

# FEMALE COLLECTORS IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY: COLLECTING AND DISPLAYING THE GREEK NATION

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## *Introduction*

This paper aims to bring together information about female collectors and their contribution to the formation of Greek museums and thus provide a more comprehensive and inclusive history of Greek institutions. The importance of such an effort goes beyond the interests of individual countries: Research in less well known aspects of institutions in individual countries can also facilitate a more thorough understanding of the development and shape of European institutions in general. Once we know more about institutions in one country we can pursue similarities and differences among more countries and more institutions and we can locate them within wider perspectives. The discussion about Greek women and their involvement in the creation of collections and through this their creation of museums can contribute towards the enrichment of historical paradigms regarding women and collecting and thus contribute to the analysis of the phenomenon on a global scale. Furthermore, it will provide a sharper view on the female contribution in framing modern Greek national identity in the public sphere. Finally, a discussion of these early origins of arts, antiquities and crafts collections will shed light on perceptions and practices of object presentation and exhibition design in Greek museums and private collections from the beginning of the 20th century onwards.

The discussion in this paper will focus on three aspects:

- individual female collectors and their participation in the construction of collections and museum narratives;
- the way they understood and »translated« ideological concepts and dilemmas of the period into material assemblages of objects;
- the way they influenced subsequent generations' understanding of culture, collections and museums.

The paper will start with a presentation of the life stories and the collecting attitudes of two female collectors active in the first part of the 20th century, then the historical and ideological circumstances of the period and the framework within which these attitudes developed will be presented in brief, and finally, I will try to raise some issues about how their collecting practices fit into these historical and ideological circumstances as well as about how these collecting practices are relevant to female collecting in general.

The two female collectors that will be discussed in this paper are Loukia Zygomala, the founder of a small folk art/house museum in Avlona, a village of Attica, and Eleni Stathatos, a passionate collector of antiques whose collection ended up in three major Athenian institutions, the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, the Benaki Museum and the Gennadeion Library of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. Despite their different stories and background, as well as the character of their personal attitudes towards the past, these female collectors also share common characteristics and aspirations of »building the nation«. It is to this aspect of their collecting practices that this paper will mainly focus.

*The creation of the collections: Loukia Zygomala and Eleni Stathatos*

Loukia Zygomala was born in Athens in 1866, she was the daughter of Aristides Balanos, a lawyer coming from one of the major centers of the Greek Diaspora, Northern Epirus. She received good education at home and was then sent to Paris to study art. There she met Antonios Zygomalas, the son of a wealthy family from the island of Chios, to whom she got married in 1888. Antonios, who had studied law, was already involved in Greek politics: He was the Minister of Education in 1885 and he became the Minister of Justice in 1902-03, both times in the conservative government of Theodoros Deligiannis. In 1890, Loukia and Antonios had a son, Andreas, who also became a lawyer. During the Balkan Wars (1912-13) Andreas joined the Hellenic Army as a volunteer. Soon after the end of this period, in 1914 during World War I, he joined the Greek forces in Northern Epirus, his mother's family homeland, in their attempt to keep the region within the Greek national borders. He was killed there in 1914.<sup>1</sup>

Of course the death of their son became a serious trauma for the Zygomala couple. Since then the course of their lives changed dramatically. Antonios resigned from politics and he remained in grief, withdrawn from all social life, until his death in 1930. Loukia, on the other hand, decided to devote the rest of her life to a national cause, as she understood it, i. e. the promotion (and collection) of traditional Greek embroidery. In 1915 she founded and ran local schools of embroidery in 17 poor and neglected villages of the north part of Attica.<sup>2</sup> Her relation to this part of the country had already started when her husband as a Minister had managed to purchase on behalf of the state the land owned by Andreas Syggros and distribute it to the villagers of Avlona (most of them coming from Northern Epirus). The people of the area considered the family their benefactors and their friends – even more so when the Zygomala's family decided to purchase for themselves a piece of land in the village.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Alexandra Bounia: Philanthropy, art and the museum: Loukia Zygomala and the promotion of Greek folk embroidery. In: Journal of the History of Collections 24/1 (2012), pp. 105-116; Ch. Papakonstantinou-Skarla: I nona mou I Loukia Zygomala (My Godmother, Loukia Zygomala). Athens 2005.

