

The Museum Takes Off with Efrat Galnoor

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Can a landscape drawing, whose object is the landscape of the very museum that exhibits that drawing, initiate the destabilization of the codes that position the museum, artist and art work in traditional settings of the art field? Could a drawing initiate a political moment of subversion before the museological practice and art discourse have an opportunity to digest it?

The landscape drawings of Efrat Galnoor, which were dripped and brushstroked skillfully on the canvases along her journey towards an exhibition in Ramat-Gan Museum, embody in their materiality this load of tension and contradiction.

When Galnoor turns the museum into the object of her exhibition, *Landscape with Museum and Gunpost*, she exceeds the pattern of museological exhibiting in which landscape drawings allude to different and remote locations rather than the exhibition's site. I will delineate my interpretation of the exhibition as a move that embodies dynamic political potential, rooted in a tangled system of relations between the museum as an exhibiting institution and the artist who wishes to enter its gates as she turns it into her object of representation; between the act of drawing and the art field's arrangements that wish to fence the image within partitions of authority, meaning, place and practice; and between the city museum – The Ramat-Gan Museum – and the city and the city landscapes that surround it.

My interpretation will also suggest that a reflexive measure in Galnoor's works re-presents this entangled relationship system and aims at harrowing its stable arrangements and partitions – if only for the temporal flickering moment of an aesthetic experience.

In her drawing series, Galnoor meticulously delineates a system of productive rituals that functions as stabilizers of movement, bodily locations and points of view through which the image of the museum and its surroundings will secrete to the canvas' surface. These rituals which she created led her body and gaze towards different lanes and locations: along one of the main thoroughfares leading from Tel-Aviv and the Tel-Aviv Museum of Art to Ramat-Gan Museum – Aba Hillel Silver; in front of the sharpened façade of the museum's building; with her back to the building's eastern rear wall; and in circled movement around a spot on its roof facing

the museum surrounds. Yet Galnoor's gaze does not consume the museum as just an outdoor landscape. In one of her series she draws the modes of consuming landscape images inside the museum. The body of works in the exhibition wishes to make present, thus, the two sides of the canvas: on the one hand, the various evidences of the bodily-sensual absorption process of the city and the museum landscapes which assemble on the surface of the art work; and on the other hand, the museological practice – behind the canvas – that desires to amass and appropriate the landscape drawings and the artist to location, practices and discourse borders that maintain the partitions and arrangements' order: the landscape artist draws a different place –not the museum – and the museum enables its visibility and stabilizes the meanings attributed to the place drawn, to the drawing and to the artist's location in the field of art. By turning the museum – both its indoors and outdoors – into an object of the drawings, disrupted is the coded assimilation of art works in general and landscape drawing in particular in the hierarchal mechanisms of the art world.

Nevertheless, within these designed regularities and strict rituality, Galnoor leaves openings through which excesses of reality and imagination are absorbed into her art work, and her drawing-hand gestures pierce via their exceptionality, disrupting the firm rituals and subverting their determination. These disrupted and disrupting series – aware and made salient – ultimately land inside the museum, wishing to strip and rock it from within, while navigating its imagined location in the city as both central and marginal all at once.

In the panorama ***Aba Hillel 146***, Galnoor sets her movement track along the Aba Hillel Silver street beginning in the diamond exchange area – close to the border between Tel-Aviv and Ramat-Gan – and ending at the museum building at 146 Aba Hillel Silver street. Along this path the landscapes of the two sides of the road were photographed in a measured manner, and with this photographed setup the panorama was drawn on the canvas with the museum in the middle, and the two street banks stretch from its sides, reaching the towers of the diamond exchange area.

But within the desire to faithfully represent the path towards a yearned-for destination with a meticulous walk-photographing ritual, a rift was opened – spatial and conscious – that strained both the centrality of the museum in the city and the coherence and continuity of the course that leads towards it. The building's locational centrality in the midst of the panorama was also

damaged as its sharpened façade was dissected by a spacing between two different canvases that were hanged loosely on the museum's wall. This spacing restores the dimension of the sharp framing effect of the photographs cutting, the structured impossibility of a realistic representation of the real, as well as the imaginative power of the eye and hand to fence in the landscape and control its imagining. In this conflicting move, the museum –which was initially the target of the ritual journey– was cracked open.

