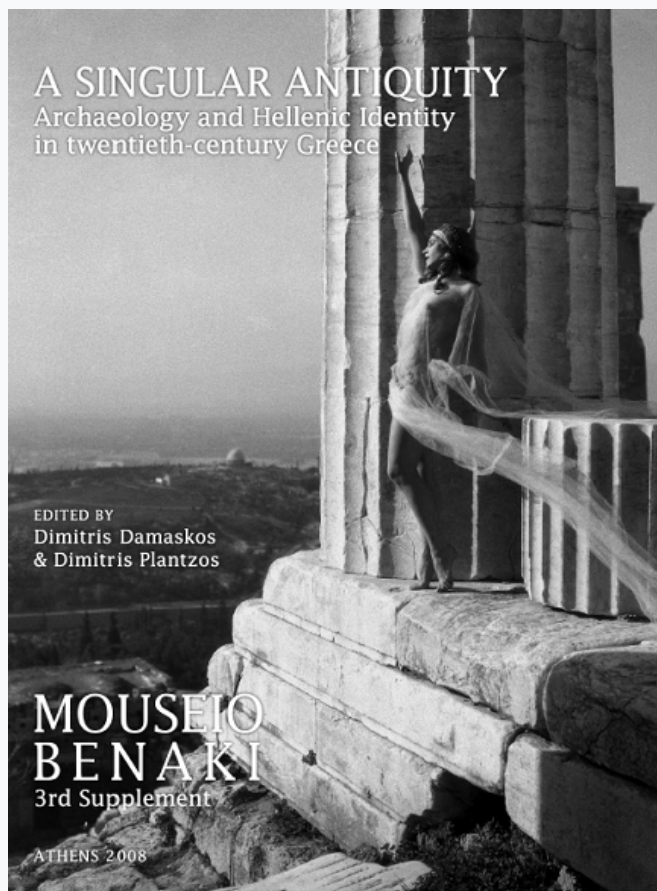


## Mouseio Benaki Journal

A Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth-Century Greece



**Greek Antiquity and inter-war classicism in Greek Art: Modernism and tradition in the works and writings of Michalis Tombros and Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika in the thirties**

*Elena Hamalidi*

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## Greek Antiquity and inter-war classicism in Greek Art: Modernism and tradition in the works and writings of Michalis Tombros and Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika in the thirties

A **PICTURE, THEY SAY**, is worth more than a thousand words. Last Christmas a prominent position in a central Athens bookshop was occupied by a monograph on Michalis Tombros (fig. 1). Its cover was illustrated with one of the sculptor's classicizing figurative works of the inter-war period considered modern by most Greek art critics at the time, as will be discussed in this paper. However, the placing of the book between a volume on the ancient site of Vergina, and an album picturing 'masterpieces' of ancient Greek art declares that the relationship of Tombros' sculpture to ancient Greek tradition remains more important in public consciousness.

But it is the work of the painter Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika – mainly from the thirties – that has been most celebrated for visualizing values of Greek culture through a modernist style, something which brought the artist a wide public as well as official and institutional recognition through the years.<sup>1</sup> During the thirties both artists set out their ideas in theoretical texts – Tombros also wrote editorials, art reviews and various other columns – in the art magazines they published.<sup>2</sup> Last but not least, their work was considered, almost unanimously, avant-garde by the critics of the time, with the exception of left-wing critics.<sup>3</sup>

Ghika on the other hand has been recognized not unjustifiably as the one who has principally formulated a Greek modernist idiom, since he developed a theory on this during the thirties. By means of theory, Ghika aimed at restoring the continuity of Greek tradition from antiquity through Byzantine times to contemporary manifestations of folk culture.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it was through theory that Ghika tried to remain true to the programme he had set

in the editorial of the first issue of the avant-garde review *To Trito Mati* ('the third eye'), namely, to 'take a position toward our weighty past', to make the best use of surviving elements of Greek tradition, as well as of the potential of the Greek 'race'. Thus a theoretical approach as well as an acquaintance with modern art and its current tendencies were to Ghika a significant precondition of moving on to creating art.<sup>5</sup> In his theoretical writings therefore the significance of the interlinking of his reception of certain modernist movements of Western Europe with the quest for Hellenicity ('Greekness'),<sup>6</sup> more or less prevalent in Greek art tendencies from the inter-war period to the nineties, arises. Ghika's reception of antiquity owes a lot to philosophical as well as art theories developed during the twenties and thirties in France, and was related to the official ideology in Greece. It holds an important place in his theoretical enquiries as well as in his visual idiom. This interlinking is my topic in this paper.

The words and works of Tombros and – mostly – Ghika will be examined therefore in the context of the official ideology and policy of the liberal Greek government, as well as in relation to the notion of 'intellectual nationalism' developed by a significant group of Greek liberal intellectuals and men of letters, novelists and poets of the so-called 'generation of the thirties'.<sup>7</sup>

The most important modernization plan since the foundation of the Greek state, drawn up by the government of Eleftherios Venizelos (1910-20 and 1922-32) and supported by the liberal movement, was conceived from the beginning as being interconnected with the formation of the nation-state and the national 'consummation'.<sup>8</sup> This



Fig. 1. M. Tombros, *Seated Woman* (*Lively Movement of a Woman*), 1926 (source: Koutsomallis & Pavlopoulos 2006, 77).

position was also reflected in the official cultural policy after 1928 – in which the contribution of the Minister of Education, Georgios Papandreou, was of great significance – and promoted through the funding of the arts, the support for the modernist tendencies and their promotion abroad.<sup>9</sup> Papandreou was convinced, moreover, that the prevalence of Greek culture abroad could ensure a strong position for the country in the context of international power relations.<sup>10</sup>

As far as Greek liberal intellectuals were concerned, the shattering of the ‘Great Idea’ following the Asia Minor *Catastrophe* in 1922 played a significant role in their shift

from nationalism to the notion of ‘intellectual nationalism’.<sup>11</sup> The latter was considered moreover to offer an alternative to the Marxist internationalist approach, as a national socialism of sorts, based on the economic solidarity between different nations or classes.<sup>12</sup> Novelists and men of letters, as Yorgos Theotokas, Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, Spyros Melas, Philippos Dragoumis, of bourgeois origin and European background, attempted to shift the focus from the area of political and territorial claims to that of culture.<sup>13</sup> In the eyes of Theotokas and Melas especially, this kind of ‘new humanism’ could enhance Greece’s role in the European context; Hellenism, more conscious now of its own tradition and identity, could contribute to and become a leading force in the realm of European culture.<sup>14</sup>

The definition of timeless criteria for judging great art through the ages till their own days made by Ghika and Tombros, based on criteria drawn from ancient Greek aesthetic as well as philosophical/cultural values, aimed at making out Greece as the cradle of European civilization and a source of inspiration for modern art, as well as ensuring their own art a significant position on the international art scene.

In this context, a focal point in Ghika’s and Tombros’ art and thought was occupied by the notion of geometry. In a series of theoretical texts Ghika actually attempted to prove that geometry, as applied in the art of certain movements of modern art (especially Cubism and abstract art), derives its philosophical and aesthetic foundation from ancient Greek art and philosophy. His reception of geometry owes a lot to the French ‘call to order’ (*rappel à l’ordre*) and the milieu of the School of Paris, and especially to the Purist representation of Cubism, as well as to the ideas and aesthetic disciplines of Christian Zervos and the milieu of his art periodical, *Cahiers d’Art*.

The prevalence of the spirit of *rappel à l’ordre* on the Parisian art scene after World War I marks a shift echoed in the style, the imagery and the writings of several artists of the period from the alleged ‘spiritual decay’ of the pre-war years to a new spirit of discipline and rationalism manifested in the classicist aesthetic.<sup>15</sup> It should be noted here that the restoration of discipline and rationalism are declared by Ghika and Tombros in their editorial notes as the most important goals of their periodicals.<sup>16</sup>

During the twenties the label ‘School of Paris’ (*École de Paris*) was applied retrospectively to a number of artists with different histories, and despite the breadth of its ap-

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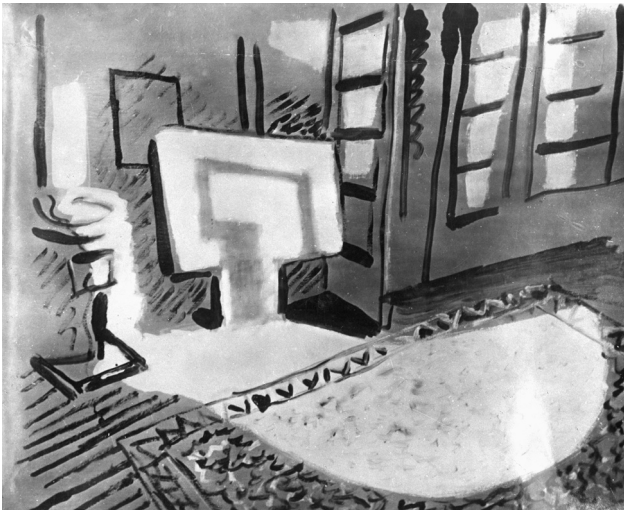
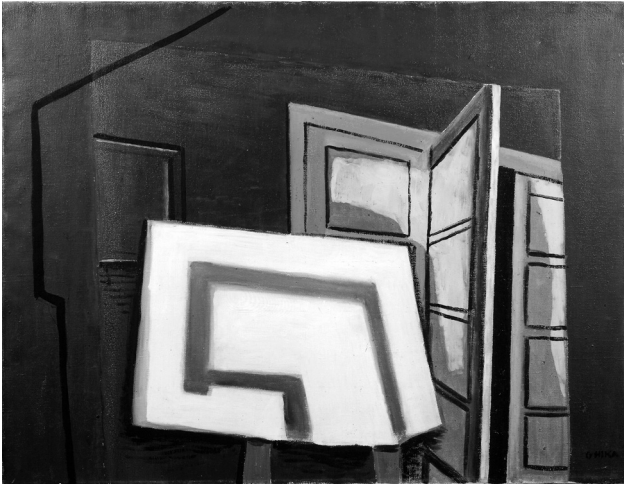


Fig. 2. N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Interior with Easel III*, 1927. Athens, Benaki Museum-Ghika Gallery.

