

newcomers

Maria Loizidou

Minerva Hotel, Platres | Pylon Art & Culture

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Maria Loizidou with her new exhibition *Newcomers* at Minerva Hotel in Platres, invites us into a space where the conventional perception of time is replaced by a kind of temporal cross-section, one that allows for a journey back and forth between past and present.

In this hotel in the mountains of Limassol, both locals and foreigners once sought refuge from the scorching Mediterranean summers. It also served as a temporary haven for people from neighbouring countries in times of war. The exhibition speaks directly to this movement, responding to the need for survival and restoration under a new condition, in the face of a temporary or lasting trial, a minor or significant loss.

The artist invites us to wander through the spaces of the hotel, restoring their original identity as places of reception. Through a temporary reuse of the site, she seeks to emotionally attune us to a living environment—one that becomes a framework for confronting a continuously evolving condition: human displacement in search of a temporary home, not for comfort or pleasure, but as a shelter and space for basic services. This endeavour aims to contribute to an understanding of the contemporary need for temporary habitation, raising questions that are inherent in the dynamics of modern history.

The exhibition design, conceived by the artist herself, part of her ongoing practice of linking her proposals to each space, whether historically charged or not, is as important to her as the creation of the artworks. At Minerva Hotel, the fundamental design elements are language, fabric, sound, and lighting, which shift and evolve according to need. The space is organized into five thematic units and one transitional passage, through which the visitor moves: the reception area, the dining room, the TV room, the staircase, and the bedrooms. These spaces unfold into a continuous exchange between space and artwork.

In each unit, visitors encounter installations featuring the artist's works alongside objects from the hotel, juxtaposed through unconventional gestures, small constellations that illuminate paths of contemplation and act as tools for introspection. Each unit is distinguished by its own title, etched onto materials using the laser cut method, with the title itself becoming part of the exhibition.

The exhibition begins on the ground floor and continues on the first and second floors of the hotel. The painted glass of the ground-floor windows and the covered furniture belonging to the space allude to the importance of care and the anticipation of another condition.

The *Newcomers* installation is accompanied by a text by Alexandra Landré, Artistic Director of Stroom Den Haag.

– Reception Room – The Welcoming

“Musical Chairs,” 2025, installation

The exhibition begins with the familiar game in which the number of chairs, placed in a circle, is always one fewer than the number of players.

– Newcomers – *Where am I now?*

"We Keep Swimming," 2023, drawing, pencil on paper

The second section unfolds in the large hall on the ground floor, dominated by a drawing suspended on a tripod. Birds appear in the drawing as rescuers of human lives.

– Storage Room

Sculptures from Maria Loizidou's two most recent exhibitions:

"Moi Balbuzard Migrant," Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris, and

"The Place I Am Not," Freud Museum and Hellenic Centre, London, 2024

This third section includes a large number of the artist's works, arranged on metal shelves tightly packed into the smallest room of the ground floor. The ability to distinguish each piece individually depends on the attention and curiosity of the visitor.

– Sleeping Rooms, No Entry

"Paravan," 2018, installation

In the fourth section, located in a specially arranged space, the artist uses simple gestures to convey the atmosphere of a condition in waiting. The folding screen—typically intended to divide space—is transparent, allowing and even encouraging observation of what lies before and around us.

– The Space in Between

Sketchbooks by Maria Loizidou

Seen through the glass front of a room encountered while ascending to the second floor, four open sketchbooks rest on a desk. These books are selected from the artist's extensive collection, in which she typically records her experiences through drawings at the end of each exhibition or project.

This exhibition features:

"Girls Are Not Afraid of Dogs" from the exhibition *Self Other*, 2002;

"Living Small" from the exhibition of the same name, 2008;

"Pelage" from the exhibition *Portals*, 2021; and

a yellow notebook awaiting to be filled with the experiences of the current exhibition, *Newcomers*, 2025.

At the second landing, in dialogue with the hotel's large mirror, the artist reflects on the tension of the in-between state that contemporary individuals are constantly called to navigate. By placing a second mirror and drawing on the wall, she invites us into a repeated projection of ourselves.

– Dreams Area

"Sleeping Room," 2025, installation

"Time," 2025, installation

"The Lost Object," 2001, sculpture

The fifth section unfolds across three rooms. In the first, all the hotel's beds have been stacked and made, ready to offer rest to anyone in need.

In the second room, amid duvets, curtains, and handcrafted textiles from the artist's collection, visitors hear instructions on how to hand-knit and how to sew a waterproof coat. This piece, dedicated to the repetitive gesture, is a tribute to human labor and the persistent drive for survival.

The third room features the missing chair from the ground-floor *Musical Chairs* installation—a gesture of offering and sharing.

Text by Alexandra Landré

Home is where the heart is

There are artists who build monuments, and then there are those who [listen](#) — Maria Loizidou belongs to the latter. Her art does not assert nor occupy space; it opens it. Her architectural interventions and sculptures are quiet questions folded into space: *Who is remembered here? Who is made to belong?* And more urgently still: *Who is forgotten, and even more so - how does that forgetting shape the world we live in?*

Maria Loizidou's work is a philosophy of fragility made visible. Through her spatial interventions – often with wire, thread, and mesh - she draws the contours of bodies that are present only by their absence — migrants, women, refugees, the ones who were not seen, who slipped from history's official archive. These are not merely artistic gestures; they are acts of political tenderness, and in them lies a profound reflection on the dilemmas of modern life: displacement, exclusion, and the longing for recognition.

