

DOSSIER DE PRESSE

IOANNIS
LASSITHIOTAKIS

RELATION

SHAPES

15/10
-18/11
2020

/

OPENING
Jeudi 15 octobre
18h -21h

HORAIRE D'OUVERTURE
Du mercredi au samedi
15h-19h et sur rendez-vous

Galerie **marie-robin**

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Exposition

IOANNIS LASSITHIOTAKIS *RELATION / SHAPES*

En Grèce, au cours du VIII^e siècle avant. J.-C., dans une Méditerranée traversée par des transformations économiques et sociales, les gestes héroïques touchent la vie des mortels, les amours des Dieux deviennent publiques, mythes et réalité fusionnent.

Dans ce creuset, est né l'art géométrique, caractérisé par la répétition de formes élémentaires - lignes droites, lignes sinueuses, cercles, méandres chevrons - utilisées selon les principes d'ordre et d'harmonie typiques de l'esthétique grecque. Le style géométrique devient vecteur de transmission du poème épique, et vice versa. Ainsi Homère, dans ses œuvres les plus célèbres, décrit minutieusement les motifs sur les objets des humains, des dieux et des demi-dieux. Poésie et art figuratif se mêlent alors dans un récit révélant l'éternelle cyclicité du *cosmo*.

Aujourd'hui, ces principes rejoignent l'art de Ioannis Lassithiotakis.

Le lien est révélé par les œuvres présentées à la Galerie Marie-Robin lors de la première exposition personnelle de l'artiste en France: *RELATION / SHAPES*.

En effet, dans sa pratique, Ioannis Lassithiotakis utilise des motifs géométriques simples et répétés.

Un langage épuré fait de lignes, de formes régulières et de grands aplats monochromatiques qui, à première vue, semblent nus, statiques. Pourtant, sous une observation plus profonde la peinture dévoile son mouvement/élan interne, sa force génératrice ou destructrice.

Comme les anciens avec l'art géométrique, Ioannis Lassithiotakis traduit la complexité de l'expérience humaine en quelques traits pour la rendre lisible à tous. Une « abstraction universelle » qui évolue dans l'exposition *RELATION/SHAPES* en « abstraction relationnelle ».

Car, il s'agit ici de *RELATIONS* au niveau du pictural et de l'interprétation.

Sur le plan du pictural, chaque élément joue son rôle dans la hiérarchie du tableau, connecté ou déconnecté avec les autres « sujets ». Ces créations expriment toujours une tension parmi l'ordre et l'évasion, l'image et les marges physiques. Une ligne interrompue ouvre le bloc et le blanc envahi les bords inférieurs du cadre incorporant ses limites.

De l'autre côté, les titres des œuvres stimulent toute interprétation selon la perception personnelle. Une ligne verticale se fait blessure, la ligne horizontale délimite et établit, une seule bande ébrèche la surface invitant l'œil à découvrir l'au-delà de la peinture. Ces lignes dirigent les plans chromatiques en suivant le flux émotionnel vers des rencontres et des séparations.

Plus précisément, dans *For what he left*, une "fenêtre" blanche jaillit sur une surface d'un jaune indiscret. Solution à la douleur de l'abandon ou raison de la séparation ? Ou encore, *Open your heart*, nous présente un rectangle rouge perturbé par un trait noir qui tente d'en forcer la limite. Boîtes fermées, lignes interrompues, périmètres incomplets font de chaque composition une conversation suspendue en attente d'une éventuelle résolution.

Entre simple vision et libre interprétation, les œuvres exposées dans *RELATION / SHAPES* nous interrogent sur la nature des multiples liens tissés avec nous-mêmes et avec l'autre. Peut-être qu'en codifiant ces relations comme Ioannis Lassithiotakis le fait avec ses formes, nous pourrions un jour saisir leur vrai sens.

Anna Donà

Ioannis LASSITHIOTAKIS

Artiste, peintre, Ioannis Lassithiotakis né en 1956 à Crète. Il étudie en Italie à l'Académie de Beaux-Arts de Florence avant d'établir son atelier à Athènes où il vit et il travaille aujourd'hui.

Sa pratique s'articule autour du concept d' "universalité abstraite". L'artiste utilise un langage épuré fait de traits et de grands aplats chromatiques qui, à première vue, semblent nus, statiques. Cependant, ses compositions impliquent un dynamisme et un symbolisme plus profonds.



Ioannis Lassithiotakis appelle l'œil à l'observation attentive au-delà du flux d'images qu'envahissent nos journées, il dévoile les relations simples entre les éléments de notre réalité.



Exposition *Ideal Lines*, DL Gallery, Le Pirée, Grèce, novembre 2019

« A travers l'abstraction j'exprime un monde interieur qui externalisé trouve sa dimension universelle. Cela signifie pour moi maturité et conscience, et la conscience de nos choix est très importante.»

— I.Lassithiotakis (*The Plus magazine*, 2018)

EXPOSITIONS PERSONNELLES

2020

Relation/Shapes, Galerie marie-robin, Paris, France

2019

Ikastikós kýklos DL, Athènes, Grèce

Ideal Lines, DL Gallery, Le Pirée, Grèce

2018

ΔΛ gallery, Le Pirée, Grèce

2017

Lefa Municipal Art Gallery,

Curator E. Gerolymatou, Athènes, Grèce

2013

Astrolavos Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

2012

Byzantine & Christian Museum, Athènes, Grèce

2011

Apocalypse Gallery, Nicosia, Chypre

2009

TIF-Pavilion 6 (44th Dimitria), Thessaloniki, Grèce

2008

Art Gallery Café, Alexanroupoli, Grèce

School of Falatados, Ile de Tinos, Grèce

2007

Athens Art Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

2006

Art Forum Gallery, Thessaloniki, Grèce

2005

Athens Art Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

Art Athine Art Fair avec Agathi Gallery Agathi Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

