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‘The New Icons’

23rd April • 14th May 2008

Vessel Gallery

114 Kensington Park Road

London W11 2PW UK

‘The 12 Madonnas’

9th • 22nd June 2008

Famagusta Gate Cultural Centre

Nicosia Cyprus

‘I.con.i.cal.ly’

16th Oct. • 4th Dec. 2008

Bridge Gallery

98 Orchard Street

New York NY 10002 USA



Like most Greeks, I was raised in two visual traditions: a Western one, where novelty was at a premium; and an Orthodox tradition, which valued conformity above everything. To succeed as an artist in the non-Orthodox world, you had to come up with a new visual vocabulary. To be an Orthodox icon-maker, you had to learn a pictorial language handed down from artist to artist, unchanged, since the start of time.

The question for me, as for many Greeks, is how to reconcile these two things: to make icons which are modern, but which respect the traditions of iconography. Icons aren't just images of holiness. They are holy, sometimes even *acheiropoieton* – made by saints, untouched by human hand. As one historian puts it, "the icon is a hole in the dyke separating the visible world from the divine, and through this hole ooze precious drops from the great sea of God's mercy." The search for a new iconography is not something to be undertaken lightly.

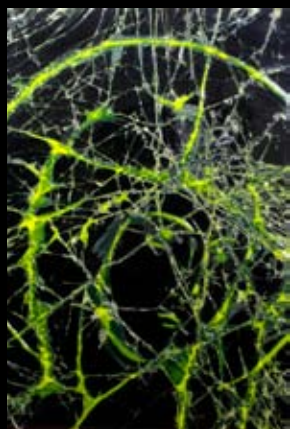
It struck me, on a retreat to Mount Athos a few years ago, that glass was the ideal medium for conducting this search. Icons have always been seen as windows between the human and divine worlds: glass is both transparent and capable of bearing an image, a revelation and a mystery. Abstraction – seeing reality in a non-realist way – is part of the iconic tradition. (Icon-makers have never gone in for perspective, or for naturalistic portraiture.) After a lot of thought, I have set to work on a series of icons of mainly the Madonna and child which will, I hope, place Orthodox traditions in a modern context – see miracles in new technology, signs of God's genius in materials like fluorescent paint. The Virgin is both the Mother of God and a woman. She is eternal, but also mortal; unchanging, but capable of change.







Gold on Black, 105 x 70 cm



Barbed, 50 x 35 cm



Unveil, 50 x 35 cm



Swept Away, 50 x 35 cm



Confusion, 50 x 35 cm



Sweet Embrace, 50 x 35 cm



Silver Blue, 50 x 35 cm





Hiding, 105 x 70 cm



Opening the door, by emmanuel cooper

*'All you need is your own imagination So use it that's what it's for
Go inside, for your finest inspiration Your dreams will open the door'*

Vogue, Madonna. Written by Madonna and Shep Pettibone

Reconfiguring familiar images has long been a challenge for artists. Andy Warhol turned major figures of the sixties and seventies, such as Marilyn Monroe and Chairman Mao, into transformed but instantly recognisable images through simplifying and enhancing their appearance. For George Papadopoulos it is the powerful image of the Madonna that, as a child, he found mesmerising and one that has continued to hold his imagination.

As a child, during his visits to Orthodox Churches in his native Cyprus, he was surrounded by images of the Madonna, a popular devotional subject across Central Europe for over 600 years. He gazed at it within the aura of solemn ritual, richly decorated vestments, flickering candles, pungent incense and a powerful sense of theatre. Reassuring, reliable and comforting, Papadopoulos found the steady, modest and retiring gaze a welcome sign of security in a rapidly changing world.

At the same time he was also aware of the inflexibility of such devotion, of the attempt by the church and other institutions to keep things as they were. Such ideas resurfaced six years ago when he spent time in the all male atmosphere of one of the monasteries in Mount Athos in northern Greece. Here the strict routine, the highly directed day and the formal ritual, while offering a purposeful structure, also seemed to Papadopoulos rigid and inflexible in its determination to resist change.

It was with such thoughts in mind that he started to look more systematically and closely at images of the Madonna, whether as prints, paintings or even mosaic. In the Greek Orthodox tradition, not only was the arrangement of figures significant but there were also rules about line and colour. The features of the face were important, noses, for instance, were made thinner and mouths smaller to emphasize their spiritual nature. With their explicit depiction of the Virgin, icons are in no sense seen as 'graven images', but, as the eighth-century Saint John of Damascus observed, 'open books to remind us of God.'

