

Spyros Papaloukas in Lesvos and the Architecture of Emotion: A Neuroaesthetic Approach

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Neuroaesthetic Approach

The study of how the brain responds to beauty and how the aesthetic experience emerges from the interplay between perception and **emotion.**

Papaloukas does not simply depict; he activates within us **biological mechanisms of perception and beauty.**



Coffee shop in Lesvos, B. & M. Theocharakis
Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

1: Completion

2: Constancy

3: Abstraction

4. Truth

5. Emotional economy

These biological principles are also **sources of aesthetic pleasure**. Nature made them intrinsically appealing so that we would use them, as they contributed to our survival.



Agiassos, National Bank of Greece

To give an idea of how the brain works, different systems are recruited to analyze the messages sent by vision **(neurobiological response)**:

- The **visual cortices (V1–V4)** recognize basic elements such as lines and colors.
- **Higher-order regions** (IT, prefrontal cortex) integrate these elements to construct meaning.
- The limbic system rewards this successful interpretation with **a sense of aesthetic pleasure and emotion**.

1: Completion

2: Constancy

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Fundamental Biological Principles of Vision and the Brain Through Papaloukas's Work in Lesvos

1. The Principle of Completion

The brain does not receive complete information from the senses. Instead, it receives fragmented stimuli and **assembles them into a coherent whole.**

Vision is not passive; **it is a creative act.**



Rooftops in Lesvos, B. & M. Theocharakis
Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

Papaloukas does not give us easy answers; he invites us to think and, in doing so, draws us into the work, making us **co-creators**.



Rural Landscape, B. & M. Theocharakis
Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

Papaloukas's modernism lies in works that may appear unfinished, but are, in essence, **complete**.



Village in Lesvos, Private Collection

The viewer's brain fills in what is missing, reconstructing **volume**, **depth**, and **even the scent** of the place.



Church in Lesvos, B. & M. Theocharakis Foundation
for the Fine Arts and Music

This creative reconstruction gives rise to aesthetic pleasure—the moment when the brain recognizes that it has **succeeded in making sense of the world** from incomplete information.



Village in Lesvos, Bank of Greece

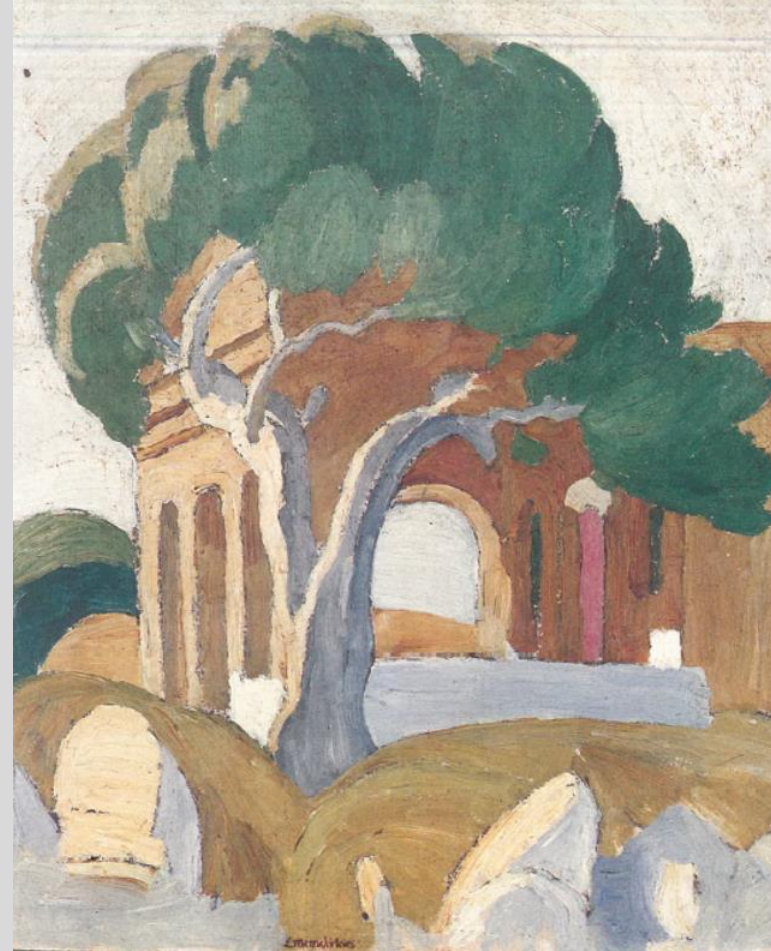
2. The Principle of Constancy

The brain strives to maintain **stable representations**, despite changes in light, viewing angle, or time.



