

αίθρυν που με
κατοικεί από τη στιγμή
που πήρα το διπλωμα
και έγινε ο φανταστικός
από τη στιγμή που τα
εξέφρασα πήραν έναν
δρόμο. πρώτη φορά

Δικίει που διαπερνούν το πυκνό ήχο και φτάνουν το ήχο
αδελφικών που αλληλοεπηρεάζονται
Συγκινούνται



Στα ΓΟΝΑΤΑ
Στης ΚΥΨΕΣ.
ΒΡΑΧΟΣ

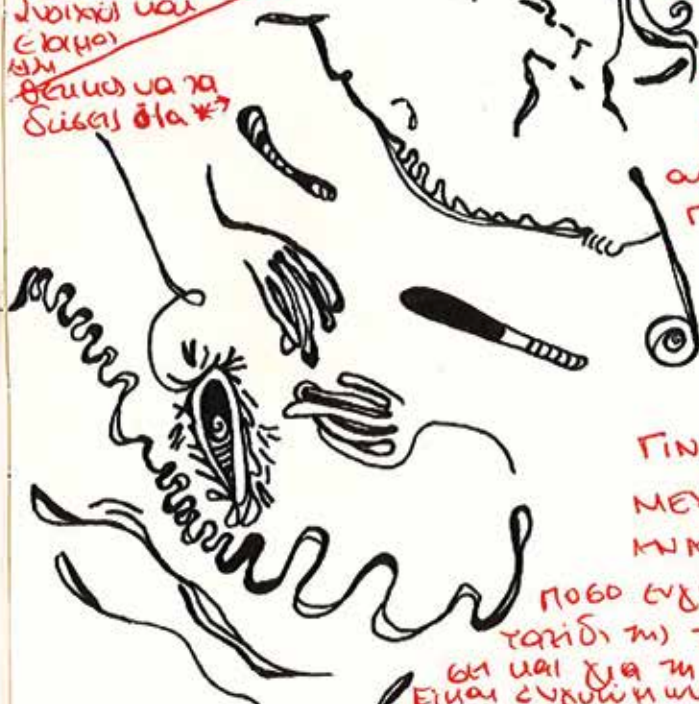
Όπως το

ΚΙΝΕΙ τον βράχο
τον

και από βράχο
ΓΙΝΕΤΑΙ
από ΡΟΤΑΡΙΟ

και από
ΔΗΜΟΣ

Εάν ζωί μου νιώθω
δύναμη, νιώθω τα εσώτατα
και μαθαίνω σιμωτά μου
να είναι η καρδιά μου
δύναμη. Να μη δίνω
για να είναι ήπιος
δυναμικός και
ελαφρύς
δυναμικός να τα
δίνω όλα *



ΜΕ ΚΙΝΕΙ
ΜΕ ΣΗΜΕΙΩΣΕΙ και

από ΖΥΓΩΤΟ

ΓΙΝΟΝΤΑΙ ΕΜΒΡΥΟ

ΝΕΟ ΓΝΟ

ΠΑΙΔΙ

ΕΦΗΒΟΣ

ΕΝΗΛΙΚΑΣ

ΓΙΝΟΝΤΑΙ Ο ΕΑΥΤΟΣ

ΜΕΧΡΙΣ ΟΤΑΝ ΓΙΝΩ

ΚΑΝΩΝΗΝ.

ΠΟΣΟ ΕΥΔΥΝΑΜΩΣ ΕΙΜΑΙ ΔΙΑ ΤΟ
ΤΑΧΙΔΙ ΤΗ ΖΩΗΣ ΠΟΥ ΕΧΩ ΔΙΑΝΩ-
ΣΕΙ και για τη ζωή μου.
ΕΙΜΑΙ ΕΥΔΥΝΑΜΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΝΤΕΛΗΣ

Τρέχω

Τρέχω

Όσο πιο ΑΥΝΑΤΑ μπορώ. Στέκομαι
με τους ΑΣΤΡΑΓΑΛΟΥΣ μέσα στον
παλτασμέ των κεμάτων.

