

Ron Amir, Invisible Presence

The deep humane interest in warmth, softness, love and beauty is gently threaded through the photographs included in **Ron Amir's** exhibition, which is currently being presented in both internal spaces of the gallery on the ground floor. The tendency to limit oneself to a corner in such concrete-exposed internal spaces, to pad them and decorate them, to turn them from exposed building skeletons into the habitats and hosting environments of their constructors – this finds an immediate common ground with any design or artistic feature. The improvisation and technical capabilities allow these invisible people to exist as shadows in places that need them as a working force on one hand but on the other hand their existence is remitted. This ungrateful situation of denial is confronted with their magnificent ability to domesticate these skeletal places into temporary environments of sheer, improvised beauty, often while presenting a risk to the safety of the user, who is already used to putting himself in daily, existentially dangerous positions. A part of this danger might also be in the photography process: the exposure of this hidden world that seems as if even the people who will live in such buildings once their construction is complete will never be aware of its existence.

Yet, it is clear that the relationships of trust constructed between **Amir** and the workers are based on humane interest, which is apparent in anything they do or touch. All the photographs were taken in the setting of a single building and over a span of eighteen months – the duration of its construction. During this period, the building functioned as a 'closed set' which the workers almost never left. The title of this exhibition, 'Invisible Presence', refers to the term in several ways: the illegal presence of these construction workers in the Israeli territories; the photography project's duration; **Ron Amir's** presence with his exhibited subjects, which allowed such a generous attitude of acceptance and familiarity; and even our own presence in the Gallery, surrounded by their pictures. The photographs remind us of our own blindness towards the existence of the people that the politics of our language tries to diminish into nothingness, by using "laundered" words and initials. Looking at the photographs is actually the contradictory action which inserts again and again into every building under construction the important presence of its construction workers, who are deprived of the basic opportunity to be proud of what they built with their bare hands.

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