This special edition of MEI Viewpoints is the second volume in a continuing series which explores the State of the Arts in the Middle East. The essays comprising this volume examine the art and influence of the distinguished Palestinian artist and educator Samia Zaru, representations of female communities in Algiers in three of renowned filmmaker Nadir Moknèché's cinematic works, and the cultural production and societal roles of female Turkish Cypriot artists.
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Call for Papers

The arts of the Middle East are “alive” — with new artists, genres, and themes continuously being grafted onto old, adding shades and texture. While some of these are represented in this volume, many more are not. In the interest of providing a fuller picture of the state of the arts in the region, MEI welcomes additional essays from young and established scholars. These essays (1,000-1,200 words) must be accessible to non-specialists and aim to shed light on the importance of a specific artist, body of work, theme, or genre. Topic proposals will be accepted on a rolling or ongoing basis. Essays accepted for publication will be added to the current collection and published in electronic format. Please submit topic proposals in the form of a 100-word abstract (including full name, title, and affiliation) to Dr. John Calabrese at jcalabrese@mei.edu

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Viewpoints Special Edition

The State of the Arts in the Middle East: Volume II

To read Volume I, please click here or visit http://tinyurl.com/no2s2g
I have wanted to tell the world about Samia Zaru for a long time. It is difficult to write about her, not because her works are inscrutable — for they are straightforward — but because the sheer power of the woman herself gets in the way. She embodies contained passion and tough love ... she combines a restless mind, a contrarian's tongue, a designer's eye, and a compassionate soul.

I was first introduced to her in Jordan in 1977, when I was doing research on Middle Eastern artists for *Aramco* magazine. The dramatic energy of both the artist and her work continues to impress me. Her *oeuvre* is multidimensional and multimedia, her mission steadfast, and her physical and emotional strength immense. As my career veered from art museum director to Fulbright scholar to writer/researcher on women’s empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries, her art became ever more relevant to me. It is fitting that her painting, “Determination,” appears on the cover of my book *Women’s Voices in Middle East Museums*.

She would blanch at the designation of legend, but her art, as well as her influence as an educator and lecturer, is acknowledged worldwide. In 2000, Samia Zaru was honored as Woman of the Year by the American Geographical Institute. Yet, she did not intend to become an artist or a teacher. Born in Nablus, Palestine, she began university studies at the American University of Beirut, planning a career in medicine but while there discovered the world of art. After graduation, she pursued graduate studies in art at the Corcoran School of Art and American University in Washington, DC. She has exhibited internationally in one-person as well as group shows. Her works are part of the permanent collections of museums throughout the world. Over the years, Zaru has represented Jordan at several international cultural conferences.

In addition to her art production, Samia Zaru believes in art expression as an important social and political forum and so began teaching at the UNRWA Amman Teacher Training Center. Even today, she constantly refers to herself as an educator. For years, Zaru also was involved in the supply side of art: recognizing that artists in Jordan needed consistent and quality sources of art supplies, she helped promote the art scene on another level.

In 1977, I wrote in my journal: “As an artist she is well versed in many media ... in her production, she reflects the internationalism of her training. She is talented and confident ... to attempt the different tasks of monumental metal sculpture. She has chosen to portray her cultural heritage as subject matter ... this is her choice, not her boundaries.” Painting, sculpture, book illustration, weaving, paper and fabric design, costume, woodcuts, badges, emblems, book covers, murals — little escapes her creative production.
Malt...

Her works are structured and orderly, even when they seem like chaotic abstractions. Design is always important, as is texture and balance.

In her works, whether bold abstracts or structured cityscapes with their geographic/urban symbols, everything has a connection, a relationship to other images either by color or black line. She says: “Line, it is the line — and line makes the form, the substance, the design. In teaching, I tell my students there are more than three dimensions. The line from your eye to the piece is the fourth, the personal dimension. Line, it’s always the line. Form comes later.”

Murals and urban art are an important part of her art production. Her first mural (1964) was made for the Ramallah Training Center (Palestine) and depicted the students and their activities. Another mural (1966), made for the Ramallah municipality, was entitled “The Heritage of Palestine.” When she came to Amman in 1969, she created several murals, including those for the Amman Automobile Club (1969), the Sports City (1978), the Orthodox Club (1980), and much later (2005) for the Children’s Museum and Al Hussein Gardens.