Fig. 3. N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Interior with Easel I*, 1926-1927, lost, Paris.

plication, the term basically refers to artists who turned to various naturalist styles and in some cases to the use of classical imagery in their paintings after World War I.<sup>17</sup> Thus, despite their differences in conceptions of and approach to naturalism in art between modernists and artists of a conservative style, members of the 'School of Paris' remained a rather well-defined group, including artists of non-Academic circles like the erstwhile Fauves, Matisse, Vlaminck and Derain and the Cubists Picasso, Braque and Gris on the one hand,<sup>18</sup> as well as artists considered minor by art critics, gallerists and art dealers till the twen-

ties, such as de Segonzac, Kisling, Utrillo and Laurencin on the other.<sup>19</sup>

The Classical tradition, moreover, was considered to be the tradition of French culture by many French artists and intellectuals of the time.<sup>20</sup> Reason, clarity, discipline and order were values attached to French culture and rhetorically contrasted with German tradition, thus transposing the political conflict between the two countries into the field of culture. As has been pointed out,<sup>21</sup> these ideas corresponded to the claims of the right-wing philosopher Henri Massis, who replied with his 'Defence of the West' (1926) to Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1917).<sup>22</sup>

Classical values were sought in the French historical painting by Poussin, Corot, Courbet or by the artists of the Verist group for example,<sup>23</sup> but for modernists oriented around the Purist group and *L'Esprit Nouveau*, it was Cubism – their own representation of Cubism for that matter – that bore the characteristics of the Classical.

It was the legacy of Cubism, of the exemplary modern movement before World War I, of 'the total image' of modernism for Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, that was now used as the ideal paradigm through which the Purist Amédée Ozenfant, the art critic and gallerist Léonce Rosenberg and the painter André Lhote, among others, attempted to declare the Classical as well as the Renaissance tradition a French legacy.<sup>24</sup> Their approach to Cubism is idealist in that they argue for its autonomy by referring to Platonic aesthetics, they defend the 'purity' of form and they establish absolute classical values and criteria of judgment, such as harmony and the 'eternal laws of balance', (mathematical) proportions and 'harmonious tracings'. Geometry is understood here as the underlying principle of a figurative art, and is defined as the 'architecture of construction', namely the austere arrangement of schematized forms. The principle of 'architecture' is actually related to the desired balance between abstraction, deformation and representation (since illusion is also rejected).<sup>25</sup>

The influence of the School of Paris on Greek artists who had studied in Paris has already been recognized by art criticism in Greece in the twenties.<sup>26</sup> In 1927 Maurice Raynal, the influential advocate of Cubism and contributor to *L'Esprit Nouveau*, in his review of Ghika's one-man show in the Percier Gallery published in his column in *L'Intransigeant*, focuses on the painter's 'Greek roots' as well as on two characteristics of his painting that will

prove to be constant, the 'sense of architecture' and the role of natural, Mediterranean light (fig. 2).<sup>27</sup>

In his review of the same year, Tériade, a regular contributor to *Cahiers d'Art* at the time, notes the same qualities in Ghika's painting, namely 'architecture' as a structuring element of his compositions as well as the role of light (fig. 3). The article by Tériade on Ghika is the fourth of a series of articles presenting 'New Painters', and in it Tériade places Ghika in the group of Neo-Fauves.<sup>28</sup> This group of mainly Spanish painters acquainted with Picasso, Francisco Borès, Francisco Cossio, Hernando Viñes, and, later, André Beaudin, were contrasted by *Cahiers d'Art* in the late twenties and early thirties with the 'threat' of Surrealism, as a part of the review's policy toward Surrealism, as has been pointed out by Kim Grant.<sup>29</sup> In 1932 Ghika took part in the *Salon des Surindépendants* in Paris as a member of the Neo-Fauves. In his review of the exhibition, Waldemar George, who stood for the return to nature and traditional values in painting through his *Formes*, attacks the Neo-Fauves' painting as decadent and pointedly disdains Ghika's 'Picassoid' forms.<sup>30</sup> Later, as Grant shows, as a consequence of Tériade's strategy, the Neo-Fauves (and consequently Ghika) were temporarily understood as Surrealists by the art criticism of the time.<sup>31</sup>

The *Cahiers d'Art* (1926-60) is considered to be one of the more ideologically independent and internationalist periodicals of high quality in the thirties, by contrast with periodicals like *L'Amour de l'Art* and *L'Art Vivant* that were conservative in their views on style and xenophobic.<sup>32</sup> Christian Zervos, its publisher, in charge of the *Cahiers d'Art* editions, and gallery owner, was an opponent of representational art. His formalist, idealist approach to art centred on the idea of beauty, on purity of form, and the notion of harmony, and commitment to traditional ways of painting.<sup>33</sup>

By closely observing the Neo-Fauves' painting, one discovers that, this 'poetic perception of an immaterial reality, often conceived as fluid and unfixed', so appreciated by the *Cahiers d'Art* critics,<sup>34</sup> could perhaps be related to a Mediterranean sense of light (Tériade himself constantly refers to the Spanish origin of most members of the group and their 'native capacity for poetry'),<sup>35</sup> as well as to the role of this light in the organization of space. More specifically, one observes that the sense of poetic 'fluidity' mentioned above is suggested by the ambiguity between the two- and three-dimensional, causing a constant to-

and-fro-movement of the eye, which is also prompted by the diffusion of light in space (figs 2-3).<sup>36</sup>

In Ghika's case, his work would develop in the direction of an austere organized composition structured by geometry and by the diffusion of light, with the arrangement of forms fulfilling the criterion of 'architecture', as Raynal had rightly foreseen in the twenties. A first step in this direction can be recognized in *Two Nudes* (fig. 4), one of the works he exhibited in 1933 at the Vavin-Raspail gallery in Paris, a place where Neo-Fauves showed their work.

In 1932 Ghika got better acquainted with Zervos and Le Corbusier.<sup>37</sup> In 1933-34, the three of them would contribute to some of the issues of *Eikostos Aionas* ('twentieth century'), the art journal published by Tombros on the occasion of the 4th CIAM (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne) which took place in Athens.<sup>38</sup> In the editorial note to the first issue in which he outlines his mission statement, Tombros promises to impose modernist rationalism in Greece.<sup>39</sup> He declares that he shares the beliefs and ideology of the participants in the CIAM. His definition of modernism and rationalism, though, becomes clearer through a parallel reading of his writings with those by Le Corbusier, Zervos and Ghika. A careful study of these articles reveals at least three aspects of the impact Le Corbusier and Zervos' thought had on Ghika and Tombros:

a) the formalist and idealist notion of purity of form and autonomy of art. In an article on modern art in *Eikostos Aionas*, Zervos argues that the painter and the poet equally 'scorn' both 'philosophical or sociological analysis and description' (though what is actually meant here as the object of scorn is representational art);<sup>40</sup>

b) the kind of modernist approach to ancient Greek tradition, which Le Corbusier and Zervos pursue (modernist classicism), which also interested Ghika and Tombros in the context of their dispute with the so-called 'School of Munich', namely the academic circle established at the Athens School of Fine Art; and

c) the notion of 'geometry', temporarily (1933-1934) related by Tombros and especially Ghika with Purist ideas and functionalism as defined by Le Corbusier.

In his articles published in the review *20eme siècle*,<sup>41</sup> written shortly before he came to Athens, Le Corbusier talks about mathematical proportion as a moral value. He invites Western man who has rejected classical antiquity, because he only knew it through its sterile *mimesis*

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Fig. 4. N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Two Nudes*, 1932-1933, private collection.



Fig. 5. M. Tombros, *Mask*, 1928 (source: Koutsomallis & Pavlopoulos 2006, 89).

by academic art, to rediscover it. Le Corbusier draws attention to the aesthetic, practical and moral lessons of the Acropolis,<sup>42</sup> and sets as the ultimate goal a synthesis of Greek and Latin spirit.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, he points out the importance of ancient pre-Classical culture, the values of which he includes in the 'constant elements' that connect contemporary man with the past.

In 1934 Zervos edited and published *L'Art en Grèce*, an album of art photographs picturing ancient Greek, Byzantine and post-Byzantine art seen through the modernist perspective.<sup>44</sup> In *L'Art en Grèce* Zervos actually calls for a fresh reading of pre-Classical antiquity under the prism of Modernism, which until then had been attracted solely to primitive cultures.<sup>45</sup>

Accordingly, in their writings in the years 1933-34, both Tombros (in his editorial note to *Eikostos Aionas*) and Ghika (in a paper entitled 'The Trial of Romanticism') contrast the classicism of modern art of the École de Paris, a classicism characteristic of the Mediterranean character, as they point out, with the romanticism of representational art.<sup>46</sup> Tombros, on the other hand, identifies romanticism with the art of Academies, with sentimentalism and with an erroneous relationship with tradition. Prehistoric Greek art, he states, Minoan and Mycenaean art for example, did not lead to academicism.<sup>47</sup>

In his article on 'The Great Ages of Sculpture' (1935), Tombros sees the geometry of 'pure', autonomous forms and their 'dynamic rhythm' as the cohesive force behind the evolution of sculpture through the ages. His definition of geometry remains unclear. Nevertheless, it bears echoes of the writings of Le Corbusier, since he talks about the 'integration of an architectural concept and mathematical harmony'.<sup>48</sup>

Tombros' style of writing is rather obscure, especially when he tries to explain his theoretical position. Despite that, the examples of modern art with which he chooses to illustrate his article shed some light on his words.<sup>49</sup> Thus, following his outline of the two main tendencies of modern art, one can understand that it is the Synthetic Cubism of Henri Laurens and Jacques Lipschitz, the schematized figures of Rudolf Belling and the classicist abstraction of Constantin Brancusi he attributes to a 'cerebral' approach, 'decorative' and expressive qualities and prevalence of the linear.<sup>50</sup> As a parallel tendency he points to the classicism and naturalism of Aristide Maillol, Charles Despiau, Georg Kolbe, which he characterizes 'composite reductions



Fig. 6. M. Tombros, *Two Lady Friends*, 1930-1932 (photo: Koutsomallis & Pavlopoulos 2006, 51).

of the realism of the phenomenal [...] into simplifications of classical content'.<sup>51</sup> The final illustrations in the article are pictures of Tombros' sculpture in both his post-Cubist and his classicist naturalist style (figs 5-6), with the latter predominating.