Undeterred by such a long and well-honed history, Papadopoulos started to investigate how he might make his own representations of the 'Holy Mother' in sheet glass. With a combination of questioning and reverence he started to play about with the image, secure in the knowledge that however far he pushed and pulled it – literally shattering the image – it would retain its magic and mystery. Using the basic outline of the familiar Madonna, he assembled the layers before carefully cracking the glass to emphasize form and structure. On some he incorporated prints derived from ancient icons, often enhanced by judicious use of gold leaf, to create multi-layered images that glow with life.

Later works became bolder, freer and more experimental. Through the use of luminescent colours such as reds, yellows and greens he introduced a new awareness of light that illuminates the image of the Madonna as an icon for our time. While acknowledging tradition, Papadopoulos has used the medium of glass to bring a fresh awareness of the idealised image. His series of works are both a meditation on, and also recognition of, the abiding power of a figure that continues to catch the popular imagination – one that remains an inspiration in 'opening doors'



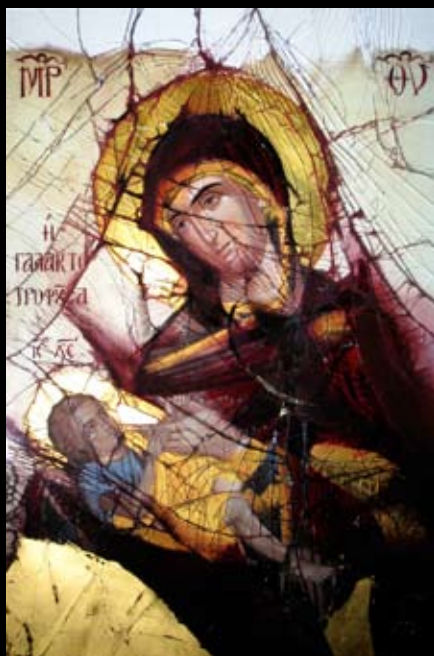
Jesus of Nazareth, 105 x 70 cm



Jesus of Nazareth, 105 x 70 cm



Sweet Kisser, 105 x 70 cm



Golden Breast, 105 x 70 cm



The Liberator, 105 x 70 cm



Guiding Light, 105 x 70 cm



Secretive, 105 x 70 cm

yorgos papadopoulos

Born Cyprus 1969

Education

- 1999 MA Ceramics & Glass, Royal College of Art
- 1993 BA Interior Design Middlesex University London

Teaching

- 2002 Visiting lecturer, RCA

Selected group & solo exhibitions

- 2008 'Effervescence II' Sussex Barn Gallery – Chichester UK
- 2007 'Dissection' ABC Carpets & Home – New York USA
- 2006 'New Voices in Architectural Glass' The Hub – Sleaford UK
- 2006 'Bombay Sapphire in Paris' Galerie Claudine Papillon - Paris France
- 2005 'Elais + Grove' 50 Bank Street Canary Wharf London UK (solo)
- 2004 'Glass has many faces', Tiffany Glass, Schloß Holte-Stukenbrock, Germany
- 2004 'Elea', The Gallery, Cork Street, London UK (solo)
- 2002 'Rosenthal: New Routes - New Destinations', Frankfurt, Milan
- 2000 'Apeiron', Hellenic Centre, London UK
- 1999 'Ninety degrees', Hockney Gallery, RCA UK (solo)
- 1999 'Collaborations', Victoria & Albert Museum UK
- 1997 'Barbican Showcase', Barbican Centre, London UK

Selected commissions

- 2008 Lincoln Vale Sloane Square London
- 2006 Pied a terre restaurant W1 London
- 2005 Vima Dance Studio – San Francisco
- 2004 Cunard liner, 'Queen Victoria'
- 2003 Berkeley Square House, London
- 2001 Private residence, Radlett, Herts
- 2000 Collingwood jewellery store, Old Bond St, London

Collections

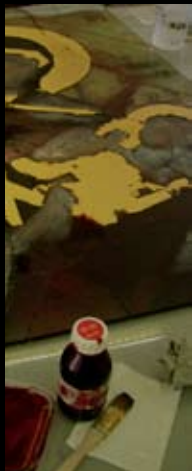
- 2004 Derix Studio, Taunusstein, Germany
- 2001 British Airways Art Collection, Terraces Lounge Heathrow T4

Awards and Scholarships

- 2004 Bombay Sapphire Prize (shortlisted)
- 2002 100% Design / Crafts Council Bursary
- 1999 RTZ Travel Scholarship, West Coast, USA

Publications

- 2006 'Colours in Architecture' Andrew Moor
- 2004 'Lamination', George Papadopoulos, A&C Black, London
- 2003 'Smocks v. Comme des Garçons' – Modern Painters Winter
- 2002 'Glass', Chris Lefteri, Roto Vision



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