

A Florida Surrogate, a Father in China, and the Babies Caught Between

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Katherine Long

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Kyla Simpson pulled up to the St. Johns County, Fla., sheriff's office in a black SUV in June with two toddlers in the back seat. She had given birth to them and raised them.

"Mommy loves you, OK?" she said, according to a video of the scene posted to social media.

Then, surrounded by deputies, she handed them over to a lawyer for their father, who lives in China. He had paid more than \$300,000 to bring them into the world and had never met them.

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The Migrants Have Left Ceuta, but the Trauma Lingers

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Benoit Faucon

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CEUTA, Spain—By Sunday morning, nearly all of the tens of thousands of migrants who flooded into this tiny Spanish city were gone. But the trauma of the sudden influx lingered.

Off a Mediterranean beach, countless shoes bobbed in the blue waters, abandoned by migrants who had swum to this slice of Spanish territory along the Strait of Gibraltar, just off the coast of Morocco.

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Archaeologists continue to unearth the past at a new site on the idyllic southwest Aegean island of Kythera.

TO BHMA International edition

The Buried History of Kythera

By Maria Katopodi

The idyllic island of Kythera, lying off the southeastern tip of the Peloponnese peninsula in Greece, has fascinated archaeologists for

many years—and not without reason. The island has long served as an important geographical and cultural bridge, linking Minoan Crete, the Mycenaean Greek mainland, and the wider Aegean and Mediterranean regions.

It was in the early 1960s that the first major organized excavation project was carried out on the island by the British School in Athens, led by Nicolas Coldstream and George Huxley. This landmark excavation followed earlier investigations in the

1930s, which first brought to light traces of Minoan occupation on the island. Key archaeological discoveries—including the Minoan peak sanctuaries, excavations at the Kastri settlement, and findings at the Paleokastro Acropolis—revealed the is-

land's close links with Crete during the Minoan era, while also confirming early urbanization, extensive maritime trade networks, and, most importantly, continuous forms of organized society dating back to the Neolithic period.

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Giorgos Georgiadis in his atelier.

TO BHMA International edition

Giorgos Georgiadis – The Last Anthropocentric Sculptor

By Panos Kougias

A few days ago, I visited Giorgos Georgiadis at his studio. We met to discuss a career spanning nearly seventy years in sculpture, but our conversation quickly opened up to embrace memories of his childhood, the people who shaped him, the events that

left a mark on his work, and the quests and questions which, at ninety-two years of age, continue to preoccupy him with the same intensity as ever.

He welcomed me with a rare politeness and a generosity of spirit from a bygone era. Without reservations and dispensing with formalities, he spoke to me about those small, chance incidents that, as he puts it,

can change an artist's course.

Whether speaking of "The Epinikia," which came into being during the years of the dictatorship, or "Mythology Backwards," or the dystopian creatures of the recent "Reinstatement >72 Centuries A.C," he is never simply sharing the history of a sculpture. He is telling the story of an era and the people who traversed it.

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One with the future

A Florida Surrogate, a Father in China, and the Babies Caught Between

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Messy custody case lays bare risks that America's largely unregulated surrogacy industry can pose to parents, surrogates and children

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"I'm gonna kiss my kids a few more times," Simpson told a deputy, before the father's attorney buckled the crying boys, now 20 months old, into car seats.

They had been born triplets; a third boy had died at nine months old. In July, Florida's attorney general intervened in litigation between Simpson and the father, persuading a state judge to bar the children from leaving the U.S. while a custody suit proceeds.

The case touches nearly every fault line of the sprawling and largely unregulated multibillion-dollar American surrogacy industry, where it is increasingly common for wealthy overseas parents to hire American women to bear their children without ever stepping foot in the U.S.

When things go wrong, as they did with Simpson's surrogacy—a high-risk pregnancy, an unexpected child, a sudden death, government red tape and an alleged fraudster with an ever-shifting story—the nation's patchy laws do little to protect surrogates, parents or children, according to interviews and court documents reviewed by *The Wall Street Journal*.

The fight has also become something larger: A new Florida law has placed the case at the front lines of conservative antagonism to birthright citizenship and Chinese influence.

At times, the judge



overseeing the dispute has seemed at a loss amid sharply conflicting narratives. "This is a complicated thing that brought three children into the world and I—I don't know," Circuit Court Judge Rose Marie Karadsheh Predy said at a hearing in June.

Still before her is whether to award custody to Simpson and her husband—who are genetically unrelated to the babies and who signed away parental rights when she agreed to be a surrogate—or to the kids' legal father, who might never be allowed to enter the U.S.

The children are now with nannies in a Los Angeles suburb.

"I love my babies," Simpson said in an interview. "It's very traumatic and very barbaric how things have played out."

In an email to the Journal, their father, Chen Zhou, wrote, "If you know the truth you will find Kyla has her plan to keep my boys from the very beginning. It is planned and premeditated with her intention."

A risky transfer

Simpson says she never planned to keep the children. In late 2023, Angels Creation Reproductive Center—a fast-growing Southern California agency that matches parents in China and other countries

with surrogates in the U.S.—recruited the then-25-year-old Simpson.

ACRC matched Simpson with Zhou, a single man living in Suzhou, who offered her extra money to carry twins. At the time, Simpson was often working seven days a week as a bank teller and home health aide, earning under \$20 an hour at each job.

Her contract paid \$50,000 for one embryo, plus \$10,000 for each additional embryo carried to term, and expenses.

Unexpectedly, one of the embryos split: Instead of twins, she was carrying triplets.

She gave birth prematurely in November 2024 through C-section. Zhou told her he wanted to attend, but said he had hit setbacks trying to leave China. He asked her to continue caring for the babies while they were in intensive care.

An industry of intermediaries

Court records paint Zhou as coming from a relatively modest background, a contrast to the many wealthy Chinese elites who seek out U.S. surrogates. An international-school tutor and translator in Suzhou, Zhou borrowed from his parents and took out bank loans to

cover the costs of the surrogacy. In China, surrogacy is illegal, and single men cannot adopt.

Zhou tapped into an international fertility marketplace to buy donor eggs and transport his sperm to the U.S., court records show. By 2023, the resulting embryos were at HRC Fertility in Pasadena, one of the country's largest IVF practices, which is owned by a publicly traded Chinese firm.

Zhou also paid close to \$10,000 to surrogacy attorney Lei Bai to prepare his contract with Simpson. Bai would later be expelled from the surrogacy industry's ethics group for her role in assisting a U.S. couple accused of deceiving surrogates into carrying more than 20 children for them.

Bai and HRC didn't respond to requests for comment.

ACRC's records indicate that Simpson was fully paid, and ACRC urged Zhou not to rely on Simpson to care for the children, according to CEO Shen Li.

'A silk scarf isn't going to pay the rent'

Simpson said she was initially willing to care for the triplets. But as weeks passed and Zhou didn't show, she found herself with three premature infants she had not prepared for, no support from anyone tied to the arrangement, and dwindling money.

