

Curatorial note

C.P. and "Of Other 'Garden' Spaces" is the title of Raissa Angeli's proposal for a monument at the Limassol Municipal Garden, dedicated to her grandfather and former mayor of Limassol, Costas Partassides (1919-1977). The proposal is being designed by the artist and is being considered by the responsible bodies of the Limassol's municipality since 2018. The idea of hosting it at *Pylon Art & Culture* within the framework of *Safely Held*, a programme of exhibitions and events, initially grew out of questions arising from the long-term subjection of the monument into a state of continuous review. Questions like, what makes a monument necessary? What is commemorated and what not in public space? Who determines this, and based on which processes, notions of identity or even conventions of memory?

As things unfolded, it became evident that these questions, which spring from the decision to return to the proposal five years following its initial inception, can only be seen in light of recent developments in which the proposed site of construction for the monument, Limassol's Municipal Garden, was found at the epicenter of debates around the urban development of the city and the transformation of its public space. It is only inevitable, therefore, that a revisit to the proposal *C.P. and "Of Other 'Garden' Spaces"* is defined by additional issues related to the public sphere to which it belongs. This is also evident via discussions beyond the local experience. For example, following the removal of statues in recent years in response to embodied dominant narratives of white supremacy, patriarchy, and social exclusion, how is the erection of a monument accounted for today? What alternative models of monumental sculpture are explored within the context of contemporary art by visual artists such as Raissa Angeli, in response not only to the events of the time but also to the wish for a more critical dialogue between an artwork in public space and the public, the current functions of a city and history?

For the exhibition at Pylon, these questions act as a prompt for reflection. They also frame the design of yet another version of the project in which the condition of its non-actualisation is handled productively and as part of its history. Only this time, the proposal is not on paper. The artist carries it out at actual scale within the space of Pylon, tendering a gesture, which can be perceived as a creative reversal of both the monument itself and the structures that preclude its realisation. At the same time, Angeli questions prevailing perceptions that define form and the use of monuments in general. More specifically, Raissa Angeli disassembles the individual parts of the proposal, which in previous versions composed an architectural complex. The seating arrangement for guests, the lights, the bust, the fountain, the plants, (a Judas tree and two standard rose bushes) are rendered autonomous and are reorganised in the space supported by a

wooden studding. These constructions, which turn each feature into a mobile unit, offer the possibility of variations of the composition in the space. As a result, the now materialised proposal acquires the dimension of a variable monument, which can be at once composed and decomposed, ready to be installed and uninstalled. The claim here is for a more expanded understanding of the “monument” as a concept and an object, particularly in regard to the requirement that a monument has a continuous, unchanging presence in space and time. The initial proposal *C.P. and “Of Other ‘Garden’ Spaces”* is materialised in the form of a scale model based on the latest revised drawings, offering viewers an opportunity to better understand the thought process that determined its design. If close attention is paid, it becomes apparent that the intention is to create within the Municipal Garden, a meeting space for commemorating visible and invisible aspects of the life and work of Costas Partassides.

Partassides was first elected mayor of Limassol in 1949, during British rule, with the support of the *Eniaio Metopo ton Ergaton kai tou Ergazomenou Laou*. His term of office was interrupted, first when he was imprisoned by the colonial authorities for his decision to rename a street named after former British governor Richmond Palmer to “October 28th”, and later, when the elected city council was replaced by an appointed committee. He was re-elected in 1953 and remained in office until December 1962, when the mayoral elections were dissolved during the first years of Cyprus’ Independence due to the deadlock of the issue of separate municipalities. Both his terms were defined by the context of colonialism, armed struggle for independence, a cold war climate, economic precariousness, inter-communal conflicts, and decolonization processes. Within the specific sociopolitical framework and given his ideological association with the Left, Partassides pushed for new views on social welfare. Several of the projects in the 1940s and 1950s intended to contribute to the betterment of the city of Limassol by means of community action were: the expansion of public housing, the founding of a municipal nursing home, the improvement of the municipal baths, and the operating of a municipal people's restaurant.

