TO BHMA
International edition
tovima.com
SUNDAY,
JUNE 21, 2026

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Erika Kirk's Vision for the Conservative Christian Woman

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By Kara Voght

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

SAN ANTONIO, Texas—Erika Kirk was standing center stage in a hotel ballroom, explaining the difference between earthly pleasures and heavenly joy, when a heckler interrupted her remarks to shout incendiaries at her.

The hundreds of women in the audience booed over the commotion. Erika's pale blue eyes flashed with panic, then hurt, but soon narrowed into a resolved stare.

"You can be a woman of the world, as we just saw," she said, "or you can be a woman of The Word." She prayed for the protester to make the right choice. "Eternity is long," she deadpanned, drawing laughs from the crowd.

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Europe Is Too Crowded. Wealthy Travelers Are Taking to the Sea.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By Caroline Tell

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

When Kim Puterbaugh's daughter graduated from college last summer, she decided to take her on a nine-night Ritz-Carlton yacht trip from Amsterdam to Lisbon. Anything, Puterbaugh said, to avoid the crowds she had experienced the summer before.

"We couldn't even walk down the street in Santorini because there were so many people," Puterbaugh, a retired obstetrician-gynecologist based in Raleigh, N.C., said. "It was so claustrophobic and overwhelming. Now, whatever it takes to be able to do things with a smaller group of people is so much better."

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TO BHMA International edition

Greece's Olive Trees Are Asking for Help

By Elena Fyntanidou

Olive trees don't need much to survive: a little cold and some water. These two conditions, according to olive growers, are essential for healthy fruit production and the cultivation of precious olive oil, a cornerstone of Greek agricultural exports. Unfortunately, however, these two prerequisites are gradually being erased by the escalating effects of climate change.

The sharp rise in temperatures, drought caused by prolonged lack of rainfall, but also extreme downpours that lead to devastating floods have become the greatest threats facing olive groves. At the same time, these conditions favor the spread of pathogenic microorganisms that attack leaves and fruit, putting the long-term viability of olive cultivation at risk.

Faced with these challenges, scientists and olive producers are struggling to find solutions not only for the survival and growth of olive groves but also for preserving the branding of olives and olive products, which are a cornerstone of the Mediterranean diet.

Will olive trees move to the mountains?

One proposed solution is the gradual relocation of olive cultivation farther north and to higher elevations.

The issue was recently raised by Christos Giannakopoulos, Research Director at the National Observatory of Athens, during a discussion in the Greek Parliament. He did not rule out the possibility that olive cultivation could gradually shift to higher altitudes, even into mountainous areas where olive trees do not currently thrive.

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TO BHMA International edition

The Woman Who Scandalized the Vatican

By Panos Kougias

From the hill dominated by the Goulandris Foundation's Museum of Contemporary Art on Andros, the gaze wanders out over the Aegean. The June light striking the exhibition poster reveals Richier's almost tearful face as—inconsolable—she embraces one of her sculptures. "She often called them her children. She spoke to them and cared for them as if they were alive," we learn a short while later from Laurence Durieu, an expert on her work and her biographer. The wind, more tempestuous than ever on this "Isle of Winds", seems to be trying to unite the Mediterranean commune of Grans—where the sculptor was born—with the Cycladic sky of Andros in a celebration in which the Elements pay collective tribute to a woman whose absolute connection to them has been matched by only a handful of creators.

Shortly before the guided tour of the Germaine Richier exhibition begins, Laurence Durieu stands in front of one of the sculptures and speaks about the woman she has spent years studying.

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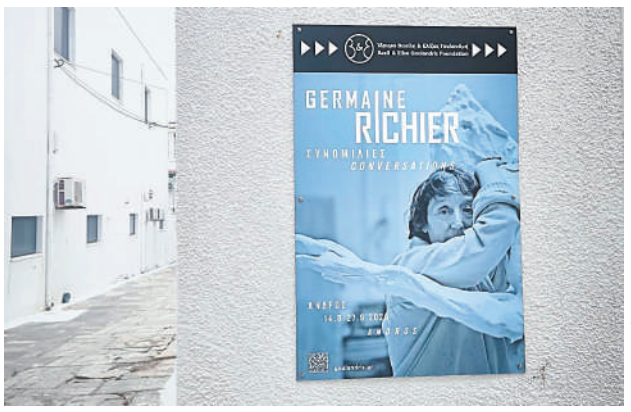

PANOS KOUGIAS/TO BHMA INTL EDITION

Poster of Germaine Richier's exhibition seen amidst the narrow streets of Andros, Greece.

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Erika Kirk Lays Out a Vision for the Conservative Christian Woman

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

With birth rates in steep decline, marriage falling out of fashion and the future of MAGA up in the air, Turning Point USA held its annual women's leadership conference

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Roughly 3,000 women descended on San Antonio last weekend for Turning Point USA's Women's Leadership Summit. The annual gathering had been the vision of Erika's late husband, Charlie Kirk, an antidote to what he saw as the feminist indoctrination rampant on college campuses and in popular culture. With birth rates in steep decline, marriage falling out of fashion and the future of MAGA up in the air, the event was meant to deliver a clear message for this moment in American politics: How to be a woman in the Trump 2.0 era.

Poised behind a lectern, in a silver silk top and matching trousers, Kirk explained that feminism teaches women to "reject the very things that make womanhood unique." That it leaves them "lonelier, resentful, confused and weaker than before." That it declares motherhood a "burden," marriage a "trap" and men "the enemy."

"The world will say, 'Your life belongs to you,'" she continued. "It does not. Your life belongs to Christ. And once you understand that, so many of the questions that the culture bombards you with will be answered."

It was a far cry from past confabs, when Kimberly Guilfoyle stood on the main stage praising Trump's Supreme Court nominees and girls formed long lines to meet Rep. Nancy Mace. Earlier in her speech, Kirk recalled her husband's hope that this conference would impart lessons about "the sanctity of life, about fiscal responsibility, about liberty and family." Of those subjects, only the family got much attention; "have more kids than you can afford," a quote from Charlie, was a constant refrain.

