

Vangelis Vlahos
Zbyněk Baladrán



The Workshop of Events

Vangelis Vlahos

Zbyněk Baladrán

Gandy Gallery, Bratislava

Exhibition: 21.01 - 06.03.2026

Catalogue texts:

An “event” of a “non-event”. On critical reenactment in Vangelis Vlahos recent body of works.

Tina Pandi

Workshop on partial failures

Zbyněk Baladrán

Photos of Exhibition:

isonative

(image caption)

Rocket launched from the Gaza Strip toward southern Israel, November 18, 2012.

Photo by Dima Vazinovich / Israel Defense Forces, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Sunday, May 23, 2021

On board an Athens to Vilnius flight.

Everything is quiet inside the cabin.

15 minutes before landing

SOUND

We hear OFF captain's announcement.
'For security reasons, we'll be diverting
to Minsk International Airport for an
emergency landing. Please remain seated
and wait for further information.'

A young man wearing a black hoodie sitting in the middle of the cabin
gets up and opens an overhead locker.

Vangelis Vlahos

No Event for Sunday, May 23, 2021, 2022

Video, duration: 05:40

An “event” of a “non-event”. On critical reenactment in Vangelis Vlahos recent body of works

What becomes of an event in an age of endless circulation of images in contemporary media? What can be considered as an event within systems of control, distortion, and repetition in an economy of informational saturation? How do we distinguish fact from fabrication, testimony from tactics, witnessing from consumption, event from its mediation? What constitutes an event and a non-event? This nexus of questions has central position in Vangelis Vlahos’s recent artistic investigations.

Vangelis Vlahos’ artistic practice is situated within a research-based framework that foregrounds processes of knowledge production and dissemination, operating along two primary axes: history, and geography, meaning the temporal spatial, and infrastructural parameters of an “event”. A leading figure of Greek contemporary art with an extensive international presence, Vlahos has systematically worked since the beginning of 2000 on critical re-reading of history, using archival material as primary field of exploration. His work was inscribed within the broader “archival turn” emerged since the 1990s described -among other terminologies -as a “need to document” in a post-communist era.¹ Over the two last decades, the use of formal strategies in his work has manifested through the deployment of architectural models, archival installations, text-based projects, photographic assemblages, and scripted video works. His research practice is articulated through a discursive vocabulary grounded in the strategies of conceptual and post-conceptual art, thereby engaging with epistemic questions surrounding memory, documentation, history and their material conditions of their production.

Shifting from projects, which were primarily concerned with the recent historical past of post-transition period (metapolitefsi), Vlahos’ most recent body of work focuses on the current sociopolitical situation, and its geopolitical implications of his native country, Greece within the broader regions of the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Located at the margins of the European continent and in direct proximity to the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia Minor, the country operates as a site of layered and contested relations. By situating his native country within both spatial and temporal coordinates, Vlahos interrogates its geopolitical condition — a nexus shaped by geographical position, political structures, economic realities, and cultural entanglements within the postcolonial, post-communist and “center/periphery” discourse.

His artistic approach creates a network of references and associations that destabilize conventional and established narratives of history and reductive theories of the region. Data that are not usually included in the dominant discourse — elements that appear misplaced, postponed, or framed as technical problems, gaps, ruptures and discontinuities—form another kind of “event”. The work turns toward these interruptions, to the moments where narrative is disrupted and meaning is deferred. Through a forensic approach, he examines fragments and traces as sites of reconstruction. Here, the event emerges not only through exposure but through absence, delay, and malfunction.

¹ *The need to document*, Vít Havránek; Sabine Schaschl-Cooper; Bettina Steinbrügge; Kunsthau Baselland.; Halle für Kunst Lüneburg eV., Zürich: JRP Ringier, 2005. For the emergence and the institutionalization of archival and research art, see Claire Bishop, “Information Overload”, *Artforum*, April 2023.



Vangelis Vlahos
No Event for Monday, December 16, 2024, 2025
Video, duration 1h20m, text - 2 digital prints on A4 paper

Thus, his works propose an alternative perception of the event—not as something fixed, but as something suspended that can be reconstructed, reimagined, and even re-experienced. By creating systems of observation and translation, Vlahos provides the viewer with tools to rethink the event, to trace its remnants, and to participate in its reinterpretation. The event becomes an open structure—subject to critical reenactment. His methodological tools, although strictly defined and systematically applied, diverge from conventional scientific or historical research. As writer Stephanie Bailey points out “Vlahos is quick to emphasize that he’s not a historian. With a focus on the mediated footnotes to Greece’s modern geopolitical history, the artist is not concerned with producing research that contributes to the field of historical study – he works with secondary sources and material found online and through the media, after all.”²

It is important to note that the artist ‘self-positioning vis-a-vis these events resist a limited reading of the work based on preconceived notions of cultural identity. Instead, it foregrounds a practice that negotiates proximity and distance, enabling a more nuanced engagement with context. The artist’s statement encapsulates his methodological position: “I don’t consider myself an outsider, but creating the conditions to function as a ‘professional stranger’ offers me a methodological opportunity to engage with the local with less bias. This in-and-out condition complicates matters and, in some cases, undermines the ability to maintain an outsider’s perspective.”³

This articulation resonates within the notion of the “stranger” as a productive position of inquiry — one that combines proximity with critical distance. By occupying an intermediary stance between insider and outsider, the artist resist essentialist readings of identity as a fixed cultural category. In this way, the work opens a space for negotiating proximity and estrangement as methodological tools rather than stable markers of subjectivity. This framework allows for a rethinking of temporality and memory, situating history not as a closed entity but as an active field of contestation and transformation.

