

TO BHMA International edition

‘I live in hope that my best work still lies ahead’

By Panos Kougias

A few days before our meeting, Dimitris Yeros spends hours working on old reels and cassettes. He is digitizing electronic music he composed in the early 1970s, back when he was simultaneously experimenting with painting, video, performance art, and anything else that sparked his curiosity.

Our conversation could easily have turned into a retrospective. His career certainly lends itself to one—from his status as one of the first Greek artists to experiment with performance and video art to his exhibitions abroad, and from the photographic series that have traveled to major museums to his encounters with figures including Gabriel García Márquez and Louise Bourgeois.

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Forget France: China Is the New Foie Gras Champion

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Katrina Northrop and Chuqin Jiang

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

When Nadia Meliani moved to Beijing a decade ago to open a French restaurant, she didn’t expect China to become a global hub for foie gras—let alone that she would work in the industry.

Today, the chef, a native of France, is working long days at a foie gras farm in northeast China trying to nail the perfect, mouthwatering flavor. She and her business partners aim to feed the appetite of affluent Chinese. Someday, she thinks, even French diners might want to try it.

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Firefighters work to extinguish a burning factory, after a wildfire broke out near Oreokastro, on the outskirts of Thessaloniki, Greece, July 5, 2026.

ALEXANDROS ARANIOS/REUTERS

TO BHMA International edition

Greece’s Wildfire Season Enters a Critical Phase

By Nikolas Kaufmann

The first weeks of Greece’s wildfire season have already turned into an early stress test for the country’s civil protection mechanism.

Over the past several days, the number and intensity of fires have increased markedly, forcing authorities to mobilize hundreds of firefighters and dozens of aircraft while placing municipalities under a state of emergency. The most severe incidents occurred in

Oinoi, northwest of Athens; Oreokastro, north of Thessaloniki; and Nea Kallikratia on the Chalkidiki peninsula. While all these fires posed significant challenges, the blaze in Oreokastro highlighted how rapidly wildfires can escalate into wider public safety

emergencies. Houses and other buildings, including a recycling plant, were destroyed, while reports indicated that toxic smoke spread toward the city of Thessaloniki. Following the disaster, the municipalities of Oreokastro and Pavlos Melas were placed

under a state of emergency.

Only days earlier, another major fire in Liti, which lies within the Municipality of Oreokastro, had claimed two lives, underlining the human cost of a season that is only just beginning.

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The valonia oak acorn, despite its small size, is a powerhouse full of potential.

TO BHMA International edition

The Mighty Acorn

By Cheryl Novak

On the north Cyclades island of Kea, known as Tzia, Macie Mayer is slowly getting ready for the acorns to fall.

By autumn, the ground beneath the island’s oaks will be scattered with them: heavy brown nuts held in rough, shaggy caps.

Families used to gather those caps by the sackful and sell them for their tan-

nins, which were used to tan leather and dye cloth.

The work was seasonal, physical and as ordinary as gathering olives. No one needed to explain why the trees mattered.

Small nut, big story

The acorn trade survived on Kea until around 1965. Then synthetic dyes took over, the foreign buyers disappeared, and younger generations turned away from the harvest and towards tourism de-

velopment. Trees that had once produced income began to look less like an asset and more like an impediment to building a second home.

Mayer has spent years trying to change that. She has helped farmers sell acorn caps abroad, persuaded landowners to let volunteers gather acorns on their property, and experimented with turning the nut itself into flour.

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One with the future

Greece's Wildfire Season Enters A Critical Phase – What Can We Expect this Summer?

The increase in the number and scale of forest fires in Greece suggest that a difficult season lies ahead. A wildfire expert warns of several risks this summer

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Government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis said in late June that Greece had recorded 96 wildfires in the previous 48 hours, exceeding the average of roughly 30 fires per day that Minister for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Evangelos Tournas cited only recently.

The latest incidents follow a gradual increase in wildfire activity since mid June. Fires broke out in Karystos on southern Evia, in Corinth, near Athens International Airport in Spata, in Akrefnio to the west of Chalkida, in the agricultural area of Elaionas near Thebes, in Peraia outside of Thessaloniki, and in Aspropyrgos to the west of Athens. Although most of those incidents were contained before they could develop into major disasters, they demonstrated how quickly simultaneous outbreaks can stretch operational resources.

Greece is preparing for another difficult summer

Authorities have spent the past several years attempting to strengthen Greece's wildfire response after a series of devastating seasons. According to the European Copernicus Earth Observation Program, Greece recorded an average of more than 50,000 hectares of burned land annually between 2006 and 2025, placing it among Europe's most fire-affected countries behind only Portugal, Spain and Italy.

The 2025 season ranked among the five worst since Copernicus records began in 2006. Eighteen individual fires exceeded 500 hectares, with the largest occurring on the island of Chios, where almost 8,000 hectares burned – approximately 15 percent of the island's total surface area. Large fires also struck Keratea in Attica, Arta, Zakynthos, and the Feneos region of Corinth. The latest data published by the National Observatory of Athens' Meteo service illustrate how severely Attica has been affected in recent years. Between 2017 and 2025, thirteen major wildfires burned more than 70,000 hectares across the region, destroying 38 percent of Attica's forests.

This year's prepara-



Local residents look at a burning recycling factory, after a wildfire threatened homes and burned businesses in Oreokastro, on the outskirts of Thessaloniki, Greece, July 5, 2026.

tions have therefore focused not only on expanding fire-fighting capacity, but also on improving surveillance and prevention. Since early July, Greece has added 600 newly recruited firefighters, who have already been deployed according to operational needs across the country. According to Tournas, the Greek firefighting force has increased from roughly 13,000 personnel in 2021 to nearly 19,000 today. A few years ago, Greece introduced specialist wildfire units named "Forest Commandos"; according to government figures, these have grown from a handful to just over 20 units manned by almost 1,500 personnel.

