

In conversation with Μιχάλης Μουντάκης

I was born in 1967. My father used to be a musical instruments maker so I found myself in his workshop from the early years of my life. I made my first games in his workshop and I grew up loving this art and decided to continue the work my father used to do.

From that time till now I continue working with the same techniques, using the same ways, which I haven't practically evolved. I use no heavy machinery to create the instruments so it's all hand-made with the aid of some electrical devices such as drills, cutting tools etc.

I make instruments based on the tambura family, such as bouzouki, tours, bag lamas, half-bouzouki etc. Others based on mandolin line like: Mandolins, quartinos and mandalas. And finally instruments based on lute such as lout steriano (island lute) bémol lute and baritone lutes that are being played mostly in crete and the southern Aegan Islands.

My father used to work close to Omonoia. In 1977 he decided to move into his workshop based on kerameikou street. Since then during my summer vacations (from school) I kept myself busy at the workshop. I was ten years old by that time and that's how I learned my craft. Having fun entertaining myself. In 1980 we moved right where we are at the moment. in Kolonou street 17. So from ten years old till now - I'm 50-, I'm here in Metaxourgeio.

At first it's difficult to realise the changes because when you live in a certain place everyday you go with the flow. But thinking back in time many things changed. Metaxourgeio used to be quite a vibrant area where many people used to work and live. There were only old, neoclassical, two storey houses. But during the 70's and the 80's apartments made their appearance along with factories. There was a german factory called "Klemark" right across the street where on it's 6 storeys more then 800 people worked. Every storey had the size of 1 acre. The streets were overflowed with people of the working class. Next door was "Maestro-Thymios" a blacksmith who used to build ventilations and constructions. There were other constructors with all kind of machinery like concrete mixers, sharpening and all kind of different tools, carpenters and others making their day labour.

Most of the grounds where the apartment blocks were build, were quid pro (fair exchange). And except for the owners other families used to live there. So as a result there were many kids and they used to play everywhere on the streets. Like I did use to play football with my friends. Nowadays something that's not possible because of the traffic. Back then there were less of it. Nowadays the area is full of houses of tolerance (brothels) which attracts a completely different group of people with different mentalities and qualities. Wouldn't care about buying a pair of shoes or trousers etc. Lots of Chinese and Syrians opened shops in the area whilst Greek ones are closing. But it's not only the Greek business that is affected by the crisis. It's also the shops from the foreigners that close down. There is no difference on that. All the legal shops close down and give way to those kind of illegal or half-legal businesses. While creative ones are getting are getting less and less. The old generation of Metaxourgeio was creating. Carpenters produced furniture, blacksmiths made tools and factories produced clothing sold in the actual market and throughout Greece being swell exported. Today it's only trading. Ready made clothes imported from Turkey of Syria sold at the shops. So a big part of creativity out of work is lost. Money is the only thing

that is mainly exchanged. Not creative work. Not for every one off course, but for a large part of representing the cultural identity of this area, slowly getting lost.

credits

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