

Live Performance | Ohtoh Olahm Shay-Lee Uziel—guest artist

There is nothing conventional about a performance of **Ohtoh Olahm** (English translation: The Same World). Neither the mixture of the instruments, nor the sound, or the execution of the Israeli and English language songs. The performance moves along serendipitously, like a conversation between friends who have met up for a drink in a bar. When they talk they know not where their talk will take them—not what about, and not with what edge.

A performance of **Ohtoh Olahm** is a conversation among three people--Pesach, Avi, and Gabi—which by chance happens in the presence of an audience.

The planning is the necessary minimum, to meet at a time and place. Content and presentation take shape spontaneously in real time. Dialogue is built, or collapses, in accordance with the mood of the moment. There are no rehearsals. They meet only for the sound check the evening of the performance. This garners for the sound of **Ohtoh Olahm** an unexpected accumulative abstract materiality, forming a single work which moves toward infinity.

They have been playing together since 2009, with a fluid schedule of performances, avoiding definition or categorization of their type of music.

Pesach stands in the middle. He plays his vocal chords, and on a percussion instrument, a “bell tree” from Pakistan, which he acquired in Michigan. He also plays a recorder and a theremin (an electronic instrument). Gabi is to Pesach’s left. He uses a computer and a groove box. On the right, Avi plays an electric guitar.

Gabi drives the groove and defines the texture of the sound, which provides the ground for Pesach’s singing, or speech, or reading. Avi adds the backbeats, everything that is below the surface. Gabi determines the language and the sound of the “conversation”. Pesach determines the continuity, the tone, the verbal component, and the abstract nuances. Avi gives the grammar, the punctuation, and the emphases.

In their meeting, the slow, dark and hazy electronic sound, and Pesach’s high vocalizing, strike a conscious distance from anything that could be called harmonic, or expected, or beautiful. The freedom with which **Ohtoh Olahm** uses known songs, some better known and some less, disassembles them and then remakes them into something new, and it makes their performance into something strange and at the same time nonchalant, by its chance quality. Pesach makes a collage out of texts which he “cuts and pastes”. Sometimes he sings a song and sometimes he speaks it. He may begin with *Hamburger Girl* by the Linus Pauling Quartet. He may follow with *Rikdi (Dance)* by Yishai Levi, giving it monotonic repetition, and then conclude with Chuck Berry’s *Rock and Roll Music*. The improvisation breaks up the normal hierarchy of voice and accompaniment. It enables the members of the group to literally go out and return as it suits them. (The same applies to the listeners/spectators.) If one of them gets up of a sudden the performance continues without him. When he returns he reenters the flow.

Although the three artists come from the same world, each, in his art, has different questions. Such it is in the exhibition. There is no pretense of an invented connection which is forced on the art. Taking place in that space between painting, drawing, sculpture, performance and object, the exhibition is an attempt to adopt the unique dynamic of a performance of **Ohtoh Olahm** and apply it to the emplacement of the objects in the gallery space. The curatorial endeavor lies in the combining of elements itself. It adopts the free values of improvisation, which occasionally are tasteless or fragmentary. The three-headed assemblage created in the space is anti-monumental. It is replete with both the inter-breeding and the contradiction between art and craft, between the two- and the three-dimensional, between movement and stasis.

The group has entrusted their anti-monumental sound to a fourth party, who is not party to their concept “platoon”, someone capable of observing the phenomenon from an outer vantage point. Shay-Lee Uziel has made a work especially for this exhibition, an extended video clip which is screened again and again, continuously. It combines anachronistic hi-tech aesthetics with the electro-magnetic avant-garde. This audio-visual collage replaces the live performance which does not take place in the exhibition.

Tali Ben Nun

Translated from Hebrew to English: Pesach Slabosky