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TO BHMA
International edition

Including articles from
FINANCIAL TIMES
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Growing Push to Protect Trophy Hunting in Africa

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By Nicholas Bariyo

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

DANDE, Zimbabwe—In this expanse of southern African grasslands, a handful of big-game hunters sat around the campfire a few weeks back, drinking wine and fretting about an emerging threat to their sport: a flurry of international bans on African hunting trophies.

Amin Turk, a 58-year-old Zimbabwean professional hunter, passed around a photo of a 1,400-pound Cape buffalo he shot four years ago. "Back then it was easy and quick to export trophies from hunts," he said. "Not anymore."

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FINANCIAL TIMES

The uneasy tandem leading France's far right

By Leila Abboud

Jordan Bardella's third book in three years was conceived as a presidential campaign manifesto in case his mentor Marine Le Pen was barred from running and he had to take her place.

Instead, Governing, launched last week, highlights the predicament of the 31-year-old far-right leader after Le Pen was found guilty in a fraud case but spared a long electoral ban, allowing her to reclaim her place as the Rassemblement National's presidential candidate.

Bardella was relegated to his old role as party chief and prospective prime minister, with Le Pen reviving her pitch for an American-style RN "ticket" that would put her in the Élysée Palace and him in Matignon.

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ALEXANDROS MICHAILIDIS/SHUTTERSTOCK

A traditional coffee shop in central Athens, Greece. Photo taken on June 1, 2016.

TO BHMA International edition

The Local Landmarks We 'Hurt'

By Machie Tratsa

There are corners of the city that don't require a street name nor a number to stand out. Instinctively, we locals know the way there - and their details make them familiar: The corner table that is slightly positioned to the side, the solitary regular who always sits in the same spot at every occasion, the quick-witted waiter, the conversations that begin with nothing and somehow end up encompassing everything.

These are the places where, even if you seek a table for one, you will rarely remain without company.

The patrons are more or less the same, even though the usual pastime has changed. There is no folded newspaper beside their coffee cup nowadays. Instead, a tablet usually is seen on the table or the patron's hands.

Yet a small everyday understanding still holds true: the coffee, the conversation, the feeling that there is a place waiting for us. These are the city's familiar hangouts (or as we say, *stekia*). Some have made history. Others remain invaluable landmarks for the locals who live near or far.

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PANOS KOUGIAS/TO BHMA INTL EDITION

Artist and musician Sophia Kalogeropoulou poses next to a couple of her paintings.

TO BHMA International edition

Sophia Kalogeropoulou: 'I didn't decide, painting decided for me'

By Panos Kougias

It is truly rare to encounter cordiality and warmth quite like Sophia Kalogeropoulou's. She's what they used to call an "old soul." Perhaps because only people who have tasted everything life has to offer, absorbed its essence and had their fill of joys and disappointments can be so generous with their emotions. From the very first, it all felt unexpectedly familiar, as if we had known each other for the longest time. Her courtesy, unpretentious simplicity, unforced laughter and complete lack of arrogance won me over instantly.

There is a rare naturalness to the way Sophia Kalogeropoulou communicates. Granting you the beauty of her spontaneous smile and treating you to her self-effacing humor and grounded authenticity, she makes you feel as though you are in the home of someone close to you.

Before I could so much as open my notes, our shared love for the opera had set the perfect tone for our conversation.

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TO BHMA THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. Featured articles licensed from The Wall Street Journal

The Growing Push to Protect Trophy Hunting in Africa

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Western animal-rights groups are pushing to ban hunting-trophy imports, but are facing opposition from African countries renowned for protecting wildlife

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France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Canada prohibit importation of African hunting trophies like heads and skins, and pressure is mounting in the U.K. and Germany to follow suit. In May, the New York State Senate passed legislation banning the importation, transportation and possession of elephant, leopard, lion and rhinoceros trophies, but the bill hasn't become law.

Airlines, including Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, KLM, British Airways and Air France, now refuse to transport hunting trophies.

But conservationists behind those bans are getting pushback from the very countries that have been among the most successful at preserving their herds and prides.

"The legislation erodes the hunting incentives and infrastructure that support conservation," said Rodney Sikumba, who was until recently Zambia's tourism minister, adding that the New York bill would "sabotage its own stated goal of improving animal welfare."

The debate reflects a philosophical divide in the conservation world between those who see hunting for sport as a thing of the past and those who argue regulated hunting can generate revenue that can be spent to protect wild animals and improve the lives of people who live among them.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JONO TERRY FOR WSJ

The Zambezi River sits on the edge of one of Zimbabwe's largest hunting concessions.

Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Namibia are among the African countries that allow regulated hunting. Kenya and Rwanda, which have vibrant wildlife-tourism sectors, prohibit hunting, as do a few other African countries.

Feelings run deep on both sides.

"Like the ban on whaling or the abolition of slavery, it's time to consign trophy hunting to the dustbin of history," said Eduardo Goncalves, a conservationist with the U.K.-based Wildlife and Conservation Foundation. "It is an archaic practice opposed by the majority of people around the world."

