



weavings

Painting and tapestry in Greece
from 1960 to the present

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and all those who wish to remain anonymous.

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BENAKI MUSEUM



ALPHA BANK

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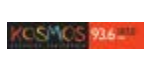
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GHKAZI

Welcome address

There is an apocryphal story relating to the post-war confiscations that returned works of art looted by Napoleon's troops to their owners; supposedly, Italian and Spanish nobles were not too keen to have their paintings back – old-fashioned things, they were; however, they insisted on furniture, carpets and tapestries, as they could come in useful. Although scholarly research has queried this anecdote, it exemplifies the importance of artistic home furnishings through the ages, an importance enshrined in William Morris's *dictum* from half a century later: 'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.' The marriage of art and utility has often been a happy one and this even applies to 20th-century modernism, which softened its 'machines-for-inhabiting' with items of high aesthetic value. The Arts & Crafts love of beauty and the moderns' love of industry can be seen to marry in architectural textiles woven in Greece and designed by the heavies of the Interwar generation but also by younger artists keen to explore a popular medium with a long tradition. It is their work as well as the conditions and context that enabled this ambitious experiment that this exhibition explores for the first time.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Benaki Museum, I would like to extend warm thanks to Alpha Bank, our co-organisers for this exhibition, as well as to the official and permanent communication sponsors. Finally, I would like to congratulate the curators of the exhibition, Irene Orati and Constantinos Papachristou, as well as the catalogue contributors, for disclosing to us a body of work that would make splendid booty indeed.

George Manginis
Academic Director, Benaki Museum

NIKOS HADJIKYRIAKOS-GHIKA
Feast by the sea II, 1970-1979
Tapestry (detail)



Prologue

The Alpha Bank Collection organises big thematic or monographic exhibitions at regular intervals. These exhibitions are always set up in collaboration with important museums of the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki, where they are also held. During the past fifteen years, the Benaki Museum has been - and still is today - a constant partner of the Bank in such events.

The existence of a sufficient core of artworks in the Collection, constituting the base for the construction of an exhibition proposal, is a prerequisite that the Bank never fails to fulfill. The tapestries belonging to the Collection constitute a particular case of artistic creation originating from a complex and equivalent collaboration. It concerns an artistic activity which was developed in Greece in the 60s, showcasing unique and unrepeated samples of expression.

The reasons behind the decision to organise the exhibition *Weavings. Painting and tapestry in Greece from 1960 to the present* are multiple.

The first is to highlight this trend, namely the efficient and esthetically exquisite creative process that brought together, in the 60s, artists and craftspeople, for the production of handmade works related to painting, weaving and architecture.

The second is the fact that this rare - in terms of the Greek reality - equivalent collaboration resulted in the repetition of a similar collaboration in the 70s, only this time with different aims and materials.

The third is related to the evolution of the interest taken in the material which showcased - from the 1980s onwards and through the crafting process of weaving based on the expressive choices of new artists, mainly women - outstanding works, largely through the Fiber Art trend which praises manual labor and the use of natural or synthetic fibers.

The choice to present the handmade “woven pictorial wall rugs” - as these tapestries were called by Yannis Tsarouchis - along with paintings, drawings, models, photographs or sculptures thematically related to one another, aims at a periodisation in Greek art after the 1960s, through works of varying textures but similar topics that can, within this context, provoke unexpected impressions, and perhaps different interpretations.

ALPHA BANK

YANNIS MORALIS
Epithalamion, 1964
Tapestry (detail)

Mur flottant et opaque^{*}

The decision to organize an exhibition with a content concerning not exclusively artworks but also handicrafts was not taken lightly, since Greece lacks a traditional uninterrupted relationship with crafts in general, as opposed to the countries of Central Europe. We investigated the chapter of tapestries exclusively with regard to the relation of such a handmade work with a work of art, namely the reproduction of a painting onto a textile surface, either a tapestry, or a hand tufted carpet, always in a limited number of copies, never exceeding twelve. The occasion, as is always the case with the exhibitions held by Alpha Bank, arose from the existing tapestries in the Art Collection. Furthermore, it was a great challenge to quest after the paintings on which the tapestries or hand tufted carpets were based, and hold an exhibition where the ones would confront the others, creating duplicate impressions.

