

A unique exhibition.**Giannoulis Halepas**

Ismini Patta (2007)

“Art is the metaphysic of the craftsmanship” a critic said once to pinpoint the subtle level that a craftsman has to exceed to be a sculptor. Giannoulis Halepas is one of them. He is a landmark of our cultural patrimony and the most famous of the 19th – early 20th century.

The unknown masterpieces of this internationally recognized sculptor are today exhibited at the National Gallery’s Sculpture Section. It is the first time -and maybe the last- that his work is gathered all together, since almost everything belongs to private collections. 95 pieces and 120 drawings as well as many archives are the material presented till the end of June 2007.

The exhibits are organized by themes. They are presented in such a way to make evident every particularity of the artist’s evolution before and after his inclusion in the psychiatric institution for nearly 40 years. We have to congratulate the contributors of the exhibition for the effort involved and the two years of preparation.

Halepas (1851-1938) studied neoclassicism in Munich, where his talent generated enthusiastic comments. His neoclassic pieces are monumental, realistic and sensitive. They are executed with an incomparable liberty of movement.

But after the sculptor's inclusion and his coming back to social life, there are many changes. It can be seen that he gave genuine solutions to narrative and technical problems. For instance, the double-face busts or the many scenes represented on the same piece. Researchers discriminate two periods after Halepas' inclusion: The first, 1918-1930, at Tinos-island; the second from 1930 to his death (1938) in Athens. In both, the artist requires more freedom for his expression, not only in the themes but in the form too. "The new old Halepas has headed the young one" he used to say.

In those pieces the ancient pagan world coexists peacefully with the Christian one. Dream, imagination and reality have no borders. The pieces recall the archaic period (before the ancient classicism). Also, they make us suspect that Halepas might know the modernistic tendencies of his contemporaries.

All in all it is a unique exhibition that if you miss, only through the photo-album you will be able to see. Cosmote, the defrayer, made a difficult but good choice.

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