Erica Kirk is visibly emotional speaking to the audience at this year's Turning Point USA Women's Leadership Summit.

ELI DURST FOR WSJ. MAGAZINE

Before her husband's assassination in 2025, Erika played more of a supporting role at Turning Point events, the feminine foil to Charlie's brusqueness who modeled modern MAGA motherhood. Now, she leads the coalition of conservatives her husband built, with a sharpened focus on faith.

There wasn't a MAGA hat in sight at the Marriott in downtown San Antonio—not on women's heads, not for sale among the dozens of vendors inside the exhibition hall. The attendees—mostly white, mostly young, with the occasional mother-daughter duo—glided up the escalators in a procession of shift dresses, sharp suits and polished heels in the muted tones of quiet luxury, inspired by a conference-curated Pinterest board of crisp feminine silhouettes.

ELI DURST FOR WSJ. MAGAZINE

The swag table at the Turning Point USA booth.

The exhibition hall offered necessities for the "Make America Healthy Again" homemaker: hand cream made from beef tallow, herbal seasonings made from organ meat, children's books made from the gospel. There were demonstrations of a countertop mill for grinding wheat into homemade flour and a vibrating platform that purports to drain the lymphatic system. The room smelled like perfume and hairspray, with the sour hint of body odor mixed with all-natural deodorant.

"I feel like we're just kind of getting back to the grassroots—his original design," says Katie Long, 28, a first-time attendee from Texas. "That's just been really cool to see that spoken through all the women and through all of the companies that are here."

Those sentiments came with an attendant resentment of corporate America—both for the obvious reasons (privileging the career ladder over motherhood) and the less obvious (Big Ag for poisoning their food, Big Pharma for poisoning their bodies). Among the best-selling swag: a T-shirt declaring "Big Tech Has No Soul" and hats proclaiming "Farmland Not Data Centers." Madilynne Machovsky, a 19-year-old from Tennessee, told me she'd been working with college classmates to fight a data center planned for near the Nashville Zoo. "Among my peers on campus, that's something, right or left, that we're all very unified on," she said.

Many attendees, however, had not found that common cause. The Women's Leadership Summit was their safe space, a refuge from campuses or workplaces they described as hostile as ever to their conservative beliefs. "There's this common ground here," said Nemiah Guimbatan, 30, a first-time attendee from California.

Savanna Faith Stone, 21, paced the stage on Saturday afternoon in a high-collared, skintight lace dress. She lives in Florida, identifies as a "tradwife" and hosts a podcast that discusses relationships through a Christian lens. She'd drawn hundreds of thousands of social media followers for sharing her story of getting married at 18, a rebellion against the "rise of radical individualism," as she put it on Saturday.

"To be a leader in this society is to go against the culture," Stone said. "It's being willing to be called a radical

Europe Is Too Crowded. Wealthy Travelers Are Taking to the Sea.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

New yachts by Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons and Aman are drawing travelers who want Mediterranean glamour without the packed beaches and skirmishes for dinner reservations

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The irony is that ships once helped create the very problem Puterbaugh and other travelers are now desperate to avoid. For years, big cruise ships funneled crowds into destinations like Venice and Barcelona, fueling overtourism concerns and prompting officials to impose restrictions on cruise traffic, ship size and visitor volume.

Rather than defaulting to the usual beachfront hotels, savvy summer travelers to Europe are turning to a new generation of yachts from ultraluxury brands like Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons and Aman. For some, being at sea is only one part of the appeal: The right ship can also provide an escape from the masses.

"If there's a theme I'm hearing from travelers in 2026, it's friction," said Brian Kelly, founder of The Points Guy. On a yacht, you can move between destinations without worrying about logistics. "Book a villa on land, and you're fighting for crowded restaurants and packed beach clubs, especially in peak season," Kelly said.

Caline Basroon, a New York-based travel adviser with Protravel International, has booked multiple clients on hotel-branded yachts this summer. She thinks of her customers as the type who have spent multiple summers at the Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc in Antibes, France, where some of her customers were waitlisted this year. Others opted out of staying on the French Riviera entirely, telling Basroon they were tired of "the scene," she added.

"Luxury now isn't just about where you're traveling, but how effortlessly you're experiencing it," Basroon said. "With these ships, you can wake up in St. Tropez and have lunch at Club 55 without battling traffic in and out of town. The next day, you're in Porto Cervo, Sardinia, without packing your bags."

This year, Addie Bell Zackon and Brandon Zackon, founders of luxury travel advisory Jetset & Travel, have booked close to 20 sailings for clients on the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, launched in 2022.

An aerial photo, taken by drone, of a luxury yacht sailing in picturesque bay of Porto Rafti, due east of Athens proper along the Southern Evoikos Gulf.

extremist because you believe your husband is the head of the household. It's being willing to be called a pick-me because you actually like your husband. It's being willing to be called a misogynist because you recognize feminism for the psyop it is."

Later that afternoon, outside the ballroom, the line to meet Stone snaked along her merch table. ("Normalize liking your husband," one T-shirt declared in a bold serif font.) Esther McGrath, a 17-year-old from Colorado, lingered to chat with Stone after they took a photo together. "I loved how she prioritized family and getting married young—just going against the pressure of society around us," McGrath said. "That's something that I, God willing, hopefully will do."

But what if you don't have a husband? Here, singlehood is described as a "season," as ephemeral as autumn leaves or winter snow. How to make the most of it was left to Alex Clark, the host of Turning Point's popular MAHA podcast, who, at 33, was among the older unmarried women who graced the summit's stage. "Your marital status is not God's report card on your life," she said.

Still, she delivered some Kirkian tough love when she urged the audience to use their unattached time to seek self-improvement.

"When you picture your future husband, are you picturing an overweight slob who never sees daylight and spends 14 hours a day online and has no real-world community whatsoever? Probably not," she said. "Now ask yourself, would you want to marry you? I know nobody likes that question, but it's a good question. So stop asking 'where is he' and start asking 'who am I becoming?'"

Take it from her. At the end of her remarks, Clark revealed her sparkly new engagement ring.

