



PERSPECTIVES ON ANGELOPOULOS

6-11



A CONVERSATION ABOUT POLYMNIA

12-19



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: LAGFF

26-27

UCLA

Stavros Niarchos Foundation
Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture



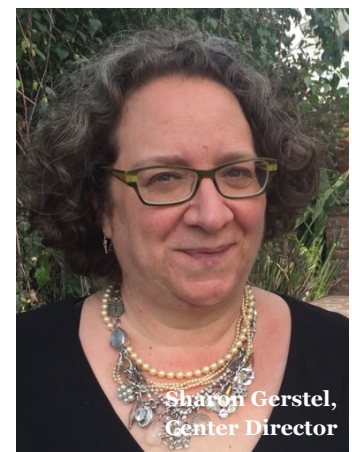
Polymnia workshop and recording session. From left to right: David Hobbs, Theodosia Roussos, Diana Wyenn, Jon Lee Keenan, Mathias Coppens, Michiel Delanghe, Joanna Lynn-Jacobs, Natalie Buickians, Anastasia Malliaras

Letter from the Director

Dear members of the UCLA SNF Hellenic Center, our valued friends,

Καλή Χρονιά! Η νέα χρονιά να σας φέρει υγεία, ευτυχία και ευδοκίμηση! Our Center wishes you a joyful 2023!

The title of our Center prominently features the words Hellenic Culture—*Hellenikos Politismos*—a compilation of the ways in which ancient and modern Greeks conceived and interpreted life and its activities. The use of these words is an acknowledgment of the role of *politismos* in our university classes, our community outreach, and our ongoing collaborations in Greece.



Sharon Gerstel,
Center Director

This year, the Center is supporting a broad spectrum of events that manifest the best of Hellenic culture. We have partnered with the UCLA Film & Television Archive to present fifteen films by the renowned Greek director Theo Angelopoulos (1935-2012) and we have supported screenings of other exceptional films in collaboration with the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival and other organizations in the community. At present, the Center's gallery space plays host to an exhibition featuring works by the contemporary Greek artist Mania Efstathiou and our graduate students are involved in Geraki, Laconia in the creation of an on-line exhibition and catalogue of traditional weavings with the support of the Vamvakou Revival team and in collaboration with our colleagues at Simon Fraser University. In January, *Polymnia*, a new opera created by local musician and composer Theodosia Roussos, will premiere at the UCLA Little Theater. This opera's lyrical music and poignant libretto will touch everyone who shares a common story of loss and resilience. Our collaboration with the Benaki Museum is ongoing—both in our shared lecture series and in our work at the Leigh Fermor House in Kardamyli, Mani. Through our SNF-funded pilot program with Simon Fraser University, and with support from a Mary Jaharis Center Co-Funding Grant, we will be hosting an academic conference, "Reconsidering the Generation of the 1930s: The Roots and Breadth of Greek Modernism," which will take place at UCLA on November 18-19, 2023. The conference, which is open to the public, will feature a number of prominent Greek scholars exploring the work of artists including Theophilos, Tsarouchis, and Kontoglou. At the same time, our focus on Greek letters and literature continues, with an event dedicated to the poetry of Yiannis Ritsos (1909-1990) in the spring and ongoing conversations with contemporary Greek authors.

Our next newsletter will feature a letter by Ioanna Kakoulli, Professor of Materials Science and Engineering, who will be stepping in as interim director as I spend a sabbatical year in Greece. During the 2023-2024 academic year, I will be involved in a number of projects, including documenting restoration work of the 11th-century church of Hagioi Theodoroi in Vamvaka, Mani, and completing a book and several articles. I will be introducing Professor Kakoulli to the community when she lectures at UCLA on "Pigments in Ancient Greek Painting and Medicine: Ecology, Materiality and the Alchemical Laboratory" on April 29. I hope you will attend this event to welcome her to the Center and the community! I'm looking forward to seeing you at UCLA for *Polymnia* on January 21, the opening of the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival on June 3, and at many other upcoming events.

Και πάλι σας εύχομαι Καλή Χρονιά! Happy New Year!

Sharon Gerstel
Director

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Center News

“Post-Truth” Exhibition Opens at UCLA SNF Hellenic Center



Professor Sharon Gerstel, Mania Efstathiou, Consul General of Greece Ioannis Stamatekos

The UCLA SNF Hellenic Center is hosting until February 1 “Post-Truth,” an exhibition by contemporary Greek artist Mania Efstathiou. Born in Athens, Efstathiou studied Nuclear Medicine and worked as a physician in Thessaloniki. In 2013, she changed careers, graduating from the School of Fine Arts in Thessaloniki. Her work explores fundamental questions about life and death. She approaches the concepts of weariness, loneliness, depersonalization, seclusion, disability, and acceptance through her experience as both a therapist and patient. The UCLA exhibition includes thirteen archival inkjet prints on metallic paper.

According to Efstathiou, “The works, based on my photographic observations of aspects of the natural landscape and the man-made features of the environment, document the reality that surrounds me. In the creative, fictional process I edit photographs, mixing reality with virtuality. I create new environments characterized by color and meaning contrasts, moving in the area of ‘post-truth,’ ignoring or even undermining the basic idea of the photographic observation, creating questions in the

interpretation of the visual composition.”

Efstathiou’s works are housed in the collections of the National Museum, Beijing; the Consulate General of Greece in New York; the Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki; the Municipal Culture Center of Corinth; Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Dentistry; Vogiatzoglou Art Space, Athens; and in private collections in both Greece and the United States. She has participated in exhibitions in Switzerland, Bulgaria, China, England, Serbia, Greece and the United States. Her most recent exhibition in the U.S., “Monitoring Solitude 2.0,” was hosted in 2019 by the Consulate General of Greece in New York.



Center News

Gathering of Scholars of Byzantine Studies at UCLA

From November 3-6, more than 190 national and international scholars of Byzantine Studies gathered at UCLA in person and virtually to offer a range of papers and attend a number of workshops at the 48th Annual Byzantine Studies Conference. The conference was co-sponsored by the UCLA SNF Hellenic Center, the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies/Center for Early Global Studies, the Dean of Humanities, the Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World, the Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies, the Edward W. Carter Chair in European Art, the Department of Art History, and the Byzantine Studies Association of North America. The conference opened with a viewing of Byzantine manuscripts at the Getty Museum led by Elizabeth Morrison, Senior Curator of Manuscripts, and a reception at the Fowler Museum, where Center Director Sharon Gerstel, CMRS-CEGS Director Zrinka Stahuljak, and Consul General Ioannis Stamatekos offered welcoming remarks. Conference attendees were able to attend a screening of Theo Angelopoulos' *Megalexandros*, a film that is "structured like a Byzantine liturgy," according to the director. Among the diverse papers were several delivered by UCLA students or graduates. Ph.D. student Sofia Pitouli lectured on "A Vlach Nun and Her Thirteenth-Century Monastery" in a panel sponsored by Dumbarton Oaks. Dr. Franka Horvat, a UCLA graduate, delivered a paper on "The Elaphiti Islands (Croatia) and Their Maritime Connections" in a panel she co-organized on Artistic Mobility and Visual Exchanges in the Adriatic Sea. Professor Young Richard Kim, a UCLA graduate and now Chair of Classics and Mediterranean Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, presented on "Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos on Constantine."

