Hshuma

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Curated by
Sharon Toval

Assaf Abutbul / R'm Aharoni / Dan Allon / Eyal Assulin /
Maya Attoun / David Benarroch /
Esther Cohen / Gil Desiano Bitton / Yosef Joseph Dadoune /
Mati Elmaliach / Avshalom Levi /
Michael Liani / Vered Nissim / Dafna Shalom / Nir Shitrit /
Daniel Shoshan & Amit Matalon /
Tal Shoshan / Koby Sibony / Merav Sudaey.

Personal notes
“I've been on the run all of my life. All of my life I've been on the run".

My parents emigrated to the young country of Israel where I was born, after centuries of existence on the North-African soil, in Algeria and Morocco. This historical and physical break, along with the notion of immigrating as a genetic memory, made me aware of the importance of researching, writing and aesthetically expressing this exhibition Hshuma.
I belong to the ancient tribe of the Jewish people, which for thousands of years moved around the planet and adopted escapism as a way of surviving, being on a continuous journey of research, analysis and intellectual discovery. A journey of highs and lows, of light and darkness.
Personally, Hshuma has been an important milestone for me to understand myself, who I was and where I came from. This exhibition is about those many artists whose roots are in North Africa. Uprooted, adapting: strangers at home.
It is dedicated to all the people in the world who escape their native lands for survival, to my own people, who are in a continuous experience of learning from their own history to achieve peace with themselves, to my parents who gave me all the freedom necessary to learn endlessly, so as to give to others and connect the dots to make up an infinite line.

“ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֶךְ-לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ ”
בראשית יב א

The LORD said to Abraham, “Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you”.
Genesis 12:1

Sharon Toval

Hshumah

Background

For thousands of years, particularly after Jewish migration following the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem over 2000 years ago, many Jewish communities migrated to the regions of North Africa [1] and settled in the continent, along the sea and in the Atlas Mountains, spreading from Morocco to Tunisia [2].

Beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century and especially after the Israeli Declaration of Independence (1948), most Jews left these North African countries and migrated to several destinations around the world, among them the state of Israel. There, the Zionist establishment, under Ottoman and then British rule, had already been created by immigrant Jews from Eastern European countries, who had been living, working hard and establishing themselves in the region during the previous four decades of the early twentieth century.

The reception accorded to the North African Jewish immigrants by their European counterparts was often unkind and discriminatory, creating ever-growing frustration and estrangement that have continued for several generations, and in some ways still continue today. This humiliation and socio-cultural prejudice have had a profound effect on Israeli society. Anything of non-Ashkenazi Jewish origins was considered and tagged Mizrahi, Eastern, Orientalist and Arab and regarded as 'primitive'. To this day, the word **Mizrahi**, used widely in the Hebrew language, has a racist post-colonialist twinge.

Throughout the somewhat short official 71-year history of Israeli art, very few artists of Arab or North African countries of origin have been given the opportunity even to consider making a living from creating their art. Only in recent decades, in the light of the reclamation and celebration of Near Eastern Orientalist Mizrahi culture and the prevalence of mixed marriages in Israel, has there been a surge in Jewish Israeli visual artists whose roots are in the Arab and North African countries and who have been able to tackle the ever-difficult climb up the Israeli cultural ladder.

1. Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.
2. Early ancient writings were first discovered in the city of Volubilis in northern Morocco, around the second century AD.

All new immigrants who arrive in their host country encounter many aspects of shame and embarrassment as part of the acclamation and integration process and the art world is certainly no exception. This exhibition addresses the story of the Jewish community of Algiers and Morocco in Israel, and attempts to touch on that shame, known as *Hshuma*, by exploring the artistic practice of several artists whose roots are in these countries.

More broadly, the exhibition is quite timely and relevant, as the entire world is currently dealing with and adapting to a surge of immigrants from these countries, most of whom now reside in Europe.

Hshuma: Social Shame

Hshuma is a word commonly used in Moroccan and Algerian households that conveys a sense of social shame in relation to how others see us, in one way or another impacting on the creative process of many Israeli artists of North African descent.

In the Western context, shame has a negative connotation, whose ramifications mostly affect and/or hurt our self-esteem and self-value: we are ashamed of our own view of ourselves. The North African concept of Hshuma is quite different: it is more of a sentiment that comes about in relation to how others see us, so it exists mostly outside ourselves, in the social realm.

Where and how do all the cultural bans related to Hshuma affect an individual's unique artistic and personal identity? This exhibition investigates this issue by dissecting the term Hshuma in its varied complexities through a variety of artistic expressions.

The exhibition is the result of a fascinating research quest originating in an art residency in Morocco several years ago. The time spent in the programme raised numerous issues among the majority of the participating artists regarding their Maghrebi roots and identity, developing these queries and maximising their presence, despite their seeming disappearance.

Thoughts of this exhibition topic started incubating while the curator, Sharon Toval, stayed at this residency programme in Morocco. While there, riveting conversations with Moroccan artists exposed him to another narrative, different from the one he had grown up with, as it relates to the mass emigration of Jews from North Africa.

A few of the Moroccan artists shared with Mr Toval the experience that their parents tended to ignore or hide this chapter in Moroccan and Algerian history, out of the humiliation and insult they still feel as a result of their Jewish neighbours' mass exodus. Sharon understood that Identity is a politicised term, built in part by the institutional governmental structures that instil certain ideologies and historiographies by means of systematic educational propaganda.

Indeed, he learned that most of the mass emigration of Moroccan Jews in the mid-twentieth century did not stem from North African anti-Semitism, but was more a result of the propaganda of the Jewish Agency and its mission to entice Jews from Arab countries to settle in the harsh, uninhabited lands of the nascent country of Israel.

Hshuma sets out to investigate this topic by going much further than the politics related to migration. It addresses the aesthetic discourse in relation to the history of art and explores Identity through the voids, or gaps in the individual's identity that are generated metaphorically by the notion of shame. Its essence is not explored in relation to something else, but on its own terms; hence the exhibition's exploration presents an important new layer in this ever-evolving conversation about identity and migration.

The Origins of Shame

The notion of shame came about with human evolution. According to monotheistic writings and beliefs, Adam and Eve's becoming aware of their own nudity was the original source of what we consider shame. It is, after all, the original sin. With the development of a more aware human being who was organised socially in tribes, shame, along with the notion of honour, became the ontological cornerstones of the tribal structure. It exists in the individual at the exact moment when we become aware of our social ex-normality. It therefore exists in the individual from that moment of self-awareness of being an outsider in relation to the social structures and norms that surround us. In a sense, there is always one who commits the transgression - the subject, facing the gaze of the one who discovers the transgression and the shame - the object.

African and Near Eastern cultures whose existence still follows a tribal model tend to function as a cohesive and coherent social tapestry with regard to keeping their members within the boundaries of accepted behaviour, guided by their definition of what constitutes shame.

In that context, shame is based on social status: it defines borders, normative and exceptional behaviours, the individual v. society, private space v. public space, sexuality and the norms and values according to which society conducts itself. In tribal cultures, the fear of social ostracism resulting from exposing one's 'true self', which may not fit the prevailing norms or cultural values of the society to which the individual belongs, is the major motive for maintaining a normative façade.

Hshuma, for me, is a return to my grandmother's home more than to my parents' home [3]; a return to my North African roots through the many cultural prohibitions and their definitions that constitute the bans whose negation defines that which is. Research for this exhibition has been a fascinating journey that exposed me to material dealing with Israeli orientalism - **Mizrahi** culture - which is perceived in Israel differently from how it is perceived in native North African countries of origin. In Israel, Jews of North African descent have been considered an anomaly and an exception within the mostly Eastern European Zionist socio-cultural landscape and narrative.

It is vital to mention that the research for this exhibition does not set itself up in opposition to European Zionism, nor does it deal with the complex story of integration of North African Jewry in Israel. Rather, this exhibition would be neither possible nor relevant without that history serving as the backdrop to the new concepts it attempts to bring to the forefront.

