



PERSONAL MAPS

PRINTED WORKS ON THE THEME OF SENSE OF PLACE AND IDENTITY

GEORGE SFOUGARAS

PERSONAL MAPS

"It is possible that love which is not returned
is still love.

Respect, however, to be real, must be
mutual".

Lountemis.

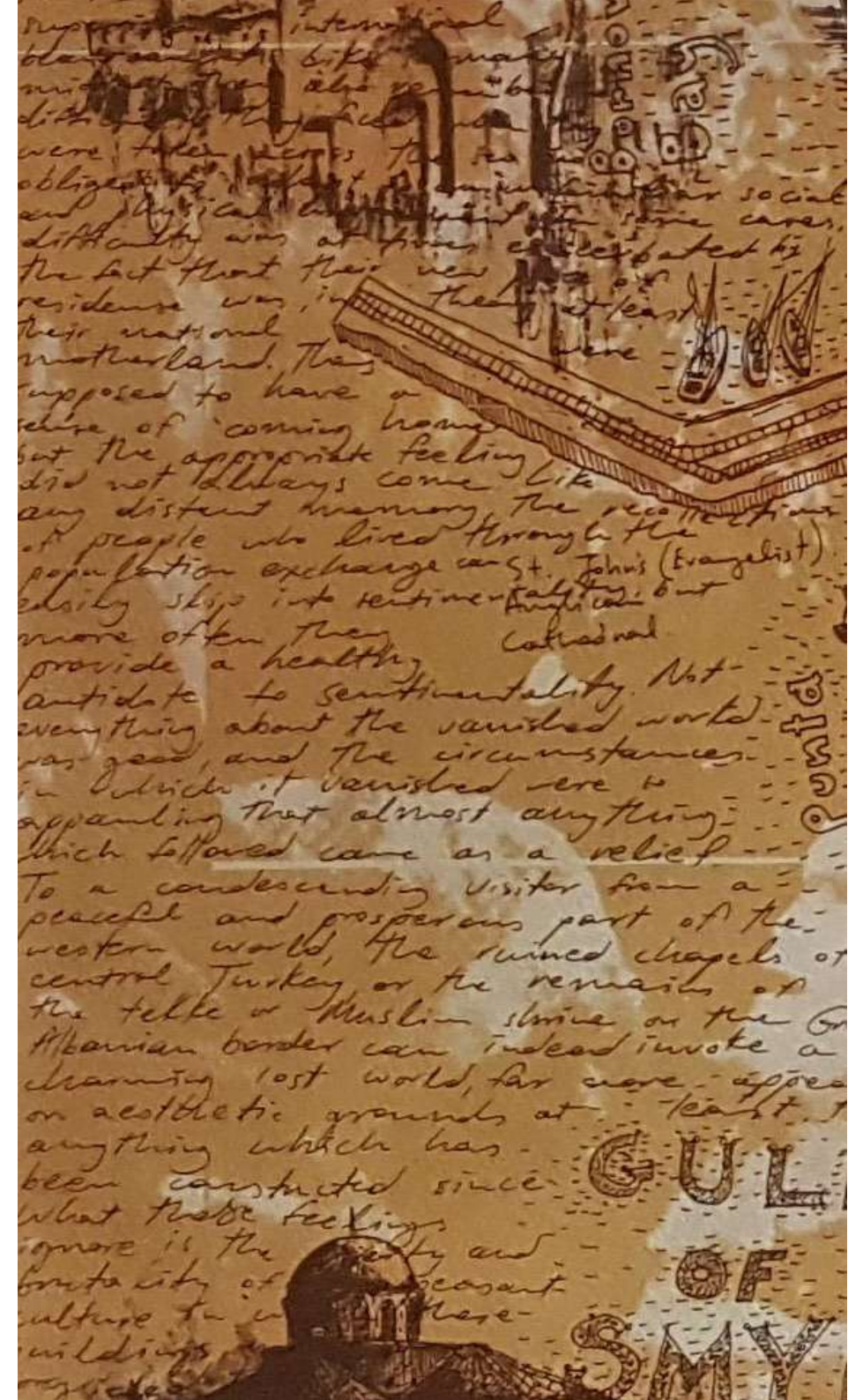
A BEGINNING

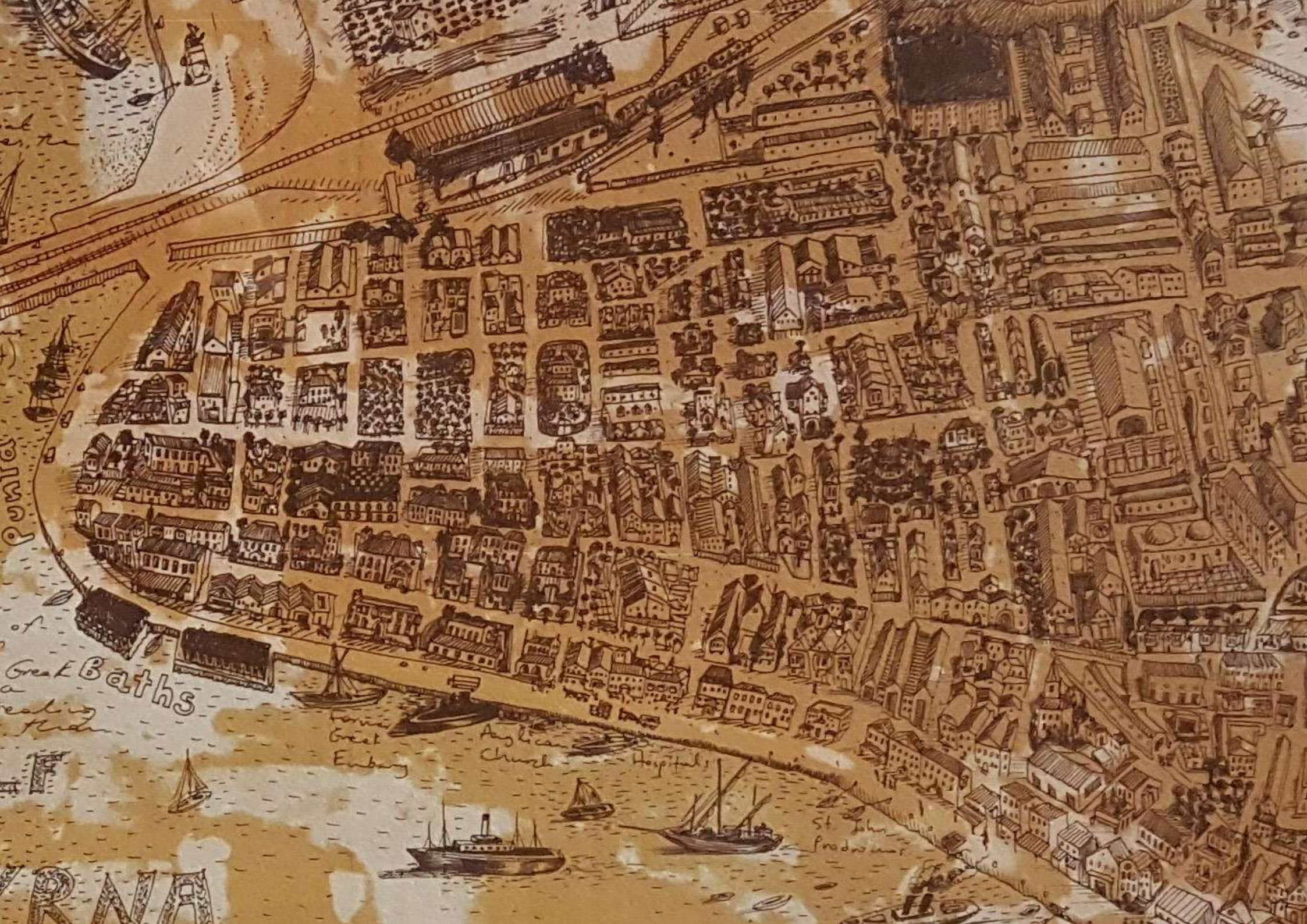
I started to draw simple descriptive maps around May 2016. Their emergence and development were entirely unexpected. I can only suggest that they came from a deep need to revisit aspects of my past and to understand our family history.

