

Mapping the Body,  
Embodying the Map:  
A corporeal taxonomy into a topographical  
transformation at the border of Nicosia

CHRISTINA GEORGIU





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<p><i>Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map: A corporeal taxonomy into a topographical transformation at the border of Nicosia</i> is a project realized along and across the buffer zone within the Venetian walls of Nicosia, the capital city of Cyprus.</p> <p>The focus of this project is the area that divides the city into two parts and it has been mentioned as <i>buffer zone</i>, <i>green line</i>, <i>borderline</i>, <i>dividing line</i>, <i>dead zone</i> and many more. This restricted area has activated not only physical barriers for people but also caused emotional and mental restraint.</p> <p>The motivation is my wish to reveal the significance of this area and uncover the impact it creates on the body: physical, mental and emotional. Also my intention is to deform and reconstruct the psychophysical perceptions of the dividing line through artistic means.</p> <p>The approach and method of working consists of artistic research, and a practical and theoretical framework. I have used live performance as my creative technique to realize a series of site-specific performance interventions along and across the Nicosia buffer zone in order to generate knowledge about that area, examined in my research. In addition, the written part of this project includes a description and analysis of my artistic work at the border, supported with theories focusing mainly on José Esteban Muñoz's work, "Disidentifications" (1999) and Sarah Pink's "Doing Sensory Ethnography" (2009).</p> <p>This thesis project questions: How the conventional idea of the border and its solidified historicity can be transformed to a new perception through performing, while bringing a psychophysical transformation to this experience? To come to an answer, the body is used as a tool to create live actions and the Nicosia border is used as a site to be experienced through non conventional ways. Finally, the outcome is an experiential mapping, which is shaped while the body is used to measure, archive, experience and re-experience, and therefore memorize the border anew.</p>			
ENTER KEYWORDS HERE Nicosia border, body, mapping, disidentification, place, site, embodiment, emplacement, site-specific, performance art, action art, live art, psychogeography.			



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*This work is dedicated to my family:  
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and the invisible forces that contributed in the completion of this project.*

## Abstract

*Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map: A corporeal taxonomy into a topographical transformation at the border of Nicosia* is a project realized along and across the buffer zone within the Venetian walls of Nicosia, the capital city of Cyprus.

The focus of this project is the area that divides the city into two parts and it has been mentioned as *buffer zone, green line, borderline, dividing line, dead zone* and many more. This restricted area has activated not only physical barriers for people but also caused emotional and mental restraint.

The motivation is the wish to reveal the significance of this area and uncover the impact it creates on the body: physical, mental and emotional. Also there is an intention to deform and reconstruct the psychophysical perceptions of the dividing line through artistic means.

The approach and method of working consists of artistic research, and a practical and theoretical framework. Live performance is used as a creative technique to realize a series of site-specific performance interventions along and across the Nicosia buffer zone in order to generate knowledge about that area, examined in my research. In addition, the written part of this project includes a description and analysis of my artistic work at the border, supported with theories focusing mainly on José Esteban Muñoz's work, "Disidentifications" (1999) and Sarah Pink's "Doing Sensory Ethnography" (2009).

This thesis project questions: How the conventional idea of the border and its solidified historicity can be transformed to a new perception through performing, while bringing a psychophysical transformation to this experience? To come to an answer, the body is used as a tool to create live actions and the Nicosia border is used as a site to be experienced through non conventional ways. Finally, the outcome is an experiential mapping, which is shaped while the body is used to measure, archive, experience and re-experience, and therefore memorize the border anew.

# Introduction

## **The story**

The “Green Line” was characterized as a “peace force” that emerged in 1964 to cut through the island of Cyprus and therefore divide the island into two parts. The Green Line divided also the city of Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, in two halves. In 1974 the Green Line became impassable causing the immigration of the island’s Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot residents who were separated by it. Today, Cyprus remains partitioned by the UN-patrolled buffer zone, with Greek-Cypriots concentrated in the southern part and Turkish-Cypriots in the northern part of the island. After a nearly 30-year ban on crossings, the Turkish-Cypriot administration eased travel restrictions across the dividing line in April 2003, allowing Greek-Cypriots to cross at the Ledra Palace Crossing just outside the walls of the old city of Nicosia. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2008, as part of the efforts to reunify the island, a symbolic wall dividing the two communities at Ledra Street was opened. Nowadays there are seven crossing points available across the green line. However this project will focus on the border that divides the city of Nicosia, confined within its star shaped stonewalls and bastions.

## **The border**

The border of Nicosia and any other geographical border is a topographic constituent dividing a land in two parts adjacent to each other. A border is a space in-between places, lands and territories, defining the outlines of maps through correlation and interrelation while suggesting the here and there. A border is an edge or a part in relation to the other and a path in its own right. It determines proximity and remoteness while enabling movement and stagnation within its topographic frame. It is a starting and an ending point, a point of arrival and departure. It activates movement or stillness, actions related to its substances. The border to be crossed defines the “state” of crossing which is determined by the living organism.

A border appears to be described in relation to the effect it has on each human being. On its own, a border is a cause of binary constituents, and the reason seems not to be its existence

but the separation it creates by its placement. The effects of the border can be easily described through what can be seen around its topography: segregation, disparity, isolation, and ruins. By describing the border itself and without relating it with the surrounding environment or what exists next to it, it can be thought as a path, a space or a location existing on its own. Therefore, there is a choice of how the border can be perceived.

### **The project**

*Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map: A corporeal taxonomy into a topographical transformation at the border of Nicosia*<sup>1</sup> is a study based on the relationship between my body and the psycho-geographical influence of the buffer zone in Nicosia. It focuses on the experience and perception of crossing borders and the process of embodiment and mapping at the specific location while interrogating how we perceive and conceptualize geography bodily. It is also questioning: How the conventional idea of the border and its solidified historicity can be transformed to a new perception through performing, while bringing a psychophysical transformation to this experience?

To answer this research question, the body is used as a tool to create live actions regarding borders and the Nicosia border is used as a site to be experienced, explored and perceived. This experiential mapping brings the body to the site in order to measure, archive, experience and therefore memorize the border anew.

The title *Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map: A corporeal taxonomy into a topographical transformation at the border of Nicosia* implies the dual face of this project and the parallel intervening of body into place and place into body.

*Mapping* is “an operation that associates each element of a given set (the domain) with one or more elements of a second set (the range)” (Oxford Dictionaries 2013). *Mapping the Body* signifies the creation of cartography or mapping through alternative ways provided by the experience of the body. These mappings present bodily information through a set of actions and/ or movements created by the body within the specific site: the Nicosia border. This set of

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<sup>1</sup> Visit the project online: <http://mappingthebody-embodyingthemap.blogspot.com/>

actions consists of bodily elements associated with another set of actions, creating a physical process and therefore a mapping of bodily movements related to the borderline area in Nicosia.

*Embodying* is to “be an expression of or give a tangible or visible form to (an idea, quality, or feeling)” or “include or contain (something) as a constituent part” (Oxford Dictionaries 2013.) A further examination of the process of embodiment will be presented and discussed in the next pages through the notion of the border and the nation as experiences mapped onto a physical site, that of the border of Nicosia.

*Embodying the Map* suggests the process of embodying the characteristics of the map through experience. Moreover, it means to embody the physical characteristics of the border of Nicosia. This embodiment practice is developed through the process of bodily actions created and shaped in relation or according to the physicality of the border. The experiential process of moving along and across the border of Nicosia may also shape its embodiment.

The subtitle: *A corporeal taxonomy into a topographical transformation at the border of Nicosia* describes the organization or classification of the bodily actions into a topography that it is in constant transformation and becoming due to the multiplicity of ways it can be perceived through the body and memory. The expression *corporeal taxonomy* is an oxymoron that seeks to reveal the contradictory terms of reality and experience and informs the hybrid identity and subjectivity.

Several mappings were realized during this project by focusing on the characteristics of the border of Nicosia. Mapping suggests numerous possibilities of movement and offers the continuity of action. The French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari described the map similar to rhizome (derived from the Greek word rhizoma, ρίζωμα and rhiza, ρίζα – a “root”), and as a process offering a multitude of possibilities to access and experience reality, while signifying reality through different dimensions:

“The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or a meditation. [...]”

A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back 'to the same' The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged 'to competence' ” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 5.)

Mapping is a process of continual transformation. The body that utters it, is also in movement, altering while experiencing it, becoming one of its elements. A body and a map are two unified entities but when they encounter each other they intervene with one another, creating simultaneous occurrences.

A map as an experience, offers a variety of ways to reach reality and the execution of a map requires physical actions. These physical actions occur through decision and choice, morality and beliefs. And they manifest through the way the geographical location is perceived according to the indication of a map. Therefore, the indication of a borderline on the map suggests or offers a multitude of possibilities to be accessed. These possibilities can be chosen and determined through identity, perception, morals and choice making. My personal choice of crossing the border of Nicosia is reflecting the process of many more and deeper crossings connected with inner manifestations, and the need for change. A “crossing” can be an experience of a versatile manifestation of situational and other phenomena, a simultaneous occurrence of contradictory and unified elements, an opportunity for transformation and evolution.

### **The research**

The research methods applied for this thesis project consist of basic methods from practice-led research such as archival research (reading and observing), and field research (interviews and ethnographies), in order to generate information that would provide knowledge about the content and the context of this project. I have applied more practical methods such as sketching, note-taking, photography, simulations, self-reflection and concept mapping in order to generate knowledge about the techniques and approaches having to do with how practice can be carried out in this project. I have also used different strategies throughout my

research such as informal interviews, direct observation, reflectivity and reflexivity<sup>2</sup>. Finally, I have used performance as my creative technique, realizing site-specific performance interventions in the area of the border in order to generate knowledge about my research area, which is the border of Nicosia. Through the impulsive elements of live performance, I combined different found materials with my personal practice, in order to find new understandings that can have operational significance for my artistic practice.

In this thesis project, there is a suggestion of auto-ethnography where a personal connection with the border appears as an immense factor for the motivation of this project's realization. The physical and experiential connection that is created with the specific site, also creates links with specific situations and experiences that form one's identity and history, in this case my own.

This study of the border aims to gather information directing to new understandings and knowledge about the psychophysical dimensions of Nicosia border and borders in general. For this endeavor, my body is my departure, my tool to experience, record, archive and memorize the border in its complexity and diversity.

In the beginning of this project, I collected information about the border through readings of historical writings and also through observation in situ. I made a field research with photography as my main ethnographic method. The field research also consisted of short interviews with the members of my family and people I have randomly met close to the area of the border. These first steps helped me to gather information about the border that provided me with knowledge and ideas about the content and the context of this project.

In the next step I realized durational walks along the border and applied more practical methodologies such as sketching, note taking, photography, simulations, reflections, self-reflection and concept mapping. I have tried out different ways of documenting and experiencing the border that helped me generate the techniques and approaches of my artistic practice.

