The Silent Streets of Crete

IOANNA PLANAKIS

ODON WAGNER GALLERY

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Greek-Canadian realist artist Ioanna Planakis explores the concepts of slowing down and living in the moment to escape the seeming chaos of everyday life. The centres of attention in Planakis’ mural-sized paintings are the simple details that often go unnoticed in a fast-paced day. “It’s when we take the time to immerse ourselves in our environments when we begin to notice the often-unnoticed details that’ve been in front of us the entire time,” says Planakis.

Born in Toronto, Ontario in 1985, Planakis was raised by her Cretan-immigrant parents. Travelling to Crete every summer since she was two, her early exposure to the many charms of the island formed her appreciation for the simple details that caught her inquiring eyes. Planakis was a curious cat roaming in what was her version of Wonderland.

Working towards her Computer Engineering degree at the University of Toronto, Planakis' tight schedule prevented her from travelling. She developed chronic stress due to the immense pressure she placed on herself to succeed amidst working and studying in the hustling city. Slowing down was not on her endless agenda as she feared falling behind on her time-sensitive goals. Merely going through the mundane motions of her day, Planakis was unaware of anything but the chaos in her mind.

Planakis pushed through and graduated before jetting off to receive her MA in Visual Arts at the Athens School of Fine Art. While studying in Athens, her mirror-like realism paintings were what set her above her classmates, placing first in many local art competitions. Often-underappreciated sights and details from her many childhood adventures in Crete were highlighted in her pieces. Painting became a medium that momentarily brought Planakis back to her childhood Wonderland adventures.

Planakis, now residing in Crete, explores every nook and cranny of the island’s neighbourhoods, villages and markets to seek out her next painting inspiration. It has been through these adventures, feeling present in her surroundings, where Planakis has calmed her hurried thoughts. Planakis believes that it is the simple things in life can bring us the greatest amounts of pleasure.

Having held over 50 solo exhibits within her fifteen-year career, Planakis’ promising career is just getting started. Her works have been showcased around the world, immersing audiences near and far with her mural-sized paintings. Her most recent exhibit was held at the Tate Museum in London, England, featuring “Potatoes, Tomatoes”: her exploration of the agriculture and markets in Crete.
Overview

THE SILENT STREETS OF CRETE

Leading realist painter, Ioanna Planakis (b. 1985, Toronto), is renowned for her mural-sized paintings that center around the charming details discovered on her explorations in the Greek island of Crete. The Oden Wagner Gallery brings the simple wonders of Cretan neighbourhoods in “The Silent Streets of Crete” exhibit on Friday October 1, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. This exhibit is welcoming visitors for the entire month of October.

“The Silent Streets of Crete” is a looking glass through Planakis’ curious eyes, featuring the hidden-in-plain-sight simple wonders that catch her attention as she mindfully explores around Cretan neighbourhoods. Over 20 of the artist’s prized paintings from the past 15 years will be displayed on the first floor of the gallery.

The exhibit’s curiosity-provoking paintings are ones that will unleash our inner child as our eyes widen and minds question. Pulitzer Prize critic, Gerald Saltz, reviewed Planakis’ “The Silent Streets of Crete” in his most recent New York Magazine Column. He stated, “Planakis’ message is plain and simple: live a little. Her exhibit brings me back to when I was a young boy, curious of anything and everything around me.” There will be much to discover as we absorb all 360 degrees of the wonderous details in Planakis’ paintings.

A vacation for the mind, the exhibit invites us to leave our fast-paced lives at the door and live in the moment, allowing time to slip the mind. As we slip away from the chaos, the mural-sized paintings will surround the eyes with details hidden in plain sight. “The Silent Streets of Crete” is a game of hidden objects. Within the details highlighted in Planakis’ paintings lie even more subtle details waiting to be discovered by a pair of curious eyes. The more we slip away from our worries, the more present we become, the easier it is to spot these charms hidden in plain sight.

Go ahead, leave the madness behind for a night and take a stroll through “The Silent Streets of Crete.” Let your curiosity run wild.
The paintings featured in "The Silent Streets of Crete" are a looking glass through Ioanna Planakis' curious eyes from every angle and perspective.

The Oden Wagner Gallery is delighted to feature all the paintings from this collection, including “The Curious Cat,” “The Beanstalk,” “Two Birds, One Stone,” “A Peep Through The Shades,” and “Bring Forward, Send Backward.”

**The Curious Cat**
While exploring an empty and narrow step street, it was a yawning kitten, caught from the bottom-left corner of her eye, that was the inspiration for "The Curious Cat." While the cat is the one of the tiniest and easily missed details in the painting, it remains the focus of the piece, exemplifying the attention the kitten demanded in that moment.

**The Beanstalk**
From the upward-tilted perspective, the story of the “The Beanstalk” begins from the close proximity of a grass-green leaf. It guides the eyes all the way to the sky as if the vine stretches out endlessly. The never-ending perspective leaves room for imagination and wonder.

**Two Birds, One Stone**
The more present we are, the more subtle details begin to appear. Originally intended to capture the unsettling contrast in colours and materials of two conjoined houses, “Two Birds, One Stone” shifts its focus to two birds settled on one of the house’s ledges, blending into its wooden exterior.

**A Peep Through The Shades**
Details can appear when they are least expected. The subjects of this painting were an accidental discovery found with a quick glance to the right: a row of houses whose walls, all shades of pink, getting lighter as the eyes wander deeper into the street. The spontaneity of this painting is captured through a subtle motion blur effect.

**Bring Forward, Send Backward**
The captivating colours and the perfectly puzzling angle of two boldly coloured, contrasting houses make it difficult to decipher which one is staggered in front of the other. “Bring Forward, Send Backward” is a moment of mind games and inquiring thought.