

## Biographies

**Inbal Abergil** is a photographer living and working in New York City. Her practice investigates aesthetic and societal norms through conceptions of time and memory, specifically in cultures where loss is a substantial part of daily life. Abergil holds an M.F.A. in Visual Art from Columbia University (2011), where she was the recipient of a scholarship through Artis' Israeli Artist Fund. She previously studied photography at Jerusalem's Hadassah College (2001) and received a B.F.A. with honors from Hamidrasha School of Art (2007). Abergil's work has been exhibited internationally in New York City, Miami, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Amsterdam, Northern Ireland, South Korea, and throughout Israel. She is the recipient of the Rabinovich Prize from Tel Aviv's Ministry of Art & Culture (2004) and grants from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation (2002) and the Artis Grant Program (2012). Her series *Nothing Left Here But The Hurt* (2011) was nominated for the prestigious Prix Pictet Photography Prize (2012). Most recently, Abergil was selected as a 2013 FlaxArt International Artist in Residence.

Born in 1979 in Acre, **Anisa Ashkar** lives and works in Acre and Tel Aviv. During her B.F.A. studies at Hamidrasha School of Art, she began creating performances and photographs inspired by mythology that dealt with major themes identified from her own life. In 2001, Ashkar began her most recognized project to date, the daily writing of poetry on her face. "My face became my canvas, and through the everyday routine I started investigating my biography and my Arab-Palestinian identity. It became a conversation starter, usually beginning with a translation of the text from Arabic to Hebrew, and became a constant beginning of new relationships. My face became not only a canvas, but also an exhibition space." Ashkar's solo exhibitions include *Barbur Aswad* at Hagar Art Gallery in Jaffa in 2003, *Al Adham* (The Black Horse) at Gastatelier, Dusseldorf and *Al Asbach* (The White Horse) at Essel Museum, Vienna, both in 2008.

**Orit Ben-Shitrit** is an interdisciplinary artist educated in New York and exhibiting internationally. Ben-Shitrit works in photography, video, and dance. She has been using choreography to address issues of domination and the potential for violence. These issues developed through three main topical themes: cycles of violence in the Middle East, invisible mechanisms of political, religious and economic control, and conflicted beings trapped in bodies. The works span a spectrum of historical references, combined with ideas that relate to co-dependency, inner demons, and behavioral disorders through texture-rich imagery. Ben-Shitrit has recently exhibited work at Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Rome; the Haifa Museum of Art; the Royal College of Art, London; Videobrasil in São Paulo; La Nau Universitat de Valencia in Spain among others. Recent commissions include HALF TAMED BEAST by Artis at Zoom Contemporary Art Fair from the Middle East in 2010; ISCP, NY in 2012; and EMPAC RPI in 2013-2014. Ben-Shitrit is a recent LMCC Swing Space resident, and a 2012 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow in Film/Video. She is based in Brooklyn.

**Zoya Cherkassky** was born in 1976 in Kiev and currently lives and works in Tel Aviv. Her painting, drawing and sculpture use visual language borrowed from pop culture, computer aesthetics, and the history of art. Cherkassky graduated from Hamidrasha School of Art and has exhibited widely in Israel and abroad. Her solo exhibitions have taken place at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Guelman Gallery, Moscow; and Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv. She is the recipient of numerous awards from Israel's Cultural Excellence Foundation. The Ingeborg Bachman Scholarship by the Wolf Foundation, The Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture's Prize for a Young Artist, and has taken part in residencies at the Bronner Residency in Düsseldorf, Germany and the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. Her works are in the collections of the Israel Museum and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and the Jewish Museums in New York, Berlin, and Vienna.

**Aïm Deüelle Lüski** is one of Israel's foremost artists and philosophers. He teaches at Tel Aviv University and Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. After years of studying in Paris, Deüelle Lüski returned to Israel with an enthusiasm for contemporary continental philosophy, which provides a conceptual framework for his practice. His work has been shown at Fotomuseum Winterthur; Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana; the Israeli Center for Digital Art, Holon; the 3rd Herzliya Biennale; the Petach Tikva Museum; and an upcoming solo exhibition will take place in 2014 at the Museum of Bat Yam, along with a book by curator Ariella Azoulay, published by Leuven University Press. His own publications include *Reality Trauma and the Inner Logic of Photography* (2012, The Shpilman Institute), *The Philosophy of Paris – Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida* (2007, Resling Publishing), *Modernism and Postmodernism: the 20th Century in Continental Philosophy* (2005, Modan Publishing), among others.

