

Women in Monuments

Ina Charkviani, March, 2026

I write this text with the thought of the women I have spent a lot of time with in recent years, who, without words, make me feel supported between movements. I call this unspoken bond friendship.

In recent years, talking about labor has become a reason of frequently meeting with women. Women who labor at home come to us after long and tiring working days to talk about their experiences with labor, often to talk this and this only. By talking about this one topic, we get to know each other and continue our connection. Of course, it is obvious to us that we all have other roles and interests in life beyond work - we are friends, mothers, grandmothers, citizens of the same state, residents of the same neighborhood, readers, spectators, passengers, and so on. We differ or are similar in our experiences. When we meet between long hours of work and rare rest, we talk only about work, but words and movements also reveal what we have experienced, what we have wanted, seen, missed, and thought about. We are members of the Care and Family Workers' Union.

It is perhaps this knowledge from recent years that a person, a woman, can contain themselves in one sentence, one movement, one stillness, one silence, etc., that became the reason for my interest in the female body and one action, that is, sculpture. Sculpture, as a work of art, expresses, contains, and implies a single, unchanging state of the female body.

I will not attempt to improve the title used in this article, Statue of a Woman, with a more adequate artistic content, because this is the first time I am researching and diving deep into this issue, and I am interested in the public significance of the statue.

In the text, I describe and observe statues, women turned into in public spaces who coexist with us in the city, or there is a memory of them, but the statue has already been taken away from the place of memory.

I told a friend about my interest, my desire to count, describe, and observe statues of women in the city, and it was only with her support that I was able to write about the subject.

Time and Place of a Statue

I found a total of 38 female statues in public spaces in Tbilisi. My interest was to observe and write about the statue, both as a part of the city, its environment, and the role of people's memory. I wanted to understand how statues participate in people's lives, and whether they take part in it at all.

I asked my female friends which statues they remember or encounter while moving around the city. The descriptions below are mostly based on their memories. The order corresponds to the chronology of the installation of statues.

Sorrowful Georgia - 1913, Rosa Luxemburg - 1923, Zoia Rukhadze - 1957, Samaia - 1958, Mother of Kartli - 1958, Labor - 1958, Figure of a Woman - 1960, The Joy of the Mind - 1961, Torso - 1963, Girl with a Flower - 1967, Rest - 1969, etc.

A chronological list of women who have become monuments allows us to observe an era or different eras.

If we look through all of these years, we will see that "Sorrowful Georgia" is 10 years apart from "Rosa Luxemburg" and 30 years passed without any statues of women; in the meantime, Zoia Rukhadze manages to become the hero of the Patriotic War and in 1957, her monument is erected in two different places - in Tbilisi and Khoni. The newly built Tbilisi garden is filled with three statues of dancing women of the same face and figure, called "Samaia". This place is called Samaia Garden. On the 1500th anniversary of the capital, a 20-meter-high monument to a woman is commissioned and erected without a competition on the Sololaki ridge. Initially, it is not called "Mother of Kartli", but "The Capital". In the same year, a monument dedicated to labor is to be placed in front of the parliament. A metal figure of a woman cut into the sky is placed in the yard of the newly built Expo-Georgia exhibition center, called "The Ascent of the Mind." There is also "Autumn" by the lake - the body of a woman lying under a willow. Then they build the Iveria Hotel, and in its yard, by pre-order, Guram Kordzakhia's "Spring" is placed, which people call "The Girl with the Flower", etc.

Sculpture and the “Fertile Moment”

Determined by the pace of city traffic and daily problems, we are not always ready to perceive the sculptures that we come across.

There are two sculptures of women in the Mushtaidi Garden. I went to see them. I stopped for a bit on the red path and talked to an elderly woman walking by. She told me that she crosses the Mushtaidi Garden on foot every day. Have you noticed the “Woman with a Dove” or do you have any memories associated with it, I asked. She looked at me with suspicion and a little surprise. No, nothing, she answered.

The sculpture “Woman with a Dove” has been standing here since 1981. If you enter the square from Mayakovsky Street, as you walk through the iron-arched alley, you will see the statue sitting sideways among the trees. If you enter the garden from the sidewalk on Tsabadze Street, it will emerge directly from the open space: a woman sitting on a pedestal with a dove in her hand.

If you, like me, free up your day and go observe the statues in the city, you will inevitably have questions. For example, what are these statues doing in squares, on the sidewalks, and on the ridges and on the high places? What do these motionless bodies tell us? What did they mean when they were created, and what meaning do they have years later? What could they have said yesterday and what do they tell us today?

In the eighteenth century, the German philosopher G. E. Lessing, in his work “On the Limits of Painting and Poetry,” contrasts sculpture with poetry, saying that it is spatial, while poetry is a temporal art. In sculpture, the sculptor cannot show the development of an action, so they must choose one, the most fertile moment. Lessing describes this moment as pregnant: a moment that contains within itself what preceded it and what must follow or has already followed. It is a stance, a form, a position, an expression that contains within itself the essence.

“The more we see, the more we should be able to imagine; and the more we imagine, the more we should think we see,” says Lessing.

According to Lessing, the viewer gives meaning to the sculpture and brings it to life. The sculpture becomes an imaginary knot, a portal in space - from the past to the present. According to Lessing, the use of the portal depends on the viewer’s ability to imagine. And, moreover, we absolutely need free time and determination to fix our gaze at the sculpture.

Who has, or can devote time to looking at motionless statues? The city is filled with unexplained knots of the past.

Most of the statues standing in public spaces in Tbilisi do not come with an explanation or description. It would be enough to have small metal plates on which the sculptor’s surname, the year the statue was erected, and their name would be inscribed. Often, a monument stands there in a way that you might even mistake it for a random stone. If the statue is covered in moss, you, exhausted, might even sit, or lay on it. For example, if you walk into the courtyard of the “Muse” cultural center, leading to Turtle Lake, you will see a number of such nameless sculptures at the end of the courtyard. Among them, I think one of my discoveries is the 1997 sculpture, “Motherhood” - a half-chopped, thrown stone. The name of its sculptor, a certain Elizabeth Juan, sounds more like a pseudonym than a name. The shapeless stone statue seems to have spiral lines running down its head and back. On the viewer’s side, there is a wavy section like water or hair, as if flowing. The upper part of the stone, which seems to extend upwards, is cut like a tree. It has neither beginning or an end, but if you get close enough, you will assume that it shows a body of a woman.

After spending time with sculptures, I think that this single, solid state of stone, which creates a sense of anticipation of movement, brings solidity to a living person. It is as if we can consider them as points of reference in time. The sculpture does not change, but it shows us how we do, communicating with us with uniformity and permanence. The permanence of the sculpture forces us to perceive our movement, our change.

