

OBJECTIVE 03

To support reconciliation, dialogue, closer relationship and trust between the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot communities



INTO STREET ART: ACTIVISM, SOCIETAL EXPRESSION AND INDEPENDENT PRACTICE IN NICOSIA

URBAN GORILLAS WITH DERVIŞ ZEYBEK AND PERVİN AVCI

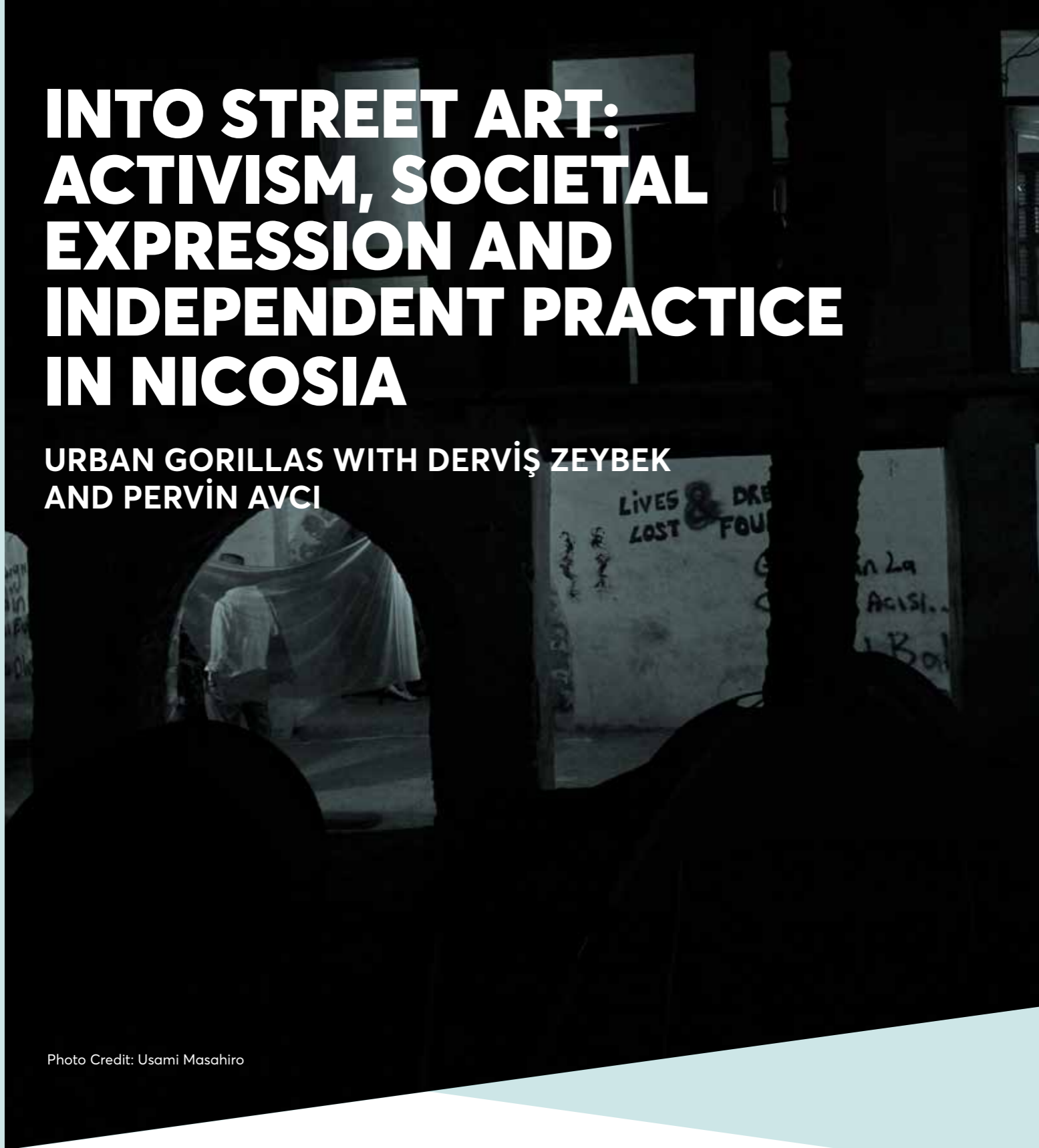


Photo Credit: Usami Masahiro

THIS ACTION INVOLVED

- A research study that documented, mapped and analysed independent street art in the old walled city of Nicosia.
- An interactive online map for virtual exploration of the street arts.
- Preparation of the "Into Street Art: Activism, Societal Expression and Independent Practice in Nicosia" Report.
- Production of a documentary about two Nicosia street artists.
- Publication of an essay on the street art of Cyprus in the online journal "the Independent", a project of the MAXXI Museum in Rome, in April 2017.
- Presentation of the project's results at Yuka Blend Festival on 7 October 2017.

