

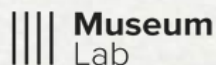
2024

DOCUMENTING THE MEMORY OF 1974

A Journey Through Exhibitions

Marina Antonopoulou

1974



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INTRODUCTION

*Παιδί με μια φωτογραφία στο χέρι
με μια φωτογραφία στα μάτια του βαθιά
και κρατημένη ανάποδα με κοιτάζε.
[Κυριάκος Χαραλαμπίδης]*

At the outset, I would like to provide some context for this project and its goals. This project was conducted as part of the Erasmus Placement program from Panteion University's Department of Communication, Media, and Culture, within the Master's program in Cultural Management. The traineeship took place at the Museum Lab, CYENS Centre of Excellence, under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Dr. Antigone Heraclidou. During the three-month placement, the primary goal was to explore and document exhibitions related to the 50th anniversary of the events of 1974 in Cyprus. I aimed to identify key aspects of each exhibition, record my personal impressions, and, where possible, interview curators. The final outcome of this project is a report detailing the main findings.

Upon my arrival in Nicosia, I observed that the city seemed to hold traces of its history in every corner. In particular, the city's walls seemed to define its essence, shaping how residents interact with and navigate their environment. As this was my first visit to Nicosia, I walked extensively through the Old City, tracing its physical boundaries along both sides of the demarcation line. My goal was to experience the spatial limits of the city firsthand.



Indeed, during these walks, I encountered numerous checkpoints, multiple dead ends filled with cameras and, often, soldiers. From a distance, I observed the overgrown streets and crumbling houses within the buffer zone — a visible grey area. The bullet marks on walls, the faded signs of once-operational shops, and buildings abandoned half a century ago were stark reminders of a turbulent and not-so-distant past.

This experience led me to a key research question: the interplay between memory and history. How is the past redefined in the present through memory? The answer is neither singular nor concrete. Over the course of these three months, I formulated my personal perspective. My approach is not purely historical but integrates subjective, individual experiences as a lens for interpreting the events. Modern historiography has largely moved away from the notion of a purely objective history, acknowledging that researchers inevitably bring

their own interpretations and biases. By embracing this, I aim to provide a more nuanced and human-centered exploration of the past, as it is conveyed through exhibitions.

In my initial plan, the goal was to include exhibitions from across the divide in this report. While I identified more than ten exhibitions in the areas controlled by the Republic, I could not find any corresponding exhibitions in the Turkish Cypriot community that addressed the events of 1974 or marked their 50th anniversary with cultural events. Although I visited several museums, none directly focused on this topic. However, I would like to highlight the Museum of Barbarism, which presents the events of Bloody Christmas, as well as the National Struggle Museum, which provides a broader narrative of the Turkish Cypriot experience.

This observation, however, raised an important question: how is the 50th anniversary of the events of 1974 presented in the areas northern of the Green Line? Through further research and discussions, I discovered that commemorations on the Turkish Cypriot side are primarily conducted through parades rather than exhibitions or cultural events in museums. This observation should be taken with caution, as the fact that I could not identify such events does not necessarily mean that they do not exist.

These unanswered questions highlight a

significant gap in my findings. The only tangible interpretation I encountered was the “invasion.” When I posed questions about the lack of exhibitions to several Greek Cypriot curators, some responses were: “Such a thing would intensify tensions,” “I wouldn’t want exhibitions like that; it would make me uncomfortable,” “Perhaps it’s a sign of the Turkish Cypriots’ discretion,” or “And what would they present? Through the academic documentation required for an exhibition, would they ultimately claim that the events of 1974 were a peace operation?”. Despite these barriers, more discussions revealed a shared curiosity about the other side’s perspective. Many expressed interest in seeing a record of exhibitions or initiatives from the Turkish Cypriot side, suggesting a broader desire to understand differing narratives.

Surely, I would have liked to include as many perspectives as possible on such a defining event. Unfortunately, I must limit myself to leave this as an open question for future exploration. Therefore, my approach primarily focused on interpreting the events of 1974 as presented on the Greek Cypriot side, based on the exhibitions I was able to identify and visit. Within the constraints of time and resources, I selected key exhibitions that offered a varied perspective, aiming to create as holistic an experience as possible. I hope the result is of interest –for me, it was profoundly so.



METHODOLOGY

*Διάβασα τον κατάλογο και σεις γράφατε στις φυλακές
στα μικρά σας γόνατα την Ιστορία του Ανθρώπου.
Κι έγραψα στον κατάλογο: όλοι παρόντες!
και πλάι το βαθμό του καθενός σας: άριστα!*
[Ανδρέας Παστελλάς]

The methodology of this project was divided into two main components: general research-engagement and exhibition research. These activities, fortunately, often overlapped. This methodology aimed to a holistic and immersive approach of understanding Cyprus's cultural landscape and memory regarding the 1974 events.

The *first component*, general research and engagement, aimed to provide me with a thorough understanding of the current situation in Cyprus. This involved reading history books, attending conferences, participating in events (HerStory Project, history tours etc.), and engaging in informal discussions with locals and visitors.

