Theo Prodromidis, Alăgam frate, tu tuti părțâli (We're running, brother, in all directions)

new commission

“We're running, brother, in all directions!” is a new work by Theo Prodromidis realized with tranzit ro/Iași in the frame of the project Institution(ing)s. At this moment it consists of four aluminum plaques of 15 x 20 x 1,5 cm, on which one can read the inscription (*“Alăgam frate tu tuti părțâli (We run, brother, in all directions)* in Aromanian/Vlach language. This is a Romance language spoken by communities historically dispersed throughout the Balkans and former Ottoman Empire territories - written in Latin alphabet. One of the plaques was installed in August 2025 in the village of Vrysochori, Greece and one is installed on the building where tranzit.ro/Iași is located and open to the public starting with 6th of November 2025.

In Iași, the plaque is accompanied by two photographs from Vrysochori. The first photograph, taken in August 2025, depicts teenagers gathering in the main square of the village. Behind them stands a multifunctional building that serves as both the village council headquarters and post office. On its wall, next to the post box, one can distinguish the installed plaque mentioned above. The second photograph was taken by Theo Prodromidis during his visit to Vrysochori after returning from Iași in May 2025. It shows a silver gelatin print from approximately the 1920s depicting the peak Tsouka Rossa (2,379 m) on Mount Tymfi in the Zagori region, part of the Ioannina regional unit in Epirus, Greece.

This work came into being as a proposition that followed a one month residency of Theo Prodromidis in Iași in May 2025. It engages with the 'question of instituting' as explored in the Institution(ing)s project - examining how institutions emerge from and shape our understanding of blood (lineage, heritage, belonging), identity (both personal and collective), movement (migration, displacement, return), and territory (both physical and cultural boundaries). The work approaches these interconnections from the unique vantage point that Iași provides, given its complex historical and geopolitical position.

The use of Aromanian/Vlach language in a conceptual art work bridges cultural histories across modern nation-states, raising questions about why such linguistic identities endure or transform in our contemporary world.

Why Iași? Why now?

In this text, we aim to pose questions and provide background rather than offering definitive answers or interpretations of artistic and curatorial gestures. Our goal is to expand this work's potential to become active towards destabilizing the status quo of ready made imaginaries. Thus, our motivation—as a small-scale curated organization based at the current EU Eastern border, in the city of Iași—for engaging in this complex process with Theo Prodromidis is to first create an imaginary map that can soon become real, simply through placement of plaques across different locations.

What are cultural institutions, and how do we (re)create them amid today's international tensions—caught between neoliberalism, globalization, nationalism, and protectionism? What is culture, and what role should it play as we try to make sense of the social and political forces that are tearing our societies apart? With rising militarization and austerity sweeping across continental Europe, a growing urgency emerges: if we wait too long, these questions may only be answered by those wearing military uniform.

But how can we treat these issues in their concrete immediacy and not as abstract concepts, so not as mere statistical data but as the lived experiences of real people, actual interests and of the interactions between them? How do we design concrete situations in which to test these pressing big questions? What does “property”, “territory”, “migration”, "dispossession" or “exile” actually mean and how is our sense of belonging influenced by these? What is the “right of self-determination” or what is the “right to return”? How can we continue to connect to a place that is a few hundred or even a few thousands kilometers away? How do economic factors play out in shaping cultural

constructs such as identity, ethnicity, nationality? And can we experimentally test new answers to such pressing old questions by means of a cultural or artistic intervention?

So far, cultural institutions have been unable to collectively respond and address the structural foundation of these issues. While most of these operate locally, regionally and nationally, transnational configurations have been difficult to sustain both conceptually and infrastructurally. But can we seriously address these issues without proper institutions to sustain this effort?

Bordering an active military conflict area in Europe (the full scale invasion of Ukraine) and being in the proximity of Republic of Moldova and its frozen conflict in Transnistria (Pridnestrovie, Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic) tranzit ro/Iași is technically based at the border of the EU and NATO. Starting from this very contemporary situation, we aim to revisit the complicated question of "territory". The possibility of violence possesses a very particular, pragmatic sensitivity towards imagining a future Europe that is even more fragmented and tormented, one in which social relations are increasingly shaped in national terms. Together with Theo Prodromidis, we acknowledge the necessity to run new scripts, various scenarios that are born of histories of people caught in the tumult of economical and political processes.

Why Vrysochori?

The important dynamic within the map of the "cultural territory" that Theo is attempting to draw and possibly expand beyond national and ethnic identities, borders or established consent is created with the help of one detail in his biography. That is the village of Vrysochori - a Vlach village in Epirus, on Greek mountain ranges, where his maternal great-grandfather was born but from which he moved back and forth within what was then the Ottoman Empire .

Navigating the protocols of hospitality, Theo Prodromidis went back to the village that is encountered now as "the only place where everybody knows me and also knows my mother". He was joined by the two curators, who instantly became "the Romanians" in the context of the village. Located on an altitude of 1157 m (3799 ft) above sea-level, in the Vikos-Aoos National Park and 5 km from Aoos/Vjosa River, one of the last free-flowing wild rivers in Europe, the village still seems to give you an idyllic image of what is traditionally known for transhumant pastoralism (seasonal movement with livestock between fixed summer and winter locations), but this would only essentialise the more diverse economic activities of Vlach communities in Ottoman Empire and contemporary Greece.