A recurring concern in his practice is the role of epistemic systems —and their role in shaping knowledge, and perception. The artist moves between different systems of knowledge, drawing from them and sustaining a critical mode of engagement. His research and visual language often concentrate on taxonomies and systems of classification — glossaries, terminologies, data visualization tools and diagrammatic structures that organize knowledge. These systems reveal the way technical registers of knowledge can be appropriated, displaced, or recontextualized to produce alternative readings and interconnect with individualized trajectories.

In an unpublished discussion between Vlahos, Balandrán and the author in 2017, Vlahos reflects on this approach “I feel that we both use systems that already exist in the world, or that have practical uses, and that we try, through these systems, to provoke a different perception of the world, of the subject. I try to appropriate a system that is quite familiar to everyone, but at the same time the relation of the subject to this system produces something not quite normal, offering another perspective.” In a similar way, Balandrán tested the limits of one system, or two systems combined, to see the outcome of their intersection. “This is something I always have in mind when I’m working.”⁴

² Stephanie Bailey, “Vangelis Vlahos digs deeper”, *ArtReview*, 14 May 2024 <https://artreview.com/vangelis-vlahos-nikos-alexiou-the-co-lection-benaki-museum-tavros-athens-interview/>

³ According to the artist’s statement.

DECEMBER 6–16, 2024

Friday 6

The Greek Prime Minister's official visit to Beirut was postponed due to a technical malfunction of the government's Dassault Falcon 7X aircraft, according to an official statement released shortly after 08:00 EET (06:00 UTC).

At 21:18 EET (19:18 UTC), loud Israeli drones circled at low altitude over Beirut, as reported by Zeina Khodr, senior correspondent at Al Jazeera English, in a post on X.

Saturday 7

An Embraer Legacy 600 private jet, registered C5-SKY, reportedly linked to undisclosed Syrian government operations, departed Damascus at approximately 16:16 local time (14:16 UTC) and landed at Abu Dhabi's Al Bateen Executive Airport at 21:17 Gulf Standard Time (17:17 UTC). Details regarding the passengers or cargo on board remain unverified.

Ethiopian Airlines flight ET406 from Addis Ababa to Beirut, which was scheduled to depart at 23:00 East Africa Time (20:00 UTC) and arrive at 03:45 Eastern European Time (01:45 UTC) the following day, was canceled due to a temporary suspension of service on the route.

Sunday 8

An Embraer Legacy 600 private jet arrived at the Russian-operated Hmeimim military air base, near Latakia, Syria at around 03:00 EET (01:00 UTC).

A Syrian Air Ilyushin Il-76T cargo aircraft of Soviet design, registered YK-ATA, departed Damascus International Airport at 03:55 EET (01:55 UTC) without a listed destination. Flight tracking data from Flightradar24 indicated that the aircraft was last observed near the city of Homs at 04:32 EET (02:32 UTC), approximately 37 minutes after takeoff. It is unknown who or what was on board.

At 09:11 EET (07:11 UTC), a satellite image taken by Planet Labs captured the Embraer Legacy 600 jet on the runway at Hmeimim, according to Reuters.

At 14:34 EET (12:34 UTC), a Russian government Il-76MD military transport aircraft departed from Latakia's international airport in western Syria and reached the Moscow area around 18:36 Moscow Standard Time (15:36 UTC). The passengers of the flight remain unconfirmed.

A Russian-registered Gulfstream G450 business jet that departed from Abu Dhabi's Al Bateen Executive Airport at around 18:00 Gulf Standard Time (14:00 UTC) is presumed to have arrived in the Moscow Vnukovo Airport area at approximately 22:00 MSK (19:00 UTC), according to flight tracking data from Flightradar24. The passengers and cargo remain unknown.

Monday 9

A Boeing C-17A Globemaster III—a large Kuwaiti military transport aircraft—arrived in Beirut carrying 40 tons of foodstuff, medical supplies, and blankets. The exact time of arrival could not be determined.

At 08:08 EET (06:08 UTC), the National News Agency (NNA) of Lebanon reported that Israeli aircraft were flying at low altitude over Beirut and at medium altitude over Kesrouan and several other areas in the country.

Tuesday 10

A satellite image captured by Maxar Technologies shows a Syrian Air Ilyushin Il-76 and a Russian Air Force Il-76 parked on the open apron at the Russian-operated Khmeimim Air Base in Syria.

Emirates flight EK953 from Dubai to Beirut, which was scheduled to depart at 15:10 Gulf Standard Time (11:10 UTC), was canceled due to a temporary suspension of operations on the route amid regional security concerns.

Saudia flight SV643 from Riyadh to Beirut, which was scheduled to depart at 08:30 Arabian Standard Time (05:30 UTC), was canceled due to the suspension of Beirut service.

Wednesday 11

Austrian Airlines flight OS464 from Vienna to Beirut, which was scheduled to depart at 13:15 Central European Time (12:15 UTC), was canceled due to operational suspensions on the route.

Thursday 12

The Greek government aircraft—a Dassault Falcon 7X—that departed from Elefsina Air Base at 09:21 EET (07:21 UTC) disappeared from flight tracking near the island of Crete, Greece. At 19:04 EET (17:04 UTC), the same aircraft was tracked departing from Heraklion Airport, Crete and landed back at Elefsina Air Base at 19:37 EET (17:37 UTC).

Ethihad Airways flight EY535 from Abu Dhabi to Beirut, which was scheduled to depart at 09:20 Gulf Standard Time (05:20 UTC), was canceled amid a temporary route suspension implemented for security-related reasons.

Friday 13

A satellite image captured by Maxar Technologies shows a Syrian Airlines Ilyushin Il-76 parked on the open apron at the northeastern end of Khmeimim Air Base, alongside a Yakovlev Yak-40 bearing Syrian Airlines markings.

Saturday 14

Low-altitude Israeli drones flew over Beirut and its southern suburbs throughout the day, from morning into evening. At 17:03 EET (15:03 UTC), Lebanon's Al-Manar news reported drone activity over the Dahiyeh district.

