Owls and the Athenian Democracy

FROM ANCIENT NUMISMATICS TO CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE

AND WORKS BY SCULPTOR APHRODITE LITI

EXHIBITION
Owls and the Athenian Democracy

Director of the Numismatic Museum

Dr. George Kakavas

SENIOR CURATOR

Prof. Aphrodite Liti

Dr. Konstantinos Avgoustakis, archaologist

ARTIST STATEMENT AND APPLICATION

Prof. Aphrodite Liti

WORKS ON

Antonia Manos, sculptor

Antonia Karastergiou, sculptor

Mark Britton, graphic designer

Tatiana Evangelou, technician

Nikos Kargiotis, computer operator

Support to artistic production


Director

05/10/2018

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THE Myths and religion in general were an inexhaustible source of inspiration for ancient engravers, who carved dies depicting local deities related to each region, so they could be easily identified as representative of each city-state. The owls and the Athenian Democracy

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The museum’s foot traffic and promote its outward-looking vision without dissolving them, invests them with new life, using con-

artist aphrodite liti is inspired by them, breaks the old forms and,

tracing these “cultural deposits” with heightened sensitivity, the

in the laurion mines in attica’s Maroneia region circa 480 bc was

bc to the late 1st century bc. the discovery of a rich vein of silver

commercial transactions from the last decade of the 6th century

of athenian coins in foreign markets. due to this significant de-

athenians”. these additions were meant to promote the usage

an olive branch and a crescent were added, denoting the owl’s

the establishment of democracy by kleisthenes (508-507 bc),

owl, her sacred symbol. later on, following political reform and

(bright eyed) helmeted goddess athena and on the reverse the

ed during the time of hippias (525-510 bc) and carried easily

with only slight variations through the ages, from the very start of Athenian coinage making in the archaic age.

The first issue of the formal “Athenian type” were made in the 6th century bc, according to an inscription. from the following the foundries of Athens, the owl became the official coinage symbol. during the time of Cleisthenes, and on the reverse the

national symbol of the Hellenic Republic. during the time of Hippias, the owl also continued to appear on the coins, but with a different appearance.

The owl was chosen as a symbol of Athenian democracy.

as representative of each city's unique characteristics. During the archaic and classical eras.

On the obverse a meander pattern flanked a large owl, the bird's head facing right, as a symbol of vigilance and knowledge. on the reverse it was the owl that served as a cloak for the understanding of the Athenian democracy, as representative of each city's unique characteristics. During the archaic and classical eras.

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My preoccupation with the owls and their entry into my sphere of sculpture are the result of a long journey of inner quest and exhaustive research in the area of symbols and collective memory. My desire to set out on what I thought would be an adventure with them became a comforting necessity and a ritual.

In the imposing neo-classical space of the museum replete with ancient coins and treasures, I suddenly find myself surrounded by my sculpted, pasted-up-with-mosaics owls. This rather strange existence of an ‘interior’ sculpted garden created by the juxtaposition of a flock of birds and shiny leaves together with the coins and the magnetic gaze of the owls seems to be carrying me dynamically towards an imaginary flight that I have never experienced before.

The owls, given their power and beneficence towards humans, were regarded as the symbol of wisdom. As a term, the word ‘symbol’ is derived from the Greek verb ‘συμβάλλω’ (contribute), that is, it turns the non-existent into something tangible, perceptible, like abstract concepts and reality.

In my quest, as I immersed myself in the various works of art, I observed that societies need to express themselves symbolically regarding their customs, institutions, and the characteristic features of their religions which are expressed in symbolic icons. Throughout the ages, these symbols were adopted by the indigeneous and its counterpart with societies which have gained symbolic authority.

The spelling of the word ‘metamorphosis’ was knowledge and a perfect meeting of set and self-creation of essence and content which together create a new form. This process of creation is the result of a high-level ability to control and result the processes of the time for the sake of art.

According to Homer, the poet was a guide of seeing through knowledge than experience. An ongoing journey can transform a person and surprise the person.

With the owl as symbol, in antiquity, of the Goddess Athena’s sacred bird whose image is depicted on the reverse of the tetradrachm of the Athenian Democracy, while on the obverse is the Goddess’s head, I have endeavoured to bring about a dialogue between the coins, the sculptures and the viewers.

The minting of this particular coin was intended to celebrate the democracy’s battles against the danger from the East and despotism. The invention of coins has enabled human beings to engage in trade with their fellow humans, in this way meeting their needs and fulfilling their obligations. Coins are directly related to the image they depict, which is informative and at the same time a symbolic medium that everyone can have in their possession. The tiny metal surfaces become trumpeters that trumpet forth symbols, merits, values, ideas, power and messages from the issuing authority.

Finally, the winged birds of the exhibition, in their dialogue, palpably transport us to a world where the use of the minimum in the service of the maximum is nothing more than a safeguard of the meaning of life as it is conveyed through art and religion.