

The Search for Artemis



A Naxos mystery *with Martin Day*

Vanessa Gordon

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Vanessa Gordon lives in Surrey and has spent many years working as a concert manager, musicians' agent and live music supplier. She visits Greece as often as possible.

The Martin Day mystery series is set on Naxos, the largest island in the Cyclades, Greece. It is an island of contrasts. The modern port of Chora is crowned by a Venetian kastro which is surrounded by an interesting old town. You can find uninhabited central hills, the highest mountain in the Cyclades, attractive fishing villages, popular beaches, and archaeological sites. There are historic towers and welcoming tavernas, collectable art and ceramics. Naxos has produced some of the finest marble in Greece since ancient times. Now, Martin Day has moved in.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Meaning of Friday
The Search for Artemis
Black Acorns

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To Mary Chipperfield with love

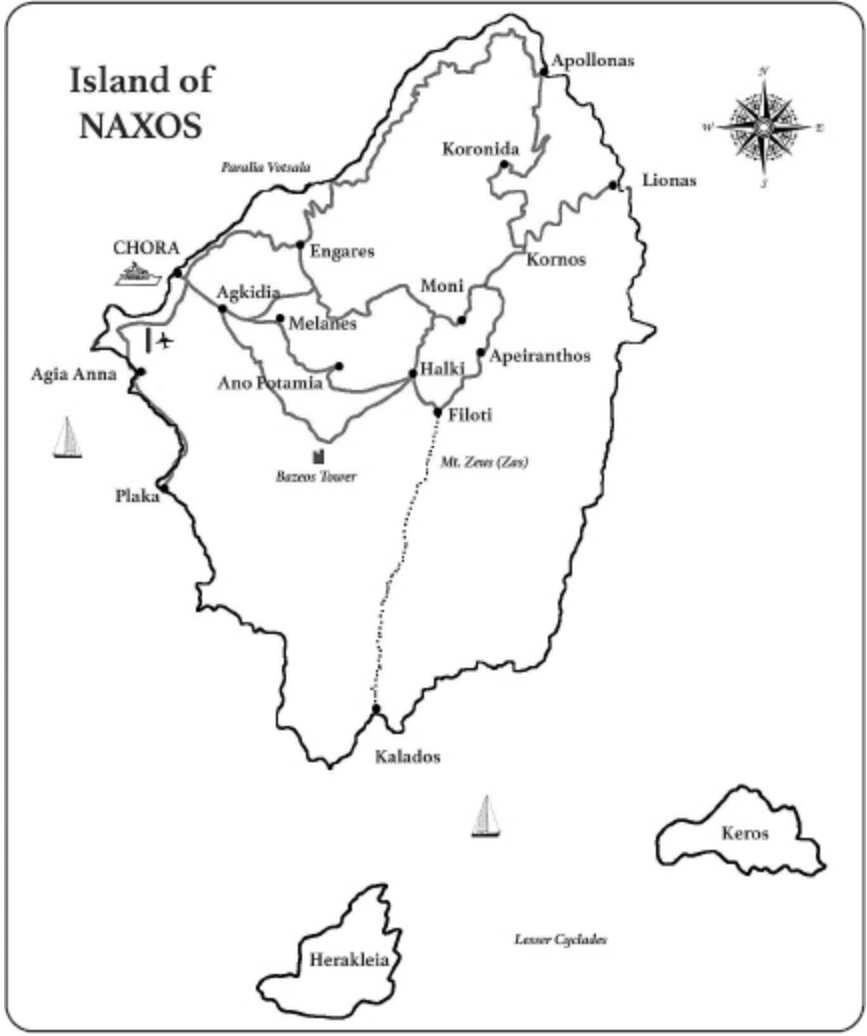
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A NOTE ABOUT GREEK WORDS

Readers without a knowledge of Greek might like to know about one or two things that they will notice in the book.

'Kyrie' and 'Kyria' are forms of address like monsieur and madame.

'Mou' means 'my', often used after a name as a term of affection.

'Agapi mou' means 'my dear'.

'Pappou' means Grandpa.

'Kali Orexi' means 'Bon Appétit!'

'Kalos Irthatay!' means 'Welcome!'

'Stin yia sas!' means "Good health!", a toast.

'Oriste!' is a common way to answer the phone.