How the Iconic Cast-Iron Tourist Binoculars Are Fighting to Survive a Cashless World

By Mark Robichaux

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

New owners are retrofitting the scenic viewers with tap-to-pay technology now that fewer people have quarters in their pockets

Tower Optical makes one of America's most recognizable tourist attractions—and one of its most outdated.

Since 1933, the company has built the cast-iron binocular viewers that sit atop landmarks from the Grand Canyon to the Empire State Building, letting generations of visitors press their eyes to the lenses and peer across skylines, waterfalls and scenic vistas. In that time, the viewers became an enduring piece of American nostalgia—the backdrop for family vacations, first dates and marriage proposals, with cameos in Hollywood films, TV shows and commercials.

But the machines depend on something many tourists no longer carry: quarters.

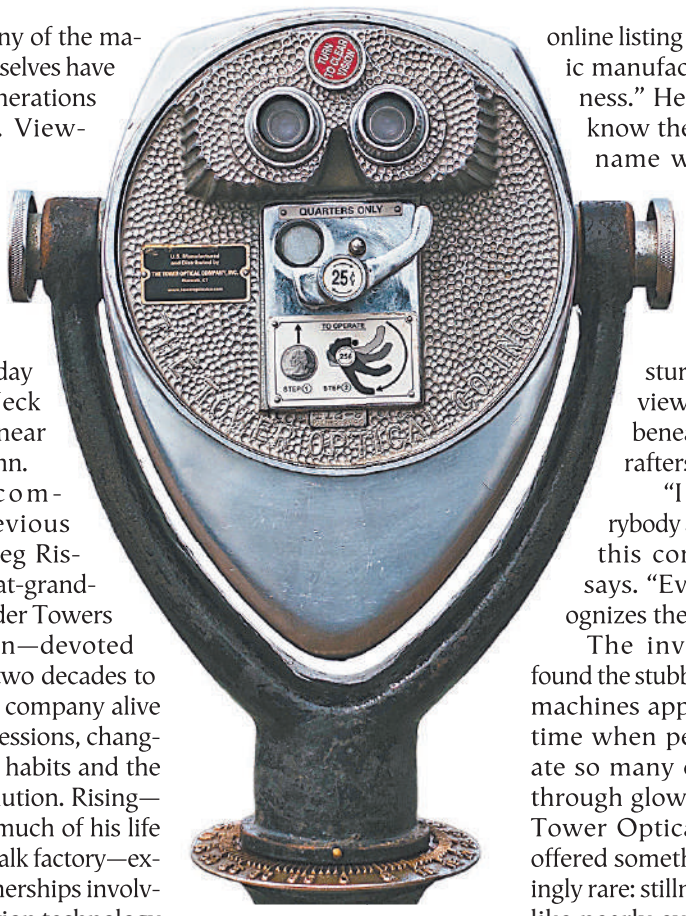
Now a team of tech-industry investors who acquired the company are betting they can revive the business by preserving everything people love about the experience by replacing the coin slot with tap-to-pay technology.

"The demand never disappeared," says co-owner Adam Rice . "People just stopped carrying quarters."

Creating an icon

Tower Optical's viewers weigh roughly 300 pounds each and were originally designed almost like miniature vaults—durable enough to survive vandalism, weather and decades of public use while safeguarding the coins inside. Some still contain binocular assemblies manufactured by Bausch + Lomb generations ago.

In the company's factory office in Norwalk, Conn., hangs a locator map of the U.S. dotted with pins marking thousands of viewer locations. Many of the machines themselves have outlived generations of owners. Viewer No. 58, shipped into the field during the 1930s, remains operational today at Rocky Neck State Park near Niantic, Conn.



Tourist sightseeing binoculars.

The company's previous owner—Greg Rising, the great-grandson of founder Towers F. Hamilton—devoted more than two decades to keeping the company alive through recessions, changing tourism habits and the digital revolution. Rising—who spent much of his life at the Norwalk factory—explored partnerships involving geolocation technology and early augmented-reality concepts that could allow visitors to look through the viewers and see historical overlays of city skylines and landmarks.

But the technology never fully materialized. And a cultural change was hitting the business hard: In a digital economy dominated by smartphones and tap-to-pay credit cards, revenue steadily declined as the machines became harder to use in everyday life. The Covid lockdowns compounded the problem, disrupting maintenance routes and collections while leaving many viewers jammed or out of service.

A new era

The company was put up for sale in 2024, after Rising died at age 51. Enter Rice and his partners—including Adam Vojdany and Dom Puglisi, friends from the startup and tech world—who were looking for an established company to acquire.

Rice discovered the company by answering an online listing for a "historic manufacturing business." He didn't even know the company's name when he arrived at its factory, but something clicked as soon as he saw the sturdy binocular viewers lined up beneath the dusty rafters.

"I realized everybody already knew this company," he says. "Everyone recognizes these viewers."

The investor team found the stubbornly analog machines appealing: At a time when people mediate so many experiences through glowing screens, Tower Optical's viewers offered something increasingly rare: stillness. And unlike nearly every modern tech product, the viewers had remained fundamentally unchanged for almost a century—artifacts from an earlier America that somehow survived the digital age.

Whenever they spoke with operators at scenic sites, they heard the same thing: People still loved the viewers. Children still dragged parents toward them. Adults remembered using them decades earlier. Tourists still lined up to peer through them at city skylines and waterfalls. The issue was a lack of coins.

The new owners concluded that they didn't need to reinvent the experience, replete with the nostalgia and tactile simplicity that made the viewers iconic in the first place. They simply needed to modernize the payment system.

The company partnered with a European hardware firm to develop battery-powered payment terminals small enough to fit into the existing machines without changing their appearance. Tiny cellular antennas mounted atop the viewers became the only obvious visual modification.

Inside, the old physical timers and coin-driven shutter mechanisms have been replaced by electronic systems that allow the company to remotely control pricing, viewing times and analytics across nearly 2,000 viewers installed at roughly 900 locations throughout the U.S. and Canada.

