

NEON

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PRESS RELEASE

NEON presents the exhibition

space of togetherness

Curator | Elina Kountouri, Director NEON

Drama School of the National Theatre of Greece | School of Athens – Irene Papas

9 September – 20 October 2024

NEON presents the exhibition *space of togetherness*, at the Drama School of the National Theatre of Greece | School of Athens – Irene Papas from 9 September to 20 October 2024.

Curated by Elina Kountouri, Director NEON, the exhibition raises some of the most pressing issues facing Europe and the world today. Safety, wars, climate change, socio-political conditions but also global demographic and economic status push towards a movement of people, cultures and ideas and shape our world as a space of flows through the interaction and diversity of cultures. *space of togetherness* is an exhibition of stories from the intersection of race, politics, and the rights of individuals and communities.

The exhibition takes place in the premises of the Drama School of the National Theatre of Greece | School of Athens – Irene Papas. The School of Athens plays a vital role in the capital's cultural life as it serves as a hub of artistic practices while being an organic space where students and performers of different origins and social and cultural backgrounds coexist. Since its foundation in 1930 together with the National Theatre of Greece, the School of Athens serves as workshop dedicated to the creative exploration of the art of acting and an artistic educational institution that promotes pedagogy and liberal ideas.

Elina Kountouri, NEON Director and curator of the exhibition said: "*space of togetherness* proposes how artists, in the present moment, use their distinctive voices to engage society in shaping, questioning and re-examining how past histories are told. The works in this exhibition urge us to come together in a public space and contemplate present injustices for a fairer future. Cultural interaction and diversity give us an understanding of what the future will look like in a world shaped by these routes.

space of togetherness is presented in an emblematic space of the capital's cultural life, along with a public program, which will be an open, living laboratory that will bring together organizations, artists, academics, civil society activists and policy makers."

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The exhibition explores the assumptions and prejudices of contemporary society woven into our daily lives, around racism, social mobility, and the rights of different communities and migrants. It suggests how, through greater awareness of class, race, and gender, we can learn to co-exist and find a sense of belonging.

20 artists and artistic collectives, representing 13 countries, will present various artistic practices. It features recent and past works of Taysir Batniji, Enri Canaj, Døcumatism, Mona Hatoum, patricia kaersenhout, Menelaos Karamaghiolis, Bouchra Khalili, Grada Kilomba, Tarik Kiswanson, Sophie Kovel, Kalliopi Lemos, Malgorzata Mirga-Tas, Stella Nastou, Roussakis, Georgia Sagri, VASKOS, including five new works by Marianna Christofides, Maria Loizidou, Igshaan Adams, Antrea Tzourovits and Kostas Roussakis, especially commissioned for the exhibition.

During the exhibition, *space of togetherness* creates a unique living laboratory from the cohabitation of the activities of the Drama School, the exhibition and a versatile public programme, open to the public. The programme will include talks and discussions, guided tours, educational programmes for children and families, concerts, readings and performances. Nonprofit organizations, local communities, artists, academics, civil society activists and policy makers will be active participants.

In the left building, in the School's main auditorium, the scene is dominated by three works by the Moroccan-French artist **Bouchra Khalili**; a film, visual and sound work that captures her long-standing research on the movement of Arabs in Europe and in particular on the Arab Workers' Movement (Mouvement des travailleurs arabes_MTA) and its theatrical groups, Al Assifa ('The Tempest' in Arabic) and Al Halaka ('The Circle' or 'The Assembly' in Arabic). Behind the amphitheater, a poem by the Portuguese artist **Grada Kilomba**, presented in a spatial and sound installation, draws on memory, trauma, gender, and postcolonialism, interrogating concepts of knowledge, power, and violence.

The area is dominated by the salt hill made by the Dutch artists patricia kaersenhout. they draw on memory, trauma, gender, and postcolonialism, interrogating concepts of knowledge, power, and violence. Their work is a tribute to enslaved people. Polish Małgorzata Mirga-Tas's vibrant textile collages collages from the perspective of her Roma roots and the rich cultural heritage of her community. Kalliopi Lemos' sculpture refers to gender equality, while Sophie Kovel's works considers the civic sphere and its current erosion by "ethno-nationalist" fascist politics.

The new commission to Kostas Roussakis dominates the courtyard of the Drama School of the National Theatre of Greece. It is a 27-metre-long table with 90 stools. Each stool bears a letter, and these all form four verses from the poem *Touching this Youthfulness* by the poet Nikos Karouzos. A symbol of coexistence, which will host the public talks within the public programme of the exhibition.

In the School's corridor, the hand-woven installations by Cypriot artist Maria Loizidou emphasize collective, personal and diasporic histories. Døcumatism, a collective of filmmakers, artists, curators, historians, social workers, researchers and educators active in the neighborhood of Kypseli, present in the two opposite rooms the AfroGreeks, an ongoing community project about the African Diaspora in Greece.