Zas is Greek for Zeus

Greek names sometimes have changed endings in the vocative, which is when the person is directly addressed. This is why you will see Thanasis become Thanasi, Vasilios become Vasili, and other examples, when the characters are being spoken to directly.

Greek place names can be found in different spellings in the Latin alphabet; spellings most likely to help with pronunciation are used in this book.

The main town of Naxos is called Chora (or Naxos). You pronounce the ch in Chora as in the Scottish 'loch'. Similarly, Halki (also written Chalki) begins with that sound.

Peppino's "Mingia!"

Translations differ, but this is a common exclamation in Sicily and probably should be given in asterisks.

1

An earthquake woke Edward Childe in the night. He woke with a sense of loss and foreboding. The sweat dried cold beneath his pyjamas. It was pitch dark, silent and still. Then he heard a noise, a car driving past on the Cambridge street outside.

He opened his eyes properly, fighting a nameless despair. Clearly there hadn't been an earthquake. He limped to the bathroom; his legs had begun to stiffen up at night around his seventy-sixth birthday. He wasn't too concerned, because his mind still worked and that was all that mattered to Edward. He got back into bed and switched off the light.

The July night was very warm and before long Edward felt too hot. It reminded him of Greece, where people slept under a single sheet throughout the summer. Edward shifted his left leg to the cool side of the bed and gently guided his thoughts away from Artemis, who had been summoned to his mind by thoughts of hot Greek summers. He tried for the last time to remember the dream that had woken him. He had a lingering feeling of dread.

He was unsuccessful, and instead invited Artemis back into his mind. Artemis was like a favourite book, one which you have loved since childhood. For the last sixty years, ever since the day she had disappeared from his bed on a hot

August night in Greece, memories of Artemis had been his pleasure and his solace.

Edward thought about the letter which had arrived yesterday from Athens. It was from somebody called Angelika, who wrote that she was Artemis's granddaughter and that she had recently learned of Edward's part in her grandmother's life through reading her diaries. Artemis, she informed him, had sadly died a few years before, but Angelika had searched for Edward, finally found him, and wanted to meet him.

Edward Childe was an optimist. He gave no more thought to the demons of the night that assail even elderly professors. He fell asleep pondering what Angelika, the lady who had beckoned to him as if from his youth, might look like.

Like Artemis, he hoped.

2

Martin Day, freelance archaeologist and now the owner of a house on the island of Naxos, was woken by the already powerful heat of the August morning. Realising that the air-conditioning was off, he reached out and found the remote, listened for the system to whirr into life, and waited for the energy to get out of bed. He remembered he was alone in the house for the first time in months. His friend Helen had taken the ferry to the mainland yesterday, to catch a flight from Athens to London. He was sorry, of course, that she had a funeral to attend, but his beautiful Greek house was too quiet now without her. Day felt more sad than he had expected.

Day made for the shower, sweeping his bathrobe off the chair without breaking step. The floorboards creaked and the iron swayed on the board, reminding him to switch it on. One day he must iron more than a single shirt at a time.

The shower began to banish his gloominess and his thoughts turned to the future. One guest out, one guest in. Today somebody potentially very interesting was arriving, Edward Childe, Emeritus Professor of History, King's College, Cambridge. Quite a title, impressive in itself, yet that was not what really excited Day. This Edward Childe, who was about eighty, wanted to discuss a professional collaboration.

Day was in two minds about the new proposal. It was like London buses: no bus for hours then several come at once. He was still in the middle of a major piece of work, a biography of Nikos Elias, an archaeologist from Naxos who had died about twenty years ago and who had found an underground tomb dating back to the Bronze Age. In theory, Day didn't have time for Edward Childe and his new project. The Elias book would keep Day's agent happy, and Day was not by nature inclined to work harder than strictly necessary. However, neither was he a man to turn down something potentially spectacular, as Edward Childe's idea promised to be, without giving it a great deal of thought.

Thinking along these lines, Day lingered in the shower and forgot to pay attention to his use of water. As it trickled over him he thought of Deppi, enjoying the glow of guilty pleasure it gave him to think of her. He loved to recall her devotion to her little boy, Nestoras. He loved imagining her standing on the prow of her husband's yacht, black hair flying in the wind, spray cooling her as she held on to some rope or other. Day knew nothing about boats. Ah well, a cat can look at a queen, he thought, and briskly turned off the shower.

