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## PLAIN AND UNADULTERATED PHOTOGRAPHY

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From his earliest prewar experimental snapshots and his documentation of postwar reconstruction up to his artistic conversion to expressionism in the 1960s, Dimitri Harissiadis remained faithful to what he has called 'plain' (or 'simple') and 'unadulterated' photography. "Purely photographic art", he was to insist in the course of an impassioned lecture before the membership of the newly founded Greek Photographic Society in the mid-1950s, is defined by "purely and exclusively photographic virtues" such as "precision, an infinite gradation of tones and instantaneous visual perception". Far removed from artistic or other interventions, photography's special characteristics represent "the vehicle whereby photography's rightful place alongside the other fine arts can be secured" – a credo which would mould, in terms of both content and aesthetics, not merely the whole of Harissiadis' work, but also the modernist canon of photography as an autonomous art in Greece.

His early, playful attempts at recording movement and the fleeting instant exactly confirm Harissiadis' determination to explore the possibilities and specificities of photographic documentation, defining the technical and conceptual parameters for his protracted postwar involvement with documentary photography. And whereas from the very beginning, realism for Harissiadis represented the cornerstone of his attack on representation, his handling of the underlying dramaturgy of the represented subject, the geometry of space and the form gradually came to amplify the informational content of his images. His insistence on a correct balance of form and meaning, no less than on the aesthetic rightness and autonomy of each image, irrespective of its type and ultimate purpose, is reflected in landscapes of every kind, in portraits whether or not commissioned, in architectural views and street scenes and even in simple snapshots. Alongside his intuitive percipience and uncompromising insistence on the highest possible standards, this 'poetic elegance' represents, in the unanimous opinion of his contemporaries, the distinguishing feature of Harissiadis' photography.

Alexandra Moschovi