The aerial fleet has also expanded. Greece now operates around 30 state-owned firefighting aircraft alongside more than 50 leased for the duration of the season. Three newly-acquired helicopters entered service in mid-June and are expected to support aerial surveillance, coordination and rescue operations.

Perhaps the most technologically ambitious ad-

dition arrived in early May, when Greece launched four thermal satellites under its National Microsatellite Program. According to the European Space Agency, the satellites constitute the world's first national satellite capability specifically designed for wildfire detection and monitoring. The system is intended to provide near-real-time surveillance of wildfires while delivering highly accurate temperature measurements over seas, inland waters, coastal zones and different land-use categories, supporting both civil protection and climate monitoring.

On the ground, authorities have continued to expand their surveillance network. The number of operational

drones has increased from 80 to over 100 nationwide, with over 30 operating in Attica alone. "They provide us with imagery day and night and enable early warning so that we can intervene immediately," Tournas said recently.

European support and a broader strategy

The European Union intends to step up its support for its member states' efforts to combat forest fires. Between mid-July and the end of August, nearly 250 firefighters from several European countries will be stationed across Greece. Four amphibious firefighting aircraft will also be provided, while the wider European reserve includes 27 firefighting aircraft and 21

certified emergency response teams ready for cross-border deployment.

The additional resources form part of a broader European effort to address increasingly destructive wildfire seasons across southern Europe, where climate change has both lengthened fire seasons and increased the frequency of extreme weather. Domestically, the government continues to implement its multi-year "AIGIS" program, which aims to modernize Greece's civil protection system through investments in new firefighting vehicles, aircraft, helicopters, drones and emergency management infrastructure.

Yet Greek authorities repeatedly stress that stronger firefighting capacity alone cannot prevent catastrophic seasons. Tournas stressed that prevention remains the first line of defense. According to his estimates, about 85 percent of Greece's wildfires are caused by negligence, prompting the government to extend this year's property-clearing deadline until June 22. Last year, around 730,000

cleaned properties were registered. "No matter how much the mechanism is strengthened, no matter how powerful it becomes – if we are not careful, if we do not work on prevention, which is everyone's responsibility, then no mechanism can respond equally effectively to every incident," the Minister for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection said a few days ago.

Wildfire expert warns of risks

Whether these expanded resources will prove sufficient during an especially demanding summer remains an open question, however. For many researchers, the answer depends less on the size of Greece's firefighting fleet than on how the country's strategy performs once weather conditions become truly extreme.

Wildfire scientist Dr. Gavriil Xanthopoulos, Research Director at the Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems of the Hellenic Agricultural Organization DIM-ITRA, believes that Greece is well prepared, but his as-

'When more than a certain number of incidents are ongoing at the same time, there is an enormous fragmentation of forces.'

Evangelos Tournas,
Minister for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection



Remnants of a car that got set ablaze from the recent fire in Oreokastro, Thessaloniki, on July 6, 2026.



A local resident walks amidst smoke rising from a wildfire near the village of Liti, Thessaloniki, June 30, 2026.

assessment is more nuanced. He acknowledges that the government has significantly strengthened its operational capacity in the wake of recent catastrophic fires, but he also argues that the effectiveness of the country's wildfire strategy will ultimately be determined not by the number of aircraft or firefighters alone, but by weather conditions, fuel management, and the ability to cope with multiple simultaneous emergencies.

"Every improvement in the country's preparedness for combating forest fires raises the threshold at which the mechanism 'fails', meaning the point at which the difficulties – whether caused by extreme fire behavior or the occurrence of simultaneous difficult fires that expand beyond the original fire front – exceed its capabilities," Xanthopoulos tells *To Vima*. History shows that greater preparedness does not eliminate the risk of catastrophic seasons, however. "This has happened repeatedly in the past, leading to very good results during relatively 'easy' years (for example 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006), followed by a catastrophic year such as 2007."

The scientist argues that one of the most underestimated long-term challenges is what fire researchers describe as the "Fire Paradox": the fact that successful fire suppression leads to an accumulation of combustible material, and therefore greater fire potential, when it is not accompanied by appropriate forest management. For that reason, Xanthopoulos believes Greece's prevention policies, such as the ANTINERO program, can contribute to a positive development. The program includes forest thinning, the removal of dead vegetation, and fire-breaks. According to the government, Greece has invested

660 million euros in wildfire prevention over the past five years, including more than 80 million euros this year in peri-urban forests.

More aircraft — but also structural weaknesses

Despite acknowledging the progress, Xanthopoulos warns that there are still important structural weaknesses within Greece's firefighting system, "mainly because they rely heavily on the use of numerous aircraft." In his view, the constant deployment of aerial resources creates operational problems later in the season. "The continuous use of aircraft, even on fires that could easily be extinguished without them, is a burden, wastes resources and leads to firefighter negligence. During a difficult fire season, this burden results in fatigue, mechanical failures and possibly accidents. Firefighters are suddenly confronted by challenges to which they are not accustomed, due to the reliance on aircraft during suppression operations."

Xanthopoulos also cautions that shortcomings in public awareness could become a serious vulnerability if Greece experiences an exceptionally difficult season. "Significant deficiencies in preventive work with the population could, I fear, play a negative role, should this year's wildfire season become difficult."

Weather remains a decisive factor

Meteorological conditions may ultimately determine whether Greece experiences another catastrophic summer. Spring rainfalls have produced a relative abundance of herbaceous biomass — mainly grasses— which, given drought conditions and strong winds, can help fires spread rapidly, especially across agricultural land and

'Significant deficiencies in preventive work with the population could, I fear, play a negative role, should this year's wildfire season become difficult.'

Dr. Gavriil Xanthopoulos
Wildfire scientist and Research Director at the Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems of the Hellenic Agricultural Organization DIMITRA

grazing areas. As temperatures climb toward 40 degrees Celsius in several regions and seasonal winds gradually strengthen, this vegetation could quickly become highly combustible.

