

Daily Episodes

by Marina Kassianidou

1. First day at school

As a newly appointed primary school teacher, my grandfather was sent to the village of Trachoni. The school—a rectangular room—was surrounded by a big disheveled field, full of trash, weeds, and wandering animals, such as chickens owned by the villagers. On the first day of school, my grandfather would have his students clean and tidy up the yard. They would remove weeds, throw away trash, and build a fence around the yard, using whatever rocks and pieces of wood they could find. At Trachoni, the students used the yard as a playground. At other villages, with better water supply, my grandfather would have the students plant flowers and vegetables around the school grounds. They would then care for these plants throughout the school year. Gardening, my grandfather tells me, was part of the school curriculum at the time. It was one of the activities the students would engage in during the afternoons. The students essentially acted as the caretakers of the school grounds, cleaning, weeding, and watering the garden. Education began by learning how to take care of the surrounding space, the space in which teacher and students lived, worked, and learned, day in day out.

2. The sink in the garden

My grandmother had been eyeing the sink ever since my parents announced their decision to replace it with a new one. When they were buying equipment for the kitchen of their newly built house, a few years earlier, the brown ceramic sink caught their eye. They thought it would look good next to the wooden cupboards. Over time, they realized that it was too small and not particularly convenient. They began talking about replacing it with a bigger stainless steel sink. That is probably when my grandmother went into action. I picture her walking around the house and garden, searching for and closely studying whatever needed adjusting or mending, thinking of how the sink might be put to use. She likely asked my grandfather to help her move the sink outside. She placed it by the stairs leading from the veranda to the garden and planted parsley inside. The drain holes at the bottom of the sink allow excess water to escape whenever she waters the parsley. She also arranged several small flower pots on the side, where the drying rack for the dishes would normally be found. In the new incarnation of the sink, the washed dishes have been replaced by a series of colorful flower pots, one next to the other.

3. Make-do

Kyriaki tells me about all the micro-interventions she has been observing and documenting in Nicosia. A sheet of taped nylon taking the place of a broken car window; an improvised cassette tape player handle made out of yellow wire; a missing pavement tile replaced by another tile, not quite the same as the tiles surrounding it but close enough. In some cases, she asks craftspeople to mend the damage and wear and tear that she notices around the city—the broken corner of a step, an uneven pavement, a disintegrating stone wall. An impulse to repair a used and broken city, using whatever limited means are readily available and whatever time and expertise people can offer. A kind of bottom-up caretaking of space. Attempts at preserving, restoring, fixing, improving, and reusing, which, however temporary they may be, suggest an active taking of responsibility. An aesthetics of makeshift care; a make-do-and-mend attitude.

Make-do. Making and doing. An active tending to space and a looking after. Making, doing, being. Making, doing, being, becoming.

I think of my grandfather teaching his students to take care of their surroundings and of my grandmother giving another life to that inconveniently small brown ceramic sink.

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Η Μαρίνα Κασσιανίδου είναι εικαστικός. Ζει και εργάζεται στη Λεμεσό και στο Boulder, Κολοράντο, ΗΠΑ. Είναι Επίκουρη Καθηγήτρια στο Τμήμα Τέχνης και Ιστορίας της Τέχνης στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Κολοράντο Boulder.

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