2 Alexandra Nikiforidou: Mouseio Zygomala Avlona Attikis (Zygomala Museum, Avlona of Attica). In: Technologia (1994); Ekaterini Tzamourani: The collection of embroideries of Loukia Zygomala: History, exhibition, management. Unpublished paper submitted at the University of Athens. Athens 2004.

3 Maria Karavia: I agape mias manas (The love of a mother). In: Ginaika 464 (25 Oct.) (1967) (in

Loukia's embroidery schools operated in the following manner: The best embroiderer was to become the head of the school, she had to organize the work and teach the younger and less experienced girls. Loukia was to provide the raw materials and the designs, which were based on traditional Greek ones, copied from old embroideries she would collect, but reworked in order to be »modernized« and made appropriate for contemporary use. The head of the school would then make sure that the quality of the work produced was impeccable – if it was not, Loukia would not hesitate to destroy it, after of course paying the girl who had created it. Loukia, on the other hand, would undertake the responsibility to make the work known and available for purchase to third parties as well. Around 1920 Loukia financed the opening of a co-operative shop in the centre of Athens (entitled »Attica. Greek Village Embroideries«) where Athenian ladies of the upper class could purchase the traditional embroideries made by the girls and use them for the decoration of their own houses.<sup>4</sup>

In 1925 after having participated on behalf of the schools in many exhibitions of traditional arts and crafts, which became very popular in Athens from the 1920s onwards, Loukia chose the best works to display in Paris in the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in 1925. Her participation won her the first prize both for her personal efforts and designs and for the quality of the works.<sup>5</sup>

After her husband's death in 1930, Loukia decided to leave Athens. She closed the shop in 1936 and moved to Avlona, where she built a small house, with two rooms attached which were to become her museum. There she collected all remaining artifacts as well as artifacts she had treasured from the previous years and mementos of her son. An artist, a friend of hers, Takis Loukidis helped her organize the presentation of the collection in her own museum.<sup>6</sup> Loukia lived there until 1947 when she passed away. In her will she bequeathed her house/museum to the local school under the auspices of the Hellenic Ministry of Education. She specifically mentioned in her handwritten will that her house and museum would remain exactly as they were at the time and nothing, no object, furniture, carpet, curtain, embroidery, photograph, etc., would be removed or repositioned. She had left an endowment for the operation of the museum, as well as a monthly stipend for one of the female embroiderers in order to continue offering embroidering services to people who might want them.<sup>7</sup>

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Greek); Papakonstantinou-Skarla, as fn. 1.

4 Takis Loukidis: *Attike. Ellenika Chorika Kentimata (Attike. Hellenic Peasant Embroideries)*. Athens 1937; Ch. Tsadaris: *Mouseio Zygomala Avlona Attikis: Ellenika chorika kentimata (Zygomala's Museum in Avlona of Attica: Hellenic peasant embroidery)*. In: *Folk Art Museums in Greece*. Athens 1997 (in Greek).

5 T. Loukidis, as fn. 4; Ch. Tsadaris, as fn. 4.

6 M. Karavia, as fn. 3.

7 Bounia, *Philantropy*, as fn. 1.



Fig. 1: The Zygomala Museum in 1967 – as Loukia had set it before her death. Magazine *Ginaika (Woman)*, 467, 1967. Unknown photographer.

