

# NAHUM TEVET

## ASTRAZIONE: LE 5 VIE

WINFRED GAUL, IMI KNOEBEL, CHRISTIAN MEGERT, BRUNO MUNARI, NAHUM TEVET

La mostra raccoglie le opere di cinque artisti che, dal Modernismo fino ai nostri giorni, hanno lavorato e lavorano su un'idea di geometria compositiva, di chiarezza concettuale e di rigore espressivo, che ha evitato di chiudersi su se stessa, ma ha invece tenuto insieme visione e illusione, ingegno e trasgressione, tradizione e innovazione.

Le opere di Bruno Munari, Imi Knoebel, Nahum Tevet, Christian Megert e Winfred Gaul rappresentano il tentativo dell'arte di cambiare continuamente la visione di un mondo che, come ha testimoniato il "secolo breve", cambia continuamente, sfidando le nostre abitudini percettive e aprendosi di volta in volta a nuove sfide conoscitive e a nuove costellazioni interpretative.

Gli artisti in mostra cercano un punto di ancoraggio nella linearità espressiva della geometria, che però va qui colta nel suo significato più ampio che arriva a superare la razionalità euclidea per accogliere visioni più eterodosse come la geometria frattalica e le geometrie dei poligoni iperbolici. Ne nascono cinque vie all'astrazione e cinque visioni di un mondo liquido e smaterializzato, la cui consistenza non assomiglia più soltanto ad un solido ma anche all'evanescenza di una nuvola che si muove e muta le sue forme nel cielo.

Il percorso di Bruno Munari (Milano, 1907-1998) è poliedrico e seminale non solo nella varietà dei suoi riferimenti al mondo dell'arte e della cultura, ma perché è stato precocemente in grado di tenere insieme la scultura e l'industrial design, la pittura e il cinema, l'animazione e l'attività editoriale, la grafica e la didattica. Un costante rimando alla libertà creativa dell'infanzia e un uso sottile quanto spregiudicato dell'ironia in cui la geometria diviene un campo aperto di sperimentazione contro ogni forma di dogmatismo culturale e di rigidità mentale. Le sue forme colorate e combinate, mentre ammiccano alle composizioni di forme e di colori fondamentali delle Avanguardie Storiche, ricalibrano pesi e temperature cromatiche, pieni e vuoti, facendo emergere armonie e dissonanze. Per Nahum Tevet (Israele, 1946) l'opera evidenzia una memoria che procede per frammenti e quasi si innesca a partire da una decostruzione degli oggetti, del loro senso così come della loro funzione. L'interazione tra forma, colore e spazio è anche il sintomo di una mentalità che è erede delle avanguardie storiche ma non ne è succube e il colore, qui e là, e il non-finito, servono ad alleggerire il senso di un progetto totale, a cancellare l'ideologismo attraverso la rimodulazione continua e il riadattamento. Le sue strutture tridimensionali sembrano il frutto di una deflagrazione compositiva che poi ritrova sempre un suo punto di riassetto in cui l'organizzazione degli elementi vive in un delicato equilibrio e in una fertile precarietà che testimonia il continuo processo di aggiustamento e riadattamento che anche l'essere umano si trova a dover compiere.

Tra i massimi artisti tedeschi della seconda metà del XX secolo, Imi Knoebel (Dessau, 1940), usa composizioni geometriche in combinazioni di due o tre colori, aggiungendo occasionalmente un effetto fosforescente che assorbe, immagazzina ed emette la luce circostante. Knoebel esplora i contrasti formali

come il taglio netto con il morbido, il colorato con il neutro e l'opaco con l'effetto riflettente e vivido. Egli incorpora motivi architettonici in composizioni articolate, come sezioni di legno a forma di finestre o porte che includono parzialmente l'architettura dell'ambiente circostante nel loro campo pittorico. In altre opere, la pittura viene espansa su scala architettonica, invitando lo spettatore a entrare nella sua zona di colore puro e risonante e restituendo una versione "umanistica" dell'astrazione che si porta più vicino al mondo del pensiero che a quello della pura forma astratta.

Christian Megert (Berna, 1936) usa la luce e il riflesso luminoso come un laser che segmenta, taglia e scompone lo spazio del quadro, allargandosi all'ambiente e alle dinamiche percettive dello spettatore. Lo specchio diviene la via per nuove e continue ipotesi di modulazione spaziale e l'opera è costruita con perizia e nitore mediante un intreccio che alterna fasi geometriche con altre tese a destabilizzare le aspettative. Il risultato è la definizione di un confine instabile della rappresentazione che slitta di continuo tra diverse dimensioni spaziali e temporali. In questo modo Megert ci ricorda quanto l'arte oggi rifletta la vita e non l'ideale di vita: l'arte attraverso l'astrazione e la scomposizione geometrica assume su di sé la caoticità che ci circonda per la necessità di uno sguardo trasparente sul mondo, non più un atto di fede nella natura cartesiana delle cose ma un atto di testimonianza nei confronti di quanto v'è di frammentario, parziale e eminentemente poetico nel mondo.

La serie "Verkehrszeichen & Signale" (Segnali stradali e segnali) di Winfred Gaul (Düsseldorf, 1928 - Kaiser-swerth, 2003) si compone di tele dai colori brillanti e dall'impianto geometrico che hanno costituito quasi la totalità della pratica dell'artista dagli anni Settanta ai primi anni Novanta. Sono opere a cui Gaul si dedica da prima del suo viaggio a New York, con cui rompe definitivamente con il periodo informale per dirigersi verso la pittura analitica, parallelamente alla Post-painterly Abstraction americana. Subì forse anche, come Mondrian, l'impatto dell'energia incessante e del traffico casuale delle strade di Manhattan, che lo ispirarono nelle composizioni di queste potenti icone urbane giocate su colori sorprendenti. La sensibilità giocosa di Gaul crea un senso di libertà, poiché le sue forme - che sono diventate sinonimo di movimento e di energia – si liberano attraverso il colore e la vibrazione.

#### Dati essenziali

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

Dal 2 dicembre 2021 al 4 febbraio 2022

Dal lunedì al venerdì dalle 10.30 alle 18

ASTRAZIONE: LE 5 VIE

WINFRED GAUL, IMI KNOEBEL, CHRISTIAN MEGERT, BRUNO MUNARI, NAHUM TEVET

This exhibition collects the works of five artists who, covering the Modernist era to contemporary times, have worked on the idea of compositional geometry, of conceptual clarity and expressive rigour, that didn't close in upon itself but rather was capable of holding together vision and illusion, ingenuity and transgression, tradition and innovation.

The works of Bruno Munari, Imi Knoebel, Nahum Tevet, Christian Megert, and Winfred Gaul represent art's attempt to constantly modify the vision of a world that, as proven by the "Age of Extremes," is ever changing, challenging our perceptive habits, and opening time and again to new cognitive challenges and new interpretative constellations.

The artists on show seek an anchorage in the expressive linearity of geometry, which must here be intended in a broader sense, capable of overcoming Euclidean rationality to encompass more heterodox visions such as fractal geometry and the geometry of hyperbolic polygons. What emerges are five paths to abstraction and five visions of a fluid, dematerialized world the consistency of which no longer simply resembles a solid but also possesses the evanescence of a cloud, moving and mutating in the sky.

The path taken by Bruno Munari (Milan, 1907-1998) is polyhedric and seminal, not only in the variety of its references to the worlds of art and culture, but also because he was precociously capable of uniting sculpture and industrial design, painting and cinema, animation and publishing, graphics and teaching. His work establishes a constant reference to the creative freedom of childhood and a subtle albeit daring use of irony in which geometry becomes an open field for experimentation, rejecting any form of cultural dogmatism and mental inflexibility. His colourful, combined shapes, while allusive of the fundamental compositions of forms and colours of the Historical Avant-Garde, recalibrate weight and colour temperature, full and empty spaces, letting harmony and dissonance emerge.

For Nahum Tevet (Israel, 1946) a work of art is the underscoring of a memory that advances one fragment at a time, nearly triggered by a deconstruction of objects, of their meaning as well as their function. The interaction of shape, colour and space is also the symptom of an attitude inherited from the historical Avant-Garde but not dominated by it. Here and there, colour and unfinished portions of the work are used to unburden the significance of an overall project, to cancel out ideologism through constant remodulation and readaptation. His three-dimensional structures seem to be the fruit of a compositional deflagration that always finds its reassembly point where the arrangement of the single elements lives in a delicate balance and fertile precarity that bear witness to the constant process of adjustment and adaptation which even human beings are forced to endure.

Imi Knoebel (Dessau, 1940), one of the most important German artists of the second half of the Twentieth century, uses geometrical compositions in combi-

nations of two or three colours, occasionally adding a phosphorescent effect that absorbs, stores, and propagates the surrounding light. Knoebel investigates formal contrasts such as clean cuts versus softness, colour versus neutral hues, and opaque surfaces versus a vivid mirror effect. He mixes architectural motifs into articulate compositions, such as pieces of wood in the shape of windows or doors that partially include the surrounding architectural structure in areas of the painting. In other works, the painting expands on an architectural scale, inviting the viewer to enter its space of pure, resounding colour, creating a “humanistic” version of abstraction that is closer to the world of thought than that of pure abstract shape.

Christian Megert (Bern, 1936) uses light and luminous reflections like a laser that segment, cut up, and disturb the picture space, to then spread through the environment and the perceptive dynamics of the viewers. Mirrors become the main means for new and continuous hypotheses of spatial modulation. The work is constructed with skill and clarity by way of a constructing weaving that alternates narrative and geometrical phases with others that are aimed at destabilising expectations. The result is the definition of an unstable representational boundary that continuously shifts between various spatial and temporal dimensions. In this way Megert reminds us how much art today reflects life and not an ideal of life: art through abstraction and geometrical decomposition takes on itself the chaotic state that surrounds us for the necessity for a transparent look at the world around us, no longer an act of faith in the Cartesian nature of things but an act of testimony towards everything fragmentary, incomplete, and eminently poetic in the world.

The series “Verkehrszeichen & Signale” (Traffic Signs and Signals) by Winfred Gaul (Düsseldorf, 1928 - Kaiser-swerth, 2003) consists of canvases painted in the bright colours and the geometrical structures that were typical of the majority of the artist’s production between the Seventies and the early Nineties. These are pieces Gaul began working on before his trip to New York, when he put a permanent end to his informalist period and embraced analytical painting, influenced by the American Post-painterly Abstraction movement. Like Mondrian, he was probably affected by the incessant energy and the casual traffic of the streets of Manhattan, which inspired him in the production of these powerful urban icons in surprising colours. Gaul’s playful perception produces a sense of freedom, as his shapes – a synonym for movement and energy – are set free by colour and vibration.

### Hard Facts

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

From December 2nd 2021 to February 4th 2022

Open from Monday to Friday, 10.30 am – 6 pm

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*Group exhibition*

***Astrazione: le 5 vie***  
MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2021

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*Group exhibition*

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MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2021



## TRA IL CASO E LA NECESSITÀ

ALBERTO BIASI, AXEL LIEBER, CHRISTIAN MEGERT, NAHUM TEVET

A cura di Gianluca Ranzi

La mostra, a cura di Gianluca Ranzi, raccoglie le opere di Alberto Biasi, Axel Lieber, Christian Megert e Nahum Tevet intorno al suggestivo tema del caso e della necessità, suggerito dal titolo del famoso libro del biologo francese Jacques Monod.

L'arte, il cinema, la letteratura sono le spie dell'esistenza del caso: esse mostrano come le biforcazioni (di esistenze, di possibilità, di eventi) siano continue e spesso imprevedute. I molteplici casi che l'arte mette in scena danno luogo a mondi differenti, spesso divergenti, che confutano l'idea di un mondo unico rigidamente tenuto insieme dalla necessità. Monod sostiene infatti che è solo una visione d'insieme, che tenga uniti il caso e la necessità, che può spiegare l'evoluzione umana e quindi i suoi prodotti culturali. Gli artisti convocati per questa mostra hanno in comune, pur nella diversità delle rispettive ricerche e nella varietà dei loro esiti, un atteggiamento ambivalente che mostra da una parte la necessità della forma (Axel Lieber), della composizione (Nahum Tevet), del dinamismo (Alberto Biasi), dello spazio (Christian Megert), ma dall'altra innestano anche nelle loro opere un anticorpo, che potremmo chiamare un derivato del caso, che manda in frantumi l'ordine e la necessità di quella prima impostazione.

Nel caso di Alberto Biasi la dinamica ottico-percettiva delle sue opere si arricchisce di una molteplicità infinita di casi e sotto-casi, si complica e si apre alla variazione, non solo cromatica ma soprattutto percettiva, per cui non esiste più l'univocità del centro, ma un'inesauribile ricchezza di punti di vista, di fughe nello spazio e nel tempo, di ingegnosissime soluzioni tecniche e di sottili accorgimenti psicologici: macchine capaci di promuovere emozione interna ed esterna all'opera.

Per Nahum Tevet l'opera evidenzia una memoria che procede per frammenti e quasi si innesca a partire da una decostruzione degli oggetti, del loro senso così come della loro funzione. L'interazione tra forma, colore e spazio è anche il sintomo di una mentalità che è erede delle avanguardie storiche ma non ne è succube e il colore, qui e là, e il non-finito, servono ad alleggerire il senso di un progetto totale, a cancellare l'ideologismo attraverso la rimodulazione continua e il riadattamento.