Αγρός

Σύννεφα

Κόκκος

Πέγνυ

Κάδομαι

Είμαι

ΝΕΡΟ

ΣΗΜΕΙΩΣΕΙ

ΒΟΤΣΑΛΟ

ΑΜΜΟΣ

ΑΝΑΜΝΗΣΗ

ΕΤΕΙ ΚΑΙ ~~ΕΤΕΙ~~

ΧΡΟΝΟΣ

Giovanna Michaliadi Sarti

The Body of Memory

Prologue

Thinking and writing about memory, I realised that this is more than a conceptual term, it is a body. A material body, ethereal and cosmic that radiates and absorbs energy and of which we can only perceive a part. I want to offer you this body to the extent that my existence is allowed through the keyboard and screen of my computer.

July 12, 2023, or week 36 and day 3 of pregnancy

I wonder if I'll be counting time this way a year from now and if I'll remember these kinds of details.

In reality of course, it's past midnight now as I write. After a day of intensive preparations for the coming baby, my mind is carried away by a storm of thoughts. I am convinced that the baby is postponing his exit on purpose, so that we can prepare the necessary things for his reception, and also work for our theatre organisation - Fabrica Athens. Duties never end and everything slips away or remains unfinished.

I'm thinking of Julia Varley and her mother, so I'm texting her. I think also about the 3,200 grams of foetus that inhabit me and of my grandmother, Xanthi, whose life inspired me to make my first solo performance and who has been in hospital for a week, with a pulmonary oedema caused by a heart disease.

As I offer myself an evening shower to find relaxation, the waves of thought keep coming more and more rhythmically, creating scenarios around my grandmother, until finally this imaginary game reveals to me the word I've been seeking:

h e r i t a g e

Choosing our vocabulary is of great importance both in our everyday life and in our theatrical life. Admittedly I have a lot of difficulty with this, especially in everyday life, since I always feel that theatre - and this makes me love it - gives me the time I need to think. To create memory or to remain with memory at first struck me as harsh and egotistical, presumptuous, but also impossible, since memory is a distillation of choices, but I'll get to that. My resistance has to do with my own reading and personal references, which make it imperative to find 'my' word to connect with the subject. I feel happy and proud, therefore, that the word *heritage* was revealed to me since it resonates within me and is in tune

with my intellect. Heritage is something we all possess, since we all have ancestors either from our biological families or from those families we choose or who chose us along the way.

Everything in the universe charts a certain course and this, consciously or unconsciously, constitutes our map. They are the invisible threads that unite us, the weight we carry and need to transform into lightness. Memory and memories are a kind of heritage. What is important is to have land where the seeds can be planted, regardless of whether these prove to be fertile or not. It is important to create space so that anyone who wishes can reap.

At this stage in life, I have two families: my biological and my theatre family. Often, I feel that the second has distanced me from the first, but today, I realise that one has encouraged me to delve into the other. On the one hand, my theatrical family has pushed me to understand the heritage that has been given to me and which I carry from my biological family, while on the other hand my biological family has created the conditions and the ground to support the heritage that I create theatrically. Therefore, I feel it is my duty to make connections with what will be inherited from me and that I am passing on to posterity; to create roads and bridges between these various lands.

June 24, 2023, 5:42 p.m.

I tidy up the house and find myself with a pile of papers, books, notebooks and diaries that have collected on the desk for months now. I discard and recycle what I no longer need or want, what is already sorted and, as I always like to do when the opportunity arises, I take some time to poke around in the various notes in my weekly journals. I realise, as I flip through them, that I'm doing more than just looking, I'm looking for what to take with me. More specifically, I

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what I will take with me! I find an almond blossom that we used in an object exercise in the Theatre of Research lab and kept in my anthology.

In this process, I began to reflect on the role of the diary in theatre, in memory and in life. Especially for women, and specifically for women artists, diaries have been a great means of expression and a gateway for the world to get to know about them. A common feature of all diaries is the recording of the events, thoughts and feelings that fill our days, regardless of whether this is done in the form of text, notes, drawings, recordings, etc. On the contrary, the form of the recording is a very important personal choice since the process should make us feel a release and euphoria.

It is this liberation and orderliness that creates the corresponding memory.

My personal experience of keeping a diary of our theatrical life regularly - training, tasks and notes related to everyday life, tasks and obligations that support the artistic activity - opens the way to a personal theatrical vocabulary, the language with which I can essentially communicate my discoveries to the world, to the artistic and general community.

It is a ritual that supports my actions, strengthening the development both in art, and in the art of 'being oneself', and in extending my relationships and (feminine) nature. Furthermore, the diary can be a rich archive and/or guide in the creative process, since I can refer to it whenever I want and draw material from its pages.

