



THE ONLINE RESOURCE

THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS

THE THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS COLLECTION  
AT THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF CRETE

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SOCIETY OF CRETAN HISTORICAL STUDIES

## THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS

The Aspasia Papadoperaki Donation  
to the Historical Museum of Crete

SOCIETY OF CRETAN HISTORICAL STUDIES - HERAKLION 2012

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*Thomas Papadoperakis, Painting*  
(Historical Museum of Crete, 28 November 2012 - 25 May 2013)

THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS  
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SOCIETY OF CRETAN HISTORICAL STUDIES  
HERAKLION 2012



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It is with sincere joy that the Society of Cretan Historical Studies welcomes the 21 paintings by Thomas Papadoperakis that his sister, pre-eminent sculptress Aspasia Papadoperaki, and his brothers, Yorgos and Yannis, kindly decided to donate to the Historical Museum of Crete. Both the donors' gesture and the valuable acquisitions open up unprecedented potential for dialogue with the contemporary period.

A recognized yet rather low-profile artist until now, Thomas Papadoperakis became known mostly as a modest artist committed to his artistic pursuits. This exhibition of the works to form the Papadoperakis Collection of the Historical Museum of Crete, alongside a few more works in private collections in Heraklion, in addition to a representative exhibition of the *Multiples*, produced at the artist's behest, will, we hope, provide the opportunity for a closer and more regular contact with the artist's work in future.

To foster this contact, we have deemed it appropriate to provide everyone interested in painting in general and in Thomas Papadoperakis' work in particular with the opportunity to access, not only the visual facet of his work, but also his thoughts, which the artist noted in writing and sometimes elaborated upon at length.

This is how this book came to be. In it, readers will find, in addition to reproductions of the paintings in the

collection, an evaluation of the artist's work and intellectual personality by the art critic Denys Zacharopoulos, the brief but meaningful words from a sister to a younger brother, as well as notes and essays by Thomas Papadoperakis himself, dating from 1995 to 2001, in chronological order. Finally, there are some of the published reviews of the artist's exhibitions, and a comprehensive biography and exhibition list compiled by his wife, Helen Papadoperakis.

The Board of the Society of Cretan Historical Studies and Chairman Alexis Kalokairinos wish to sincerely thank Aspasia, Yorgos and Yannis Papadoperakis for their kind donation.

Alexis Kalokairinos  
Chairman of the Board

DENYS ZACHAROPOULOS

“WAKING UP WITH A PAINTING IN MY HANDS...”  
A TRIBUTE TO THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS

I discovered Thomas Papadoperakis's work late. Perhaps it was his death that made me look more closely into what I had been hearing for years as a valued, autonomous artist's practice and stance towards life that seemed to have found its path, its entity, its flow. All artists undoubtedly long for the recognition, friendship, and synergy of criticism, of the artistic milieu, whether official or personal. Nevertheless, it is often the case that both critical and official recognition come, as Marx used to say of philosophy, after the wedding.

This certainty may make many artists who have plucked the string of wisdom deep inside them become well acquainted with the solitude entailed in their path, and even more so with the need to raise their voice (even though the notes often remain low-key, the wiser and more sensitive an artist is) and to speak, as best they can (and they often fare much better than any critical review), of the meaning of their gesture, the coordinates of their position, the vantage point from which their work gazes on the world.

This certainty – which one must convey as modestly as the artist has turned it into his work – undoubtedly applies directly to the painting and written word of Thomas Papadoperakis. The immediacy with which he conveys the relationship of art and life is so intimate that it has evidently kept at a distance those of us who saw the role of criticism as a crusade, or a fire-extinguishing mission.



Thomas Papadoperakis never seemed to be in a hurry, or to call out for help; he neither wished to convert anyone, nor to be hard pressed in any way. He seemed to belong to the time neither of polemics nor of expediency. This left only the other side of criticism, the one that bestows praise and censure, perched high up on its academic throne, claiming papal infallibility and the eternity of a visual-arts paradise. A paradise that Academies and Schools seek to reproduce, often forgetting that if knowledge is the original sin for the Church, it is also the foundation of life and art. Cézanne's apple – even more so than Eve's – sufficed to throw anyone who bit into it to banishment outside even the last paradise, the one that, through Schools and Academies, claims a systematic control of reproduction.

So it was that alone, in full awareness and at peace (at least as far as the condition of the work is concerned, rather than the artist's anguish), Thomas Papadoperakis lived and completed, beyond the conventional terms of a brief life, visual and literary work that we are called upon today to see (or perhaps revisit, becoming aware, alongside the gravity of each line, brushstroke, or word of his, how lightly we often pass by a stone that is in fact a cornerstone just so that we may indulge in the illusions of spectacle further down).

We are therefore invited today to see in this artist's work what Nietzsche so aptly called "something that resists the eye". And that something, often dark, shadowy, and barren at first sight, looks not even remotely like anything that we call "the Greek landscape", the diffuse light of an already frayed austerity, weary of the shallow ideological constructions of a touristic management of culture.

Papadoperakis looks around him as the old ones did, who, knowing the heat of this light, went for the shade. He accordingly sits in the shade of the image, on the threshold of vision, contemplating the motion of life, seen as the outline of a shadow against a shadow. He gazes and meditates at the point where the image meets the liquid element within life, the young water and the moisture that nourish reminiscing and remembering. Like the one who bit into Cézanne's apple, the shadow opens up in front of him like the pain of the stone that breaks up both space and time into pieces like a fan: neither covering nor revealing, it shifts the eye.

This pain is not physical; it is the inner awareness of how barren art is in desolate, joyless times, when there is no reserve of life – rather, there is just enough to fill that imaginary line that materializes in the artist's hand, the poet's word, a man's breath. Full, perhaps, yet not diffuse, it does not escape into the hues of the sun, but adjoins the shade, the light concealed within it, being itself line and light, line and shadow, line and image, line and silence, inspiring in men and things that emotion that resembles neither joy nor sorrow but, rather, the awe in which one beholds something living in front of one's eyes, that inner lucidity that made Alberti say that painting can bring back the dead.

In his paintings, Thomas Papadoperakis seems to find that awakening beyond any metaphysics of torture and salvation, crucifixion and resurrection. He shares neither the Byzantine hardness nor the Baroque wondrousness; he simply looks, in the most contemporary way possible, at what we overlook every day: the creaking of the living within the inorganic, the throbbing of life within the sur-



face of things, the echo of the depth in the darkness that envelops them, the burning of the eye at each uncontrolled use of light, or projection on them. Beyond any drama, any ritual, beyond any spectacle, Thomas Papadoperakis's painting is a sparse, human depiction of the depth that an image carries in its shadow at the expense of ostentation. Free from superfluous existentialism and metaphysics, this shadow is very near the saying by Pindar, "Man is but a dream of a shadow". And yet, this dream is not a dream of sleep, but a dream of awakening, of mindfulness, perhaps even of insomnia.

I regret not having met him earlier; I regret he did not live long enough to hear that what he loved, what he left behind with such devotion and care, is now a joy, a gift, and a lesson for life for us who see it today, in all the greatness that art knows how to reveal with the minimum of essence, in that "tiny bit of reality" that we are allowed to experience, and which artists manage to revitalize through their work, not so that they may reproduce it, but so that they may keep it alive forever amongst us.

ASPASIA PAPADOPERAKI

OUR BROTHER, THOMAS

Our brother, Thomas, who came third, after Yorgos and me, had been the youngest for 15 years; then, Yannis was born. This, coupled with his powerful and delicate character, largely determined our attitude towards him. Our mother, a very gifted person, had realized since he was a child that hers was a very special child and sought to protect him on the path given to him by divine grace.

He was aware of his own extraordinary painting skills. Aged 11, he held a solo exhibition at the 6<sup>th</sup> Elementary School, in Heraklion. He was described on the radio as “the child with the golden hands”. Our father placed Thomas’s works on display in his store, which was visited by many tourists.

When he turned 12, our mother, holding him by one hand and me by the other, took him to Stelios Kartakis, a painter and graduate from the [Athens] School of Fine Arts to serve as an apprentice; she told him, “He is already a painter, but I want you to round him off”. Our mother loved the arts. On a Sunday, she would often take us to the Archaeological Museum. The future great Byzantine-style iconographer Niki Hatzidaki studied under Kartakis during the same period. He came from a village near that of our parents, in Kissamos, Chania. Thomas stayed with him for three years. During the fourth year, he dropped out of High School to work with his teacher in producing the frescoes in the Church of Aghios Minas, in Heraklion.

He eventually graduated from an evening high school in Athens, while studying and working at the same time.

He was admitted to the Athens School of Fine Arts, in two workshops, painting and printmaking, “ranking uncontested first”, for the first time in the history of the School. His facility in drawing and painting is still remembered to this day.

His fellow student, Jenny Markaki, speaking of his character, beauty, talent, and purity of views, said, “Thomas had been touched by the hand of God”.

In 1963, or ’64, Pantelis Prevelakis commissioned from him four large copies of works by Botticelli for the stage sets of a production of his play *Holy Sacrifice* by the National Theatre of Greece.

His conversations, as a young man, with Yannis Tsarouchis instilled in him great confidence in his knowledge of painting. They would go to museums to paint together. I remember that for days in the 1970s, Tsarouchis would drop by and take him on visits to the Louvre, only to see the Fayum portraits, and, on another occasion, a nude by Rembrandt, and talk about them.

In 1979, life gave him his Helen, who was to become his companion for 25 years. She was perhaps the only woman who could stand by such an absolute person, both in life and art. From this union came their daughter Louise.

Thomas is not just a great artist. His very life, his everyday reality, was as great as a work of high art; he loved great things as well as little ones, avoiding, at a cost, all that was petty and humiliating. His life is of interest, not only for the adventures, but also for his unwavering attitude towards his art, the art of others, life, people – even though he was often disappointed.

Much still remains to be written about his work by his





fellow artists and art historians, as well as by myself. Here, I will only speak of the child prodigy and the handsome youth, full of passion and love for his art, and of talent, until the moment he died. He was a man of dignity, integrity, struggling to attain justice, generous in dealing with his fellowmen, and in guiding them.

