

*THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL*, MEMPHIS, Sunday Morning, January 21 ,1973

## **LIVING WITH ART**

by Guy Northrop

### **Classical Figures by Thanasis Fampas Have a Touch**

The landscape or some other definable background occasionally sleep into a painting by Thanasis Fampas, but his preferred subject is the human figure stylistically posed lovingly portrayed against some nebulous background that had exist only as a color, a texture, a curtain to set off the sitter.

A room full of Fampas figures such as one can see now in the exhibition at the W.A. OATES Gallery (97 North Tillman St.), transports you to a distant place where the Mediterranean Sun and earthy Balkan colors caress your vision.

Fampas, a 50 year old artist, born in Greece, but long a resident of Bucharest, Romania is unashamedly a product of his artistic heritage. His painting manner is frankly Byzantine a pastiche of the centuries of formal flat-toned figures which seem to exist simply to be painted as a gratification of the artist's compulsion to create.

Colors are extracted from the visible world which Fampas has known- the white of dress or painted wall catching hints of blue sky, evening violet, green trees, gray rocks, in the folds of material or gritty roughness of stucco. Other dominant colors, which appear in woman's skirt, kerchiefs for the head or the vague backdrop, is that of red clay, much like you see in the gullies of a north Mississippi field. So these are mostly warm paintings almost antic in tone and texture, and always plain and forthright.

For the most part Fampas depicts very ordinary people in serene restful moments. A little girl picks flowers, three farm maidens pose like classical goddesses, a fisherman raises his catch, peasant children play with domestic animals or herd and milk their goats, a musician picks his mandolin, a mother fondles her baby.

In his way of dealing with flat planes Fampas may appear quite contemporary, which is quite all right. He has the touch of expressionism that gives his paintings a 20<sup>th</sup> century validity. But basically he is classical, and his figures could have stepped out of some ancient fresco.

Oh yes, one particular Fampas touch, so easily remarked upon a large group of his pictures, is the treatment of hands. Watch them, painting by painting, as they bring grace, beauty and deep human expression into each pose, like a ballet dancer's hand embellishing the music with great stagecraft.

The Oates Gallery is open on Sundays from 2 to 5 p.m. The Fampas show can be seen from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday.