Critically Correct (IV) Givon Gallery

The current version is the fourth in the series. Unlike its predecessor, it functions as a proposed potentiality for dialogue. That dialogue originates in a 1975 performance and recording by Moshe Gershuni, in which he sang *Yad Anuga* ("A delicate hand", Zalman Shneour, 1906) from the roof of the Israel Museum*, as well as in *Performance 76* (Gideon Ofrat, Artists' House, Tel Aviv).

The decision to foreground this performative recording of the song is foundational, expansive, and historical in scope — intended to embrace themes of love and peace. As Gershuni noted in 1975, the song was meant to carry across the ringing of church bells and reach East Jerusalem. Over the years, however, the recording has been invoked in contexts that were never part of the original work.

Pinchas Cohen Gan, *A=F (N.C)*, 1976, executed on an Egyptian military blanket, depicts a towering, monumental figure beside a tent. The painting emerges out of an action Cohen Gan carried out at a refugee camp near Jericho in 1974*, in which he erected a tent. That action included a conversation with refugees and their escorts about Israel twenty-five years into the future, the declaration "A refugee is a person who cannot return to their birthplace," and the construction of a temporary shelter. Cohen Gan pulls into focus the charged emotional, physical, and territorial tensions that hover between local identities and identifications.

Efrat Natan, *Flag*, 2011, trains a sharp, precise eye on the motif-topic of the tent, pressing its symbolic weight to its fullest extent. Rather than a conventional structure, Natan presents a neglected, torn flag on a collapsing wooden pole at dawn. The flag motif first appeared in her practice in *Flag, 1974*, a photographic action from January 1974, likely shaped by the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. A related work, *Undershirt in the Window*, was first shown in 1995 under the title *Undershirt in the Window in Memory of My Father*. Over time — both actual and imagined — the work has come to engage with the wearing, fraying, and disintegration of undershirts in a window, as presented at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

In *Who Is Content and Lives*, 1984*, Nurit David poses lingering questions that remain unanswered to this day. The painting charts a space of friction between two existential poles: the urban world of survival and the open countryside. In the painted text, David portrays the city as a vast fortress of illusion, built from harsh, glittering materials - concrete and glass - in which human existence is mired in deep confusion. Against the rigidity of concrete, she sets a longing for open fields: a space where one might pursue a fleeting glimmer of truth. Through painting and the written word, she seeks to bridge the distance between the alienated and the natural, searching for a place where one can, despite everything, be content.

Micha Ullman, *Mi Ma* (*Who What*), 2009, serves as a powerful anchor for the exhibition. The work comprises two iron beds filled with red *Hamra* soil - a resonant material that carries formal echoes of Torah and ideological values. Openings pierced through the center of each bed function as drains or funnels, allowing the soil to sift downward. This transforms the piece into an open system in perpetual motion between the inside and the outside, the high and the low. Metal rings and coins embedded within the *Hamra* soil act as engravings of memory within "the flesh of the earth." The dialogue between rigid iron and yielding soil, set against the slow trickling through the openings, creates a space of testimony - a site in which preservation is not static, but a living process of matter and spirit. This process upholds a couple, family, and partnership as core values, impulses that also inspired his soil installation *Wedding* at the Israel Museum*.

In the two 1991 paintings by Gabi Klasmer* figures appear on the verge of disappearance, embodying the profound anguish of loss - both the loss of the other and the dissolution of the self. These are not specific portraits; each figure becomes a universal stand-in for anyone and everyone. The painterly style is characterized by broad fields of color that balance transparency against opacity. The formal blurring and the horizontal and vertical smears erase facial and bodily features, turning the act of painting itself into an expression of fading memory and dissolving matter within the exhibition space.

Udi Charka brings this inquiry to bear on specific, rendered figures. His contribution to the gallery includes porcelain and coarse-clay vessels from 2026, as well as paintings from 2024. Working within a

near-monochromatic palette of black and white punctuated by surgical accents of national blue, Charka's photo-based works function as acts of mediation. They dismantle and reexamine images of power and national symbolism, ranging from a portrait of Rehavam Ze'evi (Gandhi) brandishing a lion cub he kept in a military base, to a figure of the artist Adina Bar On performing *The Binding* (*Akeidah*). Through this artistic filter, Charka offers a personal reading of selfhood and masculinity, inflected with an artless faith that quietly challenges the cynical gaze.

Ascending the gallery stairs to the upper floor - after the exhibition's ideas and impressions have accumulated - visitors encounter Sigalit Landau's video *Arab Snow*, 2001*. The video documents an ecstatic process involving a cotton candy machine that generates a sugar storm, standing in for the hollow energy of the fashion and desire industries. To the sound of Umm Kulthum's *On the Ruins of Love*, the sugar storm envelops a male body lying prone, like a corpse, beneath a calligraphic shroud of snow. Landau fed sugar into the man's mouth and reversed the video sequence — an inversion that upends chronological order to produce an image in which desire celebrates atop the ruins of Eros, hunger, and death.

In the video *Place (After Micha Ullman)*, 2018*, Avner Pinchover's act of the erection and demolition of a mound of cement powder - a nod to an early sand work by Micha Ullman. He jumps onto the pile and methodically destroys it, concluding with a heavy sigh of exhaustion, shared equally by the material and the artist.

The exhibition closes with a video work by Gary Hill centered on two figures locked in an intense "non-dialogue." The piece examines the phonetic underpinnings of speech and the fraught relationship between language and the body. Through the verbal encounter between the two figures, Hill explores how sound and image produce meaning while simultaneously generating chaos. Within the context of the exhibition, the work frames language not merely as an instrument for preserving and transmitting information, but as a volatile arena of collision — one that continuously redraws the boundaries of human communication and understanding.

Exhibition Background Notes

* *Open Workshop*, 1975. Yona Fischer and Serge Spitzer, The Israel Museum, Billy Rose Art Garden.

* Pinchas Cohen Gan, *Activities*, 1974, The Israel Museum, Billy Rose Art Garden. Catalogue by Yona Fischer.

* Micha Ullman, *Hourglass*, Yigal Zalmona, The Israel Museum, 2011.

* Nurit David, *HaAvoda Street Appendix*, Givon Art Gallery Catalogue, 1994.

* Efrat Natan, Whitewash and Tar, The Israel Museum, 2016

* Gabi Klasmer, *Summer 1989*, Givon Art Gallery, 1990. Catalogue essay "The End of the Portrait" by Tali Tamir.

* Sigalit Landau ,Arab Snow, 2001, Thread Waxing Space, New York.

* Avner Pinchover*, Place (After Micha Ullman)*, 2018, Givon Art Forum.

* Gary Hill ,Figuring Grounds ,2009, Kleinert James Arts Center, Woodstock, New York.