



Ventilator hosted by The Lobby Art Space presents:
Solitude Cell for the Anonymous Smoker*

Opening: Thursday, December 18, 2019 at 20:00 | Arlozorov 6, Tel Aviv
Opening hours: Thursdays: 17:00-19:00, Friday and Saturday: 12:00-14:00 or by appointment
Closing: Saturday, January 11, 2020

"The Lobby Art Space" is pleased to announce the opening of *Solitude Cell for the Anonymous Smoker*, a new group exhibition by the nomadic art space Ventilator. The exhibition features works by Meir Agassi, Guillaume Dustan, Amir Givon, Noa Glazer, Elad Larom, Amit Levinger, Shir Moran, Lee Nevo, Maxim Turbo

It is the objective of the artist who is concerned with conceptual art to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to become emotionally dry.

- Sol Levitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (Artforum, June 1967)

One can draw a distinction between two forces influencing artistic creation: the artists' principled stance and the Zeitgeist. In many instances, the Zeitgeist charts out particular artistic styles, such as the 'pseudo research-based' (pedagogical) style which has emerged in recent years. Sweeping the international field, this artistic trend has also made its way into the local art scene. It is characterized by an appropriation of identity politics, interactive experiences, a visual paucity, as well as by an attempt to educate audiences through political correctness and liberal-capitalist inclinations. The so-called "resistance" of research-based art to the political positions of the republican-religious-conservative block, for instance, is achieved precisely through the implementation of republican-religious-conservative visual tools. In fact, the pseudo research-based style of art constitutes a rather poor representation of the spiritual dimension of art, even though there have been some very rare instances in the past when this type of art succeeded in fusing the fundamental and the spiritual - such was the case with institutional critique. In this context, a number of questions are raised: why has research become a criterion for artistic judgment? Why is the expression of a civilian's political position so mandatory in art, especially when it is clear that most art practitioners share more or less the same range of opinions? How has this type of "research" joined the museal-curatorial agenda in dictating the artistic realm? And how can a diagram ever seek to and even succeed in competing with a painting or a sculpture? How is it that, according to many, Clement Greenberg's "interesting" has become more favorable than Emmanuel Kant's "sublime"? Can this period be defined as one where intelligibility has become trendy and sensuality obsolete?

The prevailing institutional approach today is dedicated to mediating art to the viewer as promptly and as clearly as possible. It therefore advocates for an art that must be first and foremost curatorial, literal and intelligible. It is not incidental that educational departments employ the largest portion of the museum workforce. Yet if we assume that a work of art can be subject to many different interpretations, we must also agree that an artwork is difficult to define. One can thus conclude that the museum is busy trying to explain the unexplainable, enacting opinions into objective truths and above all, elevating the curatorial act into an artistic one. And yet, artistic judgment is primarily subjective: even when curators are mandated to determine what is appropriate for inclusion, and notwithstanding the far-reaching educational impact that they might achieve, their declarations remain a set of opinions that are anything but facts. And although the museum is a monopoly when it comes to preserving and displaying visual art, it holds no power, total or partial, in determining the viewer's judgment. In fact, in some instances, face-to-face encounters with works of art considered to be cultural and historical masterpieces are experienced by the viewers to be the most visually, sensually or intellectually disappointing.

The curatorial-institutional approach associated with 'pseudo' research-based art pressures artists into developing interpretative and explicative skills that seep deep into their working process and resulting artworks. Strangely enough, this

curatorial practice may find its roots within the art realm itself; more precisely, within the conceptual art movement that emerged in New York in the 1960s. Indeed conceptual art asserted a bold visual and verbal opposition to the expressionist art movement that preceded it and drew from Kant's critique of judgement. Hence the chicken and egg situation: the artistic approach of this bygone art movement was subsequently appropriated by the art establishment, which now requires a work of art to be intelligible - a requirement that may in some great part explains the emotional sterility of much of today's art. On top of which one should add a generational gap: on the one side, those who worship the past and on the other, those willing to turn their backs to both past and present and redirect their entire gaze towards the future.

Today, the unavoidable bureaucracy that artists must engage in is reflected in their visual literacy. We are required to produce slick project plans and 3D simulations, and to justify ourselves through texts and explanations as if our artistic practice could be broken down into a logical equation. This is what the loss of intuition looks like: a PDF file. Art turns into a series of explanatory acts that feel like apologetic formulas directed at institutions and influential figures. The latter are entitled to engage in a filtering process without hardly ever stepping into a studio or an exhibition space, without even facing real-life works of art prior to their display against the white walls of museums. This leaves no room for the experience of intimacy and mystery, which thus vanish from the discourse. Albeit so crucial, the artwork's absence of meaning dries out. This is even truer in regard to contemporary artworks which still lack a proper context framed by oral or written history: their interpretative validity is limited to the first or third person. But is interpretation even necessary, and to what extent?

