

The Dreamers

Alekos Fassianos

Curated by Émilie Streiff

2 April – 23 May 2026

Dans mon rêve, le plaisir perdu.
(In my dream, the lost pleasure)
–Alekos Fassianos, 'Rêve', 1992

Herald St is delighted to announce *The Dreamers*, its first solo exhibition of paintings and drawings by Alekos Fassianos (b.1935, Athens; d.2022, Athens). Taking place in the gallery's Museum St premises, it includes previously unseen works from the estate's archive and a selection of pieces from a private Athenian collector, who was a close friend of the late artist. They span over three decades, with the earliest painting from 1970 made in the heyday of Fassianos's extended Parisian sojourn, and a number of tableaux produced after his return to Athens in the 1990s.

The exhibition's title nods to Gilbert Adair's cult novel, adapted for film by Bernardo Bertolucci, which follows a pack of teenagers navigating the sensual and revolutionary spring of 1968 in Paris with louche precocity and wild abandon. It was during this heady decade that Fassianos first studied in and eventually moved to the French capital, escaping the rise of dictatorship in his native Greece and immersing himself in the literati café culture and pervasive air of freedom. Befriending architects, authors, philosophers, and poets, the artist developed a distinctive style which marries the divinities and mythologies of his home country with his new, enthralling metropolitan existence. Androgynous men and women *en déshabillé*, angels in bedrooms, windows looking out onto skyscrapers, and blowsy cyclists with scarves trailing in the wind were rendered in shapely planes of white, red, ultramarine, dusty pink, ochre, and green. In the late 1970s, Fassianos entered a 'Byzantine' era, adding volume to previously flat figures and incorporating gold and silver leaf to create tableaux reminiscent of the icons he knew so well from Orthodox churches.

The young artist soon attracted the attention of gallerists *du jour* including Paul Facchetti and Alexandre Iolas, exhibiting alongside Giorgio de Chirico, René Magritte, Georges Mathieu, Martial Raysse, Jean Paul Riopelle and Niki de Saint Phalle. His works travelled to Tokyo, São Paulo, Beirut, Istanbul, and across Europe. In 1972 he represented Greece in the Venice Biennale, and went on to be awarded *Officier de la Légion d'Honneur* and *Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* in France. In addition to his paintings, Fassianos's irrepressible and polymathic output included architecture, costume and stage sets for the National Theatre of Athens, furniture design, book illustrations and editions, playgrounds and toys, and his own lyrical and evocative poetry. Moving between Paris, Athens, and the island of Kea, he built and inhabited his own world, one that became immediately recognisable and nationally – and internationally – beloved.

For the many decades Fassianos embraced life in France, he always kept Greece close to his heart – as he would say, like a bee he held his honey, his home, wherever he went. His paintings carry the warmth of the Mediterranean and exude sensual and sensorial pleasures: the sweetness of summer fruits, the downy fur of a cat, the fragrance of a rose, the coo of a dove, the depth of a night sky. The artist developed his own vernacular, filling his paintings with repeating symbols such as blades of wheat to represent life, rebirth, and nature; scarves and bicycles for the debonaire *liberté* of Paris; birds as a sort of signature, as his name translates to 'pheasant' in Greek; and mirrors as reflections of the self, which never quite match the gazer. Many of the paintings on view evoke the containment of a room, small spaces of intimacy, rumination, and voyeurism within the cacophony of a city, with layers of other lives wafting through the windows. These vignettes are vivid and languorous, their Adonisian figures recumbent and windswept and in a trance-like state of soft contemplation, perhaps dreaming about a lover or their home. Mythologising the quotidian, Fassianos reveals mysticism in the everyday by imbuing his works with light, humour, and insouciance, as well as longing, melancholy, and deep introspection.

– Text by Émilie Streiff