

## ECMNESIA

Ecmnesia: from the Greek εκ (out/from) *mnēmē* (memory) -*ía* (suffix denoting a condition or quality). A psychic state characterized by the loss of memory of recent life, and the feeling of reliving a period from past life. The memory of the past is so vivid that it feels like the present.

The artists of the exhibition *Ecmnesia* deal with the past through personal and collective lens. Memory is a constant in their search for identity within a social reality in which they each struggle to be defined and contained, where everything is overturned: being rooted corresponds to movement, belonging is equivalent to disassociating, and the self is contingent on the other.

Untamed nature serves as a backdrop to the controlled and meticulous pencil work of Samah Shihadi. Her pencil drawings offer the illusion of a photo, instant and real, but the details produced and technique required reveal a time-consuming process. It is a technique bordering intuition and calculated movements, extending her experimentation with hyper-realism and representation of motion. Unfolding through the layers of pencil work are clear memories of daily family scenes from the village of Sh'ab where she grew up. The blurring of subjects disrupts the well-defined memory of the artist's familiar landscape, imbuing the images with a sense of transience, mirroring the complex geo-political and social realities that make up her identity and the biographical and collective memories linked to the land.

Oscillating between the strength femininity represents to the artist, and societal expectations and portrayal of women, Mai Daas's work encapsulates deep-seated tensions which she contends with daily. "Realization," the triptych of a proud woman wearing a niqab (face-covering garment used by Muslim women) and cloaked with a traditional heavy persian rug transmits a combination of confidence and insecurity. Features and expressions are absent, and while the standing woman faces us directly, determinately meeting our gaze, the girls sitting at the lower end of the carpet are covered by their hair. The element of the carpet appears also in the background of "Untitled," a painting of two women, one older and one younger, connected by their braided hair. Both wearing traditionally embroidered dresses and an expression of calmness, the generational figurative and literal connection is pervading. The bond is both restrictive and inevitable, a rootedness which is impossible to untie. The realism of the ordinary, the details of the fabric and strands of hair, are used in order to conjure the remarkable and the unusual.

Tigist Yoseph Ron's series "At Home" envelopes us in the artist's familiar environment. Everyday scenes come across light and motion, produced by the elemental combination of black and white. Some of her subjects look straight at us, penetrating looks aware of being observed, while some are engulfed in their activity. How often do we stop to observe the ordinary? How do ephemeral moments become fixed memories? Plagued by the fleetingness of time, Yoseph Ron transcends the present moment through technique. She uses erasure as a means to create, deletes in order to produce. The images themselves are based on old and new family photos which she combines, making it impossible to determine what the original memory looked like. She overcomes generational and

spatial distances, creating a completely new plane of existence where her mother and her children exist with her grandparents and where memories from the Atlit Immigration Absorption Center in northern Israel, where she stayed upon arriving to the country, are mixed with afternoons in her family home of Ra'anana. Thanks to erasure and re-drawing, the faraway memories are rendered as if they are about to dissipate.

Dor Guez's works raise similar questions: How is memory forged and how is narrative constructed? How does this shift over time and is ascribed different meanings across different socio-cultural and political realities? In the video "Sabir" the sun sets over the Mediterranean sea as Samira, Guez's grandmother, recalls her family history and the exodus of the Muslim and Christian population from the port city of Jaffa in 1948. Her soft voice moves effortlessly between Hebrew and Arabic. We do not see Samira, but locals who ride the waves on their surfboards, walk along the beach with their dogs, jog on the wet sand – a stark contrast to the unfolding narrative revealing childhood memories of family life and the consequences of war and displacement of her family and community. The sun reaches the horizon just as Samira reminds us how the passing of time affects recollection and imagination. Her home is history, present only in memory and dream, an intricate cobweb which cannot be disentangled.

