



Ben Hagari: Potter's Will

The Chami Fruchter Prize for an Emerging Israeli Video Artist, 2015

Curator: Anat Danon Sivan

Jeannette Assia Galleries, Main Building

2 February – 2 July 2016

Opening: Thursday, 25 February 2016, 8 p.m.

The exhibition will be open to the public from 26 February 2016

The show is exhibited simultaneously at the Rose Art Museum
Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts (curator: Gannit Ankori)

The exhibition at Tel Aviv Museum of Art features Ben Hagari's new work *Potter's Will* (2015–16), comprising a video and a sculptural installation: a rotating set of a 19th-century potter's studio extracted from the film screened next to it.

In the video, Hagari revisits the potter's wheel, thereby delving into ancient myths pertaining to the birth of the pot, the birth of man, creator and creation. Attempting to return to a primal moment, through inversion of the traditional technology of the potter's wheel, he causes the stage to spin, and the pot is spawned by its rotary motion.

The world is symbolically divided into two: the modern, cultural, conscious, technological "upper world," and the empty, primeval "under world"; possibly a division between heaven and hell. The former world contains a rotating stage with props, presented

as a source of pleasure. American potter **Paul Chaleff** appears on stage, breathing life into a lump of clay which transforms into a pot. The second world is revealed through the movement of a camera plunging into the depths of the whirling pot. This movement of inversion or falling explores the possibility of a return to a formative mythical moment.

The pot's opening functions symbolically as a transition, a corridor leading to a mythical, ancient, primordial world founded on biblical and Egyptian myths. In the darkness of the earth, the First Man is born from the pot, and led to his death. Caught in a Sisyphean, absurd existence, godless and without salvation, he embodies the deterministic cycle of birth and death. The relationship between the inanimate and animate elements in the film—a staff that turns into a serpent, a pot that transforms into a human being—evolve via an act of metamorphosis, and are likewise associated with cyclicity and recurrence.

The work's pun-based English title, Potter's Will, replaces the potter's "wheel" with the potter's "will," thereby setting up and at the same time confounding the unresolved dichotomy between destiny or fate, on the one hand, and individual will, namely a human being's freedom of choice, on the other. The figure seen "sleepwalking" to the burning kiln at the end of the film indicates an engagement with human fate, memory, and trauma.

Ben Hagari is the inaugural recipient of the Chami Fruchter Prize for an Emerging Israeli Video Artist 2015. Born in 1981, he holds a BFA from the Midrasha School of Art, Beit Berl Academic College, and an MFA from Columbia University, New York. In 2009–2012 he was Head of the Video stream at the Midrasha School of Art, Beit Berl Academic College.

A lecture by artist Ben Hagari and the curators of the exhibition, Gannit Ankori and Anat Danon Sivan, will be held on Friday, 26 February 2016, at 1:30 p.m., at the

Kaufmann Hall, Tel Aviv Museum of Art,

Admission: 20 NIS

Tickets may be purchased at the museum box office: 03-6077020

<http://www.tamuseum.org.il/he/event-item/63145>

For further details, please contact: Orit Aderet, Spokesperson of the Tel Aviv Museum of

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