



Shelly Reich
Vista (detail), Oil on canvas, 57 x 37.5, 2020



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PARTERRE

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Inner Space

Shahar Afek
Noam Dover &
Michal Cederbaum
Shelly Reich
Avi Nevo


STERN
-THAL

Inner Space

Roy Brand

Most of 2020 has passed with us being closed-in, isolated, and socially distant. In a world without outside, we have all, out of will or out of fear, moved inwards. The world epidemic has forced us 'to introvert' and opened a space for discreet introspection.

Inner Space grew out of the experience of these pandemic times: the turning inward, the 'hibernation', and the need of nurturing both a personal and a collective inner space. This is a quiet exhibition, pensive and intimate - with paintings by Shelly Reich, glass vessels by Noam Dover and Michal Cederbaum, and drawings, spices, and scented glass ampoules by Shahar Afek.

It's been a long time that I have been looking for the right expression for these times; not just an expression of criticism or discontent but also of a new beginning and a discovery. And where else can we search for anything new if not inside, within our soul, spirit, and through the imagination? These vehicles of exploration have been neglected in our contemporary culture, a culture which highlights everything external and extroverted: action, appearances, and frantic reactions.

No, the outside holds nothing new, it is over-used, abused, stretched too thin like a surface or a skin without a body. The inner space holds new promises and old mysteries, if we only allow ourselves the time and courage to stop and reflect. Following the lines of the works in this exhibition, which are all folding inwards, curving on themselves to create zones of recession and small turbulences, we discover the engines that can propel us forward, backward, upward and downward in a spiral.

It is remarkable that this intimate exhibition, which concentrates on emotion, spirit, and the coming into being of shades of consciousness, receives such a wonderful book to accompany it. This book is the result of our co-operation with Sternthal Books. I suppose these pages, wrapped in bare canvas like the paintings in the show, could be used as evidence for how it felt like to be living in our times--a kind of a time capsule of a worldwide historical moment, the beginning of a revolution or the beginning of an end.



Inner Space Exhibition
Parterre, Tel-Aviv, Photo by Tal Nisim



Avi Nevo
The Saint of Rishpon, polychrome pencils on cotton paper, 150 x 100cm.



Avi Nevo
Liron, Public art mural at Parterre, 2021



Avi Nevo
Liron (detail), Public art mural at Parterre, 2021



Shahar Afek
Zen, 2019, Ink, blood, Id sticker on paper, 30 x 20 cm.





On Shelly Reich
Roy Brand

These paintings were created by Shelly Reich at home during the coronavirus pandemic, and they reflect domestic life as well as her reveries and dreams. The world recedes to the background and is filtered through the bars of her balcony in Jaffa. The paintings are very intimate and direct. They have been created without any preparation or a drawing stand. The paints were sometimes mixed on the canvas itself, forming fluid shapes such as a flower, a vase, her partner, a pet. They feel like fragments of time, as if they were ripped from life and hung on a wall. They contain the movement of daylight or of consciousness when it is left with itself.

Shelly Reich
Happy Souvenirs, Oil on canvas, 41.5 x 31.5 cm.

10/6/20

Dreamed about a Tsunami wave washing over Tel Aviv.
I ride the wave and on the way I meet journalists.
Everyone tells me not to go with the flow that leads to the Yarkon river
but I insist on going there
and only later I discover it could be dangerous.



Shelly Reich
The Sign, Oil on canvas, 21,5 x 19 cm.



Dreamed about a flight in a hot air balloon or a zeppelin.
Before that I was participating in secret flight meetings in Jerusalem.
The flight in a hot air balloon starts and the people there with me keep changing.
At a certain point the air starts to go down and I'm trying to use a special spray that
adds air but I can't seem to find it.
Later, I find it and I use it but it's already too late,
the car has landed in a green field full of colorful plastic monsters (yellow).
We are terrified to discover that the zeppelin has landed in Hong Kong.

Shelly Reich
Vase, 2020, Oil on canvas, 16 x 15,5 cm.

