

ART EXHIBITION “MOUNT ATHOS”

Varlamis (1942-2016) was born in Greece, in the Macedonian town of Veria, although he studied and lived in Austria. He was an all-round artist (an architect, painter, writer, designer, teacher and sculptor). He taught architecture at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and in 2010 founded the Waldviertel Art Museum in Austria (www.daskunstmuseum.at), which he also directed.

As a whole, his work was based on the diachronic values of ecumenical Hellenism and the Orthodox Christian faith. He was a deeply religious man and many of his works are of a spiritual and religious character. His distinguishing characteristic as a painter was the fact that he presented his subjects in the form of large collections (MOUNT ATHOS, ALEXANDER THE GREAT, CHRIST, SAINT PAUL, THE UNIVERSE, THE MOUNTAINS OF MY HOMELAND, MOZART, MIKIS THEODORAKIS etc.).

MOUNT ATHOS and the values it represents had fascinated Varlamis ever since he was a young man. He regarded Athos as a continuation and development of the great schools of philosophy of ancient Greece and a living ark of Hellenism and Orthodoxy. His Mount Athos collection was presented with great success at the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki (2008-2009), the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens (2010-2011), St. Mark's Basilica on Crete (2013), the European Parliament in Brussels (2013) and the Waldviertel Art Museum (2014).

In the gallery on the right there are realistic depictions of the monasteries of Mount Athos, illuminated in such a way as to highlight the spirituality which is everywhere present on the Holy Mountain. The visitor feels as if they are walking amongst the monasteries themselves. The central gallery is dominated by the compositions depicting churches with the Virgin Mary or an angel and the impressive interior of the Monastery of Great Lavra. The gallery on the left presents: 1) typical dependencies of the monasteries, i.e. sketes, kellia and monastery harbours; 2) a series of pictures with a modern artistic approach encapsulating the essential features of Athos in bold outlines reminiscent of the Byzantine style and vivid



colours; 3) a closed room containing ‘The Supplications of the Monks’, a scenic installation that combines painting, lighting and the singing of psalms, in which the visitor can experience the mystical and penitential atmosphere of the Athonite ‘Paraklesis’ services.

Varlamis believed that we can learn a lot from the lives of the monks. Spirituality, Faith, Obedience, Respect for the Environment, Discipline, Frugality – the values that characterise the Athonite Republic – can provide people with a source of strength and help during the current ‘crisis’.

The exhibition aims to show the importance and value of Mount Athos for all people, regardless of race or religion.

