

The “Leaps of faith” art project 2005 – a potential virus of friction in the everyday life

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During the same day and at the same place of the opening of “Leaps of Faith” art project but at different time, the mayor of the Turkish Cypriot community of Nicosia was present at the inauguration of an Information Booth for the Nicosia Master Plan Organization, (a joint venture of the two communities under the auspices of the United Nations). It was in the buffer zone, between the check points going to the two sides of Nicosia, a place par excellence for neutral meetings between politicians from both sides. There was also the mayor of the Greek Cypriot community of the city as well as a crowd of officers and people.

Just opposite the Info Booth was the Art Lab project “Photo Reale, “objets trouvés” discovered and displaced in an abandoned Greek Cypriot house since the war of 1974. A little further to the north was the CALL # 192 project (in which I participated), a nomad exhibition space defined between two parked municipal buses, borrowed from the two municipalities of Nicosia. Despite the noise of the crowd gathered for the inauguration you could still listen to the music by STATUS QUO played by some performance speakers, a project by Marc Bijl, “I love status quo”.

The speech of the Turkish Cypriot mayor was a typical political speech of a mayor of a divided city. No one could notice that small difference, except if you knew what happened the previous days in the process of preparing the projects of “Leaps of Faith”. At a point of his speech he talked about something very specific- the politicians stay usually at a general level of discourse. He suggested that it is too bad that there is not one official map of Nicosia showing both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot parts. It was a rather simple suggestion that would have demonstrated the cooperation between the two sides. An impossible political act though because the Turkish Cypriots would never accept to have the original street names of the areas belonged to the Greek Cypriots before the 1974 war, neither the Greek Cypriots would accept to write those streets with their actual Turkish names. What was that thing that pushed the mayor of the Turkish Cypriot side to come upon such an initiative?

What was “inserted” in his speech was in fact something that was occurred most probably by his friction with the “Leaps of Faith” people even though his relation with them was tormented a little before and during the exhibition. A Colombian artist, Minerva Cuevas proposed such a map for her own project, “Daring Cartography, Comprehensive map of Nicosia”. The CALL # 192 project team had a long and intense meeting with the mayor the day before in order to persuade him to lend a municipal bus for the purpose of the project. A handbook was given to him with the detailed description of the project, including transport maps of both parts of Nicosia collaged into a single one.

What I want to demonstrate with the description of this banal event is that the process of making the exhibition of “Leaps of Faith” and the exhibition itself were present somehow in the content of the speech of the politician as well as in the air around the inauguration space. You could just not miss it. The exhibition was present into a banal moment of the everyday life of Nicosia and it was indeed one of its most successful instances. One can

describe a few such everyday instances “contaminated” by the exhibition that I wish were multiplied and sustained after the closing of the event.

I hope that an art exhibition of this sort, a project oriented initiative and not an object based one, succeeded even in the minimum degree to establish frameworks of communication in a tormented place like Cyprus. Or even, it pushed things to happen, or it generated friction where normally did not exist.