

# Frangoudaki Leaves Chemistry behind for Art

By Constantine S. Sirigos  
TNH Staff Writer

**SOUTHAMPTON, NY** – Chemists, accountants, and businesspersons who spend a lot of time in museums and galleries might have a painter or sculptor inside of their inner selves struggling to be born. Take Maria Frangoudaki: a gifted young Greek artist whose career change has revealed her to be one of her country's rising stars.

Growing up, conditions were good, but with Greece and Cyprus in crisis, she sends a message independent of her thought-provoking work: In addition to looking out for young scientists and entrepreneurs, Hellenes around to world should also pay attention to budding Greek artists – they too are national resources.

Another lesson is not to get upset if your children like comic books more than the Greek tragedians. Figures like Superman and the Incredible Hulk lurk in Frangoudaki's work.

She had a major exhibit this year in Mykonos from May to October called Aegean Island. "It featured more of my abstract work. I was saving all my superheroes for New York," she said.

don when she was 18 and has spent eight years there. She studied chemistry, pharmacology and business management, and then worked there – but she was drawing and painting all her life.

She finally reached a point where she chose art as her career.

She does not look close to her age of 30, which she said can be a problem professionally, but she has solid, perhaps genetic reasons for believing in herself.

She has two younger sisters, 20 and 21. When she was asked if they too were artists, Frangoudaki said "secretly. Like me. Until 2008 I did not show my work to anyone because I was just painting for myself."

Her grandfather is a winemaker in Cephalonia. She believes he inspired the flow of her creative juices. "He is very artistic." Her other grandfather was also artistic, designing and making jewelry, but she did not know him well.

Her mother is a child psychologist and her father is an economist – yes math pops up in her art too – but he used to draw as a child and is a collector. Both were very supportive of her art and the decision to



Sometimes I Cannot Control Myself. Collage. 70" x 56" 2013.

by what she saw in New York's galleries and what she learned in seminars. She noticed immediately that the residencies began to effect many changes in her work.

"Each day during my residency we were visited by a different curator who critiqued our work. They said things like: 'it's too decorative' or 'that's terrible; do something else,' or 'it's great! Continue,'" she said.

"They told me not to be afraid to reveal what is inside me, not to be afraid to shred or burn the canvas," and start again, and not to worry about the final result.

She worked on one piece for two months and she liked the final result very much. It is a dramatic collage titled "Sometimes I Cannot Control Myself."

Viewers find visual and emotional complexity in her art.

The initial idea for the collage was to create something from the world of comics. She played with the idea of the Incredible Hulk and as she went through the above process she also drew on her love of photographing construction sites.

She said the Hulk character has self-destructive elements, and she noted that there are some construction sites where you are not certain whether they are under construction or destruction. In the piece Frangoudaki combined comic book images with her own photos.

Another thing that happened during her residencies was that she overcame both shyness and what she called snobbishness. In this case, she had felt she was painting oriented and that she was above making collages, but she began to love them.

This year she began to experiment with using texts on the canvas. "I like it and I will do more of it."

One example is "My attitude depends on how you treat me." She said it is something that the Hulk says, and she found that people react powerfully to it.

"So many people come in

and tell me they want to buy it for their wife or husband. People really connect to that, but I don't know if it is always true."

Asked if that reflects the determinism of most chemical reactions, Frangoudaki said there is an element of that, but it wasn't the conscious reason. She just needed a Hulk connection, "but now that you mention it I will think about it."

In other pieces she uses the exactly contradictory phrase: "Sometimes I cannot control myself."

Her newest painting, which debuted in the Hamptons, is an abstract titled Rush Hour. "I was on Park Avenue and I saw all these taxis," that formed a yellow blur.

She will continue with collages, and says she still has some abstract works within her, but her environment and life issues clearly impact her work.

**THE NEW GREECE: A WORK IN PROGRESS.**

Frangoudaki acknowledged that the Greek economic crisis finds its way only her canvases. Indeed she just made a conscious decision to include a personal element in every work.

Naturally, she worries about her homeland. Contradictory media reports make it difficult to tell whether Greece is coming out of crisis or sinking deeper. "Unconsciously, I have it on my mind all the time."

One thinks about the construction/destruction sites in her works.

"I always want to be positive so I don't want to believe that Greece will be destroyed. I don't want to think that, and I don't believe that. It is a very slow process but we will gradually find our way," she said.

