

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

metro **new trends in greek Art 1999**

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Curator: Dan Cameron

"This exhibition, whose genesis lies in a series of conversations I had with Dakis Joannou and Katerina Gregos during 1998, might have been subtitled "A Visitor in Greece". While its conceptual framework is best described as a sampling of the most recent developments taking place in artists' studios in Athens, it is by no means intended to serve as a definitive curatorial statement about contemporary Greek art. Such a project would have entailed a degree of research that neither Deste Foundation nor I believed could be realistically undertaken in the time frame we were considering. In the wake of our initial exchange, Katerina and I decided to embark on an extended series of visits to artists' studios, galleries and collections in Athens during the first half of 1999, and to determine what the exhibition would be based on those visits. While there is little question in my mind that a number of quite different exhibitions could have resulted from this research, I think that any other selection criteria would have been of less pertinence to the art community both within Greece and abroad.

As a way of explaining why this should be the case, perhaps it should be emphasized that *METRO* is taking place at a moment in recent art history when lines between local and international artistic developments have become increasingly blurred. In very recent years, a handful of Greek artists have entered the international circuit of biennials and other group exhibitions, without unnecessary attention being given to their nationality, either in the name of cultural identity or in terms of their local reputations. The work of artists such as Nikos Charalambides, Maria Papadimitriou, Nikos Navridis, Miltos Manetas and Alexandros Psychoulis has become part of a roving avant-garde circuit, within which they and their work have come to represent the shifting artistic standard of Europe's new cultural configuration. In essence, there is little to differentiate their work from art being made in Helsinki or Brussels, or, for that matter, Los Angeles. With their range of media extending from painting to video installations and the internet, these artists seem equally disinterested in promoting the hegemony of one medium over another. Having experienced some of their works already in exhibitions in different locations, my deeper acquaintance with this generation in Greece convinced me that the exhibition I was contemplating was not going to make a stronger case for their work on a local level than they were already making for themselves.

On the other hand, a number of the most interesting works that we were able to experience, either firsthand or through documentation, were produced by artists who had had relatively little exposure on the national level, and none at all internationally. Working as well across a notably broad range of media, these artists might be said to represent a further shift away from the notion of a regional variation of international styles, preferring to make work that is at once more personal and more culturally dislocated. I was particularly struck by the fact that despite their level of artistic accomplishment, many of these artists had either just recently finished, or were even still immersed in, their formal studies. But it was the more gradual discovery that a thread could be located that would link these artists, which led in turn to the decision to focus the exhibition on artists whose work was, in most cases, being seen by a broad-based public for the first time. While this project does not mark the first time that Deste Foundation has based an exhibition entirely on the work of emerging artists, the hope has often been expressed that our experience might serve as a possible template for future collaborations with that sector of the Greek art community which is at once the most venturesome and the most vulnerable. Regardless of whether succeeding variations finally take place, the fact remains that a new generation of Greek artists appears ready and poised to ensure that the process of artistic transformation remains in a state of dynamic flux, at least for the foreseeable future."

Dan Cameron, May 1999