

PARIAHS

PERFORMING EUROPEAN HISTORICAL MEMORY



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INTRODUCTION

We are witnessing a change in modern society. We adopted new habits of life and relied on new values. Life has become faster and full of new acquisitions that push away the memory. Have we broken all the threads that connect us to each other and bind us to the essence of our existence? Are we living more fully?

Our reality forces a reevaluation of new values. Questioning new orientations. Intellectuals, who should be opening up fatal and sensitive questions, entering the "open field", are increasingly opting for the comfort zone. They are getting quieter and quieter.

In every society, there have always been rare individuals who deviated from the prevailing norms by their own actions and behaviours, causing others to have a restless conscience. Thus, they encouraged and strengthened the thought processes and the ethical vitality of society.

Do we have special people today who could be the restless conscience of the times? Who could be the promoters of beneficial changes, the corrective of society? If they are, how does modern society treat them?

We are talking about pariahs (outcasts) who have always been despised - pariahs (the name originates from India, it called ritual drummers; later members of a lower caste). Some rulers and societies of the past were aware of their usefulness and protected them.

Is modern society aware of the importance of these individuals and their "maladapted" behaviour?

The *Pariahs Project (Performing European Historical Memory)* was inspired by director Filippos Koutsaftis' documentary "The Mourning Rock" (*Agelastos Petra*; Eleusis 2000), which casts a poignant look back at the life of Panagiotis Farmakis, a marginalized figure whose decades of collecting archaeological treasures inadvertently contributed to the modern design of Eleusis. Farmakis's image has become anchored in the local consciousness and is part of the collective memory of the city and its history.

To examine this, the project brought together four local cultural organizations from culturally diverse regions (Greece, Slovenia, Armenia and France) in a two-year journey. With the desire to learn about the "unspoken" and collective memories of marginalized individuals who inadvertently shaped these communities and gradually carved out historical memory.



PROJECT PARIAHS

The *Pariahs project* brought together three non-governmental and non-profit organizations under the leadership of the non-profit organization Chorus: Jasa Društvo from Slovenia, Today Art from Armenia and Ascen-Dance from France.

Creators from different walks of life (musicians and composers, visual artists, dancers, writers and illustrators) researched, participated in mobilities, exchanges of artistic practices and participated in communities, in four different cities: Eleusis, Yerevan, Maribor and Mont Dauphin.

The starting point of the project and the basis for artistic activity was a philosophical research that explored collective memory. It took place in the form of intergenerational conversations in local communities, led by members of participating organizations in collaboration with researcher Effie Samara (from the *University of Glasgow*).

After this preliminary step, professional and emerging multidisciplinary artists from partner countries participated in artist residencies in Yerevan, Mont-Dauphin and Eleusis, connecting and interacting with local audiences and incorporating local content and other artistic practices into their productions.

Through all the activities and acquired knowledge, the following artistic creations were created in the project: a drama play, a dance performance, a new composed music, an exhibition of contemporary visual art and a picture book. And the whole project development was presented to the local community, interest groups and decision-makers through public events. **The final international event took place in January 2025 in Maribor - which nicely rounded off the whole story.**



RESEARCH

Difficulties when researching historical memory

"Memory is one of the most difficult areas of social science to define and confine." There may not be a "one-size-fits-all" method for defining or demarcating the boundaries of the concept of memory. Memory is a living concept. It interacts with the daily lives of individuals, groups, and communities, prompting them to participate in a variety of activities. These actions are relevant to their personal lives and aid in the formation of individual memory.

Understanding historical memory and collective memory involves recognizing the intersection of factual historical accounts and the ways in which societies collectively interpret, remember, and transmit their past.

Pariahs brings together four different European communities and explores European identity or multiple identities and shared values by searching for the common thread that connects our histories, cultures, experiences and understanding.

Effie Samara, Pariahs research

Research method: Intergenerational community conversations

The project's artistic research phase began with extensive community participation, allowing for the exploration of common patterns in constructing local, national, and European identities through participatory engagement activities.

The community research sessions had the form of structured gatherings or meetings where the lead researcher interacted with members of each community to collect data, insights, and perspectives related to marginalisation.

Due to the fact that some community members were not able to participate due to age restricted mobility or other disabilities, the partners arranged one-to-one interviews, in order to enrich the content with memories from elderly community members.

Effie Samara, Pariahs research

The benefits of Intergenerational community conversations

The primary aim of this task was to engage community members in the research process, ensuring their active participation and contribution to the generation of knowledge and the project.

