

MODERN GREEK PROGRAM



FALL 2016

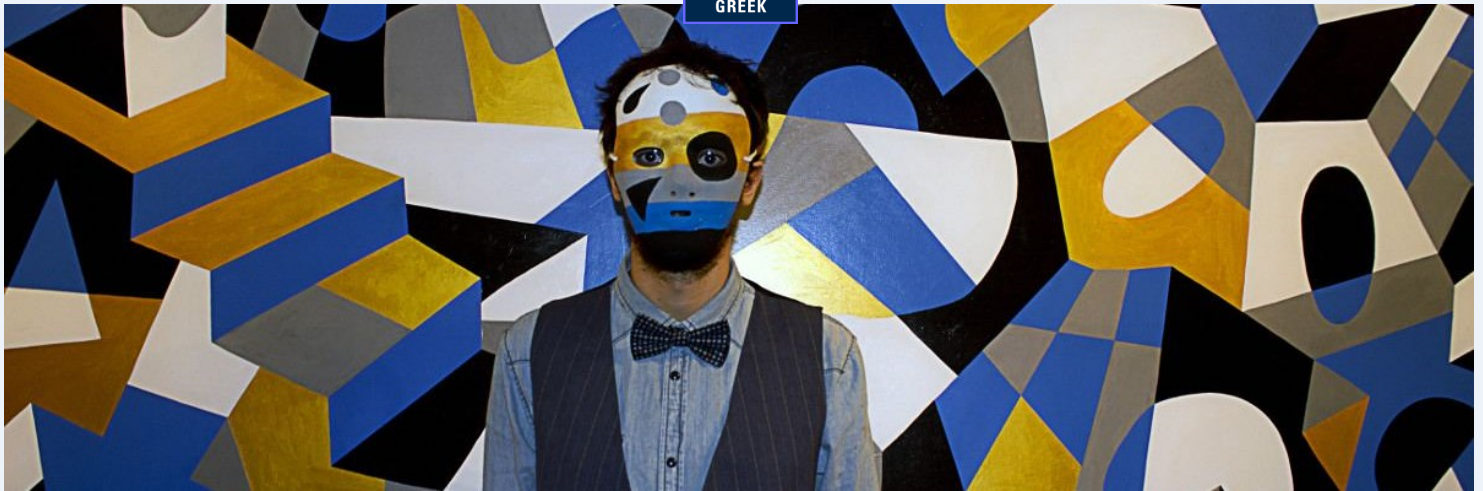


Photo of Cacao Rocks

GREEK STREET ART PROJECT, FROM ATHENS TO ANN ARBOR

By Artemis Leontis, Professor of Modern Greek

The streets of Athens became a gallery of art after 2010, when the European economic and migration crises hit the city. Even before that, tags (signatures) and slogans covered many street walls, with some brilliantly aphoristic sociopolitical commentary standing out. Street art boomed when austerity became the official economic policy of Greece and businesses closed down. Graffiti did not just multiply. It developed as art and thought. A vibrant international scene now exists with both local and foreign artists, female and male, self-taught and university-trained, who prolifically write, draw, spray, stencil, glue, and paint their images and words in dialogue with the world's most pressing matters. Athens is now known as a Mecca of street art.

Greek street art is coming to town this year! For a few weeks from September 12 to October 15, a wall on Thayer Street opposite the UM campus in Ann Arbor will become the canvas of Cacao Rocks and Olga Alexopoulou, two Athens-born artists with international reputations and with a lot of experience painting street walls.

The color-filled work of Cacao Rocks <http://cacaorocks.blogspot.com/> follows the city's transitions of the past decade. A self-taught artist, he began writing as a teenager in 2007, when life was good in the suburbs but the city's center was in decline. The tags of teenagers like Cacao expressed the desire to become part of something. A few years later, as police and youth clashed and the economic bust blighted the streets, he traded in his markers for a paint-

brush. His painted work depicts words and things that

are filled with symbolism: scissors represent austerity cuts; broken glasses or an extra pair of eyes stand for the loss of a clear political vision; and the word ΛΕΥΤΕΡΙΑ meaning freedom is written alongside these images exactly as it appeared on Athens' walls 75 years ago to protest the German occupation of Greece.

Today, as one of the most visible street artists in Athens, he is known for both his interventions and his collaborations. He is part of Λάθος (mistake), the graffiti group with a purposefully misspelled name whose signature can be found high up on multi-storied buildings—a reminder of the errors made by the world's powerful leaders. He has spearheaded large creative projects to fill abandoned factories and dull, downgraded neighborhoods with color, inviting artists from around the world to join him. In the neighborhood of Psirri, he collaborates with residents and businesses to secure permission for block-long projects and helps run the Sarri 12 gallery, which exhibits the work of street artists. Cacao had his first solo exhibition, "Les Cyclades Electroniques," at the DIO HORIA Gallery in Mykonos this past summer.

