

Greek Modern Art in Interwar Paris: Networks Rather than a Generation

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The “Association des artistes et gens de lettres hellènes de Paris” was founded in 1925. Its members included Greek artists, writers, and architects who lived and worked in Paris, including Lykourgos Kogevinas, Pavlos Rodokanakis, and Michel Economou. A year later, the sculptor Michalis Tombros published a series of articles in the newspaper “Proia” drawing attention to the fact that there was a group of Greek artists and writers in Paris who disagreed with the conservative ideological and esthetic orientation of the association. This group, to which he himself belonged, included the artists Nikos Hadikyriakos-Ghikas, Giorgos Gounaropoulos, and Dimitris Galanis, the writer Giorgos Katsimbalis, the art critics Christian Zervos and Tériade, and the collector Nico Mazaraki. Evgenios Matthiopoulos has recently argued that the term and concept of “Generation of the 1930s” was introduced by art historians and critics of the *Metapolitefsi* without such a grouping having actually existed. Tombros’s testimony confirms that the artists who lived and worked in Paris during the interwar years did not belong to only one group nor did they identify as members of a generation.

This paper will discuss the differences between the two groups of artists to which Tombros points, based on artistic and ideological criteria. More specifically, it will juxtapose the adoption of the trends of impressionism, post-impressionism, and symbolism (in line with the art promoted by the then director of the Greek National Gallery, Zacharias Papantoniou) by the artists of the “Association” with the post-cubist leanings of the group of artists to which Tombros belonged. Furthermore, the paper will focus on the latter group in order to show how these artists participated in a wider network that included both French and non-French artists, art critics, publishers, dealers, and intellectuals, among whom their compatriots Zervos and Tériade, publishers of the Parisian modern art journals *Cahiers d’art* and *Minotaure* respectively, played an important mediating role. This network had an impact both on the evolution of the artists’ creative style and on the valorization and promotion of their art through the press and exhibitions. Finally, the paper will argue that, upon these artists’ return to Greece, the continuing effect of the Parisian experience in esthetic, ideological and relational terms was evident not only in their artistic production but also in the two short-lived art journals that Tombros and Ghikas edited, namely *20ός αιών* [Twentieth Century] and *To τρίτο μάτι* [The Third Eye]. Overall, the paper will stress that what brings artists together is shared esthetic ideas and networks rather than the vague concept of “generation.”