

The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery, 1 Haim Levanon St., Tel Aviv

The Towering Inferno

The Babylon Trilogy, Part 1

Works from the Igal Ahouvi Art Collection

Curator: Sarit Shapira

25/01/2014 – 30/05/2014

Opening Event: Saturday, 25.1.14, 8pm

The Babylon series will be presented as a trilogy of exhibitions featuring around 200 works from the Igal Ahouvi Art Collection. The trilogy serves as a touchstone for the pluralistic aspect already identified by the critical discourse as the mythical syndrome of “Babylon”, a syndrome that has spread in contemporary culture as a whole.

As in television series, in which each episode ends with a riddle (To be continued...), the exhibition’s different episodes will lead one into the other. The first episode in the trilogy will be shown in the exhibition “The Towering Inferno”, the second in the exhibition “Potent Wilderness” and the third in the exhibition “Melting Walls”. The trilogy is curated by Sarit Shapira, Curatorial Director of the Igal Ahouvi Art Collection.

The first exhibition will feature works by **Joseph Beuys, Avner Ben Gal, Yossi Berger, Chris Burden, Andreas Gursky, Tamar Getter, Moshe Gershuni, Dror Daum, Marlene Dumas, David Hammons, Jeff Wall, Nahum Tevet, Raffi Lavie, Tamir Lichtenberg, Moshe Ninio, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Haim Steinbach, Raymond Pettibon, Moshe Kupferman, Martin Kippenberger, David Claerbout, Neo Rauch, Cindy Sherman and others.**

The first episode, “The Towering Inferno”, deals with the various towers of the modernist age, such as the Eiffel Tower, towers in industrial structures, power towers, communications towers and skyscrapers, which often look like the desolate totems of an age in which their force has been spent and only their heavy shadow remains. What is left of that magnificent tower whose construction, usefulness and authority have come to an end? This is one of the central questions that the exhibition “The Towering Inferno” wishes to examine.

The exhibition “The Towering Inferno” joins the literary and critical writing on the “Babylon” syndrome and seeks to broaden the discussion based on the data, procedures and means of contemporary art. For instance, dropping sculpture to the floor – the move, identified by Rosalind Krauss, in which artists do not sculpt upwards but construct a horizontal sculptural environment. Cinema also serves as inspiration for the exhibition, in films that evoke the cinematic myth of ‘Babylon’, such as “The Towering Inferno” (1974) and “Blade Runner” (1982). As does the felling of the Twin Towers, with which received world orders and the West’s sense of hegemony disappeared in clouds of smoke. The biblical story about the city of Babel and its aborted construction and focusing (the obliteration or castration of the tower at its centre) will be embodied by desolate and centre-bereaved urban views: those

that have become the stages for barbaric rites, or those that look like giant ghost towns that have lost their hearts.

The second exhibition, “Potent Wilderness” (opening in May 2014) will deal with the applications and the potential concealed in the scorched earth left after the construction of the tower and its adjacent urban project had been stopped. That abandonment led to migration and exile (as in the Babylonian Exile), which led to longing on the one hand and a cultural renaissance (in the shape of the Babylonian Talmud) on the other. Blindness and seeing in the dark are also recurrent themes in the art discourse, which will be presented alongside the textual configurations of the Jewish-iconoclastic conception in images such as the Beth Midrash, the Jewish bookcase, the National Library or Jewish scholasticism embodied in the figure of Maimonides.

The third exhibition, “Melting Walls” (opening in September 2014) will present contemporary art’s treaty of hope. Works that signal their ability to climb back up the wall and take a position that softens and re-melts the borders of the architectural site. According to this episode, art may be able to build walls and re-scatter itself out of the pure pleasure of the senses and the imagination.

The trilogy will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue which will be published at the beginning of April 2014.

The Igal Ahouvi Art Collection, which has been in place for 10 years, illustrates the pluralistic aspect of contemporary art. Over the years the inquisitive collection has developed a special interest in conceptual art and its products. It includes canonical works and focuses on several prominent artists. The collection’s foray into the public sphere in a series of exhibitions will expose significant and important works to the general public while emphasizing the inquisitive side of the collection and collaborating with scholars and researchers from various areas.

The collection comprises around 1600 works, around 850 of which are works by Israeli artists, including: **Moshe Kupferman, Michal Heiman, Raffi Lavie, Moshe Gershuni, Nurit David, Gil Marco Shani, Avner Ben Gal, Tamar Getter, Elad Larom, Nahum Tevet, Olaf Kunman, Ori Gersht, Elham Rokni, Yigal Tumarkin, Ido Michaeli, Jan Tichy, Khen Shish, Maya Gold, Dror Daum, Miki Kratsman, Sigalit Landau, Sharon Yaari, Michael Gross, Yair Garbuz, Natalia Zourabova, Alex Kremer, Eitan Buganim, Gilad Ophir, Gili Avissar, Ariel Schlesinger, Haran Mendel, Hanna Sahar, Ido Bar-El** and others.

And around 750 works by international artists, including:

Francis Alÿs, Joseph Beuys, Martin Kippenberger, Rodney Graham, Charles Avery, Marlene Dumas, Hans Peter Feldmann, Ryan Gander, Johannes Kahrs, Elad Lassry, Robert Mapplethorpe, Helmut Newton, Irving Penn, Raymond Pettibon, Franz West, Gabriel Orozco, Neo Rauch, Gerhard Richter, Thomas Schütte, Andy Warhol (works on paper), Christopher Williams, Diane Arbus, David Claerbout, David Hammons, William Kentridge, Daren Almond, Andreas Gursky, Franz West, Johannes Kahrs, Berndt & Hila Becher.

IGAL AHOUVI ART COLLECTION

The University Art Gallery will host twelve exhibitions of works from Igal Ahouvi's art collection over the next four years, alongside temporary exhibitions presented in the space by Tel Aviv University's Faculty of the Arts. As part of the exhibitions, which will be open to the general public free of charge, the gallery will host various projects, including academic debates, lectures, gallery talks with artists, curators and scholars, artists' master classes and study days on various subjects. The exhibition program will be supervised by a steering committee shared by the university, the Igal Ahouvi Art Collection and a representative of the public.

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Opening hours: Sun-Thu 11am-7pm, Fri 10am-2pm