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Walking has been one of the constellations in the starry sky of human culture, a constellation whose three stars are the body, the imagination, and the wide-open world, and though all three exist independently, it is the lines drawn between them—drawn by the act of walking for cultural purposes—that makes them a constellation.

Rebecca Solnit, Wanderlust1

Walking is a touchstone for the artist Anna Lytridou. Her artworks are testaments to the walks she has done in a range of landscapes - from her birthplace Cyprus to Britain to Iceland to the Himalayas. By incorporating walking in her art, Lytridou belongs to an august lineage of artist-walkers for whom walking is at the heart of their craft. One thinks of Hamish Fulton using texts, photographs and diagrams to communicate his walks, of Richard Long's expanded sculptures that involve walking, marking and measuring and of Francis Alÿs's walks-as-performances. On the subject of his perambulations, Alÿs has said, "You are aware or awake to everything that happens in your peripheral vision, the little incidents, smells, images, sounds ... Walking brings a rich state of consciousness."²

However Lytridou's art is less about a performance or mapping of terrain than about recording her memories of a journey. Her painting-installations reveal glimpses of a plunging waterfall, a boulder, a lake, the brooding pyramid of a summit or the gentle fold of a valley. Through these fragments that seem to melt and dissolve into one another we gain a sense of movement through space and time: the shifting hues and shadows as the light changes through the day, the glints and reflections of sun on water or sifted through foliage. But it is not simply a matter of conveying the wonder of Lytridou's incursions into nature. "My intention is to translate my experiences of certain environments into a navigable space within the exhibition space so that the viewer has a physical experience of the work that resembles a journey," she says.³

This exhibition "The Constellations We Make" at the Cyprus High Commission in London takes its title from a line by the writer and feminist activist Rebecca Solnit relating to the way humans make sense of the stars by drawing imaginary lines between them.⁴ Lytridou has created three atmospheric freestanding structures for the show which occupy a liminal threshold between painting and sculpture. At once both and neither nor, they exist in an equilibrium of opposites: absence and presence, solid and void, abstraction and representation. The steel frames break up the space and also delineate boundaries within it, their bold vertical lines contrasting with flat painted forms on copper that appear to be weightlessly suspended on them. The viewer makes their own constellations around, through and between these works, entwining their memories with Lytridou's, fusing their journeys with hers.

The use of copper as a base material for these sculptural paintings marks a new departure for Lytridou. She was drawn to the metal in part because of its link to her homeland Cyprus: the word derives from the name of the island, which is home to large deposits of copper and was famed for metalworking in antiquity. As a painting surface, the copper adds a warm sheen to the composition, while the reverse casts soft reflections of the surrounding sculpture. A tension is set up between the two metals as the flowing organic forms of the cut copper vie with the rigid geometric steel frames.

Previously Lytridou had often framed her paintings within the metal structures themselves, orchestrating intriguing juxtapositions of two dimensional planes within three dimensions. For her immersive outdoor installation *Geography of Melting Ice* for the Larnaca Biennial in 2016, for instance, Lytridou exhibited two angular metal constructions within which dreamy paintings jutted at odd angles like partial walls or screens. Painted on transparent polyester, these abstract canvases functioned as surface and window at the same time, allowing the surrounding architecture to merge with the sculpture in a jumble of facets and lines. Lytridou's arresting installation *Proving Socrates Was Wrong* (2019), inspired by her walks in the Lake District, experimented further with various modes of presenting paintings in an effort to eschew the medium's illusionistic tradition. Emphasising their objecthood, the artist framed one painting in a metal structure, hung another, asymmetrical canvas on the wall and draped a third unstretched fragment over a bar. "I want to take this form of representation away from the traditional associations with the picturesque, of the landscape as a distinct, composed image," she says. "I am creating landscape artworks that encompass the extra dimension that is so crucial to the experience of landscape as the combination of space, topography, atmosphere and form - time."

