



VICTORIA
SQUARE
PROJECT

COVID 19

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Victoria Square Project

Victoria Square Project is an evolving social sculpture. It operates as an art space community centered acquiring its meanings and values from the urban development of the specific area it's located, Victoria area.

Once the center of the upper class society today a symbol of the refugee crisis, Victoria Square is a very special neighborhood of Athens. During the COVID-19 crisis our neighborhood was highly affected, maybe more than other areas of Athens, which made VSP's response and presence in the neighborhood urgent and necessary. The neighbors of Victoria are immigrants, migrants, refugees and lower income citizens, therefore many of them do not have access to wifi or all members of the family share one smart device (phone, tablet, laptop, etc). Additionally, with all the cafes, bars, restaurants closed and people limiting their strolls in the city, the neighborhood balances changed, having a strong impact on the safety in the public space.



STRATEGY

EXHIBITION

The aforementioned challenges and VSP's identity led us to explore new ways of communication, reach and empowerment of their community and to develop a new strategy, a hybrid model that combined in situ and digital programs. The strategy was implemented in all the four axes of VSP's program "Who is the contemporary Athenian?"; the Living Room of Victoria, the educational axis Victoria NOW, Station One Artists-in-Residence and the in situ programs HOOD. Our scope while designing the project was to create opportunities for different target groups, to activate their participation, strengthen critical thinking and inclusion.

The implementation of that strategy faced and still faces **challenges and opportunities**.



A photograph of three people standing on a sidewalk, looking into a large glass window of a building. The person on the left is wearing a black and white jacket and a black beanie. The person in the middle is wearing a maroon hoodie and blue jeans. The person on the right is wearing a dark grey coat and light-colored pants. The window reflects the street scene and shows some interior details. The building has a modern, minimalist design with white walls and large windows.

Victoria Square Project was founded by Rick Lowe and Maria Papadimitriou in 2017 in the framework of documenta 14 as the **Living Room** of the neighborhood, a safe and creative space for all. That still remains the main idea of the ground floor of our premises, while the current curation revolves around the coffee ritual that our neighbors share regardless of their countries of origin.

As VSP remained closed during the pandemic, we took advantage of the formation of the space. Its big windows connect the pedestrian street with VSP's ground floor creating a big common ground that bridges the public space with our living room. Thus, we decided to continue our exhibition program with the exhibition of **Daily Practices**, a collaboration with KETHEA Transitional School. Young teens, all of them girls, created big artworks and a video art installation that reflected their physical and mental transition from teenagers to young adults, with the guidance of the actor Phevos Markianos and sculptor Kostas Sahpazis.



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ΠΡΟΤΥΠΟ
ΠΛΑΤΕΙΑ
ΒΙΚΤΟΡΙΑΣ

Καθημερινές Πρακτικές | Daily Practices

Καθημερινές Πρακτικές | Daily Practices



Opportunities

Maintain a vibrant community
Celebrate the work of the participants
Keep the space accessible and safe
Communicate with the local community
Transform the street's image

Challenges

Not exact number of visitors
Young artists didn't have the chance to visit in person their artworks
Window reflexions
No mediation

Collaborations

Transitional School , KETHEA
Phevos Markianos, actor
Kostas Sahpazis, sculptor
Harrie Kourkoulis (Photoharrie), video

Idea & Implementation

Niovi Zarampouka-Chatzimanou, director & curator, VSP
Christiana Natzika, educational programs coordinator, VSP

Dates

December 2020 - January 2021

Location

Elpidos 13, Victoria Square

Venue

Living Room, VSP

Audience

All

Number of visitors

A/N



educational program

10 countries / 10 artists

VSP's highest priority is the educational axis **Victoria NOW**. Through the discussion of the city, the public space and everything that constitutes the cultural identity of NOW, the education programs of Victoria NOW aim to highlight the citizens of NOW.

