

## GREEK ART IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY

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I come from Greece, a country where nothing is coherent and consistent any more. So, in order to survive a crisis situation what people around me need the most is to articulate a new narrative for themselves, one that will make sense. It all starts when everything collapses, really.

Our national identity (are we still Europeans? Are we less Europeans?), our social cohesion (this crisis is in fact a violent redistribution of wealth and a social class war above everything else), loss of self-esteem (unemployment rising, reaching a phenomenal 90% in theatre sector!) every day life shattered (demonstrations, universities shut down, the city of Athens has turned into a relic/ a reminiscent of what used to be my town of birth), infrastructures destroyed (education, health system, etc). In the end, our very political system, democracy fails us, if we think for instance the upraise of the Golden Dawn party and the violation of our Constitution (The Greek Parliamentarians have recently voted for what they called "Multiple Legislations", variant laws of about 600 pages ranging from pensions to pharmaceutical industry legislations ALL IN ONE vote and without giving MPs sufficient time to read it and only 3 hours discussion in the Parliament.

In the Art industry, subsidies stopped entirely (since 2011), heavy taxation was imposed on non-profit companies (even if a company has no activities at all they now have to pay 1,000 Euro per year!). Greek National TV and Radio Channel were forced to shut down for the first time (it wasn't even shut during the 70's dictatorship). Institutionalised art took over, lobbying and monopolies and a kind of undercover neo-liberal censorship was established in Greece, a country proud to have invented theatre, freedom of speech and democracy.

This censorship and oppression is not openly exercised for everyone to see, but it is still there with alternative means to terrorise and undermine independent Art sector. Last May (2013) Giorgos Kaminis, the Mayor of Athens (who has been re-elected last month) threatened to shut down all independent spaces in Athens based on an existing "security and safety legislation" that dates back in the 40's. He actually realised this threat last May by sending out official notifications by the Municipality of Athens (in charge of all technical departments related to theatre licenses) to almost all independent spaces in Athens! These notifications had specific dates for the closure of the spaces and due to high fines and pressure; some independent venues were forced to shut down.

Thanks to the reactions of the independent sector, Mr. Kaminis halted the process of official sealing. He also, brought in parliament in a "state of urgency" a new law (even vaguer than the old one) without prior dialogue with interested parts. This law was voted in parliament and the press celebrated as a victory the fact that companies can now perform anywhere they want (on terraces, in old buildings, outdoors, etc.) with a temporary permission that is granted by the municipality itself (!).paying no attention to the fact that no amendments were introduced for the licensing regulations for the existing theatres.

Yesterday, the recently re-elected notorious mayor (Mr. Kaminis) has moved on with the plan of shutting down all independent theatres and braking down independent art production in Athens. Just yesterday, he stuck on the front doors of 150 (!) - imagine 150!! theatres in Athens, that means almost ALL independent spaces- a notification of closure. The mayor is enforcing independent theatres to remain closed and cancel all winter programming. August is a month when people in independent and public sector are on a holiday. One can't even get a lawyer or, even worse, contact the municipality to understand what has to be done! And of course, most spaces are closed for summer holidays. It is important for the foreign community to support us, as this kind of politics will result in total institutionalisation of the Arts and suppress free-thinking guaranteed by the independent sector. This is serious provocation for the Arts terrorizing artists to think twice before they speak freely.

[Vyrsodepseio](#) is a grass root project that sprung as a reaction to the question: "how to produce art in "difficult times"? It became an evolving project for horizontal politics, networking, of synergies and co-operations. Today, it constitutes a platform/network of about 400 artists/activists/volunteers.