Broad-brushed collage paintings proclaim her passionate convictions. She creates power-packed forms filled with color. Colors in her early palette are not primary but acid green, ochre, and yellow; later, blue and orange are predominant. “I was haunted by the Jerusalem theme in the 1970s,” she says of her subject matter. The early 1976-78 paintings of cityscapes, views of Amman or Jerusalem, are stark with domes, arches, geometric buildings, and hills. The crescent moon and the cross — Muslim and Christian symbols — always appear in these compositions. “New Horizon” (1979), featuring a swirling impasto sun and made specifically for her family’s new home in Amman, embodies the color, style, and energy of her early period. Early landscapes feature slabs of color, her fingers grooving texture into the paint. Many figurals and portraits are faceless, perhaps representing universal identity. An example is “Woman Seated in Repose” (oil on paper, 1959-60), done while a student at the Corcoran. Her figures seem abstract, outlined as if created in stained glass. They seem lost, searching, elongated, sexless.

Samia’s art is everywhere throughout her house. In July 2008 I watched the creation of “Crosses,” a six-foot high acrylic, as she painted it in her kitchen. “This is my domain, the kitchen,” she explained. (A companion piece also was being worked on in her studio on the grounds of her family’s villa). From a blank canvas, she began at the upper left. Blocks of blue, yellow, and orange spread down the canvas to the bottom right. Lines of a figure appeared. Colorful roundels were manipulated, resembling chrysanthemums. Strokes were quick, decisive. Bold crosses finished the design. Belying this latest creation, she asked: “Painting is for lazy people ... painting is always for the rich. Where is the energy?” Perhaps that is why, between 2005 and 2008, she has concentrated on murals and sculpture.

Her sculpture, “The Family” (Corten steel, 1976) is one of the first pieces of public art in Amman, impressive at its site near Amman’s Haya Center. Other sculptures in Jordan are at the National Gallery of Art and the Darat al Funun. Recently, she completed a 15-foot high sculpture, “Link I,” for the front of a communications building. The inspiration for this welded steel tower came from remembrance of an old Voice of America (VOA) poster with its radio waves circling, jabbing the air.

Samia Zaru continues to be inspired by former themes, returning to them often, but they constently appear fresh. There
is always a new project in her mind, a new challenge. I asked her family how they see her work today. Her husband, Nadjim, said: “I know she can do anything she puts her mind to.” Her daughter, Maha, added: “Her recent work is different because the suffering is gone. It’s freer. It’s outrageous.”

Samia Zaru is many things: an artist, educator, cultural promoter, role model, and now matriarch, living in a home that is a showcase for her art, a refuge for her family — both children and grandchildren — and a studio for her creative passions.
Mutiny in the Harem: Nadir Moknèche’s Algiers Trilogy

May Telmissany

In her book _Harem: The World behind the Veil_, Alev Lytle Croutier proposes the following definition of the harem: “The word _harem_, derived from the Arabic _haram_, means ‘unlawful’, ‘protected’ or ‘forbidden.’ The sacred area around Mecca and Medina is _haram_, closed to all but the Faithful. In its secular use, harem refers to the separate, protected part of a household where women, children, and servants live in maximum seclusion and privacy … It is a place in a noble and rich house, guarded by eunuch slaves, where the lord of the manor keeps his wives and concubines.”

While discussing different representations of female communities in Algiers in Nadir Moknèche’s trilogy _The Harem of Madame Osmane_ (2000), _Viva Laldjérie_ (2004), and _Délice Paloma_ (2007), one should approach the word “harem” figuratively, as a space of confinement and liberation, withdrawal and solidarity. The filmmaker recurrently uses the figure of the harem to structure the relationships between female characters, to depict the intimacy of their interactions, and emphasize the more or less private sphere in which they evolve and through which they conquer the public arena.