Day was always desperate for his first coffee. He filled the cafetière and left it steeping while he dressed. Edward Childe was not due till after lunch, so Day had time to work on the biography before he arrived. He decided against driving across the island to the Elias house to work in his office there. He took his coffee and laptop to the balcony instead. Looking out across the Filoti valley, he was struck again by Helen's absence. Over the last three months they had often chatted round this old table under the cane awning. She would notice things, with her novelist's eye, in which he had taken no interest until she had arrived. From now on, Day would have to look for himself. He scanned the

opposite hills for the blue beehives she had liked, the shepherd with his dogs that she had watched every day, and the mule she had noticed tethered in the shade of a solitary tree. He could see the beehives. That was something, at least.

Day checked his mobile. There was a message from Helen saying she was safely home in Hampstead, and one from Edward Childe confirming he would arrive in Filoti as near two o'clock as possible. Forcing himself not to open Facebook, Day closed his phone and opened his computer to work.

Flushed with coffee as he was, the morning felt very warm. August was a little cooler here than July, tempting Athenians to come to Naxos to escape the stifling heat of the city, but Day found thirty-eight degrees very hot even so. He sensed the heat rising in invisible waves from the valley, as if trapped there and seeking an escape route across the balcony and through his living room. If it was this hot in the middle of the morning, what would it be like when Edward Childe arrived? He hoped the elderly professor was prepared.

Day opened his work at the place where he had left off the previous night, and within minutes was completely absorbed in Nikos Elias's discoveries off the west coast of Naxos.

So engrossed was Day in his work that he gave no thought to eating lunch. A text from Edward Childe informed him that his visitor expected to be in Filoti in ten minutes. Day sent a reply and put away his laptop. He looked round the main room of his Greek house with a mixture of pride and despair. He had done so well buying this place, it was the

best thing he could have done with the inheritance from his father, and after only four months as its new owner he was still very much in love with it. However, despite its charms it was certainly not tidy. Books everywhere, hats thrown on chairs, glasses waiting to be washed up by the sink. Too late now. He heard a car in the road outside. Smoothing his blonde hair with one hand he unlatched the front door with the other and placed a smile on his face.

The elderly man who paid off the taxi and turned towards Day was most certainly an English gentleman - both English and a gentleman. Day chided himself for such an old-fashioned reaction and struggled to understand what he was registering, as Edward Childe lifted his small bag and walked towards the house. It was simply that if Edward had been wearing a tweed three-piece suit, which thankfully he was not, he could not have looked more of 'an Englishman of a certain generation'.

Within minutes, as he held out his hand to Edward, Day amended this impression. His visitor was wearing cool beige slacks, a short-sleeved white cotton shirt and quite respectable deck shoes without socks. He was clearly accustomed to the Greek summer, and almost 'on trend'. He was of medium height, much shorter than Day, and maybe in his late seventies. Day regretted not having checked his visitor out online. Despite his age, the professor had dark hair, maybe thinning a little. What struck you about Edward Childe was the kindness of his face. He was smiling, of course, but it was more than that.

"Professor Day! Delightful to finally meet you!" began Edward cheerfully, shaking hands. "I'm sorry I'm a little late. So hard to get the time right in Greece."

Day laughed, not at his guest but at himself. In so few words his visitor had already teased him. Day had been dubbed 'Professor' on a certain American history series which he had presented a year ago, and unlike Edward Childe had not earned the title in any university.

"Welcome! The pleasure is mine. Do come in."

He led the way into the cool of the front room, where Edward Childe threw his small bag on the floor behind the door and rubbed his hands together enthusiastically, looking round the place with admiration and almost sniffing the air.

"You have a beautiful house here, and your choice of Filoti is excellent. I've always been fond of this village. Oh, I can smell the fresh island air even inside the house. Oregano and the sea, isn't it?"

"Something like that, yes. Come through, Edward. Let's sit on the balcony. Can I get you a glass of water? A little lunch? Glass of wine?"

"If it's no trouble, all of those sound wonderful, Martin."

In the galley kitchen at the far end of the living room, Day prepared some local cheese, some pieces of Italian ham which he particularly liked, and some rocket dressed with olive oil and sea salt. He had no bread in the house; he would have to visit the supermarket soon. There were a few crackers in a tin, usually eaten with his evening aperitif, but he threw a few on the plate next to the cheese. Two generous glasses of white wine and a bottle of water. Done.

