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Glafki Gotsi

*Hellenic Open University*, [glafkigotsi@gmail.com](mailto:glafkigotsi@gmail.com)

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# A “Guarantee of Clustered Energy and Collective Promotion”: The Association of Greek Women Artists and its Exhibitions in the 1950s and 1960s

Glafki Gotsi \*

*Hellenic Open University*

## Abstract

Founded in Athens in 1954, the Association of Greek Women Artists organized a significant number of group exhibitions in Greece and abroad, where its members showed their work. This paper examines the context of the association’s all-women shows in the 1950s and 1960s and their meaning in relation to feminist cultural politics inside, but also beyond, national borders. More specifically, it analyzes the purposes of the collectivity, the critical reception of its exhibitions in Greece and their interpretation as female initiatives. It also explores the possible connections between the association and other Greek or foreign women’s groups.

## Résumé

Fondée à Athènes en 1954, l’Association des femmes artistes grecques a organisé un nombre important d’expositions collectives de ses membres en Grèce et à l’étranger. Ce papier examine le contexte des expositions de l’association dans les années 1950 et 1960 et leur signification par rapport à la politique culturelle féministe dans le pays mais aussi au-delà des frontières nationales. Plus précisément, il étudie les objectifs du collectif, la réception critique de ses expositions en Grèce et leur interprétation comme initiatives de femmes. Il explore aussi les connexions possibles entre l’association et d’autres groupes de femmes, grecs ou étrangers.

*\* Glafki Gotsi holds a PhD in the history of art from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She has taught at several university departments. She is currently employed at the Hellenic Open University. Her publications and research interests focus mainly on issues of modern and contemporary art from the perspective of the history of women and gender.*

The Association of Greek Women Artists (AGWA)<sup>1</sup> was formed in 1954 in Athens. Amongst its founding members were many women artists from different generations: some with a long history in the world of art, such as Thalia Flora-Karavia (1871-1960), Sofia Laskaridou (1878/1882-1965) and Charikleia Alexandridou-Stefanopoulou (1889-1963), others with a well-established reputation, like Maria Anagnostopoulou (ca. 1890-1971), Pinelopi Oikonomidou (1894-1963), Koula Bekiari (1905-1992) and Rea Leontaritou (1910-1992), and still others who had started their careers more recently, for example Efi Micheli (1906-1984), Lili Arlioti (1908-1979), Koula Marangopoulou (1913-1997) and Alex Mylona (1920-2016).<sup>2</sup> According to its statute, the aims of the association were the study and collective confrontation of all art problems, the dissemination of art to the public, and, finally, the communication with similar art societies abroad and the exchange of exhibitions and other events that could promote Greek art outside the country and foreign art in Greece.<sup>3</sup> Active until the end of the 1970s the AGWA was particularly effective in the 1950s and 1960s, when it pursued most of its goals: it organized a considerable number of exhibitions in Athens, in provincial towns and abroad, and it came into contact with groups of women artists in foreign countries.

This article presents and discusses aspects of the AGWA's history with emphasis on its exclusively female character, which was sustained in the rhetoric and the exhibitory policy of its members. In alignment with the demands of feminist historiography and theory to restore women artists

to history and to critically scrutinize art practices and discourses,<sup>4</sup> the purposes of the group and the reception of its shows are here examined as part of the history of all-women collectivities and the discussion about art created by women. The essay focuses on the AGWA's activities in Greece in the 1950s and 1960s, and also considers its possible connections with female groups in other countries. The association's orientation to not only a national, but also an international scene, proves particularly interesting, since it uncovers a series of contacts and exchanges among women from different parts of the world. From this point of view much more needs to be explored not only in Greece but also elsewhere. As it has become clear to me while studying the AGWA, its case is only one example of the various female initiatives taken in the 1950s and 1960s in many countries.

Although art historical research about women artists in Greece at that period is not particularly rich, there exist some works which make a brief reference to the AGWA and its shows.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the breadth of the association's exhibitions and the multifarious actions of its members call for a more thorough investigation, which will add much to our knowledge about individual efforts and collective practices. Art groups in Greece have recently attracted the attention of some art historians, but despite the extensive information presented in these studies, there is no examination of the AGWA.<sup>6</sup> This is an unfortunate omission, given the historical sources, which offer full evidence of the association's regular and vivid presence. According to one explanation, the exclusion is due to the "non-artistic" criterion of

<sup>1</sup> In Greek, *Kallitechnikon Somateion Ellinidon*.

<sup>2</sup> The founding members, who signed the association's statute in 1954, were 22 in total. A published list of the AGWA members comprises 70 names of women artists, founding members included. See Eirini Chariati, *Εικαστικά τα εν Ελλάδι... 1940-2000* [χωρίς φόβο και πάθος] [Visual Arts in Greece...1940-2000 (without fear or passion)] (Athens: 'syllogos'-Argyris Vournas, 2000), 79-84.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?", in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, eds. Vivian Gornick, Barbara Moran (New York: New American Library, 1971), 480-510; Ann Sutherland Harris, Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976); Roszika Parker, Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London, New York: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Charis Scholinaki-Chelioti, *Ελληνίδες Ζωγράφοι, 1800-1922* [Greek Women Painters, 1800-1922] (PhD dissertation, Athens: National and Kapodistrian University), 68, 383-384; Angela Dimitrakaki, "Elements of a Secret History: Women, Art and Gender in Modern Greece", *Third Text*, no. 37 (1996): 68-69; Polyna Kosmadaki, *Τίτρα*

*Χρυσοχοϊδή* [Titsa Chrysochoidi] (Athens: Benaki Museum, 2007), 47; Georgia Metaxa, *Η γλύπτρια Φρόσω Ευθυμιάδη-Μενεγάκη (1916-1995): επισημάνσεις για τη ζωή και το έργο της* [The Sculptress Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki (1916-1995): Notes on her Life and Work] (MA dissertation, Athens: National and Kapodistrian University, 2009), 70-71.

