

Lev Ilizirov

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Portfolio 2025



I see the dance but I don't hear the music.

Paris Photo 2022.

In this performance, I use a leaf blower to scatter 7,000 small photographs around the space. These are fragments of my life — personal memories, professional work, images of friends and family. I expose my identity, memory, and secrets, not to be preserved, but to be scattered, pushed, hurled — into space, into people.

I want the audience to face chaos.
Not as a metaphor — but as presence.

This is not spectacle.
It's confrontation.

We live inside a constructed world of commercials and curation, where everything must be clean, perfect, correct. Religion, politics, and social norms train us to follow order — accessible, acceptable, controlled. But anything outside that frame becomes “wrong,” “strange,” “unacceptable.” Out of fear, we discriminate. We cling to structure. We pave over life.

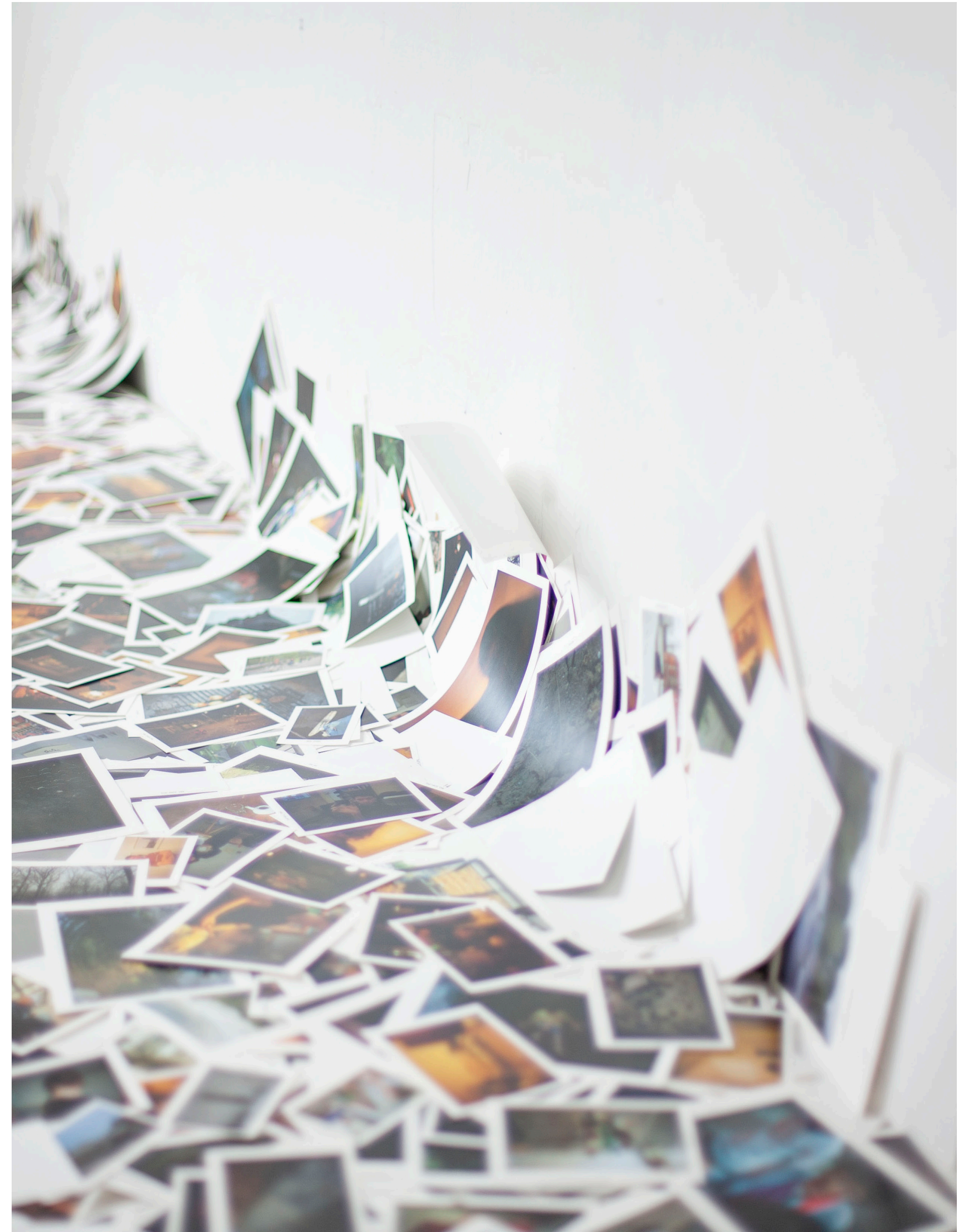
But the civilization we built is not the world we truly inhabit.
Outside the system, life is a river — fast, muddy, unpredictable.
No animal, no tree, no storm, no moment of time obeys our scripts.
Yet we keep trying to canalize the wild.

