

HERITAGE IN FOCUS

THURSDAY
FRIDAY

5 JUNE
6 JUNE

2025
2025

WATER AND NATURE : A LEGACY?

HERITAGE IN FOCUS

SERIES OF EVENTS

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOETHE-INSTITUT ATHEN AND THE HUMBOLDT FORUM

GOETHE.DE/ATHEN/HERITAGE

GOETHE-INSTITUT ATHEN
14-16 OMIROU ST., 10672 ATHENS

HERITAGE IN FOCUS

The idea of “heritage” is currently experiencing a real surge in interest in academia, politics, cultural institutions, and the media. While in the past it was chiefly associated with aspects of private law, such as inheritance law, and, in the broader social context, with the preservation of architectural monuments, the word “heritage” has taken on a whole new range of meaning in recent years, and its use has expanded accordingly. This is partly due to UNESCO, which has redefined the term and not long ago has significantly extended the provisions that are in place to protect human “cultural heritage”. Cultural traditions, customs, and food were given protected status twenty years ago: from the Byzantine chants of Greece and Cyprus to Berlin’s club “culture”, which was once considered avant-garde and subversive but is now under threat.

In parallel to this and encouraged by public debates, there has, in recent years, been growing academic interest in “heritage”: the question of what is meant by “heritage” is now the subject of much discussion among history scholars and in the realms of cultural science, ethnology, and museum studies; this raises further questions about nation-building, restitution, and provenance, and about how to deal with (post)colonialism and the overexploitation of people and nature. To give an example: in connection with the climate crisis and postcolonial debates – relating, for instance, to non-human agency – do rivers, forests, and other natural landscapes have rights of their own, and shouldn’t they also enjoy protected status as non-cultural heritage? And don’t mineralogical and natural history collections also tell (cultural) stories of relationships of dependency and human exploitation? At the same time, there are also some early dissenting voices that are critical of an expansive focus on the past – which they regard as “nostalgic” – and in turn contribute to an analytical examination of the topic.

The *Heritage in Focus*, organised by Goethe-Institut Athen and the Humboldt Forum, looks at the question of “heritage” from four different angles, with a special focus on Germany and Greece. Based on the major shift in recent years in how the term is interpreted and a growing interest in the subject, there will be four panel discussions looking at topics such as intangible heritage and urban heritage and at the range of issues connected with nature and heritage as well as the question of nation-building as it relates to finds of antiquities and restitution. The results of this series will be presented in 2026-27 as part of the focus on “heritage” at the Humboldt Forum.

WATER AND NATURE: A LEGACY?

The event on 5 June sees the *Heritage in Focus* series exploring new themes and geographies: human – and that includes European – heritage is to be decentred, and the spotlight will shift onto nature. *Heritage in Focus* #3 is primarily concerned with the element of water.

This focus on water gives rise to questions about how natural landscapes and cultural landscapes interact and connect with cultural heritage. Are the rules that apply to natural heritage also valid for cultural heritage? Do rivers, bodies of water, and seas have a legal status as entities that can be accorded the same rights and protections as humans? How can a Western understanding of nature shaped by the market economy connect with a view of natural elements based on Indigenous knowledge that sees these elements as a personified part of the community?

As in previous editions of *Heritage in Focus*, these issues will be explored with a specific focus on Athens and Berlin – two cities in which the future of water is becoming an increasingly urgent concern in urban debates. Athens's planned reactivation of its ancient water infrastructure shows that, with climate change looming large, the city is looking for a new approach to the legacy of antiquity. Berlin is likewise facing severe water shortages in the years ahead, brought on by structural changes in industry, and wants to find new ways of handling its water supply and its bodies of water. Activist groups in the capital are voicing the urban community's wish to reconfigure its relationship with the metropolis's rivers and lakes.

The burgeoning global debate on bodies of water as a "legal entity", which is also under way in Greece, suggests that a solution may be found in a non-anthropocentric view of nature. The Berlin initiative Spree:publik illustrates the form that an alternative, non-commercial, participatory approach to water might take. The debate looks beyond the European frame to include Indigenous know-how and perspectives, with an invitation extended to Brazilian artist and curator Walmeri Ribeiro, who presents the experiences of Brazilian fisherfolk in film and performative works. A visit to Athens's ancient reservoir and a programme of short films are designed to help raise public awareness of the issue.

