

(AFTER)



מוזיאון פתח־תקוה לאמנות
PETACH-TIKVA MUSEUM OF ART

Petach Tikva Museum of Art

Director and Chief Curator / Drorit Gur-Arie

(After)

Nelly Agassi, Ohad Fishof, Uri Gershuni, Michal Heiman,
Alice Klingman, Sigalit Landau, Rami Maymon,
Doron Rabina, Gil Shachar, Tal Shoshan, Gal Weinstein

December 2005 – April 2006

Exhibition

Curator / Hadas Maor

Works

Nelly Agassi /

Dress: Ronen Raz

Video photography & editing: Eser Etzba'ot

Thanks to Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv, for supporting
the production of the work

Uri Gershuni /

Thanks to Ofek Aerial Photography Ltd. Digital

Production for supporting the production of the work

Michal Heiman /

Apparatus: Yitzhak Ronen

Sigalit Landau /

Thanks to the Dead Sea Works Ltd.,

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Ohad Fishof /

Text and Music: Ohad Fishof

Vocals: Uri Katzenstein, Or Moran, Ohad Fishof

Arrangement: Ohad Fishof in collaboration
with Uri Katzenstein and Or Moran

Gil Shachar /

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and the artists



מפעלי ים המלח בע"מ



אוסף צילומי אוויר
המוזיאון לתמונות ואמנות



עשר אצבעות
עיצוב והדפסה בע"מ

Foreword

At the recent International Istanbul Biennial (2005), Dutch artist Toos Nijssen invited passersby on the bustling İstiklal street to take part in her art project by sitting still for a portrait photograph in front of a video camera in an improvised booth installed in the backyard of the Consulate General of the Netherlands. Another series of works was simultaneously screened on two monitors in the window of the adjacent bookstore: anonymous figures starred briefly alongside the better known faces of writers on the covers of elegant books. Nijssen titled her work *..biz ..biz kimiz / ..and we ..who are we?* For three weeks she added a myriad of unknown figures to her intricate portrait archive, an aggregate of anonymous photographs taken in random places throughout the world over the past decade, occasionally exhibited in museums and public venues. A broad section of human forms unites to create a single presentation, at the same time rejecting any possibility of being labeled under a common denominator, whether racial, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic or conscious. A cumulating human corpus where each figure remains a unique world, and at the same time, the figures together form a concentrated conglomeration of a yearning for exposure. A contemporary archival essence of an inexhaustible potential that undermined the grand aristocratic artistic tradition of portraiture, expanding the discussion pertaining to issues of identity, the artist's status, the viewer's place, the changes in the socio-cultural power systems, center and periphery.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the Museum's reopening, we are proud to present the exhibition "(After)" which introduces stratified, enriching reflections about the status of the contemporary subject at the beginning of the third millennium. My profound thanks to the exhibition curator, Hadas Maor, for a fruitful dialogue, and to the participating artists for their welcome investment in a unique dialogue with the Museum halls. Thanks to all those who assisted in the realization of the exhibition: Israel National Lottery Council for the Arts, Dead Sea Works, Ofek Aerial Photography Ltd., Eser Etzba'ot. Thanks to Estee Du-Nour, director of Israel National Lottery Council for the Arts, for the attentiveness and support. Thanks to Uri Ram, Michal Sahar, Oded Löbl, and Daria Kassovsky for their contributions to the exhibition catalogue; and to Ninel Koren, PR Director. Special thanks to all my colleagues on the Museum staff for their consistent efforts carried out generously and with love.

Drorit Gur-Arie
Director and Chief Curator

On Globalization / Uri Ram

Modernism proclaimed the death of God. Postmodernism declared the death of the subject. Globalization thus finds western civilization devoid of both authority and freedom; without divinity and without humanity. Globalization reduces the world to a uniform, albeit divided and inequitable system. Globalization involves trans-global activity, and at the same time it reinforces the significance of separate locations. Globalization draws the distant closer, and distances those who are close. Globalization makes everyone similar, similar also in their attempt to distinguish themselves from one another. Globalization spreads progressive liberal civil society, but at the same time elicits regressive fundamentalist counter-responses.

In the present era we are witnessing the emerging opposition in global political culture between two antithetical tendencies of deconstruction and reconstruction: on the one hand, the intensification of globalization, stemming from a techno-economic class dynamic, and on the other – the intensification of localization, namely, counter-reactions anchored in communitarian identity-minded sentiments. Consequently, “national entities” change their “state of aggregation.” On the one hand, the cohesiveness cast into them during the period of the nations’ consolidation splits, and on the other – some of their segments shatter as though by virtue of the energies compressed into them. The “new ethnicity” evolving in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is a counter-response – some say (and hope) a fighting retreat – vis-à-vis sweeping processes of capitalist globalization which threaten identities that have kept to themselves heretofore. These processes also allow for thematization of a range of new identities based on processed orientations and stylized living. Hence we witness simultaneous contradictory and complementary processes: external economic homogenization involving internal social disintegration, relativization of super-cultures involving revitalization of subcultures, political deconstruction involving bloc reconstruction, the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism.

