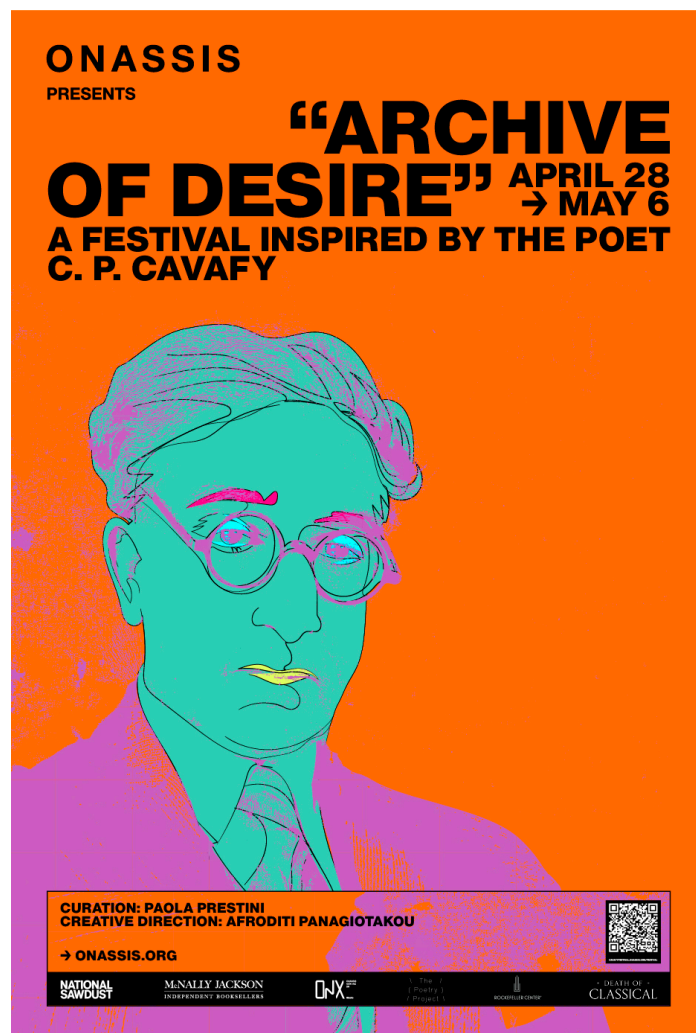


ONASSIS CULTURE

**ONASSIS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES  
“ARCHIVE OF DESIRE”: A FESTIVAL  
INSPIRED BY THE POET C. P. CAVAFY IN  
NEW YORK**

**PRESENTED IN COLLABORATION WITH NATIONAL  
SAWDUST,  
APRIL 28–MAY 6, 2023**



**ONASSIS**  
PRESENTS

**“ARCHIVE  
OF DESIRE”** APRIL 28  
→ MAY 6  
A FESTIVAL INSPIRED BY THE POET  
C. P. CAVAFY

CURATION: PAOLA PRESTINI  
CREATIVE DIRECTION: AFRODITI PANAGIOTAKOU

→ ONASSIS.ORG

NATIONAL SAWDUST | McNALLY JACKSON INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLERS | ONX | THE PROJECT | DEATH OF CLASSICAL

**Multi-venue, multidisciplinary celebration of the internationally influential Greek poet, curated by composer Paola Prestini, includes performances, visual arts initiatives, commissions, lectures, conversations, and more in response to Cavafy's work—its timeless universality, pointed social commentary, lyricism, and sensuality**

**With bold new works, contributions, and appearances by Jad Abumrad, Andre Aciman, Laurie Anderson, Helga Davis/Petros Klampanis, Nick Cave/Bob Faust, Juliana Huxtable, National Sawdust's Hildegard commissioned composers, Vijay Iyer/Robin Coste Lewis/Julie Mehretu/Jeffrey Zeigler, Daniel Mendelsohn, Evi Kalogiropoulou, Nico Muhly, Nadah El Shazly/Sister Sylvester, Rufus Wainwright, Bora Yoon and others**

**Festival creative team is led by Onassis Foundation's Afroditi Panagiotakou, with Paola Prestini as Curator and Karen Brooks Hopkins as Executive Producer**

