



ELINA THEODOTOU MARIOS THEOPHILIDES
pursuit of cleanliness

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ALPHA C.K. ART GALLERY

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“I will return in five days, stop washing”, Napoleon wrote to Josephine ¹

pursuit of cleanliness explores the cleaning practices and repetitive cleaning patterns and actions, resulting out of sociological behaviors, with soap and household dust serving as the primary mediums. The soap and dust are shifted from their ordinary and everyday form and are re-introduced. The repetition of forms and objects, as well as the consistency in relation to the mediums used, refer to the cleaning practices we adopt that suit our individual way of living, through patterns that attempt to defeat dirt and dust in our homes.

Approaching the idea of cleanliness from a sociological perspective, we were particularly interested in how cleanliness is seen as a virtue, as a form of competition as to who is the cleanest, whose “image” is the cleanest vs. “internal” cleanliness, cleanliness as a camouflage of real self, a façade. Baring symbolisms of completeness, status and significance, the shapes of sphere, diamond and pyramid serve as mediums in exploring cleanliness as an obsessive action, which is either inherent or subconscious.

It is argued by M. Douglas, that apart from social values, dust and dirt have a direct link with fears. Through her analysis, she suggests that we attribute to dirt and dust the power to disturb the order that we impose to our living spaces and consequently upon ourselves.² Dust is directly linked with the contradicting ideas of ephemerality, eternity, preciousness and decay. In his work, Richard Wentworth introduces a conversation between everyday and contemporary, rubbish and preciousness, using everyday objects, in the same way we have engaged with soap and dust: the objects enter into antithetic dialogues between each other, at the same time entering into a dialogue with the greater space, taking readymade and frequently incongruous objects and arranging them in a fashion that forces us to recognize the drama inherent in that which we too easily dismiss as routine.³

Is cleanliness next to godliness?⁴ Dust, comprised of dead cells of human body, can be seen as a continuous deconstruction of the body. In an attempt to follow social norms through ritualistic cleaning practices, bodies serve as the projection of these practices, at the same time mirroring public and private concerns of acceptance and embracement. The ephemeral and transformational nature of the body serve as an element of historical perspective, as well as a time line revealing the aftermath of social practices and states of mind. The body is not only the producer of dust, it is at the same time the holy space that dust should be eliminated from. Cleaning as a ritualistic process of purification, which eliminates the human form, leaving nothing but dust. And although visually the skin serves as the outline, as the boundary and limit of the human body, through these persistent movements, the skin is decomposed and the form of the human body is repeatedly redefined, with the body’s identity being removed. The body’s identity is dissolved through the abuse of power, with the society globally facing such actions, giving rise to questions of punishment, acceptance, provocation.

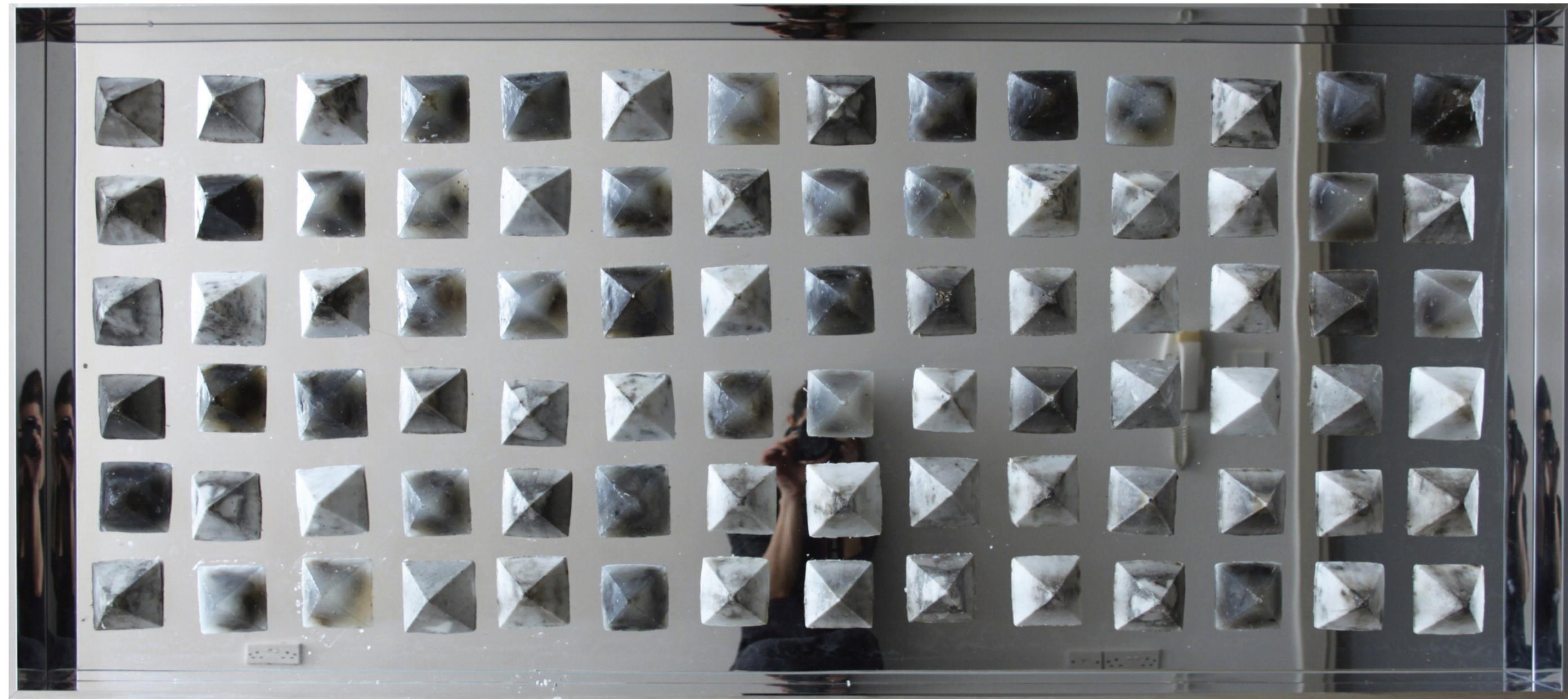
¹ Ashenburg, K. (2007). Cleanliness next to Godliness, “The Dirt on Clean: An Unsanitized History” in *The Economist*. 385.8557, US Edition, (Dec. 1): p99