He painted with equal solemnity and ease: nudes, fruit, flowers, portraits, non-figurative works, or still-life paintings, appealing to both the common man and the connoisseur, even to the highest levels of international painting. Erasing is a technique that he discussed in detail and an aesthetic and emotional proposal he first introduced into his work.

A part of his body of work, a body unbound, universal, unique, and imposing, will be on display in Heraklion. Alongside the intellectual and artistic activity of our fellow citizens, it pursues an international dialogue, such as Greece has pursued since Antiquity.

I would like to thank the Historical Museum and Alexis Kalokairinos, as well as the team that worked on the exhibition and the accommodation of the collection in the Museum.



Thomas  
Papakoperakis  
3/15/22

THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS

#### THE OBJECTIVITY OF PAINTING: VISUAL HARMONY

The only objective quality in painting is visual harmony. Symbols, and anything that concerns state of mind in painting, change, depending on life, and differ in different places and times. The word symbol is, as a rule, associated with subjectivity. Yet visual harmony never changes! It is what establishes a painting as universal and timeless.

Visual harmony clarifies the vague visual propositions that we receive from nature, which are to a greater or lesser degree always in disorder (yet these visual propositions may contain mental order, in the sense that they suggest something).

The nature of human vision inevitably seeks ways to clarify this visual aspect of nature, and these ways are set forth in the guise of laws, such as the golden section, or the complementary colours. When we paint solely in order to convey our views, though, that it is not necessary for us to comply with these (“natural”) truths. In these cases, it is preferable to resort to other media, such as action without a canvas. Yet, when we seek visual harmony, we must serve it as faithfully as possible; otherwise, when nature is already in visual disarray, we perpetuate this defect.

Perfect visual harmony cannot be achieved in painting unless we decide that we will create at the expense of truth to nature. Even though we may have opted to paint a specific theme, it is only through interventions in the name

of the laws that govern visual harmony that we may achieve results. Besides, if nature were indeed visually beautiful, why try to copy it?

We regard something as visually beautiful, and something else as visually ugly. In other words, we make a choice; there is, in fact, a convergence of the choices of different people irrespective of place and time. This fact always makes me think that there are objective truths. I am convinced of this, and I constantly experiment to discover and apply them.

Nice, 18 April 1995

THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS

SEEKING TO DESTROY MY PAINTING,  
BUT BY USING ITS OWN MEANS

I intervene in a destructive manner in my paintings, almost as a rule using the colour black; yet, the production phase is easier than the destruction phase for me. The development of a work, until I regard it as finished, is an on-going struggle between “I create” and “I destroy” – and vice versa. And since I want this intervention to be apparently random, spontaneous graphism is required on my part. It is consequently impossible for me to fully control my every movement and to foresee the final form of the work. The aesthetic values of my vision constantly transform themselves and hold various surprises in store for me, sometimes pleasant and sometimes not. This adventure keeps me constantly on my toes, while awaiting the unforeseen ultimate form of the work.

I choose the colour black because it, more than any other colour, is able to create light on the surface of the canvas. Moreover, I do not like my subject matter to betray the time and place of production; I want them to be universal and timeless, so that I may move freely in space and time in them.

I regard a work as complete when, in time, it becomes specific intellectually and clear visually. This *visual harmony* (clarity), which I hold to be the only objective quality in painting, has nothing to do with intellectual beauty, but with the clarity of forms and colours (irrespective of the complexity of the work). This visual harmony never

harmed painting; on the contrary, it has always been beneficial to it, not because it made it more beautiful, but because it made it more lucid (beauty and lucidity are two totally unrelated concepts, yet one may contain the other). The artist will need it since he seeks to communicate – as long as he does not set it as a goal in itself, lest it become merely an ornamental element. He must always use it as a *means of visual elucidation*. This visual harmony was pursued as a goal by some movements and was rejected as a goal by others. It was always as a goal that it was held in a positive or negative light by opposing schools, whereas it is a means, and a means only, of elucidation.

The destructive process in my painting started in 1972, a time when I lived in Paris (1970-1977). I now feel more mature than ever to serve it, and I might say that it is only now that I have given myself the right to express an opinion on it.

Meanwhile, smaller or larger gaps developed on account of my study of any element that I considered useful for the communion between a painting and the viewer. I have always believed that it is not sufficient to find the medium and point of view that are suited to us, but also the way in which we will manage to convey them to the outside world. As concepts change rapidly nowadays, there is an increasingly pressing need to make our views specific and our means of communication clear. This, I may add, applies, not only to painting, but to all creative modes, whatever they may be – and above all, to our own lives.

Nice, 9 April 1998

THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS

TIME

I seek to use time, *no longer as a complementary element* determined by each subject that I choose, but as the main cause of my creative production. I firmly believe in the possibility of using time, when it becomes the goal, *the main means to search for inspiration*. It may inspire emotions even from the most random event that we may happen to choose, as long as we identify in it the temporal distance between two moments, whose relationship, we feel, has artistic potential.

I see each of my subjects as much as possible across time, throughout its temporal length, from its remotest past to its remotest future, opting for the most suitable temporal distance – a distance that may be the brief duration of a small event, a minor occasion in our everyday life, or several years between two moments – so that the resulting phases as a relation between them may possess weight and evocativeness. These phases may be as many as I want, and may concern the same, or a different subject and place. For this reason, I often resort to the juxtaposition of images, mostly photographic, since photography as a descriptive medium is much more powerful than even the medium of painting.

I gradually realized this attitude of mine towards time, beginning with the observation that, in my painting, I normally chose subjects that did not reveal the time and place of their origin, so that I might circulate freely and without limitations of time in them.

Our every subject always contains the notion of time.





It is tied to before, now, after. *Time is an indispensable element of every subject*, and this is something that we must be aware of to the degree that it deserves.

In fact, as long as we are forced for practical reasons to set a specific time, the time chosen must be decided in *combination* with the moment it conveys, even if we have to sacrifice part of the usefulness of what we are about to do.

Sometime, in the distant future, the archaeologist's spade may unearth interesting works of contemporary art. Was it not such an excavation that became a "work of art" by Daniel Spoerri, who, in the 1960s, had buried, after a picnic with friends, all that was left on the table – cutlery, crockery, food remnants – utterly respecting the layout of the table, with the objective that this could be excavated someday, but at an unspecified time? Nevertheless, what, according to the artist's view, the *exact time*, will be never ceases to be of additional importance for the enterprise.

My point of view, and consequently my criticism with respect to my own works and those by others, has changed significantly since I have insisted on associating everything with the time that it contains. This is why I consider this element worthy of study and important both for art and for life itself.

Temporal distances can be sought, not only in events and things involving vision, but also in sound, even in the senses of touch, smell, and taste.

If required, I also use time in an *unorthodox* fashion, displaying the events in reverse order: I show the imaginary future so that it now comprises the memory of the past; I show now as if it came before, or after, and before

as if it came now, or later. I also pay particular attention to the order of display of each moment, as the effect will certainly be different if the future comes in advance of the past, or if the actual time sequence is preserved. If we seek to enrich our expressive potential, then we must see time also in a paradoxical light.

*In fact, it is of particular importance to me to juxtapose two different subjects, which, after having chosen them, I then try to imagine in all their successive changes in time; from the resulting combinations, I choose the two phases that are most representative for me.*

I would finally like to say that, in the characteristic silence of the element of time, memories of the past, as well as assumptions for the future always give rise to contemplation on what is life and what is the meaning of life. Every so often, what is new becomes old, so that we may be reminded that life constantly becomes younger and more beautiful than before. It is time that lends wings to the imagination, the bird-of-paradise of the intellect, so that it may fly; it is on these wings that we, too, make the impossible come true.

*I would like to make a huge sphere, to call it time, so that it might connect the religions and hopes of the whole world.*

Nice, 19 May 1998

MAURICE ELIE

THE ART OF LIVING ACCORDING  
TO THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS

It could be argued that the theoretical writings of artists, such as the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Abstract Artists, or the Futurists, were of a philosophical nature, and, since they did not concern only visual artistic creativity but life, culture, and civilization, they formed an indispensable part of their creativity (this applies to Kandinsky's *The Spiritual in Art*, as well as the writings of Malevich, Mondrian, and others).

In 1999, Thomas Papadoperakis issued a manifesto and a very peculiar exhibition, which might be considered as "happenings" of the latest kind. Of course, when the artist acts, he certainly creates a *happening*. Yet, here, the artist takes it upon himself to contemplate the "transposition" of art to life.

It is certainly not the first time that a similar topic has been pursued. Hegel, for instance, declares in his introduction to his *Aesthetics* that, "every man, by living, tries to realize himself and does realize himself. Now in relation to beauty and art, this acquires the meaning of living as an artist and forming one's life *artistically*".<sup>1</sup> Of course, Hegel goes on to criticize the absence of character that he discerns in anyone who approaches things in the light of aesthetic "irony", where everything dissolves into a mere epiphenomenon without any weight. Yet, in the case of Papadoperakis, we certainly do not have a purely shallow "game", as the artist seeks to transpose to life a kind of a



profound logic of the artistic act. And given that he alludes to the relationships between art and science, we may also recall Goethe's saying related to the kind of knowledge furnished by beauty: "Beauty is a manifestation of secret natural laws, which otherwise would have been hidden from us forever".<sup>2</sup>

These "metamorphoses" to which Papadoperakis submits events through imagination could be compared to the "variation" of a phenomenon carried out by phenomenology in order to liberate the essence both of imagination and of memory, as well as perception itself. The artist, that is, seeks to establish a system of "correspondences" between *artistic endeavour* and *life stance*. He tries, according to his own words, to discern the mystery of the subjects that he treats and "to choose an event from life [...] and then to find the way to convey it to the outside world as a *continuity in life* [...]".

In fact, this quest for the *paradoxical* character of life, which he had stipulated as a motto in 1998, returned in 1999 in expanded form.

The usual definition of paradox is that of a proposition that comes into conflict with the prevailing public opinion. Yet, in this respect, paradox can also be revelatory of truth. The "paradox" according to Papadoperakis lies in the fact that "correspondences" are first drawn from life, but the endeavours of contemporary art must in turn be transposed to contemporary life in order to form an "art of living".