Christian Megert usa la luce e il riflesso luminoso come un laser che segmenta, taglia e scompone lo spazio del quadro, allargandosi all'ambiente e alle dinamiche percettive dello spettatore. Lo specchio diviene il mezzo principe per moltiplicare identità multiple e formulare in libertà nuove e continue ipotesi

NAHUM TEVET

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di modulazione spaziale. In questo modo elementi di complessa costruzione creano movimento attraverso il riflesso e la dinamica delle corrispondenze, anche per via di dissonanza.

Le installazioni e gli assemblages di Axel Lieber sono un viaggio ironico e surreale intorno al mondo degli oggetti quotidiani, che diventano rompicapi e calembours, sono miniaturizzati o ingigantiti, rintuzzati e decostruiti. Antropologia, scienza, humor e fantasia convivono nelle sue opere e suggeriscono infiniti mondi possibili, pongono continue sfide alla logica e costituiscono anche un irresistibile godimento per l'intelligenza.

Dati essenziali

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

Dal 28 marzo al 17 maggio 2019

Dal lunedì al venerdì dalle 10.30 alle 18

## TRA IL CASO E LA NECESSITÀ

ALBERTO BIASI, AXEL LIEBER, CHRISTIAN MEGERT, NAHUM TEVET

Curated by Gianluca Ranzi

Comprising works by Alberto Biasi, Axel Lieber, Christian Megert and Nahum Tevet, the exhibition curated by Gianluca Ranzi focuses on the fascinating theme of chance, suggested by the title of the well-known book by the French biochemist Jacques Monod.

Art, cinema and literature are evidence of the existence of chance: they show how the bifurcations (of existence, opportunities or events) are continuous and often unforeseen.

The numerous possibilities that art presents give rise to different, often divergent, worlds that confute the idea of a single world held together by necessity. Monod argued that it is only a view of the whole picture that keeps chance and necessity together and can explain the evolution of humankind and hence its cultural processes. What the artists participating in this exhibition have in common is — despite the diversity of their respective practices and the variety of their output — an ambivalent attitude that demonstrates, on the one hand, the necessity of form (Axel Lieber), composition (Nahum Tevet), dynamism (Albert Biasi) and space (Christian Megert), but on the other inserts an antibody into their works. In a sense this is a derivative of chance and it shatters the order and necessity of their original formulation.

In the case of Alberto Biasi, the optic-perceptive dynamic of his works is enriched by an infinite multiplicity of cases and sub-cases. Thus it becomes more complicated and opens up to the variation not only of colour but also, and above all, of perception, so that, rather than exclusively the centre, there is an inexhaustible wealth of viewpoints, spatio-temporal perspectives, very ingenious technical inventions and subtle psychological devices: these are machines capable of promoting emotion that is both internal and external to the work.

For Nahum Tevet, the work reveals a memory that functions in fragments and is practically triggered off by the deconstruction of objects, with regard to both their meaning and their purpose. The interaction between form, colour and space is also a symptom of a mentality that is heir to the historical avant-garde movements but is not dominated by them, while here and there the colour and the *non-finito* serve to reduce the sense of an overall project and eliminate ideology through its continuous remodelling and readjustment.

Christian Megert uses light and reflection as a laser that segments, intersects and decomposes the picture space, expanding to the surrounding area and the spectator's perceptive dynamics. The mirror becomes the principal means for propagating the multiple identities and freely formulating new, continuous hypotheses for spatial modulation. In this way, complexly constructed elements create movements through the reflection and dynamic of the

NAHUM TEVET

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correspondences, also by means of dissonance.

Axel Lieber's installations and assemblages are an ironical and surreal journey around the world of everyday objects, which become riddles and puns, are miniaturized or enlarged, held in check or deconstructed. Suggesting an infinite number of possible worlds, anthropology, science, humour and imagination coexist in his works, continuously challenging logic and also constituting an irresistible pleasure for the intelligence.

Hard Facts

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

From March 28<sup>th</sup> to May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Open from Monday to Friday, 10.30 am – 6 pm

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*Group exhibition*

*Tra il caso e la necessità*  
MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2019

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*Group exhibition*

***Tra il caso e la necessità***  
MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2019

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*Group exhibition*

***Tra il caso e la necessità***  
MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2019

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## PRESENTATION

1946 – born in Kibbutz Messilot, Israel  
He lives and works in Tel Aviv, Israel

## EDUCATION AND TEACHING

### 1969-1970

Studied painting with painter Raffi Lavie

### 1980-2013

Professor at the Fine Art Department, Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem

### 2001-2010

Head of the Master's Degree Program in Fine Art, Bezalel Academy of Art and Design

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

### 2024

*Floors*, Hezi Cohen Gallery, Tel Aviv

### 2022

*Chairs and Stripes*, Kristof De Clercq Gallery, Ghent  
*For One Room (Twice)*, Atelier Shemi, Cabri

### 2018

*Nahum Tevet: Five Rooms*, Ceske Budejovice House of Art, Czech Republic  
*Nahum Tevet: Islands and Objects*, Kristof de Clercq Gallery, Gent

### 2017

*Nahum Tevet: Works on glass*, Museum Sztuki, Łódź

### 2016

*Nahum Tevet: Works on Glass, 1972–1975*, Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Gallery, Hunter College, New York

### 2014

*House Tables*, Loushy Art & Projects, Tel Aviv

### 2013

*Nahum Tevet: Islands*, Galleria Giacomo Guidi, Milano

### 2012

*Walking on The Wall: Nahum Tevet Small Sculptures, 1980–2012*, The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery, Tel Aviv

### 2011

*Diver*, Galeria Foksal, Warszawa

### 2010

*At the Same Time: Two-Room Installation*, Łódź Biennial, Łódź

### 2009

*Nahum Tevet*, Fondazione VOLUME!, Roma

### 2008

*Several Things (Herzliya version)*, Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Herzliya  
*Nahum Tevet*, MACRO – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, Roma

### 2007

*Nahum Tevet: Works, 1994–2006*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

### 2005

*Nahum Tevet: Take Two*, Centre d'art contemporain, Quimper

### 2004

*Nahum Tevet: Seven Walks*, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee



**1998**

*Version Nîmoise pour une page de catalogue*, Chapelle des Jésuites, Nîmes  
*A Page from a Catalogue and Other Works*, Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv

**1997**

*Nahum Tevet: Opening Moves*, Mumok Museum, Wien

**1991**

*Nahum Tevet: Painting Lessons, Sculptures 1984–1990*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv

**1988**

*Nahum Tevet: Sculptures*, Artifact Gallery, Tel Aviv

**1986**

*Nahum Tevet: Skulpturen 1985/86*, Kunsthalle, Mannheim; Neue Galerie Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen

**1984**

*Israeli Art: Special Exhibit No. 7 – Nahum Tevet: New Works*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

**1982**

*Nahum Tevet*, Noemi Givon Gallery of Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv  
*Nahum Tevet: Narcissus 1B and 3A*, City University of New York, New York

**1980**

*Drawings*, Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf

**1979**

*Installation for Two Rooms*, Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York

**1978**

*Drawings and Sculptures*, Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf  
*Nahum Tevet: From Two to Ten Drawings*, Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York

**1977**

*Drawings*, Galerie Ilanne, Paris  
*8x6, Drawing installation for Two Rooms*, Sara Gilat Gallery, Jerusalem  
*Nahum Tevet – New Works*, Russ Gallery, Tel Aviv

**1976**

*Nahum Tevet. Works 74–76*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

**1975**

*Nahum Tevet*, Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf

**1972**

*Nahum Tevet: Works, 1970–72*, Sara Gilat Gallery, Jerusalem

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)**

**2025**

*Material Imagination - Inflamed Nerve*, Nahum Tevet, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv

**2024**

*Sol Lewitt, Nahum Tevet*, Gallery Harel, Tel Aviv

**2021**

*Astrazione: le 5 vie*, MAAB Gallery, Milano  
*From Hommage to Homage*, Hathiya Art Space, Tel Aviv

**2020**

*Bertha Urdang: A Gallery of Her Own*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem  
*Joshua Neustein, Nahum Tevet*, Hezi Cohen Gallery, Tel Aviv

**2019**

*Tra il caso e la necessità*, MAAB Gallery, Milano  
*Room for Failure*, Piero Atchugarry Gallery, Miami

*A table*, Givon Gallery, Tel Aviv

**2018**

*Je me souviens*, Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv

*Efrat Natan / Nahum Tevet*, Museum Villa Stuck, Munich

**2017**

*Nahum Tevet, Richard Long, Alan Saret*, James Cohan Gallery, New York

**2015**

*The Rough Law of Gardens: Olaf Holzapfel / Nahum Tevet*, Kunstmuseum, Bochum; Mishkan, Ein Harod

**2014**

*In Conversation: A Selection of Contemporary Artworks*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv

**2012**

*Gregor Schneider and Nahum Tevet*, Hezi Cohen Gallery, Tel Aviv

**2011**

Herzliya Biennial of Contemporary Art, Herzliya

**2008**

*Once is Nothing*, Brussels Biennial, Bruxelles

**2007**

*D.I.Y.\* The Michael Adler Collection and Israeli Post-Minimalism in the Seventies and in Contemporary Art*, Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Herzliya

**2006**

*Humanscape: Painting, Sculpture, and Photography from the Israel Phoenix Collection*, Ashdod Art Museum Monart Center, Ashdod

**2004**

*The Mediterraneans*, MACRO – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma,

Roma

**2003**

*Individual Systems*, L'Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte. La Biennale di Venezia, Venezia

**2000**

*Vision and Reality: Conceptions of the 20th Century*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk

*ZIMZUM (Aktuelle Kunst aus Israel)*, Kunstverein, Heidelberg

**1999**

*Carnegie International*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburg

*Not to be Looked At: Unseen Sites in Israel Today*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

**1998**

*Perspectives on Israeli Art of the Seventies: The Boundaries of Language*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv

**1997**

Biennale d'Art Contemporain, Lyon

**1996**

*Wish List*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

*Painting: The Extended Field*, Magasin III Museum & Foundation for Contemporary Art, Stockholm; Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö

**1994**

Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo

**1992**

*Works on Paper from the 70s*, Artifact Gallery, Tel Aviv

**1990**

*Life-Size: a Sense of the Real in Recent Art*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

**1988**

*Spaces '88: Installations*, Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato

**1987**

*Similia / Dissimilia: Modes of Abstractions in Painting, Sculpture and Photography Today*, Städtische Kunsthall, Düsseldorf; The Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, New York; Leo Castelli Gallery and Sonnabend Gallery, New York

*Documenta 8*, Kassel

**1986**

*The Want of Matter: A Quality in Israeli Art*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv

**1980**

*Biennale de Paris: Manifestation Internationale des jeunes artistes*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris

**1978**

*Seven Artists in Israel, 1948-1978*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Brooklin Museum, New York

**1977**

*10 kunstnere fra Israel*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk

**1974**

*Five Young Artists*, Kibbutz Art Gallery, Tel Aviv

**1971**

*New Faces*, The Artists House, Tel Aviv

**PRIZES (SELECTED)**

**2013**

The EMET Prize for Art, Science and Culture, The office of The Prime Minister of Israel & A.M.N Foundation

**2011**

Dizengoff Prize for Painting and Sculpture, Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality

**2007**

Minister of Culture and Science Prize for Life Achievement in Art

**1986**

Sandberg Prize for an Israeli Artist, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

**1984**

Israel Discount Bank Prize for an Israeli Artist, Tel Aviv Museum

**COLLECTIONS (SELECTED)**

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA

Museum of Modern Art, MOMA, New York, USA

Portland Art Museum, Portland, USA

Museum of Modern Art, Ludwig Foundation, MUMOK, Wien, Austria

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld, Germany

Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany

Glaskasten Sculpture Museum, Marl, Germany

Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden

FRAC Bretagne, Rennes, France

Robert Rauschenberg Collection, New York, USA

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel

Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel

Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa, Israel

Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Hertsliya, Italy

Giuliano Gori Collection, Fattoria di Celle, Pistoia, Italy

Leo Katz Collection, Bogota, Colombia

Ygaal Ahuvi Collection, Tel Aviv, Israel

Genny and Selmo Nissenbaum Collection, New York, USA

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**Untitled**, 2014  
acrylic on wood  
acrilico su legno  
30 x 44,5 x 20 cm (11,81 x 17,52 x 7,87 in)

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***Walking on the Wall (with Black)***, 2013  
acrylic, industrial paint and varnish on wood  
acrilico, pittura industriale e vernice su legno  
76 x 87 x 34 cm (29,92 x 34,25 x 13,38 in)

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***Island #6A***, 2012

acrylic, industrial paint on wood, varnish  
acrilico, pittura industriale su legno, vernice  
86 x 125 x 185 cm (33,86 x 49,21 x 72,83 in)

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***For Don and Dan***, 2019  
acrylic and industrial paint on wood  
acrilico e pittura industriale su legno  
16,7 x 35,5 x 15,3 cm (6,57 x 13,98 x 6,02 in)

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***Time after Time (with red behind the corner)***, 2019  
acrylic and industrial paint on wood, mirror  
acrilico e pittura industriale su legno, specchio  
15,5 x 29,6 x 15,5 cm (6,10 x 11,65 x 6,10 in)



