

Diaspora I must have swallowed
 the
 dust

Kyriaki Costa

Amsterdam 2016



I must have swallowed the dust. Kyriaki Costa, 2015

The ground upon which the prospects of our lives are based is certainly unstable.

Rooted in the middle of an island, the horizon seems to be the nearest path.

Our boundary is set where fragments from other worlds appear suspended and scattered, traced against the blue sky, that at times seems almost burnt by the harsh light.

Stunned by this vision, this beauty, we always tend towards it. History and the sense of meaning seem invisible. We are blinded by the disguised fog. We remain untouched by the gusts of sand and deaf to the primary sound of the explosion because the echo has turned back.

The path has turned into a relentless game of musical chairs and a moment of inattention spells irreversible defeat and irrevocable exclusion. Instead of the essence and the "sweet dreams", air velocity creates terrifying allusions of stillness, just as if I had been "left out".

Our "lust for eternity" and the word of the "past" are the means by which we understand our present. So we continue to sweep our yards, waiting for the seeds that fall from the Sky to take root and grow.

Costa's Diaspora: A Social Geography of Dust

Iris Pissaride, Sociologist

In September 2015, millions of particles of dust travelled from Syria and covered Cyprus in a dust-cloud.

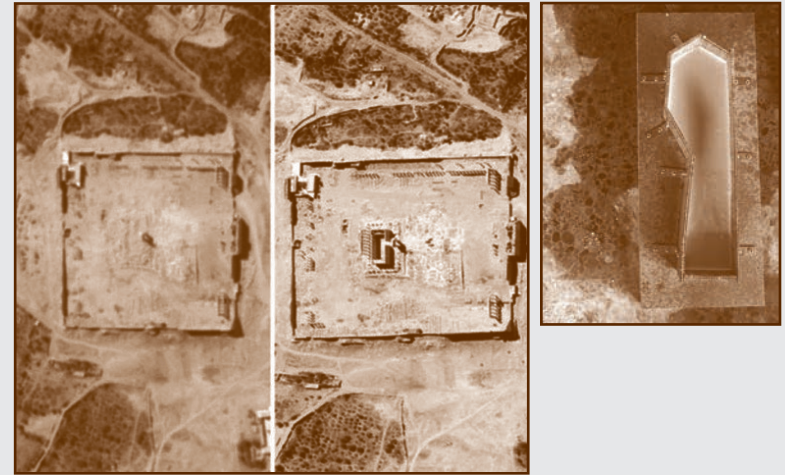
As the island of Cyprus was filled with dust, Syria was being emptied of human life.

If dust is made up of organic substances, how much of this dust was made up of human matter?



mosaic form 40cmX13cm

Costa's work is made of the dust which the artist collected during the period of the dust-cloud. In doing so, by collecting the dust, manually handling and re-shaping it, the artist creates artefacts made of "othered" contexts. Primarily containing mosaic forms in the shapes of places now lost or destroyed - which the artist located through satellite maps - the installation as a whole alludes to a heterotopia. It contains locations that are constantly "othered" in current political language in and of the west, and poses a critique towards current practices of "othering". Instead of being descriptive about the locale that she deals with, Costa lets the space itself reveal what it affords through its mere materiality.



satellite image of destroyed locations

mould of destroyed locations

The work thematically circles around the concept of dust and the potential of diaspora that a dust-cloud makes imaginable. The artist blurs the boundaries between artefacts of culture and the natural world conceiving both as parts of the same social historical processes. This interpolation of matters of the social with matters of the natural is most vividly highlighted through videoart and single heterotopic objects - like a carpet which was left outdoors to absorb dust and grow roots. She assigns an ontology of dust whereby dust, human matter, and topology, are parts of the same whole.

If no life is non-social, then the seeds that the dust scatters, and the human excess that it is made up of, make dust a source of knowledge on social reality itself. In that sense, the work as a whole is very much a geography and an anthropology of the affective excesses of dust.

