

NATIONAL GALLERY
ALEXANDROS SOUTZOS MUSEUM

FOUR CENTURIES OF GREEK PAINTING

NATIONAL GALLERY
ALEXANDROS SOUTZOS MUSEUM
100 YEARS

FOUR CENTURIES OF GREEK PAINTING

FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY
AND THE EURIPIDIS KOUTLIDIS FOUNDATION

THE CATALOGUE

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Publication Production

Peak publishing

Printing

Baxas SA

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2nd edition 2006

3rd edition 2013

ISBN: 978-960-7791-55-9

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NATIONAL GALLERY AND ALEXANDROS SOUTZOS MUSEUM

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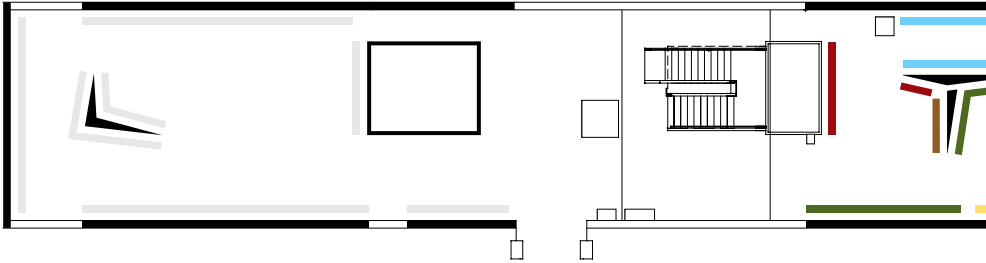
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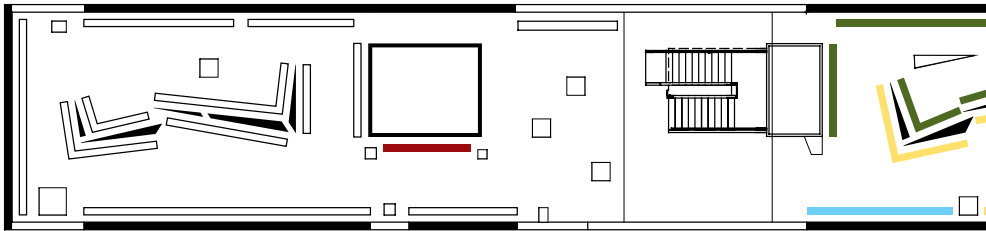


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	POST-BYZANTINE ART
	DOMENICOS THEOKOPOULOS
	THE SCHOOL OF THE IONIAN ISLANDS
	HISTORICAL SCENES
	EARLY GREEK PORTRAITS
	EARLY GREEK LANDSCAPE PAINTING
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	ORIENTALISM
	SYMBOLISM AND ALLEGORY
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	THE NUDE
	STILL LIFE
	DIALOGUE WITH LIGHT AND COLOR The First Impressionist Signs
	DIALOGUE WITH LIGHT AND COLOR Impressionistic Remnants



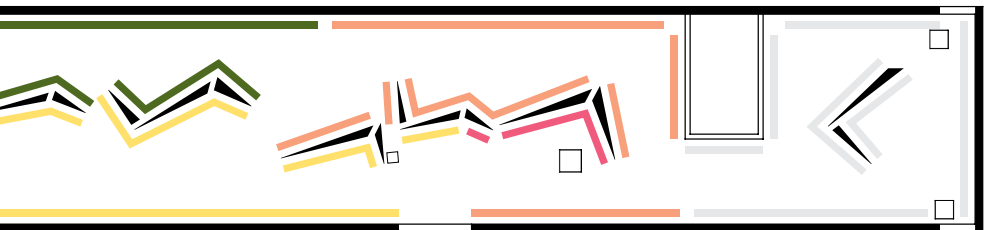
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2nd FLOOR

	GREEK LIGHT AND COLOR
	FROM PERCEPTION TO CONCEPTION
	THE GENERATION OF THE THIRTIES TRADITION AND MODERNISM
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	THE GENERATION OF THE THIRTIES AFTER THE WAR AND ITS HERITAGE
	EXPRESSIONISM. PROJECTION OF THE INNER IMAGE
	MODERN GREEK SCULPTURE

Post-war art will be presented on the second floor, in the left hall, with long-running alternating exhibitions including works from the permanent collections of the National Gallery. A lack of space prohibits the presentation of modern Greek art as a whole.





Thirteen years have passed since the first edition of this guide, published when the new permanent display of the National Gallery collections opened in the museum's renovated venue. The Museum was celebrating its centennial and welcoming the new century with optimism, having garnered the interest of the general public and organized major exhibitions. More than five million visitors have come to the museum during the past two decades, including many young people and children. The educational organization and display of the collection formed the basis for writing this guide, which proved its usefulness by accompanying thousands of visitors and serving as academic reference to numerous students of art history.

If the first edition coincided with the permanent collection display in the renovated venue of the former National Gallery, this, third, edition heralds the beginning of work for the new Gallery. The Museum is more than doubling its size by adding 11,020 m² to the existing 9,500 m² and adding to the expanded exhibition, storage and functional areas everything required for the museum to serve its multiple roles: up-to-date laboratories, a library, an auditorium, an educational programme venue, a café, a restaurant, a shop. The project, which gives a contemporary, dynamic and desirable look to the building, was designed by Architectoniki Ltd, C. Panoussakis & Associates, D. Vassilopoulos & Associates, E.E. Lontos & Associates and is funded by NSRF, as well as by a generous sponsorship by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, which has been a firm supporter of the National Gallery in recent years. The Maria Tsakos Foundation sponsored the preliminary studies, produced by the original architects of the building, P. & K. Mylonas and D. Fatouros.

Aiming to expand its educational reach to regional Greece, in addition to the activities in its main Athens venue, the National Gallery added two more annexes to the already existing Koumantareios Gallery in Sparta: the Corfu Annexe at Kato Korakiana, in 1993, and the Nafplio Annexe, in 2004. The Nafplio Annexe is housed in a listed neoclassical building, kindly provided by the Municipality of Nafplio, on the initiative of the Chairman of the National Gallery's Board, Apostolos Botsos, Honorary Chairman of the Greek

Court of Audit; the building was renovated and outfitted thanks to a donation by the Onassis Foundation. The National Glyptothèque also opened at Hellenic Army Park, Goudi, in Athens. Modern-Greek sculpture is now housed in the beautifully refurbished former royal stables; an open-air sculpture exhibition has also been set up in the park. The permanent collection display at the National Glyptothèque was funded by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

The National Gallery was founded in 1900, its first director being the painter Georgios Iakovidis, director of the School of Arts, and the first nucleus of its collections the paintings that had been donated to the National Technical University for educational purposes. Today, the National Gallery has approximately 20,000 works in its collections, starting with Domenicos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) and the Cretan School of post-Byzantine art, embracing the School of the Ionian Islands as well, but the painting, sculpture and engraving of modern Greek art from Independence to the present making up the lion's share of its collections. The National Gallery also plays host to the renowned Euripidis Koutlidis Collection. After an agreement recently reached between the two foundations, the paintings in the Koutlidis Collection will be exhibited along with the works of the National Gallery, while in honor of the collector, the rooms dedicated to the 19th century will bear his name.

The guide to the new presentation of the permanent collections is intended to furnish the visitor with a systematic tool, which will allow him or her to navigate through four centuries of Greek art in an educational and pleasant manner, following the stages of its development and the historical circumstances under which it came into being.

It is precisely these historical circumstances that prevented Greek art from experiencing the smooth organic development to be observed in the other European states. The history of modern Greek art was born and came to maturity along with the modern Greek state, after the War of Independence. The only artistic traditions that were kept alive throughout the centuries-long Turkish occupation, that is post-Byzantine religious painting and folk art, were not able to constitute the starting point for the creation of a new national school of official art. Greek artists would seek their precepts in advanced European states and foreign schools, while a School of Arts had already been founded in Greece by December 1836. In the beginning, pre-

cepts were received from many countries (Italy, France, Germany). Then because of Bavarian domination and King Othon, there was a turn toward Munich, which would almost exclusively dominate 19th century artistic life as a center of post-graduate education for Greek artists. The academicism of Munich determined the style of 19th century Greek painting. Nevertheless, a number of painters also trained in other countries, but they were not able to free Greek art from its academicism, due primarily to the horizon of expectation of a public lacking adequate aesthetic education.

As a systematic principle both for the presentation of the works in the rooms and for the compilation of the guide, we took into account the immediate expressive and functional needs art was called on to fulfill in the new society and the new state. The priorities determine the principal forms of art. Hence during the reign of King Othon (1832- 1862), we can see that the leading role was played by historical scenes whose main aim was the commemoration and idealization of the Greek War of Independence. This dominant thematic category, represented by Theodoros Vryzakis, son of a victim of that War, was followed by early Greek portraits. Through this thematic unity we see an image of a rising bourgeois class being actively promoted, with obvious traces of its rural origins both in the attire of the figures and the style of depiction. *Early Greek landscape painting* had its source in the romantic image created by travellers and offers us a Greece inhabited by the ruins of its glorious past, bathed in the eternal golden twilight of historical time.

The end of Bavarian political domination with the dethronement of King Othon (1862) was followed by a new form of Bavarian domination, cultural this time, as the forestage of artistic life was now commanded by the great teachers of the School of Munich: Nikephoros Lytras, Nikolaos Gysis (who would distinguish himself as a professor at the Academy of Munich), Georgios Iakovidis, Konstantinos Volanakis, Polychronis Lembesis, Symeon Savidis and others. A mature bourgeois class now sets the rules for artistic creation. The place of historical scenes was now taken by *genre painting*, in its various nuances (*Orientalism*, for example) and the school from which it drew its inspiration (Munich primarily, but Paris as well). Genre painting depicted, in an idealized way, the manners and customs of the Greek people. *Mature bourgeois portraits* differed from the earlier form in style, ethos, size and deployed codes. It was an emblematic image of a new prosperous bourgeois class.

New kinds of subjects express the wealth, the material pleasures, and voluptuousness (*still life, the nude*), while realistic landscapes and *plein air* studies presage Impressionism, which was already the dominant form in Paris. This is where one finds the great seascape painters (Volanakis, Chatzis, Altamouras) and the first Greek impressionists (Savidis, Pantazis).

With the entry into the 20th century, the turn noted in political life and the creation of a public more open to art, the first true watershed in the history of modern Greek painting is observed. Two painters from the Greek diaspora, Konstantinos Parthenis from Alexandria, who studied in Vienna and Paris, and Konstantinos Maleas from Constantinople, who also studied in the City of Light, would be the bearers of Spring to modern Greek art, creating the first Greek *plein air* painting. The aesthetic problem faced by this generation had been formulated at the beginning of the century by Periklis Yannopoulos in his treatise *Η Ελληνική Γραμμή* (*The Greek Line*). The duty of Greek painters was to seek out the painting ideogram of the ethereal Greek light, which dematerializes the landscape and lends it ineffable spirituality. Maleas, Parthenis, Michalis Oikonomou, Spyros Papaloukas and Nikolaos Lytras would respond to this exhortation, creating the first genuine Greek *plein air* painting, presented in a post-impressionist style, fluctuating between Fauve and the Nabis.

The Asia Minor Disaster of 1922 is what would define in Greece the period between the wars and created the climate which interprets the new turn in art: a gradual shift from *plein airism* to anthropocentrism and from the image which springs from the senses to a more intellectual, inward image. These tendencies would come to maturity and determine the quests of the so-called Generation of the Thirties. The turn toward tradition was the battle-cry during the period between the wars in many European countries (Italy, France, Germany). In Greece, the driving force behind this return to tradition was Fotis Kontoglou, from Ayvalik in Asia Minor, who saw his homeland lost forever in 1922. Kontoglou preached a return to Byzantium. And he was the only true-blue "frontiersman" of that tradition. All the other representatives of the Generation of the Thirties, both older and younger, wanted to give tradition a new reading under the light of modern art.

Parthenis was inspired by Byzantium but also by European sym-


bolism, while during the Thirties his compositions were schematized and based on cubist models. Yannis Tsarouchis and Diamantis Diamantopoulos combined the teachings of Matisse with the simplicity and clarity of folk art. Nikos Engonopoulos found a way to reconcile Byzantium with the metaphysical painting of de Chirico. Chatzikyriakos-Ghika created a hellenotropic and phototropic cubism. Papaloukas took precepts by the color and the organization of the composition to be found in Byzantine art. A hallmark common to all of them was a distancing from perception and the quest for an ideological, intellectually refined image. The only genuine expressionist was Giorgos Bouzianis who studied in Germany during the time when the most characteristic expressionist currents were being developed there.

The immediate post-war generation was, with only a few exceptions, anthropocentric and dedicated to the great models established by the Generation of the Thirties. Among those who were moulded within the climate of the Generation of the Thirties, Yannis Moralis passed on from the austere portraits of his youth to funereal and nuptial scenes: female figures are depicted in contemplative and disciplined poses, which are inscribed in strict geometrical shapes. They are thus transformed into symbols of the mortal fate of human beings. Abstraction, schematization and a limited color gamut based on those used by the ancient Greek painter Polygnotos intensify the sensation of calm melancholy which is inspired by Moralis' paintings, just like the ancient *stelae* which are their remote models.

The Fifties brought an end to the straggling survivals of the hellenocentric speculations of the Generation of the Thirties, establishing in Greece Abstraction as well, which had experienced a resurgence in Europe and America in the form of Lyrical Abstraction and Abstract Expressionism. Henceforth, Greek painting would march in step with international quests, without, however, losing its own local specialness. Moreover, it is worth noting that a powerful figurative current, which incorporates the conquests of modernism without rejecting the image, walks hand in hand with the avant-garde currents in Greece.

Athens, 2013

Marina Lambraki-Plaka
Professor of History of Art
Director of the National Gallery



ΕΘΝΙΚΗ ΠΙΝΑΚΟΘΗΚΗ
ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟΝ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΣΟΥΤΖΟΥ
ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΣΥΡΙΛΙΑΝ ΚΟΥΤΑΙΔΗ

El Greco

FROM THE "PANTECHNION" TO THE FOUNDING OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY

The Museums, in their present-day form, are a creation of the 19th century and their architectural realization became a priority during that period, fervently embraced by kings and princes. Major architects were called on to design them, based on the older and unrealized idealistic studies and theoretical views of scholars. The largest European museums were being built during that period and, as they were considered the focal point of all the arts, distinguished sculptors and painters undertook their ornamentation.

This was also an important period for Greece, which had become an object of general interest through the Greek War of Independence and the creation of the new Greek state, with the historic town of Athens as its capital. Munich which, in accordance with the directives issued by King Ludwig I, aspired to be Athens on the river Isar, formed indissoluble links with it, because of the close bonds of kinship between the two royal houses. Many institutions were to spread out from this town, among them the idea for the founding of a museum. Already by the time of the Regency in 1833, a decree had been issued in Greek and German outlining the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, to which in paragraph VII was entrusted, "progress in the arts, the establishment of art schools and collections, and the creation of Fine Arts, the preparation for excavations and proclamation of lost masterpieces of art, and care taken for the safeguarding of what still exists and vigilance so these works are not exported from the realm".

This paragraph is impressive for its concern for the formation of collections, and it was followed only a year later, on May 10/22, 1834, by the issuing of a law, "concerning scientific and technological collections, and concerning the discovery and preservation of antiquities and their use", which was based on the legislation in force at the Vatican in regard to the antiquities of Rome. In its generality it makes reference to many intellectual foundations, but also mentions the erection of a Gallery for the collection of prints, paintings and engravings. Two years later, in 1836, the drawing up of a plan for a Museum on the southwest side of the city was assigned to Ludwig I of Bavaria's architect, Leo von Klenze, who

had already built the Glyptothek and the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. Klenze gave this museum the name "Pantechnion" and it was comprised of three buildings of different styles and heights, of which the threestorey middle structure, which morphologically bore a close relation to the Alte Pinakothek of Munich, was destined to house paintings, drawings and engravings, to be collected in the future, as well as a School of Fine Arts. The remaining two sections would be dedicated to archaeological collections. Klenze's design for this complex structure was never executed, perhaps from a lack of funds or from the fact that Klenze ceased to head the architectural works program of King Ludwig, even in Munich.

Furthermore, the collection that was to be housed in the museum did not exist; the first attempt to create it came at the initiative of the Director of the National Technical University of Athens, F. Zentner, who in 1840 transferred to it all the works that had been amassed at the Ministry of the Interior and on Aegina by the former Governor of Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias. In 1878 the Gallery at the National Technical University opened, containing 117 paintings by Greek and foreign artists, of which 44 belonged to the collections of the University of Athens, including the works donated by Stephanos Xenos. In an article in the magazine *Εστία* it is noted that these works came from donations and the desire is expressed to stimulate Greek artists as well as Greek collectors abroad to enrich the Gallery with paintings in their possession. So it is obvious that the newly constituted state depended for the collection of cultural goods on benefactors and patricians, who through constant contributions played a leading role in the creation of our National Gallery. In 1896 Alexandros Soutzos (1839-1895), lawyer and art devotee, who had studied in Athens and Paris and was a founding member of the society, "Friends of the People", left all of his movable effects and real estate, as well as his collection of art, for the creation of a museum of painting. This noble donation created the impression that soon the capital would acquire its new Gallery.

A year later, on September 18, 1897, a royal decree was issued which referred to the founding of a "Museum of Fine Arts", but like the law of 1834 this decree was never applied in practice. In essence, the National Gallery only began to function with the passage of a law on April 10, 1900 which was concerned with the position of trustee for the foundation and the passage of another law, which



View of the exhibition
of the collections of
the National Gallery at
the National Technical
University of Athens

enacted the rules and regulations related to this on June 28 of the same year. In the execution of these laws the painter Georgios Iakovidis was summoned from Germany to assume the position of Trustee and on July 28, 1900, he received from the Director of the National Technical University, Anastasios Theophilas, 258 works of art which belonged to the collections of the National Technical University and the University of Athens. Publications of the period mention that Iakovidis put on display only 59 of these works, exhibiting them in the small spaces of the main building of the National Technical University where, as we know, the Gallery had always been. In 1901, 107 works of art in the Alexandros Soutzos donation were added to the collections of the National Gallery. In 1909 and 1910 the separation of the National Gallery from the National Technical University was finalized by law. In 1911 the Administrative Committee of the estate bequeathed by Georgios Averoff handed over the 76 paintings in his private collection, which had been ceded to the Foundation in 1898 and received in 1901, while at the same time the Gallery acquired the right to purchase from the bequest works of art to enrich its collections.

At the same time important donations had begun to be made, such as those from Theodoros and Aikaterini Rodokanaki (1904, 1907, 1909, total of 122 works), Grigorios Maraslis (1907, 30 works),

FROM THE "PANTECHNION" TO THE FOUNDING
OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY



The plot of land finally ceded to the National Gallery in the triangle between Vasilissis Sofias, Michalakopoulou and Vasileos Konstantinou streets for the erection of its building as a replacement for the barracks in the field on Vasilissis Sofias and Rizari streets

The first section of the National Gallery just before its completion in 1968

Dimitrios Vikelas (1908, 10 works), Roxanne Kozaki-Typaldou (1909, 19 works); these continued in subsequent years at an undiminished rate without it being possible to refer here to the long catalogue of donors; irregardless of the number of works donated, they were all equally important in quality and history. Thus one comes to realize that, in addition to statutes and decrees, the conditions which assisted in the maturation of the idea of covering the lack of a museum of the visual arts were brought about by the development of a society of merchants, scholars and artisans who were intellectually grounded on western European cultural models, but not any less by the sculptors and painters - the most eminent of whom was Nikephoros Lytras - who played such an important role in the country's social and cultural life with exhibitions of paintings and sculpture, funeral monuments and statues.

Foreign critics and art historians also began to become interested in the content of the newly founded Gallery. The associate director of the Museum of Bremen, Wadmann visited it with the intention of judging the quality of its works and in February 1911 he presented his views at "Parnassos", while an article entitled "Die Athenische Bildergalerie" was published in 1912 in the art journal *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*. During that same year the Frenchman Jean Leune also became involved with the works at the National Gallery in his article entitled "Un nouveau Grand Musée européen. La Pinacothèque d'Athènes". But the true consolidation and development of the Museum is owed to its merging in 1954 with the bequest of Alexandros Soutzos from which it took its double name.



Not only did the legislative regulation of its operations require many years, but the erection of the building where it would be housed has been an equally long-term affair. The subject was always newsworthy and many places were proposed as its site, such as in the National Technical University, the "Pedio tou Areos", the English Cemetery of the time, the Ordnance barracks on Kifisias St, and elsewhere. Despite all that, by 1939 none of these plans had been carried out; at that time because of the outbreak of the Italian-Greek war, the exhibition at the National Technical University was also closed and the works taken to the Archaeological Museum for safekeeping.

After the war the National Gallery was temporarily housed at the "Casa d'Italia" and then at the barracks on the corner of Rizari and Vasilissis Sofias Sts. Finally, in 1969, the first section of the present-day edifice, which had its cornerstone laid amid general celebration on November 26, 1964, opened at its present location in the triangle between Michalakopoulou, Vasileos Konstantinou and Vasileos Alexandrou Sts. In 1976 the second wing of the building complex was completed. The National Gallery is today the Museum of the History of Modern Greek Art, but also contains works of western European painters, engravings by both Greek and foreign artists and sculptures. Its spaces also house, in addition to the permanent collections, temporary exhibitions, other artistic events and it aspires to permanent contact with the public.

The National Gallery upon its completion in 1976

View of the first exhibition of the permanent collections of the National Gallery after the building's completion in 1976

Dr. Nelly Missirli
Curator at the National Gallery



ART AND IDEOLOGY IN MODERN GREECE

*I awoke with this marble head in my hands
which makes my elbows ache and I don't know where to
set it down.*

*It was falling into the dream as I was coming out of the dream
and thus our lives were joined and it will be very hard to
separate them.*

George Seferis
From *Μυθιστόρημα Γ'*

Hellenism awoke from the long lethargy of Turkish enslavement with a marble head in its hands. A marble head that did not belong to a genuine ancient statue. Was it meant to be ancient or neoclassical? It was simply a fake. We did not choose it in full awareness, we did not love it. Foreigners merely placed it in our hands. And it still makes our elbows ache. The lines of George Seferis acquire a sudden dramatic urgency when they are linked to the historical fortunes of Greece. The quest for a past that could be used as a historical and ideological support in the new state, appeared to be one of the most pressing concerns for this fledgling kingdom. This choice did not express, could not express the free volition of the Greeks. It was imposed by historical circumstances. The quest for models in the past presupposes a people with some political maturity. A people that looks to the past for its models of rejuvenation. Its choices must be dictated by the needs of the present and the future. Only then is a dialogue with instructive models productive and fruitful. Greeks belonged to a typical traditional society and emerged bloodied by a long period of servitude and an unfair struggle. Thus they did not meet any of the conditions which guarantee free choice.

But just what were these historical circumstances which determined the fateful choices? The London Protocol, which was signed in 1832 by the representatives of the Great Powers, made young

Nikolaos Gysis
**The Liberal Arts
and their Spirits**
[1878-1880]
National Gallery
and Alexandros
Soutzos Museum
Collection of the
E. Koutlidis Foundation
(detail)



Joseph Stieler
King Othon, 1832
 Athens, Benaki Museum

Othon I, the son of Ludwig I of Bavaria, King of the Greeks. Ludwig was a fanatic Philhellene and an ardent devotee of antiquity. During his reign, Munich, his capital, was transformed into "Athens on the Isar river" with the heavy neoclassical architecture which still characterizes it today. Thus, the choice of ancestors, the choice of a historical past, one of the first and most urgent concerns of the new state, was left to the whim of historical circumstances. For a people with a four thousand year old history, this was not a small dilemma. The past best suited to the heroic inhabitants of modern Greece was classical antiquity. And the language deemed best suited to express it *Katharevousa*, an artificial neo-Attic dialect. The tragedy of linguistic discord had already begun.

In 1834 the capital was shifted from Nauplio to Athens. In this manner, the ideological choice of the classical past received festive sanction. It was certainly not by chance that the royal palaces were initially designed to be built on the Acropolis itself, on this holy rock on which had once risen the palace of Erechtheus, a mythical King of Athens.



Gottlieb Bodmer
**Ceremonial Portrait
 of King Ludwig I
 of Bavaria**
 1835-1837
 Athens, Museum
 of the Ethnological and
 Historical Society

Let us turn back to the Athens of 1834. The picture that emerges from the idealized lithographs and wood carvings done by the travellers and philhellenes of the time, is not all that picturesque. Grass covered ruins sit cheek by jowl with Turkish brick houses. The treacherous roads were full of lime pits, whose number kept increasing with all the construction; add to that all the herds grazing on the sparse grass on the hills and vacant lots. There were no more than 10,000 inhabitants.

Two years after the capital was transferred to Athens, in December 1836, the first School of Arts was founded. In the beginning, it was a School of Architecture, which is easy to understand given the fever of construction. Foreign architects, mainly Bavarian, were drawing up the plans for the new capital. Palaces, public buildings, and official residences were being hurriedly erected. Greece had a need of architects, stone-cutters, decorators, artisans. But above all else it needed – as strange as it may seem – painters and sculptors. Because how can the amazing development of the "School of Arts" be otherwise explained? In 1843, the year the Greek Constitution was ceded by the king, a Royal decree divided the school into three sections, giving priority to the visual arts. The decree revealed



the ideological intentions of the state and foreshadowed the neo-classical direction the school would take: "In appreciation of historical remembrances which are connected to Greece in particular..." (31 December 1836). The School of Fine Arts had a five year course of study and was the only one promoted to a higher rank. It had 635 students in 1844-45. The same year the "Society of Fine Arts" was founded under the protection of King Othon with Queen Amalia as President and Prime Minister Kolettis serving as Vice-President. Its members included many renowned veterans of the Greek War of Independence.

The newspaper *Αιών* was right when it exclaimed: "Greece has a great need of artists! This multifaceted institution promises to bear the greatest fruit..."

What was the role of art in the fledgling kingdom? In the state which had emerged, bloodied and destitute from an unfair, lengthy and bloody struggle for independence? As strange as it may seem to us now, art in this young kingdom was considered a prime necessity. Painters and sculptors were as indispensable as skilled civil servants. The artist was urgently called upon to present a picture of this new society. A picture more ideological than real. A picture which would promote ideals, express aspirations and give a tangible form to the ideology of the new state and its ruling class. Art had regained its primal function. Its role was to influence the shape of this new society.

But just what kind of society are we talking about? What one found here was a heterogeneous mosaic. On the one side, there were the palace and the Bavarians. On the other, the Phanariots, who were

Unknown

Erechtheion

Athens, private collection

Johann Michael II

Wittmer

View of Athens

from Ilissos, 1833

Vouros - Eutaxias Museum –

Of the City of Athens



Theophil Hansen
**The Academy,
 the University and
 the National Library**
 1885
 Vienna, Kupferstichkabinett
 der Akademie der
 Bildenden Künste

essential to the government because they alone were literate. Raised and educated abroad, in the west, conservative, supporters of *Katharevousa*. A true priesthood. Alongside them were the veterans of the War of Independence and the Captains who were also trying to play a role in the fortunes of free Greece. To redeem their blood and wounds with offices, titles, medals and pensions. Art addressed itself to this public. Everyone looked to it for assistance in their ideological promotion and the securing of their demands. This public is the one that determined the physiognomy of modern Greek art during its genesis, not Munich or the other artistic centers which were to illuminate and guide it.

At the same moment the School of Fine Arts was being founded in Athens, Romanticism was triumphing in Paris under Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863). The aesthetic problem occupying the theoreticians of the time was the autonomy of art, in other words "l'art pour l'art" ("art for art's sake"). "Art for art's sake", the catch-phrase that was first formulated in 1833 by Gustave Planche and strongly supported by Théophile Gautier, was a little later on to be fanatical-ly opposed by the adherents of realism. Art for the Realists looked social reality square in the eyes and helped bring its problems to awareness and aspired be used as an ideological instrument for social change. Art needed to be committed. For realism the theoretical framework was linked to the social theories which had developed in France just before the middle of the 19th century. Marx's Communist Manifesto circulated in 1848, a year marked by revolutionary uprisings and the establishment of realism by Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). These social theories were unquestionably related to the crisis created by the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century and the social realignments which followed it.

But let us return to Greece: this small country, territorially reduced, with a weak economy based on agriculture, dependent and ruled

by foreigners, lacerated and with no fixed class structure. Furthermore, this class ambiguity – sociologists would now call it class mobility – has never ceased to weigh, as a historical destiny, on the modern Greek, even today, explaining the country's ideological fluidity as well. From this historical perspective, the harsh criticism levelled against Munich for its "calamitous" role it played in the artistic life of the free Greek state, appears excessive, without basis, if not outright comical. Let us not forget that avant-garde means revolution. And that revolution presupposes a long tradition, which has created a sclerotic and asphyxiating establishment which the revolution is turning against.

But let us look at things more closely. In architecture, Neoclassicism was effortlessly transplanted, thrived and in many cases surpassed its European models with the salutary effect of having authentic classical monuments right at hand. In painting and sculpture a provincial academicism prevailed, able to live under the same roof with any kind of stylistic source. When we say "academicism" we mean a conservative art, based on the rules of the Academy; a school art, based on *Katharevousa*. The Academy, hostile to all innovation, was to be the historical fate of Greek painting in the 19th century, just as *Katharevousa* was to be the historical fate of the language of the new state. An ideological choice. Not an alternative, but teleological historically.

In Greece academicism was stylistically uniform, and brought all the various currents to the same level. Because, in addition to the historical schemas, which would have Munich as the unique "lighthouse" of modern Greek art, other information and precepts come from practically everywhere: Pierre Bonirote (1811-1892), the first professor at the School of Arts, was a student of Ingres (1780-1867). The Teacher of Neoclassicism himself sent him to Greece in response to the plea of the Duchess of Placenza.

The Margaritis brothers were among the first Greek professors at the School of Arts. Philippos Margaritis (1810-1892) introduced a calligraphic form of neoclassicism from Italy (*The Muse Euterpe*). Georgios (1814-1884) studied in Italy and Paris. *Karaiskakis Advancing on the Acropolis* follows romantic models. Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) was popularized and became an academician.



Georgios Margaritis
Georgios Karaiskakis
Mounted, Charges
against the Acropolis,
 [1844]

National Gallery and
 Alexandros Soutzos Museum
 Collection of the E. Koutlidis
 Foundation

Théodore Géricault
The Infidel Ghiaour
 1823
 Malibu, Paul Getty
 Museum



The Veteran Nikolaos
 Tzavelas (1790-1872)

The Margaritis brothers would also open the first photography studio in Athens. As one found everywhere in the world, painters in Greece also hurried to adopt the new means for the mechanical reproduction of reality, so they would not be left without a profession by the rapid advance of the technology of the image. The first photographs of the veterans of the War of Independence are very important. The legendary heroes of 1821 have been transformed into *fustanella* (traditional white, pleated kilts worn by Greek men) wearing members of bourgeoisie. They retain the national costume, of course, as a reminder of the role they played in the War of Independence. But the well-pressed *fustanella* bore no relationship to the dirty and bloody uniform of the Klephts and Armatoles. The new garments symbolize the social realignments and the demands of the veterans of the War of Independence.

So Theodoros Vryzakis (1819-1878), the first Greek graduate of the Academy of Munich and the principal representative of historical painting, is not to be blamed if he beautified the War of Independence, if he "ironed" and bleached the fighters' *fustanellas*. Historical painting, the official painting of the new kingdom, praised, extolled, idealized and promoted the War of Independence, using its image for ideological propaganda and its claims. The monumental size of the works with historical subjects inspired by the Greek War of Independence confirms both their official use and their ideological role.

On 15 September 1844, the Greek Prime Minister Ioannis Kolettis visited the Margaritis brothers at their studio and ordered a "large

picture" of Karaiskakis for his office. "Our history needs to be written," he told them. "If you so desire you can write it and give it life through your pictures. Our heroes die and in vain their children ask for their pictures, in vain our descendants look for the inspiration of heroism and patriotism in their ethos. So work, because Greece requires its historical gallery. We do not, of course, make a pretence of producing works on a par with the French and Italians, because our material means are of inferior quality and we are at the beginning of our cultivation. But we have ancestral memories as well..." (News. *Αιών*, 23/9/1844).



Vryzakis' compositions were faithful to the models of the academic historical romanticism of the German school showing all the zeal and calligraphic consistency of a proselytised provincial. An analogous development can be observed in literature. The other side of historical painting is found in the historical novel (as typified by Panayiotis and Alexandros Soutzos, Alexandros Rangavis, Stephanos Xenos, Konstantinos Ramfos, Spyridon Zambelios and others) where similar

Theodoros Vryzakis
The Reception of Lord Byron at Missolonghi
 1861
 National Gallery and
 Alexandros Soutzos Museum

conventions and similar ideological exploitation of the War of Independence can be seen.

The rhetorical, large-spirited, neo-Renaissance painting of the Germans Ludwig Thiersch (1825-1909), Karl Raal (1812-1865) and others who worked on the decoration of the Palace, the University and other monumental buildings was not destined to find followers in Greece or to create a school. Another proof is that it was not the immediate models, which determined the style of a national painting, but its urgent expressive needs, its possibilities, its cultural level, the use and the ideological purpose of the image. In short, what today would be characterized as the "reception" of the work of art.

The criticism exercised on the academicism of modern Greek art of the 19th century had several nuances, determined by the ideological position of the historians themselves. One block of critics deplored the fate of Greek art which, instead of being enlightened by the European avant-garde of Paris, was darkened by the gloom of Munich.



Karl Krazeisen
General Makriyannis
 National Gallery and
 Alexandros Soutzos
 Museum

The other, ideologically hostile to the West and its teachings, lamented the lost opportunity for Greek art to base itself on post-Byzantine and folk traditions. The degree to which these two hypotheses and proposals are anti-historical can be seen, I believe, from the review we have undertaken. The adherents of the second point of view usually point to an example which seems to strengthen their position: To the *Εικονογραφία του Αγώνα* (*The Illustration of the Greek War of Independence*) by General Makriyannis. Makriyannis, who learned to read and write just before he began to compose his *Απομνημονεύματα* (*Memoirs*), knew very well the ideological use and effectiveness of the image on a people who, for the most part, were still illiterate. That is why he decided to set forth his "truth" about the War of Independence in a series of pictures which he planned on later transferring to lithographs and distributing. The story surrounding the western style painter he called on to paint his pictures is well-known. They could not come to an agreement, the General did not like the pictures, he threw out the foreign painter and called on a veteran of the war. It appears that the elder painter was not Panayiotis Zographos but Dimitrios Zographos, as recent research has shown. His son, Panayiotis, was a student at the School of Arts, on a scholarship from Othon and assisted his father as he painted, under the



Dimitrios Zographos -
Ioannis Makriyannis
The Siege of Athens
Athens, Gennadius Library –
American School
of Classical Studies

strict guidance of Makriyannis, the 24 paintings, done over a three year period from 1836 to 1839. The pictures were initially painted on wood using the technique for icon painting (egg tempera) and later were transferred to pasteboard using the water color technique, in four series of copies. When the illustration was completed in 1839 Makriyannis gave a large meal to the officials and gave them the chance to admire the paintings which he had hung on the walls for the event. This appears was the first exhibition, the first unofficial painting Salon in free Greece. He then gave a series of copies to Othon and the ambassadors of the three Great Powers to take back to their leaders.

Together with the intact series given to Queen Victoria, which are kept in the Palace of Windsor, we have the good fortune to also possess the accompanying letters. The letter of Makriyannis to Queen Victoria is in the archives of the Foreign Office and was recently published. Several elements of it definitively undermine the ideological references to the example of unadulterated folk taste of Makriyannis. The General does not appear at all enthusiastic about the quality of the pictures, which he confesses unscrupulously that he did himself, neutralising the role of the "executors" of his thought. "The pictures ... are imperfectly and unskillfully painted because the tyranny of the Sultan only left us the power to paint like this but", he adds, "only a word from your Majesty could present them by the most perfect way of

painting." It is obvious. The ideological and aesthetic values of the ruling class had managed to corrupt the mind of even one of the purest representatives of the people.