If all goes according to plan, the first wave of retrofitted viewers will come online later this month, including the binocular viewers atop Rockefeller Center in Manhattan, where generations of tourists have gazed out over New York City.

The obvious question hangs over the business model: Why would anyone pay to look through a binocular viewer when they already carry an iPhone capable of zooming, recording video and applying digital filters?

For Rice, the answer is that smartphones mediate the world through a screen—swiping, recording, editing, posting and sharing. Tower Optical's viewers narrow attention instead of fracturing it. There are no notifications, no feeds, no comments and no distractions.

"You're intentionally doing something that's not on a screen," Rice says. "People have screen fatigue. They want a moment that feels real."

Those clients range from young couples to multigenerational families, the Zackons said, but everyone is driven to book by a combination of aspiration and frustration. "We sent an ultra-high-net-worth client to the Amalfi Coast last year, and he came back saying, 'Never send me there again—it was way too crowded,' " Brandon Zackon said. "That was eye-opening for us."

Access and ease

On the Ritz-Carlton yachts Evrima, Ilma and Luminara, which run itineraries throughout the French and Italian Rivieras, Greek Isles and Dalmatian Coast, a dedicated in-house concierge team plans passengers' day on shore by the minute so that they don't have to wait in lines or battle traffic. Private drivers wait at the pier to shuttle guests to snorkeling trips, cooking classes or even helicopter charters.

Itineraries on Seabourn, one of the earliest players in the luxury cruise scene, offer guests a way to bypass peak crowds entirely. A trip that stops in Turkey includes an after-hours visit to the ruins in Ephesus, for a classical music concert when the site is otherwise closed to the public. Another day, guests can join a private wine tasting and dinner at Karnas Vineyard in Bodrum.

Other cruise operators, like Explora Journeys, steer travelers towards lesser-known ports such as Calvi in Corsica and Syros in Greece.

Trading accommodations on land for itineraries at sea isn't entirely without compromise. Travelers gain convenience and access, but may sacrifice some spontaneity in the process. Cruise trips are largely fixed months in advance so there's little room for improvisation.

Exclusivity also comes at a cost. A European voyage on a Ritz-Carlton ship can range from $6,800 per person for four nights in a standard room to nearly $90,000 for 11 nights in the highest-end suite. Those rates include most meals and drinks on board. The Four Seasons Yacht I, which runs routes sailing the Greek Isles, the Ionian and Dalmatian coasts and the Istrian Riviera, starts at $31,000 per double occupancy standard suite for seven nights. When Aman at Sea debuts its 94-passenger yacht next May, rates will start at $10,500 per suite per night, based on double occupancy.

Still, when looking at peak-season prices in Europe, some see a bargain. A double room at Le Sirenuse, a luxury hotel in Positano in July can reach over $4,000 a night before a single Negroni is added to the tab.

On the Ritz-Carlton Ilma, while Puterbaugh loved the unlimited Champagne, attentive staff and lobster dinners, some of her favorite moments were the quietest ones: morning coffee, reading on her balcony and long stretches when the ship felt nearly empty despite being fully occupied. She always found space to spread out, and when a destination looked too crowded, she appreciated having the option to simply stay onboard.

"I remember sitting in a cafe in Bordeaux and seeing a guide with an umbrella and this huge herd of people following behind," Puterbaugh said. "I thought, goodness, I would never want to do that."

‘Unlocking’ People Through the Help of Animals

From children with autism to seniors living with dementia, animal-assisted therapy is gaining ground in Greece as professionals discover new ways to reach people where words alone often fall short

By Konstantinos Dedes

Dimitris, a child on the autism spectrum, had no functional speech until he was three and a half years old. He communicated only through echolalia. After just a few sessions of animal-assisted therapy (zootherapy) at the “Warm Embrace” early intervention center, however, he spoke his first word - or rather, his first name: “Koi.”

Koi, a black-and-white long-haired Border Collie, helped Dimitris synchronize, speak, make eye contact, and play. “For us, these kinds of behavioral changes in a child are part of everyday life,” says Evgenia Karazioti, a special education teacher at Warm Embrace and a certified zootherapist. Her dog, Koi, she explains, “has an innate tendency and willingness to work with children on the autism spectrum or those facing other developmental challenges.”

A valuable partner

But this was far from the only time Koi, working alongside Karazioti and her team, helped “unlock” a child. For nearly eight years, he has appeared in the classroom twice a week, serving as one of her most important collaborators.

How can the presence of an animal help a child with autism—or an elderly person?

According to François Beiger, founder of the French Institute of Zootherapy, animals act as mediators that make no distinctions.

“They can serve many roles for patients: a source of motivation, a mirror, a behavioral model, an ally,” he tells *TO VIMA*. “The qualities an animal brings make it an invaluable partner. It can communicate in multiple direct ways that go far beyond language, which is both valuable and liberating.”

Karazioti shares the same belief. She recalls the case of Vasiliki, an elderly woman living with dementia who had lost her desire to engage with life. Hoping to motivate her—and having noticed that she admired dogs during their walks—Vasiliki’s daughter suggested zootherapy.

One day, Koi arrived at her home.

“I will never forget that session,” Karazioti says. “We brushed Koi, and she suddenly felt the need to brush her own hair. I mentioned that he was thirsty, and she got up to bring him water, even though she rarely walked. She had almost stopped eating, yet she said she would cook something for Koi so they could eat together. As I told her his story, she began recalling moments from her own past. She bent down, pet him, moved around. It was remarkable.”

Nelly Georgoudi, a clinical psychologist and scientific director of the Greek Institute of Zootherapy, had long searched for ways to access the human psyche when words alone proved insufficient.

“Through a psychoanalytic perspective, I often observed in clinical practice—especially among children, adolescents, and adults with traumatic experiences—that verbal processing was not always immediately available,” she says.

That is where the importance of an animal’s presence emerged. Animals do not judge or intrude. Instead, they offer a direct physical and emotional connection capable of unlocking areas that are otherwise difficult to access—as happened with young Dimitris.

During this search, Georgoudi came into contact with the French Institute of Zootherapy, founded and directed by François Beiger. In France, animal-assisted therapy has already been integrated into clinical and educational settings.