The Politics of Disappearance

Hannah Arendt, in her essay *We Refugees*, speaks of the "newcomer" as the figure who finds themselves outside the fabric of belonging, adrift without legal recognition or emotional attachment to any particular community. Arendt distinguishes between those who belong — who have a place in the world — and the newcomer, who is not merely excluded by laws but made invisible by society itself. The newcomer, she writes, is someone who must face a condition of constant alienation, having to re-establish their very humanity within systems that do not recognize their right to exist as part of the political community.

"The most painful aspect of the refugee's situation is not that they have been forced to leave their home, but that the world, when they arrive in it, no longer has room for them."

— *Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees"*

Arendt's "newcomer" thus embodies a displaced being, adrift in a world that offers no framework for recognition or belonging. The refugee or stateless person is rightless, absent from political structures that offer protection and meaning.

This painful truth is echoed in Loizidou's exhibition 'Newcomers' at the Minerva Hotel: this hotel, nestled in the mountains above Limassol, serves as a sanctuary for those seeking relief from the heat, but it has also historically offered refuge to people from neighbouring countries during times of war. For the occasion of the exhibition, Loizidou has transformed the site's architecture into one coherent body of work, keeping it suspended between presence and disappearance, much like the newcomer who is caught between existence and erasure and inviting reflection on the right to belong.

Loizidou's work asks us to dwell in that space of almost-belonging, the threshold where law and care fail to meet. Her practice makes visible what has been hidden — the forgotten and erased members of society who still seek to re-enter the world.

"My installations create traces — not monuments — for those whose lives remain unacknowledged."

— *Maria Loizidou*

Her work doesn't merely observe exclusion — it compels us to reflect on what it means to be human in a world that makes space only for those who fit its predefined roles. In today's world, where millions are still stateless, displaced, or culturally alienated, Loizidou's practice resonates deeply. She does not need to shout. The calmness of her installations speaks more truth than proclamations.

Weaving Belonging and Displacement

A sense of belonging is not merely related to a bodily presence and to the space one occupies. While Arendt gives us the structural language of political exclusion, Sara Ahmed provides a more embodied and emotional framework. Ahmed's work, particularly in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, reveals how some bodies are oriented toward belonging, while others are misaligned with the space around them. Desire, comfort, and fear “stick” to bodies, shaping how they are felt in social and public spaces. These affective responses create divisions between who is made to feel welcome and who feels themselves pushed to the margins — a phenomenon that underscores the fragile nature of belonging.

Ahmed's concept of “stickiness” — that certain bodies are marked by affective reactions like fear or discomfort — aligns with Loizidou's exploration of how spaces and bodies are imprinted by historical and emotional baggage. In her works, bodies that don't conform to societal norms — whether by race, gender, migration status, or other markers — become signs of discomfort in their spaces. Ahmed explains that it is not only the lack of legal belonging that matters, but the emotional and sensory responses to a body's presence in space. Bodies that are deemed “out of place” fail to align with the orientation of their surroundings and are subtly rejected or erased through the emotional orientation of others.

“Some bodies become stoppages in the flow of social life; they get in the way of comfort.” — *Sara Ahmed, "The Cultural Politics of Emotion"*

Loizidou's works materialize this discomfort. Take for example her delicate fabric sculptures, suspended in space, represent bodies that do not “fit”, hovering between recognition and erasure. The “newcomer” in Ahmed's terms is a body that does not align, a body that disrupts the smooth flow of everyday existence. Loizidou does not try to integrate this disruption but offers space for it to breathe — for us to witness the emotional and physical labor of dislocation. Her works ask us to question: How do we care for bodies that disorient us? How do we welcome those who make us uncomfortable?

The Act of Holding Space

Loizidou's art refuses closure. It does not resolve the tensions between the newcomer and the world that does not want to make room for them. Instead, it holds space for the possibility of belonging by encountering ‘the other’. She does not try to create comfort; she creates thresholds, fragile forms that suggest belonging is not about fixed, static categories but about the spaces we create for others to exist in, even if they never fully “fit.”

This is the philosophical heartbeat of Loizidou's oeuvre: the refusal to forget, the insistence that even the most delicate trace carries the weight of existence and always carries the potential of affect, emotional connection and meaning. Her work invites us to think through the political nature of memory, the materiality of recognition, and the fragility of belonging.

In a world where walls rise higher, and borders become more rigid, Loizidou's art offers an antidote: a politics of presence through absence, a material hospitality that offers a new way of seeing. Her delicate sculptures and architectural interventions speak not of the imposition of belonging, but the gentle tracing of what it means to truly welcome the other, a newcomer — in all their discomfort, complexity, and impermanence.

Alexandra Landré

*Artistic director
Stroom Den Haag*

Alexandra Landré serves as the Artistic Director of Stroom Den Haag, where she continues to shape a forward-thinking program that fosters critical discourse, artistic experimentation, and civic engagement. Her curatorial practice has consistently centered on fostering conditions for long-term impact, both for artists and the communities they engage. Trained as an art historian and curator, her work is characterized by a deep commitment to artistic practices and their integrity, social relevance, and the transformative power of the arts. With a keen eye for innovation and talent development, Landré has played a pivotal role in numerous national and international cultural initiatives that explore co-creation and audience participation in meaningful and original ways.