

MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

EXPO  
CHGO

7-10 APRIL 2022

CHICAGO | NAVY PIER

EXPOSURE | BOOTH 270

Levani (Levan Mindiashvili)

Gardens of Eurasia

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

EXPOCHICAGO 2022

EXPOSURE | Booth 270

Levani (Levan Mindiashvili)

Gardens of Eurasia

*"According to the meta-code of the human-tree the stronger and deeper one's ancestral roots, the more durable one is as a person."\**

"Gardens of Eurasia" furthers Levani's ongoing inquiry into ecology as a vehicle for reconnecting with one's ancestral heritage and regaining a sense of belonging. Concerned with the politics of representation and current geopolitical shifts, Levani presents the place of their origin—Eurasia—not as an enduring binary opposition (West vs. East) as it has historically been shown. But as a site of vast cultural legacies and, therefore, potentialities. Inspired by their interest in cosmology, neuroscience, biology, and epistemology, Levani's work invokes a post-binary, pluriversal alternative to human-centric, dualistic perspectives. They propose a holistic image of the world as a densely speciated and interdependent ecosystem. And aim to encourage empathy, solidarity, and care.

Multi-panel paintings from this series presented at EXPOCHICAGO are inspired by the medieval carvings of Georgia. They depict stylized vegetation undergoing a barely perceivable symbiosis between plants, humans, and microbiological beings. Hand-painted with a liquid mirror on glass, these works act like an actual mirror. They reflect viewers and surroundings, erasing the boundaries between themselves and the environment. The paintings become embodiments of porousness and merging.

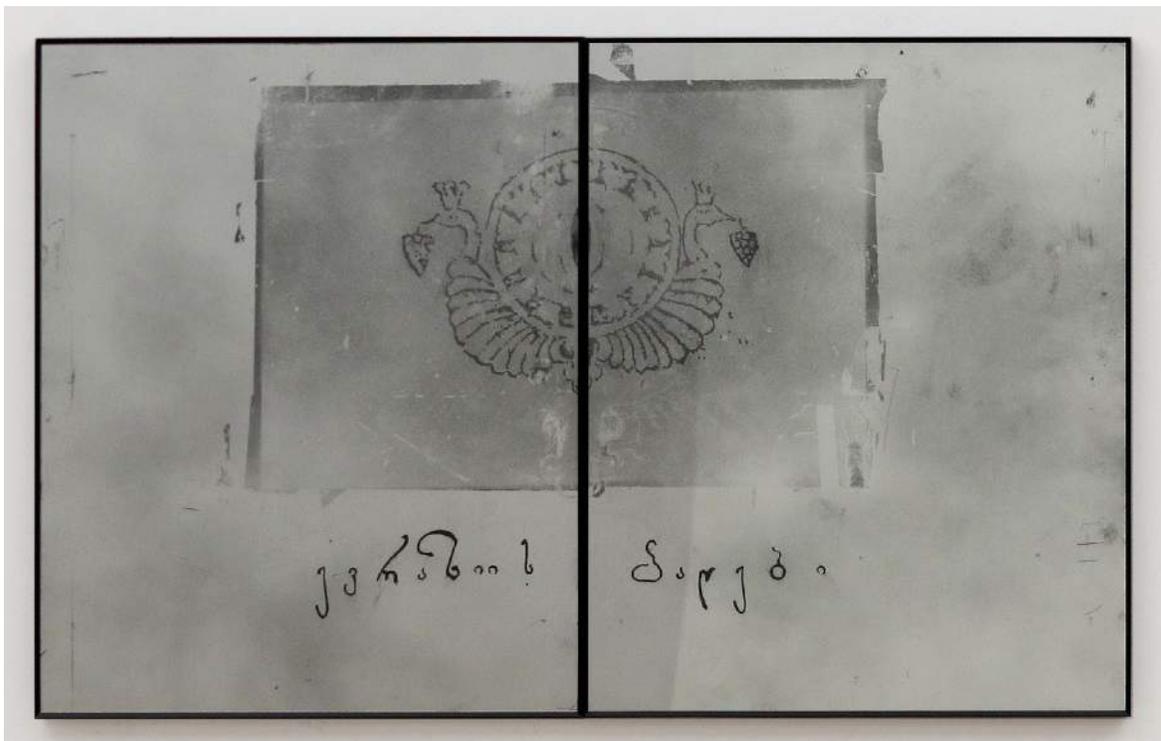
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\* *Madina Tlostanova, "Of Birds and Trees: Rethinking Decoloniality Through Unsettling as a Pluriversal Human Condition"*

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

Levani (Levan Mindiashvili, b. Tbilisi, Georgia) lives and works in New York. They hold an MFA from the Buenos Aires National University of Arts (2010) and a BA from the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts (2003). They had solo presentations at Marisa Newman Projects NY; NADA Miami; NARS Foundation, Brooklyn; Georgian National Museum, Mestia; Silk Museum, Tbilisi, among others. Their work has been shown at the 5th AIM Biennial, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx; Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens; 1st Immigrant Artists Biennial, Elizabeth Foundation for Arts Project Space, NY; Below Grand, NY; 7th Beijing Biennial, National Art Museum of China; East Slovak Gallery, Kosovo; Tartu Art Museum, Estonia; BRIC Biennial, Vol 3., and others. They are recipient of the Peter S. Reed Foundation Grant, Socrates Sculpture Park Fellowship, NYFA Immigrant Artists Mentoring Program, AIM Fellowship of the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Creative Times X Summit Grant, and FABLES Commission grant for Public Art Projects from National Endowments for Arts, NY. Currently, they are artist in residence at Artist Alliance Inc. LES Studio Program. Their work has been reviewed in Frieze, Art in America, HYPERALLERGIC, ArtAsia Pacific; The Brooklyn Rail, The Art Newspaper, Pin-UP Magazine, OSMOS, Observer, Art Margins, and others. Levani's work is in public collections of the National Art Museum of China, Beijing; Georgian National Museum, Mestia; and Tbilisi Silk Museum, Georgia.

