

Accomplished artist returns to his roots

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Maria Gregoriou



Gallery K in Nicosia will treat art lovers to an array of work by celebrated British artist John Kiki under the name In the Artist's Eye as of Thursday.

The exhibition, which will remain on show until March 31, will include 30 etchings and six oil paintings by the artist whose works have been shown in galleries as prestigious as London's Tate. Kiki is an established artist both in America and Europe. His work enthralls both young and old and has been praised by art critics across the world.

Before the opening of the exhibition, which showcases works inspired by the Carmina Burana poems from the 11th and 12th centuries satirising the Catholic Church, Gallery K's owner Ritsa Kyriacou said "Kiki's work is full of energy. His emphasis is on instinct and absolute spontaneity."

Commenting on Kiki's commissioned work by Art Esprit in 1993 to complete a project based on the illuminated manuscript of the Carmina Burana poems and dramatic text, Kyriacou said "there is great freedom and nonchalance in Kiki's works making it easy to understand Art Esprit's choice to commission him to work on the 'irreverent' Carmina Burana poems."

Kiki originally hails from Cyprus, and although he refers to various classical myths in his work, he feels his upbringing in England has been more important for his art than the Mediterranean.

He studied at London's Camberwell School of Art under painter Frank Auerbach, who has been a lasting influence on his art. He then went on to attend the Royal Academy School and by the time of his graduation in 1967, the artist had developed a unique style, a fusion between figurative painting, abstraction and Pop Art. Apart from his commissioned work for Art Esprit, Kiki was the subject of a film, *In the Artist's Eye*, a series made by Franco Rosso for BBC Television in 1989.

His long career has included shows in celebrated galleries such as the Royal Academy, the Tate, Hayward, Barbican and Serpentine Galleries in London, the OK Harris Gallery in Soho, New York and the Galerie Wahrenberger in Zurich.

He paints non-naturalistically, but employs recognisable figures in the flattened spaces of his compositions. Amazon and Epona, Leda and the Swan feature in modern undress, along with fairy-tale characters, and unspecified lovers and other characters which we may encounter in our everyday lives.

The influences on his work are many and varied. There are elements of Jackson Pollock, Francis Bacon, Picasso, the abstract expressionists and many more. However, the "greatest and most lasting influence," was, in his own words, his teacher, Frank Auerbach, who, together with pop artist Patrick Procktor, made him "rethink his strategy," to develop from the tight, measured style of his early work into the looser, fluid style which currently typifies it.

In the Artists' Eye

Solo exhibition by John Kiki. February 15 until March 31. Gallery K, 14 Evrou Street, Strovolos, Nicosia. Monday-Friday: 9.30am-1pm and 3.30pm-7pm. Saturday: 9.30am-1pm. Tel: 22-341122/23. www.gallery-k.co.uk