Toward the middle of the 19th century the national ideology known by the name of the "Great Idea" began to be fashioned. The "Great Idea" embodied the chimeric dream Greeks had of reclaiming the lands which had once belonged to a greater Greece and which continued to be inhabited by a Greek population. The development of the national ideology in a new direction during the second half of the 19th century, strengthened the "Great Idea" by incorporating it. But just what was this new ideological turn? The exclusive reference to the classical past was now replaced by the ideology of the unbreakable cultural continuity of Hellenism. "To the idea of a return to the past is juxtaposed the discovery of the past in the present."

In this ideological context not only the Byzantine but folk civilization as well are re-evaluated. Thus the disciplines of Folklore and Linguistics were created. The controversy over the value of demotic Greek began around 1880. Starting in 1883 the competitions run by *Εστία* magazine established "ethography", in literature as well. As the studies of Mario Vitti have shown this literary "ethography" is as far removed from reality as genre painting. For yet one more time Realism reached Greece in the clothes of an academic.

The genre painting, which helped bring to awareness this new turn in our national ideology, was inspired by the customs of the Greek people and the life they lived in the countryside. The bourgeois class, which bought and enjoyed these paintings, now felt sure enough of itself to confess without hesitation to its village origins and to return to these roots nostalgically. This new social class was in favor of and perpetuated academicism. This is the style which guaranteed it "quality", "perfection" and "refinement", which differentiated it from the illiterate mass of people. This ruling bourgeois class with its conservative and *Katharevousa*-based education, mentality, and elegance, explains the academicism of Greek painting in the 19th century, and not the various artistic centers where it was taught.

We need nothing more than re-pose the question regarding artistic education, to see the common platitudes of our historical writing breaking down: if Greek artists had not taken refuge in the



Theodoros Rallis
Oriental Bath
 Metsovo, Averoff Art Gallery

Academy of Munich to study or do their post-graduate work, where would they have gone? To Paris you might reply. But in Paris, the School of Fine Arts was then the bastion of the most virulent form of academicism: the painting of the *pompier*s. In any case, quite a number of Greek artists did study in Paris such as Theodoros Rallis (1852-1909), Iakovos Rizos (1849-1926) and Nikolaos Xydias (1826-1909). Their painting is no less academic. It simply adopted the idiosyncratic themes of the *pompier*s, showing a particular inclination for Orientalist themes and to daring depictions. Their technique followed the sculptural photographic line of the French academics. Nevertheless, some of their less important works, in particular, testify to the influence of Impressionism.

The third generation of Greek painters was in Munich at the time a dynamic avant-garde had already begun to be created there. Kandinsky (1866-1944), Jawlensky (1864-1941) and Klee (1879-1940) studied at the same Munich Academy. But it is well-known that: one does not seek, does not find and does not take from the others any more than he is prepared to take. Two of the most talented representatives of the School of Munich, Nikephoros Lytras (1832-1904) and Nikolaos Gysis (1842-1901) were in Paris in 1876 at the time of the second group exhibition of Impressionists. Nevertheless, they did



Paul-Louis Bouchard
After the Bath, [1894]
 Private collection

Nikolaos Gysis
**The Liberal Arts
and their Spirits**
[1878-1880]
National Gallery and
Alexandros Soutzos Museum
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation



not find anything of interest in the City of Light and hastened to return to Munich, as they themselves wrote.

But let us make amends for the injustice of history. Thirty years were enough for Greek painting to reach maturity. The painters of the third generation of the School of Munich, as well as other fellow artists, who had studied at other European centers, not only had no reason to envy the academic painters of Europe, but were perhaps their superiors. Especially if they were compared with the *pompier*s of Paris. The quality of their painting, the certainty of the composition, the sensitivity to color were not only the only virtues that justify this critical judgement. What distinguished them above all else was a *moral health* which was translated into *aesthetic virtue*. Because the society they expressed and to which they addressed themselves had no relationship to the corrupt and sophistic bourgeoisie of the Second Empire of Napoleon III, which was experiencing a deep crisis. The painters Nikephoros Lytras, Nikolaos Gysis, who was an eminent professor at the Munich Academy, Georgios Iakovidis (1853-1932), and the seascape painter Konstantinos Volanakis (1837-1907) had all done many noteworthy works, several of which were masterpieces. Alongside them could be placed quite a number of other painters who represented a number of tendencies, such as Nikolaos Kounelakis (1829-1869), Polychronis Lembesis (1849-1913), Symeon Savidis (1859-1927) and Periklis

Pantazis (1849-1884), who was working in Brussels and is to be numbered among the innovator-painters who introduced Impressionism to Belgium. But this occurred when Impressionism had already completed the revitalization of the language of painting and its descendants had prepared the modern art revolution.

With the rejuvenation of political life and the emergence on the forestage of the great Cretan politician Eleftherios Venizelos, coupled with the later victories in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the national ideology of Hellenism was enriched with new nuances. Periklis Yannopoulos (1869-1910) supplied a new definition for the aesthetic values which were embodied in the idea of Hellenism, while the poet Angelos Sikelianos (1884-1951) extolled the universal dimension of Greece in his poetry. At the beginning of the century the conditions were ripe for renewal. The public, even though still limited, was now in a position to understand and accept new currents. The first art galleries were created at that time. The wind of renewal was blowing from everywhere, from Paris and Munich as occurred a little later with the work of the superb and so very modern Nikolaos Lytras (1883-1927).

At the beginning of the century, the sought-for revitalization of Greek painting was brought about by two Greeks from the diaspora: the Alexandrian Konstantinos Parthenis (1878-1967) and the Constantinopolitan Konstantinos Maleas (1879-1928). Their education, the cosmopolitan surroundings of the cities they were born in, and their studies in Europe, had prepared them to fulfill this role. A genuine *plein air* painting with free brushstrokes and pure colors finally ousted the Academy. Greek *plein air* painting differed from Impressionism, which was not able to handle the unique quality of Mediterranean light. This particular quality, the "spirituality" of Greek light and Greek nature in general, Periklis Yannopoulos endeavored to define with nationalistic elation and some confusion in the choices and examples he summoned up in *Η Ελληνική Γραμμή (The Greek Line)*, an essay published in 1904, which exercised a great influence on artistic circles.

Konstantinos Maleas, who studied in Paris from 1901 to 1908, remained faithful to post-impressionistic currents. The arabesques of Art Nouveau, the Symbolists and the Nabis, influenced the compositional structure of his beautiful Greek landscapes, so full of rhythm. A

Konstantinos Maleas
Lavrio, c. 1918-1920
National Gallery and
Alexandros Soutzos Museum



much greater influence was exercised on Greek art by Konstantinos Parthenis, who studied in Vienna and then Paris (1909-1911). The Viennese Sezession and French Symbolism finally imposed themselves setting aside the early *plein air* quests of his work. But these influences were Hellenized. His love of allegory, mythology and religious themes, his idealism, his schematic forms, inspired to some degree by Byzantium, the luminosity and transparency of his tones, his "immaterial" technique, and his spirituality were all recognized as elements of identity of an art that was the epitome of what was Greek. The principles of Periklis Yannopoulos found their confirmation in Parthenis.

The defeat of the Greeks in Asia Minor, the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922, the annihilation of the ancient cradles of civilization in Ionia, the uprooting of one and half million Greeks, who took to the road as refugees bringing their drama to their mother Greece, were the events which traumatically marked the consciousness of the Greeks. From the bitterness and the defeatism would be born, like a natural reaction, a new need for national self-awareness and self-assurance.

The return to the sources, the study of the immediate and the more recent forms of traditional culture, the discovery of naïf artistic painters and musicians were all set down and interpreted in this climate. The refugees from Asia Minor made an important contribution to this movement. For them, tradition was an existential truth, a way of survival, because it confirmed their ethnic identity. Uprooted and

embittered, they stubbornly adhered to the values which guaranteed memory and continuity.

The artist who was destined to embody this return to the sources, not only through his painting, but also through his marvelous tales, where the legends of the East were given life, was Fotis Kontoglou (1896-1965), from Ayvalik in Asia Minor. Kontoglou consciously rejected the doctrines of the Parisian avant-garde, which he knew very well (he was in Paris from 1915 to 1919), and sought his inspiration in Byzantium and his eastern roots. As both teacher and guide, Kontoglou played a leading role for an entire generation of artists who were to define the features of Greek art. Among his friends, who along with him called for a return to tradition, was the important architect Dimitrios Pikionis (1887-1968). In his works, tradition was creatively wed to the technical and aesthetic demands of modern architecture.



Fotis Kontoglou
Self-Portrait
Athens, private collection



Konstantinos Parthenis
The Slope, 1908
National Gallery and
Alexandros Soutzos Museum

A dialogue with tradition also lay at the center of the preoccupations of another important painter: Spyros Papaloukas (1892-1957), a close friend of Kontoglou. These two artists followed the same path, having pursued the same studies in Athens and Paris. But their attitude to tradition differed radically. Papaloukas believed that only when one starts out with the urgent expressive needs of the present and the preoccupation of modern art, can one make creative use of tradition, comprehend it and draw up useful and living precepts from it. The superb landscapes of Papaloukas from Mt. Athos and Mytilene, as well as the more spiritual works of his mature years authenticate and justify his choice.

Papaloukas' attitude toward tradition was the creative motivation behind, and the basic aesthetic problem of the "Generation of the Thirties". The Nobel prize winning poet Odysseas Elytis and leading representative of this revitalizing generation would formulate the following axiomatic creed: "A work of art, the deeper it plunges, as an essence, into the roots and the sources of a specific country, and at the same time the better adapted it is as a form to the general aes-



Spyros Papaloukas
**Hermitages on
Mount Athos, 1924**
Athens, private collection

thetic spirit of an era, the better chance it has of winning the trophy of international interest and the more effectively it will stand up to the wear and tear of time... Just such a point of view, progressively freed from superfluous fears, helped "moderns" look at their own countries with a clearer eye and turned their attention to the values of the East, neglected until then" (O. Elytis, *Ανοιχτά Χαρτιά*, [*Cards on the Table*], Athens 1974, p. 388).

But just what was the "Generation of the Thirties"? This particular "generation" was first established as a literary term and a chronological context. During this decade a group of young writers, mainly poets but with a few prose writers as well, appeared at the center of Greek intellectual life; these writers were linked with the introduction of avant-garde movements into Greece and their conscious endeavor to politicize them and give them Greek citizenship: Seferis, Elytis, Engonopoulos and Embeirikos set the tone for this form of Greek modernism. The opening to Europe had been trumpeted on the eve of this decade by a young prose writer, G. Theotokas, in the pages of his essay *Το Ελεύθερο Πνεύμα* (*The Free Spirit*) (1929). The group's theoretical instrument was the Greek magazine *Νέα Γράμματα* (1935-1941), edited by its young critical apologist, Andreas Karantonis. Extending the use of the term to the visual arts was improper, for there was never any cohesive group with a common program and goals in that field. It would perhaps be more proper to seek such dominant values in the period between the two great wars. The Asia Minor Disaster, moreover, is a fateful landmark in the history of modern Greek art which the "Generation of the Thirties" did not treat. That is, whatever happened in the plastic arts during the Thirties was nothing more than the natural development of the ideological and plastic preoccupations determined by that fateful date: 1922.

In this climate of quest for genuine Greek sources of inspiration artists and intellectuals discovered the *Απομνημονεύματα* (*Memoirs*) of Makriyannis, the painter of *Εικονογραφία του Αγώνα* (*Illustration of the Greek War of Independence*) and the folk painter Theophilos (1867/1873-1934). The proof that these concerns went back further than the Thirties, is found in the fact that Seferis had "discovered" Makriyannis and his pure, efficacious Greek language by 1926, and the art critic Stratis Eleftheriadis (Tériade) had located

Theophilos Chatzimichael
Adam and Eve
c. 1930
National Gallery and
Alexandros Soutzos Museum



Theophilos in Lesbos five years before his death and had assisted him so that he could devote himself undistracted to his beloved painting. The harvest of these final years today constitutes the main bulk of the exhibits at the Theophilos Museum in Vareia, on Lesbos. With the further assistance of Tériade, the works of Theophilos were exhibited in Paris and enthusiastically received by famous artists such as the architect Le Corbusier and the art critic Maurice Raynal.

These folk models, Makriyannis and his painter and Theophilos, were also idealized and worshipped during the second half of the Thirties, the years of the Metaxas dictatorship. The avant-garde Greek magazine, *To Τρίτο Μάτι*, dedicated two pages to Makriyannis in January-March 1936, while *Νεοελληνικά Γράμματα* republished the *Απομνημονεύματα (Memoirs)* (1938) in installments. Makriyannis and Theophilos were frequently linked in the texts of the writers (Seferis, Elytis for example) and critics of the time. The same intellectual climate also explains the rekindling of interest in Periklis Yannopoulos and *Η Ελληνική Γραμμή (The Greek Line)*. The magazine *To Τρίτο Μάτι*, (vol. 2, 1936), republished an excerpt from the renowned text.

The painter who in the eyes of modern Greek criticism embodies the values of Greek art is Yannis Tsarouchis (1910-1989). A student of Parthenis at the Athens School of Fine Arts, he worked at the same time alongside Kontoglou for three years (1931-1934). Kontoglou

had created around himself the atmosphere of a monastic community. This young and exceptionally endowed student was initiated into the mysteries of Byzantine painting. In 1934, after he left Kontoglou, he painted, perhaps as a reaction, several post-cubist paintings but with surrealistic elements. At the same time, he discovered the charm of the Karaghiozis posters – which were painted by the artists of the shadow theater themselves, such as Eugenio Spatharis – and the plastic values of the work of Theophilos. His painting appears to contain all these influences creating a stylistic idiom which is strongly reminiscent of Matisse (1869-1954). Moreover, he himself would confess: "In 1937 I returned to Greece from Paris. The Greek sun, my eternal love for the Karaghiozis posters, for Theophilos, for the purity of Mediterranean painting, led me to a painting like that of Matisse, while I wanted to be like Courbet". Later, just before the war, Yannis Tsarouchis would turn toward the teachings of Hellenistic painting, the mosaic and the funeral paintings of Fayum.

Tsarouchis was not slow in understanding the common elements that connect the styles which had succeeded one another in the Mediterranean basin from the time of Greek vases until Byzantine art and finally the Renaissance. "For me" the artist stated in the same text*, "there are not styles hostile to one another: the eastern, and the western, the modern and the old... The one method is the eastern which is based on color and its harmonious combinations and in the recreation of forms, inevitably doing violence to perspective, and the other, the



Henri Matisse
Asia
Private collection



Yannis Tsarouchis
Young Man Reading the Newspaper
Ελληνικόν Μέλλον
1936
Athens, private collection



Fotis Kontoglou,
Yannis Tsarouchis and
Andreas Xyngopoulos
with the prior of the
Varlaam Monastery on
 Meteora in 1932

* See, "Τσαρούχη απολογία", mag. Ζυγός, vol.4, 1973, p.35

Greek or Hellenistic, which is basically the same as the eastern – harmony of lines, harmony of colors – but which also endeavors to render objectively, practically like a mirror, reality, that is, which respects perspective, more or less. These two styles are not separated by any great gap and in many painters are reconciled. I am not divided, but frequently I study these two unique potentials for the representation of reality separately". Tsarouchis approached the art of the Renaissance and felt it as a Greek, through its sources, through Hellenistic art. Thus, he did not observe any dichotomy in his choices and creation. Both of the directions belonged to the cultural heritage of the Greek. A similar starting point, and similar course, but with a different outcome can be seen in the classmate of Tsarouchis, Diamantis Diamantopoulos (1914-1995), another highly talented painter.

Among the students of Kontoglou it is worth examining Nikos Engonopoulos (1907-1985), the only painter in Greece, who could be considered to be a follower of Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978). The paintings of Engonopoulos were inspired not so much by de Chirico's metaphysical period as by his later style. His originality does not lie only in the mythical repertoire of his themes, but also in the stylistic relationships he retained both with Byzantine art and traditional painting.

Nikos Chatzikyriakos-Ghika (1906-1994), an early developing talent, was also a student of Parthenis. He is linked to his teacher by the luminosity of his tones and the spirituality with which his works are imbued. In 1922 he went to Paris where he studied literature and art. Although he was a student of the Greek engraver Galanis and the French painter Bissière, he was more deeply influenced by the post-cubist period of Picasso's painting. Chatzikyriakos-Ghika nevertheless managed to "Hellenize" cubism, transforming this intellectual expression into a kind of *plein air* painting. After his return from Paris in 1934, the artist worked together with the architect Pikionis, the painter Papaloukas, the writer Stratis Doukas and other intellectuals in the review *To Tpiro Mani* (1936-1937), the theoretical organ of the idea of the syncretism between traditional art and avant-garde currents.

The Metaxas military dictatorship was imposed on Greece in 1936. It is only natural for us to ask what position it took toward art, what the



Nikos Engonopoulos
Hermes Waiting
 1939
 Collection of
 Eleni Engonopoulou.
 On permanent loan to
 the National Gallery

official aesthetics of the dictatorship were and what cultural policy it followed. During that period the currents we described above had already been fashioned. The battle cry for a return to tradition was completely suited to the nationalistic ideology of autocratic totalitarianism. Mussolini had set the example with the favor he had shown the Novecento Group (its members were Funi, Oppi, Campigli and former Futurists, such as Carà, Russolo as well as former "Metaphysicians", such as Morandi and De Chirico) in the 20th century, embodying similar tendencies for a return to indigenous Italian tradition. Metaxas was quite clever and took the situation he found already prepared and incorporated it into his policy. Thus he did not lose the official opportunity to send his best regards to "Greekness" and the national character of the art of his time.

Chatzikyriakos-Ghika, commenting on the invitation issued by Metaxas for the creation of a genuine Greek art, in January 1938 wrote an article in the Greek magazine *Νέο Κράτος*, the official organ of the regime. A similar speculation was also developed by Konstantinos Tsatsos in the celebrated, *Διάλογος με την Ποίηση* (*Dialogue with Poetry*) with George Seferis, published in 1938-1939 in the Greek magazines *Προτύλαια* and *Νέα Γράμματα* in the form of an essay. The painter confirmed that contemporary Greek artists were making a conscious endeavor to create a genuine

Greek painting. In order to succeed, Ghika believed that they had to study traditional art, the "only real tradition that exists". Only there could artists discover the more enduring elements of the Greek artistic tradition. He himself sought out and identified the special hallmarks of the Greek countryside, which can be verified in Greek art down through time:

1. The main characteristic of the Greek countryside was for him the *ethereal* quality of Greek light which has no relation to the "painting" light of other countries which contains grey. In Greece, shapes are outlined clearly, and shadows are practically hard-edged.
2. "The mountainous character of nature in Greece" turns "every rock, every stone...into a prism, an unworked piece of sculpture."
3. The aridity makes sharp, geometric drawing, imperative. Chatzikyriakos-Ghika further noted that this geometric shape, existed in unbroken continuity from ancient vase-painting to Byzantine art and folk embroideries and pottery.
4. He noted the primacy of drawing over color, the domination of intellect over sentiment.
5. "In Greek painting there is no *chiaroscuro*". The color is not atmospheric. For the most part, color is pure, and applied to unbroken surfaces without fluctuations. "Color modelling is rare". According to the painter, shape and color are the two entities that we do not grasp either simultaneously or in the same way.
6. Greek art of each period has, according to Chatzikyriakos-Ghika, an intensely decorative character.
7. Greek art has harmonious proportions, which are based either on mathematical ratios or are achieved only by the artist's instinct.
8. Greek art avoids the slavish reproduction of nature. It prefers to recreate, setting off from abstract elements.
9. What particularly distinguishes the Greek from the foreign is spirit.
10. Religious inspiration has now been replaced by something of a "plastic, metaphysical, geometrical character."

A critical reading of this text reveals its ideological and aesthetic stratigraphy. The emphasis it places on spiritual quality and on the ethereal character of Greek light is derived from *Η Ελληνική Γραμμή (The Greek Line)* by Periklis Yannopoulos, who set the basis for the creation of the aesthetics of "Greekness". The idea of "absolute homography", which the plastic code of Greek art possesses throughout its

long course, echoes the ethnic-nationalistic ideology of the unbroken continuity of Hellenism. The emphasis that is placed on the values of traditional art, which is equivalent to great art, expresses the preoccupations of the Generation of the Thirties. New and startling is the equation set up between the special characteristics of a Greek artistic language and the special characteristics of modern art. Tradition and modern art here are seen as dual catalytic forms of reciprocal action. With the assistance of the one, an understanding and familiarization with the other is brought about. For the Generation of the Thirties this dual reference to tradition and modern art did not contain the slightest contradiction. On the contrary, it was the necessary condition which guaranteed art its national character, its "Greekness". The principles of the avant garde could be confirmed in the living and familiar doctrines of Byzantine and traditional art. The experience of modern art, justifies and esteems forms of art which until then were considered primitive and clumsy. What was Greek was now simultaneously and automatically modern.

Marina Lambraki-Plaka



Nikos Chatzikyriakos-Ghika
Houses in a Dry Landscape, 1978
 National Gallery and
 Alexandros Soutzos
 Museum

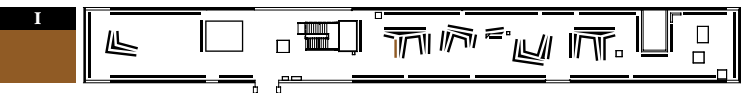
Note: The introductory part of the above text was published as the introduction to the book by Antonis Kotidis, *Ελληνική Τέχνη. Ζωγραφική 19ου αιώνα*, Εκδοτική Αθηνών, Athens 1995.

POST-BYZANTINE ART

ANDREAS PAVIAS
STEPHANOS
TZANGAROLAS
UNKNOWN

After the Fall of Constantinople (1453), the Byzantine art tradition was carried on in the new centers created outside the Ottoman empire, Venetian-occupied Crete in particular. Approximately two hundred eminent painters, organized into guilds, in keeping with the Italian model, were operating in *Candia* (Herakleio) in the 16th century. The icons of this "Cretan School" were renowned and eagerly sought beyond the borders of the island. Many of the painters of the Cretan School were "bilingual", since they could paint either *alla Greca*, or *alla Latina*, that is, in agreement with the western Renaissance style. Sometimes the two styles existed side by side, such as in the icons of one of the main representatives of the School, Michael Damaskinos, a contemporary of Domenicos Theotokopoulos.

After the fall of Candia to the Turks in 1669, many artists would find refuge in the Venetian controlled Ionian islands, especially Zakynthos and Corfu, where they would continue to paint icons in the same spirit and using the same technique (egg tempera on a wooden board). Slowly, however, as the relations with Venice became closer, the Byzantine idiom gave ground and western styles became dominant. Painting that had been idealistic and symbolic became realistic, what once had been transcendent became worldly and the flat three-dimensional, with the assistance of perspective. Large religious compositions, painted on canvas with illusory artifice, in the manner of Italian baroque, decorated the ceilings of churches (the *urania*). At the same time, portraiture also developed and thrived.





Andreas Pavius
(2nd half
of the 15th cent.)
The Crucifixion
Egg tempera on panel
80 x 60 cm
A. Soutzos Bequest
inv. no. 144



Stephanos Tzangarolas
(end 17th - beginning
18th cent.)
**The Adoration
of the Shepherds**
c. 1688-1700
Egg tempera on panel
98 x 80 cm
A. Soutzos Bequest
inv. no. 147



Unknown
**The Virgin Mary of
the Powerful Moly**
mid - 15th cent.
Egg tempera on wood
108 x 85.5 cm
Purchased by the A. Soutzos
Bequest, inv. no. 2156

DOMENICOS THEOTOKOPOULOS

(EL GRECO) 1541-1614

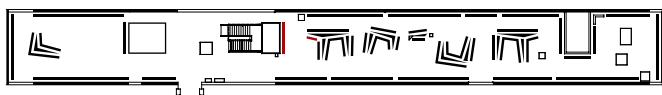
Domenicos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) was born in 1541 in Venetian-occupied Candia, the present-day Herakleio, in Crete, of prosperous, Greek Orthodox parents. Along with painting, he studied classical letters. He painted icons in the style of the post-Byzantine Cretan School, combined with influences from the Italian Renaissance.

In 1567 Theotokopoulos left Candia and went to Venice, where he studied under the great Venetian painter Titian and became completely versed in the art of the Venetian School of the Renaissance, characterized by its lavish color.

In 1570 he left Venice for Rome. He was a guest at the palace of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, where he met many intellectuals. Among them was the Cardinal's librarian, the scholar Fulvio Orsini, who would become a collector of El Greco's works. In 1572 Theotokopoulos enrolled at the academy of St. Luke, the patron saint of painters. He produced painting in which lavish Venetian color was combined with the spindly dynamic figures of the Roman mannerists.

In 1577 El Greco left for Spain, following the outflux of many Italian artists there to work at the decoration of the Escorial palace. The King of Spain, Philip II, did not appreciate Theotokopoulos' strange art. El Greco settled permanently in Toledo, the former imperial capital of Spain, which continued to be - even after the transfer of the seat of the emperor to Madrid in 1561 - the religious capital of Spain. There the proud Cretan lived in a palace, had a well-stocked library replete with the works of ancient writers and shared the company of nobles, intellectuals and the higher-ranking clergy. He had a wealth of clients, undertook large commissions and painted many astonishing works such as *The Disrobing of Christ*, and *The Burial of Count Orgaz*.

Far from the influence of the Italians and the intrigues of the court, El Greco discovered his deeper self and created an art of high spirituality, where Byzantium, the Renaissance and Mannerism were amalgamated into a completely original and unique style. Theotokopoulos died in Toledo in 1614 without ever returning to his homeland that he loved so much. He always signed his works in Greek letters, insistently Byzantine: «Δομήνικος Θεοτοκόπουλος ο Κρης εποίησεν». He was survived by a son, Giorgis Manuel, who was an architect and painter.

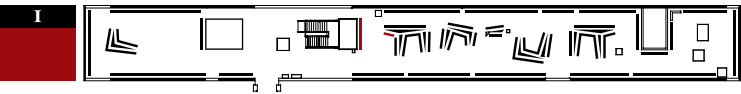




Domenicos
Theotokopoulos
(1541-1614)
The Burial of Christ
c. 1568-1570
Tempera and oil on wood
51.5 x 43 cm
inv. no. 9979



Domenicos
Theotokopoulos
(1541-1614)
St. Peter, c. 1600-1607
Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 53 cm
inv. no. 9027





Domenicos Theotokopoulos
(1541-1614)
**The Concert of the
Angels**, c. 1608-1614
Oil on canvas, 115 x 217 cm
inv. no. 152

THE SCHOOL OF THE IONIAN ISLANDS

GEORGIOS
AVLICHOS
NIKOLAOS
DOXARAS
PANAYIOTIS
DOXARAS
KONSTANTINOS
IATRAS
DIONYSIOS
KALLYVOKAS
NIKOLAOS
KANTOUNIS
IOANNIS
KORAÏS
NIKOLAOS
KOUTOUZIS
CHARALAMBOS
PACHIS
GERASIMOS
PITZAMANOS

After the Turks conquered Crete (1669) the strategic and commercial significance of the Ionian islands, which remained in Venetian hands, increased. Many icon painters of the Cretan School took refuge in these islands, particularly on Zakynthos and Corfu, and continued to work there and to create a local tradition. Western stylistic elements, which had already made their appearance in the icons of the Cretan School, gained further support and became dominant. Thus in the Ionian islands there occurred the gradual shift from the eastern Byzantine idiom to the western, secular one, which was imposed even on religious painting. The gold background, the transcendent symbol of the infinite, of the timeless and eternal, was abandoned. With the assistance of perspective, space was rendered as illusory and inhabited by forms which, through the use of chiaroscuro, acquired mass and bodily substance. These changes were connected to the technique of oil painting on canvas, which replaced the Byzantine technique of egg tempera on a wood board.

At the same time there appeared new kinds of painting: the *urantias* were monumental illusory compositions with a strong element of set design which ornamented the ceilings of single-aisle churches, set in ornate gilt frames.

The *urantias* were inspired by the baroque illusory compositions found in Italian art. The introducer into Greece of these innovations just described was Panayiotis Doxaras (1662-1729) who thus provided the bridge between the post-Byzantine and the western tradition. P. Doxaras also sought theoretical support for his innovations, translating Italian essays on painting by Alberti, Leonardo Da Vinci, Andrea Pozzo and others. Another type of religious composition that decorated the churches were called "processions". These large frieze-like compositions depicted not only the well-known religious custom itself, but also the class structure of Ionian island society, with the clergy, and the guilds, pointing out the distinctions between the nobility, the bourgeoisie and the ordinary citizens as well.

It is to the nobility, but above all the rising bourgeoisie that one must look to explain the flowering of one secular branch of paint-





Panayiotis Doxaras

(1662-1729)

[attributed to]

The Virgin Mary

c. 1700

Oil on canvas, 43 x 32.5 cm

V. Eudomadopoulos Bequest

inv. no. 3570

Nikolaos Doxaras

(1706/10-1775)

The Nativity of

the Virgin Mary

c. 1753-1754

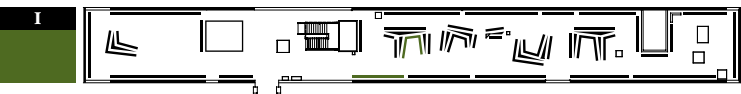
Oil on canvas, 45 x 34 cm

inv. no. 149



ing, portraiture, in the Ionian islands from the second half of the 18th century. Bourgeois portraiture is emblematic in character: the pose, the attire and the elements which accompany it, all stress the class, profession and position of the individual in society. Frequently, however, they also constitute penetrating psychological studies. Two clergymen distinguished themselves in this type of painting during that early period: Nikolaos Koutouzis (1741-1813), who was also a scathing satirical poet, and his student Nikolaos Kantounis (1767-1834).

The mature phase of the School of the Ionian islands, which corresponds to the time of the English Protectorate of the 19th century, echoes social developments, but also the changes that had occurred in the visual arts. Portraits were losing their emblematic character. The stiff poses were succeeded by more natural attitudes which set up a dialogue with the viewer (Kallyvokas, Iatras, Avlichos). Georgios Avlichos (1842-1909) is distinguished not only for the poetic spirit which characterized his portraits, but also because he was one of the few Greek artists in the 19th century who managed to avoid the brown bitumen favored of the academics, painting in pure, bright colors. Along with the two main thematic categories - religious painting and portraiture - one also finds other kinds of painting represented in the art of the Ionian islands, such as genre scenes, landscapes and still lifes.





Nikolaos Koutouzis
(1741-1813)

**Portrait of a Lady
wearing Diadem**
c. 1800

Oil on canvas, 86 x 70 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 819



Nikolaos Koutouzis
(1741-1813)

**Portrait of a Noble
Man with a Wig**
c. 1800

Oil on canvas, 85 x 63 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 729



Nikolaos Kantounis
(1767-1834)

Self-Portrait, c. 1820

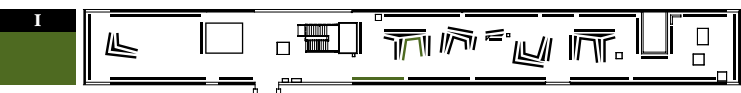
Oil on canvas
109.5 x 84.5 cm
inv. no. 2978



Charalambos Pachis
(1844-1891)
May Day on Corfu
c. 1875-1880
Oil on canvas, 61 x 50 cm
G. Averoff Bequest, inv. no. 483



Charalambos Pachis
(1844-1891)
**Landscape from
Corfu**, 1873
Oil on canvas, 53 x 73 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 439





Georgios Avlivos (1842-1909)

Girl at the Window, 1877

Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 50.2 cm, inv. no. 4167

19th CENTURY

THE PAINTING OF THE INDEPENDENT GREEK STATE

THE YEARS OF THE REIGN OF KING OTHON 1832-1862

The history of modern Greek art is identified chronologically with the history of the free Greek state and, to a degree, expresses its ideological choices. This is at least true of the first determinative decades, when the institutions were being formed and the social image of the young kingdom was being arranged in terms of class and function. The institutional and functional role of art is obvious in the urgent concern of the new state to found the School of Arts (31 December 1836) and to bring foreign teachers to Greece and the Greek students abroad on scholarship, mainly to Munich, so that in tandem with the other institutions, the painting language would also be "europeanized".

Indeed, the only artistic expressions which existed in Greece before independence were folk art and the declining post-Byzantine tradition in religious painting, which were not able to respond to the expectations of the ruling class as to what the role of art should be in the new kingdom.

The rebuilding of Athens, the new capital, went on apace. Public buildings and palaces had an urgent need of painters and sculptors to decorate them, ancient and modern heroes were waiting for artists to commemorate their deeds and to preserve their venerable physiognomy as examples of heroism and glory for coming generations. The new ruling class sought its image as a confirmation of its position in the social hierarchy. Art was called on to act in concert in the fashioning of the new society, as the catalytic morphopoetic force, rediscovering its primal function.

Historical scenes and portraiture were dominant, as was to be expected, during this first period of modern Greek art. The former had the most official character since they were destined primarily for the decoration of public buildings, while the latter gives us in a particularly expressive way, the image of the new urban class with all the obvious signs of its rural origins. Alongside these dominant categories, other thematic categories slowly made their appearance; these were frequently developed by artists from the Greek diaspora or were connected to the period of their study in foreign academies.

But which were the centers which illuminated and led this first period of modern Greek art? Contrary to what is customarily believed, doctrines and artists came from all the large European centers: Italy, France, Austria and, of course, Munich. Thus there was polyphony but a symphonic polyphony, reverberations of which were teleologically to be found in the hesitant, provincial academicism of early modern Greek art, which frequently, nevertheless, gives us examples of charming originality. Because, in the end, the character and the quality of artistic creation is not defined by the centers which illuminate it but by the horizon of expectation of the public to which it is directed. And this is self-evident: every form of artistic innovation and revolution presupposes a long artistic tradition and a social group, even if limited in number, which will receive it and support it. These preconditions were dramatically lacking in the young kingdom. It would be necessary for more than half a century of independence to go by before the historical and social conditions for artistic renewal would be created.

"Our history needs to be written. If you so desire you can write it and give it life through your pictures. Our heroes die and in vain their children ask for their pictures, in vain their descendants look to us for the inspiration of heroism and patriotism for their ethos..."

(Newspaper *Αιών*, 23/9/1844)

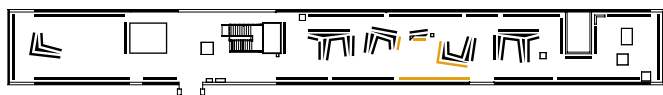
Historical Scenes

GEORGIOS
MARGARITIS
PHILIPPOS
MARGARITIS
DIONYSIOS
TSOKOS
UNKNOWN
THEODOROS
VRYZAKIS

Greek Prime Minister Ioannis Kolettis addressed himself with these words to the Margaritis brothers when he visited their studio on 15/9/1844 to order a copy of the "large picture" of Karaïskakis. (see the painting with the hero on horseback by Georgios Margaritis). There could not be a more eloquent comment on the ideological role that history painting was called on to carry out in the new Greek state. History painting was obliged to memorialize, to extol, to idealize and to promote the Greek War of Independence. The ideal image of it would thus be able to fulfill multiple aims: to promote heroism and the supreme sacrifice as a moral model and incontestable alibi for historical continuity. At the same time, it could be used as a weapon of ideological propaganda.

Theodoros Vryzakis (1819-1878) was the main representative of history painting. Son of a victim of the War of Independence, he was the first scholarship student to arrive in Munich, where he studied at the "Greek Institute" which had been founded by Othon's father Ludwig I to educate the orphans of the veterans of the War of Independence, and later the Munich Academy. Vryzakis was destined to see and interpret the War of Independence through the eyes of his German teachers, Peter von Hess (1792-1871) in particular, that is, through the eyes of romantic German philhellenism. In 1848 Vryzakis returned to Greece for three years and Othon entrusted him with painting a series of paintings with historical events taken from the War of Independence, such as the portraits of the veterans of that war. The monumental size of the works of historical painting, the ceremonial and stagy compositions, the "ironed" and studied style of academic idealistic romanticism, bear witness to the official ideological role these paintings played. With the assistance of lithography, these historical scenes were printed and distributed throughout Europe. Alongside the imposing historical compositions, which have an official

Theodoros Vryzakis
(1819-1878)
**The Exodus from
Missolonghi**, 1853
Oil on canvas, 169 x 127 cm
inv. no. 5446





character, a form of idyllic romantic genre painting connected to the War of Independence also developed, which was again determined by a philhellenic horizon of expectation.