The Medieval Sparta Class

During the fall quarter of 2022, as part of the pilot program, graduate students at UCLA and Simon Fraser University (SFU) had the opportunity to participate in a course led by Sharon Gerstel (Professor of Byzantine Art and Archaeology and Director of the UCLA SNF Hellenic Center), and Dimitris Krallis (Professor of Byzantine History and Director of the SNF Centre for Hellenic Studies at SFU). Titled "Mapping the Medieval Sparta at the Time of Saint Nikon," the class focused on the period prior to the foundation of Mystras, a time when Sparta was a flourishing urban center. The class was designed as a detailed introduction into the archaeological evidence, material culture, and written records that contribute to the reconstruction of the landscape and socio-economic environment of the medieval city. The *Life* of Saint Nikon describes the works and miracles of the 10th-century monk, who, after decades of wandering, settled in Sparta. The first classes were spent in discussion about this text, not only because of the importance of Nikon's cult in the region, but also because of the potential to use this source as textual archaeology. The discussion then moved to physical archaeology, and the exploration of the city's numerous blocks where the remains of Byzantine houses, walls, churches, small finds, and even a bathhouse and olive press were discovered. Guest speakers included Evi Katsara, an archaeologist who has excavated throughout Sparta, and Professor Christos Stavrakos of the University of Ioannina, who introduced Byzantine lead seals found in the city. Each student chose a research topic to explore during the course of the quarter. In January, students from both universities will gather in Vancouver for a week-long seminar on Byzantine coins that will be taught by Dr. Eurydice Georganteli, Lecturer in Art History and Numismatics (Late Antique, Byzantine, and Medieval) at Harvard University.

UCLA/SFU Pilot Project News

Bridging the West Coast and Greece

The collaborative initiative between UCLA and Simon Fraser University (SFU) is off to an exciting start. The schedule for 2022-23 includes performances, lectures, conferences, artistic residencies, and academic explorations that connect the west coast of North America and Greece. This pilot program is made possible through the generous support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

Our first year of collaborative events launched with a screening of *My Rembetika Blues* complemented by a discussion with the film's director, Professor Mary Zournazi, and with musician Alexis Cohen. In the spring, Professor Kostis Kornetis will explore the memories and understanding of different generations in Greece and the transition from dictatorship to democracy post-1974. The pilot project's first year also includes an exploration of Athenian street art by Julia Tulke, who initiated *Aesthetics of Crisis*, an ongoing ethnographic research project. In its first year, the program will support two gatherings of international scholars. A two-day conference on the Generation of the 1930s and Greek modernism will take place at UCLA in November 2023. From October 19-21, 2023, the program will also support a conference addressing Greece's environmental landscape and climate change. Coordinated by Professors James Horncastle (SFU) and Katerina Lagos (California State University, Sacramento), the conference will be held in Athens. Greek film director and UCLA alumnus Tassos Boulmetis will hold our first artistic residency at both SFU and UCLA in fall 2023. Students will have the opportunity to learn from Boulmetis' transdisciplinary vision and from his artistic treatment and understanding of humanitarian subjects in the realms of immigration, refugeehood, and displacement.

We have also revitalized a monthly meeting of Hellenic Center directors across North America's west coast. We will be holding several joint initiatives in the coming year, including a photo competition open to students from West Coast universities (see advertisement). This year's competition will encourage students to visit Greece and take pictures of *periptera* or kiosks. The goal of this contest is for undergraduates to take the time to absorb Greece's social fabric and everyday life. Finally, the consortium of Center directors is working towards better scaffolding students transitioning from high school to college in order to help them maintain their ties to the Hellenic community, education, language, and culture.

While this post only touches on a portion of what we hope to accomplish in our first year, we are excited about the future of this pilot program. We invite the greater west coast North American Hellenic and philhellenic communities to join us in this endeavor.



<https://hellenic.ucla.edu/>



<https://www.facebook.com/UCLASNFCenter>

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Perspectives on Theo Angelopoulos

The retrospective Landscapes of Time: The Films of Theo Angelopoulos was presented this fall by the UCLA Film & Television Archive and our Center, with support from the UCLA Center for European and Russian Studies and with the community partnership of the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival and the South East European Film Festival in Los Angeles. Held under the auspices of the Consulate General of Greece in Los Angeles, the retrospective presented almost the entirety of the Greek filmmaker's output, including many rarely-screened masterpieces.

*We had the opportunity to reflect on the retrospective and on Angelopoulos' work in discussions with **Phoebe Economopoulou Angelopoulou**, who worked as producer on most of Angelopoulos' films, and with **Paul Malcolm**, Public Programmer at the UCLA Film & Television Archive.*

A DISCUSSION WITH PHOEBE ECONOMOPOULOU ANGELOPOULOU

What do you hope the audience in Los Angeles will learn about the work of Angelopoulos throughout the course of this retrospective?

I want them to be exposed to the work of a creator who is known worldwide and has changed the language of cinema by placing past, present, and future time in the same scene in a manner that is different from what was common at the time. He was a brilliant and inspired artist who managed, with patience and persistence, to create a cinematographic narrative—a narrative with images that speak about the human condition. Although the narrative refers to Greece, it has global resonance. His works address viewers in a spiritual and humane way, in a way that asks them to participate actively and complete the narration. This is not a matter of style but a matter of storytelling.

Thodoros worked in a mixed style because the movement of his camera is complicated by incorporating the *montage* into the footage itself. Because of filming long scenes in real-time, there were technical difficulties in the movement of the camera. The actors needed to rehearse because their presence was not momentary but of long duration. Many rehearsals had to take place before the filming and in the actual location of the filming so that the actors could be coordinated with the camera's movement. When

Thodoros was filming, when the cost of 35 mm film, at least for us in Europe and Greece, was high, any mistake, particularly in a long sequence, would destroy a large quantity of film. This was an issue for both indoor and outdoor filming.

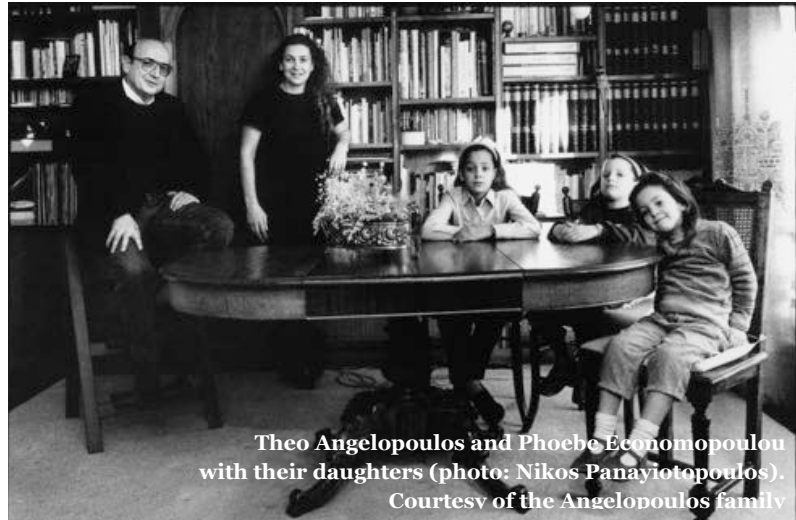
Another thing pertaining to outdoor filming is that Thodoros had decided that he didn't want shadows in his footage. He didn't want his footage, unless necessary, to be affected by the strong daylight, which in the Mediterranean is extremely particular and difficult for filming because of its reflections and color absorption. Frequently, we had to



Theo Angelopoulos and Phoebe Economopoulou
during the shooting of *Alexander the Great*
(photo: Dimitris Sofikitis)
Courtesy of the Angelopoulos family.

wait. Greece has many sunny days year-round. Often, the weather did not cooperate, and we had to wait for the right moment during dawn or dusk to film footage that could not be shot during the long hours of a sunny day. In several cases, we lost the entire season and were forced to move to the next year because the weather didn't cooperate with the film's completion. All these issues caused problems—practical problems—for people who were deeply involved from the moment they agreed to work on an Angelopoulos film. We didn't know whether a film would be

completed in one year or the next, if there would be problems because of inappropriate weather that affected funding, etc. It required a significant commitment from every individual in the production.



Theo Angelopoulos and Phoebe Economopoulou with their daughters (photo: Nikos Panayiotopoulos).
Courtesy of the Angelopoulos family

The images in Angelopoulos' films are like those created by a master painter. The language is like poetry. Was Angelopoulos a painter? A poet? What was his relationship with art?