December 2022, 10th week of pregnancy

I am in the underground theatre of Fabrica Artspace for the Theatre of Research workshop led by Fanis Katechos, founding member of Fabrica Athens. I started attending the workshop in 2015, first as a participant and later as a co-instructor. This is the first year that I have been away from it for two and a half months, because of paperwork, but also because of my pregnancy.

At the beginning we sit in a circle and each of us has a few minutes to talk about the time that has passed since the previous meeting. Before me, Markella talks about memory, and as much as I want to convince myself that this is a coincidence, I can't. Her thoughts allow me to express my sadness at not being able to retrieve more memories from the past lately, while also sensing, perhaps rationalising the situation, that now is a time in which new memories will be created. It is then that I announce that I am pregnant.

Since childhood, I have feared that I might forget the most important thing that makes me alive or that I will be forgotten. We spend our whole lives trying to remember this something; to grasp it, to grasp it well, lest it slips away and we are left out of the whole. Re-member: to become a member again. Although the etymology of the word has nothing to do with this, I feel that memory is directly related to re-establishing one's unity with a whole.

A favourite Butoh teacher of mine, Daisuke Yoshimoto, used to encourage his students and friends to smile and stay relaxed throughout their theatre training and rehearsals, thus allowing memories to emerge. This practice helped me to express myself freely, to become more of a child again and less of a performer during rehearsals and training. As the years go by, I feel it is more and more important to maintain this.

The performing of memories gives life to theatre action. I could liken memories to the cardiovascular system of the human body whose branches connect all the different parts of the body, allowing them to be oxygenated. These memories give me inspiration and create invisible and visible connections between actions that allow them to pulsate vividly.

However, the routine outside, but also inside, the theatrical life, doesn't always leave space to smile and especially to relax. I feel as though this results in these treasures getting dusty, maybe buried even deeper, maybe stopping breathing until they become corpses we can no longer recognise. I am referring to the struggle that often arises in me, perhaps in other colleagues as well, between the bureaucratic tasks and the stage work of the actress.

Another practice that complements my theatre work, and is a moment when memories arise in shallow waters, breathe and float to the surface, is during a meditation that I call the chest of the universe. In this meditation I notice the

darkness that is created with my eyes closed. It is darkness like that of a closed chest that contains all that was and will be and all it asks is that I listen to it carefully. In this dark chest I found my first memories: the moment of my birth; the floating particles of dust that the sunlight revealed in the kindergarten room; the sparkling morning sea of Agia Photia beach in Chios; and myself studying family photos, but also persistently searching every drawer and cupboard in the house to discover or reveal some mystery.

In addition, in 2017 I was in Kyoto for Noh Theatre training, where I was taught an excerpt from the choreography of the Shōjō character. The teacher was impressed that I had incorporated the choreography so quickly and accurately and asked me how I memorised it. Then I realised that the memorisation was done by shifting my body's centre of gravity and the feeling of the air touching my body in motion. The realisation that I learn and remember through my body (especially with the sense of gravity, the transfer of body weight and vibrations), probably since being in my mother's womb, made me trust more in my nature and intuition which lead my choices on stage and in life as well.

June 13, 2023

I often wonder how modern culture affects memory and memories. Whether it has a destructive influence on them or nourishes them. The rhythms of everyday life, the flow (speed x quantity) of information and various stimuli which have hit the red light and the possibility of complete erasure and the reproduction of elements offered by technology, are all, I feel, diminishing personal and collective memory. I tend to connect the issues I find in front of me in life and in art to the principles I observe or study that exist in nature, in the microcosm or even in the macrocosm. So, in nature, nothing can completely disappear in a moment, everything only changes form. It looks like the traces of waves on the

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that are recreated by the next waves that find the shore.

I am also concerned with the effect of the pace of reality and lifestyle on female sensibility. There are admirable examples of women in my life who, each of them in their own field, struggle to preserve in their actions the richness that comes from expressing womanhood and the uniqueness it bestows. However, as far as I can observe, there is a large majority of women who repress or have forgotten this uniqueness, mostly because of the global capitalist way of life. Unfortunately, I feel the imposition of a masculinisation of our unique treasures, the subjugation in a narrow rhythm of action, the commodification of a single shade of female expression, and an acceptance that this is how everything should be or is; life itself.

