

London calling

Mike Sweet visits The Hellenic Centre in the UK capital

Comments: (0)

3 votes

Your rating: None

22 Feb 2010

MIKE SWEET

As I stepped out of the warm convivial surroundings of this unique outpost of Hellenism, into a cold grey London morning in February, I reflected on what is a remarkable institution.

A quotation from Cavafy's poem *Poseidonians* used on the opening page of the brochure for the Hellenic Centre's fifteenth anniversary, says it all.

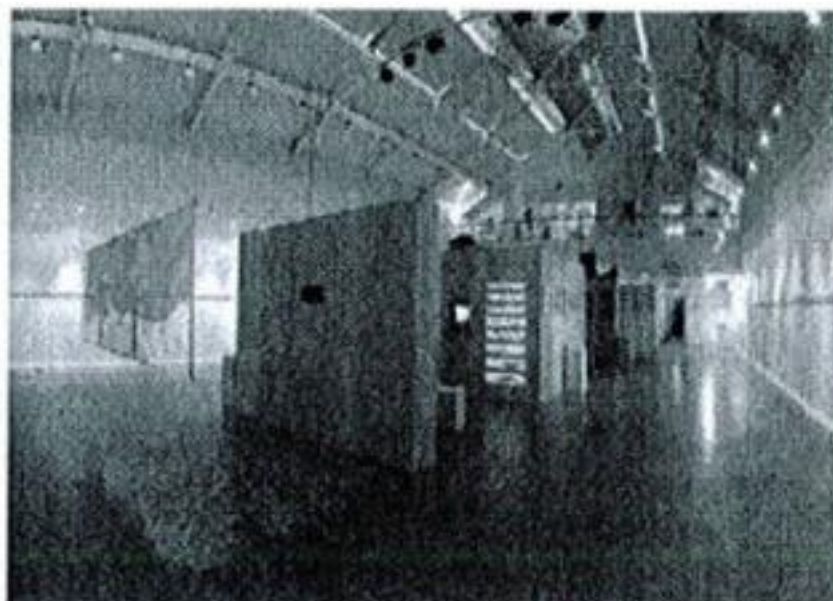
*The Poseidonians forgot the Greek language
after so many centuries of mingling
with Tyrrhenians, Latins, and other foreigners.
The only thing surviving from their ancestors
was a Greek festival, with beautiful rites,
with lyres and flutes, contests and wreaths.
And it was their habit toward the festival's end
to tell each other about their ancient customs
and once again to speak Greek names
that only few of them still recognized.
And so their festival always had a melancholy ending
because they remebered that they too were Greeks,
they too once upon a time were citizens of Magna
Graecia;
and how low they'd fallen now, what they'd become,
living and speaking like barbarians,
cut off so disastrously from the Greek way of life.*

C.P. Cavafy 1906 - Translation Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard

The Hellenic Centre 16-18 Paddington Street, Marylebone. London W1U 5AS www.helleniccentre.org

(<http://www.helleniccentre.org>)

Mike Sweet is an Australian journalist living in Athens who regularly contributes to Neos Kosmos.



(http://neoskopos.com/news/sites/default/files/apeliron2_268662423.jpg)

The prestigious exhibition centre at London's Hellenic Centre is booked out until 2011.

*The students are all ages
and from all walks of life,
education in all its forms is at
the heart of the Centre's work.
Its mission is to make known
and analyse aspects of the
Hellenic tradition, not as
folklore, but as a vibrant
contemporary culture.*