

CRITICS' PICKS



View of "Slavs and Tatars, Giorgi Khaniashvili," 2022.

TBILISI

Slavs and Tatars, Giorgi Khaniashvili

ATINATI

Ingorokva Street 19

October 22–December 3, 2022

Giorgi Khaniashvili's greatest fear may be turning into a stray dog. In the eight-panel ceramic relief *Transformation*, 2017, the artist depicts his metamorphosis from man, to jackal-

headed humanoid, to masterless canine whose feral instincts compel him to abandon domestic life. For Khaniashvili, the threat isn't in being a dog per se. It's a figuration of the paranoia around what happens when one's existence ceases to hold meaning for others.

Organized at Atinati by peripatetic project space Kunsthalle Tbilisi, this exhibition sets Khaniashvili's figurative ruminations against Slavs and Tatars' graphic printed matter, which gives trenchant visual form to the collective's research around the linguistic and cultural evolutions occurring between the Berlin Wall and the Great Wall of China.

Instability is a condition that unifies the experience of countries on the former Soviet periphery. The political and cultural transmutations endured by Georgia and its neighbors tend to sit within the blind spots of larger global narratives, but this doesn't make them any less real. Here, the artists revel in the delight, danger, and generative absurdity of how and why such transformations occur. Slavs and Tatars use humor to knead at historically inflected shifts between regional actors. (For instance, their 2012 publication *Khhhhhhh*' centers on the politically motivated removal of a phoneme from Turkish in a bid to westernize.) Meanwhile, Khaniashvili's hand-carved sculptures, like *Hunger*, 2012, in which a man swallows his own skull, highlight the personal—sometimes life or death—stakes of change. For both, the question is to whom these metamorphoses matter and why

— Kim Córdoba