

Places in Time: Chrono[topo]graphies: Limassol 17[9]00.

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This paper presents the *Chrono[topo]graphies: Limassol 17[9]00* Art Installation project, that is based on photography, and that was presented at Mitos Centre of Performing Arts in Limassol, Cyprus in November 2024. The project involves the projection of a number of photographic “palimpsests”, one for each different area of the city of Limassol, which signify each place through their morphogenetic structuring. The installation uses archival photographic material of selected areas of the city taken in different years, from the late 19th century to the mid 20th century. The separate archives from the different areas of Limassol, comprised of pictures taken from the same place at different times, were then blended using the “Difference” layer blending function in GIMP, which subtracts the values of the different photographs to produce a process similar to the surface of a palimpsest.

The aim was to record the overlap of time in relation to a given space, thus creating “temporal” visual forms. The idea is informed by the notion of the palimpsest as an intersection between the past and the present, as described by Tim Ingold (2023). The palimpsest was used in the Middle Ages as a kind of a writing surface that had been deliberately eroded to remove the previous texts and allow a new text to be written. Using the palimpsest, Ingold shows how, through this process of surface scratching and deliberate erosion, the older inscriptions are actually brought to the surface as the new ones are dug in. For Ingold (1993), this process is associated with the pre-modern societies and the way they perceived their position in the natural landscape, space, and time through the plow that ploughed the land stirring up the old to generate the new crops.

Similarly, in the Palimpsest form of writing, the newer text does not completely erase the older text. Rather there is a kind of reciprocal interaction happening in which the past is continually brought to the surface as the present is driven underneath. This creates a dialogue in which new visual and literary forms emerge from the interaction between the different layers of texts. These texts are not defined by their chronological ordering or sequencing or any other linear criteria, but instead by their intersection in time. In other words, they are the traces left of a human encounter in time.

In a similar way, in our project a material process is involved in the dialogue between the old and the new, creating hybrid forms in time that subvert the notion of linear time and layering that is perceived in Modernity. Modernity represents, simulates and views the past through static images. This view presupposes descriptions in terms of clarity, clearly distinct layers that the one replaces the other and not intersect.

Human activity is presented as a morphogenetic agent in time, challenging the idea that time is an independent, objective variable and states that time can be viewed as a result of human en-

counters across time. The work was also based on the idea of the “damaged archives” proposed by Iain Chambers (Chambers et. Al 2014) as an alternative conception of culture, outside its the strict and rigid categorization in Modernity.

The *Chrono[topo]graphies: Limassol 17[9]00* project is basically a photographic palimpsest that captures what, in this paper, we call “chronotopes” - places inside time - in the city of Limassol in Cyprus. According to theorists such as Marc Augé (1995: 77-78), a place is defined by its relational aspect, by human encounters and relationships within a space. As we argue in this paper, in Modernity we tend to view, depict or create stories about the past that are sterilized from the human interactions, and therefore as a temporal “non-place”. For example, an artifact from the past, usually in museums, is treated as an exhibit, frozen in time and intended to be viewed from a detached perspective. Its dynamic components are sterilized and it becomes an inert object just for observation. Similarly, narratives about the past of a place tend to create equally static descriptions on the past. The image of the past becomes an inert image vis-à-vis the modern subject that stands in opposition to it, and its dynamic expression is lost beneath this image.

As we suggest in this paper, this rendering of the past as a non-place is largely due to the fact that the past, in Modernity, the past is produced as an image rather than as a morphogenetic process.

For example, a photograph from the past can, by definition, only produce static images that register space and time merely as independent containers of events. In other words the dynamic and contingent element of the past that is embedded within the traces left from the material human interactions as they occur across time, are lost beneath the “snapshot” which functions merely as an imitation, a “re-presentation”, a membrane that conceals the morphogenetic processes involved in its appearance in time. That by definition removes us from the dynamic aspect of the past.

In contrast, *Chrono[topo]graphies: Limassol 17[9]00* uses photography in a fundamentally different way, aiming to restructure the way we conceptualize the past through images, emphasizing at recording the traces, the imprints of human interactions and encounters through time as a morphogenetic process rather than treating photography as a simulacrum. The intention is to use photography as a medium for visualizing the hidden markers of human activity, rather than as an abstract container of events. To reveal the invisible between images, which function as as indexical signifier rather than an iconic signifier.

To establish places in time.

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Some of the Images of the photographic palimpsests mentioned above are in the next page.



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