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## **INVESTIGATING CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY GREEK ART: THE CASE OF GREEK ARTISTS IN PARIS IN THE 1980s**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Over the years, Greeks would leave their homeland looking for a better fortune, including artists -painters and sculptors. Until the mid-1940's, few were the ones who lived, worked, studied and were distinguished abroad. After the end of the Second World War, the group exit towards the cultural centres of the West commences. Since the mid-1970s, and especially in the early 1980s, Modern Greek Diaspora has undergone a new phase transition. The establishment of the European Community affects both the character of the immigration of artists as well as the creation of their identity within a cultural pluralism. Since 1980 the situation in Greece changed significantly and the contacts of artists with their homeland became greatly enhanced. Based on the above, this paper examines the cultural identity of the Greek artists in Paris during the 1980s, in comparison to the creation of identity/identity formation of the artists of the previous migratory movements, given that this decade constitutes a critical point. Their cultural presence in Paris, as reflected in French and Greek daily press and journals of the period, is also investigated. At the same time, their connection with Greece and their contribution to the development and evolution of Contemporary Greek Art is discussed.

**Keywords:** artistic migration to Paris, cultural identity, cultural interaction, Greek artists, Greek Contemporary Art

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The second world war left ruins in its wake. It also left, though, a human characterized by two parameters: one of political and social resistance and another one overwhelmed by existential anxieties and numerous questions. People stand sceptical toward the state, power and social consensus, as those began to take shape after the end of the war, and do not accept the contribution of artistic creation or intellectuality to a state, institutional post-war rationality. A substantial portion of the artistic and cultural world objects to participating in any official organization of their country and does not wish to represent it through their citizenship. A large number of artists and intellectuals will spend their lives in other, foreign places, transcending the

boundaries of a central, institutional and administrative structure; they will constitute the international platforms of the world, which, along with art, will address education, culture, history, ideology [1].

Following World War II, European cities, with Paris being the centre of innovation in international culture since the late 18th century [2], brought together artists from around the world. They carried along their manners, customs and traditions and together with the local artists formed nurseries that developed into strong currents of movements, which promoted the new European artistic reality and became accepted by the international visual arts scene [3].

Given the long presence of Greek artists in the French capital, we shall focus on those found or continuing to work there during the decade of 1980, the latter being a landmark for change in terms of the type of movement and their cultural identity formation.

## **2. MIGRATIONS: A SHORT HISTORY OF GREEK PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTISTIC EVENTS OF PARIS**

The post-war art movements in Europe and America are in competition, yet through constant confrontation every movement gains autonomy and the acceptance of its uniqueness. The new vision regarding the world of art, is to break the shackles having limited the human and allow the artist to express its age unhampered, leaving their imprint [4]. Visual arts are a universal language that can be interpreted everywhere without translation and in a distinctive way. Unaffected by any wall or iron curtain, it sets the example of an attestation of democratic and artistic freedom. Thus, in Paris immigrant artists and others initiated a conversation, in which, through their confrontation with others, demanded for themselves freedom and a European idea, since it is a fact that the interactivity of modern art is what abolished any nationalism [5].

Numerous Greek artists participated in this pan-European framework: P. Regos (1903-1984) and Ch. Lefakis (1906-1969) were active in Thessaloniki, while N. Engonopoulos (1907-1985), N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas (1906-1994), Yan. Tsarouchis (1910-1989), G. Moralis (1916-2009), G. Spyropoulos (1912-1990), N. Kessanlis (1930-2004), K. Tsoclis ( b. 1930), Vl. Kaniaris (1928-2011), Danil (Panagopoulos, 1924-2008), G. Gaitis (1923-1984), Pavlos (Dionyssopoulos, b. 1930), K. Xenakis (b. 1931), A. Akrihakis (1939-1994), A. Fassianos (b. 1935), Y. Tsarouchis (1910-1989) and others worked in a trinitarian state of receiver-filter and transmitter [6]. From 1945 and on these artists arrive in Paris in migratory flows.

