

Collective Portrait | Hasalon 5

Curator: Maya Frenkel Tene | 11.7.19–17.8.19

Michael Shvadron | Natasha Kandov | Naama Rahamim | Idan Simon
Rotem Shmueli | Shai Dror | Tomer Fruchter

The seven artists in the collective 'Hasalon 5', all recent graduates of Bezalel Academy, have been working together for the past three years. The purpose of their collaborations, concurrent with each of the artists' studio practice, is to generate a critical, fertile dialogue that will encompass every step of the creative process: from thinking about the artwork, through its execution, to the final presentation. The works in this exhibition are both a documentation and a product of a series of actions initiated and carried-out by this collective and represent one facet of their oeuvre.

From the mid-19th century, at the onset of Modernism, artists congregated around ideas that lay the foundation for historic art movements and styles. The 20th century alone gave birth to art collectives formed around political and social processes. Robert Hobbs, an art historian, describes this as shifting from an idea of the artist as genius, a wellspring of new ideas, to a recognition that the art collective is the architect and circulator of new perspectives. Collaborative practices allowed artists an alternative to how to look and react to the world around them. These practices facilitated a dynamic experience for both the artist and the spectator, an experience that would help in forming culture itself.

The collaborative aspect exists in the practice of 'Hasalon 5' on two levels: one as an ongoing dialogue between members of the collective, and the other in their interactive relationship with the audience, and within audience members themselves, during their photographic performances. With each project a photographic work-station is constructed and positioned anew, every time in a different location and context. Part planned, part spontaneous, the collective carries out the performance, inviting unsuspecting individuals to partake in a group-portrait, in different settings and compositions, made-up of complete strangers that gather for a one-time photo shoot.

In a recent performance at a library, visitors to an art and music event were asked to assemble for a "Yearbook Photograph." Working within the confines of only half an hour, the photographers explored different viewpoints and compositions for the final images. In the project "A Family Portrait" 'Hasalon 5' members gathered different fictional families they invited from the visitors to a Christmas Fair, eventually photographing them by the Christmas tree. In the series "A Moment of," the group members staged a photography studio in the courtyard of Hansen House in Jerusalem, inviting visitors to the exhibition to take part in couple-photo shoot with a person they have just met on set. The outcome of these one-time interactions is documented in dozens of photographs. They question our own perceptions on familiarity versus alienation, similarity and difference, the nature of relationships, intimacy and couplehood.

The actions of 'Hasalon 5' allude to body art, performance and happenings of the 60s and 70s. Another interesting reference is "Relational Aesthetics" - an artistic style that came about in the 90s. The works that were created during this time - being neither beautiful nor sublime - were set as environments for individuals to come together and share a collective human experience set in an artistic context. Artists like Rirkrit Tiravanija, who served Pad Thai dishes to gallery goers and Liam Gillick who designed architectural objects prompting its users to connect personally and intimately, among others, were reacting to the virtual roles of the Internet and Globalization, which heightened the need for a non-mediated, physical, human interaction. Two decades later, at a time when virtual spaces govern our daily reality and the photographic image has become at center of all things, the practice of 'Hasalon 5' seems more relevant than ever.

An Other Day | Shai Dror

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"From below a beautiful city appeared, spreading over hills and valleys and in it tall towers, domes, flat bright rooftops, gardens, pools and bridges all bridged above the valleys." (Boris Schatz)

In 1918, while living in exile in Tiberias, Boris Schatz wrote the novel *'Jerusalem Rebuilt: A Daydream'*, in which he outlines the land of Israel and Jerusalem in particular, from a standpoint of a utopian vision – political, economic and social vision – that is to take place a hundred years later, in the year 2018. Schatz describes a green city filled with gardens, whose citizens put great effort in cultivating their environment. The city is managed in the spirit of socialist-communist ideology by cooperatives whose members are farmers, industry workers and artists, all collaboratively working as they maintain their physical and mental health. In this city futuristic trains travel, they are powered by solar energy. Schatz describes a designated quarter, "The Children's Paradise", where children and youth are brought up and are educated. This is reminiscent of the children housing and education programs of the Kibbutz. The cultural-spiritual center of Jerusalem and the country at large is the Temple Mount that has been rebuilt in the same exact place as its predecessor. It is no longer a place of worship through sacrificial rituals but is rather a museum whose art is the center of life, and as such, is to be held sacred.

'An Other Day' is a film that borrows its inspiration from Boris Schatz's vision and infuses it with visual interpretation based in manipulations of formal elements of cinema and television vocabulary. In this film, Shai Dror – born and raised in Jerusalem – offers an alternative to life in this charged and complex city in the day after signing a peace agreement, or, alternatively – after a global war erupted. The movie refers to utopian and dystopian artworks and in this context one cannot ignore its relationship to more contemporary titles like 'The Handmaid's Tale' or 'The

'Prisoner', as well as others, that delve into the dark side of totalitarian regimes and societies' failed attempts to form a new social order. The film takes place in several locations throughout the city of Jerusalem - a church, a museum, an outdoor field -

and chronicles a daily routine that is imbued with rituals, of a group dressed in hooded white sweatsuits (are they prisoners? cult group? Kibbutz members?). The absence of one distinct narrative heightens the symbolic layers in the piece: Kadishman's familiar Sheep painting presented as an icon of Israeli art, is echoed throughout the film. The cityscapes of Jerusalem symbolize sublime beauty and are shown from a birds' eye view or appear as representations of colorful landscape paintings. The final dramatic scene questions what has so far been established as a cinematic truth, and is asking us to reevaluate and reassess what we have seen.

Shai Dror (b. 1990) lives and works in Jerusalem. He holds a BFA from the department of photography at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, graduating with honors (2018). Dror is a recent recipient of the Lauren and Mitchell Presser Award for outstanding final project and was included in 'Zoom 2019' exhibition for Young Israeli Artists held at the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Tel Aviv. "An Other Day" was recently screened at the 21st Student Film Festival in Tel Aviv.