Conferences and academic engagement played a crucial role during this stage. This approach proved to be highly productive, as many diverse perspectives were shared. I would highlight the 7th International Conference of Photography & Theory (ICPT2024), titled "Deathscapes: Histories of Photography & Contemporary Photographic Practices", as well as the international scientific conference "1974-2024: Fifty Years Since the Turkish Invasion of Cyprus".

Another crucial element of this phase involved informal discussions with locals or visitors. These included residents of Nicosia and visitors experiencing the city for the first



time. Over the course of three months, I engaged in conversations with a wide variety of individuals, including researchers, friends, tourists, migrants, cameramen, photographers, taxi drivers, young people, and the elderly. These individuals represented diverse political views, cultural backgrounds, and traditions. My central questions focused on life in Cyprus (mainly Nicosia), how they perceived the current situation, and what stood out the most.

These discussions often delved into deeply personal topics, such as whether people felt comfortable crossing the buffer zone, whether they had visited their former homes, and their family's experiences with displacement. At the same time, the perspectives of first-time visitors to Nicosia were equally compelling. I was able to gather these insights while working as an invigilator at the WIP Festival, where I interacted with both visitors and locals, and during the 7th International Conference of Photography and Theory, where I met people from around the world.

The *second major component* of the methodology was exhibition research. The primary focus was identifying and visiting exhibitions related to the 50th anniversary of the 1974 events on the Greek-Cypriot side of Cyprus. This research was divided into three stages.

The first stage involved mapping the exhibitions. I began by identifying exhibitions scheduled for 2024 that related to the events of 1974. This information was compiled into an Excel table, which included details such as the title, organizer, dates, location, curators, and contact information. This list was continuously updated throughout the research period.

The second stage was exhibition observation. I approached each exhibition with a structured set of questions to observe various aspects. These included the exhibition's goals and timeframe, its handling of sensitive topics such as invasion, displacement, and loss, and the key historical events it highlighted. Additionally, I considered themes, target audiences, and the emotional impact of the exhibitions. I also analyzed how they represented refugees and lost territories, the balance they maintained between collective memory and history, and their integration of personal narratives and 'history from below'. Finally, I examined the use of technology, such as audio guides, digital archives, and interactive displays, as well as accessibility for visitors with disabilities. To document my observations, I used photographs and field notes to capture essential details and illustrate key points.



The third stage involved conducting interviews with curators and artists whenever possible. I prepared a guide with semi-structured questions to explore their perspectives. Although time constraints and busy schedules limited the number of interviews I could conduct, those I managed to complete were more than insightful (four interviews).

While my research aimed to reflect both the visitor's and the creator's perspectives, my primary focus was visitor-centered. I tried to understand the narrative presented by each exhibition and how audiences perceived it. Although qualitative research with visitors would have been ideal, time constraints led me to rely on my own observations, personal experiences, and insights from curators. Additionally I observed, as best as I could, the behavior and reactions of other visitors during my exhibition visits and took notes.



EXHIBITIONS

*Γιατί τόσα Μνημεία στον Άγνωστο Στρατιώτη κι
ούτ' ένα στον Άγνωστο Άνθρωπο;
Εμείς πού θα βάνουμε τα στεφάνια μας;
[Κώστας Μόντης]*

After the turbulent decades of the 1950s and 1960s, marked by ethnic conflict and political unrest, Cyprus reached a turning point in 1974. In July of that year, a coup led by the Greek military junta and Greek Cypriot nationalists sought to achieve union with Greece. In response, Turkey intervened militarily, citing the need to protect the Turkish Cypriot community. The intervention resulted in the occupation of approximately 37% of the island, including the capital, Nicosia. This led to the division of Cyprus into two separate entities: the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus in the south, governed by Greek Cypriots, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the north, recognized only by Turkey and considered illegal under international law.

The consequences of these events were profound. Thousands of Greek Cypriots were displaced from the northern part of the island, and many Turkish Cypriots fled the south. The island's population became physically and politically divided, a division that persists to this day. The aftermath of these events left Cyprus with a heavily militarized border, known as the "Green Line," which continues to separate the two communities, creating a deep divide that has shaped the country's modern history.

The island remained divided for decades, until 2003, when the crossing points between



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the two sides of Nicosia opened for the first time in nearly 30 years. This shift marked a significant change, allowing Cypriots from both communities to meet and interact across the divide. It also led to new possibilities for dialogue, cooperation, and cultural exchange, though the broader political situation remains unresolved.

In 2024, the contrasting narratives of the 1974 events continue to influence the political landscape of Cyprus, affecting inter-communal relations and the ongoing efforts for reunification. The 50th anniversary of these events serves as a reminder of the unresolved issues that continue to shape the lives of those on both sides of the divide, making it an important occasion for reflection and memory. Throughout this year numerous exhibitions and cultural initiatives have taken place. The table below presents data from the exhibition records, followed by a more in-depth look at selected exhibitions.