**Dor Guez** is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist, whose installations combine various modes of video and photographic practices. Guez's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions worldwide, among them *Georgiopolis* at the Petach Tikva Museum of Art; *The Monayer Family* at the Jewish Museum, New York; *Al-Lydd* at KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; *The Nation's Groves* at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and Carlier Gebauer Gallery, Berlin; *Against The Grain* at Beursschouwburg Art Center, Brussels; *SABIR* at Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv; *100 Steps to the Mediterranean* at the Rose Art Museum, Boston; *40 days* at Artpace, San Antonio; The Mosaic Rooms, London, and more. His work was also shown at the 12th Istanbul Biennial; the 17th and 18th International Contemporary Art Festival, Videobrasil, Sao Paulo; the 3rd Moscow International Biennale; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Bucharest Biennial; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography; Maxxi Museum, Rome; and more. Guez was the recipient of the Orgler Scholarship for PhD scholars in the arts at Tel Aviv University; the Perlmutter Visiting Artist Award, Rose Art Museum; and the Young Artist Award, Ministry of Culture, Israel; and was an international Artist-in-Residence at Artpace, San Antonio.

**Shai Ignatz** was born in Israel in 1969, and lives and works in Tel Aviv. He holds a B.F.A. and an M.F.A. from the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. His work has been shown at Museum Carnavalet, Paris; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Helena Rubinstein Pavilion for Contemporary Art, Museums of Bat Yam, the University of Haifa, the Museum of Israeli Art, Ramat Gan, Rosenfeld Gallery, Paris' White Night festival, and the Menier Gallery, London. In 2011, Ignatz was awarded a prize by the Israeli Ministry of Culture and in 2007, he received an award from the Legacy Heritage Fund Prize of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. His work is in the collections of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the Museums of Bat Yam, and the Schocken Collection.

**Luciana Kaplun** was born in Buenos Aires, and lives and works in Tel Aviv. She graduated from the Minshar School of Art in 2005 and Hamidrasha School of Art's Advanced Studio Program in 2012. Kaplun uses various models and platforms from popular culture as vehicles to explore collective memory and social identities. Manipulating these models, she attempts to expose and transform the mechanisms at work in the creation of collective experience. Her work involves a range of media and artistic practices such as photography, video, and performance.

**Miki Kratsman** was born in 1959 in Argentina and immigrated to Israel in 1971. He is one of Israel's most distinguished photographers, and has been committed to documenting the evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for over 25 years. Kratsman's photographs were regularly published in the Israeli daily newspaper *Haaretz* as part of "The Twilight Zone" in collaboration with journalist Gideon Levy. Since 2006, he has served as head of the Photography Department at the Bezalel Academy of Art. Kratsman's work has been shown at venues including the 2003 Venice Biennale; the 2006 Sao Paulo Biennale; MARCO, Vigo, Spain,

2006; The Jewish Museum, New York; the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Santiago, Chile; the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art; Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Witte de With, Rotterdam; ARCO Madrid, Spain; Media City, Seoul; the Ursula Blicke Foundation, Germany; Museum for Contemporary Art, Castilla y Leon, Spain; La Virreina, Barcelona; among others. Kratsman is the recipient of the Emet Prize for Science, Art, and Culture (2011), and the fifth recipient of the Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography, Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University (2011).

**Olga Kundina** was born in Moscow and has been living in Israel since 1990. She studied art at the Graphic Institute, Moscow. Her work has been exhibited in Israel at Rosenfeld Gallery, the Museums of Bat Yam, and the Museum of Beersheva, among other venues.

**Anna Lukashevsky** was born in Vilnius, Lithuania in 1975 and immigrated to Israel in 1997. Currently based in Haifa, Lukashevsky finished her studies at the Bezalel Academy of Art and later at Hamidrasha Art School. For several years, she worked on conceptual drawings and installations, later joining the New Barbizon group in 2011. Since then, she has focused on painting and drawing from observation, particularly in the form of portraits. She is interested in the precise interpretation of characters from everyday life, as well as from the surrounding art scene.

