

The Unphotographed | Shirley Wegner

Curator: Maya Frenkel Tene | 23.5.19–29.6.19

"Landscape exerts a subtle power over people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify. The indeterminacy of affect seems, in fact, to be a crucial feature of whatever power landscape can have." (W.J.T. Mitchell)

The visual power of a landscape, as that of the photographed image, has been at the core of Shirley Wegner's work for nearly two decades. Her work displays seemingly familiar landscapes that begin with an extensive, painstaking craft-based process and end with an image that reveals the means of its own making. Images that stem from personal and collective memory feed the landscapes, which are constructed as a scene within the studio walls. Each project is a result of an indexical and historical investigation into Israel's charged landscapes that are imprinted into the personal and collective consciousness. The re-creation of the landscape in large-scale in the studio and its construction from mundane and readily available materials in a meticulous craft, become analogical to the act of seeing itself: it captures the landscape in our consciousness and imbues it with a territorial dimension. The model, perpetuated at the end of the process with a photograph, comes to life and is validated as real. In the final image, which contains traces of the act of assembly, are exposed the means of the model's construction, like fishing wires, that are used for hanging many of the elements. This undermines the illusory nature of the image and its wholeness as a place.

The preoccupation with the photographed image and the methods of its creation expands and delves deeper in this current exhibition. The new works focus on the conditions of observation itself, particularly on moments where our vision is disrupted. Wegner explores the material, ontological, and autonomous photographic space. Apart from investigating the imprint of landscape, the means and conditions of the image's making are recreated alongside the traces left by the photographic apparatus, through the technical errors and failure that become visible. The piece "Eucalyptus Test Print 5/10/15/20/25 Seconds" for instance, refers to the exposure of a photographic paper to light, a process carried out in a darkroom. In the "Sensor Failure" photographs, the

landscape imagery is erased, and, in its stead, the visual errors associated with the sensor of the digital camera are recreated in the studio in detail (these also reference abstract painting). Wegner uses manual means to reconstruct the malfunctions related to vision and to processes of light exposure, whether on film or in the sensor. In so doing she invites the viewer to experience and question the space between the lens and the image, and to observe the landscape through a veil made of a collection of "photographic errors." The series "Flaneuring / Details", features small photographs that are the result of a one-time action that took place in the sets. The term "detail" here, borrowed from the art field to describe a close-up of a reproduction of art, is fictitious here. It is an independent image that is not visible to the viewer in the original photograph.

The video installation "Phenakistoscope" reveals the original set as it was constructed in the studio and for the first time, moves it into the gallery space. The familiar image of a eucalyptus grove and the breeze blowing through the leaves strums the heartstrings and evokes an opaque, blurred, long-lost and nostalgic memory. Slowly the viewer is made aware of the photographic props, the backdrop, and the artificial background noises that while they allow for the illusion to take place, they also shatter it.

Shirley Wegner (born 1969) is a multidisciplinary artist focusing on photography. She is an honorary graduate of Yale University School of Art (MFA, 2002) and of Hamidrasha School of Art (B.Ed., 1994). She is a recent recipient of The Ministry of Culture and Sports Prize for studio scholarship (2017). Her works have been exhibited throughout the United States, Europe, and Israel, among others at The Islip Art Museum, New York, at The Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Goch Museum, Germany, Farideh Cadot Gallery, Paris and Slag Gallery, New York. Her works are included in many private and museum collections, such as the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and the Gogh Museum, Germany. Wegner teaches at Shenkar Multidisciplinary Art School and Minshar School of Art. This is her second exhibition with Rosenfeld Gallery.