

# Coffee shops of the world



A CLASSIC PLACE TO MEET PEOPLE, CAFÉS ARE ALSO THE SUBJECT OF AN EXHIBITION IN NICOSIA

**N**ext weekend marks the start of a black and white photo exhibition, which takes viewers on a tour of coffee shops around the world. One such café is said to have provided the setting in which Jean Paul Sartre spawned his theory on existentialism, another reveals where you may have found the lost generation's Earnest Hemingway while he lived in Paris during the tumultuous sixties. Christina Drakou has seen fit to collate her coffee shop experiences for viewers to see how the island's favourite pastime is enjoyed across the world. Drakou is a conference and incentives organiser who, throughout her 24-year career, (in which she spends roughly 90 days a year on a plane), has been afforded the opportunity to travel the world. Visiting some of the most

prestigious and quirky and also offbeat coffee shops, Drakou now shares her experiences with us in an exhibition which donates all proceeds to the UN's High Commission For Refugees (UNCHR).

She says, "During my travels in the US, France and other countries, I happened to meet all kinds of people in coffee shops: people of the arts and letters as well as ordinary people and political refugees. Many of the memories I carry from these meetings have sensitised me to the plight of political refugees the world over. They gave me the desire to donate all proceeds from the sales of my photographs to support refugees and asylum seekers through the National Organisation for the Protection of Human Rights."

As an international businesswoman, coffeeshops provided a way in which



Drakou could relax and observe passers by during her busy routine. They also provided a commonality of place, whereby in whichever country she travelled, home away from home would be a café. She says, "A coffeeshop is an area where I can relax, meet people and even meditate if I feel the need. Also you can stay as long as you want. Each shop has its style and its clientele also. There are the regulars that you can meet, and also the clientele that are just passers by. Everything can happen in a coffee shop and also nothing."

Her collection of 38 photographs have been exhibited at the International Federation of the Art of Photography and in Austria, Slovakia, Australia, Brazil, Croatia, France, Italy, Scotland and China. The exhibition has also travelled to the Pan-Hellenic Photography Competition and at the

Finnish Biennial.

In it, her black and white photographs depict famous coffeeshops including ones in Constantinople and Paris. She photographs an old haunt of Agatha Christie's, which gave the famous detective author the inspiration for Hercule Poirot and there are also photos of Sartre's favoured Café de Floret and Hemingway's Aux Deux Magots.

Of her exhibition, she says, "Like every type of art, photography creates its own reality; it can pin down the tension of the moment with its unique directness,

vivacity and spontaneity.

"This time roaming the world, I photographed coffee shops in various parts of the planet. The coffee shop is a space for rendezvous, relaxation, isolation, dialogue, political ferment, company and meeting new people."

While the exhibition made its Cyprus première in Limassol last year, this is the first time it reaches Nicosia and it lasts for nine days only. You can see her collection at the Hilton Hotel (via the Othellos entrance) any time until February 5. ■

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### Coffee Shops Around The World

Photo exhibition depicting coffee shops around the world by Christina Drakou. January 28 until February 5. Hilton Hotel, Archbishop Makarios Ave III, Nicosia. Tel: 22-377777.