The museum (Fig. 1) indeed remained as it was (although no order for embroideries were ever received) until the 1980s when the Ministry of Culture (which had taken over from the Ministry of Education in 1977) decided to properly conserve and document the collection, pay for reconstructions of the house which in the meantime had been deteriorating, and reorganize the exhibition in a more scientific manner. The new exhibition was inaugurated on July 16th, 1991 and it is still in place today.<sup>8</sup>

The second collector of this discussion, Eleni Stathatos, was also born in one of the major cities of the Greek diaspora, Alexandria of Egypt, in 1887. She was the daughter of the wealthy family of the merchant K. Konstantinidis. Eleni married Antonios Stathatos, a successful businessman with connections to the royal court of Greece, in 1911 and had two daughters. She passed away in Athens in 1982, aged 95, and after having acquired many distinctions and honors as one of the Great Benefactors of the Greek nation, since her collection had been donated to the Greek State.<sup>9</sup>

8 Popi Zora: Dio topika monografika laografika mouseia: To Mouseio Sarakatsanon stis Serres ke to Mouseio Zygomala stin Avlona Attikis (Two local, monographic, folk art museums: The Museum of Sarakatsanoi in Serres and the Zygomala's Museum in Avlona of Attica). In: O Rolos ton Laografikon Mouseion stin Enomeni Evropi (The Role of the Folk Art Museum in the European Union). Conference proceedings. Athens 1994 (in Greek); Nikiforidou, as fn. 2; Tzamourani, as fn. 2.

9 Alexandra Bounia: Private collections and public displays in Greece at the beginning of the

The contents of her collection seem at first sight rather diverse (especially when compared with those of the collection of Loukia Zygomala) since it consists of artifacts dating from the 14th century BC to the 18th century AD, belonging to the following categories: Jewelry (mainly gold artifacts of different phases of the Greek past, from the Mycenaean to the post-Byzantine periods), a series of early Byzantine lamps as well as decorative objects (vases, sculpture, etc.) of clay and metal from various historical periods, Greek folk art embroideries, Byzantine and post-Byzantine icons, and finally popular art woodcarvings. Among them, the wood carved paneling of the walls and the roof of a reception room from a mansion in Kozani, dating from the 18th century, and definitely the most famous acquisition of her collection.<sup>10</sup>

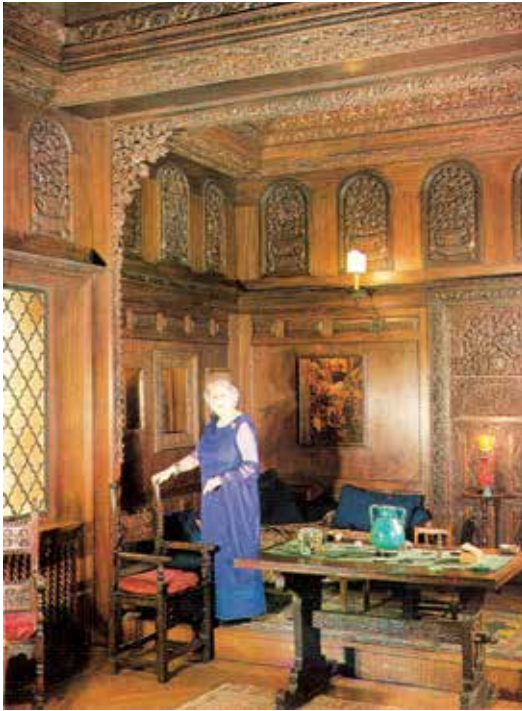
All these objects had been collected and displayed in the Stathatos' family house in Athens. Three successive but differently sized rooms on the ground floor were reserved for the display of the collection: The large reception room, the small reception room and the little room, the treasury. The first room to be assembled sometime around the 1920s was the small reception room. Its main focus was the fireplace, which was constructed from bright blue antique ceramics. The rest of the room consisted of woodcarvings from old churches around Arta in the region of Epirus. The collector herself had chosen and supervised the assemblage. The second room in terms of the date of acquisition was the large reception room, the famous »salon from Kozani«. The wood carved panels of this room were acquired by Eleni in 1928 and they came from a town house in Kozani, in northern Greece, built in 1732.