The exhibition is divided in three sections:

1. The tapestries of the 60s
2. The production of hand-tufted carpets in the 70s
3. The contemporary works

The era of the Cottage Industry

Among its other activities, the Royal Welfare created the department of Cottage Industry in 1955. From 1960 onwards, a new interest in textile art was taken, mainly linked with its revival in France and in England since the interwar period. Until then, Cottage Industry had a different orientation, as well as a different aim: to support the women living in secluded Greek villages by assigning them the creation of embroidered or woven articles (carpets, rugs, embroideries), and the reproduction of various patterns on these articles (traditional embroideries, woven textiles and blankets, aprons, bands, laces, ancient Greek and byzantine patterns, Coptic textiles, mosaics) (pl. 1).¹ The creation of a particular Department of Cottage Industry resulted in the production of a section of drawings based on paintings, a production which continued uninterrupted until the 80s when the operation of the Department ceased.

YANNIS MORALIS
Sunken city (1965)
Tapestry (detail)

YANNIS MORALIS
Sunken city, 1960
Oil on clipboard (detail)

^{*} Le Corbusier: «*Mur flottant et opaque*». G. Jeanneau, «Actualités. La leçon d'une exposition», *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* mag., November 1937, p. 375.

1. Bilingual Catalogues of the Institute of Social Protection & Solidarity, Cottage Industry / Tapestries – Rugs, n.d., with inset cards and information about the drawings produced.



1. Carpets, Cottage Industry Program publication, National Center of Social Solidarity Archives

2. Horizontal loom, Institute of Social Protection and Solidarity publication, National Center of Social Solidarity Archives

3. Handwritten note by A. Tassos Archive of the A. Tassos Arts Society

Returning to Greece, painter Yannis Faitakis, who completed his studies with a Welfare scholarship in the Ecole Nationale d'Art décoratif d'Aubusson (1960-1962), created the first workshops which offered courses of specialization in tapestry to craftswomen who came from the "Greek Home" established by folklorist, Angeliki Chatzimichali. Later on, the same craftswomen took courses in Aubusson too, with the aim to staff the Artistic Department and more specifically to design the models in the drafting rooms.

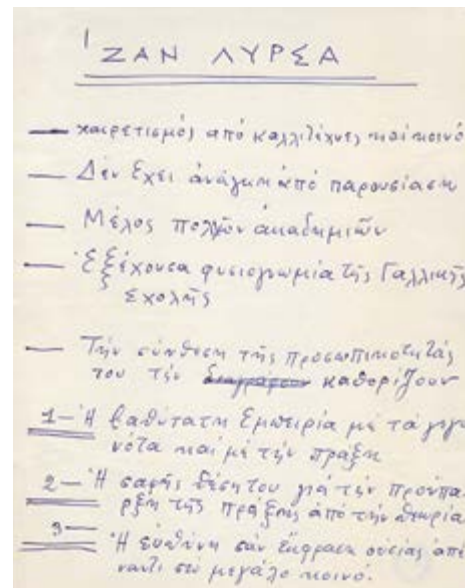
Weaving was done using a horizontal loom. The first loom of that particular type came to Athens from Aubusson² and the craftswomen worked in twos or threes (pl. 2) for the creation of one tapestry in one year approximately.³ The threads were woolen, imported from France, while the warps were cotton. Initially, Faitakis would create the preliminary drawings (patterns) for the tapestries on large cartons. The enlargement of the drawings was done with a canvas grid or with a projector, with the know-how of transposing the drawing or the painting onto a model. The numbers corresponding to the colors were noted on the pattern. The pattern was placed under the loom, while in the weaving process, the subject was created in the opposite direction.



Jean Lurçat

Jean Lurçat (1892-1966), leftist artist and itinerant, believed that tapestry would become the art of the big public buildings constructed throughout Europe in the interwar era. With his outstanding work and frankness, he contributed in a defining manner in the revival of tapestry for more than three decades. In the 1920s he had already become the painter/weaver who renovated the essence of the classic French tapestry, mainly regarding its themes, while two different trends emerged under his influence.