Friday 15

(No events recorded)

Monday 16

The Greek government aircraft—a Dassault Falcon 7X—completed a round trip between Elefsina Air Base and Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport, in support of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's official visit to Lebanon. According to available data, the aircraft departed Elefsina at 09:14 EET (07:14 UTC), landed in Beirut at 10:33 EET (08:33 UTC), began its return journey at 15:25 EET (13:25 UTC), and arrived back at Elefsina at 17:07 EET (15:07 UTC).

Between approximately 13:00 and 14:30 EET (11:00–12:30 UTC), Israeli drones and reconnaissance aircraft were observed flying at low altitudes over Tyre, southern Lebanon, and nearby areas.

Vangelis Vlahos
No Event for Monday, December 16, 2024, 2025
Video, duration 1h20m, text - 2 digital prints on A4 paper

For example, in the video *No Event for Monday, December 16, 2024, 2025*, he produces a thermal portrait of a diverted flight by combining altitude data with modeled atmospheric conditions. On December 6, 2024, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's official visit to Lebanon was postponed due to a reported technical malfunction in the government aircraft. The trip ultimately took place ten days later, on December 16, marking the first visit by a European leader to Lebanon following the November 26 ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, amid ongoing political upheavals in the wider region. The work unfolds through two parallel timelines. The first is a text-based chronicle tracing diplomatic, military, and aviation developments across the Eastern Mediterranean during the ten-day postponement of the visit, from December 6 to December 16. The second is a 1h20m video that visualizes real-time fluctuations in temperature recorded along the Elefsina–Beirut flight-path on December 16, synching environmental data to the duration of the rescheduled journey. The result is a detailed visualization of the temperature variations encountered throughout the journey. Using publicly available flight tracking data from online platforms, the video translates estimated temperature changes—calculated from altitude, regional climate, and historical weather data—into a continuous sequence of color transitions. The color scheme used to represent these temperature changes follows established conventions in aviation and meteorological data visualization, resulting in a color-based depiction of temperature variation across the flight path.

This translation of data across heterogeneous systems of quantification and visualization—metric, seismic, climatic or others—exposes the epistemic infrastructures that govern the interpretation of events. It emphasizes the contingent ways in which technical phenomena that are made apprehensible, in relation with broader questions of mediation, control, and the politics of visibility in technologically mediated spaces. Here, the emphasis is not on the stability of systems but on their permeability and potential for transformation. The act of appropriating, testing, and combining frameworks generates a productive instability that opens the possibility of rethinking the relationship between knowledge, subjectivity, and representation.

In another project presented in the exhibition, *This event has now ended (LANA), 2023* the artist investigates the 2022 Iran–Greece naval incident through the trajectory of the *Lana*, a Russian-flagged tanker carrying Iranian oil. In April 2022, Greek authorities impounded the ship in Karystos under EU sanctions on Russia following the invasion of Ukraine. Subsequently, and at the request of the United States, part of its cargo was confiscated due to U.S. sanctions on Iran. In retaliation, Iran seized two Greek tankers in the Persian Gulf, producing a months-long diplomatic standoff. The crisis was resolved when Greek courts overturned the seizure of the *Lana* and ordered the return of its oil, after which the vessel departed Greek waters. Drawing on press accounts, social media, and marine tracking data, the project reconstructs these developments through two synchronized timelines: one measuring shifts in the vessel's draft, reflecting cargo or environmental changes, and another tracing the related political events of the incident. The data generated by the ship's sinking creates an alternative form of “seascape” — a depiction of the maritime environment constructed through measurements, and surveillance infrastructures.

The linguistic translation of the LANA event lies at the core of this work. Language occupying a central role in

4 The discussion between Zbyněk Balandrán, Vangelis Vlahos and Tina Pandi was recorded on 16 November 2017. The two artists have maintained a long-term collaboration across diverse contexts and in multiple capacities, starting from 2004 when they exhibited together in the framework of *Manifesta 5* in Donostia-San Sebastián.

1. **Introduction**
The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive overview of the project's objectives, scope, and timeline. It is intended for all stakeholders involved in the project, including team members, management, and external partners.

2. **Project Objectives**
The primary objectives of this project are to develop a robust software solution that meets the needs of our customers, while maintaining high standards of quality and security. Key goals include:

- Delivering a user-friendly interface that enhances the customer experience.
- Ensuring the system is scalable and can handle future growth.
- Maintaining strict adherence to data privacy regulations.

3. **Scope of Work**
The project will cover the following areas:

- Requirements gathering and analysis.
- System architecture and design.
- Development and testing of core features.
- Deployment and ongoing support.

4. **Timeline**
The project is scheduled to begin in Q3 2024 and is expected to be completed by Q1 2025. A detailed Gantt chart is attached to this document.

5. **Conclusion**
We are confident that this project will deliver significant value to our organization and our customers. We look forward to your feedback and collaboration throughout the process.

Section 1 Introduction Project Overview	Section 2 Objectives Key Goals	Section 3 Scope Inclusions	Section 4 Timeline Milestones
Section 5 Requirements User Stories	Section 6 Architecture System Design	Section 7 Development Code Review	Section 8 Testing Quality Assurance



Vangelis Vlahos
This Event Has Now Ended (LANA), 2026
31 digital prints on A4 paper

This event has now ended (LANA)

On **April 14, 2022**, the crude oil tanker Lana (formerly Pegas) was en route to the southern Peloponnese to offload its cargo onto another tanker. However, rough seas and an engine problem forced it to moor just off the shore of Karystos, on the island of Evia, Greece.

On **April 15**, Lana was temporarily seized by Greek authorities on suspicions of breaching EU sanctions imposed on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The vessel, which at the time was Russian-flagged, was carrying 115,000 tons of Iranian oil and had 19 Russian crew members on board.

