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National Hellenic Museum presents touring sculpture exhibition
***Hellenic Heads: George Petrides* from July 21–December 10, 2023**

Exhibition features six larger-than-life busts inspired by key periods in Greek history spanning 2,500 years

CHICAGO (June 22, 2023)—The [National Hellenic Museum](#) (NHM) in Chicago is proud to present ***Hellenic Heads: George Petrides*** from July 21 to December 10, 2023. This touring sculpture exhibition features six larger-than-life busts inspired by key periods in Greek history spanning 2,500 years, from ancient times to the present.

In *Hellenic Heads*—which premiered last year at the Embassy of Greece in Washington, DC—Petrides presents a personal exploration into his Greek background, seeking to understand the cultural influences that have shaped him and the people closest to him. Starting with a rigorous research process including archaeological artifacts, academic sources, family stories and historical photographs, Petrides studied six important periods in Greek history spanning 2,500 years:

- Classical Greek Period (510 BC to 323 BC)
- Byzantine Period (330 AD to 1453 AD)
- Greek War of Independence (1821 to 1829)
- Destruction of Smyrna (1922)
- Nazi Occupation and Greek Civil War (1941 to 1949)
- The Present

Following this historical research, Petrides sought out sculptural precedents for inspiration, ranging from works from the above periods to more recent sculptors such as Michelangelo, Houdon and Rodin. Then he asked family members to pose for him, producing six larger-than-life busts for the *Hellenic Heads* exhibition, which are approximately three feet in height and stand taller than six feet on pedestals.

The **National Hellenic Museum** (333 S. Halsted Street, Chicago) is open Thursday through Sunday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and include admission to all exhibits, with special discounts available for seniors, students and children. Admission to the museum is always free for NHM Members. For more information on current exhibitions, events and memberships, visit nationalhellenicmuseum.org or call 312-655-1234.

“As a Greek of the Diaspora—born in Athens and having spent most of my life in the U.S.—I have always been interested in my Greek roots, initially absorbing them through my family: a grandmother who escaped the destruction of Smyrna in 1922 and parents who lived through the 1940s Nazi occupation and ensuing

Greek Civil War,” says sculptor **George Petrides**. “I continued exploring these topics at Harvard College, where I studied Classical Greek literature, philosophy and history. During four visits to Mount Athos, I was steeped in the art and culture of the Byzantine period. When I visit Greece now, I hear the echoes of many of the periods I studied for *Hellenic Heads*.”

“At the National Hellenic Museum, as we share Greek history, art and culture we are always looking to make connections between the past and present, and between Greece and America,” adds NHM Executive Director **Marianne Kountoures**. “In *Hellenic Heads*, sculptor George Petrides engages us in an artistic dialogue spanning from ancient times to the present. Although his sculptures reference specific moments in Greek history, they address universal themes well beyond their original historical context: the tragedy of war and genocide, the position of women, and the plight of refugees, to name just a few. We’re thrilled to share these expressive and thought-provoking sculptures with our visitors.”

Petrides’ creative process is of his own invention. He often begins sculpting by hand with traditional clay, using a life model or photographs of his relatives who have passed. After weeks of traditional sculpting, the clay model is scanned in 3D, and the file is imported into digital sculpting software, where the work continues. When that looks right to him, he uses a range of technologies to bring the sculpture back into the three-dimensional world. These include machines in his studio that 3D print using materials such as resins and thermoplastics in sizes over 6 feet. Petrides then reworks the piece by hand using power tools and construction materials, until the form achieves its final shape and unique finish.

The **National Hellenic Museum** (NHM) has a mission to share Greek history, art, culture and the Greek American story. NHM preserves the Hellenic legacy and makes this rich heritage relevant today through its extensive collection of more than 10,000 physical artifacts, hundreds of oral histories, exhibitions, educational programs and special events. Originally founded in 1983 and located in Chicago’s historic Greektown neighborhood since 2011, the museum provides lifelong learning for the community and sparks inquiry and discussion about the broader issues in our lives and society. Regular museum hours are Thursday through Sunday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information, visit nationalhellenicmuseum.org or call 312-655-1234.

Bio for George Petrides

Named a “globally recognized sculptor” by *Forbes* (2022), **George Petrides’** work can be seen around the world, ranging from public sculptures in Greece and Turkey marking the centennial of the destruction of Smyrna in 1922, to a bronze head in the renovated Tiffany’s flagship store at 727 Fifth Avenue in New York. Petrides, who lives and works primarily in New York City, creates sculptures that include figurative and abstract, in sizes ranging from palm-sized to over 12 feet on a base. Born and partially raised in Greece, he is steeped in ancient Greek and Roman sculpture and the later works that were influenced by it (Donatello, Michelangelo, Rodin, Maillol, et al.). Furthermore, modernist sculptors of the mid-20th century such as Giacometti and contemporary sculptors who reference ancient Greek sculpture such as Ray and Bhabha have played an important role in his work. His primary artistic interest is in the human experience in the form of the body and the head, exploring the beauty and the imperfection of people and of life.

Growing up in a family of artists and business people, Petrides’ first career was on Wall Street. He took his first art class at age 32 and continued taking art classes for some 20 years before committing to make art full-time. He studied drawing, painting and sculpture at the New York Studio School (whose famous students include Christopher Wool and Cecily Brown), at the Art Students League, and at the Academie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris. In 2017 he dedicated himself to making art full-time. He has had solo shows in Brookline (Mass), Dubai, Monaco, Mykonos, Southampton (NY) and Washington, DC; and he has participated in multiple artist or group shows, including an exhibition with the important Greek American artist Nassos Daphnis in New York.

For more information on *Hellenic Heads*: Hellenic.Heads

For more information on George Petrides generally: Petrides.Art

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Photo credits at top (l-r): View of the *Hellenic Heads: George Petrides* exhibition at the Embassy of Greece in the US; Sculptor George Petrides with works from *Hellenic Heads*, photo credit Christos Simatos.