I feel strongly this acceptance also comes, among other reasons, from forgetting. As individuals, but especially en masse, we forget. Forgetfulness is necessary for humans to advance their evolution, to endure the joy and cope with the sorrow of life. It has always been this way and, in my opinion, this has been



Stevi Theodosiou of Multiactive group of Art Fabrica Athens in the street parade *10 Realms in the Passage of an Ephemeral Breath* during Covid lockdown (6/3/2021). Photo: Marialena Priovolou

exploited and fuelled by the social, political and economic system. Moreover, I notice that our distance from the rituals involved in everyday life, the difficulty brought by the changes of periods and feminine organicity, intensify the oblivion of those things that render us vibrating beings of nature and by extension of the theatre stage.

For example, only five years have passed since the first Covid quarantine and, at least in Greece, a large number of people found in this pause a valuable gift, a new way of life with a more stable centre and redefined priorities. Today, sadly, this gift has been left in the warehouse with the favourites of the past. The same happened on an artistic level.

In Greece, during the critical period of quarantine, there was a movement of artists called “Support Art Workers”, which defended the rights of artists. A large wave of artists, among them people from our own group, found a stepping stone to express themselves by protesting artistically in the streets about the heated political and social situation of the country. But after the pandemic ended, or should I say the major media propaganda and intimidation about the health situation, this movement subsided and the artists’ actions stopped.

And no, it wasn’t because the problems were solved or even started to be solved. Besides, there are still rapists like Dimitris Lignadis, (former director of the National Theatre of Greece, actor and director of shows that have been presented in major theatres, such as the ancient theatre of Epidauros) who has been released by the Greek courts, while at the same time there are innocent people, or ones guilty of less serious offenses, in penitentiaries. It seems that most artists’ need to influence the system through showing their art in the public space, but the work is not strong enough or is lost in the pressures that the present modern era has created. Every day I notice that a large percentage of

people working in the arts, more specifically in theatre, lack time for collegiate issues, which concern the whole or even our personal lives, because administrative work takes priority, primarily that which is related to our involvement in a mobile phone or computer screen (funding, social media, etc.).

This condition is a simple observation and the variables that define it are many. I don't judge it as positive or negative, but always when it comes to my mind, I ask myself, as a person and as a woman who carries all that I have mentioned above, what can I do about what is happening, how can I resist and filter these situations through my daily life and theatrical work.

June 22, 2023

Theatre is the means, not the goal. It is a vehicle that, among other things, sharpens the memory and creates memories. It can lead you to very different landscapes both figuratively and literally, whether you are on the side of the creator or on the side of the viewer/receiver. This training and composition of memory is multifaceted and can be reached from different paths, since theatre is an

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and not an automated process, a distanced and sterile relationship.

Today, I went to the women's prison of Korydallos to watch a theatrical performance made by the prisoners who chose to join the theatre workshop with Fanis and Ioanna Bogdanou (theatrologist, partner of Fabrica Athens).

The show was entitled *When I was little*. It was a compilation of memories that the girls shared with the group, with their traditions and their lives outside and inside prison. Entering the dressing room they had set up in one of the institution's offices, and then in the courtyard of the prison, where they presented the performance, it was clear to my senses that these women had experienced an 'opening' through the theatre workshops and the creative process.

"When I was little...", I put honey in my father's shoes or chewing gum in my brother's so that they wouldn't leave, I told the plants my secrets, I dreamed of becoming a singer and I became... A theatrical game, which turned into a scene in the performance and which, in order to keep alive, they decided not to fix the text, but to find something new from their childhood in every rehearsal (and in the final performance).

Some cell windows looked out on this courtyard, which was no larger than 200 square metres. The music played by the show's musicians attracted the interest of the prisoners, especially the young gypsies, who crowded together to get a place near the iron fenced opening. Among them my gaze discerned an infant. He was only three months old, I was told by his inmate mother, who was holding him and they were in solitary confinement due to various Covid incidents, that's what the guards told me. A cell that, because of the configuration of the building, did not see the sun at all the whole day. I was looking at them with a joyful smile, we were having fun with the folk music that was playing, but inside

I was burning with sadness that the sun does not touch its child, I was seething with anger for the indifferent Greek society in which we and our children grow up, and I wished that the baby growing in my womb would be born free on all levels.

As the performance approached, the prisoners came to the courtyard to watch it. The baby and his mother remained in their cell. A few chairs had been placed in the space, which were soon occupied. At these events it is customary for organisers and guests to sit in the front row. Seeing the disproportion between the number of seats and the confined spectators, I asked for more seats to be brought, but I was told that they were NOT NEEDED (the total number of prisoners is about 160-200 and there were 70-100 chairs in the courtyard).

