

Kazantzakis Film by Iannis Smaragdis Avant Premiere in New York City

By Eleni Sakellis

NEW YORK – The New York premiere of the much-anticipated film *Kazantzakis* by Iannis Smaragdis took place at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) Auditorium on December 10. The event was dedicated to Nikos and Carol Mouyiaris, in loving memory of their son Alexis.

The director Iannis Smaragdis and his wife and producer, Eleni, welcomed the guests and gave an introductory speech at the opening of the event. The film's protagonist Marina Kalogirou who plays Eleni Samiou, Kazantzakis' wife in the film, also attended as did Anthoula Katsimatides who plays Chrysoula Puarie- the Kazantzakis' neighbor in France.

Among those invited to attend this first screening were all the Greek-American sponsors who made it possible for the film to travel abroad; the heads of the Greek- and the Cypriot-American organizations, and the media, including the Consul General of Greece in New York Konstantinos Koutras with his wife, Popita Pavli, and Spyridoula-Ioanna Zochiou- Consul of Greece. Among those present were Amb. Vasilis Philippou- Consul General of Cyprus in New York, Olga Bornozi- Capital Link Managing Director, James Demetro- President of the Greek Film Festival New York, Michael Hartofilis- former President of the Hellenic Lawyers Association, and The National Herald Publisher-Editor Antonis H. Diamataris and his wife, Litsa. More than 250 participated to honor Iannis Smaragdis and Nikos and Carol Mouyiaris.

The film premiered in Greece on November 15 with a screening in Crete, followed by the of-

cial premiere in Athens on November 20 at the Pallas Theatre.

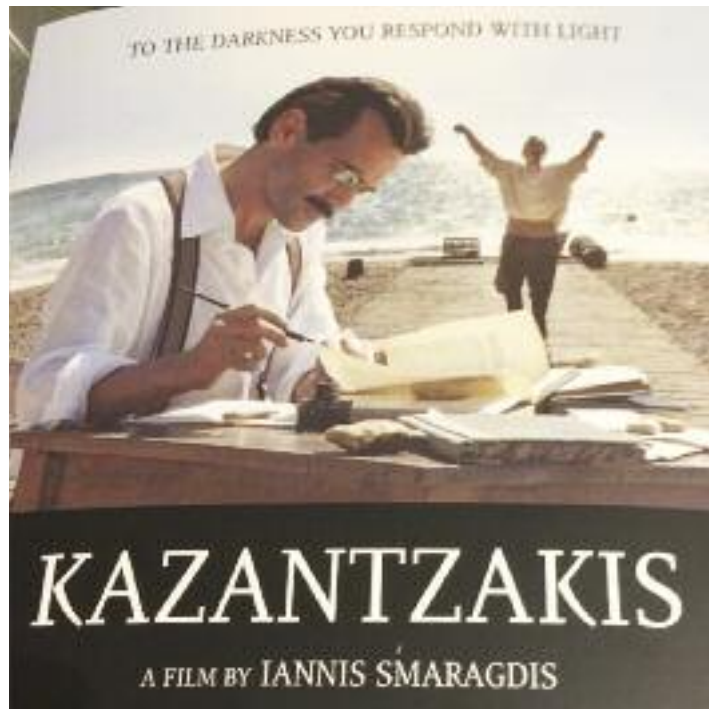
The Greek Ministry of Culture declared the year 2017 as the Year of Nikos Kazantzakis, marking 60 years since the death of the great author and intellectual.

With this film, Smaragdis aims to elevate the inspiring personality of Kazantzakis, as well as magnify Greece's magical scenery, where the writer's spirit developed. Through this film the director wishes to convey the Cretan author's ecumenical di-

mension, in the hope that it will make all the Greeks proud, in Greece and abroad.

Brilliantly portraying the main character of Nikos Kazantzakis is actor Odysseas Paspiliopoulos, while the wonderful Marina Kalogirou portrays his partner, Eleni. Eight-year-old Alexandros Kambaxis is young Nikos Kazantzakis and Stefanos Lineos is the writer in his mature age.

The moving film left many in the audience with tears in their



PHOTOS: TNH/ELENI SAKELLIS

ABOVE: Film producer Eleni Smaragdis, her husband-director and screenwriter Iannis Smaragdis, and Olga Bornozi- Capital Link Managing Director. **LEFT:** The poster for the film *Kazantzakis* by Iannis Smaragdis.

eyes for the emotionally powerful depiction of the writer and his wife as well as the stunningly beautiful images of Greece and the sea that left many longing for the homeland. A Q&A session

followed the screening in which the film's director received the congratulations and praise of the audience and answered their questions about the making of the film.