**Asya Lukin** lives and works in Jerusalem. She is a member of the New Barbizon group, and is a film director at Sharaban stop-motion animation studio. She studied in the Bezalel Academy of Art, École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and the Royal College of Art and the Prince's Drawing School in London. She works in both painting and stop motion animation, attempting to depict the nuances of human gesture, the movement of nature, and street life. Her films have been screened in London at the Institute of Contemporary Art, White Chapel Gallery, the Prince of Wales Foundation, Pushkin House, Sotheby's, and the National Theatre; and internationally at the Ottawa Film Festival, the Zagreb Film Festival, the Krakow Festival, Leipzig Doc, Dresden Film Festival, Krok Film Festival, and many others. Her paintings were exhibited at Ha-Negev Museum Beersheva and the Museums of Bat Yam in Israel; and Manezh Exhibition Hall in St. Petersburg. Her films have been nominated for the British Animation Awards, and she has received several prizes, including the Passion Pictures Prize, London; Best International Puppet Animation at the London International Animation Festival; and Best Direction, Multivision, St. Petersburg. She received the Winsor Newton Prize for the Best Drawing, UK, and was granted the Prince's Bursary in Drawing from the Prince of Wales Foundation, UK.

**Ido Michaeli** was born in Israel in 1980, and is currently based in New York. He holds an M.F.A and a B.Des degree from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. Michaeli has had solo exhibitions in Israel at Rosenfeld Gallery, HaKibbutz Gallery, and The Gallery of Hamidrasha School of Art. He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions at the Herzliya Museum, Ashdod Museum, Neues Museum, the Israeli Center for Digital Art, and more. Michaeli is the recipient of awards and grants from the Israeli Ministry of Culture, The Fund for Video Art and Experimental Cinema, the Rabinovich Foundation, and ArtPort. His work is in several private and public collections including the Israel Museum and the Herzliya Museum of Art.

**Eli Petel** was born in 1974 in Israel and is currently based in Tel Aviv. He studied at Cooper Union and the Bezalel Academy of Art. His work has been shown at international venues including the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Jewish Museum, Berlin; and in Israel at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Ein Harod Museum of Art, Herzliya Museum of Art, Haifa Museum of Art, Art TLV, and the Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem. He was awarded the El Hanani Prize by the

Bezalel Academy of Art & Design, a Sharet Foundation Scholarship and the Klatchkin Prize from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, the Dizengoff Prize by the City of Tel Aviv, the Rapaport Prize by the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and the Young Israeli Prize by the Ministry of Culture.

**Roe Rosen** is an Israeli-American artist, filmmaker, and writer. Rosen's painting and text installation, *Live and Die as Eva Braun* (1995-1997), caused a scandal when first exhibited at The Israel Museum, but was later recognized as groundbreaking and exhibited in Berlin, New York, and Warsaw. In 2012, the project was part of Rosen's solo exhibition at the Institute of International Visual Arts (INIVA), London. Rosen has dedicated years to cultivating a fictive feminine persona, the Jewish-Belgian Surrealist painter and pornographer, Justine Frank, through a project that entailed fabricating her entire oeuvre, as well as writing biographical and theoretical texts about her, and a novel she supposedly authored. Rosen's book, *Justine Frank, Sweet Sweat* (Sternberg Press) was listed as one of the best books of 2009 by *Artforum* magazine. In 2008, "Frank's" retrospective was exhibited at Extra-City, in "her native town," Antwerp. In Rosen's video project, *The Confessions of Roe Rosen* (2008), the artist's supposed confessions are delivered in Hebrew by three surrogates: illegal female foreign workers who do not understand the language. *Confessions* premiered at the FIDMarseille Festival, where it won a special mention, and was later shown worldwide, including at Manifesta 7. In 2010, Rosen created two films, *Hilarious and Out*, in which a BDSM session becomes a political exorcism. *Out* premiered at the Venice Film Festival, where it won the Orizzonti Award for best medium-length film. The film went on to win several awards, including a nomination for a European Academy Award. In 2012, the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival profiled Rosen's work.

