

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF VOLOS

A new museum is being created

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In the early 1990s the need for the creation of a museum in the city of Volos began to mature within the local society and to be adopted from the local government¹.

Volos, the second in range, after Larissa, urban centre of Thessaly, is a new city, with roughly 150 years of activity. It began to be inhabited in the mid 19th century because of its port, which until the early 20th century functioned as a channel of communication between Thessaly and the Adriatic and the Black Sea. At the same time, the Pelion tradition in the cottage industry and trade² was exploited. During this time, being a financial and commercial center of Thessaly, it attracted financial and social forces (capital - workers - lower middle class, former rural populations), expertise and technology³. In addition, religious communities (Orthodox, Catholics, Jews, Muslims - by 1922), Turkish Romanies and gypsies coexist in the city. Moreover, since the early 20th century and until today refugees from the Balkan countries, especially Asia Minor, internal migrants, mainly from Thessaly, and economic

¹ This is the period when more and more articles in the local press claim there is a need for a "Museum of the City History". See Nick Kolovos, "Cinema Achillion", newspaper *Tachydromos*, 5.8.1990 and Militsa Karathanou, "Volos needs its own City History Museum" newspaper *Thessaly*, 19.5.1991. These two articles are republished in the "*in Volos*" magazine, issue 22, p. 130-132.

² For more information, see Wilma Chastaoglou, *Volos, the portrait of the city from the 19th century to today*, Volos 2007, Volos publications.

³ Concerning economic structure and development of the city of Volos, see Egli Dimoglou, *Industry in the prefecture of Magnesia*, Athens 2005, Kerkyra publications, p. 11-100.

migrants (in the recent decades) are added to the demographic map of the area. The contribution of all the above in the economic achievements, social struggles, the expertise and integration of experience and practice determines the character of the city into the European mainstream.

"The Museum of the City of Volos is being created. You can contribute." This was the invitation that was addressed to the residents of Volos (and not just them) about two years ago. Actions of public awareness and cooperation on the project started through this invitation in order to activate the residents in all phases: from the collection of exhibits to running the museum. The activities were developed mainly in three areas:

1. Research and collection of testimonies⁴ in order to record the views and experiences of those working or living in neighborhoods around the museum, and suggestions from stakeholders in the city:

- Interviews with residents and professionals in the western districts of the city, filming and recording of oral testimonies.
- Research through the distribution and completion of questionnaires by 150 residents and professionals in the Old District and the district of Neapoli, as well as by cultural associations, institutions and organizations in the city.

2. Action taken to promote the project and sensitize residents and competent institutions of the city⁵:

⁴ Giannis Aspiotis (Archaeologist - Cultural management consultant), Chryssa Zarkali (Archaeologist - Museologist), George Papakonstantinou (Architect - Director, Assistant Professor of Architecture, University of Thessaly), Ioanna Touloupi (Set Designer - theater director) cooperated.

⁵ Ioanna Touloupi (Set Designer - theater director), Themis Dallas (Programmer, Lecturer in the Department of History, Archeology and Social Anthropology, University of Thessaly), Ioulia Pentazou (Historian - designer of interactive multimedia applications scenarios)

- Meeting with the competent cultural and environmental authorities of the educational community to involve students and implement educational programs - Open information event - a discussion with representatives of cultural associations, institutions and organizations of the city. Attended by 23 representatives of associations, the meeting was the starting point for creating a network of social institutions, which is constantly updated ever since, on the creation process of the new museum
- Creation of an electronic portal that familiarizes visitors with the future museum and attempts to involve them in the creation process. The email address of the portal is <http://www.diki.gr/museum>.
- Workshop on the “Development of local history and cultural heritage projects” in cooperation with the Cultural Affairs Bureau of Secondary Education. The workshop presented projects on local history and cultural heritage carried out in 2006 in schools in the region, as well as the rationale for the future Museum of the City and the prospects of connecting it with students and the educational community
- Events to raise awareness of residents, which included:
 - A) Three open events in neighborhoods of the city with theatrical events and screenings of audiovisual material (Old District, Neapoli, Volos Promenade)
 - B) Exhibition on "The Museum of the city is being created" in the Spirer building. The exhibition presented the results of the actions taken to promote information, networking and raising awareness to create the new museum (featuring a special video with excerpts from interviews with residents of Volos and the first presentation of the electronic portal of the museum) and a selection of the objects coming

cooperated.

from DI.K.I. (Municipal Center for History and Documentation of Volos) collections which are specifically destined for the Museum.

The immediate result of these initiatives was the creation of an oral testimony bank in DI.K.I. concerning residents and businesses of the city in the past. Above all, however, this resulted in making the proposed project widely known and to raise awareness of a growing number of citizens in order to offer objects and other material for the museum under creation⁶. The public had realized that the museum was not only trying to record the bare facts, but had also captured the very human side of history- the entertainment, customs, working environment, economy and social struggles, all of which contribute to the history of our city.



⁶ All material relating to actions for the creation of the new museum during 2005-2006 was in a special edition in the “*in Volos*” magazine, issue 22 (2006).

INTERVIEWS

Evangelos Karagianis, barber

I was born in 1930, I am 74 years old and still working. I first joined the barbershop, then I joined the school. This little shop was my savior over the years. Every Saturday, after closing the shop, I used to go to Dimini village and served the people there, Sundays too. Later was in fashion the long hair and the business went down. Thankfully there were still the elders and the young children to serve. The children were always in a hurry, you know, to finish and go to play. So I developed the style of «toufa».

Xristos Nikolaou, butcher

I was born in 1948 and my father in 1911. My grandmother, my mother, her sister and her brother, they came from Asia Minor. Her brother went to America. After he earned some money there, he bought his sisters a house to each. He also used to send money, clothes etc. He took good care of them.

I remember the earthquake. I was a little boy. It was shaking a lot, all our homes were knocked down. We used to live in tents and shades, for ten years, 9 people in a shade. Later we took a loan to build our house. After the earthquake a lot of people came here to work. Even from Crete they came. Some of them stayed here.

Palatzas Dimitrios, handyman

I grew up in Palia. My home was up on the hill. We played here as children, we used to slide down the hill on cardboards, we used to play with walnuts stuffed with pitch, for fun.