

4-1-2006

# The Art of Building Peace: How the Visual Arts Aid Peace-Building Initiatives in Cyprus

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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# **The Art of Building Peace:**

How the Visual Arts Aid Peace-Building Initiatives in Cyprus

Daniella Gold

12 May 2006

SIT Cyprus

Spring Semester 2006

Transnational Identities and Intercommunal Relations

Independent Study Project

**Acknowledgments:**

An incredible amount of thanks must be given to my wonderful ISP advisor, Marios Michaelides, for all of his advice, time, last-minute meetings, and his incredible knowledge of both bi-communal activities and football in Cyprus. To Anna, my ISP Academic Director, for her patience, positive feedback, constructive criticism, and for opening my eyes to the beauty of Eurovision. To Selhan, for all his guidance this semester and for bestowing my peers and myself with his wisdom. To my wonderful classmates, thank you for an incredible semester, for all the laughs, unforgettable memories and for always being there no matter the hour. Lastly, to my wonderful roommates Becca and Kristen for without them I would have gotten my ISP done much faster. However, I would not trade the countless late night laughter, random conversations, last minute adventures, and watching S&TC for anything.

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## **Part I: Introduction**

### Research Question:

How have bi-communal visual art activities evolved in Cyprus since restriction of movement across the Green Line was partially lifted on April 23, 2003? What role can the visual arts play in encouraging peace between Greek- Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots?

### Introduction and Statement of the Problem:

Often times, artists have the unique ability to see the world with fresh eyes. A specific group of Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot artists have consistently used the visual arts to undermine people's normal defenses and to help create an atmosphere of peace between members of the two communities. Interactions furthering this atmosphere not only take place between the artists of the two communities who are actively participating in these activities, but also between those individuals who choose to attend these events. Artists, therefore, can use their work to help facilitate peace between warring people. However, for a variety of reasons, artists and the visual arts have been an underutilized instrument in conflict transformation, although the arts can play an implausible role in uniting adversaries. Art can be a powerful tool for transformation at the personal, interpersonal, and organization level. Since restriction of movement across the Green Line was eased on April 23, 2003, selected Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot artists have realized the pivotal role that the visual arts have on influencing attitudes within the two communities. These art activities represent only a small proportion of the bi-communal events that have been executed on the island since 2003. . Bi-communal activities have employed a variety of mediums in which to impart their message to the public. Though these art activities greatly differ from other bi-communal events, together they illuminate the fight for coexistence on the island. Cypriot visual artists use their canvases and other mediums as a tool in which to voice their desire for the two communities to live together in peace.

Out of the many bi-communal activities that have been organized since 2003, visual art exhibitions have been considered some of the most successful. Art exhibits create a space for positive, public engagement in a non-threatening setting. Art is often

about emotions and personal experience; thus artists have the ability to explore subjects in ways that are accessible to everyone. By presenting various visions of a similar subject, artists have the power to change how the past is viewed. Therefore, artists, if they desire, have a unique ability to serve as conflict mediators through the creation and presentation of their work. The visions that are presented in art serve to engage the viewer on both a cognitive and sensory level, thereby providing a more holistic approach to understanding the dynamics present in a divided society.

Many bi-communal art exhibitions have received positive responses from the public, yet other events have witnessed poor attendance and little attention from the press. This paper will explore how artists, gallery owners, government officials, and those not specifically involved view bi-communal art activities. Through my research, I will try to illuminate the role that the visual arts can play in helping to further a culture of peace in Cyprus.

## History

The complexity of the conflict in Cyprus is heavily derived from the tumultuous history of the island. Although a small island, the strategic location of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea has attracted dominant powers for millennia. Very rarely and only recently has Cyprus been ruled by Cypriots, because foreign settlements on the island trace as far back as the Neolithic Age<sup>1</sup>. These ancient settlements helped to establish Cyprus as a dominant trading post between Europe, Africa, and Asia. Egyptian settlements date from 2500 BCE and the first wave of Greek migration happened around this time. Alexander the Great defeated the Persians in 475 BCE and during Roman rule, Christianity quickly spread throughout the island. The Ottomans conquered Cyprus in 1571, which marked the beginning of a Turkish community on the island. Throughout this period, there were numerous instances of Greek- Cypriots and Turkish- Cypriots uprising against Ottoman rule. It was not until the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I that Cyprus was officially annexed by Britain and made into a crown colony.

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<sup>1</sup> Solomou, Emilios. "Historical Background". InterCollege: Nicosia, Cyprus. 9 February 2006.

1931 marked the first large scale Greek-Cypriot riot against British rule. It was at this time when Greek-Cypriots began their fight for *enosis*, which is the union of Cyprus with Greece. Archbishop Makarios III was instated as the political and spiritual leader in 1950, and the campaign for *enosis* became even stronger as 96-98% of Greek-Cypriots supported unification with Greece<sup>2</sup>. Still under British rule, General Grivas and Yorgatziis established the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters in 1955, which is more commonly known as EOKA. Throughout the 1950s, EOKA organized a series of bombings and guerilla warfare against British rule.

Turkish-Cypriots formed the Turkish Resistance Organization, known also as the TMT, in 1958 as a reaction to EOKA. The TMT was lead by Dr. Fazil Kutchuk and Ralf Denktas and although it began as an underground movement, it received popular support from most Turkish-Cypriots<sup>3</sup>. The TMT's main demand was *taksim* which called for division of the island between Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots. In 1960, as part of the Treaties of London and Zurich, the Treaty of the Establishment of the Republic of Cyprus and the Treaty of Guarantee were signed by Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The latter treaty ensured that Greece Turkey, and the UK were guarantor powers of the independence of the Republic and that these three guarantor states had the right to take military action in the face of any threat to the constitution. Archbishop Makarios became the first president of Cyprus and Dr. Kutchuk became the vice president. The constitution called for the president to always be a Greek-Cypriot and the vice president to be a Turkish-Cypriot, although both executives were given the right to veto. The complex constitution tried to safeguard the rights of both communities, but instead it became impossible for the government to function under these strict regulations<sup>4</sup>.

In 1963, President Makarios tried to amend the constitution with 13 points. Turkish-Cypriots and the Turkish government rejected the new proposal and intercommunal violence began on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1963. Turkish-Cypriots withdrew

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<sup>2</sup> Sahali, Erhun. "Historical Background". Serak Consultancy Agency: Nicosia, Cyprus. 9 February 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Sahali "Historical Background"

<sup>4</sup> Kaymak, Erol. "Historical Background" Lecture. ". Serak Consultancy Agency: Nicosia, Cyprus. 16 February 2006.

themselves from all government positions and entered enclaves on the island patrolled by Turkish-Cypriot paramilitary groups<sup>5</sup>. The first United Nations Peace Keeping Forces arrived in Cyprus in 1964 and these forces continue to remain on the island today. Intercommunal violence continued for over a decade and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1974, the Greek military, with the support of EOKA, overthrew Archbishop Makarios in a coup d'etat. A Greek puppet regime was imposed under Nikos Sampson. Five days after the coup d'etat, the Turkish military offensive began in Cyprus. By August 1974, there was a de facto partition of the island with the Turkish-Cypriots living in northern 35% of the island while Greek-Cypriots remained on 65% of the land in the southern region of the island<sup>6</sup>. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1975, the Turkish Federal State of Cyprus was established with Rauf Denktas as its first president. After years of negotiations had no fruitful outcomes, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) was unilaterally declared in 1983. However, the 'TRNC' is considered illegal by the United Nations Security Council<sup>7</sup>. Turkey is the only country that recognizes the state, and the 'TRNC' remains boycotted by the rest of the world.

The UN sponsored many talks between the two sides, but none of these negotiations were ever successful. In 1990, the Republic of Cyprus applied to become a member of the European Economic Community. The Republic of Cyprus applied on behalf of all Cyprus, since the Republic of Cyprus is internationally recognized as the only legitimate government on the island. However, the 'TRNC' was not actively involved in the application process. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2003, there was a partial lift of restrictions on movement that allowed those living in the "north" and "south" of Cyprus to move throughout the island. A year later, the Annan Plan was voted on, which was a bipartisan referendum for settlement of the island as a last ditch effort before Cyprus's accession into the European Union<sup>8</sup>. On The 24th of April 2004, the majority of Greek-Cypriots rejected the Annan Plan, although 65% of Turkish-Cypriots voted in favor of the

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<sup>5</sup> Sahali "Historical Background"

<sup>6</sup> Gursan, Huseyin. "Intercommunal Relations" Serak Consultancy Agency: Nicosia, Cyprus. 16 February 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Costantinou, Costas and Papadakis, Yiannis. "The Cypriot State(s) in situ: Cross ethnic Contact and the Discourse of Recognition" in *Global Society*, Vol 15, No 2, 2001. p 128.