The third room housing the collection was small and it resembled a treasury since it held the collection of the intrinsically valuable jewels, ancient artifacts and icons (Fig. 2).<sup>11</sup>

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20th century: The collection of Eleni Stathatos. In: Sandra Dudley/Amy Barnes/Jennifer Binnie/Julia Petrov/Jennifer Walkate (Ed.): *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories*. London 2012, pp. 237–254.

- 10 Bounia, *Private collections*, as fn. 9; A. Kirkou: Eleni Stathatos: A big heart. In: *Politica Thematika* 9-14/04 (1982), pp. 55–56 (in Greek); Maria Karavia: Eleni Stathatos' salon from Kozani. In: *The Children of Loneliness: Stories of Places and People*. Athens 2003, pp. 71–77 (in Greek); Ios Zervoudaki: National Archaeological Museum. The Stathatos Collection. Athens 2000.
- 11 Katerina Korre: The salon from Kozani at the Benaki Museum. In: *News of the Friends of the Benaki Museum*. April-July 1986, pp. 25–30 (in Greek); Eleni Vlachou: A valuable treasure: The collection of Eleni A. Stathatos. In: *Eklōgi*, 9/86 (1952), pp. 61–68 (in Greek).



*Fig. 2: Eleni Stathatos in her salon from Kozani, before it was transferred to the Benaki Museum. Magazine Ikonos (Images), 1968. Unknown photographer.*

The transference of Eleni Stathatos' collection to the state took place in phases. The first major donation concerns the ancient and Byzantine jewelry and artifacts. In 1957 the objects were offered to the National Archaeological Museum under the condition that they were permanently exhibited in a separate gallery bearing the title »Collection of Antonios and Eleni Stathatos«. The gallery was inaugurated on November 13th, 1957, curated by the collector herself, according to her own »taste«, in display cases she chose and paid for. A re-display took place in 2000 and another one was inaugurated in May 2008.<sup>12</sup>

The second donation in terms of time took place in 1964. Eleni offered to the Benaki Museum her large reception room from Kozani. It was displayed in a separate gallery, in a new extension of the main museum building. The exhibition space holding the reception room along with other significant objects from the Stathatos' collection, was inaugurated on June 20th, 1968. A new display was put in place after the museum's major re-organization in 2000.<sup>13</sup>

12 Zervoudaki, as fn. 10.

13 Kate Synodinou: Invaluable the donation of Eleni Stathatos. In: Epta Imeres. Great National Collections 20 (1999) (in Greek).

The last piece of the collection, the small reception room, was offered to the Gennadeion Library of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens on April 5th, 1969. The Library undertook the responsibility to construct a room and to place the objects »as these are today placed in the donor's house«. <sup>14</sup> At the entrance to the room, the library had to place the sign »Macedonian Room. Donated by Eleni Stathatos, nee Konstantinidis«. The inauguration of this space took place on May 19th, 1972, in the specially constructed west wing of the library. <sup>15</sup>

The »feminine« character of both collections is more than obvious: They were both collections of the private sphere, domestic collections not only in terms of their content but also of their display. Both Loukia and Eleni collected, in the expected gendered manner, <sup>16</sup> embroideries, decorative objects, jewelry and icons, which they then arranged using their »fine taste«, as is often mentioned by various sources for both women, in their own period room settings of exhibitions and the shop in the former case, of her own house in the latter. It is exactly these rooms and the formation of a separate private and at the same time public space for the collections to be housed and displayed in, that makes these collections interesting. Loukia's and Eleni's collecting is therefore relational, unemphatic in the sense that it merges into their broader lives, but unlike other similar cases, it is also a conscious act of collecting (it has a purpose, it has a focus). <sup>17</sup>

Domesticity (since it shares their domestic environment one way or another) along with piety (the number of icons of Eleni's collection testify to this), taste (all the objects are fine samples of their kind), and intellectual superiority (after all they selected the objects and arranged the rooms themselves – both notorious for their high standards when it came to selecting objects and arranging them) become the main axes of their collections.

