

Givon Gallery

29.1.2016 – 12.3.2016

Raffism (Now)

“In 50 years everything will be as it should be, and on a sunny Sunday the family shall go out to visit the Raffi Lavie Museum”\*

Now that thirteen years have gone by and neither is with us, again we concern ourselves with Raffi (as with Adam Baruch, both in his secularism as in his religiousness); with the Raffi of a secularized art, the Raffi of Tel Aviv; with this great hater of prizes, of hierarchies, of enforced ideologies.

A non-conformist with of an aesthetic all his own, Raffi Lavie was the great inverter of ideas and themes, of shapes, colors and compositions, of the Israeli landscape – whether in his spirit or in the multifacetedness of culture (visual art, classical music).

“First among them, and most exemplary, and very much the creator of the ‘Tel Aviv aesthetic,’ is Raffi Lavie. It is he who undertook the task of fusing the new artistic expressions that have emerged in Europe and the USA in the late 1950s together with the local tradition of the lyrical abstract, to make of them, with proper filtering and adaptation, an art in the spirit of the place. This ‘Sabra’ sensuality that then came into being, for the first time, had found its formal expression.”\*\*

There are a number of issues that point to the relevance of a Raffi show in this moment in time, when the widening cultural gaps among different groups in society raise a sense of longing. Which brings us to ‘our’ Raffi. Had he been alive today, what might he have said in the face of a reality that he – if anyone – could link to an aesthetic, a reality that, on the face of it, was so lacking beauty, even then. If anyone, it was he could see a beauty in it, but equally a tackiness. Now it befalls his works to speak in his behalf.

For further reading on Raffi’s independence and sense of self we direct the reader to a text by Yona Fisher in *Raffi Lavie*, the catalogue of his 1973 exhibition at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, as well as “The Aesthetics of Raffi Lavie,” a text by Sara Breitberg Semel in the catalogue of a show she curated at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art in 1979.

And, as pertains Adam Baruch, this exhibition should be looked at as an appeal. It features two video works dating from his final years, *Balcony Movie* and *Home Movie*, both from 2003, as well as early works on paper from the 1970s on, coinciding in part with the years of collage art and of conceptual art.

\*Adam Baruch, “Raffie Lavie: A Bit of History Please,” *Haaretz*, 19.5.2003.

\*\*Sarah Breitberg-Semel, *Want of Matter*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 1986 (catalogue).