2003

Art Athine Art Fair avec Agathi Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

EXPOSITIONS COLLECTIVES

2020

Parallel Vienna, Rudolf-Sallinger-Platz 1, Vienne, Autriche

2019

PV for century celebration of the Bauhaus, dr. Julius Iap, Berlin, Allemagne

2018

Back to basics, Enia gallery, curator A.Potamianou, Le Pirée, Grèce

Consciousness, Alfa Gallery Miami, USA

2017

Back to Athens, Gateway to Freedom, curator Thalia Vrachopoulos, Cheapart gallery, Athènes, Grèce

Art Athina Art Fair, Astrolavos gallery, Athènes, Grèce

100 years after the October Revolution, curator: Yiannis Bolis, State museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, Grèce

2015

Art Athina Art Fair, Astrolavos gallery, Athènes, Grèce

2014

Painting II, Frisira Museum, Athènes, Grèce

Art Athina Art Fair, Statement made, curator: A. Potamianou, Astrolavos gallery, Athènes, Grèce

2011

Art Athina Art Fair, Astrolavos gallery, Athènes, Grèce

Time aspects, curator: M. Maragou, Museum of Contemporary Art of Crete (Rethymnon)

20x20, curator: T.Mavrotas, Athinais, Athènes, Grèce

The maelstrom of art and history, curator: P. Kounenaki, Chapel Renier, Chania, Crète

2010

Tracing Istanbul, Greek Embassy –Theological School of Halki, Istanbul, Turquie

Technopolis, curator: I. Criticou, Athènes, Grèce

2009

Ambassadors of Contemporary Greek Art - *Three Generations of painters*, curator: H. Kambouridis, Hellenic Museum, Melbourne, Australie

35 visual artists for Democracy, Zappeion Megaron, curator: T. Mavrotas, Athènes, Grèce

2008

"Art Athina", Astrolavos Gallery, Tsatsis Projects Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

"Native Place", Benaki Museum, Athenes, Grèce

2006

Kites, Astrolavos Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

European Parliament Headquarters, Brussels, Belgique

Panorama of Art, M.C.A, Thessaloniki, Grèce

Dialogues, M.M.C.A.-Art Forum Gallery, Thessaloniki, Grèce

There was once Penelope Delta, curator: I. Criticou, Athènes College, Grèce

Calendar of National Stationary Office, Agathi Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

2004

Olympic Spirit and Contemporary Greek Art, curator: P. Kounenaki, Athens Municipal Cultural Centre, Athènes, Grèce

Love Art, Love the World, curator E. Anthopoulou, Andronikos Gallery, Mykonos, Grèce

"The Olympic Idea in the Sky", Astrolavos Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

Gallery Walk", Agathi Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

"Athens, city of Games", Technopolis, Athènes, Grèce

"Mickey meets Art", Hellenic American Union, Athènes, Grèce

"Missal", curator: I. Criticou, Ekfrasi Gallery, Athènes, Grèce

2003

Oikade, Museum Contemporary Art of Crete, Rethymnon/Melina Merkouri Cultural, Grèce

Coup de Coeur, curator: E. Alexaki, Athens Art Gallery, Athenes, Grèce

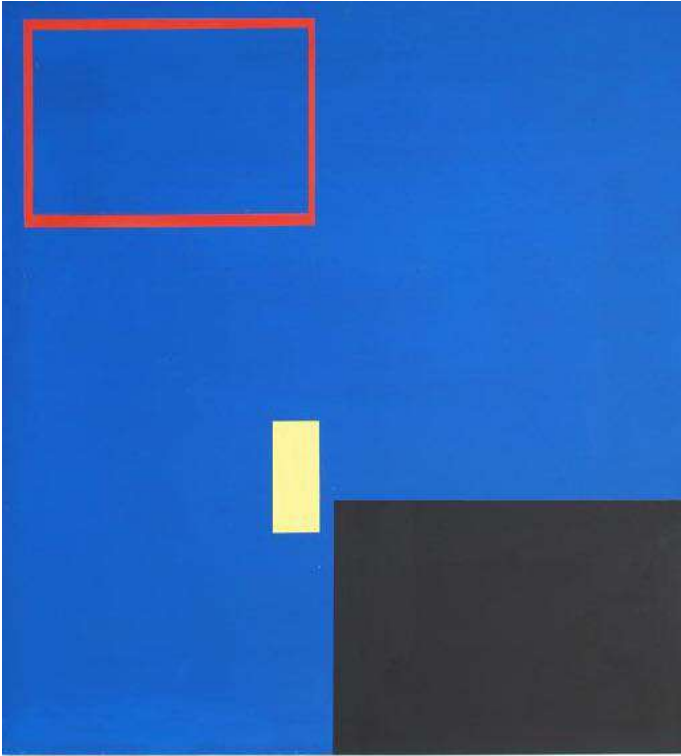
Olympic Spirit and Contemporary Greek Art, Municipal Gallery of Chania, Crete

P. Kounenaki, Thessaloniki- Giorgio de Chirico Cultural, Centre, Thessaloniki, Grèce



Exposition *RELATION/SHAPES*, Galerie marie-robin, Paris, France, octobre - décembre 2020

