

"מראות כפולי אפיק"

מיכאל קובנר במשכן לאמנות, עין חרוד

מיכאל קובנר מציף ביצירה רב-תחומית, עכשווית וסוחפת, מערכות יחסים משפחתיות ודילמות של הכרעה גורלית, לחיים ולמוות, להן לא תימצא תשובה ולא נחמה. הוא משיר מבט לדילמות עכשוויות, מוסריות ופוליטיות, ברקע נופי הגטו, יערות וילנה וברקע נופים פסטורליים של קיבוץ.

אוצרת: גליה בר אור

בתערוכה ובספר הנלווה, "יחזקאל", יוצא מיכאל קובנר למסע מורכב, אישי וקולקטיבי, המערב מציאות ופנטזיה, בסיפור ביוגרפי-פיקטיבי שבמרכזו ניצבת דמות בשם יחזקאל, שדיוקנה זהה לדיוקן אביו, אבא קובנר. במבנה של תערוכת הצבה המשלבת ציור קומיקס, סאונד, וידאו וטקסט, הוא יוצר מחזה תמונתי עשיר ומורכב, המדובב דיאלוג בין-דורי: שיחה עם אביו, שהיה לוחם בגטו, מנהיג, פרטיזן וניצול שואה, משורר וחבר קיבוץ, שיחה שלא התקיימה מעולם.



Ezekiel

Michael Kovner at Mishkan Museum of Art, Ein Harod

Twenty years have passed since Michael Kovner's father, Abba Kovner, died as he neared the age of seventy. It was then that Michael decided to create something he had never created before: a work that tells a personal story in pictures and words—the kind of work, however, that a painter produces: a painting, not comics. He did not imagine the metamorphosis of media genres that his creation would undergo and undergo again: from a book (2014) to a play (2015), a painting of a play (2015), a film (2016), and a comprehensive exhibition at Mishkan Museum of Art, Ein Harod, (2020), in conjunction with an exhibit at Bochum Art Museum, Germany (2019).

This mingling and integration of media is exceptional in Kovner's work, for his figurative painting usually focuses on landscapes. But it is precisely there, in the transitions between different kinds of media, that a different kind of present, the present-absentee, comes into view. It flickers in the threshold zones among theatre, painting, and photography, between the worlds of the outer and the inner, between reality and fiction.

For example, Michael Kovner used a "storyboard," a device adopted from the world of cinema, of course. By creating his storyboard, he was better able to channel the chaos of starting a personal journey into the flow of a story. He created the scenes for his storyboard via staged scenes with live "actors" in the studio, scene after scene. This method recalls an art form that links theatre and painting—a "living picture"—tableau vivant—that is, in its way, somewhat analogous to a snapshot of memory. The French concept of the tableau, the picture, also embraces the connotation of constructedness. Internalized within it is an act concurrently intellectual and emotional, one in which spatial

proportions are constructed in paint—in diametric opposition to the comics medium. Thus, Kovner's storyboard preserves pictorial memory even when the scenes are reworked via Photoshop. The present-absentee exists in a derivative of a derivative, in effect nowhere really at home.

Additional materials and media feature in Ezekiel: linoleum prints, archive photos and texts, memories of photography and cinema, and work with Lego. The grandfather gives his grandson an exposition on the main dilemmas in his life by building a ghetto of Lego pieces while constructing the sequence of his story. The threshold zone between reality and imagination that exists in the game accommodates a covert buffer that masks the presence of the thing itself and the yawning chasm. Essentially, however, the dialogue in Kovner's oeuvre takes place between the son and the father-figure and between artists: the painter-son and the poet-father. The hybrid intergenerational dialogue unfolds, inter alia, through Doppelgänger. The Ezekiel portrait mates the portrait of the artist-father with that of the artist himself, and the portrait of Amos (Ezekiel's son) matches that of the artist's son with the portrait of the artist. These dual identities meander between the worlds of history and delusion, spilling into the world of the psyche, into a phantasmagoria that challenges a collective narrative.

In the Ezekiel exhibit, the artist's personal journey is woven into a fictitious-biography spectacle. As he worked on Ezekiel, Kovner seems to have undertaken a belated working-through of grief by exposing dilemmas with which his father coped, foremost during the Holocaust: the commander who surrendered to the Germans with his comrades' consent, and joining the partisans for combat after the uprising failed and in view of the Germans' intention of

liquidating the ghetto. Even though many parents of fighters, including his mother, wished to join, Kovner's decision as the commander was to focus on extricating armed fighters. Thus, he informed his mother that he had no solution to offer her; the onerous burden troubled him all his life.

An additional dilemma expands the time frame to the present: the son unburdens himself to his father as he recounts the abuse of a Palestinian. He speaks of abandoning the country, causing his father to erupt. By so doing, he shows that the past is not a frozen memory in a commemorative photo. Present is poured into past via the act of remembering, a collision in which the contrasting tableaux of "there" and the trauma of the here-and-now come to light.

Curator: Galia Bar Or