Meanwhile the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) warned in early July that El Niño conditions are expected to intensify in the coming months, increasing the likelihood of heatwaves, droughts and extreme weather events worldwide. "El Niño conditions are already underway [...]. This will intensify the chances of drought and heavy rainfall and the risk of heatwaves on land and marine heatwaves in many regions of the world," WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo announced. The Greek meteorological service Meteo likewise expects above-average temperatures across southern Europe, including Greece, in July.

Historically, according to Minister Tournas, Greece enters its most dangerous

wildfire period in the second half of July, when prolonged heat, drought and the seasonal *meltemi* winds often combine to create a perfect storm of conditions.

Multiple fires remain the greatest challenge

Asked whether any specific region faces an exceptionally high wildfire risk, Xanthopoulos is cautious. "There are no indications suggesting particularly elevated fire danger in any specific area. However, it should be emphasized that in remote parts of the country where there are insufficient aircraft available for a large-scale initial attack, it is relatively likely that a fire will, under difficult conditions, develop into a major wildfire. I cite as examples Kythira in August 2017, which caught fire again in 2025, as well as numerous fires on Chios, Rhodes and elsewhere."

The Ministry for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection does, however, identify a broad corridor stretching

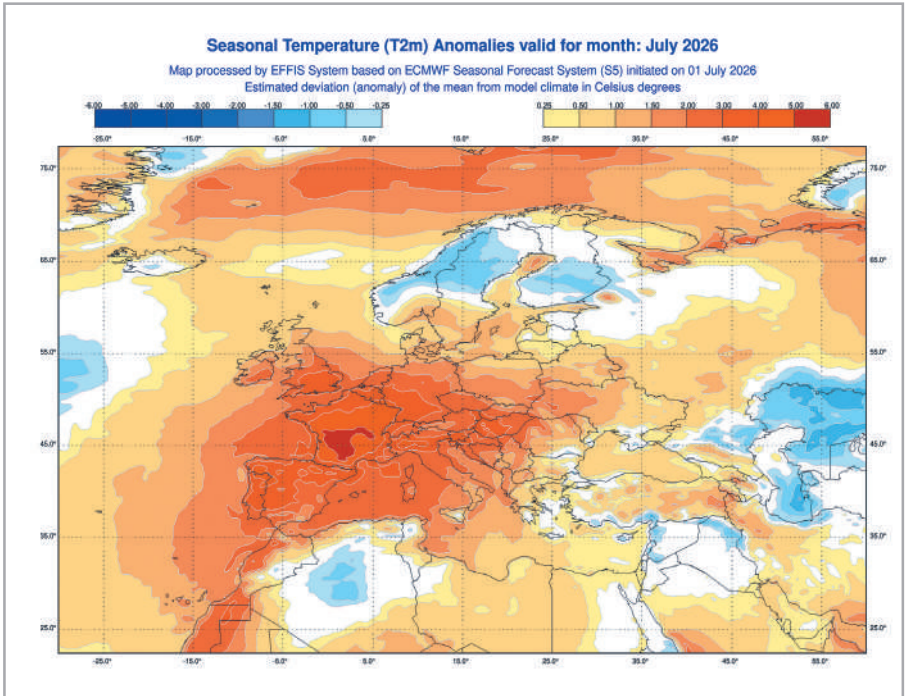
from Thrace and eastern Thessaly through Evia, eastern Boeotia, Attica, the eastern Peloponnese and the eastern Aegean islands, which is particularly exposed to strong winds capable of driving rapid fire spread.

For Tournas, the objective is not simply to extinguish fires quickly, but primarily to prevent the number of simultaneous incidents from overwhelming the available resources. "When more than a certain number of incidents are ongoing at the same time, there is an enormous fragmentation of forces. And no mechanism, however well structured and organized, can effectively respond to such fragmentation," he warned.

A fire season whose outcome remains uncertain

Xanthopoulos also identified several developments that could change the picture rapidly. "A negative development could occur if there are several consecutive days of intense and prolonged heat; if a strong, dry, cold front prevents the effective suppression of existing fires in July or August; if the 112 emergency number continues to be used 'blindly' to evacuate populations even when this is unnecessary; or if a technical failure leads to the failure of the initial attack on a difficult fire, or an accident involving aircraft, ground units or civilians impacts on the entire system and causes temporary paralysis."

Whatever transpires, Greece has invested heavily in new equipment, surveillance systems and specialized units, substantially improving its capacity to respond to an average fire season. Whether those investments can withstand an extreme summer will become clear in the coming weeks, though their ultimate success will also hinge on the public acting responsibly.



Estimated temperature peaks Europe are expected to endure this July, as depicted on a thermal map, created by the European Copernicus Earth Observation Program.

The Mighty Acorn

Small, odd-looking and easy to miss, the acorn once helped sustain Greek forests, livestock, leather trades and rural economies. Now it's being rediscovered as a symbol of conservation, food innovation and ecotourism

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Her acorn cookies are now sold as an artisanal island product, a small-scale re-invention of something Kea once knew well.

“My work in making products out of acorns is my way of trying to discourage people from cutting down trees for firewood,” she tells *TO BHMA International Edition*.

It is an unusually practical form of conservation: make the fruit useful, and the tree may be allowed to remain.

Across the water, in western Greece, the same acorn tells a similar story on a far larger scale. The valonia oak forest of Xiromero covers thousands of hectares. For centuries, its acorns fed pigs, its timber went into buildings and ships, and its tannin-rich caps travelled through the local port of Astakos to markets across Europe.

The trade helped sustain villages, particularly from the 17th to 19th centuries, and left its mark on the region itself. Mayor of Xiromero Giannis Triantafyllakis points to the old neoclassical buildings of Astakos as reminders of a period when acorns were not a curiosity underfoot, but a source of wealth.