Through this and other writings in his periodical, Tombros actually claims a position in the 'pantheon' of the École de Paris.<sup>52</sup> The École symbolizes for Tombros the

perfect synthesis of Modernism and the Classical as well as the pre-Classical Greek tradition. In a letter of his defending Zervos and the *Cahiers d'Art* and the internationalism of the École de Paris against the accusations of the French critic Camille Mauclair, he argues that 'for the first time, the ancient Greek spirit is reflected in the pulse of our avant-garde age'.<sup>53</sup>

Ghika's contribution to *Eikostos Aionas*, his paper entitled 'The Trial of Romanticism', was the second of a series of articles under the general title 'Characteristics of New Art'.<sup>54</sup> In the 'Trial', Ghika also contrasts the romantic 'vagueness', as he terms it, with the 'sense of architecture' in Cubism, and the pursuit of a functional 'solution'.<sup>55</sup> Earlier in the same year, in his article 'Passion for Beauty', he had associated the notion of beauty with functionality and the 'solution'.

'Solution' should be understood here as referring to an object's fitness for use, juxtaposed to the insistence on the beauty of inessential ornament in the handmade, pre-industrial object.<sup>56</sup> Ghika's insistence in the years 1933-34 on the form of depicted objects fulfilling their function, can be traced back to the Purist essentialist functionalism of the twenties. Ghika derives his ideas directly from Le Corbusier's *L'Art Décoratif d'Aujourd'hui*, which was written specifically for the L'Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes of 1925 in Paris, and anticipated art deco style.<sup>57</sup>

For Le Corbusier, the 'lesson' the modern machine gives us is that of the absolute connection between cause and effect, which is actually a lesson on purity, economy and precision.<sup>58</sup> According to Le Corbusier, geometry, the geometry of the depicted object and Purist abstraction as well, is the graphic expression of mathematical calculations.<sup>59</sup> The age of modern machine is the era of proportions, when everything can be included in a wider architectural system, including the modern automobile and the Parthenon.<sup>60</sup>

Following Le Corbusier's 1925 publication, Ghika discovered for a while the 'beauty' of the machine, and writes:

'a passion for beauty has no place in the construction of a machine, in the curve of a ship, in nautical equipment. [...] Here, too, the engineer or the architect looks for [...] the logical [...] the organic [...] the practical [...] the best solution, and [...] thus he often comes across beauty. I don't know of many things that can offer me the absolute satis-

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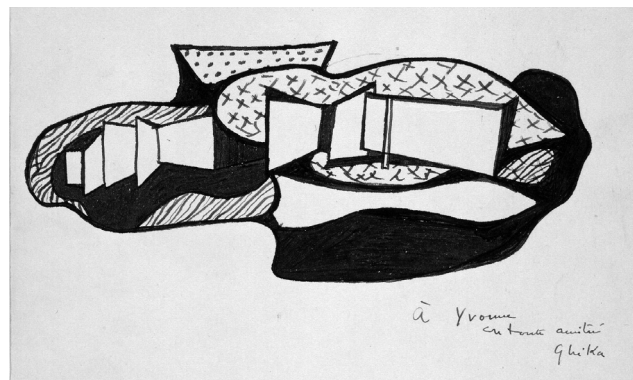
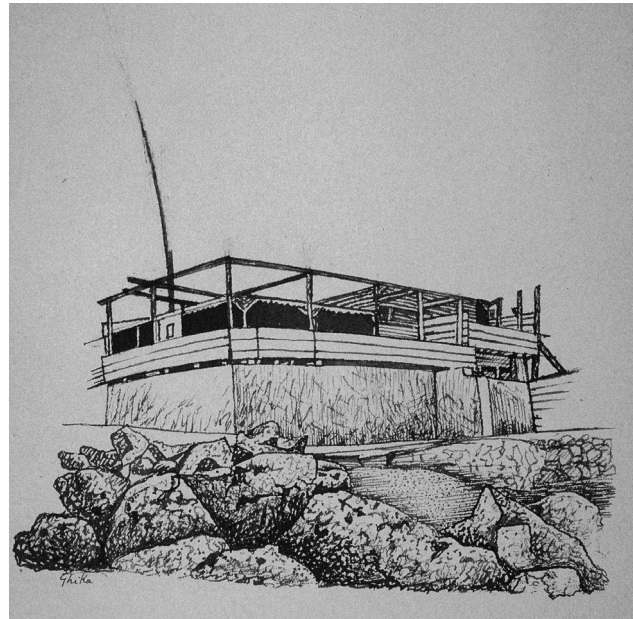
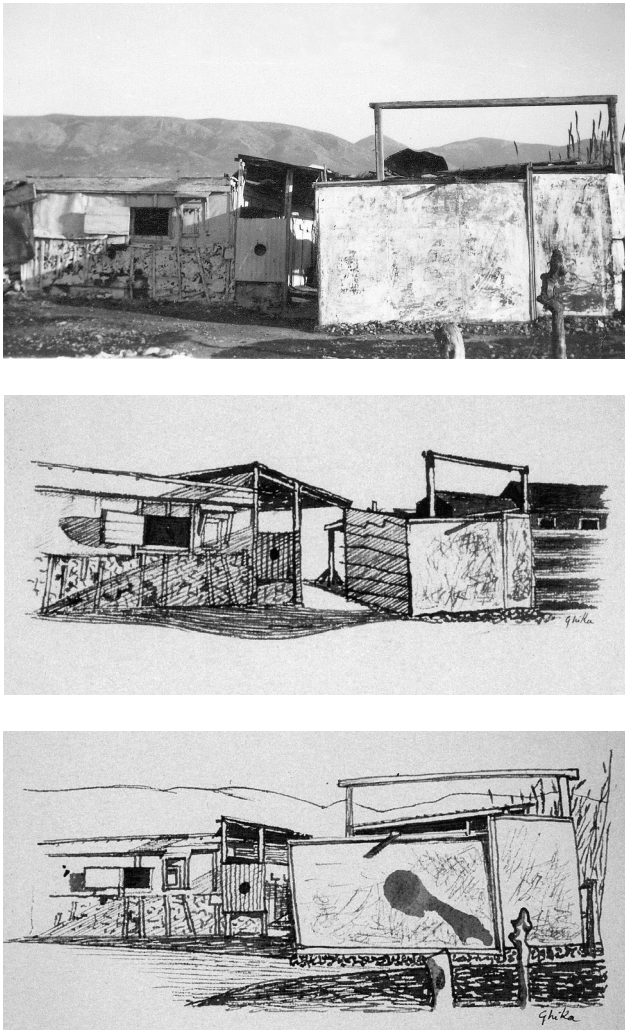


Fig. 7. a) Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Refugee huts in Polygono* (ca. 1933), photo by N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, Athens, Benaki Museum-Ghika Gallery; b) N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Refugee Huts VII*, 1930. Athens, Benaki Museum-Ghika Gallery; c) N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Refugee Huts V*, 1930. Athens, Benaki Museum-Ghika Gallery;

Fig. 7. d) N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Refugee Huts VI*, 1929-1930. Athens, Benaki Museum-Ghika Gallery; e) N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Refugee Hut*, 1929-1930. Vezelay, Maison Romain Rolland, Musée Zervos (photo: Jacques Faujour, © ADAGP-OSDEETE 2008).

faction of beauty, as a ship's deck does. Every instrument is here in its place; every piece of iron follows logical rules, and is human, because you can handle and operate it; [...] it is perfect, because it precisely fulfils what is required of it'.<sup>61</sup>

Le Corbusier also explained in 1925 that architecture 'exists in great works', like the Parthenon, but also 'in the smallest shabby house, in a fence, in everything [...] that contains a necessary geometry enabling it to suggest a

mathematical relation'.<sup>62</sup> In 1933, in fact, in an interview with Kostas Ouranis, Le Corbusier urged Greeks to show 'the simplicity, plainness, health and vitality found in art [...] and the manifestations of life in antiquity, that survives in folk tradition and contemporary manifestations of folk culture, in the working-class neighbourhoods of Athens or on the Aegean islands, for example'.<sup>63</sup>

Correspondingly, Ghika sees in folk architecture the same qualities he attributes to the machine, as well as the

same sense of beauty:<sup>64</sup> ‘just like a vernacular building, [...] in the same way, a first-class machine is closer to ancient perfection than all the optimistic, narcissistic and wishful thinking of Academicism’.<sup>65</sup> And Ghika continues, following Le Corbusier: ‘it is through folk art, that the legacy of the Parthenon survives in the architecture of “old planks, rusty tin, and tarred paper”’. It is there that ‘one discovers again the “golden section” of the Pythagoreans and a modern spirit more alive than in “all the copies of modern architecture”’.<sup>66</sup>

Ghika’s interest in contemporary manifestations of folk culture did not arise from his readings of Le Corbusier. His acquaintance with Dimitris Pikionis, dating back to 1928, was mutually beneficial. Ghika brought Pikionis to contact with recent developments in Paris, and Pikionis introduced him to little known facets of folk tradition.<sup>67</sup>

The geometry of the shacks inhabited by refugees, Ghika mentions in ‘Passion for Beauty’, had preoccupied him since 1930, resulting in a series of drawings and photographs (fig. 7). It is highly probable that these interests of his were stimulated by his discussions with Pikionis, who according to one of his students, sought ‘to mine from the depths of the Greek soul new, untouched “substances” of beauty’, which he himself sought, among other things, in the architecture of the refugee settlements.<sup>68</sup>

What Ghika actually finds in Le Corbusier’s writings, is confirmation of the continuity of Greek tradition beginning with antiquity – e.g. the golden section of the Pythagoreans – to contemporary manifestations of folk culture – the geometry of the hovels built by refugees.<sup>69</sup> When referring to the Greek people, Ghika states: ‘their sense of colour is manifested in the fishing boats, in the caiques, in the carts, in people’s clothes. Le Corbusier saw that and understood it’.<sup>70</sup> Later, in confirmation of the parallels between contemporary Greeks and their ancient ancestors, he cites Zervos’ *L’Art en Grèce*.<sup>71</sup>

In ‘Passion for Beauty’ Ghika does not declare himself on visual arts at all. He does not even mention the Purist painting which Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) and Ozenfant produced in parallel with their writings and thought of as fulfilling their theoretical principles. Referring to recent Modernist tendencies, he only notes the ‘wretched plight’ of ideas about art, and obliquely criticizes Surrealism, for its ‘anarchist’ and ‘romantic, individualistic’ – that is subjective – ‘lapses’.<sup>72</sup>