“But animal-assisted therapy is not a magical intervention,” Georgoudi emphasizes. “It is an evidence-based therapeutic mediation integrated into a broader treatment framework. It is not simply the pleasant presence of an animal. It is a structured, individualized process with clear goals, evaluation, and methodology. The animal functions as a co-therapist within a three-way relationship: therapist, patient, and animal.”

In other words, the animal—whether a dog, donkey, or another species—does not heal on its own. It becomes part of a therapeutic framework designed by the therapist, helping regulate emotions, build attachment, process anxiety, encourage projection, and create an intermediate space in which the patient can engage.

Animal-assisted therapy in Greece

In Greece, professional training in zootherapy remains limited, and there is often confusion between a scientific therapeutic intervention and simple contact with animals.

The establishment of the Greek Institute of Zootherapy as the official representative of the French institute was an effort to clarify that distinction through professional education. To date, 80 people have been certified, including psychiatrists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, kindergarten teachers, educators, psychologists, and dentists.

The journey toward introducing and gaining recognition for animal-assisted therapy in Greece has gone through many stages. First came the challenge of acknowledging that relationships with non-human beings can carry meaning and therapeutic value. Then came the need to explain what animal-assisted therapy is—and perhaps even more importantly, what it is not.

The effort began in 2016 under the auspices of the Scientific Association for the Care of Children and Adolescents in Thessaloniki, led by Grigoris Abatzoglou, Professor Emeritus of Child Psychiatry at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Through conferences, partnerships, and the training of professionals in healthcare, mental health, education, and special education, the foundations were laid.

“Gradually, a community of professionals sharing a common language and ethical framework emerged,” says Georgoudi. “Each applies the methods of animal-assisted therapy within their own scientific field.”

“Since then, we have introduced animal-assisted therapy into therapeutic settings ranging from early intervention classrooms to hospitals, as well as programs in schools, institutions, and mental health organizations, with many benefits becoming evident in practice.”

Workshops and educational seminars have also been organized nationwide.

Today, zootherapy in Greece can be described as being in a stage of emerging acceptance. Public interest has grown significantly, and increasing numbers of professionals are seeking specialized training. Nevertheless, there remains a need for institutional recognition, scientific documentation, and clear regulation of professional practices.

For centuries, Western thought remained influenced by René Descartes’ view that animals lacked thought, language, will, and sensitivity, that, unlike humans, who possess a soul, consciousness, and reason, animals were merely material, mechanical bodies.

Modern research in ethology and neuroscience suggests otherwise.

So does Koi.

So does young Dimitris.

So does Vasiliki.

Greece's Olive Trees Are Asking for Help

Rising temperatures, drought, floods, and emerging diseases are threatening one of Greece's most valuable crops, forcing scientists and growers to rethink the future of olive cultivation

Continued from Page One

"Olive trees are perennial trees. They cannot simply be 'relocated.' Olive growers are tied to both their trees and their land. If the crop performs poorly, they will face serious problems. They have to find ways to make it work," says Vasilis Demopoulos, professor in the Department of Agriculture at the University of the Peloponnese and director of the Kalamata Olive Oil Tasting Laboratory, speaking to *TO VIMA*.

Petros Roussos, professor of Arboriculture and Olive Cultivation and director of the Arboriculture Laboratory at the Agricultural University of Athens, agrees.

"Perennial species such as olive trees cannot migrate, which means they are forced to endure all climate-related changes," he says.

He notes, however, that milder winters are not beneficial for olive trees.

"Olive trees need a little cold and water," he says, while not ruling out the future selection of olive varieties based on local climate conditions.

"There are olive varieties from northern regions, such as Halkidiki, that do not tolerate warm winters. The same applies to the Tsounati variety from Crete. By contrast, the Koroneiki variety has no issue with mild winters, while the Kalamon variety is currently performing well in the areas where it is cultivated. Not all varieties can respond equally well in all regions. In the future, we may reach a point where we choose the appropriate variety for each region according to its climate."

According to the professor, mild winters are not a positive development for olive trees. He points to the biological processes of the tree and the seasonal risks it faces amid the climate crisis.

The four seasons of the olive tree

In spring, the olive tree enters its flowering stage, a critical period for both the tree and the grower. Very high temperatures—above 28 C—can cause the pollen grain, the male part of the flower, to dry out, while dehydrating the female part. This can lead to fertilization problems. If fertilization does not occur, there is no fruit production.

During summer, shoot growth takes place and any existing fruit continues to develop. Temperatures above 35 C, which have become increasingly common in Greece, combined with little or no rainfall, can significantly reduce vegetation growth. The growth produced this year will bear next year's fruit. High temperatures also affect olive oil quality.

In autumn, both shoots and fruit continue to grow. This is the period when large amounts of olive oil accumulate inside the fruit. Rainfall may remain limited or absent. Most olive groves grown for olive oil production are rain-fed and do not rely on artificial irrigation.

However, floods can also occur, as happened during Storm Daniel in 2023. Such events can reduce vegetation growth and production in the following year, while also affecting quality.

In winter, olive trees enter a type of dormancy. During this resting period, the flower structures complete their development.

What impact can climate change have during this critical stage?

With mild winters and limited rainfall, flower development may not be completed properly. In many cases, only male flowers may form, while female flowers—which are more difficult to produce—may not develop, creating problems for future production.

On the other hand, extremely harsh winters can lead to fruit damage from freezing.

"As with all agricultural products, climate change is affecting olive trees as well," says Giorgos Mitrakos, General Director of the Association of Greek Olive Oil Standardization Industries (SEVITEL).

He recalls that about two years ago olive oil production dropped sharply because of unusually high winter temperatures and prolonged drought.

"This year, production is somewhat lower because last year was very warm. We produced around 200,000 to 220,000 tons," he adds.

Anthracnose, the coronavirus of olive groves

Alongside extreme weather conditions, climate change is also bringing pathogenic microorganisms and diseases.