On **April 17**, the seizure notice was withdrawn after it emerged that Lana's registered shipowner was not on any EU sanctions list.

On **April 18**, Greek authorities conducted a port state inspection and issued a maritime detention order, citing insufficient power from the main engine, deck corrosion, damaged catwalks, and poor engine room cleanliness.

On **April 20**, the U.S. Department of Justice, citing a bilateral legal assistance agreement between the U.S. and Greece, requested the seizure of the ship's cargo, arguing that proceeds from its sale would be used to finance terrorism.

On **May 1**, Lana's flag changed from Russia to Iran.

On **May 20**, the court of Halkida, under whose jurisdiction Karystos falls, accepted the U.S. request and approved the transfer of oil from Lana to the U.S. Iran condemned the decision as "international robbery" and warned of "punitive action" against Greece for assisting the U.S. in seizing the oil.

On **May 23**, the ship-to-ship transfer of oil from Lana to the U.S.-chartered vessel Ice Energy began.

On **May 27**, during the oil transfer, Iranian armed forces seized two Greek-flagged tankers in helicopter-launched raids in the Persian Gulf over unspecified "maritime violations" and directed them to Iranian waters. Greece's Foreign Ministry denounced the seizure as an "act of piracy."

On **June 1**, the ship-to-ship oil transfer ended.

On **June 2**, a letter from Lana's captain, Nick Amelchenko, to Greek authorities was made public. He expressed grave concern about the extremely dangerous on-board conditions after the U.S. confiscated more than 600,000 barrels of crude oil. He warned that the vessel's instability had increased significantly and that if the wind picked up, the ship risked running aground.

On **June 7**, Ahmad Naderi, Iran's ambassador to Greece, visited Lana and tweeted a picture of himself on the bridge wing, stating that "intensive consultations" were ongoing between the two countries to resolve the dispute.

On **June 8**, the Greek Board of Appeals in Halkida overturned the initial decision allowing the U.S. to confiscate the ship's cargo and ordered the return of the seized oil to Lana. However, in a separate case, Greek authorities temporarily seized the vessel and prohibited its departure due to its debts to a towing company.

On **July 2**, after the debt was settled, the Lana was officially released and towed to the port of Piraeus.

On **July 26**, the Greek Supreme Court in Athens upheld the Halkida Court of Appeal's verdict following an appeal by the shipping company hired by the U.S. to transfer Lana's oil.

On **August 11**, the ship-to-ship transfer of the seized oil back to Lana began.

On **August 14**, the reloading of the seized oil was completed.

On **November 16**, following a memorandum of cooperation and improved maritime security between Greece and Iran, the two seized Greek tankers were released by Iran, and the Lana departed from Piraeus Anchorage, leaving Greek waters.

Vlahos artistic practice operates as both a tool of analysis, communication and research, framing historical and political events, and enabling critical engagement with the systems through which knowledge is produced.⁵ The work explores how found data—fragments detached from their original systems of operation—change when translated into language, and what is lost, omitted or reconfigured in that process. Drawing parallels with the visual economy of silent cinema and even the rhythmic development of documentary poetry, the work investigates how textual strategies such as captions, clauses, and fragments mediate perception. Here, technical and poetic language interconnect. Found audiovisual material is transformed into textual structures, adopting methods like cinematic *découpage* to generate detailed scripts from images. By “translating” unedited and found audiovisual material — news footage, security camera recordings, and mobile phone videos sourced from online networks— into texts that describe details of action, setting, lighting, sound, and camera movement, Vlahos emphasizes the interpretative processes inherent in understanding mediated reality.

In this direction, the project *No event for Sunday, May 23, 2021, 2022* focuses on the arrest of the 26-year-old Belarusian opposition blogger and activist Roman Protasevich, whose Athens–Vilnius flight was diverted to Minsk on 23 May 2021 under a false bomb threat. Widely condemned as a state hijacking, the incident raises questions about the possible presence of foreign secret agents at Athens International Airport and the country’s role in such operations. Without referencing any individuals by name, the project reconstructs — in textual form — the activities of Protasevich, as they were reported by the media during the first twenty-two days of his detention in Minsk.

In his recent retrospective exhibition titled “An index of no events” at Tavros art space, Vlahos recomposed and restructured works from the two last decades on the axes of event / non-event dichotomy.⁶ As curator and researcher Arie Amaya-Akkermans commented in his lecture-performance titled “The Houses I Had They Took Away from Me”, in the framework of this exhibition:⁷ (... ..) “In his “An Index of No Events”, Greek artist Vangelis Vlahos, articulates a similar sensorial entanglement with the fabric of time, questioning the eventness of a historical event and the boundaries between historical time and empty time.” The current modalities through which we consume events has transformed the very notion of the event increasingly unstable. In the economy of images and information, events collapse into a perpetual process of presence and forgetting.

Vlahos asks what constitutes an event under such conditions questioning its potential for impact. The multi-layered nexus of interconnected references in his work—details, locations, and protagonists that allude to the region’s complex geopolitical situation—creates a field of contemplation and critical reenactment. Within this expanded spatial and narrative framework, the artist invites us to engage with the intricacies of geography, history, and political implications. By exploring what remains after the moment passes—the intervals, ruptures, traces, and afterimages—he reimagines events / non-events as residual fields that reveal his multitemporal perception of the present.