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

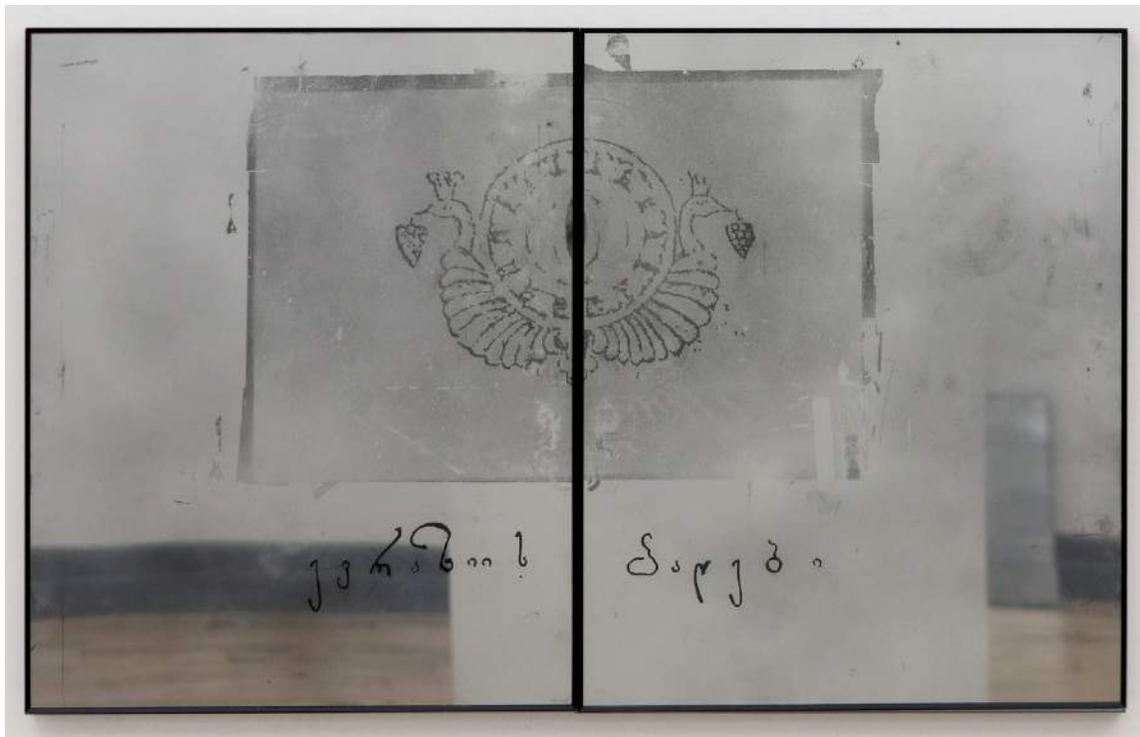
Gardens of Eurasia

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror on glass, two panels

Overall 20 x 32 inches

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

Gardens of Eurasia

2022

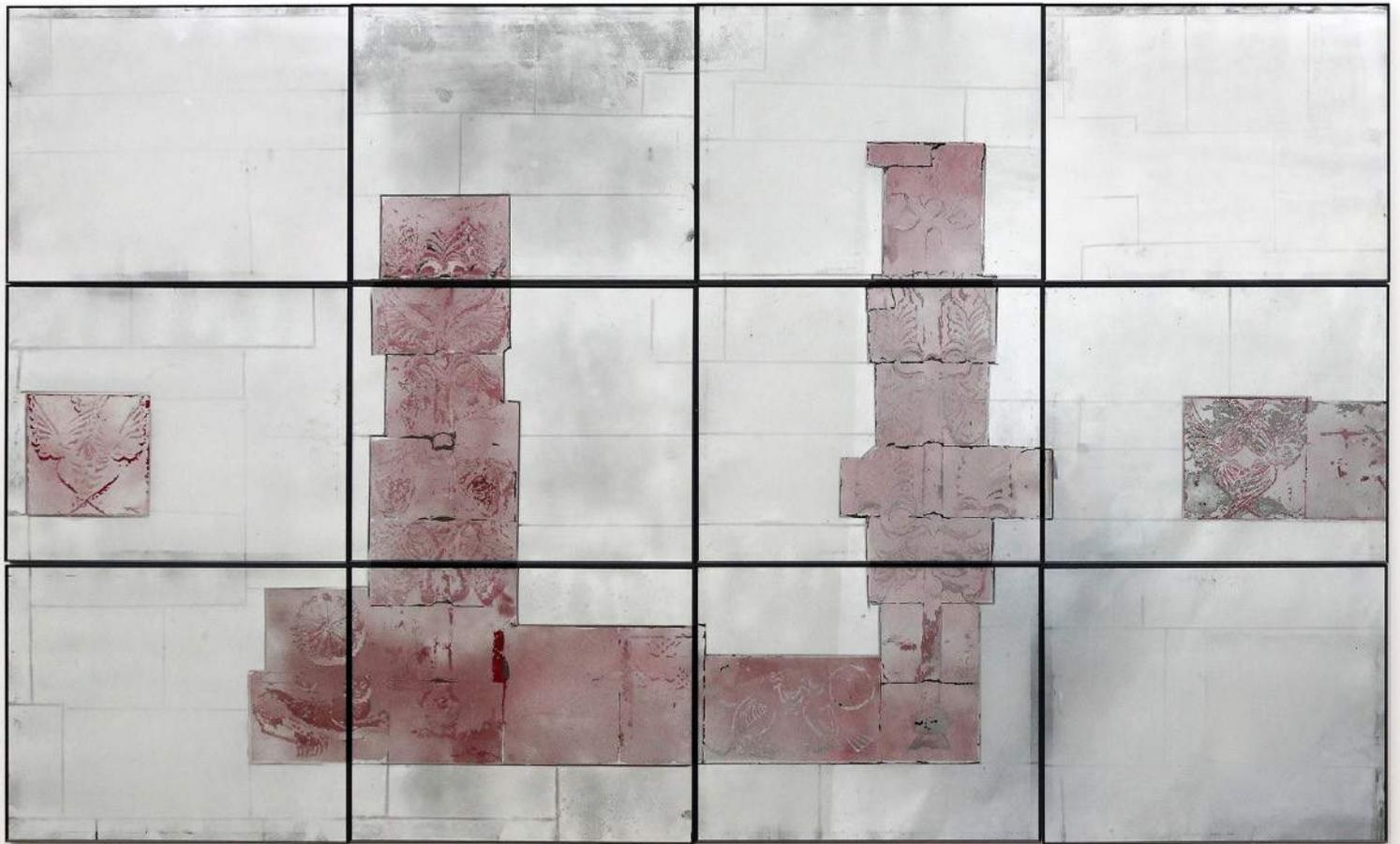
Hand-painted liquid mirror on glass, two panels

Overall 20 x 32 inches



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# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

Gardens of Eurasia (Gifts of Stones and Earth)

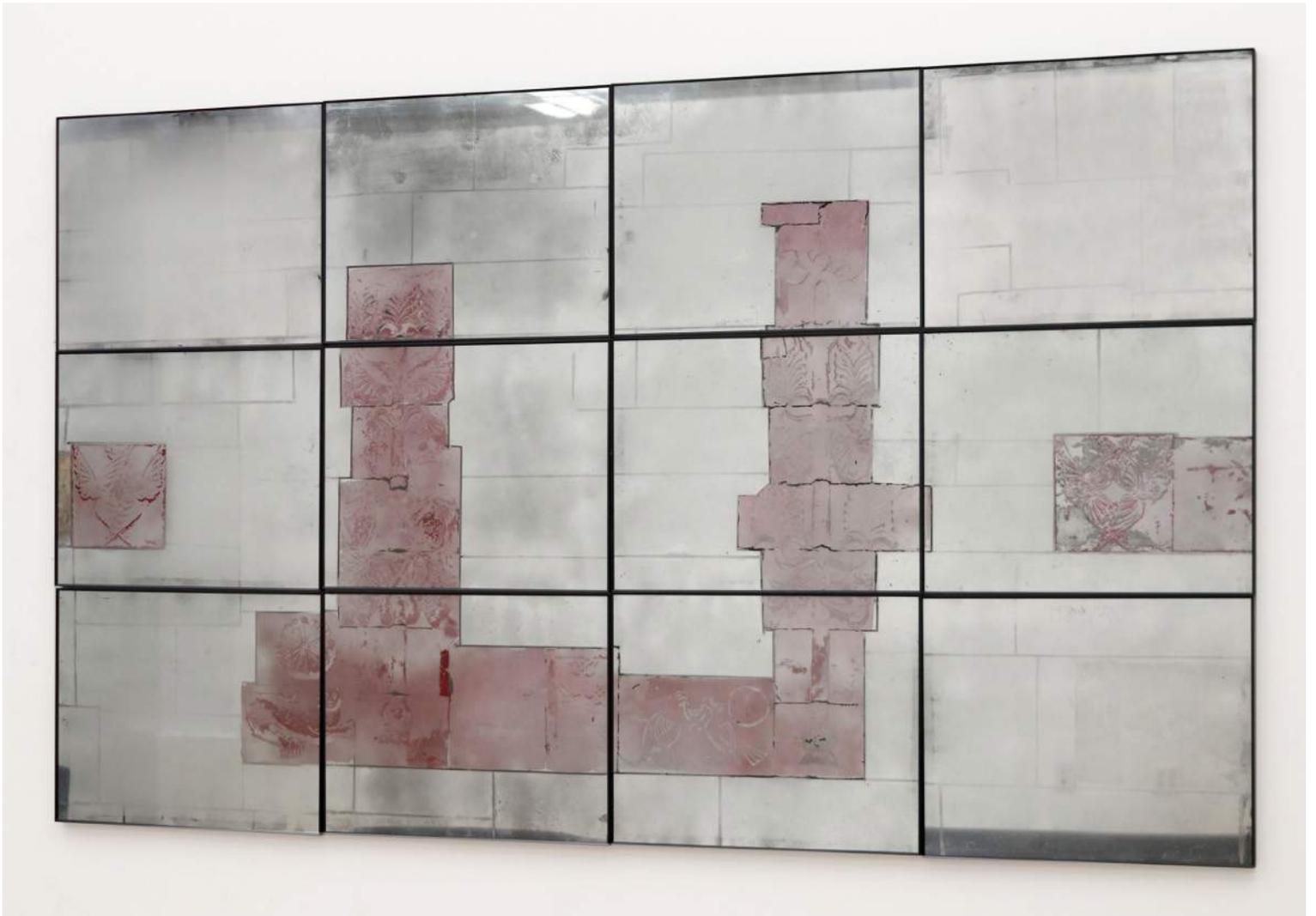
2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

twelve panels

Overall 48 x 80 inches

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

Gardens of Eurasia (Gifts of Stones and Earth)

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

twelve panels

Overall 48 x 80 inches



# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

The Living Pillar, No.1

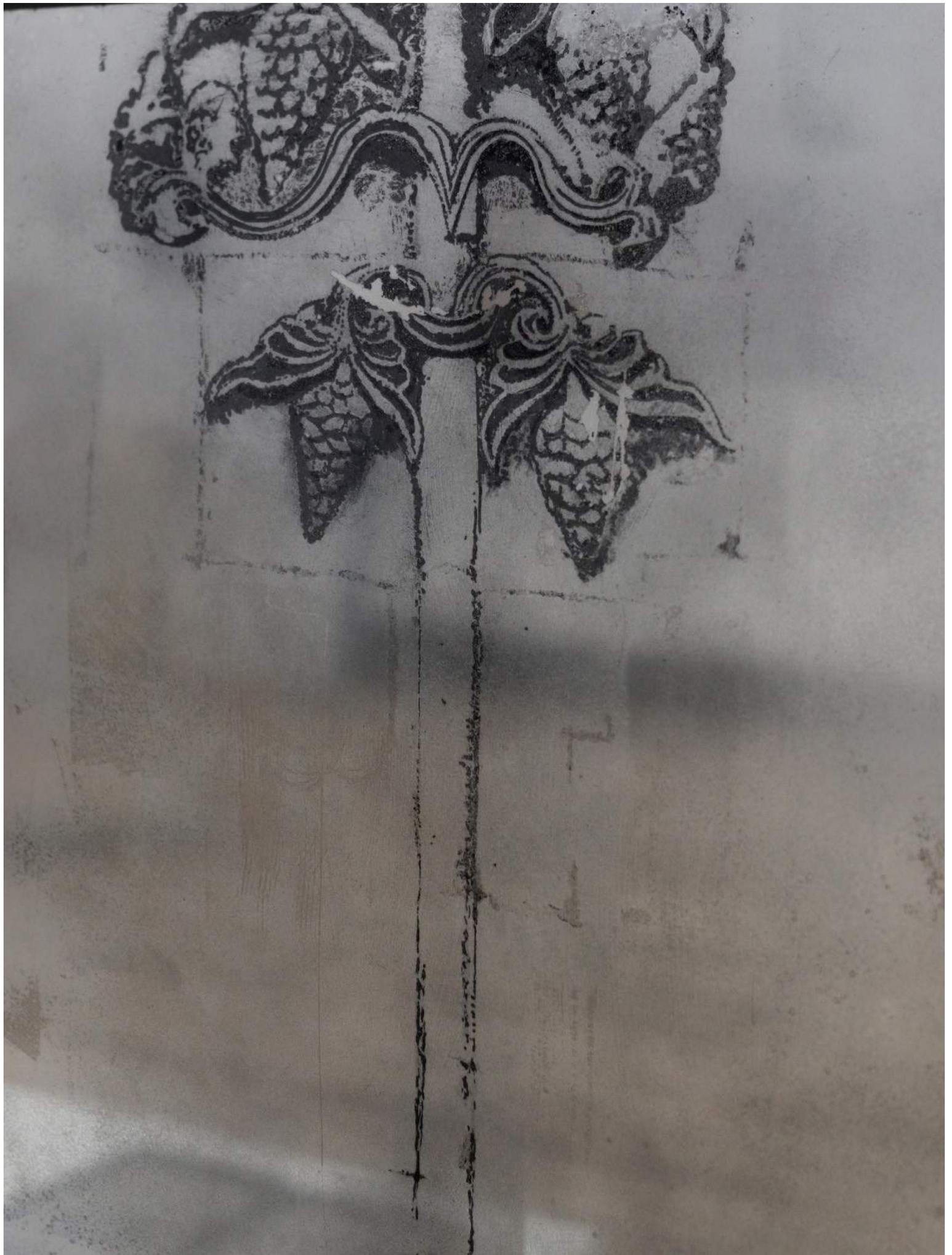
2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