"We have anthracnose. It is a disease we have known about for 30 years, but it never caused major problems. Suddenly, however, most olive groves are facing issues, partly because of increased rainfall," says Roussos.

Demopoulos compares anthracnose to the coronavirus.

"This disease appeared suddenly, like COVID-19, and since then it has caused problems for olive growers every year," he says, explaining that it is a fungal disease that attacks olive fruit.

Meanwhile, neighboring Italy has seen the spread of the bacterium Xylella, which has caused catastrophic damage to olive groves in the southern region of Apulia.

Frequent spraying may be backfiring

Geologist and Agricultural Olive Oil Cooperative of Kalamata President Michael Antonopoulos offers another possible explanation for the emergence of new diseases.

"I wonder whether climate change is the only factor, or whether frequent spraying linked to intensive cultivation practices also plays a role," he says.

"When you spray frequently, you kill not only harmful microorganisms but beneficial ones as well. As a result, olive groves become more vulnerable to disease."

'We have anthracnose. It is a disease we have known about for 30 years, but it never caused major problems. Suddenly, however, most olive groves are facing issues, partly because of increased rainfall.'

Petros Roussos,
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'When you spray frequently, you kill not only harmful microorganisms but beneficial ones as well. As a result, olive groves become more vulnerable to disease.'

Michael Antonopoulos,
Geologist and President of the Agricultural Olive Oil Cooperative of Kalamata

Laurence Durieu during the gallery tour.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PANOS KOUGIAS

Germaine Richier: The Artist Behind Post-War Europe's Most Controversial Christ

The enduring epilogue of her work remains the instilling of a compulsion to discover the life that lies hidden from us

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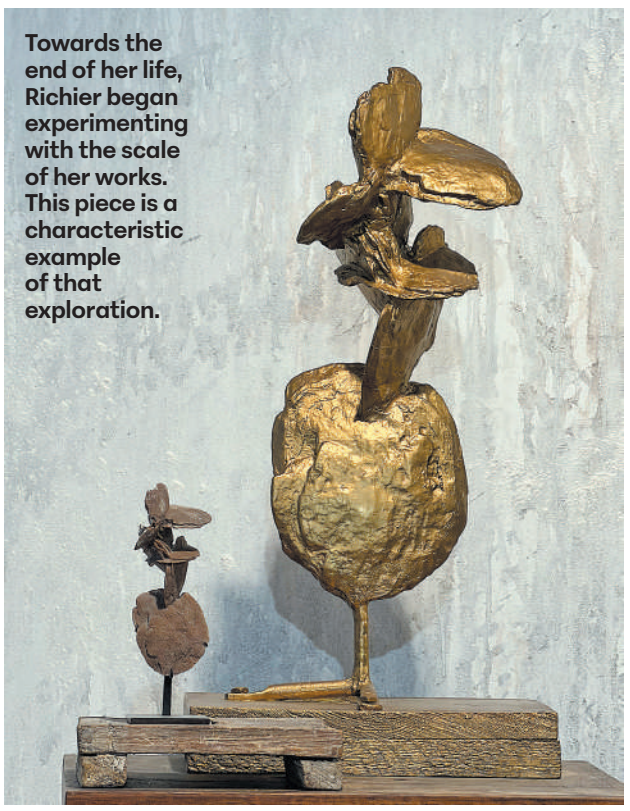
She does not describe her techniques as such, but rather a personality that never stopped observing the world around her. An artist who could spot a piece of wood on the side of a road and treat it as a supreme revelation. "Don't bring me sweets," she used to tell friends who visited her. "Bring me a piece of nature, like an olive trunk or a palm frond." Her words might seem amusing to some, yet they conceal something deeper. For Richier, nature was an endless organism from which everything stemmed. People, animals, trees, insects—even the bizarre hybrid creatures her works would later spawn—were all part and parcel of the same universe.

Walking through the exhibition rooms, one thing becomes clear: what Richier sought was to reveal the world exactly as she felt it. With all its contradictions and paradoxes, its oddities. A world in a state of constant flux, where nothing remains fixed and the lines demarcating Man and Nature are far more permeable than we think. And this may well be the exhibition's greatest triumph. That almost seventy years after her death, in a small corner of the Aegean, the Basil & Elise Goulandris Foundation can honor the memory of an artist who remains so unexpectedly relevant and moving.

The girl who grew up among cicadas and olive trees

Germaine Richier was born in 1902 in Grans, southern France, amidst a landscape that calls to mind the Mediterranean more than the image we often have of France. The Provence of her childhood was a land of olive groves, arid earth, insects, rocks, and powerful winds. It was an environment her mind's eye would never stop returning to.

Laurence Durieu argues that, to truly understand Richier, this is where one must start. With the child who spent more time exploring nature than reading her schoolbooks. With the girl who gathered objects—insects, twigs and stones—with the same devotion she would later bring to her study of the human body.



Towards the end of her life, Richier began experimenting with the scale of her works. This piece is a characteristic example of that exploration.

What is striking is that this relationship with nature never remained at the level of memory. It continued to shape her life and her work through to the end. Even when she found herself in Paris, at the epicenter of the European artistic avant-garde, Richier remained deeply connected to the natural world. This connection explains why her sculptures look so different from her contemporaries'. Nature does not function as a reference or an inspiration for her works. It is there within them, in the very body of her forms. Her figures seem to have sprung from the earth. To have been forged by the same forces that create the trees or rocks. It is no coincidence that on Andros, amidst the dry-stone walls and olive groves and bathed in Cycladic light, her work acquires an almost organic presence. As if they are returning to a place which, though she never made its acquaintance, was somehow always profoundly familiar.

From Bourdelle to the post-war nightmare

Richier belonged to a generation that was trained within tradition, but came of age amidst the great catastrophes of the 20th century. She studied under Antoine Bourdelle, one of Rodin's most important pupils, acquiring a technical mastery that impressed even the most demanding critics of the era. Her early works reveal a sculptor with a profound understanding of anatomy and the structure of the human form. However, her development as an artist would veer away from the path of academic continuity. The war would be the rupture.

