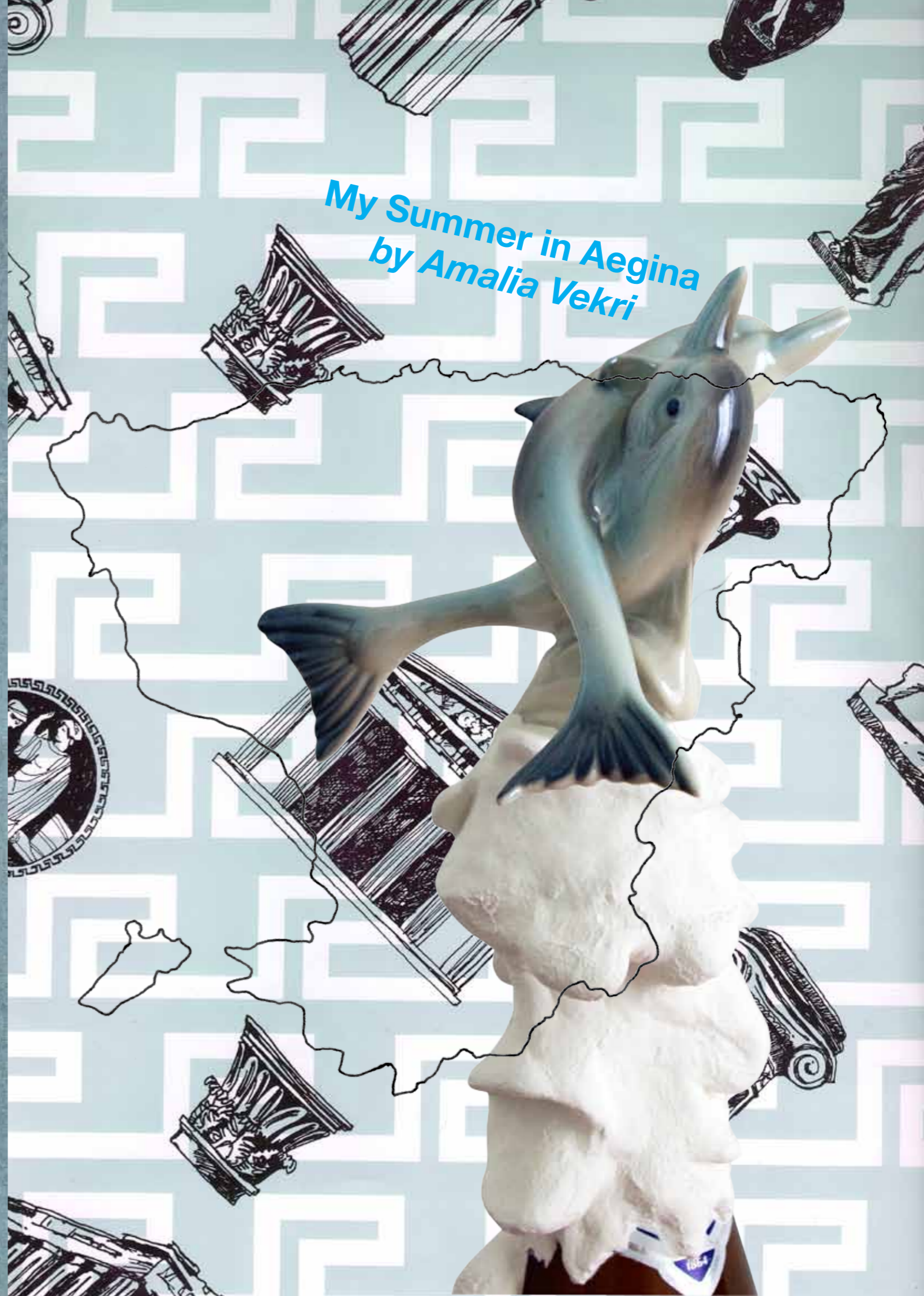
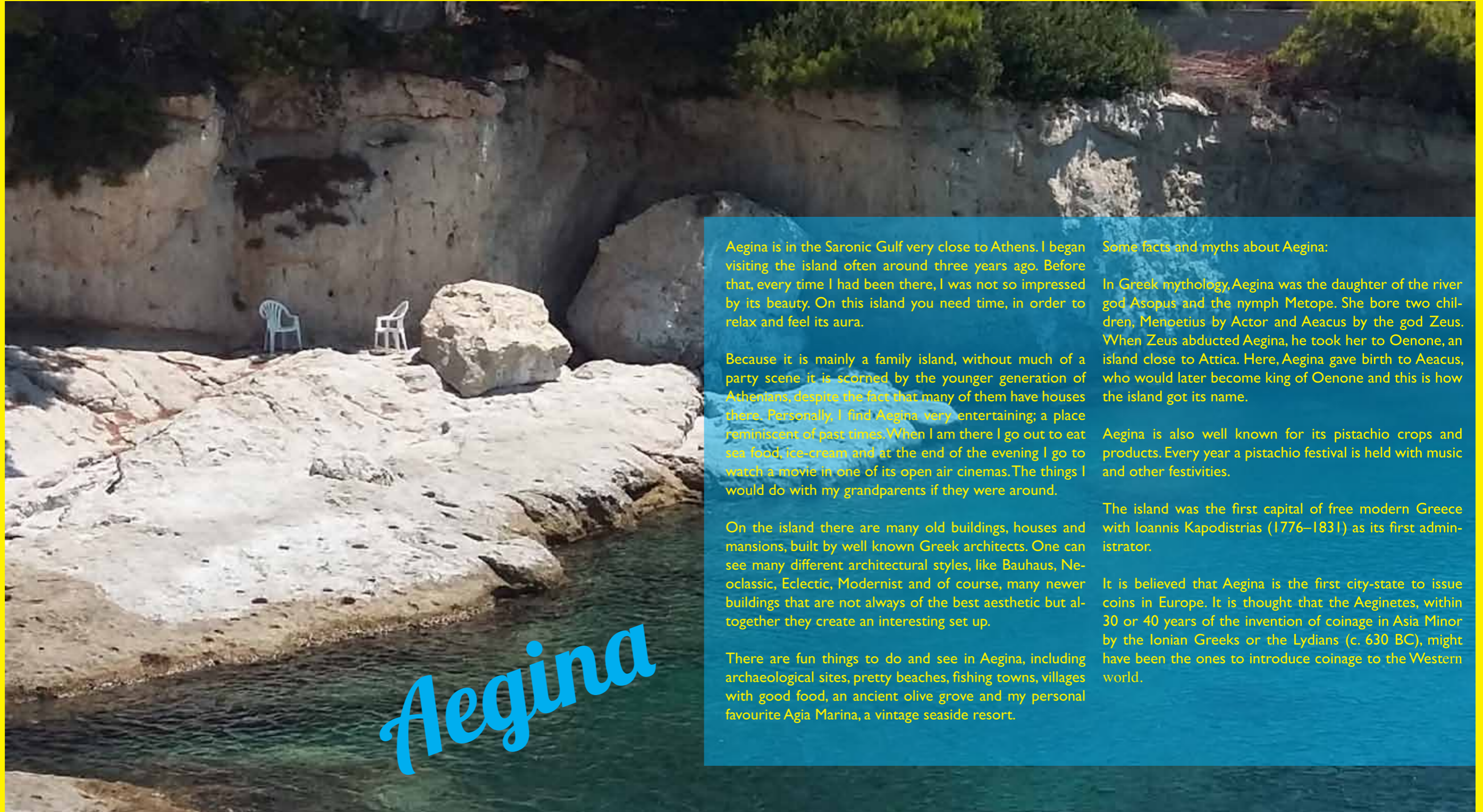