Thomas Papadoperakis also reminds us that Dada introduced life into art, and that he, in turn, attempted to restore Art in Life. Concerning contemporary art, in fact, it





has been argued that this is precisely an art that is being gradually reintroduced into everyday life. Robert Filliou (who has imagined another “principle of correspondences” – of the same artistic calibre – which extends from “well made” through “poorly made” to “never made”), argues that, “Art is what makes life more interesting than art”.<sup>3</sup>

What is certain, though, is that a common root has often been sought; it has often been surmised that there is an analogy, even identification between art and life. This is what Michel Henry does in his *Seeing the Invisible - On Kandinsky*, when he argues that, according to Kandinsky, “It is precisely because life is never a subject for itself, it can and must be the only content of art and painting”, and that, “Art is indeed a way of life and for that reason, perhaps, a kind of life”.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas Papadoperakis also wrote, “I believe that art has always sought to interpret the world”.

Besides, is it not Nietzsche (who also lived in and around Nice) who claimed that, “art is a means to knowledge” and the beginning of joy<sup>5</sup> for him?

Finally, Nietzsche wrote in *Human, All Too Human*: “One could give up art, but would not thereby relinquish the capacity one has learned from it”.<sup>6</sup> And, to borrow Thomas Papadoperakis’s words, could we not say that we would not cease to preserve its “correspondences”?

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1. *Hegel's Aesthetics, Lectures on Fine Art*, translated by T.M. Knox, Oxford University Press, 1998, v. I, p. 65.
2. *Maximes et Réflexions*, 'Art et Artistes', 1.
3. In Paul Ardenne, *Art, l'Age Contemporain*, Ed. du Regard, 1997, p. 111.
4. Michel Henry, *Voir l'invisible, sur Kandinsky*, F. Bourrin, 1988, p. 207 and 209.
5. In *Nuda Vita*, §324.
6. 1, §222.

THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS

THE ART OF LIVING  
 THE ART OF SIMILES: A TOOL FOR EXPRESSION  
 AND, CHIEFLY, REFLECTION

I define art as the ability to create evocative expression, as well as reflection on ideas and questions.

By simile I do not mean the visual, aural, gustatory, olfactory, tactile approach amongst things, events, and activities, but their conceptual approach through ideas and questions. Those approaches that emerge through sensual means are also considered to be symbols. I always perceive the terms simile and paradox as charged with emotion and able to convey truths and questions. The difference between a simile and a symbol is that the symbol is always a simile, yet a simile is not always a symbol.

A proposal to improve expression and to add a new way of reflection through similes, from the most sensible to the most paradoxical, which we can draw from life itself, where the imaginary will turn, as far as possible, into reality, reflecting a paradoxical, yet not absurd, world. The experiences of art, as an evocative expression, will be the guide in order for this effort to be effective, that is, to guide to a better, contemporary way of life that belongs to all.

Facing life with all our senses, focusing our attention on what reminds us of what, making imagination clarify and complete it, modifying it, if need be, so that it highlights its paradoxical quality, it is possible for us to feel what we call arousing the emotions. Then, if this imagi-

nary situation manages to turn into action, a new attitude towards things will have been achieved, improved with respect to both our surroundings and ourselves. This attitude is reflection.

Aiming to identify what benefit Art could hold for life – on condition that Art is perceived, not as shaping and embellishing the environment, but as attitude and thought, I brought to light profound questions, convictions, and realizations that made me draft this manifesto, with which, having defined that:

Art is defined as the ability to create an evocative expression as regards both our inner and the outer world through reflection, by which we seek to fulfil spiritual needs (ideas, questions) and psychological ones (emotions), through material, energy, events. The synthesis of all these is achieved through our imagination, mainly guided by what we call instinct,<sup>1</sup> with what we call arousing the emotions as a guarantor, and only similes as our basic tool, this unique, indirect way towards knowledge; any other human creation necessarily belongs to the realm of technique, technology, science and philosophy, or concerns exclusively the instinct of self-preservation,

I will try to argue that:

the cooperation between art and life must be more meaningful, entailing a new stance in life, aiming at a new life to evolve like an ongoing “happening”;

to this cooperation should be added the function of a new way of reflection, *evocation*, which must also become a quality of art from now on;

art is but similes;

the means of construction generally serve the goal but are not the goal;

the exaggerated simile that verges on the paradoxical should no longer be regarded in life and art as surprise and variety, but as an opportunity to wonder, to reflect, to know, and to communicate.

I embarked on this enterprise from the moment when I began to realize through everyday life that existing similes circulate uncontrollably, remaining vague and incomplete, yet at the same time articulating truths and posing questions in an ongoing, discreet whisper. Their allusive presence exerted great fascination on me and made me participate by intervening in them; I could not resist my great curiosity to try to penetrate deeply. I therefore started to observe carefully, analyse and compare the reactions in my environment and myself, eventually discovering the importance of this world of similes, which often entered the realm of the uncommon, exaggeration, paradox, giving rise to surprise.

I am going to cite examples, conclusions, proposals, and questions regarding what could be the contribution of contemporary art to such an attempt, which I call “Art of living”. I will try to document as far as possible my conviction that this belongs to everyone, inevitably underlining the pivotal importance of the Dada movement.

#### THE QUESTION OF “ART-LIFE”

The art-life relationship and their affinity, if not assimilation – art is life and life is art – continues to be an attractive topic, yet is inactive; and this because a true



discussion is lacking, one that would convince of our active participation and would make this cooperation come true. I attribute this inactivity to the fact that we may have envisioned cooperation in the field of evocative expression, yet we do not even suspect the operation of a new way of reflection through similes.

An analysis of the term “art” and an identification of the requirements that it poses would, I believe, be a determining factor in order for us to be convinced of the necessity of a contract for such cooperation.

#### ANALYSIS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE TERM “ART”

According to the dictionary, the term “art” is a general one, signifying “capacity to create” on the part of humans. Beyond this definition, we must specify the method of processing the concept (and not the method of construction) of the created product. What is this method based on? On reason? On instinct? And, then, what purpose does it serve? This is how we will be able to discern if this method of processing belongs with art or technique, technology, science, philosophy, even the instinct for self-preservation.

If the method of processing is based on reason, if it serves biological needs (body, sensory organs), it belongs with technique, technology, or science; if it serves spiritual needs (ideas), or psychological ones (emotions) it belongs with philosophy (direct knowledge).

If the method of processing is based on instinct – in the sense that we do not allow our reason to intervene at all, having faith in the fact that instinct is sacred, that it con-

tains the distilled wisdom of the ages, our historicity as beings, or anything else that we might assume in order to we convince ourselves not to obey the dictates of logic (not to taste the apple of knowledge) – then, if it serves spiritual or psychological needs (whose creations are distinguished by the evocativeness of the similes – indirect knowledge) it belongs with art; if it serves biological needs, then it belongs to the instinct of self-preservation.

The question “*What is art?*” is still the focus of intense debate and controversy, persistently seeking a solution. If we consider that the main point of art is evocative expression, then the history of art needs a review in order to classify artistic creations under the main element that distinguishes them; otherwise, if we insist on the basis of artistic creations on drawing conclusions about its meaning, we will continue to walk blindly, disoriented, and the definition of art would be impossible – since works will have been classified as such, whose intention is to respond not to spiritual or emotional needs but to biological ones (copying nature, visual harmony, display of means of construction without a point of view). These products clearly have true reason to exist, but they must be registered in the territory of technique, technology, and science.

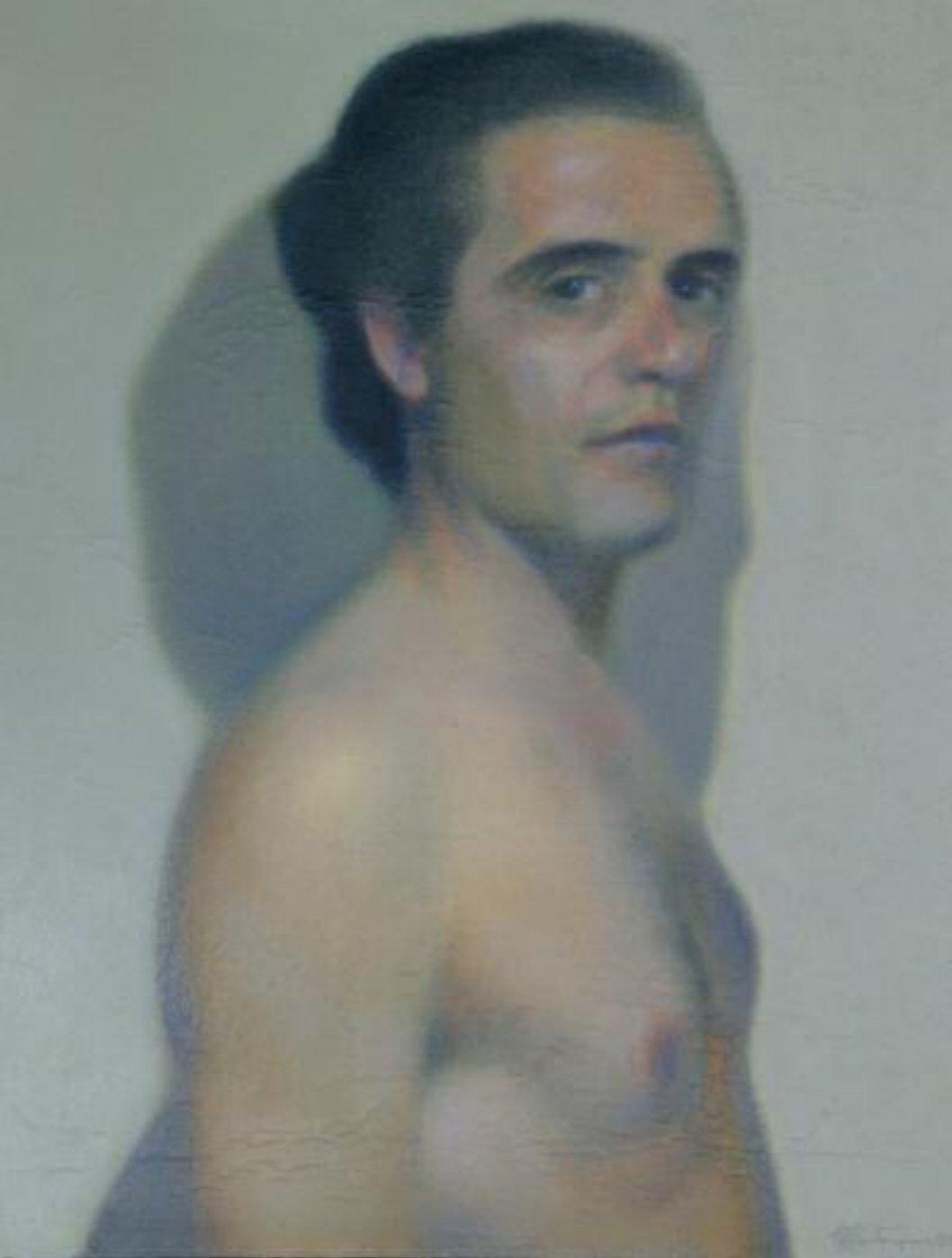
In the history of art there are phenomena that operate independently of the period to which they belong, as does science. Yet even if an appropriate classification of the history of art is carried out, constant awareness is required to identify the shifts of the borders between art and science; this is because, every so often, science gains ground by making a method out of everything, with the result that

art recedes and loses ground, as its characteristic evocation gradually surrenders to knowledge. *In the distant future there may perhaps be no art, but only knowledge; the emotion of learning may replace that of evocation, and then myth will meet with knowledge.*

