

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

George Petrides' 'Hellenic Heads' Bring Greek History to Southampton

BY TATIANA KRISZTINA

History, horror and hope come to Southampton in the form of sculptor George Petrides' exhibition *Hellenic Heads*.

Hellenic Heads had its world premiere on May 5, 2022 at the Greek embassy in Washington DC. As of July 2, the exhibit is now housed at The Muses in Southampton, sponsored by *Dan's Papers*.

"I hope that Greeks may benefit from the views of someone who is outside of Greece and so has come to have some distance for observation," said the Greek American artist in a promotional video, "and non-Greeks may benefit by learning about the foundations of Western civilization."

The exhibit is a personal exploration of Greek history and culture over the past 2,500 years. To

Civil war from 1941 to 1949; and the present. He hopes to show how each period is important to the development of Greek culture and history.

Throughout his works, Petrides explores femininity and the progress of feminism in Greek history. His piece titled "Thalia, Muse of Comedy" was inspired by a sculpture from the classical period that depicted the eponymous muse. Muses were goddesses, revered in a time when Greek women had few rights and were confined to domestic duties. On the opposite side of the spectrum, Petrides's statue "Heroines of 1821" is inspired by various women who were important military figures in the Greek War of Independence and embody their strength and freedom.

His work "Archon" is the sculpture depicting the Byzantine Empire and exudes power and



GUILLAMME ZICARRELLI

GEORGE PETRIDES' "THALIA, MUSE OF COMEDY" (2022, MIXED MEDIA, 35" X 19")



GEORGE PETRIDES' "THE CATASTROPHE" (2022, MIXED MEDIA, 34" X 21")



GUILLAMME ZICARRELLI

GEORGE PETRIDES' "KORE" (2022, BRONZE, 30" X 22")



GUILLAMME ZICARRELLI

GEORGE PETRIDES' "HEROINES OF 1821" (2022, MIXED MEDIA, 34" X 23")

prepare for this exhibit, Petrides researched archaeological artifacts, academic readings, historical photographs and family stories. He also studied famous sculptors such as Donatello, Houdon and Rodin. While his sculptures are inspired by works of art, he drew inspiration from those close to him. His statues have features of his mother, father, grandmother, fiancée, daughter and even himself.

Petrides sculpted six over-life-sized head statues to represent six eras in the history of Greece: the classical Greek period from 510 BC to 323 BC; Byzantine Period from 330 to 1453; Greek War of Independence from 1821 to 1829; the Destruction of Smyrna in 1922; the Nazi occupation and Greek

leadership. According to Petrides, "Archon" is a name that means leader. Petrides used photos of his father as a sea captain and a sculpture of Constantine the Great as inspiration.

Petrides also explores themes of dignity in the face of destruction. For the piece marking the Burning of Smyrna, "The Catastrophe," Petrides hopes to convey the pain and shock felt by his grandmother and her family when they became refugees due to this tragedy. "Life During Wartime" conveys daily life under Nazi power and the Greek Civil War with fear, horror and famine.

His last statue, the one to convey the present, is titled "Kore" and modeled after his 12-year-old daughter. Petrides shows optimism for the future

after the horrific two eras depicted before and hope for the future through the children of today.

This exhibition runs through September 5, so it's definitely a must for your 2022 summer bucket list. After its Southampton run, it will travel throughout the United States and Europe.

Petrides was born in Athens and spent more than half his life in New York City. He's been a full-time artist since 2017 but has studied and made art for over two decades. His work has been shown in Dubai, London, Athens and other major cities.

Hellenic Heads can be found at The Muses at 111 St. Andrews Road in Southampton.