

Man's Long Tail

Solo Exhibition - Irit Barel Bassan

Irit Barel Bassan explores the concept of beauty. Her works display images of the body and body parts and limbs in ways that express beauty, absurdity, ugliness, danger, completion and immortality. She asks, whether beauty is merely an empty wrapping, and ordinary decoration, a thin peel, or has the ability to suggest essence so as to create reality?

The ability to distinguish between the appearance of something and the thing itself is a relatively recent human phenomenon. Plato combined the idea of beauty with values of good will, importance and truth while using them interchangeably in many of his writings. In his composition "The Feast" Plato says, "love of beauty, like love of goodness, needs no explanation" and he goes on to explain that love is a sense of yearning for the perfect, everlasting ultimate source of beauty which was never established and will never cease to exist, never grow nor dwindle, never compare to anyone or anything but only reign as itself for itself. Socrates describes to Phaedrus what happens to someone who encounters the supreme beauty: the feathers of his soul begin to grow.

The constant aspiration of mankind to be found in an ideal situation of beauty, fitness and strength, is an uncontrollable urge. Some claim that attraction to beauty is based in evolutionary traces of biological functions. An animal with characteristics of beauty and symmetry is considered healthier and better able to survive as is the peacock with the long tail of heavily decorated feathers. Symmetry is seen as a symbol of genetic soundness and natural good health, and likewise central to the theme of abstract beauty particular to the human race.

As opposed to the divine and symmetric beauty described by classical philosophers. Barel-Bassan presents hybrid-surrealist objects and images consisting of odd limb mixtures: small legs growing as hair out of a human head, hair presented separately from the rest of the body, a pair of eyes peering out through the gaping mouth of a cat.

The hybrid concept originated in 19th century biology at the trend initially discussed blends and compounds, hooking one type up to another. The hybrid is an intermediate reality characterized by a provisional quality. It may be classified as subversive and even monstrous, since it entails in the dismantling of an understandable world and calls for a carnival view which is boundaries crossing.

The dance of the bodies and limbs in Barel-Bassan's show may remind of the "body without organs" first proposed by the playwright and poet Antonin Artaud who said from his wounded body and soul that "The body is the body. It stands alone with no need for any organs." In his search for freedom and relief from his ailments he recommends a new reconstituted anatomy, a distancing from automation, a reversed dance.

Deleuze and Guattari in their article "A Thousand Plateaus" show that all existing living beings retain open ended natural connections to the world so as to engage in giving to and receiving from all that encompasses it, and that actions, deeds and practices are forever to be changed rather than given in any recurring pattern and are not comprehended according to any rules. Perfection is an illusion, and hierarchical organizational structure is the basis for all suffering.

Visions of beauty hidden in lack , the beauty of a metaphoric body that is comfortable in its sporadic and partial being and with it lays its perfection,are proposed in Barel-Bassan's works. Complexity, variety, imperfection are bearing a chance to attain liberty, compassion , unique connection , an entirely new outlook.

Text by Adiya Porat

Yanai, Zvi, The Secret of Beauty, Galileo ¹

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A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deleuse, G., Guattari F. ,chapter 6 : ¹

“How do you make yourself a body without organs” Minneapolis :University of Minnesota Press, 1987

“A Thousand Plateaus” , Ibid ¹