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<sup>2</sup> Reflectivity describes a state of mind that one learns from experience about him/herself, and the way he/she relate to his/her environment. Reflexivity on the other hand, refers to the circular relationship between cause and effect.

In the main part of this project I have used performance as my creative technique to realize site-specific performance interventions along the border area. My performance work in general is influenced by my artistic background, which is grounded in the visual arts. Therefore, my interest focuses on performance art and action art and my performance works are minimal, often durational, with strong visuals. I frequently choose a simple action in order to build a repetitive movement within a performance – a similar process was applied during the actions on the border. My work is mainly focusing on practice but in order to support my work theoretically I worked through the field of performance studies, including queer theory and ethnography. Finally, my intention is not to come to a specific conclusion but rather to experience the process and share the knowledge and findings that were generated through this research.

In the next pages of this written thesis I present the artistic and performance work realized during this project, alongside with the research process through visual and textual material. Furthermore, I attempt to present my theoretical framework alongside the description and analysis of my artistic work supported with theories focusing mainly on José Esteban Muñoz's work, "Disidentifications" (1999) and Sarah Pink's "Doing Sensory Ethnography" (2009).

## Disidentifying with the border

Before presenting the artistic part of this project, I will present aspects that existed before the formation of the artistic part in order to build an understanding towards the choice of working on the subject of the border. I will start my journey by discussing the notion of “disidentification” in relation to the border and the immigrants as disidentifying subjects. I will also discuss the process of disidentification and its practice as a way of changing the world.

José Esteban Muñoz, in his book *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999), uses the notion of disidentification, in order to present and describe the political elements of performance and the performativity of races. Disidentification is based on theories of “revisionary identification”<sup>3</sup> and refers to the “social work” of performers, activists, artists and other queers, and their disidentificatory practice within the dominant culture. Moreover, disidentification is described as a strategy of survival and resistance of minority subjects in response to the dominant public sphere that employs racial, sexual and national power over them. The practice of disidentification is made through performances as a process of negotiation while the dominant culture attempts to destroy queer or other minority subjectivities that do not respond to its normalization and universalization.

### **Identities-in-difference**

Muñoz borrowed the term *identities-in-difference* from Third World feminists and radical women of color, especially Chicana theorists in order to categorize the disidentificatory identities. Muñoz explains that the “identities-in-difference emerge from a failed interpellation within the dominant public sphere” (Muñoz 1999, 7). Through their failure to become part of the dominant culture and ideology, these identities disidentify with the dominant public sphere while becoming involved in a counterpublic sphere.

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<sup>3</sup> Muñoz uses the term “revisionary identification” to present a hypothesis where a range of identificatory aspects come together. The word ‘revisionary’ is used to describe the different strategies of reading, perceiving, viewing and placing one’s self inside the world that aim to displace a minority subject. Revisionary identification emerged in film theory, gay and lesbian studies and critical race theory.

The psychoanalytic dimension of identification is described by Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis as a psychoanalytical process where the subject is transformed partially or wholly according to the properties he/she takes in from the other. Considering how identities-in-difference are being formed, Muñoz makes questions concerning the absence of identification: “Can a self or a personality be crafted without proper identifications?” (Muñoz 1999, 7). Questions like this are important to consider when asking how queer identities are being formulated inside a public sphere where there is the impossibility of identification. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the book *The Epistemology of the Closet*, states that identification “includes multiple processes of identifying with. It also involves identification as against” (Sedgwick 1990, 61.) This indicates that identifying with a person, an object, a specific style of living, an ideology or religion, means that one is at the same time partially identifying with and partially counteridentifying with these different aspects.

French philosopher Michel Pêcheux, a follower of the Marxist theorist Louis Althusser, presents a theory on disidentification, which was influenced by Althusser’s theory on subject formation and interpellation. Ideology is a mode of describing existence, identity and subjectivity and was used to theorize the subject formation. The process where subjects come to being, Althusser named it interpellation. In *Language, Semantics and Ideology*, Pêcheux developed this theory by stating three approaches on how the subject is constructed according to ideological norms. The first one is “identification”, where a “Good Subject” chooses to identify with something according to its ideological modes. The second one is “counteridentification” where a “Bad Subject” resists the identificatory suggestions offered by the dominant ideology and rejects them while rebelling and being against. And the third one is “disidentification” where the subject neither chooses to be adjusted in the structure of the dominant culture, nor strictly acts against it. Based on this paradigm, Muñoz adds on the mode of disidentification:

“Instead of buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere (counteridentification, utopianism), this ‘working on and against’ is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent

structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance” (Muñoz 1999, 11-12).

Muñoz describes this choice of “working on and against” the dominant ideology as the main function and characteristic of disidentification. This strategy endeavors to change the conventional logic of the dominant world while at the same time it resists the inescapable public sphere. Apart from Muñoz’s and Pêcheux’s indications, Judith Butler also believes that the disidentificatory subject is a subject that works on, with and against the dominant pattern. She furthermore refers to disidentification as a failure of identification and an experience of misrecognition where one exists in a culture in which one does and does not belong at the same time. I believe that this situation of inclusion and exclusion is what brings the disidentificatory subject to simultaneously work on and against the majority culture, to negotiate with the dominant culture but at the same time to activate a resistance towards it.

Military borders can create possibilities for identification, counteridentification and disidentification. Therefore, the border of Nicosia can be a force for people, artists, activists and others to work “on and against” its existence and ideology. On the other hand, the physical components, which are formed through the existence of the border, go beyond the notion of disidentification in terms of physical and experiential dimensions. The border appears as a more tangible factor where human beings can have experiences through the physical body and consider it as an empirical element that can contribute to the formation of their identity.

### **Hybridity and Exile**

“Hybridity” is used by Muñoz to refer to the various theories of fragmentation that come together and function within minority identity practices. He asserts: “*Hybrid* catches the fragmentary subject formation of people whose identities transverse different race, sexuality, and gender identifications” (Muñoz 1999, 31-32). The hybrid identity seems to exist in a constant transit while shifting between identity vectors. This fragmentary existence can be more understandable through the example of migrancy. In a migrant culture the negotiation

of survival and continuation leads to a hybrid identity formation where the refugee needs to travel back and forth in order to find his or her identity components inside the limits of the geographical borders.

Muñoz's writings are useful in opening up and explicating elements of my personal history of exile. Nine years before my birth, my family (my father and my pregnant mother, my two brothers, and my grandmother) was exiled from their home because Turkish troops invaded the island and forced the Greek-Cypriots in the North of the island, to move to the South. While growing up, my grandmother had a great impact on my identity formation, as she was a powerful mourning figure. Her constant mourning through her stories about the past functioned as a powerful symbol of national recognition. She referred to her present house as a "foreign" one, which she constantly failed to identify with, leading to her feeling of being lost. This state of existence is found through Homi Bhabha's words, describing that we can find the moment where identity is lost in between worlds:

"[...] we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond' " (Bhabha 1994, 2.)

This process can be characterized as a liminal phase, where one exists between two wor(l)ds<sup>4</sup>. This immediate change into exile creates an immense emotional impact, where spaces and times of past and present are blended together creating an unsure future while disorientating the exiled and forming a hybrid identity. This phenomenon of exile is a very strong example of how a hybrid identity can be formed. The experience of exile is so powerful that it produces different alterations while creating possibilities for new hybrid identities. An identity is always linked with the cultural context within which it exists and with the experiences that create one's history and memory of the past. My childhood was effectively saturated with the stories and mourning of my grandmother, and the idea of melancholy was constructed in my

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<sup>4</sup> This points to Bhabha's notion of nation as a dissemination of language. The conflation of "words" and "worlds" does not appear as a binary condition but instead, language and location become an entity in order to inform and reveal the hybrid identity.

imagination as a force to identify, counteridentify and disidentify with her in order to construct and form my personal and family identity.

Muñoz proposed “disidentification” as a procedure where queers perform within the dominating society but at the same time work against its ideology. According to this, disidentification also occurs when exiled communities live within the occupied country (as Cyprus is) and work “on and against” the political leadership to bring forth changes.

Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, discusses the Western achievement that creates certain binary oppositions and consists of West/East, North/South, and First/ Third worlds. This procedure of positioning these binaries denotes that the first term of the binary dominates the second and confirms the violent relationship of the West towards other cultures. The North part of Cyprus was under the control of a stronger political hierarchy creating fear in the South part. In this case contradictory notions and identities of difference are constructed through North/South, Self/Other. The construction of the difference between higher and lower, black and white, majority and minority is also articulated in Muñoz *Disidentifications* where cultural differences occur and binary opponents assert the domination of majorities over minorities.

The crossing of the border of Nicosia, distresses the dividing Green Line between North and South Nicosia, and reveals the border as a liminal condition. The physical and cultural borders between the two parts of the city consist of what exists in-between the Greek-Cypriot community and the occupied – by the Turkish troupes – North part. In a similar way, the artistic work of the performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Pena, focuses on the crossing point between North and South, Mexico and the U.S., and concerns the border as a condition in culture and the politics of the brown body while presenting his hybrid identity by portraying the disunion of colonialism. The physical and cultural borders between the two countries consist of what exists in-between the mainstream U.S. and the various Latino cultures, which are the U.S.-Mexico border, the immigration, the cross-cultural and hybrid identities, the misinterpretations between cultures, the misunderstandings through languages and the difference of races.

Differences exist and will always exist, but crossing a border while carrying a difference can produce fear and the feeling of being different, weaker, rejected, and being powerless to support beliefs that are against the dominant world or enemy. I have experienced and felt this fear while crossing and moving along the border of Nicosia throughout this project. Upon my crossing to “the other side”, I could immediately perceive my difference in relation to the “other”. My temporary “immigration” was giving me a little taste of the dreadful occurrence of exile, experienced by the Cypriot refugees in 1974.

I see the immigrants and the citizens on both sides of the divided city as disidentificatory subjects and the buffer zone as a way to control them through political power, which is employed over them while setting restrictions in physical and emotional means. The process of identification and disidentification can be shifted according to which side of Nicosia the body is situated (North or South). Liminality<sup>5</sup> can be experienced during the crossing of the border and the travelling between the two communities as the formation of a movement according to the way that the body is related to and perceived at each side of the divided city inside its topographic frame.

### **Melancholia and Mourning**

There is a connection between disidentification and melancholia – in the event of loss – which is referred to as a “structure of feeling” (Muñoz 1999, 51), that forms the identity and enactment of disidentificatory subjects.

