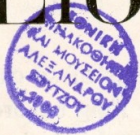
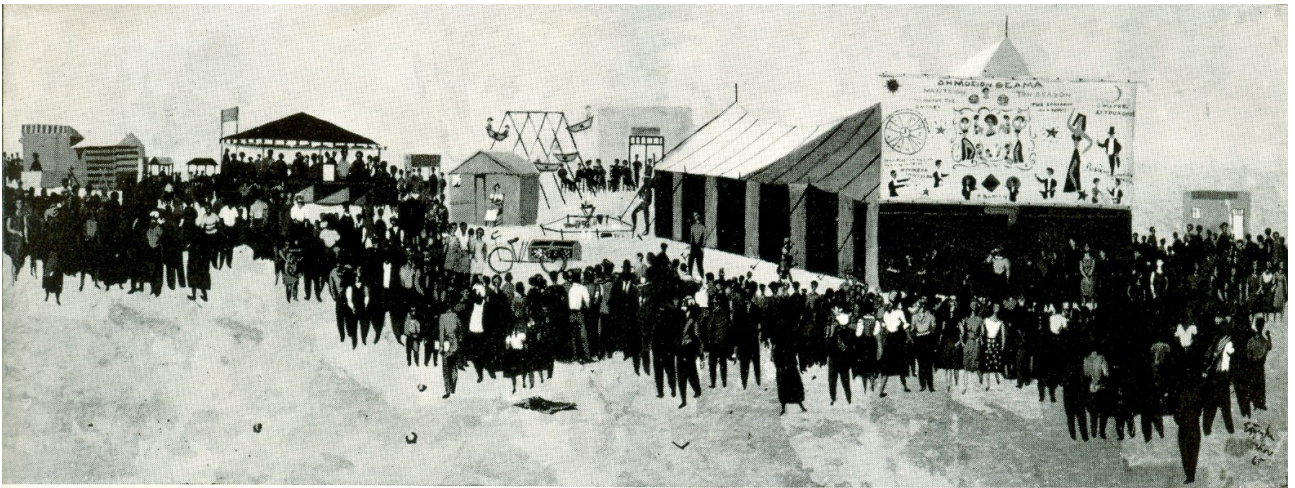


VASSILIOU'S GREECE



UPPER GROSVENOR GALLERIES

JULY 1966 - 19 UPPER GROSVENOR ST. LONDON



A VIEW OF VASSILIOU

This brief introduction by a layman to the work of the Greek painter Spiros Vassiliou will not answer those who ask to be informed, in the esoteric vernacular of the professional art critic, about the artist's place among the trends and "isms" of modern art.

Certainly, the artist himself would reject the question as irrelevant. For the outstanding quality of his painting lies precisely in its total lack of self-consciousness, in the easy harmony of the relationship between an extrovert artist and the subject which inspires him to paint.

Not that we cannot detect traces of all kinds of so-called "schools" in Vassiliou's work. For many years, for instance, since long before the term was invented, he has been producing pop-art of the purest kind, in the sense that his canvasses

have been living witnesses to material elements of Greece's folk traditions on a plane so intensely distilled as to attain symbolic dimensions. And we find elements also of many other styles and techniques, through the whole range from Byzantine ikon painting and oriental miniaturism to impressionism and, very emphatically, surrealism. Although he would probably be horrified to hear it, Vassiliou has even adapted some of the lessons of the purest abstract painters to his super-representational works.

But, in the hands of this energetic and prolific artist, the derivative aspects of his methods are irrelevant. They combine spontaneously to become the composite elements of a style so intensely personal that the only superfluous thing on a Vassiliou painting is the artist's signature.

Nobody has yet been known to mistake a picture by Vassiliou, in spite of the vast variety of his themes, for anything else. About how many modern artists, I wonder, is it possible to say this?

If we had to describe the dominant key of Vassiliou's highly individual work, we might put it briefly like this: it is descriptive painting in which the artist sees ordinary people, objects and landscapes with such penetrating observation, with such a wealth of love, humour and optimism, that the commonplace is transformed into the poetic, disorder (like the glass fragments in a kaleidoscope) blends into significant harmony, and everyday drabness is clothed in an unsuspected beauty.

Perhaps it could be put even more simply.

