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NARRATIVES OF CRISIS: REPRESENTING CAPITALIST REALISM PART II: THE GREEK CRISIS



GROSSRAUM C21

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GROSSRAUM C21:

EXPERIENCING INTANGIBLE

FIELDS OF SOVEREIGNTY,

EXPANSIONISM AND

IMPOSITION OF STATE-OF-

EMERGENCY REGIMES

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ABSTRACT

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This project is a collective site-specific exhibition that took place as a parallel action to the Documenta 14 happenings in Athens. Despite being showcased as a progressive decision by the Documenta institution to move the exhibitions for the first time out of Germany into another country—and perhaps to indicate with this gesture its solidarity with Greece—for many Greek intellectuals and artists this narrative seemed equally colonial and imperialistic. A sticker in the city center summarized the critical approach toward the art institution: “Dear Documenta, I refuse to exoticize myself to increase your cultural capital. Sincerely, the people.” Thus, a few anti-Documenta performances and art happenings were organized during April and May 2017, one of them being “Grossraum 21C”

YANNIS KARPOUZIS is an Athens-based artist working with photography, filmmaking and text. He is also a PhD candidate (Ionian University, Royal Danish Academy) in the disciplines of Photography Theory and Aesthetics.

YORGOS KARAILIAS is a visual artist and cultural professional. Since 2010 he lives and works between Spain and Greece. His work explores possible ways of interweaving technical images and sociopolitical issues. .

YORGOS PRINOS is a visual artist. His work explores issues of power and violence at the intersection of human psychology and politics, often focusing on the human figure in urban space, using his own images alongside found footage from media and the internet.

PAVLOS FYSAKIS is an Athens-based artist working with lens-based media. He is co-founder of the non-profit cultural organization KOLEKTIV8 and of the art collective Depression Era which, since 2011, has been documenting the social landscape of the Greek crisis through images and texts..

GROSSRAUM C21

The fact that today there are Grossraums formed, thus there is a war incited, is no worse and no more frightening than other earthquakes of previous centuries. Why be afraid of Behemoth more than Leviathan?

Carl Schmitt, 1939

The writings of Carl Schmitt, the German jurist of the 20th century, denote and rationalize the expansionist eagerness of the ruling class in Germany from a very early period. The strategy of spatial occupation and political aggression led to two world wars and the formation of the Third Reich. Grossraum¹ is the actual area of a state's dominance, where its interests are expanded. It constitutes the network of influence, the practice of legislation, the possibility of imposing a state of emergency. Considering the current dominant situation, the European Union is a form of capitalist totalitarianism, totally conforming to the schmittian approach: crisis² is no more than an unexpected state of emergency unfolding in neutral time, forced upon peoples by the dominant elites through financial institutions³.

It surely seems naïve and unhistorical to compare the expansionist policies of the Third Reich with today's Bundestag and European bank policies. However, it is as much unhistorical – indeed, it is a dominant ideology – to conceal that both a war with bombs and a war with banks derive from the same doctrine, the great area; that the actual occupation of land and the occupation of technological, legislative, financial “lands” are the outcome of the same economic model, the one that separates people in classes⁴.

We should have in mind, of course, that the networks of capitalistic and spectacle flux are more than ever global and, at a certain extent, intangible. A hundred years ago, it was Schmitt who cited the American Monroe Doctrine and its concept of “non-intervention” in the American Raum⁵. He was the one who saw the Monroe Doctrine as the first implemented Grossraum. “This is the core of the original Monroe Doctrine, a genuine Grossraum principle, namely the union of politically awakened people, a political idea and, on the basis of this idea, a politically dominant Grossraum excluding foreign intervention.” New world order imposes itself through war, biotechnology, banks, nationalistic groups and politics, unemployment, dominant culture, prisons, concentration camps, control, states.

Experiencing such a form of exploitation today, we strongly believe that symptoms reach the same depths with structures and we constitute negations throughout sociopolitical spectrum sharing as an objective the refutation of the very spectrum. Re-using and acting in a public space is crucially important; especially Gini building at Athens Polytechnic⁶, historically opposed –symbolically and literally– to all forms of power during the last four decades in Greece. Reclaiming those public spaces⁷ is crucial for the strengthening of participatory, cooperative and collective means of expression and action against each imposed Grossraum.



Figures 1- 16: Installation shots *GrossraumC21* collective site-specific exhibition, Athens Polytechnic University, Gini building, 2017 ©Yannis Karpouzis, Yorgos Karailias, Yorgos Prinos, Pavlos Fysakis.