As to his own work, despite Ghika’s eclecticism, his

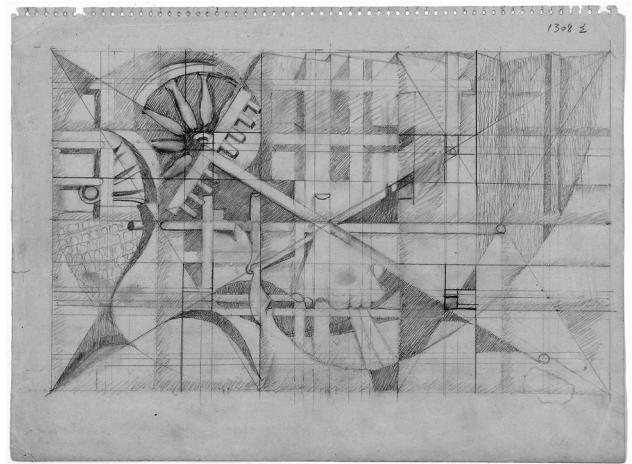


Fig. 8. a) Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Garden Tools*, 1933-1934. Athens, Benaki Museum-Ghika Gallery;  
b) N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Garden Tools*, 1933-1934. Athens, Benaki Museum-Ghika Gallery.

interest in architectural composition, in geometry, in mathematical proportions and ‘harmonious tracings’ that emerged in these early years will remain constant at least till the end of the thirties and even later. In the Purist equation of the aesthetics of geometry with functionality as well as purity and precision, Ghika sees a first foothold for the conjunction of Modernism with tradition. For Le Corbusier (in his *L’Art Décoratif d’Aujourd’hui*) as well as for the Purist Jeanneret, the ‘pure’ forms of his paintings, were the essential, the ideal, and the exemplary forms for the real objects that would reach this state through the ‘self-perfecting’ modern production processes which aimed at rationality and utility.<sup>73</sup>

This is the context in which Ghika’s still lifes with gar-

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Fig. 9. a) N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Boat*, 1934-1935. Athens, Municipal Gallery (photo: Elias Georgouleas); b) *Boat*, photo by N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, ca. 1933, Ghika gallery: photographic archive.

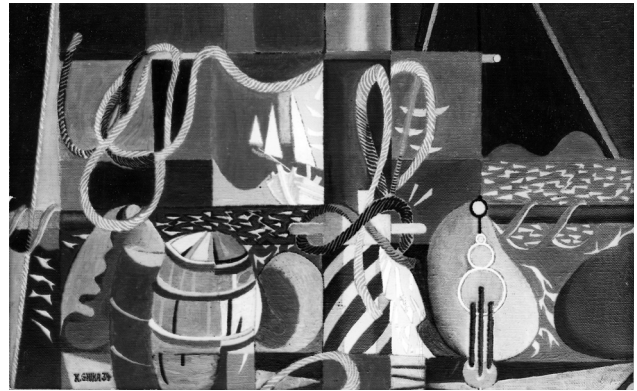


Fig. 10. N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Mast and rigging*. Ownership unknown.

dening tools (fig. 9) and other everyday objects, which he exhibited in July 1934 at the Cahiers d'Art gallery, along with some of his few abstract paintings, should be seen. In these bronze bas reliefs, of 1933-34, the 'harmonious tracings' are obvious.

Shortly thereafter (1934-35) Ghika painted *Boat* (fig. 9) and *Mast and Rigging* (fig. 10),<sup>74</sup> thus returning to a subject he had explored in previous years. In these two paintings, Ghika seems to explore the 'organic curve' of the fishing boat and the geometry of the 'nautical equipment', which he mentioned in 'Passion for Beauty' where he was referring to the 'beauty' of the machine. The paintings were exhibited in the celebrated 'exhibition of the three' (Ghika, Gounaropoulos, Tombros) in the Atelier Gallery, which was heralded by the art critic Kostas Ouranis, as an avant-garde art exhibition.

Despite the significant impact Purist theory had on Ghika these works do not seem to be influenced by the composition in the Purist paintings by Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, but rather by works of André Lhote of the same period.<sup>75</sup>

In *Boat* – we can see the original which served as his model in a photo Ghika himself took – the subject is 'deformed' by the painter only in so far as the form of the caique's stern which serves the purpose of its sailing, or in other words its utility, is enhanced. Thus, despite the fact that the form of the boat, as part of the geometrical composition, is reduced to its harmonic proportional relations, the rendering of volumes, the figurative and narrative elements, as well as the structuring role of natural light

in the geometry of the composition do not correspond to the Purist subjection of experience to the intellect.<sup>76</sup> The same could be said for *Mast and Rigging*, in which Ghika exhibits a greater degree of abstraction.

By contrast, the way Ghika organizes his compositions should lead us to Lhote as the most likely point of reference. For Lhote, form, being more important than colour, must ensue from the observation of the physical environment (nature), as well as from the 'purification' of natural forms through geometry, while their composition must be based on the natural laws of balance.<sup>77</sup> Most importantly, Lhote regards Cubism as too cerebral and therefore proposed the 'humanization' of Cubism, and finding a balance with the sense of lyricism.<sup>78</sup>

One year later, in 'Art and the Age', the main article in the first issue of *To Trito Mati*, Ghika seems to have changed the views he expressed in 'Passion for Beauty'. He now sees in art deco a 'new academicism' and, most importantly, he confronts the modern machine with scepticism. The criterion of functionality is now shown to have been applied at the expense of aesthetic qualities and the timelessness of forms. He now compares a machine with an ancient statue to demonstrate the modern machine's inferiority.<sup>79</sup>

From now on he focuses on the philosophical foundation of the notion of geometry in ancient thinking. Already by the end of 1934, in his lecture 'On Proportion', at the Artists' Club,<sup>80</sup> Ghika was associating geometry with the notion of 'beauty', in the context of Pythagorean and Platonic cosmology. Still, the ambitious 'synthesis', striving to prove the continuity of Greek culture, will be completed in the sevenfold issue no. 7-12 of *To Trito Mati*, which came out during the Metaxas dictatorship, in 1937. The theme of this special issue was 'Number as Law in Nature and Art' and Ghika contributed two articles, the introduction and the leading article on visual arts ('Number as Law in Art').<sup>81</sup>

The main argument which can be deduced from the leading articles by Ghika and Pikionis, the structure of the contents, and the illustrations, is both astonishing and revealing. Both editors insist on the relationship between their notion of geometry in art and aesthetics and Pythagorean cosmology and ethics, but their actual aim is to prove the timelessness and consequently the importance of Pythagorean cosmology and ethics for their own time.<sup>82</sup>

Ghika maintains that man's destiny is to achieve 'geo-

metrical thinking' as he calls it, namely to decode the secret of universal harmony. At this point he emphasizes the contribution of the irrational tradition of thinking, in the religion and mythology of various civilizations, including the Kabbalah and magic, to our knowledge of nature and man.<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, the coupling of the rational with the irrational in Pythagorean philosophy interests Ghika, who stresses both its intuitiveness and its 'scientific accuracy'.<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, Ghika argues that Pythagorean cosmology and ethics as well as various irrational, mystical tendencies of thought have been endorsed by twentieth-century natural sciences.<sup>85</sup> His arguments derive from *Le Nombre d'Or. Rites et Rythmes Pythagoriciens dans le Développement de la Civilisation Occidentale*, by the Romanian mathematician Matila Ghyka (1881-1965), which came out during the inter-war period, in Paris.<sup>86</sup>

Matila Ghyka's publications had some impact in his time,<sup>87</sup> and are characteristic of the rekindling of interest in proportions during the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries among historians, philosophers, and even psychologists.<sup>88</sup> In the special issue of *To Trito Mati*, Ghika and Pikionis republish excerpts and tables from *Esthétique des Proportions dans la Nature et dans les Arts*, translated into Greek.<sup>89</sup>

For Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, in this context art acquires a messianic character, as the only human manifestation that can lead man to his destiny, namely the achievement of 'geometrical thinking'. Ghika's notion of art includes applied arts, crafts and relevant techniques as well as natural sciences in a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in that it unites the two sorts of geometry, on the one hand, the 'earthly' geometry of reason, experience and the senses (arts, crafts and natural science), and on the other, the geometry of intuition and even of esoteric knowledge.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the 'fulfilment of the geometrical canon', 'order' and 'precision', constitute the cohesive thread of continuity in art from ancient times till the modern age. According to Ghika, in Greece 'ancient traditions are rediscovered in Byzantine times, to be later crystallized in the manifestations of folk culture'. At a universal level, this knowledge can be recognized in the geometry of the arabesque, and through the 'medieval mystic wisdom' of Gothic architecture, which survives in the naturalism of Renaissance art.<sup>91</sup>

Modern art, according to Ghika, is nothing more than 'the quest for new proportions in line with the ancient system of geometry'.<sup>92</sup> In his outline of the history of art of the

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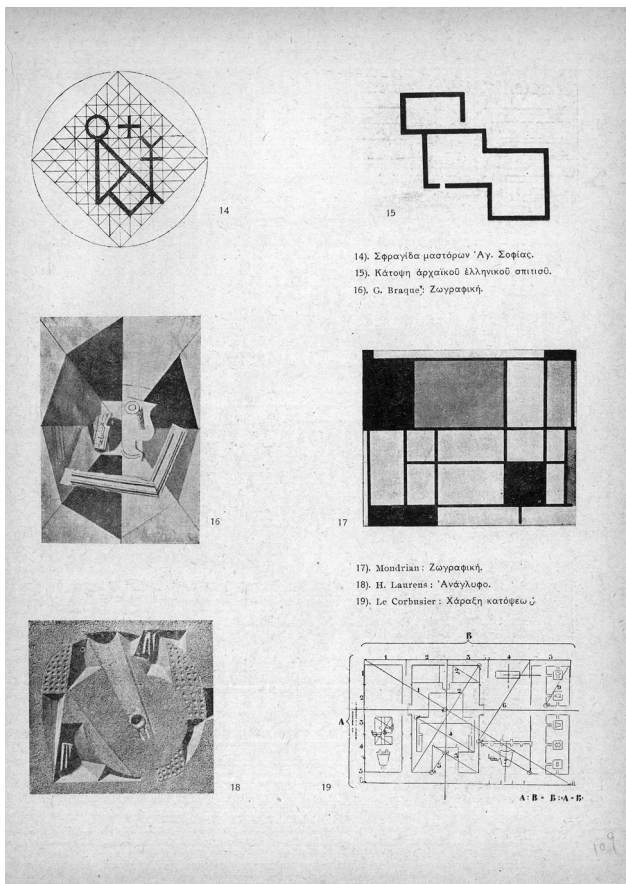


