

An aerial photograph of a coastline. The top half of the image shows deep turquoise water with small waves. Below the water is a wide, light-colored sandy beach. In the lower half, a shallow lagoon or inlet is visible, with a small, dark, rocky island in the center. The water in the lagoon is a lighter shade of blue.

Nicolas Papassinos-Bletas

# AVANTIS

a photographic journey on Evia Island



**AKTO**  
**Art & Design College**

**BA (HONOURS) DEGREE IN PHOTOGRAPHY**  
**MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY**

# **AVANTIS**

a photographic journey on Evia Island

**ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΣΙΝΟΣ-ΜΠΛΕΤΑΣ**

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Agiou Dimitriou 20

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[contact@flyhigh.gr](mailto:contact@flyhigh.gr)

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Nicolas Papassinos-Bletas

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# Contents

Introduction .....	10
Spring.....	14
Summer .....	24
Autumn .....	34
Winter .....	44
The Other Ones .....	54
The Photographer.....	60







Map of the island of Evia

# | Introduction

Creating a photography project in the quarantine era

**B**ack in 2008 I decided to leave the big city and move to the country house my family owned in Evia, the second largest island of Greece. The name Evia derives from the Greek words εὖ and βούς, meaning respectively good ox. An island with a history spanning over 3500 years, it has also been known with several different names, including Elopia, Macris, Negroponte and Egriboz. Avantis, where this project gets its title, originates from an ancient tribe inhabiting the island, and is mentioned in Homer's Iliad. Long and narrow, the island stretches from north-west to south-east in proximity to the mainland, to which it is connected by two bridges that lie over the Euripus strait, in the capital city of Chalkis. Even though it is so close and accessible, and it is a popular destination for short trips and long weekends, especially among Athenians, the island is not considered a tourist destination and remains relatively unknown and unexploited. Its large size makes it difficult for visitors to explore it and one must spend many days or even several trips to really get to know it. A place of rare physical beauty, the diversity of its sceneries is remarkable and noticeable as you travel from north to south. From the alpine fir forests and beach resorts of the north to the secluded sandy beaches and rocky mountains of the south, Evia is an island that anyone could make a connection with.

When I set out to design this project my original intent was to take the reader on a photographic journey, exploring the island. In the close to ten years I was living in Evia I got to travel around and through the island several times, visiting fantastic locations and meeting very interesting people on the way. Even though I have been always taking photos of my travels, I felt the need to produce a structured project, to document the people and capture the landscapes most visitors don't ever get to see. I wanted you to experience the island as a local, as I did when I was living there and discover the sights that mesmerized me over the years.

People consider certain styles of photography, such as street and landscape, to be better served by black and white images. This might be true, to an extent, by removing color you eliminate a distraction and allow the viewer to focus on other elements of your image. It is also one less thing for a photographer to consider when composing an image, one might argue that black and white even makes for easier photos. However, I feel I would not be making justice to this project if I restricted myself to black and white images. The diversity of landscapes and sceneries throughout the island needed to be imprinted in color as did the Aegean blue, the Greek summer and the night sky with its million stars.

I was drawing my inspiration on the work of great classic photographers such as Edward Weston and Edward Steichen, but also on contemporary photographers such as the Italian Franco Fontana and the American Joel Meyerowitz. Weston, known mostly for his black and white work, has also experimented with color landscape photography. His color transparencies from Point Lobos, used by Kodak to publicize the Kodachrome film in 1947, were among the first from an acclaimed photographer. Steichen was among the earliest proponents of color photography as an artist's creative medium. As MoMA's Department of Photography director, he organized the museum's first all-color photography exhibition in 1950. Color offered photographers new creative possibilities. Intense, almost saturated images like Fontana's abstract rural landscapes of distant viewpoints shot using tele-photo lenses or more subtle, like Meyerowitz's images in Cape Light became possible with the advent of color photography.

