

The background of the entire page is a painting of a landscape. It features a bright blue sky with soft, white, billowing clouds. In the foreground and middle ground, there are rolling hills and mountains rendered in shades of green, yellow, and brown, suggesting a natural, perhaps mountainous, terrain. The style is impressionistic, with visible brushstrokes and a focus on light and color.

# *The Dynamic Earth*

Stamatis Skliris' Vision of the Past, Present, and Future  
of American Natural Treasures

**An Exhibit of Paintings**

Los Angeles, California  
August 30<sup>th</sup> - September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013



Father **Stamatis Skliris** was born in Piraeus, the port of Athens, in 1946. At his baptism he was named after Holy New Martyr Stamatios from the island of Hydras. From the early childhood, he showed the artistic gifts and through his elementary and high school education, he began to paint and write church poems. Initially he completed the Medical faculty (1971), and then Theology (1976) at the University of Athens. He continues his studies in Belgrade at the Theological and Philosophical Faculty, attending lectures in Theology and Art History. His love and zeal for Theology and Art, defined him as one of the most knowledgeable Orthodox iconologos, iconographer and technotrope (designer and stylist) of icons, as well as of the ancient, medieval and modern art.

STAMATIS SKLIRIS

The mounting of the display is done by Jasminka Gabrie

The event is organized by Stefanie Salata Davis

This event is sponsored by Serbian Western American Diocese

## Stamatis Skliris

### On the Changing Nature of Forms

Inspired by the painting of the National Parks of America

We walk on the very crust of the earth. Beneath us, a seething hot sun is hidden in a damp fiery form. Landscape painting is the portrayal of this crust, since the painter's main concern is the rendering of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional canvas. This burning sun wears its lava as a dried up skin that swallows up the flames.

The painter knows that beneath the landscape there is lava. He sees not only the surface, but also the depth. He also sees the crust as it once was, and wonders how it developed to this point. Looking at the landscape, he sees thousands of eruptions of lava. He sees the effects of precipitation, conflicts, subsidence, erosion, and partitions. All sorts of deformations of the Earth's surface that led to its current form. The painter also predicts future variations of the landscape, because the same forces that acted and led to the present will create the future landscape. If the painter sticks to just one form, he will be unable to understand successive forms: he will be unable to understand the logic of the landscape's anatomy, the sculptured form of the landscape. This is not surrealism or a dream, it is simply the changing nature of beings, the created-ness of their being. It is the familiarity of the painter with the forms of matter, which help him understand the changing nature of forms. This provides a panoramic sense and view of the entire development of the planet in the past and in the future. That grain of sand was once a solid monolith, and that monolith over there that our eye can see now will change, will dissolve, and will one day become a grain of sand, then quicksand, and then a vanishing powder.

The eye of the painter sees every surface of the landscape as perforated, fragile, and flimsy in the face of the changes produced by the actions of humanity. He sees the sandwiching of the natural landscape between man-made landscapes, which are expanding quickly, and that suffocate natural landscapes. He cannot, therefore, look at the landscape he is painting without noticing the effects of man's insatiable and revolutionary attitude toward nature, and of nature's peaceful obedience to the laws of nature. Somewhere within all these landscapes, even in the most primal and deserted corners, man exists. The creator and destroyer of landscapes, man is also the artist that creates works of art from primal nature. The crafty destroyer and creator doesn't always appear in the landscape. Usually, he is behind the mountains, in the societies that shape the changing landscape and its fragile form.

But even the artist does not appear at first sight, because he paints, first from this perspective, and then from that perspective and, finally, he hides within his own work. He doesn't let the landscape have its space. He places his own unique stamp upon it. Through his creativity, he makes the landscape his own. There is the classic scene that you've seen, and about which you say, "this is how Van Gogh painted the cypress tree." That, over there, is St. Victoria Mount, not as seen in nature, but as painted by Cezanne, which is completely his own. The same is true for Kandinsky's Blue Mountain, with its blue/mauve strokes. Wherever we take the work, wherever we put it, its painter comes along with it, because he can be found within it, and from within it he speaks to us across the ages, using his unique brush strokes as words that he hurls at us. These small, weak brushstrokes, however, appear to change the destiny of the landscape.

Yes, the painting of a landscape is an act of destruction, similar to the breaking through of lava, which "paints" a completely new landscape. It is completely enigmatic, the birth of a passionate and infinite scene that does battle with the destiny of the planet and of man. Here is man, a landscape within the landscape, who is fragile like the rocks and spins together on his mother, the earth.

This man, with his paints, uses his senses to enter into the structure and depths of the earth and its destiny. The flame within him inspires him to liberate and to unify the discontinuities and conflicts of the landscape. He wants the rocks to be able to fly. He always wants all things to exist for all time, and to remember them all for all time. This is why he "immortalizes" them in his art.