Olga Alexopoulou's <http://olgaalexopoulou.com/> art expresses another dimension of Greek life today: movement and flight. Herself a person on the move, she was born in Athens, trained at Oxford University's John Ruskin School of Art, moved to Istanbul in 2005 after finding inspiration in that city's atmosphere, and paints on canvas and walls in cities throughout the world. On canvas, birds are a favorite theme, and the color blue simply explodes in her work. She is so passionate about blue that she even flew to China to study techniques of painting blue and white porcelain. Her city murals are usually black and white, pushing against urban environments flooded in color, and she works on a massive scale. She enjoys painting city walls because people openly express opinions about public art.

Her work in Athens is highly visible. For example, her mural entitled "She's a Leader," on Iera Odos, is at least five stories high. It represents a remarkable scene of public vs. private spaces rising

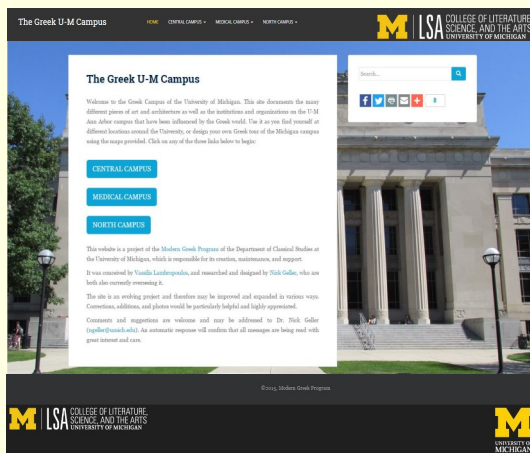
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THE “CATHOLEPISTEMIAD OF MICHIGANIA” IS TWO CENTURIES OLD!

Next year promises to be a very exciting one as the University of Michigan will be officially celebrating its bicentennial throughout 2017 (<http://bicentennial.umich.edu/>). The tiny Greek-named college “Catholepistemiad,” with thirteen courses—also with Greek names—and a Greek seal, has developed into a large world-class university. It changed its name to the “University of Michigan” and moved from Detroit to Ann Arbor in 1837. And yet it still retains its Greek character in its architecture, art collections, and commitment to Greek studies, both ancient and modern. As you will notice, the UM bicentennial logo consists of a laurel wreath (δᾶφνη) like the one given to the winners of major contests in ancient Greece.

THE MODERN GREEK PROGRAM IS PARTICIPATING IN THE CELEBRATION IN SUBSTANTIAL WAYS.



Here are three examples...

The Greek UM Campus is a unique website created by the Modern Greek Program, which lists and describes 50 destinations on campus with Greek characteristics. This site documents many different pieces of art and architecture as well as the institutions and organizations on the Ann Arbor campus that have been influenced by the Greek world. People use it to find these destinations either virtually or on campus, referring to the website (it is mobile-friendly) to create their own Greek tour of UM. It is free and accessible to all. (<http://sites.lsa.umich.edu/greekcampus/>)

The Greek Life, an innovative undergraduate course (GreekMod 350 / Comp Lit 372 / AMCult 311.002) offered in Winter 2017, looks for “Greeks” on campus over the past two centuries. It finds them in the many ways that people pursue a Greek life, often without even knowing it: when they incorporate into their activities and mental elements of Greek culture that have been absorbed into the American mainstream life through people’s fascination with Greece over the centuries, through athletics, fraternities and sororities, Greek immigrant culture, lexical borrowings in science and philosophy, and the buildings, museums, books, words, ideas, and courses of that are part of university life.



“Speaking Greek at the American University Over the Last Two Centuries” is the title of the 15th Annual Pallas Lecture, to be given this year by Georgios Anagnostou, Professor of Modern Greek at The Ohio State University. Taking as his starting part the original name of the University of Michigan, Professor Anagnostou will discuss the place of Hellenism as a symbol and as a subject of learning in American universities then and now, with special emphasis on Greek American culture.

My Greece Greece: brains and beauty.

By Christina Vallianatos

Passport. Check.
Suntan lotion. Check.
Poster tube? Check!

As I performed one last run-through of my to-do list before I left for the airport, it finally hit me that this trip to Greece was different than the rest.

