

Opening: Thursday 22/10/2026, 7-10 p.m.
Until 28/11/2026

After a long period of working with moving images, collages, drawings, manipulated prints and, more recently, the possibilities of artificial intelligence, **Irini Karayannopoulou** returns to painting.

In '**The Golden Syndrome**', presented **at a.antonopoulou.art and curated by Efie Falida**, heterogeneous images, symbols and cultural references coexist without being guided towards a predetermined narrative: painting functions as a field of exploration.

The starting point of the series lies in the idea of abundance and the search for a lost treasure. The image of the precious object that remains hidden, awaiting its revelation, becomes an allegory for the very act of searching. Tiny dots of colour are placed side by side until the canvas is filled; gemstones, gold jewellery and a shower of chains make up some of the marvellous objects that inhabit these paintings. The accumulation thus becomes a persistent gesture of addition, until the density of the work reaches the point of excess.

The history of art is full of images of wealth and abundance: from the golden statues and precious objects of antiquity to the treasures of rulers, from the Cabinets of Curiosities of the Renaissance and the Baroque to the palaces of Versailles and the aesthetic excess of the Rococo. The precious object has always been a symbol of prestige, power and authority.

Through mythological references, such as that of the Golden Fleece, the desire for the precious takes on a dual dimension. On the one hand, there is the promise of pleasure and fulfilment; on the other, the realisation that every significant achievement requires a journey and, possibly, a price to pay, a sacrifice. The need for more possessions, more beauty, more pleasure, more recognition, more acceptance, is a constant feature of human experience. However, abundance also carries within it the anxiety of loss and, with it, the fear of emptiness.

Karayannopoulou's paintings navigate precisely within this ambiguity.

A conversation between the artist and the exhibition curator, Efie Falida:

Efie Falida: In your new work, I sense that you are trying to find yourself facing something. To reveal something you are searching for, something you have not yet managed to get close to.

Irini Karayannopoulou: Yes. I'm trying to find myself facing something. I don't exactly want to confront it, I want to get closer to it. But I know very well how elusive it is. This also has to do with painting, with the impossibility of painting. Painting is something you can't really achieve. You can't grasp it, touch it, understand it, or make it your own. It is the non-achievement. If you're a painter, this is one of your fundamental struggles.

E.F.: And is this elusiveness, this attempt to approach something ideal, also links to the title of your new series of works, which you've called 'The Golden Syndrome'?

E.K.: Yes. Just as this whole adventure is golden, the ideal that people pursue. It's what makes them get through each day and not give up. To "gild the pill", as we say, to gild their day, to find a little more courage. And of course there's hope. Hope is something that keeps coming back in my work.

E.F.: Is hope linked here to luck as well? To the possibility that luck might turn?

E.K.: Yes... You know, gambling is something that interests me in my work. That's why playing cards, dice and the like often appear.

E.F.: A deck of cards played a leading role in one of your earlier works, amongst objects that seem to carry different stories.

E.K.: I'm very interested in the impact luck has on our lives. Or, to put it another way, how the same actions take on a different meaning depending on their outcome. I have the story of an ancestor of mine who had saved up some money and spent it on building a single, solitary ship. That ship sank very quickly, before it had even set out on its maiden voyage. He was deeply distressed and, in his despair, gambled away his entire fortune, hoping that perhaps this might change his luck. He took a gamble and, unfortunately, lost. The interesting thing is that, had he won, he would have been the family hero, whereas now his actions are condemned and we hardly ever speak of him. Fortune is a strange thing.

E.F.: So, in your new paintings, I sense this anticipation of a turn of fortune. There is something dark, yet at the same time something radiant. As if the night were hiding wonders, and not necessarily threats. One of your works evokes the glamour of the 1920s for me. Something between *The Great Gatsby* and film noir. An atmosphere of abundance, yet also a intangible sense that something is about to happen. Like in films where you don't see

the threat, but the rhythm of the imagery, the camera movement, the traversal of the space, make you realise that something awaits the protagonist.

E.K.: There's something of a spectacle to it, indeed, but also something of Las Vegas and the Horn of Amalthea. Others have seen it as a submarine. And then I started to see it that way too, because that's how they saw it. But what you're saying is closer to how I feel too. There are many things hidden behind colourful strings of pearls. These are new versions of a very old story.

E.F.: And amidst this spectacle, the cocktail, the ice cream, the cherry on top all make an appearance. Small pleasures, but also a bit of excess.

E.K.: I read that a Piña Colada has six hundred calories. I don't drink cocktails in general. But I thought that someone might have three cocktails and end up consuming a whole day's worth of calories. Now that you've mentioned excess, I'm thinking about this whole accumulation of wealth, the fact that we want more and more to feel satisfied, and that the world is the way it is precisely because of this insatiable desire.

E.F.: Yet there is also something very physical about this new painting approach. Even the way you work has been influenced by your hand.

E.K.: Yes, because of De Quervain's syndrome, which has recently forced me to limit my movements to a minimum, I make very delicate adjustments or paint with my left hand. It's an interesting exercise; it's a bit like meditation. And yes, I struggle with the urge to add a new element or to hide something I've already painted beneath a fresh brushstroke. I conceal and reveal whatever I feel should be seen.

E.F.: Concealment and revelation are present throughout your work. And in your collages too. In the density of the images. You want to show something and at the same time hide it.

E.K.: Sometimes I say: this is already too much; we don't need to say it. It'll be nicer if I know it's behind that black shape. Or if it's become a black hole. There's always something that can be revealed later. Something that's waiting. In one piece, for example, there were originally lots of large blue elements and in the end only one remains. It's a bit like seeing which one will manage to prevail.

E.F.: So here, too, we come back to chance. Which element will survive, which will prevail.

E.K.: I let my instinct and chance itself play a very big part. I try to keep my rational mind calm, almost in a trance-like state. Because, if I decide from the outset that I want to create this piece, I'll create this piece. But so what? I want something more metaphysical to emerge from my relationship with painting.

E.F.: I think that's what makes the difference in your work. You remain devoted to painting rather than to a goal that might be calculated or professionally secure.

E.K.: That's the only thing that's certain. Although I'm interested in gambling, there's just no winning!

E.F.: But I like this contradiction: on the one hand you want to be carried away by instinct, and on the other you're aware of what you're doing.

E.K.: I understand very well where I'm heading, and what things perhaps shouldn't be done that way. But I can't – and don't want to – resist. There are artists who are like well-oiled machines. There are no surprises. There's a fine, lofty concept and everything is safe and secure. When the audience expects to see the same old things and you serve them up, art does indeed become somewhat 'professional'. I believe that my new work – the one I'm struggling to finish because of the syndrome – will be my best yet. It will be different; it will lead me to discover something. It's lovely to be immersed in something new, to still have it ahead of you and to be exploring it. It's also lovely to look at it and not be able to touch it. The waiting.

E.F.: It's not always you who decides what will happen.

E.K.: No. At some point you have to listen to what the work itself is telling you. Let it guide you.

E.F.: And wait.

E.K.: Yes. For the time being, there is waiting.

E.F.: Perhaps that is what the 'Golden Syndrome' is: the desire to reach something that remains perpetually just a little further away. To believe that luck might turn, that something will be revealed, that behind the darkness there is another image.

E.K.: Perhaps. What I do know is that I always want to get closer to something I cannot grasp. And that, ultimately, is what painting is all about.

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Opening hours: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 14:00 – 20:00 & Saturday 12:00 – 16:00