<sup>6</sup> Evgenios Matthiopoulos, "Από τον 'Σύλλογο των Ωραίων Τεχνών' στους 'Νέους Έλληνες Ρεαλιστές': καλλιτεχνικές ομάδες και οργανώσεις στην Ελλάδα (1882-1974)" [From the 'Society of Fine Arts' to the 'New Greek Realists': Art Groups and Organizations in Greece (1882-1974)], in *Εθνική Πανακοθήκη, 100 Χρόνια* [National Gallery, 100 Years], ed. Marina Lambraki-Plaka (Athens: National Gallery and Alexandros Soutsos Museum, 1999), 155-175; Spyridon Moschonas, *Καλλιτεχνικά σωματεία και ομάδες τέχνης στην Ελλάδα κατά το α' μισό του 20ού αιώνα: η σημασία και η προσφορά τους* [Artistic Unions and Groups in Greece during the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Their Significance and Contribution] (PhD dissertation, Athens: National and Kapodistrian University, 2010); Spyros Moschonas, "Τα καλλιτεχνικά σωματεία στην Ελλάδα: 1930-1955" [The Artistic Leagues in Greece: 1930-1955], *Ιστορία της Τέχνης* [Istoría tis Technis], no. 4 (2015): 46-65.

gender that has determined the AGWA's formation.<sup>7</sup> As this implies, the collective issues and demands raised by women artists can be left outside the field of art historical analysis. This suggestion is not easily understood, especially when we consider that other art organizations with aims of a purely professional or unionized character are not overlooked by inquiry. The consequence of such an approach is serious, since it perpetuates the absence of women from history.

As my research has revealed, there exists a variety of documents on the subject of the AGWA, both in the press and in the archives: interviews, reviews and photographs in newspapers and journals, catalogues and leaflets of the exhibitions, as well as letters and other written or published data from the personal collections of some of the members. The close analysis of all this material offers valuable information and contributes to the reconsideration of the role of the association and of some of its artists.

### The historical context of the AGWA and its aims

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the formation of groups was a common practice among artists, who assumed they could better promote their work, as well as ideas and needs, through collective movements. The organization of exhibitions was the main form of action developed by art groups in Greece, and several women participated in such events and bodies. At the beginning of the 1950s the names of a number of female artists, who would soon participate in the AGWA, featured in the lists of members and exhibitors of groups like Armos [Joint] (1949-1954), Stathmi [Level] (1949-1955), Omas Zografoi kai Glyptai [Group Painters and Sculptors] (1949-1955) and Ergastiri [Atelier] (1952-1969). Moreover, many women were

enrolled in the *Kallitechniko Epangelmatiko Epimelitirio* [Chamber of Fine Arts and Trades], the primary contemporary institution in Greece responsible for issues of professional rights and demands of artists.<sup>8</sup> The majority of the AGWA's members participated in the Chamber,<sup>9</sup> however they decided to form their separate female group, apparently in order to advance their distinct issues as women.

Although it was not declared in the statute, one of the AGWA's main concerns seems to have been the condition of women artists in Greece, who, as the president Eleni Theochari-Perraki stated in 1957, remained unnoticed and were set aside.<sup>10</sup> Two years earlier Hara Vienna (1922-1982), painter and member of the association, had remarked in an interview that while women artists shared the same difficulties and aspirations with men during their studies, their situation deteriorated thereafter since they lacked the necessary networks that men were able to find, and, furthermore, they faced male competition in the profession.<sup>11</sup>

These career problems of women could probably not be elaborated and attended to within the framework of the Chamber of Fine Arts and Trades, nor could they be solved in the context of the other mixed art groups. As the painter and important proponent of the AGWA Diana Antonakatuou contended in 1965, the association's creation was a "guarantee of clustered energy and collective promotion" that women needed because of their inferior and marginal positioning in the art world.<sup>12</sup>

The strategy of the association, with its emphasis on the organization of exhibitions and on people's contact with women's art, had been a familiar one since the interwar period. Then similar intentions had been demonstrated by the Women's Association of Letters and Arts and its exhibition in Athens in 1937.<sup>13</sup> Several members of the AGWA

<sup>7</sup> Matthiopoulos, "Από τον 'Σύλλογο των Ωραίων Τεχνών' στους 'Νέους Έλληνες Ρεαλιστές'", 156.

<sup>8</sup> The Chamber of Fine Arts and Trades was founded in Athens in 1944.

<sup>9</sup> A list of the artists registered in the Chamber of Fine Arts and Trades in the 1960s contains many of the names of the AGWA's members. See Chariati, *Εικαστικά*, 30-54.

<sup>10</sup> El. N., "Στην έκθεση του 'Ζυγού' με τις Ελληνίδες ζωγράφους" [At 'Zygos' Exhibition with the Greek Women Painters], *Αυγή* [Avgi], May 30, 1957.

<sup>11</sup> R.P. [Roula Papadimitriou], "Συνέντευξις με την ζωγράφο κ. Χαρά Βιένα" [Interview with the Painter Ms. Hara Vienna], *Φως* [Fos], April 21, 1955.

<sup>12</sup> Eleni Marinou Lazaridou, "Το Καλλιτεχνικόν Σωματεῖον των Ελληνίδων" [The Association of Greek Women Artists], *Δράσις* [Draasis], March 1, 1965, typed text in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file "Letters from Various Bodies, with Statutes", National Gallery, Athens.

<sup>13</sup> On the Women's Association of Letters and Arts and the exhibition of 1937 see Chariklia-Glafki Gotsi, "Feminist Art", 'Female Art', 'Sexless Art' in a Modernist

had participated in that show, and thus engaged in the interwar collectivity that had attempted to encourage professional women, female artists included, by strengthening their mutual bonds. Although this older group does not seem to have undertaken any further action in the following years, it can be presumed that the association of the 1950s had its roots in the female initiative of the 1930s.<sup>14</sup> Besides, as was noted in a brief historical report in 1963, the AGWA had been founded by “a group of distinguished artists and active members of the arts section of the Women’s Society of Arts and Letters, which had accomplished a great deal before the War.”<sup>15</sup> The connection between the two collectivities was also implied in a newspaper article published in 1955, which mentioned that the AGWA had been founded before the war.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, it is possible to argue that the group had refrained from action during the years of the German occupation of the country (1941-1944) and the subsequent Civil War (1946-1949), and had later returned with a more formal structure. In any case the claim of continuity on the part of the AGWA’s members revealed the acknowledgment of a female past and the belief in the usefulness of women’s networks.

Other additional signs of relations and co-operation among women also existed before the inception of the association. On the one hand, there was the coordinated participation of substantial numbers of Greek artists in two events abroad: first in the International Women Painters, Sculptors, Gravers exhibition, organized by the National Council of Women of the USA at the Riverside Museum in New York in 1939,<sup>17</sup> and later in the 45th Annual

Exhibition of the Women’s International Art Club at R.B.A. Galleries in London in 1947.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, there were two exhibitions of female artists in Greece: one at the gallery ‘Knossos’ in Athens in 1953,<sup>19</sup> the other at the hall of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Thessaloniki in 1954.<sup>20</sup> Many of the participants in these latter shows were afterwards included in the members’ list of the association, the official character of which was probably agreed in the context of these preceding events.