21/6/20

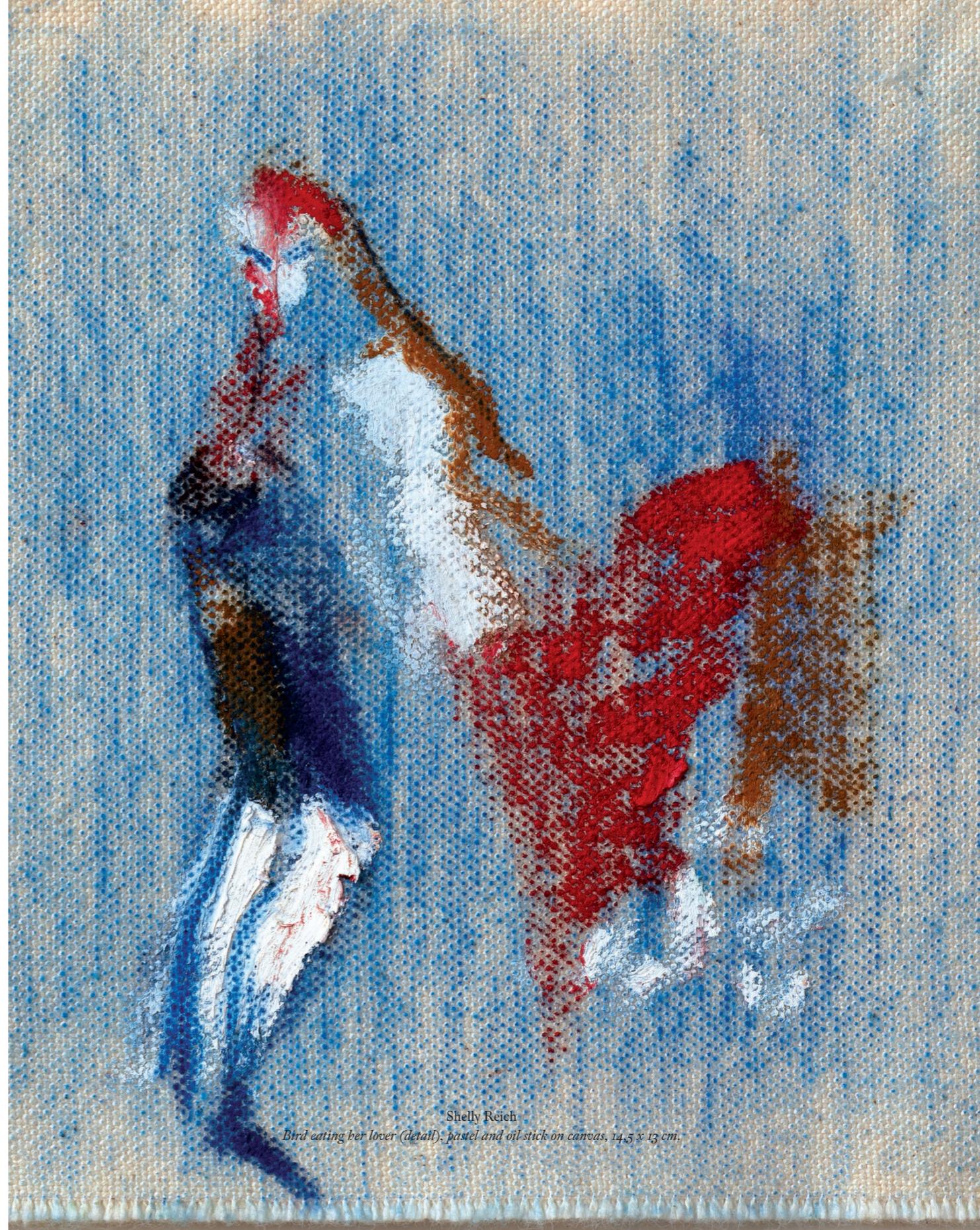
A dream about a sewing room.
I did my homework there and it keeps changing,
between a synthesizer and a sewing machine.
In the morning, the seamstress gets there.
Later I rearrange groceries and perfumes in there,
inside a cabinet sitting outside, covered in a plastic veil.



Shelly Reich
Monster Universe, Oil on canvas, 64 x 54 cm.



Michal Cederbaum & Noam Dover
Canvas; Amphorae; 03, 37 x 23 cm., photography by Shabar and Ziv Katz



Shelly Reich
Bird eating her lover (detail), pastel and oil stick on canvas, 14,5 x 13 cm.

A guard is giving me a parcel that looks like our polaroid bag.
It's a 'Lost & Found' container of stuff.
For some reason I decide to take it and go to another room.
I take a small golden ring with a blue diamond out from the bag while writing an
SMS full of errors to the manager, telling her I don't feel so well.