Calls to ban trophy hunting grew louder following the well-publicized 2015 killing of Cecil, a male lion in Zimbabwe that had been studied for years by researchers from Oxford University.

The 13-year-old lion was lured out of Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park, then shot and killed by an American dentist, according to the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force, a Harare nonprofit. The killing, using a bow and arrow, sparked international outrage, public protests and a temporary closure of the hunter's dental practice in Minnesota.

Airline bans followed. United declined to comment. Delta didn't respond to a request for comment.

Around the campfire, on a half-million-acre hunting concession run by Charlton McCallum Safaris, Illinois lawyer Phil Brewster shared a picture of a leopard he shot on an earlier visit to Zimbabwe. He is arranging to have its head shipped home to hang on his living-room wall. He said he plans to bring his teenage son on his next hunting trip to Africa but complains about restrictions and proposed bans on trophy imports.



A selection of trophy skulls following a successful hunt.

"Trophy bans stigmatize African hunting and deter first-time hunters," said Brewster. "Bans ignore the people they affect most—rural Africans."

Charlton McCallum's concession, one of the southern African country's largest, sits on the edge of the Zambezi River and is home to thousands of elephants, hippos and herds of buffalo and antelope, as well as lions, leopards and crocodiles. Every hunting season, wildlife authorities here set aside a specific number of the animals for hunting, drawing hundreds of wealthy hunters to this expanse of yellow savanna, rocky hillsides and cliffs.

Hunting an elephant in Zimbabwe can cost as much as $60,000, while a permit to shoot a buffalo is around $50,000 and an impala kill is priced at $20,000, according to wildlife authorities. The prices vary with the size of the animal and location

of the hunt, as well as the logistical support required, according to tour operators.

Each year during the period of 2012-14, some 19,000 international hunters visited at least one of eight African countries, spending an average of about $26,000 per visit, according to 2015 research commissioned by the U.S.-based Safari Club International Foundation.

Last year, local communities around Charlton McCallum's concession earned nearly $500,000 from a total of 90 wild animals shot by trophy hunters, according to company data. These included 31 buffalo, 17 impala, five hippos and four big cats, including one male lion. Another $130,000 went to anti-poaching operations, resulting in the conviction of more than 40 poachers last year, according to Myles McCallum, director of Charlton McCallum.

"People understand the value of wildlife—they know it's an asset that brings them earnings, and they are keen to support conservation initiatives," McCallum said. "Money from hunting goes into rehabilitating schools, building water systems and improving social services such as medical care."

Zimbabwean wildlife authorities require hunters to distribute the meat from their kills to the local communities, where malnutrition levels are high following years of back-to-back droughts. A local spirit medium sprinkles blood on the ground to appease the ancestors before blessing the kill and presiding over the distribution of the meat.

Edmore Kambuzame said he was delighted to receive 26 pounds of meat in August, after a hunter killed a Cape buffalo near his village. It fed his family for weeks, he said.

Clifford Chikuwe, a taxidermist in Dande, starts each day by inspecting a shaded area where the freshly hunted heads and skins of buffalo, elephants and crocodiles are left to dry. Each dried animal skin that he rolls out of the salt and tucks into the wooden shelves brings him a tiny step closer to reuniting the trophy with its owner in the U.S. or Europe.

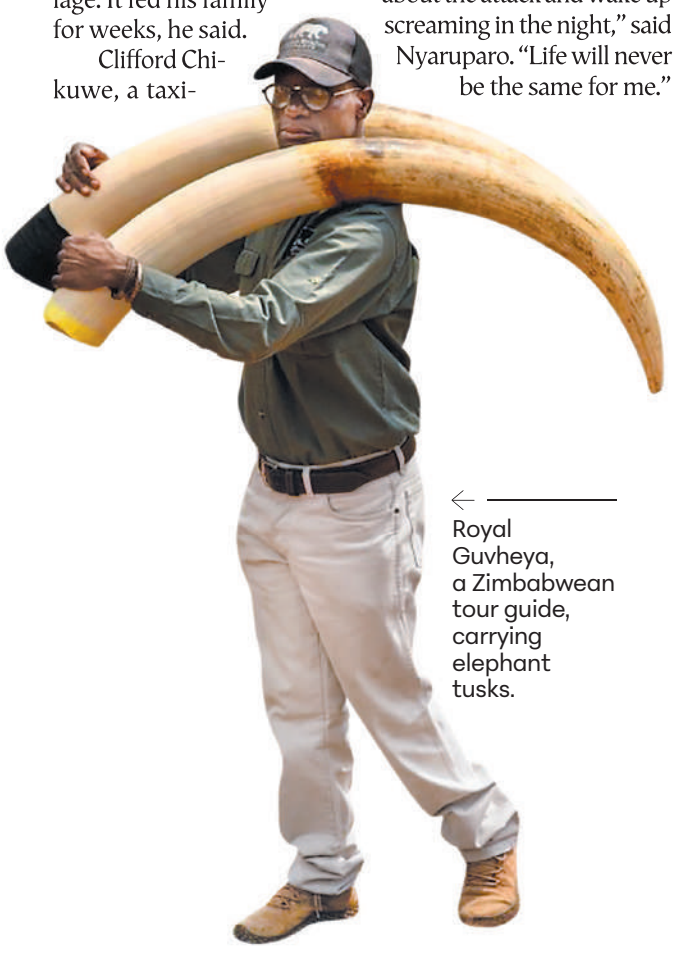
"I have been doing this for more than 20 years now. It's the only job I know," said the 56-year-old, inspecting an identification tag on a bull buffalo head.