Fig. 11. Numbering in art and craft, photographic display, *To trito Mati* 7-12, 8/1937. The stamp blazen of the craftsmen of Haghia Sofia and the plan of an ancient Greek house are compared with works by G. Braque, P. Mondrian, H. Laurens and groundplans by Le Corbusier.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Ghika refers to the theories of art of Auguste Rodin, Paul Cézanne, Georges Seurat, Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, and he further stresses the principle of ‘discipline’ in Cubist and Surrealist composition (fig. 11).<sup>93</sup>

Ghika’s reception of Cubism was based on the literature on the relationship between Cubist composition and non-Euclidean geometry and the fourth dimension. These ideas were widespread in the ateliers of the Cubist circle during the seconde decade of the twentieth century.<sup>94</sup> Thus, referring to the rendering of space in Cubist composition, Ghika claims that Cubism arranges ‘geometric and rhythmic elements’ of the ‘outside world’ according to a fourth dimension.<sup>95</sup> Ghika’s insistence on the structur-

ing role of the fourth dimension in Cubist composition is relevant to Matila Ghyka’s theories. The impact of non-Euclidean geometry and the theory of a fourth dimension on modern thought is one of Matila Ghyka’s main arguments for proving the timelessness of Pythagorean philosophy.<sup>96</sup>

In the same context, Ghika again criticizes Surrealism for ‘ignoring’ the ‘only witness and guarantor of every artistic expression’, ‘the plastic event’, by ‘often accepting insignificant manifestations of the subconscious’.<sup>97</sup> He seemingly reproduces here the arguments used by Zervos, in his criticism of Ismaël de la Serna, a member of the Neo-Fauves, in 1928, initiating anti-Surrealist polemic in the *Cahiers d’Arts*. With his reference to ‘the plastic event’, Ghika is looking back to Zervos’ criterion of the ‘indispensable instinct of creation’.<sup>98</sup>

Already in ‘The Trial of Romanticism’, Ghika had adopted Zervos’ position, in seeing Cubism as the fulfilment of modern classicism.<sup>99</sup> His aestheticism is expressed in the criterion of a ‘sense of form’ that should be seen as influenced by Zervos’ notion of the ‘instinct of creation’.<sup>100</sup> A careful reading of the writings of Zervos leads to the assumption that both terms, Zervos’ ‘instinct of creation’, and Ghika’s ‘sense of form’, refer to the desired balance between abstraction and deformation, on the one hand, and representation on the other. Zervos was against representational art but believed in iconic art. He rejected *mimesis*, but appreciated some of the values of traditional painting, like technical skill.<sup>101</sup>

Zervos relates the criterion of the ‘indispensable instinct of creation’ to the deserved ‘balance of cerebralism and the study of dreams’.<sup>102</sup> The observation of Kim Grant, that: ‘This instinct of creation is precisely what Zervos believed the Surrealists ignored when they dispensed with the proper means of painting to follow abstract rules and become passive spectators of bizarre dreams’<sup>103</sup> could have been written about Ghika. Ghika’s criterion of a ‘plastic event’ could be explained as the ‘proper means of painting’, and related to Zervos’ commitment to the traditional medium of painting.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, Ghika accepts the abstractionist rules for structuring painting composition, namely the rules set according to proportions related to an absolute, purist idealism as well as to an essentialism connected with the Greek national character.<sup>105</sup>

In ‘Characteristics of Cubism’, one of his articles written for *Eikostos Aionas*, Zervos argues that Cubism in-

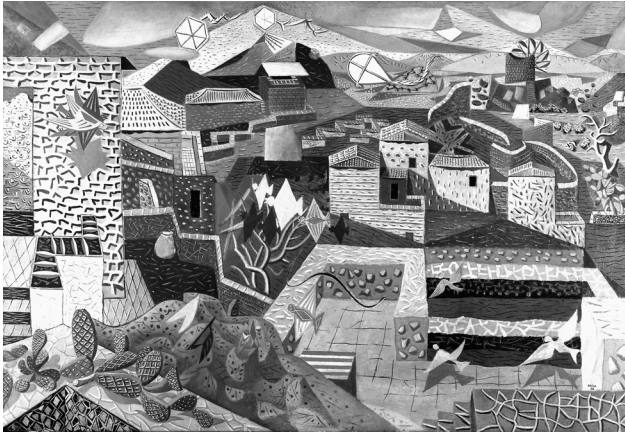


Fig. 12. N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Large Landscape, Hydra*, 1938. Athens, private collection.

Fig. 13. N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Hydra: Composition in white*, 1938, private collection.

troduced the 'plastic event'.<sup>106</sup> In his article, 'La Nouvelle Génération' (1931), published in *Cahiers d'Art*, Zervos had defined Cubism as the extreme limit of acceptable abstraction and deformation.<sup>107</sup>

But why in 1937 did Ghika still insist on condemning Surrealism based on theories current in Paris in the twenties and the criteria of *Cahiers d'Art* and of Zervos himself who had in the meantime accepted Surrealism?<sup>108</sup> Moreover in 1937, the internationalist Zervos included Surrealist art in the exhibition of 'Art Indépendant' at the Exposition Internationale de Paris. Zervos curated the exhibition of 'Art Indépendant' along with André Dezarrois, then direct-

ing *Revue de l'Art* and a curator of the Musée des Écoles Étrangères, specializing in modern art. The exhibition was meant to be a response to the official exhibition at the Petis Palais, which established the art of the 'École de Paris' as the official French tradition.<sup>109</sup> By contrast, the exhibition of Zervos and Dezarrois emphasized the contribution of foreign artists to the Parisian art scene and promoted the art of Surrealism and of avant-garde movements pushing abstraction.<sup>110</sup>

Ghika most probably persisted in condemning Surrealism in 1937 for the same reason the Greek literary review of the thirties, *Neoellinika Grammata*, which promoted the novelists of the 'generation of the thirties', like Theotokas and Angelos Terzakis, suppressed all mention of Zervos' exhibition, despite publishing numerous reports from Paris on the Exposition Internationale.<sup>111</sup>

Thus, Ghika's representation of Cubism must be seen in the context of the overall reception of Cubism in Greece in the thirties. In Greek artistic and intellectual circles of the time the representation of Cubism by the *rappel à l'ordre* movements acquired the significance of a great model because of the limits this imposed on the distortion of form. The confrontations between critics and artists on modern art and the accepted limits of innovation in visual language focus on Cubism. If one browses the Greek literary and art periodicals of the thirties, one observes that Cubism is the most discussed movement of modern art, that avant-garde movements of social intervention are almost excluded from the debate, and that Modernism is not understood in relation to modernization and the social conditions that gave birth to it. The formalism of the 'plastic event' which preoccupied Ghika belongs to the wider context of the formalist reception of Modernism in Greece in the thirties.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, the reception of his work *Island Landscape* (fig. 12) of 1938 by the critic of *Neoellinika Grammata*, Ilias Ziogas, is not surprising.<sup>113</sup> Ziogas tries to convey the general view, when he writes that with his presence in the second Panhellenic Art Exhibition of 1939, Ghika raised more comments than any other artist, and this demonstrates what 'Mr Hadjikyriakos symbolizes in our country'. After 'seriously flirting with the most uncompromising forms of modern art', he hearkened to 'the voice of his race'. He concludes by reassuring the readers: 'Of course, if we delve deeply, we can find in this work certain post-Cubist traces. But these are so few and above all so weak

## Greek Antiquity and inter-war classicism in Greek Art

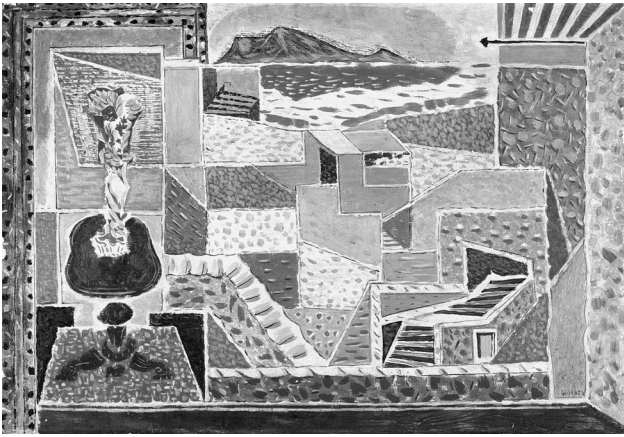


Fig. 14. N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Hydra, landscape II*, 1939. Athens, private collection.

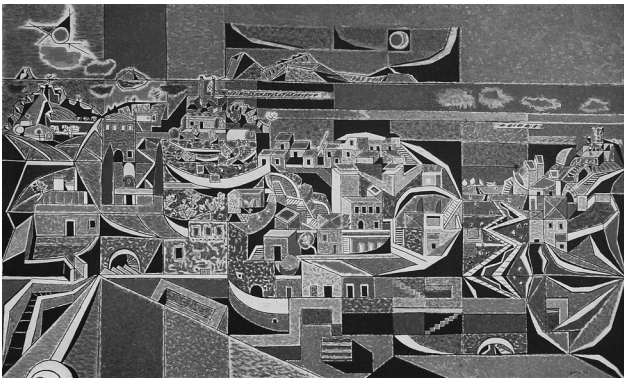


Fig. 15. N. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, *Large Hydra Composition*, 1948. Private collection.