My brief discussion of the harem representations in Moknèche’s films consists of two arguments. The first emphasizes the opposition between the reductive representation of the historical/colonial/traditional harem on the one hand, and the modern image of women groupings viewed — metonymically — as “harems,” on the other. The cinematic harem becomes a spatial token that opposes and reconciles the old traditions and the aspirations of specific categories of modern Algerian women: an old combatant of the Algerian resistance and her daughter in _Le Harem de Madame Osmane_, a former dancer and her daughter in _Viva Ladjérie_, and a mafia lady and her daughter-like protégées in _Délice Paloma_. Far from being rejected by women, the harem is conceived of, and perceived as, a space of female solidarity and empowerment, and as a space of initiation, given the recurrent mother-daughter clusters depicted in the trilogy.

The second argument examines the de-romanticized representation of the harem as the cultural allegory of a de-romanticized “homeland” viewed through the Diasporic gaze of the Algerian-French filmmaker. While most Arab and Middle Eastern filmmakers of the Diaspora tend to perpetuate the _cliché_ of the feminized homeland, Moknèche problematizes the relationship between woman and land by territorializing it outside of the patriotic discourses; therefore, the relationship is never taken for granted. The woman/homeland dichotomy is tightly intertwined with the colonial/post-colonial duality,

2. Nadir Moknèche is a French-Algerian director. He was born in Paris in 1965, and lived in Algiers most of his childhood and his adolescence. He went back to Paris in 1984, where he studied theatre and cinema. He then traveled to London and New York and came back to France where he worked for the famous playwright Ariane Mouchkine. In 2000, he signed his first long feature, _Le Harem de Madame Osmane_, co-produced by France and shot in Algiers. _Viva Laldjérie_ is his second long feature, co-produced by France and Belgium, shot in Algiers and acclaimed in many international film festivals. The famous Algerian comedian Biyouna (the servant in _Le Harem_ and the mother in _Viva Laldjérie_) appears in his third film, _Delice Paloma_ (2007), in the role of a mafia lady called Madame Aldjérie.
where the encounter of odds (homeland and hostland) and the reconciliation of extremes (colonial past and national present) seem to be possible, thanks to the diasporic gaze.

Evidently, the filmmaker wishes to create (or re-identify) his own “Laldjérie,” a mixture of the French name Algeria and the Arab one, Al-Djazaer. He also re-appropriates the Orientalist gaze as a component of his particularly mixed identity, namely through the mise en scène of an Orientalist-like episode in Viva Laldjérie, where Goucem, the daughter, seeks the help of a fortune-teller, a character coming out of a painting by Delacroix or Gérôme. Correlatively, the filmmaker presents a completely demystified vision of the modern Algerian woman, especially in the last film, Délice Paloma, where his fetish actress Biyouna plays the role of a mafia lady called Madame Aldjérie who is obsessed with only one dream: buying the old Thermes of Caracalla.

A similar situation is seen in Viva Laldjérie where the main character, Papicha (also played by Biyouna) is determined to find and purchase the cabaret where she used to dance, the Copa-cabana, which has closed under Islamist pressure. In fact, Biyouna's sense of irreverence and vulnerability is key to the popular success of Moknèche's movies outside of Algeria.

The harem representation is deterritorialized, equally dissociated from its historical and Orientalist backgrounds. One way of destabilizing this image is to subvert the power relationships between men and women on one hand, and between female masters and female servants on the other hand. In Moknèche's harem, female characters live, dwell, and work on the margins of the masculine realm. The quasi-absence of male central characters is obviously an aesthetic choice as well as a political statement: the absent husband in The Harem of Madame Osmane, the dead father in Viva Laldjérie, the unknown Italian lover and the unfaithful husband (owner of a cinema playhouse) in Délice Paloma are deliberately stereotyped in order to emphasize the negation — even the neutralization — of the harem's exclusive function as a space for hedonistic pleasures where the “lord” keeps his wives and concubines in maximum seclusion. And while Moknèche keeps the father's figure at bay, he de-romanticizes the harem by excluding the erotic fantasies of male exclusivity in the traditional house of happiness (aka the Turkish seraglio). The non-exclusive sexual relationships depicted in Viva Laldjérie and Délice Paloma subvert the traditional representation of the harem, since major female characters in both movies openly seek sexual liberation, facing social reprobation and religious furies.

