

Foreword and Acknowledgements

Matthias Frehner and Regula Berger

VEDO DOVE DEVO. These three words, in neon lettering on the façade of the Kunstmuseum Bern, bring Nakis Panayotidis's core message to a striking point. Also that he is an artist who acts in an eminently diverse way, always on several levels simultaneously. His minimalist lettering makes an impression like a work by Lawrence Weiner; the light that it gives off reminds one of comparable works by Bruce Nauman; and the anagram, as it emerges from the words, tricks our perception like the plastic illusory games by Markus Raetz.

VEDO DOVE DEVO—I see where I must. It is all a question of perspective; perception is never clear. But also, if I always look from the same standpoint, the second view is never identical with the first one, and the third questions everything seen before, in the way that Gertrude Stein succinctly put it: "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose."

This complex multiplicity plays a central role in the work of Nakis Panayotidis. He allows the unseen to shine; he brings into focus that which did not exist beforehand or which was different. With this he suspends the existing borders and creates new associations based on the apparentness that he sees in front of him: between past and present, myth and everyday life, reality and illusion.

In 1966, as a student in Turin, Nakis Panayotidis encountered Arte Povera. The art of his older colleagues shaped his work—a newspaper critic in *La Repubblica* later characterized him, after an exhibition at Palazzo Ducale in Genoa, as "l'ultimo dei poveri," the last of the Povera artists. Everything for him revolves around everyday, familiar materials, that which is tattered and thrown away like his own discarded shirts. He also turns to the valuable material of bronze, yet he handles it as if it were wet dirt, from which one casually shapes a lump. That which is random is just as interesting to him as what is fleeting. This also leads to a preference for light and steam: his panel works, drawings, and photographs, his reliefs, objects, and installations are rooted in the cultural history and traditions of his native Greece; they express the themes that occupy the artist—with philosophy and mythology, social justice, and inner freedom.

"All that I want is to remain a foreigner, yet always within my circle of friends," says Nakis Panayotidis. He has been living in Bern since 1973, indeed as "foreigner" but among his friends, and thus remains deeply connected to his chosen home. That Nakis came to Bern at all and stayed here can be credited to his wife Agnès.

Twenty years after the exhibition *Nakis Panayotidis. Mnemographie* by Hans Christoph von Tavel in 1994 in Bern and many additional international solo exhibitions later, the Kunstmuseum Bern is dedicating a comprehensive retrospective to his oeuvre. *Nakis Panayotidis. Seeing the Invisible* shows in chronological sequence the sculptures, installations, drawings, and photographs that have been created since the early 1970s. His contribution to Arte Povera is by far the largest of any artist in Switzerland. We thank Nakis Panayotidis for undertaking this project with us. The time that we have spent together was characterized by intensive work and was enlivened by the spontaneity, curiosity, and ever-new possibilities that he opened up to us every day.

We thank the Sophie und Karl Binding Stiftung for their generous support, which made this exhibition possible in the first place, and we are grateful that the present catalog has been included in their publication series *Sélection d'Artistes*. Benno Schubiger deserves our thanks for the time that he has invested into the project. We are grateful to the Hess Art Collection, Bern, and Donald Hess for their contribution that made the production of this catalog possible. We thank the curator of the Hess Art Collection, Bern, Myrtha Steiner, for her support. Our sincere thanks also to Mania and Bernhard Hahnloser, who are connected to the artist through their long-time friendship, for their contribution to realizing the exhibition. Furthermore, both Donald Hess and Mania and Bernhard Hahnloser have enriched the exhibition with their art loans. We also thank the additional lenders, Pamela and Touraj Etezady, Zurich; Vanessa Sabet, Geneva; and Ingeborg and Wolfgang Henze-Ketterer, Wichtrach, for entrusting us with their artworks for the exhibition. Galerie Henze & Ketterer, Wichtrach/Bern are thanked for their support.

We are pleased and thank Giovanna Alberta Campitelli that the exhibition will be shown at the MACRO, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, following the one in Bern. A big thank you is due to Donald Hess, who will show the exhibition in a modified form at his Hess Art Museum, The Hess Collection Winery, Napa, USA.

We are grateful to Professor Bruno Corà for his support and academic contribution to the present catalog. His excellent knowledge of the works and his long-term friendship with the artist are put to words that capture Nakis Panayotidis's works in an awe-inspiring way. Sabine Hahnloser Tschopp, collector and Nakis's friend, has written wonderfully for the reader on her conversations with Nakis. Donald Hess, who has collected Nakis's works for many years, allows the reader a very personal insight into the friendship that he has had with Nakis for a long time. Petros Markaris has allowed inspiring words to flow into his biography of Nakis—a diversion from his crime novel writing. Thierry Spitzer, who filmed a documentary with Nakis Panayotidis, allows the reader to partake in a shared experience with his friend Nakis. The film by Thierry Spitzer will be presented to visitors in the context of the exhibition. For the production and realization of this film we thank Maria Embiricos, Jaleh and Dimitri Angelopoulos as well as Petros Gaïtanos and Konstantinos Angelopoulos, who have been Nakis's close friends for many years. Hans Christoph von Tavel, who realized the exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Bern in 1994, expresses his appreciation for the work but most of all for the person Nakis Panayotidis in a letter to the artist. We thank all authors for their personal words and for sharing their thoughts with the reader. They have helped make this catalog a singular publication.

Finally our gratitude goes to all those who have contributed to the realization of this exhibition, especially the technicians René Wochner, Andres Meschter and Roman Studer, who have in their ever-reliable way done the groundwork and cleared up all technical and logistical problems. We thank Marie Louise Suter, who designed this publication, and Isabelle Fehlmann for her valuable work as registrar.