



ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ ΝΙΑΡΧΟΣ  
STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION

**Patrick & Joan Leigh Fermor House, Benaki Museum**

**Official Opening, Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**SNF Welcome by George Agouridis, Member of the BoD**

Good afternoon!

It brings great joy to us at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) that we are all gathered here, seeing the house of Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor open its doors to the public and fill with people, conversation, and life. In a sense, the house represents yet another of Patrick's creations, a composition of stones, which, like his words, were carefully placed with mastery and art, creating a fascinating result. When you visit this stone-built house, surrounded by olive and cypress trees and endless sea views, you do not want to leave, in the same way that you do not want to set down one of Patrick's books.

Patrick did not manage to complete his trilogy on his journey through Europe. However, thanks to the Benaki Museum, at his and his wife Joan's house, he will continue to offer inspiration for his guests—academics, artists, and the general public—for many years to come. Already, ten artists from ARTWORKS, an organization founded with support by the SNF, visited the house and created drawings, video art, and photos inspired by the garden, the home, and the overall atmosphere.

For visitors to this site, the invisible links binding Patrick Leigh Fermor to this place gradually become visible. He wrote in his book *Mani* about these bonds and the debt of happiness that he felt he owed to Kardamyli and its inhabitants, and, thanks to what he has given to us, these feelings are now extended to us all.

SNF's grantmaking reaches every corner of Greece and around the world, but our heart beats here, in the Peloponnese, in Messinia and in Laconia. This is where our Founder, Stavros Niarchos, had his roots. We feel this connection here in Kardamyli and in Sparta, where the new SNF General Hospital will be established with support from the Foundation. We feel it in Vamvakou, where we stand with a group of young people trying to revive the village and where, this weekend, we are celebrating the village's traditional Walnut Festival with the official opening of a new technology hub,

the V. Lab (Vamvakou Techonology Lab fully powered by Stavros Niarchos Foundation).

On our journey as a Foundation, we, like Patrick Leigh Fermor, make many stops, even detours, but all these stops along the way tend toward a single destination: doing good for society and for as many people as possible in it—be it in the small community of Mani, Laconia, or in academic and artistic communities.

Thank you.

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