

SOUND, STONE, *and* the ISLAND of MEMORY

A CONVERSATION WITH
EKATERINA JUSKOWSKI & TATIANA GECMEN-WALDEK



On Hydra, two curators, Ekaterina Juskowski and Tatiana Gecmen-Waldek, work with sound, stone, and memory.

Their project, Hydra: Island in the Sound, is made of site-specific installations, recordings, and marble pieces. In this interview with Irini Karayannopoulou for ESCAPE magazine, the two co-curators speak of matter, methodology and the stubborn beauty of making art on a land that won't be tamed.



Q Can you tell us about the concept behind the Mnemosyne Project? What themes does it explore, and how are they connected to the island of Hydra?

EKATERINA Mnemosyne Projects is a non-profit curatorial platform and international cultural think tank dedicated to the conservation and artistic representation of authentic sites of memory. The concept of Mnemosyne Projects was born on the Greek island of Hydra, whose rich history, unique architecture, and longstanding artistic legacy serve as both a backdrop and a living source of inspiration for the platform's mission.

Hydra's role as a historic crossroads of cultures and ideas informs the project's central themes: intercultural dialogue, artistic memory, and the preservation of intangible heritage. Drawing on the island's distinctive blend of local traditions and cosmopolitan influence—from seafaring and spiritual heritage to its status as a haven for artists and intellectuals—Mnemosyne Projects explores how collective memory can be revived and reshaped through contemporary creative practices.

Through cross-cultural research, artistic interpretation, interdisciplinary curation, and strategic partnerships, the project identifies, records, and archives hybrid cultural phenomena that hold historical significance for communities worldwide. Hydra, with its deeply symbolic landscape and aura of myth, becomes not only the birthplace of this initiative but a recurring lens through which the broader mission is refracted.

Mnemosyne Projects continues to engage audiences both on and off the island, bridging local legacy with global dialogue. The organization collaborates with artists, musicians, producers, curators, writers, educational institutions, and cultural organizations internationally.

Q How did your collaboration with Hydra School Projects begin? What drew you to this particular platform and location?

EKATERINA My collaboration with Hydra School Projects began organically, through a shared sensibility toward the island's layered heritage. Dimitrios Antonitsis, the visionary founder of the platform, is a Greek curator and artist with deep roots on Hydra. This year marks the 26th edition of Hydra School Projects, a remarkable testament to his commitment to sustaining contemporary artistic dialogue in such a unique and challenging setting.

Last year I launched Mnemosyne Projects with The Warp of Time exhibition at the Old Carpet Factory. The exhibition explored the traditional craft of carpet weaving in Hydra and Greece more broadly. This art form inspired the conceptual framework of the project but also lent its name to the 18th-century sea captain's mansion where the installation took place. Dimitrios's works were shown alongside those of Helen Marden in that setting of the mansion.

Dimitrios has an unparalleled understanding of Hydra's landscape, its rhythms, histories, and subtleties. So when I shared the vision for my upcoming installation, his immediate and enthusiastic support meant a great deal. He offered the Lyceum's amphitheatre space. Collaborating with Hydra School Projects is a great honor and feels like contributing to a living archive of artistic memory on the island.

Q Would you describe Hydra: Island in the Sound as a site-specific project? If so, in what ways has the island—its history, landscape, or architecture—influenced your curatorial approach?

EKATERINA Hydra: Island in the Sound is very much a site-specific project—one that draws directly from the island’s singular history, sonic atmosphere, and architectural poetics. It began as a reimagining of Hydra’s cultural and artistic identity, crafting a kind of origin myth for a place that, curiously, remains largely absent from the canon of Greek antiquity.

At the heart of this process was a desire to entwine sound with matter—to give resonance a form, a weight. That’s when I reached out to curator Tatiana Gecmen-Waldek. I had the sound; I needed the stone. I envisioned a cosmology of the island—an interplay between Hydra’s audible memory and its material presence. Tatiana, who works closely with a marble company from Tinos, brought not only an intuitive understanding of form and texture, but also a global perspective that beautifully expanded the scope of the project.

While my curatorial lens remained rooted in Hydra’s local narratives and intangible heritage, Tatiana helped propel the project into a broader, contemporary discourse, bridging mythology and materiality, intimacy and universality. The result is a contemplation on what we choose to keep and what gets discarded.



Q The Old Carpet Factory is a striking venue. How does its distinct architectural character engage with the marble works presented? In what ways do the two spaces—Hydra School Projects and the Old Carpet Factory—dialogue within the project?

TATIANA It all began with a conversation in 2024, during Deste Week on the island of Hydra. One evening, I shared with Ekaterina my involvement in marble repurposing, a thread that runs through much of my curatorial work. When Dimitrios Antonitsis later announced the title of his group exhibition at the Hydra School, Lithos / Lethe, and Mnemosyne Projects was invited to present a project in the courtyard, Ekaterina kindly included me to involve a sculptor and bring marble to the forefront. Driven by Antonitsis’ longstanding fascination with collecting discarded Greek marble sinks, we saw an opportunity to challenge him, an artist who had never worked with noble stone, to create a site-specific installation. The result aligns with his ongoing inquiry into contemporary archaeology, revealing a subtle yet haunting motif within his practice.

