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“THE ALLEGORIC RECALL
OF DESCRIPTIVE HYPOTHESES OF ART
– The Painter Takis Marthas”

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There has not as yet accomplished any satisfactory outline sketch of the descent, origin, evolution and perfection of Marthas's wonderful craftsmanship, albeit his contribution to the Greek modern art that constitutes a remarkable geometric contemplation of his object as well as his manifold and most certain aesthetic stance against the generic and visible environs.

Except for a few critical prenotations encountered in various scattered publications that do not however touch the core of Marthas's artistic meditation, virtually there is nothing which might serve as a positive aid for the future researcher. And so, facing this inexcusable shortage, it is time, I think - now that the universal thought tends to establish the new principles for civilisation and to initiate our future artistic expectations - to include without any further delay, amongst our more general theoretical pursuits a model methodology process, so that the overall progression of Professor Marthas's art may be revisited and re-evaluated on some sound footing and grounds that later will support some truly detailed scrutiny not only of his entire artistic offer but also of the neo-hellenic aesthetic transition as occurred in Greece in the 20th Century.

The aesthetic peculiarity of the artist's native land and the architectural aesthetic peculiarity as a basis for his artistic expression.

Takis Marthas was born of Jiotian parents (Keaislet) at Lavrion, Attica, in 1905. His prime works-watercolours and drawings in pencil and ink depict seascapes, ports, various still life objects (nature morte) specially with fishes, fishing boats, country churches and little houses. He signs his paintings under his «Pan. Marthas». On several of them of small dimensions, he puts the date. Thus, we may be informed today that in 1924, 1926, 1927, namely, during his studies at the Polytechnic, Marthas paints depicting his recent juvenile impressions which imply that, considering their fine hues and sensitivity of sketch - the island surroundings must have been deeply rooted in the artist's soul to such an extent that every moment of his creative temperament to have been stimulated by the emotional reminiscence of his native land.

A significant number of these works although juvenile are not the least juvenile. They possess metric, thoroughness, adequate perspective, rich

chromatic range, that all together confer into his painting «craftsmanship» all freshness and uplifting of neo-impressionism.

On the other hand, Architecture, as a research of the laws ruling all structural beauty, complements in a positive way the artist's prime aesthetic convictions. Out of his scholarly work we discover abundant perspective works and details from architecture designs that constitute purely painting works. Their dominant element the harmonic approach of architectural objects and its coupling with nature. Marthas in these works of art is searching for his personal potential of expression always through the great nurse of impressionism. These are the most crucial for modern neohellenic intellectual trends mid - war years. In France, post-impressionistic trends are now dominant: pasting (collage), cubism and surrealism along with several other peculiar artistic pursuits aiming at resetting and recomposing all aesthetic values. In Germany, the Bauhaus school formulates a new wide current with deeper influence in the shore of painting.

In Greece, a battle is fought for the first time against “academic” painting with main representatives of replenishment Papaloukas and Parthenis. Marthas, under his two equivalent capacities - that of the architect and the other of the painter - is the offspring of this crucial epoch. The fact that he passed his juvenile aesthetic modus vivendi through, impressionism, without subjecting to normative idealistic realism, or classicism or even romanticism (trends that during the mid-war years defined the patterns of classification of all artists in our country) manifestly shows his predisposition to accept the charm of novelty.

In more general terms, this novelty in art, didnot emanate from nonexistence nor from any craftsmanship attempt to search for the expected. It pre-existed as an unconscious modus vivendi and it only came to enlighten when it became concientious. That was why in mid-war years the so-called pioneers attempted to seek and re-establish pre-existing aesthetics, which substantially was nothing else but human focusing on nature and traditional works of art. What really changed was the mode of action which helped them to see clearly and re-establish the pre-existing. Papaloukas's neo-impres sionistic concept never averted from the Greek line, the only line that he could remodel, and which contended the greatest part of his own course in life.

In this same period of time, Pikionis suggested and applied the reestablishment of traditional popular line in architecture. Pioneers in letters and poetry, respectively, were called “heretics”. They didnot reform subject, they didnot deform the essence of their object; they only changed style and mentality in contacting nature as well as man. This was a change of the mode of action as noted in previous paragraphs. At the time, Marthas, still in his youth, most probably didnot know and was not fully aware of the turn towards novelty. Besides, he didnot belong to the familiar small groups of these reformers. One thing is

certain as it is manifested in his painting works: he bears in himself the uneasy spirit of renewal, which was not to stop short with artistic impression.

The social mission of his works of art

1940. Marthas for several years now serves as an Assistant Professor with the School of Architecture of the Polytechnic. His incessant and labourious research and his unbending will to participate in the common development of science and fine arts, render prominent on his altruistic personality. His altruism that accompanied him through his entire lifespan as a teacher and colleague, is charged with patriotism during the resistance. He then decides to devote himself to engraving. He depicts on linoleum the remnants of the conqueror's atrocities, women's and mothers's torture and sufferings, blockades, destruction and executions. His engravings are limited but their message at those deadly hours is really magnificent. He signed them as "Panayotis" or with, his illegible initials. Quite right, Tonis Spiteris detects for the first time the existence of the engravings, and renders on them their real social aims. It should be noted here that with his engravings, Marthas depicted not only the German occupation sufferings, but also, other themes, such as the Parthenon of Acropolis, various portraits etc. all stamped with fineness, gentleness and last but not least with his own rare artistic craftsmanship and dexterous skill.

The transition from painting impression to painting expression

Almost since 1950, Marthas accedes to expressionism which starts from simple deformations for the sake of reference to expression, and reaches out to most abstract compositions.