To respond to the pandemic, a new more suitable to the challenges educational program was designed, that was held online and reflected the cultural identity of the residents of Victoria area, the **10 countries / 10 artists** kids art workshops. The response was so high that the classes doubled. Kids from Astypalaia and Kavala to Athens and Voukouresti explored influential artists from the countries of origin of our neighbors, such as Ghana, Bulgaria and Bangladesh. Art created a fertile ground to explore not only different artistic practises but to discuss different cultures, utilize previous knowledge and stimuli of the children, expand together our perspective on the way we see art and different paths of life, and create.

10 χώρες 10 καλλιτέχνες





Currently, from May 25, 2021 the programs are held partly online and at our premises.

Our attempts to approach the youth of the neighborhood failed, even though we maintain close relations with the youth community of our neighborhood and collaborate closely with the 2nd high school of Athens- Theo Angelopoulos. From the youth point of view, they were fed up with the online activities and they wanted to spend their free time outside with friends instead of in another digital classroom.

Opportunities

Development of a community beyond Victoria Square
Connect with kids and families across Greece & abroad and expose them to a multicultural identity, that of our neighborhood
Share VSP's values and identity

Challenges

Difficulties to connect with local communities due to absence of internet connection and/or lack of smart device
Internet connection problems

Channel of implementation

ZOOM

Idea

Niovi Zarampouka-Chatzimanou, director & curator, VSP
Christiana Natzika, educational programs coordinator, VSP

Implementation

Christiana Natzika, educational programs coordinator, VSP
Marina Naki, educational programs & community engagement assistant, VSP

Period

January 2021 - now

Location

online & Elpidos 13, Victoria Square

Audience

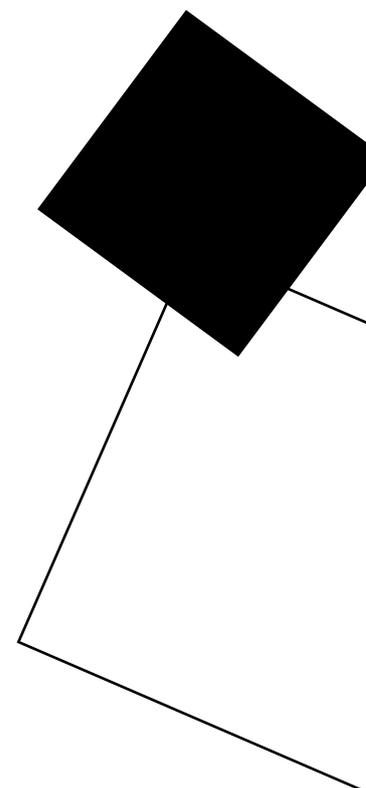
kids 4-12 years old

Number of applicants

1st cycle: 122
2nd cycle: 115

Number of participants

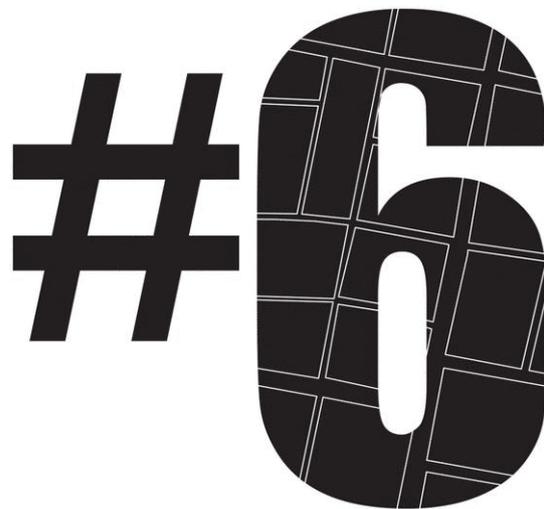
1st cycle: 87
2nd cycle: 74



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

During the pandemic our connection with the public space was inextricably linked with number 6. Inspired by that, we designed #6, a self guided and paced game, an alternative walk around the neighborhood. It's goal was to explore Victoria neighborhood in a non formal or predefined way, as a flâneur.

The #6 is a printed map. It was freely distributed in several locations/businesses around Victoria Square and Kypseli. After putting a sticker on the map at the beginning point, they would stroll around our neighborhood and then leave the map at the specially designed pink mailbox at Elpidos 13. That way they would also visit VSP, the exhibition and any other activities happening.