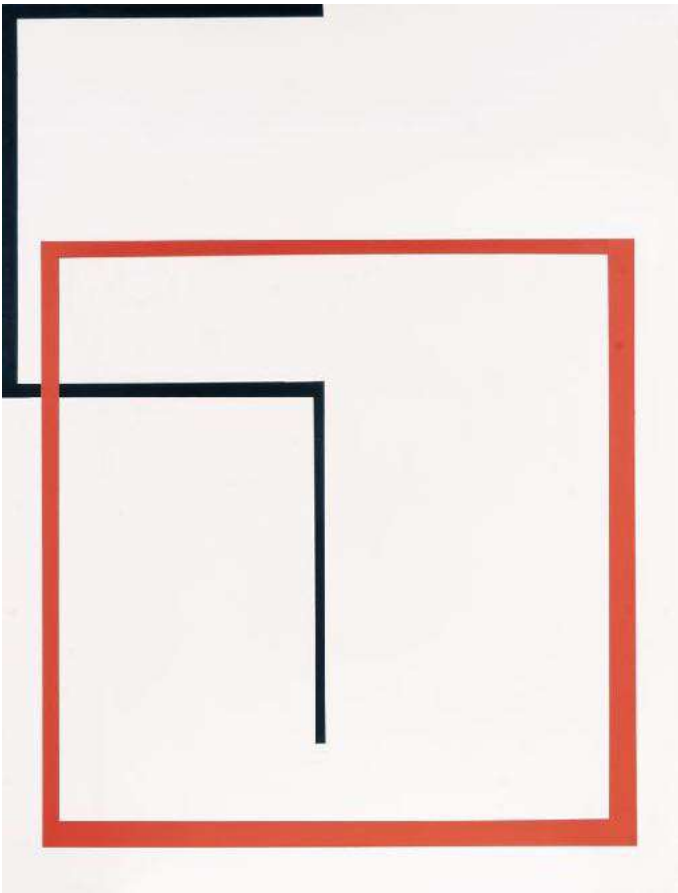
ŒUVRES PRÉSENTÉES



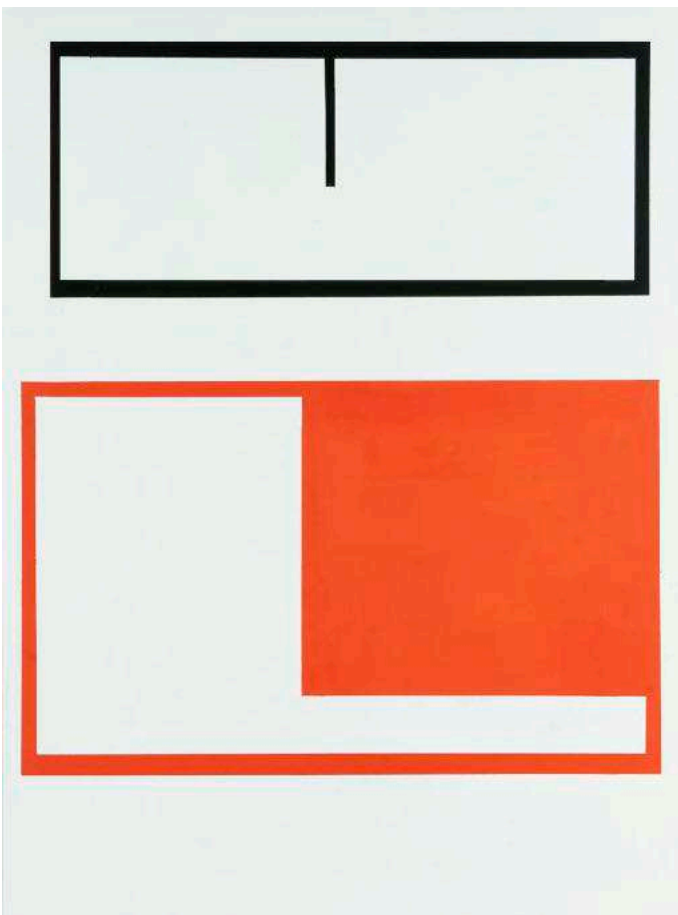
Nocturne
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



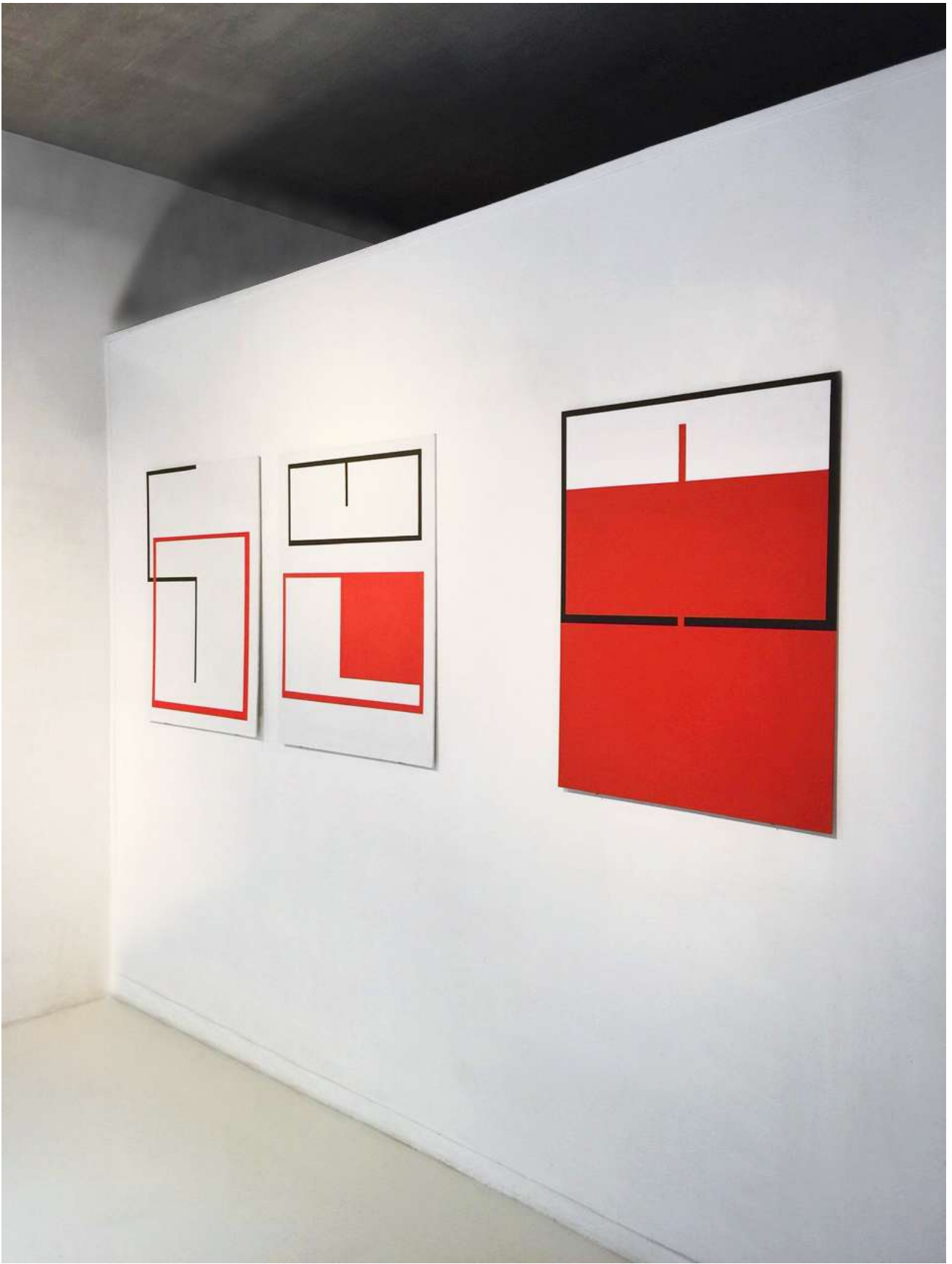
For what he left
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