Georgios Margaritis
(1814-1884)
**Georgios Karaïskakis
Mounted, Charges
against the Acropolis**
[1844]
Oil on canvas, 94 x 117 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 878



Dionysios Tsokos
(1820-1862)
The Flight from Parga
c. 1847
Oil on canvas, 37 x 47 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 822





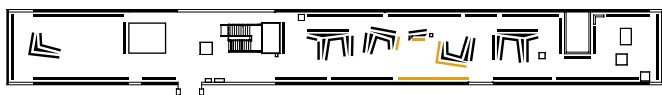
Philippos Margaritis
(1810-1892)
Captain Gouras
after 1843
Oil on canvas, 98 x 80 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 854



Theodoros Vryzakis
(1819-1878)
**Portrait of
Anagnostopoulos**
c. 1850-1860
Oil on canvas, 97 x 70 cm
inv. no. 1173

Theodoros Vryzakis
(1819-1878)
Karaïskakis'
Army-Camp, 1855
Oil on canvas, 145 x 178 cm
Donation of the University
of Athens, inv. no. 493

Theodoros Vryzakis
(1819-1878)
Farewell at Sounion
1863
Oil on canvas, 67 x 78 cm
Donation of the University
of Athens, inv. no. 772





Early Greek Portraits

- NIKOLAOS KOUNELAKIS
- ANDREAS KRIEZIS
- GEORGIOS MARGARITIS
- ARISTEIDIS OIKONOMOU
- FRANCESCO PIGE
- SPYRIDON PROSALENTIS
- LUDWIG THIERSCH
- DIONYSIOS TSOKOS
- UNKNOWN
- NIKOLAOS ZACHARIOU

An unexpected, charming and very important composition inaugurated early Greek portraiture: a painting by an unknown artist invites us to visit the workshop of a young Greek painter who, dressed in island attire and a red cap, is sitting in front of his easel and putting the final touches to a portrait of a man. The model, a young man dressed in a tuxedo and wearing a bow tie, is standing erect and attentively observing his image in the painting. A fellow artist or student of the young painter, dressed in the same outfit and cap, is making a comparison between the model and his image to confirm the similarity. The work must have been painted during the period right after independence and it startles us with its uncommon subject, its exceptional quality and the messages it bears. It reveals the fever that had possessed Greeks to bring the fine arts back to their ancient birthplace and the interest of young people in these studies. These were perhaps young students at the newly established School of Fine Arts who were involved with the new kind of portraiture. The portrait, in any case, resting on the easel still has the stiff pose of the early "archaic" form of the discipline.

Early Greek portraits give us an image of a new bourgeois class which was still in a stage of formation. Veterans, islanders, and farmers were being transformed into the bourgeoisie. They still retained their attire, customs and severe mien. Professional distinctions, lavish dress, and expensive jewellery were all enlisted to symbolize the class, the role, and the ideological image that the person being depicted wished to promote.

Francesco Pige (1822-1862), from Tyrol, but who worked exclusively in Greece, has left us the most beautiful examples of this early emblematic portraiture. He painted islanders in the main (Hydriots, Syriots and so on) in their lavish, picturesque local costumes, which his brush described with sensual devotion. The models in full or three-quarter pose, stiff, ceremonial. Their expression is hermetic, faceless really, outside time. The painter combined the precision of the Flemish portraits with the abstraction of Ingres (1780-1867) but nevertheless remained naive, particularly in his insistence on decorative detail. But what gives his charming compositions an

Unknown
Young Artist and his Model, c. 1840-1845
 Oil on cardboard
 66 x 50 cm
 inv. no. 1871





unfading luster, as if they had been done yesterday, is that Pige ignored the bitumen of academic painting and used only the purest and most brilliant colors.

The same was not true of Andreas Kriezis (1813?-after 1877) who interpreted models of the same origins and class and in a similar way, so that for a long time the works of Pige were attributed to him. In reality, Kriezis was less naive, much more academic, particularly in his colors, and did not display the same insistence on decorative detail; above all else, he has none of the "flavor" and charm of Pige. But he did paint a few masterpieces.

A much more urban character is to be found in the portraits that were painted by Greek painters who had studied or lived in the large urban centers of Europe and were addressed to a more refined clientele. Among these can be numbered Aristeidis Oikonomou (1823-1887), who studied in Vienna, and Nikolaos Kounelakis (1829-1869), who had studied in St. Petersburg but lived and worked in Florence. Kounelakis, a superb portrait painter, loved the closed, simplified form of the classicists and the strict well-built composition. To Kounelakis we owe a unique humanistic, allegorical subject, "hidden" in the monumental portrait of his family. The painter resided in a city, Florence, which was still living in the reverberations of a centuries-old literary discussion concerning the equality of the fine and the liberal arts. Did the fine arts have the right to be housed under the same roof as the liberal arts? Kounelakis gave his own reply to this question which had preoccupied painters and theoreticians since antiquity: he, the symbol of *Painting*, depicts himself painting the dome of the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, a dual reference both to the glorious town that he is a guest in and to the art of *Architecture*. The marble bust of a Muse, which is resting to the left, represents the art of *Sculpture*. The artist's wife Zoe Kambani is making notes on a pentagram, referring to the art of *Music*, while her mother has just stopped reading from a typical little book of *Poetry*. Thus the artist managed to house in his own pantheon the fine and the liberal arts, creating at the same time the first humanistic allegory in the history of modern Greek painting.





Dionysios Tsokos
(1820-1862)
Portrait of a Lady
1851
Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm
inv. no. 2194



Georgios Margaritis
(1814-1884)
**Portrait of a Lady
with a Feather**
c. 1850
Oil on canvas, 58 x 46 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 850

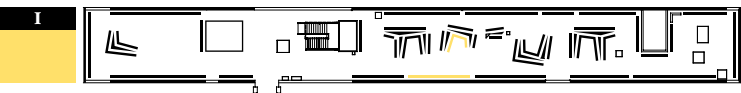


Ludwig Thiersch
(1825-1909)
Kleoniki Gennadiou
c. 1856-1859
Oil on canvas, 124 x 83 cm
Donation of I. Gennadios
inv. no. 877

Ludwig Thiersch (1825-1909) saw Kleoniki Gennadiou, one of the first sculptresses and painters in the new kingdom, with the eyes of a foreign philhellene. Thus, behind her beautiful features, he seeks the ideal type of Greek female beauty. The painting, however, which was painted just after the middle of the century, is unique for another reason: its monumental size, the easy pose of the model with her dreamy look, the unusual Greek landscape, which scenically frames the elegant black-dressed Athenian woman, lend this work a genuine romantic feeling which would not, however, be developed further.



Andreas Kriezis
(1813? - after 1877)
**Noble Woman
from Hydra**, 1847
Oil on canvas, 101 x 82 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 764





Francesco Pige
(1822-1862)
**Portrait of a Lady
from Hydra**, c. 1855
Oil on canvas, 82 x 65 cm
inv. no. 1684



Francesco Pige
(1822-1862)
**Portrait of a Noble
Man with the
Acropolis and the
Theseio in the
Background**
c. 1850
Oil on canvas, 82 x 65 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 802

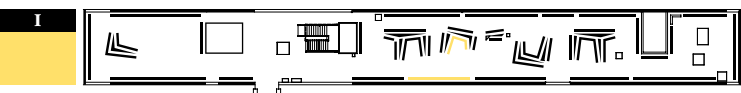
Nikolaos Zachariou
(2nd half of the
19th cent.)

**Portrait of a Young
Man**

Oil on canvas, 94 x 68 cm
A. Benakis Bequest
inv. no. 2068



Nikolaos Kounelakis
(1829-1869)
Zoe Kambani, c. 1862
Oil on canvas, 78 x 62 cm
G. Trapantzalis Bequest
inv. no. 1209





Nikolaos Kounelakis (1829-1869)

The Artist's Family (Allegory of the Fine Arts and the Liberal Arts), c. 1864-1865

Oil on canvas, 94 x 73 cm. Donation of the National Technical University, inv. no. 476

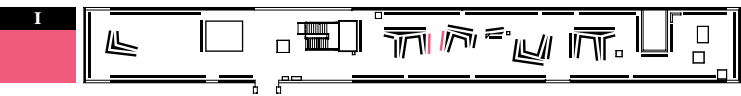
Early Greek Landscape Painting

- VIKENTIOS BOKATSIAMBIS
- RAFFAELLO CECCOLI
- ANGELOS GIALLINAS
- VIKENTIOS LANZA
- STEPHANOS LANZA
- GEORGIOS MARGARITIS
- AIMILIOS PROSALENTIS
- DIONYSIOS TSOKOS

Raffaello Ceccoli, an Italian who taught at the School of Arts from 1843 to 1852, gives us, along with the first example of Greek landscape painting, the distinctive marks of the subject matter and morphology

at this early stage: a Greek shepherd, dressed in traditional Greek costume, is leaning on his crook and a piece of ancient marble and talking to a Greek priest. Next to him his flock is grazing. In the background, behind the bare hills, rise up the ruins of the Parthenon, all golden, bathed in the light of a brilliant sunset. It was not by chance that another foreigner, the Italian Vikentios Lanza (1822-1902), would carry on the same tradition, establishing a fashion with great durability and a sure clientele. This tradition would last until the end of the century not only with the son of Vikentios, Stephanos Lanza (1861-1933), but also through Greek painters, especially Ionian islanders, such as Aimilios Prosalentis (1859-1926) and Angelos Giallinas (1857-1939).

What was the source of inspiration for this particularly attractive and much loved subject matter? The early landscape painters, as they had no tradition backing them up, drew from the ready at hand and rich mine of romantic travel and landscape painting, which experienced particular development in the second half of the 18th century, continuing on into the 19th. The images of the historical sites of Greece were widely distributed and were accessible through books and lithographic copies. It is worth noting and paradoxical that in this landscape painting two opposing traditions converged and were fused: the interest of neoclassicism in antiquity and the romantic view of the ancient world. The romantic did not attempt to depict antiquity like the neoclassic artist. He would stand in reverie before the ancient ruins, the melancholic remains of a "golden age", irrevocably lost. The unfading honey-colored light which wraps the remains of temples is the light of myth, history and nostalgia. Greece as seen by the romantics is suspended in a transcendent dimension, where immobile historical time rules. Intellectuals felt this powerful experience, which is the fruit of sensation and intellect, when they found themselves on the sites marked by historical memory.





Vikentios Lanza
(1822-1902)
The Acropolis, c. 1860
Oil on canvas, 37 x 56 cm
Apostolos Chatziargyris
Bequest, inv. no. 62

Raffaello Ceccoli
(19th cent.)
The Acropolis
c. 1845-1850
Oil on canvas
60.5 x 80.5 cm
inv. no. 3725



Romantic landscape painting traced its origins to the classicist landscapes of Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) and, later, Hubert Robert (1733-1808). The never ending golden light of an eternal late afternoon is drawn from their works and not from any real feeling for the Greek landscape. But it is worth observing that the views of historical sites with ancient ruins protected early Greek landscape painting from the brown bitumen used by the academics. The "romantic" landscapes were luminous with color and light and this was due first and foremost to their models, which were often water colors. Thus, when observation began to displace the intellectual models of academicism, romantic landscape painting began – toward the end of the century – to be animated with the oxygen of the real countryside.



Stephanos Lanza
(1861-1933)
**The Lysicrates
Monument**, c. 1890
Water color, 31 x 23 cm
Zoe A. Soutzou Bequest
inv. no. 2429





Aimilios Prosalentis (1859-1926)

The Acropolis, 1897

Water color, 38 x 61 cm. S. Velentzas Bequest, inv. no. 811



Angelos Giallinas (1857-1939)

The Theseio and the Acropolis, c. 1895

Water color, 41 x 74 cm. M. Koryialenios Bequest, inv. no. 1120

THE BOURGEOIS CLASS AND ITS PAINTERS 1862-1900

Not only for modern Greek history but for modern Greek art as well 1862 constitutes a watershed. Though the dethronement of King Othon brought an end to the Bavarian rule of Greece, in art a new period of "Bavarianism" began with the triumphant arrival on the forestage of Greek artistic life of the great representatives of the mature School of Munich: Nikephoros Lytras (1832-1904), Nikolaos Gysis (1842-1901), Georgios Iakovidis (1853-1932) and Konstantinos Volanakis (1837-1907).

1862 also marked the end of a fruitful twenty year period at the School of Arts, under the directorship of the brilliant architect Lysandros Kaftantzoglou. His exclusive concern for the School of Arts had functioned catalytically, speeding the passage from the experimental to the mature stage, not only of teaching but Greek art itself. The students who distinguished themselves at the School of Arts during the Kaftantzoglou period (1844-1862) were destined to become outstanding teachers, the founders of modern Greek art. At the same time, Kaftantzoglou managed to open the School to the outside world through the organization of exhibitions, the creation of a museum (launched in 1846), and artistic competitions. Lysandros Kaftantzoglou would also design the plans for the new and illustrious National Technical University, built with the princely donations of the benefactors Nikolaos Stournaris, Michael Tositsas and Eleni M. Tositsa. The National Technical University would move into the Metsovio building in 1872.

What could have been the legitimate expectations of the School of Fine Arts in the second half of the 19th century? To educate fine artisans, to transcend the hesitant, provincial stage, to cover the distance separating it from the European academies. How did it respond to this role? With undreamed of success. The sculptors, who would give neoclassical Athens its physiognomy, were worthy artisans. The painters' achievements were even more impressive. Because we did not expect Greece to develop an avant garde, as we explained above. Greek academicism was frequently superior to that of its direct German models and certainly more vigorous and genuine than the French academicism of the Second Empire

of Napoleon III. Even the most insipid genre painting – modelled on the corresponding German anecdotal painting – was nothing in comparison to the prosperous, mundane, and frequently pornographic aberrations of the French *pompier*s. But the technique of the Greek academic painters also rarely slid into the cold photographic precision of their French colleagues. Two talented Greek painters who studied and worked in Paris, Iakovos Rizos (1849-1926), a student of the *pompier* painter Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889) and Theodoros Rallis (1852-1909), a student of the Orientalist Jean Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) will enable us to confirm the differences between the two forms of academicism with a separate derivation.

The mature stage of modern Greek art corresponded to a period during which there was a large shift of the rural population to the urban centers, to the capital in particular. The urban population had begun to shed along with the attire, the character of its rural origins as well and one could now speak of Athenian society in particular as largely bourgeois. This bourgeois society also determined the horizon of reception for works of art. Art would mature along with it and as it progressively acquired a cast of mind and cultivation, the road to artistic renewal would also open up. This change would take place gradually and the turn would be completed during the opening decades of the 20th century, together with the radical transformations occurring in the country's political life with the arrival on the forestage of the national leader Eleftherios Venizelos.

Genre painting, a kind of nostalgic return to the roots, corresponds to the expectations of an urban class, which has acquired a certain amount of distance from its rural origins, so it can reflect on them without qualms. Moreover, this concerns an image of an idealized life, which has cast off every form of hardship, seen by painters through the prism of German idealism. In the large industrial centers of Europe, France in particular, realism confronted reality with an uncompromised love of truth and a critical eye.

Alongside genre painting, which held the sceptre in terms of the public's and the painters' preferences, a form of portraiture designed for the bourgeoisie, clearly different from the static portrait

Nikephoros Lytras
 (1832-1904)
Return from the Fair
 c. 1865-1872
 Oil on canvas, 100 x 66 cm
 Collection of the E. Koutlidis
 Foundation, inv. no. 106

of the preceding period, experienced great success. Still life, the bourgeois genre par excellence, and to a somewhat lesser extent the nude, completed the thematic repertoire of the mature stage of Greek academicism. We leave to last another important feature of the waning 19th century: landscape painting. Here many old and new ideas were to be found: the academic landscape gave us the stereotypical and unchanging image of a world translating the slowly moving rhythms of a rural economy. At the same time, and sometimes by the same painters, a new painting of the open space appeared, a true *plein air* painting full of vigor, gusty skies, free brushstrokes, color and light, transmitting the image of a fluid world, where there are no certainties – everything is relative, just as in modern physics. The only certainty is the feeling of the individual who is experiencing a given phenomenon at that specific moment because, as Heraclitus said, "we never step into the same river twice" (Frag. 91).

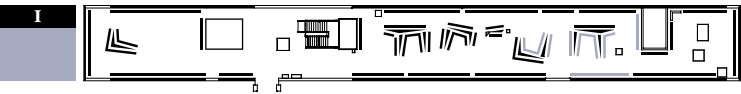
Genre Painting

NIKOLAOS
 GYSIS
 GEORGIOS
 IAKOVIDIS
 POLYCHRONIS
 LEMBESIS
 NIKEPHOROS
 LYTRAS
 IOANNIS
 OIKONOMOU
 KONSTANTINOS
 PANORIOS
 NIKOLAOS
 VOKOS
 IOANNIS
 ZACHARIAS

"The artist should devote himself to genre paintings and to works that are related to what stirs delights and educates the people".
"The customs of our Greek people brought Liberty and must be protected like the apple of one's eye"

Nikephoros Lytras

In these admonitions of Nikephoros Lytras we recognize the ideological starting point and the "educational" program of Greek genre painting, which was destined to dominate the mature phase of the School of Munich. From the middle of the 19th century on, and throughout Europe, under the direct influence of Positivism and in the context of the new conditions of life, which the first industrial revolution and rapid urbanization had created, the traditional repertoire of painting was abandoned. History, mythology and literature constituted an inexhaustible mine for painting until the advent of Romanticism. The "myth" of Aristotle and the "history" of Alberti, the leading subject in the hierarchy of traditional paint-







Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)

**Childrens'
Betrothal**, 1877

Oil on canvas, 103 x 155 cm
Argyris Chatziargyris Bequest
inv. no. 110

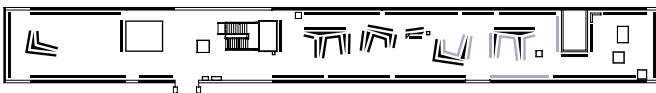


ing, now ceded its place to the observation of daily life, to nature or the objects which surround us. But this kind of observation did not always lead to realism, which developed primarily in France and was represented by artists with a social conscience such as Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) and Jean-François Millet (1814-1875).

The term "realism" was established by the manifesto published by Courbet who exhibited his works in a special pavilion in the framework of the International Exhibition of Paris in 1855 and by the book of the same name by the theoretician Champfleury (1857). The realist painter endeavored to render reality as it is, unvarnished, with all the rough edges and that is why realists frequently are censured for their "coarseness". It is not by chance that realism coincided with the spread of the daguerrotype photograph, the photographic depiction of reality. Photography has sometimes been used by painters as an aid, but painting rarely has become "photographic" with the exception, perhaps, of certain academicians (*pompier*s) of the French School. Realism in its most authentic manifestations does not refer to individuals but to social categories (the worker, the farmer, the washerwoman) and to social customs (*Burial in Ornan* by Courbet) and is often highly critical.

Genre painting is marked by a basic qualitative difference from realism. It also gives us pictures of customs, everyday images, but it reduces them to the models of a life idealized and harmonious, painless and passive. In genre painting there is no room for social criticism. Everything is beautified, even the most tragic elements. Thus genre painting can function as an educational model for the people, in accordance with the wish of Nikephoros Lytras.

Greek genre painting was German in origin, but more often than not transcended the painless and festive Biedermeier style. The model for German genre painting was the corresponding school of painting which developed in the Protestant and urban society of the Netherlands in the 17th century. Moreover, it is not by chance that the theoreticians of French realism recognized in these painters the ancestors of the new school of objective truth. In Greece, genre painting coincided with the founding of the





Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)
The Fortune Teller
1885
Oil on canvas
72.5 x 92.5 cm
A. Benakis Bequest
inv. no. 1858

Nikephoros Lytras
(1832-1904)
Milkman at Rest
1895
Oil on canvas, 53 x 37 cm
Donation of Argyris
Chatziargyris, inv. no. 1797

Nikephoros Lytras
(1832-1904)
The Kiss, before 1878
Oil on canvas, 79 x 69 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 139

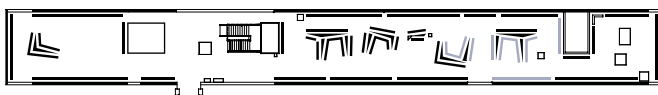


bourgeois class which nostalgically returned to its roots through the creation of the science of folklore, which studies the manners and customs of peoples, and the development of genre literature and comic idyll in the theater.

Realistic observation and idealism found a way to be reconciled to each other in Greek painting, as was also true of its German models. Terms such as "idealistic naturalism" were used by the criticism of the time to define the style of the German artists who were painting genre paintings during the same period. Greek genre painting, nevertheless, would never manage to praise the "heroism of modern life" in line with the admonition of Baudelaire, which was confirmed by the French realists. Conversely, scenes from everyday life, particularly rural life, were idealized and beautified in order to lend their own tone of ebullience to the bourgeois Athenian salons they were destined to ornament. It should be remembered that French realism was known in Germany, where Courbet started exhibiting in 1852, and achieved a personal triumph in the large international exhibition that was organized in the Bavarian capital in 1869. A realistic current had begun to form in Germany. It would find an echo in a few painters in Greece such as Polychronis Lembesis and in works where the observation eclipses the anecdote or the sentimentalizing. In any case, contemporary Greek criticism recognized in Greek genre painting, and in Nikephoros Lytras in particular, who was characterized as the "most national" of all painters, authentic elements of "Greekness" (*Εφημερίδα*, 10-11-1888).

Genre painting gave Greek painters the opportunity to display their compositional, scene-direction and scene-design abilities, and to bring many separate motifs into the same painting space – portrait, still life, the study of traditional costume – while at the same time permitting them to develop their purely plastic potentials in design, color, and the rendering of texture. Greek painters proved to be great virtuosos, while at the same time from their paint-brush came masterpieces with rare expressive force and evocativeness such as the elegaic *Dirge for Psara* by Nikephoros Lytras.

When the objective observation overshadows idealization, Greek artists were able to touch on realism. Georgios Iakovidis, particu-





Nikolaos Vokos
(1859-1902)

The Fisherman

before 1892

Oil on canvas

120 x 180 cm

Collection of the E. Koutlidis

Foundation, inv. no. 583



Polychronis Lembesis
(1848-1913)

The Boy with the Rabbits, 1879

Oil on canvas, 130 x 103 cm

Donation of M. Salvanos

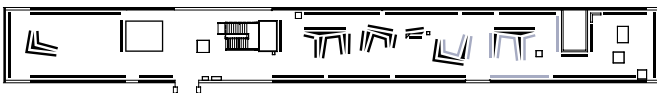
inv. no. 632

larly in those scenes inspired by the world of the child, became a realist in order to emphasize the opposition between the decline of old age and the emergence of new life. This realism is responsible for the negative criticism which dogs his work. Greek critics, who applauded Nikolaos Gysis for his idealization of reality and poetic spirit, characterized Iakovidis as a superb technician, but dull. A category of genre painting places particular stress on the picturesque elements of the attire and customs of the East and can be associated with the European spirit of Orientalism. In Greece of course the boundaries are difficult to make out as local costumes and the context of country life still had an "eastern" flavor and character during that period.



Ioannis Zacharias
(1845 - ?)
Young Artist, c. 1868
Oil on canvas, 64 x 46 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 256

Ioannis Oikonomou
(1860-1931)
The Art Critic, 1885
Oil on canvas, 43 x 33 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 107





Georgios Iakovidis
(1853-1932)

**Grandmother's
Favorite**, [1893]

Oil on canvas, 78.5 x 60.3 cm
inv. no. 9039



Georgios Iakovidis
(1853-1932)

Maternal Affection
[1889]

Oil on canvas, 90.2 x 66 cm
Collection of Alexandros
and Mary Zymnis.
On permanent loan
to the National Gallery



Georgios Iakovidis
(1853-1932)

The First Steps, [1892]

Oil on canvas, 140 x 110 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 199







Nikephoros Lytras
(1832-1904)

**The Dirge on the Isle
of Psara, before 1888**

Oil on canvas, 97 x 140 cm
Purchased by the G. Averoff
Bequest, inv. no. 474



Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)

The Vow, [1886]

Oil on canvas, 107 x 158 cm

Purchased by the G. Averoff

Bequest, inv. no. 633

Orientalism

NIKOLAOS

GYSIS

GEORGIOS

IAKOVIDIS

NIKEPHOROS

LYTRAS

THEODOROS

RALLIS

SYMEON

SAVVIDIS

Orientalism, a nostalgia for the Orient, the worship of the exotic and the extravagant is part of the pathology of romanticism. The Orient was for a long time the favorite place for the romantic artist to escape to. It was a destination that excited the imagination and fired the passions. The world of the Orient was revealed to romantic consciousness by a series of events: the campaigns of Napoleon in Egypt and Palestine, travel literature and the French colonial conquests of Algeria and Morocco. And finally, another chapter of these discoveries was opened by Philhellenism and the Greek War of Independence.

The romantic artists viewed a trip to the Orient as much more important than the traditional pilgrimage artists made to Rome. In 1832 Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) discovered in Morocco and Algeria a "living antiquity" and a reality so powerful it could "kill". Costumes, exotic customs and specimens of humanity enchanted painters. Many of them kept wardrobes with traditional eastern outfits which assisted them in setting their scenes more convincingly, their brushes intoxicated with the colors and ornaments of the Orient. The French painter Jules-Robert Auguste (1789-1850) travelled to Greece and the Orient and returned from there to Paris with a large collection of costumes, weapons and objects. Delacroix turned to the Orient to study traditional Greek costumes, which he describes with such authenticity and painterly power in his works.

In addition to Delacroix, who would dedicate an entire section of his thematic repertoire to his adoration of the Orient (including the epics inspired by the Greek War of Independence), a large category of French painters, representatives of academic romanticism, specialized in oriental subject matter. The way was opened by the pre-romantic Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835) and followed by other painters as well who travelled to the Orient and were inspired by the exotic world they found: Alexandre G. Decamps (1803-1860), Théodore Chassériau (1819-1856), Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) and Eugène Fromantin (1820-1876).

During the same period, the wind from the Orient animated romantic literature throughout Europe (Coleridge, Keats, Byron,

Theodoros Rallis
(1852-1909)

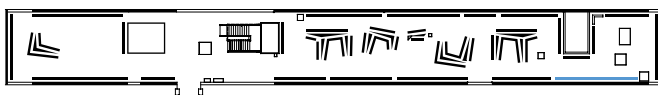
The Booty

before 1906

Oil on canvas

133 x 100 cm

Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 712



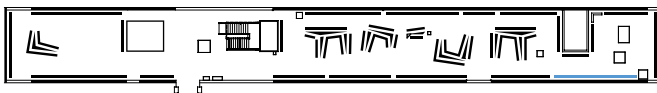


Novalis, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Gérard de Nerval, Gautier, Hugo). This current ran right through the 19th century and then was rekindled and further expanded during the closing decades by symbolism and exoticism (Barrès, Louys, Loty).

German Orientalism, although it lacked French ebullience, shared the same symptoms. Quite a number of German painters undertook the great pilgrimage to the Orient and drew their themes, motifs and doctrines from its revealing light and by so doing enriched their compositions. Franz von Lenbach (1836-1904) would spend the winter of 1875-1876 in Egypt along with the painter Hans Makart (1840-1884) and other artists. Nevertheless, it was not just fashion which induced two typical representatives of the School of Munich, and close friends, Nikephoros Lytras (1832-1904) and Nikolaos Gysis (1842-1901) to undertake a pilgrimage to the Middle Orient, which they felt close to, in 1872. If, as Nikephoros Lytras recommended, painters felt obliged to study and depict the customs of the Greek people, his trip to Asia Minor, where an authentic piece of ancient Hellenism still lived, took on the character of a return to Greek roots. Despite all that, the two friends would repeat the ritual which was part and parcel of these journeys: they did drawings of scenes, picturesque human types, and costumes, and built up a repertoire which they used in many of their compositions. Indeed, in line with a practice common among European painters of the time, they also were later photographed in eastern dress.

Symeon Savidis (1859-1927), who truly was from Asia Minor, painted real orientalist scenes, inspired by repeated trips to paternal lands. Many of these were able to capture not only the atmosphere but the light which enlivened the colorful festival that was the Orient. Savidis put down his impressions with a free impressionistic style.

Of course, the boundaries between Greek genre painting and orientalism are difficult to discern, as the scenes of daily life in Greece had, as their natural decor, the traditional costumes set amid the context of a life lived in the countryside, which still bore a strong oriental flavor.





Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)

**Middle Easterner
with Pipe**, c. 1873

Oil on wood
40.5 x 31.5 cm

E.A. Christomanos Bequest
inv. no. 4071

Symeon Savidis
(1859-1927)

**The Lighting of
the Pipe**, 1899

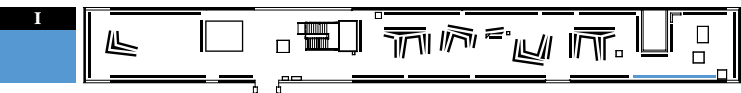
Oil on canvas, 83 x 56 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 118



The most genuine Greek orientalist was Theodoros Rallis (1852-1909). A student of the late French orientalist G r me, Rallis would make many trips to Greece, Mount Athos, Asia Minor, Egypt and Palestine, from which he would take the subjects for his compositions. He had a dual point of view: as a Greek, he explored Greek orientalist subjects with deeper understanding but at the same time, he did not stop seeing them from the angle of a *pompier* painter of the French School. He too frequently yielded to this salaciousness of the eye, just as his fellow French artists who were addressing themselves to the liberated bourgeois clientele of Paris during that period. In his orientalist work, Theodoros Rallis followed the "photographic" technique used by the *pompier*s. Rallis was admired for these works in Greek exhibitions, in which he regularly took part, while his impressionistic departures did not receive the same warm response from Greek critics.



Nikephoros Lytras
 (1832-1904)
**Michael Vodas
 Soutzos**, c. 1890
 Oil on canvas, 55 x 45 cm
 A. Soutzos Bequest
 inv. no. 738





Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)

**Middle Easterner
with Fruit**, c. 1873

Oil on canvas
107 x 174 cm

Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 574



Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)

The Slave-Market
c. 1873-1875

Oil on canvas, 72 x 50 cm
Purchased by the G. Averoff
Bequest, inv. no. 553



Theodoros Rallis (1852-1909)

Vigil at the Dead Pasha of Tangiers, 1884

Oil on canvas, 116 x 191 cm. Donation of A. Gaïtanos, inv. no. 4707



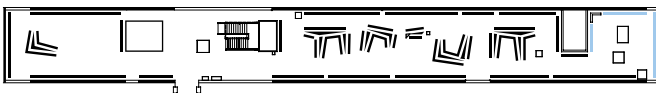
Symbolism and Allegory

NIKOLAOS
GYSIS

When the young Konstantinos Parthenis (1878-1967) was informed in Vienna of the death of Gysis in 1901, he expressed an important opinion on the deceased: "during the first stage of his work he was a distinguished painter, during the second a genuine artist... As an artist he always swept me off my feet and the poetry of his works always made me seek them out, while as a painter I simply liked him" (*Παναθήναια*, A', 1901, p. 434).

This opinion is completely understandable viewed in the symbolist climate of the Viennese Sezession, as our colleague Antonis Kotidis has observed (*Μοντερνισμός και Παράδοση*, 1993, p. 171). The strange thing is that it was shared almost unanimously by contemporary Greek criticism, which appeared to identify idealism and symbolism with a "modernism" worthy of the Greek classical tradition. For Periklis Yannopoulos, Gysis was the "purest manifestation of the Greek idea and feeling" (*Η Ελληνική Γραμμή*, 1992, p. 24). Leafing through Greek magazines and newspapers from the end of the century, we frequently encounter enthusiastic references to symbolist painters, such as the Germans Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901), Hans von Marées (1837-1887), Max Klinger (1857-1920), and Franz von Stuck (1863-1928), the Frenchman Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1823-1898) and the Englishman Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898). This critical reception of symbolist currents is in harmony with the idealistic deviations observed in Greek modernism in its early stage and with the rekindling of forms and ideas of symbolism later observed in the work of the mature Parthenis. But as Antonis Kotidis once more correctly observes (*op. cit.*) the model of Gysis acted as the bridge and the alibi behind these sluggish symbolist revivals.

Symbolism spread throughout Europe like a sweet poison, functioning as an antidote to the "prosaicness" of realism. It endeavored to keep alive those forces which had once been activated by romanticism and which had been condemned to an apparent death by positivism and realism: dream, fantasy, poetry, and the idea. The theme came back into art but lost its anecdotal character and became a bearer of message, a means by which to express the ineffable. Content and form were interwoven, and aspired to tempt the viewer into emotional participation, in a society that contained





Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)

Art and its Spirits

[1876]

Oil on canvas, 67 x 55 cm

Purchased by the G. Averoff

Bequest, inv. no. 550

Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)

Spring Symphony

[1886]

Oil on canvas, 100 x 196 cm

Donation of A. Benakis

inv. no. 635

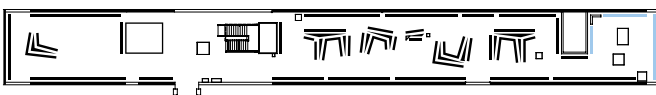


poetry and mystery. The term "symbolism" as established by literary circles was taken from the manifesto of the Greek poet Jean Moréas and was published in Paris in 1886, while in painting it had manifested itself much earlier.

Gysis, as our colleague Nelly Missirli so accurately observed in her superb monograph dedicated to him, had a dreamy and poetic nature which tended toward idealism. His idealism, nourished by the nostalgia for an ideal Greece, would lead his work, during the closing three decades of the century, to lofty conceptions fitting for a Greek, which were incorporated into the broader movement of European symbolism. The entire repertoire of the thematic, morphological and expressive content of symbolism can be traced in the mature work of Gysis. His compositions refer us to a higher spiritual sphere and are strongly suggestive of music made with purely plastic means (Gysis adored Beethoven). Among his favorite subjects were the ecstatic and liberating dance, in agreement with the analysis of the Dionysian spirit by Nietzsche (*The Birth of Tragedy*, 1873) which influenced the symbolists. The elevation of the idea of religion, contemplation, the soulful gaze, the dream, silence, woman as a mysterious creature, unfathomable and sometimes demonic, allegories and personifications, are the dominant features of Gysis' symbolist works.

Symbolism demanded of the form that it identified to such a degree with the content that it could suggest it without actually stating it. In order to respond to this demand, Gysis radically renewed his expressive means. The vigorous and precise drawing which characterized his style became elliptic, his brushwork became more open, and his line captured the gesture. Antiquity helped him schematize his forms, which lose all individual character, in order to embody ideas. His colors were limited to a few emblematic tones: black, blue, red, like fire, and whites which were felt as sudden flashes in all that black (*Archangel* from the *Triumph of Faith*, *Behold the Celestial Bridegroom Cometh*), while in *Spring Symphony* he exhausts his freshest palette in order to convey us to the paradise of art, to the domain of eternal spring.

Symbolism is encountered, and integrated, toward the end of the century, with another current, formalistic this time, Art Nouveau (in



Nikolaos Gysis
 (1842-1901)
Mother of God
 study, [1898]
 Oil on paper, diameter 38 cm
 Purchased by the G. Averoff
 Bequest, inv. no. 596

Nikolaos Gysis
 (1842-1901)
The Archangel, study
 for the **Establishment
 of Faith**, [1895]
 Oil on canvas, 91 x 69 cm
 inv. no. 548

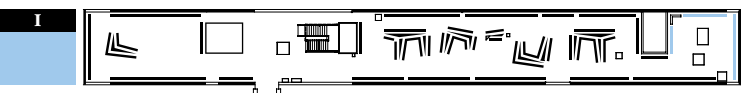
Nikolaos Gysis
 (1842-1901)
The Archangel, study
 for the **Establishment
 of Faith**, [1894-1895]
 Oil on canvas, 145 x 73 cm
 Collection of the E. Koutlidis
 Foundation, inv. no. 302



German speaking countries known as Jugendstil). The symbolist artists of Central Europe, who expressed themselves through the codes of Art Nouveau, formed groups toward the end of the century with the indicatively revolutionary appellation of Sezession, which suggests a break with academicism. Gysis was a member of the Munich Sezession, which was founded in 1892 under the leadership of Franz von Stuck. The Art Nouveau style, which influenced all the arts, is characterized by a superficial awareness of form and a strong decorative inclination. The arabesque, the complacent curved line, the floral and vegetative motifs which cover the painting surface, are found in the works of many representatives of Symbolism throughout Europe, such as Franz von Stuck, Klinger, Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Edvard Munch (1863-1944), and Gustave Moreau (1826-1898), to name but a few.