² Marder, M., *Dust* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p.6

³ <https://www.lissongallery.com/artists/richard-wentworth>

⁴ Quote by John Wesley

REFLECTING FAÇADE - PYRAMIDS
80x180x13 cm
mixed media

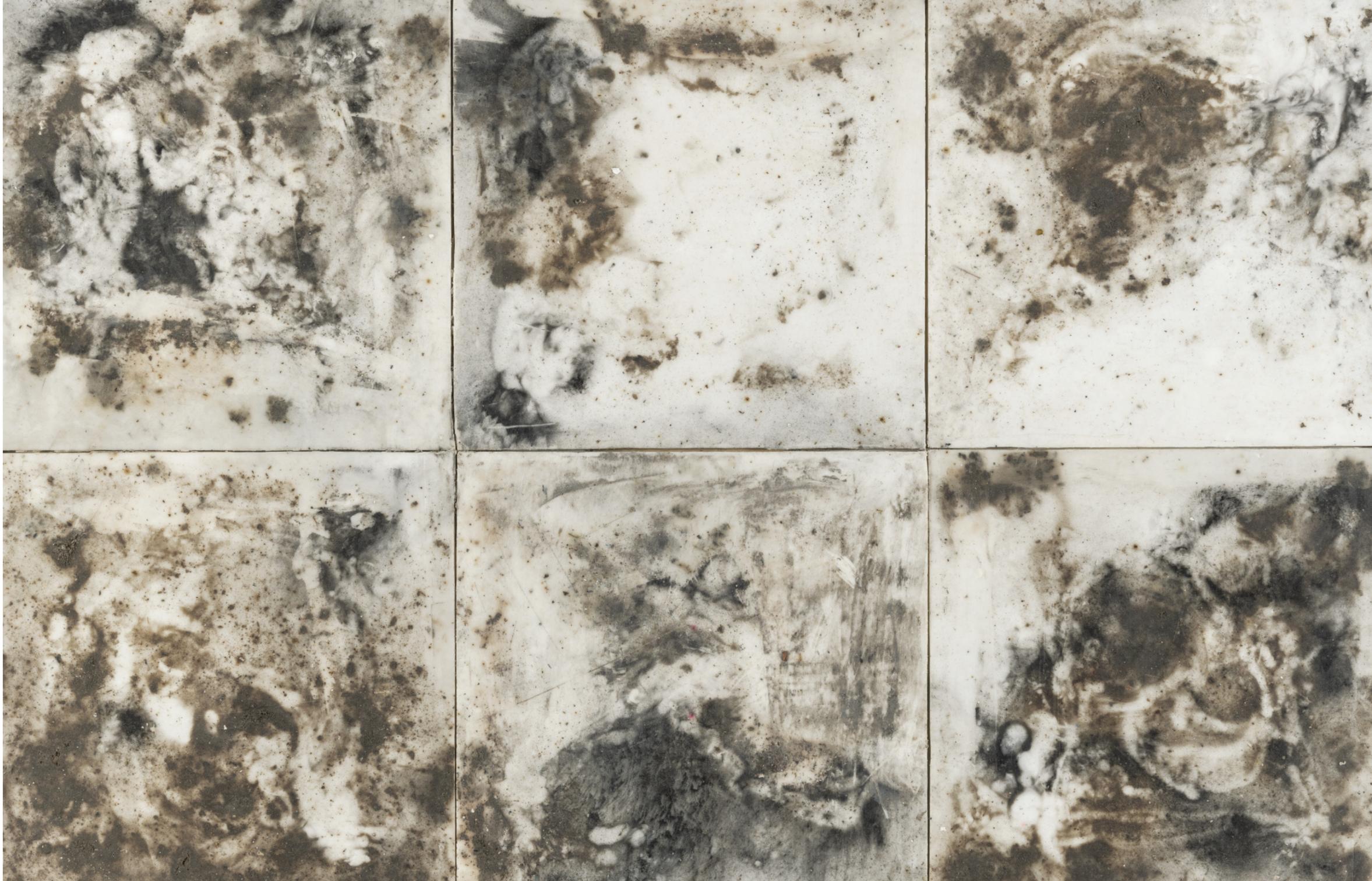






TO(O) CLEAN (I, II, III)
40x120x30 cm (each)
mixed media

SOLIDITY
120x180x7 cm
mixed media



REDEFINING FORMS (I-X)

150x30x30 cm (each)

mixed media



RE-DEFINING FORMS (detail)





REFLECTING FAÇADE - DIAMONDS

80x180x13 cm

mixed media



REFLECTING FAÇADE (detail)



REFLECTING FAÇADE - SPHERES

80x180x13 cm

mixed media



REFLECTING FAÇADE (detail)





Elina Theodotou lives and works in Cyprus. She completed her BA in Fine Arts at Central St Martins College of Art and Design, 2000 – 2003 and her MBA at the European University of Cyprus in 2009.

Parallel to her practice she works as a CSR manager at the alphamega hypermarkets.

She is a member of NeMe, a Cyprus registered cultural NGO.

Solo Shows

- 2019 *Pursuit of Cleanliness*, Alpha C.K. Art Gallery, Nicosia (with Marios Theophilides)
- 2002 *Obsessions*, Morfi Gallery, Limassol

Group Shows

- 2017 *Clay Formed*, NeMe Arts Centre, Limassol
- 2015 *IDIOSYNCRASIES.CY*, Rialto theater, Limassol
- 2012 *Direct Observation*, Rouan Gallery, Limassol
- 2010 *Looking Awry*, Lanitis Foundation, Limassol
- 2010 *The Nature of Landscape*, Rouan Gallery, Limassol
- 2008 *Isolomania*, Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre
- 2008 *In Transition Russia*, Academy of Fine Art, Yekaterinburg, Russia and the National Centre for Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia
- 2007 *Extreme Light*, Dino Art Café, Limassol

