



## *Visit the Village*

Blissfully serene landscapes, food that provokes the taste buds, cobble lanes so silent you can hear a pin prick, and striking stone buildings that defy the hands of time: Cypriot villages are where authentic local life reigns supreme. Simply follow winding country roads to discover six of the island's most stunning rural communities.



## Lefkara: Lace, silver & folk tales

Ask a local about the best of the island's villages, and Lefkara is sure to top the list. An easy drive from Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol, this quaint stonebuilt area makes for the perfect road trip if you don't want to veer too far from the city, but are still itching to discover more about the island's past.

Lefkara is best explored on foot; discover old architecture in the cobbled alleys, engage with friendly locals who'll welcome you into their shops, and kick back at traditional taverns for a homemade taste of Cyprus.

With dazzling lace embroidery adorning practically every inch of the village – from building exteriors to coffee shops and countryside hotels – it's

little wonder that local folk are so proud of their produce. The so called 'lefkaritika' are included on UNESCO's Intangible World Heritage List, but intricate lace is not the only reason that locals grin from ear to ear. Their silversmithing skills are also the best on the island!

Want more history and culture? Make a beeline for the Folklore Museum (House of Patsalos, Tel: +357 24 342326), where you'll discover more of the island's splendours.

**Must-try:** 'Ttavas', which is the ultimate Cypriot dish originating from Lefkara. Satisfy those taste buds with rice, potatoes, vegetables and lamb, slow-cooked in a casserole, and infused with cumin.



## Lofou: Glorious wine land

Nestled in the towering foothills of the Troodos mountains outside Limassol, Lofou is one of the most captivating stonebuilt villages on the island. And it's also one of the island's prime winegrowing villages: the nearby hills are blanketed in rambling vines, while winegrowing traditions and customs are still intertwined in local life.

Have your cameras at the ready when you walk through the village, with its elevated location – rising almost 800 metres above sea level – providing stunning views. Head to the Neoclassical old village school to take it all in, and you'll be left breathless. Stop off at the olive mill ([www.lofou.org/en/olives-len](http://www.lofou.org/en/olives-len)) to catch a glimpse of how the prized oil was made in bygone

days, while the Folk-Art museum provides insight into village life in centuries past. When hunger hits, try Kamares Tavern (Tel: +357 25 470719) for sumptuous meze in a traditional, stone-wall setting.

End your day with a cup of soothing herbal tea at the quintessentially Cypriot 'Xenis o Poyiatzis' (Xenis the Painter) coffee shop-cum-herb shop located on Lofou's main cobbled street, right opposite Kamares Tavern.

**Top tip:** While exploring, see if you can spot a vibrant street art mural portraying one of the village's locals.



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## Omodos: A taste of local produce

Another bucolic winegrowing village, Omodos is a popular rural destination, but don't let the crowds put you off. Renowned for its traditional Cypriot produce of 'zivania' (a strong alcoholic spirit made from a mixture of grape pomace and local dry wines), 'arkatena koulourka' (bread rusks) and 'kiofterka' (jelly-like sweets made from grape juice), Omodos offers visitors a real taste of local village life. The good news is that sellers on the main street often offer bites to taste before buying.

The cobble lanes of Omodos are also filled with traditional embroidery: the 'pipilla'. Women of the village take great pride in their craft and it still largely remains the pride and joy of every Cypriot household in the district.

Savour local Cypriot delicacies at Stou Kir Yiannis' tavern (15 Linou Street, Tel: 70 000100) or head down to Katoï ([www.omodosevents.com](http://www.omodosevents.com)) for a real twist on tradition. Wine enthusiasts will love visiting the medieval winepress, a 500-year-old wine-making machine at Kiima Gerolemo ([ktimagerolemo.com](http://ktimagerolemo.com)).

**Must-see:** The Holy Cross Monastery in the village centre. One of the oldest and most famous in Cyprus, it houses what is believed to be Holy rope and wood that Jesus was crucified on, brought to Cyprus by Saint Helen.



## Lania: Hidden artist's paradise

Don't let the quiet façade fool you, Lania hides countless treasures and is often celebrated as one of most picturesque villages on the island.

While the village homes are humble in appearance, foreigners and locals alike have colourfully transformed Lania with lush vegetation and wall mosaics. With relocated creatives having opened up art studios in this secluded spot of the Limassol winegrowing district, you can pop into studios and get hold of local art to take back home.

Peruse the area and you'll come across the Old Olive Press, the Shoemaker's Museum and the Commandaria Storage Museum. As a grape-cultivating village, the Old Wine Press also beckons, providing a glimpse of local wine

production methods. And while you're traversing the village centre, stand back to admire the 800-year-old oak tree.

Be sure to trace Lania's history through a permanent black and white photography exhibition which adorns the village walls. And if you happen to visit Lania in May, you'll love the 'Lanes and Courtyards of Lania' festival (Tel: +357 25 432333 for exact dates closer to the time), where the friendly women of the village open their stunning courtyards to visitors.

**Best eat:** Tuck into simple yet tasty Cypriot cuisine at Platanos tavern (Tel: +357 25 434273), just as you enter the village. You can't miss it!

## Fikardou: Deep into times past

You won't need long to walk through the tiny village of Fikardou; a few hours may be enough to discover all the nooks and crannies. But each and every corner is worth it, with this tiny place deep in the Pitsilia countryside having won the Europa Nostra Award for cultural heritage in 1987 and declared an ancient monument.