A great example of melancholia and mourning unfolds through the demonstrations of Cypriot women since 1974, which are related with the notion of “communal mourning” (Muñoz 1999, 73), where one is mourning not only for oneself but also for one’s community and history, and therefore mourns as a “whole” (Ibid). The pictures of Cypriot women and children who have lost their land and their loved ones have been documented and exist in

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<sup>5</sup> Liminality (from the Latin word *līmen*, meaning "a threshold") is a state of being that occurs during a ritual. Participants of this ritual experience a transition as they exist in an in-between situation of the before and after condition that this ritual offers. During this liminal phase, participants experience a threshold that lies between their past and their future way of structuring and perceiving their identity. The concept of liminality was first developed in the early 20th century by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and later was taken and developed by Victor Turner.

every historical book of Cyprus and throughout the Internet. These mourning figures appear to grieve collectively while creating a community with common longings. These pictures reveal the idea of “communal mourning”, related not only to the people of Cyprus but to all people who mourn the loss of their loved ones.

The following images show a demonstration of women in Cyprus in 1974 and in 2012. In the first picture we can see young females and in the second picture we see old females holding the pictures of lost males in their hands. These people are mates, brothers, fathers, husbands and sons. The two images together show the passing of time between the two demonstration events and the position of gender roles in the passing of time. Those women come back to the border each year and demonstrate for the same cause while holding the images of their loved ones. Even if that time has passed by, for them it has been frozen at the moment when loved ones existed in their lives. The incident of the division of Cyprus has divided their lives into two parts, in the same way as their country has been divided. This division has introduced the expression “before and after” in their narratives (also in the narratives of my grandmother), separating them from their most loved people and places. One of them is my grandmother, for whom her homeland stories have revealed excessive and powerful feelings of grief and nostalgia.



Illustration 1: *Untitled image I* 1974, Cyprus.



Illustration 2: *Untitled image II* date unknown, Cyprus.

I have experienced melancholia and mourning even if I haven't experienced the exile myself through the enormous compassion for my loved ones whose melancholia has created an important link between me and the other (lost) side of my country. Even if I have never lived in the other part of my country, this side is shaped in my memory and my imagination through stories of loss. An immense part of my identity, concerns my routes: who am I and where do I come from? I concur with Muñoz's understanding of this "structure of feeling" that it is not a pathology or a negative factor but "a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names – and in our names" (Muñoz 1999, 74). Melancholia is a drive that makes one to reconsider identity and reconstruct it according to what is lost while keeping it alive through memory.

Furthermore, immigration can be described as a form of disidentification and melancholia in the event of loss. In Freud's theory, the inability to solve the problems that the lost object (which can be a loved one, or one's own country) produces, becomes the process of mourning, and the withdrawal from the lost object becomes essential. Muñoz relates the structural form of melancholia to the one of disidentification and he adds: "Like melancholia, disidentification is an ambivalent structure of feeling that works to retain the problematic object and tap into the energies that are produced by contradictions and ambivalences" (Muñoz 1999, 71). Melancholia and disidentification work to hold and maintain what the subject possesses. The subject rejects forces that hold him/her back from what he/she possesses and at the same time he/she moves between contradictions.

The Cypriots who immigrated from the one part to the other part of the country exist between two contradictory realities of past and present memories, dividing their life into *before* and *after* the event of exile. The movement of the body between the two communities creates shifts between these two realities, while building an ambivalent structure of feeling regarding belonging and becoming, remembering and forgetting.

Melancholia in this case becomes a drive to reconsider identity and reconstruct it according to what is lost and what is found as an aim to deform and reform the idea of the border and create something anew. We cannot remove the physical border but we can "work on and against" the border and the political ideology. We should not abandon it but live with it in

order to bring forth changes. We can transform it or break it through new perceptions of what can be experienced and what can be lived across, along and through the borderline.

This project can be characterized as a disidentificatory process that includes performances and stories aiming at the transformation and reformulation of the border in Nicosia. There is an attempt to construct an alternative reality through the deformation and reformation of the existing situation. This new formation can transport us into a new reformed public sphere, which can also include subjectivities of the minority culture. Performances have been realized through a repetitive mode and with ritualistic means, where artistic performance appears as a different mode of performing the world and the performance artist aspires to the transformation of the world by creating a “possible future while, at the same time, staging a new political formation in the present” (Muñoz 1999, 200).

## Crossing the border

*My attempt was enforced by a desire and a fear, creating a wish and a struggle. At the beginning almost everything seemed to be emotionally charged, sometimes creating emotional borders that were much more difficult to be crossed than the physical ones. Crossing the border is about "moving back" in time in order to reform the present (diary notes July 2011.)*

On Saturday 23 July 2011, I crossed the border at Ledra Palace crossing point while moving from the South part to the North part of the city and then back to the South.



Illustration 3: *Looking at the other side* 2011, Nicosia.

*While crossing the border I turned to look back. I found myself in between two worlds, unable to locate my feelings. I walked ahead and a sentiment was making a nest in my stomach...fear. I moved further, I walked through neighborhoods and backyards. I passed in front of people's houses feeling myself as an intruder. Inside me were growing contradictions...of belonging (diary notes July 2011.)*

On Sunday 24 July 2011, I crossed the Ledra Street crossing point from the South to the North part of the city and from the North back to the South. Several oppositions became apparent during my transportation, when the border appeared in relation to its neighboring areas.



Illustration 4: *Looking at the other side* 2011, Nicosia.

*While travelling in the North side, I make an attempt to walk closer to the UN Buffer zone. A Turkish police officer shouts at me with a tension in his voice. I stop immediately and I look at the borderline unfolding in front of my eyes. I remain motionless for a moment and I look at the horizon. I see a line remaining always unreachable, but observable through the eyes. A horizon that divides the here from there, the seen from the unseen, the light from darkness. A line that divides the people from the land, the I from the Am, cultivating borders within (diary notes July 2011.)*

***Quid pro quo***

Realization: Monday 8 August 2011 at 18:00

Location: Ledra Palace crossing point, Nicosia

Duration: 10 minutes



Illustration 5: *Quid pro quo* 2011, Nicosia.



Illustration 6: *Quid pro quo* 2011, Nicosia.

**Description of Action:**

I am carrying my mother on my back while walking with bare feet slowly towards Ledra Palace crossing point in an endeavor to cross the border of Nicosia from the South part to the North part.<sup>6</sup>

This action suggests an action of exchange, a favor for a favor for my mother and all the mothers who were carrying their children during the exile in order to protect their family. My mother was exiled together with her family from the North to the South part of Cyprus in 1974. With this action I am transporting my mother back to the North side, back home as a payback. There is a negotiation between mother and child, where the parent that used to be the carrier of the young child receives the favor 37 years later. The child, now as a grown up, realizes her mother's wish and takes her back to where she belongs. The child becomes the motivator, because of the mother's endless wish.

Building on the materials observed and collected during my research, the action described above informs my motivation and wish to experience further incidents that occurred in the past due to the existence of the border. By taking into account the practice of “sensory ethnography” described by Sarah Pink in *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (2009), the moments of sensory learning cannot be planned or structured in a particular way, neither can a research question be chased during the sensing experience. Pink states that the researcher arrives at an understanding of other's people's memories and meanings through their own embodied experiences and/or attending to other people's practices, subjectivities and explanations. What I try to explain at this point is that I have chosen the action of transporting-my-mother not as an attempt to find answers to specific questions nor to reach to specific outcomes, but rather to search an understanding through the sensing body while embodying the same experience that my mother has lived through many years ago.

Sarah Pink discusses the relationship between body and mind in the ethnographic context and the knowledge that is produced through the experiencing body of the researcher by adding that “the idea that ethnographic experiences are ‘embodied’ – in that the researcher learns and knows through her or his whole experiencing body – has been recognized in much

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<sup>6</sup> View excerpts from the live action: <https://vimeo.com/71984505>

existing methodological literature across the ‘ethnographic disciplines’ ” (Pink 2009, 25). Pink also cites the statement of the sociologist Amanda Coffey about the importance of the body in the realization of ethnographic fieldwork:

”Our bodies and the bodies of others are central to the practical accomplishment of fieldwork. We locate our physical being alongside those of others as we negotiate the spatial context of the field. We concern ourselves with the positioning, visibility and performance of our own embodied self as we undertake participant observation” (Coffey 1999, 59, cited in Pink 2009, 25.)

The understanding from this observation is that the body is very important for the realization of fieldwork and especially the located body, which interacts with the environment or place that the research is focusing on. Furthermore, being in this context with others allows mutual experiencing and therefore the understanding of phenomena through the body.

Pink explains also that the sensory ethnographer works in a “culturally specific” way in order to collect embodied and emplaced knowledge while aiming “to understand human perception, experience, action and meaning and to situate this culturally and biographically” (Pink 2009, 47). This declaration explains that experience through body and place should be focused on the specificities of culture, in order to gain knowledge and understandings positioned in cultural and biographical frames.

On the other hand, Stoller says: “ethnographers open themselves up to others and absorb their worlds” (Stoller 1997, 23). As Stoller explains, the ethnographer takes in any kind of information coming from the environment as a conscious decision, which implied a sensing experience of the process. I find this process similar with the experience of the performance artist, who observes the environment in order to take in the information provided by the subject that interests him/her. In case of the border, I was consciously open for any kind of information provided by the people living near the border or passing by from the area of the border.

The next step of my task as a performance artist was the implementation of action and therefore the experience of the border in the way that has been experienced by other people. Pink describes that “the sensory ethnographer would not only observe and document other people’s sensory categories and behaviors, but seek routes through which to develop

experience-based empathetic understandings of what others might be experiencing and knowing” (Pink 2009, 65).

My work on the border suggests my endeavor to find ways of experiencing in order to achieve “empathetic understandings” of the experiences of others, especially in *Quid pro quo*, where I seek for an empathetic understanding towards my mother and many other Cypriot women who have made the same action in the frame of exile. My participation in the cultural-particularity and site-specificity of the border of Nicosia seeks for many understandings, and the sensory knowing has been transmitted through action in order to inform experiential phenomena of the place. I strongly believe that the embodiment and emplacement that took place through the action *Quid pro quo*, opens up another dimension of experience through which we can be taught and learn in order to reform and transform fixed perceptions of reality and bring changes in our lives. Sarah Pink sites Wegner to say that “learning might change ‘all at once who we are’ ” (Wegner 1998, 226-228, cited in Pink 2009, 37), and Downey to add that learning “can lead to ‘perceptual, physiological and behavioral change’ ” (Downey 2007, 236 cited in Pink 2009, 37). It is essential to be open to receive and absorb what things can teach us and change in us through experiencing and knowing.

By focusing on the experiential aspects of the border and the involvement of the senses in the research process, my actions tend to explore a sensory existence in relation to the border of Nicosia. Therefore, my aim is not to present an objective reality that one should sympathize but to suggest a subjective analysis through my personal experience of the Nicosia border and its experiential elements that form and inform the direction of this project as well as the knowledge, which is produced.