Nevertheless, Gysis did not allow this unhealthy graphism to undermine his vigorous and manly style, except in rare cases, and especially in his graphic arts work, which is important. The Art Nouveau style would achieve great success in Greece at the turn of the century and would maintain its resistance for a long time, even until the period between the wars.

Nikolaos Gysis
 (1842-1901)
**After the Annihilation
 of Psara, [1896-1898]**
 Oil on canvas
 133 x 188 cm
 Purchased by the G. Averoff
 Bequest, inv. no. 460





Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)
**Behold the Celestial
Bridegroom Cometh**
[1899-1900]
Oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm
inv. no. 641

Mature Bourgeois Portraits

IOANNIS
DOUKAS

NIKOLAOS
GYSIS

GEORGIOS
IAKOVIDIS

NIKEPHOROS
LYTRAS

ARISTEIDIS
VAROUCHAS

NIKOLAOS
XYDIAS

Nikephoros Lytras
(1832-1904)

**Lysandros
Kafantzoglou**

c. 1886

Oil on canvas, 190 x 124 cm

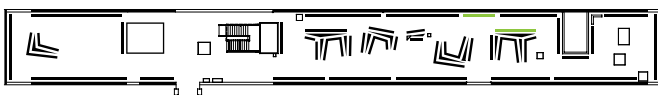
Lysimachos Kafantzoglou

Bequest, inv. no. 645

Mature bourgeois portraits present a picture of the wealthy bourgeoisie, which was created under the government of Charilaos Trikoupis during the final quarter of the 19th century. Bankers, industrialists, merchants, shipowners, and wealthy landowners, as well as certain intellectuals, would for many decades constitute the ideal clientele for the great painters of the School of Munich, with Nikephoros Lytras (1832-1904) and Georgios Iakovidis (1853-1932) in the vanguard.

There are many elements which distinguish mature portraits from the earlier ones: first of all the horizon of reception. The portraits of this category are addressed to the highest social class with its advanced urban cultivation, considerable refinement, close contacts with Europe and a completely different context of life. The rich bourgeoisie of Athens lived in luxurious neoclassical mansions, which had space available for works of large dimensions, the people were dressed according to the latest word in European fashion and competed among themselves in a show of narcissistic good taste. All this explains the commissions for individual and, more rarely, family portraits done by the most renowned painters of "fashion", as well as the monumental size of these works, which often depict their models in full body poses, life-size and, sometimes, more than life-size.

Greek portraiture in its early stage was limited to presenting the depicted person as a bust or in three-quarters profile in rigid and rather clumsy poses, which are strongly reminiscent of the early photographic portraits. Moreover, the dialectical relationship between the newly discovered photography and painting has been confirmed. Furthermore, it is not by chance that many painters hastened to become photographers out of fear of losing their clientele to this new "diabolical" invention which faithfully reproduced reality. The Margaritis brothers (Philippos, 1810-1892 and Georgios, 1814-1884) opened the first photography studio in Athens, in the middle of the century. The spread of photography gave all classes the great democratic privilege of being depicted photographically and limited the charm of having one's image immortalized by the hand of a major painter to the few.

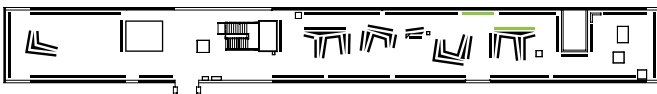




The wealthy bourgeois class would find in the figure of Nikephoros Lytras (1832-1904) its poet. The full-body monumental portrait of the great architect and director of the National Technical University, Lysandros Kafantzoglou (1811-1885) gives us an emblematic image of this refined and contemplative intellectual in his "studiolo", in keeping with the model of similar Renaissance works. Painted with incomparable mastery, which combines precision and freedom in the brushwork with very warm, delicate color harmonies, could be compared to the most beautiful examples of European portraiture. A sudden dark thought casts its shadow on the handsome face of the mature man, who interrupts his study in order to concentrate on an invisible threat. Nikephoros Lytras is shown as an astute psychologist, living up to his own exhortation: "the portrait painter must draw from his depicted models what they are feeling in their deepest part of their soul" (X. Sochos, *Ελληνες Καλλιτέχναι*, Athens 1929, p. 42).

The full-body female portraits of Nikephoros Lytras are at one and the same time character studies and painting accomplishments. *Clémence Serpieri* (1869), *Madame Saroglou* (1891), *Lady with White Gloves* (*Marianthi Charilaou*, 1895-1900), are masterpieces of this type. Comparing the austere elegance of the models with their bejewelled garments and the jewellery seen in early female portraits, we confirm the high cultivation of wealthy bourgeois Athenian society at the end of the century. It is worth letting our eyes wander and savor the sensual painting quality of the symphony in white, which unfolds over the entire painting surface in the portrait of Marianthi Charilaou: the white dress is projected on a similar flat white background painted with free gestures. Lytras writes the symphony of a great colorist, playing with the iridescent whites of warm and cool tones, where the broken-up ochres and lilacs dominate. The only strong tone in this pulsing symphony of whites are the violets in the décolletage, which harmonize the dark hair and the fringe on the umbrella of the elegant Athenian woman. Even the pose, with the sudden turn of the head, shows a great painter, who is in absolute control of his expressive means.

The portraits of Lytras are the swan song of a great European tradition, which started in the 15th century with the Renaissance in Italy



Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)
Telemachos Gysis

c. 1890
Oil on wood, 40 x 32 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 4

Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)
The Artist's Daughter

c. 1880
Oil on canvas, 23 x 18 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 53

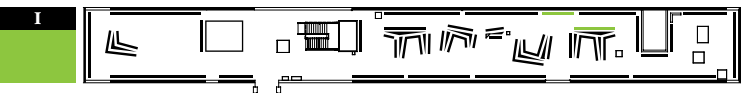


Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)
Artemis Gysi, 1890
Oil on canvas, 100 x 75 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 251

and Flanders, when the human being, after the long theocratic period of the Middle Ages, once more became the center "of all things" in agreement with the principal of the sophist Protagoras. But already by the time Lytras was painting these masterpieces, the impressionists had driven this type of portrait into decline. André Malraux confirmed that E. Manet (1832-1883) was modern, precisely because his portraits speak more about the painter and his style than about the personality and the truth of the model (G. Picon, *1863: Naissance de la peinture moderne*, SKIRA, 1974, p. 153). This characteristic sign of modernism can be traced in Greek painting to around the end of the century. Then we begin to find portraits where the style, the setting down of the line tends to outweigh the importance of the depicted person. The portrait of *Artemis Gysi*, which portends the aesthetics of Sezession, *Lady with a Dog* by Mathiopoulos, employing the Parisian style of Art Nouveau, the *plein air* portrait of Iakovidis, *The Artist's Wife with their Son*, all belong to this category.



Aristeidis Varouchas
(mid.-19th cent.)
**Gentleman Reading
a Newspaper**, 1882
Oil on canvas, 45 x 36 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 685





Ioannis Doukas
(1838/41-1916)
**The Wife of the
Greek Ambassador
in Paris**, c. 1869
Oil on canvas, 73 x 59 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 115



Nikolaos Xydias
(1826-1909)
Portrait of a Woman
c. 1870
Oil on canvas, 92 x 72.5 cm
Donation of S. Theocharis
inv. no. 4518

The Nude

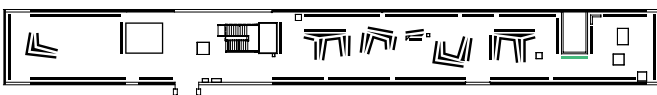
POLYCHRONIS
LEMBESIS
NIKEPHOROS
LYTRAS

The nude, as an independent category, returned to art after the eclipse of the Middle Ages, around the middle of the Quattrocento (15th century). In the beginning, it retained its Gothic inflexibility, the narrow shoulders, the protruding belly and the *déhanchement* of Eve, found in medieval depictions. Even the *Aphrodite* by Botticelli (1444 or 1445-1510) is burdened by the fact that the nude body had been long forgotten even though it did imitate the Aphrodite of the Medici. The proportions of the ancient Aphrodite, the ease of her pose with the harmonious interchange (the crossing of the movements) would only be dealt with by the classics, da Vinci (Leonardo da Vinci, 1452-1519), Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio, 1483-1520) and Titian (Tiziano Vecellio, 1487-1576).

From that time on, with minor exceptions, it became an institution that every nude shown in painting would have Aphrodite as its model, that it would be "dressed" with the triumphal nudity of the goddess of love. The exceptions were many and frequently created a scandal. We will mention only one: *Nude Maya* (c. 1800) by Goya (Francisco Goya, 1746-1828). *Olympia* (1865) by Manet (Edouard Manet, 1832-1883) was another violation of the rule of this double code (Model+Aphrodite = Nude in art) and was to be a scandal/landmark in modern art. These had been preceded by the demythologized nudes of the realist Courbet (Gustave Courbet, 1819-1877) which also caused a scandal in the middle of the 19th century.

What position did the female nude have in modern Greek art, in a conservative society which could not tolerate the teaching via a nude model in the School of Art throughout the entire 19th century? Indeed, instruction at the School, which in any case was male dominated, was given only with a male model. Iakovidis (Georgios Iakovidis, 1853-1932), as director, established the study of the nude female model in 1904. Young women were accepted at the School, in a separate section for "young ladies", starting in 1894. In 1898, there were approximately seventy female students in this special section, alongside the approximately eighty male students. During that same period there were no more than ten female students in all the other university schools. Starting in 1901, and again at the initiative of Iakovidis, study at the School of Arts became co-educational.

The collections of the National Gallery contain quite a number of nudes, but with the pretext of a mythological theme (such as *Andromeda* by Kounelakis) as well as others without such an alibi, as fawning adulation



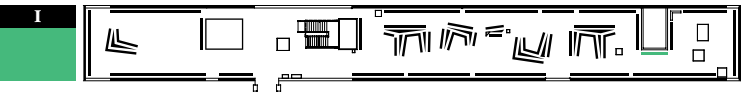


of feminine beauty or as a realistic study of the female body. Kounelakis (Nikolaos Kounelakis, 1829-1869) used this dual code in agreement with the model of his classic Italian teachers and Ingres (J.A. Dominique Ingres, 1780-1867). *Woman Undressing*, with its round, polished forms, and the reduction to completely stereometric shapes, is reminiscent of Ingres' nudes.

The *Nude* by Nikephoros Lytras (1832-1904) repeats the pose of the *Aphrodite* by Velázquez (1599-1660) but reverses it. A comparison with it is instructive. The nude by the Spanish painter is more realistic. Here the strict Greek teacher wants to weave a hymn to the unblemished youth of the young girl. No incident, no failing disturbs the delicate melodic lines of this body, which unfolds before the eyes of the spectator the lovely curves of her back and buttocks.

The *Female Nude* by Polychronis Lembesis (1848-1913), practically in the same pose, gives us a realistic rendering of the female body without any make-up or idealization.

Polychronis Lembesis
(1848-1913)
Nude, c. 1877
Oil on canvas, 87 x 116 cm
inv. no. 2216





Nikephoros Lytras
(1832-1904)

Nude, c. 1867-1870

Oil on canvas, 86 x 118 cm

M. Embeirikos Bequest

inv. no. 3033

Still Life

NIKOLAOS

GYSIS

ALEXANDROS

KALLOUDIS

POLYCHRONIS

LEMBESIS

PERICLIS

PANTAZIS

NIKOLAOS

VOKOS

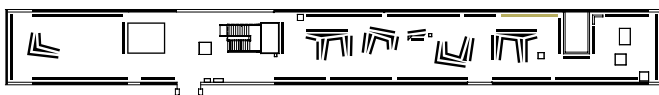
NIKOLAOS

XYDIAS

The term still life, *natura morta*, was introduced into Italian art terminology in the 18th century. At the time, *natura morta* was still thought to be a second class form of painting and was juxtaposed to the "noble" *natura vivente*, living nature, where the human being was protagonist. In the Low Countries, where in the 17th century this form was the favorite of the bourgeoisie and enjoyed especial cultivation, the term for it that was to prevail in England and Germany came into being: still life or *Stilleben*, the tranquil life, the tranquil motif, in opposition to the movement that characterizes the living model.

By the time that Caravaggio (M. Merisi da Caravaggio, 1573-1610) painted, around 1600, one of the first still lifes in history, a vibrant basket with fruit, painting had already signed its declaration of independence. It had implicitly declared its desire to stop telling stories and to be autonomous, to be self-signifying. Still life speaks to the viewer through a variety and melody of shapes, a wealth of texture, through a harmony of colors and the structure and rhythm of the composition. Naturally, still life depicts material goods, objects, meals, sweets, fruit, and flowers. That is why it is bourgeois painting *par excellence*, immortalizing moments of pleasure and symbolizing prosperity and is thus destined to ornament dining and drawing rooms. Oil painting is a technique which permits the painter to bring forth the texture of the various objects and to emphasize their material presence, their tangible quality. There is, nevertheless, a category of still life that refers through specific codes to one subject alone: *vanitas*. A skull, an extinguished candle, an hourglass, a symbol of passing time, a half-finished meal serve to remind us of the vanity of worldly things. This kind of still life is part of the repertoire of Roman Catholic subject matter and does not correspond to the horizon of expectation of a Greek clientele.

Still life developed in Greece during the final quarter of the 19th century and corresponded to the demands of the new bourgeois class. In 1899 (4 April) a columnist for the newspaper *Εμπρός*, who wrote under the *nom de plume* Rip, commenting on an exhibition at the Zappeion Hall, confirmed with pleasure and humor that, "there was a reduction of the cataclysm of *nature morte* which transformed last year's Artistic Exhibition into a section of the fruit and vegetable market."





Nikolaos Xydias
(1826-1909)

**Still Life with
Artichokes**

c. 1875-1885

Oil on canvas, 60 x 74 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 240



Polychronis Lembesis
(1848-1913)

Basket with Fruit
1878

Oil on canvas, 35 x 44 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 501

Nikolaos Gysis (1842-1901), who enriched his compositions with superb still lifes, honored this category of art with several masterpieces, even though, as he mentions in a letter, he did it as a pastime, "playing at it". Infrequent and prized are the still lifes of Nikephoros Lytras (1832-1904) while Nikolaos Vokos (1859-1902) served this discipline with the academic precision of an old Dutch painter. Conventional, though often attractive, are the still lifes of Georgios Iakovidis (1853-1932). Alexandros Kalloudis (1850/1853-1923), who studied in Paris and specialized in still life, gave his objects a fuzzy quality with a delicate colorist feel, reminiscent of the French teacher of still life J.B. Siméon Chardin (1699-1779). Periklis Pantazis (1849-1884) would paint many still lifes where we can observe the development of his style from dark and thick colors to the liberation of his brushstroke and luminous impressionist colors. In this course we can also divine the changing of the guard in his models and his teachers: from Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) to Edouard Manet (1832-1883).



Periklis Pantazis
(1849-1884)
Vase with Flowers
c. 1875-1877
Oil on canvas, 99 x 75 cm
inv. no. 3544



Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)

Still Life, c. 1890

Oil on canvas, 54 x 80 cm

Purchased by the G. Averoff
Bequest, inv. no. 549



Nikolaos Gysis
(1842-1901)

Flowers, before 1895

Oil on canvas, 58 x 42 cm

Purchased by the G. Averoff
Bequest, inv. no. 463

Dialogue with Light and Color The First Impressionist Signs Impressionistic Remnants

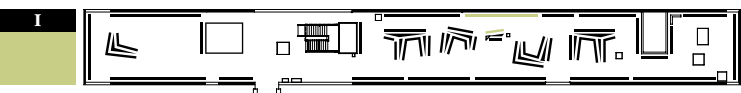
IOANNIS
ALTAMOURAS
UMVERTOS
ARGYROS
VASILEIOS
CHATZIS
GEORGIOS
CHATZOPOULOS
NIKOLAOS
FEREKEIDIS
THALEIA
FLORA-KARAVIA
ODYSSEAS
FOKAS
GEORGIOS
IAKOVIDIS
SOFIA
LASKARIDOU
POLYCHRONIS
LEMBESIS
PAVLOS
MATHIOPOULOS
PERICLIS
PANTAZIS
THEODOROS
RALLIS

Specialization is a characteristic of urban consumer society. In the field of the history of art this phenomenon is observed for the first time

to any large extent in the Protestant urban society of the Netherlands in the 17th century, after its independence and its separation from Catholic Flanders. Moreover, landscape painting developed there as a particular kind of painting. The "realistic" landscapes of the Low Countries would become the prototype for the revival of interest in nature that took place during the 19th century.

Neoclassicism, as with any classical art, is anthropocentric. Nature is absent from the work of its painters or simply is noted as a context for human action. The interest in nature was awoken by the Romantic movement. Nature as seen by Romanticism, however, is not a realistic but rather a sentimental projection, a stage set, which translates emotions, passions, and moods. It frequently embodies the idea of the "sublime", which constitutes the essence of the romantic aesthetic. Revelation, the struggle with the elements of nature, the bittersweet relations of the human being, sometimes with nature-mother and other times with nature-stepmother are the basic elements of romantic landscape painting.

The turn toward nature was, nevertheless, fostered and completed by realism. Positivism, the crisis in and gradual abandonment of traditional subjects (myth, history) and the turn toward a "pure" and incorruptible nature, which is juxtaposed to the teeming urban centers of the first industrial revolution, make up the historical context of this phenomenon. The group of French painters who, around the middle of the 19th century, formed an artistic community in a small village in the woods of Fontainebleau near Paris, has become known as the Barbizon School. These painters were the first ones to take their easels to the subject itself and endeavor to render the spectacle they had before their eyes artlessly, opening the way to *plein air* painting: Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867), Charles François Daubigny (1817-1878), Narcisse V. Diaz de la Peña (1807-1876) and others. Until that time, the painter took "notes" on his motifs in



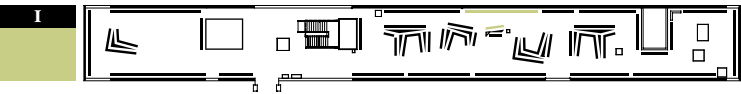


Konstantinos Volanakis (1837-1907)
Outside the Harbor, c. 1872
Oil on canvas, 48 x 96 cm, inv. no. 3703

IAKOVOS
RIZOS
GEORGIOS
ROÏLOS
SYMEON
SAVIDIS
EPAMEINONDAS
THOMOPOULOS
SPYROS
VIKATOS
KONSTANTINOS
VOLANAKIS
MARKOS
ZAVITZIANOS



Konstantinos Volanakis (1837-1907)
Festival in Munich (The Circus), 1876
Oil on canvas, 60 x 130 cm
A. Zachariou Bequest, inv. no. 1398





Konstantinos Volanakis
(1837-1907)

Ships at Anchor

c. 1886-1890

Oil on canvas, 112 x 212 cm

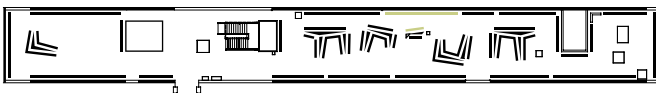
G. Trapantzis Bequest

inv. no. 642

order to later refine them in the final painting done in his workshop. This was even done by the realist Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). The painters of the Barbizon School prepared the ground for impressionism. The Frenchman J.B. Camille Corot (1796-1875) and the Englishmen John Constable (1776-1837), Richard Parkes Bonington (1802-1828) and J.M. William Turner (1775-1851) can, in their freest studies, be considered as the forerunners of impressionism.

The exodus from the shadowy workshop to the brilliant light of the outdoors was a revelation for painters. There they became aware that the image of nature was being ceaselessly transformed by the flow of time and the change of light, that strong, natural colors bore no relationship to the browns, greys, and whites of traditional landscape painting, that the academic technique, laborious and slow, was inadequate for conceiving of things in their flow and interpreting nature as a continual state of becoming and not just an event. Thus, impressionism was born. A form of painting that aspired to capture the momentary impression, before it was elaborated by the intellect and imprisoned within the mould of tradition. The watchword for impressionist painters was *nature contre culture*. Through the assistance of the physiology of vision and optics, they broke light down into the pure colors that composed it, creating a semiology which did not imitate but rather interpreted the action of light. The impressionists worked with unadulterated colors, just as they came out of the tube, resorting to supplementary tones to increase the brilliance and the luminosity and thus managed to translate the feel of the vibrance of the real outdoors. At the same time, they revitalized their technique: they painted with short, feverish brushstrokes and invited the eye of the viewer to actively participate in the genesis of the work, and in the poetics of the image, rather than remain passive as before. Their paintings glow with luminosity, pulse and color and transmit to the viewer the vitality of euphoria.

Impressionism, a purely French movement, had its immediate forerunners and main representatives. Edouard Manet (1832-1883), Eugène Boudin (1824-1898), and Johan B. Jongkind (1819-1891) prepared the way along which the great painters of the movement would move: Claude Monet (1840-1926), Pierre A. Renoir (1841-





Ioannis Altamouras
(1852-1878)
Copenhagen Harbor
1874
Oil on canvas, 30 x 43 cm
A. Benakis Bequest
inv. no. 2087



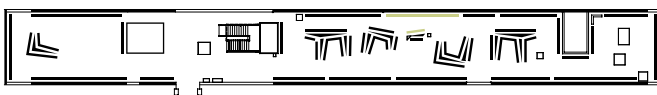
Ioannis Altamouras
(1852-1878)
Boat on the Shore
1874
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm
inv. no. 3312



Vasileios Chatzis
(1870-1915)
Shipyard with Boat
c. 1910
Oil on canvas, 50 x 66 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 257

1919), Camille Pissaro (1830-1903), Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) and others. In 1874 the impressionists, who were not accepted by the official salon, exhibited for the first time in an informal space, Nadar's photography studio. This would be followed by other exhibitions. Their revolution would be slow in breaching the public's conservative horizon of reception. One of the artists, Cézanne, would react to the dissolution of form and would suggest a rebuilding of form; nevertheless he retained the basic doctrine of impressionism: the analysis of light into units of color, which he would then transform into elements of structure. His reaction would be followed by others (neo-impressionism, the Nabis, symbolism, and expressionism to name a few) which are connected with great forerunners of modern art such as Georges Seurat (1859-1891), Van Gogh (1853-1890) and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903).

Did all of these messages manage to reach artistically backward Greece? How were they assimilated or distorted? The student of modern Greek art is called on to answer these questions. In a preceding chapter we encountered the romantic landscape painting of ruins. A "realistic" landscape painting slowly came into being during the final quarter of that century, that is when in France the impressionist revolution had made itself manifest. *Plein air* preoccupations and impressionist frolicking were to be encountered in many Greek painters, such as Konstantinos Volanakis (1837-1907), his student Vasileios Chatzis (1870-1915), and Ioannis Altamouras (1852-1878). Indeed, the latter, who died prematurely, penetrated so deeply into the philosophy (phenomenology of the visible) and the technique of impressionism that he could be considered one of its forerunners on a European level. His studies in Copenhagen helped him avoid the pitfalls of the academicism of Munich. Volanakis alternated free studies employing impressionistic technique and genuine *plein air* feeling, with constricted and severe seascapes, faithful to the Dutch model. Here it would be worthwhile investigating the role of the horizon of expectation of a specific clientele, which was directly related to the development of the harbor of Piraeus and the creation of a commercial fleet of steamships which replaced the sailing ships. It must be assumed that the *nouveau riche* shipowners, who were conservative in taste, would be the clients





Polychronis Lembesis (1848-1913)

The Areopagus, 1880

Oil on canvas, 62,5 x 95 cm. Zoe A. Soutzos Bequest, inv. no. 2424



Periklis Pantazis (1849-1884)

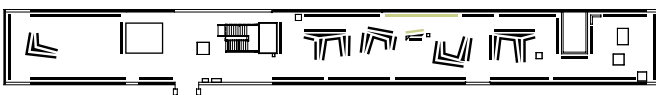
The Areopagus, [1880]

Oil on canvas, 58 x 80 cm, inv. no. 3154

of the painters of ships. This helps explain how the early Volanakis, who had come into contact in Munich with the new painting quests of the French, was more daring than the established professor at the School of Arts. Two characteristic examples of this bipolar attitude are the *Festival in Munich* (1876) with the daring *mise-en-scène* and the free brushwork, which was painted during the time of the second impressionist exhibition in Paris, and the *Exodus of Ares* (1894) a commission done for the royal palace of Athens.

Periklis Pantazis (1849-1884) deviated from the traditional one-way road to Munich to end up, by way of Paris, in Brussels, after the Athens School of Arts. There, joining radical groups of Belgian artists, he would take part in the rejuvenation of painting, despite his premature death. His early works bear the clear mark of Courbet, both in subject matter (still lifes, landscapes, portraits and scenes from daily life) and in the thick application of color with its dark tones. The more mature paintings are connected to the early impressionists Manet and Boudin, in terms of their *plein air* quests and subject matter (northern coasts with figures, forms in the open air, women in interiors and children) and their free technique. Characteristic examples of impressionism of the German and the French type are given by two works on the subject of the *Areos Pagos* (1880) which were painted at the same time by two friends, Pantazis and Polychronis Lembesis (1848-1913). In German-speaking impressionism the luminous color with the supplementary warm and cool tones does not influence the unlined precision of the design. Conversely, in Pantazis the form dissolves under the energy of light and the role of its reconstitution is shifted to the viewer's retina.

The question is which one of these two painters was closer to the essential elements of Greek light? The light of the Greek south, particularly in the dry climate of Attica, describes volumes and shapes with sharp precision, without the gradations which distinguish the atmospheric landscapes of the north. This may be the main reason impressionism was not able to prosper in Greece. This supposition is confirmed by all Greek painters who even deep into the 20th century continued to paint "impressionistically": Odysseas



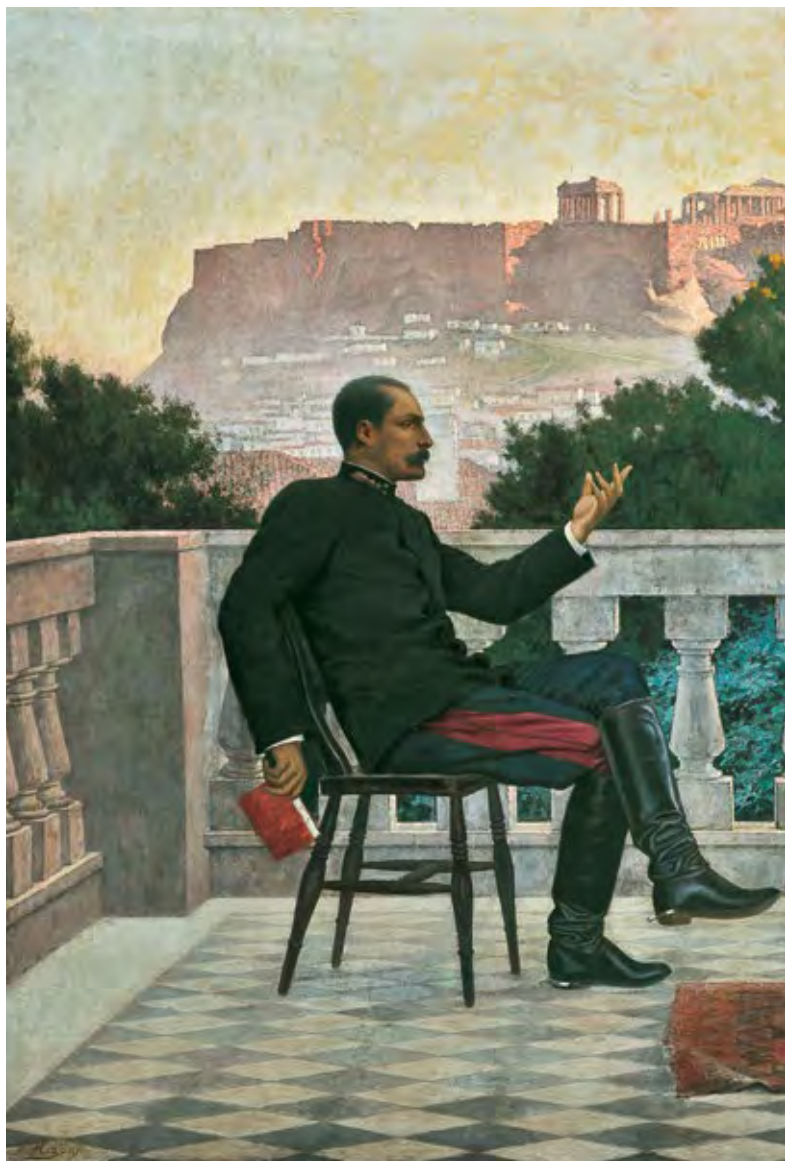


Periklis Pantazis
(1849-1884)
**A Lady with a Fan
Looking in a Mirror**
c. 1880-1882
Oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 553

Pavlos Mathiopoulos
(1876-1956)
**Lady with a Little
Dog**, 1899
Pastel, 200 x 100 cm
Donation of A. Benakis
inv. no. 1539

Iakovos Rizos
(1849-1926)
**Lady in Garden with
her Dog**, c. 1885-1890
Oil on canvas, 39 x 30 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 138





Iakovos Rizos
(1849-1926)

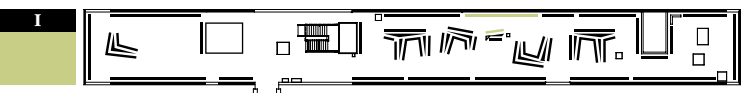
**On the Terrace
(Athenian Evening)**
1897

Oil on canvas

111 x 167 cm

Donation of the artist

inv. no. 1108

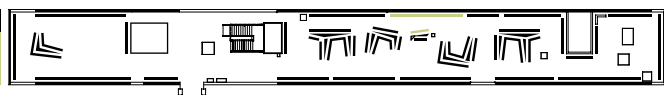




Fokas (1857-1946), Georgios Chatzopoulos (1859-1935), Nikolaos Ferekeidis (1862-1929), Georgios Roilos (1867-1928), Thaleia Flora-Karavia (1871-1960), Dimitrios Geraniotis (1871-1966), Umvertos Argyros (1882/1884-1963), Nikolaos Othonaios (1877/1880-1950), Epameinondas Thomopoulos (1878-1974), and Spyros Miliadis (1881-1965). Symeon Savidis (1859-1927) can be considered to be a true impressionist even though he came from the School of Munich. This of course holds true for his *plein air* works. Perhaps because through these studies on the relationship of light and color he was endeavoring to penetrate into the theoretical and scientific bases of the movement. His painting, with its iridescent colors, the constant refraction of light and the "rain" of white spots which animate the outdoor scenes, reminds us of the quests of Pierre A. Renoir (1841-1919) and transmits a similar feeling of joy.

At the end of the 19th century most Greek artists felt the need to open their palettes and revitalize their painting with the breeze of impressionism, independent of their origins. Characteristic of this is the example of Georgios Iakovidis (1853-1932): *Children's Concert*, which was exhibited at the Zappeion Hall in 1896, was enthusiastically received. The most perspicacious of the Greek critics of the period, Emmanuel Roidis, after analyzing the painting extensively, which "captivates and captures the eye", then called on the artist to improve his "coloring", confirming that "from this room, which Mr. Iakovidis has depicted so perfectly, only one thing is missing: a good fire to give it warmth" (*Ακρόπολις*, 1/6/1896). And it appears that the artist paid heed to the advice of the inspired writer, if one can judge by the monumental version of the same subject in the collections of the National Gallery, which was exhibited at the International Exhibition of Paris in 1900. But perhaps the most genuine *plein air* work by Iakovidis is *The Artist's Wife with their Son* (1895). The fact that the painting did not have a specific horizon of expectation allowed it to exhaust the limits of his *plein air* inquiry. The *mise-en-scène* of the subject, with the figures placed on the primary level opposite the light, has the unstudied immediacy of Manet, but the figures, squeezed into unimpaired outlines, do not lose any of their volume. But above all else, they do not lose their "humanity" and are not transformed into a purely painting motif. They are prese-

Georgios Iakovidis
(1853-1932)
**The Artist's Wife
with their Son**, 1895
Oil on canvas, 109 x 75 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 475







Georgios Iakovidis
(1853-1932)
**Children's
Concert**, 1900
Oil on canvas
176 x 250 cm
Purchased by the
G. Averoff Bequest
inv. no. 475



nces and figures which emphatically lay claim to the viewer's attention and establish a dialogue with him, while the grove situated behind them dissolves in the light.

The figure in the outdoors occupied a prime, even crucial, place among the plastic preoccupations of the impressionists. The *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* which engrossed Manet, Monet and other impressionist painters did not have as its only motive the command of modernism "to belong to your time and to paint what you see", but offered painters the opportunity to "incorporate", to weave together, forms and space with light used as the catalyst. In the collections at the National Gallery one will find many paintings that answer this challenge, some successfully, such as the small study by Theodoros Rallis, *Lady in the Country* (1893) and *Study for Color* (1910) by Savidis, while others are less successful, as their painters remained shackled to academic conventions. In any case, at the end of the 19th century painters, critics and the public were prepared for a renewal. All of them were praying for it and waiting for it, without being in a position to define it. And indeed it would not be slow in making its appearance.



Symeon Savidis
(1859-1927)
Color Study, 1910
Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 386



Symeon Savidis
(1859-1927)
**At the Chinese Tower
in Munich, 1915**
Oil on wood, 33 x 24 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 471

Symeon Savidis
(1859-1927)
**Boats in the
Bosphorus**
c. 1903-1908
Oil on canvas, 35 x 50 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 360

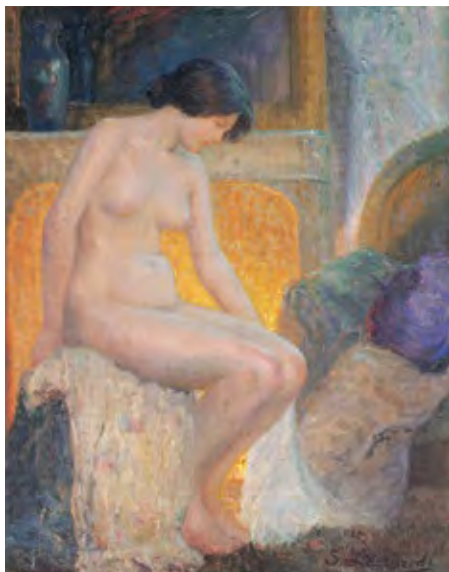




Umvertos Argyros
(1882/84-1963)
By the Window
1926
Oil on canvas, 100 x 85 cm
Donation of A. Vranas
inv. no. 5122



Markos Zavitzianos
(1884-1923)
On the Balcony
Oil on wood, 38X30 cm
inv. no. 2625



Sofia Laskaridou
(1882-1965)
**In Front of the
Fireplace**
c. 1913-1914
Oil on canvas
100 x 81 cm
S. Laskaridou Bequest
inv. no. 3507



Georgios Roilos
(1867-1928)
The Bugler, after 1897
Oil on wood, 51 x 36 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 550

Thaleia Flora-Karavia
(1871-1960)
**German Woman
in an Interior**, c. 1913
Oil on pasteboard
41 x 51 cm
Donation of the L. Ch. Floras
Family, inv. no. 4683



Spyros Vikatos
(1874/78-1960)
Christmas Tree
before 1932
Oil on canvas, 77 x 105 cm
inv. no. 484

Georgios Roilos
(1867-1928)
Rocks, c. 1925
Oil on canvas, 35 x 53 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 551



Georgios Chatzopoulos
(1859-1935)
**Landscape of Aigio
with the Corinthian
Gulf in the
Background**
c. 1915-1920
Oil on canvas, 87 x 110 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 660





Odysseas Fokas
(1857-1946)
Mount Hymettus
c. 1900
Oil on canvas
133 x 112.5 cm
O. Fokas Bequest
inv. no. 2617



Epameinondas
Thomopoulos
(1878-1976)
**The Beginning
of the Autumn**, [1929]
Oil on canvas, 100 x 65 cm
A. Benakis Bequest
inv. no. 2132



Nikolaos Ferekeidis
(1862-1929)
Oak, 1915
Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm
M. Embeirikos Bequest
inv. no. 3042

TOWARDS GREEK MODERNISM

1900-1922

Greek Light and Color

LYKOURGOS
KOGEVINAS
NIKOLAOS
LYTRAS
KONSTANTINOS
MALEAS
MICHALIS
OIKONOMOU
NIKOLAOS
OTHONAIOS
KONSTANTINOS
PARTHENIS
PAVLOS
RODOKANAKIS
THEOPHRASTOS
TRIANTAFYLLIDIS
PERIKLIS
VYZANTIOS
EMMANUEL
ZAÏRIS

The year 1900 did not constitute a watershed in the history of Greek art. Limits and watersheds are logical

inventions which facilitate researchers in the organization of their material. The currents we encounter in the waning 19th century penetrated deep into the 20th, while the new artistic quests had already been prepared. As I mentioned in the preceding chapter, the need for a change runs through the texts of that period. It simply had not coalesced into a form. Each critic preached the gospel with a different physiognomy and frequently its image was a contradictory hybrid. Munich had come to bore them, but Paris terrified them. They prayed that painters would expand their palettes and let them be flooded with Greek light, but at the same time, impressionism, which was already passé, seemed heretical to them. Its painters, according to Emmanuel Roidis, "Sought to impose themselves through abrupt contrasts and clashes of colors and daring decisions, what one might call a coup d'état of the paintbrush". The writer was led to these observations by the "pastels" of Pavlos Mathiopoulos (1876-1956), who was characterized as a "fanatical adherent of the heresy of the so-called *impressionistes*" (The critique of his exhibition at the Zappeion Hall, *Ακρόπολις*, 1/6/1896).