In this performance, the photographs become agents of disorder.
The leaf blower becomes an extension of natural force.
I move through the space as chaos itself — not to destroy, but to disorganize.
To rupture the illusion of false order.

Gustav Mahler once described a vision:
Dancers in a brilliantly lit ballroom, seen from far away in the night, their music inaudible.
That silence — that separation — is what I resist.
I want to hear the music so I can understand the movement.
I want to know the history, so I can choose which traditions to follow — and which to refuse — because many no longer speak to the life we live today.

I want to bring you into that dance, into the mess, into the moment before meaning is formed —
when life just is,
when you are part of it,
when you begin to ask questions,
before you judge others.

Performance (7000 prints , leafblower)



Drifting in the Uncertain, 2025.

A tall cylindrical structure hangs from the ceiling, gently moving forward and back in a slow, mechanical rhythm. Wrapped around its surface is a large photograph: a seascape veiled in thick fog. In the image, rocky islands barely emerge from the mist. The scene lacks sharpness, horizon, or fixed perspective—its edges dissolve into obscurity.

This slow, pendulum-like motion activates the image. It introduces a sense of repetition, of indecision. The structure doesn't rotate or spiral—it moves only forward and back, as if pacing within the same thought. The gesture is simple, but its effect is disorienting: we are never quite settled in front of the work. As viewers, we too are pulled into this oscillation, both physical and emotional.

The image and its motion together evoke a condition familiar in contemporary life: the sense of being suspended between directions. A quiet anxiety about what lies ahead. A crisis of meaning. A loss of confidence in narratives—personal, spiritual, political—that once anchored us.

Neuroscience tells us that the brain is built to predict, to find patterns, to reduce uncertainty. When these patterns fail—when the future is unreadable or belief collapses—the brain responds with distress. The amygdala, responsible for fear, becomes activated. We become stuck in loops of doubt and

anticipation. The installation embodies this: not free movement, but constrained repetition. Forward and back. Again and again. In existential psychology, this state is described as “meaning crisis”—a moment when no direction feels right because belief itself has dissolved. Studies show that when individuals lose faith (whether religious, ideological, or personal), they often experience a form of cognitive and emotional freefall. Without stable ground, even movement becomes a kind of circling.

And yet, something remains. The islands in the image—though obscured—are still there. The structure moves, but it does not collapse. From quantum theory to Buddhist thought, we are reminded that uncertainty is not always absence. It can also be space. Possibility. Transition.

The installation does not resolve uncertainty—it gives it form. It does not offer faith—it offers presence. A presence that rocks gently, forward and back, suspended in a space where meaning has not disappeared, but has yet to come into focus.

