

Corresponding Author:

Konstantinos Avramidis
University of Cyprus Cyprus
avramidis.konstantinos@ucy.ac.cy

Author(s):

The surfaces of Athens are privileged sites upon which crises have historically been inscribed. During periods of crises, the phenomenon of wall writing intensifies, both in terms of numbers and content, turning graffiti into both a visual synonym and a material embodiment of crises. Yet, specific edifices seem to be more prone to graffiti than others due to their placement, appearance and use. In a sense, the [writings on] architecture reflect[s] the social and political changes happening in different moments of crisis.

This presentation focuses on the Athens Polytechnic, an emblematic site that has been the epicentre of historical ruptures during which it is extensively graffitied. It is based on a corpus consisting of graffiti writings from the particular building during three moments of crises: the Axis occupation of Greece (1941-1944) during which the site operates as a student hub cultivating resistance spirit and liberation morale; the Military Junta (1967-1974) when the Polytechnic plays a pivotal role in the student uprising against the Dictatorship; and the contemporary crisis (2010-2015) during which the building becomes a site of recurring political expression. This talk critically re-examines a series of architectural drawings of graffiti writings on the Athens Polytechnic produced as part of the author's design doctoral thesis.

The presentation aims to reflect on the design methods followed to produce the drawings that fastidiously record all the writings of the building's façades. By resituating the graffiti written in different times on the walls of the Polytechnic, the talk registers the various responses to the overwhelming forces of crises. It questions what it means to represent crises and how crises can challenge our means of representation. The drawings are theorised as atlases, sort of tableaux akin to Aby Warburg's unfinished 'Mnemosyne Atlas' project. Ultimately, the presentation introduces a design method that allows us study and reconceptualise the interplay of art and crisis.

The interplay of crisis and art