

ATHENS

APOSTOLOS GEORGIU

ATHENS GALLERY

The principal feature of Apostolos Georgiou's recent paintings is that everything seems to be compressed in a central cluster of images. By means of this singular compositional device, it appears as though the artist has deliberately let go of the rest of the surface so that the ground, in terms of content and form, is essentially not part of the painting. This engenders a paradoxical whole composed of tension-packed themes and an apparently nonchalant style. The background takes on a mercurial quality since the paint seems to have been only summarily applied to the bland surface. Indeterminate and essentially unbounded, the background appears to slide off the edges of the canvas into the surrounding space. The confines of the painting may appear to be restricted to only the image-cluster or, conversely, to extend beyond the canvas' rectangular parameters so that the dual role of the canvas-as-support and the canvas-as-background is rendered virtually defunct.

Georgiou's palette is somber and his themes solemn. The colors emphasize the personal, quotidian drama in which the figures that appear in his paintings are engaged. As a whole, the work has a touch of the theatrical. The figures are like paper dolls on a stage set that seems ready to implode—a theatrical/pictorial space that is qualitatively different from the explicit artificiality of the flat, flush background. This reading is enhanced by the artist's vernacular which is replete with unusual and forceful images that are also deceptively naive and artless. It also becomes perceptible that formal issues and painting techniques have been placed at the service of thematic content and that the painting process is only of secondary importance.

These paintings can also be viewed as portraits of the audience. Georgiou's *Everyman*, at once enigmatic and nondescript, depicted in familiar stressful situations, encourages the viewer to engage in self-examination. Moreover, the outlandish situations depicted in almost all the artist's paintings, though cryptic and absurd, are also somehow realistic because they concede that the intuitive, illogical, and irrational are intrinsic to life.

Ultimately, when Georgiou exceeds the limits of the conventional rectangular canvas surface by introducing the compacted theme coupled with a "slipping" ground, it seems like the most elegant way out of an existential cul-de-sac for an artist who has stated publicly: "I don't like being a painter and I would like to escape from painting altogether."

—Catherine Cafopoulous

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