Installation (metal, motor, photography)







Dunes prophecies, 2022-2024

In this installation, you see images I have captured on Natania Beach, near Iris Reserve and Ir Yamim where I have been working intensely on these photographs since 2022. When I arrived in Israel, at the age of 17, the first few years before moving to Jerusalem for my studies at the Academy of Fine Arts, I settled in Netanya, I would go to this place to isolate myself from the social chaos and find calm—walking in the dunes and swimming in the sea. This place meant a great deal to me. It was magical and spiritual. Sometimes, I would accidentally encounter red foxes. To my disappointment, when I returned years later to visit friends and family, I found an enormous new neighborhood growing in the area, now called Ir Yamim—30-story residential buildings with private swimming pools, malls, and shopping centers. The landscape is disappearing day by day. Most people who settle here work in Tel Aviv but seek more affordable housing outside the city. In recent years, Israel has become overpopulated, especially along the Mediterranean coast. This has led to increasing traffic and pollution. Many immigrants come to Israel seeking to live in the Holy Land. When I came back and witnessed these changes, I realized the only thing that hadn't changed were the dunes along the beach. They are too unstable to build on. Collapses happen often, and the Mediterranean waves keep advancing, eroding the cliffs year after year. The wind carries dry sand through the cross-stratified layers, ever reshaping them.

I began to notice the changes happening with every passing year, and I started to document the dunes during each visit to Netanya. I focused on close-up, zoomed-in views of the sand's cross-stratification—partly for memory, and partly out of a nostalgic connection to the walks I used to take. I wanted to preserve the beauty of that place and deliberately frame out the destruction.

I started to question the idea of holiness in this land—the deep arrogance of being religious while destroying everything and everyone in the name of God. I see only sand and stones. There is nothing holy in this land.

For me, the geology of this place holds more meaning than its religion. I discovered a quiet beauty in the way nature builds its layers over time, while humans kill each other in vanity through centuries of history. These sands understand time differently. With every stratified layer, we can read years—marked by rain-formed hardened bands. And all of it can be blown away by the wind at any moment. This fragile situation in the Middle East holds the entire world in tension and fear.

This installation is composed of small archival images arranged in a systematic grid, alongside fine prints layered spontaneously on top of one another. The dialogue between order and chaos reflects the struggle between humanity's desire to dominate and nature's need to survive. Life, in its unpredictable way, always finds a path—like flowers pushing through asphalt. Nothing can stand in the way of the wind.

*Instalation (photography, metal, ventilators)
soon on Daegu Photo Biennale 2025, Korea.*



Real Unreal, 2024

Real Unreal explores the fragile line between perception and meaning—between what is seen, what is imagined, and what resists representation. The work draws from Lacan’s distinction between the Real—that which lies beyond language and cannot be symbolized—and reality, the constructed, shared world shaped by images, signs, and cultural codes.

At the heart of the installation is a wooden structure inspired by the broken spatial logic of medieval painting, where visual perspective is inconsistent, flattened, and layered symbolically rather than optically. This fractured geometry evokes not just visual disorientation, but a sacred dimension—where divine space resists the coherence of earthly geometry. In this visual language, space breaks in order to reveal something beyond it: a spiritual rupture, a glimpse into a presence that escapes rational order.