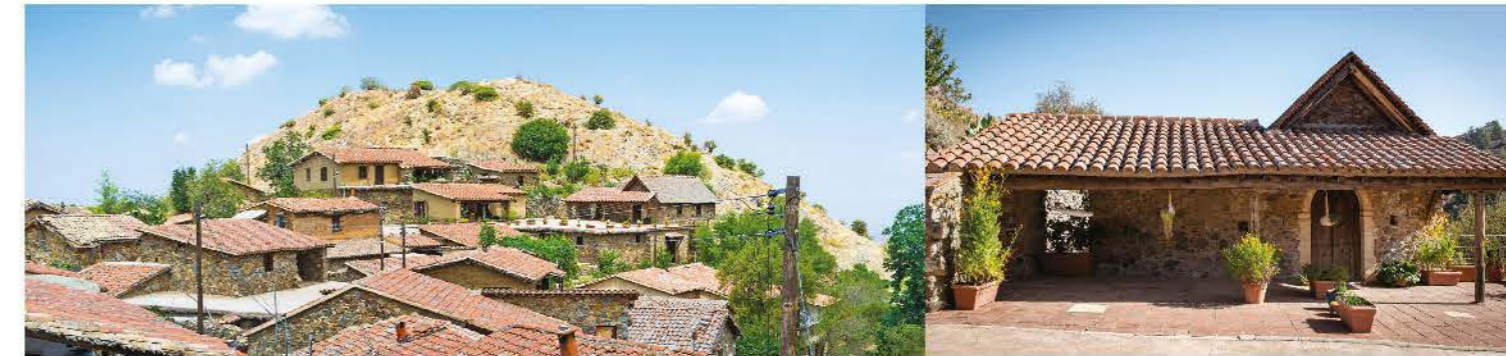
Practically abandoned, just a handful of inhabitants remain in the village today, only re-attracting visitors after a hit Cypriot TV series was filmed in the area, showcasing the old, red-tiled-rooves which characterise the village homes that cradle the rickety cobble lanes.

Yiannakos Tavern (Tel: +357 22 633311) welcomes visitors upon arrival, known for its local food and quirky decor. Look out for the dried, carved butternut

squash hung on its walls, which you'll also spot around the village's gardens.

Two houses have been turned into the Local Rural Museum (Tel: +357 22 634731) which beckons curious visitors. The House of Katsinioros – which was named after its last owner – is a two-storey stone-built manor house with a steep-pitched wooden roof and many 16<sup>th</sup> century architectural features, showcasing old tools, agricultural mechanisms and more, while the second, that of Achilleas Dimitri, gives visitors a glimpse of a weaver's workshop and scholar's guest house.

**Best sleep:** For some great countryside shut eye, spend the night at the Magic Hour – Traditional House (listed on Airbnb) and experience how locals used to live in this cosy and quirky stone-built place.



## Kakopetria: Up to higher heights

One of the most visited villages on the island, the Solea Valley village of Kakopetria lures explorers making their way up to Mount Olympus all year round, famed for its cool climate in the summer, and cosy charm in the winter.

In the heart of Kakopetria, you'll quickly be drawn to the central burbling River Klaros, and if you're looking to get those legs moving, venture out on a short 1km hike on the Vateri Nature Trail along the river, engulfed by tall sycamore trees. Feeling thirsty? Fill your bottles with mountain water from the fountain at the end of the trail.

Recharge your batteries with a sip of Cypriot coffee at Serenity (Tel: +357 22 922602) in the old part of the village with traditional old stone and

wood houses, then head on to explore the church of Ayios Nikolaos tis Stegis, one of the ten painted churches of the Troodos region, that enjoys UNESCO's World Heritage status. Its simple 11<sup>th</sup> century stone façade stands in complete antithesis to the embellished interior, with rich murals paying heritage to the island's vibrant Byzantine past.

**Must-try:** Be sure to tuck into the delicious spoon sweets (bite sized fruit and vegetables preserved in syrup) sold by the women of the village outside their doors.



*'This exhibition is a way that allows people on the margins to address and speak to the audience that usually, in the context of Cyprus, is not within their reach'*



MAJA'S family and other friends in her village took up loans so she could pay the total fee of \$6,800 necessary for a work visa to come to Cyprus through an employment agency

DOMESTIC workers from different countries find shelter at the St. Joseph Social Centre for women in the Old Town of Nicosia



# The familiar faces of migration

Buffer zone exhibition engages in new dialogues on the global movement of people

By Eleni Philippou

The life of a migrant, the life of a local. Do these meet and co-exist and can they share similar stories? The multimedia installation exhibition, 'Island in the Sun' by Maren Wickwire and Melissa Heekers, set to take place during the Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival next week (November 10th-12th), highlights such issues of migration and social marginalisation, by presenting them from new perspectives.

Berlin/Chicago-based visual anthropologist, Wickwire, whose work usually explores social

questions, expresses the German cinematographer. She highlights how crucial her relationship with the participants was, in order for them to expose their lives. In addition, collaborating with Nicosia-based Heekers, who contributed to the project as a writer, aided greatly in assuring a better understanding of political and cultural norms.

The exhibition found a platform within the Buffer Fringe Festival, hosted by the Home For Cooperation, whose location is a sign of people movement in itself, given that individuals cross the checkpoint daily; an element which only adds to the exhibition's purpose.