## Walking alongside the border

*I revisit the border of Nicosia. I walk along its markings and ruins. I repeat my walk again and again. My journey seems quite an unprompted decision, aiming to search for hidden stories. I am wandering along the border on my search for signs and traces from another time, while forgetting myself in the here-and-now. I look around while locating myself in the frame of an image that used to exist in the past. I continue my walk until my gaze is fixed on a dust-covered door of an abandoned broken house. What remains at home after leaving? What remains there after us, after we walk away? And I answer: The roots that are watered with memory (diary notes July 2011.)*

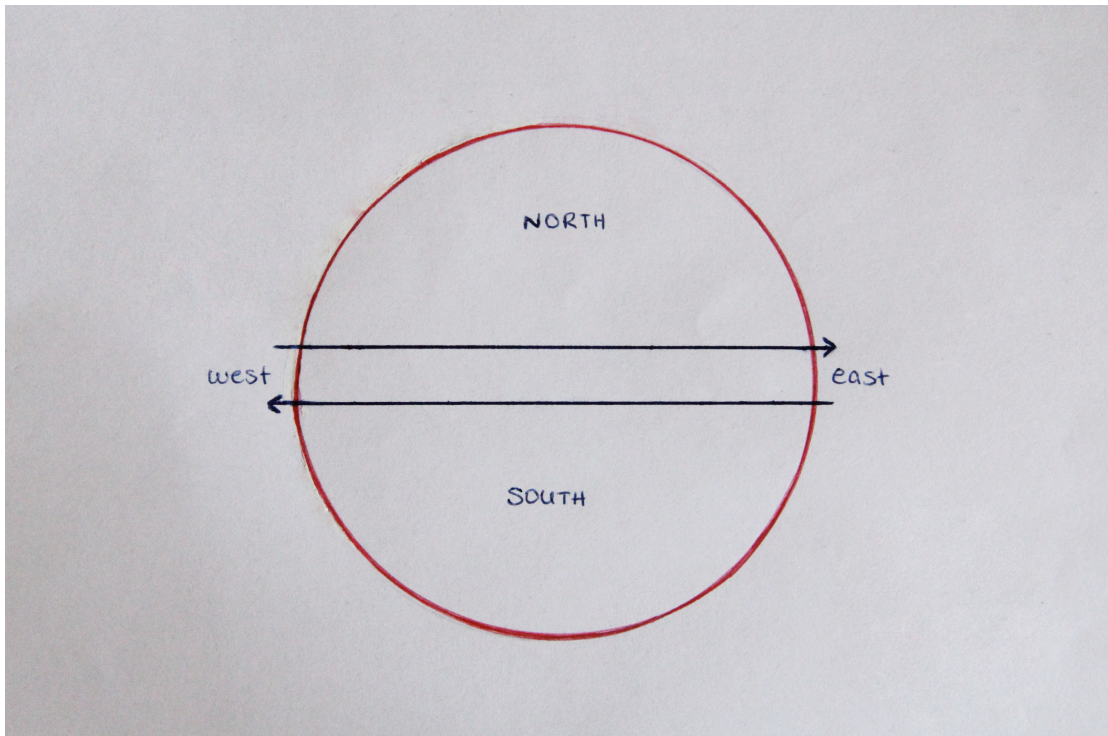


Illustration 7: *Directions* 2011, Nicosia.

During my research I realized several walks along the borderline that divides the city of Nicosia within the Venetian walls. My walks took place at both sides of the border, the North and the South side. Two walks were realized at the North part of the city where I walked from the west to the east and back to the west, and another two walks took place at the South part, where I walked from the west to the east and back to the west.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2011, I walked along the borderline from east to west and back to the east, at the North part of Nicosia. Duration was 2 hours.



Illustration 8: *Walking alongside borders I* 2011, Nicosia.

While walking I was in a constant endeavor to direct myself as close as possible to the borderline, but unfortunately this was not possible in most places. Soldiers and police officers were controlling the buffer zone area while adding more barriers to my endeavor. I continued my walk silently and peacefully alongside the border but with a physical distance between my body and the border. Throughout my walk I saw many signs indicating that the use of any camera is strictly prohibited but I secretly attempted to take some pictures at moments when nobody was watching me. I passed through the center of the city, then through abandoned buildings and then through streets and neighborhoods. People outside their houses, in the streets, passers-by and children were looking at me in wonder and distrust. I tried to speak with a few people in English but there were no opportunities for communication. I found myself confused and lost. My walking pace suddenly increased and my attention shifted to what was in front of me. I was frightened and even if I remembered the way back, my desire to complete my walk was empowering my determination to keep walking. Fear was one of the stronger feelings that occurred during my walk and became part of the whole process especially while I was walking alone at the north part of the city. The feeling of fear became a

dynamic factor, increasing the pace of my movement, and the pace of my heartbeat. A number of different movements in my upper body were also generated as I was in a constant worry to look around and behind me while walking, in order to observe the space and be alert for anything that might occur. Moreover, fear appeared as a fundamental element in this process while adding another dimension to the psychophysical process of this project.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2011, I walked along the borderline from west to east and back to the west, at the South part of Nicosia. Duration was 2 hours.



Illustration 9: *Walking alongside borders II*  
2011, Nicosia.

During this walk I passed through streets that I already knew, buildings that looked familiar to me and people that were passing by without me noticing much about them. The Greek-Cypriot soldiers that were positioned at different spots along the borderline were approachable. I stopped my walk for a moment and I turned to look at the other side. Barbed

wire was indicating the limits of my walk and also the character of the border. The borderline appeared between the two parts of the city or in other words the border was separating the city, while informing the identity of the city near the border: abandoned buildings, broken walls, dust, emptiness, silence. The existence of the border was creating confusion, fear, sadness and chaos, but the need to approach, look at, think of, and experience the border was an urge. The memories experienced and shaped at the other side were manifesting in the here-and-now, while covering and uncovering the remembrances of the past.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2011, I walked along the borderline from west to east and back to the west, at the South part of Nicosia. Duration was 2 hours.

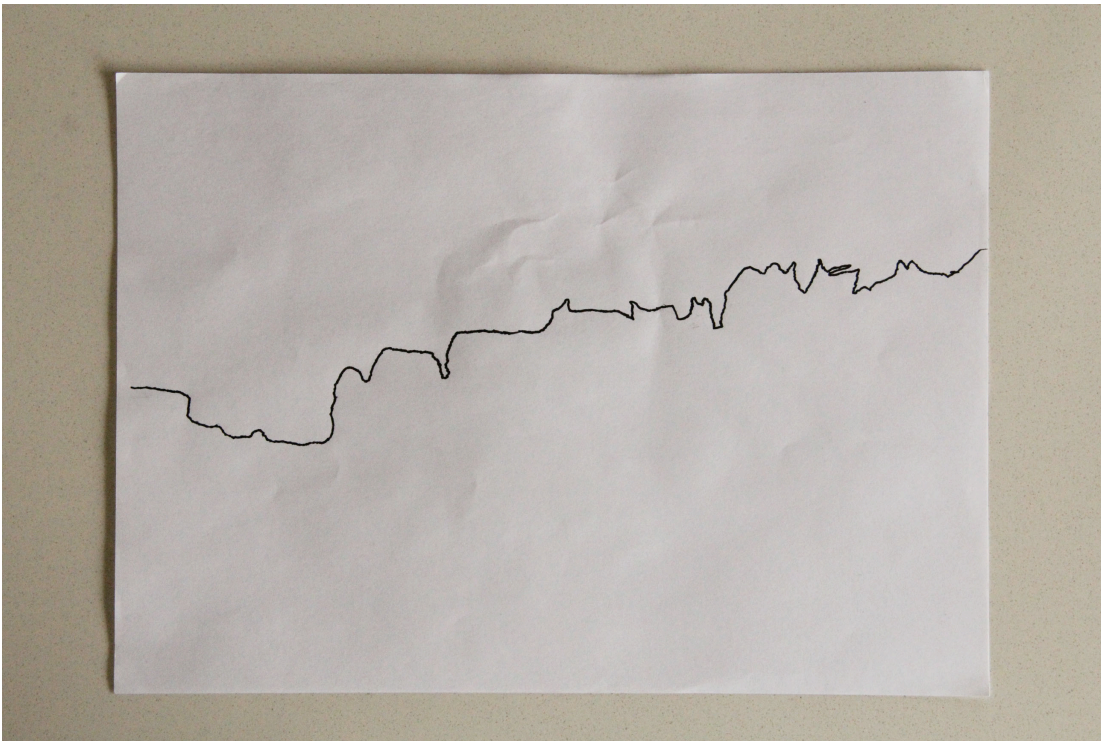


Illustration 10: *Pathway* 2011, Nicosia.

The mapping above was created during the walk. I was holding a paper and a black pen and my writing hand was following the exact movement of my body in a synchronized manner. My hand in a parallel motion with my body was following the directions executed by the body at the same time and in the same manner that the body was realizing the two-hour walk. The hand followed the exact movement and direction of the body at the same time that the body was moving, in the frame of a smaller scale, that of the paper. The process of simultaneous

action created a focus on the movement of the body while I was giving attention to my hand in order to capture the movement on paper. This is a process of “mapping the body” while archiving its movement and constructing memory of the here-and-now perception of the border.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2011, I realized another walk at the North part of Nicosia. This time, after the walk along the dividing line at the North part of Nicosia, I tried to remember the route of the walk in order to draw it on paper. With closed eyes I was re-experiencing the walk through memory while transporting it on the paper. The duration of the walk was 2 hours and the duration of drawing the walk by memory was 10 minutes.

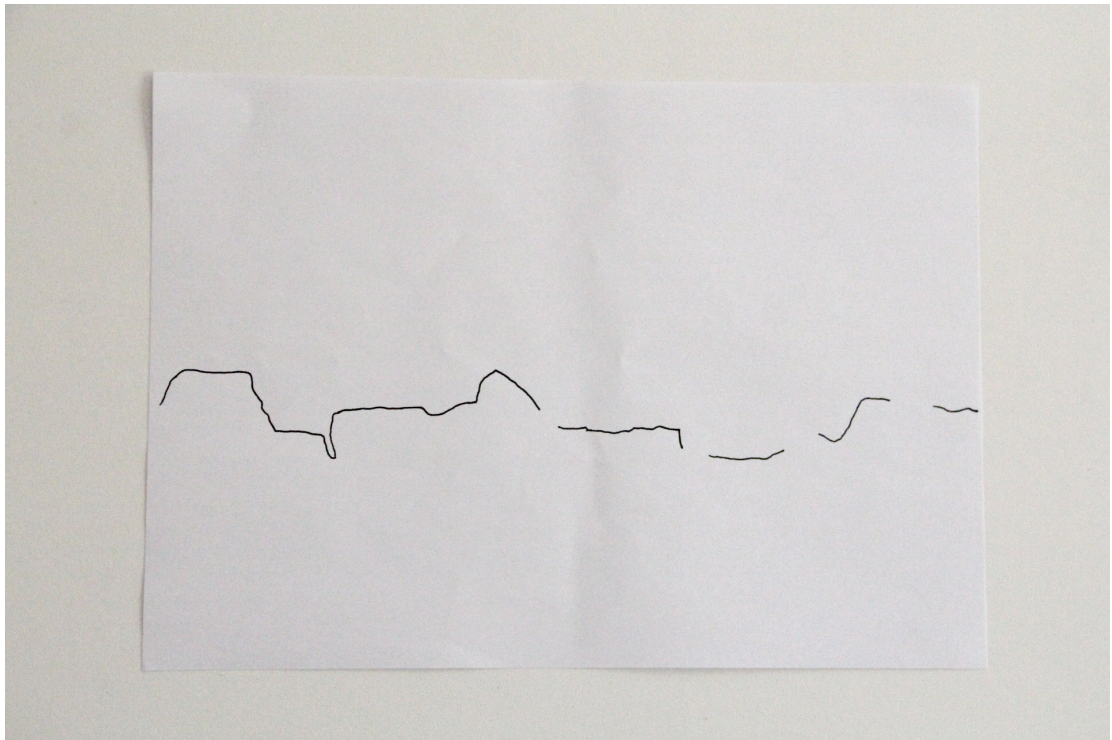


Illustration 11: *Remembering Pathway* 2011, Nicosia.