The goals of the AGWA corresponded, as it becomes clear, to the interests and the pursuits of its participants. First of all, the steady presence at exhibitions and the orientation towards a public both inside and outside the country can be traced in the activities of several of its individual artists, who showed work at collective exhibitions held in Athens, in provincial towns, or abroad. This was, for instance, the case of Anagnostopoulou, Antonakatoú, Niki Karagatsi (1914-1986) and Ioulia Papanoutsou (1900-1973), who in the period 1949-1953 exhibited in Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos and Rome, as members of the group Stathmi.<sup>21</sup> Other artists of the AGWA, like Leontaritou, Micheli, Mylona and Ira Oikonomidou (1909-1997), participated in the exhibitions of the members of the group Ergastiri in Athens but also in the provinces between the years 1954 and 1969.<sup>22</sup> The concern to present work abroad, quite popular among Greek artists since the interwar period, led members of the AGWA to search for more opportunities; hence, for instance, the exhibition of Arlioti, Bekiari, Terpsi Kyriakou (1916-1993) and Ioanna Spiteri (1920-2000) in Venice in 1959,<sup>23</sup>

Context: Women’s Collective Exhibitions in Greece, 1925-1937”, in *Women’s Contributions to Visual Culture, 1918-1939*, ed. Karen E. Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 46-49.

<sup>14</sup> On this hypothesis see also Glafki Gotsi, “Αρχείο και γυναικεία καλλιτεχνική δραστηριότητα στον 20ό αιώνα: γενικές παρατηρήσεις για την ελληνική περίπτωση και μερικά παραδείγματα” [The Archive and Women’s Artistic Activity in the 20th Century: General Remarks on the Greek Case and Some Paradigms], *Κριτική+Τέχνη* [Kritiki + Techni], no. 6 (2015): 246-47.

<sup>15</sup> Exhibition catalogue *Καλλιτεχνικών Σωματείων Ελληνίδων. Πρώτη θερινή έκθεση / Association of Greek Women Artists. First Summer Exhibition* (Rhodes, July-August, 1963).

<sup>16</sup> Terpi Skordou, “Η έκθεση Ελληνίδων ζωγράφων και γλυπτριών” [The Exhibition of Greek Women Painters and Sculptors], *Σφιγξ* [Sfinx], December 24, 1955, press clipping in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file “On Exhibitions, 1955-1959”, National Gallery, Athens.

<sup>17</sup> Exhibition catalogue *International Women Painters, Sculptors, Gravers. Australia, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, organized by the National Council of Women of the United States* (New York: Riverside Museum, 1939), 10-12.

<sup>18</sup> See the letters of L. E. Pirie, secretary of the Women’s International Art Club, and Margaret Thomas, member of the Women’s International Art Club, April 5, 1947, in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file “On Exhibitions, 1938-1954”, National Gallery, Athens. See also the exhibition catalogue *Women’s International Art Club, Contemporary European Women Painters*, March 14th-April 5th 1947, 17. Special thanks go to Althea Greenan and Una Richmond who facilitated my access to a copy of the above catalogue.

<sup>19</sup> Exhibition catalogue *Έκθεση Ελληνίδων Καλλιτεχνών. Κατάλογος έργων* [Exhibition of Greek Women Artists. List of Works] (Gallery Knossos, November 22-December 22, 1953).

<sup>20</sup> Exhibition catalogue *Α’ Έκθεση Ελληνίδων Καλλιτεχνών. Κατάλογος έργων* [First Exhibition of Greek Women Artists. List of Works] (Hall of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Thessaloniki, January 16-30, 1954).

<sup>21</sup> Moschonas, *Καλλιτεχνικά σωματεία*, 652-53, 660-61, 664, 686. The sculptress Ioanna Spiteri was also a member of Stathmi and participated in its exhibitions in Greece.

<sup>22</sup> Moschonas, *Καλλιτεχνικά σωματεία*, 782-802.

<sup>23</sup> Exhibition catalogue *Espongono quattro artiste greche: L. Arlioti, K. Bekiari, T. Kyriakou, G. Spiteri* (Venezia: Galleria 3950, 1959).

possibly mediated by Spiteri, who was living in Venice at the time; or the participation – after selection by special committees appointed by the state – of Arlioti, Vasso Katraki (1914-1988), Eleni Stathopoulou (1915-2016), Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki (1916?-1995), Bekiari, Mylona, Eleni Zerva (1917-1993), Eleni Pagkalou (1905-1995), Kyriakou, Natalia Mela-Konstantinidou (1923), Ifigeneia Lagana (1915-2004), Jenny Lyber-Argyrou (1902-1975), Ira Oikonomidou, Titsa Chrysochoidou (1906-1990), Karagatsi and others, at international events like the Biennale of São Paulo or the Biennale of Alexandria in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>24</sup>

Aside from planning and organizing exhibitions, the AGWA's other objective, the achievement of contacts with similar female groups elsewhere, related, as becomes obvious from the available archival material and other sources, to the involvement of at least some of its members in collective bodies with a pro-women or feminist agenda. The sculptress Bella Raftopoulou (1902/1907-1992) and the painter Lyber-Argyrou, for instance, participated in the Lykeion ton Ellinidon (Lyceum of Greek Women),<sup>25</sup> a club advocating women's educational and professional rights together with their philanthropic and national activities. The sculptress Efthymiadi-Menegaki was member of the Ethniko Symvoulion ton Ellinidon (National Council of Greek Women),<sup>26</sup> an

