



An ongoing project by Maaïke Stutterheim

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"ΔΩΡΙΖΕΤΑΙ" is a project made by Maaïke Stutterheim, a dutch visual artist that graduated from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. She came up with the idea of this artwork, during her two-month stay in Snehta Residency (Athens written backwards). Maaïke has been visiting Greece (and specifically Athens and Leros) almost every year since the age of 4. Therefore, she has both the objective eye of a "foreign" artist and the attachment and sensitivity of a "local" one. This combination was pretty crucial for the making of the project. She wanted to make a work focussing on the juxtaposition of the growing amount of empty spaces, shops, houses buildings, and the growing amount of homeless and jobless people in Greece. Some weeks after our first meeting she asked me: "Do you see all these paste-ups saying FOR RENT and FOR SALE? They are everywhere. I want to create one that says FOR FREE." At that point her research for the realization of the project started.

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These signs have a specific form in Greece: They always have red typefaces printed on yellow paper, you can buy them in corner shops and kiosks for a couple of euros. She experimented with different sizes and papers in order to find the one that would speak exactly the same "language" as the ones in the street. This task was more complicated than it seemed but she managed to find the font and ordered 6500 "ΔΩΡΙΖΕΤΑΙ" signs. She started pasting them up in the streets systematically for more than three months. The artist tried to create a visual dialogue with the "FOR RENT" and "FOR SALE" signs and used them in many innovative ways and in a variety of places, using humor and imagination, pasting them in front of government buildings, beaches, and so commenting on the political situation in Greece at the moment. However, she focused on gluing them in the window screens of the empty shops, that are getting more and more in the city centre due to the crisis. Maaïke hopes that her project might create awareness over the use of all these empty spaces. She believes that people should think creatively and just do something with it and she keeps wondering why since there are so many homeless and unemployed people nobody is not occupying these empty shops. She gets somehow frustrated when she talks to people about it, since the majority of the counterarguments refer to bureaucratic obstacles. In addition, the reaction of the public to her project differs. Some people think that it is a humorous joke, others characterize it as an annoying/cynical prank and some (especially the owners) find it threatening and they remove the signs as soon as they notice them.)



We need here to stress that Maaïke comes from a "different" background. In Holland there was a law (until recently), that legitimized the occupation/squatting of a building, if it has been empty for more than a year. On top of that she is a member of the Artists with Attitude (AWA), a curatorial initiative that was based in the cultural centre OT301, which used to be a squat in Amsterdam. In her artworks one encounters the idea of the re-use of empty spaces a lot. During the past years she creates installations/"environments" in abandoned hotels in Europe, using found objects that people left there. These storytelling images reveal that the artist not only attempts to construct on nothingness, but also to extract life from the uninhabited.

[A text created by Vital Space Team in cooperation with Maaïke Stutterheim]