The above mapping was created on paper through remembering my walk. Through my hand I tried to repeat the movement and directions of my body while tracing them on paper. The process of remembering the action of the body in relation to the site and the transference of this remembrance on paper created another parameter of the experience, that of thought and remembrance.

The action of remembering implies the process of recollecting a group of movements in order to form a unified action: the walking. The border is the material, which the bodily

experience is related to and created by, and it comes to memory while remembering the movement. The mind tries to grasp the images that come to memory and put them in an order through concentration. Sometimes the memory is flowing and sometimes it creates gaps that are depicted and archived on the white paper.

Both journeys (transferred on paper) signify the shape of the border as a bodily experience that reveals a nomadic action within a place. They also imply a migrant movement, a movement in constant transit where the body drifts away, never remaining on the same spot. The location is experienced through an endless motion, as a flowing element that passes by. The landscape and cityscape unfold in front of my eyes, and the only line that remains in stillness is the horizon.

In the works on paper above, drawing is explored in a process of “mapping the body” through movement and through remembering, as a way of tracing and scheming the body’s direction. This work seeks to explore notions of the border as a place where body and drawing break through the topography of traditional definition and establish new dialogues and relationships between experiencing, sensing and mapping.

# Sewing the borderline

*Memory brings the body back to the places it belongs to* (diary notes July 2011).

## ***Sewing the borderline I***

Realization: Monday 8 August 2011 at 18:30

Location: Along the borderline within the Venetian walls at the South part of Nicosia, from the west to the east side of the city.

Duration: 2 hours

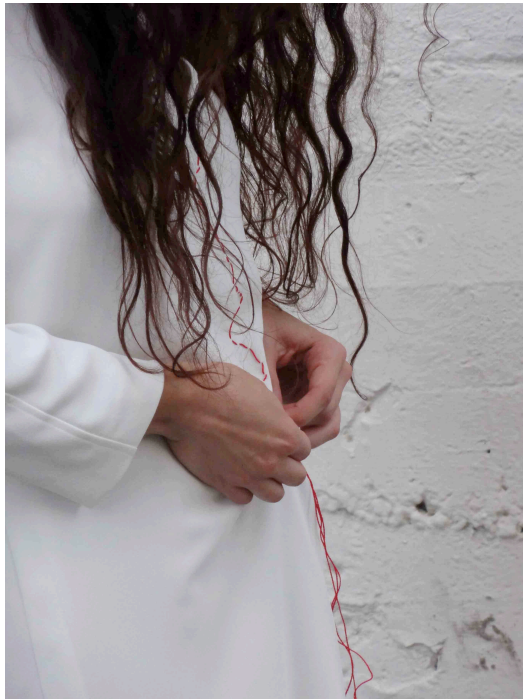


Illustration 12: *Sewing the borderline I* 2011, Nicosia.

Illustration 13: *Sewing the borderline I* 2011, Nicosia.

### Description of action:

With a red thick thread I am sewing the direction of my walk along the dividing line on the white dress that I am wearing while walking along the Green Line. The buildings on and next to the buffer zone determine the shape of my walk as they force me to turn towards different directions in order to reach the Green Line and complete my route.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> View excerpts from the live action: <https://vimeo.com/71984506>



Illustration 14: *Sewing the borderline I* 2011, Nicosia.

The action of sewing was used as a way to archive the dividing line, not its topographic shape but the direction that the body has turned in order to walk along its length. This action created a new line where its shape was informed by the endeavor of the body to walk as close as possible to the physical one.

I have chosen a red thread for the representation of the Green Line. The Green Line was created as a peace force but this is a paradox as it is a restricted area, a “dead zone”, a line that forbids any access through it. Therefore, I used the opposite and complementary color of green in order to challenge its existence and suggest a contrasting perception of the so-called Green Line.

### *Sewing the borderline II*

Realization: Wednesday 10 August 2011 at 18:00

Location: Along the borderline within the Venetian walls at the South part of Nicosia,  
direction: from west to east. Duration: 2 hours



Illustration 15: *Sewing the borderline II* 2011, Nicosia.



Illustration 16: *Sewing the borderline II* 2011, Nicosia.

Description of action:

With a red thin thread I am sewing the direction of my walk along the dividing line with my right hand on my left palm, while walking along the Green Line.<sup>8</sup>

The action of sewing created a displacement of the Green Line while using the body's skin to create a topographical map. A mapping of the Green Line was formed on my palm as a document of the action and the border. The thread remained in my skin for three days. The sensation of the thread inside the skin was giving a slight whiff of remembrance of the sewing action, and the route that I walked during the action.

The mappings created through the action of sewing (on the dress and the palm) inform the route of the walk, which is presented as a line/map. These mappings have been made in order to archive the action of the body and inform the movement of the body. The walking action was realized in relation to the border, and its mapping depicted through sewing informs the movement/direction of the body and not the actual border.



Illustration 17: *The Green Line* 2005, Jerusalem.

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<sup>8</sup> View excerpts from the live action: <https://vimeo.com/73818165>

In contradiction to the work of Francis Alÿs: *The Green Line* 2005, where the generated green line remained as a trace in place, in *Sewing the borderline I & II*, a mapping was created on the dress and the body.

In his work, Francis Alÿs used green paint with a leaking can in order to pour it along the 1949 armistice border of the Arab and Israeli forces in Jerusalem, during his walk. The result of his action was a green line formed on the land, along the known “Green Line”. A new border is shaped simultaneously during his action while creating a separation between the artist’s body and the location at the other side of the green line. The artist realizes his walk quietly and naturally by leaving a path and a trace of his own journey that denotes an imitation and remembering of the existing Green Line.

Alÿs’s action of dribbling green paint during his walk suggests the formation of a second, colored green line next to the one that separates the land, while forming the trace of his walk. The contour of the line takes the shape and length of the artist’s walk in an automatic way, where in my action *Sewing the borderline I & II* there is a different effort to shape the line according to the direction of the body on two different surfaces: the clothing and the skin. Furthermore, my actions inform a process of “mapping the body” and therefore the creation of mappings on the white dress and the palm, which can be transported or taken away from the site, in opposition to Alÿs’s green line that remains at the site, positioned in relation to the geographical Green Line.

Regarding the relation of the performers and the site, my action of sewing took place in Nicosia, my native city and place of residence, while Alÿs’s action of walking and dripping green paint took place in Palestine where he does not live or come from. Alÿs moves as a passer by in order to “walk through”, whereas the action of sewing is an inhabiting one. The process of the sewing action focuses on the experience of the border that activates a “body-mind-environment” relationship (which I will discuss in the next pages) while synchronizing the action of the body with the hand, and with the attention towards the border.

## Measuring the border

*I move in the middle of two worlds, trying to locate my feelings...(diary notes August 2011).*

### ***Measuring the border***

Realization: Tuesday 9 August 2011 at 18:00

Location: Along the Green Line within the walls of Nicosia at the South part of the city, from the east to the west side.

Duration: 3.30 hours



Illustration 18: *Measuring the border* 2011, Nicosia.

#### Description of action:

I am using my body, and particularly the length of my open arms, as a tool to measure the borderline of Nicosia. Through my intention to measure the length of the border, the body changes several positions in relation to the border while executing the measurement on the ground or on the buildings' walls. During my action I calculate how many open arm lengths are needed to measure its length. This durational intervention became an intense physical experience where the body and mind were used in their totality through a repetitive action and the mind was deeply concentrated to realize an estimated 1285 repetitive actions (embraces).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> View excerpts from the live action: <https://vimeo.com/73813578>



Illustration 19: *Measuring the border* 2011, Nicosia.



Illustration 20: *Measuring the border* 2011, Nicosia.

In this performance intervention, the body is used as a tool of measurement. The action of embrace is executed in a repetitive motion throughout a continuous and fluid process and therefore creates another action in its whole. The mind is involved through intensive concentration where repetitive patterns can never be the same but are unified throughout the durational action. The recurrence of the action denotes a constant remembering and returning, while the whole action becomes a union of bodily and mental functions.

By implementing the idea and practice of repetition, I have used repetitive action in order to construct remembrance and to transform perceptions through the re-experienced, as a mode of research and learning. The repetitive movement involves the body as the sensing organ gathering experiential material on the geographical border through the relationship between body, mind and border.

In the video work *Along the G-Line* 2010, by the Cypriot artist Marianna Christofides, a seven-year-old boy turns cartwheels along the UN Buffer zone that divides the city of Nicosia. The action of the young boy reveals the physicality of the border while the video shows the border and its surroundings through the boy's continuous playful movement. In this work the body appears as a tool to measure or experience the border of Nicosia throughout its length in an experiential behavior.



Illustration 21: *Along the G-Line* 2010, Nicosia.

In both actions the body shapes a movement according to the borderline in order to create a parallel line and a parallel situation to that of the border. On the other hand, a peculiar juxtaposition is created while the body becomes a scale in an alternative method of measuring the length of the borderline. The physical action of the body becomes site-responsive while mapping the place anew. The body transforms the place which is loaded with historical facts

and precise perceptions to another place which is activated and perceived in the here-and-now.

In the intervention *Measuring the border*, the border appears more tangible through the action of opening the arms that denotes the action of embrace. The gesture of embrace brings the physical body closer to the materiality of the border. The body makes a sensorial attempt to experience the border alongside its length while changing several positions and gestures in relation to the environment: standing up, lying on the ground, touching, embracing, leaning towards. All these possibilities are informed by the physical elements suggested by the environment and the border.