Angelopoulos was a poet. He knew a lot of things about art, but also about cinema, philosophy, literature, philology, politics, history, religion, poetry, and other subjects. Thodoros was always referring to one's "internal" landscape, not the "external," the physical landscape. He believed that if he imagined something, it would surely be found somewhere in nature. Thodoros initially conceived an image in his mind, and by this image and the primary idea of a concept or something else, he started writing. To continue, he needed movement. [By the way, Thodoros didn't drive, shoot pictures, or paint.] After drawing a route on a map, he would traverse hundreds of kilometers to match his original image with a landscape. Sometimes he succeeded or nearly succeeded, and in the cases when he did not, he "intervened" in the landscape. In most cases the places he used were those in which he had to more or less intervene. For instance, he might change the color of the ground, modify the roofs of houses, plant trees, disguise electrical poles, or reconstruct facades where modern buildings existed (in Greece we do not have extended, homogenous habitation units because of the consequences of the war, extensively burned landscape and villages, or modernization). Constructions had to be built to cover visually disturbing elements, like a multi-story or modern building. What you describe as paintings are actually artificially modified images of the landscape and urban environment, not the landscape itself in its actual appearance. Thodoros was very clear about a specific thing in his art: what matters is not only what you say, but also how you say it. Through this process, he managed to pave his own path in the field of filmmaking.

Something very impressive in his films is the music. To what kind of music did he listen? How did he work with musicians?

He listened to classical music, jazz, demotic music, and ecclesiastical hymns depending on the idea in his mind. The music in his films is particular and plays an important role. The music is not used like a "carpet" to create a background intended to attract attention or steal the viewer's sentiment. The music is normally

inserted into the film at the source of the physical sound, for example when someone plays an organ or when there is a specific reason for the music to be inserted. He used music in different ways, also for describing or underlining identities. Thodoros preferred to work with the same colleagues, both technicians and musicians. In the beginning, he worked with Loukianos Kilaidonis. In *Megalexandros*, he worked with Christodoulos Halaris, who was educated in traditional musical instruments and monophonic music. Later he met Eleni Karaindrou while writing *Voyage to Cythera*. At that time, Thodoros was listening around the clock to Vivaldi's Concerto for Two Mandolins. He told Eleni that he wanted to use it and that she should adapt it for different styles, such as rock, musical, popular song, orchestral, etc. When they met again, she told him that she had prepared something of her own in the same musical meter, which could be adapted to all the versions he desired. Their cooperation continued until his penultimate film, and Karaindrou created remarkable music. I should add that Karaindrou recorded the music, and he used it according to the film's rhythm. During the editing, Thodoros altered the music in parts to a faster or slower mode, etc. This is the reason why there are no soundtracks for those films. Only the original music albums for the films exist, which are similar but not the same.

How did Angelopoulos work with his actors?

Very smoothly. Depending on the character of the film and the character of the actor, he used different techniques. Thodoros succeeded in incorporating the actors into the film without mutual overlapping, irrespective of how great or famous an actor was compared with the others. I consider this to be a great achievement, and a talent that is not frequently seen. It is very important to see and identify an actor—for example, Marcello Mastroianni, Harvey Keitel, Willem Dafoe, Jeanne Moreau—as part of his role. That is, the viewer does not see the individual but the film's character. This is so for the less well-known actors in the film, who are all at the same level.

Was it common for women to be involved in the production side of the filmmaking industry in Greece? How did you learn to be a producer?

From older times, women have been occupied in a part of film production. And they did quite well in solving problems without creating the problems that men create between them! Women usually help find solutions. Although it was not that common to see women in production, their number was not negligible. Of course, especially in older times, it was rare to see men addressing women with due respect. Even if a woman succeeded in being respected there was always the danger that she would be underestimated by her male colleagues, either because she was good looking, or because she was born a woman, etc. This is a serious issue. As for the second part of your question, this is almost an anecdote! Because I grew up in an artistic, musical, and cinematic environment I didn't like to be involved with artists of any kind. However, when my stepfather decided to be also the producer and director of a film, my mother called me and ordered me that whatever I had learned was enough. She knew that I didn't like this activity, but because she wanted her investment to be returned to her bank account, I had to undertake the management of the production. She insisted that I was capable of producing, and my stepfather called a former assistant who was already a film director to educate me during a week's crash course. I learned whatever was necessary to manage a film's production. You know, one film brought another. The rest came along with the experience one gains from life, some talent, enthusiasm, and determination. Being a good-looking girl, I always wanted to prove that I had abilities, not just an attractive appearance. Therefore, here I am! I was always prone to get involved in demanding projects.



Phoebe Economopoulou Angelopoulou and Paul Malcolm at the Billy Wilder Theater

A DISCUSSION WITH PAUL MALCOLM

How did the idea for an Angelopoulos retrospective come about? What were its goals and what challenges did you meet in putting the event together?

I had always thought Theo Angelopoulos was a major and unfairly overlooked director, but mounting a full series of his work at the Archive wasn't feasible until the Harvard Film Archive staged its career retrospective in 2016. With all the prints in the country, it suddenly became possible. Former film critic and current Amazon Films executive Scott Foundas, also an Angelopoulos supporter, put me in touch with Katerina Angelopoulos, and we started talking about the possibilities. There were still some significant challenges in terms of resources and timing, and then the pandemic happened, but Katerina and I stayed in touch. I knew I wanted to make the series a priority after we returned to the theater in late 2021. All the pieces finally fell into place when we connected with Sharon Gerstel at the UCLA SNF Hellenic Center and Laurie Hart at the UCLA Center for European and Russian Studies. It was Sharon and Laurie's support of the program that made it fully possible for us to bring the prints in and stage the series.

What were some of the most memorable moments from this journey?

It's been wonderful working with Katerina, who was incredibly gracious and patient with me as I kept trying to figure out how to make it work. It's also been great to connect with so many people at UCLA, like Sharon

and Laurie, who are so knowledgeable about Angelopoulos' work and learning more about his films from their perspectives. But what's most present in my mind once the series got underway are the reactions of many people I've spoken with at the Billy Wilder Theater. Some people are revisiting films they know but have never seen on the big screen—or haven't seen since they first came out—but many are discovering Angelopoulos for the first time, and that's really exciting. After the opening night film, *Landscape in the Mist*, people of all ages hung around for a long while, talking in groups in the Hammer Museum courtyard about what they'd just seen. That's really what it's all about: making connections with one another through film, so that was really gratifying.

What fascinates you about Angelopoulos' work?

There are a lot of ways into his work that are all equally fascinating and rewarding. First and foremost, there is the completely singular style that he sustains across decades, never surrendering his formalist rigor to passing trends or demands of the marketplace. Film critic Andrew Horton said of Angelopoulos that "there are few, if any, filmmakers in the history of cinema who qualify better for the classic definition of *film auteur*." I don't believe that's an overstatement! As demanding as his work can be and as pessimistic and melancholic as his perspective can be, there is something intensely reassuring in his faith in cinema—specifically a rigorously critical cinema—to connect us with our humanity.

Where would you place Angelopoulos in the tradition of world cinema?

He studied cinema in Paris with Jean Rouch and worked as an usher at the Cinémathèque Française in the 1960s, so he took in a wide array of films before he ever started shooting himself and he's said that he always gravitated toward the more critically engaged style of art cinema that emerged in Europe at that time. Some



Paul Malcolm
(photo: Todd Cheney)

filmmakers he's mentioned as influences include Antonioni, Bergman, Bertolucci, Bresson and Pasolini, along with nods to Welles and Mizoguchi. So, he's grounded in that tradition—which, of course, was the oppositional cinema of its day—and he's carried its influence, in his own way, further into the 20th and then 21st centuries, I think, than any other filmmaker of his generation. He is a master of cinematic time who has, on occasion, been criticized for being out of step with the times but that's also the reason why his champions find his films so heroic, in a way. The big question has always been why he isn't as well-known as other major artists of his generation—especially in the English-speaking world—especially given that his own influence has been profound. In 2012, critic David Jenkins referred to him as "an icon of Slow Cinema," placing him in the ranks of Andrei Tarkovsky, Miklós Jancsó, Béla Tarr, Chantal Akerman and Hou Hsiao-Hsien. But ask any younger cinefile, especially, and I would wager they're more familiar with those latter filmmakers than with Angelopoulos, if they know of him at all. I am definitely hoping our series can be something of a local corrective to that and I'm encouraged, as I said, by the audience responses I've been hearing and seeing at the theater.