**Natalia Zourabova** lives and works in Tel Aviv. She was born in Moscow in 1975, and graduated with a B.F.A. from the Russian Theater Art Academy in 2000, and from the University of the Arts, Berlin in 2003. In 2011, Zourabova together with four others founded the New Barbizon group. Her paintings have been exhibited internationally at venues such as the PERMM Museum and the Iragui Gallery in Russia; Les Salaisons, France; and the Vasteromland Museum, Sweden. In Israel, her work was exhibited at the Mediterranean Biennale in Sakhnin, the Negev Museum of Art, the Bat Yam Museum of Art, Janco Dada Museum of Art, the We Festival 2013; Rosenfeld Gallery, and Noga Gallery. She has received numerous prizes, fellowships, and residency grants from the Pro Helvetia Foundation, Switzerland; Kultur AXE, Austria; Art Factory Bat Yam; Igal Ahouvi Art Collection; and the Valand School of Fine Art, Sweden.

**Chen Tamir is Curator at the Center for Contemporary Art in Tel Aviv. Her previous positions include Executive Director of Flux Factory, Program Manager at Artis, and Program Associate at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School. She has curated exhibitions in numerous venues internationally, including Art in General and White Box in New York; the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Saskatchewan, the University of Toronto's Justina Barnicke Gallery, and Gallery TPW in Canada; and the Israeli Center for Digital Art and Museums of Bat Yam in Israel. Chen holds an M.A. from the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College; a B.F.A. in Visual Art; and a B.A. in Anthropology from York University.**



Shai Ignatz, *WIZO Women, Australia*, 2009, C-print, 35.4 × 23.5 inches, edition 1 of 6



Ido Michaeli, *Ethiopian Curtain of the Ark*, 2012, cotton (embroidery), 78.7 × 98.4 inches



Zoya Cherkassky, *The Ceaper Buing*, 2013, 31.5 × 23.5 inches, oil on canvas



Inbal Abergil, *Station*, 2004, C-print, 23.6 × 31.5 inches, edition 3 of 5 + 2 AP

## Centrifuge

October 1, 2013–February 28, 2014  
The Nathan Cummings Foundation  
New York  
Presented by Artis  
Curated by Chen Tamir



Miki Kratsman, from *The Archive* series, 2010–2012, inkjet print, 11.7 × 16.5 inches, edition of 10



Anisa Ashkar, *We Shall Meet On One Of The Days With The Long Shadow*, 2004, photograph on PVC, 39.3 × 47.2 inches, edition 4 of 10



Anna Lukashevsky, *Ola Hadassa*, 2013, oil on canvas, 39 × 31.5 inches



Luciana Kaplun, *Ella, La Telenovela*, 2011, video, 15:00 min, edition of 5 + 2 AP



Through the work of 16 artists, *Centrifuge*<sup>1</sup> takes a parallax view of contemporary life in Israel; different facets of society come into focus depending on one’s position or perspective. As the world’s gathering place for the Jewish Diaspora, Israel is a refuge for many and ghetto for some. Yet, despite a strong nationalist identity, its contemporary society is fragmented and fraught, a complex mosaic of cultures, religions and ethnicities. Within this faded promise of a utopia, there exist vying centrifugal forces that push some communities to the peripheries, while others emerge at its core. Rather than depicting Israel as a uniform or stable place, the works presented in *Centrifuge* suggest we examine the country’s many diverse, colorful edges in order to gain a better understanding of it as a whole. From the religious traditions of the Ethiopian-Jewish community, the experiences of Latin American and African migrant workers, the contested histories of mixed Palestinian-Jewish cities such as Jaffa and Lod, and the powerful influence of international philanthropists, the works in *Centrifuge* span a range of lenses through which to see life in this rich and complex corner of the world.

Acting as a pivot for the concept of the centrifuge, the exhibition begins with a hand-made camera by **Aïm Deüelle Lüski**. *The Wine Barrel Camera* allows for one piece of horizontally laid Ektachrome film to be exposed to 16 surrounding pinholes simultaneously. Detielle Lüski’s cameras are site-specific; he builds each one to suit the context he wishes to photograph. *The Wine Barrel Camera* was custom-built to photograph the large pedestrian square outside the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, which is surrounded by the municipal library, the central Court of Justice, and the *Kiryat*, the central administrative military base in Israel. The round wine barrel camera can, almost like a panopticon, survey the symbolic centers of cultural, educational, judicial, and military power in Israel all at once. The result is an abstracted image, with light shining on the horizontal film plane from many directions. Their streaks resemble arms, as if each of the symbolic centers of power (museum, library, courthouse, and army base) were grabbing at an elusive center. Of course, the image can be read in the opposite way, where forces are scattering out from the center. This very dichotomy – the gravitational symbiosis between center and edge – is the key metaphor underlying *Centrifuge*.

