

Pavlos NIKOLAKOPOULOS, THE APPARENT VOID
Opening Tuesday May 31st at 6pm

Pavlos Nikolakopoulos, committed artist as he is, has long worked on what he calls "the dense narration". These highly charged works are packed full of information. "I deliberately created the confusion," he said, "using political theories, slogans, songs of the street, to help the observers to focus their attention on the conflicts of which my images illuminate the magnitude." This was at the very beginning of the year 2010.

But in 2012, while what Nikolakopoulos calls "the terrorism of destruction" flourishes, the artist began to create empty spaces in order to allow for greater contemplation, while pursuing the same train of thought. And in 2015, while the material void entrenches Greece, opening completely new areas, **Nikolakopoulos got to working on metal**. Immaculate, hard, conceptual, metal is also one of the leftovers of the industrial era on which the world of today was constructed, a mnemonic trace. The density of metal invites the spectator to "touch" the work with one's eyes, freeing the narrative from the artist. The narrative embraces the poetic and all becomes a question. "I wish that utopia never comes to an end" says the artist.

But the void is not in principle nothing... how could it be, thus, being "apparent"? The apparent void is a void of "things", things which capitalism generates the desire of, the production and the "possession" of— a desire and a possession "void". The recent political and economic events of which Greece has been the theater of has generated a void of "things": empty wallets, empty cash registers, empty cabinets, empty pharmacies, empty suitcases. Greece has been bled dry, with a lack of money, investments, and capital. But if this void of "things" is unmistakable, the void of thought does not exist. Quite the contrary, **thought and language reveal themselves in full**. So it is with the works of Pavlos Nikolakopoulos and of his evolution. For the artist, language creates above all a space of thought. And if words have disappeared from his works, then they multiply in his notebooks, his indispensable lifelong companions, and develop the silent language of the **alert state**.

The poet Georges Seféris wrote the following regarding the Trojan War:

An enormous pain had fallen down on Greece.
So many bodies of men discarded on the pasture
In the sea, in the ravenous earth;
So many souls
Surrendered to the grindstone to be crushed
Like grain upon grain. ...
And my brother?
O nightingale, nightingale.
What is the divine? What its opposite?

What is there between the two?

Between the two, there is uncertainty, the ephemeral, the precarious, a violent constraint. And in the “palpable” space-time of Greek society in 2010, it seems that a poetic culture of simplicity can offer unexpected possibilities for the re-appropriation of artistic disciplines, as well as the re-appropriation of daily life, and a reinvention of a relationship to self, as well as a relationship to others and to the world. Athens, moreover, brims with artistic, poetic, performative, and intellectual initiatives: thought, creation, performance and writing are everywhere, at a crossroads of expression.

The apparent void of the works of Nikolakopoulos in no way conceal the violence that dwells. Quite the contrary, they reveal it. Violence? For the artist it is reality. **The stainless steel blades** (23 blades, like the 23 blows Brutus struck upon Caesar) reveal on the wall their reddish reflections, like that of blood. A musical work—rhythm, thought, and feeling being generated in the moment, like the rhythm of a Fontana. Facing the blades, slightly away, **the blueness of the sky casts on the knife’s blade a safety catch:** apparent void, attention danger. The white mass, at the top of the staircase seems to challenge us, like a threat—an absolute threat, sumptuous, although minimalistic, which conjures up Robert Morris, who tied the power of art to violence.

“My aim,” says Nikolakopoulos, “is to give an illusion of levity. An oxymoron. And an opportunity to feel more human.” All of these works give us a view beyond. According to Nikolakopoulos, they allow us to see the intangible. The intangible is on the horizon: behind the work, in an apparent void.

By contrast, the white piece which the spectator is confronted with upon entering the gallery resembles **a mirror**. There is no reflective effect besides the steel edge; but this square grabs the attention of the spectator and causes him to regard himself. The square, a symbolic structure, is a reference to Malevich, and also to Bruce Nauman. It is there that everything takes place, in the square, and in its edges. The spectator is in the gallery.

Upstairs, **the drawings** that follow and precede it and become **“almost nothing”** remind us of the greatest artists of drawing. “Zeichnen ist weglassen”. The red and the black, the blue, the yellow—and white, always—Mondrian, Kandinsky at times, Malevich again: emotion reveals itself in a formal minimalism, all the more poignant that it is charged with significant political questioning. But Nikolakopoulos defines himself as a material being—one who creates from material—with her—to reveal sensuality. The sensuous paper material invites us to touch. The drawing? A utopia, too. The drawings of Nikolakopoulos are as close to a form of poetry as synthetic material can be.

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