

to love and devour
07.05 - 23.11.2025
Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation

Tolia Astakhishvili

With Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Zurab Astakhishvili, Thea Djordjadze,
Heike Gallmeier, Rafik Greiss, Dylan Peirce, James Richards, Maka Sanadze.

Curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist

Tolia Astakhishvili (b. 1974, Tbilisi, Georgia) is an artist based between Tbilisi and Berlin. At the Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation at Dorsoduro 2829 in Venice, the artist has created a site-specific installation in dialogue with the architecture of the building and its history, which takes place prior to its renovation into an exhibition space for the future programmes of the Foundation.

In creating the installation, Tolia Astakhishvili lived and worked at Dorsoduro 2829 for the first months of 2025, creating an exchange with the space and a series of artists who she invited into conversation. These include: Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Zurab Astakhishvili, Thea Djordjadze, Heike Gallmeier, Rafik Greiss, Dylan Peirce, James Richards, and Maka Sanadze.

Tolia Astakhishvili once told me that at the core of her work is a desire to blur the boundaries between individual and collective artworks, between her authorship and that of others, and the feedback loops that can be engendered with the environment in which artworks are shown. This unique project at the Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation exemplifies Tolia Astakhishvili's ability to create a complete installation – a Gesamtkunstwerk, but one which is not overpowering, imposing or didactic, but rather allows the viewer multiple entry points.

In creating a complete artwork that utilises fragmentation, impasse, construction and destruction as spatial vehicles, the project follows the methodology used by Tolia Astakhishvili in several of her previous extraordinary installations at Haus am Waldsee, Berlin (2023), and Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn (2023). However, where several of these projects involve the transformation of white cube art spaces into construction sites, at Dorsoduro 2829 the artist begins with a ruin, a building yet to be restored.

This fifteenth-century edifice of the Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation was previously the property of the painter Ettore Tito during the 1920s, who facilitated an extension of the existing space to be used as an artist's studio, with the building then undergoing subsequent renovations until the early 1970s. Today, there lies a hybrid building in its forms and materials, made of contrasts and adaptations and in which different functions over time have profoundly changed its original appearance. Tolia Astakhishvili's project delves into this material history of the building. In taking up temporary residence in January 2025, she has transformed the space through several structural interventions: walls have been removed and added; spaces have been narrowed and widened; artworks and multisensory elements by the artist and others have been incorporated, including text, painting and drawing, as well as video, film and sound. With her delicate, fragile drawings, this medium is often central in Astakhishvili's installations, and connects to the importance of drawing in Nicoletta Fiorucci's art collection.

By privileging processes of addition and subtraction, expansion and contraction, Astakhishvili creates a temporary spatial intervention with a profound sense of destruction, distortion and fragmentation. In doing so, she creates a temporal opening that projects into the future and returns to past realms. As with all her work, the installation speaks to the question of how we build and spend time in different spaces, and the fragility and existential uncertainty that pervades this lived experience. This sense of uncertainty is echoed in the way that visitors to the installation are given the freedom to move in whichever way they choose, without a concentration on a centre or a prescribed pathway. As Gilles Deleuze wrote, we ‘are in the middle of things, but in the centre of nothing’.

– Hans Ulrich Obrist, April 2025

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