How does Angelopoulos' cinematic language resonate with a global and, in particular, an American audience?

I can only speak to my own personal experience in that it resonates with me! Following what I said earlier, Angelopoulos' very rigorous cinematic language doesn't resonate with American audiences—especially cinephile audiences—I would argue some of that can put down to the difficulty of seeing his films in a theater. It's a cliché these days to say this or that film “has to be seen on the big screen” to be appreciated. The sad fact is that a lot of movies these days don't! But it's true for Angelopoulos. I'm more convinced of that now

having had the chance with our series to see more of his films on the big screen myself for the first time. There's nothing like it. Our daily lives are so fragmented these days, our experience of time and space is so chopped up and distracted, to sit in a darkened theater and give oneself over to Angelopoulos' sustained contemplation of time, place, history, and meaning can be quite profound.



Q&A at the Billy Wilder Theater with Paul Malcolm
(photo: Todd Cheney)

What did you learn about Angelopoulos that you did not know before organizing this retrospective?

I was not as familiar with modern Greek history as I should be, and preparing this series required a crash course in Greece's tumultuous experience of the 20th century to really grapple with Angelopoulos' larger project. I don't think one necessarily needs to be a student of Greek history to take something significant away from his films but it can help to situate oneself within his preoccupations and concerns. I have resigned myself to the knowledge that I'm still missing a lot of historical and cultural references but that's another thing that makes his cinema so engaging: Every one of his films will leave you wanting to learn more. The other thing I discovered is that there is probably no better person to make sense of his films than Angelopoulos himself! I tend to immerse myself in critical writing about a filmmaker when I'm preparing a series but this time, I kept coming back to Angelopoulos himself in interviews. There are occasions when he will say, as artists do, that he doesn't know why he chose this or that image or composition in the moment of shooting, but more often than not he knew exactly what he wanted and why and he can be incredibly forthcoming about his reasons. That said, over the course of his career, in interviews he returns again and again to the responsibility of audiences watching his films. He's very clear that he wants active viewers and he uses ambiguity as a strategy to draw us into the meaning making process, which is connected to how he mobilizes Greek history and mythology. If the recurring structure of his films is the journey, he never gives us road signs. He wants us to find our own way with him.

Polymnia, Memory and Love

Our Center is proud to be supporting the production and the staging of *Polymnia*, a new opera composed by local artist **Theodosia Roussos** based on letters and poems of her great-grandmother about her experience of being expelled from her ancestral home in Asia Minor. We hosted recently, at our Center, a conversation between Ms. Roussos and **Peter Kazaras**, Distinguished Professor of Music, Director of Opera UCLA and the Inaugural Susan G. and Mitchel D. Covell MD Chair at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music. Professor Kazaras has also contributed to *Polymnia* as a dramaturg.

Polymnia will premiere on Saturday, January 21 at the Little Theater in Macgowan Hall at UCLA. For further information and to purchase tickets, please visit the event website (<https://hellenic.ucla.edu/event/polymnia/>).



Theodosia Roussos and Peter Kazaras at our Center

Encounters and Beginnings

PK: I knew about you, Theodosia, maybe before you knew about me. I had heard about this incredibly promising oboist around 2007 or 2008, when you were only a sophomore. I remember you were participating in Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Medium*,

a small chamber opera directed by MFA Directing student James Darrah. We had three performances, all sold out, but fifty people were left waiting in the hallway for the first performance of the final night. I remember I asked the conductor if the orchestra could stay and do a second show, and we had to convince you, in particular, because you had an

exam the very next day. We were very grateful when you agreed to do a second show. Since then, I kept my eye on you and your progress.

TR: I loved that show. It opened my eyes to opera. We had played *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Falstaff*, but playing contemporary opera was an amazing experience, just being a few feet away from the singer and hearing it in English. It was just something different.

PK: Were you a fan of opera before that?

TR: I was a fan of opera singers: Pavarotti, Bartoli, or Callas, those were the soundtrack of my school years. While I sang opera, though, and I took part in singing competitions, I didn't major in voice at UCLA, I majored in oboe. I also did my artist diploma in oboe at Oberlin. I met there one of my dear friends and mentors Robert Walters, who supported me in being a total musician and embraced who I was as an artist. I was able to study improvisation and play in different groups. I also learned how to make my own arrangements, half classical and half jazz. I had an eclectic approach to music already from my younger years and Oberlin was a continuation of that. After Oberlin I went to USC, where I got a double master's in oboe and voice. I worked with many wonderful teachers and I had the chance to really work on my technique and reach a professional level so that I could feel comfortable putting myself out there as a vocalist and as an oboist.

PK: This is something that characterizes your work: you break down walls and you do your thing.

TR: I think that's thanks to my dad. Every time I have a crazy idea, I talk with him and with my family. He's incredibly supportive, encouraging me to test and try things out.

PK: You mentioned your dad. I wanted to ask you about your family, which even includes recording artists, the Pappas singers! (*points at album*)

TR: That's actually my mom's side of the family—the side that the story of *Polymnia* comes from. The Pappas singers are my great uncles. They were both musicians: Demetrios, or Jimmy, Pappas studied composition at Columbia. He made his own version of the Greek liturgy and Greek churches in New York still use his liturgical arrangements. So, the Pappas brothers were trained musicians but they also played a lot of folk music. And that was my childhood. We would visit the New York part of the family twice a year and every gathering would include music—just standing around the piano and singing these Greek songs.

Creating *Polymnia*

PK: Tell us about the origins of this opera, *Polymnia*.

TR: I began writing it when my mother passed away a few years ago. I began looking at old family documents and photos to feel connected to her. Her

"Polymnia is a product of diaspora. It's a story that I have heard second and third hand. What does that sound like? What does a second- and a third-hand telling of the story sound like and how does it come out of me, a Greek Cypriot American singer?"

Theodosia Roussos

name was Paula, she was named after my great-grandmother Polymnia, who died the year I was born. I didn't know Polymnia, but I wanted to know more about this woman whom my mom was named after. I found photos, letters, and poems that she wrote—she had beautiful cursive handwriting. And I also found a text, typed by a cousin of mine, that narrated the five-year ordeal that Polymnia went through, as told by her daughter and my grandmother, Sophia Vasilas. They were from Troulia, a small town in Asia Minor, and they were coal traders. They lived in a big house with eleven children. Once tensions began to rise, they were warned that a pogrom was going to take place. They had their belongings ready to go, but events moved fast and they were sent on a five-year death march, without any money or property. The opera is telling all of these events, it tells the full story. After the Ottoman Empire was dissolved, they were allowed to go back. They recovered their sewing machine, which they had buried in the ground, and Polymnia became the unofficial seamstress of the town. So, they started to piece their lives back together, before the 1922 catastrophe uprooted them again. Six of the siblings had already passed away on the march and their mother did as well. Many of the surviving members of the family went to Drama. Polymnia survived and instead of going to Drama, she was sent to America in an arranged marriage with my great-grandfather, Costa, who was from the same town.

I wrote some songs based on this story for my master's in voice at USC. Following the suggestion of my teacher there, Elizabeth Hynes, I orchestrated them for a string trio and guitar and I submitted them to Ensemble Evolution, a program at Banff, and they selected my pieces to be workshopped, performed, and recorded. That was an amazing experience, I got great feedback and a lot of support for the project. The reception was incredible. All these people came up to me crying. I didn't expect that.



But I wanted the Greek community to hear my work. I knew that the UCLA SNF Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture had produced other shows in the past, so I decided I would write an opera. The story itself is so operatic. So, I just emailed Sharon Gerstel, the Director of the Center, without knowing her previously. I simply shared my songs and asked if the Center would be interested in supporting this. And the answer was “yes!”

