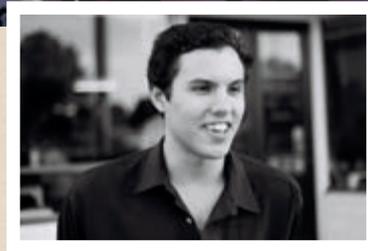


# A Kytherian diary and the eye of a photographer

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*Isaac Panaretos is a professional photographer based in Melbourne. He recently visited Kythera and posted some of his photos and a blog commencing at <http://isaacpanaretos.com/greece-part-1/>.*

We were impressed with the candid and spontaneous nature of his landscape photography, his eye for a photo and some striking portraits.

Extracts from Isaac's blog and some of the photos are reproduced here with the photographer's kind permission.

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### September 6, 2013

I have been in Greece for almost 6 weeks and will be living here until the end of October, or what will mark the beginning of the olive season. I'm staying in a house that was built by my great grandfather in 1910 in a small town called Potamos, on the small Ionian island of Kythira. There are around 4,000 people living here now, although there apparently used to be closer to 30,000. I buy vegetables from the Pazari in the main square every Sunday, and drink water from the springs on the mountain side over-looking the old port of Agia Pelagia. This is the home of the Lady of Cythera, also more commonly known as the hands-down sexiest Goddess ever, the flawless Aphrodite. Also, it's filthy hot here like every day.

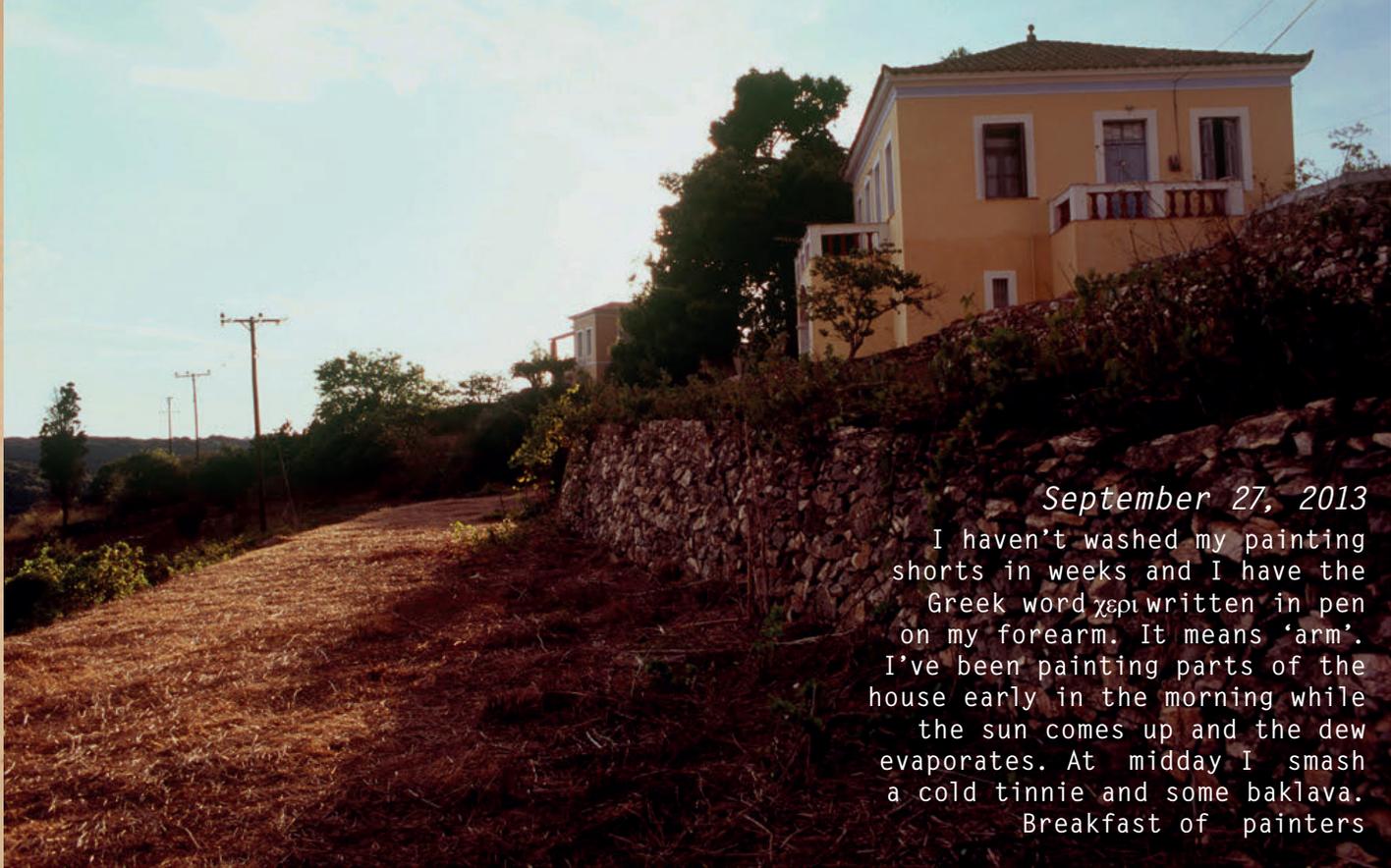
### September 23, 2013

Last night there was a street dance in Agia Pelagia in Kythira. I sat on the curb with my bottle of ouzo as only an Australian could. There were hundreds of tables and chairs that had been spread out across the street and up the beach, with a band playing blissfully never-ending renditions of traditional Greek songs. I recognised the guitarist as one of the local plumbers. In front of me, the Greeks and a few touristes, were wrapped up in a circle dance that was morphing as people finished their dinner and pushed their way into the circle. At times the formation would break into a spiral,