Tina Pandi (Art historian and Curator)

⁵ *His series of works Objects to relate to a trial were pivotal to the linguistic orientation of his practice.*

⁶ *Elpida Karaba in her review of the exhibition notes that “The conception of the Index of No Events functions both as the cohesive substance among different spatial and time frames that nevertheless form a horizon of geopolitical fermentations but also is the backbone of works that were created and presented in different occasions, time and venues, which in this exhibition become a total, one installation.”, Elpida Karaba, “An Index of No Events. Are we done with archival art? Or the “Cunning of History”.*

⁷ *Arie Amaya-Akkermans “The Houses I Had They Took Away from Me”, lecture performance, November 15, 2024 Tavros art space.*





Zbyněk Baladrán

Oracles / Protocols, 2023-2025

*42 paintings on canvas, pigments and chemicals, and paper (selection), various dimensions
29 collages on cardboard, bw prints on paper (selection), 35x42cm*

Workshop on partial failures

Works of art circulate in a specific way: they exist within the art world, are supported by specialized institutions, are subject to speculation, and have capital accumulated in them. In addition, they also fulfill other functions, such as maintaining the status quo not only through sophisticated criticism that is integrated into the structure of the system and justifies its functioning. Everyone participates in this structure—from artists, curators, and institutional workers to journalists writing about art. To varying degrees, they are all accomplices in the art world, and each tries in different ways to maintain their self-respect without cutting themselves off from sources of funding and attention. Of course, this shared sentiment does not capture the entire spectrum of approaches to art-making. Marginalized groups of artists often refuse to participate in such practices, thus remaining outsiders. Controversies and conflicts also emerge along political or class lines, with mutual accusations of complicity with the establishment. Some events intensify these debates while others become a real test for individual actors.

The whirlwind of events in the first quarter of the 21st century is accelerating: international law is weakening, technology is accelerating capitalism, and militarization is bringing the possibility of absolute destruction closer. There are many unprecedented events that illustrate this, one of which is Israel's reaction to Hamas' terrorist attack. The IDF's massive response, leading to the total destruction of Gaza, has divided the cultural elites of the West. Art critic David Velasco summed up this division among cultural elites in his article for *Equator* magazine: "The art world, with all its progressive scaffolding and humanist ornamentation, practically designed to celebrate and aestheticize every rebellion, couldn't metabolize Palestine. It still can't."¹ Velasco, who worked at Artforum for eighteen years and served as its editor-in-chief for the last six, was fired in 2023 for publishing one of the first Palestinian letters of solidarity calling for a ceasefire. Since then, many actors, including artists, have faced similar problems. Political and moral pressure led to self-censorship and a re-evaluation of positions. The art world was shaken, but its structure remained intact. But is it possible to break free from the complicity of the art world? And is it even possible to depict a horrific genocidal event through art? There are historical examples showing that it is possible, but an adequate method must be invented and applied. Just to name a few historical examples: Goya's *Caprichos* (1797–1798), Picasso's *Guernica* (1937), and the satires of Philip Gaston (1913–1980) have always been able to effectively capture the horror of unprecedented violence and provoke a reaction, even if delayed.

What are the possibilities of art today, when social networks are overflowing with images of death and suffering? Technical images of war, violence, and destruction have become a common part of the consumption of representations of the world. Photographs from the Vietnam War stirred public opinion at the time, leading to an end to the aggression. The war in Ukraine has brought images from the perspective of a deadly weapon—the eye watching its target until the moment of death. One wonders, is there any place in the world today that cannot be seen? And what about Gaza, which today lies ninety percent in ruins? Its inhabitants live in tents on the ruins of their homes, watched by hundreds of eyes, but unlike the case of the war in Ukraine, technical images are heavily censored by Israel. Other types of technical recordings are difficult to obtain due to

¹ David Velasco, "How Gaza Broke the Art World," *Equator*, December 22, 2025.



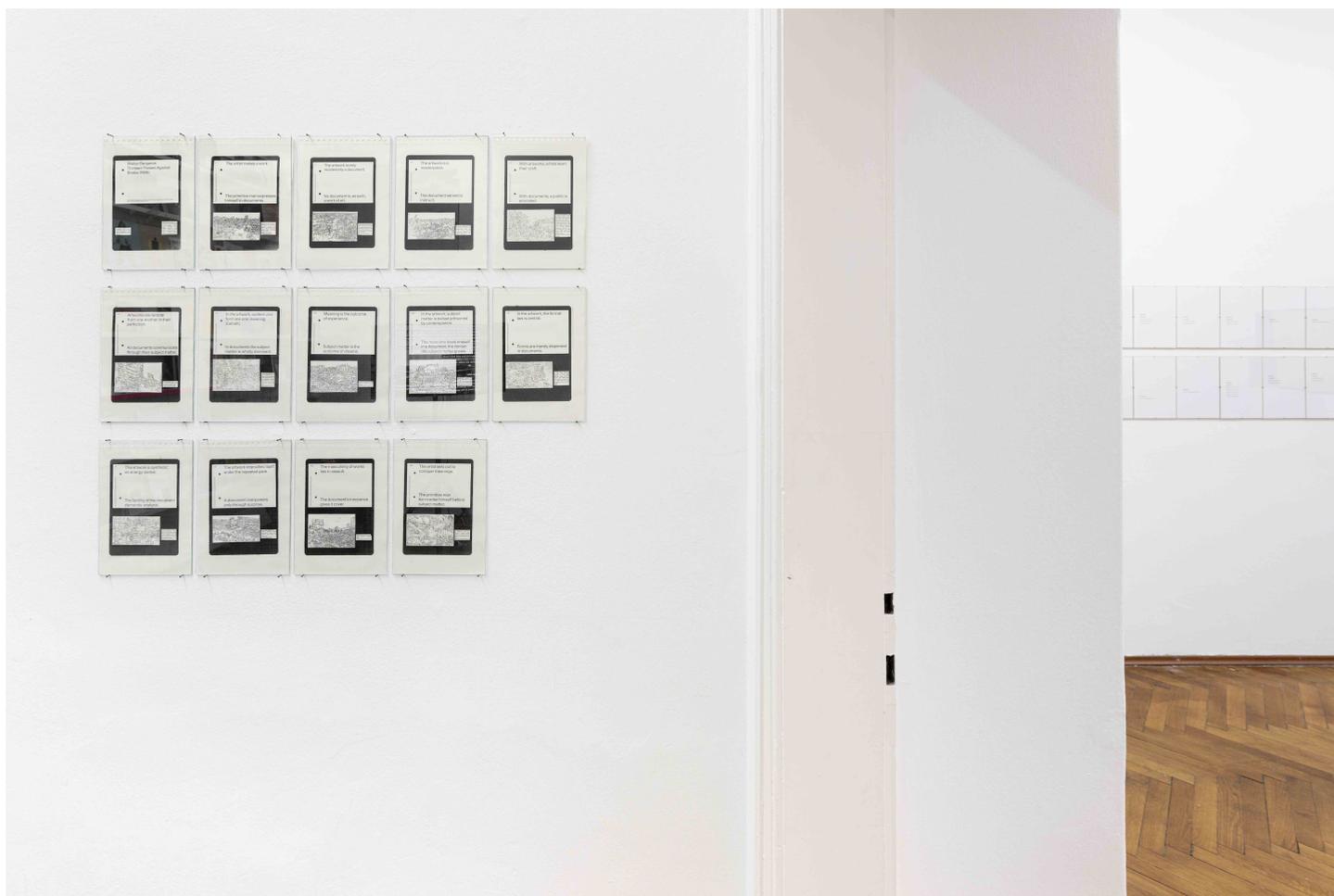
various restrictions and a lack of access to independent sources. Most of the photographs show ruins and craters a few hours or days after the bombing. Piles of rubble, houses smashed into pieces of concrete with the remains of torn fittings sticking out of them. Often residents can be seen still in shock from this incredible rearrangement of matter, trying to understand and adapt to it.