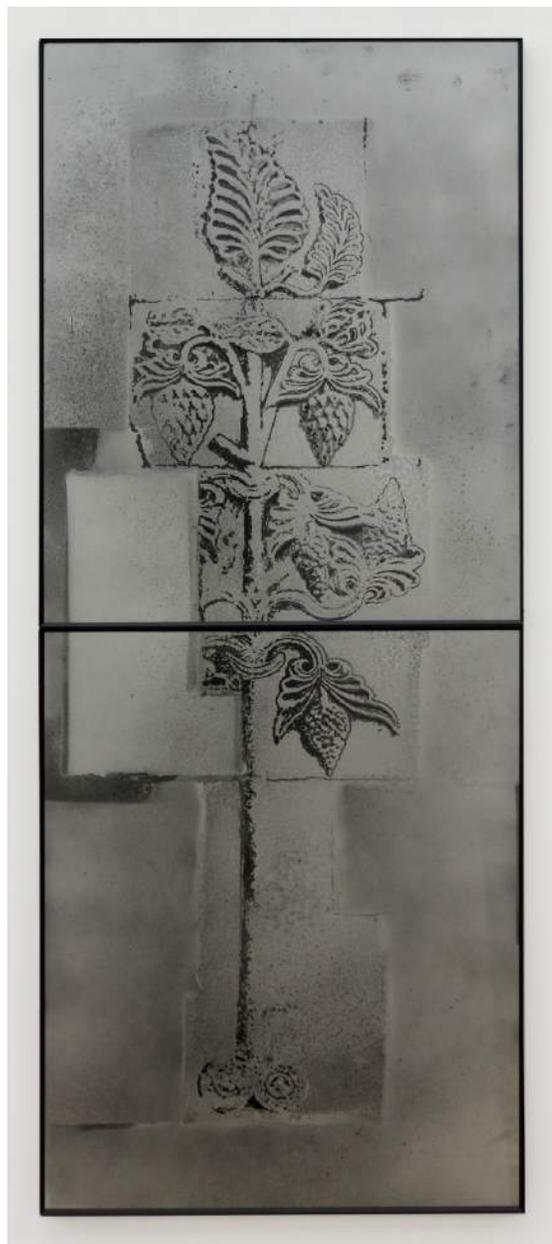
two panels

Overall 40 x 16 inches





# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

Living Pillar, No.2

2022

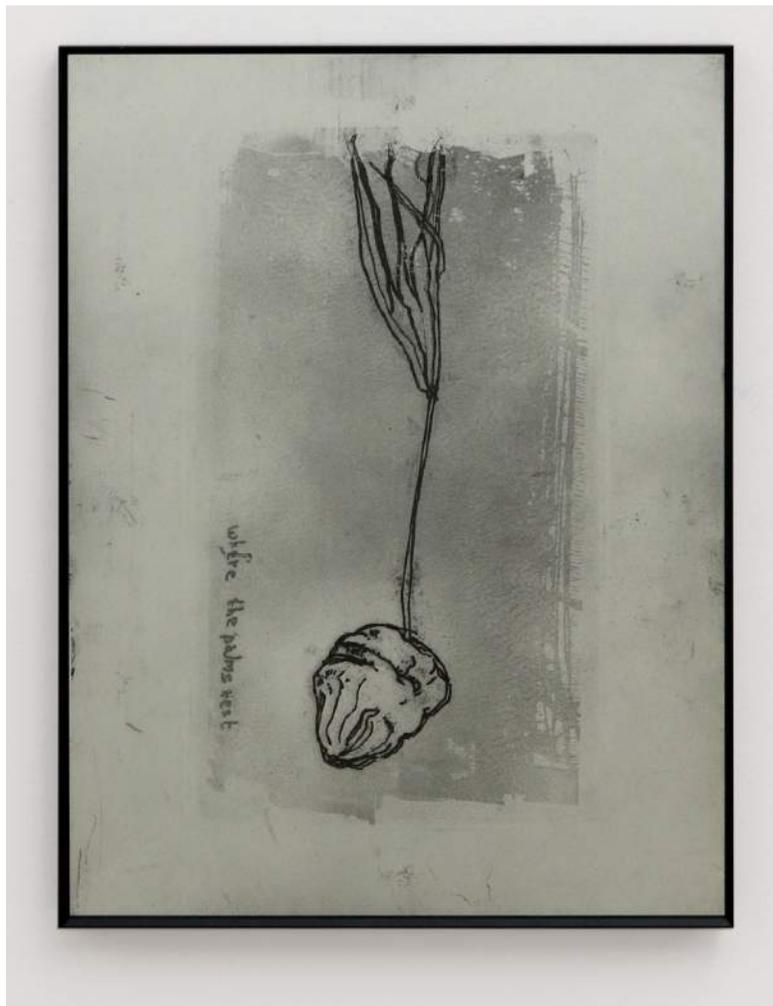
Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