My mind turned to places and experiences that I have held onto, or more accurately filed for future reference. Echoes of my childhood and places half-remembered emerged in a simplified linear form, sometimes superimposed over archetypal faces of my younger self and my parents, or in the form of illustrations of places half forgotten, lost in time, or destroyed by war.

A kind of alphabet that I had used in my previous graphic works became more clearly defined: boats are metaphors for change and transition, waves signify an arduous journey and trees stand for hope. Slowly this symbolism began to merge with remembered details of places and people from different times in my life, archival material and literature.

It was in this organic way that my designs for 'Personal Maps' emerged. This book explains some of the works in detail and revolves around the suite of mainly printed works completed between May and December 2016 at the Leicester Print Workshop. The poems were added later, a word summary of each picture and a way of explaining the feelings that motivated me to create these images.





of

Great Baths
a
rearing
place

Great
Embay

Anglican
Church

Hospitals

St John
Proctor

RNA

'MAP'

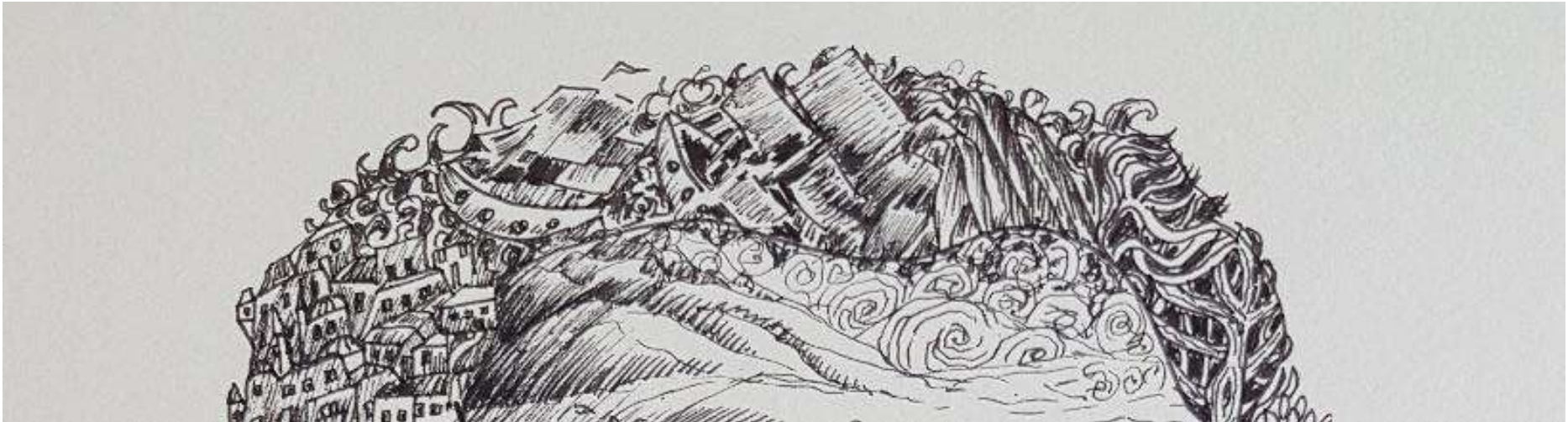
The first image in the series.

I started to draw a large 'archetypal' face of a young man in pen and ink over four sheets of A3 cartridge paper. I had been thinking about my past, the history of my hometown and my parents' lives. It was an awkward combination of mental images and ideas. A plan emerged of a chronological history of Crete, specifically Heraklion, starting with the Arab conquest, right up to the current concerns surrounding mass migration.

A kind of allegory of our family history and shared heritage developed slowly and spread like an unfamiliar script over the shaded areas of the face.

I found a beautifully illustrated codex by Ioannis Skylitzis, a Byzantine historian of the 11 century AD in digital format the Madrid museum. It acted as a catalyst for the rest of the work. The images were naïve rather than realistic, and that freed me up in the first instance and encouraged me to let go of the restrictions of an academic realism, which would have been less expressive.

The work took approximately a week of drawing to complete the four A3 sheets. 'Map', a title that immediately sprang to mind, was one of the first graphic works that I had attempted on such large scale and it produced a visual image that was able to express some of my intentions in a new way. The light areas accentuated the complexity of the drawn shaded areas, and the shaded areas had sufficient complexity to hold the eye and invite further exploration.



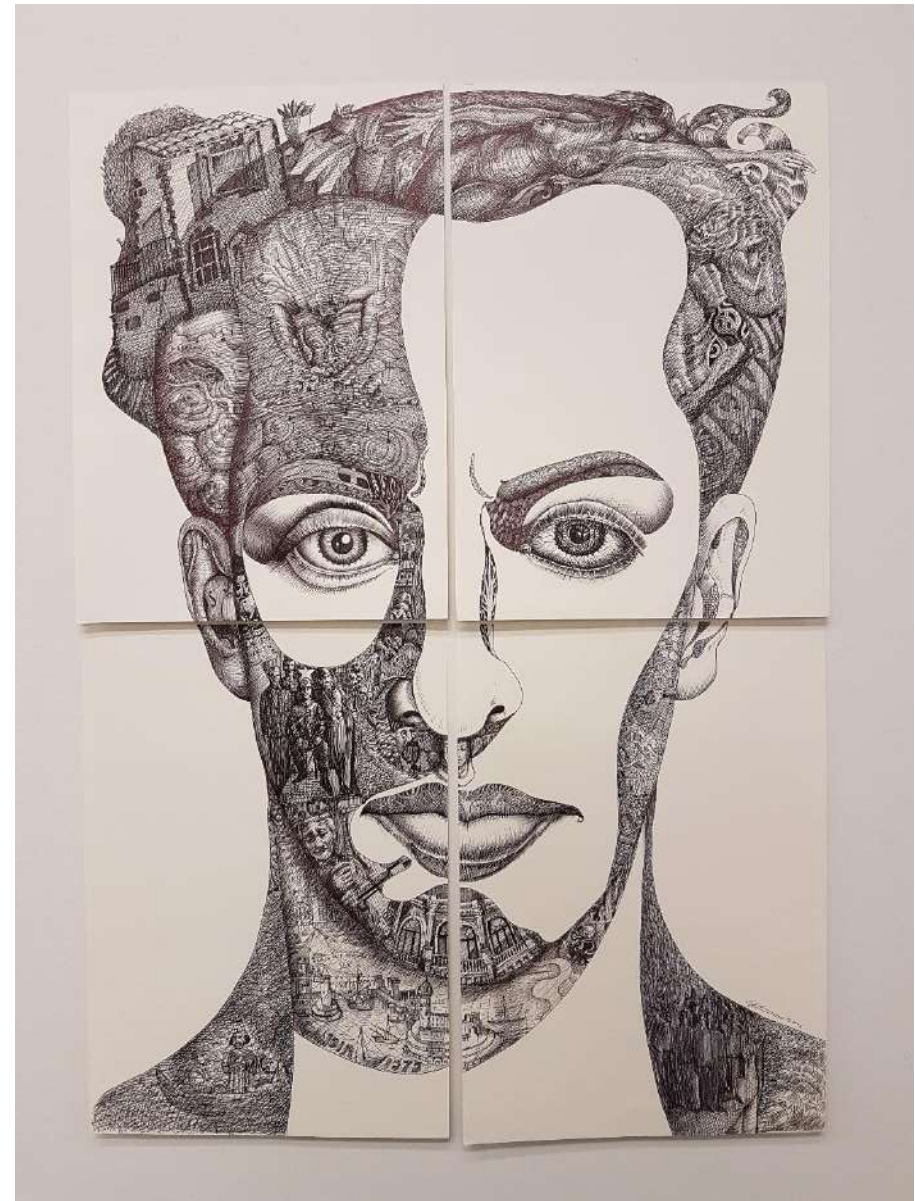
THE FINISHED DRAWING.