Zhou was also growing frantic, according to court

The Migrants Have Left Ceuta, but the Trauma Lingers

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A city long-known as a melting pot of cultures suddenly feels vulnerable

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Evaristo Casares Fernandez, a sanitation worker, noted that it would fall to him to clean up the floating mass of footwear.

"It used to be a very tranquil place," said Casares Fernandez, 55 years old, a Ceuta native. "That's no longer the case."

For centuries, this city has been a multiethnic melting pot where European and African, Muslim and Christian cultures converged, and co-existed mostly peacefully. Its mix of Spanish military fortifications, churches, mosques

and even a synagogue is unusual for North Africa.

Now, it is a symbol of the chasm that migration has opened between the two continents.

For several chaotic days, migrants flooded into Ceuta, overwhelming the border guards and sending many of the 80,000 permanent residents to the safety of their homes. Shops closed, the enclave's bustling street life receded.

Mercedes Cabrera Lafaro was hoping to reopen her beauty parlor now that the large groups of young men

were no longer roaming the streets. But the 67-year-old said the fear remained that such an influx could happen again.

"We feel abandoned," she said, echoing a widely shared grievance among Ceuties, as the locals call themselves.

Spanish authorities estimated that 60,000 migrants breached the border and entered Ceuta, but some residents said it seemed like more. Madrid deployed police and military forces to round up most migrants and escort them to the border with Mo-

rocco by Saturday evening.

The migrant incident highlights the tense relationship between Spain and Morocco, which doesn't recognize the Spanish claim to Ceuta. Migrants say Morocco allowed them to cross the border for reasons that remain unclear. Morocco's government didn't respond to questions seeking comment.

Political analysts have pointed to Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's recent visit to Algeria, Morocco's neighbor and rival. Algeria supports a rebel faction trying to gain independence

for Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony that Morocco claims as its own. Though Spain recognizes Morocco's claim, Sánchez's visit to Algiers to upgrade ties rankled Morocco's government.

Under Sánchez, Spain has also taken a critical line toward Israel, which has relations with Morocco through a Trump-brokered diplomatic pact. Spain has also irked the Trump administration by banning U.S. military aircraft involved in the Iran war from its airspace and refusing to allow American forces to use joint bases on Spanish

territory for the conflict.

"The mass migration undermines Sánchez and curries favor [for Morocco] with the U.S. and Israel," said Geoff Porter, president of consulting firm North Africa Risk Consulting.

A previous migrant crisis in Ceuta was tied to the decision by Spain to allow medical treatment for an insurgent leader from Western Sahara. In May 2021, thousands of Moroccans swam or scaled border fences into Ceuta, much as they did last week.

The crises have shattered Ceuta's sense of security.

filings. He despaired about how to collect the boys, unsure he could obtain a U.S. visa, court documents showed.

He pleaded with Simpson to keep caring for them and sent sporadic payments totaling close to \$10,000, plus reimbursement for breast milk, according to court records. He promised to send gifts, silk scarves and pearl necklaces. In February 2025, Simpson responded: “A silk scarf isn’t going to pay the rent that’s due which the babies thrive under, or the car note which carries them to their many doctor appointments.”

Leaving with ‘strangers’

After Simpson took the children home from the hospital in January 2025, Zhou repeatedly asked her to get them passports, offering \$1,000. She never did. When he suggested she bring the babies to China herself, she refused—she had no passport and couldn’t manage three infants on a multiday flight.

In March 2025, Zhou emailed her: “The babies have been with you for a long time already,” he wrote. “So I will ask my friend and agent to pick my babies, so that you can go back to your normal life.”

Two days later, two men arrived at Simpson’s home, she testified in court. She wasn’t there. The men next went to her grandparents’ home, which she said alarmed her. She said her mind leapt to human trafficking, a popular topic in the Facebook groups where she chatted with other surrogates.

“My mother’s intuition told me something wasn’t right,” she later testified. Simpson refused to hand over the children to Zhou’s agents.

Zhou begged Simpson to reconsider, according to



Some of the children's toys.

emails included in court filings.

In an email to the Journal, Zhou said that the reason he took so long to apply for a visa was that Simpson never obtained updated birth certificates for the babies listing him as the father. “She cheated me,” he said. According to court records filed by his attorney, the birth certificates were updated to list Zhou as the father by March 2025. Simpson’s attorneys said she worked with Zhou to obtain documents starting in the weeks after the children’s birth.

The U.S. consulate rejected Zhou’s visa application in April 2025.

A death and an investigation

In August 2025, one of the triplets died.

Simpson and her husband covered the cost of the funeral, raising \$600 from donations.

Florida’s Department of Children and Families opened an investigation into the death. Excerpts later filed in court by Zhou’s attorneys described dirty clothes and dirty diapers, and a caregiver who “frequently smokes marijuana.” The department classified the Simpsons as a

high-risk household.

Simpson’s attorney said the investigation was closed without findings and that the children were “deemed as safe in the household of both parents.”

Simpson loved the babies, she insisted, just as much as she loved her daughter. By spring 2026, she hadn’t heard from Zhou in months, and ACRC was no longer engaging with her.

In May 2026, she filed to adopt them.

A ‘fourteen-month fraud’

Zhou, meanwhile, knew almost nothing about the triplets’ welfare, according to court documents.

By spring of 2025, the children were five months old, and Zhou had only seen them on video calls. His best efforts to get a visa to visit the U.S. had failed. Then he found a solution in the form of a man he called Uncle Kent—Jiapeng “Kent” Wan, a fixer introduced to Zhou by a Los Angeles doctor.

Wan was one of the men who arrived at Simpson’s door in March 2025 and attempted, unsuccessfully, to retrieve the babies. He told Zhou that given a little more time, he could bring

the children home, according to a summary of 673 pages of WeChat messages filed by Zhou’s attorneys.

But the path Wan charted appeared long. A panel of six judges needed to sign off. The passports were almost ready at the San Francisco consulate. A Florida congressman was personally intervening. Each week brought a new complication—and a new request for cash. As time went on, Wan’s claims grew more outlandish.

When ACRC notified Zhou that one of his sons had died, Wan initially claimed Simpson had fabricated the death for financial gain, according to court records, then said the surviving babies had been removed from Simpson’s care and placed in a state-run facility. He instructed Zhou not to contact Simpson, saying it could disrupt his plans to get the babies. Zhou’s attorneys would later allege that photos Wan sent of the children were manipulated with AI.

Wan, who is in China, declined a request for a phone interview, insisting that a reporter travel to interview him in person.

By late 2025, Zhou had paid Wan \$30,000—on top of

the tens of thousands he had paid to Simpson, ACRC and other intermediaries—court records show. His children had been born 14 months ago, then 16 months, then 18—and he had never held them. After their first birthday passed without Zhou seeing them, he told Wan he had “no heart to celebrate.”