<sup>8</sup> Kaymak "Historical Background".



settlement. Cyprus joined the EU on 1 May 2004, but as a divided island. Currently the United Nations is reworking the Annan plan but there is no known timetable for its resubmission to the public.

Rationale:

There has not been success in reaching a lasting solution between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots on the institutional level. Therefore, it is important to look at other ways peace can be established between the two communities. In many global conflicts, peace-building has been a grass roots movement started by a few individuals in society. The main purpose of peace-building is to form relationships between warring groups in order to prevent future conflicts from occurring. Peace-building allows for trust to be built between members of the communities. By creating bi-communal activities, such as art events, it will become easier for Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots to positively interact thus assisting in the re-humanization of the other community.

The arts are a very valuable yet underrated tool in peace-building. My Independent Study Project will shine light on bi-communal activities that might not have gotten as much attention as they deserve. By understanding the success or failure of these events, it will become easier for future bi-communal art endeavors to flourish. Creative approaches to peace-building have proven more successful than many standard conflict resolution tools. By increasing the attention given to these bi-communal activities, it will hopefully allow for more participation in future events. The more Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots are able to interact in an informal manner, the easier it will be to build relationships between the two communities.

It is also important to mention that more research must be done on the role of the arts in peace-building. There have been very few studies that have focused on how the arts can aid conflict transformation. Therefore, my research is very important because it will increase the amount of information that is written on this topic and present a case study which has not been thoroughly researched before.

**Part II: Literature Review**

### Literature Review:

In this section, I will be summarizing various anthropological and sociological arguments that will better allow me to create a conceptual framework for my case study. It is very important that the reader be made aware that there is little theoretical research done on the arts and peace-building for this has been a very new field in conflict mediation. Until a few years ago, creative approaches were not frequently used in peace-building processes for they were believed to have little merit. I will be separating my literature review into two sections of theory, the first one focusing on civil society and peace-building and the second one more specifically on arts and peace-building. Before one can fully comprehend the role of the arts, it is necessary to understand how civil society initiatives have influenced peace-building. Though my data will focus directly on the visual arts, the theories presented below will discuss the arts as a whole and do not concentrate on a particular artistic medium.

### *Civil Society and Peace-building:*

Art based peace-building efforts can be situated within a larger framework of civil society based initiatives for building peace. The term “peace-building” has become increasingly prevalent since it was used by Boutros Boutros Ghali- then the United Nations Secretary General- in announcing his *Agenda for Peace in 1992*.<sup>9</sup> Since then it has become a catch-all phrase covering a wide range of policies. Several analytical frameworks have been created to distinguish between peace-building, peacemaking, and peacekeeping, the most notable being those of John Paul Lederach, Dennis Sandole, and N. Ropers. Each of these frameworks has been proven successful depending on the stage of the conflict and a variety of other external factors. Generally speaking, peacekeeping is reducing conflict and violence by the intervention of a third party while peacemaking is defined as the attempt to tackle some concrete problem in a process that generally begins with a difference of interests, proceeds in the form of negotiations, and in the end- if

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<sup>9</sup> Hamber, Brandon and Kelly, Grainne. “ A Working Definition of Reconciliation”. Paper Published by Democratic Dialogue, Belfast, September 2004. p 1.

successful- leads to an agreement<sup>10</sup>. Peace-building, on the other hand, takes place on a larger time scale and focuses on transforming relationships and social structures so that future conflicts are less likely to occur. Peace-building is thus a distinct process from peacemaking and peacekeeping. Peace-building is a process that seeks to establish peace and prevent violence from reemerging by addressing the root causes of the conflict<sup>11</sup>. This can involve a number of particular processes; for example peace-builders might focus on establishing new institutions, reconstructing society, and developing new socio-economic frameworks.

Civil society plays an important role in peace-building for members of society are able to address concerns at the individual, community, and political levels. While most conflict mediators focus on peace-building efforts that are concentrated on educational and economic aspects, John Paul Lederach and Richard Wendell Fogg believe that the arts can have a significant role in fostering peace-building efforts in a conflict-ridden society. The arts, along with other civil society based initiatives, can help to develop a shared vision of an interdependent society, provide a mechanism for healing and reparation, and build positive relationships by changing how people relate to one another<sup>12</sup>.

In “Dealing with Conflict: A Repertoire of Creative, Peaceful Approaches” Richard Wendell Fog examines the fact that creative methods have recently been given more prominence in civil society based initiatives. These alternative methods have proven successful when contrasted with the conventional approaches that are commonly used by peace-builders. The term “creative approach” is defined by Fogg as an approach that leads to specific outcomes that are unusual, remote, flexible, numerous, and generally non-zero-sum<sup>13</sup>. Frequently, when traditional negotiations break down, the peace process comes to a stand still; however, the numbers of ways left to deal with a

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<sup>10</sup> Ropers, N. “Peaceful Intervention: Structures, Processes and Strategies for the Constructive Resolution of Ethnopolitical Conflicts”. Berghof Report No. 1. 1995  
[http://www.b.shuttle.de/berghof/eng/ind\\_pub.htm](http://www.b.shuttle.de/berghof/eng/ind_pub.htm).

<sup>11</sup> Sandole, Dennis. “A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution Research: A Three Pillar Approach.” *Peace and Conflict Studies*, Vol. 5, No.2, 1998. p 3-5.

<sup>12</sup> Hamber and Kelly, p 8.

<sup>13</sup> Fogg, Richard Wendell. “Dealing With Conflict: A Repertoire of Creative, Peaceful Approaches.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (June 1985) p 332.

conflict remain almost inexhaustible. In order to push the peace process forward, Fogg theorizes that it is important to develop a civil society that is willing to work in creative and peaceful ways, thus changing how the conflict is viewed, and eventually accentuating the similarities between warring groups. Civil society can use the arts to help communities reconcile and prevent future conflicts from occurring, thereby aiding peace-building initiatives.

Both Fogg and Lederach believe that civil society should function in more creative and imaginative ways. Lederach theorizes that artistic processes will be the determinant in creating long lasting peace between warring groups, and that these processes will evolve through initiatives undertaken by civil society. Also, Lederach believes that a global shift must occur where one's work becomes envisioned as a creative act instead of a technical process for this will result in much needed social change<sup>14</sup>. The moral imagination which has "the capacity to imagine something rooted in the changes of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist" allows artists the liberty to break the rules of morality and transform ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, and thinking<sup>15</sup>. Civil society initiatives have the power to transform communities, but instead have been hindered by the fact that the many professionals generally give more weight to the outcome rather than the process. Artistic processes have proven the opposite is true; that the process is generally more pertinent than the official outcome. By using artistic processes in peace-building, civil society initiatives will appeal to a greater audience and have richer results<sup>16</sup>.

#### *The Arts and Peace-building:*

There are several theoretical works that expand specifically on the link between peace-building and the arts. These works advise modern peacemakers not to be discouraged when conventional conflict transformation methods fail but to instead apply creative approaches to help solve disputes.

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<sup>14</sup> Lederach, John Paul. The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. p 5.

<sup>15</sup> Lederach p 27.

<sup>16</sup> Lederach p 160.

In his dissertation, Herm Weaver focused on the application of the arts in conflict transformation and peace-building. Human notions on process, change, and healing can all be challenged when examining a conflict through a lens of art and social change. Weaver theorizes that peace-building should follow a more artistic process rather than a linear formula of activities that are aimed at producing a specific result. The artistic process is not linear for it does not have a specific sense of time and instead focuses on creating a path as the process continues<sup>17</sup>. When the creative process is forced, it becomes less desirable and artificial outcomes emerge. Therefore, peace-building must also not be forced for the most fruitful outcomes will occur when there is utter honesty and commitment between the groups.

Weaver concluded that there are certain elements that guide the artistic process and that these elements should also be found in peace-building initiatives. Although Weaver dealt with music, the same elements can easily be applied to the visual arts. The six elements that Weaver discovered are that: the music was to be guided by an internal standard rather than an external, the music was to be honest, simplicity was the best value, there must be a space for the listener to participate, music should arise from the heart as much as from the head, and that the artists and participants must be committed to having fun<sup>18</sup>. The arts have the “capacity to build a bridge between the art and the mind”; therefore these six elements should be applied to all peace-building initiatives<sup>19</sup>.

