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[Home](#) » [Art Athina Heals Sick Greek Economy](#)

ART ATHINA HEALS SICK GREEK ECONOMY

Despite the woeful situation of the Greek economy, the 17th edition of ART-ATHINA took place from 12th to 15th of May 2011 at the Faliro Pavilion and was a resounding success. This year it once more became the centre of interest for Athenians young and old, bringing a welcome wind of optimism and a breath of culture to the city. ARTKABINETT collector members appreciate the ability of fine arts to foster a sense of optimism and creativity in this battered nation.

As the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mr. Pavlos Yeroulanos, stated after his visit: "ART-ATHINA is proof of the vibrant presence of art in Athens, proof that the city itself is lively and that young people have their own voice. It also proves that Greece can play a significant role on the international art scene."

More than 18,000 visitors (a 12.5% increase compared to 2010) had the opportunity to see and enjoy works of art by 350 established and upcoming contemporary artists, both Greek and foreign. They were also able to take in a multidimensional Parallel Programme with video-art, a series of actions-works in progress, documentary screenings, talks, educational programmes for children etc.

It is worth noting that the opening day alone attracted more than 5,000 visitors, among them many important representatives of the political, economic and cultural life of the country. The organisation of this year's exhibition was widely acknowledged as exemplary, while the high standard of artworks presented by 58 galleries from 9 countries was also favourably discussed.

In addition, despite the tough financial situation, the commercial interest was very significant. As President of the Hellenic Art Galleries Association, Yianna Grammatopoulou, underlined, "the success of this year's ART-ATHINA is encouraging, and also makes us feel obliged to continue holding the event in the future. It demonstrated that the institution is constantly improving and renewing itself, both in terms of its organisation and its quality."

For yet another year, the country's largest annual visual arts event offered gallery owners, artists, curators, museum and cultural organisation representatives, art critics and journalists the opportunity to meet and strengthen their relationships. The presence of 44 cultural institutions, who communicated their programmes to the public and came into contact with artists and galleries, created a panorama of the contemporary art and cultural scene in Greece.

With significant benefits in two directions: on the one hand it gave visitors the opportunity to find out what is going on in the contemporary art and cultural scene and, on the other, it became the trigger for constructive communication among the institutions themselves. The exhibition's General Director, Alexandros J. Stanas, noted: "The success of this year's ART-ATHINA on all levels was beyond every expectation. The enthusiasm of all participants and visitors alike shows that the current crisis should not be used as an excuse: contemporary culture is a social catalyst as well as a vehicle for development."

The Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism incorporated ART-ATHINA in its ambitious communication programme entitled ATHENS EVERY WEEK and the fair was the central event of the 1st ATHENS ART WEEK (9-15 May 2011).

This year, for the second time, a special questionnaire-based survey was conducted during ART-ATHINA so that the visitors' opinions on the fair can be studied. Results will be compared to last year's, thus offering important statistical information and tracing the public's opinions with regard to contemporary art in Greece.

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