

## **Archive in Motion**

### ***contemporary approaches of a historical trajectory***

The Athens Printmaking Art Center (APAC) was founded in 1977 by artists Pino Pandolfini and Dimitra Siaterli, with the aim of highlighting and promoting the language of printmaking to the general public. Throughout the long trajectory of the space and the numerous collaborations with great artists, a large collection of works emerged, which now constitutes the Historical Archive of APAC. Its documentation, archiving, and digitization are in progress, in order to create an open and accessible database that will serve as a point of reference in the historic and artistic research around printmaking. This is a process of transition, where fragments of knowledge and moments in time are brought together in one space, thus acquiring a new collective status with a structural and primary character. After all, the archive is an organizational principle that involves the intention of the beginning, the start of new, unexpected articulations (Karaba 2012: 56).

The Historical Archive will be entirely available in a digital format through the webpage of the Athens Printmaking Art Center, reflecting the rich past of the organization, while playing an active role in the present, in a sustainable form for the future. Driven by its most important capacity in regard to sharing information and disseminating knowledge (Petrešin-Bachelez 2010), it aims to establish itself as a research tool and function as a starting point for contemporary art production. It is not an inactive body that focuses exclusively on memory, but a living hub that can be subjected into new readings each time, promoting the importance of creative process and reflection, instead of the static and final product (Cook 2000).

Starting from the development of the Historical Archive as a need, followed the intention of its artistic exploration, which led to the realization of the present exhibition. The *Archive in Motion* presents the work of five printmakers from Greece, who approached the life and work of an equal number of visual artists through the archival material of the APAC. Utilizing the non-hierarchical spatiality of the archive as a rare capacity in today's reality (Foster 2004: 4), participants were invited to conduct artistic research, in order to make historical information visible in the present, as contemporary

printmaking proposals. The exhibition summarizes self-documentation elements of the respective research processes, which are presented alongside the final artworks, looking to interconnect the source material with the artistic result and initiate an open dialogue between past and present.

In particular, Eri Agriou studied the life and work of Tonia Nikolaidi (1927-2011), focusing on some of the numerous techniques used by the artist, connecting them with her own morphoplastic diction that goes beyond a purely printmaking expression. This way, she created two portraits in a concise manner, one of her grandmother's and one of Nikolaidis herself, with the common material being the thread. Conceiving weaving as an emotional statement, the artist chooses to represent with a different means, but a similar denominator, two figures that have a special meaning to her, thus vividly expressing her personal and creative charge. Furthermore, the artwork-booklet, entitled *Islands*, is a reference to the place of origin of the printmaker, that is Ithaca, but also to the polyptychs she often produced, thereby wanting to illustrate in a non-descriptive way the sense of human presence.

Antigone Valery focused on the abstract character that runs throughout the entire spectrum of the work of Opy Zouni (1941-2008), bringing to the foreground aspects of the urban landscape as pure geometric shapes, freed from narrative elements and individual details. The modern way of life is described schematically, through forms that imply the geometry of the surrounding space and compose compact and dynamic works that refer structurally to the art of collage. The visual artist, deeply inspired by Zouni's constant experimentations and freedom of expression, ventures to implement abstraction as an act with the tools of printmaking, adding a special weight to the process itself and proposing renewed ways of composing.

On the multi-layered work of Lambros Orfanos (1916-1995), the engraver of the Greek banknotes, focused Valentini Mavrodoglou, and specifically on his post-war series *Amusement Park*. By depicting human figures in various workspaces, she highlights the labor relations that govern each environment, and reveals the multiple patterns of interaction that are inherent in it. In connection with Orfanos' approach, who captured the mood of an entertainment area in the past, through human psychographs, Valentini showcases the monotony and exhaustion that is reflected in the image of employees in

the present, through their overall attitude. Therefore, starting from an experiential and self-biographical point, she presents with finesse, but also immediacy, an often-invisible aspect of contemporary reality that concerns the working conditions and the active subjects having to survive in it.

Finally, Elena Provata examined the artistic production of Vasso Katraki (1914-1988), but also travelled to Aitoliko, the place of origin of the accomplished engraver, in order to better understand her work both practically and experientially. This way, she managed to gather further information about her life, to feel the specific characteristics of the area where she lived, and dive into her style, from which she has been profoundly influenced. By consequently combining components of the environment she encountered there, such as the local fauna and the element of water, with recurring morphological types in the work of Katraki, such as the minimal human figures, she was able to compose a narrative mosaic with multiple complimentary prints.

Through the multiplicity of the readings of the past and the renewed narratives of the present, the exhibition seeks to propose ways of seeing, approaching and activating the Historical Archive of the Athens Printmaking Art Center, acting as the first chapter of its upcoming activities. Employing the existing material as a tool of visual memory, but also as a means of enhancing dialogue in the public sphere (Tsiara 2015: 136), the artists present contemporary research-based printmaking artworks, which piece together a multifaceted exhibition and reflective framework.

## **Bibliography**

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