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3. My parents' home had experienced that cultural flattening, Israelisation, a kind of elimination of any signs of belonging to a North African tribalism.

Shame and Jean-Paul Sartre

In his book ***Being and Nothingness***, Jean-Paul Sartre added another voyeuristic layer to shame, in which the subject observing the object (the vector of the shame) turns into an observer of that forbidden act and, in the process, the object also becomes a subject. Sartre used the Peeping Tom as a case in point: Peeping Toms engage wholeheartedly in the act of peeping, until the moment they realise that they might be found and thus themselves also become the object of shame.

[*Shame only exists in the presence of the other. The other is a necessary mediator between me and myself. I'm only ashamed of myself through the other's perception of me*.]

Such a Sartrerian transfer from object to subject exists clearly in **Yosef Joseph Dadoune**'s *The Jewish Women*, which addresses a trend in mid nineteenth-century Algiers. He presents postcards (4) of Algerian and Moroccan Jewish women who were photographed by Western photographers in the twenties of the last century, in somewhat provocative poses: despite being seemingly documentary, they are clearly exploitative in nature. Some were Jewish prostitutes who had been kidnapped or run away from their villages, promised or hoping for a better, Western-style life in the big city (5). Some had become entangled in this life without their families knowing about it and were photographed as part of a documentary photography phenomenon of French colonialism. In her book about Jewish prostitution, Chrystelle Taraud (6) wrote brilliantly that Eugene Delacroix's celebrated 1834 painting *Jewish Woman of Algiers* had made the Near Eastern Orientalist image of women female image became a fascinating to the Western eye. Jewish women were particularly interesting and attractive because of their hybrid socio-cultural nature: on the one hand, it was 'primitive' from Arab villages, while on the other hand they were French citizens (in Algiers) by virtue of French colonial law, which made them Western.

The French occupation inadvertently divided the Jews of North Africa into those in the elite, who left the Mellah (7) - the Jewish neighbourhood - and

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4. Dadoune purchased these cards for his private collection. The exhibition features several of such postcards: *Young Jewess from Constantine, Jewess from Algiers, A Jewess from the kept area of Casablanca, Morocco*.

5. There were some who chose to pursue prostitution because they had no other economic choice.

6. Christelle Taraud, La prostitution féminine juive dans l'Algérie coloniale - Entre fantasmes
et réalités (1830-1962), Les Belles Lettres, pp. 77-85.

7. The Jewish neighbourhood in every city was named after the tax that Jews had to pay to their Muslim rulers for protection.

those who stayed behind - the poor whose lives were quite harsh. The more Western-looking Jewish prostitutes worked in city brothels dressed in fashionable modern clothing and left their religious traditions behind. Their village sisters, who continued to live in the Mellah and were closer in spirit and traditions to their Muslim sisters and neighbours, continued dressing in traditional clothing.

Dadoun's photographs explore his topic through the filter concept of the North African mother. The Algerian Jewish mother is the cornerstone of the family, in what is a very matriarchal culture. His work expresses a triangular tension between the model photographed (the Jewish woman who is the object of the photograph), the photographer (the subject who, by merely photographing her, turns her into an embarrassing or dishonoured entity who is now exposed to multitudes when the photograph is reproduced on postcards) and the researcher who gazes at both and explores them as objects of dishonour. Moreover, there is a tension between the double identity inherent in these images, that of the mother and the prostitute: an impossible existential diode that we all experience when we think of the sexual relations between our parents.

A similar phenomenon occurred much later when North African Jews had already arrived in the nascent state of Israel and were pushed to its geographical, social and economic periphery. In his photographic series *Transparent*, **Avshalom Levi** documented homeless women who worked as prostitutes and lived in an Israeli homeless shelter called Doors of Hope, managed by David Fiquette. It is a hair-raising and upsetting series about women, mostly from Arab countries, whose sad, harsh lives determined their destiny, uprooted and eaten alive by drug usage.

The series is hard to look at but, after a few minutes of carefully gazing into these women's eyes, the observer can slowly discern their beauty shining through their deep distress. The series was photographed in black and white and painted in watercolours. The painting layer serves as a metaphorical resuscitation of these dead souls. Avshalom's series was created in honour of his younger sister, who did not make it: she lost her life in similar harsh circumstances. Is it possible to see in Avshalom's subjects their maternal nature? Is the rough and desperate image he captured only a mask that veils the beauty, humanity and tenderness of the subjects photographed?

Yosef Joseph Dadoune (1975)
Jewish Women Stereotypes 1910-1930, 2018.
The artist's private postcards collection.

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Jewish Women Stereotypes 1910-1930, 2018.
The artist's private postcards collection.

Yosef Joseph Dadoune (1975)
Jewish Women Stereotypes 1910-1930, 2018.
The artist's private postcards collection.

Avshalom Levi (1959)
Alona 37 out of the series *No Man's Land*, 2009.
Three pigment prints on archival paper.
Courtesy of the artist.

Avshalom Levi (1959)
Becky 40 out of the series *No Man's Land*, 2009.
Three pigment prints on archival paper.
Courtesy of the artist.


PUNCH GREEN CAMP

Avshalom Levi (1959)
Nataly 32 out of the series *No Man's Land*, 2009.
Three pigment prints on archival paper.
Courtesy of the artist.

Humanity beyond despair and ugliness
Prostitution among immigrants in their new host country is quite common and always painful. Male prostitution in Rome, in the 'service' of the Vatican, is described in detail by the author Frédéric Martel in his book Sodoma, in which he puts his lengthy research to good use, describing how the church managed to conceal years of sexual exploitation of Syrian and other immigrants, who provided sex services to members of the Catholic institution.

Another work that explores driving the maternal instinct out of its negative self-perception is that of **Nir Shitrit**'s *When I First Met You*. It is the fourth in a seven-part series, a video art piece that deals with the artist's relationship with his parents through personal, social, religious and ethnic realms, embodying the complexity of his identity and all the void space and metaphorical gaps left by Hshuma in this early, yet quite mature and challenging artistic expression. In this work, Shitrit sits on his bed, with dusky sunlight as a beautiful backdrop, while his mother rolls a razor, which does not shave, along his entire body, caressing it. In the background, we hear a song by the Israeli Oriental pop singer Eyal Golan *And I Call on You*, perhaps referring to a lover, to Mother Earth, or to a homeland.

[When I first met you, my life definitely changed. When I first met you, happiness and sadness changed in me. Also pain. And I call you: don't go. In my throat I'm tired, my heart is exhausted, above our city were ghosts and demons, until I met you my beloved.]

There is a double unfulfilled potential in Shitrit's work, creating tension in the viewer: the act of a mother shaving her son's body and the upsetting hint of incest, which is amplified by the song's lyrics. That tension relates to Hshuma, in that it highlights the inherently oxymoronic mother/whore image, strengthened all the more by the song, set against the popular image of the Mizrahi mother as a very traditional, protective homemaker. Is Shitrit suggesting a new maternal model that is more aware of its femininity because it looks at itself beyond, while also challenging the existing family structure?
If I tell you about my life, tears will come out of my eyes, 2015, is the title of a video art piece by **Vered Nissim**, in which she works alongside her mother to showcase - in a brave, painful and challenging manner - the story of how she grew up in a proletarian Jewish Arab household. Vered Nissim stands on a ladder, silent, with a large wall poster featuring a European forest landscape behind her. Her mother, Esther, is below her, on all fours

on the sidewalk, scrubbing a rug made of yellow dish gloves in the shape of a sun or a flower. Esther is cleaning in the harsh, bright sun of the Middle East, while Nissim is in the shade, silent and occasionally pouring water on her mother and creating more and more soap that is impossible to clean. An infinite loop of silence, talk and soap is created between mother and daughter. The water symbolises wealth and abundance, countering the Sisyphean work created by the waters poured by the artist. Esther talks about her life, about the challenge of daily survival that immigrants experienced in the first years in their new homeland, about the blessings of work and about her daughter's childhood, interspersed with singing traditional Jewish songs and lamentations. Nissim's treatment of the story of Arab Jewish families is unique in its directness and poignancy. Her parents are prominently featured in all of her work. They are the protagonists. Her silence is disturbing. Even when her mother asks her to speak, she does not comply. Her silence alludes to the secrets parents keep from children, as well as to how immigrants hide and even silence their cultural origins in their new host country. Indeed, the intensity of that mass silence is dependent on the host culture. Nissim's silence is deeply symbolic of an immigrant family's Hshuma.