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***All of These*, 2018**

acrylic and industrial paint on wood, varnish, mirror plexiglas  
acrilico e pittura industriale su legno, vernice, plexiglass specchinate  
59 x 65 x 26 cm (23,22 x 25,59 x 10,23 in)

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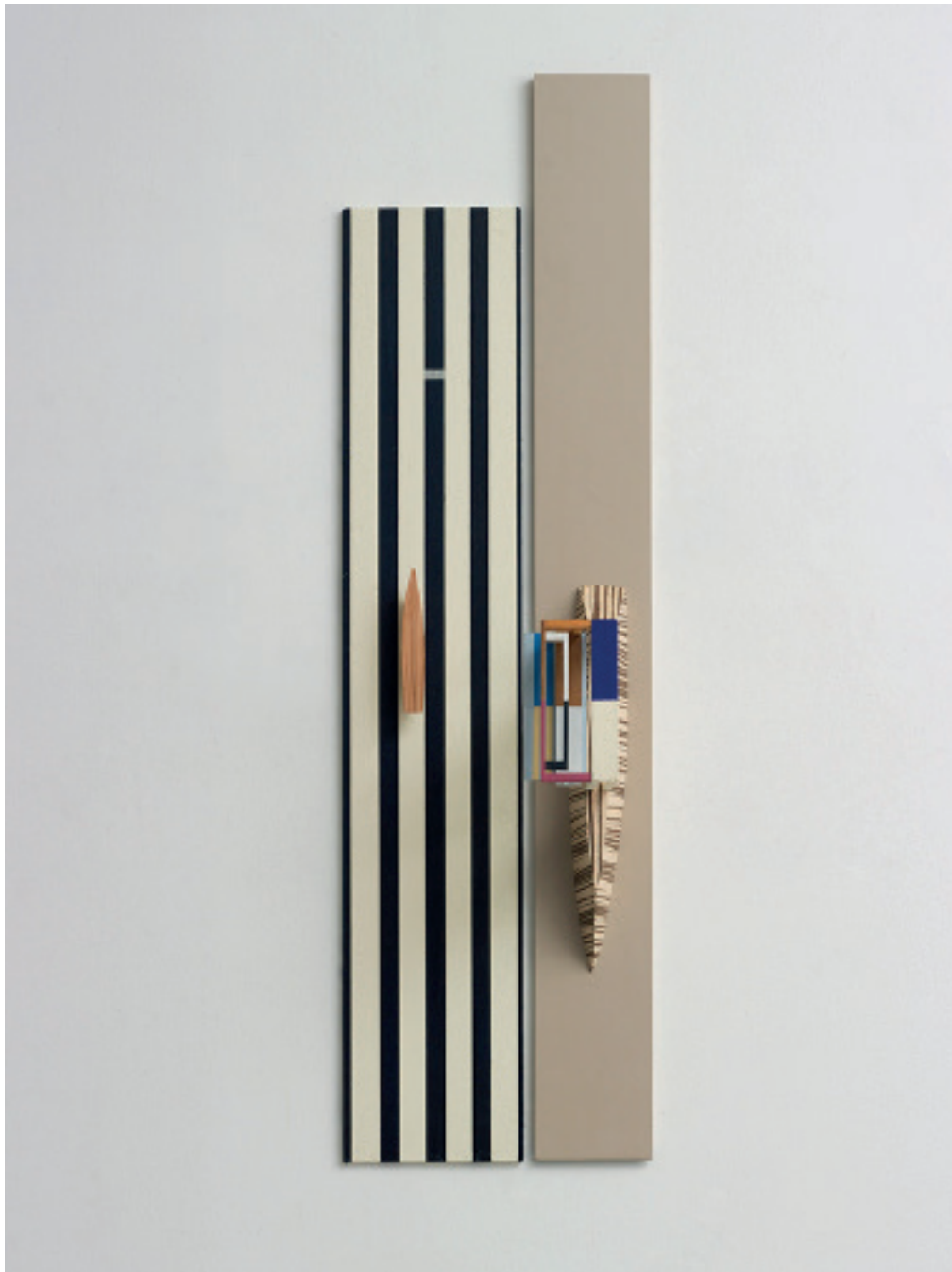


***This is a floor piece!***, 2018-2019  
acrylic and industrial paint on wood  
acrilico e pittura industriale su legno  
37 x 87 x 99 cm (15,57 x 34,25 x 38,98 in)

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***This Way or Another***, 2018-2019

acrylic and industrial paint on wood, varnish  
acrilico e pittura industriale su legno, vernice  
102 x 29,5 x 22 cm (40,16 x 11,61 x 8,66 in)

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***Orange Still Life with Magnet and No.***

1991

acrylic on wood

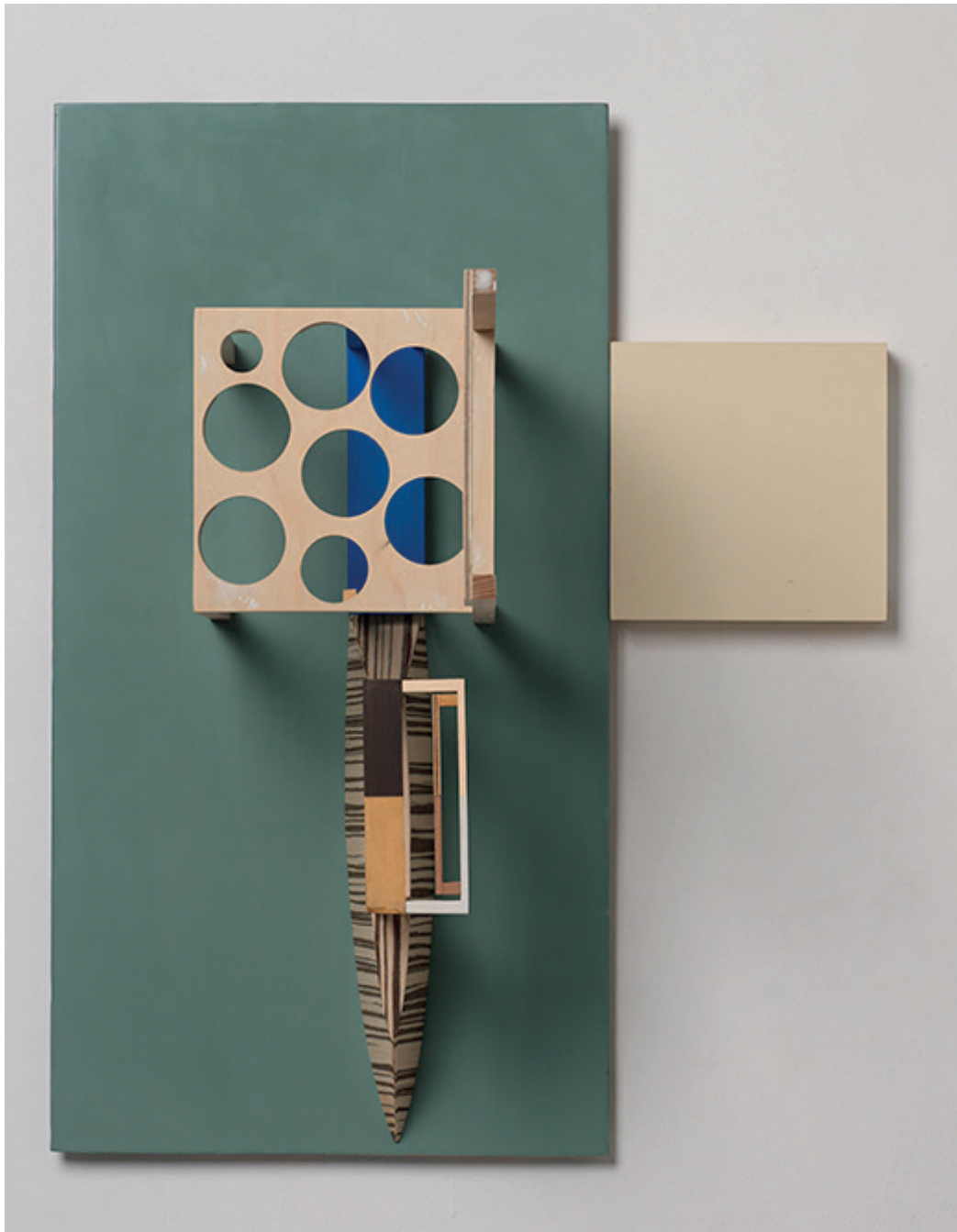
acrilico su legno

79,5 x 59 x 40,5 cm (31,25 x 23,25 x 16 in)

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***Bridges and Boat***

1991

industrial paint on wood

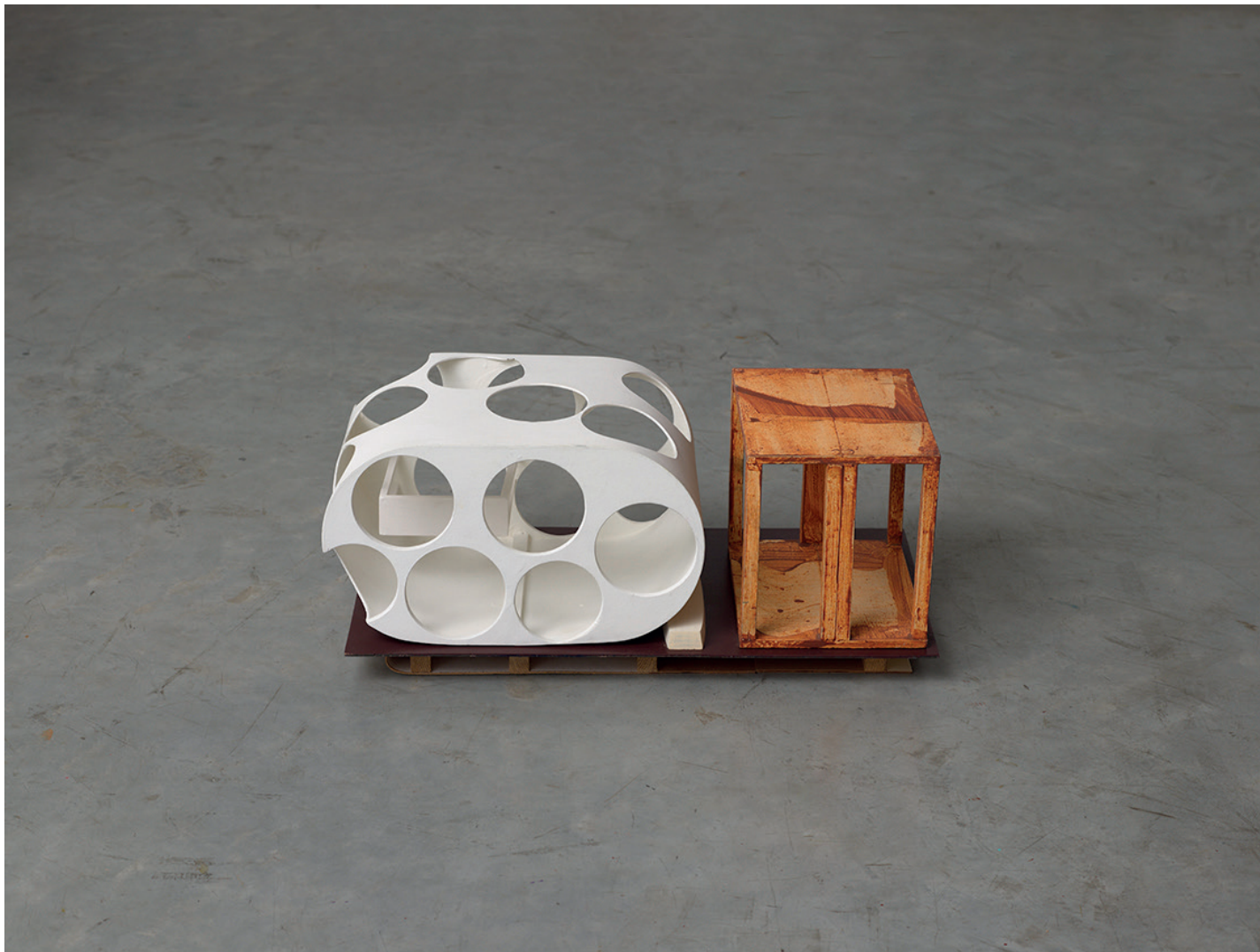
pittura industriale su legno

59,5 x 48,7 x 34 cm (23,42 x 19,17 x 13,38 in)

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***Some Grounds***

2007

acrylic and industrial paint on wood

acrilico e pittura industriale su legno

46 x 31,8 x 25,5 cm (18,11 x 12,52 x 10,04 in)