INTRODUCTORY KEYNOTE

CAROLA HEIN

Carola Hein is Professor of History of Architecture and Urban Planning at Delft University of Technology, Professor at Leiden and Erasmus universities, and director of the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus PortCityFutures Centre. She holds the UNESCO Chair of Water, Ports and Historic Cities. She has published widely in the field of architectural, urban, and planning history, tying historical analysis to contemporary development. Her recent (co-)edited books include *Hustle and Bustle of Port Cities* (2025), *Port City Atlas* (2023), *Oil Spaces* (2021), *Urbanisation of the Sea* (2020), *Adaptive Strategies for Water Heritage* (2020), and *The Routledge Planning History Handbook* (2018).

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

THANOS ANDRITSOS

Thanos Andritsos is an Architectural Engineer, graduate from the University of Thessaly, with postgraduate studies in Urban and Spatial Planning at the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), where he is also a PhD candidate in the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning. His research focuses on policies and practices for Sustainable Urban Development. He has participated in national and international research projects and has contributed papers to conferences and scientific publications both in Greece and abroad. He has extensive experience in the design and implementation of public and private projects and has received awards in architectural and urban planning competitions. With over fifteen years of international experience, he has worked on studies and projects in the fields of Spatial Planning, Sustainable Urban Development, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), Urban Planning Legislation, and Participatory Planning. He is a founding member of Commonsense and Participatory Lab, an interdisciplinary community that promotes participatory spatial planning and urban adaptation to climate change. He is the author or co-editor of several projects, including "Participatory Planning: City, Environment & Climate Change", "Sustainable Urban Development: What is the Role of Citizens?", and "Participatory Municipal Budgeting", in collaboration with the Heinrich Böll Foundation. He represents Commonsense in the EU Urban Agenda Thematic Partnership on Water-Sensitive Cities and was the coordinator of the project "Sites of Water" within the *Atlas of Mediterranean Liquidity*, curated by Goethe-Institut.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

MAX BAYER

Max Bayer initially studied to be a teacher of politics and chemistry but ended up working in extra-mural education, where he has launched and overseen projects in which young people explore and design urban open spaces using artistic and craft approaches, both on land and on water. His pedagogic work focuses on participation and self-efficacy, and many of his projects are funded by the German Federation for Arts Education and Cultural Learning (BKJ). For over twelve years, he has also been involved, in a private capacity, in political and cultural initiatives centred on Berlin's waterways. He is a member of the Anarche collective and one of the founders of Spree:publik, an umbrella organisation for houseboats and cultural boats in Berlin. Spree:publik is seeking to establish, on a long-term basis, a non-commercial cultural harbour that will give Berlin's subculture a permanent base on the water, with a range of offerings for the public, consistent with a standing commitment to maintaining the city's waterways. In addition to the annual festival on the Rummelsburger See and regular clean-ups of the lake, the members of Spree:publik put on year-round events of all kinds on a variety of boats – these include concerts, demonstrations, film screenings, and much more. To this end, they work together with several associations and initiatives that are likewise committed, away from the water, to alternative ways of designing the city to serve the common good.

GIORGOS SACHINIS

Giorgos Sachinis is a Civil and Environmental Engineer (MSc, UC Berkeley; BSc, Duke University) and currently serves as Director of Strategy and Innovation at EYDAP, the Athens Water Supply and Sewerage Company. He is also a theatre director (MA, Central School of Speech and Drama) and co-founder of the UrbanDig Project, a non-profit organisation dedicated to arts and community engagement, with a recent focus on fostering a culture around water. Sachinis is a Board Member of Water Europe and serves on the Ad-hoc Task Group on Water Scarcity and Droughts, established under the EU's Common Implementation Strategy.

Please see
Introductory Keynote Page

CAROLA HEIN

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION MODERATION

DAPHNE DRAGONA

Daphne Dragona is a curator and writer working in Athens and Berlin. In her current work, she addresses the ambiguous role of technology in times of climate crisis, and the challenges of degrowth for art and culture. Her exhibitions and projects have been hosted at Onassis Stegi, transmediale, LABoral, the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Akademie Schloss Solitude and other institutions. She teaches Curating, Exhibition Design, and History of Digital Art at the Department of Audio & Visual Arts at the Ionian University. She holds a PhD from the Faculty of Communication & Media Studies of the University of Athens.

