

# Fields of Muziris

memories, myths and traces

Truth is not always the whole story. It is plausibility that adds to the imagination. Fields of Muziris is a plausible<sup>1</sup> project on the lost landscapes of Muziris, the city of black gold. Fluctuating between truth, interpretation and fabrication, this project is an exploration into the multiple mysteries hidden in this place.

## <sup>1</sup>Plausible

/ˈplɔːzɪb(ə)l/

adjective

(of an argument or statement) seeming reasonable or probable.

“a plausible explanation”

Synonyms: credible, reasonable, believable, likely, feasible, probable, tenable, possible, conceivable, imaginable, within the bounds of possibility, convincing, persuasive, cogent, sound, rational, logical, acceptable, thinkable

(of a person) skilled at producing persuasive arguments, especially ones intended to deceive.

“a plausible liar”

***“Architecture is not simply about space and form, but also about event, action, and what happens in space”***

Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts*, 1976-1981

# Abstract

*There is no absolute presence or absolute absence, but there is the 'trace'. "Every so-called 'present', or 'now' point, is always already compromised by a trace, or a residue of a previous experience, that precludes us ever being in a self-contained 'now' moment"*  
(Derrida, 1973)

Fields of Muziris is an effort to map Muziris and its so-called lost landscape. Here, imagination is the key for research and traces become a significant and dynamic lens for studying the flux of this open terrain and its 'ongoing past'.

The fabled trade town Muziris, the supposed end point of the ancient Roman spice route and the first emporium of India, is a land that exists partially in history and myth. The stories that allude to this ancient port city lie in seemingly disparate fragments and are discontinuous in space and time. Excerpts from ancient trade accounts, classical literature, historical and archaeological records offer a challenging yet plausible means to piece together an image of erstwhile Muziris. However, the shape-shifting nature of this image has been rendered differently by various interest groups over time. It is continually distorted by academic, political and cultural appropriation, leaving no opportunity to discuss a complete picture from a unified, neutral ground. Perhaps all historic places can be subjected to such an inquiry. But Muziris offers a particularly exciting opportunity because its history remains behind the scene; hidden under the everyday and the ordinary, unpunctuated by monuments.

The project is a deeply personal exploration of Muziris, probing into the hidden layers of 'intangibles'-beliefs, social phenomena, aspirations, cultural exchanges, conflicts, contradictions, distortions, memory- that impart the fullness of character of a city.

**It is by accepting that the fragments of a city exist beyond its material remains, that they can be found in other traces left by the functioning of the previous societies and the ones that continue to inhabit it.**

The project seeks to discover a way to regard history from a distance, taking a dispassionate position and yet using personal sentiment to understand the interconnectedness of everything. Space can then be regarded as a temporal-spatial tool to practise the remembering of lost land and to elaborate an imagined landscape; one that connects in multiple facets of a story. Modes of mapping will open up more perspectives, neither authoritarian nor mere documentation. The representability of memory is challenged through graphical storytelling juxtaposing multiple narratives informed by time-space references, to raise relevant questions that concern the past, present and future. The composite drawing thus arrived at will be a narrative of fragments, decontextualized in an urban landscape; a relational mapping exercise exposing a dynamic collective memory.

**Fields of Muziris presents an opportunity for exploring new methods of reconstructing the past and questioning the existing paradigms in archaeology and architecture through a speculative 'Blankscape'. Clues in the present become an idiosyncratic vantage point in time.**

**Muziris is eternally mired in myth. The inaccessible, exotic aura that engulfs the lost city has revealed a different landscape for different people, and has never offered the same dreams or desires. The stories of Muziris are locked into memory and disjointed elements that are discontinuous in time and space. Therefore, Muziris has settled on a curious plane of fiction that appears now and then, throwing sly hints of actual places for those who venture to find its whereabouts, like the Mount Olympus for the Greeks. A mention here in classical poetry and under the silt beds of the land, some broken pottery. Lost across memory, some more vivid than others, and ruins, the story can be retold any number of times providing endless possibilities of correlation and hence several versions of Muziris.+**

**Muziris can never be found.**











