

Uzi Tzur | Shutting One Eye

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When capturing the profound encounter I experienced at Uri and Rami Nehoshtan Museum into one picture; it is the untenable Peacocks' beauty and their screams echoing the mines of memory lane. Each young artist, with his tools and within his private and consolidated world, has burrowed these mines within the place's memory or their private ones. At the same time, the curator, Smadar Keren, has deciphered and connected the two worlds into two exhibitions.

[...]

Netai Halup has turned the museum space into an archaeological site comprised of contemporary relics, in which David Haki's peacocks' screams echo an empty prophecy of destruction. At first glance, with its calculated, complex and musical beauty, the sculptural installation seems to be an aesthetic, abstract, site-specific, formal etude. Nevertheless, slowly and ever so gently, the installation reveals signs of life from within, and it appears that Halup has evoked a sensation where the soul of a different, otherworldly lost place is overlapped, interfaced, and inhibited in this tangible space, as a consciousness created by memory. The installation's positioning on the main gallery floor is masterful. Halup positions the other floor's horizontal and vertical stratum as a perfect formula applicable from every angle, even when surrounding and passing through all its parts. It is modular by its nature, but simultaneously, it seems as if each and every part is in its right place in the jigsaw puzzle.

Before us is the end of a journey that started with Halup's stay in his grandmother's house in Beit She'an, days before its demolition, the house his mother grew up in and which had a significant part of his life. Halup's regeneration of the house's components renders the living room floor into a walkthrough guide to their mapping. Halup has cast the memory-saturated floor tiles into concrete planks mixed with pigment. He placed all the planks upon brittle platforms made of sugar, tea and milk, the hospitality materials of his family life. He cast the doorframes, windows and doors, the bedclothes, window blinds and cabinets using concrete moulds. The curator described them as "Death Masks", "a heart wish to capture with matter that which has been lost in spirit". Among all these, we can notice the remnants of the video cassettes from the Iraqi musical nights in the living room (Charlie Bagdad), phantoms of bygone lives.

Halup is a master in the art of concrete; in his hands, loss of control becomes an organic element of the outcome, as the creation's own destruction constitutes its very essence. In Halup's sculptures, memory is embedded within matter itself, as along with the pigments, he frequently dilutes the concrete with organic testimonies — pomegranate juice, sugar, lemonade, salt — the DNA of the Mizrahi family, whose roots are in Iraq.

In the museum's interior space, Halup has seemingly broadened his discourse on every place subjected to a continuous threat by humanity's deeds. The duality of the exhibition conveys part of the sculptures as building blocks, already enclosing future destruction.

In the narrow, prolonged space, Halup assembled an inanimate engine that stands in exceptional correlation of proportions and adjustments of bodies that their impeccability seems to be eaten away from the inside. By way of destruction, they seem to return to their primal base condition, a motor of the artistic mechanism at its finest. At the end of the space, a fragile “death mask” of a window blind is leaning against the wall, emulating the words “The End” in the closing credits of a film.