TITLE	ORGANIZER	CURATOR(S) /ARTIST	DURATION	LOCATION	NAME OF THE INTERVIEWEE
Cyprus Insula: History – Memory – Reality	Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation	Dr. Yiannis Toumazis and Demetra Ignatiou	4/7/2024- 30/6/2025	Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation	No interview was conducted
Cyprus, 1974. Memory is the only homeland of humanity	Hellenic Parliament Foundation for Parliamentarism and Democracy and the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus	Anthi Tofari, Nadia Karayianni, Anna Enepekidu, Hristos Hristidis	20/9/2024- 13/12/2024	SPEL - The State Gallery of Contemporary Art	Anthi Tofari (Text of a speech delivered by Mrs Tofari and sent to me via email)
Imagining Home Between the Walls	D6:EU	Alessandro Vincentelli	4/10/2024- 31/10/2024	Master Plan venue/crossin g area Ledras – Lokmaci	No interview was conducted
50 χρόνια μνήμες – Η κραυγή μέσα από την γλυπτική	Art Nest, Mikri Salamina Sculpture Park	Philippos Yiapanis	7/10/2024-	Art Nest, Mikri Salamina Sculpture Park	Philippos Yiapanis
Kanthos: The Sharp Edges of History	A. G. Leventis Gallery	Katerina Stephanides, Despina Christofidou	23/11/2024- 9/3/2025	A. G. Leventis Gallery	No interview was conducted
Reflections	A. G. Leventis Gallery	Katerina Stephanides, Despina Christofidou	23/11/2024- 9/3/2025	A. G. Leventis Gallery	No interview was conducted
Sector 2: Nicosia	The Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia	Tzeni Lymperopou lou Savvidou, Maria Patsalosavvi, Chrysostom os Sakallis	10/1/2025- 31/10/2025	The Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia	Chrysostomos Sakallis

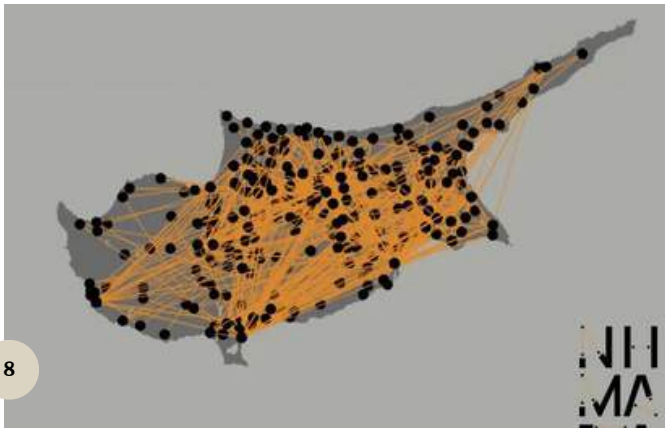
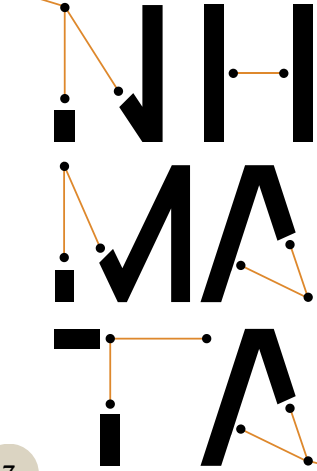
TITLE	ORGANIZER	CURATOR(S) /ARTIST	DURATION	LOCATION	NAME OF THE INTERVIEWEE
IN GIRUM IMUS NOCTE ET CONSUMIMUR IGNI: Εσύ Χριστό κι εγώ Αλλάχ όμως κι οι δυο μας αχ και βαχ	The Office Gallery/ Iconostasio	Christos Kyriakides	7/11/2024	A. Kleanthis Christofides 32 B. Stoa Nikokleous No.7 C. Socratous 21	No interview was conducted
50 χρόνια τουρκικής εισβολής μέσα απο την τέχνη και το λόγο	Faneromeni Library	-	9/10/2024	Faneromeni Library	No interview was conducted
1974: 50 Years of Invasion, Occupation, and Displacement	Cyprus Folk Art Museum	Dr. Ioannis Eliades	2024	Cyprus Folk Art Museum	Ioannis Eliades
50 Years - Turkish invasion and occupation	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, Press and Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus	Press and Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus	26/6/2024- 6/10/2024	Press and Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus	No interview was conducted
Nemata	Deputy Ministry of Culture	Dr. Ioanna Hadjicosti and Andreas Papapetrou	2024	Different Locations	Andreas Papapetrou
Skammata Documentary	Department of Antiquities of the Cyprus Deputy Ministry of Culture	Danae Stylianou	2024	Different Locations	No interview was conducted

The "Nemata" art project, led by Dr. Ioanna Hadjicosti and Andreas Papapetrou, adopted an innovative and participatory approach to mark the 50th anniversary of Cyprus's division. In contrast to traditional exhibitions, "Nemata" is a hands-on initiative that invited the public to directly contribute to the creation of the artwork, fostering a sense of community involvement. Papapetrou explained the concept behind the project: *"The idea was to create something that would symbolize connection and continuity. Using threads to unite points on a map of Cyprus, we aimed to evoke the idea of shared journeys and the desire for return"*.