PK: What steps have you gone through with *Polymnia* up to this point? You have been involved with Beth Morrison Productions and you now have



Still from the short film *Polymnia*
(photo: Hana S. Kim)

a National Sawdust commission. Can you tell us about that and why that is important?

TR: Yes, that was an amazing experience. They approached me to create an art film with my *Polymnia* songs. I did that project collaborating with director Diana Wyenn, projection artist Hana S. Kim, and conductor Christopher Roundtree with WildUp. It is on PBS and still streaming on AllArts. This gave me an opportunity to create a microcosm of the opera, which wasn't exactly the same as the song cycle that was the first creation that emerged from this material.

Staging *Polymnia*

PK: Can you share some details about the upcoming production of *Polymnia* and the participants?

TR: We have assembled a group of incredibly talented people, who feel passionate about sharing this history. Michele Patzakis, a long-time friend who is a soprano for the LA Opera (and a member of the Community Advisory Board of the UCLA SNF Hellenic Center) is part of the cast as well as the fabulous singers including UCLA alumnus Joanna Lynn-Jacobs, Jon Lee Keenan, Liliana Natalie Buickians, and Anthony Moreno, scenic designer Tanya Orellana, projection artist Yee Eun Nam, lighting designer Pablo Santiago — Yee Eun and Pablo are UCLA alumni as well. I will be playing Polymnia and, very briefly, myself.

PK: What is that experience like?

TR: It's interesting. I wanted to tell the story of how this came to me, and part of it is discovering all these papers, saying goodbye to my mother, and wanting to know all the things she didn't get to tell me. That is why *Polymnia* has a strong imaginative component with many liminal moments when someone's soul is still in their body. She's also very important in telling this story as she is my immediate connection to it.

PK: Tell us about your conductor and your collaboration.

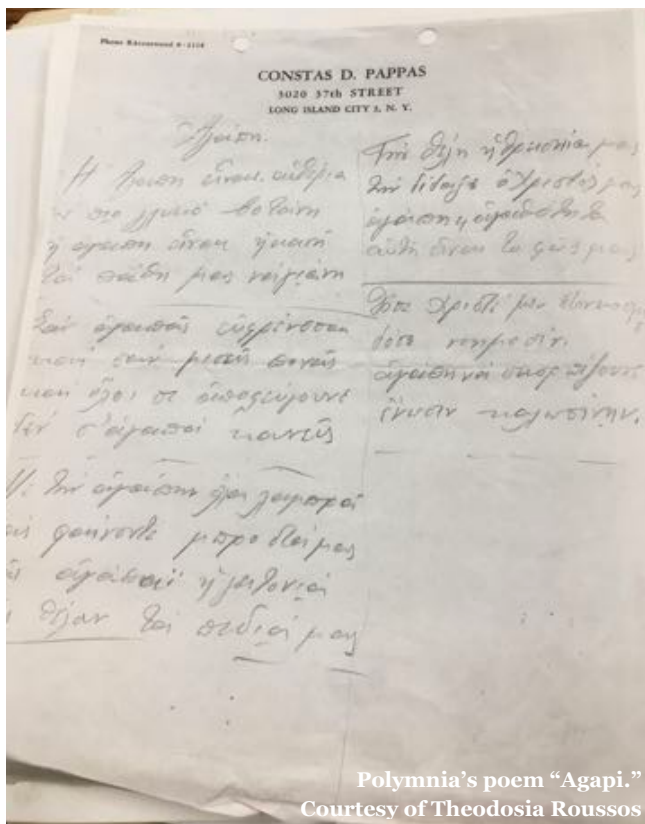
TR: Michiel Delanghe is incredible. He is a longtime friend of my partner, Mathias Coppens, and they have an ensemble in Belgium called deCompagnie. I have spent a lot of time in Belgium during the last year because of my partner's work, and Michiel loved the project since I showed it to him. He also helped me when I would get stuck in writing a certain part or connecting different sections of music. He asked good questions, he talked me

through certain ideas, and he suggested scores to study. So, it was the natural next step to ask him to conduct it since he knew the score intimately by that point.

PK: *Polymnia* strikes me as a deeply personal memory piece. There's a lot of folk tonality and rhythm which is evocative of another era, in terms of Greek ethnicity—whatever that may mean in terms of music. But the sounds of it are familiar to me. And there's also this Asia Minor influence with different styles and traditions. It feels that you discovered something through music from Troulia and that the language of the piece was dictated by the circumstances in which the events happened a hundred years ago.

TR: I wanted to immerse myself in the soundworld that my family would have been in. That includes the music of their village, recordings of which I found this amazing album *Κεμήλια ήχου και λόγου από Ανατολική Θράκη – Ανατολική Ρωμυλία* (*Treasures of Sound and Speech from Eastern*

Thrace – Eastern Rumelia). I was listening to *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares*, an incredible album with Bulgarian folk music that uses improvisation in a manner that makes it, for me, very experimental. At the same time, the music in Constantinople would have been very different—what we call or think of as rebetiko. While the music from the villages of Asia Minor stays in one key and the singing is very nasal, music in Constantinople would have been more maqams and it would have more influences from Ottoman music. I wrote this piece with all these traditions in mind, embracing all the types of music I grew up with, while also listening to Philip Glass, Menotti, Mozart, and my contemporaries. The challenge was how to make these my own. There was a lot of creative re-imagining in telling this story, because a lot of this history and this music is lost. I should say that there are scholars trying to recover these songs, and I plan in the future to join them and conduct research and collect songs from the area near Troulia. I want to trace the itineraries of these people and their musical tradition. In this regard, *Polymnia* is a



Polymnia's poem "Agapi."
Courtesy of Theodosia Roussos



Polymnia with her sister Anna (left) and a friend (right).
Courtesy of Theodosia Roussos

product of diaspora. It's a story that I have heard second and third hand. What does that sound like? What does a second- and a third-hand telling of the story sound like and how does it come out of me, a Greek Cypriot American singer?

PK: It's obvious to me that at some point along the road there was a switch that was turned on in you. Maybe it was from the time you were born. I want to help all of my students flip that switch and realize that they are creators. They have the power to do this, if they want to. Of course, you need to have a certain amount of talent but you also have to work hard and make your own opportunities.

TR: I think I always was a composer. I've always written songs. I used to walk around as a kid with a tape recorder, and I would write songs. But I never thought "I should study composition." I simply loved music, I was obsessed with it, it was the thing I cared about the most. But I didn't feel like I could be a composer until I worked with Emile Mosseri on his film score for *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*. He gave me an incredible opportunity as an experimental oboist and improviser, and was very encouraging whenever I shared original pieces with him. I started to see myself as a creator.

PK: I want to ask you a, perhaps, difficult question. What is it like personally to create an artistic response to loss?

TR: It is difficult. The piece *Agapi* was meant to be for my mother and also for my great-grandmother, whose history I had recently fully come to understand. I knew that she had survived this five-year ordeal. But I didn't *know*. Nobody said to me "Oh, that's genocide!" Nor had I realized before that *that's* why my family came to this country. It is a very dark story that nobody wanted to talk about and I understand why. The story is therefore about grief. But it is also very cathartic. The upsetting part is what happened. This part, the opera, is not upsetting, it is a healing process. The poem *Agapi*, written by Polymnia, is about love and how love

"To have that attitude when you have seen such violence, to come to that perspective, after living through such trauma and loss, and not becoming bitter and angry, that's incredible, to me. In her poetry there is no self-pity at all. It is all about love—love about her home and love in describing the world she had lost."

Theodosia Roussos

cures all your ills. To have that attitude when you have seen such violence, to come to that perspective, after living through such trauma and loss, and not becoming bitter and angry, that's incredible, to me. In her poetry there is no self-pity at all. It is all about love—love about her home and love in describing the world she had lost.

PK: You wrote this during the pandemic, which must have been a challenging time. What was that experience like?