Accompanying Guez's video are two luminous prints based on his archival finding of a pressed-flowers album from the American Colony in Jerusalem dated 1900-1914. The Christian utopian society founded in Jerusalem by Americans and later joined by Swedes preserved dried plants and petals in order to sell them as souvenirs to pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Guez's prints are based on his photos of the flowers and the pigments left on the protective sheets of the album, a reconstruction and representation calling attention to the inconsistencies of the historical (mis)representation derived from the souvenir, and the relevance of the religious and socio-political meaning ascribed to objects. While presented as scientifically methodical and historical proofs, intended to represent the natural elements of the land as constructed in religious narrative and orientalist views, the flower album presents errors not only in their classification but also their origin. The complex relation between the supernatural and natural as well as history and memory, is encapsulated in the act of reconstruction and the resulting contemporary object proposed by Guez, which resembles cyanotype and serves as a memento of our time.

Drawing upon their biographical background in an environment where personal and collective memories intertwine, competing and interdependent, the definition of self and present is inevitably attached to the past. Works by Daas, Guez, Yoseph Ron and Shihadi offer alternatives to the competitive arena of recollection and contested truth, a history of the present moment.

Livia Tagliacozzo

*Ecmnesia*, curated by Barak Rubin and Livia Tagliacozzo (IDRIS) and Micol Di Veroli

### **Mai Daas**

Born in Tira in 1991. She has participated in numerous group shows including at Rosenfeld Gallery in Tel Aviv, at the Haifa Museum of Art, C1 in Berlin and Hybrid Art Fair in Madrid. In 2021 she held a solo exhibition at the Umm el-Fahm Art Gallery.

### **Dor Guez**

Born in Jerusalem from a Christian-Palestinian mother and a Jewish-Tunisian father, he lives in Jaffa. He received his PhD from Tel Aviv University in 2014, earned his professorship from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in 2018. Guez held over forty-five solo exhibitions worldwide, most recently at the Museum of Modern Art in Bogota, Dvir Gallery in Tel Aviv, Goodman Gallery in Cape Town and the Hamptons, New York, Gebauer Gallery in Berlin, Futura Gallery in Prague and the American Colony Archives in Jerusalem. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions, most recently at the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv, the Jewish Museum in New York, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke, Virginia.

### **Tigist Yoseph Ron**

Born in Gondar, Ethiopia in 1977, she immigrated to Israel in 1984. She lives and works in Raanana, and is a graduate of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. Yoseph Ron has participated in exhibitions in Addis Ababa, at the Jaffa Museum, Petah Tikva Museum and more. In 2019 she received the Haim Schiff Award for figurative-realist art awarded by the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, where she held a solo exhibition.

### **Samah Shihadi**

Born in Sha`b in 1987, Shihadi is a Haifa-based artist. She is a graduate of the Oranim College where she obtained a BA in 2012, and the Haifa University where she completed an MFA in 2015. Shihadi has received numerous prizes, including the Haim Schiff Award for figurative-realist art, awarded annually by the Tel Aviv Museum of Art in 2018. Shihadi has exhibited consistently in the Middle East and Europe, holding solo exhibitions in venues such as the Wilfrid Israel Museum, Tabari Artspace in Dubai, and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions, most recently at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the Jordan National Gallery in Amman, Kunstmuseum Bochum in Bochum, Mémoire de L'avenir gallery in Paris, and the Yasser Arafat Museum in Ramallah.

**IDRIS** is a curatorial initiative run by Barak Rubin and Livia Tagliacozzo established in 2017. Idris presents the work of emerging and established artists with diverse political, geographical, religious and social backgrounds, inviting collaboration and dialogue. Idris exhibitions have been showcased in numerous venues including the Ramat Gan Museum of Israeli Art, the Jaffa Museum of Antiquities, Al Markaz Contemporary Art Gallery in East Jerusalem, The Lobby Art Space in Tel Aviv and Umm el-Fahm Art Gallery, as well as art fairs in Europe. Idris has collaborated with the Center for Contemporary Arts (CCA Tel Aviv), Atar Project and with the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, among others.

**COSMO** is a creative space born in the heart of Trastevere and managed by Zaelia Bishop. A place to meet and exchange new ideas, in which to experiment further forms of research and conceived as a crossroads of languages.