

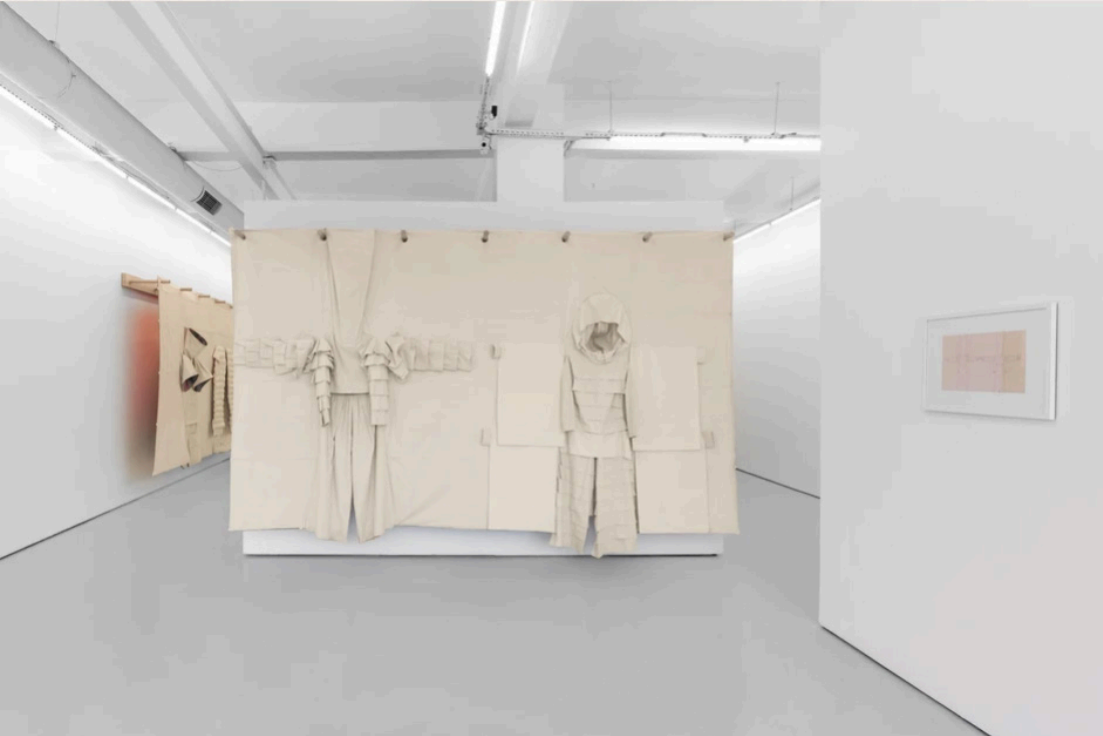
Press Review

Yuzu Magazine, Onur Baştürk, December 2024

# yuzu

NEFELI PAPADIMOULI

the SKIN CONNECTS US to the OUTSIDE WORLD



Skinscapes, the first solo exhibition in Istanbul by Greek artist Nefeli Papadimouli, who lives in Paris, has opened at The Pill. Before exploring the exhibition, take a moment to hear what the artist has to say about her practice...

*When and how did focusing on architectural costumes become central to your art practice? How has this practice evolved over time, and how do you evaluate where you are today?*

The ongoing research project Relational Cartographies, which includes the architectural costumes, emerged in my practice with Être Forêts during the lockdown. It was first exhibited when galleries reopened after the long pause. At that time, I aimed to create a work that could act as a vector, a catalyst for building communities, where participants in performative actions would feel connected both literally and metaphorically. I began by developing a material protocol of connections to activate through performances. This consisted of a system of textile modular elements—pockets and containers that attached to the bodies of each participant. These costumes, or corporeal masks, took form as wearable sculptures.

I wanted to design wearable structures that facilitated transitions: from oneself to another, akin to ritualistic masks, and between people through the connective protocol. My goal was to position participants in a vectorial state, placing them in an “in-between” space of identities or conditions. During rehearsals, I observed a transformative effect: the costumes seemed almost magical, allowing my collaborators to feel altered, to experience being “Other.”

As I worked on this project, I realized it visually and methodologically translated a politics of connection, proposing that spatial configurations of distance could serve as foundational elements for social balance. This realization sparked my passion for exploring ecosystems that emerge when material bodies are seen as spatialized and spatializing entities in dialogue with their environments. This proto-architectural approach now defines my practice, enabling me to explore methods of organizing and visualizing interpersonal and intersubjective correlations.

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This research, and the six large-scale works it has produced so far, is deeply rooted in my architectural education. It examines the relationship between body and space and how their mutual interpretations shape our society. Today, amidst the undeniable ethical and ecological crises we face—a cataclysmic reality that makes the future feel like the past—I feel compelled to focus on the connections living bodies can create over time (linking us to both past and future) and the relationships between living beings and specific places, including our rights to land.



### THE SKIN, AS OUR LARGEST LIVING ORGAN

*The title of the exhibition at The Pill, Skinscape, is a combination of two words. Why did you choose to merge these two words? What is the philosophy behind this name?*

Skinscapes is the title of one of the series of works featured in the exhibition. We chose it as the title for the entire exhibition because it provides a conceptual framework encompassing the diverse works presented.

The skin, as our largest living organ, simultaneously protects us from and connects us to the outside world—the Other. It allows us to breathe; it is a boundary yet also a passage. It functions as an adornment or surface, but fundamentally, it is our physical link to everything surrounding us. All the works in the exhibition address the idea of connection—between one and another—and aim to become vectors for creating relationships: studying transformations and initiating new relational landscapes. They explore transitions between the individual and the collective and vice versa.



*Will there be people wearing the costumes at the exhibition in Istanbul? Or will the costumes, as you describe them, be displayed “on strike,” hanging on the walls?*

The works from the Relational Cartographies series and the Objects to Connect series being shown in this exhibition share a dual existence. When displayed in the exhibition space “on strike,” they function as sculptures, taking on the status of artworks. Alternatively, they can also act as accessories or prosthetics for scripted collective performative actions.

For this exhibition, we chose to present the works “on strike,” accompanied for the first time by archives and research materials developed during the realization of the performances. In this way, the works themselves become witnesses of past events, carrying traces of previous performances while also serving as invitations for their future actualizations.



## ARTIST, MOTHER AND MEDITERRANEAN

*Your work seems to take an anti-stance towards the fashion industry. How do you view the fashion industry?*

I understand that this question can arise when seeing my work. In their forms, my works, at least the wearable ones, could present connections to the fashion world. I feel though that the works are hybrid creations and they are informed or we could find their origins in different disciplines of the history of art, like painting, sculpture, theater, dance, fashion or architecture.

*Now, take a step back and look at yourself from the outside. Try to describe yourself in three words. Which words would you use and why?*

This is a difficult exercise. I think it is impossible to see oneself from the outside without the feelings, desires and fears that each one experiences. But I think the most evident words that would define me are artist, mother and Mediterranean. The first two, are the two roles that describe my everyday life, that I struggle to combine sometimes, that they give me immeasurable happiness and inevitable frustrations. The Mediterranean is probably because of my attachment to the sea, to the noise, to the sun which make my overall temper.



*What inspires you?*

I'm not sure "inspiration" is the right word to describe what drives me in the studio. Instead, I feel deeply connected to people, books, works, situations, and stories I encounter in my life. These encounters—whether physical or virtual—nourish my work. I see some of my creations as "homages" to others—artists, architects, activists, friends, and lovers. Discovering the work and writings of Brazilian artist Lygia Clark, for example, was a transformative experience for me that profoundly shaped my artistic approach.