I'm no stranger to the 5,000-mile journey between Detroit and Athens; I have been travelling to Greece since before I could walk. Greece is where my father was born, where my mother's parents grew up, and where as a kid I spent most of my summers. My dad made it a point to take me every year he could, to give me a chance to spend time with our relatives, to connect with our heritage. The long hours spent on planes and waiting in airports were a small price to pay for a summer with my family overseas: visits with my grandparents and cousins, catching up on our lives over the last year, enjoying the crystal clear seas and delicious Greek foods.

Even as an adult, that connection to Greece has remained strong. While it's been harder and harder to find time to travel to Greece—first college, then work, now grad school—the desire is always there. Maybe that's why, when I learned about a week-long lecture course on genetics taking place in Greece this past August, I couldn't let the opportunity pass me by.

And so I arrived in Athens with my research poster in one hand, sunglasses in the other. I packed my notebooks and laptop alongside my flip-flops and bathing suit. Days that otherwise would have been spent lying in the sand were spent sitting in lectures by top researchers. Nights typically reserved for chatting with my cousins were replaced with long conversations with PhD students and professors from around the world.

This wasn't the summer in Greece I was used to. And yet something about it all was so familiar.

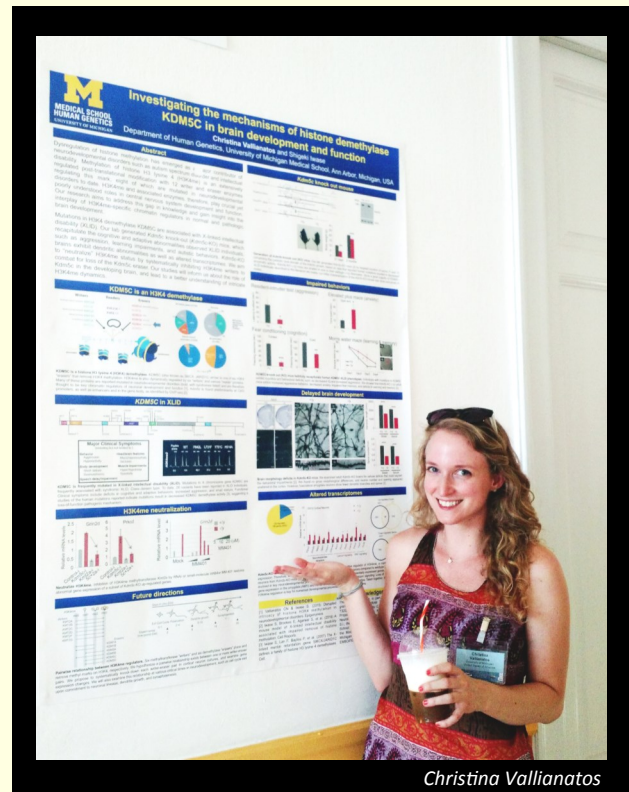
I was amazed at how easily the rigorous scientific world was tamed by the easy-going Greek way of life. It was as if the Mediterranean sun melted our stresses away. With everyone at ease, the ideas kept flowing and the conversations never ran dry, making it one of the best meetings I've been to. World-renowned professors became more approachable in their sandals and swim trunks. The shade of the olive trees in the courtyard outside the lecture hall provided a perfectly cool spot for afternoon research talks. Conversations about hot topics in science mirrored the typical Greek dinners over which they occurred: everyone sharing, the topic changing with every new dish brought to the table, with no sense of time and no urgency to ask for the check.

Greece seemed to be a natural host for this meeting of scientific minds. And why not? Isn't Greece the land where mathematics and philosophy thrived, where astronomy and medicine have

strong roots? It surely isn't coincidence that from ancient to modern times, in all fields from literature to biology, Greece has both given birth to great minds and also provided inspiration to great minds.

It's no wonder, then, that my colleagues and I left Greece feeling energized, full of new ideas and collaborations. We learned that Greece is more than just a pretty face, as the saying goes. In addition to the white washed buildings and breathtaking landscapes, the country has an amazing potential to inspire and create.

The Greece I grew up dreaming about changed slightly for me this summer. I now realize that this beautiful country has so much more than what meets the eye. The connection to Greece my dad tried to foster within me all these years now goes deeper than family ties and trips to the sea. The thoughts and ideas I had during this course are forever tied to their birthplace; Greece is now a part of my professional life as well as my personal life.



Christina Vallianatos

Christina is a proud alumna of the Modern Greek Program, having graduated with a BS in Neuroscience and Modern Greek Studies in 2010. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Human Genetics at the University of Michigan. Christina thanks the Modern Greek Program for their generous support of her experience at the EMBO/FEBS lecture course.