On the eve of the outbreak of the Greek civil war in 1945, the director of the French Institute in Athens, Octave Merlier, provided refuge to a hundred and fifty Greek intellectuals, artists and scientists in Paris because of their connection to the Resistance and the EAM (National Liberation Front) [7]. They all travelled on the *Mataroa* ship. This was the first post-war

migration to Paris, and the reasons for the flight were mainly political. In the intermediate years, 1945-1950, young artists reinforced the first migratory wave [8]. In the 1960s the migration of artists, mainly to Paris, becomes massive and is attributed to the type of contemporary art.

In the French capital, they meet artists that arrived there in the early post-war years, as well as artists, intellectuals and distinguished personalities from Greece who live and work there, even before the war, such as Cr. Zervos, Teriade, Iolas, D. Galanis. Away from their homeland, they all gradually follow the path of studies, scholarships or adventure. Most of them either experimentally or in the belief that this is how art is created research, experiment and indulge in practices, methods, experiences or theories that abstraction had initiated. In those years, artists establish their personal style and adapt its function to the new social, economic and professional standards, as these are evolving abroad [9]. They associate and develop a dialogue among them as well as with local and foreign artists [10], while being confronted with the general political, social, aesthetic concerns, conflicts and inclinations of the age. Many of them spend a great part of their lives in Paris, such as D. Vyzantios (1924-2007), G. Gaitis, Danil, Vl. Kaniaris, M. Karavela (1938-2012), S. Karavousis (1938-2011), N. Kessanlis, G. Maltesos (1911-1987), Chr. Botsoglou (b. 1941), K. Xenakis (born in 1931), Pavlos (b. 1930), G. Touzenis (b. 1947), Yan. Tsarouchis (1910-1989), K. Tsoclis (b. 1930), G. Christophorou (1921-2014), A. Kindyni (1914-2003), K. Andreou (1917-2007), K. Kouledianos (1918-1995), K. Valsamis (1908-2003), I. Spiteri-Veropoulou (1924-2000), Yan. Bouteas (b. 1941), N. Pastra (1921-2011). They constitute a social class, a category, mentally, psychologically, socially and politically. Most are already organic members of another society or another political and social entity with a dual and conflicting identity, similar to that of their compatriot artists who came to Paris at the beginning of the 19th century. They participate in the dual identity and pluralistic historical, social, cultural and artistic problematic in the context of post-war world [11].

In the field of painting, M. Prasinou (1916-1985), Th. Tsigkos (1914-1965), G. Gaitis, D. Vyzantios, apart from representation and abstraction, place human and their gesture at the centre of modern artistic exploration [12]. In the 1960s, Vl. Kaniaris and N. Kessanlis, together with a large group of artists of the Greek diaspora, are found at the heart of the European avant-garde developments [13]. Danil, Kaniaris, Kessanlis and Pavlos associate with the French art critic P. Restany (1930-2003) and participate, though on the sidelines, in the New Realism movement, which Restany established with his manifesto on 16/10/1960. Restany greatly promoted the Greek artists with exhibitions, his writings and others, and accompanied them in their path for forty years, until his death in 2003 [14]. The sculptor Takis has been a pioneer in the full conjugation of art with the most innovative research of his time as well as its assimilation from the international art scene. Through his encounter with foreign artists and movements, he traces his primary identity [15].

The artistic production of the Greek diaspora in Paris continues at an intense rate in subsequent years. The press of the time writes "...this year in many exhibitions in Paris, there were given interesting samples of the latest Greek avant-garde research. Within the modern European scene that provides evidence of a parallel exploration with what artistic research and the theory of artistic creation is concerned today in terms of form and thought ... " [16].