Creativity, the place “where the divine and the human meet”, is the one of the most important aspects of the artistic process<sup>20</sup>. The main outcome of this process is to produce something new and unexpected<sup>21</sup>. Thus, it is creativity that allows for new processes and results to evolve from ordinary practices. Peace-building professionally should employ artistic processes instead of only focusing on traditional methods, and also directly involves artists in conflict transformation. Artists play a unique role in society that cannot be imitated by others. To create new life, artists require a physical space of

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<sup>17</sup> Weaver, Herm. *Travelin' Home and Back: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Reconciliation.* PhD dissertation, Union Institute and University, 1999. p 105-106.

<sup>18</sup> Weaver p 103.

<sup>19</sup> Weaver p 103.

<sup>20</sup> Lederach p 62.

<sup>21</sup> Fox, Matthew. *Creativity: Where the Divine and Human Meet.* New York: Penguin Putnam, 2002. p 17.

some bareness <sup>22</sup>. This space allows for solitude and gives the artist freedom to explore a wide range of emotions that would be otherwise hindered by society. By freeing themselves from societal constraints, artists are able to present new ideas to the viewer that challenge how the world is viewed. Thus, artists are not hindered by what is commonly accepted and constantly try to move beyond the past and create something entirely new. To fully explore the role that artists can play in building peace, it is important to understand that many artists are constantly embracing new ideas and moving beyond the narrow parameters of what is commonly accepted.

Artists are on a journey to reflect their surroundings and they build their lives upon an “insatiable curiosity, constant intervention, and attentive critique”<sup>23</sup>. These three pillars allow artists to rarely face the same exact problem twice, because they are constantly creating innovative techniques to cope with their quandaries. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has become apparent that many peace-builders are incapable of transcending and transforming global fear and insecurity to promote peace. The challenge that peace-builders are currently facing is to create innovative responses to prevent future violence from occurring. Peacemakers should intertwine these three pillars and the artistic approach in their traditional peace-building initiatives. It is more likely that peace will be obtained through the combination of both formal and informal processes, rather than only focusing on traditional peace processes<sup>24</sup>. In order for this to occur, conflict resolution professionals must not fall prey to the narrow approaches commonly used for building peace and instead use artistic processes and imagination to transcend violence. Tapping into the creative side will create new insight on how to solve conflicts and promote peace.

It is not just the process that matters, but the masterpiece as well. It is equally important to understand the role that the actual works of art and the presentation of these works have in furthering peace-building. Professor Cynthia Cohen explores how works of art can have support movement toward coexistence because at its most basic level, art is pleasurable and enlivening. Art can reach beneath people’s defenses, and invite reciprocity. To justify hatred, it is perceived as natural for humans to convince

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<sup>22</sup> Fox p 19.

<sup>23</sup> Lederach p 122.

<sup>24</sup> Lederach p 132.

themselves that the enemy is threatening by de-valuing and de-humanizing. In coexistence, art can be used to transcend these narratives of hatred and to develop meta-narratives that embrace the society as a whole. In the visual arts,

elements are organized in space, each symbol replete with layers of meaning, enhanced by the relationships among them and by the resonance they evoke in their viewers. The beauty of visual form can invite viewers to become aware of images and to linger as they are supported to encounter, reexamine, and reconsider symbols and their own processes of making meaning<sup>25</sup>.

Art exhibits can become dialogue sessions for artists who say what others cannot or will not say. Therefore, many artists inevitably take on the role of a mediator by creating dialogue between warring groups. By creating expressions of a common humanity, artists allow the viewer to imagine the experiences of “the other” and this can lead to re-humanizing the enemy. Although art can play an important role in peace-building, it can also hinder peace processes. Art has the ability to present ethical dilemmas, represent miscommunication, and deal with intense, and sometimes negative emotions. As much as art can help build peace, it can also impair it and create new barriers between groups<sup>26</sup>.

However, Professor Cohen believes that the arts can do more good than harm in promoting peace and reconciliation. Art exhibitions offer images and text in a modest forum where those who wish to participate can look, think, discuss, and create. Participation in these exhibitions can help to reintegrate people into their community. By doing so, both the artist and participant are able to contribute towards coexistence and reconciliation<sup>27</sup>. Exhibitions create spaces that are bounded and therefore offer unique opportunities for learning and experimentation within a specific set of boundaries. It has been previously suggested that positive engagement between two groups is often more likely to occur when the expression is understated, limited, or indirect<sup>28</sup>. This theory is frequently proven true at art exhibitions. By limiting interaction between the

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<sup>25</sup> Cohen Cynthia. “Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence. In Imagine Coexistence. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2003. p 9.

<sup>26</sup> Cohen “Engaging with Arts” p 14.

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, Cynthia. “Recasting Reconciliation through Culture and the Arts”. Waltham: Brandeis University Publications, 2005. p 5.

<sup>28</sup> Cohen “Recasting Reconciliation” p 13.

communities, members frequently wish to communicate more and this might increase the desire to build relationships with “the other”<sup>29</sup>. Exploration of the visual arts is only one of the many sub-processes that can be present in a society undergoing peace-building. The arts can become a vehicle for the affirmation of values such as responsibility, accountability, and excellence.

Kess Epskamp offers a useful framework for the impact that the arts can have on a community during and after a conflict.

### **Epskamp’s Model of Possible Role of the Arts in Conflict and Post-Conflict Peace-building<sup>30</sup>**

<b>During the Conflict</b>	<b>Post-Conflict</b>
<p><b>Society:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• experiment with alternative visions of a future society;</li> <li>• develop alternative and playful visions which outline the future nation and its organization;</li> <li>• support the planning of alternative strategies to build up the nation as envisaged;</li> <li>• mediate between parties involved, especially beyond the medium of the spoken dialogue;</li> <li>• encourage the various (conflicting) parties involved not to close the door to an ongoing dialogue;</li> <li>• train people (by means of simulation) to gain control over their participation in political and socioeconomic systems.</li> </ul> <p><b>Community:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inspire new visions based on trust and faith</li> <li>• reach a working consensus within the community on fundamental issues;</li> <li>• create a sound organizational basis at a local level;</li> <li>• develop strategies for ‘future’ community leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stimulate process of democratization and rehabilitation (e.g. drama performances to stimulate voters behavior);</li> <li>• increase understanding and appreciation of divergent worldviews;</li> <li>• articulate and work towards achieving equal rights and social justice (gender and ethnic specific items);</li> <li>• integrate art education into the national curriculum as a means of reconciliation and peace education in order to education the next generation;</li> <li>• facilitate continuing dialogues at important moments, intercession and mediation.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contribute to community development and community organizations;</li> <li>• improve community interaction and socialization;</li> <li>• support in dismantling a climate of fear and distrust;</li> <li>• contribute to the creation of cultural cohesion</li> </ul>

<sup>29</sup> “The Other” is an anthropological term that refers to the constructed enemy of a group; “the other” is essentialized and constructed as having the opposite identity of one’s self.

<sup>30</sup> Epskamp, E. Healing Divided Societies in *People Building Peace. 35 Inspiring stories from Around the World*. European Platform for Conflict Transformation: Utrecht, 1999. p 286-292.



**Individual:**

- prepare the people for the post-conflict situation;
- contribute to identity building;
- take away ethnic stereotyping.
- use the arts to educate and train the adult population (collaborators, former freedom fighters, refugees in exile, and community dwellers);
- make people aware of their rights and also of their responsibilities.
- contribute to conflict resolution;
- empower ethnic groups;
- address cognitive, affective and social needs;
- strive for reconciliation through negotiating peace;
- teach mutual respect and understanding;
- support personal security and individual rights;
- support therapeutic treatment of postwar traumatized adults and children.

Epskamp was one of the first scholars to provide a detailed model of how the arts directly relate to conflict mediation and peace-building. This model will be particularly useful in my research, as it will allow me to create a framework within which to study the relationship between the arts and peace-building in Cyprus.