For the second exhibition, Marble Riddles, hosted at the Old Carpet Factory, I invited two muralists. Once ceremonial or spiritual, murals connect to prehistoric rock art—often monumental and carrying the weight of walls. In Marble Riddles, British Holly Björklund and Mexican Esteban Fuentes de María turned inward, distilling mural composition into hand-held precious fragments, like minute-scale frescoes once discovered on Hydra, Greece. Both engaged with the metamorphic stone and repurposed leftovers that hover between relic and rêverie, mythology and symbology.

EKATERINA The Old Carpet Factory is more than just a venue; it’s a site of layered memory. I host an art residency at the Old Carpet Factory with the mission of fostering research-based, interdisciplinary practices that engage deeply with the identity of the island. The project itself emerged through a collaboration with artist and ethnomusicologist Angela Tisner and cultural researcher Alkistis Boutsoukou, both of whom joined the residency through our open call. Angela set out to trace Hydra’s sacred and secular musical traditions, while Alkistis brought the island’s oral histories to life through storytelling and ethnographic research.

Together, through field recordings, interviews, and immersive sonic compositions, we uncovered Hydra’s hidden rhythms and voices, echoes that seemed to harmonize naturally with the building’s stone surfaces and intimate acoustics. The Old Carpet Factory also supported the production of a limited 7” vinyl EP that accompanies the project.

The two spaces formed a kind of conceptual stereo: the Old Carpet Factory embodying the intimate and auditory, the Lyceum channeling the monumental and material. This collaboration allowed the project to unfold across multiple registers, creating a layered exploration of Hydra’s sonic and spatial cosmology.

Q How long did it take to develop and realize this curatorial intervention? Were there any particular logistical or conceptual challenges you encountered during the process?

TATIANA Once the artist’s vision aligned with our curatorial ambition, we turned our focus to the conceptual framework.

With Dimitrios Antonitsis, a visit to Serpetinis marble factory on the outskirts of Athens became the pivotal starting point. There, we went urban mining and selected a series of archetypal utilitarian sinks, sculpted from white Dionysos Pentelic marble—the very stone used to build the Parthenon. Its historic association subtly underpins the transformation of these everyday objects into contemporary art forms. During this process, two imposing slabs of onyx captured the discerning eye of Antonitsis. Their organic veining and geological presence demanded inclusion—not to become functional, but as abstract, topographic elements. They now exist in deliberate dialogue with other artists’ works within the exhibition’s classroom setting, a conceptual space for reflection and exchange. The inclusion of a single Cretan pink marble sink, sourced from a now-defunct quarry, brings an additional layer to the narrative. It evokes the opulence of Minoan palatial architecture, bridging ancient grandeur with domestic modernity. All nine pieces, titled Fountains by Dimitrios Antonitsis, are engraved with the exhibition’s title in a playful, childlike script. This gesture, both ironic and affectionate, echoes the broader curatorial approach: the elevation of utilitarian forms into sculptural works that engage with cultural memory, material lineage—restoring the question of how we want to leave our planet to future generations.

For Marble Riddles, the intervention was of a different approach. At first, both artists were inspired by the stone itself. For Björklund, her iconography whispers of natural spirits and forgotten folklores. Her delicate, layered imagery seems to emerge from the stone itself, suggesting an alchemy between imagination and mineral memory, introducing precious talismans intentionally powerful. For Fuentes de María, Hellenic-connoted labyrinths, protective eyes, and Cycladic elements are part of his larger surrealist cosmology shaped by his deep engagement with myth, history, nature, and space.

EKATERINA I always say that nothing ever goes exactly as planned on Hydra. The island has its own tempo. It is beautiful but also utterly resistant to structure. Few realize how many challenges can arise when mounting even the simplest of projects here. To create something meaningful on Hydra, one must be both determined and willing to surrender—to stay rooted in the vision while adapting to the island’s shifting realities.

There are countless anecdotes of people attempting to impose their ideas rigidly, only to find Hydra unmoved by insistence. The island demands a dialogue, not a monologue. If the artistic vision is inflexible, it tends to unravel.

In that spirit, Hydra: Island in the Sound took over two years to fully come into being, from the earliest research and conceptualization to its final realization. The development and production of the site-specific installation component alone spanned six focused, often unpredictable months.



Q Looking ahead, do you have any upcoming projects or future plans that you’d like to share?

TATIANA Looking ahead, my upcoming projects and future plans are two active marble collaborations—with Acne Paper, a new gallery in Paris, and with the Cycladic Museum shop in Athens. I am also pursuing my curation at Joali Maldives, a luxury resort—the only art immersive in the region, with a sculpture park for which I am responsible for their artist-in-residency program. Exciting new art contaminations are on the horizon for 2026 in both the UAE and Greece. Stay tuned!

EKATERINA Yes, we currently have several projects unfolding in parallel, each expanding Mnemosyne’s scope in new and meaningful ways. One collaboration is with HumanCulture, an organization dedicated to working closely with Indigenous communities around the world. The other is with The ReefLine, a Miami-based initiative with a global reach through its visionary stewardship of marine ecosystems. Both organizations visited Hydra this year, and our exchanges have sparked inspiring conversations about cultural memory, environmental consciousness, and the possibilities of shared narratives across geographies. While it’s still early to share specific details, it’s worth learning about the work these two remarkable platforms are doing. The dialogues we’ve begun feel full of promise.