In the following years, there was a rather massive cultural migration of Greek artists to Paris, caused by the period of dictatorship. The coup of 21st April 1967 and the seven-year dictatorship imposed on Greece initiated a new wave of flight, the third one and mainly to Paris, of Greek artists, intellectuals and scientists aspiring to better prospects, freedom of expression or the experience of the special atmosphere spurred by May 1968 [17] and its aftermath, even for short. The artists came in contact with their compatriots of past migration waves, many attended schools, while a few never distanced themselves from the events taking place in Greece, despite residing abroad [18]. Although the French society proved hospitable to the exiles of the Greek dictatorship, most of them encountered numerous difficulties during their settlement in France [19]. The fall of the dictatorship in 1974 was followed by a massive return to Greece. This fact, coupled with their short stay in Paris or the reluctance of many of them to learn French, provides evidence of a population barely integrated into the French society.

### **3. INTERNATIONALISATION: THE ARTISTIC LANDSCAPE IN THE DECADE OF 1980 AND ITS IMPACT ON CULTURAL IDENTITY**

In the 1980s, Europe is a continent without boundaries, and consequently diaspora alters in nature. It expands considerably, as it disperses in a far larger area than in pre-war years. With the spread of mass media and rapid dissemination of ideas, art is internationalised and challenges any geographic or ideological barrier [20]. The field of intellectual and artistic life has broadened so much that in every city there are structures (art schools, galleries, museums, galleries, collections, magazines, etc.) that attract artists. At the same time, beyond traditional institutions and the usual professional paths, new roads open informally in various parts of the world. Artists shift their attention to the periphery, everyday life, the poor neighbourhoods, corners and moments of anonymous life or message exchange between them. They travel, move and transform their lives into a constant wandering. The new European diaspora abandons the large saturated geographical centres and international art metropolises. The artists turn their attention to the macrocosm as well as the microcosm of everyday life, a directly political statement expressing- without declarations or theories- a shift of interest and the awareness of many younger artists [21].

Even as early as the first half of the 20th century, such artistic movements as the Dada or Surrealism had attempted to integrate the small and the "trivial" items of everyday life into the

artistic field [22]. Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), a French philosopher, Marxist-sociologist, one of the leading scholars of everyday -and mainly- urban life, among others defined art as one of the fields of in-practice criticism in everyday life, as one of the main means of cultural change (Also see a compelling phrase of the philosopher: "let daily life become art work! Let every technique be applied for the transformation of everyday life" [23]. A view passionately argued by Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), who formulated the tenet that everyone could be an artist, once again and in another way echoing Marcel Duchamp and Dadaist perceptions. Besides, Beuys, like other enlightened artists, tried to break the boundary between art and life, creating visual standards that reconnected the past with the present, being with becoming. Art no longer has limitations in being expressed nor is it subjected to the authority of formalistic choices, while at the same time the brush and the dynamics of colour re-emerge [24]. Additionally, trends of artistic production falling in the category of conceptual art bring art very close to everyday life in many ways [25]. They seek the conjunction of art and reality, introduce time and experience into the artwork, whether an installation or a performance, utilising concepts and familiar everyday objects as tools [ 26].

As regards art in Paris these years, let us examine it through the article of painter A. Pierrakos (1920-2017), inter alia stating that in the last years in Paris there were certain developments that everyone involved in everyday art life considered to be expected. In aesthetics, the movement of figurative art gained ground or perhaps received universal recognition, overcoming the excessive experimentation that had sidelined it. Certainly, all schools continue their activity, but the time has arrived that the practice of "painting" returns as the strongest visual arts statement with colour, form, pattern etc. This flourishing of painting describing the explosiveness of modern life or the mythology of reality is a strange phenomenon in Paris, when the official policy is permanently registered in the field of avant-garde. The artists, weary from the constant changes of odd ideas, look at the world around them definitely with new eyes, when suddenly various talents, almost unknown, but also established artists, such as Bacon, followed figurative painting and gained a wide public. In a sense, successors of the Picasso phenomenon are expressed with the perennial painting materials. On these aesthetic issues, the instinct of Paris, despite the obstacles posed by the art trade and art critics' views, began to impose a simplified and robust painting, freed from the dictation of America [27].

