

Press Release

Andro Wekua

There

June 2–July 29, 2023

Public Reception: June 1, 6–8pm

Sprüth Magers, London

Sprüth Magers

Moving freely between figuration and abstraction, Andro Wekua creates multilayered paintings composed of fragments of recollections and figments of the imagination that display various formal layers. Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to announce a solo exhibition of Wekua's latest body of work. Containing traces of the artist's hand continuously applying and removing richly pigmented colors, his paintings present as palimpsests that conjure images and associations but defy straightforward interpretation.

The Georgian artist's works refuse to be tethered to the weight of specifics. Rather, through his deft use of color and mark-making, they represent and become liminal spaces. Exemplifying this trait, *House / Gate* (2023) is a vibrant green canvas that beckons the viewer into its picture plane, where dark lines organize into an architectural structure, the walls of which emit bursts of bright orange. His charcoal marks make mere suggestions: black winding lines could be a path leading to an open gate, or they could form branches of a tree partially obscuring the view. Another of Wekua's lush abstractions, *There* (2013/2023), hints at a row of blue and pink buildings hidden beneath a layer of streaky white paint. This color pairing is ubiquitous across Wekua's work and can be found in another painting on show, *That Place* (2023), where fields of dark blue alternate with areas of icy blue that are broken up by pink shapes and a luminous orange opening to the right. Recalling Wekua's seaside hometown of Sukhumi, devastated by civil war, these works are perhaps the product of a fading memory – that of the city itself or the artist growing up there. Together they meditate on the unbridgeable distance between history, fact and fiction.

Evoking an equally phantom presence, Wekua's enigmatic figures are immersed in themselves, their obscured faces floating or gazing into the void. In the moody *That Portrait* (2023), a figure with angular shoulders is set against a dark background. The folds of expressive blue brushstrokes wrap the figure's head in a shawl, framing the ghostly face with its downcast eyes. *Face Looking* (2022) is another rendering of a similar figure against a glossy black background that leaves what the dark eyes see unknowable. Subtle in their visual language, these figures have a haunting aura and echo the introspective and impermeable quality all the images on show possess.

As always, Wekua makes the process of painting itself and its material his subject. Applying paint and scraping it off with a palette knife, the artist inscribes himself upon the surface. At times revealing the underlying canvas, Wekua points to art's artifice, its invention. Leaving gaps for the viewer to fill, paint serves Wekua as a tool to mediate between object and symbol, reality and representation. His work displays a belief in the medium's transformative properties – its ability to reveal or reflect aspects of our humanity. Highlighting Wekua's formal aptitude, the works on view capture the fragmentation and reconstruction that inform all experiences. By scrutinizing the layers that shape perceptions of the past and the present, the artist ultimately questions the veracity of our reading of life and the world.

Andro Wekua (*1977, Sukhumi, Georgia) lives and works in Berlin. Solo exhibitions include TANK Shanghai (2022), Kunsthalle Zürich and Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (both 2018), Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2016), Benaki Museum, Athens (2014), Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Kunsthalle Friedericianum, Kassel, Castello di Rivoli, Turin (all 2011), Wiels, Brussels, Museion Bolzano (both 2010), Museum Bojmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2007) and Kunst Museum Winterthur (2006). Andro Wekua's work has been featured in group exhibitions and major biennial exhibitions worldwide since the early 2000s.

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