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The Greek Sale, 1 Dec 2015

THE PRESS RELEASE

VIEWINGS

HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE, Athens: 23rd to 25th of October
CONINGSBY GALLERY, London: 9th to 14th of November
CYPRIA, Nicosia: 24th of November to 1st of December

The mystical seascape *The Port of Copenhagen* is a rare work by the 19th century, pre-impressionist marine painter Jean Altamoura and the most highly priced to be offered at Cypria's Greek Sale. The auction will be held on the evening of the 1st of December at Cypria, Nicosia premises.

Cypria's Greek Sale will total 78 artworks by Greek and Cypriot artists of the 19th and 20th centuries, whose work has shaped and influenced the evolution of contemporary Greek and Cypriot art. Highlights include rare, fine paintings by Nikiforos Lytras, Gerassimos Steris, Ioannis Kissonergis, Victor Ioannides, Alexis Akrithakis, Umberto Argyros, Katy Stephanides and Yannis Gaitis.

Ritsa Kyriacou, managing director of Cypria, says: 'The entire collection, stretching from the rare 19th century seascape of Jean Altamoura to the contemporary abstract expressionism of Maria Hatzigaki is a visual guide to the evolution of Greek art in the 19th and 20th centuries'.

A preview will be held from November 24th to the 30th, at the Cypria Nicosia premises. The inaugural preview took place from October 23rd to the 25th at the Grande Bretagne Hotel in Athens. A second viewing of the works was held from November 9th to the 14th in London's Coningsby Gallery.

Cypriot art market

Marinos Vrachimis, marketing and sales director of Cypria, points to the recovery signs for the art market in Cyprus. He notes: 'After the downslide of the economy that shocked the art market we can finally say that we are on stable ground with art sales actually showing growth'. The art market in Cyprus had fallen victim to the financial crisis that hit the Mediterranean island's economy leading to weak sales and unprecedented low prices even in the case of exquisite artworks by pre-eminent artists.

Modern Art in Britain

Ritsa Kyriacou notes a marked increase in interest for Greek and Cypriot modernists by new art collectors in London. She says: 'It is our belief that present enthusiasm for modern art represents one of the positive indices of an emerging generation of art collectors in the UK'.
'In London, established collectors with an interest in Greek art have mostly invested in traditional Greek and Cypriot painting. Increased appreciation for the creativity, the underlying ideas and the subversiveness of significant Greek and Cypriot modernists marks a fascinating development'.

AUCTION HIGHLIGHTS

Jean Altamoura, *The Port of Copenhagen*

Painted in the years Jean Altamoura (1852 - 1878) lived in Denmark, *The Port of Copenhagen* (58 χ 78 cm, oil on canvas) captures the metaphysical atmosphere of the Northern European seas with a marked shift towards the brightness of Greek light. Deeply mystical, *The Port of Copenhagen* is considered one of the most important works by the pre-impressionist Greek artist whose work had a direct and dramatic influence on the evolution of Greek art.

Alexis Akrithakis, *Untitled*

Untitled (85 χ 116 χ17cm, construction) is a fine example from a series of constructions of wood and fluorescent light by Alexis Akrithakis (1939-1994). The Greek artist experimented with the mysterious relation between art and experienced reality, theoretically and practically, stretching his exploration from artistic narrations preserving childlike innocence to colourful and fluorescent representations of hidden departure - the life that will be no more. *Untitled* was created by Akrithakis in his transitional years of the late 1970s.

Ioannis Kissonergis, *Kreontas and Antigone*

Kreontas and Antigone (82 x 122, oil on canvas) is a rare painting by Ioannis Kissonergis (1889-1963), one of the founding fathers of Cypriot art. He came under the influence of academic realism during his university years at the School of Fine Art in Athens. Kissonergis approached the painterly surface with rigidity, exceptional technique and care for details. Despite the shift from the idealized to the ordinary that dominated the realist movements, *Kreontas and Antigone* is inspired by classical mythology. This idealized work offers a glimpse into the artistic preferences of the urban elite in Cyprus during British colonialism. Most of Kissonergis' work is not dated, making *Kreontas and Antigone* particularly exceptional in that it bears the date *1925*.

Gerassimos Steris, *Homeric Seashore*

Homeric Seashore (50 χ 64 cm, oil on canvas) is one of the most representative paintings by modernist Gerassimos Steris (1898-1987). It belongs to the 1926-1936 decade in which Steris explored surrealism and the post-cubic influences of his Parisian years. An innovative and subversive artist, Steris introduced to Greek Art cubism together with the metaphysics of Giorgio de Chirico. His particular style and enigmatic paintings, full of challenge for the explorative viewer, captured the imagination of poet Odysseas Elytis prompting him to address the artist as the *lucid and elusive* Steris.

Victor Ioannides, *The Old Market*

The Old Market (55 x 64 cm, oil on board), a scene from old Limassol, is one of the finest works of Cypriot painter Victor Ioannides. An exceptionally skilled craftsman, Ioannides approached his canvas both as an impressionist and as a realist, painting scenes from every day life, landscapes, portraits, stills and nudes. The artist was captivated by light and always tried to capture its translucency and brightness. To achieve it, he experimented both with technique and materials. He made his own varnishes which he mixed with processed paints. At times he created relief surface bases from alabaster powder on canvas. Then he used the processed paints and varnishes, thus giving the painted surfaces porcelain like effect.

Katy Stephanides, *Untitled*

Untitled (80 x 105 cm, acrylic on canvas) is a unique painting by vanguard modernist Katy Phasouliotis Stephanides (1925 - 2012). It belongs to the artist's series of paintings under the general title *Homeric* (2005-2008). From her early sketches to op-art and from cubism to constructivism and abstract geometric painting Stephanides always approached painting through

the difficult track. She continuously experimented with form, colour and materials. She alternated between representation and abstraction, both of which she regarded as a way to explore and unravel the hidden qualities of space. A leading modernist, Stephanides had a dramatic influence on art in Cyprus. In the *Homeric* series, the figurine functions both as compositional element and metaphysical allegory. In *Untitled*, large fields of radiant colour attune to the symbolism of the figurine together creating a novel sense of soft form and hidden space.

NOTE FOR EDITORS

Cypria is a private auction house, founded in 2006. In the year of its launch, Cypria successfully held the island's first major sale of 19th and 20th century Greek and Cypriot art. It achieved great success and started a wave of Greek sale auctions in Cyprus which continue to date, changing the landscape of the art market in Cyprus.

Cypria is a pioneer in showcasing significant Greek art and is also committed to including the finest Cypriot art. Our success to date includes the attainment of record prices.

With art now being increasingly considered an advisable and profitable investment, Cypria remains devoted to upholding its level of success by dealing with selected works of high artistic value, as well as offering unparalleled service and expertise.

for more information

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