Sculpture - in the context of conceptual art and such currents as minimalism, the latter contributing to sculpture development on the basis of the constructivist principles that were largely responsible for the abolition of traditional sculpture- often expressed itself through constructions, which altered the "sculptural space." By abolishing basic principles of sculpture, such as those governing the function of mass and volume, the artists stressed the mental function

of materials and the need to create projects of an "integrated nature" and equal participation of the arts of space, painting, sculpture, architecture.

The limited area of constructions led the artists to free installations, a tendency more advanced than the environments and constructions, and one related to the art of the earth, action, process and generally with visual acts that did not aim at permanence or stability, but at eliminating the boundaries between art, nature and life. The anti-formalist trend that characterised the artists and the supremacy of the "idea" on the form imposed the concept of ephemeral, so that the newer aesthetics prevailed over tradition [28]. Nausika Pastra says: *"What we currently call sculpture, that is, construction, assemblies, accumulations," objects "and environments, represents the most substantial effort for the conquest of space, its social and residential configuration"* [29].

With regard to Greece, its art has long gained an international character. Its distance from the European avant-garde shrinks over time as does the number of Greek artists who get distinguished abroad. The contact with the international artistic centres and international meetings are more frequent [30]. The artistic and cultural borders have opened more than the political ones [31]. Greece is a full member of the EEC, the cold war is almost over and the political and social climate prevailing in the years of the dictatorship is changing and relinquishes its position to existential issues, ecological concerns, opinions and visual arts proposals of a narrative type [32].

These ideological and cultural changes taking place in Greece initiated the repatriation of several diaspora artists. Many artists, residing in Europe and especially in Paris, returned to their homeland and asserted dynamically, albeit belatedly, their participation in the formulation of social institutions or the political and cultural processes [33]. Their contribution to the contemporary cultural field found its confirmation in the interest of the art loving public, their participation in various artistic institutions and an even more substantial outreach in their teaching activity at the Higher School of Fine Arts (HSFA) in Athens, where by the mid 1980 's, a new research climate gradually took shape [34]. The artistic ferment of the era led to the polymorphic art spectrum of the 1980s [35].

#### **4. THE CHANGE: FROM MIGRATION TO MOVEMENT AND RETURN**

In the years of the 1980 's, younger Greek artists, despite the satisfactory information on the evolution of art in their place [36] and the possibility to create original work, equivalent to that of their colleagues in any part of the world, travel to the art centres abroad with the desire to study, improve their qualifications and their art, come directly in touch with the events in the art scene in the west, sometimes for work or other reasons [37]. The greatest proportion once again heads for Paris, most on scholarship by the French Government, the Athens Academy of Fine Arts,

various endowments, foundations (Onassis, Leventis, Vassilis and Elisa Goulandris Foundation, Tositsa, Vikatos, Bakala Brothers etc) or organizations (E.O.M.M.E.X). Most artists had already completed their studies in HSFA and advance their education in Paris, studying in École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (ENSBA), in École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Appliqués et des Métiers d' Art, in École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (ENSAD), in Sorbonne, in various studios and teachers, such as L. Cremonini, V. Velickovic, J. Lagrange, P. Carron, Abraham Hadad, Denis Rival, S. Mouille, G. Vineent and M. Rafestin.

Some artists work abroad for some time, such as Ch. Makridis, P. Samios, (1978-1992), G. Sifianos until the 1990s, B. Michael from 1981 to 1986, H. Poulos and others. After completion of their studies or work, most return to Greece with a one to five year stay in Paris. Very few stay there permanently, such as E. Kalessi, who went there in 1984, E. Chatziargyri and even fewer live and work between Athens and Paris (A. M. Tsakali). In the 1980s there were still in Paris artists of previous artistic movements, such as G. Adamakos, St. Daskalakis, G. Kottis, Costis (Triantafillou), M. Loizidou, Ch. Mavros, D. Ratsikas, A. Patsoglou, A. Raftopoulou-Patsoglou, P. Samios and others.

