

AFRODITI *NO jewelry*

Afroditi has always been a jewelry designer. Passionate about manual arts, this strong and independent woman has always found a way to carry out her projects.

Her shop, [NO jewelry](#), opened in 2012, presents beautiful creations as diverse as they are varied.



Who are you?

I am someone who loves to make things with my hands. When I was younger, I painted and sculpted, I loved all these arts but not to make a job of it. With jewelry, I found a place where I can do everything: I can paint, I can draw, I repair and make the jewelry. It is something you can wear.

How did you start?

I first did jewelry in middle school, but it was not good. The teachers were old jewelry makers, I did not enjoy that teaching.

Then I went to Thessaloniki, to study at *Mokume* (www.mokume-art.gr) the art of jewelry. It was very interesting.

I got pregnant with my daughter at 21, so I had to stop, and I came back to Ioannina.

When my daughter was two and a half years old, I studied graphic design here in Ioannina. When I finished, I started to work in this field.

All these years until 2012, when I decided to work again in the creation of jewelry, working with the papier-mâché technique, and I opened my shop, also because it was something special that no one else was doing.

You are passionate about art and handcraft, so you live from what you like to do.

But I also like to do a lot of sports. I like climbing, I like doing martial arts (Muay Thai, boxing).

In your shop, you have not only your own creation but also those of other artists.

Yes, there are designs from three women and one man. Different pieces from what I do. One does painted leather, one works with stones, my other friend does titanium and the other one does all sorts of very shiny fish jewelry. They do different things and I love it. It is very beautiful.

And what material is it?

It is silver, titanium, bronze, copper, or many other materials. We do not have gold. Just a little bit of

copper because personally I do not like it, I do not like the color.

Do you think that what you are doing has an impact on women's empowerment?

I believe that women in Greece are very strong. We may think that men here are strong, wild, but I think women have all these things. They have a family, sometimes a main job, and they are stronger than men. If you see all the jewelry shops like mine, most of them are women's shops.

And so, do you think you participate to this kind of society of strong women in Ioannina?

Yes, I believe there are a lot of strong women in Ioannina.

And personally, it was never a choice. I do not have a second side, because I got divorced when my second child was 6 months old, and I had to take care of my children alone. I had to work, and sometimes 10 to 12 hours a day and I had no second choice.

But I think since I was a child I was like this, strong and independent.

Is this something you give to you children?

Yes, my daughter has been living in London, England for two years now, she is 25 and she is very strong. She is doing her job, she lives alone.

And we are creating together a website in the UK, to sell this jewelry in London.

In between sentences, Afroditi's daughter, Nefeli, called her from London. This interesting conversation now welcomed a third person adding a gentile perspective on her mother's work.

Nefeli talks about her mom: She has mostly a female clientele and she sees people inspired by the jewelry making.

She also gives jewelry classes, jewelry making workshops, and most of her customers come to learn how to make jewelry themselves. So, you can say that many are inspired.



So, you like to share with people what you do?

Afroditi: Yes, I love it and I believe that the art should be transmitted to other people as well and that more people should learn the art. I believe that the best way to be inspired of art is by doing art. So, for this reason I try to teach to people how to make

jewelry.

To Neferi: And do you agree with that? You do your own jewelry also.

Neferi: Yes, I do. I learned from my mom, from the workshop she was doing, mainly by helping. And I learned a lot, also from the everyday interaction I would say. And now that I am thinking about it the whole family got inspired!

To Afroditi: Your son also is helping?

Afroditi: Yes, he is working at the shop now on Saturdays, and all these necklaces about climbing are made by him.

And what does it mean for you to be a woman, if it does mean something for you?

I do not know; I do not think so.

Do you want to talk to me about a woman that inspires you?

I am not thinking about someone in special, but about a lot of women, and sometimes from different times. Mary Shelley, Marie Curie, or some women that marked the history and that were equal with men.

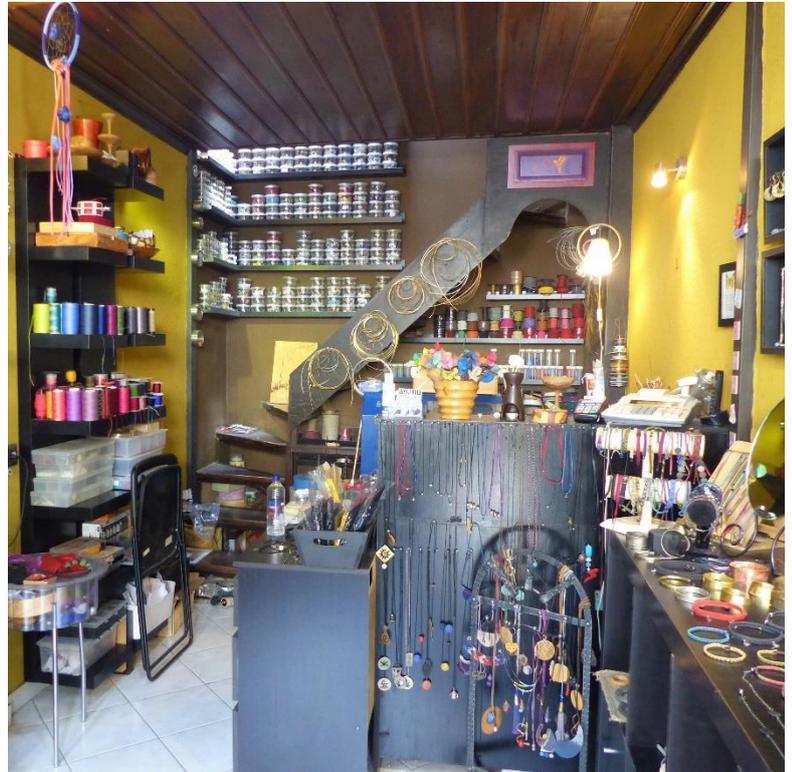
And you Nefeli?

Nefeli: I could say that I feel inspired by many women. Lately to be honest I have more inspiration from the pop culture. I think some of the pop female singers

present an image of more powerful women, very financially independent. But I am also inspired by people from Black Lives Matters for example, these kinds of stuff do inspire me a lot.

And about the previous question, about being a woman and like how this has affected my mother, I would say that I do not think my mom ever felt less capable. She always felt as capable as a man would be, 100%. But I think she gives a female touch in everything she makes.

Also, her art, in comparison to what other male artists do generally in my city, I think it is a little bit more contemporary. She uses more contemporary technics and materials, and more light and female patterns. So, I think it has inspired her a lot the fact that she is a woman.



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To see Afroditi's work:

- www.facebook.com/afroditizoukiNO
- www.instagram.com/nojewelry.afroditi.zouki