Our era is thus characterized by a blend of centralized and decentralized, homogenous and heterogeneous, global and local configurations. This new condition has been dubbed “glocalism” (a combination of “globalism” and “localism”). The process now being experienced by the nation-state may be likened to that undergone by the grocery store, pulverized both by the giant supermarket chains (“Fordist standardization” in terms of sociological theory) and by small delicatessens (“post-Fordist specialization”). This does not mean that all the grocery stores are being closed, but they

are certainly no longer the last word in food marketing. The same applies to nationalism. It has not become extinct overnight, but, as some have argued, while it still responds to the period, it no longer shapes it.

Globalization thus changes the social agenda, and subsequently, the agenda of the social sciences – the paradigm of modernization; the nation-state is replaced by the paradigm of globalization and post-nationalism, or “McWorld vs. Jihad,” the former with and against the latter as two dimensions of the globalization process. McWorld is the capitalistic West, Jihad – fundamentalist Islam. Economic and technological power vs. the zeal of community and faith. It is the dialectic dynamic of globalization and localization, or – glocalization.

The term “glocalism” indicates the new postmodern condition evolving in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a state where global tendencies and local tendencies, in their juxtaposition, enfeeble the central institutional and identity unit of the previous modern condition, namely that of the nation-state, creating a new glocal – global-local – arena. Globalist tendencies are the super-tendencies that erode the nation-state “from above,” on the part of technological, financial, media, bloc, commercial transnational systems. The local tendencies are the counter-tendencies that erode the nation-state “from below,” by ethnic, religious, racial, nationalist, regional, and other cultural sub-national identifications.

The global tendency and the local tendency erode the nation-state and its two components: the organizational-institutional element – the state, and the parochial-cultural element – the nation. Mainly, however, they erode the hyphen in “nation-state,” a hyphen intended to validate the ostensible full correspondence between the institutional aspect and the symbolic aspect, and between the state framework, and its society and economy. The state is eroded because its territorial borders are penetrable to “signals” streaming through the global network channels. Nationalism is weakened since its ideological constraints are penetrated by messages from without and by identities from within, which can neither be stopped nor vanquished (or rather, can be, but at the high cost of human repression and social deprivation). A new situation emerges where the state is weakened, nationalism is enfeebled, and the correspondence between the two is blurred. The nation-state, previously considered a single cohesive unit, now finds itself pinned between the elements that fuse it to its external surroundings which are greater, and those that break it down to internal units that are smaller.

These complementary-contradictory global-local tendencies may be described, as aforesaid, after American scholar Benjamin Barber, in terms of the dialectic of “McWorld,” the world of global consumerist brands, such as McDonald’s, and “Jihad,” the world of fundamentalist holy wars, and this refers not only to the Islamic one, nor only to religious ones. To increase the confusion, the relationship between McWorld and Jihad is not of simple opposition. On the contrary, it is precisely the social and cultural reality spawned by McWorld that triggers Jihad, and it is precisely due to the means of expression and distribution provided by McWorld that Jihad can thrive. McWorld likewise reveals a Jihadian facet in its war against Jihad, attempting to gather its congregation around banners such as democracy or civilization. Thus, the notion corresponding with “glocalism” is “McJihadism” – the dialectic, dichotomous combination of contradictory tendencies within a dynamic totality.

Global tendencies thus undermine old local tendencies; doing so, however, not only do they fail to eliminate them altogether, but they also rekindle them more forcefully, or at the very least, in the short run. Thus the global “post” and the local “neo” are intertwined, two facets of the new postmodern global condition: one draws its legitimization from the “new,” the other – from the “old.” This antithetical combination is the reason for the contradictoriness typifying our era, where, on the one hand, an unprecedented unification of human societies takes place to the point of creating a single human society (to be exact, this does not refer to harmony or equality, but to unification as a new structural state), and on the other – an unprecedented disintegration of human societies into separate, not to say separatist, identity groups, occurs. Hence, the contradictory phenomenon where the dissolution of borders and identities brought about by the global tendency (in Israel: post-Zionism) causes a heightened counter-reaction of border fixation and identity consolidation on the part of the local tendency (in Israel: neo-Zionism).

Globalization has far-reaching repercussions for political regimes and social systems. On the one hand, capitalist universalization dissolves the ostensible existing identity between state and nation, dispossessing nationalism of its identity prominence, thus functioning as the single significant factor in the promotion of democracy in our time. On the other hand, it is also an element that threatens democracy, for the existing democratic institutions have evolved in the nation-state and are adapted to it. Basic democratic elements, such as sovereignty, constitution, division of authority,

citizenship, representation, rights, elections, political parties, trade unions, etc., were created in the course of a struggle and negotiations between social elements within the nation-state, and have existed only in the political context as internal strata of the democratic state. The weakening of the democratic state thus virtually implies the weakening of democracy. Nevertheless, most of the world's nations are not democratic to begin with, and globalization pressures them in this direction from without. Once again, however, globalist democracy is civic and political, but it is not "social" (in the egalitarian sense), and in most cases, it is even anti-social.