GREEK STREET ART PROJECT, FROM ATHENS TO ANN ARBOR

(continued from cover)

vertically in city space. In Rizari Park not far from Syntagma Square, she painted a horizontally expansive image, with a turbulent urban scene to the right and a dramatic landscape of tall mountain peaks and a pine forest to the left. Between the two unrelated scenes, each tempestuous in its own way, a woman is seated, with a gas mask covering half her face, as if she has stopped in the middle of a demonstration to take stock of her ambitions. Appearing in the spring of 2012 during non-stop street demonstrations in Athens, the painting was a call to contemplation, on the one hand, and creative action, on the other. It was part of a highly publicized intervention by the activist group Atenistas, a beautify Athens group.

The Modern Greek Program is absolutely delighted to collaborate this year with the Institute for the Humanities (IH) to bring these artists to Ann Arbor to create new site-specific work on the Panera wall on Thayer Street opposite Hill Auditorium, with the generous support of Mr. Sam Roumanis, Vice President of the Foundation for Modern Greek Studies. They will be resident artists of the IH, painting between September 12 and 15 (Alexopoulou) and October 4 and 15 (Cacao Rocks). Mehdi Ghadyanloo

{<http://howardgriffingallery.com/artists/mehdi-ghadyanloo>}, an Iranian mural artist who, with wit and a little paint, has been transforming Tehran's cityscape of high-rise buildings, will be another resident artist of the IH. He will paint a tall, vertical interior wall in the Thayer Building from October 9 to October 15. Alexopoulou and Cacao will meet with students in my freshman writing seminar "Writing on the Wall." The Modern Greek Program will hold a public discussion with Cacao in the Classics Department library on Wednesday, October 12 at 4pm. The three artists will return for a campus-wide discussion on Wednesday, February 8 from 4:30 to 6pm. Videographer Donald Harrison will document the entire project.

Amanda Krugliak, Arts Curator of the IH, has worked tirelessly with me and with Christiane Gruber, Professor of the History of Art, to make the project possible, and she received the approval of the Office of the Dean of LSA. The idea is to engage the campus and larger community with international artists who offer a global perspective on street art. We want people to see, photograph, share, and meet these artists, to express their opinions, and to have a scholarly conversation about this important world cultural phenomenon.



Street Art by Cacao Rocks



Olga Alexopoulou



Mehdi Ghadyanloo

K. H. KARAGIANNI
PROFESSORSHIP IN MODERN GREEK
ENDORSED BY THE FOUNDATION FOR MODERN GREEK STUDIES
Rackham Graduate School



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Janet Crayne
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Hatcher Graduate Library

World Wide Web Address
<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/modgreek>

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STUDENT AWARDS, DEGREES, AND GRANTS

MODERN GREEK MAJORS AND MINORS

Constantinos Demetral B.A., Classical Archaeology, Modern Greek with Highest Honors

Rodolfo Franco B.S., Biomolecular Science; Minor, Modern Greek

Constadina Manettas B.S., Biopsychology, Cognition & Neuroscience; Minor, Modern Greek

Katherine Montie B.S., Math; Minor, Modern Greek

Christina Russ B.A., Modern Greek, English

John-Alexander Sakelos B.F.A., Musical Theater; Minor, Modern Greek

Stamatia Tsakos B.A., Psychology-Crime & Justice; Minor, Modern Greek

Christina Yotides B.A., Political Science; Minor, Modern Greek

STUDENT GRANTS FOR SUMMER STUDY, RESEARCH, AND INTERNSHIPS

Constantinos Demetral received funding from the Foundation of Modern Greek Studies and the Constantine A. Tsangasdas Trust to intern at the National Hellenic Museum in Chicago over the summer.

Will Stroebel was awarded the Kalliopi Kontou-Filis and Kenneth P. Mathews Fund for study abroad.

Christina Vallianatos, Modern Greek and Neuroscience B.S. in 2010 & currently pursuing a PhD in Genetics, received funding to attend a genetics conference on the island of Spetses.

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Etienne Charrière, (PhD candidate, Comparative Literature) successfully defended his PhD dissertation in Comparative Literature in the summer of 2016. He will receive his degree this semester. He received honorable mention in the 2015 Victor Papacosma Graduate Student Essay Competition awarded by the MGSA for his paper, "'A Greek Novel 'Clad in an English Dress': Stephanos Xenos's Devil in Turkey (1851) As Transnational Text.'" He will be an ANAMED Fellow next year at Koç University in Istanbul studying archival sources on the Greek community in that city in the 19th century and working on his book project entitled "We Must Ourselves Write About Ourselves: The Trans-communal Emergence of the Novel in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1840–1908," which surveys the development of prose fiction in the late Ottoman period within a comparative framework and includes examples from Ottoman-Turkish, Greek, Armenian, and Ladino literatures.