'Island in the Sun', consists of large photographs showing observations of the lived experiences in Cyprus of migrants. The mixed media components direct the more systematic matters at present, such as heavy bureaucracy and the strict migration model of Cyprus, which create complications for individuals from non-EU countries.

Wickwire explains her choice of an audiovisual installation for the exhibition as it provides "a multi-vocal and multi-layered form of telling personal narratives which relates much more to the fragmented stories we heard and the experience people expressed". As many of the stories overlap and do not occur in chronological order, this art form allows a flow.

As the exhibition offers insight into marginalised people's lives in Cyprus, it simultaneously gives new standpoints on the movement of people around the globe. "We hope people will be inspired to ask new questions or see the 'other', be it the local or the foreigner, in a new light and engage in dialogue."

Through the project's artistic presentation, Wickwire and Heekers hope to create new discussions between the local and the migrant community, reducing the gap existing between the two. Besides, the phenomenon of migration is not an abstract idea for Cypriots either. On the contrary, Wickwire feels that Cyprus acts as a perfect example for migrating, for reasons



AS PART of a larger community of domestic workers in Cyprus, Filipinas come together on Sundays to hold their all-day volleyball tournament in Nicosia



BIRDS flying over the island. Cyprus with Turkey to the north, Syria to the east and Egypt to the south, is placed on one of the major migration routes in the Mediterranean

of employment and a better future, as many of the interviewees had opted for. Many Cypriots have, in the past, and continue today, to move abroad for work and study purposes. Therefore, relating with many individuals, 'Island in the Sun' wishes for its audience to engage in new perspectives, listen to peoples' stories and reconsider them.

"The exhibition is meant to serve as a form of feedback loop to the audience," remarks Wickwire. She goes on to explain that the objective of this audiovisual installation is to engage the viewer interactively in the space, experience the life of foreigners living in Cyprus as the locals relate to them and act as a starting point for new viewpoints on the topic of resettlement.

"This exhibition is a way that allows people on the margins to address and speak to the audience that usually, in the context of Cyprus, is not within their reach."

Freelance journalist Heekers feels migration has revolved around a local aspect for decades, yet there still exists a grand scale of isolation between the foreign and local communities. She adds that it is even an issue that is often ignored, and so she hopes that with this artistic introduction, the public will begin to confront it and take on fresh ideas.

And with the exhibition's format itself constituting a reminder of relocation, the presentation, too, is able to 'migrate'. Thanks to its multimedia element, the exhibition, produced by Manifest Media, does not limit itself to the festival walls and the two artists encourage individuals wishing to host their project in their space, to contact them directly. Designed to be mobile, the exhibition can, thus, travel to diverse spaces, be they schools, universities or conferences.

Ultimately, both Wickwire and Heekers are excited to learn people's thoughts on migration and hope the exhibition will continue to grow and dialogue maintain its flow.

The exhibition launches on November 10 at the Goethe Institute at 6pm.

## Pluralism boost

2016 Buffer Fringe expands with international acts

Presenting its third edition next weekend, the Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival continues to strive to use contemporary performing arts as a tool to shape, redefine and create new cultural identities.

As a constantly evolving and improving initiative, the Festival is set to feature eight innovative and experimental performances from both Cyprus and abroad.

"In the course of the last three years, the festival has explored different ways of questioning artistic and geographical boundaries," says Marina Neophytou, director of the Home for Cooperation which organises the festival.

"In its first year, the Buffer Fringe took place solely in the buffer zone, challenging in this way the use of a restrictive area, yet remaining in a neutral and safe environment for participants and visitors coming from across the divide.

"In its second year, the festival took the form of a 'tour' with performances in different public spaces, squares and venues within the walled city [of Old Nicosia], exceeding the restrictions of a de-facto geographically-divided city.

"This year, it embraces even more fluidity and endorses cultural pluralism more than ever. Remaining within the physical boundaries of the walled city, it expands, however, its reach internationally, hosting five international acts along the five local ones. Thus, it takes place over three days plus the pre-festival event," reveals Neophytou.

To this end, Neophytou explains that audiences should expect to experience cutting-edge performances, the artistic product of artists of all performing arts genres who search for and make new ways of expression. "They should expect to be challenged,



PURE by Ramona Nagabyczynska: a contemporary dance performance transcending the body from the field of the symbolic to the field of fantasies

to redefine their parts; audience receptor or audience reactor; also many great opportunities to meet the artists and one another.

"Starting with a pre-festival event where artists and the public get the opportunity to meet each other, moving on literally and metaphorically to performances and ending with a striking closing party, every bit of it for me is a highlight," she adds.

"Each performance becomes an invitation to challenge artistic limits, transforming every experience into a live expression of creativity and imagination. The whole festival is a celebration of experimentation, of artistic restlessness and the spaces this opens for artists and audience to perceive themes and relationships. The highlight, then, is not one show but rather what happens between the lines, what brews and boils in these new spaces."

Yet bringing avant-garde arts to the general public, within specific boundaries or fringes one, should say, has its challenges.

"In order to do justice to the great vision and the big experiment that this festival is, we, too, have to constantly expand our limits and capacity. There are financial and organisational limits, a lot of bureaucracy to deal with, different time zones as of this year and, of course, the different pushes and pulls of society.