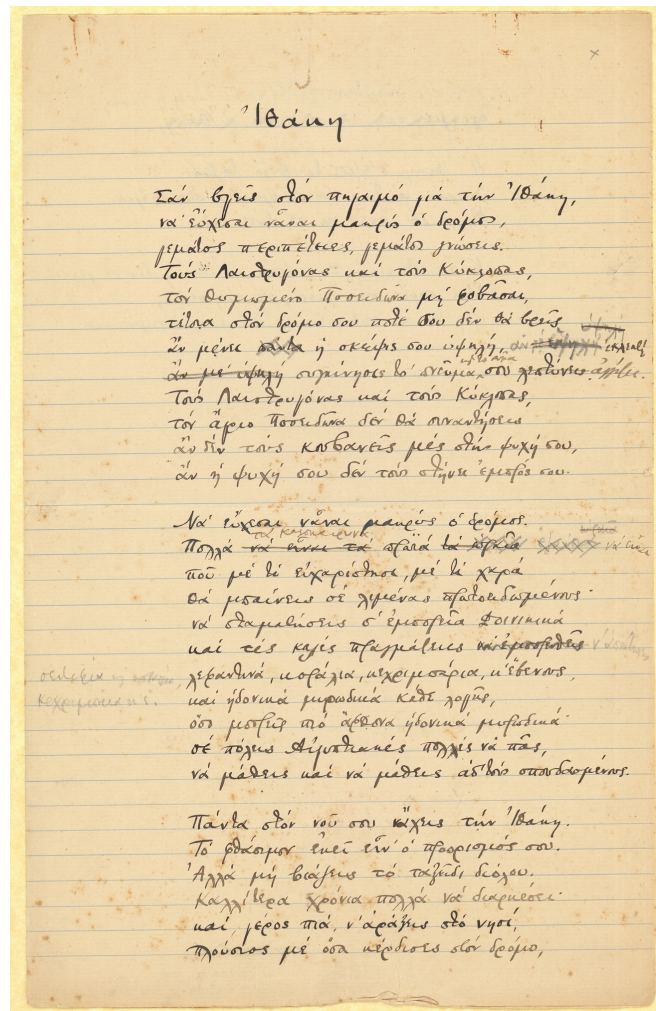
The Onassis Foundation announced ["Archive of Desire": A Festival Inspired by the Poet C.P. Cavafy](#), a momentous gathering of artists responding to a poet's legacy that stretches across every facet of the arts, yet remains widely undiscovered in the U.S. The festival activates Cavafy's enduring writing in celebration, more largely, of poetry's timeless role in society, and as an illuminating force for a world in turmoil. Organized under the leadership of **Afroditi Panagiotakou**, Director of Culture, Onassis Foundation, and curated by **Paola Prestini**—the “composer and arts visionary” (*Wall Street Journal*) who is co-founder and artistic director of [National Sawdust](#)—the festival assembles a multi-genre series of events that engages with Cavafy's poetry. **Karen Brooks Hopkins**, President Emerita of Brooklyn Academy of Music, now Senior Advisor and Board member of the Onassis Foundation, serves as the festival's Executive Producer. Taking place April 28-May 6, 2023, the festival begins during National Poetry Month and takes place at National Sawdust, festival bookstore partner [McNally Jackson](#), and locations across New York City. “*Archive of Desire*”—which takes its name from a new work by acclaimed poet Robin Coste Lewis, written for this occasion and inspired by her experience viewing Cavafy Archive in Athens—further Onassis's mission, in their acquisition, digitization, and translation of the extensive [collection of the Cavafy Archive](#), to make his vital and distinctive work more accessible. In keeping with this aim, highlights from the Cavafy Festival will be available for free on the [Onassis Channel](#) and the Onassis Foundation is building a new museum in Athens to house the Cavafy Archive and celebrate his legacy, due to open in the coming year.