Another perspective of the maternal character in the context of a family form of Hshuma has been well explored in **R'm Aharoni**'s work *All You Need*, which documents his parents' Yemenite Israeli wedding, held in Israel in the seventies. His mother talks of an arranged marriage forced on her at a very young age, and her sadness during the several rituals that go along with such a traditional Yemenite wedding, as well as an additional, Western, white-dress celebration of the nuptials: because of the country's inherent multi-culturalism, it is customary in Israel to have a Henna ceremony, followed by a Western white-dress wedding. The expression 'white wedding' is an English term originating in the wedding between Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1840, when the queen wore white. The practice duly spread throughout the Christian world, eventually also being adopted in Jewish and Muslim weddings. Aharoni's work highlights how female oppression through the practice of forced marriage is still common in Arab and African countries. The dissonance between the loud, communal ethnic ceremony of the traditional celebration and the quiet, sterile white wedding ceremony based on choice (although a choice that has actually been denied), amplifies the deep sadness and hopelessness of the artist's mother.

ppg . 22-25
Nir Shitrit (1987)
When I first met You, 2018.
Video 4'43''
Courtesy of the artist.

ppg . 27-30
Vered Nissim (1980)
If I tell You the Story of my Life, Tears Are Coming out of My Eyes, 2015.
Video 12'26"
Courtesy of the artist.

R'm Aharoni (1983)
All You Need, 2016.
Digitalized Super 8 film, 7'00''
Courtesy of the artist.

The New Mizrahi Orientalist: a new aesthetic model?
Many artists of Arab and North African extraction are more or less aware of the artistic act as one that shields, protects or enables the artist to escape from personal topics of the traumas of Orientalist shame - Hshuma - in relation to society at large. Others have referred to Israeli art history as a backdrop against which they explore their own identity. Such is the sculptural work *Moti* by **Eyal Assulin**, inspired by Isaac Danziger's (8) iconic 1939 sculpture *Nimrod*, which poses fascinating questions about the sources of Israeli historiographies, the part they play in defining a new Mizrahi Orientalist Israeli narrative and the impact they exert.

Eyal Assulin's work attempts a new identity, one that derives from place, the locale, while simultaneously rooting itself in Hebrew culture and Judaism. That co-existence could be read as an oxymoron by art critics who might assert that the essence of Judaism is not in any given place, but more in non-territorialism and an intrinsically nomadic culture. That dissociation started with a group of artists (9) who rebelled against the Bezalel School of Art ethos, asserting the existence of a connection between Hebrew culture and Israeliness: a romantic view of place. *The New Mizrahi* does not differentiate between Hebrew culture and Judaism, because it is a product of a long lineage of North African Judaism, deeply rooted in North African Arab culture, which is similar to the local Palestinian Arab culture. This kind of Judaism is integral to the individual's religious identity come across clearly as Assulin's sculpture *Moti* is actually circumcised, unlike Danziger's *Nimrod*, which is not.

In order to be born, the new Mizrahi artist had to cross a metaphorical, ideological Israeli river, which historically denied and flattened any non-Western cultural elements, forgiving its heavy-handedness and often destructive effects. This New Mizrahi features a blend of traits, including great pride, peacefulness, passion, creativity and eroticism, much as several simultaneous interpretations tried to feature in the original sculpture.

For Assulin, the name of *Nimrod* is irrelevant, as his character does not hunt anything – a trait typically associated with a Nimrod character. Instead, it

showcases culture and beauty by employing the medium of the cat Mau from ancient Egyptian mythology, a symbol of domestic motherhood and protection of the home in ancient Egypt. The cat proudly wears a *khai* necklace (which in Hebrew stands for life and the number 18), a type of gold necklace associated with low-life Mizrahi culture, or what might be considered *chahchahim*, or street bums. Thus, in this context, the new Mizrahi is not ashamed or embarrassed to be wearing that necklace: he shines in all his glory. The golden *khai* and the colour black are found in Assulin's work as an expression of external wealth and hidden poverty, a common feature in poor communities, and the harsh physical labour imposed on the new immigrants to Israel from North Africa and the Levant in the fifties. The colour black amplifies the work's visual opulence, like black gold, and expresses a criticism of the politicisation of wealth between East and West.

The masculinity of the new Mizrahi Orientalist character is questioned, as was Nimrod's, by art historians and critics. Nimrod, the black child of the Ham family, father of the hunters and a hero soldier in the eyes of God, is an erotic masculine character. The exhibition *The New Nimrods* (Artists House, Jerusalem, 2011) presented several works that addressed the queer nature of Danziger's *Nimrod* (10).

In Assulin's *Moti*, the new Mizrahi male is a fluid male born into a new era in which questions of gender identity are commonplace, and where any sexual orientation is respected and accepted. He knows how to express strength, power and charisma, as well as weakness, sensitivity and empathy. His hunting tool behind his back is an extension of his impressive sexual organ, and a male-oriented social perspective which, according to John Berger, is always represented by an external symbol of strength, as opposed to the more introverted feminine social perspective.

Assulin's work was created from fibreglass, using a mould made of Styrofoam, which was emptied out in order to become the mould and receive its new material identity. This new materiality replaced the Nubian sandstone brought by Danziger from Petra (11), in Jordan, hearkening back

to an ancient primitive style which he had been schooled to admire and strive for by his teacher Henry Gerard at the Slade School of Fine Arts in London, as well as by his many visits to museums and archaeological collections.

A contemporary material that reflects our consumerist culture, fibreglass is made of glass fibres and is heat retardant, lightweight and a great insulator. Indeed, Assulin's sculpture continues in the classical figurative sculptural tradition of creating the mould by hand, but does away with the stone part of the traditional artistic sculptural orientation. Metaphorically speaking, using Styrofoam and fibreglass allows Assulin to refill the shape with a filling made of the until-recently silenced identity and culture of North African Jewry. In *Moti*, the original *Nimrod* was indeed emptied of his original Israeli narrative. Only *Nimrod*'s halo is present in the contemporary *Moti*.

As another part of a new wave of interpretation of canonical works of Israeli art, **Assaf Abutbul** presents a work inspired by David Ginton's 1974 photographic work entitled *Pain*, created after the devastating Yom Kippur war in 1973 as part of a series by the same name. Abutbul continues Ginton's practice of having a visual dialogue with his teachers and sources of inspiration, within the framework of modernist sensibilities. In Ginton's case, the inspiration was Joseph Beuys, whom he admired and considered an artistic father figure. In the original work, the word 'pain' is written in blood on feminine napkins and placed on the artist's feet. Abutbul has recreated that work exactly, except that he has erased the first letter of the word 'pain' in Hebrew, so that it now reads as 'father', suggesting a yearning for an artistic father figure or source, much like Ginton and Beuys. Is Abutbul's search destined to failure? Is inquiry into an existing artwork a futile search for personal meaning in another's identity? Is this minimalist erasure comparable in its artistic potential to the new sculpting of *Nimrod-Moti*? Is historical acknowledgment enough fodder for its revival and renewal?