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***After One Room no. 1***

2021

acrylic and industrial paint on wood

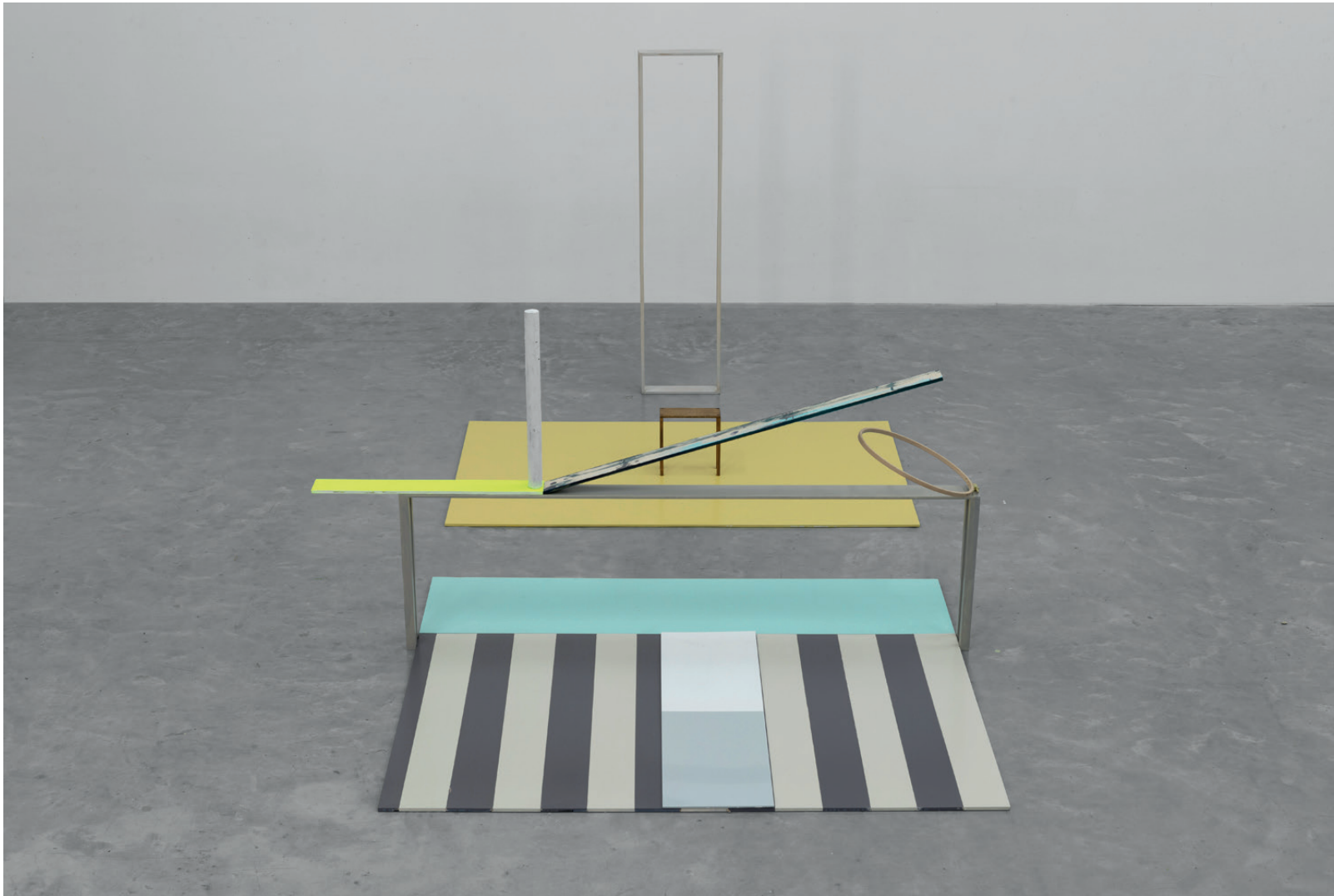
acrilico e pittura industriale su legno

106 x 95 x 87 cm (41,73 x 37,40 x 34,25 in)

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***After One Room no. 2***

2021

acrylic and industrial paint on wood

acrilico e pittura industriale su legno

188 x 121,5 x 86,3 cm (74,01 x 47,83 x 33,98 in)



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***After One Room no. 3***

2021

acrylic and industrial paint on wood, cardboard  
acrilico e pittura industriale su legno, cartone  
106,5 x 65 x 87,7 cm (41,93 x 25,59 x 34,53 in)

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*Duo exhibition with Efrat Natan*

***Efrat Natan / Nahum Tevet***  
Villa Stuck, München, 2017

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*Duo exhibition with Olaf Holzapfel*

***The Rough Law of Gardens***  
Mishkan Museum of Art, Ein Harod, Israel, 2015

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*Solo exhibition*

**Nahum Tevet**  
Fondazione Volume!, Rome, 2009

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*Solo exhibition*

***Nahum Tevet***  
MACRO, Rome, 2008

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*Solo exhibition*

***Several Things***  
Herzliya Museum for Contemporary Art  
Hertsliya, 2008

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*Group exhibition*

Various venues, Lodz, 2010

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*Solo exhibition*

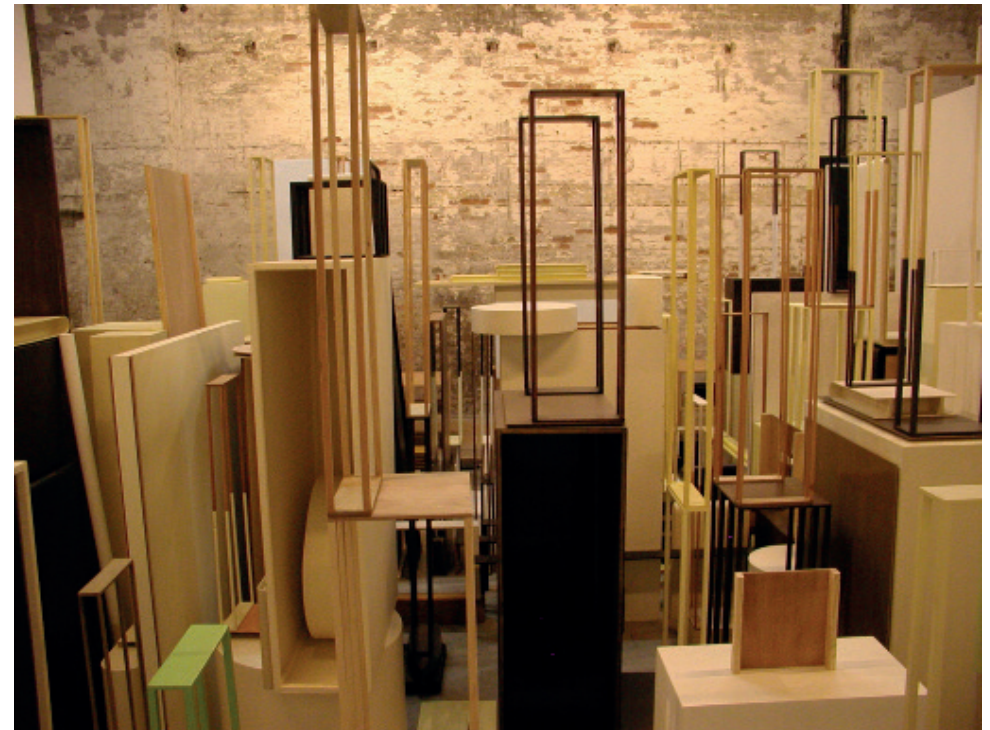
***Nahum Tevet: Works 1994-2006***  
The Israeli Museum of Art, Jerusalem, 2007



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*Group exhibition*

***Sogni e conflitti. Sistemi individuali***  
50<sup>th</sup> Biennale di Venezia, Arsenale, Venice, 2003

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*Group exhibition*

*L'autre*  
La Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, 1997

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*Group exhibition*

***Ruptura como o suporte***  
Bienal São Paulo, São Paulo 1994

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*Solo exhibition*

***Painting Lessons: Sculptures 1984-1990***

Sam and Ayala Zackers Pavillon

Tel Aviv Museum of Art

Tel Aviv, 1991

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*Group exhibition*

**Documenta 8**  
Kassel, 1987

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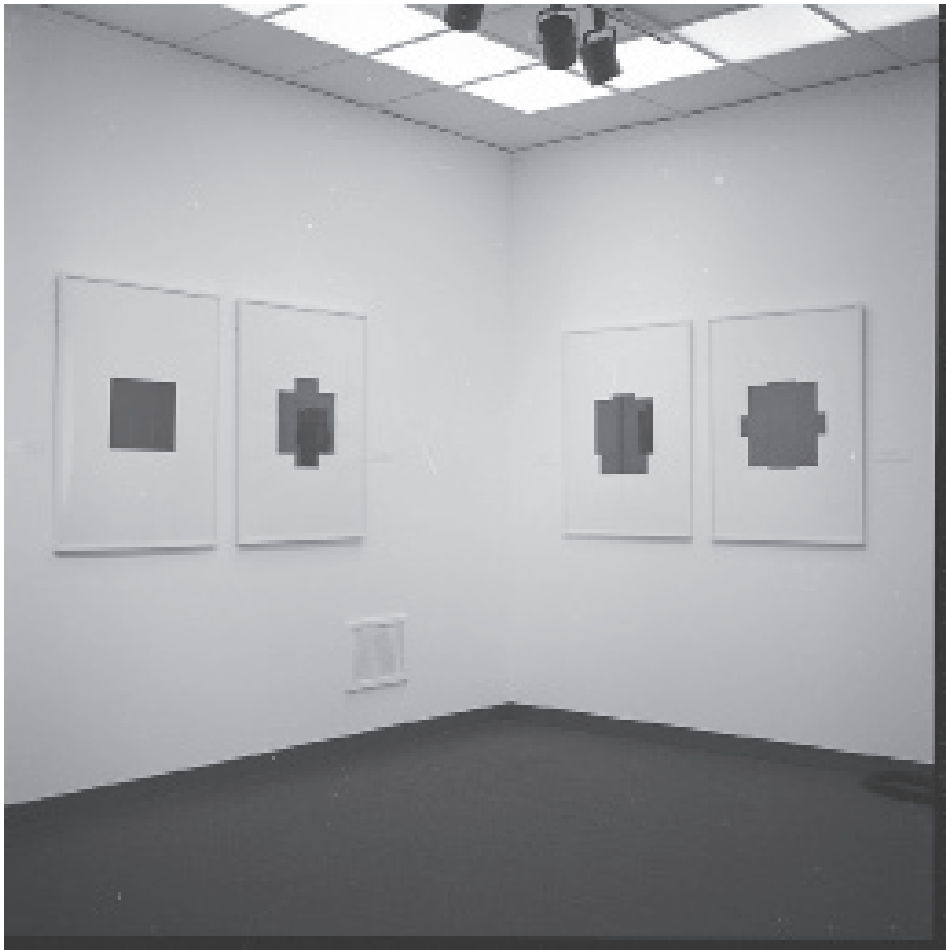
*Group exhibition*