The coherence of the road to the museum was also interrupted. The rhythmic photographing wished to institutionalize the experience of pilgrimage and assemble it into the module of tower-street-museum-street-tower. Nonetheless, this module and the bodily ritual that structures it failed to create a sequence to the route that leads to the museum building. Galnoor creates within her work a mechanism that offers her work a platform upon which to rest, and simultaneously ruptures it with gestures and content that cannot be contained in this platform's confines. The imagined sequence of the path leading to the museum is undermined by the sliced images that she locates one next to the other, on the spaced canvases. Even though she forms the city and the street as planned sequences – or as structured moves in an artistic carrier – Galnoor becomes a hostage of minor humane interferences that burst out to the street segments and obtain hyperbolic visibility on the canvas. These are the blasting pink fireworks that the palm tree becomes, the cypresses framework that wraps a building, the shadows of vegetation on the balcony plastic sheds, green synthetic fabric-sheets that stretch on high scaffolds turning into green splashes on surrounding building images, and the close-up of building materials that lean against a pillar. This process of determination and its disruption in the work of art simulates the processes of creating urban space. Like the controlled ritual that Galnoor designed for documenting the city and the road that crosses it to the museum, so too has the city been established via powerful planning that designs and forms it from “above”; like the segments of the real and the excessive painterly gestures that burst onto the canvas, so do minor acts of everyday life reshape the city in chaotic gestures from “below”. It seems that these everyday gestures take over the drawing and prevent the panorama from representing a coherent urban route that leads to the museum's building. In the urban order of the panorama, the museum's façade is split and the temporal urban landscapes subvert the laws of both drawing and city planning. The temporal presences and stains are holding onto the ritual orderings and thus resist assembling into the logic of the realistic drawing as well as of the city as a planned, controlled scheme. In *Aba Hillel 146* the

possibility of a stable location for the museum in the city, in the libidinal mechanisms of the artist and in the imaginative power of the art, is dissolved.

In the triptych *The Museum Takes Off*, the museum building escapes its instability in the panorama and is relocated in a central urban location as an object of an exhibition and of artist's desire. With a visual stratagem of façade spreading the museum escapes its narrow lengthened lot. As the building gains an obtuse angle in the drawing, it becomes wide open and occupies a central place in the city swelling up in its back. In an elevating move of extraordinary expertise in color and painterly manipulation of the visualization laws, the drawing carries the spectator away to a transcendental height and width that by this ironic gesture escapes its location on the fringes of Tel-Aviv's art center and the everyday landscapes that threatened its authoritative presence in the panorama. This gesture makes the spectator experience the instigating political potential of the artwork that can either exclude its object or augment it; that signifies the excessiveness and precedence of the imagining power over the institute that desires to control and codify it.

In the diptych *Behind the Museum*, Galnoor gets closer to the institute, stands with her back to the eastern wall, and concentrates her gaze on the closer surroundings. At the left edge a one-floor house is located, with several additions piled all over, and on the right edge stands a standard Israeli apartment building. Between the buildings an empty lot slopes downwards from the head of an elevated hill. On the hilltop some green stains suggest agricultural landscapes, and above them are brush-stroked clear light-blue skies stretches in which light silhouettes of buildings are soaked. The museum does not inspire its institutional authority on this fragmented semi-agricultural urbanity that seems to bend over it with its emptiness and peripherality.

