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Description of the funded research project
1st Call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects to Support Faculty Members &
Researchers and Procure High-Value Research Equipment

Title of the research project: The Institution of Panhellenic Art Exhibitions, 1938-1987

Principal Investigator: Evgenios D. Matthiopoulos

Reader-friendly title: Panhellenic Art Exhibitions

Scientific Area: Humanities and Arts (Art History)

Institution and Country: University of Crete, Greece

Host Institution: Foundation for Research & Technology Hellas (FORTH) – Institute for Mediterranean Studies (IMS)

Collaborating Institution(s): -

**Project webpage
(if applicable):** <https://panartexh.ims.forth.gr/en/index>



Evgenios D. Matthiopoulos



Lefteris
Spyrou



Spyros
Moschonas



Afroditi
Kouki

Budget: 187.000 euros

Duration: 24 μήνες

Research Project Synopsis

The research project aims at the systematic documentation and critical analysis of the fifteen Panhellenic Art Exhibitions, which organized between 1938 and 1987 and were the most important periodical large-scale art exhibitions in 20th century Greece. Their significance is evident by the systematic participation of almost all the well-known Greek artists, the large public attendance and the abundance and extent of the art criticisms published in the press.

The project is based on the following research axes: a) Research in the archives of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, as well as in the archive of the Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece, in order to record and collect the material related to the Panhellenic Exhibitions: i.e. minutes of the Organizing and Jury Committees, correspondence, statutes, photographic material, exhibition catalogues etc. b) Research in the collections of State Art Museums (National Gallery, Athens Municipal Art Gallery, Piraeus Municipal Gallery, Ioannina Gallery etc.) and Ministries and public sector bodies (e.g. the collection of the Bank of Greece or National Bank), as well in private collections and artists' studios, in order to identify the works of art acquired by the Panhellenic Exhibitions and to identify them in the corresponding catalogues. c) Research in the daily and periodical press, in order to find out the articles on the Panhellenic Art Exhibitions as well as photographic material from the exhibitions, exhibited works, etc.

This study provides us with essential information about the artistic production in Greece, the means of State intervention in the arts and the trends within the art market. Finally, it looks at the art criticisms, which formed the dominant aesthetic canon, by promoting certain artistic criteria and consequently influencing the reception of the artworks by the public and the direction of the artistic production in Greece.

Project originality

Despite its fundamental importance in the history of Greek art, the institution of the Panhellenic Art Exhibitions remains a largely under-researched area by the scientific community of art history in Greece. The systematic documentation and critical analysis of the fifteen Panhellenic Art Exhibitions organized between 1938-1987 is an original in every aspect study related to a broader research field. Firstly, it provides us with essential information about the artistic production of each era, the dominant artistic trends, and the degree of convergence of Greek art's directions with the then current international trends. Secondly, it offers the opportunity to look at the means of State intervention in the arts, to highlight the underlying ideological-aesthetic tendencies that might have contradicted or compromised the composition of the jury, and to interpret the rationale behind the choice of the submitted artworks, as well as the criteria of the awards. Thirdly, it records the trends within the art market, as several artworks were purchased by the State for the financial support of Greek artists and by individual buyers. In addition, such transactions were directly related to the enrichment of the collections of public arts institutions. Finally, of special interest is the study of the contemporary art criticism, i.e. the articles and essays, which were published during and after the Panhellenic Art Exhibitions. These texts contributed to the promotion of certain artists and/or various aesthetic tendencies and influenced the reception of the artworks by the public. At the same time, the art critics often promoted specific aesthetic criteria in the public sphere, forming thus a dominant aesthetic canon and consequently influencing the direction of the artistic production in Greece. Finally, the comparative study of the statistics of the Panhellenic Exhibitions will allow us to draw conclusions about social and gender discrimination in the field of art.

Expected results & Research Project Impact

As part of the research project, an open-access electronic database is being developed at the Institute for Mediterranean Studies (FORTH), which records the data for each Panhellenic Art Exhibition separately. In its final form, the user will be able to see the catalogues of the exhibitions, photographs, reproductions of the identified works, as well as the relevant articles that were published for each exhibition all in digitized form. Moreover, the members of the Organizing and Jury Committees, the awarded prizes and the purchases made by the State and individuals are recorded. At the same time, the organization of a Scientific Meeting titled “The Institution of Panhellenic Art Exhibitions, 1938-1987” is being prepared, where the research data, as well as scientific papers on the subject will be presented. The proceedings of this meeting will also be published in a special and richly illustrated volume.

These deliverables will contribute substantially to the promotion of the research of the history of Greek art, since the critical analysis and the systematic documentation of the fifteen Panhellenic Art Exhibitions is related to the study of artistic institutions, the reception of the artworks, the history of ideas and the social history of art. During these exhibitions, the aesthetic perceptions, the ideological tendencies and the stylistic pursuits of the artists were confronted. Furthermore, the boundaries of State intervention in the arts, the relationship between artists and art-critics, as well as between artists and public were constantly at stake. Finally, as the State was expected to buy several works from the exhibitions for the financial support of the artists, the Institution of the Panhellenic Art Exhibitions became a key regulatory factor in Greece’s artistic life.

The importance of this funding

Since the preparation of my doctoral dissertation, my broader long-term research strategy was aimed at the study of the institutions in the field of fine arts in Greece. Under this perspective, the recording and documentation of the Institution of the Panhellenic Exhibitions constitutes one of the fundamental conditions for the understanding of their historical development.. Given that 2.050 artists participated, and more than 11.000 works were exhibited, the task of locating, recording and documenting the Panhellenic Art Exhibitions, as well as their art-critical reception, would only be possible through the collaboration of a group of art historians within a funded research program.



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