In the art of so-called easel-painting (a two-dimensional surface, irrespective of form, or colour, whether it reminds us of something or not), if we limit ourselves to its irreplaceable quality, which is to instil order and specify the visual stimuli that we receive from nature (before the brain is notified), which are more or less in disorder and confusion (I have defined this quality as visual harmony), then we will have to accept that it belongs to the realm of scientific research, with technology enabling it to accelerate. Of course, visual harmony always has a *raison d'être*; it is an inevitable biological need, which arises from the nature of the organs of vision. The same, in a parallel way, applies to music,<sup>2</sup> and sculpture.

Yet, if we intervene in a work of painting in which visual harmony (which belongs with science) prevails, with elements of evocative expression that showcase a message and *overthrow the dominance of visual harmony*, then the work will change its realm of creation, and from the field of science it will be transferred to the field of art. The same reversal would occur for a work that faithfully depicts nature (technique), or another one that seeks to showcase a means of construction only (absence of message). The reverse could happen for a work that belongs with art: if some intervention alters or eliminates the message that it conveyed and at the same time replaces it with





other elements that belong to the realm of reason, then this work changes field and enters the realm of technique, technology, science, even philosophy.

The question is what prevails as an overall objective of usefulness in all works of so-called painting, or generally in every work of art. If its necessity is biological, then we classify it as technique, technology, or science; if its necessity is spiritual or psychological, we classify it either as philosophy (if its communication method is logic) or art (if its communication method is evocativeness/similes). (Of course, there are human creations of no usefulness.)

#### THE LOGIC OF PARADOX

Beyond the restrained behaviour towards our environment, imposed by everyday necessity, there is the behaviour of our imagination, which intervenes instinctively, transforming things, events, and our actions, to the effect that their meanings change, to a greater or lesser extent. We form combinations according to the symbolism<sup>3</sup> acquired by the environment in the life of each of us, as well as according to conceptual elements drawn from our personal experiences.

We thus try to make specific and complete the vague and incomplete messages we receive from our environment, changing reality through our imagination and turning it from reasonable into paradoxical, to a lesser or greater degree. Rarely, and hesitantly, when we are allowed, we turn it into action, employing, as I suspect, an indirect, codified, yet ultimately clear and complete series of truths and questions. At this phase of the overall

process, I would like to pose my most profound question:

When we are presented with a conscious problem, which corresponds to this indirect truth (or question), is the latter then decoded inside us, so that it turns from evocative, indirect knowledge to conscious and direct? If so, then I would be so bold as to say that our conscious pursuit and everyday experience must be to transform the imaginary paradox into action: wherever and whenever we can, to the extent that we regard this strange trajectory as important, we ought to transform and classify as knowledge both simile and the seemingly absurd paradox. I also wonder, if by analogy a paradoxical expression (or communication between us) could function, that would seem implicit; that is, not requiring the contribution of discourse, yet which might be the precursor of a corresponding logical expression (or communication) as well as its aid in its effort to be fulfilled.

I am deeply convinced that, by our nature, we constantly find ourselves in an inevitable, ongoing, instinctive, autonomous reflection shaped by the similes of life itself. This reflection is a process in which each of us fights a battle, through all of our senses, secretly, silently, unsuspected, independently, uncontrolled by reason, to store codified truths and questions. This is a process through which our thought arrives at knowledge. I feel that this tendency already exists in us instinctively, but we are not aware of it so that we may be persuaded to function drastically and adopt a similar psychological mood for dealing with life, and especially with reflection.

Our life itself, I believe, has always insisted on interpreting the world.

Suppose that a conscious problem occurs to us, and we react impulsively to the intensity of the event by deciding to take a journey (or a walk). This decision is not simply dictated for recreational purposes, but at the same time, and above all, by our need to move to a different environment, in which to reconsider our problem with elements different to those that brought it about, so that we explore it *also* through a different way of reflection: that of evocation through similes. Perhaps we do not always go so that we may forget our problems, but, rather, so that we may solve them. Consequently, a walk, or journey, contributes to a re-examination of our problems, which may result in their solution and our relief. The same mechanism, by analogy, could be used if I sought to reinforce a logical expression.

The choice of one particular journey, rather than another, may depend on the relation, or even identification, of the problem that concerns us with a simile, which we hope, or suppose that will meet in that place. I believe, in fact, that once the choice of destination has been made, and even though the journey has not yet begun, our imagination has already arrived at the destination much earlier, and the problem has begun a parallel journey of its own towards its solution.

Evocative reflection reaches its goal much more easily than evocative expression (and communication), as it is able to use even subjective and temporary symbols, contrary to evocative expression (and communication), which requires strictly objective and enduring symbols.

Art has a unique, and extremely powerful, way of operation, that of similes, which are transformations of truths and questions through strange combinations and un-



suspected means, different from those employed and composed by reason, yet they share common conceptual elements, which allow this transformation of truths and questions. These similes are in fact the only support for reflection beyond reason.

“What the human mind cannot express, art can,” wrote Goethe.

#### EVOCATIVE EXPRESSION BELONGS TO ALL

Convinced that art is similes, that we have been liberated from the education of the past, which was nothing but the development of the skill of copying, that visual harmony plays no role whatsoever in evocative expression; and – given that the various genres of art cooperate and become increasingly complex, tending to become life itself; and also that ugliness, hate, humiliation, and all other negative concepts are also means of (evocative) expression at the limits of what is allowed<sup>4</sup> – I can only distinguish one thing: that the relationship between creator (evocative expression) and public is able to expand, the boundaries between art and life can be eliminated, and all of us, to a greater or lesser degree, can acquire the ability to express ourselves evocatively.

In an imaginary competition between art and life, a hypothetical encounter of the two means of construction, life would be the winner, as it possesses much greater diversity of means of construction and, consequently, a far greater number of combinations. Actuality is, in fact, its privileged weapon, which life uses exclusively in order to convince us, and which no-one can take from it in any

way. *Evocative expression has achieved its autonomy and now belongs to all; to a greater or lesser degree, we all have something to say through it.*

#### THE MEANS OF CONSTRUCTION ARE NOT THE END

The combinations of different means of construction – material, time, energy – in order to become means of evocative expression – material, happening, energy, and mixes thereof – are infinite, as are the surprises they hold in store for us; yet, if they do not possess the evocation of simile, they are only valid as a surprise due to diversity (and therefore belong with technology). If the means of construction do not serve a goal, one surprise comes after another; the new becomes old as everyday reality, and our desperate effort for our work to be enduring has no end. This everyday reality is due to the fact that we seek the surprise of new means of construction, rather than the method that would enable them to function as means of evocative expression of a point of view, which would entitle them to be called art. The worst occurs when these means of construction, which do not convey any meaning, are repeated, flattered by any surprise they may have caused. We then have the kind of decadence of art called formalism. (Today, when the consumption of works of art has been established, and some production beyond the artist's capacity is required, formalism is called upon to solve this problem, which it does, easily.)


When we enthusiastically regard something new and say, "This is art, too!", or "And why can't this be art, too?", concluding that, "Everything is art", that is, that

everything expresses something evocatively, we are wrong. On the contrary, everything can be regarded as a means of construction – for everything has its meaning – so that there is the possibility of creating means of evocative expression. Yet, it does not follow that concepts and their combinations contain, or achieve, a point of view. Art, nevertheless, *possesses a point of view*. This is why, the correct is to say: "This too is a means of construction of evocative expression", or "And why can't this, too be a means of construction of evocative expression?", or "Everything is a means of construction of evocative expression", or, more correctly, "Through this, too, we can express ourselves evocatively and wonder", and, finally, more specifically: "*Through too, this we may find similes to express ourselves, to wonder, yet above all to reflect*".

Only when we are aware that *art is but similes* (the genre of poetry has been aware of this ever since its inception), will we cease to be surprised every so often by its means of construction (which have almost become an end in themselves), and seek the goal, that is, the messages they may contain.

The existence or otherwise of evocative messages is what determines whether something is art or not. We repeatedly confuse the means of construction with the goal; the means of construction are not a goal, they have a goal. They serve a goal. The means of construction are a language, and it is up to us how we use it in order to express ourselves evocatively. Instinct, which guides us to inspiration, guides us to means of construction and expression just as quickly. Inspiration and means are interdependent and synchronized.





Yet, for instance, Warhol's display of the Campbell's soup can is an obvious demonstration of the means of construction without any intervention in the object whatsoever, on purpose, so that no evocative point of view may function, but to emphasize that mass consumption products, such as the above, have become part of our reality, our symbols, with their extraordinary intervention in our lives, and have become part of our vocabulary. They bring together the memories from the past, the topicality of the present, and the dreams of the future. Pop Art,<sup>5</sup> in the 1950s, inspired by the Dada movement, was a universal influence and source of positive ideas. Nevertheless, Warhol's can may be a manifesto – we may consider it philosophy, or at least a relative of philosophy – but it is not art! And this is because it has no point of view vis-à-vis an idea, but is exclusively proposed as a means of construction.

The means of construction – whether or not they have a goal, that is, messages – and their messages, important or not, temporary or timeless, topical or universal – are subject not only to criticism, but also to the test of time.