Power relations between female masters and servants are also deconstructed. Meriem the servant in The Harem of Madame Osmane regularly transgresses the rules of obedience, reversing the power relationship with the landlady by simply ignoring her orders or by singing to maintain a certain distance with her master. In one of the most powerful scenes of the film, the middle class landlady gives her maid a bath, and while the maid is singing and enjoying the bath, the lady is weeping over the death of her own daughter, which occurred when the daughter defied a curfew. Papicha in Viva Laldjérie condemns the sexual liberation of her own daughter, and overtly antagonizes her neighbor, Fifi the prostitute, but without imposing any rules nor limits on her relationship with either of them. It is actually the daughter who imposes her rules on the mother, empowered by the fact that she works while the mother does not. Finally, the unscrupulous Madame Aldjérie in Délice Paloma exploits her “girls” to gain power over men, and consequently to insure her/their future as the potential owner(s) of the public baths of Caracalla. The opening of the movie shows her coming out of prison, meeting with her closest associate (now married and veiled), and, with her deaf sister, asking them both...
Telmissany...

to come back to work for her and facing their stubborn refusal and their disdain.

The cinematic harem is saturated with self-empowerment and resistance against all forms of dominance, male or female, but also against religious fundamentalism and the bourgeois moral system (denouncing this system for its coward positions during the years of terror, as in the wedding procession in *Viva Laldjérie*, when rich, fur-covered women deliberately deliver Fifi the prostitute to the national security agents who kill her). The three movies pay homage to today’s new women fighters of Algiers, middle class combatants, seasonal workers, dancers, singers, and even prostitutes, some of which are representatives of female resistance against the establishment, the institution of family, and marriage, while some others are ultimately witnesses of prejudices about sexuality and sexual liberation, such as those which confuse female sexual appetite with prostitution or deviance.

The cinematic harem has open doors, and its inhabitants are subject to the voyeuristic, imaginative gaze of the filmmaker. Yet this voyeuristic gaze does not reflect a documentary preoccupation. The purpose of making an authentic representation of women’s space does not operate in cinema like it used to in Orientalist painting or in colonialist photography. In Malek Alloula’s major book *The Colonial Harem*, imprisoned women are eroticized and fantasized, but what their imprisonment reveals, argues the author, is mainly the sexual frustration of the photographer, not that of the photographed. The old harem is represented in colonial photography as a community of faceless women, seriality and servility being two faces of the same coin. Images of women in the harem are often the serial representation of a typically seductive, passive, lusty, faceless woman. In Moknèche’s movies, female characters are individualized, differentiated. But they are also considered disreputable and immorale because they choose to live outside of the traditional family institution. And since male authoritative figures are absent from his narratives, the only choice left to female characters is to operate in the margins, as humble middle class house owners, dancers, singers, prostitutes, small mafia gangsters, and the like. These characters are therefore depicted as strong, ambitious, cunning, intransigent, and even cruel women, especially in relation to other women, in the exclusively feminine environment where solidarity and wickedness rime perfectly well and enjoy some sort of consensus.

The Diasporic gaze as we have seen in Moknèche’s trilogy uncovers the shifting values and social transformations of Algiers, in terms of space representation, class oppositions, gender discrimination, and political oppression, challenging the prevailing social and religious conservatism as well as the nationalist predominant discourses. Like North African filmmakers of the Diaspora, mainly in France, Moknèche explores different aspects of his transnational identity by focusing on two fundamental leitmots: the investigation of contemporary history (the aftermath of the years of terror) and the denunciation of socio-religious conservatism and prejudices. Each aspect is explicitly or implicitly illustrated either to provoke the homeland audiences and challenge their self-indulgent representations or to attract the attention of the hostland audiences to the rapid social transformations in post-independence North African societies. He deconstructs the images Algerian people and filmmakers are keen to portray of themselves, and suggests a more complex and less apologetically constructed portrayal of his homeland.
In an interview with French-Algerian historian Benjamin Stora, Nadir Moknèche notes: “Algerians have a tricky relationship with images, their image. They started by seeing themselves through the colonial eye, a mass of undifferentiated people, then when independence came, as social realist archetypes: the Combatant, the Farmer, the Worker. Never as individuals with their own personality … Since its independence, Algiers has practically not been depicted, a city always lacking contemporary images of itself. The reference self-portrait remains colonial or folkloric.”

