

Press release

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«...preaching that motherland is a whore and a foster mother and a shrew...»
I Diki tou Nafpliou, Shorthanded minutes of the proceedings
(Excerpt from the indictment),
Dionysos Publisher, 1976

To what degree language acts as a catalyst in shaping the social structures? How does it become a battling instrument of violence and power?

The sociopolitical dimensions of language come under study in the new solo exhibition by Alexandros Psychoulis, extending a recurring problematizing in his work since 1997 and his now emblematic "BlackBox", which was awarded at the 47th Venice Biennale.

For building his new narrative, Psychoulis studies a real incident related with the so-called "Greek Language debate", namely a reformative pedagogical experiment: the foundation of the Higher Girl's School of Volos in 1908, with Alexandros Delmouzos appointed as director.

Regular walks in the countryside, teaching without books, the young age the male director and, above all, the use of the demotic Greek – a profoundly social and political controversy of that time – scandalize the Church authorities who, by means of a populist newspaper under their influence, manage to fanaticize a pious segment of the society of Volos.

The school closes violently three years after its foundation and Delmouzos, among other things, is accused of moral corruption and teaching socialism and atheism. The trial takes place in the city of Nafplion to avoid any clashes. In the absence of evidence, the witnesses for the prosecution make do with rehashing rumors and fanciful allusions to sexual misconducts inside and outside the school. The poor command of katharevousa which the accusers are meant to defend gives rise to a series of inconsequential testimonies preserved in the printed minutes.

The installation by Alexandros Psychoulis is a triptych of works made by interlacing cords with the idiosyncratic technique the artist has applied in previous works, and a video with excerpts of testimonies given by witnesses for the prosecution, in what was actually the first trial about the Greek Language debate in 1914, exactly one hundred years ago.

Translation: Nikos Eliades