

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Aspasia Koumli of The 9th Los Angeles Greek Film Festival

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On June 3-7, 2015, the 9th Annual Los Angeles Greek Film Festival will be held at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood. For full line up and ticket info, go to [the LAGFF website](#).

We caught up with one of the producers of the opening and closing night events, Aspasia Koumli, and got to know her a little bit.



Aspasia Koumli: What's In a Name?

The first Aspasia was the most legendary woman in Ancient Athens. Admired for her intellect as much as her charm, this highly-educated hetaira (courtesan) of Greece 's golden age assembled the most illustrious philosophers, intellectuals, and artists of the time. According to Plutarch, her house became an intellectual centre in Athens, attracting the philosopher Socrates. Aspasia influenced Socrates and was mentioned in the writing of philosophers Plato, Aristophanes, Xenophon, and others. Clearly, she was fascinating – Aspasia was the life-long companion of the great leader, Pericles, who famously said: *“Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean that politics won't take an interest in you.”*

Pericles could easily be speaking to 21st Century Greeks, for whom daily life has become a political struggle, and to a modern day Aspasia, who found herself delivering crucial messages to the Greek people. Born into a political family, and eating, sleeping and dreaming media, it is clearly her destiny to live up to the legend.

What's in a name, indeed.

This 2015 Aspasia, family name – Koumli- is also quite a communicator. A Political Media Expert, she was swept into major campaigns that shaped the course of Greece.

Cultural Weekly: How did you craft campaigns for the Greek government—what did you do differently?

Aspasia Koumli: I have an in-depth educational knowledge of Politics, Economics, Sociology, Psychology, Communication and Media. I also come from a political family and I have been involved in political campaigns since I was seven years old. I had a grandfather that was a politician (in one of the largest cities), and I understand the needs, worries, and the mentality behind any democratic process, and especially elections. I was never particularly interested in one party over the other, I was never a fan, but I was an analyst of sociopolitical and economic environments, from the City of London, to the Greek Government, to Blue-Chip Corporate Strategy, international journaling; all my professional positions required eyes and mind that strategized on the big picture.

CW: What qualities make a great Media Expert?

AK: A broad understanding of real worldwide issues, Greek historical, political, psychological issues included and a great love for analysis, strategy and social change complement my personal background.

Sometimes I ask myself why I didn't become a politician, which was my grandfather's dream. There was something about the frontline that made the purpose of analysis and strategy irrelevant, as if the means were ruining the purpose. I am sure it wasn't stage fright; I love stages, I prepare them, I organize them, I dream of them with lights, and spotlights, and the crowd cheering, applauding, and approving. My career brought me where I should have been as I have been lucky to have worked in so many prestigious departments, and positions only a handful of people (way older) than me have ever achieved in their lives. I am 30 years old, and I have lived in three continents, serving as a key person in my country's government, running national and international campaigns on behalf of huge organizations. I feel happy for my life, but luck is not the right word—hard work and talent were the tickets to my success.

CW: What is the essence of present Greek politics and is there hope?

AK: Present Greek politics are under redefinition. After a 25 year democratic government of the same party, Greece is slowly flirting with the idea of a Renaissance. The Greek people are redefining what they actually need from a Democracy. Do they want to be playing along the thin lines of corruption and legality that have been going on for so long in their modern Greek history, or rebirth themselves into an economy that welcomes entrepreneurship, allows arts and crafts to flourish by opening their borders and allowing themselves to feel as important voice in the European family again. It is crucial/historic times for Greece. For the first time they voted for a young person who doesn't come from a political family, who has always been seen as part of the people and not part of the corrupted political system. He is backed up by some of the same people that run the country for two decades now, but still this is a change for Greeks. Although he is disappointing them, and ridiculing the country abroad, at the same time he serves as a reminder for Greeks that Renaissance can only come in steps, and it is a cathartic process that is closely related to self-awareness and self identity. Who do Greeks wish to be?

CW: How did that experience prepare you for the jobs that followed?

AK: An experience in such an environment, either that being the Greek government or any government for that matter, is a life changing experience. One gets to see how a government works, how and why such a system treats its citizens, the power struggles, the political behind-the-scenes stage, the international agendas, the media's role in governing, the need and importance of

structure. Life changing experience in terms of professionalism, a different level of conduct, attitude, language and ethics for such a position, but also broadening of understanding about our world's structure.

CW: What is the most important thing to keep in mind when working on political media?

?AK: The media is waiting thirsty for stories. Being mindful of the words, and clear about the messages ?in each media contact. Political agendas are one thing, getting the message to the citizens is another thing. The work doesn't necessarily talk for itself, as it would more easily be the case in any other media campaign.

CW: How do you keep it positive? Politics can be such a hardball game!

?AK: For me working for the government was my chance to give back, and offer my services—what i know best—to my country. So, for me being a part of this is rewarding and keeps me positive. ?

It would be easier if I was working for the government during the booming years of the Olympics where everybody loved Greece. But it wouldn't be as challenging!?

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