



School: Bath School of Design

Researcher: Tim Vyner

Project Title: Mount Athos

UOA: 32 - Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory

Research Timeline

Date	Rationale of research activities and decisions undertaken
2013 – 2014	<p>Stage 1:</p> <p>Three separate visits to Mount Athos, throughout the calendar year to explore and record 20 separate Monasteries on Mount Athos. Individual introductions were made to each Monastery via the Mount Athos Centre in Thessaloniki and the Abbot of each Monastery. [See Maps for location timeline]</p> <p>Following on from the very 'public' reportage illustration project at the London Olympic Games, this bursary presented a very different challenge for Vyner who was applying his methods to a place that was far from the public gaze. Plans for the bursary were to visit all 20 monasteries over a calendar year, and three visits of a month at a time were planned in Spring, Summer and Winter. Vyner travelled independently and introductions were made in advance to each monastery in the form of a letter from the Mount Athos Centre in Thessaloniki. Each monastery then accepted Vyner on arrival and he stayed as long as he needed, living and working among the fathers daily routines. Each visit was different, some monasteries were visited frequently, others just once. As the project developed Vyner would always be made welcome but also experienced a combination of curiosity and some suspicion. He engaged in conversation to earn trust and learned what were acceptable means of producing artwork in this private and traditional place. Drawing was more accessible than the lens of a camera and the iPad was a source of great interest. Much of the peninsula was 'off-grid'.</p>
2014	<p>Stage 2:</p> <p>Development of artwork for exhibition and publication. Regular discussion and visits to Doug Patterson's Studio to discuss progress and outcome.</p> <p>Regular visits and conversations about the artwork and experiences took place with Doug Patterson in his London studio on the return from each visit. Having learned the rules of each monastery a balance was struck between using traditional materials of ink and paint on paper, with digital drawings and animations using an iPad. When working on paper you are</p>

essentially static, working in one place, using a single viewpoint. With an iPad you can create a timeline in a drawing, and effectively 'walk through' a monastery as the drawing develops [see 'hilandariou_zografu' animation]. There is an authenticity about both processes, and it became important that both had equal value and would combine together effectively for exhibition and publication. Throughout 2014 artwork was revisited and developed in the studio to add to the content produced on location. Watercolour and gouache materials were used to develop ink drawings created at speed from sketchbooks [see methods and process images]. Photographs were used for some architectural reference in the studio, but all the figures were only ever drawn and observed from life. And the iPad images exhibited were only from drawings made on location. The only development in the digital artwork was to edit sequences together into films, using recordings supplied by the Mount Athos Centre.

2014 – 2018

Exhibition Timeline:

**23.10.2014 –
26.6.2015**

Thessaloniki, Mount Athos Center.

Artwork for the Mount Athos Centre Exhibition was curated by Vyner and Dr Syrago Tsiara. The show represented all 20 monasteries, and included the complete body of work; sketchbook drawings, iPad drawings and animations watercolour and gouache paintings made on sight and in the studio. There were cabinets that displayed ephemera and the materials used while on location.

The aim was to recreate the 'firsthand' experience of being on the Holy Mountain, and bringing the lives of the father and pilgrims to mainstream audiences in mainland Greece. Throughout the duration of the exhibition there were informal events around the subject matter of the artwork, alongside more formal gallery presentations with the artwork as a backdrop. There were visits from local schools where the iPad drawings and animations were the main focus for the teachers and pupils.

**19.8.2016 –
17.9.2016**

Belgrade, [Atrium] Hall of the Central Library of the city of Belgrade [23rd International Conference of Byzantine Studies].

23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies took place in Belgrade from the 22nd to 27th of August 2016. It brought together more than 1300 scholars from all over the world. And a selection of work from Tim Vyner alongside work made by Doug Patterson on the subject of Mount Athos was exhibited at the [Atrium] Hall of the Central Library of the city of Belgrade from 19th August to 17th September. This was the first time work by both Patterson and Vyner had been exhibited together. The Director of the Mount Athos Centre in Thessaloniki was responsible for curating this selection of work

**3.7.2018 –
31.12.2018**

Tzirtzili Mosque, Serres, Northern Greece.

Zincirli [Tzirtzili] mosque in Serres, Macedonia Northern Greece had been fully refurbished in 2018 and was a significant location to exhibit the work from Mount Athos. At the end of the Bursary in 2015, 20% of the original artwork was retained by The Mount Athos Centre in Thessaloniki and the rest was reproduced in high quality archival giclée prints and used for

touring exhibitions. An example of the continued reach of this project beyond Mount Athos.

2015

Dissemination:

Lecture at “Friends of Mount Athos” annual review symposium:
St Anne’s College, Oxford University and Bristol University.
Presentation of artwork and discussion and dissemination of
exhibition/content.

An important aspect of this project is the connection to organisations such as Friends of Mount Athos; “FoMA formed in 1990, is an international organisation open to all who share a concern for the Orthodox monasteries of Mount Athos. Members include men and women — of all faiths and none — who are interested in the past, present, and future of Athonite monasteries and their dependent houses.” Their Royal Patron is HRH Prince Charles. Vyner was honoured to be invited to speak about his experiences to an invited audience at published lectures at St Annes, Oxford University and Bristol University. FoMA are a learned and knowledgeable group of historians, authors, theologians, researchers and volunteers, and they were particularly interested in Vyner’s non-orthodox perspective adding insight to the project’s research questions.

2015

Publication:

“Tim Vyner – An Experience of Life on Mount Athos”
240mm x 280mm, 239 pages, full colour
ISBN 978 618 80861 4 2
Introductory essay by Doctor Syrago Tsiara
Greeting from Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomos
Greeting from Holy Community, Mount Athos
Greeting from Mayor of Thessaloniki: Mr Yiannis Boutaris
Publication in English and Greek.

This bursary involved two outcomes of significance: the exhibiting of original artwork for audiences to see and visit, and a full-colour archival publication. This 239 page book chronicles the project in three visits; spring, summer and autumn/winter. It included diaries, maps and sketchbook drawings, paintings and iPad digital drawings produced on location and in the studio. All 20 monasteries are represented, along with sketes, small chapels and houses in between. It includes thoughts, conversations and the changing seasons over a year.

The publication of the book was a significant part of the bursary, because an exhibition, like the monasteries themselves, are only accessible to those who can visit, but the book reaches out to wider audiences and provides a lasting legacy to the project

The introductory essay is written by Doctor Syrago Tsiara, who was the curator of Thessaloniki Contemporary Art Museum, and understanding Mount Athos is forbidden to women and children, and is a closed, entirely male environment the essay is significant because it was written by a woman.

An introductory greeting from Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomios and from the Holy Community, Mount Athos shows the support of all 20 monasteries and each Monastery Abbot personally received a copy of the book for their unique monastery libraries, used by pilgrims researchers and scholars, thus validating the project among the long history of Mount Athos surveys.

Finally, a greeting from the Mayor of Thessaloniki: Mr Yiannis Boutaris recognises that while Mount Athos is a semi-autonomous region, the project and publication was funded in part by European Community funding for culture.

2020

A planned workshop to revisit the Mount Athos Centre in 2020 to hold a series of talks, workshops and discussions around this body of work was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
