

GoGaneshaGo – Elephants for Peace.
Famagusta Gate – Nicosia 14/1/2009

Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

On behalf of my fellow artists, members of Cyprus Chamber of Fine Arts, E.KA.TE I would like to thank you all for being here tonight.

I would also like to thank Mrs. Stylianou from the Goethe Institute for asking me to open tonight's exhibition. When she first mentioned the idea of the Elephants for Peace, as an artistic project, I have to admit that I was not at all sure of the connection to the Cypriot situation, as the elephant is not an animal familiar to the people of Cyprus or in any way connected to it. But she mentioned two key- words that moved me immediately. Art and Peace. These two words are tightly connected to each other. Art promotes Peace, and Peace generates Art. Yes, I strongly believe in the role of Art towards Peace. I believe in the power of Art in creating routes of communication, between people of different nationalities, ethnic origins and cultures. Art can really work as a tool for Intercultural dialogue between different communities, countries and people. It enables us to understand the history and culture of other people opening up the dialogue of communication for peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding..

At a time where we are witnessing day after day the horrors and the distraction of war in the neighbouring area of Gaza, we feel the need to do something. We want to raise our voice, we want to shout and we want to scream out for the war to end. And even though we feel quite helpless in the situation, we cannot afford to ignore it. Even the smallest gesture towards Peace is worthwhile. So this project of Elephants for Peace titled

“GoGaneshaGo” provides a perfect situation for a start towards the right way.

But before I go on I would like to thank some one who is responsible for providing us with this symbolic gesture, Rose Marie Gnaush, an artist and art historian who initiated this whole project and came all the way from Germany, to install and set up this exhibition.

I would like to quote part of her writing about this project so we can understand better the concept behind it.

“The Elephants for Peace Project is about using arts’ capacity to create a new symbol which impact consciousness as represented by the elephants in terms of making the peaceful attitude, and their living in harmony with other species the fundamental building blocks of our consciousness both at individual and collective level. That’s why the main meaning of the project has been described as “Peace made visible”. Here we are offering the abstract concept of peace a new symbol of strength and kindness combined:

The main motivation behind this non-traditional vision of the artist is to use art as a tool for the participants from across the globe, artists and non-artists to make a collective statement about their desire for a shift in human consciousness in a way that will embody the wisdom of peace and joy of living in harmony with each other on our planet.”

The present exhibition at Famagusta Gate is a preliminary activity of the project in relation to Cyprus; it features some of the finished and donated works of participants artists and creators of Art from different parts of the world, it will be on until the 22nd of January. The main activities and exhibition will take place in May along Ledra Street.

Anyone can participate in this event: young school children will find it very interesting I am sure. But I must say that I found it most touching to hear of Mrs. Fries 83 year old lady from Wittlich who knitted an elephant, saying “Wherever I can I help”.

The exhibition of elephants is expected to move on to other parts of the world such as Israel, Palestine, Georgia, Korea and Iraq.

In this respect Cypriots can make use of the opportunity of the Elephants for Peace project to make a statement and help generate this quantum leap. Through their attitude Cyprus can be a role model for transformation of consciousness of other conflict-ridden societies in particular and for mankind in general.

The lining up of the elephants for Peace from one end of Leedra street to the other will symbolize the reunification of the city of Nicosia in the hope that 2009 will be the year for the reunification of the whole island of Cyprus, a place for peaceful coexistence for all its citizens Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots..

Daphne Trimikliniotis.

President of Cyprus Chamber of Art, E.KA.TE