

The Moshava Museum, after Eran Shamir, Mazkeret Batya

Shirley Wegner, Mechanics of Sloughing

Curator: Ilanit Arkin-Kish

11.4.2024 - 30.6.2024

The exhibition "Mechanics of Sloughing" is a solo exhibition by the artist Shirley Wegner, created as part of a residency program marking 140 years of the establishment of Mazkeret Batya's old colony, and inspired by the collections and early buildings of the historical museum. Situated between present and past, the exhibition seem to expose and reveal to us a hunter and forty year old layers that coated buildings, mechanisms, and local trees. Through an quasi-archaeological act, the artist disassembles and re-assembles different layers in the exhibition space. Similar to an animal shedding its old skin to reveal a new one, Wegner creates an alternative layering of these historical strata. Her multi-layered artworks allow us to experience the passage of time, reflect on the reality we live in, and contemplate the future to come. Research that is based in disassembling and reassembling layers of time and different materials has been part of Wegner's ongoing process of investigation in her studio. When she first entered this space of the Levin Barracks, she saw in the peeling layers of paint sloughed-off materials exposing the historical structure - and this imagined image is what she recreated in her studio.

The exhibition features five chapters, showcased over both floors of the Levin Barracks - which was the original one of four residential buildings of Mazkeret Batya: "Scrolls (Eucalyptus)" is a series of three large-scale prints creating a pattern out of images of over 100-year-old eucalyptus tree sheds, surrounding the museum. "Sloughings" is a site-specific installation exhibited in the preserved back room of the Levin Barracks. Wegner documented the building's walls methodically, and from these photographs she created collages simulating their shedding. The "Father-Son Tongue" series offers hybrids and connectors between the original ploughs made by the first blacksmith of the colony (Levi Yitzchak Ashbal), and sculptures made by his son (Reuven Ashbal). Each plough and sculpture were photographed as a studio portrait, the photos were then cut and re-assembled to create surprising new machines, offering diverse and ambiguous meanings and functions. The machine became a dialectic space

bridging between father and son, between history and present, and between the idea of early settlement which often contradicted the creative act. The upper floor features the video "Time Modulator". This work follows the mechanisms of some of the main sites still remaining in the old colony. Through wandering in the wells and the decades-old blacksmith's shop collections, Wegner breathes life into the different mechanisms, and with deliberate intervention asks those mechanical systems, that had lain still for years, to shed layers of dust and time. Accelerating these machines, she activates the sites as water come up to the surface, bubbling, gurgling and spilling. The cinematography style takes inspiration from filmmaker Helmar Lerski's 1930s-40s films of the renewing agriculture in Israel, yet in contrast to the masculine, rigid, mobilized style, Wegner offers a softer, more contemporary gaze at those old mechanisms. The exhibition also invites to listen to voices of the past in the sound works "The Sounds We Do Not Hear". The works are featured in the Clerk's House, within the permanent exhibition of the Moshava Museum, imbuing many of the old objects with new life and meaning. The sound works were created in an artists workshop with the Art majors of the local high school.

Shirley Wegner is a multi-disciplinary artist focusing on photography. A graduate of Yale University's Master of Fine Arts program with distinction (2002). A graduate of Hamidrasha- school of Art n (1994), a recipient of the Encouragement of Creative Work Award from the Ministry of Culture (2017), and an alumna of several residency programs including Workspace at Donné Dieu Residency, New York (2009). Her works have been exhibited in the United States, Europe and Israel, among others at Goch Museum, Germany, Islip Art Museum New York, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Kallmann Museum Germany, Farideh Cadot Associés Gallery, Paris, Slag Gallery, New York. Her works are included in numerous museum and private collections, among others are the collection of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and the Goch Museum, Germany. These days her work is featured in a show at Mussrara Gallery, Jerusalem. Wegner is a lecturer at the Multidisciplinary Art Department at Shenkar and is represented by Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.