organization of conservative feminist tendencies affiliated to the International Council of Women.<sup>27</sup> The international connections between women's collectivities meant communication and exchange on various matters, not only political or social, but cultural as well. From this point of view some women artists engaged in specific projects. Thus, in 1951, on the occasion of the triennial meeting of the International Council of Women that was held in Athens, Efthymiadi-Menegaki offered her studio for the presentation of Greek women artists' works to the foreign visitors.<sup>28</sup> In 1955 during her stay in Egypt the same artist visited the female School of Art run by the woman painter Zenat Abdou.<sup>29</sup> In that year she also met Mary Fedden, president of the Women's International Art Club, with whom she discussed the possibility of the AGWA's participation in the forthcoming exhibition of the Club in London.<sup>30</sup> Another member who must have made similar efforts was Chrysochoidi. In her case it is possible to assume that she was one of the artists responsible for the communication of the AGWA with the Fédération Internationale Culturelle Féminine, after the former's integration into the latter's list of group members in 1961.<sup>31</sup> In 1961 Chrysochoidi made contacts with the Club International Féminin, soon to develop into the Fédération Internationale Culturelle Féminine, in order to send works to its exhibition of 1962.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>24</sup> For the detailed lists of names of artists who exhibited at the Biennale of São Paulo and at the Biennale of Alexandria in the years 1955-1975 see Tonis Spiteris, *3 αιώνες νεοελληνικής τέχνης 1660-1967* [Three Centuries of Neohellenic Art 1660-1967] (Athens: Papyros, 1979), vol. 3, 378-385. See also Scholinaki-Chelioti, *Ελληνίδες Ζωγράφοι*, 244-245, 269, 274, 278, 290, 306, 321, 326, 338. A long list of names of women artists who exhibited at various international shows is provided in D. Papageorgopoulos, "Οι Ελληνίδες καλλιτέχνιδες στις διεθνείς εκθέσεις" [Greek Women Artists at International Exhibitions], accessed March 14, 2018, <http://www.academia.edu/13741120/>

<sup>25</sup> Eleni Bobou-Protoyapa, *Το Λύκειο των Ελληνίδων 1911-1991* [The Lyceum of Greek Women 1911-1921] (Athens: Lyceum of Greek Women, 1993), 222, 257, 262, 292, 302, 305, 309.

<sup>26</sup> About Efthymiadi-Menegaki's participation in the National Council of Greek Women see Metaxa, *Φρόσω Ευθυμιάδη-Μενεγάκη*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> About the National Council of Greek Women and its conservative position regarding the issues of women's work and the vote, see Efi Avdela, Angelika Psarra, *Ο φεμινισμός στην Ελλάδα του μεσοπολέμου: μια ανθολογία* [Feminism in Greece in the Interwar Period: An Anthology] (Athens: Gnosi, 1985), 41-44. See also Angelika Psarra, "Φεμινίστριες, σοσιαλίστριες, κομμουνίστριες: γυναίκες και πολιτική στο μεσοπόλεμο" [Feminists, Socialists, Communists: Women and Politics in the Interwar Period], in *Βενιζελισμός και αστικός εκσυγχρονισμός* [Venizelism and Bourgeois Modernization], eds. Giorgos Mavrokordatos, Christos Hadjiouis (Heraklion: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis, 1988), 67-82. On the International Council of Women see Leila J. Rupp, "Transnational Women's Movements", *European History Online* (EGO), published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2011-06-16, accessed September 23, 2018, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/ruppl-2011-en>

<sup>28</sup> Letter of the National Council of Greek Women to Efthymiadi-Menegaki, in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file "On Exhibitions, 1938-1954", National

Gallery, Athens. See also the typed list of names and exhibits with the headline "Œuvres des Femmes Artistes Grecques Réunies dans l'Atelier de Madame Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, Sculpteur", in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file "Letters from Various Bodies, with Statutes", National Gallery, Athens.

<sup>29</sup> See the transcription of Efthymiadi-Menegaki's interview on Cairo Radio, December 28, 1955, typed text in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file "On Exhibitions, 1955-1959", National Gallery, Athens.

<sup>30</sup> Letter of Mary Fedden to Efthymiadi-Menegaki, September 16 [1955], and letter of Efthymiadi-Menegaki to Mary Fedden, without date, in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file "Letters from Various Bodies, with Statutes", National Gallery, Athens. About the Women's International Art Club see Peter Gordon, David Doughan, *Dictionary of British Women's Organizations 1825-1960* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists Between the Wars: 'A Fair Field and No Favour'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 209-220.

<sup>31</sup> On the participation of the AGWA in the Fédération Internationale Culturelle Féminine see the exhibition catalogue *Καλλιτεχνικών Σωματείων Ελληνίδων. Εκθεσις Μεγάλη αίθουσα Πarnassos* [Association of Greek Women Artists. Exhibition. Large Hall of Parnassos] (December 5-23, 1963).

<sup>32</sup> Letter of Lucie Buniol, president of the artistic section of the Club International Féminin, to Chrysochoidi, December 12, 1961, in the archive of Titsa Chrysochoidi, file 2, "Invitations to Exhibitions, 1977-1948", Benaki Museum, Historical Archives. On Chrysochoidi's contacts with the Fédération Internationale Culturelle Féminine see also Kosmadaki, *Τίτσα Χρυσοχοΐδη*, 47, 67. For a brief history of the Fédération Internationale Culturelle Féminine see "Historique", accessed August 18, 2018, <http://www.ficart.org/index.php?page=choix.historique>. For an interesting comment on the political role of the Fédération see "Künstlerinnen Europas", accessed August 18, 2018, <https://plassenburg.de/de/angebote/archiv/kuenstlerinnen-europas>

After briefly pinpointing the moves and connections of specific members, the title, the program and the activities of the AGWA can be better contextualized and understood. Like other contemporaneous art groups, the AGWA strived for the circulation of the art of its members through the organization of exhibitions in the Greek capital, in the provinces and abroad. At the same time, inspired by the ideas and practices of female activist groups like the National Council of Greek Women and encouraged by the initiatives of international art and cultural collectivities of women like the Women's International Art Club or the *Fédération Internationale Culturelle Féminine*, it directed its endeavors both to domestic and to external spaces, representing women artists in Greece and Greek women artists abroad.

### The exhibitions and their purposes

From 1954 to 1970 the AGWA held seven exhibitions of its members in Athens, ten in provincial towns and eight abroad (Figs. 1-2). It also showed work of American and British women artists in Athens.<sup>33</sup> The number of its shows, the span of time they cover and their geographical dispersion are quite impressive, when we compare them with the respective data of other art collectivities. For example, between the years 1954 and 1969 Ergastiri, the only contemporary group with an equivalently extensive exhibiting program, organized in total ten exhibitions of its members, nine in Athens – one of which also travelled to provincial towns in the Peloponnese and Macedonia – and one in Piraeus.<sup>34</sup>

The exhibition spaces of the association in Greece were diverse: halls of societies, a private gallery, an ocean liner, a hotel, a state hall, a public library, a cultural center, as well as venues controlled by the American factor, i.e. the hall of the United States

Intelligence Service and later the “Kennedy” hall of the Hellenic American Union.<sup>35</sup>

#### In Athens

- 1957: • Zygos Gallery  
• Hall of United States Information Service - Olympia Ocean Liner  
1963: • Parnassos Literary Society  
1966: • Hellenic American Union, Kennedy Hall  
1968: • House of Fine Arts and Letters  
1969: • Hellenic American Union, Kennedy Hall  
1970: • Hellenic American Union, Kennedy Hall

