

The gift of Demosthenes Agrafiotis to the G. Gounaropoulos Museum

The gift of Demosthenes Agrafiotis to the G. Gounaropoulos Museum highlights the important and longstanding relationship between the Greek and French artistic and intellectual world. This relationship becomes evident through the life and art of Giorgos Gounaropoulos himself. The artist, just like many of his fellow artists, as well as intellectuals of his generation, spent quite a few years in Paris (1919-1932), where he completed his formal art education and shaped his personal artistic style. Years later, Paris became a pole of attraction for a young scientist, Demosthenes Agrafiotis, who, influenced by the sociopolitical movements and the ideological/philosophical quests of the 1960s, he turned toward poetry and the fine arts, eventually becoming one of the most radical practitioners of contemporary art.

Agrafiotis –just like Gounaropoulos– was formed as a person and artist by influences mainly from Greece and France. Therefore, his gift to the G. Gounaropoulos Museum, is of special importance. The gift includes two of his artworks, archival material documenting his manifold international activity and a series of French journals that marked his intellectual and artistic formation. These include 147 issues of *Critique*, 173 issues of *Le Cahier du Refuge* and a small number of other publications.

Critique is a monthly journal of the historical publishing house Les Éditions de Minuit. It was founded by Georges Bataille and was first published in 1946. To this day it provides a forum for the international literary, philosophical and more broadly intellectual avant-garde. It approaches a variety of issues raised by current book publications and welcomes authors from all over the world. It has presented articles and studies by and about thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze. From its inception, *Critique* has been presenting the ideas that have shaped the philosophical systems and the theoretical approaches to many sectors of human endeavor after World War II.

Le Cahier du Refuge is the exemplary documentation bulletin of the cipM Centre international de poésie Marseille (International Centre for poetry Marseille). The centre begun operations in 1990 as an initiative of the poet and, at the time, vice mayor of Marseille, Julien Blaine. It promotes poetry in all artforms and presents a wide range of cultural events from the international experimental art scene.

The journal *L'Arc* was issued from 1958 until 1986 and in its 100 issues it presented well rounded tributes to eminent figures of international cultural importance. *Action poétique* (1950-2012) connected poetry to the ideology and the struggles of the French Left. The journals *L'Ire des Vents* (1978-1987) and *Argile* (1973-1981) are collectable publications of outstanding quality that combine poetry with the plastic arts. *Galerie l'Ollave, Préoccupations* (1994-2016) used to be a dynamic forum for contemporary art, relating also to the exhibitions organized by the gallery with the same name. Finally, *Lithiques*, first published in 1985, is a journal dedicated to the science and the aesthetics of all types of stone, notable for its immaculate photography and exquisite printing quality.

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Translation to English : Dionissia Giakoumi, Angelos Sakkis



Mental landscape 1979
Chinese ink on paper
29x45 cm

Mental landscape 1978
crayon on handmade paper
51x77,5 cm



A gift as a poetic gesture

The proposition for a gift from the poet and intermedia artist, Demosthenes Agrafiotis, to the G. Gounaropoulos Museum was submitted on May 18, 2019. It was on the occasion of his participation on a special exhibition marking the 130 years from the birth of the painter Giorgos Gounaropoulos, and the 40 years from the creation of the Museum under his name (*Poetry: eloquent Painting. Hommage à Gounaro*), where the intertwining of painting and poetics in the work of Gounaropoulos was pointed out and a “discourse” was attempted with corresponding works by Greek artists. The gift included two paintings by Agrafiotis, a part of his personal archive, along with francophone journals on literature and art, and related books he had in his possession. As the artist stated, his purpose was to “pay tribute to the Greek-French culture of the painter Gounaropoulos.” With its decision N. 36/2019, the Museum Board of Trustees accepted the gift. Since then, the gift material has been received and the inventory work has followed.

What may we discover in the contents of the Agrafiotis archive, but also by reading between the lines in the material of his gift? At a first reading, we run through documents of exhibitions, publications, typewritten texts, symposium and art festival schedules and related brochures—mainly in French and Greek—, from the decade of the 1980’s to our days, the “persistent” traces of the multi-prismatic poetic journey of the artist. A fertile journey, which expands beyond mere writing to visual poetry, mail art, photography, performance and the new media, but also to organising Greek-French poetry translation meetings or his participation to special festivals, to exhibitions and publications about art and poetry, as much in Greece as also abroad. A journey that undoubtedly underlines Agrafiotis’s fighting spirit in the defense of poetry in all its expressions, as a transcendental way of thinking, but also as an interlingual medium.

For the Greek artist who has come to intellectual maturity in France, we must appreciate the fact that his overview of poetics was being recharged in France, a country always hospitable to the arts, but also a country of constant advancement of contemporary thought and a quest for expression. This fact becomes evident as much by his archive itself, as also by his francophone books, and particularly by the journals which he himself read, collected or collaborated with. And if his personal archive, as well as his entire gift, as his chosen articles of memory, not only defines the artist, but it also contains him as a historical being, then it may also offer to the inquisitive scholar a broader set of information about the relationship between poetics and the fine arts in the last few decades, especially in the Greek and French speaking area.

[Translation: Angelos SAKKIS].

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