



By means of an informed intuition, Georgian-German artist Thea Djordjadze has established an internationally recognized practice over the past 30 years.

Thea Djordjadze's works are created by a process that responds to the architecture of a site, sometimes reflexively, sometimes as an immediate, visceral reaction to the given conditions of space, surfaces, textures, but also its institutional layout. Combining found and manufactured materials, craft and industry, her work operates at the intersection of painting, sculpture, architecture and exhibition design. It brings together the gesture and pictoriality of an abstract language with objects and pieces of furniture. These often appear in fragments, creating a domesticity that is both familiar and constrained, even dislocated.

Originally trained as a painter, Thea Djordjadze embraced sculpture and installation early on as a means to reflect multiple points of view and to allow a close encounter between the work and the viewer. Her interest in space coincided with a wider change in the artistic and theoretical fields. After the implosion of the Soviet Union a new post cold war and post colonial era allowed territorial changes and a new freedom of movement. Increasing decentralisation led to an awareness of local specificity and regional knowledge. Nevertheless, as this exhibition shows, pictoriality, reflection, texture, and surface, have always been essential to the artist's work.

Although she frequently references Western and Eastern modernism in art, design and architecture, Thea Djordjadze uses her own perspective as a Georgian and German artist to challenge the historical validity of established hierarchies. Her work is punctuated by quotations and allusions that form subtle echoes of her varied background and influences. Within this cycle and transfer of ideas, her own works often reappear reinterpreted or translated into different mediums. Whether pictorial or sculptural, Thea Djordjadze's interventions subtly document this journey.

Set against the backdrop of the poetic dilemma posed by its enigmatic title, Thea Djordjadze's exhibition *the ceiling of a courtyard* offers an insight into the artist's working process. This involves the continual reinvestigation of older pieces alongside new works which she adapts to their surroundings, in this case WIELS' cast concrete architecture and columns. Each exhibition offers an opportunity to relocate and reconfigure her work. As the pieces move from one site to another, they reveal, like a palimpsest, their successive influences and modifications. In this way, Thea Djordjadze's works testify to a flexibility that resists displacement. The changes that she makes to the works shows the importance of their location.

The artist presents a thoughtfully laid out arrangement of a wide range of works, some of which function as presentation devices — podiums, alcoves, pedestals, display cases,

niches — implying variously layered relationships between interiority and the outside world. Here, Thea Djordjadze continues her interest in the conventions of display, but also more broadly, in the ways the works are seen.

The display in the first exhibition room feels theatrical and remote, highlighted by a relative inaccessibility. In the second room, however, the artist draws on local traditions, deciding to divide the space in a way that evokes the brutalist architecture of Juliaan Lampens. A prepared canvas which demarcates a space between the columns comes from a workshop in West Flanders and is made using handed-down artisanal knowledge.

Among the many sources referenced in the exhibition are display cabinets from the Georgian Archeology Museum in Tbilisi, designed in the 1960s by the archaeologist and curator Alexander Javakhishvili and the artist Avto Varazi. Through clever use of presentation, design, color and light, these cabinets create an illusion of depth enveloping the artifacts with a timeless aura. Thea Djordjadze reproduces archive images of these cabinets on framed aluminum plates.

The works arranged among these staged elements reflect the artist's interest in the language of materials. Her experimentation allows a constant, unresolved dialogue between rigidity and flexibility. The seemingly cool, clean lines of the industrial architecture is destabilized by the artist's interventions. By her hanging gestures, or by the gestures imbued in the material itself.

Thea Djordjadze's work draws on the expressive force of contradictions and counter-forms, of what lies in the flaws. It is full of tension between visibility and concealment, appearances and omissions, exploring the temporal and spatial relationships with history, its traditions, ruptures and contemporary perceptions; its perpetual cycles of revision.

**Curators:** Pauline Hatzigeorgiou & Dirk Snauwaert