### *The national narrative*

Before we discuss the collections further, though, it is important to consider in brief the historical circumstances of Greece during the early part of the century, i. e. when these collections were mainly formed.

The national issue dominated late 19th century Greece. The War of Independence of 1821 resulted in the creation of the new national state of Greece in 1830. The borders of the country, though, did not correspond with the lands where the Greek (or Orthodox) population lived. During the last two decades the exaltation of national feeling produced an ideology of nationalism, which, since it revolved around irredentism, took various forms: A series of »national uprisings« in the »unredeemed« regions of the Ottoman Empire, rhetorical declarations, patriotic festivities, national symposia and so on. In 1896 the organization of the first modern Olympic Games in Athens contributed to the increase

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14 Contract No. 30765, Gennadius Library Archive.

15 Francis Walton: Hélène Stathatos. In: American School of Classical Studies Newsletter (1982), pp. 16–17.

16 Julie Verlaine: Femmes collectionneuses d'art et mécènes. Paris 2013.

17 Bounia, Philanthropy, as fn. 1; Bounia, Private collections, as fn. 9.

of national pride and allusions to the glorious forefathers. It is interesting to note that it was the Deligiannis government, in which Loukia's husband participated that was responsible for the organization of the Games. A year later, in 1897 the Greco-Turkish War of 30 days resulted in the defeat of the Greek forces and traumatized national pride and patriotic enthusiasm.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, by the end of the century in the context of the »Eastern question« – i. e. the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of rival Balkan nationalisms – and the national fervor which overtook the country, nationalist discourse assigned women a decisive role in the fulfillment of the civilizing mission of Hellenism and the realization of the irredentist ideal. Female education was charged with the task of forming the future mothers of the nation's children but also teachers who would disseminate the ideas and virtues of Hellenism to the »unredeemed« territories. Even though women did not have voting rights, at the turn of the century their role was altered and their participation in the creation of the national was established in its own way. Of course, there is a class issue involved here: All women would be the mothers of Greek soldiers, some of them would be teachers, but the leading role in the education of these women, the responsibility of such an important task was left with the women of the upper classes, who could undertake this role through their position.<sup>19</sup> It is not coincidental that the Lyceum Club of Greek Women, a most important bourgeois women's group under the suffragette Callirrhoe Parren was established in 1911, during exactly this period.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time a serious intellectual conflict was also in place. The relation of Greece to its medieval past, i. e. the Byzantine period, came under scrutiny. The historian Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1815-1875) in his seminal »History of the Greek Nation« (1860-1875) restored the importance of Byzantium, which until then had been neglected in the light of the pre-eminence of the classical past. He claimed its importance for the historical continuance of the Greek nation and its role as a connecting thread between the distant and the recent pasts. Therefore, the interest in Byzantium brought along an interest in the »people«, in the traits that differentiated contemporary Greeks from other nations. The study of folk art came as a result of Romanticism and acquired increasing importance among intellectuals.<sup>21</sup> Pericles Giannopoulos (1869-1910), another intellectual of the period, encouraged the admiration of everything Greek and ridiculed anything foreign. In one of his articles he encouraged Greeks to get rid of all their house furnishings, all the objects decorating middle and upper class houses that had been brought from abroad and followed the European taste. He encouraged women to create with their own hands the decoration of their houses and to return to the traditional as the only way to create a restful and

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18 Richard Clogg: *A Concise History of Greece*. Cambridge 1992.

19 Efi Avdela/Angelika Psarra: Engendering »Greekness«: Women's emancipation and irredentist politics in nineteenth-century Greece. In: *Mediterranean Historical Review* 20/1 (2005), pp. 67-79.

