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The Entrancement of Ruins



IMAGES FROM A LAND DISCOVERED

Ioannis Lassithiotakis

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IMAGES FROM A LAND DISCOVERED

Paintings by **Ioannis Lassithiotakis**

Review by Peggy Kounenaki

October 1998

The memory of a ship sailing at night, leaving behind a lighted harbor; a deserted house; the empty corner of a cheap seaside restaurant with its white plastic chairs; interiors of ruins; a concrete staircase leading from the earth to infinity; the bow of a ship crossing an empty sea...Images hovering between dream and reality. Images that come nostalgically to remind of a past still alive, often as vivid as the present.

The "images from lands discovered" of Ioannis Lassithiotakis are not recognizable. They are emotionally familiar; random images from Egypt, Morocco, Pelion, Eptanissa, Tinos and Mani; holiday images which moved the artist enough to imprint them not only in his memory but on film as well. Some time later these images were reformed in the studio; the colour prints were stripped of colour, digitally enlarged and affixed on the canvas. Part of them gradually disappeared. The artist's creative processing was under way...

The form of the paintings emerged step by step. Space is dominated by memory images, representational in an abstract way; colours range between black, white, ochre and hues of brown and gray; both form and colour intensify this feeling of lost time and space. Some relief elements appeared here and there to emphasize the sensation of a recent past and register this interplay between photograph and visual artwork.

This technique, strongly familiar from the artist's earlier works, has now evolved in the best possible way. Suffice it to remember not only his experiments with Egyptian reliefs or the ancient Greek art but also his "Compass cards and weather-vanes" or the Jules Verne-inspired "Stories of the wind" to realize that Lassithiotakis is carrying on his journey and his dialogue with earlier civilizations-with anything whose symbolism lies in the past. It is impressive the way he manages to intertwine his recent

experiences with childhood memories from the streets of Heraclion. This visual exchange between past and present makes for an outcome of multiple meanings. Personal memories acquire a universal character which is relevant to all of us.

It is characteristic of the new series that space is presented as a symbolic condition, while the descriptive elements have been reduced. The artist is more interested in the image as illusion rather than reality. This is no more representation of some places which touch him emotionally during his travels. Instead, he is trying to set off their psychological background, to emphasize the lack of human presence. For man is absent from these images, although his earlier presence is so strongly declared that it seems as if the artist is looking for him, seeking to establish a secret dialogue between them.

These works of Lassithiotakis dominated by transcendence, poetry and a subtle commentary. Over time he has become more of an introvert. He is now minimally decorative. He has acquired a stronger painterly manner as the inner processes mutate in a different way on his works. Three-dimensional elements, also familiar from past works, are fewer now. When used-a thread, a stick, a piece of cloth-they serve to stress the painterly character of the theme and attest in a simple but meaningful way to the painter's fertile dialogue with his materials.

When I saw the latest works of Ioannis Lassithiotakis at his studio I was impressed by the powerful images-by those places I neither knew nor recognized. I was touched by the interplay between light and darkness, half-light and shade. The images managed to become familiar to me, to spark off thoughts and emotions. And I believe they will do the same thing for others as well...



