

**Maya Brodsky**  
*Moments of Being*

February 23 - April 1

The George Adams Gallery is pleased to announce our first solo exhibition of paintings by Maya Brodsky, her first in ten years. Intimate in both their scale and subject, Brodsky draws on her lived experience to create paintings that are deeply personal yet universal in their concerns. The exhibition, *Moments of Being*, includes work from the past five years, a period that encompasses the birth of her second daughter, Eda.

The title of the exhibition, *Moments of Being*, derives from the autobiographical essay by Virginia Woolf, *A Sketch of the Past*, which investigates the recording of memory itself. Woolf describes the consequential “moments of being” as distinct from those everyday “moments of non-being,” calling them the “scaffolding in the background; [the] invisible and silent part of my life.” Likewise, Brodsky searches out those “moments of being” to translate into paintings, as both an aide-memoire and a way to fully explore the nuances of the moment. Central to the exhibition are a group of paintings based on photographs she took during a hospital stay following her daughter’s birth. In these, we share Brodsky’s perspective as the photographer as she surveys the clutter of the hospital room from the vantage of her bed, with a myriad of textures and variations of light and shadow. The level of detail throughout is overwhelming, from the wrinkled sheets to the reflections on the windows, a verisimilitude only possible in retrospect. Brodsky has shared how little she remembers of the stay, yet how profound the experience was for her. The process of bringing these images into the studio and living with them over the years it took to complete the paintings was a discovery – a chance to finally see and explore the room, at a remove from the physical and emotional stresses of the time.

Themes of life, birth and death are central to these paintings as Brodsky searches out those moments of stillness within experiences both profound and commonplace. Old family photographs were an early source of inspiration and a relationship to that format is maintained in both the subject and scale of these more recent paintings. Drawing a connection to previous generations and specifically a shared bond of motherhood, the focus alternates between Brodsky’s newborn daughter and her maternal Grandmother, Dusya. Throughout, hands appear, creating a chain of touch that can be traced from Dusya to Maya to Eda; the hands are also performative, providing warmth or love or protection through simple gestures. Her attempt to capture that tactile sensation is key, touch being the most transitive, most subjective sense. In the triptych *Wave II*, Dusya holds Maya’s sock-covered foot, the intimate moment repeated like a filmstrip with the foot slipping out of frame. A second triptych, *Wave I*, follows this same format, while this time it is Maya touching a lounging Eda whose foot moves into focus over the three panels. The ebb and flow of images and the inevitable connotations of film emphasize not only the passage of time, but also a transfer from one generation to the next.

For Brodsky, scale is also an expression of her manner of painting; she prefers to hold the panels while working, making larger sizes unwieldy. Instead, she pieces together multiple segments to create a composite of the final image. That intimacy is an echo of her subjects, where the act of painting becomes synonymous with the acts of touching or holding that are seen in Brodsky’s images. While her work is undoubtedly autobiographical, it veers away from any attempt to define the personal; the poignancy of “being,” to use Woolf’s expression, extends beyond the particulars of the moment. Even in the specificity of Brodsky’s titles, with their diaristic evocation of a time and a place (as in *Saturday, April 28, 6pm*) is as much a meditation on the light of a late spring evening, as it is a marker for a consequential event. Instead, she emphasizes the universality of expression and the basic narrative arc of life as it is lived. In painting these “moments of being,” she is holding on to something ephemeral – a memory, a touch, a gesture, a sensation – literally stopping time in order to make it permanent.

Maya Brodsky (b. 1984, Minsk, Belarus) was raised in Brookline, Massachusetts. She received a BFA in painting and a BA in Philosophy from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2008. In 2010 she graduated with an MFA from the New York Academy of Art where she was awarded a Post-Graduate Fellowship for 2010-11. She was the recipient of an Acadia Foundation Artist’s Residency in 2013, an Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant in 2014 and 2018, and a Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant in 2022. She currently lives and works in Cambridge, MA.