Jihad, on the other hand, is non-democratic, even explicitly anti-democratic, for it promotes "affiliation," "identity," "tradition," and "authenticity," which are essentially repressive. But even here there is a "nevertheless"; for, although Jihad is anti-democratic, from the viewpoint of the postcolonial discourse it is rather the identities of "others" that are perceived as contributing to democracy, due to the representation of the "local" which they offer to population groups inferior in the "global" capitalist context, such as ethnic minorities or migrant workers.

Both McWorld and Jihad thus have diverse contradictory facets. Both may promote democratic orientations under certain circumstances, but they also threaten democracy. Jihad is a tendency toward unification and separatism. It melts blood-communities based on hatred and exclusion. McWorld is a tendency toward decentralization and generalization, albeit ones based on markets entirely indifferent to both public needs and basic social justice. To wit, Jihad is based on solidarity without universalism (and includes a strict repressive hierarchy also within its so-called "primary" group), whereas McWorld is based on universalism without solidarity (and hence, on formal inessential equality).

Globalization innately transforms the social regime, the class structure, and the distribution of wealth and income in society. Thus, in the past two decades in Israel, as in the world as a whole, there are increasing data indicating an intensification of social polarization, an increase in the number of the poor, centralization of wealth in the hands of a few, the decline of the welfare state, cutbacks in social services and welfare allowances, and increased social distress. This situation, it should be emphasized, is not the outcome of temporary crises, but rather a structural pattern evolving over time, which only consolidates in times of economic prosperity. In other words, wealth and poverty grow together.

The phenomenon of the intensification of inequality is the result of a change in the balance of class power relations, namely the strengthening of private capital holders as a dominant, policy-setting group, as opposed to the power of the workers as a dependent group lacking political representation. This change in the balance of class power relations involves a structural change

in capitalism: namely, the transition from the Fordist-national capitalist regime to the post-Fordist global capitalist regime. This transition, in turn, is carried by the communication and computerization technologies – the post-industrial revolution, even if it is not a derivative of the technological development in itself.

Economically speaking, globalization implies the formation of a united – but not uniform – global market, and global work distribution. The telecommunication technology functions as a transmission means for the flows of capital, labor, commodities, and ideas in global networks, a means that extracts the social action from the specific place, rendering it trans-spatial. Trans-spatial indeed, but not trans-social; on the contrary, the fast movement capacity in itself becomes a capital asset that divides those who are “mobile,” whose domination of the space is intensified, and those who are “static,” confined to a space whose conditions are a-priori defined in the global space.

Indeed, in the transition between the two models of the capitalist social regime, from the Fordist-national to the post-Fordist global, a neo-liberal social regime that brings down the achievements of the struggles for equality as well as the conditions that previously allowed for such struggles in the nation-state, is introduced. For the sake of accuracy, then, the cause of the intensification of inequality is not globalization in itself, but its being dominated “from above” by the large corporations and their neo-liberal representatives, while the political balances and barriers “from below” – in the form of political parties, social movements and organization – grow weaker.

All in all, the implications of postmodern glocalization on culture, politics, and society are ambiguous: on the one hand, by weakening national identity and strengthening universal human rights, it expands the circle of democratic civic participation; on the other hand, by weakening the state and labor and strengthening capital, it reduces the circle of public and democratic responsibility. Thus, instead of the social configuration that characterized the post-World War II period: the capitalist welfare state as “first world,” the communist bloc as “second world,” and an impoverished, poor “third world,” a new, polarized global system has been formed since the 1980s, where the leading tendencies are uninhibited capitalist globalization, on the one hand, and localist, chauvinistic, xenophobic counter-reactions, on the other.

Neither inclination is endearing: the new networks are indifferent (principally, not always practically) to gender, color, race, faith, and culture – which makes them more democratic, but they

also lack commitment to fellow members (socialism), or, unfortunately, to voters (liberalism) – and this makes them less democratic. The new communities, in contrast, are identity communities uttering the voice of “other,” remote, subaltern, repressed groups – which makes them more democratic, but they are unbound by the liberal commitment to equality among all human beings, regardless of gender, color, race, faith, and culture, and of the commitment to the individual, his freedom and happiness – and this makes them less democratic; far less democratic. By the very rise of McWorld and Jihad, Benjamin Barber rightfully asserts, egalitarian civic society comes out at a disadvantage.

Globalization shuffles the cards of the prevalent modern political division between right and left. The right is split from within between market fundamentalism (neo-liberalism) and traditionalist fundamentalism (ethno-nationalism); the left is split from within between (Marxist) egalitarian radicalism and (postmodern/postcolonial) identity radicalism.

Within the overall crisis and in-between capitalist globalization and nationalist localization, other voices are also making themselves heard, demanding civil democracy, social-democracy, and multi-cultural pluralism, but the new agenda they introduce has not yet been assimilated into society as a whole.

* The text was processed from Uri Ram's book, The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem [Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005] [Hebrew].