She is also optimistic because "I believe there are really talented people in Greece in all fields, especially the younger people," and she things 80 percent of the people who are leaving will be back.

Frangoudaki's work can be seen at: [www.mariafrangoudaki.com](http://www.mariafrangoudaki.com).



Hulk Tango. Mixed media on canvas. 77" x 72" 2013.

Non-Greeks are paying attention. Frangoudaki is getting exposure in the Hamptons and Manhattan.

This autumn she had an exhibition titled "Superheroes" in One Art Space, in Manhattan and after that her work was featured at the 4 North Main Galleries in Southampton.

Since she was 18, she has lived more outside than inside Greece, but she strives to maintain her connections; she aims to exhibit there once or twice per year.

"Connections are important. You can be in another country and you want to do well, but you still have the connections with Greece," she said. Her grandparents are from Chania, Crete and the island of Cephalonia.

Frangoudaki first went to Lon-

do what she loves.

Her first exhibit was in Athens' Skoura art gallery and contained all abstract art. "There was a lot of red, a couple of black and white pieces, and hot yellows."

**NEW YORK, NEW YORK – OLD ART, NEW ART**

Then she moved to New York, where she passed from reds to blues but her work developed in many ways, and its form changed greatly.

She arrived two years ago to undertake some courses at schools including Parsons School of Design, NYU and the School of Visual Arts, and she participated in art residencies.

The Southampton show was a joint exhibition with her fellow SVA resident Matt Moffet from Tulsa. OK.

Frangoudaki was fascinated

## GOINGS ON...

### ■ THRU MARCH 2, 2014

WASHINGTON, DC – Heaven on Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections will be presented at the National Gallery of Art from Oct. 6 2013-Mar. 2, 2014. In the first exhibition devoted to Byzantine art at the Gallery, some 170 rare and important works, drawn exclusively from Greek collections, the exhibit will offer a fascinating glimpse of the soul and splendor of the Byzantine Empire. Recognized masterpieces, many never lent before to the United States, will be on view with newly discovered and previously unpublished objects from recent archaeological excavations in Greece. The exhibition is organized by the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture, and Sports, Athens, with the collaboration of the Benaki Museum, Athens, in association with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. After Washington, the exhibition travels to the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, where it will be displayed at the Getty Villa from April 9 through August 25, 2014.

### ■ DECEMBER 14

WESTLAND, MI – Join the St. Constantine & Helen Philoptochos Cookie Walk on Saturday, Dec. 14, 9AM-12Noon, as we present delicious cookies for sale to the community. Cookies sold by the pound Hellenic Cultural Center, 36375 Joy Road in Westland.

### ■ DECEMBER 15

LIVE CALL-IN FROM ANYWHERE – Ancient Faith Radio Orthodoxy Live with Fr. Evan Armatas will take place on Sunday, Dec. 15. Fr. Armatas offers listeners an opportunity to ask pointed questions about the Orthodox Church. Perfect for seekers, converts, and cradle Orthodox Christians alike, this program is your chance to ask the tough questions about the Orthodox Church. Fr. Evan is a great communicator and well-versed in all aspects of Orthodox theology. The program streams live, with listener call-ins from around the world, on the first and third Sundays of each month. For more information, including time and specific location, please contact the director of the film Maria Iliou at <http://ancientfaith.com/orthodoxylive>.

MANHATTAN – Diphono: a new partnership of two Greek opera singers Georgios Argeratos and Stefanos Koroneos joined by pianist Areti Giovanou, present "A classical journey through the places we loved..." with music by Hatzidakis, Kalomoiris and other Greek composers, as well as romantic Italian songs On Sunday Dec. 15, at 3PM at Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 West 69th Street, in Manhattan. Tickets: onironproductions@gmail.com phone: (347)-556-3232, \$15 pre-sale, \$18 at the door. Stefanos Koroneos made his debut in La Bohème at the Staatsoper in Freiburg, Germany. He has since then performed in theaters such as Teatro alla Scala, the Rossini Opera Festival (Pesaro, Italy), The Bolshoi Theatre, Palm Beach Opera, Teatro Reggion di Parma, Connecticut Opera, Giglio Lucca, Verdi Busetto, Sociale Rovigo, Livorno, Ravenna, Pisa (Italy), and the Athens Concert Hall (Greece). Georgios Argeratos has participated as a soloist with Opera of Thessaloniki, Altamura Center for the Arts, Opera Manhattan, Amore Opera, Allegro Singers, New York Lyric Opera Theatre, Metropolitan Greek Choral and Grattaciolo opera. Areti Giovanou is a classically trained pianist with a MM in piano performance and a MM in vocal accompaniment. Equally at home as soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral musician, she has performed in many of New York's leading venues including City Hall, Steinway Hall, the Morgan Museum, the Ukrainian and Bulgarian Consulates, Goethe Institut, and the University and Grolier Clubs in New York City, Italy, France, and Greece in various festivals.