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8. Isaac Danziger was an Israeli artist of German descent, an environmental architect who sculpted many artworks, among them his most famous *Nimrod*, currently on display as part of the permanent collection at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.
9. Ziona Tager, Yehiel Shemi and Reuven went against the Bezalel movement, claiming that the institution was disconnected from Israeli culture by clinging to Jewish archetypes. Benjamin Tamuz, Levita Dorit, Gideon Ofrat, *The Story of Israeli Art*, Modan Publishers, 1980, page 38.
10. The works of David Adika, Adi Nes and Doron Rabina.
11. According to Gideon Ofrat, Danziger found a Nubian stone that had apparently been stolen from Petra and left at the old central bus station in Jerusalem. The sculpture was created from one part from that stone. With the other broken half, he created *Shabziye*, 1939. From the Storage Room by Gideon Ofrat, *Nimrod: The Whole Story*, spoken at the 70th anniversary of the Handicapped House of Jewish Antiquities.

ppg . 34-37
Eyal Assulin (1981)
Moti, 2018.
Plastic, fiberglass, industrial paint, 8K gold, gourmette and pendent.
Private collection, Israel.

Assaf Abutbul (1972)
Father Pain, based on *Pain* (1974) by David Ginton, 2014.
Manipulated photograph.
Courtesy of the artist.

Sex and Nudity as a Protest.
One ought not to confuse shame with blame. Shame is essential to have other people's critical approval or disapproval, unlike blame, which exists as an internal mechanism. Sartre likens the moment of discovery of shame to an abstraction of the person, who becomes aware of his own nudity and feels a strong urge to look away from whoever is looking at him. In this regard, **Merav Sudaey**'s painting treats the nude as an act of protest, overcoming a ban on exposing the beautiful, mature nude female body. In her painting, Sudaey is depicted as a reclining nude surrounded by a northern Israeli, Galilean landscape. The style hovers between Impressionism and post-Impressionism, and in a sense embodies the conflict between the need to reveal and the moral ban on such exposure, the fear of Hshuma. On the one hand, the work's vibrant colourfulness is impressionistic, internal, sensitive, nostalgic and romantic, with a sense of childhood memories wrapped in adult yearning. On the other hand, the brushstrokes and paint placement are more expressionistic. In that tension lies the dilemma which Sudaey experiences, between the deep need to explore the topic of nudity and its problematic external expression. Her painting creates an interesting tension between the object of shame - her genitals and their perception by others - and the subject herself. The artist deals with her own self as a critical eye, as well as the public's, once the painting is shown in the gallery context. In fact, during the opening of the exhibition in 2018, one visitor quickly covered the painting with some fabric found in the vicinity, so that an orthodox visitor could pass by the room in the Tel Aviv Artists House Gallery. That unplanned vignette doubly strengthens the Hshuma element in the work and draws our attention to the reality of ever-increasing religious conservatism all over the world in general, and in Israel specifically.

Researching in similar areas, **Tal Shoshan** presents three drawings in coloured pencil on photographs entitled *Self Portrait* (2010), in which she is seen nude in her upper body, looking straight at the camera, her body lit from below, appearing strong and dramatic. Each of the three portraits showcases a different hand gesture: a hand choking her throat, a hand resting heavily on her shoulder, and a hand resting gently on her heart. Metaphorically, they could be read respectively as choking, applying a heavy

weight and acceptance. Tal is an installation artist, and this series, shown here for the first time, serves as a personal parenthesis. It is evident that Hshuma was created as a male-driven control mechanism that exists in a variety of tribal cultures, so was designed to rein in wives and daughters and takes the form of a set of bans comprising codes of strict behaviour when in public. In her work, Shoshan seems to attempt to react to these bans in a way that implies self-acceptance.

Another artwork that expresses protest is Origin of the World by **Michael Liani**, a part of the *A Watching Eye series*. The work stands on a glass corner table that balances on a white leg designed in the shape of a male sex toy. Clearly, this work refers to *The Origin of the World* (1866, Courbet), the painting that forever changed the male view of female genitals and strived to achieve an honest realism, as opposed to the then-prevalent aesthetic of concealment. The iconic painting was fraught with a history of bans and shame from the day it was sold to the original buyer, Hallil Bye [12], to its last private owner, the renowned psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Indeed, the painting was never shown in public until 1993, when it was donated to the Museé d'Orsay in Paris. The main reason why it was not shown in public until then was that the pubic hair and the genital opening slit, visible in the front and centre in the painting, were considered too vulgar to show in public.

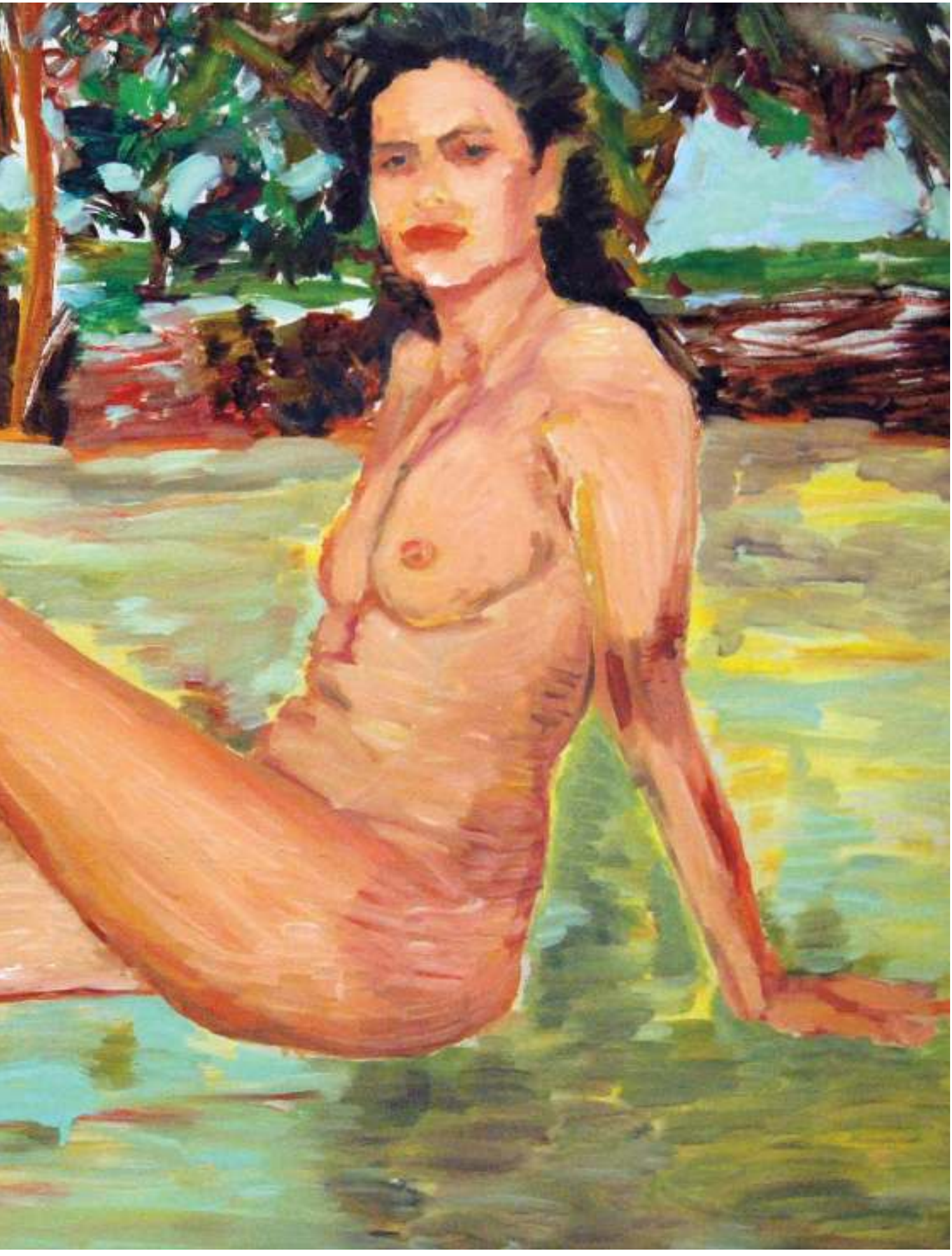
In Liani's version, the artist photographed the newly-formed female genital area of a transgender woman, then proceeded to erase the actual genitals in Photoshop, creating a neutral and indecipherable genital area. It is still possible to see the scars of the operation, which were left in the photographic image. At first glance, it may seem that Liani is suggesting we erase the act of giving birth and its origin, a kind of post-queer observation that occupies a terrain between birth, parental association and gender. This is a male-turned-female. Upon deeper observation, his entire series *The Watching Eye* addresses the topic of the Hshuma of immodesty, the ever-present effort to hide any external wealth, what is known as ***Hbium*** in Moroccan Arabic [13],. Liani's entire visual vocabulary is based on that filter of modesty. On the one hand, the work is provocative, but on the other

12. An art collector, he was the son of a well-known pasha. Born in Egypt, he grew up in Istanbul. The original buyer of the painting.

