



## MUSEUM OF MODERN GREEK CULTURE HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

The Museum of Modern Greek Culture (MMGC) is the only public metropolitan museum of the Ministry of Culture that deals with the recent past of the entire Greek territory and the material traits of its culture. It was founded in 1918 and was housed in the Tzisdarakis Mosque in Monastiraki. Throughout its long history, the changes in its name reflect its collection policy and the need for its institutional presence to be expressed in the wider cultural space in a timely and decisive manner. Today, the Museum of Modern Greek Culture is reintroducing itself with a contemporary and innovative permanent exhibition, with a human-centered character, where modern Greek culture is presented in all its aspects and the objects serve as a catalyst for highlighting the perceptions, aesthetic standards, technology, and art of people of the recent past, unknown to many but crucial for shaping the identity of modern Greek society.

## THE MUSEUM COMPLEX

The new permanent exhibition of the Museum is hosted in a historical neighborhood enclosed by the streets of Adrianou, Areos, Kladou, and Vrysakiou in Monastiraki, where different relics of the past are preserved: sections of the late Roman wall, built by the Athenians after the invasion of the Heruli (267 AD) to protect their city, the Byzantine church of Saint Thomas, a three-aisled basilica from the 6th-7th centuries AD with later phases of construction, the gate and staircase of the mansion of Chomatianos-Logothetis, a characteristic building from the first half of the 18th century. Also found here is the restored church of Saint Elissaios, a family church of the Chomatianos-Logothetis family where the “Saint of Greek Letters,” Alexandros Papadiamantis, chanted during vigils with his cousin Alexandros Moraitidis, the house of Nikolaos Dragoumis, as well as newer buildings with elements from the Ottoman period and from folk architecture.

The Tzisdarakis Mosque, an iconic monument of the late Ottoman era in Monastiraki Square, is dynamically integrated into the Museum’s permanent exhibition, as it houses one of the ten main thematic units of the narrative. Built in 1759 by Tzisdarakis, the governor (voevod) of Athens at the time, it was used after the establishment of the Greek state, as barracks for the military band, a prison and a warehouse, while in 1915 it was restored by Anastasios Orlandos to house the newly founded Museum in 1918.

## THE NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION

In a complex of 4,000 square meters, eighteen buildings dating from the 19th-century that were expropriated some decades ago were preserved and restored by the Ministry of Culture to house an exhibition unit that deals with an aspect of modern Greek culture through the traits of material and intangible cultural heritage, thus creating a unique cultural landscape that contains and incorporates the wider urban plan of historical Athens.

## 1. TZAMI TZISDARAKI THE STORY OF THE MUSEUM

The Tzisdarakis Mosque in Monastiraki, which is conceptually linked to the rest of the museum narrative, houses the exhibition of the history of the Museum, narrating its foundation, evolution and the cultural context of different eras that influenced its collection policy. Exhibited here are different museum objects, from the very first object acquired by the Museum in 1918, a vest of the women’s bridal and festive attire from Skyros, made in the 17th century in Asia Minor, to the latest acquisitions of the collection, a set of artifacts dating from the 1930s to the 1970s from a 102-year-old donor, “memories” of her family that compose a small “treasure trove” of memory.



## 2. OUR FAITH AND WORSHIP

In the exhibition concerning the relationship between humans and the divine, the various expressions of religious sentiment are presented, along with the “encounter” of church rituals with folk tradition and customs. The main milestones of the human life cycle and the annual cycle of time are illustrated through some of the oldest and most precious objects in the Museum’s collections.



## 3. WHERE ARE YOU FROM? WHERE ARE WE FROM?

This section explores the two fundamental components, place and time of modern Greek culture, that shape among others, the identity of modern Greeks. Through diverse objects, serving as iconic symbols, travel mementos or heirlooms, we journey through the unique homelands of modern Greeks and witness how major historical milestones are inscribed in everyday objects, such as embroidery or postage stamps.



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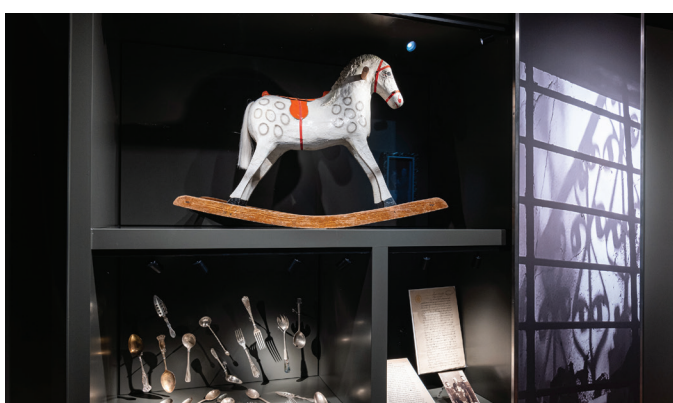
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#### 4. WHERE ARE YOU? WHAT WAS IT THEN? WHAT IS IT NOW?

