

Marina Lambraki Plaka: 'Between art and craft'



"Art is the metaphysics of craft." Maritsa Travlos's work walks the tightrope with carefree gracefulness between the two poles of art and craft, poles that seem related, yet most times are dizzyingly discrete.

Vast in range, richness and ingenuity, her work can effortlessly be included among the applied arts or design. Using delicate porcelain and a generous palette of colors as her media, her artistic genius and limitless industriousness guide her in creating her own boundless artistic universe, making use of tried techniques and discovering new and original ones. Founded on innovative skill, her creative imagination has put her own personal stamp on the multi-form decorative and useful objects that she crafts. Yet apart from these, there are works that claim their rightful place in what is deemed purely artistic creation. The large-scale paintings she composes with the "precious" and refined palette of colored porcelain, employing her own original technique, can easily be included in this category.

Marvelous tables, crockery, mirrors, enchanting lamps, and evocative light fixtures are only some of the dozens of useful objects Maritsa Travlos has designed with simplicity, good taste and the utmost sense of functionality. Form and color converse harmoniously, allowing these objects to be fluently assimilated by any ambience. The creator displays particular sensitivity in the chromatic scales she chooses, masterfully combining a genteel gamut of quiet pastels with gladsome chords of vivid notes. The innate properties of porcelain—translucency and refined luxuriousness—are highlighted with the suitable techniques—smoothing or burnishing—lending these works a rare quality.

Nature and especially her beloved sea world, of which she has intimate knowledge, are an inexhaustible source of inspiration for Maritsa Travlos. The colored porcelain fish she crafts, at times as lively individual sculptures and at others as decorative motifs embedded in a surface, do not belong to an abstract sea-world species; they are recognizable in all their flapping vitality. Living close to the sea—an angler herself—she also maintains aquaria rich with Mediterranean and exotic fauna, allowing her to communicate directly with her living models and convey their vibe in her works. Even her abstract forms preserve intimations of the living sea realm, as is also the case with her light fixtures, inspired by sea urchin shells, with their perfect plasticity and ornate decorative texture.

Another side of Travlos's talent is revealed in her colored sketches and drawings. Her artistic idiom bears the strength to perceive and portray instantaneous movements and fluid images of daily life with dynamic clarity and a sense of humor.

The multi-faceted artist's large wall compositions, which can, in my opinion, easily be categorized as works of pure visual art, also intimate seascapes. These monumental paintings presuppose knowledge and skill in handling composition and color, which Maritsa Travlos seems to possess and control with facility and originality. Her dynamic and balanced compositions feature melodic rhythms. Her chromatic harmonies, oftentimes homophonic, are dominated by cool, blue-green aquatic tones, which are enlivened by sudden, rare and precious warm ones. These paintings give the impression of painted works and only when observed up close does one realize they are actually made of porcelain. Abstract and only hinting at representational art, they retain their pleasant decorative character, which suffuses the whole of Maritsa Travlos's oeuvre, one destined to uplift our daily lives with the blessing of art and good taste.

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