We will encounter similar contradictions several years later in the famous aesthetic writings of Periklis Yannopoulos, which set the theoretical bases for a painting that would be the epitome of "Greekness". This aesthete writer of *Η Ελληνική Γραμμή (The Greek Line)* (1904)* confirms the complete lack of aesthetic education of the Greeks, condemns "europeanization", which as an "imitation is not progress, but retrogression" and calls out loudly for a turn to the indigenous sources of Greek tradition and Greek nature. "The key to the understanding of ancient Greece, to the understanding of modern Greece, and to the understanding of Hellenism and the Hellene" was, for Yannopoulos, Byzantium, and this had been condemned by Europe. The historical continuity of Hellenism and the seeking of the past in the present, the ideological bases of his theory, had already been fashioned by the end of the 19th century.

* The references are to the recent publication of Periklis Yannopoulos, *Η Ελληνική Γραμμή και το Ελληνικό Χρώμα*, ed. "Νέα Ξύνορα" - Α.Α. Λιβάνη, Athens 1992.

The writer thought that no matter "what places in Europe" the artists had gone to study, they had been unable to create a National School for the Greek painting so "recently born" (pp. 22-23). He singled out





Konstantinos Parthenis (1878-1967)

Kalamata Harbor, 1911

Oil on canvas, 70 x 75 cm. Donation of the Ministry of Transportation, inv. no. 488



Konstantinos Parthenis (1878-1967)

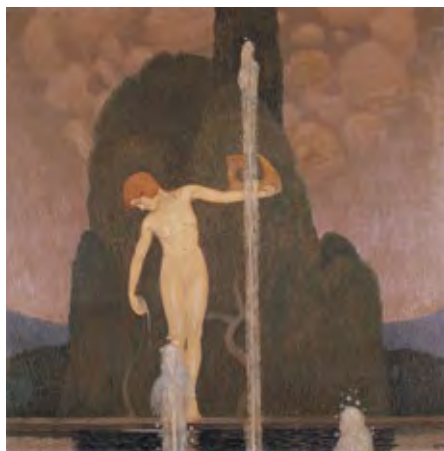
Landscape, c. 1909-1911

Oil on canvas, 24 x 32 cm. Donation of S. Partheni, inv. no. 6491

only Nikephoros Lytras (1832-1904), "the most poetic artist we have here", "whose creations are always noble and seemly", and praised to the skies Nikolaos Gysis (1842-1901), mourning his recent death (1901). What was it in this great teacher of the School of Munich that so moved Periklis Yannopoulos? In answering this question, we can also gain some idea of the form the writer envisioned for the Greek renaissance of art. "The great man of present-day Greece", Nikolaos Gysis, was characterized as a "creator of Greek art and form", which "does not spring from either the narrow imitation of the ancient or the equally narrow copying of present-day reality" (p. 24). His art, "directed by ancient teachings, finds its artistic expression in present-day life, which it expresses artistically" (p. 61) "Gysian art" was for the writer like a "twin sister" of ancient and Byzantine art. The work of Gysis moved him because it expressed in a poetic way the sublime ideas which were missing in other painters, because they were so often uneducated. It is obvious that Yannopoulos was referring to the idealistic, symbolic works of Gysis' mature creative period.

In all that we have just mentioned concerning the ideas and choices of this representative of Greek "aestheticism", and despite all the hellenocentric rhetoric, we find no obvious opening of a perspective for a Greek form of modernism. On the contrary, they expand the aesthetics of the symbolist currents which marked the end of the 19th century as one of the final outpourings of expiring romanticism. But they also express a reality in regard to the orientations of Greek intellect and chart the horizon of expectation to which were directed the subterranean and superterranean currents of Symbolism in Greek art right up to World War II, the outstanding figure being Konstantinos Parthenis: a follower of Gysis, purified by the light of Attica, precisely the way Periklis Yannopoulos wanted it. Had this intellectual artist indeed been influenced by the texts of the romantic suicide? We don't know. But what we can maintain with certainty is that the mature Parthenis (1878-1967), through his luminous and ethereal allegories and idealistic visions, where antiquity and Byzantium are to be found in harmonic interaction, fulfilled the daring expectations of Yannopoulos concerning the creation of a truly Greek form of painting. And this independently of the influences of Viennese and French symbolism, which persistently appeared in his work.





Pavlos Rodokanakis
(1891-1958)
Harmony, c. 1919
Oil on canvas
111 x 108 cm
inv. no. 4186

Konstantinos Parthenis
(1878-1967)
The Slope, 1908
Oil on canvas
96 x 92 cm
inv. no. 458



The true innovation in the theoretical writings of Periklis Yannopoulos lie in the way in which he saw and interpreted the aesthetic and plastic singularity of the Greek outdoors. Despite the idealistic and ideological nuances of this "revelation", which can also be traced in the modern poetry of Sikelianos, these elevated descriptions are based on observation. And it is precisely for this reason they could serve as a steadfast guide for painters, who were endeavoring at the beginning of the century to create a genuine and modern Greek form of plein air painting, something outside academic formulas and foreign models. Behind the nationalistic transport, the references back to the theory of Hippolyte Taine that "each country fashions the human being in its own image" (p. 83), and the poetic elevation, the *Ελληνική Γραμμή* (*The Greek Line*) tracks down the elements needed for the identity of the Greek outdoors and makes note of the objective difficulties involved in its painterly interpretation. The pitiless light and the dryness of the climate make the line act as the protagonist. Each and every shape is "written" with transparency and clarity, even the most remote. The "ethereal" and "immaterial" light lightens the volumes and the colors, restricting their scale. Light and shadow vary only slightly. "Black nowhere...light everywhere...exquisite lines everywhere ...placidity, grace, exhilaration" (p. 91).

Describing the line of the Greek countryside, Yannopoulos augurs the paintings of Maleas, Parthenis, and Papaloukas, where the beloved curve of Art Nouveau is slowly developed, dressed in Greek attire: "It is obvious that this one single line, ascending most gently, descending most sweetly, undulating in great, calm waves, ascending harmoniously, descending symmetrically, through this process creates beautiful, rounded shapes, eventually soaring upward with vigorous, adolescent suppleness...and returning again to a gentle rhythm" (p. 91).

The divisive tendencies which characterized criticism – insistence on idealistic subjects along with the invitation to create a Greek form of modernism – can also be traced in the creation itself as it is found in the opening two decades of our century, as our colleague Antonis Kotidis confirmed for us (*20th Century. The First Thirty Years*, in *National Gallery. 100 Years*, Athens 1999). Despite that, this is the first, and perhaps the last time, with only a few exceptions, that the Greek countryside constituted an object of serious painterly speculation. Using as their models French post-impressionism, Fauvism and the Nabis,

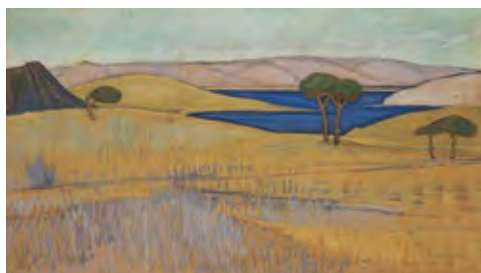




Konstantinos Maleas
(1879-1928)
**Thermos,
Aitoloakarnania**
[1921]
Oil on cardboard
41.5 x 47 cm
inv. no. 3713



Nikolaos Othonaios
(1877/80-1950)
Spring on Mount Oitis
c. 1933
Oil on canvas, 138 x 86 cm
A. Benakis Bequest
inv. no. 2077



Konstantinos Maleas
(1879-1928)
Lavrio, c. 1918-1920
Oil on cardboard
51 x 90 cm
inv. no. 2603

Nikolaos Lytras
(1883-1927)

The Straw Hat

c. 1925

Oil on canvas, 86 x 66 cm
inv. no. 492

Parthenis, Maleas (1879-1928), Papaloukas (1892-1957) and others would endeavor to and would find a color ideogram for Greek light. The same thing would be achieved, using German expressionistic models, by that very daring painter Nikolaos Lytras (1883-1927). Their works are effortlessly incorporated in the spirit of modernism, as they tend toward a self-signification of the forms: they abolish the third dimension, simplify the form, and use pure and luminous colors. Of course, alongside these "modern *plein air* paintings", there were also landscapes with symbolic connotations as well as allegories, which nevertheless made use of the same plastic language.

The most innovative painters would get together in 1917 in the *Omas Techni* (Art Group) (see the relevant article by Evgenios Matthiopoulos). Their radical views were in harmony with the new liberal ideas, which had been advanced to the forestage of political life by the revolt of 1909 and the government of Eleftherios Venizelos. The conservative artists gathered from 1910 on in the *League of Greek Artists*, under the presidency of Georgios Iakovidis. These organizations express the conflict between the academic establishment and the new progressive forces, which would find a favorable horizon of reception among their intellectuals and the politicians of liberal persuasion. The rejuvenation in art followed and expressed the rejuvenation of political and social life.



Nikolaos Lytras
(1883-1927)

**Sailboat
(Panormos, Tinos)**

c. 1925

Oil on canvas, 57 x 73 cm
inv. no. 467







Konstantinos Maleas
(1879-1928)
Santorini
c. 1924-1925
Oil on canvas, 75 x 107 cm
Donation of E. Malea
inv. no. 673



Lykourgos Kogevinas
(1887-1940)
Corfiote Landscape
c. 1924
Oil on canvas, 89 x 130 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 1423



Theophrastos
Triantafyllidis
(1881-1955)
**Two Children on
the Beach, 1919**
Oil on canvas, 54.5 x 75 cm
inv. no. 3288





Michalis Oikonomou
(1888-1933)
Hydra, c. 1930-1931
Oil on canvas, 62 x 50 cm
Collection of the E. Koutlidis
Foundation, inv. no. 595

Michalis Oikonomou
(1888-1933)
Red Awning
c. 1927-1928
Oil on pasteboard
45 x 56 cm
inv. no. 2601





Nikolaos Lytras (1883-1927)
Portrait of Mrs Lytra, c. 1919-1921
Oil on canvas, 110 x 84 cm, inv. no. 496



Periklis Vyzantios
(1893-1972)
Aurélie, [1914]
Oil on wood, 32 x 45 cm
inv. no. 5179



Emmanuel Zairis
(1876/78-1948)
Women Ironing
Oil on canvas, 88 x 112 cm
inv. no. 454



THE PERIOD BETWEEN WARS 1922-1940

From Perception to Conception

SPYROS
PAPALOUKAS
KONSTANTINOS
PARTHENIS

The period between the wars did not have the same chronological span in

Greece as it did in the rest of Europe. This period began in Europe at the end of World War I, with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in January 1919. In Greece, the period between the wars is identified with a bloody milestone: the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922. The tragic epilogue of the Asia Minor campaign would bring to a violent close the climate of national euphoria and optimism which had been created by the victories in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and the new enlarged Greece for which Eleftherios Venizelos was responsible. The pyre of Smyrna and the tragedy of the displaced Greeks uprooted from Ionia would mark the final condemnation of the utopian "Great Idea".

A number of artists experienced the tragedy of the Asia Minor Disaster at first hand. Fotis Kontoglou (1896-1965) from Ayvalik saw his homeland vanish along with the age-old centers of Hellenism on the shores of Asia Minor. His friend Spyros Papaloukas, who had followed the campaign as a military painter, saw the rich harvest of his works obliterated in the flames that burned Smyrna to the ground. The following year, 1923, Papaloukas set out with another person from Asia Minor, the writer Stratis Doukas, for Mt. Athos, where they would remain for an entire year living a hermit's life and studying Byzantium and the unique natural surroundings of Mt. Athos. Fotis Kontoglou would join them a while later on this purifying and cathartic pilgrimage, destined to open new horizons for Greek thought and orientations to art.

I think we can characterize the Twenties as transitional. It was a period of intense spiritual agitation and behind-the-scenes activity, which would bear fruit during the following decade and put its mark on the artistic creation of the so-called "Generation of the Thirties". In reality, the "heretical", that is, innovative painters of the previous decade now became the protagonists of artistic life and indeed, perhaps for the first time, they had the official support of progressive governments. Parthenis worked closely with the Venizelos government and had its full backing. On 15 January, the imposing Parthenis' retrospective, comprised of 240 works,



Konstantinos Parthenis
(1878-1967)

Music

Decorated Piano Lid
before 1920

Oil on wood, 144 x 140 cm

Donation of S. Partheni

inv. no. 6458







Konstantinos Parthenis
(1878-1967)

**The Benefits
of Communication**

c. 1925

Oil on canvas, 79 x 174 cm
inv. no. 494

was launched at the Zappeion Hall. In addition to his close friend Alexandros Papanastasiou, there were several Venizelian politicians on the organizational committee responsible for this exhibition. In March of the same year, Eleftherios Venizelos himself awarded the Prize in Letters and Arts to him. The advisor to the Prize committee was Zacharias Papantoniou who had replaced Iakovidis as the Director of the National Gallery in 1918. In 1923 Parthenis would design the emblem for the "Democratic Union of Greece", Papanastasiou's party, which would come to power in 1924. The same year the painter did the first of the three portraits he dedicated to him. In 1929 Parthenis was appointed professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts by a legislative regulation of the Venizelos government. Indisputable proof of the progressive good taste of the Venizelians were the works that ornamented the Liberal Club. They had already been purchased in 1917 from the first exhibition of the Art Group. (See E. Matthiopoulos, *Η συμμετοχή της Ελλάδας στην Μπιεννάλε της Βενετίας, 1934-1940*, vol. III. Unpublished doctoral dissertation at the University of Crete).

The artists in the Art Group, which had been formed at the initiative of Nikolaos Lytras in 1917, had exhibited in 1919 at the Parisian gallery La Boétie, carrying out the wishes of Venizelos himself, who was there at the peace conference. The negative reception of the exhibition by the press revealed the limits of the so-called Greek "avant-garde". L. Vauxcelles, who criticized them harshly, calling them imitators, was the "godfather" who had baptized two avant garde movements, Fauvism (*Gil Blas*, 1905) and Cubism (*Gil Blas*, 1908). How could he charitably view and assess the true plastic values of works which were reminiscent of the post-impressionist and symbolist quests of the end of the 19th century? The premature death of two of the most important representatives of this early Greek modernism, Nikolaos Lytras (1883-1927) and Konstantinos Maleas (1879-1928), would bring their creative careers to a precipitate end. Their work essentially constitutes a continuation of the quests and achievements, they had completed in the preceding decade. In 1923 Nikolaos Lytras was elected professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts, a running along with Parthenis. His choice was at





Konstantinos Parthenis
(1878-1967)
**The Battle of Heracles
and the Amazons**
c. 1922
Oil on canvas, 115 x 131 cm
Donation of S. Partheni
inv. no. 6503



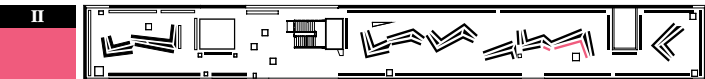
Konstantinos Parthenis
(1878-1967)
Women Bathing
before 1919
Oil on canvas
114 x 130.5 cm
Donation of S. Partheni
inv. no. 6504

the time considered a conservative victory of Munich over the new School of Paris. In reality, Nikolaos Lytras represented one of the purest forms of expressionist modernism, even if it did come from Munich. Thus the Academy received its first blow, and from within.

The Art Group dissolved and was reconstituted a few years later, with a different composition, on the day after Venizelos' return to power (1929). The Art Group 1930, as it dubbed itself, was destined to play a leading role in the artistic life of the Thirties.

But let us see what changes can be noted in the Twenties in the work of the two main figures of Greek modernism and if these warrant the title "from perception to conception", which we put forward as the working hypothesis of this chapter. Papaloukas never lost touch with the tangible world, with nature. In his work he endeavored to remould the "natural cohesion" which unifies things. If we compare the early works, small in size, he painted as exercises in redemptive psychotherapy – or better light-therapy – on Aegina immediately after his return from Asia Minor and before his experiences on Mt. Athos and his study of Byzantine art, we will confirm important differences in them, both in the articulation of the image and the choice of colors used in the works. The transparent, delicate shades of the small lyrical works from Aegina would be replaced by the prescriptive intervention of the Byzantine scale, where the main role is played by the earthy colors (ochres, siennas) and their supplementary greys and blues. The curved lined rhythm of the composition, which characterized most of the representatives of early Greek modernism, now encountered the schematic forms of Byzantine art.

Papaloukas would set down his new experience in a complex work, which would also come to constitute the most productive proposal for the renewal of Byzantine iconography: the decoration of the Cathedral Church of Amfissa (1927-1932). Modernism and Byzantium would find a way to be reconciled in this daring iconographic whole. The critical committee who entrusted the work to Papaloukas was comprised of four of the most luminous representatives of hellenocentric modernism: the architects Dimitrios Pikionis and Aristotelis Zachos, the byzantinologist





Spyros Papaloukas
(1892-1957)

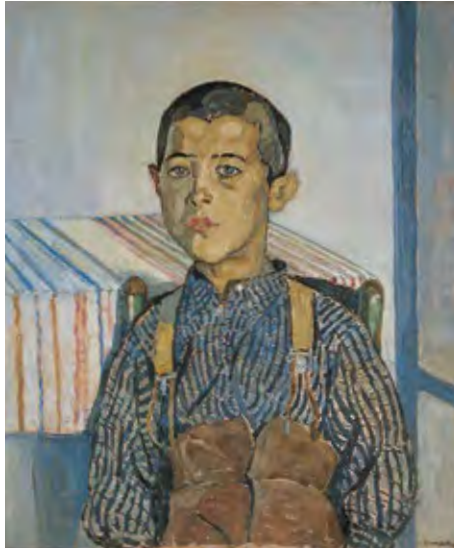
**The Village Kameno
on Lesbos, [1925]**

Oil on canvas, 59 x 51.5 cm
inv. no. 2248

and architect Anastasios Orlandos and the painter Konstantinos Parthenis. Papaloukas' wall paintings for the Cathedral of Amfissa serve as an introduction to the Thirties and foreshadow the major public commissions that would be executed by painters of the Greek "avant-garde" at the end of the new decade and under different political auspices. It is worth noting here a characteristic excerpt from the preamble of the critical committee. Commenting on the virtues of the preliminary drawings, the committee confirmed that Papaloukas, "arrived after long and thoughtful work based on nature at the need for an abstract work and in this way was able to truly comprehend Byzantine art". Papaloukas himself thought and proclaimed the same thing. That there was only one road along which one could encounter tradition: one started with the expressive and plastic problems of modern art. His theory lies in direct opposition to the views of Kontoglou, which gestated throughout the Twenties and only took form in the Thirties.

The preoccupations of Papaloukas can also be confirmed in the painting of Konstantinos Parthenis. His *plein air* work from the opening two decades of the century had already begun to undergo a powerful schematization. A brief period intervened, around 1910, with landscapes which radiated Mediterranean light and pure color. The Viennese influence from the beginning of the century was slowly being displaced by the synthetic shapes of the French symbolism of P. Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), with tectonic compositions worthy of a Greek, and mainly from the Nabis. He was particularly influenced by Maurice Denis (1870-1943). Both these painters did religious work, as Parthenis would also do. During the Twenties, the painter abandoned *plein air* studies and turned toward allegorical, symbolic or religious subject matter. His works became more intellectual, more spiritual. The older influences were covered over with new, hellenocentric ones. On the brilliantly lighted field, a screen of dreams of a utopian and idealized Greece, were projected the figures of the "Parthenian" pantheon. Influences from antiquity, Byzantium and Theotokopoulos flowed together in a harmonious amalgam, which crystallized into the unique, unrepeatable and amazing Parthenian mannerism.





Spyros Papaloukas
(1892-1957)
Boy with Suspenders
[1925]
Oil on cardboard
60.5 x 51 cm
inv. no. 3300

Spyros Papaloukas
(1892-1957)
**The Reception Room
at Lavra Monastery
on Mt. Athos, [1924]**
Oil on pasteboard
52 x 59 cm
inv. no. 3941



The Generation of the Thirties Tradition and Modernism

- AGENOR
- ASTERIADIS
- NIKOS
- CHATZIKYRIAKOS-
GHKA
- THEOPHILOS
- CHATZIMICHAEL
- DIAMANTIS
- DIAMANTOPOULOS
- NIKOS
- ENGONOPOULOS
- ERRIKOS
- FRANTZISKAKIS
- DIMITRIOS
- GALANIS
- GIORGOS
- GOUNAROPOULOS
- FOTIS
- KONTOGLOU
- YANNIS
- MORALIS
- SPYROS
- PAPALOUKAS
- KONSTANTINOS
- PARTHENIS
- ANGELOS
- SPACHIS
- GERASIMOS
- STERIS
- YANNIS
- TSAROUCHEIS
- SPYROS
- VASILEIOU

The term "Generation of the Thirties" is connected to Greek literary criticism and refers to a group of avant garde artists, poets and prose writers, who managed during that contentious decade to radically revitalize their expressive means using the European avant garde as their model: George Seferis, Odysseas Elytis, Nikos Engonopoulos, Andreas Embeirikos, Angelos Terzakis, Kostas Politis, M. Karagatsis, Fotis Kontoglou (as a writer rather than painter), Ilias Venezis, Stratis Doukas, Pantelis Prevelakis and Giorgos Theotokas. The magazine *Νέα Γράμματα* (1935-1942), headed by the young critic Andreas Karantonis, was the groups' theoretical forum. The writers of the "Generation of the Thirties" acknowledged a youthful essay by G. Theotokas, *Το Ελεύθερο Πνεύμα* (*The Free Spirit*), published in 1929, as their spiritual manifesto. The writer, who concealed himself behind the eloquent pseudonym, "Orestes Digenis", denounced the "provincialism" of the country's intellectual life, the "clinging to the past" and "ignorance of the present" which prevented Greek artists from producing works of "European-level importance". It borrowed terms and ideological slogans from futurist manifestos and announced a rather vague program ruled by the ideas of freedom, independence and the individual spirit, which Theotokas dubbed "ingenious". He condemned "genre art", by that meaning the "photographic school" and proclaimed the end of the defeatism occasioned by the Asia Minor Disaster. At the same time, however, and in opposition to his European orientation, the writer dreamed of a ruling figure, a "leader" who would guide youth in productively channelling its "passion" into "action on behalf of the nation". Here one detects the dangers with which similar wishes were pregnant, which were not slow in being fulfilled by the Metaxas dictatorship. The contradictions that can be observed in this *juventalia*, the European orientation and the ethnocentric ideology, also characterize the artistic creations of the "Generation of the Thirties". The dilemma was painlessly solved and naturally enough in the work of the most worthwhile creators. The works of Seferis, Elytis, Engonopoulos and Embeirikos, to limit ourselves to the sphere of poetry, are modern and yet profoundly Greek.





Konstantinos Parthenis
(1878-1967)

**The Apotheosis of
Athanasios Diakos**

before 1933

Oil on canvas, 380 x 380 cm

Donation of S. Partheni

inv. no. 6506

But now let us take a look at what happened in the sphere of the visual arts. As we have stated previously, there had already been a call for "Greek" painting put forth at the beginning of the century by Periklis Yannopoulos, with terms that barred foreign influences. And despite obvious foreign influences, the opening twenty years of the 20th century saw commencement of Greek *plein air* modernism. After the Asia Minor Disaster, the problem was posed again, under new terms. Besides, the climate had changed throughout Europe with the postwar turn to order and representation. Two of the protagonists on the Greek visual arts scene, Parthenis and Papanloukas, did not need to reject the teachings of modernism in order to turn to the indigenous tradition. Kontoglou was preparing, with writing exercises, for his own solitary revolution, which would manifest itself at the midpoint of the Thirties.

As we have already noted, the representatives of modernism did not have to deal with serious opponents or negative reaction for they expressed the official aesthetics of the modernizing democratic governments, which would support the "moderns" with money, prizes, commissions and effective intervention. The Metaxas dictatorship, imposed in 1936, would continue to favor innovative painters. The commissions given to the "futurists" (sic) provoked a violent reaction from the conservatives. The iconographic painting of the church of Ayios Dionysios Areopagitis was done by Spyros Vasileiou (1936-1939), while between 1937 and 1940 the painters Kontoglou and Gounaropoulos would be the ones to do the large illustration-like complexes at Athens City Hall. Parthenis resigned from the program, despite the fact he had reached the point of preliminary drawings and had even done paintings destined for City Hall. Six academic painters (Vikatos, Prokopiou, Georgiadis o Kris, Dimas, Artemis and Doukas) would express their opposition in 1937, even making an ignominious plea to the dictator Ioannis Metaxas. For, due to the enlightened intervention of intellectuals such as Pantelis Prevelakis, who had been appointed Director of Fine Arts, the dictator was able to maintain a correct attitude in regard to the fine arts. The reply of Metaxas to the protesting academics, dictated by Prevelakis, as he himself told me, is characteristic: "in order to evolve art requires freedom" (see *Νέα Εστία*, no. 340, 15/2/1941, pp. 162-163). At





Konstantinos Parthenis
(1878-1967)

The Virgin Mary

c. 1940-1942

Oil on canvas, 125 x 67 cm

Donation of S. Partheni

inv. no. 6472

Konstantinos Parthenis
(1878-1967)

**The Night Replies to
My Complaints, c. 1933**

Oil on canvas, 84 x 75 cm

Donation of S. Partheni

inv. no. 6448



Konstantinos Parthenis (1878-1967). **Still Life with the Acropolis in the Background**, before 1931

Oil on canvas, 41 x 81 cm. Donation of S. Partheni, inv. no. 6482

that same time, the dictator was enthusiastically hailing "our art, our own art, our Greek art". Indeed, Metaxas found the hellenocentric modernism of the "Generation of the Thirties" already formed and he had no reason not to benefit by supporting it, as all the totalitarian regimes in Europe favored similar tendencies. (See the introductory text, *Art and Ideology in Modern Greece* and above all the book by Antonis Kotidis, *Μοντερνισμός και Παράδοση στην Ελληνική Τέχνη του Μεσοπολέμου*, Thessaloniki 1993, which has an extensive bibliography).

What were the dominant characteristics of this "hellenocentric" modernism, if we accept that that is a valid term during the Thirties? Was there a significant difference from the preceding decade? We have confirmed the need of artists to establish their own theoretical forum, in the spheres of literature and the visual arts. Thus in 1933, Michalis Tombros (1889-1974) published the magazine *20ός Αιώνας*, while in 1935 the most progressive magazine of the period between the wars appeared, *Το Τρίτο Μάτι*, put out by a "group of friends" who would supply the reference point for the period through their reflections and art: Stratis Doukas, Dimitrios Pikionis, Nikos Chatzikyriakos-Ghika, Spyros Papaloukas and Sokratis Karantinos. Later Takis Papatzonis, Michalis Tombros and Angelos Theodoropoulos were added to this publishing group. The six issues (1935-1937) of the magazine expressed the open and informed spirit, the anxieties and the multifaceted nature of the quests of the artists of the "Generation of the Thirties". Even the mock-up for the cover was itself inspired by the Russian avant garde and constructivist publications. The texts published show the need of these artists to give their quests theoretical support. They published translations of Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Paul Klee (1879-1940), Juan Gris (1887-1927), and studies on the "Laws of Number in Nature and Art", which artists such as Spyros Papaloukas were deeply involved with during that period. The newspaper *Τέχνη*, headed by the painter Errikos Frantziskakis, which began its circulation in January 1938 contained a lead article by the young artist Yannis Tsarouchis on Theophilos (1873?-1934), one of the vernacular models that had been "discovered" by the celebrated generation (See, *Art and Ideology*, op. cit.). The reevaluation of Theophilos and the



Nikos Chatzikyriakos-
Ghika (1906-1994)
Fruit Store, Apollo
1939

Oil on canvas, 55 x 46 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 7317



Nikos Chatzikyriakos-
Ghika (1906-1994)
Athenian Houses
1927-1928

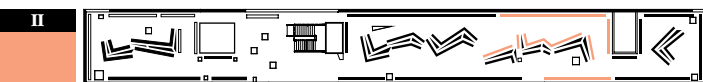
Oil on canvas, 60.5 x 105 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 7309



painter of the *Εικονογραφία του Αγώνα* (*Illustration of the Greek War of Independence*) by Makriyannis, not to mention the value of the General's writings themselves, did not constitute, however, acts of ethnocentric introversion. It is not by chance that Theophilos' value was first seen by Tériade, one of the most important figures in modern art in France. The generation that discovered Theophilos was a generation brought up and inculcated with an understanding of the laws of modern art. In the same spirit painters such as Papaloukas would approach Byzantine art and recognize its plastic values.

To summarize: the painters of the "Generation of the Thirties" were better informed, more aware of things. They wanted to be at one and the same time both modern and Greek, perhaps in the manner Seferis had touched on in his famous dialogue with Konstantinos Tsatsos: "since they are Greeks, the works that their souls will truly give birth to cannot be other than Greek", assuming, of course, they were looking for the truth (G. Seferis-K. Tsatsos, *Ένας Διάλογος για την Ποίηση*, edit L. Kousoulas, 1979, p. 30). Of course, they were attempting to test this "truth" on the body of age-old Greek tradition, which lent itself to a long-term syncreticism and now embraced vernacular as well as Byzantine art.

The dominant figure of the Thirties remained Konstantinos Parthenis, who became a professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts in 1929 and was feted and honored by the democratic Greek governments. He expressed a form of official art and he would retain that privilege throughout the Metaxas dictatorship. Parthenis was identified in people's minds with an absolute value of intellectual life, despite the pressure he was under at the School of Fine Arts. In 1938 he would represent Greece at the Venice Biennale with a large retrospective exhibition containing 56 oils and 53 drawings. The Greek delegation was complemented by the engraver Angelos Theodoropoulos (1886-1965) and the sculptor Michalis Tombros. Concerning the lukewarm reception Parthenis' work received from Italian and international critics, Evgenios Matthiopoulos develops a convincing explanation in his well-documented study (op. cit., vol III, p. 879 ff). Parthenis' work evolved within the same stylistic parameters he had carved out during the preceding decade: large allegorical or history compo-





Spyros Papaloukas
(1892-1957)
Houses in Kyriadiis
1938
Oil on canvas, 65 x 80 cm
inv. no. 3299

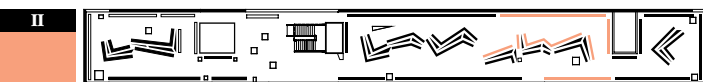


Angelos Spachis
(1903-1963)
**The Enigma
of the Human
Psychiognomy**, 1932
Mixed media
45.5 x 50.5 cm
inv. no. 5124

sitions, idealistic and anti-realistic in character, which frequently developed in the form of a frieze on a "screen", as the luminous projections of an otherworldly vision. The drawing, which always was of prime importance for Parthenis, contained traces of influences from ancient Greek vase painting, Byzantium and Theotokopoulos (1541-1614). The difference in his work, in comparison to the style of the preceding decade, was that the curved line had now been succeeded by a more angular schematization, obviously derived from cubism. In his figures and, particularly, in the architectural elements and the objects in the still lifes, the form is broken up into geometrical shapes and then recomposed, in line with models taken from the post-cubist works of Georges Braque (1882-1963) and Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) from the Twenties. Similar quests can be traced during the same time period in the early works of N. Chatzikyriakos-Ghika (1906-1994), who has given us the most authentic version of a phototropic, Greek post-cubist idiom. Yannis Tsarouchis (1910-1989) would also briefly flirt with a post-cubist style, as soon as he broke away from the catalytic influence of Kontoglou.

Nearer the elevated visions of Parthenis but clearly influenced by the metaphysical painting of Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978) are the dreamy Greek seashores of Gerasimos Steris (1898-1987), with the schematized figures which are reminiscent of Tombros' sculptures. In his works Steris managed to capture the motionless time of de Chirico, who also inspired another artist, Angelos Spachis (1903-1963), who produced few works. Georgios Gounaropoulos (1890-1977) would create a utopian space, defined by a strange light, and he would inhabit it with his dream-like classicist figures. This is the hellenotropic version of surrealism.

We must examine the case of Nikos Engonopoulos in the context of the impact exercised by the personality and teachings of Fotis Kontoglou. In this "great school of the nation" were fashioned, sometimes as followers and admirers and others as anti-artists and rebels, painters such as Spyros Vasileiou (1902-1985), Nikos Engonopoulos, Yannis Tsarouchis, and Diamantis Diamantopoulos (1914-1995). Younger artists such as Yannis Moralis (1916-2009), Nikos Nikolaou (1909-1986) and later Alekos Fassianos (1935), creatively assimilated Kontoglou's doctrine, which retained his





Giorgos Gounaropoulos
(1890-1977)
**Female Figure with
Two Faces by the Sea**
1935

Oil on wood, 81 x 100 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 4735



Yerassimos Steris
(1898-1987)

Seashore, c. 1930
Oil on canvas, 57,5 x 72 cm
Donated by the Ministry
of Education
inv. no 2902

charm unimpaired even after the war, influencing a host of students and descendants. Fotis Kontoglou reconstructed in his fascinating narratives the lost paradise of his own familiar eastern world and in his painting found a place for the age-old pantheon of the Greek race and his own personal mythology. He believed that the spiritual message, technique and morphology of Byzantine art, enhanced with the simplicity of Greek tradition, were enough to support a genuine form of Greek expression and able to serve secular as well as religious themes. His most felicitous works convince one of the authenticity of his proceeding. Moreover, his work must be evaluated in full consideration of the beneficial influence he had on students and on the whole period (see the perceptive monograph by Professor Nikos Zias, 1991). Nikos Engonopoulos, after a brief period of obvious dependence on his teacher, marked by very beautiful works, fashioned his own personal iconographic universe, his own style. Through a poetic "licensed" use of European surrealism and the metaphysical painting of de Chirico, Engonopoulos created his own super-historical "entopia" ("land within"), where all the ideological fixed ideas of the Greek intellectuals of his period come together: antiquity and Byzantium, the heroes of the Greek War of Independence and ladies who had escaped from romantic novels, all coexist in his paintings. Byzantium and Kontoglou had taught him the technique. Therefore, even his oils are reminiscent of egg tempera. His painting is Mediterranean, familiar and friendly, even when threatening or outrageous acts are being narrated.

Yannis Tsarouchis would temporarily forsake the teachings of Kontoglou to achieve the unachievable: the hellenization of Matisse's (1869-1954) doctrine of art, grafting it to the models of Greek vernacular art he had before him. At the same time, he would bring about a revolution in subject matter, as he stressed the everyday aspect of vernacular models (see the relevant introductory text). Diamantopoulos carried out much the same investigation during the same period.