"As the reach of the festival grows and audiences subscribe to its ideas and ideals, so, too, do negative attitudes by some parts of society or even indecisiveness by possible sponsors. Indeed without the help of professionals in these fields, our many volunteers and all who endorse the festival, the challenge would have been even bigger," concludes Neophytou.



and cultural phenomena, has gained global recognition for her projects which, over the last few years, have focused on peacemaking and the refugee crises in the US and Europe.

When she first visited Cyprus in 2012, she was exposed to various issues concerning non-EU individuals in Cyprus and began to learn about their experiences by interviewing and spending time with them. Thereafter, inspired by Melissa Heekers' TEDxNicosia talk last May, concerning the latter's volunteering experience with refugees in Lesbos, the two began brainstorming a joint project.

Over the months that followed, the project started taking shape, attempting to plumb the life of migrants, introducing therefore, new perspectives on migration through the focal point of Cyprus. Having to address the life experiences and problems of individuals living on the periphery of society certainly contains ethical



SOLO dell'Arte by Carlos Estaves Garcias, a contemporary mask theatre piece where one actor, the audience and an empty space tell the stories 'the Moon of Santiago' and 'Lola 'La Nuit'

Marina Neophytou, Director of the Home for Cooperation, organiser of the Buffer Fringe

*'Art now requires questioning... [it] needs to say something beyond pretty' - Ismini Haholidou*

**TWO** of the photographers of the exhibition; Orestis Lambrou and Panagiotis Minas



**VISITORS** view the artworks moments after the exhibition opened last Wednesday



**THE** display of Ismini Haholidou's work

# Contemporary views of Cypriot landscape

*Two young artists discuss new art practices on the island*

By Eleni Philippou

**A**G. Leventis Gallery welcomes art lovers and artists to two exhibition openings that run alongside each other; 'Genius Loci: Ioannis Kissonerghis and British Landscape Painters' and the artistic response to the latter 'The Contemporary Photographic Gaze'.

The combination of older artistic work with a more modern focus enables a visual conversation with its main spotlight being Cypriot landscapes.

The Genius Loci display, located on the ground floor of the gallery features the romantic portrayal of local landscapes by Cypriot painter, Ioannis Kissonerghis. He was the first to depict contemporary Cyprus in his work, which set the foundations for modern Cypriot art, and was also known for his artistic testimony of South Africa where he lived until the end of his life.

The second exhibition, on the second floor, holds the work of five young Cypriot photographers; Charalambos Artemis, Ismini Haholidou, Nicolas Iordanou, Orestis Lambrou and Panagiotis Minas, who were invited to revisit and share their own views on Cypriot landscape a 100 years after Kissonerghis. What emerges is a contemporary interpretation of the island's scenery, brought to life through the artists' different perspectives and use of digital media.

Speaking with two of the photographers, Panagiotis Minas and Ismini Haholidou, we gain an insight into this project's aims, as well as a reflection on the art practices in Cyprus and discuss the importance of these two exhibitions co-existing.

When in his early life, Panagiotis bought his first camera, a film slr he took everywhere, experimenting with concepts and styles. Greatly influenced by the run-down city of Coventry, where he studied, and its lack of aesthetic values, he explains that he

tends not to present very aesthetically pleasing images as they do not represent him.

"There is a poeticness in the ugly-ness. There are poems that don't make sense, they are still poems, they are still romantic. There is an art of a certain romantic nature, you can romanticise everything, it does not need to be pretty," explains the Larnaca-born photographer, reflecting on new art forms that re-define 'pretty'. In the essence of the project's invitation, art today takes a new stance and offers a different aesthetic value of the island.

Despite not having a specific style, this notion of 'the ugly and the mundane' is present in Panagiotis' work in the current exhibition; "it is what makes sense... why turn the camera away?" he comments about being drawn to this perspective.

His images, lacking the romanticism of Kissonerghis' paintings, are in themselves a critical statement igniting a discussion with regards to art now and then. The way in which Kissonerghis and Panagiotis, as well as the other four modern-day photographers, completed their work evaluates the development of art forms and also acts as a timeline of Cypriot landscape. Panagiotis feels that the gallery's juxtaposition of older artist work with more contemporary projects is an important breakthrough in art as it creates a new conversation which revolves around the land.

He comments that the magnitude of this exhibition is the continuation of this dialogue that was proposed by Kissonerghis. When an established gallery such as A.G. Leventis allows work with great artistic value, such as that of the painter mentioned, to interact with new, modern work, it is a turning point for Cypriot art. Through this generated discussion the photographer sees it as "a triangle of landscape painting, art and social critique".

Inspired by Kissonerghis' personal story and his move to South Africa, Panagiotis placed his visual focus on coastal areas, "there is a certain gaze from Cyprus looking out towards the sea". For him, this also relates back to the younger generation that comes and goes. Ten years ago when the photographer returned to his homeland he noticed that the individuals that had returned had an obsession with the Cypriot landscape. Thus, studying the painter's images, he photographed scenery focusing on what was beyond the horizon.



**ART** lovers admire the photographers work



Ismini Haholidou incorporates a similar theme of the 'disappearing horizon and severed mountains' in her images. Using Kissonerghis as a motive, her work presents her own personal attempt to define Cypriot landscape painting. She explains that all of her exhibiting photographs have an allegorical factor which gives force to questioning.

"Cypriot landscape painting, I believe, happens without much questioning. The morphological changes in the environment are a bit out of control, without us reflecting on what is happening and it is an issue that you don't know where or how it's going to finish and with what identity it's going to end up after 100 years," Ismini observes.