#



Opportunities

Development of a community beyond and around Victoria Square

Share VSP's values and identity

Keep the street vibrant therefore safe

The #6 allowed us to map the neighborhood from the eyes of our community

Challenges

Difficulties to connect with local communities due to absence of internet connection and/or lack of smart device

People didn't always return their maps but preferred to keep them as a souvenir

Idea & Implementation

Marina Naki, educational programs & community engagement assistant, VSP

Dates

December 2020 - present

Location

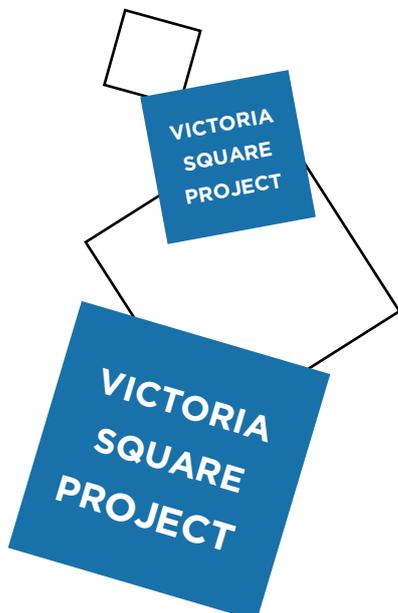
Victoria neighborhood

Audience

All

Number of visitors

A/N



**VICTORIA
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**Elpidos 13,
10434,
Athens**

LIVING ROOM

co-Living Room Community

The co-Living Room Community was formed in March. It was an invitation of VSP to its community to co-create its living room. During the first cycle of activities we e-connected our living rooms, we created a non-discriminative common space to encourage the exchanging of ideas, free expression and entertainment for all.

The main idea was revolving around activities we actually do in our living rooms. Therefore, apart from pottery, creative lighting and embroidery workshops the program included AfroFitness workshops and a campaign for the design of furniture inspired by the everyday life of our neighbours and community members without ever meeting.

The members of the community would pick up the necessary materials for the workshops from VSP in a KIT. Then, they returned their art creations to be composed in one artwork.

Co-Living Room

WORKSHOPS

12.04-30.05.2021

the mug
the light
the paravan
afrofitness

community discussions

One of the main goals of the co-Living Room Community was to bridge the language gap, as the project consisted of an integration method for the refugees members of the Curing the Limbo program of the Municipality of Athens. At the same time we aimed to create a digital space, which then would be “transferred” into a physical space. The designed objects and the ongoing activities would bring the community together whilst keeping the safety measures.



Opportunities

Renew our social contract with the neighbourhood by co-designing elements of the space based. The living room, based on the idea of the founding artists for a safe space for everyone, remained accessible to the neighborhood.

Development of a large community beyond Victoria Square

Keep the space accessible and safe

Communicate with the local community

Keep the street vibrant therefore safe

Share VSP's values and identity

Challenges

Internet connection difficulties

Language gap

Many people picked their kits up but didn't join the workshops

A very dense program and many different means of communication (email, facebook group, facebook page, telephone calls) that were sometimes confusing