Some countries that allow hunting also say their conservation efforts have been so fruitful that they now have more animals than the land can bear—another reason, they say, to bring in high-paying hunters.

Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia have increased lion and elephant populations to the point where they outstrip the carrying capacity of their national parks, according to the Switzerland-based World Wildlife Fund. Locals complain about elephants trampling crops and homes, and about crocodiles attacking people who go to rivers to wash or fish.

Gift Nyaruparo was collecting red worms last year to use as fishing bait along the Zambezi in Zimbabwe when a 6-foot crocodile bit his left hand and tried to drag him into the water. Nyaruparo, 25, said he fought with the crocodile for about 15 seconds before escaping, his hand badly mutilated. Fellow fishermen carried him from the riverbank and transported him to a hospital, where doctors amputated his hand just above the wrist.

"Sometimes I dream about the attack and wake up screaming in the night," said Nyaruparo. "Life will never be the same for me."



Royal Guvheya, a Zimbabwean tour guide, carrying elephant tusks.



Turnstone co-founders Jai Bhatia, 21, and Aryan Vij, 24, work out of their apartment.

JASON HENRY FOR WSJ

20-Somethings Are Ditching Entry-Level Jobs to Become Their Own Bosses

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

AI is shaking up the employment market for younger workers—and making it easier for them to become entrepreneurs

By Ray A. Smith and Lindsay Ellis

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

At 21, Jai Bhatia has never had a full-time job at a tech company. But he's building one.

Founding a business someday was long in the computer-science major's sights—he purposely sought out internships at startups to learn the entrepreneurial ropes. A cloudy future for his field, though, helped speed up his plans.

"It's like, hey, I don't want to be replaced by AI in three years," said Bhatia, who co-founded Turnstone—an app that runs artificial-intelligence teammates that users can give work to—just before graduating last December from the University of California, Berkeley. "I want to be myself."

Entrepreneurism is booming these days in America, and no demographic is starting businesses at a faster rate than 20-somethings. AI is disproportionately shaking up the entry-level jobs many of them once saw as solid career launchpads. At the same time, younger workers have been especially adept at deploying the technology to get enterprises off the ground.

At least 23% of Americans between 18 and 34 were running their own businesses or side hustle last year, up from 19% in 2021, according to Babson College, which runs a yearly survey on entrepreneurial activity. Among those from ages 18 to 24, that rate has more than doubled from a decade ago.

In a separate survey of more than 1,000 people who started businesses in 2025, more than 70% of Gen Z entrepreneurs said they used AI to create their businesses. That is more than other generations, said payroll and benefits provider Gusto, which conducted the survey.

Bhatia and Turnstone co-founder Aryan Vij, 24, said they had job offers but decided to turn them down a month before graduation and go all in on the app they were building. While studying for finals, they successfully pitched and received $500,000 from the startup accelerator Y Combinator.

The startup now employs two engineers and a staffer for marketing, and they work out of the living room of Bhatia and Vij's San Francisco two-bedroom apartment. "The window is the whiteboard," Vij said.

A surge of venture capital flowing into new businesses is helping Gen Z founders raise money. There were about 8,625 first-time financing deals in the U.S. through the third quarter, already surpassing the 2021 full-year record of 8,507, according to a PitchBook-NVCA Venture Monitor report.

Sheena Jindal, managing partner and founder of Sugar Free Capital, said she has seen situations in which it is easier to raise $2 million than get an entry-level job. She said it's important that early-career entrepreneurs understand the gravitas of taking investor funding.

Hugo Stack, 27, searched unsuccessfully for an entry-level job in finance and professional services before enrolling in law school in September 2025. Now, he is taking a leave of absence to build a financial startup called Mecone aimed at bringing perpetual futures trading to a wider investor base. The company recently completed an accelerator program through Andreessen Horowitz.

Besides fundraising and building the product, Stack has been figuring out the basics of running a business on the fly. One of his two full-time employees recently asked him whether he could expense gas or business meals. He wasn't exactly sure what counted.

"I have to figure this out," he said. "All three of us founders of my company have not had real jobs."

That is not as unusual as it once was, said Donna Kelley , a professor of entrepreneurship at Babson. "The logic that you get some work experience to get a little bit of credibility before you start a business is starting to change."

Some young entrepreneurs say they have been motivated by seeing so many peers earn money on their own, particularly by generating social-media content.

"It's maybe even a healthy pressure, like well, what's my thing?" said Justus Shaw, 25, who started his own coffee-cart catering business last year. Until then, he had run it as a side hustle while building apps for a payment-software company.

Shaw says it cost roughly $7,000 to get Shaw's Coffee Cart off the ground and he has about six rotating staff to cater weddings, conferences and other events. Within eight months, the cart generated more than $100,000 in revenue, though he has poured much of that back into operating costs.

