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Spatial Sea – Χωρικά Ύδατα – the site-specific installation as contested space of politics, heritage and everyday life.

Dr Liana Psarologaki Buckinghamshire New University liana.psarologaki@bucks.ac.uk



Above: Liana Psarologaki (2015) *Spatial Sea – Χωρικά Ύδατα (2016)*. St George's Gate, Heraklion Crete. Installation view. © the author.

This paper is a reflective account on the aesthetic modalities under which the site-specific installation *Spatial Sea – Χωρικά Ύδατα (2016)* created a contested space of politics, heritage and everyday life at the St George's Gate in the venetian fortifications of Heraklion Crete. In *Spatial Sea*, the cultural and architectural context serve to create an intervention that sustains and at the same time interrupts the site's spatial continuum. The city of Heraklion is an architectural palimpsest and many sites of heritage -like the fortifications- are timeless to the residents and inhabitants, who use them by habit as part of the public cityscape. St. George Gate (Lazaretto) was one of the four main gates of the Venetian fortifications built between

1462 and 1560, positioned at the four compass points allowing access from the capital of Crete (Candia) to different parts of the prefecture. It now serves as a connection in the form of a subterranean passage between the port and the city centre. In 2016, it hosted *Spatial Sea*; a caustic light and sound intervention inspired by the topographical and topological significance of its locus at present times and in the past. *Spatial Sea* amplified the qualities of the site that echoes the ‘archetypal heroic and tragic spatialities, the relation between the body and the cosmos’¹. It created fabulative sensations of matter by enacting tactility, visuality and soundscapes of water that become mythopoetic. Inspired from the Japanese concept of ‘minamo’ (Japanese for the surface of water, depicted in the speculative work of Torafu Architects²) the intervention immerses the viewer into a floating sensation of almost touching but never haptically reaching a water surface. As such, one becomes with the space to sense an abstract condition of ever changing and fragile beauty. *Spatial Sea* created a fragile spatial condition that gently embraced heritage traces of culture and history and subtly disrupted the visitors’ flow, by emergence not by appearance. It attempted to encapsulate a manifold of spatio-temporalities, creating a lived experience that open to social, political, as well as aesthetic connotations and meanings. It established a manifestation of a hyper-reality that entails the zeitgeist of the site in present, its virtual self in future memories and the past in materiality. The paper uses a three-fold methodological approach of (i) visitors’ responses, (ii) a minor critical theory literature review based on the concept of the sensorium as a new meta-embodiment and the notion of the Nietzschean zeitlos in Henri Bergson’s fabulation and (iii) the creative arts installation practice as self-reflective case study, to offer an authentic and engaging account on experiencing the emergence of the space of a public heritage site “interrupted” by contemporary art. It will highlight novel meanings and neologisms emerging

¹ Loukaki, Argyro. (2014) *The Geographical Unconscious*. Farnham: Ashgate. 141.

² See <http://torafu.com/works/min>

from such work to theorise site-specific installations and interventions as politically contested spaces in the commons of culturally loaded heritage sites.

Dr Liana Psarologaki is an architect, artist, author, and interdisciplinary academic examining radical pedagogies of space, ecofeminism, neuroaesthetics, post-humanism and social/spatial narratives of justice through mythmaking. She is originally from Crete and lives in London, UK. She has been the founding Head of Architecture at the University of Suffolk UK, the Chair of Education of RIBA East Region (2020-2022), and finalist for the 2nd Greek International Women's Award in Design (2020). She trained at the world-renowned National Technical University of Athens School of Architecture and practiced architecture before completing her MA in Fine Art with distinction at the Centre of Spatial Analysis and Intervention UCA Canterbury UK. In 2025 she was awarded one of the first funded PhDs in the Creative Arts by the University of Brighton UK. Her work has been published and exhibited internationally, and she is the author of many essays and two books: *Cultures of Erudition and Desire in University Pedagogy* (Routledge, 2022) and *Site Reliant Immersive Experiences* (Bloomsbury, 2025). She is currently associate professor and the Research and Impact Lead at Buckinghamshire New University UK, where she leads cross-university collaborative research projects, international partnerships and inclusive knowledge exchange initiatives. She is lead of *The Chronicles of Cleaning*, an interdisciplinary research project exploring the poetics of cleaning as liberatory methodology for self-care and spatial justice presented at the Royal Academy of Arts London as part of the London Festival of Architecture 2022 and in the process of writing two new books focusing on posthuman thought with Routledge and Transnational Press. She is associate editor for *Exchanges Interdisciplinary Research Journal* and *The Journal of Posthumanism*, and on the scientific committee of *ArchiDOCT*. She is also a senior fellow of the Higher Education Academy UK and member of Future Imaginaries Network (RMIT).