

Olympia Mytilinaiou

CV

Born and raised in Litochoro in the province of Pieria, near the foothills of mount Olympus in North Greece.

From 1987 until 1991 she studied photography in Stavrakos' Cinema and Television School.

She started working for the Greek Film Industry during her university years.

Until today she has worked as a camera assistant, focus puller and camera operator in fiction films, documentaries and TV spots.

In 1999 she had her first job as Director of Photography (DOP), in the movie **17 to 18** by Mimis Kougioumtzis.

*In 2001 she was the Director of Photography for the feature film of Lagias Giourgou **Too Late Tomorrow**.*

During 2009 her work became well known to the general public through the movie **Strella** by Panos Koutras, which was screened, among others in the department Panorama of the Berlin International Film Festival.

In 2011 she was DOP for the movie **David Is Dying** by Stephen Lloyd Jackson. It won the Grand Jury Prize, the Best Director and Actor award of the American Black Film Festival.

In 2012 she was DOP for the documentary **Dollars for a Saint** directed by Avra Georgiou, a coproduction of ERT and the French – German channel ARTE, a Films Transit International production.

In 2013 she collaborated with the director Alexandros Avranas for the feature film **Miss Violence**, which won many awards: the Silver Lion in Venice, Fedora Award, Young Cinema Award and the Best Actor in the Venice Film Festival, Best Screenplay Award in the Stockholm Film Festival, Innovation Award etc. The same year she was awarded the Gianni Di Venanzo International Cinematography Award in Italy for her work in the film.

In 2013 she collaborated as well with the artist Stefanos Tsivopoulos for the movie **History Zero** which was presented in the Greek Pavilion 55 during the Biennale of Venice.

In 2015 she collaborated with the Algerian director Rayhana for the feature film **Amon âge, Je me cache encore pour fumer** with Hiam Abbas in the lead role, a coproduction of Michele Ray-Gavras and Fenia Kossovitsa.

In 2016 she worked as a DOP for the short documentary **Ode to Lesbos** by Talal Derki, as an assignment by Johnny Walker.

During 2017 and 2018 she collaborated with Stavros Tsiolis in the movie **Women Who Passed My Way** and with Nikos Kornilios in the movie **Back Held Hands**.

In 2018 she collaborated with the artist Pantelis Makkas in the art film “**Antistoli**”.



*From Stavros Tsiolis' film **Women Who Passed My Way** (2017)*

How did you decide to work for this specific field and what difficulties did you encounter in finding work in the field?

In 1989 I became an employee in rentalhousecameras. From there on, the way I followed was precise and I did not really encounter true difficulties. There were some incidents of intimidation and sexual harassment but not more than what was happening outside of work.

I was born and raised in Litochoro, in the province of Pieria. I moved to Athens in 1987 to study Photography in the in the Stavrakos' School of Cinema and Television. I heard about this job from a friend and I found it exciting, because it requires a combination of knowledge and skills both in the artistic and the technical department. In 1988 non-public tv channels opened which were a real professional challenge and opportunity for young people like me, in the same line of work.

Because for some people it might not be completely clear what the job of a Director of Photography is, can you explain it to us in a few words?

Being a Director of Photography (DOP) means you are the creator of visualization and esthetics in a movie.

It is a job of great responsibility because it requires from you to have a global view of the lighting style of the movie – cinematography – which should invigorate dramaturgically each film. Either it is a documentary or fiction. It requires close collaboration with the director in order to truly represent his/her vision. He/she should also know how to use the camera and the use of framing. It is also very important to work well with the camera/lighting and the colorgrading team in order to give the desirable outcome of a finished esthetic.

The Director of Photography is part of the executive team that deals with the film from the beginning all the way to the end. He/she is the most important artistic collaborator of the director.

As we know there are few women Directors of Photography around the world and even fewer in Greece, how do you explain that?

