



ANA PLOUS
CULTURAL & EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS

CRITIC BY STRATIS TSIRKAS

“An Alexandrian writing about an Alexandrian”. In this capacity, my audacity in presenting Yannis Manganaris and his painting in a few words is somewhat justified. When he returned to Egypt (in 1944) in the aftermath of the liberation and the December events this artist, who was so young, evidenced astonishing self-control and a rare serenity. We found the explanation as soon as we saw his first exhibition: his great teacher Parthenis – who by coincidence was also born in Alexandria – had taught him a great deal through his work and his example.

In this new work, some thirty years later, Parthenis’ tuition yet exists: talent signifies above all creative ethos; simplicity of material; lofty ideas; dedication to the spirit and natural environment of Greece. By now, nonetheless, Manganaris has reached his own personal perception of painting. He has of course traversed many vicissitudes but like his teacher he has not been afraid of life; he challenged it and fought it. He has however been afraid of Art. In the face of an unending cavalcade of movements and schools his stance has been one of awe and at attention. He benefited from them all without being an adept of any. This luminous simplicity, the serene equilibrating of the dramatic are his own conquests since he whetted his moral and mental weapons on the adverse rocks of reality.

Stones, waters and clouds are for Manganaris the capital letters of a code registering man’s course on earth, signs of flight and support on a perspective constantly altering with the intervention of the fourth dimension: time. This is what eliminates contours, erases details, drains colour by tempering it. By means of the horizontal stroke of a wide but diaphanous brush line, his colour graded from faint and ascetic to simple and plain, time is suggested, fragmenting the space into levels of tendency and complementary hues. In the contest between time and space the object – stone, water or cloud – survives, condensing the two elements in a dramatic human instant. The former black and rugged outlines of his paintings have now been abolished. A white background, a horrible chaos covers what parts of a painting is not occupied by the object-moment, to signify the presence of the perpetual within which interminably human history is remodelled.

At times, traces of that black contour – now faint single strokes of arabesques – vibrate in entwined bodies, in ripples of water surface, in folds of clouds. However, when the present becomes imperative, as in the grand painting of Cyprus, the colour black is accumulated in the charred tree, the black sun-bomb, the smoke-besmirched whitewashed wall. And, naturally, when the volumes seem to be unfinished they are not human beings turning into stones; they are stones turning into humans. A contemporary prehistory.

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