The four A3 sheets comprising my 'Map' picture are shown in the image to the right. This was later translated into a large screen print. I used sepia coloured ink rather than black to emulate old archival documents of the Venetian era.

Some of the details that can be seen include our house in Crete, archetypal female and male figures, (mother, lover, father hero) folk/naïve maps and references to human migration.

Motifs such as olive trees, waves and boats that have been evolving into symbols in earlier works are also used here.

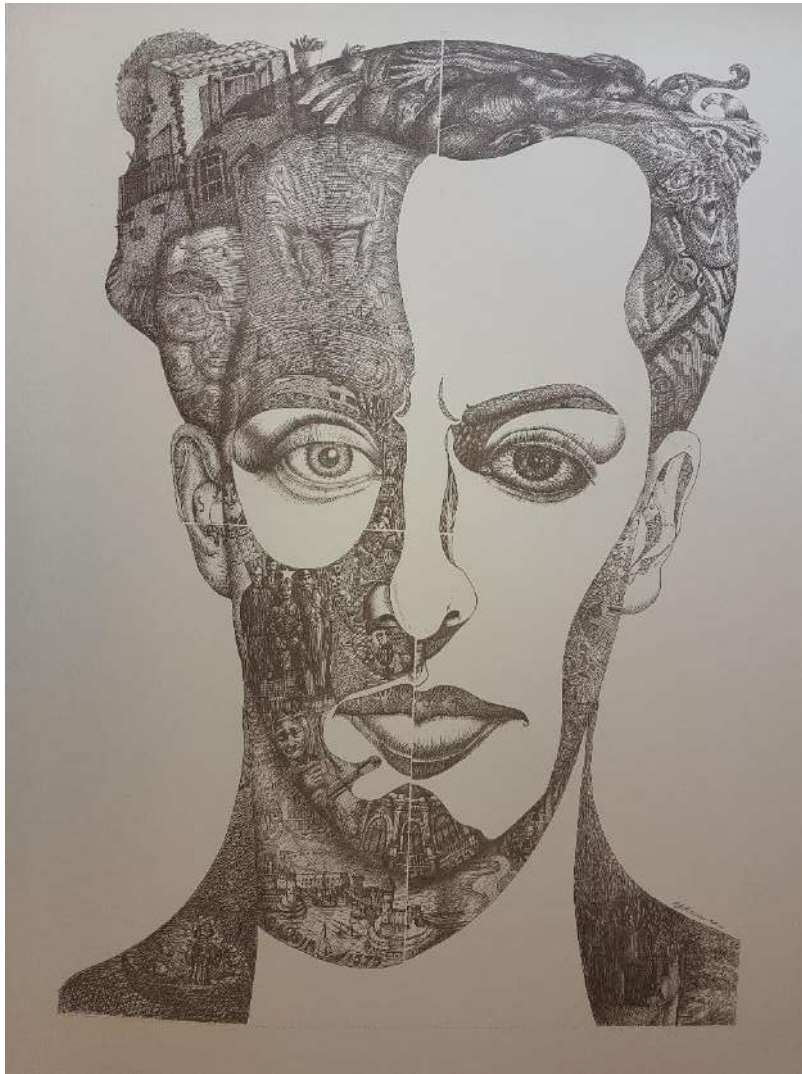
Left: detail, drawing for a head.





'MAP'

Chandaka
Like a map on my skin,
Saracens,
Venetians,
Turks and
Greeks,
Your many lives
Weigh me
Down.



'MAP'

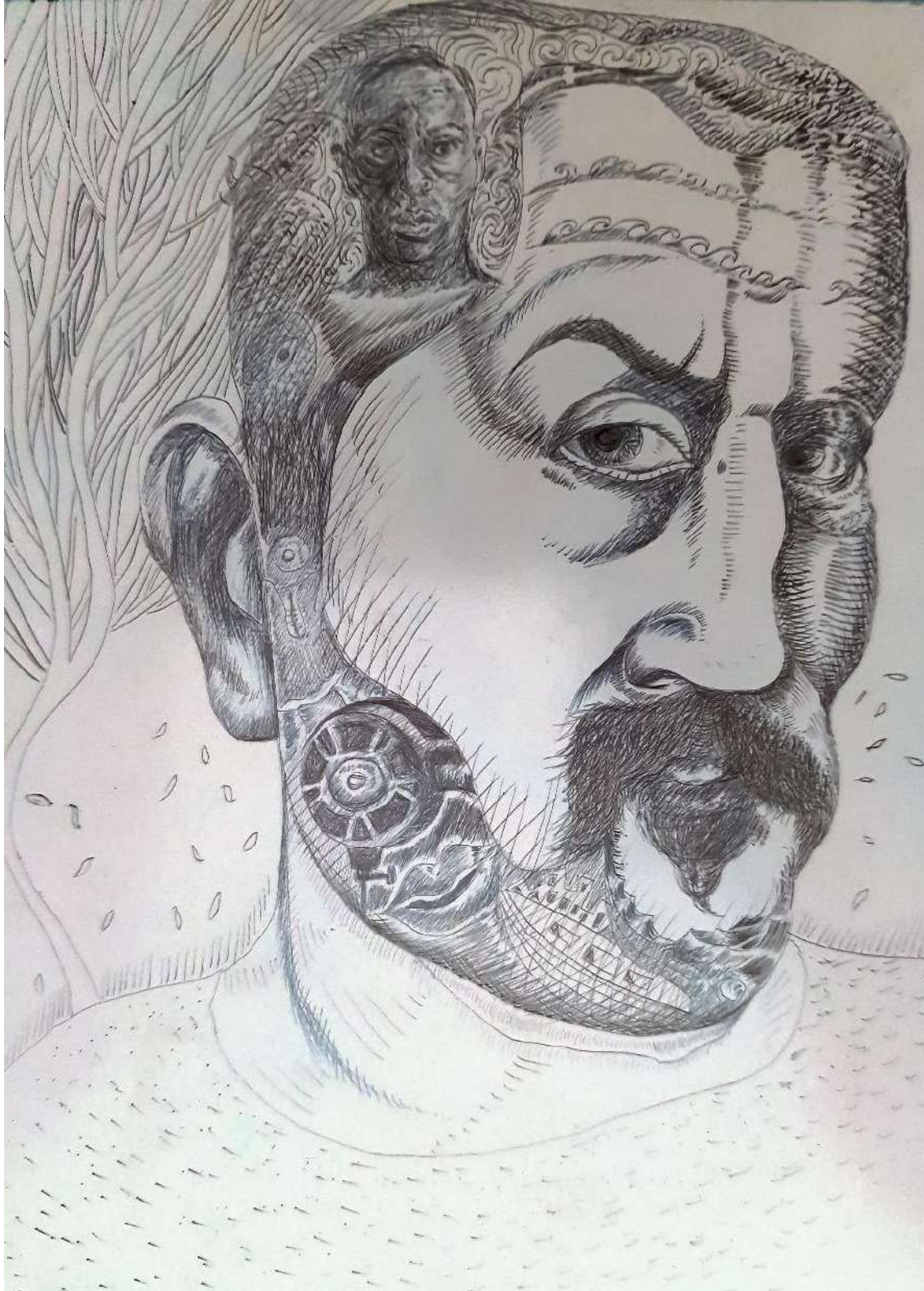
The printed work

I left small gaps and slightly staggered the four A3 stencils to emphasise the way the image was originally conceived and drawn. The white dividing lines between each segment allude to the folds in a map or manuscript. The enlarged detail on the opposite page is a digital version of the print with a vellum background.