During their stay there, young Greek artists lived and acted individually. The concept of teamwork or group has long languished [38]. They associate with each other mostly by chance, as in the years of the '30s, mainly through their studies, at studios, museums, galleries, rather than through discussions, ferment, proposals, a trend that started in the mid '70s. Efforts to consort are rare, though it seemed that the general climate favoured, or at least sought them [39]. Naturally, the opposing view has also been supported, namely that the society incited solitary action to manipulate the individual and make them more vulnerable to the production conditions and the competition imposed by the age [40].

Judging from young artists' duration of stay in Paris and their way of living, it seems that they had already acquired a deep and solid foundation in their place, which was also their permanent goal. During their stay in the French capital, they show no interest in integrating into French society or obtaining an identity alongside their national one. Nevertheless, they maintain ties with the country that hosted them and the international art scene and, given the opportunity, they exhibit their artistic production in the halls of Paris or participate in Biennale, a production to the creation of which their occasionally short stay in Paris had contributed.

## **5. THE PROMOTION: INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PRESENCE IN GREEK ARTISTS IN THE PARISIAN SCENE**

Greek artists living in Paris have a significant presence in French art scene and leave their mark on the expression of currents of the time in painting and sculpture. We will refer only to those who lived during the decade of 1980 there.

Seventeen young Greek artists participated in the 12th Biennale of young artists held at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris with the participation of forty-five countries. The art critic M. Mavrommatis was charged with the Greek national delegation, promoting artists who represented the most characteristic and varying trends of contemporary art in painting, sculpture, video. This exhibition, apart from a typical celebration of youth, had a lot of innovations, particularly in the areas concerned in plastic expressive research. Fewer happenings and more painting, in the opinions of art critics, show a tendency to return to painting and sculpture. The Greek artists, most of whom lived a part of their lives in Paris, exhibited their work in all forms of expression: music, photography, sound, sculpture and are as follows: Aris Georgiou (b. 1951), Irimi Gonou (b. 1955), who spent eleven years in Paris from 1974 to 1985, Stavros Ioannou (1945-2009), Katerina Thomadaki, who since 1975 lives permanently there and teaches at Media Art University Paris I, Sorbonne, Maria Klonari, who lived in Paris since 1975 and until the end of her life, Stelios Koupegkos (b. 1954), George Lappas (1950-2016), Nakis Panayotidis (b. 1947), Dimitris Pantazis, Manolis Polymeris (b. 1951), Christos Tzivelos (1949-1995), Aris Prodromidis (b. 1947), Thanassis Totsikas (b. 1951), Ersi Venetsanou (b. 1950), Costas Vrouvas (b. 1951), Nakis Tachtsioglou, Xanthippos Vyssios and the Cypriot painter Loizos Sergiou (born 1951) [41].

With a large wire construction placed at the entrance to the Biennale, the sculptor George Lappas welcomed the visitors. The artist lived in Paris in the 1980s, from 1984-5, when he came on a scholarship by the French state and attended a course in ENSBA. Lappas, considered to be the most influential sculptor of the modern age in his place [42], first conceived the new spirit of sculpture and with admirable energy presented works, which whether they were environments, constructions or installations, all made a bold statement on the relationship between volume and space, against the architecturally structured environmental system [43]. He brought back the sculpture medium at the centre of the visual arts research and at the same time enriched it with the presence of colour, usually in a monochrome spectrum, linking it with the history of contemporary painting, Yves Klein perhaps more than anything else [44]. With the presentation of his *Mappemont* work in Venice Biennale in 1987, Lappas is established as one of the most interesting artists of the mid 80 's and on [45].

In the great exhibition *Comparaisons* held in Grand Palais of Paris annually, and considered to be one of the artistic events of the year, more than fifty Greek artists of the new generation presented works of modern Greek painting. The honorary invitation of Salon des Comparaisons

1982 to the Greek association of "Artistic Exchanges" initiated this participation. A member of the committee was the Greek painter Danil, who lived and worked in the visual arts in Paris for years. Among the participating artists of the 1980s was the painter Ersi Chatziargyriou (b. 1951), who since 1976 had settled permanently in Paris, and studied stained glass in the *École Supérieure des Arts et Métiers* (1976-1979) and painting in ENSBA (1979-1982) [46].

