

Thermia

PROJECT

THERMIA PROJECT 2026

Convivial Gestures

- 📌 Exhibition Opening: July 4, 19:00 – 22:00
- 📌 Duration: July 4-19, 19:00 – 22:00
- 📌 Venue: Primary School of Chora, Kythnos
- 📌 Curated by: Odette Kouzou
- 📌 Admission: Free

Thermia Project presents the group exhibition of contemporary art *Convivial Gestures*, the outcome of the artist residency programme, which took place on the island of Kythnos for the fifth consecutive year in May 2026. Artists Kyveli Zoi, Yiannis Malinakis and Polina Miliou developed new works in dialogue with everyday life on the island and its forms of social coexistence. The exhibition will be hosted at the Primary School of Chora, Kythnos, from the 4th to the 19th of July 2026, curated by Odette Kouzou, with free admission for the public.

The exhibition of Thermia Project, titled *Convivial Gestures*, turns its gaze toward the gestures of everyday coexistence that shape the social and cultural fabric of Kythnos. The starting point of the artistic research lies in the practices of leisure, recreation, and social gathering that develop in both public and private spaces, such as meetings at the café, spontaneous gatherings in the alleys and squares, festivals, local celebrations, shared routes, moments of rest, music, and entertainment. These constitute forms of intangible cultural heritage that are transmitted experientially from generation to generation and continue to organise the daily life of the island. In a place where memory and tradition coexist with the contemporary conditions of island life, these practices function as carriers of collective identity, social cohesion, and shared experience. The artists, Kyveli Zoi, Yiannis Malinakis, and Polina Miliou, investigate and reinterpret these forms of sociability, seeking the ways in which people form communities, share experiences, and shape relationships with place and with one another. The exhibition proposes a dialogue between art, everyday life, and collective memory, examining how small gestures of coexistence can function as vehicles of cultural continuity and social connection.

Kyveli Zoi's paintings move between the "real" and the "dreamlike," highlighting relationships between human communities and their environment. Drawing inspiration from music, history, and everyday moments on the island, she develops a visual language marked by a strong sense of theatricality, where the everyday acquires a poetic dimension and is transformed into scenes of shared experiences and narratives.

During her stay in Kythnos, the artist focuses on spontaneous forms of social coexistence unfolding in the island's public spaces: elderly people gathering in the alleys, young people

participating in traditional dances, and small, unexpected encounters of everyday life. In her works, these scenes are rendered through a romantic and at times nostalgic gaze, where landscape, people, and imagery are interwoven, creating a sense of a summer memory. Music, local traditions, public space, and the particular relationship between the daily lives of the inhabitants with the land and sea constitute the field of her research, through which she captures how places are shaped by collective experiences and the stories people share.

In Yiannis Malinakis' works, the contrast between internalised loneliness and the desire for social connection is particularly pronounced. Human figures appear at times enlarged and at others distorted, as if oscillating between isolation and participation in collective experience. Scenes of music, friendship, and social life coexist within an intermediate space between the imaginary and the real, where the familiar borders on surrealism, acquiring an enigmatic dimension.

A characteristic element of his practice is the use of symbolism drawn from mythology, folk tradition, and local narratives. Through these references, the artist brings the past into dialogue with the present, composing images that connect memory, history, and the natural environment. During his stay in Kythnos, his research is enriched by new experiences and stories of the place, which are organically incorporated into his visual universe.

In her works, Polina Miliou approaches the architectural and social landscape of Kythnos through the transformation of "humble" materials, found objects, and neglected items, such as chairs or other familiar utilitarian objects that evoke moments of everyday life. Drawing from the practice of reuse, she collects objects that have been abandoned or discarded due to age or obsolescence and reintegrates them into the present, creating new associations. Through this process, the everyday acquires a sculptural presence, where the past and the present coexist.

At the same time, the artist draws inspiration from the custom of the "Easter Swing", a celebration that takes place in Kythnos on Easter Sunday and Easter Monday and has long served as a place of gathering and entertainment. The "Swing," which was once located in the village squares and functioned as a point of communication for the island's youth, symbolises the joy of togetherness and the collective experience of celebration. Miliou, exploring the unpredictable transformation of the materials, reinterprets this element through a sculptural version of the swing, incorporating into the very material of the seat the flowers that traditionally adorn it. The work recalls the festive and ritual character of the custom, while simultaneously highlighting the significance of communal practices that continue to bring people together.

Thermia Project is a contemporary art initiative implemented by the nonprofit organisation CAP Collective for Visual Arts and Dance Performance and Research. The programme aims to cultivate a dialogue between contemporary and folk art, while supporting emerging Greek artists through residencies, exhibitions, and educational activities.

The project is made possible through the financial support of the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Thermia Project Patronage Programme.

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