Having only 8 permanent inhabitants during winter, the village seemed full of social life in the middle of August, close to the Vrysochori Panagia Celebration. Many generations of descendants are traveling from places such as Ioanina (capital of Epirus, Northern Greece), but also from the big cities of Greek diaspora such as London, in order to reunite for this celebration. One of the most important meeting places in the evenings was: "At Kosta's - Cafe-Grocery Store-Grill" is where "The Romanians" were offered coffee and souvlaki, while being faced with an oral version of a language that they could not always understand. But they were always welcomed or departed with: "Ziua Buna!" (Good day) or "Buna Noapte" (Good night). The square with the Vrysochori Community building where the plaque was installed since August 2025 is just behind the bar and every evening becomes full of kids and teenagers socialising late in the evening, while the height and darkness of the mountain are isolating this temporary community in the middle of nature.

"We're running, brother, in all directions!" could resonate across the scattered communities where this Eastern Romance language is spoken in Romania, Greece, the Republic of North Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Serbia. The series of four copies was produced in Iași, serving both as a pretext and reminder of Theo Prodromidis's heritage - connecting to how his maternal great-grandfather would move back and forth between Vrysochori and Asia Minor during Ottoman times. They were created in collaboration with two artisans (Romeo Ostan and Dumitru Mitica Dinca): one who typically produces wooden artifacts for churches and monasteries, and another who usually makes aluminum pots from recycled scrap. These three professionals left their personal imprints on the final objects, giving them their very specific characteristics. A common denominator in the working process with the other two professionals was the Greek language with which they were also connected via work immigration history. At the moment, according to Eurostat, in 2025, within the EU, Romania has 16% (3.1 million people) of its working-age

population living abroad for employment purposes, while, for reference, Greece has 3.9% (412,000) and Germany 0.9% (715,000). Romania ranks first and Germany ranks last in this labor migration survey, reflecting economic patterns that continue to echo the sentiment “We're running, brother, in all directions!” in contemporary terms.

As a counterpoint to this image of the romanian labour migrant that equips itself with new languages according to the place of migration, we - strangely enough - encounter the image of the Romanian immigrant to Greece, in the `80s through the lyrics of the song of Lena Platonos:

"How I love to hear people going up in the elevator
And speaking Romanian
One afternoon, the Romanian's son lost his little chicken
He knocked on all the doors and his big eyes
As they searched in vain seemed like funnels
Through which anyone
Could proclaim human rights
How I love to hear people going up in the elevator
And speaking Romanian
And one night while I was looking at the arched balconies of Elena's maternity hospital
I heard the sound of a piano
One of the Romanians was habitually playing the same piece
And was again transforming the municipalities of the American Embassy
Was transforming them again into a caress
How I love to hear people going up in the elevator
And speaking Romanian
One noon, bent over and anonymous
In the dark corridors of an apartment building
I heard them speaking Romanian
As they went up in the elevator, speaking Romanian
And then I sang
How I love to hear people going up in the elevator
And speaking Romanian"
(Automatic translation from Greek to English)

Some of us, would easily understand that these were different kind of immigrants, that are more likely middle class trying to escape authoritarian socialist Romania of the 80`s, but the habit of introducing the notion of class is less present nowadays, leaving much place for discussion about embodied experiences of language that travel across borders and class boundaries. Whether this is a useful vehicle or not, remains to be decided. Similarly with the lyrics of the song by Lena Platonos, Prodromidis`s work may create moments of unexpected linguistic intimacy.

That is the position from which he tries to assemble the possibility of other relations or even alter the ones cemented in blood, land and beliefs. He travels carrying, among other things, an art object from which he departs in an unilateral gesture inscribed in the act of donation, entering thus in the realm of “rights” that are defined universally as being won by people, but “given” by the state.

Reading the inscription in Vrysochoriy on Theo Prodromidis' work means something else than it does when we read it in Iasi. „We're running, brother, in all directions!” But in what direction are we running? Are we running towards something fueled by our own desires and expectations? Or, instead, we are running away out of necessity. There is an urgency that is associated with this last option that can be explained by some sort of violence: economic violence or other sorts of associated political violence, hence a discernible need to survive.

Text by Livia Pancu and Florin Bobu, November 2025

Work Credit
Theo Prodromidis
“Alăgam frate tu tuti părțâli (We run, brother, in all directions), Vrysochori Community Building, Zagori”
2025
Archival print
120x80cm

Photo Credit
Theo Prodromidis, *“Alăgam frate tu tuti părțâli (We run, brother, in all directions), Vrysochori Community Building, Zagori”, 2025, courtesy of the artist*

Work Credit
Theo Prodromidis
“In front of Tsouka Rossa”
2025
Archival print
105x70cm

Photo Credit
Theo Prodromidis, *“In front of Tsouka Rossa”, 2025, courtesy of the artist*

Theo Prodromidis (b. 1979, Thessaloniki, Greece) is a visual artist based in Athens. He studied Contemporary Media Practice at the University of Westminster and graduated with an MFA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths in 2007, London, UK. Theo's artistic research and practice on performativity, participation and citizenship has been activated in both institutional and non- formal spaces of knowledge, action and exhibition. He has participated in international exhibitions in galleries, museums and festivals, including Callirrhoe, Victoria Square Project, GMK Zagreb, 3rd Biennale of Industrial Art, Furtherfield Gallery, Galerija Nova, State of Concept Athens, 1st and 5th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, 4th Athens Biennale, etc. In 2020-21 he presented "An Album for Our Square", supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Public Humanities Initiative (SNFPHI) at Columbia University and was an AFIELD fellow. His artistic research has been supported by the Ministry of Culture and Sport, and he also participated, through the production of new artwork, in the project "Communities of Learning, Bridging the Gap of Isolation", an initiative of WHW with the support of the Culture of Solidarity Fund of the European Cultural Foundation. In 2023 he was a guest artist at the Department of Public Activities of the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid. For 2024-2025, he was a resident artist at the ArtExplora festival in the Mediterranean and he is currently developing a new body of work for tranzit ro/Iași in the framework of Institution(ing)s.

This project is realised in the frame of *Institution(ing)s*

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