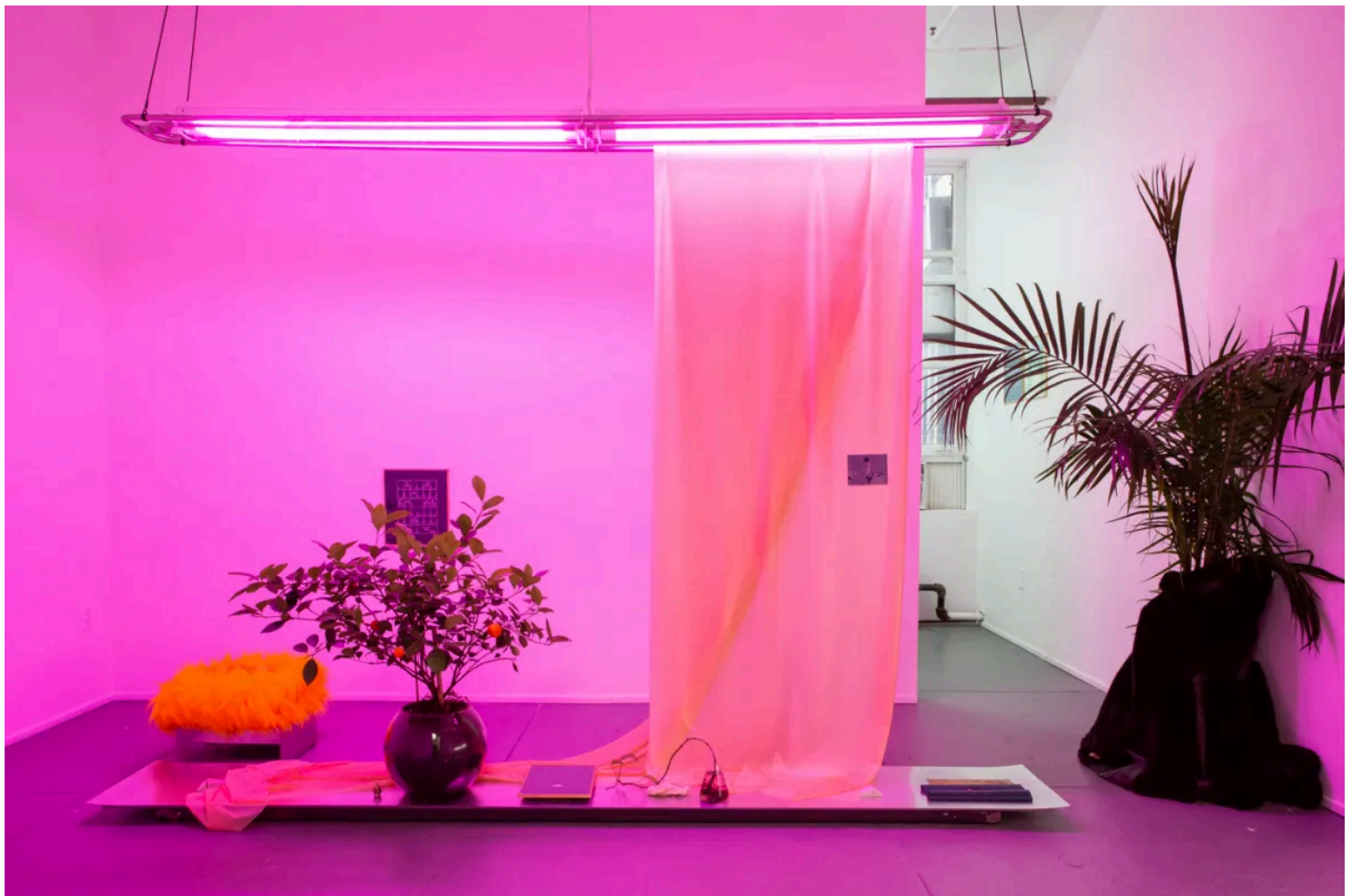


Levan Mindaashvili's Childhood Memories

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



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 fishbowl, stands on one side of the platform underneath the light and suffuses the room with a pleasing fragrance. On the platform's other side, a translucent latex scrim has been draped from the light fixture 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.

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 film 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.



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

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: what color is the Black Sea? *continues at Marisa Newman Projects (38 West 32nd Street) until May 12.*