Edward Childe was already settled on the balcony. As he talked to Day he devoted an intense and appreciative scrutiny to the fields and hills which filled the view from where he sat. When Day put the tray on the table, Edward

noded happily. They raised their glasses of wine with a camaraderie which had everything to do with men who both enjoy their pleasures.

“I really like your house, Martin. It has space and air. You must find it excellent for your concentration.”

“Very much so, when I work here. I often have to work in the Elias house, over on the coast near Engares, because all the documents and artefacts are kept there. You know about my current project?”

“I’ve heard about it from my publisher, Jonathan, at Browne and Moore. Not much escapes Jonathan. You’re preparing a book on the late Nikos Elias, I believe? I was told there’s a newly discovered Mycenaean burial site, which Elias apparently found some years ago but kept to himself, and you re-discovered earlier this year?”

“That’s right. I propose to bore you with all the details later, over dinner. But tell me, what are you doing these days, Edward?”

Edward Childe laughed contentedly, his gaze shifting from Day to the farther side of the valley, where a man was leading a mule across the landscape towards the outskirts of the village.

“I bounce from one project to the next as if I were still a young man, Martin. It’s the only way to live when you get to my age, believe me. What are you - about forty? I’m eighty-one, would you credit it? Only when I hit eighty did I have to admit I was really quite pushing it. What do they say in Greece? ‘A heart that loves is always young’. Such a wise people, the Greeks. I love my work. There’s so much I still want to do.”

“It’s certainly doing the trick. You don’t look a day over seventy!”

“Well said!” Edward chuckled happily, and Day knew he had hit the right note. As he neared his fortieth birthday, he rarely felt young enough these days to make a joke about age. He passed his guest the plate of cheese and tossed the rocket in the dressing.

“Bon appétit!” said Edward, about to tuck in. “I should say, ‘Kali Orexi’, should I not? Many thanks, I forgot to eat today apart from a Marks & Spencer sandwich on the aeroplane.”

“The view’s better here, despite the heat. Kali orexi!”

As they ate, Day reflected that he felt so at ease with this eminent historian that they might have known each other for twenty years. Edward had the trick of landing in your pool and making minimal ripples. Such ripples as did emanate from him were an adornment rather than a disturbance. Day shook his head. He wondered how his elderly guest had already affected him like this.

“Thank you, Martin,” said Edward, closing his knife and fork politely. “A delicious lunch, at the right time and in a beautiful place.”

“Would you like to unpack, maybe have a rest and a shower, and then you can tell me all about the new venture? I’m looking forward to hearing the details.”

Day refilled Edward’s glass of water from the bottle in the fridge, retrieved his bag from the table by the front door and showed him to the guest room. He was relieved that he had remembered to prepare the room the previous night. This had been Helen’s bedroom for three months, and it felt

slightly strange to give it to somebody else. At least it was tidy.

He opened the thin white curtain, the window and the shutters, and let in the scented air from the valley. Edward smiled when he saw his private balcony with traditional wooden chair, and declared it was charming. Day grinned.

“Your bathroom’s just over there. Clean towel behind the door. Remote for the aircon is here on the table, but it should be on the right setting already. I’m off for a bit of a siesta. See you later, about six?”

“Perfect. Thank you again, Martin.”

Day set his alarm, and after a deep sleep unbroken by dreams he took another shower and ironed a second shirt. After careful thought he left the air conditioning on in his bedroom. He arrived in the living room to see Edward happily enjoying the view from the balcony as if he had not moved since lunch. Completely at ease, he seemed unaffected by the heat and in an excellent mood.

“Ah, Martin. Did you have a good rest?”

“I did, thank you. Did you?”

“Yes, a good hour or so. Most restorative.”

“Tea?”

“How English! Yes, please. Can I help?”

“No, you just chill out. Ha! A poor choice of phrase. I’ll bring some cold water too.”

“So, Martin, how much have you heard about this idea of mine?” said Edward. “I take it your agent contacted you after hearing from Jonathan at Browne and Moore?”