A statue is a point of reference in time. It is connected not only to the era of its creation, its birth, but also to our own life, to time, or to the day when we first saw it. I think that is why we have the desire to see it again: to realize how much we have changed, how much we have grown in height, or whether we have become smaller, who we are today, what new things we have seen. Seeing a statue again is a faultless measure of time and space.



Motherhood, Elizabeth Juan, 1997, courtyard of the "Muse" culture center

Unveiling of a Monument in the City Square

One instance of unveiling of a monument stands out in my memory. I was in the third grade, it was 1996. In Kutaisi, on the main square, the pedestal of the David the Builder monument was being built for a long time. I don't remember anything else being built at that time. Perhaps that is why there was such a big stir and anticipation for the unveiling. I remember the monument with a white sheet. A lot of people around it. When the sheet was removed, the rope broke and the sheet hung down, the moment of the statue's unveiling dragged on. People were nervous for a few minutes, as if something had been broken. When the monument was unveiled, we saw a three-dimensional sculpture of Aghmashenebeli in the middle of the square. The great king on a horse. The statue had a calm, convincing expression. I remember that I expected it to be larger in size, considering the size of the square and the Meskhishvili Theater, the statue looked quite modest. After the Gelati walls, hope first appeared in the form of a square. I don't remember how art historians reviewed it. I remember how happy I was to see it when I was 9 years old. Every day from school to home, bus number 22 would circle Agmashenebeli and continue its journey like that. There was no light, water, or heat waiting for me at home. There were only reminders of the great past from school books and now faith in the future

- Elguja Amashukeli's David Agmashenebeli stood in the main square of the city.



David the Builder, Kutaisi, 1996-2011, photo by Levan Taktakishvili, Photo Archive of the National Library

1. “Sorrowful Georgia”, Iakob Nikoladze 1913.

The first Georgian sculpture with a female body that has reached our time belongs to Iakob Nikoladze, the founder of the Georgian school of sculpture. Iakob Nikoladze was born in Kutaisi. In 1904, Nikoladze, who went to study in Paris, traveled to Florence and saw Michelangelo's series of sculptures - “The Slaves”. Nikoladze says that from that moment on, “I was already a student of Rodin” (Iakob Nikoladze, T. Sanikidze, Art, Tbilisi, 1977, p. 12). Rodin was the one who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, turned Michelangelo's “The Slaves” into the language of modern sculpture. This seemingly half-finished sculpture by Michelangelo did not deserve much attention next to David, Pietà and Moses. “The Slaves” was first translated by Rodin. According to his observation, this sculpture is not a work of art in a moment of fertility, but one in motion. The “slaves” do not resemble David, Pietà, or Moses in the completeness of a moment. They are being constantly freed from the stone blocks.

Iakob Nikoladze's enthusiasm was apparently caused by this very movement. In those years when Nikoladze, who, in Paris, became Rodin's student, Iliia Chavchavadze was murdered in Georgia. The year is 1907, and the Georgian people are united by the grief caused by this story. Iakob Nikoladze is very determined to express a sad Georgia in sculpture. In 1909, Iakob Nikoladze created “Sorrowful Georgia” - a bronze body of a sad woman leaning against a wall, with her shoulders slumped, holding a laurel branch in her hand. However, the creation of the sculpture, from conception to installation, has a separate story.

“As a Georgian, my heart aches with you and I shed tears for our untimely lost bard. And I consider it a blessing if I am entrusted with the honor of the brilliant poet and compatriot,” wrote Iakob Nikoladze to the Literacy Society on November 6, 1907. In February 1908, he arrived in Georgia and again asked to be entrusted with the creation of the monument. In response, the administration instructed the sculptor to create a model and submit the estimated cost.

A total of three sketches of the monument were created. In the composition presented in the first sketch, a mourning woman dressed in black sits next to the bust of Iliia. By decision of the artistic commission, the bust of Iliia was removed from the composition, as they considered it to violate the integrity of the monument. In the second version, we see only the figure of a weeping



“Sorrowful Georgia”, Iakob Nikoladze, Tbilisi Pantheon 2026 წ.

¹ National Archives of Georgia, Fund #481, File #25, Sheet #3

woman. The commission again makes changes and, finally, approves the third version of the sketch. On December 20, 1908, Iakob Nikoladze signs an agreement with the Society for the Spreading of Literacy and leaves for Paris.

In September, Nikoladze sends a photo of the “Sorrowful Georgia” figure, already sculpted in clay, from his workshop - “I have already completed the monument to Ilia Chavchavadze in clay, which has been approved by the public. Since it is impossible to leave the clay model for a long time, for this purpose I am sending graphic images, I humbly ask you to consider it as soon as



Sketches of “Sorrowful Georgia”

possible and inform me of the opinion of the board by telegram. I will add that photography, of course, cannot make the impression that the monument clearly makes.”¹

The administration received and approved the photo about a month later. Along with the response, they sent Iakob Nikoladze the money needed to cast the statue in bronze.²



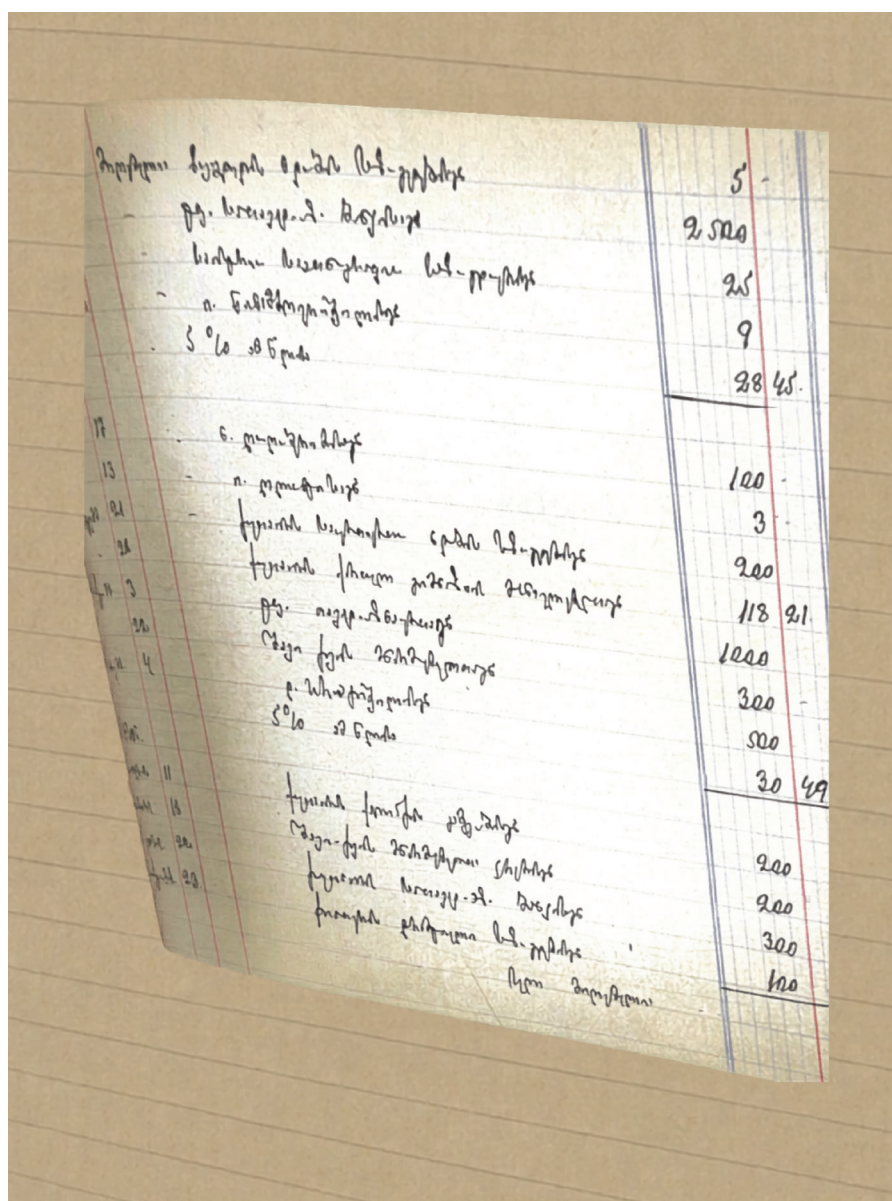
Photo sent to the commission for consideration by Iakob Nikoladze. Paris. 1909. National Archives of Georgia.