20 Efi Avdela (Ed.): *The Lyceum of Greek Women. 100 years*. Athens 2010.

21 Teti Hatzinikolaou: Introduction. In: *Ethnographica* 12-13 (2003), pp. 11-26 (in Greek).



beautiful Greek home. The peasants, their clothes, bodies, customs and traditions attracted admiration. They were considered to be the epitome of the Greek soul and life that should be copied and studied.<sup>22</sup>

In the meantime, the political situation in Greece changed. The conservative party, which was considered responsible for the shameful defeat of 1897 lost power and was replaced in the country's lead in 1910 by Eleftherios Venizelos and his liberal party. During the Balkan Wars (1912-13) Greece would acquire significant pieces of land (Epirus, Macedonia, Islands of the North Aegean Sea), while by 1920 West and East Thrace as well as Smyrna in Asia Minor were also added to the Greek state. The glorious period in terms of war achievements, ended in 1922 when another defeat in Asia Minor had as a result the loss of territories (Smyrna and East Thrace among them), the end of the irredentist politics of Greece and the arrival of thousands of refugees on the Greek islands and mainland.<sup>23</sup> Under the circumstances, the protection of local arts and crafts acquired an economic dimension as well, since the newcomers needed work, while the country could not really afford many imports.<sup>24</sup>

The collections of both Loukia Zygomala and Eleni Stathatos were created during this period, under the influence of these ideas about what constitutes heritage and what does not, what is important for the nation and what is not, what a noble woman should do about these issues and what she should not.

#### *The national cause and the role of collectors and museums*

Loukia had received training as an artist before her marriage, her sister Anna was the wife of one of the first historians of the Byzantine period, Spyridon Lambros, also a collector and the curator of an exhibition on Byzantine emperors sent by Greece to the International Fair in Rome in 1911.<sup>25</sup> Loukia was undoubtedly influenced by Lambros, but also by Pericles Giannopoulos, the intellectual who encouraged the admiration of the peasants and their »authentic Greek« ways, and who was also a family friend. Soon after her son's death, she decided to re-orientate her motherly responsibilities from the son she had lost and the grandchildren she would never have to the »salvaging« of local traditions and the »mothering« of the peasants. Her aim was twofold: First, to salvage local traditions from disappearance due to the westernized way of life and second, to provide local women with means to financially support their families without actually having to step outside their houses and their roles. In other words, her aim became to enable them to participate in the national economy in an appropriate feminine way and thus provide double service to the nation.<sup>26</sup>

This activity was also considered appropriate for herself: The grieving mother

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22 Perikles Giannopoulos: *I ellinike gramme (The Greek line)*. Athens 1981. D. Philippides: *Neo-ellenike Architektonike (Neohellenic Architecture)*. Athens 1984.

23 Clogg, as fn. 17.

24 Bounia, *Private collections*, as fn. 9.

25 Spyridon Lambros: *The Greek exhibits at the archaeological and historical World Fair in Rome*. In: *Neos Ellinomnemon* 8 (1911), pp. 60-70 (in Greek).

26 Bounia, *Philanthropy*, as fn. 1.

of a hero would continue his noble role through her feminine ways. She became the »mother« of all those young women who learned to keep their traditions alive and to support their families, i.e. fulfilling, in their turn, their motherly national role. When the time came, after her husband's death, she withdrew from her activities and she created a museum using her collection and knowledge in order to provide for the future generations similar instruction and example. This was the reason she bequeathed her museum to the Local School and the Ministry of Education: She understood her collection as mainly instructive – an opportunity for younger people to admire the art that originated from the local traditions and had taken a new shape and form following the »fine taste« of Loukia – the artist – herself.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Eleni Stathatos began donating her collection to museums after her husband's death (1956). She felt, as she claimed in interviews, that the time had come for her to offer her beloved possessions to the state.<sup>28</sup> As a member of the Greek upper class she had been raised to be part of the intellectual elite of the country: Offering to the state was considered an act of social and intellectual responsibility and proof of real cultivation and morality. Rescuing important treasures of the Hellenic past, selected and savored by her finely cultivated taste and offering them to the nation, was an appropriate attitude for an upper class, educated and religious woman. By that time a shift of emphasis had already occurred: It was not a matter of women contributing to the economy of the state anymore, but rather a matter of protecting the Hellenic cultural heritage from leaving the country and therefore to retain this strong link to the past that was expected by contemporary Greeks.<sup>29</sup>