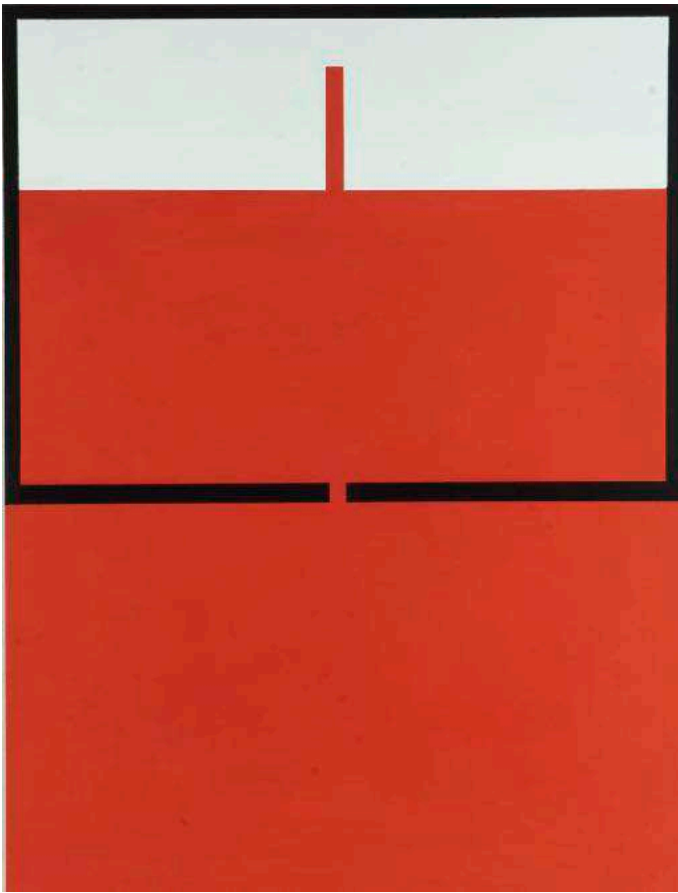
Open your heart
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



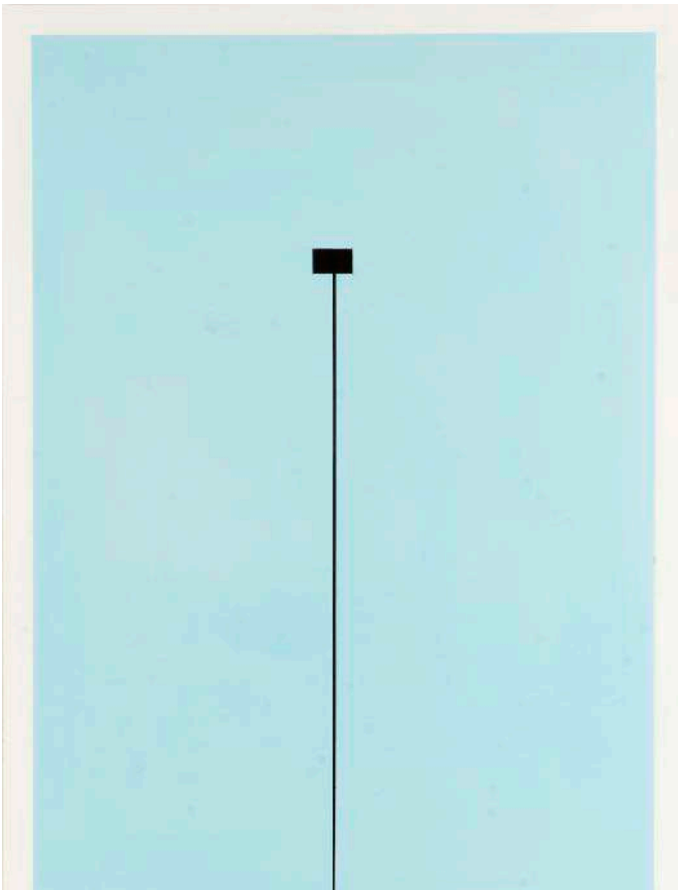
Cluster
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



