

# 1000 WORDS: HARIS EPAMINONDA TALKS ABOUT 'PROJECTS 96'

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GROWING UP IN GREEK CYPRUS in the 1980s, Berlin-based artist Haris Epaminonda thought of the Turkish side of that divided island as an unimaginable world. But, she recalls, "I somehow believed I could connect to this other world through books and the ancient ruins and relics found everywhere on the island—things that existed long before the country was to be separated." Epaminonda could be described as a time traveler, one who roves among eras collecting such artifacts. The elements in this ever-growing trove of found images (both still and moving) and objects are recycled and reassimilated into her work in various ways. In her precise installations, items from her archive—whether presented in groupings of found curios or images, or incorporated into collages or films—are arrayed on, in, or among plinths, frames, and other display structures of the artist's own design. The architecture, too, is designed by Epaminonda. Typically, she will build a museum within a museum, squashing or elongating the proportions of the host institution's gallery, creating alcoves, culs-de-sac, and dead ends. Via these constructions, she directs the viewer's journey while creating a rupture between the self-contained world of her work and the larger institutional "world" that houses it.

This month in New York, Epaminonda will present a new installation as part of the Museum of Modern Art's ongoing series of "Projects" exhibitions. A kind of architectural folly, the installation will comprise several discrete spaces. In the first room, Epaminonda will create a museological-style display using a number of different items from her collection. In the darkened second room, the three-channel video installation *Tarabi III, V, VI*, 2007, will be shown. Epaminonda created each of the component videos, which will play sequentially in a continuous cycle, by editing together excerpts of Greek movies from the '60s. The suburban melodrama of the source material is transformed by Epaminonda's editing, which loosely synchronizes fragments of the original films to Alexander Scriabin's eerie, dissonant Piano Sonata

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No. 10 (1913). Devices such as slow motion and superimposition amplify the music's ominousness, estranging such innocuous images as a couple crossing a footbridge or a little girl standing on a bright green lawn. Faced with these decontextualized snippets, viewers are thrown back on their own memories and associations—as is the case in all of Epaminonda's work, which transposes the relics of the past from historical time to psychological time, to use Henri Bergson's formulation. In this register, temporality is nonlinear and subjective, and the experience of duration is as mysterious, recursive, and unpredictable as memory itself.

—Kathy Noble

IN GREEK, *tarabi* means “turmoil”—specifically, a moment of calm followed by something intense happening. It's also a state of mind, and I think this state of mind, this mood will be echoed throughout the exhibition at MoMA. There will be two rooms; the films will be shown in one, and in the other will be architectural interventions: a large niche and a little window—similar to the window I made at Tate Modern in 2010—as well as a selection of framed images, some pedestals and found objects. There are formal relations between the rooms, a kind of fragmented and twisted narration in the films and in the space, turning both into visions of the world as a slow-motion whirlwind.

When I began the “Tarahi” series in early 2007, I had just started looking at some Greek movies from the 1960s. In Cyprus, these were popular films—romances, thrillers, dramas, comedies—that were often shown on TV. I watched them many times during my childhood, and when I saw them again years later, I realized what an impact they had had on me and decided I wanted to rework them. Instead of re-creating the narratives of the original series, I would put together short sequences, isolating a small movement or the appearance of a shadow. In this way I could build up a collage of fragments, selected according to my own emotional responses and arranged according to color or imagery rather than any sequential story line. In those days I was spending a lot of time listening to a piece by Alexander Scriabin, Piano Sonata No. 10. The composition has crescendos and a restlessness in places, then returns to calm. Like Scriabin's music, the “Tarahi” films develop rhythmically, based on changes of mood and atmosphere, building to peaks, creating tension.

For the installation of *Tarabi III, V, VI* at MoMA, I imagine counterbalancing the intensity of color and motion in the films. I would like the first room to be a very static space. I've decided to create a separation between the two rooms, a corridor that leads from a brighter ambience into total darkness. The project won't take its final shape until I'm installing; I know that the moving images will in some ways inform my visual approach to the installation. In the films there are two people, a man and a woman, who seem disconnected yet waiting and longing for each other. In an abstract way, such notions will also be echoed

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in the second room.

I like to think of the whole space as the work. For me it all appears as a kind of closed form, an image. Once you're inside the space, you're inside the work, and all the images, objects, and display structures are part of it. I'm always collecting—I take my Super 8 camera with me during my travels, capturing scenes and moments. And as I collect, I'm already editing, cutting out the bits and pieces of material that I don't need, in a struggle between storing and erasing. When I want to make a work, I begin by picking different elements and slowly juxtaposing and rearranging them. Certain motifs become important for me and repeat, an accumulation of gestures that is like a form of language.

I am often asked whether being a Cypriot has shaped my identity as an artist. This hasn't been so much a conscious or a literal thing, but it has affected my vision. Today, as I sit in my car in a traffic jam in the center of Nicosia, looking at the modern architecture overshadowing the different periods and styles, I can feel both the tragedy of erasure and the memory that remains, accumulating in things and places.

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