In his short polemical text based on aphorisms entitled *Thirteen Theses Against Snobs* (1925), Walter Benjamin succinctly mocked cultural and intellectual snobbery and its depoliticization. A hundred years ago, art played a similar social role as today, only everything was multiplied. If at that time, according to Benjamin, a snob was someone who builds their identity through differentiation but without understanding and without real commitment, he describes today's common practice among artists. If a snob translates political and social issues into style and taste instead of taking a stand, then this is a common phenomenon in the art world. The snob is guided by what is new, fashionable, or avant-garde. For him, it is a sign of prestige, not a challenge to think or act, and so on. It is clear that what is being criticized here is the phenomenon of radical vocabulary, but not radical practice. The snob is a figure who "consumes revolution as a cultural commodity."² It is unpleasant to admit that Benjamin's pamphlet may have been effective satire at a time when revolutionary social changes were taking place and in the face of economic crisis and general frustration. The success of the revolution seemed inevitable. Today, most artistic production seems to be produced by snobs themselves. Perhaps this is because it is almost impossible today to imagine anything outside of the time we live in. The horizon of communist revolution has disappeared and is nowhere to be seen. And there are no other options. So let's at least try a thought experiment, we don't even have to call it a work of art, we'll avoid accusations of snobbery anyway: Let's juxtapose those thirteen theses with specific images, for example digital drawings of ruins created from photographs of bombed-out Gaza. What will happen? Does the resulting collage speak to the horrors of destruction in Gaza? Or does it speak to the impossibility of such a statement? Isn't it rather a message about a world where it is possible to find escape from horrors in creativity? Or could it be a small piece of the puzzle that will lead to an end to violence?

Any artistic response to the technologized violence in Gaza is met on the one hand with propaganda and accusations of "new anti-Semitism"³ and, on the other hand, with social media and its inflation of images full of violence and destruction, or their trivialization. Paradoxically, it is essentially the language of art, its institutions, and the resulting snobbish environment in which such presentations are possible. The escape route leads somewhere to the border of art. Experimenting with the non-artistic is one way to try to capture and perhaps even help stop the machinery of genocide. Let us try, for example, a practice far distant from Enlightenment reason, an archaic way of acting, the practice of which may help to reveal the absurdity of destruction: a practice of divination. Divination and its techniques have never disappeared, even though antiquity remains the period of its greatest flourishing. In its time it was even institutionalized, and the process of political decision-making had its own rules for synchronizing divine and human interests. The decision-making process of political action was supposed to be in accordance with the will of the gods, and on the other hand, it was a way of sanctifying human actions with divine approval. Words such as oracle or mantic refer to a complex set of

2 Benjamin, Walter. "Thirteen Theses Against Snobs." In *Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927–1934*, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, [rozsah stran]. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

3 Della Porta, Donatella. 2024. "Moral Panic and Repression: The Contentious Politics of Anti-Semitism in Germany." *Partecipazione e Conflitto* 17 (2): <https://doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v17i2p276>.



Zbyněk Baladrán

Theses, 2025

14 black and white prints (selection), 30x21cm

ideas, values, and rituals that are difficult to define, which are associated with the revelation and interpretation of things that normally remain hidden from humans.⁴ Obtaining such opinions was common in ancient cultures. Under normal circumstances, divination was not necessary, but in the event of any ambiguities, irregularities, or deviations from the norm it provided a key, a path, or at least a possibility for the right solution. The acceptance of divination was not always unambiguous; for example, Thucydides mocked the soothsayers, saying that they mostly fulfilled political assignments according to who wanted to hear what. Divination could be performed using steam, clouds, numbers, entrails, the dead, or the earth, and so on. The questioner was often informed by a specialist in reading random shapes made by throwing stones or branches, or by the shape of random arrangements of spots created by the diviner's intervention. It is not easy to replicate such techniques; most writings on geomancy (divination using the earth) have not survived, and those that have survived are in fragments. In principle, the techniques of interpretation are very open and depend on a gifted individual who, through contemplation of shapes and signs, is able to decipher their meaning.⁵ This next thought experiment attempts to use artistic work for other, perhaps more useful, purposes. That is why it is important to ask the oracle a good question. The IDF bombing has become an unpredictable and irrational reality for the inhabitants of Gaza. The only specific question that could help is: Where and when will the next bombing take place?⁶