(After) The Death of the Subject¹ / Hadas Maor

The last part of the twentieth century was characterized by simultaneous development in various theoretical disciplines that sought to diagnose some moment of annihilation indicated in the various fields of life and practice, and to touch upon some fundamental, radical change in the perception of the subject, the world, and the totality of their possible interrelations. Analysis of the structure and status of the subject, with its diverse manifestations, was, thus, a key concern to a group of scholars from various discursive disciplines, among them Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, and others.

The concept of the 'death of the subject' was introduced by Fredric Jameson in the early 1990s in his seminal essay *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*,² where he explored the waning of historicity in contemporary culture, the growing depthlessness, and the fundamental change that occurred in the emotional constitution of the subject in society, while linking all these to the structure of the new economic world system – globalization – which was, in his perception, one of the major causes for the very emergence of these changes. For Jameson, postmodern culture is an expression of the structure of the new economic system, a system whose predominant formal feature is depthlessness, and where the aesthetic production is combined with the general production of commodities.

Somewhat earlier, Jean Baudrillard introduced an in-depth discussion of the basic concepts of 'original' and 'copy' in his essay *The Precession of the Simulacra*,³ describing a situation where the ongoing race for the production of the 'real' spawns countless imaginary substitutes that function as 'hyperreality', attempting to compensate for the eternal loss of reality. In the era of 'hyperreality', as Baudrillard dubbed it, nothing is left of the 'real', and a series of copies without an original ('simulacra') is created in its stead.

In the period following the 'death of the subject', and in the gap that developed as part of the struggle to decipher the definition of the 'real', this exhibition sets out to trace the status of the contemporary subject vis-à-vis the complexity of social structures and the intensity of the new power systems within which he must function at the beginning of the third millennium. While doing so, the exhibition also refers to concepts such as center, periphery, and globalization, by examining various cultural situations and focusing on the subject's position and functioning within them.

The new economic structure and the developing communication networks were supposed, so it seemed, to furnish more open access and true equal opportunities for citizens of peripheral countries and cities. In effect, however, it seems that the process of globalization indeed created a global network akin to a cohesive fabric of the world's big cities: New York, Paris, London, Berlin, Tokyo, etc., leaving the satellite towns and peripheral areas even more distant and cut off than they had previously been. The notion of distance ceased to be a question of physical distance, increasingly becoming a matter of economic, political, and cultural distance or even gap. To wit, the process of globalization apparently brought the central countries and cities closer together, but left the periphery in an even more problematic situation in terms of the potential for a real connection with these centers, despite the broad range of technological possibilities characterizing our era.

Within this process, as part of the imaginary of blurring and the loss of identified foci, an ongoing process seems to have occurred simultaneously, a process of the subject's negation, the substitution of his focused private gaze with a general, generic, glassy gaze. While in the past the transition from the periphery to the center attested to a certain realization of a personal eloquence, now these transitions indicate mainly the ability to dissolve the private gaze into the public, to withdraw into a general rule that has no room to contain or acknowledge the exceptional.

The formulation of the exhibition's theme and the selection of artists and works included in it, are based on an attempt to characterize the cultural situation as a whole, and on examination of the artists' works from within and in relation to that situation. At the same time, however, the exhibition may also be regarded as a type of hybrid, striving to dialectically combine the illusion of independent, authentic existence with the inability to evade the boundaries of possibility typical of the political, economic and cultural circumstances of the period, any period, in which the artist lives and works.

In this context it is interesting to note that the notion of the 'system' resurfaces in various works in the exhibition: systems of signs, systems of sorting and classification, economic systems, communication systems, sewage systems and other systems are marked and addressed. Furthermore, the engagement with the tension between surface and essence reappears throughout the exhibition, and is ultimately marked as a quality immanent to the concept of 'art' and as a symptom of the period.

At the same time, the conscious refusal to gather under an unequivocal or declarative definition regarding the state of affairs is fundamental to the mindset and mode of thinking underlying and resulting from this exhibition. Accordingly, the exhibition avoids explicit reference to possible

futuristic and apocalyptic aspects involved in the accelerated technological development and issues such as cloning, genetic engineering, or robotics.

In some respect the exhibition strives to indicate the subject's place as a site of struggle. A Sisyphean struggle for survival that transpires cyclically and infinitely despite, and perhaps because of, the different forces directly and indirectly threatening to restrict, govern, and annul its scope of existence, thought and action over the years. By focusing on threshold and ambiguous situations the exhibition endeavors to signify a type of collective state of in-betweenness, without engaging in ideological, value-minded judgment of this state, what preceded it and what is to follow it in the future. Or, to borrow Jameson's own assertion, and the words of Marx before him (with regard to capitalism): "to think this development positively and negatively all at once."⁴

A stratified, combined gaze at the various works in the exhibition thus exposes, respectively, the dialectics of militant energies alongside laconic statements, sociological insights alongside sentimental metaphors, aesthetically or conceptually subversive proposals alongside a reflection of distinctive systematic assimilations.