² Iakob Nikoladze, Mamia Duduchava, Art Publishing 1953, p. 34-43

The amount was not small, and apparently, almost the entire Georgia participated in collecting it.

- From Zugdidi Trust Society - 5 (Russian rubles)
- From the Noble Bank of Tiflis - 2500
- From N. Ghoghoberidze - 100
- From I. Ghlonti - 3
- From teachers of the Kutaisi Georgian Gymnasium - 118.21
- From the nobility of Tiflis - 1000
- From black stone producers - 300
- From D. Sarajishvili - 500
- From the Kutaisi City Administration - 200
- From Kutaisi City Bank - 300
- From the Chiatura Drama Society – 100

We read in one of the lists of donors of the Iliia monument.



One of the lists of donors for the monument of Iliia

It would take years before “Sorrowful Georgia” is cast in bronze and erected. Olga was apparently worried about the unfinished grave of Ilia. In 1913, the Akaki removed the white sheet from “Sorrowful Georgia” and described it as “a crown of sorrow and heartbreak.”

And, criticism did not hesitate: some were saying that a sorrowful face was not fitting to the memory of Ilia, who sacrificed himself for the ideals of Georgia.³

Iakob Nikoladze died of illness at the age of 75. Shortly before his death, he revealed to his friends who were visiting him about his life and his love for life.

“The greatest beauty and joy has been life, perhaps that is why I sought it in the lifeless clay and cold boulders of stone. I was giving them life, and now I myself am losing my life... All of you, all of you who are alive are beautiful, so beautiful.”⁴

2. “Rosa Luxemburg”, figure of the international workers’ movement (1871-1919), I. Sergeyev, 1923, Nadzaladevi Culture and Recreation Park / the statue was taken down in 1991.

The concrete bust of Rosa Luxemburg, erected in 1923, was removed from Nadzaladevi Park in 1991. After that, no information about the monument can be found. There is not a lot of information available about its creator, I. Sergeyev. According to Internet sources, Sergeyev should have also installed the first statue of Lenin in Tbilisi, erected in 1921. The fact is that Tbilisi thoughtlessly got rid of socialist knots in the very first years of the collapse of the Soviet state, although Tbilisi was not the only city to do so. In the 90’s, Rosa Luxemburg memorials and statues were erased from other cities as well.

In the spring of 2025, in a desperate Tbilisi, we all started thinking about strikes. We wanted to stop the evil that had taken hold by striking, that is, by refusing to work. It was then that I turned to the texts of Rosa Luxemburg.

“If someone were to try to turn the mass strike, as a form of proletarian action, into a subject of methodological agitation and try to spread this “idea” by going from house to house in order to gradually win the working class over, it would be as senseless, futile and absurd as trying to turn the idea of revolution, the idea of fighting on the barricades, into a subject of agitation.”⁵



“Rosa Luxemburg”, I. Sergeyev, Nadzaladevi Culture and Recreation Park. The statue was taken down in 1991.

³ Iakob Nikoladze, Mamia Duduchava, Art Publishing, 1953, p. 42

⁴ Memories of a Sculptor, B. Nikoladze, Soviet Georgia, 1964

⁵ The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions, Rosa Luxemburg, 1906, pg 10

3. “Zoia Rukhadze”, Amiran Bilanishvili 1957, Arto Garden

The bus makes a circle around “The Braids of Time” and continues on Dimitri Uznadze Street. “Noe Zhordania Beach,” announces the audio guide of the bus. A little girl, probably 10 years old, eagerly stares at me, leaning her head against the glass. She’s thinking about something. Then she looks back at the river bank, the sun playing on her face.

“-Open up, open up!

-Why the rush, lady!” the driver answers loudly. The bus stops at Zurab Chavchavadze Street. You have to go back about twenty steps and you will notice the arch of Arto Garden. Zoia Rukhadze will be waiting for you here.

I probably would never have noticed the statue of Zoia Rukhadze in Arto Garden, or understood the power of her step forward, if I had not noticed a huge statue of a woman on the Khoni highway while traveling to the West. The statue of Zoia Rukhadze in Khoni is over 10 meters high and so is the entire complex surrounding it. No one can ignore the body of a young woman standing with strange pride, her fist clenched behind her back.



Statue of Zoia Rukhadze in Khoni, 2026

I asked passersby about the statue's identity, but no one knew. Then, on the opposite side, the cashier at the "Two Steps" store, a middle-aged woman, told me that it was Zoia Rukhadze. She was a world-famous partisan woman, a hero of the Patriotic War, born in Khoni. I was surprised. I had never heard her name.

Zoia Mate's daughter Rukhadze, 1916-1944, hero of the Great Patriotic War.
Komsomol partisan.
Zoia Rukhadze Arto Garden, 2026

It is windy in Arto garden. The leaves are whirling in the wind. Zoia is standing, one leg forward, her hands are cuffed, one hand is clenched into a fist, as in Khoni. The breeze is blowing on her dress, weaker than today. Her eyebrows are furrowed. Her dress is falling on her shoulders. It is cold. The garden is empty. The sound of drums can be heard from the hall of the Georgian folklore ensemble.