Both Loukia and Eleni follow the trends of their days as these have been developed by the social elite to which they belong. They both come from wealthy families of the Hellenic Diaspora and they feel their Hellenic identity to be strong and powerful. As the Great Idea of the Greek expansion to the east dies along with the defeat of 1922, Greece concentrates on the Hellenocentric character of its culture.

The refugees from Asia Minor who brought along their traditions and material culture also influenced social life and contributed to the active search for a new synthesis in the intellectual field. Therefore, almost a century after the creation of the modern Greek state, Greeks were invited to re-evaluate the »lost world« of tradition, indeed, to be inclusive in their understanding of the Greek nation both in historical terms (there is a medieval and recent past which should be added to the classical one) and in terms of regions and people.

#### *Display methods and the identity of the collector*

Both Loukia and Eleni chose to display their collections in period room settings, in total environments. Loukia selected this method of presentation in all the

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27 Ibid.

28 Karavia, Eleni Stathatos' salon, as fn. 10.

29 Bounia, Private collections, as fn. 9.

exhibitions she participated in and this was the method of display in the Paris 1925 exhibition, in which she participated. Her museum was partly organized in display cases, i.e. in a systematic way, partly organized in room settings and partly as a living space for her. The decision for her living quarters to remain as a museum space after her death – actually she even mentioned in her will that the bathroom should be immediately destroyed so that nobody would be able to live in her own space after her death – reinforce this perception of her living space being a museum or of her museum being her living space.<sup>30</sup> Also for Eleni her collection was the living space she shared with friends and family. Almost no one can recollect her receiving anyone outside this space, even after she had donated everything to the museums.<sup>31</sup>

The choice of this particular display method is not accidental. Period rooms, total environments seem to abolish the distance between past and present; in this setting, the communicative value of the artifact, instead of its cult-value, is emphasized. Time is somehow suspended and the objects are viewed through the spatial relations of the display, as a »translucent window« into the past »as it was«. Therefore, the period rooms form the appropriate setting for objects to become immediate, unmediated vehicles for a »realistic« picture of the past. The period room becomes a »naturalistic« representation of the past, in other words, it presents the immediacy of the past with maximum credibility; it aims at preserving an exact copy of the »way things were« and it can do that because contemporary life is considered an immediate descendant of this past. Consequently, the naturalization of the past and the illusion of an exact copy of an original which never existed are complete.

Furthermore, the practice of collecting and displaying decorative objects in their private quarters is not unique in our cases or even in Greece. Already at the end of the 19th century French writers like Pierre Loti, Jean Moreas, Anatole France and Emil Zola are among the individuals who developed such an approach to decorative arts.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the exhibition logic of the private parlour had become quite familiar to a wider readership in France and other countries through specialist journals that used to describe such collections and present their photographs. These public presentations increased the interest in forming such collections, since they seemed to contribute to the collectors' status. The difference between the »consumer« – another new notion of the end of the 19th century – and the »collector« was authenticity and social utility. The »good collector« would be the person who amassed a coherent group of objects instead of a random assortment, who would not only collect eclectic and rare artifacts but also combine passion, taste and intelligence, keeping in mind display models and scholarly discourse that justified these choices. Sharing acquisitions with a larger public was also considered an important contribution to the greatness of the nation. Edifying the public was added to the characteristics

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30 Bounia, Philanthropy, as fn. 1.