The inspiration of Vassiliou's art are the material objects the rest of us see with half-closed eyes: a stone, a tree, a blade of grass, an old newspaper, a lamp, a terra-cotta sphinx, a gilt-framed mirror, a peasant woman sitting outside her cottage -- all these things, when touched with the humane magic and superb technical gifts of Spiros Vassiliou, are revealed surrounded by a halo of meaning we never suspected. Sometimes we are made to feel thoroughly ashamed of our own ignorance, of the poverty of our humdrum imagination, of the way we shut out the excitement of the material objects which surround us.

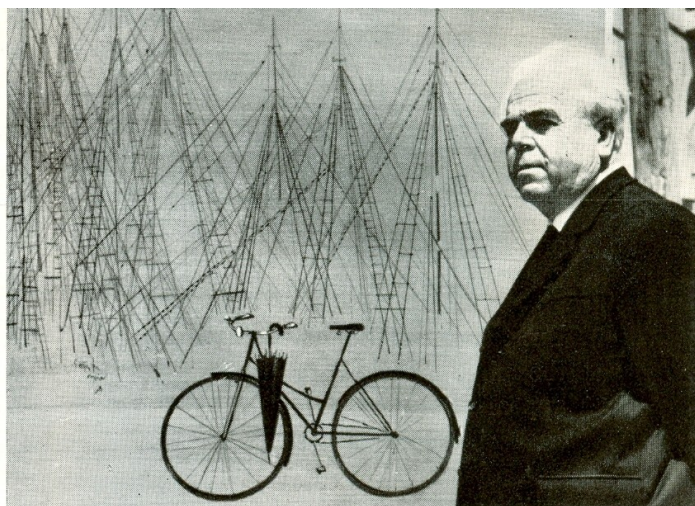
It is an added virtue of Vassiliou's work that the penetrating incisions of his paintbrush, his triple-distillation of the essences which compose his own physical world, result in a description of the Greek scene which is unique in its totality and truth. A Vassiliou painting is often worth as much as a dozen learned books for those concerned to enquire into the sights and the soul of Greece.

But to suggest that Vassiliou is primarily an inspired and persuasive observer of the physical scene around him is to do an injustice to the universality of his appeal as an artist on the intellectual plane. Certainly, he would reject cerebral appreciation of his art as vigorously as he abhors cerebration in its execution. But, in all the fields of spiritual expression, one elementary definition of true artistry still survives (or ought to have survived) the twentieth century shattering of artistic values: the ability of the artist, by a disciplined and skilful exercise of his inborn talent, to add a new dimension to the common experience of men, to provoke a delighted shock of recognition in the mind and eye of the beholder, to create order and beauty out of chaos and ugliness, to enable men to identify themselves with the universe of which they are a part.

By those standards, Spiros Vassiliou is one of the outstanding painters of his time.

Leslie Finer

PEOPLE : 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
PLACES : 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
MOMENTS: 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
THINGS : 32, 33, 34, 35



Spiros Vassiliou

- 1902 Born at Galaxidi
- 1921-27 School of fine Arts, Athens
- 1926-27 Participates in the «Exhibitions of the Four», in Athens, Volos, and Thessaloniki
- 1929 One-man exhibition at the Stratigopoulou Gallery
- 1930 Visits to Italy, France and Belgium
Award of the Academy of Athens for the design of the frescoes for St. Denis of the Areopagus
Founder member of the «Techni» group Teaches at the Papastratos School
- 1932-33 Exhibitions of drawings and water-colours at the «Studio» Gallery, Athens
- 1934 Participates in the 19th Venice Biennale
- 1935 Participates in the exhibition of Greek art in Vienna
- 1936-39 Works in the church of St. Denis of the Areopagus
- 1944-45 Illustrations for manuscripts with the theme of the underground movement
- 1950 Founder member of the «Stathmi» group
- 1952 Paints in Italy and France
- 1955 The Detroit Institute of Arts shows his work done for St. Constantine church (Detroit)
- 1960 Receives the local Guggenheim Award
- 1964 Participates in Venice Biennale
- 1952-66 Participates in exhibitions in Italy, France, Yugoslavia, Sweden, Canada, USA etc, and has one-man exhibitions throughout Greece

Sets for sixty plays and films. Illustrations for many books. Publication of his «Ships of Galaxidi», «Children's drawings» and «Greek merchant ships».