[...]. It should be noted that until then almost all Greek critics (with the exception of Kostas Ouranis), even those who appreciated Ghika's work, regarded it with puzzlement, and characterized it as intellectual.<sup>114</sup>

What really happened was that Ghika had found a solution to the question of the 'plastic event' that had preoccupied him. He himself had earlier pointed out in the works of Juan Gris a 'symbolism that was precisely at the proper distance between representation and reduction, instinct and knowledge, intuition and affirmation, so that it is as much 'fine' art, as can be 'justified', in other words 'comprehensible by most people'.<sup>115</sup>

In his article 'On Greek Art', published in the unofficial organ of the Metaxas dictatorship, *To Neon Kratos* (1938), Ghika associates geometry with Greek landscape and climate. He thus arrives at the conclusion that 'dry' draw-

ing, namely using bold outlines, is a timeless characteristic of Greek art rooted in Greek antiquity, imposed by the Greek climate, which reveals the purity of outlines, and is also connected to mathematical proportions.<sup>116</sup> Ghika's notion of 'dry' drawing owes a lot to the theory of Periklis Giannopoulos, as outlined in his *Greek Line and Colour*: the 'Greek Line' was, according to Giannopoulos, a formal characteristic embodying Hellenic essence as an element inherent in Greek art, Greek landscape, even in the bodies of young people.<sup>117</sup>

Ghika and Tombros, who also wrote on the 'Return to Greek Drawing', both mention racial characteristics, local character and the role of the climate.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, Ghika's landscapes of the Greek island of Hydra painted between 1938 and 1948 are based on these principles (figs 13-15). Ghika seems to have discovered the 'plastic event' that suited him. Greek light brings out the sculptural character of the Mediterranean landscape. In this light the ambiguity between the two- and three-dimensional, created by the diffusion of light in space, that one observes in Ghika's painting of the late twenties and early thirties, no longer expresses a poetic 'fluidity'. Instead it enhances the rhythm inherent in the Greek landscape and seems natural. The classical value of drawing as a means of intellectual organization of composition, the bold outlines and the rhythmic counterpoint of curves associated by Giannopoulos with the typical 'Greek Line', the mathematical proportions of voids and filled spaces, namely all the constant characteristics of Greek art through the ages, which Ghika himself had recited in his article 'On Greek Art', seem to acquire form in the landscapes of Hydra. Especially in *Island Landscape* one can recognize the popular toys (in this case kites), that Pikionis wrote about in *To Trito Mati*<sup>119</sup> and Ghika painted in a naturalistic manner in 1938, as well as the bird's eye view and the multiple viewpoints of Byzantine painting, plus the tactile qualities of the materials of folk architecture, associated with the natural environment and climate, and consequently with the Greek national character by Ghika and *To Trito Mati*.<sup>120</sup> Hydra landscapes and the way the notion of geometry is applied in them by Ghika offer, I think, a scheme of representation of the continuity of Greek tradition through the ages. In a series of works concluding, possibly, with *Hydra* in 1948 (fig. 15), the cohesion of the 'seemingly incoherent mosaic' which is Greek civilization,<sup>121</sup> appears to have been restored for

Ghika. And, at the same time, idealism conquers subjectivity, and the balance between intellect and experience is consecrated in the Greek light.

Ghika was a man of his time, as well as shaping it. His concept of geometry as well as other ideas expressed in *To Trito Mati* and especially in its themed issues, seem to have had a significant impact in their time on the generation of the thirties. So, it does not seem fortuitous that in 1938 in his article, 'The Question of the Hellenicity of Spirit and Art' Theotokas mentions geometry as a means of organizing chaos and creating harmony through reason,<sup>122</sup> nor that the idealist philosopher Dimitris Kapetanakis refers to 'Number as Law in Art' in 1939.<sup>123</sup> Kapetanakis writes that unlike Expressionism, which sees in the world 'ugliness', 'discord' and 'pain', and beyond its limits the void, and Surrealism, that 'lowers the gaze' to the unconscious, Ghika's 'painting attempts to express God's will: the profounder order [governing] the world'. The pleasure gained by the contemplation of this work, he concludes, 'is not of fleeting significance, because the established order and harmony that give birth to it are not of a fleeting nature'.

Although Ghika based his intertwining of modernism and Greek tradition mainly on ideas from the twenties, even the previous decade, the eclecticism of his own compositions owes a lot to the spirit prevailing on the Parisian art scene of the thirties. By the end of the twenties, in fact, a new 'post-avant-garde and synthetic' era arose. The old dispute between the *anciens* and the *modernes* lost its meaning, and the avant-garde utopian plan of social intervention through a uniform modern style seemed to belong to the past.<sup>124</sup> The new Modernist post-avant-garde era emerging is expressed by the spirit of 'synthesis', namely that of pluralism and eclecticism.

Artists such as Hélios, an acquaintance of Ghika's from his time in Paris,<sup>125</sup> and the group *Art Concret*, as well as *Abstraction – Création* and other groups, sought in geometry, in scientific theories such as the theory of relativity, as well as in biological and cosmic structures, something that

has been described as a new 'reality' or a 'mythology of the timeless', that of the 'human or cosmic eternity', which, they believed was created exclusively through pure form. The timelessness of this formalism also signifies its a-historical character, i.e. its separation from historical reality, as well as a condemnation of Surrealism.<sup>126</sup>

Seen from this perspective the last issue of *To Trito Mati* as well as Ghika's theoretical texts and work were keeping in pace with the prevailing tendencies of his time on the Parisian art scene.

Ghika, and to a lesser extent Tombros, attempt, through their neo-humanist synthesis of the continuity of Greek civilization based on the geometric canon, to demonstrate that the necessary qualities for any great work of art through the ages are constant characteristics of Greek culture. Their approach itself was post-avant-garde and formalist. Their representation of Modernism divested modern art of its vision of social intervention, and geometry of its avant-garde dimension, even of the functional dimension of Purism. The criteria they developed owed a lot to the reception of antiquity by European art and thought in Paris of the inter-war period. I would like to cite here the words of Nikos Hadjinicolaou which still best describe Ghika's contribution to Greek art: 'a conservative who revolutionized Greek painting'.<sup>127</sup> Ghika's work, indeed, could be acknowledged as belonging to the international spirit of 'synthesis', an eclectic and post-avant-garde spirit. On the other hand, the kind of 'national modernism', that he aspired to establish along with Tombros, has been a significant point of reference for Greek artists and intellectuals, for the state and art institutions as well as for the wider public. It still remains, nevertheless, unintelligible outside Greece.

Elena Hamalidi  
Department of Audio and Visual Arts  
Ionian University  
elhamalidi@yahoo.gr

## NOTES

\*The review *To Trito Mati* cited in this paper was published with no page numbering. All page references I use in my notes and bibliography were added by me on copies of the original edition I inherited from my grandfather, the painter Argyris Stylianidis (1909-1998), to whose memory this paper is fondly dedicated.

1. An important part of his work (46 pieces dating to between 1927 and 1986) was donated by the artist in 1986 to the National Gallery of Athens and were exhibited for many years long in a room named after him. Starting in 1991, 60 of his works (dating between 1931 and 1990) were exhibited permanently in the Ghika Gallery then housed at 3 Kriezotou Street, Athens, where he himself had lived and kept his workshop for many years (now the Gallery, annexed by the Benaki Museum, is under extensive renovation); Iliopoulou-Rogan 1991, 18-19. Rogan emphasizes in her foreword that Ghika, 'an artist of international repute, invested Cubism with the transparency of Greek light, an achievement we should not overlook. Having done so, he ever after demonstrated, with renewed vigour on every occasion, that there is a golden mean between East and West. Again, it was Ghika, who within strictly Greek bounds and in several different ways, spurred on the search of our Greek roots and their exploitation in more than one sphere of creativity so that we might recover our identity through the inspiring nature of art' (Iliopoulou-Rogan 1991, 19). In 1973 the National Gallery of Athens held a retrospective on Ghika, the first of a series presenting the work of Greek painters, sculptors and engravers of the so-called 'generation of the thirties', see Papastamos 1982. These exhibitions were organized by the National Gallery, directed at the time by the archaeologist and art historian Dimitris Papastamos, mainly during the seventies and early eighties, and aimed to show how the artists of the thirties managed to express perennial values of Greek tradition by combining a modern style with stylistic elements and themes from ancient, Byzantine and folk art. The following statement by Dimitris Papastamos on Ghika elucidates this: 'In his paintings one is able to discern the plastic constancy and the intellectual precision of a classical piece, the wealth of colour of the Byzantine mosaic, the symbolic forms, the boldness of colour combinations, the austerity of forms and the variety of a folk-art work. It is the blending of all these elements of tradition that Hadjikyriakos-Ghika offered on the altar of modern art rendered through the means of a modern, contemporary approach to painting creatively elaborated by him. It is for the significance of the contribution of his work, which remains open to the future while respecting the past, that Ghika earned an important place in the turbulent years of the thirties, as well as in the subsequent years' (Papastamos 1981, 95). Art historian Stelios Lydakis, the author of the first reference books on the history of Greek art for the Athens publishing house Melissa, sees Ghika's contribution in his introduction of a modernizing spirit to Greek art on the model of post-Cubist tendencies (Lydakis 1976, 409-10; Lydakis 1977, 472). Ghika has remained an important point of reference, both through his works and his writing, till his death in 1994. Both Tombros and Ghika achieved important academic positions, as professors at

the Polytechnic University (Tombros from the thirties, in the years of the Metaxas dictatorship) and became members of the Greek Academy. See also Hadjinicolaou 2000.

2. Tombros published *Eikostos Aionas* (1933-34) and Ghika, together with the architect and intellectual Dimitris Pikionis and 'a group of friends', artists and writers, published *To Trito Mati* (1935-37), with Ghika and Pikionis as the main editors. The readership these two reviews appealed to was very limited. The editorial in the first issue of *To Trito Mati* declared that the 'group of friends' aimed to contribute to Greek intellectual life in a way that would have an impact on everyday life, but that was precisely for this purpose that they were addressing the intellectuals who were 'aware of the gaps in the intellectual life and struggled to fill them', *To Trito Mati* 1 (Oct.) 1935, 1. In a short text on the magazine's call for subscriptions it is also made clear that the publishers expected financial support from those who were able to appreciate its importance. Actually, the magazine's aesthetical and philosophic content was not designed to appeal to a wider public.

3. Hamalidi 2002, 128-29; 155-56; 164-65; 186-87; 197-99; 215-17; 241-42; 250; 277-78.

4. In the editorial of the first issue restoring the coherence of the 'apparently incoherent mosaic bequeathed to us from the various cultures that have passed through our country' is declared as one of the main goals of the periodical. The style of the editorial suggests it was written by Ghika (Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1935c, 2).

5. According to the editorial 'before we pronounce judgment on individual works [we] ought to state our intentions, to take a position regarding our weighty past. For there is not enough evidence to make us denounce the potential of our race. Whatever our race has achieved it was achieved with NO MEANS. No real work has ever contributed to its needs. There is neither depth nor latitude to the ideas offered to our race (Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1935c, 2 [capitals in the original]).

6. Hadjinicolaou 1982; Zias 1984; Ioannidis 1986; Kotidis 1993.

7. Tziouvas 1989, 55-71.

8. Mavrogordatos 1992, 9-10.

9. Matthiopoulos 1996, 83.

10. According to Matthiopoulos, these ideas of Papandreou's are the starting point of the Liberals' move towards *Hellenicity*; Matthiopoulos 1996, 190; Matthiopoulos 2003, 430-31.

11. Tziouvas 1989, 59-61.

12. Tziouvas 1989, 59-64.

13. Tziouvas 1989, 59-70.

14. Theotokas 1932, 59; Tziouvas 1989, 63-65.

15. Silver, 1989. Benjamin Buchloh (1983) sees a direct causal link between the traditional style in art and political

conservatism at this time.

