



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
AND CULTURE



CULTURAL SERVICES

January 10th 2019

**Inaugural Exhibition at the State Gallery of Contemporary Art – SPEL**

**UNTIMELY ON TIME: CHRISTOFOROS SAVVA (1924–1968)**  
**(31 January – 31 March 2019)**

The SPEL building renovations, in the heart of old Nicosia, have been completed, yielding the infrastructure for a significant cultural project: the new State Gallery of Contemporary Art – SPEL. This new site opens its doors to the public for the first time on the 31st of January 2019, presenting a large-scale survey show of Christoforos Savva (1924–1968), curated by Jacopo Crivelli Visconti. The exhibition is co-organised by the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, Cultural Services and Point Centre for Contemporary Art, Nicosia, in conjunction with the participation of Cyprus in the 58th Venice Biennale (May – November 2019), which will be dedicated to Christoforos Savva.

Christoforos Savva is widely acknowledged as one of the most groundbreaking Cypriot artists of the 20th Century. In a relatively short period of time he produced an impressive and highly diverse body of works, ranging from the figurative paintings of the '50s to the abstract paintings, the sculptures, the experimentations with wire, cement, and fabric leftovers, as well as the forays in furniture design and the architectural interventions he undertook in the '60s. The coexistence of styles and the wide range of themes and references that appear in Savva's work, from Greek and African Classical Art to Cypriot handicrafts, Folk Art, Informal Art, Pop Art, and avant-garde movements, all seem to suggest that strictly formal questions were not his main concern.

It could be said that the core of his practice constantly shifted toward a place that was beyond both the form and the content of any individual work. Looking closely at his activity there is a sense that this 'beyondness' embodies the artist's unique practice, his role in Cypriot society and in the local artistic system that was gradually being organised in the years shortly after independence from Britain. In May 1960, together with Welsh artist Glyn Hughes, Savva founded Apophasis [Decision], the first independent cultural centre of the newly founded Republic of Cyprus, soon to become the epicentre of intellectual and cultural activity on the island. In 1968, Savva was one of the artists selected to represent Cyprus in its inaugural Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, but only a few days after the opening, he died suddenly in Sheffield, UK.

Through more than ninety works, the exhibition *Untimely on Time* will present the inclusive, idiosyncratic diversity of Savva's production, thus paying homage to a major figure of Cypriot art while aiming to provoke reflections on the processes that have shaped the post-independence national imaginary of Cyprus. Any such endeavour needs to take into account the fact that Cyprus, like many other countries with a colonial past, did not have the opportunity to deal with the 'modern' in a substantial and autonomous way. At least in so far as its art historiography and the international visibility of its artistic production are concerned, what has registered instead, is a sense that it ultimately chose to delve directly into the 'contemporary'. Revisiting,

then, this key moment in the island's recent history becomes a fundamental step towards a better understanding of its contemporaneity.

*This exhibition is being held on the occasion of a double fifty-year anniversary associated with the participation of Christoforos Savva in the first official show of the Republic of Cyprus at the Venice Biennale in 1968, as well as the subsequent death of the artist in the same year. Exhibition design by Studio Manuel Raeder. Accompanying publications in collaboration with Hatje Cantz and BOM DIA BOA TARDE BOA NOITE. This is the first of a series of events to be presented in the new State Gallery of Contemporary Art – SPEL, until it operates under the statute of the Cyprus Museum of Contemporary Art, whose establishment is under way.*

***The event is organised under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Nicos Anastasiades.***

## **PROGRAMME OF PRESENTATIONS & TALKS**

### **Friday 1st February**

**18:00** Guided tour of the exhibition by the curator, Jacopo Crivelli Visconti (in English, with consecutive interpretation into Greek)

**19:30** Discussion with the curator and visual artists Andreas Chrysochos, Giorgos Kyriakou and Polys Peslikas (in Greek)

### **Saturday, 2nd February**

**11:00** Discussion with Ghika Savva-Coyle and Polina Nicolaou on Christine Savva-Duroe's archive, presented for the first time as part of the survey show (in English, with consecutive interpretation into Greek)

**12:00** Presentation by Achilleas Demetriades, Advocate, on the subject of 'Artists' Resale Rights in the Cyprus legal order' (in Greek)

**12:30** Presentation of the publication *The Memory of The Archive: Christoforos Savva in the 1954–1968 Cypriot Press & Literary Periodicals*, BOM DIA BOA TARDE BOA NOITE, 2019, by the author Maria Panteli, sociologist (in Greek)

*Additional events to be held during the exhibition will be announced.*

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## **STATE GALLERY OF CONTEMPORARY ART – SPEL**

**73 Ammochostou Street, 1016 Nicosia**

### **Opening**

Thursday, 31 January 2019, 19:00

### **Duration**

31 January – 31 March 2019

### **Opening hours**

Tuesday – Sunday 10:00-18:00, Saturday 11:00-20:00 (closed on public holidays)

### **Co-organisers**

Ministry of Education and Culture, Cultural Services

Point Centre for Contemporary Art, Nicosia

### **Supporters**

Lellos P Demetriades Law Office LLC

Alexis Tsielepis

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