

ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

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I Wish I had a River, The Underground Lobby
Garden: Keren Anavy at ZAZ10TS

Art Spiel Photo Story



The artist in front of the billboards featuring her work, I Wish I Had a River, The Underground Lobby Garden. Photo credit: ZAZ10TS

Keren Anavy's site-specific multi-media installation *I Wish I Had a River* creates a sense of a painted garden made of paintings, drawings, laser cutouts, sculptures, and video within the confines of the lobby of 10 Times Square. The artist draws on the history, architecture, and ecology associated with her installation site—the center of the bustling garment district; and Art Deco architecture of the building. Moreover, merely 40 years before its completion, New York's biggest reservoir and supplier of all of Manhattan's drinking water in the 19th century was decommissioned and torn down one avenue to the East. This relationship between nature, particularly water, functioning as a cultural agent and an

important element of consumerism is of particular importance for Anavy, who grew up in a desert region of conflict, where the water resource was scarce. The show is curated by Lauren Powell and runs at [ZAZ10TS](#) through August 31, 2021.



Keren Anavy, Water Stone # 1, 2021, Plexiglas, ink on Mylar, detail from: I Wish I Had a River, The Underground Lobby Garden, 2021, site-specific installation at ZAZ10TS Lobby Gallery Space. Photo credit: Stan Narten

Upon entering, the viewer is greeted with five paintings, made of ink and colored pencils on semi-transparent Mylar mounted to Birchwood panel. The paintings depict luscious garden beds, each radiating with color and life, reminiscent of vegetation in the garden and at the same time also resembling underwater landscapes. The artworks are created through a process of dripping ink on submerged Mylar which requires the artist to relinquish control of the pigment to her water substrate for an unpredictable result that only nature can determine. Anavy's paintings rely on water in the same way as the garden they depict. Water moves the ink and dictates the patterns we see in the Garden paintings, which are then filled in with more details drawn with colored pencil—oddly alive with artificiality, a welcomed break from the grey and marbled hues of the pavement outside and the lobby walls inside.



Keren Anavy, Flower, 2021, ink and colored pencil on Mylar, 36 X 36", I Wish I Had a River, The Underground Lobby Garden. Photo credit: Stan Narten

Directly above, a massive forty-eight-foot-long blue painting stretches in a niche on the ceiling—the river shaping the path of both life and art creation—leading the viewer deeper within the installation into the lobby space. The movement of water echoes the movement of people in the lobby space. Bodies flowing through this passage towards their next destination, often an office box in the sky above or back into the concrete jungle outside. The ‘river’ painting above us can function also as a sky, creating disorientation in the space.



Keren Anavy, River, 2021, ink and colored pencil on Mylar, 48 foot long on 36", I Wish I Had a River, The Underground Lobby Garden (detail), 2021, site-specific installation at ZAZ10TS Lobby Gallery Space. Photo credit: Keren Anavy

As rivers often lead to larger bodies of water—following the river paintings leads to an area between two elevator shafts showcasing more of the artists' oeuvre. Here, pigment appears to be defying gravity, flowing upward onto the Mylar painting that extends from a grand tank full of blue liquid. This monumental collage of works represents a visual diary of the artist's creative path over the last several years. In an intuitive process, Anavy integrates a variety of works and techniques that have informed her practice, resulting in an installation that resembles a large-scale drawing. Laser cutouts map intricate patterns

reminiscent of those found in nature as in the veins of a leaf or of estuary paths seen from above. Each component of the installation relates the nature observed along a riverbed to the sweeping rhythmic patterns of the Art Deco interior.



Keren Anavy, I Wish I Had a River, The Underground Lobby Garden, 2021 (detail), ink and colored pencil on Mylar, Oil on linen, Laser paper cutout, clear tank, water, ink, site-specific installation at ZAZ10TS Lobby Gallery Space. Photo credit: Kat Ryals

The river ultimately leads the viewer to a floating utopian forest of Plexiglas pillars in which drawings and paintings in shades of blue and fluorescent orange are rolled inside and reflected through, alongside two paintings in Plexiglas hovering just above the floor. Besides this is a projection of *I Wish I Had a River*. This titular video is based on Anavy's ink and colored pencil paintings on transparent Mylar fused with video footage she took at water channels in New York. The round format video looks like a peephole into a world that combines images from reality with fragments of painting moving meditatively. This installation is reminiscent of a floating forest or a hanging garden made of pillars, alongside a hanging pond that can also be perceived as an image of a moon. The intense orange that cascades down the pillars pays homage to the Art Deco patterns found on the preserved elevator doors to the left. The color also reflects the numerous traffic cones and smokestacks that call our attention to the ever-changing city. This installation is reminiscent of a floating forest or a hanging garden made of pillars, alongside a hanging pond that can also be perceived as an image of a moon. The intense orange that cascades down the pillars pays homage to the Art Deco patterns found on the preserved elevator

doors to the left. The color also reflects the numerous traffic cones and smokestacks that call our attention to the ever-changing city.



Keren Anavy, I Wish I Had a River, The Underground Lobby Garden, 2021 (detail), site-specific installation at ZAZ10TS Lobby Gallery Space. Video projection, ink and colored pencil on Mylar, Plexiglas. Photo credit: Kat Ryals



Keren Anavy, I Wish I Had a River, The Underground Lobby Garden, 2021 (detail), ink and colored pencil on

Mylar, Plexiglas, video projection, site-specific installation at ZAZ10TS Lobby Gallery Space. Photo credit: Kat Ryals

A series of ten short videos depicting water imagery based on Anavy's paintings, bring the flow outside, to the ZAZ Corner, where the artwork is displayed on a large LED billboard in the heart of Times Square. Anavy aims to invigorate the passersby in the incessant flow of traffic—inside, with her installations, and outside, with her video—all rich in color, movement, beauty, and life, creating a secret natural paradise in Time Square.



Keren Anavy, screening on the ZAZ Corner at Broadway & 41st Street in Times Square, New York, NY. Photo credit: ZAZ10TS

Keren Anavy: I Wish I Had a River, The Underground Lobby Garden Curated by Lauren Powell Until August 31, 2021 ZAZ10TS Gallery | 10 Times Square | 1441 Broadway, New York, NY 10018 All week / Every day 08AM- 10PM

PHOTO STORY

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