

## **On «Terra sine sanguis», by Nadia Kalara Christiana Galanopoulou, Art historian, curator**

Whenever Nadia Kalara exhibits, she elucidates her personal world as if delineating its borders from some other standpoint. This is a world of odd nomadic lands full of architectural traces without, however, their human agency: whether it is bridges, highways, quarries or prehistoric settlements, these traces make up a landscape within the landscape, like what the archaeologist of the future will find on the surface or in the interior. These landscapes afford the viewer an opportunity to travel to a timeless temporality, at once past and future.

The digitally processed images of the landscapes, though fabricated almost in their entirety, give the illusion of photographs and invite the gaze to a second and third inspection before eventually revealing some of their secrets.

Actually, the images are a mosaic of shots of the same landscape from different angles, so many of them that the viewer is forced to look at the landscape as if she were simultaneously inside and above it, close up and afar. While distorting her primary material, the snapshot, Kalara maintains a peculiar faith in it. The created image encompasses aspects of what was and what is becoming and incorporates temporality in its dynamic by means of the consecutive shots from different angles.

Existing simultaneously as past, present and future, time plays an even more important role than it appears at first sight. Time is the source of light – one not generated by any visible source. Time is also what creates the sky – a sky that does not operate as an opening but as a veil of eternity. The sky: this is not a sky to escape into, nor an element of lightness – let alone an insinuation about the time of day. An inexorable sky, a harsh vehicle of timeless temporality, it grounds us in the terrain of every landscape.

A terrain of dirt. Portraits of places made of dirt. A few structures, a lot of garbage, stones, a flock of sheep. Shacks, makeshift shelters, filth,

dryness. A familiar image of land. The large-size digital images bring the viewer face to face with an experienced reality, not a pleasant one. Kalara constructs landscapes using existing images, bringing to the fore things that are uncomfortable to see, pressing our buttons that border on aversion.

A visual game, the earth-made-of-dirt and the earth-planet merge into one in the first video of the installation. A small planet is composed out of the images which the viewer sees around her. A small planet made of dirt delineates even more clearly this relationship between the essence of the earth and eternity, also making it understood, for some inexplicable reason, how fragile it is. The relationship of the earth with eternity becomes the object of reflection in the second video also, where the viewer's gaze wanders about an earth made of dirt, full of indeterminate formations and the prehistoric remnants of an absent civilization. The wandering appears to end when the camera-gaze sinks into the dark hole of a gap. Yet, like everything in the universe, the black hole of the end is but the occasion for the new beginning.

Terra sine sanguis: earth without blood. Bearing wounds on its skin, yet not bloodied. Living dead, finally. But also, bloodless. A land never sanctified because it was never loved, so that it never became a homeland.

With all that dirt and garbage, it is difficult to love it. Yet, Kalara invests on these constructed landscapes to the extent that she makes them the most poetic gift one could make to a landscape: she gives them names. Mysterious and formal names, like the one's astrophysicists give to the geophysical formations of other planets. We name something and it immediately becomes ours. Through bestowing these names, she claims ownership of these landscapes of unfamiliarity which she salvages from her personal world, thus ultimately undermining herself.

**«Terra sine sanguis» photographic installation was presented at  
CHEAPART from 14.10 – 5.11.2008**