

galerie frank elbaz.

Host

curated by Lisa Offermann

Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Tolia Astakhishvili, Tony Just, Sopho Kobidze, Tamaz Nutsubidze, Elené Shatberashvili, Keta Gavasheli and Andria Dolidze

February 3 - March 9, 2024

Opening Saturday, February 3

“The host’s pouring is infinite. His debt is never-ending... If he is hospitable, he pays forever. He pours, continuously.”

Michel Serres, *Parasite*

galerie frank elbaz is pleased to present *Host*, a group exhibition featuring works by Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Tolia Astakhishvili, Tony Just, Sopho Kobidze, Tamaz Nutsubidze, Elené Shatberashvili, Keta Gavasheli and Andria Dolidze, curated by Lisa Offermann, LC Queisser.

The tapestry work on view, *Spring*, by Georgian textile artist Tamaz Nutsubidze (1944-2002) comes from his 1988 four-part series *Seasons of the Year*. The series emerged from the artist’s longstanding interest in exploring frameworks for marking time through weaving. The pattern of vertical stripes—in black, browns, white and vibrant greens—emphasizes the parallel between the gridded and mathematical natures of both weaving and systems of time. Out of all four tapestries, the colors in *Spring* are particularly vibrant. The greens glow, making the cascading layer of sisal fibers appear lively, as though the work were sprouting. The only historical work in the exhibition, Nutsubidze’s tapestry frames the surrounding works through a few shared concerns: an exploration of spring as both generative and destructively exhaustive; a conceptual mining of an artwork’s substrate; and a fascination with excessive multiplication and/or division within abstraction.

In *Other*, by Keta Gavasheli and Andria Dolidze, we see flesh tones that have a musculature-like quality circling a shape resembling a sphincter. It could be a fragment of a gullet, or an abstracted zygote—a moment of digestion or a stage of development. Similarly, the paintings by Elené Shatberashvili explore the paradoxical nature of eating, as both nourishment and destruction. One painting depicts a dinner table with three cooked fish presented on clean white plates. In another work that might be a sequel to the first, a disquieting disembodied mouth with a single eye, bites into a whole fish that lays limp across the center of the canvas.

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In Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili's work, *Natural is Supernatural (Green)*, the artist uses a found translucent print of roses—perhaps on cellophane, or a plastic bag—as a negative, producing a shadowy grid of flowers against a vivid green and yellow background. A similar motif is then printed on a translucent curtain in *I am Kurious Orange*, using another found, translucent non-photographic form to explore photographic questions around negative, positive, and the transfer of light onto a sensitive surface. Similarly, Tolia Astakhishvili's practice often blurs the boundary between artwork and substrate, with the work growing to encompass the architecture of the exhibition space and other artist's objects. Astakhishvili's exhibited works on canvas resemble the small drawings and paintings that often appear on drywall or found objects in her expansive installations.

Tony Just's abstract paintings are made through the transfer of chance compositions onto the canvas. Just comes to these compositions in various ways, at times by spilling ink, or wine, onto books, and at other times by tracing shadows made by his arms and hands. His work looks at the multiplication of meaning, and interpretation, that happens in one's encounter with abstraction, which he locates in both the quotidian and the sacred. Similarly, Sopho Kobidze's works on view explore the construction of space in abstract painting. Dense and repetitive scratch-like marks lay an irregular and erratic grid over loose color fields. The works' minimal palette highlights Kobidze's organization of space through her fervent mark-making.

Taken as a whole, the collected works in *Host* resonate with Michel Serres' infamous work *The Parasite*, in which Serres uses the parasite as a figure from which to theorize the fundamental basis of human social structures. In Serres' estimation, the parasite—with its minor status—is an agent of change, having an immense capacity to initiate transformation. In one section titled, "The Gods, the Perpetual Host," Serres writes: "The host's pouring is infinite. His debt is never-ending... If he is hospitable, he pays forever. He pours, continuously." Where there is a guest, there is a host, giving and giving.

- Marina Caron