Her images depict the industrial and residential areas of Dali, Misero, Tseri and Ayios Sozomenos which have a rather individual aesthetic. Relating back to Panagiotis' dissection of 'pretty' art, Ismini also examines this factor: "art now requires questioning... [it] needs to say something beyond 'pretty'".

A common element between all five photographers, despite working independently from one another, is their lack of Kissonerghis' romanticism and a more modern perspective which reflects on the development of art over the last 100 years and adds onto this conversation that the exhibition wishes to encourage.

On the topic of art practices in Cyprus, Haholidou that "The Contemporary Photographic Gaze" successfully allows two generations of art followers to come together; those of older styles and those of more modern approaches. Thus, an attempt is made to bridge this gap.

Nonetheless, Ismini comments that there is still a lack of artistic reach to a broad audience "art isn't cultivated to a wider public; just to those that are involved in art". The stance of the juxtaposition of these two exhibitions co-existing is to hopefully unify different generations of art lovers and provide a new view of the island through the progress of art.

Both exhibitions at A.G. Leventis Gallery run until January 16. The photographs of all the artists will remain in the permanent collection of the Leventis Gallery. A limited number of facsimiles are available which can be purchased directly from the artists.



**A self-portrait painting of Ioannis Kissonerghis**



**PHOTOGRAPHER** Ismini Haholidou





**MYRTO Fereou and Myrna Demetriou Pattichis; founders of Retrovi project**

# Clutch bags revive Cypriot culture

*Retrovi project marries Lefkaritiko, Fithkiotiko heritage with 21st-century style*

By **Eleni Philippou**

**T**raditional Lefkaritiko lace and Fithkiotiko weaving represent a major part of Cypriot cultural heritage, unfortunately, has been slowly vanishing.

Determined to counter this trend, Myrna Demetriou Pattichis and Myrto Fereou began a clutch-bag project in the hope of re-integrating this Cypriot treasure into a modern day lifestyle, while preserving the tradition.

Named after the Esperanto word for re-discovery, 'Retrovi' clutch bags in Lefkaritiko and Fithkiotiko designs are transforming and restoring this old practice in a fresh context.

When the Cyprus Weekly spoke with the duo, the two women brought the story of Cypriot embroidery to life.

### Heritage under threat

The tradition stems back to a woman from the village of Lefkara, Marikou, who sold her lace embroidery around the island. A name that has now become an expression in Cypriot culture - "Marikou from Lefkara" ("I Marikou pou ta Lefkara"), originally derived from the mockery she received for carrying her embroidery in a bag around Cyprus. Meanwhile, the first woman to take Lefkaritiko lace abroad was Alisavou (Elisabeth), and she introduced the work to Egypt.

Embroidered in Lefkara village, this lace tradition is passed on from generation to generation, yet Pattichis and Fereou worry that buying lace embroidery has now ceased and the minimal levels of tourist purchases can neither sustain a village nor a tradition.

The pair also noticed that, with the target consumers usually being women, these buyers were no longer purchasing household items, but instead investing in themselves. And with an increasing interest in international trends, traditional embroidery was being pushed out of the Cypriot home.

With this in mind, and combined with their desire to revive the heritage of embroidery, the use of Lefkaritiko had to be altered to complement modern-day tastes.

### Life-changing encounter

Whilst Pattichis was on the hunt for thread, she stumbled across a small thread shop in London. Thereafter, as she and shop owner, Lady Hayat Palumbo, began a life-changing interaction, Pattichis was introduced to her projects that were encouraging more people to embroider. Palumbo would of-



fer patterns to individuals to embroider and later transform them into chic items - bags, pillows and so on.

Growing up in a household of embroidery creations and utterly awe-struck by this idea, Pattichis felt a deep drive to create something similar.

"Lady Palumbo told me: 'You have incredible embroidery in Cyprus - I know, because I am Lebanese. When the [Lebanese civil] war happened, our first stop was Cyprus, and then we left for London, so I know Cypriot embroidery very well,'" recalled Pattichis.

Thus, with this powerful, new-found inspiration, Pattichis began to envision what would become the Retrovi project.

### A journey begins

She then sought out Art Director Fereou, to help in the bid to revive Lefkaritiko lace culture. Both women, wanting to expand the possibilities of this local embroidery treasure, began implementing 'Retrovi'.

"Having that interaction with Lady Palumbo urged us to create a clutch bag where the design was first on the embroidery and then on the bag itself," said Pattichis, in reference to developing a fashion item that would best showcase the lace tradition.

In this way, the creative pair hope also to encourage more people to learn the embroidery skill themselves, by re-introducing it into a 21st-century lifestyle through the clutch bags.

"One of our greatest aims is to encourage younger women to take up embroidery to create something stylish. Making a bag or a fashion accessory will entice them into further learning," said Fereou about this re-emergence of Lefkaritiko lace.

### A voyage in colour and thread

Beyond desiring the continuation of this cultural tradition, the Retrovi founders, themselves, also underwent a voyage.

"Through the project we both went on a journey. We



**RETROVITS innovative mission was rewarded with a feature in the FT's 'How to Spend It' section**

began with more traditionally classic patterns, and now we are creating embroidery with more colourful palettes," observed Fereou.

Until today, Lefkaritiko lace had kept a specific colour tone and thread. Retrovi clutch bags experiment with more colours and with designs that have not been applied before.

