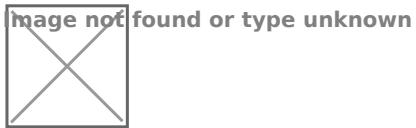


Kykladitisses: An Archaeological Exhibition

Collaboration between the Ministry of Culture - Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades and the Museum of Cycladic Art



Isis, Neiko, Parthenika, Aline, Magia Pulchra, Ermione, Alexivola, Artemis, Athena, Theoktiste, Maximilla, Euporia...these are just some of the Cycladic women who will be telling their stories in the archaeological exhibition with the title Cycladic Women: Unknown Stories of Women of the Cyclades, organized by the Ministry of Culture, with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades and the Museum of Cycladic Art from December 12, 2024 to May 4, 2025.

The exhibition, which will be hosted first at the Stathatos Mansion, will then be presented in its entirety at the renovated Archaeological Museum of Thera, which will officially re-open its doors with this presentation. The curators of the exhibition are Dr Demetrios Athanasoulis, Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, and the Academic Directors of the Museum of Cycladic Art, Dr Panagiotis P. Iossif, Professor at Radboud University in the Netherlands, and Dr Ioannis Fappas, Assistant Professor at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

The first pan-Cycladic exhibition ever organized, presents history through the eyes of the women of the Cyclades, from antiquity to the 19th century. It is an exhibition that brings together in Athens 180 unique masterpieces from almost all the islands of the Cyclades: Amorgos, Andros, Delos, Thera, Ios, Kea, Kythnos, Melos, Mykonos, Naxos, Paros, Seriphos, Sikinos, Siphnos, Syros, Tenos and Pholegandros. The exhibits date from early prehistory to the 19th century and the birth of the Greek state. Unique works, most of which have never travelled either outside the Cyclades or outside the Museum of Cycladic Art; some have never before been presented to the public. Alongside the marble Cycladic figurines of the Early Cycladic period from the Museum of Cycladic Art, 135 exhibits from the collections of the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades and artefacts from the Canellopoulos Museum, the Epigraphic Museum of Athens, the Ephorate of Paleoanthropology and Speleology and important private collections are on display.

The exhibition is the first joint action of the Museum of Cycladic Art and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, in implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation signed on May 17, 2024 by the Minister of Culture, Lina Mendoni, and the President and CEO of the Museum of Cycladic Art, Sandra Marinopoulou, with the aim of studying, highlighting and promoting the Cycladic culture in Greece and abroad.

As the Minister of Culture Lina Mendoni has stated:

“The exhibition ‘Kykladitisses: Untold stories of the women in the Cyclades’ seeks to explore two timeless issues. First, the position of women through space and across time, in history and culture. Secondly, insularity. Insularity has been defining –since the prehistoric era to our time– the course and the historical development occurring on the Cycladic islands. Women are the ones holding a particular position in the island society and this is reflected either through the worship of specific deities, or in written sources, namely inscriptions found in the Cyclades that have preserved the role of women in the private sphere –through an abundance of written sources–, or in their public presence. Even their expression of grief, as women themselves experience and show it, is indicative of their position in these ancient island societies. In this exhibition, women are the central characters in the private and public spheres: in the family, religion, economy and in politics. The dichotomy between limitation and dynamic presence at one and the same time reflects their resilience, adaptability, and ability to redefine their identity and role to suit the circumstances of each era.”

As stated by the President of the Museum of Cycladic Art, Sandra Marinopoulou:

"We are proud that the first collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades is a major archaeological exhibition concerning women. Women of the Aegean and their history, as it evolved over the centuries. This co-organization with the Ministry marks the beginning of a series of joint activities, not only through exhibitions but also through research programs, conferences, scholarly publications, digital applications, and so on. Kykladitisses will be a landmark inter-Cycladic exhibition, as it brings together for the first time so many masterpieces of the Cyclades under one roof. For this reason, we have decided with the Ministry of Culture to let it continue its journey to the Cyclades, to inaugurate the renovated Archaeological Museum of Thera. This is also a way to contribute practically to the spreading of the knowledge of the Cycladic culture and to give something back to the Cyclades, as they are the reason for the existence of our Museum."

