

Alexandra Christou *Taverna*

29 January – 11 April 2026
8 Bury Street London SW1Y

Opening Thursday 29 January, 6-8pm



“By the Goddesses, you’ll find that here await you
Four companies of most pugnacious women
Armed cap-a-pie from the topmost louing curl
To the lowest angry dimple.”

— *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes

Alexandra Christou (1950-2009) was a self-taught painter. She was born in Athens and left her country in 1968 to live a bohemian life of passion and art in the United States, Australia and Germany. Returning to Greece in 1987, Christou and her young daughter lived between Athens and the Aegean island of Astypalaia. Her work was discovered posthumously and has rarely been exhibited to date. Christou gives us a portrait of Greek life and the spaces where private and public converge, in which her personal rebellion is defiant and exhilarating. This exhibition presents paintings and drawings from the 1990s; depictions of city and island life, of markets, tavernas, island landscapes and the characters that repeatedly inhabit these places of community and social interaction. Island life is local, it is small and claustrophobic, it is conditioned for intense but compassionate observation.

Throughout art history bar scenes have mined the intense choreography of social interaction for which a bar provides a stage. Christou, like Gilroy and Hogarth, like French Impressionists Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas and Manet, as well as the Neue Wilde German painters like Immendorf and Kippenberger who she knew, captures the joy and tragedy of the tavern’s intoxicating, atmospheric, dynamic.

The paintings in this exhibition take cues from the winding streets of Psirri (Athens) and the ubiquitous gatherings Christou observed in her local urban epicentres. The works focus on Greek *kafeneia* – cafés or coffee shops serving a mix of ouzo, retsina, strong coffee and meze in simple, informal settings – and *kreatagores* – bustling markets or butchers’ shops that offer a place to eat, gather or wait. Christou was interested in the people overlooked in her neighbourhoods, the marginal characters she passed every day, indiscriminate in her choice of protagonist. In *The end of the relationship, Kafeneia* (1992), a hanging mirror reflects the shared table, magnifying the strewn leftovers and spilled digestifs symbolic of a broken relationship. In her unromanticised depictions of observed subjects, her paintings maintain compassion, vibrancy and a palpable energy. Groups of women, or *geinaikes*, inhabit many of Christou’s works, dominating café and market scenes of shared meals, card games, smoking, drinking and slow-paced communion. The intergenerational grouping in *Untitled (Kafeneia Women’s Table A. with Friends)* (1991) illustrates how these non-domestic spaces are platforms for camaraderie, independence and performance.