"The business has to make a lot more money for me to still walk away with some money," said Shaw, who had made about $60,000 a year in his corporate job.

A LinkedIn survey of more than 1,000 adults this spring showed nearly one in five Gen Z founders said AI made starting a business feel possible.

This spring, Katherine Mead, 28, launched Planning Partner, a platform that lets teachers customize AI-generated classroom materials, after leaving her role as a data and analytics consultant at an IT-services firm. She had agents do market research and much of the coding. AI also helped her figure out how to establish a limited liability company.

That, plus getting on her fianc 's health-insurance plan and working from her home, has kept costs down. All told, she said she has spent about $9,000 getting the platform off the ground, including $1,600 for AI tools.

Mead said she would never say never to another corporate job but loves the autonomy and income potential of entrepreneurship.

"I think a lot of people my age feel like they are waiting for some conglomerate somewhere to potentially pick them for a layoff," she said. "It feels a lot more empowering to be in control of your own employment and destiny."

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The uneasy tandem leading France's far right

Jordan Bardella has been relegated to second billing by Marine Le Pen ahead of next year's presidential vote

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"I may have taken it hard," Bardella conceded tersely in the book, confirming what had been plain to see the day after the ruling, when he appeared tense and unhappy alongside Le Pen during a walkabout in the Loire Valley.

Bardella, who is president of the Patriots for Europe group in the European parliament, admitted he had prepared for and pictured himself as president. Yet in public, he consistently cast Le Pen as the natural candidate and himself as her understudy.

"Always careful to not be seen as disloyal or clumsy, I would answer what we had decided on together," he wrote.

Le Pen has lodged a final appeal with France's highest court, the Cour de Cassation, risking further upheaval if it confirms her conviction before the April vote, as she could be subject to house arrest with an ankle bracelet.

Legal experts are also divided over whether the lower court's five-year ban could still disqualify Le Pen before the Court of Cassation delivers its final ruling, an interpretation rejected by the chief prosecutor.

Meanwhile, the RN has been rocked by internal tensions and policy disputes that have exposed cracks in the longstanding portrayal of Le Pen and Bardella as politically interchangeable.

Le Pen's inner circle, known as the "Marinistes", has regained influence at the expense of Bardella's allies, despite his re-election as party leader last month with 99 per cent of the vote.

One of Le Pen's nieces will oversee campaign communications, while her brother-in-law Philippe Olivier will lead strategy and speechwriting. Her once-estranged niece Marion Maréchal, an ultra-conservative EU lawmaker married to an Italian MEP from Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's party, has also been brought back into the fold.

Bardella's business-friendly proposals, including scrapping the statutory retirement age and introducing personal investment accounts, have been overshadowed by Le Pen's preference for a more generous welfare state. She wants to lower the retirement age for some workers to 60, from about 63 today.



MICHEL EULER/AP PHOTO

Internal party tensions have exposed cracks in the portrayal of Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella as interchangeable.

Another sign of Le Pen's renewed authority was the ousting of François Durvye, an adviser who had helped the RN court business leaders but whom she regarded as disloyal.

"The recomposition was rough since many and even Marine herself thought she would not be able to run," said one RN ally. "It was difficult for Jordan but they have moved past it now. Both know that nothing would be worse for the campaign than a rift."

The book, published by Fayard, an imprint owned by conservative billionaire Vincent Bolloré, does not mention tensions between the pair. It also offers little reflection on the RN's setbacks under Bardella's leadership, including its repeated selection of candidates later exposed as holding antisemitic or racist views.



A photo from Jordan Bardella's book signing event shows Bardella speaking to press in Toulon, France, November 11, 2025 .

Bardella was forced to add three pages to the book after investigative outlet Mediapart reported in September on antisemitic private messages he allegedly sent as a teenage activist.

He again vehemently denied the allegations, portraying them as politically motivated attacks on the frontrunner RN. "The blows are getting harsher, and the attacks are getting personal," he wrote.

Outside his glitzy Paris book launch, protesters chanted through a megaphone: "Bardella, your antisemitism cannot be erased!" Such disruptions could dog his nationwide book tour, although the allegations have so far left Bardella's and Le Pen's poll ratings unscathed.

Although writing books is de rigueur for French politicians, Bardella's first two became bestsellers, earning him about €1mn since 2024.

His debut, What I Am Looking For, recounted his upbringing in the poor, immigrant suburb of Saint-Denis, where exposure to drugs and crime drove him to join the RN at 16. His second, What the French Want, offered portraits of people he met on his travels, including a farmer who railed against an "obese" state stifling his business.

The first half of Governing reads like a diary, with Bardella attending an Élysée crisis meeting on soaring energy prices, visiting the Poland-Belarus border to deplore lax security and falling in love with an Italian princess, Maria Carolina of Bourbon-Two Sicilies.

But the book also paints a near-apocalyptic portrait of a France that he says has lost control of its borders, its finances and its destiny, while a disconnected political class flounders. Only the RN can come to the rescue, he argues.