#### In the provinces

- 1961: • Thessaloniki, Techni Art Society  
• Volos, Hall of Tourism  
1963: • Rhodes  
1964: • Ioannina  
• Corfu  
1965: • Thessaloniki, Techni Art Society  
• Argos, Hotel Mycenae  
1966: • Patras, Municipal Library  
1968: • Tripoli  
1969: • Zakynthos, Cultural Center

Figure 1. Association of Greek Women Artists. List of members' exhibitions in Greece (1954-1970)

- 1955: • Cairo, Museum of Modern Art  
1958: • New York, Argent Gallery  
1960: • Hilversum (Netherlands), Goois Museum  
• Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni  
1962: • Paris, Salon du Club International Féminin, Museum of Modern Art  
1963: • Canada  
1964: • London, Women's International Art Club  
• Paris, Salon du Club International Féminin

Figure 2. Association of Greek Women Artists. List of members' exhibitions abroad (1954-1970)

Women artists' personal connections and public relations, their aims to show and sell work to particular audiences, or their cultural and political

<sup>33</sup> In 1957 it presented works of members of the American National Association of Women Artists, and in 1965 works of members of the Women's International Art Club. The list of its shows till 1970, where unfortunately not all exhibition spaces are noted, is cited in the exhibition catalogue *Καλλιτεχνικών Σωματείων Ελληνίδων* [Association of Greek Women Artists] (Hellenic American Union, “Kennedy” Hall, February 1970).

<sup>34</sup> Moschonas, *Καλλιτεχνικά σωματεία*, 782-802.

<sup>35</sup> The Hellenic American Union was founded in 1957. Evgenios Matthiopoulos, “Η πρόσληψη της αφηρημένης τέχνης στην Ελλάδα (1945-1960) στο πεδίο της κριτικής της τέχνης” [The Reception of Abstract Art in Greece (1945-1960) in the Field of Art

Criticism], in *Προσεγγίσεις της καλλιτεχνικής δημιουργίας από την Αναγέννηση έως τις μέρες μας* [Accounts of Artistic Creation from the Renaissance till Today], ed. Nikos Daskalothanasis (Athens: Nefeli, 2008), 98. About its connection with the United States Intelligence Service in the 1960s see Matoula Skaltsa, “Αθηναϊκές αίθουσες τέχνης από τη δεκαετία του '20 ως τη δεκαετία του '70” [Athenian Exhibition Halls from the 20s till the 70s], in *Αίθουσες τέχνης στην Ελλάδα. Αθήνα, Θεσσαλονίκη 1920–1988* [Exhibition Halls in Greece. Athens, Thessaloniki 1920–1988] (Athens: Apopsi, 1989), 39.

affiliations must have determined these choices. The role of the entities that made available the specific spaces cannot be underestimated either. The case of the US services is especially eloquent, since it underlines the continuous American interest in the cultural penetration of Greece in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>36</sup> The organization of American art shows in Athens and other cities, the offer of exhibition space to Greek artists, the State Department programs of educational and cultural exchange, through which scholars and artists were encouraged to travel and study in the US, were some of the strategies followed for the consolidation of the American influence in Greece. Among the individuals who benefited from this policy was the AGWA member Efthymiadi-Menegaki, who visited the USA through the State Department's Leadership and Specialists Program in 1957.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, it may be presumed that this artist's contacts and actions assisted the association's appearances in the US-supported spaces.

The number and frequency of the AGWA's exhibitions illustrate the members' constant belief in the importance of such events for women artists. As Antonakatoú asserted in 1966, the AGWA constituted an indicator of women artists' existence on the Greek scene and of their efforts for professional equality with men.<sup>38</sup> Through the exhibitions, she noted, the association manifested women's growing presence in art – in contrast to their absolute absence some decades earlier –<sup>39</sup> while at the same time it revealed the steps that had still to be taken for their full restoration.<sup>40</sup>

As it was argued, women's exhibiting opportunities needed improvement. The association could contribute to this matter by its own shows, thus increasing the numbers of female artists at

exhibitions of other collectivities or institutions.<sup>41</sup> A typical example of this kind was the Panhellenic, a big periodic art event organized by the state, where many artists presented work, women too. However, as Antonakatoú contended regarding the Panhellenic of 1965, women represented only one third of the total number of participants.<sup>42</sup> Her remark implied that equality was not gained and that women still had to fight for it, contrary to the voices of those who claimed that art had no sex and that women had reached men on all levels of expression, promotion and professional occupation.<sup>43</sup>

Female artists' asymmetrical positioning in the art world with relation to men had another serious aspect, as Vienna explained in 1955. Male colleagues undertook most of the public jobs at churches, buildings and monuments, leaving women at a financial disadvantage. It was thus fundamental for female artists to appeal to a wider audience for support. Vienna clarified that the AGWA's exhibitions, mostly those in the provinces, were meant for the information and cultivation of average people, who could gradually become proponents of art. Such initiatives, she added, provided women with opportunities to become known, talked about and, above all, to sell work to ordinary people, such as housewives and the petty bourgeoisie.<sup>44</sup>

Antonakatoú's and Vienna's concerns summed up the major difficulties of female artists in the 1950s and 1960s. Certainly women in Greece had gained much in the areas of education and work since the previous decades, and in 1952 they were also granted the right to vote. Nevertheless, their professional situation was still weak; low wages, inferior positions and precarious jobs were the main features of female occupation at the time.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>36</sup> On the U.S. policy of cultural penetration after the end of the Greek Civil War and its ramifications see Evgenios Matthiopoulos, "Η πρόσληψη της αφηρημένης τέχνης", 67-108. See also Skaltsa, "Αθηναϊκές αίθουσες τέχνης", 28, 39, 42.

<sup>37</sup> Μεταξα, *Η γλύπτρια Φρόσω Ευθυμιάδη-Μενεγάκη*, 24-25.

<sup>38</sup> Diana Antonakatoú, "Ομαδική έκθεση ζωγραφικής-γλυπτικής" [Collective Exhibition of Painting-Sculpture], *Ανένδοτος* [Anendotos], February 1, 1966.

<sup>39</sup> Diana Antonakatoú, "Εκθέσεις" [Exhibitions], *Αρχιτεκτονική* [Architektonikí], no. 56 (1966): 108.

<sup>40</sup> Antonakatoú, "Ομαδική έκθεση".

<sup>41</sup> According to Theochari-Perraki the AGWA offered better exhibiting opportunities to women, who were usually underrepresented at art shows. El. N., "Στην έκθεση του Ζυγού".