The festival will encompass a wide range of events and works: a sensorial, interdisciplinary book-journey, performances melding music and poetry, a visual rave, a large outdoor mural, digital and sonic installations, literary and academic talks, a screening of Cavafy-inspired short films, and more. Artists, writers, musicians, and thinkers participating in the festival include **Jad Abumrad, André Aciman, Laurie Anderson, Tei Blow, Charlotte Brathwaite, Brooklyn Youth Chorus, Eleni Calenos, Nick Cave, Helga Davis, Nadah El Shazly, Bob Faust, Stathis Gourgouris, Stamatina Gregory, Andrea Guterres, Richie Hofmann, Paul Holdengräber, Juliana Huxtable, Hannah Ishizaki, Vijay Iyer, Evi Kalogiropoulou, The Knights, Yaz Lancaster, Robin Coste Lewis, Taylor Mac, Steven E. Mallorca, Julie Mehretu, Daniel Mendelsohn, Nico Muhly, Matthew Niederhauser, Elena Park, Michael Potvin, Mac Premo, composer Paola Prestini, DM R, Daniel Bernard Roumain, Carl Hancock Rux, Ali Santana, Kelley Sheehan, Sister Sylvester, DJ SHYBOI, Nathan Thatcher, Rufus Wainwright (with music arrangement by Missy Mazzoli), Bora Yoon, and Jeffrey Zeigler. **Death of Classical, The Poetry Project, Columbia University, Rockefeller Center**, and others, will collaborate on dynamic offerings throughout the city. [Pomegranate Arts, Inc](#) is the festival's producing partner, and [ALL ARTS](#) is the media sponsor. Programming details and schedule will be announced at a later date.**

**Onassis Foundation Director of Culture Afroditi Panagiotakou** says, "Atypical, erotic, direct but also obscure, Cavafy was a complex person who seemed to embody an almost paradoxical existence. He was a contemporary citizen of ancient cities, a man with a linguistic style of his own invention. Cavafy is a poet for everyone, even and perhaps especially for those who don't consider themselves poetry fans. It thrills me to know he's coming to New York and entering the lives of those who don't already know him—his legacy walking the streets, alive within the minds of the crowds."

Composer, [National Sawdust](#) co-founder/Artistic Director, and "*Archive of Desire*" curator **Paola Prestini** has a longstanding interest in poetry's intersection with other art forms. She explains, "Poetry has saved me, has become music, and has helped me dream the abstract. As I stitched the quilt of voices and partners to bring to life Cavafy, I meditated on his queerness and the lack of binary in his life...his otherness and how this relates to current political themes...his sense of sensuality and how its hot fragrance persists through time and still quickens the pulse. How the artists in the festival illuminate Cavafy is yet to be seen as this is all newly commissioned work. What I do know is that, like Cavafy, who as a self-published poet foreshadowed the current state of many in the sector, these artists are fiercely independent, brilliant, and unique."

**Karen Brooks Hopkins, Senior Advisor of Onassis USA, Board Member of Onassis Foundation, and Executive Producer of "*Archive of Desire*": A Festival Inspired by the Poet C. P. Cavafy**, says, "Through the Onassis Foundation, I discovered the poet Constantine P. Cavafy. His words are both accessible and adventurous, powered by a life force that draws you in like a great novel. Erotic and aspirational, Cavafy communicates pure feeling with no verbal overdrive. He writes, it seems, for the undiluted joy of self-expression, and generously shares that with his readers. I hope audiences will enjoy the events we have planned and, in doing so, will find their own way to the heart and pen of this talented writer. The contemporary artists and poets featured in the festival have studied and embraced Cavafy's poems and have added their own sensibilities to his work, thereby amplifying his voice and their own."



Cavafy's handwritten first draft manuscript of the poem "Ithaca" @Cavafy Archive, Onassis Foundation.

Though Cavafy penned Jackie Kennedy Onassis' favorite poem, "[Ithaca](#)," which was read at her funeral; though he was championed by E.M. Forster, who consistently encouraged him to publish his work more widely; though Leonard Woolf (Virginia Woolf's husband) himself tried to publish him through Hogarth Press; though he has influenced artists ranging from David Hockney to Leonard Cohen to Orhan Pamuk and J.M. Coetzee, among others; and though his depictions of multiculturalism, otherness, desire, and queer identity, were ages ahead of their time; Cavafy has never received such a significant public spotlight in the United States. The festival aims both to celebrate Cavafy with those familiar with his work, and to share his legacy with countless others for the first time.

A poet of the in-between, [Constantine P. Cavafy](#) was born in Alexandria in 1863 to Greek parents from Constantinople, and inhabited a fluid cross-cultural existence that strongly influenced his writing. Cavafy spent most of his life in Alexandria, where he lived in a neighborhood of intersecting walks of life—and his work mirrors the vibrancy and tensions of the worlds mingling outside his door. (His home is currently being restored by the Onassis Foundation and the Hellenic Foundation for Culture.) Cavafy's poetry is marked by a pervasive sense of liminality: his language can be idiosyncratic, playful, modern to the point of being called by some "prosaic," yet also nostalgic. Similarly, his poetry often references Greek history and mythology, yet he is a monumental figure of modernism, and his works offer viewpoints that transcend their time and resonate today. Cavafy's poetry was a safe haven for him to explore his queerness -- sometimes explicitly, sometimes in more coded language.