“Yes, my agent in London, Maurice Atkinson. He’s very good. He told me something about your proposal. It’s probably best if you tell me everything yourself, Edward. I liked what I heard from Maurice, it sounded more than exciting enough to whet my appetite, but this is your brainchild. Why not start at the beginning, and we’ll carry on over dinner? There’s an excellent local taverna I thought we should visit tonight.”

“What a treat! Very well, then, I’ll tell you. For the last forty years or so I’ve been collecting original writings and art by nineteenth-century English travellers to Greece. I think it’s what they call an ‘idiosyncratic’ collection. Some of the travellers are quite well-known figures, for example I have an Edward Lear watercolour and some letters written by Mabel Bent. Other travellers aren’t well known but their work is tremendous. I’ve never done anything about pulling the collection together or doing something worthwhile with it, and that’s a great pity.

“My idea is that an item from the collection could introduce each location, or episode, in a series of accessible documentary programmes. The subject of the series will be my particular love, marble. I’ve always been fascinated by marble, and I’m far from alone in that. I suppose it’s no surprise that my greatest love is for ancient marble, but I also admire modern marble sculpture, and since my retirement I’ve indulged in finding out about the Greek marble artists who working today. In my art collection I have

some paintings which show ancient marble buildings and sculptures from various parts of Greece.

“I thought it would be nice to combine my collection, the subject of ancient marble, the lives of the ancient sculptors, and an introduction to modern marble artists in Greece. You and I would travel all over Greece following in the footsteps of the travellers in my collection, examining the use of marble, past and present. It could make a stunning series of programmes, I think ... and my hope is that you would present it. What do you think?”

“I think it’s extremely interesting. How many episodes do you envisage?”

“Ten at least. We can do a lot of linkage between past and present, some in-depth work on living artists, with interviews and so on, and tie in some of the items in my collection. A lot of the things have never been seen before.”

Edward took a contented sip of his tea before turning to Day with the enthusiasm of a schoolboy.

“I thought we’d start by involving a friend of mine who lives and works here on Naxos. In fact, I’ve taken the liberty of arranging for you and me to go to his workshop tomorrow, if that suits you, Martin? He’s absolutely fantastic, one of the leading marble artists in Greece, if not Europe. Over dinner I’ll tell you all about him. If you don’t want to be involved in the project after you’ve met Konstantinos Saris, so be it. But I think you’ll be captivated.”

3

Out of respect for his guest's age, Day resisted the temptation to offer him the gin and tonic before dinner that would be Day's usual habit. They finished their tea, closed up the house and began to walk into Filoti to the taverna. They drew a few stares from the locals, the tall, blonde Englishman and the wiry old professor who was old enough to be his grandfather. Edward talked about his life in Cambridge as they sauntered along the road. After retiring fifteen years ago from his position as Professor of Ancient History at King's, he had continued to live on his own in one of Cambridge's tall, elegant townhouses in a quiet road near Jesus College. He had never married or had a longterm partner, but he was very content with his life. He maintained a close association with his old college, and often met former colleagues at High Table and annual events. He had never stopped working, and still spent much of his time in the library.

Day envisaged the overwhelming beauty of King's College while his eyes fell on the small houses of Filoti and sun-bleached cars full of dents and scratches parked up on the cracked pavements. Old people sitting on ancient chairs by their front doors were chatting across the street in the now gentle heat of evening. Different worlds.

A short walk brought them to Taverna O Thanasis, Day's favourite restaurant since moving to Filoti. The tables in

front of the taverna were all full, the tourist season being in full swing. Thanasis, the portly owner, saw them arriving and turned from the bar to greet them. He smiled broadly when he saw Day.

“Martin, my good friend, how are you? And good evening, sir, you are most welcome!”

“Thanasi, this is Edward, my friend from the UK. Edward, this is Thanasis, owner of my favourite restaurant in all Greece!”

Thanasis offered them a good table near the open front window, overlooking the terrace and the street beyond. He brought them a bottle of cold mineral water, glasses, menus and a basket of freshly sliced crusty bread nestling against cutlery tightly wrapped in paper serviettes.

“I’ll leave you in the care of my son, Vangelis,” said Thanasis, beckoning the younger man, “and I shall just say that this evening I recommend my wife’s katsikaki. It’s her own recipe.”

Thanasis gave a small bow of the head and retreated to welcome more guests.

“Remind me, Martin, my Greek’s a bit rusty?”