Along with the hellenocentric tendencies we have been endeavoring to trace up to now in the Thirties, we can also confirm something which at first glance is mysterious and inexplicable. Namely, the attraction exercised on a number of Greek painters by André





Spyros Vasileiou
(1902/3-1985)
Galatsi, c. 1930
Oil on wood, 61 x 74 cm
inv. no. 9042

Errikos Frantziskakis
(1908-1958)

Still Life

Oil on canvas, 49 x 59.5 cm
inv. no. 2890



Dimitrios Galanis
(1879-1966)

The Hunter, c. 1924

Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm
inv. no. 495

Derain (1880-1954). The Derain who bewitched Greek painters of that period is not the avant garde painter from the beginning of the century who was a leading player in the Fauve movement and who worked in the company of the cubists, but the "classicist" painter from the period between the wars with his palette composed of dark brown and olive colors. It appears that Derain's style became known in Greece through the mediation of Dimitris Galanis (1879-1966), who had been influenced by the French artist, particularly in painting. In 1928 Galanis exhibited his paintings in Athens at the Velmos hall (Velmos was the publisher of the magazine *Φραγγέλιον*). In Paris, the studio of the well-known engraver and painter was a gathering place for Greek artists who were studying or living in the French capital. The influence of Derain and Galanis can be traced in the early works of Spyros Vasileiou, in the cerebral early *plein air* works of Yannis Moralis as well as his early portraits. The dark, earthy tones dominate these works. The still lifes of Errikos Frantziskakis (1908-1958), with the Cézannian references, the classical design and the dark colors, also bear witness to the influence of the French teacher. Perhaps we could hypothesize that Derain's style found in Greece a favorable horizon of reception, cultivated by the teachings of Fotis Kontoglou and the study of Byzantine art. The simplification of form, the schematization, the violation of perspective – the cubist remnants taken from Derain – and the anti-realistic color tones, dominated by earthy colors, constituted elements making up a common code. *Still Life* (1936) by Engonopoulos, showing the clear-cut influence of Kontoglou is not very far removed from the corresponding Derain still lifes. This group of works constitutes the only thematic violation of the anthropocentrism, which is characterized as the dominant element of the painting of the "Generation of the Thirties".

Most of the currents in the period between the wars that we have examined up to now, were marked by the dominance of thought, by the logical elaboration of form, by the subjection of form to norms, to prescriptive shapes. This also insures the powerful unity of style which characterized artists as different as Parthenis, Ghika, Papaloukas and Kontoglou. There was, nevertheless, a group of artists who were not obedient to anything but inner impulse, the intensity of emotion, the thymic commands of a





Theophilos
Chatzimichael
(1873?-1934)
**The Beautiful
Adriana of
Athens**, 1930
Oil on canvas, 92 x 43.5 cm
inv. no. 6829

Theophilos
Chatzimichael
(1873?-1934)
**Athena and
Artemis**
c. 1927-1934
Oil on canvas, 90 x 79 cm
inv. no. 4210



Theophilos
Chatzimichael
(1873?-1934)
**Ayia Anna,
Chalkis**, 1927
Oil on pasteboard
67.5 x 97 cm
inv. no. 6830



Fotis Kontoglou (1896-1965)

Wall Painting, with which the artist decorated his house

Fresco, 336 x 646 cm. Donation of V. and N. Goulandris in memory of their brother, Konstantinos Goulandris, inv. no. 5695





hypersensitive and somewhat disturbed psyche. These were the Expressionists.

The painting of the "Generation of the Thirties" would be mythologized by post-war generations and indentified as a kind of ethnic reservoir. Followers and descendants would exhaust these reserves and at some point it would be popularized to the point where its teachings were debased. Thus the younger artists would cultivate a love-hate relationship with it and would divide up into group of supporters and enemies. Both of these attitudes today seem passé. The time has come for serious study and sober assessment. I am happy to see that the younger art historians have already begun this task.



Nikos Engonopoulos
(1907-1985)
Delos, [1939]
Oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm
Collection of
Eleni Engonopoulou
On permanent loan
to the National Gallery





Nikos Engonopoulos
(1907-1985)

Poet and Muse, [1938]

Oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm

Collection of

Eleni Engonopoulou

On permanent loan

to the National Gallery



Yannis Tsarouchis
(1910-1989)
Head of a Young Man
1941
Oil on wood, 35.5 x 24.5 cm
Donation of S. Charokopos
and E. Petroutsi, inv. no. 6179

Yannis Tsarouchis
(1910-1989)
**Swarthy Youth Seated,
with an Overcoat,** 1937
Water color with glue on paper
99.5 x 63.5 cm
Collection of the Y. Tsarouchis
Foundation. On permanent
loan to the National Gallery



Yannis Tsarouchis
(1910-1989)
Sailor, 1938
Oil on canvas, 100 x 70 cm
inv. no. 3572







Diamantis Diamantopoulos
(1914-1995)

In the Chamber

c. 1937-1949

Tempera on paper, 24 x 33 cm

Donation of K. and L. Arliotis

inv. no. 5829

Diamantis Diamantopoulos
(1914-1995)

The Drawing, c. 1938

Oil tempera on hardboard

100 x 70 cm

inv. no. 3239





Expressionism Projection of the Inner Image

GIORGOS
BOUZIANIS
THEOPHRASTOS
TRIANTAFYLLIDIS
MIMIS
VITSORIS

Expressionism is rarely found in Greece, or in southern Europe for that matter. Perhaps because, as has been observed, Mediterranean light absorbs psychic eruptions, scatters the phantoms. "Generation of the Thirties", nevertheless, contained several expressionists. Theophrastos Triantafyllidis (1881-1955) was a muted and intimate painter, but his works are imbued with feeling. This took him to the verge of Expressionism. Yannis Mitrakis (1898-1963) looked at the landscape through a powerful experience which led him to abstract expressive distortion. Mimis Vitsoris (1902-1945) anachronistically represented the damned and self-destructive artist type. The greatest and most genuine Greek expressionist remains Giorgos Bouzianis (1885-1959). His painting came to maturity in the land of Expressionism, Germany. Bouzianis was the only one of the Greek painters at the School of Munich who arrived there psychically predisposed to embrace the great doctrine of expressionist painting, the national school of Germany. As he lived in Munich till 1935 he came to know all the successive expressionist movements: from the revolutionary *Die Brücke* (1905) to the lyrical, abstract serenity of the *Blaue Reiter* (1911) and the savage social satire of *New Objectivity* (around 1920). What did Bouzianis take from all this? Nothing. Nothing but the one great lesson of Expressionism: the absolute freedom of the Ego, the subject, to see and express the world in the image of its own soul. And the only element that connected him to the "Generation of the Thirties" was his anthropocentricism. Bouzianis created a painting universe inhabited by human passions, which became the passions of form and the passions of painting material.





Mimis Vitsoris
(1902-1945)
Self-Portrait, c. 1924
Oil on canvas, 67,5 x 40,5 cm
inv. no. 4469

Theophrastos
Triantafyllidis
(1881-1955)
Return to the Village
1952
Oil on canvas, 106 x 156 cm
inv. no. 2640





Giorgos Bouzianis
(1885-1959)
The Uncle, 1950
Oil on plywood, 101 x 72 cm
inv. no. 3305



Giorgos Bouzianis
(1885-1959)
Theatre Actress, 1954
Oil on canvas, 105 x 75 cm
inv. no. 2350

Giorgos Bouzianis
(1885-1959)
Liza Kottou, 1947
Oil on canvas, 116 x 81 cm
inv. no. 8007





AFTER THE WAR. CONTINUITY AND BREAK

The Generation of the Thirties after the War and its Heritage

AGENOR
ASTERIADIS
SAVVAS
CHARATSIDIS
NIKOS
CHATZIKYRIAKOS-
GHIKA
DIMITRIS
DAVIS
ALEKOS
FASSIANOS
DIMITRIS
GIOLDASIS
RALLIS
KOPSIDIS
KOSTAS
MALAMOS
GIORGOS
MANOUSAKIS
YANNIS
MIGADIS
YANNIS
MORALIS
NIKOS
NIKOLAOU
GIORGOS
PARALIS
GIORGOS
SIKELIOTIS
VASILIS
SPERANTZAS
YANNIS
TSAROUCHIS
SPYROS
VASILEIOU
MARIOS
VATZIAS
ANDREAS
VOURLOUMIS

The landscape of post-war art in Greece constitutes the physical extension, without an easily

discerned line of demarcation, of the artistic creation of the period between the wars. As we saw, the period between the wars, and the Thirties in particular, was characterized by a dual, but not contradictory, orientation: the interest in tradition was combined with, or better aroused by, a fundamental speculation regarding modern art, with the exception of the "heretical" case of Kontoglou.

The young painters who had been nurtured on the doctrines and ideals of the teachers of this "chosen" generation matured and developed their work in the post-war period, proving the dynamism and the endurance of the hellenocentric precept. Ghika, Tsarouchis, Moralis and Engonopoulos, to limit ourselves to only the leading figures, would each travel along their own road guided by the star of that now distant ideal of "Greekness", which would lead them to utterly different destinations.

Chatzikyriakos-Ghika continued to cultivate a form of hellenized cubism which, in his more successful works, was realized in the rhythmic geometry of Hydra. In his last paintings the spell exercised on his art by the Far East led him to compositions with a strong decorative feeling, always pleasing and luminous. Drama is lacking in the painting of Chatzikyriakos-Ghika. The life of the prosperous townsman and his natural predilection kept the shadows of national calamities and the shocks of psychic outbursts far from his work. Moreover, the generation of hellenocentric modernism was characterized by definition for its censorship and sobriety. Chatzikyriakos-Ghika made the National Gallery a highly important gift, which allows us to follow his artistic course through his best and most representative works.

Yannis Tsarouchis, after exhausting the gold-bearing deposit he had already located before the war, that is, the felicitous yoking of the doctrines of vernacular art with the doctrines of Henri Matisse (1869-1954), would turn to another source of inspira-





Nikos Chatzikyriakos-
Ghika (1906-1994)

**Memories from
Hydra, 1948-1976**

Oil on paper, 122 x 200 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 7349



Nikos Chatzikyriakos-
Ghika (1906-1994)

The Sky, 1966

Oil on canvas, 200 x 230 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 7335

tion: the art of the Italian Renaissance. In the conviction that it was borrowed from Greek art, he would endeavor to transliterate the Renaissance idiom into an eastern style or, more accurately, a hellenistic style. From the local color of his first period, he would be led to the moulding of form, and the rendering of volume but with the use of models, openings and light, as the painters of the dead faces of Fayum or the Byzantine icon painters had worked. The world of Tsarouchis remained the same: it is the great and small Tsarouchian universe with the Cavafyesque young men in the working class cafés and the boring army camps in times of peace. Because here also Peace, the German Occupation and the Greek Civil War passed by without having any effect on this familiar, indigenous and paganistic utopia.

The work of Yannis Moralis, the other great Teacher of helleno-centric modernism, is sober but marked by a knowledge of human destiny. Eros and thanatos constitute his two thematic poles. Frequently, or practically without exception eros and thanatos, the warp and weft of human life, are woven on the same loom; they exist inseparably in the same painting. In the Forties, Moralis produced several deeply moving portraits, done frontally on a shallow space employing a technique which reveals attentive study of the Hellenistic tradition, the Renaissance and post-cubist Derain. In 1947, the generally accepted value of the young painter secured him election to the Athens School of Fine Arts, a move hailed as a decisive rupture in the academic establishment. And indeed, the students of Moralis would complete the synchronization of Greek painting with the currents of the European avant garde. Around 1950, Moralis turned to classical antiquity and tombstones in particular, which would be the inspiration for his most evocative works. Unlike the work of Tsarouchis, where adolescents and young men are the protagonists, in the painting of Moralis the main role is played by prepubescent girls and young women. Trapped in immobile and enclosed poses of reflection and self-concentration, they are inscribed within absolutely geometrical shapes, which become the symbol of irrevocable destiny itself. In the painter's recent works, the theme of eros displaced the





Yannis Tsarouchis
(1910-1989)
**Kountouriotissa
(Woman from Eleusis)**
1948
Tempera on wood
191 x 70 cm, inv. no. 2355



Yannis Tsarouchis
(1910-1989)
Neon Café (Day)
1956-1966
Oil on canvas, 127 x 180 cm
inv. no. 3497

Yannis Tsarouchis
(1910-1989)
Neon Café (Night)
1965-1966
Oil on canvas, 127 x 180 cm
inv. no. 3498



thanatos of the funeral compositions. His compositions have become steadily more abstract, the colors fewer, and painterliness is shed. The art of Moralis leans toward an ideogram, which refers to the essence of the meaning of an always easily read image.

The most personal work of Nikos Nikolaou (1909-1986), a close friend and fellow-traveller of Yannis Moralis, is also centered on antiquity. His female bodies are inspired freely and very abstractly from ancient vase painting. Alekos Fassianos (1935) belongs to the generation of those who inherited hellenocentric modernism. His youthful works were influenced by French *informel* art. But he quickly found his own personal style. Ancient vase painting, vernacular art and the teachings of Tsarouchis assisted him in composing a code genetically programmed to convey a message of vital well-being and optimism. This, I believe, is one of the secrets of the favorable horizon of reception that the painting of Fassianos has enjoyed.

The nostalgic subject of an Athens that is being lost, of the familiar routine of life which is engulfed in the mass anonymity of the megalopolis, was one of the attractions of the mature painting of Spyros Vasileiou (1902-1985). His traditional subject matter was supported on a style marked by the obsessions of the "Generation of the Thirties": vernacular art and Byzantium. His compositions, which possessed a decorative character, contributed to the widening of the audience for art. A similar horizon of reception, and for similar reasons, was enjoyed by many descendants of the "Generation of the Thirties", such as Giorgos Sikeliotis (1917-1984) with his frontally-rendered rugged folk figures.

The sensitive artists who trained our eyes to discover the beauty in the facades of the last, moribund, neoclassical houses, before they were levelled by the bulldozers of modernization, those who captured in their work the images of a model of life condemned to destruction and oblivion were the ultimate frontiersmen of the hellenocentric tradition: Andreas Vourloumis (1910-1999), Konstantinos Malamos (1913-2007), Niki Karagatsi (1914-1986), Giorgos Manousakis (1914-2003), Giorgos Paralís





Yannis Moralis (1916-2009)
Portrait of M.R., 1943
Oil on canvas, 92 x 43 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 7686



Yannis Moralis (1916-2009)
Figure, 1951
Oil on canvas, 160 x 104 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 7689



Yannis Moralis (1916-2009)
Grave Composition
1958
Oil on canvas, 204 x 223 cm
inv. no. 2432





(1908-1975) and Yannis Migadis (1926). Two painters who extolled the working world, the folk-style painter Dimitris Gioldasis (1897-1993) and Valias Semertzidis (1911-1983), who in his work gave us a Greek version of socialist realism, also belong to the "Generation of the Thirties". The inheritors and descendants of the "Generation of the Thirties"- and there were many – led hellenocentric modernism to burn-out, satiation, popularization and finally physical exhaustion. The moment was ripe for crossing the great dividing line.



Agenor Asteriadis
(1898-1977)
Piraeus, 1973
Egg tempera on wood
202 x 122 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 4829



Spyros Vasileiou
(1902/3-1985)
**The Microcosm on
Webster St.**, 1975
Acrylic and gold leaf
on canvas, 97 x 130 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 5719



Nikos Nikolaou
(1909-1986)
Hydra, [1953]
Plastic on plywood
170 x 190 cm
inv. no. 2684





Kostas Malamos
(1913-2007)
Houses in Dexameni
1964
Oil on canvas, 120 x 84.5 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 4692



Giorgos Sikeliotis
(1917-1984)
Family, c. 1961-1970
Emulsion on canvas
122 x 100 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 6339





Giorgos Manousakis
(1914-2003)
Head of a Maiden
1967
Oil tempera on pasteboard
35 x 22 cm
inv. no. 3681

Yannis Migadis
(1926-2003)
**Rear View of
Apartment Buildings**
Tempera on cloth
80 x 110 cm
inv. no. 6346





Vasilis Sperantzas
(1938)
On the Balcony
[1989]
Oil on canvas, 122 x 100 cm
inv. no. 8084

Alekos Fassianos
(1935)
Palmist in his Room
(Bicyclist in his Room)
[1977]
Acrylic on canvas
194 x 129 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 5505





Abstraction

VLASSIS
CANIARIS
ALEKOS
KONTOPOULOS
CHRISTOS
LEFAKIS
YANNIS
MALTEZOS
TAKIS
MARTHAS
YANNIS
MITARAKIS
NIKOS
(KESSANLIS)
CHRYSSA
ROMANOU
NIKOS
SACHINIS
JANNIS
SPYROPOULOS
THEODOROS
STAMOS
GIORGOS
TOUYAS
GIORGOS
VAKALO
KOSMAS
XENAKIS

Abstraction, the pulling back from the tangible world and its representation on the painting surface, the autonomization of the painting language, to the point that does not refer anywhere but to itself, had already been a part of European painting for half a century when it first appeared in Greece. Indeed, by 1910 many European painters had arrived at abstraction, along a number of routes. The father of non-figurative painting is generally thought to be Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), who made the critical leap in 1910 with his first abstract water color. By his clear-headed and dialectical spirit he would also become the first theoretical advocate of abstract art through his works *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1910, and *Point, Line and Surface*, 1926. For Kandinsky, the *signifiers*, the plastic points and their infinite combinations, represented a much broader category and much richer in meaning than the *signified*, whose limit was the human being's cognitive horizon. The *signifiers* are connected to the reality of existence, which is infinite, while the *signified* are related to the world of experience, which is finite. The importance of the plastic points is not pre-determined, as it is awakened by the contact of the work of art with the receiver, the emotion that is aroused being the catalyst. Both Plato (*Φιληβος*, 51b) and Aristotle had prophesied non-figurative art. The creator of ideas had envisioned geometric abstraction, an art which would be based on the absolute beauty of geometrical shapes, while his student gave an actual definition to art without an object: in a painting, "if by chance we have not seen before the object being depicted, then the pleasure will not be occasioned by imitation, but the execution of the work, the color or some other similar cause." (*Ποιητική*, 1448 b17).

Greek painting in the 20th century had frequently approached abstraction, but it had never definitively severed the umbilical cord with visible reality. This step would be ventured by several painters who started their careers in the Thirties and until then had shared the concerns of their generation: Alekos Kontopoulos (1905-1975), Takis Marthas (1905-1965), Christos Lefakis (1906-1969), and Jannis Spyropoulos (1912-1990) to name the most important. To this group would be added many younger painters, born around 1920. Among them a few painters would be from the Greek diaspora, artists who were active in the large centers

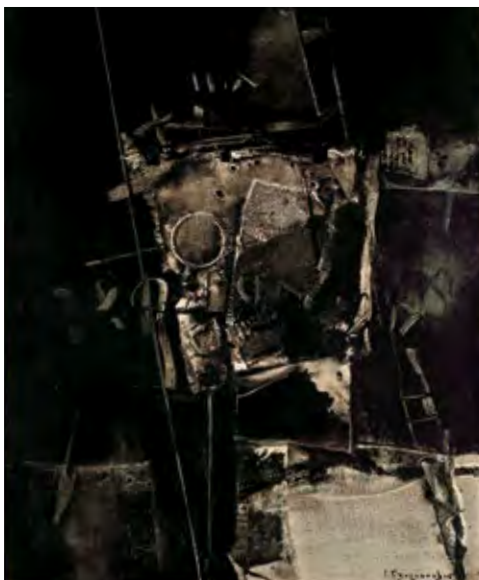


Alekos Kontopoulos
(1905-1975)
Athens, 1954
Mixed media on canvas
160 x 111 cm
inv. no. 4880

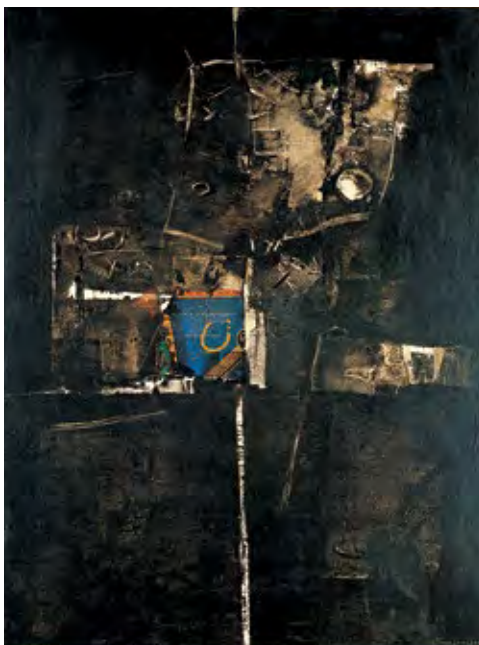


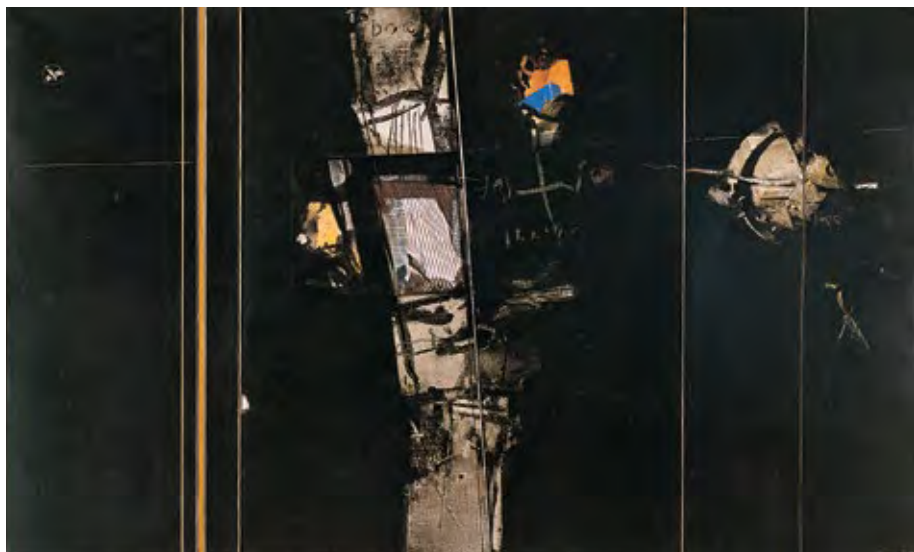
Alekos Kontopoulos
(1905-1975)
Composition-Image
1962
Oil on hardboard
125 x 160 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Education, inv. no. 3802

Jannis Spyropoulos
(1912-1990)
All That's Left, [1973]
Oil on canvas, 65 x 54 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Culture, inv. no. 4385



Jannis Spyropoulos
(1912-1990)
Phaos C, [1966]
Mixed media on canvas
128 x 96.5 cm
inv. no. 7071



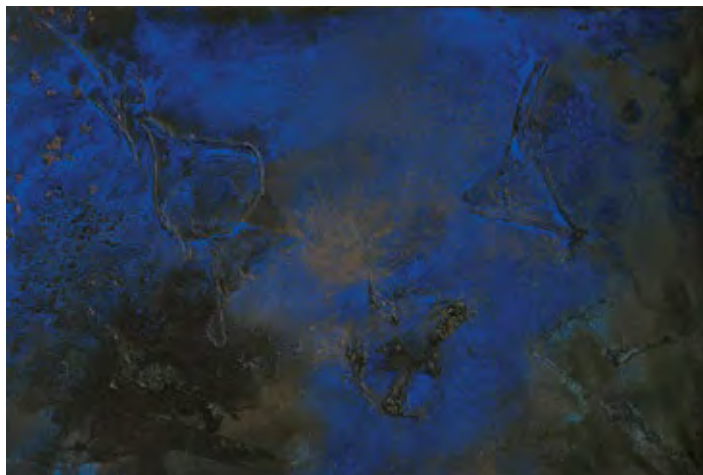


Jannis Spyropoulos
(1912-1990)
Triptych E, [1969]
Mixed media on canvas
162 x 270 cm
Donation of Zoe Spyropoulou
inv. no. 8474

and had an influence there, such as Theodoros Stamos (1922-1997), one of the leading figures in American abstract expressionism. By 1960, the dominance of non-figurative art internationally, just before the return to the consumption reality with Pop-Art, would temporarily sweep many young painters along into abstract experiments: Demosthenis Kokkinidis (1929), Dimitris Mytaras (1934), Christos Caras (1930), and Makis Theofylaktopoulos (1939) to name but a few.

It is permissible to speculate whether in the end this turn to abstraction in Greece in the Fifties, after the end of the Greek Civil War, represented another belated reference to the abstraction from the beginning of the century or was synchronized with the new wave of non-figurative art, which manifested itself at the same time in France (lyrical abstraction) and the United States (abstract expressionism, gestural or action painting). I believe it to be the latter. The conditions in Greece had become ripe for a break, both with the conservative remnants of the teachings at the Athens School of Fine Arts and the fathers of the generation of hellenocentric modernism, from the period between the wars. The first generation of abstract painters is, nevertheless, not identified with the tumultuous dissenters, who a while later would lead their investigation into the sphere of the radical avant garde. That this was a synchronization with what was happening in Europe and America during the same period is also confirmed by the more general trend of the abstract currents in Greece, which was expressionistic and gestural in nature, precisely the same as the contemporary European and, above all, American models. Jannis Spyropoulos directed his investigations to what would prove to be supreme personal achievements: a rich and elaborate poetics, employing collage, overlapping and emergence along with a peerless use of light, which created a world both intellectual and mysterious like a ceremony of sacred rites, which impose silence and contemplation. The painting of Spyropoulos constitutes a unique contribution of Greece to the history of abstract art internationally.

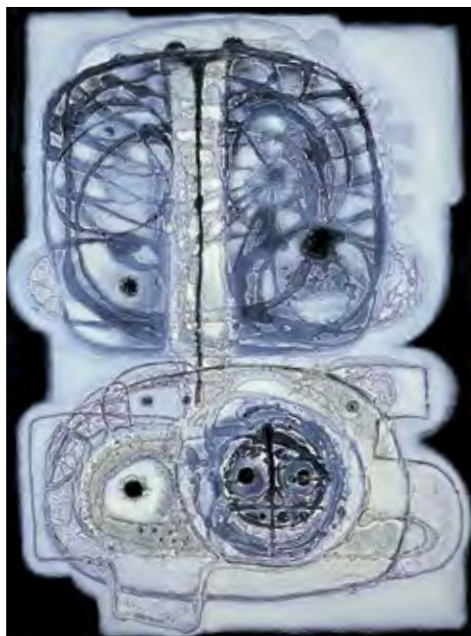
Christos Lefakis
(1906-1969)
Painting, 1963
Mixed media on canvas
131 x 195 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Education, inv. no. 3582



Theodoros Stamos
(1922-1997)
Conversation Piece
1963
Oil on canvas
133 x 142 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 4772



Yannis Maltezos
(1915-1987)
Untitled, 1964
Mixed media on canvas
130 x 97 cm
Donation of E. Maltezos



Giorgos Vakalo
(1902-1991)
Trunk of Poplar Tree
1960
Oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm
Donation of E. Vakalo
inv. no. 8976





Nikos Sachinis
(1924-1989)
Painting, 1964
Mixed media on canvas
122 x 75 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Education, inv. no. 3819



Chryssa Romanou
(1931-2006)
Summery, 1960
Oil on canvas
120 x 50 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Education, inv. no. 3822

Kosmas Xenakis
(1925-1984)

Composition

before 1966

Oil on canvas, 119 x 119 cm

Donation of the Ministry
of Education, inv. no. 3564



Vlassis Caniaris
(1928-2011)

Composition, 1958

Oil on canvas, 116 x 105 cm

inv. no. 3879



Nikos Kessanlis
(1930-2004)

Composition, 1962

Oil on canvas, 54.5 x 33 cm

inv. no. 3971



From the Pictorial Surface to the Space

ALEXIS
AKRITHAKIS
VLASSIS
CANIARIS
CHRYSSA
(VARDEA)
DANIL
(PANAGOPOULOS)
DIMITRIS
KONTOS
STATHIS
LOGOTHETIS
STELIOS
MAVROMATIS
IASON
MOLFESIS
NIKOS
(KESSANLIS)
KOSTAS
PANIARAS
PAVLOS
(DIONYSOPOULOS)
DIMITRIS
PERDIKIDIS
VASILIS
SKYLAKOS
KOSTAS
TGOCLIS

Modern art completed the deconstruction of the institutional language of painting when it succeeded in abolishing the framed painting, the

frame. The painting frame represented the border between the imaginary and the real world. The frame transformed painting into an open window, as it was defined by Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) and equated it with the box of the Italian stage. With the assistance of perspective, the magic space defined by the frame became a vehicle one could escape in to the world of illusion. The abolition of perspective led the painting surface to its own self-signification. It was no longer anything more than a surface covered with colors set down in accordance with certain principles, if we accept the definition of Maurice Denis (1870-1943).

The last bastion of traditional art, the frame, was destined to fall when reality itself penetrated this framework with its material, ontological substance, violating and annihilating the final remnants of this idealized art space. This decisive leap occurred in the Autumn of 1912, when the protagonists of the cubist movement, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963) advanced from collage (pieces of paper stuck together) to assemblage, using a variety of materials and random objects. These works were followed by the daring angular reliefs of Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953), made around 1915 in Russia. At approximately the same time the traditional cube of the Italian stage was burst open allowing the action to spill out into space.

These developments had profound consequences for the very essence of painting itself, its poetics, its meaning and its relationship to the receiver. The abolition of the frame and the penetration of space automatically signified the transcendence of the traditional boundaries set between the various categories of art (painting, sculpture). The poetics of the work were no longer founded on traditional rules, but on the process of its construction, and the work of art was equivalent to an object, which lay claim to a place in life itself. Frequently, the artist produced his work as a happening, in front of the public, challenging it to participate in this act of creative becoming. The Dadaist ready-



Nikos (Kessanlis)
(1930-2004)

**Portrait of Vlassis
Caniaris, 1965**

Photograph on sensitized
cloth, 115 x 115 cm.
inv. no. 5898

Nikos (Kessanlis)
(1930-2004)

**Portrait of Dinos
Georgoudis, [1976]**

Mixed media on canvas
200 x 199 cm
inv. no. 5667



made of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) and the assemblages of Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), took this course to its logical if extreme conclusion: the center of gravity now shifted from the object to the artist and the creative act itself, often taking the character of subversion and protest in the process. All these daring investigations were completed by the second decade of the present century.

It is reasonable to wonder if the similar tendencies, which are to be observed in America and Europe during the Sixties, were nothing more than a throwback to the daring quests of the militant avant garde at the beginning of the century. Despite the spell cast by the Dadaist models and the great mystics of the avant garde, such as Duchamp, on younger artists, the new artistic inquiry developed under the auspices of a new social reality, which defined both its expressive means and its codes: the first post-war explosion of the consumption market. The American Pop-artists would make ironical and subversive use of these selfsame codes of advertising, while their European counterparts would appropriate the abundant waste products of consumer society, in order to create works where aesthetic concerns are expressed in tandem with social commentary.

Just what was the position of those creators, who attempted as a group to break out of the asphyxiating climate in Greece at the end of the civil war and to actively participate in the ferment that marked the large artistic centers of America at the time? In 1964 three Greek artists exhibited at the La Fenice Theater in Venice, on the margins of the Biennale, a collection of works entitled "Three Proposals for a New Greek Sculpture". These artists were Danil (Panagopoulos, 1924-2008), Nikos Kessanlis (1930-2004) and Vlassis Caniaris (1928-2011). Through works that developed in space, through gestures that appropriated space and through drastic interventions in materials, they laid claim to and secured for themselves a position of enterprising originality and not just synchronous with the quests of the European avant garde. Using *informel art* as their jumping off point, which the exhibition in Venice typified, these three young Greek painters would immediately become part of the Nouveau

Vlassis Caniaris
(1928-2011)
Landscape, [1970]
Mixed media
207 x 99 x 13 cm
inv. no. 8865



Kostas Tsoclis
(1930)
**We Are All
Responsible**, 1972
Collage and pencil
132 x 102 cm, inv. no. 5634



Kostas Tsoclis
(1930)
Seascape, 1979
Oil on canvas
60.5 x 80.5 cm
inv. no. 5897



Réalisme movement (New Realism), the Parisian version of American Pop-art. Daniel, through his boxes and burlap, and employing only a few signifying interventions in ordinary industrial materials, would create sensitive works rich in meaning. Nikos would invent Mec-Art (Mechanical Art), printing the shadows of the "Platonic cave" on the surface of the canvas through photochemical manipulation. Caniaris would stage his own Theater of the Absurd, using the codes of communication which bridge language and reality in the contemporary world. As his raw material he would also choose ordinary industrial materials: mesh grids, plaster, second-hand clothes to dress his mannequins.

Pavlos (Dionysopoulos, 1930) would develop his own style in Paris, in the context of New Realism. Using strips of shredded posters he would create new images and objects imbued with the romantic wind of poetry and nostalgia. The "palimpsest" images of Chryssa Romanou (1931-2006) emerged from the same climate. Kostas Tsoclis (1930) would follow a similar course leading from Rome to Paris. His most personal quests are focused on the ontological problem of creation. The relationship between illusion and reality, the suspension between the two worlds, the meditation on the creation and destruction of the image, and the active participation of the spectator in the construction and deconstruction of the work are a few of the problems he has investigated in an aesthetic, poetic and sensitive manner. Dimitris Kontos (1931-1996) enriched the Greek avant garde with his gestural lines, his holy scriptures and votive offerings, which would take another form in the work of Vasilis Skylakos. Alexis Akrithakis (1939-1994) created a dense semiology of labyrinths, where the loneliness of all the jostling of the modern megalopolises, is exorcized in joyous colors. His arrows suggest ways out. His assemblages, his suitcases convey poetic and lyrical flights from a world which oppressed him so overwhelmingly that he was led in the end to self-destruction and an early death. The investigation of space by Iason Molfesis (1925-2009), the interventions and other actions of Stathis Logothetis (1925-1997), in which he assumed the leading role, the poetic images created by Paniaras (1934), through plastic and color interventions in various materials, offer us other variations of the resourceful Greek avant-garde.



Danil (Panagopoulos)
(1924-2008)
Burlap, 1992
Acrylic on burlap
122 x 95 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 9723



Dimitris Perdikidis
(1922-1989)
Triptych Relief
Emulsion on wood
91 x 144 cm
inv. no. 7499



Vasilis Skylakos
(1930-2000)
Untitled, 1981
Mixed media, 138 x 55 cm
inv. no. 5762



Stelios Mavromatis (1930)
Train, 1973
Mixed media, 85 x 70 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Culture, inv. no. 4347

Chryssa (1933) has managed to make her presence felt in the difficult American art market, in the context of Abstract Expressionism. Setting off from inscriptions and advertisements taken from the commercial streets of the large, modern cities, Chryssa has created her own luminous form of graphism, which combines the dynamic gesture of the sculptor with the gesture of a painter from the Far East. It is a pity that the collections of the National Gallery do not contain works by the most important artists of the diaspora, such as Loukas Samaras and Yannis Kounelis. I hope we are able to fill this void. The conclusion we arrive at from this brief survey is that during the Sixties and Seventies, Greek art not only managed to completely coordinate itself with the international currents, but enriched them with original investigative proposals.