The first concerned the peintres cartonniers, the artists who created works, mainly quite small gouaches, specifically for the purpose of being reproduced into tapestries by the artistes lissiers who were in charge of everything else (preparation of the carton, échantillonnage, weaving). The second trend concerned paintings by



2. Information provided by Vaso Dimitrakopoulou, weaver (2018).

3. Information provided by Aliko Platania, weaver (2018).



DAPHNE
BARBAGEORGOPOULOU
Abstract Kite, 2019

MANOLIS ZACHARIOUDAKIS
Untitled, 2018-2019

TOULA PLOUMI
Finger Pockets, 2016



More specifically, for Vanezi, the importance of grids, networks and structures, the importance of weaving, speech and sound as systems of expression, are perceived in a conceptual environment where pre- and post-modern communities, materiality, time, memory, loss, deportation, are investigated in historical terms. In the weaving gesture one can identify the chronometric dimension of music, and even the condensed experience of gender roles and social balances.

For Gaitanidou, embroidery becomes a medium of expression with chromatic intensity, gradated tones and compact design (sub)structure. The naive neo-expressionism with tribal art and Henri Rousseau connotations, identified in her work by Roberta Smith,⁶ is obvious in the densely embroidered tapestries, where stitches, as free brushstrokes, recreate based on a tight design, oneiric worlds in a horror vacui atmosphere.

For Barbageorgopoulou, the gesture operates more as a venture of transcription of the physical experience in two-dimensional visual forms. The element of weaving is already present in the structure of the straw surface receiving her work. Her particular tapestries begin from a transcribed pattern which is imprinted on the straw surface using spray colors and a needle and threads that are sewn (at big intervals) and/or affixed, without spaces, even at times on consecutive repeated layers.

Finally, regarding Toula Ploumi, the canvas and the painted metal are the elements that compose the weaving structure of the *Finger Pockets* series. The canvas is cut in ribbons and braided, allowing the formation of spaces that will serve as niches for the insertion of small (finger-sized) metal pieces. At times, the metallic elements are also cut in ribbons and braided as well, or nailed on the canvas surface, like embroidered details. Nothing is final, as in this series, the malleable works seem open to all possibilities: they may be unraveled, deconstructed, and reoccur as a new version of themselves.

6. Roberta Smith, «Zoi Gaitanidou: 'Risk Aversion'», *The New York Times*, 12 September 2013 https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/13/arts/design/zoi-gaitanidou-risk-aversion.html?_r=0&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1379273501-+MQQWMVokUVyBBigUHLvnVw (access: 10 April 2019).

NIKOS NIKOLAOU



Hydra, 1972 (cat. no 37)
Plastic on canvas 155 x 206 cm
Vorres Museum

Hydra B, 1980s (cat. no 35)
Tapestry 136 x 178 cm
Alpha Bank Collection
Pages 78-79
Hydra (detail)





1. Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika

Rocks in the sea, 1964

Tapestry 307 x 251 cm

Reproduction on tapestry, Y. Faitakis, Royal Welfare Workshop of Decorative Wall Textiles
National Center of Social Solidarity Collection

Document: Tapisseries [sic], 1) *Rocks in the sea*, dimensions, quality, price. Benaki
Museum / Ghika Gallery. Mag. *Pronoia*, issue 1 (February 1992), p. 28.



2. Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika

Rocky landscape, 1964

Oil on canvas 61 x 51 cm

Benaki Museum / Ghika Gallery (PHG 76)

Ghika, National Gallery - Alexandros Soutsos Museum. Athens, May 1973, cat. no. 112
(title: *Rocky shore*); Kleantchi-Christina Valkana, *Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika. His painting
oeuvre*, Benaki Museum, Athens 2011, p. 299 (pl. 347).



3. Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika

Moon and reflections, 1967

Tapestry 221 x 153 cm

Reproduction on tapestry, Y. Faitakis, Royal Welfare Workshop of Decorative Wall Textiles
National Center of Social Solidarity Collection

Invoice No 476, National Organization of Welfare: "Tapestry No 82 / Drawing, Moon of
Hydra", National Organization of Welfare - Cottage Industry Service Archive
Dora Iliopoulou-Rogan, *Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika. The parallels (Ta parallila)*, ed. "Poly-
plano", Athens 1980, p. 146; Jean-François Bonhomme, *Ghika. Photographs 1989-1994*,
Benaki Museum, Athens 1997, No 35, 40; Evita Arapoglou, *3 Kriezotou Street. Nikos
Hadjikyriakos-Ghika. His Home, Studio and Gallery*, Benaki Museum, Athens 2011, p. 35
(No 45), p. 36 (No 46, 48); mag. *Pronoia*, *ibid*, p. 28.



4. Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika

Moon and reflections, 1967

Oil on canvas 54.5 x 38 cm

Benaki Museum / Ghika Gallery (PHG 83)

Dora Iliopoulou-Rogan, *Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika. The Apollonian-The Dionysian. 1906-
1994*, Benaki Museum, Athens 2006, p. 147 (No 249); Valkana, *Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghi-
ka*, *ibid*, p. 302 (pl. 382).



5. Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika

Wattle fences (Kafasota), 1970s

Handmade rug 300 x 200 cm

Benaki Museum / Ghika Gallery (PHG 51)

Arapoglou, *3 Kriezotou Street*, *ibid*, p. 64-65 (pl. 141), pp. 66-67 (pl. 146-148); *Carpets
from paintings by Greek artists*, "Polyplano" Art Gallery, Athens 1981, No 2 (variation).



123. **Dimitris Mytaras**

Nike

Tapestry 200 x 600 cm
National Bank, Johannesburg Branch
K. Kalavros photographic archive

The tapestry, visible at the background in the photo, was donated by the National Bank to the SABA in 1973. The SABA donated it to the Greek school SAHETI in Johannesburg in 2015 (Information provided by K. Stamatopoulos, NBG).

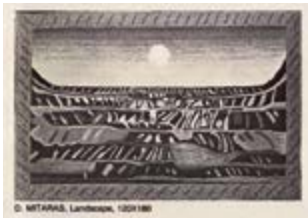


124. **Dimitris Mytaras**

Nike, 1972

Triptych. Acrylic on plywood 220 x 330 cm
Alpha Bank Collection

Mag. *Neo sima*, *ibid*, p. 27 (No 70).



125. **Dimitris Mytaras**

Greek landscape

Hand tufted rug 120 x 180 cm/12 copies
Production: "Nees Morfes" Gallery
Manufacturing: Tapis

Tapestries II, *ibid*, No 8; New Forms Gallery, *ibid* (title: *Landscape*).



126. **Dimitris Mytaras**

Greek landscape, 1972

Acrylic on canvas 134 x 167 cm
Private collection

Dimitris Mytaras, "Notes on my work", mag. *Zygos*, New period, issue 10-11 (September - December 1974), p. 44; mag. *Neo sima*, *ibid*, p. 26 (No 66); *D. Mytaras*, ed. Adam, Athens 1992; (collective), *D. Mytaras. Painting 1956-2008*, Ianos, Athens 2008, p. 99.



127. **Dimitris Mytaras**

Pigeon house, 1973

Hand tufted rug 120 x 310 cm. 12 copies
Production: "Nees Morfes" Gallery
Manufacturing: Tapis

Magda Aspidou Christodoulidou collection, Nicosia

Tapestry '73, *ibid*, No 8; Spiliadi, "With a thousand woolen threads", *ibid*, p. 52 (No 2); *New Forms Gallery*, *ibid*, (title: *Pigeon house*).



128. **Dimitris Mytaras**

Tinos - Island Pigeon houses, 1971

Acrylic on block board, six-fold 120 x 960 cm
Dating by the artist: "5-9 Sept. 1971"
Alpha Bank Collection

The artwork was created in situ in Tinos, in 5 days.