<sup>42</sup> Antonakatoú, "Ομαδική έκθεση".

<sup>43</sup> Panos Karavias, "Οι πλαστικές τέχνες" [The Visual Arts], *Ελευθερία* [Eleftheria], February 13, 1966.

<sup>44</sup> R.P. [Roula Papadimitriou], "Χαρά Βιέννα".

<sup>45</sup> Efi Avdela, *Δημόσιοι υπάλληλοι γένους θηλυκού: Καταμερισμός της εργασίας κατά φύλα στον δημόσιο τομέα, 1908-1955* [Civil Servants of Female Gender: Sexual Division of Labour in the Public Sector, 1908-1955] (Athens: Foundation of Research and Culture of the Commercial Bank of Greece, 1990), 33-35, 38-39, 45, 56-58, 151-153. Dimitra Samiou, "Όψεις της έμφυλης ιδιότητας του πολίτη στην Ελλάδα: γυναίκες, κράτος και πολιτικά δικαιώματα τον 19ο και 20ό αιώνα" [Aspects of Gendered Citizenship in Greece: Women, the State and Political Rights during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries], in Glafki Gotsi, Androniki Dialeti, Eleni Fourmaraki (eds.), *Το φύλο στην ιστορία: αποτιμήσεις και παραδείγματα* [Gender in History: Historiographical Accounts and Case Studies] (Athens: Asini, 2015), 152-153.



Similarly, in the field of fine arts women had not attained equality with men. A rough survey reveals that, despite their full access to art studies, they were underrepresented in the body of professors at the School of Fine Arts in Athens and on the various committees of state exhibitions or commissions.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, their participation in important shows was usually limited in numbers,<sup>47</sup> while men exceeded them in the undertaking of major art projects.<sup>48</sup>

Under these circumstances the AGWA's exhibitory program regularly publicized female art and encouraged its members' presence in the art market. Apart from the artists' names, the catalogues accompanying the shows contained the titles and the prices of the works. Some of the places and spaces chosen for the exhibitions were particularly appropriate for sales, since they were frequented by those categories of art lovers who were becoming the main buyers of art at the time, i.e. tourists, businessmen, people from the middle classes and intellectuals.<sup>49</sup> How successful the results were cannot be estimated with the up to now examined material, and further research needs to be done on the subject. Nevertheless, from the little information that has been gathered so far it is possible to assume that during the AGWA's exhibitions women did manage to sell some of their work.<sup>50</sup>

## The critical reception of the shows in Greece

The members' conviction of the necessity for the AGWA's shows was founded on a further reason. Critiques of the exhibitions in the press often commented on the value of the work and stressed the weaknesses as well as the achievements of the producers.<sup>51</sup> From this point of view work made by women was often deemed a distinct and lower kind of art that needed or demonstrated improvement. Aware of such evaluations, Vienna and Antonakatoú argued that the association's shows were crucial, since through them women proved the high quality of their production and the significance of their contribution to art.<sup>52</sup>

Questions of artistic value were frequently raised in the context of the AGWA's exhibitions. Women's art, as it was observed in 1957, showed steady progress and had reached a good aesthetic level.<sup>53</sup> According to a newspaper review, the association's show at the hall of the United States Information Service was a real surprise, since it was based on seriousness, care and quality.<sup>54</sup> Sometimes such opinions underlined women's accomplishments in the field of art, which, as it was assessed on various occasions, had equaled men's or had almost reached those of men.<sup>55</sup> While this comparison suggested male superiority, at the same time it functioned in favor of women, who, it was noticed, displayed responsibility, ease, creativity and boldness.<sup>56</sup> In 1957 the critic Eleni Vakalo would praise the participants of the exhibition at Zygos Gallery

<sup>46</sup> In these male-dominated bodies women seem to have been only rare exceptions. See, for instance, the case of Elli Voila, who was appointed head of the atelier of mosaic at the School of Fine Arts in 1961. Giannis Bolis, "Βοΐλα-Λάσκαρη Έλλη" [Voila-Laskari Elli], in *Λεξικό Ελλήνων Καλλιτεχνών* [Dictionary of Greek Artists], vol. 1 (Athens: Melissa, 1997), 201. Similar cases include Bekiari, Pinelopi Oikonomidou and Katraki, who in the 1950s and 1960s participated in the critical committees of the Panhellenic. Spiteris, *3 αιώνες νεοελληνικής τέχνης*, vol. 3, 368-373.

<sup>47</sup> This can be deduced, for instance, from the catalogues of the Panhellenic exhibitions of the years 1957, 1960, 1963, 1965, 1967 and 1969, in which male participants are generally double the number of women.

<sup>48</sup> Some paradigms of major projects undertaken by men in the 1950s are mentioned in Moschonas, *Καλλιτεχνικά σωματεία*, 574-575, 594, 665. Women who were engaged in such works in the same decade were Voila and Mela-Konstantinidou. See Moschonas, *Καλλιτεχνικά σωματεία*, 594, and Chrysa Damianaki-Romano, "Μελά-Κωνσταντινίδη Ναταλία" [Mela-Konstantinidi Natalia], in *Λεξικό Ελλήνων Καλλιτεχνών* [Dictionary of Greek Artists], vol. 3 (Athens: Melissa, 1999), 96.

<sup>49</sup> Eleni Vakalo, *Η φυσιογνωμία της μεταπολεμικής τέχνης στην Ελλάδα*, τ. 1: *Αφαίρεση* [The Physiognomy of Postwar Art in Greece, vol. 1: Abstraction] (Athens: Kedros, 1981), 62-63; Skaltsa, "Αθηναϊκές αθουσες τέχνης", 31-32, 42-43.

<sup>50</sup> See for instance *Καθημερινή* [Kathimerini], May 8, 1957. See also comments about the success of the exhibitions in *Τα Νέα* [Ta Nea], May 29 and June 4, 1957; *Ελληνικός Βορράς* [Ellinikos Vorrás], May 21, 1961; *Καθημερινή* [Kathimerini], December 10, 1963.

<sup>51</sup> See for instance Antonis Mystakidis, "Η έκθεση των Ελληνίδων καλλιτεχνίδων" [The Exhibition of Greek Women Artists], *Φως* [Fos], December 24, 1955, press clipping in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file "On Exhibitions, 1955-1959", National Gallery, Athens; Stavros Spyrogrou, "Ομαδική έκθεση του Καλλιτεχνικού Σωματείου Ελληνίδων" [Collective Exhibition of the Association of Greek Women Artists], *Ελληνικός Βορράς* [Ellinikos Vorrás], February 26, 1965, typed text in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file "Letters from Various Bodies, with Statutes", National Gallery, Athens.

