



BENAKI MUSEUM

ΔΕΣΤΕ

Aleksandra Waliszewska: Irruption of Antiquity

Opening: Tuesday, June 2, 2026, at 20:00

Duration: June 3–September 27, 2026

Benaki Museum of Greek Culture, Athens

Press Kit:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/9br0eqxbuht85ehjltaf9/AECR4m1XKlqHWFyiKeL9nWU?rlkey=wrp718zp0b7yrqbmymhvdhxc&dl=0>

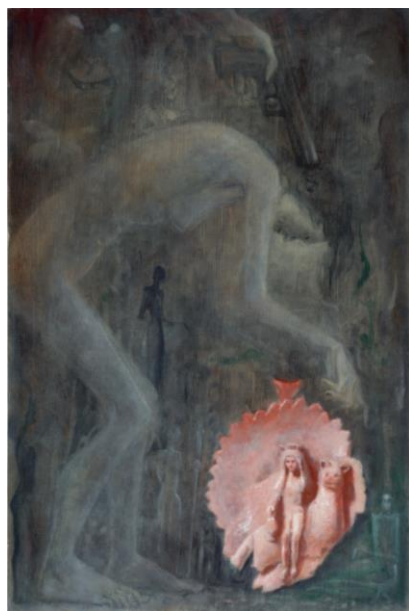


Image: Aleksandra Waliszewska, *Untitled*, 2025.
Courtesy of the artist and Consonni Radziszewski.

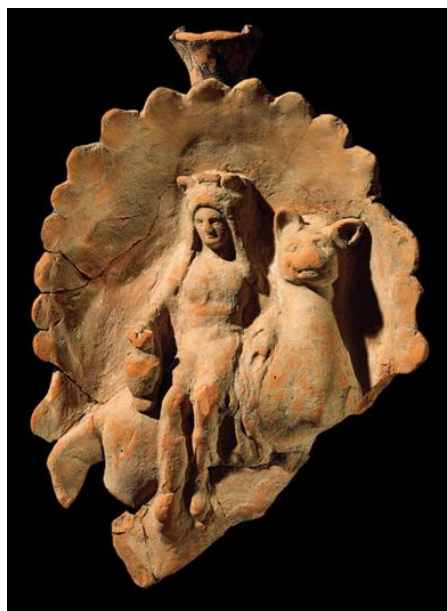


Image: Attic terracotta oinochoe (wine jug) with trefoil mouth, featuring the youthful Dionysus riding a panther. Mid-4th c. BC, The Benaki Museum, inv. no. 28138.

The **DESTE Foundation**, in partnership with the **Benaki Museum**, are pleased to present ***Aleksandra Waliszewska: Irruption of Antiquity***, curated by **Alison M. Gingeras** and on view starting **on June 3rd, 2026** at the **Benaki Museum of Greek Culture**, Athens.

Unfolding across two floors of the Benaki Museum of Greek Culture, the exhibition features sixteen paintings by Polish artist Aleksandra Waliszewska. The works are placed in charged iconographic

tension with objects spanning Neolithic Greece, classical antiquity, the Byzantine world, and the modern Greek era. The exhibition pays homage to Greece as the birthplace of figurative, narrative art and as a foundation of Western visual culture—while also tracing its enduring presence in the visual imagination today. Waliszewska's intense psychological tableaux manifest moments of "irruption": the sudden, forceful entry of ancient visual tropes into the present.

One of art history's most tantalizing unfinished projects, and Aby Warburg's *magnum opus*, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* was begun in 1928 and remained incomplete upon Warburg's untimely death in 1929. Named for the Greek goddess of memory, *Mnemosyne* was conceived as a pictorial atlas. Warburg organized it into twelve thematic chapters to trace the Renaissance's roots in the classical cultures of Greece and Rome. Through a vast iconographic analysis—ultimately comprising more than a thousand images—Warburg aspired to create a map of collective cultural memory without words.

