i Art Visuel’ [One More Tendency, Art Visuel] published in *Zygos* journal issue 65, 1965, (Xagoraris, 1996, pp.96-119), ‘Ta “Paralipómena” tou Bauhaus’ [The “Omitted” Bauhaus] published in *Eikastika* magazine issue 17, 1983 (Xagoraris, 1983, p.7), ‘Kampiles kai Epiphánies stin Arkhitektonikí kai Gliptikí’ [Curves and Surfaces in Architecture and Sculpture] published as a special study for the department of interior design of the Thessaloniki Polytechnic School in 1964 (Xagoraris, 1964), ‘Neokonstruktivistikés Tásis kai Morphés’ [Neoconstructivist Tendencies and Forms] published for *Dimiouryíes* [Creations] magazine issues 11-12, 1971 (Xagoraris, 1971b, pp.142-144).



*To Trito Mati* [The Third Eye] and the artists and writers of its milieu, representatives of the so-called “Generation of the 30s”, in the history of art in Greece.

The journal *To Trito Mati*, published between 1935 and 1937, included among its contributors important personalities of the Greek arts and letters such as the writer Pericles Giannopoulos (Patras 1869–Athens 1910), architect Dimitris Pikionis (Piraeus 1887–Athens 1968), painter Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas (Athens 1906–1994) and sculptor Michael Tombros (Athens 1889–1974). The journal has been considered of major importance as an expression of the intellectual and artistic developments in Greece during the interwar years, as well as for disseminating concepts related to modernity. It is through the pages of the journal that Pantelis Xagoraris became acquainted with theories of optics, colour frequencies and harmonies and encountered the writings of Matila Ghyka. Its contributors have been criticised for their allegiance to a tendency of “intellectual nationalism” and nationalist modernity prevalent at that time, especially during the 1936–1941 Metaxas dictatorship (Hamalidi, 2008). Through the journal’s pages, there is a clear attempt to link Greek and Mediterranean landscape and nature to Greek antiquity and to present a version of modernity and its achievements directly connected to classical Greece. However, Xagoraris’ approach differs from the nationalist stance of *To Trito Mati* perceiving the importance of Greek influence on global culture as a classicist, who sees ideas formed during Greek antiquity as a necessary step for understanding contemporary culture. He often referred to Pericles Giannopoulos and Dimitris Pikionis as part of a long timeline of research in art and science that begun with the Parthenon architect and sculptor Ictinus and Phidias and continued with Walter Gropius and Moholy-Nagy in Bauhaus and György Kepes at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center of Advanced Visual Studies (M.I.T. C.A.V.S.).

Xagoraris often referred to Matila Ghyka (Jassy, 1881–London, 1965), whose 1927 book *The Geometry of Art and Life* investigates the common mathematical rules existing in harmonious man-made structures as well as in nature and which has Pythagoras and Plato as its starting point (Ghyka, 1977, p.ix). Ghyka’s work is centred on the occurrence of the golden section, of the Fibonacci numerical sequence and of perfect geometrical shapes in biological and geological formations, in the human and animal bodies, in musical compositions as well as in architecture and art, which are motifs that preoccupied Xagoraris’ art and writing. In the introduction to his book, Ghyka clarifies the different meaning of the word “symmetry” for the artists of the past:

Let us point out at once that “symmetry” as defined by Greek and Roman architects as well as the Gothic Master Builders, and by the architects and painters of the Renaissance, from Leonardo to Palladio, is quite different from our modern term symmetry (identical disposition on either side of an axis or plane “of symmetry”). We cannot do better than to give the definition of Vitruvius: “Symmetry resides in the correlation by measurement between the various elements of the plan, and between each of these elements and the whole [...]” (Ghyka, 1977, p.x).

Xagoraris in his doctoral thesis also made a similar clarification:

Regarding the meaning of the word symmetry, we have to note that ancient Greeks used the word with the meaning of “eumetria” (i.e. good measure), and generally the observance of measure and analogy [...] This is related to the perception dominant in recent art, especially in painting, where the notion of symmetry is connected with the attempt to balance forms determining the harmony of the work [my translation] (Xagoraris, 1981, p.38).

The most important theme from Ghyka’s theories, which is prevalent in Xagoraris’ art and writing, is that nature, art, and science, are governed by the same mathematical rules and that natural forms such as shells and honeycomb structures have distinct engineering properties that serve their naturally appointed purpose but are also forms with aesthetic qualities.

A recurring example in Xagoraris’ writing is the work of the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier and especially his Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut de Ronchamp, built in 1955, as well as the Phillips Pavilion, built in Brussels in 1958 and co-authored with Iannis Xenakis. Xagoraris often praised those buildings for the creative use of geometry in lectures and articles. He also discussed those works with Xenakis himself in correspondence which is induced in his application for the National Technical University of Athens (N.T.U.A.) professorship (Xagoraris, 1994, p.52).<sup>9</sup> Le Corbusier’s influence on Xagoraris’ thought is

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<sup>9</sup> In an undated letter (possibly 1963, just before the publication of the book *Musiques Formelles*:

also evident through the effect of his Athens visit during the 4th International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) conference in 1933. Le Corbusier's 1933 writings, published in the Greek journal *O Eikostos Aionas* [The 20th Century], reconciled the ancient with the modern and had a great impact on the painter Nikos Hadjikiakos Ghikas and sculptor Michalis Tombros, both future contributors of the journal *To Trito Mati*. As suggested by Elena Hamalidi, Le Corbusier's influence on Ghikas and Tombros can be recognised in the following three aspects of their writings: "a) the formalist and idealist notion of purity of form and autonomy of art[...] b) the kind of modernist approach to ancient Greek tradition[...], and c) the notion of "geometry", temporarily (1933–1934) related by Tombros and especially Ghika with Purist ideas and functionalism as defined by Le Corbusier" (Hamalidi, 2008, p.340). As it will be made evident in this chapter, all three of these characteristics are fundamental in Xagoraris' thought and practice.

Xagoraris often referred to the Bauhaus movement and its principles on numerous occasions in his writings, talks and even visually through his work. He singled out his 1963 article 'To Bauhaus kai i Simasia tou' [Bauhaus and its Importance] in *Zygos* journal (Xagoraris 1996, p.59–94) as the first Greek study on the Bauhaus school (Xagoraris 1996, p.9). In this essay, Xagoraris outlined the elements of Bauhaus teaching that bring art closer to life through a scientific and aesthetic approach to the construction of functional objects and buildings. He concluded that Bauhaus seeks the truth, in the sense that its approach unifies concept and object. Years later, Xagoraris criticised a Bauhaus exhibition presented in The National Gallery – Alexandros Soutsos Museum for overlooking the strong impact of the Bauhaus school in the Greek avant-garde (Xagoraris, 1983, p.7).<sup>10</sup> He mentioned the 4th CIAM and its Athens conference which László Moholy-Nagy attended, the publications of texts by Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee in the pages of *To Trito Mati*, the architecture of Ioannis Despotopoulos (İzmir, 1903–Athens, 1992), a Greek architect who studied at the Bauhaus school, and the publication of articles on the subject by the architects Panayotes Mihelis (Patras, 1903–Athens, 1969) and Dimitris Fatouros (Athens, 1928–Thessaloniki, 2020). Alongside those omissions, he referred to György Kepes (Selyp, 1906–Cambridge, 2001), as the Bauhaus successor, for his former collaboration with Moholy-Nagy but also for the

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*Nouveaux Principes Formels de Composition Musicale*) Xenakis diminishes Le Corbusier's role in the aforementioned buildings and gives more information on the engineering aspect of the use of geometry (Xagoraris, 1994, p.52).

<sup>10</sup> The exhibition was titled *Bauhaus* and was held at the The National Gallery – Alexandros Soutsos Museum between November 1982 and February 1983 (Papastamos, 1982).

foundation of C.A.V.S. in M.I.T., a place where artists and scientists collaborate. He also mentioned his own extensive 1963 essay, as well as the members of the group Processes/Systems, in which he was a member, placing himself in the timeline of the continuation of Bauhaus ideas.

Xagoraris often mentioned the work of Antoine Pevsner (Klimavichy, 1884 –Paris, 1962) and Naum Gabo (Bryansk, 1890 –Waterbury, CT, 1970). In his articles, Xagoraris discussed the work of the two artists in terms of the use of platonic solids and geometrical principles that subvert the perception of volume and form and for the foundation of the constructivist movement and its pursuit for an art that is “of clear form, dynamism, and, in a way, functional” [my translation] (Xagoraris, 1996, p.41). He mentioned the *Realistic Manifesto* co-authored by Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner and issued as a poster in 1920 in Moscow, and its renunciation of mass as a sculptural element: “It is known to any engineer that the static forces of a solid body and its material strength do not depend on the quantity of the mass [...]” (Gabo and Pevsner, 1920, p.297–299). Xagoraris referred to the example of Naum Gabo’s 27-meter-high sculpture *Untitled* (1957) in Rotterdam as proof of the successful utilisation of those principles. In subsequent articles, Xagoraris outlined a spectrum of tendencies and artists whose practice and ideology advanced and continued ideas central to the Bauhaus and constructivism or simply involved science and art in some degree. Examples of artistic groups would be the N group, the T group, Milan, Equipo 57 in Spain, the Zero group in Germany and the Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel (GRAVS) in France. He mentioned, among other things, the first *New Tendencies* exhibition in Zagreb and the Italian exhibition *Arte programmata. Arte cinetica. Opere moltiplicate. Opera aperta* (Xagoraris, 1996, p.96–103). Furthermore, Xagoraris classified tendencies such as Art Visuel, Op Art, Kinetic Art and Minimalism as Neo-constructivism, linking them to earlier modernist artistic advancements. In the illustrations of those articles, he included works by Victor Vasarely, Julio De Park, Takis as well as photographs from his own kinetic sculptures (Xagoraris, 1971b, p.144). Not unlike Naum Gabo, who created works based on mathematical models during the late 1930s (Gamwell and Tyson, 2015, p.310), Xagoraris made small sculptures and large-scale installations that resembled mathematical models or directly referred to geometric principles.

Apart from examples from the history of art and from movements that were active during the 1960s and 1970s, Xagoraris was influenced by mathematics, often on an unseen

conceptual layer. This influence was not limited to specific thinkers and their ideas, nor to specific forms and processes, but occurred through the parallel progress of art and mathematics, where developments in one field often affected the other. He would, for example, link the formulation of non-Euclidean geometry by Nikolai Lobachevsky (Nizhny Novgorod, 1792–Kazan, 1856) and Georg Friedrich Bernhard Riemann (Juelich, 1826–Verbania, 1866) with the shift from the renaissance rectangular parallelepiped painterly space to modernist flatness (Xagoraris, 1996, p.26). The introduction of non-Euclidean geometry during the late 18th century triggered a critical moment for mathematics as mathematicians strived for a reevaluation of the founding principles of their science, resulting in a formalism equivalent to what occurred in the arts during the same period (Gamwell and Tyson, 2015, p.151–152). Consistent with this view, Xagoraris was appreciative of artistic investigations of science as well as scientific interpretations of aesthetics as it can be seen from his references to George David Birkhoff, Hermann Weyl and Andreas Speiser (Xagoraris, 1996, p.149) who are known for their contribution to mathematics as well as aesthetics. Specifically, George David Birkhoff (Michigan 1884–Massachusetts 1944) published *Aesthetic Measure* in 1933, a book in which he approaches the aesthetic aspect of shapes, ornaments, music and poetry with a mathematical formula (Birkhoff, 1933). Likewise, Andreas Speiser (Basel, 1885–1970), whose *Die Mathematische Denkweise* [The Mathematical Way of Thinking] is included in Xagoraris’ thesis bibliography, was known for his work on aesthetics and philosophy but mostly for his contribution on group theory (Speiser, 1952). Speiser was a mathematician who had close ties with the art world, and his acquaintances included personalities such as Le Corbusier and Max Bill with whom he shared common ideas on aesthetics, also expressed through the Concrete Art movement (Gamwell and Tyson, 2015, pp. 256, 264–268). Another mathematician mentioned by Xagoraris for his stance towards art and science is Hermann Weyl (Elmshorn, 1885 – Zurich, 1955), whose 1952 publication *Symmetry* begins with ancient Greek ideals of proportions in order to understand beauty through mathematics. Weyl’s intention of contributing to the understanding of art, nature and mathematics is summarised in the book’s ending: “Symmetry is a vast subject, significant in art and nature. Mathematics lies at its root and it would be hard to find a better one on which to demonstrate the working of the mathematical intellect” (Weyl, 1989, p.145).

At the turn of the 20th century, a tendency that emerged in mathematics concurrently with formalism was “intuitionism”, the view that mathematics was an activity located in the

human mind and did not exist independently. Influenced by German romanticism, mathematicians combined science and spiritualism, with central figures such as the Dutch mathematician Luitzen Egbertus Jan Brouwer (Overschie, 1881–Blaricum, 1966) were leading an ascetic life, influenced by mysticism, religion and eastern philosophies (Gamwell and Tyson, 2015, p.225–229). Mathieu Hubertus Josephus Schoenmaekers (Maastricht, 1875–Laren, 1944) was also a mathematician and a theosophist who viewed scientific and natural phenomena in a spiritual way. He was the link of Brouwer to the De Stijl movement and influenced Piet Mondrian’s geometrical interpretation of the visual field through vertical and horizontal lines (Gamwell and Tyson, 2015, p.238–239). In the introduction to his book *Metaskhimatismí: Domés kai Mesótites stin Téchni* [Transformations: Structure and Mediation in Art], Xagoraris accounts for key events and texts that influenced his thought and practice (Xagoraris, 1996, p.9). Among those, he quoted Schoenmaekers: “We now learn to translate reality in our imagination into constructions which can be controlled by reason [...]. We want to penetrate nature in such a way that the inner construction of reality is revealed to us” (Schoenmaekers, 1915, p.3, 51). The idea that aesthetics can be expressed through mathematical formulas and that group theory can be used to study aesthetic structures, such as symmetry as explicated by Weyl and Speiser, was of special importance to Pantelis Xagoraris whose basic tool was mathematics. In his treatise, he uses group theory for the analysis of geometric structures, before proceeding to write or edit programmes that produce similar structures (Xagoraris, 1981).

### **3.3 Exhibition spaces and access to technology**

Pantelis Xagoraris had an artistic career that was manifested through few and focused individual exhibitions: over a period of thirty years, from 1962 to 1992, he organised only six exhibitions, five of which were part of a sequence titled *Transformations*. He participated in numerous group exhibitions, the vast majority of which were generic shows without specific context, e.g., young artists, artists from his generation, or shows of Greek contemporary artists. Notable exceptions are the exhibition *Art of Computers*, 1971 at the Athens Technological Organisation, *Multiple Interactions*, 1974 at M.I.T. C.A.V.S., of the group *Processes/Systems* 1976 at the Athens Art Gallery, *Art and Technology*, 1986 at the Galerie F, *Investigation of New Materials and Media* 1987 at Apopsi gallery, and *4 Critical Reviews* 1988 at the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center.

Pantelis Xagoraris did not have a regular collaboration with a gallery in the sense of gallery representation. He was socially connected to the Desmos Art Gallery, which represented his wife, Bia Davou, as well as most of his friends, and which was directed by Eppi Protonotariou, a friend from his student days at the Athens School of Fine Arts. Although he often participated in group shows and events organised at the Desmos Art Gallery, he realised only one individual exhibition there, *Transformations 3* in 1974. The Desmos Art Gallery had no bias against technology and exhibited works with any kind of medium. Even more actively supporting new contemporary tendencies, was the Contemporary Art Workshop of the Goethe-Institut Athen, with which Xagoraris also had a long-term collaboration. In 1971, he presented his second solo show *Transformations 2* in the exhibition space of Goethe and years later, in 1984, the solo exhibition *Transformations 4* where he also presented a laser show, titled *Ta Panta Rei* [Everything Flows] (1984), in collaboration with the composer Stefanos Vassileiadis. The Goethe-Institut was also the co-organiser of the event *Art and Cybernetics* realised in collaboration with the Athens Center of Ekistics of the Doxiadis institute in 1971, hosting a section of the exhibition *Computerkunst – Impulse*.<sup>11</sup>

It was during the opening of this series of events when Pantelis Xagoraris realised his first work of a series titled *Symmetries of the Cube*, his first work created with the aid of a computer, a UNIVAC AC1107 from the Athens Center of Ekistics Computer Center (Athens Center of Ekistics, 1971a). At that time, this was one of the few computers operating in Greece. According to Andreas Drimiotis, Technical Manager and General Manager of the Doxiadis Associates Computer Center during 1967–1984, the Athens Center of Ekistics Computer Center owned a UNIVAC 1004 since 1964 and purchased the model 1107 in 1969. Other companies owning computer equipment was the National Bank of Greece, a textiles industry, and the Hellenic Statistical Authority. IBM had also a branch office in Athens. However, existing computer facilities were deemed insufficient and the Athens Center of Ekistics Computer Center would buy night computer time from the Technical University of Stuttgart for its urban planning projects. This changed after the purchase and installation of the UNIVAC 1107 computer when even large companies like the Public Power Corporation of Greece became customers of the Athens Center of Ekistics Computer Center. As it is

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<sup>11</sup> *Computerkunst–Impulse* was an exhibition curated by Käthe Clarissa Schröder initially presented in Kunstverein München in 1970.

obvious from the triumphant newspaper article titles encountered in the Doxiadis archive celebrating the “biggest computer complex in the Balkans”, the acquisition of the computer was an important event (Constantinos and Emma Doxiadis Foundation, 2003-2019). Drimiotis also describes the new computer’s inaugural event, with press, celebrities and VIPS playing a guessing game that the programmers of the centre had authored specifically for the event (Drimiotis, 2009, p.54). It is in this celebratory context that the events of *Art and Cybernetics* were organised.

Following the participation of Pantelis Xagoraris in this event, and his first work created with a computer, he actively sought out access to computing equipment, for the calculation, design or even the materialisation of his drawings. In 1974, Xagoraris attended computer programming seminars in the National Centre for Scientific Research “Demokritos” (Pandi and Schizakis, 2008, p.240).<sup>12</sup> The same year, Xagoraris received a Ford Foundation fellowship, with a letter of recommendation by György Kepes, director of M.I.T. C.A.V.S. at the time, whom Xagoraris knew through his 1965 book *The Nature and Art of Motion* but also through the recommendation of John G. Papaioannou (Xagoraris, 1986b, p.20). With the aid of the fellowship, Xagoraris and his family travelled to the United States in September 1974 where they stayed for a month travelling and visiting museums. After their departure, Xagoraris moved to Boston in October and November where he worked as a fellow researcher at the M.I.T. C.A.V.S. during the first year of Otto Piene’s directorship (Xagoraris, 1974b). In a letter to his wife Bia Davou on the 27th of October 1974 (Xagoraris, 1974c), Xagoraris, lists as his other fellows the following: Bart Johnson (1953), Allesandro Siña (Santiago, 1945), Avatar da Silva Moraes (Bagé, 1933– Rio de Janeiro, 2011), Michio Ihara (Paris, 1928), Paul Earl (Springfield, Missouri, 1934–Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998), Luis Frangella (Buenos Aires, 1944–New York, 1990), Juan Navaro Baldeweg (Santander, 1939), Scott Fisher (Pennsylvania, 1951), Friedrich Florian (Graz, 1932). He also mentioned an American woman working with electronic music. Although her name is not included in the letter, Maryanne Amacher (Pennsylvania, 1938 – New York, 2009) was the only American composer at M.I.T. C.A.V.S. at the time (Act.mit.edu, 2021). In another letter to his wife on November 8th, Xagoraris mentioned his meeting with Nicholas Negroponte and

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<sup>12</sup> The Institute of Informatics and Telecommunications | National Centre for Scientific Research Demokritos had a computer division since 1968 and manufactured the first experimental 16-bit digital computer in Greece (Institute of Informatics and Telecommunications | National Centre for Scientific Research Demokritos, 2021)



the Architecture Machine Group, obviously perplexed by his youth and finally expressing envy for the resources available to American artists:

I have to tell you my love that our work is progressing well. I believe that we are on a level equivalent to foreigners (and in some cases, probably higher), but we live in Greece. The works of C.A.V.S. fellows are published in international magazines, dictionaries and books. They have international exposure. Who knows about us? [my translation] (Xagoraris, 1974d).

During his fellowship and as mentioned in the article 'The M.I.T.'s Center for Advanced Visual Studies', Xagoraris used the Architecture Machine Group's computer equipment to produce colour screen images:

During autumn 1974, the writer of this article worked at the centre (C.A.V.S.) as a fellow researcher after the invitation of the professor György Kepes. During his stay, he focused on the development and realisation of programmes of various drawings and colour images at the computer centre of the Architecture Machine Group directed by Nicholas Negroponte. Apart from the digital computer IBM2250, he used for the production of colour images the computer XDP-1 as well. It is a cathode ray tube (CRT) system in which electronic beams are projected on a phosphoric screen and produce visible colour lines which are made through the mixing of three colours: red, green and blue. The image is produced in less than 1/20th of a second and is automatically photographed with a custom system attached to the computer. Nicholas Negroponte and the Architecture Machine Group's assistance was of great value in making this work [my translation] (Xagoraris, 1977, p.194).

Those images were later used for the series of *Symmetries of the Cube* (1974) ([Figure 9](#)). Following his return to Athens, Pantelis Xagoraris started using an H.P. 9810A computer calculator accessed through the department of Projective and Descriptive geometry of the National Technical University of Athens (N.T.U.A), where he worked initially as a teaching assistant since 1965 to various grades until he became an associate professor in 1989 and, two years later, the Director of the Architectural Language Department. With the aid of this calculator he conducted most of the computing necessary for his PhD thesis (Xagoraris 1996,

p.210). It is through this computer, as well as the H.P. 9862A plotter that most of his plotter drawings were realised. Xagoraris also participated as a scientific advisor in research programmes carried out by N.T.U.A., such as the project “Plastic Arts, Computers and Holography” for which he equipped the department with a holography system (Xagoraris, 1994, p.28).

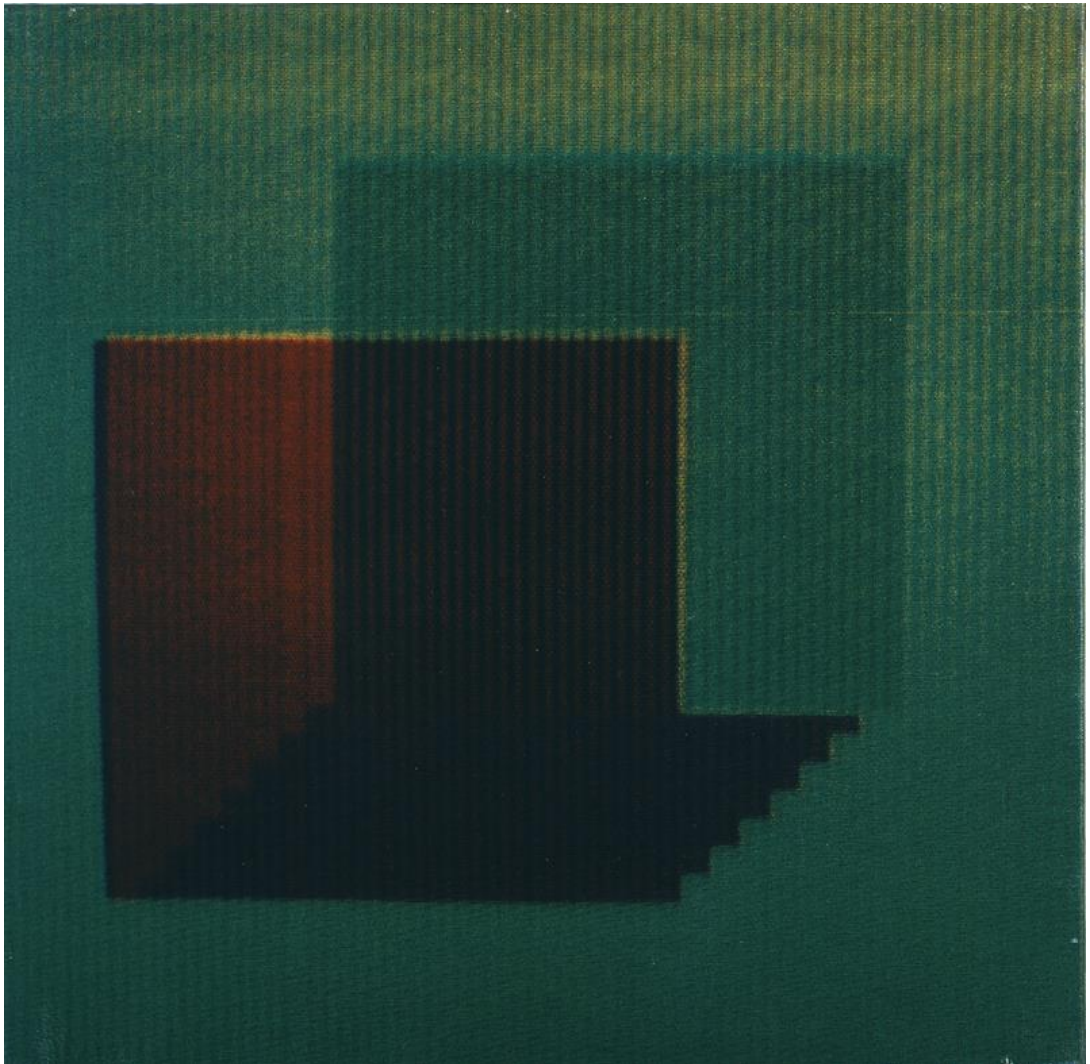


Figure 9. Xagoraris, P. (1974-1976) *Symmetries of the Cube* [Colour print on oilcloth, 59 x 59 cm], Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens Inv. No. 424/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2002.

Access to computing equipment for an artist was not something given during the period in question: it was not affordable, and it would be very unlikely that an organisation would grant access to or support its use for artistic purposes. Pantelis Xagoraris managed to use computers through his double capacity as an artist and mathematician.

### 3.4 Important exhibitions and curatorial approaches to his work

Xagoraris was a distinct case of an artist in Greece and his work was rarely presented in a dialectic relation with art produced and presented in Athens during his lifetime. Although he often participated in group shows, it was only on very few occasions that his work had any relation with other co-presented works. The work of his wife, Bia Davou, was among the few exceptions; it touched upon similar themes such as the relation of art and mathematics, cybernetics and man-machine communication, but at the same time, infused with myth and lyrical poetry, was visually and conceptually distinct. In addition, although her practice included the construction of circuits, algorithmic diagrams and numerical sequences, the final work was always produced with a manual process. More often than not, whenever they were both participants in group exhibitions, their work was presented together. An example would be the important 1992 exhibition *Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience*, curated by Anna Kafetsi, where the work of Xagoraris was presented together with Bia Davou and Constantin Xenakis as works that involved language and technology (Figures 10–12).



Figure 10. Xagoraris, P. (1965–1971) *Synthesis with Minimum Amount of Surface*, and drawings from the series Davou, B., (1978–1982) *Serial Structures*. Archive No. 3432, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001 (Installation photograph from the exhibition *Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience* of the National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum (1992).

One of the rare occasions that their work was presented together in an exhibition with a focused curatorial framework, was in the exhibition of the group Processes/Systems, in the Athens Art Gallery in 1976. Apart from Pantelis Xagoraris and Bia Davou, the group included the artists Opy Zouni, Michalis Katzourakis, Yiannis Michas, Yiannis Bouteas, Nausica Pastra as well as the art historian Emmanuel Mavrommatis. The short-lived group, apart from a few meetings, a couple of published articles and the exhibition, had no other activity and dispersed after the show. The exhibition is known as one of the first curated shows in Greece and Emmanuel Mavrommatis is considered as one of the first art critics who functioned as curators, bringing artistic practices in dialogue with each other. According to Mavrommatis who undertook the realisation of the exhibition, the idea, the members and the group's name was a collective decision that was taken during a meeting at Xagoraris' house. The conceptual thread that linked the practices of the seven participating artists was that the artwork was the outcome of a predetermined process or system and that those practices were in contrast with the illustrative and expressionist tendencies dominant in Greece at the time (Schizakis, 2011, p.24–25).

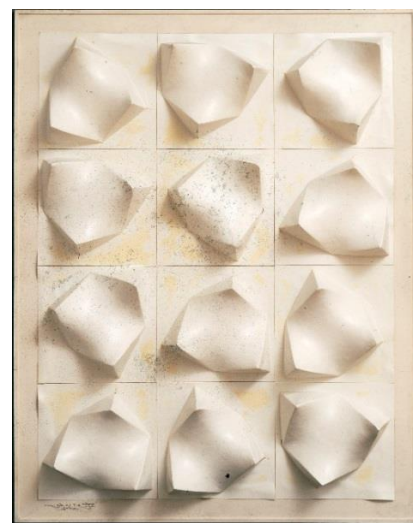
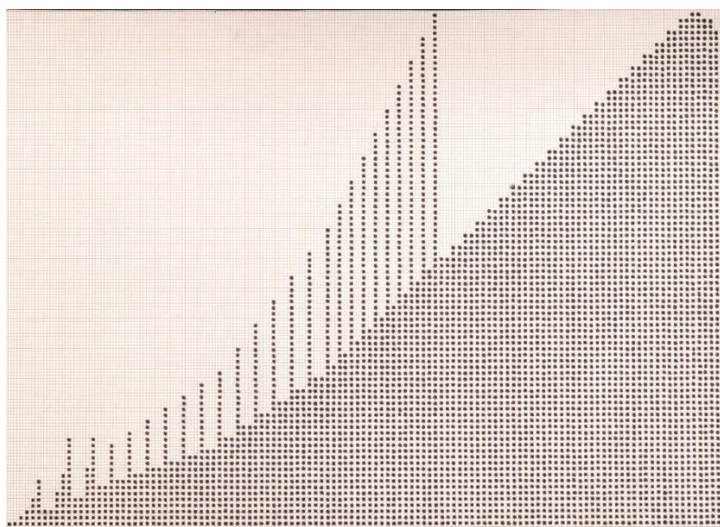


Figure 11. Davou, B. (1978) *Serial Structures* [Ink on graph paper, 17.4 x 24.1 cm] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens Inv. No. 262/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris.

Figure 12. Xagoraris P. (1965–1971) *Synthesis with Minimum Amount of Surface* [Plastic on wood, 132 x 102.5 x 14,5 cm] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens Inv. No. 422/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris.

Although most of the important critics and art historians in Greece wrote appreciatively about Xagoraris' work, the only two who had a sustained interest in similar ideas with Xagoraris and followed his work from early on were the musicologist and composer John G. Papaioannou who often lectured about Xagoraris' work, including in a public event during

his first solo exhibition, and the architect and artist Dimitris Fatouros, who also wrote the catalogue text for the artist's second solo show.

Xagoraris' individual exhibitions were almost all titled *Transformations*, numbered from 1 to 5, as he perceived all of his works to be applications of geometrical transformations. His first exhibition in 1967 at the Athens Technological Organisation is labelled as a "composite artistic event" as it comprised of Xagoraris' works, photographs of mathematical models and computer prints of mathematical diagrams from Boeing space research providing the theoretical background of his practice, and an electronic music composition for two stereo audio recorders that also integrated the sounds of the audience by Michalis Adamis, also titled *Transformations* (Athens Technological Organisation, 1967). As seen from the three stapled A4 paper pages that were printed as catalogue and from the photographs found in the EMST archive, Xagoraris exhibited metal, wooden and polyester sculptures, drawings, and at least one kinetic work ([Figure 13](#)).

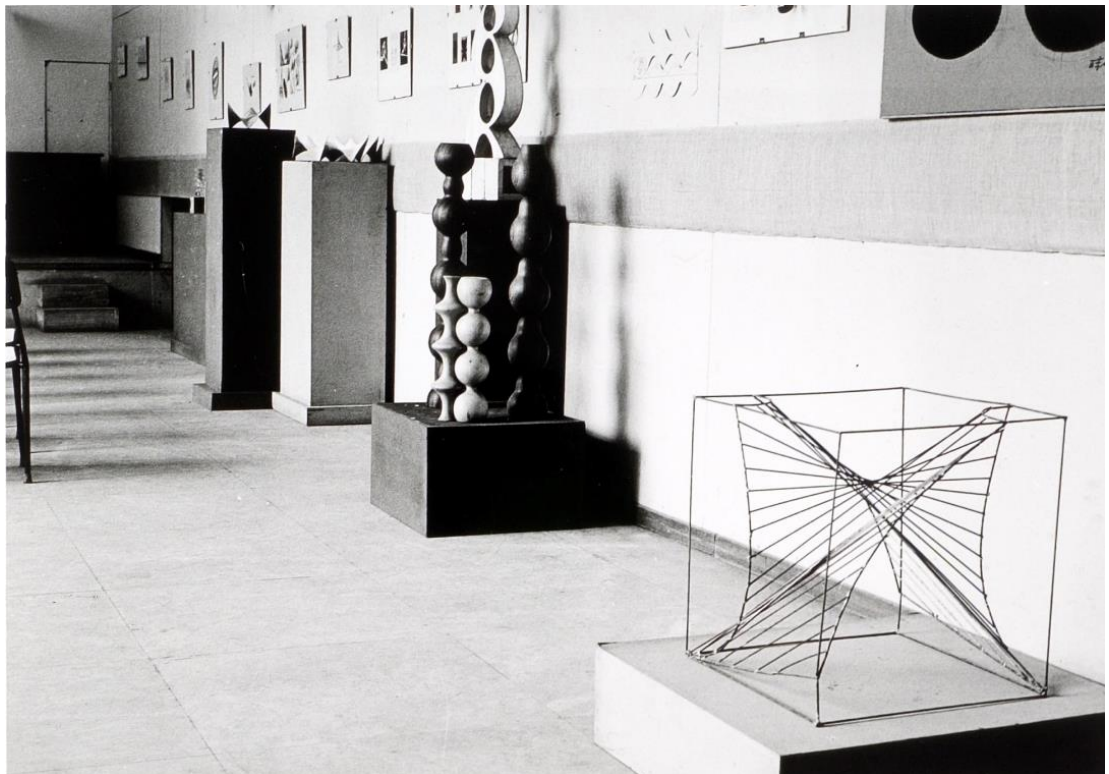


Figure 13. Xagoraris, P. (1967) Installation view from Pantelis Xagoraris exhibition *Transformations* at the Athenian Technological Organisation. Archive No. 3444, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001. The work in the foreground is Xagoraris, P. (1966) *Projection in Space* [Metal, 50 x 50 x 50 cm] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens Inv. No. 417/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris.

The exhibition *Transformations 2* in 1971 followed the same principles, although we can see from the drawings included in the catalogue that Xagoraris had begun creating works of

even greater geometrical complexity. This exhibition was realised in Goethe-Institut Athen, a few months before Xagoraris' presented his first work with the use of a computer. Important changes are evident in *Transformations 3*, presented in the Desmos Art Gallery in 1974 (just before the M.I.T. fellowship in September the same year) where he presented computer drawings for the first time in a solo show. Those included the work realised with the UNIVAC 1107 of the Doxiadis Associates Computer Center in 1971, titled *Symmetries of the Cube* (Figure 14), as well as newer works realised with a H.P. 9810A at the department of Perspective and Projective Geometry of the N.T.U.A.

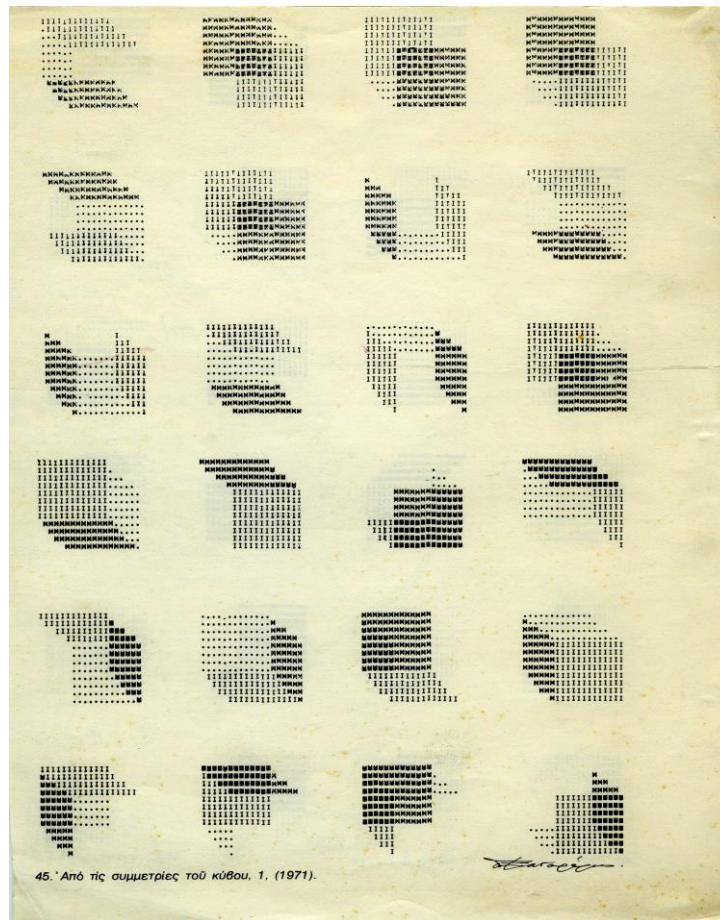


Figure 14. Xagoraris, P. (1971) *Symmetries of the Cube* [Ink on printer paper] in Xagoraris, P. (1981) *Yeometrikí Metaskhimatísmi kai Morphí: Didaktorikí Diatriví Ipvvlithísa stin Anotáti Skholí Arkhitektónon tou E. M. P. kai Engrithísa tin 24 Septemvríou 1980*, Phd Thesis, National Technical University of Athens, p.93.

The catalogue essay was written by Xagoraris himself. He justifies the use of computer analysis for the creation of abstract works of art as it facilitates “the passage from chaos to order and the geometrically organised shape” (Xagoraris, 1974a, p.7). *Transformations 4* is the exhibition realised in Goethe-Institut Athen in 1984, after the completion of his doctoral treatise. Appart from plotted computer drawings, the exhibition included the first kinetic-

laser work titled *Ta panta Rei* [Everything Flows] (1984) (in collaboration with the composer Stefanos Vassileiadis) (Figure 15); *Compositions with Light Cubes* (1974), (CRT monitor images from the computer graphics realised during his fellowship at M.I.T. C.A.V.S.) (Figure 16); and a large installation titled *Homage to the Volute of the Ionic Capital* (1981) (Figure 17).



Figure 15. Xagoraris, P. (1984) Stefanos Vassileiadis during the event *Ta Panta Rei* [Everything Flows] in the auditorium of the Goethe-Institut Athen, Archive No. 3564, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001.

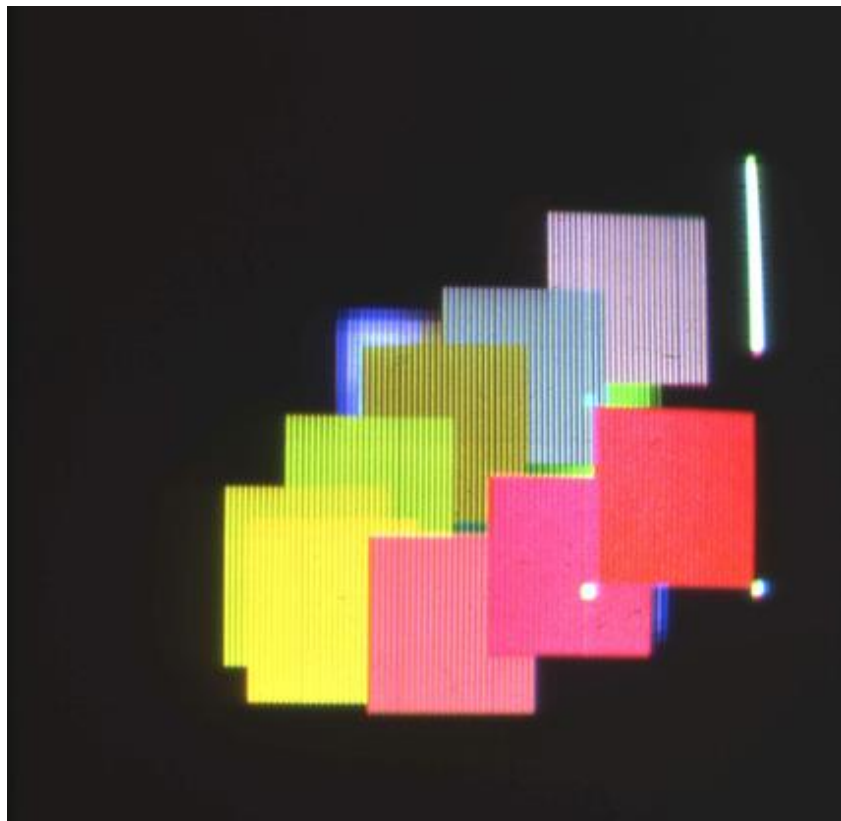


Figure 16. Xagoraris, P. (1974) *Compositions with Light Cubes*, Archive No. 3558, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001.

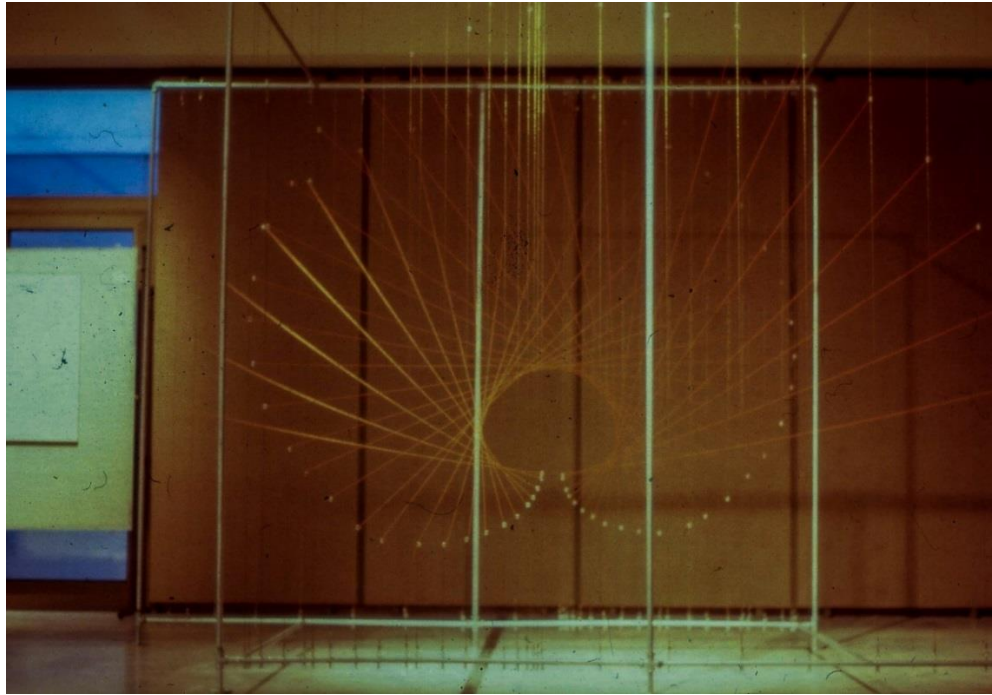


Figure 17. Xagoraris, P. (1981) *Homage to the Volute of the Ionic Capital*, Installation view from Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam, Archive No. 3558, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001.

The catalogue text is along the lines of his PhD thesis, with references to group theory and its use in the analysis of existing images and for the arrangement of visual elements into the creation of new ones. “This demonstrates that for the artist-creator a new path opens that is parallel to the work of nature, and it is not superficial and imitative but grounded on the knowledge of the same laws governing nature” (Xagoraris, 1984, p.12). Xagoraris’ next solo show, *Transformations 5*, took place eight years later in Thessaloniki, in the Paratiritis Art Gallery. By 1992, when this last *Transformation* exhibition took place, Xagoraris had mostly occupied himself with laser projections, which were presented through their photographic documentation, alongside older paintings and plotted drawings.

For the 1988 *4 Critical Reviews*, four concurrent exhibitions by four curators were realised at the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center. In this context, Anna Kafetsi proposed and curated an individual exhibition of Pantelis Xagoraris’ work. Dominating the exhibition space was a large-scale conical sculpture from twine titled *Homage to Appollonius* (1988), referring to Apollonius of Perga (late 3rd–early 2nd centuries BC), a mathematician and astronomer especially known for his contribution in the geometrical study of conical shapes. The surrounding walls were covered by large-scale computer drawings. Among the works, there was also a pyramidal installation of video monitors displaying a version of the laser



work *Ta Panta Rei* [Everything Flows] (1984). The catalogue includes a comprehensive interview with curator Anna Kafetsi, whose understanding of classical antiquity and its problematic integration in the modern Greek tradition, as well as her deep knowledge of contemporary art and its avant-garde ancestry, allow for an interesting discussion with Xagoraris, provoking him to elaborate on his work. Kafetsi begins the dialogue on the premise that in Xagoraris' work, art and knowledge are linked. Xagoraris replied "[...] Plato's definition of poetic and artistic creation precisely describes the relationship which exists between the artist-creator and the researcher-scientist, because both are seeking to uncover and manifest the unknown" (Xagoraris, 1988, p.58) Kafetsi singled out Xagoraris for his work which is

[...] of special interest in the context of Greece for a number of reasons but mainly because it represents perhaps the only instance (and relatively early for a country lacking technological infrastructure and having only a rudimentary involvement with scientific research and investigation) of systematically flowing with the current of modern experimentation, achieved through the medium of advanced technologies and scientific knowledge. In a climate that favoured representational art forms, often with picturesque tendencies and ideological clothing of doubtful authenticity, the artist's creations grant us the opportunity to follow the relevant experimentations and allows us to place them in the wider framework of analogous artistic attempts, especially on the part of abstract art which was the main mode of modern expression and exploration for a language and alphabet of plastic form in the decade of the 60s [...] (Kafetsi et al., 1988, p.10).

For Pantelis Xagoraris, who did not have the chance to realise a retrospective exhibition during his lifetime, this was the most extensive and comprehensive presentation of his work, which included his most recent work, selected older work as well as live presentation of his plotting process.

### **3.5 Pantelis Xagoraris and his contribution to the discourse on art and technology**

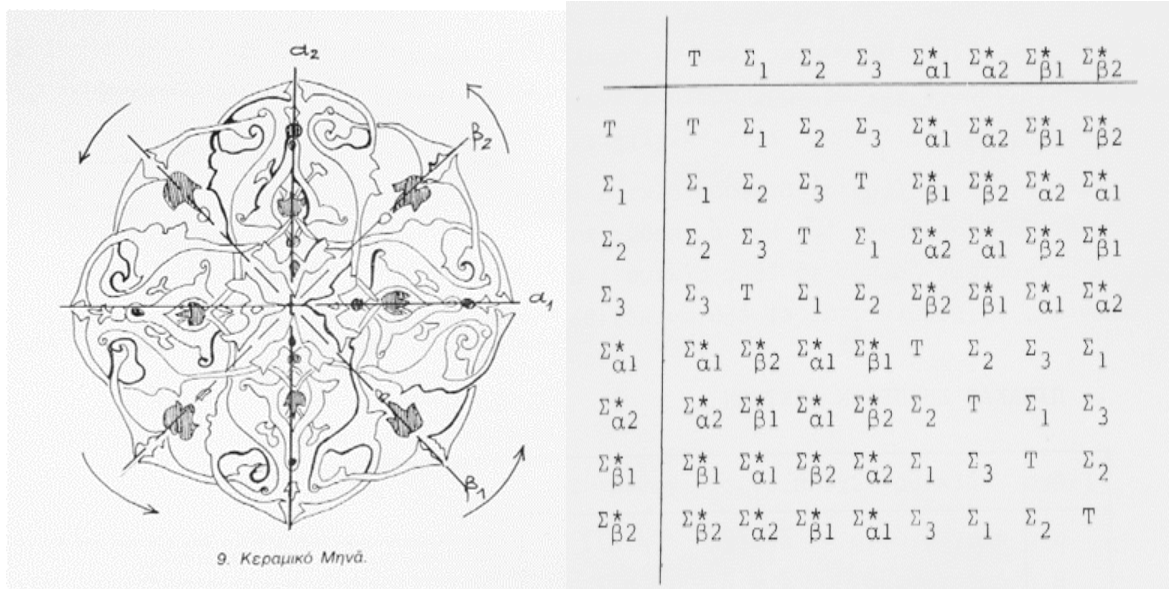
Most of Xagoraris' articles and essays, written from 1959 to 1984, were collectively republished close to the end of his life in 1996 with the title *Metaskhimatismí: Domés kai Mesótites stin Téchni* [Transformations: Structure and Mediation in Art]. As discussed above,

Xagoraris wrote extensively on the relation of art and technology and on the science behind visual perception. As he was one of the few Greek scholars to do so, it was through his writings that the contemporary practices of New Tendencies, Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), the M.I.T. C.A.V.S., were presented for the first time in the Greek press to a Greek audience. One could say that in absence of relevant expertise in art criticism, Xagoraris provided the context of his work to the artistic circles of his time by himself.

