



the story of my Museum

THE WELL-KNOWN ART AFICIONADO PAUL FYROS AND HIS WIFE TAKE US ON A JOURNEY TO THE WORLD OF ART THROUGH THE MAJESTIC SETTING THEY HAVE CREATED UNDERNEATH THE ACROPOLIS, IN THEIR OWN «HERAKLIDON» MUSEUM IN THESION.

BY DIMITRA PAPADATOU

PHOTO NIKOS LAMBROU

It is an impressive place!

Yes. It is a neo-classical building of 1898. It was bought by our family, with the objective to express in it our love for art.

Did you need to do any work on the building?

The building had suffered some damage from the earthquakes. It was not allowed to be inhabited. It is actually two buildings that were connected to better serve the museum's needs.

What does «artist» mean for you?

It is a very broad term. For someone to be an artist he or she needs to create something that everybody else can identify with. Something that others will like and that is able to show them what the artist wanted to communicate.

What is the role of sensitivity in all this?

An artist is like a radio station which the audience is seeking. It is like as if someone is transmitting at a certain frequency at someone else is trying to find it and identify with it. It may not be art for anyone else, but it is for the person who's looking. As the number of those who identify with it increases, the artist finds his or her audience.

Were you looking for a place like this?

We knew what we needed and what sort of place that would take. There was also the concept of the museum we wanted to materialize, and we thought that this setting was perfect for it. If we took the walls apart, if we designed it as we needed it to be, it would certainly respond to what we had in mind. You know, with museums, one needs to keep a certain order. It is unthinkable for visitors to get lost in the various rooms. That's why we tore apart the interior and rebuilt it, holding on to whatever could be kept and maintained.

How was the idea of the museum born?

There were two ideas that at one point came together. We have an obsession with collecting works of art and another



obsession with neoclassical buildings. We had all these artworks at home, in our living-room to be exact. We used to move them around so often that we surprised our friends all the time. At some point, someone suggested the concept of a museum. Besides, we live in the States and we did not want all this to remain there — so we put two and two together. Of course, initially, we thought of it as a private exhibition space.

You mean just for you and your friends?

Not only for us; to share them with others too. We had noticed that every time there was an exhibit in Athens, the public was very responsive. So we thought of creating a museum.

Was it your personal passion?

We both agreed, my wife and I.

You seem to be very close to each other.

We've been together for many years. Since we were sixteen.

Were you born in the United States?

(Ms. Fyrou) I was born in England from a Greek mother and English father. My parents got divorced when I was very young and I grew up with my mother's family. I moved to the States after I got married.

How did you two meet?

(Ms. Fyrou) At a French essay exam. We won the award and went to Paris.

A puppy-love then?

(Ms. Fyrou) After I finished my studies as an interpreter in the University of Geneva, we got married.

And you Mr. Fyros?

I was born in Egypt and don't really remember what exactly I was doing until I was 17. Then I went to France to study computers in the University of Toulouge. I worked for Porto Carras in the States. But that didn't go very well and I had to return to work here. I decided to quit and stay in the States, where I started my own firm. I had it until last March. After I sold it, we've been coming to Greece more often.

Are you involved with anything else?

(Ms. Fyrou) I am involved with ceramics. I always liked art. When I was young I wanted to attend the Fine Arts School but my parents didn't allow me. In America, I learned the art and I have been an amateur artist since then. Paul likes design, as an amateur of course. The good thing is we both love being surrounded by art.

Is «Escher» your first exhibit?

Yes. It started in August and will go on until July.

How has the public responded?

The public response exceeded our expectations. Everyone has been very warm and what the critics wrote was very flattering.

Do you also offer an educational program?

Over 3,000 students have visited. The teachers were especially pleased and many came a second time.

The children walk around showing great interest for the program. Leaving here, they always hold something to remind them of their experience.

How is the place designed?

Our objective was for the visitor to be equally impressed by the setting as by the exhibit itself.

The two hours one spends here are enough for him or her to form an opinion about both.

The setting carried, then, a lot of weight for you.

Naturally, the lighting of the artworks is very significant: the works need to be lit properly so as not to get destroyed.

The lights go off when nobody is inside. Security systems, technical issues...the list is endless.

The setting as well as the work you have put into it are very impressive.

An other feature of this gallery is that it functions as a center for presentations and other art events. It also features a conference room for up to 100 guests.

What would you like to say to the art-lovers?

Art offers beauty and everyone should come to contact with it. It may change one's mood completely.