Marios Theophilides lives and works in Limassol. He was admitted to the M.A. in Art History and Theory, Technological University, Cyprus and is currently completing an M.A. in Fine Arts at the OCA accredited by the University of Creative Arts, U.K. Parallel to his art practice, Marios Theophilides is a practicing lawyer. He was admitted to the LL.B., University of Warwick, U.K., the LL.M. in Commercial Law, University of Cardiff, U.K. and the M.Sc. in Shipping, Trade and Finance, Cass Business School, City University, U.K. He is a member of the Cyprus Bar Association and of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers. He is a member of NeMe, a Cyprus registered cultural NGO.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2019 *Pursuit of Cleanliness*, Alpha C.K. Art Gallery, Nicosia (with Elina Theodotou)
- 2017 *Re-Define*, Diatopos Gallery, Nicosia
- 2014 *The Embrace of the Prodigal*, Rouan Gallery, Limassol
- 2012 *Origin*, Rouan Gallery, Limassol

Group Exhibitions

- 2017 *Clay Formed*, NeMe Arts Centre, Limassol Cyprus
Summer Breeze, Diatopos, Nicosia, Cyprus
- 2015 *Dis-Locate*, NeMe Arts Centre, Limassol Cyprus
- 2014 *It's the Political Economy Stupid*, NeMe Arts Centre, Limassol Cyprus
- 2013 *Environmental Media*, Rouan Gallery, Limassol Cyprus
- 2012 *Direct Observation*, Rouan Gallery, Limassol Cyprus
- 2010 *The Nature of Landscape*, Rouan Gallery, Limassol, Cyprus.
- 2008 *In Transition Russia*, Academy of Fine Art, Yekaterinburg, Russia and the National Centre for Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia
- 2007 *Extreme Light*, Dino Art Café, Limassol, Cyprus