There are also some other unique people who view the landscape in a different way, who are able to see what hides behind the hill, or behind the wall. They are able to enter into and to experience rocks and water from within, through their senses. They are able to see light in the middle of darkness. Let us call them "The Only True Landscape Painters."



1. **“Thunder Springs, North Rim”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

In this painting, which is the first in the series, I painted a small waterfall in the canyon, and I left room to write the name of the location later, because I don't know the exact name right now. Half of the canvas displays a large rock, which goes from the top to the bottom. On the right is the source from which the water comes. The waterfall gets bigger and falls into a small pond. In the foreground can be found some more rocks. It begins as a naturalistic landscape, but the way in which the rocks are painted has elements reminiscent of the way that Byzantine iconographers painted landscapes. So here we have a marriage between modern naturalistic painting and Byzantine landscape painting.



2. **“Niagara Falls #1”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

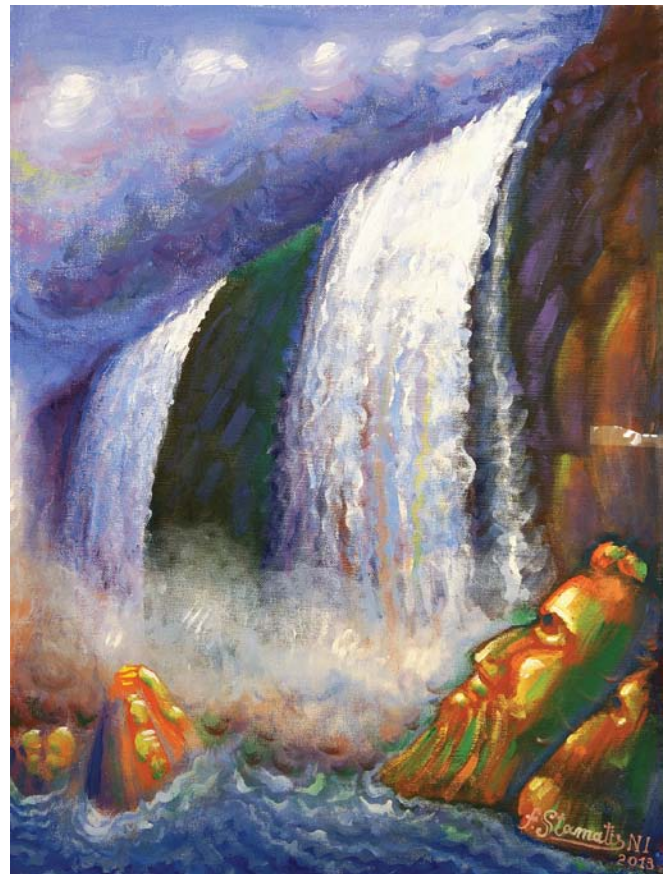
This scene is painted from where the top of the waterfall looks like a horseshoe. The top part of the painting shows the trees beside the river. The water from the river is a dark color, and where the water begins to fall, it becomes radiant. The dominant color in this painting is blue; nearly the entire painting is made up of different shades of blue.



3. **“Niagara Falls #2”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

In this painting, Niagara Falls is painted from a different perspective. The falling of the water is painted in a naturalistic way. When the water falls into the lake below, however, there are rocks there that are painted in an anthropomorphic fashion. The main rock has the face of a person looking at the waterfall, and in awe of what he is looking at. This is an enigmatic element that is introduced: the expression of a human face that has been transposed onto nature (which does not have its own face). Along with this enigma, the question of how to interpret it also arises. It's a fact that there is nothing stable in nature, everything changes. The ancient philosopher Heraclitus said that everything disintegrates, everything changes. So here, the appearance of a human face in the rock requires reflection and has theological dimensions.

4. **“Grand Canyon”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.





