

## **Michal Bachi: Tigers in bed**

### **Oil paintings and works on paper**

During her years as a painter, Michal Bachi has created a unique world of characters and situations which is identifiable as her own. This is a world in which existence is doubtful, and the childlike-grown-up inhabitants "live" on the verge of a constant abyss. They swing, they are pulled head-on downward, they stand on edge; they may be undone or erased at any instant. Their acrobatic and innocent nature, full of devotion and wonder, is contrasted to their ontological gloom, and evokes in the observer a sense of suspense and anticipation.

In the last two years, Bachi has focused on oil painting on plywood and canvas, favoring rollers, mason's spatulas, coarse fabrics and sharp wooden sticks, over the use of brushes. By these means, she creates layers of texture, imprint, engraving and pattern, out of which the characters rise, and into which they also disappear. These paintings are the core of the current exhibition.

The paintings are characterized by intense colors, made of shades of orange, blue, green and black, which mix and clash endlessly. The expressive and disharmonious colors echo the ambiguous, undermined state of the characters, which up till now were created in a sequence of prints and industrial-paint drawings on paper. In the drawings, the characters are situated in enigmatic small tales, of blacks & grays, floating within the paper's boundaries. The oil paintings present a totally different scope – colorful, laden and stuffy – in which the characters are struggling and hiding.

Bachi's painting consists of endless, dizzying, restless motion, which gets material & irritating dimensions with the condensed use of the oil colors. It seems as if the motion turns slow and awkward, further pointing out daily futile struggle, but not giving up the entwined poignant irony. As the exhibition title "Tigers in Bed" suggests, the characters are also placed in shaky transition from movement to stringent immobility, from morphological excess to mental dizziness, from soaring to falling. In the oil paintings, these transitions highlight the mutual relations between the figurative and the abstract, where the physical presence of the color surfaces sometimes overpowers the dominance of the figure, until its total disappearance.

Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway" opens with a great exhilaration of plunging into the fresh, open air, but at the bottom of the immense excitement resides a feeling of non-existence and death. This dichotomy also characterizes "Tigers in Bed". Bachi presents carnivalesque and crowded paintings, full of humor and insinuations to the spectator. She does this while examining states of solitude, eternal doubt, and with keen self contemplation at the mere ability to survive. From within the absurd, which is so funny it hurts – that of existence and that of the color laying – a certain substance is formed, in which horror and the grotesque, anxiety and innocence march on side by side.

Irena Gordon  
May 2008

Translated from Hebrew by Gitay Ashuach