The benefits of these sessions included the exploration, unearthing, and recording of collective and historical memories. The information gathered provided a rich source material for artistic teams to incorporate into their artworks. Furthermore, informal discussions facilitated communication and feedback between the lead artist/researcher, representatives of the host partner, and participants, enhancing the overall project engagement.

This approach assisted Pariahs artists and researchers to access the best possible insight into their core practices and optimal understanding of the communities and their contexts.

Effie Samara, Pariahs research

The outcome

The outcome of Pariahs is the profound historical and present material connections between people, across the breadth and width of Europe made by those on the margins of history. The historical memory joining Eleusis, Yerevan, Mont-Dauphin and Maribor, four cities of disparate socio-political realities, is found in the connective tissue of *sharing* and *caring* for land and resources, ecology, transgenerational literacies and the loss of shared objectives.

There is a common acknowledgement that the unheard and unseen histories of Europe continue to be told and preserved by Pariahs: groups, communities and individuals operating on the margins of history and in non-institutional settings. It is they who have woven the unbreakable webs of knowledge and preservation of memory paving the way for future connections and inter-dependencies.

The community connections discovered in Pariahs are founded on solidarity and a silent social contract expressed in new materialisms: texture, weavings, yarn, the body, the soil and their engravings in rock. This was mapped against the pathologies of centrally managed, digitally controlled histories. Across the four cities of Pariahs we have observed distrust and wariness at the mechanics of deterministic histories promised by unbridled market-led politics. Therein we also find a secret message of marginal values and natural laws connecting humans and societies which appear to supersede frontiers and regulatory frameworks.

This consortium has been able to create formal and functional models for conceptualizing the field of cultural performance and the growing field of historical memory as past but equally as future and as imagining.

Effie Samara, Pariahs research



(Here I will put pictures of both cover pages of Research D2.3 on the Final Research)

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Research session Yerevan

Two community sessions, with together 28 participants, were organised by *Today Art Initiative (TAI)*, led by Lilit Stepanyan. 11/08/23 17:00-20:00 and 04/10/23 16:00-19:00, as well as individual interviews (of 15 participants), that were held from April 23-July 23, at location Ayntab village and Yerevan.

To explore the unspoken historical memories of marginalised people in Armenia. The first community session was conducted with former (mostly women) workers of the Ayntab village's lace factory in Armenia. The second was about the discovery of the community memories of the Syrian Armenians whose ancestors have been immigrated to Aleppo from Cilician Armenia in 1915 and later repatriated back to Armenia.



Research session Mont Dauphin

Two community sessions, with together 20 participants, and 2 workshops (with 17 and 20 participants) were organized in Mont Dauphin, On 16th of September 2023 from 10h to 13h and 15h to 18h. Both were facilitated by Isabelle Bazin Mazuel and Anne Bouchon.



Research session Eleusis

Two sessions were organised Date in Eleusis with 30 people participating. Particular those who experienced the events of the Farmakis period as well as the wider historical locus of post WWII Eleusis. Secondly, individual interviews were organised with Maria Kastani of Chorus and Effie Samara. Wherever a workshop attendance was not possible (or advisable due to participant's special needs) interviews were conducted at participants' own home. Personal interviews were conducted by Maria Kastani and on fewer occasions, accompanied by researcher Effie Samara.



Research session Maribor

The Research of Historical memory in Slovenia was held in the First Gymnasium Maribor among the students of the first grade of the high school (16 years old). Preparatory phases was between 16 November and 23 November, when students held conversations with older generations and prepared summaries-notes. After preparation, two Zoom sessions were held on 23rd of November 2023 group 1 (8:40 - 10:25) and group 2 (10:45 -12:15) with together 55 students. The students used the school's digital conference tool - a 360-degree camera and a microphone to have the conversation with researcher Effie Samara. Video of her was projected onto the screen wall. The teacher Brigita Praprotnik and the representative of the organisation Jasa, Mateja Jamnik, were present in the classrooms and coordinated the conversation when necessary.



Artistic Residency in Yerevan

Was held from 22-29 October, 2023 in Ayntab village and Yerevan, Armenia

It gathered Artists from four countries: Mateja Jamnik and Fergus Conlon from Slovenia (publisher, Jasa Association); Isabelle Bazin-Mazuel and Lisie Philip from France (dancers and choreographers); Lilit Stepanyan and Anush Manucharyan (visual artists), Ashot Manucharyan and Gurgen Dalyan (Hatik Band – musicians and music composer) and Davit Stepanyan (music producer) from Armenia; Katerina Papageorgiou (performing artist) from Greece.

Through the artistic residency, not only friendships were forged between the artists involved in the project, but also the common concept of the project was understood and the foundation of art creations was laid.

The residence was full of various educational and social activities: Four workshops: lace-making, dance, drama and literary; several trips to Aintap Village and walking tour in Yerevan; meeting and cooperating with local people; learning about the history of the city and Armenia; visiting museums and galleries ...



Artistic Residency Mont Dauphin

Was held from 23 to 25 of February 2024 in Embrun and Mont-Dauphin, France.

It gathered artists from two countries: Isabelle Bazin-Mazuel and Lisie Philip (dancers and choreographers) from France; Lilit Stepanyan (visual artist) and Armen Zargoryan (Kamantcha) (music composer) from Armenia.

The residency allowed continuing the co-creation process in dance about the collective memory, with sharing live dance and music between Armenian Musician and French local dancers, and finalising music and words recording.

A sewing co-creation with the local population has been made - for the Today's Art exhibition in Armenia.

A meeting between Today's Art Armenian's and Mont-Dauphin's visual artists was organised, about lace, and other artwork that is part of Mont-Dauphin.



Artistic Residency Eleusis

Was held from 6-9 of April, 2024 in Eleusis in Greece

It gathered artists from two countries: Mateja Jamnik and Fergus Conlon from Slovenia (publisher, Jasa Association); Katerina Papageorgiou and Maria Kastani (performing artist) from Greece.

The editors of the book dedicated to Parihas project, Mateja Jamnik and Fergus Conlon, got to know the local population's memories of Panagiotis Farmakis in more detail, and got to know the surroundings where he lived: Eleusis, the native village in the hills of Dervenohoria and Athens (archaeological sites and museum).

Through the artistic residency, one performance workshop dedicated to the memory of Panagiotis Farmakis was held with the local population. The archaeological site, the main stage of Eleusis as the European Capital of Culture (2023) (in the abandoned warehouses of the Titan factory) and the industrial areas of Eleusis were visited. A warm and inspiring talk with archaeologist Argyro Orfanoudaki-Bora, who wrote a book about the life of *Titan factory* workers, was held. As well the meeting with drama committee (writers, directors and actors) who are preparing a drama play about Pariahs. The nephew of Panagiotis Farmakis, showed them the birthplace of the Farmakis family and they watched the movie *The Mourning Rock*.



Workshops with local community Yerevan

- 1) Theatre workshop lead by Katerina Papageorgiou, Ayntab village, 24/10/23
- 2) Needlework workshop lead by Vania Msrieh and [REDACTED], Ayntab village, 25/10/23
- 3) Contemporary dance workshop lead by Isabelle Bazin-Mazuel and Lisie Philip, Ayntab village, 25/10/23
- 4) Literary workshop lead by Mateja Jamnik and Fergus Conlon, Yerevan 27/10/23



Workshops with local community Mont Dauphin

- 1.) Two dance workshops lead by Isabelle Bazin Mazuel and Anne Bouchon, Mont-Dauphin 16/09/23 (10h-13h and 15h-18h);
- 2.) Dance - improvisation workshop, led by [redacted], Embrun 18 and 19/11/23
- 3.) Dance, music and lace making workshops lead by Isabelle Bazin-Mazuel and Lisie Philip; Lilit Stepanyan and Armen Zargoryan (Kamantcha), Embrun and Mont-Dauphin, 23, 24 and 25/2/2024



Workshops with local community Eleusis

- 1) Two intergenerational discussions with local residents led by Maria Kastani and Effie Samara 30/9/2023 and 1/10/2023, 11.30-14.00, Eleusis
- 2) Performative workshop led by Maria Kastani and Katerina Papageorgiou, 7/4/24 from 11.30 - 14.30, Eleusis



Showcase event Maribor

Showcase event Yerevan

Showcase event Mont Dauphin

Showcase event Eleusis

CONCLUDING WORD

WHAT WOULD THE WORLD BE LIKE WITHOUT PARIAHS

History teaches us that there have always been dissenters. They generate new ideas, brought fresh mindset. Enriched common reality.

It was never easy for them. As they walked the solitary path, they were “on the way” to all those who did what was generally accepted and comfortable. They awakened the restless conscience of the majority, and themselves were “burned out” for higher ideals.

Every person feels, at least subconsciously, that he came into the world to do as much good as possible. To humanly coexist with other people, with nature, with everything that surrounds it. In our time, with a new understanding of the meaning of life, this original rootedness is disappearing.

