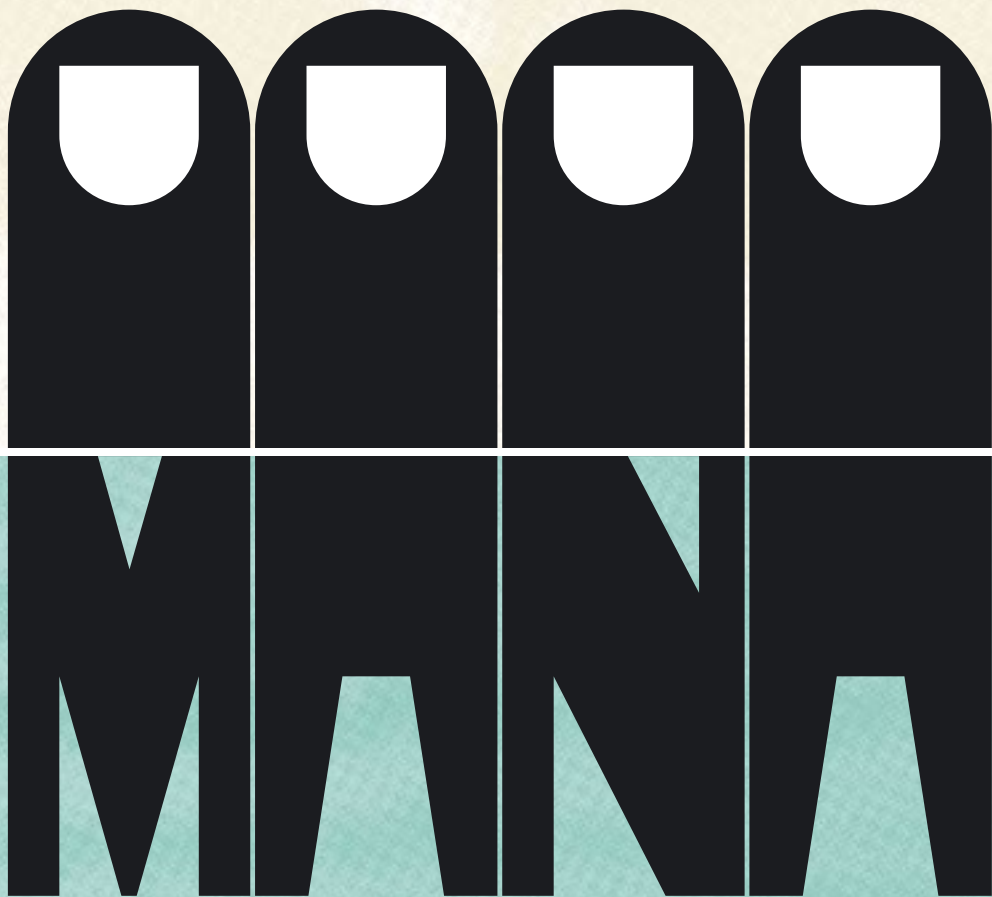


AN **EXILE FILMS** PRODUCTION

# THE FIERCEST GIRL GANG IN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH HISTORY



MANA

A FILM BY VALERIE KONTAKOS



KICKSTARTER  
FUNDED

**EXILE FILMS**



ουρασμένες από τις ζωντανές συγκινήσεις και το κοπιαστικό ταξίδι από την Χρυσοκελλαριά της Καλαμάτας στην  
θήνα, οι τέσσερες από τις εξη υποψήφιες μοναχές — οι αδελφές 'Αγγελόκη, η Ζαννή και η 'Αξιότη — κοιμώ  
ι, καθώς το αυτοκίνητον με το ποίον τις άγγενείς των χθές την νύκτα, στα πατρικά των σπ  
α, τρέχει με ιλιγγιώδη ταχύτητα στην λεωφόρον τέσσερις φέρουν το μοναχικόν σχήμα, που ποιός  
ρει αν θα καταλείφουν...