and then chip off into smaller circles, and every now and then a rogue Greek would start up his own reason to live. For some songs it was the children that owned the dance, whereas for other songs it was the yia-yiathes (elder woman) that raised their chins and taught the islanders how to party. At this point I realised how monumentally significant it was to be involved in a Greek dance, in regards to finding that old road going to happiness that everyone's always looking for. I sat and watched the euphoric grins multiply while I shared a drink with Yiorgos, one the local taxi drivers. Everyone describes him as trelos, which means mad for life or something like that. These photos show Kythira in the peak of summer.





*September 27, 2013*

I haven't washed my painting shorts in weeks and I have the Greek word χερι written in pen on my forearm. It means 'arm'. I've been painting parts of the house early in the morning while the sun comes up and the dew evaporates. At midday I smash a cold tinnie and some baklava. Breakfast of painters

*November 2, 2013*

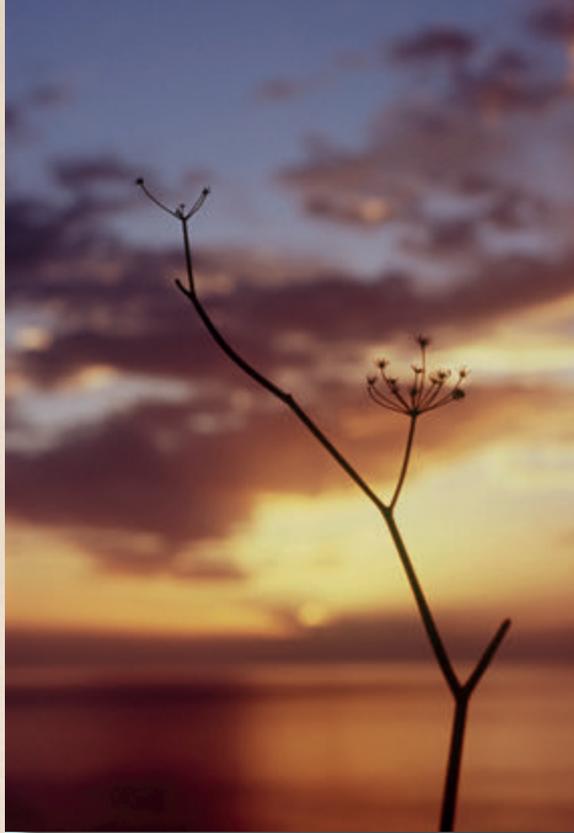
My last month in Greece the winds turned cold and skies became veiled by the sun. People I had met were slowly leaving from the island as the sound from the shutters was trying to remind me that the fun was over. It wasn't over. As the rental cars cleared from the roads, and the tavernas took their chairs in, a new form of life emerged on the small Greek island of Kythira. The people had recently stopped watching basketball on the TV and were now watching the football instead. Shortly after Greece were knocked from the European Basketball tournament, locals began organising soccer games to be played on the gravelly field before dusk. The backgammon boards in the cafes became occupied by men who were much older and more weathered, and the rain sporadically poured down from outside. There were less stalls at



the vegetable market in the plateia now, but it seemed that the wives and husbands sitting behind their weekly yield of tomatoes and greens now had more to lose. I felt a sudden urge to engage with everyone I had met, and to see the colossal Greek sun elevate again from behind the church. As my impending sense grew that an end of an era was blowing over from the west, I began to stay up later and wake up earlier. I also frequently made photography trips to different areas of the island as the light slowly lowered into darkness.

### *November 13, 2013*

The night before I left Kythira I drove to Lykodimou, one of the sunset goldmines on the west coast of the island. The aniseed was flourishing on the side of the road like usual, but instead of appearing like the national pest that



it is, it seemed somehow fluid with the landscape this time. I'd named the car that I was borrowing The Basher, but tomorrow I would finally give it a break. The next morning I drove to Kouli's house on the beach where he was waiting on a wooden log ready to leave for the airport. I kissed his wife Eleftheria goodbye on the cheek and we turned back towards the mountain. Halfway up the hillside we stopped the car to pick some wild thyme from the side of the road. Kouli told me how he had once built a nearby side-road that led down to his farm by the sea. He is an old man now, but Kouli still wakes up at 5:30 every morning to work

his land. And on Sunday mornings he walks across the shore to the church on the other side of town. We filled a plastic bag full of thyme, and Kouli put his knife back into its leather case. Passing through another small town, we stopped again to see if a friend of Kouli's was home. The man was out working with the bees when we arrived, so we kept on going. When we got to the airport I pushed the bag of thyme into the top pocket of my backpack and I shook Kouli's hand. I promised that I would be back again, and as I looked down over the island on my way to Athens, I vowed not to break that promise.

**These photos are taken during Autumn on the Greek island of Kythira.**