13. The Hbium is the contrary of Ashufuni, in Moroccan, means 'check me out'. It refers to the phenomenon of people showing off their wealth with complete disregard to what others might say.

hand that provocative scream is tempered by a carefully aestheticised external identity. In a sense, Liani offers an alternative to the Moroccan admiration of the female body as a source of birth and creating life, whilst also exploring his own gender identity in the public realm, all while being highly aware of that Moroccan Hshuma.

In the course of my interesting research, I came across **Meital Abukasis** film *White Walls*, which she made when she was still an art student at Sapir College in the south of Israel. The film investigates her grandmother's decision to paint the green interior white, so as to erase any Arabic style and make it assimilate better in the local Israeli culture. During the Shiva, the religious week of mourning in Judaism that followed her grandmother's funeral, Abukasis attempted to film her family's interactions, only to be told that filming was banned, because it represented something joyful that was not allowed during mourning. Clearly, her work is in direct dialogue with the feature film Shiva, by the brilliant duo Ronit and Shlomi Elkabetz, a canonical film work that explores the terrain between tradition and modernity in a contemporary Moroccan family in a predominantly North African town in southern Israel.



Merav Sudaey (1970). *Nude 1 (Self-portrait)*, 2018. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist.

ppg. 44-46
Tal Shoshan (1969)
Self Portrait, 2010.
Three coloured pencils on photos.
Courtesy of the artist.

Michael Liani (1987)
THE Origin of the World out of the series *Evil Eye*, 2016.
Photography installation.
Courtesy of the artist.

The work of **Daniel Shoshan** and **Amit Matalon** is a perfect example of an artistic treatment that deconstructs content from form in order to present a visual distortion far removed from the original source material. In the installation piece *Hz'anah*, which means 'yearning' in Moroccan Arabic, Shoshan and Matalon present a digital drawing of the Home for the Handicapped in Beit Shean, which was previously a mosque during Ottoman rule, and was actually built in the fifteenth century as a Greek orthodox church. Beit Shean, an ancient city in the north of Israel, is Shoshan's birthplace. The landscape of his hometown and its region serve as inspiration for several of his artworks, including this one. In this piece, which was presented at the MoMA Shanghai in 2015, the views of the immersive digital drawing change with the rhythm of the music composed and performed by the artist's brother. Daniel Shoshan 'pokes holes' in the scenery, altering it like a morphing dancer, and layers it with Moroccan mourning songs and lamentations. This deconstruction and the addition of an Oriental sound layer to the ever-changing image creates a mesmerising, if macabre, immersive experience.

The thematic treatment of the hidden as the source material of identity gets a romantic historical interpretation with the drawing installation by **Maya Attoun**. *Lover's Eye* is a series of drawings inspired by a cultural phenomenon that started in eighteenth-century England, when the aristocracy would commission miniature drawings or paintings of a single eye of a loved one, a lover or a child. This same kind of drawing of one single eye was done on jewellery, on furniture or in hidden spots, such as under drawers or inside jewellery boxes. Since a single eye did not constitute exposure and easy identification, the miniature could be shown publicly. As a tribute to this practice, Attoun asked her family and friends to send photos of a loved one's eye, which she then drew expertly and sensitively. Her work also incorporates the tensions of such superstitions as the evil eye that are still very prevalent today. The mysticism around the evil eye depends solely on the other person's view of the subject and how the subject perceives that gaze. Different layers in an individual's identity are intertwined with that external gaze and take the modesty factor into consideration consciously or subconsciously or, alternatively, its opposite ban of ***shufuni***: "look at

me". In this regard, Attoun's work serves as a counterpoint to Liani's, in that it hides what is seen, despite the intensity of its content.

In a more thematically conceptual manner, **David Benarroch** offers a series of photos entitled *Untitled (sideboard buffet)*, 1:1 scale photographs of four doors of a typical, basic wooden Israeli sideboard of the sixties or seventies. The wood pattern resembles camouflage and thus directs our thinking to issues of visibility/invisibility and all that might take place behind closed doors. The way the photographs are framed and hung close together turns them into a single object that extends beyond the photographic image and in a sense offers a closed door, impossible to open. This gesture is diametrically opposite that of Liani's *Origin of the World*, in the sense that it highlights 'that which is hidden' as fodder for our nagging thoughts.

The hidden world as an expression of a gap-ridden identity is explored from a more primary perspective in the work *Savta, Sabba* (Grandma, Grandpa) by **Mati Elmaliach**, based on two photos of the artist's grandparents taken in France on their way to Israel, after having left Morocco. The artist erased their faces by superimposing white squares, in a sense geometrically hollowing them out, and then proceeded to frame them. These two photographs are the only ones that survive from his grandparent's immigration journey to Israel, telling of their lives before arriving in Israel in the fifties. The way he has treated them becomes a metaphorical account of the brutal cultural historical erasure that many feel still today. Does this erasure address the generalisation and abstraction of an entire population from North Africa, whose historical narrative was severed so abruptly? Did the personal narrative survive? Can identity exist from memories alone, or do we need visual cultural aids and objects? How is Elmaliach's identity affected by that erasure?

Inspired by the seventeenth-century French artist Nicolas Robert, who was known for his botanical drawings and lithographs, **Esther Cohen**'s drawings *The Mandrake Roots* (14) directs our attention to the biblical plant of the mandrake root in its Jewish context. The artist combines the concept of shame rooted in nudity, and the original sin for which Adam and Eve were

14. Mandrake, or *Mandragora Autumnalis*, is a plant with a thick, curvy root that penetrates as much as two metres into the soil and a shape that resembles the human form. The plant has been used for thousands of years in traditional medicine, since it has many properties related to reproductive health and sexuality, and has generated many myths about its use as an aphrodisiac, an anaesthetic before surgery and a magical serum to ward off the evil eye.

forever expelled from the garden of Eden.