Greek-Owned Malibu Diner in NYC Serves Blind Community

TNH Staff

NEW YORK – The Malibu Diner on 23rd Street in Manhattan is in many ways like many of New York's Greek-owned diners. It has been a fixture in the Chelsea neighborhood for many years amid changing demographics, it serves classic diner food, is open 24 hours a day, and it exemplifies the Greek tradition of hospitality and philotimo. But the diner is unique for its proximity to the Selis Manor, "a roughly 200-unit apartment building that offers housing to blind, visually-impaired and disabled New Yorkers," and for being a favorite among the blind residents who can order from the Braille menus the diner offers, the *New York Times* reported.

The blind are regulars at Malibu, which plays music outside to alert the visually-impaired customers that they've reached their destination.

The *Times* article reported that the diner and "the building for the blind appeared at about the same time — nearly four decades ago — and have been entwined ever since," adding that "the diner opened around 1978 in a handsome brick building that had once been home to the Traffic Cafeteria (the building still bears the name)." It was first known as City Diner, but became the Malibu Diner in 1981, while "Selis Manor, which was built by a blind newsdealer named Irving M. Selis, opened in 1980," the *Times* reported.

One customer, Sharon Lash said, as reported in the *Times*, "Six in the morning, I'm headed to the Malibu," as she "taps her



MALIBU DINER FACEBOOK PAGE

Malibu Diner in New York City.

way along 23rd Street with a white cane."

Nearby crossing signals give sound cues "tick-tick-tick," and "wait-wait-wait," and "there are more service dogs than on the average block," to aid the visually-impaired residents as they navigate the busy streets of the city, the *Times* reported.

The Malibu continues the tradition of friendly service, too. Lash noted that, "I walk in there and they say, 'Hi, Sharon,' I know the waiters' voices."

George Stratis, a waiter at Malibu said, the *Times* reported: "There's a system to serve blind patrons. If a server shouts 'no mirando,' or 'not seeing,' the Spanish-speaking kitchen staff knows to chop up an order, put dressing on a salad, even sprinkle salt and pepper. They know to cut it into small pieces so they

can eat it."

Something most seeing people take for granted, cutting up food can be difficult for those born blind or who lost their sight at a young age the *Times* reported and as Lash noted that "the help is welcome" even though "I can do it, but if the Malibu will do it, why should I refuse?"

On a typical day before work, Lash has breakfast at Malibu, "A variety of things with eggs," she said the *Times* reported, "And I've got to have my coffee."

On weekends, she visits the diner and talks with Stratis, who has been serving her for about twenty years. Stratis said, the *Times* reported, "if I say in the kitchen, 'an order for Sharon,' they know what to do."

"For about five years, the diner has partnered with Visions,

a nonprofit based in Selis Manor that offers services to the blind and visually-impaired: It hands out breakfast vouchers to residents of the building," the *Times* reported.

Director of caregiver and senior services at Visions, Elizabeth Lee, said as reported in the *Times*, that the diner "filled a huge need" for the community, "The staff are knowledgeable about the population, they'll help them, they'll escort them" adding that "the residents redeem around 75 breakfast vouchers a week."

The clean and busy diner, offers the classic diner experience for all and the blind may experience the sounds of the diner more of Stratis talking with customers or another server, Agnes Khakula singing softly as she works, though "Lash dismisses

The script was based on Kazantzakis' *Report to Greco*, the fictionalized account of Kazantzakis' own life, a sort of intellectual autobiography framed as a report to the Spanish Renaissance painter, and fellow Cretan, El Greco.

Smaragdis said that this film had to be made, it had to exist, and he thanked his wife who, he added, is an angel who lends him her wings during the film-making process and then he returns them to her at the end so as not to leave her wingless. The director/screenwriter also thanked Olga Bornozi for her efforts in bringing the film to New York, calling her an angel as well.

Among the distinguished cast of the film, Argyris Xafis portrays Kazantzakis' father and Maria Skoula his mother. Actor Nikos Kardonis skillfully recreates the flamboyant poet Angelos Sikelianos and Amalia Arseni is his wife Eva, Itka is played by Youlika Skafida, Alexandros Kollatos is Jules Dassin, Zeta Douka is Melina Merkouri, and Adrian Frieling is Dr. Heilmayer. In his final role, the late Stathis Psaltis best known for his comedic performances, played against type as the abbot of Mount Sinai.

