A – LA - LA I FETIXE MOSQUE NAFPAKTOS (a wander in three installations)
It was Maria's idea to let her work speak within the space of mosques. We worked together to organize three separate installations, each presenting her work in a different way. First was the Fethiye Mosque in Nafpaktos, then the New Mosque (Yeni Camii) in Thessaloniki, and finally the Zincirli Mosque in Serres.

The curatorial approach to the trilogy, as was fit, respected the spirit of these former places of worship. It created conditions for the installation that would take advantage of the features of the reception hall but also propose ways of showing the specific art.

Here in the first installation at the Fethiye Mosque in Nafpaktos, the artist's works, instead of being hung on the wall, were set on the floor in pairs, one propped up at an angle against the other. The installation thus makes a comment on the transformation of one kind of art to another, the transition from two to three dimensions, from "painting" to "sculpture".

These (now) spatial entities of tilted paintings stage a re-enactment of the "union" of two equally sized, painted parallel planes in a series of repetitions. Morphologically these pairs call to mind a gabled roof, a reasonable, initial reference to the concept of shelter or protection, with all its obvious archetypal elements and symbolism, though of course this is not the only schematic reading of the work that can be made.

Moreover, the anti-forms that arise in the gaps between the paintings all function as free gateways of escape and passage. The stylized symbolic-like repetition of filled and empty space thus guides us and, at the same time, reveals the existence of limits and routes of escape, instances of subjugation and freedom.

An Ottoman shrine and monument of pilgrimage undoubtedly bears the spirit of its varied and complex history. The discourse with this ultimately elusive substance can yield interesting "rhythms", improvised or interactive, but in any event open to processes of transformation.

Thalea Stefanidou

Art historian / critic-curator

A_LA_LA II GENI MOSQUE THESSALONIKI

It was Maria's idea to let her work speak within the space of mosques. We worked together to organize three separate installations, each presenting her work in a different way. First was the Fethiye Mosque in Nafpaktos, then the New Mosque (Yeni Camii) in Thessaloniki, and finally the Zincirli Mosque in Serres.

It is with these thoughts that I ended my small note on Maria Kompatsiari's installation in the Fethiye Mosque in Nafpaktos. The paintings in this first installation, instead of hanging on the wall, were arranged in pairs on the floor, one propped up against the other, creating a commentary on the transition from two to three dimensions.

The second installation of the works in the Yeni Mosque in Thessaloniki takes advantage of the monument's square base and characteristic ground floor of alternating black and white square tiles. The pattern of the tiles creates a chessboard for zatrikio (an ancient Greek and Byzantine version of chess). A symbol of the articulation of space in traditional painting, the floor serves at the same time as the platform for an open chessboard of complex moves and solutions to mathematical problems.

A square is formed from nine 50 x 50 cm paintings hung on a wall, while a larger painting (200 x 200 cm) is placed on the floor. The latter has been deconstructed into 14 polygons in accordance with the carefully calculated shapes that appear in the syntemachion, Archimedes' dissection puzzle for forming a square. Also known as "Archimedes' Box", this is one of the earliest references on the construction of puzzles.

All the paintings chosen for this installation have the same blue and purple palette, and all develop the artist's familiar gestural abstract motifs.

This particular visual intervention, which uses the monument's structural features and decorative realia, plays on notions such as geometry and aniconism, construction and deconstruction, transformation and re-signification, convergence and divergence, deduction and re-evaluation, the game and its variations.

Thalea Stefanidou

Art historian / critic-Curator

A-LA-LA III Zincirli Mosque Serres

This "visit" of Maria Kompatsiari's paintings to the Zincirli Mosque in Serres is the third and final stop in a journey that began at the Fethiye Mosque in Nafpaktos and continued for its second stopover at the Yeni Mosque in Thessaloniki.

In this final phase and in the way of an ending, it was decided that the works would be installed accumulatively, one piled on top of the other. Stacked vertically at the center of the floor and rising towards the dome of the monument, the paintings create an irregular structural array of platforms and ledges.

This arrangement establishes a simpler “order” among the paintings, one that ties together common elements and triggers unexpected connections, and in the sequences it creates, one that even manages to distort and transform the very concepts of classification and taxonomy.

This looming, tower-like heap of paintings, oddly stacked in no apparent order of sequence, brings to mind preparations for the construction of a bonfire. The works, festively gathered in the center and rising under the monument’s domed sky, seem ready to be delivered into flames, as if they were offering themselves to be sacrificed.

And this is the “silent” (alali) syntax that is built between the space and its essence, or rather, between the space and its “name”, and within the context of a post-religious —and thus secular— understanding of the person and unconventional creative processes and creative acts.

In any event, the scenography that emerges as multiple paintings come together to form a single three-dimensional work—that is, a work in space—serves the main intention of this visual installation, namely, to construct a sacrificial Babel on the basis of the random.

Within the remarkably dignified and gracious space of the mosque —a place where men and women once gathered for prayer, alone in their personal devotion or together with the faithful— the third installation of works by Maria Kompatsiari aligns itself to the rhythm of A_LA_LA with the most accessible musicality of the trilogy.

Thalea Stefanidou

Art Historian/Critic – Curator