*L'autre*  
La Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, 1997

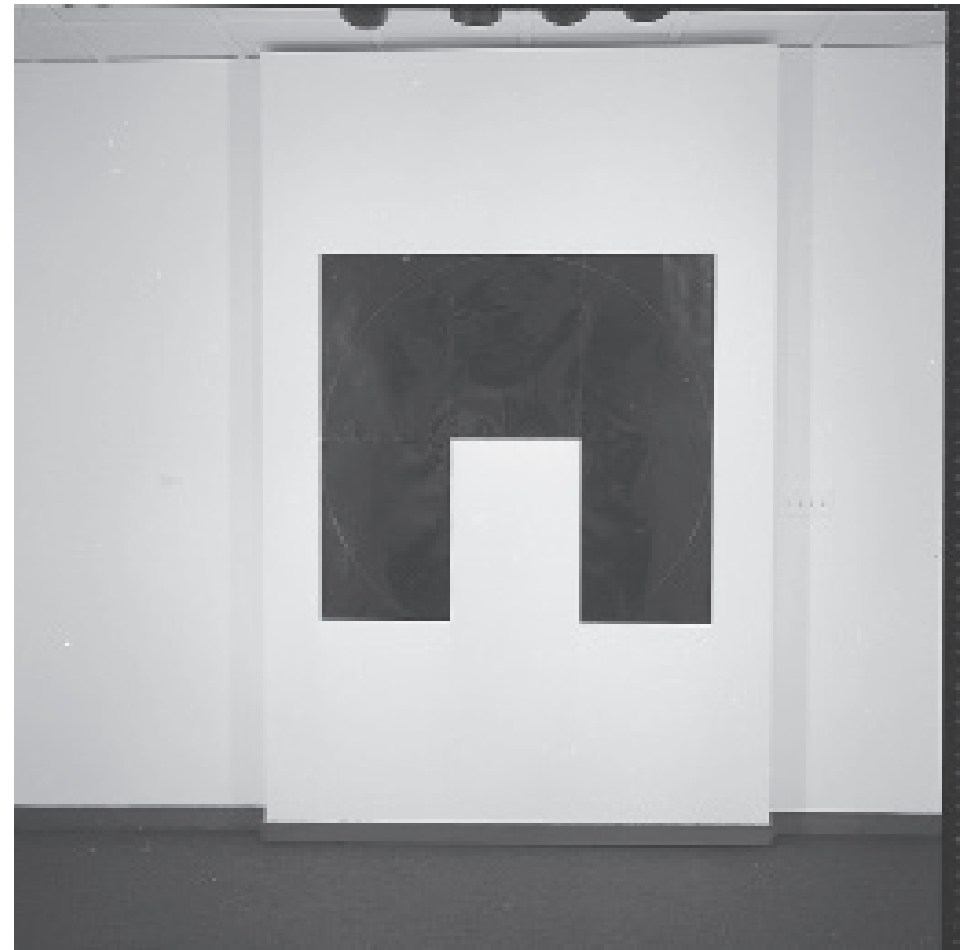
NAHUM TEVET

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*Group exhibition*

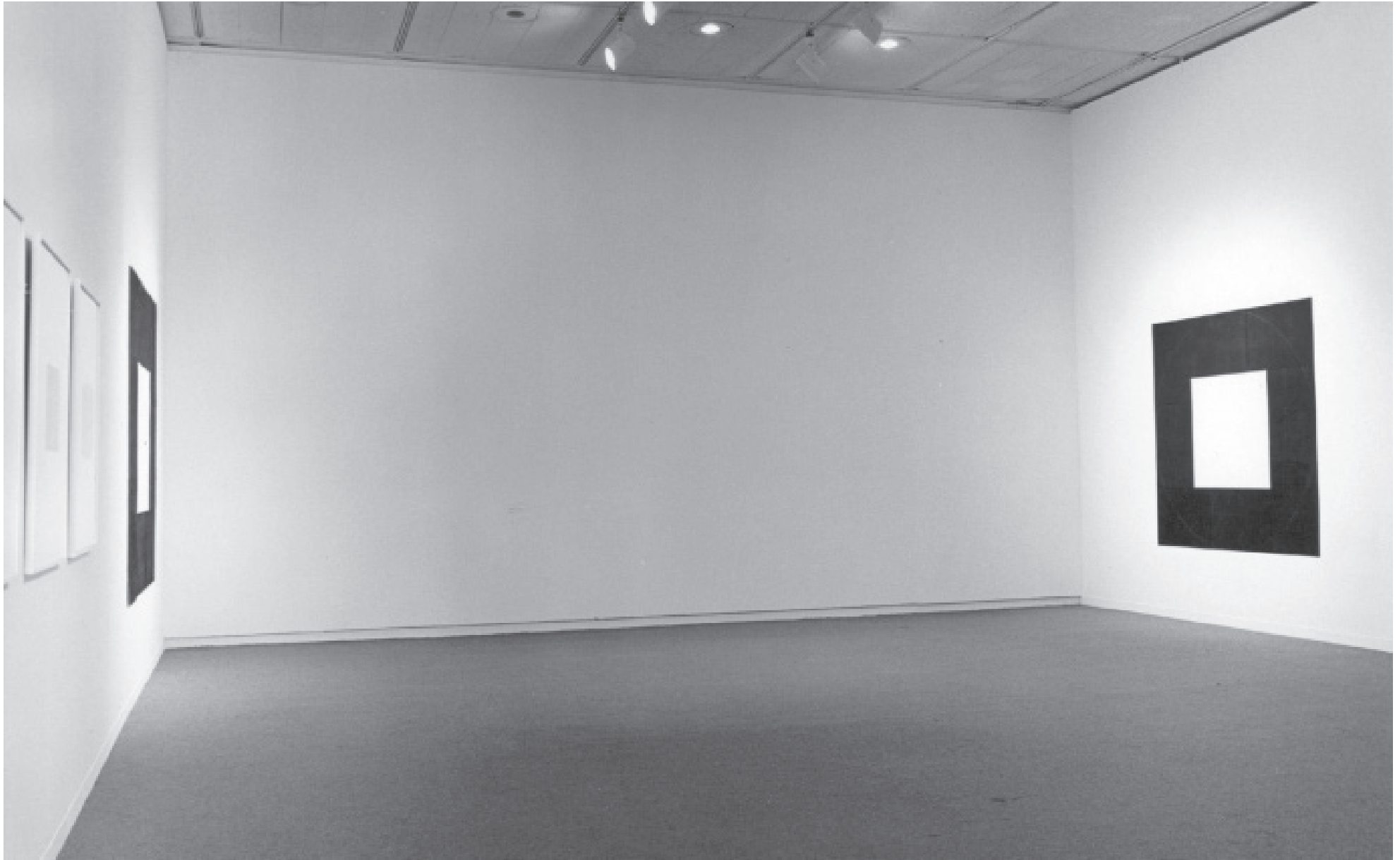


***Seven Artists in Israel***  
Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1979

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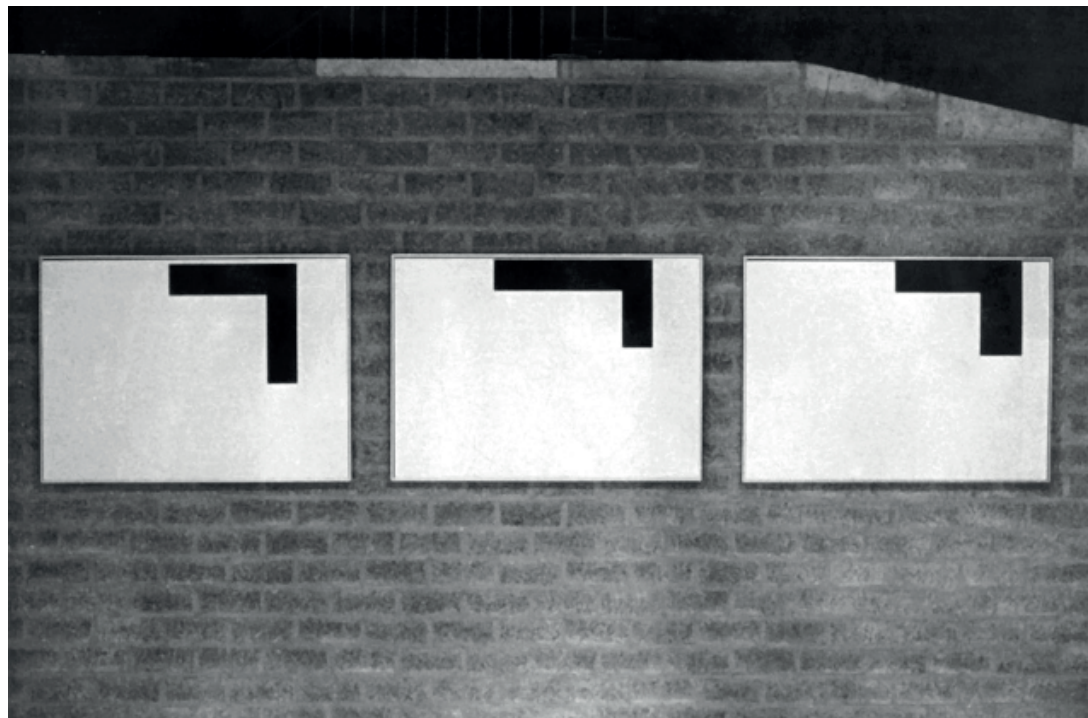
*Group exhibition*

***Seven Artists in Israel, 1948-1978***  
LACMA, Los Angeles, 1979

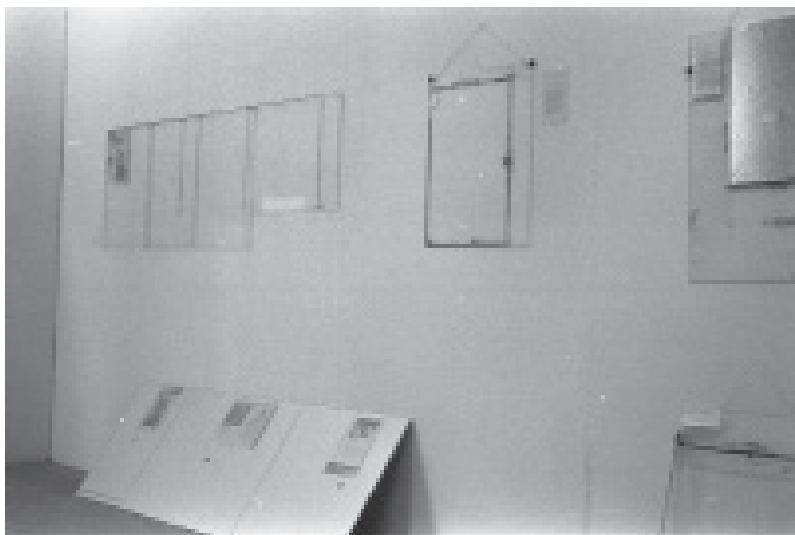




Alfred Schmela at the  
Nahum Tevet's solo exhibition



Nahum Tevet, works from the *Quintet series*  
installation view, 1978



Nahum Tevet, works from the *Cezanne series*  
installation view, 1978

*Solo exhibition*

***Drawings and sculptures***  
Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf, 1978

## NAHUM TEVET: ORCHESTRAL MANEUVERS

### RAPHAEL RUBINSTEIN

*Berlin : Hatje Cantz, 2017*

#### Difficulties of Seeing

A good subtitle for Nahum Tevet's *Seven Walks* might be, to borrow a phrase from Merleau-Ponty, *the Visible and the Invisible*. As our eyes scan back and forth over this crowded gathering of objects, and into and out of it, we constantly encounter obstacles and blockages, barriers and shields, obstructions and interruptions of all kinds. Everything within Tevet's tightly clustered assemblage appears to be standing in the way of something else; each element, whether it is a solid form or an openwork object, obscures our view, either partially or totally, of its neighbors.

Normally, when we want to see an object that is blocked by something else we change positions, either by moving closer or by finding another angle from which to view our subject. In *Seven Walks* the first option is impossible: Tevet has set up his installation so that we are forced to remain on the periphery. The elements are so closely positioned, the spaces between them so narrow, that it would be impossible for anyone, even a small child, to enter the installation without knocking over some of the precisely situated parts domino-fashion. Only with our vision—this sense that allows us to project ourselves into locations beyond our bodies—can we penetrate into *Seven Walks*. But even our purely visual entries soon encounter resistance; any line of sight is quickly thwarted by a tall panel, a corner we can't see around or a crack too narrow to peer through. These stoppages are the consequences of the proliferation of elements, and also of their mutual proximity: the artist appears to be fascinated with the consequences of placing forms very close to one another, with the condition of almost touching.

If we can't see these hidden zones by moving in closer, the second option, changing position, is somewhat more effective. As we shift to another vantage point on the perimeter of the installation, areas that were previously obscured come into view, and, as they do, other parts slide, inevitably, into invisibility. Even if we slowly move around the entire border of *Seven Walks*, halting at each step to look again, we will still be denied a total view, particularly because certain areas close to the floor in the very center remain unseen. We know these spaces exist, but we do not know exactly what occupies them. Does anyone? Maybe even the artist has forgotten exactly what he placed in these central enclaves. In theory we could send a camera-equipped drone to fly over the installation, but I'm not sure that even aerial video surveillance would result in a full visual survey of this piece. Some of it will always escape us. A similar play of hiding and revealing is also central to Tevet's recent small wall sculptures, which are constructed so that they present dramatically different appearances as one moves in a 180-degree arc around the artworks.

Tevet has been drawing his viewers' attention to how a person's physical relationship to an artwork affects experience of the work for a long time. In 1979, for his first exhibition in New York, he created *Installation for Two Rooms*, in which he filled two separate spaces at the Bertha Urdang Gallery with floor-to-ceiling wooden structures made from long 2-by-4s and sheets of plywood. Crucially, when you were looking at the installation in one of the rooms, the other half of the show was invisible. The artist consciously made a work that was impossible to see all at once. It wasn't only the phenomenological complexities that intrigued him, but he also wanted (as he has recalled to me) to frustrate casual viewers, and lazy art critics, who were in the habit of simply poking their

heads into a gallery and claiming that they had “seen” the show. Another target was the camera, whose influence he wanted to counter by making sculptures that couldn’t be easily photographed.

The fact that our view of *Seven Walks* will always be incomplete—and in a manner that is far more extreme than happens with traditional freestanding sculpture— seems to be perversely counter to the chief purpose of visual art, which is to make itself available to sight. Yet for the past 100 years, at least since Marcel Duchamp dismissed painting as too “retinal” and began presenting works of art that viewers had to complete in their minds, artists have often sought to deemphasize visuality, particularly since the advent of Conceptual art. Clearly Tevet does not subscribe to anything like pure conceptualism: not only is his work highly visual, it is, due to its subtle manipulation of shape and color, volume and void, light and shadow, among the most formally complex oeuvres of recent decades.

Rather than situate him in any relation to anti-retinal Conceptual art we should consider his work as belonging to the long line of art that partially withholds its own visibility. Think, for instance, of Duchamp’s *With Hidden Noise* (1916), Man Ray’s *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse* (1920), Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s wrapped art such as *Package on a Table* (1961), or David Hammons’s group of abstract paintings from 2007-2010 that were partly obscured with everything from plastic trash bags to large pieces of furniture.<sup>1</sup> Even apparently straightforward painters can be drawn to concealment: De Kooning, remember, believed that it was part of his job to “make the visible a little hard to see.”

## An Orchestral Art

Installation art takes many guises, incorporates many compositional strategies, from scattered chaos to repetitive modularity, from pristine emptiness to horror- vacui plenitude. If we had to choose one word to characterize Tevet’s approach to installation, “orchestral” might be a good candidate, especially with *Seven Walks*, which achieves its effects much like a symphony orchestra. As we gaze at the piece there is a constant shifting of attention as now *this* group of elements seems to rise out of the ensemble, now *that* one. Then suddenly, a particular piece of the installation captures our eye, before it is reintegrated into the whole. Areas of interest swell and diminish. The degree of complexity, the sheer number of visual tempos and harmonies—and disharmonies—is more than any viewer can consciously keep track of. Ultimately there is no choice but to simply surrender to the experience and let the waves of precisely organized forms wash over you.

