

# PETER KATSICHTIS AND THE METROPOLIS ART GALLERIES

A Manhattan Showplace for the finest contemporary Greek artists.

BY MICHAEL KARRAS



*Peter Katsichtis and his wife Stella at their gallery in New York*

**Q. Do you believe first in the artist or in the work of art?**

**A.** "Your question is something like the one about the chicken and the egg. However, I do believe first in the work. The artist creates the work, but the work defines, makes the artist"

Peter Katsichtis is, like so many of us,

a dreamer. His dreams sweep over bare canvases and imbue them with images electrified with bold, brave color and stunning imagination. He knows that if he concentrates long and hard enough, his dreams will have a chance to take root in reality. As we all know, when man has the will to accomplish, there is no limit to the ideas the mind conjures up and brings to fruition. Multi-colored

desires fill up stark white canvases to form works of art suitable for framing. Unlike many of us, Peter Katsichtis frames his dreams in the world of reality.

**Q. What is your advice for achieving professional success?**

**A.** "The same as it would be for achiev-

ing personal happiness. Love life. Love. Be faithful to your family, your religion, your dreams. Find what stirs, stimulates, excites you and determine what you cannot live without. Then, pursue your desires with all your heart and energy."

A dream-come-true for Peter Katsichtis is Metropolis Art Galleries, at 790 Madison Avenue, located along the Manhattan street that is synonymous with fine art. Peter's desire is to display the works of contemporary Greek artists, most of whom have already achieved fame in their own country and European nations where many of them have studied, as well as that of younger artists who are slowly on their way to recognition.

**Q. Why is it that you plan also to exhibit the works of lesser known artists?**

A. "I believe strongly in what young people have to say, in particular the artists who are striving to express new ideas and variations on age-old themes. The show opening at the gallery on April 19 will feature the drawings, paintings, and prints of such an artist, Yannis Psychopedis, who is now beginning to make a name for himself in Germany."

When I met with Peter at his gallery one afternoon just recently, I found myself in the company of a man who I instinctively admired. I didn't confront him as the successful restaurateur that I know he is, but as the art connoisseur, the dreamer whose passion for works of beauty preceded his direct involvement in the world of art, a microcosm he has admired from a distance for many years.

According to him, he created the Metropolis Art Galleries in order to share his profound love of art with others, most especially the Greek-American community, and to introduce to the American public artists whose works are worthy of consideration well beyond and geographic borders. Like a bank in which people place their utmost trust before they deposit their money, a gallery must encourage trust, first from the artists themselves and then from the public. A purchase of fine art may be among the best investments anyone can make, not only in terms of monetary value but for the immeasurable pleasure it will undoubtedly provide. When the



*L. to R.: Dr. Michael Sideris, artist Psychopedis, Mrs. Kalamaras, Tom Kalamaras, Mrs. Katsichtis, Mr. Katsichtis and Mrs. Niki Sideris, at the opening of the second exhibit at the Metropolis gallery.*



*Mrs. Exarchos, the wife of the permanent representative of Greece to the U.N. and Mrs. Katsichtis at the opening of the Psychopedis exhibit.*

gallery opened its doors in the Fall of 1990, the well known artists Christos Caras and Dimitris Mytaras entrusted their paintings to Peter Katsichtis. The public liked what it saw and the success of that inaugural showing launched the gallery's reputation.

A gallery is by no means a small ven-

ture. It is a major investment of time and money; it requires keen knowledge of the art marketplace and of who's who among artists. It also requires a special sort of sensitivity and belief, and a commitment to doing what is best for the proper promotion of each individual artist. In a city like New York, where the competition is huge and often mind

boggling, it also needs all the support it can get.

**Q. Do you believe that the Greek community in New York has supported your endeavor?**

**A.** "Without doubt. I have seen so many enthusiasts among the Greeks who, like other friends of the gallery, are delighted to find such interesting works by Greek artists. This work cannot be lumped together and labeled "Greek art". Perhaps there are certain points of view expressed that artists of other nationalities may not depict in the same way. But the subject matter is universal, as relative to the Greeks as it is to the Americans or Russians."

**Q. What is your deepest desire for the Metropolis?**

**A.** "Recognition, on a much broader scale within the American art community so that it will take a place among the great galleries of New York City. This will come in time. The Greek artists who will be presented will do all the work because each and every one has a great deal to offer."

