



## The Unknown Island

*Dreaming of islands—whether with joy or in fear, it doesn't matter—is dreaming of pulling away, of being already separate, far from any continent, of being lost and alone—or it is dreaming of starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew.*

*Desert Island, Gilles Deleuze*

With the two-person exhibition, **The Unknown Island**, the artists **Sophia Kyriakou** and **Lea Petrou** invite the audience to an existential walk, an adventure inside and outside the boundaries of the exhibition space. Their inspiration and starting point is the short story of the Nobel Prize-winning Portuguese writer **Jose Saramago**, ***The Story of the Unknown Island***, a tale about the restless human spirit, persistence, and the act of travel as a research for the self and the utopia, but also about how sometimes the belief in the existence of Utopia is more critical than its very existence:

A man and a woman risk leaving behind safety and venturing into the dark sea to discover themselves and experience the vertigo of a meaningful human relationship through a daring mission: the search for an *Unknown Island*, an island that does not exist on the map because it has not yet been discovered.

Departing from the idea of the Unknown Island as an archetypal symbol of the search for utopia in art and literature, the two artists create an idiosyncratic and sensitive dialogue on our stereotypical perceptions of travelling. On the one hand, they examine the expectations and longings caused by the (sea) voyage, and on the other hand, they highlight how our relationships with the world, nature, the ocean and the future are shaped through it. Their artistic research explores the postcolonial landscape, migration and political geography, proposes alternative approaches to the city and harbour, highlights ecological issues and traces gendered dynamics.

Against the seamanship and the patriarchal lyricism of the patient, "Penelopean", female handicraft, longing and fantasy implied by the embroidered handkerchiefs, the fragile ceramics and the stamps and postcards of Petrou stand the unexpected Arte-povera pieces of jewellery, collages and the trinket-islands made of microplastics through which Kyriakou expands the discussion towards contemporary consumeristic normalisation of the exploitation and destruction of our planet.

The journey of this multidimensional peripatetic exhibition starts from the ancient hydrosystems of the Metro Station "Dimotiko Theatro" of Piraeus and some poetic diary pages of Saramago. It is then directed to the impressive area of the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation and its rich Historical Library. There, the artists encourage us to browse through the old and rare books of the institution before reaching its naval collection, where their artistic path illuminates the tragic story of Lady Hamilton through her correspondence with Admiral Nelson while sparking a plethora of existential and historical associations around old maps, compasses, bone ships and several other fragments of this wondrous collection.

Saramago's tender short story was written on the island of Lanzarote in 1997. Since then, the world has experienced successive odysseys of migration, pursuits of new paradises, and ecological, economic, health, and humanitarian crises; it has watched successive travellers perishing in dark seas and oceans, haunting places and consciences, and successive utopias collapsing.

With their very own reading of *The Tale of the Unknown Island*, Sophia Kyriakou and Lea Petrou activate new maps of desire and anticipation, inviting us to *dream of islands*, as Deleuze puts it, as a possibility. That is, meditating upon the changing world and its dreadful prospects and daring to envision new beginnings and atlases.

This unique trip will be accompanied by a catalogue that includes photographs of the works and the curatorial text by Gelly Gryntaki, a theoretical wandering text by Nikitas Siniosoglou, and unpublished material from Jose Saramago's diaries translated by Athena Psyllia.

The exhibition takes place in the framework of Sea Week 2024 of the Municipality of Piraeus, with the noble support of the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, STASY, Elliniko Metro, Saramago Foundation, Embassy of Portugal, Kastaniotis Editions, Vorres Museum and the noble sponsorship of the Metropolitan Hospital and Angelicoussis Foundation.

### **Two-person exhibition "The Unknown Island"**

**Artists, organising:** Sophia Kyriakou, Lea Petrou

**Curation:** Gelly Gryntaki

**Opening:** Friday 24th of May 2024, 18:30-21:00.

**Locations:** The Historical Library of the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, 2as Merarchias 36 & Aktis Moutsopoulou, Piraeus 185 35 and Metro Station "Dimotiko Theatro", ticket office level.

**Exhibition duration:** 24th of May - 7th of June 2024.

**Visiting hours:** Monday - Friday 09:00-17:00,

Saturday 25th of May 12:00-18:00, Sunday 26th of May 11:00-14:00.  
Saturday 1st of June 12:00-18:00.

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