The project's tactile and visual elements made it particularly compelling. Participants used colored threads to mark their personal or family journeys on a three-dimensional map of Cyprus. This act of engagement transformed the exhibition into a dynamic, evolving narrative: *"The map fills up with hundreds of threads, representing the collective stories of individuals and communities. It becomes a tapestry of shared experiences"*.

The dual nature of "Nemata", combining both physical and digital components, was essential to its inclusivity. While the physical installation allowed for hands-on engagement, the online platform (nemata.cyens.org.cy) enabled remote participation, extending the project's reach beyond the exhibition space. At the same time, Papapetrou emphasized the importance of maintaining a physical dimension, particularly for those less familiar with technology, ensuring accessibility for all. He also stressed the project's non-confrontational ethos, aimed at resonating with a diverse audience: *"We wanted to offer a universal message of connection and healing, without provoking or alienating any group"*.

During my time in Nicosia, I had the opportunity to observe the project's effect on both locals and visitors while serving as an invigilator at the WIP Festival. Despite its simplicity, the project effectively encapsulated the island's complex history of displacement. With nothing more than threads and a 3D map of Cyprus, "Nemata" managed to create a profound connection between past and present. Visitors were not passive observers but became co-creators of the artwork. Elderly refugees, many of whom had lived through displacement, stretched threads across the map, often recounting their personal stories as they did so. Younger participants, in turn, discovered their families' histories through this collaborative process. In one notable instance in Limassol, the artwork was destroyed. Reflecting on this incident, Papapetrou remarked: *"When something is exposed to a public space and you say it is participatory, you must accept that its course may include events like this. It's part of the journey."*



"Sector 2: Nicosia"

The exhibition "Sector 2, Nicosia," co-curated by Chrysostomos Sakallis, explored Cyprus's broader historical context, with a particular focus on the lived experiences of Nicosia residents before and after 1974. Initially conceived with a wide historical scope, the curators gradually refined the focus to the events of 1963-64, widely regarded as the beginning of Nicosia's division. Sakallis articulated the challenges of addressing such a multifaceted subject: *"The occasion is the 60 years since the creation of the Green Line and the 50 years since the Turkish invasion. It was something commemorative that we couldn't remain silent about; we had to say something. Nicosia remains the last divided capital in Europe. The Green Line is something that is part of the life and daily reality of every Nicosian, yet it remains unknown to the world. Or at least on a level of perception, if not knowledge"*.

The exhibition was divided into thematic sections that addressed key historical milestones and their impacts. One notable feature was the inclusion of oral histories from diverse communities: *"We essentially wanted to bring the people of Nicosia to the forefront. We reached out to all communities in Cyprus: Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Armenians, Latins, Maronites"*. The interview process was crucial for the exhibition, as they aimed to present multiple sides of the story. Sakallis mentioned the challenges they faced, such as the difficulty in accessing Turkish Cypriot sources and the lack of trust from some interviewees: *"The challenges were mainly in terms of accessibility. It wasn't easy to move around; there weren't many elements concerning the Turkish Cypriot side or narrative"*.

A characteristic example was the difficulty in acquiring specific items, such as a bottle of Taksim Cola: *"We found this in an antique shop, and the owner wouldn't sell it to us. He realized we were Greek Cypriots and suspected we wanted it for something related to the 50th anniversary, so he wouldn't sell it"*. At the same time Sakallis emphasized the importance of objectivity and multiple perspectives in presenting history, acknowledging that the official narrative often includes subjective positions.

Another defining aspect of the exhibition was its integration of multimedia and interactive elements, designed to provide visitors with a deeper, more immersive experience. One standout feature was the inclusion of VR experiences of the Green Line, which allowed visitors to engage directly with the divided city. Sakallis explained how this technological component came to be: *"Technology, to be honest, came a bit by chance. It was something we wanted to include, but we weighed our options, and the budget wasn't large enough to create something from scratch. That's how CYENS's VR came into play"*.



"Cyprus 1974: Memory is the Only Homeland of Humanity"

The "Cyprus 1974: Memory is the Only Homeland of Humanity", a title inspired by Kyriakos Charalambides's poetry, encapsulates the exhibition's dual focus on trauma and resilience. The exhibition's narrative was carefully constructed along thematic lines, exploring life before 1974, the coup, the invasion, and the aftermath. This chronological structure enabled visitors to trace the complex trajectory of Cyprus's modern history. The curators emphasized the personal and collective dimensions of memory, integrating a wide array of materials, including artifacts, photographs, testimonies, and rare archival documents. As Anthi Tofari points out:

"We aimed to create a space where history and memory converge, reflecting the experiences of those who lived through the events of 1974 while inviting visitors to explore their own connections to this pivotal moment".

A key feature of this exhibition was its reliance on contributions from the community. Local residents donated personal items, photographs, and oral testimonies that served as the foundation for many of the displays. The exhibition also incorporated multimedia elements, such as video interviews and soundscapes, to enhance the visitor experience.