Undoubtedly, his most important text was his PhD dissertation submitted in 1981 and titled *Geometric Transformations and Form*. The treatise was a specialised text and was never published as a book, but it puts into perspective his life's work. Its subject, according to the introduction, is the research on the relation of geometrical forms in two- and three-dimensional space, as well as of their transformations, for the utilisation in architecture and the plastic arts. It also dealt with original combinations of geometrical applications in contemporary art through the use of contemporary mathematics, and especially through group theory. Computers and the writing of specific computer programmes are "contributing" to the study of those transformations. (Xagoraris, 1981, p.10). The thesis begun with a historical overview of the mathematical rules of aesthetics and harmony as mentioned by Plato ("platonic" geometrical shapes as beautiful in themselves), Pythagoras (nature composed from numbers), Vitruvius (harmony among the parts of a work of art), Leon Battista Alberti (numerical analogy in vision as in music, subjugation of the individual architectural elements in the harmonious whole), Paolo Uccello (perspective and analogy), George David Birkhoff, Hermann Klaus, Hugo Weyl, Andreas Speiser (mathematical interpretation of aesthetics), Paul Cezanne (depicting nature through a combination of platonic solids), Kazimir Malevich (geometric abstraction), among others. Through this overview, beginning from antiquity and ending in modernity, which included the views of artists, architects, philosophers and scientists, Xagoraris concluded that there is a parallel development in contemporary mathematics and contemporary art (Xagoraris, 1981, p.22).

Through the first part of his thesis, Xagoraris established that there are consistent and infallible rules of harmony that are used in the structure of works of art. Structure affects the content of the work and partakes in its meaning. As "structure", Xagoraris refers to the existence of antithetical powers within the same whole, like straight and curved lines, warm and cold colours, heterogeneity and homogeneity. For systematizing the structure of artworks, Xagoraris suggested treating those plastic elements as collections of objects

according to Set Theory<sup>13</sup> (initiated by the German mathematician Georg Ferdinand Ludwig Philipp Cantor (1845–1918) and then compose artworks by using mathematic concepts such as ‘group’ and ‘transformation’ (Xagoraris, 1981, p.25). In geometry, ‘transformation’ concerns the study of shapes and objects that have been moved or changed and each point in the old position corresponds to a point in the new position or shape. Symmetrical transformations are called “isometries” and include rotations and reflections. Projections and topological transformations concern those transformations that result in the change of the shape of the object (Downing, 2009, p.265, 350–351). A ‘group’ in mathematics is formed by the combination of two elements that form a third, in a way that certain axiomatic conditions are met.<sup>14</sup> Xagoraris analysed decoration examples of Egyptian, Minoan, Islamic and Gothic sources, and then proceeded in analysing contemporary art, with examples by Frank Stella, Max Bill and Richard Paul Lhose (Figures 18 and 19).



Figures 18 and 19. Xagoraris, P., Example of transformation analysis of a ceramic plate in Xagoraris, P. (1981) *Yeometrikí Metaskhimatismí kai Morphí: Didaktorikí Diatriví Ipvolithísa stin Anotáti Skholí Arkhitektonon tou E. M. P. kai Engrithísa tin 24 Septemvríou 1980*, Phd Thesis, National Technical University of Athens, pp.32–33.

Within the same context, Xagoraris created drawings following the same principles of group theory, by using the H.P. 9810A computer and by writing a programme specifically for this reason (Xagoraris, 1981, pp.50–51, 197–199). The actual circular diagram that resulted from this programme is a visualisation of a group of 24 “displacement” transformations.

<sup>13</sup> Set Theory studies “sets”, which in mathematics can be considered any defined collection of objects or elements (Hrbacek and Jech, 1999, p.1).

<sup>14</sup> In mathematics, a “group” is a set of two elements that form a third when their combination follows four axiomatic conditions: closure, associativity, identity and invertibility (Ledermann, 1976, p.1-2).

Following group theory to study transformations used in decorative and fine arts in a geometrical two-dimensional surface, Xagoraris subsequently analysed architectural and sculptural works in three-dimensional space. In the case of physical structures, harmony is not only an aesthetic characteristic but one that also relates to utility, like increased durability or reduced surface. Xagoraris successively studied different modes of transformations (e.g. regular polyhedra, isometries, symmetries) with works by Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner as well as sculptural works made by himself among his case studies (Xagoraris 1981, p.87–91). Closing the chapter on the three-dimensional space isometries, Xagoraris included again his own computer drawings illustrating different transformations of a cube, and specifically the work *Symmetries of the Cube*, a work that Xagoraris made with the UNIVAC 1107 of the Doxiadis Associates Computer Center in 1971, with a programme in COBOL algorithmically edited by Xagoraris in collaboration with Alan Parkin (Xagoraris, 1981, p.93–95).<sup>15</sup>

Transformations of ruled surfaces were also investigated in his thesis, with examples from architecture, nature and art. As examples, he refers again to Antoine Pevsner, Naum Gabo, Barbara Hepworth, Max Bill, Iannis Xenakis, Felix Candela, Ieoh Ming Pei as well as sculptures designed and executed by himself. In addition, Xagoraris realised “experimental” drawings of different types of ruled surfaces by using H.P. 9810A and H.P. System 45 (Xagoraris, 1981, pp.127–129, 219–220). The conclusion of his thesis is that the geometrical transformations included in his study exist in nature as well as in art due to physical laws and functions. The information collected in his study, however, should not be “overestimated” since it is a tool with a relative function and not a rule (Xagoraris, 1981, p.146). He characteristically mentioned that the use of scientific data in art is of special interest from a “Greek viewpoint” since it is related to ideas of measure and balance, and quotes Dimitris Pikionis regarding the possibility of reconciliation between technical drawing and painting.

Xagoraris kept his network of friends and professional contacts up to date with his life and work through handwritten or typed mailed correspondence as was expected during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. In the Pantelis Xagoraris Archive at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, there are numerous letters to his wife Bia Davou, as well as to

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<sup>15</sup> Alan Parkin was a designer and programmer who had participated in *Cybernetic Serendipity* in 1968 and who started collaborating with Doxiadis Associates Computer Center in 1971. His work was also presented as part of the *Art and Cybernetics* exhibition (Athens Center of Ekistics, 1971a, 1971b).

fellow artists Costas Tsoclis, the sculptor Theodoros, Constantin Xenakis and Danil (Panagopoulos). There are also letters to publisher Orestis Doumanis, architect Dimitris Fatouros and art historian Emmanuel Mavrommatis. Correspondence with his friends and colleagues from Athens was not extensive but coincided with the periods that he or they were living abroad or travelling. From the archive, we can single out Tony Spiteris and John G. Papaioannou for being in a life-long dialogue with Xagoraris.

Most importantly and on a regular basis, Xagoraris corresponded with the critic Tony Spiteris (Corfu, 1910–Athens, 1986) who lived for large periods in Italy and France but never lost contact with the Greek artistic circles. Many of his letters addressed to Tony Spiteris are kept in the Teloglion Institute in Thessaloniki and reveal their deep friendship and mutual respect. Xagoraris' letters are often very scholarly as he explicates the way his work progresses, often in a way that resembles his articles but which also revealed details of his working process: “With the encouragement of John G. Papaioannou and the valuable help of the English programmer A. Parkin, I realised my first works with a digital computer UNIVAC 1107, of the Doxiadis Associates Computer Center during Autumn 1971[...].” [my translation] (Xagoraris, 1974e). Their correspondence is also very personal and revelatory of the feeling of isolation that Xagoraris felt regarding his work. In a letter to Spiteris Xagoraris expressed his disappointment about the state of Greek art criticism:

My exhibition *Transformations 3* in Desmos was successful enough, this time even commercially, as there were 22 works sold in total, drawings, lithographs and multiples. However, I was left with a feeling of bitterness. There are no critics in Athens, who can acknowledge and write about the the painful and difficult area of my work. Of course, in the catalogue I reprinted my whole article from Design in Greece 5/1974 (“A treatise” as Fatouros called it), but did any of the critics active in Athens read it?

Andreadis for example, who writes a review in VIMA, uses faulty journalistic information from the Sunday Observer of 7/4/1974.

So I thought of you again Tony, for the love, understanding and humility with which you stand in front of our works and ask for information. The others don't ask “because they know...” as we once said [my translation] (Xagoraris, 1974f).

John G. Papaioannou (Athens, 1915–2000) was a prominent architect, urban planner and

musicologist, professor of ekistics at the Athens Technological Organisation since 1959, and co-founder and co-director (with the composer Günther Becker) of the Goethe-Institut Athen contemporary music workshop from 1962 to 1984. He was largely responsible for the introduction of new music tendencies to the Greek public as well as for the promotion of the idea of multidisciplinary works of art, combining music, visual arts and performance (Alexaki, 2015, pp.16–24). Papaioannou’s involvement with the Athens Technological Organisation included the planning of its rich parallel cultural programme. It is in this context that Xagoraris’ first solo exhibition took place, in 1967, under the title *Composite Artistic Event with the Title “Transformations”* as it featured an electronic music composition by Michalis Adamis alongside the exhibited works. Papaioannou introduced both parts of the exhibition with a speech on the relationship between mathematics and art “motivated by the work of Pantelis Xagoraris” (Papaioannou, 1967). As suggested by Eugenia Alexaki on the catalogue *Sinergasía Technón: To Polítechno Orama tou Yiánni G. Papaioánnou* [Collaboration of Arts: The Polytechnic Vision of John G Papaioannou], “in today’s terms, we could suggest that Papaioannou functioned as the curator of the exhibition” (Alexaki, 2015, p.25). Papaioannou continued contributing to the discourse around the work of Pantelis Xagoraris, with articles like ‘Mathimatiká kai Plastikés Téchnes’ [Mathematics and the Plastic Arts] (Papaioannou, 1970) and talks (like the introductory talk in Goethe-Institut in conjunction with the second solo exhibition *Transformations 2* in 1971 (Xagoraris and Papaioannou, 1971) and the lecture titled ‘Information Technology and Art’, in conjunction with the exhibition *Transformations 4* in Goethe in 1984 (Alexaki, 2015, p.28).

### **3.6 Re-evaluating and re-contextualising Pantelis Xagoraris and his work**

#### **3.6.1 Views on technology and science**

As can be seen from the limited curatorial approaches by his contemporaries, Xagoraris’ work was not exhibited in a way that revealed the full spectrum behind his intention, his lineage and the process behind the finalised artwork. As this chapter has demonstrated, his intention was to create forms rendered on principles of the natural world, which have been analysed, understood and quantified by mathematics and have been applied in art and engineering since antiquity for their perceived aesthetic and physical qualities. He placed his own practice as part of a discipline that disregarded the superficial separation of art and science and which included the scientific visual observations of artists as well as the aesthetic observations of mathematicians, engineers, biologists and philosophers from antiquity to his

time. Most importantly, he had an instrumental relation to technology and was critical of “technological rationality” as critically accounted in Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Marcuse, 1964) believing instead in the possibility of an “intellectual technology” (Xagoraris, 1996 p.188) that would be a tool for the advancement of humanity and not a means of oppression.

In one of his earliest articles, published at the age of 29, Xagoraris wrote that “When we state that painting depends on technique or that it solely depends on emotion, we are wrong. Because it is neither on its own” [my translation] (Xagoraris 1996, p.15). Xagoraris’ education allowed him to trace the common references of his twofold passion in art and mathematics into the work of ancient Greek philosophers where disciplines currently considered as distinct are still perceived as one. He often quotes the following excerpt from Plato’s *Philebus*:

By “beauty of shape” I don’t in this instance mean what most people would understand by it—I am not thinking of animals or certain pictures, but, so the thesis goes—a straight line or a circle and resultant planes and solids produced on a lathe or with ruler and square. Do you see the sort of thing I mean? On my view these things are not, as other things are, beautiful in a relative way, but are always beautiful in themselves... (Plato, 1975, p.51)

Xagoraris also stated that his work is about “consistent” and “logical” relations of the arrangement of the visual elements (Xagoraris, 1996, p.170–171).

Furthermore, as explained above, Xagoraris appreciated art that intentionally made use of geometric order as well as recent scientific advancements. Xagoraris often quoted Cezanne’s platonic statement known for its influence on cubism: “One must first of all study geometric forms: the cone, the cube, the cylinder, the sphere. When one knows how to render these things in their forms and their planes, one ought to know how to paint” (Loran, 2006, p.9). Xagoraris praised Bauhaus for the combination of art and science for practical issues but also for aiming at the “truth” in the sense of Thomas Aquinas “Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus” [Truth is the adequation of things and intellect] (Xagoraris, 1996, p.75) but most importantly, for aiming at a “humanisation of technique” (Xagoraris, 1996, p.141).

Xagoraris suggested an alliance between technological and artistic imagination that would ward off the advancement of irrationality and incomprehensibility (Xagoraris, 1996, p.96). He dismissed the biased and technophobic view that there is any danger for a “scientification” of art and believed that the outcome of such an alliance would be the aestheticisation of scientific ideas. He characteristically stated that “the real danger is when we erect walls to protect ourselves from imaginary dangers” (Xagoraris, 1996, p.103). He believed that initiatives such as the M.I.T. C.A.V.S., which supported that kind of alliance, help to deconstruct the obscuring mechanisms in any technology so that it can be adjusted to human needs (Xagoraris, 1996, p.188). Similarly, he believed that the fear of computing machines replacing human activity is baseless, as through his own experience can discern that the human intellect has the power to control the “machine-medium” acting on its behalf (Xagoraris, 1996, p.203). The use of computers forces the artist-programmer to correctly formulate the process in advance (Xagoraris, 1996, p.200). The works emerging from this process are versions of the same aesthetic principle and aim at its verification:

“a programme” which, without denying the spontaneous, guides it, controls it and defines possible directions. We could speak about a “programmatic” art of which the “quality of its aesthetic delight” is not based on the expression of a law but from a kind of pre-operation on the basis of which would constantly try to change [my translation] (Xagoraris, 1996, p.98).

In accordance with the above, Xagoraris used computing machines for the following reasons: i) for moving from formal disorder to order; ii) for executing a large number of combinations of the same element with the aim of creating new images; iii) for the use of algorithms in order to increase the perplexity of a work with the aim of hiding its harmony; iv) using “intelligent” programmes that have the probability of randomly distributing visual elements on an aesthetic structure in order to replace or enhance the artist’s intuition; v) for creating new and unexplored structures through the disruption of the programme. All the above-mentioned reasons are related with Xagoraris’ intention of controlling the artistic process through rational elements and through a mechanical precision beyond human possibilities (Xagoraris, 1996, p.170–172).

This justification of computer use by Xagoraris appears very close to the views of other international pioneers such as the co-founder of the Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel



(GRAV) Vera Molnar (Budapest, 1924), who also emphasised the broadening of possibilities through accidental and random interferences of the orderly and symmetrical (Popper, 2007, pp.63–64). Despite the use of technology in his art, Xagoraris aimed to restore an ancient Greek ideal of harmony and of the human measure (Xagoraris, 1996, p.172). Xagoraris' persistence on humanity and the humanitarian utilisation of machines recalls philosophical views like the ones expressed by Vilém Flusser (Prague, 1920–1991) in the 1983 essay *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. In this prophetic text focused on photographic technology as a prototype for intelligent devices, Flusser looks at the camera as a tool, extending human capabilities, as a machine, in its industrial sense, putting people under an invisible yoke, and as an apparatus, a black box containing unseen processes compelling its user in a specific use predetermined by its creator (Flusser, 2012, p.22–32). Xagoraris' concept of artist-programmer who controls the process for specific needs, and the idea that artists are deconstructing the technological processes, are similar to Flusser's suggestion of a method to retain artistic freedom against the technological predetermination of apparatuses.

### 3.6.2 Relation of Xagoraris' work with other international pioneers

Xagoraris systematically moved from one area of visual research to another, producing distinct bodies of work that investigated different areas of the mathematical cognizance of two-dimensional and three-dimensional space. Before he started using a computer, the form of his drawings, kinetic works and other sculptures discloses his strong affinities with older generation artists such as Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner, Max Bill and Constantin Brancusi among others. This formal relation can be attributed to a common investigation on the mathematical rules governing aesthetic perception, but also on Xagoraris' scholarly attitude towards art-making, always acknowledging his influences and constantly affirming his intention to be classified as an artist continuing the Bauhaus tradition. Works like *Hyperboloid* (1971) and *Beauty of Shape* (1963–1970) or even *Topological Surface* (c.1966) (Figures 20–23) relied on new materials or entirely on geometrical applications of mathematical principles and all traces of handiwork are concealed. The relation of these works to the work of the aforementioned artists is easily identifiable as for example in Constantin Brâncuși's *Endless Column* (1918), Naum Gabo's *Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave)* (1919–1920) and Max Bill's *Unendliche Fläche für Drei Positionen [Continuous Surface for Three Positions]* (1974–1975).



Figures 20 and 21. Xagoraris, P. (1963-1970) *Beauty of Shape* [Kinetic sculpture, Plexiglas, iron, motor and plastic base, 37 x 15 x 15 cm] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens Inv. No. 414/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris.

As most of his neo-constructivist contemporaries working on the cross-section of optical and kinetic art, gestalt theory and art concrete, Xagoraris experimented with a computer, a potent tool for the investigation of “rational aesthetics” as Peter Wiebel terms the tradition branching from Naum Gabo’s and Antoine Pevsner’s ‘Realistic Manifesto’ and which included groups such as the New Tendencies and Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel (GRAV) (Rosen et al, 2008, p.43–46). Xagoraris was well informed of the New Tendencies and GRAV groups as well as of the work of the associated artists, as is evidenced from this 1965 essay ‘Mia Akóma Tási I Art Visuel’ [One More Tendency Art Visuel] (Xagoraris, 1996, pp.96–103) and later in the 1978 essay ‘Kivernitikí kai Téchni’ [Cybernetics and Art] (Xagoraris, 1996. pp.193–209).

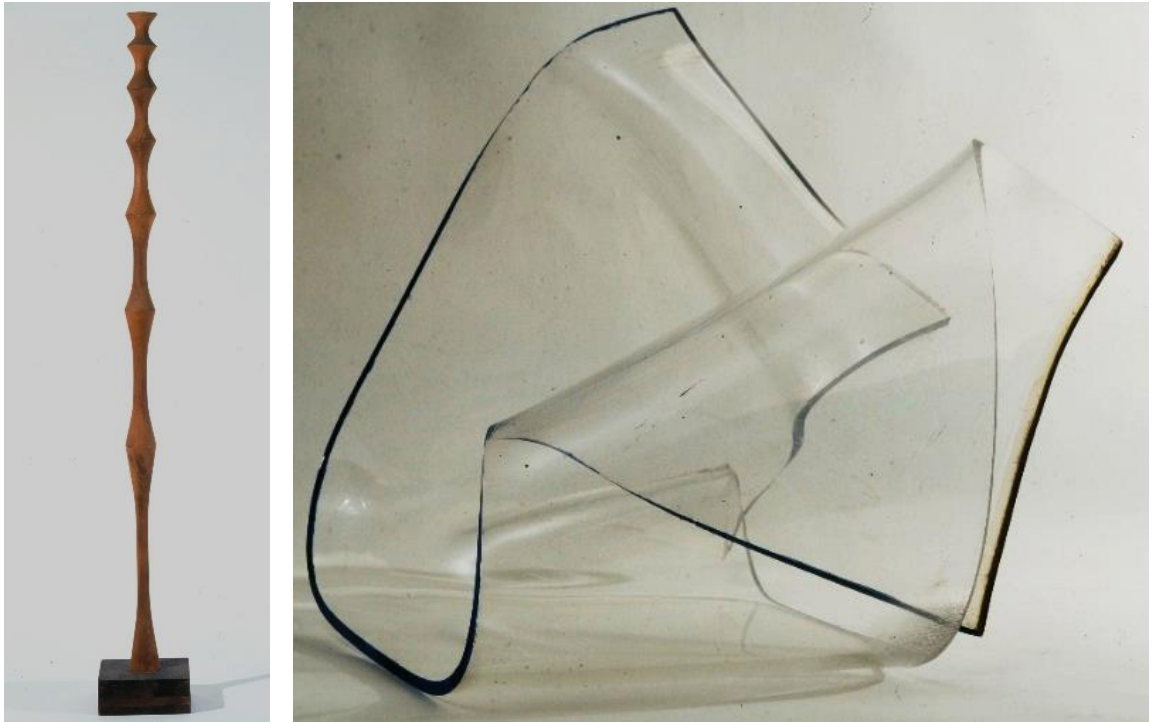


Figure 22. Xagoraris, P. (1971) *Hyperboloid* [Wood, 162 x 21 x 21 cm] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens Inv. No. 420/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris.

Figure 23. Xagoraris, P. (c1966) *Topological Surface* [Plexiglas, 27 x 30 x 33 cm], Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens Inv. No. 415/02, donated by Zafos Xagoraris.

His texts and PhD thesis are full of references to the work of the first wave of artists-scientists that presented work produced or assisted from a computer, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in exhibitions such as *Cybernetic Serendipity* (Institute of Contemporary Arts London, 1968), *New Tendencies* (Zagreb, 1961–1973) and *Computerkunst–Impulse* (Kunstverein München, 1970 – Athens Center of Ekistics and Goethe-Institute Athen, 1971). Some of these artists, born in the 1920s and 1930s share similar aesthetics, formal characteristics and technical processes with Xagoraris’ work and are often mentioned in his writings. Among them, George Nees (Nuremberg, 1926–Bubenreuth, 2016) was one of the first artists to make computer graphics in the mid-1960s with the use of algorithms and a plotter. During the same period, Frieder Nake (Stuttgart, 1938) was investigating randomly generated images based on mathematics. Manfred Mohr (Pforzheim, 1938) was also making computer graphics based on calculations and logical sequences since 1969. Xagoraris was also aware of the work of the Japanese group CTG (Computer Technique Group) formed in 1966, as it can be seen from experiments with a similar type of “deformation” and “transformation” in which he used his own image.

It is important to note that Nike and Nees were studying at the Technische Hochschule Stuttgart with Max Bense (Strasbourg, 1910–Stuttgart, 1990). Bense advocated the use of computers and symmetry in art, relying on the theories of Speiser and Birkhoff as well as the concrete art of Max Bill (Winterthur, 1908–Berlin, 1994) (Gamwell and Tyson, 2015, p.368–369). As it can be deduced from Xagoraris’ thesis submitted in 1981, his work originates from the same ideas, is realised with similar tools and individual works bear strong resemblance. However, his analytical practice, his quantification of aesthetic rules and their use as part of an algorithmic process, is closer to the practice of A. Michael Noll (New Jersey, 1939) working at Bell Labs during 1961–1977. Noll algorithmically analysed paintings by Piet Mondrian, such as *Composition in Line* (1916–1917), in order to isolate and quantify their aesthetic structure and replicate it with computer software in order to make his own work (Gamwell and Tyson, 2015, p.370).

Most of the neo-constructivist tendencies associated with computer-facilitated creativity and visual research were group endeavours and even against individual efforts or tried to eradicate subjectivity in the creation and perception of the artwork. Artists and scientists were forming groups and international networks together with philosophers and mathematicians. Pantelis Xagoraris, with the exception of very short intervals, lived and worked in Athens, where he participated in short-lived artist groups like the aforementioned Processes/Systems, collaborated with artists from other disciplines like the musicologist John G. Papaioannou and the musician Michalis Adamis (Piraeus, 1929–Athens, 2013) and was in a lifelong dialogue with his wife and fellow artist Bia Davou (Athens, 1932–1996). Unfortunately, the artists in Greece who followed a similar path were few and even fewer were the institutions that could persistently support and present similar ideas. Although an isolated practitioner for the most part of his career, his work was in dialogue with the work of computer art and graphics pioneers and was possibly the most important and dedicated scholar of the relation between art, science and technology in postwar Greece. His work’s unique character centred on investigating the importance of symmetry in its initial and literal sense, in reconnecting mathematical advancements with foundational principles of mathematics and aesthetics and in teaching the machine to make a work of art according to the platonic concept of beauty.

### 3.6.3 A new curatorial approach

From 1971 onward, Pantelis Xagoraris used printers and plotters for the production of his works. Those works were made in his office and studio and were exhibited as completed, static objects. Currently, curators, artists and critics often perceive work such as this as relics of an outdated artistic practice. Today's artificial intelligence programmes analysing data from the mass of aesthetic objects submitted to the web by a variety of users have a vastly greater potential than the mathematical objects analysed as case studies by Pantelis Xagoraris. This was not the case 50 years ago, when Xagoraris introduced the computer in his artistic practice, in the context of a live event and printed the work *Symmetries of the Cube* (1971) in front of the audience of the Athens Technological Organisation. He also presented the programming and plotting process at least on two other occasions, in a 1984 television broadcast about his work, and in 1988 in a specially arranged event at the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center. From the repetition of this demonstration, we can assume that the artist considered important, or at least useful, this process of realisation for the understanding of his work by the audience: how the printer or the plotter in each case slowly visualised, dot by dot or line by line, the shape calculated by the programme, a process important for the understanding of his practice. The temporal element of the process is also evident by the fact that in certain publications, his plotted drawings appear with title, date and execution duration (Xagoraris, 1978) ([Figure 24](#)). In Pantelis Xagoraris' PhD thesis one can find detailed information on his drawings and his artistic thought. The same source includes the information on the exact technology used for his work as well as the software programmes in BASIC and COBOL which he compiled or modified for specific types of drawings (Xagoraris, 1981, p.197) ([Figure 25](#)). In addition, in the Pantelis Xagoraris archive located at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, there is a dossier which includes draft plotted drawings with notes on the parameters of mathematic structures ([Figure 26](#)). Those discoveries can allow someone to adapt mathematical structures used and studied by Xagoraris, such as Lissajous or other harmonic curves in current visualisation environments, virtual reality and printing technology through current programming languages.

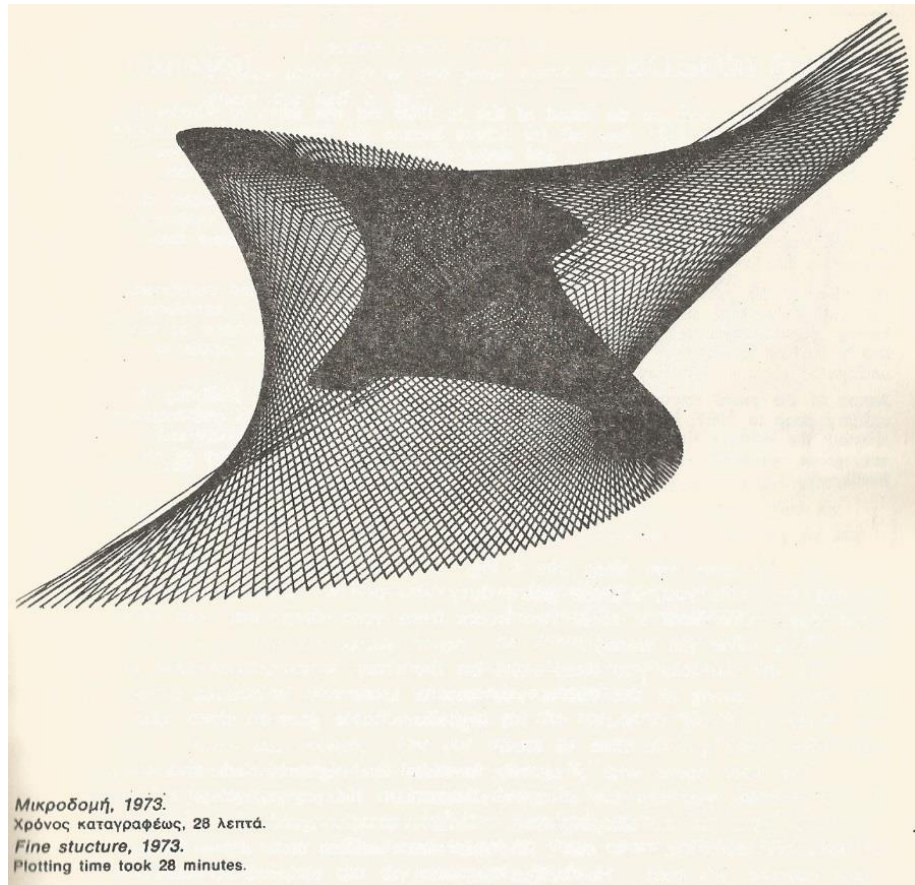


Figure 24. Xagoraris, P. (1973) *Fine Structure* [Ink on paper] with plotting time note, printed in *The Coffeehouse: Contemporary Greek Arts and Letters* 7-11, p.11.

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X MAX=
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Y MAX=
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EO LIMITS=
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X MAX=
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Y MIN=
-426.94158
Y MAX=
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Figure 25. Page from programme written by Xagoraris for producing drawings of ruled surfaces in Xagoraris, P. (1981) *Yeometrikí Metaskhimatismí kai Morphí: Didaktorikí Diatriví Ipolithísa stin Anotáti Skholí Arkhitektonon tou E. M. P. kai Engrithísa tin 24 Septemvriou 1980*, Phd Thesis, National Technical University of Athens, p.219).

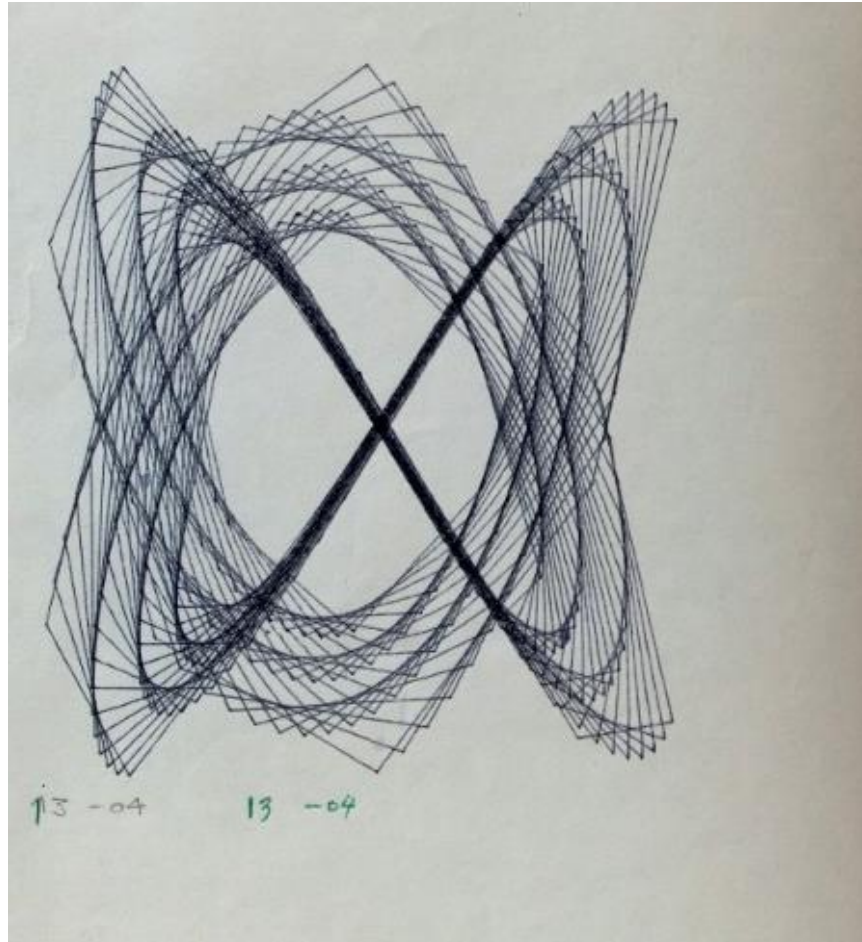


Figure 26. Xagoraris, P. Page from dossier with plotted drawings, Archive No. 3491, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, [Dossier with plotted drawings], donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001.

This was attempted in the recent exhibition and conference *Homage to Pantelis Xagoraris* organised by the Athens School of Fine Arts on 23 January 2020, with the participation of the author, new media artist and professor Manthos Santorineos and computer scientist Stavroula Zoi for the project @postasis. For this experimental homage, Stavroula Zoi studied the mathematical concepts and structures found in Pantelis Xagoraris' work, as well as the technical means that he used (including the manuals from his Hewlett Packard hardware), before using processing programming language to recreate his artistic process. The language used, although resulted in screen depiction of the process and not in paper replotted, recreated a digital canvas and incorporated a mechanism for time-based design (Schizakis, Santorineos & Zoi, 2020, p.37) (Figure 27).

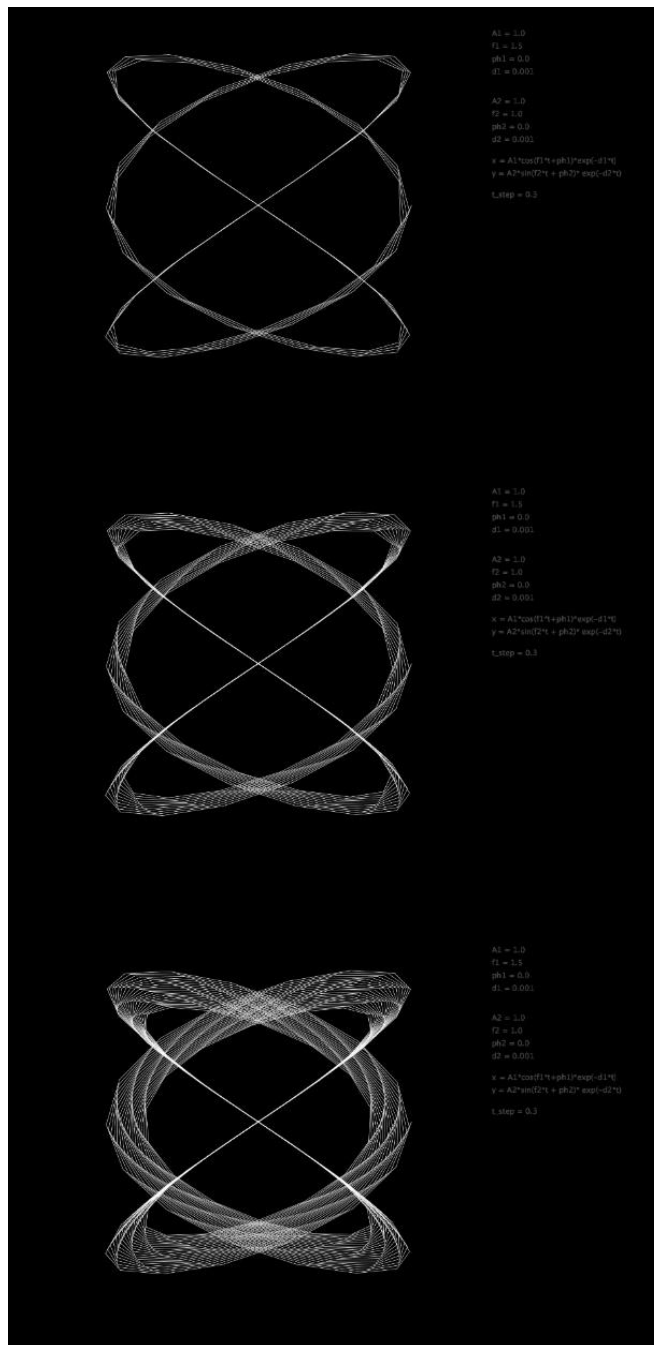


Figure 27. Zoi, S. (2020), A series of parametric forms resulting from the simulation of a functioning harmonograph, implemented in the Processing programming language by Stavroula Zoi for the project @postasis (Screen capture).

The resulting digital objects recreated on-screen the animated course of a stylus point drawing the geometrical design, according to predetermined variables sourced from Xagoraris' dossier, simulating the sequential creation of the original plotted drawings through Xagoraris' plotter (Figure 28). The final step in this process was to include the digital objects in a multi-user virtual space within which the designs could be seen on a different scale (Schizakis, Santorineos & Zoi, 2020, p.43) (Figure 29).





Figure 28. Videostills from the 11 April 1984 television broadcast of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation *Periskopio: Electronic art at Goethe*, Archive No. 3573, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001.

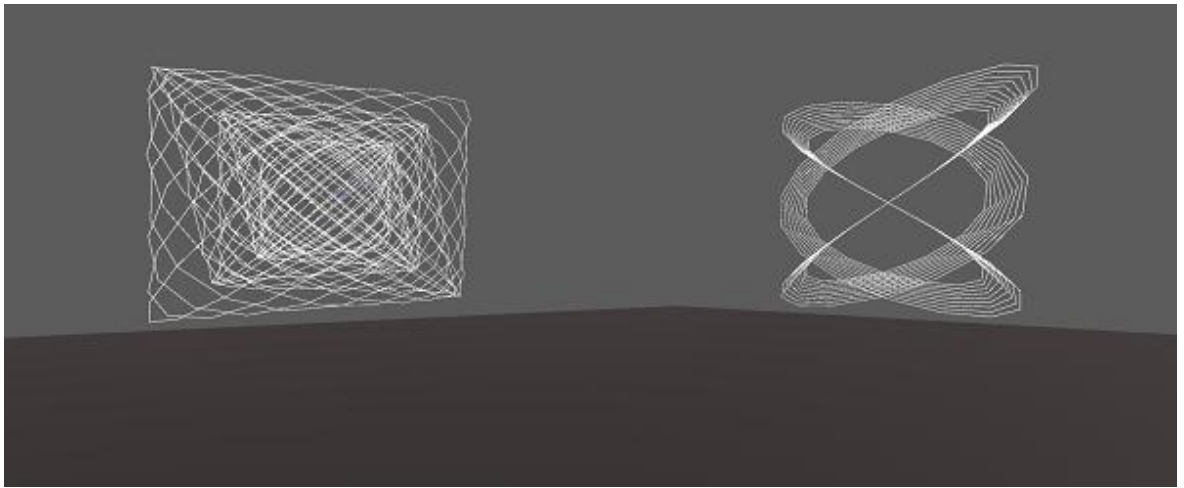


Figure 29. Zoi, S. (2020) A screenshot inside the 3D space of @postasis.

The event took place at the Athens School of Fine Arts auditorium and included a small exhibition of archival photographs depicting Pantelis Xagoraris creating his works with the operation of a computer and plotter alongside images of his equipment and a slide show of his draft plotted drawings. The major exhibit were two computer screens displaying the new programmes and the gamepad-controlled three-dimensional environment of the @postasis project with the new digital objects. The same space served as a screening area of videos

from the Pantelis Xagoraris archive that displayed his equipment in operation, but also a video documentation of his exhibition in *4 Critical Reviews*, which included his large, room-sized twine installation *Homage to Apollonius* (1988).

The change of scale that becomes obvious when the new digital objects are placed in a virtual reality environment also enhances our understanding of Xagoraris' few large room-sized installations with twine, like *Homage to Apollonius* (1988) and *Homage to the Volute of the Ionic Capital* (1981) ([Figure 17](#)). The second was firstly installed in Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam in 1981, which was similar in principle to an earlier smaller metal sculpture titled *Projection in Space* (1966) ([Figure 13](#)). This is an example of a scale-free system, one of the ten characteristics of "the computational aesthetic" put forward by M. Beatrice Fazi and Matthew Fuller in the similarly titled essay (Fazi and Fuller, 2016, pp.291–292).<sup>16</sup> This characteristic refers to the computational integration of multiple scales with technological means. In Xagoraris' case, whose work is made known from the actual objects produced through computational processes, this element becomes even more apparent when the code that produced those objects became re-activated, with size being just one more parameter.

As noticed in Christiane Paul's introduction to *A Companion to Digital Art*, there is a historical lineage from kinetic art and light installations to computer art (Paul, 2016, p.6), often related to László Moholy-Nagy's idea of the virtual volume, i.e. of sculpture as a relation between moving volume relations (Moholy-Nagy, 1947, p.237). What was made strikingly apparent from this experimental process and the reactivation of the temporal element, was the relation of Xagoraris' plotted drawings with his earlier kinetic work as well as with the subsequently realised laser projections. In all three media used by Xagoraris, the resulting work is an interplay between moving point, moving surface and moving volume.

Loosely based on a 'hands-on media history' methodology, but also more traditional artwork conservation ethics dictating an approximation of the original processes, through this

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<sup>16</sup> In the essay titled 'Computational Aesthetics', M. Beatrice Fazi and Matthew Fuller describe ten characteristics that affect the reality of computation: Abstraction and concreteness, universality, discreteness, axiomatics, numbers, limits, speed, scale, logical equivalence and memory. Scale is described in the following way: "Systems designed to navigate and conjoin multiple scales, such as the golden mean or Corbusier's *Modulor* (1954), exist within numerous aesthetic forms as a means of arranging elements or of making and assisting a judgment about these forms' efficacy or beauty. Computing, however, allows for these systems of judgment and composition to be integrated into the technology in which these systems themselves are realized" (Fazi and Fuller, 2016, pp.291-292).

experimental process, one can potentially reproduce a digital object as Pantelis Xagoraris would have done in the 1970s. Re-writing the code or emulating the operating system and hardware of works from the recent history of new media is a practice that has developed significantly during the last decade, with initiatives such as *Rhizome Artbase* (Rhizome, 2021) allowing for hundreds of websites and digital artworks to be viewed as originally intended. However, this solution and its tools concerned digital works that were born digital. Extending similar methods to reproduce and recreate the computational process of works that were conceived, planned and executed digitally but were materialised due to intent, or technological and other limitations in traditional media, can have surprising results in a current reconsideration of those works. In the case of Xagoraris, this is the re-introduction of the temporal element and the issue of scale.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

Pantelis Xagoraris was possibly the most important and dedicated scholar of the relation between art, science and technology in postwar Greece as proven by his artworks, his writings and his research in the artistic application of mathematics. Xagoraris held a critical but also positive view of technological mediation in art and understood that the computer enhanced the speed and complexity of calculations that were part of artistic creation since antiquity. During the same period, the only other systematic artistic investigation of technology was carried out by the sculptor Theodoros who regarded sculpture as technology and communication, juxtaposing it with the new emerging media of mass communication.

# Chapter 4: Theodoros and post-medium sculpture

## 4.1 Introduction

Theodoros, also known as Theodoros Papadimitriou or Theodoros, sculptor is a unique case of an artist who worked with traditional sculptural media as well as new emerging mass media from the 1950s to 2018. Born in 1931 in the rural Greek town of Agrinio he studied in the Athens School of Fine Arts from 1952 to 1958 before leaving for Paris to study in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts under a state scholarship. He returned to Athens during the colonels' junta, while in 1973 he managed to travel and work briefly in the U.S.A. with the support of a Ford Foundation fellowship. During his early career and while still in Paris, Theodoros produced *Gates* (1961–1962) and *Delphics* (1962–1969), two series of welded metal works as the outcome of his interest in sculpture for public space. During this period, Theodoros also produced sculptures consisting of multiple modular elements attached together with flexible steel wire, which could be positioned and arranged in several ways and which were called *Sculpture for Public Participation* (Figures 30 and 31).

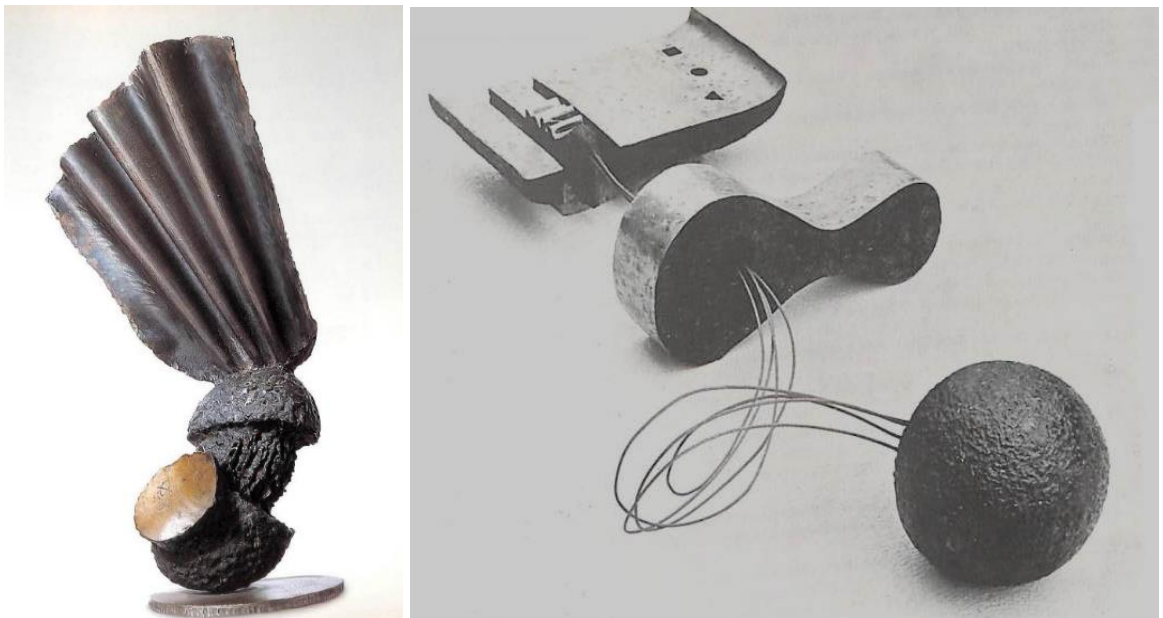


Figure 30. Theodoros, sculptor (1964) *Aris*, from the *Delphics* series [Iron, 70 x 29 cm] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, Inv. No. 1344/21

Figure 31. Theodoros, sculptor (1967-1969) *Compulsory Course*, from the series *Sculpture for Public Participation* [Iron, variable dimensions] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, Inv. No. 1297/21.

The artist himself describes this period in the following words:

My formal studies both in Greece and in Paris followed the traditional sculptural discipline of reproducing figuratively the form of a model. We used clay, plaster and stone (e.g. marble). Neither institution encouraged experimentation, and in fact, some of my teachers –especially in Paris– were actively against modernism. But I gradually started breaking away from this mould, introducing elements of abstraction and an emphasis on overall composition in my works. During this period, I also participated in a series of seminars on architecture and urban planning at the Beaux-Arts. These impacted deeply on my work and initiated my long-lasting concern with sculpture in public spaces. The first manifestation of this direction in my work was in *Gates* (1961–62), a series of studies for urban landmarks for highway intersections, city gates, or public squares [...] (Theodoros, Papadimitriou and Durden, 2018, p.113).

Theodoros was awarded the Prix Rodin at the Biennale de Paris in 1965 and at that time his career in Paris seemed promising. In an oral history interview to the author, he declared how he intended to continue residing and working in Paris, but his life was interrupted by a regulation requiring all recipients of state scholarships to either return to Greece or repay the funding sum. As a result, he unwillingly chose to return to Athens for the sake of his family (Schizakis, 2005). His work and thought are greatly affected by this forced return but also from experiencing life in a militarised country.