If I had to refer only one major personal influence that would be Joel Meyerowitz. Like Fontana, he was an early advocate and pioneer of color photography since the early 60's, a time when color photography was not perceived as 'serious' art. I consider his work, documenting urban and rural America, to be seminal, reminiscent of Robert Frank's but in color. In Cape Light Meyerowitz's images are quiet and understated. He is exploiting light, shape, forms and refined color to produce images with simplicity and serenity, transforming everyday scenes to something otherworldly. In an interview, Meyerowitz commented on his use of color, "*When I committed myself to color exclusively, it was a response to a greater need for description. When I say description, I do not only mean mere fact ... I really mean the sensation I get from things—their surface and color. ... Color plays itself out along a richer band of feelings—more wavelengths, more radiance, more sensation.*"

I had just started shooting for this project when a mandatory lockdown was imposed all over the country because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This sidetracked me and greatly reduced the amount of time I had available once the lockdown was lifted. With only two weeks left for shooting I had to plan a new itinerary as it would be impossible to go with the original and visit all the locations I intended to. What is more, following the lockdown people derived from their usual activities and where still distancing themselves from each other. It became very difficult for me to include a human element in my images, the few people moving around were usually not very fond of having their photo taken by a stranger. Neglect was apparent, preparations for the summer season were delayed and locations I

thought I would get some of my best photos were now in bad shape or inaccessible. Even the weather turned bad, but this turned out to be an advantage. In the span of a few days I got to experience and photograph all four seasons as it went from summer days to snowing in mid-May. Eventually the material I collected led me through the rest of the project and defined the direction and aesthetics of the book.

I wish to thank my professor, Alkis X. Xanthakis, for his esteemed guidance and support throughout this project. *Avantis* is the sincere depiction of a place I am deeply connected with and a testament of the timeframe it was developed. Through images and color I tried to document the simple, everyday beauty that is often being overlooked and understated, slowly fading as the world around it advances.