**Part III: Conceptualizations**Conceptual Framework:

In Cyprus, unofficial interventions have rarely had the objective of transferring outcomes to the official mediation track, let alone creating ripeness for settlement. Bi-communal activities have normally been focused at the individual and community level, and have rarely influenced the political realm. Many of these past efforts for coexistence have not been given the merit they deserve because they have not resulted in substantial outcomes. Bi-communal art exhibitions, although generally dismissed by the government, have played a noteworthy role in creating dialogue between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. In this section of my paper, I will set up a conceptual framework in which to analyze the role that bi-communal art activities have had in promoting peace-building in Cyprus.

The art of education and learning has been taken out of the field of conflict resolution for far too long<sup>31</sup>. With the artistic process removed, “education becomes training and learning becomes evaluation”<sup>32</sup>. The mentality behind conflict resolution is that social change is linear and best measured by visible and verifiable results. However, I believe that peace-building is what leads to long lasting peace, and that the process is more important than the end result. By following a more flexible framework and using artistic processes, peace-building will become more successful, because it will have focused on the journey and not the specific outcome. Cypriot artists have the ability to serve as mediators by exploring different subjects in their works and facilitating open dialogue between members of the two communities<sup>33</sup>. This is just one of the many reasons why artists and the artistic process can help to successfully pave the path to peace in Cyprus.

Visual art activities provide the opportunity for communities dealing with conflict to imagine future relationships based on coexistence and reconciliation. By participating in bi-communal events, Cypriots learn how to perceive each other’s humanity and how to build relationships based on co-operation and a hope for a united future. Artistic processes can be crafted to support more complex understandings of the “the other” and can help to de-reify the perceived enemy. This allows for communities to begin acknowledging and addressing injustices present within a society that might have been previously pushed aside. Also, these processes can allow for the development of relationships and can aid the formation of new, more equitable institutions<sup>34</sup>.

Although it is apparent that the arts are not at the top of the list of tactics employed by peace mediators, John Paul Lederach and Cynthia Cohen have each created a theoretical framework that proves why the arts are an essential tool in peace making. Both Lederach and Cohen point out that aesthetic experiences engage the individual on both sensory and cognitive levels. This is important because the individual is made aware of him/herself through his/her participation, directly or indirectly, with the art. Art gives a voice to those who have been previously silenced, and allows for those who desire to

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<sup>31</sup> Lederach p 124.

<sup>32</sup> Lederach p 124.

<sup>33</sup> Cohen “Engaging with the Arts” p 3.

<sup>34</sup> Cohen “Creative Approaches” p 52.

voice their hopes for the future. Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot artists are able to visually articulate their pasts and their dreams for the future through their works, although they might not be able to verbally express the same sentiments out loud. This is because art exhibitions are non-threatening arenas in which the past and future can be presented in peaceful ways. Each piece of art is able to challenge the perceptions of the past and also create new visions of the future. Therefore, artists, curators, and viewers are all given an extraordinary power to affect change just by participating in these bi-communal art activities. Peace-builders should focus more of their energy on the visual arts for the arts present another avenue in which peace-building initiatives can be furthered.

#### Conceptualization of Definitions:

Many terms that I came across in my research are polysemous, and their meaning is different to every individual. Therefore, it is important for me to define the terminology used in the paper, so that the research presented is as valid as possible. The operational definitions below are how I choose to define specific terms, and the reader should understand that these definitions are explicit to my research and are not to be taken as the only existing definition for the term. In my interviews, I will ask my interviewees to define terms that are polysemous and differences in the definition of a term will be noted within the context of the research.

#### Operational Definitions:

*Art*: the process or result of making material works that adhere to the creative impulse and serve to further self-expression.

*Bi-Communal*: involving active participation from members of two ethnic communities; in this paper, it will refer to the participation of members from both the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish- Cypriot community.

*Coexistence*: to live in peace with others despite potential differences.

*Conflict Resolution*: causing the fighting or contention in a dispute to subside through establishing an agreement between the warring groups.

*Conflict Transformation*: the process of renovating a society to create relationships between people and a joint hope for the future.

*Cypriot*: a citizen of Cyprus that does not choose to identify him or herself in terms of his/her ethnic community.

*Enosis*: the movement to unify Cyprus with Greece, popular among Greek-Cypriots mainly from the 1930s-1970s

*Greek-Cypriot*: a citizen of Cyprus that is of Greek descent and aligns him/herself with the government of the Republic of Cyprus.

*Motherland*: the nation to which Greek-Cypriots or Turkish-Cypriots attach themselves to; either Greece or Turkey depending on the community.

*“north” side of Cyprus*: the land north of the UN buffer zone. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has declared this area an independent state, however the ‘TRNC’ is only recognized by Turkey as a legitimate government.

*Peace*: the absence of war and other hostilities that are either physical or emotional.

*Peacekeeping*: reducing conflict and violence by the intervention of a third party.

*Peacemaking*: a process that solves problems between two warring groups, and if successful ends in an agreement.

*Peace-building*: the process of transforming relationships and social structures so that future conflicts are less likely to occur

*Reconciliation*: the process in which relationships are transformed from relationships of hatred and mistrust into relationships of trust; it reflects a shift in attention from blaming the other to taking responsibility for one’s own actions.

*“south” side of Cyprus*: the land south of the UN buffer zone, under jurisdiction of the Republic of Cyprus.

*Taksim*- the movement to partition Cyprus into two bi-zonal states, popular with Turkish-Cypriots from the 1940s-1970s.

*Turkish-Cypriot*: a citizen of Cyprus that is of Turkish descent who aligns him/herself with the ‘TRNC’ government.

#### **Part IV: Methodology**

## Research Design.

This research project will use qualitative research methods. One of the primary purposes of qualitative research is to examine social and cultural topics and analyze them within their own setting. Qualitative research is the preferred method for cross-cultural research because it allows the researcher to elaborate on a specific topic. The researcher is actively engaged in the process and the evolution of the topic being studied. Data gathered through qualitative research cannot be generalized, because the data is specific to the experiences of each individual. It is important to recognize that the data presented in this paper represents only a small portion of the thought present in Cyprus.

For my research, I will use critical case studies of individuals who have been involved with bi-communal art activities. My data will be primarily gathered through primary and secondary sources, interviews, and observations. Interviews were conducted as standard open-ended interviews and a set of fixed questions were prepared for each interview. Interviewees were allowed the opportunity to expand on each question posed to them, and therefore the interviews ran in a variety of different fashions. Interviewees were allowed to skip any questions they did not feel comfortable answering and were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time. I have purposely left all spoken grammatical errors in my quotations as to maintain the authenticity of the data.

To analyze my data, I will be focusing on Kess Epskamp's "Model of Possible Role of the Arts in Conflict and Post-Conflict Peace-building". This framework will allow me to examine the role that the arts can have on an individual, community, and society. I will specifically focus on examining the impact of an artist on peace-building initiatives at these three levels. During the conflict, Epskamp believes that it is important to "develop alternative and playful visions which outline the future nation" by encouraging dialogue between the groups<sup>35</sup>. Cypriot artists have had the opportunity to inspire new visions of the future by facilitating dialogue sessions about their works. These sessions take place between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot artists but also between the individuals who attend bi-communal art activities. Epskamp highlights identity building as one of the most important aspects that an individual should focus on during a conflict. Artists have the opportunity to deconstruct stereotypes by the way

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<sup>35</sup> Epskamp "Model of Possible Role of the Arts"

subjects are presented in their work. A selected group of Cypriot artists frequently present messages of mutual respect and understanding in their works, thus helping to create unity within the society and empowering both communities. Epskamp's model provides a detailed framework in which to analyze how the arts have supported peace-building initiatives in Cyprus.

#### Population of Sample:

I have interviewed four artists who have participated in bi-communal art activities since 2003, two Greek-Cypriots and two Turkish-Cypriots. Age is not important in my case study, because the purpose of these interviews was to further my understanding of bi-communal art activities and how the public received them. Both a Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot organizer was interviewed to shed light on the process of setting up a bi-communal art exhibition. The two organizers also happened to be artists and were able to illuminate many aspects of bi-communal art activities. By conducting these interviews, I have been given a general picture of what it is like to participate, directly or indirectly, in bi-communal visual art activities and how the public generally perceives them. I have also interviewed two Greek-Cypriot art students that have attended, but not directly participated, in bi-communal art exhibitions. I had hoped to find two Turkish-Cypriots to interview that had also attended these events, but attendance is not recorded at these exhibitions thus making it extremely difficult to find Turkish-Cypriots that had partaken in these activities.

