

## 'Vathis sq.' 'Πλατεία Βάθης'

English

Epoches Art Gallery, Kifissia/Athens, Greece 2001  
Chrysa Art Gallery, Katerini, Greece 2001  
Prisma Art Gallery, Livadia, Greece 2001  
Galerie Argo, Nicosia, Cyprus 2002  
Galerie Argo, Athens, Greece 2002  
Cycladian Pinacothèque, Hermoupolis/Syros, Greece 2003  
Galerie Minima, Mykonos, Greece 2003  
Silogi 12, Spetses, Greece 2003



**A.Tamvaki**, Curator National Gallery and Alexandros Soutsos Museum  
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### 'A different view of Athens, A.D. 2000'

Neoclassical houses with faded facades, bearing the marks of their past splendour and present wear; ill - matched figures apparently cut off from the ravaged surroundings; heavy traffic in the daytime and even some activities that we choose to ignore at night... A somewhat weird setting, which is, nevertheless, remarkably close: it is so familiar, and get so strange...

The atmosphere is totally unsuitable for romantic reminiscences and picturesque regressions. These are really neighborhoods of Athens that we usually by-pass in a hurry; the reason may be that they make us think of some aspects of our problematic everyday reality which frighten and upset us. There is hardly any nostalgia left for a warmer, friendlier and more human Athens. We have even come to terms with a few realities which apparently do not concern us. A few steps further away we discover a very different world; full of problem and rather uninspiring. What is really happening behind these hermetically closed doors and windows? It is true that these somewhat unappealing interiors exhale their own poetry and music that only a sensitive and meditative artist could hear. The smell of mould is here mixed with a musty fragrance of old - fashioned cologne; the prevailing feeling of loneliness is intermingled with touches of a bizarre eroticism. The present and the past seem as far from each other as they could possibly be.

Vassilis Karakatsanis' recent work is a most spectacular turn which surprises and impresses us. The beautiful fashionable clothes, the autobiographical parties are way behind. Spaces deprived of openings, somber colours, interiors with cheap furnishings which may preserve the memory of past elegance, and impersonal figures - symbols are now the highlights. Could the latter be foreign immigrants, devastated by the loss of hope and the misery reflected into their staring eyes?

In the course of this imaginary wandering the artist's penetrating glance discovers and reveals each and every detail; the characteristic perspective distortions give the impression that everything is viewed through a wide - angle lens. This is not a realistic representation of that world near us: it is a thorough recreation full of sensitivity and understanding. Even though the viewer may not be immediately enchanted, the sincerity and authenticity of such an uncommon itinerary through some neighborhoods of decline and desertion is most moving and thought - provoking.

The suggestive light, certain monotony and the emphasis on every significant detail contribute to the creation of an outlandish, extremely charged atmosphere. It would have seemed extremely out of place to add a few typical picturesque elements as signals of an unmistakable identity. Although we may easily recognize the place, we could not really exclude other possibilities. The lighting, the faces of the people and even some of the trivial objects may point towards Athens with a greater certainty. Moreover, this is hardly a chronicle of the Athenian fringe in the year 2000. The artist is not particularly interested in the residents of the houses located in the streets around Platia Vathis, their problems and occupations. With a remarkable mastery

Vassilis Karakatsanis avoids the all-too-easy lapse towards an artistic para-philology, with melodramatic overtones and hints at social criticism. Its style is here quite abstractive and impressively mature and controlled, with a few refreshing touches of «freedom». The feeling of a caring person is harmoniously combined with the objectivity of an observer from a distance. Vassilis Karakatsanis uncovers the hidden aspects of this down - graded area, thus leading the viewer to a meditative observation. The power of art gracefully overcomes the limitations of the uninspiring reality, thus transforming these declined interiors into unparalleled scenery of magic.