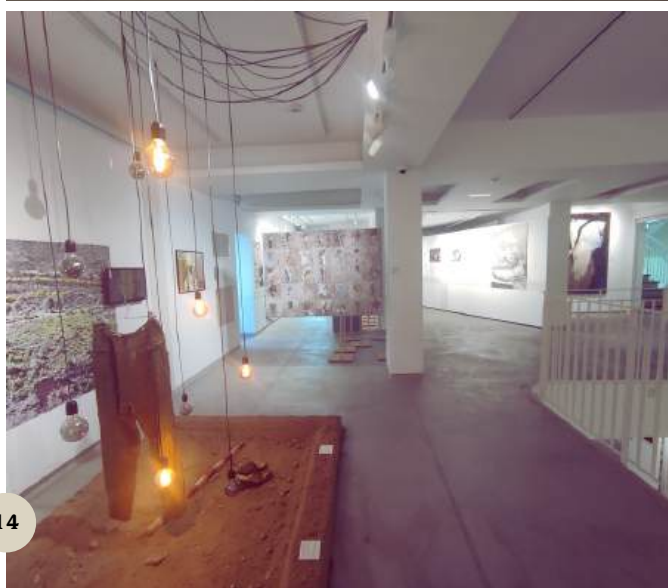
A particularly moving aspect was the inclusion of testimonies from both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, offering a nuanced and inclusive narrative. The curatorial team highlighted: *"By featuring voices from across the divide, we aimed to foster understanding and dialogue, while recognizing the shared human impact of 1974".*

What stood out to me personally was the vast volume of material and the diversity of perspectives. The exhibition's captions were presented in three languages—Greek, Turkish, and English—demonstrating its commitment to a broad and inclusive audience. It was one of the most comprehensive and diverse exhibitions. One of its most thought-provoking elements was the strategic placement of mirrors among the exhibits, subtly encouraging visitors to see themselves as part of history and the ongoing narrative.

The exhibition was also presented in Athens, maintaining much of the same collection and impact.



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"1974: 50 Years of Invasion, Occupation, and Displacement"

One of the key exhibitions explored in this study was "1974: 50 Years of Invasion, Occupation, and Displacement", curated by Ioannis Eliades at the Cyprus Folk Art Museum. This exhibition focused on three intertwined themes: invasion, occupation, and displacement. A notable feature was its inclusion of materials related to the enclaved populations, as Eliades explained: *"For the first time, we presented artifacts and documents related to the enclaved individuals. These people continue to resist efforts to displace them, striving to maintain their presence in a region of exceptional natural beauty and cultural heritage"*.

The exhibition showcased a diverse array of traditional artifacts that represented the intangible cultural heritage of Cyprus. Items on display included personal belongings, land deeds, maps, children's drawings, clothes, sculptures, furniture, and textiles. Among the most interesting pieces was a dress worn by a young woman during her journey as a refugee in 1974. Eliades highlighted the centrality of folk culture to the exhibition: *"We aimed to highlight folk culture, as it is more accessible and deeply tied to the people's identity. This is cultural heritage that cannot be stolen; it lives through the communities that maintain it"*.

During a guided tour, Eliades emphasized the importance of helping visitors understand the context and themes of the exhibition. He noted that the focus on the events of 1974 was designed to educate younger generations and evoke memories among older ones, while deliberately avoiding a political tone. He shared that many visitors were deeply moved by the stories and artifacts: *"When visitors see these displays, they begin to remember, to think about the pain and resilience it took to rebuild lives after such devastation"*.

Located on the museum's first floor, the exhibition faced challenges with accessibility due to the presence of staircases. Budget constraints also meant the absence of technological elements, although Eliades acknowledged their potential value in enhancing the visitor experience. Additionally, the lack of multilingual captions—limited to Greek—restricted accessibility for non-Greek-speaking audiences, suggesting a primary focus on Greek Cypriots. Despite these limitations, the exhibition succeeded in delivering a powerful and familiar narrative from a Greek Cypriot perspective. As Eliades concluded, its core aim was to preserve and share memories, prioritizing education and commemoration.



"50 χρόνια μνήμες – Η κραυγή μέσα από την γλυπτική"

The "50 Χρόνια Μνήμες – Η Κραυγή μέσα από την Γλυπτική" exhibition by the artist Philippos Yiapanis provided a deeply personal perspective on the events of 1974. Yiapanis, himself a refugee from Famagusta, transformed his private collection and artistic creations into a poignant reflection on loss and memory.