"I have read how the enemies
Tortured Shushanik, a Georgian woman,
How they carried her through the thorns,
Having spent the night thinking about the motherland.
I have read how the enemies
Tortured Ketevan, a Georgian woman,
How they drained her out of blood,
How they burned her chest with torches.
But Jakob, you too, Teimuraz,
You would not have heard of this even in a fairy tale!
Can you imagine?
Can you imagine how they tortured our Zoia?!
They tied her up, they pinned her to a wall,
They burned the soles of her feet with fire,
The dark crevice was lit
With streams of Zoia's blood.
They twisted her tender arms,
Could not make her cry, but shed her blood,
Then they took the pliers.
And they pulled out all ten of her nails.

They tortured her so, they tormented her so,
Still, no tears flew from her eyelashes,
Even if she was in terrible pain,
Her chest was burning, and thirst was killing her,
Illuminated by a ray of hope



Zoia Rukhadze, Arto Garden, 2026

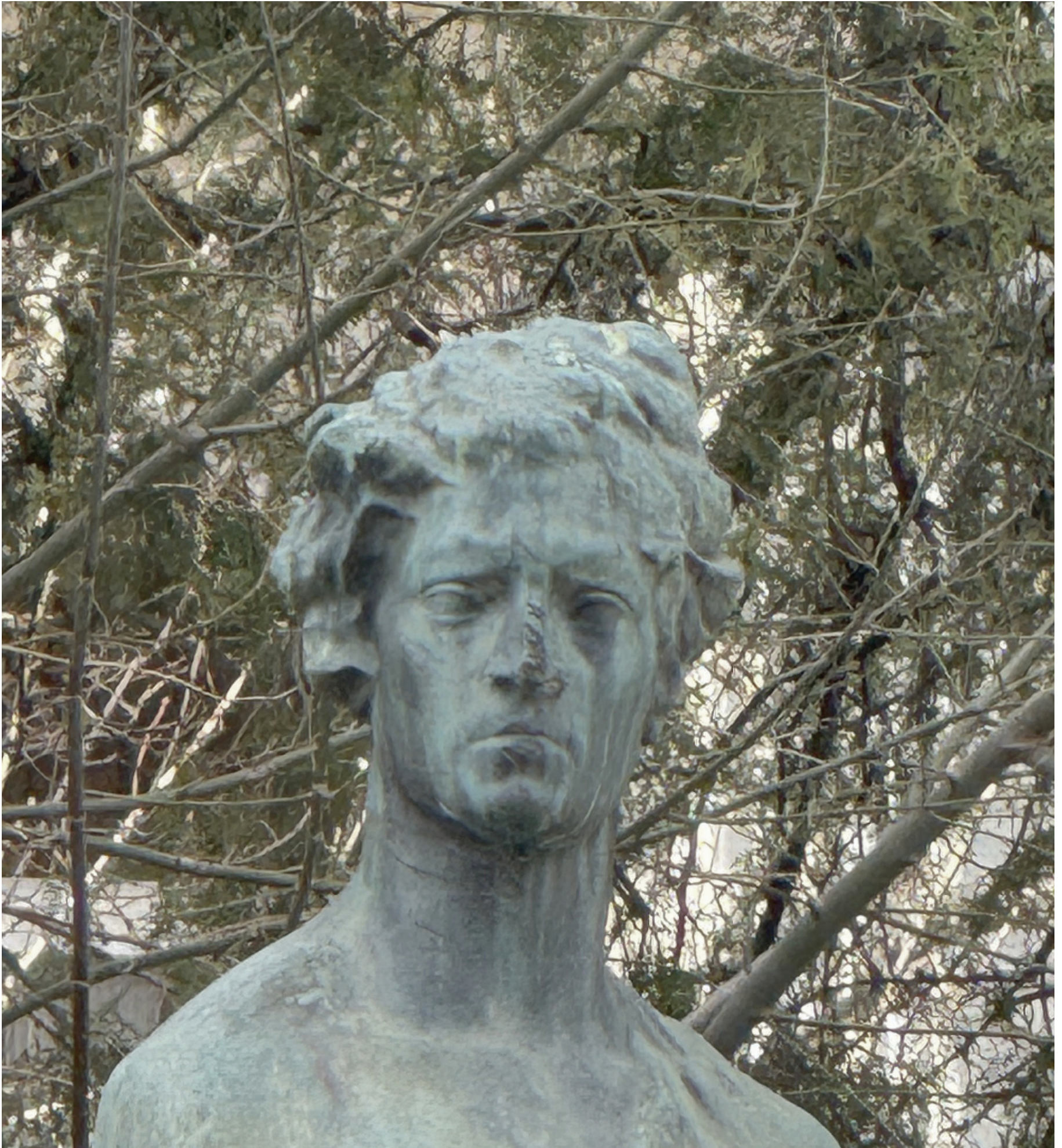
She stood proudly at the gates of glory!”

My friend Lia told me this poem and I wrote it down. Lia grew up in Tkibuli. She often recalls stories from her childhood and life in Tkibuli, school, adolescence, and working as a nurse.

Lia was the first to believe in uniting women involved in domestic work. The first one whose words became the reason for the founding of the Association of Nannies and Domestic Workers. Lia’s mother told her about Zoia Rukhadze in her childhood, teaching her and her sisters poem about Zoia.

These lines were remembered by her on the way from Batumi to Tbilisi. Lia tells me that everyone knew about Zoia. Zoia was an underground bomb-maker, during the Patriotic War she posted anti-fascist messages on German barracks, collected information on the location of the enemy, and took part in the explosion of important weapons depots. She did this at the age of 19-20. She died at the age of 21. The enemy took her to her own birthday on March 10. They asked her to declare herself an ally. On April 10, they drowned her in a well.

I pay 12 GEL for a scoop of vanilla ice cream and a cup of coffee at “Luca Polare” on Agmashenebeli. The sun is still shining. The cashier girls at are excitedly talking about chatting on Instagram.



Zoia Rukhadze, Arto Garden, 2026

4. „Samaia“ - N. Aleksidze, G. Kartvelishvili, T. Tchkonია, 1957, Javakhishvili Street

Neli Aleksidze is the only female sculptor whose statue I discovered in a public space – on Mikheil Javakhishvili Street, in Samaia Garden.

“I have been jealous of men my whole life,” Neli said in an interview with the newspaper “New Generation” in 1997, “who had more time to work in the workshop. In the morning I would rush to give lectures, in the afternoon to the workshop, and in the evening I would run to my family. It is difficult trying to kill two birds with one stone, and I had to chase three.”⁶

Samaia is a statue of three identical faces and bodies, half-turned, in motion. The women hold a common bowl in one hand, from which water once flowed, and the other hand is lowered by all three. You can barely make out the women’s bodies among the umbrellas spread out in the garden. The lowered hands make you realize that these women are not standing, but dancing.

