

A post classical landscape

Greek culture seen through Greek eyes at Ffotogallery

This is the first British exhibition of work by contemporary Greek photographers, and Ffotogallery in Wales are to be congratulated for mounting it. It includes work on a variety of themes by eight photographers, one woman, seven men, all of whom are associated with the Athens Centre of Photography. The exhibition was curated by John Stathos, author of the introductory essay to the well-printed and informative catalogue.

In common with other areas of the Mediterranean, Greece has been represented to us by photographers from Northern Europe in terms which reflect the colonisation of the region partly as a source of classical history and partly as one great holiday resort. After a century of being seen largely in terms defined by others, in this exhibition Greek photographers in effect reclaim their right to represent their own culture and environment. As such, this work challenges preconceptions.

Religious references characterise the work of two of the photographers. I particularly enjoyed Nicos Panayotopoulos' village chapel interiors, the only rural work in the show. Religion is also marked in Stelios Eustathopoulos' black-and-white cemetery photographs in which heritage and memory are symbolically expressed through the placing of family portraits behind glass, amidst arrays of commemorative objects. Four other photographers work within a – to us – more familiar documentary tradition, taking aspects of Athens street culture or worklife as subject-matter.

Costis Antoniadis also depicts the town, but his work transcends documentary to engage more directly with the changing urban environment of advertising, commercialism and dehumanisation. In his constructed images, the familiar glimmers of consumerism are replaced on the street hoardings by ordinary men and women involved in everyday mundane existence. Yiorgos Depollas is similarly concerned with the everyday, in this



• A cemetery photograph by Stelios Eustathopoulos: '... heritage and memory symbolically expressed.'

instance, the day off at the beach. His blurred and toned photographs stylistically reference photographic history whilst undermining any sense of the classical through humour, through informality of his subjects, and through unpretentious, indeed banal, captions.

This exhibition has many points of interest, although I would have wel-

comed a more generally experimental approach. The prints are uniform in scale which, whilst consolidating the group endeavour, obscures individuality and limits the impact of specific sequences. But the exhibition successfully draws our attention to less familiar aspects of Greek culture ●

Liz Wells

A Post-Classical Landscape: Greek Photography in the 1980s

Shows at the Untitled Gallery, Sheffield until 28 February. Thereafter it tours to: Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre, Cwmbran, Gwent; Stills Gallery, Edinburgh; Picture House, Leicester; Wye Side Arts Centre, Builthwells, Powys and Duncan Jordanstone School of Art, Dundee.