

Sort out your space

Three series of meticulously executed watercolours in the style of architectural illustrations are mounted on boards that face each other. Set up between the pillars in the middle of the gallery, they occupy only one corner of the entire space. Stacks of glossy magazines serve as bases to the boards that are set close to the ground. The catchy phrases on the magazines' front cover have been appropriated as titles: 'Notorious', 'The Luxury of Choosing', and 'I know I am a Good Kisser'. The first series consists of three interiors, three versions of a sunken sitting area. The two latter series are close-ups of bathrooms. The precise colour schemes and drawn out optical views of the watercolours are the result of the close collaboration between the artist and a professional architectural office. Although linear, exact, and quite technical, the images remain aesthetically pleasing to the eye, at times resembling single frames in comics (BD, the French bande dessinée).

Vangelis Vlahos is primarily interested in the discrepancies between fiction and reality. He concocted a fictional story of a house, built in the 50s but destroyed by a hurricane in 1995, whose new owners decide to rebuild within a modernistic aesthetic. At the centre of its interior is a so-called conversation pit, 'a cosy corner where people sit and chat', which forms the focus of the artist's imaginary space in 'Notorious', three watercolours in bright yellow, blue, and pink shades. To conceive the image, Vangelis gathered practical information on similar type houses and interiors to reconstruct his space according to real and valid data. The images are juxtaposed with texts, selected parts of various written sources, while they optically follow the resurrected modernist credo of Jorge Pardo's much publicized '4166 Sea View Lane'. It is hardly important whether this projection actually resembles any real or existing building. For Vangelis Vlahos, it is part of the reality that having grown up in Greece, most knowledge on the modernistic aesthetic, on art, design, style, and architecture, had come to him through published sources rather than through any lived experience. Watching from the sidelines, living

his reality from a distance, he became intrigued with the people, the artists, the object and realizations that are at the center of this world.

For the press release, the artist used a fictional statement, supposedly made by collector Dakis Joannou but really an amalgam of quotes by Joannou himself and alternative rock star Marilyn Manson. Real persons are cast in roles to allow the artist to trace certain relationships - e.g. between the artist and the collector, or the architect and the client - and established networks, in the same way that descriptive, financial, and technical information are weaved together to conjure up an architectural image. The sole use of English as a language points to its influence in international culture - not in the least through its dominance on the Internet -, while it simultaneously means to criticize the Greek art world for its lack in international scope.

'The Luxury of Choosing' and 'I Know I am a Good Kisser' each represent two views of private bathrooms, the first of Dakis Joannou, the second of personal friend Panos. They act as intimate portraits of their occupiers but are aesthetically laid out according to the clinical and often impersonal doctrine of lifestyle magazines. 'The Luxury of Choosing' was proposed as an imagined project for Jorge Pardo to redesign Joannou's bathroom, following his recent conversion of the Dia Center for the Arts' ground floor with ceramic tiles.

Much has been written about the tendency of artists to integrate design practices in their work, thus blurring the lines between aesthetic and functional values, between the private and the public, between an institutional and ordinary context. Although Vangelis Vlahos' work is all set within these boundaries - design, architecture, lifestyle - he is not so much interested in the individual contributions of each field but in their representative value in the present culture. To entangle the web of relationships and influences, the artist has cast himself in the double role of the commissioner and the commissioned.