

# Travelling artists capture centuries of island's life

Nearly three centuries of Cyprus' physical and social history, from the mid-Ottoman period to the end of British rule, are graphically depicted in a unique exhibition in Nicosia of the work of artists who visited the island between 1700 and 1960 and also in an impressive and comprehensive companion book published in London last December.

Featuring some 350 works by over 120 artists, both the exhibition and the book are entitled "Travelling Artists in Cyprus, 1700-1960" and are principally the work of Dr Rita C. Severis, an eminent art historian and, together with her husband Costas, the collector of many of the works featured. The exhibition is to be seen at the Nicosia Municipal Art Centre until 29 July.

The 350 works present a panoramic view of the island's landscape, its monuments and its people over 260 years, as seen through

the eyes of visitors with artistic skills and passions. The artists whose works are featured are mostly European and include diplomats or their wives, military personnel, monks, missionaries, ethnographers and historians. Most of the items have not been published before.

The 120 artists begin with Basil Grigorovich Barskii, a Russian monk who dedicated his life to visiting and depicting the churches and monasteries of the Eastern Orthodox world and who travelled to Cyprus in the early 18th century. They continue with other visitors during the Ottoman period, for whom Cyprus was an exotic and little-known island well off the normal routes of the European traveller. The works of British artists begin to feature prominently from the advent of British rule in 1878 and include the Beardsleyesque pen and ink drawings of Gladys Peto in the 1920s and

some of the donkey-loving Marjorie Congreve a decade later.

The more troubled post-1945 period is also represented, notably by a painting of the world-renowned artist David Bomberg, who became fascinated with the Cyprus landscape in the late 1940s. Also striking are a series of woodcut engravings by unknown inmates of the Caralios internment camp near Famagusta where the British authorities housed Jewish refugees seeking to reach Israel.

The beautifully produced 288-page book contains 300 colour and 50 mono illustrations, which are accompanied by a scholarly and lucid text by Dr Severis, based on the doctoral thesis which she took at Bristol University.

●The book is published by Philip Wilson Publishers of London (ISBN 0 85667 522 9).



• Striking 1879 watercolour... "The Artist's Mules in a Rich Cypriot's Home", by British artist Tristram Ellis (1844-1922).

## Notes & News

●A ceremony on 6 April to mark the 75th anniversary of the Melkonian Educational Institute of the **Armenian community** received a message from President Clerides in which he paid tribute to the community's contribution to the economic and cultural life of Cyprus. Numbering some 2,500, the Cypriot Armenians had opted at independence in 1960 to be regarded as part of the majority Greek Cypriot community.

●Cyprus Interior Minister Christodoulos Christodoulou clashed verbally with Turkish representatives at a ministerial conference on cultural heritage in Portoroz, Slovenia, in early April when he gave indisputable evidence of the desecration and looting of 520 **Orthodox and Armenian churches** in the Turkish-occupied area and the theft of 13,000 icons. On his return to Nicosia, the Minister said that the Government would hold Turkey to an unprecedented promise given by its Deputy Culture Minister, under pressure of opinion at the conference, to respond to such complaints if Cyprus supplied details.

●A Vatican spokesman announced on 3 April that **Pope John Paul II** would not after all visit Cyprus in May in the course of his tour of Greece, Syria and Malta.

●Four volumes containing some 68,000 signatures demanding an inquiry into the whereabouts of **27 children missing** since the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus were handed to Council of Europe Secretary General Walter Schwimmer by a Greek

Cypriot delegation on 25 April. The signatures included those of President Clerides, the Archbishops of Cyprus and Greece and many foreign dignitaries. Herr Schwimmer responded by pledging every possible assistance to the families concerned.

●In an historic decision on 20 April, the House of Representatives approved by 46 votes to 8 a Government bill providing for the creation of a universal **state health care scheme**, which Health Minister Frixos Savvides said was expected to become operational from 2006. At



• New arrival... Assured of state health care.

the beginning of the month civil service, banking and electricity industry union leaders had called off a planned further two-day strike in protest against the scheme, having received ministerial assurances on fears that it would result in loss of existing benefits.

●Measures to protect Cyprus from **foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)** have been instituted following the major outbreak in Britain and the discovery of cases in Turkey. A "protective shield" has been set up along the ceasefire line to prevent penetration by any infection in the Turkish-occupied area, while close liaison has been established with the British military bases at Akrotiri and Dhekelia to guard against FMD being brought in from Britain. Visitors arriving by air from Britain have to walk across disinfectant mats and to hand over any food items they bring with them. The ban on imports of British livestock, meat and dairy products has been extended to include pets. □

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