The Pariahs project showed in all clarity that those special individuals and communities who organized themselves respecting human originality and the idea of justice can be an incentive and a signpost for making the world different, better.

This realization is fading and the project partners want to draw the attention of the European public to this.

Because, as the mother advised to Cat the Cat (the hero of the picture book, developed within the project): "Remember something, my son: You must leave the world the way you came. But you came clean. Wrapped in the golden threads of nature... The same blood flows under the fur of every cat. Don't look for a brother or sister based on their appearance. May all cats with a pure heart be your family."

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

CHORUS, Eleusis, Greece



Chorus Non-Profit Company

<https://chorus.org.gr/en/>

info@chorus.org.gr

Telephone: +30 210 220 1691

Contact person: Virginia Vassilakou

CHORUS is a non-profit organisation founded to build a bridge between arts, education and society. It was established in 2016 in Eleusis by active and engaged citizens active in the cultural, creative and educational sectors. Our mission is to promote humanitarian principles and values, to trigger public debate and mobilise the public on key social issues, to support the proactiveness of the civil society, through contemporary artistic creation, education and cultural participation.

It's liminal is promoting equal access and participation to culture. Our vision is to develop a creative industry that embraces diversity and pluralism. We focus our activity in three key areas: Inclusive Education, Accessibility Services and Production. Our overall aim is to create opportunities for anyone who is interested to engage with and participate in cultural, creative and artistic processes without barriers. We perceive the social, physical, linguistic and other characteristics of each one of us as a font of knowledge and incentive to explore human diversity.



Društvo Jasa – Jasa Association, Maribor, Slovenia



Društvo Jasa – Jasa Association

www.onezimosvet.si

<http://www.onezimosvet.si/international-cooperation>

jasa@onezimosvet.si

Telephone: +386 41 787 228

Contact person: Mateja Jamnik

The NGO Jasa was founded in 1996 by supporters of humanistic orientation (philosophy professors, writers, journalists, etc.). The aim was to actively “co-shape” a society, to intervene in areas relevant for a quality society: human rights, ecology, animal protection, ethics, European education, consumerism, etc. (In short: Sustainable Education and Active Citizenship).

Jasa is a member of various European networks of non-governmental organisations and cooperates in various European projects.

Jasa educates and raise awareness among the public, with an informal way of teaching.

To that end purpose a special educational book edition “Let’s Make a Gentler World!” was published.

In the past 27 years, Jasa has prepared and published 30 titles of particularly educational books with a total circulation of 97,000 copies, most of which were donated through various educational projects, mostly to children, with the support of donors and sponsors.

The book's message is reinforced by educational activities: workshops, discussions, exhibitions, entertainment and educational events, dramatizations and so on, and by the preparation of didactic material for educators and teachers as well as workshops for school teaching of collectives or managers, companies, local communities, etc.



Today Art Initiative (TAI), Yerevan, Armenia



TAI, Armenia

<https://todayart.org/>

tai.todayart@gmail.com

Telephone: +374 994 333 01

Contact person: Lilit Stepanyan

Today Art Initiative (TAI) was founded in 2014. The aim of the organisation is to develop contemporary art activities and create a platform for experimental and innovative art practices and exchanges. TAI provides opportunities to reflect on society's issues and investigate today's life problems locally and internationally. Exchanges and residencies aim to foster dialogue between art practitioners on a larger contextual level, such as identity, community, and nationality. Their goals and objectives include the development of the contemporary art scene in Armenia and emphasising cultural activity in rural areas, developing artistic residency programmes with international artists and bringing the new innovative media in the form of collaborative art practices. They also provide educational, cultural, and information exchanges among youth in Armenian rural areas and other countries. TAI is also invested in facilitating youth involvement in social-economic, political and cultural life and helping young people discover their creative potential. To promote the participation of youth in the civic society as active artists/citizens and in various types of social youth activities, the organisation took part in different European projects.

On April of 2015 TAI organized a big international mail-art exhibition in Armenia, which was the first mail-art exhibition in Armenia. "Art for Peace" aimed to promote peace via artworks. Artists from 36 countries (Armenia, Georgia, Turkey, Egypt, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, England, Wales, Estonia, Slovakia, Ethiopia, Brazil, Japan, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, USA, Macedonia, Korea, Morocco, Poland, Ukraine, Iran, Serbia etc., around 60 artists) sent their original artworks in different technique to Armenia. The exhibition held in one of the main art institute of Artists Union of Armenia.