Once again, the blood rose to my head. I offered my seat to an inmate, who refused it, probably because she wasn't on the guest list, and sat on the ground in the front. Inmates, guests and staff, seeing me, a pregnant woman sitting on the ground, immediately offered me their seats, but I declined them with a smile; after all, it was the best place to see the show. Then suddenly other chairs appeared, in which those standing happily sat down, while other, younger women also took a place in front on the ground with me.

Activation through shame. But why? This is the reality, in this snapshot of Greek society, in the detention centres.

July 18, 2023, 7:19 p.m.

The sun is setting beautifully and all I am doing is thinking. What is the connection between: Director Lena Kitsopoulou's production in the ancient theatre of Epidaurus and all the

which caused feedback on social media

the theft

of our new theatre; my father's phone call from the hospital for me to talk to my

grandmother

Xanthi, who was obviously not well at all (perhaps he thought that this might be the

last time

I would talk to her); the phone conversation we had earlier with my father about the importance and meaning of

pain

(my father had been suffering intensively for a year from pains in the perineum), the

birthday

(birth, therefore also pain - area: again perineum) of my sisterly friend Amalia, I,
who after the phone call

I fill

my mouth with

sheep's yogurt and oatbran,

the sun that sets beautifully

and what kind of memory the combination of these events evokes in me.

I need a full pause.

This is theatre for me and this has always been its value. A full pause. I experienced it from the very first time when I participated in training in Fanis' theatre workshop. I experience it every time during my personal training, during rehearsals and in performance, even when I am a spectator. Energy is guided in specific directions, thickens and thus a new body is born that dances in a sphere which dissolves and utilises the surrounding environment. This process of total (or almost total) yielding to something (I deliberately avoid the word 'concentration') and the pausing that results is liberating, rejuvenating, makes me feel complete, fully alive.

Once, after many years, I met my teenage love on the street. I don't know how this happened, but literally everything around me froze. If I were using theatrical terms, everything continued its action in slow motion, close to the stillness of Gabrielle Roth. My heart started beating fast, I ran into his arms and spontaneously we kissed on the lips with all the innocence and love that exists in the universe. Slowly then, the world around returned to its normal speed. This is how I feel theatre works as well.

I feel that theatre is life itself. Personally, it became my whole life from the moment my bare feet stepped on the floor of Fabrica Athens' underground black box theatre. If you ask Greek artists "what is theatre?" they will refer to the actual theatre space and to performances and rehearsals within it. Whether this definition exists in artists of other nationalities I don't know, so I limit my reference geographically in order to show the Greek reality in which I live and act. But for me, theatre means also public space, refugees, rich families from the northern suburbs of Athens, writing projects, travelling, nature, odd jobs and, if I tried to condense everything that is theatre into one word or phrase, perhaps this would be

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with what society and more broadly life includes (again, the separation is deliberate). What is included within me and the world around me (I would like not to separate these, but I do so to emphasise the meaning I want to give).

It is in this complete pause, called theatre life that I discovered a great wound of mine which I would like to share: my difficulty in giving myself completely to

something. Letting go and not holding back. Theatre has helped me a lot with this in my everyday life, but then vice versa, since theatre has matured me in my everyday life, everyday life makes me dive more boldly into the theatrical process and then life becomes more like theatre and theatre more like life.

June 13, 2023, 2:13 p.m.

It's raining. For the last few years, I keep hearing people say confusedly "It is June and it rains". However, it's at least a decade now since I have been observing and remembering (here I want to note that I question if the selection of these two verbs is a coincidence) that it always rains in June. The last rains before the hot Greek summer. Surely the memory of nature has something to tell us with its rains!

Yesterday, I dreamt that I was on an educational visit about weather phenomena, where a third video representation was used to explain how the rain subsides. When I was in primary school, we were taken to the National Meteorological Service of Greece, which had predicted snowfall in Athens. I will never forget it! It was the first snow I experienced as a child.

In sifting through old notebooks, I found some notes from the summer of 2022 and a sketch from 2023, which coincidentally dealt with something common given a different form.

The notes from 2022 were related to my thinking that memory and memories are like clouds (hence vapour, hence water). Clouds take many forms. At first, they appear sporadically and are small, until they meet each other, creating large formations, which eventually dissipate in the form of rain. On the other hand, in the sketch, a female body was roughly drawn like an element of nature (mountains, rivers, volcanoes, lava, flowers, etc.) and clouds were the ancestors of this body.

