

KAKAL: Between Naïvety and Soberness in Recent Israeli Works

10.6.2013-10.8.2013

The exhibition features works by the gallery's Israeli artists, dealing with the notion of local identity and at the same time, alienation. These works all rest somewhere on the line between awareness and blind optimism, showcasing the ever-changing approaches towards the Israeli experience. Relating to the social, political, cultural and philosophical aspects of local identity, these artists reveal non-simplistic ideas in regards to fundamental issues every citizen deals with.

Efrat Shvily's black and white photographs of forests planted by "Kakal" foundation (Hebrew initials of The Jewish National Fund, founded in 1901 to buy and develop land in Ottoman Palestine for Jewish settlement) have drawing-like qualities. Watching the photos, the viewer senses the beauty and calm they possess, but at the same time feels disoriented and entangled. By blocking the ability to see into the space behind it, the mass of details and textures forces the viewer to face up to what is presented and forge a way through.

Eliezer Sonnenschein's paintings are part of a series depicting Israeli landscapes through a dark and fantastic, almost surreal view, very different from the one dominating the minds of the first settlers in places like the Kineret or the Galilee. Sonnenschein's scenes are describing a political landscape, envisioning the northern parts of Israel as intense both in a religious and historical contexts.

Rona Yefman is showing a recent photograph taken in her current residence of New York, where she has been living and working for the past five years. The sort of naïve optimism shown in this work is a different take on her usual portraying of outsiders and odd-looking characters. In this case, her depiction of a young couple might imply that New York is where the concept of a "melting pot", conceived originally by David Ben-Gurion as a vision for Israel, actually takes place.

Guy Ben Ner's "Spies" relates to the biblical story of the twelve spies, who were dispatched by Moses to the land of Canaan, before the people of Israel have returned to it from slavery in Egypt. Two spies returned carrying a huge cluster of grapes, as means to imply the richness of the land. Nevertheless, the ten remaining spies stated that it would probably be impossible for them to conquer Israel. The people believed them and not the two prophets Caleb and Joshua who said they should trust in God, which resulted in the condemnation of the Israeli people to 40 years in the wilderness. Ironically, an iconic image from this story is used as part of the logo of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. Structurally simple, the film zooms out from this logo with a voiceover dialogue which interweaves quotes from Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" and Swift's "Gulliver's Travels", establishing a correlation between tourists and spies, and evoking the disassociation of the traveler on returning home.

"Are we forever bound to remain suspended in the limbo of endless issues of our identity?" is one of the questions addressed to Theodor Herzl and Sigmund Freud during the performance that

accompanied the opening of **Yael Bartana's** exhibition "If You Will It, It Is Not a Dream", at the Secession in Vienna this year. Bartana addresses the spirits of the two pioneers who, with different approaches, sought to bring redemption to the individual and to the collective – and whom she declares as the spiritual gods of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP), which she founded in 2007.

Two works by **Adi Nes** are taken from his latest series, "The Village", where meticulously staged pastoral images are imbued with an underlying subtext of anxiety. In Nes's own words, "like the state of Israel, this village appears as a small place created in the wake of tragedy. It's an idyllic valley with wide vistas, green fields and trees full of fruit yet with a charged atmosphere".