Nicolas Papassinos-Bletas



| Spring

Day #1



On the road to Kalamos, near Lepoura



A shepherd in Dystos





Koutoumoulas



Amarynthos



Gerani beach near Amarynthos



Agios Loukas



Ano Vathia



Chalkida, Full Moon, May 20200



The Port of Amarynthos

| Summer

Day #5





Near Nea Styra

The defunct Hotel Delfis in Eretria





Amarynthos



Giannitsi beach, near Marmari





Mount Xiro, near  
Istiea



Taking the workhorses to drink water, near Paramarites

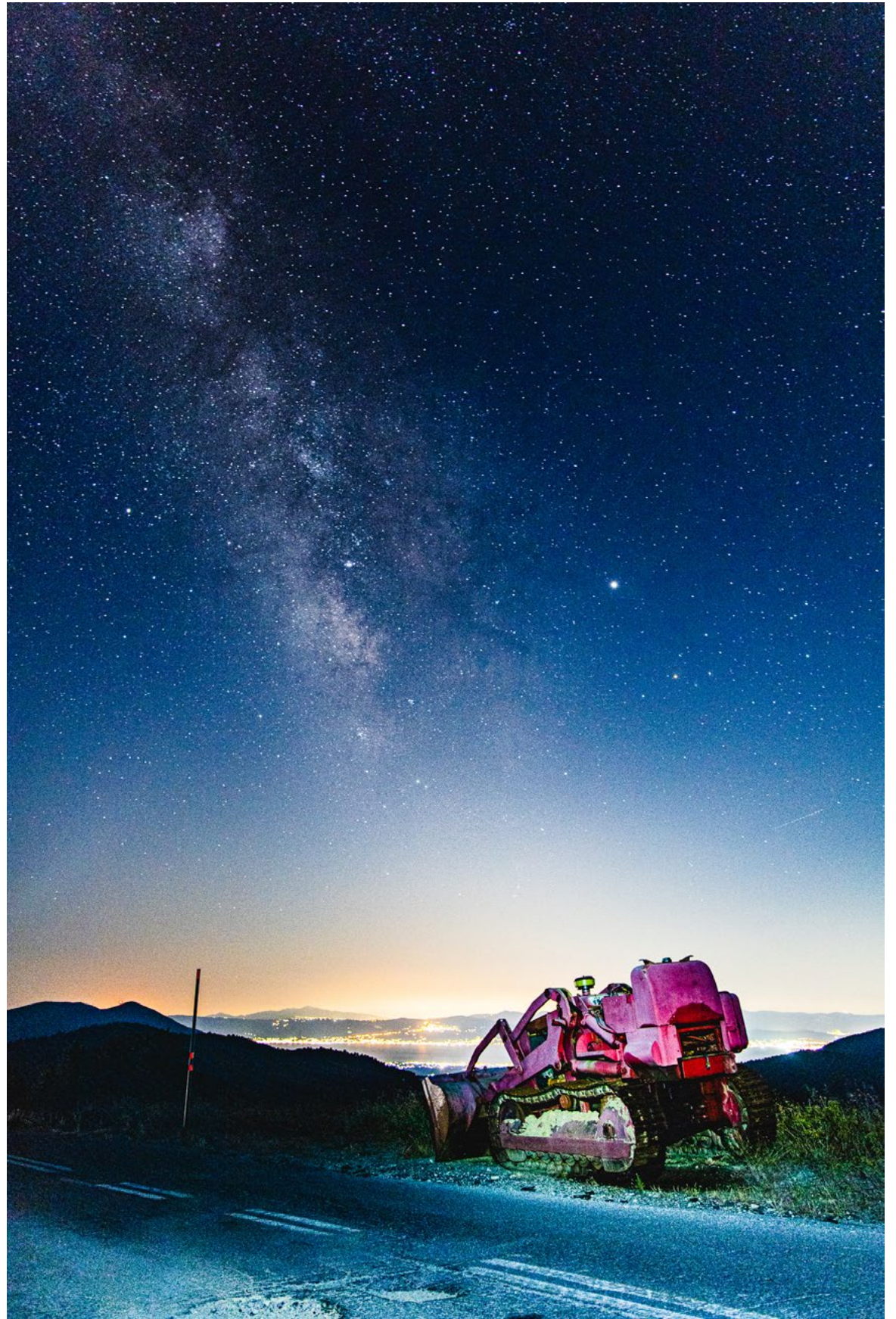


Ampoudiotissa



Ano Seta





Gymno

| Autumn

Day #9



Mount  
Xirovouni



Paralia Kymis



Milaki Aliveriou, view from the Karavos peer



Monodri



Orologio



Gerani beach, Amarynthos





The old water sliders of Kampos Aliveriou



The wind turbines over the monastery of Agios Nikolaos, close to Ano Vathia



Armyriki near Mesochoria

| Winter

Day #12



Late season snow



Chania Avlonariou



The bridge of Monodri



On the road to Metochi





Trachilli



Stomio Kymis



The old cement factory of Chalkis



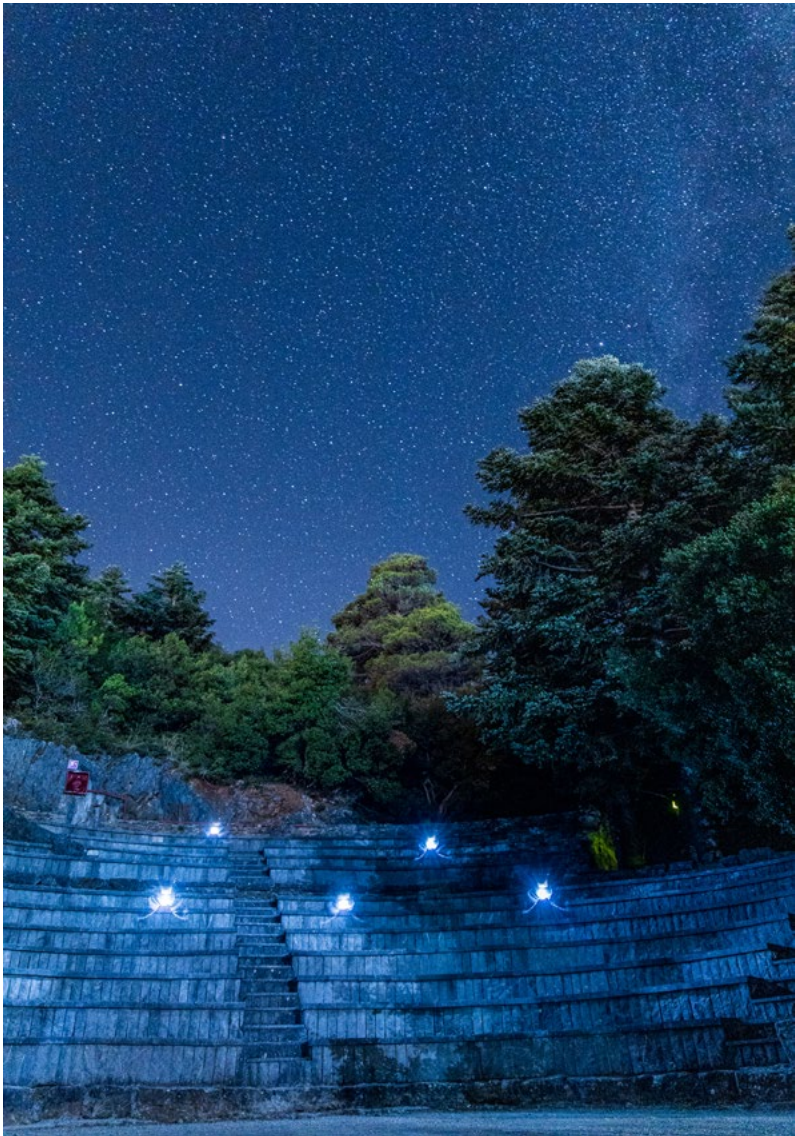
The old powerplant of Aliveri



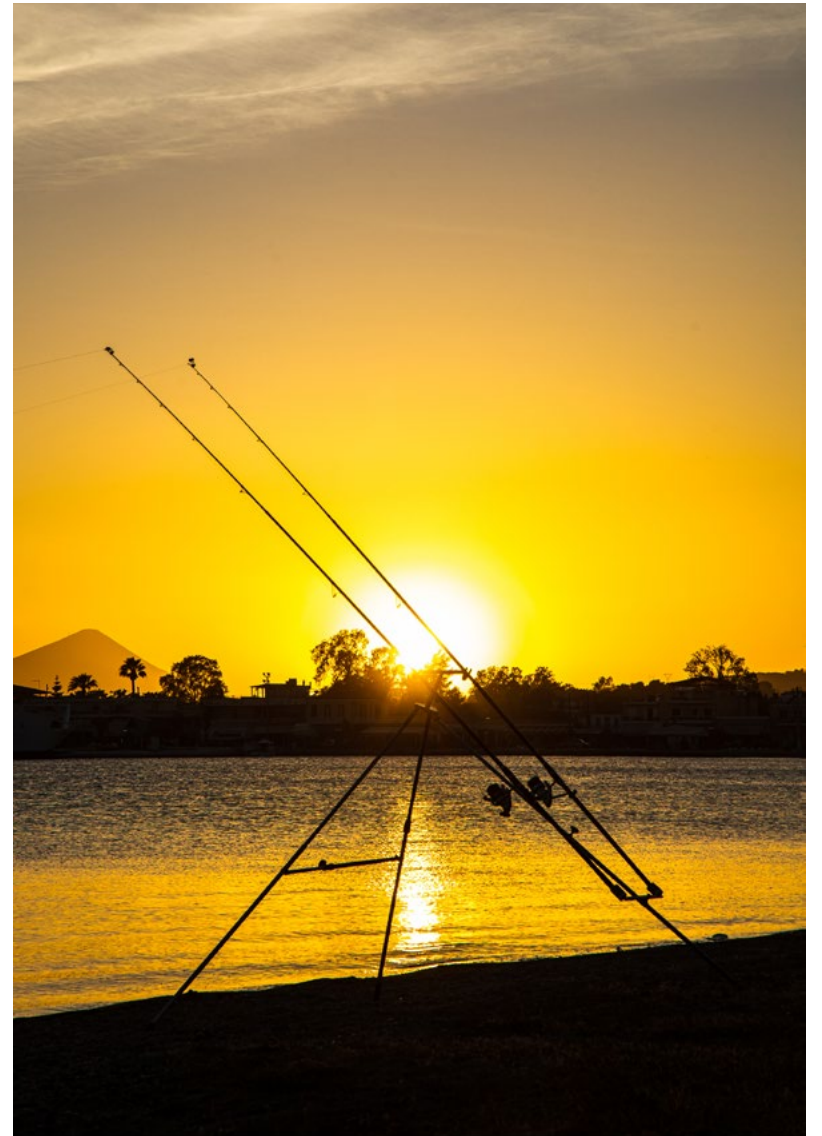
The church of Panagia Portaitissa and the Polar star, Amarynthos

| The Other Ones













| The Photographer

**Nicolas Papassinos-Bletas**, born in 1982, is a Greek artist based in Athens. He is interested in fine art and environmental photography, focusing in activities in public spaces and private workspaces, stemming from his interest in action, journalistic and social documentary photography. Besides, other areas of his interest include landscape and light-painting photography; however, he has been also working commercially in the fields of architectural, interior design and still-life photography.

Papassinos-Bletas' photographic approach encompasses getting physically involved with the people that become the subjects of his work, employing a fast, run and gun style of photography to document his subjects in their natural space. Lately he has been closely collaborating with fellow Athens based artists of various disciplines, producing a record of the Athenian contemporary art scene incorporating in his work all aspects of the artistic process, from conceptualization and creation to showcasing their work.



Nicolas Papassinos-Bletas  
npb.flyhigh.gr  
nicolas@flyhigh.gr  
ATHENS - GREECE



npb.shots