When World War II breaks out, Richier is in Switzerland. When Europe collapses, many of the certainties that had shaped the art of previous decades

implode with it. When she starts to sculpt again, Man's image has changed, definitively and irrevocably. Her forms are no longer serene and solid. They become fragile, eroded, scarred by an invisible violence. The human figure appears wounded, as if bearing the traces of history.

It is the era that will give us the great works that connect her to the existential angst of post-war Europe. Yet, unlike other creators of her generation, Richier does not turn toward abstraction. She remains faithful to the body. Only this body is no longer the body of classical humanism; it is a body whose form is forever changing. The Forest Woman, The Forest Man, The Grasshopper, The Bat, The famous Tatou—these are existences sculpted into being by her imagination. They are creatures that defy the dictates of logic: humans that look like animals; animals that look like humans; forms with no respect for clear boundaries. Today, with the debate over the relationship between humans and nature very much in the foreground, her work seems almost prophetic.

Giacometti, fame, and her silencing

For many years, Germaine Richier was frequently referenced in terms of her relationship with Alberto Giacometti. There is no doubt that the two creators shared common artistic quests and moved in the same circles. However, art history's persistence in presenting Richier as a secondary figure at the Swiss sculptor's side says more about the era than it does about her work. She was extraordinarily popular during her lifetime. She exhibited internationally, enjoyed recognition from critics and collectors, and was considered one of the foremost voices in post-war sculpture. Nevertheless, after her death in 1959, her name began to fade into the background. Durieu frequently refers to the difficulties a female creator faced in a space dominated almost exclusively by males. She specifically notes that, although Richier had staged her first solo exhibition a few years before Giacometti, the male artist tellingly told the gallerist they shared: "You have to choose. It's her or me." Today, as art historians re-examine that period, they increasingly recognize that numerous female figures were sidelined despite their importance. Richier is perhaps the most characteristic example. It is no coincidence that she became the first female sculptor to be honored—posthumously, of course—with a major retrospective at France's National Museum of Modern Art. It was belated, though profound, recognition.

Le Christ d'Assy - the piece that scandalized the Vatican.

"Oftentimes she would call them her children. She spoke to them and nurtured them like they contained life."

The Christ that outraged the Vatican

In the early 1950s, Richier receives an exceptionally important commission: to sculpt the Christ Crucified for the church of Assy in the French Alps. Her selection is a milestone in itself. Never before has a woman been charged with such an important religious commission. The work she delivers is far removed from conventional representations of Christ. The figure is dramatic, stripped of all realistic elements, with a horizontal axis for arms and a vertical one for a body.

Initially, its installation does not provoke any particular backlash. Soon, however, a campaign is launched against it. Conservative Catholic circles deem the work blasphemous. Photographs are sent to the Vatican, and the matter reaches Pope Pius XII himself. The verdict is damning, and the work is removed. For about ten years, Richier's Christ remains in exile from the church it was created for. Ultimately, however, the story will take a different turn. The work is reinstated, returned to its rightful place, and transformed into one of the most iconic examples of the relationship between modern art and religion. Today, it is considered a masterpiece. It was exhibited at the Centre Pompidou in 2023 as one of the artist's most important works. This journey from condemnation to vindication seems to encapsulate Richier's trajectory through art history.

The studio as a way of life

As the guided tour draws to a close, Laurence Durieu shares one more remarkable story. Richier once entered her studio very late at night and had the distinct feeling that the sculptures were alive. That they were communicating with one another in the silence. The anecdote sounds almost like a fairytale, yet it accurately describes the way Richier perceived her work. Her sculptures were not objects; they were organisms. Organisms she had birthed with her hands, but also through her entire body.

Within her studio, bronzes, plaster casts, branches, bones, insects, shells, and all manner of found objects coexisted. She even kept the bones from her meals, transforming them into a source of inspiration. For Richier, there were no boundaries between life and art. Everything could serve as creative material. It is this freedom that allows her work to remain so vibrantly alive. Richier was never interested in perfection; she was preoccupied with energy, movement, and metamorphosis. In our era of collapsing certainties and challenged distinctions, Germaine Richier returns to remind us that life does not reside in static forms, but in their perpetual metamorphoses.

Leaving the museum, the visitor's gaze alights once more upon the Aegean landscape. On the olive trees, the insects and stones. But now, it is as if their viewing is slightly altered—as though the landscape is filtered through the sculptor's gaze and identity. As if she has managed, with a metaphysical sleight of hand, to initiate us into the secrets of how life should be beheld. And this was, is, and will always remain the enduring epilogue of Germaine Richier's work: the instilling of a compulsion to discover the life that lies hidden from us, waiting to be revealed, in even the humblest object of this world.

Athens is Packed. But Who's Getting the Money?

The Greek capital draws millions of visitors, but sees little in return. *TO BHMA International Edition* speaks with Athens Mayor Haris Doukas about the city's push for greater control over tourism policy

By Maria Paravantes

Monastiraki Square, in the heart of Athens, is one of the Greek capital's most frequented tourist spots.

Athens has always mesmerized travelers with its light, energy and contradictions. It's hardly surprising. People have lived here continuously for more than 3,500 years, making Athens Europe's oldest inhabited capital. Across the centuries, philosophers, poets and writers have tried to capture its essence. During his stay in Greece, American novelist Henry Miller perhaps came closest.

"Everything here speaks now, as it did centuries ago, of illumination, of blinding, joyous illumination. Light acquires a transcendental quality: it is not the light of the Mediterranean alone, it is something more, something unfathomable, something holy. Here the light penetrates directly to the soul, opens the doors and windows of the heart...," he wrote in "The Colossus of Maroussi".

Much has changed since Miller sat in a Syntagma Square cafe in the late 1930s, sipping a glass of cold water and watching the city unfold around him.

Today, crowds stream through Plaka and Monastiraki, while thousands of travelers patiently wait in long queues to catch a glimpse of the Parthenon. Once a brief stopover on the way to the Greek islands, Athens has justifiably become a destination in its own right.