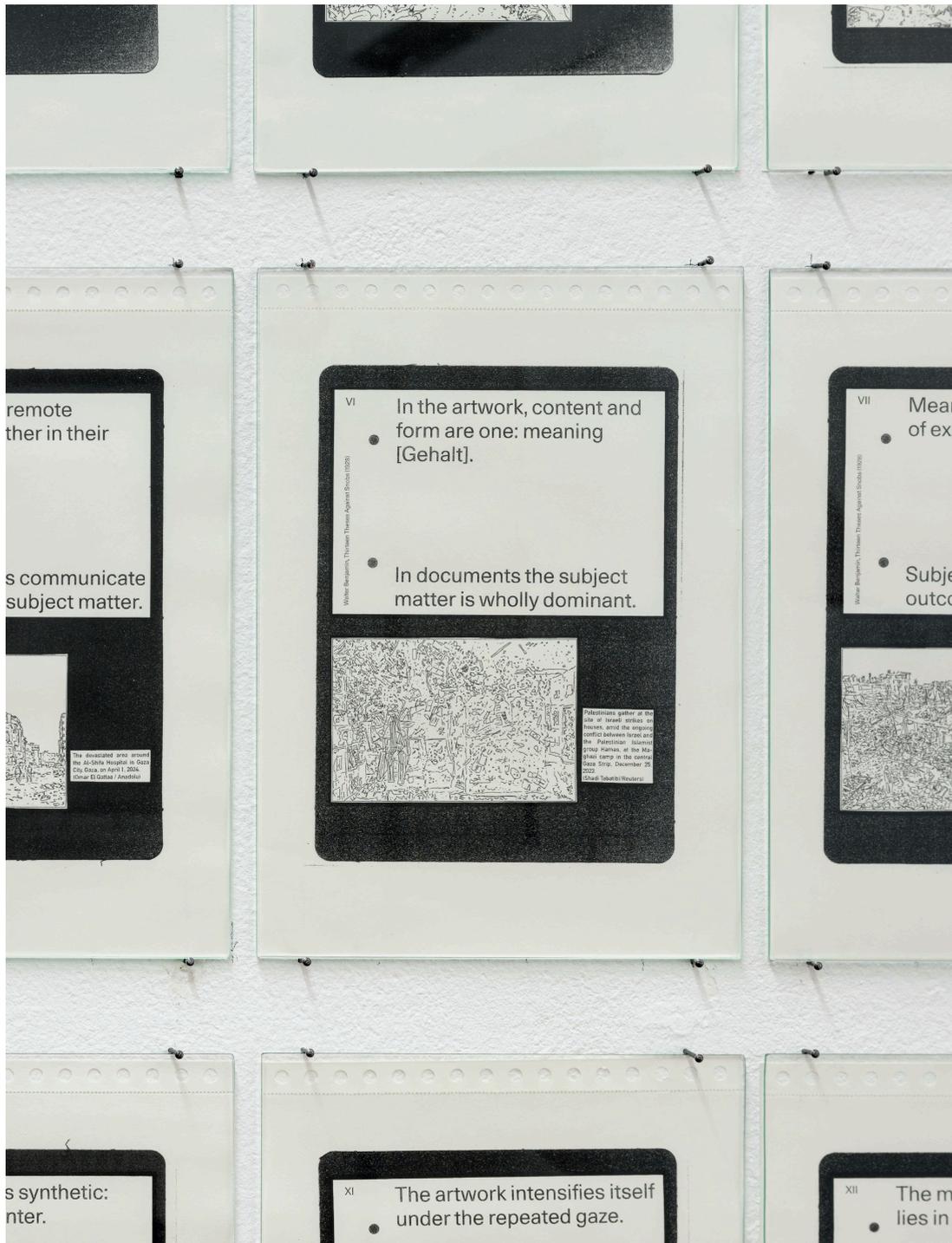
Yes, it is a desperate attempt to find another function for art, probably a common phenomenon in the paradoxes of artistic creation and perception. If we ignore the fact that failure is an integral part of artistic practice and this, together with the interpretation of works of art, is where a wave of partial and endless failures begins. The first of these is the image itself, which is created by combining pigments and other chemical reactions. They should indicate directions of reading on their own, but instead they tend to affect the imagination and aesthetic sensibility related to the category of beauty. The descriptions, placed directly in the image, help to disrupt the idea that this is a work of art and inform us that it is a tool for divination, but why is everything placed on a canvas stretched on a wooden frame? Unfortunately, this clearly refers to the fact that it is a work of art. This special technique is not used for any purpose other than artistic activity. Another failure in this attempt to escape artistic discourse is the place where this work can be encountered. This place is, of course, the safe space of a gallery, which can always tear anything cleanly out of reality and safely enclose it. Where else could the Oracles be placed? In destroyed living rooms or hospital waiting rooms in Gaza? They could certainly have practical use there, if only there were someone suitable on hand who could read the prophecy. This further emphasizes the powerlessness and absurdity of this work and the impossibility of helping in any way or even stopping the violence.

The author experienced many nightmares while creating the series of paintings between autumn 2023 and autumn 2024. He had the nagging feeling that each of them would come true, because there was always another bombing. This paranoid idea can also be interpreted as an unconscious assumption of responsibility for what is happening. Another explanation is offered by curator François Piron, who compared this attempt to predict the bombings in an effort to save human lives with the work of Joseph Crépin (1875–1948),⁷ an artist

4 Vitek, Tomáš, Jiří Starý, and Dalibor Antalík, eds. 2006. *Věštění a prorokování v archaických kulturách*. Praha: Herrmann & synové.

