

Panos Papadopoulos

life journey - with passion as fuel

In the 1980s, he revolutionized the fashion for swimwear.

Now comes Panos Papadopoulos' autobiography. For GP, the swimsuit king tells about the "odyssey" of his life - from childhood in Greece to luxury fashion and eventually Gothenburg's restaurant scene.

not an ordinary biography. Book one certainly describes one human life as well as many others, but it's written in a different way. Some sentences are, for example, bold. They contain extra important lessons.

- The publisher did not like it. But I wanted it that way, says Panos Papadopoulos and smiles.

His answer describes him well, Panos must be allowed to be Panos. If people say "you can not do it" he does just the opposite: Start a fashion brand that delivers colorful swimwear in a gray Sweden in the 1980s, or write a book in three months.

Panos Papadopoulos started working as a teenager and quickly saw opportunities for improvement in his workplaces. In a shop, he reshuffled so that forgotten goods suddenly sold. He bought his clothes like everyone else in the kiosk on the corner. But no one else matched the pink shirt and green pants with a narrow belt. The sense of style and entrepreneurship was aroused and led him on. The road was not straight, people teased the determined young man who refused to give in.

- I want to create, I want to see, I do not want to stagnate, to be poor. But I have not sought to become very rich. I want it a little better in different ways and that means acting.

When you do that, you get a zest for life.

We sit on one of the green sofas at his restaurant Panos Panos tavern in Lorensberg. It's calm and quiet this Friday morning. The light filters in on the set tables where the now 64-year-old Panos Papadopoulos serves cinnamon bun.

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When I would go to the job I just sighed.

Panos Papadopoulos on the sale of Panos Emporio.

He moved to Gothenburg from Greece immediately after high school. The decision was made one afternoon when he was tired of the political situation in his home country. Between 1967 and 1974, the country was ruled by the dictatorship-like attitude of the Greek military junta.

When Papadopoulos was about to graduate, the junta had fallen, yet he ended up in a political conflict. He refused to pay for his diploma and accused the technical school where he studied corruption.

When it did not work, he contacted

media. It was not liked. Papadopoulos tells in his book how he was interrogated about alleged communist views and entered the police register. Then he chose to leave.

- When I started walking around Gothenburg, I fell in love. It felt like my soul had found a place to be. I had strong negative experiences as a child in Greece. For me, it was a relief to move from there.

Here it was order, greenery, no cars honking. In Greece, I always wondered why we have such chaos.

Panos Papadopoulos was born in 1950s Greece and grew up in what he describes as a poor family in an industrial area outside Athens. The parents worked inconvenient times and several jobs so that the three children would have food on the table. He tells of a hard upbringing that was filled with love and respect both from and to the parents. He quickly gained freedom.

- I took care of myself and they let me do what I wanted. It has helped me a lot in life, but I have taken responsibility for it as well. It has been obvious to me that you should know where you have me.

Basically, Papadopoulos talks a lot about three things: love, respect and passion. It is written on the walls inside the restaurant, and these are the three pillars of life, he says. In that way, all his ideas have gained a breeding ground.

The luxurious swimwear brand Panos Emporio was formed, for example, after a visit to Näset. A stark contrast to Greek, turquoise waves.

- I thought the water here was dirty, so I did not want to swim. Instead, I sat and watched people and everything was so gray, cut the pores, the water and the swimsuits were the answer. When I talked about the idea of making swimwear, people said "you are not smart, people do not bathe here". It's such a short bathing season. But the more people who said no, the more interested I became - as a child who has to prove to himself that it is possible.

Panos Emporio created a new swimwear. From small collections to great success. Pa

padopoulos worked for free in a factory to see how the work goes. He studied economics and learned about the industry. During the trip with the brand, he also tried to revive Miss Sweden again, and people were shocked when the swimsuit king wanted to remove the bikini moment. It also led to a dispute with Donald Trump who then worked with Miss Universe.

- The concept needed to be renewed and we were partially successful. The bikini section disappeared and we asked more political questions. But there was so much fiddle in the competition. Trump got mad at me for talking about what should change. But they did not dare to go all the way.

After three years, he stopped trying to come to life

Panos Papadopoulos



Name: Panagiotis "Panos" Papadopoulos.

Born: 1958 in Athens, Greece.

Family: Siblings and relatives in Greece, four children in Sweden.

Lives: Gothenburg.

Background: Grew up outside Athens. Moved to Sweden after high school and got stuck in Gothenburg. Has a university degree in technology, behavioral science and has also studied economics. In 1986, he founded the brand Panos Emporio, which still makes luxury swimwear, but the company and the brand sold Panos Papadopoulos in 2019. For 20 years, he also owned the Shock store, which was located at Brunns parken in Gothenburg. Since 2021, he runs the restaurant Panos Panos tavern in Lorensberg.

Current: With the autobiography "Panos - my life, my odyssey" which was published in May 2022.

About her relationship to food ... "Mom cooked and Dad took care of the grill when we had meat on the weekends. But I remember that she was careful that it would taste, even if it was only green beans or lentils on the table, it was made with love and it never tasted the same. You can season a little differently every day. And something has probably come from there. If I cook, I do not follow your recipes but just invent."

... and ouzo: "I like tequila the most, people think I should drink ouzo but unfortunately it does not suit me".

in Miss Sweden. During his career, adversity and success have often gone hand in hand. Another project that Papadopoulos would leave is the cult store Shock. Somewhat unexpectedly, he ran the store for about 20 years before it was closed this spring.

The most difficult thing, however, was to say goodbye to Panos Emporio. After 33 years, he sold the brand in 2019. Even today, it is hard to talk about

- I had lost inspiration, the zest for life with it. When I would go to work I just sighed, he says and strokes his hands over his face.

- I made the decision and did the whole deal

in a month. It went quickly. The feelings then came. I thought I could continue without him an operational role, but with new owners you go in different directions and it did not happen. It was very hard for a few years but now it has been released.

When you talk to Panos Papadopoulos, it's like listening to five people tell their own life stories. Opening a restaurant in Gothenburg was another dream come true last year. The restaurant received lukewarm reviews in GP. Despite that, he is noticeably proud.

- I did everything myself, did not want any design agency that decorated. Nobody thought my color choices were right, but it does benefit my eyes, he says and smiles.

- You get so questioned, it's very Nordic. And it is clear that it can be a stressful moment, that there is failure, spirit, tears, but there is joy and above all strong experiences in always challenging oneself.

It is also a trait he lacks in the Swedish labor market. Papadopoulos says that a passivity has started to appear for some time, which worries him.

- I lack passion, drive. Even if you are employed, you must want to come forward, dream of something: A better bike, a better dinner, whatever.

It also happens internationally, but earlier in Sweden because we have legislation that allows you to be a little relaxed.

It's a complicated issue that I'm curious about.

Do people dream too little?

- People have become more passive, but the question is for what reason? It is not a new DNA that has been created. We have been shaped by the atmosphere around us. We are not rich when it comes to the human side, it has become poorer. Money has also lost value. When I was growing up, people talked about pennies, then hundred bucks, thousand bucks... Today it is so abstract and we do not feel better, we do not get along better with each other as human beings.

He himself handles his "troubled soul" with several projects just in time for the publication of the autobiography, which he describes as "a love story to his life". Negotiations are underway for a sequel, as well as a possible film adaptation. In addition, he looks at new opportunities in the fashion world.

- I can not turn off the tap and have accepted that my life is like that. I do what comes to mind, then you get to see how it turns out, it's a feeling.



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