

# EMΣT Athens | What If Women Ruled the World



**What If Women Ruled the World radically reimagines what a museum would look like if, instead of a few token pieces, works by women artists were the majority.**

*What If Women Ruled the World*

Official opening and press preview: [RSVP](#)

Part I: Thursday, 14 December 2023

Part II: Saturday, 10 February 2024

Part III: Saturday, 11 May 2024

[EMΣT | National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens](#)

Kallirrois Ave. & Amvr. Frantzi Street (former FIX Factory), 11743  
Athens, Greece



Image: Performance view of Leda Papaconstantinou during her solo exhibition *The Box*, Gallery 3, Athens, 1981. Performers: Leda Papaconstantinou, Lesley Walton (alias Sally Smith). Photo: Erricos Karer.

In December 2023, the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (EMΣΤ) inaugurates *What If Women Ruled the World*, its next exhibition cycle with an unprecedented initiative dedicated to the work of women artists or artists who identify as female.

As part of a unique programme, including the re-hang of the collection, from December 14 and over the course of seven months, the museum will gradually be taken over by women artists. The three-part programme begins in December this year and will conclude in May 2024.

**Katerina Gregos**, EMΣΤ Athens artistic director, notes: " *This is the very first time a major public museum is exhibiting exclusively work by women artists, in both its permanent collection and temporary exhibition programme. Women artists and cultural practitioners are still underrepresented in most aspects of the art world and we wanted to reverse the narrative to radically reimagine what a museum would look like if, instead of a few token pieces, works by women artists were the majority.*"

There will be solo presentations of historically important contemporary Greek artists, such as **Leda Papaconstantinou** and **Chrysa Romanos**, leading contemporary artists of a younger generation **Danai Anesiadou** and **Malvina Panayiotidou**, and internationally renowned artists such as **Yael Bartana**, **Alexis Blake**, **Claudia Comte**, **Hadassah Emmerich**, **Lola Flash**, **Bouchra Khalili**, and **Tala Madani**, as well as the very first presentation of a selection of works from the **D. Daskalopoulos Collection Gift**.



Image: Tala Madani, *Flight*, 2011. Oil on linen, 61 × 45.7 cm. Part of the D.Daskalopoulos Collection Gift Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (EMΣΤ).

***What If Women Ruled the World*** will unfold over time in three parts:

**Part I: What If Women Ruled the World**

14 December 2023

***WOMEN, together***

EMΣΤ will inaugurate a complete rehang of its permanent collection on the 3rd floor of the museum.

Titled **WOMEN, together**, it will showcase over 25 works by over 20 women artists and artists who identify as female. These include works by **Ghada Amer** (Egypt), **Helene Appel** (Germany), **Bertille Bak** (France), **Karla Black** (UK), **Hera Buyucktasciyan** (Turkey), **Diana Al Hadid** (Syria), **Eleni Kamma** (Greece), **Tala Madani** (Iran), **Annette Messager** (France), **Tracey Moffatt** (Australia), **Cornelia Parker** (UK), **Agnieszka Polska** (Poland), **Christiana Soulou** (Greece), **Maria Tsagkari** (Greece), and **Gillian Wearing** (UK). Reflecting the growing diversity of EMΣT's collection, **WOMEN, together** will present for the very first time a significant number of works from the **D. Daskalopoulos Collection Gift**, the most important donation in the museum's history. The exhibition also includes a new long-term loan of a major work by **Etel Adnan** (Lebanon), courtesy of the **Saradar Collection**.

#### **Leda Papaconstantinou**

The Museum is pleased to announce the first major retrospective of **Leda Papaconstantinou** (b. 1945), one of the most important artists in the history of contemporary art in Greece. For nearly five decades, Papaconstantinou developed a diverse oeuvre of work. Always centred on the body, it took on a range of forms including performance, sculpture, video, site-specific installations, and painting, in order to explore issues of gender, sexuality, collective and personal memory, history, politics and ecology. A seminal point of reference in the Greek art scene, her work has served as an inspiration for generations of artists.

#### **Chrysa Romanos**

EMΣT is delighted to present a solo exhibition dedicated to the work of artist **Chrysa Romanos** (1931–2006), one of the most important Greek artists of her generation. Her sojourn in France during the period from 1961 to 1981 was decisive for the formation of her artistic identity. She belonged to a group of Greek artists of the diaspora who lived and worked in major Western art centres after the war. She is significant because, for the first time in the history of Greek art, a woman artist did not simply follow international artistic developments but were co-shapers. Perhaps best known for her intricate collages, which critically and incisively conjoined advertisements and images drawn from mass media picturing political and social reality, Romanos' uncompromising gaze, which focused on the society of consumption and the dominance of the image, remained sharp and ironic throughout her life.

