

# INTRODUCTION – CRITIQUE

*Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki: Whirlwind of Creativity*

If every artist expresses himself self-sufficiently and to his utmost through his works, Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki communicates in a constant and unrivalled diapason through: her “still”, yet so *animated*, “still-lives”, her racing cars, tankers, cranes and shipyard installations, the frenzied “traffic” of the megalopolises, her renowned athletes, selected themes which she decodes with characteristic vividness and indomitable creative instinct.

Endowed with charismatic tenacity and completely informed of the rhythms of metaphysics itself and of cosmogony, because permeated by the supreme energy that rules the universe. Energy that constitutes also an indissoluble connecting link between the artist’s works, whatever the subject. A connecting link that reveals and emphasizes a pulse constantly on the alert. A pulse that as it emerges from the painter’s very own DNA to blend organically with that of the surrounding nature, “implicitly” inhabits “any” of her works whatsoever, to project them, although by definition two-dimensional: saliently in space.

Mina’s works truly move and, as a matter of fact, in a respiratory rhythm. Vibrate, contract and expand, lending themselves to a different interpretation each time they are viewed, through the dynamics of the colour and of the trace. Dynamics in which the biorhythms of nature itself have been transfused.

Her racing cars, identified in their pictorial style with the frenzy of the race through the intense colours with their explosive pulse and tones.

The tankers and other merchant vessels, the worksites and their installations, imbued with the energy and dynamism of the construction.

The movement and traffic in the contemporary megalopolises, remodelled to the extreme thanks to the visual angle and layout of the composition through the intense pulsating colour.

The succulence of nature, charismatically evoked through the inspired still-lives which allude directly and eloquently to the mysteries of life.

The tension, the self-concentration, the energy that the athlete brings into play, in whatever sport he goes in for, directly conveyed and permeating right to the innermost depths of the viewer so that he participates not only visually but also with his soul in the particular theme.

All these characteristics, deeply consolidated – innate – in the works of Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki reveal, in each and every case, a truly noteworthy, dynamic and pure talent. A talent that makes her works defy any description, however much she aspires to hit the mark, as here it is evident that spirit and material are nothing more than the two different sides of this one, sole Truth. The Truth that is identified with the supreme Energy.

It is precisely that energy which she transfuses exclusively into her works that project – archetypes – whose material expression is impervious to time. Archetypes that, while transcending the biological entity of the painter and every “material” that is part of their expression, coincide, thanks to the unprecedented energy radiated from them by the colour and trace, with Plato’s definition of genuine art: namely, it is real only when it expresses an idea. It is precisely this “idea” of Energy that is expressed, with profuse clarity, conviction and power of suggestion, through the explosive combinations of colour and trace, in the “living” creations of the artist.

Dora Eliopoulou-Rogan  
PhD-Art Historian – Art Critic  
Commandeur des Arts et Lettres en France

When I first encountered the sport art of Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki, I immediately recognized her ability to evoke emotion and movement with each piece reflecting her intense energy and vibrant personality.

Each of Mina's art pieces captures more than just the viewers gaze, they echo the emotions and experiences of a life lived to the fullest. Her sheer enjoyment of life is brilliantly brought alive with bursting color as it takes you though the competitiveness of a sport.

I admire the beauty, excitement and explosive energy of all her art. An artist of infinite passion!

Kay Daughdrill, Executive Director,  
American Sport Art Museum and Archives

Graceful runners, speeding automobiles, seagoing vessels, intimate still-lifes, and breathlessly alive sea and landscapes. No matter what the subject, Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki's paintings have an electricity, a dynamism that issues directly from her skilled use of a gemlike palette and a loaded brush. Her figures exist in fully activated pictorial spaces. They emerge from their picture plane and then fold back into it, making the point that the world around us is in constant flux, restlessly moving, always in a state of becoming. Papatheodorou-Valyraki feels this rhythmic energy at her core and infuses her art with her own life force. For me, this is the key to her expressive gifts as a painter.

In writing this brief note of appreciation for the artist's first monograph, it is my pleasure to say that I became acquainted with Papatheodorou-Valyraki in 1999 when I was President of the Board of Trustees of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Her work had first been exhibited in the United States in the 1990 exhibition, "A Glance at the Contemporary Greek Art" in Dallas, Texas, where she was one of the youngest artists represented. Like her art, it was clear she was moving along a fast track. In 1998, she was commissioned by Automobili Lamborghini to create a cycle of paintings for their headquarters. Just this past year she was named an official artist for the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, and also for the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece. These are wonderful markers in a career that has been strong and vital for almost two decades.

Recognizing Papatheodorou-Valyraki's accomplishments through the publication of this book is an important step as well. So often in the past and even in present times, women artists have had to struggle for recognition. Often there was no significant monograph, and their works were overlooked or under-appreciated. It is my hope that this volume will help secure Papatheodorou-Valyraki's reputation as a Greek woman artist of stature today and in the years to come. We are delighted to have *Still life in yellow* in our permanent collection at the National Museum of the Women in the Arts.

Carol Matthews Lascaris,  
President Emerita, The National Museum of Women in the Arts,  
Washington DC, USA

*Celebrating 30 Years of Excellence of the United States Sport Academy*

*Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki: 2002 Sport Artist of the Year*

**E**xuberant in the extreme, the paintings of Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki truly pulsate with life. It is impossible not to notice the passion that exudes from her works, as they explode with colors and shapes. The Sport Artist of the Year 2002 is a wondrous artist indeed.

Of the 19 Artists selected by the Academy over the past two decades for this singular honor, Mina is only the second woman and the first with a doctoral degree. The standing-room-only seminar that she conducted on the Academy's campus as a part of the institution's 30th Anniversary celebration this past year demonstrated that not only is she a world class artistic talent, but also first class seminarian and scholar of fine art. Her mastery of the subject is underscored by her exhibitions in distinguished museums dedicated to sport art such as the International Olympic Committee Museum in Switzerland and the American Sport Art Museum and Archives in the United States where a number of her pieces form a part of the permanent collection.

Mina embodies the criteria for the Sport Artist of the Year: an individual who captures the spirit and life of sport so that future generations can relive the drama of today's competition. We look forward to her continuing contributions to the genre and the profession; contributions which will be both many and exceptional.

Thomas P. Rosandich, Ph.D.,  
President of the United States Sport Academy,  
Daphne, Alabama 22 October 2002