1/ Whereas over the years, and distinctively in the romantic era, a certain idea has been formulated regarding the relationship between man and the world, assuming man's powerlessness vis-à-vis nature's given force, the modern era saw the emergence of the concept of the autonomous subject, who is responsible for his fate and can personify abstract ideas in his cultural realm. The concept of "the death of the subject" refers to the death of the idea of the subject as it has been imprinted in the modern era.

2/ Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (London: Verso, 1991).

3/ Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," trans. Paul Foss and Paul Patton, in Brian Wallis (ed.), Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art & David R. Godine, 1984).

4/ See Jameson 1991.

**Michal Heiman /
Archive, Detail (Dedicated to Adam
Baruch), 2005**

Michal Heiman's archive consists of two display fixtures grouping dozens or even hundreds of brown envelopes, and in between them, a long, narrow mirror. Generally, each envelope is dedicated to a figure that Heiman photographed as part of her diversified artistic practice in the past thirty years, containing negatives, transparencies, contact sheets, and prints. Most of the figures photographed by the artist during the 1980s and 1990s were documented due to their extensive activity and substantial contribution to intellectual, cultural, and social life; figures from the fields of music, theater, art, culture and politics, among them entirely private people whom Heiman met, photographed, and affixed to her expanding body of work. Some of the photographs were published at the time in different newspapers and magazines, and later featured in exhibitions as enlarged newspaper pages, raising and reinforcing the question of the affinity between art, action, and life.

Alongside these, the archive contains photographs from various sources, photographs of Heiman's own art works, photographs of works by other artists, photographs of family members and friends, as well as the archival essence inherent in the very construction and activation of such a mechanism of sorting, preservation and display.

Heiman's works/photographs, however, are not presented in the exhibition. They are not available for viewing, but merely marked as a representative corpus of a personality and a period, latent, forgotten, hidden within the artist's sealed archive of images, concealed somewhere in the cellars of local collective memory. Thus, Heiman's work is featured in the exhibition through an apparatus resembling a sculptural installation in the space, one which declares itself as containing a certain sum of images, yet does not expose them to our gaze.

Both parts of the display, with the addition of the long, narrow mirror, generate a sense of facing a closet, such that the viewer can see himself, and possibly other things, while striving to comprehend the essence and complexity of the work.

This dual nature of the gaze, experience and consciousness, alongside the consistent, reflexive engagement with processes of sorting and defining, have formed a major axis in Heiman's work throughout the years. Thus she exhibited photographs torn from old family albums and exposed their rectos and versos simultaneously (The Sorting, 1990, Bograshov Gallery, Tel Aviv), drew attention to photographer-subject relations, to the photographer's place and the status of the photograph, imprinting various photographs with a set of stamps of her own making (Photographer Unknown, Photo Rape, etc.), or repeatedly addressed called-for, possible

and alternative reading modes of various images as part of discursive fields perceived as separate, among them the artistic, therapeutic, historical, familial and political fields (M.H.T. 1, M.H.T. 2, What's on Your Mind?, etc.).

In this context, Heiman's current work constitutes another layer in the chain of splits, duplications, and intersections typifying her work, where the archive functions as yet another manifestation of the image, a comment on it, a statement concerning it, an expansion of its possible connotative boundaries.

**Alice Klingman /
Salvation, 2005**

Alice Klingman's work is a delicate screen made of transparent nylon threads tied into loops, stretched from ceiling to floor, blocking the side exit of the exhibition space. The delicacy and transparency of the threads, the elusive flickering of their presence, draw the viewer nearer to explore the work from up close. At the same time, however, the issue of death marked by the loops, or alternatively, the potential of salvation that may arise from holding onto them, inundates the viewer, shaking him and undermining the clarity of his experience.

The blocking of the space by means of the

work is tantamount to a demand for a decision; setting a material, mental and emotional borderline, forcing the viewer to make a decision where retreat is the only option.

The title of the work contains a similar ambiguity, for salvation has many changing faces, and its essence can never be defined in an ideological, absolute or unequivocal manner.

The obscurity concerning the threads' ends, the fact that they evade distinctive cohesive diagnosis, and the psychic state which the work generates, link the perception of the work to Jacques Lacan's concept of the 'Real', a notion which is a key to the understanding of the subject's structure and his ability to proceed in the world.

**Gil Shachar /
Untitled, 1998**

Gil Shachar's work presents a figure lying on the floor, rolled up inside a plain greenish carpet, with only its lower body sticking out, exposing the end of undershorts and feet with pale-colored socks. The figure lies on the floor motionless, possibly a wrapped corpse, possibly a living figure hiding from reality, ostrich-like. Either way, the work elicits caution and recoil, primarily through the high realism of

its implementation, as well as the instinctive tendency to withdraw and be wary of what is signified by the homeless, the mad, or the corpse; three concepts which in western culture mark a place of transgression (the 'corpse' and the 'madman' signify similar concepts in other cultures as well; the 'homeless' is an essentially western notion), a failure to remain within the bounds of social norms, or a decision to object to them, which is perceived as prohibited. Three concepts which expose the limits of the normative ability to contain the anomalous, the different, the dirty or profane, shedding light on the absolute and unbridgeable gap between that which is within the limits of social norm and that which has deviated from them, thus forming a threat to their very existence, calling to mind Julia Kristeva's notion of the 'abject' (which, according to her definition, is very close but inassimilable, embodied in everything that deviates from the boundaries and rules, thus violating them).