Standing in for the international philanthropic community, the women in **Shai Ignatz’s** photographs offer an endearing, though somewhat disturbing portrait of an important satellite group. The Women’s International Zionist Organization (wizo) is popular among middle-aged and mature Jewish women in English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. Run by volunteers, wizo was founded in 1920 to serve the needs of women and children in Israel. Ignatz’s honest portraits bring to light the eccentricities and vulnerabilities of these women. His work often focuses on the cultural codes of conduct of those looking for love and connection, such as his well-known project featuring men tucked away in a notorious gay cruising park. This series shares with the wizo women an awkward self-presentation that speaks to the human need for belonging.

The four works from the *Astrological Paranoid Series*, 2006–2008 feature a glimmering night sky in which the astrological constellations display cryptic texts such as “I was killed by Putin” or images of foreboding iconography like two double-headed eagles. These works were purportedly made by Maxim Komar-Myshkin, the pseudonym of Efim Poplavsky, a Russian poet and artist who immigrated to Israel in 2003. Shortly after his arrival, he founded an art collective of former Russian artists called

“The Buried Alive” group who claim to hate all societies and refuse to integrate into Israeli culture, as their manifesto states:

*We left our bloody land for an entirely different bloody land. We landed in the oriental Jewish State, mostly because it would let us slip in. But that place demanded us to change, to transform, to evolve, to learn a new language and accept new values – to assimilate. How ridiculous! We disavowed our identity, sure, yes, of course – but we have no intention of assuming another!*

Caught in a cultural limbo, the fictional Komar-Myshkin is plagued by paranoia, unable to escape his past life in Russia. He believes the Russians are after him, and finds no peace in his new home, Israel. An allegory for the dystopia of immigration, this series, and in fact the entire premise of the work, is the product of artist **Roee Rosen’s** imaginative mind. Rosen created the fictional Poplavsky, who in turn took on the pseudonym of Komar-Myshkin. Identities trapped within projected identities, and an allegorical battle over assimilation – both the inability to assimilate and the resistance against it – are trademarks for Roee Rosen, whose earlier major body of work revolved around the fictional character Justine Frank, a French Holocaust survivor and artist. Rosen’s work is a clever and complex exploration of the Other, the newcomer, who is swept into Israel by circumstance, but who does not buy into utopian delusion and wants no part in its nationalism.

Acting as a foil to Rosen’s fictional “Buried Alive” group, the five artists who comprise the **New Barbizon** group take to the gritty streets of urban Israel and paint with gusto the life around them. Their own immigration from the former Soviet Union has made them sensitive to the challenges of integrating into Israeli society. While each lives in a different city or town, they often come together to paint *en-plein-air* like their namesakes before them (the Barbizon group who defied the romanticism of 19th century Paris by going out of the studio to paint real life scenes). The selection of works here features paintings from each artist’s individual practice. For example, **Olga Kundina’s** *The Cleaning Person* captures a moment at Tel Aviv’s Central Bus Station, a hub for the many foreign workers who live in Israel and who have come from Africa, Asia and South America. The station itself can be read as a sort of centrifuge, functioning as a temporary hub for people to come together and disperse geographically. **Anna Lukashovsky’s** *Ola Hadasha* (New Immigrant) is a touching portrait of a new immigrant to Israel, posed between her Apple laptop and a colorful painting of an African woman as if to symbolize the forces of globalization, technology, and the complexity of representation and identity. Duplicity is abundant in this painting, starting with the two electrical plugs of which the ola has chosen to be plugged into the left. Her legs seem to be of slightly varying hues, the one at the forefront, nearer to the computer, is lighter (and also sports a tattoo), while the darker leg is in the background, closer in tone to the painting of the African woman behind her. **Zoya Cherkassky’s** *The Ceaper Buing* features an unmistakably Israeli scene, with a Hasidic Jew and a presumably Ethiopian-Israeli young man crossing a street, while a dainty woman rides by on a scooter. Behind them, a minimarket with a misspelled name attests to their shared economic reality. **Natalia Zourabova’s** *Nargilla House in Jaffa* and **Asya Lukin’s** *West Jerusalem* are both vivid examples of paintings featuring former biblical cities that now bustle with vibrant and diverse public life.

