

Making the intangible tangible

In 2023 UNESCO, the United Nations' cultural arm, signed a convention known as the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, with the explicit intent to help peoples across the globe preserve “*the practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities and sometimes individuals recognize as part of their heritage.*” The convention was prompted by the continued negative effects of unchecked globalized economic practices and the spread of social media. Helping preserve the heritages that sustained communal and individual identities over centuries is a timely effort to provide a “ground” on which people can secure a sustainable future. In 2015 Tinos’ “marmarotechniki” (marble carving) was designated one of the world’s intangible heritages.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 4



Figure 3

During the last year and a half a pilot project that aimed to become a blueprint for safeguarding the future of marble carving traditions, took place. It was

constructed and executed by Dr. Caterina Pizanias and Vassiliki Boulerou, under the sponsorship of the Cultural Foundation of Tinos with funding from the Ministry of Culture of the Hellenic Republic. It aimed to explore possibilities of learning/reviving opportunities to bring an active interest in the centuries-old Tiniot tradition to the creative surface. We met numerous times with local leaders and artists and visited many marble-studios.



Figure 6



Figure 5



Figure 8



Figure 7

A teaching phase of the pilot was designed to introduce the participants to the tools used, and teach them how to choose the right tool for the types of marble they were working on. It was a firsthand introduction to marmarotechniki, peppered along the way with stories about the craft. Each participant applied technical knowledge to design and carve an object of their choice. The expert marble carvers who taught were Lorentzos Vidalis, Kionia, Nikos Desyrpis, Spitalia, Onoufrios Desyrpis, Ysternia, and the Kousounadis Brothers, Nikos

and Manolis, Hora, all with studios on Tinos. Rossan Tika, a Pyrgos School of Fine Arts graduate taught at the Technical High School in Athens.



Figure 9



Figure 10

The studio experience was followed by a gathering of all the participants on Tinos for a visit to the Museum of Marble Crafts and the Preparatory and Professional School of Fine Arts, both in Pyrgos, Tinos. After the excursions across the island, the workshop teachers, the pilot organizers, the participating students, members of the board of the Cultural Foundation of Tinos, along members of the general public, gathered at the Foundation building to enjoy an impromptu exhibit of the objects produced during the workshops, took inventory of how best this pilot effort can be continued and listened to pertinent issues of heritage preservation by a lawyer, gallerist and an exhibition organizer.

There is hope and there will be continuation. An effort well received!

Caterina Pizanias, PhD

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1 and 2: Lorenzos Vidalis Studio, Kionia, Tinos

3 and 4: Onoufrios Desypris Studio, Ysternia, Tinos

5 and 6: Nikos and Manolis Kousounadis Brothers Studio, Hora, Tinos

7 and 8: Nikos Desypris Studio, Spitalia, Tinos

9 and 10: Technical High School of Agias Paraskevis, Athens