During this transition, Theodoros experienced the way in which the extreme political power of the army violently transformed Greece in a way that many aspects and failures of Western societies were vehemently accentuated. This led him to the decision that sculpture cannot be as effective if it remained unchanged. The societal effects of mass media and mass commercial culture firstly appeared during the 1970s in Greece, as an effect of the country's improving financial condition (Papadopoulou, 2005, p.26), and were immediately criticised in the art of the era, especially by the painters of the group New Greek Realists.<sup>17</sup> Theodoros'

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<sup>17</sup> Yannis Valavanidis, Cleopatra Dinga, Kyriakos Katzourakis, Chronis Botsoglou and Jannis Psychopaidis formed the group New Greek Realists in 1971, published a joint statement in the annual journal *Chroniko* and exhibited together in Goethe-Institut Athen in 1972. This group of painters shared a common ideological and stylistic attitude, aiming at criticising reality through painting images sourced from mass media (Papadopoulou, 2005, p.31).

artistic practice changed radically towards the eradication of traditional sculptural media while he provokingly started calling himself “Theodoros, sculptor”.<sup>18</sup> This change happened during 1967–1968 and Theodoros calls it “rift”<sup>19</sup> as it was the moment for which he wrote: “The historical events of 1967/1968 disclosed the futility of my struggle for a new vision of public sculpture, as the arts had been completely assimilated by the ‘society of the spectacle [...]’” [my translation] (Theodoros and Lampropoulos, 2012, p.37). Theodoros dedicated many of his subsequent texts to explain the reasons that led him to this decision but also for reconciling his early work with his later practice. Years later, Theodoros would speak about several steps in a predetermined trajectory of an investigation that aimed to bring sculpture into dialogue with other media. Those steps were parts of a series of works titled *Manipulations* (1973-1982). The works in the series utilised media and practices often seen as extraneous to sculpture, like performance, photography, typography and video, but which were conceptually reconciled with Theodoros’ sculptural aims. Theodoros also appropriated older works through photographs and film, placing them in a newer context, such as in the case of the broadcast film *Tele-manipulation* (1976). This work, which alluded to the format of an artists’ documentary, activated older sculptural works through its cinematography and also contained several re-performances of recent works critically remade for the medium of television. This is only an early example of how Theodoros investigated ways in which sculpture could critically engage with mass communication media, in a fashion similar to what Rosalind Krauss describes as the “post-medium” condition where newer media are used to “re-invent” or “re-articulate” traditional media (Krauss, 2000, pp.53–56).

This chapter investigates the historical framework of this rift and how it resulted in the *Manipulations* series. The argument is based on factual information on the contents and aims of each work in the *Manipulation* series, some of which have not been published and evaluated before, as well as on information provided by the artist himself, through his published and unpublished texts and interviews (one of which was specifically made for this research). Through this diverse material, I attempt to make clear how, by using words and

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<sup>18</sup> Theodoros explains this in his own words: “But it was in Paris around 1960 when I made the decision to identify as a sculptor rather than an artist. I wanted to differentiate my approach and my work from the avalanche of modern movements that sprang up in the art scene at the time, all of which used aesthetic theories in order to find a place in the art market, and turned art into a spectacle for consumption. So, I decided to label myself as a sculptor, ironically posing as a survivor of the prehistoric ‘homo faber’” (Theodoros, Papadimitriou and Durden, 2018, p.110).

<sup>19</sup> In Greek, Theodoros uses the word “tomí”, meaning incision, cut or rift.

works, Theodoros aimed to revitalise sculptural practices by focussing on sculpture's communicative potential. The main objective of this chapter is to outline the corresponding points between sculpture and the new audio-visual mass media drawn by the artist in light of his politically driven thoughts and actions which resulted in works that made subversive use of mass media such as radio and television.

During this research, I was in contact with Theodoros for the provision of unpublished material as well as for guidance. A few months before he passed away, I had the privilege of discussing an early draft of this chapter with him, for consistency and fact-checking. A comment that repeatedly appeared throughout the text was the suggestion on the use of the word "public" instead of "viewers" or "audience". Theodoros had reconceptualised the museum and gallery space as an extension of public space, where sculpture can still function on the same level of communication as public sculpture used to do in the past. He also used to state that all his sculptures are scaled versions of public sculptures. I now consider this insistence on his part as revelatory regarding his dedication to unpreoccupied communication with the public.

#### **4.2 The "rift", the matraque-phallus and the dialectical relation to the public**

An early acknowledgement of the aforementioned "rift" in Theodoros' work is in his 1975 retrospective exhibition at the Institute Francais de Thessalonique, titled *Confronted Retrospectives 1963–67 & 1968–74*. In this exhibition, even the catalogue layout echoes a rupture, consisting of two parts assembled in an inverted position. Upon reaching the middle of the catalogue, a reader would have to turn the book upside down and start reading again from the back cover towards the middle. The part of the book including the work of 1963–1967 included metal sculptures intended for public space, such as the aforementioned *Gates* and *Delphics*. In a text published in 2012 in *Stígmata Porías: Anazítseis stin Téchni kai tin Paidía* [Journey Marks: Investigation on Art and Education] Theodoros described this part as the "good side" whereas the part including the work of 1968–1974, as the "wrong side" dedicated to works that have "as their main aim the dialectic communication with the public" (Theodoros and Lampropoulos, 2012, p.37).

Neither the "rift" nor the idea of "dialectic communication with the public" appear suddenly at the time of the sculptor's return to Greece in 1968. In a 2005 exhibition catalogue,

Theodoros located this “rift” a few years earlier, linking it to the 1965 police murder of the student’s movement leading figure Sotiris Petroulas (Theodoros, 2005, p.72). The violent suppression of a demonstration leading to murder and its cover-up by the police acted as a political wake-up call expressed through Theodoros’ work titled *Midnight Alarm* (1965) (Figure 32).



Figure 32. Theodoros, sculptor (1965) *Midnight Alarm* [Bronze, marble, wood, 150 x 93 x 30 cm]  
Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, Inv. No. 1364/21



*Midnight Alarm* consists of an abstract bust ending in a curved metal plate. The bust lies on top of a pedestal with a niche containing a truncheon. The public decoding the relation between the metal plate and the truncheon would face a dilemma of either using the elements of the sculpture, i.e. pick up the truncheon and hit the gong-like face, or conform to a “do not touch” exhibition condition. By choosing to hit the sculpture with the truncheon, a viewer will choose to obey or disobey a set of rules governing exhibitions but also, probably unknowingly, mimic police violence, as in the suppressed demonstration of 21 of July 1965 when Sotiris Petroulas was murdered. In addition, unknowingly, the viewer will mimic the creative gesture of a sculptor giving shape to the sculptural material. This series of choices confronting the viewer as in the example of *Midnight Alarm* is what Theodoros saw as part of the dialectic communication of the sculptor with the public.

Apart from being a sculptural work provoking audience interaction, *Midnight Alarm* was also the work in which the symbol of the “matraque-phallus” made its first appearance. The matraque-phallus is a symbol whose shape combines the phallus, the police truncheon (“matraque” in French) and the sculptor’s hammer (“matrakás” in Greek) and which Theodoros devised, developed and used in many occasions and in many forms as a way of addressing the intertwining of sexual, political and artistic power within the work of a male sculptor living and working within current social conditions. In his own words:

The Homo-faber invented the matraque, the wooden club that allowed him to use physical force and skill in order to shape his physical and human environment for survival. In my work, the matraque-phallus has connotations of both destruction and creation. I use it as a sculptural code inviting the public to be active by participating in my work. I also see it as a musical clef, a symbol that sets the tone for my art. (Theodoros, Papadimitriou and Durden, 2018, p.119)

Although Theodoros continues to have as his main aim the “dialectical communication with the public” through his work, a major shift from 1968 and on is his belief that the sculptor should reach for additional means of communication and not limit himself to his hands and the sculptural material. In a TV broadcast, he explained:

[...] in the period 1963–1967 I believed that the sculptor could be silent, that he didn’t have to speak with words about his work, that his hands spoke and by that I mean the work of his hands. I believed that his hands were adequate in

explaining his work, his mind, his feelings. I was mistaken. Because the sculptor, as a primary producer, is trapped in the system of art consumption, and by that I mean the system of intermediaries who promote art, either critics that write theory about art, or others, salesmen, who sell art and bestow it with monetary value. This causes a deep alteration to the function of the hands as these were up until now in the history of mankind. [...] Old dreams collapsed. Sculpture ceased to retain meaning in the public space. It's time for the "situations". The "manipulations". In this period of my work the hand of the sculptor stopped being the tool constructing objects-works of art and assumed another function. The function of immediate intervention and action. During this period, the medium becomes oral word, the printed page, theatre even, and, like this very moment, TV. Even this is a sculptural medium. A Manipulation [my translation] (Theodoros, 1976, pp.19–30).

Through these paradigms of works as well as through the concept of the rift, the symbol of the matraque-phallus and the objective of a dialectical sculpture, Theodoros embarked on an artistic quest to transform sculpture. In his narrative, he embodies the persona of a sculptor who sacrificed his sculptural virtuosity for reaching a greater audience and for reconstituting the artist as a public figure with an essential contribution to public discourse.

### **4.3 The political backdrop**

The concept of manipulation, the idea of the rift, and the symbolism of the matraque-phallus are essential for understanding the artistic intent in the works of Theodoros, as well as perceiving his oeuvre as one of uninterrupted artistic evolution regardless of the apparent differentiation in medium and practice. This was not clear during the first formative years up to 1975, since the same political situation that generated this rift would not allow for a straightforward reading of its politically dissident subtext.

Eleni Vakalo noted the following regarding the stance of Greek artists during the colonels' junta:

One would think that with the dictatorship and the silence that followed from the side of the artists as a first immediate reaction in its imposition, the halting of the [artistic] progress would be unavoidable. Nevertheless, when the artists

decide to break the silence in order to carry a message through their art, the significating aspect of art, its effectiveness as a value [...] become for us reality and practice. [...] Its utilisation was then identified with the political meaning endowed (to artistic practices) not only by the artists but by the audience as well [my translation] (Vakalo, 1985, p.83).

In the catalogue of a posthumous retrospective exhibition of Vlassis Caniaris, Bia Papadopoulou mentions the importance of the first Vlassis Caniaris exhibition after the Colonels overtook democracy in relation to the 2005 exhibition *The Years of Defiance: The Art of the '70s in Greece*:

The solo exhibition of Caniaris at the New Gallery of Athens in 1969 was used as the chronological starting point for *The Years of Defiance: The Art of the '70s in Greece* because it was a milestone in contemporary Greek art. That particular show marked the return of Greek artists to exhibiting—after a two-year break in protest against the dictatorship—with works that introduced new codes of encrypted visual communication and cultivated a conspiratorial relationship with the viewer (Marinos and Papadopoulou, 2016, p.120).

Nea Gallery was one of the first spaces that started operating during the colonels' junta, in January 1969, initiating its artistic programme with a group show of Costas Tsoclis, Pavlos, Vlassis Caniaris, Christos Karras, Yannis Gaitis and Theodoros (Marinos et al 2005, p.247), all of whom had already distinguished careers in Paris and Rome. The Caniaris solo exhibition, held in May 1969, is often considered as the show recommencing artistic activity in Greece, was realised a few months after Theodoros exhibited in the same space. At that time, exhibiting was not a decision to be taken lightly, as the general attitude of artistic circles was to refrain from any form of cultural activity as a means of a passive protest against the colonels' junta. However, in February 1969, Theodoros realised a large retrospective, split between the spaces of Nea Gallery and the Hellenic American Union.

In an oral history interview to the author, Theodoros explained the reasons behind his decision to exhibit and describes the politically charged atmosphere:

This [exhibition] happened during the junta. It happened after we took the decision of rekindling [activity]. This was the time of the exhibition strike. Among this group of colleagues, we thought that this refusal to exhibit helped the junta and weakened us. Artists were just whining, living parasitically [...] I worked a lot, but there was inactivity. Only talk talk talk, a left-winged dialectic without any action. So, we said we should take the initiative. I had the firm belief, as mentioned in many of my texts, that real art is a cultural force opposing any form of dictatorship. Real art, not an art pretending to be [political]. Creativity strips down any kind of authority. That was my firm belief, so I was the first to realise an exhibition. The others out of fear put me first, and what they were afraid of happened to me. [...] So, I was accused of breaking the exhibition strike. It was only a minority of artists that believed the exhibition strike should end. With our group of colleagues we did a few exhibitions and then I went along my own way. I realised that this gallery [where I exhibited] was also sitting on false foundations [my translation] (Schizakis, 2005).

Disappointed from the treatment by his peers, Theodoros ceased collaboration with Nea Gallery and began collaborating with the Goethe-Institut Athen and its Contemporary Art Workshop, which was a major artistic hub in Athens during the colonels' junta up to 1973. Its director, Johannes Weissert, as a representative of a foreign institution, could retain some safe distance from the colonels' control and managed to create what Lena Kokkini would describe as a "cultural oasis" within the dictatorship. Following a semi-secret lecture by Günter Grass, as well as the press interview of the authors Heinrich Boll and Mauricio Kagel, the colonels exercised their influence to bring the Institut's cultural programme to a halt and Weissert was eventually transferred to Goethe-Institut in London in 1973 (Kokkini, 2005, p.223). It was in 1970, within the protective environment of Goethe, that Theodoros realised a solo exhibition with the provoking title *Sculpture for Public Participation – Participation Prohibited*. In this exhibition, Theodoros presented for the first time his new body of work made after the "rift".

An example of such work, made after the "rift" and presented in Goethe, was *Test No III* (1970), an installation consisting of a baseball bat-sized matraque-phallus placed in front of three helmets one of which was already crushed ([Figure 33](#)).



Figure 33. Theodoros, sculptor (1970) *Test No III* [Iron, wood, felt, variable dimensions] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Inv. No. 1395/21

The viewer was confronted with a half-finished violent act and the tools of its completion. Posters of Theodoros as a sculptor and as sculpture would include contradicting instructions for use: “Sculpture for Public Participation – Participation Prohibited”. The posters would also include other questions: “Is art something more than a self-complacent act? How many artworks equal a tank?” Theodoros used printed word and image alongside sculpture in order

to create a dialectic space in an exhibition seen as a single installation. Strategic ambiguity and the dynamism of the relation between the objects and the works allows for multiple readings referencing different ideological standpoints and positions of power. Is the restriction of action (participation prohibited) a reference to the colonels' junta or to the institutional exhibition viewing protocol? Is the installation a call to violent anti-military action by suggesting bats crushing helmets or is it an anti-art gesture, investigating the commercial potential of a destroyed work of art? Is it a comment on the relation between art and military power? Is the question "how many works of art equal a tank?" only in reference to art's monetary value or is there an underlying message that regards art's oppressive potential? Indicative of the hostile nationalist political environment was the scathing critiques from press aligned to the regime such as an article by the publication *Tetarti Augustou* [4th of August] targeting, as art historian Irene Gerogianni points out, the artist ("a person studying in France"), the hosting institution ("who pays for this?") and the audience ("the whole masochistic intelligentsia") (Gerogianni, 2019, p.104; 4i Avgouóstou, 1970).

Following the fall of the colonels' junta, and in order to avoid the wave of populist political didacticism that swept across the public sphere in Greece, Theodoros avoided relating publicly his works and actions to specific political events. For example, *Midnight Alarm* (1965), which was exhibited in this first retrospective in Nea Gallery and Hellenic American Union, would not be related to the police murder of Sotiris Petroulas until 1988. In the catalogue of the 2005 exhibition *Replace – Research II*, Theodoros mentions the story of *Midnight Alarm*: "it was realised in summer 1965, as an 'Elegy for Sotiris Petroulas'. This dedication was never revealed until 1988. This was done in order to avoid releasing my work in the art market with an aura of sentimentality that often leads to political kitsch" [my translation] (Theodoros, 2005, p.72). With the characterisation "political kitsch", Theodoros refers to an existing tendency, during the first years of the transition to democracy, that favoured figurative art with "resistance" themes, such as against the dictatorship, the German occupation, or other people's struggles, as described by art historian Martha Christofoglou (Christofoglou, 2003, p.284).

As it can be deciphered from the above, the political conditions created tensions between the artists but also forged links between artists and a new public, which was described by cultural studies scholar Myrsini Zorba as "an underground progressive democratic sub-culture" (Zorba, 2009, p.249). As Christofoglou argues, whereas for the emerging artistic tendencies

during this era the public in Europe and America discovered Dadaist references, audience in Greece perceived similar gestures as disguised protest (Christofoglou, 1995, p.45). Censorship, as well as the fear of censorship (or worse), affected the reading of the history of this period for years to come, and still does, as stories, works and documents emerged at a later date if made known at all. What is clear is that art produced and exhibited before the colonels' junta with art produced and exhibited after the artist strike ended was radically different in form and content, and that it was also perceived differently by an entirely different public with new expectations from art and artists. In this light, the "rift" of Theodoros' personal artistic narrative could be seen as an accentuated manifestation of this difference.

#### **4.4 Manipulations. Sculpture confronting the spectacle**

In 1973, during a trip to the U.S.A. sponsored by a Ford Foundation fellowship, Theodoros started the decade long series of *Manipulations*, through which he juxtaposed sculpture with other media, such as television and video, and which became the focal point of his media subversive practice. The term "manipulation" appeared in Theodoros' work around 1973, starting with *Manipulation I – For a Spectator Only* (1973), a vinyl LP record produced in New York and presented during the International Design Conference in Aspen the same year. Its two sides contained the poetic recitation of three axioms by Theodoros, in English and Greek:

##### Axiom I

I am a sculptor. This is my social condition, this is my marketing label too  
I hope you see that I have a sculptural voice—a voice that you can even touch  
Everything I do is sculpture.

##### Axiom II

They say: sculpture occupies the space  
I say: my voice occupies this space now  
They say: sculpture is a visual thing  
I say: look at the record, look at the record's cover, look  
They say: sculpture belongs to the tactile reality too  
I say: you have touched the record, haven't you?

Also I say: you can take my matraque-phallus in your hand and then feel free to give your own extension, your own expression.

Attention! Freedom is something that you must buy in one or another way.

If you buy this sculpture, then you may destroy it if you like.

Axiom III

We all know that our need for glory or success is nothing else than a need for survival, a need for perpetuation, a need for duration

We all know that the best way to achieve that is to be under a preservation—perpetuation system that guarantees duration etc.

For that purpose, please take this sculpture and place it in a well—climatised museum, under a plexiglas protective structure

Place on it the title

Don't forget my name

Thank you

Culture is safe

Put your money in art works

(Theodoros, 1973)

Between every axiom, Theodoros would repeat the words “fast and effective” with increasing speed until it could be heard as “fast and defective” as also noted by the artist himself in a printed version of these verses (Theodoros, 1984, p.57). Likewise, on the first (or last) page of the *Confronted Retrospectives 1963–67 & 1968–74* catalogue Theodoros wrote:

Manipulation (Rift)

April 1967–May 1968: an axis on which the pages of this catalogue are reversed and split into two periods of my work—which I confront and juxtapose here not only from the right side but also reversed—as you look at these pages

Theodoros 30.1.75 [my translation] (Theodoros, 1975).

In both those works from the *Manipulations* series, Theodoros manipulates the viewer into a series of actions in a similar way as in *Midnight Alarm* (1965) where the inclusion of a



truncheon and a metal plate in the same sculpture prompts the viewer towards a predefined action. However, unlike *Midnight Alarm*, in these later works, the sculptor used media not traditionally viewed as sculptural. In the case of the vinyl record, the viewer/listener has to take the disk out of the sleeve, place it in a record player and play it. He or she will be hearing a poetic justification of a vinyl record as sculpture in terms of its objecthood, its sonic content, its communicative potential and its cultural and financial value. Similarly, the catalogue, by its design and by the upturned pages and letters, forces the viewer to acknowledge it as an object. Although usually a book is perceived as a sequence of two-dimensional pages, in the case of the *Confronted Retrospectives 1963–67 & 1968–74* catalogue, one is able to read and see all its content, by turning it around on its axis, i.e. by treating the book as a three-dimensional object. As Theodoros himself explained in *Oi Dimiourgoí* [The Creators], oral and printed word can become a sculptural medium (Theodoros, 1976).

Theodoros spent the largest part of the 1960s in Paris, experiencing the effects of the domination of mass media and mass culture as well as the intensifying criticism against their effect on society. He was also following and participating in the dialogue around art and politics up to the point that he left Paris for Athens, just after the events of May 1968 and he held a critical viewpoint summarised in an interview with the following words:

[...] there is no doubt that my work emerged out of a dialogue with my surroundings. However, my approach was different in that I was not interested in reproducing the modern imagery that dominated the art world, and that sought commercial success via theoretical justification. I wanted to invite the public to engage with the diachronic dimensions of sculpture and use it as an instrument of sensory and—more implicitly—social and political awakening.

(Theodoros, Papadimitriou and Durden, 2018, p.115)

Although there is no direct connection with the Situationist group or their ideas, it is evident from his texts and even from the work titles (such as *Situations* and *Anti-spectacular*) that Theodoros had been investigating similar concepts and that through his work he responded to the impasses of art and communication that Guy Debord outlined in *The Society of The Spectacle*:

As soon as art which constituted that former common language of social inaction establishes itself as independent in the modern sense, emerging from its first, religious universe to become the individual production of separate works, it becomes subject, as one instance among others, to the movement governing the history of the whole of culture as a separated realm. Art's declaration of independence is thus the beginning of the end of art.

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The fact that the language of real communication has been lost is what the modern movement of art's decay, and ultimately of its formal annihilation, expresses positively. What it expresses negatively is that a new common language has yet to be found not, this time, in the form of unilaterally arrived at conclusions like those which, from the viewpoint of historical art, always came on the scene too late, speaking to others of what had been experienced without any real dialogue, and accepting this shortfall of life as inevitable but rather in a praxis embodying both an unmediated activity and a language commensurate with it (Debord, 1967, p.55).

From this brief excerpt from *The Society of The Spectacle*, we can draw parallels with Theodoros' views on communication through action, as well as with the vision of a dialectical art and even the perils of art's independence. However, Theodoros' views are strongly affected by the observable social and intellectual decay caused by the colonels' junta, its militaristic spectacle and its new medium of dispersion, which was television. It is in the context of this era's television that Theodoros realised the exhibition *Sculpture '74 – Manipulations* in 1974 ([Figure 34](#)). *Sculpture '74 – Manipulations*, also titled *Anti-Spectacular*, was Theodoros' first major exhibition in the Desmos Art Gallery. The centrepiece of the exhibition was an installation of five frames covered with semi-transparent tulle called *Anti-Spectacular Screens* (1974), but also the questionnaire *Manipulation XI – Public Activation Test* (1974). With both works, as almost with all of the works in the *Manipulations* series, Theodoros tried to overcome the passivity of the public and compel viewers into actively taking a stance. By that time Theodoros had already been creating and exhibiting works that investigated the conditions of exhibiting, like *Sculpture for Public Participation – Participation Prohibited* in Goethe-Institut in 1970. The questionnaire, with its choice of specific or open-ended questions about art, critics, artists, audience and its freedom, would also fall in this category. Its function as a work of art cannot be understood

in the sense of aesthetic appreciation, but mostly as institutional critique or even as the result of an impulse to directly communicate with the audience.



Figure 34. Theodoros, sculptor (1974) *Anti-Spectacular Screens* [Wood, tulle, charcoal, variable dimensions] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, Inventory No. 579/07 (Installation photograph from the 2017 exhibition *ANTIDORON- The EMST Collection*, realised in the context of documenta14 in Museum Fridericianum).

Television broadcasting in Greece had only started in 1966, just over a year before the building of the National Radio Foundation (EIR) was stormed by the Greek army special forces in a series of attacks planned by the Colonels. For the next seven years, national television fell under the Ministry of Defence and everything that was being recorded or written was scrutinised by the censors. It was during the colonels' junta that television developed in Greece, both in terms of infrastructure and programming, eventually becoming a mass medium with mass reception. With the colonels' junta appreciating its propaganda potential, television programming was strictly presenting an agenda of religion, nationalism and the patriarchal family. Even soap operas had the aim of presenting military figures in a positive light, by presenting them as heroic, incorruptible and in positions of power (Valoukos, 2008 p.53). During this period television presents an unreal unified worldview with no discord in opinions. It is this media environment, which accentuated during the colonels' junta but is not unique to it, that Theodoros' expanded view of sculpture as bi-directional communication is responding to. As expressed in the 1972 text of the work *Instead of a Sculpture*, Theodoros was cautious of the established tendency to appreciate art through its reproduction, clearly stating that works which are "photogenic" are preferred by the media, contributing to a general tendency of culture towards two-dimensionality through a media bias. (Theodoros, 1984, p.49) In the same text he differentiated sculpture from the "spectacle" by stating the following:

[...] sculpture does not belong to temporary “spectacles” (such a definition may seem baseless today but it is necessary to differentiate between temporary structures made for festivals, scenery and other ephemeral spectacles from sculpture that was expressed through media that sustain the passing of time). Sculpture came into being to express a specific human need: duration, duration as a physical or a metaphysical extension of man [my translation] (Theodoros, 1984, p.46).

*Anti-Spectacular Screens* (1974) is indeed one of the works that comment on the two-dimensionality through its dual function as a sculpture that is also a wall piece. The messages written on the wall behind the tulle were “Project your vision”, “Beyond and over the frame” and “With love”. A questionnaire also addressed the viewer, demanding a response. Both were part of an attempt to revive sculptural communication. Interestingly, the *Anti-Spectacular Screens* appeared in Theodoros’ broadcast *Tele-manipulation* where he addressed the viewer with the words: “TV viewer! Sculpture cannot be photographed! It can only be touched, like life!” (Theodoros, 1976) (Figures 35 and 36).<sup>20</sup>



Figures 35 and 36. Theodoros, sculptor (1976) *Tele-manipulation* [16mm film, black and white, with sound, duration 53'] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens. Inventory number pending (Film stills from the moment Theodoros is standing in front of *Anti-Spectacular Screens* and addresses the viewer: “TV viewer! Sculpture cannot be photographed-it can only be touched, like life...”).

*Tele-manipulation* is a unique work in Theodoros’ oeuvre that cannot be easily categorised or paired with other works by other artists working in Greece at the time. Its medium is film, but it is also television, as it was intended for broadcast. Video was far from being a standard

<sup>20</sup> *Tele-manipulation* is the title Theodoros used after 1978 for the 1976 TV broadcast *Oi Dimiourgoí* [The Creators], produced by George Emirzas (Theodoros, 1984, p. 103).

for the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation in 1976, the time of the film's making. Like most programmes, *Tele-manipulation* was recorded and edited in 16mm film and then broadcast using telecine equipment. *Tele-manipulation* was aired in two parts, on 1 and 15 December 1976 titled as *Oi Dimiourgoí* [The Creators] in its opening credits, and George Emirzas is credited as its director. In the September-December 1977 issue of *SIMA* the two-part film is presented in detail over 24 pages, including the full storyboard drawn by Theodoros with the corresponding film stills and voiced over text (Kotzamani, 1977, pp.18–40). The title used in the article is *Theodoros-Sculpture 1963–67* and *Theodoros-Sculpture 1970–1974*, with Emirzas credited as the producer.<sup>21</sup> In a note, Theodoros clarifies: “The two films are a diptych, there is an analogy in their structure as well as antithesis. Although these are a ‘documentary’ on my work, their form constitutes an expression similar to the expression of the works presented” (Kotzamani, 1977, p.18). This structure is also a manifestation of the “rift”. The film presents many sculptural works by Theodoros as moving figures, combines footage of his hands working, explains in depth the artist's views on sculpture and communication and includes footage of him swinging a matraque-phallus in the streets of New York, raising it towards the sky among the twin towers of the World Trade Center. Apart from including existing documentation of past performances, the film incorporates a re-enactment of the performance realised in the Desmos Art Gallery on the 17th of February 1973 titled *Sculpture '73 = Touch + A Little Taste*, in which he provokingly consumed and shared with members of the audience a chocolate matraque-phallus after pronouncing the statement: “When we have to sell and consume—eat all of our values, all of our symbols, words and images and more, allow me to eat here in front of you one of my works. Besides, we can communicate through the same taste: bitter” (Theodoros, 1984, p.54). However, this is not merely a televised performance as its aim is not limited to communicating through television, but also to highlight the limits of this communication as opposed to an actual performance where taste and touch could be utilised by the present viewers. The film also includes another reenactment, based on the two undocumented performances that were realised the same year in Experimental Theatre – 28 Acadimias Street, titled *Two Sculptural One-Acts – Elegy for Homo Faber* (1976). Theodoros appears welding the last of four metal cubes. In the complete performance that was realised in front of a live audience, Theodoros sealed elements that related to the performance itself inside the metal cubes (a guinea pig

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<sup>21</sup> During an inventory record of his bequest to the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, apart from the works, tools, materials and catalogues found in his studio, I also found props and hand-drawn title cards used in the film. Apparently, Theodoros had full creative control of the film's content.

that was ritually killed, iron filings from the construction of the boxes, sweat resulting from the sculptor's toil, etc).<sup>22</sup> In the televised version, we can only see the sealing of the last box, while Theodoros explains:

The contradiction: The information carried by the works presented here is not possible to be transferred by photography or language i.e. televised information. The fact that these works are presented from here, through audiovisual means, is in contradiction with the essential aim that defined their existence as art objects. This contradiction is also proof of the impossibility of survival of art outside mass media. This is the end of the *Two Sculptural One-Acts* that were performed last February in Experimental Theatre. [...] Here lies their content, sealed in order to be made into sculpture. FOR ETERNITY, FOR THE MUSEUM. We made use of image and sound. If you were convinced that this could be sculpture, this is another story... [my translation] (Theodoros, 1976, p.40).

Theodoros remained critical of the impossibility of expressing sculptural ideas through television but repeated an attempt to work with those limitations. When invited in 1981 by Beatrice Spiliadis to participate in a Greek contemporary art festival in Amsterdam, Theodoros proposed *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show* (Figure 37). Speaking about this work in an oral history in 2016, he described the written concept of the installation performance as the quintessence of his work (Theodoros, 2016). *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show* consisted of a stage covered by a protective transparent plastic sheet containing thin rectangular elements made of glass and metal. The elements were marked as fragile and non-fragile accordingly. Theodoros entered the installation and started playing music by hitting the elements with a matraque-phallus. Naturally, the glass elements started to shatter. Although the performance was recorded on video, Theodoros did not initially acknowledge the existence of the video record of the first performance, mentioning that although he had arranged the recording, this was not realised (Theodoros, 2016).

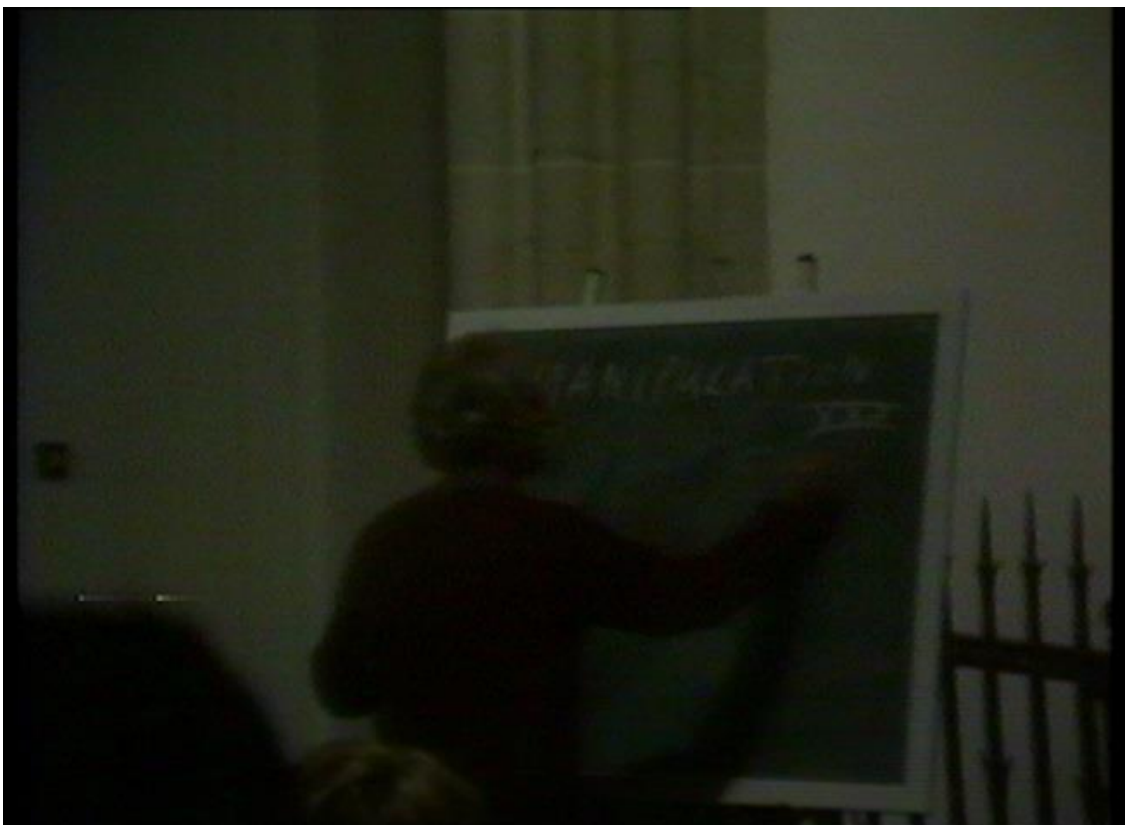
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<sup>22</sup> As Theodoros describes the event in his own words: “In *Anti-Spectacular Theater: Elegies of Homo Faber* (first presented in Aspen, in 1973, and then at the Experimental Theater in Athens, 1976) I performed two sculptural one-act plays on a theatrical stage. In the second of these, *Manipulation II: On the Limits of Tolerance* (1973), I pushed both my own and the audience's boundaries with a performance that culminated in the ritualised sacrifice of a laboratory mouse, which was then sealed for ‘eternity’ inside a metallic cube intended for the museum. In this way, I explored the tension between destruction and creation that is integral to my work” (Theodoros, Papadimitriou and Durden, 2018, p.111).



Figure 37. Theodoros, sculptor (1981) *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show* [Installation-performance, variable dimensions] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens. Inv. No. 1318/21 (Installation photo from the Greek Art Festival, Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam).

Nevertheless, a U-matic tape containing a record of this performance surfaced during the course of this research. This was digitised and seen possibly for the second time. The performance started with a lecture in which Theodoros pointed out words on a blackboard. It is obvious from the sound quality, the dark and blurry image and the silhouettes of spectators moving in front of the camera that the record could not be used as intended. The amateurish quality of the recording justifies Theodoros' refusal to use it at the time, but also the physical state of the tape, which even required a change of its plastic casing in order to be used for the digitisation, explains the reasons for not being digitised earlier ([Figure 38 and 39](#)). Theodoros was determined to complete this work as it was the last step in the series of *Manipulations* and the video recording was an essential element in a work exemplifying how performance and sculpture are feeding other media.



Figures 38 and 39. Theodoros, sculptor (1981) *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show* [Installation-performance, variable dimensions] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Inv. No. 1318/21. (Videostills from the first and never used video recording of the performance at the Greek Art Festival, Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam).



As he describes in his own words, this work was:

[...] the last step in the path I had outlined from 1970 onwards, because I had a plan. Not in exact detail. But as a strategic plan. I knew where I was going from medium to medium, from word, television, cinema, printed page etc. [...] so this (the work's) dialectic is the dramatisation of the destruction of tactile civilisation in favour of what we live today. It may appear far-fetched, but allow me to say that it is like the destruction of the monuments and the infrastructure and the natural environment in Syria which feeds a power that exists through the spectacle of this destruction... it is an effect of the same process that I carry out in this work [...] [my translation] (Theodoros, 2016).<sup>23</sup>

In 1982, in the context of *EUROPALIA – Grèce Art d'Aujourd'hui 2X10* at the Palais Royal des Beaux-Arts in Brussels Theodoros recreated the installation and performance as *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show (Variation B')* (1982) for which he wrote:

*Manipulation XXX* is an installation-performance, *One-Man Sculptural-Musical (?) Show*, in the *Antispectacular Manipulation* series. It consists of a tactile installation structured around the variables of FRAGILE-NON-FRAGILE of the used materials in relation to the power of each strike which produces the musical range of the performance. Action, transcending the sculptural reality through its ritualistic sacrifice, is rising through the dominant myth (fiction) of the audiovisual spectacle—the Olympus of mass media!

The sacrifice of the tactile aesthetic exceeds the limits of traditional sculpture [...] and then the magnetic tape becomes the material vector of this sculptural work which conserves the EPHEMERAL of life within the ETERNAL of the rotating loop...VIDEO [my translation] (Theodoros, 1984, p.129).

The video record of this performance starts with the same statement being read by the artist in French. Following this statement, the video contains images of other wall texts as well as

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<sup>23</sup> Theodoros is referring to the notorious destruction of cultural artefacts by ISIL and especially the blasting of Palmyra during May 2015-March 2016.

close-ups of the sculptures presented on the flanks of the stage. Those glass sculptures contained (and still contain) small envelopes wedged between two sheets of glass with messages to the owner who dares to break the (purchased) sculpture. Following is the whole performance, in which Theodoros starts playing music by softly hitting the glass and metal sheets, while at some point he starts wearing protective clothing and a fencing mask. At this moment two assistants draw two thick transparent sheets of plastic over the stage while Theodoros starts smashing the glass elements of the installation. The performance ends with Theodoros grabbing a baseball-bat-sized matraque-phallus and hitting the central metal “non-fragile” element like a gong. The final image in the video is a TV monitor appearing on the performance stage replaying the events that were documented on the earlier parts of the tape (Figures 40–41). In this way, the document of the performance contains its own repetition: «the ETERNAL of the rotating loop...VIDEO».<sup>24</sup>

His aim was clearly stated in his last interview with Mark Durden and Lydia Papadimitriou:

My work in the 1970s and early 1980s (the *Manipulations* series) brought sculpture into dialogue—or even into a clash—with media such as television, theatre, recorded sound (vinyl), text or music. Its aim was to explore the extent to which the public could relate to the work through fundamental properties of materials—durability, touch, taste, sound—and perceive it as something more than images (Theodoros, Papadimitriou and Durden, 2018, pp.110–111).

On another point in the same interview he elaborates:

[...] *Manipulations* emerged from the sense that democracy was deeply undermined both by the political conditions (in Greece and elsewhere) and by the domination of the technologically reproduced audio-visual regime, which changed perceptions of time and space. I therefore created these confrontational works that placed sculpture in dialogue and/or conflict with other media, using

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<sup>24</sup> As described by Theodoros in an interview to Mark Durden and Lydia Papadimitriou “*Manipulation XXX* (1982), the culmination of this series, was a one-man sculptural-musical show in which I created music by hitting glass and metallic panes with matraque-phalluses of different sizes and materials. Producing sound and rhythm, the show highlighted the variable durability of materials and ended in the destruction of the glass panes. The performance was recorded, and, after the event, it was shown on a television monitor placed on the stage with the broken glass” (Theodoros, Papadimitriou and Durden, 2018, p.111).

sculpture as a catalyst for arousing social and political consciousness. The junta in Greece was in many ways the trigger for this work, but its aim and target were broader (Theodoros, Papadimitriou and Durden, 2018, p.117).

*Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show* could have been the completion and the end of a path as outlined by the artist since he did not continue the *Manipulations* series after this work. However, this series outlined a mode of working as a sculptor with a wide range of communication media which he continued to investigate and criticise through his activity and status as a public figure.



Figure 40. Theodoros, sculptor (1982) *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show (Variation B')* [Installation-performance, variable dimensions] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Inv. No. 1318/21 (Videostill of the performance as it was realised in *EUROPALIA – Grèce Art d'Aujourd'hui 2X10*, Palais Royal des Beaux-Arts, Brussels).



Figure 41. Theodoros, sculptor (1982) *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show (Variation B')* [Installation-performance, variable dimensions] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Inv. No. 1318/21 (Installation photo of the work as it was realised in *EUROPALIA – Grèce Art d'Aujourd'hui 2X10*, Palais Royal des Beaux-Arts, Brussels in 1982).

#### 4.5 Theodoros and his contribution to the discourse on art and technology

Vilém Flusser's *Does Writing has a Future?* was published in 1987 and it concerned writing in all its aspects and its evolution since its appearance, comparing it to other means of communication. The resulting text defends writing against emerging image, sound and data-based means of communication by identifying what is distinct about it (Flusser, 2003). Like Flusser's text, Theodoros' work developed systematically, from the unconventional sculptural works of the *Manipulation* series to public communication activities such as newspaper columns and radio broadcasts.

From February to October 1980, Theodoros had a regular column in the newspaper *Ta Nea*, which he later published in the form of a book with the title *Énas Glíptis stin Agora* [A Sculptor in the Forum] and in which he criticised and commented on issues regarding visual

arts, mass culture, sports and politics. In the first of those articles Theodoros likened the act of public communication with that of a sculptor who carved words and images in public space:

In the forum, apart from the orators and salesmen there were also sculptors. They would speak with their works, carving on marble or bronze the history of each place and people. [...] Since the author of this text has no longer the objective possibility of speaking and writing in public space with his sculptor's hammer and chisel, he publishes his photo and signs on the forum of this ephemeral communication [my translation] (Theodoros, 1981, p.11).

Along the same lines, during 1988–1989, Theodoros also voiced an artist's concerns over a weekly radio broadcast through the Third National Radio Channel titled *I Alli Sképsi* [The Other Thought]. The broadcast was later published as a book with the title *Énas Glíptis ston Aéra* [A Sculptor on the Airwaves]. Through his short commentaries, taking the form of anecdotal narratives, lectures or broadcast performances, Theodoros investigated themes of public space, urban planning, ecology, art and media, while being critical of the emerging culture of a mass media promoted lifestyle. In every broadcast he partially analysed the act of broadcasting and the act of listening, resulting in a deconstruction of the medium and the superficiality of ephemeral mass communication and entertainment.

Unlike the case of the broadcast *Oi Dimiourgoí* [The Creators] (1976) which was later treated as part of Theodoros oeuvre with the title *Tele-manipulation*, those two later examples of public communication were not regarded as artworks by the artist. However, the structure, form and content of those activities is entirely consistent with the artist's holistic view of art as communication and share a common goal with the works in the *Manipulations* series. Theodoros himself acknowledged this in the foreword to the published version of the radio commentaries (Theodoros, 1989, p.12–13):

Because for the last 25 years I believe that sculpture is a communication medium (this is the way I understand it historically, I study it and practice it), it is consequential to study the relation of Sculpture and the language of other communication media, such as oral speech, written word, static image as in photography and painting or moving image as in cinema and video, as well as

the sound as music or voice.

In this in-between area I realised experimental events titled *MANIPULATIONS* [...] My involvement with radio is not by chance or opportunistic but a continuation of my dialectic process between sculpture and audio-visual media, the media of ‘the society of the spectacle’ and mass reception” [my translation] (Theodoros, 1989, p.12).

These projects also drew parallels between sculpture and each respective mass medium completing the trajectory drawn years earlier as part of his struggle to find a place for sculpture in the new fora of mass media.

Even before the *Manipulations* series, Theodoros used printed word as sculpture, as in the case of his first collaboration with the Desmos Art Gallery during 2–7 May 1972 in a six-day event titled *Instead of a Sculpture*. The “exhibition” contained works which, as stated in the catalogue, were only a “pretext, a course leading up to this print” (Theodoros, 1972, p.14). The text began with Theodoros excusing himself for choosing to communicate through text and not by sculpture before explaining the “difficulty or uselessness of being a sculptor today” (Theodoros, 1984, p.42). The text mainly argues for the relation of sculpture to technology and how the uses of sculpture—which is tactile and tends to be long lasting (or “eternal”)—is affected by a technological turn towards a visual and ephemeral direction. Theodoros also argued that whereas antique cultures displayed sculpture in order to publicise technological advancement even for military purposes, this goal is now achieved by other means. Sculpture was no longer sponsored by states and governments as much as in the past and at the same time, public space was shrinking. Sculpture slowly moves out of public space, being restricted into gallery spaces and their small public. In order to reach a greater audience through media, printed, telecast or projected, a work had to be photogenic. Tactile sculpture was unprivileged unless it willingly served a purpose in the rear-guard of technological development like in the case of Kinetic art “taming technology for human and safe use” (Theodoros, 1984, p.50). Theodoros describes our brave new world:

Maybe in the future, our environment will be illusory, meaning that each one of us will have the choice of selecting a private dream (from a series of commercially available dreams) protecting from an oppressive and unbearable reality. It is understood that in such a case, touch, matter and everything that

delays us or reconnects us in a corporeal way with the world becomes not only useless but also dangerous [my translation] (Theodoros, 1972, p.10).

In the same text Theodoros would describe four degrees of the relation of art with technology:

-Art irrelevant to technological culture, which maintains old standards and mediums, and which begins from the conviction that the needs and relations of art with humanity are unchanging regardless of the changes in the environment and culture. Traditional art.

-Art against technology, in the context of which technology assumes the position of the evil, of a demon in a new mythology.

-Art in favour of technology, where the liberation of mankind seems possible through the acceptance and familiarisation with technology. For expressing itself, this art uses the technological possibilities of its time.

-Art in which technology is accepted as an unquestionable factual condition. In this case, art is investigating human behaviour and the formation of consciousness as a necessary element of human civilisation [my translation] (Theodoros, 1972, p.7).

It is clear that this text was something like a manifesto for Theodoros' work that followed from then on, and that central to his thinking was the question of medium, and especially the relation of the traditional medium of sculpture to the dominating new technological mass media of the time.

In his approach, Theodoros expanded on issues initially described by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* (Debord, 1967) and by Marshall McLuhan in *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (McLuhan, 1962), two texts which are very different but converge on the differentiation of visual from embodied experience and their critical approach on the social and political consequences of mass media. The art of sculpture, as defined by Theodoros, contains qualities like memory and sensorial experience, similar to what McLuhan attributes to "scribal" or "manuscript culture". Both Theodoros' and McLuhan's concepts oppose the quick, ephemeral and distant transmission of visual information characterizing "print culture". Through similar reasoning, Theodoros attempted to highlight the timeless value of sculpture and those characteristics that are not simply leftovers of an ancient technical and technological tradition but preserve the vitality

necessary in a constantly evolving social and artistic field. These were defined as the relation of sculpture to the entirety of the human body and spirit through which the sculptural work, utilizing all of the senses, is able to disturb the illusion of a solely optical perception of the world and restore reality. Theodoros' timeless message is the defence of public artistic discourse with any means available. His conclusive aphorism "if this is called sculpture or not it is of no importance anymore" (Theodoros, 1984, p.51) is the crux of his work: Sculpture is the medium and the scope is true communication.

#### **4.6 Re-evaluating and re-contextualising Theodoros and his work**

Theodoros's work developed systematically in the period 1973–1982 through the *Manipulations* series into investigating the parallels between sculpture and different mass media completing the trajectory drawn years earlier. He was an artist fully aware of the limits of communication through each chosen medium. He did not like being misunderstood, and his personality was very sensitive to mediation of any kind, including curatorial mediation. He made every effort to be set apart and treated as "sui generis", and often vocalised privately or publicly his disapproval of the labelling of his work by art historians and curators. Theodoros was very open about ideas that were developed by other artists and left a mark on him, or somehow influenced his work. At the same time, he recognised his own artistic identity as something uniquely distinct. He would happily acknowledge that his work was in dialogue with the work of Joseph Beuys for the way art can influence society, or even for superficial references such as the blackboard used in a performance. He would acknowledge being in dialogue with Andy Warhol for the critique of popular culture, the fame of the artist and the mass media. An interesting document in the archive of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens testifies to his approach. In a letter dated 9 January 1974 addressed to Hans Haacke at the John Weber Gallery, Theodoros writes:

I am writing to ask you, if it is possible to send me some exemplaries of your John Weber Gallery Visitor's Profile 1 & 2. I mean the yellow perforated card. I would like to use the method of the test in an entirely different way but since I do not want to appropriate others ideas I would like to refer to your name [...]  
(Theodoros, 1974).