The Lefkaritiko lace and Fithkiotiko weaving, created on the loom, are made entirely by women from the Lefkara Embroidery Association. Pattichis and Fereou offer guidelines and combinations, yet the design creators are utterly free to follow their imagination. In this way, each Retrovi bag is unique.

Fyti village in Paphos is the home of Fithkiotiko weaving, which has been crafted for hundreds of years. As Fereou described, it usually follows set colour tones, but now Retrovi is introducing innovative combinations of such patterns, with new colour designs.

Nonetheless, in contrast to the women's freer Lefkaritiko creations, the Fithkiotiko component has strict guidelines.

To enhance the cultural sense of Retrovi, each clutch bag is named after a Queen of Cyprus, and a short text about the historical figure is found inside the accessory. If all bags are collected, a timeline of the Queens of Cyprus results, dating from the Byzantine period to the Frankish/Venetian era.

### Appreciation

At the bags' first exhibition at Anassa Hotel last summer - for which the pair express great gratitude - Financial Times journalist Mary Lussiana, who happened to be there, found herself drawn to this most original showcase of Cypriot heritage.

So impressed was she, that Retrovi's innovative preservation mission was rewarded with a feature written by Lussiana, which recently appeared in the Financial Times' 'How To Spend It' section.

"As history repeats itself, so does everything else. The embroidery was appreciated by foreign eyes, as it happened at the beginning of the project [by Lady Palumbo], and now by this journalist of the tremendous Financial Times, making its comeback," noted Fereou.

Ultimately Retrovi, celebrating the inspiration in which women create their embroidery freely in their home environment, is building a successful common ground between tradition and modern-day style. The essence of this cultural marriage is that it desires to see Lefkaritiko lace and Fithkiotiko weaving continue the embroidery journey.

Exactly two years since the start of the project, on this coming Wednesday, February 8, the Retrovi clutch bags will be displayed in a two-day exhibition at A.G. Leventis Gallery, from 10am - 10pm.

For more information and online purchases, please visit [retrovi.com](http://retrovi.com).

*The creative pair hope also to encourage more people to learn the embroidery skill themselves, by re-introducing it into a 21st-century lifestyle through the clutch bags*

# Entering the 'Baffle Zone'

*Mural whose halves span the divide challenges stereotyped ways of seeing*

By **Eleni Philippou**

**B**affled by the prevailing Buffer Zone divide, creative NGO Urban Gorillas, under their Urban Spectacle series, have collaborated with street artist Twenty Three to paint the walls of the capital.

Urban Spectacle's public intervention series aim to challenge citizens' stereotyped ways of seeing, spurring them to interact not only with one another, but also their urban public spaces.

Graffiti artist, Twenty Three, has been bringing colour to the walls of Cyprus for many years now, and his work is driven by socio-cultural contexts. This time, together with Urban Gorillas, he tackled the line segregating the island's two communities, unlocking another platform for discussion.

As territorial maps were being tabled in Geneva by President Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, on January 12th, Twenty Three hit the streets along the Green Line and created one mural across two separate walls.

With a backpack full of spray paint and stencils, the artist marked a wall in the Greek Cypriot community and one in the Turkish Cypriot community, on either side of the Green Line. The idea being that, in order to view the mural unbrokenly - since each half appears only on one side, in an unfinished frame - the observer must walk through the Buffer Zone to reach the missing part.

"The mural is a call to re think the unknown side of Nicosia," adds Twenty Three, with viewers



Photos by **Eleni Philippou**

thus encouraged to transcend the island's partition.

Elaborating on the inspiration behind the 'Baffle Zone' project, the street artist said: "I was always wondering about the detachment of young Cypriots regarding the existence of the other side, and the lack of desire to meet the other space".

As street art is slowly becoming more and more prevalent in wider society, on a global and local scale, graffiti has been moving away from its associations with vandalism and towards providing inspiration and motivating reflection.

With this shift in perception, street artists have been undertaking social and political issues, opening up a conversation within society.

Thus, the 'Baffle Zone' mural only functions in a space that is explored, lost and found. A work of art that, once pieced together, poses a visual riddle, continuing the journey that the project proposes, in parallel to the island's journey yet to be written.

Twenty Three's work can be found island-wide, in both cities and villages, always carrying his numerical signature. As part of the collaboration with him, Urban Gorillas followed the mural's path across the capital and video-documented the wall stamps. The resulting short film will be displayed at Maxxi museum in Rome throughout February and March during an exhibition showcasing Urban Gorillas' work so far.



*'I was always wondering about the detachment of young Cypriots regarding the existence of the other side, and the lack of desire to meet the other space'*





ARTICHOKE By Melissa Hekkers

Room for us all

"My name is Patran and I am 16 years old. I was born in the city of Al Hasaka in Syria and my parents are Kurdish. I feel the need to support my family and siblings, and for this reason I have decided that, from now on, I will also start protesting in front of the Ministry of the Interior in order for them to keep their promises."

These are the words of a Kurdish stateless boy who has decided to stand in solidarity with his family who have been on hunger strike outside the presidential palace for 58 days today.

"I travelled for the first and last time when I was eight years old, in order to illegally come to Cyprus with my mother to ask for asylum. I go to school at the Aifa Paraskevi Gymnasium in Yerokkipou (Paphos).

