

WE STAND WITH GIORGOS GAVRIEL: against the censorship imposed by the national mainstream (Online Article)

Historical Note

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Content

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The closure of the exhibition by the artist Giorgos Gavriel, just one day after its opening in Paphos, was the result of the hate campaign launched in recent days by MPs and officials of ELAM and DISY, aided by other far-right elements on social media.

The exhibition, titled Antisystemic Art, was opened yesterday, Saturday 13 December, and was marked by the intervention of three individuals who entered the exhibition space and took down works by the artist.

In recent days, Efthymios Diplaros and Marios Pelekanos, as self-appointed inspectors of artistic creation and guardians of moral order, once again attempted to demonise the artist. They appealed to the most conservative sections of society and should be held responsible for enabling the death threats that the gallery owner and his family have received during the last hours. Indeed, while individuals are receiving threats to their lives, the fascist ELAM today called on the Chief of Police to initiate criminal proceedings against the artist, while Nikolas Papadopoulos also launched attacks against him in a post.

It should also be noted that what Efthymios Diplaros presented as a painting is in fact a collage of various selected works by Gavriel, created in order to construct his own narrative and to achieve the mobilisation of the far right.

This is not the first time that Gavriel's works have been targeted by fascist elements. We recall that in 2021, the then Minister of Education, Prodromos Prodromou, after failing in his attempt to punish Gavriel as an artist for his work, ordered disciplinary proceedings against him in his capacity as a teacher and headteacher for "inadequate performance of duties", on the grounds that he allegedly did not promote Greek-Christian ideals.

The fascists' allergy to the arts is not a Cypriot invention; they are merely imitating their like-minded counterparts in Greece. In 2025, theatrical performances by the comedian Christoforos Zaralikos were cancelled in Greece, likewise on the grounds that they were deemed offensive to the "divine", while an MP from a nationalist parliamentary party destroyed artworks inside the National Gallery.

We stand in solidarity with Giorgos Gavriel and with the wider artistic community, which has recently been subjected to increasing attempts at censorship. There is a thread that connects censorship of speech and the arts with the murder of migrants at the borders, the militarisation of the state apparatus, rampant corruption, the extreme impoverishment of the population, and, more generally, the devaluation of our lives in every aspect.

The more our lives are stolen from us—through meagre wages, precarity and the rising cost of living—the more the economic elite and their political representatives feed society with xenophobia, nationalism and conservatism. Giorgos Gavriel is being targeted because his art, as the title of his exhibition itself suggests, highlights the social injustices of a rotten system and exposes those who defend it.

Once again, we are called upon to stand up and defend the right to artistic expression as a democratic right, as well as our free choice to view and study works that do not please the national “saviours”.

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