#### Reliability and Validity:

The research presented in this study should be considered reliable and valid as is true to the experience of the participants in this study. No information was hidden from the interviewees, and all of the data presented is valid to the best of my ability. It is impossible to generalize my data, as it is the beliefs of particular individuals, although I have tried to synthesize the information obtained in a clear, honest, and presentable way. There is no one objective reality, and I have tried my hardest to analyze the data in its own context. I have followed a strict code of ethics in all of my research, and this code is explained below in more detail.

### Ethics:

The rights of each participant have been safeguarded in my research. No information was hidden from the interviews and at the beginning of each interview, each participant was asked to give consent to participating in the study. Each interviewee gave either written or verbal consent. I have tried my hardest to protect my subjects from any repercussions, and each subject has been given anonymity in my research. In my written report, the names of each participant and organization mentioned have been changed. This has been done to minimize any social ramifications that might occur from participating in this research.

It is impossible to completely separate one's own biases from qualitative research, but I have tried to present my research as unbiased as possible. I have attempted to separate myself from my research, and to remain impartial to the data that I have collected. No information in this report is meant to be misleading and the research in this project is presented as honestly and ethically as possible.

### Limitations:

Throughout this project, I have faced many limitations. The biggest limitation I faced is the language barrier between my participants and myself. I do not speak Greek or Turkish, and therefore my data could only be collected from English sources. Also, due to the language barrier, my population sample is not as random as I would have preferred because I was only able to interview those individuals who spoke English. Therefore, the number of sources I was able to gather information from were limited and represent only a small percentage of the population's opinions.

Timing was also a major limitation, as all of my research was conducted in a three-week period. The short time period forced me to only skim the surface, and I did not have the ability to explore the topic as in depth as I would have liked. Since, I had limited previous knowledge on my topic, almost all of the research presented in this paper was gained during the ISP period.

Another important limitation in my research was the fact that I am a foreigner looking into a society from the outside. I do not understand all of the cultural norms in

Cyprus, and this hindered my ability to fully conduct research. There were many instances of miscommunication and misunderstanding between Cypriots and myself, because I am not a member of the society. Also, I was constantly trying to be culturally appropriate and this might have limited the amount of information I was able to gain. Some of my participants might not have been as honest or open as they would have been with a member of their own community. The fact that I am a foreigner also shifted the power dynamic that I had with my participants, and I tried my hardest to equalize this dynamic and not offend my participants in any way.

I had also hoped to find at least one or two members of society that had visited bi-communal art activities to gain knowledge on how these events were perceived by those who were not directly involved with the exhibit. However, it was difficult to find anyone to interview who had attended these art activities, because attendance at most of these events is not recorded, and there was no way for me to contact these individuals. I was lucky enough to meet and interview two Greek-Cypriot art students who had attended a number of bi-communal art exhibitions. However, it was impossible for me to find Turkish-Cypriots who had also attended these events due to lack of resources.

## **Part V: Data**

### Data Analysis:

I have separated my data into two sections to better answer my research questions. The first section of my data provides the reader with an overview of how bi-communal art activities have evolved, the difficulties that have arisen, and how the Annan Plan in particular changed the face of bi-communal art activities. The second section provides data on the role that these activities have had in promoting peace-building initiatives in Cyprus and particularly examines the role of the artist and the individuals who have participated in these activities.



*How have bi-communal visual art activities evolved in Cyprus since restriction of movement across the Green Line was partially lifted on April 23, 2003?*

Bi-communal visual art activities began with an insatiable curiosity of who “the other” was and what life was like on the other side of the island<sup>36</sup>. These activities existed long before restriction of movement was eased across the Green Line, and early activities concentrated on the desire to directly communicate with other community. When asked why he originally became active in bi-communal art activities, Constianos, a Greek-Cypriot artist said that “there was a need, I couldn’t fill myself in peace or in unity or fulfill myself without knowing ...I needed to understand that or else I would not feel complete in my work or in my life”. Many artists use their works to communicate a specific message, and this drive for communication spurred Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot artists to collaborate on creating bi-communal art activities with the purpose to open dialogue between the two communities.

Starting in the 1990s, Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriots artists would sporadically meet in Ledra Palace and Pyla. These meetings were few in number, and any larger endeavors to organize bi-communal exhibitions internationally were difficult to achieve. In 1999, a group of artists met in Stockholm, Sweden for a ten-day long bi-communal workshop. This activity was not limited to a specific artistic medium and artists ranging from painters to writers and photographers participated. Upon their return to Cyprus, the artists involved in this workshop started the organization Artists and Artists which has organized many bi-communal visual art exhibitions, activities, and translation workshops on the island. Many other international art workshops were planned during the 1990s, but the majority of them never materialized.

When restriction of movement across the Green Line was eased on April 23, 2003, many artists ran to meet their acquaintances that lived on the other side. The ease of movement allowed members of the two communities to “look to the other side” and see “that this is a people, humanity, not an enemy”<sup>37</sup>. This desire to fully understand the other community spurred two organizations, the Eastern Mediterranean Art Association

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<sup>36</sup> Sonya, Zehra. “Art, Monuments, and Ideologies” in Eastern Mediterranean Art Association Art Journal. Volume 1 (March 2005): 31.

<sup>37</sup> Ayshe. Personal Interview. 26 April 2006.

(EMAA) in “north” Nicosia and the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts (E.KA.TE.) in the “south” to begin planning numerous bi-communal visual art activities. Many members of these organizations had met previously in Ledra Palace, and as a result had formed friendships through these early interactions. These two organizations mainly focused their early activities on proving to the public that members from both sides of the island desired to live together as one.

The aim of many early bi-communal visual art activities were to create possibilities for artists to create and live together. Artists believed that it would be easier to form friendships if they were first able to deal the traumas of the past years through learning from each other’s past. In December 2003, members from E.KA.TE. and EMMA gathered in the United Nations buffer zone from ten in the morning till ten at night for three days straight. The purpose of this event was to establish open communication between the artists by creating an open studio within the buffer zone. When people traditionally attend art exhibitions, they talk for a few minutes and then return home unchanged. In *Out of Line*, the artists hoped to create a project, and not just an exhibition, that allowed the artists to not only “do artwork together, but [also to share] everything. We shared our materials, our dreams, our hopes, we sang, we danced, we talked, we discussed”<sup>38</sup>. The public was stunned to see artists creating artwork within the UN Buffer Zone, and almost everyone who walked through the Green Line during these three days stopped to talk with the participating artists. Thus, this event was very successful for it not only allowed the artists to live and work together but also allowed visitors to interact and explore how the arts could help further a culture of peace on the island.

The longest running bi-communal art activity on the island, *Art Aware*, involved twelve Greek-Cypriot and eleven Turkish-Cypriot artists and ran from April 2004 until May 2005. *Art Aware* was conceived under the desire for Cypriot artists to view, get to know, and understand each other’s art, who although living on the same island, hadn’t had any contact for the last thirty years. Constantinou described *Art Aware*, as “a series of culture interchange that I believe became one of the most successful bi-communal events on the island. The reason? It’s simple, non-official character”. On the first Saturday of

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<sup>38</sup> Pembe. Personal Interview. 26 April 2006.

every month, artists and other visitors would gather at Arabhament Cultural Center in “north” Nicosia. Two artists would present each month, one Greek-Cypriot and one Turkish-Cypriot, and each artist was given the opportunity to “explain their technique, their philosophy, and how they decided to do this kind of work”<sup>39</sup>. There was eagerness by many artists to participate in this activity, and almost all of the artists that were approached to partake accepted. The friendly atmosphere of the event induced confidence in the participants who looked forward to the festive “aftermath”, the food, drink, and dance after the session completed. Ayshe, a Turkish-Cypriot artist, believed this activity was so important because of the “opportunity to engage in conversations [that] enabled us to thrive, spread and connect our personal experiences, differentiate or leap into fresh ideas”. Constantinos reflected that “*Art Aware* [should] be a clear demonstration that we not only need, but can understand each other on this island and truly live”.

As these two events clearly show, early bi-communal visual art activities focused on bringing together artists from both sides to work together and share not only their artwork, but their hopes and dreams as well. Activities were not necessarily focused on the event itself, usually an exhibition, but instead focused on the process of building relationships. Two art camps were organized in 2005 in Paphos and Karpas with the sheer desire for artists to live together for an extended period of time and share every aspect of their lives. It is obvious from these camps that many of the artists involved in early bi-communal activities felt that the artistic process was more important than the works created. The works from these camps were exhibited in the Osman Foke Exhibition Center in Famagusta, but all of the artists I interviewed who had participated in the camps discussed only the friendships that were formed. None of the artists mentioned anything about the art that was created. It is apparent that the works created were of secondary importance to the artists learning to understand each other.