Theodoros wrote this in relation to the questionnaire present in the exhibition, requiring feedback on the public's perceived role of art, artists, galleries and museums and art critics. Theodoros, having ascertained his artistic originality through the references, characteristics



and subjects of his sculptural work made in the 1960s, before the rift, he would investigate other modes of presentation, exhibition and engagement with the public. His early work testified his all-time interest in public participation, mass media, investigation of energy and force, as well as sculptural extensions of the body: *Sculpture for Public Participation* (1966–1969) (Figure 31), *Portable Silent Sculpture – Proposal for 8.000.000 Copies* (1967) (Figure 42), *Midnight Alarm* (1965) (Figure 32), *Bust with Chamber Pot* (1963) (Figure 43), *Throne with Forbidden Parts* (1966), *Suicide Helmet* (1964) (Figures 44–45). His subsequent practice is still anchored to sculpture, regardless of borrowing elements from performance, photography, conceptual art, video art and installation.



Figure 42. Theodoros, sculptor (1967) *Portable Silent Sculpture – Proposal for 8.000.000 Copies* [Iron, 35 x 28 x 9 cm] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Inv. No. 1341/21 (film still from *Tele-manipulation*).

Figure 43. Theodoros, sculptor (1963) *Bust with Chamber Pot* [Iron] Collection of Nefeli and Lydia Papadimitriou (film still from *Tele-manipulation*).

Figures 44 and 45. Theodoros, sculptor (1964) *Suicide Helmet* [Iron, ostrich feathers, 93 x 55 x 57 cm] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Inv. No. 1387/21 (film still from *Tele-manipulation*).

Even since the 1990s, his contribution to the development of various artistic genres in Greece has been acknowledged and appreciated. In the last two decades, we can observe an increased appreciation of his importance in the history of performance art in Greece. While the historicisation of ephemeral practices in Greece is still in progress, there have been many initiatives such as festivals, publications and exhibitions, exploring the emergence of performance in Greece. Theodoros figures as an important entity in all of these initiatives: a special guest of *OIIA 0.2: On Performance Art* at Bios in 2009, a participant in *The Dream of Antigone-Performance Art in Greece Between the '70s and Today*, an exhibition held in Venice in the framework of the 3rd Venice International Performance Art Week in 2016. His work is also a major case study in the recent publication *I perphórmans stin Elláda, 1968–1986* [Performance art in Greece, 1968–1986] by Irene Gerogianni. The present permanent collection exhibition of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens includes *Anti-Spectacular Theater: Two Sculptural One-Acts – Elegy for Homo Faber* (1976) among the exhibited works, which summarises Theodoros' previously described relation to performance, as the public enactment of the sculptural act. Theodoros theorised performance through the idea of “erg” and “ergon”, the Greek word for work and the physics unit of energy, entangled in sculptural creation:

My work (ERGoN) as a sculptor, is all the more directed towards my struggle to dispel the work of art from the cultural fetishism of the object of conservation. In other words, I seek to reach for the primary meaning of the creative act affecting and transforming life [...] when the power-energy (in Dynes?) of the human-sculptor (Homo Faber) tries to move (in CGS units?) the human-social consciousness towards its [...] utopia. [my translation] (Theodoros, 1984, p.129).

Theodoros continued relating the performance to its documentation: “Action, transcending the sculptural reality through its ritualistic sacrifice, is rising through the dominant myth (fiction) of the audiovisual spectacle—the Olympus of Mass media!” [my translation] (Theodoros, 1984, p.129). In this excerpt, Theodoros is concerned about how the destruction of the material and the emphasis on action is a requirement of mass media and “the society of the spectacle” and how its tools, like television and video, reconcile the temporality of the event with the eternity of its documentation. Theodoros emphasised the translation of the term “performance”, which is used as such in Greek, as “action” and “energy” and not as “representation” or “rendering”, as the acting body and not the exhibited body (Theodoros, 2014, pp.90–92).

Some of his iconic performances and artistic gestures have been the starting point of great influence on a younger generation of artists as for example a recent work by Paky Vlassopoulou (Athens, 1985) *Postcard from New York* (2019). For this series of instant photographs, Paky Vlassopoulou visits locations in New York while wearing a mask made of bread and wielding a rolling pin. The captured images allude to a film sequence of Theodoros' *Tele-manipulation*, in which the artist walks among the streets of New York while carrying a matraque-phallus, juxtaposing it with the phallic symbols of capitalism (Figure 46 and 47).



Figure 46. Theodoros, sculptor (1976) *Tele-manipulation* [16mm film, black and white, with sound, duration 53'] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, inventory number pending (film stills).



Figure 47. Vlassopoulou, P. (2019) *Postcard from New York* [Monochrome instax photo paper, 6 photos 5.4 cm x 8.6 cm] Collection of the artist.

In accounts of video art and the history of art and technology in Greece that were written in the 1980s and early 1990s, namely by Anna Kafetsi (Kafetsi, 1989) and George Papakonstantinou (Papakonstantinou, 1992), Theodoros is mentioned among the first artists experimenting with audiovisual media. In subsequent accounts, such as Areti Adamopoulou's 'Video Art: Hi-tech kai Téchni stin Elláda' [Video art: High-Tech and Art in Greece] (Adamopoulou, 1995), his contribution is overlooked. This could be partially due to Theodoros' reluctance in claiming contribution to any field other than that of sculpture. It is also partially due to the younger generation of artists claiming a contribution that was more in line with clearly defined categories, unlike Theodoros' "post-medium" hybridity. Hopefully, through his bequest to the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, key works such as *Tele-manipulation* (1976) and *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show (Variation B')* (1982) that testify to his contribution, will be made again part of the public sphere. The first, *Tele-manipulation*, stands out for the inventive use of present tense: Through this recording, Theodoros addresses the viewer as in a live performance through the authoritative and coercive language of television that is known for conveying the sense of truth and for manipulating public perception. With his last phrase he deconstructs everything with a question "If you were convinced that this could be sculpture, this is another story..." [my translation] (Theodoros, 1976). The second work, *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show*, should also be acknowledged as significant in the context of the history of art in Greece for the sophisticated conceptual and actual integration of its video documentation: a sculptural-musical performance, made for being documented while it is being destroyed. Its subject is the transition of matter into the immaterial energy of the electronic image.

Theodoros' work has without doubt a conceptual strand, especially apparent in the works that share similar media with those used by conceptual artists, such as print and drawings. *Instead of a Sculpture* (1972) is such a case of a work. He considered education, which he practised as a professor of Sculpture at the National Technical University of Athens, one of the most important higher education institutions of Greece, as an extension of his artistic practice, similarly to his essays, radio broadcasts and television presentations. Nevertheless, sculpture, performance, conceptual art, media art or any clearly defined category proves inadequate when trying to describe Theodoros' work and practice, which is essentially hybrid, and in demand of its own new language.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

Theodoros retained a consistency in his aim for more than two decades, starting in the mid-1960s, at the moment termed as the “rift”, to the completion of the *Manipulations* series and the public communication that ensued and lasted until the end of the 1980s. Focusing on sculpture as communication, Theodoros systematically investigated the communicative potential of sculpture through modern-day mass media. His artistic experimentation often resulted in the admission of the inability of sculptural language to be vocalised through audio-visual and printed media. The same investigation also resulted in a broader definition of space, especially of public space, increasingly occupied by non-sculptural media. His work is inherently political, responding to the social upheaval that swept across Europe in the 1960s and affected his understanding of art’s diminishing power, and the artist’s shrinking ability to address the public with their art. As he explained to the author in an oral history interview in 2016:

I studied sculpture in relation to the reign of communication. I studied all means of communication [...] Recorded speech, image and sound together. I studied all those and through the series of *Manipulations* I placed those (means of communication) under scrutiny and deconstruction and comparison with traditional media of the sculptural materials. [...] I did this in order to disrupt the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the audio-visual mass media system, the foundations of the society of the spectacle [my translation] (Schizakis, 2016).

Theodoros’ importance in this research lies much further than the use of film, television, video, sound recordings and radio transmission for his sculptural work, to the systematic investigation and theorisation of the problematic relation of the older material media with the new immaterial mass media. Through Theodoros’ works and writing, one can observe how both global and Greek events trigger his passage from a modernist sculptural mode of working into the contemporary post-medium condition that affected his later practice. Although Theodoros used himself as an example in this existential dilemma posed by the dominance of mass media, the conditions that affected him were affecting almost every other active artist of his generation in Europe and the U.S., and as will be discussed in the next chapter, the next generations of artists started integrating audiovisual technologies in their practice.

## **Part II**

### **1980-1992: New Media Collective Efforts**

# Chapter 5: Media arts from the margins to integration

## 5.1 Introduction

For the U.S. and most part of Europe, the emergence of video art and the integration of video as part of artistic practices is chronologically positioned towards the end of the 1960s. The date corresponds to the increasing accessibility of video equipment, and most importantly of portable video equipment, praised by artists for its ease of use and autonomy. Also praised by artists at the time is the new medium's lack of tradition. As feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey argues, film had its own "important radical traditions" and together with video, it was used for challenging patriarchal tradition and the exploitation of the image of women (Mulvey, 2019, p.xi). However, it was video that became the preferential medium for feminist art practices, as it "had no place in the history of art" and its form "had not been contaminated by years or even centuries, of male domination" (Mulvey, 2019, pp.xi–xii). Video was often perceived as a tool of empowerment but also as a weapon that could counter-attack the cultural dominance of commercial television (Meigh-Andrews, 2014, pp.6–19). It was also a medium that broke free from the self-referentiality of modernist medium-specificity, thoroughly investigated through the earlier and inherently modern technologies of film and photography. This is not to say that the investigation of medium specificity was completely absent. As mentioned by media theorist Sean Cubitt in reference to British video art in the 1980s, one of the two main directions was a gallery-based video practice that explored the specific potential of the medium, parallel to a documentary practice that overlooked the medium itself but utilised its capabilities for socio-political purposes (Cubitt, 1993, pp.27–28). The integration of video in a strict modernist view is problematic as was made clear in the intensification of the discourse around the new medium from the 1990s onwards. As noted by Alexandra Moschovi, in *A Gust of Photo-Philia: Photography in the Art Museum*, during the 1990s video is reconsidered through exhibitions such as the 1990 exhibition *Passages de l'Image* curated by Christine van Assche, Raymond Bellour, and Catherine David at the Centre Georges Pompidou and *Photovideo: Photography in the Age of the Computer*, at Impressions Gallery in York, England, in 1991 curated Steven Bode and Paul Wombell. In those exhibitions, video is also examined for its capability to re-mediate film and photography, i.e. to present a medium through another, and for this reason, it is disruptive of the concept of medium specificity (Moschovi, 2021, pp.248–253).

In the middle of the 1980s, when video became widely accessible for artists living and working in Greece, these characteristics of medium-specificity, remediation, television subversion and political utilisation were not so prevalent. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, national television started operating in 1966, just before the military coup that placed the junta of the colonels in power and was instantly instrumentalised by the army as a propaganda medium. Television at the time was mostly operating with telecine equipment (donated by the CIA) and video was used only for live in-studio broadcasting (Valoukos, 2008, p.41). Characteristically, state television productions in the 1970s were shot and edited in 16mm film (such as the aforementioned Theodoros' *Tele-manipulation*), a medium that was dominant even until the end of the 1980s. George Papakonstantinou, writing in 1992 about the conditions of video art in Greece mentions:

Greek filmmakers did not accept the challenge of television as a new medium of expression and creativity. They showed a reserved—if not hostile—attitude towards video. They did not consider the electronic image as a creative domain but as a merely financing means of their films. As a result, the great majority of television programmes has been realised in 16mm film (Papakonstantinou, 1992, p.222).

For example, *Monograma*, an ongoing broadcasting series of biographical episodes produced by the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation that began in 1982 started using video for its production in the early 1990s. Without being used by television, video technology is adopted very late and is established through VHS, home videos and home rental video stores.

Video as an art form in Greece was presented for the first time in Polyplano Gallery in 1980 when the first video art screening took place. As advertised in *SIMA* [Signal] review, the screening included works by Les Levine, Eleanor Antin, Dennis Oppenheim and Allan Kaprow (Papadakis, 1980, p.33). The same issue includes an advertisement of the existence of a video lab operating within Polyplano Gallery, whereas a year later, in the first issue of the redesigned *Mikro SIMA* [Small Signal], the back page includes a whole list of the equipment available at the lab (Papadakis, 1981a) ([Figure 48](#)).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Polyplano Gallery offered a choice of four different video cameras, one portable VHS recorder, three VHS decks, one Betamax and one U-matic systems.



## Η ΑΙΘΟΥΣΑ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ ΠΟΛΥΠΛΑΝΟ ΣΑΣ ΠΡΟΣΦΕΡΕΙ ΤΙΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΥΤΕΡΕΣ ΕΥΚΑΙΡΙΕΣ ΑΓΟΡΑΣ ΗΜΕΝΟΙΚΙΑΣΗΣ ΒΙΝΤΕΟΜΗΧΑΝΗΜΑΤΩΝ

### ΒΙΝΤΕΟ ΚΑΜΕΡΕΣ

Οι βιντεοκάμερες είναι ένα είδος σπάνιο ακόμα κι αν τις ζητήσετε στις επίσημες αντιπροσωπείες. Από το τμήμα βίντεο του ΠΟΛΥΠΛΑΝΟ μπορείτε όχι μόνο να αγοράσετε μία απ' αυτές τις κάμερες αλλά και να νοικιάσετε και πάντως, σ' οποιαδήποτε περίπτωση, με οικονομικούς όρους και οποιαδήποτε θα σας συμφέρουν.

#### JVC G-71 P

Έγχρωμη φορητή βίντεο κάμερα με ηλεκτρονικό viewfinder. Με φακό ZOOM 6:1, f=17-102 mm f/2 με δείκτη έγγραφής σε περιπτώσεις έναλλασσόμενου φωτισμού, αυτόματα ιριδα και έναωματωμένο μικρόφωνο.



#### SANYO VCC-545 P

Έγχρωμη φορητή βίντεο κάμερα triniticon με ηλεκτρονικό viewfinder. Με φακό ZOOM 17.5-105 mm, F 1.8, τέσσερες θέσεις θερμοκρασίας χρώματος και έναωματωμένο μικρόφωνο.



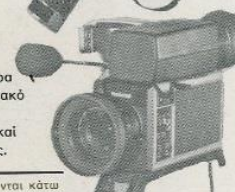
#### JVC GX-77 E

Έγχρωμη φορητή βίντεο κάμερα με ηλεκτρονικό viewfinder. Με φακό ZOOM 6,2X f=12-75 mm f/1.4, με αυτόματα ιριδα και μακρο, ενσωματωμένο φίλτρο για έξωτερικό ή εσωτερικό μικρόφωνο. Έντελώς αυτόματα.



#### NATIONAL WV-3200 N

Έγχρωμη φορητή βίντεο κάμερα με ηλεκτρονικό viewfinder, με φακό ZOOM 6:1, f 11,5-70 mm F 1,8. Με έναωματωμένο μικρόφωνο και αυτόματο έλεγχο φωτεινότητας.



Όλα τα μηχανήματα που νοικιάζονται κάτω από όριζόμενους όρους, δεν είναι διαθέσιμα κάθε στιγμή. Παρακαλούμε να προγραμματίσετε τις ημερομηνίες που τ'α χρειάζεστε.

#### NATIONAL NV 8620-EM



Σύστημα VHS. Χρόνος έγγραφής 3 ώρες, remote control με καλώδιο, προγραμματισμό 8 ημερών, άργη και γρήγορη κίνηση της εικόνας.

ΒΙΝΤΕΟ ΚΑΣΕΤΕΣ VHS, Beta και U-Matic 60 λεπτών, 120 και 180, από τις καλύτερες εταιρίες παραγωγής μαγνητικών υλικών. Άκόμα γραμμένες βιντεοκασέτες σ' οποιαδήποτε σύστημα μετά από παραγγελία και πάντως με δικαίωμα αλλαγής.

### ΜΑΓΝΗΤΟΣΚΟΠΙΑ

#### JVC HR-4100 EG/EK

Φορητό, συστήματος VHS, ελαφρού βάρους, αυτοφορτιζόμενη μπαταρίας PBP-1, μπαταρίας αυτοκινήτου 12V και ρεύματος. Συνδέεται με το Tuner TU-41EG και συνοδεύεται με το τροφοδοτικό AA-P41 EG/EK. Χρόνος έγγραφής με τη μπαταρία μία ώρα.

#### JVC HR 3660 EG

Σύστημα VHS. Χρόνος έγγραφής 3 ώρες, remote control με καλώδιο, προγραμματισμό 8 ημερών, άργη και γρήγορη κίνηση εικόνας.

#### AKAI VS-9300

Σύστημα VHS. Χρόνος έγγραφής 3 ώρες και προγραμματισμό έγγραφής προγράμματος.

#### SANYO VTC-9300

Σύστημα Betamax, με προγραμματισμό 7 ημερών, διάρκεια έγγραφής 3 ωρών, άκινητοποίηση εικόνας και σταμάτημα της λειτουργίας καλωδιακά από απόσταση.

#### NEC PVC 8307

Σύστημα U-MATIC. Έπαγγελματικό μαγνητοσκόπιο πολύ μεγάλης ακρίβειας, που συνδέεται με οποιαδήποτε βιντεοκάμερα ή άλλο μαγνητοσκόπιο.

Χρησιμοποιούνται ταινίες U-MATIC, 3/4" και έχει δυνατότητα λειτουργίας μέχρι μία ώρα. (Κανένα επαγγελματικό μαγνητοσκόπιο δεν έχει μεγαλύτερη διάρκεια). Με 2 κανάλια ήχου (για έγγραφη και αναπαραγωγή) με πολλαπλές δυνατότητες σύνδεσης με διάφορα ήχητικά μηχανήματα (μικρόφωνα, πικάπ, μαγνητόφωνα).

### ΤΟ ΠΟΛΥΠΛΑΝΟ ΒΙΝΤΕΟ ΕΦΑΡΜΟΓΕΣ ΔΕΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ "VIDEO CLUB"

1. Αν αγοράσετε ή νοικιάσετε ένα κάποιο μηχανήματα από μ'α εμάς εκτός από τις αρχικές έγγραφες οδηγίες στα ελληνικά θαχετε για όσο καιρό χρησιμοποιείτε αυτή τη συσκευή, όχι μόνο τη θεωρητική έγγρηση της εταιρίας, αλλά τη διαρκή συμπαράστασή μας για τ'ο π'ος και π'ο'θ'α τ'α χρησιμοποιήσετε.
  2. Αν ενδιαφέρεστε για γραμμένες βιντεοταινίες πορνό σας παρακαλούμε να μη αποτανθείτε σε μ'α.
  3. Αν θέλετε να διαπιστώσετε τη διαφορά που υπάρχει ανάμεσα σε μ'α και στα διάφορα περιστασιακά clubs, πηγαίνετε και ζητείστε να νοικιάσετε μ'α βιντεοκάμερα. Θ'α διαπιστώσετε ότι κανένας δεν χρησιμοποιεί τ'ο βίντεο στα σωστά του μέτρα.
- Από τ'ο τμήμα βιντεοεφαρμογών της αίθουσας τέχνης ΠΟΛΥΠΛΑΝΟ μπορείτε να προμηθευτείτε, για όσο καιρό θέλετε οποιαδήποτε σχετικό μηχανήματα.

Αίθουσα Τέχνης ΠΟΛΥΠΛΑΝΟ Λυκαβηττού 16 Αθήνα 136.

**ΒΙΝΤΕΟ ΠΟΛΥΠΛΑΝΟ**  
ΛΥΚΑΒΗΤΤΟΥ 16 ΑΘΗΝΑ ΤΗΛ. 3629822

Figure 48. *Mikro SIMA*. 1, (February, 1981). Back cover page advertising available video equipment.

In February and June, 1981 Nikos Papadakis, the publisher of *SIMA* and owner of Polyplano Gallery, published two issues of a magazine titled *Video SIMA* [Video Signal] in which he included articles on how to make your own videos and how to set up your own video studio (Papadakis, 1981b, pp.25–30). Within those issues, alongside articles on video art, one can see advertisements for video production companies and home video rentals (Papadakis, 1981a, 1981b). As it is obvious, at the time there was no dominant technological standard

for this new service of video production and home video rental. The presence of U-matic, Beta SP, VHS as recording mediums and colour systems PAL, SECAM and NTSC testify that this technology was still in development and that no format or standard had yet dominated the industry.

During the late 1970s video was still an inaccessible and expensive novelty unlikely to be preferably used as a medium of documentation. Up until the early 1980s art performances in Greece were typically documented, edited and projected in 16mm or super 8 film and the same applied to stand-alone media works, as the necessary equipment was easily available in Greece. Examples would be Dimitris Alithinos' public space performance *Writing in Space* (1979) and Yorgos Lazongas' *Manipulations of Everyday Behaviour with Gas Stoves* (1978). Aspa Stassinopoulou also had developed a filmic practice from as early as 1972 as can be seen from *Operation* (1972) where images from an operation on her own body were juxtaposed with images from a printing machine. Stassinopoulou also produced the rarely seen film *Athens* (1972) where images of Athens during the colonels' junta are juxtaposed with images from pigs in a pigsty. Among the exceptions was *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show* realised in 1981 and 1982 by the sculptor Theodoros as discussed in Chapter 4. The work was presented in Amsterdam and Brussels and the video was produced during the opening performance. Since the work was produced in two other European countries, the means available were different from the conditions of video production in Greece examined in this thesis. Theodoros wanted to use video as a structural and essential element of an installation work that was referring to television, its content and apparatus, not as a documentation medium. As it can be verified from the oral testimonies of most artists choosing to use video in an exhibition context in Greece, availability and accessibility were not among the reasons for its choice.

Parallel to the somewhat technical reasons for the late introduction of video in Greece, i.e. the aforementioned television system and the hostility of the film-makers, there was a problematic theoretical and historic integration of art and technology that was partially due to the "incomplete" pursuit of modernism in Greek art and art history, because, as art historian Martha Christofoglou argues, the modernist polemics specifically active in Greece were not connected with an international discourse, and were overrun by postmodernism before being resolved (Christofoglou, 1995, p.46–47). This affected video production in a way that a modernist investigation of the medium through effects and feedback loops, a pre-

modern or retrograde aesthetic alluding to issues of Hellenicity, and a contemporary post-medium impulse to enhance sculpture or painting were concurrently present in new media art in Greece.

Another technology that reached a wider public during this decade is the personal computer or microcomputer. With different capabilities than the mainframe computers of the 1960s and 1970s or the calculators that artists like Pantelis Xagoraris used, personal computers were directed for office and home use, for professionals and amateurs alike, with commercially available programmes as well as relatively easy to learn programming tools for those who preferred to write their own software. Nestoras Papanicolopoulos was an artist who programmed still or animated images, often presented to the public through video recordings. Papanicolopoulos also associated and collaborated with video artists in their events of art and technology, often being the only example of artistic use of technology other than video.

This chapter lays the foundations for a reevaluation of artistic uses of video and computers in Greece in the 1980s, through reviewing the context and the content of key works and important practitioners. For this reason, the chapter focuses on the artistic practice of the creators that affected the presentation, production and perception of new media works in Greece, but also on the identity and aims of the organisations and organisers that supported and exhibited new media works. The chapter is structured as a chronology based on the order of appearance of artists and organisations, with the aim to highlight different aspects and ways of presentation such as the inclusion of media works in solo or group exhibitions, in screenings and in television broadcasts. The chapter also includes sections on professional and D.I.Y. production, on the foundation of media organisations, as well as on the unrealised plans for the foundation of a distribution organisation.

## **5.2 The appearance of video in commercial galleries and exhibition spaces 1978–1987**

### **5.2.1 Artists that presented video works in solo exhibitions 1978–1989**

The global origins of video art have attained mythical status, with facts and oral accounts of the experiments of Nam June Paik, Andy Warhol and Wolf Vostell being disputed and in constant rewriting and reinterpretation. These origins are stories where the protagonists are no longer living, and their creations are no longer available. A similar situation arises with

the history of video art in Greece, with many artists laying claim to the first artistic use of video. All these claims are valid, depending on different terms, interpretations and hierarchies of video practices. As is often the case with the history of artworks making use of technological media, for the first instances of video use in an art context in Greece, there is a notable lack of documentation or critical mention. However, as time progresses, artists, critics and galleries become increasingly aware of the reasons and the results of exhibiting works that make use of video technology. For example, whereas we can find numerous documents relating to the activities of the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center and its Art and Technology Sector between 1989-1992, there is almost nothing on the first video-performances of Yioulia Gazetopoulou realised sometime around 1977–1978.

Yioulia Gazetopoulou (Thessaloniki, 1932–Athens, 2018) was a painter and a visual poet, theatrical set and costume designer. She was mentioned in several accounts among the pioneers of video in Greece, for her use of video documentation in a performance in Polyplano Gallery. In an oral history interview, Nikos Giannopoulos also mentioned that Gazetopoulou realised a performance in Polyplano Gallery with the use of a medical camera (endoscope) but he did not remember details on the date (Schizakis, 2018c). The catalogue of the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies also mentioned a video dated 1978 (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, p.84) and George Papakonstantinou mentioned a performance in Polyplano Gallery dated “possibly in 1977” (Papakonstantinou, 1992, p.220). Beatrice Spiliadis also mentioned a past performance with video: “The first information about this aspect of her work [Gazetopoulou’s] was given by the video documentation of a performance with movement of people and colours” (Spiliadis, 1983). Curator and art historian Lina Tsikouta also described a video documentation of a performance exhibited in Polyplano Gallery in 1980, in which Gazetopoulou made a plaster cast of a woman in a bathtub (Tsikouta, 2005). The critic Eleni Vakalo in her four-volume work titled *I Physiognomía tis Metapolemikís Téchnis stin Elláda* [The Physiognomy of Postwar Art in Greece] also includes a mention of Gazetopoulou’s use of video as a combination of artistic intervention, body art and video art (Vakalo, 1985, p.111). In an interview with Nikos Papadakis printed in the catalogue of a 1983 performance, there is also mention of an earlier performance recorded on video (Gazetopoulou and Papadakis, 1983). Interestingly, all of these accounts point to a past event, whereas there are no mentions of the event from the time it was realised. The dispersion of the archive of Polyplano Gallery

after Papadaki's death is making research into the history of this work even more difficult.

Mit Mitropoulos (Piraeus, 1939) also known as Dr Mit (Eftimios) Mitropoulos had studied art and architecture in Durham, Brussels and Edinburgh, before travelling to the U.S.A. with a Ford Foundation Scholarship where he experimented on television and networks as a fellow at Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center of Advanced Studies (M.I.T. C.A.V.S.) between 1979 and 1985. His presence in art galleries in Athens begins as early as 1976 in the Desmos Art Gallery where he presented drawings, sculpture and architectural research projects (Tzirtzilakis, 1999, p.152). Both his artistic practice and academic research are centred on networks and communication, ideas that are explored in a variety of media, like mail art, environmental art, two-way cable TV, facsimile transmission, etc. Some of his unrealised or unrealisable project proposals take the form of magazine articles that suggest the application of technology (usually long or short distance audio-visual communication technology) on a citywide, nationwide or global scale supported by examples of realised smaller-scale experiments. He often published articles in visual arts magazines, most importantly in the *Ekistics* journal, published by the Athens Center of Ekistics, in *Leonardo* published by the M.I.T. Press, and the Greek visual Arts monthly magazine *Eikastika*. However, he retained some distance from the Greek artistic milieu, and possibly due to the conceptual character of his artistic projects, the hybridity of his practice and the small number of works realised in Greece, his early work has hardly been included in group exhibitions or critically evaluated in any publications on Greek art. The present research takes into account the conceptual, temporary, evolving and hybrid character of his practice, which resulted in only a few projects taking the specific form of an artwork or event, and considers them alongside his published projects proposals. His architectural thesis submitted at the University of Edinburgh, as explicated in one of his early articles in the *Ekistics* journal, deals with the spatial changes in urban design and architecture from shifting the perception of space from "euclidian" to "hodological", i.e. from the assumption that a body in space will follow the shortest possible route to the consideration of a network of all possible routes (Mitropoulos, 1975). In 1976 Mit Mitropoulos published a short article in the Greek political review *ANTI* about a contemporary art museum as a network. The short text is characteristic of his visionary practice:

The museum of contemporary art begins from the street that you presently walk.

It is the street. Where suddenly, when you take a turn on the left, there are no

cars, Where the wall on your right is green (roulette green). Which was red (Indian red) last week. And where you can stop and look what are they selling at the laid down rugs. And get inside buildings in which only one floor, the third one, is free to go through (because the rest are offices). And you go up on roofs and terraces of other buildings (there are people living underneath). And you go through large open spaces. But from next week (as it is written in posters) a group will convert them into a labyrinth. There will be lights and voices. And you are struggling to find your way, because older passages have been blocked and new ones have been opened with small temporary bridges (you know that teams of technicians are designing, laying foundations, building, changing constantly. In urbanplanningarchitecture (sic) it is called space network and is based on social networks. And they had said then that if such an effort fails, then our way of life has to change structurally.) The posters also say that the Museum of Contemporary Art will be connected with a railroad stop by this December, this January with an arcade shop complex. This February with the listed building's area of Plaka. This March, every Sunday for the whole day, with a dozen or so cinemas which will screen short films by young filmmakers. This April, it will be linked to the National Technical University of Athens. This May with a neighbourhood. This June with a park. I remember that last June, the museum spontaneously joined a demonstration [my translation] (as reprinted in Mitropoulos, 1984, p.22).

As mentioned above, Mitropoulos was involved in mail art projects, which he described as “cultural objects produced through the network of post offices (i.e. mail art)” (Mitropoulos, 1985, p.41). He also participated in a mail art exhibition in 1978 at the Gazette bookstore in Athens. In this exhibition, Mitropoulos presented a television monitor that displayed “static” or manipulated images captured from television (Mitropoulos, 1985, pp.40–41). Interestingly, Mitropoulos avoids the term “artwork” in relation to all the works in the exhibition and also links this inclusion of television monitor with his subsequent work at M.I.T. CAVS and after. In his own words “From the presentation of television image at Gazette, Athens in 1978 until the recent tests of electronic image at the M.I.T. for the ‘Sunset’ proposal, television image is considered as a medium of communication and as a bearer of

aesthetics” (Mitropoulos, 1985, pp.40–41).<sup>26</sup> It is just a few months before Mit Mitropoulos moves to the U.S. to work as a visiting scholar at the Department of Architecture of the M.I.T., but in this early gesture of presenting a television in a mail art exhibition, the three ideas central to his work are evident: “Found object”, “communication with or without technology”, “network”. For Mit Mitropoulos, the found object is extended through media. People activated through mail art networks into performative scenarios are “found persons”. A space resulting from human behaviour and not from a geometrical outline is a “found space”. In the same way, one can use the postal network to find persons, one can use the television network to find photographs:

Television (TV) is a ‘space’ we can switch on and off. The meaning of a photograph as ‘found object’ is clear. A ‘found photo’, on the other hand, occurs when the viewer turns on the TV set (first move), takes a Polaroid photograph of the image on the screen (second move), and chooses to keep that photograph (third move). If the TV set is left on, that electronic space may become the viewer’s electronic coastline, along which he or she may beachcomb with a camera (Mitropoulos, 1986c, p.32).

For Mit Mitropoulos communication is seen as a behaviour that involves a human network, as simple as two people face-to-face or as complicated as a city or an international network of personal contacts (Mitropoulos, 1983, p.321). Technology is part of the communication process since the discovery of fire, and objects are part of this process since the trade of obsidian arrowheads in Mediterranean islands before the invention of sails. The question is “what is the use we make of technology?” (Mitropoulos, 1986b, p.331). This attitude to communication technology is further exemplified in the series of installations *Face to Face* that was realised in Salerno Italy and in Artcom in Paris in 1986 as well as V2 centre in Hertogenbosch, Holland in 1989. In this series of installations, two people come face to face through various layers of long-distance audio-visual communication technologies, such as slow-scan image through a phone line or two-way cable television. The visible part of the installation consists of two faces on television monitors that appear to talk to each other (Mitropoulos, 1991). Found objects, communication, and other activities, such as a person

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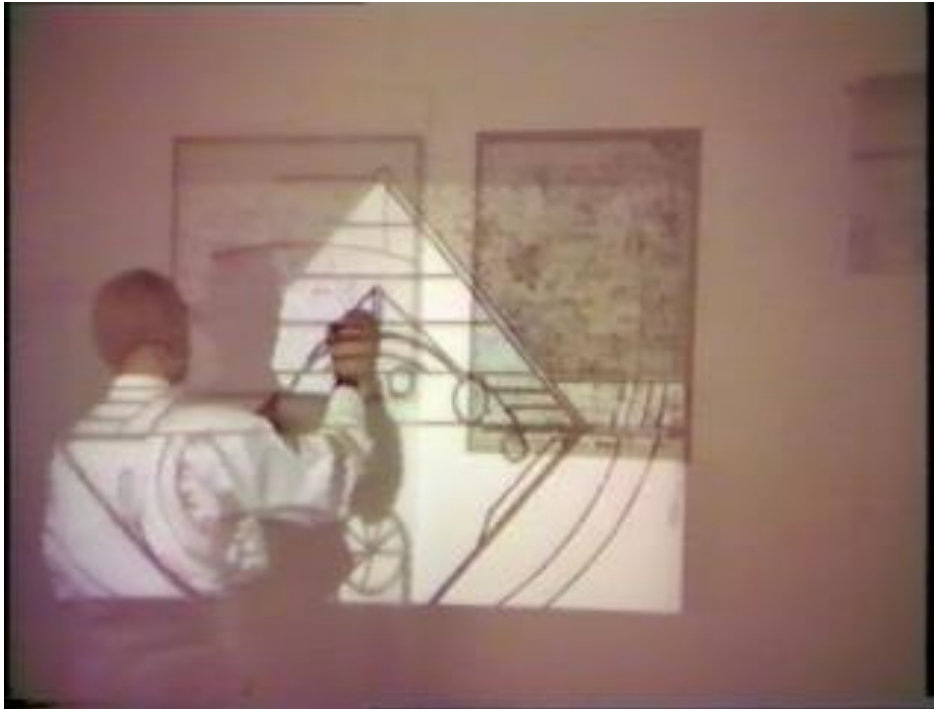
<sup>26</sup> By the “Sunset” proposal, Mit Mitropoulos refers to the *Line of the Horizon* (1986) project that was realised in Thessaloniki in 1986.

moving into space, or technological infrastructure and use, are creating networks. He relates the aesthetics of networks with control, knowledge and complexity of interactivity and uses the term “geopolitical art” for “the art that sets up networks or uses networks already there” (Mitropoulos, 1988, p.308). In 1984, Mitropoulos republished the 1976 proposal for a museum as network with “Telecommunications Extension for a Museum of Contemporary Arts” in the visual arts magazine *Eikastika*. Given that in the meantime technology had evolved, Mitropoulos justified the reconsideration of his proposal, which was based on networks without technology, like mail art, the realisation of live actions in non-art spaces, trucks carrying personnel and material etc. The “telecommunications extension” could transfer sounds, images and text in much further distance in high altitudes and islands, through wired or wireless one or two-way television systems, taking into consideration the country’s geography and the need to extend the network beyond the Athenian urban centre. This extended idea evolved in the proposal for MUMED or “Mediterranean Museum” as an electronic interconnection where the whole of the Mediterranean could be exploited as a network (Mitropoulos, 1986a, pp.231–237).

Aris Prodromidis (Thessaloniki, 1947) studied art, architecture and cinema in Florence during 1971–1977. After a brief period of working in an architectural office, Prodromidis focused on his art which related the artist’s body to urban, psychological and political space. In 1980, his work started to include live elements such as the event realised at the Architectural Association of Thessaloniki on 19–20 December 1980 titled *Two Performances* (1980) and which focused on the artist’s social role in an envisioned society where art would be seamlessly integrated within all social functions. In May 1981, Prodromidis participated in the group exhibition *Environment-Action* in the Zappeion Megaron in Athens with a version of the above-mentioned performances, titled *Act III* (1981), which involved a variety of media like drawing and painting, photo slide projections, magnetic tape players with urban sounds and a typewriter. In this work, the first where Prodromidis focused on the figure of the artist, he enacted himself, surrounded by the above-mentioned creative instruments and mediums and by photographs of imagined urban interventions. Prodromidis used video for recording and replaying parts of this performance within the installation during his absence from the exhibition space (Schizakis, 2017a). The video document of the event was later titled *La Vita d’Artista* [The Life of the Artist] (1981) and was presented as an independent video work (Figure 49 and 50). In November 1981, Prodromidis realised a solo exhibition in Athens in Medusa Art Gallery with the title



*anamorphosis–installation/action/video*. The exhibition included two installations consisting of several smaller mixed media works most of which were anamorphically transformed photographic portraits, a performance that was repeated twice during the two weeks of the exhibition, as well as a 30-minute-long video titled *Self-Portrait in Anamorphosis* (1981).



Figures 49 and 50. Prodromidis, A. (1981) *Vita d' Artista* [Video, colour, sound, duration 20'], 2017. Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens. Inv. No. 1122/17, donated by the artist (videostills).

All the works were related to the idea of anamorphosis, as a representation of subjectivity, of changing viewpoints and of shifting reality (Strousa, 1981). This is the first time that a stand-alone video work is included in an exhibition in a Greek gallery. According to the artist's oral history interview to the author, during the first week of the show, there was a break-in in the gallery and the only objects stolen were the expensive video player and the television monitor, which the artist had rented at his own expense. The single copy of the work was lost together with the video player. As mentioned in an interview with the author, Prodromidis had proposed this work for another exhibition, so he decided to recreate the work with which he participated in many exhibitions and festivals during 1982–1985 (Schizakis, 2017a). It is titled *Self-Portrait/Anamorphosis* (1981) (Figure 51).



Figure 51. Prodromidis, P. (1981) *Self-Portrait/Anamorphosis* [Video, colour, sound, duration 7' 25 '' Edition 3/6], Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, inv. No. 1123/17, donated by the artist, 2017 (videostill).

Angelos Skourtis (Patras, 1949) is also an artist whose account of his use of video included audience expectations and reception. In 1983, Skourtis collaborated with fellow artist Li Likoudi for an intervention in the National Garden of Athens and a concurrent exhibition in

the Desmos Art Gallery, titled *Ethnikos Kipos* [National Garden]. The multiple event (labelled as *Intervention/Action/Video*) included an in-situ installation and public performance in the National Garden of Athens and an exhibition at the new exhibition space of the Desmos Art Gallery (which was within a short distance from the installation and performance site). The installation in the garden consisted of coloured transparent Perspex rectangles and monochromatic canvases situated in such a way that the frames guided and altered the gaze of the visitors. During its brief, six-day long duration, those elements also incorporated parts of the park, like fallen leaves, dust and soil, shadows and overgrown branches. The performance of the opening day consisted of a flautist guiding the visitors from the garden to the gallery within which photographic slides of foliage were projected onto the flautist and the audience. The exhibition included photo collages and photographs from the intervention, as well as a video of foliage projected onto a naked body. The video is titled *Metaplasis* [Post-formation] (1983) and was described in the press release as a “body art performance” (Desmos Art Gallery, 1983). It is a straightforward record of a male and female body walking among the beam of a slide projector projecting colour photographic slides of foliage. In an oral history interview, Skourtis explained that he chose to use video for this event since it was “the new thing” and this newness was part of its attraction. Skourtis described the equipment that he used as cumbersome compared to what is being used today but clarified that it then looked small. Skourtis could not remember the videotape format which he described as “a big cassette”, which “at that time was considered compact” (Schizakis, 2018a). The most important reason Skourtis accounted for the use of video, was that its content was viewed through the television monitor, and despite video being an uncommon apparatus in Greece, television was very familiar. Additionally, video was easier to use for exhibition purposes, as one just had to insert a cassette and press play, in contrast to super eight projection, which occupied the whole room with the necessary darkness and its sound. Structurally, as the whole *National Garden* event centred on the mediation of nature, the television screen had a central role among the physical “screens” of the Perspex and canvas frames installed in the park (Schizakis, 2018a).

Nikos Giannopoulos (Thessaloniki, 1952) had studied psychoanalysis, architecture and cinema in Paris and Vincennes in the 1970s before moving to Athens to work in cinema, radio and television production in the early 1980s. He would mostly work in 35mm and 16mm film as it was expected at the time, however, faced with a budget review on a proposed TV series, he considered collaborating with one of the two professional video studios in

Athens operating at the time. Eager to experiment with the new equipment and fully understanding the new capabilities and differences, his investigation led him to Polyplano Gallery (he was looking for a U-matic tape recorder). He met the owner of the gallery Nikos Papadakis and watched the video art tapes of the media library of Polyplano Gallery. He also proposed a closed-circuit live event which was realised in 1983 and titled *Before 1984 or Illusions* (1983). This is a collaboration work with Nikos Giannopoulos, the musician Thomas Sliomis and the dancer Nena Papageorgiou (also triply labelled as *Video/Music/Action*) (Figure 52).



Figure 52. Giannopoulos, N. (1983) *Before 1984 or Illusions* [Video, colour, with sound, duration 11' 20'] A video based on a live 45' performance that took place in Polyplano Gallery in 1983. Collection of the artist (videostills).

The event lasted for 45 minutes and was repeated 15 times. The performance space extended on the complete L-shaped 2nd floor of Polyplano Gallery, which was decorated and furnished like a residential apartment for the purposes of the performance. One part was occupied by the piano played by Thomas Sliomis, and the other was mostly occupied by the dancer Nena Papageorgiou who was moving around the whole floor. The audience could

also freely move in the space. The rooms were covered with many mirrors that had rounded corners so as to resemble television screens. Among the mirrors were also actual television sets playing random music videos and television commercials remotely controlled by Giannopoulos. Some television monitors were connected in a closed television circuit fed by a camera also operated by Giannopoulos. The subject of the performance was personal identity in a media-saturated environment on the eve of Orwellian 1984. During the duration of the performance, the performer, pretending to be a woman just before a night out, would look at different reflections and images and try to fit into a different stereotypical role (mother, lover, businesswoman etc.) by frantically changing clothes. As the members of the audience could not have simultaneous views of both parts of the space, the mirrors and monitors connected to the camera would provide alternating views as Giannopoulos (in effect the third performer) would move around the space, operating the camera, following the dancer, focusing on the pianist as well as on his own mirror reflected image, as described in by the artist in an oral history interview with the author (Schizakis, 2018c). Giannopoulos related this work to McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* and the "never-explained numbness that each media extension brings about in the individual and society" (McLuhan, 1964, p.6). McLuhan's view that the rapid advancement of technology increased the capabilities of humankind but caused additional anxiety is combined with the myth of Narcissus who lost his life the moment he discovered his idol in the lake's reflection. Narcissus was a recurring theme in Giannopoulos work, as he made two works with this title (*Narcissus I* and *Narcissus II*) while his private film production company was also titled Narcissus. *Narcissus I* (1985) was presented in a Spanish language and culture institute called Al Andar and was an installation consisting of a photographic portrait of the artist reflected on a broken mirror, together with a television monitor playing a video where Nikos Giannopoulos appears destroying his image with various methods such as fire, spray paint, water, etc. By using video effects and depending on the destruction method, a new image appears over the destroyed one ([Figure 53](#)). At the beginning of the video Giannopoulos reads the following:

There, Narcissus was lost while trying to identify with his image, by falling in the river his image was destroyed, while himself was also lost, here, Narcissus is lost in a circular labyrinth in space and time, trying to identify with his image but the image is self-destroyed and reborn, it is constantly transformed in the

same image, like Medusa, running like water from one's fingers, and contrary to the original myth, it leaves him vengefully untouched, like time does to Dorian Grey, a Sisyphean game of self-destruction with no beginning or end, which Sisyphus-Narcissus knows and enjoys too well [my translation] (Giannopoulos, 1985b).

After every sentence, Giannopoulos gets up from the chair and leaves the space of the screen, while the image of his seated self remains in place, continuing the recitation. The video is dedicated to Peter Campus, whose work *Three Transitions* (1973) is directly referring to.



Figure 53. Giannopoulos, N. (1985) *Narcissus I* [Video, colour, with sound, duration 12'] Collection of the artist (videostills).

Apart from his own videos, performances and video installations, Giannopoulos was also professionally producing videos for other artists, like Leda Papaconstantinou, through his production company Narcissus Film Productions founded in 1983. He also assumed the role of an organiser of media events and acted as the commissioner of the Greek participation in international festivals. In 1990 and 1993 he was also part of the team that realised the first and second European Meeting for Art/New Technologies. In 1984, the Ministerial

Department of Youth organised *Youth and Language* conference with a section titled ‘Video Art: A New Language’ with French video artist Patrick Prado as a guest speaker. The event took place in the Zappeion Megaron where Nikos Giannopoulos realised a video installation titled *BABEL*. As described in the oral history, the installation consisted of a tower of television monitors in the central hall of the Zappeion Megaron, all playing concurrently the same video, from a selection of videos by Patrick Prado as well as other French and Greek video artists (Schizakis, 2018c) ([Figure 59](#)).

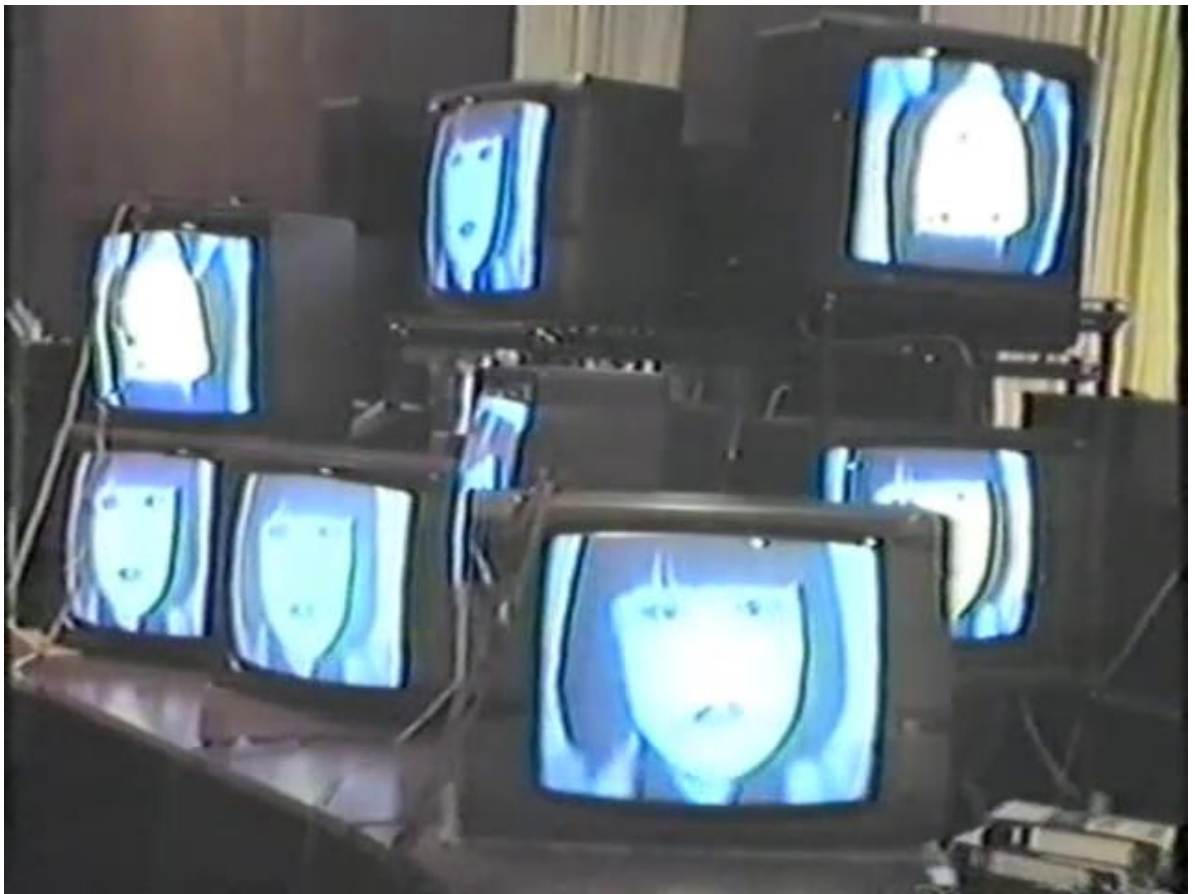


Figure 54. Giannopoulos, N. (1983) *BABEL* [Videoinstallation] (Video still from video documentation of the installation displaying Patrick Prado's *L'amour Transcode*).