Spyros Vassiliou pone la sua pittura in un rapporto non intellettualistico, ma ottimistico e gioioso con la natura e le cose. Dalla tradizione, rivissuta con sensibilità nuova, trae espressione originale, felicemente autoctona, d'ispirazione appunto popolare. L'artista riassume il senso, lo tramanda in frammenti, che acquistano il valore di una testimonianza non peritura, fissata in uno spazio intuito, stimolante, moderno.

In Grecia da ricordare l' elegante primitivismo descrittivistico di Vassilou: una sorta di surrealismo all' acqua di rose, d' incantata levità.....

pittori interessano l'uno, il Vassiliou, per quella visione limpida e stilisticamente condotta nell'interpretazione delle cose;

do. La sua arte si indirizza verso una pittura omogeneizzata, composta dei più disparati materiali: legno, ferro, marmo, pietra, biciclette, ombrelli, scialie a chiocciola, finestre, che egli appella semplicemente « Trasformation I », « Transformation II », « Mer matinale », « Encore une autre petite histoire » e « La couleur que prenait la mer à Molyvos l'été passé », « Roman I », « Roman II », manifestazioni di assembramenti pittorici di figure e accostamenti vari, quasi esposizione cartellonistica di drammi passionali e sensazionali.

classe; la Grèce nous évèle un peintre sexagénaire, Spyros Vassiliou, d'un irréalisme poétique particulièrement savoureux. Le

Germania, Gran Bretagna (qualcuno si diverte alle trovate di Joe Tilson, mentre ci pare che lo scultore Meadows stia sciupando il suo ingegno), Grecia (con qualche eccezione per il pittore Spyros Vassiliou) hanno perso il loro fascino ideale e storico. Il Giappone

Mario Monteverdi,

“Pop,, e lekythos

Anche i greci testimoniano un convinto aggiornamento verso le iniziative della avanguardia internazionale. Spyros Vassiliou osserva la natura e se costei accoglierle in una disposizione razionale capace di circoscrivere i significati più oggettivi. E' un pittore tra metafisico e pop il quale trae un proprio repertorio realistico nutrendolo sì di ricerche recenti ma anche dei segreti delle « fonti » primarie, che per lui significano i vasi antichi, le bambole, i lekythos del V Secolo, gli affreschi bizantini.

vano Beringheli

Spyros Vassiliou est un peintre. Un peintre dans la pleine acception du mot; conformément à l'étymologie du mot grec. Le premier composé du mot « zographizo » implique le sens de la vie (« zoé »); le second (« grapho ») signifie je trace, je grave, je fais de la peinture, ainsi que je transcris, dans sa signification actuelle.

Vassiliou donc transcrit la vie avec des moyens contemporains.

C'est un peintre moderne, sans avoir recours, cependant, à des manières étrangères à la tradition. Je ne pense pas

MARINOS CALLIGAS

Vassiliou, rompu à la scénographie depuis 1927, fait des toiles qui ressemblent à des maquettes de théâtre, mais ses décors poétiques suggèrent la présence de protagonistes invisibles. Si l'on voulait le rattacher à l'une des formes actuelles de la figuration, ce serait le post-surréalisme.

de poètes où le réel échappe à la réalité, nous embrasse dans sa joie, dans sa fraîcheur.

Petites notations.

Rien qu'un souvenir. Un songe.

Du quotidien. Objets de tous,

de vous,

de moi.

Esquisse d'une ville,

de « la » ville, d'Athènes.

Sa vie, sa pulsation. Une nostalgie.

Tout un conte, un roman bref.

Images qu'on feuillette.

Puis des coins aimés. Des préférences.

Des ports. Des plages.

Étretat. Promeneurs et calèche.

Molyvos. L'Ionie et ses couleurs « saphiques ».

Et tout cela danse, pétille, joue de tours d'enfant, envoi-

TONY P. SPITERIS

vertegenwoordigd: door Spyros Vassiliou, die heel persoonlijk velerlei naieve, sureële, traditionele en andere elementen tot een eigen stijl versmelt, en