Houses on a Hillside, Kameno Chorio, B. & M.
Theocharakis Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

Papaloukas paints precisely this constancy: the Greek light changes ceaselessly, yet beneath his brushstrokes, **the unchanging essence of the place is revealed**—its underlying mental geometry.



Tree in Lesbos, B. & M. Theocharakis Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

1. Completion

2: Constancy

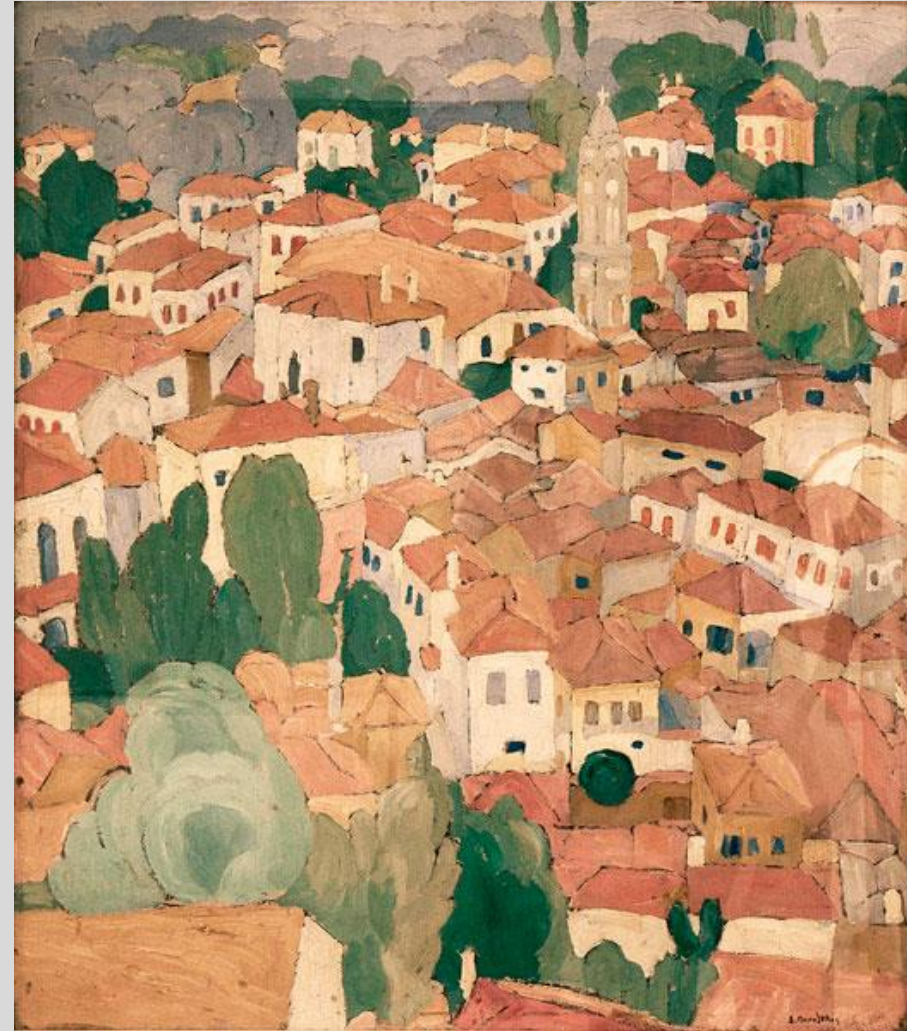
3. Abstraction

4. Truth

5. Emotional Economy

3. The Principle of Abstraction

The brain abstracts in order to understand.



