

Women's Section

"Inside every secular woman there is a Haredi woman, and in each Haredi woman - a secular one". With this statement Nomi Tannhauser opens her series of works at the Women's Section exhibition, which includes two series of works: One named Girls, Girls, Girls - painted and exhibited in the nineties, the other titled the Shawl Women - executed in 2018. These bodies of works, created within a gap of 25 years reflect the changes in the point of view of the artist towards the Jewish Ultra-Orthodox as strange and different. Nomi chose to focus on a theme that was then considered beyond physical and mental boundaries, behind a wall. No one saw Haredi people, let alone on the Israeli canvas, even as the popular theme of the "other". The first series was painted from photographs the artist took in Me'ah She'arim with the artist Pamela Levy. Tannhauser shares that she used the images of Haredi women to examine her own motherhood. The women are depicted as a collective that idealizes motherhood, and to whom the western model of feminine beauty is irrelevant. The title - Girls, Girls, Girls – emphasizes the criticism towards the phenomenon of the loss of the Individual. Another work in the series hides the women behind the decorative and visually striking Sukkah ornaments that are contradictory to the feminine ideal of modesty. In this context the Haredi painter Motta Brim testifies that "The women of Me'ah She'arim don't dress as they did in the first series because they lose themselves in aesthetics".

Respectively, in her new series - the 'Shawl Women', shown for the first time at Ha'Miklat gallery, Tannhauser gives expression to the sociological changes that take place in the Haredi and Israeli society. Here the visual language is sharpened while transmitting information about diffusions taking place in traditional societies as a result of modernity. This esoteric phenomenon of extreme modesty developed lately, especially in newly religious women. Tannhauser contends with the topic of coverings, decorations and clothing layers with virtuosity. The game of concealing and exposing is intensified when she paints the 'Shawl Women' in Pop Art style with striking but detached local color that contradicts the dark colors used of these women. The color deceives since its apparent purpose is to attract the eye, but because of the identical hue of figure and background, with the combination of decorativeness reminiscent of the partition in the traditional women's section in the synagogue or the shawl they have adopted, the color defines itself as camouflage, i.e. modesty.

Nomi's series tell the story of the social - Israeli narrative that assumed to put itself in the dichotomic position of the cold and rational 'side-observer' – an impossible position in the first place. In reality it moves between stereotype and attraction, longing and estrangement, empathy and criticism, all bound together.

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