Shelly Reich
Flower Vase (detail), Oil on canvas, 57 x 37.5 cm.

Shahar Afek

Release Letter,
Shavei Zion, 2021

With the arrival of Covid-19 my partner and I both left Tel-Aviv for isolation in the North of Israel, inside a cabin close to nature. Since I am in a high risk group and at the peak of a long process of recovery, I have chosen to move away from the city and start a wandering journey which is continuing to this day. We have started our voyage at a small moshav in Hula valley inside of a fruit tree orchard, and at a walking distance from Ramot Naftali. From there we have continued to the northern coastal plain, the Banks of the Sea of Galilee, Upper Galilee, lower Galilee and a village close to HaBonim Beach Reserve.

Life in nature allowed me to put aside the stress and the conflict which the land on which I grew up contains and to connect to it in different ways, such as cooking, pickling, preserving, and gathering natural products from the natural environment. These actions went beyond culinary, took shape and gathered into an archive titled "Release Letter" (מכתב שחרור), which includes sketches, texts, photomontages, collages, video, objects and more.

As part of those days of isolation in the cabin I have made friends with Said Halol, a farmer from maronite christian origin whose family was expelled from the village next to the Lebanon border in 1948. Said and I share interests around the subject of food gathering. From him I have learned to go up to the mountains to gather the common seabed plant also called za'atar (because it is a dominant ingredient in the mixture of the za'atar spice together with sumac, sesame, and salt).

Since 1977 za'atar was forbidden to gather by governmental law, despite its growing in nature in abundance. The ban instigated a protest of the Palestinian community, claiming that it is politically motivated since za'atar is a central ingredient in the Palestinian cousine. In 2019 the prohibition was cancelled. Every morning for two months Said and I have met and drank tea made out

of different plants, including za'atar. The shared sitting included conversations and stories about life, food, and the connection to the place. The same experience is mentioned in the space by a receptacle which gather za'atar to make tea. The ceremony has been transferred from me to Roy by whisper, and he transfers it forward to visitors.

Additional works which are being exhibited at the show are part of an internal process of discovery and healing. The drawings manifest an intuitive, free act which enables the transference of emotions and thoughts on paper. Sometimes a drawing is used as a preparation document for a ritual/ action or performance that will happen at the space in the future.

In these days when the environment and nature seem far from us and not understood I am interested in building a research of planning and experimenting with relationships of memory and organic material, scent and touch through a personal journey of discovery and healing.



Shahar Afek
Za'atar, 2020



Shahar Afek
Zaatar (performance), 2020



Shahar Afek
Glass Tubes with Trapped Scent, 2019

A quick stop at the promenade, on the sidewalk
arak, star anise, vinegar, cardamom

The neighbors meet in the stairway while the desert is burning and the city is on fire
Israeli garlic, za'atar, worwood herb

My dead roots
horseradish and beets

Making love under the olive tree
damp soil in wine

The morning after last night is finished
turkish coffee, tobacco and vodka

Shahar Afek
Evening Menu, 2019



Shahar Afek
Zaatar, 2020



Shahar Afek
Zaatar, 2020, Inner Space exhibition view, photo by Tal Nisim



Shahar Afek
Petrichor, 2020, Ink and watercolor on paper, 30 x 20 cm.



Shahar Afek
Summer Fruits, 2018, Orange lantern, apricot leder, watermelon, nectarine, plum, rope, sunflower, 200 x 70 x 70 cm.

Michal Cederbaum &
Noam Dover
Roy Brand



Michal and Noam's workshop in Ein Ayala is bathed in sun and silence. It is an open structure, built right on the border of a field, inside a moshav set on a longitudinal route from the Carmel mountains to the sea.

There are mostly bananas growing out there today, and one cannot help seeing the resemblance between the vassals morphic shapes and the curves of the bananas. Each vase is similar yet different, as if guided by a Platonic form that allows for repetition and difference in every new creation. They also seem hard on the outside and very soft when you look in.

Noam and Michal's techniques relate to ancient glass blowing methods and traditions, combined with an emphasis on free play and experimentation. What is striking is the presence of the process in the finished creation. If industrial design is meant to hide the conditions of its making, then art-design is the celebration of the making in the made.