The action of embracing usually suggests an action of tenderness and care towards a human, an animal, or an object, which is loved and/or wanted. The action of embracing the border creates an antithesis to these feelings, as the specific physical border is something unwanted by the people of the two communities: the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot<sup>10</sup>. My repetitive action of embracing a place that caused pain and sorrow to the people also suggests an endeavor of accepting it as it is, while being open to experience and receive its emotional and physical essence in the “here-and-now”.

The action of embracing in the performance *Measuring the border* may also suggest the way that music is produced or performed through the lengthening or shortening of a string on a violin or the expanding or closing of an accordion. The correlation between the musical action and the site-specific action on the border exists again in the action of embracing as the violin player and the accordion player also embrace their instruments in order to play and produce sound. In the instance of the border, the body is embracing the border in order to realize a performance art action that aims to re-create its relationship with the border.

The corporeal process in the actions of measuring and sewing the borderline, involves the engagement of the performer by learning and understanding through physical and sensorial experiences on the border such as touching, walking with bare feet, smelling, tiredness, pain, etc. The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan in his book *Space and Place: the perspective of experience*

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<sup>10</sup> During my research I interviewed people that I randomly met close to the border – passers-by and residents – about how they feel about the border. The main impression I received from them is their wish of no borders between people and the easy and safe transportation in the whole island without rules and restrictions.

(1977), asserts: “An object or place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind” (Tuan 1977, 18). The actions on the border involve touching with hands, body and feet, walking, lying on the ground, smelling, getting dirty, and therefore experiencing the border through the totality of the senses. Furthermore, in this process I use my own experiences in order to discuss the outcomes of this project while presenting the sensing body as the central focus of this analysis. In addition, I frequently present spontaneous and impulsive actions I have made during this project that inform the reflexive part of my research.

Before the realization of this project my perception of the Nicosia border was mainly defined through the descriptions and personal stories of others, and my own visual experience of the border as part of the geography. The approach and strategy to experience the border through my sensing body was an endeavor to go further and challenge existing perceptions and constructed interpretations of Nicosia border. In *Landscapes of the Mind* (1990), Douglas Porteous stresses a rethinking of the importance of landscape in geography and gives attention to the “non-visual sensory modes” (Porteous 1990, 5). He furthermore says that “...vision drives out the other senses”, and describes it as “the ideal sense for an intellectualized, information-crazed species that has withdrawn from many areas of direct sensation” (Ibid.) What Porteous suggests here is that sight and vision can collect information from a distance without experiencing a subject with any other senses. Moreover, the mind tends to intellectualize the information it takes from vision and therefore keeps the body at a distance from other sensing possibilities. Porteous also refers to the notions of “smellscape” and “soundscape” (Porteous 1990, 23), in order to investigate how these techniques evolve as sensory experiences through the way that people experience their environments.

In relation to Porteous’s modalities of sensory experience, I would say that my thesis project opens up also the possibilities of a “touchscape” created throughout the performative actions on the border. In the intervention *Measuring the border*, the hands and also the whole body are used to embrace and touch the border. And in almost all the other actions on the border I use my bare feet in order to feel the texture and temperature of the ground, the road and the earth.

## Voicing the border

*Air is touching my skin, insects are singing. I hear people's talks and continuous steps from people passing next to me, I hear the sound of my breath until I hear music. While I move the sounds shift and change, a telephone is ringing, a dog is barking, noise, my voice speaks. I search for a story, a story in sounds. I search for images that trace a path and become movement, images which steer sight towards a threshold (Excerpt from the voice-recording made by Christina Georgiou on the 11th of August, 2011.)*

### **Voicing the border**

Realization: Thursday 11 August 2011

Location: Along the border at the South part of Nicosia within the Venetian walls, from west to east and back to the west.

Duration: 2 hours



Illustration 22: *Voicing the border* 2011, Nicosia.

Description of action:

I am walking along the buffer zone at the South side of Nicosia, and during my walk I use my voice to talk to and about the border that divides the city.

The sound recording includes an amalgamation of sounds: the sound of the surrounding environment, people's talks, cars passing by, my steps, my breath, then my voice. The voice describes the phenomena and events that occur, the natural elements of the place, and what feelings, sensations or situations they create to the body. It also informs the position of the body: along, across, in front of, behind, next to and on the border.

The voice suggests the experience of the body on the border through the rhythm, pace, dynamics, pauses and expressions of its sound and reveals personal emotions towards the border in response to a here-and-now experience at the site. The intensity and the rhythm of the breath that accompanies the sound of the voice, informs further the physical experience of the body and other psycho-physical parameters in relation to the border. The voice and breath increase and decrease, indicating a possible feeling in response to the site and in synchronization with the physical experience at the site. At moments of anxiety and dread the pace of breath, walking and speaking voice increase as an automatic response to these feelings. On the other hand, moments of silence and stillness are expressed through the softness and slowness of the voice.

The sound of the voice appears to be more important than the language, which is spoken, as the words and phrases, which are used, can produce only subjective feelings, but the voice itself cannot hide its psychological and physical condition. Jacques Derrida in his book, *Of Grammatology* (1974), states that writing has been derived from speech, which is closer than writing to the truth. This implication can lead to the assumption that *phonè* is part of this truth and the meaning of *logos*. Analyzing the voice as a form of sound, by ignoring the words, phrases and construction of syllables can help define several aspects of the speaker's expression and consequently aspects of the speaker's identity.

The sounding voice in the action *Voicing the border*, reveals the experience of the body and its encounter with the border during the walk while altering the location with its resonance. A thinking voice, a singing voice, a feeling voice, a physical voice create shifts through the synergy of emotion and thought. The voice appears as a transformative tool that translates action and experience into language and sound.

## Reflecting on the border

By reflecting on the actions that took place on the border of Nicosia, I notice the intense experiential process that created a strong relationship between body and border. My interventions on the border focused on the “here-and-now” experience of the border through newly formed actions, which endeavored to avoid the consideration of any historical factors about the place and therefore focus on present aspects in order to experience the border anew.

At this point, I would like to distinguish the difference between experiencing the border in the present moment and experiencing the border in the daily routine. Victor Turner states the difference between “mere experience” and “an experience” (Turner 1986, 35), where the “mere experience” is the continuous occurrence and flow of events that we passively experience, while “an experience” is a defined event that has a beginning and an end. This distinction can suggest and describe the experience of the geographical border of Nicosia in two different manners: as a “mere experience”, where the passing, crossing and living next to the border describes the continuous appearance of events as a permanent situation which is passively accepted, and as “an experience” which appears and is experienced as a specific event with a beginning and an ending.

On the other hand, the here-and-now situation offered an experiential process, which was focused on the impression of the border without intellectualizing the experience at the present moment through the mind. Through his approach, Victor Turner separated body and mind in the process of experience due to the fact that reflecting and giving a meaning to a corporeal experience creates a distinction between sensation and intellect and therefore disunifies doing and knowing. The notion of “embodiment” eradicates the idea of division between body and mind and the dichotomy between practice and knowledge while giving an understanding of the body as a source of knowledge and not as a source of activity, controlled by the mind. I believe that the non-regular<sup>11</sup> ways, which were chosen in order to experience the border of Nicosia (embracing, sewing, etc.), through the practice of performance art, offered an

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<sup>11</sup> I describe my actions on the border as non-regular in relation to the conventional ways that the border has been used and experienced before, and I also relate these unconventional ways with the practice of performance art as an art practice that offers these possibilities.

empirical process where the body, especially through a repetitive manner, attempted to learn about the compound nature of the border.

The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his book *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), discusses how as human beings we perceive and conceptualize our experiences in a bodily manner, how consciousness is embodied and that body and mind are not separated in this process. Regarding my experience on the border, I perceived this unity of body and mind while being fully engaged with the action. Although this understanding arrived later in my perception, because when I was experiencing the unity I was not aware of it, I was just being in the moment of experience. Merleau-Ponty also emphasizes the initial role of perception as a mode of understanding the world and engaging with the world, where consciousness and the human body as a perceiving thing are linked and equally engaged in the world through a body-mind process. My personal understanding of the border emerged effortlessly through this process when I was absorbed in the action through the occurrence of a continuous flow. At that moment where the passing of time was not considered, there was no differentiation between body and mind but rather a body-mind experience, an embodiment, as there was no separation between them. The anthropologist Thomas Csordas argues: “on the level of perception it is not legitimate to distinguish between mind and body” (Csordas 1990, 36). On the other hand, Sarah Pink characterizes the body-mind relationship as limited, while quoting Howes’s suggestion: “While the paradigm of ‘embodiment’ implies an integration of mind and body, the emergent paradigm of emplacement suggests the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment” (Howes 2005, 7, cited in Pink 2009, 25). By reflecting on the actions realized on the border, apart from the body-mind connection there was also a connection with the place that my action was focusing on. Actually there was a continuous connection between body, mind and environment, as Howes describes above, because every action and movement was always in relation and in response to the place. During the actions *Measuring the border* and *Sewing the borderline I & II*, the body-mind-environment relationship was in a constant activation throughout the performance and throughout the durational process, denoting a synchronization during the sensing experience.

My attempt to reflect on what happened on the border brought me to consider all parameters regarding the body, which had an elemental part in this process as it was used as the instrument of my action and the method for the realization of my thoughts and ideas. Furthermore, by concerning the body and the multiple sensory modalities as well as the relationships between them, “My body”, as Merleau-Ponty describes, “is not a collection of adjacent organs but a synergic system, all of the functions of which are exercised and linked together in the general action of being in the world” (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 234). What Merleau-Ponty refers to here as “being in the world” is related to the synergic occurrence of things in the here-and-now experience of the border as the place and the content of “being in”, and brings to mind the notion of emplacement suggested by Pink while adding the idea of interconnectivity of the senses through the body-mind-environment relationship. The idea of “being in the world” is also related to philosopher Edward Casey’s argument of being “emplaced” (Casey 1996, 44), where space and time exist within place, denoting that we cannot escape from place as it is the content we inhabit and which creates our lives. Casey also adds that “*lived bodies belong to places and help to constitute them*” and that “*places belong to lived bodies and depend on them*” (Casey 1996, 24). According to Casey, the human factor is responsible for the constitution of a place but in Casey’s statement, there is also an understanding of the “lived bodies” as the central component for the formation of a place in a collective manner. My reaction to Casey’s statement is that even if we might not be able to physically escape a place, which is constituted by a group of people, we can contemplate through our perception of it. I believe that it is extremely important how we inhabit a place and therefore how it creates our lives. This idea of how we choose to live a place is one of the reasons that brought my attention to the border of my native city and the wish to reform my perception of the place that created my life, by re-inhabiting it through the various examples that I have shared through this project. My study on the subject of the border involves a personal investigation of place, which has a specific significance for my identity and my life. By reflecting on my experience, places appear to be solid but they can be perceived as fluid through the sensing body and its organic functionalities. Casey explains that place is not fixed or static but rather a continuous process and an ever-changing subject, conceptualizing place

as “event” (Casey 1996, 44). He also refers to place as a “gathering power” (Ibid), while explaining that “places gather things in their midst – where ‘things’ connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts” (Casey 1996, 24.) Considering Casey’s thoughts within this reflection, place includes a variety of subjects and can be in a constant change because of the human factor, but on the other hand I believe that it is us who form its perception according to our own needs and determinations of how we want to live our lives through our bodies within places.

