

...so a sense of bravery to expose myself this way. I am not hiding anything anymore»

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...that now it's OK for Greek...
...pool. Whereas when I went...
...en fruit. I love the fact that I...
...mmunity. There was a time...
...Now it's a totally different

...n come about it?
...e back of a major exhibition...
...th a view of doing a follow...
...e at the Hellenic Museum,
...to Athens and the Benakis...
...o. I have been working on...
...- which has always been a...
...ways featured in my work -...
...d really embrace that. When...
...nic Lyceum to exhibit I got...
...brating Greek women and...
...alian culture and history. I...
...ded to incorporate that into

my imagery. The painting I am exhibiting celebrates the females I grew up with: my mother, my sisters who are strong women.

Was the piece created especially for the exhibition?

Yes it is. But my work follows on all the time. I don't really stop and think what I am going to paint for a particular exhibition. As you know that Greekness has always come through naturally in my work; I don't really have much say in that.

That was my next comment. Although your work is predominantly abstract, the Hellenic influence is always very distinguishable.

I think I am still covering my identity as a Greek Australian artist. I don't really have much of a choice over it, I can't really switch it off, it's always there. So instead of trying to squash it, I embrace it. I don't know if you remember these paintings that I did, the ones that were monochrome, red, yellow or blue, and heavily



scrapped. The Greekness there, was hidden behind the paint. Now I allow the figures to come out and I show the markings of the paint. It's almost like I show the architectural diagrams of the pain. This comes in the form of text, of writing, of little abstract figures, that sort of thing.

Can we put that down to maturity?

Yes, but it's also a sense of bravery to expose myself this way. I am not hiding anything anymore.

Do you think the struggle between the two aspects of your nationality, between the Australian and the Greek, create interesting art?

Look, I did struggle with it. There was a period of ten years when I would travel between Australia and Greece every summer. It's that classical thing: over there you are Australian, over here you are a Greek. It's a constant battle to find where one belongs and where one exists. But I also think that by exposing the framework of these paintings it shows that I have now settled somewhat. To show a figure that does not look like it has been totally polished with Mr Sheen, is fine by me.

You divide your time between Australia, New York and Singapore. How did the art world over there react to this amalgam of these two influences?

You know what? I think my work transcends many different cultures and speaks to many different people. It doesn't necessary need to be a Greek-centric or Australian-centric. I believe it has the ability to touch everybody. Because I believe my work has to have a soul, it has to have a voice. And as soon as I create something I destroy it and rip the paper apart and create it again. Because it's all history and it's the history I carry, the history you carry, it's the history that every person carries. When people look at my work I want them to connect with it, to find some sense of truth in it.

Most artists go through serious bouts of depression. Is it true that depression breeds good art?

I think it's a myth. All humans need to go through the darkness to get to the light!!! Thankfully for me, I have that vigil of pushing paint around as my meditation. That's what saves the soul. Unfortunately a lot of people don't have that ability. My work serves as a beacon of truth; there are no lies in it. That's why it connects with people.

I find that the more personal a work is, the wider its appeal.

Absolutely! People are walking this earth searching for some sense of truth and belonging. Some turn to religion, some to drugs, others to meditation. What I have always pursued in my work is pushing for the truth. And I am not talking about universal truth, but truth in the confines of a canvas. So I go into my upmost part of the earth to push a painting as far as I can. I use the term Jack Kerouac used to write about: it's called satori, an elevation. And being in a state of assurity where everything for a second begins to make sense. And clarity...

How was the New York experience for you?

New York is good, it's very hard work, very difficult because basically I had to go there and reinvent myself. It's not like here where I have a reputation and I have people that have followed my work for 20 years, know who I am and have collected it. Over there it was a completely different situation. I had to basically start from scratch. Which in some ways was exciting, but very hard work, never the less. You have to go in, and like a fish find which stream to swim in.

Do you still swim against the current though?

Absolutely. Otherwise I would have been working in an office somewhere making \$300,000 a year doing what we term as an honest. But I always swim against the current. It's inherit, it's within me. As much as I would like to swim with it, I can't. It's like being asked whether I paint for money. No, I don't.

What's next?

I have some very exciting and interesting things on the horizon. Like I have mentioned earlier there is the prospect of the Hellenic Museum in Melbourne and the Benaki Museum in Athens. Hopefully we can fuse them together. That's where I want to take my career: into the museums. It's well and good to do the commercial things, but in places like Europe and the USA it's more important to exhibit in museums. That's what I am striving for. But it takes a lifetime...

But I always presumed that when you signed on the dotted line, it was for life.

It was. As much as I would like to run from it, it always pulls me back. Art is a mistress that calls me all the time. We live in hope. And that hope is to pick that brush up and push it around.