### ■ FEBRUARY 22-23, 2014

PALM DESERT, CA – Be Greek for a Day (or a weekend!) The 18th Anniversary Palm Desert Greek Festival 2014 will take place on Saturday and Sunday, February 22nd & 23rd at the St. George Greek Orthodox Church of the Desert at 74-109 Larrea in Palm Desert. For directions, festival hours, and general information, please contact the Church office at (760) 568-9901.

### ■ NOTE TO OUR READERS

This calendar of events section is a complimentary service to the Greek American community. All parishes, organizations and institutions are encouraged to e-mail their information regarding the event 3-4 weeks ahead of time, and no later than Monday of the week before the event, to [english.edition@thenationalherald.com](mailto:english.edition@thenationalherald.com)

### ■ DECEMBER 31

READING, PA – Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church celebrates its 100th year and rings in the new year with its annual New Year's Eve Party, held at the Church's Social Hall,

1001 East Wyomissing Blvd. in Reading. The event begins at 9PM with no set time to end. Live music will be provided by the band ENOSI, and mezedes, beer, wine, soda, Vasilopita, and breakfast will be available. Admission is \$30 for adults, children 10 years and older, \$15, and children 9 and under Free. The event is children-friendly, so, bring the whole family! For more information, please contact the Church office at: (610) 374-7511, or at office@stskonstantinehelen.org.

### ■ JANUARY 24, 2014

LOS ANGELES, CA – The Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral at 1324 South Normandie Avenue in Los Angeles invites you to our day of Prizes and Surprises! Friday, Jan. 24 at 11:30AM. It's that time of the year when we play our favorite game. Please join us at 11:30AM for a delicious lunch for a donation of \$10. Following lunch, you can enjoy an afternoon of "prizes and surprises" with your friends. Reservations are required. Please call chairperson Jayne Poullos (310) 429-3949 or cochair Irene Mitropetros (323) 346-5223.

### ■ FEBRUARY 2, 2014

WASHINGTON, DC – "SMYRNA: THE DESTRUCTION OF A COSMOPOLITAN CITY, 1900-1922" with the kind support from the STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION will be featured at Georgetown University in Washington, DC on Sunday, Feb. 2, 2014. The idea behind the project is to familiarize students at some of the finest universities in the United States and Canada with the history of Smyrna. The Modern Greek Studies programs are collaborating with the departments of history, film as well as with other departments so that as many students as possible have the opportunity to see the film. Many of them are preparing papers on the subject of the destruction and the history of Smyrna is now being taught at various universities. Maria Iliou who wrote and directed the film as well as historical consultant Alexander Kitroeff will be presenting the documentary and the screenings will be followed by a Q&A. For more information, including time and specific location, please contact the director of the film Maria Iliou at [marieiliou@earthlink.net](mailto:marieiliou@earthlink.net).

### ■ FEBRUARY 6-9, 2014

SARASOTA, FL – Come join us at our 30th annual Greek festival from February 6 through 9, 2014, at St. Barbara's Greek Orthodox Church, 7671 North Lockwood Ridge Road, in Sarasota. The Festival, which is a celebration of Hellenic Culture, features authentic Greek foods and delicious pastries, Greek music by the band Ellada, Greek folk dancing by our Hellenic Dancers, bargain shopping at Y-ayia's Attic, and an Agora including an eclectic variety of jewelry and crafts. The festival is from 11AM-9PM on February 6 through 8, and from Noon to 8PM on February 9. Our raffle, sponsored by Alex Karras Lincoln, features a 2014 MXZ or MXK (car or hybrid) as the first prize! Second prize is \$7500 in cash and third prize is a roundtrip ticket to Greece and the islands, for two (a \$5000 value). There are daily church tours, as well as children's activities from February 7 to 9. For more information, call (941) 355-2616.

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## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Dear Readers,  
Our Question of the Week feature is being revised to be compatible with our new website, which was launched on November 25 ([www.thenationalherald.com](http://www.thenationalherald.com)). Stay tuned!



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