According to the spirit in which the exponents of the Dada movement (1916, main founder Tristan Tzara, 1896, Romania – 1963, Paris) saw art, opting for the complete freedom of means of construction in order to enrich the means of expression beyond messages, any means of construction is allowed. The 20<sup>th</sup> century could be regarded as the century of the liberation of means of construction, with Dada as the precursor; the 21<sup>st</sup> is the century of evocative messages; yet, this century will draw on the

experiences and experimentations in means of construction of the previous century.

EXAMPLES AND QUESTIONS REGARDING  
THE FUNCTION OF SIMILES IN EXPRESSION  
AND REFLECTION

*Examples of expression:*

The eccentricities of certain artists<sup>6</sup> sometimes appeal to us more than their work (Dali, Warhol, Ben).

The preparation of an exhibition or a work of art is a spacetime that also contains messages, perhaps more important than those of the exhibition itself, or of the completed work: the transportation of César's works for the Venice Biennale through the city's canals, the erection of Arman's monument in Beirut, with the multi-storey arrangement of armoured military vehicles in a construction made of concrete, Christo's interventions with wrapping public buildings, etc.

Do our memories also contain secrets of similes that insist on guiding us?

Our mood also depends on whether the world of similes functions, or not, in our relationship with our environment.

Does a slight smile in front of a landscape also express the joy of knowledge?

Dreams and myths are worlds that can gradually reveal the truths that lie inside them.

Are our exaggerations, lies, and mythomanias also the result of the need to complete similes in order to express some truth or question?

Gifted visionaries are often aided by the codified mes-

sages of a society. They clarify them, providing us with clear directions for life. Besides, tradition, the indirect knowledge of every people, always contains codified experiences, as long as we are able to judge what to keep and what to throw away; the choice is hard – yet, yesterday is always able to help today.

*Examples of reflection:*

Our reflections are linked to the environment in which they are shaped because they are aided by it (irrespective of the temporary symbols that represent them); this is why when we attempt to reconstruct our memory, we return to the environment that gave rise to our memories.

Our habits do not change as long as we reflect evocatively through the elements that make them up; we abandon them only when we have drawn all that we need from them. God forbid that anyone should try to change them; it is as if they were taking away our memory. The most dangerous thing, in fact, is to try to change the habits of a group of people.

Let us think how impatiently our gaze wanders around in all directions, when we are faced with a serious problem; how all our senses are on the alert; how we try to save ourselves by every means possible. Could an emergency perhaps make us *also* reflect differently?

Do our manias form ongoing ways of evocative reflection through similes, which abandon us only when we specify, complete and solve the problem that corresponds to them in the context of their codified world? Taboos should also interest us, in the light of the same kind of logic.

The more our problems change, the more we seek a different environment and have new reactions. The opposite occurs when our view is constant and unchanged, and is not subject to any basic reconsideration, as is the case, for instance, with religions, or other dogmas.

#### PROPOSALS AND PERSONAL CONCLUSIONS

We need to trust our imagination, which, when accompanied by emotion, is not accidental; we should be well disposed towards and respect even expressions and reflections that we regard as foolish, as they may have in store a transformed truth, which can fuel a consequent rational behaviour. I would, therefore, say that it is wrong to hesitate in the face of “foolish” reflections, when they express us, as we benefit through them; and, vice versa, when they do not express us, it is not always clever to pursue them.

It is time we saw and faced life in a new spirit. I feel that the importance of using similes will gradually increase. I envision a future world that, due to the need of better expression and reflection, will inevitably become paradoxical, not absurd! It may end up being absurd, though, unless we hasten to make it paradoxical.

I should like – in the same way that I seek as an artist to identify the secret of my subject matter, in other words to secure a vision – so to draw from life an event of my choosing and, by making all the necessary processing in my imagination, modifying it until it is almost or even completely paradoxical, to discover what indeed moves me and then to find the ability and courage to express it





evocatively to the outside world, as a continuation of my life, rather than as a “happening” scheduled for a specific time and place. That is because I want it to be an indispensable part of my life, to the extent that its topicality always supports our cause and makes our experiences take root. Or, rather: *I want to create life from nature.*

I can only perceive inspiration in art, which is due to a cultivated instinct, as a revelation of similes in the environment in which we live, similes which reflect truths and questions that pre-exist in us, waiting to be liberated and meet the outside world, to become identified with our environment. I feel that this moment of identification is the moment of inspiration, which affects our psychological world in order to give rise to what we call emotion.

In similes, which emerge even in the context of everyday life, I can feel the whisper of great truths, which we might have been unable to identify through reason, and questions that we might never pose to ourselves rationally. I also entertain the hope that a serious observation of these similes would decode the whisper they keep deep inside. In this way, truths and questions would turn from evocative elements into rational ones, and would enrich our lives.

Let us then try to reflect and express ourselves, through similes, from life for life, reaching the paradoxical, so that the boundaries between art and life may disappear.

#### THE CONTRIBUTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART

I am deeply convinced that the avant-garde of “contemporary art” – as an experience of boldness, mainly through “happenings” with a tendency towards the paradoxical –

may become a guide in this enterprise, so that we may have, not only a “contemporary art”, but a “contemporary life” of expression and, above all, of reflection.

I do not feel that we ought to speak of a crisis in quality or immaturity of “contemporary art”, but, rather, of a crisis related to its orientation and mission. The main cause of this crisis is, I believe, lack of dialogue; if contemporary art were incorporated into life itself, not as a decorative element, but as a way of life, that would solve the problem of its crisis and at the same time would form the epilogue of its means of construction. Thus, it would cease resorting to itself every so often in order to search – in vain – for new means of construction in order to impress us. This effort is of no particular interest. When contemporary art becomes aware of the nature of its crisis, the time to reap will have arrived. It is only then that we will be able to grasp the messages contained in the museums, especially those of contemporary art, which will begin to operate in a different manner, as a “lighthouse” of positive energy, as a bridge linking us to life, giving us directions for it.

Gradually, the more the surprises of “contemporary art” decrease, which they certainly will, the more the surprises of life itself will increase. This will establish a new way of life, which will tend towards the paradoxical, as well as an improvement in our way of expression, which will enable us to communicate better. Yet, above all, this new way of life will help us think more efficiently.

I believe that evocative expression is not a privilege of art, but also of life itself. Cooperation between the visual





arts, poetry and music both in the museum world and in education will soon be indispensable. Therefore, the different manifestations of art will be mutually enriched and will obtain, each individually, a greater weight in our lives.

Rapid industrialization, due to the technology introduced by science, gradually imposes upon us a common way of life; new, universal symbols are established, and their progressive adoption becomes increasingly widespread. Thus, in the near future, there will be no boundaries in communication between peoples and between generations and, inevitably, a new, totally globalized art will emerge.

The Dadaists, and those who were inspired by them, introduced life into art. It is high time that we reintroduced art into life, so that we may have a life imbued with courage, tending towards what is paradoxical, for a better world of communication and thought, a world of progress.

I would like to dedicate this manifesto to all who have felt, feel, or will feel this need for a new mode of expression and, above, all reflection; to all who believe in progress and regard dialogue as the main constituent of culture.

Thomas Papadoperakis  
Maroussi, 9 August 1999

1. When I mention instinct, I do not rule out the participation of the unconscious, the subconscious, or even inherited experiences.

2. Even though the theory of music (two colours) is comparatively less complex than the theory of painting (three colours), it is

much more difficult in its application. The need to classify and make specific the three other senses (smell, touch, and taste) has been totally overlooked.

3. A symbol forms a part of similes and signifies the conventional or otherwise shape, volume, sound (much less taste, smell, or a tactile stimulus) that is felt, in motion, or stillness, and which is either constructed or found readymade in our environment. It represents and characterizes an idea or a question. I distinguish four kinds of symbol:

The weak subjective symbol, which is defined without the control of reality (mental illness)

The healthy subjective symbol (for the support of evocative thinking)

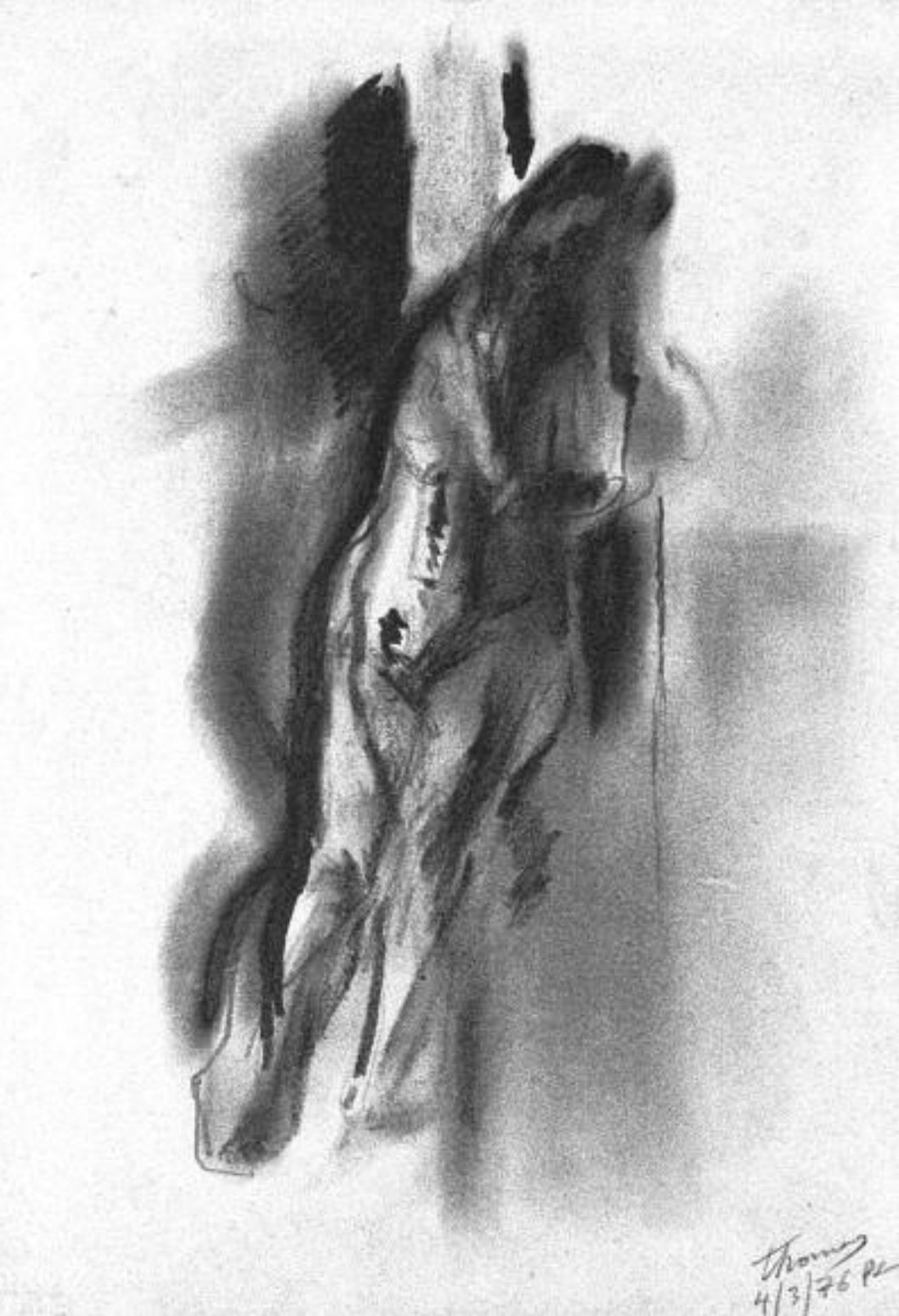
What is created by itself in the environment, out of historical events.