Over the past decade, the Greek capital has transformed into one of Europe's fastest-growing city destinations. Visitors who once stayed a single night, just long enough to see the Acropolis, now spend an average of four to five nights. The tourism boom has brought new hotels, a flourishing short-term rental market, rising visitor spending and record revenues.

For Athens Mayor Haris Doukas, this success is worth celebrating. "Athens has evolved from a city break into a year-round international destination," he says. "That did not happen by chance. The city became more outward-looking. It invested in culture, major events and new experiences in its neighborhoods. Athens became attractive again."

Yet behind the Greek capital's tourism success story lies a growing paradox. Athens welcomes millions of visitors every year, but the municipality charged with managing their impact receives only a fraction of the economic benefits tourism generates.

In an interview with *TO BHMA International Edition*, Doukas argues that while tourism revenues flow largely to the central government, the burden of maintaining the city falls squarely on local authorities and residents. And this, he says, needs to change.

Picking up the tab

Last year, Athens welcomed approximately 8.7 million international visitors, with the majority arriving between May and September. At the same time, the wider metropolitan area is home to roughly 3.8 million residents, nearly one-third of Greece's population. Add students, temporary workers and undocumented residents, and the number may be much higher.

"The truth is that the city bears the burden of tourism without receiving its fair share," Doukas says. "The majority of revenues go to the central state, while local governments in Greece receive only 2.7% of the state budget. Yet every day, the Municipality of Athens is called on to manage enormous pressures with limited resources."

This imbalance is particularly evident in the way tourism taxes are distributed. Visitors staying in hotels and tourist accommodation pay the so-called "Resilience Fee", which in some cases can reach 10 euros per night. The revenues generated from this charge are not returned directly to Athens, however.

"Zero euros come back to the Municipality of Athens," he tells *TO BHMA International Edition*. "At the same time, legislation reduced the temporary resident fee from 2% to 0.5%, which means that the municipality ultimately receives less than 0.62 euros per visitor."

For a city hosting millions of tourists each year, he argues, the numbers simply do not add up. Who pays the price?

"The real cost is paid daily by the city and its residents," Doukas says. "More visitors means greater pressure on cleanliness, infrastructure and public spaces."

To cope, the municipality has expanded waste collection services in high-traffic areas and invested in digital management systems aimed at improving efficiency. But city officials insist that operational improvements alone are not enough.

Lessons from Barcelona, Venice and Amsterdam

Athens now finds itself confronting challenges that other European cities have grappled with for years: overtourism, housing shortages and growing tensions between visitors and residents. The difference, Doukas argues, is that municipalities elsewhere have far greater powers to intervene.

He points to Barcelona, which plans to eliminate new short-term rental licenses by 2028 and channel tourism revenues into housing policies. Venice has introduced entry fees during peak periods, while Amsterdam imposes a 12.5% charge, Europe's highest tourist tax, using the proceeds to help offset the costs of mass tourism.

"In Athens," Doukas says, "the municipality is largely responsible for managing the consequences without having the corresponding tools to shape policy." This lack of authority has become one of the mayor's crucial battles.

Housing crisis imminent

This is not the first time Athens' mayor has brought up the issue of granting the municipality more control over tourism policies and taxation. Earlier this year, Doukas warned that Athens "cannot operate as a giant hotel" and called for stricter regulation of both hotel development and short-term rentals. The issue, he says, goes far beyond tourism; it directly affects Athenians' daily lives.

"In many areas in Athens, rent accounts for more than 70% of a young person's income," he says. "The lack of affordable housing has become a social crisis."

At the same time, the municipality estimates there are roughly 38,000 unelectrified properties - potential homes - within city limits, while entire neighborhoods in the historic center are gradually being reshaped by tourism-related activity.

"We are not Barcelona, not yet," Doukas says. "But we do need to pay attention now, before the city's carrying capacity is exceeded."

The municipality has submitted proposals to the government's new Special Spatial Planning Framework for Tourism, including designating the historic center and the city's First Municipal District as saturated zones where new hotel developments and tourism-related projects should be restricted.

Doukas also argues that short-term rentals should face stricter planning regulations. "When an apartment operates as an Airbnb, it functions as a hotel," he says. "It cannot continue to be treated simply as a residence."

More specifically, Athens wants a greater role in determining how tourism develops within its boundaries, along with a raft of additional powers. Central government decisions based on the new Special Spatial Planning Framework cannot override local government's urban planning, he argues.

"Ministries cannot just open the door to new tourist uses without giving oversight to local authorities and then expect them to manage the consequences," Doukas says. "Cities must have a say in how they develop."

Priorities: housing, flood protection

The mayor insists that securing a larger share of tourism revenues is about much more than simply balancing municipal budgets. Athens faces substantial and costly long-term challenges, particularly in terms of climate resilience and housing.

"Flood protection alone will require around 100 million euros," Doukas says. "We currently have only 2 million euros available. This is the reality."

He also points to studies conducted through the European "Mayors for Housing" initiative, which suggest that creating 1,000 affordable housing units in Athens could significantly ease pressure on the city's strained market.

Yet despite public expressions of support from government officials, including Tourism Minister Olga Kefalogianni, who has acknowledged that cities should receive a greater share of tourism revenue, Doukas says little has changed.

"We have not seen the corresponding political will from the government. We need to decide whether we want strong, sustainable cities," he says, "or municipalities that are simply expected to pick up the tab".

Creating the tourism we want for Athens

For all his concerns, Doukas is clear on one point: Athens wants visitors. Tourism remains one of the city's great success stories and a vital pillar of the economy. The challenge, he says, is ensuring that success remains sustainable.

To achieve this, there is only one way: all the stakeholders must work together to create the tourism model Athens deserves. The debate over ways of doing this, from tourism taxes and housing regulations to greater municipal autonomy, is likely to intensify as visitor numbers continue to rise. The question facing Athens now is whether the city that attracts millions of visitors each year has the resources and authority to manage the impact.

For Doukas, the answer ultimately lies in building a city that works for both visitors and residents. "Our goal is to improve everyday life in Athens," he says. "And to do that, we need citizens themselves to play a more active role. If we can achieve that, then we will truly have succeeded."