

CHRISTINE PARK GALLERY

Vangelis Pliarides: *Traveling Watercolors 2007-2017*

29 June – 18 August 2018

Private View & Reception

Thursday 28 June 2018, 6-8 pm

515 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011

Tuesday to Saturday, 11am – 6pm & by appointment

For immediate release

Christine Park Gallery is delighted to present a 10 year-retrospective of watercolors by Vangelis Pliarides. From South Africa to Laos, from the tropical islands of Sihanoukville in Cambodia to the cosmopolitan city of Bangkok, Pliarides's painting trips have been playing an essential role in his paintings. Inspired by experiences and adventures from the trips, his *Traveling Watercolors* were created and carried during the trips and upon his return, such experiences were results in a big sized oil paintings in his London and Thessaloniki studio. 15 works have been carefully selected among the 10 year series for their first presentation in New York.

Through the numerous watercolors by Vangelis Pliarides, one can enter a space and time utterly subjective and enigmatic. The laws of reality cease to exist (bodies are often invertebrate, or even permeable), ghosts are real and singing songs, often made of sharp looks or deafening silences.

Then again, perhaps in this pictural world, the laws of reality apply more than anywhere else. The vast world of desire meets the finite world and cracks, holes, wounds and fantasies are established for good. In this world, individual memory (which one might call it imagination if they did not believe in its power), shaped in the innermost recesses of the Self, seems to launch a full-scale attack on the order and logic of what we call "reality."

The hybrid body figures of Pliarides (the body is still the embankment of the "new age") are fluid and unpredictable, often fragmented and cracked, crowded and insolent, obsessive and curious, unfaithful and undying, familiar and immature, potentially competitive and therefore threatening or threatened. And so, the artist renews the exhausted symbolic repertoire of identity with great doses of vitality, incorporating the repertoire of difference to it. This is where the Ego fleetingly meets the Other in order to create the real condition for both sides to change, perhaps for us spectators to change as well.

His Garden is not an Academy. Tourists, hunters, wannabe conquerors, invalids, couples, balls, swim rings, coconut trees and tropical huts create the narrative setting. Traveling, places, love, accidents, violence and tenderness, broken men and women, where topsy-turvy life seems to be his endless pool of inspiration.

Pliarides' paintings and journey draw a large map from Laos to South Africa, from Sri Lanka to Burma and from Thailand to Cambodia. In this map, art is reinvented not as a visual universe but as a representative enigma, an existential bet, a metaphysical challenge, a visual paradox, theological hubris, anthropological threat.

Thus, the wild joy in the paintings of Pliarides vividly redefines the notions and nuances of contemporary painting. This chapter had a triumphant opening in the 1980's in the wake of the exciting times of abstraction painting claiming the freedom of gesture, yet hasn't closed yet with the paradoxically concurrent recognition of traces of the collapse of faith in the modernity of such expressions.

In these watercolors of Pliarides there is the representation or a "creation" of space of a psychoanalytical anthropology, along with the idea of a utopic Paradise (or an almost demonic Hell).

With his solid techniques and stylistic thematic orientation, Pliarides can awaken all of our nightmares along with the hedonistic side of life. While preserving his own moral independence as an artistic subject, he often presents an allegorical, almost cinematic dimension to the episodes of his narratives. The emotional resonances are well hidden in his imagery of tropical forests and strange heroes, while the painter painstakingly draws the "diary of his day and night". Those who live with love and lust at all times. Even if they get sent to hell by mistake, the devil himself will send them back to Paradise.

Thouli Missirloglou

*Art Historian, Curator & Director of Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art
June 2018*

About the Artist

Born in 1964 in Thessaloniki, Greece, he graduated from the Aristotle University, School of Fine Arts in Thessaloniki in 1989. He finished his studies in London at the Royal College of Art by obtaining a Post Experience Diploma (PED) in Painting (1992) and a Master of Fine Arts in Painting (1994).

Received awards and fellowships from the British Council, the Fulbright Foundation and the RTZ plc, his artworks are included in various public collections such as Astra Zeneca (Sweden), Alfa Laval (Sweden), Scania (Sweden), Södertälje Konsthall (Sweden), Union of Swedish Artists (Sweden), Royal College of Art (UK), British Council (UK), Fulbright Foundation in Greece, Frissiras Museum (Greece), Foundation Sana-Huja (Spain), and Musée d'art moderne et contemporain (MAMCO) (Switzerland). He was Associate Professor at the Aristotle University, School of Fine Arts in Thessaloniki since 2003 and became Professor in 2018. He lives and works in Thessaloniki and London.

About the Gallery

Christine Park Gallery is a young gallery dedicated to supporting both emerging and established international artists. Founded in London's Fitzrovia in 2014 and now relocated in West Chelsea, New York's burgeoning art hotspot since 2018, the gallery has an extensive programme of solo shows, conceptually curated group exhibitions, and special installations. With a constantly developing roster of innovative artists the gallery prides itself on exhibiting works in a range of media, seeking to provoke cross-disciplinary debate and extend the boundaries of the current contemporary art scene.

Our vision is to provide a platform to allow artists to develop and gain greater recognition. Therefore, as well as providing a commercial space that artists can use as a canvas to realise their projects and present their works to the public, we actively foster relations with art foundations, public museums and private clients.