

Opinion # Christmas # fikardou

# Why is everyone going to Fikardou?



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Chrystalla Hadjidemetriou 27 December 2023

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In the last two weeks, during the weekends, the police have been forced to make adjustments due to increased traffic to the village of Fikardou. A small village with no residents anymore, it manages to attract thousands of visitors during Christmas. The same happened a few years ago when a popular TV series was filmed there (Aigia Fuxia). Even organized school trips took place. Beyond the folklore of the whole thing, the example of Fikardou, as well as that of Kalopanayiotis, can illustrate another model of tourism, without the sea, beach, expensive beds. The goal, of course, should not be tourism, but the revitalization of the countryside through its inhabitation. However, perhaps one leads to the other.

Why do people go to Fikardou? Because it is truly beautiful, steeped in history, preserving its traditional character untouched without destructive interventions, thanks to being declared an ancient monument, and thus manages to survive as it was centuries ago. What does this teach us? Huge hotels with all the comforts are impressive and comfortable, but they are identical all over the planet. From Las Vegas to Sharm El-Sheikh. Tourists are looking for different images and experiences. Even domestic tourists lately discover the Chielefou Bridge, the Teisia (walls) of Madari, the Diarizos Valley, the Panagia

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of Syndi, the waterfalls of Kritou Terra, and other beautiful landscapes, as well as tastes that had been devalued for years: fresh lemonade, sweet walnut, trahana...

Traditional villages are scattered throughout the countryside. Just as beautiful as Fikardou. However, they have been abandoned by their inhabitants and the state. As has happened with Fikardou and the neighboring Lazania. Until, thanks to some initiative, they not only come back to life but also become the center of attention, sometimes throughout the year.

Inia, Neo Chorio, Argaka, Pyrgos obviously cannot be satisfied with such vitality. The coastal area makes their residents want a development model like Ayia Napa. However, if they visit these places these days, they will see that Ayia Napa is nothing more than a silent, built landscape without life. However, no one bothers to support another tourism model, adapted to the natural charms of the place, which it will maintain, appreciate, and promote as a uniqueness worth seeing. And let the amounts that will flow into the pockets of individuals be smaller.

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## This is why art is dangerous



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Christos Arvanitis

27 December 2023



### The way we perceive a work of art reveals our character.

The Greek government acknowledges that it is in favor of domestic violence and femicides! When the Minister of Foreign Affairs, G. Gerapetritis, decided to withdraw and order the removal of Georgia Lale's work "Neighborhood Guilt" from the exhibition at the Greek consulate in New York, a symbolic protest against crimes victimizing women in the family setting, we can reasonably interpret the move by the head of Greek diplomacy.

Simultaneously, we should consider what harm awaits us from similar "diplomatic" handling of more serious issues concerning Greek foreign policy. You see, a work of art can be dangerous not only because of the power of the message expressed by its creator but also in how each individual perceives it.

As you may have learned, the controversial work is an imitation of the Greek flag made from sheets, mainly pink, with flowers, etc., sourced from women abused by their partners. "These women seemingly have few commonalities, but all have lain desperate and fearful on these sheets," say the organizers of the exhibition.

"The majority of victims are murdered in their homes and beds. [...] Their sheets absorb their blood. Similar sheets to those that absorb our tears, that absorb our dreams." The artist emphasized that her work aims to raise awareness about femicides in Greece: in 2022 alone, twenty-two cases were recorded.

Therefore, the minister did not need much thought to understand the message of the work, as its meaning had been explained and analyzed. It is certain that he did not confuse or misunderstand it, unlike D. Natsios, the president of the camouflaged far-right party "Niki," who contaminates the Greek Parliament with his presence. Holding a photo of the work, he denounced the "scoundrel" presented at the consulate in New York as "our flag, made with bedspreads and pink color. Our flag is blue and white, and it is dyed red only with the blood of our heroes!" he exclaimed. It does not matter if he is narrow-minded and sees enemies of the "sacred" symbols of the nation everywhere, but it concerns us all if the institutional representative of the state abroad is also a fool and of diminished perception, especially if he is a hostage to a bunch of fantasies, a racist patriarch who winks at his far-right "customers."

The interest in symbolism, therefore, lies not only in what they say but also in what they do not say, that is, how some perceive and understand the message they convey. A flag is simply a national symbol and, as such, can be used in many ways. One of them is to provoke and offend, for example, by setting it on fire.

The provocation is aimed and has an effect on those who consider it a sacred symbol and not just an inscription, the name of the country as an ideogram, a sign of identification. It aims to annoy and offend (those willing to be offended). Vlassis Kaniaris' work "Coexistence" is a "multiple" flag that emphasizes that the state is not monolithic, as it coexists with different people, nationalities, ideas, and religions. Certainly there are some "patriots" who



...misinterpret it or disagree with its rationale.