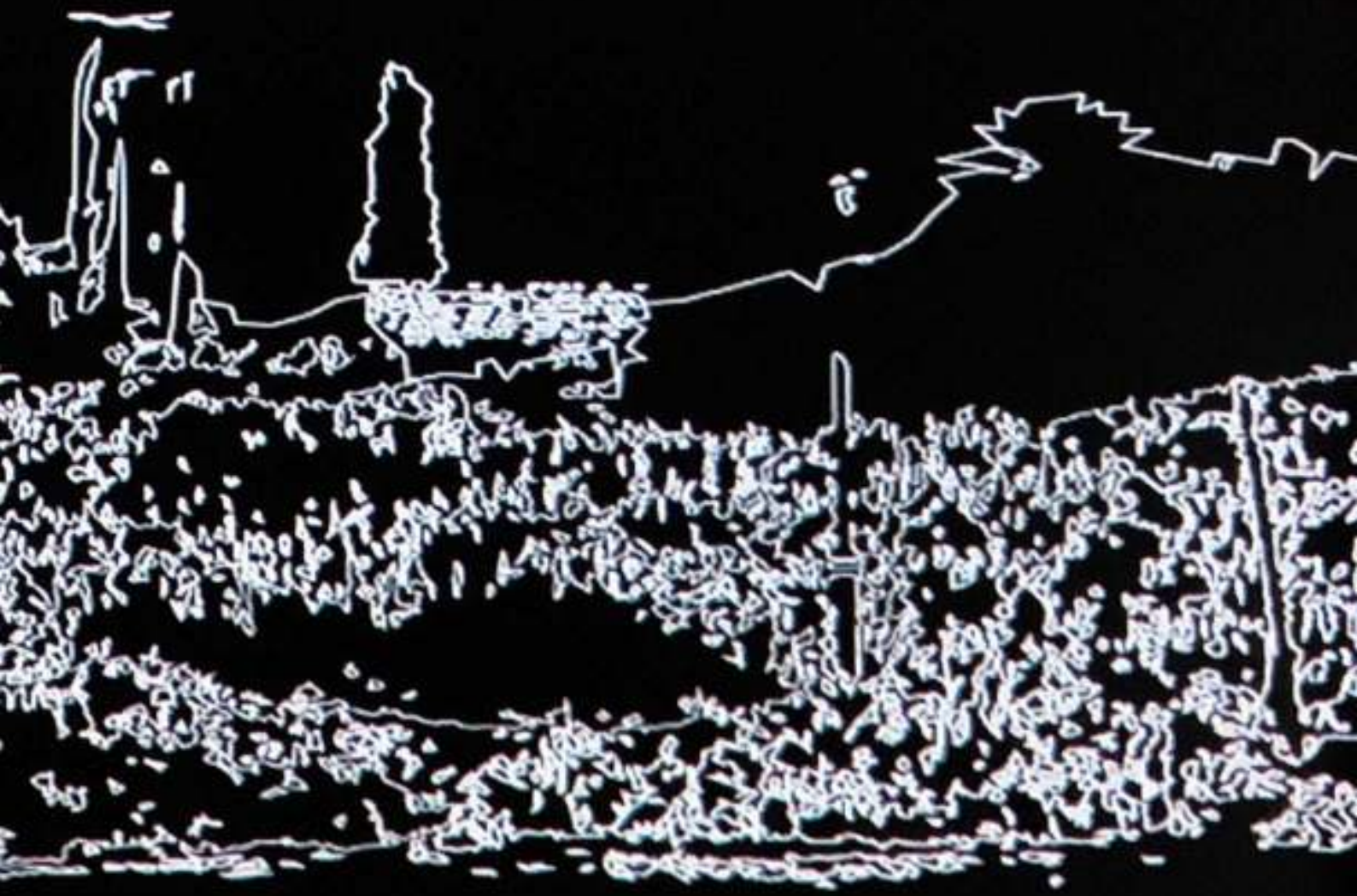
"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" Genesis 2:25

The two are presented here with the nudity of the lower half of their bodies exposed, drawn like the medicinal plant and merged by means of wo.man-made bracelets and amulets created of gold and gemstones. All of the pieces of jewellery depicted are part of the tradition and folklore of the artist's parents' home: jewellery passed down for generations that used to be worn by women, men and babies as signs of luck and blessings for health, wealth and longevity. A closer look shows how Cohen's detailed drawings disclose a personal secret that is at once revealed and hidden. The woman-root is drawn in on one side as a goddess of fertility and passion and on one of her sides she is shown as having had a breast mastectomy and also reveals an abdominal scar. The heads of both the man and the woman in the drawing are lost in the foliage, the fruit and the flowers, perhaps as a hint of the magical element of love and magic that may be enabled by the biblical medicinal plant of the mandrake root. Indeed, in this work there is a play between the hidden and the revealed that relates to several other works in the exhibition, such as those of Maya Attoun, Mati Elmaliach, David Benarroch, among others.

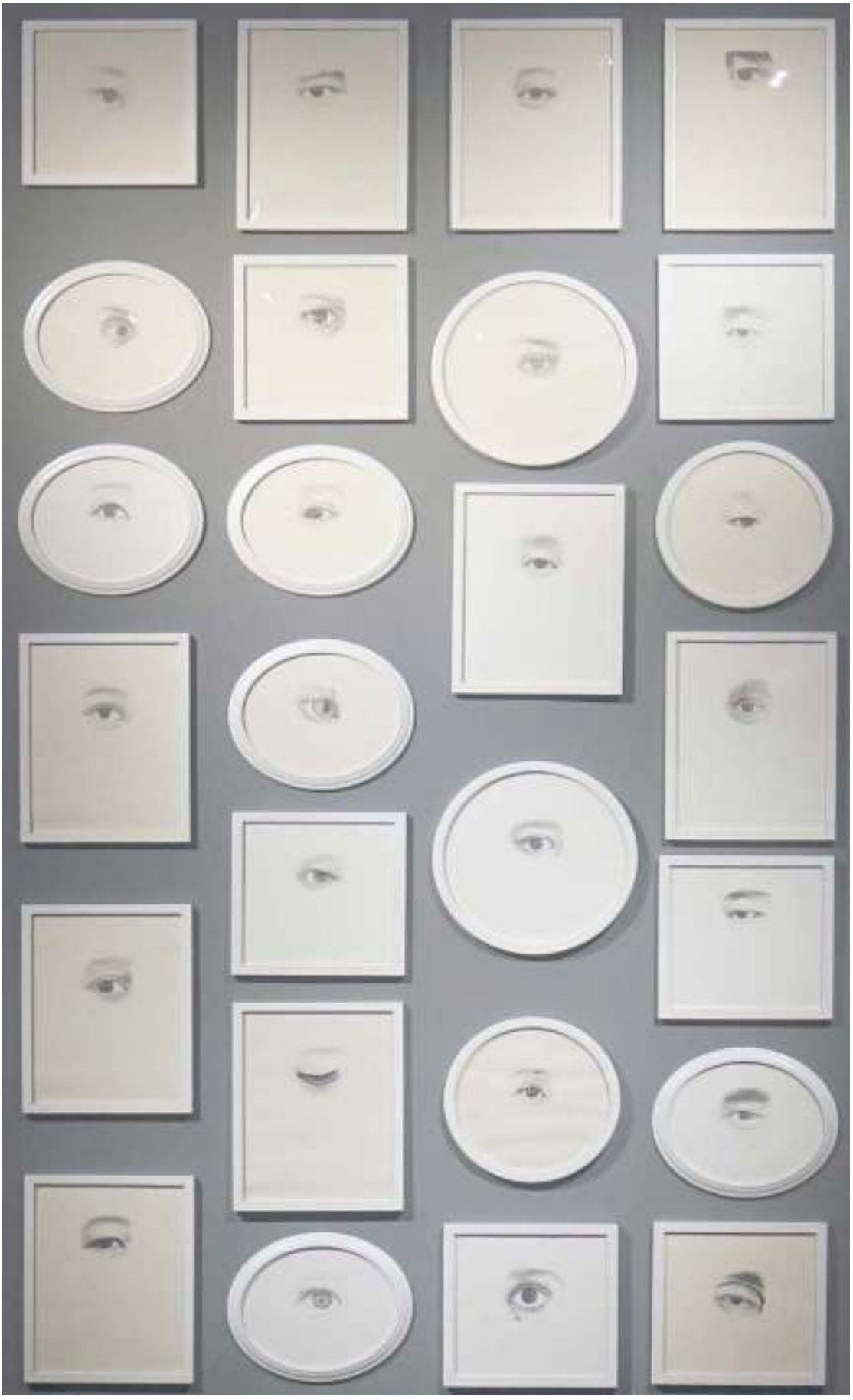
Dafna Shalom's video work, part of her now-canonical trilogy *Days of Awe* [15], links the act of concealment to Jewish tradition, with its cyclicality and connection to nature. In its broad reading, *The Trilogy* deals with the element of time in the month of Elul, a period also called *Days of Awe*. This is the month of Jewish mercy, when the individual looks inwards in search of spiritual self-examination and reflection against all that is present in our everyday physical life. It is also a time to consider our place in nature and our hopes for our family as an infinite cyclical existential circle. One major characteristic of the Jewish religion, the source of all the monotheistic religions, is its organisation into a cycle of prayers, actions, rituals and ceremonies. That repetitive cycle is present in each of the works in Shalom's trilogy. In the first chapter, showcased in the

