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Small Studio • Great Impact

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All champions of creative play, 30 award-winning design units speak about why they are proud to stay small and how they intently forge artistic excellence in the global arena from 18 cities, with ace solutions grounded in professionalism and a personal zest.

Edited & published by Viction:ary

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“Never compromise, thematically or aesthetically.”

GREECE IS FOR LOVERS
Athens, Greece



Key members / Thanos Karampatsos,
Christina Katsilelou
Specialty / Product design
URL / www.greeceisforlovers.com

Est. 2007



Conceived at the foot of the Acropolis hill of Athens, Greece is for Lovers are Thanos Karampatsos and Christina Katsilelou, two keen souls dedicated to presenting a new sense of “Grekness” out of humour, irony, nonchalance and extravagance — the truly Greek. Appearing as odd fusions of old and new, the duo’s designs comment on habitual activities and behavioural patterns of both the past and the present.



HOW DID YOU START YOUR COMPANY?
WHAT IS ARE YOUR CREED(S) AND
ASPIRATION(S)?

Our first encounter was during our product design studies in London, back in 1998. A few years after graduation and while we were both in Athens at some point in 2006, we worked on a project together for an exhibition in Belgium. After that, we officially formed the company in 2007. Our motto has always been to never compromise, thematically or aesthetically.

WHAT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT FOR YOU AT THE BEGINNING?

When you have two individuals working together, it's bound to be difficult at times to compromise, or even to find common ground. In our case, the really specific concept behind the work has helped us a lot. Although we never had any idea on how this venture would evolve, we have a very tight brief and creative context. This has been our goal, from the beginning until now.

WHAT ROLES DO YOU INDIVIDUALLY PLAY IN THE FIRM?

We commit ourselves to all tasks, either creative or administrative. Both of us do a little bit of everything. Lately we employ others to work on graphics or other areas we feel are not our specialty. Of course, interns provide some extra help occasionally!



HOW DO YOU PROMOTE YOURSELF?

Every year we take part in international design fairs and smaller exhibitions. That's how we made our initial studio brand introduction to the design world and how we continue to establish contacts with possible buyers or curators. Having an international press presence also helps.

WHAT MAKE(S) SMALL STUDIOS SUSTAINABLE? WHAT IS MOST CRITICAL FOR STUDIOS LIKE YOURS TO GAIN A FOOTHOLD IN THE COMPETITIVE MARKET?

We believe in the flexibility of small studios. Studios that are personal can promote themselves as such. The best way for a small studio to declare its presence is through their very tight concept and style, in other words individuality.

IT MIGHT BE EASIER FOR LARGE DESIGN AGENCIES TO WIN A JOB. WHAT ARE YOUR STRATEGIES TO BEAT THEM? HAVE YOU EVER LOST/HAD TO GIVE UP AN OPPORTUNITY THAT MIGHT BE RELEVANT TO YOUR COMPANY SIZE?

Larger companies have more resources and are faster in delivering the outcome, compared to smaller design studios like ourselves. We count on our strong concept and unique approach to design briefs and usually people who employ us appreciate this. In most cases we lost potential jobs because of a lack of ability to have large volume productions.





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WHAT ARE THE BEST AND WORST EXPERIENCES BY FAR?

The whole experience of running a small creative studio is priceless for sure! One can gain so much knowledge and confidence just by dealing with tasks that arise every day. Of course there are bad times, but that's part of the whole package.

DO YOU TWO HAVE VERY DIFFERENT CHARACTERS?

Of course being two strong-minded individuals, we have different opinions on a lot of issues. We have managed though, during these years of working together, to put them behind us and sometimes compromise for the sake of the outcome. That is also the interesting part of group work!

HOW DO YOU TWO WORK TOGETHER? WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF BOTH OF YOU ARE STANDING AT THE OPPOSITE EXTREMES AND FAIL TO REACH A CONSENSUS?

When we have a new brief, we usually brainstorm together and then work on some ideas individually. We then come together again, discuss them and try to decide what works better.

It's funny how a lot of the times we come up with very similar things! If we disagree, we have a fight, avoid each other for a while and then try to find a middle ground!



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DO YOU INTEND TO RETAIN YOUR PRACTICE'S CURRENT SIZE? IF IT HAS TO GROW BIG ONE DAY, WHAT WOULD BE THE ULTIMATE SIZE?

Occasionally we are struggling either with work load or with economic situations but eventually we are both happy with the way this studio has grown organically. We really appreciate the fact that we never compromise creatively and that we are able to set our own briefs and creative context. Of course things would be much easier if we could employ some extra pair of hands to deal with sales, marketing and promotion or even plain administrative work.

AND THE TRADITION(S) ETHOS TO KEEP?

The creative freedom and flexibility we mentioned above. To create our own rules and set our own standards. Of course we would also want to keep our own specific approach as a brand.



01 / Atlantish Scarf, 2011
Silk scarf with a map of the lost city of Atlantis.

02 / PYROCKS, 2008
Mosquito coil ring for the launch of KOBRES' new fragrance range.

03 / No Sleep Till Hades, 2011
Die-hard merchandise range comprised of a mug, a tote bag and a plush pillow.

04 / Amen Tableware, 2009
China plates with a wry view on the rebellious sentiment of modern Greeks.

05 / Slice Me Nice, 2008
Marble chopping board-cum-herb crusher resembling a beach racket set.

06 / Demigod, 2008
Water-jet cut marble pot coaster and paper weight with semi-divine charm.

07 / AATV, 2009
Cocktail stirrer set for Myran-Scandinavian Design's fifth birthday.

08 / Flavour of the Month, 2011
Delicious-looking paper weight made of white marble and chromed brass.

09 / Zeus!, 2007
Plated brass hatemall-opener endowed with the stealth and fury of Zeus.

10 / Tougher than Leather, 2008
A leather covered skateboard incorporating a pair of Greek sandals.

11 / Claymate, 2010
Full-scale skateboard handmade in red clay with ancient Greek pottery decor.

12 / Mr. Bones, 2012
Evil-eye mascot for Merimna's auction contracted by Kiehl's (Greece).

13 / Tan Lines, 2010
Sun-kissed, foldable chair made with aluminum frame and untreated leather.

Photos (01, 04-06, 09-13) by Nikos Alexopoulos, (03) by Eleanna Kokkini