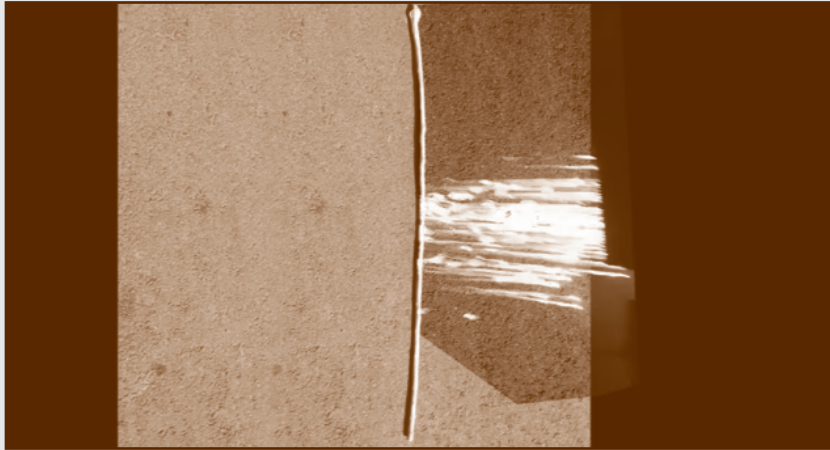


carpet/tapestry / 200cmX80cm



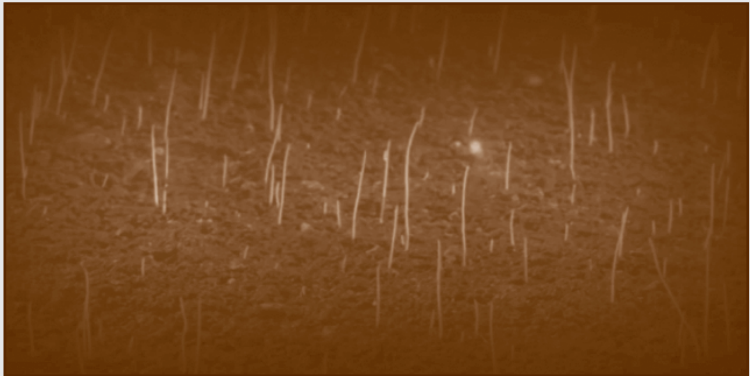
scattered mosaic forms

The mosaic forms seem scattered in space but they are also intrinsically related to history via their topological and chronological characteristics as mapped and moulded locales. Being both vessels of dust as well as made to present the conflict-driven locations from which the dust emerged, they remind us that the realm of the political is far from a mere abstraction. Costa's work attains a sense of the political in terms of the spatial and the material. The objects here are both familiar and "ours" as artefacts in a gallery; but they are also locations that are "othered". They act as catalysts, critically questioning interpretations of our own "western" political subjectivities and the exclusions they entail.



snippet from video "i must have swallowed the dust"

The thematic around lines and shapes made of lines (topologies of space) connected with allusions to rhizomes and plant lines that organically grow and communicate, opens up thoughts on the divisionary of lines in the social. In the video, a single straight line stands still, as if it were a border -fixated - leaving the explosions happening on the other side. As it stands still with the explosions moving in waves as multitudes of fireworks and stars, it is also suggestive of a certain national flag, and alludes to the imperialist fixation with walls and borders. The video-work plays through an interpolation of organic essences of plants that are born and reborn, and one-directional lines through which explosive situations emerge, creating themselves a new diaspora for seeds, as they are scattered. The sounds , recorded by placing microphones in caves and holes in the earth, provide us with a more holistic approach to the microcosm of dust, soil and earth. The birth and rebirth of seeds through this forced diasporic voyage symbolise the sense of time in this space-related work. Time, through the lifecycle of seeds and plants, adds to the work the layer of chronos and the ever turning wheels of history in which we are placed and in which the work itself is embedded.



snippets from video "I must have swallowed the dust"



mosaic forms

The multiple tensions that the work deals with - of life and death, points of departure and fixation, line and rhizome, location and dislocation, praxis and stillness, of reification and the simultaneous critique of reified art - reveal its social character further, and point to the contradictions in our reality itself. The mosaic forms which seem like fragments of floor tiles on which we walk everyday, and which have been materialised here through the “othered” locations where this dust came from, make one wonder: On what turmoils have we been building our own locations? What do we walk on to reach our much protected western values? Which “others” are we constantly stepping on; and what do we constantly sow in the earth to grow in their grounds through our explosive hypocrisy and through divisionary visions of superiority? Through the openness of the question-marks it affords, the work becomes a tool of critique instead of a mere mirror to the social.