Chryssa (Vardea)
(1933)
Multiple 8/12
before 1980
Neon, plexiglass
48 x 38 cm
inv. no. 6175



Pavlos (Dionysopoulos)
(1930)
Overcoat and Hat
c. 1979
Affiches massicotées
125 x 32 cm
inv. no. 6379

Pavlos (Dionysopoulos)
(1930)
Ties, 1967-1974
Affiches massicotées
120 x 70 cm
inv. no. 5635



Dimitris Kontos
(1931-1996)

Feet from the series
Objects of Worship

Mixed media, 121 x 75 cm
inv. no. 5197



Alexis Akrihakis
(1939-1994)

Silence of Metal

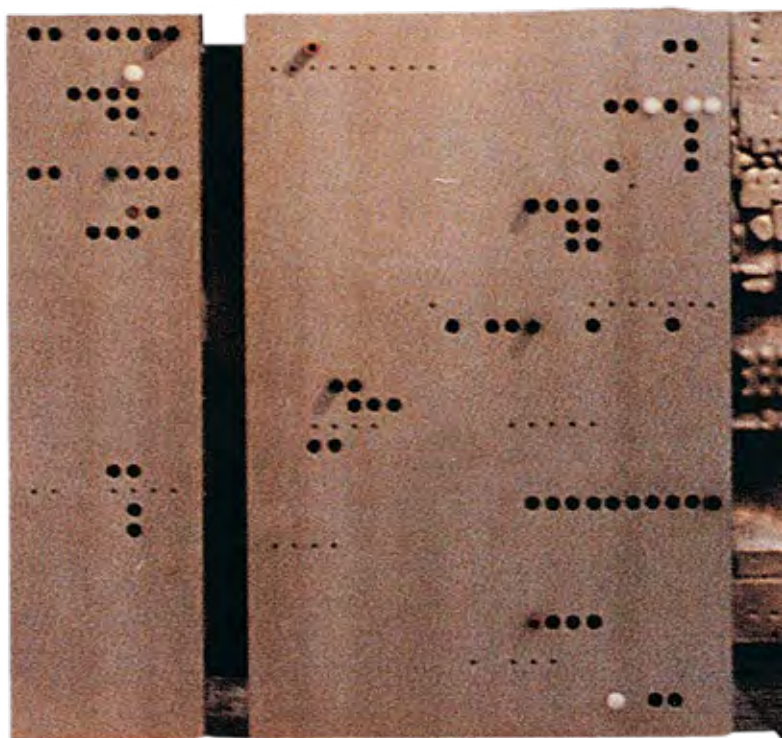
c. 1976-1977
Wood and metal
79 x 113 cm
inv. no. 5519



Kostas Paniaras (1934)
From the series
Day and Night, 1983
Vinyl on canvas, 200 x 100 cm
inv. no. 6878



Stathis Logotheitis
(1925-1997)
Work 165, c. 1975
Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 100 cm
inv. no. 5128



Jason Malfesis
(1925-2009)
From the work
Iron Corridor, 1986
Hammered lead, polyester and iron
110 x 140 cm each
inv. no. 9033/a-d



Art and Technology

BIA
DAVOU
NIKI
KANAGINI
MICHALIS
KATZOURAKIS
GIORGOS
TOUYAS
PANTELIS
XAGORARIS
KONSTANTINOS
XENAKIS

The relationship between science and art is a very old one. Perspective, the instrument for the composition of the painting space and the vehicle for an escape to utopia of the illusory image, was based on Euclidian geometry. Proportions are a form of applied mathematics in art. The avant garde was ideologically prepared to establish and maintain privileged relations with science and technology, as it believed in progress and sang its praises.

The futuristic image was inspired by the analysis of movement as it was set down by time photography. Technology would constitute the starting point for the artistic inquiries of the Russian Constructivist movement. Constructivism placed the artist at the heart of the new society which depended for its progress on technology and industry. Artistic inquiry was obliged to be both functional and revolutionary. The forms in Constructivism "were constructed" in keeping with a specific plan, with the assistance of technology, which insured they were precise and perfect. Frequently, constructivist works introduce the dimension of space along with motion.

The Monument to the Third International (1919) by Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953), the archetypal constructivist work, has become legendary. Not only because it utilized the technological potential of the era, but also because it foreshadowed the technology of the future. Finally, it became identified with the utopian symbol of the failed revolution, as it could never be realized in the monumental form the artist had conceived of: as an enormous movable sculptural and architectural figure, which was to have been used as the seat of the revolutionary government and as an information tower. The Pevsner brothers (Antoine Pevsner, 1886-1962 and Naum Gabo, 1890-1977), utilized mathematical curves, parabolic and hyperbolic surfaces, in order to create forms full of motion, rhythm and dynamism.

These inquiries would find a temperate climate in the Bauhaus (1919-1933). When later, in 1933, the renowned school was closed down by the Nazis, the quests connected to it would emigrate with it to the United States. Today, the Mecca of these



Bia Davou
(1932-1996)
Dual Antithesis
1978
Acrylic on canvas
204 x 125 cm
inv. no. 5622



Pantelis Xagoraris
(1929-2000)
From
Transformations
[1984]
Computer drawing
115.5 x 80.5 cm
inv. no. 7059



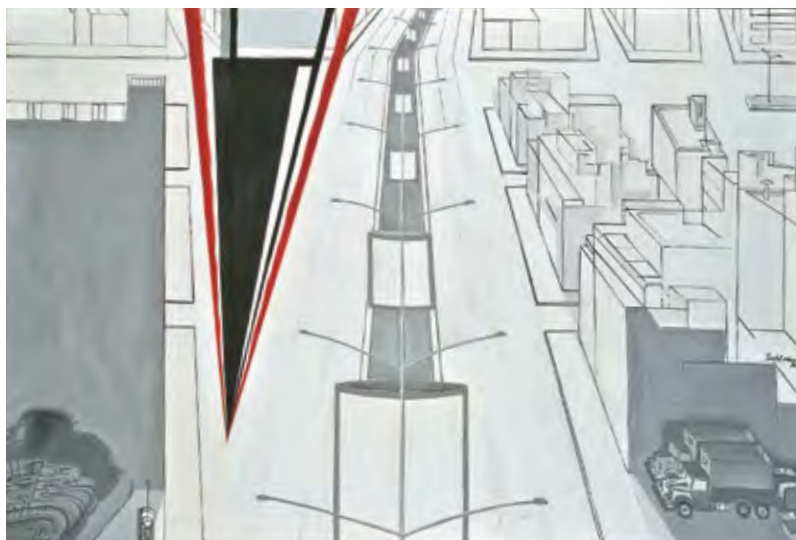
Konstantinos Xenakis
(1931)
Commandments
H.H.B., 1991
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 81 cm
inv. no. 9030

inquiries is considered to be MIT, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which has been attended by a number of Greeks.

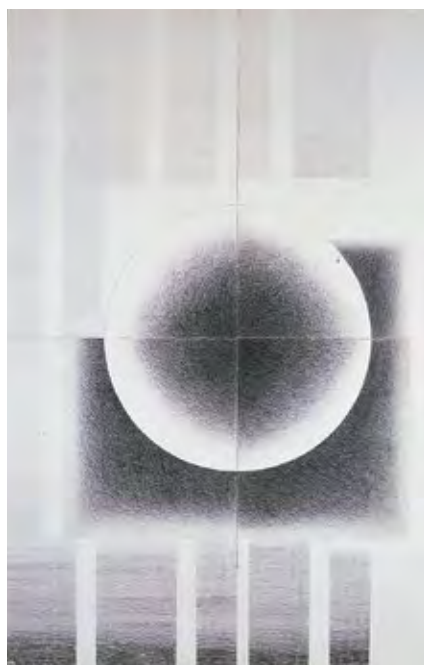
Technology and mathematics have also guided the plastic quests of a few Greek painters such as Pantelis Xagoraris (1929-2000), Bia Davou (1932-1996), and Konstantinos Xenakis (1931). Geometric elements, in combination with figurative signs, can be tracked down in the work of Giorgos Touyas (1922-1994). Niki Kanagini (1933-2008) frequently comes close to Minimal Art through her sensitive style. Michalis Katzourakis (1933) also expresses himself through minimalistic, geometrical language, where the tactile feeling of the rich texture of the materials he chooses plays the leading role.



Michalis Katzourakis
(1933)
B 36, 1978
Mixed media, 130 x 130 cm
inv. no. 7064



Giorgos Touyas
(1922-1994)
The City, 1970
Emulsion on canvas
130 x 195 cm
inv. no. 5125



Niki Kanagini
(1933-2008)
Newspaper, 1975
Pencil on paper
200 x 140 cm
inv. no. 5284

Figurative Painting Expression, Gesture, Material, Texture

CHRISTOS
CARAS

JOHN
CHRISTOFOROU

ILIAS
DEKOULAKOS

MANOLIS
KALLIYANNIS

ORESTIS
KANELLIS

DEMOSTHENIS
KOKKINIDIS

GIORGOS
MAVROÏDIS

DIMITRIS
MYTARAS

PARIS
PREKAS

PANAYIOTIS
TETSIS

MAKIS
THEOFYLAKTO-
POULOS

THANOS
TSINGOS

DIKOS
VYZANTIOS

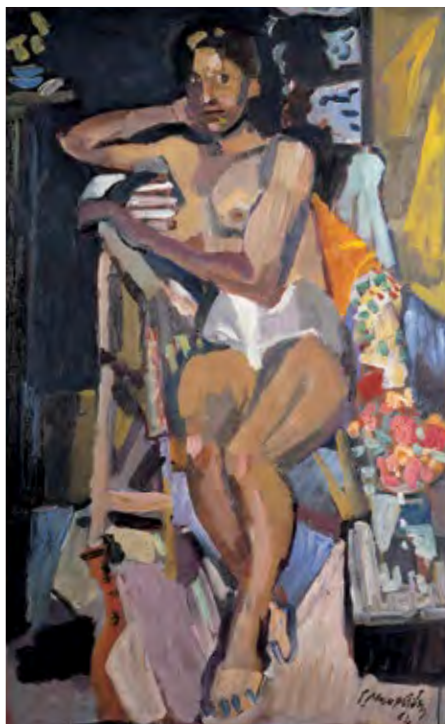
In Greek art the Mediterranean propensity for focusing on the figure is to be constantly observed. Abstract and non-figurative trends are but brief interludes.

The image has returned most vigorously

after a short-lived eclipse in the Sixties, enriched now with the experience of abstract quests. The figurative idioms cover the entire expressive gamut. Expressionism practically never reached the level of tempestuous, expressive distortion, with the exception, perhaps, of John Christoforou (1921), who fashions a human mask, threatening and threatened, with rough brushstrokes. Giorgos Mavroïdis (1913-2003) constructs his figures through color levels and large, decisive gestures. During the early period of his creative work, and particularly in his "butcher's paintings" Panayiotis Tetsis (1925) approached expressionism through the force of his color. But there is always the concern for structure, which will come to dominate his mature works. The work of Orestis Kanellis (1910-1979) and Eva Boulgoura (1917-2000) typify a mild form of lyrical expressionism.

The painters Demosthenis Kokkinidis (1929), Christos Caras (1930), Dimitris Mytaras (1934) and Makis Theofylaktopoulos (1939), who came into their own in the Sixties, have retained an always recognizable image buried under their abstract shapes. The same is true of the painting of Alkis Pierrakos (1920), who vacillates between the adventure of matter and the emergence of form.

Thanasis Tsingos (1914-1965), Dikos Vyzantios (1924-2007) and Manolis Kalliyannis (1923-2010), who were in Paris during the period of *Art Informel* and Lyrical Abstraction, would enrich these currents with their own personal quests, without rejecting the image. Through use of gestural expressionism Ilias Dekoulakos (1929-1998), an artist who died at an early age and had expressed his protest against the Greek dictatorship through Hyperrealism, would carve out the rough image of his beloved Mani in the viscous material of color.



Giorgos Mavroidis
(1913-2003)

Nude, 1964

Oil on canvas, 116 x 73 cm

Donation of the Ministry
of Education, inv. no. 3352

Orestis Kanellis
(1910-1979)

Presence

c. 1961-1963

Oil on canvas, 75 x 97 cm

inv. no. 3077



John Christoforou
(1921)
Injured Man, 1994
Oil on canvas
116 x 146 cm
inv. no. 9028



Thanos Tsingos
(1914-1965)
Boats, 1956
Oil on canvas
73 x 91.5 cm
inv. no. 8643





Panayiotis Tetsis
(1925)
Butcher Shop, 1955-1956
Oil on canvas, 162 x 207 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 9927

Christos Caras
(1930)

Exodus, 1964

Oil on canvas, 128 x 160 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Education, inv. no. 3346



Dimitris Myrtas
(1934)

Mirror with Mauve

1964

Acrylic on canvas
173 x 258 cm
inv. no. 3219

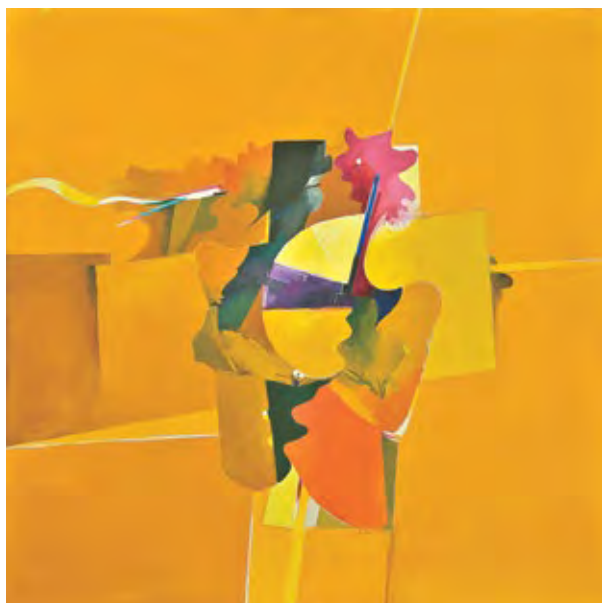




Makis Theofylaktopoulos
(1939)

Composition,
[1966]

Oil on canvas, 78 x 86 cm
inv. no. 5195



Demosthenis Kokkinidis
(1929)

Antithesis, [1980]

Acrylic on canvas
200 x 200 cm
Donation of the Ioannis
F. Kostopoulos Foundation
inv. no. 6364

Manolis Kalliyannis
(1923-2010)
Cypress, [1971]
Oil on canvas
249 x 114.5 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Culture and Science
inv. no. 4137



Dikos Vyzantios
(1924-2007)
Painting, c. 1972
Oil on canvas, 130 x 162 cm
inv. no. 7066





Ilias Dekoulakos
(1929-1998)
Mani - Paliros.
One Summer
(triptych), 1986-1991
Oil on canvas
170 x 450 cm
inv. no. 8635/1-3

The painting of Panayiotis Tetsis (1925) has always retained its constant and unbreakable bonds with feeling. His eye was trained to read light and to translate it into pure color forces. And as the natural propensity of his art remains focused on the landscape, Tetsis has developed into one of the few, and the most worthy, painters of the Greek outdoors. He has indeed attained the unattainable, giving the lie to a tradition two centuries old: creating a painting of the outdoors which is truly chromatic, and containing powerful harmonies, which translate the nature of Greek light with great conviction. In his mature work, Tetsis literally builds with color. He translates the light and shadow into calculable units of pure and brilliant color, and constructs a universe clear and luminous, where the sun in its orbit regulates hours and seasons. Nevertheless, Tetsis' painting does not reject abstraction. Each part of his painting can be read as pure color and as part of the enigma of the image.

Similar inquiries can be recognized in the painting of Manolis Kalliyannis (1923-2010), where the abstract landscapes are built up of units of color on the model of Nicholas de Staël (1914-1955). In the landscapes of Paris Prekas (1926-1999) and Vasilis Theocharakis (1930) feeling and intellect are balanced with one-sided correlations, while the water colors of Asadour Baharian (1924-1990) sing the lyrical praises of the Greek outdoors.

Panayiotis Tetsis
(1925)
Athens IV
c. 1967-1968
Oil on canvas, 138 x 138 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 9948





Paris Prekas
(1926-1999)
Tanker, 1982
Oil on canvas, 130 x 150 cm
inv. no. 6873

Panayiotis Tetsis
(1925)

The Blue Chairs II
1975-1977

Oil on canvas, 138 x 88 cm

Donation of the artist

inv. no. 9955





Panayiotis Tetsis
(1925)
Balcony Door, 1961
Oil on wood, 172 x 99 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 9950

Panayiotis Tetsis
(1925)
Street Market
(triptych), 1979-1982
Oil on canvas
249 x 1215 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 9960



Aspects of Pop Art

YANNIS
GAÏTIS
GIORGOS
IOANNOU
CHRISTOS
SARAKATSIANOS
GIORGOS
VAKIRTZIS

Pop Art (the name is derived from the initial letters of *Popular Art*) was born, as is only natural, in the United States, where the first explosion of the consumer society was to be observed in the Sixties. It succeeded Abstract Expressionism and can be viewed as a form of impetuous approach to reality. The codices of Pop Art have their source in the language of advertising: graphic standardization, simplified shapes, poster paint, repetition, monumental enlargement of a consumer item were a few of the discoveries used by these artists in a critical, ironic and sarcastic spirit. Indeed, they imitated the mass production employed by advertising with multiple images which they fashioned with only minor interventions (Andy Warhol, 1928-1987).

In Europe Pop Art developed another kind of character: New Realism (Nouveau Réalisme as it was known in France) appropriated the rubbish of consumer culture, which they then were deflected from their original use in order to create a new aesthetic object.

Yannis Gaïtis (1923-1984), standardizing and multiplying in a cumulative fashion the homogenized individual found in large, contemporary cities, managed to create the visual ideogram of the anonymous crowd. With humor and inventiveness he moulded an art both popular and for consumption, which managed to broaden its public, influencing even groups which were characterized by aesthetic and artistic apathy.

Christos Sarakatsianos (1937) through the curved lines of his "maternal and erotic divinity" and Giorgos Ioannou (1926) through his "mosaic-like" excerpts from the popular illustrations of a circus, have given us a thrilling Greek version of Pop Art.

But perhaps one of the most original variations can be found in the giant movie posters which were executed by the sure brush and pure colors of a group of painters led by Giorgos Vakirtzis (1923-1988).



Giorgos Vakirtzis
(1923-1988)
Poster from the movie
**The Diary of Anne
Frank**, [1959]
Fish-glue on paper
178 x 140 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Culture and Science
inv. no. 4249



Giorgos Ioannou
(1926)
Concerning an Event
[1972]
Oil on canvas, 100 x 70 cm
inv. no. 4555

Christos Sarakatsianos
(1937)

Composition, 1982

Acrylic on canvas

130 x 180 cm

inv. no. 6409



Yannis Gaitis
(1923-1984)

Sirens - Odysseus

c. 1980

Oil on canvas

150 x 195.5 cm

inv. no. 5794



Yannis Gaitis
(1923-1984)

Composition, 1975

Construction, oil on wood
200 x 134 cm

inv. no. 5194



Reality and Transcendence

ACHILEAS
DROUNGAS
THOMAS
FANOURAKIS
DANIEL
GOUNARIDIS
NIKOS
HOULIARAS
LEFTERIS
KANAKAKIS
SARANTIS
KARAVOUSIS
MICHALIS
MAKROULAKIS
THODOROS
MANOLIDIS
GRIGORIS
SEMITEKOLO
DIMOS
SKOULAKIS
SOTIRIS
SORONGAS
THANASIS
STEFOPOULOS
GIORGOS
VAKALO
PETROS
ZOUMBOULAKIS

The Greek coup d'état of 1967 was destined to bring the avant-garde spring, which had just

begun, to a jarring halt. Of course, many representatives of the Greek avant-garde adapted their codes so as to denounce totalitarianism through eloquent signs (the plaster casts and carnations of Vlassis Caniaris, for example). During the early years of the dictatorship people of intellect and spirit imposed voluntary silence on themselves. This silence created the preconditions for a new turn of events.

The Seventies were launched with the return to figurative painting, which echoed and marched in step with American Hyperrealism and European forms of realism. The Greek version is identified with these currents in terms of the origin of the new image in photography and the mass media. The New Greek Realists appeared as a group in an exhibition at the Goethe Institute in 1972. To this group belonged Yannis Valavanidis (1939), Kleopatra Dinga (1946), Kyriakos Katzourakis (1944), Chronis Botsoglou (1941) and Yannis Psychopaidis (1945). They are not represented in the present volume for two reasons: primarily because the National Gallery does not have works from this important period in its collections. But also because they were all born after 1940, the cut-off point we have adopted for the artists represented in this edition.

The return to the image encouraged many artists, older and younger, to open a new dialogue with the people and things of this period. In this chapter we are considering together those artists who revealed the invisible in the visible, the transcendent in the real. Two older artists, Giorgos Vakalo (1902-1991) and Thanasis Stefopoulos (1928-2012) drew up poetic images of fantasy from the passions of matter. They belong to the tradition of surrealist quests which can be traced back to Max Ernst (1891-1976).

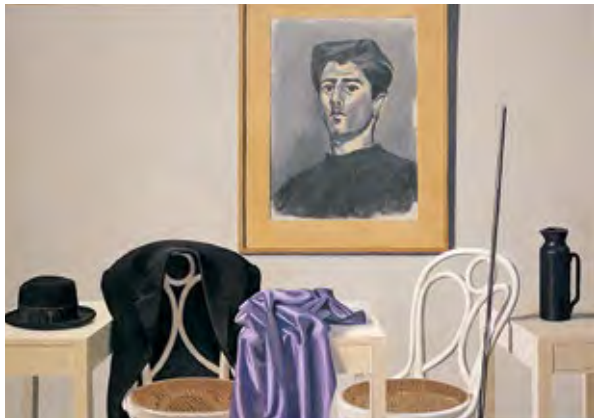
Nevertheless, here we are interested in a form of figurative painting which approaches the subject, landscape or object, with a simplicity and directness that is practically realistic. In the end, however, through a variety of interventions in the compositional code of the image, in the choice of motifs or even in the tech-



Sarantis Karavouzis
(1938-2011)
**Landscape with
Archaeological Ruins**
c. 1974
Oil on canvas, 69 x 100 cm
inv. no. 5248

Lefteris Kanakakis
(1934-1985)
17 July 1967
[1967]
Oil on canvas
114 x 162 cm
inv. no. 5140

Thomas Fanourakis
(1915-1993)
**Wooden
Constructions, 1974**
Emulsion on particleboard
87 x 67 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 5901



nique itself, it manages to convey in an allusive way the metaphysical *frisson* of another place and another time. The feeling that these works arouse is related to poetic *dépaysement* which was first experienced in the works of Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978). It is not by chance, however, that the landscapes of the great mystic of metaphysical painting were landscapes from the south and that the light played a catalytic role in the discovery of the unfamiliar through the familiar.

Both his age and earlier works make Thomas Fanourakis (1915-1993) a part of the "Generation of the Thirties" and its helleno-centric quests. In his latest works he has been painting interiors with a true "metaphysical" feel to them. Lefteris Kanakakis (1934-1985) worked in accord with the principles of Critical Realism during the time of the Greek dictatorship, arranging objects in his still lifes to serve as comments on the Colonels' rhetorical propaganda. After the restoration of democracy, he felt free to dedicate himself to a painting which reveals the mystery found in the inherent properties of objects. Painted with ineffable sensitivity, bathed in light, Kanakakis' objects invite us to share in their own "still life", a term that is truly suited to them.

Sarantis Karavouzis (1938-2011) can be seen as a true descendant of de Chirico. His archaeological landscapes, inhabited by mutilated statues, vacillating between presence and absence, life and fossilized time, his still lifes consisting of bits and pieces of inscriptions, everyday objects or "empty shirts" give rise to a true metaphysical *frisson*. But it is primarily through the real quality of the painting that the feeling of motionless time is transmitted: an indeterminate light which caresses things and refutes all sharpness, and a color scale based on sensitively colored greys. Petros Zoumboulakis (1937) transports us through his landscapes into a dreamy space.

Daniel Gounaridis (1934), through his boundless grey and uninhabited cement cities and Grigoris Semitokolo (1935), through his imaginary constructivist structures which inhabit desolate areas, comment on the alienating urban landscape of the modern world. The recent urban landscapes of Dimos Skoulakis (1939) also belong to this category.



Giorgos Vakalo
(1902-1991)
From the series
Moons, c. 1979
Oil on canvas
76.3 x 100 cm
inv. no. 6045



Thanasis Stefopoulos
(1928-2012)
Untitled, 1974
Oil on canvas, 122 x 120 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 5506



Daniel Gounaridis
(1934)
The City, 1974
Acrylic on canvas
132 x 180 cm
Donation of the Ioannis
F. Kostopoulos Foundation
inv. no. 6365

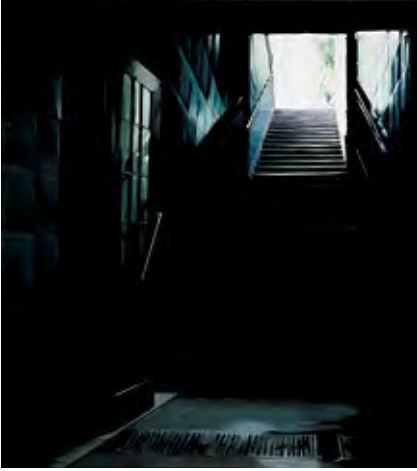


Petros Zoumboulakis
(1937)
**The Night Separated
Us from Those We
Love**, 1978
Mixed media, 90 x 120 cm
inv. no. 5582

The interiors and still lifes of Thodoros Manolidis (1940) could be considered in tandem with the analogous works of Kanakakis. But there is an important difference. The intense schematization and decorative character lend his works the feeling of a folk fetish. Achilleas Droungas (1940) paints figures and objects possessed of spectral lucidity, reminiscent of the polished and faultless world of illustrated magazines and advertisements. The choice of objects he juxtaposes to one another constitutes a sarcastic or ironic comment on the gleaming world seen in the store window. Frequently, however, this same idiom of perfect and flawless form with its illusory artifice takes us to the world of myth and poetry. The peerless alibi employed by Michalis Makroulakis (1940), is pure poetry expressed in a style of ineffable sensitivity and precision.

Nikos Houliaras (1940), an esteemed writer, composer and painter, using his personal codes stages the drama of the everyday routine of his hero, who is none other than himself. Sometimes he confines him in narrow rooms, and other times exiles him to immense uninhabited areas with only his shadow, cast down by the light of a distant moon, for company, as in the diptych *The Warm Desert of Life* (1996).

The choice of black-and-white, the recourse to a technique reminiscent of drawing even when it is an oil painting, and above all else the semiological use of iconistic elements, which are chosen with economy and care, gives the painting of Sotiris Sorongas (1936) its own particular character. The texture of the material, space, the void and silence play the leading roles in this special painting language. The painters who have been considered together in this chapter show that even in the dazzling light of midday they can successfully evoke the ghosts or is it the light which gives birth to them, like those "midday boogeymen" our mothers appealed to, to get us in from the streets at noon when we were children?



Dimos Skoulakis
(1939)
**Victoria Station -
Stairs**, 1977
Oil on canvas, 210 x 190 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 9974



Grigoris Semitekolo
(1935)
**Imaginary
Landscape**, 1993
Oil on canvas, 97 x 148 cm
inv. no. 8867



Lefteris Kanakakis
(1934-1985)
Interior
before 1979
Oil on canvas
129 x 129.5 cm
inv. no. 5663

Thodoros Manolidis
(1940)
Still Life, 1972
Oil on canvas, 109 x 120 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Culture and Science
inv. no. 4367



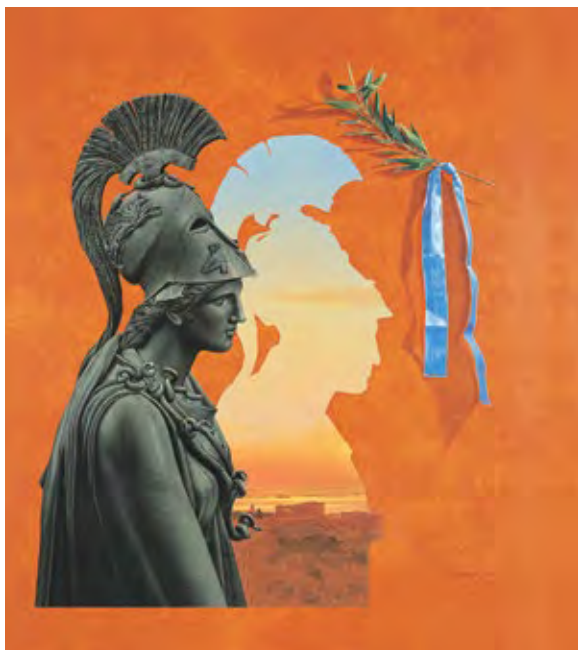
Michalis Makroulakis
(1940)

Composition, 1978
Emulsion on wood
53.2 x 37.6 cm
inv. no. 6386

Achilleas Droungas
(1940)

Athena - Athens
2002

Oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 11249





Nikos Houliaras
(1940)
**The Warm Desert
of Life** (diptych), 1996
Mixed media, 70 x 200 cm
inv. no. 9717



Sotiris Sorongas (1936)
Ancient Chariot
before 1974
Emulsion on canvas
150 x 150 cm
inv. no. 5246



Sotiris Sorongas
(1936)
Rock, before 1977
Emulsion on canvas
200 x 180 cm
inv. no. 5245

Transformations of the Image at the End of the 20th Century

ANTONIS
APERGIS

CHRISTOS
CARAS

TAKIS
KATSOULIDIS

DEMOSTHENIS
KOKKINIDIS

DIMITRIS
MYTARAS

GIORGOS
VAKIRTZIS

DIKOS
VYZANTIOS

In the long Greek tradition iconoclasm was but a brief interlude, a small deviation in the ongoing adherence to form, to iconolatry. The Critical Realism under the Greek dictatorship brought the image back to Greek painting even though it was by means of the all powerful mass media. Moreover, along with the artists who had advanced on to abstraction, there were dozens of Greek artists who at the same time remained faithful to figurative painting.

After the restoration of democracy certain changes are to be observed, which foreshadow the deep division in the contemporary postmodern period. Many figurative painters who, because of political conditions, exercised direct and indirect criticism of the regime through their work, now felt free to express their own personal desires without remorse: Demosthenis Kokkinidis (1929), Dimitris Mytaras (1934), Christos Karas (1930) and several younger artists such as Chronis Botsoglou (1941) and Yannis Psychopaidis (1945). The liberating climate of the postmodern condition, which proclaimed religious tolerance and eclecticism, favored these transformations. Even older artists such as Yannis Tsarouchis (1910-1989) and Giorgos Vakirtzis (1923-1988) opened a new dialogue with the past, reshaping and modernizing works from their imaginary museum: Tsarouchis singling out Vermeer (1632-1675), and Vakirtzis *The School of Athens* by Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio, 1483-1520).

The handful of works we house from this group arose from this climate. If we set aside the period of Mytaras' theatrical portraits which retain, despite their daring, strong bonds with feeling and observation, the rest of the works are hybrid children of the morганatic marriages of Postmodernism. The manneristic figures of Dikos Vyzantios (1924-2007) set down an inscrutable action in strange spaces like stage sets. A similar feeling is transmitted by the statuesque female figures of Caras. Kokkinidis left behind the social speculation of his earlier painting to give himself to the ironic lyricism of rural idylls or to the painless blissfulness of his bathers. The cultural palimpsests of Postmodernism do not

Dikos Vyzantios
(1924-2007)
Figures, 1985
Oil on canvas
200 x 300 cm
Donation of M. Liakopoulou
inv. no. 8481



Takis Katsoulidis
(1933)
The Two Generations
1983
Oil on canvas, 150 x 148 cm
inv. no. 7063

Giorgos Vakirtzis
(1923-1988)
The School of Athens
No 2, 1974
Oil on canvas
149.5 x 149.5 cm
inv. no. 5280



exclude a dialogue of the painter with his own self. This is exactly what takes place in Mytaras' late work where we track down the bits and pieces of his personal archaeology.

Postmodernism had a catalytic effect on modern Greek painting. The old disputes between the figurative and abstract painters, between conservatives and the avant-garde, no longer have any *raison d'être* in this climate of acceptance, syncretism and globalization. If the key word for the avant-garde is Questioning, tradition in the main, and its ideological stimulus a faith in progress and the future, the key word for modern artists is Nostalgia, the return. The return to a tradition that is disappearing, a return to a nature that is threatened, a return or turn to familiar everyday life, but with tenderness, irony and a playful disposition, without an air of importance. Art tends to reject the role of witness and judge and to once more become philanthropic, consoling and delightful. This ruling principle abolished the borders, which had divided painters on a canvas from artists who expressed themselves through constructions, environments or happenings. Peaceful coexistence is also a consequence of *pax post-moderna universalis*.

Antonis Apergis
(1938)
From the series
In the Month of Athir
1998
Acrylic on canvas
170 x 235 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 9978

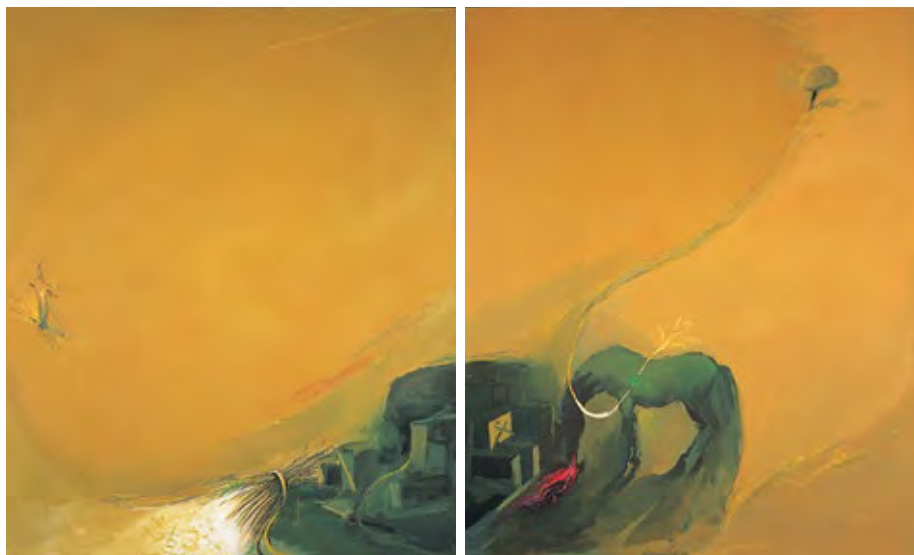




Christos Caras
(1930)
Three Graces, 1974
Oil on canvas
154 x 234 cm
inv. no. 5196



Dimitris Mytaras
(1934)
Seated Male Figure
1979-1980
Acrylic on canvas
190 x 220 cm
inv. no. 7053



Demosthenis Kokkinidis
(1929)

Descent (diptych), 1989

Acrylic on canvas, 121 x 200 cm

inv. no. 8638/1-2



Dimitris Mytaras
(1934)
Workshop, 1993
Oil on canvas
220 x 180 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 9971



Dimitris Mytaras
(1934)
Bow, 1994
Oil on canvas
220 x 180 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 9970

MODERN GREEK SCULPTURE 19th CENTURY

YANNOULIS
CHALEPAS

LEONIDAS
DROSIS

GEORGIOS
FYTALIS

LAZAROS
FYTALIS

NIKOLAOS
GYSIS

IOANNIS
KOSSOS

KONSTANTINOS
PAPADIMITRIOU

DIMITRIOS
PHILIPPOTIS

PAVLOS
PROSALENTIS
(The Elder)

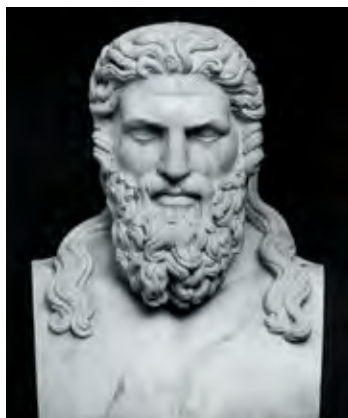
GEORGIOS
VROUTOS

Sculpture reached its acme in ancient Greece and held a similar position during the following centuries but that was not destined to continue.

The victory of Christianity and its subsequent rejection of every element derived from the heathen world led to the gradual downgrading of sculpture in Greece, till it assumed a completely decorative role. During post-Byzantine times it survived in the form of wood engraving, and metal and stone working, and was confined to the context of folk art.

In Greece the reappearance of sculpture as an autonomous art and its liberation from its secondary, decorative role was realized at the beginning of the 19th century in the Ionian Islands, through the work of the Corfiot sculptor Pavlos Prosalentis the Elder (1784- 1837). Prosalentis was the first academic modern Greek sculptor and in 1813 became the founder of the first Art School in Greece. His work reflects the classicistic doctrines of St. Luke's Academy of Rome and that great classicist teacher Antonio Canova (1757- 1822), while his subject matter (mainly statues and busts, together with a limited number of compositions inspired by mythology) corresponds to the demands of the English-governed Corfiot bourgeois society of the times. The bust of *Plato* (1815), the first dated work in modern Greece, is a characteristic example of the spirit in which he worked. He, his friend and coworker Dimitrios Trivolis-Pieris (1785-1808) and his student Ioannis-Vaptistis Kalosgouros (1794-1878), would constitute the three representatives of the Ionian Island School of sculpture, which, however, remained independent of the rest of Greece and had no sequel.