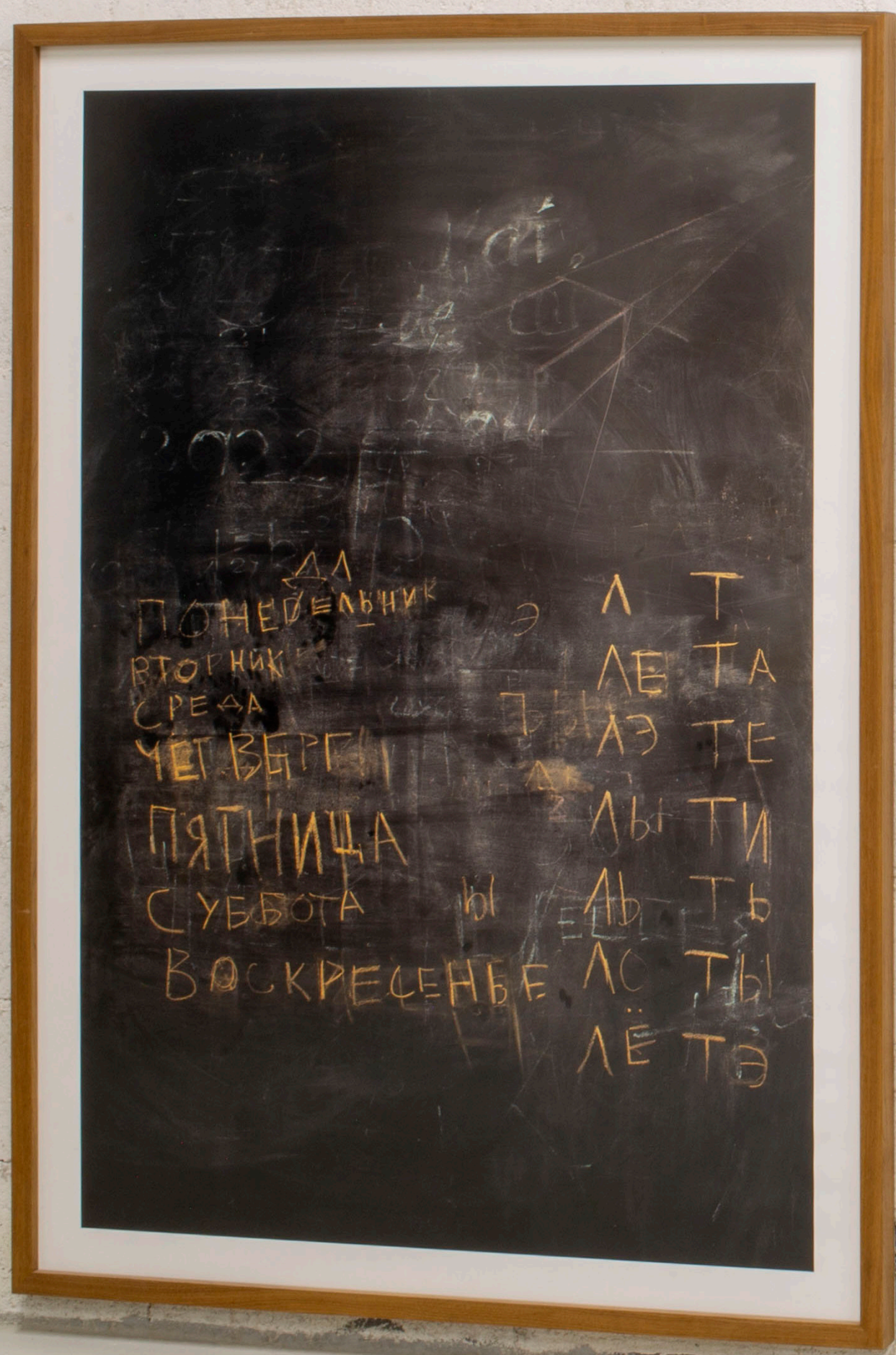
Two large prints, reminiscent of Torah scrolls or an open book, hang from the structure. This gesture weaves together psychoanalysis and religion—two systems that attempt to address suffering and the search for meaning. Yet where religion offers coherence through sacred law and divine narrative, psychoanalysis (especially in Lacan’s view) insists on rupture. It exposes the lack at the center of the subject—something religion may mask with fantasy, structure, or the illusion of a “Big Other” who guarantees meaning.

The photographs in the installation show two distinct perspectives on the same architectural fragment: a pair of windows and a glass wall between them. This doubling resists resolution and reflects my commitment to studying things from multiple angles—refusing to leap to conclusions shaped by ideology, fantasy, or inherited belief. Before meaning can be fixed, Real Unreal urges us to linger in ambiguity—to see deeply, to look again, and to accept that truth may reside in what cannot be fully resolved.

Real Unreal is not a resolution but a disruption. It proposes a space where binaries dissolve—real/unreal, word/image, sacred/profane—and where looking becomes both a confrontation with the limits of vision, language, and belief, and an ethical act: an invitation to think more deeply, before we believe too quickly.

