



Press Release

## **A new, significant grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation to the Benaki Museum for the Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor House in Kardamyli**

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation has approved a grant to the Benaki Museum to fully cover the repair and restoration works as well as the cost of the necessary equipment for the Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor House in Kardamyli. This unique property will soon start operating as a centre for hosting notable figures from the intellectual and artistic worlds as well as a centre for educational activities in collaboration with Institutions in Greece and abroad.

### **The donation of Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor**

For many years Patrick and his wife Joan Leigh Fermor lived in Kardamyli in Messenian Mani, in the house which was designed by the architect Nikos Hadjimichalis in close collaboration with the Leigh Fermors.

In 1996, Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor bequeathed their home in Kardamyli to the Benaki Museum, while still in life, with the intention that ownership of the house would be transferred to the Museum after their deaths. The option of donating the property to the Benaki Museum was suggested by their close friend Tzannis Tzannetakis. The bequest was accepted unreservedly by the Benaki Museum, particularly given Leigh Fermor's close relationship with the Museum's founder Antonis Benakis and his daughter Irini Kalliga.

According to the donation contract, the property must be used to foster the success of the Benaki Museum's work, based on the decisions of its Board of Trustees. In addition, it may be used to host researchers seeking a quiet and welcoming place to work, while there is also provision for the option



of renting the property for three months every year in order to secure its operating costs. Taking into consideration the donor's personality and standing, the Museum added certain categories of guests such as writers, poets, artists and so on.

The Museum acquired full ownership of the property after the donor's death, in the autumn of 2011. After receiving the gift, a study on its future use was initiated, and in parallel, a preliminary study on the repair and restoration of the property's buildings was undertaken in collaboration with architects Andreas Kourkoulas and Maria Kokkinou and a budget was also drafted for the project. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation, in response to the Museum's initial request for funding for the repairs and the acquisition of the necessary equipment for the operation of the house, commissioned—and funded—a feasibility study, which was conducted by AEA Consulting, a firm specializing in the organization and management of cultural institutions. This study, which was based on the Benaki Museum's proposal for the future operation of the house, led to a number of changes, mainly in regard to the financial planning respecting the sustainability of the project.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation announced the approval of the Benaki Museum's request to fully cover the repair works and the restoration of the Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor House as well as its equipment, so that it can start operating as soon as possible.

The Benaki Museum's Board of Trustees would like to once again thank the Stavros Niarchos Foundation for its continued and very generous support, and the inclusion of this project in its arts and culture grants. The unique location of the Leigh Fermor House, its distinctive architectural form and the luminance bestowed upon it by the author himself, in conjunction with the Benaki Museum's supervision and the support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, guarantee the creation of an exceptional centre which will gain a high place among the many similar centers in Europe and the United States.

### The property

The property is located in the Kalamitsi area on the outskirts of Kardamyli, in Messenia, and has a total area of about nine stremmata, a little over two acres. It is, by general consensus, one of the most beautiful properties in Greece. Its direct contact with the sea—narrow stone steps lead to a small pebble beach just below the estate—the low, discreet, stone buildings and the Mediterranean garden that goes down to the water, comprise an ideal environment for focus and the creative process.

In short, **a sojourn in this place is a great gift that Greece can offer** to notable figures from the intellectual and artistic worlds.



## The vision

The creation of a centre in Greece (working title: The Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor Centre), the operation of which, will commence in stages and planning of the following years will be based on evaluation of its activity.

The operations of the Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor Centre will include:

- hosting of young writers and scholars for work and research purposes,
- organization of higher-educational activities in collaboration with Universities and Institutions in Greece and abroad,
- honorary hosting of notable representatives from the fields of literature, the arts and other fields,
- organization of educational and cultural events for the general public and residents of Kardamyli,
- scheduled tours of the property, focusing on the donors, the history of the house and its use by the Benaki Museum,
- short term honorary hosting of benefactors and major supporters of the Benaki Museum.

As per a decision by the Museum's Board of Trustees an international committee is to be set up, which will form and advise on the operation program of the Centre. The advisory committee will be unpaid, it will monitor the project underway and it will make recommendations regarding the selection of guests.