In Costa’s heterotopia of diaspora we seem to be entering an enigmatic dream-like or nightmare-like state, where the scenario might be that of human extinction - we’re not sure if humanity is alive. The only sense of life is that of plants and seeds growing from forceful diasporas of dust. We are reminded thus of our current stillness and inertia. Numb by our own belief in promises of universality and “humanitarian interventions”, convinced by our conformity to selective empathy, we only awake from our self induced hibernation when the explosions are presented as being a little closer only to fall back to sleep when it’s all over.



explosion of dust

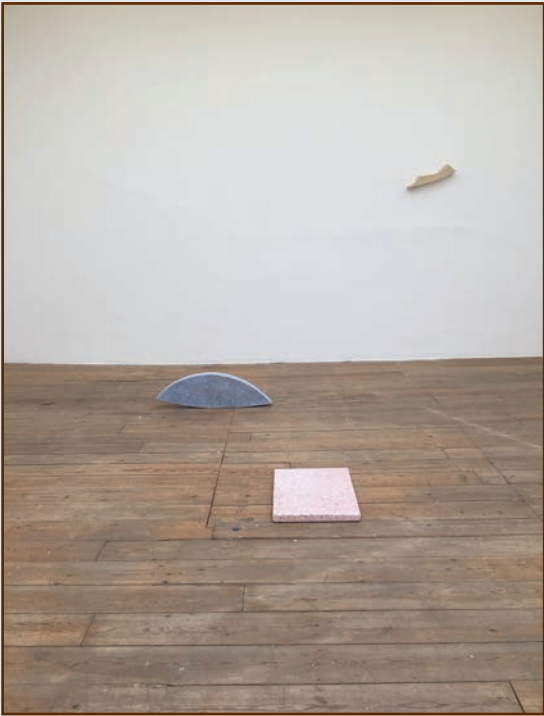
“I must have swallowed the dust” - the artist states, and with it she asks what else is being swallowed: How can we remain unaffected by the dust? How can we keep sweeping it from our yards as if we’ll then go “back to normal”? Why do we remain deaf to sounds of certain explosions? Why do we swallow and accept the imperialism of “western superiority” that fuels up destruction? Who gains from our fixation with topographies of outsiders and “others”? In Costa’s work the place which is also “the dust”, “the physical matter”, “the human substance” itself is something that now intimately and physically reaches us - bringing into question the always contested “us” within the visions and divisions of discourse.

As we walk through Costa’s heterotopian displays, human action seems non-existent. The installation welcomes us to enter a fait accompli of destruction and dispersion - unmasking in this way our already delayed sense of solidarity and consciousness, and the comfortably suspended sense of our (non) praxis.

The atmosphere of heterotopia that the work creates, allows the artist to vocalise space and as such to talk about a place that is near and at the same time constantly “othered” and excluded.









Pamphlet in the honor of an artist living and working on the border of Europe

Jelle Bouwhuis, SMBA, Curator

The thought of the European continent being swarmed by immigrants causes much political turmoil, and presents another test for the unity and integrity of the European Community. The efforts to put a halt against the influx of refugees, from Syria, Libya, the Middle East in general, as well as North and East Africa by amassing them at the outer edges of this Community - such as in Greece and Turkey - might be taken as a sign of what this integrity entails: to keep the outsider outside, or at least outside of the 'core' European countries. The reason for this is perhaps most adequately yet not very subtly formulated by a famous populist Dutch politician: to prevent 'us' from a 'tsunami', a tsunami of migrant workers, strangers, criminals, or - basically and most explicitly hinted at - Moslems.