I couldn’t manage to read anything on why Neli Aleksidze chose to sculpt Samaia. An interview with Nino Ramishvili can be found about the Samaia dance. Iliko and I were in Svetitskhoveli, we saw the frescoes, says Nino and twists her wrist - apparently, this image became the inspiration for creating the Samaia dance. It was first staged in the opera “For Abesalom and Eteri”, at the invitation of Zakaria Paliashvili, and the dresses were created by Soliko Virsaladze based on three frescoes of Queen Tamar - the young Tamar on the Vardzia fresco, Tamar of Kintsvisi in a blue dress, and the third face is Tamar of Bertubani. The copper-colored dress refers to the powerful king, says Nino Sukhishvili in the same interview.



„Samaia“ – N. Aleksidze, G. Kartvelishvili, T. Tchkonია, 1957, Javakhishvili Street

⁶ Annual newspaper “New Generation”, #29, 1997, p.4

5. „Mother of Kartli“, Elguja Amashukeli, Sololaki Ridge, 1958

Mother of Kartli stands on the Sololaki ridge. Since the 1960's, there has probably been no one who has lived in Tbilisi has not seen and fixed their gaze at the monumental statue by Elguja Amashukeli.

“Without hesitation” - this is how Murman Lebanidze describes the feeling of first seeing the statue of Vakhtang Gorgasali by Amashukeli at a competition held in 1958, where about twenty works by Vakhtang Gorgasali created by various sculptors were exhibited. “Without hesitation, I bowed down to Vakhtang Gorgasali,” he says, explaining that in this monument he found a previously non-existent face of the king, which no one had seen even in a sketch before. Vakhtang Gorgasali of Elguja Amashukeli contained in itself the formless image existing in people's minds, the movement of the king chasing a falcon, which supposedly lead to the founding of Tbilisi. Amashukeli expresses this movement with the king's hand raised, forming an angle in the air.

Perhaps it is this lack of hesitation that makes Vakhtang Gorgasali and the Mother of Kartli relatives.

In the same letter, Lebanidze asks the Mother of Kartli questions too: “What, what does this lovely silhouette signify to us, so stinging and so reserved? Why does it stand so bravely and so straight? Why does it not stand with its head held high, slightly bowing? Perhaps it is also a coincidence that the frowning Mother has aligned her blade with her hip, and covered? A true work of art never answers questions directly and often, decades later, it takes possession of a person and gives the answer through the emotion that it causes.”⁷

The Mother of Kartli was commissioned without a competition in 1958 to celebrate the 1500th anniversary of Tbilisi, to the already famous sculptor Elguja Amashukeli. Initially, it was called “The Capital” and was made of wood. Like almost all monuments, the people chose its real name. “Ma...” - you will see graffitied as you approach the obelisk of the statue.

From a distance, she overlooks the entire city, but from up-close, only the blue sky has risen above its head, so that you can't



Mother of Kartli, Sololaki Ridge, 2026

⁷ Elguja Amashukeli, Library of the newspaper “Literary Georgia”, Tbilisi, 1966. p. 34.

see anything else. Such closeness of metal and sky creates a strange, cosmic feeling.

I came across an article on the Internet where Elguja Amashukeli tells an interesting story about the location of the Mother of Kartli, which turned out to be a controversial one. I could not confirm the accuracy of this story with other sources, but it sounds very similar to the truth. The statue became very popular soon after its installation and was endlessly written about in local and Soviet publications. Against the backdrop of such universal recognition, the secretary of the Soviet Tbilisi City Committee, Giorgi Gegeshidze, summoned Amashukeli to his office and said that the Mother of Kartli should be removed from the Sololaki ridge and moved elsewhere. "There is an idea that we should remove it and move it to Mount Makhata, to a higher pedestal," he told him. Shocked, Amashukeli investigated the cause and found out that the sword of Mother of Kartli was apparently aligning the neck of the Lenin statue from some point of view on Rustaveli Avenue. To prove it, Gegeshidze apparently even took out a photo of it from his drawer.

In the end, the author's argument saved the statue. It is a law of geometry that two points will necessarily coincide with each other through some third point, Amashukeli said.

I went to see Mother of Kartli on a sunny Saturday. I found more people there than I expected. All of them foreigners, they go to it, stop for a while, circle around it, look up. Sword and bowl, these are the words I hear most often. They try to understand their meaning.

"I read about the statue on Google, she holds a sword in one hand to show independence, and wine in the other – as a symbol of hospitality. I liked it, it was cool, and the size is exceptionally large," Anisa from Turkey tells me.

"She protects the city, that's what she does. She reminds me of the Rio statue, of Jesus with outstretched arms. She's beautiful, very beautiful, she's the mother of Georgia, isn't she?" asks the middle-aged Claire.

In a large group of foreigners, one of the women became interested in the symbolism of the sword and the cup. The young Georgian man, who plays the role of a guide, carefully chooses his words and tries to explain to the interested tourist what the simultaneous holding of the sword and the cup represents. The wine cup is a symbol of kindness and hospitality, and the sword is held as a sign of strength, it can protect against enemies. Indeed, women can become real warriors," the guide adds with a smile. The female tourist repeats the guide's words and concludes thoughtfully - "We women can really take turns in doing so, sometimes we are hosts, sometimes warriors."

A young girl takes a Bounty and a Snickers from her bag near the steps of Mother of Kartli's concrete balcony and hands them to a young child and her friend. They smile. I realize they are Georgians. I approach and ask her why they came up here. "I used to come here with my mother and aunt when I was a child," Anna tells me, "and now I want to bring my child with me. We were last here a year ago. I like to come on sunny days, because it's so high up. I also go up the stairs from the Bethlehem Church, it's always cold there, and the cold bites me on the way, but here it is always sunny, so I like to come up."

Rays of the sun shine on the light-colored metal of the Mother of Kartli indeed. This grandiose statue of a woman was 20 meters



Mother of Kartli, Sololaki Ridge, 2026

high. If you look closely, the metal plates, approximately 1 meter in size, are arranged together and connected into transverse strips, forming a solid, well-proportioned figure of a woman.

A friend tells me that when she was a teenager, they used to go up to the statue to drink. Now, only passing tourists come here, they linger for a while, take photos. The most popular is drone photography. This is a modern photo and video shooting service, which requires flying a drone.

A drone targets a tourist standing near the pedestal of the Mother of Kartli. First, it takes a close-up shot, then it flies up and captures the Mother of Kartli in one frame. The 18-times-larger figure of the woman is an impressive sight in the video footage as well. Then the drone circles the Mother of Kartli and captures the city too.

The video is accompanied by various Instagram trending music tracks: Coldplay - Paradise, Indila - Love story, Paris Apaloma - Labour the Cacophony. Tourists upload the footage to their Instagram profiles, the service costs 60 GEL. Young Georgian drone photographers are constantly trying to interest tourists in their drone filming service throughout the day.

