

## **The Heat of the Day**

Michal Biber, Ruti Ben Yaakov

Curator: Iris Mendel

Israeli art has been strongly engaged along the years with Local light, sunrise, and sunset. The exhibition As the Heat of the Day by Michal Biber and Ruti Ben Yaakov focuses on the heat and the burning sun in the summer. Inevitably, the works evoke the thought of climate change and heat which is becoming more extreme. It diverts thought to the rising temperatures and the heat waves which are concerning and at the same time mirror political and social events which increase the feeling of suffocation and burning.

Michal Biber's paintings are immersed with light and color and manifest two methods that she researches and examines: one of painting while observing, a method she is identified with, and the second, painting freely and unintentionally, a method which she started practicing again now adays. The painting starts from a spilled ink stain on canvas, Biber plays and juggles with its surprising possibilities, and at the same time ads structural elements from reality in oil paint, such as the view from a big window in her studio, overlooking the buildings, trees, and porches of the neighbors. The strong sunlight penetrates the window into the paintings. It is an influential and striking light, local Mediterranean summer light which is rooted in Israeli art and charges Michal's paintings with strong bright

colors. On top of this there are artificial lights that are "warming up" the paintings, such as home lighting fixtures, bulbs, colorful garlands that insinuate a disturbing and polluting presence next to the natural light. The vegetation in the paintings is also present and seems as if it is between two extremes, like two moods moving from despair to hope, and there are upright and full of life flowers who appear against withered and dry ones which melted and bended in the sun.

In opposition to Biber's urban look, Ruti Ben Yaakov's paintings include desert landscapes that were painted following a trip to the Negev Mountain. The quietness and the way everything stands still is strongly apparent, kind of a deceptive Fata Morgana. A dry eastern wind blows from the paintings, and it seems as if hot fumes are rising from them and there is a layer of dust on top of them. The dryness and the desert views are moving from the outside inwards to the human soul and into enigmatic associative images. The figures in the paintings are lying down and tired, as if looking for refuge from the heat. They are quiet and Introvertive on one hand and on the other hand contain a kind of inside fire combining body and spirit. Ben Yaakov plays between the sunlight and the energy that moves through the body and is shown from it, and in a free and intuitive way leaves in the painting a tone of emotion and distant blurred memories.