16. In their editorials Ghika and Tombros outline the ‘gaps’ in intellectual life in Greece. Besides the ignorance of contemporary trends in modern art as well as of the most genuine elements of tradition, and the lack of interest in innovation, Ghika considers the absence of ‘discipline and hierarchy’ the most important (Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1935c, 1). Tombros declares that he aims to impose modernist rationalism in Greece (see below).

17. Batchelor 1993, 9. See also Krebs 2000.

18. See, for example, Pablo Picasso, *Les Trois Musiciens* (1921) The Museum of Modern Art, New York; *Trois Femmes à la source* (1921), The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Georges Braque, *Le Canéphore* (1922), Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Juan Gris, *La Femme à la mandoline (d’après Corot)* (1916), Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Kunstmuseum, Basel.

19. Batchelor 1993, 9. Even the prices for these artists went up during this period, becoming higher than those for Cubist works. Green 1987.

20. Batchelor 1993, 61–62, 82–83.

21. Silver 1989.

22. Massis 1926.

23. Derouet 1981, 204.

24. Ozenfant 1993; Rosenberg 1993; Jeanneret & Ozenfant 1993. A member of *Section d’Or*, the painter André Lhote was the one who introduced the term *rappel à l’ordre* in a review he wrote on Braque’s exhibition in Rosenberg’s gallery, in *Nouvelle Revue Française* 6 (1919). See Reymond 1975, 210. Reymond also shows that Lhote along with Jacques Rivière worked for a ‘classical revival’ through Cubism in *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Reymond 1975, 217.

25. Rosenberg 1993; Ozenfant 1993.

26. Matthiopoulos 2006, 107–22.

27. Raynal 2004, 201.

28. Tériade 1927; Grant 2005, 191, 378 n. 41.

29. Grant 2005, 176–237.

30. George 1932, 311. Cited in Grant 2005, 286.

31. As Grant states: ‘In contrast to the widespread critical conviction that Surrealism had no relevance to the values of modern painting and could easily be dismissed, the *Cahiers d’Art* critics directly engaged Surrealism as a serious opponent in their effort to define modern poetic painting. Although they vigorously opposed the Surrealists’ antiformalist stance, they also appropriated and adapted Surrealist ideas to their own ends, using them as a means to elaborate and extend a definition of poetry in painting based on style and artistic process’ (Grant 2005, 177). It was actually a time, during the twenties, when Surrealists, and especially André Breton, who mainly theorized about the visual arts up to the early thirties, had not

yet precisely defined the techniques and methods which were to constitute Surrealism in the visual arts. See Grant 2005. As a result of *Cahiers d’Art* politics, in his essay, ‘Le Dadaïsme et le Surréalisme’ in *Histoire de l’Art Contemporaine: La Peinture, Paris 1933–34*, Jean Cassou recognized the central position in the Surrealist movement of Ghika as well as of the other members of the Neo-Fauves. Mentioned in Grant 2005, 346; 394 n. 12. See also Grant 2005, 285, 343–44. The Neo-Fauve group was, however, more a project of Tériade’s, Grant 2005, 347.

32. Fauchereau 1997, 372.

33. Grant 2005, 173–90.

34. Grant 2005, 224.

35. Grant 2005, 190–91.

36. Compare with the works of Ismaël de la Serna, *La Nuit, Cahiers d’Art* 1 (1928) 19; André Beaudin, *Two Sisters, L’enfant blond, L’enfant à la collerette plissée, Le chevalier, Cahiers d’Art* 8 (1928) 8. Published in Grant 2005.

37. Delivorrias 2004, 19.

38. The first issue of *Eikostos Aionas* came out only in French in order to access the members of the CIAM. Tombros 1933b, 9–10.

39. Tombros 1933a, 1–2.

40. Zervos 1934, 17.

41. Le Corbusier 1933a; Le Corbusier 1933b.

42. Le Corbusier 1933a.

43. Le Corbusier 1933b.

44. See also Tombros’ note in *Eikostos Aionas*: Tombros 1934, 66. The second edition of Zervos’ *L’Art en Grèce* (1936) can be found in Ghika’s personal library, now in the Ghika Gallery, Athens.

45. Zervos 1936, 9–10.

46. In this article, Ghika equates Romanticism with the ‘picturesque’ and representation in art (‘Romanticism = nature’), as an inherent quality in people from Northern and Central Europe. Later he defines Romanticism as the tendency ‘to see things as they are’, as they ‘appear’, without being able ‘to see how they could be’. By contrast, he states, ‘new art’ (i.e. modern art), showed up as a reaction to naturalism and Romanticism, ‘became de facto Classical and Mediterranean’, and was associated with ‘archaic’ (i.e. primitive) art in general, e.g. namely the pre-Renaissance ‘primitives of the 13th and 14th c.’, Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934b, 22–24.

47. Tombros 1935, 10.

48. Tombros 1935, 10.

49. Tombros 1935, 12–44.

50. Tombros 1935, 9.

51. Tombros 1935, 9.

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52. Tombros 1934b.
53. Tombros 1934c, 61. Among other things, Tombros refers once again to the Fascist models of Maclair: 'unless you, to satisfy your stubbornness, prefer to suggest to our progeny to turn once and for all towards Rome and Berlin' (Tombros 1934c, 62).
54. The 'Trial of Romanticism' followed 'Passion for Beauty' in *Simera*, published in the same year, and was followed by 'Design', in *Ellinika Filla* (1935), and 'Art and the Age', in *To Trito Mati* (1935).
55. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934b, 24.
56. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a.
57. A first edition of 1925 was dedicated to Ghika by Le Corbusier himself in 1933, probably on the occasion of his visit to Athens as a participant in CIAM. In the copy in Ghika's Library (Ghika Gallery, Athens), the following dedication in Le Corbusier's own hand can be seen: 'À l'ami Ghyka ici ou il y a un petit feu du vrai fond d'un honnête homme. Amicalement, Le Corbusier'.
58. Le Corbusier 1925, 112; 114-15.
59. Le Corbusier 1925, 112; 114.
60. Le Corbusier 1925, 5; 140; Le Corbusier 1977, 111. See also *L'Esprit Nouveau* 10 (1921) 1141.
61. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a, 75-76.
62. Le Corbusier 1925, 210-11.
63. Ouranis 1933, 249.
64. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a, 73.
65. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a, 76. On the other hand, Ghika here pointedly criticizes Greek Academy artists once more. For him, contemporary vernacular architecture is closer to ancient architecture than all academic art. He points his shafts at the Greek followers of the 'School of Munich', when he writes: 'the renowned "lovers of Greek beauty" never miss the opportunity to pity and *misunderstand* [...] absolutely Greek phenomena that seem to them "barbaric" and which they perceive as remnants of the Turkish occupation. A grocery, a greengrocers, a cart [...] seem to them "vulgar". They do not see that even in these humble things there are the same *virtues*, the same *truth*, the same *respect* for prehistoric human *traditions* and *rules*, and especially the same *immutable character* we, both native Greeks and foreigners, admire in the marbles of the Acropolis' (Ghika 1934a, 74 [emphasis in the original]).
66. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a, 74.
67. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1989, 269; Condaratos 1998, 68-69.
68. Dimitriou 1989, 42.
69. It was actually during 1933-34, that the great 'synthesis' of the continuity of Greek culture began to preoccupy Ghika. The reception of Le Corbusier's writings mentioned above in confirmation of the continuity of Greek culture on behalf of the West, and the importance of this to him becomes clear in 'Passion for Beauty', where Ghika refers to the experience of Le Corbusier and other members of the 4th CIAM, who were moved by the majestic spectacle of the port of Piraeus: 'The entrance to the port of Piraeus is one of the most powerful spectacles in the world. I confirmed that lately, when I saw the members of the 4th Congress of Modern Architecture standing amazed on the deck of Patris II. The majesty and the excitement caused by the view of this entry for the most part due to *poverty* [...] Little houses and shacks along the coast, stuck on the yellow rock, eroded by the sun and the sea [...] Here the most impressive stage effects are achieved with *lesser means* and a minimum of expense. *This is the definition of real art*' (Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a, 74 [emphasis in the original]). Ghika is referring to *L'Art Décoratif d'Aujourd'hui*. See above.
70. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a, 74.
71. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a, 75.
72. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a, 75.
73. Fer 1993, 144.
74. Compare also Ghika's works of the same period, *Composition with objects of Greek Origin* (1934), Municipal Art Gallery, Rhodes: De Rycke & Paissios 2004, 129 fig. 112; *Composition with rhythmic objects* (1935), Benaki Museum-Ghika Gallery, Athens: De Rycke & Paissios 2004, 142 fig. 125; *On the beach* (1936), Benaki Museum-Ghika Gallery, Athens: De Rycke & Paissios 2004, 153 fig. 143; *Three tailors* (1936), private collection: De Rycke & Paissios 2004, 157 fig. 148; *Three tailors* (1936), private collection, Athens: De Rycke & Paissios 2004, 157 fig. 150.
75. See André Lhote, *Les Baigieuses*, 1935, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux.
76. Will-Levaillant 1975, 247-49.
77. Reymond 1975, 212.
78. Reymond 1975, 218.
79. He writes: 'The parts of a machine are subject to decay. A rusty machine is worth nothing and LOSES ITS BEAUTY. On the contrary, an ancient marble, even in pieces, does not lose its beauty [...] the ratio of a machine's components to one another is the ratio of utility. But this ratio can change according to the needs, whilst every part of an ancient statue is joined to one another with an absolute and not with a relative ratio. Certainly, this makes the difference between art and all other human manifestations', (Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1935d, 9 [capitals in the original]). The shift in Ghika's position regarding modern technology could be related to the impact Pikionis had on him. Pikionis had disagreed with Ghika's approval of modern production procedures and the ideas he expressed in 'Passion for Beauty'. It must have been Pikionis Ghika had in mind, when he wrote that some friends of his had objected to him writing that 'a first-class machine gets closer [...] to ancient perfection' (Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1934a, 76).

80. Ghika gave the lecture on 'Proportions' at the Artists' Club on 5 December 1934, as he notes in Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1935b, 105. The text was published in the literary magazine *O Kyklos*, Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1935a.

81. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937a; Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937b.

