

'Alcohol 2009 / 2010' | 'Αλκοόλ 2009 / 2010'
English



ekfrasi-yianna grammatopoulou, Athens 2010

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"Alcohol 2009-2010"

Wishing to interpret a work of art through a written text is undoubtedly a difficult task and I often wonder whether it is even necessary. A multitude of pages are written every day all over the world with the purpose of explaining the existence, necessity and worth of various instances of artistic expression. In and of itself, this may trick the writer into stating points of view that grow out of the tendencies of a particular era, out of a stagnant aesthetic, out of people who say one thing and do another and, through this process, give a nod of approval to an "ego" that is adventitious, selfish, and falsely illustrated, while they forget that the approach to art requires poise, profound knowledge, simplicity and honesty.

Considering the speed with which, in the past few years, legions of artists have surfaced, the parameter that is used to measure the art trade as carried out by certain people who view their artistic work as shares in a unique yet nonetheless effective stock market, and whose sole purpose is financial gain, is an actual fact and, as far as many are concerned, lawful in a free society of adults.

Given that this type of trade is based on the artist's renown, which at certain points and periods in time can procure great financial gains, prestige and access to a social and intellectual elite which is both interdependent and adulating, I wonder how important a superficial immersion in popular culture and the yearning to make money has become among those who frequent and participate in the art trade.

These people are, above all, those artists who are dazzled at the sight of money and of their – in my opinion short-lived – view of themselves as cultural leaders. From the moment they put a price on their work, I consider them merchants.

Then there are the gallery owners, many of whom love not art but the artists that make them a profit, and, lastly, there are those curators and critics who, with a smattering of what we call instruction, quickly and frivolously put forward in general interest or fashion magazines their thoughts consisting of contradictory, incomprehensible and inane statements, thus bringing together an audience that begins to resemble them, even in their outer appearance.

I am very familiar with Vassilis Karakatsanis's trajectory. He belongs to the generation of artists who grew



(Bags 85) (*1)



(Cities 85) (*2)



(Houses 1, 88) (*3)



(Clothes 90) (*4)



(Carpets 91) (*5)

up and began to create in the transitional decade of the eighties. His painting, displaying awareness and continuity, is the product of a personal, independent artistic investigation that bears the characteristics I mentioned earlier: profound knowledge, simplicity and honesty. And I witness this in the assimilation of his influences which, starting off from an existing reality, become his own personal proposals, through a subject matter that brings to mind the successive scenes of a theatrical play; totally anthropocentric, serene, and processed artistically in a manner that is lucid, simple, and marked by delicate sensibilities.

During all these years he has been painting, it seems to me as if he is paying attention to that which is our life in order to reproduce it from a certain distance, the challenge here being his full participation in everyday events – his complicity with them, I'd say.

Vassilis reminds me of a child, smiling mischievously as he gleefully and amusingly tells his parents about the trick his classmates played on their teacher at school, taking care not to mention that he was in fact one of them.

Looking at the vital element of the themes that Karakatsanis chooses, it is clear that he is recreating a fetishistic relationship with life that unfolds within the urban landscape.

(Bags 1985, *Artio Gallery, Athens*)(*1) (Cities 1985, *Galería Juan Oliver Maneu, Palma de Mallorca*)(*2) (Houses 1, 1988, *Galerie Gisela Bolhagen, Bremen and Galerie Meissner, Hamburg*)(*3) (Clothes 1990, *To Trito Mati, Athens and Galleria Fontanella Borghese, Rome*)(*4) (Carpets 1991, *Titanium Art Gallery, Athens*)(*5) (Flags 1992, *Vicky Dracos Contemporary Art, Athens & Gloria Gallery, Nicosia*)(*6) (Party 1995/1996, *Kreonidis Art Galleries, Athens & Thessaloniki*)(*7) (Sarong 1997/1998, *Espace Kreonidis, Athens*)(*8) (Urban Materials 2005, *Zita-Mi Gallery, Thessaloniki & Astrolavos Art Galleries, Athens*)(*9) (Urban Behaviours 2007/2008, *ekfrasi-yianna grammatopoulou, Athens & Morfi Gallery, Limassol*)(*10) y (Alcohol 2009/2010, *ekfrasi-yianna grammatopoulou, Athens*)(*11).

In his latest work, which is entitled "Alcohol" and consists of the representation of specific drinks, as a pretext for the representation and structuring of the forms of the glasses – which, for those who are familiar with the night and who experience it in a particular way, is the essence and the formula of a special, often painful relationship – Vassilis borrows elements from the language of advertising, television, and billboards, with which, free of prejudice or pseudomoral taboos, he registers the eroticism, always within an urban environment, or, more plainly, the sex; the social relations; the passions; the morality and, why not, the perversion – the way I see it. The personality of the protagonists in this imaginary bar is false and hypocritical, until they arrive at what they're after, which is none other than the sexual act as liberation.

Clarity in the use of the coloured surfaces, lucidity and assurance in what he does and his undeniably explicit style result in a contemporary realism with touches of his own personal aesthetics.

Vassilis Karakatsanis succeeds in placing the spectators on the stage and the actors in the stalls. Using as his material the well-known aptitude for learning of our western culture, he raises mirrors that register, in all its crudeness, our solitude, our suffering and our penury.

In art, having something to say is a given; it's being able to say it that's difficult.

Karakatsanis speaks to us in the best way possible and that is because he himself moves cunningly between the stage and the stalls.



(Flags 92) (*6)



(Party 95/96) (*7)



(Sarong 97/98) (*8)



(Urban Materials 05) (*9)



(Urban Behaviours 07/08) (*10)



(Alcohol 09/10) (*11)