The following very brief account gives an idea of some of the rich histories that informed this work.

Stone tools made more than 130,000 years ago have been discovered on the south coast of Crete and Europe's most ancient civilisation flourished on the island from 3,650 BC. Some sources suggest that Cretan history can be divided into three periods: Prehistoric (6000 - 1050 BC), Greco-Roman (1050 BC- AD 824) and Mediaeval-Modern (AD 824 - 1900).

My hometown of Heraklion acquired the name Chandakas following the Arab conquest in 822 AD. The Greek alliteration is derived from Rabdh El Khandac, meaning the Fortress of the Trench. The name changed to Chandakas in the second Byzantine period in 961AD, then, later during the Venetian period (1205-1669) to Candia. It was then captured and remained under Turkish rule until 1898 when it became an autonomous state and Heraklion acquired the current name. Crete became part of Greece in 1913.



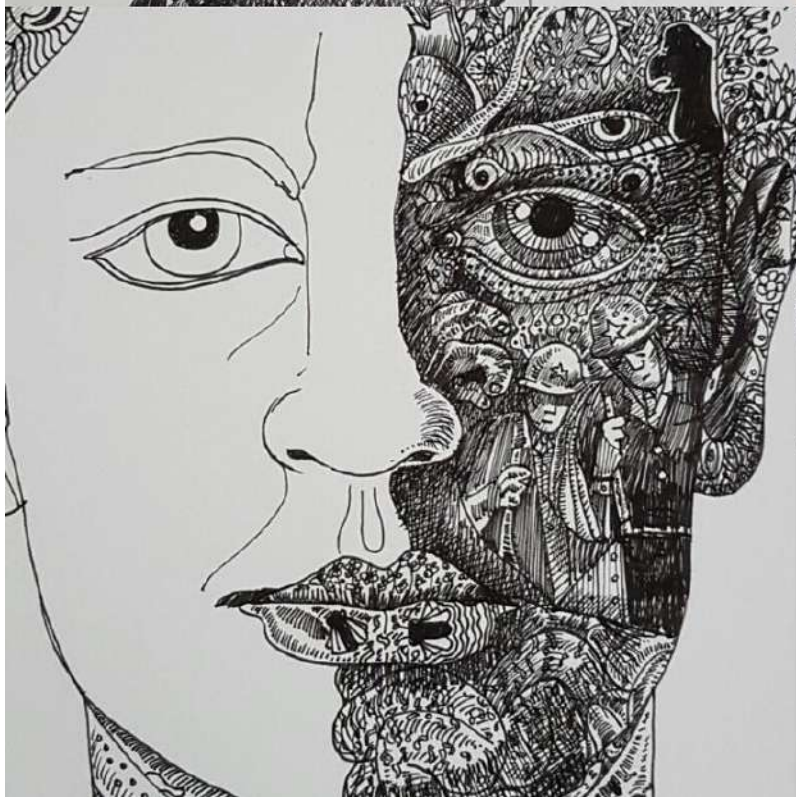
OTHER EXPERIMENTS

After completing the large 'Map' print, I was buzzing with ideas. I decided to look at how images inspired by memories of specific times could be transposed onto faces.

I experimented with the amount of information I packed into the pictures, and I found that too much detail was less effective. The white areas gave 'respite' and 'framed' the information contained in the shaded busy areas. The portraits on this page although enjoyable somehow lacked the depth of feeling of the large face 'Map'. On reflection, this was because the original large drawing has a clear focus and direction.

I did not convert these pictures into screen prints. I did, however, make one etching on steel (image on the left). Etching is a beautifully delicate process, yet I somehow felt that I had less control over the final image and differences occurred in the translation of the drawing onto the metal plate.

I decided to focus on screenprinting and to look at how the consistency of ink and the size of the screen mesh could improve the detail of the finished printed image.



'A MAP OF THEN'

Let me
Show you
A Map
Of Then.

More real
Than this town.

Your laughter echoes
From the place
Where
We
Hid.



ΑΤΑΝΕΩ ΦΙΛΟΝΙΑ

ΕΥΡΥ ΠΛΑΤΕΙΑ

ΜΕΣΟΧΡΗΣΤΙΑ

ΓΑΡΟΤΕΛΕΙΟΝ



ΠΑΡΑΙΝΑΣ

ΚΑΛΑΜΙΕΣ

ΑΤΟΜΕΡΙΕΣ

ΚΑΤΟ ΜΑΥΡΑΔΑ

ΜΕΣΟΧΩΣΤΙΑ

ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΔΑ

ΑΡΧΑΝΕΣ

ΜΑΣΤΑΜΤΑΣ

ΚΟΥΤΕΛΟ

ΑΤΑΝΑΡ ΓΙΤΟΝΙΑ

ΤΑΝΑΡΙΑΣ

ΚΑΠΟΖ

C. KALIS

The 'Map of Then'

This image materialised one day when I was sitting near the open window of our little house.

I was thinking about how useful it would be if we had a map of the village. Apparently, a long time ago the streets had names and signs, and a previous mayor had even designated the steep road to the village square, one-way. Sadly now there are hardly any street signs or house numbers. Finding anything means finding someone to ask.

It is sad to see what is happening to the rural areas in Crete. As the old people pass away, the properties often stay unoccupied for extended periods of time, and thus the population of individual villages have declined sharply in the last 50 years. Less funding and the decrease in occupancy has meant that some projects and priorities have suffered.

There is another factor which may explain why road signs are not critical here. There is always a friendly local willing to tell you where to find something or someone. The size of some settlements means that distances are relatively small and the local people genuinely like to talk and interact. In any case, I realised that a map of this village would not be possible without street names and signs.

I had already started to draw a couple of the houses on the never-to-be map, and as I continue to scribble on my A4 pad, I found myself making up and re-imagining buildings, places, and streets of my childhood. What emerged was not a precise place but rather an amalgam of places and feelings. I removed eight pages and stuck them together to form a large sheet. This simple act also meant that I was able to carry my 'map' around, making changes and working in other settings. A large sheet gets damaged. I also like the fact that I am somehow forced to find a solution to the joints. All these considerations contribute to a sense that this is not another drawing, but more of a plan, a map, another thing altogether.

One part of the picture makes reference to places where we played as children, hidden from adult supervision. ('Apomeris' in the bottom left corner means 'Out of the Way'.) Elsewhere, familiar street names and houses, the villas of the wealthy and the long abandoned and neglected buildings in melancholy neighbourhoods formerly occupied by Muslim Greeks deported in the 1920s.

'MY PERSONAL ISTANBUL'

This image emerged on a quiet afternoon in the studio. I had an idea about a combination of a Greek and Turkish landscape, where things flowed in and out of the picture and overlapped. I was working on the 'Hope' series of trees around that time, and thus the tree became the central point around which everything else grew.

In 1922 the end of the Greco-Turkish War, saw millions of people displaced as both Turkey and Greece expelled their other faith populations back to their respective 'countries of origin'. Sadly, for hundreds of thousands of innocent people, it was the first time that any of them had even been to their 'mother country'.

In my picture, I tried to depict Istanbul (in Turkish) or Constantinople (in Greek) in a symbolic sense. I have alluded to the history of the city and the diminished presence of the Greeks through the symbolism of the empty village houses and other images.

The destructive dragon representing conflict, the crumbling classical columns, the one surviving Byzantine eagle, the boats of evacuation, the tree of knowledge and the idealised Muslim scholar show a landscape riddled with contradictions. Waves of turbulence and leaves have blown away, little churches and falling minarets signify religious conflict. The symbolism of the falling figures alludes to political events orchestrated by governments, without any consideration or safety net for the welfare of ordinary people.

