

Press release
New exhibition at
The Philharmonic Hall
of Potamos, Kythira

Slender Thread

Opening: July 28, 8 pm

This exhibition emerged from local garbage bins, where we found parts of destroyed looms and old hand-woven fabrics. Following the thread of a forgotten craft, we explored the closed chests and attics of Kythirian houses, some of which still contain treasures – the modest but heroic labor of local women and girls. With their hands, they made everything needed for the simple lives they lived - from cotton and linen underwear, bedclothes, and ornamental bed and table covers, to heavy woolen blankets and rough sacks for olive picking. Every household had a loom; every girl knew how to spin and weave.

Traditional textile making is one of the most ancient handicrafts, encompassing a broad spectrum of skills – from animal care and plant foraging to yarn processing and dyeing and fabric making. Its unique history is at the same time local and universal. Over the long and complicated process of producing a piece of handmade fabric, everything is connected, interdependent, and necessarily sustainable.

Today, this craft is almost totally forgotten. We live in a reality of mass-produced, standardized commodities, made by anonymous people through obscure processes – a reality that not only is dangerously wasteful, but also denies the uniqueness of the worlds we inhabit, rending the fabric that connects places and things to each other and to our lives. We are used to buying everything that we need and discarding it fast. Like anything else, textiles have become mere consumption goods, detached from culture, context, and environment.

This exhibition does not claim to research the history of traditional Kythirian textiles. Instead, it highlights the story of their disappearance. Through the direct encounter with the last remains of modest but touchingly beautiful handmade Kythirian fabrics, we hope to bring awareness to the gradual vanishing of local cultural heritage. Our past hangs from a slender thread.

The exhibition is aimed at a large variety of visitors of different ages and backgrounds from elementary school students to textile experts and it has two parts - a historical one, facing the past and presenting two original works of art concerning a collection of traditional Kythirian fabrics and rescued parts of old looms, and a contemporary one - a sculpture piece which is actually a big communal "loom" with a warp ready for a collective work of the exhibition visitors and one line of red weft, produced by us from the very beginning starting from raw wool and till the very end of dyeing it with locally foraged madder root. The exhibition is planned as a 4-part community-focused project, involving 1) collecting old hand weaved local kythirian fabrics and donated crochet threads from the community, 2) constructing the

community loom and fabric and loom displays, 3) welcoming kythirians and guests to join the collective weaving on the communal loom, 4) presenting a series of lectures and workshops for children and adults concerning the history of weaving and the process of spinning, dyeing and weaving from local materials.

The exhibition is organized, curated, and produced by a collective of visual artists "Chorus effect" - Valery Bolotin, Maria Schina and Masha Zusman in collaboration with the local community and The Philharmoniki of Potamos and with the support of NEON Organization for Culture and Development

Our special thanks to the Cinematheque of North Macedonia for allowing us to use documentary films "Grandmother Despina" and "Weavers" by the Manaki brothers.

Opening Hours: Sunday 10:00-14:00, Thursday 18:00-21:00 and by appointment

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