

# Cultural footprint



Greece's maritime imprint is wide and deep, going well beyond the tankers and bulk carriers closely associated with names of well-known Greek shipowners. As in other major centres of the diaspora, the Greek effect on culture, on education on media and other sectors, backed up with lashings of philanthropy is almost as great as the maritime effect.

Walk through the Olympic Tower in midtown New York and you will find the Onassis Cultural Center, funded by the Onassis Foundation, which hosts several exhibits of Greek-themed art annually. If there is time for another museum visit, the Museum of Modern Art boasts the Stavros Niarchos Gallery filled with impressionist art, MoMA being one of several US cultural institutions supported by the Foundation.



George Economou hosts at MoMA



John Angelicoussis accepting HACC award

Boston's famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is where DryShips' George Economou among others studied. MIT's Ocean Engineering Department - closely linked to Prof. Henry Marcus - International Shipping Club have provided an entry point into the business for many. Nearby is Massachusetts General Hospital where Thanassis and Marina Martinos (Eastern Med Maritime) endowed the Athinoula A. Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging in the late 1990s, just one of several US hospitals supported by Greek funds.

Other shipping links with academia exist at Georgetown University, where the Vardinoyannis, Hadjipateras and Kyriakou families have all sent family members. Nicolas Tsakos has meanwhile supported the Hellenic Studies programme at Columbia University, where he studied during the 1980s.

The Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce (HACC) provides what is perhaps the best pulse on the role of the Greeks in the States - encompassing shipping, real estate, but also the cultural arts, and medicine. Its roster of recipients of the distinguished Person of the Year award offers a panoply stretching across shipping, real estate, media and the arts. Recent shipping recipients have included John Angelicoussis (2011), Sophocles Zoullas (2010), Angeliki Frangou (2007), Peter Georgiopoulos (2004) and Angeliki's father Nikolaos Frangos (1997).

Visual arts and design loom large also. The Papachristidis name is well-known on the New York cultural scene since the designs of Alex Papachristidis feature in the homes of the rich and famous in Manhattan and the Hamptons. The Goulandris family works on exhibit exchanges that bring Greek art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (and also to the Getty Museum in Los Angeles). The annual New York Greek Film Festival was one year underwritten by Navios's Angeliki Frangou. And the Leventis family, former owners of Navios, supports a foundation whose philanthropic gifts included support of a 2011 exhibit of works depicting the goddess Aphrodite, at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Museum connections goes beyond classical art. In early April, Peter Drakos - formerly the president of the CMA and now building up short-sea shipping business Coastal Connect - made a hefty donation to the Mystic Aquarium, close by the famous Mystic Seaport maritime museum. The Aquarium has benefited for many years from his family's support; James Drakos, Peter's brother, heads up tanker specialist Groton Pacific Carriers.

Meanwhile, shipbroker Stelios Taketzis, a partner at the well known drycargo shop NJ Costalas, brings the cultural contribution bang up to date by volunteering as a radio host on Hellenic Public Radio Cosmos FM, aired every week on a local New York radio station. ■