As a composer/conductor, Tevet favors muted tones: *Seven Walks* relies almost exclusively on white, black and a tan hue that evokes natural wood or a very arid landscape, with only a sparing use of small units of bright orange or yellow. In his notes on the piece, Tevet explains that he wanted to resist the immediate solutions that bright colors offered, and also distance himself from the work of certain contemporaries, and a too obvious relationship to painting: “I could have used color in order to organize the whole. However, I rejected the option that I called ‘The Jessica Stockholder model’, which for me is like enlarging a typical Abstract American painting (Hans Hofmann) into the entire room. I insisted on the ‘sculptural’ in *Seven Walks*. I did not want to put some ‘visual order maker’ in the monotonous chaos by a lively red here and a yellow painted object there because they could have served as an easy compositional device which is what I wanted to avoid.”<sup>2</sup>

This mention of Jessica Stockholder, an American artist known for her sculptures and installations that make liberal use of bright colors and readymade elements, is a reminder that Tevet was not working in isolation. There hasn’t yet been a comprehensive critical discussion of his work within the context of his international contemporaries, but certainly there are parallels—and divergences—to be seen with artists such as Stockholder, Martin Kippenberger (chiefly his

furniture-based work such as the “Peter” sculptures of 1987 and *The Happy End of Franz Kafka’s Amerika* from 1994), Reinhard Mucha and Doris Salcedo.

One of the most notable differences between these artists and Tevet is his avoidance of found or readymade objects: for several decades all the elements in his work— apart from the occasional mirror fragment—are things that he builds himself. This wasn’t always the case. For a period in the 1980s he incorporated found objects into his sprawling floor-to-wall sculptures (*Ursa Major with Eclipse*, for instance, features a number of folding wooden chairs). The prevalence of the handmade, and the consequential avoidance of anything readymade, in Tevet’s oeuvre is important not only because it marks his distance from Duchampian practice but also because it makes possible the nuanced variations of scale and color in his versions of functional objects such as tables, benches, cabinets, shelves, the hulls of boats.<sup>3</sup> This doesn’t mean that he foregrounds craft and skill in the manner of sculptors such as Martin Puryear or Kathy Butterly. There is always a utilitarian, neutral, anonymous quality to his objects that situates them somewhere between the Bauhaus and Ikea. On the other hand he doesn’t suppress craft to the extent of turning to fabricators or utilizing industrial materials and processes. It was in the middle of the 1980s that Tevet seems to have fully embraced the possibilities of the carpentry shop, taking an increasing pleasure—which, again, he is discrete about—in shaping and painting the many components of his sculptures and installations.

Much happened, in the world and in the art world, during the seven years that Tevet labored on *Seven Walks*: a century ended and another one began; Hong Kong reverted to China; Israel was convulsed by the Second Intifada; thousands of people died from a tsunami in Southeast Asia; the events of 9/11 threw the world into deeper uncertainties; the Web 2.0 emerged as the internet expanded into new, more interactive forms. As these and countless other events occurred, close by and on the other side of the globe, Tevet, ensconced in a former high school gym in Tel Aviv, continued to patiently assemble and adjust the ever-growing installation, the three-dimensional symphony, that eventually became *Seven Walks*. Can we detect any echo of these events in the final piece? Writing for *Frieze* in 2007, Ronald Jones found “implicit connections” between Tevet’s works of the mid 1990s—the installations made just prior to *Seven Walks*—and the political strife in the Middle East, characterizing his art as “what happened when post-Minimalism was exposed to war.”<sup>4</sup> It is one of Tevet’s many virtues that he has never sought to herd his audience in the direction of any particular interpretation. My personal feeling is that Tevet’s work is not about conflict in the Middle East nor any other historical events, but that contemplating them while keeping his work in sight and in mind can yield insights. Perhaps this is another way that his work is similar to a musical composition. As Jacques Attali has pointed out, music has the ability to subtly mirror, and often anticipate, vast social developments.

## The Uses of Painting

Tevet’s admission that with *Seven Walks* he wanted to emphasize the sculptural is interesting, since the dialogue between the mediums of painting and sculpture has been a recurrent feature from the very beginning of his career. Although he has rarely presented a work that was identified as a painting (an exception would be *Big Lying Painting*, a 1978 work in which narrow sheets of wood covered with paper and oil paint were turned into a long bench that extended from an interior to an exterior space) the conditions of painting, its materials and techniques and history, have been central to his art. This is most explicit in *Works on Glass* (1971-75), if only because they are single-plane, rectangular works hanging flat on a wall, but painting has been constantly on his mind, as can be seen from the title he gave to an important series 1984-1990 of floor sculptures: “Painting Lesson.”

A pivotal work in Tevet’s development, and perhaps his most explicit engagement with painting is *Page from a Catalogue (Cézanne) Eight Times 92x73*.

Created in 1976 (along with several similar works) it consists of a 184-by-292-centimeter plywood support that has been covered with white industrial paint. Hanging on the wall it is, for all intents and purposes, a monochrome painting. Using a pencil, Tevet drew grid lines onto the white surface, dividing it into eight 92-by-73 rectangles. He derived the dimensions and divisions from a 1972 catalogue raisonné of Cézanne's paintings. In this book, numerous Cézanne paintings are reproduced in grids on each page. For *Page from a Catalogue, (Cézanne) Eight Times 92x73*, Tevet turned to one page and selected from it only the paintings with identical dimensions (92 by 73 centimeters), and drew those grid lines on the white-surface plywood. Hung next to the painted plywood is a photographic enlargement of the source page from the 1972 catalogue raisonné. The French standard sizes for paintings, which were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 92 by 73 is designated as "F30" ("F" stands for *Figure*, distinguished from P for *Paysage* and M for *Marine*). Apparently, Cézanne would frequently turn a canvas intended for a figure sideways and use it for a landscape scene.

If we consider the direction of Tevet's work following *Page from a Catalogue (Cézanne)*, it is as if having reduced painting—embodied by the most exemplary of modern painters—to a blank surface determined only by its physical dimensions, the artist was able to begin working more extensively in three dimensions. (It is perhaps worth noting that Tevet's only artistic training was as a painter—he studied privately with the Israeli painter Raffi Lavie.) This isn't to suggest that Tevet immediately began concentrating exclusively on more sculptural work. Through the rest of the decade, he produced numerous wall drawings. By 1979, however, with *Installation for Two Rooms* he had, in effect, broken with the single plane in favor of structures that extended into space in multiple directions. And yet, to complicate matters, his sculptures of the 1980s often included gestural brushwork on their wood surfaces. As the artist has explained: "In the 80's I used acrylic in very painterly, 'indexical' gestures, something like showing a catalog of as many as possible 'Painting's Clichés'." In the 1990s these painterly touches disappear from his installations. He continued to apply paint—industrial, turpentine-based paint rather than acrylic—to all his wood constructions, but in a more anonymous manner, in the artist's own words as "a professional house and furniture painter rather than an Artist (painter)."<sup>5</sup> What then, we might ask, is the exact role of painting in Tevet's work? If he is not engaged in "enlarging" painting into "an entire room" (in the way he characterizes Stockholder's work), what exactly is he doing to it, or with it? Is his work an example of painting "in an extended field"? Some twenty years ago Tevet was included, along with Stockholder, Imi Knoebel, Polly Apfelbaum, Rudolph Stingel and nine other artists in an exhibition titled "Painting—the Extended Field" at the Magasin III in Stockholm. Obviously taking its cue from Rosalind Krauss's influential essay "Sculpture in a Expanded Field," this exhibition was, in the words of *Artforum* reviewer Daniel Birnbaum,

"a demonstration of how painterly practices emerge in other genres, such as photography, video, sculpture, printmaking, and installation. Painting no longer appears as a strictly circumscribed mode of expression but as a zone of contagion, constantly branching out and widening its scope".<sup>6</sup> (Birnbaum described Tevet's contribution, *Untitled 1995-96*, as resembling "the architectural model of an imaginary city", likening it to Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*). In "Sculpture in a Expanded Field," published in 1979, the same year as *Installation for Two Rooms*, Krauss argued that following the nomadic condition of modernist sculpture, postmodernist sculpture operated in an "expanded field" defined by its relationship with landscape and architecture, rather than the material-oriented medium specificity.

I'm not sure that Tevet's work, either then or now, is an instance of painting emerging within another "genre" (i.e., sculpture). Rather, it seems to me that he has established a practice drawing on multiple mediums (painting among them) in order to initiate precise (and multifarious) experiences for his viewers. There is a perceptual and participatory dimension to Tevet's work that displaces emphasis from the object to the experience. This is true not only of the installations, but also of the small wall sculptures, which are every bit as dependent on the viewer's choice of position and movement. This might seem to situate his work in a Friedland objecthood/theatricality debate, but ultimately Tevet's work easily escapes such binary thinking. If nothing else, it is simply too complex, especially in its orchestral mode, to be subsumed into the language of any single medium. He also has found a way to decouple painting from the

circuit of commodification to which it is so often consigned. There's very little chance that any of the painted rectangles in his installations will become pieces of trophy art or vehicles of financial speculation.

### Montage and Memory

Although its role is not so immediately obvious, there is a third medium besides sculpture and painting that is present in Tevet's work: film. Tevet has signaled his connection to cinema in titles of works such as *Sound for a Silent Movie* (1986) and *Man with a Camera* (1993-94). The latter title clearly is meant to evoke Dziga Vertov's revolutionary 1929 documentary *Man with a Movie Camera* (sometimes referred to as *Man with a Camera*). It makes sense that an artist as deeply influenced by Russian Constructivism as Tevet would also be attracted to Vertov, whose approach to filmmaking shared much with artists such as Aleksandr Rodchenko, who designed the titles for Vertov's 1924 film *Kino Eye*.

There is a passage in his notes on *Seven Walks* where Tevet alludes to the role that film plays in his work. After first comparing the "different events unfolding" in his work to "the way urban architectural landscape appears surprisingly with its lack of sequences," he then likens the panels separating different "areas" in his installation to "cinematic montage splices." More specifically, he explains, "I used the partitions in this work like cuts in cinema, after each cut (wall) the next scene may be a new one, a surprise, a break in the sequence."<sup>7</sup>

It's important to note here that montage, executed in dazzling, innovative variety, is at the heart of Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*. Interestingly, Vertov isn't the only filmmaker whose work resonates with Tevet's, whether through their use of montage or their depiction of the discontinuities of "urban architectural landscape" or both. There are certain sequences in the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, for instance, where a walk through a city becomes, in the words of film critic Richard Brody, a record of "visual architectural dissonances."<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most Tevetian of such sequences is found in the final seven minutes of *L'Eclisse* (1962) where a series of seemingly disconnected shots show us glimpses of a bleak, deserted suburban neighborhood in Rome, providing the film with a radically narrative-free ending.

Another innovative European film of the 1960s that Tevet's work brings to mind, albeit in a more literal fashion, is Jean-Luc Godard's *One Plus One* (1968), largely shot in a London recording studio divided up by large acoustic panels that resemble nothing so much as the thin wall-like wood panels that punctuate Tevet's installations. Even the colors of the studio (where the Rolling Stones are rehearsing and recording "Sympathy for the Devil") is similar to the kind of palette that Tevet favors. In Godard's film these dividers serve to isolate the individual musicians psychologically as well as acoustically; they also evoke, as do Tevet's painted-wood dividers, the realm of monochrome abstraction.

Despite these cinematic resonances it would be a mistake to interpret *Seven Walks* as a commentary on urban alienation or social discontinuity. For one thing, Tevet's work—all of it, not just *Seven Walks*—is invested with an infinite amount of artistic labor, an attention to minute differences of scale and color and proportion, that conveys the opposite of alienation. In this he is not only distant from Antonioni and Godard, but also from many contemporary artists with whom he otherwise shares structural affinities. Rather than evoking some dehumanized environment his work often speaks to us of shelter and dwelling, an impression that is strengthened by the appearance of symbolically-charged forms that resemble boats and books. There is a tenderness to his work, an inherent plea for us to act gently and move slowly, lest this subtle order be destroyed. One of the most important messages that Tevet's work may have for

us is that there are, indeed, viable models for existence between the uncontrolled chaos and intransigent order.

The tenderness is embodied in the tables (or should we see them as empty pedestals?) with impossibly slender legs, and in the tiny boats, which could be the playthings of a child who has disappeared into the realm of adulthood but left behind these talismans of freedom, of leisurely escape, of imaginative play. All of us have known such objects, even if they are now only dimly vibrating images. Tevet reminds us that they once existed in the physical world and still do, invisibly, in our memory, and, perhaps, visibly in the realm of art. Somewhere in this labyrinth, in this real-world memory palace, a sense of intimacy and wholeness is waiting to be rediscovered, around a corner, on a hidden shelf, in an alcove of life that we haven't entered, yet.

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<sup>1</sup> See Raphael Rubinstein, "To Rest Lightly on the Earth," *Art in America*, tktk, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Nahum Tevet, "Some Notes on the Making of 'Seven Walks 1997-2004.'"

<sup>3</sup> Thierry de Duve has argued persuasively on the importance of Duchamp for Tevet's early work, especially the "Works on Glass." See Thierry de Duve, "Handle with Care," info tkktkktktk.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Jones, "Nahum Tevet," *Frieze*, October, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Nahum Tevet, "Some Notes on the Making of 'Seven Walks 1997-2004.'"