The film production included French co-producer Vincent Michaud, director of photography Ari Stavrou, music composer Minos Matsas, costume and set director Giorgos Patsas, and editor Stella Filippopoulou.

Stavrianidis Teaches Rutgers Students How To Market

TNH Staff

PISCATAWAY, NJ – Dr. Peter Stavrianidis, PhD, a successful entrepreneur and fourth-generation family business owner of Venus Jewelers, presented a class on entrepreneurship at Rutgers University's School of Chemical Engineering on December 6. The presentation, "How to Market Yourself in Business and in Life," provided students the key elements required to succeed in any entrepreneurial endeavor, starting from interviewing, landing a fine position in the job market and becoming a leader in the corporate or private sector.

According to Dr. Stavrianidis' research, three things really count in a skillful communicator – first, vocabulary or information, his ability to articulate, lis-



COURTESY OF DR. PETER STAVRIANIDIS

Dr. Peter Stavrianidis, PhD

ten and communicate; second, his tone of voice; and third, his body language. Of these, the last counts most. Body language is more important than content, he said.

He also spoke about the importance of leadership and how our world today is thirsty for competent leaders. "Leadership is a learnable skill," Stavrianidis mentioned several times in his presentation and demonstrated some of the qualities and habits that make somebody a leader.

"Money is a symptom of success," Stavrianidis said. "It requires enthusiasm, energy, and service...with these ingredients your team will win, your organization will prosper, and you will be elevated to higher degrees of influence."

He concluded his presentation by inviting students on the stage and coached them on their presentation skills encouraging them to follow the template that he had taught them.

With more than 35 years of business experience, Stavrianidis is focused on sharing is 35-plus years of business experience with the public, especially college students.

Abundance Art Exhibition Features Work by Kaminis & Matusik

By Eleni Sakellis

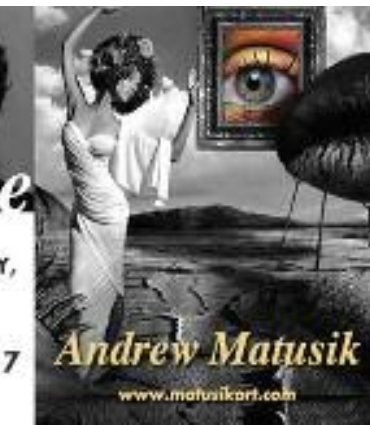
NEW YORK – The art exhibition entitled *Abundance* featuring paintings by Greek artist Yiannis Kaminis and photographs by American Andrew Matusik opened on December 4 in the Gallery- Sunni Spencer in New York City.

Kaminis spoke with The National Herald about his work and the current exhibition. He explained his method of painting noting that his art is a process and a "complete way of

of Kaminis' many strengths as an artist. The play of light on many of the works with their visible brushstrokes and texture, creates interest and can even transform a painting entirely.

The artist, as noted on his website, yianniskaminis.gr, "is inspired by people, ideas and phenomena as they are evident in the sphere of conscious and unconscious life. He chooses colors to represent energy dynamics and the painting emerges as a flow of energy."

Kaminis said "usually each



COURTESY OF YIANNIS KAMINIS



ABOVE: The work of painter Yiannis Kaminis and photographer Andrew Matusik is on display in the art exhibition *Abundance* in New York City. **FAR LEFT:** Opening night of the art exhibition *Abundance* in New York City. **LEFT:** Yiannis Kaminis and Andrew Matusik.

being" and inspiration can come from a concept, idea, feeling or vibration. The evocative, abstract paintings included in the exhibition are charged with energy and emotion. Color is one

painting has a multifaceted meaning unveiling archetypal signs and symbols." When asked about his commissioned works he said that he "selects the color dynamic" for the people and

"continues with the imagery on canvas as a fingerprint of their unique character and identity."

Kaminis said that a mutual friend mentioned the Gallery and suggested he meet Matusik.

Viewed together, the photographs and the paintings create a fantastic synergy in the space. Matusik, who studied painting, took up photography later on, noting that he "thinks

like a painter" rather than thinking like a photographer. The photographs in the exhibition are surreal and a few recall famous paintings of that genre by Dalí and Magritte.