“People of nationalities unknown to us come here,” a Georgian boy, probably under 25, tells me. “Europeans rarely come, but Arabs, Hindus, and Russians do. I’m not praising the Russians, but you can teach them more, they understand and appreciate our culture better. The people you see now are probably ten percent of the number that used to come. Tourists don’t come to Georgia anymore,” the young man tells me, sadly.

You will notice a small information board on the right corner of the statue’s pedestal. When you scan the QR code, you will receive a call from the Mother of Kartli on your phone. You should answer the phone and she will speak to you in this manner. Is such directness really necessary?

6. “Labor” - V. Topuridze Sh. Mikatadze, 1958, The Parliament

Who knows what the protests in Chiatura, Tkibuli, and other cities would be like today, amidst the endless suffering, torture, and hunger of the working people, if the Statue of Labor was still standing in front of the Parliament. Anti-Soviet propaganda has made the Statue of Labor disappear without a trace. And with its disappearance, it convinced itself that it also made the importance of labor disappear, hid it away.



“Labor, Science, Technology”, V. Topuridze, Sh. Mikatadze. In front of the Parliament, Shota Rustaveli Avenue, the statue was taken down in 1989.

7. “Spring“ or “Girl with a Flower”- G. Kordzakhia, 1967. Garden of Iveria, Lisi Lake

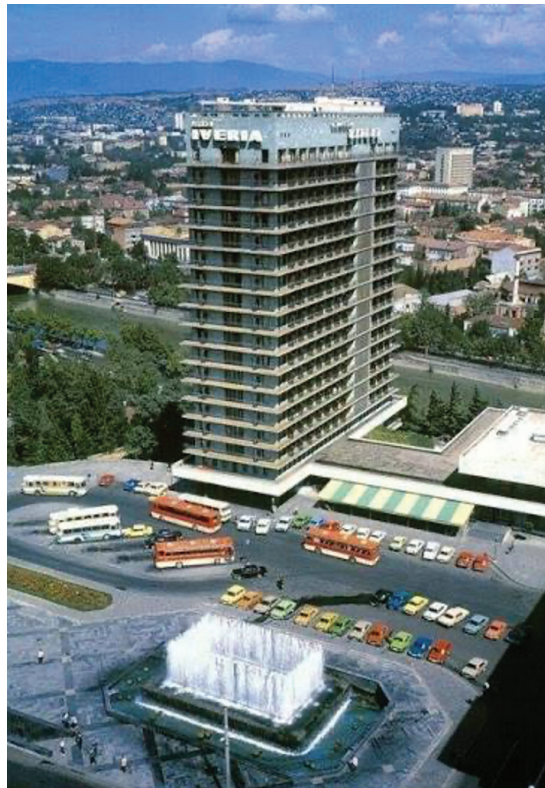
The first thing I learned about Guram Kordzakhia was that he fought in World War II from its beginning to its end. He turned 18 on June 21, 1941, and the war began on June 22. He had enrolled into the Technical University, but instead of university, they took him to war, says Guram’s daughter, Ketii Kordzakhia.

After returning from the war, he began studying at the Academy of Arts. He made a statue of Mayakovsky as his diploma work and sent it to Moscow, to the Mayakovsky Square, for a sculpture selection competition. “Who would have let a Georgian win this competition, since no Georgian statue had ever been exhibited anywhere in the Soviet Union before,” says Ketii Kordzakhia. However, the Mayakovsky monument was never returned from Moscow to Tbilisi, thanks to the efforts of the poet’s family and friends. “Mayakovsky’s sister, Maya Mayakovskaya, Lilya Brik, sculptor Sara Lebedeva, and a thousand others got involved and Guram’s Mayakovsky was erected in the courtyard of the house-museum. There are photos of the opening, and another sculptor’s Mayakovsky, named Brik, was erected in the square.”

In Tbilisi, in Digomi, there is an enlarged version of this statue of Mayakovsky, which was criticized. They say that the increase in size distorted the forms of the statue. Still, the Mayakovsky of Tbilisi is also impressive.



(From left to right) Leila Kordzakhia - Guram Kordzakhia’s sister, Irakli Ochiauri, Gogi Ochiauri, Guram Kordzakhia with his back to the frame and a sketch of a statue of Mayakovsky (the identities of the two seated people are unknown) Workshop of the Academy of Arts. 1951.



The newly opened Iveria Hotel. 1967-70

In 1959, Kordzakhia cast a statue of a naked girl in plaster and exhibited it in the Blue Gallery. This was the first time a nude body was exhibited during the Soviet years. The nudity of the statue caused a great stir. In 1966-67, he was commissioned by the Iveria architect, Toni Kalandarishvili, to cast it in marble and even installed it in the inner courtyard of the newly opened Iveria, by the pool.

“Iveria was an ultra-modern building with minimalist design, covered in Georgian green tuff,” Ketu Kordzakhia says. “It stood in a way that no matter where you looked from, Mtatsminda could still be seen. I was always interested in the fate of the statue. I would go there and see what a catastrophic state it was in, broken, written on, painted over. Years later, they began evicting refugees from Iveria. I could see what was happening inside the hotel - Gulda Kaladze’s fantastic reliefs, Aliko Gorgadze’s enamels, Bela Berdzenishvili’s works were being broken and thrown away. I discovered that my father’s statue was not on anyone’s balance sheet, neither the City Hall nor the Ministry of Culture. I hired a crane and removed the statue, took it away. I gave it a home. It is still being restored. It is temporarily located in a place where no one will damage it.”

On March 2, I went to see the “Spring.” I knew it was standing in the yard of an old, round summer restaurant on Lisi. I crossed the driveway. I was looking for the entrance to the snow-covered yard when I saw a white statue among the fir trees, against the backdrop of a lake. It appeared like spring. It was strangely joyful to see it. As you approach, you think it will lose the effect it had when you saw it spontaneously. You approach and find it kneeling, unbelievably alive. It surprises you and fills you with joy.



“Spring” or “Girl with a Flower” Guram Kordzakhia, near Lisi Lake. March 2, 2026.

8. „Rest“ - G. Shkhvatsabaia, 1969. Area Surrounding the N. Baratashvili Bridge

Do you remember a strange figure of a large concrete woman by Shkhvatsabaia near the Baratashvili Bridge? A huge white concrete stone in the form and shape of a woman was apparently placed near the Baratashvili Bridge. At an exhibition of Etruscan artifacts, I came across a similar image from the seventh century BC. The Etruscans erected such figures on sarcophagi of human ashes to protect them from evil spirits. The Shkhvatsabaia monument, with exactly the same image, existed in Tbilisi and was called “Rest”. It was taken down in the same year that it was erected - in 1969.



„Rest“, G. Shkhvatsabaia, 1969, The monument was erected in 1969 in the area surrounding the N. Baratashvili Bridge.



