

Brotherhood, Sisterhood

Ron Amir – “Invisible Presence”, Curator Vered Gani, Artists Studio Tel Aviv

Aliens, legal aliens and illegal aliens– the words of our language are becoming stained on a regular basis. **Ron Amir** begins with humane, social, anthropological foundations and reaches the high tops of exhilarating photographs that uplift the subject with proximity and dignity, and covered in thinly-sensed web of sensuality and eroticism of manly brotherhood, which has been deprived of a feminine ingredient. As nomads of the 21st century, who leave their families and girlfriends in order to find occasional jobs, the subjects of the photographs live in the periphery of society, as they build the mighty accommodations of Pithom and Ramses. Amir lived with the Arab construction workers in Israeli construction sites and created an breached intimacy with them. His photography is not condescending nor does he capture them as an observer and nothing more, but instead his art is created on the same level that they inhabit. The photographs, their beauty and their strength come from the whole picture as well as the sum of its elements, from the tension between the realism and the light touch, the barely tangible intervention of dramatic cinema; the photographs' composition, the additional, artificial illumination. He touches them like Adi Ness only without Ness's cinematic production which creates a type of mega-reality. The photographs depict the tension between the private man and the prototype photography, as a representation of the saint pictures in the tradition of western paintings. There is also a tension between the will to create a certain feel of “home” in a place, which contrasts the alienation of temporary concrete spaces – which create their own aesthetics and language.

Amir names the picture by naming their subjects, this pulling them out of their anonymity. “Habib, Ali and Alla” is a tri-picture of young men lying in complete tranquility on the flower-pattern of their comforters and fleece blankets. The view seen through the window is nearly “Swiss”. The young men look at the photographer (and beyond him, at us) in leisure, almost as if pining. The additional light that illuminates them, which is nearly swallowed by the natural light, disconnects them and diverts them beyond this reality's time and place. “Ruwar, Amin, Mahmad, Fuaz and Omar” are nesting in the high and mighty balcony of some futuristic penthouse (will the ones who live in this penthouse ever think about the anonymous construction workers who inhabited their home before them?). The artificial lighting illuminates them and the angles of the bare concrete in the still-constructed building. Outside, feathery clouds lazily cross the fantastic blue sky. A countryside view picture is seen through the skeletons of window-frames, and three of the men inhabit the room: one sits on the improvised brick-made bed, the second sits on the edge of the bed, looking out and smoking, while the third bends over the open window, curiously looking down – a picture standing on the fine line between natural and stages, with no way of telling which it is.

The night comes down over the rough window square, and “Nasha'at” is in short blue pants that cover his slim body, a cigarette hangs from the corner of his lips, while he sits on a bare mattress with tin cans and plastic juice bottles at his feet. “Ramadaan and Alla” are each cuddled under his flowery blankets, lying on the improvised beds lined up against the naked concrete walls, their only cover provided by pictures of women from various journals as well as some naïve paintings from Africa, probably left

behind by African workers. “Mahmad” stands seemingly nonchalant but the fire in his eyes, his palms are still covered in dried cement dust and behind him – all across the frame – is a fleece blanket with a giant floral pattern, as if this was a royal palanquin and he was a hero-prince from “1001 Arabian Nights”. “Habib” stands in front of the sun, its rays surround him as if in an epiphany, looking down at the photographer and us – his young imagination still a-dreaming. In some of the photographs, Amir chooses to focus on the objects themselves: the flowery blankets; an improvised electric spoon made of electric wires connected to a metal board and nailed to a piece of wood; a heart-shaped ashtray, carved from an Ytung block or aerated concrete; a broken and distorted radio antenna, bent to the shape of a heart – hearts that create the yearning for that which is missing.

This is the last exhibition in the Artist’s Studio’s current location and space – at the end of the carpenters’ ally, one of the best local spaces for an art exhibition. We should hope that the new space of the Studio’s exhibitions in Kalisher St. will be operating soon, since this un-commercial, mid-space fills an important role in the presentation spectrum between Galleries and Museums.