

ART & EDUCATION

Greek American Karen Zissis creates showstopping custom pieces

By DIANE ADAM

CHICAGO— You may not know her by name or by the company she cofounded, but Karen Zissis' work can be found in the most influential places in Chicago—Macy's, the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago Children's Memorial Hospital to name a few. Greek American Karen Zissis is the cofounder of Chicago's premier design and fabrication firm, Kinc, which creates showstopping custom pieces that exemplify a product, a theme, or an entire vision.

Kinc's award-winning works have been featured in public, private, and retail spaces nationwide. If seeing is believing then visit the



Karen Zissis

Christmas tree in the Walnut Room of Macy's. Kinc has decorated the Great Tree for the last three years.

Kinc founders Karen Zissis and Katherine Ross met as

graduate students in Northwestern University's prestigious Theatrical Design department.

During solo careers as professional designers, they realized the need for an approach that brings the design and fabrication processes together under one roof - allowing the artist-designer to directly participate in the build of their creation, and ensuring complete adherence to the client's vision from first meeting to installation.

Zissis, who grew up on the East Coast and now calls the Midwest home, says she is not very active in the Greek-American community but is sure to frequent Greek restaurants and Greek run businesses such as produce markets.

Looking back, she credits her father as a driving force behind her passion for art. Zissis whose father was Greek and whose mother was Irish recalls her childhood surrounded by a love of art.

"My father, from a young age, had been interested in art," she said. "He did beautiful watercolors and later oils. He never had any formal training but had basically taught himself."

Zissis said her father loved to go to the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. near where they lived. "I was exposed to great art and his painting as a child," she said.

Things took a natural course and Zissis was interested in art at a young age, which continued in school.

"When I went to college, I discovered the theater depart-



Design preview of Kinc's Peter and the Wolf installation for Lurie Children's Hospital.

ment (Greek and Drama do go together!) and so began to combine the two art forms," she said. "Our business really uses both of these disciplines in all types of venues to transform spaces into environmental experiences."

Kinc recently added another large project to their portfolio. Kinc will design a series of interactive environments for the 15th Floor Regenstien Cardiac Care Unit of the new Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago. After a competitive bidding process, Kinc's proposal was chosen by Lurie Children's Hospital 15th Floor Creative Partners Lookingglass Theatre Company, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO).

Inspired by the Peter and the Wolf-based Lookingglass/CSO 2010 performance collaboration Into the Big Green Meadow,

Kinc's design utilizes the theme "listen with your heart," and features designated areas inspired by Prokofiev's masterpiece - including a forest, a meadow, and a pond - with play and discovery elements suited to the demands of pediatric cardiac patients.

"Our goal is to give Lurie Children's Hospital's young patients an environment that inspires strength, hope, and perseverance - traits exemplified by the hero Peter, in Peter and the Wolf. Some of the children will spend months at a time in the Cardiac Care Unit. Kinc is going to make sure they're always in a space that engages and uplifts them and contributes to their overall recovery," said Ross.

Working closely with Lookingglass and CSO staffers, Kinc's installations will embody the visual style and artistic visions of the creative partners, and allow the Unit's young residents to engage their imaginations, develop their creativity, and utilize the lessons of Peter and his friends to help them cope with the challenges they may face during their time at the Hospital.

Kinc has previously worked with Children's Memorial Hospital on projects ranging from set designs for the Hospital's television studio, Skylight TV, to the recent creation of the "I Believe" nook for the 5th floor Janice and Kimberly Brown Family Life Center. Skylight TV Producer Rene Roy says "Katherine and Karen were chosen for this project because of the personal approach they bring to their work. They are hands-on artisans, with a strong artistic vision and the ability to deliver high quality results."

Design and construction of the Cardiac Care Unit installation is now underway in Kinc's studio located at 3927 N. Central Park Avenue in Chicago. The new Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago is scheduled to open in June of 2012. For more information visit www.kincinc.com.

them in the 'Goddess' boutique."

The Christmas season is already off to a busy start. She's currently promoting a new line of cards she's created, in both Greek and English. "I'm getting a lot of custom orders for photo cards, too," Julie has also added some other products to her line, which make great gifts as well. She's developed a line of prints of different islands. "They are maps, 5x7 flat prints. We're getting a lot of requests to add more islands to what we have right now." Like her Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/cartoulesletterpress>, and get 10% off when ordering. Also, on Black Friday, get 25% on all ready-made items.