Bardella casts his youth as a political asset, taking a swipe at two septuagenarian prime ministers whom the RN helped bring down. "In the great history of France, age was always secondary," he writes, noting that Napoleon was just 27 at the Battle of Arcole and Louis XIV was 22 when he "decided to rule alone".

In brief portraits of Emmanuel Macron's seven prime ministers, Bardella takes aim at presidential hopeful Édouard Philippe, likening him to "a criminal who returns to the scene pretending to be the detective".

In the second half, Bardella sets out the RN's agenda for power: curbing immigration, cracking down on crime and restoring state authority.

He pledges to govern through referendums, rarely used in France, but glosses over the legal obstacles that could thwart such plans.

"The time has come to govern with the people and the referendum must become a natural part of the democratic process," he writes. "We will start with the one that will determine the future of the country more than others: immigration."

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KIM KYUNG-HOON/REUTERS

People walk through a restaurant district in Tokyo, Japan, October 26, 2026.

The high price of Japan's disaster-proof society

Telling people to stock up is one thing but the Japanese know that building a stockpile of civil credibility requires greater effort

By Leo Lewis

The UK government's frightening plea for households to stockpile survival supplies — and the Great British baked bean-off that hit supermarkets afterwards — nudged a check on my own disaster prep here in Japan.

The solar charger was dusty, the radio batteries had corroded. But other than that, my family — along with millions of other Tokyoites — is catastrophe-maxxed.

Cyber attack and extreme weather events are chillingly plausible here, but the main focus is seismic. A mega-quake, as everyone in Japan goes about their lives knowing, could devastate the capital at any time. Projections of casualties, building collapse and disease spread are alarming in the abstract; government-issued manga depicting the possible aftermath ensure anyone above the age of four can clearly visualise the horror.

But prepping — whether for natural disaster or some man-made collapse of vital infrastructure — is a psychological game that isn't just about your own store of beans. It's about your perception of everyone else's. And, crucially, your confidence in what might happen — good, bad and ugly — when they run out.

The recommended stockpiling for the — one hopes temporary — end of life as we know it in Tokyo is set out in a hefty manual, updated every few years, distributed to all households and running to more than 300 pages (including maps and quizzes). It lays out the stocks of water, food, protection from the elements and first aid that could make the difference between life and death.

The manual is a laudable blueprint for risk mitigation. But it is the vast, unwritten volumes of socialised prepping which accompany it that generate the more fundamental comfort.

Japan has done what it can, through a permanent, politicised cherishing of social cohesiveness, to instil the sense that good will contain bad in the face of true threat. It has tried to universalise a perception that everyone has understood the warnings, that others value preparation as highly as you do and that stability is the nation's default condition.

Telling people to stock up is one thing. Building a stockpile of civil credibility is the bit that requires the greatest effort and can come, as Japan has discovered, at a cost.

Some of this is codified. The public files of Shibuya City — one of the 23 wards of Tokyo — contain impressively long lists of agreements struck between the city and a wide variety of institutions guaranteeing they will do the right thing in a crisis. The lists include services that will operate where possible, shopping malls, hotels, universities, offices and others that have pledged to accommodate those in search of shelter, and rural towns outside the metropolis that will take in evacuees. The other 22 wards all have versions of these.

The sense that order, empathy and altruism will prevail amid blackouts, floods and rubble arises not from the detail of these agreements, but the assumption that they were struck sincerely by a prep-tastic nation. Bring on calamity. The fight, Japan has reassured itself, will be with circumstance, not each other.

Britain and others who are now entering the prepping game rather later in the day may fancy that decency is turbocharged by crisis. Japan has chosen not to leave it to chance and may, in darkening times, look enviable for that.

The problem is that, over the longer term, the price of being enviable is high and rising, and until the worst happens, there is no proof the formula will work. In the Japanese corporate world, the instinct to stash for a rainy day has, to a significant extent, locked capital ineffectively in protective cash hoards or cross-shareholdings. It has generationally blunted management attitudes to risk. The economy, and a big slab of the banking industry that underpins it, have evolved around the perceived benefit of preserving as many companies as possible, favouring a static stockpile of diminishing relevance over something more fluid.

On the societal side, the strain of building 'anything-proof' cohesiveness has left a stiffness in the joints. In its protection of "Japaneseness" as the ultimate defence against crisis, the country has become hypersensitive to threats against that image, while remaining less troubled by the rising perils of cyber attack and actual conflict. For example, Japan needs, as a matter of urgency, a serious public discourse on immigration; it cannot have one as long as outsiders are viewed as automatically corrosive to the national armour-plating.

A prepping world needs good examples of those who have done it well. Japan's "beans-plus" solution is tempting, but untested.

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TO BHMA International edition

Sophia Kalogeropoulou: 'I didn't decide, painting decided for me'

The optimism, vitality and joie de vivre reflected in her paintings are an integral part of her own personality

Continued from Page One

I asked to hear her voice from her time on the operatic stage. Fortunately, her partner, the great Takis Kalogeropoulos, had taken care, unbeknownst to her, to save a record with some of the roles she performed. We listened to it together, with her commenting, sometimes amused and sometimes moved, on moments from that period. I was impressed by the ease with which she transitioned from self-deprecation to the most personal confessions, without ever losing her vivacity and sense of humor.