two panels

Overall 40 x 16 inches



MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

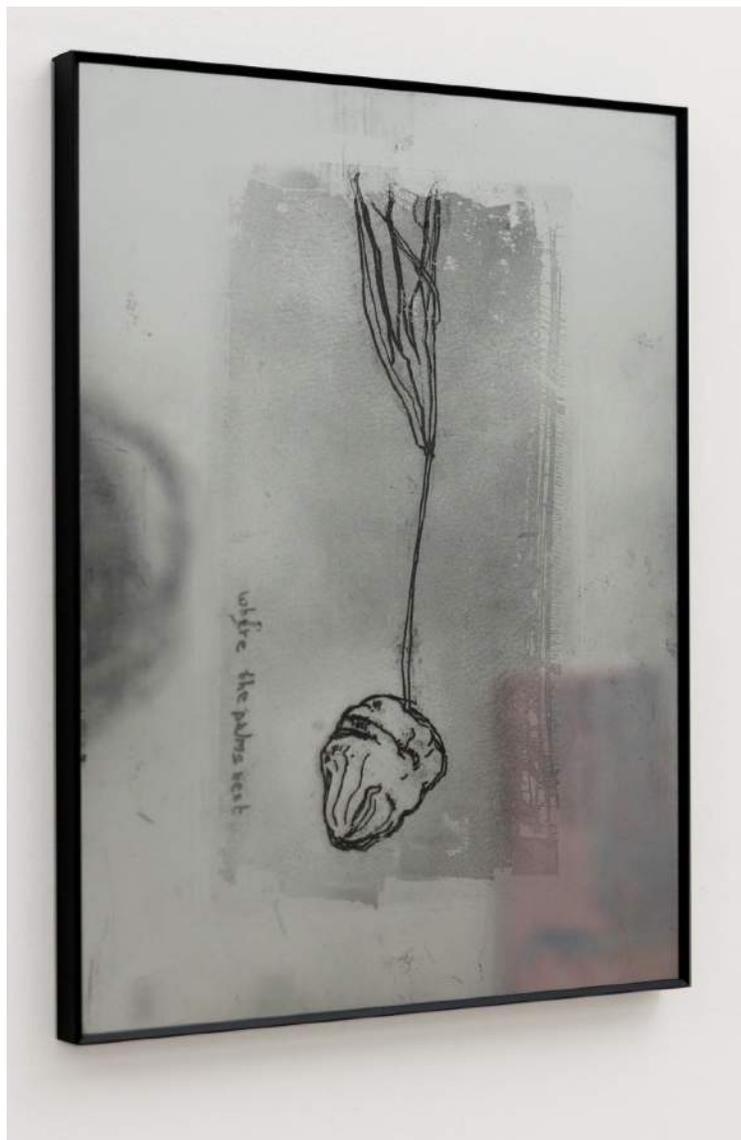
Where the Palms Nest, No.1

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

16 x 12 inches

MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

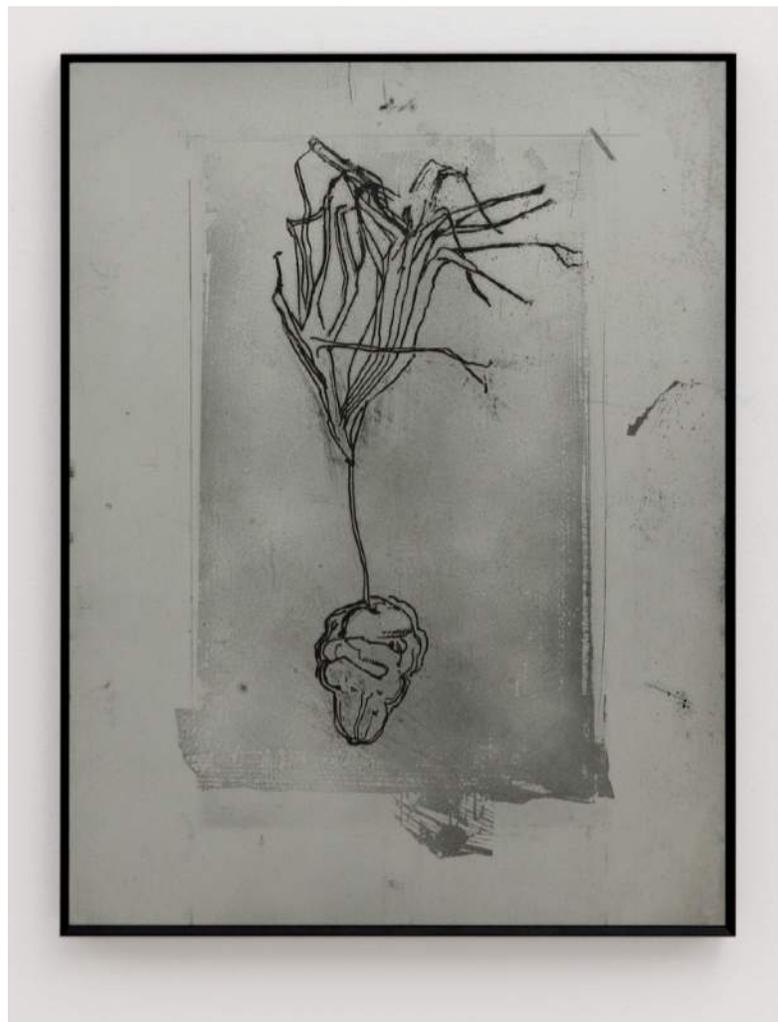
Where the Palms Nest, No.1

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

16 x 12 inches

MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

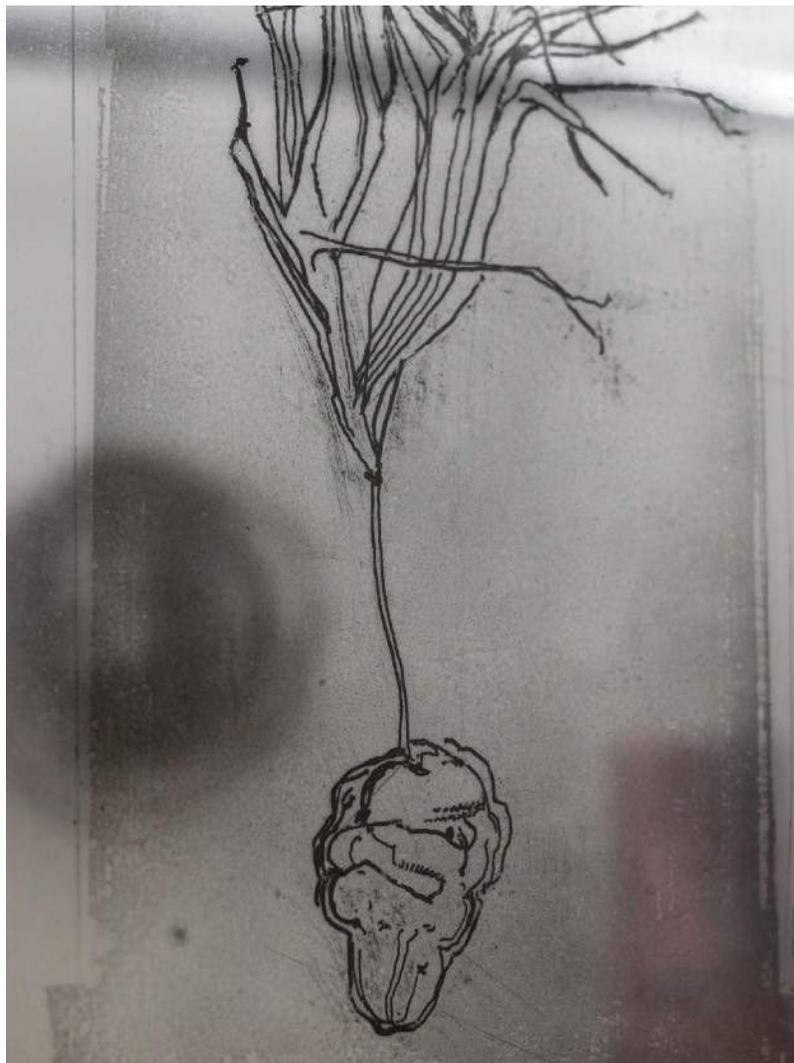
Where the Palms Nest, No.2

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

16 x 12 inches

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Levani

Where the Palms Nest, No.2 (detail)

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

16 x 12 inches

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Levani

Where the Palms Nest, No.3

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

16 x 12 inches

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Levani

Where the Palms Nest, No.3

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

16 x 12 inches

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

## PREVIOUS WORKS

Levani's practice takes a transdisciplinary approach to empirical, scientific, and spiritual knowledge. They create immersive installations, two-dimensional images, sculptural objects, and neons that explore the psychological dimensions of current geopolitical shifts and socio-cognitive dislocation. Levani has organized communal dinners and dance parties as tools for community-building, mobilizing and care. Preceding "Gardens of Eurasia," the project "what color is the Black Sea?" was developed throughout 2021 in three iterations: solo presentation at Marisa Newman Projects, 5th AIM Biennial at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, and a group of latex paintings and sculptural objects. Each time, Levani restaged a childhood trauma that took place on the Black Seashore as a psychological landscape, thereby foregrounding ecology as a site of healing and rebirth. That same year they created an outdoor sculpture at Socrates Sculpture Park: gates adorned with palm tree leaves and buds—a metaphor for the threshold of becoming and liberation. Preparatory drawings of these palm trees became the paintings "what if the trees were our Lungs?" No.1 & 2 - the first works from "Gardens of Eurasia."

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

what color is the Black Sea?

2021

Marisa Newman Projects, NY

Growing UV lights, artist's photograph at the age of three on the Black Sea shore silkscreened on latex fabric from both sides, tangerine tree potted in aquarium, stone from the black sea, laboratory beaker with plant, brass rings on brass chain, palm tree wrapped in faux-fur vintage coat, mineral pyrite gemstone, aluminum sheet mounted on plywood, iPad with hedgehog video on fake fur and stainless steel stand, blacked-out white neon, Christmas cactus in cut crystal vase on stainless steel stand, silkscreened latex in double brass frames, overall dimensions variable.

MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



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Levani

what color is the Black Sea?

2021

Marisa Newman Projects, NY

Growing UV lights, artist's photograph at the age of three on the Black Sea shore silkscreened on latex fabric from both sides, tangerine tree potted in aquarium, stone from the black sea, laboratory beaker with plant, brass rings on brass chain, palm tree wrapped in faux- fur vintage coat, mineral pyrite gemstone, aluminum sheet mounted on plywood, iPad with hedgehog video on fake fur and stainless steel stand, blacked-out white neon, Christmas cactus in cut crystal vase on stainless steel stand, silkscreened latex in double brass frames, overall dimensions variable.

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

Test No. 001 (what color is the Black Sea?)

2021

Negative and positive of artist's photograph at the age of three on the Black Sea shore  
silkscreened with oil on latex, stainless steel trays, black plexiglass, glass, plant in lab glass  
beaker, stone from the black sea shore, brass rings on brass chain

two parts

overall 17 x 20.5 x 7 inches

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

Test No. 001 (what color is the Black Sea?)

