

In the same place

*I have seen these things in a shaft of sunlight**

I visit the Cyprus Museum often. Each time something different captures my interest and resonates in me, I feel a special connection and an intimacy with its exhibits. Over the years this relationship has become personal, and I feel such a familiarity with the space, it's as if I am returning home each time I visit.

I dearly cherish the creatures excavated at Agia Eirini and have travelled all the way to Stockholm to find the ones missing from the Cyprus Museum. I became curious, I felt the need to visit the place where they were found, to discover the space where the people who made and used them once lived. Since then, I've had the pleasure of visiting Agia Eirini many times and each time my connection to the place and the landscape deepens. Each return constitutes a new journey in space and time.

I am a visual artist, I seek to record, capture and ultimately to understand the lived experience. Cyprus, discovering the island and its people has been at the centre of my entire journey as an artist. Watercolour has been the main medium I have been employing since 2015, when I started painting in nature, observing the landscape, and conversing with it.

Fascinated by the excavations of the Swedish Cyprus Expedition I began to visit the areas where they had been carried out, and started to record, with some painting notes, the elements of the surrounding landscape. This is how the idea of a project related to the exhibits of the Cyprus Museum was born.

* T.S. Eliot, 'Murder in the Cathedral', *The Complete Poems and Plays*, Faber & Faber, London 1969, p. 240.

I felt the need to walk the places where the great artefacts, which are today exhibited at the Cyprus Museum, were discovered, to spend time in the spaces where they once existed, where they were activated. I felt the urge to observe the landscape that brought them to light, its lines and colours, the way these transform at different times of the day. It was with great awe that I began this landscape observation, consciously surrendering to the experience, in order to record, marking in colour, the specificity of each location, but also so as to get attuned to the high-energy vibration that emanates from each place.

My goal was to finally create, through observation, a pictorial record of my experience, as I stood before the landscape, in the landscape, in time. A series of painting notes were thus born, which, I hope, carry some of the energy and soft tenderness of each place, and are exhibited together with the objects related to them, in the Cyprus Museum exhibition spaces.

I perceived the experience of visiting the excavation site, as well as the process of observing the wider area, in order to carry out the work, as a ritual, which placed me in a continuum of time and brought me in direct contact with what has been, with what remains important and unchanged, and finally with what is worth preserving and protecting.

As I travelled, I recorded, along with the drawing notes, any thoughts, observations, or memories that arose through the process.

I was able to experience the extraordinary importance of each location, the deep and meaningful relationship between community and place, the ways in which communication was enabled by the geography of the landscape, the sophistication of craftsmanship, perception and expression. I often

found myself repeating primordial movements. This immersion in space and time was healing, a blessing that I now carry within my body.

At the same time, the contemporary reality was often painful to observe: the garbage, the noise pollution, the excessive lighting, the loss of connection, the ugly and levelling ways in which the ‘development’ of the island is being deployed. As the location is annihilated, as the natural landscape is cemented and negated, the soul is often flattened, because, after all, what are we but an extension of the space in which we live and of the movements we repeat every day? We vibrate in tune with the sounds that we hear. We exist bathed in the light that surrounds us.

As I travelled back and forth throughout the island, I experienced once again that Cyprus is indivisible. Recent memories or people’s personal stories confirmed this knowledge, which is evident in the Cyprus Museum, as well as in the actual geography of the island.

Walking the island and listening to its deepest voice, which can only be heard when we remain quiet so that only the sounds of nature remain, when we rest our body on the ground and keep our eyes open to its breathtaking beauty, I realised that there is no other heaven than the land in which we are rooted and where we spend each day in a shaft of sunlight.

September 2022

Katerina Attalidou