What has always existed in the operation of nature's laws and is not easily transformed; its duration is long and unspecified, yet we are not going to risk calling it timeless, or universal, or both – that is, characterizing it as objective.

4. The event that marked in an impressive but also painful way the development of means of construction in the history of art (beyond any intention) was a “happening” of a planned suicide, which was accompanied by a written statement by the two artists (who supposedly belonged to the world of so-called art).

5. The word “pop” was first used in an art context in 1947 by the Scottish artist Eduardo Paolozzi.

6. Artist means producer of beauty, of sensual beauty (not visual harmony). It is misused as a general term. Neither should its meaning be identified with that of “Fine Arts” [κάλλος/καλός – beauty/good, in Greek]. Moreover, even the term “Fine Arts” is wrong, as visual production today also includes bad or ugly means of construction (Bad Arts). I would call today's “artist” an “evocative expresser” and the “Fine Arts” “evocative expressions”.







THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS

AN ATTEMPT TO ACTIVATE METAPHORICAL THINKING  
FOR METAPHORICAL REFLECTION  
(Abstract)

Thought: I mean the reference to socio-historical, not material-energy qualities of a situation in our memory, that is, the perception of this situation in its abstract, rather than its concrete, sense. Thought possesses two ways to seek ideas-views: the direct, spontaneous, immediate and non-pensive one, and the indirect one, that of reflection.

Reflection: I mean the extension of thought, as defined above, with the addition of the mechanism of correlation of the qualities that comprise it and the increasingly richer and wider conclusions that result from this correlation; through which conclusions we are guided towards gradual determination of the idea-view situated at the core of the thought that preoccupies us. (Reflection, in general is, according to dictionaries, the return of thought to itself in order to solve questions posed by it.)

I believe that the difference between thought and reflection is that thought is a mental reference to something, whereas reflection is the way to seek that something. Thought does not contain reflection; reflection contains thought.

“The art of metaphorical reflection” is the art whose metaphorical concept is not the direct result of vision, but of a process of reflection based on metaphors, which are concealed by the environment and our imagination. The point of departure and main goal of this art is to declare, not only the existence, but also the potential usefulness of this kind of reflection, which it represents; hence, this

essay attempts, by posing questions, risking remarks, and stating convictions, to raise interest and encourage further exploration of metaphorical reflection, because it considers it to be the only possible support in acquiring knowledge beyond reason. It is called metaphorical reflection, that is, successor to metaphorical thought, because it is activated every time the latter emerges as a problem in search of a solution, because either the idea conveyed by thought remains pending or a suspicion arises in us that another way of investigating phenomena, beyond thought, is feasible.

It will be argued in this essay that by engaging in constant, unconscious, unsuspecting, autonomous reflection, independent of our reason, we tend towards a method of metaphorical reflection, both in art and life itself. Yet, we do not realize it. If we did, we would not regard the metaphors we meet occasionally in our everyday life as a surprise and variety; rather, we would approach them in a fresh psychological mood as an opportunity to meet, to wonder, and above all to think also differently, turning our attention to them in a systematic fashion, suspecting that they always have something valuable in store for us. “Metaphorical reflection, in other words, is not the metaphor of a given rational reflection, but a direct, immediate metaphorical reflection”.

A seagull flying, for instance, which would unconsciously respond to a specific problem (of an abstract concept) that preoccupies us – when the specific concept of a seagull flying and the abstract concept of the problem

that preoccupies us share common functional elements – may implicitly invite us to participate in this event, thus enabling us to study the problem by elements that are foreign to those that gave rise to it, and thus to *also* reflect differently.

Metaphorical reflection is what will shock the metaphorical thought that is posed as a question into mobilizing for the first time its own means – the metaphors that make it up, rather than the actual elements that gave rise to the question – into constant correlations, demanding from it conclusions able to lead from nowhere, progressively to the final metaphorical solution of the problem. A solution that would coincide with what we generally call, in art, a “vision”, whose possible concrete manifestation would provide a new kind of “happening” art, an art that might be called “art of metaphorical reflection”.

The “art of metaphorical reflection” functions, regarding searching for the idea-vision, in a very different way to arts *as expression* that use time. The latter carry out successive metaphorical thoughts – they narrate ideas – in time; when they improvise, or when they include some reflection in their work (whether a monologue or a dialogue) we discover that this kind of reflection is born out of a metaphor of a real, common, ordinary thought that they consciously or unconsciously have in mind. Generally, arts *as expression* correlate and instinctively connect metaphorically – they do not think, they do not investigate metaphorically. They seek readymade visions, no matter how unprocessed, and struggle to make them specific; we might say that they either discover or reveal visions



(depending on whether these pre-exist unconsciously in the artist, or are caused, given to him by the environment), but they do not *invent* visions, which is what metaphorical reflection does.

The “art of metaphorical reflection” aims to gradually become self-determined, so that it may eventually become the mechanism that produces visions (and emotions). It also hopes that the solution-vision is related to our conscious world, is decoded by it, turns from indirect into direct knowledge and supports the actual thought that it represents.

Hasn't our own life always insisted, even unconsciously, on interpreting the world through such thinking – through a possibly existing, tireless, hidden process of perception? Is metaphorical reflection perhaps the backup (and encrypted) way of thinking when our reason fails us? Might it be the unsuspected factor in all our decisions? Is perhaps part of our mood dependent upon its function, rather than on our relationship with our internal and external environment? Finally, is the phrase “I love this job because it's me” in need of a deeper interpretation? Would it be preferable to interpret it as “I love this job because it enables me to *also* think differently?”

This essay is deeply convinced that if the next step of contemporary art, in the context of seeking its *raison d'être*, must be its visible connection with life, with the ultimate goal of a contemporary way of life, the last step cannot but be its invisible connection with thought, aiming at a contemporary way of thinking. An art to serve this kind of thinking would encourage man to use metaphors

in order to express not only his external, but also his inner world; not to use them only for metaphorical thought, but also to extend them towards a metaphorical reflection, with the motto “Art is not only a way of expression, but also a way of thinking”. Motivated by the need for a more comprehensive expression, better communication, and above all reflection (preconditions in order for man to know in order to feel that he exists), this essay is informed by the intuition that the boundaries between art and life will gradually fall apart, that life will become an unplanned, ongoing happening, and that people in the distant future will inherit a paradoxical world. Paradoxical, not absurd; for it risks ending up absurd, unless we hasten to make it paradoxical.

Thomas Papadoperakis

Nice, 22 May 2001

## SELECTED CRITICAL ESSAYS



JOURNEY ON THE WAVES  
THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS (GALLERY 3)

Looking at Thomas Papadoperakis's paintings now on display, I am transported by association to his place of origin, Crete. This proud three-masted ship sailing through the immensity of time on the blue Mediterranean waves has acquired an unmistakable historical and cultural profile from this long journey. Always at the epicentre of the Mediterranean basin that nourished all the Biblical cultures (Egypt, Greece, Italian cities, Byzantine Empire). Crete has one eye on North Africa and the other on the canals of Venice, and both eyes on Theofylaktos, the psalmodic Byzantium. Strata of culture, both her own and foreign, can be identified on her. And the mentality of her inhabitants is strange: sometimes they soar, with admirable superiority, and sometimes they crawl.

I mentioned Crete because it is the birthplace of the artist Papadoperakis. He mentally soars, with a peculiarity that stems from his genes. He struggles as all his generation does. If we had to sum up his painting, we would call it "Rembrandtist". In it he constantly gropes with darkness and light. A profound ongoing juxtaposition with cyclical black and white echoes. His lighting, coming from a single point, becomes an explosive power and is diffused over the darkness in vibrant circles. Beyond the apparent subject matter of each painting, its real content is the conflict of darkness and light. I believe that this struggle is Papadoperakis's innermost visual discourse. Moreover, there is a widespread sense of economy of colour, originating perhaps in the scant colour of the celebrated Cretan School of religious iconography.

All this gifted visual individuality makes up Papadoperakis's personal style. It demonstrates his mature quality. One wonders: could Papadoperakis's relentless conflict of darkness and light, fear and hope, fall and rise capture in art the zeitgeist of Greece at this time?

Nikos Alexiou, art critic,  
*Rizospastis* newspaper, Saturday, 18 March 1989

NAUTILOS ART GALLERY-BOOKSTORE – 1990  
(not included in the exhibition)

A great island, in a privileged position with regard to painting, Crete has produced important works for centuries, from Minoan times to the Renaissance, and has inspired the whole of Greece; this is its glorious history, but the history lives on with the young Greek painters who are as distinctive in Greece as are the Spanish in Europe.

As an independent island, Crete also has independent painting; the first painters to recognize the fact that Rome was the new Constantinople, at the time when El Greco made his perilous leap to the West, Cretan painters were the first to admit it.