Cavafy was intentional about his work's refusal to be pinned down: he resisted becoming part of the publishing market both in Greek and in English, despite many attempts by literary figures in several countries to convince him to share his work widely—yet he archived and annotated everything as though waiting for the expanded worldviews of future readers. He insisted on self-publishing, creating pamphlets of his work, and giving poems to those who visited him in Alexandria. Visiting Cavafy therefore became a destination of the literati: the best way to experience his work was through him directly. *“Archive of Desire”* convenes some of today's most category-defying artists to further interpret Cavafy's prismatic legacy—propelling it even further into the future, and revisiting it as a fertile source for inspiration anew.



Photographic portrait of C.P. Cavafy at a mature age. @Cavafy Archive, Onassis Foundation.

### **About the Onassis Foundation**

The mission of the [Onassis Foundation](#), founded by Aristotle Onassis in 1975, will always be human-centric; to create the conditions, explore the ideas, and spark the discussions that lead to a better society.

The Foundation works to promote the rich contributions of contemporary Greek culture throughout the world. The Onassis Foundation's work is based in Athens but spans the globe, focusing on culture, healthcare, and education. It has awarded more than 7,500

scholarships to young people worldwide since the late '70s and presents countless cultural events each year. By building the Onassis National Transplant Center until 2024, following the Onassis Cardiac Surgery Center in Athens, it creates the conditions to provide health to all, offering the Greek society a hospital for the transplant of solid organs, as well as a center for research and innovation in the field of organ transplantation.

Through Onassis AiR, a program built on the continuous support of artistic research and practice, aiming to foster a space where the artists set the conditions themselves for the development of their work, the Onassis Foundation supports the existing partnerships and members of its broader ecosystem with the local and international artistic community.

And when it comes to culture, it's not just art; it's a way of living. At Onassis Culture, with the Onassis Stegi as its hub, the Foundation encourages the talent and energy of local and international artists to thrive and starts conversations that aim to shake and shape society. Onassis Stegi is a center of global contemporary culture that, through a series of initiatives and works, promotes dialogue about democracy, social and environmental justice, racial and gender equality, and LGBTQIA+ rights.

[Movement Radio](#) is Onassis Stegi's international web radio, thus a cultural platform that focuses on new music productions, speaking through sounds and ideas, tracing current political and critical thought, and crossing an imaginary archipelago for the bolstering of dialog that goes beyond borders and dates.

The [Onassis YouTube Channel](#) is constantly evolving and growing bigger by adding new productions, digital concerts, documentaries, online discussions, and unique content, bringing our common digital future into focus.

In the US, the Onassis Foundation offers generous support for and curation of cultural programming across various art forms and creative endeavors. Onassis USA, based in New York, includes ONX Studio for Extended Reality, a joint initiative between Onassis USA and New Museum's NEW INC; an accelerator, a subsidized workspace, and an exhibition gallery located in the Onassis Gallery of Olympic Tower in Manhattan.

### **About The Cavafy Archive**

C. P. Cavafy collected and archived his work on a systematic basis, hence creating a unique literary and personal archive. The Cavafy Archive consists of manuscripts of poems, hand-compiled printed editions, prose literary works, articles, studies, notes by the poet and more. The Cavafy Archive was acquired by the Onassis Foundation at the end of 2012. This acquisition safeguarded the archive's continued presence in Greece, and prevented a potential fragmentation. The Onassis Foundation's mission is to render the archive accessible to all, and to promote Cavafy's work and the international character of his poetry. After digitizing and documenting the entity of the archive, the Onassis Foundation published in 2019, in Greek and in English, [the digital collection of the Cavafy Archive](#), inviting everyone with a passion for Cavafy to discover all the above. In addition, the Onassis Foundation is building a new space in the heart of Athens to permanently accommodate the archive and C. P. Cavafy's library, and celebrate his legacy, while also supporting the restoration of the poet's house in Alexandria.

## **About National Sawdust**

National Sawdust believes that artistic expression empowers us all to create a more joyful and just world.

The organization curates, commissions and produces music and artistic works rooted in curiosity, experimentation, innovation, and inclusivity.

National Sawdust presents its work by engaging communities of artists and audiences at its state-of-the-art home in Williamsburg, Brooklyn and on its digital stage.

## **INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

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