

1. ARTISTIC LOOK AT OUR COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Publication: . . .CYPRUS MAIL

Date:14/02/2018 Clipping Date: . . .14/02/2018

Page: 15



Artistic look at our collective identity



TEN artists will join forces on Friday at the **Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre** for the opening of their group exhibition entitled **The Presence of Absence, or the Catastrophe Theory**. The artists from Albania, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, along with a British artist of Turkish Cypriot origins will present videos, photographs and installations. These works will all examine the notion of landscape and memory, amnesia and nationalism, identity and resistance, fragmentation and displacement, and alienation and longing for places that may not really exist. All of these artists are associated with modern states formerly united by the Ottoman Empire

that have since taken vastly different directions. The complex history of this region reflects enduring cultural threads and ruptures that transcend national borders. "The current context of Cyprus embodies a state fractured not by cultural differences among its population, but by the myth of nationalism engendered by external forces in the interest of exploitation and control of a territory. Thus it begs the question: Does conflict cause the formation of borders, or the other way around?" states the exhibition's press release.

The alchemy of place is a potent mixture of history and conquest, cultural memory and mythology, landscape and geopolitics, with the narratives of victors inscribed onto any topography in the form of physical and ephemeral remains. Colonialists, empires, democracies and despots as well as sudden catastrophes impose new orders and trigger transformations that mark a terrain, leaving a cultural residue whose origins are often forgotten in the mist of collective amnesia. Absence is also present in the people torn from their homes, as evoked by Mahmoud Darwish's poetic meditation *In the Presence of Absence*. The memory of a generation is short and thus erasure and sentimentality are intertwined as one, just as ideology and ruin can be spoken about in the

same breath. The traces of our past creep up on us through the cracks of what came before, displacement stirs nostalgia and languages and cultures mingle to form a new idea of things. These, and much more, are things that have become part of our collective identity and it is here that the ten artists of the exhibition will turn our attention.

The exhibition is curated by Cathryn Drake.

The Presence of Absence, or the Catastrophe Theory Group exhibition. Opens February 16 at 8pm until April 14. **Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre**, 19 Palias Ilektrikis, **Nicosia**. Tuesday-Saturday: 10am-9pm. Tel: 22-797400

By Maria Gregoriou

