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# Defining the Undefined

Cypriot artist Anna Fotiadou joined eight other artists in Germany for an interactive workshop to create an exhibition that will take place in November

In an attempt to redefine the future terms of Skulpture Glaskasten's (Glass-Box Sculpture Museum) renowned video and sound art awards before they are presented again in 2013, an interactive workshop entitled *Undefine* took place in Marl, Germany with the diverse voices and experiments of nine artists from around the world including local applied artist Anna Fotiadou.

Equipped with experience and sound knowledge on the international contemporary art scene, the Director of Glaskasten Museum, Georg Elben, personally selected this pool of artists based on their work and individual subject matter only to bring them together in a common space.

But once on location, without a pre-set goal, artists didn't only verbally explore the delicate definition of video and sound art nowadays, but worked together, combining their concepts and techniques which, bearing in mind the nature of each outcome, are to be separated into two results.

The first is an exhibition of representative video and sound art installations to be displayed in the "Kaleidoskopische Klang – Bild – Welten" (Kaleidoscopic Sound – Image – Worlds) exhibition held in Marler Stern shopping centre during the autumn and the other a selection of five performances from the workshop that will be exclusively presented at the WDR broadcasting studios in early November 2012 as part of the "Long Night" event held throughout museums in Cologne.

Going about redefining the basis of an awards' selection on a subject matter that is so complex in its own way, Elben seems to be attempting this by discussing the matter with people who are directly involved in it; the artists themselves.

"Participating artists gave their thoughts and some suggestions about how the awards could be redefined or change course," explains Anna, yet there "wasn't any concrete 'redefinition' by the end of the workshop.

"All thoughts, suggestions and ideas will be taken into consideration by the organisers and a final proposal will be drafted" in due time.

Discussions and communication went beyond the "conference table."

Having had the opportunity to view portfolios beforehand, thus attaining a rough idea on each participant's ideologies and work mediums, artists from the fine arts (video and sound art) and art theory, music, performance and dance fields were cut off from society for a week, in the suburbs of a small German



town called Marl.

Their only guidance was themselves, their experience, and a thematic focus: Urban Utopias. In this case Urban Utopias refers to "the creation of planned cities such as Lingang in China, Palmanova in Italy, Chandigarh in India or Marl itself which gives us fine examples of a utopian approach to architecture.

"For all the planning that goes into these cities, the form of the social structure that results within these futuristic-looking architecture remains incalculable". Introducing the human element to the subject matter the workshop also included "other topic areas such as contemporary models of the role of the individual in society, the future visions for human cohabitation, or examples of public figures (politicians, stars...) and questions of identity."

Suddenly being found isolated in a new space, with unfamiliar faces and a variety of educational and cultural backgrounds is daunting to anybody, at least at first, but it appears the workshop was purposely built in such a way.

"It (the workshop) was influential enough just by being 'forced' to work with artists you never met before in a short period of given time. Just meeting and discussing each other's work was interesting in seeing different creative approaches to different situations" says Anna.

And perhaps in such circumstances, it's only when one comes home to reflect on what 'just happened' that one realises or uses the experience to move to other planes.

"The whole process of the workshop was hectic and tiresome at times, but it gave all of us exciting results and left everybody in high spirits of creative modes", which explains why the results of the workshop are set to be presented at a future date.

The works completed at the workshop where exposed to the general public on a single occasion however, with performances having been presented on July 1 at the Stadttheatre in Marl, a placebo of what is to take place in November.

Anna's performance at the Stadttheatre will be repeated in November, in a collaboration she developed with "Mila Burghardt (a performance/video artist). The live performance, which incorporated video art, was entitled "Incline".

"The work was based on how the most simple opposite words can give rise to a narrative within a city landscape that has not yet redefined itself as an urban territory.

"Marl, an old coal mine city, now a chemical factory city, reconstructed during the last fifty years, with a newly founded city centre, deviates from the horizontal or vertical, it's 'slanted'.

"This ambiguous landscape influenced us to a certain tendency and didn't impose the right or wrong, but placed before us, our own questioning aspects of the urban system."

For Anna, her return only enhanced her need to "continue collaborating with imaginative people in the field of performance, whether in Cyprus or abroad and get as much creative work done as possible".

In addition, exchanging notes with other artists also implicated a collaboration on a series of performances with Olivia Pils, a German sound/loop artist who participated in the workshop.

As for Georg Elben, he's going to have to dwell on the exchange of opinions given throughout the workshop and reach a decision on what essentially Skulpture Glaskasten is looking for when awarding works in the audio-visual art scene.