The Netherlands may be hijacked by such sentiments, alongside countries like Hungary and recently also Germany, but it ignores the simple fact that Europe has been an immigration continent for over half a century. This started with the dismantling of the colonial administration and the movement of post-colonial communities to Europe. It was followed by a warmly welcomed influx of low wage migrant workers, culminating into incoming waves of politically and/or economically marginalized peoples at Europe's fringes, attracted by the post-Iron Curtain predominantly neo-liberal formulation of a United Europe with its star-spangled banner as its brightly shining focal point. The immigration-based society has now become a matter of fact, especially in urban centres such as London, Paris, Berlin and Amsterdam.

The refreshed foundation of this cosmopolitan community presents us with eclectic forms of creativity compiled out of what Glissant has called the Creolization of culture. This entails the merging of former disciplinary borders, collective approaches, putting identity issues and histories on the agenda and the happily mixing of street, pop and high (Western) forms of cultural expression.

All of these form a challenge to the established cultural infrastructures that hitherto claimed cosmopolitanism as being theirs, reformulated in a claim of freedom of artistic expression and packaged in the aesthetics of modernism. One only needs to look at the cultural canons established by, and now indispensable for the thriving of, the larger, official (that is, subsidized) cultural institutions. Most of these institutions came into existence in the age of national and predatory colonial proliferation, the sentiments of which they still carry on in the 21st century. Their canons are rooted in modernism, which included the secularization of public life. This leaves us with the heritage of a cultural appreciation predominantly biased in 19th century national, that is white, superiority; and a secular, (neo-)liberal worldview. Such institutions once functioned as the cultural factories of modern, cosmopolitan and emancipated men and women, especially in the period between World War II and the fall of the Wall. In order to 'produce' this new society, they often appropriated the strategies of pioneering avant-garde artists.

Are those same institutions capable of producing the user communities of our current transcultural European society? Can this society cope with Creolization and cultural diversity, with new religious mindsets, cultural taboos, and a cosmopolitan crowd craving for recognition and longing to be taken seriously? With current practices still directed towards keeping the outsider outside, the tendency is to cater for the populists of our age. But if the gaze would only be turned inwards, the answers for European politics would be formulated on a European reality that is already ours.

CYPRUS ([HTTP://CYPRUS-MAIL.COM/CATEGORY/CYPRUS/](http://cyprus-mail.com/category/cyprus/))





Dust, Refugees and the Butterfly Effect

Dimitris Dalakoglou, Professor of Anthropology, VU Amsterdam



Dust in Athens. Photo credit: Dimitris Dalakoglou

‘Observe what happens when sunbeams are admitted into a building and shed light on its shadowy places. You will see a multitude of tiny particles mingling in a multitude of ways... their dancing is an actual indication of underlying movements of matter that are hidden from our sight... It originates with the atoms which move of themselves [i.e., spontaneously]. Then those small compound bodies that are least removed from the impetus of the atoms are set in motion by the impact of their invisible blows and in turn cannon against slightly larger bodies. So the movement mounts up from the atoms and gradually emerges to the level of our senses, so that those bodies are in motion that we see in sunbeams, moved by blows that remain invisible.’

Titus Lucretius Carus, On the Nature of Things, circa 60 BC

Brownian motion or **pedesis** (from Greek: *πήδησις* /p'ɪ:di:sis/ "leaping") is the random motion of particles suspended in a fluid (a liquid or a gas) resulting from their collision with the quick atoms or molecules in the gas or liquid.

Since the ancient times, students of natural phenomena were fascinated by the concept of dust. Famously, Albert Einstein (a member of the Diaspora himself, as he was forced to leave Europe during the rise of Nazis) explained Brownian motion in one of his 1905 texts. That was the year that he - the 'Jew', the 'Other', the 'Different' - changed physics forever, with only three publications. It would take decades until the Nobel Prize would be awarded to him as he was both the 'Other' and pretty anti-authoritarian politically. He was annoying the establishments in a continent where everything was going perfectly well.

Very few people care to know how dust is dispersed and how it moves, yet most people are well aware of its consequences. Athens had one of its dust waves on March 23, 2016. The dust was desert dust; it came from abroad, over the sea. Dust is annoying; Who will clean the houses and the cars after the dust wave? It seems like dust is impure, it disturbs the order of things in a city where otherwise everything is going perfectly well...

