

# THE FACE / Orly Maiberg

ARTIST, 53, LIVES IN TEL AVIV WITH HER PARTNER ASSAF AMIR

AND TWO OF THEIR THREE CHILDREN

I am in the studio all day, alone with music. Today I listened to Schubert. Two years ago, I did an exhibition in which I painted the singers I like – Patti Smith, Marianne Faithfull, Jeff Buckley, David Bowie and others – as though they were friends of mine who had come to model for me in the studio.

Since returning from New York I have swum every day, and in the past few years I have crossed Lake Kinneret regularly. That was the genesis of my latest exhibition, "Sea of Galilee." I spend about a 10th of my life underwater. On land I am a control freak, but in the water I have an illusion of lightness, so I allow myself to let go. But even there I conduct a lot of arguments with myself.

I was a student in New York in the 1980s, which was a turbulent period. I worked in Andy Warhol's studio. Fortunately, I am blessed with broad shoulders, so I could lift a massive squeegee and lug paint with it, hanging in a huge net. Even after two years of hard work I was ashamed to ask Andy to sign a Grace Kelly print that was on its way to the garbage can, with other flawed works. It's not worth a dollar but is still hanging in my living room.

A successful work of art can change one's way of looking at routine events, because it introduces the artist's distinctive gaze. For example, the video work by Douglas Gordon about [Zinedine] Zidane, which puts you in the place of the player for an hour and a half of soccer, without sound, in front of thousands of fans. His view of Zidane's isolation in the face of the team and a roaring crowd that is silenced accompanies me when I watch games.

Both my parents died of cancer. My father died when I was 21. There was something that was stable in my life and then suddenly disappeared. I am not waiting for the disease to strike me, too, but sometimes I am assaulted by bad thoughts. I am always tense, never relaxed. In Pinter's "Ashes to Ashes" the female character says she always hears the sound of a siren. I identify with that.

I don't know if I am a painter because I am not much of a talker, or whether years of painting have made me taciturn. When my father drove me to places, he would tap me on the knee to try to get me to talk. When I try to get my son to talk in the car, he turns up Jack White on the stereo. We smile in understanding that talking is not obligatory.

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