

Moon walks\ solo show by Matan Ben- Tolila

Noga Gallery- Tel-Aviv\ January 2013

Matan Ben-Tolila paints mental landscapes, as though they were exterior landscapes. He tantalizes our vision with familiar and tangible objects, yet places for us unmissable tracks of illusion and riddle, a labyrinth, as though explicitly telling us: The image before you is in my mind and in your mind alone.

A landscape stretching out, not a single soul appears. An empty space, with no possibility to place anything within it. An open and lit house - no one comes or goes, its entrances and exits are blocked. A mountain in the distance, no trail leads to it. Distant sceneries fading and collapsing into themselves. The meticulously drawn structures hold no substance, their walls do not connect to one another, and their spaces contain nothing. There is no door to enter through. There is no window to look out from.

For a moment he deceives us with colorfulness, in clean and clear lines, we are swiftly invited inside, to sit in the "**Gazebo**" and restfully ponder. Yet it then becomes apparent to us that the path leading up to it is blocked by a white unpainted area, an empty canvas that the artist's hand chose to leave untouched. A momentary illusion will have us believe that the billowing sheet in "**Two Moons of Autumn**" – on it are painted what seem to be perhaps moons, perhaps eyeballs - is an invitation to an exotic journey, a hedonistic search after a perfect beauty. But these two moons lead us to the ironic haiku song:

Press your eyeballs

And there you have two moons of Autumn

If you search for beauty, search for it within yourself. Do not turn your gaze outside, to the scenery surrounding you, but press your eyes and materialize the beauty within you. Will you be willing to pay the price of pain that is entailed in pressing the eyeball? Is the search for beauty, color and magic not doomed to be a painful and agonizing process that compels us to close our eyes to the true reality that surrounds us?

In the painting "**Blue Gate**" we are left wondering in front of a childish playground, its simple colors and shapes show a fleeting illusion of childhood, an illusion that quickly fades while facing the two eyeballs, looking at us silently like two full moons. The metal gate threatens to turn into a guillotine before our very eyes, while they linger for another glance.

The moon, its beauty illuminating the night, does not shine its light from within itself, but is irradiated by the light of the sun. In itself it is opaque and impenetrable.

The paintings in the exhibition are full of light and color, a colorful palette, an almost "Pantone" color scale, colors hinting at the industrial and artificial. A palette that deliberately veers as far as possible from natural coloring. These colors are the making of the artist, painting a world where all the outlines and joints are his

making. A creation entailing toiling preciseness, meticulous thoroughness, as though a carpenter or an expert metal worker – the making of a master craftsman.

Moon walking, the iconic treading of the astronaut walking on the moon, touching the ground, and leaping back off of it, their weight is no longer weight, their step is no longer a step. Moon walking, as Michael Jackson's dance moves, is a deceiving walk, steps that repeat themselves with a misleading ease, where feet graze the ground, hover over it, hardly touching.

The act of painting wishes to assimilate the moon walk. To be laid on the canvas as though not painted but projected on it, as though it's light and colors do not come from within itself, but from the gazing vision of the painter. The gaze will disappear and with it the sights, the colors and the structures.

And we, the viewers, standing between the painter's eye and the image projected on the canvas, can only leave but a shadow of our figure; and just like it, will fade with the disappearance of the last rays of light and the disappearance of the gaze.

Tzila Hayun – creator and curator of interdisciplinary culture programs.

Matan Ben-Tolila was born in 1978, Kibbutz- Yavne. Completed his BA in the Bezalel Art Academy in 2006, and the Bezalel MFA program in 2010.

Ben-Tolila has exhibited in many group exhibitions, among them "Shesh-Besh" in the Petah-Tikva museum, curated by Hadas Maor. In the Lincoln center in New-York, Mani House in Tel Aviv, and more. He was twice awarded the Excellency award by the America Israel Culture Foundation, and was awarded the Presser award for Excellency in painting by the Bezalel Academy.