**Luciana Kaplun’s** *Ella, La Telenovela* is a segment of a fictional Latin American-style soap opera, or *telenovela*, centered on a mysterious maid who never actually makes an appearance. The actors are foreign workers who have legally or illegally come to Israel for work. Through dialogue and improvisational rehearsals, Kaplun combined their personal stories into a fictive narrative, which they in turn act out. The class dynamics at play in this video are especially poignant considering the intertwined relationship with the maid, Ella. Her name translates in Hebrew to “goddess,” but is more commonly understood in Spanish as “her” or “she.” The ironic undertone, of course, is that here the foreign workers are playing the role of the privileged bourgeoisie and they are the “she,” the “Other,” working menial, thankless jobs in service of Israel’s middle class population.

**Ido Michaeli’s** three-part project, *Ethiopian Curtain of the Ark*, explores the religious mythology of Ethiopian Jews through the prism of their contemporary experiences in Israel. The large tapestry, *Curtain of the Ark*, was embroidered at the Almaz Factory in Lod, and the plant manager Aviva Almaz Rachamim recounts in the accompanying video the story of Ethiopian Jewry. Exhibited alongside the curtain and video are 16

drawings by Michaeli that illustrate the famous Biblical story, wherein the Queen of Sheba traveled to Jerusalem to meet King Solomon, and returned to Ethiopia carrying their son, Menelik, who headed the Solomonic dynasty. On a visit to his father, Menelik took the Ark of the Covenant back to Ethiopia with him and it remains a central element in Ethiopian Jewish culture. Most Ethiopian Jews came to Israel in the 1980s and 1990s via organized immigration waves and like other groups of immigrants, they contend with the challenges of balancing their unique cultural heritage with the pressures of assimilation into Israeli society. Like generations of craftspeople creating Judaica objects, these Ethiopian-Israelis actively produce the symbols of their evolving national identity.

In **Orit Ben-Shitrit’s** *Y’lem* series, traditional perspective and horizontal planes are broken by using mirrors, flips, collage, and multiple focal points, illustrating concepts of fragmentation and dispersal through formal means. Like Aïm Deüelle Lüski, who challenges the verticality and cohesive surface of the photographic plane, Ben-Shitrit’s work is kaleidoscopic, resisting any stable composition in favor of scattered richness. Against this fragmented backdrop, all three images feature dismembered heads – a Roman stone female bust stares at herself through eerie montage, another sideways bust overlooks a panorama of the city, and a portion of a photo of a man riding a donkey has been flipped so that his head is upside-down. Beneath the donkey is the Hebrew word “betzelem,” which means “in the image of God” – but here the word is cropped and mirrored so that it actually reads “ke’ilem” – meaning “as if mute.” By simply reorienting the image, the male figure is stripped of the power to speak, and like the stone woman in the adjacent work, he reflects the cycle of domination and victimization that repeats throughout Israel’s history.

**Eli Petel’s** *Untitled & Detail Untitled* is based on the difficulties the artist encountered streaming the news on his computer. Due to poor Internet connection, several frames were frozen on his screen, simultaneously depicting the trial of former Israeli President Moshe Katsav, Pope John Paul II’s visit to Israel, a sporting event and an image of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. Petel captured the image on his computer screen and subsequently painted it on canvas. In the final phase of the work, he photographed the painted image and printed it, before destroying the painting itself. Petel’s confusion while watching the online newscast is captured in his process of layering painting and photography. Petel’s inadvertent editing of events and images produced a new and hybrid reality made possible by the glut of imagery in Israel’s media-saturated society. Such disjunction in this work is not simply a media glitch; it poignantly reflects Israel’s splintered political life and the many representations of it.

Another artist keenly interested in the circulation of media images is **Miki Kratsman**, who has worked for decades as one of Israel’s most distinguished photojournalists. His mammoth project, *The Archive*, consists of re-photographing his own pictures that have been printed in various newspapers throughout the years. By bringing to the fore the very texture of these images, including folds in the pages and bleed-through shadows from the back of the newsprint, Kratsman interrogates the way knowledge is produced and disseminated. These images have circulated through Israeli social life and shaped the way current events and collective identities are understood. *The Archive* points to the composition of Israeli society, the myths and social constructs that propel it, and the impossibility of its representation. These images ultimately cannot fully recount a solid or stable story on a national level nor personal level. No image can truly do that; it can, at best, act as an illustration or a partial document. This selection of works from *The Archive* offers a small but considered assortment of images that attempt to present a broad view of human experience in Israel, including those shaped by its complex ethnic and class divisions.