“Many families lived off the acorns,” he relates to *TO BHMA International Edition*.

Today, the ships are gone, the acorn market has largely vanished, and many of the villages around the forest have emptied. Yet the trees remain. On Kea, Mayer is trying to give their fruit a second life. In Xiromero, scientists and local authorities are asking a broader question: how do you protect a forest after the economy that once helped maintain it has disappeared?

The rise and fall of the valonia

The valonia oak, known scientifically as *Quercus ithaburensis* subsp. *macrolepis*, once covered far more of Greece than it does today. Professors Anastasia Pantera and

Andreas Papadopoulos of the Agricultural University of Athens remind *TO BHMA International Edition* that its woodlands extended across parts of the Peloponnese, Attica and many Aegean islands. Their last great Greek stronghold now survives in Aetolia-Acarnania.

The oak tree's intrinsic value was recognized by Greeks long before its acorns became an export commodity. At the ancient oracle of Dodona, priests listened for messages from Zeus in the rustling of sacred oak leaves. And a local tradition in Xiromero holds that a person who saved an oak might one day marry the fairy that lives within it, the Professors relate. Such stories belonged to a world in which cutting down a venerable tree was not a neutral act.

A tree that fed animals, yielded timber and produced a marketable crop had obvious value, inadvertently serving as a form of protection and what we call today forest management. But the industrial era steadily dismantled the relationship between communities and forests. Synthetic chemicals replaced natural tannins, agricultural activity declined, and the old export chains broke apart.

Mayer's attempts to revive the acorn trade as something “sustainable” show how completely the market has changed. She has helped send acorn cups to Germany, China, India, and Turkey. The German customer paid well, she says, but stopped buying acorns after roughly 150 years in business when the fourth generation abandoned natural dyes. Her explanation was disarmingly ordinary: “People don't wear leather-soled shoes any more; they wear trainers.”

Meanwhile, Greece's producers struggle to ex-



A family walks the new trail through the Xiromero oak forest.



Acorn: Then and Now

For centuries, the most valuable part of the valonia acorn was not the nut but its rough, tannin-rich cap. From the 17th to the 19th century, shiploads left western Greece for Italy, France and other European markets, where the tannins were used to tan leather and dye cloth. The trade supported rural families and helped bring prosperity to ports such as Astakos. Demand collapsed as synthetic chemicals replaced natural dyes and traditional leather production declined. Today, the acorn is being put to very different uses. On Kea, it is processed into flour, cookies and cosmetic ingredients, while harvesting workshops attract volunteers and visitors. In Xiromero, it is inspiring gastronomy, walking trails, research, ecotourism and renewed interest in local history.

port acorn caps to Turkey—the only major importer left standing, explains Mayer. “The caps get stuck at the border to Turkey and are subject to heavy fees, which makes the business financially unsustainable.”

The forest the trade left behind

The valonia oak forest of Xiromero is far from the dark, dense woodland many readers may imagine. It is a Mediterranean working landscape, open in places and grazed in others, shaped

over centuries by animals, people, heat, drought and wind.

Estimates provided in the interviews place it at between 16,000-17,000 hectares. Pantera and the Mayor describes it as the largest continuous valonia oak forest in the Balkans. “It's an ancient forest”, says Papadopoulos. “Some of its trees are more than 500 years old.”

The forest shelters wildlife and plant life, stores carbon, protects the soil, and forms part of a traditional silvopastoral system

in which livestock graze among trees.

Yet the disappearance of the acorn market, and herds and farmers in the region has created a problem. “Without the people and animals that once worked the landscape, parts of the forest have become overgrown,” explains Papadopoulos.

In other words, the decline of the economic activities in the region did more than remove a source of income; it changed the way the forest was used and cared for.

“The forest has been left unmanaged for years,” and “the accumulated biomass increases the risk of fire”, highlights Papadopoulos.

Finding new uses for an old landscape

Kea and Xiromero are now testing two very different responses to the change in activities in their regions.

On Kea, Mayer works at the scale of a small island sustainable enterprise. During the harvest, owners of second homes give her access to their land so she can

gather acorns with volunteers and even adventurous tourists. She processes the acorns into flour, which features in the 70 recipes included in her acorn cookbook. She is now preparing a second volume, this one focused entirely on gluten-free recipes.

“Acorn flour has to be processed to reduce its bitterness,” Mayer says. She uses it in cookies, pancakes, waffles and foods that do not need to rise and it is considered by scientists to be highly nutritious. And when the flour is boiled, it creates something gelatinous- similar to pudding. Mayer has also sold the flour to Lush Cosmetics for use in facial masks.

The work is modest compared with the export trade of the past, but it re-connects the harvest to local cuisine, visitors and land-owners. That matters on an island where, as Mayer notes, the oak trees may be protected, but they stand on private properties. “Conservation is difficult when owners are asked to preserve something that produces no visible return,” she cautions

Mayer is realistic about the limits of what one person can revive. Acorns can yield tannins, oils and other products, but she has decided not to pursue every possibility. “I am 63 and have to choose my lane,” she says. “And that lane is acorn flour. I would love it if the younger generation would explore its other uses.”

In Xiromero, the proposed answer is broader. Triantafyllakis says the municipality is seeking protected status for the forest through the Ministry of Environment, while it is also looking into developing more walking routes, ecotourism, gastronomy, livestock farming, beekeeping, and possibly a small museum devoted to the uses of the acorn.

The desired protection is not intended to freeze the forest in time, the mayor says. Rather, the region seeks to support activities that depend on the landscape, which will prevent them from exhausting the forest’s resources or fragmenting it.