It was only after Simpson filed to adopt the children that Zhou came to think that he had been the victim of a “fourteen-month fraud” by Wan, his attorneys wrote in court filings. Zhou retained an attorney immediately.

‘What was I left to do?’

What had been a private matter was about to come crashing into the political furor over President Trump’s fight against birthright citizenship and right-wing anxieties over growing Chinese influence in the U.S.

On May 11, amid conservative outrage over Chinese parents exploiting lax surrogacy rules, Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a law banning citizens of China and other “foreign nations of concern” from hiring Florida surrogates. Florida Sen. Rick Scott introduced a similar nationwide ban in November, which hasn’t advanced.

The Florida ban took effect more than two years after Simpson and Zhou’s contract, and didn’t apply retroactively. But Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier nonetheless sought to intervene in Simpson’s case, arguing in filings that the surrogacy agreement was invalid and Zhou hadn’t proved parentage under Florida law.

On June 17, the family court judge directed Simpson to place the children in the custody of Zhou’s attorneys, who took them to a doctor the following day. The examination found mul-

iple bruises and abrasions in various stages of healing.

Simpson’s attorneys said the boys weren’t mistreated. In an interview, Simpson said they were extremely allergic to mosquito bites, causing the abrasions. In a letter included in court filings, the boys’ longstanding pediatrician said that in her opinion, they were well cared-for.

Zhou’s claim that Simpson never planned to relinquish the children is false, Simpson’s attorneys said in an email, pointing to documents in the court record showing that Zhou asked Simpson to care for the children, paid her to do so for several months and gave her power of attorney.

At a hearing on June 25, Simpson appeared without a lawyer. “I didn’t anticipate establishing a parent-child relationship,” she told the judge, “but what was I left to do?”

Judge Preddy was sympathetic but direct, telling Simpson that until she makes a final decision on custody, the boys must stay with Zhou’s representatives.

Zhou’s attorneys removed the children to Monterey Park, Calif., a suburb of Los Angeles, and asked the court to keep the precise address confidential, citing media attention.

On July 17, Simpson received a form letter from the U.S. Department of State: Passport applications were pending for both children. She had until July 20 to object.

Next week, Preddy will hear arguments on whether Zhou can continue to keep the boys in California or must return them to Florida while the case is decided.

The children will turn two in November. Their father has never met them. The woman who delivered them and raised them for 20 months hasn’t seen them for six weeks.

“We have become victims of a geopolitical chess game that’s bigger than us,” said Rashid Sbihi, a spokesman for a union representing most Ceuta officers of the Guardia Civil, a police force.

The seven-square mile enclave on a peninsula jutting into the Strait of Gibraltar has been Spanish since 1580. Today, close to half the population are Spanish Christians who came from mainland Spain, with about the same number of Arab Muslims. There are also small minorities of North African Jews and Hindus from what is now Pakistan.

“All these communities live in harmony,” said Sbihi, an Arab Muslim.

Ceuta’s unique location has long been an advantage for Spain, giving it a foothold

on the southern coast of the Strait of Gibraltar, the strategic waterway that separates the Mediterranean from the Atlantic Ocean. Yet its geographical position as a magnet for illegal immigration has turned what was once an asset into a



Shoes belonging to migrants lie on El Tarajal beach, amid mass crossings of migrants on foot and by sea from Morocco into Spanish territory in Ceuta, Spain, July 31, 2026.

liability—and a flashpoint for political tensions.

Morocco has been making a renewed push to claim

Ceuta and Melilla, another Spanish enclave in North Africa. The kingdom has received a sympathetic ear from the U.S. An April congressional report on national security acknowledged Morocco’s longstanding claim on the two enclaves. It urged Secretary of State Marco Rubio to encourage diplomatic talks on their future.

Spanish politicians have descended on Ceuta in recent days to criticize Sánchez for allowing the migrant influx. “Any responsible government in the face of a crisis of this nature would have resigned,” said Alberto Núñez Feijóo, leader of Spain’s conservative Popular Party, in an interview.

The Sánchez government has defended its mi-

gration policies and blamed smuggling mafias instead. On Saturday, Spanish officials said they began installing a makeshift, inflatable barrier that extends out some 500 yards from a breakwater where many of the migrants had swum to the enclave.

The Spanish prime minister’s office didn’t respond to a request for comment.

The tensions in Ceuta are far from over. Late Sunday, locals clashed with anti-Muslim protesters who arrived from mainland Spain, prompting the police to deploy.

Moroccan authorities were also on high alert. At the border town of Fnideq, anti-riot vehicles were stationed along the beach where the migrants had swum to Ceuta.

The Buried History of Kythera: How EVOKE Is Rewriting an Island’s Story

Archaeologists from around the world are uncovering 5,000 years of history at Vythoulas on Kythera, where the EVOKE project is shedding new light on the island’s role as a crossroads of ancient Mediterranean civilizations

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Interest in Kythera’s hidden past is what brought a team of archaeologists from around the world to the island in the summer of 2026. The EVOKE (Exploring Vythoulas Origins in Kythera Environs) Project, a five-year international archaeological research program, is directed by researchers from the University of Sydney and brings together specialists, students, and collaborators from universities and research institutions in Australia, Greece, the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, and elsewhere.

The project works in close collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Culture and the local Ephorate of Antiquities, while also engaging a broad network of scientific specialists whose expertise allows researchers to investigate every aspect of the site’s archaeology.

Why Vythoulas matters

Dr. Lita Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, Archaeological Research Facilitator of the EVOKE Project, told *TO BHMA International Edition* that the excavation aims “to better understand the long-term history of human occupation on Kythera.”

“Our aim is not simply to uncover ancient buildings or artefacts, but to reconstruct how people lived, adapted, and interacted with their environment over thousands of years,” she explained.

Tzortzopoulou-Gregory said Vythoulas preserves evidence spanning more than five millennia, offering an exceptional opportunity to examine continuity and change within a single landscape. She emphasized that this continuity is what makes Vythoulas “truly unique” and the reason it was selected for excavation. Evidence of human occupation spans from the Late Neolithic period to the present day.

“This remarkable sequence makes it one of the most significant archaeological sites on the island and an exceptional case study for Greek archaeology more broadly,” she said.

Vythoulas allows archaeologists to examine how one community evolved across successive periods—from pre-history through the Bronze Age, Classical, Hellenistic,



Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, and Ottoman periods, and into the modern era. According to Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, very few sites in Greece preserve such an extensive and uninterrupted archaeological record within a single location.

“This continuity enables us to explore long-term processes of settlement, resilience, adaptation, and cultural transformation in ways that are rarely possible elsewhere,” she explained.

This first excavation season, carried out between June 22 and July 11, focused on establishing the site’s archaeological sequence and identifying the nature and extent of occupation across different periods.

“We aimed to understand the site’s stratigraphy, locate well-preserved occupation layers, recover environmental evidence, and collect material that will allow us to build a robust chronological framework,” Tzortzopoulou-Gregory said.

