

hinterland of the Balkans, and a center for the distribution of immigrants and refugees from ravaged war zones. It is a living, breathing city-museum boasting a historical past that stretches back to antiquity. Possibly due to its powerful cultural past the city has fallen victim to its historic affluence. We believe that opening up the city to the modern world through art is a goal worth the effort of each and every one of us.

3 You have a performance section, why do you think Performance art seems to be more relevant at the moment?

The Performance Festival was launched in the previous Biennale and we are very proud that it continues this year with the participation of many well known artists. We are also very happy to welcome as our guest star ORLAN and are having a day dedicated to the important Greek artist Thodoros. I believe performance art is more relevant at the moment because of the current social situation and turmoil that bears many similar characteristics with the '70s. Moreover, I believe that many existential and social issues are directly expressed and better communicated through performance.

4 In your opinion, what are the 'stand out' events of the biennale?

We value all of the Biennale programming. All of the exhibitions of the parallel programme are of interest as well and the Performance Festival, with artists presenting their work in various locations around the city, and "Domino", the Workshop of young artists.

5 You use the term 'A Rock and a Hard Place' in the title of the main programme, looking at the past and seeing the present are you worried about the future?

The title of the main programme is chosen by its three curators, Mahla el Bach Urieta, Marina Fokidis and Paolo Colombo. As they say in their curatorial statement, "soon after our appointment as curators of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale, we decided to take the idiom "between a rock and a hard place" as our catchphrase to describe the quandary into which the region has fallen. It became evident that this would be the most suitable title to describe the Biennale's framework. We decided to leave out the "between", mainly because we were interested in investigating the terms of the concept rather than placing the art, our curatorial practice, or the landscape itself in an existential and defeatist position. Being caught between a rock and a hard place usually indicates physiological, social, or political dilemmas that present a choice between equally painful alternatives. It describes a situation oscillating between hope and despair, violence and peace, loss and memory, redemption and order, the social and the individual, and the private and the public. In such a context, there are no easy solutions as all possible outcomes generally entail a degree of discomfort or a price that needs to be paid. Navigating the space and time that lie between a rock and a hard place involves a precarious route, which, paradoxically, might lead to a productive outcome full of possibility and hope. With hindsight, it could be a dynamic transition. This is the condition that we wanted to explore through the Biennale, especially given the current context of popular mobilisation and uprisings".

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Image:IMRAN QURESHI *Moderate Enlightenment*, 2009 Opaque watercolour on wall 51.5 x 42.5 cm, IQ09-3
Private Collection, Venice Courtesy: Corvi-Mora, London

6 Can you tell us about some of the events that will adjoin the main programme such as dOCUMENTA(13) talk?

What are some of the highlights of the adjoining events coming up.
Chus Martínez, Head of Department, Member of Core Agent Group for dOCUMENTA(13) introduced the series "100 Notes – 100 Thoughts", a very interesting and well attended event that took place as part of the preview days.
After this lecture, Marina Fokidis, co-curator of the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale hosted a discussion with Yannis Stavrakakis, Associate Professor at the School of Political Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Chus Martínez at the Archaeological Museum in Thessaloniki. This was the fourth public presentation of dOCUMENTA(13)'s "100 Notes – 100 Thoughts" series, following presentations in Cairo on April 21, 2011, New York on May 10, 2011 and Buenos Aires on May 19, 2011. Another interesting event that opened the Performance Festival was a lecture and a discussion with ORLAN. In November there will be a series of special performances by Alexandra Bachatzis and Kostas Tsoukas. As part of the Biennale, the next meeting of the Mediterranean Cultural Parliament is to be organized in Thessaloniki at the beginning of November.

7 You are concentrating on the Mediterranean this year, why have you chosen to focus on this region as opposed to Greece or Europe?

Making the most of Greece's geographical location at the crossroads of East and West, the Biennale has the potential both to strengthen the ties with the broader region of the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Black Sea, as well as to extend the study and activity network in the Mediterranean, and particularly this year, in the Middle East and North Africa. Since antiquity Greece has shared close ties with these regions and is therefore in the unique position to play a prominent role in stimulating, through art, a lively and constructive dialogue focused on communicating, identifying common problems and aims and finding suggestions and methods that will contribute to the rapprochement between – mostly – the younger generations. Furthermore, focusing on the Mediterranean, the birthplace of European civilization, Thessaloniki is well-suited to examine the common roots, similarities and differences that shape the character of this remarkable 'mosaic of cultures' surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, thanks to their historic, enduring presence, the different cultures of the Mediterranean area can be comparatively examined, thus strengthening the intercultural and interdisciplinary nature of this venture.

3rd Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art

The 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art will take place in cooperation with the 11th Lyon Biennale (15.09-31.12.2011, www.biennaledelyon.com) and the 12th Istanbul Biennial (17.09-13.11.2011, biennialoksv.org).

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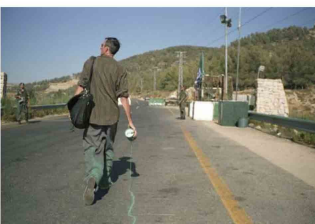


Image:FRANCIS ALÿS *The Green Line* (Sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can become poetic), 2005 Documentation of an action Edition of 1, EP
Courtesy David Zwirner, New York