15. This trilogy belongs to a larger series of works called *Time Change*, which deals with short-term changes, like day to night or night to day, week to week. The trilogy was first shown at the Petakh Tikvah Museum in the exhibition *Days of Awe*, in September 2011, and has been travelling the world since then.

exhibition, we see a man followed by a woman: both paint their faces with camouflage face paint. This image is coupled with A Capella singing of traditional prayer hymns, performed by Smadar Levy, whose haunting voice alternates with a recording of men singing prayers in synagogue. The Sephardic Mizrahi synagogue space still serves today as one of the only safe spaces for Jewish men to 'wear' their Arabness freely. In fact, there is a proud meticulousness in these synagogues associated with the pronunciations and song variations that are typical and unique to each specific city or country of origin. It is a space where two layers of identity that are typically antagonistic - Jewish and Arab - exist beautifully as one. As the faces in Shalom's video installation are slowly covered and hidden by the camouflage paint, the space is filled with layers of religious sound. In this way, Shalom's work relates thematically to the work of Daniel Shoshan, whose own video piece also addresses layers of sound that relate to visual images in flux.



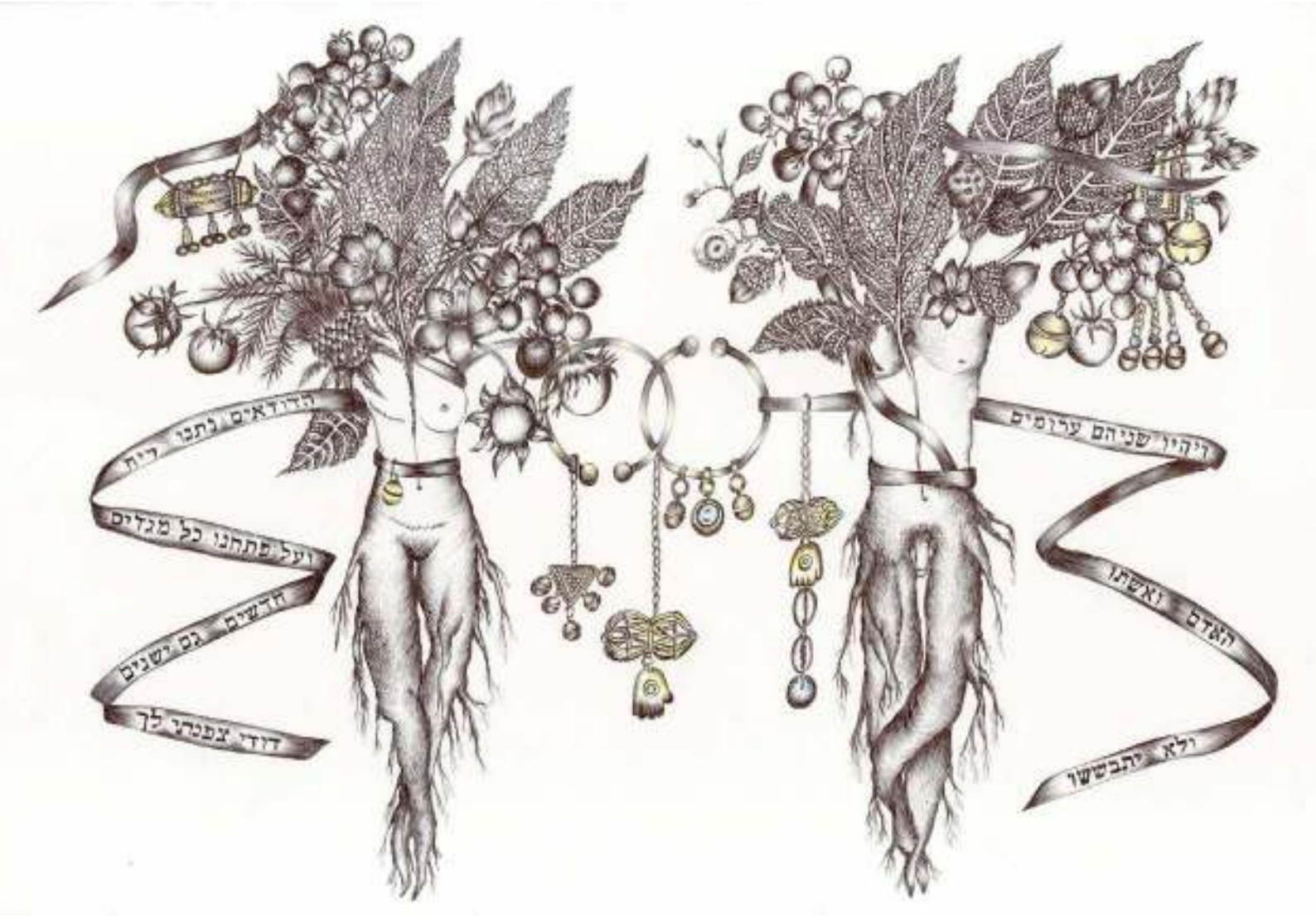
ppg. 54-55
Daniel Shoshan (1957) / Amit Matalon (1982)
Hzana (Lament), 2013.
Video 2'50'', sound by Daniel Shoshan.
Courtesy of the artists.



Maya Attoun (1974)
Lover's Eye, 2016.
Pencil on paper, wood.
Courtesy of the artist.

David Benarroch (1982)
Untitled (Sideboard), 2016.
Archival pigment print, four units.
Courtesy of the artist.

Mati Elmaliach (1979)
Untitled, 2018.
Pigment print on archival paper, diptych.
Courtesy of the artist.



Esther Cohen (1972)
Mandragora Roots, 2018.
Ballpoint pen and pencil on paper.
Courtesy of the artist.

Dafna Shalom (1966)
Fearful Days: A Trilogy. Chapter 1, 2006.
Video 2'55''
Courtesy of the artist.

Social Severing as an Artistic theme.
Although Sartre considered shame to be a direct external extension of guilt, there is a substantial body of literature, especially American, that deals with the topic of shame and its distinct difference from guilt. The social scientist Brené Brown, from the University of Houston, claims that human connection is what provides life with meaning and that the fear of losing that essential life-affirming connection is what drives shame. Unlike guilt, which she claims is a positive productive feeling, shame is a painful feeling and experience, highlighting what is missing and what is a void in our identity: our need for belonging if we are to feel a sense of self-esteem. Her theory relates well to Hshuma, as it highlights the shame we feel with respect to the tribe to which we as the shamed one belong and our fear of losing that essential social affiliation.

Dan Allon's work *Strange Stranger* and **Koby Sibony**'s *You Should Be Ashamed of Yourself* share feelings of social ostracism or its potential, through their personal interactions with their respective fathers. In his piece, Allon embarrasses his father by urinating in his building's stairwell, then proceeds to gets caught by his dad, who also happens to be the building's tenants' representative. Using a different approach, Sibony's piece is a summary of many conversations with his father about his entire childhood, in the form of a sculpture made of four Hebrew words sculpted in pink wire that read *Not Nice, You Should be Ashamed of Yourself*. The potential banishment embedded in both works is a significant variable in their artistic practice and their identity as having Moroccan roots.

A much heavier layer of Hshuma encompasses **Gil Desiano Bitton**'s entire artistic and existential approach, as is evident in his piece *A Conversation from the Kibbutz*. An old rotary phone, of the kind that was common in the seventies and eighties of the last century, is placed alongside a drawing of a well-known Kabala writer and researcher Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai, to create a powerful installation. In this interactive installation, when you pick up the receiver, you can hear Gil's uncle recite Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with a very heavy Cockney accent. The artist's identity is heavily influenced by his infancy as a Mizrahi child, replete with experiences that are filled with shame

and embarrassment because of his family's limited language abilities and Arabic accent, among other things. Here, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* represents the "superior" Western culture from which he felt ostracised, while it is read/dictated by his uncle, who is tagged in Israeli society as uneducated and uncouth, in a sense banished from society by virtue of having spent much of his life in prison.