Objects revealed during the restoration works of the buildings dominate this section, which, in conjunction with archival records and digital exhibits, narrate the human stories of the residents of the neighborhood that is today the home of the Museum. A neighborhood that uniquely encapsulates the historical, social, economic, urban, and architectural evolution of one of the oldest parts of the city of Athens, which has never ceased to be inhabited.

#### 5. WHERE DID THEY LIVE? WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

Architectural elements of traditional and neoclassical houses, mason's tools, aspects of the interior decoration of homes from different areas of Greece, illustrate the different forms of housing in modern Greece. Unique decorative ensembles depict the urbanization of lifestyle as well as the preservation of memory of the past through traditional objects. In a specifically designed space, the murals with works by the folk painter Theofilos from the "good room" of the Zolkos house in Napi of Lesvos are exhibited.



#### 6. WHAT DID THEY COOK? WHAT DO YOU COOK?

Exhibits related to the production and sale of food products, cooking and food storage, catering and serving, dietary habits throughout the year and human life cycle are included in this section. Tools and utensils manufactured and used in different geographical areas shed light on the peculiarities of each place, the formation of collective identity through food consumption practices, the paths, and stories of people and objects in space and time.



#### 7. WHAT DID THEY DO FOR FUN? WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN?

Semantically charged objects, digital exhibits and visual material present the various forms of entertainment, encountered throughout the broader Greek territory, in various cultural environments and at different times in modern history. Festivals, shadow theater, musical and theatrical performances, dances, puppet theater, cinema, and coffeehouses compose a colorful mosaic of Greek entertainment. Emphasis is placed on shadow theater, a unique form of theatrical art that encapsulates the folk spirit, expressing experiences from the social and political life of the people.



#### 8. WHAT DID THEY WEAR? WHAT DO YOU WEAR?

The exhibition displays the different ways in which people dressed in various areas of Greece from the 18th to the early 20th century. Following the needs and possibilities of the pre-industrial way of life, traditional costumes revealed the close bond of people with the place and the community where they lived. Handcrafted or imported fabrics, embroidered and woven patterns, and jewelry rich in symbolisms served the timeless need for clothing and adornment, indicating gender, age, origin, social and economic status, as well as aesthetic perceptions. Later, when European fashion prevailed, traditional costumes became part of the official national image and identity.



#### 9. WHAT DID THEY DO FOR WORK? WHAT DO YOU DO FOR WORK?

This section presents aspects and snapshots of work and productive processes in modern Greece. Reference is made to agricultural and livestock farming work, workshop/manufacturing work, craftsmanship, and the intensification and diversification of work through the use of machinery and electrical energy. Objects and digital exhibits outline a path from land cultivation and manual labor to tourism and mechanized, industrial production.

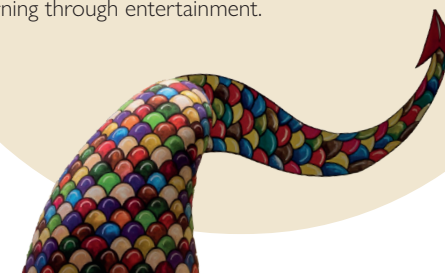


#### 10. HOW DID WOMEN WORK? HOW DO YOU WORK?

In this section, the rich inner world of anonymous women is unfolded through female labor, primarily in handicrafts. Embroideries and weavings serve as focal points of the museum narrative. Through their exhibition, combined with digital exhibits and rich visual material, the active role of women in the family and community, in the productive process and in meeting the multiple needs of the household, is highlighted. Upon the embroideries, small and larger stories are stitched and woven about women's identity, perceptions, aesthetics, techniques, uses, symbols, customs, rituals, and the historical and cultural context of their creation.

#### FAMILY EXHIBITS

The museological approach of the Museum of Modern Greek Culture is strengthened by the creation, in selected parts of the exhibition, of family exhibits presented for the first time in Greece. In these rooms, the different exhibition themes are presented in a playful way, aiming to capture the interest of even the younger ages. The young visitors, under the supervision of their parents or companions, participate in games designed to offer them a pleasant learning experience. The development of family exhibits is part of the general philosophy that characterizes the new exhibition spaces of the Museum, dominated by the principles of experiential design and learning through entertainment.



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