5 Vitek, Tomáš. 2016. *Věštění v antickém Řecku III: Země a mrtví*. Praha: Herrmann & synové.

6 Lindqvist, Sven, and Linda Haverty Rugg. 2003. *A History of Bombing*. New York: New Press.



classified as Art brut, and also a spiritualist, who during World War II was ordered by angelic voices to paint three hundred pictures, otherwise the ongoing war could not end. Crépin painted the last of these on May 5, 1945, at a time when the last Nazi troops were fighting their way through Prague and then capitulating. The author preferred to stop creating oracles in the fall to rid himself of the oppressive feeling that bombing would always occur when a prophecy was formulated. This freed him up for a more analytical approach to his work. He examined the overall context of depicting destruction, attempted to capture how propaganda works, sought connections between global production and capital flows participating in the military machine and surveillance, and also tried to understand through his work the ideological background of the creators and actors of this asymmetrical war. The cardboard collages he created are a sad testament to the confusing complexity of shared responsibility for genocidal violence, a kind of distant echo and trace of horror.

The ongoing war in Gaza has sparked widespread controversy about how to talk about this violence. It can be seen as a new form of warfare. The deeply asymmetrical nature of this war and the huge number of Palestinian civilian casualties have led some analysts to describe the situation as a "new urban war." Other analysts question the idea that this conflict can be described as a war. Instead, they argue that the mass killing of civilians constitutes an act of genocide, crimes against humanity, or a campaign of ethnic cleansing. For example, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Palestine Francesca Albanese emphasizes that this conflict should not be called a war, but genocide, regardless of military motives. As the scale and scope of organized violence continues to expand, war and genocide may become indistinguishable. In this context, the mass killings in Gaza are not an exception, but in many ways indicate a possible long-term development of contemporary warfare. The genocidal nature of this conflict is a litmus test for even more destructive wars looming on the horizon.⁸ Art, as a perfectly imperfect tool for exploring our position in the world and its essence, will also be there. We will leave the tension between snobbery and practice leading to radical change unresolved for now.

Zbyněk Baladrán

⁷ Joseph Crépin's paintings from the period of World War II are primarily held today in the collections of the Centre Pompidou / Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris, the Zander Collection in Cologne, and the Gallery of Everything in London. In addition, they regularly appear in specialized outsider art exhibitions.

⁸ Malešević, Siniša, and Lea David. "Organized Callousness: Gaza and the Sociology of War." *Journal of Genocide Research* (2025): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2025.2503562>.

The Workshop of Events
Vangelis Vlahos
Zbyněk Baladrán

Gandy Gallery
Sienkiewiczova 4, Bratislava,
Slovak Republic
January 9. 2026 – March 6. 2026

Thanks to:
Nadine Gandy,
Adam Korcsmáros,
Sarah Brock

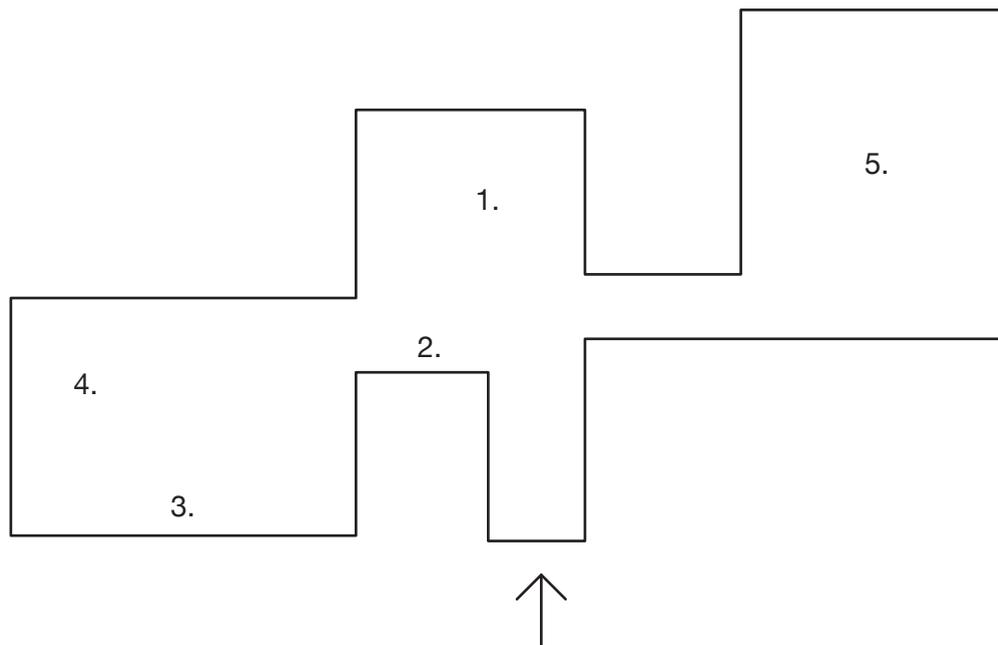
Editor:
Gandy Gallery

Photo credits:
isonative

Graphic design:
Zbyněk Baladrán

Print:
2026

www.gandy-gallery.com



1.
No Event for Sunday, May 23, 2021, 2022
Video, duration: 05:40
2.
Theses, 2025
14 black and white prints (selection), 30x21cm
3.
This Event Has Now Ended (LANA), 2026
31 digital prints on A4 paper
4.
No Event for Monday, December 16, 2024, 2025
Video, duration 1h20m, text - 2 digital prints on A4 paper
5.
Oracles / Protocols, 2023-2025
42 paintings on canvas, pigments and chemicals, and paper (selection), various dimensions
29 collages on cardboard, bw prints on paper (selection), 35x42cm