In this show Lytridou achieves this sense of multiplicity through a rich dialogue of textures and forms. In addition to the three installations, she has hung **three** collaged paintings on stitched fabric on the walls, thus inviting connections across media and geographies between her abstract landscapes. These bewitching large-scale textile works are created in stages. The artist initially paints over individual segments of polyester, cotton and linen, which she fits together "like a puzzle" and sews before finally painting over them as an integrated whole, allowing the stitched edges to mark lines. Lytridou builds volume through this process of layering different textures, producing a patchwork of electrifying landscapes that evoke moods and sensations. I am reminded of the poet and artist, Etel Adnan, whose work in diverse media is also profoundly influenced by nature. As Adnan notes, "Images are not still. They are moving things. They come, they go, they disappear, they approach, they recede, and they are not even visual — ultimately they are pure feeling. They're like something that calls you through a fog or a cloud."⁵

Echoes of the women painters of the New York Abstract Expressionist school also reverberate in Lytridou's paintings. Her bleeding of opaque and transparent textures and use of intense colour have particular affinities with the work of Helen Frankenthaler, whose passion for nature shines through her abstractions.

But there is a further element to Lytridou's landscapes that, for me, relates to psychological states. The pleasing disorientation she creates through the instability of overlapping boundaries, the perpetual fluctuation between image and object, interior and exterior, calls to my mind Virginia Woolf's 1931 experimental novel *The Waves*. In the book, Woolf explores the nature of subjectivity and the workings of the mind through six characters whose experiences and feelings are vividly conveyed by means of dramatic soliloquies.

"I see a ring," said Bernard, "hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light."

"I see a slab of pale yellow," said Susan, "spreading away until it meets a purple stripe."

"I hear a sound," said Rhoda, "cheep, chirp; cheep, chirp; going up and down."

"I see a globe," said Neville, "hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill."

"I see a crimson tassel," said Jinny, "twisted with gold threads."

"I hear something stamping," said Louis. "A great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps."6

The quoted passage exemplifies our arbitrary patterns of thought and the way we internalise the world outside. As well as physical scenes from nature, Lytridou's works similarly suggest an assemblage of shifting perceptions and memories.

The artist has always been inspired by her walks but the way she has expressed them in her art has evolved. In 2016 she was invited to make a site-specific commission for the Suncheon national park in South Korea and employed metal rods, threads and wires in space to draw a specific journey on foot. Paul Klee - himself an obsessive student of nature - famously spoke about taking a line for a walk and Lytridou did just that in three dimensions with her poetic installation *Adrift in a Leaky Metaphor*, which she describes as "a multi surface drawing". In a series of balletic movements that seemed to hover in space like vapour trails or fireworks, the metal line zig-zagged and dipped, swooped and curved, veering back on itself, inviting the viewer to trace its path. At times the metal dissolved against the branches of surrounding trees or echoed the urban lines of a nearby bridge or building. "The act of walking becomes a meditation within space seeking for new forms," Lytridou said.

DRAWLANDWOVENSKY, another three-dimensional line drawing that the artist made for the 2017 group exhibition "Weaving Europe: the World as Meditation" in Paphos, Cyprus, expands on the idea of recording the body's movements in landscape. Lytridou approached the theme of weaving metaphorically and used industrial steel to weave together memories of the vast skies and haunting scenery she encountered on walks during a residency in Iceland. The meandering metal lines evoked a passage of music with euphoric accents and lulls and cast a shadow version on a white wall behind like a musical counterpoint. Punctuating the 3D drawing, flat paintings on PVC and aluminium sheet shimmered in and out of vision.

If Lytridou's artistic vocabulary has modified in the past few years, it remains nonetheless consistent with her utopian vision. Compressing time and distance into her painting-sculptures, she envisions new, urban-rural landscapes fusing metal, air, earth and sky.

1 Solnit, Rebecca, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (Penguin, New York, 2001) p.528

2 Alÿs, Francis, *Francis Alÿs: Seven Walks*, London 2004–5, exhibition catalogue (21 Portman Square, London, 2005) p.48

3 Quotes by the artist taken from conversation with her and her website

4 Solnit, Rebecca, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics* (University of California Press Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 2007) p.165

5 Adnan, Etel quoted in 'Etel Adnan by Lisa Robertson', *BOMB Magazine*, vol. 127, 2014.

6 Woolf, Virginia, *The Waves* (Penguin Books, 1992) p.5