The Metropolis offers a warm and gracious welcome. The gallery is Peter's extended home, the place to which everyone is invited to come and admire, to learn and discover all sorts of things about contemporary art that they may not already know. We are so used to looking back into history to the artworks created by our ancestors and which are displayed prominently in every major museum of the world. We lose sight of the fact that contemporary art created by today's Greeks is also rich. It is admirable that someone, that Peter Katsichtis, is here to remind us of all the good works being created today and provide us with the opportunity to see for ourselves that the tradition of fine art continues.

**Q. How would you characterize today's art market and the art-buying public?**

**A.** "Despite the enormous competition that exists today, artists of merit will be recognized for their abilities more readily than ever before. Art buyers are more knowledgeable of what comprises good art and, consequently, they will choose more carefully those pieces they



*Psychopedis: Nude in front of the Mirror, 1987, Pencil, 51x66 cm.*



*Atlantic Bank president Charalambos Zarakiotis chatting with Peter Katsichtis and painter Psychopedis.*

will admit into their homes to become a vital part of their daily environment. People demand works of art that will energize and refresh them, get their minds thinking and emotions flowing. Gone are the days when paintings were chosen according to whether they matched the living room furniture or color scheme. People are seeing and appreciating art for art's sake. They are also more aware of the investment factor. Like a piece of well situated property or a precious gem, works of art can appreciate in value at an alarming rate. The last few years in particular have pointed out this fact to the average person, a fact

that serious art collectors have always known."

**Q. The first show featured the works of two of Greece's foremost artists, Garas and Mytaras. The second show will feature the work of Psychopedis. Are you interested in group shows?**

A. "I would love to host a group show of the works of well-known artists and a separate one of the works of newcomers. Also, I would love to exhibit the works of Greeks living and working in the United States, such as Vassilis Lambrinos, a wonderful artist."

**Q. Have you thought about showing photography or any other medium besides canvas art?**

A. "Photography is not out of the question at a later date. At some point in the near future I would also like to exhibit sculpture. I am always interested in expanding, but right now there is so much I want to show in the category of canvas art. So much."

**Q. Now that the gallery is on its way toward achieving a certain measure of success, what else would you like to achieve?**

A. "Honestly, I would like to stimulate the Greek to become yet more interested in art. Our history is one of nonstop artistic expression. Art is part of us and we must appreciate and support it in all its various configurations. I would like to play an important role in seeing to it that all Greeks have a place where they can always come and learn, question and suggest."

**Q. Do you have plans for expansion?**

A. "Plans are underway for a second Metropolis, in Glyfada, the seaside suburb of Athens. It's much too early to make plans for elsewhere, although I have already given a great deal of thought to other locations here, in the United States, and in Europe. One at a time."

**Q. Greece at the moment is experiencing a critical political and economic period. Is now the time to open a gallery there?**

A. "I have every confidence that the situation is going to change for the better. I believe that the people who live in Greece must show greater amount of trust in the present government and not try to escape for their responsibilities as Greeks. If every Greek would show support, Greece would go forward more quickly. This is what I hope will happen and this is what I believe will happen. It's just going to take a little bit more time."

Peter Katsichtis told me that aside from art and, naturally, his lovely wife, Stella, that which he loves most in life is challenge. "I want to wake up every morning and be faced with a challenge. I want my mind to be free to explore and to create something new every day. I want all my endeavors to be worthy so that I may offer something of significance to my fellow man."

**Q. From what I know, you have accomplished yourself as a top notch**

**restaurateur. Why not combine your interests in good food and good art and open an elegant little restaurant in Manhattan called, let's say, The Greek Gallery. It could feature original works of art and original Greek culinary delights. I'm sure the Greek community would take pride in such a place. I'm sure the American community would take equal pride.**

A. "I would like that very much. As it is, I have something cooking already, but starting tomorrow I'm going to take your suggestion seriously. Should it come to be, I'll tell everyone that you're the godfather."

**Q. If a friend asked you what you would like to be doing if you were not doing what you are doing now, what would you say?**

A. "I'd say that I haven't yet begun what I am doing now. How can I want to do something else, be something else? I'm totally involved with this moment. And, I'm enjoying myself totally. But tomorrow, well, that's another day."

And tonight, well, just may bring yet another dream.

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