

«1924 - 2024»: 100 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST ART EXHIBITION IN THE CITY OF THESSALONIKI

This Hellenic Auctions event is dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the seminal exhibition of Spyros Papaloukas' works in our city in December 1924.

In terms of semiotics, this exhibition was a milestone—a decisive moment in our cultural history. It marked the first art exhibition experienced by the public of Thessaloniki and introduced the city's people to the European artistic avant-garde.

In 1923, Papaloukas visited Mount Athos, where he stayed with his friend Stratis Doukas for an entire year (November 1923–November 1924). During this period, he painted landscapes, studied Byzantine art, and captured the essence of the northern Greek landscape—monasteries, shipyards, monastery lodgings, inner courtyards, and moments of devotional life. Upon their return from Mount Athos, a representative selection of these works was exhibited in Thessaloniki in December 1924, in a specially prepared room in the White Tower.

Organized by Stratis Doukas, this exhibition initiated a dialogue between tradition and contemporary art, harmonizing with new trends in the international art scene.

Drawing inspiration from Byzantine art and the spirituality of Mount Athos, Papaloukas sought to capture the essence of Greek identity through his art. His works, with their characteristic colour palette and rhythmic composition, depict the landscape and life of Mount Athos, emphasizing not only its forms but also its profound spiritual dimension.

One of his masterpieces, a depiction of the Holy Monastery of Simonopetra, adorns the cover of this catalogue. Inside, you will also find five additional masterpieces by Spyros Papaloukas, paying homage to this great painter.

Our celebration of the 1924 exhibition is a tribute to Thessaloniki as a vital cultural hub of its region. The 'localness' in Papaloukas' works is not about returning to roots but about cultivating a deep awareness of identity and enhancing it. Through his love of tradition, Papaloukas traced its trajectory, transforming it with his knowledge of European art, and creating a uniquely captivating synthesis.

The fusion of tradition with the avant-garde trends that inspired Papaloukas is evident in his work and resonates with the introspective tendencies of the interwar Thessaloniki prose writers. Known as the 'Thessaloniki School of Esoteric Monologue', these writers expressed a life philosophy and a system of relationships between people and their environment.

Papaloukas' works are authentic renderings of the breathtaking Athonite landscape, poetic visions imbued with a warm, exotic tone that focus on the soul of the scenery—the unseen essence that, as André Breton might say, makes 'tremors of the future run through it'.



Our auctions, in general, feature rare impressive collections of works by the leading Greek artists, mainly from the 19th and 20th centuries, but this time we owe a special mention to the presentation of exceptional creations by four worldwide leading sculptors representing the dynamism of Greek sculpture including some interesting works by younger very promising creators.

George Zongolopoulos, a key figure of the Greek avant-garde, achieved harmony between movement and balance through his extensive exploration of the relationship between art, public space, and light. Known as 'the poet of stainless steel', Zongolopoulos remains one of the most celebrated ambassadors of Greek art on the international stage.

Achilleas Apergis, with his extraordinary ability to transform metal into vibrant forms, offers a sculpture that blends abstract aesthetics with intensity, staying true to the philosophy of postwar modern art. His work is a fascinating study of forms that delve into the primordial relationships between space and matter.

The famous work by Costas Coulemtianos represents the artistic evolution of a sculptor who masterfully combined the classical roots of Greek sculpture with a modernist approach. With simple yet dynamic lines, Coulemtianos' sculpture exudes poetic intensity, bridging the gap between traditional art and contemporary trends.

Finally, the work of Takis Vassilakis (Takis), the most playfully innovative artist of post-war Europe, here, with his masterfully designed and recognizable little table with glass and metal discs, once again, confirms his reputation as one of the important innovators of sculpture.

These sculptures are unique highlights of this auction, providing a rare opportunity to appreciate the greatness of Greek sculpture through the visionary creations of four artists who defined its identity.

Thanos Evangelinos
Auctioneer - Certified Appraiser
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