ABOUT URBAN GORILLAS WITH PERVİN AVCI AND DERVIŞ ZEYBEK

Urban Gorillas is a civil society organization based in Nicosia. It is run by a multidisciplinary team of urban enthusiasts who envision healthy and socially inclusive cities. It was established in 2013 to create projects and actions that bring new energy and inspire change in city spaces. The group consists of Derviş, who works with disadvantaged youth in the northern part of Cyprus, Pervin, whose photography skills helped shine a light on the street art of Nicosia, and Veronika, an activist and urban enthusiast.

STORY OF THE ACTION

The action "Into Street Art: Activism, Societal Expression and Independent Practice in Nicosia", aimed to document and promote the street art of Cyprus, and introduce the wider public to the street art scene, and how it portrays the concerns of citizens of the island.

Through the action, the bi-communal team of independent researchers and activists captured a snapshot of the street art scene by photographing and mapping each piece of art seen along the planned routes through the city. They interviewed artists/activists from both communities in order to gather their insights, which also gave exposure to wider audiences. They shared their findings through videos and an online interactive map.

"Conducting the action throughout Nicosia, we visually documented street art, capturing a moment in the urban space of the city through the perspective of its wall art. Our strolling observation took us through the winding streets and back alleys of the city, tracing lines along the buffer zone. Through experiencing Nicosia's street art, we found that the issues raised by the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities differed, and were related to specific social and political concerns, and current affairs. Exploring these public spaces in our divided city, we observed independent voices claiming free space to express themselves, in an attempt to be heard amid the mainstream flow of society. We could see how urban space becomes a platform where young groups and independent voices can operate in a confrontational manner in the face of political, social and environmental concerns."

Veronika Antoniou

The action's findings have been gathered in a report and widely disseminated through their contacts and networks, and have also been published on Urban Gorilla's online interactive website. In addition, they also presented a photo-essay that was screened alongside a video documentary about street art in Nicosia as a part of the Yuka Blend Street Festival, on 7 October 2017. One of the crucial elements of the action was the collaboration and co-learning aspect among the bi-communal team, which itself turned into an achievement as a reconciliation effort.



Photo: Into Street Art Documentary

RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

The action highlighted the scope and importance of street art as a form of freedom of expression. It has been the first substantial research project on street art in Cyprus, exploring how the concerns of individuals and groups in both communities are visually expressed on the city's walls. The team aimed to gain critical insights about the vital issues in our present-day society that must be observed and understood. They wanted to use the opportunity to understand "the now-ness" of their community, and reflect on the importance of street art as a form of free expression. They also managed to have international exposure of the Nicosia street art and their research, by publishing their visual essay in the "Independent Project", an online journal about independent artistic practice, an initiative of the MAXXI Museum in Rome.

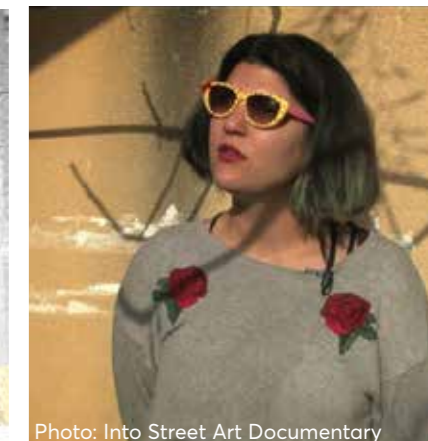


Photo: Into Street Art Documentary

WHAT'S NEXT?

The team defines the action as an ongoing social investigation, continuing their observations at different times.

TO FIND MORE ABOUT THE ACTION

- Urban.Gorillas.ngo
- www.urbangorillas.org



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