

Keren Anavy
I Wish I Had a River
Curated by Lauren Powell
May 5 - August 31, 2021

ZAZ10TS Gallery | 10 Times Square | 1441 Broadway, New York, NY 10018



The site-specific multi-media installation [*I Wish I Had a River*](#) by artist [Keren Anavy](#) and curated by [Lauren Powell](#) creates a painted garden within the confines of the lobby of 10 Times Square and will be on display from May 5th through August 31st.

“The Underground Lobby Garden” as the artist calls it is composed of paintings, drawings, laser cutouts, sculpture forms, and video projection. The installation honors the original footprint as the city’s once major water source and celebrates the original architectural features of the building. Completed in 1930 as the Bricken Textile Building, the edifice was the center of the bustling garment district, dressed head to toe in Art Deco lines, patterns and adornments. Merely 40 years before it’s 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 where Bryant Park and the New York Public Library now stand. This relationship between nature, particularly water, functioning as a cultural agent and important element of

consumerism is of particular importance for Anavy, who grew up in a desert region of conflict, where the resource was always scarce. 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 that the installation depicts, a process she initially developed in her site-specific installation *Garden of Living Images*, at Wave Hill, Bronx, New York (2018). Without water, there is no life, and this exhibition explores how those two elements intertwine and work together to hold memories, build gardens and shape our cities.



10 Times Square was built nearly one hundred years ago and the lobby has been in a constant state of flux ever since - bodies flowing through this passage towards their next destination, often an office box in the sky above or back into the concrete jungle outside. These walls have a history of bearing witness to the countless determined souls that continue to navigate this path. Anavy's installation invites each passersby to slow down and take a moment of contemplation amongst nature before returning to the hustle and bustle of the day, at the center of the metropolis, perhaps the busiest in the world.

Upon entering, the viewer is greeted with five lusciously rich garden beds, each radiating with color and life. As light does not enter into a ground floor with 34 levels stacked above it, Anavy instead relied on water for her garden to flourish. Each piece in the show (except the laser cutouts

and one large scale oil painting) is created through the power and unpredictability of this essential element. Water moves the ink and dictates the patterns we see in the Garden paintings, which are then filled in with more details through the use of colored pencil - artificially alive, and a welcomed break from the grey and marbled hues of the pavement outside and walls inside. But how did the water get there? Directly above is a massive 48 foot long blue painting - the river shaping the path of both life and art creation - leading the viewer deeper within the installation inside of the lobby space.

Rivers often lead to larger bodies of water and Anavy's in the ZAZ10TS lobby is no exception - following her river finds 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. Situated amongst this monumental collage of works acting as a visual diary of the artists' creative path over the last several years, a variety of works and techniques are informed by practices and discoveries made during previous bodies of work following an intuitive path like 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 historic interior.

The river ultimately leads the viewer to a floating utopian forest of plexiglass pillars in which drawings and paintings in shades of blue and fluorescent orange are rolled inside and reflected through alongside two paintings in plexiglass 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 intense orange that cascades down the pillars pays homage to the art deco patterns found on the preserved elevator doors to the left as well as reflects the numerous traffic cones and smoke stacks that call our attention to the ever-changing structure of Manhattan. The video is also featured on ZAZ Corner's In Between Programming, where the artwork is displayed on a large LED billboard in the heart of Times Square (through May), allowing Anavy to invigorate and inspire the flow of traffic interiorly with her paintings and exteriorly her video - both rich in color, movement and life, creating a secret bubble of natural paradise deep inside of Manhattan, disconnected from the outer world, and impossible to exist without water.

"I see nature as a powerful tool to scrutinize issues of the dynamic relationships between nature, culture and sites. The idea for I Wish I Had a River has evolved following my interest in the connection between water and specific sites in New York City, which was built around water, as the New York Public Library, at the corner of West 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue stands atop the foundation stones of what use to be Murray Hill Reservoir. The exhibition turns the lobby space into an artificial pocket of nature in the heart of the island of Manhattan. Water is a sign of life, of purity but at the same time signifies mourning, tears, memory, desire and longing for another reality." ~ Keren Anavy

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