SO LONG // Orit Bertini Shavit

Orit Bertini Shavit's one-person exhibition reveals a new corpus in which a link is constructed to a female figure the artist calls "the good girl." This image was borrowed from an old slide Bertini Shavit found in which a young girl is seen, dressed in a white blouse, blue skirt, and white knee socks – a seductive representation of softness and innocence, which becomes wild and unrestrained after the artist's treatment.

Bertini Shavit appropriates the identity of the young girl in the photograph, and through various means she constructs a visual language around the found image. She intervenes, deconstructs and reconstructs it, but along with the direct treatment she also revives and activates the figure of the girl as a human doll. In this way the "good girl" comes to life as an alter ego, the double of the artist which, paradoxically, she tries to appropriate as an embodied persona, to contain it and bid it farewell simultaneously.

The richness and complexity the artist creates around the image resonate a gender-based discussion on the way in which feminine identity in general, and the feminine body in particular, become an arena of reference to issues of activism as compared with passivity, attraction coupled with repulsion, boldness along with restraint and self-control.

In the works on view, the girl appears as an imprisoned or bound figure, halved or doubled, performing physical actions, some of which are restrained, others dramatic, and still others childish and humorous. Thus an illusion is created between the concrete and the fictional, between present time and the time of an inner past, similar to a dream or an hallucination.

Beyond the engagement in issues of feminine identity, Bertini Shavit constructs a world containing a battle between the live and the inanimate, the wild and the regimented, resulting in a tension placing the "good girl" as a representation of processes of inner change accompanied by tense conflict parallel to the stages a caterpillar goes through until emerging from the cocoon as a butterfly spreading its wings (an image reflected in the works on view). The title of the exhibition, SO LONG provides a hint: the order to set out on one's journey is internal. We are dealing with a quest to repair, to break through, burst out of the cocoon into the light, and spread one's wings.

* The Hebrew name of the exhibition alludes to God's command to Abraham to leave his native land and set out on a journey, the command in the masculine imperative. Orit Bertini Shavit has changed the command to the feminine imperative – *Lech Lach* – to signify her own quest.

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