In assessments of Partassides’ legacy, a distinct relationship between modern architecture and notions of development and progress are recognizable. Both the municipal kindergarten in the district of Agios Ioannis and the adjacent playground inaugurated in 1959, as well as the improvement works at the Municipal Garden beginning in 1962, were undertaken by two important representatives of modern architecture in Cyprus, Fotis Colakides and Phivos Polydorides, respectively. This particular trend supports what recent studies have shown regarding the role of modern architecture in decolonization efforts and in creating a new profile for the newly established Cyprus Republic. Both these projects are also indicative of new approaches to the management of the natural environment, which was landscaped with specific

tree plantings and a redevelopment of public space for specific functions. In the Municipal Garden, the complex designed by Polydorides was to provide for a restaurant, bar, square and stage for artistic events, and was connected to the important place the garden holds in the plans to transform the city into a touristic, commercial and cultural centre with a modern profile. For example, the garden became a place to host the Wine festival (established for the first time in 1961), the exhibition of an Ideal Home and Car, and two International Flower exhibitions in 1962 and 1963, which were curated by a horticulturist specially invited from Haifa. As such, the Limassol Municipal Garden as a venue for events on both a local and international level, and as a public space for experimentation with innovative architectural approaches to the natural environment, are a good example of what Partassides might have meant when, in an interview in May 1962, he referred to Limassol as the “city of the future” and as the “golden hope of Cyprus” with all the conditions “to become the most beautiful and flourishing city”.

Directly intertwined, then, with the course of Partassides, the Municipal Garden of Limassol could not have been a more appropriate place for the proposal to erect a monument. In its design, the garden has played an important role both as a natural space with a specific history and as an idea, which interacts with philosophical concepts, such as that of heterotopia. The prompting to relate to the term is inherent to the title of the work, which is an inspired paraphrase of Michel Foucault's *Of Other Spaces (Des Espaces Autres, 1967/1984)*. In the text, which was originally delivered as a lecture in 1967, the French philosopher searches for the “places of otherness” in contrast to utopias. He recognizes them in existing spaces, where regulations are contested and otherness is located. He introduces the concept of “heterotopia”, in which he discerns the power “to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several locations which are in themselves incompatible”. As a key example of this principle, Foucault thinks of the garden and concludes: “The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world”. In other words, the garden is, in this sense, a world within the world.

Conversing with the above, the proposal *C.P. and “Of Other 'Garden' Spaces”* takes the form of a “garden within a garden”. The idea, as implied by the intentional use of quotation marks in the title of the proposal, also takes in mind the enclosing reasoning of *mise en abyme* – a French term for “put in the abyss”. According to this technique, a structure or system is an insert within itself in a process of self-referential investigation of its mechanisms, which extends into perpetuity. In *C.P. and “Of Other 'Garden' Spaces”*, the intention is that the form of the “garden within the garden” can activate reflection around the nature of the garden, its intrinsic characteristics, and its heterotopic attribute of juxtaposing different realities within it. It is designed in a way that bears clear references to a specific type of landscaping: *parterre en broderie* or embroidery flowerbed. The French term, which refers to tapestry and embroidery

techniques is adopted to describe the type of gardens distinguishable by their complex geometric arrangements reminiscent of a carpet or embroidery, where each feature carries specific symbolism.

Something similar also occurs in the “garden within the garden” of the monument, where each of its parts claims a symbolic content, referring to aspects of the history of Costas Partassides, but also of the Limassol Municipal Garden, and the city in general. For example, the Judas tree and the particular type of roses had been imported to Cyprus on the initiative of Partassides, while the lights began functioning at the Municipal Garden (following its re-landscaping during his mayorship) at a time when urban squares, like the one on Irini street, were being arranged according to the French flowerbeds, *parterre*. As for the fountain, it borrows elements of the circular structure, which remains in the garden, and is one of the last remnants of Polydorides from the period of urban regeneration. In this respect, the “garden within the garden” that is created, wherein each characteristic has its own value and where different spaces, times and histories are juxtaposed and coexist, emerges in an idiosyncratic heterotopia. It is an intervention in the normative space and time of the Municipal Garden and the city, conducive to a springboard that can unwind the thread that leads to lesser known or peripheral histories, which feature different facets of the past and present. Through this lens, the “garden within the garden” works as an incentive to discover “stories within history”.

The effect is a proposal for a monument invested with historical memory, based on an expanded perception of history that is composed of a myriad of visible and invisible micro-histories. As these point to gaps, contradictions, the silencing or the rifts in the narrating of the past, they also illuminate unknown strands of the monument, as well as the most unforeseen and personal ones, allowing for a more meaningful connection with what is being remembered – the mayor, the garden, the city.

This dimension of the proposal *C.P. and “Of Other 'Garden' Spaces”* is also encouraged through the installation at Pylon. The dismantling of the monument and the recomposition of its elements in the space suggests a playful departure from the dominant perception of the monument as fixed in place and time. We can also perceive it as a nudge to acknowledge each of the features as objects-perpetrators, which despite their inanimate and artificial nature, play their own role in the telling of history, as well as in the power relations that determine developments, and maybe even in the realisation or not of the monument itself. It is a different, heterotopic point of view presented to us within the space of Pylon from which we may possibly subvert information and reshape our understanding around history, commemorative practices and the terms by which we relate to the public space of a city through art.

Translated from Greek by Maria Petrides