On the first floor, the sound work by Marianna Christofides, *Restory(ing) Waters* -a new commission- is a collaboration with the Melissa Network, a non profit institution for Migrant Women in Athens, composer and performer Savina Giannatou and composer Stavros Gasparatos. Next to her second work, *Rivers, Banks*, a long curtain draws limits and borders.

On the wall, photographic diptychs by VASKOS test the limits of traditional identity, photographs by Enri Canaj follow the journey of the movement of refugees and immigrants, drawings and images by the Palestinian artist Taysir Batniji give visuals of reality, photographic snapshots by Stella Nastou capture the poetic dimension of water in transportation, works by patricia kaersenhout and Maria Loizidou focus on the female role in different survival conditions. Two carpets of different materials by Mona Hatoum depict the hardness and control systems within a society, while the sculptural installation by the Swedish artist Tarik Kiswanson refers to the transformation of nature and history.

In the adjacent room, South African artist Igshaan Adams creates an amalgam using his past works and a new commission where he blends hand-woven installations and tapestries with performances, which will take place in situ.

On the right side of the Drama School, Antrea Tzourovits, born in the former Yugoslavia, creates a new work combining sound and a wall installation. Next to him, Maria Loizidou, also on a new commission, extends the life of her family's personal plants and creates a 'migratory garden', which will remain on site, in partnership with Papigion project.

In the interior, Georgia Sagri presents an ongoing research project based on breath and recovery, while Menelaos Karamanghiolis, member of the Døcumatism team, presents the video installation *Singing in Athens*, an ongoing project, in an unpredictable Athens in turmoil.

diaNEOsis, Melissa Network, Dipylon, Døcumatism, Drama School of the National Theatre of Greece | School of Athens – Irene Papas, Hellenic Children's Museum, EIGHT / TO OXTΩ, Papigion project, TAVROS, Fulbright Greece participate in the exhibition's public program.

The first week of the program is dedicated to the exhibiting artists, where the exhibition's curator Elina Kountouri will discuss with artists Igshaan Adams, Bouchra Khalili, Grada Kilomba, Kalliopi Lemou and Maria Loizidou together with Achilleas Chariskos, representing the Papigion project.

The weekly program of events will be uploaded on neon.org.gr

In the context of *space of togetherness* NEON has renovated several spaces at the Drama School in accordance with its principle of creating and gifting infrastructure to all its selected venues and opening to the public unexpected spaces of cultural importance.

Special thanks to the National Theatre of Greece for giving us access to the School of Athens – Irene Papas



space of togetherness

Drama School of the National Theatre of Greece | School of Athens – Irene Papas

Pireos 52, Piraeus

9 September – 20 October 2024

Opening hours:

Wednesday & Sunday | 11:00 – 19:00

Thursday, Friday & Saturday | 12:00 – 20:00

Free Entrance

More information at neon.org.gr

NOTES TO EDITORS

NEON is a nonprofit organization that works to bring contemporary culture closer to everyone. It is committed to broadening the appreciation, understanding, and creation of contemporary art in Greece and to the firm belief that this is a key tool for growth and development. NEON, founded in 2013 by collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, breaks with the convention that limits the contemporary art foundation of a collector to a single place.

NEON's space is the city. It acts on a multitude of initiatives, spaces, and civic and social contexts. It seeks to expose the ability contemporary art has to stimulate, inspire, and affect the individual and society at large. NEON constructively collaborates with cultural institutions and supports the programs of public and private institutions to enhance increased access and inventive interaction with contemporary art.

Drama School of the National Theatre of Greece | School of Athens – Irene Papas is located on 52 Pireos Street housed within a building complex which is representative of the early 20th century industrial architecture in the city. In 1997 it was declared a listed building as part of the conversion program of Piraeus Street into a cultural axis. The building's strategic location, versatile functions – a factory of the chemical and pharmaceutical company "Sanitas", warehouses of public institutions – and rich history cultivate 'a space of togetherness'.

Pireos Street, spanning 9 km, historically connected the center of Athens and its port Piraeus, and played a crucial role in the city's urban development. It was initially planned in the 1830s as part of Athens' new urban design, becoming the route to Piraeus port, encompassed by the ruins of the ancient "Long Walls," which once fortified this path. Until the early 19th century, the surroundings of the road were dotted with olive groves. With the city's urban growth, industries emerged in the end of 19th and early 20th century, marking the birth of the Greek industry. These included chemical, metal, textile and food industries, technical workshops and warehouses, some continuing their operations until the late 1990s or even today. The area has witnessed population movements driven by employment opportunities in the burgeoning industrial landscape with local, refugee and migrant working-class populations settling in the vicinity.

In the mid-90s, celebrated Greek actress Irini Papa initiated partial renovations of the buildings, envisioning a theatre and a drama school. Architect Manos Perrakis bridged early 20th century industrial architecture with a modern theatre facility. Since 2018, the National Theatre of Greece Drama School has been located there, hosting numerous theatrical performances. Since 2018-2019 academic year, the Department of Directing was also put into operation at the same time.

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