In the first case, his subject originates in the sphere of his juvenile impressions and the route of his own architectural development. A little port, some family gathering, a city view, the interior of a Christian church are all impressions that generate from his inevitable descent and eventually follow his memory representations. Then, it is only a matter of re-establishing all these emotional objects that constitute the immediate surrounding. The main goal is to convert depicting art into some representation which remains indifferent towards the realistic natural measures, while being subjected to the discipline of natural rhythmology. Upon which an equivalent and corresponding to speech phenomenon is readily emerged, which is known as an allegory, which in this case means that if the reality felt constitutes the resultant of certain diagrams felt, then allegory is expressed as a reference of reality in conformity with the incessant compositions of its components.

In a more simplified wording, we may say that frequently an impressionistic work of art comprises in itself a perfect real presentation and vice-versa. The phenomenon is transparent with Marthas's post-war works. Furthermore, it constitutes a very rare example of the natural flow of facts in man's intellectual process, without any violent self-interventions and drawbacks.

Marthas was in his lifespan an obscure artist, with his only objective to work intensely and research. He did not subject his time to the drawback of projecting himself. Which in turn means that he was of modest and decent nature. The more he strained the more he conquered obscurity. This kind of occupation in the life of an intellect makes outstanding the contents and the true meaning of his ascetism.

This is the justification of the natural flow of facts in his creative course of life; his inevitable descent that eventually followed his memory representations, as amply stressed in the previous paragraphs.

In the second case, - the entirely abstract works - there are no diagrams of depicted subjects. Here we have a complete escape into the sphere of the harmony of contrasts, where the subject is formed of drawing and colour. Marthas's presence as an architect in his painting, is felt by the way, the artist lines - up his themes (geometric contemplation of plane space) by the surfaces he employs (goferred paper, felizol, xylotex, carboard, bakelite, perforated insulation, etc) and by the material and stuff he used to make outstanding the expressive value or to suggest certain specific virtues in his beautyfying capability (mortar, plaster, thick fluid plastics, golden yellow or white, matcloth, threads, wire, wood, tulle, etc.

In the works of this series one could admire the artist's intervention to the casual conciliation of colour, to the material performance (fluidity) and to thereaction of cast elements or ready elements (i.e.thread). Frequently, we presume the unsatisfied feelings of the artist, who is never satisfied by the drawing perspective, but wants to give a quasi-structural perspective inside-out.

All the above findings demonstrate the extent of the aesthetic research and analysis the eye and the nerve of a charismatic creator. Besides, they show his pursuits which never end in art, as long as the latter refuses to teach us the entire truth.

Marthas's abstract expressionistic painting leads our imagination to far-away stellar space, refers our thought to the sudden functioning of things, to the speediest alteration of time, to perfect movement and perfect tranquility. It is real clarity not only of aesthetics but also of meditation.

The meaning of the beloved in the subject

A work of art always contains the non-dimensional image of man, even with the purely physiocratic casses, where reference to man is entirely undiscerned. Human physiognomy is fused in the harmonic dimensions of creation, favouring it with some phsyhic charm emanating from the artist, and that withoute, it, the work remains an unrhythmical product of coincidence.

Usually, there are people in the artist's life, for the love of whom creation in itself is materialised. This is an attraction which bears the meaning of the beloved person into the subject in order to have in turn his feelings expressed by the emotion he experiences with beloved persons.

Marthas's wife, Lucia, and his only child, Costas, also an architect himself, who unfortunately followed in his prime the fate of his absent father. Several other persons from the immediate friendly surroundings also stood as sources of his inspiration.

A series of lyric and romantic writings, in a poetic form were found amongst other spiritual legacies of Marthas's that show in all evidence the inner wishes of the artist, the richness of his emotional world, the resourcefulness of certain juvenile love romances that perhaps were never started or never completed. Everything that shook his memory, has been depicted and properly projected and found its fulfilment in the manifold and complex work of the painter.

Despite the reference to nature, man remains the main figure present in the entire extent of Takis Marthas's painting. This fact, besides its artistic style, imposes on the artist's aesthetics a transparent, gentle morality. This is an element that we should underline, especially today, that the morals of art, following the existentialistic dispute and the crisis of higher values, that helped man in the past to dominate in his pursuits, raises many questions.

The unity of Fine Arts

With all the Fine Arts that Marthas occupied himself with, he uplifted them to perfection and enlightened them. His presence should be amongst the few exceptions of artists who in their creative process co-existed simultaneously and equivalently two or three fine arts together. This is something that renders the artist uneasy and indefatigable and brass-guts. May we remind here the Picasso case. With his unrestrained uneasiness and his creative will - power he succeeded in magnifying a "minor art" ceramics. His success he owed to the understanding of the necessity dictating the unity of fine arts. Ability comes second.

However, there exists today a widespread society of artists who share in common their creative activity in primary and secondary aesthetic occupations. They all accept the unity, only in the sense of hierarchy priorities. Marthas as an architect and painter had an entirely different concept for art: "Modern painting is more architectural and modern architecture is more painting.

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The stress of life has made artistic events and expressions more intensive both in design and in colour. The dazzling light of modern architectural spaces receives, endures and renders prominent the painting works through vivid and flushing light colours. Geometric, pure designs and straight-lined surfaces go in harmony with the robust and generous outlines of new painting, without mutual planning. The painter and the architect try hard to solve these aesthetic problems in parallel. Marthas' absolute freedom instead of setting the two qualities apart, unites them".

*The book "THE ALLEGORIC RECALL OF DESCRIPTIVE
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published in greek in 1984 by the Law School Students Association at the Demokritos University of Thrace (Greece). In that same year, the author, greek poet and aesthetician Evangelos Andreou gave a lecture at University of Thrace on the life and work of Takis Marthas

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