Ancient trees, new instruments
Scientists are approaching the same question about sustainability from below the canopy and beneath the soil. Through the EU-funded DRYAD project, Pantera, Papadopoulos and their colleagues are studying the forest’s resilience and testing nature-based approaches to its management.
Plots of land are being used to conduct research on tree growth and biomass. Sensors record soil moisture, temperature and the

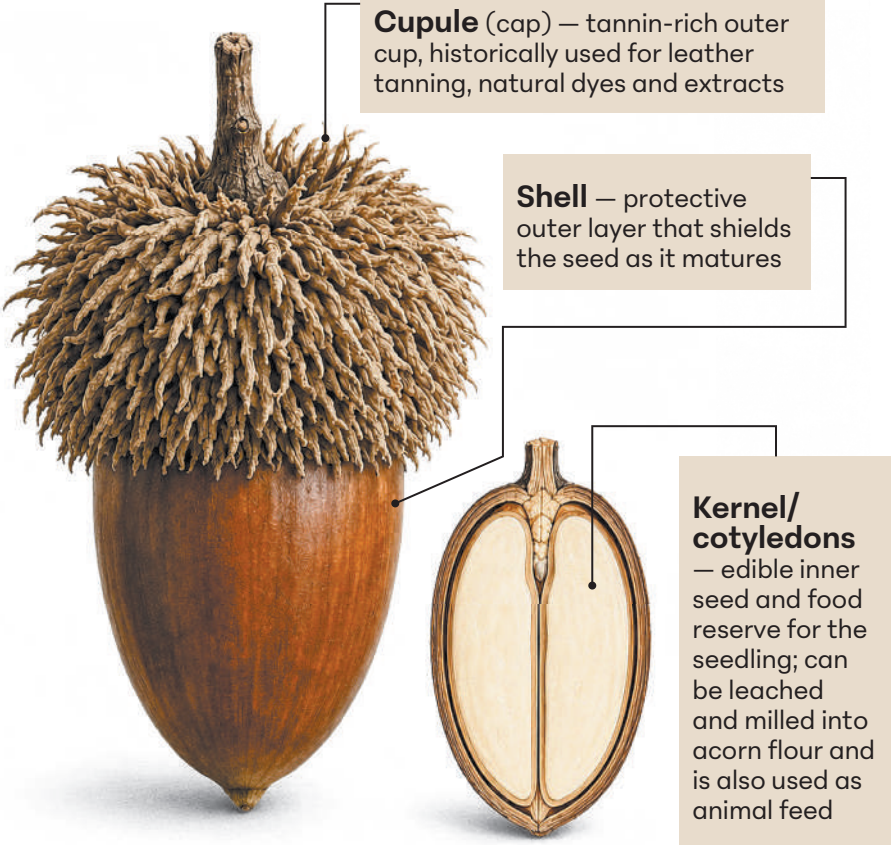
Prof. Pantera and Prof. Papadopoulos take samples of the Earth near valonia oak trees in Xiromero oak forest.



water status of the trees. Researchers are examining roots at different depths and comparing how traditional grazing affects vegetation, fire risk, and the wider ecosystem.
The aim is not simply to catalogue an ancient forest; it is to understand what helps it endure. It is also intended to feed data from Xiromero into a wider network of “e-forests,” making environmental measurements available to researchers, students, policymakers and the public.

The instruments are new; the management question is not. For centuries, the forest survived the shifting relationship between trees, animals, trade and human settlements. Researchers are now trying to determine which parts of that relationship can be restored, and which must be reinvented, particularly in this age of rapid climate change.
Can ‘new value’ keep the oaks standing?
Today’s efforts are not trying to recreate the old acorn

Anatomy of an acorn



An educational display at Xiromero presenting acorn-derived products and traditional materials — from roughly ground flour, storage jars and sacks and processing tools.

Seasonal acorn harvest on Kea island. Tourists are invited to participate in the tradition.

VALONIA OAK: Six Facts

Scientific name: *Quercus ithaburensis* subsp. *macrolepis*.
Common name: valonia oak.

- Greece’s last major valonia oak stronghold lies in western Greece, particularly Aetolia-Acarnania. The Xiromero forest covers roughly 16,000–17,000 hectares.
- Xiromero is considered the largest and most continuous valonia oak forest in the Balkans, with some trees believed to be more than 500 years old.
- Valonia oak woodlands are traditional silvopastoral landscapes, where livestock graze beneath scattered trees. They support biodiversity, store carbon and protect soils.
- In ancient Greek mythology and religious practice, the oak was the tree of Zeus. At Dodona, priests sought divine messages in the rustling of its leaves.
- Scientists in Xiromero are using research plots, weather stations and soil and tree sensors to study forest resilience, water stress, biomass and the effects of grazing



economy that once sent shiploads of cups from western Greece to markets across Europe. Instead, they are building something new. On Kea, cookies and acorn flour are giving the fruit a modern identity in a farm-to-fork approach. In Xiromero, plans for protection, research, cultural heritage, land management and local enterprise aim to create new reasons for

people to connect with the forest.
The opportunity lies in choosing uses that strengthen, rather than strain, the landscape. Tourism and new markets can support conservation and forest management when they are rooted in the needs of the forest and the communities around it.
The real measure of success of these efforts will not be how much value has been extracted, but how much ecological, cultural and economic value will be sustained.

‘I live in hope that my best work still lies ahead’

Dimitris Yeros speaks about the freedom of creation, the painting he invariably returns to, photography, video, and the curiosity that, even after half a century, continues to drive him in the studio



Artist Dimitris Yeros inside his atelier.

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Though he himself rarely dwells on any of that. Whenever the discussion veers toward such accolades, he deftly redirects it back to painting which, as he admits, has always been the fixed point that anchors his work.

He does not seem to place much stock in the labels that frequently accompany artists, nor in the necessity of serving a single medium. To him, photography, video, and painting are not distinct identities; they are simply different ways of approaching the same idea.

Which may be why his final answer also serves as the most candid commentary on his entire career. When asked what it is that keeps drawing him back into the studio every day, he does not speak of prestige or recognition. “The hope I will create my best and greatest work,” is his reply. “In recent years, that hope has kept me going.” That phrase seems to explain better than any biography why, after more than fifty years of creative output, he continues to treat every new work as

though it is the most important he’ll ever make.