Costas Tsoclis (Athens, 1930) is one of the most celebrated artists in Greece. He studied at the Athens School of Fine Arts (1948–1954) and in 1957 moved to Rome in order to continue his studies at the Scuola delle Arti Ornamentali. He moved to Paris in 1960 where he stayed for the following 20 years, travelling and exhibiting extensively in Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and the U.S. among other places. During this period, his recognizable style was based on the trompe-l'œil effect of reconstructing three-dimensional images on flat wall surfaces, while integrating actual three-dimensional objects. Upon returning to Greece in the early 1980s, his turbulent life, boastful attitude and relation with “high society”

attracted media attention and contributed to his star status. In over 550 newspaper and magazine clippings of his archive, from 1959 to 2002, there is an increasing emphasis on his personality, his lifestyle and his general attitude towards art rather than any specific insight into his works. Exhibition reviews become an excuse for the expression of generalisations on art and its role, of disappointment on the cultural establishment, on a personal success story, or the enthusiasm of the public but there is hardly any precise reference to the exhibited works. In 1985, Tsoclis exhibited the *Harpooned Fish* (1985) in Zoumboulakis Gallery, the most prestigious commercial gallery at that time in Athens. This was his first *Living Painting* work, as he terms the practice of animating painted canvases by means of video projection. A real metal harpoon was attached to the canvas on which a video projection displayed the video recording of a dying harpooned fish. The work was part of a sea-themed exhibition that included mostly commercial works of fishing boats and seascapes referencing the style of picturesque cheap seascapes one can buy in a framer's studio. The *Harpooned Fish* (1985) stood out for its macabre theme of a dying fish and became the epicentre of all exhibition reviews. Some of the few reviews referred to this technique as a major step in Tsoclis artistic career, since it enhanced the artists trompe-l'œil practice with video projection technology (Kambouridis, 1985). Almost all the reviews available in his archive refer to the strong emotional impact of the work (Sokou, 1985; Karavia, 1985). In 1986, Tsoclis was selected to represent Greece in the Venice Biennial which that year explored the relationship between art and science. Among the works in the Greek pavilion, Tsoclis included *Harpooned Fish* (1985) surrounded by five larger-than-life full-body silent and mostly immobile portraits titled *Portraits* (1986) (Figures 55 and 56). By means of video projection, the five figures, all friends of the artist and notable artists and scientists, appeared to be alive. The Greek pavilion had some international press coverage (Panicelli, 1986, p.144; Scio, 1986) but the Greek press focused on the disappointment for not winning the biennial prize and the insufficiency of the Greek cultural establishment to assert the national interests on an international level (Misirli, 1986, pp.42–43; Markou, 1986, pp.13–14; Kotzamani, 1986a, pp.82–84; Kotzamani, 1986b, pp.81–83; Maragou, 1986). Most articles included various explanations why Tsoclis was not awarded the International Prize at the Venice Biennial: the inadequacy of the committee, the hinted existence of non-artistic criteria or the inability of the Greek Ministry of Culture to get involved in international art world lobbying and cultural diplomacy. The expectations of the award and the subsequent disappointment were indicative of the public support that Tsoclis had among the Greek public and press. Interestingly, Tsoclis' exhibition in the Greek Pavilion included other installations as well,



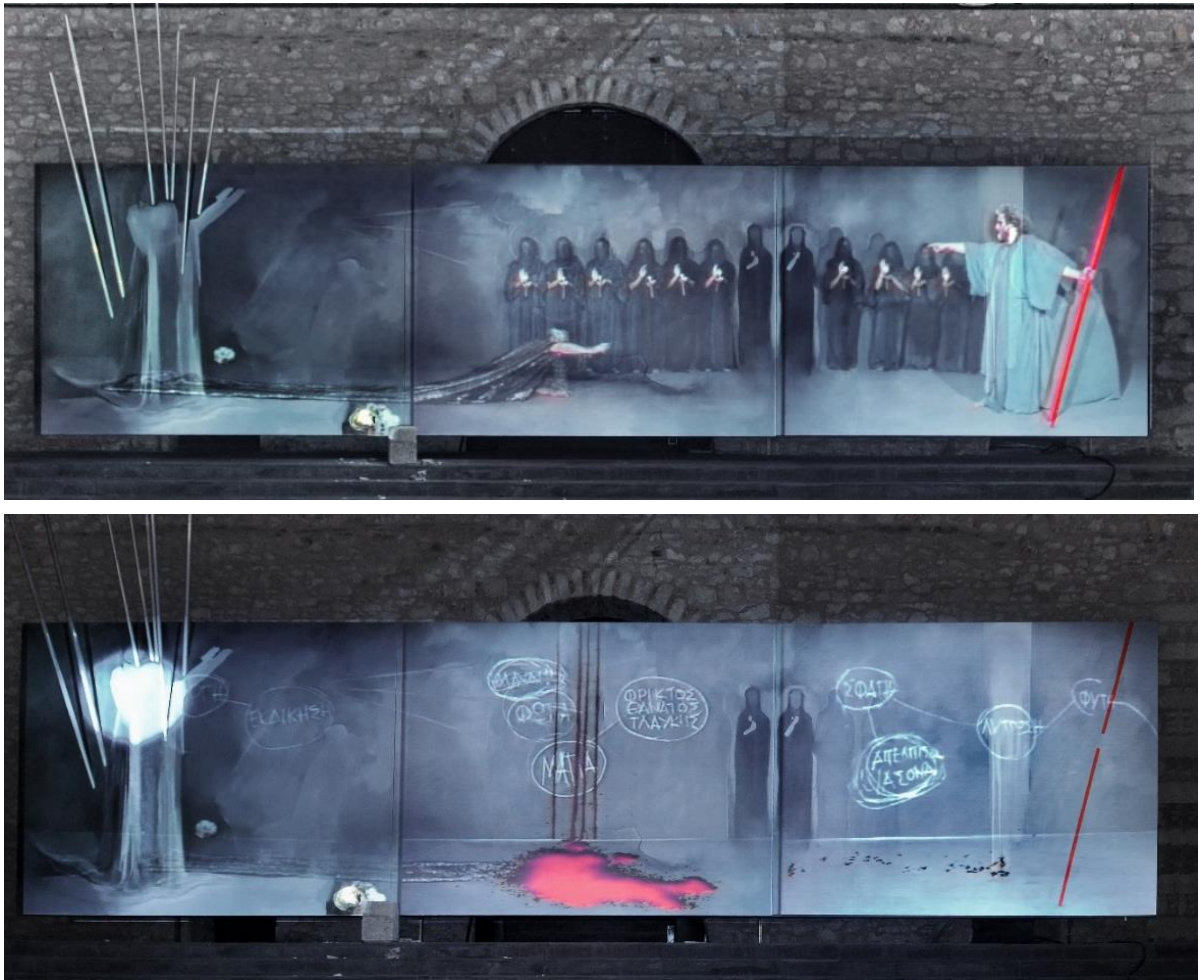
but the press coverage centred on the *Living Painting* installation. Tsoclis continued to produce ambitious video installations every few years like *Medea*, 1989, a 47-minute synchronised three-channel installation version of Euripides tragedy ([Figures 57 and 58](#)).



Figure 55. Tsoclis, C. (1985) *Harpooned Fish* [Video installation, colour video, silent, looped, projection on acrylic and metal on canvas, variable dimensions] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, inv. No. 1075/17, donated by the artist 2017 (installation view).



Figure 56. Tsoclis, C. (1986) *Portraits* [Video installation, colour video, silent, looped, projection on acrylic on canvas, variable dimensions] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, inv. No. 473/02, donated by the artist 2002 (installation view).



Figures 57 and 58. Tsoclis, C. (1989) *Medea* [Installation, colour video projection with sound on three three-dimensional paintings 500 x 375 cm each, 3 projectors, synchronisation, duration 45'] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, inv. No. 476/02, donated by the artist, 2002 (installation view).

This was presented in Troyes, France, in a cathedral. Tsoclis' intention was to “take those ancient texts whose value no one disputes and turn them into a contemporary artistic investigation” so as to be Greek but also a universal art understood by all (Tsoclis, 2009, p.132). The work is silent, and the narrative progresses through the movement of actors and through text inscribed on the background. Tsoclis produced several *Living Painting* works throughout his career, with the latest being *Sisyphus* (2016), a room-sized installation where one can see the artist at the end of a long corridor endlessly struggling with a rock. However, in the catalogue of a 2010 retrospective of all his *Living Painting* works, Tsoclis singled out *Harpooned Fish* (1985) as a peak in his career characteristically saying that he could have died that year and that an artist often has to sacrifice other good works in order to support his masterpiece or, in his own words “the work defining his contribution to art” (Tsoclis,

2009, p.130). In an oral history interview to the author conducted in 2018, Tsoclis elaborated on the reasons that inspired him to begin the *Living Painting* series: In 1977, Tsoclis visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York for the first time where he saw many impressionist works which he knew from his studies. In two subsequent visits, after significant changes in his life, upon seeing them again he felt uneasy and then angry. He described the realisation that the works are not alive as a trauma for the viewer. The subject of the harpooned fish resulted from a summertime experience under the hot Greek sun, while the artist was dazzled by the heat and saw several fishermen passing by, one by one, carrying a dying fish. Half asleep, he thought that all of them were carrying the same dying fish. With this work, Tsoclis tried to portray the martyrdom of the fish dying. *Harpooned Fish* (1985) was the artist's first contact with technology. He described how he purchased a BARCO projector from a nightclub owner that closed his business. He mentioned that the image settings were not controlled with buttons but with screws and screwdrivers and draws analogies between this process and "painting". As mentioned in the oral history interview, for the production of the video, Tsoclis hired technicians from the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation. For the leasing of the additional projectors for the installation in Venice, for *Harpooned Fish* (1985) together with the five *Portraits* (1986), the artist had to pay in instalments for the following five years (Schizakis, 2018b). Tsoclis wanted to focus on the "living" aspect of his painting, on the animating, life-giving properties of his art, and not on the "complicated" issues of technology. He called this kind of work "bastardised", because of the introduction of technological elements which he dislikes. In an interview, talking about *Conclusive Oedipus* (2006), a 13-screen *Living Painting* installation, Tsoclis was very critical of technology:

When I used projections in 1985 as a medium for the completion of my artistic vision, at least I had the satisfaction of proposing a new way of expression, which I think has yet to be used by any other artist of note, apart from Tony Oursler who projects on sculpture, but who was still a child when I exhibited those works in Venice.<sup>27</sup> Simple projections are now used by thousands of artists from all around the world, sometimes for important works and other times with no reason and with no emotional impact. Now, every poor artist has a video camera and

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<sup>27</sup> Tony Oursler (New York, 1957) was 28 years old at the time and already quite known for his animation videos. During the year of the 42nd Venice Biennale, he presented his first large video installation titled *Spheres of Influence* (1985).

records images that will later project, hoping to fill the emptiness of his soul or to become somehow “current”. It is even worse when he abandons himself to the innumerable capabilities of technology forgetting his own initial intentions, resulting in a work that is inflated without identity [my translation] (Tsoclis, 2009, p.133).

This danger of losing one’s aim, misguided by the capabilities of the technological apparatus, continues to concern Tsoclis, as is evident from the process of restoring and re-digitising the deteriorating *Medea* master beta tapes, currently taking place at the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens. In a recording of his commentary on the whole work for conservation purposes, he describes the ingenious methods used in the making of this work as well as the technical limitations at the time of the work’s making still affecting the work today (Schizakis, Tsoclis & Faros, 2021). Some of those imperfections were singled out for correction in the digital remaster, whereas some others were maintained, despite the possibility to have them digitally corrected. Among the limitations, it is interesting that although the work consists of three projections on three adjunct frames, for the recording of the action it was not possible to find three similar cameras, resulting in a middle frame of a slightly different perspective and image quality (Schizakis, Tsoclis & Faros, 2021).

Leda Papaconstantinou (Ambelonas, Larissa, 1945) graduated in 1971 from Maidstone College of Art and her practice was predominantly performative from the end of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s and 1980s, although the outcome was documented and presented through a variety of media like film, photography, installations, assemblages and sculpture. Leda Papaconstantinou had used film to document performances, and she had made performances in order to be documented on film, such as the works *Today What* (1969), *Oh Godard* (1969), *Votive* (1969), *Do you Love Me* (1969) and *Bite* (1970). She had collaborated with Carole Roussopoulos in 1981 for a video that was presented to a small audience in Spetses, but the first video she presented in a gallery, as part of her solo show *Recent Events* in Dracos Art Center, was *The Arrows are of Eros* (1985) produced with the help of Nikos Giannopoulos (Figure 59). The video begins with a close-up shot of the artist’s hands while she recites the following:

There are times when while executing an ephemeral gesture I stop and return to parts of it with special sweet attention, an expression of a desire to stop, contrary to the initial course and intention. The performance exists in the viewers’

memory only, in a private and vulnerable space in time. For this reason, I give in sometimes and I document particles of a greater gesture with stable mediums which memory cannot alter, affirming the possibility of a return to a specific point in time and space, which has a special meaning, like the small piece of almond in the heart of sweet candy [my translation] (Papaconstantinou, 1986).



Figure 59. Papaconstantinou, L. (1985) *The Arrows are of Eros* [Video, colour, duration 6' 47'', produced and edited by: Nikos Giannopoulos, Performance: Leda Papaconstantinou] Collection of the artist (videostill).

Following this recitation, the artist performs a series of gestures, while words like “again”, “secrets”, “no secrets”, “tenderly” appear sporadically written on her palms. At the end of the video, the palms open outwards to reveal a heart, upon which moving film images from the performance *Burning* are overlaid. The included excerpt of the performance, which happened a year earlier, is a document of the artist sitting on a chair within a circle of fire.

Marianne Strapatsakis (Athens, 1947) studied interior design at the Athens Technological Organisation during 1967–1969 before moving to Paris to study painting at the Ecole National des Beaux-Arts and art history at the Ecole du Louvre during 1969–1974 with a

scholarship from the Academy of Athens. In her early exhibitions, in the early 1980s, paintings were exhibited alongside music by contemporary Greek composers as she considered music an essential part of her painting practice, by synesthetically intervening on her choice of colour, tone and shape. Her early work, which she described as “constructivist”, consists of paintings alluding to both industrial machinery and electronic circuitry. However, she soon started painting over stainless-steel surfaces because the irregular reflection resembled the effect of light on seawater. She presented those works for the first time in 1985 in Medusa Art Gallery but by that time she has already been experimenting with recording their constantly changing form on video, which formed the video work *Vital Pulses* (1985) firstly presented in 1985 in Goethe-Institut Athen as part of a live event during Praxis music festival. As a single-channel video titled *Vital Pulses* (1985), it was initially presented at various group exhibitions like *Ist Document* at Gallery F in Athens and Studio Videograph in Thessaloniki in 1986. In *Ist Document*, an exhibition in conjunction with the publication of an “Art and Technology” special issue of the journal *Diplí Ikóna* (Deligiannis, 1986), Strapatsakis exhibited printed stills from the video as well as the video, in a live parallel programme also including presentations by Pantelis Xagoraris, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos and Costis Akritidis. In the short article published in *Diplí Ikóna*, Strapatsakis unfolds her views on video art:

The two main characteristics of video art are time and space because it is based on the constant movement and transformation of the image. It is an art where the real production time is the filming time. [...] Video as a technological medium assist in rendering all of those feelings and mental associations due to its technical capabilities, slow-fast motion (intervention in time), filming details invisible to the naked eye etc.

The constant movement of an image or simply of the scan lines of the screen produces another immediate way of approaching the viewer, that of rhythm, which in the case of my work, draws its content from the soundtrack. So, I studied the plasticity of image and the intensity of colour correlated to music.

This attempt aimed at the use of more than one sense to affect more senses of the receiver, so as the mental associations can find two ways of forming, a visual and an aural, having always in mind that the more senses are affected the more the viewer is participating and the closer we are to complete creation [my translation] (Strapatsakis, 1986, pp.29–32).

Strapatsakis also delved into more detail on the relation of video and her earlier practice of painting on curved reflective steel surfaces: “In the most recent work exhibited in Medusa Art Gallery, the title was *Painting in Four Dimensions* because time was the fourth dimension of those works, and it was a basic element in their transformation. Time was partaking in the distortion of space through the stainless-steel plates” (Strapatsakis, 1986, p.32). The first video installation she exhibited was realised in 1989 and was firstly presented at Journées Internationales de la Photographie et de l’Audiovisuel de Montpellier. The work travelled to Athens and was exhibited at the garden of Institut Français d’Athènes, then at the Municipal Gallery of Rhodes in 1990, at Institut Français de Thessalonique in 1991 and later at the National Gallery of Athens in 1992 for the exhibition *The Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience*. The work was titled *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* and consisted of four stainless steel plates with elements of an ancient Greek temple painted on their reflective surface, four television monitors displaying video images of the temple of Aphaea in Aegina superimposed with images of waving water and combined with imposing music composed by French electro-acoustic composer Ermeline Le Mezo who often collaborated with French video artist Robert Cahen (Figures 60 and 61). The combination of the two images creates a third one, of a temple reflected on the water. Everything is submerged in four transparent plexiglass cylinders filled with water and sea pebbles. With water as the dominant element in this work, *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* (1989) refer to birth, to ‘primal soup’ theories and in a civilisation in embryonic stage (Schizakis, 2011). The end titles credit French video artist Robert Cahen as the video production advisor. In Cahen’s own words, this video was:

Both a descriptive work and a generator of impressions, the video projection in Marianne Strapatsakis’ installation comes to complement and enrich the notion of memory. [...] These images convey a sense of time (the seasons, the passage of time) as well as motion (a coming-and-going, a back-and-forth between the exterior and the interior of the temple, alternating views of earth and sky). In the video’s second part, the images seem to vibrate (by means of special effects), to come alive at a chaotic pace: viewers experience a sense of precarious hovering; a vertigo-like feeling that forces them into a daydream of portentous moments in history” (Cahen, 1989, p.39).



Figure 60. Strapatsakis, M. (1989) *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* [Installation, stainless steel, oil pastel, drawing ink, plexiglas, water, television monitors, colour video with sound] Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Crete (Installation view from an exhibition of the work at Yiali Tzami in Chania, Crete, 2020).



Figure 61. Strapatsakis, M. (1989) *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* [installation, stainless steel, oil pastel, drawing ink, Plexiglas, water, television monitors, colour video with sound] Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Crete (videostill).



The relation of the work, and its ability to address history, in general, and specifically, is central in the reviews of *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* (1989), where every review of the work while mentioning the technological aspects of its production, praised the artists' capability of dealing with the overwhelming subject of antiquity. An example is the review of art critic Athena Schina:

The difficulty that Strapatsakis successfully overcame was ancient times and everything that defines this era seen from a sentimental point of view. Freed from complex feelings towards the past and with extraordinary originality, the artist uses architectural elements from the Temple of Aphaea that intercept her visual environments. [...] Her video art, plexiglass and water, present a complex language of expression, where the various levels feed, and at the same time undermine one another, creating new structural elements, like organic articulations of a vertebrate generative structure. (Schina, 1990, p.51).

Similarly, Niki Loizidi states:

In *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past*, a work by Marianne Strapatsakis, the interplay of reflected images is not employed in a metaphorical or symbolic fashion, but rather as one of the installation's organic, structural elements. [...] In my view, the very use of means and materials (screens submerged in water, attached to four double-wall columns made of plexiglas and stainless steel foil) refers to a poetics that is no more "modern" than it is part of a rational and thus split awareness of cultural products and historical memory. (Loizidi, 1999, p.63)

Among the reviews it is evident that there is some media bias regarding video, often viewed as an element irreconcilable with art: "[...] the temple of Athena Aphaia in Marianne Strapatsakis' work, its relationship with the sea and the sky, is filtered through personal experience and thus allows us to forget the video screen, to escape the reality of technology and to dream instead[...]" (Maragou, 1990, p.47).

Marianne Strapatsakis was the art director of *Archaeology and the Arts* journal since 1981, a role that gave her insightful knowledge on issues of archaeological practice and history,

which are evidently the inspiration and subject of her work, as was the case with *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* (1989).

From the majority of those case studies, we can see how video was used as part of a wider artistic practice, alongside performance, painting and sculpture, whereas much fewer are the cases of artists whose use of video was from the outset or gradually evolved to be at the epicentre of their practice. It is also important to note how differently each artist approached the technical aspect of video creation and the varying degree of involvement, from relying completely to the assistance of professionals to assuming a central role in the making of their work. It is also interesting to note how critical appraisal was centred on the work of already established artists and was often defensive of its technological elements.

### 5.2.2 Group exhibitions 1986–1992

Before 1990, group exhibitions that included video works were rare in Greece. In most of the early group exhibitions with video works the subject was video art itself, and the aim of the presentation was to introduce a new medium. Even for the few exhibitions that were part of a larger institutional programme, there was no curator or critic involved and the exhibited works were decided by one or more of the participating artists, with no other connecting or interpretative element such as theme or technique. Also, the organisations that provided support for those exhibitions were in their vast majority newly founded or temporary, subsections of a reoccurring event such as festivals and biennials. Some specialised organisations that formed towards the end of the 1980s did not manage to maintain their long-term operation. As was the case with screenings and broadcasting video art, group exhibitions of video art were often organised aiming at the presentation of the work of creators who felt they were left out of the established art circuit. Organisations that supported video art events also gained visibility by taking advantage of the aura of novelty that video art had at the time, probably with the aim to reach out to a new and younger audience.

The first group exhibition exclusively showing video works was realised in 1986 in Thessaloniki, in Videograph, a private video production studio managed by photo-reporter Yiannis Kouitzoglou and illustrator/ animator/director George Baganas. This presentation included existing works, not any new productions, and the only linking element was the

medium of video.<sup>28</sup> Strangely, the wording used for the exhibition is vague: Giannopoulos describes it in an article as a “collective presentation” (Giannopoulos, 1986), while in the oral history he clarifies:

We did two (exhibitions) in Thessaloniki. The first one was in a private space. We did the following: we placed plinths with monitors on top. They had no television sets available; there were the tubes and the videoscope with two headphones and each visitor could listen. Each tube featured another artist. We recorded those in tapes that played in a loop. We did that in Thessaloniki and we did that in Heraklion [my translation] (Schizakis, 2018c).<sup>29</sup>

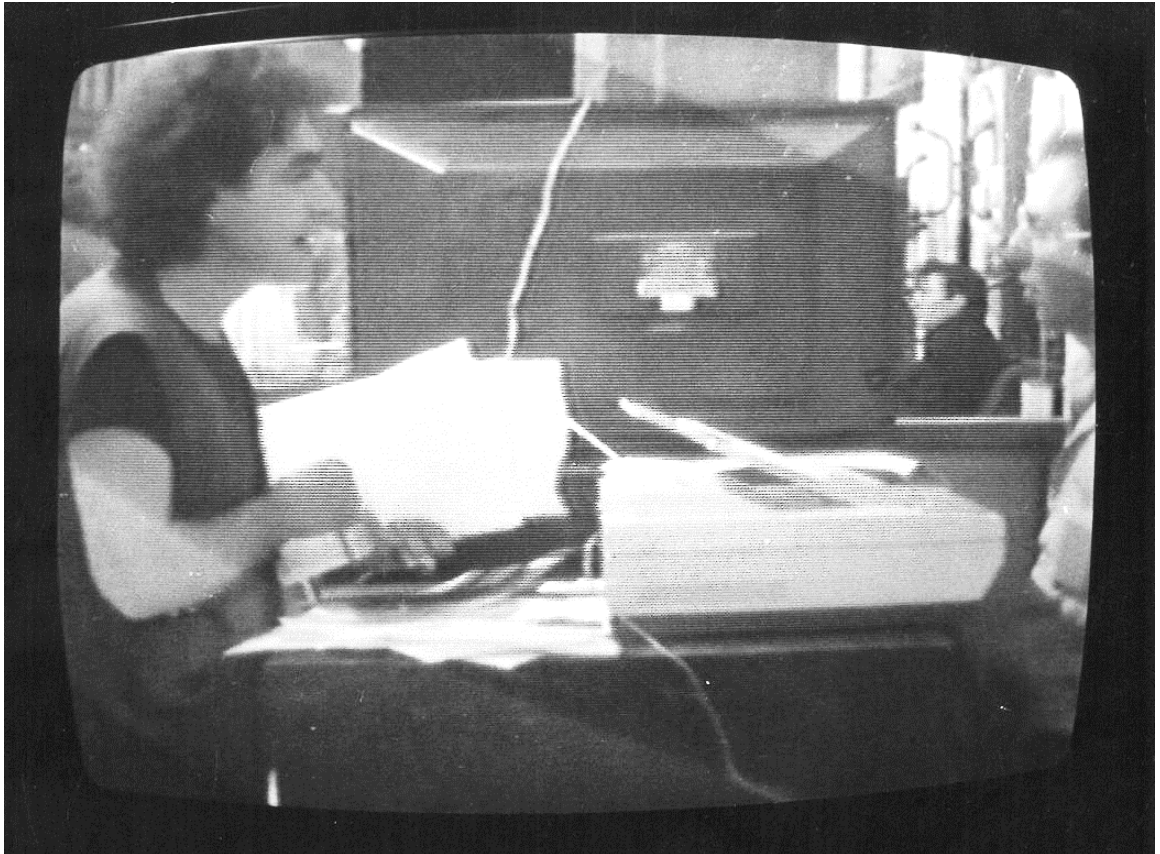
The same year, the Second Biennial of Young Artists from the European Countries of the Mediterranean took place in Thessaloniki. It was a major artistic event with more than 350 participants from artistic disciplines like architecture, fashion, dance, music, comics, cinema, photography, industrial design, theatre, literature, jewellery and video. It was the first large artistic event that includes a video art section with works by Yiannis Kouitzoglou, Damian Georgiadis, Dimitris Mourtzopoulos, Konstantinos Kapetanidis, Margarita Ovadia, Nikos Patiniotis, Marinos Pashaloudis, Konstantinos Stratoudakis, Tassos Boulmetis, Vangelis Moladakis. As was the case with the Studio Videograph exhibition, this event also included existing works and not new productions. The inclusion of video art as a category distinct from visual arts is also indicative of its status at the time. The participation in every section of the biennale was decided by several distinct committees, and part of the video section committee was the architect and artist Mit Mitropoulos. As a “special project” of the video art section, he proposed and realised *The Line of the Horizon* (1986) (Ministry of Culture, General Secretariat for Youth; Municipality of Thessaloniki, 1986, p.144) ([Figures 62–64](#)). He describes the realisation of the project in two articles, in *Diplí Ikóna* journal (Mitropoulos, 1986d, pp.112–135) and in *Leonardo* (Mitropoulos, 1992, pp.135–142). This project involved a facsimile network between 27 locations arranged from east to west. The plan was to connect Thessaloniki with other coastline locations across the globe: A supertanker ship

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<sup>28</sup> The exhibition included works by Leda Papaconstantinou, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Vangelis Moladakis, Michalis Kokoris, Nikos Giannopoulos, Manthos Santorineos, Tassos Boulmetis, Margarita Ovadia, Alexandra Katsivelaki and George Baganas.

<sup>29</sup> By “private space”, Nikos Giannopoulos refers to the Studio Videograph exhibition, as the other presentation in Thessaloniki was the 28th Thessaloniki Greek Film Festival. By Heraklion, Giannopoulos refers to the Heraklion Video Art Festival 1989.

in Ormuz Straits of Persian Gulf, Limassol in Cyprus, Alexandria in Egypt, Rhodes, Heraklion, Chania, Melos, Chalkis, Volos, Athens, Kalamata and Patras in Greece, Valletta in Malta, Tunis in Tunisia, Naples, Rome and Turin in Italy, Nice, Marseilles and Montpellier in France, Barcelona in Spain, a bulk carrier ship at the port of Lisbon in Portugal, a houseboat in Maas River in the Netherlands, Toronto in Canada and New York in the U.S.A. (Mitropoulos, 1988, p.310).

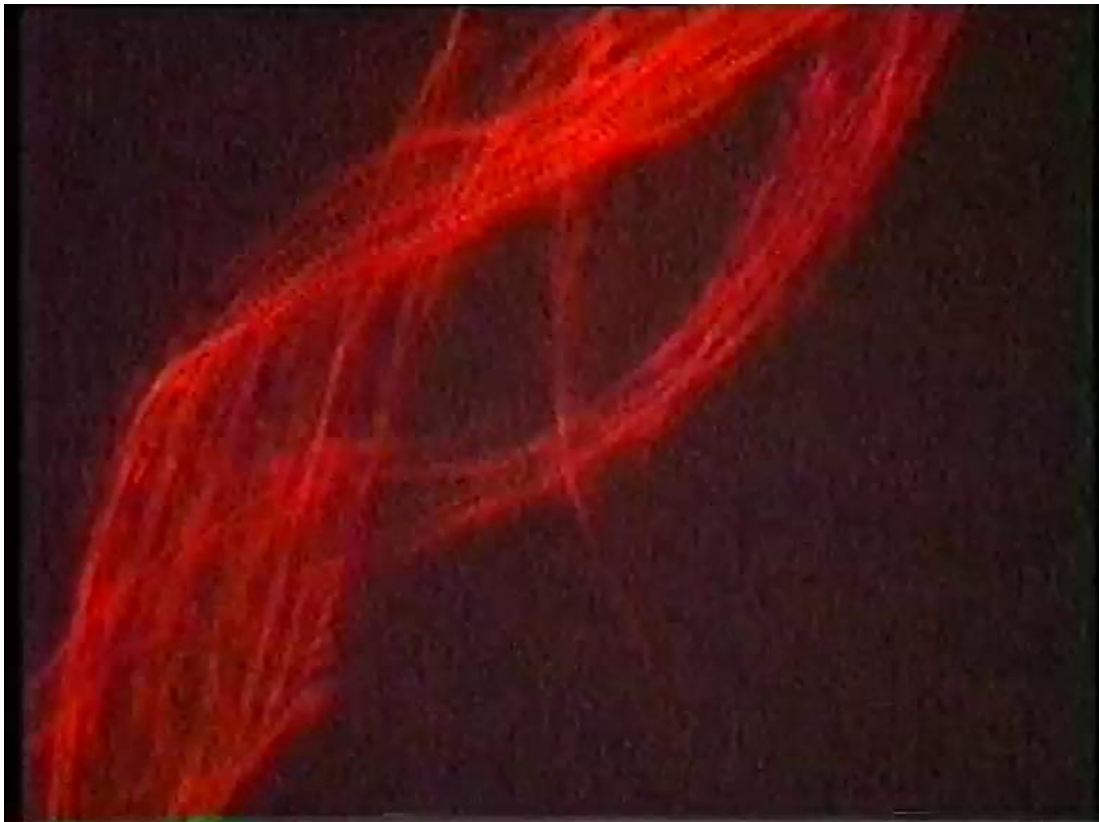


Figures 62–64. Mitropoulos, M. (1986) *The Line of the Horizon*, Collection of the artist (videostills from the documentation video of the event).

Participants from these locations would send and receive a sequence of polaroids and sketches of the sunset as the earth rotated around the sun. *The Line of the Horizon* (1986) became a major event of the biennale, with a parallel dance group performance on the city's waterfront, the presence and participation of the mayor as well as the participation of elementary schools. The project facilitated interactivity on a global scale and utilised a variety of transmission technologies, such as satellite to ship phone transmission, facsimile through a phone line and even phone-to-phone in the case of the earthquake struck Kalamata (Mitropoulos, 1992). Mitropoulos wrote an account of the difficulties of the project, including the obsolescence of the existing telephone network in Greece and the inability of the organisers to provide additional equipment as the project evolved. He also estimated that the proposal was accepted for realisation "due to heterogeneous factors that simply converged" (Mitropoulos, 1988, p.310). The initial proposal's plan to project all images on television screens did not happen (Mitropoulos, 1986e). Nevertheless, the realisation of this project was a major contribution to media arts in Greece which has hardly been acknowledged. Despite Mitropoulos' criticism, it is one of the few cases in Greece where a large international group exhibition becomes a platform and provides support for a large-scale media experimental project.

It was also in 1986 that the exhibition *The Physiognomy of Postwar Art in Greece* took place at the Municipal Gallery of Athens. The exhibition, curated by Eleni Vakalo, originated in a four-volume work with the same title, and attempted a complete evaluation and classification of contemporary art in Greece. Among the categories of the exhibition, as well as within the curatorial text, Vakalo included video art together with installation and performance and includes the video work from the intervention of Angelos Skourtis and Li Likoudi at the National Garden in Athens in 1983 (Vakalo, 1986) as discussed in Chapter 2.

The Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center was founded in 1988 as a private cultural space. During the first year of its operation, it presented the exhibition *4 Critical Reviews* in which four different curators realised the same number of exhibitions. In this context, Anna Kafetsi curated an important body of works by Pantelis Xagoraris, among which was the laser work *Ta Panta Rei* [Everything Flows] (1984). As discussed in Chapter 3, although this work was first presented as a live laser projection with music by Stefanos Vassileiadis in 1984, it was made again, recorded on video and presented to the public in an exhibition through the means of video screens (Figures 65 and 66).



Figures 65 and 66. Xagoraris, P. (1984–1988) *Ta Panta Rei* [Video] Archive No. 3571, Art Archive, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001 (Videostill from the documentation video of the exhibition *4 Critical Reviews*, 1988, in the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center).

In the same show, in the section curated by Efi Strousa, Angelos Skourtis presented a work titled *Post Script I* (1986), a video installation of sculptural illegible ideograms. For its

making, Skourtis used the same technique as for the earlier work, i.e. projecting photographic slides of hand-drawn ideograms on a body painted white and recording it with a video camera. In the installation, Skourtis incorporated small video monitors among stern sculptural black forms, thus adding an audio-visual, performative, bodily and painterly element on a sculptural work. Skourtis regarded the piece as a work envisioning a new language of a holy-erotic civilisation, of a sanctity of ideas and human relations, shown in his installation through the body, and the imaginary communication code inscribed on it (Skourtis, 1990, p.98).

In 1989, the Art and Technology Sector of the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center organised the week-long art and technology event *Art without Borders*. It included a parallel exhibition with works by Nikos Alexiou, Stephen Antonakos, Nikos Giannopoulos, Hellenic Institute of Holography, Manolis Zacharioudakis, Christos Konstantopoulos, Nikos Patiniotis, Manthos Santirinaios, Nakis Tastsoglou, Ersi Venetsanou, Kostas Vrouvas, Stefanos Vassileiadis, Costas Tsoclis, George Tsolodimos. Although entirely without any other context apart from the use of technology in the production of the artworks, this concurrent exhibition included a variety of practices and not just digital image. Among the works, apart from video and computer technology, there were works of electronic sound, optics, laser, holography and even robotics by a wide array of artists. It included works by celebrated artists like Stephen Antonakos and Costas Tsoclis, emerging artists like Nikos Alexiou and Manolis Zacharioudakis, distinguished musician Stefanos Vassileiadis, video artists like Nikos Giannopoulos and even a scientific/educational organisation such as the Hellenic Institute of Holography (Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, 1989a).

During June-July 1989, the 4th Patras International Festival, under the artistic directorship of Thanos Mikroutsikos, included a week dedicated to Art and Technology, with talks, video art screenings and a video art exhibition. The screening section included works by Patrick Prado, Dominic Beloir, Zbienie Rybczynski among others as well as works by Greek video artists. It included an exhibition of computer art, holograms, videos and video installations all under the umbrella of video art, as well as a series of talks about art and technology, mostly introductory of various genres of art and technology (Municipality of Patras, 1989).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Screenings included works by Margarita Ovadia, Leda Papaconstantinou, Vangelis Moladakis, George Papakonstantinou, Marianne Strapatsakis, Tassos Boulmetis, Manthos Santorineos, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Avra Georgiou, Nikos Giannopoulos and Angelos Skourtis. The exhibition participants were Nikos Giannopoulos, Nelly Kasimatis, Manthos Santroinaios, Nikos Patiniotis, George Tsolodimos and

The video technology monthly magazine *Video Inn* had a detailed presentation with photographs and descriptions of works spanning from poetic readings (“Isn’t making video art a bit like turning the world upside down?”) to completely technical observations (“after its development, the hologram is visible only if lit with a proper light source at the same angle as the one it was shot”) (Fourgiotis, 1989, pp.21–23).

In 1989 and 1992, Alexandra Katsivelaki realised a festival of video art in the city of Heraklion. The first edition included mostly works already presented in recent exhibitions and screenings.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the festival was introduced with a short note by the National Gallery curator Anna Kafetsi, who concluded that the group of artists working with video in Greece have a “dynamism that is of special potential” (Kafetsi, 1989). The second event following three years later also included the same participants with the addition of works by Constantine Deligiannis, Pandora Mouriki, George Pasiyas, Costas Stratoudakis and Hadjipanayotou-Petrou, and included video installations together with single-channel videos (Katsivelaki, 1992).

In 1990, Nikos Giannopoulos, George Papakonstantinou and Nikos Patiniotis undertook the organisation of the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies as part of the 5th Patras International Festival. Due to the postponement of the opening date of the latter, the integration with the festival was not possible and the meeting was hastily re-organised for Athens (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, p.8). The meeting included 42 listed participants, representatives of museums, television channels, production companies and video distributors from 12 countries, mostly from Europe but also from Canada and the U.S.A. Events included a conference with focus on the distribution of electronic arts. The festival included more than 300 works, videotapes and video installations. In the necessary transfer of 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies in Athens, the organisers collaborated with the galleries and art spaces Gallery Titanium, Evmaros Art space, Medusa Art Gallery and AD Gallery for hosting parts of the event, including its video installations.

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Nestoras Papanicolopoulos. There were the following scheduled talks: Nestoras Papanicolopoulos “The Digital Image as a Work of Art”; Maurice Avdelas “Electronics and Art”; George Papakonstantinou “The Specificity of the Electronic Image”; Nikos Patiniotis “The Perception of Space in Video Art”; Nikos Giannopoulos “The Art of Video and Issues of Narrative, Visual Aesthetics and Time” (Municipality of Patras, 1989).

<sup>31</sup> The participants were Margarita Ovidia, Leda Papaconstantinou, Vangelis Moladakis, George Papakonstantinou, Tassos Boulmetis, Manthos Santorineos, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Nikos Giannopoulos, Avra Georgiou, Angelos Skourtis, Marianne Strapatsaki, as well as the work *Mythologies* (n.d.) by Maria Choulaki, a photographer and video artist trained close to experimental French film and television director Jean-Christophe Averty (1928–2017), pioneer in the use of video and the bluescreen technique.



The Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center presented an interdisciplinary musical video performance by Dimitris Kamarotos and Kostis Papadopoulos based on the music of Nikos Skalkotas with the assistance of Manthos Santorineos titled *Nine Rhythms for Nikos Skalkotas* (1990) initiated from the notion that tradition can have a negative effect on inspiration and with the aim of creating a strong form which involved three video sequences and a live performance from musicians. EIKONA Audiovisual Research and Application, a production studio founded and administered by Manthos and Dodo Santorineos, presented a video installation by Pandora Mouriki, titled *Pezi* [Pedestrian] (1990) described as a relief with impressionist colour palette and video, as well as a video installation by Kostas Stratoudakis titled *Int-o* (1990), that was inspired by Alfred Bester's novel *Golem 100* and utilised colouring video effects for rendering the hallucinogenic trip of a couple against the Athenian cityscape. Gallery Titanium presented a sculptural video installation by Dimitris Dokatzis titled *Persephone* (1990), a construction with steel, stone, glass, resin, light bulbs and video screens projecting eroticised female body parts. The subject, according to the artists' statement was energy transformed to information (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, p.86). Evmaros hosted the video installation *Wave Motion 2* (1985–1990) by Danish video artist Torben Soeborg consisting of six television monitors displaying sea waves. The television images were reflected on broken glass spread on the floor. Another space collaborating with 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies included the following works: Nikos Patiniotis' *Peter and Renee* (1990), a moving video layer over a still drawing, reference to Peter Campus and René Magritte, Alexandra Katsivelaki's *Without Walls* (1990), a voyeuristic closed-circuit television installation, Nelly Kassimati's *Athens by Night* (1990), a sculptural rendition of a woman's body with an embedded monitor alongside a double bed-sized mirror structure with two embedded monitors as a reference to the erotic relation between body and cityscape, Petros Petrou and Stella Chatzipanagiotou's *Poseidon and Amphitrite* (1990), a metal and neon light structure embedding a monitor with changing colour on a printed monochromatic version of a painting of *Neptune and Amphitrite* (1516) by Jan Gossaert. Nikos Giannopoulos exhibited *Dancer of the Universe – A Tribute to Wolf Vostell* (1989), a turtle-shaped video sculpture in which scales from the turtles' shell were replaced with television monitors displaying fragments from an interview in which Wolf Vostell toyed with a live turtle using it as an example of the audience: "the audience when confronted with an artistic programme feels like a turtle turned on its back, protesting that there is no common ground with these things. In a way, making an artistic video is like turning the world upside down" (Giannopoulos, Santorineos & Ovadia, 1986,

p.42). Angelos Skourtis presented *Post Script I* (1986), the same video installation that had been presented in *4 Critical Reviews*.

In 1990, the 4th Biennial of Young Artists from the European Countries of the Mediterranean is realised in Marseilles and, in 1991, the Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Athens presents the artworks that formed the Greek participation. Among the participants Aemilia Papaphilippou presented the video installation *Salt Testament* (1989) with video images of liminal body segments on a UV lit construction that covered a television monitor in salt. Konstantinos Stratoudakis presented a work titled *Small Electronic Poetics* (1989) in the same exhibition (Sidiropoulou, 1991).

*Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience* was a controversial and groundbreaking exhibition in terms of understanding the context of Greek contemporary art. The curator of the exhibition, Anna Kafetsi, outlined her approach in the introductory text, as one that tries to explore the “gradations” of the “rift” with tradition and representation by adopting a view of modernism as a notion beyond place and beyond era (Kafetsi, 1992, p.17). The exhibition included *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* (1989) by Marianne Strapatsakis and was also the first major presentation of a work by Klonaris/Thomadaki in Greece. The artistic duo realised the expanded cinema installation *Fictions: A Film* (1992), which combined black and white photographic prints, video, a motorcycle and music in order to create a unified narrative in a space lit with UV light. *Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience* was produced by and realised in The National Gallery – Alexandros Soutsos Museum and was the first exhibition of a major public institution in Greece to include media works among an overview of Greek art. *Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience* was also the first major group exhibition that included video works and placed them in a wider context alongside other mediums and practices. In the following years, there were more exhibitions, in galleries, museums and private institutions that presented media works outside a media-specific context, leading to the conclusion that the media bias dominating the art establishment in Greece started to recede around the middle of the 1990s.

In 1996 for example, three major exhibitions that took place in Athens are evidence of a new approach: *Art at the End of the Twentieth Century: Selections from the Whitney Museum of American Art*, a travelling exhibition, is hosted at The National Gallery – Alexandros Soutsos

Museum. The DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art realises *Everything that's Interesting is New: Works from the Dakis Joannou Collection* at the Factory, the exhibition space of the Athens School of Fine Arts, curated by Jeffrey Deitch. The same year, London-based Greek curator Emily Tsingou realised the video art exhibition *Push-ups* at the same space. The first two cases are international exhibitions where video and video installations are included in equal terms with other media. The third is a video-only exhibition of Greek and international artists emerging in the 1990s.<sup>32</sup> Not even one of the artists active in the period examined by this research was among its participants. In 1998, the Fournos Center for Digital Culture, which Manthos and Dodo Santorineou founded in 1992, realised the First Greek Festival for Art and Technology. The catalogue of the festival is prefaced by the Greek Minister of Culture and the Greek Minister of Innovation. Among the sponsors are the Greek dealership of Apple computers, I.T. magazines of high circulation and media companies. The participating works were divided into various sections such as video art, computer graphics, web page, digital photography, with distinct but equally rich student subsections. Among the participants, one can see established new media artists such as Alexandra Katsivelaki, Makis Faros and Vouvoula Skoura alongside the emerging generation of media practitioners, still during their studies. Speakers at the accompanying conference were invited to map out the position of Greece in the digital civilisation under formation at the time (Santorineos, 1998). From the corporate and political support of the event, it is evident that towards the end of the decade of the 1990s policy makers are making a turn towards supporting new media art.

### **5.3 Broadcasting and screening video art**

#### **5.3.1 Broadcasting video art**

ERT, the channel of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, scarcely used video technology. As mentioned before in this chapter, television productions were shot and edited in 16mm film and broadcast using telecine equipment up to the early 1990s, and there was a hostile attitude from filmmakers against the new medium (Papakonstantinou, 1992, p.222). However, there are a few exceptions to youth-oriented programmes and a younger generation of directors and producers, which embraced the new medium. In the 1980s, ERT

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<sup>32</sup> It included works by the following artists: Andreas Angelidakis, Alex Bag, Vanessa Beecroft, Henry Bond, Cosima von Bonin, Mat Collishaw, Cheryl Donegan, Sylvie Fleury, Giuseppe Gabbelone, Lothar Hempel, Karen Kilimnik, Dimitris Kozaris, Alix Lambert, Sean Landers, Miltos Manetas, Maria Papadimitriou, Pipilotti Rist, Julia Scher, Barbara Visserz.

was already a large state-run organisation with the ability to host and present a multitude of different and even conflicting viewpoints. Nikos Giannopoulos in his oral history interview with the author gave an interesting account of his involvement with the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation and his transition from 35mm and 16mm film to video, which was at that time seen as a cheap alternative to film. In this interview, he clearly described the significant differences in working for the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, which gained him recognition after hard work, and for working for advertising, which entailed significantly more earnings. He also described the strong cultural focus of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, under the leadership of important cultural figures such as Iakovos Kambanellis and Vassilis Vassilikos.<sup>33</sup> Most importantly, Giannopoulos described the spirit of the era and tells the story of how some of the main organisers of video art events in Greece started working together through the Video Art broadcast which he produced for ERT:

After the performances of *Before 1984* in Polyplano were over, Nikos Papadakis told me that Vassilis Vassilikos had also seen the performance and left a message for me. [...] So, I arranged a meeting at ERT and he told me that what we did was exceptional and he wanted me to produce a broadcast on the subject of video. What he meant by this, which I realised much later, was a broadcast for teaching people to use video, for making home videos. [...] Without knowing this I thought it was normal to make a series about the possibilities of video and video art. It was easy at that time to travel and find original video artists from Italy, France and England but I thought that we couldn't possibly do this and not also have Greek video artists. So, through Loukia Rikaki I met Manthos Santorineos and I already knew Tassos Boulmetis through his friend Dimitris Papadimitriou. Leda Papaconstantinou was a close friend and I knew she was making super 8 films so I knew she was up to it if I could help her with the video. [...] Almost a third of the material was by Greek creators. I can't remember how I met Alexandra Katsivelaki. [...] Everything on this broadcast was produced with ERT money. A bit later than my broadcast, *Chromata*, a video magazine, was launched and Loukia [Rikaki] was bold enough to include a video art piece every

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<sup>33</sup> Iakovos Kambanellis 1921–2011 was a poet, a playwright and a writer who also was the director of the Radio section of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation from 1981 to 1987.

Vassilis Vassilikos (b.1934) is a Greek author known internationally for his novel *Z*, also made into film by Costas Gavras. He was also the Director of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation for the period 1981-1984.

time. It was a broadcast with headlines, let's say, four or five minutes for various subjects. That's how we formed a team [...] [my translation] (Schizakis, 2018c).

The Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation channel ERT was a participating organisation at the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies in 1990. The event's catalogue includes the two broadcasts mentioned by Giannopoulos, *Video Art* and *Chromata* [Colours], as well as excerpts from the series *Periskopio* which "either directly refer to electronic art and audio-visual communication or present works of video art and composed images" (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, p. 89). *Video Art* was a six-broadcast series that aired in the period 1984–1985 and was produced by Nikos Giannopoulos' Narcissus Film Productions. The first episode began with a short history of video art and continued with the presentation of the artist Patrick Prado and his works *Sono Gioconda* (1981), *Amour Transcode* (1982) and *La Mauvaise Memoire* (1981). The second episode began with a definition of video art, continued with a presentation of Dominique Belloir and broadcast her works *Auto-portrait* (1984) (which was produced especially for the broadcast) *Memory* (1979) and *Digital Opera* (1980). Episode three opened with the subject of video art in Greece and presented the works *Landscapes* (1982) by Tassos Boulmetis, *Metro* (1985) by Vangelis Moladakis, *Narcissus* (1985) by Giannopoulos himself and closed with Tassos Boulmetis talking on the subject of electronic image-making. The fourth broadcast, aired in 1985, had as a subject the relation of music videos with video art and included videos from musicians such as Laurie Anderson, Paul Simon, Jim Morrison, Leonard Cohen, Elton John, Jean Luc Pondou and others. The fifth episode was about narrative in video art and had works by Belgian artists Walter Verdin, Albert Pepermans, Pieter Vereertbrugghen and Ann Francx. The last broadcast had visual art experimentation as its subject, with *T* (1985) by Manthos Santorineos, *Proteus* by Alexandra Katsivelaki, *Narcissus II* (1985) by Nikos Giannopoulos, *The Arrows are of Eros* (1985) by Leda Papaconstantinou and *Electronic Painting* (c.1985) by Nestoras Papanicolopoulos (Giannopoulos, 1986).

This is the first presentation of video art to the wider public, as at the time in Greece there were only two television channels. The broadcast had an educational element but also had links with popular culture. It was also important that this broadcast was the motive for the production of works by some of the invited international video artists but mostly for the Greek artists who participated. The presence of video art in public television continued briefly with *Chromata* broadcast, a weekly hour-long entertainment show produced by

Orama, Loukia Rikaki's production company. The description in the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies catalogue reads that it is a broadcast produced by a team of young people for young viewers with 8–10 five minute long subjects “treated by a different director and written by a different writer” with the aim of “discovering and presenting new and progressive tendencies in various sectors of expression and communication” (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, p.68). Rikaki also collaborated with Giannopoulos for the production of one of the latter's works for the German public television channel ZDF and the broadcast *Timecode* in 1989. The work, titled *Prometheus* (1989), is a six-minute colour video with music by George Christianakis and with a wordless narrative related to the progress of civilisation and ecological disaster ([Figure 67](#)).



Figure 67. Giannopoulos, N. (1989) *Prometheus* [Colour video with sound, duration 6'] Collection of the artist (videostill).

From the late 1980s to throughout the 1990s, many of the artists falling within the scope of this research had some involvement with television, either as directors of television documentaries, as producers of television series, videoclips, or more supporting roles (Nikos Giannopoulos, Manthos Santorineos, Margarita Ovidia, Loukia Rikaki, George Papakonstantinou to name a few). Although their expertise is evident and aspects of their

video art practice become apparent even in the more conventional context of mainstream television, there were no further broadcasts of video works in the examined period.

### 5.3.2 Screening video art

Unlike group exhibitions of video art, screenings varied in magnitude, inclusivity and aim. Apart from the main core of creators whose work was included in almost every screening and exhibition, there was a larger circle of video makers who infrequently participated in local or national festivals or even in the Greek section of international film and video festivals. A screening programme in the period in question would almost always be part of a larger festival with other sections and events, such as exhibitions and live performances. In accord with the absence of curatorial interpretation and mediation, evident in all exhibitions and screenings of the period, the only classification in these events would be nationality.

In June 1980, Polyplano Gallery in Athens hosted the first known video art screening in collaboration with Anna Canepa Video New York and with works by Les Levin, Eleanor Antin, Dennis Oppenheim, Allan Kaprow, with the title *To Próto Prógramma Tainión Vinteo Téchnis* [First Programme of Video Art Movies] (Papadakis, 1980, p.33). It is described as a programme, and it is unclear whether it was presented on a monitor or cinema screen. During that time, there was no video art produced in Greece that could have been included in this or a similar screening programme. In 1984, Giannopoulos began the television broadcast *Video Art* and during the same year he compiled a video art screening for the 6th super 8 Film Festival at the Institute Francais de Thessalonique which for the first time included an “amateur video and video art” section (Moumtzis, 1984, p.6). Giannopoulos also got involved in the organisation of the Greek participation of the 14th Festival International du Nouveau Cinéma et de la Vidéo de Montréal [Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and Video], of 5th Tokyo Video Festival in 1985, the 3rd International Video and Television Festival, Montbéliard in 1986 and in the Experimental Images Week organised by the London Film-makers’ Co-op the same year.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Greek participation of the 14th Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and Video in 1984 consisted of the work *Allegories* (1984) by Marianna Theodoridou. The Greek section of the 3rd International Video and Television Festival, Montbéliard in 1986 consisted of works by Vangelis Moladakis, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Leda Papaconstantinou, Manthos Santorineos, Margarita Ovardia and Nikos Giannopoulos. The Greek section of the Experimental Images Week in London in 1986 consisted of works by Aris Prodromidis, Nikos Giannopoulos, Leda Papaconstantinou, Tassos Boulmetis, Manthos Santorineos, Vagelis Moladakis, Yioulia Gazetopoulou and films by Thanassis Rentzis and Antoinete Angelidis.

Giannopoulos actively encouraged the production of new works for these occasions, as in the case of the work *Allegories* (1984) by Marianna Theodoridou for the Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and Video in 1984. This was Theodoridou's first video for which she realised a short performance of hiding her face in her palms in front of a mirror fragment (Figures 73 and 74).



Figures 68 and 69. Theodoridou, M. (1984) *Allegories* [Colour video with sound, duration 6'] Collection of the artist (videostills).

The piece was realised in one take, with a borrowed camera operated by a friend. Although in her individual practice she dealt with issues of communication and identity, she had been



referring to mass media through performances such as the one made for Avgi Festival in Thessaloniki in 1981, where she walked through a television set frame.

Meanwhile, in Greece, Marianne Strapatsakis experimented with video recording the reflections of coloured light on the stainless-steel surfaces she used in her painting practice. The Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation producer and director Takis Hatzopoulos lent her a video camera and introduced her to a camera operator who worked with her into the project, which later evolved into the work *Vital Pulses* (1985). The work comprised close up video recordings of reflections of Strapatsakis' pre-existing sculptural objects. In this work, Marianne Strapatsakis responded to initial music compositions by Thanassis Zlatanios, who later completed the music in relation to the final videos. *Vital Pulses* (1985) was firstly presented in 1985 in Goethe-Institut as part of a live event during the music festival Praxis (Schizakis, 2017b).

In 1987, the Thessaloniki Film Festival realised its 28th edition under the directorship of experimental filmmaker Thanassis Rentzis. The festival included for the first time a video section with screenings from France, Italy, Belgium and Greece. All videos were presented on a video screen in the centre of the exhibition space with a different programme for each day of the festival's two weeks duration. The festival was the most extensive presentation of video art to that date in Greece, with works by most practitioners that became established as well as some artists presenting their work for the first and only time in a large audience.<sup>35</sup> There was a Belgian video art programme with works by Walter Verdin, Albert Pepermans, Pieter Vereertbrugghen and Ann Francx, Mari Andre, and Ken Teys, a French programme slot with works by Dominique Beloir and Patrick Prado, an Italian section with works by Maurizio Bonora, Fabrizio Plessis, Giorgio Cattani, Cristianna Moldi Ravenna, Guido Sartdrelli as well as two documentaries on American video art. Screenings each day opened with a different movie made for television produced by the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation. The festival organised a public discussion with Manthos Santorineos, Marianne Strapatsakis, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Giorgos Baganas, Kostas Alexandridis and Aris Prodromidis on the subject of "Video Art as Means of Communication"

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<sup>35</sup> Single channel screening participants were Leda Papaconstantinou, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Manthos Santorineos, Nikos Giannopoulos, Vangelis Moladakis, Tassos Boulmetis, Aris Prodromidis, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Marianna Theodoridou, Margarita Ovadia, Dimitris Mourtzopoulos, Damianos Georgiadis, Giannis Kouitzoglou, Agis Kelpekis, Dimosioipalliliko Retire, Marianne Strapatsakis, George Papakonstantinou whereas Aris Prodromidis, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Thannasis Chondros and Alexandra Katsiani participated with video installations.

(Baganas, 1987, p.7). Last but not least, there was a separate 60-page catalogue for the video section, with texts by Tassos Boulmetis, Nikos Giannopoulos, George Papakonstantinou and Nestoras Papanicolopoulos. It is evident that the festival tried to showcase an international sample of video art in its various manifestations, while highlighting the work of Greek creators and educating the public through the event and the catalogue mediation. It is also notable that almost all video makers active at the time were included in the programme and the catalogue. Tassos Boulmetis (Istanbul, 1957) had presented his video works already several times, the first time being in Giannopoulos' *Video Art* broadcast in 1984. The two works presented in the festival, *Landscapes* (1982) (Figure 70) and *Rubaiyat* (1982), have an exceptional place in the festival as Boulmetis describes them in detail in his four-page essay on video art, part of the catalogue (Baganas, 1987, pp.14–17). *Landscapes* (1982) was realised as part of his thesis submitted to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and supervised by experimental director Shirley Clarke (New York, 1919–Boston, 1997). The work is based on Dimitris Papadimitriou's 1981 album with the same title and originated after the composer proposed this collaboration to Boulmetis. The work has two parts in which Boulmetis uses different colouring techniques. *Rumbaiyat* (1982) is a computer graphics animation, based on ideas of harmony, which was shot in 16mm film as part of a CGI class supervised by experimental american animator John Whitney (Pasadena, 1917–Los Angeles, 1995).

An important first presentation to the public was the work of George Papakonstantinou (Athens, 1953). Having studied architecture at the National Polytechnic School of Athens and later Video and Computer Graphics at the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs in Paris, Papakonstantinou had been making videos since 1985. The works presented at the festival were *Ce qui se Passe, Quand il ne se Passe Rien* [What Happens When Nothing Happens] (1986) (Figure 71), which already had been presented in AVé 86 in Arnhem, and his most recent *Espace Inutile* (1987). *Ce qui se Passe, Quand il ne se Passe Rien* (1986), which had been made as part of his studies, combined voice narration from Georges Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, jazz music and footage from St-Sulpice square in Paris, the place of Perec's observations. The videocamera's panoramic views combined different temporal moments in the same frame, in increasing complexity. *Espace Inutile* (1987) made in the following year, is also based on a text by Perec, on the section "A space without a use" from *Species of Spaces* (Perec, 1997, p.33) and is an attempt at an audio-visual interpretation of the text. Papakonstantinou's importance cannot be evaluated simply from his video works,

but also from his future participation in the realisation of the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies as well as his involvement with the presentation of the Greek section of video art in the exhibition *Panorama Europeo del Videoarte y Palmarés TV* in the framework of European Capital of Culture Madrid 1992.



Figure 70. Boulmetis, T. (1982) *Landscapes* [Colour video, with sound, duration 5'] © The artist (videostill).

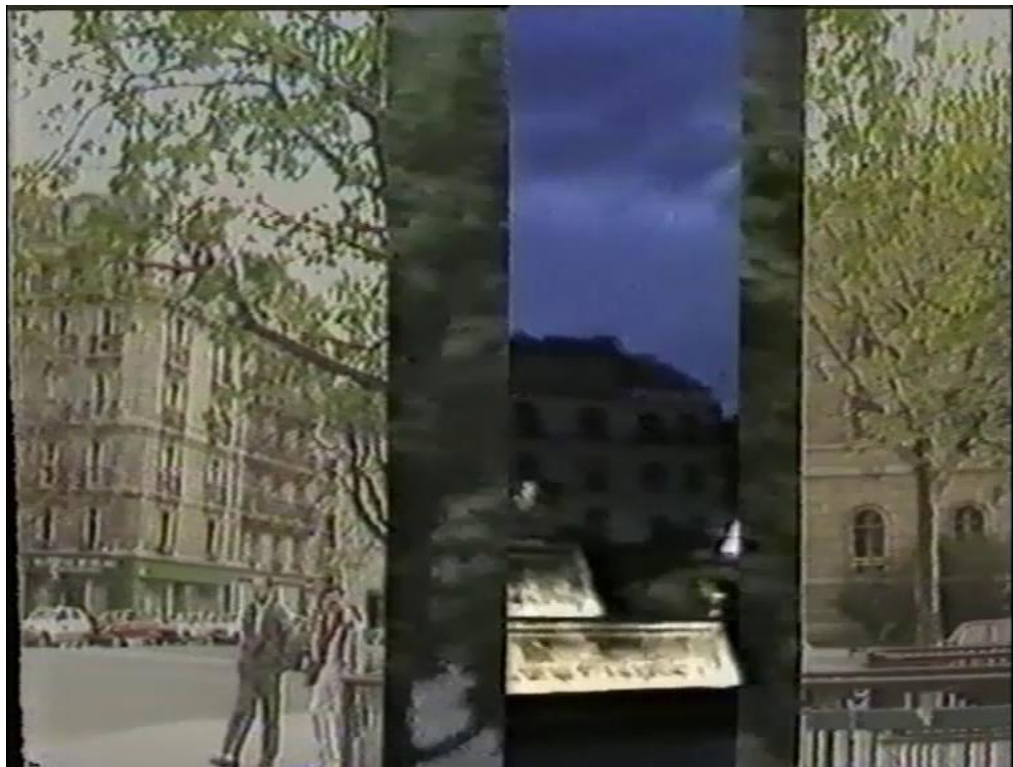


Figure 71. Papakonstantinou, G. (1986) *Ce Qui Se Passe, Quand Il Ne Se Passe Rien* [Video, colour, with sound, duration 16'10''] Collection of the artist (videostill).



Figure 72. Katsivelaki, A. (1984) *Proteus* [Video, colour, with music by George Christianakis, duration 4']  
Collection of the artist (videostill).

Alexandra Katsivelaki (1955, Heraklion) was another participant who also became a festival organiser a few years later. Katsivelaki had attended seminars on video at Freie Universität Berlin as well as Fine Art in Hochschule der Künste between 1980 and 1983. From 1985 and for the following five years she is participating in almost every video art event with her personal works, whereas in the early 1990s she gradually turned towards directing documentaries about art and archaeology while also pursuing a career in teaching. Although she had presented works since 1985 (in Giannopoulos' *Video Art* broadcast), the first major presentation of her work was at the festival with the screening of five works: *Concert for Piano* (1985), *Proteus* (1985) (Figure 72), *Sun Parlor* (1987), *Square Wave* (1987) and *Geometrical Games* (1987). All of her works are characterised by a synesthetic approach to image and sound, with the use of D.I.Y. video effects and music that was often specially written for the work. Images were manipulated with a technique that involved feedback loops made by recording with the camera the distorted image of the video monitor altering the initial recording to the point of abstraction. Alexandra Katsivelaki is a distinct case of a video artist in Greece that throughout her short-lived practice produced works that dealt with the structural and aesthetic aspect of video.

The 28th Thessaloniki Film Festival also included works by major actors in the video art scene, who already had presented their work in the few preceding events, such as Manthos Santorineos, Marianne Strapatsakis, Aris Prodromidis, Nikos Giannopoulos and Leda Papaconstantinou, as well as Margarita Ovidia who presented her first video titled *Cyaniris* (1987), based on a song with the same name by poet, composer and singer Lena Platonos and which also functioned as its music video. However, much of the strength of the festival was in the inclusion of a wide range of creators who had not participated in the pre-mentioned events and presented their work mostly for the first time. One of the youngest participants, with an interest in computers and music, was Damianos Georgiadis (Thessaloniki, 1964), who presented the video collage *The Clan* (c1987) which included music composed by himself. Film director George Zervas (Argolis, 1960) presented *Descendu dans le Metro Pour Jouer de Nouveau au Jeu* [Descending to the Metro station to play with a new toy] (1986), one of the few narrative videos, based on the Julio Cortázar short story ‘Manuscript Found in a Pocket’ taking place in the Parisian Metro. Cinematographer Vangelis Moladakis (Thessaloniki, 1954) presented *Metro or Clinical Observations of a Lame Landscape* (1985), also a video focusing on the alienation of urban life, with a protagonist lost in labyrinthine underground pathways. Moladakis’ intention was to make a video “against a reality where no facts are for us but everything is for the MEDIA” (Baganas, 1987, p.37). Dimitris Mourtzopoulos (1960) an electrical engineer who had an interest in photography and worked with video, film, digital animation and computer graphics in advertising and cinema, presented a video titled *Drama-Music* (1986). Photographer Giannis Kouitzoglou (Xanthi, 1956) exhibited a video titled *Poreia '86* (1986) while architect and painter Marianna Theodoridou (Imathia, 1952) exhibited the work *Allegories* (1984). Important participation was the artistic duo Thanasis Chondros (Thessaloniki, 1953) and Alexandra Katsiani (Siatista, 1954) with their video installation *Writing* (1987) (Figure 73). The work consists of a monitor on a pedestal displaying a looping sequence of a pencil being sharpened. Beneath the monitor and in front of the plinth there was a heap of pencil shavings. A nearby plinth had pencils and sharpeners so that members of the audience could contribute to the shavings heap (Leopoulou, 2014, pp.103–104). The work was made for the event, and it was consistent with their practice of conceptually integrating art and daily life through humorous gestures, public interventions and performances (Leopoulou, 2014, pp.102–106).



Figure 73. Chondros T. and Katsiani, A. (1987) *Writing* [Videoinstallation, colour video with sound, monitor, pedestal, pencil shavings, duration 14'04'' looped] Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, inventory number pending, donated by the artists 2018.

Chondros and Katsiani also worked as part of the artist group Dimosioipalliliko Retire together with Dani Tragopoulos. Dimosioipalliliko Retire, literally meaning “civil servant’s penthouse” was an artist group that functioned as a music band, realising music performances and releasing albums regardless of not knowing how to play any instruments

(Leopoulou, 2014, p.132).<sup>36</sup> The group also participated in the festival with videos based on tracks from their most recent record. According to the members of the group, their aim was “to use music as a pretext for actions and interventions in public space” (Leopoulou, 2014, p.132). The catalogue of the festival includes five titles: *This*, *The Debt*, *The Train 1599*, *Everything that I have Lived*, *27/1/1986*. Out of those five videos, only the first two have been traced and are remembered by the artists. In a mail to the author, Chondros and Katsiani describe the origin of the videos: “We prepared those videos for an act titled *Who’s Afraid of Phenylketonuria* in Café Theatre in Kalamaria. After we did what we did, we left the stage and left those videos playing” [my translation] (Chondros and Katsiani, 2020). *This* (1987) begins with a frantic poetic recitation of the following message: “This that happens here for the first time is important because it means that there is life on this planet in this country in our city and where there is life there is rupture and rupture cuts deep for the first time” [my translation] (Chondros and Katsiani, 1986a). Images from what seems a badly designed bar restroom follow the frantic music and speech. The whole video is less than two minutes long. *The Debt* (1987) is an even shorter video displaying a group of teenage boys reluctantly crossing a flooded street with their bikes while nearby a group of shepherds milk their sheep. During the flow of those images, in a short break from music, a voice states “some God owes us a cock” (Chondros and Katsiani, 1986b). Both videos, although very short, display a sophisticated relation between image and sound, and a technically simple and non-demanding creative use of common flaws of video recording.

Giannopoulos was invited in 1988 by European Media Art Festival: Osnabrück to compile and present the Greek film and video section of the festival. The selection included Margarita Ovadia’s *Cyaniris* (1987) and *Rhythm I* (1985), Leda Papaconstantinou’s *The Arrows are of Eros* (1985), Alexandra Katsivelaki’s *Concert for Piano* (1985) and *Proteus* (1985), Nikos Giannopoulos’ *Narcissus I* (1985) and *Narcissus II* (1985), Vangelis Moladakis’ *Metro or Clinical Observations of a Lame Landscape* (1985), Manthos Santorineos’ *T* (1985), Nestoras Papanicolopoulos’ *Researches I* (n.d.), Giorgos Zervas’ *Desandu dans le Metro pour Jouer de Nouveau au Jeu* [Descending to the Metro station to play with a new toy] (1986), George Papakonstantinou’s *Ce qui se Passe Quand il ne se Passe Rien* [What happens when Nothing Happens] (1986) and *Espace Inutile* [Unlocated Location] (1987), Marianne Strapatsakis’ *Vital Pulses* (1985), Eva Stefani’s *Rithra* (1988) ([Figure 74](#)), Marina Petri’s

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<sup>36</sup> Dimosioipalliliko Retire could also metaphorically mean “civil servant’s highest salary”

*Name Marina* (1984) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1988). Nikos Giannopoulos comments on the situation of video art in Greece in the catalogue text, in which he is especially concerned with the late adoption of technologies and artistic tendencies in Greece because of the lack of communication with Europe and the U.S.A., but also on how the fields of film and video remain distinct in Greece, regardless the fact that some experimental directors are also using video (Giannopoulos, 1988, p.158).



Figure 74. Stefani, E. (1988) *Rithra* [Video, colour, with sound, duration 12'] Collection of the artist (videostill).

Another important participation in an international festival was Vouvoula Skoura's *Rusted Frame* (1989) in the Kurzfilmfestival Berlin in the same year. Vouvoula Skoura (Thessaloniki, 1939) had studied graphic arts and art history and her practice included photography and collage, mixed media installations, stage design, film, video and video installations. Her themes are greatly influenced by history and literature, especially poetry and drama. During a course on computer graphics in Middlesex Polytechnic, she created the work *Rusted Frame* (1989) by editing found images of ancient Greek pottery through a hybrid practice involving manual and electronic processes (Sotiropoulou and Varopoulou, 2001, p.18). Although half electronic animation and half handicraft, this work was finalised in 16mm film.



In the context of Madrid Cultural Capital of Europe 1992, the event *Television y Video de Creacion en la Comunidad Europea* [TV and Creative video in the European Union] hosts a Greek video art section with works by Tassos Boulmetis, Leda Papaconstantinou, Nikos Giannopoulos, Vangelis Moladakis, George Zervas, Manthos Santorineos, Avra Georgiou, George Papakonstantinou, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Margarita Ovadia, Kostis Stratoudakis, Marianne Strapatsakis and George Passias, selected by George Papakonstantinou. The catalogue includes an insightful overview of Greek video art by George Papakonstantinou titled 'La Busca de Identidad del Videoarte Griego' [Video Art in Greece: In Search of an Identity] (Papakonstantinou, 1992).

In 1993, the 2nd European Meeting of Art-New Technologies took place in Thessaloniki. Its programme included multimedia music and dance performances, a computer art exhibition by Konstantinos Petridis and Iordanis Stilidis, a homage to Peter Greenaway, video art screenings by Marina Abramovic and Ulay, Nam June Paik, Ulrike Rosenbach and others as well as video dance section. Participation of Greek video artists included Tassos Boulmetis, Leda Papaconstantinou, Nikos Giannopoulos, Vangelis Moladakis, Manthos Santorineos, Avra Georgiou, George Papakonstantinou, Marianne Strapatsakis, Giorgos Zervas, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Margarita Ovadia, Kostas Stratoudakis, Georgos Passias, Kostas Stratoudakis, Agis Kelpekis. Despite the enrichment of the programme with interdisciplinary performances and a rich international video art section, it is interesting to note that the Greek participants were almost the same as the previous edition of the festival three years before, and it was only three works dated post 1990, a fact that reveals how the conditions for continuous new media artistic production had not been achieved.

## **5.4 Producing and distributing video art**

### **5.4.1 D.I.Y. production practices**

As is evident from cases like Marianne Strapatsakis, Aris Prodromidis, Angelos Skourtis and Alexandra Katsivelaki, many visual artists wanting to experiment with video in the early 1980s had diminished access to professional means. Some resolved to acquaintances in the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation for unofficial help in the form of equipment and expertise or used their resourcefulness and improvised effects by making unexpected use of the equipment available. Katsivelaki for example simply created her feedback loops by recording with the camera the distorted image of the video monitor altering the initial recording to the point of abstraction without resourcing to a professional studio.

Skourtis' oral history account of his first video, *Metaplasis* (1983) mentions that he made it with the assistance of a friend working at the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation who brought a video camera borrowed from the channel's equipment. The video was recorded straight out of the camera, with colour slide images of leaves and nature projected over the nude body of an actor and an actress. Their bodies were covered with white face paint in order to increase the contrast of the projected images, which would otherwise not be registered clearly in the lo-fi camera. Whereas someone would expect that the images of this video could be easily created by overlaying one video-recorded image over another, the artist obviously preferred a process that involved more participation from the actors and, at the same time, required less technical involvement from the video editors (Schizakis, 2018a).

Marianne Strapatsakis also mentions in an interview to the author how for the production of *Vital Pulses* (1985) (Figure 75) she borrowed a camera from the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation producer Takis Hatzopoulos who also introduced her to a camera operator (Schizakis, 2017b).

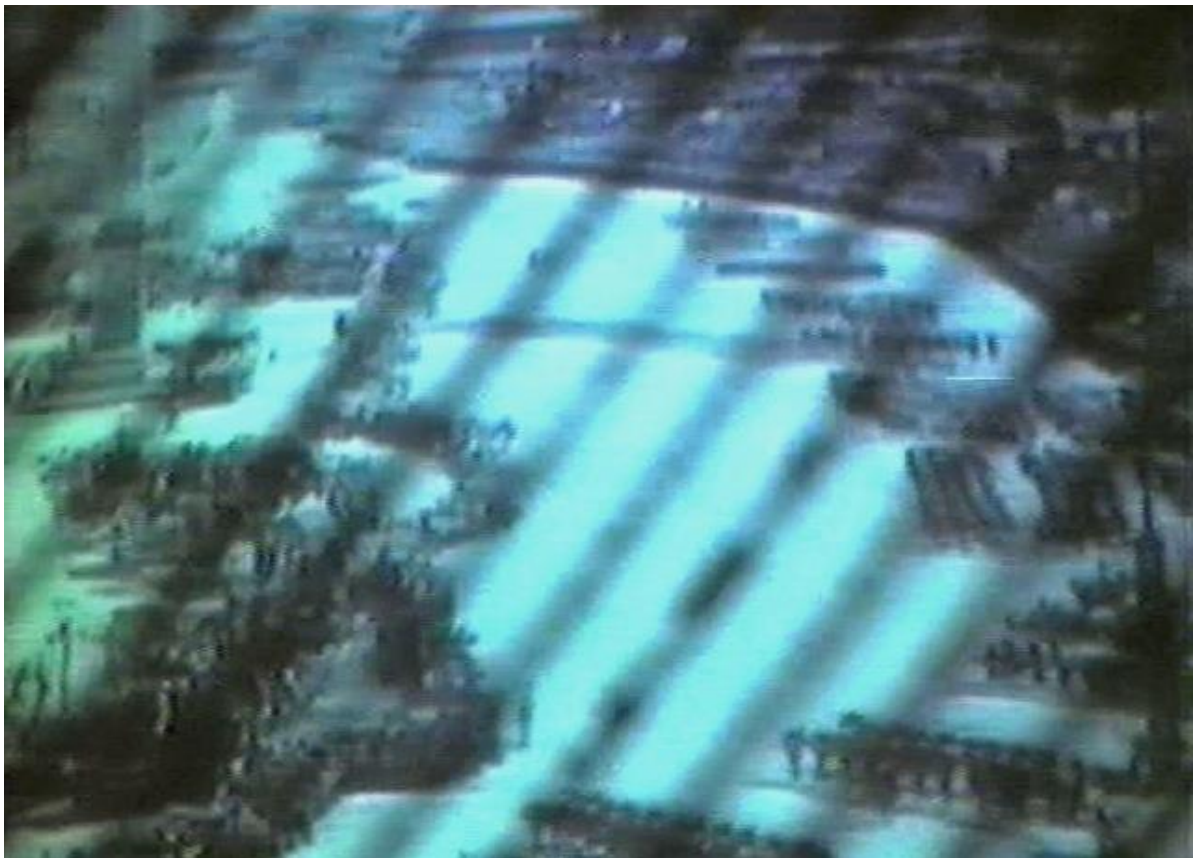


Figure 75. Strapatsakis, M. (1985) *Vital Pulses* [Video, colour, with sound, duration 5'15''] Collection of the artist (videostill).

Although the images of the work could have been created using effects, her intention was to capture the reflection of her stainless-steel sculptures and, for this reason, she physically moved coloured lights and TV images around the sculptures while the camera operator recorded close-up images of the changing reflections. However, Strapatsakis often mentions how those reflections have been mistaken for elaborate video effects by colleagues who were unaware of the technical possibilities available in Greece at that time (Schizakis, 2017b).

Aris Prodromidis also improvised for his first video. *Self-portrait in Anamorphosis* (1981) a constantly transformed image of the artist's face in a dark background, was made with an amateur camera borrowed from a relative. The camera was mounted on a tripod and the lens focused on a reflecting metal sheet taken from a discarded photo paper drier. Prodromidis would constantly bend the mirroring surface of the metal sheet while an assistant was changing the position of the light. The resulting transformation of the image looked so smooth that according to Prodromidis' account viewers were assuming he had employed the help of a professional video effects studio (Schizakis, 2017a). It is interesting to note that those artists who were not exclusively video makers and came from a visual arts field did not remember any details on the equipment, as it was always borrowed and mostly operated by others.

An unusual exception of a video made with the D.I.Y. ethic of feminist activism was the video *Bouboulina* (1981) directed and produced by Leda Papaconstantinou and Carole Roussopoulos (Figures 76–78). The work is centred on the heroic female figure of the Greek revolution Bouboulina Laskarina (Istanbul, 1771–Spetses, 1825) who acted as a naval commander during the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and is probably the earliest political/activist/guerrilla TV type of approach in video making in Greece. Bouboulina spent most part of her life on the island of Spetses, where both Papaconstantinou and Roussopoulos resided at the time the video was made and had strong ties with the island's residents. The video is composed of short interviews with women of different generations speaking about Bouboulina, whose life was still discussed among the island's residents. Through provocative questions, episodes from Bouboulina's life are paralleled with the life of women today and the possibility of a woman from Spetses being a captain today. The form of the film itself is interesting as images of Bouboulina are overlaid on images of the interviewed subjects. More often than not, the women speaking do not stop their daily activities, such as weaving, and the camera often focuses on their hands as they speak.



Figures 76-78. Roussopoulos, C. and Papaconstantinou, L. (1981) *Bouboulina* [Video, black and white, with sound, duration 34'] Collection of the artist (videostills).

This emphasis on hands is also present in Leda Papaconstantinou's next video, the *Arrows are of Eros* (1985). Although Papaconstantinou's work, before or after *Bouboulina* (1981), in video/installation/performance was always feminist in its core, the collaboration with Carole Roussopoulos brought about a different, confrontational approach. The video, that was firstly presented in a small circle of people in Hydra, was recorded with Roussopoulos' Sony Portapak which, as mentioned in the film *Delphine et Carole, Insoumuses* (McNulty, 2019), was purchased after Jean Genet's suggestion.

#### 5.4.2 Professional studios

When *SIMA* review and *VideoSIMA* advertised the video screenings at Polyplano in the early 1980s, Nikos Papadakis promoted the concept of video art as a new folk art (Papadakis, 1980). Polyplano offered equipment for rent to amateurs and *VideoSIMA* included articles on how to make your own home studio (Papadakis, 1981b, pp.25–30). In parallel with the D.I.Y. logic promoted by the articles, video production studios advertised their services in the magazine (Papadakis, 1981b, p.58). Nikos Giannopoulos describes his experience with professional studios in his oral history interview. In order to lower the budget of a proposed broadcast initially planned for film, he considered two video production studios. These were operated by technicians coming from the field of cinema and who, having only basic knowledge of video equipment, had cameras in standard positions and avoided editing. Giannopoulos surprised them with his experimentation and with special effects techniques he had knowledge of by observing the work of Jean-Christophe Averty while he was living and studying in Paris.<sup>37</sup>

They knew very well how to operate the equipment from the manuals. So, there I go, a stranger, coming into the studio asking questions “what will happen if we press both of those buttons together?” They thought I am very knowledgeable about video. I had no idea of course, but I was functioning as a cinematographer who tries to make the best use of the tools available [my translation] (Schizakis, 2018c).

Nikos Giannopoulos founded the Narcissus Film Production company in 1983, for producing video artworks authored by himself as well as by other artists. A presentation of the company stated that: “Narcissus Film Production tried to develop and promote video art in Greece, by producing and promoting video art-work in Greece as well as abroad and by organising events in Greece and taking part in International Festivals” (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, p.91).

From the very beginning and alongside its other activities, the company takes upon itself to assist artists with the production of their videos, as in the case of Leda Papaconstantinou’s second video *The Arrows are of Eros* (1985). During the company’s operating years,

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<sup>37</sup> Jean-Christophe Averty (1928-2017) was a French television and film director, pioneer in the use of video and the bluescreen technique.

Narcissus Film Production produced works for Leda Papaconstantinou such as *The Arrows are of Eros* (1985) and *Genet's Toaster* (1997), Vangelis Moladakis' *Metro* (1985) and Giannopoulos' own videos and video installations as well as the *Video Art* broadcasts.

The other company active in the production of audio-visual artworks was EIKONA Audiovisual Research and Application which was founded in 1987 by Manthos and Dodo Santorineou and produced works for cinema and television but also for corporate and cultural use. Apart from the founders, EIKONA also employed the artist and video editing expert Makis Faros and the musician Spyros Faros who contributed in many projects produced by EIKONA.<sup>38</sup> A written description of the studio states that “it is the result of the theoretical labour on the post-industrial age artists' studio based on communication, information and the easy to use and combine audio-visual technological means” (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, p.73). Among the important activities of EIKONA was its collaboration with the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center for its Art and Technology department. However, EIKONA also produced video works and made distribution attempts with the most important being *Artos*. *Artos* was a video magazine in VHS which published its single issue in 1997, with many of the works included being produced by EIKONA. One could also conclude that the studio favoured collaborations with the Greek cultural milieu of the 1980s and 1990s such as the poet Andreas Pagoulatos and the theatre director Michael Marmarinos. In 1994, EIKONA also produced the video installation *Requiem pour le XXe Siècle* (1994) for Klonaris/Thomadaki, an artist duo that had formerly expressed its dedication to film (Tuer, Thomadaki & Klonaris, 1986, pp.12–13). Among its other collaborations and professional productions, one can see theatre companies and well-known singers such as Savina Yannatou as well as other video artists such as Kostas Stratoudakis and Pandora Mouriki. EIKONA Audiovisual Research and Application also provided technical support for conferences and media events, designed and produced creative communication projects, made educational videos for ministries, children programmes for television channels, travel documentaries, animation series, promotional material for corporations and cultural institutions, in addition to organising its own media events, within the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, the Fournos Center for Digital Culture or other collaborating organisations (EIKONA, 1993).

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<sup>38</sup> Makis Faros (Athens, 1967) is a multimedia artist, film director, musician and composer of electronic music as well as a teacher of audio-visual arts. Spyros Faros (Athens, 1964) is a musician involved in many musical genres, as well as a composer who created many scores for video art works, notably for works by Klonaris/Thomadaki.

### 5.4.3 Distributing video art

From the moment the first video events started being realised in Greece in the mid-1980s, distribution was a concern, especially among organisers who struggled with sourcing videos for the events. By that time, in the U.S., Canada and most European countries, there is at least one art video organisation or a major re-occurring festival that could centrally distribute media works, not to mention the organisations specializing in distribution. As described by Giannopoulos in the oral history interview to the author, international festivals looking for Greek participations were coming into contact with Narcissus Film Production, his own production company, which also undertook the role of the national commissioner as in the case of the 5th Tokyo Video Festival in 1985 (Schizakis, 2018c). In 1988, writing for the catalogue of the European Media Art Festival: Osnabrück, Giannopoulos expressed his hope that distribution of Greek videos would increase together with the expansion of the market, within the framework of the European Economic Community (Giannopoulos, 1988, p.158). In numerous articles, Nikos Giannopoulos stressed the need for support from state institutions, giving the example of the Centre Pompidou and Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA) in France which supported and purchased media works from artists. (Giannopoulos, 1986b, p.70; 1992, p.87). Manthos Santorineos also supported the view that the Greek state support for media arts was inadequate (Giannopoulos, 1985a, p.27).

The issue of distribution is explicitly and in-depth tackled during the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies. The catalogue includes a short essay by Nikos Patiniotis titled “For the Distribution of Works of Electronic Arts” explicating the reasons that media works need a different circulation system than the one already established, based on the immaterial nature of the works, but also on the different audience and lack of uniqueness of the art object. He suggests that the natural space of media is electronic space and that when the conditions are met, then electronic arts could reach directly to the public from a database, releasing art from its usual bonds (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, pp.13–14). Nikos Giannopoulos contributes another essay titled “Electronic Art and Database” expanding the subject commenced by Patiniotis and suggesting the assembly of a European database, operating within the framework of the European Economic Community (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, pp.141–142). The conference section of the festival centred around other European examples, about the capabilities of information technology and telecommunications as well as the data networks existing at that time like cable television and Videotex and culminated in a round table

discussion on production and distribution (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, pp.147–149). It is evident from the scale of the festival as well as the composition of its participants, that the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies had been aiming at much more than the creation of a Greek distribution organisation, and aspired in participating in the modelling of the next-generation global media platform.<sup>39</sup>

### **5.5 The introduction of microcomputers and Nestoras Papanicolopoulos**

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, personal computers enter the Greek household concurrently with video technology, although its use is established at a slower rate. During this period, the artists using computers are even fewer than the artists using video, namely Pantelis Xagoraris who used computers since the 1970s, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos who became the main spokesperson for the artistic use of personal computers during the 1980s, and Costis Akritidis who mostly worked professionally in graphics and who sporadically participated in artistic events. Art made with the use of computers was so uncommon that there were no computer-specific events realised during this period and the work of Nestoras Papanicolopoulos was often grouped together with video, as another art and technology-based practice, and for the additional reason that he often used videotape for capturing and presenting his computer animations.

Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, also known as Nestoras, is not mentioned in any major publication or catalogue and his work has been scarcely exhibited in the last three decades. However, from his few surviving published works, his consistent involvement in the art and technology events of the 1980s and from the few but extensive articles and interviews that were published during the same period, it is obvious that Nestoras was a highly esteemed figure. His focus on collective work and teaching paired with his expressed disdain for the commercial aspect of art and the uniqueness of an art object placed him and his work outside the margins of art history. His few works that were used as illustrations in press and publications usually serve as an example of his teaching and his practice, with hardly any specific information by critics, curators or himself. Nevertheless, during a period when Pantelis Xagoraris slowly moved away from the calculators and plotters of the 1970s and

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<sup>39</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, the event included 42 participants, representatives of museums, television channels, production companies, festivals and video distributors from 12 countries, more than 300 works, videotapes and video installations exhibited in various venues.



early 1980s and concentrated on his laser works and installations, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos renewed the discourse on the artistic uses of computing machines.

### 5.5.1 A short biography for a long life

In 1981, the brochure of the second solo exhibition of Nestoras Papanicolopoulos (Athens, 1928) at the Parisian Galerie Darial includes a colour drawing, a black-and-white print and a short list of biographical details: he was born in Athens, he studied at the Athens School of Fine Arts under the tutelage of the painters Yiannis Moralis and Spyros Papaloukas during 1953–1958, he participated in the Panhellenic exhibitions of 1960 and 1965—like almost every artist active in Greece—and participated in the events organised by the Group Omada Technis Alpha between 1962–1967.<sup>40</sup> In 1967, the year the colonels' junta began, Papanicolopoulos moved to Paris. He participated in group exhibitions such as the Salon Comparaisons whereas his first solo show after 20 years of activity was realised in 1980, in Nees Morfes Gallery in Athens. According to the press release of this first exhibition, “for his first introduction to the Athenian public” Papanicolopoulos presented a selection of works from the last 15 years. The same press release includes an artist statement, in which Nestoras singled out two factors that affected his art, the study of Byzantine and post Byzantine painting as well as his life in Paris. He also presented shape, colour, material, structure and composition as elements to be transformed for the discovery of new forms, necessary, in the belief that “the reality of our times cannot be expressed with forms borrowed from the past” (Nees Morfes Gallery, 1980).

Papanicolopoulos' biographical information is sparse in the Greek bibliography. There is no mention of him in exhibitions that survey the 1970s or the more recent periods of art in Greece.<sup>41</sup> This is no surprise. In fact, quite a few artists in this research are not included in the same list of exhibitions and publications. Moreover, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos had been teaching art for most of his life but exhibited rarely, and his work has not been acquired by

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<sup>40</sup> Omada Technis Alpha (also termed Company for the Promotion and Dissemination of Plastic Arts and Crafts) was an art group that formed around the painter Giannis Chainis during 1962-1967. Its aim was to outreach and educate the greater public about the pioneering artistic tendencies through events realised in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Poulou, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> This footnote is a reference in reverse: Papanicolopoulos is not mentioned in the survey publication *Istoría tis Téchnis stin Elláda: Zographikí kai Glyptikí tou 20ou Aíóna* [History of Art in Greece: Painting and Sculpture of the 20th Century] (Papanikolaou, 2006), nor in *The Years of Defiance: The Art of the '70s in Greece* (Papadopoulou, 2005). He is not included in the exhibition catalogue *Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience* (Kafetsi, 1992), or the volumes *I physiognomía tis metapolemikís téchnis stin Elláda* [The Physiognomy of Postwar Art in Greece] (Vakalo, 1985).

any private or public collections. Consequently, there are no publications that would allow someone to have an idea of his work. Someone managing to discover the few images available (as for example what is included in the Contemporary Greek Art Institute Archive), will be even more perplexed as these few works, dated in the 1970s and 1980s, reveal a style that has progressed very little since the modernist avant-gardes of Cubism, Futurism and Russian Constructivism. Although one is tempted to conclude that all the above justify this lack of critical interest in Papanicolopoulos' work, a careful examination of the works in the archive will reveal that some are digitally reworked or entirely made with a computer. Also, his biographical note in the Contemporary Greek Art Institute Archive clearly shows that almost half of the exhibitions he participated in were realised between 1984 and 1990. This coincides with the introduction of microcomputers in his work which drew attention to his art but also to his teaching and writing. The essays of Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, who had trained as an engraver since the 1940s, reveal that he held the unique and original work of art in disregard, which partially explains why he often reworked older works with other media. His participation in the group Omada Technis Alpha also reveals his political stance and the belief that art should be a tool for social transformation. This stance could explain his apparent indifference for gallery shows and his insistence on teaching. Teaching art, graphics and animation was his main occupation: from 1961 to 1967 at the Athens Technological Organisation (of Doxiadis Associates), from 1983 to 1986 at the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Athens and Athens School of Fine Arts as teaching assistant in the Fifth painting workshop. He also led computer graphics seminars at Evmaros Gallery of Arts from 1989 until 1992 when he quit for health reasons.

### 5.5.2 Working with the BBC micro

Nestoras Papanicolopoulos was an artist who used a variety of media. He became an experienced printmaker while working as an assistant to the engraver Tassos (Alevizos), many years before the commencement of his studies at the Athens School of Fine Arts (Orati, 2010).<sup>42</sup> He earned a living from icon making and conservation (Orati, 2010) while he also developed a personal style that evolved out of the application of constructivist theories of shape and colour. His visual language is very precise, with shapes embodying specific qualities, like balance, closure, hostility; the outlines also express degrees of certainty, and

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<sup>42</sup> Tassos Alevizos (Messini, 1914–Athens, 1985), simply known as Tassos, was a prominent engraver, etcher and sculptor.

colours are linked with emotional states (Papanicolopoulos, 1990). It is no surprise that Papanicolopoulos upon starting to use a home computer encodes this visual vocabulary as routines in BASIC programming language instead of choosing to work with one of the readymade graphics programmes available commercially at the time (Micromad, 1988). This choice is partly justified by his disdain for commercially available graphic software and their pre-conceived aesthetic embedded in their commands as exemplified by the following excerpt:

The one who writes the programme predetermines in a large percentage the basic strands of the aesthetic of the digital work of art. And most programmes intended for “painting” are no exception. On the contrary, those are examples of programme making with a purpose to serve the field of applied arts and crafts, like advertising, graphics, television etc. With the multitude of impressive effects available, those programmes shape the aesthetic of advertisement. And those effects are “canned” routines, made by ingenious programmers to satisfy the demand of the advertisement market. One could say that many of those systems have a preconceived aesthetic. The images were made in to showcase the capabilities of those powerful systems are realistic images, of photographic quality, like academic art of the 19th century, with natural-looking shadows, polished, clean, perfect. As a matter of fact, the most powerful systems made by man up to now, the most advanced in the technology of the image, are used in order to produce a visual result that is anachronistic, without any aesthetic interest and the perfect example of bad taste [...] [my translation] (Papanicolopoulos, 1989a, pp.5–6).

As known from a detailed description of his equipment within an insurance certificate sent by the 28th Greek Thessaloniki Film Festival, Papanicolopoulos owned and worked with a BBC micro model B computer (Rentzis, 1987). He utilised the advanced graphic capabilities of its hardware and programmed images according to the manual of its graphic ROM (Graphics Rom: The graphics extension ROM for the BBC micro). The BBC micro could display simultaneously 8 colours from a colour pallet of 16 (Loch, 2014). Papanicolopoulos utilised this element for creating fixed images where the colour pallet would change rapidly, creating the impression of movement. The dynamism of his paintings and prints was based on the relations between fixed elements within the two dimensions of the pictorial frame,

between shape, size, line and colour and the computer allowed for testing additional relations between alternating colour variations (Papanicolopoulos, 1990). His intention was to continue through the computer the same investigation in two-dimensional shapes carried so far through painting and print but to also understand and utilize the distinct characteristics brought about by the computer medium itself (Micromad, 1988). He describes one of those characteristics as the linear development of a work, because of the careful planning of creating through a programme and the distinct creative stages that are recorded and comprise part of the finalised work, and he parallels this workflow with filmic narrative and music composition (Micromad, 1988, p.28). Although Nestoras Papanicolopoulos often proposed a modernist exploration of the medium-specificity of the computer, he actually chose a post-medium use for enhancing his own engraving and painting practice.

Nestoras realised only three solo exhibitions, all of them during the 1980s. Only one out of those three exhibitions was realised after he started working with a computer. The invitation from Galerie F, with “NESTORAS” printed in capital letters with a dot matrix typeface, invites audience to an exhibition of “painting, computer graphics” for the last week of November 1987. In this exhibition, Nestoras includes three types of works: paintings in traditional materials, computer graphics, as well as computer prints that served as the foundation for further manipulation with other media (Kerdos, 1987). He used this third method as a way to create or continue an image based on the many possible versions that could be generated and tested first through the computer: “I did not replace my brushes or my colours with the computer. I use them to continue, eventually, the treatment of an image studied and composed on the computer. It offers the possibility to compose and create shapes, to transpose them, enlarge or diminish them, erase etc. and those very rapidly” (The Athenian, 1987). Nestoras summarised his modus operandi of enhancing painting through computers in a video made for the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies:

Despite the contrary opinion of most art critics and historians, I insist on being called a painter, because the work I do is an exploration of the field of the visual arts regardless of the fact that I use a computer that gives me the possibility of movement. I do not believe that my work belongs in the field of video art or animation but with the use of computers I have the capability of adding movement in my work through the alteration of colours and shapes that I can create but I am looking towards two directions: I am interested in the still image,

its manipulation, reaching a point where I am satisfied and it expresses me so that I can take a photo or through other means transfer this image in a material vector so that I can further manipulate it with other techniques and materials. Of course, during the process of manipulating an image, the perception of movement appears when you have alternating colours or sequences of images with different colours and different shapes. This colour circulation is a new element for a painter who is used in working still images, and this element leads me to a perception of the image I am creating in relation to time, i.e. I see the image progressing in time [my translation] (Ovadia, 1990) (Figure 79).



Figure 79. Papanicolopoulos N. (1990) Nestoras Papanicolopoulos presenting his work for the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies in the video documentation of the event (videostill).

This video record of Nestoras Papanicolopoulos is one of the few instances where the artist talks specifically about his work and not generally about the possible uses of a computer in artistic practice. It is especially interesting to note that he uses the computer as a tool that enhances his painting practice and not as an autonomous practice.