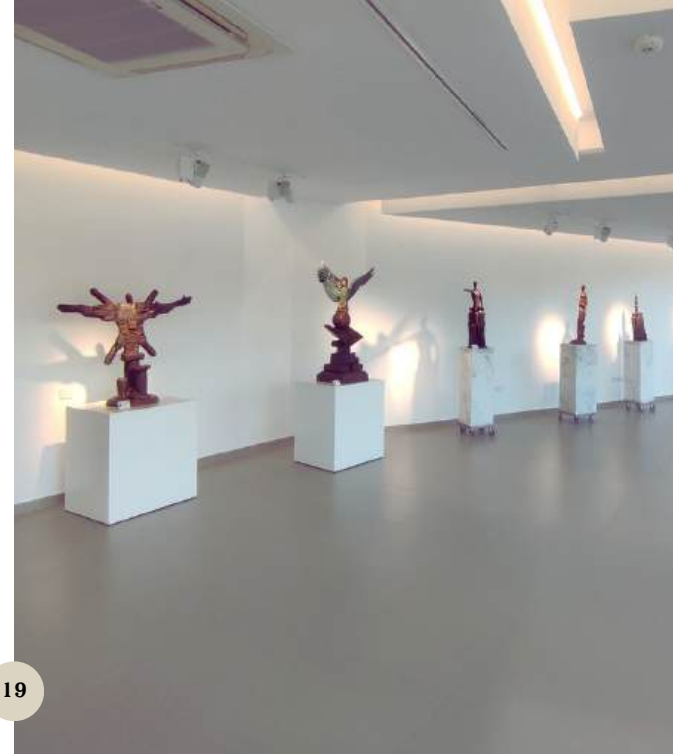
"For me, the 50 years are every day. The pain, the anxiety for this land's future — these are constant".

The exhibition featured a diverse array of artworks, including sculptures, poetry, and installations. Yiapanis's approach blended art and teaching, using his works to educate visitors about the ongoing impact of the invasion: *"Through the sculptures, the theater, and the walls of Famagusta and Kyrenia, I aim to raise awareness and shed light on our shared history".*

When I visited Yiapanis's space in Limassol, he welcomed me warmly and provided a personal tour of the exhibition. More than gracious, he shared insights about his work and the overarching themes of his artistic journey. Regarding his own displacement, he was reserved, but he made a striking observation about the true tragedy of 1974: *"The greatest drama of '74 is not the missing or the dead. It's those who remained behind. The families of the fallen and the missing — the mother, the father, the sister, the wife, the son. They carry the greatest burden".*

Yiapanis's artistic process was deeply cathartic, offering him a way to cope with his own memories: *"Art was my outlet, my way of processing images and emotions that remained etched in my mind".*

The physical space of "Mikri Salamina," designed to resemble the occupied area of Cyprus, further immersed visitors in the themes of loss. The exhibition's evocative sculptures, symbolized both destruction and the enduring spirit of survival. One particularly moving piece depicted a fragmented family around a fence, representing the absence felt by those left behind. Yiapanis's dedication to preserving and sharing his story reflects a broader desire to keep the memory of 1974 alive for future generations. His exhibition did not shy away from the emotional weight of its subject matter but embraced it as a means to educate and connect with visitors on a deeply human level.



The "Cyprus Insula: History – Memory – Reality" exhibition, hosted by the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, provided a captivating and multidimensional exploration of the island's history. By seamlessly intertwining historical documents, artistic representations, and cutting-edge digital media, the exhibition presented Cyprus not merely as a geographical entity but as a living, evolving cultural and emotional landscape, shaped by its intricate and often turbulent past.

Divided into five thematic zones, the exhibition traced significant milestones in Cyprus's history, from ancient civilizations and periods of colonial rule to the island's division following the events of 1974. Each section was meticulously designed to offer visitors a dynamic and immersive experience, employing interactive displays and multimedia installations to deepen their engagement with the subject matter.

The first section of the exhibition offered visitors the opportunity to encounter the people of Cyprus. Lined up before them were representations of Cypriots as depicted by artisans of clay, stone, and wood across the centuries. This segment provided a deeply immersive experience, making me feel like I was one of them. Additionally, technology played a significant role in bringing history to life, with video projections making the statues appear to speak and a short animation offering a concise yet engaging history of Cyprus.

A particularly striking section utilized augmented reality to reconstruct the old Nicosia airport, juxtaposing its past and present states. This innovative approach poignantly underscored the tension between continuity and transformation, emphasizing the enduring impact of history on contemporary Cyprus. The use of technology in this context did not merely serve an aesthetic function but actively invited visitors to reflect on the passage of time and the narratives embedded within the island's landscapes.

Furthermore, a compelling short documentary provided a concise yet informative overview of Cyprus's historical trajectory up to the present day. Its clear and engaging presentation ensured accessibility for audiences of diverse backgrounds, making complex historical narratives comprehensible and emotionally resonant.