As time passed, I began to recognize in Sophia Kalogeropoulou the self-same brightness that had so captivated me in her painting. The joy, optimism and *joie de vivre;* her inexhaustible curiosity. It seemed as if the courageous colors, dreamy characters and fantastic stories that almost always accompany her works' protagonists were a natural extension of her personality. And this optimism acquires something close to sanctity when you know the difficulties she faced and the losses she suffered, how her highly promising career was cut short so devastatingly. Her biography would need multiple volumes to do it justice. Her Law studies, years at the Vienna Opera, meetings with legendary music personalities, and, later, an entire second life dedicated to painting. Yet she recounts even her greatest moments with a disarming humility, often poking fun at herself. Leaving, I promised myself this: to capture on paper some of the light she had shared with me so generously. The light I already knew from her paintings and which shines bright within her, now and always.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PANOS KOUGIAS/TO BHMA INTL EDITION

Sophia Kalogeropoulou poses next to her artwork in her painting studio.

If I were to ask you to introduce yourself today, would you say you were a painter or a musician?

I've studied music, but not painting. Which is why, when people asked me what I did, I'd say I was a musician. If you want a more meaningful reply, I'll say I'm a "lover of the arts." Art has always interested me, in all its forms. When I lived abroad, I was forever going to museums and exhibitions. I wasn't just interested in classical painting. I had a great love for modern art, too, along with contemporary music. All of which are, ultimately, connected.

Before painting there was the opera, to which you devoted yourself entirely. What do you recall today from those years?

I had studied a great deal. In Vienna, I had Tito Gobbi as my repertoire teacher. I was supposed to sing Nedda from *Pagliacci* and Antonia from *The Tales of Hoffmann*, which was my favorite role. I had studied dozens of operas and knew the roles by heart. The prospects looked excellent, I'd met great people and music was my entire life. But even then, I was already dealing with serious health issues, which also affected my singing. It was a period of great expectations and equally great difficulties.

You also met Maria Callas, whom you admired from a young age.

I adored her. I met her in Milan, and we spoke in Greek. I have kept the photograph and her dedication, which she wrote in Italian. It was a very big moment for me. But I am also moved by the memory of so many other people from the opera world, my teachers, the voices I heard. Those things stay with you forever. And even if your life suddenly changes course, you'll always have those experiences.

You have spoken with remarkable candor about the anorexia and bulimia you were battling during that period. Looking back today, what do you think helped you the most when it came to overcoming this challenge?

The most important thing was that, at some point, I realized I was sick and admitted it to myself. That's what saved me. I had suffered for many years, and the situation had taken a terrible toll on my physical stamina. In singing you need breath, you need strength. And I no longer had either. I started receiving treatment in Munich in 1977, and gradually began to confront my condition. I can be humorous about it today, but back then it was so very hard. I also needed quite a few years to recover enough to even think about music again. I remember that when Takis became vice president of the State Orchestra, I found it hard to even attend concerts at the Megaron Concert Hall. Until, at some point, after countless conversations, I decided to go back to what I loved, but in a different way. I would paint the opera. Which is how "The Phantom of the Opera" came into being. And it was so important to me that I could return. I was interested in what happens when a performance is truly great—when the singers, the orchestra and the audience somehow become one. And we are all drawn into the story. So when I painted Aida or A Masked Ball, I didn't only want to show what happens on stage. I wanted to convey this collectivity, this communion when we all become a living, breathing part of the opera for a time.

How did Takis Kalogeropoulos, your partner in life and in music, change your viewpoint on life?

He influenced me deeply. It was music that united us from the start, but Takis was a man of immense cultivation and wide-ranging interests. He read ceaselessly, loved people and was deeply unconventional. He opened up other worlds to me, so I was no longer confined to singing and related matters. We shared a lot and worked together for Greek music. The "Panarmonia" project, later presented as an exhibition, is also connected to this shared path. He was a man with a genuine love for what he did.

You once said: "Music was the love of my life, while painting is a loving relationship"...

Yes, that's still how I feel. Music was a great passion of mine, and such things simply cannot be replaced. Painting is a love that is perhaps

closer to a marriage. That doesn't mean it's any less important. It is a different kind of relationship in a different phase of your life. As you grow older, you understand that everything has its time. You don't need to pretend you're still twenty years old. There are other joys, a different tranquility and above all more freedom to be yourself.

Painting arrived at a time when your life had already changed direction. Was there a particular moment when you decided to devote yourself to it?

I didn't decide, painting decided for me! I was going through a very difficult period. I had returned to Greece and was trying to find myself again. At one point, I went to an excellent psychologist who asked me, "What do you know how to do?" I told her I knew a lot about antiques, old porcelain, all the things I had loved since I was a child. But I also showed her a few of my drawings that were hanging on my walls. She looked at them and said, "Choose. One of the two." That shook me to my core! Imagine. I had finished my studies and already sung on stage, but now I suddenly had to accept the need to start something entirely different—something I might not even be very good at. It was a massive blow to my ego. But it also proved to be my cure. Painting helped me get back on my feet. And then, before I knew it, the exhibitions started coming, the collaborations, a whole new world.