### 5.5.3 Teaching and writing on computer art and graphics

The 1987 exhibition at Galerie F was Nestoras Papanicolopoulos' last solo exhibition. For the following years, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos participated in festivals and group exhibitions together with video artists or other practitioners who made use of technology in their work. He also participated in round table discussions and conferences on art and technology events and published articles on the importance of the introduction of computer use in fine art education. Papanicolopoulos was concerned about the increased availability of computing hardware in the Greek market, in a way that it becomes available for commercial applications, but not for artistic experimentation and expresses his wish for the introduction of computer graphics in the Athens School of Fine Arts (Papanicolopoulos, 1986). In his talk for the conference Computer Image Synthesis and Animation that took place in 1988 in Athens, Papanicolopoulos restated his concern and attributed the bias of the critics and the academia against artists working with computers to the slower integration of technologies in Greece in relation to other European countries (Papanicolopoulos, 1989a). He also stated that himself as well as other artists working with this new aesthetic were suspended in an indeterminate space between the art establishment and the world of applied arts, computer games and commercial computer applications without the understanding and support of anyone (Papanicolopoulos, 1989a).

Papanicolopoulos often juxtaposed or drew parallels between traditional techniques in painting and printmaking with the computer process. In an article titled 'Digital Image and Artistic Creation', Nestoras attempted to disconnect the mechanical image creation techniques from the idea of "reproduction". In his view, a print could indeed be inferior to a painting, only if it is used as a reproduction medium since the important material element of the original artwork will be lost in the transmigration process. The same happens with a photograph of an artwork, or a video recording. However, all these media could be used and are being used for original expression that utilises their inherent characteristics and, for those reasons, the resulting work could also be original, but without being limited to a single material vector. Interestingly, Nestoras used a similar argument in another text, titled 'To Polapló kai i Monadikótita tou' [The Multiple Work of Art and its Uniqueness], which refers to print-making and other techniques that can be used to reproduce a work of art (Papanicolopoulos, 1989b).

It is evident from his life and writings that Papanicolopoulos emphasised the importance of arts education. The only brief period in Nestoras Papanicolopoulos' artistic career when he exhibited regularly was while following the activities of the artist group Omada Technis Alpha, whose exhibitions were predominantly education oriented. His main profession was teaching, which he practised in private and public art schools. In the mid-1980s, when Nestoras was a teaching assistant in the painting workshop of Nikos Kessanlis at the Athens School of Fine Arts, the conditions would not allow for his knowledge of computer graphics to be included in the curriculum as the first computers purchased by the Athens School of Fine Arts and used as tools in art creating process were in Rena Papaspyrou's workshop in the mid-1990s.<sup>43</sup> Papanicolopoulos taught computer graphics for the first time in 1989, in Evmaros, as a seminar titled 'Digital Image'. His notes for the seminar begin with what appears to be specific rules of pictorial notation, where each shape, line and colour carries a very distinct meaning. However, Papanicolopoulos clarified that this meaning varies in each individual depending on life experiences as well as that the combination and juxtaposition of all of the above can open up endless variations and readings (Papanicolopoulos, 1990).

#### 5.5.4 Evaluating Nestoras Papanicolopoulos' contribution today

Nestoras Papanicolopoulos' work may be near impossible to evaluate today. Some of his original graphics and animations that are written in BASIC survive through video recordings made at the time of their programming, but most of his work has been constantly undergoing further manipulation. This creates a problematic chronology where early works were reworked through a computer and later works produced through a computer were entirely overpainted or used as the basis for silkscreen printing techniques. What is even more problematic is the scarcity of the published visual material, limited to a few brochures and works that illustrate his articles and interviews, and which almost always are untitled and undated (Figure 80). However, when trying to determine Nestoras Papanicolopoulos' importance and influence one will not trace it in his object-based work, as this had hardly ever been in public view and it is very unlikely that the work itself had any effect on the development of contemporary art practice in Greece. Equally, Nestoras' influence in the development of digital art in Greece through his teaching cannot be evaluated. Although

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<sup>43</sup> The first graduates who worked with the digital tools in the workshop realised an exhibition of their works in the 1998 exhibition titled *Kinós Paronomastís i Psiphiakí Ikóna* [Common Denominator the Digital Image] in June 1998, Gallery 7, Athens (Karra, 1998).

some of his seminar notes survive and some of his students are now successful artists, the seminar at Evmaros, a now-defunct private organisation, was short-lived. The period of Nestoras Papanicolopoulos' activity in the field of computing, during 1985–1992, is a period that coincides with the demystification and wider circulation of computer use in every field and most importantly at home. It is the time when personal computers are being established as a consumer technology since the falling prices of processors and peripherals made them available for individual professionals and amateurs (Taylor, 2014, pp.179–180). During the same time, the critical perception of “computer art” or art made with the use of computers by the mainstream art world criticism is either absent or extremely negative.

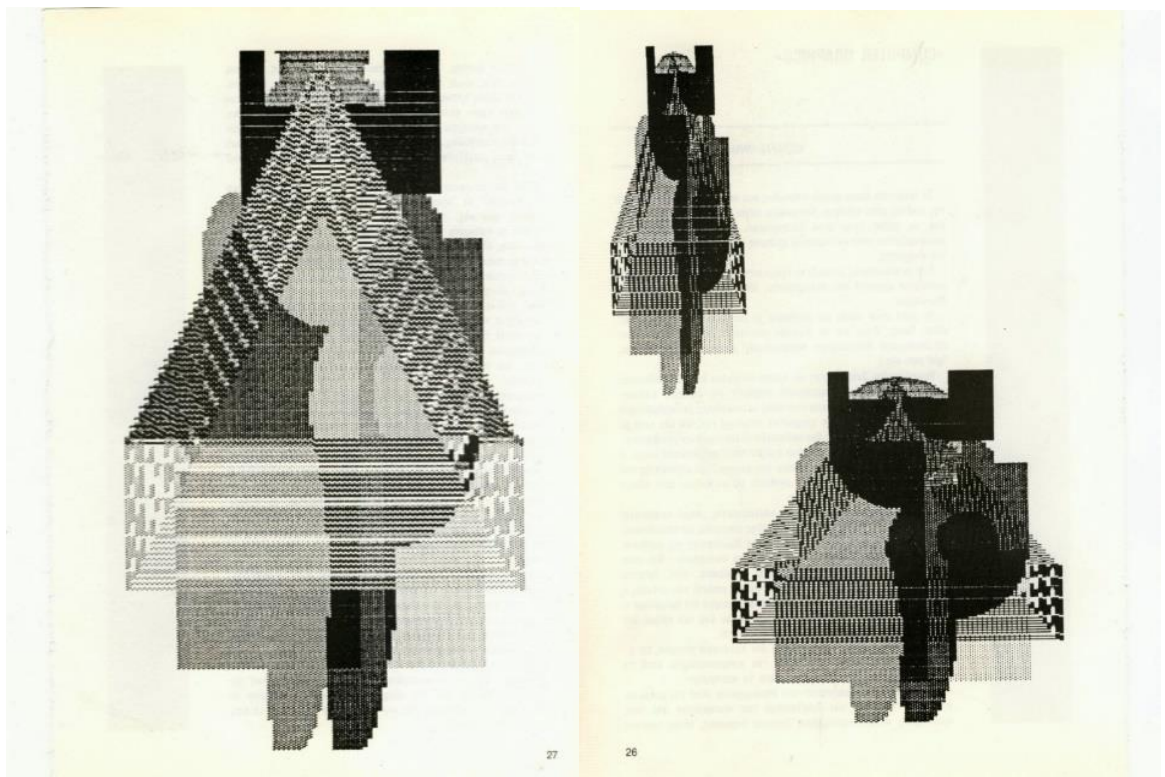


Figure 80. Papanicolopoulos, N. Typographic spread of his work printed in *Dipli Ikona* magazine (Deligiannis, 1986, pp.26–27).

On the other hand, computer art and graphics enjoyed a popular status as a novelty that attracted an ever-growing public interested in the wider field of computing (Taylor, 2014, p.4). Papanicolopoulos' contribution can be attributed to the fact that he was the only active and known practitioner who made art with personal computers during a period when personal computers were being established as tools accessible to individuals with no prior knowledge of programming. Papanicolopoulos as a public figure who often talked or wrote about his work acted as the spokesman who contributed to the demystification of computer



use, criticised its conventional aesthetic and urged for its introduction in art education. Nestoras could be classified alongside those traditionally educated artists who started using a computer after the 1980s without knowledge of mathematics and without working within the auspices of institutions (Taylor, 2014, p.180). Unlike Pantelis Xagoraris, who was also traditionally trained as an artist, but equally trained as a mathematician, Nestoras advocated the use of the computer as a tool that could aid a wide field of artistic practices, exceeding that of platonic aesthetic ideas and mathematics. However, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos was critical of reproducing traditional artistic practices and aesthetics through the computer, and maintained a position in favour of the artist who makes his own programmes in order to avoid a prefabricated working method, taking a stance in a dispute that seemed to dominate computer art discourse at the time. As described in Grant D. Taylor's *When the Machine Made Art: The Troubled History of Computer Art*, for non-programming artists the computer allowed experimentation, but their works were dominated by the characteristics of the commercially available programmes, whereas artists-programmers advocated that only by making their own programmes they utilised the full potential of the computer (Taylor, 2014, pp.190–193).

### **5.6 Reevaluating and recontextualising media art in Greece in the 1980s**

Even since the very early stages of the appearance of new media art in Greek cultural spaces, the artists involved were attempting to specify the local context in which Greek media is created and presented, with a special emphasis on the lack of institutional support. This usually came as part of a rather defensive argument about the delayed emergence of video and the perceived lack of originality in group or individual expression, as explicated in the texts of George Papakonstantinou (Papakonstantinou, 1992, pp. 218–225) and Nikos Giannopoulos (Giannopoulos, 1988). At that moment, the other known histories of video and new media art were the examples of countries in Western Europe and the United States with vastly different cultural and media policies, which were politically stable and financially developed. In the 1980s and 1990s, new media art history still lacked its global perspective, and almost all notable examples of artists and institutions would all originate in the U.S., France, the U.K. and Germany. Is it possible now, when the history of video and new media art in different countries have been researched and written, to find paradigms closer to the case of Greece allowing for a better understanding of the way the lack of institutions and media infrastructure affected production?

How did the major social, financial and ideological changes that Greece underwent in the 1980s, as outlined in Chapter 1 affect this production? This period in time is now often idealised, as a period of freedom and affluence but how much of this freedom and affluence was actual and what is affected by nostalgia, or remnants of the mostly unrealised political message of “allagi”? During the last decade, the decade of the 1980s has been the focus of renewed historical interest, with publications such as *I Elláda sti Dekaeτία tou '80: Kinonikó, Politikó kai Politismikó Lexikó* [Greece in the '80s: Social, Political and Cultural Dictionary] (Vamvakas and Panagiotopoulos, 2014) and even large blockbuster exhibitions *GR80s. Greece in the 80s at Technopolis*, held at the Technopolis exhibition space in 2017. The Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) policies that generated affluence and progress during the period 1981–1989 have also been criticised as the origin of the 2009 Greek debt crisis and those years are often seen as the key to understanding the current state of affairs. In addition to the general political and social history of Greece, there are other areas that have now been under scrutiny like the history of the women’s movement in Greece, through the archive of “This is not a Feminist Project” (Spanoudaki, Ntoulia and Triantafyllakos, 2018) as well as art history through the archive of the Contemporary Greek Art Institute (Contemporary Greek Art Institute Digital Platform, 2016). Can these new historical perspectives on the transformation of Greek society and culture allow for a new reading and context of the new media works produced during this time?

In 1989 when changing legislation allowed for private channel broadcast, channels started to proliferate and broadcast locally or nationally. This became a new field of employment for media experts but, unfortunately, those new channels did not contribute to the advancement of new media art. On the contrary, together with the emerging lifestyle press, the private broadcasting corporations assumed and actively promoted an anti-cultural and anti-intellectual position which ridiculed or disavowed the figure of the intellectual and the artist, especially of the left (Sevastakis, 2004, pp.150–152). The art that found new space through these emerging media organisations was bestselling literature (sometimes converted to soap opera scenarios) and “quality” folk music both of which shared a romanticised version of the Greek nation’s recent past. This newly shaped mass media environment was dominated by the anti-intellectual private channels as well as from the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, which despite its strong cultural focus, was technically conservative. Neither of those agents provided a space in which new media art could develop. But how did the creativity of media arts pioneers was utilised in their new role? One can trace their names in

the production credits of music video clips, advertisements and animations, in major or secondary roles. One of the few exceptions of a broadcast series that had art and technology at its core was *Meta Ti?* [Post What?] produced by EIKONA Audiovisual Research and Application for the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation in 1993 with Manthos Santorineos, Dimosthenes Agrafiotis and Dimitris Kamarotos as the creative team. The series used 3D animation and virtual environments and the content included the presentation of the work of artists working with media, as well as their technological tools. The broadcast tapes have not survived but their content was presented in VideoFest '94 in Berlin (VideoFest '94, 1994, p.77).

The lack of persistent visibility for most works in this research greatly affected the understanding of their content and aims, leading to an almost total disregard of media art produced during this period. Knowledge of those works usually comes through photographs, articles, short descriptions, or at best through a bad copy. Maybe the single most important step in their reevaluation is the compilation of an archive, a publication or an exhibition that will re-instate those works again in the public sphere. Most important in any reevaluation attempt of media arts in this period is our changing understanding of what constitutes artistic expression. Earlier accounts of new media art in Greece overlook works made by trained architects, cinematographers, poets and television producers. As a result, these accounts conclude that experimental media practices appear in Greece in the 1990s and that before then video was used as part of performances and video installations, with no “social content and focus” (Adamopoulou, 1995, pp.18–19). In a similar way, art historians looking for media art only in places such as museums and galleries are missing television broadcasts or marginal artistic practices.

The concept of the “post-medium condition”, as introduced by the critic Rosalind Krauss in the 2000 essay *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* is pivotal in our understanding of how video is utilised by a variety of practices such as painting, sculpture, architecture, music and dance in order to enhance their potential. Video, as well as the computer, are preferred by a new category of creators from every field for their capacity to express and even enhance ideas coming from any other art form. Ideas such as Krauss’ “post-medium condition” or Raymond Bellour’s “in-between-images” widen the scope of what constitutes a technology-based artistic practice. By reconsidering practices

and by escaping the confinement of media investigation and media specificity, we can now reconsider works and practices cast out in the past as “non-art”.

This is the case with the work of Thanasis Chondros and Alexandra Katsiani, who like an artistic couple with no formal art education working on the intersection of political activism, visual poetry and music performance, bridging the gap between art and life, had many works mistook for “life” rather than “art” i.e. as a parallel activity. After the inclusion of their work in exhibitions and publications during the past decade, their practice can be seen in a new light and reevaluated.<sup>44</sup> This is also the case for Leda Papaconstantinou’s documentary-styled collaboration with Carole Rousopoulos which before the “documentary turn” in contemporary art and curatorial practice celebrated by documenta 11 in 2002 would not fit in the dominant perception of video art practices.

## 5.7 Conclusions

The canonisation of documentary practices implemented by Okwui Enwezor’s documenta is one of the important events that progressed the historicisation and theorisation of new media in the last two decades, alongside exhibitions such as *Moving Pictures* realised in 2002 in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, but also initiatives such as Media Art Histories, the New Media Encyclopedia of Centre Pompidou and Ubuweb.com. This research is informed from the widening scope of contemporary art practices and the abovementioned theoretical advancements as well as its new media art perspective and attempts to reconsider art produced in Greece in the context of art and technology. This is achieved by mapping the path of new media art in Greece from its production to presentation, which is in many ways different from the path of contemporary art practiced and presented in Greece during the same time, as screenings, festivals and Television broadcasts had a greater role than gallery exhibitions. Such a perspective allows for a reevaluation of the importance of works that have been left out of the history of art but also for a reevaluation of their scope. Through this research one can follow the developments from individual

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<sup>44</sup> More specifically, their work has been presented as part of the 2012 exhibition of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens curated by Tina Pandi *This is a Poem: Visual Poetry Group 1981–2011*, in the presentation of the same exhibition in the public programme of documenta14 in 2017 (Pandi and Sarris, 2017) and in the recent publication by Areti Leopoulou *Beneficial Parasites: Approaching the Everyday from Leda Papaconstantinou / Alexandra Katsiani and Thanasis Chondros / Yiorgos Tsakiris* (Leopoulou, 2017).

experiments to collective efforts in presenting new media art with the further aim of creating the supporting infrastructure for its production and dissemination. Although the discourse was dominated by video art, most major events included other new media art practiced in Greece at the time, such as art made with computers, as with the case of Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, and with telecommunication networks, as in the case of Mit Mitropoulos' *The Line of the Horizon* (1986) project. Many of these events were organised in the context of the activity of a public institution financed by the state. Nevertheless, none of these organisations consistently maintained a new media art scope compelling artists and new media art producers to set up their own dedicated organisations. The emerging situation was in many ways different from the developments in new media art in the Greek 1970s. What can be the conclusions from a comparison as well as a retrospective evaluation of new media art and its discourse in these two related but very different periods? In the following and concluding chapter, the present research is focused on answering these questions.

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

## 6.1 Research aims

As mentioned in the introductory sections of this thesis, the period in question extends over three decades (from the 1970s to the 1990s) that involve four distinct historical phases of the Greek state including a dictatorship that disrupted political and cultural life for seven years. While cultural activity in Greece was strongly affected by developments in the troubled political arena, it was also influenced by the waves of artists returning home from political exile, from years of living and working abroad or simply from their studies. Those artists had been able to work within a different context, produced works with the support of institutions and galleries, had access to a range of technologies not available in Greece at the time and had even received international attention for their work. As one would expect, those intertwining timelines of art history come into conflict and disrupt any attempt for a linear narrative. Is it correct to consider the plotted drawings of Xagoraris, an artist who studied in Greece working in a large private institution during a dictatorship, alongside and as part of the same historical timeline with the video installations made during the 1980s by Costas Tsoclis, who studied in Rome, lived in Paris, collaborated with major galleries such as Galerie Sonnabend and was represented in Greece by the commercially successful Zoumboulakis Gallery? Or with the video works of Tassos Boulmetis produced during his studies in University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) under the tutelage of Shirley Clarke and John Whitney? How can we account for the influence of Iannis Xenakis who pioneered the integration of technology and art in music and architecture since the 1950s but could not visit Greece until the restitution to democracy after 1974?<sup>45</sup> Equally, how can one account for the influence of Takis who also left Greece in the 1950s and who, upon his return in 1986 founded the Research Center for Art and the Sciences that started operating in 1993 (Takis Foundation, 2021)?

In 1988, Nikos Giannopoulos accompanied the Greek section of the video and film programme of the European Media Art Festival: Osnabrück by pointing out a chronological

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<sup>45</sup> Iannis Xenakis was sentenced to death in absentia for his participation in resistance groups during WWII and the December events in Greece during December 1944 and January 1945. Fortunately, he had already fled Greece, but the pending sentence did not allow him to return until the general amnesty issued in 1974.

delay in how artistic concerns reach Greece and how there is an absence of duration and of artistic movements (Giannopoulos, 1988, pp.157–158). Giannopoulos also pointed out the lack of dialogue between filmmakers and video makers, the lack of artistic bridges between Greece, Europe and the U.S., as well as the issue of the country’s problematic economy resulting in slow adoption of new technologies (Giannopoulos., 1988, pp.157–158). In an introductory text to the *Video Art* exhibition of the 1989 4th Patras International Festival there is a comment on the newness of Greek video art and its successful establishment in spite of the lack of support by any private or public institution (Municipality of Patras, 1989, p.146).

In another early evaluative essay, in 1990, George Papakonstantinou noted the characteristics of video art in Greece, including the lack of a contemporary art museum and education in the electronic arts. He pointed out the reasons for the delayed introduction of video technology as a consequence of the equally delayed establishment of television. However, Papakonstantinou also mentions as a positive development the increasing visibility of video works after 1986 as well as the inclusion of Greek participants in many international festivals (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, p.10). In 1992, for the Greek representation of the exhibition *Television y Video de Creacion en la Comunidad Europea* [TV and Creative video in the European Union], which was hosted by Madrid Cultural Capital of Europe, George Papakonstantinou published the text ‘La Busca de Identidad del Videoarte Griego’ [Video Art in Greece: In Search of an Identity]. In this key text, Papakonstantinou attempted a detailed investigation of the history and physiognomy of video art in Greece. His conclusions, as described in Chapter 2, included that most of the artists working with video during their work abroad did not maintain access to technology after their return to Greece, that the dictatorship brought artistic isolation, that uses of video were mostly straightforward recording, that there was no support whatsoever, no education and no institutions, and that although there was a slight improvement after the mid-1980s, the conditions did not allow for the development of “original expression” (Papakonstantinou, 1992, pp.218–223).

Although similar arguments could be made for the introduction of computer use during the 1970s, as it was a period directly affected by the colonels’ junta and the institutional landscape in Greece was equally barren, Pantelis Xagoraris is more positive in his writings, focusing on the contribution of himself and his few peers, although he rarely participated in

group endeavours (Xagoraris, 1996, p.202). Nestoras Papanicolopoulos in the 1980s renewed the discourse during a period that computers were becoming increasingly available, but his views are aligned with his peers from the field of video art, revealing a different attitude towards what is expected from institutions and the state. His position highlighted the importance of educative institutions and organisations in making technology accessible to artists, as the lack of education was as preventive as the affordability of the equipment.

Although artistic production in Greece in the 1970s as understood through the work and writing of Pantelis Xagoraris and the sculptor Theodoros and the 1980s as evaluated by Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Nikos Giannopoulos and George Papakonstantinou, are affected by different social and political circumstances, this research tries to bridge everything in a single chronology allowing for new comparisons and new conclusions. This common chronology highlights the lack of relevant institutions as a common denominator to all aspects of artistic production, presentation, critical perception and historicisation throughout the whole period in question. It also allows for an evaluation of how the access to technology changed, how educational organisations responded, how artists networked through artist organised events and what was the relation of media artists with the art market. Through various examples, one can see how the collective strategies for domestic and international visibility evolved and how the lack of mainstream criticism was counterbalanced by a surge of artist writings. Finally, this chronology allows for common motives to emerge, such as the relation of the works made with technological means within the practice of traditional artistic disciplines. This comparison also allows for an account of other common characteristics or the lack thereof of new media art produced in Greece and in relation to art developments internationally.

The present research set specific aims and objectives from its outset, as stated in the introduction:

- i) To investigate the chronology of new media art in Greece between 1970 and 1990.
- ii) To explore the technology that was available to artists who were pursuing to work with new media during the period in question.
- iii) To study the ways in which new media art related to artistic tradition in Greece during those two decades.
- iv) To discover when and to which extent new media art appeared in arts education and art criticism.



- v) To evaluate the ways in which existing institutions supported new media arts and indicate the organisations which were founded with the purpose of supporting new media arts.
- vi) To unravel the ways in which artists networked within and outside the borders of Greece.
- vii) To determine whether art produced in the framework examined by this research had any common characteristics.

What follows is a reflection on how the new information emerging from this research changes or verifies earlier conclusions about new media art in Greece.

### 6.1.1 Chronology

This thesis considers works and practices by artists from different generations, who worked in an evolving context defined by different technological media, as part of a common timeline. In this way we are able to see progress, rupture and reoccurring issues that slipped out of the rigid criteria of earlier attempts to map contemporary art in Greece. New findings, such as hardly seen or undocumented works, works exhibited in a context defined by other media, artworks considered of lesser artistic importance or made by creators who did not consistently pursue a career in visual arts, allow for new interpretations of history, fill in disputed gaps and challenge the often-cited isolation of the Greek art milieu from international developments.

The period in question begins with the works of Pantelis Xagoraris, who as mentioned earlier, understood mathematics, science and art, in their pre-industrial unity, closely observing the work of international art movements and artists who did the same, locating himself and his work within the visual arts tradition of the Bauhaus and Constructivism. Although it is often mentioned that the dictatorship had a negative effect on cultural life in Greece, it is also connected to the emergence of performative practices for their provocative potential but also for their strong ability to engage the viewer (Gerogianni, 2019, pp.101–102). Eleni Vakalo also mentions that even during the dictatorship, when artistic activity restarted, there was a fresh and intense interest in the arts, with more people visiting exhibitions and events than ever before (Vakalo, 1985, pp.83–84). Bia Papadopoulou suggests that the shift from the end object to the process is also a form of artistic dissent similar to the political turn in the 1970s, as it is a revolt against artistic tradition (Papadopoulou, 2005, p.101). This is the timeframe of both Xagoraris' first computer work *Symmetries of the Cube* (1971) as well as Theodoros' earliest works in the *Manipulations* series. Thus, although it is a fact that the colonels' junta imposed censorship and obstructed collaboration and exchange with artists and institutions

of democratic countries, it is also true that after the initial pause (artists' strike) there was a surge of artistic events that contributed to the renewal of the cultural field. In the case of Xagoraris' *Symmetries of the Cube* (1971), realised within the auspices of an important private organisation (Athens Center of Ekistics) and a foreign cultural institution (Goethe-Institut Athen) in conjunction with a travelling exhibition organised by Kunstverein München, there is no known political obstruction. Xagoraris, whose oeuvre included motor rotated kinetic works in the 1960s such as *By Beauty of Shape* (1963–1970), starts using a computer almost concurrently with developments in western Europe and Yugoslavia, where groups of artists whom he closely studied, such as GRAV and the New Tendencies followed a trajectory from the optical to the kinetic and the digital (Paul, 2016, p.6). This is not to say that the conditions in Greece allowed or aided somehow such a practice; Xagoraris' work is the unique exception of work produced with a computer in Greece in 1971 by an exceptional artist-mathematician and within the context of organisations with international activity.

Theodoros' case was also exceptional. When he started exhibiting his critical performative installations, specifically *Sculpture for Public Participation – Participation Prohibited* in Goethe-Institut Athen in 1970, the artist became the target of a fierce attack from press aligned with the regime (Gerogianni, 2019, pp.103–104). Theodoros' practice was hybrid, with strong conceptual and material roots in sculpture, but with an expanded array of linguistic tools borrowed from performance, conceptual art and the mass media, which became the object of his criticism. Unlike his contemporaries, such as the aforementioned group of New Greek Realists who critiqued mass culture through painting, Theodoros adopted both the media and the processes of mass culture in order to subvert them, through a deconstructive and antagonistic comparison with sculpture. His practice as exhibited from 1970 onwards, spearheaded participatory, performative and media practices in Greece, including television from as early as 1976.

Television apparatus as a reference or as a structural element of artworks starts appearing in Greece around 1975. Among the examples are Dimitris Alithinos' spontaneous interventions in the Athenian Ancient Agora and the Hephaestus Temple where he placed a switched-off portable television set in front of a copy of a kore's head; Mit Mitropoulos' 1978 use of a television displaying static as a readymade in a mail art exhibition. Yioulia Gazetopoulou's reported use of video and television images; Theodoros' *Tele-manipulation* (1976), which is extensively discussed in Chapter 4. As is often the case with early video, works are lost or

become unavailable, especially when produced as an experiment, as an ideological statement, in the context of a political struggle or for an ephemeral, non-commercial artwork. From 1981 video appears in exhibitions in commercial galleries, as is the case with Aris Prodromidis' work. However, it is only well into the 1980s that video becomes a widely available technology in Greece. As a result, the cases of audio-visual experimentation and performance documentation during the 1970s are very few, and mostly recorded on film. This lack of availability was also the reason that no avant-garde artists from the 1960s and 1970s that lived and worked in Greece got involved or experimented with video, as was the case in Italy where for example established artists such as Alberto Burri, Lucio Fontana and Greek-born Jannis Kounellis had the chance to produce video works, through the Florence-based video art organisation art/tapes/22 (Bordini, 2016, p.39). As a result, when the medium started being used in Greece, there was already an internationally established tradition of video art that most artists aspired to connect to. Besides the outdated technological standards of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation and other technological and financial reasons for the late appearance of video art in Greece, as discussed in Chapter 5, the most important and widely acknowledged reason was the imposition of the colonels' junta and its effect on the programme of the television channels, as well as the censorship on art and audio-visual productions.

#### 6.1.2 Technology

It is apparent that issues of chronology are often entangled with issues of technology, as innovations in art using a technological medium are dependent on what kind of technology is available for artistic use, a fact easily observable in the history of new media practice in Greece. In the case of Greek video art, chronological and technological issues are also linked to the lack of free speech with any medium and platform, including exhibitions, audio-visual productions, performances and of course, public television broadcasting which had just begun its regular programme. As a result, artistic expression in the context of public organisations was out of the question until the fall of the colonels' junta, while finding the essential equipment was a solitary pursuit.

Pantelis Xagoraris managed to gain access to the UNIVAC computer of the Athens Center of Ekistics in 1971 although he sought after computing technology and investigated its artistic potential certainly since 1967 when he included computer drawings by others among the contextual notes of his first *Transformation* exhibition (Xagoraris, 1996, p.155). He later

gained access to computers during his M.I.T. fellowship in 1974, and after his return to Greece he regularly used an H.P. 9810A calculator and plotter provided by the Department of Projective and Descriptive Geometry of the National Technical University of Athens (Xagoraris, 1981, p.7). Despite his success in gaining access to necessary equipment, this technology was far from being available to artists in Greece before the 1980s. In fact, it was available to Xagoraris in his capacity as a mathematician teaching in a major educational institution and not through his capacity as an artist. In the ensuing decade of the 1980s, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos faced a completely different state of affairs when personal computers made for household and office use were becoming increasingly available. However, as he mentions, this technology remained largely inaccessible to artists for financial, educational and other reasons despite being very quickly adopted by the advertising industry and for other commercial applications (Papanicolopoulos, 1986, pp.25–28). Both artists had to surpass this lack of accessibility, each one in his own way.

Theodoros also had to surmount difficulties that did not affect artists working with traditional media. Joining forces with television director Yiorgos Emirzas allowed him to create a film for the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, even if the context was a documentary for his work. *Tele-manipulation* (1976) is an unpaired example of work created for broadcast in Greek television, not only because it included performances directed to a television public but also because it did so through the conditions of television viewing. Although it was made with film, the work makes use of present tense, often with the artist addressing the viewers as if in a live event. “Liveness” is an intrinsic property of video image, which is electronic, it is transferable over cables or radio waves and can be recorded on magnetic tapes. This is the characteristic that linked video to performance and body art through most of their joint history. However, in 1970s Greece, video was a rare technology reserved for live studio broadcast, whereas everything else was filmed, developed, edited and telecast using telecine. This hybrid work is by no means unique to the history of audio-visual media: iconic works in the history of video art or the history of art for television, such as David Hall’s *TV Interruptions (7 TV Pieces)* (1971) were shot in film as video equipment was not always available (Juliá, 2013). Theodoros re-attempted to make a work referring to television, its content and its apparatus, including video, in 1981 with the performance and installation *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show* (1981) for the Greek Art Festival in Amsterdam. Although Theodoros could access video technology outside Greece, he could not control the resulting video, so unfortunately the amateurish result of the recording in this

first attempt prevented Theodoros from using it as intended. The artist recreated both the installation and the performance a year later for *EUROPALIA – Grèce Art d’Aujourd’hui 2X10* at the Palais Royal des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. Theodoros, as well as all artists that wanted to engage with video in Greece were at a disadvantage, especially before the establishment of VHS as a home video system in the mid-1980s. As narrated by Nikos Giannopoulos, apart from the scarcity of equipment there was a scarcity of expertise (Schizakis, 2018c). Artists working with video during their studies who returned to Greece, could not easily exhibit or screen their tapes, and artists wanting to produce video in Greece could not easily find professional assistance and resorted to ingenious resources for editing, creating visual effects or simply recording. In a strange occurrence, before the first few individual video artists living and working in Greece started to meet each other and constitute a dynamic tendency, for a short period of time around 1980 and 1981, Nikos Papadakis of Polyplano offered equipment and expertise for artists without receiving any significant expressions of interest. It seems that only Nikos Giannopoulos capitalised on the opportunity. Consequently, in Greece, one can say that video had a contradictory history, of equipment predating artistic needs and artistic needs predating the available equipment at the same time.

### 6.1.3 Artistic tradition

As mentioned above, artistic tendencies in the 1960s and 1970s involved a break with tradition, and new technologies were often seen as an unexplored field of experimentation (London, 2020, p.11), but, by the time certain technologies became available to artists in Greece, their artistic use was already burdened with a canon consisting of important works and artists. This is less the case with the early computer practice of Pantelis Xagoraris who was more interested in the history of the relation of art and mathematics and science and who actively sought to be associated with the Bauhaus and constructivist traditions (Xagoraris, 1983, p.7). This is also the case with Nestoras Papanicolopoulos who used a PC for creating works in line with his painting and printing practice that bore Russian Constructivist influence. Both of those artists working with a computer did not seek to engage with an emerging tendency in computer art and graphics but linked their work with existing historical avant-garde movements and groups.

Another issue explored through new media by artists in Greece was traditional artistic media and the tradition of other art forms which could be straightforwardly or creatively enhanced with video or the computer, such as sculpture and painting. The living paintings of Costas

Tsoclis who used video projection technology to enhance painting, as well as Theodoros' sculptural investigation through television and video are the most obvious examples. Marshall McLuhan states in *Understanding Media* that the "content of any medium is always another medium" with the examples of speech as the content of writing, and writing as the content of print (McLuhan, 1964, p.8). Since Tsoclis is using video in order to recreate and enhance a method of working with painting, the *Living Painting* series of works exemplify this fact as the "content" of those video installations is painting. Theodoros would also create works through media like vinyl records, television broadcasts and printed books, where the content would be sculptural communication. Unlike Tsoclis, Theodoros is not imitating the form of another kind of art but focuses on the elements of sculptural communication, which are visual as well as non-visual. Provocatively, he uses one newer medium to enhance the communicative potential of sculpture but also to hijack mass media and use them as a channel for the re-introduction of artistic speech in the public sphere. Nestoras Papanicolopoulos also used the computer to design multiple versions of an image before choosing which one to realise through a hybrid practice of printing and painting. All three of them progressed towards the "post-medium" condition described by Rosalind Krauss by "reinventing or rearticulating" traditional media through the effect of newer media (Krauss, 2000, pp.53–56). Theodoros' example is a systematic attempt of total integration of the media of mass communication within the technical and conceptual limits of sculpture whereas Costas Tsoclis and Nestoras Papanicolopoulos are enhancing the specific apparatus of painting, like the canvas and the easel through technology.

The case was slightly different with artists working with the audio-visual medium of video, in which there was not a tradition in the historical 20th-century avant-garde practice but which, by the 1980s, had already a history spanning the previous two decades. Artists like Nikos Giannopoulos clearly referred to this history with works that were a homage to Peter Campus and Wolf Vostell.<sup>46</sup> Even more common was the use of video to make works that referred visually or conceptually to Greek antiquity and mythology. This characteristic is not specific to video art but another manifestation of national identity in art, or a transformation of the Hellenicity (Greekness) issue in Greek art.<sup>47</sup> Hellenicity had been under critical

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<sup>46</sup> Nikos Giannopoulos presents *Narcissus I and II* (1985) as a homage to Peter Campus and *Dancer of the Universe* (1989) as a tribute to Wolf Vostell.

<sup>47</sup> The term 'hellenicity' has been used to convey national identity in a broader cultural context but mostly as the ideologically charged tendency to present a continuity from Greek antiquity to postwar and contemporary art (Christofoglou, 1995, p.238). Cultural studies scholar Myrsini Zorba offers a wider

scrutiny since the 1970s by art historians such as Nicos Hadjinicolaou, who disclosed the ideological foundations of claims to national identity in art which could be used for both revolutionary or regressive and conservative purposes through examples of “Englishness”, “Frenchness” and “Mexicanicity” (Hadjinicolaou, 1982, pp.83–101). In the early 1980s, conferences such as the *Avant-garde and Tradition* organised by Síndesmos Sínkronis Téchnis [Association of Contemporary Artists] investigated the subject even further regarding the relation of tradition to the Greek manifestations of modernity (Síndesmos Sínkronis Téchnis, 1981). Eleni Vakalo’s *I Physiognomía tis Metapolemikís Téchnis stin Elláda: O Míthos tis Ellinikótitas* [The Physiognomy of Postwar Art in Greece: The Myth of Hellenicity] recapitulated on the various claims to Greek identity in art from the 1930s to the 1980s in terms of style (light, line and perspective), themes (Byzantine and antique subjects) as well as the purpose (1930s Nationalism, postwar conservative reaction to modernity and abstraction) (Vakalo, 1983). As is obvious from the aforementioned critical views on hellenicity, despite the opinion of critics, art historians and artist, it was still an existing tendency in the 1980s, and that affected video production as well. Examples include Nikos Giannopoulos’ *Prometheus* (1989), Alexandra Katsivelakis’ *Proteus* (1984), Marianne Strapatsakis’ *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* (1989), Yioulia Gazetopoulou’s *Medee* (1986), Tsoclis’ *Medea* (1989), Dimitris Dokatzis’ *Persephone* (1990).

Artists working with video in Greece did not limit themselves to painting and sculptural references but also used video to work with music, theatre, dance and poetry. In this context, most of the early works made with or using video were part of a collaboration with a musician, a poet or a performer. The 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies and 2nd European Meeting of Art-New Technologies as well as the events for *Art without Borders* at the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center and the Fournos Center for Digital Culture presented a programme comprising mainly interdisciplinary collaborations such as video installations with musicians, video dance performances and video poetry. This points towards a similar desire by practitioners of other artistic fields to enhance their respective mediums, practices and artistic traditions through the use of technology, in accordance with a post-medium tendency opened up by new audiovisual technologies.

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definition: “This ‘Greekness’ was a cultural identity with a large dose of ancient Greek civilisation (Hellenicity), together with Greek honor and manliness, conviviality and Mediterranean temperament, pride-set and touristic folklore, all expressively charged with social sensitivity, emotion, the complaint of the small country against injustice, as well as the development of a phobic syndrome” (Zorba, 2009, p.253).

#### 6.1.4 Education – visibility – criticism

A major issue affecting the dissemination and establishment of art and technology practices in Greece in the 1980s and 1990s was the lack of formal education. Video art and electronic media were not taught in schools of fine arts. During the period examined in this research, apart from the “teach yourself video” attitude propagated by Nikos Papadakis through the pages of *VideoSIMA*, training for the new tools was only possible in private organisations such as Evmaros, which included computer animation seminars alongside its other classes from as early as the 1980s and Focus School of Photography which introduced video in its curriculum in 1992. Practitioners of video art were either self-taught (e.g. Aris Prodromidis), or relied on the assistance and technical expertise of others (e.g. Angelos Skourtis, Marianne Strapatsakis, Marianna Theodoridou) or had professionally trained during their studies abroad (e.g. George Papakonstantinou, Vouvoula Skoura, Tassos Boulmetis).

The first students of the Athens School of Fine Arts which had the opportunity to be taught video and new media were students from the Third Painting Workshop around 1996.<sup>48</sup> The first dedicated multimedia workshop of the school was founded in 1998, characteristic the institution’s conservative and outdated stance towards art education. The following statement by Nikos Kessanlis, the School’s Dean at the time, was representative of the situation: “The conditions in which the young artists have to create are difficult. Often the creators of video art are being disputed by the art circles. However, the school wishes to establish a chair for video art” (Vidos, 1996). That statement was made on the occasion of the video exhibition *Push-ups*, realised in the exhibition space of the school in 1996, one of the events that took place in the new premises of the school, alongside exhibitions such as the Dakis Joannou collection *Everything that's Interesting is New: The Dakis Joannou Collection* the same year and which highlighted the gap between contemporary art and art realised within the context of Greece’s most important art education institution. Kessanlis’ remark also refers to the stance of local art criticism that did not engage with video works and the aims of video art during the period of this research. Apart from reviews of works presented in commercial galleries (e.g. the works of Tsoclis and Strapatsakis) there is little to nothing written by the art critics of major newspapers on works presented in screenings, festivals and non-commercial spaces. Most texts published in daily press and magazines are

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<sup>48</sup> The students of the Third Painting Workshop, under the tutelage of the workshop director Rena Papaspyrou, exhibited their works in the exhibition *Kinós Paronomastís i Psiphiakí Ikóna* [Common Denominator the Digital Image] in June 1998, Gallery 7, Athens.



interviews or are authored by the artists themselves. This was also the case with the festival catalogues, with most introductory and mediation texts provided by the participating artists.

In the absence of active institutions during the period examined in this research, there is little accessible documented information in terms of public response, multimedia installations, exhibition design and parallel events, whether talks or performances. Through focusing on the histories of the exhibitions and events themselves we can understand their role in disseminating new media discourse and compensate for the absence of criticism and institutions. Most importantly, this approach allows for a deeper understanding of the way works comprising many elements that were inadequately documented were presented to the public (Graham, 2016, pp.575–576).

#### 6.1.5 Institutions

Through educating the public, other artists and critics, the artists working with video sought greater visibility and integration in the artistic milieu and the market. Although the very first media-related organisations, such as Polyplano and its video studio, Narcissus film production and EIKONA Audiovisual Research and Application, aspired to assist in the production of works, the next step was the foundation of organisations that aimed to present media works to a large audience. Nikos Giannopoulos collaborated with George Papakonstantinou and Nikos Patiniotis for organising the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies, EIKONA Audiovisual Research and Application collaborated with the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center for its Art and Technology Sector, before founding the Fournos Center for Digital culture a few years later. All three aforementioned organisations realised large events and their activity lasted for a few years and/or was reoccurring. The 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies was the most ambitious in scale and aims but did not manage to parallel its initial success in its second edition, whereas the Fournos Center for Digital culture is currently the new media organisation in Greece with the longest duration of activity operating since 1992.

In New York, since the early 1970s, video creation was supported by a multitude of organisations. These were purpose founded artist-run initiatives, film organisations that extended their scope in order to include video, experimental TV labs, women initiatives, and even museums such as the Museum of Modern Art (London, 2020, pp.34–39). Australia and European countries also had programmes that financially supported media production,

whereas in Japan, the state as well as the Japanese electronic corporations were indifferent to supporting new media art. In Latin American dictatorships, consumer video cameras were illegal (London, 2020, pp.16–17). Italy is a distinct example of a country with a rich history in video art which has been discussed in detail and which was geographically close to Greece and had a number of organisations, like art/tapes/22, producing hundreds of videotapes during the 1970s (Partridge, 2016, pp.9–10). In Yugoslavia, basic state support through the Student and Youth Cultural Centres (SKC) and several television stations allowed artists to create videos as early as the late 1960s and even collaborate with Italian organisations active at the time (Blackwood, 2019, pp.57–59).

In Greece, for the whole period examined by this research, there were no existing specialised institutions providing technical infrastructure and contextual framework, connecting the work of Greek artists with other similar institutions abroad. In the past, Greek cultural institutions, following WWII and the ensuing Civil War, were instrumentalised in propagating the dominant national ideology with any progressive deviation being expelled and branded as communist (Zorba, 2009, p.246). The 1980s are a period of transformation for the Greek cultural institutions and their actual democratisation. This changing state policy towards cultural institutions accounts for the completely different attitude between artists in the 1970s and artists in the 1980s. In the first instance, the artistic community had the foundation of a contemporary art museum as its single demand, whereas towards the end of the 1980s, artists expressed a variety of demands, from state support to different types of specialised organisations.

Existing public and private institutions, with the notable but intermittent exceptions of the Thessaloniki Film Festival, the Institute Français d’Athènes and Goethe-Institut Athen, did not adapt to support new technologies. Public discourse on art and new technologies in Greece, especially during the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies in 1990, focused on the foundation of such institutions and organisations. Artists talking or writing publicly focused on the justification and the necessity of public and private production, distribution and educating institutions, often with examples from other European countries.

The time that the important and ambitious changes took place in the Greek cultural sector was the mid-1990s, when the minister of culture, Thanos Mikroutsikos, appointed a series

of dedicated working groups to investigate and make proposals on the development and promotion of contemporary art practices. One such important committee investigated the issue of the contemporary art museum, and another the issue of photography, which had a parallel course with video art in the sense that there was an increase of photographer-run photography dedicated organisations in the 1980s which managed to gain state support from the mid-1990s onward (Stathatos, 2000, p.265). State support for new media art was incorporated in the 1997 founding law of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens. Its scope was outlined as “the collection of works of painting, sculpture, installation and assemblages with multiple media, drawings and prints, photography, video art and art works made with current audio-visual or other technological media, rare books and relative objects” (Hellenic Government Gazette: FEK 2557/A/24.12.1997). In fact, the work of artists working with new technologies became a major argument for the necessity of the foundation of a museum of contemporary art, with both Xagoraris and Theodoros persistently promoting this idea.<sup>49</sup>

#### 6.1.6 Networking – collecting

New media artists in Greece expected that the foundation of the proposed organisations will assist in the production, archiving and distribution of their works, advancing the financial prospects of video making, but that will also become an institutional counterpart for developing transnational collaborations and boost the visibility of Greek video artists on an international level. Although artists regularly collaborated with their peers abroad, like for example Marianne Strapatsakis with Robert Cahen for *The Phantasms of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* (1989) and Nikos Giannopoulos’ collaboration with Wolf Vostell for *Dancer of the Universe* (1989), this could not continue in equal terms, since artists around Europe could easily find institutional support, in contrast with artists living and working in Greece. During the 1980s it was still common for festivals to group artworks as national participation, as for example in the European Media Art Festival: Osnabrück (Coldewey et al., 1988). This required a professional entity that could be contacted and which could regulate and administrate potential participations. While Greek video artists

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<sup>49</sup> Xagoraris was a founding member and vice president of the organisation Friends of the Museum of Contemporary Art founded in 1989 and as well as the vice president of the organisation Artists’ Association. Theodoros also was a founding member of Artists’ Association, founded in 1976, which advocated the necessity of a foundation of a contemporary art museum as its first public manifestation. Both artists had expressed the importance of a specialised organisation for the presentation and preservation of contemporary art through their texts.

emerging in the 1980s managed to come together very quickly forming a local network, this dynamism was not maintained into forming sustained international connections.

The art market was also an issue that required assistance from organisations. As it is evident from the type of events discussed in this thesis, commercial gallery exhibitions were rare, and mostly happened during the early 1980s. Although in 1990 several galleries collaborated with the organisers of the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies and hosted new media works, video installations started regularly appearing in Greek galleries much later into the 1990s. With the exception of Tsoclis' video installations eventually purchased by collectors, there is no other known purchase of video works during the period in question.<sup>50</sup> In China and India, where artists also started using video as late as the 1990s, regardless of the appearance of specialised galleries, the market was supported by western collectors (Meigh-Andrews, 2014, pp.51, 54). In Greece, there was no commercial interest from neither Greek nor international collectors or collecting institutions. Therefore, a distributing organisation that could enhance the visibility of Greek artists would have been desirable as described in the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies (Giannopoulos, Papakonstantinou & Patiniotis, 1990, pp.13–14 and 141–142). Eventually, before any of the proposals of the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies took off, the international art market had started integrating editioned videos and video installations. During the 1990s, a new artistic landscape is forming by the first private institutions such as the DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, the Athens International Art Fair Art Athina, as well as new commercial galleries that represented Greek and international artists. In this emerging condition, a younger generation of artists created, exhibited and sold limited edition video works while the milieu that struggled for visibility, integration and infrastructure, gradually withdrew, absorbed by different professional routes, opening up at the same time due to the expansion of private television stations during the same period.

#### 6.1.7 Characteristics of produced works

Media artists in Greece came from various paths, significantly different education and training backgrounds and also had different aims. They never constituted a “school” with common characteristics. For example, even the production of video works –which numerically exceed all other media works in Greece for the period in question– never

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<sup>50</sup> Versions of the *Harpooned Fish* (1985) were purchased by the Giuliano Gori Collection in Italy (Koskina, 2002, p.204), and for the Beltsios Collection in Kalamata (Zacharopoulos, 2004, p.93).

reached a mass where videos or video artists would be categorised according to a subject, technique or any other trait. As a result, collective presentations of video had as their subject the medium itself, its newness, its aims, its characteristics and its problematic integration in the Greek artistic circuit. The curatorial context provided aimed at educating the audience about video art and there was hardly any in-depth analysis of specific works. This was evident in exhibitions, screenings, round table discussions, as well as television broadcasts and the written press presentations of those events.