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

In 1962, a group of young women made headlines in Greece by running away to join a convent. Each time they were captured and sent back to their families, but they kept trying until they finally succeeded. Uninterested in praying all day, they started a shelter, providing a family for abandoned and abused children. Half a century later, the surviving founders are still running the Lyrio Children's Village without help from church or state, raising infants without a wedding band. This film tells the story of their vision and how they've changed the lives of more than 500 hundred children's so far - simply by taking their fate into their own hands.







## LONG SYNOPSIS

30km outside of Athens, at a mountaintop monastery overlooking the Aegean Sea, life is not as peaceful as it seems. The Agia Triada Monastery, better known as the Lyrio Children's Village, was founded in 1967 by six stubborn girls who had run away from home to become nuns five years earlier. Back then, young women didn't have many choices: they either had to get married and start a family or stay at home and help their parents. But this group of girlfriends from Piraeus decided to take life into their own hands and change the course of their future.

More than 45 years later, the nuns delve back into the memories of their rebellious youth, constantly surrounded by children who will sooner or later start a rebellion of their own. Before patching things up with their own families, the nuns were forced to live on the run, persecuted by their parents and the police, as not all of them were over the legal age limit of 21. Little by little, they managed to convince their parents their ultimate goal wasn't to isolate themselves from society and spend their days fasting and praying, but to start their own unconventional family.

That's how the idea of the Lyrio Children's Village first started taking shape, an establishment that has offered shelter to more than 500 abused and abandoned children so far. Organized in six stand-alone houses - each with a black-clad "mother" as the central figure - Lyrio has very little in common with your run-of-the-mill foster homes. Children are not separated from their siblings, nor do they have to leave the nuns' care once they reach 18. The only problem is that Lyrio's fate solely depends on the kindness of strangers, as it operates on private donations and has never been sponsored by church or state.

At seventy, Mother Superior - who spearheaded the girls' escape back in the 60s - bridges the past and the present, introducing us to their everyday lives through the stories of Nikos and Maria, two of the older children, who are about to leave the nest. Despite the pain of letting go, the nuns see their faith renewed every single day through the eyes of their children, even when they go against their will - just like they did with their own parents back in the day!





# MAIN CHARACTERS



## MOTHER SUPERIOR

Mother Superior is the leader of the pact. Also known as Gerontisa, she has the endless curiosity of a 5-year-old and maintains a constant fascination with the ways of the world. At 70-something, her agility does not match her wrinkles and her girlish laugh is a direct throwback to her teenage years, back when she first realized that the world, as she knew it, wasn't a place she could call her own. Which is why she and her best friends decided they were going to change it! Always ready to conquer new territory, Mother Superior is the kids' favorite and the driving force behind the survival and expansion of the Lyrio Children's Village.



## NIKOS

Along with his 4 siblings, Nikos has been living in Lyrio for the past 8 years. His father was a petty criminal and his mother had forced him and his siblings to beg on the streets. Once the court placed him under the nuns' care, he started a new life and now hopes to become a car mechanic. But the pull from his burdened past is still strong. At 19, his mother is eager to win him back so she can live off him, while his father – recently divorced from his second wife – is suddenly glad to have someone around. Only problem is, Nikos needs to finish high school first, and no one has any real interest in his future but the nuns. And they're losing their grip on him fast...



## MARIA

Maria and her twin brother were brought to the village by their mother, after she was abandoned by her philandering husband. Maria was the perfect child, demure and sweet-natured. At 25 she was introduced to a young priest-to-be and was instantly incorporated into his extended god-fearing family. Although heavily involved in the child-rearing process while still at Lyrio, Maria tended to blend into the background and never seemed to find her own voice. Now married and pregnant with her first child, she is a prime example that history is repeated, allowing the nuns' powerful influence to define her future - a trick their own parents' once tried on them.





# EXILE FILMS

Exile Films is an independent media arts company specializing in documentaries. We bring together and collaborate with filmmakers, writers, producers and broadcasters from various parts of the world to create films for international audiences. Valerie Kontakos has produced two 13-episode documentary series and a number of non-fiction shorts under different outfits over the past 2 decades. Exile Films, established in 2009, marks a new direction in her career, enabling her to produce projects under her own flag.