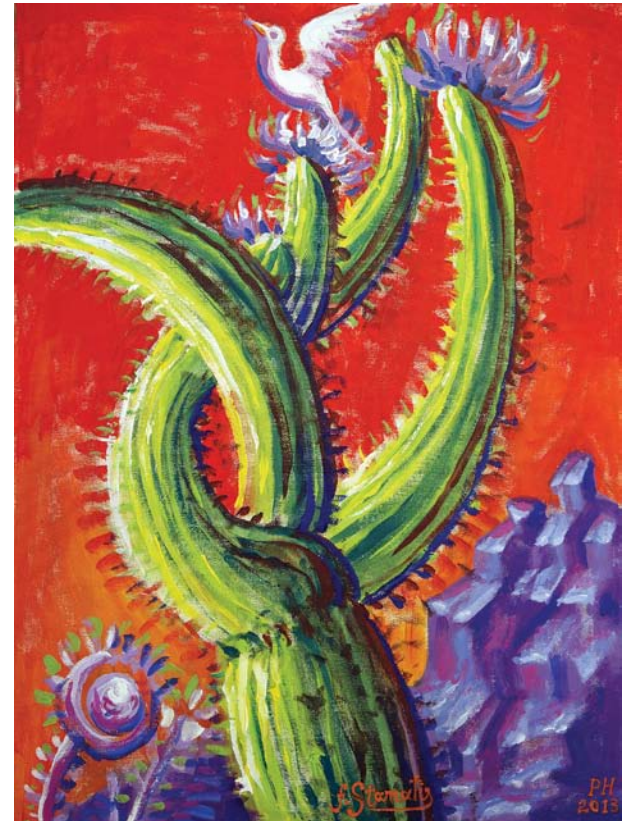


Faced with the amazing subject of the Grand Canyon to paint, I chose to focus on a small part of it, a limited landscape that appears in the foreground. The largest part of the canyon appears in the distance, and is not included in the space of this painting. A path leads toward the gorge and to the left of the path there is a combination of rocks, among which can be found a small cave. Beyond the foreground is another slope. And in the distance is another rock that is red in color. It is the first study I made, attempting to capture the greatness of the Grand Canyon. Other paintings will follow, that deal with the canyon itself, and that present interesting aspects of this geological phenomenon.

5. **“Arizona Cactus”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

The inspiration for this painting came when I visited St. Anthony’s Monastery in Arizona, where I had the opportunity to see many cacti. The painting, however, is done in a completely impressionistic style, with a great deal of movement in the painting. The result is that the branches of the cactus have a good deal of movement, which expresses the possibility of nature to take on a personality of its own. This bestowal of personhood to nature, which is usually nondescript, is a characteristic that we encounter in many great works. In particular, whatever Van Gogh painted that was not human, he would give traits of human personality. So

here, in place of branches, the cactus has hands. And the hands suggest that it is dancing or making some other human movement, such that it’s able to capture a small white bird. The bird is portrayed with its wings open, trying to free itself from the fatal embrace of the cactus. So there are two elements to the cactus: the cactus is open to us, encouraging us to come close, while at the same time it has these needles and arms that capture whatever comes near, or whatever is blown toward it by the wind, and it’s dangerous. From the perspective of painting, it’s interesting that the background is red. Here, I should note that the heat of the landscape causes the painter to feel that in order to express it properly, he must use red, rather than blue, which is the common way to portray the sky. This is the superficial explanation, however. There’s also the sense in which the instinct of the painter is to place it next to an object whose color complements it. In this case, a very green cactus. There is also the symbolic dimension of the painting: that such a strong red color is able to properly portray the habitat of such a dynamic cactus. From the perspective of technique, it’s interesting to note that the red brushstrokes that approach the cactus provide the impression of many needles, without the painter having to have painted every last needle individually. It’s a technique that comes out of the tradition of Impressionism – the painter tries to create an impression of movement, needles, and aggressiveness, rather than present an optical phenomenon in a literal fashion.



6. **“Sedona Cathedral Rock”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

This painting is dominated by two mountainous masses, as well as the orange and red colors of the rocks, which are the most obvious/objective elements of the scene. These come into a dialectic relationship with the earth, which is mauve and bordeaux. To the right is an arrangement of rocks, which are painted surreally – they take on a variety of shapes – balls, spheres, and are portrayed in such a way as to give them the sense of not being heavy, and of radiating light. At the same time, each piece of the bordeaux colored sand is painted individually, each one with its own shadow, and strong light, so that the sand radiates light just like the rocks. There are two ways to view the painting: on the one hand, we view the entire scene as a whole, on the other hand, we view each





individual part on its own - such as each piece of sand, each of which gives off light. In order for this to work, the piece needs to have a dark blue sky, which provides the appropriate background so that the orange rocks are prominent. So there is a dialectical relationship between the objective level of the picture (the picture as a whole) and the subjective level of the individual, unique parts. These unique elements give us the sense that nature can change form and give off light, which is borrowed from the way nature is portrayed in Byzantine iconography.