The art I am writing about here, the one with a principled stance, requires contemplation, reflection and time. It asks to linger, to seek relations, to ripen materially and conceptually, to fade, to get old, to withdraw and even disappear. Its essence is to become a common denominator to its community, operating through the gaze and the senses, unintelligibility and meaninglessness, on a time continuum greater than any sum of individual existences.

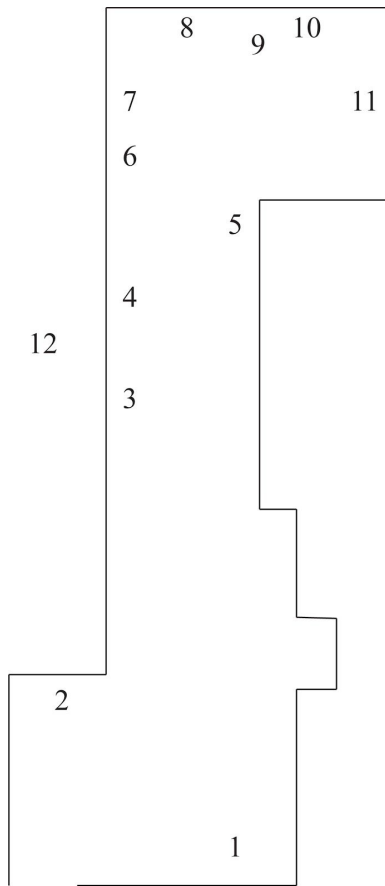
For example, when one visits a European bourgeois home and looks at an 18th-century painting that has been hanging on the wall for the past two hundred years, one can imagine this artwork as a vantage point shared by both the living and the dead - like a vortex. The experience is spiritual at its core and does not require much artistic explanation: the very choice of preserving a work of art in the family home, generation after generation, is what gives this painting its profound essence.

After all, what is the likelihood for any worldly object not to be eventually thrown away? What are the chances of a work of art to survive decades or even just a few years? Why would anyone other than the artist invest energy in looking at a particular work of art, let alone in its discovery and its preservation? Who even claimed that the viewer of a particular work lives here today? Maybe he/she will only cross paths with the artwork in the future? Maybe this would be preferable. Where does this sense of urgency and expectation, this longing for intelligibility come from? Unlike other fields, art holds the right to ambiguity and lack of clarity. When depleted by its own creator, art gives rise to an inorganic opposition between the visual and the literal; an opposition that has gained far too much exposure in our times, in tandem with the growth of criticism.

This principled stand is "dazed in that it belongs to artists who are evangelists of the quiet consciousness embarking on the troubled waters of the subconscious." It asks for no discourse, nor viewer, nor museum display. It might as well survive for decades in the invisibility of a home, for its motivation is first and foremost intimate. It testifies to a kind of time devoid of any profitability, utilized to the fullest in the artwork's sensual making-process; a time invested in prolonged observation. This is also where the artwork's validity reaches its limits, and with it comes a paradox. By being hierarchically superior to humans, the artwork will always stand above language, criticism, explanations and justifications, above intelligibility and everything else except Nature. And yet even if it were to disappear altogether, and despite its elevated state, the artwork's claim will still remain the same: to take a small part in this world. Forever.

- Ishai Shapira Kalter

* The exhibition's title: *Solitude Cell for the Anonymous Smoker* is borrowed from Meir Agassi's book, *The Jar from Tennessee: a Selection of Essays on Artists, Art and Contemplation 1983-1997*, published by Am Oved, 2008



1. Lee Nevo, *The Volunteer*, Ceiling fan, Stuffed crow, Metal cable, Bulb, variable dimensions, 2011
2. Noa Glazer, *Spitting Box*, Pine wood, Spit, 4.8x23x16.5 cm, 2019
3. Lee Nevo, *Sonata No. 14*, Mouse trap, Alarm clock, Motor battery, Wires, Aluminum foil, Three pizza boxes, 5x33x33 cm, 2019
4. Amir Givon, *Untitled*, Markers on wrapping paper, 160x160 cm, 2004
5. Amit Levinger, *Untitled*, Markers, spray and oil sticks on chrome paper, 70x75 cm, 2019
6. Meir Agassi, *Self Portrait Behind*, Mixed media on paper, Variable dimensions, 1981 (Courtesy of Ruth and Nelly Agassi and Mishkan Museum of Art, Ein Harod)
7. Meir Agassi, *Self Portrait with a Hat*, Mixed media on paper, Variable dimensions, 1982 (Courtesy of Ruth and Nelly Agassi and Mishkan Museum of Art, Ein Harod)
8. Shir Moran, *Predator*, Acrylic, oil pastels and markers on Jeans, 2019 (Courtesy of Alon Segen Gallery)
9. Amit Levinger, *LaPanim*, Single channel video, 06:35, 2004
10. Guillaume Dustan, *Pop Life*, Single channel video, 19:27 min, 2000 (Courtesy of Guillaume Dustan and Treize, Paris)
11. Elad Larom, *Indian Toast*, Oil on canvas, 200x257 cm, 2012
12. Maxim Turbo, *Performance*, 2019