82. The issue is divided in three parts: the introductory text by Ghika is followed by the first part on 'The Law of Numbers in Nature. Microcosm-Macrocosm' consisting of plates and tables depicting celestial bodies, atoms, magnetic fields and crystalloid and cell formations in order to prove the mathematical laws governing Microcosm and Macrocosm as the universal laws of 'Creation', *To Trito Mati* 7-12 (Aug.) 8-11. The second part reproduces the 'Euclidean Canon' as the first example of a text devoted to harmonic proportions in music, followed by plates figuring the dominance of geometric shapes and numbers in mechanics, 12-22. The theory of A. Georgiadis on the same subject that follows, 23-43, was developed during the twenties. It is followed by plates with 'Geometric Units on Plane and in Space' featuring the geometric bodies of Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy, 44-46. In 'Theories of Harmonious Tracings in Architecture', K. Doxiadis outlines the relevant theories prevailing from the end of the 19th c. to the twenties, 47-57. The presentation by D. Pikionis of the theory of Jay Hambidge on 'dynamic symmetry', 79-84 (as well as the plates in pp. 44-46) are reprinted from Matila Ghyka's *Esthétique des Proportions*, Ghyka 1927, 121-28. D. Pikionis presents the doctoral thesis on the treatment of space in ancient architecture his former student and later assistant at the Athens Polytechnic, K. Doxiadis, presented at the University of Berlin, 66-78. The second part closes with a text by D. Pikionis on 'Harmony in Colours and Tones', 85-88. Pikionis tries to apply J. Hambidge's theory here. In the third part there are articles by K. Sachs, P. Claudel (P. Claudel, *Réflexions sur la Poésie* [Paris 1963] 9-12; 15-17), M. Ghyka (reprinted from M. Ghyka, *Le Nombre d'Or. Rites et Rythmes Pythagoriciens dans le Développement de la Civilisation Occidentale I* [Paris 1931] 99-101) and S. Karantinos on rhythm in dance, poetry and the theatre, 90-104), as well as Hadjikyriakos-Ghika's text on the 'Number as Law in Art', and plates with photographs of pieces of fine and applied arts and architecture of different civilizations from prehistory till modern times, 107-19. The issue closes with excerpts from Paul Klee's *Pädagogisches Skizzenbuch = Neue Bauhausbücher* (ed. H.M. Wingler; Mainz and Berlin 1964) 6-21; 32-43 and Wassily Kandinsky's *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche. Beitrag zur Analyse der malerischen Elemente* (ed. by M. Bill; Bern 1973) 129-49; 154-58; 120-28 and 129-41 respectively.

83. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937a, 1-2, 3.

84. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937a, 3.

85. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937a, 2.

86. Ghyka 1931. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika cites a phrase of Bertrand Russell from an article of his published in *The Nation* in 1924: 'The most strange thing in modern science is perhaps its recurring to Pythagorean thought'. In the first volume of *Le Nombre d'Or* Matila Ghyka outlines Pythagorean and Platonic

philosophy as well as 19th and 20th c. theories on proportions and 'harmonious tracings', esp. on the golden section. In the second volume he refers to Pythagorean rituals and the impact Pythagorean thought had on Neo-Pythagoreans, Alchemists, even on masonry. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika derives many of his ideas from Ghyka's books, but he mainly insists on the conclusions of the two last chapters of *Le Nombre d'Or*, concerning the relation of modern natural science as well as of Bergsonian philosophy with Pythagorean philosophy (esp. the chapter on 'Modern Science and its Recurring to Pythagoras').

87. It should be noted that Le Corbusier himself became acquainted with Zeising's theory of the golden section through another study of Matila Ghyka, *Le Nombre d'Or*. Naredi-Rainer 1982, 102 n. 120.

88. In many cases, their interest was not just of a historical nature. Many theoreticians attempted to decode the system of proportions applied in ancient architecture, mainly to the Parthenon, and later aimed to define anew a system of proportions of universal validity both in nature and for art, mostly the golden section. See Wittkower 1960; Naredi-Rainer 1982, 25-26, 34, 40-82. In his *Esthétique des Proportions dans la Nature et dans les Arts* (1927), Matila Ghyka defines the golden section as the system of proportions of 'Mediterranean aesthetics', Ghyka 1927, 15-31.

89. Such as the presentation of Jay Hambidge's theory on 'dynamic symmetry', 'Rhythm in poetry' and plates with the geometric shapes of Pythagorean and Platonic philosophies. These plates are juxtaposed with others, with drawings and pictures from the telescope and the microscope in order to demonstrate the dominance of the geometric shape as the 'visible symbol of the Law of Numbers' and the 'absolute fundamental and universal principle of Creation' from heavenly bodies to the atom, magnetic fields, crystalline and cellular formations of inorganic and organic matter. See above, n. 82.

90. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937a, 4-6.

91. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937a, 4.

92. In his 'On Proportions' Ghika argued that modern art 'uses geometry in drawing, section and the plane, and combines them hoping to render an object in a more profound way, namely not in perspective, but by depicting all its sides (from all possible viewpoints), as the Chinese used to do. [Modern art] also uses perspective where necessary. It uses optical illusion (trompe l'oeuil) the way Renaissance man used perspective [...] It uses optical corrections we are acquainted with through the Parthenon. It uses deformation through light the way [Dominikos] Theotokopoulos taught us. It also uses mathematical precision, the lesson of mechanics of our age', Ghika 1935a, 15.

93. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937a, 4.

94. Adelman & Compton 1980, 64-90; Henderson 1983; Wittkower 1960, 208. See also Apollinaire 1968, 223; Chipp 1968, 223 n. 1.

95. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937a, 4.

96. Ghyka 1931, 119.

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97. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1937b, 106.
98. Grant 2005, 211. See also below.
99. Zervos 1935.
100. By the term 'sense of form' I translate the Greek expression, 'πλαστικό αίσθημα', used by Ghika. The etymological root of the adjective 'πλαστικός', is the verb 'πλάθω', that means I give shape, I give form, I create. The same adjective ('πλαστικός') is widely used in the thirties as well as later for the Greek translation of the term 'πλαστικές τέχνες' (*plastic arts*), for visual arts.
101. Grant 2005, 173-90.
102. Referring to Ismaël de la Serna's painting, Zervos writes: 'The future of painting will be precisely in the balance of cerebralism and the study of dreams so characteristic of our generation and the indispensable instinct of creation', Zervos 1928, 21. Quoted in Grant 2005, 211.
103. Grant 2005, 211.
104. Grant 2005, 212.
105. Ghika also relates geometry to the Platonic notion of 'beauty'. In 'On Proportions' he cites the famous extract from the Platonic dialogue *Philebus* (51b-d) on pleasure, in which Plato opposes the absolute beauty of geometrical figures to the relative beauty of beings and of illusionary images, Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1935a. A longer passage is published in the first issue of *To Trito Mati*, 11. This particular passage was widely used in art periodicals in relation to Cubist painting, and later also to abstract art, as Ozenfant had used it for the first time in his own magazine, *L'Élan* 9 (Feb. 1916): Fry 1966, 193 n. 2; Bucher 1990, 104.
106. Zervos 1935.
107. 'When the next generation wished to exceed these limits, it destroyed the object and lost control of its plastic means', Zervos 1931, 400. As Grant states: 'For Zervos, poetry in visual arts was freedom within limits, and these were limits that could not be abrogated, the limits of technical requirements and the limits of essential forms', Grant 2005, 230.
108. Grant shows this shift in *Cahiers d'Art* politics that took place gradually about the middle of the decade, whereas toward the end of the thirties it became an organ of Surrealism. She attributes this change in Zervos' position to the influence of his wife, Yvonne: Grant 2005, 347.
109. Krebs 1997, 494. See also Direction des Beaux Arts de la Ville de Paris et La Conservation du Petit Palais, *Les Maîtres de l'Art Independent. 1895-1937* (exhibition catalogue, Petit Palais; Paris 1937).
110. Krebs 1997, 493-95. Concerning the internationalism of Zervos it must be pointed out here that *L'Art en Grèce* was one of a series of editions he published up to the sixties, in which he tried to prove the timelessness of simple, pure forms in the art of various civilizations, such as that of Mesopotamia, Sardinia or the Cycladic and Minoan civilizations (*L'Art de la Mésopotamie*, 1935; *L'Art de la Catalogne*, 1937; *La Civilisation de la Sardaigne Nouragique*, 1954; *L'Art de la Crète Minoenne*, 1956; *L'Art des Cyclades*, 1957; *L'Art de l'Époque du Renne en France*, 1959). He focused on these examples trying to fill a lacuna, since according to him scientific research had ignored them and focused solely on Classical and Renaissance art.
111. *Neoellinika Grammata* 2 (6 March 1937) 15; Recuyer 1937; Fortiadis 1937; Sotiriou 1937. See also Chéronnet 1937; Huyghe 1937.
112. Hamalidi 2002.
113. Ziogas 1939, 10.
114. On the change in Ghika's reception by art critics, see Hadjinicolaou 1982, 62-64; Hamalidi 2002, 471-73.
115. Gris belonged to the group of painters pursuing 'harmonious tracings'. In the first issue of *To Trito Mati*, a text by Gris on Synthetic Cubism in relation to his own work was published. Gris states that 'the only possible technique of painting is a sort of two-dimensional and coloured architecture', something more than a simple 'construction' (Gris 1935). This text was presented as a lecture at the Sorbonne in the context of the initiatives of the 'Groupe d'Études Philosophiques et Scientifiques' of Dr. Allendy, and in 1925 it was published in the Berlin art journal, *Querschnitt* ('Über die Möglichkeiten der Malerei', 1, 32-40).
116. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1938, 128.
117. Excerpts of Giannopoulos' book, originally published in the newspaper *Anatoli* (Mar. 1903 - Sept. 1904) were reprinted for the first time in a special issue of *To Trito Mati*, on 'Nature-Subject-Landscape', Giannopoulos 1935. See also Hamalidi 2002, 329-35.
118. Tombros 1936. It should be noted that the same article by Tombros was published in the pro-dictatorship periodical *Nea Politiki* the following year: Tombros 1937.
119. Pikionis 1935.
120. See esp. *To Trito Mati* 2-3 (Nov./Dec.) 1935; Hamalidi 2002, 301-41.
121. Hadjikyriakos-Ghika 1935c, 2.
122. Theotokas 1938, 2. See Hamalidi 2002, 469-70.
123. Kapetanakis 1939.
124. Serra 1997, 27.
125. Ghika and Hélon took part in an exhibition organized by *Cahiers d'Art* in 1934.
126. Fabre 1997, 362.
127. Hadjinicolaou 1982, 61.

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