

World of Bliss - World of Threat

The fluid universe of Yiannis Roussakis

The visual compositions of Yiannis Roussakis, like successive murals, are spread out as a multi-part installation. I stand before these testimonies of dense narrative, dotted with reconciling attempts to redefine a common ground, and I feel as if the viewing point I am standing on is at the edge of a cliff. Never before in recent history has there been such a tense confluence of feelings of insecurity and precariousness. Never before has there been such a lack of faith than today, as we gallop through the 21st century.

However, despite the semantic interpretation of these images of auspiciousness and threat, the digital collages of Yiannis Roussakis are on their own a world of self-existent beauty. In view of this aesthetic perfection (a complete and all-encompassing impression), the visual narratives are gradually transformed into small altars of past bliss. A familiar world that is withdrawing, a devised world in obsessive recall.

More than a ritualistic act of awakening, these images simultaneously fulfill the function of a kaleidoscopic perception of the world. A world moving in vortices, extending in orbits towards infinity. The sanctity of the moment is refined in the timeless universe and the individuation of existence is evaporated in vapors of self-fulfillment.

Yiannis Roussakis, taming the art and technique of digital collage, proceeds - presumably effortlessly and unintentionally - to the structuring and spatial arrangement of a hinterland of psyche. This hinterland seems to be vast and universal, it resembles a land of dreams and illusory projections, a land where everything has already happened or everything could happen. In this time capsule, with all the paraphernalia of a maturing 20th century, Yiannis Roussakis becomes himself a mediator to a landscape of inherent contradictions, where the individual oscillates between presence and absence. The individual rises above, the individual is crushed.

The aesthetic references of this world, fragmented but ultimately coherent and within the disposition of a complete narrative, are represented in this visual sequence

of images, coordinating the perception around post-war world legacy.

For older viewers, or at least those who grew up during the second half of the last century, the legacy of the historically recent past is recognizable, familiar and full of symbolism as well as resurfacing emotions. The post-war world from 1950 to 1990 was roughly built on the unstable but existing nonetheless principles of progress, of a certain amount of confidence in the future, of bulimic consumption, of ubiquitous art, of geopolitical balance.

That is the world where the values of leisure time, recreation and competition thrive, where the coordinates of bliss and successive denials are redefined, where the family and the individual self, the body and the fantasy, confront each other as interconnected forces. In that universe, there is always a Don Quixote to jump off a television set.

However, Yiannis Roussakis draws from yesterday's iconography, not to talk about the past, but to talk about the now. The unbridled allegorical power of his images, composed with harmony and imagination that reach the frontier of self-sufficient art without the need for semantic

explanations, deceptively welcomes us, luring us to a dystopian land.

The surreal iconography of his digital collages builds a myth that is solid but also elusive, undoubtedly attractive as well as ambiguous, in shades of chiaroscuro and with an obvious, almost self-destructive disposition for rifts and questioning. Beneath these oceans of plethoric messaging and the seemingly endless horizons of perpetual sunrise, a shadow is cast, we can hear the muffled sound of rupture.

Yiannis Roussakis is a poet of images. He is also an anatomist of a Zeitgeist, of the spirit of an era, of an indefinable atmosphere that is easier to sense than describe with words. But through this explosion of colors, palatable contrasts, hybrid cohabitations and endless surprises, Yiannis Roussakis unfolds the already stained and torn banner of the 21st century.

He narrates the human tragicomedy, with self-sarcasm but also with a sense of an engaged theatricality. This theatrical element, drawn from art history, advertising and mass culture, is gradually fertilized by the seeds of doubt and self-questioning. The new theatre stage of humanity is built on stilts, it is a travelling theater standing on sand or

water, the actors wear grotesque masks, their roles mature from the narcissistic superman to the fallen beggar.

However, Yiannis Roussakis is in no mood to school, instruct or warn. He simply unfolds a philosophical reflection on the culture of mass demystification, and formulates whisper-like questions that sometimes sound like cracks at the membrane of complacency. The new human type of the 21st century, living in the armor of an overestimated ego, will be ambushed and led by force of circumstance to defeat an inner tyrant.

The collage series "Live Like This" by Yiannis Roussakis is an hymn to imagination and beauty, as well as a herald's wake up call against vanity and cynicism. I am keeping the emotional and aesthetic universe of his images as a talisman. The symbolism of his images survives beyond the time of viewing, it is a kind of communion, delightful and disturbing at the same time.

This is a gospel of an era. An allegory that unfolds like an endless mural.

Nikos Vatopoulos