2021

Negative and positive of artist's photograph at the age of three on the Black Sea shore  
silkscreened with oil on latex, stainless steel trays, black plexiglass, glass, plant in lab glass  
beaker, stone from the black sea shore, brass rings on brass chain

two parts

overall 17 x 20.5 x 7 inches

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

ჩემი ცნობიერის ჩუქურთმა (Patterns of My Consciousness)

2021

Oil silkscreened on latex mounted on artist's steel frame,

brass screws

30 x 16,5 x 4 inches

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

what color is the Black Sea? (restaged)

2021

The Bronx Museum of the Arts

Modular steel structure, tangerine tree potted in glass aquarium on children's swing, aluminum rods and lab hardware, palm tree bud casted in silicone gel tinted closest to the artist's skin, palm tree leaf casted in pigmented urethane resin, hand-painted liquid mirror on glass and steel frame, blacked-out white neon, growing UV lights and fixture, hardware. Text on the mirror painting reads: "...like a small plant that turns toward the sun in order to survive" [Alice Miller]

Modular structure: 84 x 48 x 98 inches, overall total: 84 x 48 x 130 inches

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

what color is the Black Sea? (restaged)

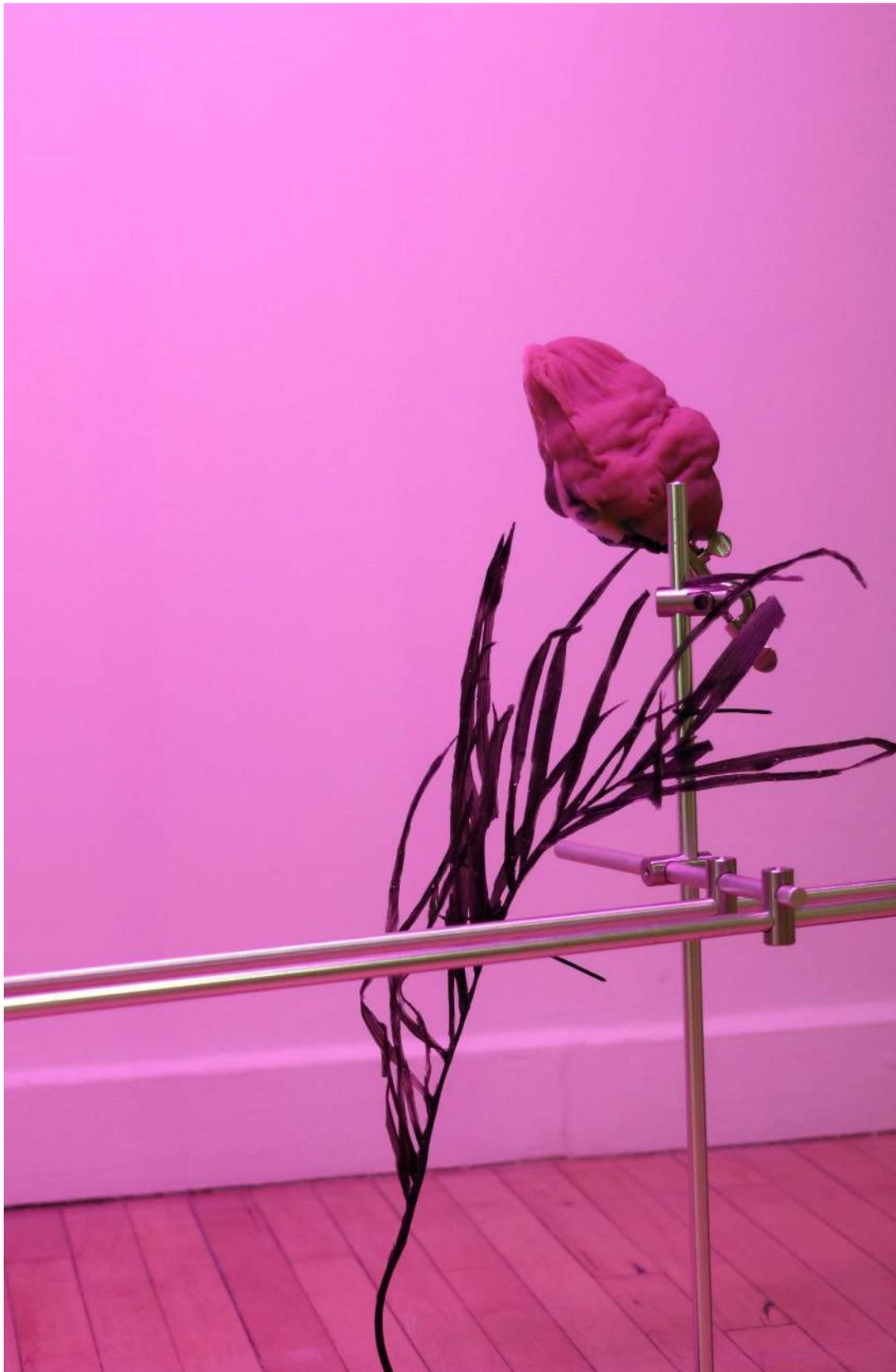
2021

The Bronx Museum of the Arts

Modular steel structure, tangerine tree potted in glass aquarium on children's swing, aluminum rods and lab hardware, palm tree bud casted in silicone gel tinted closest to the artist's skin, palm tree leaf casted in pigmented urethane resin, hand-painted liquid mirror on glass and steel frame, blacked-out white neon, growing UV lights and fixture, hardware. Text on the mirror painting reads: "...like a small plant that turns toward the sun in order to survive" [Alice Miller]

Modular structure: 84 x 48 x 98 inches, overall total: 84 x 48 x 130 inches

MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

127.1 bpm (for my dancing peers)

2021

Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens

Steel frame, polished steel and stainless steel structure, CNC cut steel palm tree leaves, palm-tree buds casted in clear resin and stainless steel powder, laboratory hardware, patina, lacquer, pigmented silicon and resin in acrylic tube, speakers, sound, updating playlist, public events.

Overall 89 x 204 x 20 inches.

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# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

what if the trees were our lungs?, No.1

2021

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

nine panels

Overall 42 x 36 inches

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Levani

what if the trees were our lungs?, No.2

2021

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

nine panels

Overall 42 x 36 inches

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Levani

The Eastern Wall, Fig.01

(Gardens of Eurasia)

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass, twelve panels,

Overall 56.5 x 33.5 inches

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

The Eastern Wall, Fig.02

(Gardens of Eurasia)

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

16 x 11 inches

MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Levani

The Eastern Wall, Fig.02

(Gardens of Eurasia)

2022

Hand-painted liquid mirror and enamel paint on glass

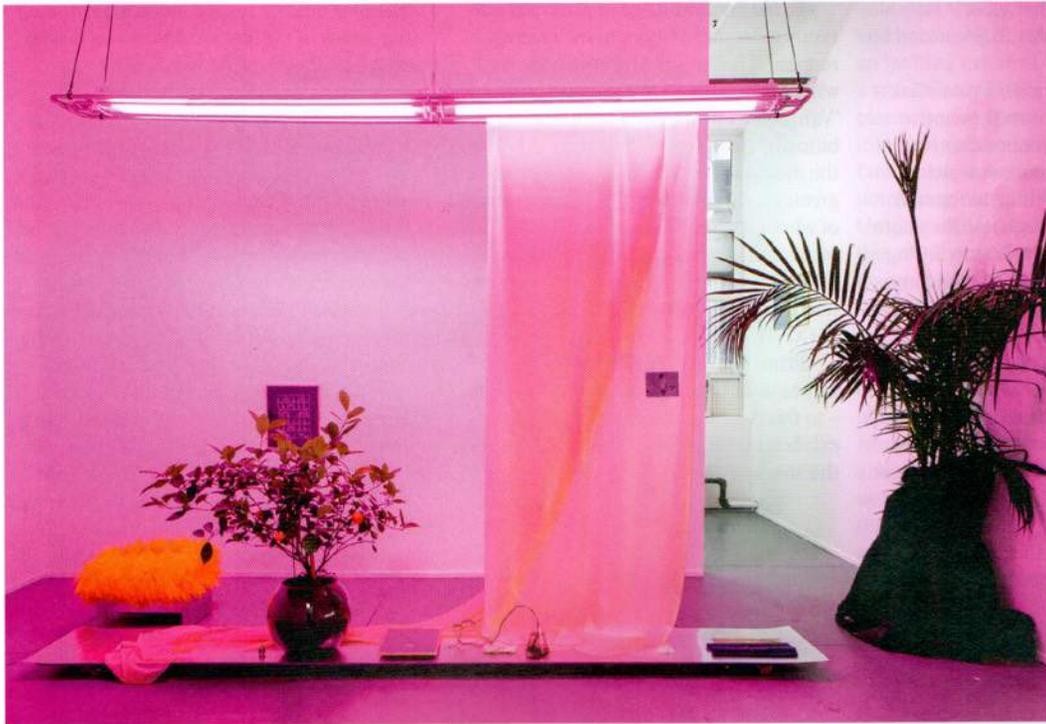
16 x 11 inches

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

## RECENT PRESS



Featured in  
Issue 221



Levan Mindiashvili.  
*what color is the Black Sea?*  
2021, installation view

## Levan Mindiashvili

Marisa Newman Projects,  
New York, USA

'WHITE is the spiritual colour of our times, the clearness of which directs all our actions. It is neither grey white nor ivory white, but pure white.' How far we have come today from statements such as this from Theo van Doesburg's 1929 essay 'Towards White Painting'. I'm not accusing the Dutch modernist of racism, but it's hard to overlook the contradiction in the claim that white is both a colour and the condition of visibility as such – exemplified, naturally, by the proverbial white cube of the gallery. Colour is the very definition of the subjective, as Joseph Albers argues in *Interaction of Colour* (1963): 'Colour [is] the most relative medium in art.'

This seems to be the intuition at the heart of Levan Mindiashvili's *what color is the Black Sea?* (2021), a compelling installation at Marisa Newman Projects, New York, that which plumbs the murky depths where colour, form and language blur in the immateriality of memory. The title of the work – rendered as a blacked-out, white-neon sign – hangs knee-high on a wall from where it vies for your attention as you contemplate an arrangement of elements sitting on a mirrored surface under intense UV grow lights. These all refer to Mindiashvili's childhood and include a living tangerine tree in a planter, a picture

of a hedgehog, a latex curtain draped across the installation, a box sporting thick, orange, faux-fur tufts and a digital image of another hedgehog. This motley collection – a kind of surrealist still life set in a Berlin club – is flanked by a palm tree dressed in a fur coat and framed pages of a Georgian-language alphabet book, while screen prints of the artist's baby blanket hang on opposite walls.