"Without citizenship, I cannot do the same things as my classmates and peers. I cannot travel either with my parents or with my school, and I do not even know if I will ever travel again in my life. I cannot go and study abroad or visit our relatives living in other countries.

"Without citizenship, I feel that I do not belong anywhere and that I live as a prisoner in Cyprus."

What would you do if this was your 16-year-old son? How can one stand as an obstacle to a youngster's dreams for his future? How can we stand by and watch a teen sleeping alone, on the footsteps of the Ministry of Interior, at night? And why does a youth have to take matters into his own hands in order to address a system that impertinently looks at the wide picture instead of individuals?

What mechanisms are in place in order to humanely lift the burden of these displaced people, instead of simply leaving them to perish before our eyes and waiting in silence as community leaders, politicians and stakeholders stand by in an equally deafening silence?

Someone told me this week that, if we wanted to, we could fit the entire population of the world, if standing upright, on our little island. I don't know if this is actually correct, but just the thought of the size of the world in comparison to how many people are trying to make do in it, gives room for consideration. Whatever the case, there is room for all of us.

AT HOME: Goran Bregovic will perform at Aphrodite's rock tomorrow



Music from the bewitching Balkans

Gypsy maestro Bregovic and the Amalgamation Project set to wow

By Eleni Philippou

The island's music-lovers will enjoy a thrilling merger of Mediterranean and Balkan sounds this weekend as part of the Paños 2017 summer programme, when Goran Bregovic's sold-out concert makes magic at Aphrodite's rock (Petra tou Romiou) tomorrow.

Known for his influences from traditional Balkan music, Bulgarian polyphonies and blend of percussion and string instruments, Bregovic returns to Cyprus for a one-night performance that will undoubtedly provide a night of the riotous, anarchic joy worldwide fans have come to associate with him.

"I'm from a place where, if you are in the gypsy job, and if you play music, it's inevitable that you're ... impressed with gypsies"

The Serbian/Bosnian roots of the composer musician infuse his work with gypsy flair. Speaking with the Cyprus Weekly, he explained that, having grown up in a gypsy environment, he carries this heritage deep within him and, in fact, its presence in his songs has begun to alter the connotations of Roma culture as he's taken gypsy music across the world.

"I'm from a place where, if you are in music, you are in the gypsy job, and if you play music, it's inevitable that you're ... impressed with gypsies, it's an unexplainable talent of making music," Bregovic mused, expressing his fascination and enduring love for the Roma people's gills.

He added that, even as a world recognised composer, his biggest compliment is to know that gypsy musicians earn some money by playing his songs and so, in return for their vast inspiration, he is able to offer something back in return.



VASILIKI Anastasiou

fusion - as their name, the Amalgamation Project, already suggests.

The band is an all-female a cappella choir and band, whose musicians are drawn from various backgrounds.

"[What we do] is a mixture of different musical elements, such as Mediterranean folk music and African musical elements with an alternative pop touch. It's a melting pot that joins old and new," the group's director and arranger, Vasiliki Anastasiou, told the Weekly.

Taking the stage ahead of Bregovic, the Amalgamation Project will begin with a dynamic opening set; 'Moon and Stars - The Mediterranean meets the Balkans'. Along with traditional sounds and original compositions, the programme will include short narrations and poetry recitals, to put the audience into a blissful summer trance, with the sea as a backdrop.

Having been selected for the Paños 2017 opening ceremony and now participating in a fully-booked concert, the Amalgamation Project are thrilled to be performing alongside Bregovic who, through his music, has shifted the perspectives of Balkan culture.

"Goran Bregovic is a very important artist of our time, he has taken Balkan music around the world. We have just started and it is a real honour for us to play at the same concert and open the stage for him and his fantastic musicians," remarked Anastasiou.

Bregovic and his brass band will thereafter take the stage at 10pm on a specially-constructed platform placed in the sea, with Aphrodite's rock in the background.

"If you play in places like this you can imagine some old spirits are flying around and you hope that you're going to make them happy," Bregovic commented.

Enthused to have been invited to perform by this year's European Cultural Capital, having also opened the Thessaloniki ceremony in 1997, Bregovic said playing in Cyprus, surrounded by the Mediterranean, ultimately felt like home.



ARTICHOKE By Melissa Hekkers

Pondering the paradox

I had the choice of either marking the arrival of spring or the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks in Brussels this week. Needless to say that nature prevailed and the sun's rays accompanied me as I turned a blind eye to last year's event.

Yet the urge to face the paradox between the nature of our environment now prospering as spring makes its way to our doors, and the nature of human beings as we tentatively come to grasp what mankind is capable of, is hard to shake off.

The natural world has a mysterious way of manifesting itself. Indeed, whether we are talking about the nature of our environment or our own as human beings, it's got to be said that both of these are capable of extremes.

The snow on the Sahara desert this winter comes to mind when thinking of an example that can illustrate environmental extremes. The decision by the Trump administration in the US which imposed a new restriction on electronic devices carried by travellers coming to the United States from 10 airports - mainly in the Middle East and North Africa in response to unspecified terror threats - is the other example I propose for our extreme human nature.

What's that all about? It seems we're somewhat stuck in between these extremes, incapable of boosting our own nature in order to potentially address these phenomena. What's for sure is that both of these occurrences mentioned will, at some point, entice some form of reaction. I would like to think that the majority of us would like to stop climate change on the one hand, and address discrimination based on nationality on the other.

