

Liebe Mitglieder und Freunde der German Friends of the Israel Museum,

DOR GUEZ heißt der junge Künstler den wir Ihnen heute im Rahmen unserer Reihe

"YOUNG ARTISTS IN ISRAEL: Looking through the Social Prism" vorstellen möchten.



(© Israel Museum Jerusalem)

The art of Dor Guez (b. 1980) exposes exceptional human stories, which do not follow the well-accepted historical narratives, or rather – they lie within the cracks of those narratives. Guez’s biography itself is such a story. Guez was born to a Jewish father, a holocaust survivor, who immigrated to Israel from Tunisia, and to a Palestinian mother, belonging to the Christian- Orthodox minority. This unlikely ancestral background, a combination of unique historical situations (Holocaust survivor, yet from North Africa and not from Europe, Palestinian, yet from the Christian minority) places Guez as a national hybrid, whose art is a lantern highlighting forgotten historical corners. From these corners, the mainstream historical narratives are seen differently. In the series Scanograms, Guez took old family photos, which were accidentally found, and scanned them, several times each. The work Samira, based on a photo of Guez’s grandmother on her wedding day, is in the Israel museum’s collection. The advanced scanning technique gives an exact sensation of the original photo, and Guez manipulated the result to emphasize the tears and the photo’s poor condition. The damages appear as a white stain, which partly covers the face of the woman, like the veil she was wearing that day, but it is heavier, threatening to erase her. The caption beneath the photo is in Arabic. For the average Jewish Israeli, as for all non-Arabic speakers, it remains mute. In Arabic it says – “Samira, Lod Ghetto, a year after 1948”. The Christian-Arab residents of Lod were living, in the area called ‘Lod Ghetto’, in the period after the 1948 war. The emphasis on the year of the war, instead of just writing 1949, centralizes the post-war atmosphere, rendered as well from the expression on the bride’s face. The word ‘Ghetto’ usually has different connotations in the Israeli culture, and therefore has a provoking force in this context.

Another example is a studio photograph, in which a young man is seen dressed as a cowboy, 'riding' a painted horse, 'shooting' a painted tiger, in front of a painted background. The Arabic caption says: "studio Photo of Jacob, Samira's future husband, Tel Aviv, 1942". The scene exposes the local phantasies of manhood, and of faraway lands (with cowboys and tigers...), and can invoke derisive smiles, since the time that has passed, changed people's tastes, and their visions of phantasy. With the scanograms, the audience is invited see the photos out of their original context, and every detail is more noticeable. The captions call our attention to what we know of history - of what had happened since those photos were taken, and it is met with the personal worldview of the spectator. In the picture of Samira as the bride, the viewer might feel positive feelings towards 1948, the year Israel was established, but at the same time he is confronted with the same year as representing trauma. 1942, the year when Jacob was pictured, was in midst of the Second World War, but it was still possible to imagine oneself as a hero, in a different scenery.

Guez acts as an archiver and an exposé of visual material that has existed before, and his art is, as well, an act of contextualization. By placing the old photographs in their new scanned form with the caption in an art exhibition, Guez historicizes the private stories and gives them a historical context. His art becomes powerful when the viewers themselves create the meaning, by bridging what they see, with the history they know.

(Text: Noa Milikowsky-Marienburg)

<https://www.dorguez.com>