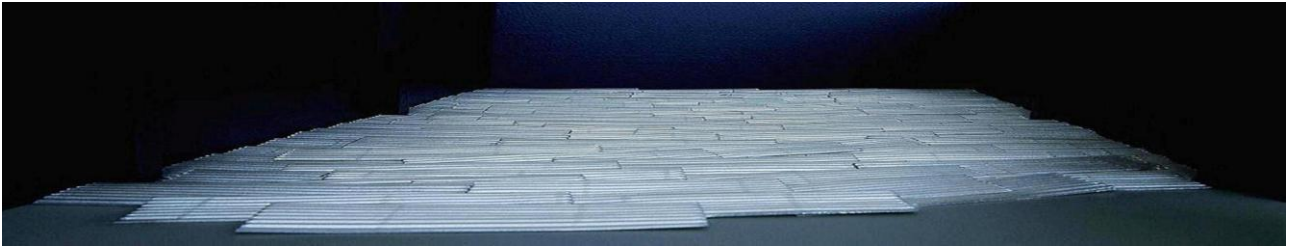


Kostas Paniaras, 1934, lives and works in Athens



ultra marine

By the poet Yiorgos Veis

Over his career, Kostas Paniaras has developed a rich code of media and moves from painting to sculpture and special installations, freely adopting materials through which he gains access to the illusion of the new image.

In the process of his quest for the truth, artistic acts/reflections of an undefined inner self and memories resurfacing from a remote past take part in the constant game of the alternating presence and absence of 'subject' as well as in the various possibilities for the final verdict of his works.

I remember that in some of his earlier three-dimensional constructions the corrugated sheets made of diverse materials alluded to his relationship with the sea, which began *before his memory*, as he says: from his pregnant mother's strolls along the coast that continued with himself in the pram every morning and afternoon, according to the former habits of everyday life in the seaside greek towns.

Yet this amniotic relationship did not evolve into that close thing that most Greeks have in their blood. *The existential need to sail, the reverie on the deck or even the pleasure of swimming are all too far from that elusive question that the sea raises in me*, claims Paniaras.

Nevertheless, in the early 1990s a watery fluidity began literally to inundate his paintings. Such telling titles as *The Journey* or *The Adventure* recur regularly during that time, while Paniaras firmly repudiates the label of seascape painter and insists that his works *may be close to the idea of the sea but not to its image*, which he exorcises in his recent polyptychs with the paroxysmal greens, the strong yellows and—more often—the dazzling reds that invite us on other journeys, away from any deceptive 'seafaring'.

In his new wide installation ***ultra marine*** at the DESTE Foundation, which I would translate as the ***ultimate sea***, the corrugated sheets return, this time in metal and in no way processed by the artist, so that the cold hyper-naturalism of the readymade industrial material invests the work with a resonant, disquieting 'silence' and a muted mercurial phosphorescence which point to the primordial question of the First Night...

Before the ominous surge of the new work of Kostas Paniaras there is only a very narrow passage for the viewer, from one door to another amidst the gloom... I must admit that this extreme minimisation of what little space remains points instantly to the Homeric awe of the Great Deep and thus precludes any other form of 'sea lust'...