STUDIO VISIT (HTTPS://BOMBMAGAZINE.ORG/SERIES/STUDIO-VISIT/)

Studio Visit: Levani

Disrupting the boundaries of art and identity.

BY LOUIS BURY (HTTPS://BOMBMAGAZINE.ORG/AUTHOR/LOUIS-BURY)

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(https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/bomb-images/_hiresolution/studio-Levani1_2022-06-07-092202_hssz.jpg)

Both times I've visited Levani's studio it coincided with their having recently deinstalled an exhibition, and both times the deinstalled work had been reconfigured like refrigerator magnet poetry after a house party. During my most recent visit, Levani had recently taken down *127.1 bpm (for my dancing peers)* (2021) from its display at Socrates Sculpture Park. The work consists of two rectangular steel gates, each with symbolic sculptural objects affixed to their airy interiors, that paid homage to the resourceful joys of NewYork City's underground queer dance scene.



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Resituated in the studio, *127.1*'s constituent parts were in various states of use and repose. The gates rested against a wall and were partially stripped of their ornamental interior objects. Both types of object—steel palm leaf symbols of the Bossa Nova Civic Club and resin casts of palm tree buds—had been arranged on nearby tables among photographs and latex prints from previous installations as well as among new works, including an autumnal botanical drawing and the cracked-open and dried-out husks of actual palm tree buds. The arrangements—ways of testing out display combinations between exhibitions—evidence the artist's willingness to let different projects cross-pollinate one another.



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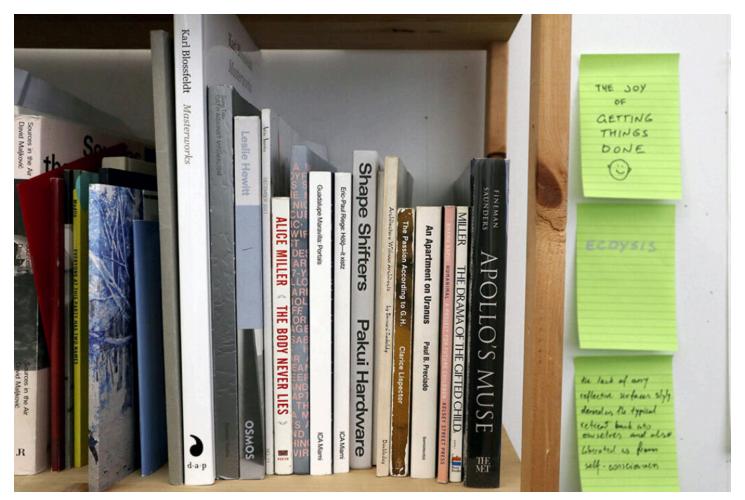


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"I'm not attached to any preexisting forms," explains Levani, citing how insights from epigenetics in particular, that there are no clear boundaries between human cells and bacteria—have influenced everything from their understanding of identity to the way they make and display art. "My work always starts from ideas," they elaborate, "even if these are not superficially apparent in the work itself." Levani opens their notebook to a page where they transcribed the definition of "meta code": an "active conceptual and functional component that is not visible." The definition is an apt, oddly poignant way to conceive of the unseen forces operative in their work.



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02.18.2022 THE LANDSLARE IS THE DIVINE BODY, AND JOME PLACES IN THE WORLD ALLOW US TO EXPERIENCE VERNACHLAR architecture doesn't go THAT SENSE OF THE BODY MORE CLEARLY through flashion styles. It is nearly immutable, THAN STREPS, Rachel Pollack "PLASE OF SIRDS" indeed, unimprovable, since it serves its purpose to perfection. As a rule, the origin , THE DIVINE GARDEN OF MATTER of indigenous building forms and construction FROM WHICH WE NEVER LEFT." methods is lost whe distant past. Bernard Rudofsky "ARTUITECTURE UITEOUT TIMUR SI-QIN , A NEW PROTOCOL" ARCHITECTS ! + · ARCHITECTARE GALERNED WITH DOMESTIC and ACLORDING TO THE META-CODE of the functional rather than monumental buildings. HUMAN - TREE THE STRONGER NOD DEEPER ONE'S ANDESTRAL ROOTS, THE MORE DURABLE ONE IS AS APERSON" YOU ARE A FLOWER IN THE GARDEN OF HUMANITY . TLOSTANOVA . OF BIRDS & TREES . PS. 17 Thich Nhat Manh (too human-certric bit kuda poetic) I STUDY THE PATTERNS OF THE MUUTI - SPECIES ALLIANCE LIFE FORMS" (The form on which the life manifests itsef)." LEVAN

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(https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/bomb-images/_hiresolution/studio-Levani10.jpg)

Similar dynamics are at play in Levani's most recent series, *Gardens of Eurasia* (2022), the centerpiece of which is an impressive twelve-panel wall hanging of what appear to be scuffed and sooty mirrors painted with faded, rosy-brown renderings of sacred stone carvings from Georgian antiquity. The panels, however, are actually panes of transparent glass whose obverse sides have been treated with liquid mirror paint, a technique the artist previously used to create the silvery iconography of their 2018 *Studies for Impossible Image* series. Levani's use of reflective paint began as a response to the conditions under which images are made and disseminated online in which there is no clear separation between creator and consumer. As we stood before Levani's contemporary rendering of an ancestral depiction of a sacred garden, our dusty images reflected back at us, I could see the importance of honoring preexisting forms along with the necessity of not getting attached to them.

Levani's work can be seen in the group exhibition The earth leaked red ochre (https://miriamgallery.com/exhibition/the-earth-leaked-red-ochre) at Miriam Gallery in New York City until June 12.

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