**Gal Weinstein /
Imprint, 2005**

Gal Weinstein's work in the current exhibition is not self-revealing; it demands a searching gaze and a connecting consciousness to locate

and decipher it. A round sewage hole, 60 cm in diameter, is opened and immediately re-sealed in the museum floor. Only a close meticulous look reveals that the cover is not an ordinary sewage lid, with the required ownership definitions, such as 'Petach Tikva Municipality', and that the decorative pattern adorning it is not a repeated pattern intended to prevent it from being slippery when wet, but rather a unique personal fingerprint which turns out to be the artist's own.

Weinstein's use of the notion and formation of the fingerprint sends us to several contexts simultaneously. The fingerprint is the major external tool used to identify and classify people and citizens throughout the world. For the illiterate, the fingerprint serves as a signature substitute, and in the history of classical western art the term has been associated with the phenomenon of the 'genius' artist whose fingerprint in the work was clear and could not be undermined, imitated, or forged.

The fingerprint also conceals a memory potential, an evidence of existence, a trace of contact. Its stamping on the sewage cover ostensibly projects a type of personal, private, material ownership onto it, and the cover, which is a simulation of the 'real thing', becomes an original in its own right, a type of self-portrait, albeit possibly part of a production of a set of casts where the original's value and the object's or work's uniqueness will, once again, be examined.

Weinstein's work infuses the sewage system into the exhibition space, juxtaposing, on a single plane, the sublime notions of genius, individuality, and uniqueness, with that which is identified with the most abject, inferior human common denominator, that which strives to be distanced from touch and gaze.

Creating an opening in the museum space calls for contemplation of parallel levels of occurrence and existence, of the ideological distinction inherent in the gap between that which is visible on the surface and that which remains hidden beneath it, and necessarily – of different types of intricate systems that tie different sites and individuals together, such as systems of communications, electricity and water; systems that have become vital for human existence, with the cyclical intricacy characterizing it in the modern era, but also ones characterized (not always consciously) by a threat to vanquish and eradicate it.

Uri Gershuni / A Star is Born, 2004

Uri Gershuni's series of photographs was taken during 2004 in the auditions for the television show 'A Star is Born 2' ('Israeli Idol'). Gershuni attended the auditions held in various places

throughout the country by geographic division: North, Center and South. In each location he photographed the candidates before entering the audition, scared and excited on the one hand, conscious of the new arena ahead of them and anxious to 'play the game', on the other.

All the figures are photographed against an identical backdrop, in a similar photographic format, thus enabling their body language, fashion and styling choices, and the array of 'stardom' insights that they have formed, to unfold across the forefront of the photographic frame, guiding the viewer through it.

The figures appearing in Gershuni's photographs are entirely anonymous. They are depicted due to their very yearning to deliver themselves from the 'periphery' and be accepted into the cultural and economic 'center' (or what they perceive as a center).

'A Star is Born' is the type of show that enables anonymous figures, devoid of professional training or proven prior experience, to try their luck in this or that field on which the specific program focuses (singing, dance, entertainment, fashion, etc.). Such programs thus spawn new 'stars' who thereby circumvent the need for years of hard work, in terms of their art as well as the accumulation of contacts, publicity and exposure.

Being set as part of the series, the figures in Gershuni's photographs present a wide cross-section emphasizing the inability to extract some common denominator, whether conscious,

cultural or economic, with regard to them; thus, each figure remains a whole world in its own right and a refined essence of yearning for exposure at once.

**Doron Rabina /
The Next Full Me, 2005**

Doron Rabina's work extends along the side of the exhibition space. The long wall was entirely covered with stuccoed plaster which distinguishes it from the smooth texture and white color of the other walls in the space. On the top part of the wall, inside the stucco texture, appears a large cavity which exposes the infrastructure of the work and its covering mode, sketching a silhouette of the tails of two intertwined snakes. A staged photograph and a bare fluorescent light are sunken into other parts of the wall, and several objects, among them a large satellite dish, are located in front of the wall.

The work's array is ostensibly externalized, total and erupting, but any reading attempt requires an act of retreat, of quiet contemplative observation whereby linking of the various elements generates an accentuated moment of passion, while interweaving revealed and concealed, sublime and inferior, the threatening and the familiar. Thus the insight elucidates that

the concave satellite dish had been seemingly blocked by threaded rods assembled with a rotary removal motion erupting from within, under whose shade hides a urinal's filter, and next to it – a white decorated barrel.

Ostensibly, one may locate various elements with familiar narrative potential in the work, such as man, snake, light, lightening, knowledge, yearning, and wonder, elements that may be interwoven into an alternative homo-erotic or male story of creation. Concurrently, however, the work produces a type of general liminality between interior and exterior, high and low, practicality and display, proceeding somewhat idly on its way to make a statement. This static pace of meaning construction or refutation generates a challenging and highly demanding viewing experience, attesting to a clear intention to leave an unraveled room in terms of the work's interpretation.