Exposition *RELATION/SHAPES*, Galerie marie-robin, Paris, France, octobre - décembre 2020



For your love
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



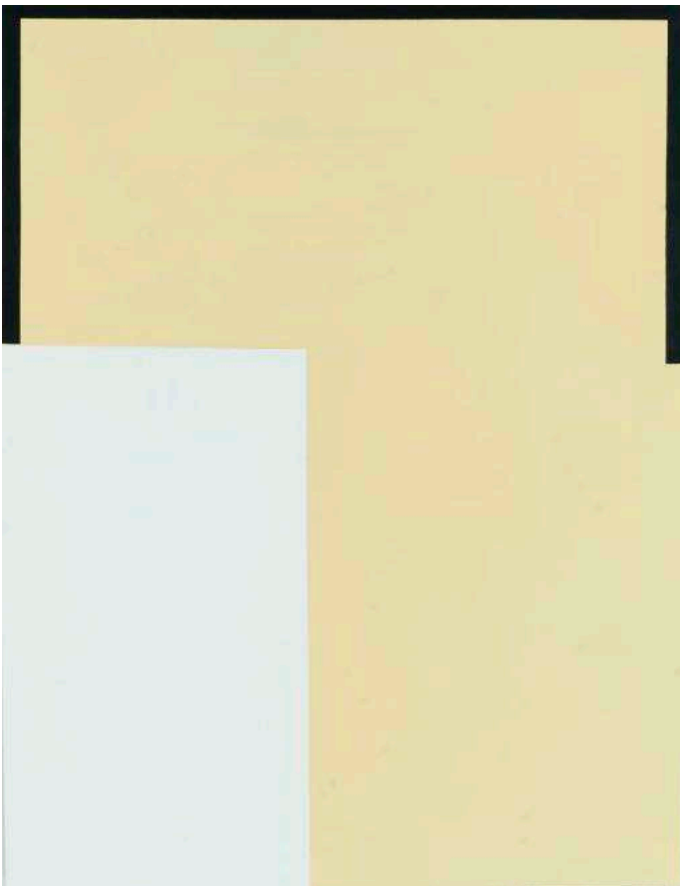
Prayer
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



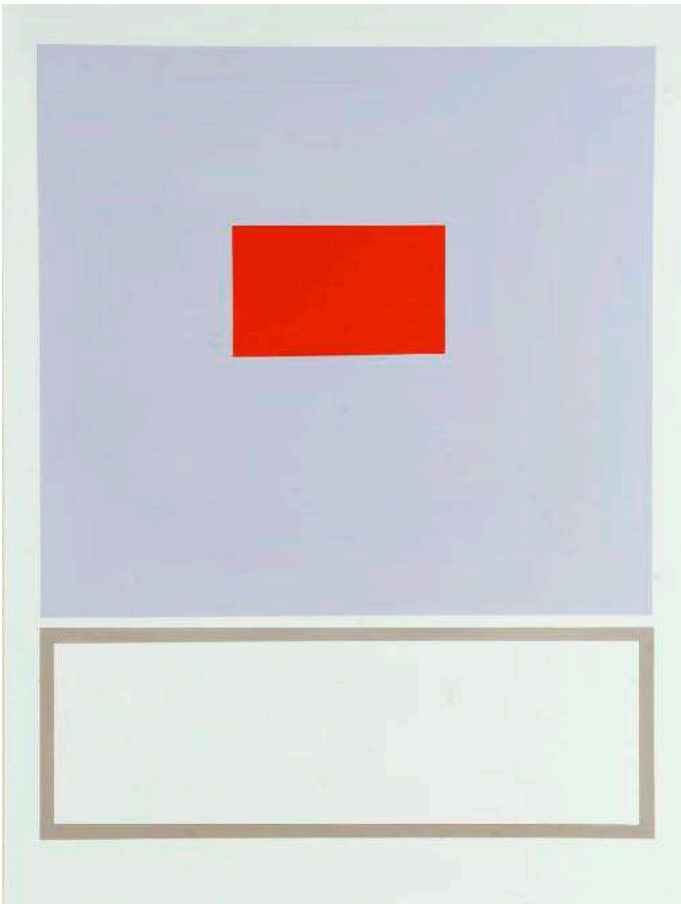
Exposition *RELATION/SHAPES*, Galerie marie-robin, Paris, France, octobre - décembre 2020



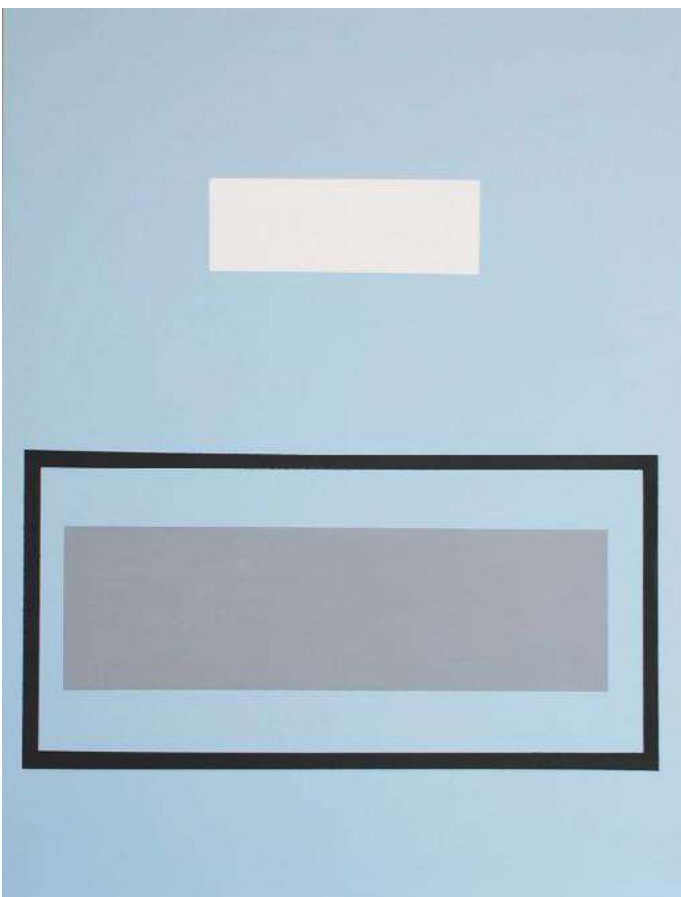
The birth of the world,
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



