

‘In the same way that local farmers and producers enthusiastically shout out at the island’s open-air markets that all of their goods are made locally and cultivated in the island’s very soil, our archaeological museums too should ardently proclaim and promote the fact that all of their exhibits were discovered on this land, and are also local goods!’ These were the words of a visitor after a recent guided tour in one of the Department of Antiquities’ local archaeological museums. We both laughed at the comparison but his words often come to my mind, especially during the course of long meetings at international committees when the issue of the decolonisation of museums is raised. During such discussions, representatives of the large museums of the West ardently support the value and relevance of the so-called ‘universal museums’, where the sense of place usually hovers about uncomfortably, or is communicated in an abstract manner, focusing on the idea of ‘civilisation’ or ‘culture’, often with a rather colonial outlook.

Katerina Attalidou’s project ‘In the Same Place’ at the Cyprus Museum could be experienced as a gentle gesture, the result of lived experiences and long journeys of discovery. The Cyprus Museum, which since 1908 stands on what was until recently Museum Avenue (renamed to Mikis Theodorakis Avenue), houses and exhibits Cypriot antiquities from countless places on the island, removed from archaeological layers that date to over eleven thousand years before the present day. Beyond being a mere edifice, the Cyprus Museum is foremost a place with fascinating depth; a place to which Attalidou feels an emotional attachment, where countless place-specific experiences are reflected and all sorts of

identities and stories can be told. Attalidou's watercolours, each with a unique journey behind it, invite us to appreciate the aura of place: the archaeological, ecological, historical, personal, and romantic place.

All excavation is destructive, a non-reversible process. Archaeologists remove layer after layer of centuries-old accumulated material, which was once part of places. Places are in the process of continuous transformation, either a gradual, slow one or a result of unexpected and abrupt events. Regardless of their nature, these episodes all leave their traces on the biography of the landscape.

Attalidou's watercolours are discretely placed within the Cyprus Museum exhibition halls and cases, in the same place as some of the antiquities that she has chosen, specifically the ones that touch her more intensely. Attalidou's 'places' generously but discreetly offer the possibility of a very different museum experience. Her works to some extent bridge the 'gap' formed when an archaeological object has been removed from its find-spot and is displayed in a museum exhibition space. At the same time, her work invites us to move around our landscapes and observe the places around us. Her watercolours unfold the multiple layers and dimensions of each place, and their tangible and intangible qualities. Most importantly, they remind us of our island's wholeness and indivisibility.

Troodos, the Akamas and Karpasia peninsulas, Ammochostos (Famagusta), Rizokarpaso, Leonarisso, Arnadi, Galinoporni, Ovgoros, Platani, Peristerona, Vitsada, Lefkonoiko, Afaneaia, Bellapais, Kazafani, Klepini, Kythrea, Ampelikou, Keryneia, Lapithos, Akanthou, Larnakas tis Lapithou, Petra tou Limniti, Vouni, Agia Eirini, Filia, Mansoura, Pomos, Gialia, Polis Chrysochous, Kritou Marottou, Souskiou, Lempa, Kissonerga, Kourion, Erimi, Parekklesia, Mari, Maroni, Choirokoitia, Agia Varvara, Deneia,

Katydata, Egkomi, Arsos, Melousia, Tremetousia, Dromolaxia, Larnaka (ancient Kition), Pera Oreinis, Dali, Sotira, Paralimni...

When Katerina Attalidou first came to us with her proposal to embark on an island-wide journey in search of the areas from which selected antiquities exhibited in the Cyprus Museum came from, and to consequently create a series of watercolours, the process of traditional archaeological surface survey instantly came to our minds. Conducting archaeological surveys is an important part of the work performed by the Department of Antiquities. Many of the island's archaeological sites have been recorded and investigated as a result of archaeological survey and others still await to be discovered. Attalidou, led by the 'creatures' of the Cyprus Museum, has performed her own survey, influenced also by the multifaceted history of Cypriot archaeology and of course her own personal experiences and memories. Katerina has performed her survey with all senses activated, her watercolours becoming a precious voice that calls us to also experience the island's loaded, beautiful and troubled places...

January 2023

Efthymia Alphas  
Archaeological Officer  
co-curator of the exhibition