At the same time, the work performs a type of internalization of the exterior inward, confronting the viewer with what generally strives to be alienated or shifted from his gaze in the urban or cultural field. Similar to previous works by Rabina which contained solar collectors, shutters, gas canisters, or headlights, the penetration of the outside inward undermines the very difference between them, producing a situation where the objects on display ostensibly lack a definite context, a situation where the enigma is constructed from a totality of entirely routine details.

**Nelly Agassi /
A Dream where Silence is Made
of Gold*, 2005**

Nelly Agassi's two video pieces were created especially for the context and space of the current exhibition. One features the artist lying motionless, wearing a flesh-colored dress. Through an opening at the heart of the dress, in the midriff and around the navel, one can closely observe the rhythm of her breath, locate the swelling of the chest and abdominal cavity and their emptying of air, and all of a sudden notice smoke emanating therefrom. The source of the smoke is invisible, and the burning process apparently taking place inside the artist's body is exposed only through its symptom or side-effect. The artist continues to lie motionless as the dark smoke rises from her body, billowing outside the boundaries of the photographic frame in a process of purification, or release and evaporation.

In the other work the artist is seen from the back, waving goodbye in a slow, cyclical, sequential motion. Her face turned to the wall, ostensibly fused to or seeing through it, Agassi strives to expand the scope of its containment, to penetrate it. Despite the gesture's tenderness, the cyclicity of the act generates a cumulating difficulty, a piercing pain, which stands in stark contrast to the sense of hovering arising from the work.

Agassi's two works explore the array of

possible interrelations of the artist with the space around her, on the one hand, and with the viewer's gaze, on the other. The works' refusal to acknowledge or respond to the viewer's gaze, and their distinctive attempt to break out of the exhibition area demarcated by the walls of the space, continue the artist's early work process, which sought to mark, probe, and stretch those boundaries intended to distinguish between private and public, thought and action, practice and display, activity and passivity.

The suspension of the gaze occurring in both works, while stretching the still image into a video work, generates an ongoing tension between the static image and the continuous one. The same suspension also emphasizes the principle position characterizing all of Agassi's video works and performances, where the duration of the action rather than the sequence, structures the essence.

**Sigalit Landau /
Rotten Ice, 2005**

Sigalit Landau's work in the exhibition includes the single figure of a woman, sitting/crouching, indrawn. The figure is sculpted from various materials, among them iron and papier-mâché, seemingly wrapped or covered with a layer of clay that has dried and cracked. It is seated next to

* The title of the work was borrowed from Alejandra Pizarnik's poem "Search" (1963)

an undefined object, cumbersome and lumpy on the one hand, flowing and wavy on the other, and seems as though it has frozen in place in a setting at once contemporary and archaic. The scene generally resembles one of an accident, whether private or general, internal or external, psychic, geological or climatic, an accident that led to the constitution of that freezing of image and movement.

The title of the work typifies Landau's practice, which insists on juxtaposing contradictory forces such as salt and sugar, aridity and moisture, purity and decay, and which is manifested in the current work in the tension created between the salt and the clay, between the potential of life and movement, and the sense of death and frozen existence.

The various materials comprising the installation were manipulated by the artist and subjected to a process of mineral and salt adsorption for a long period of time during which they were immersed in the Dead Sea waters. The process of crystallization infused the materials with elusive qualities, highly beautiful, but also the carriers of loss and destruction. The waters of the Dead Sea – the lifeless, lowest place on earth, in which the works were immersed in one state, and from which they were pulled out several months later in a very different state – set an anticipated yet uncontrolled organic process in motion, which continues to operate and sizzle in the works even now, as they are exhibited. In other words, that which motivated the work's

construction, the expansion of its volume, will eventually lead to its annihilation. Thus, like a living body in the process of dying, the works struggle for the duration of their existence in the space, undergoing a constant process of compounding and discharge, while various chemical processes, alongside the element of time, form a crucial factor determining their survival.

Landau's work conceals a narrative proposal centered on the figure of the woman, but this proposal is a type of diversion, a moment of disguise. The woman turns her back on the viewer's initial gaze, ostensibly generating a situation which forces the latter to encircle the work and study it closely. By doing so, the viewer is exposed to the power inherent in the figure's posture and in the way in which Landau has captured the very essence of her being.

Over the years the body's gestures and postures have been a major axis for understanding the power motivating Landau's work as a whole. Stretched, folded, indrawn, strained, peeled, the figures embody refined moments of energy, movement, effort, distress, which an equivalent or even greater force seemingly strives to curb and vanquish. A concise choreography in a single body, that expands and creates comprehensive, complex arrays as part of her solo exhibitions, the figures form a dialectic encapsulation of the human struggle for existence, physical as well as mental, historical, political and cultural.

