

Continuum: Installations following the Collection

1. Heroica

Avital Cnaani

Alona Rodeh

Curator: Irit Carmon Popper

“Continuum” is a new series of exhibitions that strives to shed light on the Museum’s art collection. Each exhibition will serve as a platform for invited artists to create site-specific installations which will explore a single theme deriving from the collection. A creative endeavor oscillating between a tribute and an intertextual gesture, this *modus operandi* is a paraphrase of Nicolas Bourriaud’s concept of “postproduction” denoting various processes applied to existing cultural products, among them art works, to generate links and charge them with new meanings.

“Heroica,” the series’ inaugural exhibition, turns a mediating, critical spotlight at the notion of heroism, the value of victory, and the memory of the fighters. It juxtaposes installations by two young artists, Avital Cnaani and Alona Rodeh, third generation descendants of agricultural Zionist pioneers, who confront the local archetype of heroism by deconstruction and reconstructing it anew. Cnaani corresponds with Mordechai Gumpel’s mosaic walls which perpetuate the settlement’s fighter-heroes; Rodeh corresponds with bronze sculptures of pioneer figures by Ze’ev Ben Zvi and Yehoshua Yoshpan, and with a *Yizkor* sculpture by Zvi Aldoubi.* The visual and ideological representation of the Zionist ethos of masculinity—the fighting, land-redeeming sabra—which drew its inspiration from mobilized modernist art, elicits a disillusioned cynical gaze in both artists, alongside fascination with the power-minded image. Via a strategy of depersonalization, each isolates the heroic image and renders it a formalist motif, whose emptying opens the possibility for a new narrative.

Cnaani’s ceiling work simulates a silhouette of a landscape painting, conveying a sense of threat and aggression. The installation is suspended indoors, at the Yad Labanim House, as a metaphor for thatch. It vacillates between interior and exterior, between variable and permanent, between lingering and moving on. The narrative’s underlying dichotomy is also discernible in the sculptural matter: motion versus stasis, flatness versus volume, mass versus weightlessness. The King of Birds, a heroic archetype in its own right, extracted from the biblical narrative of bereavement, is depicted in motion, yet

serves as an image of the memory of flight. It contemplates the gap between the bird of prey and its manifestations (from Roman culture through the Third Reich to Danziger’s *Nimrod*), and its airy, brittle representation. The manual sculptural work with small wooden sticks and scraps, virtually handiwork, is congruent with the mosaic technique and with the minimalistic principles for the creation of anti-sculpture, associated with abstract drawing modes.**

Rodeh’s audio-visual silhouettes blur the materiality of the massive modernist sculptures mounted on a Russian Constructivist type of semi-architectural structure, as a variation on a victor’s podium. The installation constitutes a dark site conveying a Pagan ritualistic air, where the sacred metaphysical aura, despite its artificial graininess and the exposure of the illusion which sets it in motion, never ceases to engage in aggrandizement. With theatrical effects drawn from the clubbing culture, the artist pits the eternal and sublime with values of camp and trash, thus reflecting the transformation from the mythological hero’s sculpture to a requisite in a primitive silhouette spectacle. The glorification and dramatization generate an experience of ritualistic empowerment centered on the hero—not the static sculpted one, but the viewer who is blinded, observing the work as if he were sightless. The song’s lyrics expose an affinity between the intense flight of the bird of prey from the adjacent space and the yearning for desistence, reinforcing the link between heroism and death, rendered ever more conspicuous *vis-à-vis* the resounding silence of the commemoration compound.***

The choice of two such visually divergent works which offer a diametrically opposed viewing experience—works which were, in fact, motivated by a similar act of image deconstruction and its uprooting from the mythological context in favor of a current, personal narrative—indicates the project’s intention to introduce a wide spectrum of interpretations for refined, quintessential mindsets and motifs in the subconscious of local culture.

* Zvi Aldoubi, *Yizkor*, 1960s, bronze, 76×40×46 cm; Ze’ev Ben Zvi, *The Pioneer*, 1930s, bronze, 70×33×37 cm, gift of Nativ; Mordechai Gumpel, mosaic walls at Yad Lebanim Museum, Petach Tikva, 1966-67; Yehoshua Yoshpan, *The Pioneer*, 1930s, bronze, 55×56×39 cm, gift of Eliezer Raphaelovich’s family. All works from the Petach Tikva Museum of Art Collection.

** Avital Cnaani, ceiling sculpture, 2011, wooden sticks

*** Alona Rodeh, audiovisual installation, 2011, mixed media, 3:15 min, loop: piano adaptation of Jim Morrison’s *Bird of Prey*; pianist: Maya Dunietz; singing: from Jim Morrison’s *Bird of Prey*; sound editor: Rona Geffen; audio-video mounting: Ronni Shubinsky.