I only know versions of Istanbul from afar. By word of mouth from my father, who was born there in 1911 and from the media. This image, a version of Istanbul, is an emotional map of what is and what is not there. It is deeply personal and a way for me to come to terms with historical events which profoundly influenced my parents' generation and subsequently all those of us connected with the events that led to the 'Asia Minor Catastrophe'.

'MY PERSONAL ISTANBUL'

I never knew you
Other than through hearsay,
My father's memories.
I do not even know what to call you.
One name seems anachronistic
The other a betrayal.
I know I will never really know you,
But really what does that matter?
I cry for you
All the same
One step away,
All this love for a
City.



'I LOOKED INSIDE'

It was a hot day, but luckily there had been cloud cover, and as the day drew to a close, the air began to cool and fragrant as it drifted over the mountain herbs that hug the rugged landscape. I took an unusual turn in the main road and I found myself parked next to an old agricultural commission sign. On a weathered map, I could just about make out some local species of birds and a path leading to the river.

I decided to take the little dirt track, and within a few minutes, I was amongst old olive trees and allotments that must have been thriving some thirty years ago. Their borders lay clearly delineated in big riverbed stones. I realised that place was, in fact, the deep ravine that I saw each day on my drive along the mountain road. I had been told stories by the locals of thriving water-driven flour mills down there and had fleetingly glimpsed parts of stone walls on the brink of collapse.

Suddenly, there it was. A huge, powerful river that had coaxed and rolled and dragged millions of huge, rounded stones down its course. The locals had referred to the river as flowing so strongly, "it would take your head off" if you were not looking. The surprisingly big river bed was dry. It lay there silent and obsolete, straddled by an ancient Roman bridge. The loss of the river suddenly hit me hard. Up above a few kilometres away from all natural water sources had been redirected to an immense reservoir designed to supply the local towns. The village nearby was now as dry as a bone. Its name, meaning 'Riverside' redundant.

The dry, deserted landscape, filled me with a desire to hold on to what was left. Despite being a recent arrival to the area, not a local, I became angry, sad and emotional. It seemed as if the very life of this land had been wrenched from it, yet people carried on and continued to hope and to toil in these harsh conditions. I sat beneath the gnarled olive trees and allowed these negative emotions to run their course. Momentarily I sensed my heart swell with a feeling which was hard to place or measure. It was love for all that is fleeting, human and vulnerable in this world. When back at the house, I drew this little heart shaped image. My love for this land, the people and my family had found a sort of expression. I created this drawing, which I dedicated to them.

If you look closely, you can see the submerged village of Sfondili, another casualty of the dam. In my mind, this work flies against life's disappointment and catastrophes; the image is about love and hope and, more love. Faced with the inevitability of loss made me feel that the ones we love are truly precious.



*I looked inside my heart,
and there the river still ran,
and everything was full of
you.*

'I LOOKED INSIDE'

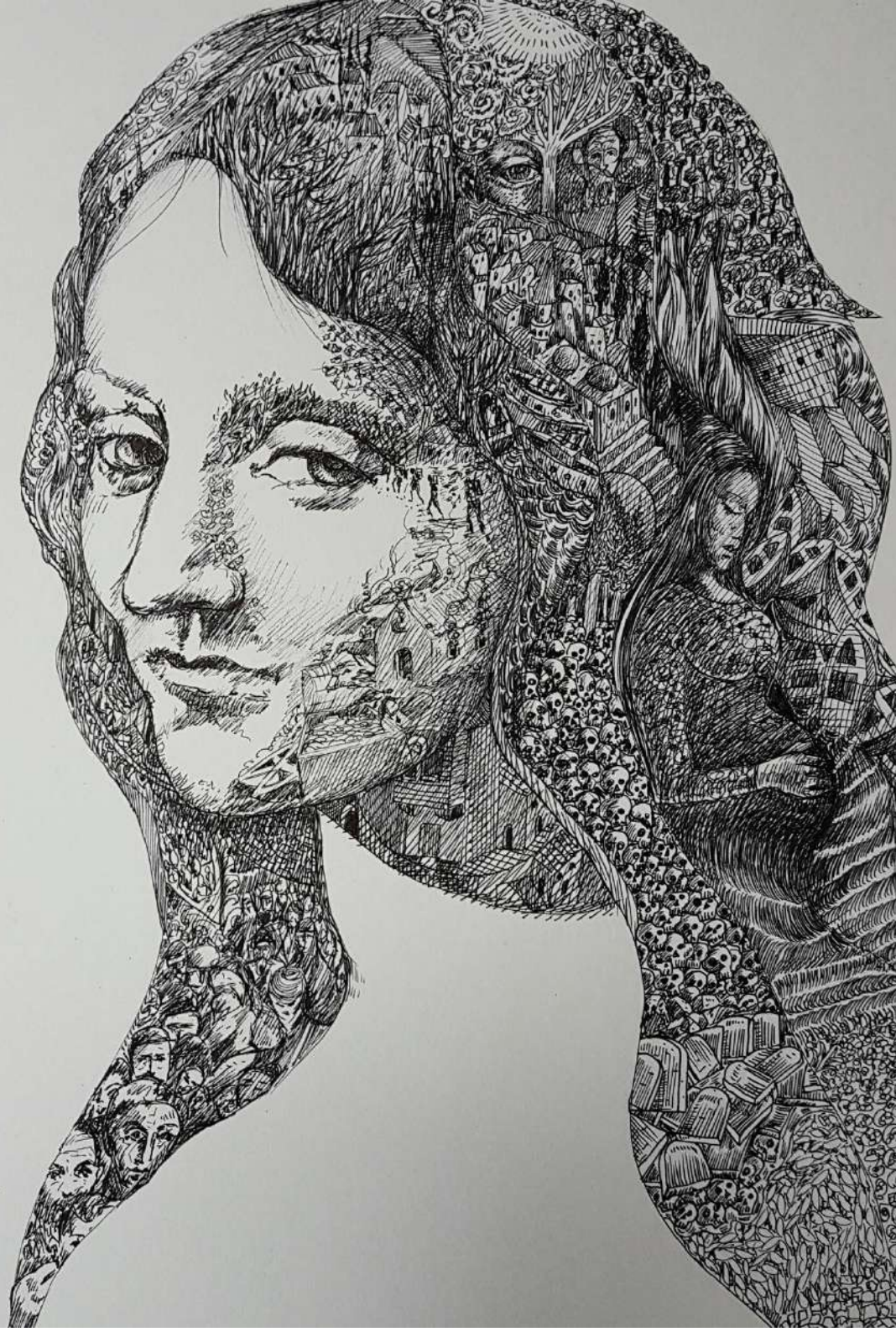
I looked inside
This old heart
And there the river
Still ran
And everything
Was full
Of you.



'IZMIR'

This face emerged as an homage to Da Vinci. I wanted a timeless quality and an unusual vehicle for the rather grim narrative. The illustrations are about the destruction of Smyrna (Izmir) in 1922. It is one of the saddest images in this series of prints and depicts the plight of all those affected by the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922.

The figure of the woman to the right is a version of my grandmother who was carrying my mother at the time. Although surrounded by the sadness and the destruction suffered by both sides, the promise of new life is what stands out in this image. The poem reinforces this concept and urges us to look beyond the catastrophe. Love is waiting to be discovered inside us all. It is there, sometimes in the ashes of the greatest tragedy. I feel we must believe that, to move on and rebuild. I applied a sepia tint to age the paper on some of the prints in the edition.



'IZMIR'

I looked for love and redemption.

Life still goes on,

It has spread like a blanket over it all.

The souls of our ancestors

Do they exist?