Do you remember when you realized that what you were doing was something special?

I remember being taken to Panayiotis Tetsis and having him view my work. He told me how much he liked my colors. I wanted to learn, to study, to be shown how it's done. He told me that I didn't need to try to learn that way. I already had my own way of seeing things. At first, of course, I was happy simply to be taking part in a group exhibition, even if they had hung my work in a rather charmless corner! Then came the collaboration with the Zoumboulakis Gallery. Everything happened without my having planned it.

Did you ever feel you lacked academic training in painting?

No. I had the freedom to do whatever I wanted. In music, there was an entire system. You had to sing this role, to prove that you could do one thing or another. In painting, no one told me what to do. I serve myself, my vision, my desire, my soul. Because I didn't have a teacher to follow, I could let myself go. And that's very important. I'm not saying that what I paint is the best that's ever been put on canvas. But it's mine.



Artwork by Sophia Kalogeropoulou.


One of Kalogeropoulou's paintings hangs over her fireplace.

Your painting is characterized as naïf. What does the term mean to you?

To me, naïf means that the artist is self-taught. That's all. It doesn't mean that someone is naive, or that they paint without thought. I love Theophilos very much, other creators within the naïf tradition, too, both in Greece and abroad. When I participated in international exhibitions, I saw painters from completely different places. At first glance, you might say our works looked alike, but in reality, we were all different. Different lives, different experiences, different worlds. That's the beauty of it. Everyone brings their entire self to the work.

Color is perhaps the first thing one recognizes in your work. Has your relationship with it changed over the years?

No, it has remained constant from the start. I don't know the rules of color the way someone who has studied painting does. I think it comes down to having an eye for it. Perhaps my great love for fashion also played a role. I used to keep up with it all: I adored Yves Saint Laurent, the combinations and fabrics, the dresses and hats. All of which was a visual education. Color came naturally to me. I didn't sit down and decide that I was going to paint "brightly." It's how I see things.

Your paintings are full of people, animals, birds and little stories. Is that a world you want to live in?

All of it comes from within me. You might be influenced by something you loved, by a painting you saw, by a story you read, but you cannot copy another person's soul. I like to include every last detail. I want there to be a host of things you can discover by looking. And not all of them are necessarily happy. Even when I tackle dark subjects, I want to pour everything I have into the work. I can't do something hastily, just to get it out of the way.

Mythology often lies at the heart of your stories. What is it about myth that moves you so?

I view mythology as the true history of humanity, in the sense that it's the memory of the world's peoples. One civilization speaks of Noah's flood, another of Deucalion's. There is something behind these narratives. And that interests me far more than which politicians were in power and when. I wanted mythological figures to exist in my painting as if they were still walking among us. I wanted to abolish time. Because, in a way, all of that is still here.

And literature seems to be opening up a new chapter in your current work.

I am very preoccupied with female creativity. I read, I go back to books, I think about the women who wrote them and the heroines they invented. Mary Shelley, the Brontë sisters, Emily Dickinson are figures who move me. I'm not interested in merely illustrating a plot. I might linger on a detail, on a psychological state, on a door that seems open but no one is passing through it. Sometimes it takes a long time to understand how I should paint something. I have works that are still waiting for their moment to arrive.

Are you interested in what your paintings have to say to the viewer?

Very much so. Sometimes I see an enthusiasm I didn't expect. I think that perhaps the things I paint redeem people somehow. I don't think it's just the colors or whether a composition is pleasing to the eye. I have been involved with psychoanalysis for many years, and I know how deeply an image can touch us. There are doors we don't walk through, stories that recur over and over, desires we dare not confess. All these things find their way into my works, even if the painting may look happy at first glance.

You have lived so many different lives. What is it you don't want to lose?

The need to do things. I cannot sit and wait. I might have an idea and it might not work out right away; I might leave it, go back to it, think about a color for days. Which is fine. What interests me is being honest. I don't want to do something because it's fashionable or because it will be liked more. It takes courage to make art. To say what you believe, even if someone else doesn't understand it. And to keep going.

The Local Landmarks We 'Hurt'

Preserving a neighborhood's identity means protecting its historic landmarks and offering incentives to retain traditional businesses often woven into everyday life

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When these hangouts disappear, their loss rarely involves demolitions. A shutter rolls down indefinitely or temporarily, a sign changes or vanishes. The city beats to the same rhythm; properties are passed around, their use subject to change.

Mouria in the central Athens district of Exarchia – a café that has operated for 111 years, albeit in a different building after the original one was demolished – is not the only recent loss recorded in the urban landscape. Over the past decade, central Athens has bid farewell to *Kentrikon*, the historic downtown restaurant on Kolokotroni Street, which, since 1935, had been a meeting place for artists, journalists and politicians, as well as *Aigaion* on Panepistimiou Street, with its *loukoumades* (Greek honey doughnuts) that had satisfied Athenians' "sweet-tooth" since 1926. In December 2023, the lights went out at the *Ideal cinema*, after 102 years of screenings, a convivial meeting place for the Greek capital's cinephiles.