Installation (wood, metal, neon, photography)





Blackboards, 2017-2025

I painted the wall black—not to cover, but to invite. Chalk became the medium of emergence: my children’s early attempts at writing, at forming the world through symbols, unfolded across this surface like a daily ritual. The deformation of letters, their resemblance to the Phoenician alphabet, hinted at something primal—the raw formation of meaning, echoing ancient scripts where abstraction first became language.

As my son began learning, I documented this evolution. But the wall became more than a surface for literacy—it became a polyphonic field, where Russian Cyrillic, Latin, Hebrew, and Japanese hieroglyphs from Naruto anime elemental symbols (fire, earth, wind, water) coexisted, layered in chalk and intention. A semiotic playground.

And the ghosts. When chalk is wiped away, it leaves a residue. Traces. These smudges, these afterimages, refuse to fully disappear. They turn into pictorial forms—accidental beauty born from erasure, like palimpsests where memory haunts the surface. A child’s thoughts half-erased are not lost; they become something new. The wall itself becomes a metaphor for the mind: overwritten, imperfect, glowing with past impressions.

What began as a semi-archaeological interest in the evolution of writing transformed into something more intimate. I discovered a new method of understanding my children—not through what they were taught, but through what they chose to express. The board became a mirror, a visual interface between their inner world and mine. I learned to read their play, their desire, their affinities.

I also drew on the board: the Earth spinning around the sun, visualizing truths that are otherwise too abstract. I used the wall as a pedagogical tool, and in doing so, returned to the oldest form of teaching—gesture, drawing, storytelling.





LEV ILIZIROV

Exhibitions (selected)

2024 The Places, The Spaces, The Irruptions, Galerie DÍNAMO, ESAP, Porto (June)

2023 Down The Rabbit Hole, cooperative

Octopus, Paris, FR (May) solo exhibition

2022 I See The Dance But I Don't Hear The Music. Performance at Paris Photo, Grande Palais Ephemere, Paris, FR (November)

2022 On Abstraction, Opium Philosophie, Poush, Aubervilliers, FR (October)

2022 War and Piece. Performance at Border Line, Pavillon Vendome, Paris, FR, (April)

2021 Atlas Bazar, Rotolux, Poush Manifesto, Paris, FR, (November)

2018 The Town Hall of Serralongue, Languedoc Roussillon, FR, (August)

2016 Le Palais De Monteurs, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR, (July)

2015 Leonid Tsvetkov and Lev Ilizirov / Borders, Van Zijll Langhout / Contemporary Art, Amsterdam, NL, (Nov) 2015 Cutlog 6, Paris, FR, (October)

2014 Fieldeye's Funky Wednesday, PhotoQ Bookshop, Amsterdam, NL, (May)

2014 Momart at Art Rotterdam 2014, the garage of Van Nellefabriek, NL, (February)

2013 Momart presents ALL, Amsterdam, NL, (November)

2013 Prospects & Concepts – Mondriaan Fonds toont talent, Rotterdam, NL, (February)

2012 Athématique, Espace Brochage Express, Paris, FR, (September)

2011 Galerie Serge Aboukrat, Paris, FR, (February) solo exhibition

2010 Kunstraum Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, DE, '10 selected positions from the Rijksakademie'

Artists' Books (Selected)

2014 'L'envers du Détail'

2009 'Fade out'

2007 'Hostel'

2007 'Asphalt - Israel 2002-2003'

Publications (Selected)

2011 Kunstbeeld, text by Sandra Spijkerman, (June)

2010 De Gids, text by Marieke Barnas, (June)

2008 Le Monde 2, special edition, (May)

Education

2003-2008 The Bezalel School of Fine Arts, Jerusalem, IL

Residences (Selected)

2009-2010 Royal Academy of Fine Arts

Amsterdam (Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten), Amsterdam, NL

2011 DCR Guest Studio's, The Hague, NL

Scholarships (Selected)

2011 Fund for beeldende kunsten, vormgeving en bouwkunst, NL

2010 Van den Berch van Heemstede Stichting, NL

curently in Paris

Links on internet

lev.ilizirov@gmail.com

<http://www.levilizirov.com>

<https://www.instagram.com/lev.ilizirov>