## VALERIE KONTAKOS

DIRECTOR

A native New Yorker, she moved to Athens in 2003. Upon finishing NYU film school she worked on features and commercials until she met and collaborated with David and Albert Maysles and decided to concentrate exclusively on documentaries. Her work has aired on PBS (USA), WNET (NY), ERT (Greece), YLE (Finland), EBS (Korea). Her films have been shown at various film festivals and her debut feature WHO'S ON FIRST? won best documentary at the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival in 2007. She has taught at Queens College, CUNY and is currently on the board of directors of the Greek Film Archive.

**A Quality of Light**, 61', doc (1990)

**City Dwellers**, 15', doc (2003)

**Who's on First**, 58', doc (2006)

**What's Eating Dimitri?** 52', doc (2006)

**From the Ground with Love**, 45', doc (2011)

**Volta**, 12', fiction short (2014), producer

**Mana**, 70' doc (2014)

## DESPINA PAVLAKI

PRODUCER

Born in Greece, she studied Communication and Mass Media in Athens and Documentary Filmmaking in Barcelona. After spending 10 years as a film critic in print and online publications, as well as a film programmer/coordinator in doc, fiction and animation festivals in Athens, Thessaloniki and Cyprus, she transitioned into documentary and has been exploring research and production ever since. She also maintains a semi-secret professional identity as a translator, film subtitlist and children's books author.

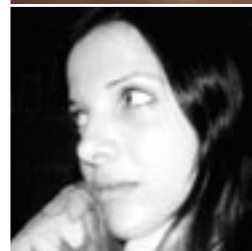
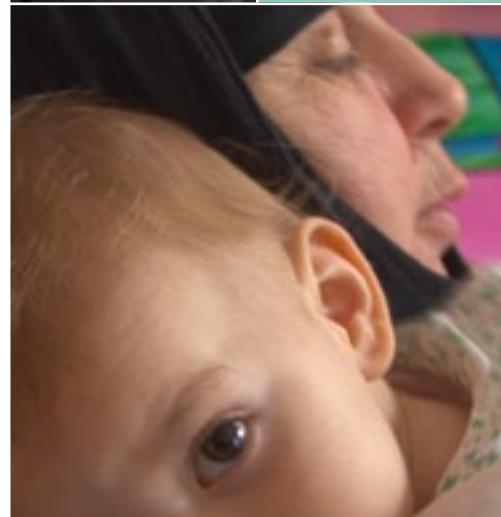
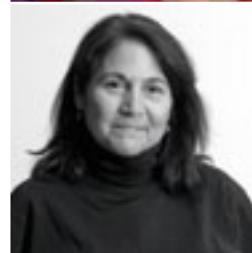
**Lost Bodies**, 33', doc (2011), associate producer

**Ecological Diaries** (documentary series)

- Used But Useful (2011), writer
- On the Road (2011), writer
- All in Our Hands (2011), writer
- Sowing the Seeds of Love (2011), writer

**Volta**, 12', fiction short (2014), producer

**Mana**, 70' doc (2014), producer



An **EXILE FILMS** Production



# MANA

70'

directors of photography PANTELIS MANTZANAS, GIANNIS MISOURIDIS editing DIMITRIS PEPONIS  
sound DIMITRIS KANELLOPOULOS sound design ALEXANDROS SIDIROPOULOS, ARIS LOUZOTIS  
sound re-recording mixer KOSTAS VARYBOPIOTIS music ELLY PASPALA executive producer KATHRYN HUNTER  
producers VALERIE KONTAKOS, DESPINA PAVLAKI written and directed by VALERIE KONTAKOS



Co-produced by



[www.manathemovie.com](http://www.manathemovie.com)

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info@exilefilms.gr +30 210 3223395 **Facebook** Mana-The Documentary **Twitter** ManaTheDoc