I read the black-painted neon sign as an acknowledgment that, in contemporary America, race not only warps social discourse and politics, it casts a shadow over everything. At the same time, its dark light interacts with the grow lights to create a purplish-pink glow that displaces the scene into the symbolic register of LGBTQI+ discourse and questions of intersectionality. The combination of pink and black recalls the colour scheme of the 'Silence=Death' posters of the eponymous AIDS activist group in the 1980s and '90s, thus resisting any easy metaphorical reading of the work as an affirmation of a utopian rainbow pluralism. Rather than simply shifting from one set of references to another, Mindiashvili literally immerses and suspends the viewer in a vibration of hues that transgresses the carefully guarded boundaries of any and all identities.

The work also resists being overdetermined by the American context. Mindiashvili was born and raised in the Republic of Georgia, a country that sits at the crossroads of several ancient empires – the Holy Roman, the Ottoman, the Persian and the Russian – and therefore reflects a historical and cultural diversity in which skin colour is also a charged issue, but operates very differently than it does in the US. The installation restages a memory of a day at the beach during which the artist first became cognizant of the colour of his skin when his mother worried aloud over him getting sunburned. A photograph of him as a naked three-year-old on that day is printed on the latex curtain, which is tinted the exact flesh tone of his own 'white' skin, effectively staging the way his mother's words *imprinted* colour on his consciousness, prompting his awareness of the difference between body and self. It would be idealistic to say that such repetition dissolves trauma – whether private or collective. Nevertheless, Mindiashvili's autobiographical meditation suggests that colour, not unlike his native country, is an intersectional crossroads – one that remains long after the imperial powers which claimed it as their own have come and gone.

— Saul Anton

## MEMORY WORK: LEVAN MINDIASHVILI AT MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

By David Ebony  April 28, 2021 2:35pm

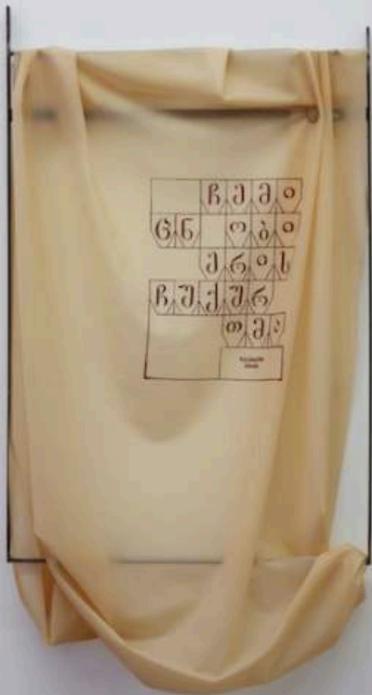


View of the exhibition "what color is the Black Sea?," 2021, showing *what color is the Black Sea?*, 2021, and *Patterns of My Consciousness (where I used to nest), No.4*, 2021, at Marisa Newman Projects. Courtesy the artist and Marisa Newman Projects, NY.

PHOTO MARCIE REVENS.

Within the limited space of a modest venue, **Levan Mindiashvili** manages to convey in this exhibition a complex narrative of his early childhood in Tbilisi, Georgia. The show's title, "what color is the Black Sea?," a childish jest, alludes to a family seaside holiday when Mindiashvili was three years old, an occasion that the artist has identified as his first memory. For him, the event marks the beginning of consciousness—and self-consciousness—including the nascent moment of his queer identity.

The exhibition features the titular installation with numerous components—including live plants similar to those native to Georgia and a stone from the shore of the Black Sea—as well as several small oil-on-latex paintings (all 2021); some of these replicate floral patterns Mindiashvili recalls from a blanket he used as a child, and others present Georgian script in a format used to teach youngsters the letters of the alphabet.



Levan Mindiashvili, *ჩემი ცნობიერების ჩუქურთმა (Patterns of My Consciousness)*, 2021, oil on latex mounted on artist's steel frame, brass screws, 30 by 16 1/4 by 4 inches. Courtesy the artist and [Marisa Newman Projects](#).  
PHOTO MARCIE REEVENS.

Hanging from the ceiling in the center of the gallery is a scrim-like translucent latex curtain with a beige hue that approximates the artist's skin tone. Most other components are hung low, placed on the ground, or slightly elevated on top of a narrow, face-up mirror, to suggest the viewpoint of a child. Thematically, the exhibition centers on a snapshot of the three-year-old Mindiashvili sitting naked and alone on the beach. It was an image his parents kept in a prominent place in a family photo album and often showed to visitors, mortifying him as a child. The image reappears several times in the show, most prominently on the fleshly curtain—a positive image is silkscreened on one side of the curtain, and a negative imprint on the reverse. Adding to the charged, gender-fluid tenor of the installation, ceiling-hung grow lights bathe the entire gallery in a feminizing, soft pink-purple light that also benefits a small tangerine tree in the center of the room.

Mindiashvili's paintings, objects, and installations often explore identity in abstract, spatial terms, as in his 2014–17 project "Unintended Archeology of (un)Place." A recent example is his installation "Levani's Room: HOME," presented by the gallery at last year's SPRING/BREAK Art Show in **New York**, for which Mindiashvili re-created intimate spaces of his apartment with photographs printed on sheer cloth scrims. "What color is the Black Sea?" is more ambitious in its scope and conceptual depth, especially in the way it evokes formative childhood experiences through a basically abstract visual language. The show's mood is more meditative and melancholy than that of previous efforts, yet the artist also incorporates a number of humorous surprises. A video loop on an iPad, embedded within a child's yellow-orange faux-fur pillow on the floor, shows a hedgehog moving across a lawn at night, referencing a similar scene that unfolded in Mindiashvili's grandparents' backyard after the seaside vacation. Similarly nostalgic and rather campy passages occur elsewhere in the show, as in the form of a small potted palm tree partially wrapped in a fake fur coat adorned with jewel-like crystals. In its own eccentric metaphorical terms, the work represents the artist's mother.

Positioned at a child's height on one wall, the show's title appears in cursive white neon lettering that has been painted black on the front, so that the letters appear backlit by a halo of light. This poetic fragment corresponds to Glenn Ligon's 2009 wall-hung neon work *Untitled (America)*, in which block letters spelling the word "America" are painted black on the front side, allowing only limited illumination of the wall behind. Ligon's work is a wry comment on segregation and America's double standard of equality. Mindiashvili's piece is a similarly potent statement about negation and rejection. It conveys a feeling of displacement and ostracization that for him began at age three on the shores of the Black Sea.

Art   Reviews   Weekend

## Levan Mindaashvili's Childhood Memories

Mindaashvili's installations strike a teasing balance between disclosure and concealment.



by Louis Bury  
April 24, 2021



Levan Mindaashvili, "what color is the Black Sea?" (2021), artist's photo silkscreened with oil on latex fabric, tangerine tree in glass aquarium, horticulture growing lights, oil on green latex in folded brass frame, corroded brass sheet, stone from the black sea shore, plant in lab measuring, marble weight holders, brass incense holder, on aluminum sheet mounted on plywood and steel, overall size: 84 x 112 x 41 inches (All images courtesy the artist and Marisa Newman Projects; photos by Marcie Revens)

A horticultural grow light overhead bathes Levan Mindaashvili's installation, *what color is the Black Sea?*, at Marisa Newman Projects, in a warm, magenta glow. A small tangerine tree, planted in a shbowl, stands on one side of the platform underneath the light and suuses the room with a pleasing fragrance. On the platform's other side, a translucent latex scrim has been draped from the light xtecture like a half-open shower curtain. Silkscreened on the scrim is an inky, 3.8 by 5- inch photographic image of the artist, at age three, wading naked in the Georgian Black Sea. Other, equally beguiling, sculptural amalgams punctuate the room: a tiny palm tree swaddled in a vintage fur coat; a stainless steel box wrapped in a yellow faux-fur boa; a neon sign stating the exhibition's titular question, its black letters lit from behind.

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The exhibition's atmosphere is at once jaunty and guarded, reflecting the tone of the title, which feels like both a riddle and a portent. Mindiashvili has a knack for creating installations that, through an economy of architectural means, strike a teasing balance between disclosure and concealment. What color's resonant details reinforce this dynamic. Inside the steel box, for example, an iPad plays night vision Im footage of a hedgehog nosing around a patch of grass. (One of the artist's earliest childhood memories is of a hedgehog.) Two series of 13 by 11-inch framed oil on latex silkscreens, "(Patterns of My Consciousness)" and "Patterns of My Consciousness (where I used to nest)" (both 2021), hang, rebus-like, on the walls. The former depicts chalkboard grids containing the Georgian alphabet, each grid missing some letters, while the latter depicts crinkled and forlorn segments of the artist's beloved childhood blanket.

The beauty of what color's personal symbology is that its referents aren't fully revealed — the press release invokes, but doesn't specify, a childhood trauma — yet the work isn't hermetic. Mindiashvili's spatial and material choices offer the visitor numerous footholds in the installation's psychogeography. In particular, his repeated incorporation of latex calls to mind human skin, as well as the material's popular association with condoms. What color contains no overtly sexual content but its many hints and innuendos have an erotic charge. Just as latex can function as a barrier to human intimacy but also enable it, Mindiashvili's artistic recollections bring the visitor close — but not dangerously close — to the enigma of childhood.



Levan Mindiashvili, "Patterns of My Consciousness (where I used to nest) No.1" (2021), oil on latex in double sided brass frame, 13 x 11 inches

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*what color is the Black Sea?*

by Lilly Wei

That's the intriguing but also rather curious question that is the title of a new work—and the exhibition—by Georgian artist Levan Mindiashvili. He adds to it studies for a “Book of Patterns (Morphemes of my Consciousness)” that consist of other significant objects from his childhood.