I have been following Papadoperakis since his first steps; from his drawings as a pupil, which were impeccable. They could have made him a faultless draughtsman, yet he chose the difficult uphill path of painting, and applied all his gifts as a draughtsman to colour, with the king of colours, according to Renoir, black, weaving bittersweet magic in his paint-

ing. His delicious painting seems to appeal to the sense of taste. When I was asked why he introduces the black spots in his works, I replied simply and naturally that this adds flavour. All the possibilities of painting that Plato mentions are present in his painting: transparency, opaqueness, gloss, are all present in his works.

That is why they are painterly works.

Yannis Tsarouchis, painter, thinker, author  
Maroussi, 14 April 1988

FAREWELL TO THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS  
(1943 CRETE – 2002 NICE, FRANCE)

Every year, our visual arts family bids farewell to some of its members. No matter how close our acquaintance with them, the painful news shocks us, severing a branch from the trunk – from that peculiar unity that is not formed by “profession” but by a special outlook on life through expression. And this loss leaves us doubly desolate. For the death of an artist is a double loss: that of his fleeting physical presence, and that of the spiritual entity, which is suddenly cut off from its creative extension, the continuity and slice of eternity that exists in it. For the work of art, however great the risk of decay it may possess, bequeaths as much force of endurance to posterity, with its essential ability to transport through time and place.

To the bitterness of the recent departure of beloved colleagues from life and art is added the pain for the sudden



death of Thomas Papadoperakis, on 12 September 2002. One of the most special painters in Greece has died prematurely: he was gifted with mind, heart, and talent. Before completing his fifth decade, he left a work of maturity, aesthetic perfection, contemporary and enduring in its course towards the future. Yet he also left unfinished his quest of delving into the communication and transmittance potential of a work of art, his meeting with the mystery of human nature and its environment.

His unceasing studies from the age of 12 led Thomas Papadoperakis to acquire the codes of all artistic genres, which finally led him to opt for painting. Drawing, religious iconography, printmaking, stage design (under Grammatopoulos and V. Vassileiadis at the Athens School of Fine Arts); he then went on to study painting in Paris, at the *École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts*, under Singier, with honours.

Between 1961 and 1975, he studied and participated in nine group exhibitions in Greece and France. In 1994, he designed the stage sets for three theatre productions. Concurrently, he had published articles in newspapers and magazines since he was 20.

We admired even in Papadoperakis' earliest exhibitions that harmonious union of sense and reflection, which transformed any tangible reality, the texture of things, to a memory of an experience. As if there were a distance between touch and remembrance. His figures, nudes, everyday things seemed lost in a faint fog of distance. As if the painter refused the harshness of reality, enveloping the immediately visible with devout affection in a veil of forgetfulness, of past visual conception, a final farewell.

The colour black – the king of colours according to



Renoir – was for Thomas Papadoperakis from 1972 a magical “alchemy” that at the risk of destruction covered the prosaicness of the tangible and revealed the poetry of the elusive, the remote. Enhancing white through black, light through dark, does not, in Thomas’ work, symbolize conflict, struggle, or a “trick” for originality, appeal, “flavour”, as remarked. It is a means in a visual struggle to achieve visual harmony, which the artist believed was the only objective quality in painting.

A concurrent intellectual path in Papadoperakis’s writings extends his investigations as a painter to philosophical associative accounts that go hand in hand with his ongoing effort to delve deeper. In an exhibition catalogue in 1998 he wrote: “I choose the colour black because it has the possibility, more than any other colour, to produce light [...] and I do not like my subject matter to reveal the place and time of their inception [...]”. Elsewhere, in a 1995 catalogue: “Symbols, and anything that involves mental state in painting in general, change subject to life and differ in each country and period [...] A symbol is subjective; visual harmony never changes [...]”.

One of the most important and original essays by Papadoperakis is “The Art of Metaphorical Reflection”. I was pleased to receive an abstract whose proofreading was completed only a few days before his passing. The essay, a taxing piece of writing with a sense of profound responsibility, was an obsession for him. I do not know if he ever completed it, since he died so suddenly on the shoulder of his beloved wife, leaving an inconsolable daughter and grieving siblings to mourn for him, deeply attached as they were in

family affection and shared interests in art and the intellect.

In this essay he investigates the importance of “thought” and “reflection”: “[...] thought is the mental reference to something; whereas reflection is a way to seek something [...] Art is not only a way of expression, but also a way of thinking [...]”. But excerpts butcher the cohesion and purport of this essay, which is worth reading, even in its abridged version, by our colleagues.

The premature loss of Thomas Papadoperakis is a double loss: for his intellectual discourse and, above all, for his visual discourse, both for Greece and beyond.

He was loved by all who knew him for his mellow manners, gentleness and kindness, moral stature and dignity. He was valued because he never wished to impress, surprise, or anger with his many gifts. We believe that his great potential was not appreciated by the State. Now that he is no longer amongst us, we should try to grasp the depth and scope of his unmistakable style, extraordinary emotions, and wonderful commitment. By contributing to a long overdue display of Thomas Papadoperakis’s work, we honour our country.

Diana Antonakatou, Painter  
Member of The Association of Greek Art Critics,  
AICA HELLAS (International Association of Art Critics)  
E.E.T.E newspaper, No. 81, November 2002

IN MEMORIAM  
THOMAS PAPADOERAKIS (1943-2002)  
THINKER AND PAINTER

The death of the important painter-printmaker, gifted human being and remarkable thinker, Thomas Papadoperakis, last September (12 September 2002) in Nice, France was indeed a loss to the art world.

A man of integrity to the ultimate degree, unspoiled by the sirens of fashions and superfluous situations, Thomas Papadoperakis, who will endure through the metaphysical quality of his body of work was a rare artist and human being.

Born in 1943 in Spilia, Heraklion, Crete, he studied painting, printmaking and stage design at the Athens School of Fine Arts under Mavroides, Grammatopoulos, and Vasileiadis, while also studying with Yannis Tsarouchis. He then studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1970-1976) in G. Singier's workshop, graduating with honours.

*Awards*

Having held 12 solo exhibitions in Greece and France, and with a wealth of participations in major international events, Papadoperakis – who also designed stage sets for the theatre and wrote numerous articles and essays on art, published in major periodicals – won two awards during his career: the 1988 Nikos Kazantzakis Award for Painting, and the 1995 Audience Award for painting at Art Jonction in Cannes, France.

Living in Nice since 1994, where he enjoyed the respect of people of letters and the arts, he contributed with his presence and work to the cultural life of Southern France.



His work was presented several times in Greece; the supreme moments were the two monumental exhibitions at the ArtForum (Thessaloniki 1988 and 1999), as well as that held at the Municipality of Lykovryssi Cultural Centre in April 2001. Another monumental solo exhibition was planned for 2003 at Yayannos Gallery, but the artist's sudden death prevented it from materializing.

### *Metaphysics*

Papadoperakis's visual style could be characterized as "non-incarnate" painting, as his genius managed to transform even the most specific object or figure into an austere, metaphysical presence; into a presence associated/identified with that ultimate harmony which the artist defined in his essays: "The only objective quality in painting is visual harmony. Symbols, and anything that concerns state of mind in painting, change depending on life and differ in different places and times. The word symbol is, as a rule, associated with subjectivity. Yet visual harmony never changes! It is what establishes a painting as universal and timeless." Each of Papadoperakis's works is a "presence", irrespective of which period of his career it dates from and the original stimulus (still life, human figure, nude, portrait); it always manages to evoke the very idea of its being. A concept that, being contained here – always at the forefront – corroborates for this gifted artist the Platonic definition of authentic art and, consequently, of authentic creative production in general.

### *Creatures*

Thomas Papadoperakis did indeed manage to evoke the subtle through the physical with a unique scope. A scope that aptly identifies the notion of metaphysical in order to make it accessible and familiar to us. His figures were "creatures" and so were any objects that he decrypted. They are inhabited by the metaphysical element itself, which by penetrating matter makes them eyewitnesses conducive to an utterly transcendental mood. A mood that denotes, above all, the charismatic threshold between the earthly and the heavenly, precisely at the point where the soul's aura is orchestrated; the aura of the artist's soul, a gifted medium-transmitter and receiver of cosmogonic messages. Transcendental by nature and temperament, Papadoperakis's works emerge – irrespective of the original stimulus (Oriental musical instruments, a female nude, the human figure focusing on the face, a still life) – pristine, timeless presences-archetypes, made with a unique lucidity of light, composition and treatment.

The light of the intellect, the light of the soul that shines through these works, resisting recipes, or prosaic descriptions, lives beyond the work itself, the surrounding space in order to evoke a singular mood. A mood whose unmistakable originality has made the artist's originality internationally renowned.

Dora Iliopoulou-Rogan  
Art historian and critic

Member of The Association of Greek Art Critics, AICA  
HELLAS (International Association of Art Critics)

*Ta Nea tis Technis* art review



UNKNOWN WORKS BY PAPADOPERAKIS  
REPORT ON THE ERSI GALLERY EXHIBITION-TRIBUTE AT  
ART-ATHINA 2004

When Thomas Papadoperakis left us three years ago, I was unable to write a single word. He was a friend; it was sudden and premature. And I did not want to discuss his work under this influence, lest emotion get the better of me, and I could not do justice to his work. Nor did I see hasty and impulsive things taking place, so the striking “presence” at *Art-Athina*, jointly with Vostel (Ersi Gallery) came to remind, and not only me, of a debt overdue. In this exhibition, thanks to the efforts of his wife, who cherished his memory and preserved his work, we saw his old black works, which we were not familiar with, or did not remember so well. And, along with them, we had forgotten their power and loud voice, their groundbreaking qualities and powerful personality, which knows how to converse on an equal footing with the German fellow-artist. This is why I would like to say to Helen, and others, that Thomas has not gone; he has simply hidden behind his works, and is part of all this.