Many people in Europe were surprised - and even annoyed- that Syrian refugees of 2015-2016 had smart phones and did not look the way that we imagined refugees should look like. A couple of years ago plenty of these Syrian refugees probably had a perfectly fine middle class life too, with their own nice houses and cars. Some of them were probably annoyed by the dust waves that covered their property. Today their property is dust dispersed into thin air. This should act as a warning to Europeans. Private property

and comfort might be temporary, especially with the rise of far-Right and neo-Nazi forces in the continent. This rise of the far-Right can mean only one thing: violence and war in a continent which acts like it has forgotten its recent past. The refugees are treated as an undesired factor, disturbing the order of things in a continent that otherwise everything is going perfectly well...

The dust-wave of March 2016 reached Athens one day later than forecasted by the meteorologists. All forecasters know that there is very little possibility to forecast weather phenomena with exact precision. The reason for this, is the so-called butterfly effect: very small causes can have a very large effect. However, as we have known since ancient times, phenomena have causes - or as Lucretius put it: some things are a result of '*underlying movements of matter that are hidden from our sight*'.

The Middle East and Central Asia felt really far away a few years ago, when so many Western armies and governments were declaring war against various countries in the region. The idea was that the consequences of declaring war 'out there' would be limited. Today, Northern and Central Europeans are waking up to what has been a reality among the Mediterranean countries for many years now: The effect that these wars had on the people of the region is huge. Moreover the Middle East and Central Asia are of walking and swimming distance from our own neighborhoods.



Ο Φιλελεύθερος, 08/09/2015

Dust cloud to continue blanketing boiling Cyprus

John Leonidou

Meteorologists have warned people in Cyprus to prepare for another dustfilled day fuelled by high temperatures with Nicosia set to hit 41°C.

According to the latest reading at 6am on Tuesday morning, the biggest concentration of dust particles is in the Zygi area of Limassol where 2,910 grams per litre of air has been recorded. Larnaca is also seeing high levels of dust particles. Although dust concentration is shifting continuously, it is expected to begin lifting by late Tuesday and is expected to clear by Thursday.

Around ten people have already visited the island's hospitals with breathing difficulties.

The government has already issued health warnings to people with breathing difficulties and the elderly due to the dust clouds while the Ministry of Education has alerted schools to keep children indoors. The Labour Ministry has also issued warnings to construction companies and unions. The dust clouds originate from Syria and have also blanketed some parts of Jordan, Israel and some areas of Egypt.

Cyprus is also gripped in a heat wave where temperatures are expected to hit 41°C inland while temperatures will be between 32°C and 35°C on the coast. But the high levels of dust are effectively cooling temperatures on the island by some one to two degrees as the dust particles are blocking out sunlight.

“The chance of a sandstorm occurring is very minimal,” said Meteorologist Panagiotis Michael when asked about the possibility of that happening. This is not the time of year for sandstorms.”

Although the dust is expected to settle by Thursday, temperatures are set to climb once again this coming weekend.

Hermes Airports spokesman, Adamos Aspris has confirmed that some incoming flights to Larnaca Airport have been redirected to Paphos Airport due to the thick dust clouds in the district.





Herbert Ploegman added 4 new photos.

April 7 ·

I once read an anthropological article on the dust around 9/11's Ground Zero, and how the dust both became thick of meanings and of constituents as people realised that the body parts of those in the towers were now in the dust.

Not so unrelated to this event I encountered the same tonight at the SMBA exhibition 'I must have swallowed the dust' by Kyriaki Costa. She made mosaics from dust of sandstorms that came from the east, and soil that she gathered in Cyprus - a place in Europe from where you can see the eastern sky lightening up when explosions happen in Syria, as I was told. Dust that contained the houses, the bodies and basically whole lives of Syrians, now fleeing to the same west.

Tonight's discussion was short but rich. There was a scholar, Thomas Jeffrey Miley from Cambridge, that realised how academia has been worryingly silent ever since the times that the war in Syria incubated; a war that was partly caused by draught (caused by climate change) and related turmoil, a draught that produces more and more of these sandstorms.

