

Kostis Velonis

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Vas. Georgiou B' 17-19 and Rigillis street

May 11–September 5

You say you want a revolution? Look no further than Kostis Velonis's timely exhibition at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Greece, opening just days after protests erupted in response to new economic measures. Velonis's painted wooden assemblages combine references to world history and twentieth-century art movements that held hopeful, if idealistic, views of the political future. Taking formal elements from Russian Constructivism while at the same time mining his own heritage by espousing the ideals of ancient Greek democracy, Velonis carefully constructs both monumental and diminutive sculptures to represent the working-class struggle.

Long red strips of wood positioned on the floor lead to a small wooden platform in *At the End of Demonstration Day*, 2009, possibly symbolizing a trail of blood: an eerie, if unintentional, foreshadowing of the three bank workers who became victims of the recent riots. Yet Velonis could be considered an optimist: He projects a slide of a man and woman sitting on the ruins of an ancient site in *How One Can Think Freely in the Shadow of a Temple*, 2010, perhaps implying that freedom of thought is of utmost importance to the health of a democracy. But does Velonis see his practice as enacting any real change? That these works are exhibited in a museum, as opposed to a public plaza, raises the issue of whether the artist is speaking to a captive audience. Regardless, the infusion of political concerns halts any simplistic readings of Velonis's work.



Kostis Velonis, *How to Build Democracy Making Rhetorical Comments (After Klucis's Design for Propaganda Kiosk, Screen and Loudspeaker Platform, 1922)*, 2009, wood, plywood, acrylic, spray, pencil, oil pastel, marker, paper, glue, 14 3/4 x 25 1/2'.

— Chris Bors