A lot of logistics around production due to the nature of the program

Channel of implementation

ZOOM & FACEBOOK

Idea

Niovi Zarampouka-Chatzimanou, director & curator, VSP

Implementation

Dorothea Kritikou, program & production coordinator, VSP

Ioanna Ntali, communications & development coordinator, VSP

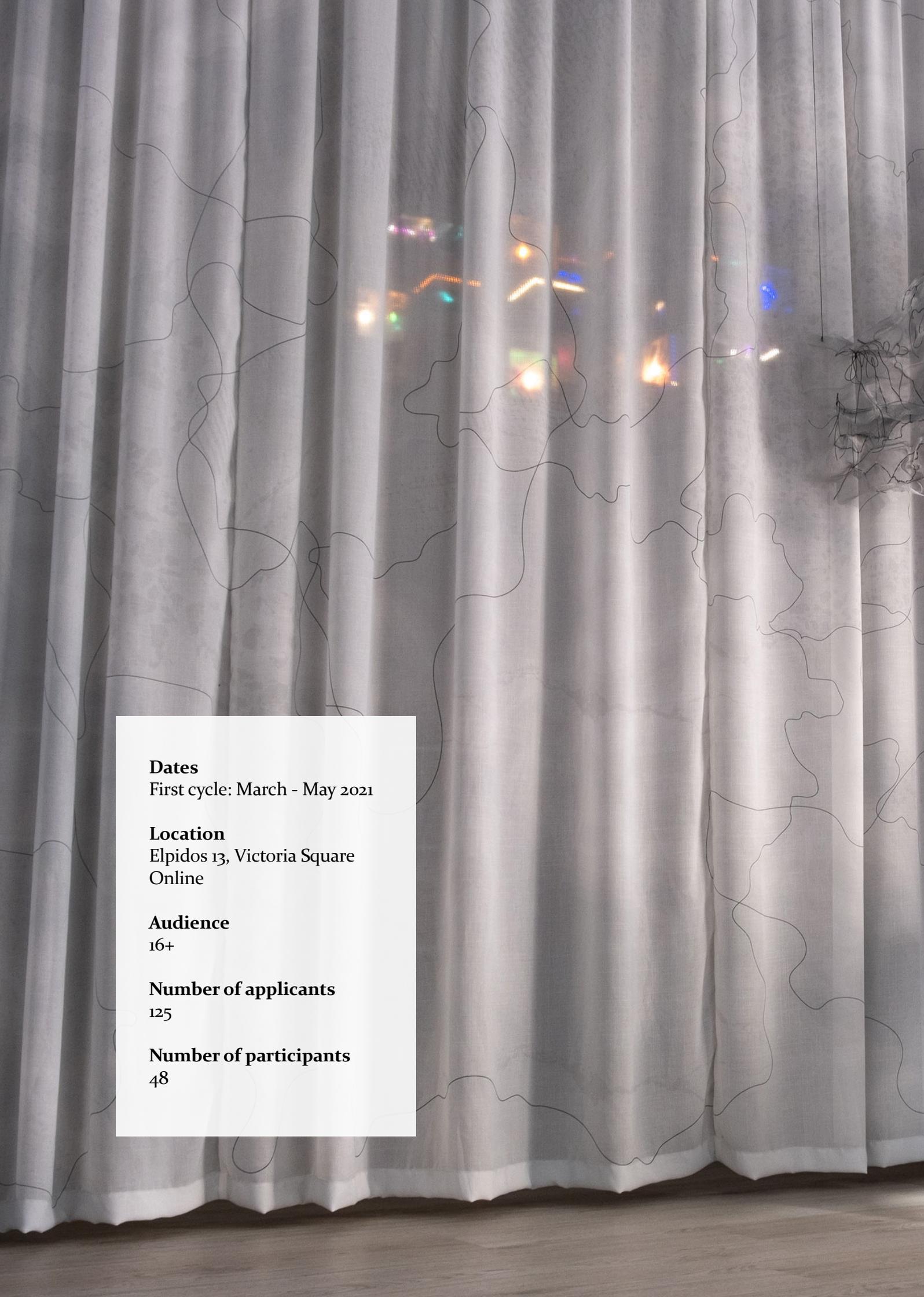
Aggelos Kostamparis, community liaison, VSP

Dafni Crema, educational programs assistant, VSP

Supported by

Curing the Limbo, co-Athens, Municipality of Athens





Dates

First cycle: March - May 2021

Location

Elpidos 13, Victoria Square
Online

Audience

16+

Number of applicants

125

Number of participants

48



ARTISTS- IN-RESIDENCE

Station One AIR

In collaboration with Counterpoints Arts & The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Public Humanities Initiative (SNFPHI) at Columbia University

Victoria Square Project in collaboration with Counterpoints Arts and SNFPHI at Columbia University, launched the first call of Station One AIR, a year-long residency program for emerging artists to reimagine Greek identity under the theme “Hippodamia in Context”. The selected artists will work in teams of four, for three months, under the mentorship of Columbia University faculty, collaborating artists and curators, and VSP’s team to engage in a series of “contextualizations” of Johannes Pfuhl’s sculpture in Victoria Square, Athens.