The historical component is therefore a primary concern, investigating the colonial past and the post-colonial present of the city through the dichotomy of the old quasbah and the modern colonial city facing the sea, and through the depiction of the years of terrorist upheaval and their impact on city life, and on women in particular. The religious aspect is subtly criticized in his films, where manifestations and repercussions of fundamentalism as well as the struggle for secularization are omnipresent. For the filmmaker views himself and his female characters -his alter-egos- as rebels with a cause, introducing a new and fresh image of Algerian urban society today, not as an undivided whole, but as an individuated cinematic space, propitious for mutiny.

Turkish Cypriot Women Artists and Their Role in Society

Netice Yildiz

Art in the sense of Western style is a rather new concept for the Turkish society living in Cyprus. Under British rule, Turkish Cypriots were slow to follow new trends due to their lack of education and desire to preserve their national and religious identities. The British government reinforced this by fostering an education policy based on the Hellenic and Ottoman systems, in which the Orthodox Church and the Turkish Evkaf1 organization took the responsibility for educating each society. Over the years, however, the prospects for Turkish Cypriot artists, including female artists, have improved; and the form and content of their cultural production has evolved, as has their role in Cypriot society.

THE LEAN YEARS

The Republic of Turkey, founded in 1923, sought to initiate a modernization trend. This trend began in Cyprus in the 1930s with the appointment of some teachers from Turkey. As a result, female Turkish Cypriots, who previously had wrapped themselves in their veils and had lived behind the walls of their houses, suddenly experienced the fruits of a vibrant intellectual life. Women not only entered the labor force, but became cultural producers: writing poetry, contributing to newspapers, and participating in theater, music, and sporting events. However, progress for female Turkish Cypriots was nonetheless slow. The secondary school curriculum, for example, provided inadequate preparation for girls to begin university education. It was geared, instead, toward educating women to be “intellectual housewives” and providing few career opportunities (e.g., as primary school teachers, nurses, or midwives). Few families sent their daughters to Turkey or England to complete their education.

Thus, until the 1960s, art experiences for most female Turkish Cypriots consisted merely of drawing and painting, and remained only as primary and secondary school “classroom memories.” Surprisingly, despite women’s major role as art teachers in primary and secondary schools, the first Turkish Cypriot artists to exhibit their works were their male counterparts, such as Mehmet Necati (1904-1967), Hasan Öztürk (1904-1981), İsmet V. Güney (1932-2009), and Cevdet Çağdaş (1926-2009). Mevhibe Şefik, the first permanent secondary school art teacher, preferred to remain in the shadow of her students’ exhibitions.

In 1931, Sir Ronald Storrs initiated an annual event known as the Pancyprian celebrations — a program of athletic competitions and art exhibitions aimed at bringing together Greek, Turkish, Armenian, and British participants. The first Pancyprian exhibition, held at the Cyprus Conservatory, displayed 144 paintings, among which were the paintings of the male Turkish Cypriot artist, Mehmet Necati. After 1947, İsmet Vehit Güney joined these exhibitions. However, with the exception of Olga Rauf (1893-1987), the wife of a Turkish doctor, no female Turkish Cypriot artist’s works appeared at the annual

1. The oldest Turkish institution responsible for pious foundations and philanthropy.
Pancyprian exhibitions. During the 1940s and 1950s, even male artists’ interest in exhibiting their works at these annual events waned. The reason for this is rather obvious: In the United States and Europe the post-modernist movement, particularly abstract art, was taking hold. Meanwhile, Cypriot artists, like their counterparts in many Middle Eastern countries, were making attempts to practice Western art, mainly depicting landscapes, still lifes, or portraits in which they tried to hone their drawings through the use of three-dimensional as well as perspective techniques. The products were usually naïve or impressionist style in character. Art in the modern sense was a rather new concept for Turkish Cypriots, even for the intellectuals who studied abroad. In a 1946 newspaper article, Nazif Süleyman Ebeoğlu bitterly criticized the new trends, citing the difficulty of comprehending the “craziness” in modern art. Foreign artists, particularly the English artists living in Cyprus, also practiced mainly impressionist and post-impressionist or naïf cubist styles. The situation was not much different for the Greek artists, who only were acquainted with the schematic Byzantine-style icon painting. During the last decade of British rule in the 1950s, the attempts to create a Pancyprian society almost failed; instead, ethnic division reached its apex, resulting in the segregation of Cypriot’s communities.