Not all bi-communal visual art activities were organized to form relationships between the artists. Since 2004, *Open Studios* has been planned within the walled city of Nicosia on both sides of the Green Line. The *Open Studios* workshops happen in the fall and generally involve over thirty artists opening their studios to the public. Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots are given the opportunity to come into contact and interact

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<sup>39</sup> Pembe. Personal Interview. 26 April 2006.

with each other and with the artists. Much of the dialogue at this event took place between members of the two communities who were visiting the studios. This was very different than many previous bi-communal art activities, because it was directly aimed at opening communication between members of the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot communities. Also, many past bi-communal art exhibitions had only appealed to art lovers, the elite and government officials, and few members of the public had been encouraged to attend these events. However, *Open Studios* has received a large turnout over the past two years and has been the basis for much communication between members of the two communities who would not have otherwise met. *Open Studios* sent a strong message to the public, that of an indivisible Nicosia and by extension, an indivisible island.

Though *Leaps of Faith* was an international event and not directly organized as a bi-communal art activity, it is important to briefly mention the exhibition and its implication on the visual arts in Cyprus. Aimed at “animating and activating public spaces and sites” along the Green Line, curators Katerina Gregos and Erden Kosova stated in their pre-event statement that they wished to avoid the politics of the ‘Cyprus issue’ in their exhibition <sup>40</sup>. However, both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot artists participated along with twenty-two international artists in this May 2005 event and thus it could be classified as a bi-communal art activity. Though this event received a lot of negative press both in Cyprus and internationally, many lessons can be learned from the exhibition. Though the show was aimed at addressing larger global social issues, it also provided the belief that “art is the least biased and offers the most ‘humanitarian’ perspective on political issues”<sup>41</sup>. Art “engenders communication and serious thought and shapes the way in which we perceive the world”<sup>42</sup>. Thus, the event provided pertinent evidence of the role that the arts play in building peace in Cyprus. Many of the artists involved in this event used the exhibition to express themselves and their desire for peace between warring groups. It was the intention of many of the artists involved to use

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<sup>40</sup> Gregos, Katerina and Kosova, Erden. *Leaps of Faith*. Press release. April 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

their work to communicate a sense of faith in communication, co-habitation, and a peaceful future for not only Cyprus but the world as well.

Early bi-communal art activities in Cyprus helped to foster relationships and open dialogue between members of the two communities. The events discussed above are only a few of the numerous activities that have been executed since April 2003. The purpose of these activities lends itself perfectly to more general understanding of the aim of peace-building initiatives. Peace-building is based upon transforming relationships and social structures so that future conflicts are less likely to occur. By initiating activities in which members of the two communities were able to form relationships, the visual arts helped to promote the dismantling of stereotypes and allow for the vision of a united future to form. This idea will later be explored in greater depth in the last section of my data.

The artists who have participated in bi-communal art activities have had immeasurable success when one acknowledges the difficulties that they faced when trying to organize these events. Sophia, a Greek-Cypriot organizer, believed that “yes, there have been difficulties just like any other difficulties, not really different in nature from any other event” while Pembe, a Turkish-Cypriot organizer, felt that there were many more hardships to overcome when organizing a bi-communal activity. One of the main difficulties that artists face when planning a new activity is that of money and sponsorship. Much of the money for these activities comes from private sponsorship, because neither the ‘TRNC’ nor the government of the Republic of Cyprus has a budget that generously supports the arts. Both governments normally have had a non-existent role in aiding the arts, and sometimes the governments have even hinder bi-communal art activities from occurring by enforcing strict regulations. Also, there is no public visual art school on the island thus the visual arts have take a backseat to many other artistic mediums. There is also limited public art space in Cyprus, thus making it more difficult to find spaces suitable for bi-communal visual art activities. Every artist interviewed noted that the lack of funding from the government made it very difficult to host frequent bi-communal art activities. Constantinos brilliantly pointed out “in Cyprus, you would never see [works of art] in the street except statues of soldiers throwing a grenade or holding a gun or some very stiff bust of [a] general”. The money that the government

tends to set aside for the arts usually goes to sponsor art that supports political propaganda. Much of this art does not lend itself to dialogue, but instead reifies hatred and reinforces stereotypes. It appears to be more difficult to receive money from the municipality to exhibit works with the purpose of peace-building and bi-communal joy. Both the Republic of Cyprus government and the 'TRNC' government appear to fund propaganda art more than bi-communal art activities.

When in the past the government of the 'TRNC' has been willing to sponsor an activity, many "Greek artists don't want to participate because the Greek government doesn't like people to do work, or anything, with the Turkish government"<sup>43</sup>. This created a problem when the catalogue sponsor for *Art Aware* was the Turkish Education Ministry. The organizer of this event decided it was best not to acknowledge the fact that Turkish Education Ministry sponsored the printing of the catalogues, and instead just briefly thanked the Ministry at the opening of the event. This preventive measure made sure that the Greek government could not prohibit Greek-Cypriot artists from participating in this bi-communal event. Both Pembe and Ayshe noted that this aspect is hypocritical, because many Turkish-Cypriot artists do not have a problem participating in activities sponsored by the government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Another major obstacle to organizing bi-communal activities is the language barrier. This obstacle is not only faced by artists who have limited knowledge of English or the other community's language, but also by the media and other literature. There are no public printing presses in Cyprus that have Greek, Turkish, and English letters<sup>44</sup>. Therefore, any catalogues or invitations made for these events can only be bilingual: Greek and English or Turkish and English. Many artists have expressed discontent over the limited language options. A Turkish-Cypriot artist withdrew from *Art Aware* after visiting the *Cyprus Maps Exhibition* in "south" Nicosia. The artist was astonished that after having been invited to this bi-communal event the board at the entrance of the exhibition had information only in Greek and English. When the artist started reading the text on the wall it said, "Cyprus is the largest Greek speaking island in the

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<sup>43</sup> Pembe. Personal Interview. 26 April 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Strousa, Efi. Interview. By Zehra Sonya in *Eastern Mediterranean Art Association Art Journal*. Volume 1 (March 2005): 16-26.

Mediterranean”<sup>45</sup>. After reading this text and realizing that there was limited Turkish representation in this exhibit, the artist decided to withdraw from *Art Aware* as a protest against bi-communal activities in general. Not only was the artist offended by the actual text, he was also insulted by the fact that there was nothing written in Turkish at the exhibit. Though this represents an extreme case, it shows how language manifests itself in a variety of problems at bi-communal art activities.

Two artists also specifically mentioned that they did not want to express themselves in the English language, but frequently had no other communication choice. There are other artists who wished they could participate in bi-communal activities but they did not feel comfortable communicating in any other language other than their own and this hindered their ability to partake in particular activities. Due to the language barrier, many of the artists that frequently participate and organize bi-communal art activities have a strong knowledge of the English language and this is seen as a deterrent for many other artists who do not necessarily feel as comfortable with the English language.

Also, the lack of trilingual printing presses on the island makes it difficult for members of the other community to receive invitations to these events and to find the location where they are being held. Most invitations have started to include a map in order to solve this problem, but many individuals only attend bi-communal events that are located on their side. Therefore, if you host a event in the “north”, the majority of visitors are Turkish-Cypriots while in the “south”, they are Greek-Cypriots. There are many more art gallery spaces in the “south” thus the frequency of bi-communal art exhibitions is higher in the “south” than in the “north”. EMAA created May Days as a bi-communal art exhibition that is located throughout “north” Nicosia in order to increase the amount of bi-communal activities that occur on the “north” side of the island. Two Greek-Cypriot art students, Spilios and Eleni, both said that although they would go to bi-communal art exhibitions in the “north”, they preferred to attend those that were hosted in the “south”. Thus, the location of the activity tends to hinder guests from attending.

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<sup>45</sup> Ulucan, Hikmet.. “Letter from Hikmet Ulucan” Eastern Mediterranean Art Association Art Journal. Volume 1 (March 2005): 9-10.

