

Dimitrios exhibits in Antwerp, Belgium

"That fantastic feeling of creating"

By Wim Hart

The feeling to create visually appealing images is great, says local artist Dimitrios. "Realistic paintings don't appeal to me. I don't replicate. I create new images," he stresses. "To me, being an artist is not about being a photographer with paint, but it is to create works of aesthetic value by being imaginative and to challenge the viewer's imagination."

His focus, the artist says, is to attend international shows and exhibit his artwork there. The good news for him in particular and for St. Maarten in general is that he has received an invitation to show his paintings in a brand new gallery in the heart of Antwerp, Belgium. The Omega Gallery is part of the Grieks Huis (Greek House), a large historic building donated by the city of Antwerp to the Greek community. Belgian-born artist Dimitrios is of Greek descent and this combination together with his unique 'power dots' artwork made him a prime candidate to the gallery holder to open the first art exhibition in the Grieks Huis.

"I was thrilled by the opportunity," Dimitrios tells The Daily Herald. He says, the exhibition was opened in his presence about three months ago and is still ongoing. Besides offering space for a gallery, the building is also used as a centre for Greek cultural expressions and celebrations; display of Greek articles, such as Greek wine, olives and cheese, as well as cooking lessons to prepare Greek food and a lot more.

Dimitrios' father Giorgios Likissas lives in Belgium, has many friends from the country's



A street side view of the Omega Gallery in "Het Grieks Huis" showing some of the St. Maarten artist's paintings.

Greek community and played a major role in having his son's artwork selected for the first official exhibition at the Omega Gallery.

"I have fourteen of my paintings on exhibit in Antwerp. It's a mixture of my older art works and new paintings and I made them all here in St. Maarten," Dimitrios said.

Interest for the exhibition so far, he says, has been moderate to good.

Dimitrios says he was very young when he began to get interested in art and especially in the creative side of art. "I began by doing the realistic and very recognisable things. As soon as I saw them, I have always been fascinated by circular patterns. One or two circles and rolling, flow-

ing patterns. Never square. I hate square. Flowing images give you a feeling of freedom, as they have no boundaries," the artist explains his preference for this particular type of art expression.

"I call it power dots, because of the strong visual effects of the little balls that you experience when you look at the painting for a longer while. I find this power dot pattern so fantastic that I never get enough of it."

Looking at his paintings, you notice that the perfectly round dots or balls are not just thrown on the canvas, but that there is consistency and order in the image.

This, Dimitrios explains, enhances the exciting visual effects of his

paintings." Most people want to see realistic paintings, but that does not count to me.

They judge your painting based on how well real life objects/persons are replicated. A tree, a house, an animal, a human. But that doesn't count to me either. To me what counts is the total visual impact of a work."

A designer by profession, Dimitrios says the computer does not affect his art, although his dots are perfectly round in a way that suggests that a computer could have been used. "My artwork is hundred per cent done by hand," he says without revealing the 'tricks' he uses to get the circular effects he desires. Except that he works with meticulous precision, often estimating the dimensions he wants to use. "I calculate the distance between each of my power dots with a measuring tape, and so," he notes.

He paints with acrylic and sometimes oil--"a painting is more brilliant in oil, but it takes a long time to dry--acrylic dries much faster"--in the basic colours red, yellow, blue, black and white and the medium he prefers is canvas.

As it is difficult to acquire the quantities of canvas he needs in St. Maarten, he surfed the net and came across a good offer from a company in the States. He then had a big roll of canvas shipped and is now able to produce as many and as big paintings as he wishes to.

Dimitrios says he gets his inspiration from the things he sees. He also reads many magazines. "Because of my work, I look at texts and pictures from a technical

perspective. In the same manner I look at the things that strike me in one way or another."

Looking for an example, he leaves through a magazine until he comes upon a page showing an eye-catching image. "Images, such as this one that I find attractive I tear out and collect in a file. I have a big file and when I open it, it guides my imagination for a new work. My artwork does not come out of the blue. I already have a plan. When I complete one piece I know already what I want to do the next time."

For instance, he says, when he completed the power-dot painting of a cow, he already knew that the next painting would be that of a hand, of course also with the power dot pattern.

"Sometimes, I don't have a thing. Thinking: What do I paint now? That feels bad, and that is when my file comes to the rescue. When I open it I always find something that gets me going again."

Asked what he thinks is his best work, he takes quite some time, before replying a little annoyed with the question, "My best work? They are all good. Otherwise you do not show it and sign your name to it.

Then he admits, "Sometimes, when I look at a painting a long time after I completed it, I think, 'What a sh... thing! I have two paintings hanging at home that do not tell anything. No pattern. Nothing. But, then.. when I think back to the time that I created them, I have that fantastic feeling again."



Powerdot paintings from Dimitrios occupy a central position in the Antwerp gallery. Insert: Artist Dimitrios