The forms no longer follow function; the mold communicates with its opposite - flexibility and randomness - and control is tightly orchestrated with an ease of letting-go. Everything grows from the inside to the outside and back again. Much like a Möbius strip, if you follow the curves you will find yourself moving from outside in and back again. The two are not distinct but part of a whole.

Michal Cederbaum & Noam Dover
Soft Interpretations, 2021, photography by Shabar and Ziv Katz

At the long table of time
God's jars are boozing.
They guzzle the eyes of the seeing
and the eyes of the blind,
the hearts of the ruling shadows,
the hollow cheek of evening.
They are the mightiest of boozers:
they raise to their lips the empty
as well as the full,
and don't spill over like you or I.

Paul Celan



Michal Cederbaum & Noam Dover's Studio
Photography by Roy Brand



Michal Cederbaum & Noam Dover's Studio, Ein Ayala, Israel.
Photography by Rami Maymon



Michal Cederbaum & Noam Dover
Canvas; Amphorae; 03, 43 x 22 x 20 cm., photography by Shabar and Ziv Katz



Michal Cederbaum & Noam Dover
Cluster Amorphae, 2021, photography by Shabar and Ziv Katz



Shahar Afek
After grinding and prayer, 2019, Ink and watercolor on paper, 30 x 42 cm.



Shahar Afek

Sour, sweet, life, art, biography, salty, 2019, Ink and watercolor on paper, 40 x 50 cm.

Muteness
Roy Brand

Taoism suggests that non-action (wu wei)
is the only reasonable way of relating to
evolution. Not a different action, but
non-action.

Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, The Second Coming



Shahar Afek
Calicotome villosa, 2020, Ink and watercolor on paper, 42 x 29 cm.



Michal Cederbaum & Noam Dover
Untitled Photograph, 2019

We cannot fight chaos. Chaos feeds off of the struggle against it, and it is empowered by opposition to it. Instead of fighting, we can ask ourselves: whom or what does chaos serve? Who profits, or can potentially profit, from the vagueness and the distraction which chaos creates? To observe without acting, to experience without externalising – it is in this way that the world will change from within. The only possible revolution is an internal one: from disorder to form, from blindness to insight, from violence to beauty and from chaos to cosmos, a well-tempered universe which is constructed out of mutual relationships and reason.

Beautiful and blue twenty-year-olds. I can feel their sadness as they are locked into their screens. I feel their longing for something different yet lack of ability to imagine anything different. There is no way out. Everything is blocked inside, and the external world appears chaotic yet fixed.

If you have been living in the world of the past twenty years, then you have been living inside of the rabbit hole of ‘oneself,’ a reverberatory space that only repeats what has already been said. This reminds us of the curse of Echo and Narcissus: the former can only repeat what has been said, and the latter is fixated on his own image until death. Life now appears to be quite similar, a repetitive binge of echoing selfie clips. Gradually, the familiar turns uncanny and the day-to-day becomes weird and surreal. Things are familiar to the point of estrangement. I am the walking dead, a digital bot who acts in the destruction field of the twenty-first century.

My fear is that young people today will convert alienation and sadness into anger and that this anger will eventually find expression in hatred. This not to speak of a kind of creative, passionate, poetic, erotic hatred, but of a hatred that is oppressive to passion and of an anger that is impotent. Muteness turns into violence.

We are currently at the extreme end of an unequal distribution of knowledge. There are very few things which I know, yet a lot of information appears to be “out there.” And so, more often than not, out of fear or laziness, I rely on the mediation of experts: commentators, spiritual or religious savants, institutions, political leaders and anonymous corporations. I feel lost in the overload of information. But this is exactly where a revolution is required – an internal revolution wherein I reclaim ownership of the information I consume and disseminate. This entails a change in attitude and a willingness to act without being paralysed by hesitation. The attitude changes from passivity to ability, and the will becomes harnessed to two horses: passion and reason. In other words, we need to reclaim our ability to feel, understand, judge and navigate for ourselves within the overflowing stream of information.

Revolutionary moments in history are different from one another. A revolution can never be repeated. But there’s one theme that can be detected, and it has to do with the relationship between information and knowledge. Information is composed of external data that controls the system and holds the power, while knowledge is the internalisation and the understanding of how power works. The relevant question to every revolution pertains to the adequacy or inadequacy between the amount of information that circulates in the system and the ability of the individuals involved to grasp and use that information. One thing is clear: revolutionary moments occur when information that has up until that point been held by a small segment of the population suddenly becomes accessible and open to all.

