

for **Stefanos**

Panayiotis Tetsis

Today's partisans, dedicated workers plying the artist's trade, can be divided into two categories: those who paint using the traditional means and those who reject them which is merely the consequence of a deep-seated conviction that the heritage of Classical and Renaissance thought and civilization has been invalidated and that it is possible other sources still exist. Painters use colors and other related media with which they either represent their physical surroundings as the eye directly perceives them, or as changing remembrances of lived experiences and emotions. But there is, or was, a subdivision of painters who used the materials abundantly but remained indifferent to the visible with the aim of discovering an intimate function within the vast array of tendencies and denominations. However, art follows a trajectory that goes its own way. The vanguard of the last century did not remain indifferent to scientific and technological advancements or primitive art that was held in contempt until then. Galloping progress of this breed, the sort that flattered the imagination and made everyone fancy they could take advantage of that from amidst these advances was best-suited to the artist's mental capacities and whereby, through the intermediary of some convoluted thoughts that allegedly touched upon profound philosophy, the artist had the certitude that he had

succeeded in arriving at the inception of a work of art. There exist any number of these flowing directions and they have nothing to do with the name of painting. As such there are two great classifications either of paint and the brush on one side and the refusal of these materials on the other, which pretends to have the charisma of the avant-garde, while the category of painting is not preoccupied with anything of the kind and thus has become the object of acerbic commentaries. Common are the qualifications and denominations concerning sclerosis and lack of ambition in view of progress, but nevertheless in the past decades painting has passed through periods of invention, some well-founded while others less substantial, tagged by a variety of labels without signifying it was paint that conferred the title on painting. It is even possible that impastos may have justifiably led to other forms of art by assembling disparate materials to form creative compositions and next by electronic and photo-capturing means. After the marathon of overbidding on modernity and modernization, there is nothing left but traces of originality and surprise so that the accusation of academicism directed at recent painting has no actual basis despite what is claimed at international art fairs in an exclusive manner. The painters that the International exhibitions could not imagine existed who do not align with the planetary,

newer form of some modernism but find themselves instead emotionally charged and in an interior ebullience, with clear aspirations. They advance their art through psychic toil – for them each dab of paint can be one more step ahead because the inner workings convey pathos and anguish and do not skimp on sentiments or material expenses.

In this land, for more than a century and a half, many important artists have shone brightly. At certain times a shadow fell upon them cast by the vanguard of the latest Art, a tendency which is also prevalent today. We have to maintain our composure, remain levelheaded and objective to comprehend what is offered by those believers in a long-term artistic apprenticeship, having researched and studied all the trends of this century in order to formulate their personal idiom which is what makes them genuine (sincerity which we're in dire need of today). For all of us here who believe in painting, often figurative, join a larger circle of artists and art lovers, the latter ardently devoted to the former, bound together by their love of art. From the younger generations, I know painters who are now middle-aged – and fewer very young people – with important work up until today and promising futures ahead – they are se-

lect. Every exhibition of paintings of those artists who are at the height of their powers is a milestone in their creation – as is the present case for Stefanos Daskalakis. I would call him an eminent figure, even if he would not like this designation, because of his long-standing tenure – or apprenticeship in art. From a very young age with steadfastness to the acquired values and to the knowledge that formed him, along with his rich interior life, he put into motion his inclination towards art and painting (if we were to talk about talent, it would take us too far back.) Stefanos' personality crystallized a long time ago. As it expands and unfolds on the canvas, he has nothing to hide and he bids you to delve into his world that you cannot just glimpse perfunctorily, because it is fine painting. The sight of this painting beckons you to view it from various angles, especially from up close, because I believe that good painting is meant to be “stripped.” It is possible that the preachers of the imponderable contemporary art could pass by the painting coolly with a certain tightening of facial muscles in a show of contempt. But Daskalakis is who he is thus he does not lose. Any one of his works, either small or large-scale, is big because it has substance, emotional depth. Daskalakis is painter of vision and of rep-

resentation and he has no need to seek refuge in the language of abstract ideas in order to be imposing. With his compositions, we are riveted and we revel in the whole as much as in the details. One apple, one pomegranate glimmers in the light and the color and soon transports us to the shadowy part which also has the same value as the glimmering one. I admire the way the plasticity of the drawing stretches out, the dazzle of white flesh over the hips of a female nude like a fresh apple in his last exhibition in which the principle subject was full-scale female figures. He confided in me that each work required some fifty days (that means of effort and expense). Hordes of other younger painters begin such works with wide-opened eyes which is for us the confirmation that painting exists and that they have not succumbed to apathy. In this way a painter offers his presence, his existence, and maybe even after his natural death because he writes life.<sup>1</sup> And Daskalakis writes life. He is a painter!



με τη Μαριλένα Λιακοπούλου και τον Παναγιώτη Τέτσι στην Ύδρα, 1985.  
with Marilena Liakopoulou and Panayiotis Tetsis, Hydra, 1985.

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: The Greek term ζωγράφος (painter) contains the words ζωή – "life" – and γράφω – "write" – thus the painter "writes life."