These are only a few of the many difficulties that have been faced when trying to organize bi-communal events. Organizing any art event is very difficult, and many of these difficulties would have been faced regardless of whether it was a bi-communal event or a solo exhibit. Those who are devoted to partaking in bi-communal art activities generally do not let these deterrents hinder their participation. Another difficulty is that the face of bi-communal events is constantly changing, and also the purpose of these events is frequently evolving. For example, the Annan Plan referendum affected bi-communal art activities greatly in both positive and negative ways, thus changing the goal of future bi-communal activities.

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004 a referendum took place in both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities in order to vote on the *basis for agreement on a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus Problem*, known otherwise as the Annan Plan. The plan was rejected by 76% of Greek-Cypriots who voted yet accepted by 65% of the Turkish-Cypriots. Therefore, the plan was not implemented but the drastically different stances caused repercussions for bi-communal art activities. Constantinos believed that after the referendum bi-communal events have “died down a bit but are not dead... it [is] mainly because of the political propaganda that people are letting themselves be influenced in a negative way”. One of the primary purposes of the artist camp *From Sunrise to Sunset* was to reopen communication between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot artists after the referendum<sup>46</sup>. Pembe believed that the camp was so successful because

most of the artists wanted to explain why they said no to the referendum and we said yes, and we had to discuss about these things... we have to be open hearted to each other because if I said no, I said no and if she said yes, she said yes. Only I can understand now, maybe I don't like it because I want them to say yes but I can understand it”.

It was extremely important that the artists had a period of time to cool down after the referendum and then were given the opportunity to openly explain why they had voted the way that they did. This allowed for greater understanding between the communities and many Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot artists found they were more motivated to

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<sup>46</sup>Onar, Anber. “From the Editor.” Eastern Mediterranean Art Association Art Journal. Volume 4 (October 2005): p 1-7.



show the world that although the referendum did not pass, members of both communities still desired to coexist. It is important to note that during the time period immediately after the referendum, many artists facilitated their own dialogue sessions, which were separate from organized events. There was never a time when the two communities of artists stopped communicating entirely; thus proving that artists are able to take on the role of conflict mediators and help to facilitate open dialogue between the communities.

Though both Pembe and Ayshe agreed that after the referendum a level of trust was lost, Sophia believed that it was not the referendum that affected bi-communal events but merely that the need for such activities had evolved. The first bi-communal activities had the purpose of bringing people together to meet each other, but after the restriction of movement across the Green Line was partially lifted, bi-communal activities began to focus more on learning from each other's experiences. According to Sophia, bi-communal activities have changed their course not because of the referendum but because people had been given more opportunities to interact over the years.

The effect of the referendum is merely one example of the changing nature of bi-communal art activities in Cyprus. Bi-communal activities are

like a painting that has layers added upon layers on it. You never start a painting knowing the end of it. One movement leads to another. You try to see far but at the same time you allow the process to mould it. We are in this process now. It should be pure, alive, unpretentious and this is what is happening. It is a natural involvement and an exchange<sup>47</sup>.

The aim of early bi-communal art activities was to act as a bridge between the two communities and inspire new visions of trust and faith. These activities were aimed at improving interactions between the two communities by empowering the individual artist to overcome past stereotypes and focus on a united future<sup>48</sup>. The way in which artists dealt with the Anna Plan is exactly how Kess Epskamp described the role of the arts in conflict and post-conflict peace-building. For example, by organizing camps in order to share their views, artists "facilitated continuing dialogue at important moments" in order

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<sup>47</sup> Panayi, Nicholas. "Untitled" in Art Aware 2005. Eds Nilgun Guney and Zehra Sonya. Oncu Basimevi: Lefkoshia, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Epskamp.

to “increase their understanding of divergent world views”<sup>49</sup>. This group of artists followed the correct path thus aiding peace-building initiatives in Cyprus. Though after the referendum, the drive for bi-communal art activities could be viewed as having decreased, it should instead be viewed as an example of how the shifting nature of bi-communal art activities have aided peace-building initiatives on the island.

*What role can the visual arts play in encouraging peace between Greek- Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots?*

It is very important to acknowledge that many Cypriot artists view themselves as having a large role in promoting peace, while their actual influence on the society as whole is much smaller than they care to acknowledge. Though many artists greatly aid peace culture, in reality it will take the majority of Cypriots to agree to find a solution to the conflict, because it is the individual who must apologize for the pain that s/he has caused and be willing to replace ideas of racism, antagonism, and fanaticism with new values that would sow the seeds for peace. Thus, the artist has started to act on the role that individuals must undertake and some artists have emphasized “that in spite of the division of the island, [the] two communities that live on the island resemble each other culturally, sociologically and physiologically and are even the same”.<sup>50</sup> By focusing on a common humanity, artists have been able to work together, form friendships, and rehumanize the other community. Bi-communal art activities bring members of the two communities together and create a safe space where it is acceptable to learn, question, and understand the complex narratives that are present on the island today.

Why do artists find themselves participating in peace-building initiatives to such a great extent? Although there are many answers to this question, one characteristic that almost all artists share is creativity. Creativity and freethinking allows for alternative solutions to be conceived. Many artists use their artistic medium as a way to present different solutions to the Cyprus conflict. Sophia believes that the reason artists are able to foster a culture of peace is because “artists have another language rather than the

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<sup>49</sup> Epskamp.

<sup>50</sup> Mesda, Ipek. “Art and Cyprus. Eastern Mediterranean Art Association Art Journal. Volume 3 (September 2005): 15-32.

language of the conflict, this other language is very communicative [and] directly talks to the human heart and the human condition”. This language is expressed only through artistic creations and cannot be found anywhere else. Thus, artistic expression has an extremely important value because artists are able to explore and present subjects that are not necessarily examined by other avenues in society.

Art is considered by many anthropologists to be mirror onto society, both in terms of reflecting the expression of the artist and the viewer. Just by attending an art exhibition, the individual immediately enters an open dialogue on what art is and what its purpose is in our lives. Knowing this, many artists produce works that are able to present messages that might not be communicable to society in any other way. Therefore, works of art “can take you to places where you didn’t expect to go and you may see something that [you] have never thought of” before<sup>51</sup>. Because art is accessible to everyone, artists have the unique opportunity to undermine people’s normal defenses and engage the viewer on both a sensory and cognitive level. In Cyprus, artists have used their works to bring together the two communities through sharing common cultural experiences, rehumanizing the other community, and engaging individuals in atypical ways. Bi-communal art activities have helped to foster interaction between the two communities and facilitate reconciliation. Though the visual arts are by no means the only creative method that should be used to aid peace-building, the arts have played a significant role in increasing understanding between warring groups and facilitating interaction.

In Cyprus, art has not always been created as a beautiful image to be sold, but instead has frequently been produced to communicate a message to the public. Though not always obvious or direct, many artists hide a specific message under the surface of their works. Many times this message is one that directly or indirectly preaches peace. Ayshe said that she doesn’t normally see “an artist that says go to war, kill these people. Always an artist wants people to live together in peace...and to say good things on humanity”. This is not to say that all artists share the same vision of peace, but rather that the artistic message has very different implications than any political position that might exist in society. The meaning of the term peace varies for each individual depending on

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<sup>51</sup> Nilgun Guney and Zehra Sonya, eds. Art Aware 2005. Oncu Basimevi: Lefkoshia, 2005.

their own political opinions, but as a whole, many artists involved in bi-communal art activities use their art to perpetuate a message of mutual understanding and cooperation.

One could say that art produced in Cyprus today is based upon a number of different thoughts and attitudes towards art and life; all of which are diverse but at the same time pertain to certain complex contemporary social issues. Not all artists in Cyprus are as open minded and pro-solution as the artists that I have interviewed for this project. Though this select group of artist uses their work to express their desire for a solution to the Cyprus conflict, other artists do not utilize their work to send the same message. The artists who partake in bi-communal art activities are generally representative of the portion of society that is focused on peace-building and reconciliation.

Bi-communal art activities seem to have a greater affect on the artists participating than those individuals who just attend the exhibits. However, even though Greek-Cypriots are more likely to attend bi-communal art activities that are hosted in the “south” and Turkish-Cypriots in the “north”, the public has received most bi-communal art activities with open arms. Generally, the artists who have participated in these events have not felt any discrimination or social stigmas just for partaking in these events. The majority of visitors to bi-communal art activities are art lovers and are not necessarily there to support the political message that is presented when artists from the two communities work together. There have been many so many bi-communal art activities in the past that visitors have had difficulties remembering whether the exhibition was bi-communal or not. To the majority of participants, it is the art that is of utmost importance and not which community the artist is affiliated with. Spilios, a Greek-Cypriot art student said that he could “only tell the difference when read[ing] the names of the artists, you can’t tell who is from which side when looking at the work”<sup>52</sup>. Eleni, another art student, said that the sheer magnitude of artists desiring to work together has lessened the press that is commonly associated with bi-communal events. To these students, working with members of the other community is not a major concern because “everyone works together” on the island<sup>53</sup>. One student even went as far to say that “no one really cares

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<sup>52</sup> Spilios. Personal Interview. 2 May 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Eleni. Personal Interview. 2 May 2006.

about bi-communal anymore” since it has become much easier to organize bi-communal events.