"These days, everyone is sending email or communicating on Facebook and Twitter, however, sending Christmas cards and writing cards is still important. It's important to still have written communication. I'm glad I can offer this to the Greek community. I couldn't find anything that I thought was well-designed or printed on high quality paper, so I created my own, and it's going really well." Now everyone can have a Cartoules card. For more information, visit www.cartoulespress.com.



Kent State University undergraduate students Ola Sobieska and Heather Benya study an ancient Greek papyrus document as part of the international Green Scholars Initiative.

Kent State Students Study Ancient Greek Papyrus as Part of International Effort

Four ambitious Kent State students have the rare opportunity to study an ancient Greek papyrus as part of an innovative program designed to mentor undergraduate students in the research and publication of ancient texts.

Dr. Jennifer Larson, chairperson and professor of classics in the Department of Modern and Classical Language Studies, heads the project for the university. When Larson received a call from Dr. Scott Carroll inviting Kent State to participate in the Green Scholars Initiative (GSI), she was thrilled and surprised.

Carroll is the director of the Green Collection, one of the world's largest private collections of manuscripts, papyri and cuneiform tablets. The collection is owned by Steve Green, president of Hobby Lobby Stores. Carroll travels the world acquiring items for the collection, which is valued at up to \$40 million and will eventually be housed in a non-sectarian Bible museum.

The Green Scholars Initiative is an international project to involve undergraduate students in the publication of items from the massive archive. Larson, whose expertise is in ancient Greek culture and literature, had never participated in a project of this type before - but jumped at the chance to involve Kent State students in the challenge.

Four Honors College students were recruited to be a part of Larson's GSI class through an essay competition. The students, who had to agree to take elementary Greek classes, receive 2 credits per semester for their work.

The papyrus arrived at Kent State in August enclosed in a glass case. Internal grants from the University Research Council and the College of Arts and Sciences provided the incidental funds necessary to bring the valuable antiquity to the university.

"When I finally had the papyrus in front of me, I thought of all of the times looking at pictures of artifacts in books," said philosophy major Tommy Walsh. "Now there is something in front of me from almost 2,000 years ago. We are dealing with a piece of history. It was an amazingly intense feeling."

Walsh and student colleagues Heather Benya, Ola Sobieska and Kayla Zatezalo are making new discoveries on an almost weekly basis. "Dr. Carroll told us the papyrus was probably from the Egyptian city of Oxyrynchus and we were going on that assumption," Larson explained. "But now that we are reading it, it looks like it may be from Tebtunis, a city north of Oxyrynchus."

Carroll did not provide a date for the papyrus, but Larson's team has already determined that it's from 44 A.D., during the reign of the emperor Claudius.

Ancient history scholar Dr. Jerry Pattengale, a noted author and assistant provost at Indiana Wesleyan University, leads the GSI. "Pattengale does a lot of work with experiential learning, and that really is the focus of this project," Larson said.

Approximately 200 students nationwide are currently participating in the GSI. Twelve institutions are collaborating on papyri from the collection.

Larson said the groundbreaking program provides a rare opportunity for undergraduate students. "It turns everything upside down," she said with a laugh. "Work on a very specialized document like this is usually reserved for senior professors and Ph.D. students."

Benya, a sophomore mathematics major, said she was "floored" when she found out she was chosen to participate in the project.

"I could only dream of being able to handle an original ancient Greek document at the age of 19," Benya said. "I am so honored to be a part of the team that is identifying and publishing the ancient Greek papyri, and also to be able to work with Dr. Carroll and Dr. Larson."

The four students will work on the project through this academic year. "If it takes longer to arrive at a publishable version, they are welcome to continue working on it with me," Larson explained. There is no set timetable for publication, but students will receive a publication credit.

"There's nothing as motivating as working with an actual ancient artifact," Larson said. "It's so exciting for them, and every day we discover something new and that excites them all the more."

Items from the Green Collection are featured in the exhibit "Passages: The 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible," which opens Nov. 19 in Atlanta and will eventually visit cities around the world. Given that there are enough unpublished documents in the collection to keep scholars around the country busy for decades, Larson said there may be opportunities for future Kent State students.

"It's my hope that when this project is done, they will send us another document we can work with," Larson said.

For more information on Kent State's Department of Modern and Classical Language Studies, visit www.kent.edu/mcls.

