Translation of the interview published in 'TA NEA' weekend edition on Saturday October 18th, 2025:

When he was born on May 20, 1967, no one could have imagined that he would be the last person ever born on the then royal estate of Tatoi. Today, 58 years later, as the estate, after decades of abandonment, is preparing to be "revived" and open to the public in 2026 (according to official announcements from the Ministry of Culture), Pavlos de Grèce speaks to the daily newspaper "TA NEA" about what he "remembers" of Tatoi, about the family stories and the notable figures his relatives once told him had passed through the living room of the so-called palace, about his impressions when he visited the house where he was born, and what he expects to see as it is transformed into a museum.

He welcomes us into his modest office on the lower part of Herodou Attikou Street, just a short walk from the Panathenaic Stadium. Dominating the wall is a large black-and-white photograph taken by his brother, Nikolaos. On the glass table sits a white porcelain mug decorated with a vivid blue pattern, which, as he explains, is a combination of the initials of his name and those of his wife, Marie-Chantal. After the initial handshake and once the notes and necessary equipment on both sides are arranged, the conversation begins with how he approaches the fact that a space so private to him—his birthplace—is soon to become accessible to everyone.

"I left Tatoi when I was seven months old, so I never had the chance to truly live in our house, like my father or my ancestors did. I'm glad that it will reopen to the public and that people will get a sense of what this family represented, a family that was a significant part of our history. On the other hand, of course, I feel a touch of sadness because this house, our family home, is no longer ours. I use the word 'house' intentionally and not 'palace', as it's often called, because I want to be precise. This house was built by my great-grandfather, King George I, and Queen Olga, as a countryside retreat. Later, people started calling it a 'palace' because the kings spent much of their time there. But if you see it up close, you'll understand it was truly a house, not a palace—beautiful furniture, yes, but without excess. There was nothing 'royal' in terms of luxury. It was a family home," he replies.

Although the photos he has from Tatoi show him as a baby in his father's arms, such as during the presentation of a gift offered by the armed forces to the heir to the throne, or others taken in front of the living room fireplace with the entire family (soap bubbles were used behind the camera in that shot to attract his and his older sister Alexia's attention), his actual memories are non-existent. However, the image he encountered during his first visit in 1981, for his grandmother Frederica's funeral, was exactly as

it had been on December 13th, when the family hurriedly left for Rome after the failed counter-coup against the colonels' junta.

"We left without taking anything with us. The house remained exactly as it was that day. It was very emotional. It felt like we had just left the day before: a little dust covering things, but everything in its place: the toothbrush, the glass on the nightstand, and personal belongings. The impression was that the owner had just stepped out to buy cigarettes," he says, while searching his phone for some photos he had taken: his mother's wardrobe with the dresses still hanging, the shoes in their place, the stroller he was taken around in, a storage room with baby care products meant for him, and his sister holding her childhood photos.

"Inevitably, you feel overwhelmed by nostalgia when you see in front of you the things that were once only described: the spaces, the objects, the corners of the house. I remember my parents telling me that there was always music playing, mostly classical, and especially on weekends they would open the windows so it could be heard all the way out to the garden, where everyone would sit together. My mother, for example, told me she loved walking in the garden but didn't like the swimming pool because she found it too deep. My sister, who was two years old when we left, remembered that the carpet in the playroom was green," he continues.

From both that first visit and the second, and final, one in 1993, were you tempted to take anything as a keepsake?

'What could one take? We took two or three small things, mainly for sentimental reasons. I remember a calendar with photos of my parents, frozen in time: on December 13, 1967. It was as if time had stopped on that day. I think we still have it at home. We didn't take anything more. By the second visit, most items had already been packed into boxes, and we didn't want to take anything that no longer belonged to us.'

Will the opening of the palace as a public exhibition space surprise you, or have you already worked with officials from the Ministry of Culture on the final outcome?

'I believe that the Minister of Culture, Mrs. Lina Mendoni, has done an outstanding job. She genuinely cares for the estate, has embraced it, and has personally contributed to its preservation, even when the project seemed overwhelming. She clearly acts with care and dedication. No, we were not consulted on how the museum would be organized or operated, but my mother and my aunts visited Tatoi with the Minister and a team from the Ministry to provide some information and descriptions of how the house was arranged. I think that visit was simply to give the Ministry a first-hand impression of the place, nothing more.'

Did you have a personal vision for Tatoi?

'Of course. I had a very specific idea in mind, which I also discussed with my late father. I wanted something similar to what has been done in Great Britain or Scotland: an estate that serves not only as a historical monument but also as a lively, vibrant place. A space open to visitors, where people can feel what life was like there, while also serving an educational purpose. My vision was to revive the estate's spirit, not just its appearance. Of course, I hoped visitors would have the chance to see original items from that time—the old cars, carriages, dresses, and artworks. All the things that tell a story. For me, Tatoi should be alive—it shouldn't turn into a locked-up museum. My only wish is that it doesn't become a place for exploitation or commercial sell-off. We want people to enjoy it, to get to know it, to experience it with respect, not just to consume it.'

What emotion primarily comes to mind when you talk about Tatoi?

'It's a part of Greece where many pages of our history have been written. Meetings of heads of state, prime ministers, ministers, and foreign leaders took place there. American presidents, European officials, and important personalities came through. It is a place that carries the memory of all these people. I feel happy that now people will be able to see it, walk there, and experience that past. Because, let's be honest, many parts of our history have been forgotten. For example, very few remember that during the liberation of the Dodecanese and in critical phases of the Balkan Wars, King Constantine and his father, King George, played leading roles. They led the Greek army and secured the victories that shaped our current borders.

Tatoi is a museum of itself, through which our family's history also naturally emerges. This part of history, often marginalized until now, will be brought back to the forefront again. When someone sees my mother's wedding dress, they'll want to know who she was, who my father was, and who we all were. In this way, history gains a human dimension. It doesn't matter whether someone supports or opposes monarchy; the history is shared by all. This country, as it stands today, is also the product of those efforts. And I believe that's worth remembering and honouring.'

Do you feel any bitterness about what happened in past decades?

'It's a complicated matter. The estate and the objects belonged to our family. The truth is that there was initially a willingness to reach a fair solution, which involved transferring most of the estate to the State so it would be accessible to the public, while we would keep the residence, the smaller part of the property, and the family cemetery, with no possibility of sale or change of use. Unfortunately, that solution was lost amid the political shifts and rivalries of the time. At some point, the State decided that none of it belonged

to us anymore. We took the matter to court, and the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the property was indeed ours and that, since it would not be returned, we were entitled to compensation. And that's what happened. The compensation, of course, does not erase the sense of loss. We still feel that things were taken from us, things that were part of our life and our history. Fortunately, efforts are now being made to preserve them because, for many years, everything had been left neglected and had fallen into a very poor condition.'

When it officially opens, will you visit or feel awkward about it?

'Of course I'll go. I even hope we'll be invited to the opening; it would be lovely to be there. But in any case, at some point, I'll go with my children and tell them: 'Here is our history'.'

As the last person born in that house, if you had the chance to talk to a visitor, what would you say?

'I'd tell them that I was born here. I'd show them the window of my mother's room and explain that this was once home to a family who loved this place deeply, cared for it, and made it into a functional and sustainable estate—truly ahead of its time.'