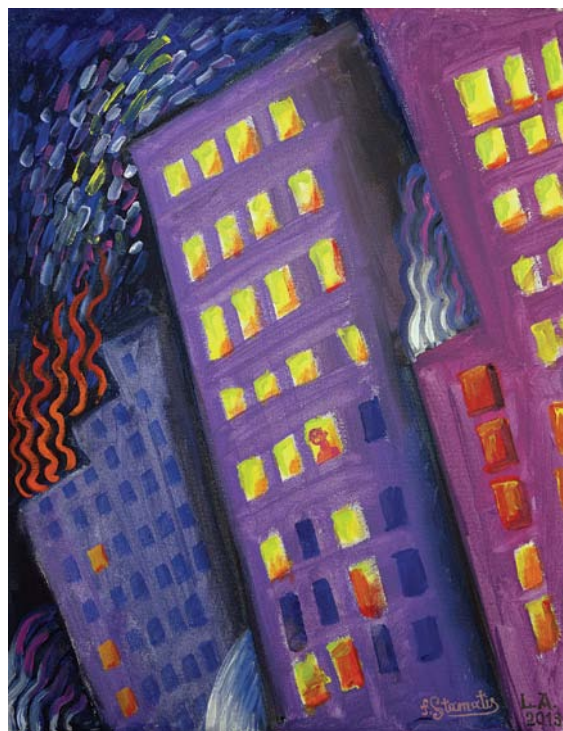


7. **“Melody of Waters”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

In this painting we see an abstract approach to the circle of life that water takes. At the bottom there is a lake, from which water evaporates, rises, and creates the clouds that are at the top of the painting. The clouds produce rain, and from the rain, waterfalls are created. So, on the first level, which we can refer to as the scientific level, we have the circle of life that water takes. The result of this circle of life is a tree, which is painted in the right section of the painting. The scientific level, however, only provided the initial inspiration for the creation of this painting. The most important part of the painting can be found in its rhythm. The way the water falls creates a sense of great movement, which is aided by the colors that are used. That is to say, when water has a color palette that ranges from orange to blue, it creates a powerful sense that something is happening to the water that causes it to move and to transform into different colors. Ultimately, this portrays the sense of the powerful role that water plays in nature. The approach in the painting is poetic, which is why I gave it the title, “Melody of Waters.” From painting I was transported to music, and I borrowed a musical term to express the reality of the painting.

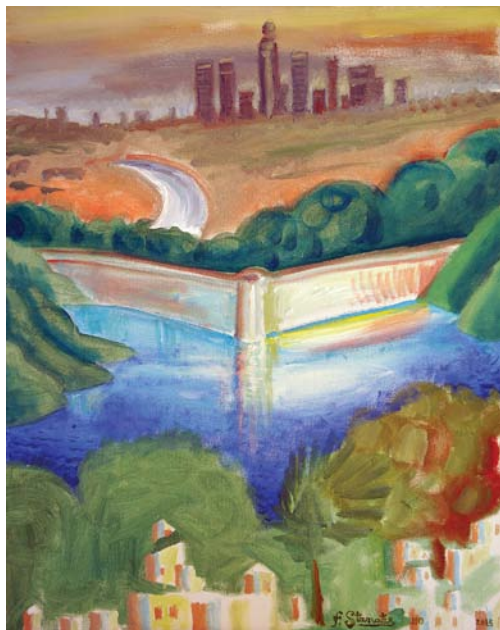
8. **“Manhattan at Night”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

From the perspective of light, this painting comes into contrast with the other paintings from this series because it has a dark background, and consists of dark gray skyscrapers, which have a number of windows that are lit up. The windows that are lit give a sense of human presence, while those that are dark give a sense of emptiness. There are some waves, perhaps fire, that rise from one of the skyscrapers, and create a sense of the anxiety of the big city. So we have two ideas that are expressed regarding huge modern cities: on the one hand there is loneliness, which is suggested by the hugeness of the buildings, which dwarf the humans, and give the sense that a person is simply one among many in this huge building. On the other hand, we have the sense of the movement of the city, the sense of anxiety, where everyone is running all the time so as to be in time for something. Absent from the painting is the sense of peace of the soul. The painting represents the hopelessness of the city in the middle of the night. While it was painted in Manhattan, the feelings that it evokes could apply to any of America’s huge cities.



9. **“Hollywood Hill”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

This was painted from the Hollywood Hills, looking down on Lake Hollywood Reservoir, with the city and its skyscrapers in the distance. It was painted just after the sun had gone down. In the middle of the picture, the lake emits light. In the foreground are trees, houses, and the Hollywood Hills, and in the background, the colors get darker. The skyscrapers appear as a group of people that stand in a desert. The building in the middle appears to have a head, and through these buildings, the human element enters the picture, surrounded by nature that lacks a personal dimension.





