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Mount Athos & Meteora 1929: Princeton’s Hidden Treasure at the Maliotis Cultural Center



This unique exhibition of rare photographic and film material from 1929 is presented for the first time in America from September 27, 2024- January 31, 2025 in collaboration with the Department of Art and Archaeology of Princeton University, the Mount Athos Foundation of America, and the Mount Athos Center (Thessaloniki, Greece) with the support of Maliotis Cultural Center. The exhibition will be officially opened at 5:00 p.m. on Friday September 27 at the Maliotis Cultural Center (50 Goddard Avenue Brookline, MA 02445).

Towards the end of 2017, during a move of the old libraries of Princeton University’s Department of Art and Archaeology, the staff discovered a hidden barrel containing photographic material relating to an unknown and long-forgotten journey.

Research carried out by members of the departmental staff revealed nine canisters of film that had been placed inside the barrel containing the record of a journey 2 undertaken by a group of travellers to Mount Athos and the Meteora. Further research succeeded in establishing a connection between the film material and 254 photographic prints and 81 glass lantern slides (16 of which were hand-coloured) that already existed, though unidentified, in the Visual Resources Collection of Princeton University.

The journey to Greece took place in the autumn of 1929 and the group of travellers comprised the Russian emigré, painter, explorer and gifted communicator Vladimir “Vovo” Perfilieff, the photographer, talented cinematographer and later Oscar prize-winner Floyd Crosby, and the architect and Princeton University graduate Gordon McCormick. The three travellers were accompanied by the young Anastasios Chatzimitsos, an interpreter from Thessaloniki. The expedition’s main destination was Mount Athos, where the aim was to photograph and film a place which was then regarded as being mysterious, unique and unaltered by the passage of time.

The members of the expedition were struck by the superb natural scenery, the architecture of the monasteries, the daily life of the monks, their encounter with

the cave-dwelling hermit Elias and the remarkable conditions in which he lived.

The photographs in the collection bring to light rare material and the information they provide in the fields of history, social studies, folklore and architecture is extremely important as it extends the range of original sources and adds invaluable new data to the historical research on two leading monastic centres of the Orthodox world: Mount Athos and the Meteora.

Research & Curation of the exhibition: Anastasios Ntouros, Director of Mount Athos Center

More information at www.mountathosfoundation.org/exhibition/ and www.agioritikiestia.gr.

Photo: Maliotis Cultural Center.

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