

Galia Yahav, "Rome in Petach Tikva"

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In the collection gallery of Petach Tikva Museum of Art, a back room that shares a wall with the city's monument for fallen soldiers – dedicated for exhibition dealing with the collection itself - Dana Levy presents her brilliant video installation "Impermanent Display". What you see in it is this: on the walls of a ruin – nearly collapsed, hangs a mixed collection of paintings. They are placed extremely close to one another, gapless, top to bottom, while the ground is also filled with statues made from stone and iron.

Busts without arms, landscapes, portraits, abstracts, watercolors and oil are presented frontally to the viewer. Towards the end of the video the fading light becomes sunrise, singing birds are now added to the natural sound that accompanied their activities.

A woman in a red dress walks between the works, writing something down, perhaps cataloguing. Next to her, a man is seated; he is drawing, or rather copying, works around him. Both seem to be unconcerned with one another or whatever is going on around them, they are deep in an artistic meditation... Or maybe this is an official institutional activity. More paintings and sculptures are placed in a pile on the ground, both on the filmed ground and on the gallery floor where the viewer is situated. A spectacular live image is created, which is a distinct quotation of the two paintings Ancient Rome and Modern Rome by Giovanni Pablo Panini from 1757. Unidentical twins. Levy created a kind of filmed dramatization of them, which include the element of art inside art that exists in them anyway.

Both Panini paintings, which are considered a pioneer of ruins painting, are representative of Rome's cultural and economical power as an ancient and modern city.

“They portray a vast Roman estate with paintings lining the walls from floor to ceiling and wall-to-wall, glorifying Panini's patron—Count de Stainville” Writes curator Hila Cohen Schneiderman “for his great riches, and Rome for its magnificent cityscapes. At first glance, the homogeneity of the estate interiors lends them the appearance of replicas. Only a closer look reveals their divergence. The paintings thus introduce the rationale behind the collection as a reflection of economic power and

political force; as a focusing lens which brings numerous sights together, which later evolved into a model guiding many art institutions worldwide to this day”

As part of Levy ongoing research; she created a visual adaptation for the local museum collection that makes Panini's work come to life. Levy materialized Panini's work by video, by using the collections artworks from the Petach Tikva collection, that were hung on the walls of the archeological site the Mazor Museolem the Roman estate near the city.

The incredible detail that exists in the Panini paintings is reproduced in the video supremely - besides the fact that it too, like the paintings, is a great lesson in archeology of the local culture, Levy brings to life very well the basic visual duality that exist in the paintings - their frontal presentation to the observer , the leap from the surface of the painting out, equivalent to the virtuosity perspective , the illusion multi-focal points that . So is the duality of silence of the stones that comes from them, the immobility of eternity next to the traffic of human beings living inside the building. (Which is also the cultural structure) , but with their awakened limited perspective. In Panini’s paintings, Rome became the headquarters of the concept of ideas, the backdrop of story of man , exemplary to the genius but in Levy’s video the tables are turned - people are the statistical in the apparatus of cataloging , sorting and labeling of culture and art, rising above the accommodation.

The man at the for front of the video work (the illustrator Joni Rokotnitz) is therefore the image of the Count , ambassador to Rome, who in Panini’s painting is sitting on a armchair, surrounded by Michelangelo's Moses , David, Bernini’s Apollo and Daphne and more. But even the documenter , and perhaps a self-portrait of Panini , now represents the artist, the woman amidst the works, writing something down, straightening, filing is in the role of herself. Sigal Krinski responsible for the museum's collection as herself .

Just like paintings Panini’s painting that do not promote one work over another but draw a broad panorama of cultural treasures, so does Levy’s video camera not focus on particular detail or the another but moves across the whole, as if to work out what a collection, what is the passion for conservation, how visual knowledge is accumulated, how are different viewing disciplines founded? All of these also create

pride, lack of fear, education and imparting imperial values. The manner in which it is staged and photographed, are somewhat reminiscent of video works by Bill Viola with a more tattered representative execution— Representations of any person committing symbolic acts in spaces that are huge metaphors of the world, nature, mode of existence, of human knowledge. For Levy it is the burden of art history, the abundance of styles and schools of thought, their studying and paving the way from them.

But this whole operation isn't just an imitation of mounting style and placement, this is not just a work inspired by a work. This is a fantastic mocking on the provincial collection Petah Tikva all together. After some time of serious viewing at the slow moving camera over the scene, the criticizing axis on which the whole work stands on, Rome in Petach Tikva. The capital of an empire and the mother of colonies as twin cities. From this moment the parodic element rules.

All the stuffed up conceptualism about the accumulation of knowledge, collecting, ruined cities and renewing ones, optical illusions of the extreme architectural facade of an image, all these and more fall into the bin of Petah Tikva. "You could say that the museum collection far from the European ideal as a treasure of masterpieces, as far as Rome is from Petah Tikva," writes that the curator. The comparison just funny.

This is not a momentary gimmick. The work gains an astounding ironical quality that brings to light the provinciality, exposes the the disproportional implication of the term collection on The Petach Tikva ruffraff that described "images of people studying, Arab women, a soldier in uniform, and a orthodox guard, besides the Knesset, the Western Wall and Petach Tikva landscapes. As the curator writes the pretentiousness to gain knowledge breaks down the making of its power and sustained educational farce which forces the educated to visit not the Coliseum or visit the Pantheon, but to travel to Petah Tikva and learn about the history of the town through the works of amateur league.

The occupation with museum collections as a historical given exists as a raw material for artistic intervention is a curatorial trend of recent years, perhaps due to the thriving art archives in recent years. But most these types of exhibitions are more like taking

inventory, veiled in contemporary artistic action or another PR and educational ratification value, rather than a serious historical investigation. Maybe this trend is due to the fact that in Israel's peripheral museums there are no historical assets that are worth investigating. In most cases these are cultural works that the Israeli culture can live without. So that it's possible to be entertained with the collection as an abstract concept. To perform towards it Critical and other actions, to treat it like the ready made and not like a sacred collective property.

"The Petach Tikva Museum of Art Collection is similar in nature to those of other peripheral museums in Israel" so writes curator Chen Scheiderman "collections which hold works by renowned artists alongside works by amateurs, and are essentially comprised of an assortment of sculptures, landscape views and abstract paintings, portraiture and documentation of local daily life"

Precisely because the ironic distance toward the poor local history Levy managed to make the blend, the atmosphere and coming to its advantage - grouping pieces together is what creates immediate visual understanding of the 'culture' the culture industry, one piece which quotes in a joke on the local repetitive history.