The printing revolution in the fifteenth century, the industrial revolution in the eighteenth, the communication revolution in the nineteenth century and the digital revolution in the twentieth – in all of these there was a shift in the way in which information was shared and distributed. When the floodgate was cracked open, information

moved out of the hands of the privileged few and into a shared common space. The invention of print made books available to the public, modern industry and machinery resulted in a public that was mobile and centred in cities, and the digital revolution brought the world to our fingertips. But with every new step, new inequalities and injustices appeared.

Now, for example, I know that governing bodies, states and corporations hold an immense amount of information about me, which, for the most, I have given unwillingly but with legal consent. The composition, details and consequences of such information is, however, outside my purview. To better balance this inequality, I can, for example, disconnect myself from “free services”, thereby restoring control over my actions in the shared virtual space. I can also try to better understand the ways in which big data works and navigate my way in a much more intelligent, responsible and critical way. There is no doubt that, in the past couple of decades, technology has developed at a much greater speed than that of consciousness and that technology, rather than human reason and action, is in fact governing society today. My claim is that, in order to make a change, we must first move the control to the participants.

The story of the past two decades is the story of surveillance, the constant surveillance done by governments and corporations for profit and control. This surveillance is ruinous and stifling. It manipulates communication and stifles creativity and freedom. The digital space must be democratised while democracy itself needs to grow and evolve to counter new challenges. In the long process of attempting to democratise information and open a shared space, we have first liberated physical locations such as the countryside, the cities and the streets. We (our common ancestors) then liberated institutions, occupations and forms of expression. We have taken possession of palaces and have turned them into museums. We have turned monasteries

into libraries and universities. The next step would be to liberate virtual space. This would be a long process (a revolution spread over centuries), but it can start now with a change of consciousness and a new attitude, namely, that virtual space is our own. We need to take back possession of our information because information is essential for democracy – consistent, high-quality information from reliable sources. Like air, water and the sky, information belongs to everyone. Information is our natural habitat.

Muteness is a characteristic of our time. No one dares to speak out, not in class, not at family dinners, not on paper, not verbally. Muteness penetrates inwards and strangles our thoughts and passions, imagination and creativity. Muteness and violence inward and outward. How few are the people who still possess the art of conversation, who know how to tell a story, to listen and to laugh, to continue their partner’s train of thought and deepen it into an open, shared fabric. A real conversation requires real listening – not someone who tells you who you are or what you “should” do, but a form of open dialogical attention which enables that which cannot be realised individually.

I want to propose the arts, and especially the art of reading, as a cure for muteness. That might come as a surprise since reading is an art mostly practised alone, by one’s self in a room with a book. And yet, reading is a deep journey beyond oneself. As Marcel Proust, a real virtual voyageur, wrote in his *In Search of Lost Time*:

“The only true voyage, the only bath in the Fountain of Youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees, that each of them is; and this we do [with great artists]; with artists like these we do really fly from star to star.” (Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, vol. 5, “The Prisoner and The Fugitive”)

Art is a journey in time and space, outside of our bodies and consciousness and into that of others, into different times, different thoughts, different desires, passions and fears. When I read Shakespeare, I can feel what it was like living in sixteenth-century Britain. Visiting the Acropolis of Athens, I understand what it must have been like in ancient Greece. This is not a theoretical kind of knowledge but a visceral experience – I am living it. Likewise, the art that we do today will tell our stories to prosperity. It is like sending a capsule of experiences into the future. Art is our magical Noah’s Ark which will land after the flood on a future Mount Ararat, and whatever we would like to keep of our present can thus be reincarnated. Art is a form of communication – not the communication of this or that bit of information, but the sharing of experiences and forms of life.

