

What is the trigger? When did it happen? When does a Man become an Artist?

Written by Ofer Lellouche



Where to begin from? Is it a hotel room? It is an unfamiliar space. It is still dark outside and you are awakening, your head full of dreams heavy with an opaque presence and yet you know who you are.

Then, on your way to the bathroom, you encounter a stranger and you know that you can't reconcile between the presence that filled your head a moment ago and your face in the mirror.

At that moment, you feel clueless, neither lacking the understanding of how to differentiate neither an apple from a tree nor drawing any of them.

If you have the soul of an artist, it becomes your life's mission. To search for the image and likeness that you can identify with.

It takes much luck and fortuity to encounter it, yet, sometimes it happens. It happens by surprise and it stands in front of you and you know that it is what you are looking for. It appears before you as a riddle, like an obstructive barrier that hides nothing behind it and yet you feel compelled to stay in its presence.

Perhaps our need for art is born out of that very presence, the inability to recognize ourselves in the mirror.

For Eliko, it started in Cuba, while wandering through the alleyways like any other tourist.

Our era is overflowing with images. People photograph incessantly with a kind of unprecedented appetite. Our smart phones are filled to the brim with images reflecting nothing but that trivial and redundant urge to document and prove that "I was here".

For Eliko, photography comes from an entirely different urge. He is not a tourist. He has a way of lining up with his environment that does not coerce his own presence upon it; without acting as an image-hunter in the local nature reservation of the natives. His gaze reflects good faith as he says "I look people in the eyes".

In one alley, his eye met the eye of an elderly woman leaning out of her window. A connection was forged between two equals, between two human beings. That was why that woman opened up her front door to him and what he saw inside moved him tremendously.

How is that a man so far from his home, in an unfamiliar space and an unexpected time, can encounter something so familiar and dear to his heart; like a primordial view that had been lost and suddenly found.

A room, and inside it a simple metal-framed bed with colorful and meticulously arranged sheets, a modest pair of slippers and in the entrance, a work station with some kind of a machine for etching or drilling. (It turns out that the woman rents out a part of her one room apartment during the day to an unknown worker)

What was in that simple combination of objects, merely photographed on a mobile phone that moved Eliko so much then, and still continues to move us now?

One can write a lot about this photograph, but that would miss the point. In that moment of encounter, Eliko realized that there is a meaning there: a mysterious riddle seemed to be hidden in the odd combination.

When he returned to Israel, he acquired a professional camera and dedicated himself to learning the art of photography from scratch and returned again to the same place. When his "professional" photographs did not turn out as he wished, he returned to Israel and found an abandoned hut in a kibbutz, where he built a stage, reminding him of that same room in Cuba.

The House at the Edge of the View / Eliko Ner Gaon

Written by: Pesi Girsch & Nir Harmat;



At an abandoned hut, located at the sidelock of a Kibbutz, at the heart of Emek Izrael, Eliko Ner Gaon moves back and forth in time. Weaving an odd reality. This place seems familiar and feels as if we've been here before. It brings up faded memories of some artistic sights and our lives' events. On one hand the house is warm and welcoming; but on the other hand, it is full of conflicts and brings up appearances from various times and cultures, which is confusing and makes you uneasy. The House at the Edge of the View is out of time and out of place; its story accumulating in between moments. It's a twilight zone; a playground or a lab where the experiment overflows.

The action is at the base of the exhibits here: "I put together a world of fantasy while searching for the atmosphere, the mood of the combined elements" says Ner Gaon. The House appears sturdy, old and grounded. Its walls filled with history and memories; still, everything constantly changing, moving and unstable.

The unruliness, settings of composition, building-up and breaking-up of the pieces of life reflecting from the photos, are at the core of these artworks. The action is performative, and theatrical. It creates a stage for anonymous actors, foreign families and short-lived moments that were rearranged to be something else. Familiar family scenes make the set a home. "The photography is the final step, documenting the act, providing proof" says the artist.

The light in the photography can fool us: blinding at times then swallowing the elements and the room itself. The light revealing and hiding, wrapping and diminishing. As if a hidden alchemist is swirling it. The photographs require time to view, with penetrating stare that seeps through skin; like morning light penetrating through the shutters, and is as vital as this penetration.

The authentic and real get mixed-up with the imitated and staged. Suddenly, what appears to be real is phony and visa-versa. Ner Gaon uses familiar forms and daily artifacts as evasive grip-handles. The exhibition assimilates dreams with reality, fantasy with actuality. Sometimes it lifts the weight off your heart, and sometimes it is what weighs upon it.