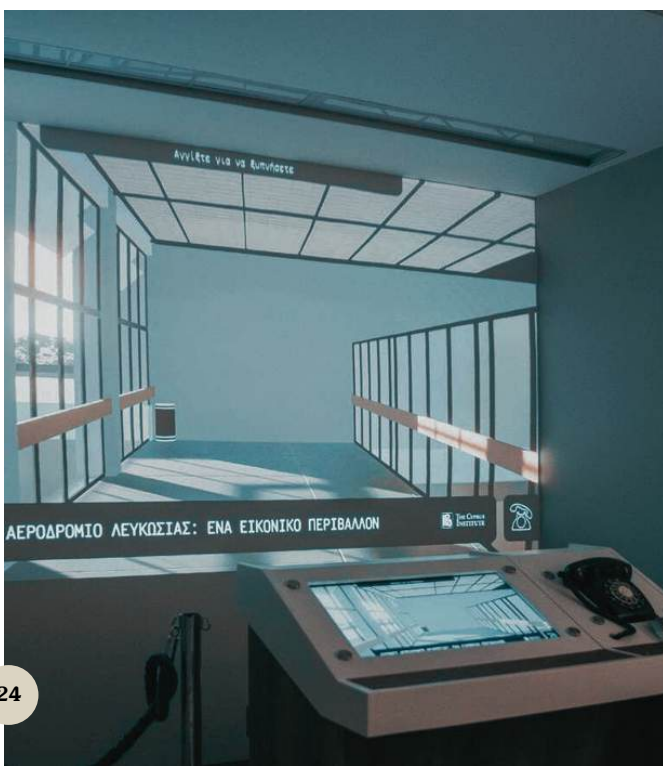
Regrettably, time constraints prevented me from conducting interviews with the exhibition's curators. Nevertheless, as a visitor, I found the exhibition to be an insightful and evocative journey through Cyprus's layered history. The combination of traditional and contemporary interpretative methods fostered a rich and thought-provoking experience, leaving a lasting impression on those who engaged with its content.



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“Imagining Home - Between the Walls”

The 'Imagining Home - Between the Walls' exhibition, located in the buffer zone crossing Ledras-Lokmaci, delved into the profound concept of 'home.' Through curated displays, it reimagined houses and the idea of 'home' in Nicosia, 50 years after the events of 1974 and 60 years after the establishment of UNFICYP. The exhibition featured powerful exhibits using sound, installations, artworks, and the concept of home. At the entrance, a chair with a television showing a documentary, along with carpets and a sense of home comfort, juxtaposed with the awkwardness of the buffer zone, created a mix of emotions.



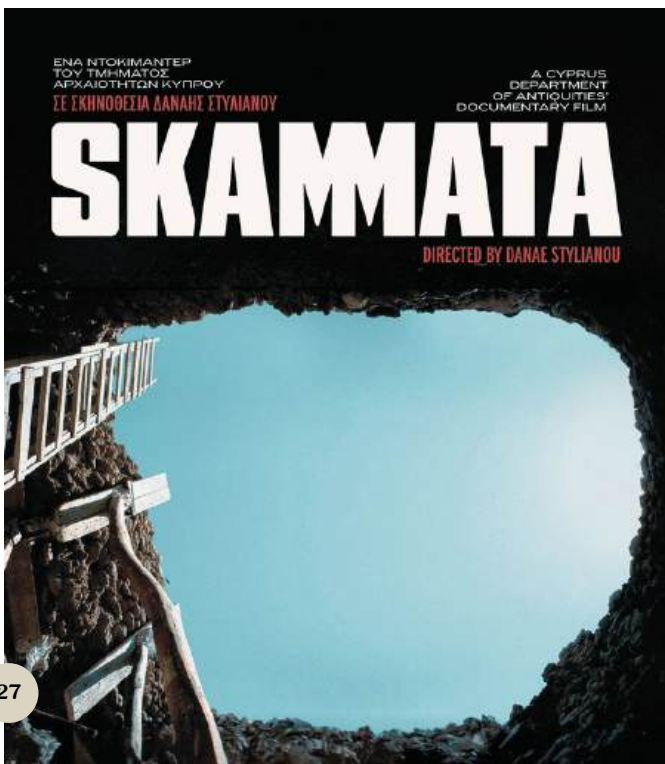
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“Skammata Documentary”

The documentary "Skammata," directed by Danae Stylianou and produced by M.P.L. Productions for the Department of Antiquities, offers a compelling perspective on the complexities of Cyprus's history. Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the 1974 coup d'état and subsequent Turkish invasion, the film interweaves archival excavation footage with personal testimonies from both foreign and Cypriot archaeologists, as well as retired staff members of the Department of Antiquities. These narratives reflect on the collective trauma of war and its profound impact on Cypriot archaeology.

The film underscores the challenges faced by archaeologists who, after 1974, were restricted to excavating only the southern part of the island. This limitation raises a poignant question: "How can you uncover the past of an island when you only have access to half of it to excavate?" This inquiry prompts reflections on whether it is possible to fully understand the present or envision the future of a divided island without access to its entire past.

By addressing the gaps and silences in these narratives, "Skammata" highlights the importance of comprehensive historical accounts. It emphasizes the need for inclusive perspectives that not only deepen our understanding of Cyprus's complex history but also foster meaningful dialogue about its future. Through this approach, the documentary aspires to move closer to a more nuanced and inclusive comprehension of this divided island.



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DISCUSSION

Το θάμα ήτανε στ' όνειρο, αλλά μισό κι αυτό.
[Κυριάκος Χαραλαμπίδης]

The analysis reveals that the 1974 exhibitions serve as both commemorative tools and dynamic platforms, bridging personal recollections with collective memory. The design and presentation of these exhibitions are deeply embedded in contemporary political, social, and cultural discourses. This is evident in both the content and format of the displays. The experiences and narratives of participants - from artists and curators to visitors - transform the historical space into a dynamic forum for dialogue and reflection.