Your career has embraced painting, printmaking, photography, video, and performance art. Looking back at this journey today, what is the thread you feel connects these different forms of expression?

I am a painter first and foremost, and a photographer after that. But to return to your question, I think you forgot—or perhaps did not know about—the electronic music I have composed, which I had almost forgotten about myself and only recently rediscovered. Lately, I have been spending days on end listening to and digitizing old reels and cassettes containing my compositions, and I think they remain interesting. I

wrote them between 1970 and 1980. I was, in fact, an avid member of the Hellenic Association for Contemporary Music, and I attended almost all their events. There were some outstanding musicians there under the leadership of Yiannis G. Papaioannou: Vassiliadis, Logothetis, Aperghis...

Look, I was quite young, I didn’t care about tomorrow, I lived for the moment and did whatever I liked and whatever amused me. I was always on the lookout for new outlets. I would play around, and have the best time doing it. I would lock myself in the studio for days creating things that were for me and nobody else. I wasn’t interested in their impact or reception. I happened to be making a bit of money from the visual arts, and that supported me. I also spent my days and nights at discos and clubs.

I enjoyed countless nights of carefree abandon at Quinta, for instance.

However, later on, in 1976 when I first went to New York and began working with the Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer gallery, and right after that with the Hubertus Schoeller gallery in Düsseldorf, I found myself with less time on my hands and had to dedicate myself more to painting. Which is how I came to drift away from the other stuff.

I mean, there were years when I had three to five one-man shows in different cities. Then, in 1986, the Bochum Museum in Germany staged my first solo exhibition.

Recently, I’ve also spent an inordinate amount of time searching for the video art I made between 1977 and 1983, which was scattered near-ruined around my studio. I had to digitize

it, because it will be included in a major international exhibition on Video Pioneers which a European Museum will be staging in the near future. I think I’m the only Greek artist in it.

You’ve had five or six solo exhibitions in museums abroad and works of yours are held in several of their collections. But I don’t think I’ve seen your work in a museum in Greece.

That’s because none of my work is actually held by museums here. They might be waiting for me to call round cap in hand—who knows? You see, Greek museum directors have their own unique style, their own idiosyncrasies. I won’t go into what those idiosyncrasies actually are. But I will share something that Heinz-Norbert Jocks, who has curated

exhibitions of mine, said to me when he was in Greece a few days ago as a guest of Dakis Joannou.

Having just visited the National Gallery, when we met he asked me if they had works of mine in their collection. When I told him they didn’t, he replied: “It’s to your credit that they don’t...” Just so you understand, the director of the National Gallery, an older woman and supposedly competent, doesn’t know the difference between a woodcut and a wood carving, and there’s published proof of her ignorance in a lengthy book she authored.

Did the time come when you felt that painting was no longer sufficient in itself to express what you wanted to say, so you turned to photography?

No, not at all. Painting is my passion. I cannot live without it. Of course, I don’t paint like a... house painter, every day to a schedule, and when I start painting I isolate myself and work at length. I might not leave my studio for months.

But you don’t stage exhibitions very often...

There was a time when I hadn’t had an exhibition in Athens for twenty years. I don’t do them often, because I wait to accumulate enough material to create a cohesive body of work. I’m not interested in selling everything I create, either. I paint for myself first; it’s only later that I consider which ones I’ll exhibit.

And even when I do decide to exhibit a work, it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s for sale. In New York, I collaborated for many years with the John Stevenson Gallery on 23rd Street. He sold my photographs and was crazy about my painting. He only represented two painters: Mark Beard, who has also painted all the Abercrombie & Fitch stores, and myself. In fact, whenever I sent him works to set aside for a future exhibition, he’d sell them—on the excuse that he couldn’t say no to his collectors.

The male body is central to your photographic oeuvre, yet it never functions as a provocation or a bid for sensationalism. What does its persistent presence seek to achieve?

Talking about the photographic nudes featuring humans with animals, which are my best-known works of this type, I wanted to shed light on the relationship between the natural-innocent nudity of the animal, and

‘I was always on the lookout for new outlets. I would play around, and have the best time doing it. I would lock myself in the studio for days creating things that were for me and nobody else. I wasn’t interested in their impact or reception.’