Creative Young Greek-American Starts Cartoules Press, Designs Letterpress Cards for Every Occasion

By MARIA A. KARAMITSOS

CHICAGO—When you can't find what you're looking for, make your own. We've heard this many times. San Francisco Bay-area native Julie Karatzis heeded these words. Back in 2009 when she and her Athenian-born husband, Spiros were planning their wedding - which took place in Greece - she sought letterpress invitations, written in both Greek and English. "I love letterpress stationery. I looked and looked, and no one could do bilingual invitations, so I decided to do it myself, and Cartoules Press was born." Just as many inventions were born out of necessity, this enterprising young woman started her own letterpress shop. Business is really taking off.

Born and raised in California by a father from Kefalonia and an American-born mother with roots in Sidirokastro near Thessaloniki and Simiades near Tripolis, Julie spent her summers in Greece. "Mostly in Kefalonia. The rest of the year, my time was filled with Greek School, Sunday School, GOYA, basketball and more," Julie recalled. The family attended the Holy Cross Church in Belmont. Julie was also very involved in Greek folk dance, from the age of four through college. She became involved with the Greek Orthodox Folk Dance Festival, which frequently brought her to LA. For several years, she was on the management team that organized the festival. Her husband and school would prompt a move to LA, where she now lives. Later she directed a Greek dance group in LA. She went on to teach Greek School at the Saint Sophia Cathedral in LA.

Always creative, and so fond of letterpress stationery, Julie decided to take some courses at the International Printing Museum in Carson, Calif. "I wanted to learn more about this craft. There, they had every single letterpress ever made. It was so cool. I attended classes on weekends, and met someone there who could help me print my invitations, once I designed them," she shared. Julie

and Spiros spent considerable time there, printing 200 wedding invitations - five pieces with two colors each. "I really enjoyed the entire process. It was great to see the results of what I'd created. Nothing like this ever existed. I was so excited, so I started the business."

Julie began doing work for friends, and then began designing Christmas cards, and it "took off from there." "I've met a lot of Greek brides from around the world; a lot of Greek brides in Germany, Singapore. I've also worked with quite a few brides who were not Greek, but were marrying Greek, and felt it important to keep the Greek as a part of their wedding."

The website at www.cartoulespress.com serves as a portfolio, and all jobs commence from there. "Wedding work is typically all custom." Brides tell her what colors they are using, a theme, and what they are looking for, "and then I create something and we tweak it together from there. Sometimes they see something on the site and they want to take that idea and customize it to their event." She also designs invitations for bridal showers, baby showers, baptisms, any sort of invitation desired, as well as greeting cards. "When I'm not super busy with custom work, I develop more greeting cards. She sells her ready-made line of greeting cards on Etsy, an online marketplace. One can find holiday cards, thank you cards, and more.

Cartoules invitations and cards are printed on a "very cool" antique letterpress manufactured in 1887. "The 7x11 Golding & Co. Pearl press is made of cast iron and weighs 800 lbs. It's a bit labor-intensive, as I have to pump it with a foot treadle while feeding the paper through and adding each color separately. It's a labor of love, but so worth it, when you see the result." Julie recently added a 1926 10x15 New Style Chandler & Price press to her shop, which has a motor. "It's more efficient and offers a bigger printing area, so I can do larger-sized projects."

This is all from an individual with no formal training in graphic design - though she has always loved to draw and paint, do crafts,



Julie Karatzis

"I'm mostly self-taught." Still a bit of a "side business," by day, as they say, Julie, who holds a Master's in Public Relations and a BA in Communications, works for a small PR agency in LA. "My clients are all architects and designers, which is a great environment for me. It's fun to work with them, since I understand the creative process and what they are going through, how it all works together. My PR work is part-time, so I can work my business as well."

Social media has played a huge part in the growth of Cartoules. She also writes a blog too, on all things related to letterpress, her work, and "cool design stuff." "Right now we're building a house in Kefalonia, so I blog about that too, sometimes." Her work has been recognized by other design and print blogs as well.

A couple of years ago, Cartoules Press was featured on the blog Goddess of the Hunt, (www.thegoddessofthehunt.com) which unveils the "undiscovered and under-promoted projects of Greek creativity from around the world." Julie has kept in touch with editor Dana Siomkos, and now they are launching a joint project. "We're developing a line of prints that have to do with the graffiti in Athens. Dana got some photos from Greece this summer and I turned them into line art. We'll print them as 8x10s and sell

VENETIAN MONUMENT COMPANY

Serving the Greek community since 1912



Mr. Steve Karastamatis
(773) 338-6106

- Finest quality memorials
- Guaranteed customer satisfaction
- Chicago's largest indoor display

527 N. WESTERN AVE.
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60612
(312) 829-9622