An Etruscan urn for storing human ashes, displayed at the Archaeological Museum of Milan. 2026

9. „Muse“, Merab Berdzenishvili, 1971

No passenger on minibus number 466 looks at the sunlit Muse.

And as I look at their faces, I forget that I have to ask the driver to stop. I get off near the circus. The sun is shining brightly on the ivy leaves and the tiers of the roads. It's three in the afternoon. Heroes' Square is empty of people, cars are moving nonstop on the levels. To get to the Muse, I have to cross several wide streets. I pass the car wash set up in the middle of the underground passage and come out at the eternal flame of Heroes' Square. Gas station, construction, graffiti on Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Satchashnike, the famous engineer and public figure Adolf Khurodze lived in this house, a pawnshop, the construction company Vista Group, a casino, the aesthetic medicine center Medi, Caucasus Credit, a cafe, a cafe, a men's clothing store, maybe he'll come by after winning at Europebet, or maybe he will need this shirt to win, an old tailor shop, a hotel, another pawnshop, a fruit and vegetable store, baby linen, a maternity hospital, office #40, a movie theater, they're showing Wuthering Heights.

As you walk the shady sidewalk of Kostava, you can see the Tbilisi Tower and the Ferris wheel above. From here, you have to look back to see the muse.

The sun illuminates half of her face and shoulders. She stands as a young woman named Muse might stand in the middle of a square. If someone had asked me to stand in plain sight at this place for no reason, I would probably have stood like this too.

In one hand, she seems to hold the ram's part of the Golden Fleece, which has been represented many times. Behind her body, with hands outstretched theatrically, she shows us a stack of masks. The body is unified, plastic and airy. It seems that she in herself is considering the nearby umbrella tree and the facade of the Philharmonic Hall. The movement in which we see the Muse is not full motionlessness.

Children speaking in English are sitting on the steps of the Philharmonic. They are Georgian. I talked to them. They told me that they spend a lot of time near the Philharmonic, that their friends skate there. And that they love this place, that there are not many spaces like this in the city. I asked one of the three, probably around 15 years old, about the Muse. “How can I not notice it? Art is a part of our lives and it is an interesting monument, although I haven't given it any special meaning until now,” Barbare tells me. Next to her bag, on the steps of the Philharmonic, is a small bouquet of cyclamens. It is spring.



Muse, Merab Berdzenishvili, 2026



"Muse", sculpture and its first sketches, Merab Berdzenishvili.

10. “Revival” - G. Ochiauri, 1989. Melikishvili Avenue

As you come out of TBC Bank, annoyed, you will be greeted by a sliced body of a woman by Gogi Ochiauri.

In 1989, shortly before the April 9 tragedy, Gogi Ochiauri’s “Revival” was erected on “Zemeli”. That was its original name, but like almost all monuments, people changed the name of the Revival and called it April 9 or Sliced Georgia. The statue became a witness of April 9. In several books, the monument is called Kintsvisi. For years, it was decorated with flowers. People saw it as a metaphor for Georgia sacrificing itself for freedom. One night, the statue was stolen. They took it and damaged it. Sometime later, it was restored without the external frame.



At the April 9 Memorial, 1989-90, photo by Shakh Aivazov, National Library Photo Archive

There is an opinion that the frame of the statue irritated the Soviet government. They seemed to believe that the author was making an allegory about Soviet oppression.

In reality, if you see the Kintsvisi fresco, you will immediately recognize the angel’s wings that have escaped the frame. The only thing that reminds us of the similarities between the Ochiauri statue and Kintsvisi is the palm, with the index finger in the air.



“Revival” or “Kintsvisi”, Gogi Ochiauri, Melikishvili Avenue

11. „Motherhood “ - G. Japaridze, 2002. I. Chavchavadze Avenue

“Couldn’t the father have taken at least one child?! She is taking one to school, the other is in her arms. The woman’s hands are tied with children. The man doesn’t interfere. When I pass by, I feel sorry for her,” says Lia. It’s March, the sidewalk in front of Iliuni is packed with people, students and lecturers are protesting the announced shutting down of the university. At first, I think about asking the students about the statue, but



„Motherhood“ - G. Japaridze, Chavchavadze Avenue, Photo from the Internet

when I get closer, I decide to join the procession.

12. „Braids of Time“ - Giorgi Khaniashvili, Vorontsovi Square

The appearance of the “Braids of Time” in the city was a topic of heated debate on social media. I remember reading criticism of the statue on social media before seeing it.

I went to Vorontsovi Square to see it. It was night, the statue had no lights and still doesn't. I crossed the road and stood on a small pedestal. It was standing on the ground, but I couldn't quite fix my gaze on it, its silent face staring transparently into space.

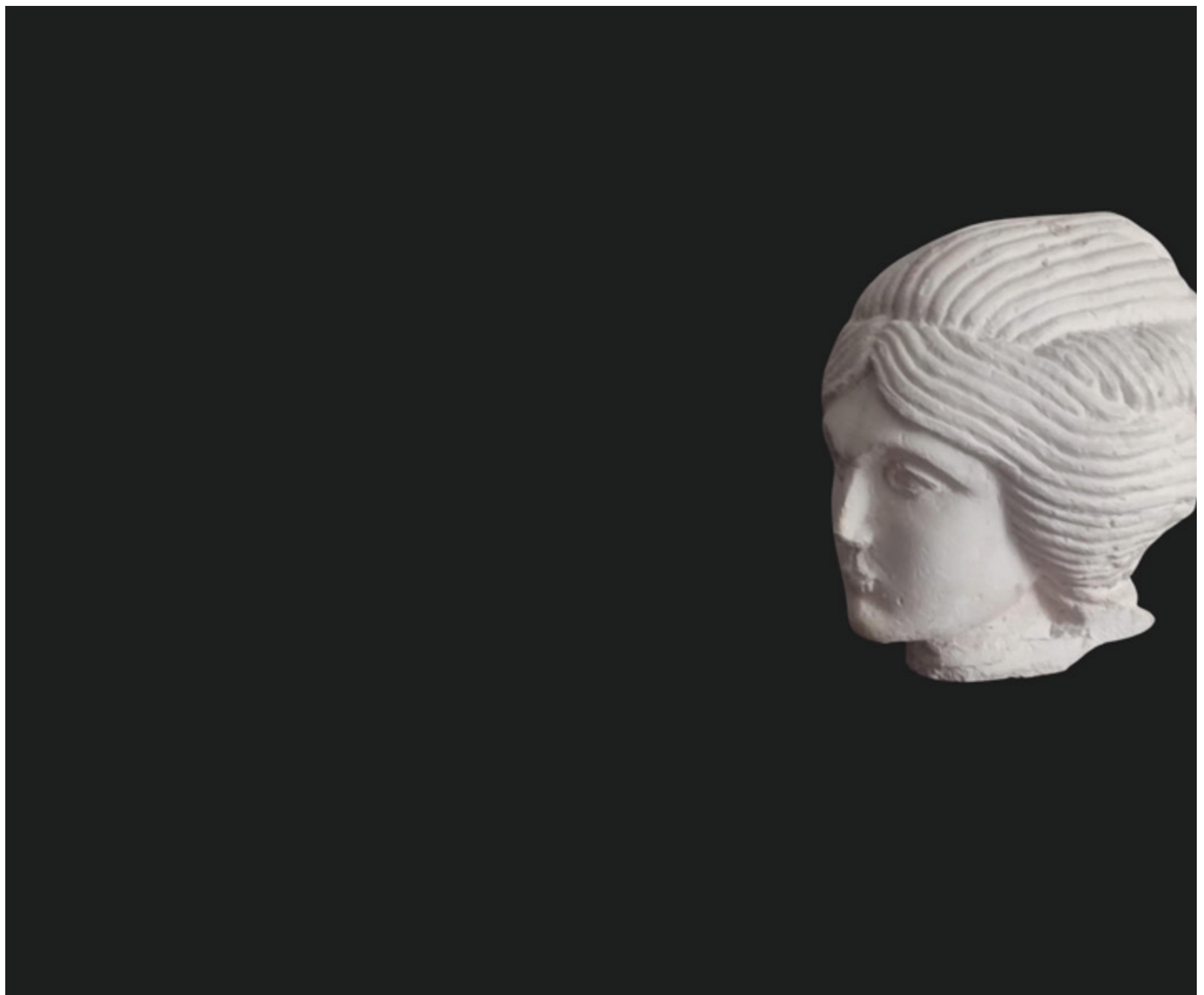
Since then, I would only pass by the “Braids of Time” by bus or car.