TR: It was very difficult. I would avoid going back to the composition for months at a time. The subject matter is heavy and I really put myself in the story when I'm writing music. That's something extremely exhausting, sometimes it would prevent me from even writing. Sometimes I would get stuck

and I would seek to talk about it with other composers, with you and Diana Wyenn, who are the dramaturgs, with Michele Patzakis who helped me frame the piece. I needed these connections. I should also say that I was even scared to start because I was worried that I would get the story wrong or that I would offend people. This is not just my history, it's my family's history and the history of so many others—the people who were displaced, the people who suffered. I did feel this pressure and responsibility to do justice to this story, both musically and dramatically. So, on the one hand, I did not want to make a mistake. I wanted people to understand the story. At the same time, I didn't want to create a documentary. This is an artistic

"The whole experience of opera and music making is intensely intuitive and physical and emotional. It is not primarily an intellectual or analytical process for me. [...] I am not a religious person, but I do believe in the process of people coming together to experience music in one place at one time."

Peter Kazaras

piece; it's not meant to be too literal.

PK: What has been the reception so far of this material? You mentioned you performed the

original song cycle already, have there been any other public-facing events?

TR: Yes, I also performed the cycle at the Bang on a Can Festival. It went extremely well. Friends who were also participating in the program came to me in tears after the performance. A woman with family from Hong Kong came to me and said that it reminded her of her family's history. There was a similar reaction when I workshopped the songs during a residency at SongFest. The comments I received were very supportive and this kind of support buoyed me to keep going.

Growing as Artists at UCLA

PK: So, you are a magnet for those who have constructive help to offer. Not by providing ready recipes, but rather by making suggestions. The true mentor-mentee relationship is enabling the person who's learning to figure it out in their language.

TR: Yes! And challenging them with the right questions or providing apt observations at the right moment. It's really helpful to have just someone you trust, who is an incredible colleague like you, or Mathias, my partner, who is an incredible composer and he would help me, giving comments on the orchestration.

PK: When I started working here at UCLA it was difficult for me to hear students say that they considered me as a mentor. The word makes me nervous! I am keenly aware that the role of mentors is to make themselves redundant, to enable the mentee to leave the nest. That doesn't mean that there can't be a friendly relationship, but the first goal is to grow up, go out, and do what you need to do. And I did not set out to become a teacher. I was first a singer and when I began teaching, I was not teaching voice but how performers should prepare in order to exist onstage as believable characters. I came to UCLA in 2007 and I have been here ever since. I remember that Jessye Norman, who was a friend, came to sing a recital at Royce Hall. When I

Polymnia song cycle at SongFest
(photo: Jeanine Hill)



introduced my students to her and mentioned that I was a professor here and Director of Opera UCLA, she teased me by saying that my telling people what to do is a perfect job for me. But you know, this is not a desire to be bossy, but to be helpful in order to create an artistic experience. Sometimes that's appreciated and sometimes it's not, but for me that process is really life-affirming. The whole experience of opera and music making is intensely intuitive and physical and emotional. It is not primarily an intellectual or analytical process for me. There is of course a lot of preparation and study, lots of engagement with source material, but at its core it's something else that bypasses a cerebral approach. I am not a religious person, but I do believe in the process of people coming together to experience music in one place at one time. That, in a sense, is my religion. That is the energy stream that I plug into to derive inspiration. In a sense that sounds very strange, but it's true. I don't know how else to say it—it is magic.

TR: UCLA is really important for me as well. It was an incredible place for me as an undergraduate. I felt safe here but I also felt very independent. It's a

very happy place for me and I have so many good memories, playing in the orchestra, doing the operas with you, Peter. And I've come back over the years to do many projects; I did, for instance, *The Tragedy of Carmen*, with Joanna Lynn-Jacobs who was incredible in that role. I loved the intimacy of that show and it stayed with me as a composer. I kept thinking about it while writing *Polymnia*. I was also invited for some lectures and I participated in some recording sessions. It is always so fun to be back at UCLA. It is such an honor to be back again with my own opera. It's so exciting.

PK: For me, UCLA is one of the most important chapters in my life. I had gotten to a certain point in my career and I was still singing but I knew that that wasn't going to go on forever. I've had the opportunity to be here and craft a career out of being here as a director and a teacher. And I'm ready now to transition to the next stage, which is retirement. I've gotten now to the point that I know that that's a good thing, I'm happy about it. I am not exactly counting the days but it's time and that's OK. It's time for new people, and it's time for new imaginations, and it's time for new thoughts.

Faculty News

Tracing Ancient and Modern Migration in Northern Greece



Professor Sarah Morris

For the past ten years, **Professor Sarah Morris** (Classics; Cotsen Institute of Archaeology) has been exploring ancient Methone in Pieria, northern Greece, excavated by the Ephorate of Antiquities since 2003, and by a team including UCLA from 2014-2017. Reports appear in *Hesperia* (<https://bit.ly/3APS24Y>) and in a forthcoming Cotsen Institute of Archaeology monograph, but the modern community and its recent past also form part of the team's project. On March 30, Professor Morris will lecture on this topic at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (for further information and Zoom registration, click here: <https://bit.ly/3VCIhib>). She looks forward to exploring the diachronic history of an ancient site and its inhabitants and

their afterlives, from antiquity through the twenty-first century. First occupied in the Neolithic period, Methone was colonized by Eretrians in 733/32 B.C. and destroyed by Philip II of Macedon in 354 B.C., in a history of displacements over the first millennium B.C.. The site vanished from history until the dramatic events of 1922, when refugees from Agathopolis on the Black Sea founded Nea Agathapouli near ancient Methone. Their descendants have taken a keen interest in the project since 2014, which was reciprocated by the restoration of the abandoned train station. Once repaired, it received a new sign by local artist Nikos Semizidis, who has decorated the town much like street art and murals of the original Agathopolis (Ahtopol in today's Bulgaria), as recorded by Maria Savidis, an Agathopolitan from New Jersey, linking the stories of diaspora communities (for more information on her work, see here: <https://bit.ly/3GTAusc>).

Research on Mycenaean Greek



Professor Brent Vine

Professor Brent Vine (Classics & Program in Indo-European Studies) recently published the article "Myc. *tu-wo*, Hom. *θύος* and the vocalism of *s*-stems in Proto-Indo-European" (*Acta Linguistica Petropolitana*, 18.1, 2022), which advances our knowledge of Mycenaean Greek and its relation to the reconstructed ancestor language "Proto-Indo-European" ("PIE," spoken ca. 4,000–5,000 BCE). Mycenaean Greek is the earliest form of the Greek language and it is documented on clay tablets from Crete and mainland Greece during the Bronze Age (ca. 1400–1200 BCE). Together with Homeric Greek, Mycenaean Greek provides crucial data for understanding the history of the Greek language, and also its relationship with cognate Indo-European languages, all descended

from PIE. Greek is particularly important for the reconstruction of PIE because it

preserves precious details of the complex PIE system of morphology (i.e., the different forms taken by words like verbs and nouns). Vine's publication focused on one type of nouns, the category of "*s*-stems." While the traditional theory about PIE *s*-stems holds that the root should contain the vowel *-e-*, Vine's research considers *s*-stems that do not contain this vowel and shows that this is not an anomaly, but rather a representative of an *s*-stem subtype that can be reconstructed for PIE itself.

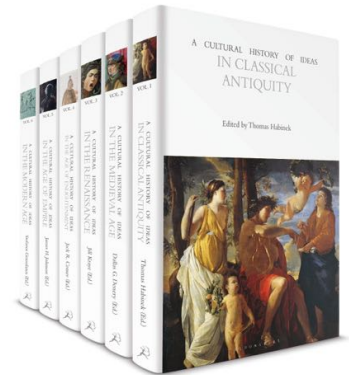
Faculty News

Publications on Classical Literature and Thought



Professor Giulia Sissa (Political Science; Comparative Literature; Classics) co-edited the volume *A Cultural History of Ideas in Classical Antiquity* (Bloomsbury, 2023), together with Professors Clifford Ando (University of Chicago) and Thomas Habinek (USC), a beloved scholar now sorely missed who had started the project. She also authored the section “The Human Self” in this volume, which is the first in the six-volume series *A Cultural History of Ideas*, covering, in addition to antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Ages of Enlightenment and Empire, and the Modern Age. Professor Sissa also published the study “Elle sait. Elle dit. Elle rit. L’ éloge paradoxal d’éros par Diotime de Mantinée” as

a chapter in the volume *The Gendered ‘I’ in Ancient Literature: Modeling Gender in First-Person Discourse* (De Gruyter, 2022). In that chapter, she explores the conception of Eros in Plato’s *Symposium*—expressed, crucially, by a woman who laughs at Socrates’ own contradictions. The study argues that Diotima’s speech must be read against the background of the erotic and theatrical culture of Athens and that its implications for the practice of philosophy are surprisingly paradoxical.