The first team of four started their residency in May online by attending the courses designed by SNFPHI and on June 10 they started their collective research in situ.





Opportunities

Development of the artistic community of VSP
Continue researching the curatorial question posed on September 2020, an attempt to identify all these elements that define the contemporary Athenian identity
Communicate with the local community
Share VSP's values and identity

Challenges

Internet connection difficulties
Travel restrictions for residents from abroad
Combine in situ and online activities

Channel/Place of implementation

ZOOM & Elpidos 13

Idea

Niovi Zarampouka-Chatzimanou, director & curator, VSP

Collaboration

Counterpoints Arts
Stavros Niarchos Foundation Public Humanities Initiative (SNFPHI) at Columbia University

Implementation

Aggelos Kostamparis, community liaison, VSP
Dafni Crema, educational programs assistant, VSP

Supported by

Outset Contemporary Art Fund, Counterpoints Arts

Dates

First cycle: May - December 2021

Location

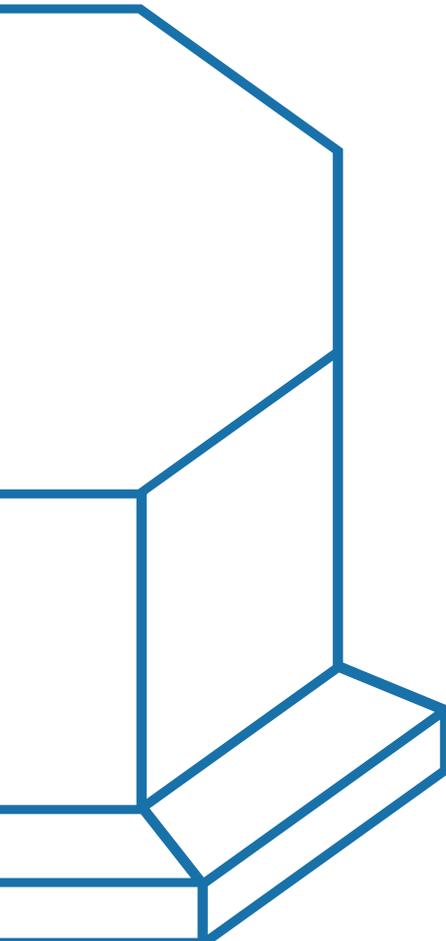
Elpidos 13, Victoria Square
Online
6th District of Athens



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CONCLUSION



The next chapter of Victoria Square Project started in September 2020. Under the curatorial research question “Who is the contemporary Athenian?” posed by the new director and curator of VSP Niovi Zampouka-Chatzimanou, we have developed a three-year program as an attempt to define all these elements of a collective Athenian identity beyond labels like immigrant, migrant, refugee, second generation Greek etc.

Due to COVID 19 crisis the implementation of the program faced a lot of challenges and opportunities that have created an extended toolkit, a know-how that will define VSP's future and knowledge around community engagement, communication methods and practices, and of course crisis management tactics. As described above the COVID-19 strategy is designed around the main goals of the organization as access to art and culture, access to rights, empowerment of the community through social and civic engagement, and social inclusion. By defining our goals and adopting methodologies which allow the construction of an open and inclusive narrative, we have expanded our reach and managed to connect even in times when interpersonal relations, which are a core of our practice, were not allowed.

Through our process we are looking to create activities and programs which encourage cooperation and participation as much as possible, not only throughout the creating state but also expand participation before and beyond this.

Working on feedback and evaluations throughout the process which we are acquiring from the participants, team members and collaborators, allows us to evolve our tools and adapt depending on the needs. We are working towards a direct and transparent flow of communication with all of the parties involved in our programs.

VSP's Major Donor



In cooperation with



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