“The Voice Calls” | Orit Bertini Shavit

> ‘‘From there, after six days and seven nights, you arrive at Zobeide, the white city, well exposed to the moon, with streets wound about themselves as in a skein. They tell this tale of its foundation: men of various nations had an identical dream. They saw a woman running at night through an unknown city; she was seen from behind, with long hair, and she was naked. They dreamed of pursuing her. As they twisted and turned, each of them lost her. After the dream, they set out in search of that city; they never found it, but they found one another; they decided to build a city like the one in the dream. In laying out the streets, each followed the course of his pursuit; at the spot where they had lost the fugitive's trail, they arranged spaces and walls differently from the dream, so she would be unable to escape again.” – Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (1972)

Orit’s exhibition creates an encounter between viewers and a collection of items that are remnants of memory, proofs of an event that took place at some time in the past and left us longing to touch upon it again. This is an attempt to capture something in a photograph, a piece of fabric, a letter, or on a page from an old book…

It is necessary to be in a dream consciousness to follow the inner logic of the collection we are viewing and connect it into a single harmonious universe. The various elements come together and deconstruct on the wall and within our consciousness, weave together and unravel again and again in a search for what has been forgotten, a sliver of memory. Like a dream we have dreamt a moment before waking up – it is located there, at the edge of consciousness, almost within arm’s reach but which at the last moment collapses into the hand attempting to grasp it.

This is the voice that calls from a place the past forgot, a place that was woven and is unraveling in the memory to expose a moment that did not take place but only happened in our memory, as in the City of Zobeide. Here, too, we are wandering around, rummaging through the past, exposing traces, seeking to connect the fossil pieces we discovered to form a single essence. We deconstruct and reconstruct, desiring to fix the moment, like a cat attempting to capture the dancing light reflected on a floor.

Memory motivates us and our movements create the city, delineating a map leading us through narrow alleys, between houses densely piled up to clotheslines hovering in the wind – inwards and outwards towards the past which is the subject of our quest.

“Reminiscence” in platonic philosophy is a concept referring to the soul’s memory, whoever it truly was underneath the layers of flesh and matter, the soul that was buried under the weight of life in the concrete world, but which awakens and rises from it like the tender feminine figure hewn out of the crude, unworked stone.

Nirit Arbeli-Etzioni, *New Acropolis*

March 2014

The Voice Calls / Orit Bertini Shavit

In Orit Bertini Shavit's exhibition "The Voice Calls," photographs and objects hang, lean on, or are placed against the wall. Photographs lean on objects, are hung or glued, a photograph is glued on an object, a leaning object has a photograph on it, a standing object has a photograph on it and additional objects are arranged around it.

An embroidered dog is placed on a chair, a hoop hangs on a faded wall. The photograph of a taxidermist's work hangs on the wall with a fan next to it placed on the floor, once more on a lonely plank found at the beach. A photograph of a painting of a young girl waving a jump-rope is intertwined with an illustration of a girl printed on embroidery fabric. Two photographs of red electrical wires emerging from an exposed socket, sewn together with a red thread and are placed on a piece of paper with a Japanese-style red and white pattern. The portrait photograph of a sculpted bust of Camille Claudel with the remnants of the cast still visible is placed inside a glassine envelope. A portrait painting of artist Frida Kahlo is integrated with a photographic portrait of Claudel and interwoven with shells thrown onto the beach. The painted landscape of a distant ship and a young woman with a white parasol is placed adjacent to a Parisian black and white landscape.

Painted and photographed landscapes, photographed and concrete objects, portraits that are painted, photographed and sculpted, a world of sculptures and objects that are photographed "live" parallel to the universe of concrete objects.

The name of the exhibition is drawn from the title of August Rodin's sculpture *The Inner Voice (Meditation)* reworked into the *Monument for Victor Hugo.* Bertini Shavit found great similarity between Claudel's face and the figure in the sculpture, and attributes the body to Claudel's. Rodin's sculpture (more correctly, the sculpture of Claudel's body), was photographed by Bertini Shavit and appears six times in the exhibition. The sculpture present in the photographs but of course missing in its concrete presence, becomes proof of Claudel's absence.

The name of the exhibition in Hebrew – *Hakol Hakoreh* – "the voice that calls" is a homonym for "the voice that reads," hinting at a state of multiplicity. Bertini Shavit saves decorative, "orphaned" objects, useless boards, distant landscapes, and two scarred women artists, retrieving them from oblivion. This is a universe of multiplicity and illusion, a broken world seeking to bind the tears and make its voice heard.

But the work is not anchored only in turning the gaze towards repression. Through her actions and wall installation in the exhibition, Bertini Shavit proposes a map of the world, a layered topographical map with strata, matter, and a body. Through her art action, Bertini Shavit paves pathways for walking and travel. In this way, the artist who traveled to Paris to photograph the original statue makes the presence of her journey felt to reveal its path through the world so that we, too, will observe it while in motion.

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Tamara Messel,
Exhibition Curator
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