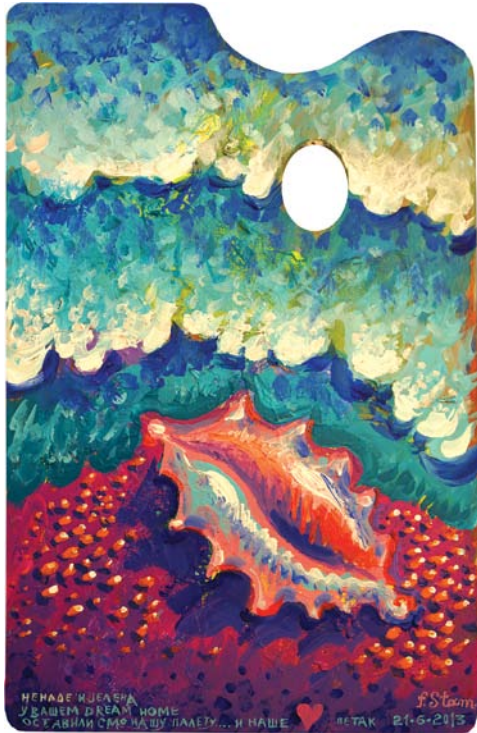
10. **“Walt Disney Music Hall”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

The main subject of the painting is the music hall. The metal exterior of this architecturally unique building, with its characteristic lines that collide, is offered in pictorial form. Because within this building is the temple of music, we have the anthropomorphism of music as a woman. The building appears as a type of boat within which this woman stands, and which is headed toward us. The woman has a mysterious face that is both attractive as well as peaceful, with red hair, and holding in one hand a lyre, the symbol of music, and in the other a mask, the symbol of the theater, of the ancient tragedies. The background includes planets, which revolve around the symbol of music. There are also circles that surround the entire background, so as to give music a sense of universalism – music transports us from earth to other, fantastical and mysterious, worlds. To the right is a hot air balloon and to the left is an airplane, which are symbols of Los Angeles, as well as of the movement of humans within this space. Humans move in this space, just as the planets move through space. It’s interesting to note the difference between the lyre and the mask. The mask appears as though it’s going to cry, influenced by the tragedies that it expresses. The lyre, on the other hand, seems to be at peace, which suggests that music is an attempt to overcome tragedy.



11. **“Malibu 1”**,  
Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

This painting is an impressionistic study of the landscape of the highest points of the Malibu coast. This coast has unique features that the painter should take advantage of, which are particularly impressive during sunset. These are expressed in an impressionistic way, with contrasting strokes of warm and cool colors. In the foreground, the coast takes on an anthropomorphic sense, as the rocks look a bit like a face, whose hair is the grass at the top of the rock, and which looks out to the ocean. It’s a strong person, whose members: hands, feet, etc. are suggested in the other parts of the rocks. To the right, beyond the foreground is another rock that looks like a human (painted in bordeaux), another one that is green, and in the far background, one that is dark mauve. We could say that these are four elders that are looking out into the future. To the far left is a green slope, where we can see the same element as in the painting from Sedona: each little rock is painted individually, with its own color and unique brush strokes. This slope has a striking feature – it looks like the back of a large animal, whose neck is bent down at the far back left. The colors of the sky complement the painting. It has a yellowish green color, and in the dark section of the sky, the planet Venus can be seen; it’s far away, in the dark green section of the sky. The combination of the rocks that don’t move with this distant planet makes this painting a commentary on stillness and quiet. It’s



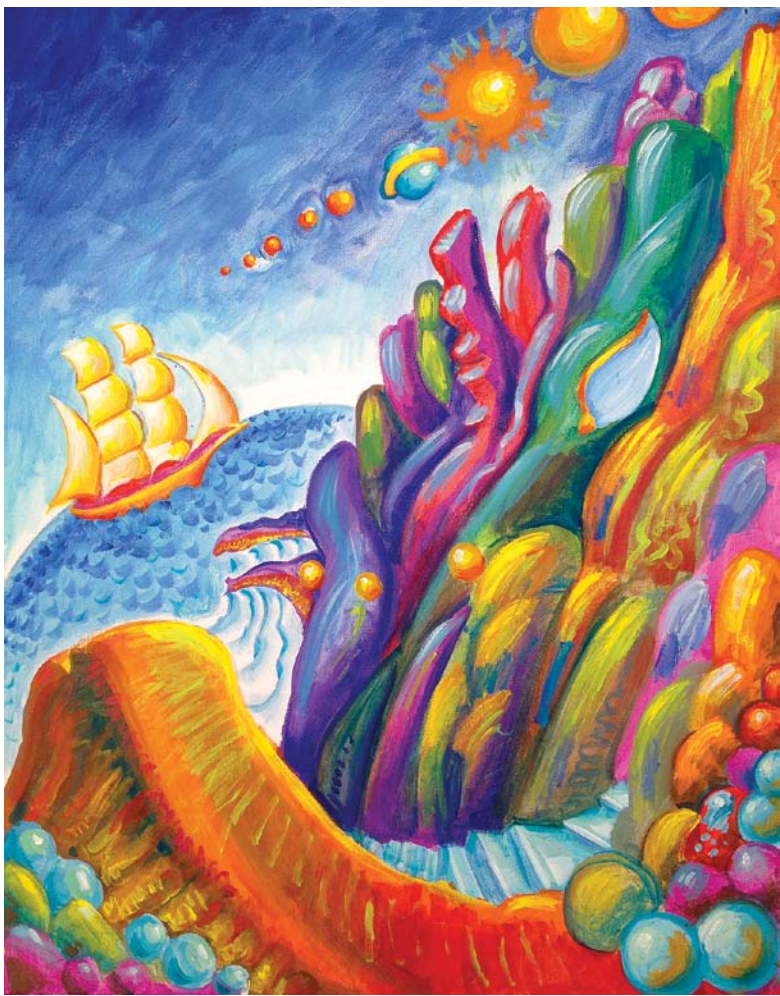
a painting that in addition to inspiring awe for the dynamic aspect of nature, also inspires silence.