PROJECT PRESENTATION

WALMERI RIBEIRO

Walmeri Ribeiro is an artist-researcher, curator, and Associate Professor in the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at Federal Fluminense University (Brazil). Having a background in performance studies and media art, she is interested in research that focuses on dialogues between the arts and environmental issues, especially the Anthropocene, climate change, and its impacts on contemporary society. She searches for ethical-political and participatory forms of making art, building actions, workshops, and immersive research in collaboration with other artists, scientists, and traditional communities (Indigenous, fishing, and quilombolas) from local perspectives. Her artistic work is developed in the fields of performance studies, moving images, visual arts, and media art. Currently a FAPERJ's Research Fellow, she developed her post-doc research at Concordia University (Montreal, Canada, Capes' fellowship research), her PhD at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC/SP, CNPq fellowship research), and her master's in arts at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp). She is also a Professor of the Graduate Program in Contemporary Arts of Federal Fluminense University (PPGCA/UFF), where she is coordinator of the Laboratory Research of Performance, Media Arts, and Environmental Issues (BrisaLAB / CNPq) and director of the Sensitive Territories Platform. Author of some books, she has also written papers that are published in academic journals and collective volumes in Brazil and abroad, and participated in congresses, seminars, and art exhibitions. Her activities have been commissioned by Brazilian federal agencies, international agencies, and prizes for research and art production.

MUSIC SELECTION

MAX BAYER (SPREE:PUBLIK)

Please see
Roundtable Discussion Page

HERITAGE
IN FOCUS

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN
GOETHE-INSTITUT ATHEN
AND THE HUMBOLDT FORUM

GOETHE-INSTITUT ATHEN
05.06.2025

DEXAMENI SQUARE
06.06.2025

FREE ADMISSION

WATER AND NATURE : A LEGACY?

THURSDAY PROGRAMME

05.06.2025

GOETHE-INSTITUT ATHEN

19:30

INTRODUCTORY
KEYNOTE

CAROLA HEIN

ROUNDTABLE
DISCUSSION

THANOS ANDRITSOS, MAX BAYER,
CAROLA HEIN, GIORGOS SACHINIS
MODERATION: DAPHNE DRAGONA

PROJECT
PRESENTATION

WALMERI RIBEIRO
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH, WITH SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION INTO GREEK

22:00

FILM
SCREENINGS

ON THE OTHER SIDE – OIL ISLANDS
WALMERI RIBEIRO, 2025, 24'
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE DIRECTOR
LANGUAGE: PORTUGUESE, WITH ENGLISH AND GREEK SUBTITLES

LAYER OF DESTRUCTION
COSTAS VRETTAKOS, 1980, 32'
LANGUAGE: GREEK, WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

HERACLES, ACHELOOS AND MY GRANNY
DIMITRIS KOUTSIABASAKOS, 1997, 29'
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE DIRECTOR
LANGUAGE: GREEK, WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

MUSIC SELECTION

MAX BAYER (SPREE:PUBLIK)

FRIDAY PROGRAMME

06.06.2025

DEXAMENI SQUARE

10:30

EDUCATIONAL
GAME

*DISCOVER THE HADRIAN AQUEDUCT
OF ATHENS*, URBANDIG PROJECT, 180'
LANGUAGE: GREEK, ENGLISH

THE FILMS

ON THE OTHER SIDE – OIL ISLANDS

**WALMERI
RIBEIRO**
2025
24’

Navigating the waters of Guanabara Bay, in Rio de Janeiro, means travelling through many landscapes, from the most bucolic to the most dystopian. This film, produced during the performative mapping by the Floresta de Marés project, shows a part of this Bay, made up of the so-called Ilhas do Petróleo (Oil Islands). Far from the eyes of the tourists and the part of the residents, hidden on the other side, are the islands that serve as warehouses for the oil and gas industries. With narration by fisherman, diver, and activist Thiago Caiçara, this film seeks to bring up the discussion about property and heritage.

LAYER OF DESTRUCTION

**COSTAS
VRETTAKOS**
1980
32’

In the late 1970s, a reservoir is built on the River Mornos to supply the capital with water. An entire riverside village, Velouchovo, must be abandoned – a forced destruction that seems like a sacrifice in the name of progress. But there is another sacrifice, too: that of an ancient city that once flourished on the same banks and that now, just as it was beginning to be uncovered by the archaeologists, will be flooded forever. Insightful and elegiac, Costas Vrettakos's film extends in multiple directions at once: a melancholy record of the decay of a traditional community in the mountains of Phocis and a thoughtful archaeological documentary, *Layer of Destruction* can also be viewed as a gripping thriller, an archetypal struggle of memory against oblivion, as the excavators fight to save the traces of the ancient city from the water level that rises day by day, swallowing everything in its wake. And if the film perceives history as a palimpsest of destruction, if it comments on indifferent and amoral nature that erodes everything, surrendering all to oblivion, its gaze is not a pessimistic one: it is from the viewer's questioning of what is worth saving and what is not that the memory of the future will be born.