My professor Dimitris Dalakoglou was there, arguing that the construction of walls is the only thing remaining from and reminding us of the construction boom of the 90s and 2000s due to privatisations, and the flourishing of our untroubled lives back then. If Europe wants to save the attachment to this era, it needs to reiterate the essence of that time through constructing and protecting.

In response to my remark about our own (not much pondered upon) precariousness that becomes visible in our exposure to a rising sea level, Miley added that it is certain fears that are emphasised while others are ignored or downplayed. The fear of some terrorists, or the 'other' that is invading Europe are both being highlighted -- fears from beyond our well-preserved 'cupola' of peace.

Go, see for yourself this week!

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1141195862597780>

Kyriaki Costa was born in Nicosia, Cyprus. Her recent work deals with social and natural phenomena which she enigmatically transforms and places in indoor spaces. By musealising the natural world her work constantly blurs the boundaries of nature and culture allowing the audience to see them as part of a continuum. Costa deals with topographies, histories, and place-making, by using art as an anthropological practice and as a set of interventions on the social. The corpus of her work as a whole is thematically influenced by history, sociology and the politics of identity and space. She is also an activist in Cyprus focusing on environmental issues as well as matters of public spaces and the commons.

Iris Pissaride was born in Kaimakli, Cyprus in 1990. She is a sociologist and a musician. She holds a BA in Politics Psychology Sociology, and an MPhil in Sociology from the University of Cambridge. Her sociological work revolves around matters of identity and space and it is focused on liminal spaces, identity constructs, postcolonialism and critical theory. She is interested in the interpolations of sociology with art as well as practicing public and visual sociology through new curatorial practices. As a musician she holds a BA in Music and she regularly performs by playing the santouri (hammered dulcimer) as a member of ZRI - a classical-gypsy quintet- and at productions of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London.

Jelle Bouwhuis was born in the Netherlands in 1965. He is an art historian and curator at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, where he heads its project space, Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA). He has (co-)curated some 40 exhibitions at SMBA, as well as group exhibitions such as the large-scaled 'Monumentalism. History and National Identity in Contemporary Art' at the Stedelijk Museum in 2010, 'Time, Trade & Travel' at the Nubuke Foundation, Accra (Ghana) in 2012, and 'Spaces of Exception' as a special project of the Moscow Biennial 2013. He is also a recipient of the Dubai based Abraaj Capital Art Prize 2010. Among many publications by himself he is also co-editor of *Now is the Time. Art and theory in the 21st Century*, (NAi Publishers, 2009) and *Project 1975 – Contemporary art and the Postcolonial Unconscious* (Blackdog Publishers, 2014). He is currently head curator of the long-term project *Global Collaborations* at the Stedelijk Museum.

Dimitris Dalakoglou is a Professor, holding the Chair in Social Anthropology at Vrije University Amsterdam. He is also affiliated with the Sussex Centre for Global Political Economy. He works on mobility, cross-border and urban infrastructures in the Balkans and Greece and he was one of the first anthropologists to approach the Greek crisis ethnographically. In 2012 he was awarded an ESRC-Future Research Leaders grant for the project 'The City at a time of Crisis' (crisis-scape.net), he co-created a map of racist attacks in Athens, and he has been conducting research on migration and the borders of Greece since 2004. His most recent book is 'The Road' (Manchester University Press, 2016).

Dr. Thomas Jeffrey Miley is lecturer of Political Sociology in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge. He received his B.A. from U.C.L.A. (1995) and his PhD from Yale University (2004). He was a Garcia-Pelayo Research Fellow at the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies in Madrid (2007-2009). His research interests include comparative nationalisms, the politics of migration, religion and politics, and democratic theory.

This project would not have been made possible without the generous support of the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Culture in Cyprus and of course our host Jelle Bouwhuis at Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam.

Special thanks to Evros Voskarides for his generous consultation regarding graphic design, as well as Manon van den Blik and Rosa de Graaf for their immensely valuable help throughout the coordination of the project.

We would further like to thank Phileleftheros and their journalist John Leonidou, for providing the newspaper article of September 8th 2015 as well as Cyprus Mail for the photo they provided.

All pictures credited to the artist (Kyriaki Costa) unless otherwise specified.