

'The World of Cyprus' comes home

RETURN OF MASTERPIECE SENDS MESSAGE OF HOPE TO CRISIS-HIT ISLAND

By **Melissa Hekkers**

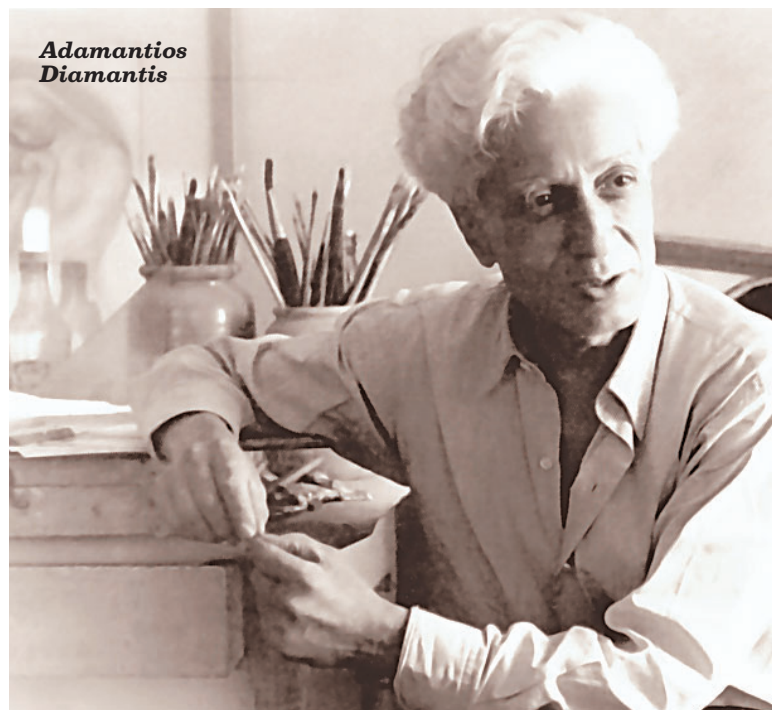
The return of a work of art initially sold in order to protect it in the aftermath of the 1974 invasion is a message of courage to crisis-hit Cyprus, representing the 'constant, firm and timeless values of its world', as portrayed by Adamantios Diamantis in his monumental piece entitled 'The World of Cyprus'.

Set to be open to the public at the end of April at the Leventis Municipal Museum, the 17 metre painting made up of 11 canvases, attempts to serve an idea, to give shape to the spirit of an age and a particular world which can easily relate to current times.

Yet for very different reasons which we acknowledge today, the composition of 67 symbolic figures set in a background of various parts of the island, sets a tone that transcends the notion of a population enduring an invasion.

"The work set out as its creator imagined it, appears to depict a group of people from the Cypriot countryside gathered in a square, a coffee shop somewhere on the Mesaoria Plain, in Lysi, or in Assia or even somewhere near Lefkara," the Leventis Museum said.

"The people sit silently contemplating the years gone by and looking to the years to come. Do they know what happened in 1974, and what is happening today? And what of the



Adamantios Diamantis

citizens of today? There is something symbolic about the presence of "The World of Cyprus" among us; it gives us a kind of strength that springs from an older age, from the traditional, time-honoured values of our homeland."

One can admire the work at the Leventis Municipal Museum in Nicosia, barely 100 metres away from Diamantis' studio, where it was created in 1967 to 1972.

It took 37 years before an agreement was reached between the painting's owners - the Tellogion Arts Foundation of Thessalonik - and the A.G. Leventis Gallery to repatriate Diamantis' piece to its birthplace in exchange for works of art and educational and re-

search projects with the Leventis Municipal Museum and The A.G. Leventis Gallery where it will eventually be displayed.

"Diamantis was promised, by the president of the (Tellogion) foundation, that when security on the island will prevail, the work would be returned here, to the place it belongs," said art historian Eleni Nikita at a press conference held on the occasion.

Diamantis was an avant-garde artist in modern Cypriot art who loved his country dearly and observed its human form in the villages of the island.

What depicts Diamantis' love for the country and what brings forward the underlying

realms of 'The World of Cyprus' is his own words about the piece. In a free translation this is what he wrote:

"What can they say? How can these 67 figures of our ancestors and grandfathers talk? What lessons can they give us? Because these figures are saying something. They talk about the wisdom of peoples of an era who were pressured for centuries, humiliation yet remained silent since they could not resist. And people reverted into themselves; they took the few things that were given to them... People took these few means and created a life filled with celebrations, they maintained their faith, adjusted their morals, the righteous,

they silently planted the seed, their commitment to race and vision, what we now go and spoil with our insanity, our superficiality, our lack of any sensible thinking and restraint, with the curse of dry selfishness and destroying one another."

The art work "The World of Cyprus" which was first exhibited by Diamantis himself in Nicosia in 1975 will be on show at the Leventis Municipal Museum from April 24 to 6 October 6. Opening hours Tuesday - Sunday: 10am-4.30pm and Wednesdays 10am-10pm. There will also be educational programmes and tours of the exhibition. More information on 22661475 or e-mail: info@leventismuseum.org.cy