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Birnbaum, "Painting—the Extended Field," *Artforum*, February, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Nahum Tevet, "Some Notes on the Making of 'Seven Walks 1997-2004.'"

<sup>8</sup> Richard Brody, "Cinema's Walking Cure," *The New Yorker*, September 7, 2016.

## THINKING SMALL

### JAMES TRAINOR

*Walking on the Wall, Nahum Tevet Small Sculptures 1980-2012*

*The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery, Tel Aviv University, 2012*

When I first met Nahum Tevet, he had everything he needed in a suitcase. It was a chilly November in 2010 in New York, and Tevet had just installed himself in rented rooms on a nondescript block on West 16th Street. In fact, the picture he presented was nothing less than the proverbial “one-suitcase man,” the itinerant figure who has judiciously edited, whittled down and eliminated all the extraneous matter of his far-flung existence so that it all packs and inter-leaves neatly—metaphorically as well as literally—into a single portable case. In his “shoebox,” as he later jokingly called it, he had brought with him for this self-imposed three-month sabbatical all the necessary materials for assembling and constructing a diminutive art work within the tight linear confines of a snug railroad flat, itself a domestic shoebox form requiring of the inhabitant an economy of means, movements and actions. It immediately struck me as a decidedly Duchampian enterprise, and like the grandfather of

Conceptualism’s famed *boîtes-en-valise*, Tevet’s suitcase was both handy museum and concentrated biography, shape-shifting self-portrait and retrospective inventory. The important difference, however, was that Tevet’s traveling salesman kit was not an endgame, it was not an ironic summation of a career. It was an active workshop, a studio for a man-on-the-go, a new beginning. From out of this carpenter’s portmanteau sprung a modest assembly line of wooden planes and panels, miniature Euclidian geometries, paint, glue, dowels and wood screws, objects waiting to be conjoined, shuffled, banished, reunited, and brought back into the fold.

The basic building blocks that comprise Tevet’s formal vocabulary of sculptural units (for both his small wall works and the large, sprawling, encyclopedically heroic sculptural installations) are simple, verging on the Platonically archetypal—the table, the chair, the box, the boat hull, the rectilinear plane, the book-like block, the framework armature, etc. Together they form a catalog of stock objects or inanimate familiars—the ubiquitous things of the world against which we take our own measure and gauge our presence. Two years later, visiting Tevet’s studio in a blocky warehouse in the industrial Shvil Hamifal area of Tel Aviv would be like gaining access to the central stockrooms of some vast and mysterious manufactory of which 16th Street was an itinerant outpost, a place where an archeology of disassembled components and parts is indexed and categorically arranged on industrial shelving. Tevet calls these varietal objects his readymades, yet in contrast to the Duchampian understanding of the term as a found object pressed by the artist into service in a work of art, Tevet’s inventory is all self-produced. Like the rows and rows of typesetter’s blocks at a printing house, the common denominator is that all these individual units comprise the resilient bits and pieces of an adjustable lexicon that hint at a narrative thread amidst the geometric abstraction. Some objects are brand new, with the lingering aroma of fresh paint and glue; others have been loitering for up to two decades on some upper shelf, waiting patiently to be assigned their syntactical purpose, or re-assigned a new role in a new context.

Back in Manhattan, in the context of the apartment that served as Tevet’s somewhat cramped quarters during those months, the atmosphere was part monastery and part production line, the sequential arrangement of uniaxial tenement rooms (bathroom leading into kitchen leading into sitting room leading into bedroom, like coupled train compartments) echoing nicely Tevet’s artisanal sequential working methods. One’s first impression on surveying the miniature output of Tevet’s workshop pinned to the plaster walls, arrayed like little handcrafted machines, ambiguous toys, or architectural models of nothing grander



than themselves, was that he was permitting himself the liberty to play, engaging in an elevated expression of serious fun, slyly simple on the surface but drawing on a deep percolating aquifer of experiences and weighty calibrations of forms and associations developed over years and decades. As in a game of chess, the pieces comprising these intimate assemblages are limited, generically familiar, always the same. Yet within this confined framework of sameness lies a nearly infinite range of possibilities, configurations and potentials. As with the pieces of a chess match in-progress, each object seems to embody a carefully chosen set of opening moves, initial stratagems and intuitive gambits for charting the elusive path through a relationship of parts. They are, on this level, a set of manipulative and manipulable propositions, presented puzzle-like, and mathematical in their ability to express their values on multiple planes and from various viewpoints.

There is something playful and comically slapstick about this precariousness of vantage point and scale. The viewer, confronted, for example, with a nested configuration of chair, table, or skiff-like forms of different sizes projecting from the wall—some right-side-up, others resting on their side, some upside-down, abutting one another with a cabinetmaker's precision but seeming to occupy different realms of orientation—is required to constantly recalibrate and puzzle out an elusive “correct” point of view: What is up and what is down? What is large, what is small? Is this an aerial or ground-level view? What exactly am I looking at? What looks like a skiff seen from beneath the water could also suggest an old clothing iron seen from above. It is both, or neither—it is a mere block of wood, playing tricks.

As in the exquisitely controlled chaos of a Buster Keaton silent comedy, in which a pinwheeling house turning end over end transforms a floor into a ceiling, a wall into a floor, humdrum furniture into precipitous ledges or footholds, there is a sense of topsy-turvy domestic vertigo in these little worlds, scaled to the size of a human head, that Tevet fastens to the wall. And there is more than a whiff of Alice in Wonderland-like dislocation and skewed perceptual instability at play as well: when a miniature table is introduced to another one 95% its size, encountering it at, say, a 45-degree angle rotated on a perpendicular axis, is one object the original and the other the inexact copy? Is there a hierarchical system operating here to which we can be given the key? And what are we to make of our own comparative relationship to these objects that politely refuse to agree upon a definitive arrangement, function or relative size? Are we the Gulliver in this situation or the Lilliputians, or is the scale of our own presence immaterial to the event?

But, as viewers, we are beguiled and seduced by the kaleidoscopic, multiplying, mirroring, doubling, folding uncertainty either way. Anything that is labeled “drink me”—as was Alice's elixir—we have a difficult time turning away from. Like refracting jewels, like shiny new products rolling off the assembly line, they have us in their diminutive grasp. They are small and irresistible and they know it. And this fact raises the specter of trust and doubt, even for Tevet—how beautiful is too beautiful? Is their intimate toy-like size some sort of trick? Are these objects nothing more than alluring, spring-loaded traps? But one fundamental question raised by each object time after time—“why is it this way and not that way?”—contains within it the kernel of redemption of them all. Each iteration, with a certain degree of humility built-in, deflects attention towards all the many other versions of itself that it might have been, but is not and never will be. How original, how perfect can one thing be if you can make another one right next to it that is only minutely different? Together, as sequential propositions on the wall, the individual works begin to set up amongst themselves a “family dialogue,” as Tevet refers to the kibitzing compositional discourse that takes place. They are snippets of dialogue that admit to being fragments, not final proclamations or summations. And from the wall they beckon and cajole, arguing multiple lines of reasoning from every angle without settling on a conclusion. Resisting the rigid authoritativeness of perfection that comes with any singular object, they opt instead for the suggestion of a salutary indeterminacy, finding their freedom as kindred events, slipping in and out of symmetries and synchronicities, all happening at the same time.

## TO LIVE OUTSIDE THE LAW

### FRANCIS MCKEE

*Nahum Tevet, Museu d'Arte Contemporanea Roma (Macro) / Electa 2008, Exhibition Catalogue*

In a small work from 1997 called *Underground Event* Nahum Tevet places his work on a shelf under a table supporting an architectural model of the Paracelsus Klinik in Marl, Germany. It is a scale model of the hospital, a classically white, modernist building set in a landscape of green lawns and trees. The simple table that supports it is designed to its own plain modernist principles. Indeed, although it was built specifically for the model, it recalls the tables of Nahum Tevet. Spotting the opportune moment, Tevet filled the space beneath the model with his own wooden pieces – cylinders, hollow cubes, rectangles, and naturally some small tables. The model was already pregnant with paradoxes. A visitor entered the Klinik only to be confronted again with its external view in the model. Standing within the full scale building, however, you were now viewing the whole edifice in miniature. By adding his own work, Tevet created a new, impossible basement to the building, filled with comparatively giant sculptural forms. The artist's gesture twisted space and time, highlighting the complex perceptions of the building that the model already generated.

There is an echo of Tevet's idea in an account of a proposed basement in the Pompidou Centre which was published first in 1976 by Albert Meister under the assumed name of Gustave Afeulpin. Meister imagines the creation of a 70 storey basement under the new French cultural centre. This underground space is to be an alternative to the high-powered world of contemporary art.

*About the chairs: this was the miracle of this evening. While I was out someone proposed that in order to start saving, each one should bring at least one chair, that it was not necessary to buy new ones and that the money would be better used for equipment for creation ... It was a bit like the slap of Zen that suddenly opens the spirit and sparks off enlightenment...*

*Let's get back to the chairs...because this elementary furniture has set the tone for the centre. To opt for recuperated furniture meant that we were positioning ourselves radically apart from the fashionable cultural institutions, the luring design and the modern art filtered Kartell. It meant too, that we would straight away give up culture as comfort (or comfort as culture, which is more common), that we were ready to reconsider all aspects of life as cultural phenomena, that to reflect on things as ordinary as the chairs was a prerequisite to be able to rethink every aspect of culture progressively.*

It's clear that Nahum Tevet's work is complex and that *Underground Event* can be related to minimalism and modernist architecture. However, there is also a resonance with the fantasy of Albert Meister and a clear renunciation of the smooth predictabilities of the contemporary art scene. In its own way this serves as a reminder of the roots from which minimalism sprang: the use of industrial materials and the simplicity of form and construction that allied the work with the everyday world.

The way in which Tevet makes his work already underlines this. Each piece is carefully crafted in a studio that critics have noted is similar to a carpenter's workshop. Likewise, critics have noted his upbringing in a Kibbutz and how many of his pieces evoke the forms of the Spartan furniture that was used in these communities or in army camps. This evocation of furniture is, as Meister would say, positioning Tevet radically outside the orthodoxies of minimalism and the design conscious art world.

Moreover, since the early nineties, the time deliberately taken for construction of these increasingly large works defies the economies of contemporary art. Some of the largest pieces have stretched on several years in the making and are created through a process that moves beyond the world of deadlines and the production line:

*My incessant engagement with repetitiveness and with one thing leading to another, and more and more, which in the end doesn't lead to anything, and*

*that's how it has been throughout the years – but also in the development of a single work, Seven Walks, for example, which was quite a 'disturbed' dynamic of almost eight years of work on a single work, in which I added and added and then removed and removed and removed and so on. The dimensions of the work and the prolonged time of making it are connected with my move to a new studio outside town in a moshav, in what had actually been the gym hall of an abandoned school. Its dimensions became a condition of the work's growth, and it took several years to grow in this place.*

The unused gymnasium in a moshav is itself a telling fact. Moshavs, like kibbutzes, are undergoing a transformation in Israel as they are compelled to abandon their collective,

socialist roots in favour of privatisation. The way of life they once stood for is now being jettisoned under the dictates of the free market.

The works conceived by Nahum Tevet have a melancholic quality that mirrors the passing of that world. In large works such as *Untitled 1995-96* or *Take Two* the pieces transform their rooms into something akin to a storage space. Often with these larger works there is a sense of everything being stacked, packed away, forgotten and invisible to the world outside. This quality of otherworldliness is reinforced when the works can be seen in natural light that provides new tones and infinite mutations of shade but lacks the persistent urgency of electric light.

The scale of these works alone persuades us to spend time with them. Their melancholy, abandoned air permits us to extend that time and takes us out of the hurried timeframes of contemporary life. The evocation of furniture and the expanse of semi-hidden forms invites us into another mental space, half-glimpsing private spaces, almost recognising certain shapes. Discussing the fundamental human need expressed in furniture, Gaston Bachelard says: *Wardrobe's with their shelves, desks with their drawers, and chests with their false bottoms are veritable organs of the secret psychological life. Indeed without these "objects" and a few others in equally high favour, our intimate life would lack a model of intimacy. They are hybrid objects, subject objects. Like us, through us and for us, they have a quality of intimacy.*

Tevet's works share this sense of intimacy. The mass of wood, the nearly recognisable familiar forms, the serene colours and the endless nooks and crannies of each piece offer space where the viewer can lose oneself.

Such descriptions may, however, begin to sound too cosy. Tevet's work does not exist simply to provide comfort. And, in the long run, losing oneself is not a comfortable experience. The works may remind us of furniture but, finally, they exist beyond a clear identification with furniture. As the artist himself points out 'They are always reminiscent of things in the world, but they do not take part in it.'

As we walk around the pieces and, in some cases into the breach of some of them, we find ourselves in constant movement, always realigning our view of the work. This process of viewing is a deliberate result of Tevet's construction – 'In the final analysis, the work is build so as not to allow you to stand quietly in one place, there's something unquiet about it, that pulls the carpet from under your feet.'

This restlessness compels us to constantly renew our perception of the work, putting the piece into motion as each element shifts in relation to the other and to our relative viewing position. What we experience is the phenomenon of parallax – the apparent motion of an object due to a change in the observer's position.