A wide range of exhibitions was organized. One major insight from the study is the dual role that these exhibitions play. On one level, they preserve personal testimonies, artifacts, archival documents, and everyday objects - from a refugee's dress to handwritten letters - that capture the human cost of displacement and loss. On another level, by integrating interactive elements such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), as well as participatory installations and oral history, the exhibitions transform visitors from passive observers into active participants, even co-creators of memory.

The report further illustrates that a wide array of curatorial strategies was employed. Traditional approaches - using static displays of artifacts and chronological narratives - coexisted with innovative, technology-driven



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Fabric rolls with digitally printed copies of a childhood diary. Visitors were invited to take a piece of the fabric home with them.

formats. Many exhibitions, for instance, combined historical documents and artifacts with multimedia installations and interactive digital storytelling. This convergence of the old and the new not only enriched the narrative but also ensured that the story of 1974 resonated with a broad, intergenerational audience. The spatial and sensory design of the exhibitions - through the use of interactive technology, multilingual captions, and immersive installations - enhanced the visitor experience by bridging the gap between historical events and contemporary identity. Travelling exhibitions amplified this impact, taking these complex narratives beyond fixed museum spaces and fostering a cross-regional dialogue about Cyprus's divided past and hopeful future.

The overall message of these exhibitions was twofold. They aimed to commemorate the traumatic events of 1974 and preserve both personal and collective memories, while also redefining memory as a tool for reinforcing collective identity and sparking critical reflection on the past - with an eye toward reconciliation and social coexistence. Although many of the exhibitions shared this common objective, differences emerged in the ways the narratives were presented; some adopted a more conventional, chronological approach, while others integrated dynamic digital elements and interactive experiences that set them apart.

The active involvement of CYENS emerged as a significant factor in this initiative. The center's contributions were visible across several projects: from "Nemata" developed at CYENS Thinker Maker Space, to facilitating interactive "talking statues" in the "Cyprus Insula" exhibition and developing the immersive virtual environment of CYENSverse in the "Sector 2: Nicosia" exhibition. These initiatives demonstrate how interdisciplinary collaboration and technological integration can create more engaging and reflective cultural experiences.

The approach adopted in this study, which combines direct observation with conversations with those involved, demonstrates that the exhibitions expose the complexity of history. The commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the events of 1974 do not merely recount facts but actively redefine memory, turning it into a tool for reinforcing collective identity. Moreover, the project's methodology - rooted in both systematic mapping of exhibitions and direct engagement with curators, visitors, and local communities - highlights the challenges of capturing the full spectrum of historical experiences. Field observations, interviews, and the use of multimedia documentation enriched the analysis, yet they also underscored the difficulties inherent in reconciling diverse personal narratives with an overarching historical account. Although the approach was successful in capturing a wide spectrum of experiences, time constraints and limited access to Turkish Cypriot cultural events narrowed the scope of inquiry. Future research might benefit from a longer fieldwork period and more robust collaboration with stakeholders from both communities. Such an inclusive approach would likely yield richer insights into the contested nature of collective memory.

Overall, these exhibitions emerge as progressive interventions in cultural remembrance. By merging traditional narrative techniques with cutting-edge digital innovations, they offer a multifaceted dialogue about the past that is both commemorative and forward-looking. They challenge audiences to not only remember but also to reflect critically on the implications of history, encouraging a more pluralistic and inclusive understanding of events that continue to shape Cyprus's identity. In doing so, these initiatives lay the groundwork for future cultural projects that might bridge divides and foster a society that is more united and aware.

CONCLUSION

Yurdunu sevmeliymiş insan, öyle diyor hep babam. Benim yurdum ikiye bölünmüş ortasından, hangi yarısını sevmeli insan?
[Neşe Yaşın]

In conclusion, the project underscores the critical role of cultural exhibitions in shaping public memory and understanding historical events. The diverse presentation methods - from tangible artifacts to digital and participatory media - show that memory is a living construct, evolving with new interpretations. While the exhibitions capture the sorrow and resilience of the 1974 events, they also highlight the challenges of representing a divided past.

A key issue identified is the absence of Turkish Cypriot perspectives in many cultural narratives, revealing a significant gap that future curatorial practices must address. Inclusivity is essential for a holistic historical account and fostering dialogue and re-conciliation between communities. Some exhibitions showed greater openness to Turkish Cypriot perspectives, promoting inclusivity and dialogue, while others maintained a more singular narrative. This variation highlights the progress made and the need for continued efforts toward a balanced and representative historical discourse.

By bridging the personal with the political, and the tangible with the intangible, this research deepens our understanding of how memory functions as both a reflection of identity and a catalyst for change. The findings encourage further investigation into integrating diverse cultural narratives to construct a more inclusive and comprehensive portrayal of Cyprus's past and its future.



ILLUSTRATIONS

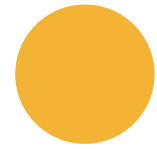


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