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In Practice: Ana Gzirishvili

By Nina Chkareuli



Installation view: *In Practice: Ana Gzirishvili* at SculptureCenter, 2026, New York. Courtesy the artist. Image courtesy SculptureCenter, New York. Photo: Charles Benton.

At SculptureCenter, Ana Gzirishvili presents a new body of sculptures formed from reconfigured sheets of leather and positioned in an articulated semi-circle. A small, dimly lit rectangular gallery within the larger cavernous space of the SculptureCenter now looks like the abandoned ground of an animal farm, a site of violent eruption, and simultaneously a post-apocalyptic altar room of some mythic temple within the white cube. The animal skins sourced by Gzirishvili

from various street markets also function as seven augmented reality maps, etched with abstract index marks. Clearly needed in the tumultuous spring of 2026.

There are multiple ways of extrapolating the meaning or, if you wish, feeling the frequency of what is on view. By synthesizing these two registers, Gzirishvili's context becomes more pronounced. Gzirishvili is the child of the 1990s politically destabilized and torn Georgia, reeling from the Soviet collapse. At that time, even its capital, Tbilisi, was suffering from regular outages of electricity, rise of criminal rates, food shortages, and the extreme polarization of society. People had to take the security of their families into their own hands, discarding the skins of their former Soviet identities. As a representative of the younger generation of contemporary Georgian artists, Gzirishvili recontextualizes the intergenerational traumas of her country, finding apt materials and metaphors. Here, it is also noteworthy that skins also have a traditional meaning within the Georgian agricultural tradition, where they are used as wineskins to transport and store the beverage. Consciously or subconsciously connecting these more traditional parts of identity, Gzirishvili teases out the complexity of a country's geopolitical crossroads, forever stuck in the power games of its larger neighbors.

The installation's second register is emotional as Gzirishvili mediates her engagement through very specific modes: the artist's bodily contact with the skin and relational connection to the material and space. Her sculptural process is elaborate. Sourced skins are soaked, pulled taut, and wrapped tightly over handmade frames and assemblages. Once the material dries, the artist removes the supportive materials, producing reliefs and imprints of bricks, fruit, furniture, and fragments of earlier works. Reconfigured skins are positioned in an abstract pattern, several of them placed on the wall.



Ana Gzirishvili, *A scene in a meadow*, 2026. Leather, cotton fabric, paint, foam. 12 ⁵/₈ x 16 ⁵/₈ x 9 ¹/₈ inches. Courtesy the artist and Bukia Vakhania, Tbilisi and Berlin. Image courtesy SculptureCenter, New York. Photo: Charles Benton.

Irregularity is an important characteristic to Gzirishvili, and so is the instability of the material. Her titles, ranging from more abstract to concrete names, do not specifically reflect this. *A scene in a meadow* (2025) is a large, rectilinear shape, hardened and self-supporting, with two discrete parts touching and facing away from the viewer. Nerve endings accumulate under the skin, mirroring Donald Judd's distinction between objectivity and the obdurate identity of material and parts, which does not weaken the unity of the presentation. *Tango* (2025) is created with leather, a wooden stick, paint, and cotton fabric. Its surface is smooth in some areas, strained and wrinkled in others, registering the tension of its making. Removed from its original mold, the piece exists as a suspended trace—an imprint of pressure, time, and contact. It is somewhat relatable to Ursula von Rydingsvard's intuitive approach to monumental sculptures, most often carved from cedar, balancing raw physicality with an intrinsic sense of

form. At SculptureCenter, anti-form becomes as important as the space it occupies; the process supersedes the spatial arrangement.

By bridging both of these analytical and visceral registers, while indirectly addressing formal questions of Post-Minimalism, Gzirishvili works to resolve the current dilemma of Georgian and Eastern European art: how to stay authentic, bold, and inquisitive, while also addressing trauma and embodiment within a formal scaffolding, the lingua franca in New York and elsewhere. Sculptures made from skin are rough and durable. They look like a radical manifestation of vulnerabilities, but not as cries for help. They would rather stay detached.

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