Three young Greek painters who studied in Paris in the 1980s, Rania Kapeliari (b. 1960), Manolis Haros (b. 1960) and Ersi Chatziargyriou displayed their work entitled Contemporary Greek Painting in the Parisian Galerie *Peinture Fraîche*, 29 rue de Bourgogne, in January 1983, combined with the presentation of modern Greek composers, such as Stefanos Vassiliadis. Kapeliari studied painting and mosaic in ENSBA and on a Greek State scholarship (IKY) phototransfer techniques in engraving in the 1980s. From 1978 to 1983 Haros studied painting and engraving in ENSBA and attended postgraduate studies in the communication of image in ENSAD [47].

The well-known *Sammy King* gallery organized a great solo exhibition with recent works by the painter and hagiographer Paul Samios (b. 1948), who lived and worked in Paris from 1978 to 1992. The exhibition enjoyed a great appeal and gave a new impetus to the recognition of the artist's work, for which the French art scene has expressed itself very favourably in recent years [48]. From December 1995 to January 1996 the artist presented his work in the same gallery. M. Stefanidis mentions "... *Paul Samios primarily utilises his memory. He returns to it even when he escapes from it. The images experienced of an offered childlikeness are not an alibi, but an expressive necessity. They guide him in the present unit of his work. The painter wants to tell a story and this desire is sacred... The painting that he draws to placate his memories is tender, dreamy, melancholic... using the materials of the old cobbler shop, Samios respectfully remembers an ancient art...*" [49].

The well-known Greek painter, Manolis Haros, displayed his work at the Saga art publications exhibition. After a long stay in Paris, Haros had returned to Athens, yet the recognition of his work in exhibitions in various European countries prompted him to return and settle once again in Paris, where he resumed exhibiting his works [50]. M. Papanikolaou comments on Haros' style "... *It penetrates the secret aspects of the landscape exploring its symbolic geography through a historical or antiquarian type of wanderings. His technical inspirations (collage, lithography, constructions) bring unexpected visual aspects to his works satisfying the visitor's thirst for complete executions of composition*" [51].

Haris Xenos (b. 1959) lived in Paris from 1986 to 1990, where he studied painting at the ateliers of O. Debré, L. Nallard & P. Allechinsky in ENSBA as well as attending a three-year seminar in the history of art in *École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales de Paris*. He held an individual

painting exhibition in *Galerie du Haut Pavé*, 3 Quai de Montebello at Cartier Latin. Dimitris Ratsikas (born in 1946) displayed his works at the exhibition organized by the Institute of Higher Studies of Art in Faubourg Saint Honore in Paris until 20th May 1989 [52]. Ratsikas has lived in Paris since the 1970s. He studied painting with G. Sinver and mosaic with R. Licata in ENSBA (1973-1979), while he conducted studies in plastic arts, where he was awarded the title of a Doctor of Aesthetics at the University of Sorbonne Paris I (1980-1986).

Giorgos Rorris (b. 1963), an exceptional Greek creator, after completing his studies in the Higher School of Fine Arts in Athens, arrived in Paris in 1988 on scholarships by V. and E. Goulandris as well as Bacala brothers' institutions, where for three years he studied painting in ENSBA at Leonardo Cremonini's studio. The Parisian *Flak Gallery*, 8 rue des Beaux-Art, displayed twenty-three works of his from 23rd May 1996, covering the years 1993-1996 [53]. The inspiration of this artistic creation was Athens, the urban landscape and the daily aspects of the city, as he observed the Attic sky from his open window [54]. In his works the artist portrayed what constitutes the geography of the city, the apartment blocks with scaffolding, television antennas on the roofs of the houses, illuminated signs at night, the city smog, underground railway works, concrete, advertising boards and some touches of green [55]. The human form is absent, yet it seems to exist as a latent presence through the urban residential creation of the city, but also the area of daily public experience [56], capturing the loneliness of life in a modern city. "Athens is the ultimate depiction of Greek society. Modern constructions, apartment blocks of the '60s, unfinished construction works anarchically structured, like our life..." says Rorris about this solo exhibition [57]. The reviews for his exhibition were remarkable in both the Greek and the French press.