Vivi Vassilopoulou  
*Kosmos tou Ependyti* newspaper,  
Saturday 12 - Sunday 13 June 2004



THOMAS PAPADOPERAKIS (1943-2002)

BIOGRAPHY - EXHIBITIONS

Thomas Papadoperakis was born in Spilia, Heraklion, Crete. He received his first lessons in painting under Byzantine-style iconographer Stylianos Kartakis. Concurrently with his high school studies in Heraklion, he also received his first drawing lessons. In 1960, he produced the bust of Nikos Kazantzakis, on display at the eponymous museum. Immediately afterwards, he left for Athens, where in 1961 he was admitted (ranking first) to the preliminary course of the Athens School of Fine Arts, under George Mavroides; in 1962 he was admitted (ranking first) to the painting workshop (George Mavroides) and (also ranking first) to the printmaking workshop (Konstantinos Grammatopoulos) with a scholarship from the Greek State Scholarship Foundation (IKY). During the same period, also met the painter Yannis Tsarouchis, who became his teacher, mentor and interlocutor, both in Athens and during his stay in Paris. In 1964, he produced, jointly with Yannis Tsarouchis, life-size copies after works by Domenikos Theotokopoulos for the play *El Greco*, produced by Manos Katrakis in Heraklion Crete, on the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary the death of the Spanish-Greek master.

In 1965, he enrolled in the theatre design workshop of Vassileios Vassileiadis; during the same year, he produced three life-size copies of works by Botticelli for the play *The Holy Sacrifice* by Pantelis Prevelakis, produced by the National Theatre with set designs by Vassileios Vassileiadis.

In 1966, he received his diploma in printmaking and theory of art from the Athens School of Fine Arts, with two

distinctions for evening nude and with honours for woodcut composition; in 1969, he received a diploma in theatre design from the Athens School of Fine Arts with honours for poster design.

In the following year, he left for Paris, where he studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris (ENSBA) under Gustave Singier. In 1974, he earned a three-year scholarship from the National Organization for Greek Handicrafts to study pottery at the ENSBA.

During his stay in Paris, he became friends with Iris Clert, Lila de Nobili, Alexander Iolas, Tériade, and César; he also stayed in touch with Yannis Tsarouchis.

In 1976, he graduated with honours from the ENSBA.

Afterwards, he held many solo exhibitions and participated in many group events in Greece and abroad; he also worked in theatre design and published several articles on art theory in newspapers and magazines. He lived and worked in Greece from 1977 to 1994, when he moved to Nice, France. In 1988, he received the Nikos Kazantzakis Award for his contribution to the arts. His works are housed in the National Gallery in Athens, and in various private collections in Greece and abroad, including the famous Élie de Rothschild collection (Paris).

## EXHIBITIONS

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1968 Serres, Serres Chamber
- 1974 Athens, Ora Gallery
- 1979 Athens, Kreonidis Gallery
- 1988 Heraklion, Saint Mark's Basilica for the Nikos Kazantzakis Award  
(with sculptor M. Tzobanakis)

- 1989 - Athens, Gallery 3  
- Thessaloniki, Artforum Gallery
- 1990 Heraklion, Nautilus Bookstore, a tribute to Domenikos Theotokopoulos on the occasion of the major El Greco exhibition in Heraklion, Crete in summer 1990, on the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the master's birth
- 1995 - Nice (France), J. Guillot's Allianz Via Insurance Company  
- Nice (France), Maison des Artistes, Nice, Côte d'Azur
- 1996: - Villefranche s/Mer, Chapelle Sainte Elisabeth, L'Été Grec, organized by the Greek Consulate in Nice (14/6-15/7)  
- Nice (France), International Artists Exhibition, Direct Art (22/9-2/10)  
- Saint-Laurent-du-Var (France), *Parenthèses*, Canicule Advertising Company annual exhibition, with sculptor G. Sassier
- 1999 - Nice (France), Sainte Réparate Gallery, *Manifeste: L'Art de la Vie*, organized by the Municipality of Nice (9/4-29/5)  
- Thessaloniki, Artforum Gallery, *The Art of Living* (November)
- 2001 Lykovryssi, Athens, Municipal Cultural Centre, *A Brief Retrospective* (4-21/10)

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

#### Greece

- 1964 Athens, 3<sup>rd</sup> National Youth Art Fair
- 1969 10<sup>th</sup> National Art Fair
- 1971 11<sup>th</sup> National Art Fair
- 1973 12<sup>th</sup> National Art Fair
- 1975 13<sup>th</sup> National Art Fair
- 1987 14<sup>th</sup> National Art Fair
- 1972 1<sup>st</sup> Cretan Art Fair in Chania



- 1974 2<sup>nd</sup> Cretan Art Fair in Chania  
 1976 3<sup>rd</sup> Cretan Art Fair in Chania  
 1976 Athens, National Gallery, *A Panorama of 50 Years of Greek Painting*, organized by the National Gallery in Athens  
 1983 Athens, National Gallery, *Contemporary Trends in Greek Painting*, organized by the National Gallery in Athens  
 1986 Athens, Kreonidis Gallery, with Yannis Tsarouchis and Takis Sideris  
 1986 Kifissia, Trigono Gallery, with Yannis Tsarouchis and Takis Sideris  
 1998 Rethymnon, Centre For Contemporary Art, *With the Lyre and the Bow*

*Posthumous exhibitions*

- 2007 Voroï, Crete, Museum of Cretan Ethnology Research Center, Artists from Eastern Crete 1930-2007 (7-21/09)

*International Exhibitions*

- 1973 Toulon (France), 23<sup>rd</sup> World Fair, Toulon Festival  
 1975 Paris (France), 1<sup>st</sup> Exhibition of Young Greek Artists  
 1977 - Paris (France), Paul-Louis Weiller, International Portrait Exhibition  
 - Normandy (France), VI<sup>e</sup> *Salon de la Côte d'Albâtre*  
 1978 Nicosia (Cyprus), *Contemporary Greek Painters*, organized by the National Gallery in Athens  
 1979 Dublin (Ireland), *Contemporary Greek Painters*, held at the National Gallery in Athens  
 1980 Bucharest (Romania), *Balkan Art Fair* (Special Distinction), organized by the Ministry of Culture and Science  
 1983 Algiers (Algeria), *Mediterranean Countries Art Fair*, Greek participation organized by the Municipality of Athens



- 1988 Brussels (Belgium), *Greek Painting 1968-88*, organized by the National Gallery in Athens at the European Commission headquarters and the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of the European Communities
- 1995 Beaulieu s/Mer (France), *Festival des Arts*, under the auspices of the Municipality
- 1999 Monaco, *Prix International d'Art Contemporain*, annual exhibition organized by the Principality, where the artist represented Greece

*Posthumous exhibitions*

- 2002 Nice (France), *L'Art et l'Euro*, organized by the Bank Caisse d'Epargne, Côte d'Azur
- 2003 Cagnes-sur-Mer (France), Maison des Artistes, *Correspondances*, with Coop'Art (07-23/06)  
Cagnes-sur-Mer (France), Château-Musée Grimaldi, *Portraits*, André Verdet Collection (13/12-22/04/04)
- 2006 Carros (France), *International Center for Contemporary Art*, André Verdet collection (summer)
- 2012 Carros (France), *International Center for Contemporary Art*, André Verdet collection, in a room dedicated to his collection

FAIRS (Solo Exhibitions)

- 1995 Art Jonction, Cannes (France), Artforum Gallery, Thessaloniki
- 1996 Art Athina, Ariadne Gallery, Heraklion, Crete (with sculptress Aspasia Papadoperaki)
- 1998 Art Jonction, Nice (France), Artforum Vilka Gallery, Thessaloniki, *Time*
- 2000 Art Jonction, Nice (France), Artforum Vilka Gallery, Thessaloniki, *The Art of Metaphorical Thinking*, 1<sup>st</sup> Version

- 2001 Art Jonction, Nice (France), Artforum Vilka Gallery, Thessaloniki, *The Art of Metaphorical Thinking*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Version

*Posthumous exhibitions*

- 2004 Art Athina, Ersi Gallery, Athens, tribute to *Black Works*, in collaboration with the Inge Baecker Gallery, Cologne, with a special show by Wolf Vostell

THEATRE DESIGN

- 1993 *Stella Violanti* by Grigorios Xenopoulos, directed by Tilemachos Moudatsakis, Heraklion (Vivi Theatre)
- 1994 *The Seagull* by A. Chekhov, directed by G. Antonakos in Heraklion, Crete, University of Crete Theatre Company)
- 1994 *Life is a Dream* by Calderón de la Barca, directed by Tilemachos Moudatsakis, Heraklion (Vivi Theatre)

AWARDS

- 1988 Nikos Kazantzakis Award for painting
- 1995 Audience Award for painting at Art Jonction International Art Fair in Cannes, France

## PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS

- Cover. Oil on canvas, between 1972 and 1977,  
0.41 x 0.33 m.
- p. 6. Oil, 1965, 0.74 x 0.53 m.
- p. 14. Oil, 1965, 0.53 x 0.47 m.
- p. 18. Oil, 1969, 0.41 x 0.42 m.
- p. 20. Pencil and Charcoal, 1976, 0.31 x 0.25 m.
- p. 26. Acrylic, before 1970, 0.24 x 0.30 m.
- p. 30. Oil, 1982, 0.54 x 0.45 m.
- p. 32. Charcoal, 1976, 0.33 x 0.43 m.
- p. 38. Oil, 1974, 0.93 x 0.72 m.
- p. 42. Oil, 1980, 0.63 x 0.49 m.
- p. 46. Oil, 1981, 1,00 x 0.70 m.
- p. 50. Acrylic on wood, 1991, 0.45 x 0.35 m.
- p. 54. Oil on oilcloth, 1983, 1,00 x 0.73 m.
- p. 58. Oil, 1985, 0.23 x 0.30 m.
- p. 60. Charcoal, 1976, 0.30 x 0.22 m.
- p. 62. Oil on wood, 1988, 0.79 x 0.60 m.
- p. 70. Pencil, 1965, 0.35 x 0.25 m.
- p. 74. Acrylic on cardboard, 1996, 0.29 x 0.30 m.
- p. 78. Acrylic on cardboard, 1996, 0.29 x 0.30 m.
- p. 82. Acrylic on cardboard, 1997, 0.41 x 0.17 m.
- p. 84. Oil on wood, 2002, 0.53 x 0.62 m.
- p. 88. Charcoal, 1996, 0.28 x 0.20 m.

Photographs pp. 6, 14, 18, 20, 30, 32, 38, 42, 46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 68,  
72, 78, 82, 86 by Fotis Kazazis  
Cover photograph, pp. 70, 90 by Maria Houlaki