Reflecting on the actions produced by the body, every movement was in a constant response to the place it accommodated while introducing another manner of experiencing borders. Anthropologist Tim Ingold, turns his attention to the way we live in relation to our environment by focusing on movement rather than place. He believes that places are created from movement, as “there would be no places were it not for the comings and goings of human beings and other organisms to and from them, from and to places elsewhere” (Ingold 2008, 1808). Through Ingold’s account, places seem boundless and limitless due to the contribution of the human factor but I think that this idea applies only in free places and not in restricted areas and border zones, even if they were created from people once. My thought is to consider the border not as a place that can be changed physically but as a place that can be perceived differently. The shift of perception is not an easy subject, as a person needs time to contemplate the idea and act upon it. It took me many years to struggle with the subject, then come with an idea and finally become involved in an action in order to re-experience the border and shift my perception towards it. This new perception though is not solid and fixed, as the border still occurs physically in my life and brings new emplacements every time my body creates a movement in response to it. Ingold, expresses that places “occur along the lifepaths of beings” (Ingold 2008, 1808), suggesting a continuous emplacement due to the continuous movement where place and body are two interconnected entities creating change, fluidity and movement. Hence, it is my decision of how I create a new emplacement that will construct my memory of borders afterwards.

Thinking and reflecting on my experiences at the border of Nicosia, the physical action creates a dynamic relation between the body and the topographical characteristics of the

border, and it simultaneously builds physical and emotional dialogues and connections between the body, the mind and the border. Additionally, the simple action of walking – which can also be perceived as a continuous movement that constructed a continuous emplacement – enabled a visual and a physical experience whilst constructing a dialogue between the body and the border, through empirical elements including sensing. In all my actions I used walking as a way to experience the border and as a way to unify the repetitive and continuous actions (sewing, embracing) within the walking experience (along and across the border). Finally I used the action of walking as a method of researching through the sensorial activity of the bare feet and the rest of the body.



Illustration 23: *A line made by walking* 1967, England.

The action of walking can be found also in Richard Long's work: *A line made by walking* 1967, where he walked back and forth in a field and his repetitive walk created a straight line on the grass in the English countryside. In this work the artist used the landscape in order to create a sculpture by his repetitive walking, showing the intersection between performance and sculpture. The straight line formed on the grass does not indicate the beginning or ending

of the line as action emerged repetitively. This idea presents the action of walking as an art action exploring time, distance, geography and measurement, while suggesting a mapping.

My actions of walking along the border of Nicosia were also focusing on the geography in an attempt to experience the border within the Venetian walls of Nicosia by measuring the border and archiving the movement of my body but without leaving any traces behind, as in Long's work. In my work there is a decision of the beginning and ending placed within the walls of Nicosia but the action itself focuses on repetition: repetition in walking, repetition in sewing, repetition in embracing the border. My actions and also Long's action shape a mapping of the body and inform the decision made and the movement executed by the body. In Long's work this is apparent in the place even with the absence of the body while in my work the mapping appears on the body, on the dress (sewing) and on the paper (drawing).

In the reflections regarding the walking actions there is a suggestion of the relationship created between the body and place. Specifically in my interventions at the border of Nicosia there is a responsive behavior towards the border, which investigates my relationship with the place. This idea alludes to the work of Ana Mendieta where in her *Siluetas Series* 1973-1980, she used her naked body to connect with the earth. She used nature as her canvas and also as her medium in order to create female silhouettes in the grass, sand and dirt while exploring her relationship with place.

In the above observations on the artists' works there is an allusion to the idea of inhabiting and the ways a place can be inhabited. Mendieta's works reveal the shape of the body on earth indicating an inhabiting by the body. Mendieta's and Long's works can be characterized as marks of the body (Mendieta) or marks made by the action of the body (Long), which hold an artistic significance. Both works involve the appearance and disappearance of the body while suggesting the abandonment of place. This idea can be related to the notion of exile and the traces, which are left behind by the inhabitant of that place. In my actions the body also inhabits the place but avoids leaving any traces on the earth or the place, but rather collects the experience of its action by measuring, archiving and mapping.

## Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map

*Mapping the body along and across a dividing line.*

*A story that unfolds through a map, a journey, an action.*

*A displaced praxis of the body, on the body, for the land.*

*A body that remembers and re-experiences.*

*A corporeal taxonomy into a topographical transformation. (Georgiou 2011.)*

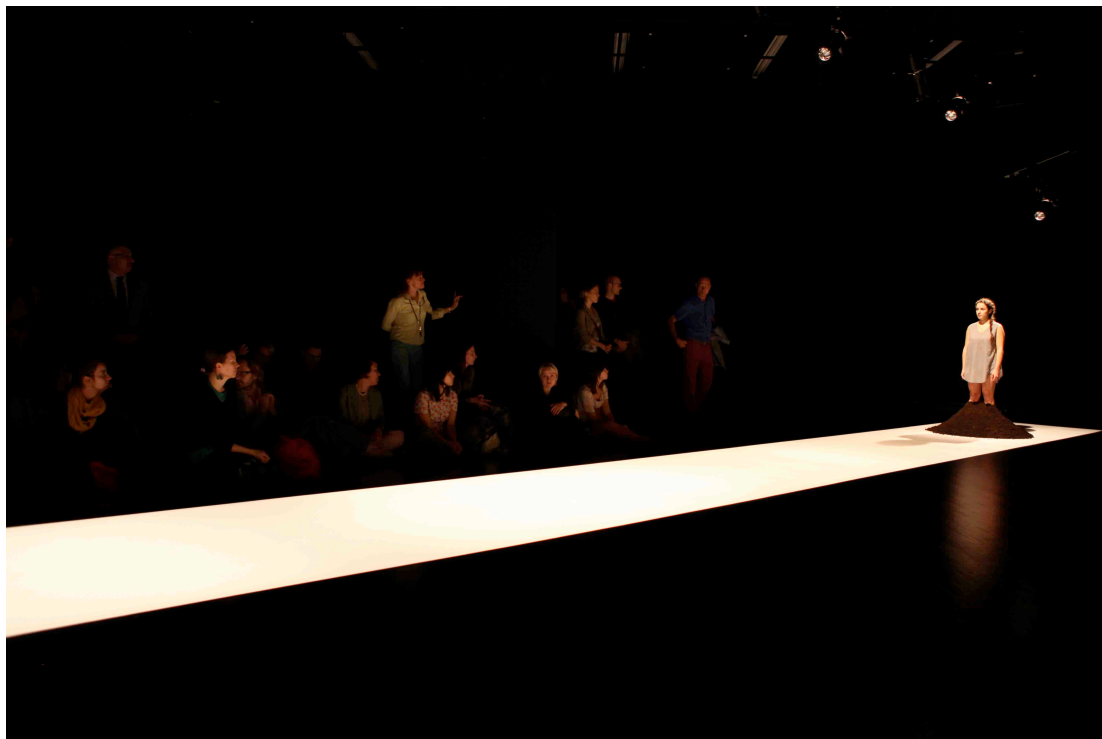


Illustration 24: *Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map* 2011, Helsinki.

### Description of action:

I am standing inside a pile of earth with my legs covered up to my knees. As I walk slowly away from the pile of earth, red threads, which are sewed on my heels, are stretched until they disconnect from my body. I reach the second pile of earth at the other side of the aisle. I take a needle out from it, which is connected with a red thread, and with my right hand I start sewing a red line on my left palm. When I finish sewing I walk backwards with the thread attached on my skin. I continue moving backwards and the thread is stretched. Then it starts moving out through my skin. I blow on my palm while using the sound of my voice. The thread moves slowly through my skin until it is disconnected from my hand.



Illustration 25: *Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map* 2011, Helsinki.

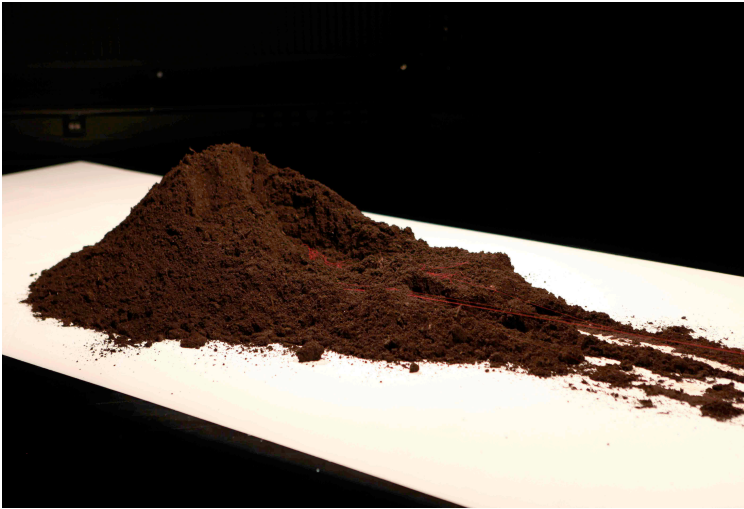


Illustration 26: *Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map* 2011, Helsinki.



Illustration 27: *Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map* 2011, Helsinki.



Illustration 28: *Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map* 2011, Helsinki.

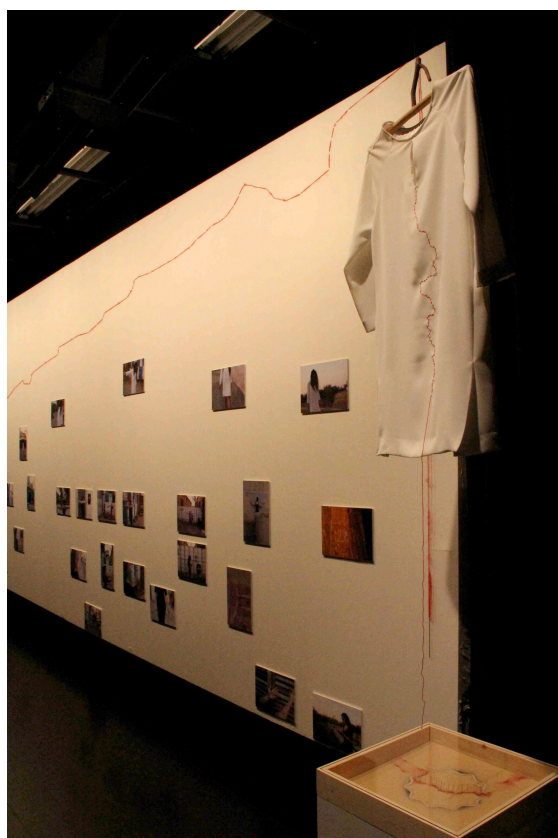


Illustration 29: *Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map* 2011, Helsinki.