A New Production of *Eugene Onegin*

Over the summer, **Professor and Director of Opera UCLA, Peter Kazaras** (Music), directed a well-received new production of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin* for Music Academy of the West. Kazaras’ direction paid homage to the 75th anniversary of this important music training program. You can hear Professor Kazaras talking about *Eugene Onegin* on the organization’s website (<https://bit.ly/3UEcfSZ>). He is also looking ahead to a busy and creative 2023. In winter, he will direct the first workshop readings of a new opera, *The Grand Hotel Tartarus*, with music and libretto by Professor Richard Danielpour, a member of the Composition faculty of The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music. Following that, he will return during a sabbatical in spring to Washington National Opera to revive his 2014 production of *La Bohème*.

Duel scene from *Eugene Onegin*
(photo: Zach Mendez)



Final scene from *Eugene Onegin*
(photo: Zach Mendez)



Student News

Tracing Pathways from Sea to Sky

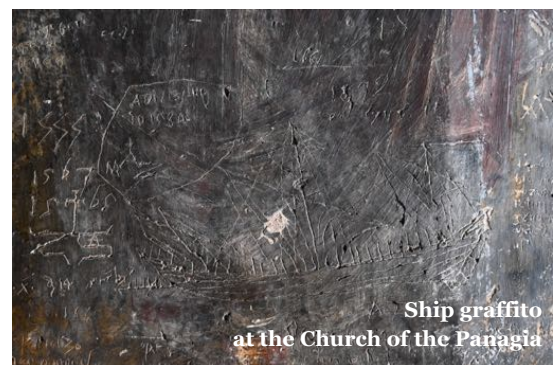
Nicolyna Enriquez (Ph.D. Candidate, Byzantine Art History) reflects on her summer research on ship graffiti in Cretan churches with support from a Peter and Vivi Demopoulos Fellowship.



While conducting field research in Crete for my dissertation, I found myself on the narrow and steeply winding road leading from the village of Loukia to the picturesque village of Kapetaniana, which is perched almost above the world along the western side of the Asterousia mountain range. I was drawn to the Church of the Panagia (dated by an inscription to 1401-1402) by the presence of ship graffiti on the images of St. Peter and St. John the Studite, together with various names and dates inscribed into the wall paintings (see photo). Formerly the *katholikon* of the now-destroyed monastery of Vathmou, the Panagia is not the only church in the region that is marked by

ship graffiti. The nearby Church of the Archangel Michael (c. 1404), a former *metochion* or dependency of the same monastery, contains one ship graffito, while the seaside cave monastery of St. John (1360) contains fifteen images of ships incised primarily into the images of the healing saints Cosmas, Damian, and Panteleimon. Pathways link these three churches to one another and to numerous other former and active monasteries nestled in the mountains. Known even today as one of the last great wildernesses of the island, the caves, and barren hillsides were, until very recently, inhabited by hermits and monks craving the solitude that the mountain range provided. Today the region is home to thousands of goats and sheep which roam freely among the *phrygana*.

During the summer of 2022, I spent one week documenting the churches and their graffiti and mapping the pathways which link these sacred sites. I walked the path leading from the entrance of St. John through the Goula Gorge to the portal of the Church of the Panagia. That same route then continued east, connecting the Panagia to the Church of the Archangel Michael and then onwards to the fourteenth-century Church of the Three Hierarchs (also a former monastery). The path finally culminated in the daunting pass leading to the modern Church of Timios Stavros at the peak of the highest mountain in the Asterousia range, Mount Kofinas, a point that affords views of both the entire coastline and the valley below. Moving west from Kapetaniana, similar pathways lead across the mountains to the fortified monastery of Zoodochos Pege, a site that held a sacred spring as indicated by the church's dedication. Down along the shore, a pathway leads along the coastline from the Church of St. John to the still-functioning twelfth-century monastery of Koudoumas. This route, winding along the cliffs and beaches of the southern coastline, provides access to several cave churches, including one dedicated to Sts. Cosmas and Damian. The emphasis on the healing nature of these saints, alongside the presence of ship graffiti, marks this territory as a site of pilgrimage, healing, trade, and movement during the Late Byzantine and Early Modern periods.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR UCLA STUDENTS

Undergraduate Scholarships/Grants

Aristides G. Alexopoulos Endowment Student Fund

Provides assistance in the form of small grants to students in financial need, with preference given to undergraduate and graduate students of Hellenic descent or with parents of Greek citizenship. To apply, please send an email to hellenic@humnet.ucla.edu with your name, year, department, and a paragraph description of why you are requesting financial assistance. No application deadline.

Graduate Student Fellowships

Peter and Vivi Demopoulos Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship

This fellowship supports graduate student travel to Greece for research during the summer.

Award: \$4,000

James and Carolyn Kolokotronis Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship

This fellowship supports graduate student travel to Greece for research during the summer.

Award: \$4,000

George Olympios Family Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship

This fellowship supports graduate student travel to Greece for research during the summer.

Award: \$2,000

The George and Cleola Gavalas Fund for Archaeology

This fund is used to support students studying archaeology in Greece, from any period of the country's history.

Award: \$2,500

UCLA

Stavros Niarchos Foundation
Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture

Student Awards

The Gus and Judie Christopoulos Award for Modern Greek Language Study

Annual award provided to the student with the best performance in the first year of Modern Greek language courses.

To apply for a graduate student fellowship, please submit to hellenic@humnet.ucla.edu the following documents:

- Letter of intent including name, year, department, contact information, and project description (not to exceed one page)
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Two (2) recommendation letters; the letters should be sent directly from the recommenders
- Application deadline: March 1

For more information, please visit <https://hellenic.ucla.edu/fellowships/>.

For inquiries, email hellenic@humnet.ucla.edu or call 310-825-5323

Student News

Research on Kontoglou in the USA

In November, **Sofia Pitouli** (Ph.D. student, Byzantine Art History) traveled to Charleston, South Carolina, to visit the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity, built in 1952 by the Greek community. The church includes several icons painted by the renowned Greek hagiographer Fotis Kontoglou (1895-1965). Most importantly, he also designed the stained-glass windows decorating the church and painted medallions of saints below the dome. This research, which received support from the George Olympios Family Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship, forms part of a larger research project examining the work of Kontoglou in the United States. Pitouli, who has worked at the Textile Museum in Washington, DC, serves as project manager for the pilot project's collaboration with the Women's Weaving Collective in Geraki, Laconia.



UCLA Students Celebrate Oxi Day



On October 28, Greek, Cypriot, Greek American, and American students met at our Center to celebrate the anniversary of Greece's entrance in World War II to fight totalitarianism.

West Coast Hellenic Photo Competition



The West Coast Consortium of Hellenic Studies Programs invites all interested undergraduates to submit their best photograph for the competition. The photographs must be taken in Greece between May – August 2023. All photos must be original.

The theme for 2023 is:

Kiosk (periptero)

*If you've ever traveled to Greece, there is no doubt you have come across and used a **periptero**, which is a small kiosk selling anything from tobacco, phone cards, water, soft drinks, newspapers, magazines, ice cream, gum as well as other confectionaries.*

Photos can be of entire kiosks, details, or even portraits of those who work or shop at the periptero.