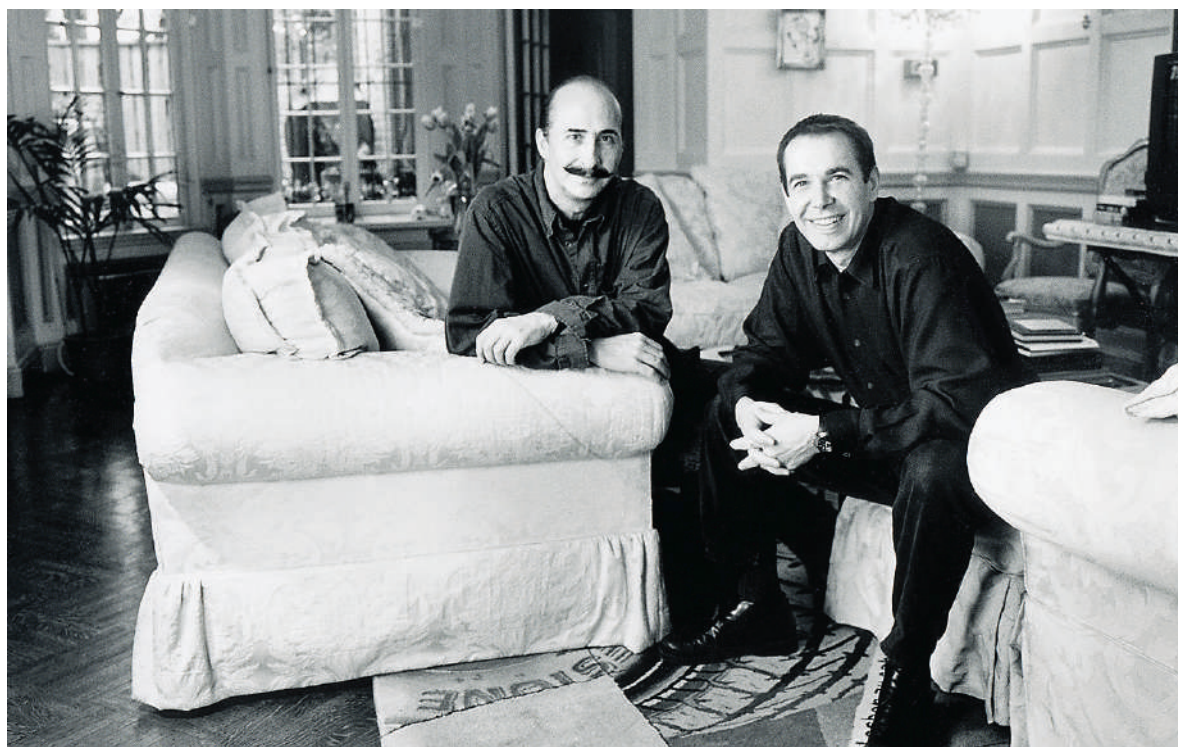
the unnatural nudity of the human figure. Peter Weiermair, Louise Bourgeois and Jeff Koons are among those who have praised these photographs, which were published in book form in 2000. Edward Albee was also inspired to write a poem by one of my photographs, *Another Narcissus*, which we later included in a book. I should say that I started taking these specific photographs in 1988, on film, before the advent of digital cameras and their infinitude of cost-free conveniences. So many conveniences, in fact, covering so many levels, that it verges on the ridiculous... which is to say on the vulgar.

“Queer” is used ever more frequently as a term in public discourse and art history today. Do you feel it is applicable to your work, too, or is it a characterization applied in retrospect?

Not only is it not applicable to my work, it's an insult to it. Nor could I ever have imagined my work being described in such terms. It is like putting José Domingo on the same billboard as Le.Pa (Lefteris Pantazis)! First of all, let me clarify that I have nothing against Le.Pa., or what's called queer, or any other movement, term, collective, etc. There is a place for everyone and everything in society as a whole. It's just that I live in my own society and am very happy here.

And that I have so much to do, while also preparing for my... departure, which I hope will happen in the most painless way possible, that I'm not interested in other societies—which, as time goes by, seem increasingly anti-social to me. What's more, I don't concern myself with trivialities. I think it's just a passing fad, unattractive and in poor taste. If someone isn't much to look at, they pass by unnoticed. If they desperately need to be noticed, they invent things to draw attention to themselves... then complain that people are giving them dirty looks.

Still, I don't think the term can be applied to any work—it's entirely inadequate for the task, and certainly doesn't describe the work of many of the serious artists of my acquaintance. It is also aesthetically displeasing. In my day, fifty plus years ago, I remember them using “queer” in America to describe certain low-class, self-outed fringe types who sought to provoke the public with their behavior then reveled in the backlash. Nowadays, they call them... faggots! Here, they used to call them something else. I remember a cer-



Dimitris Yeros, left, photographed next to contemporary artist Jeff Koons.

‘One day, a publisher friend asked me if I would like to illustrate some of Cavafy’s poems with paintings. I thought about it and concluded that I could do it better with photographs.’

tain Werner in Eighties Athens who used to wear a skirt and sashay around Kato Patisia purely so people would jeer at him. The more they jeered, the happier he was!

But tell me this, if you will: why isn't the term “straight photographer” used in the public discourse? And this: would they ever dare apply the label to Manos Hadjidakis or to Cavafy? Because they'd have cut them to shreds—Hadjidakis, in particular! Not to mention Alexander the Great, Hadrian, or the Borgias.

So let's stop lumping everyone together, shall we? A few days ago, a great photographer and a friend for

thirty-seven years, Duane Michals, died. One or two Greek publications, determined to impose the term on him, described him as a queer photographer. I'm certain he'd be furious if he found out. He was singularly dignified, an extremely erudite gentleman with a fantastic sense of humor, active and creative until the very last.

He was married to Frederick Gorree, probably for practical reasons, whom he never called “my husband”, and who cared for him with great devotion until he died of Alzheimer's. Duane never referred to his sexual side—not once. And he was annoyed with

another friend of mine (I once introduced the two), the great writer Edmund White, who has taken to describing his sexual exploits in recent books. He found them cheap, vulgar, and ridiculous, capable of eliciting nothing more than a “Why do we care?”

Edward Albee, another dear friend, had the same reaction to this “queer”... movement, as did Gore Vidal.

The series “Shades of Love,” inspired by the poetry of Constantine Cavafy, stands as a unique dialogue between image and word. How did this

need to converse photographically with Cavafy come about?

One day, a publisher friend asked me if I would like to illustrate some of Cavafy's poems with paintings. I thought about it and concluded that I could do it better with photographs. Besides, apart from having young models available for Cavafy's erotic poems, I also had many acquaintances, outstanding men and women of letters and the Arts, whose lives or work had some link to the poems' protagonists. So, for example, I asked the sculptor Armand Fernandez to pose for the “Sculptor of Tyana”, the painter Tom Wesselmann

for “Artificial Flowers”, the award-winning poet Richard Howard, who has his entire bathroom wallpapered with photographs of the famous dead, for the poem “Voices”, Olympia Dukakis for the poem “Supplication,” and so forth.

You got the chance to photograph Gabriel García Márquez. And your acquaintance with Louise Bourgeois brought you face-to-face with one of the most important figures in contemporary art. What's the main thing you've kept from those encounters?

I am often asked about my relationship with Márquez and Bourgeois, because they are leading figures in their fields, and that sells. It was an honor to know them and spend time with them for so many years. And I have to say that both opened their doors to me because they knew and appreciated my work. I met Márquez when I photographed him for the poem *Ithaca*.

