

Marina Genadieva

Aerial Passages

Zoumboulakis Galleries 2 - 20 April 2024

Takis Koubis

The Buffer Zone as Image Act

Since 1974, the Buffer Zone has been defined as an extension of the Green Line, whose name, geographical location, spatial expanse, and geopolitical significance all stem from the line of demarcation drawn by British Army Major General Peter Young on a map of Nicosia on December 30, 1963. This green pencil line marked the ceasefire and simultaneously inaugurated the separation of the two communities.

This abrupt cartographic gesture is imbued with 'the irreducible desire of the line,' to quote Henri Matisse. All gestures of this kind bear inherent aesthetic significance while simultaneously retaining a strangeness to the intention that motivates it. The Green Line's demarcation is aligned with the intention of delimitation, particularly of urban space. However, in the case of the Buffer Zone, it is not the absence or presence of boundaries that exists, but the phenomenon of invisible boundaries. Consequently, the Buffer Zone represents a shift in the geopolitical blueprint towards the realm of visual demarcation and a neutral zone. The intention of separation is left ambiguous, inadvertently leaving room for the development of *natura naturans*, nature in its authentic form, as defined by Spinoza.

Through this lens, Marina Genadieva's work explores the way in which the forms of nature are connected to works of visual art, in relation to the universal motif of the constitutive cause, whereby the image of nature is inseparable from the physical image of art.

Aerial Passages by Marina Genadieva poses the question of crossing boundaries and, in particular, the movement of crossing invisible boundaries, such as those of the Buffer Zone [known as the Dead Zone in Greek]. These are not ascertained either on the ground or on the map; they are perceived through insight and sight. The presence of these works here aims to transform visual form into an active image, to set the *artwork in motion* through interaction with the observer.

In this respect, these are not representations, becoming, rather, image acts (*Bildakte*), to use a term by the German art historian and image theorist Horst Bredekamp, as they visually encapsulate their transformation into active artefacts. The subject here is the visual and artistic conception and visualisation of the Buffer Zone of the Mesaoria section between the Troodos and Pentadaktylos mountains, which is marked by the prohibition of human access; a primordial Nature has thus established itself in the area – an animal and vegetal *non-space*, which hosts some of the rarest species of endemic and endangered plants and animals.

Therefore, Marina Genadieva's works attempt, by implicit reference to Darwin, in whose theory the principle of image act is based, to materialise Lucretius' insight that there is no contradiction between the forms of natural things and artefacts, but continuity.

If, for the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, the *movement* of crossing boundaries presupposes the inescapable experience of transport, walking, meeting and receiving, the *Aerial Passages* of *invisible boundaries* move towards the gaze, which they invite to cross the *non-space* of the *Buffer Zone*.

Within the Buffer Zone's territory, the passage of refugees and migrants towards other places is outlined on the anthropological and ethical-political levels, thanks to the catalytic mediation of neutrality. Identity checks stand in stark contrast to the passive nature of the Buffer Zone. Images draw strength from the same source as the migrants, who, as Georges Didi-Huberman argues, 'pass at any price.'

Aby Warburg, in his 1913 lecture entitled 'The Images of the Planets during their Migration from the South to the North and their Return to Italy,' had grasped the power of the migration of images. Just as the images of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* migrate from the Mediterranean basin to the centre of Europe, so too do Genadieva's images aspire to migrate from Cyprus, to traverse different countries, and to survive.

Curtain Space-Image

In Western art, the curtain defines the framework of the work of art, opening a space for symbolism and ambiguity through the *concealment/unconcealment* of ambiguous areas of the image. As a central iconographic motif and as a utilitarian object for covering and uncovering religious images during ritual ceremonies, the curtain represents a paramount visual and theatrical element of interaction, which on the one hand highlights the question of power, of the *potentia* of the image and, on the other hand, as invitation to be drawn and reveal the visual space wide open, aims to 'capture' the viewer as Leonardo da Vinci might say.

In *Aerial Passages*, the curtain (2022, 215 × 335 × 50 cm), consists of 1.5 million coloured glass beads threaded by hand, translating the painting experience into space. In this case, the two-dimensional imagery in the painting gave way to a spatial reconstruction of depth, without any material substrate, retaining, however, the binary relationship of *concealment/unconcealment* in the light of the appearance/disappearance of the landscape of the Buffer Zone. This reframing by thousands of coloured dots promotes a latent state underlying the phenomena – as the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan might say – which, however, is undone with every twinkle of the curtain against the light. The subtle motion caused by air – space breathing – creates multiple openings, passageways to the realm of invisible boundaries, which are ensured by the focus of the *space-image* at a certain interval from the observer, depending on how the light falls. This *image in motion* creates the actual condition of a landscape, evoking a primordial experience of Nature.