#### **Danai Anesiadou: D Possessions**

EMΣT is pleased to host the first solo exhibition in Greece of the Belgo-Greek artist **Danai Anesiadou**. Born in Germany to parents of Greek origin and based in Brussels, Anesiadou has developed a range of metaphysical and personal concerns into a seductive and mercurial body of work over the last 15 years, which references cinema, occult sciences, Greek antiquity and contemporary affairs. Described as a "21st-century European poster girl for crisis", her work is highly perceptive to both the political and the invisible fabric of reality. Armed with a keen interest in historiography and deep interest in politics, she questions what we consider to be true, pointing to the double standards and false dichotomies of the dominant discourse. **Danai Anesiadou: D Possessions** lures visitors into an allegorical scenography consisting of newly produced sculptures and collages related to the inflation of political and spiritual crises. Like a modern-day exorcist, Anesiadou attempts to purge and transform not only her material possessions but also the energy flows vibrating around us. The exhibition is co-produced with **WIELS, Brussels**.

#### **Alexis Blake: Allegory of the Painted Woman**

For the official opening of **What If Women Ruled the World**, EMΣT will feature a performance by 2021 Prix de Rome winner **Alexis Blake** (Netherlands), which will mark the artist's first presentation in Greece. Blake's multi-disciplinary practice coalesces visual art, performance and dance. She investigates the way in which the body is represented and treated as an archive, which she then critically examines, disrupts, and re-negotiates. Her work directly engages with the representation and subjectification of women's bodies, while also activating them as sites and agents for socio-political change. In doing so, she created languages of resistance and spaces to expose and elude systems of power. For the opening, Blake will present her seminal, iconic work *Allegory of the Painted Woman*, with two performers and four musicians, which challenges the archetypal, patriarchal portrayal of women in the history of art.





Image: Chryssa Romanos, Inside Nikos Kessanlis installation, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 1964.

## Part II: What If Women Ruled the World

10 February 2024

The second part of the cycle of exhibitions dedicated to the work of women artists features the first European museum exhibition of **Tala Madani** (Iran), as well as solo exhibitions of **Bertille Bak** (France), **Yael Bartana** (Israel), **Claudia Comte** (Switzerland), **Hadassah Emmerich** (Netherlands/Indonesia), **Lola Flash** (US), **Bouchra Khalili** (Morocco), and **Malvina Panayiotidou** (Greece). The project by **Bertille Bak**, entitled *Spotlight*, will launch a new feature of the museum's exhibition programme that will highlight the work of one artist in the museum's collection, by way of a solo presentation within the collection.

## Part III: What If Women Ruled the World

11 May 2024

### Penny Siopis

EMΣT will inaugurate the first major museum retrospective of the work of **Penny Siopis**. Born in South Africa in 1953 to Greek parents, Siopis came to prominence in the early 1980s and 1990s with her feminist

and history paintings, both of which were exemplary for their socially engaged stance in relation to both women's rights and the resistance against apartheid. In the era after South African national liberation, her interdisciplinary practice has explored the persistence and fragility of memory, notions of truth and the complex entanglements of personal and collective histories. Working in a wide range of materials, Siopis has explored the politics of the body, grief and shame, collective history, and, more recently, the relationship between the human and the non-human within the context of climate change. In the process, she has established herself as one of the most important artistic voices on the African continent and beyond and has become an important point of reference for artists of a younger generation. EMΣΤ is proud to be able to present the work of the artist in its entirety for the first time.

Following *What If Women Ruled the World*, the next cycle of exhibitions will open on 13 June 2024, the centrepiece of which will be the large international group exhibition *Why Look at Animals?*, presented across two floors of the museum and curated by Katerina Gregos, artistic director of EMΣΤ. The exhibition is inspired by the book of the same name by John Berger, which explores the animal-human relationship during modernity and how animals have gradually become marginalised from human societies. Looking into the issue of estrangement between humans and animals and the alienation of the latter from their natural environment, the exhibition aims to draw attention to the tragic plight of animals at the hands of humans and to open discussions about the urgency of acknowledging animal sentience and animal rights.



Image: Ghada Amer, *The Little Girl*, 2001. Acrylic, embroidery on canvas, 132 × 127 cm. Part of the D. Daskalopoulos Collection Gift Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (EMΣΤ).

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