I remembered an old joke about socialist realism and its effectiveness as denunciatory art with strong symbolism, and to what extent such a work is clear and understandable to everyone: A peasant in one of the Latin American countries painted a picture depicting his daily life: workers toiling in the fields and the boss on horseback wielding a whip to prevent them from slacking off – a clear message about the oppression of poor farmers by wealthy landowners. The painting ended up in the living room of one of those landowners, who bought it and showed it to his visitors, saying, “This is how you should behave with these beasts so they don’t take the air from you!”...

Art reveals for the public, its recipients, at least what it reveals about the creator. These not only differ but are independent of the artist’s intentions. The same applies to any kind of symbol, even one of the simplest and most understandable, such as a flag. Let the hot-blooded ones calm down, then.

In the photo, the work “Coexistence” (1974) by Vlassis Kaniaris (fabric, wood 400 x 200 x 130 cm). It is exhibited in the permanent collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens and is a donation from the artist.

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Elefthera, 24.12.2023

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## And if I’m pink, don’t be afraid...





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Thanasis Photiou

27 December 2023



When in September 2021, Daniel Craig appeared at the global premiere of “No Time To Die,” the 25th James Bond film where the actor bid farewell to the role of the famous agent, wearing a pink velvet jacket by the iconic The Anderson & Sheppard, the world was stunned!

The brotherhood of universal masculinity couldn’t digest Craig’s choice to strip away the masculine image of the character he portrayed. Instead of the traditional black tuxedo, he appeared in a color historically associated with femininity.

From Piers Morgan, who suggested (always in reference to the actor!) that James Bond (the character, of course!) would never wear a flashy pink jacket (!) to the sarcastic remarks of top media analysts, outdated discussions about masculinity and colors were reignited. Not even the uninformed bothered to check how many times Sean Connery, not as Sean but as James Bond, wore pink shirts, jackets, and ties in the movies. But it’s not the times that are to blame; it’s our resistance to change.

Despite claiming many times that nothing can surprise or shock us anymore, we couldn’t have imagined that, just two years later, levity would take on national dimensions. This happened due to a work, well-known around the world, exhibited at the General Consulate of Greece in New York. A powerful piece touching on gender-based violence, femicide, and domestic abuse. I don’t know if their masculinity or their patriotism was offended first. Both, expressed in their sick way, provoke a nauseating feeling, especially when it doesn’t matter. Yet, I suspect it was masculinity that was offended first in this case—their discomfort with the color pink. Simultaneously, the quick reflexes of nationalistic complexes rushed to support and embellish the discussion with their pumpkin-like turns.

The far-right faction took the lead, dragging along various narrow-minded and nationally hypersensitive individuals who, more than the youth struggling with text comprehension, advance in neither understanding texts nor general perception and comprehension.

Excuse me, and whoever takes offense, may refrain from wishing me Merry Christmas, but discussing a “symbolic offense” when the work (although I find defending it on the basis of its humanitarian message a mistake) touches on such an important issue is not a sign of intelligence. It’s not even ridiculous! It is an expression of provincial nationalist complexes, the roots of which, I dare say, reach into misogyny. When symbol distortion in stadiums and (nationalist-religious) protests has reached absurd levels without anyone being offended—on the contrary, with their collaboration—when the symbol has become a flip-flop within the context of “live your myth in Greece,” nationalist complexes were disturbed by a work addressing the major issues of femicide and domestic violence! At a time when recent statistics place Greece at the unfortunate European forefront in this regard!

Certainly, the artist Georgia Lae did not discover the wheel with the, in my opinion, powerful “Neighborhood Guilt.” The flag in art is a symbol that has been used globally many times to send social and political messages. I don’t

been used globally many times to send social and political messages. I don't need to recall well-known examples from abroad. Regarding Greece, one of the most accurate instances was just last spring, a creation by Betroot from Thessaloniki, with the flag's lines resembling derailed train cars! However, it doesn't take much for nationalist complexes to react, especially when combined with the fearful syndrome of masculinity that pervades a significant portion of their expressions.

The complaints of a handful of fools, supposedly offended, who have made a business out of appropriating history, homeland, and its symbols, are not a recent phenomenon. Do I need to remind you of incidents fifteen years ago? When, in no time, a Facebook profile titled "DEATH TO THE TRAITOR" with 5,000 members was created because someone burned a Greek flag at a football match—who? A guy known to everyone, who roamed the streets of Nicosia constantly talking on his phone without anyone on the other end of the "line"??

Should I remind you of the frenzy we experienced in 2009 for an artwork at the Venice Biennale or a play in Rizokarpaso that both fell victim to ideologies? The disappointing aspect is, firstly, that as the years go by, perceptions regress, and secondly, the stance of the hosting state, governed by a party wearing the cloak of a grand liberal and European faction, while the stench of the far-right and nationalist complexes is repulsive in its passing.

\*The title is a variation of Vasilis Papakonstantinou's song, "And If I Am Rock."

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## When there is no vision, everything else is empty rhetoric