The performance *Mapping the Body, Embodying the Map* took place at the Theatre Academy Helsinki at the 7<sup>th</sup> of September of 2011, as part of an exhibition presenting the results of the project that took place on the border of Nicosia during July and August of 2011. The live performance was realized not as a result of the previous actions but as a poetic account and resonance of the experience at the border while bringing together elements of the place (border) and the body (action) including objects used at the border.

The aspects used in this performance aimed to function as triggers of remembrance, not specifically of the border in Nicosia but of borders in general (geographical, physical, emotional): The white aisle, which was created on the floor of the black box space was positioned diagonally on the floor, separating the space in two parts. The audience members should choose a place to position themselves upon their arrival in the space. The two piles of earth placed at each side of the aisle functioned as a mirror while referring to the two-sided face of reality and things. The red thread sewn on the hand created another “borderline” in a micro scale that reflects the existence of borders and the division of things in life. Finally the connection of the legs with red threads and their placement under the pile of earth denoted the idea of rhizome, portrayed in a surreal way.

The “transportation” of this work to an indoor space in Helsinki aimed to present the work in other places and spaces and to bring visibility to the work in order for it to be viewed by a broader audience. The actions on the border are site-specific and are responsive to the place of the border, while the performance in Helsinki can take place in any indoor space. Furthermore the performance in Helsinki did not map Nicosia or the actions of the body, which were realized on the border. In Helsinki different materials were used and arranged in space in order to create a visual and a poetic idea of borders, rather than making a real work on the border of Nicosia. Even the action of sewing the red thread into the skin appears as a “body-art” process in the indoor performance and more as a process of archiving and mapping during the performance in Nicosia. I believe that the work in Helsinki did not reveal directly the experiential components of the actions on the border and the simplicity of the walking action or the action of embrace; however, I believe that it offered an atmospheric quality of the border and melancholia through visuals and sound.

## Aftermath

The live performance realized in Helsinki did not build on the findings of this research project, which have been developed at the place of the border. I believe that the transportation of the idea, which was focusing on the border of Nicosia, to be performed in Helsinki, did not work in terms of the spatial and experiential characteristics of the work that took place in Nicosia. The work in Helsinki was a dislocation of elements taken from the actions on the border and taken to an indoor space, to another country, where the audience members were not much prepared or informed of the process before watching the performance. The live performance in Helsinki involved poetics and elements about borders while informing my experience with borders but not the actual physical experience on the border of Nicosia. I believe it is a great risk to present a site-specific work in an indoor space as it might function as a re-enactment of what have been done before. The process made me feel dislocated – mentally and physically, within my own practice, and disconnected from the actual site, place and experience of the border, causing a disembodiment. On the other hand it opened up another situation of facing borders and coping with the idea of their existence in life and art during a here-and-now situation that required my immediate response.

Besides a whiff of the site-specific actions brought in the live performance in Helsinki, there is no fulfillment in terms of transformation, but rather a symbolic occurrence or an idea taken from the pure action realized at the border. On the other hand, the exhibition in Helsinki with the documentation of the work realized at the border was an opportunity to share my experience with the audience and present the outcomes of the project. Moreover, my experience at the border was presented in an informative manner and it was exhibited through images, objects and mappings.

Considering the impact of this project and its further exploration, I realized that in order to create a bigger impact and communicate its experiential properties more directly, I should think of the participation of the public. Therefore, I decided to involve more people in this project by conducting a 4-hour workshop in Nicosia, in March of 2013 with participants of 20-35 years old, residents of Nicosia. The workshop was based on my actions/interventions and it

was realized along the border of Nicosia.<sup>12</sup> Guidelines were provided to the participants who executed different exercises focusing on the mind-body-environment relationship in order to receive the experiential properties of the border.<sup>13</sup> After the preparation techniques participants were called to realize some of the actions I personally made on the border. The action of mapping the movement of the body while walking along the border was one of the main tasks they were called to accomplish. It was obvious how different each person executed the task according to its movement, rhythm, pace and perception of movement and location.

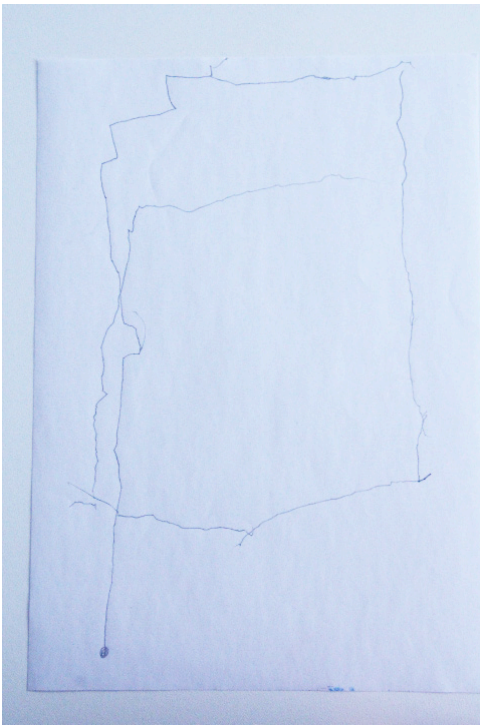


Illustration 30: *Untitled I* 2013, Nicosia.

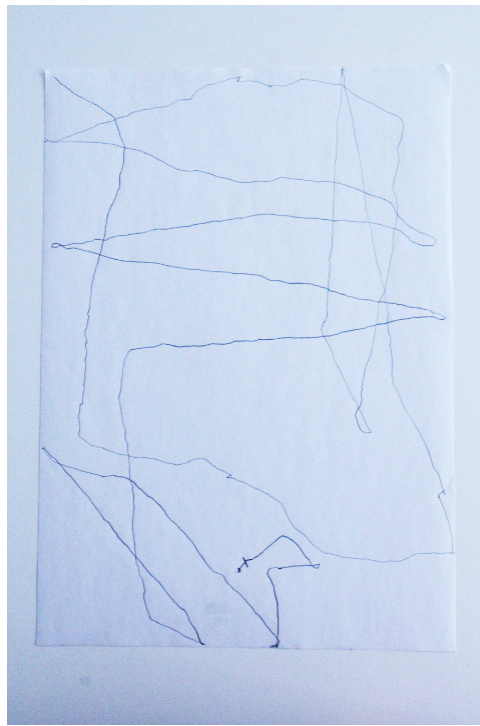


Illustration 31: *Untitled II* 2013, Nicosia.

The involvement of other people in this process is very important not because it involves more people but because of its experiential properties that offer possibilities to change perception towards Nicosia border and hopefully borders in general. This was a basic experiment to consider as part of the development of this project by realizing workshops with a longer duration and involve the participation of the audience in the live action. I believe that the proper duration will be illuminating my methodology and deepen its outcomes further.

<sup>12</sup> Christina Georgiou. 2013. "Experiencing the city: Nicosia, Performance Art workshop." Organized by YEU Cyprus. Hosted by Nicosia Youth Hostel, Nicosia, 9.3.2013.

<sup>13</sup> All exercises took place outdoors and included concentration techniques, group exercises and exercises focusing at each sense, games and mappings and many more, where participants were asked to stay silent during the 4-hour workshop.

## Summing up

*My body is my instrument, my tool and my technique to shape experience and to make the intangible tangible. My body is the vessel of my memory, the memory of the past and the memory of what is created now (diary notes August 2011.)*

This project was an attempt to create experiences at the border through the movement of the body in its geographical frame and consequently defining a possible change upon reality. It also endeavored to change the perception of the border as a time-related historical incidence and create a here-and-now physical relation between the sensing body and place. The experiential components that constituted this process aimed to create a place for a new perception and a new identity and therefore a new memory.

An emotional force was occurring during the process, aiming to suggest or create conditions of expression and freedom beyond the entrainment that the border has created for my country, my hometown, and my loved ones. Throughout this project, many emotional borders occurred and a mapping of memory was created through a recollection of events that revealed gaps in my identity due to geographical and arcane borders. At the beginning I found myself on a journey between self and other, where many components of reality were scattered, creating confusion and emotional restraint. Many contradictions were found between internal and external consciousness, where psychological and corporeal awareness were searching a common way towards actualization. As a disidentifying subject I found myself in a process of negotiation, shaping voices of remembrance and resisting within a sphere of the borders that I had created for myself.

The several crossings of the border at Ledra Palace and Ledra street crossing points were realized through repeated durational walks along and across the buffer zone from both sides, the North and the South part of the city. The border was experienced in its variety and was perceived as an element standing on its own. Throughout this research I gathered information, keeping records and documentation of the physical and emotional behavior of my own body, a body crossing the border and moving next to it, as also my personal voice and reflections of this experience.

The event of coming across the “other” part of a divided city (where the other is different for and from each part) creates a shift of perception every time one crosses the border. The “appearance” of the “other” functions as an identity factor for identification and re-consideration while the border activates physical and emotional limitations. The body can break these limitations when it creates action. The action in its turn creates its own unique performance, meaning that the body produces a set of actions in order to form a behavior that functions as a union in order to achieve a purpose. My purpose for this project was to transform the reality that was constructing my identity. This metamorphosis was formed through an intense and excessive experience of the border in a specific way by altering the historical and daily recurring manners towards the border to an experiential journey in the here and now. By experiencing and re-experiencing the border in my own personal way this formed another reality of how I perceive borders in general and how I identify, counteridentify or disidentify myself to borders. This connection informs my present relationship with Nicosia border and other borders which was formed through my own contribution for making a change firstly for myself and then for others. My tool to achieve this was Live Performance and I believe that its practice can be a powerful tool to shift conventional thinking into new dimensions.

Moreover, I feel that this project has touched a little of what can be done and achieved collectively in order to create a change for a better future without borders of pain and sorrow. I believe that art can offer a lot to the political sphere and bring changes in the world (social, political, communal, emotional). These changes can manifest through the experiential approach towards the border in a way that can shift perceptions anew. I believe that these changes can manifest more easily through the direct experience of the audience as participants than through observation, and this can take place through sensory memory. Sensory memory is a powerful tool to create transformation and perceive remembrance as an event occurring in the here-and-now. My sensory memory of the border of Nicosia has been transformed through this project. The remembrance of the border is no longer perceived as an incident learned through the lives of my family but a sensory memory that is formed through my own sensory experience and perception. My intention is to continue working site-

specifically in other places that are destined to accommodate borders or abandoned sites with historical significance.

I know that “*my walk along the border needs many steps to cover its past, it needs many embraces to soften its pain, it needs many voices to hear its existence*” (diary notes August 2011). What I wish is that people can have the courage to move a step further in order to change their imprisoned lives by achieving transformation. I wish that my own transformation and experience through this project as well as my writings may help others in any possible way to re-think of their own “solutions” and “behavior” towards “borders”.

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