Naomi Leshem. Landmarks

19 Jun–25 Jul 2014 at Noga Gallery, Tel-Aviv

Naomi Leshem,Itay, Archival Pigment Print, 92x92 cm, 2013

Noga Gallery is delighted to present a solo exhibition of the artist Naomi Leshem.

The exhibition Landmarks consists of a series of new works from 2012/13 alongside earlier photographic series.

Centered 2012/13

Centered comprises 10 photographs, each of a solitary figure – five male, five female--placed in a challenging physical or psychological situation by Leshem. Each was thus forced to confront and cope with the difficult position by finding a sense of order and balance; they each find a way to be centered. While Leshem photographs the figures in stasis, this deceptive calmness is reached only after much struggle.

These “struggle to surrender” scenarios address and shed light on multiple issues, namely the questions of gender stereotypes, of the role of the individual in a larger societal context, and of the relevance of a physical place to one’s identity.

Naomi Leshem subsequently traveled around the world, asking strangers for their impressions of the photographs; these foreigners then wrote their responses in their native languages, by hand. Both the sense of calm and the questions brought up by the ten photographs in the series are further reinforced by the abstracted texts and the mystery of what they may mean. Leshem created a project that is at once international and local, providing a global context that has become increasingly important and inescapable in an ever-changing and complex world. Naomi Leshem's pairing of the photographs with personal and international responses establishes that contemporary art is often the best conduit to make sense of these changes.

Trust Me 2012

The glossy surface of Leshem's photographic sculptures is reminiscent of porcelain and appears to be both fragile and precious. The photos, folded and fixed using a clear varnish, establish new connections within the images' content, telling a story of their own through fragments of their subjects that can be made out and identified.

Way To Beyond 2003/06

Leshem narrates a story of disappearance in seemingly serene and quiet locations, places of vanishing; such as, a remnant of an airplane in the depth of the Sea of Galilee, traces of an airplane that crashed and remained in the sand of a crate in the desert, a motorbike accident in a highway leading to the south of the country, a policeman stabbed to death found in a back side of an apartment building, or a drown man who was found in a swimming pool.

Photographing these landscapes not only describes the moment of its capturing, but also the moment of the death of a human being in the landscape. Therefore, the location was not shot as a landscape but as an observation of what accrued within the landscape.

Runways 2007

The series Runways is photographed in a symmetric composition with accurate alignment controlled by linear perspective creating harmony within these photographs. The landscape is burned and dry and the sensation of blazing heat rises from the scorched asphalt in the far horizon. The stillness in which the runways are found creates a high tension reality, this is the moment where we encounter the absence in the afternoon shining sun there is no movement on the burning runways, a place of threatening danger. Alongside the runways Leshem staged young women giving life signal in the still and barren landscape suggesting an axis-mundi, the idea that a pole is an axle of the world linking earth and heaven and symbolizes the dialog and mediation axle between the known and unknown.

Forty 2013

The desert is an image that Leshem is constantly exploring, drawing a parallel between the desert space, an organic, infinite and abandoned, fluid space and the hard to define orders, a pre-rational space of spirit and contemplating territories which are not bound to civilized logic and a part of its rules. Nonetheless, Leshem covers the desert landscape with urban measures, and thus turns the image into an arena of confrontation between the rational and

irrational. In the imagery of the desert, which is often conceived as monotonous, Leshem leads the gaze into the depth of the frame: a red stain of vegetation, land that rises up to sort of a barrow that creates rhythmus with the hills and wall sands next to it – the desert landscape being discovered not only as primordial and ancient, but also as a spectacle of delicate balances, hushed almost lyrical landscape.

In all of the works there is a representation of Leshem's observation of the landscape. Some of the works appear strictly as landscapes, however, there will always be another element – immersed gazes into death (in Way to Beyond death landscapes are being depicted; Runways carries a violent and deadly potential in staging the young women in these sites), representations of narratives, contemplations, and associations.

There is a tension between the local and the universal in Leshem's works. The debate is not the political or social aspects of Israel; instead the basis of the scenery through the Israeli landscape is one of the substances which effects Leshem's practice.

The work reflects the general and does not remain in the personal state of the artist although it has biographic and autobiographic derivatives. Concurrently, the subjects of Leshem's work, such as death, adolescence, transitions between different phases are universal even though they are staged in local districts. The concept of time the decisive photographic moment is prominent in her works turns in her works to defuse and captures different times within one image.

Naomi Leshem, born 1963, graduate of Hadassah College, winner The Constantiner Award for an Israeli Photographer, The Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel, exhibited in solo and group shows in Israel, Europe and the U.S.

In 2014 Leshem had two solo exhibitions at the Andrea Meislin gallery in New York where she exhibited works from the series Centered and at the Jerusalem Artists House where she exhibited Forty. Leshem is currently participating in the group show Journeys at the Israel Museum. In July 2014 Leshem will participate in a group exhibition at the Rietberg Museum in Zurich.

Her works are in the collection of the Israel Museum Jerusalem, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the Norton Museum of Art (Florida U.S), the Shpilman Institute of Photography Tel Aviv, and private collections in Israel and abroad.

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Opening hours

Monday - Thursday from 11am to 6pm
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2. Naomi Leshem, Untitled#1 Archival Pigment Print, 120 x 120 cm, 2004
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4. Naomi Leshem, Ravit Archival Pigment Print, 92 x 92 cm, 2013
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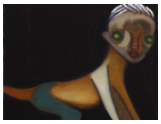

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