31 Karavia, Eleni Stathatos' salon, as fn. 10.

32 Janell Watson: Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust. Cambridge 1999.

that made a collection worthy of its name and discerned the authentic collector from the casual consumer.<sup>33</sup>

The relation between collection and consumption also acquired a gender perspective.<sup>34</sup> The association of decorative objects with the domestic, the pretty, the detail and the ornamental had as a result being considered »feminine«. On the other hand, »collecting allows both genders to participate in the feminine world of consumption in a way that simultaneously supports the masculine world of production.«<sup>35</sup> In other words, the effeminate world of the decorative art collections was to become »masculinized« by its association with the erudite collector and the scholarly tradition. Therefore, the idea of the »good collector« became more elaborate: Domestic interiors decorated in the medieval style and embellished with decorative objects became typical of consumption and fashion – they were typical of the female approach.<sup>36</sup> On the contrary, these same interiors were to become a »real collection«, only if their owner knew how to select, order, classify and authenticate objects worthy of being amassed and placed in personal or collective reserves. Obviously the borders between the male and the female, the collector and the consumer, are very fine indeed, and they are dependent on the collector's choices and devotion to the collection.<sup>37</sup>

In our case, both collectors went to great lengths to acquire for themselves the status of the »good collector«. It was not only philanthropy that they practiced by purchasing those items, it was not only an act of consumption and trend: Both cultivated for themselves the traits of the intellectual connoisseur, who combined the knowledge about the objects of the collection with the interest in enlightening the nation, in fulfilling a national duty. In this sense, Loukia Zygomala and Eleni Stathatos, both well-educated with connections in France and a cosmopolitan background, soon went beyond the parlor to create a »good collection« which had to end up in its rightful place, i. e. in the museum – their own or the state's.

### *Conclusions*

At the end of the 19th century, within the context of the relations of Greece with both »east« and »west«, nationalistic discourse gave women a decisive role in the accomplishment of the educational and cultural mission of Hellenism. This discourse had a characteristic developmental and eurocentric content. Women were considered an important group for building up the nation. Women were

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33 Elizabeth Emery/Laura Morowitz: From the living room to the museum and back again: The collection and display of medieval art in the fin de siècle. In: *Journal of the History of Collections* 16/2 (2004), pp. 285–309.

34 Verlaine, as fn. 15.

35 Russell Belk/Melanie Wallendorf: Of mice and men: gender identity in collecting. In: Susan M. Pearce (Ed.): *Interpreting Objects and Collections*. London 1994, pp. 240–253.

36 Rémy Saisselin: *The Bourgeois and the Bibelot*. New Brunswick 1984.

37 James Clifford: *Collecting ourselves*. In: Pearce, *Interpreting Objects*, as fn. 34, pp. 258–268; Susan M. Pearce: *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*. Leicester 1992; Pearce, *Interpreting Objects*, as fn. 34 Susan Pearce: *On Collecting: An investigation into collecting in the European tradition*. London 1995.

the reproducers, nurturers and educators of the national body.<sup>38</sup> They identified with motherhood and domesticity and had the moral responsibility to fulfill their natural predestination. It was this approach that allowed for women to claim for themselves a central role in »saving« the social order and, consequently, the nation. Of course, this role was not given equally to all women: Participants in the upper middle class were those who were considered qualified enough to undertake such a role, whereas women of other, lower, classes were considered inadequately equipped and therefore in no position to participate. As a result, women of the upper class were the ones who took advantage of this role and acquired privileged access to the nation's construction.

Within this context, rescuing important treasures of the Hellenic past having used their fine taste, developed through their upbringing and offering them to the nation, to public museums, in order for them to be available for others to enjoy and learn from, has been considered part of the upper class, educated and religious woman's responsibility in Greece at the beginning of the 20th century. Loukia Zygomala and Eleni Stathatos aimed to accomplish important tasks: They aimed to connect history with individuality; to blur the boundaries between private and public; to situate femininity in relation to public and private values and to define and assert artistic quality.

Their collections need to be studied further along with similar collections of their era, in order to provide a comprehensive insight into both the history of women and the history of museums in Greece and in Europe.



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38 Avdela/Psarra, as fn. 18.