12. **“Shellfish of Malibu”**, Acrylic on palette board, June 2013.

The painting is painted as though we are looking from the very top of the coast, where the waves disappear as they hit the sand. On top of the sand sits a shell, which casts a shadow. The shadow gives the shell a sense of dimension. Because the waters land on the sand and then retreat backwards, they move quickly over the sand, which makes the sand sparkle. This is why each piece of sand is painted individually, as in the paintings from Sedona and Malibu 1.

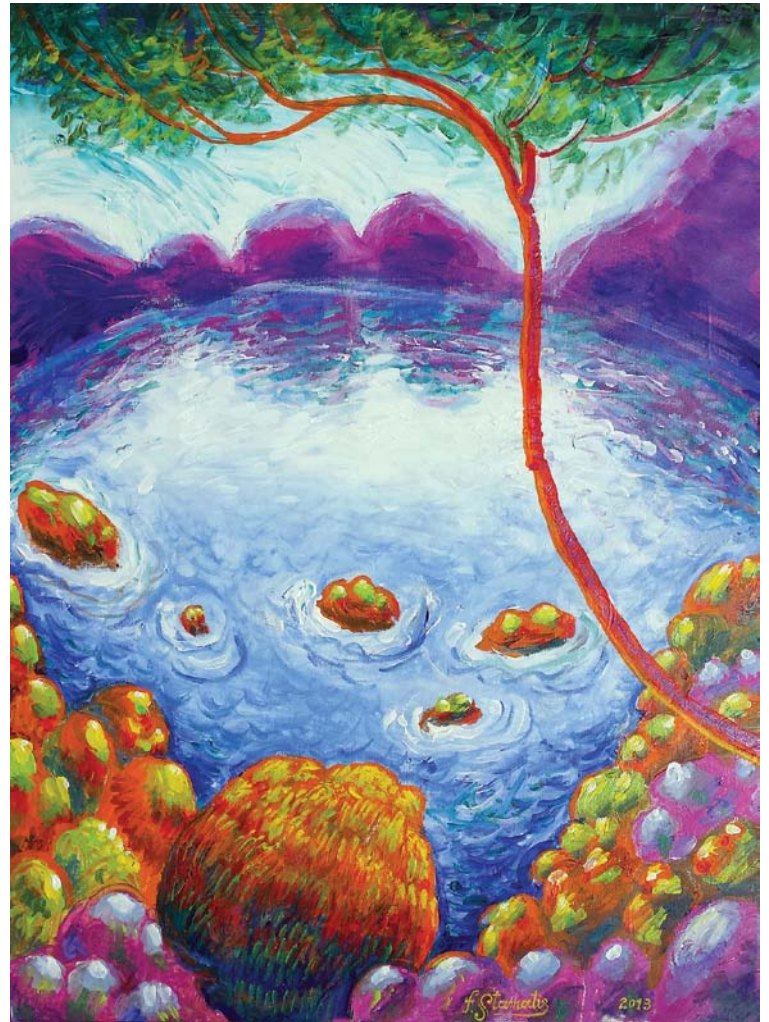






13. **“Malibu 2”**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013.

A (blue) path that descends quickly to the Malibu coast provided the inspiration for this painting that, to the right, has different colored rocks and to the left has another section that goes from yellow to red in a semicircle, which move in an opposite direction from the rocks to the right. This creates a balance along with the large rocks to the right. In the middle, the blue path goes down to the beach. To the far left is the ocean with a sailboat with large sails. Planets are painted in the sky, along with stars, the sun. We could refer to this painting as an example of “spherism,” which is to say, the elements of the rocks are artistically rendered as spheres that on the one side are given light, and on the other side are shown in shadow. The ways in which shadow is added, and in which the other colors are added (which is an inheritance from Impressionism) gives the impression of depth and of plasticity to the rocks. So, we have a completely visual language to geometrically express and interpret a natural landscape of beach and ocean.



14. **“Jordan Pond and the Bubbles”**

Acrylic on canvas, New Jersey, July 2013.

