

# LA VITA AI TEMPI DELLE BATTERIE

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### Otto Meister and the paintings at Diapori

When we prepared this exhibition, the question aroused who could have been the painter of the unusual good paintings in the barrack of Diapori. There are copies of two paintings of Breugel, farmer's wedding and two sketches, showing what the soldiers were missing most: food and women. In the corridor of the barrack is a real Comic Strip with a dog resembling the Milou in the Belgian Comic "Tintin". The dog follows a lady with a fox collar, jumps and in the end gets it.

There are also some paintings in the same style in a private Home at Agia Marina, depicting a couple, the man is a soldier.

Two small paintings showing German bombers and the Navy memorial near Kiel can be found at the barrack of the battery at Mt. Mouplogurna.

I remembered having asked a former navy soldier for the paintings 15 years ago. And he gave me a name, Herbert Freundt from Stuttgart, telling that he had died years ago. In the hope of finding a descendant I phoned a Horst Freundt and was lucky: He turned out to be the nephew. He confirmed that his uncle was member of the Naval Artillery on Leros, but paintings? No, definitely not.

Ok! Then by chance my friend Andreas Galanos found in the internet an auction of aquarelle paintings in New Zealand on the other side of the world, depicting San Giorgio battery on Mt. Skoumbarda and other views of the island. The name of the painter was Otto Meister. The internet provided more details like that he was a war painter in the Second World War and had been in Greece. I also found out that his assets are stored in a museum at Nuremberg. I went there and had a look. There were a few personal papers and sketches from Leros and Samos. In different papers he stated having been to Saloniki, Kos and having taken part on the Leros operation and later Samos.

Otto Meister was born at Dresden in 1892. He studied arts there and had military service in the First World War. He worked successfully as a painter at Dresden and only was banned by the Nazis in 1934. In spite of that he got orders by the Wehrmacht for wall paintings. In 1942 he was appointed war painter of the Wehrmacht. He was sent to Russia, in 1943 to Greece and in 1944 to France. The end of the war found him in the battle of Berlin and he was lucky enough to survive and even get through to the Americans where he was taken prisoner. He did not return to his home town Dresden as it was under communist rule but settled in Erlangen, a small university town near Nuremberg. He married twice, with his second wife, Paula, also from Dresden, he started a successful career as a painter in Erlangen where he got several orders for wall paintings. After the passing away of Paula in 1953 he obviously married a third time Lydia Kreher. He died in 1959.

Much of his work has been destroyed in war.

I think that by these researches we have found the painter of Diapori.