Unfortunately, it seems that these games are only addressed when things really get out of hand. In this case, either when we will finally acknowledge the real damage we have been imposing on our planet for decades. Or when restrictions come to knock on our own European identity. How our nature will react then, remains to be seen. Enjoy the spring before the shift to summer drowns us in heat.



ABOVE: Alain Wafelmann of Switzerland will be among the six international poets competing; right: a view of the ARTos Foundation



Slam poetry hits Nicosia

Two-day poetry competition to shake up island's literary scene

By Eleni Philippou

Three minutes, a dramatic recitation and a competition are the most important elements of slam poetry - performed verse that aims to provoke and push this literary form to the limits, challenging not only the poet but the audience as well.

Originating from a smoky Chicago bar in the Eighties, slam poetry is a competition in which participants interpret original work, dramatising their readings within the tight time constraint in front of a jury and audience.

Over March 27-28, at the ARTos Foundation, literary lovers have the opportunity to experience this alternative approach to poetry

The first-ever Poetry Slam Cyprus 2017, hits the island this month in a two-day event, inviting all poetic voices, genres and approaches.

Organised by non-profit cultural organisation Ideogramma, in collaboration with the Goethe Institute, six international poets (Julian Heun from Germany, Mari Laaksonen from Finland, Austria's Christoph Szalay, Spain's Josep Pedraza, Sweden's Arner Sarsour and Switzerland's Alain Wafelmann) have been invited to participate and compete while reciting their work.

Simultaneously, around 25 Cypriot-based poets have been selected to com-

pete through an open call process.

Over March 27-28, at the ARTos Foundation, lovers of verse will thus have the opportunity to experience this alternative approach to poetry.

On the first night, the six international poets will recite poems, whilst the Cypriot-based writers compete for a spot in the final the following day.

The last round on March 28 will host the six international poets and the six shortlisted from the competition, as the dozen battle for the winning three spots.

Ideogramma, dedicated to the promotion of all forms of culture - and primarily of literature and use of language - are encouraging the poets to recite their works in their original language. English translations will be projected onto a wall and will be included in hand-outs.

Through this event, the NGO aims to further integrate literature into culture and bring more exposure to slam poetry. "It is the first time we are doing this, so we had no idea whether anyone would have taken part, because we, as Cypriots, are a little bit hesitant when it comes to competitions; we don't like the idea of being 'judged'," stated one of Ideogramma's co-founders, Nora Hadjisoteriou.

Hadjisoteriou also expressed her pleasant surprise when they received a blend of established writers' as well as young poets' applications. "This is very exciting, because it opens up this [idea of] slanted poetry."

Ideogramma hopes Poetry Slam Cyprus 2017 will force both the poet and the

audience to move away from the 'acceptable boundaries' set by society, age and the place where one lives.

This form of cutting-edge poetry has been used as a tool for political and social change. "We hope the event will encourage our poets to experiment, find other ways of expression and educate the audience about other forms of presentation," commented Hadjisoteriou.

This newcomer event to the Cypriot poetic scene arose from a long-term collaboration between Ideogramma and the Goethe Institute, and is supported by the Cyprus embassies of Spain, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden and Austria.

In this form of poetry, the time limit is a vital component of slam as the poet has to perform a beginning, a middle and an end within those three minutes. An influencing factor, however, are the audience members, who can impact the judges' evaluation.

On the judging panel for March 27th and 28th are: actor/director Andreas Araouz, poet Alexandra Galanou, composer Costas Cacoyannis, artist Achilles Kentonis and journalist Sami Özulu.

The two-day event is free admission and will close with a rock concert performed by the band Old Fashioned.

A pre-event poetry reading will be given by Julien Heun and Josep Pedraza at 19:45 in north Nicosia on March 26 at 8.30pm.

More details can be found on the Goethe Institute's website: goethe.de/ins/cy/en/ver/cin?useaction=events.detail&event\_id=20937570

'Aishe goes on holiday'

Play charts story of Greek Cypriot woman who lived secretly as Turkish Cypriot for over 30 years

Celebrating 10 years of existence, the theatrical group Solo Gia Treis, in collaboration with AntiLogos theatre, is presenting its new production, 'Aishe goes on holiday' over March and April 2017 in Nicosia. The play is based on Constantia Soteriou's eponymous book, which won the Athens Prize for Literature.

The play tells the story of a Greek Cypriot woman who lived secretly as a Turkish Cypriot for over 30 years, hiding her true identity from those around her, while her son later watches her secret being revealed in 2004, when the checkpoints/barricades open in Cyprus. Her son thereafter crosses "over" and she finds her-

self faced with the biggest question a person can ask themselves: "who am I?" or, rather: "can you change who you really are?"

Around her, the worlds of her sister, neighbour and boss reflect the universe of the space being lost. And at the centre of everything, is love and the choices made for love.

Memories of a lost Cyprus, the war, the pain of those who became victims of history, but above all, the challenge of identity - what you are what and you choose to be - shape the narration of the story of Eleni who became Hatice, a narration that reflects the contemporary history of Cyprus of the last 50 years.



Meanwhile, the owls bringing bad news, the sour lemons from our youth, devotion to Christ and Mohammed and the pathways of Ayoios Kasianos compose the frame of the history. "A history of love which does not reflect religions and colours but smells like Nicosia's jasmine in the afternoon," states the production announcement.

Regular performances will take place over March and April at Teatro Dentro in Nicosia. For more information, call 97829257.