Submissions are due by September 15, 2023. A panel of university faculty and artists will determine the winning photographs. The best overall photo winner will receive a new Apple iPhone 13. Second-place winners will receive \$100 Amazon gift cards. The winning photos will be displayed on the Hellenic Studies websites of the participating universities and a curated selection of photos will go on display in university centers, the Greek consulates, and the Greek Embassy in Washington, DC during the fall term of 2023.

Submissions must be sent electronically to: hellenic@humnet.ucla.edu. All submissions should be sent in jpg or tiff format (at least 300 dpi) along with the title of the photo, the location of the kiosk, and a short paragraph describing the subject for use as an exhibition label. Submissions should also include the name, university affiliation (please include a copy of your student ID), and contact information of the photographer. No late submissions will be accepted.

For more information, please contact Ms. Nikki Erinakis, Program Manager, UCLA SNF Hellenic Center at: nerinakis@humnet.ucla.edu.

Partner Spotlight

Q&A with Aris Katopodis, Artistic Director of the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival (LAGFF)



Aris Katopodis
(photo: Urbanite Media)

How did the LAGFF start in 2007? What led to this initiative?

The LAGFF was founded by Ersi Danou and Angeliki Giannakopoulos, both filmmakers. Ersi Danou, a Hollywood Foreign Press Association member for 20 years, has directed and produced fiction and short films, while Angeliki Giannakopoulos has directed documentaries and several theatrical plays in Los Angeles. The need to bring, showcase, and represent Greek cinema, culture, and the new generation of Greek filmmakers from Greece, Cyprus and around the world in the creative capital of the world, while building a bridge of opportunity, was the primary spark. The love of film and culture realized this festival.

You are the Artistic Director of the LAGFF. How did your experience as a student at UCLA prepare you for this position?

As a student at UCLA, I had the opportunity to study Chemistry and Film, two complementary areas of study! Classes in film history, directing, and cinematography, profoundly prepared me for my consequent engagement with theatrical plays, as a director, producer, stage manager and then as Artistic Director of LAGFF. Obtaining life-lasting learning expertise, knowledge, and leadership skills is invaluable.

What were some of the challenges the LAGFF faced at the beginning? What new challenges have taken their place?

We diligently encourage and promote cross-cultural communication, education, and collaboration so that ideas, creative initiatives, and professional opportunities are nurtured while barriers are broken. The LAGFF's fundamental purpose of existence is to raise awareness of modern Greek culture in Los Angeles and Southern California, while continuously drawing on and underlining the inexhaustible wealth of the Hellenic heritage. These goals were not without challenges. Showcasing films in a metropolitan area such as Los Angeles, a film festival can face stiff competition. There are over 90 ethnic film festivals in the city at last count. The quest for the hearts and minds of viewers has been challenging. The financial challenges have also been significant. LAGFF is a nonprofit organization that raises its own budget annually. We have been very honored and grateful for the love and care of the community and our friends who appreciate, welcome, and long for our cultural offerings and Greek film. The UCLA SNF Hellenic Center has been one of these friends, supporters, and collaborators. We are appreciative of the support and are looking forward to an even closer relationship. Being challenged by Covid-19, as many organizations have, a new landscape has appeared as film lovers have many options of viewing films. Online streaming, home theaters, and on-demand virtual

viewing capabilities are now widely available. This affects the film industry at large. As a full-fledged film festival, now in its 17th year, we offer a plethora of experiences. An expertly curated film slate, live Q&A sessions with the filmmakers present, workshops, red-carpet events, VR labs, live panels with industry experts, community gatherings, networking opportunities, industry connections, press exposure, are just some of the value-added activities that cannot be experienced at home. In addition, we have also established our own virtual platform for viewers that love the films but may be further away, or unable to attend in person.



You recently announced the Global Greek Film Initiative (GGFI). Could you tell us a bit more about this initiative and its goals?

GGFI is strategically designed to establish an array of new annual programs to promote cultural exchange between Greece, the United States, and the Hellenic diaspora, service opportunities for employment and economic growth within Greece, and be the North American hub and global one-stop collective for Greek film programs and initiatives. GGFI is the natural expansion of LAGFF to a larger and pivotal role that would include several new programs and activities. I mention just a few of them: The inception of a crew training program for Greek professionals in the entertainment business, administered by American professionals and technicians; strategies to facilitate Hollywood film production in Greece; scholarships for Greek film students to attend and participate in LAGFF and to enjoy personalized programs of professional development and networking; the expansion to Greece of LAGFF's already established International Project Discovery Forum; multiple series of online and in-person screenings or events with various relevant focus areas, including faith and tradition, diversity, women's empowerment and LGBTQIA+; and, of course, expanded collaborations with other learning institutions in the U.S. and Greece.

Does Greek cinema talk to a global audience today? What unique perspectives do Greek films bring to global cinema?

Greek cinema has always been influential to a global audience. From *Zorba the Greek* to the Melina Mercouri and Irene Papas films, to Theodore Angelopoulos, Michael Cacoyannis, and Pantelis Voulgaris films, Greek cinema has captivated the heart and soul of an international audience. Since *Dogtooth* and Yorgos Lanthimos, modern Greek film introduced a fresh, innovative, and different perspective to film. Greek film today continues to capture major film awards at Cannes, Berlinale, Tribeca Film Festival, and Venice Film Festival. Innovative techniques, current themes, history, art, and emotional engagement characterize modern Greek cinema. The very successful short film crop of directors bodes well for the future of Greek cinema. Strong incentives, established by the Greek government in 2017, for shooting films in Greece have established the country as a go-to destination for international productions and have also contributed to a significant leap in the quality of Greek productions as well, both in cinema and in TV. The future of Greek cinema seems to be in an ascending and hopeful path. We are here to experience it and enjoy it together!

Winter-Spring 2023 Events

All events held on the UCLA campus unless noted otherwise

- January 7** • **GREEK BOOK CLUB | CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR**
10:00 AM
Zoom
Έρση Σωτηροπούλου, *Τι μένει από τη νύχτα*
- January 21** • **OPERA**
7:00 PM
Little Theater
Polymnia, a chamber opera composed by Theodosia Roussos
- February 11** • **A CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL GREEK LANGUAGE DAY**
10:00 AM
Zoom
Themistoklis Aravossitas, University of Toronto
“Greek Language Education in North America: New Directions and Challenges”
Co-sponsored by the Embassy of Greece in the United States and the
Consulate General of Greece in Los Angeles
- March 4** • **GREEK BOOK CLUB | CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR**
10:00 AM
Zoom
Μαριαλένα Σεμιτέκολου, *Ακουαρέλα*
- April 11** • **LECTURE**
4:00 PM
Royce Hall 306
Kostis Kornetis, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
“Generations of Transition: Memory, Conflict and Democratization in post-Junta Greece”
This lecture is supported by the UCLA/SFU pilot program.
- April 22** • **NATIONAL POETRY MONTH LECTURE**
10:00 AM
Zoom
John Kittmer, Former British Ambassador to Greece
“‘From the Tip of My Little Finger a River Flows:’ Yannis Ritsos’ Response to Dictatorship (1967-1970)”
Co-sponsored by the Embassy of Greece in the United States
- April 29** • **LECTURE**
3:00 PM
Royce Hall 306
Ioanna Kakoulli, Department of Materials Science and Engineering, UCLA
“Pigments in Ancient Greek Painting and Medicine: Ecology, Materiality and the Alchemical Laboratory”
- May 7** • **LECTURE**
3:00 PM
Royce Hall 314
Paschalis Kitromilides, Member of the Academy of Athens
“Asia Minor: Idea and History”
Co-sponsored by the Consulate General of Greece in Los Angeles and UCLA Center for European and Russian Studies
- May 13** • **GREEK BOOK CLUB | CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR**
10:00 AM
Zoom
Αντώνης Μπαλασόπουλος, *Ο κύβος και άλλες ιστορίες*
- June 3** • **FILM**
TBA
James Bridges Theater
Los Angeles Greek Film Festival Opening Night