

Maria Grigoriadi

a man who looks like me

Looked at from a distance, Maria Grigoriadi's paintings seem like maps of a vibrant microcosm. At approaching this microcosm, one notices human figures in strange acrobatic poses. They may be discerned, at times somewhat faintly and at times more clearly, amidst a variety of geometric forms, or seen projecting through lighter or heavier depositions of substances and materials placed on successive layers on the monumental canvases, along with readable or unreadable inscriptions and symbols. One may also see an umbrella, a fish, an animal, or a ball that in one painting is depicted as a linear symbol and in another as a color chart. Yet although these works with their segmented imagery seem to be describing the modern compartmentalized condition of existence, and even if they may be likened to a collage of snapshots of a joyful colorful world, their subject-matter remains the art of painting itself.

Abstract works which palpitate with an inner rhythm, its necessary pauses and moments of exaltation, they tell the story of the birth of matter. It is line, volume, form, texture, flow and staticity that is described on their painting surfaces; it is matter under formation. Through the process of layering, gestural drawing, the persistent reference to geometry, and the materiality of artificial means, Grigoriadi explores her relationship (and ours) with the recognisable or the as yet unrecognisable code of the phenomenon of the visible and sensible world. In her work, the vacant timeless surface of the two-dimensional canvas is thus transformed into a vital space within which the chaotic perception of the world becomes rationalized.

A central vehicle and a persistent reference in these monumental works is the grid: a structural element that organizes space, checks the diffused and flowing, provides borders and isolates groups of elements. Based on the rectangle, or square -a reference to the non-naturalistic and a central feature of modernity in art- the grid, or the multiple overlain grids used in the works, create a special spatial condition: defying central perspective (Renaissance), they segment the painting surface thereby allowing a fragmented narrative to unfold, while also acting as a pattern that may extend beyond the canvas boundaries. However, at the same time, the grid functions as a unifying web that binds the sum of the fragmented structure, offering coherence to each

composition.

Apart from simultaneity in the fragmented narrative, (a narrative strategy that is consciously selected by the artist) the temporal aspect is also hinted at by the technique used. Utilizing a variety of substances and materials in successive layers, which create areas of opacity and density the works hint at a condition of past and present, ranging from the primeval to the modern and the up to-date.

But it is not the beginnings of the world and its creation - the cosmogonic myth with the struggle between chaos and form - that is being explored here in the paintings. At the core of Grigoriadis' painting proposal is the ability provided to her by the art of painting, (and thus to all of us, as viewers of the work of art), to analyse and comprehend the visual phenomenon of physical and material existence. Thus, persistently addressed in her work is the way vision and visual information works and how it is in turn decoded and rationalized via manual labor and the use of artificial means. This is revealed by the titles the artist selects for her works, such as "Pictures," "Look," "Gaze," "Symmetrical Chaos," "Square," "6X12". It is more descriptively analysed in the excerpts she often chooses to accompany her exhibitions with their recurring references to eyes, light and vision, as to hands and writing. In one of these excerpts, it is precisely this continuous and endless spiritual effort of man to find and understand his place in nature's everflowing state that is described, how he strives to convert this cognition into a visual code and thus transmit it:

In that circular cell, a man who looks like me is writing in letters I cannot understand, a long poem about a man who in another circular cell is writing a poem about a man who in another circular cell...

Denise-Chloe Alevizou

art historian

Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids', in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, Mass. and London 1985.

Jorge Luis Borges, *A Dream*, from the poetic collection *The number 1981*, Alianza, transl. S.J. Levine cfr. Maria Grigoriadi "Togetherness", exhibition catalogue, Medusa Art Gallery, Athens 2011.