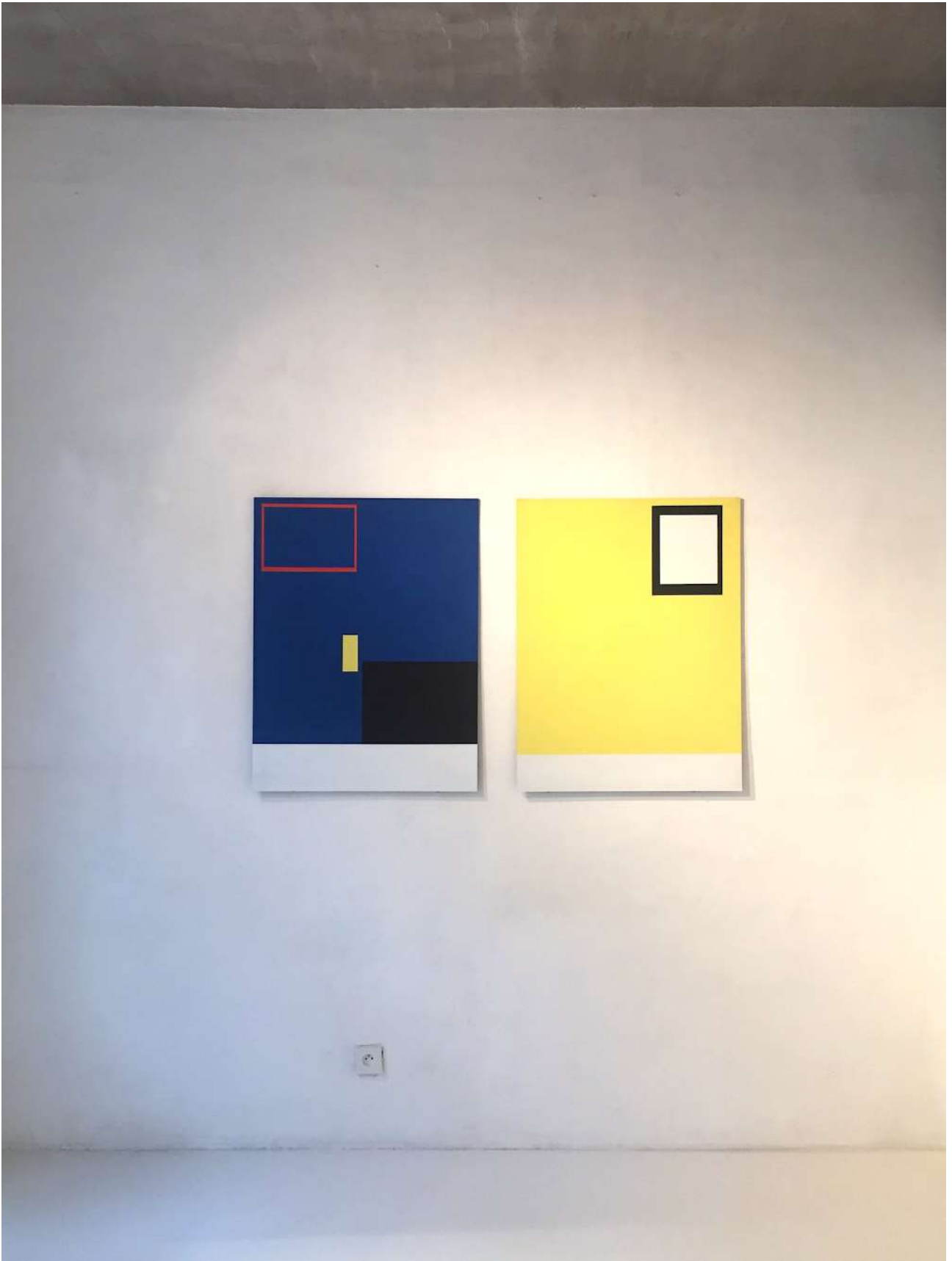
Unrequited love
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



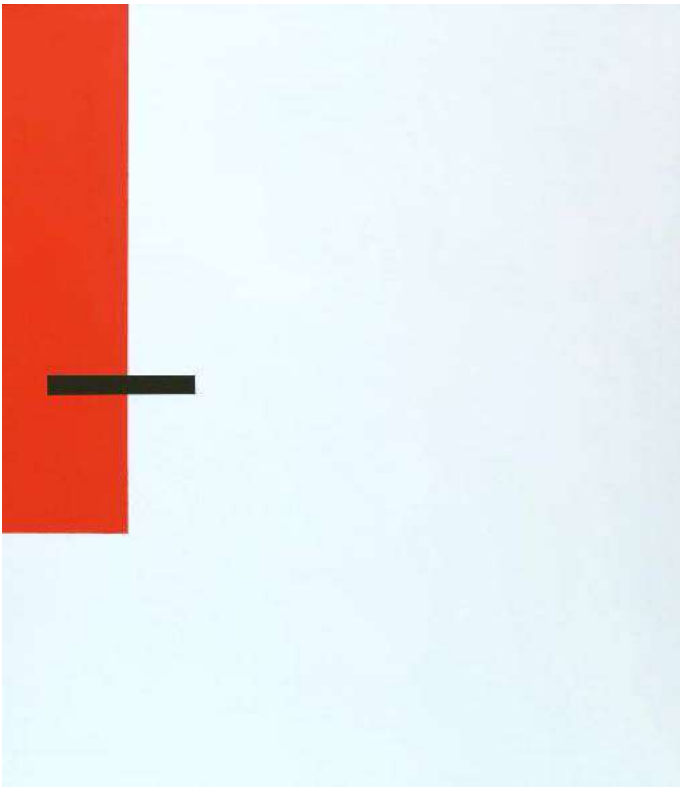
The meaning of passion,
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



