

Under the Lamplight and Pits Series

Positioning is not commonly used in writing about paintings; nevertheless, regarding Michal Bachi's work it is needed. In her works, one can notice a vitality, which is accumulated from a construction of formalistic moves, charged with surprising subject matter by the ways they are embodied in the different works. The positioning of the paintings components: Surfaces of light versus dark, concreteness versus abstract, art history versus randomness, all take part in the happening in which a principle place is given to methods of opposition, some calculated some instinctive. Still, in all of them, the choices of laying the one opposite the other also include references to materiality, motion and additional workflows, all avoiding the narrative or the illusory course.

The works make use of color, or alternatively, completely avoid it and take the severe choice of the black to white spectrum. The act of painting is sometimes replaced with stamping, frottage, engraving or print. Choosing these techniques allows evading the virtuoso lines. In this case, the painting capability knowingly renounces full control of all the painting ingredients.

On the other hand, it is not about being charmed by coincidence, but making intellectual use of techniques which are the product of painting knowhow, originating at the DADA & Surrealism and continuing from the 20th century onward. Dealing with the load of this knowledge and analyzing it in the works, are the corner stones to a painting that is personal, inquisitive and also critical. This kind of painting produces different methods of contemplation and research of means, techniques and subjects for painting. The references that alternate between German Expressionism to Art Brut, Nouveau Realism and Abstract Expressionism, open up diverse routes, fundamental to painting today, which are apparent in Bachi's works. The constant tension between image and abstract seemingly spells antagonism, but surprisingly discloses kinship: The image is not always clearly recognizable, while the abstract may relate to recognized materiality and texture. The deep commitment to painting and the problems arising from the immediate success of "Bad Painting" with its expressive flow, are also referenced - and not without irony. Besides a historic development, it is hard to ignore the popular-commercial demand of the art market in the last few years, to large sized canvases overflowed with fat black contours. The small colorful works on paper serve almost as warning flags, or alternatively some of them, as ironic references to extremely large subjects in other places. The choice of paper, its small dimensions and the acid color of the works called Pits, refer to toxicity and pinpoint the dual existence of painting with its overloaded culture, its loss and its options for revival or extinction, entwined with each other in this exhibition. A status quo which turns between quick choices, this way or that way (image/abstract, light/dark, eliminating the artist's handwriting/emphasizing it, among others) done in each of the works, is also a constant dialectic state, which is needed for the coexistence of stoppage and continuity, view and happening, passivity and action. All these are immanent components, essential to Bachi's work. Specifying, dismantling these aspects and the attempt to name some of them is not meant to simplify the course of the painting but to pay attention to its numerous components.

Vered Zafran Gani

From Hebrew: Gitai Ashuach