The exhibition is carefully, ceremonially staged as a “psychological tableau,” as he dubs it, conjuring an experience from the artist's earliest memories. Most of these objects are placed to be viewed from a child's height.

An elegant, planar fixture with grow lights drops a few feet down from the ceiling, suspended by wires. Shades of a ravishing, alchemizing magenta illuminate everything within its range, creating a hothouse-like ambience. Draped through it on the left cascading to the ground is a double-plied natural latex curtain that suggests flesh, stripped from the body's architecture. Its color, without the grow lights, approximates the artist's skin tones. The back panel is longer and sweeps across the floor in an haute couture swirl. The room seems to expand and contract, under the spell of the incandescent pinks that he persuades us is surely the color of memory.

## “What color is the Black Sea?”

Catalog essay by Lilly Wei

That's the intriguing but also rather curious question that is the title of a new work—and the exhibition—by Georgian artist Levan Mindiashvili. He adds to it studies for a “Book of Patterns (Morphemes of my Consciousness)” that consist of other significant objects from his childhood.

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Silkscreened onto the latex skin, a tattoo of sorts, is a positive and negative version of a snapshot of the artist as a cherubic, naked three-year old, seated on a rock, knee-deep in the

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

sea, engrossed. There is a teasing note handwritten by his mother scribbled across the photo: "as you turned me black at the Black Sea, now turn me white at the White Sea."

A hazily reflective metal platform that mimics water functions as the installation's base, floating a few inches above the floor. On it is a potted tangerine tree, some additional stones, a photo of one of those stones, a branch snaking gracefully out of a clear beaker of water, and other similar objects. Recurrence is frequent in this project. Alongside the platform is a child-sized edition of a kind of hassock that is jauntily trimmed in fake orange fur. Peering in, there is a short video loop of a hedgehog, an amiable creature that was Mindiashvili's earliest awareness of an existence distinct from his own.

Hung on the wall behind this installation is an image of a child's gridded chalkboard, one of three that refers to a common tool used to teach reading, a process dependent upon rote but also on a leap of the imagination. My Consciousness Patterns is spelled out on them, one word per board, in Georgian script. There are also a number of framed silkscreened remnants of his cherished baby blanket, no longer in one piece.

Standing against the wall to the right as if in the wings of a theatre, waiting to make its entrance, is a palm tree, its base swaddled in a vintage fur coat, cast in the character of a matriarch that seems both comedic and forceful, beloved and feared. Next to it, in white neon, is the central text: what color is the Black Sea? The words facing the viewer are painted black, but the light of the reverse side bounces off the wall, brilliantly haloing them.

Mindiashvili's question might seem straightforward at first, but he doesn't ask it flippantly and it becomes increasingly complicated as the exhibition points to the slipperiness of memory and its encryptions. Autobiography is not his concern as he proposes different methodologies of representation and analyses that are both verbal and visual, to see past events in the present tense, from other perspectives. Yet the exhibition inevitably refers to what particularly concerns him. For instance, it might allude to blackness in Georgia and its cultural and social implications which differ from what constitutes blackness in the United States (although hierarchies, discrimination and inequities are not monopolies of either country, of any country). That perpetrates other questions. As a Georgian, for instance, is he European, Asian, or Eurasian, and if the latter, does he incline more East or West, leading to yet other questions about identity such as queerness and intersectionality.

"What color is the Black Sea?" is a kind of trick question with countless responses but no ultimate answer. For Mindiashvili, the exhibition focuses on consciousness and the capture of foundational moments in the construction of self, a framework for reassembling memories and reconsidering them. It is a renovation of sorts, an amelioration, poignant glimpses backward that lead forward.

## Levan Mindiashvili Notes on the Infrathin

BY CHRISTIAN RATTEMAYER

For a solo presentation at the NADA Art Fair in Miami in 2018, Brooklyn-based Georgian artist Levan Mindiashvili produced a series of quasi-photographs comprising ostensibly abstract images hand-applied with a liquid mirror on glass and mounted each in a metal frame. These images evoked the format, scale, and texture of old-fashioned photographic technologies, such as daguerreotypes and large-format transparencies, while also acting quite literally as mirrors, reflecting the viewer and other sculptural objects in the booth. Their use of glass and a liquid-silver medium and their origin in a photomechanical process—albeit manually rearticulated—inescapably situated these objects within the logic of photography, with its historical associations with windows and mirrors, its early technologies of Ambrotypes and various glass plate negatives, and its gradual transmission through a series of transparent plates. Collectively titled “Studies for Impossible Image,” these objects triggered a number of subsequent works in which the correspondences between the photographic and the three-dimensional are explored further. As Mindiashvili writes:

*“Studies for Impossible Image” became a starting point for my ongoing body of work that deals with the idea of “fluidity” as a current state of being. As continually changing social forms and paradigms no longer represent a temporary, transitional condition and became an essential part of our every day, my work itself has become a morphing entity that encourages deeply personal, subjective readings and interpretations. [...] I also look at them as a metaphor of the screen—a crucial device in the perception of our reality today. (I’m even considering to name entire body of work “screens”). What’s most important for me is the fact that, thanks to their reflectiveness, the surface become a meeting point of the viewer, surrounding where it’s placed, and the work itself, a constantly “updating” chronicle of the very present.*

Two of these subsequent series of variations on the “Impossible Image” might further exemplify the way in which Mindiashvili’s objects situate themselves at the threshold of the two- and the three-dimensional, between the sculptural and the photographic and insert themselves into discourses about representation. They take aim at the ways in which reflectiveness, liquidity, fluidity, and screen time have become metaphors for a current condition of dissolution between memory and experience, on the one hand, and between the body and the image, on the other. One operates within the historical, the other within the art historical.



# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



Installation view of *In Search of the Miraculous*, ERTI Gallery, NADA Miami, December 6-9, 2018

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS



*Study for Impossible Image No. 02, 2018*



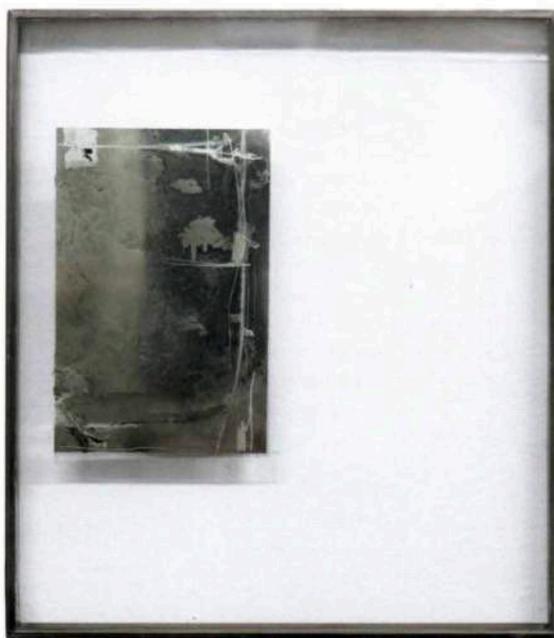
*Study for Impossible Image No. 01, 2018*

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

LEVAN MINDIASHVILI MEANS TO AN END



*Study for Impossible Image No. 01, 2018*



*Study for Impossible Image No. 05, 2018*

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

Mindiashvili's most recent iteration of this ongoing series, two works titled *89 (89.19)* and *19 (89.19)*, refer to the years 1989 and 2019, respectively, and are ostensibly grounded in the artist's contemplation of two historical raves, on April 9 and November 11, 1989, as recalled from today. Here, the raves are imbued with historical significance as events of freedom, coinciding emblematically (or conveniently) with the larger historical events of 1989, most significantly the fall of the Berlin wall on November 9. History here is commemorated via an act of physical expression: the rave as a metaphor for the similar—and possibly shared—feeling of opening, bleeding, uniting, mirroring, dissolving into an experience of freedom.

Meanwhile, Mindiashvili's *Study for the Large Glass for the 21st Century* faithfully reproduces the cracks in Duchamp's 1915–23 magnum opus *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*. Duchamp's *Large Glass* is a modern icon and perhaps the most important reference for Mindiashvili's project, as its material (meticulous behind-glass painting) and meaning (the idea of a slowly unfolding approximation of near events, a "Delay in Glass," as Duchamp called it, among many other interpretations) neatly encapsulate an obvious avenue of interpretation for Mindiashvili's quasi-photographic objects.

But Duchamp also provides an additional precedent that I think is even more central to Mindiashvili's project: in 1930, he collected forty-six handwritten notes through which he aimed to outline his concept of the *inframince*; Paul Matisse published them posthumously in 1981 in a facsimile edition. Each note aims to give a definition or example of what might constitute the *inframince*, or *infrathin*. For Duchamp, the *inframince* was a condition that, although impossible to define, can be alluded to through examples. Some have become better known, such as his example of tobacco smoke that also smells of the mouth of the smoker; the warmth of a recently abandoned seat; or the difference between two forms cast from the same mold. But in note number fifteen in Matisse's facsimile, Duchamp gives another example for the *inframince* that seems eerily relevant for this discussion: "Painting on glass seen from the unpainted side gives an *infra thin*." In fact, Mindiashvili's quasi-photographs, or glass images, operate quite strikingly in the register of the *inframince*. They establish thresholds between object and image, and, in the increasingly referential works of the series *89* and *Study for the Large Glass*, make explicit their ambition to sit at the points where history and art history rub against personal experience and memory. They make manifest what Duchamp suggested in his final note on the *inframince*: that a deep mirror could serve as optical illustration of the idea of *inframince* as "conductor" from the second to the third dimension.