The first solo exhibitions of Cypriot Turkish artists date back to 1947 — specifically to an opening by İsmet V. Güney at the British Institute, where the artist was teaching. Ayşe Halluma, a woman from Turkey married to a Turkish Cypriot, was the first female Turkish Cypriot to exhibit her works, which consisted of illustrations of the poetry of Özker Yaşın and Taner Baybars, two young Turkish Cypriots. Her exhibit opened on May 19, 1954 at the Çetinkaya Sport Club. Although all exhibits were sold out on the first day of the exhibition, it ended up unhappily for this young, talented artist when a family quarrel erupted, as is recorded in the diary of Taner Baybars.

The first Turkish Cypriot artists’ exhibitions were organized in 1960, the year of the founding of the Republic of Cyprus. These were repeated in subsequent years, and female artists who were mainly graduates of art schools took part in them. Their participation stemmed from the upgrading of girls’ secondary educational institutions in 1952, including the introduction of a new curriculum. These changes enabled women to earn Lycée diplomas, which in turn paved the way for them to attend higher educational institutions in Turkey. Sema Zihni (1932-1967), Inci Kansu (b.1937), and Göral Özkan (b. 1938) — the first graduates of Gazi Higher Teachers’ Training Institute (currently Gazi University) — started their careers as art teachers in the secondary schools. This was a promising turning point for those newly graduated young artists. However, due to the political turmoil in 1963, Turkish Cypriot society soon faced financial difficulties. With limited budgets (hardly enough to cover their living expenses) and restricted travel on the island, affording and even finding painting materials on the market became exceedingly difficult.

During these troubled years, any solo exhibition or music performance was considered a great occasion in Cypriot society. Such events were attended by politicians, bureaucrats, diplomats, high-society notables, and intellectuals. Aylin Örek (b. 1941), the first Turkish Cypriot artist to earn a degree from the Fine Arts Academy (today, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University) in İstanbul, Turkey had her solo exhibition in Nicosia in 1966. Later, Göral Özkan, İsmet Tatar, Emel Samioğlu, Ali Atakan, Salih Oral, Güner Pir, Ayhan Menteş, and Özden Selenge followed her example.
Nowadays, the number of artists is increasing, while specialization in different techniques and mediums is bringing richness to the art of Turkish Cypriot society. Emin Çizenel, Aşık Mene, Nilgün Güney, Ruzen Atakan, Günay Güzelgül, Ümit İnatçı, Feridun İşiman, İlqay Önoş, and many others are following in the footsteps of their artistic forebears. The main style preferred by a majority of these artists is abstract impressionism, symbolism, neo-realism, and graphic art forms — all combined with local elements. Noteworthy artists include sculptors and ceramic artists, such as Şinasi Tekman, Baki Bogac, Zehra Şonya, and Ayhatun Ateşin, and paper art artists, such as İnci Kansu. Sensitivity to the environment, political developments, and daily human life are their main topics. Almost no Turkish Cypriot artist today depicts the bitter, bloody scenes of communal conflict.

During the period of 1975-1990, artists exhibited their works in local exhibition halls owned by the government as well as in some joint exhibitions in Turkey such as the International Asian-European Art Biennale. A new era began in the 1990s with the opening of some private galleries, such as Fluxus Gallery (1988), HP (Haydar Pasha) Gallery (1991), and Vision Gallery (1994). One of the most noteworthy of these exhibitions was the opening of the 1st International Erotic Art Exhibition in 1990. Unfortunately, by 2000, all of these galleries had closed down. Side Street Gallery (2006) is the only one still operating.