The artist gets even closer when she is located on the museum's rooftop, where she creates two different series. The series *Observation Tables* is based on nine photographs that were taken from the roof with an aperture adjuster opened to the point that their urban images were burnt. In the drawings of these images the museum surroundings have gone through an extreme abstraction and their identifying details, coloristic properties and urbanity dissolve. In the museum space the drawings were installed in a circle, laid in an almost horizontal angle as a projection of the locations from which the photographs were taken on the roof. The placing seeks faithfulness to the event of photography, and echoes the indexial installation of maps in

observatories that indicate time and action layers in the landscape, their meaning-giving or their camouflage. The *Observation Tables* installation seeks to designate the museum's factuality and indisputability, "right here", in the middle, while the drawings act in an extreme counter-movement of exposure and abstraction of the site's presence. On the one hand, the museum surroundings are portrayed as intangible; and on the other hand the radial installation creates a presence experience for the person that stands in it. Thus Galnoor simultaneously obliterates the city and attaches it to the distinct location of the museum in it, and to its capacity to include its citizens inside it.

The second roof series *360 degrees* – a series of round, centripetal drawings on paper – was drawn by Galnoor from a distinct point on the museum's roof, directly on the paper, one drawing a day. The landscape slices were drawn as she rotates her body and the easel in fixed angles around an imagined pivot on the roof, while another rotation of the paper was added, around another imagined pivot on the sheet's center. This series is the most meticulous one in its attempt at faithfulness to the real: it was made out of a direct gaze towards the landscape without the mediation of photography; it was done from a fixed point and with colors faithful to the real – each day and its exclusive light that changed this day's drawing. But this strict ritual was disturbed, again, by the imaginative power of the artwork that rather than by representing the surrounding landscape it re-presents the iterated centered positionality of the artist in the middle of sight and movement circles. Every day this centered presence yielded a different set of seams of the supposed identical landscape slices; it wraps together place, presence and action, congesting them into an aesthetic whirled pleasure that ends with a transcendental gesture to the museum and its settings that exceeded beyond the viability of stable positioning or identification.

In a counter-movement to all of the other series, *A4* assembles the exhibition to its close with images of children's guiding scenes in an art museum. With a technique of copying footages above carbon paper placed on light-blue painted canvases, the dominant colorfulness of Galnoor is nullified. In this series the conceptualization of the works, their dubbing, labeling and consuming, threatens to melt the active agency of the artistic act.

The Ramat Gan Museum hosts Galnoor's works, and at the same time these very works besiege this institution in the tension and contradiction between blowing, empowering, and dissection; between concealing, exceeding, and presence. With abundance of bodily and painterly moves

and strategies, and with her deep knowledge of contexts, allusions and drawing gestures, Galnoor's works locate and shift alternately the imagined location of the Ramat-Gan Museum in the city and her positions vis-a-vis this institution: on the way towards it, in front of it, behind it, on top of it, and within it. The installing of a museum's landscape drawings inside a museum is a contradictory act, of doubling and re-presentation on the one hand; and a tough control game of positioning on the other. Thus the drawings fissure the manner in which the museum is traditionally imagined; they instruct and re-imagine locations, authorities, terms of spectatorship and hierarchies that tend to be consolidated in the art field. And while re-imagining, the drawings embody the political power of the art work to destabilize – even if only temporarily – the field's institutions and discourse.

The execution of the political potential in Galnoor's canvases does not amount to an ironic play of locations and positions. Rather, it creates a reflexive signification of the arts' imagining power, which exists in the tension and contradiction between the structured performativity and its excesses in her work. The reflexive utterance transmits on the one hand a ritual stratum that acts as an infrastructure upon which the work is planned and performed. On the other hand, it represents the fissuring of this rituality with the poietic move that opens beyond the ritual's law and gives in to excesses of the real and the imagined, thereby initiating the art experience. Despite the enactment of the political imagination Galnoor also re-presents via her reflexive acts her uncertainties concerning the possibility of initiating reshufflings in the art field. Thus, in her **A4** series, artworks are imagined as subjugated to museological practices of instruction. It seems that the drawings continuously spin around a subverting act—and a repeating subversion of that very act. The striking sensual experience that her images offer us, and her humility, are affording us to be here, physically in the museum, straddling between enjoyment and contradiction.