<sup>52</sup> R.P. [Roula Papadimitriou], "Χαρά Βιέννα"; Lazaridou, "Το Καλλιτεχνικό Σωματείο των Ελληνίδων".

<sup>53</sup> Tonis Spiteris, "Εκθέσεις ζωγραφικής" [Exhibitions of Painting], *Ελευθερία* [Eleftheria], April 12, 1957.

<sup>54</sup> *Τα Νέα* [Ta Nea], March 12, 1957, press clipping in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file "On Exhibitions, 1955-1959", National Gallery, Athens.

<sup>55</sup> El. N., "Στην έκθεση του 'Ζυγού'"; Angelos Doxas, "Εκθέσεις ζωγραφικής" [Exhibitions of Painting], *Εμπρός* [Empros], December 12, 1963.

<sup>56</sup> Eleni Vakalo, "Καλλιτεχνική έκθεση Ελληνίδων" [Art Exhibition of Greek Women], *Τα Νέα* [Ta Nea], December 20, 1963, press clipping in the archive of Frosso Efthymiadi-Menegaki, file "On Exhibitions, 1960-1964", National Gallery, Athens; Doxas, "Εκθέσεις ζωγραφικής"; Kostis Meranaios, "Ελληνίδες γλύπτριες" [Greek Women Sculptors], *Νέα Πολιτεία* [Nea Politia], January 16, 1969.

for their choice to work on a common iconographical theme, i.e. a composition with human figures (Fig. 3); such a move indicated, as she pointed out, an exceptional courage on the part of women artists, who could be led to new challenges and interesting explorations.<sup>57</sup>



**Figure 3.** Eleni Stathopoulou, *Swimmers*. (1957), oil on hardboard, 162.5 × 97 cm. Private collection, Athens. Photograph by Leonidas Kourgiantakis. The painting was shown in the AGWA's exhibition at Zygos Gallery in 1957.

In addition to comments about the equivalence between women's and men's production there appeared views that referred to an essential difference of female art, a particularity of female

sensibility and expression. Such judgments were probably inspired by the only common denominator of the shows, the gender of the exhibitors, which was expected to carry a deep peculiarity. This opinion, popular since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was repeated in the 1950s and 1960s, when the shows of the AGWA were sometimes received with a general and vague allusion to the natural sensitivity of women artists,<sup>58</sup> or to the innate creativity of the female temperament.<sup>59</sup>

A more nuanced and skeptical approach to this matter was adopted in the comments of some women critics and artists, who sought either to enrich the meaning and content of female difference or to redefine and reject it. In 1957 in her critique of the exhibition in the hall of the United States Information Service and later on the ocean liner "Olympia," Vakalo maintained that despite the variety of styles and the individuality of the producers, one could recognize a unity of female spirit. As she elaborated,

[...] a certain tenderness in the treatment of the subjects, a certain lightness and grace, despite all the care, a lyrical mood in the expression, the decorative element in many cases, a distinctive stability of the surface of the works, sometimes even the intelligence of solutions, gave this show a unified style and distinguished it as a representative exhibition of the female world of art.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, Vakalo's effort to detect particular and positive traits in women's art was not to be continued in the following years. Instead, in her subsequent writings she chose to make remarks about singular works and individual artists without invoking any female specificity.

An opposite opinion was expressed by the critic Maria Kotzamani in her review of the exhibition in Parnassos Literary Society in 1963. According to her, woman's sensibility was only a burden that the artists had successfully removed in order to produce serious art. As she clarified, the efforts of

<sup>57</sup> Eleni Vakalo, "Η έκθεση του Καλλιτεχνικού Σωματίου Ελληνίδων" [The Exhibition of the Association of Greek Women Artists], *Τα Νέα* [Ta Nea], June 7, 1957. Many thanks go to Spyros Moschonas who supplied me with a photograph of Eleni Stathopoulou's painting *Swimmers* and assisted in obtaining reproduction permissions by the copyright holders.

<sup>58</sup> Dimitrios Evangelidis, "Εκθέσεις" [Exhibitions], *Νέα Εστία* [Nea Estia], no. 719 (1957): 877-78; Stavros Spyroglou, "Ομαδική έκθεση".

<sup>59</sup> Giorgos Mourellos, "Foreword", in the exhibition catalogue *Καλλιτεχνικών Σωματίων Ελληνίδων. Πρώτη θερινή έκθεση*.

<sup>60</sup> Eleni Vakalo, "Εκθέσεις Καλλιτεχνικού Σωματίου Ελληνίδων" [Exhibition of the Association of Greek Women Artists], *Τα Νέα* [Ta Nea], April 12, 1957.

the association's members were admirable, "not only for their diligence and sincerity, but also for the audacity with which the woman artist dismisses her innate, idiosyncratic sensitivity, in order to get involved in more substantial matters". She further contended that art was no more a pleasant pastime for woman, but an imperative need and a means to express "her own aesthetic views on the international problems that shake humanity".<sup>61</sup>

A comparable denigration of the innate character of women's art was made in the writings of Antonakatoú, who assumed the role of art critic in addition to her career as a painter. In 1966 in her comments about the exhibition at the Hellenic American Union she categorically asserted that women had surpassed the inferior classification of a separate female art and had attained a quality independent of any "supposed female traits of sensitivity, romanticism, lack of personal courage etc."<sup>62</sup> Antonakatoú insisted that the association's shows did not represent any essential common femaleness in art, but, on the contrary, they indicated the autonomy and individuality of women artists. From this point of view she defended the diversity of styles in the work of the members and she justified the openness and flexibility of the group.<sup>63</sup> As she explained, the women of the association were free to participate in other art societies as well, and to follow their own aesthetic options.

Avoiding judgments that united women's production under the umbrella of a distinctive female nature, Antonakatoú aligned with that part of contemporary criticism that concentrated on questions of thematic, morphological and theoretical choices made by each artist independently of gender. This method analyzed works in relation to popular tendencies in art, usually of a European or American origin, which, as was generally admitted, had some more or less discernible influence on

Greek producers. Thus, artists were often classified within specific trends, while at the same time personal investigations and solutions were taken into consideration for thorough evaluation of their art.



Figure 4. Frosso Eftymiadi-Menegaki, *Head of an owl*, wrought iron, 58 x 64 x 26 cm. National Gallery – Alexandros Soutsos Museum, Athens. The sculpture was shown in the AGWA's exhibition at Parnassos Literary Society in 1963.