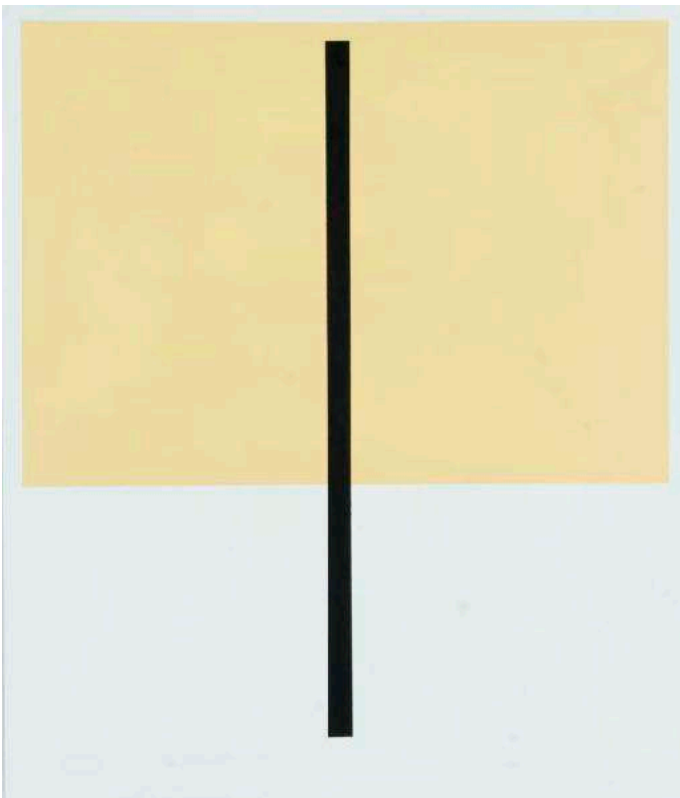
Cluster II
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
91.5x70cm, 2020



Exposition *RELATION/SHAPES*, Galerie marie-robin, Paris, France, octobre - décembre 2020



Pain
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
82x70cm, 2020



Penetration
peinture à émulsion sur bois
emulsion on wood
82x70cm, 2020

Ideal and Abstract Lines

The aporia

The latest work of Ioannis Lassithiotakis is remarkably abstract. His painting, generally, with time seems to move towards greater abstraction: From the human shadow-figures and other unspecified forms that are combined with short black lines in his previous personal exhibition, to the monochromatic triangular shapes and simple orthogonal boxes of more recent work. The loaded titles given to most of the paintings arouse the viewer's imagination, but at the same time generate a justified aporia regarding the so-called meaning that could be extracted from these austere, almost naked works. In the following pages I address this aporia, first by attempting to interpret in my own way some of the works of the exhibition and then by examining how abstract art in general and the work at hand in particular function and how they may affect the viewers.

The works

The exhibition takes off with the Boxes, a sample from a series of paintings by the artist with the same title. The commanding pictures of simply painted orthogonal boxes against a neutral background, stacked sometimes in stable, other times in unstable equilibrium, calls on us to ask ourselves: What is the content of the boxes? How and when have they been filled? Why are they positioned this way, how can they be re-arranged? Is their content a personal issue for each one of us, or is it in some sense common?

Of course every viewer can imagine that the boxes contain their identity, their baggage, personal or maybe familial, secrets or lies, memories that they want to protect from time's attrition and the daily friction with people; to keep them always there, only to know that they exist somewhere in the side or the back of their life's stage. We could also connect the work with socio-political concerns: Boxes as carriers of ideology, established, static, one-piece. Like totems of sorts, always present and always dominant in the collective imaginary, but always inaccessible with regards to their content / meaning – the only things that are manifest about them in the end are their external monochromatic surfaces and their interrelations of hierarchy and support. But perhaps it is more fruitful to connect the boxes with the metaphysical quest that runs across the whole of the artist's present work: The two-dimensional picture with the single slit that injures the homogeneity but allows us to imagine that, after all, a third dimension exists and that communication with it may be possible, expresses in simple visual language the artist's existential aporia, his anxious quest to find substance and meaning beneath the surface of things.

The painter goes ahead in this quest by moving, in his subsequent works, the process of abstraction one step further. He realizes that he can leave out of the canvas the side edges of the boxes and focus on their content in order to pose, in a visual way, conceptual, moral and metaphysical questions, by using as catalysts short black or white lines and small squares. For example, in the two works titled Black Line he places the

black line in the middle or at the edge of a yellow monochromatic block, leaving ample white margins on the lower or the upper segment of the canvas. The white could be understood as the absolute, timeless, divine light of infinity; the yellow is of ochre, of human memory, of settled experience, of life, it is earth mixed with light; the black line is fatal but not final. Considering that this black cold horizontal line is placed within the warm yellow of human earthly experience, the paintings could be interpreted as abstract vanitas, reminders about the absolute character of death which nevertheless defines and moves life itself.

