

The Alchemist

Anat Propper Goldenberg views the work of an artist as alchemy, and accordingly, she combines and mixes disciplines and materials without limitation or concern. "I'm a multidisciplinary artist in the full sense of the word," she says, thus explaining the amalgamation between painting and performance art, video and installation, embroidery and laborious handmade craft, concept and execution. She weaves together the mundane with the artistic, the biographical with the cultural, gems of knowledges and vigorous learning with intuition and a sense of the primal.

In an event entitled "Song of the Waiting Women", presented in her studio at Panorama House in Tel Aviv, she laces together a story whose beginning has emerged from her artist in residence in Athens the previous year, and continues in the present moment reality, through her performance art before an audience at the studio. Both coastal cities serve as a timeline for a personal journey between geographical points of reference, which simultaneously bear a symbolical quintessence – each city is a living organism, an entity embracing infinite life stories, embodying a scheme of cultural and local style, history and pertinence.

For Propper Goldenberg, the city is an anchor and a home, a point of departure and return, or a vista point from which to observe with anticipation, longing and eager waiting. The title of the event, "Song of the Waiting Women", is borrowed from the "Song of the Sailor's Beloved" (Yair Lapid), which succeeds in capturing the essence of female anticipation in its universality. "The aspect of waiting for women recurs over and over in the cycles of life - the monthly menstrual cycle, pregnancy. Waiting is usually perceived as a

passive act, but in reality, any waiting period involves activity and manifestation, ripening and growth,” she clarifies.

The video installation features a series of copper etching she created in Athens, round discs that reflect the monthly phases of the moon. “In many cultures, the moon represents a female element, fertility, and among seamen (the object of anticipation in the song) it is especially meaningful – as the force in charge of the ebb and flow of the sea.”

The décor Propper Goldenberg lends to the studio is reminiscent of a typical Tel Aviv immigrant apartment of the 1950’s and 60’s, inspired by her late grandmother, a Holocaust survivor. Anat spent her childhood close to her grandmother, experiencing her grandmother’s memoirs as tales of heroism and survival with much awe and strong identification. The grandmother’s home as the place of primordial memory comes to life as the backdrop for the performance art and the artwork interwoven in it. The homeliness emerging from the treated walls, the TV screens and the illuminated glass cupboards, is experienced as an anchor providing safety and a sense of belonging, while at the same time allowing one to embark on journeys to faraway destinations.

During the performance art, TEMPERED BREATH, Propper Goldenberg circles the space, turning two moon discs that rub against each other. Her figure - dressed in a black dress with an etched and embroidered copper apron, another art product from her artist in residence in Athens - conjures up an image straight out of Greek Theater, a kind of Penelope awaiting Odysseus’s return.

Upon entering the studio space, viewers themselves become part of the artwork. They fill the space, moving around in it, between the

different parts of the installation, in a natural flow. They walk around or follow Anat with their gaze as she performs, so that her meditative movement becomes a rustle that moves the viewers like a breeze.

The fact that it is a one-time performance adds to the sense of urgency and alert anticipation. "I am interested in the passing event – the single occurrence in it, the sense of waiting and the frustration of missing out." Those who see the exhibit without the performance will be able to understand the context and feel that lack, the absence of a body moving in the center will leave an imprint.

Hagit Peleg Rotem

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