When we went out into the garden for the shoot and because he was stiff—strangely, he was very shy—I reminded him that I was not a paparazzo but his friend and asked him to relax. In reply, he said, “I know very well who you are, Dimitris, I have your ‘x-ray’ and your magical realism on my desk.” for her part, Bourgeois dedicated her first photograph to me with the phrase “Avec Anticipation”. My photographs of Márquez were published many years ago. I also have a book ready with Bourgeois and am looking for a publisher.

Is there a specific work or idea that you've had in your head for years, but have still to realize?

There are a whole lot of works and a good many ideas in there. In fact, about forty-five years ago, I published my ideas for works which I could never hope to realize, given their scale and cost, in an artsy magazine. Today, with so many showy, vain sponsors around, I see enormous visual art productions being made—most of them, I think, simply for show, and many without the knowledge of their creators.

To bring this interview to a close, could I ask what it is that keeps you coming back into the studio every day to create?

The hope that I will create my best and greatest work. In recent years, that hope that has kept me going. And that's no small thing...



Dimitris Yeros in his atelier.

Forget France: China Is the New Foie Gras Champion

Asian newcomer makes 11,000 tons of the bird-liver delicacy annually—and lots of caviar too

Continued from Page One

Meliani’s venture is part of an improbable boom unfolding half a world away from the Périgord Noir, the region in southwest France famed for the product. Chinese producers now make up 45% of the global supply of foie gras, according to a June report from state-owned China International Capital—amounting to 11,000 tons a year.

Chinese companies also are making gains in other decadent foods such as caviar and truffles. Exports of Chinese truffles have more than tripled since 2022, while the caviar supply chain, once led by Iran and Russia, is now dominated by China.

“For decades, among Western consumers, ‘Made in China’ was associated with a cheap, lower-quality, simple product,” said Even Pay, a director at consulting firm Trivium China and expert on Chinese agriculture. “In the last decade, what we’ve really seen is a whole bunch of brands made in China where the products” are top quality at a lower price, she said.

Using industrial-scale sturgeon farms to harvest hundreds of tons of the fishy treat, Chinese caviar companies accounted for 40% of the global exports last year, according to data from the International Trade Centre.

A Chinese company that sells caviar under the brand name Kaluga Queen is the world’s largest caviar producer. That company, Hangzhou Qiandaohu Xunlong Sci-tech, raised more than \$150 million in a Hong Kong public offering in June, and it sells most of its caviar outside China.

The foie gras frenzy came out of a push by Beijing to find sustainable industries for rural villages left behind when workers flooded into cities. The state has supported the industry’s growth, said Pay, providing government loans and marketing assistance.

Today, producers are concentrated in the eastern provinces of Shandong and Anhui, where farmers churn out thousands of tons of foie gras by force-feeding ducks and geese to enlarge their livers. The liver is then extracted and treated before serving, perhaps pan-seared or smeared cold on bread.

Advertisement

Meliani, the chef-turned-entrepreneur, thinks Chinese foie gras has room for improve-

ment. The texture is good, she said, but the taste doesn’t linger in your mouth as it should.

Though foie gras is hardly a classic Chinese dish, the cuisine includes duck and meat innards such as tripe, helping local foodies embrace the French creation. Industry executives say caterers now clamor for foie gras to add a luxurious touch to weddings and banquets.

Restaurants and producers are hatching creative of-

Though foie gras is hardly a classic Chinese dish, the cuisine includes duck and meat innards such as tripe, helping local foodies embrace the French creation.



China’s foie gras frenzy came out of a push to find sustainable industries for rural villages.



Cherry-shaped foie gras desserts in Huoqiu county, Anhui province, China, April 28, 2026.

ferings such as foie gras ice cream, blueberry-flavored foie gras or sushi rolls topped with the delicacy. At one popular chain specializing in Peking duck in China, chefs mold foie gras into the form of a cherry to enjoy alongside the meat.

It is still mostly a treat for the wealthy elite in big cities. Average Chinese aren’t splurging much these days with the economy in the doldrums. But the lower price tag of local foie gras—the

French kind can cost nearly twice as much—broadens its appeal.

Ignace Lecleir, founder of the TRB Hospitality Group, which runs eight high-end Beijing restaurants serving Chinese-made foie gras, said there is “definitely a much higher demand than before.” He has been surprised to see it on the menu not only at Western-style eateries but also more casual Chinese establishments.

Export push

Outside of China, the sale of Chinese foie gras is limited for now to a few small markets. Still, some in the industry see foie gras following the familiar pattern in which Chinese exporters, honed by fierce competition at home, undercut global competitors with low prices.

Ma Lijun is the general manager of Shandong Chun-guan Food, which employs 500 people and produces more than 3,000 tons of foie gras annually. She said the domestic industry has become hypercompetitive with “endless price wars” in the past five years. Over the next decade, she hopes half of the company’s revenue will come from outside China.

Macau, a gambling hub, could be a harbinger. The former Portuguese colony is governed by Beijing as a special region of China, but it has its own import rules and resembles an overseas market for mainland producers. They are quickly making inroads.

Hugo Ao, a sales manager at food distributor Olivier Pacific, sells Spanish foie gras to restaurants and casinos in Macau. He said the company has lost customers to cheaper Chinese suppliers who sell it for around \$17 a pound, compared with \$28 for Spanish products. This has forced Olivier Pacific to slash prices to compete, Ao said.

The European Union is getting ready for the onslaught. This year, the EU strengthened regulations on foie gras labeling. The rules prevent foreign producers from trying to make their foie gras sound authentic by using words such as “Périgord-style.”

Alexandre Léon, head of the Périgord foie gras association, said that if Chinese imports arrive, customers might hesitate at first but price would ultimately win out.

“It could change everything,” Léon said.