If so, the Crest and the Cross

Must be reconciled by now.

Let us then look for love in the new ruins

I know it must be there

Let the people be

Let them find peace

In the newborn.



'A MAP OF CANDIA'

Ships encircle you

Like a prize.

What treasures

Such a small chest holds.

Gunpowder blackens

Your walls

And you continue to

Look out seaward.

Who is coming next?

The cannons sing

Your requiem,

Whilst changing

Your name.

'MISTRAS'

I was inspired to paint this map of Mistras in Greece when I discovered an engraving created by the Italian cartographer Vincenzo Coronelli in 1866 long after the War of Independence had liberated the Peloponnese from the waning Ottoman Empire.

Franks, Byzantines, Turks and Greeks ruled and put their particular cultural stamp on the area. The fortified town is improbably perched on Mount Taygetos, near ancient Sparta. Mistras served as the capital of the Byzantine Despotate of the Morea in the 14th and 15th Centuries, experiencing a period of prosperity and cultural flowering. The site remained inhabited throughout the Ottoman period when Western travellers mistook it for ancient Sparta. What we see today as the local culture is the product of deep and complex cultural cross-fertilisation.

This map seems to me to have a mythical quality in both appearance and legacy. The safety of walled cities and their illusion of impenetrability is something that also resonates with me and is comforting on a subconscious level, perhaps.

I did not translate this into print; somehow it felt complete as it is. 80x60 cm Acrylic and tempera on an acid-free card.

'MISTRAS'

High up above
Your dusty roads
A ruler speaks in
Foreign tongue.

Shackle down
Your honour
For it leaves you
Wanting.

MISTRA. I. SPARTA



'SMYRNA/IZMIR'

Maps can speak to us on a deeply personal level and help us navigate emotions, not just physical topographies. I thought I could use this quality to 're-imagine' my mother's hometown of Izmir (previously Smyrna) before the army started a fire that engulfed and destroyed the majority of the city, in 1922.

The accompanying poem's reference to 'New Life' is about my grandmother; she was expecting and gave birth to my mother in a resettlement camp on the island of Mytilene. It is ironic that less than a century later, thousands of people displaced by the war in Syria are using that same island as a safe haven.

I chose to start at the small Punta section which was not as affected by the fire. Using French insurance maps, photographs, Google street view and advice, materials, and encouragement from the Levantine Heritage Archive, I attempted to draw a detailed map of what 'might' once have been. It is a more of a re-imagining rather than a reconstruction, and as such, it will appeal to a sense of nostalgia rather than a thirst for historical accuracy.

The staining in the background is a print directly on top of a photograph of my family during a carefree weekend. It acts as a different kind of 'map', a ghostly impression of another form of landscape. In the image, you can also see St Voukoulos and St Photini churches, both of which survive in another part of the city. In the top corner, a stamp of the Ottoman Railways symbolises the enforced movement of people that was to follow the signing of the Lausanne Treaty.

'SMYRNA/IZMIR'

I looked through the maps

Of a burned city

Lips pressed against cold ashes.

The fields of plenty now barren.

Broken is the past

But inside her

New life.



and states the condition of Turkey and Smyrna in a recent account. The fact that in the early years there was some still living who can remember that it was the city of the Sultan's Court and of the Emperor's Palace in the early years still remains a subject of interest.

Turkey and Smyrna were the first to be visited and described by travelers and the earliest account of Smyrna were still in use. They have not forgotten that Salonica was a city of the first order as well as a great and beautiful city of the same age as the other cities of the Empire. He recalls the fact that the Turkish Sultan was part of Turkey was, in some ways, a King, a Parliament, a University, a hospital, education and a city which was the tradition of Cappadocia.

For many years, 700 years were still in use. The greatest centers of Hellenic culture and commerce were to be seen in Constantinople and Smyrna. On the side of the region this is a very true fact. In the city of Smyrna there was a very large and important harbor and a very large and important harbor. It was a very important harbor and a very important harbor. It was a very important harbor and a very important harbor.

Although it is not clear from the text, it seems to be a description of the city's history and its importance as a center of commerce and culture. The text is written in a cursive, handwritten style and is integrated into the illustration of the city.

GULF OF SMYRNA

Great Baths

Great Baths

English Church

Hospital

Hospital

Hospital

Hospital

Hospital

Hospital

'STORIES FROM MY MOTHER'

All your stories
I now carry
Sometimes I retell them to my children.

Now that you are gone
I listen more carefully.

Yes, I am still listening
Your voice
In a time of not knowing
Knew
Everything.



'STORIES FROM MY MOTHER'

Some time ago, I completed a series of prints which were grouped under the title 'Songs from My Father'. My father used to sing a lot to us when we were young, and I still remember the lyrics and melodies as if it was yesterday. My mother had stories of the family and of past times. Sometimes she told us fantastical tales of monsters and heroes, of historical happenings and myths.

It was hard to gauge the historical validity of some of the reminiscences, and as I grew older, I was not always as ready to accept them as fact. It was to my surprise that my mother's recollection of a significant and traumatic event during the German occupation of Crete proved to be a fact.

The Germans were shipping most of the Jewish citizens of Crete to Thessaloniki and then, over land to concentration camps. My mother recalled that the vessel was destroyed in the Aegean, resulting in the death of everyone on board. Years later when I was researching a related topic, there it was:

"While sailing in convoy for Piraeus, 33 miles northeast of Heraklion, the Tanais was torpedoed and sunk by the British submarine HMS Vivid. Of the hundreds of victims, more than one hundred were children". (Constantin E. Mamalakis, curator of Modern history at the Historical Museum of Crete 25 June 2009.)

Not all her stories were as painful as that one. She had many happy stories too and many anecdotes which still make us laugh. Most importantly, my mother was the main source of cultural knowledge and held on to traditions and customs from her own upbringing. I was worried that when she passed away all those beautiful things would disappear from our lives. Although some things have gone with her, her recipes, love of food, stories and folk tales have remained with us and now live within her grandchildren.

The text in red is from my favourite childhood writer, a communist (Menelaos Lountemis) who sadly spent his later years in exile. Greece was under by a right-wing regime in the late 60s and early 70s. The tender sensibilities and warm, humane tone of Lountemis' works depicted a just world and filled my heart with hope. Menelaos Lountemis (real name Takis Valassiadis) was born in Istanbul a year after my father, and he too escaped with his life in 1922. It seemed appropriate to start this book with a quotation from him on the subjects of love and respect.

'TALISMAN'

In all the accounts

She appears

As the lost soul.

Here,

She is the one

That saves us.

Theia

Dimitra,

Sewing

Byzantium.