Based on this idea a chain of thoughts spontaneously arrived which dealt with my desire to create two shows. The first one's theme is love. Love to me is like water. It passes through various forms, is constantly changing and can be adventurous like a torrent, calm like a lake, underground like the hidden water of the earth, it can be rhythmical like rain or soft like snow, and therefore clouds.

So, if memory and memories are like that

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and love the same, is there a correlation between these two concepts?

s a n d

The second performance which I want to create is related to dementia. Elda, my grandmother on my mother's side, had dementia. Sometimes she didn't recognise me, as if I had been erased from her memory. What I particularly remember about her is that for years when we lived together and she took care of me, we watched *Gone with the Wind* every night. In the research I've done so far,

sand games help people with this condition. Sand (which I singled out above as a word), and water are interconnected elements.

Maybe I'm not meant to create two different shows, but a common one. Love equals memory, water and cloud, water and sand. I wonder if you also see the connection and if following my reasoning, you can tune into my thinking.

Nevertheless, regarding whether it will be one or two separate performances, is a question that time will clarify. The same happened with the solo show *Xanthi* which I mentioned earlier. Everything seemed to take so much time. But, after its first two presentations, at Transit 10 and the 10th HRT Fest, I understood that the clay was still being sculpted. And it continues to be sculpted. Every performance is a living sculpture, which, even years after its body and content have been made, new variables come to move it from its point of balance, so that it constantly oscillates left and right. This makes it alive. Thus, on this occasion I will let myself be guided by time with a smile. I will resist my tendency to want to deal with things immediately or in a rush, which is a remnant of my habits as well as my temperament.

It is incredibly beautiful how the wisdom of life can be revealed to you by the creation of a show, by being member of a theatre group and a theatre family. I will always be grateful to *Xanthi*'s journey and to my grandmother. It is the lighthouse on the rock that is tamed by the pelagic waves and stands romantic, melancholic, an omen of celebration.

As I take these notes for *The Open Page* I feel so in love! In love with the Magdalenas. The magical touch of their breath during Transit 10 supports me in this fleeting moment to trace my own breath and the invisible paths that the breath of my ancestors and present and future members of my various families have breathed into my body. Oh, my baby, he is the baby of all the Magdalenas. I feel blessed with these realisations, I feel in love with my Self, with this dark



Giovanna Michaliadi Sarti rehearsing the solo performance *Xanthi*. Photo: Giannis Poulimenos

chest, which I know nothing about and every day I learn. I'm in love with the unknown.

Meeting of personal and theatrical notes

Pregnancy has been the most authentically creative time of my life so far. The process of giving birth was the most wonderful performance. Puerperium, the most bittersweet farewell with the risk of forgetting the moments of the last nine months and my life before them.

I am very afraid of how my new life - I am spotting an airplane crossing vertically across the sunset - will affect my theatrical life. But why am I afraid and not just wondering how it will affect it? I preconceive something. I feel as though the world is built this way, in this direction that makes me afraid. The fear has been planted in me by society itself. But I have faith in this blue-pink sky, in the tenderness I find in my feminine existence.

If you've made it this far in this article and if any of these words resonated within you, call me, send me a message or a letter (I love so much letters and postcards) to this address:

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Pisidias 14-16
17124, Nea Smyrni
Greece
j.michasa@gmail.com, +306949409474

Because I need to know that what I do, what I write touches somewhere, is connected to something and something new is born from this connection. This is how nature, the great creator, finds the strength and joy to continue to give birth, because she feels the connection, the synapse that is produced. So also, for artists, after the period of contemplation, meditation and solitude, comes the moment of sharing with the public. They look forward to this connection, so that through it they can channel their work or otherwise their memories into new territory and create a new memory.

Correspondingly, the audience is waiting to connect with the artist for the same reason, to make a new memory. And after they enter their burrow and begin their own contemplation and meditation on this new memory and whether they will choose to keep it and make it an integral part of their memory.

With these things on my mind, I realise that our duty is not so much to create a memory of our work, this is not solely up to us, but as women and female artists to leave something behind. I feel that we women have this possibility innately: to leave behind our records, our path and continue to express ourselves with courage and respect. To reach the finishing line having given as much as we can so that the journey and its end are light and sweet.