Another dissonance that relates directly to the duality of Desiano Bitton's work is his name, which is made up of his original Moroccan name, Bitton, and the more Western-sounding name that he later added, Desiano. His work is also highly influenced by a genre of artworks presented using telephones from the late sixties. One such important exhibition, curated by Harald Szeemann and which became iconic, is *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes become Form, Works, Concepts, Processes, Situations, Information* [16]. Another no-less important one was *Art by Telephone* at the Contemporary Art Museum in Chicago in 1969 [17]. Then there was Walter de Maria's work shown in Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland, which consisted of a phone laying on the ground which the artist called once in a while: whoever picked it up had a conversation with him. There was an inherent need in the piece to pass on a message.

In his work, Desiano Bitton also employs the tension described above when he uses the low, heavy intonations and strong accent of his uncle's voice on the phone, as a contrast with the no less, yet differently, tragic smoothness of Shakespeare's words. Indeed, there are two main layers of identity in this work that reflect the local search for defining identity: the elusive Western layer, with the immigrant's aspiration to reach and meld into it, and the Mizrahi Orientalist Arab layer, which is more organic and visible, but less solid and firm, so more susceptible to being overcome and swallowed by Western norms and mores.

What began as my thoughts about perspectives related to the Israeli Mizrahi Orientalist Arab Jewish identity while on a curatorial residency in Morocco has culminated in this exhibition as a collection of artworks that enable visitors to explore that identity through the specific lens of

16. "When Attitudes Become Form" (Harald Szeemann, 1969), Information (Kynaston L. McShine, 16 11970), or Software (Jack Burnham, 1970), Curated by Harald Szeemann, Kunsthalle Bern, March 1969.
17. The artists who created the artworks in this exhibition confirm that they were all made using a telephone.

Hshuma. It is but one filter for exploring that complex identity, one out of many, facilitating deep X-ray explorations of an ancient culture that has inadvertently, or not, been swallowed and synthesised by a new one. The exhibition sets out to take a close look at the elements and components of Israeli art, practising a dissection that aims to isolate and highlight certain parts of its identity, and enable their existence within the contemporary artistic field to be acknowledged.

Dan Allon (1982)
The Mysterious Stranger - Radio Drama, 2018.
Single channel voice recording, 1'46''
Courtesy of the artist.

Dear neighbors,

We need your help.
You all know about the constant urinating in elevator.
If you see something suspicious around the bldg, please let us know.

Thank you,

The building committee

Dear neighbors,

We have installed hidden cameras across the hall, lobby, and in other places.

Please, if you are the one who is doing it, come forward, and we will talk like men.

Sincerely,

The building committee

Dear Neighbors,

Sometime next week, a laboratory specialist will come to pick up samples. We believe that this would allow us to solve this horrible situation.

Please, it's the last chance, hand over yourself. You are officially warned.

The building committee

You know who you are.
We know who you are.
We have proof.
Come forward or be shamed publicly.

Dear Neighbors,

WE HAVE GOOD REASONS, TO BELIEVE WE CAUGHT THE CRIMINAL.

We will take action in the next days.

The building committee

Koby Sibony (1982)
Shame on You, 2018.
Iron wire, manual bending.
Courtesy of the artist.

Gil Desiano Bitton (1977)
A Conversation from the Kibbutz, 2018.
Sound installation.
Courtesy of the artist.

Gil Desiano Bitton (1977)
Untitled, 2018.
Two oils on paper.
Courtesy of the artist.

Hshuma

Curated by
Sharon Toval

Exhibition views at
MACT/CACT Museo e Centro d'Arte Contemporanea Ticino, Switzerland.

1 September - 8 December 2019

Assaf Abutbul / R'm Aharoni / Dan Allon / Eyal Assulin /
Maya Attoun / David Benarroch /
Esther Cohen / Gil Desiano Bitton / Yosef Joseph Dadoune /
Mati Elmaliach / Avshalom Levi /
Michael Liani / Vered Nissim / Dafna Shalom / Nir Shitrit /
Daniel Shoshan & Amit Matalon /
Tal Shoshan / Koby Sibony / Merav Sudaey.

left
Eyal Assulin (1981)
Moti, 2018.
Plastic, fiberglass, industrial paint, 8K gold, gourmette and pendent.
Private collection, Israel.

right
Maya Attoun (1974)
Lover's Eye, 2016.
Pencil on paper, wood.
Courtesy of the artist.

Maya Attoun (1974)
Lover's Eye (detail), 2016.
Pencil on paper, wood.
Courtesy of the artist.

Michael Liani (1987)
THE Origin of the World out of the series *Evil Eye*, 2016.
Photography installation.
Courtesy of the artist.

left
Mati Elmaliach (1979)
Untitled, 2018.
Pigment print on archival paper, diptych.
Courtesy of the artist.

centre
David Benarroch (1982)
Untitled (Sideboard), 2016.
Archival pigment print, four units.
Courtesy of the artist.

right
Eyal Assulin (1981)
Moti, 2018.
Plastic, fiberglass, industrial paint, 8K gold, gourmette and pendent. Private collection, Israel.

Nir Shitrit (1987)
When I first met You, 2018.
Video 4'43''
Courtesy of the artist.

ppg. 78-79

left
Avshalom Levi (1959)
Alona 37, Nataly 32 and Becky 40 out of the series *No Man's Land*, 2009.
Three pigment prints on archival paper.
Courtesy of the artist.

centre
R'm Aharoni (1983)
All You Need, 2016.
Digitalized Super 8 film, 7'00''
Courtesy of the artist.

right
Tal Shoshan (1969)
Self Portrait, 2010.
Three coloured pencils on photos.
Courtesy of the artist.

left
Dafna Shalom (1966)
Fearful Days: A Trilogy. *Chapter 3*, 2011.
Video 12'57''
Courtesy of the artist.

right
Merav Sudaey (1970)
Nude 1 (Self-Portrait), 2018.
Oil on canvas.
Courtesy of the artist.

ppg. 82-83-84

Dafna Shalom (1966)
Fearful Days: A Trilogy. *Chapter 3*, 2011.
Video 12'57''
Courtesy of the artist.

ppg. 86-87

left
Tal Shoshan (1969)
Self Portrait, 2010.
Three coloured pencils on photos.
Courtesy of the artist.

right
Dan Allon (1982)
The Mysterious Stranger - Radio Drama, 2018.
Single channel voice recording, 1'46''
Courtesy of the artist.

Gil Desiano Bitton (1977)
A Conversation from the Kibbutz, 2018.
Sound installation.
Courtesy of the artist.

Gil Desiano Bitton (1977)
Untitled, 2018.
Two oils on paper.
Courtesy of the artist.

Koby Sibony (1982)
Shame on You, 2018.
Iron wire, manual bending.
Courtesy of the artist.

Yosef Joseph Dadoune (1975)
Jewish Women Stereotypes 1930-1910, 2018.
The artist's private postcards collection.

Vered Nissim (1980)
If I tell You the Story of my Life, Tears Are Coming out of My Eyes, 2015.
Video 12'26''
Courtesy of the artist.

Esther Cohen (1972)
Mandragora Roots, 2018.
Ballpoint pen and pencil on paper.
Courtesy of the artist.

Yosef Joseph Dadoune (1975)
Jewish Women Stereotypes 1930-1910, 2018.
The artist's private postcards collection.

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Cover image, 2nd and 3rd page:
Dafna Shalom (1966)
Fearful Days: A Trilogy. Chapter 3, 2011.
Video 12'57''
Courtesy of the artist.

חֲשׁוּמָה

حشومة