Painter Maria Filopoulou (b. 1964) between 1984 and 1988 studied painting at Leonardo Cremonini's studio, while attending postgraduate studies in lithography with Abraham Hadad at the same school on a French government scholarship (1988-1989). She presented a first sample of her work in Paris in 1991 at *Galerie Eonnet Dupuy*, 27, rue Tholozé. For this exhibition her teacher will say "... *Maria paints as if there was no frame in her works, as if the frame were one of the ephemeral inventions of human...*" [58]. *Galerie Flak* hosted a one-month solo exhibition of the artist in April-May 1997. The painter, along with a series of images of her greenhouses, displayed a first sample of her swimmers, with the human form being the focus of her attention [59].

Also in *Galerie Flak*, the painter Irini Iliopoulou (b. 1950) presented her third solo exhibition in Paris from 14 November to 14 December 1996 with painting on large size paper -with watercolours and oils, continuing her problematic on the dialectic relationship between nature and culture. Iliopoulou, a modest painter of traditional means [60], arrived in Paris on a

scholarship by the IKY and by the French state in 1981 and studied painting at Cremonini's atelier until 1985. Four years of laborious work there brought her recognition and her first exhibition at *Etienne de Causans* Gallery, 25 rue de Seine, in Paris, with works depicting everyday life. In 1990 she presented her work in a solo exhibition at *Berggruen* Gallery in the context of *Salon de Mars* with works inspired by nature and a central theme of cows and landscapes in which they are integrated, a topic that would occupy her in the next ten years [ 61]. In 2007 we see her again in Paris in a solo exhibition at the *Lefor Openo* Gallery [62], with the subject of lonely adults, immersed in silence, works of mystery and enigmaticity. Iliopoulou continuously evolves her thematography inspired from the history of art.

On the inauguration of the cultural centre *L 'Espace Les Esselières*, 3 Boulevard Chastenet de Géry, the Parisian municipality of Villejuif organized an exhibition entitled *Vers un Nouvelle Humanisme*, with the participation of seventeen young Greek painters, all of whom resided in Paris in the 1980s. Some had finished their studies, others continued their education while a few shared their time between Paris and Athens. All of them were young, passionate about their life course, art, painting [63]. Eleven out of the seventeen artists completed their postgraduate studies in the studio of the distinguished Italian painter Leonardo Cremonini, a professor in ENSBA, Paris from 1983 to 1992 and director of the figurative painting department, one of the three departments of the school. In his interviews, Cremonini occasionally refers to Greek art students: "... *The Greek students come to Paris already having an education in painting*" [64], "*The graduates of your school handle their media to a degree unusual for young artists... What I appreciate to painters coming from the HSFA is their pure eye Vladimir Veliskovic's*" [65], "*My teaching was based on the particular relation developing between the painter's hand and mind, the Greek students had assimilated a deep painting tradition, one probably deriving its origins in the Byzantine hagiography*" [66]. Indicative of his appreciation for the Greek students is the fact that in the small programmatic leaflet of ENSBA he opts to illustrate his text with works of two Greek students: Edward Sacaillan and Maria Filopoulou. The exhibition was curated by Maria Lambraki-Plaka, a professor at the School of Fine Arts, with the support of the Greek painter Nikolas Stavropoulos, an art consultant of the municipality. The comments of thousands of visitors to the exhibition were favourable and enthusiastic, and despite any reservations regarding the form of painting, everyone agreed that it possessed high morality, honesty and technical self-sufficiency, requiring solid education and laborious exercise [67].

