

»Once Upon A Time« (the essay), Lia Nalbantidou (2001)

Once upon a time there was a family.

Back then, the family had many children, maybe as many as the year's months, the week's days, or the right hand's fingers. It also had aunts and uncles, and cousins and grandmothers and grandfathers. And not everybody liked the other, but they were living together, not always in harmony, but humans ought to live with one another, tolerating one the other's faults.

Living together is the way to learn how to love even when the relationships are not always convenient. Living within a family is about commitment to others outside ourselves.

But life has changed and the family now counts one child, or sometimes just one parent. As the Sunday paper informs me, in the United Kingdom of the year 2010 the single person households will be the rule rather than the exception. The family institution sits at the borderline of today's lifestyle. My generation, the «thirtysomething», aims to goals, pleasure, fame and power.

Our times allow for the disposal of a spouse and the search for another one. It is financially possible to remain single. Also, childless. Child rearing brings a lot of responsibilities. That is true. But the existence of children in the adult's life besides the constant renewal it provides, it makes him/her discover a magnificent other self, one hardly knew existed before. A child makes the willing adult to see life through another perspective fundamentally different from the one he or she has. A child broadens the horizon of the adult who has learned how to view him/herself as the only center of the world.

The Secure Private Domain of my Home (1996 – 2001) – Zero to Five, is a series of photographs exploring the emotional context of the family creation within the spacial framework of the house. It is perhaps my inheritance of forcefully displaced families (from both parents) that led me to attempt a redefinition and a recreation of an emotional photographic context, so that as to acquire a sense of belonging.

Family is a necessary condition. And like all things in life a family has limits. However, through the emotional development its members experience, they acquire a greater understanding for life. This is the ground where one learns to define and maintain their identity. Creating a family is the pivotal political act to defend and preserve our identity and culture.