

Alexandra Bounia

Heritage and/in conflict: historical museums in Cyprus

Cyprus has a long history of war, conflict and occupation. And, as is often the case with regions in conflict, the museums of the island have to deal with issues of violence and war through the years; in particular, the historical museums created by the two main ethnic communities of the island, i.e. the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot community, since the 1950s, present a history that remains fractured and contested. The museums themselves, created as expressions of strong historical and political views, are often used as political 'weapons' in contemporary debates and struggles. It is not, therefore, surprising that they do not adopt an inclusive perspective, but instead they project messages from the groups that have created them and have been using them as vehicles for establishing pre-determined narratives, while excluding alternative voices.

This paper will focus on four museums: the (National) Struggle Museum in the Republic of Cyprus, and three museums in the still unrecognized by the international community 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC): the National Struggle Museum, the Museum of Barbarism, and the Museum of Peace and Freedom. We will discuss the history of their establishment, as well as their exhibitions, focusing on their projected narratives, the use of the objects and photographic material, their depiction of the 'Other', as well as their commemorative styles. We will argue that despite the fact that all four museums have been recently refurbished, their aims and discourse remains un-changed, largely reflecting values and myths encouraging division and conflict.

CV

Dr. Alexandra Bounia is an associate professor of museology at the University of the Aegean, Greece, Department of Cultural Technology and Communication. She studied archaeology and history of art at the University of Athens and museum studies at the University of Leicester, UK. Her research interests are on the history, theory and management of collections and museums, the interpretation of material culture, and the use of new

technologies as interpretive media. She has published in Greek and international journals and participates in research projects in Greece and abroad.

Alexandra Bounia

University of the Aegean

Department of Cultural Technology and Communication

Administration Building, University Campus

Mytilene, 81 100

Lesvos

Tel: +30 22510 36630, +30 6977 822385

E-mail: [abounia@ct.aegean.gr](mailto:abounia@ct.aegean.gr)