By focusing on women, as they emerge through the material testimonies of the Cycladic past, the exhibition aims to examine the roles of women and their positions in insular societies. This is achieved through revealing the smaller or larger 'untold' stories that they themselves tell us – either through their own words or through their material remains; but almost always through the filter of the view of men of their time. The exhibition thus brings to light the often unfamiliar roles of women over the years and demonstrates how these roles were influenced by their position of dependency. Deities and mothers, priestesses, courtesans, merchants, fighters, intellectuals, mourners, witches, immigrants – all star in the show.

The visitor will get to understand the Cycladic women both in public and in private life, in social, political, religious and family spheres. Within the twelve sections of the exhibition, their relationship with eroticism, death and mourning, their participation in religious events and Dionysian festivals, the violence they suffered and the restrictions imposed on them by the community, are all presented.

Statuettes and large-sized sculptures, vases, jewellery, coins, funerary stelae, inscriptions with legal texts, frescoes, mosaics, engravings, manuscripts and icons – ranging from prehistoric to post-Byzantine times – compose the exhibition. Of the items, many of which could be, and are, exhibition objects by themselves, three works stand out due to their uniqueness and size: the colossal Kore of Thera (2.48 m high), one of the few almost intact Archaic statues, now exhibited for the first time in Greece; the emblematic fresco from Akrotiri in Santorini presenting the 'Women in the Sanctuary', a unique work of monumental dimensions (almost 4 m

long); and the Hellenistic statue of Artemis Elaphebolos from Delos, which will be exhibited for the first time outside the island.

The exhibition *Kykladitisses: Untold Stories of Women of the Cyclades* is the second in the new series of archaeological exhibitions with the theme of 'Human Histories' at the Museum of Cycladic Art. These tell and illustrate stories about the lives, customs and works of mortals, which yet influence the lives, perceptions and thoughts of later generations.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXHIBITION:

Cycladic women historically have expressed a dynamism imposed on them by their landscape: arid, rocky, isolated and yet at the same time connected to the other islands, charming, unique. Bold women who entered into economic transactions or were benefactors to their community, they travel from the ends of the world to meet their destiny in the heart of the Archipelago, test their relationship with the divine, transform themselves into very saints. Always, they are influenced by the sea itself: either because of the threats and dangers it represents, or because of the wealth and freedom it offers.

But why women from the Cyclades? Simply because the island complex offers a wealth of sources related to women and the multiple roles, they were called upon to play on the islands and in local societies. Never before has an attempt been made to tell their story through the presentation and analysis of the archaeological, historical and ethnological sources of evidence in a continuous and approachable manner, particularly in the context of an exhibition addressed to the general public.

The exhibition places the Cycladic woman at the centre-stage: not only because she can tell the history of the islands in a different way compared to that of men, but also because Cycladic women embody interesting similarities and differences in their roles over time. They are the ones who are deified in prehistory and constitute the feminine and dominant expressions of the divine. Marginalized thereafter in early historical years, they begin to regain an important and even dominant position in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. There are women who travel, who encounter their happiness or their fate in the Cyclades. The goddesses and saints of the island religions offer relief and healing, and as such are objects of worship from distant prehistory to the present day. It is women who, from goddesses of nature and motherhood, are transformed into protectors of the sea and sailors. And, finally, are those few women who influenced the formation of the modern Greek state and contributed so much to the Revolution, driven and influenced by the insularity of their homelands.

The exhibition is structured around the following 12 sections:

1. Juggling between two genders
2. The origin of the world
3. Goddesses of the islands
4. Female apotropaic figures
5. In the sanctuaries
6. Goddesses of the sea
7. Women's identities
8. From the Oikoumene to the Archipelago
9. Eroticism
10. Violence
11. Death through their own eyes
12. Faces

The museographical study of the exhibition was prepared by the three curators, while for the presentation design there was close collaboration with the architects

Despina Tsafou and Katerina Apostolou.

The exhibition is accompanied by a two-volume catalogue which includes essays by important scholars and extensive entries on the exhibition objects, many of which are published for the first time. The first volume of the catalogue is 520 pages long and presents all the objects of the exhibition by section. Further, with the aim of promoting research on women in the Cyclades, a significant academic conference will be organized in the spring.

Photo: Paris Tavitian/Museum of Cycladic Art.

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