The inaugural excavation has already confirmed the site’s exceptional archaeological potential, producing exciting results that include securely dated occupation layers, architectural remains, evidence of domestic and agricultural activities, and environmental samples that will enable archaeologists to reconstruct past landscapes, diets, and farming practices.

“Together, these discoveries will help us better understand not only Vythoulas itself but also the wider development of Kythera through time,” she noted.

Beyond the excavation
The Vythoulas program ex-

tends well beyond excavation alone, comprising several interconnected components that reflect its broader multidisciplinary scope. Each excavation season, Tzortzopoulou-Gregory explained, is followed by extensive post-excavation work, including the conservation, cataloguing, specialist analysis, and scientific study of recovered material.

“Our research integrates archaeological, anthropological, historical, environmental, and archival evidence to build as complete a picture as possible of life at Vythoulas across more than five thousand years,” she said.

Alongside the study of artefacts and architecture, historical documents, archival records, oral histories, and

local traditions are also examined “to better understand how the community evolved into the modern era and how its inhabitants interacted with both the local environment and wider Mediterranean networks.”

The project also brings together specialists in ceramics, lithics, archaeobotany, zooarchaeology, geoarchaeology, archaeometallurgy, environmental archaeology, digital recording, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), while incorporating scientific dating methods, photogrammetry, and other advanced analytical techniques. These complementary approaches allow the research team to reconstruct not only the site’s chronology and development

but also changing patterns of land use, economy, migration, social organization, and human-environment interaction over millennia, she noted.

The findings will ultimately be disseminated through academic publications, conference presentations, museum exhibitions, educational programs, public lectures, and digital resources, ensuring that the knowledge generated by EVOKE is accessible to both the scholarly community and the wider public.

Science meets archaeology

Discussing the project’s methodology and advanced techniques, Tzortzopoulou-Gregory noted that modern archaeology is an interdisciplinary science, and EVOKE fully embraces this approach.

“Alongside traditional excavation methods, we use high-resolution drone photography, digital mapping, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), photogrammetry to create detailed three-dimensional models, digital recording systems, and comprehensive spatial databases that integrate every piece of archaeological information,” she said.

She also stressed the importance of scientific sampling. In coming seasons, archaeologists will recover flotation samples for archaeobotanical analysis, collect sediment for geoarchaeological study, analyze faunal remains to better understand animal husbandry and diet, and employ scientific dating and other laboratory techniques to establish accurate chronologies.

“These methods enable us to reconstruct not only what people built or used, but also their environment, economy, agricultural practices, and everyday lives with a level of precision unimaginable only a few decades ago,” she pointed out.

A lasting legacy for Kythera

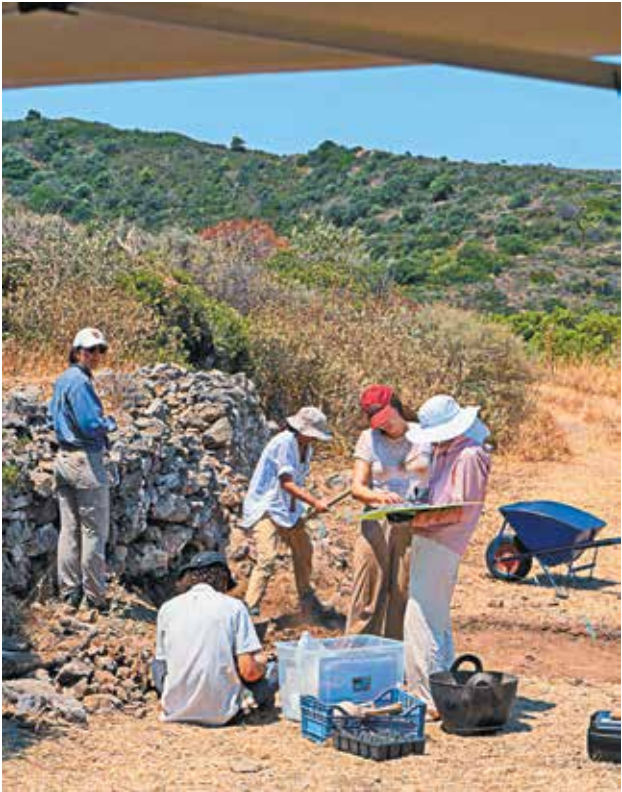
EVOKE’s ambitions extend far beyond archaeological research, aiming to leave a lasting legacy for Kythera, its local community, and future generations. According to Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, the project seeks to deepen appreciation of the island’s exceptional cultural heritage while creating opportunities for education, community engagement, and sustainable cultural tourism.

A key pillar of this vision is the active involvement of local residents through public presentations, open excavation days, educational initiatives, and partnerships with local organizations. At the same time, EVOKE serves as an international training platform, offering hands-on field experience to students from around the world while helping prepare the next generation of archaeologists.

By combining scientific research with public outreach and education, the project aspires to ensure that its impact endures long after the excavation itself has concluded.

“Ultimately, we hope EVOKE will establish Vythoulas as a site of international archaeological significance, enrich our understanding of Kythera’s unique place within Mediterranean history, and leave a lasting legacy through publications, museum exhibitions, educational initiatives, and long-term partnerships that continue to benefit the island well beyond the duration of the excavation itself,” Tzortzopoulou-Gregory said in her closing remarks.

The inaugural field season of the EVOKE project, led by Professor Tamar Hodos, has now come to a close. The team will return next year, when excavations resume with renewed anticipation that the soil of Vythoulas, on the northeastern side of Kythera, will reveal more of the long-hidden stories of its ancient inhabitants—secrets that have remained buried for thousands of years.



By Odin Linardatou

I met Mariya Gabriel in Paris on the sidelines of the Meliore/Project Syndicate Media and Democracy Summit. She explained to me that UNESCO has developed a strong partnership in Greece with the School of Journalism and Mass Communications of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, specifically through the International Training Centre for the Safety of Journalists and Media Professionals (ICSJ). In cooperation with UNESCO, the Centre supports training, research and capacity-building initiatives relating to journalist safety, media freedom and freedom of expression across Southeast Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Looking ahead, UNESCO is partnering with the Voices European Festival of Journalism and Media Freedom and Media and Information Literacy, which will be held in Thessaloniki, Greece, on November 26–28, 2026.

How bad are things for journalism these days?

There have been some very alarming developments. The World Trends Report that UNESCO publishes every three years states very clearly that, since 2012, we have suffered a 10% decline in freedom of expression. That has never happened before, not since the two world wars. Second, there has been a 63% increase in media self-censorship. This means people know they aren't protected, and so do not dare to publish. In addition, an unprecedented number of journalists have been killed. Accompanied by an unprecedented increase in the number of lawsuits filed against journalists. On the other hand, there have also been some very good examples of journalists who ensure that the public has access to the information it needs, which is a public good.