The layering of the four levels of the *space-image* (namely, the first level: the palm tree, a symbol of the tree of life in Cypriot art, the wild plants and flowers; the second: trees and reeds on the banks of the Ovgos River; the third: the two hills; and the fourth: the Pentadaktylos mountain range) aims to direct the gaze to infinitesimal vanishing points, beyond the boundaries of the Buffer Zone, in order to guide, conversely, all the levels, through a centripetal motion, towards the depth of the eye.

'Remains' – Symbols as Living Images

Remains of dead flowers are forms sculpted in organza, thread and embroidery that evoke a state of collective death and decay. They take on a body, which is, however, not a substitute for the body of the dead or the missing: Through an ambiguous perception in terms of the scale and texture of absent human bodies, they attempt to impart physicality to the *living form* of an image.

But how does the remain of a body turn into a *living* image? According to Maurice Blanchot, the image of the corpse 'does not resemble the corpse' and is certainly 'neither the same as the person who was alive, nor is it another person, nor is it anything else.' It is the image itself that makes the poppy a symbolic flower, through the non-decomposing body, which, although colourless, ruined and transparent, retains its shape and its living neuroses, to continue to 'supply with blood,' *ex negativo*, the image-body.

Threads, in the guise of vases, suggest the needle – the age-old implement for making clothing and for medical use, on display in the showcases of Cypriot museums – with the aim of sewing the living element of the artifact as a model for eliminating any distinction between the products of art and the derivatives of science.

Mines / The Non-Space of the Neutral

The Buffer Zone is an inaccessible, uninhabitable area that eradicates every metaphysical hierarchy, every myth of place and residence, every possibility of *taking place* for the benefit of pristine nature, a homogeneous and undisturbed place. In this sense, it is the non-place of the neutral, in the sense given to the term by Maurice Blanchot – that is, the non-positive, non-negative, neutralised place, which reveals 'an empty neutrality, a phantom wandering in a space where nothing happens.'

The non-place of the neutral is not the non-place of super-modernity invoked by Marc Augé, nor is it the space of Michel Foucault's heterotopia. It is the unknown, paradoxically non-spatial and dangerously mined space, which validates Hölderlin's famous line: 'But where danger is, grows the saving power.'

Consequently, M15 mines and M49A2 mortar shells both threaten and protect pristine Nature. Here presented in the guise of ceramic sculptures, they morph into image, shedding their dangerousness and conveying the actual neutrality of the *Neutral Zone*, a non-place. Acting as *artefacts of the neutral* and possessing neither *place* nor *hearth*, they reject the qualities of utility and belonging to become vessels that convey the peace of primordial Nature. The landmine images on the gallery floor seem to threaten us, even as their deadly power is negated, reminiscent of snakes in the Hopi Indians' ritual cited by Aby Warburg: by turning into image, they are rendered harmless.

Endemic and Rare Plants of the Buffer Zone: Direct Physical Imprints

Two among the 18 endemic and rare plants, *Onosma fruticosum Sm.* and *Onopordum cyprium Eig.* become physical, Vera-Icon like imprints in a botanical register of *natura naturans*. The parallel drawn with neutralised *Bursts* of flowers – bloodstains in the form of a cosmological arc of *Poppies* of the species *Papaver Rhoeas*, which grow profusely in the Buffer Zone – captures the uniqueness of the imprint in a fusion of natural imagery and artistic skill.

Kraters of Mine-Laden Eruptions

Like the self-introducing artefacts of Antiquity (skyphoi, kylikes, lekythoi, which state their own creator or owner), these *Kraters – Vessels of Time* invoke the life of the inhabitants, the danger of explosions in the minefield of the Buffer Zone, visualising the 'Rude Style' formand depicting the patterns of plants on the tulip-filled hill – dotted with spots of a symbolic fusion – a tempering process dictated by the heterochrony of Cypriot vases. Krater-Vessels, Crater-soils, orifices, openings that reveal the inside of the form to activate the latent condition of images in terms of their role in interaction with the observer.

Marina Genadieva focuses on the natural power of the image, validating Lucretius' view that things emit 'fine images' in a fusion of images and objects. This concern for the physical power of the image aims to form a 'natural bond,' to use Aby Warburg's term, between images and nature, images and words. In this sense, the natural image of her work is proposed as an extension of the image of nature in the non-place of a Neutral Zone.

English translation: Dimitris Saltabassis