**Inbal Abergil** also uses photography to investigate the fissures within Israeli society. For her series *Station*, Abergil photographed bus stations all over the country. Buses are the predominant form of public transportation in Israel and are responsible for ushering its inhabitants to and from its main cities, enabling the symbiosis of center and periphery. Here, however, Abergil presents these stations as completely abandoned, alluding to absence or loss, dotting the Israeli landscape in all its banal beauty and ongoing decay. Buses hold an important space in the Israeli psyche because of years of suicide bomb attacks targeting public buses. Some of these stations have been transformed into makeshift memorials, more likely to victims of traffic accidents than terrorists. Nonetheless, these “stages” for waiting function as barometers of public sentiment, displaying graffiti that ranges from innocuous to blatantly racist.

Also acting as a type of platform from which to project ideas and sentiments, **Anisa Ashkar’s** face is like a canvas that changes each day. Her work is rooted in a daily practice of facial calligraphy written in Arabic, a performative ritual enacted by Ashkar to outwardly express her Palestinian identity. This daily gesture is inspired by notions of female independence and strength, and is woven into her performances and photographs; for example, *Agria Matia* was inspired by the tragic Greek figure of Medusa, which she depicted in her performance *In a Twinkle of an Eye*. The writing on her face reads, “It is time to come, I, who is coming soon. Sleep and death are one.” Resolved to her destiny, Medusa was a powerful monster whose face had the power to kill merely by being seen, making it a fitting talisman for Ashkar. As seen in the adjacent suite of works, her drawings are an extension of her daily calligraphic practice. As the focal point of the face, the eye is adorned on paper with the earthy blackness of tar instead of eyeliner or face paint.

**Dor Guez** is another artist whose ethnic identity is central to his practice. Guez was born to a mixed Jewish and Palestinian-Christian family in the ethnically diverse town of Lod (or Lydd in Arabic). Lydd was taken over by military forces in 1948 during Israel’s War of Independence (or Palestinian *Nakba*, the “Day of Catastrophe”), and the majority of its Palestinian inhabitants fled or were forcibly displaced. Over the past several decades, many buildings in Lod that were originally Arab homes have fallen to ruin and have become overgrown with vegetation. In *Lydd Ruins*, a series of photographs taken with only the light available from the surrounding city, Guez captures these architectural remnants through a sublime, idyllic lens. The photographs provide a stark contrast to the realities of contemporary Lod, a poverty-stricken town now known for its drug trafficking and its proximity to the airport. Guez’s quixotic works are full of nostalgia for a past that is quite literally hidden in plain sight.

— Chen Tamir

# ארתיס ארטיס artis

**Special thanks to Persis Singh, Artis Program Director, for her collaboration and for co-organizing this exhibition. This project would not have been possible without its initiation by Sonia Simon Cummings and Ruth Cummings; the invaluable partnership of Maurine Knighton and Brandi Stewart; and installation by Elisa Pritzker and Todd Brannon from Pritzker Studio.**

Artis is an independent nonprofit organization that broadens international awareness and understanding of contemporary visual art from Israel. We provide important resources, programs and platforms for artists and art professionals to develop lasting partnerships and exchanges with the global art community and the general public. Artis launched in 2004 and is based in New York, with branches in Los Angeles and Tel Aviv. Our activities include: Public Programs in New York, Los Angeles and Tel Aviv; the Artis Grant and Scholarship program; Research Trips to Israel for Professionals and Collectors; Professional Development Initiatives; and our online resource, artiscontemporary.org.

THE NATHAN CUMMINGS FOUNDATION

The Nathan Cummings Foundation is rooted in the Jewish tradition and committed to democratic values and social justice, including fairness, diversity, and community. It seeks to build a socially and economically just society that values and protects the ecological balance for future generations; promotes humane health care; and fosters arts and culture that enriches communities.

**artiscontemporary.org**  
**nathancummings.org**

<sup>[1]</sup> From Latin, “to flee from the center.”