HERACLES, ACHELOOS AND MY GRANNY

**DIMITRIS
KOUTSIABASAKOS**
1997
29’

In Armatoliko, a mountain village in Trikala province, high in the Tzoumerka mountain range, on the banks of the River Acheloos, the 89-year-old Mrs Dimitra lives alone. She is the beloved grandmother of director Dimitris Koutsiabasakos, who visits her with a small crew of friends. The result of the visit is *Heracles, Acheloos and My Granny*, one of the most iconic Greek documentaries of recent decades. Through the unforgettable, laughing, down-to-earth figure of his grandmother, Koutsiabasakos's lens captures the rugged and indomitable, inexpressibly tender and loving spirit of the Greek countryside, as well as the dark

and turbulent history of the 20th century, the wounds of which are inscribed on the old woman's body. Wounds which not only still gape, but on which new wounds are being piled up, as Armatoliko is shortly to be flooded by the waters of the Acheloos, due to the controversial dam being built in the area. Rarely has a short film captured the spirit of a place – and of a century – so vividly, bursting with emotion and love.

THE FILMMAKERS

DIMITRIS KOUTSIABASAKOS

Dimitris Koutsiabasakos studied film and TV directing at the All-Russian State University of Cinematography in Moscow (VGIK). He is a Professor at the School of Film at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He has directed documentaries, TV series, short and feature films. His works have received national and international awards. He is a member of the Hellenic Film Academy and the European Film Academy. Recent films include *The Goals of August* (2025), *Daniel* '16 (2020), *The Weavers* (2020), *Heracles, Acheloos and Mesochora* (2019).

**WALMERI
RIBEIRO**

Please see
Project Presentation Page

COSTAS VRETTAKOS

Costas Vrettakos (Athens 1938–2018) studied film directing in Athens and Rome, although he never completed his studies. Until 1980, he worked professionally in advertising and photography. At the same time, he occasionally engaged in journalism and published two poetry collections titled *Anarithma*. In 1980, he founded the publishing house “Three Leaves” and returned to cinema, initially directing documentaries such as *The Layer of Destruction* (1980), *The Park Avenue district in Montreal* (1984), *Rescue of the Monument* (1986), and one and only fiction film, the award-winning *The Children of the Swallow*, which deals with the Greek Civil War, starring Alekos Alexandrakis and Mary Chronopoulou (1987). He served as a film advisor for the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (1989), president of the Greek Film Centre (1991–1998), and Greece's representative at Eurimages at the Council of Europe (1991–2006). In 2009, his first novel, *Passing Through Reykjavik*, was published (by Potamos Publishing), followed by *Exercises in Curiosity* (2016), which was awarded the Nobel Prize of the Academy of Athens. In the final year of his life, *Added Value* was published (by Polis Publishing) – a book containing his youthful poems, selected and annotated by himself.

EDUCATIONAL GAME

URBANDIG PROJECT

UrbanDig Project invites us to discover the Hadrian Aqueduct on 6 June 2025. Since the 2nd century AD, the Hadrian Aqueduct has continuously sustained its water journey, which begins at Mount Parnitha and ends in Kolonaki. It is the only aqueduct of its kind and length in Europe. The game takes place in Dexameni Square, introducing participants to the Hadrian Aqueduct and inspiring them to think about the environmental and cultural resources of the cities in which we live.

UPCOMING EVENT

The *Heritage in Focus* series will close on 6 November 2025 with the critical topic of "nation-building", focusing on antiquities and the question of restitution. Film screenings and filmmaker talks will offer further artistic insights and create formats for discussion and exchanging of ideas as part of the accompanying programme.

THE HUMBOLDT FORUM

The Humboldt Forum brings together under one roof cultural world heritage, art and culture, advanced international research, and urban and architectural history. A critical examination of the eventful history of the site and the ethnological collection forms the basis for a programme of exhibitions, performances, concerts, readings, and workshops that crosses genres and involves international experts, creative artists, and culture professionals.

The Humboldt Forum is jointly organised by the Humboldt Forum Foundation (Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss), the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz) – with the Ethnological Museum and the Asian Art Museum, which form part of the National Museums in Berlin – the Stadtmuseum Berlin, and the Humboldt University in Berlin; its programme is designed in cooperation, on an equal basis, with Berlin's communities and partners around the world.

**THE *HERITAGE IN FOCUS*
EVENT SERIES
IS A COLLABORATION
BETWEEN GOETHE-INSTITUT
AND THE HUMBOLDT FORUM**



GOETHE.DE/ATHEN/HERITAGE

**GOETHE-INSTITUT ATHEN
14-16 OMIROU ST., 10672 ATHENS**