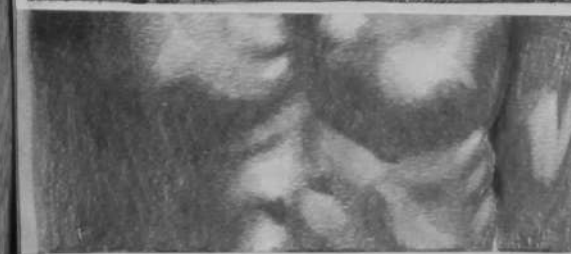
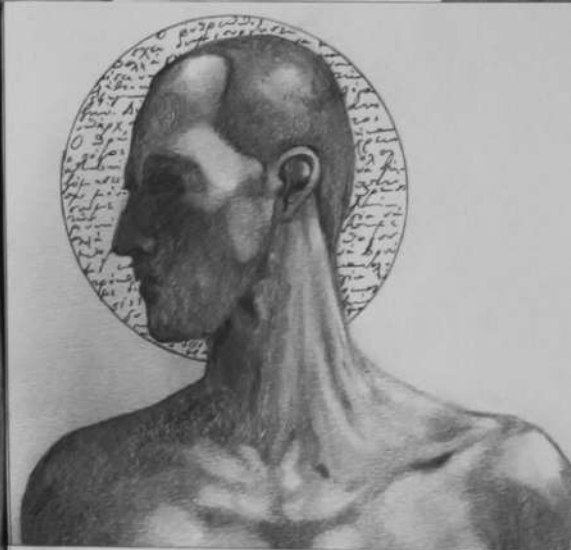
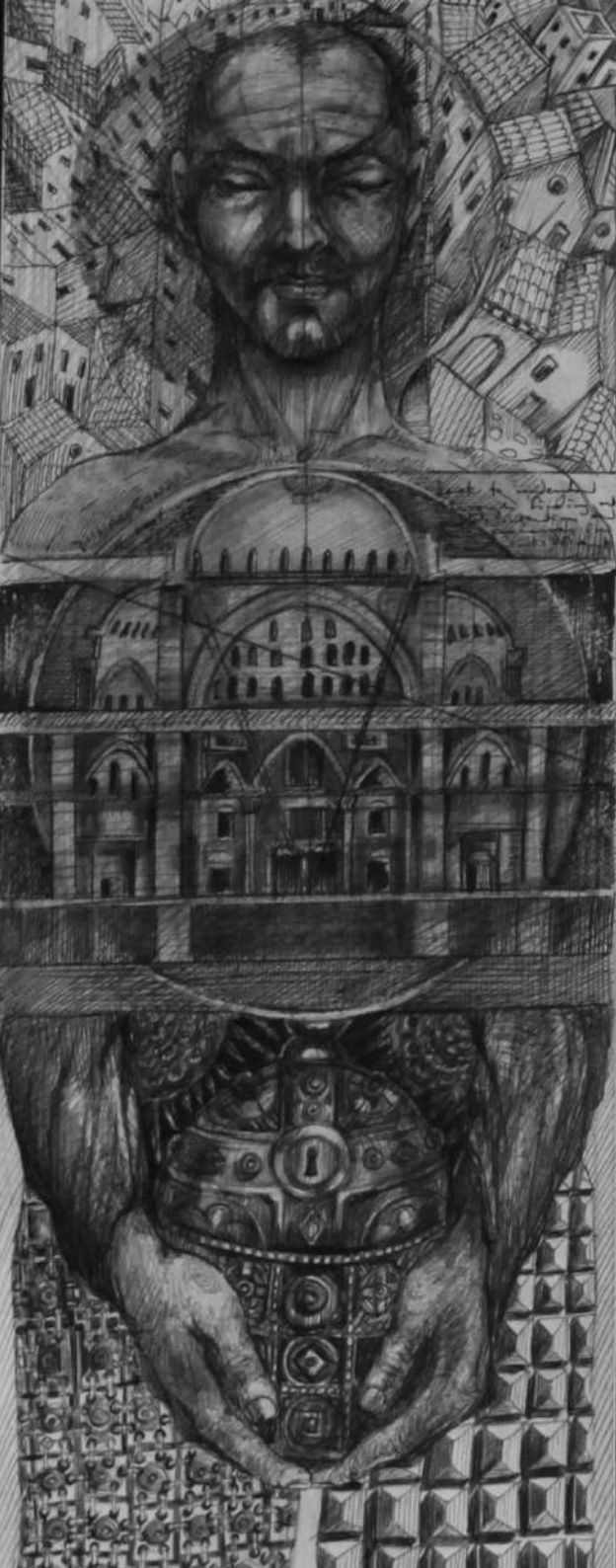
'TALISMAN TRIPTYCH'

The work that I made around the concept of 'Talisman' is a collection of thoughts and ideas which relate to Psychogeography as well as feelings that are connected or rooted in a particular geographical place, time and power relationship.

Elements of these panels include images, references and symbols suggesting that we are shaped by those we love, cultural influences and 'inherited memories'. There have been some interesting developments in the area of Behavioural Genetics which suggest that events in our lives can affect our DNA and that of our children. (See the website of the Behaviour Genetics Association for further reading on this subject.)

The triptych is a means of unpacking complex feelings. It serves the purpose of an 'exorcism' and is a tool, a step and an attempt at a healing process. The title 'Talisman' refers to the protective nature of this work, driven by a need to reconcile, not alienate or dig up past hatreds, to enact healing through forgiveness and most importantly protection through love. It is not by means the end of the story, nor is it fully resolved as an artwork, or a concept. As I was making it and now as I write about it, I am aware than ever before of the need to be fair in the way we deal with the past and the subject of shared histories. (In this case the histories of the Greek and Turkish people.)

Opposite: the original pen and ink drawings 40x30 cm. The finished prints measured 80x60 cm overall.



'TALISMAN TRIPTYCH' Panel 1.

(In order of making).

A Talisman is any object which is thought to have magic powers and to bring good fortune.

I have been fascinated since childhood by the silver votive offerings that are used to ask for the divine intervention in the Greek Orthodox Church. The idea that an object could act as a conduit to a greater power is what appeals to me; the concept of faith, of asking for help and healing is a compelling idea, even if over the years my Orthodox faith has become diluted. There are some interesting similarities with the Talisman, the constant divine protector and communication line to a greater power. The concept, of course, is both compelling and unbelievable, perhaps an example of the application of particle physics on perception?

Panel 1 started as a figure study from a photograph and then transformed into a series of segments which roughly corresponded to the human figure. Ottoman maps of Constantinople, apotropaic eyes (used in both Greek and Turkish cultures to 'ward off' evil) are a recurrent theme in this and other print designs. The embryo alludes to the way we evolve as people depending on our biological and cultural inheritance. 'Nodes' connect the foetus with knowledge which depending on the source is deemed culturally significant.

While making this work, I made notes of my references and thoughts. I felt the need to follow the theme of 'mapping' as a process and an idea. I was thinking about the genetic code that shapes its life and even the architecture of the brain. Recent research in the area of behavioural genetics suggests that parental knowledge and trauma can be transmitted biologically to our offspring. I have been exploring that thesis in some of my 'maps' and other unrelated paintings and narrative works such as 'Memories from My Father' (not shown).

Other elements in this drawing are: 'Mediterranean' man, based on an illustration from my second year Anthropology textbook; a map of Constantinople/Istanbul, designed in 1422 by Florentine cartographer Cristoforo Buondelmonti - the oldest surviving map of the city; Da Vinci's study of an embryo; Mehmet II.



'TALISMAN TRIPTYCH' Panel 2: ' THE RELIQUARY'