The effect of this phenomenon is to unsettle our sense of self. The certainty of our perceptions is one of the vital supports in the construction of a stable self. The ability to trust our senses and to take a sure measure of the world helps ground our relationship to the world around us. In Tevet's work that trust is challenged and we are bound to constantly recalculate our measurements of the world and our distance in relation to it. The losing of oneself takes on a much more fundamental meaning as the viewing process dismantles our certainties.

Observing the ever changing inventory of Tevet's storage-like works we are reminded of the ways in which our own lives can be recalibrated. As Italo Calvino puts it - 'Each life is an encyclopedia, a library, an inventory of objects, a series of styles, and everything can be constantly shuffled and reordered in every way conceivable.'

NAHUM TEVET

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Tevet's works place us in a shifting world, sometimes almost familiar but never legible enough to grasp definitively. Space, time and truth all become relative constructs to be renegotiated. The object of perception becomes indescribable.

It is here that Tevet's work acts like the 'slap of Zen' described by Albert Meister. We enter a labyrinth of shifting signs, lose ourselves and find instead a space beyond the laws of contemporary living. What Tevet creates is an alternative mental ecology which extends our attention span, challenges our constructed identities and engages us in a protracted dialogue with our sensual environment. In *Underground Event*, almost an emblem of Tevet's work, the subterranean geometrical forms worked therapeutically to remind us of the principles underlying the modernist hospital. With larger scale works such as *Untitled 1995-96* or *Take Two* the pieces revise our understanding of the buildings they inhabit.

## Reading the Sculpture of Nahum Tevet

**Yonah Fonce**

*Nahum Tevet, Painting Lessons, Sculptures, 1984-1990; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Exhibition Catalogue 1990*

The oeuvre of Nahum Tevet should be considered within the context of several contemporary developments which have profoundly altered both the interpretation and the actual discourse of sculpture. The most important of these developments has been labeled “deconstruction”. Although originally referring to literary criticism, this Derridean concept has been applied to other cultural contexts as well.

On closer analysis, Nahum Tevet’s work appears to be exemplary of this new approach; the more so since he began his investigation of the fundamental assumptions underlying modernist sculpture before the term “deconstruction” was applied to the visual arts.

To understand the full scope of the radical break that Tevet’s sculptural conception makes with the post-minimal tendencies dominant over the past thirty years, we should consider his art against the background of Greenbergian reductionism. In his *Towards a Newer Laocoön*, Clement Greenberg argued that the essence and finality of art in general and of each medium in particular consisted of and coincided with an analysis of its own specificities - i.e. that which separates it from all that is not art and from all qualities not proper or exclusive to a given medium. Sculpture was thus supposed to contain no references to the non-aesthetic (i.e. “real”) world, nor to any other medium (in the first instance to painting, and secondly also to architecture).

In this reductionist purism, all metaphor, mimetic references to reality (“images of things”), relational types of composition, color, personal style, etc. were gradually thrown overboard, leaving us ultimately with an autistic, redundant “degree zero” of art: the empty stage as theater, silence as the ultimate music, the bare canvas as painting, and a sober and sobering polystyrene cube as sculpture.

It is obvious that this logic could not be carried any further. Its final consequences, which became evident somewhere in the mid-sixties, did not seem to give any profound, let alone lasting, answers to most of the fundamental issues of sculpture.

Nahum Tevet’s sculpture appears to be the very opposite of the results derived from this reductionist sculptural logic. First of all in its underlying strategy: instead of severely excluding all “alien” elements (e.g. qualities traditionally associated with painting, such as color and plane composition), he adopts an eminently inclusive attitude. His works are very complex, and often combine divergent kinds of logic which cannot be subsumed to a single overall aesthetic programme such as Greenbergian reductionism. On the one hand, for instance, the presence of chairs and other objects which also have an existence independent from their inclusion within a work of art, refers to the “found object” tradition, with all the intricate and far-reaching aesthetic implications this entails. On the other hand, characteristics of the traditional modernist types of composition - linearity, seriality, symmetry, axionometrically centered relational design and the like - are replaced by a very complex additive, cumulative logic. In fact, one can no longer speak of a relational composition when describing how his works are ordered; perhaps we should replace the concepts of order and composition with the concept of “reading”. This implies that the centre of gravity of Tevet’s sculptural discourse has shifted from a preoccupation with form as such (formalism) to an epistemological standpoint. This, needless to say, is a categorical break. Both the frame of reference and what is at stake are fundamentally different.

When confronted with a Tevet sculpture, we experience a feeling of inadequacy, of both our sensorial and - much more pervasively - our interpretative apparatus. It is virtually impossible to perceive the sculpture in its totality, or from one angle or from one point of view only, let alone to know - deduce - it from one look at it. When we move around it, or when we let our eyes wander over some of its not-so-contingent parts, we try to order all the visual data within an interpretative scheme or mental reconstruction. But such a scheme seems to elude us. All the snippets of information, all the changing viewpoints, all our shifts of motion, all the partial views and all the parts of the sculpture stand in no predictable or even logical relation to each other. When we try to remember, to visually reconstruct

the sculpture as it is, in its totality, by winding back all the visual information we have registered with our eyes closed, or by turning our back, we realize that we cannot visualize. cannot reconstruct an overall mental image of it. In other words. Tevet's sculpture exists only in the perception of the viewer, on the one hand, and as a material reality (object), on the other. Not as the materialization of some preconceived or preconceivable sculptural idea or form, for instance. It cannot be approached via an aesthetic based on platonic ideas. Tevet's approach to sculpture could therefore be characterized as exquisitely phenomenological.

Donald Judd, the most outspoken theoretician of minimal sculpture (which Lucy Lippard quite pertinently labeled "rejective sculpture") characterized his sculpture as "a form as a form as a form", as opposed to traditional sculpture, which could more or less be paraphrased as "a form as a form as a carrier of meaning (s outside of it)". Judd's definition of his putative ideal sculpture is very redundant, tautological. in nature, but some of its implications become clear when we contrast it to Tevet's works, which obviously seem not to begin from a preconceived, abstract form or, for that matter, from a Gestalt, and which in contrast to Judd's repetitive, stereometrical volumes - cannot be fully perceived at one glance. In order to enhance the formal complexity of his sculpture, Tevet applies color to his works; this does not at all simplify the process of reading/interpreting them, but much rather disrupts it and absorbs all the attention of the spectator, who cannot abstract or recognize familiar modes of sculptural order. The fact that we cannot subsume these sculptures to any given epistemological structure, preconceived construct, or cognitive unit. makes us suspect that the artist might be intending a critique of the interpretation or the "cognizability" of sculpture. Hence, an epistemological approach to sculpture.

The aesthetic programme behind minimal sculpture was eminently consistent. The Greenbergian view of the evolution of art as an ongoing process of cathartic self- purification and simplification in all senses, runs nicely parallel to other "master narratives" that are so typical of modernist world views, be they Hegel's metaphysics, Marxist dialectic materialism or the quintessential paradigmatic model of deductive science: arithmetic.

Tevet's sculpture opposes any overall interpretation, by its very complexity. Because of how it mixes up different and divergent categories ("found objects" versus constructed parts within the one work), and by its references to painting (cf. the title of most of the works in this exhibition, *Painting Lessons*), it implies an undermining of any overall, totalitarian approach that bases the interpretation of art on abstraction from perception. If modern art can be seen as a metaphor which in the final analysis - and by analogy - proposes that the world can be known by reducing it to some underlying, completely knowable logical structure. Tevet seems to be pointing to the frustrating and embarrassing truth that the world is in fact full of gaps and flaws, and that no system of interpretation or deductive epistemology can give us a clear, total and definite insight into the world. His sculptures seem to be saying that different points of view, uncongenial and heterogeneous though they be, can and should be adopted if we are to get any real, unbiased idea of what the world (and the work of art) is like, and that - last but not least - the world exists only insofar, and as long as, we can experience or apprehend it.

The direction in contemporary philosophy which most clearly and most thoroughly comes to terms with this sobering realization and also proposes a possible alternative, is Derridean deconstructionism. As opposed to structuralism, from which it originated, deconstructionism does not grant much relevance to the structures and systems it discovers via analysis and deduction as contents of meaning for their own sake: it is much more interested in and preoccupied with results of inductions, with parataxis, and with the recombining of results of analysis.

Applied to Tevet's sculpture, this means that the artist no longer isolates one specific aspect of sculpture, such as primary, stereometric form (Judd). or weight (as Richard Serra stated about his own work). and blows it up to monomaniac proportions. It means, rather, that he will comment on the totality of sculpture as a text-context with all its complex interrelations, by deconstructing it. decomposing it, and presenting its parts in such a manner that previous grammars can no longer help us to read it. He thus confronts us with a totally new assessment of sculpture as an epistemological-aesthetic field.

Most pre-Caro, pre-Smith sculpture could be analyzed by describing the relations between different parts of the work to the whole, as they relate to a central axis or a grid, etc. Tevet's sculpture clearly is not organized around a central axis or centre of gravity to which other parts would be subordinated according to a hypotactic visual grammar. Tevet uses a paratactic syntax, which means that his work makes sense only as a text full of contradictions and parallels, rather

than like a sentence in which all parts contribute to one statement on the basis of relations of interdependency and subordination. On the other hand, at times this chaos appears to be directed by a rotating, spiraling movement. But any possibly directive circular rhythm which might point to a linear type of reading is contradicted by the “illogical” use of color, by the introduction of “objets trouvés” which divert the spectators attention, by a haltering staccato rhythm and - most of all - by the fact that the information which the viewer gets from one point of view does not at all prepare him for- and is often contradicted by - the information he obtains from another point of view. The result of all these impressions does not lead to any clear-cut conclusion because, quite simply, one cannot add apples to eggs: i.e., one cannot subsume divergent categories under one greatest common denominator.

As mentioned above, Tevet does include chairs, pistols, and the like in his works. Let us analyze his use of chairs/tables as an exemplary deconstructionist strategy of his aesthetics. Chairs have been included in modern sculpture for a diversity of reasons, which could tentatively be grouped around three (more or less) interrelated main lines of force. First of all when the status of the pedestal or base (or in the case of painting, of the frame) was put in question as a marker of the epistemologic separation between the world of art and the everyday reality, it was replaced by the trivial object par excellence, a chair, in order to question the necessity of this radical separation (cf. Marcel Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel*, 1913). Secondly, the chair (or table) did frequently function as the exact opposite of this banal cosiness, as in the surrealist “Unheimlichkeit” (cf. Victor Brauner's *Wolf-Table*, 1933-1947, and Alberto Giacometti's *Table*, 1932) and was often charged with sexual meaning (cf. Allen Jones' *Table Woman*, 1969). A third line of force is also based on the chair's (or table's) triviality, its being exemplary of “literal objects as opposed to metaphorical objects”, in Donald Judd's words (cf. Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs*”, 1965, which is a visualization of the Juddian tautology “a chair as a chair as a chair”).

In Tevet's *Painting Lessons*, chairs and tables often function as pedestals, while supporting beams that link different parts of the sculpture. They do have an epistemological function, but this is not related to the concept of the base or pedestal, although it does imply a critique of the problematic relation between the purely aesthetic and the non-aesthetic contexts. On closer analysis, this critique springs from the difference between chairs as undeniable concrete found objects par excellence and the constructed “abstract” elements which further constitute the sculpture. It is as if the logic of Caro's additive sculptural sentences - which, after all, are still sentences within the text and history of the “master narrative” of modernist formalism - were being intertwined or confronted in an explanatory arrangement, an “Auseinandersetzung”. with the found object, a radically non-formalist and more precisely semantic direction, based on the manipulation and shifting of categories. Two uncongenial discourses are juxtaposed. In other words, Tevet's work relates to sculpture as a text, to the history of sculpture with its flaws and irreconcilable divergent programmes. In closing, we could state that the work of Nahum Tevet relates to sculpture in its totality; it cuts across different periods and styles, and stages conflicting sculptural programmes and theories in an astonishing formal and visual complexity. In this sense, it is a clear reflection of contemporary thought and philosophy.

Plurality and experience are the key words. Every shift of focus, every other angle of vision adds new information about the same (?) work, but does not lead to rigid conclusions. Tevet's work is one with the spectator; it exists for him only during the time of perception, it cannot be reconstructed mentally, or deduced from a preconceived aesthetic programme or formal structure. The time the spectator spends with these works is visually very fascinating. And the fascination is actually visual, not just a mere visualization of contemporary theory of sculpture, as the present text might suggest. This text, after all, was not meant as an introduction. It is intended to come after the viewing.

Let's have a look and shut up.



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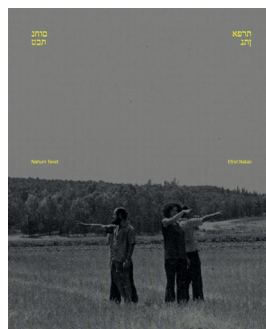
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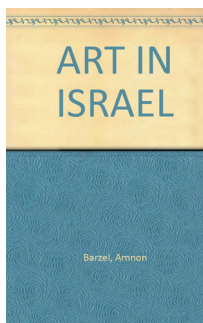
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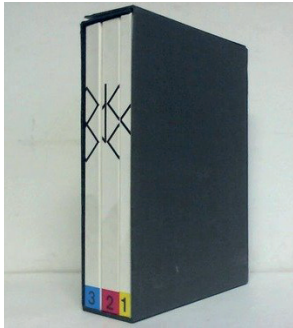
### ART IN ISRAEL

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