They resist on the ground, they are resilient and they innovate. Journalists work in conflict zones. They work in crisis and emergency situations. And thanks to them and their work, we save lives. So today, more than ever, there is a need to recognize the extraordinary added value of the work journalists do. Protecting journalists means protecting us as a society, as well as our resilience. It ensures we as citizens have access to reliable information, which enables us to participate meaningfully in democratic life. And we need to stay highly, highly mobilized. That is UNESCO's role.

UNESCO has very strong normative power to establish global frameworks, as well as the convening power to bring governments, journalists, civil society organizations, and



Mariya Gabriel, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information at UNESCO, speaking at this year's Summit on Media and Democracy in Quai d'Orsay, Paris, France.

How SLAPPs and Intimidation Are Silencing Journalists

Mariya Gabriel, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information at UNESCO, speaks to *TO BHMA International Edition* about the growing threats to journalists and press freedom, UNESCO's efforts to protect those who report the news, and the profound impact of social media

media organizations together. But it also has a second, operational function: We are on the ground in Afghanistan, Gaza, Ukraine, and Sudan. We are in Kabul. We protect journalists through the Global Media Defense Fund. We work with them to identify new threats—like online violence, an area in which women journalists face especially severe risks. Here, again, we have seen the numbers rise alarmingly. The percentage of the instances of online violence against women journalists which also have offline consequences has risen from 20 to 40 percent in just five years.

So we need to stay mobilized, and we need to find ways to innovate and provide women journalists with the tools they need to continue doing their work.

But what happens when we start to see these trends in key democracies, too? We've seen it happening in the US, but in European countries, as well. How can we stop it?

UNESCO's function is unique here, too, because we can gather the right people together to discuss pos-

sible solutions. Importantly, though, our goal isn't limited to identifying the new tendencies; it is also to consider how those tendencies can be tackled. A good example here would be the Global Media Defense Fund.

The Fund was created to ensure legal protection for journalists. And in the years it has been in existence, the Fund has helped 11,000 journalists protect themselves legally. And that's what we need: concrete tools to ensure that journalists—specifically those who are being threatened—have the means, tools and structures they need to

continue exercising their profession. That is also the case in Ukraine, with the safe spaces, and with local radio stations and women in Afghanistan.

We have elections coming up in France and in Germany, and we are very much afraid that actors like Russia will try to interfere with these elections using journalism, journalists, and social media. Is there a way to teach people how to read the news, given that younger people

increasingly rely on social media?

It's true: today, more than ever, young people rely on social media to stay informed. That's why, for us at UNESCO, Media and Information Literacy is so critical: it empowers citizens to think critically, to navigate this complex environment, to question and express doubts, and to make informed choices. That's why we continue to work very closely with Member States to introduce this literacy into the curriculum. We also have concrete initiatives, like teaching it in schools and universities.

We also look to parents as an important—but widely ignored—link. They spend a lot of time with their children, yet they themselves are often scared and don't understand how algorithms influence the entire environment, for themselves as well as for their kids. So we published a global guide for parents, which helps them navigate the complex digital world. Our goal is to help re-establish a dialogue between parents and children, and to encourage both to consider how they read, what they retain, how they critique what they read, how they identify vital information, and how they should go about verifying sources.

Another important thing we do at UNESCO is work with content creators, which we are doing more and more. That's because, while more than ever before, many citizens—and not only young people—receive their information from this ubiquitous group, our analysis shows that 62% of content creators don't actually verify their sources before sharing. So we need to work with this group, because it's up to them how much disinformation is out there.

And I definitely think that, globally, we need to keep on increasing our efforts in this direction until we achieve a critical mass of initiatives that perhaps makes Media and Information Literacy mandatory, while expanding the teaching of it beyond schools and universities into urban spaces, with different categories of recipients. That's what we would like to do.

What will be the biggest challenge for UNESCO in the years ahead?

In one sentence, to remain a platform for dialogue. Without dialogue, we'll never be able to tackle the challenges, which are growing every day. But if we lose our capacity to talk to each other, to understand each other, if we lose our access to reliable information and can no longer preserve the integrity of the information ecosystem, it will be very difficult to find solutions.



A view of a Meliore/Project Syndicate Media and Democracy Summit session, at the Quai d'Orsay, Paris, France.

Giorgos Georgiadis – The Last Anthropocentric Sculptor

The leading Greek sculptor looks back on a journey spanning nearly seven decades, remembering his teachers and the high points of his career, and explaining why the human figure remains the non-negotiable core of his art

Continued from Page One

Throughout our conversation, his studio spreads out around us like a living archive of a life. Sculptures from different periods, test pieces, sketches, tools, and figures small and large coexist as milestones in a dialogue that has been ongoing for nearly seventy years. The discreet presence of his partner, the internationally renowned ceramist Maro Kerasioti, completes this “portrait” by adding a key piece: their creative coexistence. It quickly becomes clear from our conversation that she has been a constant presence in his life and a fellow traveller through the most decisive shifts in his work.

Giorgos Georgiadis is a creator who, after nearly seven decades of continuous artistic endeavor, continues to approach art with the curiosity of the child who would mold figures out of clay in the back of a shop in Marousi. And, perhaps, therein lies the secret of his journey. In the ability to remain a student of the world, even when the world has long since acknowledged him as a master.

Mr. Georgiadis, what was the defining moment when you first knew for sure that you wanted to sculpt?

When I was in Primary School, between the ages of six and twelve, my father ran a hardware and paint shop in Marousi. His younger brother—my uncle—had a plumbing supply store, and their father, my grandfather, kept a tinsmith’s workshop on Ermou Street, in the same town. Three shops, just two years after the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the family’s hasty and violent expulsion from Smyrna, where they’d lived. So my father, who was an avid self-taught painter, sold all sorts of things in this shop, including paints and art supplies—brushes, canvases, palettes, and so forth. And he’d often gather with his customers whose primary interest was in painting, so they could exchange views and knowledge with each other about their shared interests. Those I can remember include Nikolaidis, who had graduated in painting from the Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA); Laskaris the painter, Papalaskaris’ son; Kritharis, a tuberculosis specialist and self-taught painter; and Mrs. Lychnou, a formally



One of the many artful sculptures by Giorgos Georgiadis.

trained painter and wife of an MP for the Ionian Islands.

She was a highly progressive figure for her time, as she rode a bicycle and would smoke alongside my father. And so, quite often, when I happened to be present at their gatherings, I would listen to their discussions on the subject of art. I should note that, because my father also played the violin, his interests extended to music as well. It was then that I first heard the names Lytras, Parthenis, Bouzianis, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Picasso, El Greco, Goya, Beethoven, Liszt, and Brahms—all jumbled together, with art as their common denominator.

“The Epinikia” is one of your most emblematic series, and a milestone in your career. What was the initial spark of inspiration behind this work, and how does the concept of “victory” converse with our present?