1. 1996, Egypt, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm



2. 1996, Egypt, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm



3. 1996, Greece, Pelion, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm

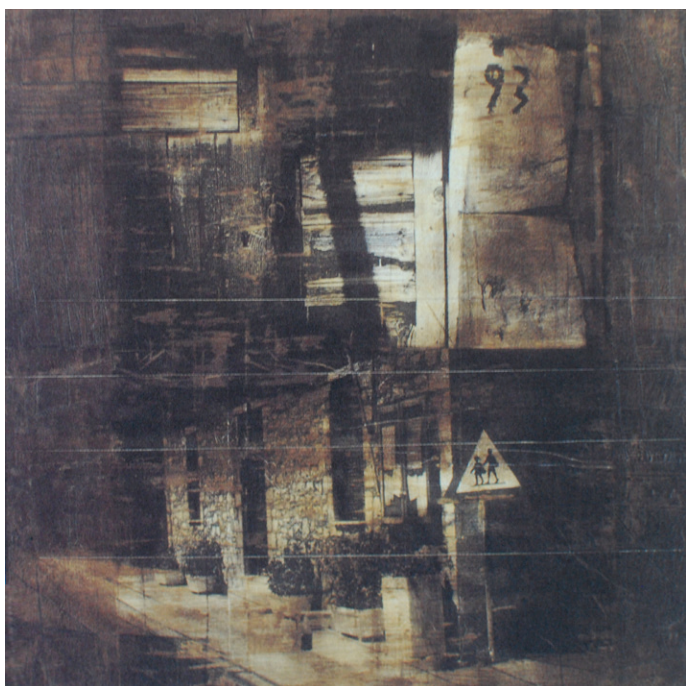


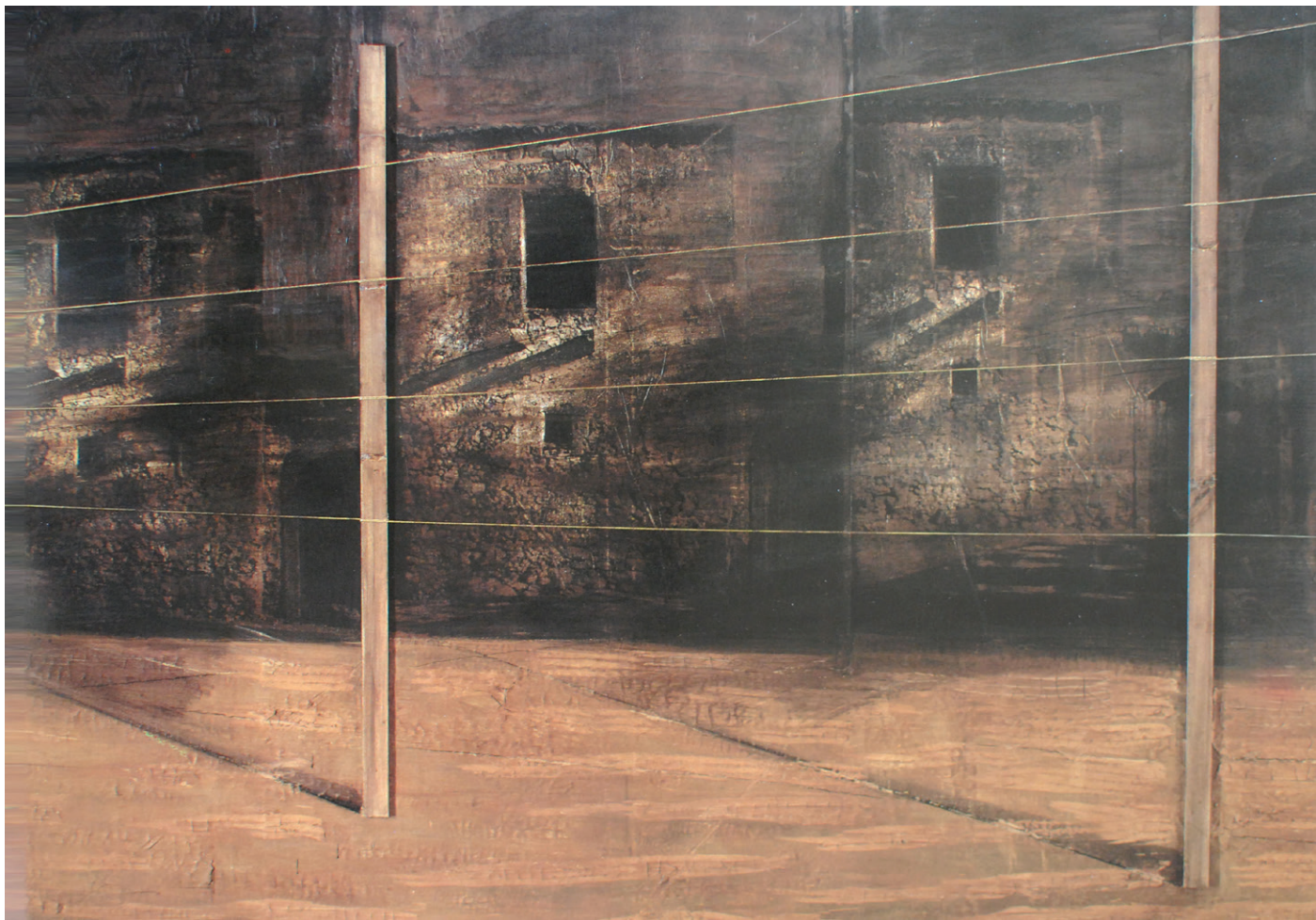
4. 1998, Inside, a place in Athens, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm

5. 1998, Images from a land discovered, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm



6. 1998, Greece, Messolonghi, mixed media on canvas, 180x250cm





7. 1998, Greece, Messolonghi, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm

8. 1998, Greece, Paxoi island, mixed media on canvas, 180x250cm





9. 1999, Greece, Crete, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm



10. 1999, Greece, Lesbos island, mixed media on canvas, 140x240cm



11. 2000, Greece, Messolonghi, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm



12. 2000, Greece, Messolonghi, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm

13. 2000, Greece, Gytheio, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm

14. 2000 Greece Peloponnesus mixed media on canvas 180x180cm



15. 1996, Greece, Kythira island,
mixed media on canvas, 180x250cm.



16. 1996, Egypt, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm



17. 1996, Egypt mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm



18. 1996, Egypt, mixed media on canvas, 180x180cm.



19. 1999, Greece, Chania Crete, mixed media on canvas, 180x250cm



IOANNIS LASSITHIOTAKIS

Ioannis Lassithiotakis was born in Greece (Crete island) in 1956. He studied painting at Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence. He has conducted 30 solo exhibitions and many group exhibitions in Greece, Germany, Italy, USA, Japan, Australia, Belgium, South Africa, USA, Emirates. He also participated in the 'Biennale Youth of the Mediterranean Countries' (1986), '1996 Osaka Triennale' and was awarded the 2nd Prize for Painting at the 4th International Biennale of Sarjah in HS Emirates (1999).

His works are in Museums (National Gallery, Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Frissiras Museum, etc.) and private collections. He is professor at the University of West Attica, Greece.

lassith@uniwa.gr, www.lassithiotakis.com/