In the enigmatic painting titled God's Eye the black line is placed off-center at the upper left side of the yellow of experience. The Eye of God can be understood as a metaphor that signifies an external point of view of human and worldly affairs, an Archimedean point that may be necessary to attach meaning to our lives and to render them open to moral evaluation. Because the first step in our effort to transfuse our actions with moral content is to ask ourselves whether there is someone or something that sees them, ascribing moral value or disvalue to them; or, a little bit more impersonally, whether there exists an objective point of view that is independent from us and from which we can be judged. The criteria according to which such moral judgment is passed are certainly posterior.

Traditionally, the eye of the Omniscient God sees everything and is considered to be placed outside of this world or, at least, everywhere within it. On the church-domes the Pantokrator surveys us from the center and above, from the sky, having a complete overview of his fold. The eye of such a god is the surveying instrument of a superior being that is placed above and beyond human affairs but, paradoxically, sees everything, judges, praises and punishes.

But in the painting the artist seems to discard this absolute conception of the Omniscient God, placing the eye clearly within this world, within the yellow of earth, time and life. Its placement here strips the eye of some of its godly attributes and seems to proclaim that moral judgment takes place with criteria that are human, cosmic, perhaps naturalistic, but in all cases not transcendental. Moreover, its placement off-center can be taken as a comment to the effect that this moral judgment is not always fair and impartial, precisely because it is cosmic. However, the eye keeps some of its frightening – threatening characteristics: It is still placed high, yet it is orthogonal and opaque, recalling a black box that does not emit any light but only absorbs. But the white on the lower and, especially, on the upper end of the canvas, where it appears boundless, gives the painting a sense of existential optimism, as if affirming that this imperfect cosmic judgment is not final since a white beyond also exists, even if we cannot know anything about it.

This playful probe with increasingly simpler visual means of the basic elements of human experience and of the concepts that we use to describe them, returns in different forms in the remaining paintings of the first section of the exhibition.

The work *Dialogue* perhaps represents the most abstract development of this probing process: Two short black lines, opposite each other, on a completely white canvas. Is the title ironic, alluding to a dialogue that is fruitless, sterile, impossible even? The two lines appear to be utterly disconnected and static, unable to act on each other. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the composition prima facie looks inert, on a more careful viewing it reveals dynamism, fertility, as if it is pregnant with movement that will result in interaction. The lines have an air of lightness, as if they are suspended on a vacuum and they appear to converse in a silent, maybe spiritual way. If we read the black lines as holes we could imagine this conversation taking place subcutaneously, beneath the surface defined by the canvas; if we interpret them as fatal, like we did before, we could view the painting as another abstract vanitas. But of course these interpretations are personal and the work could also function purely visually, as a dialogue between the contractive black and the expansive white.

In the works featured in the exhibition's second section, the artist appears to dwell on the contours rather than the interior of the carriers of meaning, experience or emotion that he tries to unlock. The dominant visual role is played here by the lines that circumscribe or separate the monochromatic blocks, which are always presented as dialectical pairs. Focusing on the way congenial or contradictory concepts and experiences are demarcated, defined and related, is an analytical and at the same time experiential process that can help us to understand better the concepts, but also to live the experiences in a more thorough way. For instance, contemplating on the limits of our view of the world, as the work *Window of my Dreams* urges us to do, helps us evaluate our cognitive relation to the world. Two eyes that are turned towards the absolute white, the synthesis of all the colors of the visible spectrum, a dual frame of (partial) view of the totality of the different qualities and experiences. But at the same time this frame gives depth to the painting, as if it detaches itself from the surface, floats and transfers itself to any position in space, to reveal to us again the spotless, uncontaminated white that exists everywhere. The world freshly made in the eyes of the artist and the viewer; the virgin look, the rebirth, but, unfortunately, as a dream only: yearned for yet impossible. In the painting *The Road to Freedom* this dual frame breaks: One of the two parallelograms is now open below so that the circumference is incomplete, incapable of circumscribing the limitless white. This lifting of symmetry could in itself be seen as an escape to freedom, as could the spillage of the white beyond the limits of the frame. But something is still troubling in this painting since, if we focus on the incomplete frame itself, the escape route traced by it closes in on itself, returning to the middle of the way; the road thus appears to lead to nowhere and the escape seems pointless. This is a pessimistic reading of the title's freedom but, as in the rest of the exhibition's works, the play between boundaries and interior / content can transform the way in which we understand the painting's theme.

In the two pairs of paintings with the titles *Absence – Loss and Together Forever – Separation* it appears that it is the boundary between frame and content itself what is being questioned. Hence, the external limit sometimes merges with the content, sometimes is transferred to the interior of the canvas.

At the same time the works titles suggest that the artist s interest is now turned towards the psychological, emotional world. The twin (white, black, red) columns that are depicted express the conceptual and emotional relations either through the mutilation of one of the pair and their intense color-contrast (in the cases of the compositions titled *Absence – Loss*), or through their parallel rise and separation until infinity by a thin line between them (in the cases of the compositions titled *Together Forever - Separation*). However, these columns also appear like two thin sheets that are struggling to stand against a field with depth. This feeling of depth, as well as the merging of limits and content, give the impression that the emotions and the personal experiences alluded to in the works' titles are externalized and therefore expressed and evaluated with criteria that are not just subjective: The psychological world of each person co-exists with that of their other half and both of them extend beyond the subjects, being organically situated in their environment; the interior world is completed with the exterior.

Texte : Harris Hatzioannou PhD in Philosophy, University of London October 2018

Indebted to: Discussions with I. Lassithiotakis as well as writings by K. Malevich, W. Kandinsky, E. H. Gombrich, N. Goodman, K. Varndoe and D. Portides.

Exposition *Ideal Lines*, DL Gallery, Le Pirée, Grèce, novembre 2019



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