At that time, I had a mania for making all sorts of things with my hands, and since I never lacked tools, I would craft everything: from toy guns for my friends, to dolls for the girls in the neighborhood. I even got ahold of clay, asking for it from Marousi’s potters, which I used to create little animals and people. At my uncle’s shop, using his tools, I could construct small objects out of metal and sheet iron. I was never really drawn to my father’s paints. He wanted me to study architecture or dentistry, though I could never understand how he’d combine those two professions. As for me, on finishing high school, I chose to listen to my heart and attend the ASFA.

Any form of art—whether it be poetry, painting, sculpture, theater, even literature—expresses, in some way, the stimuli and influences its creators absorb from their political, economic, and social environment. Over the course of my work, for nearly seventy years now, I have engaged

with and expressed myself through different materials, often working in one for a period of time before moving on to another. Coincidentally, for several years my focus was on a seated female torso, since my work was anthropocentric and figurative from the very beginning. The seated figure arose from a necessity: one of my first studios—I have moved through seven over the years, but this one was in Kallithea—had a low ceiling, which made it hard to work on standing figures.

That condition would end up leaving its mark on my entire oeuvre. Trying to transmute stimuli and emotions, I would remove the human body’s primary expressive parts—the head, arms and legs—and set out to compose in space solely through the movement of the torso. The torso was one of the subjects we had to study at ASFA. I chose the female body for the entire “Epinikia” series because, aside from its harmonious curves, it is so plastic

in its movement; it also symbolizes motherhood and the perpetuation of humanity. The wings I added—often just one, as a solitary means of escape from some form of oppression—drew their symbolism from the fabrics in which the torsos are tightly bound. I produced this series of works during the abhorrent dictatorship the Colonels imposed on Greece. Many of my colleagues, and not just sculptors, expressed themselves in a kind of silent protest through similar themes during that period. As I mentioned earlier, the series’ general title was “The Epinikia,” meaning the victory celebrations that followed a victory, the triumphal chant, the paean. In many of these works, with its loose folds and pleats, the fabric signifies liberation, release, and serenity.

All the works in this series, from the small ones to the larger-than-life-size, express stimuli from my surroundings, and pressures I would at times be put under by the prevailing conditions. Sometimes, a random event can lead you down new paths that end up molding and marking your professional goals. I would like to say at this point that my use of tight or loose fabric around a highly kinetic body or torso came about entirely by chance when, during a break from work, I covered a seated female torso in clay with a wet cloth to keep it drying out. When I returned a while later and saw my work draped in that blessed fabric, it occurred to me that I could use the technique to express various situations that were concerning and troubling me. After all, in art—in sculpture, but also in dance and painting—many artists have chosen to express themselves using the folds in fabric. Of this specific sculpture, which I named “waiting” and cast in metal exactly as I found it, the well-known French art critic Louis Charnet wrote in the *Paris Journal* of the time, in the context of my participation in the European Exhibition at the Musée Rodin: “Standing out among them all is the seated figure by the Greek sculptor Giorgos Georgiadis.”

I did not expect this, and it was a great honor and a reward for my efforts. Imagine that, when my teacher Gianis Pappas proposed that I take part in the show, in my haste, I used a wooden crate with knots and nails as a seat

for the figure. Perhaps this also played some singular part in the work’s aesthetics. I cast the work in two copies. One is in the Greek Ministry of Culture, the other in the collection of a French collector.

In your recent exhibition “Reinstatement>72 Centuries A.C.”, you once again created something entirely new and entirely different from what we had seen from you thus far. At the same time, humor, sarcasm, and a pervasive irony coexist in these sculptures, alongside the tragic element. How difficult is it to achieve this delicate balance?

It’s true, humor and satire have not been absent from my artistic inquiries at times, primarily from the series I dubbed “Mythology Backwards”, and even in the series “Reinstatement>72 Centuries A.C.”, which is imbued with black humor, given what is going on all around us—wars with untold casualties, genocides, the bombarding of cities using weapons of mass destruction that are constantly evolving and being ‘improved’ to better destroy and wipe out peoples and civilizations. It is there, perhaps, that the pessimistic element in my work becomes apparent. It is this series of works, “Homo Sapiens 20 Centuries AD”, in which I boldly tried to highlight all the many contradictions and inequalities that exist between people on this small planet we call Earth.

The lack of food and water, shelter and healthcare, combined with our fearful anguish over something even worse on the way, over the exploitation and fate of entire peoples, contrasted with the prosperity, happiness, comfortable living, and conspicuous consumption and wealth in another corner of the same planet, compelled me to create this series. I used real utility objects including a gold toilet bowl, a supermarket trolley, a luxurious “period style” chair with velvet upholstery—all framed and juxtaposed against Third World figures cast in bronze. In all the things I’ve mentioned as stimuli across the various decades and periods of my work, there is an obvious inclination toward a narrative mode of expression, in con-

junction with what I call my figurative and anthropocentric disposition.

Your sculpture is inhabited by zoomorphic humanoids and creatures that seem to have sprung from a post-apocalyptic or surrealist world. What do these hybrid forms symbolize for you?

From time to time, ever since the period when I was still working on “The Epinikia”, I have tackled a subject that is not human-centric. Namely horses. The horse wasn’t a subject I had studied before. As a trial, I began sketching the animals at a stud farm in Marathon. I made countless sketches, experimenting with various techniques—pencils, charcoal, ink, and even monotypes, spreading printing ink on the surface of glass, which I would then print onto rice paper before continuing to draw on the print in India ink. This monotype technique was shown to me by the talented engraver Nota Siotropou in her studio in Rome; sadly, she left us too soon.

All this work sketching horses captivated me so much that at a certain point I decided to model a horse out of clay. The plasticity of this animal’s movements is particularly distinctive, offering multiple fascinating variations. So one horse became two, then three, always with a different motion, until I had some thirty sculptures cast in bronze. It was at this point that it first occurred to me to mold them as a herd. The interesting thing was that I could layer this composition by assigning each horse a different position. I can say that this prolonged study of horses gifted me a unique professional experience.

From the traditional bronze, we have seen you passionately turn to double-fired cast stoneware in your recent exhibitions at the Sianti Gallery. How did this need to change material arise, and what new expressive possibilities did it offer you?

The use of cast stoneware ceramic came about out of necessity, and due to the encouragement of my partner Maro, who is a ceramist. Because casting works in my favorite material, bronze, had become financially unfeasible for me. I can say, however, that this change in medium gave me the opportunity, over a period of seven years, to mold and realize these works in a unique and different way—one every bit as time-consuming as bronze, but from a different perspective and using a technique that proved truly revelatory for me. The balance you mention, between humor and irony, is hard to achieve because the boundaries be-

tween the two, just like those between comedy and tragedy, are vague, unstable, and hard to discern.