Since 2014 we are running artists in residency program in Yerevan and since 2019 in rural areas of Armenia. We aim to make it as exchange too by giving opportunity to local artists to travel another EU countries. In 2019 TAI started a new artists in residency project called Eco Art AiR for developing eco art projects and saving the environment.



ASCEN-DANSE, Mont-Dauphin, France



ASCEN-DANSE

<http://www.ascen-danse-05.webnode.fr>

asso.ascendanse05@gmail.com

Telephone: +33 6 62 12 30 38

Contact person: Isabelle Mazuel

The association ASCEN-DANSE, based in Mont-Dauphin, France, includes:

- a dance school that exists since 1996 and offers contemporary dance classes on the north of the department with two teachers
- a professional dance company: compagnie Isabelle Mazuel
- the organization of a dance festival in a Unesco heritage setting since 2006 : Vertical'été

Ascen-Danse is hosting companies for the "Vertical'été" festival. In 2017, a co-realization was conducted with the National Monuments Centre, within the framework of "Monuments in Motion" (valorisation of national monuments by the performing arts). It allowed the company of Yoan Bourgeois to appear in the program of the festival. In the continuity of "monuments in movement", the purpose is to value a reciprocal sublimation between heritage, landscape and living art.

In-situ projects have already been launched. For example, a mapping was created on the Porte de Briançon, "Ceux d'ici", with and about the inhabitants of the fortified village. It was played in 2019 and 2021 and is updated every two years with new shots, integrated into the current version.

The desire of the municipality of Mont-Dauphin, in the near future, is to create a place of residence for artists, and a theatre of greenery. The European professional companies welcomed in the village will thus be more easily open to amateurs.

For several years, Ascen-Danse has been creating with amateur dancers from its school or the inhabitants of Mont-Dauphin; his contemporary dance is influenced by various ways (Cunningham, Graham, Pina Bausch, Peter Goos, Gallotta, theatre, circus, vertical dance, Feldenkrais, Alexander, Body Mind Centering...). Creations with contemporary choreographers were created (revival of "3 generations" by Gallotta, Sylvie Guillermin, Tango contemporary dance Mattias Tripodi...). Creative workshops have led to in situ shows (Collégiate church in Briançon, Salettes Fort in Briançon, Embrun Cathedral).



Researcher, Effie Samara, PhD (University of Glasgow)

effie.samara@gmail.com

Telephone: +44 7853 505 051

Effie Samara is a writer, film maker and doctoral researcher at Glasgow University. She studied Law at Cambridge University and obtained an M.F.A. in Writing from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

Effie's published work centres on participatory and reconciliatory art and on building community and possibility at times of acute danger. She writes extensively on existing institutions and on Scotland's constitutional debate after Devolution. In collaboration with York University in Toronto, she is the author of the Political in the Performative to "#MeToo in Performance: How Not to Look Away".

Effie recently completed an appointment with the Scottish Government on 'Mapping Community-Based Learning and Development Plans against the National Performance Framework', engaging with qualitative evaluative methodologies as well as sustainable and innovative learning policies in Scotland. She has organised and curated Symposia, notably Spaces of Exile at Tramway, has participated in the Scottish Refugee Council Festival and is an active part of the GRAMNet network of researchers. She is the Founder of Red Women Theatre and a regular collaborator in UNESCO Chair's Summer Programmes.

Her theatre work includes SARTRE, Baby and LESBOS at Tramway, Glasgow. These works are reflective of the spirit of exile, minority rights and refugee integration. They focus on politico-philosophical debate, Human Rights, women's rights and gender identity in exile. Her academic research under Professor Alison Phipps looks into exilic consciousness and radical reimaginings of citizenship towards a political dramaturgy through culture and creativity.

Her film work includes A Poetic Constitution for Scotland awarded the Chancellor's Fund and featured as part of the Being Human Festival in collaboration with the British Academy. Effie Samara is the writer and producer of Taxi Driver, a short film and video Installation. The Installation premieres at the Scope Gallery in Paisley between 21-24 September 2022. The film Taxi Driver engages with Glasgow as a place of refuge, family, intimacy through an incisive women's lens. aims to energise an artistic form of citizen advocacy for positive change and a wider commitment to reflective practice with an activist perspective.

For her work in academia and theatre, Effie has been awarded the Collaborative Research Award, the Tom McGrath Trust Award and the Playwrights' Studio Scotland Award. She has received grants from Arts Council England, Creative Scotland and, most recently, the European Cultural Foundation's Democracy Needs Imagination Award and the Chancellor's Fund Award. She is the founder and Chair of Thinking Acts.





P A R I A H S . E U

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