

S P L I O A

22 transcripts | NORA OKKA



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SPOLIA transcripts | Nora Okka

‘Spolia’ are recycled stones – building blocks, reliefs, tombstones, etc. – removed from their original context to be re-used in a different one. A squeeze is a reverse copy of a surface that has been sculpted, engraved, or carved. It is a non-aggressive method of reproducing an accurate copy of the surface; it requires suitable paper, a good brush, and water. Squeezes can be easily carried and stored.

The ‘squeezes’ presented in this exhibition were made by the architect and artist Nora Okka, who has introduced a new technique of multi-layer squeezes, imprinting reliefs of ancient and medieval spolia built in the ‘Little Metropolis’ of Athens. This 11-12th century church is a unique example of spolia architecture. Its walls are entirely made of marble spoils, including reliefs with decorative and figurative motifs of different origins, spanning more than one thousand years (ca. 300 BCE-ca. 700 CE).

With her work, Nora Okka takes the interaction with spolia to a new level: the multilayer-squeezes can be viewed closely as three-dimensional objects and in continually new combinations and arrangements. The relief negative of the squeeze suggests the relief image of the original. The making of squeezes transforms the spolia to moveable objects of art. Their history continues as they are integrated into new architectural settings representing a complex configuration of past and present spaces.

The Institute for Advanced Study hosts a unique collection of thousands of squeezes of ancient Greek inscriptions.

Angelos Chaniotis, Professor of Ancient History and Classics

W17 Byzantine closure slab relief with two large sphinxes and two smaller ones.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, West façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m2, 102 x 81 cm



W12 Byzantine closure slab relief with two gryphons, two eagles and two snakes.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, West façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 102 x 73 cm



W19 Byzantine relief with two gryphons picking at a pine cone and two eagles fighting snakes symmetrically disposed on either side of a tree of life, 6th – 7th c. A.D.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, West façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 102 x 73 cm





S46 Byzantine closure slab relief with an eagle gripping a hare.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, South façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 98 x 85 cm

E72 Byzantine closure slab relief with an inscribed large whirlwind-rosette in an interlaced circle in the middle of a rectangular moulded frame and four lotus flowers in the corners.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, East façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140 gr/m², 102 x 82 cm



W6 Byzantine closure slab relief with an interlaced cross framed by four rosettes.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, West façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m2, 98 x 95 cm



E66 Byzantine closure slab relief with a based cross flanked by four rosettes and on the top and the bottom semi-circular pattern.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, Eats façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m2, 102 x 69 cm



N79 Byzantine closure slab relief with a foliate cross, paper squeeze of multiple layers.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, North façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 84 x 70 cm



S30 Byzantine closure slab relief with twelve ‘palmetto’ ornaments in an interlaced grid pattern, 12th c.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, South façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m2, 100 x 71 cm



W11 Antique relief with a female figure in profile and a later-engraved large double cross, 1st c. B.C.-A.D.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, West façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m2, 100 x 75 cm



E60 Byzantine slab relief with a foliate double-cross in an arcade flanked by two rosettes in the corners and framed by a rich foliate scroll.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, East façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 84 x 70 cm



E62 Byzantine slab relief with an interlaced stepped cross flanked by two gryphons and two eagles and framed by a foliate scroll.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, East façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 73 x 65 cm



W5 Byzantine closure slab relief with a cross flanked by two lions and two gryphons.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, West façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140 gr/m2, 104 x 73 cm



E71 Byzantine closure slab relief with a central rosette and anthemion in an interlaced lozenge framed by rope and astragal ornaments.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, East façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140 gr/m², 102 x 67 cm



N97 n44* Byzantine closure slab relief with a central rosette and star-shaped, radiating stylized floral ornaments in a transverse lozenge.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, North façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140 gr/m², 102 x 95 cm

*The upper left corner of the slab N97 has been replaced by another piece of a relief (n44). The symbol with the lower-case letter designation refers to a personal study of another 44 unpublished fragments of spolia in addition to the 99 spolia whose symbols refer to the numbering of K. Michel and A. Struck research (Michel, K. & Struck, A., *Die Mittelbyzantinische Kirchen Athens*, 1906, *Mitteilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung* 31, Bd XXXI, Athens, pp. 279-324).



E65 Early Byzantine closure slab relief with a foliate cross-rossette in the middle intersected by the two windows apses.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, East façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 105 x 88 cm



E50 Early Byzantine closure slab relief with a lion gripping a roe or deer.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, East façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 84 x 73 cm



N80 Byzantine closure slab relief with a cross in an interlaced lozenge.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, North façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140 gr/m2, 114 x 61cm



E64 Byzantine closure slab relief with a banded lozenge, an eagle in the middle and four rosettes in the corners.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, East façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m2, 102 x 73 cm



N96 Byzantine closure slab relief with a moulded foliate cross flanked by two rosettes in the upper corners.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, North façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140 gr/m², 102 x 85 cm



S31 Byzantine closure slab relief with interlaced circles, knobs and a sunk-relief rosette in the middle.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, South façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 104 x 76 cm



S44 Byzantine closure slab relief with a banded lozenge flanked by four large rosettes and a banded cross with five small rosettes in the middle.

Paper squeeze of multiple layers, Little Metropolis of Athens, South façade, 2015

White archival absorbent paper 140gr/m², 98 x 88 cm





Nora Okka is an architect, artist, curator and theorist of architecture.

She holds a professional degree in Architecture (2006) from the National Technical University of Athens, a master's degree in Digital Arts and Cinema (2009) from the Athens School of Fine Arts, a master's degree in Advanced Studies in Scenography (2012) from Zurich University of the Arts and a doctorate diploma in Architecture Curating (2017) from Vienna University.

Since 2010, her spolia series constitutes a multidisciplinary research and artistic experimentation that demonstrates the concept of spolia as a micrography of the constitution of architecture itself. This dual approach results in a new multilayer-squeezes technique of imprinting reliefs of precious architectural fragments of the past. It seeks to be interpreted and experienced as a symbolic reconstitution of the authentic spolia but also as a performative continuation of the practice of spolia. The spolia series allows us to perceive furthermore the contemporary cultural techniques as continuous transcripts and displacements.

Her research has been supported by grants and scholarships from the Greek State Scholarships Foundation, the Swiss Confederation, the A.G. Leventis Foundation, the Basil & Elise Goulandris Foundation and the A.S. Onassis Foundation.

Past exhibition of the spolia series, Spolium (2010), Zurich University of the Arts, Spolia (2014), Michael Cacoyannis Foundation, Spolia: 99 Transcripts (2015), Athens Conservatoire under the auspices of the Municipality of Athens and the Museum of the City of Athens, Spolia: The Attic Calendar of the Little Metropolis of Athens (2017), Cyprus Embassy, Spolia: 11 Transcripts (2017), The Patmos Trust (2017) under the auspices of the International Aegean Film Festival, Spolia: 11 Transcripts (2017), Museum of Historical Archives of Epirus under the auspices of the City of Ioannina Cultural Center.

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