Mirroring the art historical models Warburg imagined, Waliszewska's paintings testify to the *longue durée* of Greek culture in the present. Ancient gods, myths, symbols, and religious figures surface within her haunting pictorial universe not as remnants of a distant past, but as unstable, often disturbing forces that continue to shape contemporary visual consciousness. In this sense, *Irruption of Antiquity* proposes antiquity not as heritage, but as pressure: a reservoir of images and affects that persist, re-emerge, and refuse to remain historically contained.

"Irruption of Antiquity" is among Warburg's most intriguing chapters and serves as an apt title for a transhistorical exhibition that brings together the Benaki Museum's rich, heterogeneous collections and the pictorial universe of Aleksandra Waliszewska.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Aleksandra Waliszewska (b. 1976, Warsaw, Poland) is known for her dark, atmospheric paintings that are steeped in art historical erudition. In fact, Waliszewska, a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, considers herself a contemporary heir to the Symbolist movement of the turn of the last century. The entwinement of sex and death looms large in her dense visual narratives. Empowered female protagonists dominate her paintings, frequently depicting apocalyptic scenes populated by animals, imaginary creatures, zombies, hybrid monsters, and the living dead. Often allegorical in nature, her paintings probe the human condition as they grapple with primordial feelings of fear, anxiety, desire, and death. Coded references to the industrial landscapes of Poland, its primeval forests and swamps, as well as to specific national mythologies permeate her oeuvre and ground her work in Polish visual culture. Her sly reworkings draw from a rich personal canon of European art—from the primitive Flemish master Petrus Christus to Georges de La Tour to Młoda Polska (Young Poland) painters, from the Belgian Symbolist Léon Spilliaert to Leonor Fini—to name but a few of her recurrent citations.

Born and raised in Warsaw, Waliszewska hails from a matriarchal lineage of female artists. Four generations of women in her family were practicing artists, including her grandmother, Anna Dębska, an accomplished postwar sculptor known for her animal imagery. With this unique background, Waliszewska has built her practice on this rich and unusual heritage of imagistic storytelling. Waliszewska lives and works in Warsaw, Poland.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Alison M. Gingeras is a writer and curator. She serves as Curator at Large at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN) and works independently. Over the past years, she has worked extensively on Aleksandra Waliszewska, notably co-curating her exhibitions *The Dark Arts* at MSN and at the National Museum in Kaunas, Lithuania. In 2004, she was part of the DESTE Foundation's curatorial team for the groundbreaking show, *Monument to Now*.

ABOUT DESTE FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

The DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art is a non-profit institution established in Geneva in 1983 by collector Dakis Joannou. DESTE engages in an extensive exhibition program that promotes emerging as well as established artists and aims to broaden the audience for contemporary art, enhance opportunities for young artists, and explore the connections between contemporary art and culture. The flexibility of DESTE's exhibition schedule enables the Foundation to respond to what is current in the art world, both nationally and internationally, and to embark on interesting projects as they emerge in today's society.

www.deste.gr

ABOUT BENAKI MUSEUM

The Benaki Museum is among the most extensive and innovative museum organizations in Europe. It was founded by Antonis Benakis in 1930 and subsequently donated to the Greek state. Arranged across a satellite network of six museum buildings, the Museum also features 5 archival departments and an extensive library, the Leigh Fermor House, offering residencies to scholars, and a collection currently holding a 500,000-strong inventory covering all periods of Greek culture as well as European, Islamic, Pre-Columbian, African and Chinese art.

benaki.org

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HASHTAG EXHIBITION: #AleksandraWaliszewska

Aleksandra Waliszewska: Irruption of Antiquity

June 3 – September 27, 2026

Benaki Museum of Greek Culture

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Opening hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 10:00 – 18:00

Thursday 10:00 – 00:00

Sunday 10:00–16:00

Tuesday Closed

Entry to the exhibition is included in the standard ticket for the Benaki Museum of Greek Culture:
€12, €9.