In the case of the AGWA, critics discovered from early on a range of members' different inclinations, from academicism to modernism,<sup>64</sup> from realism to impressionism or expressionism,<sup>65</sup> from figurative to abstract art.<sup>66</sup> As Angelos Doxas noted about the exhibitors in Parnassos in 1963 (Figs. 4-6), they represented all the known tendencies, while the painters of landscapes among them offered a great variety of styles.<sup>67</sup> However, despite the frequent comments about the rich and up-to-date aspects of the works, some critiques referred to the

<sup>61</sup> Maria Kotzamani, "Εκθέσεις" [Exhibitions], *Εικόνες* [Eikones], December 20, 1963, press clipping in the archive of Frosso Eftymiadi-Menegaki, file "On Exhibitions, 1960-1964", National Gallery, Athens.

<sup>62</sup> Antonakatoú, "Εκθέσεις".

<sup>63</sup> Lazaridou, "Το Καλλιτεχνικόν Σωματεῖον των Ελληνίδων".

<sup>64</sup> Skordou, "Η έκθεση Ελληνίδων ζωγράφων"; Miltos Garidis, "Η έκθεση του Καλλιτεχνικού Σωματείου Ελληνίδων" [The Exhibition of the Association of Greek Women Artists], *Αυγή* [Avgi], June 15, 1957.

<sup>65</sup> Evangelidis, "Εκθέσεις".

<sup>66</sup> Hara Viena-Papageorgiou, "Η έκθεση του Καλλιτεχνικού Σωματείου των Ελληνίδων στη Ρόδο" [The Exhibition of the Association of Greek Women Artists in Rhodes], *Εθνικός Κίρυσ* [Ethnikos Kirix], July 18, 1963; Spyroglou, "Ομαδική έκθεση".

<sup>67</sup> Doxas, "Εκθέσεις ζωγραφικής".

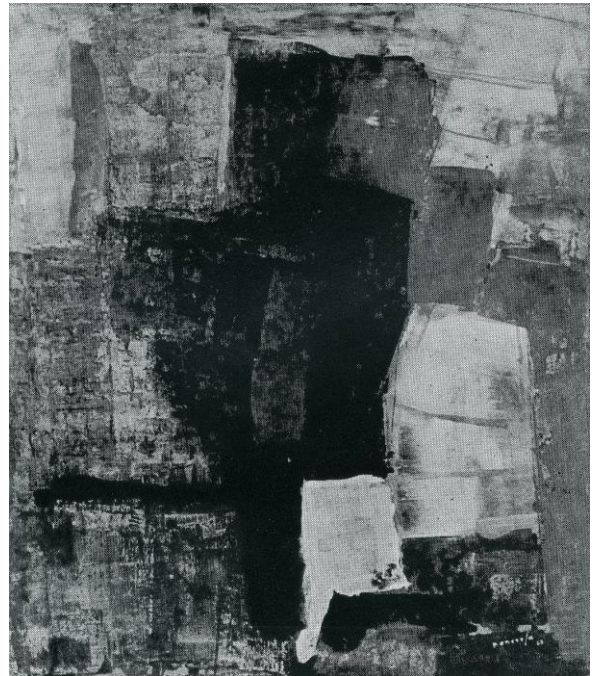
conservative attitude of the association's artists and their cautiousness towards new explorations.<sup>68</sup>



**Figure 5.** Alexandra Mavrogordatou-Petritzi, *Vosporos*, photograph from the exhibition catalogue *Καλλιτεχνικόν Σωματείων Ελληνίδων. Έκθεσις, Μεγάλη αίθουσα Παρνασσού* [Association of Greek Women Artists. Exhibition. Large Hall of Parnassos] (December 5-23, 1963).

Antonakatoú made a similar appraisal, when she wrote about the conservative position of the members, whose paintings lacked, as she noted, the “provocative pursuits, collage, pop art etc.”<sup>69</sup> In 1965, in a press interview on the occasion of the exhibition in Thessaloniki, she defended this position as one of moderation, sincerity and consistency vis-à-vis art, as well as responsibility towards the public, which had difficulties in understanding rash stylistic changes.<sup>70</sup> Her view was probably connected with the association's concern to reach a wider audience, the average people, as Vienna had put it earlier.

<sup>68</sup> Giorgos Fokas, “Έκθεση Καλλιτεχνικού Σωματείου Ελληνίδων (Αίθουσα ‘Κέννεντυ’)” [Exhibition of the Association of Greek Women Artists (‘Kennedy’ Hall)], *Αυγή* [Avgi], February 10, 1966.



**Figure 6.** Maria Spentza, *From the Byzantine Era-Odes*, photograph from the exhibition catalogue *Καλλιτεχνικόν Σωματείων Ελληνίδων. Έκθεσις, Μεγάλη αίθουσα Παρνασσού* [Association of Greek Women Artists. Exhibition. Large Hall of Parnassos] (December 5-23, 1963).

## Conclusions

Active from the 1950s throughout the 1970s the Association of Greek Women Artists was one of the most long-lived art groups in Greece after World War II. With a considerable number of members and a significant list of exhibitions inside and outside the country the association brought together women artists of different generations and artistic inclinations, and encouraged contacts and exchanges beyond national borders. While contemporary art groups in Greece also showed comparable intentions and developed equivalent strategies for exhibitions and interconnections, the AGWA was clearly differentiated from other collectivities, since it addressed exclusively female artists' issues and demands in their specific historical context and raised the question of gender in the production, circulation and reception of art. With an agenda informed by female activist groups, its orientation to art linked it with similar women's

<sup>69</sup> Antonakatoú, “Ομαδική έκθεσις”.

<sup>70</sup> Lazaridou, “Το Καλλιτεχνικόν Σωματείων των Ελληνίδων”.

initiatives before and after the War and promoted its participation in the international scene.

As the outcome of a first approach to the subject, the observations of this paper can definitely be enriched and elaborated by further investigation both within and beyond the Greek frame. The specific works of the artists exhibited at the association's shows still need to be located and examined in juxtaposition with the critiques they have received. Their reception in the context of international exhibitions has also to be studied and compared with Greek reactions. Moreover, research in the archives of more individual members may bring new evidence about the AGWA and its support of women's professional careers, while the examination of sources in the US and Europe may reveal other information about foreign contacts. The study of the association's presence abroad generates a range of questions about women artists' collective initiatives on the international scene of the 1950s and 1960s and the conditions under which they were undertaken. Hopefully, future research will shed more light on them.