Proust’s art is, mostly, the art of reading and writing. Part of today’s muteness is a result of the crisis in reading. How many of us still read, carry books to read while travelling on a bus or train, and keep a few books next to our beds? If we still read, and this I know from experience, our attention is deflated. On screens, the eye quickly wanders, not to other worlds but to the next tab, where it loses itself again. Proust must have had in mind an enthusiastic reader such as himself. He imagined a reader who can hold many details in her memory for hundreds of pages, a reader who can go out for a long, world-discovering journey. In contrast to this reader, the reader of today scans the page to “get to the punch line.” cursorily scanning for information is a new kind of reading and a new kind of thinking. I want to understand something “straight away,” immediately label it, find its place and move on. Of course, there is no time to absorb the constant flood of information, so I fight this chaos by labelling it and saving what I can. Maybe “one day” I will “go back to it”, I tell myself, when I have just a little more “spare time”, although I know that the amount of information which my phone already contains will take a lifetime to access. This desperate attempt to “save” information

reminds me of Walter Benjamin’s story about the angel of history from his last surviving text, “On the Concept of History.”

Benjamin describes Paul Klee’s little drawing wherein he observes a flimsy angel, his face directed to the past, where waves of ruins pile up. He wants to suspend, awaken the dead and stitch the ruins back together, but the storm blowing from heaven has caught in his wings and is too strong. It pushes the angel backwards into the future. “[What we call progress,” writes Benjamin, “is this storm.” Like the angel of history, we are caught up in this storm, moving ahead faster than we can absorb, experience and understand.

That which is lost during the chase after “the bottom line” is a process of creating deep networks of relationships. This process includes connecting old and new fields of knowledge, discovering analogies between different ideas and experiences, drawing conclusions, examining possibilities, evaluating truths, and also transitioning to other ways of looking and forms of knowing. In the midst of the storm that befalls us, there is no more room for play or imagination. Instead, we experience a downgrading of our levels of empathy and the quality of our awareness.

Here, reading works as a healing force to counteract the storm of information. The intimate and solitary experience of reading, which takes me away from myself and into the realm of deep empathy and conversation with the experiences of others, is a curing silence. Silence then, yes, as the opposite of muteness: quiet meditation and reflection, rather than deafening anxiety and inattention.

We are on the edge – on the threshold or the cusp – of a transition period. Something is closing behind us while something is yet to come. We are stepping towards the end of the world, at least as we know or imagine it to be.

How can we understand this sense of an end without a new beginning? The future

or the belief in a future, which was so vital to modernism in the twentieth century, is dissipating. Do we still believe in the future, in the future of modernity? Do we believe in progress? Or do we yearn for some radical break, some inexplicable messianic transformation? In the nineteenth century, Nietzsche spoke about the death of God. "Haven't you heard," the madman asks in *The Gay Science*, "about the death of God?" As if the death had already happened but the horror had not yet sunk in. We killed him when we stopped believing: "I am telling you; we have killed God – you and I! We are all murderers. But how did we do it?... What have we done when we have untied the earth from its connection to the sun? Where will it go now? Where will we all go now?" (*The Gay Science*, section 125).

Even though the remains are still among us and the corpse not yet utterly cold, there is no doubt that faith in God and the frightful system which it entailed have withered. But what has come to replace it? Nietzsche argues that we cannot really live without faith, and so we moderns come to replace God with a secularised belief in progress. But what is progress? Simply put, it is the belief that "things will be better" in the future. Better how? This is undefined, and this is also the beauty of the whole concept, because it gives us the opportunity to shape the future like a fantasy. Each and every one of us has their own utopia, and in it we or our descendants can achieve happiness and possibly immortality.

Many today are waiting for technology to save us from the hell which we have created and lead us into the promised land of artificial intelligence. This belief – that someone or something will navigate our lives and save us from ourselves – is still with us today and is still very strong. How can we imagine life without it?

Finally, I want to suggest that this belief be cracked open so that we can say, just like the madman, "Have you not heard that the future is dead?" Because it has already

happened, although the horror has not yet sunk in. And maybe, just like with Nietzsche and God, the death of the future is not necessarily bad? Perhaps this faith in the future kept us from living as we should here and now? Perhaps the future is our greatest danger? If the belief in the future were to fade, we could then take care of this world and this life instead of the one to come. In the present to come we could do things for their own sake rather than instrumentally as means to other ends. My writing here would be only for you, and your art would be only for us; we would not accumulate assets as if we were to live forever, and we would not burn the club on the way to glory. We would have to learn how to live, as the poet writes, "without future, hope or dream". What would the world look like without a future? Not so different from the world as it is now, except, perhaps, without the deceiving disguise of "soon, later would be better". The end of the world is not tomorrow; it is already here.

Roy Brand



Parterre, Tel-Aviv, 2021

The space features a presentation of art books published and curated by Sternthal Books.