Being the Director of Photography was always a man's job. Mostly, cause of the job's nature that I described before. When something is set in stone it is difficult to change it. Women in positions of authority have problems in every work space. Being a female Director of Photography is one more demanding role where women are not accepted. Mistakes are not forgiven and you need to work twice as hard to have the same advantages as a male colleague has.

Furthermore, a big problem is if you want a family. You are not permitted to have children. You can't expect any help. It is taboo.

Also, there is no support from the rest of the women in the field. The female Directors and Producers usually don't choose women for the position of Director of Photography.

What is your advice towards young women that want to work in the field?

This job is a way of life. Your life is your work. You need to love it and try to train yourself in order to cope with its demands. Knowledge and experience in the artistic and technical department of the job are obligatory, but also you need to know how to position yourself among the crew.

A big problem is the sexist behavior but also stereotypes. I would say a woman needs to tread carefully in order to surpass all these obstacles and succeed in her career.

Can you give us an example of gender discrimination that you experienced or witnessed in your field of work?

When I started working as a Production Assistant I found myself in a van with an important Director of Photography and I told him of my intentions to work in the same job as him. He said that I would be better fitted for the makeup or costume department. At that point in Greece there were only men in this specific line of work.



Many countries the last few years try to apply the measure of 50/50 in the case of women participating in film production and in the programming of international festivals etc. In Greece for the time being there has been no initiative concerning such a measure. Is it something that you would want, that you maybe have discussed with other people in the film industry or you believe the conversation hasn't started yet?

I believe it is important for such an initiative to exist in an institutional level. People

from all professional fields want the same.

But we see that although the European Union has enacted legislation concerning the quota, in Greece this legislation is not followed.

There must be political initiative in order for the legislation to be enacted.

Basically this conversation is still at its start. But even if the quota is enacted there will be no professional guarantee for female Directors of Photography.

There have been some efforts to create a women's union for women working in the audiovisual sector that would encompass all specialties. But without any result. There are 3 female Directors of Photography in Greece, which is a terribly small number. Film production in our country is quite limited and for that reason it is a bit difficult for someone to proclaim their claims in that context.



Digital Bolex Super 16mm mode (2048x1152) 1.78:1 (16:9)
Taken on: May 6, 2019 at 14:24 with Artemis Pro Director's Viewfinder
LAT: 40° 10' 35.74" LONG: = 22° 33' 14.89"
Tilt: 13° Bearing: 237° (SW)

12mm
ARRI Ultra 16 Primes


*Photo during the preproduction of the short film **Goads***

During the years you have worked have you noticed a rise of the number of women behind the camera or generally in the crew?

Yes the number has risen in the cinematography department but not dramatically. Let's say it has doubled. But still the percentage is low.

Can you give us the names of some women in film (directors, producers, directors of photography etc) that have inspired you and you would suggest following their work?

Directors of Photography: Ellen Kuras, Rachel Morrison, Kira Kelly.

Directors: Celine Sciamma, Jane Campion, Sofia Coppola, Penelope Spheeris.

Tell us on what have you been working on?

There are scripts for feature and short films and documentaries that are in the stage of script development and in search of funding.



*From the short film **Happy Moments***

Finally, what do you hope will change for the better in the Greek film industry in the next five years?

I don't believe something will change for the better. I don't still see an existing state plan concerning the development of the film industry. Things can become better only if a consistent support and funding plan is set in motion. The funding that exists now is limited. Low budget films, low budget scripts. So, it is difficult to find co-funding from outside of Greece and then have international distribution, with such low budget. The difference between Greek and international budgets is quite big. I hope film education will be introduced into schools more consistently, in order to create a more educated audience that will love cinema as an Art early on and will recognize Greek cinema.

P.S.

I would also like to say that being a Director of Photography is an amazing job. Either you are a woman or a man.

It liberates you both as a human and an artist. It really is worth it if you decide to do it as a job.

My answers were consistent with the questions. I thought I should be honest and present things as they are. I did it in the hopes that there will be even the slightest possibility to help women that are or want to become Directors of Photography.