The artists participating were: Kostas Argyris (b. 1957), living in Paris in 1987, Alexis Veroukas (b. 1968), who studied History of art at the Institut d' Art et d ' Archéologie at Sorbonne (Paris IV) (1986-1988) as well as painting at Leonardo Cremonini's atelier and lithography at Abraham Hadad's studio in ENSBA (1988-1993); Stefanos Daskalakis (b. 1952) who studied painting with Cremonini in ENSBA (1978-1981), Evita Zola (born 1964), who studied painting

with Cremonini in ENSBA on an IKY scholarship in 1988, as did Irini Iliopoulou from 1981 to 1985 on scholarships by the IKY and the French Government.

In addition, Eri Mastoridou (b. 1963), who studied at ENSBA in 1989 at Vladimir Velickovic's studio on an IKY scholarship, Kelly Mendrinou (b. 1961), who studied painting with Cremonini in ENSBA on a scholarship by the Academy of Athens, Spyros Kritikos (b. 1960), who on a scholarship by HSFA (bequest Spyrou Vikatou) in the decade of 1980 studied with Vladimir Velickovic and Henri Cueco in ENSBA as well as with Denis Rival in ENSAD. Kostas Markopoulos (b. 1957), on an HSFA scholarship studied painting at Vladimir Velickovic's studio at the *Galerie de la maison des Beaux-Arts* (1987-1990), Tasos Missouras (b. 1963) who, on scholarship by the French state and IKY, studied painting with Cremonini in ENSBA (1987-1991) and attended courses in ENSAD.

Also, Kostas Ntaoulas (b. 1962), who in 1989 on a scholarship from Vassilis and Elisa Goulandris Foundation, studied painting with Cremonini in ENSBA, Marina Papalampridi (b. 1963), who, on a French government scholarship, studied painting in ENSBA (1989-1990), Maria Papafili (born 1961), who, on a scholarship from the S.P. Vikatos Foundation, studied in ENSAD-Section Art Espace from 1985 to 1989 - and in Sorbonne, DEA Philosophie de l'art, Giorgos Rorris and Edward Sacaillan (born 1957) both on three-year scholarships of the School of Fine Arts in Athens (1984-1987), Anna Maria Tsakali (b. 1959) from 1983 to 1987 and Maria Filopoulou.

The activity of Greek artists abroad constitutes a significant accomplishment. It contributes in its one's own way to making our country known beyond the limited context of our geographical boundaries.

## **6. EPILOGUE**

It is the fact that most, but also very important Greek artists, for some period of their professional careers came in a direct and in many cases lasting contact with the radiation of Paris, as an international art centre, although we do not claim that all the artistic potential of the country felt a compelling need to visit and personally experience the creative momentum of the French capital.

The new generations of artists are no longer characterised by a strong desire to head for the West. They have sufficient information about the evolution of art in their homeland and can create original work, equivalent to that of their colleagues in any part of the world. Indeed, they travel to Paris, London, Rome, New York, since both the new media and Greek and foreign scholarships have greatly facilitated travelling, but also because being informed in their homes, they tend to seek a more direct contact with the latest accomplishments of art. Moreover, they

consider the travel as an essential factor of cultural and social renewal as well as personal emancipation.

Paris still attracts artists, no longer inspiring awe or great expectations, though. It is considered more of a symbol of European tradition rather than the cradle of avant-garde. Still, in Paris they meet their compatriot fellow artists, who arrived there with previous migratory flows (1945, 1960) in order to come in contact with the modern movements and join them. Many of those migrant artists resided and worked there permanently, benefiting from the institutional, educational and professional opportunities missing from their homeland. They integrated into the French society and acquired a new identity, alongside their national one. Full members of the French society and culture, and professionally successful, they now act as supporters and teachers of their compatriots.

The younger artists, though, after completing their studies or scholarships, return to Greece, having roots in their community, while maintaining parallel relations with the international scene; they assert some creative distance, though not one a priori derived from their hellenicity or the international demands.

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