What the Lexikopoleio in Pagrati used to look like prior to its permanent closing.

'A field of uncontrolled urban transformation'

The losses, however, are not limited to the many historic establishments that have disappeared. They also concern newer ones which, without having a century of history behind them, nevertheless had time to become "landmarks" of our everyday lives. Urban memory also resides in places that have not been designated historic monuments or listed buildings: a neighborhood café, a pastry shop, one of the few remaining bookshops. Within 15 years, *Yasemi*, on the narrow steps of Mniskleous Street, became an inseparable part of old quarter Plaka's image, before closing its original premises in 2025. Another is *Lexikopoleio*, a den for Athens' French-speaking community in the Pangrati district, which closed in 2026.

Different places, different eras, but one common denominator: a loss of neighborhood character. This part of urban transformation primarily concerns the market and the economic viability of businesses, but also affects overall urban planning.

Prof. Efthymia Sarantakou, an associate professor specializing in tourism spatial planning at the University of West Attica, places the issue in a broader context.

"The absence of adequate regulatory rules in the property market, combined with the penetration of international investment capital, has turned Athens into a field of uncontrolled urban transformation," she says, pointing out that historic and traditional establishments are especially vulnerable, as they are called upon to compete with newer business models that offer greater financial returns.

Protection of their social function

Protection, therefore, must extend beyond the building itself to include its use, the continuity of its business and the social function of a place. Otherwise, there is a risk that only the façade will be preserved, while everything that made it part of a neighborhood's identity will be lost forever. The Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Athens, Maro Evaggelidou, also highlights this danger, focusing on the traditional commercial districts of the city center.

Clusters of specialized shops that developed over time – selling sewing supplies, stationery, traditional jewelry, packaging materials, spices and ironmongery – constitute, as she explains, a distinctive part of Athens' cultural heritage. Comparable to modern business clusters, these commercial networks risk losing their character as they are displaced by new uses.

The objective is not to keep the city clinging to the past. After all, Athens' commercial life has always been renewing itself. Shops opened, became established and, at some point, closed. The question is whether the city can evolve without flattening everything that makes it distinctive and recognizable.

The preparation of the Local Urban Plan (LUP) for Athens, which is currently under way, creates a critical opportunity, as it can lay the foundations for controlling land uses. However, according to Evaggelidou, its provisions risk remaining on paper unless they are accompanied by legally established implementation tools.

As an immediate intervention, she proposes suspending the issuance of building permits for new buildings and for changes of use in existing properties intended for activities that frequently displace traditional commercial uses. This is a proposal that the municipality has already submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Energy, but without receiving a response.

Financial incentives and modernization

The need for intervention is becoming more pressing as local government authorities watch the gentrification of the city center rapidly unfold without having any meaningful tools to control land uses. As the Deputy Mayor points out, the municipality cannot regulate the development of hotels and food-service establishments, unlike what happens in many cities abroad. Certain central neighborhoods are a partial exception, where special Presidential Decrees have imposed restrictions.

To help the "smaller fish" of the local economy survive, Sarantakou proposes the introduction of a special designation, "Historic Shop of Athens", linked to financial and tax incentives, as well as business modernization and succession programs. She also recommends creating cultural and gastronomic maps for visitors to the city.

As she points out, tourism is not an enemy of urban memory. It can become a valuable advocate for its preservation, provided that part of the revenue is returned to the neighborhoods, for example, through a Municipal Commercial Heritage Fund that would support the preservation of historic businesses.

In the meantime, opportunities for intervention are being sought out within the existing institutional framework. One of these concerns the differentiation of municipal fees according to the use of properties, an option provided for by the new Code of Local Government, which could be used to support activities threatened by the commercial gentrification of neighborhoods.

As a more immediate measure, Evaggelidou favors restricting the allocation of public space for outdoor tables and chairs on selected streets, for urban-planning, architectural or sustainable-mobility reasons, as was done on Ermou Street, with the aim of preventing the uncontrolled expansion of food-service establishments.

'Lessons' from Europe

Some European cities have already moved on to organizing specific interventions, demonstrating – according to Sarantakou – that there are ways to protect commercial heritage and preserve historic shops.

In Paris, the municipality made use of its right to acquire certain commercial premises.

When a shop located within a protected zone is put up for sale, the municipal authority has the right of first refusal to purchase it at the price agreed upon with the seller. It then undertakes its renovation and leases it to independent retailers, craftspeople and booksellers at controlled, low rents. The relevant interventions have contributed to the preservation and development of more than 400 commercial establishments.

In Lisbon, the "Lojas com História" (Shops with History) program recognizes historic shops as living elements of cultural heritage, promotes them and provides financial support for eligible expenses.

Barcelona is another interesting European example. Since 2016, it has been implementing a special plan to protect its emblematic shops, offering financial incentives and subsidies. Ten years later, 141 of the 209 shops on the original list are still operating without any changes.


INTIME NEWS
Artwork stacked behind one of the colorful tables of Mouria, an iconic coffee shop that remained open for over a century.