Here we have a lighting condition known as “contre lumière.” The viewer is set against the light, the distant hills are in shade, and the center of the lake acts as a mirror reflecting the sunlight. This glow gives a strong sense of the fluid and liquid character of the water. A tree with a thin red trunk seems to sway above the lake, and suggests motion above the peaceful and unmoving lake. The lake seems to turn its surface toward the viewer, and we have a bird’s eye view, as though we are looking at the lake from above. A sense of quiet peace pervades the scene.



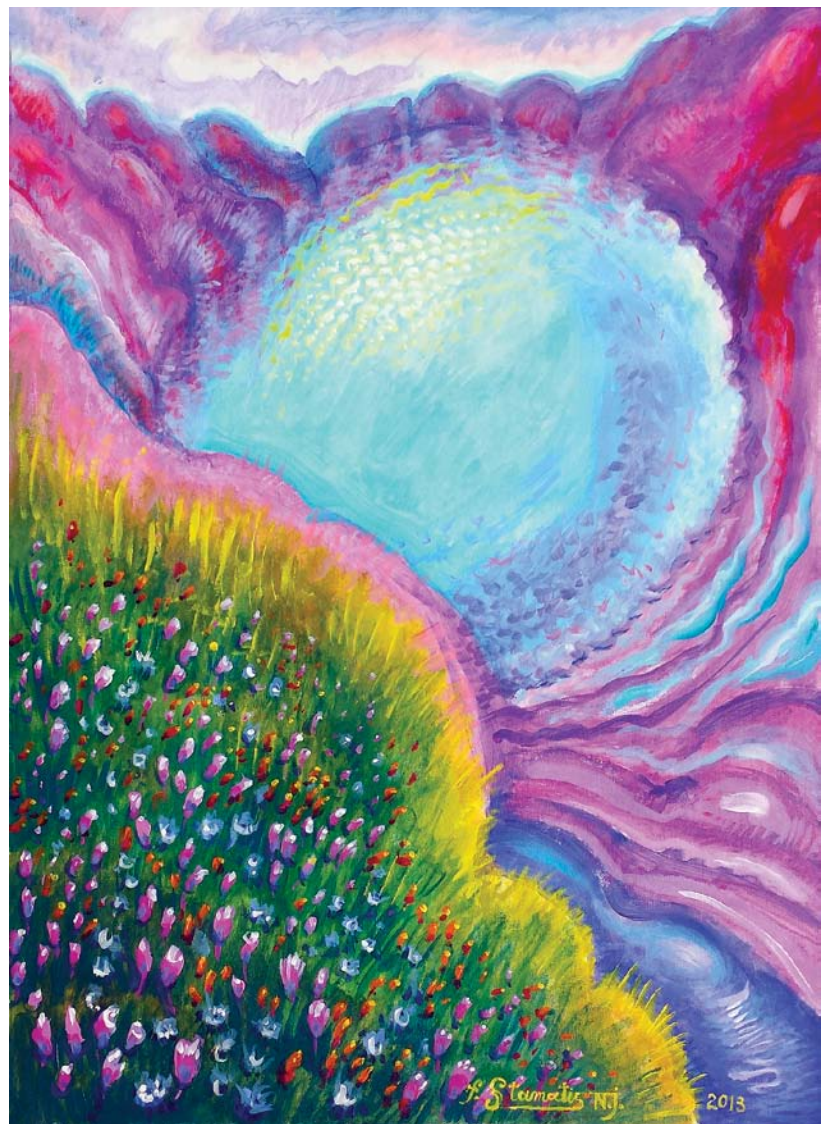
15. **“Fireweed and Arctic Cotton”**,  
Acrylic on canvas, New Jersey, July 2013.  
Johns Hopkins Inlet.

The rendering of the water’s natural shine is not the focus of this painting. Even though the lake’s surface is wrinkled with wavelets, the shapes and colors of the various elements are used to form a rhythm of colors and shapes. The lake is the main subject, with its turquoise color that does not appear horizontally, but as a balloon that lifts off the ground. Before us in the foreground is a slope with flowers that exude the joy of natural beauty. In the background, surrounding the lake, wild reddish mountains stretch the perspective toward the back, and thus offer us an endless view. The scene is pervaded by a sense of loneliness and of man’s awe before the boundlessness of nature. However, the colors of the flowers surround us with the sensation of thousands of delicate fragrances in the air, and sweeten the lonely desert landscape.

16. **“Buffalo”**, Acrylic on canvas, Arizona-Porto Rafti, July 2013.

The Bison has a brute force that even itself does not know. The bison nourished the native peoples of America with its meat and warmed them with its fleece. In these places it is the pillar of life and the powerful aspect of the landscape. It does not move much, but it has been displaced. It has a vibrant and life-giving presence that we cannot ignore; it dominates the American landscape.

