



ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

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REVIEW OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION OF MR IOANNIS ANASTASIOU  
IN THE FIELD OF ARTS, IN THE DICIPLINE OF FINE ARTS AND ART  
CONSERVATION

The Dissertation was carried out in the frame work of the doctoral  
School Academy of Fine Arts Eugeniusz Geppert in Wroclaw.

TITLE: "The last Image: Memory as a Destructive Thought"

I had the chance to meet Mr .Ioannis Anatasiou in Thessaloniki-Greece during his undergraduate studies. So I know very well the work that he produced for his MA which was also based on the idea of the collective memory. I am extremely happy to see that Mr Anastasiou, in the following years in Wroclaw deepened his way of Artistic thinking and also enriched his skills and knowledge in matters of technique. I am also aware of his devotion to his tactics as well to his strategic tasks. He was a leading figure inspiring the younger students. In the Printmaking Studio of Thessaloniki Mr. Anastasiou was the first to start his daily work and the last to leave the place. In the premises of the Studio younger students still have a poster with a photo of Ioannis answering to the questions of his fellow students: "when are we leaving for the night" and he answers: "not today". This proves that he was and he is engaged to the Artistic and the Aesthetical research in the highest degree. We must also note that he overcame the obstacle put to his studies by the pandemic. He and Miss Dokudowicz rent a space and created their own printmaking facility. So with an extraordinary effort no time was lost and his research went on.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'X. Sachinis'.

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He knows very well that there can't be an aesthetic-artistic creation without an intriguing theory that consolidates and guides his steps. The artist has to identify and define the aesthetic questions and then propose the possible solutions using the proper techniques that will balance the harmony of the equation parameters: theory plus technique give a complete artistic work. In the dissertation of Mr. Anastasiou this axiom is obvious. His research gives us the opportunity to think about the function of collective memory first as a tool for restoring the facts and second giving the images, already existing, another interpretation based on different philosophical approaches. This is not a "game" but for me it's a system of prolonging the life of collective memory that it seems to weaken constantly in front of the digital memory storages and miracles of our time. And he gains his strength from philosophy which for me is the explanatory poetry that still reveals to us the meanings of life. Mr. Anastasiou intervenes in the undercover overwhelming oblivion using land mark images with a critical and creative manner more friendly to our days perception of life and its priorities. Professor Pierre Vidal-Naquet from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales wrote several excellent texts, concerning the collective memory and its opponents. They were published under the title: *Les assassins de la memoire* published by the @Editions La Decouverte, Paris, 1987,2005. The phenomenon of collective memory needs all the help it can get from the philosophers, historians and of course artists in order to stay alive and not to get lost. There for the tools of I. Anastasiou are: the word-logos and the image that was given as a document. This image is reworked and presented as a new lexicon of interpretation for the meaning and the function of collective memory in our days.

I also find very interesting the fact of a possible philosophical question that one can derive from the title of the third "chapter-series" : Μέμνημαι-πως δ'ου. I remember, how could I not? I seem to remember, but what I remember is my reconstruction of what I already know or do not know" Plato's Theatetus", relating it with the theories of the French

philosopher Maurice Halbwachs and his death in the concentration camp of Buchenwald Germany. His death was witnessed by Jorhe Semprun writer and ex Minister of Culture of Spain. Semprun was the student of Halbwachs in Sorbonne. He wrote about the last moments of his Professor and as Halbwachs could not speak, the blinking eye communication they had before the end. Everything is written in the book *L'écriture ou la vie*, Editions Gallimard, Paris 1994. Halbwachs experienced his death but as being dead he cannot remember or reconstruct the event that before his death didn't know. But through Semprun's text the event becomes a part of the collective memory having a special value for the ideal relation between the one who knows more and the one who knows less but it's him (the younger) who will experience the memory of the future. The Academic milieu in an Academic lieu (Buchenwald?), just like Pierre Nora could have evoked for the absolute praxis of sharing the knowledge the same moment with death's arrival. I.A. studies and compare the thoughts and theories of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Paul Ricoeur, Pierre Nora, Maurice Halbwachs. This research was completed with the study on E. Kienholz and Zbigniew Libera as well on other artists. The work of Magdalena Abakanowicz, about Auschwitz, exposed in the Polish Pavillon of the Venice Biennial of 1968 could be an interesting case to study and could help the research on artists exploring the subject of the collective memory.

It is apparent that Mr. Anastasiou's work gave me the chance not only to assess it as a result of an Academic research (theory and praxis) but gave me a hint to reflect upon the different functions of collective memory. Example: the concrete pillars of the Nazi KZ and death camps resemble to me with a bent obelisk with any meanings that one can give to the shape of a bent obelisk.

Nevertheless the whole effort is crowned with a tremendous success and gives a series of works directly analogue to the results of the theory questions and proposals. The purely artistic part of the dissertation consists of three "chapters", series of work, questions asked and answers given this time through the endless research about printmaking its techniques concerning the matrix and its independent status of a

piece of art without the following obligatory praxis of printing the engraved or etched surface. The trace on the matrix can be negative or positive. For Plato the wax presents a virgin space and as a metaphor is compared with the human mind and it is a memory field where events are impressed and exist as fragments. I.A. dares to deal with this theory perceiving his matrix as an ekmajio-cast. This is the view of the printmaker who needs the idea of the matrix to build his concept. The boundaries of the different disciplines are brought down and the artist can move freely on behalf of interest of his final aesthetic proposal.

The series XXic Trichotomy of large format graphics as well the series Déjà vu and the Μέμνημαι-πως δ'ου are the main consisting parts of the present dissertation by the title: "The last image: Memory as a Destructive Thought". Finally we clearly see that the work of Mr. Anastasiou presents a very interesting intellectual pursuit and result able to be put in the annex of a unique Phd. In the text he also reveals, the way and the process, the personal magic, of how his inspiration turns to be a completed series of art work. From logos to praxis and by the praxis to the result, that is a two dimensional or a three dimensional visual art object.

He performed his didactical duties, those of a doctoral student, as his supervisor says with kindness and helpfulness. Exactly the same way he was helping younger students in the Printmaking Studio of the Aristotle University Thessaloniki, Fine Arts School.

Inevitably the excellent quality of his work, the continuous artistic creative energy and the continuous international exhibitions led him to be awarded twelve times from 2019 till 2022. In his Artistic and Academic Achievements we find that till now he has exhibited in ninety two Polish and International exhibitions proving the relentless rhythms with which he works. He has taken part in five important Conferences (notably IMPACT) and has six publications. We see that he is very active in all the fields that compose his artistic character, which is innovative and persistent.



For all the facts and reasons I mentioned above I accept without any doubt, the dissertation, written and artistic under the title "The last Image: Memory as a Destructive Thought" by Mr. Ioannis Anastasiou. I strongly recommend him for the highest possible distinction.

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Professor Emeritus

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