Over the years, I have seen a good many artistic trends, styles, and movements emerge around me but leave me entirely unmoved, even though some were very interesting and bequeathed us high-caliber works. I remember the time when abstraction was the prevailing mood in art, with representation, narrative, and drawing all stripped out, leaving only color for painting and volume for sculpture. It made an impression on me then how many of my fellow artists, primarily painters, would go to sleep one night painting figuratively and wake up the next morning working abstractly. That was when I decided to express myself free from influences, exactly as I felt after two World Wars. So, I imagined that in the distant future, roughly seven thousand years from now, humans will have degraded into beasts, to the point where the great naturalist Darwin takes over—meaning they are now what he called “anthropoids”.

It’s just that, as I imagine and render them in the works in this series, they have retained certain preferences from their earlier life as Homo Sapiens. They prefer to wear clothes, to walk on two legs, for instance. Above all else, they have retained their worship of machines of all kinds, with the motorcycle symbolizing this peculiarity in their subsequent evolution.

In your works, we also frequently observe a strong connection with ancient Greek literature and myth, but viewed through an “inverted” or deconstructed prism. Does myth remain a fundamental lens through which you interpret reality?

For the works in the “Mythology Backwards” series, I turned to Greek mythology, whose myths are richly plotted and which has inspired many artists around the world at different times. Myths feature subjects that verge on the fantastical with dramatic, comic, and ironic elements that are as fascinating as they are timeless. Somewhat tentatively, I too entered this unique, magical world, intent on expressing the various stories and singular situations to be found in Greek mythology in my own way. I named the series “Mythology Backwards”, because I tried to view the fiction being described in a completely topsy-turvy way. So I took the relationship between Zeus and the young Europa one step further, and perhaps in a slightly more unorthodox light; or I looked at Hercu-



Giorgos Georgiadis in his atelier.

les’ weaknesses in relation to his strength; and even asked why Aphrodite shouldn’t be a sexy, Black African woman conversing with Hermaphroditus, the son she had with the god Hermes; or the sensitive and musically talented Arion of Lesbos, who out of hunger ended up eating the beloved dolphin that saved his life. Also, the beautiful muse of dance and music, Terpsichore, whom I imagined as a very corpulent and slow-moving female figure presenting herself as something she cannot be: a ballet dancer.

This entire series, cast in bronze—an expensive and time-consuming technique—also gave me the opportunity to use wax at a certain stage. It’s a malleable material, and one I grew particularly fond of, as it allowed me to mold some parts of these sculptures directly in the wax. They are unique works; further copies are an impossibility, due to my quirk of destroying their casts and molds. Many have criticized me for this decision.

In 1984, you represented Greece at the Venice Biennale, a

crowning moment for any artist. What do you remember most vividly from that international experience, and how did it influence your subsequent perception of Greek art in relation to that of the rest of the world?

It was decided by the Minister of Culture at the time, Melina Mercouri, that, together with my late friend, the great painter Christos Karas, we should represent Greece at the Venice Biennale in the spheres of painting and sculpture. The theme of that year’s exhibition was “Pittura-Pittura, Scultura-Scultura”. At this massive event, the various trends prevalent in art at the time were all on display in the national pavilions in the Giardini del Popolo, as the respective selection committees had nominated the most notable representatives of their country’s art scenes to participate. At the time, I was urged to participate by many worthy and respected colleagues, including Christos Kapralos, Vaso Katraki, George Zongolopoulos, and Spyros Vassiliou—who, along

with Thanasis Apartis, I consider my mentors, alongside my teacher Yiannis Pappas.

Even though my study and work had reached a crossroads at that time, with the themes of “Homo Sapiens” and “The Epinikia,” I had reservations about participating. Ultimately, I took part with works from both series, which were linked by their technique, their material (bronze), and their symbolism: pessimism in the case of one half, optimism in the case of the other. Perhaps this contrast played its part, because the reviews for both Christos and myself were favorable.

What has remained lodged in my memory from Venice, though, was a morning in the Biennale gardens, when, after a night of rain, a spider had woven a huge web between two tall trees. Spun with mastery and a flawless technique, the web showcased the raindrops shimmered on it like diamonds in the light, as the sun emerged from behind thick cloud. For a long time, Christos and I stood admiring this magnificent work of art wrought by nature, which always has so much to teach us. It was an unexpected lesson in aesthetics. After Venice, our exhibition transferred intact and with great success to Berlin, to the Galerie am Kurfürstendamm.

Looking back at that time, do you believe that Greek sculpture held then—or holds now—its rightful place in the global artistic firmament?

The great French sculptor Auguste Rodin, in his writings and testament to us all, and especially to young people, wrote, as a kind of wish, that it would be a great blessing for humanity if nations were governed and their fates decided by artists. Then, lasting peace and justice among people would prevail on the planet, without wars and weapons of mass destruction. Following the unique experience of participating in the Venice and Alexandria Biennales, as well as at the Pan-European Exhibition in Budapest, with its flawless presentation of works, I saw that Greek sculptors, in their experiments with new trends and modern tools, all while using traditional materials, surpass many sculptors around the world in creativity and originality. They are distinguished by a boldness of expression in their realization of a subject in space.

If we set out to analyze the various art forms and trends that developed in different parts of the planet, we quickly realize that expression is influenced by—and goes hand in hand with—the condi-

tions and stimuli that prevail in different settings and environments, as well as the different materials available in each place. In Greece, for both sculpture and architecture, the primary raw material available from antiquity to the present has always been marble. Additionally, there are ceramic materials with which many sculptors and experienced ceramists work. In Italy, color and bronze dominated the golden age of the great Renaissance. In certain other countries with forests and timber, wood carving prevailed. All of this is only natural.

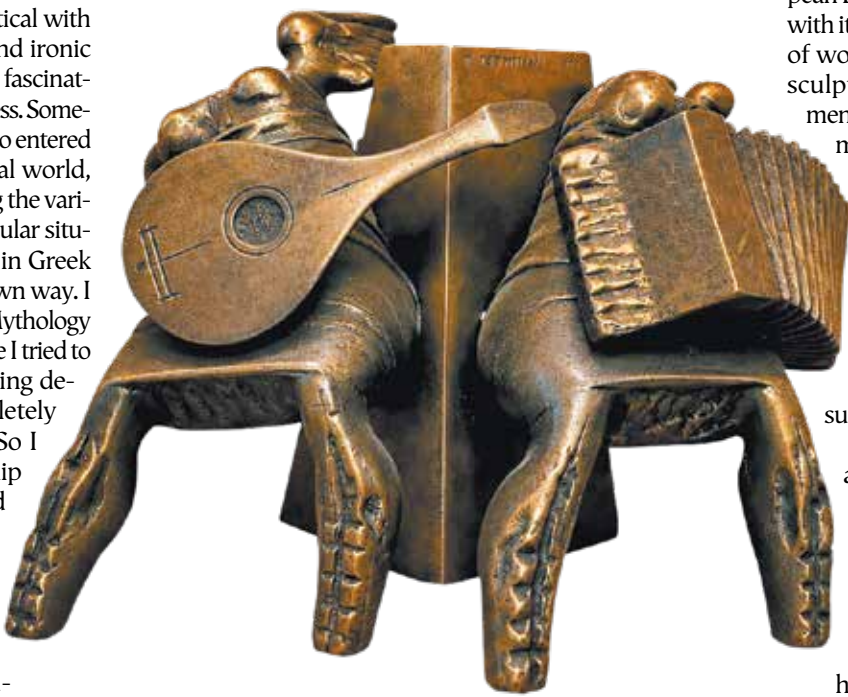
How do you feel about the state of sculpture today?