**Rami Maymon /
Zinc Yellow, 2005**

Rami Maymon's work links the Museum's two major spaces, touching upon questions of identity, uniqueness and essence. Its structure includes covering the wall with brown Formica wallpaper, a simulation of a simulation of a 'real' organic material, bearing various elements set on 'display'. A thickened shelf protruding from the wall accommodates three identical photographs of a child holding a blue ice pack close to his body, and a piece of blue plasticine is stuck to his nose, possibly a band-aid, possibly a type of sun-screening device. In continuation of the shelf, two odd, similar organic growths, natural and yet domesticated, burst out of the wall. Another object wrapping the exhibition wall bears, on one side, a recycling mark, and on the other side – the word "fragile".

Maymon's work introduces several concurrent questions. The notion of identity and its modes of construction are examined through the called-for analogy between the figure of the child, the strange growths, and the word 'fragile'. In this context, the question also arises, to what exactly does the word 'fragile' refer: To the figure of the child? To his particular situation? To the broad cultural situation in which he was raised? To the yellow object on which the word appears? Or perhaps it is rather the status of the work of art that is, in fact, probed and defined as fragile?

The concepts of the 'original', 'unique' work are examined by presenting the entire photographic edition while exposing the control mechanisms associated with the status of an art work in the world. The use of the signed and numbered edition procedure is intended to delimit the work's 'spreading' in the world by means of technical reproduction, and thus enable its economic as well as artistic value to be gauged and fixed.

Presenting the three identical photographs which comprise the entire edition undermines this external attempt to generate uniqueness, confronting the viewer with the need to account for the repetition. Despite this undermining, one may say that the work's array as a whole is measured and ordered, carefully arranged, and only the two strange protrusions create a type of anomaly; a wild, uncontrollable element that performs a transgressive act of intrusion and invasion, upsetting the installation's balance, ostensibly challenging the cultural, rational, even mathematical facet of the work's structure.

Maymon's work echoes and activates a type of familiar mechanism of passion, exploring the potential relationships between signifier and signified, original and copy, a work of art and a commercial brand, while introducing questions about processes of blurring and veiling meanings.

**Ohad Fishof /
Twelve O'clock, 2005**

Ohad Fishof's sound installation consists of two loudspeakers and a composed text played in the space. Disallowing passive listening in the exhibition's background, the work demands focused attention, generating a clear spatial concentration in the space.

The text of the work was written and composed for the context of the exhibition, comprising a chain of short descriptive/declarative sentences unraveled into this or that 'occurrence' only three or four times. The words of the 'song' recurrently refer to various notions pertaining to or associated with some large collective that the text assumes to be familiar and known through the repeated use of the word 'ours'; a collective in which there is no room for performative speech in first person, direct reference or conversation, but only for a type of pronunciation.

The rhythm of the 'song' is restrained and interrupted, erupting into the space each time anew, as it were, starting and stopping, melodious and retouched. The sound oscillates between periods and styles, echoing a familiar moment and disappearing, as the void, the interval, becomes equally significant to the utterance and flow. In this respect the work is a strange hybrid that strives to blend times and situations, a hybrid that turns out to be an organic entity that changes with every listening.

In a sense, one may say that the work is linked to Fishof's ongoing preoccupation with the concept of the 'song' – the basic, timeless combination of words and tune – as an art form, a cultural phenomenon, an anthropological document, and psychic evidence at one and the same time.

Nevertheless, even as part of that large collective from which the text fails to deviate or escape, and despite the repeated use of the word "our," the song ends with the insight that dreams are not what they seem, language is secret.

**Tal Shoshan /
Fear Not, 2005**

Tal Shoshan's work confronts those exiting the museum, dominating the entrance into the exhibition spaces in reverse, as it were. The figure featured in the work looks straight into the center of the space, toward the viewer, its hand slightly extended, open and stretched out, as if signaling something to those wishing to enter or exit the exhibition space. The hand's position is analogous to what is habitually perceived in Western culture as a 'stop' sign, characterizing the figure as one striving to preserve the space of its private body, or even to prevent visitors from entering the exhibition space or leaving its bounds. In Far Eastern culture, the hand's

posture signifies a 'mudra' meaning 'fear not' (the mudra movements are traditional Buddhist gestures indicating mental states), hence it signals to the potential viewer something diametrically opposed to the meaning of the sign in western culture. At the very entrance to the exhibition the viewer is thus faced with a sign which is not unequivocally interpreted, forming a key to his subsequent mental and emotional progression.

Beyond the ambiguity of the image as a lingual sign, the work also contains several layers and ambiguities in terms of structure and essence.

The artist's work process included self-photography with exposed upper body, ink printing of the work on quality woodless paper, and tracing the outline of the printed image with pastels. Neither photography nor painting, the end result interferes with the viewer's ability to examine and gauge its degree of medial, and singular 'authenticity'. For the exhibition the 'original' work (whose dimensions were 50x60 cm) was scanned and reprinted in ink-jet print on canvas (in 135x195 cm size), a process which ostensibly completed yet another loop in the work's cyclical metamorphoses between photography, painting, photography, and so forth.

This continuous, cyclical crossing of given or accepted defined boundaries (of the language of art, of sign language, etc.) strives to undermine and crash these boundaries by introducing a new hybrid option based on the insistence to be both this and that, rather than something definite.