“He was recommending the baby goat,” said Day. “Thanasis’s wife, Koula, never fails to do something amazing in the kitchen. I recently had her souvlaki, and although I don’t much care for souvlaki as a rule, well, it was astonishing.”

“Then our choice is made. I take it we’ll order to share? Good. Perhaps you’d do the honours?”

Day asked for some small bits and pieces chosen by Vangelis to start, followed by a portion of the baby goat, a Greek salad and Naxos fried potatoes. Day had a particular fondness for chips. Moreover, on Naxos the locals claimed to grow exceptionally tasty potatoes. Day could not dispute this, and happily put it to the test as often as he could.

“Do you already know, Edward, that you are now in the home of the finest potatoes in Greece?”

“I had heard the rumour,” Edward nodded. “One can hardly know Naxos without hearing it. I have to say, they’re right. I’m fond of potatoes, as anyone with Irish blood must be, and I’ve never tasted better.”

“You have Irish blood?”

“A little. A love of potatoes, and an ability to tell a good story at great length, is all I have to show for it.”

“Ah. In that case, you should tell me a good story! But before you do, shall we order some wine?”

“Please, let’s do that. Red wine? Barrel?”

Day regarded his guest with approval, and beckoned the attentive Vangelis. He ordered a litre of the local red wine ‘from the barrel’, light and young, and good for your head the next day.

“It sounds as if you’ve been to Naxos before, Edward? Do you know the island well?”

“I’ve tried to visit as many of the islands in the Cyclades as I can. I have friends on Naxos now. I also remember the Archeological Museum. Wonderful curator there, I recall.

Many good pieces too, although the Roman things aren't so close to my heart as the older material..."

"You know the Curator? He's a very good friend of mine. Aristos Iraklidis."

"Ah yes, that's the name. He's still here?"

"He's been here for ever, I think. I'll take you to see him, you can renew the acquaintance."

"That would be excellent, Martin. I must say, ..."

Day didn't discover what it was that Edward had to say, as Vangelis arrived with their first dishes. There was a small plate of crispy fried squid in a delicate batter, another of courgette balls, and a bowl of homemade tzatziki dip, flavoured with mint and cucumber. The bright metal jug of red wine and two glasses then appeared, and Vangelis wished them Kali Orexi.

"Oh, this is a real pleasure. Thank you, Martin."

"To your good health, Edward."

Contrary to their plan, they devoted themselves to the food before beginning to talk of the project. Once again, Day approved of Edward Childe for this. It seemed they had certain preferences in common as well as at least one friend. When the food arrived they found that Koula, who brought the dish of roasted baby goat to their table herself, had again cooked something special. The meat was tender, tasty and not too strong, nestling among chunks of the famous Naxian potatoes which were ideal for absorbing the juices. Day was in potato heaven. He helped himself to a second portion of chips when he thought Edward was preoccupied.

When sufficient justice had been done to the dinner, Day divided the last of the jug of wine between their glasses, and sat back in his chair. He suggested that Edward tell him more about his friend, the marble artist.

“I met Konstantinos Saris in 2013 in Cambridge. He was visiting the Fitzwilliam Museum for an exhibition called ‘Marble Art in the Islands of the Mediterranean’. It was a collaboration between the Fitzwilliam, The Greek Ministry of Culture and various senior curators and academics. Behind the scenes, most of the administration was being done by a very gifted PhD student of mine. Anyway, it was a wonderful exhibition, featuring the work of some really exciting contemporary sculptors at the height of their powers. At the exhibition you could see their new work alongside examples of ancient marble sculpture from the same islands. There were representatives from Cyprus, Sicily, Crete, Sardinia and the Cyclades.

“I went along to the Fitzwilliam one day to congratulate my student, and she introduced me to Konstantinos. He and I went for dinner together that night, and formed a plan for me to visit him on Naxos a couple of months later. Well, I was retired, so there was nothing to stop me. That was six years ago, and I’ve visited him a couple of times since. His home is in the hills near Kato Potamia, not too far from here, in fact. You have to see it to believe me, it’s an artist’s paradise.

“Anyway, Konstantinos is almost exactly my age, but his career is going from strength to strength. The Niarchos Foundation have taken an interest in him, and have funded a three year project in which Konstantinos will collaborate with a different marble artist each year at his ‘atelier’ (as he