All of the bison’s power is located in its head. The hind legs, torso, and chest give strength and momentum to the head, which is compelling. Here, the bison is pictured with his head drawn to the universe, the stars, clouds, galaxies, and every-



thing that comes along. And here again, as in Malibu and in other places, are planets that circle the central hero of the painting. We feel as though the bison is alive in front of us: alive, strong, and universal. It perseveres, with inner strength, enduring its destiny; but also creating it, silently.

At 3:30 in the morning, I finished the face of the bison. I’m not speaking of the head, but of the face. Without my wanting it to, it came out anthropomorphic and looking upwards. It also ended up with a devout, or maybe sad expression. Perhaps we can sense here the influence of Byzantine iconography, which portrays St. George’s horse anthropomorphically. The same tradition that, on the rocks of the cave of the Nativity of Christ, sometimes includes eyes that are dazzled before the mystery of the Incarnation of God.





### 17. "A Ship Moors in the Channel Islands"

Acrylic on canvas, Los Angeles-Porto Rafti, July 2013.

In the night and blackness of these wild islands of the Pacific Ocean appears a glowing boat that defies the tempest and heads toward the craggy coastline. By itself, this contrast brings us hope.

The island inspires with its rugged coastline. It is painted in the night, as a storm comes in as a huge dark mass upon which huge waves crash. On the left, a boat can be seen as it defies the storm, and is pushed toward the rocks. To the right end of the canvas, between the rocks, there is the suggestion of a fossil of some ancient inhabitant of America, who appears at this turbulent time, as an enigmatic presence out of the past.

### 18. "Nighttime in Arizona"

Acrylic on canvas, Phoenix-Neo Psychiko, July 2013.

Night, with a huge moon and a silent starry sky above the landscape of rocks, shrubs, and cacti. A raging white horse in a blue dream runs through the Arizona desert with an upright rider, a mysterious Indian, on its back. Man has caught the animal, and the animal's momentum endangers man's balance. The silent and peaceful presence of the night and of the desert converse with the dynamic relationship between man and animal. And all those depicted are cast with the golden light of the moon.



### 19. "The Cave Where Christ Was Born",

Acrylic on canvas, Athens, 2011.

This painting was placed as a type of graffiti on a wall in Athens on Christmas Day 2012, and was then detached from the wall and moved to Los Angeles. This is why it was painted with a simplicity of colors and shapes, almost like a kid's drawing, which helped passersby grasp it at first glance. The atmosphere that it exudes echoes the spirit of Christmas. In addition, on the surface of the landscapes of this painting, we are reminded of how nature, the landscape with its rocks and caves provided man's first home. And this again shows God's endless humility, to be born in such a primitive home, as was the cave of Bethlehem.







20. **The Dynamic Mother Earth and Horses**, Acrylic on canvas, Athens, 2012.

Wild Horses of Indians galloping Arizona, on the very crust of the earth, while beneath them is personified the Mother Earth of Native Indians. The eye of the painter sees the surface of the landscape and understands that even in the most primal and deserted corners man exists.

## LIST OF PAINTINGS

1. **Thunder Springs, North Rim**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 14" x 18"
2. **Niagara Falls 1**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 14" x 18"
3. **Niagara Falls 2**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 18" x 24"
4. **Grand Canyon**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 14" x 18"
5. **Arizona Cactus**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 18" x 24"
6. **Sedona Cathedral Rock**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 48" x 36"
7. **Melody of Waters**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 14" x 18"
8. **Manhattan at Night**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 22" x 28"
9. **Hollywood Hill**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 24" x 30"
10. **Walt Disney Music Hall LA**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 48" x 36"
11. **Malibu 1**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 22" x 28"
12. **Shellfish of Malibu**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 14" x 18"
13. **Malibu 2**, Acrylic on canvas, June 2013, 30" x 24"
14. **Jordan Pond and the Bubbles**, Acrylic on canvas, New Jersey, July 2013, 19" x 25"
15. **Fireweed and Arctic Cotton**, Acrylic on canvas, New Jersey, July 2013, 19" x 25"
16. **Buffalo**, Acrylic on canvas, Arizona-Porto Rafti, July 2013, 55" x 36"
17. **A Ship Moors in the Channel Islands**, Acrylic on canvas, Los Angeles-Porto Rafti, July 2013, 81" x 53"
18. **Nighttime in Arizona**, Acrylic on canvas, Phoenix-Neo Psychiko, July 2013, 36" x 52"
19. **The Cave Where Christ Was Born**, Acrylic on canvas, Athens, 2011, 79" x 125"
20. **The Dynamic Mother Earth and Horses**, Acrylic on canvas, Athens, 2012, 21" x 17,5"





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