

"I'M INSPIRED BY THINGS THAT ARE UNIVERSAL AND LARGER THAN THE SELF."

What are you working on now?

Presently I have just finished doing a 24-channel video installation that was at the gallery that represents me in New York – the Cristin Tierney. That project has really opened up a lot of doors. It was a big achievement for me technically and it gives me the confidence that I can do these very big projects.

I am currently working on a very large multi-screen commission for a new building that is being built which is sort of confidential at the moment. But I plan to have that finished sometime in the early fall.

How does it all come together?

How does the whole process work? What I do is I start backwards. I think about the effect that I want a work to have on an audience and then I sort of work backwards from there.

I also have to know what type of space I'm working with so that I can think of ways to fill that space. When I am working on projects like these multi-screen video projects, it's ultimately dictated on the number of screens I'll be able to put in.

So I figure out my fixed limitation and once I have that in place I figure out the effect that I want the work to have on the audience and then I start to create content from there.

My process basically involves pulling from a rich arsenal of content that I have already created and developed over the years and combining that with new content.

In other words, I have been shooting photography and video and film and making paintings for about 15 years now. I have been constantly creating work and developing these things, so ultimately I look through all that content and I pull from that to create the pieces that I make today as well as augmenting that with new things that get created to round out what's already been created.

One of the results is that when I look through this rich arsenal, the common thread is a certain symbolism of all the images I have created. Primarily, it has to do with landscape symbolism. I like to draw upon that type of work and then add to that. And add new work and new compositions and new images to create a new work.

I'm constantly making and working on things, so there's really no beginning or end in how I operate on each project.

Where does your inspiration come from? One of the things I would say inspires me is that, as an artist, I'm looking to express my interpretation and my reality in a way that uses a tool set that is accessible to anybody else. That is one of the real challenges of any artist – taking something that is personal to them and creating an artwork that is accessible to someone who may come from a completely different walk of life.

I'm interested in making work that whether you're a bushman or a businessman, you will be compelled to look at it.

How do you do this? I know that in order to capture the attention of somebody you need to make it visually compelling. So I try to create something that is visually compelling and that once I have their attention, all of the layers can be peeled back and there's multiple interpretations that can happen based on who it is. Everybody brings their own set of circumstances.

What inspires you? I'm inspired by things that are universal and larger than the self. I am very much inspired by astrophysics and astronomy and our universe to things that more grounded in the terrestrial as well – these are things we can understand or can tangibly interact with on earth.

I am also very much inspired by looking at other art – all the creativity that is around us, from ancient times to the present. I am very much inspired by the way others have interpreted the world around them.

What's a dream project of yours? There are so many. I would actually really like to do a large exhibition in Greece at some point. That would be a dream project of mine.

I grew up coming to Greece and spending all of my summers in Greece. I am very rooted in my culture, especially as I got older and stopped taking it for granted. I started realizing what a rich culture I come from.

Both my parents are from Greece. My yia-yia and papou used to live

with us. I spoke Greek growing up. I kind of had a dual existence growing up. I would go to an American school and then I would come home to a Greek household and everything that goes along with that.

As I got older and started to really recognize the importance of my heritage and the importance of Greece itself in the context of evolution and in the context of history, I've grown very interested in this idea and finally coming to Greece to do a big exhibition there that incorporates all of the things that I've learned.

How has Greece inspired you in your work? I am very much inspired by the Greek culture primarily the symbolism that comes out of it. You can find it all over my work. I am particularly fond of two things. One is the ancient culture of Crete – the Minoan civilization. I have been to Crete three times now for the purposes of investigating the Minoans. The second thing is my interest in ancient technology and all things that have to do with technology of the ancient world. Greeks were very prolific in that area.

You can actually find Greek culture peppered all throughout various works of mine.

I'm also very much inspired by the hybrid existence I've had growing up in the States in a Greek household. There's a lot to extract from an experience like that.



TRANSMIGRATION
24 CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION WITH SOUND
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Artist Yorgo Alexopoulos is a digital wizard in the studio

by Kathy Tzilivakis

YORGO ALEXOPOULOS' secret to success is all in the mix. This New York-based artist is best known for his innovative ways of fusing traditional media like painting, photography, film and sculpture with digital media.

The Greek American artist's trademark is syncing multiple monitors or projections. He uses video installations and high definition flat screen pieces.

Alexopoulos recently mounted a 24-channel video installation at Cristin Tierney – the gallery that represents him in New York City.

Last year, he was commissioned by the Art Production Fund, a non-profit arts organization, to produce a sprawling 432 LCD screen installation for the lobby of Cosmopolitan Hotel in Las Vegas. It was met with much critical acclaim.

In an interview with *The Pappas Post*, Alexopoulos, a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, explains how he broke into the digital media world and reveals one of his biggest dreams – to one day exhibit in Greece.

How did you get into the digital media? Essentially, I started off as someone working in the more traditional media like painting and photography – primarily painting. I got my initial start by being part of the big underground graffiti movement in Los Angeles

in the late 1980s. At that time I was basically doing graffiti art and murals all over the city. That got me into making paintings and producing pretty large scale paintings.

At the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, I was in the painting program initially, but looking around at all of the other opportunities and all of the facilities and becoming friends with other folks in other departments.

I started to recognize the potential for expanding what I was doing in other areas. The time I spent at the school really allowed me the freedom and the flexibility to experiment in other ways.

I was also very comfortable doing things technically on the computer. My father and step-father and uncle were all electrical engineers and there was a lot of high-tech talk and influence around the house. At school, there were also sorts of opportunities available to create art using a computer.

I very quickly started meandering into this area and experimenting with digital means. And that's really what got me going. This was also in the early 1990s – at the advent of when Photoshop and Illustrator and all of these programs were becoming more accessible to people. So I was sort of pioneering this stuff early on. That's really where it all kind of started.

What was your first project? Well, I quickly switched to the photo department, which also had access to computers. My first projects were really showing up to photo class critiques with prints that were all done on the computer.

I never shot a photograph pretty much for all the time I was in arts school. What I did was work on the computer using Photoshop and I would literally draw with the mouse and create digital drawings and then I would use the equipment there to take still photographs of television of films and manipulate them in the computer. And then I would print them.

Back then you didn't have beautiful inkjet printers or any printing solutions, so I would have my digital images recorded onto film – the school had equipment where you could take a digital file and print it on to actual film. I would then take that film and go into the photo lab like all the other students and I would print these digital film stills on to actual color paper. I would ultimately show up to my critiques with these, which were essentially the beginnings of digital printing before digital printing even existed.

That's sort of my first foray into really using the computer in my work, ultimately fusing traditional media with new media – digital media. This is what I am very much interested in and exploring in my present work.

What sort of feedback have you received? The feedback that I typically get is that most people find that I am doing something very unique. The experience is often very unique because the systems that I have incorporated into my video installations are both content driven and technically driven. I'm finding clever ways in the studio of sinking monitors and multiple screens to create one big image and blurring the line between many screens to make one image and then all the screens making their own individual image.

So, I think that one of the first comments I typically get is that people find my work a very unique artistic experience. They have never experienced artwork in the way that they experience my work.

Other feedback I've gotten is that the use of traditional media within the digital media is another area that I find people respond to, as well as the content I'm using.

Is there an underlying theme to your works? Ultimately, my themes are very expansive and very universally accessible. I often make work that on some level has a transcendental component to it or it is often about things larger than the self. So my work is about getting the individual to think about things that are bigger than themselves. There's much more to the world than their own individualism.



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