

***imago^[1] of a global south^[2]-born, lenapehoking^[3]-based queer artist to investigate the material, cosmological, and psychological dimensions of existence; to collapse dichotomies and identity categories; to offer an iconography of pluriversal^[4] belonging; to inspire empathy, solidarity, and care.^[5]**

^[1] i-ma-go (Latin for "image")

1. ENTOMOLOGY

In biology, the imago is the last stage an insect attains during its metamorphosis, its process of growth and development; it is also called the imaginal stage, the stage in which the insect attains maturity. It follows the final ecdysis of the immature instars.

2. PSYCHOANALYSIS

an unconscious idealized mental image of someone, especially a parent, which influences a person's behavior.

^[2] Countries of the world that are regarded as having low-income, dense population, poor infrastructure, often political or cultural marginalization, and are typically located to the south of more industrialized nations. Most of humanity resides in the Global South.

—Arbab, Parsa, "Global and Globalizing Cities from the Global South: Multiple Realities and Pathways to Form a New Order".

^[3] The Lenape name for Lenape homeland, which spans from Western Connecticut to Eastern Pennsylvania, and the Hudson Valley to Delaware, with New York City at its center.

^[4] A theory that reality is composed of a plurality of entities.

Jakob Johann von Uexküll, a Baltic German biologist from the late 19th to 20th century published the book "Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere" (1909), introducing the idea that animal species perceive their environments subjectively and implying that there are multiple subjective realities coexisting in an ecosystem.

^[5] "New ontologies, new politics, new ethics of noticing, marking, and attending to the ways in which the world is an interspecies one."

—Julie Livingston and Jasbir K. Puar "Interspecies" from *Social Text*, issue 106

Created through a series of drawings, paintings, sculpture, and personal objects, *imago of a queer artist** offers space for an expanded notion of queerness as the capacity for porousness, fluidity, and transformation. The exhibition's title is a deliberate tool providing a conceptual framework for the show and responding to overwhelming systems of categorization used in the art world (and in larger discussions around identity politics). The need to assign labels within conversations around representation, while sometimes intended to improve clarity and communication, often creates rigid and pre-conceived images to which one is forced to adhere.

Drawing upon their own research, as well as the work of writers, scientists, theorists, and thinkers who have served as companions along the way, Levani re-imagines, in community, a more holistic way of being in the world. As such, the story of *imago of a queer artist**, will be told through a polyphony of voices that move between borders, generations, traditions, and time to propose a new state of existence—shifting, breaking down, reconstituting—to become whole.

A multitude of perspectives will be shared through documents, book launches, talks, and poetry readings brought together by the artist as a series of public programs, offered free of charge, within the space of the exhibition at Cuchifritos Gallery. A full calendar of events is available on the Artists Alliance website.

“La facultad is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant “sensing,” a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak... Those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense.”

—Gloria Anzaldúa,
Borderlands/La Frontera: New Mestiza

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Cuchifritos Gallery
+ Project Space
88 Essex Street, no. 21
[inside Essex Market]
New York, NY 10002
Wed-Sat, 12-6p

@aai_nyc
artistsallianceinc.org

“All the world began with a yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born.”

—Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*

“The earth speaks to us most fully through her creatures. the millions of species that have poured out from her body”

—Rachel Pollack, *The Shining Tribe Tarot*

An instar is a developmental stage of arthropods, such as insects, between each moult, until sexual maturity is reached.

Violet is the color of light at the short wavelength end of the visible spectrum, between blue and invisible ultraviolet.

The literal translation of “lullaby” in Georgian is “the song of violets.” Violets are also the first sign of spring, the time when exhibition takes place.

“When a caterpillar enters its cocoon, it releases enzymes that dissolve most of its bodily tissues, liquifying itself to be rebuilt; a body breaks down and a new one forms from the same material. Liquidity, of course, has an economic association, referring to assets being made liquid in times of crisis, or growth.”

— “Metamorphosis,” a film series by the Institute of Queer Ecology

Depending on the species, the pupa may be suspended under a branch, hidden in leaves or buried underground.

epilogue:prologue, 2021

color pencil, pen, ink, marker on newsprint, walnut frame

instar, 2023

stainless steel sanitizing box, syringe and glass beakers from 1980's, gauze, dry flowers, aragonite, snowflake obsidian, faux pearl, atlantic ocean red algae, soy wax casts of human genitalia, stone shelf

imago of dragon flies mating, 2023

color pencil on mylar

emergence, 2023

violet neon

pupa, 2023

Georgian crib, aqua neon “Sacred,” artist’s birth tag, The Year of Children Medallion on iridescent latex, latex fabric, Black Sea shore palm tree skin, glass petri-dish with black sea sand and shells, artist’s wisdom tooth, golden rutile quartz, shungite, pyrite, rough black tourmaline, selenite, “infinite” and asterite serpentines, turquoise, blue calcite and fern, zip-ties, stainless steel lab-hardware, aluminum rod, LED light tubes, plexiglass, plywood

“The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings.”

—Audre Lorde

Adults carry some 8 pounds (3.6 kilograms) and 22 square feet (2 square meters) of skin, making it the largest human organ.

*syzygy - the nearly straight-line configuration of three or more celestial bodies. The full moon and new moon phenomena occur when the earth, sun, and moon are in syzygy.

“nested” within the exhibition—in an adjacent room—is a sculptural piece created in collaboration with poet Lucas de Lima, who has been instrumental in the artist’s transformative journey since the summer of 2020. The installation reveals another way of transformation and emergence through queer kinship, porous merging, generosity, spirituality, and Love. The winged nest in the installation is related to Lucas’ newest book “Tropical Sacrifice”.

* Molecular formula of Oxytocin

Oxytocin is a hormone released in response to the activation of sensory nerves during labor, breastfeeding, and sexual activity. In addition, oxytocin is released in response to low intensity stimulation in response to touch, stroking, and warm temperature.

imago (syzygy)*, 2023

ink and black pencil on paper, mylar, 22 square feet of latex fabric, acrylic, enamel, liquid mirror, violets, pyrite, mirth, incense, blue calcite, blue kyanite, black sea sand and shells, earth, tape, aluminum frames

altar, 2023

coconuts, chicken wings, pyrite, latex fabric, red quartz clusters, Georgian cut-out alphabet on iridescent latex, stainless steel, plywood, metallic tape

Q000_C43H66N12O12S2()*, 2023

hand-painted liqued mirror and enamel

here, 2018

yellow neon