

**We are happy to inform that**

**up to December, 13, 2009 at the Tallinn Art Hall (Vabaduse väljak 6, Tallinn, Estonia) is on display project by women artists from Israel**

**“Women Creating Changes”.**

Curators: **Reet Varblane** (Tallinn Art Hall), **Shula Keshet** (Israel, Achoti).

Artists: **Hannan Abu Hussein, Ester Almo, Anisa Ashkar, Aliza Auerbach, Lilah Bar-Ami, Dana Darvish, Shula Keshet, Dana Levy, Buthaina Milhelm, Shuli Nachshom, Vered Nissim, Ricki Puch, Lianna Silberman, Daphna Shalom, Masha Zusman, Manar Zuabi.**

Israel as in 1948 started state which could be from one hand defined as a democratic society, created by the rules of the Western contemporary state, is, from the other hand, occupant for the Arabic people who lived in this territory for several centuries. “The Holy Land” concept is a theoretical justification which has nothing to do with the real situation. But in spite of that lots and lots of Jewish people move every year to Israel to find in their “holy homeland”, special spirituality (especially from Asia and Africa) but they find only nationality.

In Israel, women of different social groups experience various forms of discrimination and oppression. Palestinian women endure double oppression – as women in patriarch society and as members of an oppressed national group. Factors of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and class are also critical. The division of gender roles in the military is replicated on all levels of society. In the military, men occupy the leading positions, while women occupy administrative and marginal roles. In the general society a woman is expected to fulfill the supporting role as soldier’s mother or wife. Because the definition of the state of Israel as Jewish and democratic largely relies on demographic balances, women’s reproductive rights become an object for political interests and state policies. Reproduction among Jewish women is encouraged, while the reproduction among Palestinian women in Israel is viewed as a national threat.

But Israeli Jewish people are not only so called white Jewish people, with the European background ashkenazi people, there are lot of so called second rite Jewish people from Asia and Africa – mizrahi people, Ethiopian Jewish people who are inside the Israeli society the Others. The mizrahi women are the double Others.

And beside the Israeli and Palestinian women the number of foreign workers (among them women) is growing. Lot of these women are victims of the human trafficking.

But it is not right to study the women living in the Israel only as oppressed victims, there are lot of strong women, personalities who are ready to dedicate themselves to their community, to create changes in the society starting from the grass-root level.

The topic of women in the project “Women Creating Changes” is studied on two levels: public and private. The main keywords are self-identity, religion, sexuality, militarity, violence, human traffic/prostitution, mother’s and daughter’s relationship.

The exhibition begins with a video by Dana Levy “Dreamers” about the ordinary Israeli and Palestinian people’s, teenagers’, prisoners’ and poets’ dreams. In dialogue with the video is the Shula Keshet’s project “Women creating changes” – photo-based installation about the women from Israel, ashkenazi, mirzahi, Ethiopian, Congonese, Palestinian, Russian etc who have dedicated their life for the women of their own community that to change the society. And the third art-work which is visitors will see next is photo-series “Island” by Lilah Bar-Ami, inspired of her childhood kibboutzi, place for shaping out new Israeli nation, anonymous people. Or if to say differently: the exhibition is built up on hope, possibility and reality.

The main hall is for artworks which define identity, self-identity. Anisa Ashkar’s photo series is as a visual diary: her self-portraits with Arab text on her face as a tattoo, every day different sentence as message for life. Hannan Abu Hussein defines herself through her mother’s bed sheet as metaphor for a submissive Arab woman, wife for her husband. In the videowork she studies the meaning of Palestinian young woman in contemporary society. Buthaina Milhelm’s textile installation is a conceptualized traditional female handicraft, the lines of embroidery remind as subjective maps or female body. Masha Zusman speculates about immigrant women’s (she has Russian background) situation: her installation reminds closed tiny house which has been made in used crates and covered with ballpoint pen drawings with signs from the Soviet Union and Israel, especially Jerusalem. Ester Almo, young artist with an

Ethiopian background tries to destroy the stereotype of depicting young black woman: members of her family have been represented as heroines from art history.

Ricki Puch and Daphna Shalom translate the militarism in the Israeli society: the videos by Shalom ("Fearful Days", "Song of the Sea") explore the tragedy and discrimination through the metaphorical zone of human throat and tongue which produce an expressive voice. With meticulous integration of sound and image the videos include metaphorical spaces that absorb and digest contemporary conflicts. Ricki Puch's gentle, transparent plastic objects remind women handicraft ("low art") but actually they are replicas of guns, pistols, bomb-shells – the ordinary addition for the every day life but still horrifying. Lianna Silberman's photos about the blond hair prostitute is somehow symbol of the femininity (Marilyn Monroe and gentlemen prefer blond etc) and sexuality however the Israeli prostitute happen to be poor Chinese etc, Asian girls. Manar Zuabi has created site-specific installation using thousands of hairpins. As the viewer examines the maps in the first time, he/she could identify different shapes of human body, shapes that stresses the fact that the lines of the map has been merged from human history that was shaped from victims of human brutality.

Aliza Aurebach photo series is a poetical journey of being mother: from the giving birth up to the burying the child in the war conflicts, and regardless it still living further. Vered Nissim's self-portraits with her mother is glorification of daughter's mothers's relationship even in the situation of belonging to the lower social class.

Dana Darvish's anima film is somehow conclusion of Israeli society, "happy" melting pot which can burst out in the very next minute.

It is the first time when Israeli society has studied by such a wide range of women, not only opposing Jewish and Palestinian.

Text written by Reet Varblane