The Benaki Museum's legal, financial and other services (including departments such as Educational Programs, Sponsorship and European Programs, Public Relations and Communication, and Conservation among others) will support and assist the project taking place at the Leigh Fermor House.

The Benaki Museum is aiming for the creation of an endowment based on third-party donations, which will be able to cover operating expenditure of the Centre and allow the proposed educational activities to evolve and grow.

## Brief history – Up to date

- the archival material found in the house has been delivered to the executors of the will, in order for it to be handed over to the National Archives of the United Kingdom, as stipulated in the will,
- the staff selected by Leigh Fermor himself have been retained to ensure the ongoing care of the buildings and surrounding area are on a daily basis,
- the property has been insured,
- cataloguing of the library has progressed,
- detailed photography of the house and the recording of the household effects have been carried out,



- artworks and valuable books have been transferred to the facilities at the Benaki Museum in Athens for conservation and safekeeping, until completion of the requisite repairs,
- detailed mapping of the property has been completed as has the architectural and electromechanical study for repair of the buildings and maintenance of the gardens, with the principle of maintaining all those elements that render the property so unique (study team: Maria Kokkinou-Andreas Kourkoulas, Pantelis Argyros, Dimitris Pastras, Helli Pangalou),
- the process of legalizing buildings on the estate has been completed,
- the feasibility study by AEA Consulting on the future use, operation and viability of the house has been completed with funding from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation,
- two successive disinsectisations have been carried out for the protection of the house and household effects, and in particular the wooden elements of the house such as the ceilings of the rooms, furniture, and so on,
- one bank account has been set up in Greece and one especially activated in the United Kingdom, in order to facilitate donations,
- discussions with Greek and foreign educational institutions regarding collaboration in the future operation of the Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor Centre have been initiated,
- an implementation study for the repair work is in progress,
- a book in honor of Patrick Leigh Fermor, dedicated to his life and work, is in preparation and will be completed in 2016, and another publication about the house will follow,
- finally, a short—for the time being—presentation of the Leigh Fermor House has been uploaded onto the Benaki Museum website. A separate website for the house is currently in preparation, where detailed information about the project's progress, the operation of the house, and scheduled events and guided tours will be posted. These presentations will also provide all the necessary details for donations to the endowment for the future operation of the Centre,
- from the day the Leigh Fermor residence came into the ownership of the Benaki Museum, the Museum has organized and/or coordinated a particularly large number of visits. During many of these visits, individuals working with the Museum have informed the guests about the house's prospects and future programs. Revenue from visitor tickets is used exclusively for the needs of the house.

#### From now on:

- The commencement of the repair work is entirely contingent on the issue of the permit. It is anticipated that work will be completed in about 12 to 18 months from its commencement. Until such time as the preparation of the house for the repair work begins, the organized visits, upon arrangement with the Museum, will continue. ([www.benaki.gr](http://www.benaki.gr))



- The Benaki Museum is in the process of creating an endowment for the collection of donations, which will ensure that the operational expenditure of the Centre is covered and that the proposed educational activities will continue to evolve and grow.
- With the dual objective of informing the public of developments and the collection of donations, the Benaki Museum is planning a series of detailed presentations on the progress of the project and its future operation.
- More specifically, it is organizing a detailed presentation in early November 2016 in London, where there is a keen, ongoing interest in the author and the Kardamyli House, while in the interim, similar presentations are planned for Athens and Kardamyli.

For information about the Leigh Fermor House please contact Irimi Geroulanou or Myrto Kaouki at the Benaki Museum, on the following numbers: 210 3671010 and 210 3671090, or by email: [plfproject@benaki.gr](mailto:plfproject@benaki.gr)

## MAJOR DONOR



Donations for the Leigh Fermor House have also been made by:

- Roberto Calasso, writer and publisher of the works of Patrick Leigh Fermor in Italy, (Adelphi Edizioni publishing house)
- the Friends of the Benaki Museum
- DAES insurance company

The Benaki Museum would like to thank them all for their generous support

**Note:** The Benaki Museum is the only official Institution that may receive donations for the PLF House endowment fund which will be created for the Centre's sustainability.

## BENAKI MUSEUM PERMANENT COMMUNICATION SPONSORS