In addition, there have been bi-communal art exhibitions, conducted under the auspices of the Embassy of the United States in Nicosia with the aim of fostering the peace process. These exhibitions, known as the Brushstrokes across Cultures, were successful attempts to bring together Greek and Turkish Cypriots as well as foreign-born artists and intellectuals. The first three exhibitions were organized in private art galleries both in the Greek and Turkish parts of Nicosia, in 1992, 1993, and 1997, while the last two (in 1997 and 1999) were organized in the American Embassy residence in southern Nicosia. These occasions, as well as bi-communal conflict resolution group training, encouraged the authorities of both sides to open borders for free circulation in the island on April 23, 2003. Since then, there have been several meetings, concerts, exhibitions, and conferences organized usually with the generous funding of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The first such event, the Marginal Art workshop, was organized in December 2003 at the buffer zone in Ledra Palace, Nicosia. There, artists, poets, and musicians worked together for three days and exhibited their works in the streets.

In recent years, another important project, open studio exhibitions, has been realized in Nicosia. The project's aims were to bring people together to revive bi-communalism in Nicosia through art and artists, to enable the public to come into contact with art and artists and reacquaint themselves with the beauty and realities of the historic city, and to cultivate through art mutual understanding and respect. Thirty artists took part in the project's first exhibition.

The Leaps of Faith Exhibition, curated by Katerina Gregos and Erden Kosova, opened in Nicosia on May 13, 2005. This was another international exhibition in which multi-disciplinary art projects were exhibited in a part of the UN-controlled Green Line (buffer zone) dividing the island. It marked the first occasion in 30 years that the area was opened up for use in an international event. This project aimed to animate and activate public spaces, buildings, and sites in the divided city of Nicosia.
Currently several joint exhibitions are underway, organized by the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts, Cyprus (EKATA) and European Mediterranean Art Association (EMAA). It is believed that these projects can, and are, bringing the members of the two societies closer together and contributing to the peace process.

Very recently, other joint exhibitions have taken place, including at the site of the Cyprus peace talks on the buffer zone. The second such exhibition, unveiled in July 2009 by the Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on Cyprus, Alexander Downer, featured works by the female artists Katerina Attalidou, İnci Kansu, Stella Angelidou, Ismet Tatar, Tatiana Ferahian, and Vicky Pericleous. Their works consisted of pieces illustrating different aspects of the Cyprus problem.¹

The universities established in Northern Cyprus nowadays provide opportunities for exhibitions as well increasing research and publications about the recent history of art in Cyprus. One such great occasion to publicize female artists (including painters, sculptors, and ceramic artists) was held in 2002 at Eastern Mediterranean University. This event, on the occasion of International Women’s Day, featured works by 21 female Turkish Cypriot artists. Another important contribution is the formation of an archive of documents about Turkish Cypriot artists by the Centre of Cypriot Studies, Eastern Mediterranean University. The periodical Kadın/Woman 2000 also has given greater notoriety to female Turkish Cypriot artists.

However, despite the increasing opportunities for artists, difficult economic conditions, the lack of galleries, and the unrecognized status of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are obstacles to the sale of their works. Meanwhile, the lack of a modern art museum or archive has hampered the work of art historians and art critics.

CONCLUSION

Over the years, the number of Turkish Cypriot artists has grown, as has the diversity of arts forms and subject matter. So, too, have the opportunities for Turkish Cypriot artists and aspiring artists to study their craft and to exhibit their works. With the revision of educational curricula and other developments, there has been an increase in the number of female Turkish Cypriot artists and in the notoriety they have received.

In recent years, Turkish Cypriot artists have produced art not only for art’s sake, but in the broader service of Cypriot society. Male and female Turkish Cypriot artists alike have sought to infuse Cypriot society with a positive spirit and energy, employing their craft in efforts intended to bring peace and unity to a still divided Cyprus.

SELECTED SOURCES

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1. I acknowledge Ms. Özgüll Ezgin, one of the curators, for her kindness in giving some of the illustrations for the article.

2. I acknowledge Ms. Özgüll Ezgin, one of the curators, for her kindness in giving some of the illustrations for the article.
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