

## **We are building upon Sustainability by means of Art**

In the framework of the Erasmus + KA2 program entitled "Sustainability for Democracy - Democracy for Sustainability" and in view of the third mobility to Portugal, on "Democracy, Environment and Art", students and teachers of the 5th GEL of Veria participating in the program met artists and visited galleries in our city.



In particular, on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September the students had the opportunity to talk with the painter and Art teacher Fotini Hamidelieli. The painter communicated her experiences from her first steps in art to the students, comparing Art education in the USA with that in our country and noting the serious deficiency of aesthetic education in Greece. However, she encouraged young people to pursue art despite adversity. The discussion focused on the relationship between Democracy and Art and highlighted the social and educational nature of Art and its contribution to the development of democratic consciousness and social sensitivity. Reference was made to the notion of "woman" which inspired the painter and determined her position in the world. Regarding the relationship between the Environment and Art, the artist emphasized that it is a relationship of interaction, as the Environment is both a source of inspiration and a field of artistic creation. But she also shared with the students her concerns about the aesthetic abuse of the Environment by humans. In the end the students had the pleasure to ponder on Mrs Hamidelieli's original works and to "feel the breath" of a painting.



The next day on 27<sup>th</sup> September, students met Graffiti artist Elton Soulos. They initially expressed their concerns about 'Street Art', both in terms of its legitimacy and its relation to vandalism. Believing that public space is "our space", the artist spoke of the aesthetic intervention in the gray of the city: graffiti makes the walls speak and they even communicate ecological, social, political messages, sometimes making them travel in the form of the graffiti on trains. He is often called upon by municipal authorities to create graffiti in order to raise public awareness of issues such as racism. But he also expressed his distaste for any kind of vandalism, that against the monuments and even the graffiti itself. The students kept asking the artist questions related even with the graffiti on their desks or whether our bodies could be considered canvas. The meeting rounded up with a presentation of graffiti works from Greece and abroad, which are examples of "youth art", a form of democratic Art that transforms the urban environment.



On Sunday 29th September, the Erasmus team visited Papatzikou Gallery. There they were welcome with warm hospitality and met a hostess willing to discuss the problems of promoting Art. The students were intrigued to hear how a young artist finds a home in a gallery that, like that of Mrs Papatzikou's, promotes innovation instead of commercialisation. During the discussion it was evident that democracy in Art lies on the artist's contact with his time and on his social sensibilities. However, the goal remains the closer contact of the public with Art, especially of people living away from big cities. The ecological dimension of Art was also discussed, both in relation to the materials used by an artist (sometimes useless, recyclable materials, as in the case of arte povera), and in relation to the urban environment and the artworks in it - a typical example of Varotsos's work in the *Clock Square* in town. The visit rounded up with a tour of Potamianou's exhibition, whose works are displayed in the gallery these days. What the students have received can be summarized in Ms. Papatzikou's phrase: *"art is the little rock that makes the lake surface ripple"*