*Study for The Big Glass, 2019*

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

Levani (Levan Mindaashvili)

Born Tbilisi, Georgia; Resides and works in Brooklyn, NY.

## EDUCATION

2010 Postgraduate Studies in Combined Artistic Languages, IUNA (National University of Art of Buenos Aires) Argentina;

2003 Tbilisi State Academy of Fine Arts, 2003;

## SELECTED SOLO PRESENTATIONS

2021 "what color is the Black Sea?" Marisa Newman Projects, NY;

2020 "Levani's Room: HOME," Spring/Break NY;

2019 "Now is Always Someone Else," NARS Foundation, Brooklyn, NY;

"I Should Have Kissed You Longer," TAF'19, Tbilisi;

2018 "In Search of The Miraculous," NADA Miami Beach;

2017 "Here," Georgian National Museum, Mestia;

"In-Between," State Silk Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia;

"Shifting Identities", The Lodge Gallery, VOLTA NY;

2015 "Suites For Unintended Archeology," The Vazquez Building, Brooklyn, NY;

2014 "Borderlines," The Lodge Gallery, NY;

2013 "Whispers," ArtArea Gallery, Tbilisi, Georgia;

"Urban Identities," Kunstraub99, Cologne, Germany;

2011 "Intimidades Mobiles," NES Gallery, Buenos Aires, Argentina;

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2022 "The earth leaked red ochre," curated by Re'al Christian (publication) Miriam Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (forthcoming);

"Forward Ground," Fridman Gallery, NY;

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

- 2021 The 5th AIM Biennial "Bronx Calling," The Bronx Museum of the Arts;  
"Sanctuary," Socrates Sculpture Park, NY;  
"Two Leaves and A Tree," East Slovak Gallery, Kosovo;  
"Zwischenzug," Below Grand, NY;
- 2020 "In Search of The Miraculous," Museum of Modern Art, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
1st Immigrant Artists Biennial, Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, NY (catalog);
- 2019 "In Search of The Miraculous," ShauFenster, Berlin, Germany;  
"Lucky Draw," SculptureCenter, NY;  
"BRIC Biennial Vol.3," BRIC, Brooklyn, NY;  
"Image and Its Likeness," Museum of Modern Art, Tbilisi, Georgia;
- 2018 "Down The Line..." NARS Foundation, Brooklyn, NY;  
"What We Loved Was Not Enough," Super Dutchess, NY;  
"RE:21 This Is Not Here," Pfizer Building, Brooklyn, NY;  
"The Border No.1," The Border Project Space, Brooklyn, NY;  
"Tbilisi... Tbilisi," Project ArtBeat, Tbilisi;
- 2017 The 7th Beijing International Art Biennale, National Art Museum of China;  
"Limits of My City," Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi;  
"Unintended Archeology, Bekaia+Mindiashvili," The Lodge Gallery, NY;
- 2016 "Shaping Identities," Tbilisi History Museum, Georgia;  
"Eco Impulse," Tbilisi Literature Museum, Georgia;  
"Shaping Identities," Arsenal Museum, Kiev, Ukraine (catalog);  
"Aesthetics of Repair in Contemporary Georgia," Tartu Art Museum, Estonia (catalog);  
"A Room of One's Own: An Exhibition," curated by Osman Can Yerebakan, The Clemente, NYC;  
"Night Intervention, Bekaia + Mindiashvili," Tbilisi Silk Museum, Georgia
- 2015 "HERITAGE," RichMix Arts Center, London, UK;
- 2013 "HERITAGE," Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
"For Which It Stands," The Lodge Gallery, New York City, NY;
- 2012 Summer Show, Fundacion Mundo Nuevo, Buenos Aires, Argentina;
- 2011 Movistar Arte Joven 2011, Centro Cultural Borges, Buenos Aires, Argentina;  
"Seres Encontrados," "Objeto a" art gallery, Buenos Aires, Argentina;
- 2010 ArtIsterium 10, III International Forum of Contemporary Art, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
"Projects," Isidro Miranda Gallery, Buenos Aires, Argentina;  
"Vectores Invertidos," Laguanacazul Art Gallery, Buenos Aires, Argentina;
- 2008 "Heterodoxa01," Salon Dorado, Teatro Roma, Buenos Aires, Argentina;

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

2006 "The Lost Ones," Gallery Universe, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
"Georgian Visual Art," National Gallery of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia;

## SELECTED PRESS

THE BROOKLYN RAIL, Bronx Calling, The Fifth AIM Biennial, by William Corwin;  
HYPERALLERGIC, Artists Find Sanctuary at Socrates Sculpture Park, by Rachel Remick;  
FRIEZE Levan Mindiashvili's Interactions with Colour, by Saul Anton, September 2021,  
Issue 221 (in Print);

Art in America Memory Work: Levan Mindiashvili at Marisa Newman Projects by David  
Ebony;

HYPERALLERGIC Levan Mindiashvili's Childhood Memories by Louis Bury;  
Levan Mindiashvili "what color is the Black Sea? (exhibition catalog). Essay by Lilli Wei,  
Published by Marisa Newman Projects, NY.

PIN-UP Magazine, FROM STUDIO 54 TO CARL CRAIG, A WAVE OF DANCE FEVER  
HITS THE EXHIBITION CIRCUIT, By Jesse Dorris;

artnet news, Editors' Picks: 10 Things Not to Miss in the Virtual Art World This Week,  
March 23, 2020;

OSMOS, "Levan Mindiashvili Notes on the Infrathin" by Christian Rattemeyer, Issue 19,  
Fall 2019;

The Art Newspaper, Tbilisi Art Fair 2019 by Andrey Rimar;  
Cool Hunting, Multi-layered highlights from the Tbilisi Art Fair 2019 by David Graver;  
Le Quotidien de l'Art, Tbilisi Art Fair: une ouverture sur les mystères du Caucase, by  
Rafael Pic;

The New York Times, New York Art Galleries: What to See Right Now, BRIC Biennial;  
The Art Newspaper, Dealers Take a Stand Against Transphobia at Miami's Fairs by  
Osman Can Yerebakan;

Cool Hunting, Miami Art Week 2018: Radical Sculptures by David Graver; ArtAsia  
Pacific, Tbilisi Roses from The Rubble, by HG Masters;

HYPERALLERGIC, 8 Artists to Watch from Bushwick Open Studios by Hrag Vartanian;  
The Observer, Art Dubai's Global, Cosmopolitan Vision By Guelda Voien;  
ArtRadar Journal, 8 Galleries and Artists to see at Art Dubai by Rebecca Close;  
The National, The key highlights and attractions of the 11th edition of Art Dubai;  
HaberArts, Highlights from Armory Week by John Haber;  
ArtsInBushwick, Precarious Constructs: A Dance with the Maelstrom by Jenjoy Roybal;

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

ART Margins, Aesthetics of Repair in Contemporary Georgia by Liisa Kaljula; Indigo, Night Intervention of Uta Bekaia and Levan Mindiashvili by Sophia Kilassonia; Liberali, Salt, Charcoal and Skin - Night Intervention of Bekaia Mindiashvili by David Bukhrikidze;

Estonian Art, The Pleasurable Aspects of Breakdown by A. Wheeler;

Baltic Worlds, Georgia: a Much Repaired Society by Francisco Martinez;

Forbes Ukraine, 5 Artists to Watch during Kiev Art Week;

Vogue Ukraine, Must see Artists during Kiev Art Week 2016;

Essays: Words, Objects and Buildings in Personal Diaries of Levan Mindiashvili by Khatuna Khabuliani, Saba Publishing, Tbilisi, 2016;

Brooklyn Magazine: Best Art Exhibits of 2015;

Huffington Post, Multimedia Reflections on Georgian Heritage and Identity by Katerina Zherebtsova;

HaberArts, Yvonne Jaquette, Levan Mindiashvili and New York Cityscapes, by John Haber;

ArtSlant, The Best from ArmoryWeek 2014;

ArtsInBushwick, Tbilisi to Bushwick: Levan Mindiashvili's search for Identity by Etti Yaniv;

## SELECTED AWARDS & RESIDENCIES

2022 LES Studio Program, Artist Alliance Inc.

2021 The New York City Artist Corp Grant;  
Socrates Sculpture Park Fellowship;

2020 Peter S. Reed Foundation Grant for Sculpture/Mixed Media;  
NYFA Immigrant Artists Mentorship Program;

2019 Creative Time X Summit Grant;  
AIM fellowship, The Bronx Museum of the Arts;

2018 NARS Foundation Studio Residency;

2014 National Endowments for the Arts Public Art Project Commission Grant.

## PANELS / TALKS

2019 Contemporary Art from Georgia, panelist with Uta Bekaia, moderated by Heike Fruehburghe, Berlin Art Fair Talk Series.

# MARISA NEWMAN PROJECTS

What is Political? with Monika Sosnowska and Sohrab Mohebbi, (moderator), Tbilisi Art Fair Talk Series organized by Tbilisi Kunsthalle.

## TEACHING

- 2021 VAADS Free University, Tbilisi. Thesis advisor;
- 2021 Tbilisi Kunsthalle, Contemporary Frameworks for Critical Thinking and Art Writing: Post Identity, Intersectionality and Decolonization;
- 2018 VAADS Free University, Tbilisi. Thesis advisor;
- 2017 VAADS Free University, Tbilisi. Visiting artist.

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

National Museum of Art of China, Beijing;  
Georgian National Museum, Mestia;  
Tbilisi Silk Museum, Georgia.