**My Summer in Aegina**  
*by Amalia Vekri*

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Aegina is in the Saronic Gulf very close to Athens. I began visiting the island often around three years ago. Before that, every time I had been there, I was not so impressed by its beauty. On this island you need time, in order to relax and feel its aura.

Because it is mainly a family island, without much of a party scene it is scorned by the younger generation of Athenians, despite the fact that many of them have houses there. Personally, I find Aegina very entertaining; a place reminiscent of past times. When I am there I go out to eat sea food, ice-cream and at the end of the evening I go to watch a movie in one of its open air cinemas. The things I would do with my grandparents if they were around.

On the island there are many old buildings, houses and mansions, built by well known Greek architects. One can see many different architectural styles, like Bauhaus, Neoclassic, Eclectic, Modernist and of course, many newer buildings that are not always of the best aesthetic but altogether they create an interesting set up.

There are fun things to do and see in Aegina, including archaeological sites, pretty beaches, fishing towns, villages with good food, an ancient olive grove and my personal favourite Agia Marina, a vintage seaside resort.

Some facts and myths about Aegina:

In Greek mythology, Aegina was the daughter of the river god Asopus and the nymph Metope. She bore two children, Menoetius by Actor and Aeacus by the god Zeus. When Zeus abducted Aegina, he took her to Oenone, an island close to Attica. Here, Aegina gave birth to Aeacus, who would later become king of Oenone and this is how the island got its name.

Aegina is also well known for its pistachio crops and products. Every year a pistachio festival is held with music and other festivities.

The island was the first capital of free modern Greece with Ioannis Kapodistrias (1776–1831) as its first administrator.

It is believed that Aegina is the first city-state to issue coins in Europe. It is thought that the Aeginetes, within 30 or 40 years of the invention of coinage in Asia Minor by the Ionian Greeks or the Lydians (c. 630 BC), might have been the ones to introduce coinage to the Western world.



The temple of Aphaea is located on a hill within a sanctuary complex dedicated to the goddess Aphaea. Aphaea means the one you cannot see.



Goddess by the sea  
Acrylic on paper, 50 cm x 70 cm, 2017



One of the places I value exploring is Agia Marina, a popular resort during the 80's and 90's. It is located underneath the temple of Aphaea and forty minutes from the town of Aegina. Although it is a fishing town of great beauty, its architecture is quite extravagant and it seems very touristy. Nevertheless, I feel fascinated wandering around this town, seeing all these strange colourful buildings, cafes and bars that follow their own aesthetic rules. At some point after the 90's the area began to lose its popularity. Many of its bars and shops shut down and now they lie there empty and derelict.



Looming over the town, there are the crumbling ruins of an enormous hotel complex. The locals say that its construction began in the late 60's and it was left unfinished. Next to it there are many other hotel rooms that look remote and depressing like ghosts. Among all this, there is hotel Apollo, exuding a grandiose atmosphere, redolent of the 70's Greek cinema. It is a modernist complex, built within a bay by the sea, surrounded by a pine forest. With nostalgic mood and old fashioned decoration everything feels very tranquil. The whole area is a time capsule.





Hotel in Agia Marina



Hotel in Aga Mania





Characteristic hotel buildings in the town of Agia Marina.





Local animal  
Acrylic on paper, 40,5 cm x 30,5 cm, 2017



There are so many cicadas in Livadi area that sometimes the sound is deafening.



There are two large derelict hotel sites on the island, one in Agia Marina and one in Perdika. Their construction began during the 60's and 70's, when Greece was under a military rule and they were part of a financial scandal. The military government was taking loans with loose terms for tourist development. They would start building hotels, but when the loans were secured they would leave them unfinished. There are many such ruins in the Greek countryside.

Apollo is a modernist hotel built in the 70's in Agia Marina bay. It is the type of hotel that most Greeks have been with their parents, at least once in their lives. This kind of a set up is also familiar from 70's Greek cinema with famous actors of that time, like Lambros Konstadaras and Rena Vlachopoulou.



Sphinx  
Acrylic on paper, 30,5 cm x 40,5 cm, 2017

## THE TEMPLE OF APHAEA

The temple of Aphaea is located above Agia Marina on a hill surrounded by a pine forest.

The temple was devoted to goddess Aphaea. According to myth she was the daughter of Zeus and Karme. She was loved by Minos and in order to escape his attention she jumped into the sea and emerged in Aegina, where she disappeared (*Aphaea: not visible*) in a grove. There she hid in a cave, where many terracotta figurines and other objects dating from the Mycenaean period have been discovered.



The sign reads: The pine tree of the grave.  
Nun Anastasia planted this pine tree in 1905 after seeing a holy light. While planting it she heard a repeating voice saying: 'leave some room for a grave'. Saint Nectarios really loves this growing tree and has been seen many times hugging it.



TEXT BY PHILIPPOS KAPPOS  
TRANSLATED BY MELITA EMMANOUIL  
GRANDDAUGHTER OF SPYROS MANOLIOS

While he was alive Saint Nectarios performed miracles. One day the nun Antonia said to him: Father we do not have food. The nuns in the monastery and the animals will starve. The Despot was calm and reassuring: God will help us, sister! Call two workers. They can bring two animals and take them to Souvala to load provisions. Souvala was then the main harbor of Aegina.

-To load what, your holiness? asked Antonia amazed. We have not ordered anything.

-We have ordered to the good God, sister. Call the workers.

During that time I (Philippos Kappos) used to work in a rich house. Spyros Manolios (Emmanouil) was the name of my boss. He was the most successful wood merchant. I was helping him by doing errands for him. He came every summer for vacations and had a house in Livadi. I was getting his newspapers and bringing him his mail from downtown Aegina. The day when the Despot said to the nun that workers should take the animals and go to Souvala to load provisions, in the house where I worked my boss said to his wife: Marika the time has passed and we have not sent to Saint Triada provisions. Most probably they will have nothing to eat...

That was what happened. He (my boss) often used to send food to the monastery... That day he felt something strong inside him and he told about it to his wife. I was present when they had this dialogue about that matter. I heard it with my own ears. At once they sent a lot of provisions to Souvala for the monastery.

I heard this story from the nun Antonia. She said to the people: His Holiness sent us to Souvala to load the provisions, without knowing something about it. He was not notified by anyone...

Text from the book 'I spoke with Saint Nectarios. Interviews with 30+1 people who met him' by Manolis Melinos, Athens 1989



People say that if you put your ear and listen closely on the Saint's grave you can hear his feet.



Pistachio and olive trees in Livadi, at Spyros Manolios estate.



Godess with flowers  
Acrylic on paper, 30,5 cm x 40,5 cm, 2017



The other main archaeological site is located in the town of Aegina. Kolona, the ruins of the Apollo temple and an ancient settlement.

One day while traveling around the East side of the island I visited the only two remaining ceramists in Mesagros area. Their creations scattered around, lying peacefully in the yard and all over the place. One of them told me that his family moved there from Sifnos island many years ago and that all of them were professional ceramists but now he is the only one left in the family. He was a bit unhappy about being alone but he cannot leave the island for the life of the city.





Nude at the beach  
Acrylic on paper, 49,5 cm x 79 cm, 2017



The sea in Livadi is crystal clear with sand inside, surrounded by some flat rocks. It is quite shallow up to a point and when the water is calm it feels like an endless swimming pool.









Amalia Vekri is a Greek artist based in Athens. She is a graduate of Central Saint Martin's in London and the curator/publisher of the Asthenia art project.



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