Red Rooftops in Lesvos, Rhodes Art Gallery

1. Completion

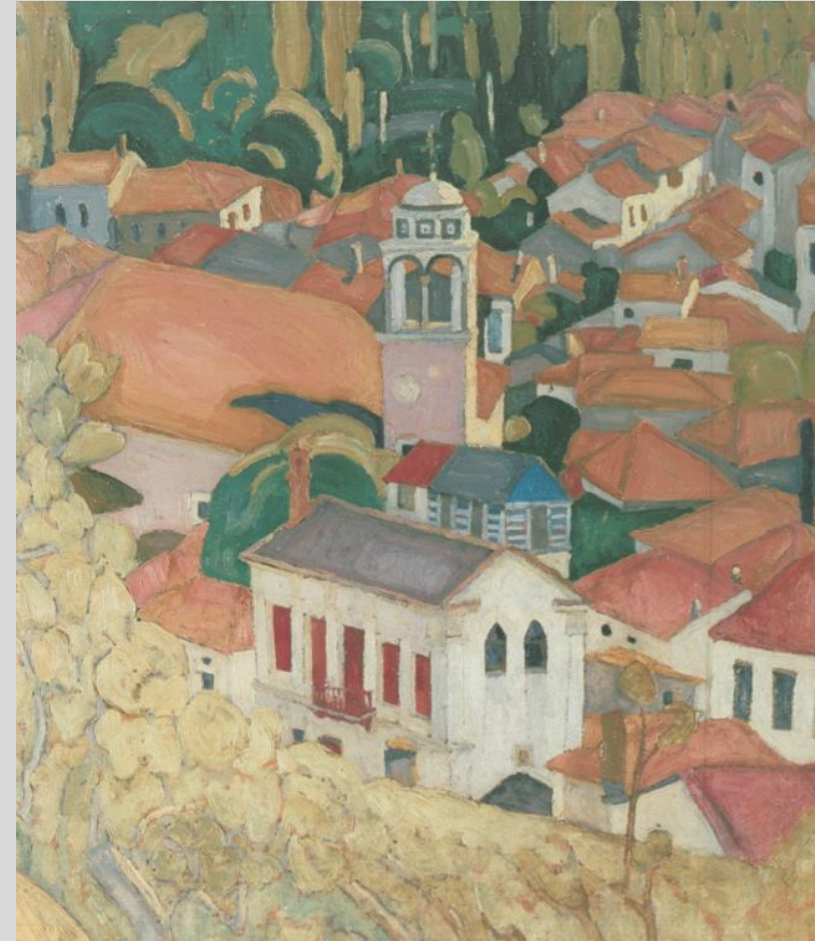
2: Constancy

3. Abstraction

4. Truth

5. Emotional Economy

Papaloukas works precisely through this **mental economy**: he strips away volume, shadow, and depth, retaining only the rhythmic structures of the houses and the pure geometry of light.



Bell Tower and Red Rooftops, B. & M. Theocharakis
Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

1. Completion

2: Constancy

3. Abstraction

4. Truth

5. Emotional Economy

Papaloukas's creative process mirrors the brain's capacity for abstraction. He discards the incidental to arrive at the **universal essence** of what we see.



Child with Suspenders, National Gallery

4. The Principle of Truth

Beauty, as the brain understands it, **is the experience of truth.**

Papaloukas does not pursue beauty as decoration; **he seeks what is true.**



Hayati (Covered Veranda), B. & M. Theocharakis
Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

1. Completion

2: Constancy

3. Abstraction

4. Truth

5. Emotional Economy

For the brain, beauty is the experience of truth. **It is not a matter of taste, but of cognitive recognition**—the moment when the mind feels that what it sees corresponds perfectly to something deeper within itself.



Houses in Lesvos, B. & M. Theocharakis Foundation
for the Fine Arts and Music

For Papaloukas, truth is not “realistic.” It is not about whether the color is accurate or the landscape faithfully rendered. It is about **inner coherence**—the moment when all the elements of a work (form, rhythm, color, light) come into harmony and become a single, unified message.



Women of Agiasos, B. & M. Theocharakis
Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

1. Completion

2: Constancy

3. Abstraction

4. Truth

5. Emotional Economy

And this harmony is
precisely the **biological**
experience of truth.



Houses in Agiasos, B. & M. Theocharakis
Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

5. The Principle of Emotional Economy

Although Papaloukas himself said that reason should not be carried away by emotion, his work is **rich in emotion, yet economical in means.**



Fountains, B. & M. Theocharakis Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

1. Completion

2: Constancy

3. Abstraction

4. Truth

5. Emotional Economy

Just as the brain encodes emotion with economy and clarity, Papaloukas paints with a simplicity that carries **depth and essence**.



Monastery in Lesvos, B. & M. Theocharakis
Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music

1. Completion

2: Constancy

3. Abstraction

4. Truth

5. Emotional Economy

The brain, which favors **efficiency**, recognizes an economy of emotion: with minimal stimuli, **maximum emotional impact** is achieved.



The Village of Gera in Lesvos, National Gallery – Alexandros Soutsos Museum

Summary

In Papaloukas's work, the human brain finds a dialogue partner.

His art is not an imitation of nature, but a revelation of **how the brain perceives truth**. And that is why—like all great art—it does not age.

Biology validates Papaloukas: **what is true for the brain remains true forever**.

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