

# Portraits of Women

Exhibition of paintings by Dina Tourvas at The Shop Gallery in Glebe April 6th-12th 2015

by Anna Couani



Η κα Κόττη, η κα Λιν Ευαγγελάκος και η ζωγράφος



Η ζωγράφος Ντίνα Τουρβά με την ποιήτρια Άννα Κουάνι



Ο πρέσβης της Ελλάδας, κ. Χαράλαμπος Δαφαράνος, η σύζυγος του Έβη Δαφαράνου, ο καθηγητής του τμήματος νεοελληνικών σπουδών του πανεπιστημίου του Σίδνεϊ, Βρασίδης Καραλής, ο καθηγητής του τμήματος νεοελληνικών σπουδών του πανεπιστημίου του Σίδνεϊ, Αντώνης Δρακόπουλος και η ζωγράφος Ντίνα Τουρβά



Η συντονίστρια της εκδήλωσης Ελένη Ελευθερίας Κουστακίδη ανάμεσα σε παρευρισκομένους



Η ζωγράφος και η ηθοποιός Κική Μπέτυ



Οι ποιητές Αντιγόνη Κεφαλά και Γρηγόρης Χρονόπουλος



Η κα Σοφία Καθαρείου Ράλλη και η ζωγράφος



Η καθηγήτρια του πανεπιστημίου της ΝΝΟ, Ευφροσύνη Δεληγιάννης και ο καθηγητής Αντώνης Δρακόπουλος

Dina Tourvas' exhibition, Portraits of Women was a performative phenomenon as much as an exhibition, especially on the opening night. We found ourselves standing in a room gazed upon by 14 contemporary Sydney faces and remarkably many of the subjects of the portraits were also standing in the space, animated, talking, laughing, walking, posing with the artist in front of their portraits. I was one of them, along with an interesting collection of Sydney writers, musicians, artists and intellectuals, many from Greek backgrounds. Eleni Eleftheria, Antigone Kefala, Martha Mylona, Yota Krili, Athena Touriki to name a few. It was almost indescribable, the sensation of being part of this event. Those women are part of Dina's social and intellectual circles but also constitute a substantial force, a not-so-visible Sydney network. The effect of being

there was so positive, to be included and to have that feeling of a conferred sense of belonging. The paintings were all arranged at the same height, at eye level, surrounding the viewer on three sides, so this created a round table effect, where each woman was equal and each portrait accessible to the viewer. Each of these works is now the property of its subject, we each left with our own portrait when the show finished. Although the occasion felt very natural and easy going, I think the significance of this event will dawn on all of us slowly. This was a one-off, unlikely to be repeated, this collection, performed before this group of people with their fellow practitioners, their friends, partners, husbands.

This was the outcome of years of work, of planning by the artist who has been immersed in an ongoing project to paint portraits of women from both her own circles and from

history. The set of portraits of Sydney women was accompanied by a second set of 13 portraits in the second room of the gallery, of famous, in many cases revolutionary, women from the present and the past. Women as various as Emma Goldman, Susan Sontag and Virginia Woolf. Dina sees this set as a homage to women "who have sacrificed their lives in order to fulfil their missions and beliefs", meaning women like Rosa Luxembourg.

Many of the portraits were painted on a floral patterned background and all are finished with a lace border sewn around the canvas. There is a unity in the show, not only stylistically (in the application of a feminine aesthetic), but also because the canvases are all the same size. Knowing that this series continues into the future, that it is a project that may never be finished, leaves a permanent question mark and also a desire to suggest other

candidates. It leaves me thinking of all the important women in my own life and the women I value in history. So the feminist intention of the exhibition was not only on display but also influential.

The exhibition was launched by His Excellency Mr Harris Dafaranos, the Greek Ambassador to Australia who spoke in Greek and English and speeches were also made by Mrs Eva Dafaranos and Eleni Eleftheria. They all acknowledged the uniqueness of the collection, the political importance of such a show and the fascinating content. A special treat was Helen Aristidou singing the famous Seferis/Theodorakis song Denial that had everyone singing along.

On the golden sand  
we wrote her name;  
but the sea-breeze blew  
and the writing vanished.