There are still many individuals who choose not to attend bi-communal art activities either because they do not personally support the message that bi-communal represents or because they are not generally interested in the arts. Normally, it has become a very educated crowd that chooses to participate in these exhibits. The majority of those attending bi-communal visual art events are art lovers, art students, or other artists. Thus, these activities are usually aimed at a certain crowd and unless they take place in a particular venue or as a part of a larger activity, the events do not necessarily reach a large audience.

## **Part VI: Conclusions**

In Cyprus, bi-communal visual art activities have been an especially affective tool in peace-building for these activities have brought together the two communities by creating a safe arena where it is possible to share personal experiences and engage in open dialogue. Many of these bi-communal events have focused their energy on the process rather than concentrating on the product. By focusing on the process, there is a greater chance that the individuals involved with the activity will be able to create relationships instead of worrying about what the exact outcome of the activity will be. Lederach hypothesizes that a global shift must occur where work becomes envisioned as a creative act instead of a technical process<sup>54</sup>. This theory will hold especially true in peace-building for, as the case of Cyprus has shown, the arts have stimulated many successful peace-building initiatives on the island. Conflict resolution professionals should employ a similar mentality and focus on the process when trying to establish an agreement between warring groups. The establishment friendly relationships and mutual understanding will be the basis of any lasting peace agreement.

The Republic of Cyprus and the ‘TRNC’ should allocate more funds to the arts in the future. These funds are not only needed to create art institutions and public art spaces on the island, but should also be used to sponsor bi-communal art activities. Public

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<sup>54</sup> Lederach p 5.

monuments should be erected on both sides of the buffer zone that present peaceful images. The only public art on the island should not be nationalist propaganda for this is hindering a culture of peace from developing. Both the Republic of Cyprus and the ‘TRNC’ must pay more attention to the influence that the arts have on society, and use this clout to portray positive messages. Thus, there should be further examination of how the arts can help further a culture of peace in Cyprus.

The internationally community should also help support arts-based processes as a process for peace-building because this process has proven successful in the past when contrasted with formal peace-building processes. Art-based approaches offer a more holistic approach to understanding a conflict for it allows different avenues of thought to develop. Given that people have multiple intelligences, the peace-building field should broaden the scope of its work and be more inclusive of artistic processes in order to reach a larger audience.

In Cyprus, artists have become more convinced peace-builders through their interactions with members from the other community. Those who attend bi-communal activities have the opportunity to learn from the artists and interact with a variety of distinct individuals. However, there is no clear-cut data to support the theory that there will be a significant impact on an individual’s life just by attending a bi-communal art activity. This is an idealistic belief that many artists hold, but none of my research was able to confirm this thought. The majority of those individuals who attended bi-communal events did so because they were art lovers, and not peace activists. However, my research has proven that artists who are involved with bi-communal activities are more likely to present a message of peace and coexistence in their work.

Though the aim of bi-communal art activities has completely evolved since April 2003, the current principle of these activities remains just as important to aiding peace-building initiatives even though the rationale behind these activities has changed. The initial friendships have already been formed, and now these activities must focus on sustaining these relationships and allowing for the continuation of dialogue between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. As conflict resolution and arts practitioner, William Kelly so eloquently put “it is my previously stated belief that although ‘ a

painting can never stop a bullet’, a painting can stop a bullet from being fired”.<sup>55</sup> This perfectly illustrates the valuable role that the arts can have in supporting peace-building initiatives. It is the message that many artists have chosen to present in their works that has the power to build peace in Cyprus.

## **Part VII: References**

### Instrumentation:

#### *Interview Questions:*

##### General Questions:

Please state your age, where you are from, and your job

How did you originally get involved in the art field?

How did you choose to get involved in bi-communal art events?

How many bi-communal art exhibitions have you been apart of?

What do you feel is the general reaction to these exhibits?

What is your reaction to the bi-communal art exhibitions you have a participated in?

Have you received positive reactions from viewers and the government?

Do members of both communities attend the opening and how do they interact?

Comparatively, do bi-communal art exhibits do as well as other exhibits?

Is there more or less media press involved with bi-communal exhibitions?

Have you felt any repercussions for participating in bi-communal events?

Do you think bi-communal art exhibits can help foster a culture of peace on the island?

What do you see as the future for the arts in Cyprus?

##### For Artists:

How do you classify yourself and your work?

Wby did you decide to partake in bi-communal art activities?

How do you explain your work to viewers at these events?

Do you receive different reactions to your work depending on where it is exhibited?

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<sup>55</sup> Kelly, William. 2000 p. 19

Where on the island do you most enjoy presenting your work?

If you have exhibited your work on the other side of the island, were you comfortable exhibiting your work there and did you feel as if you were given equal treatment?

Do you find that gallery owners and museum curators are open to bi-communal art exhibitions?

Do you feel that your work can reach a larger audience through these events?

For Organizers

Why did you decide to host or organize a bi-communal exhibitions?

Have you had difficulty organizing bi-communal exhibitions?

Have you had a difficult time find artists to partake in these events?

Please describe the atmosphere at these events.

Do you notice tension between Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot artists at these events?

Is it common for a member of one community to purchase a piece of art produced from a member of another community?



Activity Chart:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week One	Returned from Rural Home stay, talked with Marios	Visited University of Cyprus library, began work on Literature Review	Continued work on Literature Review, restructured interview questions	Received ISP proposal back, began editing proposal	Visited Ataturk Cultural Center and Arabhamet Arts and Cultural Center in north side of Nicosia, began scheduling interviews
Week Two	Continued work on Literature Review and began reworking my conceptual framework	Visited HP Gallery, Old Electric House, Nicholas Panayi's Gallery and the Nicosia Master Plan, talked with Marios about project	Interview two Turkish-Cypriot Artists, visited art studios in Buyuk Han, met with Anna, talked with Marios, and began transcribing interviews	Finished transcribing interviews, read literature given to me by Turkish-Cypriot artist, and interviewed a Greek-Cypriot Artist	Transcribed interview of Greek-Cypriot artist, worked on literature review and conceptual framework
Week Three	Met with Marios on Sunday, set up two interviews, worked on conceptual framework	Interviewed one Greek-Cypriot artist, and two Greek-Cypriots that had attended bi-communal art activities. Transcribed interviews from this morning. Met with Anna.	Transcribed two interviews from yesterday, interviewed Greek-Cypriot, began working on presentation. Went to football match with Marios and other intellectuals.	Transcribed last interview, worked on presentation all day.	Worked on presentation
Week Four	Worked on data section, edited paper	Worked on data section	Reorganized data section, wrote conclusions	Edited Paper	Finished Paper

Appendices:

*Consent Form*  
The Arts of Building Peace:  
Artistic Approaches to Solving the Cyprus Conflict  
Daniella Gold  
School for International Training

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted on the role of bi-communal visual art exhibitions in Cyprus. I am currently an undergraduate student studying abroad in Cyprus for the semester. Your opinions and ideas are very important to my research and any information you provide will be helpful to my report. This research is being done as part of an independent research project for the School for International Training. This research project will culminate in a forty-page paper to be presented to my collages and teachers in May 2006. The research might be further used in my senior thesis to be undertaken at Brandeis University in the fall of 2006 and spring of 2007.

Participation in this study will involve an interview that will be tape recorded for accuracy and will take approximately one to two hours to complete. If you agree to participate in the study, you will be assigned a random pseudonym so that they are not linked directly to the research. The research presented in the paper will be anonymous and there will be no way to link you back to your responses.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may decline to participate at any time without any penalty. In the interview, you may skip any questions in the interview that you are not comfortable with, and you may decide to stop participating at any time. If you decide to withdraw, your data will be removed from the data set.

If you have any questions about the research procedures, you may contact Daniella Gold, 0035799249208 or degold@brandeis.edu. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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