“Braids of Time” was supposed to be a temporary project, they were supposed to move it somewhere afterwards. Otherwise, I probably would have had a hard time making a decision, Giorgi Khaniashvili tells me. I remember that Mother of Kartli was also supposed to be a temporary piece.

“I didn't intend to come to the figure of a woman. I was led to it by signs. I had made a portrait of an archangel in wood. This image came to me years ago on its own, and then I transferred it to form. When I transferred it to three dimensions, it resembled an ancient Greek statue. It was like a discovery for me. The statue is a fusion of the Christian and the ancient, the old and the new. It has the body and posture of a modern animated game character. I came across it by chance in a magazine. The hair with which the statue is tied is the hair of Saint Nino, growing like roots. It is a synthesis. The ancient passes into the Christian and enters modern life. It stands there and looks at the surroundings.”

It is a strange coincidence that Vorontsovi Square (now Saarbrücken) was the place where the first monument in Tbilisi was erected - on March 25, 1867.

We conclude this text with the newest statue of a woman, erected in the same square after 157 years.



“Braids of Time”, Giorgi Khaniashvili, one of the first versions of the sculpture.

Women in Statues

A list of the statues and their chronology according to being erected in public places

- “Sorrowful Georgia”, Iakob Nikoladze 1913. (1)
- “Rosa Luxemburg”, figure of the international workers’ movement (1871-1919), I. Sergeev, 1923, Nadzaladevi Culture and Recreation Park / the statue was taken down in 1991 (2)
- “Zoia Rukhadze”, Amiran Bilanishvili 1957, Arto Garden (3)
- „Samaia“ - N. Aleksidze, G. Kartvelishvili, T. Tchkonია, 1957, Javakhishvili Street (4)
- „Mother of Kartli“, Elguja Amashukeli, Sololaki Ridge, 1958 (5)
- “Labor” - V. Topuridze Sh. Mikatadze, 1958, The Parliament (6)
- Figure of a Woman - G. Kaladze 1960. Center of Culture “Muse” (7)
- „The Joy of the Mind“ - L. Mamaladze 1960-61. Expo-Georgia (8)
- Torso - M. Berdzenishvili - 1963. Center of Culture “Muse” (9)
- „Spring“ or “Girl with a Flower”- G. Kordzakhia, 1967. Garden of Iveria, Lisi Lake (10)
- „Rest“ - G. Shkhvatsabaia, 1969, Area Surrounding the N. Baratashvili Bridge (11)
- „Autumn“, G. Shkhvatsabaia 1970. Expo-Georgia (12)
- „Muse“, Merab Berdzenishvili 1971 (13)
- Torso - J. Shanshiashvili 1974. Center of Culture “Muse” (14)
- „Memorial of Glory“ - G. Ochiauri, 1981-85, Vake Park (15)
- „Woman with a Pigeon“, I. Kabdashvili 1981, Mushtaidi Garden (16)
- „Spring“, I. Revazishvili 1983. Mushtaidi Garden (17)
- „Nato Vachnadze - N. Kandelaki 1987. Dighomi, Cinema Studio “Georgian Film” (18)
- „Quickly, flags!“, G. Shkhvatsabaia 1988. G. Leonidze Park (19)
- “Revival” – G. Ochiauri 1989. Melikishvili Avenue (20)
- „Ketevan the Martyr“, M. Berdzenishvili, 1989. M. Berdzenishvili’s Creative Workshop (21)
- „Veriko Anjaparidze“ - G. Shkhvatsabaia 1990. Mtatsminda Pantheon (22)
- „Georgia“ - M. Berdzenishvili 1991. M. Berdzenishvili Creative Workshop (23)
- „Saint Nino“ - Z. Tsereteli 1994. Dighomi Right slope (24)
- „Motherhood“, Elizabeth Juan, 1997, Courtyard of the “Muse” Culture Center
- „Motherhood “ - G. Japaridze 2002. I. Chavchavadze Avenue (26)
- „Elene Akhvlediani“ - T. Ghviniashvili, 2000. 9 April Garden (27)
- „A Date“ - G. Japaridze 2006, N. Baratashvili Bridge (28)
- „An Awaiting Mother“ - V. Melikishvili 2005. 9 April Garden (29)
- „A Dancing Girl“, G. Japaridze 2004. Buzalashvilebi Street (30)
- „Sopiko Chiaureli“ - L. Vardosanidze 2010. Sioni Street Square (31)
- „Marjory Scott Waldrop“ - J. Kikia 2015. April 9 Olliver Waldrop Square (32)
- „Memorial of the TSU students who died for freedom” - I. Nikoladze 201, TSU yard (33)
- „Bait“ - T. Sepiashvili 2015. Expo-Georgia (34)
- „Woman with an Umbrella“ – M. Tsotsoria, Restaurant “Georgian House”, Left Bank of Mtkvari (35)
- „Nino Ramishvili and Iliko Sukhishvili“ - Z. Tsereteli 2011, Davit Aghmashenebeli Avenue (36)
- „Nato Vachnadze“ - L. Vardosanidze, 2017. Tumanishvili Theater (37)
- „Braids of Time“ – Giorgi Khaniashvili, Vorontsovi Sq