

UNA

UNA is happy to present **Birds!**, Vasilis Papageorgiou's solo exhibition hosted at the gallery's new space in Milan, located at Via Lazzaro Palazzi 3.

Papageorgiou's practice explores themes of togetherness, communication, and loneliness, while reflecting on the expression of leisure in everyday life. He focuses on semi-private or semi-public spaces – such as bars, beaches, or local football stadiums – where people reclaim their right to spend time alone together. These environments offer moments of freedom, allowing individuals to experience a sense of community while maintaining personal solitude.

In his recent work, Papageorgiou draws on the sculptural language of coastal architecture and human intervention to examine the politics of tourism and its effects on both the environment and the human body. His work engages with the depletion of natural resources and the physical and mental strain of contemporary life. Through this lens, he opens up new imaginative spaces, questioning the values and systems that define modern existence.

Birds! serves as both a footnote and a continuation of Papageorgiou's recent institutional exhibition in Austria, *Sunseekers or Dimming the Sun* or, where he reflected on capitalist systems of pleasure, their role in the cyclical exhaustion of planetary resources, and the paradoxical loop they create around the need for rest and regeneration. At the heart of his show at UNA is a series of **swans** – symbols of hospitality and care – crafted from copper-plated towels, commonly used in hotels to welcome guests and create an inviting atmosphere. Papageorgiou places the swans atop mirrored steel pedestals, seemingly unbalanced, evoking the reflective surface of the water and alluding to the myth of Narcissus – a metaphor for the vicious cycle of egoism and individualism.

Also featured in the exhibition is the work series **Business and Pleasure**, which consists of beach umbrellas supported by bronze casts of the artist's hand and foot, depicted as strained and stretched, as if they were captured in moments of work or extreme stress. These body parts serve as both the literal and metaphorical foundation of the umbrella, bearing the weight of its structure and providing shade to shield visitors from the sun. In doing so, they symbolize the often-overlooked relationship between tourism and labor, where the body itself becomes a structural support for leisure.

The installation is accompanied by a new series of **drawings** titled **Awning and the Moon**, inspired by the awning systems commonly seen in Athens – the artist's hometown. The balcony drawings are paired with marble elements reminiscent of the moon, creating a poetic interplay between light and shadow, and engaging with themes of protection, exposure, and the rhythms of day and night. An awning serves as a boundary between the hidden and the visible, the backstage and the foreground, the observer and the observed. Vasilis Papageorgiou's overall practice constantly oscillates between private and public spaces, carrying different connotations; especially of labor and productivity.

“Therefore, if the promise of tourism-led development has failed, how and why is it still maintained? Tourism monocultures, like other extractive industries, have been historically sustained by the provision of cheap labour—be it local or foreign, more or less visibilised; sometimes relaying old colonial genealogies of exploitation, most often merely responding to contemporary forms of financial capitalism.”

—Julia Moranderia Arrizabalaga, *Tourism Apocalypse Now*, 2024

in Vasilis Papageorgiou, *Sunseekers or Dimming the Sun or*, Mousse Publishing

Opening: April 1 3:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Special Breakfast: Aprile 5 10:30 am – 13:00 pm

Exhibition: April 1 – May 10

Wed-Fri 3:00 pm – 7:00 pm | Sat 12:00 pm – 6:00 pm

+by appointment

Vasilis Papageorgiou (b. 1991) is an artist working and living in Athens. He studied at the Athens School of Fine Arts in Greece and the Luca School of Arts in Brussels. In 2025, he will organize a panel discussion on the intersection of tourism and labor at Onassis Stegi in Athens, following the publication of his recent book by Mousse Publishing. He will also present a solo show at UNA in Milan. In 2024, he took part in the group exhibition *The Moths* at CRAC Alsace and opened his first institutional solo exhibition, *Sunseekers or Dimming the Sun or*, curated by Mirela Baciak at the Salzburger Kunstverein. Papageorgiou has previously presented his work at the 7th Athens Biennale; the Benaki Museum in Athens, in collaboration with the New Museum (New York) and the DESTE Foundation (Athens); the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Foundation Center in Athens; the MAXXI Museum in Rome; the 6th Moscow International Biennale for Young Arts; and the BOZAR Brussels, among others. His work is part of the La Gaia Collection in Busca (CN), the Onassis Collection in Athens, the Arte Contemporáneo Alkar Collection ACC Bilbao, and the Fondazione Fiera Milano Collection. In 2023, Papageorgiou was an artist-in-residency at LUMA Arles. In 2019, he received the 3Package Deal grant (2019-20) from AFK in Amsterdam, and in 2018, he participated in the 1st Stavros Niarchos Foundation Artist Fellowship Program, ARTWORKS. Papageorgiou is the co-founder of Enterprise Projects, an artist- and curator-run initiative and project space that has been operating in Athens since September 2015.