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Date of birth: February, 19, 1995
Title of the doctoral dissertation: *The Last Image, Memory as a Destructive Thought*
Name of the university where the dissertation is carried out: The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, Poland
Field and discipline in which the doctoral dissertation is carried out: Field of arts in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation

DISSERTATION REVIEW

Ioannis Anastasiou approached the writing of his doctoral dissertation in a very interesting way, both in artistic and in the field close to scientific circles. The title of the work *The Last Image - Memory as a Destructive Thought*, which was realized at The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, in the field of arts in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation, he hints at the need to record certain moments which are simultaneously important for the author personally, but also for society as a whole. In this way, the author immediately introduces the term collective memory, which stands out as his guiding thread during many years of work and research.

The author very constructively and conceptually builds his opinion on several authors and texts, among which Plato's *Theaetetus* can be singled out, in which the positive or original (which is associated with a person, object, conversation, etc.) is correlated with the negative or imprint that is the result of absorbing experience which is imprinted in the memory. Memory as such becomes the carrier of this doctoral thesis. The author formulates several questions that intrigue him during the formulation of the thesis/work, and the key could be: *Is memory a thing of the past, or an evolving process that lives in the present?*. The question is significant because it is very current and applicable to the state in which the world is today, especially if we look at Europe and the unrest that is happening within it.

Here we can have a link with the development of human civilization and the destructive events that are an integral part of it, recalling Cicero's saying *By what other voice, too, than that of the orator, is history, the witness of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the directress of life, the herald of antiquity, committed to immortality?*¹ (*Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia nisi oratoris immortalitati commendatur?*²) and wondering if it is still applicable! In addition, it should be added that those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it, which we witness almost every day. Society constantly experiences deep changes, transformations that are too fast for some and too slow for others, while memory in the context of history and repetition of mistakes is almost lost in what the author notes explaining the context of the term *ekmajio* which was devised by Plato in the work mentioned above. *Ekmajio* implies the idea of memory as a continuous transition, which Anastasiou correlates very well with the principles of fine art printmaking and matrix conditioning as a template for multi-originals.

Leaning on the memory that Anastasiou takes as a guiding thread in the process of creation, the first part of the title of the doctoral thesis defines *The last image* as an almost bare memory or what remains after the complete reduction of memory so that it manifests itself only in our mental constructs. Therefore we define it as immaterial, and what unites it with the outside world is precisely the graphic matrix that the author defines as a link between imagination, memory and the material world. With this, he brings fine art printmaking, its matrix and multiplicity, into a direct relationship. The author identifies memory as a constant change with the process of printing.

Dividing the work into three parts; *XXIc Trichotomy, Déjà Vu* and *Μέμνημαι· πῶς δ' οὐ*, Anastasiou follows a logical way following and listening to the medium of graphic art he deals with, which gradually leads him to a sculptural form. By diving into three-dimensionality in the work *Μέμνημαι· πῶς δ' οὐ* the author enhances the possibility of basic graphic element, creating a line in space that, with its symbolic flow and character, and very directly suggests what the author is really dealing with in the work. The object is made of etched matrices whose hollow surfaces suggest fragility on the one hand and roughness on the other, thus inviting the observer to fully delve into the

¹ <https://archive.org/details/ciceroonoratoryo00cice/page/92/mode/2up?view=theater>, January 7, 2023

² <https://archive.org/details/deoratore00pidegoog?view=theater#page/n178/mode/2up>, January 7, 2023

structure by reading the legible, but also the illegible and undefined, which together creates a feeling of discomfort and encourages questioning the audience. The author's intention was not to create a monument to the memory of the Holocaust, but to question the commemorative approaches we use during such events, and at the same time to question the reactions of individuals, which are often contrary to his idea. In addition, collective memory and knowledge of content, that is, history forces us to conclude that different narratives can be shaped and thus create some new memories. Before this artwork, Anastasiou creates two series of prints, the first of which, entitled *XXIc Trichotomy*, consists of three representations of objects on one graphic sheet (a total of nine prints) placed in juxtaposition, devoid of chronological connotations, stripped bare and offered to viewers for their own interpretation. It also includes a format that, with its size, emphasizes the importance of separate objects, some of which are purposefully oversized. In the series of works called *Déjà Vu*, the author visually relies on the previous series of works by separating each image on a different sheet of paper with the aim of giving each work a "personal" space, while the format of the work itself, which is several times smaller than the first series, invites observer to a more intimate approach, which potentially leads to a different feeling and formation of opinions when observing this work. Reading and observing the work of Anastasiou, we can define his work as extended fine art printmaking in which the medium is not just a mere technological visual sensation, but a deeply thought-out and elaborate work that moves from a two-dimensional medium to a three-dimensional one. With this transition and the creation of a coherent whole, Anastasiou pushes his own boundaries, but also the apparent and learned limitations offered by fine art printmaking, creating a very high-quality conceptual whole.

With this work, Anastasiou reached an enviable level in the field of artistic activity, but from what has been presented it can be concluded that he also paid attention to research work within printmaking. It often happens that printmaking artists do not deviate from what they have learned at the institutions because there is a common opinion that printmaking often implies strict following of recipes, working methods, printing, etc., which ultimately leads us to consider it as a technological discipline and less of an artistic category. Deviating from such a paradigm and emphasizing that the process and research within the media is very important, the author problematizes and further deepens the creative potential of the process, not having a problem from going beyond the established principles of the printmaking procedure. Also, Anastasiou approached the matrix as a material subject to various chemical reactions and in this way let himself and others know that experimentation and a creative approach to the process in printmaking is possible. The latter is of great importance because it provided some solutions for new ways of chemical intervention on matrices, but also for some new possibilities and safer work in the medium itself. With this work, the author has started a research process that can potentially end up as a scientific-artistic research, offering new options, and we can hope that, for the benefit of printmaking society, he will continue to research, conclude and produce new artworks following his own artistic habitus.

All of the above confirms the impressive number of exhibitions at group and solo exhibitions, awards and acknowledgements for work, participation in projects, workshops, as well as the need to work in community with other artists, which emphasizes the social component that leads to the popularization of art and artistic activity. The didactic component is indispensable, i.e. work at the Academy, where Anastasiou creates new projects in collaboration with his colleagues and transfers knowledge to students. Ioannis Anastasiou's doctoral thesis is a valuable document of artistic activity with high-quality conclusions and questions posed by the author, and as such it can serve to realize some new solutions, both from an artistic and a scientific aspect.

Following my analysis of his dissertation and creative output as well as his professional practice in the field of art, I highly recommend that he be awarded an academic Ph.D. title in the field of art, in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation.

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