What were the characteristics of works that were produced or presented in this specific state of affairs? What are the unique characteristics of new media art produced and presented in a country with reduced access to technology and with a national identity preoccupied with the past, with the teaching of new technologies being absent from major educational institutions, with some exceptionally advanced private cultural organisations and in a period of a democratisation process for national institutions? Apart from the strong attachment to tradition, what are the specific qualities and exceptions in the content and production of new media works?

The artworks produced were very few considering that the period in question spans more than two decades. This is especially evident in the case of video art, where artists presented the same work on many occasions often without being able to fund or support the production of more works. It is characteristic of the situation that most festivals and exhibitions presented existing works, already produced through self-funding or institutions abroad and that during the period 1987 to 1992 all festivals and exhibitions present the same art works.

Due to lack of professional expertise, technical support and specialised equipment, artists resorted to resourcefulness and experimentation, resulting in hybrid works or works that made use of uncommon and ad hoc solutions. For the same reasons, media works produced in Greece were rarely state of the art, whereas more technologically demanding traits such as interactivity, user control, synchronisation, multiple channels, projections and networks were either very rare or non-existent.

Although there is resourcefulness and experimentation, works that really open up new perspectives to a medium are very rare. One such case would be Costas Tsoclis *Living Painting* practice which had at least some international recognition, as his work was presented in the Venice Biennale in 1986 and was later included in Jasia Reichardt's *Electronically Yours: New Images from the Digital Era* realised at the Tokyo Metropolitan

Museum of Photography in 1998, an exhibition including combinations of video with painting and sculpture (Reichardt, 1998). Another case would be Mit Mitropoulos, whose *Face to Face* series of works, although never realised in Greece, were exhibited in international media events and institutions such as the Artcom in Paris in 1986 and V2 centre in Hertogenbosch, Holland in 1989. In addition, his *The Line of the Horizon* (1986) realised in Thessaloniki in 1986, and with which Mitropoulos linked several locations around the globe through fax machines and telephones following the earth's rotation, was a unique example of an artwork of global scale.

Artists that were classically trained in fine art academies and had an established artistic practice and who consistently or sporadically engaged with new media were only a few. Most of the practitioners screening and exhibiting video works in the 1980s were previously active in different fields, resulting in widespread interdisciplinarity, bringing within the video discourse issues active in music, performance, poetry, cinema, architecture, theatre and television. As a consequence, the great majority of video art works has a self-referential aspect, dealing with the medium itself, and its relation to other kinds of art. If video in the U.S.A. and Europe served a political cause, either as alternative television and newscasting or for documenting the politically charged body and performance art practices, this was not the case in Greece. In its global history, video has also been connected with the artistic practices emerging during the period of second-wave feminism, in the context of which even personal and private issues were created and documented in a wider political context. In Greece, explicit political practices are uncommon, as for example among the works of the sculptor Theodoros, Leda Papaconstantinou's and Carole Roussopoulos' media activism, the radical reassessment of urban habitation in the works of Mit Mitropoulos and George Papakonstantinou and the poetry of the every-day in the work of Thanasis Chondros and Alexandra Katsiani.

## **6.2 Research questions - contribution to knowledge**

The answers to the three questions that guided this research could be synthesised as follows:

i) In what ways and under which circumstances new media art, in the form of art made with computers, video and communication networks, was introduced in artistic discourse and practice in Greece in the 1970s and 1980s?

Discourse that related to the new media field commenced towards the end of the 1960s in

connection to the computer calculated and plotted work of Pantelis Xagoraris and the mass media critique of the sculptor Theodoros, despite the restrictions imposed by the colonels' junta as well as the lack of supportive public institutions. Discourse on art and technology was mainly carried out by the artists themselves and focused on their artistic practice, with limited contributions by critics, which usually overlooked issues of technology. In the 1980s, new media art that was practised and produced in Greece was mostly video, with the few noted exceptions of works made with the use of computers and telecommunication networks. In this second period as examined in the research, numerous artists produced and presented works in spaces and events that were organised by artists but also by few public institutions and governmental agencies. Important state support, linked to the politically driven support to technological innovation, unfortunately, lacked a strategy and failed to have a long-lasting impact. Theorisation of art and technology developed significantly, through the organisation of numerous events, conferences, exhibitions, magazine articles and dedicated periodical publications and with the contribution of art historians, critics and scientists alongside the numerous voices from artists from every field.

ii) Which factors contributed to the marginalisation of new media practices in Greek art history and practice?

Most of the work examined in this thesis was presented and exhibited in the most important private and public art spaces and cultural organisations active at the time. Those practices were marginalised due to their exclusion from the historicisation process. This is because historicisation for the period in question is still an incomplete process in Greece but also because the way it was carried out in the past, in the absence of non-specialist institutions, was affected by a biased view of the artwork as an object and commercial product and a biased view of the artists as professionals with a distinct and specific practice carried out throughout their lives. The marginalisation of new media art in Greece was due to the fact that most works were not commercially available through a gallery system and that their creators were not always professional artists who maintained a constant interest in new media art.

iii) How does the dissemination of these practices relate to other national and international histories of new media art?

Although Pantelis Xagoraris' abstract computer art tendencies and the political ambiguity of Theodoros' performative installations during the colonels' junta were possible under the

auspices of foreign cultural institutions and private galleries, this was not the case for audiovisual and televised practices that required the collaboration of the single television channel which was controlled by the state, much like Latin American countries that also suffered from dictatorial suppression of free speech and artistic expression. Following the reinstatement of democracy in Greece in 1974, the limited integration of technologies in Greek artistic cultural institutions, including television, did not generally allow for the production of new media artworks by Greek artists, while making problematic the presentation of works that were produced abroad. During the 1980s, artists made a significant effort to change this without firm supportive private or public infrastructure. Their intensive endeavours affected the character of the institutions emerging in the 1990s, while new media art was becoming increasingly integrated into a globalised art world.

The contribution of this research to new media art histories can be summarised as follows:

- To answer the three research questions, documents, catalogues, artworks, earlier historicising attempts and canonical texts on the history of art in Greece were evaluated through a new media art scope for the first time. Essential in this process was the compilation of a chronological timeline of new media arts in Greece, included in its entirety in the Appendix B.

- In addition, this research investigated unpublished documents located in public and private archives shedding new light into the aims and methods of new media artists and organisations active in Greece during the period in question.

- The lack of written sources, of criticism and of enduring institutional support for the most part of the period in question is supplemented by oral history type of interviews with artists and exhibition or festival organisers, with the aim of recording their perspectives and opinions, their intentions and their otherwise undocumented efforts in presenting, promoting and producing new media art. At the end of the present research, the recordings of these interviews will be donated to a public archive of a relevant institution in order to assist further research in the future.

- Starting from the assumption that the historical appraisal of media art in Greece has suffered from both a technophobic and a western bias, this research was carried out in the hope that its outcome will allow for a reevaluation of the artistic aim of historical works perceived as cold, technological, formalist and “unimportant” by their contemporaries.



-The research reveals how and to which extent the ideas of artists living and working in a country with limited access to technology were in dialogue with the work of new media pioneers in Europe, Asia and the U.S.A.

-The importance of this research project lies in filling in a major gap in the history of Greek post-war art by offering a new case study in the global history of new media experimentation that contributes to a better understanding of how new media art practice evolved outside artistic centres.

-The original findings of this research have been used to reevaluate the individual practice of important pioneers of media art in Greece, in essays, exhibitions and events that have been realised, published or are currently under realisation in connection to my independent and institutional curatorial practice.

### **6.3 Past, present and future research on new media art in Greece**

The present research focuses on a history of new media art in Greece, retrospectively looking at artistic practices entailing technology, from the moment that it was practised and discoursed by few individual artists, to the moment that a small but dynamic group of artists formed the first new media organisations. Those organisations aimed to present the work of Greek media artists nationally and internationally, trying to establish global connections and find ways to support production. During this period there were some exceptional works produced, but which were neglected by criticism and the mainstream art world in Greece. In those works, technology was rarely used in itself, in a modernist, medium-specific mode. For the vast majority of artists discussed in this thesis, technology was used in relation to another practice, as a comment or improvement, and as a way to combine arts from different fields. Nevertheless, there is also a significant number of works referring thematically to their medium of making.

The lack of formal education for new media art practices was also a parameter that affected both new media art production and discourse. It is due to this unavailability of training in new technologies, as well as due to the lack of technical or other support for the production of new media art, that there is a strong D.I.Y. element that affected even professional production. The collective efforts of artists working with new media in Greece reached a dead end in the early 1990s when the dynamism deflated. Concurrently, in Greece, emerging

new galleries, institutions, collectors, artists and curators are increasingly accepting new media. With Greece becoming part of an increasingly globalised world during the 1990s, information circulated faster, there were stronger ties with an international art market, and a younger generation of artists, studying and working in Greece and/or abroad, having demystified the use of video and computers, used them alongside a broader artistic practice. By the second half of the decade of the 1990s, this work was being exhibited, reviewed and collected, all contributing to the formation of a new “post-media” condition.

The survival and sustained visibility of many of those works produced in the 1970s, such as the works by Pantelis Xagoraris and Theodoros, is largely due to their inclusion in the collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens. This is also the case for video works produced during the 1980s by established artists such as Tsoclis, Strapatsakis and Prodromidis, which were collected alongside the works of artists that emerged in the 1990s and the new millennium and whose work was acquired by the museum from the commencement of its collection activity in 2000. Currently, the work of earlier pioneers is part of the same collection with works by artists such as Andreas Angelidakis, Alexandros Psychoulis, Lina Theodorou, Maria Andelman, George Drivas, Stefanos Tsivopoulos, Michael Arfaras, Makis Faros, Dimitrios Kozaris, Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki, Kostas Basanos, Costis (Triantafyllou), Chondros and Katsiani, Eleni Kamma, Artemis Potamianou, Dimitris and Panayota Tzamourani, Nikos Navridis, Jenny Marketou, Eleni Mylonas, Danae Stratou, George Hatdjimichalis, Rena Papaspyrou, KERNEL, Spyros Nakas, Sophia Kosmaoglou, all of whom have contributed to new media art practice whether it is their main practice or not, with works made with the use of video and computers from the early 1990s to the present day.

The present research allows for the next important step, which is the restoration, preservation, collection, archiving and exhibiting the majority of the works that had not been collected from their time of production to today, with the further aim of their reevaluation in the present. Through the detailed delineation of the field of new media art practices in Greece, one can also easier identify and trace missing cases, unsuccessful experiments or works that were never exhibited and supplement the timeline of new media art initiated in this research.

The National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, as well as private institutions that function from the 1990s onwards, such as DESTE and the Fournos Center for Digital Culture,

make the study of new media art in Greece an easier task. These institutions maintain archives that include press reviews, exhibition documents, collection archives, videos of events, press releases and artist talks so that researching any field related to their activity is possible through archives that are publicly accessible. This can potentially facilitate future research that will concern the period following the period of this research: what happens in a globalised state such as Greece in the 1990s? What happens after the introduction of the teaching of video and digital media at the Athens School of Fine Arts? Where there any common traits in works produced by Greek artists during this period? Which are the important new media art practitioners and what is their contribution to new media? Are there any links forming between new media art and other arts? What was the effect of active new media art organisations, such as the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies, the Fournos Center for Digital Culture and the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center in the development of new media art in Greece in the following years? Where there other organisations that actively promoted new media art through their programme, exclusively or parallelly to a broader programme?

Those questions are not merely issues of historicisation of media that are especially sensitive to time. The present circumstances of a global pandemic were catalytic in the relocation of almost all human activity in a space mediated by audiovisual and digital means. Despite the numerous paradigms offered by the history of new media art, the methods that dominated this transition were the most conventional, even in the field of art. Discovering, remembering and understanding this brief history of new media art is part of a struggle against the oversimplification and corporatisation of human perception.

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# Appendix A: Oral histories

The following recorded interviews were realised in the context of this research during the period 2016-2020

## A.1

Theodoros, sculptor, Oral History Interview with Stamatis Schizakis

Athens, 28/9/2016

High-definition video, colour, with sound

Duration: 45 minutes



In this discussion, we began by talking about the work *Test No III*, 1970, which EMST wanted to borrow for an exhibition or even permanently if the artist agreed. Taking the opportunity, I asked Theodoros about his trip to Japan, an experience he described as life altering just a few minutes before we start recording. He mentioned his sensei Kuroda, who influenced his approach to object making. We talked about simple forms and complicated meanings and, while mentioning a photographic work, I asked about how his preference of basic, earthly materials, like wood, stone, earth and metal relate to his later work with various media. I try to bring forward an affinity of his work with the writings of Vilem Flusser (especially ideas laid out in *Does Writing Have a Future?*) which I think was a useful comparison since we discussed about how media enhance a communicational potential of

sculpture, and how for him there is a lineage from stone carving to vinyl recording, but the more advanced the media the most effective it is, and about how a sculptor should infiltrate this new public spaces. As part of this we discuss about a work titled *Manipulation XXX – One-man sculptural-musical show* (1981-1982) that was installed twice, once in the Nieuwe Kerk of Amsterdam during the Greek Art Festival and a second time in Palais Royal des Beaux-Arts in Brussels during *EUROPALIA – Grèce Art d’Aujourd’hui 2X10*. What changed during the two installations was a video screen documenting the performance which was not recorded adequately the first time. The intention was for the work to be documented and although I was trying to bring up the subject of mimicking an aesthetic of a musical TV show of the time, as suggested by the title, Theodoros brings up an interesting parameter by likening his actions to the destruction of Palmyra by ISIL, in the sense that during this performance there is a destruction taking place with the aim of its recording and its transmission. This is not something that he sees solely as an event that takes place only when the means of its communication are present, but as an example of the digital overtake of haptic civilisation, of objects being devalued by their digitisation.

## A.2

Aris Prodromidis, Oral History Interview with Stamatis Schizakis,

Thessaloniki, 01/02/2017

High-definition video, colour, with sound

Duration: 4 hours



On Wednesday 01/02/2017 I travelled to Thessaloniki to meet Aris Prodromidis and conduct a four hour long oral history that covered his life and work from his childhood to his recent work. In his late teens, inspired and encouraged by his neighbour, Nikos-Gavriil Pentzikis, who was an important literary figure in Thessaloniki as well as a self-taught painter, Prodromidis began painting with discarded colour tubes. His first knowledge of art history came from the Goethe Institute of Thessaloniki library books, and he started participating in group exhibitions even since 1966. The same year he made his first attempt to study art, in Stuttgart, against the will of his parents and without any support. He was obliged to return and, after military service, made a second attempt and traveled to Florence to study in the period 1970-1976. During his studies, he followed closely the cultural program of artistic centres and museums in Florence.

During the course of the interview, Prodromidis mentioned specifically an avant-garde film festival during which he followed the complete screening programme but he also mentioned to his architecture professor, Leonardo Savioli and his teachings. Savioli, who is credited for

inspiring the architects of the Italian Radical movement, was also the first to write on the work of Aris Prodromidis for his solo show in Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. Prodromidis was aware of the activity of video initiatives like art/tapes/22 during his student years; he had also assisted on the production of a video for a colleague, but he had never experimented with video equipment during his studies. His work focused on geometrical compositions addressing issues of scale carried out by mixed media such as cloth, perspex and neon light.

After his studies, Prodromidis worked both as an architect in Thessaloniki as well as an artist, but he soon quit the architectural office, perplexed over the public's expectations over his dual role, and started working entirely as a visual artist. His work was still largely influenced by architecture and urbanism, as many of the works from this period had the form of unrealizable large-scale urban intervention proposals. From 1980 and on his work included/he started to incorporate live elements in his work (e.g. *Two performances* in the Architectural Association of Thessaloniki) and in 1981, during the exhibition *Environment-action* in Zappeion Megaron, he used video to record and replay part of his performance within his installation. The same year he created *Anamorphosis*, a single channel VHS video that would be presented in a tv monitor as an autonomous work, part of his *Anamorphosis Environment/Action/Video* solo exhibition in Medousa Art Gallery in Athens. The exhibition includes mainly silkscreen prints of distorted photographic portraits of the artist and family members that cover most of the exhibition wall and floor. Together with some distorted slide projections, the video presents a constant transformation of the artist's face, made with an amateur camera borrowed from a wealthy friend. The camera was stable on a tripod and framing a reflecting sheet metal taken from a discarded photo paper drier. The mirroring surface was constantly bent while an assistant constantly changed light direction. During the first week of the show there was a break-in the gallery and the expensive video player as well as the TV monitor, both of which the artist had rented at his own expense, were the only objects stolen. The single copy of the work was lost together with the videoplayer. Prodromidis made another attempt to recreate the work with which he participated in many exhibitions and festivals during 1982-1985. He recalls that in the opening of the exhibition in Medusa there were many cinematographers among the public, expecting a more cinematographic approach from the video work, but also commenting on the artist's capability to create transformation effect without any access to more expensive professional video equipment.

He continued to make video works that were presented as single channel works or part of installations and live works. However, the majority of his videos would remain undisclosed until a 2002 retrospective of his performances and video works by the Thessaloniki Cinema Museum & Cinematheque that revived his status as a Greek video art pioneer. His strong conviction that artists working with video should aim to create autonomous works by means of a distinct audiovisual language expelling all elements of narrative was the reason he only rarely presented his work together with other artists working with video at the time. One of the few exceptions was the 28th Thessaloniki International Film Festival in 1987 which included a number of his works in a video art section.

### A.3

Marianne Strapatsakis, Oral History Interview with Stamatis Schizakis

Athens 11/12/2017

High-definition video, colour, with sound

Duration: 156 minutes



I met Marianna Strapatsaki on the 11th of December 2017 in her home and studio for conducting a life story type of interview. The total recorded duration of the interview is 2 hours and 36 minutes and starts from early family life to just after 2010. Its aim was to cover three largely interconnected areas of activity, that of the artist, that of the creative director for the publication “Archaeology and arts” from 1981 to 2010, and that of the lecturer in the department of Audiovisual arts in Ionian University 2004-2014.

The discussion begins to become relevant to the research as Marianne explains the reasons for choosing a musical composition by composer George Kouroupos to accompany her exhibited paintings on her second solo show in 1980. She would disclose how while working she used to create a musical environment by repeatedly playing the same track, which would have direct influence on her work. This relation with music, an indication of the passing of time (among other things), would also appear to her first video works in 1985, which came as a result of a collaboration with electronic musician Thanasis Zlatanios and were presented



as live musical performance in Goethe-Institut Athen. Music was always a strong influence on her work and an important element, which she developed through collaboration with musicians and composers in her media works. Although she never studied music, she listened Xenakis, Mahler, Stockhausen, Messiaen, among others, and she appreciated the work of Kandinsky mentioning him as a strong influence on her earlier work. Another indication of the passing of time would be reflected light on materials like water or stainless steel (materials that appear on her object-based practice but also investigated through traditional artistic practices like watercolour painting), which she tries to capture with the use of video, or recreate through electronic image manipulation. She closely observed the field of archaeology through her employment as the creative director of a dedicated publication that provided her with articles and images on historical subjects that would eventually become the central theme of her media works. The discussion also briefly revolved around practical issues of production media works during the eighties and early nineties, the support of the non-existing institutions, the influence of key personalities and the other active colleagues and collaborators. She would not record or edit by herself but would choose instead to collaborate with specialists, or even other video artists, for the production of her works, allowing her to concentrate on the aesthetics and concept of every piece.

#### A.4

Nikos Giannopoulos, Oral History Interview with Stamatis Schizakis

Athens 18/03/2018

High-definition video, colour, with sound

Duration: 150 minutes



In this interview with Nikos Giannopoulos (Thessaloniki, 1952) I heard about his turbulent and adventurous life as the son of a delicatessen owner who run away from home at 18 and who with minimum support from his family moved to Paris without speaking French to study Psychology. After two years he quit this subject for Architecture and then again for Cinematography. Some years after returning to Greece, around 1981, and, after a children's storybook he wrote while in Paris was adapted for children's radio broadcast, he proposed a series of broadcasts for the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation channel ERT. The proposition was accepted, but since the sum offered for production was lower than what was necessary, he tried to use video and turned to two video production studios in Athens at that time (1 and 2-inch tape equipment).

Coming from a cinema background he experimented with what was different in video, and after a short visit to Paris where he attended a video art festival (c. 1982) with works by Peter Campus, Bill Viola, Fluxus artists etc, he proposed a closed-circuit live event in Polyplano Gallery in 1983 (titled "a bit before 1984"). After his success, Vasilis Vassilikos, the

National Television director at that time, proposed to him to present and produce a video art program for National Television. According to Giannopoulos, this was a misunderstanding, as Vassilikos had in mind something for home video enthusiasts. The result of this was twelve 30-minute episodes about video with works of international pioneers together with presentation of works by artists living and working in Greece. In the process, he gathered a circle of people experimenting with video that participated in events he organized. In general, this interview is very useful as it includes numerous references to people and events, to the overall feeling of experimentation and playful D.I.Y., to the technical and financial possibilities at that time and very interesting insights on the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation which dominated the media production of the time and Giannopoulos often worked for.

## A.5

Costas Tsoclis, Oral History Interview with Stamatis Schizakis

Athens 18/5/2018 and 14/6/2018

High-definition video, colour, with sound

Duration: 50 minutes



The oral history is an additional interview to the 128-minute-long oral history file that already exists in the EMST archive and was conducted by Tsoclis himself on December 2005. This new 50-minute interview is split into two parts since there was a technical problem during the first attempt.

Tsoclis began narrating the reasons that led him to work on the *Living Painting* idea, making him combine video projection with painted canvases. According to him it was not an idea but a necessity. This need had to do with his first visit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1977 when he saw for the first time many actual impressionist works which he knew from his studies. In the following year he visited New York again and he revisited the museum, feeling uneasy because the works looked the same whereas he felt he had changed. On a third visit, after a few years, when there were massive changes in his personal life, this feeling turned into anger. He describes this as a trauma, the realisation that the works are not alive and do not follow the life changes of the viewer. He felt the need for a living painting. Another moment that this need arose was in a summer experience under the hot Greek summer sun, when dazzled by the heat he saw several fishermen carry a dying fish, and his

illusion was that all fishermen were carrying the same fish. So, he tried to portray this martyrdom of the fish dying but also to fulfil his need for a work of art that has duration. He tried to source the equipment to create this work, which it did not work out immediately but through a series of trials and errors. In the end he finalised it and presented it in Zoumboulaki Gallery among seascapes. He describes the work as the “king of the sea”. He completed it with the 5 *Portraits* for the Venice Biennale 1986 and described briefly the failures of national cultural policies. He attributed the choice of this work for the Greek National representation more to a public intervention with mirrors in an Athenian neighbourhood and not on the success of the *Harpooned fish*. His first contact with technology was for the work *Harpooned fish*, when he purchased a Barco projector from a night club. He mentioned that at the time you could not control the settings of the image with buttons but with screws and screwdrivers and described this process as “painting”. For the production of the video, he hired technicians that had experience from working for the Hellenic Broadcasting Organisation. He also had a full set of equipment that he donated to Manthos Santorineos later when the later founded the Fournos Center of Digital Arts.

Equipment at the time was very expensive and the 5 additional projectors for the Venice Biennale had to be rented from Belgium, trusting Alexander Iolas for financial support. That was not realised, so Tsoclis had to pay instalments for the following five to six years. Tsoclis obviously wanted to focus on the living aspect of his painting, on the animation, on the life-giving properties of his art, and not on the complicated issues of technology. He called his work bastardized, as it introduces technological elements which he dislikes. However, he accepted that *Living Painting* is entirely within the borders of his practice that was based on the trompe l’œil which he described as trompe l’ esprit. He also described how he continued *Living Painting* with *Mideia*, a synchronised three channel projection made in 1989.

## A.6

Angelos Skourtis, Oral History Interview with Stamatis Schizakis

Athens, 5/06/2018

High-definition video, colour, with sound

Duration: 35 minutes



I had a discussion with Angelos Skourtis on the 5th of June 2018. I followed the mode of the short discussion, and the interview duration was less than an hour, focusing on a single work, realised in 1983 in conjunction with a Desmos Art Gallery show, a collaboration of Angelos Skourtis and Li Lykoudi. We spoke about his studies in Florence (Accademia di Belle Arti 1973-8), and the rich artistic activity in Italy in the 1970s, and how this influenced his mode of work relying on collaboration rather than individual work. The exhibition in discussion was titled *National Garden*, also referred to as *Metaplasia I*, and concerned a 15-day intervention in Athens National garden. The intervention included several coloured but transparent acrylic rectangles used as “screens” installed in various places in the park, framing specific viewpoints, as well as several installed canvases that captured the nature on their surfaces (shadows of moving leaves, light coming from the sky, dust, fallen branches etc). The “screens” aimed at creating an intermediate between the viewer and nature, as well as the canvases, were activated in a special performance of a flute player guiding passers-by and special audience in an event that led the audience through the park in specific points in the installation and guided the public to the new space of Desmos in Tziraion street, which was close to the park, for a continuation of the event where photographic slides of nature

were projected on the flutist. The exhibition space contained mixed media works, black and white photos with colour pencil drawing of the national garden interventions. It also contained a video. The video contained images of a model's body on which colour images of flowers and trees were projected, like in a reinterpretation of the performance elements. Skourtis elaborated on the reasons for choosing to use video, which was a very unlikely choice at that time. The reasons were practical, for ease of use, as well as linguistic. Videotape at that time seemed extremely easy to use in relation to super eight, both for shooting as well as for replay, regardless the lack of familiarity. For the production and the equipment, they had to collaborate with Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation employees, as well as to unofficially borrow a video deck. For staging the shooting, Skourtis and Likoudi improvised with light, makeup and background. The camera was operated also by a Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation employee. The playback of the work in the gallery could be easily arranged, but the most important for the artists was the novelty of the medium, which allowed for playback of a work through a TV screen, an apparatus that was mostly familiar.

During the same period, Skourtis realised another video installation with the same borrowed apparatus and the same actress, projecting letters and text over the naked body. He presented the work as an installation, together with sculptural objects. Skourtis soon felt that he had to defend himself from the association of video as a characteristic of his practice and did not seek out to create another video work for years. His artistic intention involved the investigation of various languages related to emerging media and we used as an example in the discussion a subsequent installation, now in the collection of the museum, which investigates mobile text messaging. This practice of investigating emerging languages of emerging media was one of the reasons he did not maintain a practice related to a single medium.

## A.7

Manthos Santorineos, Oral History Interview with Stamatis Schizakis

Athens 9/1/2019 and 12/06/2020

High-definition video, colour, with sound

Duration: 147 minutes



The first part of the oral history interview with Manthos Santorineos is 65 minutes long and took place at the Athens School of Fine Arts inside an exhibition of his work with the purpose of his professorship application. In this interview, Manthos Santorineos talks about his early memories and family life, the importance of a family bakery and a plaster workshop to his artistic inclination and in the foundation of the first center of digital culture in Greece titled Fournos (Bakery) which was situated in the disused family-owned bakery. He also talks about his early films, the transition to video, EIKONA production company and its technical capabilities and his involvement with the Ileana Tounta Contemporary art Center and its Art and Technology Sector.

The second part of Manthos Santorineos' oral history took place in Fournos and is 82 minutes long. It began with the importance of *Institut Français d'Athènes*, which invited video artists for workshops in the early 1980s and included video activist Carole Roussopoulos among the workshop instructors. Santorineos was also invited by the institute as a speaker and through this collaboration he was acquainted with artists such as Leda Papaconstantinou, the publisher Eleni Saroglou but also Ileana Tounta, who later founded the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center and who invited Santorineos to run its Art and



Technology Sector. Santorineos also spoke about EIKONA and its collaboration with visual artists, poets and theatre directors. Among the artists that collaborated with EIKONA were Klonaris/Thomadaki a duo of artists known for their dedication to film, who produced their first video in 1994 after being convinced by Manthos Santorinaios. Santorineos also talked in detail about the lack of support from Greek art historians and curators, his first solo exhibition titled *Low resolution images*, the constant struggle with technology and the importance of influencing reality around you, by making institutions, infrastructure and by convincing people of their importance.

## A.8

Eppi Protonotariou, Oral History Interview with Stamatis Schizakis,

Paiania, 20/5/2014

Digital Video, PAL, with sound

Duration: 93 minutes



In this lengthy interview Eppi Protonotariou talks about her school and student years at the Athens School of Fine Arts, about the foundation of Desmos Art Gallery and Manos Pavlidis, about her friends and artists of her gallery Bia Davou and Pantelis Xagoraris, Theodoros, Valerios Caloutsis, Costas Tsoclis, Stathis and Anestis Logothetis, the musicologist John G. Papaioannou, as well as her parallel puppeteering and teaching activity. The discussion is focused on biographical information and issues of art and technology as presented in the Desmos Art Gallery.

# Appendix B: Timeline of new media art in Greece

The following chronological list of events spans from the beginning to the end dates of this research and results from the examined sources.

## 1967

Pantelis Xagoraris realises the exhibition *Transformations* at the Athens Technological Organisation. The exhibition includes an electronic music composition by Michalis Adamis (also titled *Transformations*). Alongside his drawings and sculptures, Xagoraris exhibits photographs of mathematical models and computer prints of mathematical diagrams from Boeing space research calculated by professor K. Goudas and programmed by T.A. Bray.

## 1971

Goethe-Institut Athen in collaboration with the Athens Center of Ekistics of the Doxiadis Associates realises the event *Art and Cybernetics*. The event hosts a section of the exhibition *Computerkunst – Impulse* as well as a series of talks and events. In the opening day, Xagoraris realises *Symmetries of the Cube* by using a UNIVAC AC1107 computer from the Doxiadis Associates Computer Center.

The Desmos Art Gallery is founded in Athens by Manos Pavlidis and Eppi Protonotariou. During its early years, the Desmos Art Gallery presents the most pioneering art practices in Greece while its directors consciously try to overcome the lack of relevant institutions, often by sidestepping their commercial interests.

## **1972**

Theodoros realises the exhibition *Instead of a Sculpture* in the Desmos Art Gallery, where the installation functions as a pretext, leading the audience to an essay titled *Instead of a Sculpture*. In this text, Theodoros describes his views on art, politics and technology.

## **1973**

The Desmos Art Gallery begins to host a series of evenings dedicated to electro-acoustic music composition presented by the musicologist John G. Papaioannou. The events continue up to 1976.

Theodoros travels to the U.S. with the support of a Ford Foundation scholarship. He produces the vinyl record titled *Manipulation I* and presents it at the International Design Conference in Aspen.

## **1974**

Pantelis Xagoraris presents the exhibition *Transformations 3* in the Desmos Art Gallery. Xagoraris includes his own computer drawings for the first time in a solo show. Those works were *Symmetries of the Cube* realised with the UNIVAC 1107 of the Doxiadis Associates Computer Center in 1971, as well as newer works realised with a Hewlett – Packard 9810A of the department of Perspective and Projective Geometry of the NTUA. He also receives a Ford Foundation Scholarship and travels to the U.S. to work as a fellow at the M.I.T. C.A.V.S. During his stay, he works with computers with CRT monitors and produces the works *Compositions with Light Cubes*.

## **1976**

Valerios Caloutsis presents the exhibition *Naturmatic* in the Desmos Art Gallery. Some of the works presented have integrated sound devices and circuits controlling sound and light.

Sculptor Theodoros' *Tele-manipulation* is broadcast through the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation channel (ERT) in two parts in December. In addition to being a documentary on the work of Theodoros, the second part includes performances reenacted for television.

## **1978**

Gazzete bookstore in Athens presents a Mit Mitropoulos mail art exhibition. The event includes a television set displaying static. Before the end of the exhibition, the television set is tuned to display a presentation of the exhibition in the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation channel ERT.

## **1980**

*Neo SIMA* review dedicates its January – February issue to video art. The magazine, associated with Polyplano Gallery in Athens, advertises its video editing studio and its collaboration with Anna Canepa Video New York for the first screening programme scheduled for June, with works by Les Levin, Eleanor Antin, Dennis Oppenheim, Allan Kaprow. The magazine includes images of works by Peter Campus, Bruce Nauman, Bill Viola, Nam June Paik, Lynda Benglis, Joan Jonas and Gary Hill among others.

Gallery F is founded by Dimitris Pantazidis. It is a gallery with an exhibition programme centered on photography exhibitions, but also includes video.

## **1981**

Aris Prodromidis presents the installation-performance titled *Act III* in the exhibition *Environment-Action* in the Zappeion Megaron. He uses a video recording of his performance for replaying when he is not present during the exhibition's two weeks duration. The video document of the event was later titled *La Vita d'Artista* [The Life of the Artist]. The same year, Prodromidis included in his solo exhibition titled *Anamorphosis* –

*Installation/Action/Video* in Medusa Art Gallery in Athens, a 30-minute-long video titled *Self-Portrait in Anamorphosis*. It is the first time that a video work is included in an exhibition in a Greek gallery.

Leda Papaconstantinou and Carole Roussopoulos co-author a video titled *Bouboulina*. The work is centered around the heroic female figure of the Greek revolution Bouboulina Laskarina who acted as a naval commander during the Greek war of independence in 1821 and is composed of short interviews with women of different generations living on the island of Spetses talking about Bouboulina as well as themselves.

Beatrice Spiliadis organises the Greek Contemporary Art Festival in Amsterdam. The sculptor Theodoros participates with the installation-performance *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show*. He records the opening performance on video, but, unsatisfied with the result, never includes the video in the installation, although it was an integral part of its conception.

## 1982

Nikos Papadakis, the publisher of *SIMA* magazine and director of Polyplano Gallery, publishes *Video SIMA* [Videosignal] a magazine about the art and technique of video. The short-lived magazine circulates only two issues. It includes extensive information on video technology, editing techniques and video art, announcing through its pages a series of exhibitions and events for amateur videographers.

Theodoros is invited in *EUROPALIA – Grèce Art d’Aujourd’hui 2X10* at the Palais Royal des Beaux-Arts in Brussels and proposes a second version of the installation of *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show* titled *Manipulation XXX – One-Man Sculptural-Musical Show (Variation B’)*. Following the opening performance, the documentation is successfully integrated in the installation.

Tassos Boulmetis realises the video *Landscapes* as part of his thesis submitted to UCLA and supervised by experimental director Shirley Clarke. The work is based on composer Dimitris Papadimitriou’s 1981 music album with the same title. The same year Boulmetis realised

*RUBAIYAT* a computer graphics animation as part of a CGI class supervised by animator John Whitney.

### **1983**

Nikos Giannopoulos with the musician Thomas Sliomis and the dancer Nena Papageorgiou realises *Before 1984 or Illusion* in Polyplano Gallery in Athens, a 45-minute closed-circuit television live event.

Nikos Giannopoulos establishes Narcissus Film Production Company with which he produced video art works authored by himself and other artists.

Angelos Skourtis and Li Likoudi present the video *Metaplasis I* as part of the Desmos Art Gallery exhibition concurrent with their live public event and intervention at the National Garden of Athens. The video, which was described in the press release as a “Body art performance”, depicted photos of foliage projected on the moving naked bodies of actors.

Architect Pavlos Kremos establishes Evmaros Gallery of Arts in central Athens. The space hosts more than a hundred exhibitions and events, including seminars and research on new technological applications on music and the visual arts. It ceases its activity in 1995.

### **1984**

Pantelis Xagoraris realises *Transformations 4* in Goethe-Institut Athen. The exhibition, apart from plotted computer drawings, includes works made from CRT monitor images from the computer graphics realised during his fellowship at M.I.T. C.A.V.S., titled *Compositions with Light Cubes* (1974), as well as his first kinetic-laser work made in collaboration with the composer Stefanos Vassileiadis.

Marianna Theodoridou presents the work *Allegories* at the Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and Video.

Nikos Giannopoulos with Narcissus Film Productions directs and produces 6 broadcasts

titled *Video Art* for the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation channel ERT. The three first episodes aired in 1984 included videos by Patrick Prado, Dominique Beloir as well as *Landscape* by Tassos Boulmetis, *Metro* by Vangelis Moladakis, *Narcissus* by Nikos Giannopoulos. The later three broadcasts that aired in 1985 included Belgian artist video like Walter Verdin, Albert Pepermans, Pieter Vereertbrugghen and An Franck, as well as *T* by Manthos Santorineos, *Proteus* by Alexandra Katsivelaki, *Narcissus II* by Nikos Giannopoulos, *The Arrows are of Eros* by Leda Papaconstantinou and a video by Nestoras Papanicolopoulos titled *Electronic Painting*.

The Ministerial Department of Youth organises Youth and Language conference with a section titled *Video Art: A New Language*, with French video artist Patrick Prado as a guest speaker. The event takes place in the Zappeion Megaron where Nikos Giannopoulos organises a concurrent video installation titled *BABEL*.

Nikos Giannopoulos presents a section of video art during the 6th Super 8 Film Festival, Institute Francais de Thessalonique.

## **1985**

Nikos Giannopoulos presents *Narcissus I and II - Homage to Peter Campus* at Al Andar Gallery, an institute for Spanish culture and language. *Narcissus* is presented as a video installation.

Costas Tsoclis exhibits *Harpooned Fish* at Zoumboulakis Gallery, his first work in the *Living Painting* series, where he combines painted canvases with video projected images.

Marianne Strapatasakis presents a video installation with live music performance by musician Vasilis Zlatanov at the Goethe-Institut Athen, in the context of Praxis Music Festival. The single channel version of the video is titled *Vital Pulses*.

Nikos Giannopoulos is invited to organise the Greek section of the 14th Festival International du Nouveau Cinéma et de la Vidéo de Montréal and of the 5th Tokyo Video Festival.



## 1986

Publication of the seventh issue of *Dipli Ikona* with a special section on Art, Science and Technology. The issue includes texts by Pantelis Xagoraris, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Marianne Strapatasakis, Costis Akritidis, Martha Christofoglou, Dimosthenis Agrafiotis and Nikos Svoronos. The publishers organise a concurrent exhibition titled *First Document* on Art-Science-Technology with works by Pantelis Xagoraris, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Marianne Strapatasakis and Costis Akritidis.

Studio Videograph in Thessaloniki realises an exhibition with videos by Leda Papaconstantinou, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Vangelis Moladakis, Michalis Kokoris, Nikos Giannopoulos, Manthos Santorineos, Tassos Boulmetis, Margarita Ovidia, Alexandra Katsivelaki and George Baganas.

Nestoras Papanicolopoulos presents his computer drawings at the auditorium of the Institute Français d'Athènes.

Costas Tsoclis represents Greece at the Venice Biennale. Among the works exhibited are *Harpooned Fish* and *Portraits* from the *Living Painting* series.

*EIKASTIKA* magazine publishes in its November 1986 issue an interview of Wolf Vostell to Margarita Ovidia, Manthos Santorineos and Nikos Giannopoulos

The 3rd International Video and Television Festival, Montbéliard includes in its programme works by Vangelis Moladakis, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Leda Papaconstantinou, Manthos Santorineos, Margarita Ovidia and Nikos Giannopoulos.

Experimental Images Week organised by the London Film-makers' Co-op includes works by Aris Prodromidis, Nikos Giannopoulos, Leda Papaconstantinou, Tassos Boulmetis, Manthos Santorineos, Vagelis Moladakis, Yioulia Gazetopoulou and films by Thanassis Rentzis and Antoinete Angelidis.

The University of Crete organises a three-day symposium on Art and Technology.

Second Biennial of Young Artists from the European Countries of the Mediterranean takes place in Thessaloniki. It includes a video art section with works by Yiannis Kouitzoglou, Damian Georgiadis, Dimitris Mourtzopoulos, Konstantinos Kapetanidis, Margarita Ovidia, Nikos Patiniotis, Marinos Pashaloudis, Konstantinos Stratoudakis, Tassos Boulmetis and Vangelis Moladakis. The architect/artist/poet Mit Mitropoulos produces a proposal for a project titled *Line of the Horizon* which included linking participating cities through facsimile machines and through two-way cable TV. His proposal is finally realised without the two-way television element. He publishes the full proposal in the 8–9 (July/December) issue of the *Dipli Ikona* journal.

Eleni Vakalo realises the exhibition *The Physiognomy of Postwar Art in Greece* at the Municipal Gallery of Athens. The exhibition, which originated in a four-volume work with the same title, attempts a comprehensive evaluation and classification of contemporary art in Greece. Among the categories of the exhibition, as well as within the curatorial text, Vakalo includes video art together with installation and performance and includes the video work from the intervention of Angelos Skourtis and Li Likoudi at the National Garden in Athens in 1983.

## **1987**

The 28th Thessaloniki Film Festival includes a video section with screenings from France, Italy, Belgium and Greece.

The Institute Français d’Athènes hosts a video festival in collaboration with the second Video Festival of the Zappeion Megaron. It includes daily video workshops and discussions, including a round table discussion with Lionel Boll, Herve Nisic, Marianne Strapatsakis, Patrick Zanolis and Pantelis Xagoraris on artistic uses of new technological mediums in imaging.

Greek-French Scientific and Technical Association organises a conference on the subject of “Application of image manipulation and analysis in science and art” at the National Hellenic Research Foundation. Nestoras Papanicolopoulos gives a lecture about “The use of microcomputers in the artistic process”.

*Painting-Computer Graphics* exhibition of Nestoras Papanicolopoulos at Gallery F.

Manthos and Dodo Santorineou establish the Center for Audiovisual Research and Production EIKONA.

## 1988

The Greek participation in the European Media Art Festival Osnabruck '88 includes Margarita Ovidia's *Cyaniris* and *Rythm I*, Leda Papaconstantinou's *The Arrows are of Eros*, Alexandra Katsivelaki's *Concert for Piano* and *Proteus*, Nikos Giannopoulos' *Narcissus I* and *II*, Vangelis Moladakis' *Metro or Clinical Observations of a Lame Landscape*, Manthos Santorineos' *T*, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos *Researches I*, Giorgos Zervas' *Desandu dans le metro pour jouer de nouveau au jeu*, George Papakonstantinou's *Ce qui se passe Quand il ne se Pase Rien* [What Happens when Nothing Happens] and *Espace Inutile* [Unlocated Location], Marianne Strapatsakis' *Vital Pulses*, Eva Stefani's *Rithra*, Parina Petri's *Name Marina* and *Sleeping Beauty*.

The Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center is founded and collaborates with EIKONA for its Art and Technology Sector. Among its activities are seminars and conferences as well as a videotheque. The videotheque includes 24 titles by the following 18 artists: Leda Papaconstantinou, Nikos Giannopoulos, Vangelis Moladakis, Manthos Santorineos, Margarita Ovidia, George Papakonstantinou, Marina Petri, Marianne Strapatsakis, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Christina Linaris-Coridou, Robert Nottrot, Tassos Boulmetis, Eva Stefani, Angelos Skourtis, Agis Kelpakis and Aliki Throumouloupoulou.

The Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center presents the exhibition *4 Critical Reviews* where four curators present four concurrent exhibitions. In this show, Anna Kafetsi curates an extensive section of works by Pantelis Xagoraris and Efi Strousa includes Aggelos Skourtis' video installation *Post Script I*.

**1989**

First Autumn School in Computer Graphics organises a symposium titled *Computer Image Synthesis and Animation* in Athens. Among the speakers are Anne-Marie Duguet, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos and George Papakonstantinou. The proceedings are published in 1992.

Loukia Rikaki and Orama productions realise the broadcast *Chromata* [Colours] for the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation channel ERT.

Nikos Giannopoulos collaborates with Loukia Rikaki and Orama productions for making the single channel video *Promitheus* for the ZDF broadcast *Timecode*.

The 4th Patras International Festival includes a video art exhibition and a week dedicated to Art and Technology. Among the participants in the international video section are Patrick Prado, Dominic Beloir, Zbienie Rybczynski. The Greek section includes works by Margarita Ovadia, Leda Papaconstantinou, Vangelis Moladakis, George Papakonstantinou, Marianne Strapatsakis, Tassos Boulmetis, Manthos Santorineos, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Avra Georgiou, Nikos Giannopoulos and Angelos Skourtis. The festival also includes an exhibition with videos and video installations by Nikos Giannopoulos, Nelly Kasimatis, Manthos Santorineos, Nikos Patiniotis, George Tsolodimos and Nestoras Papanicolopoulos.

Municipality of Heraklion in Crete hosts the 1st Heraklion Video Art Festival, with works by Nikos Giannopoulos, Margarita Ovadia, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Leda Papaconstantinou, George Papakonstantinou, Tassos Boulmetis, Manthos Santorineos, Avra Georgiou, Angelos Skourtis, Maria Choulaki and Marianne Strapatsakis.

The Ileana Tounta Art and Technology Sector realises a week-long art and technology event titled *Art without Borders*. The event includes daily presentations, talks and discussion sessions, music events, video art screenings and exhibitions of artworks and documents. Among the lectures about application of technological tools on various art forms like music and architecture, or art historical approaches on the relation of art and technology, there are notable participants and subjects like Pantelis Xagoraris on fractals and on art and technology in Greece, as well as a discussion on Video art in Greece with Anna Kafetsi, Nikos Giannopoulos, Margarita Ovadia, George Papakonstantinou, Manthos Santorineos and Nikos Patiniotis.

Vouvoula Skoura produces *Skoria Fotos* [Rusted Frame] with the support of the Greek Film Centre and Middlesex Polytechnic and presents it in Kurzfilm Festival in Berlin.

Marianne Strapatsakis presents *The Phantasmes of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* at *Journées Internationales de la Photographie et de l'Audiovisuel de Montpellier* and later at the the garden of Institut Français d'Athènes.

## **1990**

Costas Tsoclis exhibits *Medea*, his first synchronised multichannel *Living Painting* installation, and presents it in Treviso, Italy and Troyes in France.

Evmaros presents an exhibition titled *TH/Y Greek Artists and Information Technology*. Artists include Diane Katsiafikas, Fanis Kouzounis, Antreas Laxanis, George Papakonstantinou, Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Argiris Sarafopoulos, Ilias Tambakeas, Tasoula Triantafili, Artemis Tsagaridi, Erifili Kaninia, Charis Kalergis.

Nikos Giannopoulos, George Papakonstantinou and Nikos Patiniotis organise and realise the 1st European Meeting for Art/New Technologies. The event includes 42 listed participants, representatives of museums, channels, production companies and video distributors from 12 countries mostly European but also from Canada and the U.S. The festival includes more than 300 works, videotapes and video installations.

Evmaros organises an exhibition for the 5th Patras International Festival with works by Nestoras Papanicolopoulos, Ilias Tampakeas and George Economidis. The title of the exhibition is *The Aesthetics of the Digital Image*.

## **1992**

Municipality of Heraklion in Crete hosts the 2nd Heraklion Video Art Festival (titled Summer Fest Heraklion), organised by Alexandra Katsivelaki. It includes work by Nikos Giannopoulos, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Pandora Mouriki, Constantine Deligiannis, George

Pasias, George Papakonstantinou, Marianne Strapatsakis, Costas Stratoudakis, Petros Petrou and Stella Hadjipanagiotou

In the context of *Madrid Cultural Capital of Europe 1992*, the event *Television y Video de Creacion en la Comunidad Europea* [TV and Creative video in the European Union] hosts a Greek video art section selected by George Papakonstantinou with works by Tassos Boulmetis, Leda Papaconstantinou, Nikos Giannopoulos, Vangelis Moladakis, George Zervas, Manthos Santorineos, Avra Georgiou, George Papakonstantinou, Alexandra Katsivelaki, Margarita Ovadia, Kostis Stratoudakis, Marianne Strapatsakis and George Passias. The catalogue includes an insightful overview of Greek video art by George Papakonstantinou titled 'La Busca de Identidad del Videoarte Griego' [Video Art in Greece: In Search of an Identity].

The National Gallery – Alexandros Soutsos Museum presents the exhibition *Metamorphoses of the Modern: The Greek Experience*. The exhibition, curated by Anna Kafetsi, includes the film installation by Klonaris/Thomadaki *Fictions* and the video installation by *The Phantasmes of the Mediterranean or The Reflections of the Past* by Marianne Strapatsakis.



Pantelis Xagoraris, from Archive No. 3491,  
[Dossier with plotted drawings] Donated by Zafos Xagoraris, 2001.