Christina Yotides and Artemis Leontis

EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 12 TO SEPTEMBER 15: Olga Alexopoulou, artist in residence at the UM Institute for the Humanities, painting a wall on Thayer Street (side of the Panera building, 777 N. University) and meeting with students of the "Writing on the Wall" freshman writing seminar taught by Artemis Leontis.

MID-OCTOBER (TBA) Cacao Rocks, artist in residence at the UM Institute for the Humanities, painting a wall on Thayer Street (side of the Panera building, 777 N. University) and meeting with students of the "Writing on the Wall" freshman writing seminar taught by Artemis Leontis.

OCTOBER 9 THROUGH OCTOBER 15: Mehdi Ghadyanloo, artist in residence at the UM Institute for the Humanities, painting a wall in the Thayer Building atrium, 202 S. Thayer.

TBA: Public Discussion on Street Art in Athens with artist Cacao Rocks, in the Department of Classical Studies library, 2175 Angell Hall.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 4-6:00 PM: 15th Annual Dimitri and Irmgard Pallas Lecture, "Speaking Greek at the American University Over the Last Two Centuries" Georgios Anagnostou, The Ohio State University, in the Department of Classical Studies library, 2175 Angell Hall, Ann Arbor.

TO FOLLOW UPCOMING EVENTS VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [LSA.UMICH.EDU/MODGREEK](http://lsa.umich.edu/modgreek)

MORE STUDENT NEWS

CONSTANTINOS DEMETRAL RECEIVED HIGHEST HONORS FOR HIS SENIOR THESIS ENTITLED *PRESERVING THE PAST IN THE*

The reason I transferred schools was to study Modern Greek at the University of Michigan. Being Greek American, I felt an obligation to learn Greek as best as I could, so, I majored in Modern Greek. Having graduated, I can confidently say now that the Modern Greek Program has been invaluable not only in terms of my academic development but also for my professional and personal growth.

I significantly improved my writing and reading skills through classes and in writing my honors thesis my senior year. In it, I examined the role ancient Greek heritage plays in forming Modern Greek identity within the current crisis. My three areas of exploration were archaeological excavations, street art and graffiti, and the novel *Ο βομβιστής του Παρθενώνα* by Christos Chrisopoulos. I found that Greek antiquities are valued very differently in these different contexts and what is termed Greek heritage is not agreed upon but constantly in flux. I show that during this period of crisis in particular, people's dissent and resistance ironically incorporates old canons and tropes, which are reimagined in ways that forge new connections and traditions.

The thesis taught me a great deal about research, synthesis, and polishing an academic paper. I improved my Greek in all aspects, as most of the research was in Greek sources. Additionally with the help of faculty I secured an internship at the National Hellenic Museum, a Greek cultural museum in Chicago, which really helped me get an idea of my future beyond the university. All in all, the Modern Greek Program surpassed all of my expectations as a student. The faculty funded me to study in other countries and advised me in many matters important to me, including my professional course. Without a doubt, they have deeply invested their time in my education and future. I appreciate their care and support very much and am indebted to them.



Thesis cover created by Constantinos Demetral



Artemis Leontis and Constantinos Demetral

CHRISTINA RUSS, CALLIOPE PAPALA POLITOU MODERN GREEK SENIOR PRIZE



Christina Russ

(This is my response to a conversation I had during one of my Conversations on Culture. The memory has stuck with me for so long. Even after finding out that her definition was technically wrong, I have not dismissed it; it is, in my mind, "correct." I think there is something powerful about personalizing language, and I am no one to suggest she does not have the right to do so. The moment really drove home the idea that language isn't simply about formal definitions or grammar. The Conversations on Culture were an extremely useful tool that taught me what is most important about communication.)

When you find yourself in the midst of a conversation in which you are speaking a foreign language, do you not think to yourself, I am transcending both time and space? The experience is, much to my mind, frightening. You develop an ultra-awareness of the subtleties of language, quite careful, for example, to say "δουλειά" instead of "δουλεία," and you choose your words wisely for fear of offending the Greek, who calls a place you've never seen home, on the other end of the conversation; you also wonder if she enjoys Mario Kart as much as you do, but you do not ask because you are not sure that you can effectively vocalize that thought, or perhaps because you feel that, as an agent of your culture, you ought to partake in loftier discussions with her. She then defines the word "σπέρνομαι" as "to involve oneself in business in which one should not be involved," Modern Greek is suddenly not unlike the Ebonics you speak at home, and so you release the tension in your shoulders, put on a warm smile, and abandon the urge to correctly conjugate every verb. The real conversation begins.