Sculpture, as I have always understood it, as a monumental and timeless form of art wrought from materials that are almost imperishable over time—such as marble, bronze, and even ceramics—continues to evolve as an art form as new and more modern tools become available to most sculptors. In many cases, the ease with which all these materials can now be processed produces works with a decorative perspective, without this detracting from them, given the abstract disposition each artist brings to their work. Abstraction, and the current tendency to simplify form, have given many the opportunity to engage with the arts—through, primarily, sculpture and painting. All of them are set apart under the umbrella term “visual” artists.

The wise Yiannis Tsarouchis once said: “In Greece, you are whatever you declare yourself to be.” My intention with what I say and write from time to time is not to analyze every facet of my work from an aesthetic viewpoint, but purely to point out the motives and stimuli that, being prevalent in my milieu, provided me with the ideas I process and render tangible in my work. Often, when the artist himself attempts to analyze his work by speaking or writing about it, the significance, meaning, and broader resonances can often end up diminished.

If you had to leave a single piece of advice or testament to young Greek sculptors who are embarking on their own artistic journeys in today’s volatile global environment, what would it be?

I believe that young artists, and sculptors in particular, who have to deal with difficult materials, must dedicate a lot of time to their work. They must acquire knowledge little by little, and no matter how many stages they master, they should keep on striving to improve their technique still further, so they can grow as artists and leave their mark on this world.



Why Does Everyone in Greece Dine After 10 p.m.?

Think 7 p.m. is dinner time? In Greece, restaurant tables don't fill until after 10 and this is why

By Maria Paravantes

The first clue that your holiday schedule doesn't quite fit in Greece comes at around 7 p.m. You've spent a lovely day at the beach, taken a stroll through the romantic whitewashed island streets, stopped for an iced coffee and are suddenly hungry. So you set out looking for dinner. The restaurant is open, but it's almost empty. You wonder if you've discovered a hidden gem.

You haven't. You've simply arrived three hours before everyone else.

For many first-time visitors to Greece, one of the biggest surprises isn't the beaches, the coffee culture or even the afternoon quiet. It's that the restaurants locals actually eat at don't really come alive until after 9 in the evening. By 10 o'clock, it's a whole new world. The tables are full, laughter and voices spill into the street, and finding a seat without a reservation can be surprisingly difficult.

So why do Greeks eat so late?

Welcome to "All About Greece", part of "TO BHMA International Edition Travels Greece With You" series. Here, we answer your questions and introduce you to this wonderful country we call home and you call vacation!

Heat vs. dinner

Summer in Greece is hot. Not "sit under an umbrella for half an hour" hot, but very, very hot, well above 36°C (97°F) into the evening. Sitting down to a generous meal while the sun is still blazing simply isn't that appealing.



People dining in typical Greek taverna restaurant located on sea coast in Motsouna village, Cyclades, Greece.

That's why your typical summer day in Greece unfolds differently. People head to the beach in the early morning, stop for coffee, run errands and wait for the temperature to ease before sitting for dinner. The main meal of the day becomes something to look forward to once the sun has set and the air finally feels comfortable again.

That's also why eating outdoors is such an important part of the Greek summer experience. Even when air-conditioned dining rooms or homes are available, Greeks will always choose to sit outdoors on the terrace, in the village square or at a table by the sea.

It's about the socializing

In many countries, dinner is simply the last meal of the day. As with everything Greeks do, whether it's coffee or drinks or dinner, it's always a social happening. Greeks never just sit, order, eat, and leave within an hour. They settle in. It is a chance to spend some care-free moments with family and friends. It's usual for conversations to stretch late into the night and no one cares about the time.

Meals in Greece often last for two or three hours, with dishes arriving gradually rather than all at once. Sharing is equally important. Instead of everyone ordering a separate main course, the table fills with meze dishes—

small plates with appetizers to be enjoyed slowly.

The Greek way of life

When visiting Greece, you should remember that a large majority of Greeks works in tourism and hospitality. Most businesses are family-owned, so work is almost never over. During the busy summer season, some stores remain open until 9 p.m., making a late dinner the most practical and natural option.

In the past, many Greeks ate dinner at around 9 p.m. The reason had very much to do with siesta time. Towns followed a split working day. Shops opened in the morning, closed during the hottest part of the afternoon, and reopened until around 8:30 p.m.

In many smaller towns and villages, this still applies today, along with laws protecting afternoon quiet hours.

Is everyone in Greece really eating late?

Not quite. Like everywhere else, dining habits in Greece are changing. Families with young children often eat earlier. Older Greeks may prefer dinner around 8 p.m., especially during the winter, while office employees in larger cities follow more international schedules.

The famous 10 p.m. Greek dinner is still very much alive in the summer, particularly on the islands, in seaside towns and anywhere people spend long evenings outdoors. But it's definitely not the only

way Greeks eat. You can now find many more quality restaurants serving food earlier.

What you should know about dining in Greece

- Don't expect busy restaurants at 6 p.m. During summer, many tavernas are quiet early in the evening. The action picks up after 8:30 p.m., with most locals arriving between 9:30 and 10 p.m.
- If you want the authentic Greek experience, eat later. A table at a traditional seaside taverna after sunset is when you'll experience Greek dining at its best.
- Don't expect fast service. Meals in Greece are meant to be enjoyed slowly. Waiters won't rush you or automatically bring the bill. When you're ready to leave, simply ask for it.
- Share your food. Rather than ordering individual mains, do as the locals do and order several dishes to be shared.
- If you're traveling with children or simply like to eat earlier, arriving between 7:30 and 8 p.m. usually means quieter restaurants and easier access to a table.
- Hotels and resorts serve earlier dinners. Most hotels and resorts in Greece have adapted their restaurant hours to suit international visitors, so you won't struggle to find an early meal if that's your preference.
- Book ahead during peak season. In July and August, popular tavernas can fill up quickly after 9:30 p.m., especially on the islands and in seaside towns.
- Last but not least, as a traveler, you won't need to change your schedule completely, but trying one late dinner at a traditional seaside taverna can become one of the most memorable experiences of your trip. Take it slow. Enjoy the moment. Forget time.



After 10 p.m. and most Greeks in the northern port city of Thessaloniki are out enjoying dinner and company.



Just after 9.30 p.m. and people are starting to fill the tables at this taverna on an island, Greece.



The best time to enjoy dinner in Greece during the summer is after the sun sets and temperatures drop.