

Distance, Measure, and the Image Held in Suspension

By Dr. David Anfam

At first glance, one is tempted to speak about distance. But distance, here, is not merely optical. It is experiential.

Consider, instead, the act of standing back.

Anyone who has walked away from an image – not from indifference, but in order to see it – understands that recognition is not immediate. It arrives belatedly, sometimes reluctantly. Dimitri Likissas's paintings insist upon this delay. They neither yield themselves at once nor dissolve entirely into abstraction. Rather, they hover – suspended between legibility and dissolution.

This suspension is not accidental.

Likissas works within a fixed system: a dot-based grid, unwavering in its structure, unyielding in its demands. Before any image appears, the conditions are already set. Scale, resolution, and density are not expressive choices so much as preconditions. The grid precedes intention. In this respect, the work aligns less with painterly spontaneity than with a discipline closer to architecture or musical notation.

And yet, despite this rigor – or precisely because of it – the paintings breathe.

From close range, the surface asserts itself as a field of discrete units. Each dot stands alone, autonomous, carrying no narrative burden. Only through proximity and repetition does meaning accrue. The image is not painted so much as assembled, accreted through patience. One is reminded that images, like memories, are constructed incrementally.

At a distance, however, another register takes hold. Faces, figures, and familiar forms emerge – not crisply, but tentatively. They appear as if recalled rather than observed. Recognition flickers. The eye oscillates. The image exists in the movement between these states, never fully resolving into either.

This oscillation is structural, not decorative.

In this regard, Likissas's paintings engage a lineage that stretches beyond the technical fact of dots or grids. They participate in a broader meditation on perception itself – on how images come into being, and how easily they unravel. One thinks of the way late Turner dissolves form into atmosphere, or how Rothko allows color to hover at the edge of presence. In each case, certainty gives way to experience.

Control, here, is paramount – but it is not absolute.

Although the system is strict, it is not tyrannical. Adjustments in density, spacing, and scale are introduced to preserve legibility. The work lives in tension: between autonomy and constraint, order and contingency. Likissas neither celebrates freedom nor fetishizes limitation. Instead, he holds both positions simultaneously, allowing the work to inhabit their unresolved coexistence.

This refusal to resolve is key.

The paintings do not declare meaning; they withhold it. They ask the viewer to participate – to move, to adjust, to negotiate distance. In doing so, they resist the immediacy that dominates contemporary image culture. They slow seeing down. They reintroduce duration.

What emerges, finally, is not an image that demands attention, but one that rewards it.

Likissas's work reminds us that vision is not instantaneous, that recognition is fragile, and that meaning – like the image itself – is something we assemble over time.