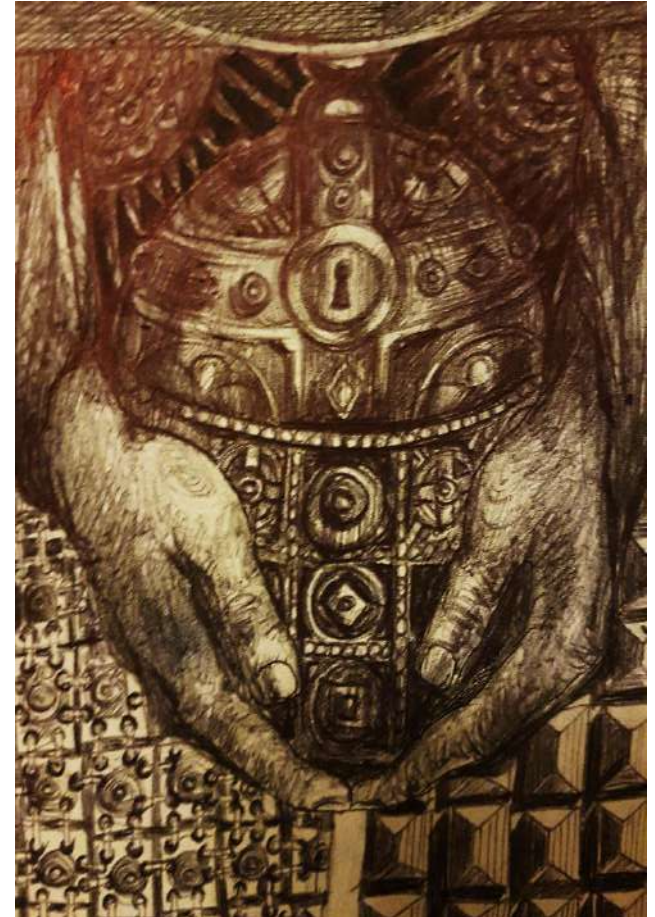
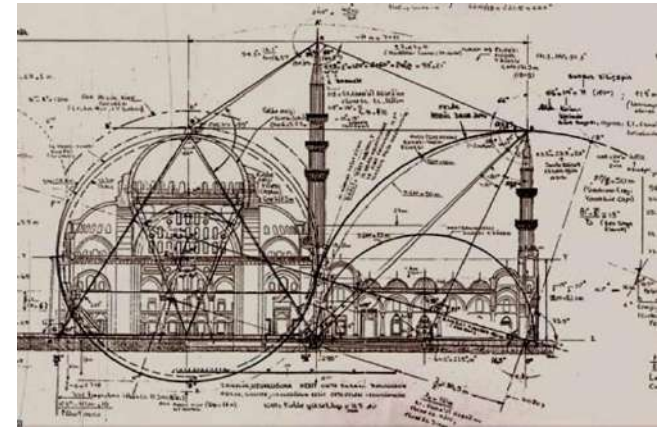
(In order of making)

In this image, I looked at both Orthodox church and mosque designs, reliquary vessels, mutually destructive or inventive Christian/Muslim mosque to church conversions and vice versa, Ottoman armour and military clothing. I was entranced by a beautiful architectural drawing of a mosque and went on to research the origins of it and the architect. (See design immediately to the left.)

When I was growing up in the Greece of the late 60s and early 70s, it was unthinkable to suggest that the Turkish occupation of Greece had yielded any significant benefits or buildings that merited attention. Most if not all minarets had disappeared by the time I was born. It was very moving to come across a restored one, towering up high, in the city of Rethymnon. (The following is from the Municipality of Rethymnon site: "During the Venetian times the Mosque 'Neratzes' used to be a church named 'Santa Maria", dedicated to the Mary of Augustans. In 1657, the Ottomans turned the temple into a mosque called 'Gazi Hussein' or 'Neratzes', which also served as an Ottoman seminary. Today the Mosque is used as a Conservatoire".)

The design to the right is one of many public buildings that the Ottoman architect Minar Sinan created. This beautifully balanced study of a place of worship forms the core of the second panel. I have omitted the minaret because it distinguishes it from a church, and for me, the two things are indistinguishable. If you look carefully at the trousers above the boots, you will see, or may just about be able to see that there are two religious buildings, one obscured by the creases of the trousers. I drew them simultaneously and made them identical; one mosque and one church, both the same.

This interchangeability is one of the tenets of this panel. The way that we define things through labels as opposed to significant differences. Beyond perception bias lies the reality of what is, and by the time we get to that our mind has become the proverbial 'immovable object'. The man holds a reliquary vessel, inside which the remnants of a saint are preserved and which is considered holy. The value we place on such things and the influence they exert on our lives is the second significant concept in this print and the reason for the title.



'TALISMAN TRIPTYCH' Panel 3: 'THEIA'

(In order of making)

The third and middle panel of the triptych entitled 'Talisman' is about the life and times of my aunt, Dimitra. It is a symbol of her, not a portrait and it attempts to capture some salient and personally significant memories of her and our shared cultural inheritance. The drawing 'maps' aspects of her life and uses metaphor and symbolism for her unique circumstances and the influence she exerted on my life.

A talented seamstress, she helped to bring up her sister's children and was the sole nurse for her mother, and a husband whom she married in her late 50s. An unsung hero, a woman whose class and upbringing confined her to a very limited world and who under different circumstances would have flourished beyond the ordinary. Despite a tragic life, she created things of beauty and was a pillar of strength to everyone else in the family. She holds the one remaining wounded eagle of Byzantium, while her old Singer sewing machine creates a beautiful landscape devoid of the pain that she experienced during her lifetime.

Significant visual components include:

The family house (a life spent in the service of others)

The dark clouds (her personal struggle with severe illness)

The dressmaker's dummy (her profession and talent)

The wounded Byzantine eagle (post-1922 chaos and loss)

The flower on her abdomen (she could have been a loving mother)

The sewing machine (she made such beautiful things)

The tapestry blanket of memories (her memories)

The golden sovereigns (she left behind an unused, useless fortune in gold)

The pin cushion and needles (an allegory for needless pain)

Flowers elsewhere in the painting (she created beauty into the midst of all the sadness).



'THE CITY'

I have often imagined old Istanbul or Constantinople in my father's childhood. The drawing is about summoning up an image from someone else's recollections. To the right, Galata Bridge, under my hands the eternal church of Agia Sophia, now a museum.

The poem alludes to the emotional rather than physical safety of distance when you conjure up something that you imagine, rather than know through first-hand knowledge.

'THE CITY'

High up
Or rather from far away,
I manipulate the scene.
It is all set now.
Safe.
Distant.
A word to the wise.
You see
This way
It comes alive
And the shadows
Are
Mine
Alone.





'SARAJEVO'

The cultures of the countries which comprise the Balkan area have been significantly affected by the former Ottoman Empire. The legacy is visible in the ethnic diversity of the regions and also in the immense chasm that religion and mass conversions created. Generations later the situation erupted into a destructive civil war.

I chose this beautiful face to represent the duality of conflict and the random nature of armed conflict. The complexity of the religious and ethnic affiliations within the region and the various governments' efforts to create order resonate with my experience and the legacy of my family's forced exile from Asia Minor.

'SARAJEVO'

I drew you once before,
Full of wooden palaces,
Creaking in the snow.

Summer, the smell of

Pine resin

And horses.

Your innocent face

Tell-tell signs.

What hell you have known

Just to breathe again.

Like a new face

Washed clean

By the storm.



CONCLUSION

This book started life as a collection of prints with the addition of poems to accompany an identifiable body of work in my artistic meanderings. It became a description of a creative process and a set of ideas, which I hope will serve some purpose in future projects.

I am very blessed to have such a rich family history and that my parents, siblings and my loved ones are aware of the importance of personal histories. It is a sense of wanting to understand my family's journey, no matter how tumultuous, that fuelled the need to make this work and to communicate visually and in written form. I hope I have done some of these concerns and histories justice, even though I am acutely aware this is only a small personal glimpse of a much bigger picture.

Two of the works ('Stories from my Mother' and 'Smyrna/Izmir') included in this book were designed, printed and exhibited for the 'Sense of Place' Exhibition (organised by the Leicester Print Workshop in 2016, as part of Passion to Print 2.) All of the prints included in this publication were made using the facilities at the LPW Studio, Leicester. I am grateful for the encouragement I received from staff and members during the making of these works.

I hope to continue to explore themes and ideas in the area of cultural identities and to examine through art, the histories of people suppressed by nationalism. More than anything I would like to create work that adds something to our collective understanding of who we are and which at some level resonates with other people's life experiences.

George Christos Sfougaras February 2017.

Image opposite: 'Remembered Garden Map'. Design for screenprint.

Image on the front cover: 'Stories from My Mother' screenprint.

Image on the back cover: detail from 'Smyrna/Izmir' screenprint; detail of Ottoman Railways Stamp, in French and pre-Turkish Republic Arabic font.

The majority of the works shown in this book are drawings in pen and ink, translated into limited edition screenprints. Multiple sizes.







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