

P R E S S R E L E A S E

metro
new trends in contemporary Greek art 1999

alexandros georgiou – maurice ganis
lina theodorou – despina isaia
kostas ioannidis – panos kokkinias
deanna maganias – panayota tzamourani
dimitris tsoublekas

24 June - 11 October, 1999

Curator: Dan Cameron

S p o n s o r e d b y : I N T E R A M E R I C A N

METRO is taking place at a moment in the history of art when the boundaries between local and international developments are becoming increasingly blurred. The first impression one gets on entering is a feeling of disorientation. On the surface this reaction probably seems ironic, given that the nine artists in the exhibition do, after all, share a particular place, Athens, and a particular time. Yet the sense of dislocation created by bringing together these artists' work seems to be rooted mostly in those affinities their art shares with developments outside of Greece. This double quality of being connected to international developments and of not being recognizably Greek in their choice of styles, techniques or iconography, does not merely contribute significantly to the sense of dislocation that this exhibition provokes. It may be, paradoxically, the factor which most closely ties these artists to a particular set of developments in art history. Thus, the works included in *METRO* aim to articulate one of global culture's most interesting concepts: the potential for local ideas and issues to be transformed into unifying principles that cut across cultural barriers of all kinds. In essence, the works of the artists in *METRO* are little different from the art produced in Helsinki, Brussels or even Los Angeles. With their range of media extending from painting to video installations and the Internet, these artists do not seem interested in promoting the domination of one medium over another. It soon becomes obvious that the common trait is a metropolitan artistic genealogy rather than any ideological or stylistic affinity, as well as a constant effort to locate some sense of order within the chaos of contemporary life. Many of the works explore social space and employ new media and technologies from a particular neo-conceptual perspective, while others are characterized by an emphasis on personal narrative and references to private spaces.

Maurice Ganis' paintings communicate with a visual language of almost universal simplicity and conjure up a parallel world in which the most mundane or outlandish gesture is framed by an utter believability. Constructed from imagined episodes as well as allusions to daily life, his works often function as private allegories of alienation and survival.

Kostas Ioannidis and **Lina Theodorou** have both created works for the exhibition that centre around the impending threat of terror or destruction. Ioannidis has confronted the volatile territories of the Balkans, North Africa, and the Middle East in the form of an oven that is constantly producing fresh baklava, a sweet produced in all these areas. An accompanying audio component consists of a recording made of a young child's voice, which is alternated the roaring charge of a wild beast. Theodorou's work is based on her Internet forays into bomb-making sites, in particular her investigation of an anarchist fringe dedicated to supplying the network with information on how to construct bombs. On the basis of this information the artist produces her own bomb designs.

Despina Isaia and **Deanna Maganias** create work in which focused investigations into personal interactions result in objects and situations open to multiple interpretations. Isaia's search for a means to represent personal security through behavior led her to explore different friends' private preferences and rituals regarding objects or items of clothing that provide them with a feeling of sensual gratification and safety. Maganias deals with architecture, producing maquettes in which improbable juxtapositions of scale and/or space become real.

As befits current tendencies in art, three of the participating artists in *METRO* work primarily in photography: **Alexandros Georgiou**, **Panos Kokkinias** and **Dimitris Tsoublekas**. Georgiou's photographs suggest the isolation of the individual, even in the midst of a larger group. Kokkinias shoots scenes based on mundane aspects of everyday life that in turn reveal the artist's state of mind at a particular moment. Tsoublekas documents domestic or public spaces and his familiar outdoor environment to create startling visual juxtapositions.

In **Panayota Tzamourani's videos**, mundane realities of everyday life - the play of light on the surface of a window or a blind, for example - are transformed into abstract patterns of texture and color.

METRO is not a thematic or comprehensive review of contemporary Greek art, nor is it intended to serve as a definitive curatorial statement; rather it is a sampling of the most recent developments and new tendencies, an exhibition that aims to bear testimony to an increasingly growing and revitalized art scene within Greece. It reflects the pluralism and variety of the contemporary art scene and indicates at the general attitude of *laissez faire* which characterizes so much art today. A new generation of Greek artists appears ready to ensure that the process of artistic transformation remains in a state of dynamic flux, at least for the foreseeable future. True to its aim of promoting contemporary art and supporting young artists, the DESTE Foundation in collaboration with the exhibition's sponsor INTERAMERICAN will present an award, at the end of the show. The **DESTE-Interamerican Prize** will be awarded to the artist who has presented the most challenging and innovative body of work and whose achievement is based on a sustained and coherent vision. The decision will be made by an international jury. A silent auction will take place during the last two days of the exhibition. The proceeds will go towards the DESTE Foundation's exhibition program. More details will be announced in September.

The exhibition is accompanied by a color catalogue in Greek and English.

For more information, please contact the DESTE Foundation's Press Officer Mr. Fivos Sakalis.

Duration of exhibition: 24 June – 11 October 1999

*Opening Hours: Monday - Friday: 11:00 – 12:00 midnight
Saturday: 12:00 – 4:00
Sundays: Closed*