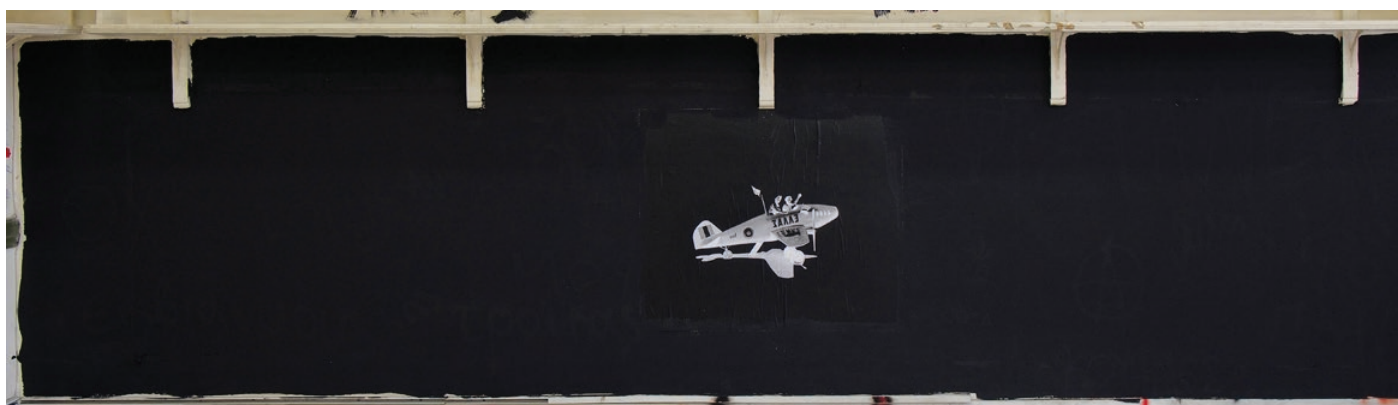












NOTES

- [1] After six years of crisis, Greece has been left wrecked. More than half a million people had left the country due to unemployment, the country's GPT was reduced by 25%, and suicides had increased by 30%. The quality of life and public health collapsed, and a neo-nazi party entered parliament. The public property had been getting sold to European companies, especially German ones, as happened with the prosperous Greek National Telecommunication Company (OTE). The economy had crashed; for many scientists, Greece suffered more losses to its economy than during the Nazi occupation period. Greece never recovered after this shock.
- [2] The exhibition was held in 2017, a year after the capitulation of the Greek left government (and one of the very few left governments ever elected in Europe) with the authorities of the European Union, concerning the continuation of austerity measures and the general political depression that followed. Despite the 2016 referendum results, in which 61% of the people rejected further measures, the left government was forced by the Eurogroups to proceed with further neoliberal policies.
- [3] Both the text and the exhibition recognized back then the affinity between the European Union—an entity vastly controlled by the German capital—and the definition of Grossraum by German intellectual Carl Schmitt. The Documenta 14 takeover of the Athenian art scene seemed as a metonymy of the Grossraum condition in the field of art.
- [4] Carl Schmitt went through a trial after the Second World War, from October 1945 to April 1946. Schmitt was accused of being one of the ideological inspirers of the Third Reich. During the interrogation, Schmitt referred to his book "Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für raumfremde Mächte" where he makes comparisons between the American Monroe Doctrine and the Grossraum condition.
- [5] The location was crucial for the exhibition. The Athens Polytechnic University complex resides in the center of Athens and has played a key role in all freedom movements of the Greek people. After the Second World War, it became a battlefield between left guerilla forces and British troops, and in 1973, it became the center of the anti-dictatorship struggle, which resulted in many worker and student assassinations by the Junta. The Polytechnic uprising ended with the invasion of the complex by a military tank on the 17th of November. Up until these days, people gather in the Polytechnic complex and the Gini building after demonstrations or for political assembly purposes. Nowadays, the complex accommodates the Architecture School, some departments of the Fine Art School of Athens, and the Civil Engineering School. Despite the reactions, the Greek state has left the complex, especially the Gini building, without maintenance work. Our interference through photographs of the decayed building was intended as political activism itself.
- [6] Various buildings inside the Athens Polytechnic University complex and around it (many of which remain unapproachable for art exhibitions) hosted Documenta 14 exhibitions after official state invitations.