During the period in which Prosalentis founded his Art School in Corfu, the rest of Greece was still under the Turkish yoke. The first representatives of sculpture in Greece proper, those who would signal its beginning immediately following the Greek War of Independence, had not yet been born. The small painted wood statue of Georgios Karaïskakis, which Konstantinos Papadimitriou



Pavlos Prosalentis
the Elder (1784-1837)

Plato, 1815

Marble, height 50 cm

Collection of the
Numismatic Museum.

On permanent loan
to the National Gallery
inv. no. 3717



Georgios Fytalis
(1830?-1901)

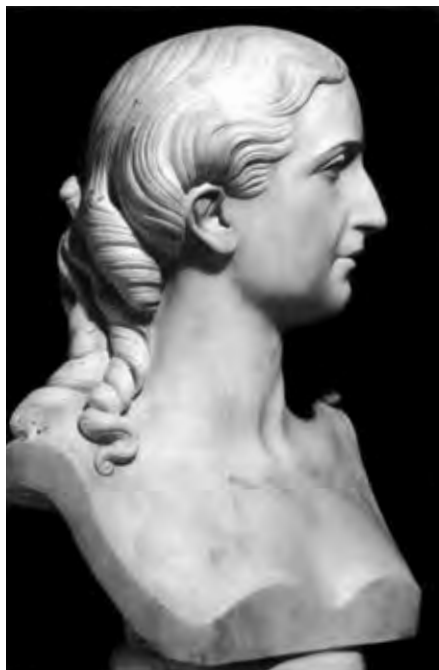
**Shepherd with
Kid**, [1856]

Marble, height 110 cm

Nikolaos Iliopoulos Bequest
inv. no. 1418

from Agrafa made in 1829, was an isolated example of a folk artisan who wanted to immortalize this warrior of the Greek War of Independence with his own naïf conception of art. The involvement with sculpture was localized to the marble working shops of Tinos, which had a long tradition in the processing of marble, but which was limited to works of a decorative character. The construction of new buildings, which began to gain momentum with the transfer of the capital of the free Greek state from Nauplio to Athens in 1834, constituted a pole of attraction for these experienced Tinian artisans, who came to Athens to work in the decoration of the new edifices. This fact reflects the more general spirit of the era, in agreement with which architecture was closely connected to sculpture. Already by 1835 the brothers Iakovos (?-1903) and Frangiskos Malakates (?-1914), of Tinian origins, had founded the first sculpture workshop in Athens under the name "Ermoglyfeion" ("Statuary Shop"), and they began to undertake many architectural works. Quite a number of the people who worked in this workshop were later to become eminent Greek sculptors. The need, however, for more systematic instruction in the arts, incorporated into the framework of the broader reformation of the newly constituted Greek state, was imperative. Thus, in 1837 the "School of Arts" was founded, where sculpture was systematically being taught by 1847, the year when the German sculptor Christian Siegel (1808-1883) was appointed professor there.

Siegel brought to Greece the classicistic spirit which had already come to prevail in Europe. The first Greek sculptors, such as Dimitrios (1819-1872) and Ioannis Kossos (1822-1873), the Tinians, Georgios (1830?-1901) and Lazaros Fytalis (1831-1909) and Leonidas Drosis (1834-1882) who began to formally study at that time were fashioned in this spirit. These sculptors were carrying on a family tradition in sculpture. The father of the Kossos brothers was a carver of ship's figureheads, while the Fytalis family had a long tradition in the processing of marble on Tinos, and, finally, the great-grandfather of Drosis was a sculptor. The classicistic education Ioannis Kossos received at the School of Arts was augmented with studies in Rome, while Drosis went to Munich for the same purpose. The themes they were involved with were analogous



Ioannis Kossos
(1822-1873)
Adelaïs Ristori, 1867
Marble, height 63 cm
inv. no. 1501



Ioannis Kossos
(1822-1873)
Night, 1864
Marble, height 49 cm
inv. no. 1500

to the education they had received, in regard to style, while the content of their works was adapted to the requirements of the newly constituted Greek state.

Ioannis Kossos developed into a national sculptor deeply involved with the depiction of those who fought in the Greek War of Independence (a series of his busts ornaments the galleries of the University of Athens) as well as the leading figures of the period while, on a more limited scale, he showed an interest in allegorical and mythological compositions. His bust of the Italian actress *Adelais Ristori* (1867) and his allegorical rendering of *Night* (1864), are examples of the subject matter he employed, and his rather remote classicistic style.

The interest of Georgios and Lazaros Fytalis, who often worked in common, was focused on cemetery monuments, which were in great demand during that period, on busts and architectural decoration, not to mention compositions of a mythological or genre character. In the latter category one finds the *Shepherd with Baby Goat* by Georgios Fytalis, an early work which combines classicistic idealization with hints of realism and a studious elaboration. Its model in plaster won the first prize in 1856 at the Kontostavleios competition.

Among these early sculptors the most important representative of the classicistic spirit was Leonidas Drosis. Drosis furthered his education at the Munich Academy under Max von Widmann (1812-1895), a student and successor of the classicist Ludwig Schwanthaler (1802-1848); he subsequently travelled to various European cities and ended up in Rome, where he opened his own studio. Exceptionally energetic and with a wealth of artistic production, he was a significant influence on quite a number of later artists, both through his work and his teaching at the National Technical University of Athens. To him is owed the sculptural decoration of the Athens Academy, and a number of statues and busts of distinguished figures, as well as numerous compositions inspired by antiquity. His adaptation to the spirit of classicism and his exceptional skill in the processing of marble are obvious in *Penelope* (1873) at the National Gallery. The stance of the figure is based on the iconographical model of *Aphrodite Olympiad*, a

Roman copy of a classical model from the 5th century BC, as well as the later *Agrippina and Eleni* at the Capitoline Museums and *Letizia Ramolino Bonaparte* (1804-1807) by Antonio Canova (collection of the Duke of Devonshire, Chatsworth). The model in plaster for this work won the gold medal at the Olympia Exhibition of 1870 and King George I donated thirty thousand drachmas to have it transferred to marble. In 1939 the Palace donated it to the National Gallery.

Despite the fact that classicistic expression held first place in Greek sculpture throughout the 19th century, by the 1870s other elements also began to make their appearance. Along with state and private commissions, artists were also turning to compositions which were freer in nature and to a gradual broadening of their subject matter. Dimitrios Philippotis (1834-1919) from Tinos was one of the first to be interested in the free and more realistic composition, though he did not cut himself off completely from the classicistic tradition. The figures of children in nature, such as the *Harvester* (1870, Zappeion Garden) and *Young Fisherman* (1874, Zappeion Garden) would constitute new kinds of subject matter to augment the already existing and oft-repeated themes of previous sculptors and would connect Greek sculptural production with European conceptual approaches. His turn to realistic depiction is obvious in his busts as well, such as

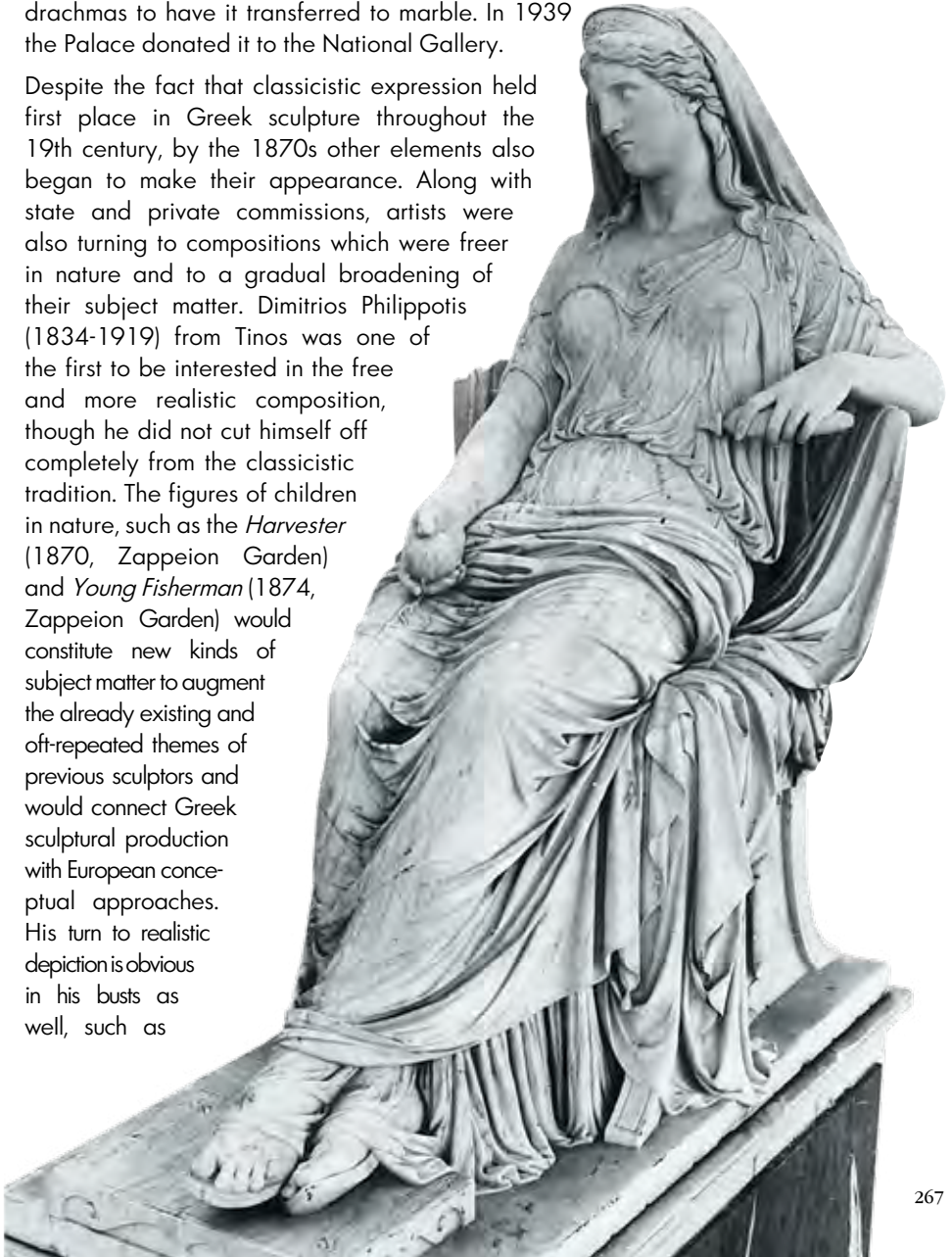
Leonidas Drosis
(1834-1882)

Penelope, 1873

Marble, height 143 cm

Donation of the Palace

inv. no. 508



Aikaterini Konstantinidou (1896) and the burial monuments that he made on commission.

Georgios Vrontos (1843-1909) also received classicistic education at the School of Arts from Georgios Fytalis, at the studio of Ioannis Kossos and at St. Luke's Academy in Rome, from the students of Canova. His classicistic roots, though they never ceased to be apparent in his work, were combined with endeavors adapted to realistic perceptions and a distancing from standardized subject matter - busts, statues, cemetery monuments - of commissions. In the context of this endeavor and with a clear-cut tendency toward innovation, he transferred to marble in 1877 the plaster model of the work, *The Spirit of Copernicus*, which he had made in 1873 in Rome and exhibited in 1875 at the Olympia Exhibition. The inverted figure with its legs in the air, known from the Hellenistic composition of the *Boy with the Dolphin* (Roman copy at the National Museum of Naples), was repeated in the composition by Canova, *Hercules and Lichas* (1795-1815, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome). The winged figure, moreover, which symbolizes the spirit of an eminent figure and supports itself on a globe, was already known from Descartes' cenotaph at the church of Adolf Fredrik in Stockholm, by the Swedish sculptor Johan Tobias Sergel (1740-1814). In any case, for the Greek public, this composition was exceptionally daring and the endeavor was not carried on any further. Conversely, in *Leda and the Swan*, which belongs to his cycle of mythological compositions, a subject is treated beloved since antiquity, which is brought back into both European painting and sculpture. Works such as *Boy with Crab* (or *Fear of Cancer*, 1893) or *Cupid Breaks his Bow* (c. 1896), which in 1900 won first prize at the International Exhibition of Paris, are incorporated in a more broadly accepted subject matter which drew its model from the genre work of European art. Compositions of this type were destined for the decoration of private and public gardens and aimed at delighting the viewers, as is shown by the placement of another copy of *Cupid Breaks his Bow* in the Zappeion Garden.

Around the middle of the 1870s, Yannoulis Chalepas (1851-1938), the sculptor of the *Sleeping Female Figure* at the First Cemetery of Athens and one of the most important figures in



Georgios Vroutos
(1843-1909)

**The Spirit
of Copernicus**
1877

Marble, height 150 cm
Nikolaos Iliopoulos Bequest
inv. no. 1417

modern Greek sculpture, appeared on the artistic scene. Son of a marble carver from Tinos, he took his first lessons from his father and continued at the School of Arts under Leonidas Drosis and at the Academy of Munich under Max von Widmann. The classicistic doctrines of his teachers and the broader artistic environment of the Bavarian capital contributed to the cultivation of his unquestioned talent. Until 1878, when the first symptoms of his mental illness appeared, he made works which are unique examples of the assimilation of the classicistic spirit. *Satyr Playing with Cupid* (1877) precisely combines this assimilation with his love for ancient Greek sculpture and mythological representations, which are constantly reappearing in his work. This commanding composition with its decorative character, stressed by the delicate and playful disposition of the two figures, is the first variation on a theme which Chalepas was to rework twelve times, between then and 1936. The plaster model of the work won a gold medal in 1875 at the Munich Exhibition while the marble version of it was presented in 1878 at the International Exhibition of Paris.

Though Greek sculpture in the 19th century is characterized by the dominance of classicism, the need for the renewal of the plastic language and its adaptation to more realistic directions became more and more intensely felt. In the transitional period which followed there were still artists who preferred Munich or Italy for their post-graduate studies, such as Georgios Bonanos (1863-1939/1940) and Thomas Thomopoulos (1873-1937). But even they did not remain completely unaffected by the newer perceptions which had already begun to dominate Europe. The presence of Rodin (1840-1917) stirred up the European sculptural establishment and Paris gradually became the pole of attraction for Greek sculptors. The Tinian Lazaros Sochos (1862-1911), the sculptor who made the equestrian statue of Theodoros Kolokotronis (1904, Old Parliament), was the first to turn to the French capital, in 1881. His work, which reflects the transitional period that modern Greek sculpture had entered, combines the age-old classicistic tradition with realistic elements and his personal idealistic perceptions. The change of orientation had already begun and would be revealed gradually but much more clearly in the artists who would follow.

Yannoulis Chalepas
(1851-1938)
**Satyr Playing with
Cupid**, [1877]
Marble, height 135 cm
Donation of the heirs
of Angelos Kanellopoulos
inv. no. 2086



MODERN GREEK SCULPTURE 20th CENTURY

THANASIS
APARTIS
ACHILLEAS
APERGIS
IOANNIS
AVRAMIDIS
YANNOULIS
CHALEPAS
KONSTANTINOS
DIMITRIADIS
FROSO
EFTHIMIADI-
MENEGAKI
CHRISTOS
KAPRALOS
KOSTAS
KOULENTIANOS
LAZAROS
LAMERAS
MICHALIS
LEKAKIS
KLEARCHOS
LOUKOPOULOS
FROSO
MICHALEA
YANNIS
PAPPAS
BELLA
RAFTOPOULOU
GERASIMOS
SKLAVOS

The gradual liberation of modern Greek sculpture from the models of classicism through the introduction of realistic depiction and the

endeavor to adapt to new European conceptions had already begun to make its appearance during the final twenty-five years of the 19th century. This readjustment, of course, even though it was necessary, was not easy. The reverberations of classicistic doctrines reached all the way, in some instances, to the end of the first two decades of this century and standardized subject matter continued to survive. Even though Georgios Bonanos (1863-1939/1940) turned to realistic depiction, he remained strongly devoted to ancient Greek art. Thomas Thomopoulos (1873-1937), a professor at the School of Fine Arts for a series of years, without abandoning the formal sculpture of commissions and whatever this entailed, was at the same time involved with mythological and allegorical compositions, which reflect his personal idealistic conceptions. One of his innovations was a series of colored sculptures, which he made using the encaustic technique, in which the plastic elaboration of form derives its model from the work of Rodin.

The adoption of the plastic conceptions of Rodin expresses itself most clearly in the work of Kostas Dimitriadis (1879-1943). An artist with a brilliant career both in Paris, where he lived for thirty years, and Greece, he focused his interest from the very beginning on free compositions, frequently with a symbolic character. The *Crying Woman* (1909) is part of this subject matter and belongs to a broader iconographic whole called *Life's Defeated* (1905- 1914) which the outbreak of World War I prevented him from completing. These works as well as the later *Female Torso* (1920), reveal, even though evidence of his academic training has survived, the influence of the French teacher, both in the choice of subject and rendering of the form.

Paris, where the plastic ideas of Rodin coexisted with those of the younger Aristide Maillol (1861-1944), Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929) and Charles Despiau (1874-1946), had already definitely won over Greek artists. Greek sculpture, of course, continued to experience a transitional period and to oscillate between



Grigorios Zevgolis
(1886-1950)
Nude Young Woman
Marble, height 127 cm
Donation of Grigorios
Zevgolis family
inv. no. 4747

Kostas Dimitriadis
(1879-1943)
Female Torso, 1920
Marble, height 126 cm
Donation of Antonios Benakis
inv. no. 505

ANTONIOS
SOCHOS
THEODOROS
(PAPADIMITRIOU)
MICHALIS
TOMBROS
POLYGNOTOS
VAGIS
GRIGORIOS
ZEVGOLIS
GIORGOS
ZONGOLOPOULOS



academic tendencies and teachers, and innovative conceptions. Grigorios Zevgolis (1886-1950), a friend of Nikolaos Lytras and one of the founding members of the *Art Group*, belonged more to the first category, mainly in the works resulting from commissions. On the other hand, he adapted the doctrines of his French period of study with greater boldness in his free compositions, such as *Nude Young Woman*.

The sculptor who would consciously experiment with more modern perceptions, not only those of Maillol and Despiau but cubism and surrealism as well, was Michalis Tombros (1889-1974). A restless artist with a variety of interests, he taught for years at the Athens School of Fine Arts and led the way in the dissemination of avant-garde currents into Greek art. *Stout Seated Woman* (1926, copy from 1948 at the National Gallery), which in 1934 was presented at the Venice Biennale, is a work with clear references to the female figures of Maillol. In *Two Friends* (1930, Venice Biennale 1934), an archaic simplification is effected with a generalized rendition of a subject which has its roots in two Tanagra statuettes from the 4th century BC (terracotta, The Louvre) which reappeared in the 1st century AD, as well as in a composition by Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764-1850) with the princesses Louise and Frederica of Prussia (1795-1797, marble, National Gallery of Berlin). Conversely, the *Sprite* (1955, Venice Biennale 1956) is the result of his experimentation with cubist and surrealist forms.

Despite the fact that official commissions had not disappeared and, particularly after the Asia Minor Disaster and during the Metaxas dictatorship, there was a period intensely given over to the production of hero's monuments, the tendency that prevailed in free compositions was the combination of models of ancient Greek art, particularly the archaic and the austere style, with avant-garde European currents. Yet another Tinian, Antonios Sochos (1888-1975), from a well-known family with a long tradition in sculpture, would, after studying in Paris under Bourdelle, turn to ancient Greek art and the folk tradition, without at the same time rejecting the tendencies of European sculpture. In his early works in porous stone and bronze there are clear references



Michalis Tombros
(1889-1974)
Two Friends, [1930]
Marble, height 65 cm
Donation of the Ministry
inv. no. 2936



Michalis Tombros
(1889-1974)
Stout Seated Woman
1948
Bronze, height 107 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 3236



Antonios Sachos
(1888-1975)

Resistance
(figurehead)

Wood, height 165 cm
Donation of the artist
inv. no. 4664

to the *Kores* on the Acropolis. Later his turn to woodworking would lead to works such as *Resistance* (figurehead, Venice Biennale 1958) and stress his connection with European primitivist conceptions and wooden folk figureheads.

Around 1925, at the initiative of Thomas Thomopoulos, Yannoulis Chalepas (1851-1938) would return to the forestage. Cut off for years because he had been committed to the Psychiatric Asylum of Corfu and subsequently isolated on Tinos, which kept him from the new developments in Greek and European sculpture, he would supply models of works with a completely different style, which had its source in his personal experiences and is characterized by a peculiar "primitive" and, at the same time, expressionistic mood. Works such as *Alexander the Great and St. Barbara* (before 1925), *Ayios Charalambos and Hermes* (or *Ayios Charalambos and the Carver of Statuary*, before 1925), the *Secret* (before 1927), the *Harvester*, the *Large Reclining Woman* (or *Reverie*) and *Aphrodite* (1931), *Pegasus, Hermes and Aphrodite* (or *Perseus, Pegasus and Andromeda*), *Medea, the Thought* (or *Mermaid*) and the *Hunter* (1933) are characteristic examples of this period, during which he was either interested in new subjects or reworked older ones, frequently in more than one version.

During a period when Greek sculpture oscillated between academicism, a return to the roots and avant-garde trends, Thanasis Apartis (1899-1972) would completely adopt realistic expression, passing through the models of archaic art and the austere style. Antoine Bourdelle, his principle teacher in Paris, had a decisive influence on his work. An exceptional portraitist, who focussed his interest on the human figure, Apartis would make works such as *Kyra-Antiopi* (1941), *Woman Washing* (1943), and *The Sailor* (1955 and 1958), as well as a host of busts, such as the one of his wife Marie-Thérèse (1949, bronze) in which are recapitulated all of his sculptural quests.

Despite the fact that conservative tendencies continued to be represented by several sculptors, nevertheless more and more of them were turning in modern directions. Study abroad and contact with a variety of stylistic currents led to experimentation in



Yannoulis Chalepas
(1851-1938)
Medea, 1933
Plaster, height 72 cm
Donation of the Bank
of Greece, inv. no. 1470



Yannoulis Chalepas
(1851-1938)
**Ayios Charalambos
and Hermes
(Ayios Charalambos
and the Carver of
Statuary)**, before 1925
Plaster, height 56 cm
Donation of Antonios Sochos
inv. no. 1954



Yannoulis Chalepas (1851-1938)
Reverie (Large Reclining Woman), 1931
Plaster, height 49 cm. Donation of the Bank of Greece, inv. no. 1466

various tendencies, to a withdrawal from the use of traditional materials and the imposition of metal, primarily, and to different treatment of form in relationship to space. After the war, but especially at the beginning of the Sixties, there were quiet a number of sculptors who turned to abstract or completely non-figurative forms. At the same time, anthropocentrism, even though it withdrew to the margins, was never completely abandoned, but projected in a new way.

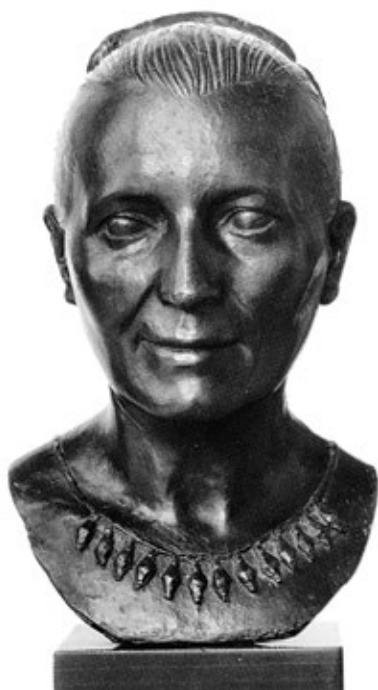
Giorgos Zongolopoulos (1903-2004), after his service to realistic depiction and anthropocentric sculpture, was one of the first to gradually advance on to schematization and abstraction. He would also experiment with constructivist forms and introduce the elements of motion, water and sound into his work. At the same time, he would become interested in the creation of visual distortions with lenses and would use materials such as nickel, glass and plexiglass. Similar was the career of Klearchos Loukopoulos (1908-1995) who, after a period of realistic endeavors, turned to abstract and completely non-figurative forms with stylistic references to Mycenaean Greece (*Acrocorinth*, 1965, Venice Biennale, 1966) ending with a constructivist composition of his material (*Superimposition*, 1977). Non-figurative expression also claimed Achilleas Apergis (1909-1986). His experimentation with iron, bronze and the smelting and welding of metals would lead him to compositions with welded rods and references to specific or non-figurative shapes while his series with stairs would be symbols of fight into space. On the other hand, Bella Raftopoulou (1902-1992), who was a student of Bourdelle, remained in essence faithful to figurative depiction and the direct carving of stone, even though in her later works she experimented with abstraction. Works such as *Sculpture* (1932) with its clear-cut carving, large surfaces and an archaizing tendency, are characteristic of her sculptural approach. Christos Kapralos (1909-1993) was yet another artist from this same period who even though he did not completely abandon figurative rendering, did gradually move on to abstraction. The realistic and archaic style of his earlier works and the use of plaster, stone and marble gave way, around 1960, to abstract compositions. Using his own technique with thin wax sheets, which were moulded with the assistance of fire and then cast in bronze, created works in



Thanasis Apartis
(1899-1972)
Kyra-Antiopi
[1941]
Bronze, height 38 cm
inv. no. 3760



Thanasis Apartis
(1899-1972)
Woman Washing
[1943]
Bronze, height 19.5 cm
Donation of the Ministry
of Education, inv. no. 3724



Thanasis Apartis
(1899-1972)
Marie Thérèse, [1949]
Bronze, height 35 cm
Donation of Marie-Thérèse Aparti
inv. no. 8497/1

which the actively pursued distortion, fragmented rendering and combining of heterogeneous elements, drew their models from expressionism, surrealism and futurism. The *Head of Horse* (1959) and *Motherhood* (or *Figure*, 1961) are of the earliest examples pointing toward expressionistic depiction. More moderate in his experimentation, Yannis Pappas (1913-2005) has remained faithful to anthropocentric depiction. The realistic rendering that characterizes his early sculptures such as *The Sculptor Christos Kapralos* (1936) and *The Painter Yannis Moralis* (1937) would be succeeded by a more generalized and simplified elaboration of volumes and the use of elements taken from Egyptian sculpture. The simplification and austerity would become stronger around 1960 in the rendering of compositions such as *Resting Figure* (1959). The participation of Lazaros Lameris (1913-1998) in 1949 in the founding of the avant-garde group *The Extremists* along with Alekos Kontopoulos, Yannis Gaitis, Yannis Maltezos and other artists with similar quests, is indicative of his preoccupations in regard to modern currents. Already in the preceding year he had made *Penteli* (or *Exaltation*), one of the first abstract sculptures in Greece. Even though he never completely abandoned figurative depiction, he continued to experiment in more modern directions, introducing sound, touch and motion in an endeavor to bring the spectator into direct contact with the work of art. Figurativeness, the use of clay, and a gradual distancing from the realistic rendition of figures by the direct forging of the metal components characterizes the work of Froso Efthimiadi-Menegaki (1916-1995). In abstract compositions such as *Ballerina* (1961), and *Lot's Wife* (1962) the natural figure is included as a memory, while the element which definitively sets the tone is the intense feeling of an evolutionary course. Kostas Koulentianos (1918-1995) followed a similar course. His settling in Paris in 1945 and his friendship with Henri Laurens were definitive factors in the fashioning of his subject matter and style. He abandoned clay, plaster and bronze, originally turning to lead and then steel, iron and copper. He gradually moved on to abstraction, creating, in the Sixties, works which could be connected to the constructivist movement. *Thunderbolt* (1964) belongs to this category. The shaping of the natural phenomenon is achieved through the combination of geometrical levels with pointed terminations, which suggest the feeling of movement

Klearchos Loukopoulos
(1908-1995)

Acrocorinth, [1965]

Bronze, height 95 cm

inv. no. 3433

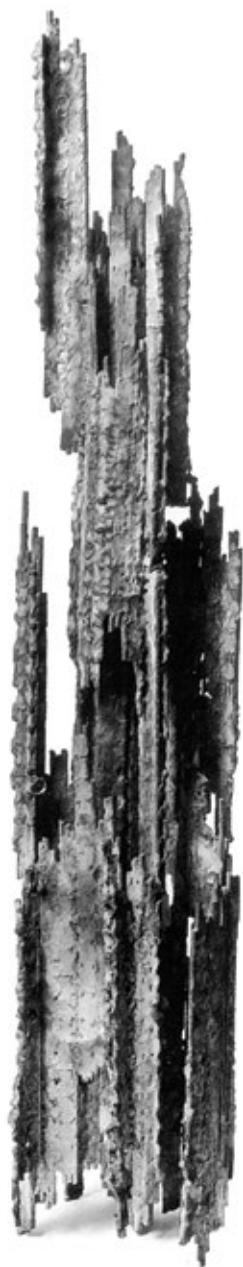


Achilleas Apergis
(1909-1986)

Composition, [1963]

Bronze, height 99 cm

Donation of the Ministry
of Education, inv. no. 3356





Yannis Pappas (1913-2005)

Resting Figure, 1959

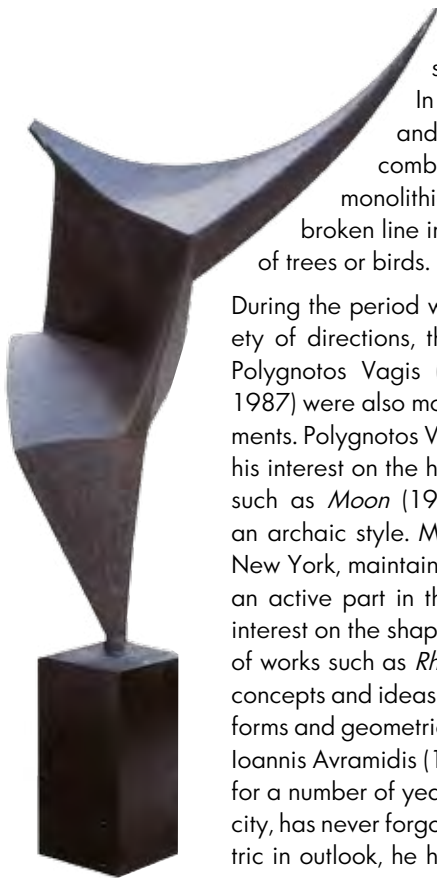
Bronze, height 91.5 cm

inv. no. 3422



Christos Kapralos
(1909-1993)
Maternity, [1961]
Bronze, height 137 cm
inv. no. 2700

Kostas Kouletianos
 (1918-1995)
Thunderbolt, [1964]
 Bronze, height 220 cm
 inv. no. 3438



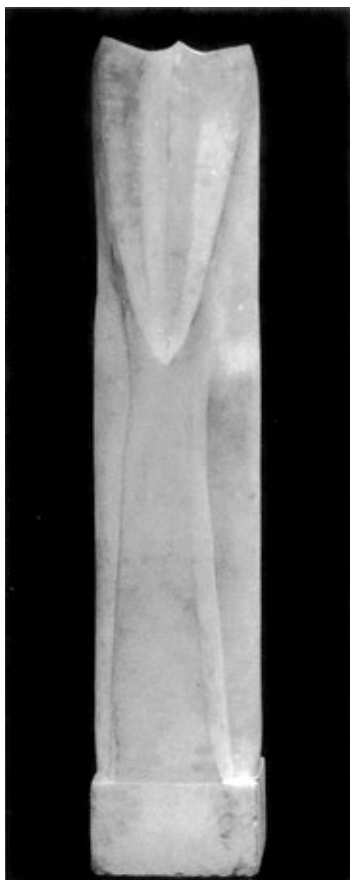
and penetrate space. Theodoros (Papadimitriou, 1931) brings his artistic quests to realization using a variety of methods and materials. Employing Dadaist and surrealist models, he incorporates his compositions into space and blends together spheres, wheels, hanging and folded shapes, experimenting with equilibrium. At the same time, aspiring to a more immediate and freer form of expression he "demythologizes" the work of art and, making use of a number of manipulations and happenings, makes a particular effort to secure public participation. Froso Michalea (1936-2001) is one of those artists who, spontaneously moving in step with foreign currents, express themselves primarily through abstraction. Her brief attempt at figurative depiction, marked by intense schematization, gave way to abstract shapes.

In series of works made of porous stone, wood and sheets of steel painted a single color, she combines vertical and horizontal motifs, works on monolithic volumes, while she also makes use of the broken line in order to develop levels in space suggestive of trees or birds.

During the period when artists in Greece were turning in a variety of directions, the works of two Greeks from the diaspora, Polygnotos Vagis (1894-1965) and Michalis Lekakis (1907-1987) were also moving in step with these same artistic developments. Polygnotos Vagis, who went to New York in 1911, focused his interest on the human and animal figure and in compositions such as *Moon* (1940), carving stone in bold lines and using an archaic style. Michalis Lekakis, even though he was born in New York, maintained his contact with his Greek roots by taking an active part in the Greek-American community. Focusing his interest on the shapes of abstraction, he carved in wood a series of works such as *Rhythm* (1959-1974), in which he gave form to concepts and ideas with the mixing in of biomorphic or vegetable forms and geometric subjects. Yet another Greek of the diaspora, Ioannis Avramidis (1922), who settled in Vienna in 1943 and was for a number of years professor at the Fine Arts Academy of that city, has never forgotten his Greek roots. Remaining anthropocentric in outlook, he has adopted elements from archaic sculpture



Froso Efthimiadi-Menegaki
(1916-1995)
Lot's Wife, [1962]
Marble, height 85 cm
Froso Efthimiadi-Menegaki
Bequest
inv. no. 9151



Gerasimos Sklavos
(1927-1967)
The Last Vision
[1967]
Marble, height 106 cm
inv. no. 5289

Lazaros Lameris
(1913-1998)
Penteli (Exaltation)
1948
Marble, height 50.5 cm
inv. no. 5777



Michalis Lekakis
 (1907-1987)
Rhythm, (1959-1974)
 Cherry wood, height 233 cm
 Donation of the artist
 inv. no. 5958



and renders his figures schematically, in the form of a *stèle* or *column*. Isolated, or in a multiplicity of combinations, they are characterized by the coexistence of vertical and horizontal motifs, a vertebral arrangement and a rhythmic repetition of the elements which make up the volumes.

Experimentation of all kinds, the use of new materials, the exploitation of light, movement and sound, and the possibilities offered by science and technology, as well as the main characteristics of the work of quite a number of artists who presented the major volume of their work after the Second World War, and have been frequently active outside Greece itself. Takis' (1925) *Signals* and *Telemagnetics* and the constructions using neon tubes made of plastic, glass or plexiglass by Chryssa (1933) are quests in this direction. Being "traditional" in regard to their material but avant-garde in conception and the treatment of form are also the hallmarks of the work of Gerasimos Sklavos (1927-1967). His earlier works in plaster were succeeded by ones done in iron, granite, cement and marble. The *Last Vision* (1967), which was completed on the day of his death, is indicative of his turn to abstract conceptions, through which he gave form to ideas and concepts.

This brief survey and the references to the works exhibited do not constitute a complete presentation of the course of modern Greek sculpture and the work of the many important sculptors who have worked and still do, both in Greece and abroad. They are but an attempt to indicate the presence of certain characteristic works, by period, to the degree that these are represented in the collection of the National Gallery and bear a probable relationship to the corresponding tendencies in painting. A future and more inclusive exhibition will show in a more complete form, and independent of painting, the course and development of modern Greek sculpture.

Tonia Giannoudaki
Curator at the National Gallery



Polygnotos Vagis
(1894-1967)

Moon, 1940

Cement, height 43 cm

Polygnotos Vagis Bequest
inv. no. 3763



Bella Raftopoulou
(1902-1992)

Sculpture, [1932]

Stone, height 54 cm

Donation of the artist
inv. no. 5928

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS EXHIBITION 2000

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