

Esther Dotan  
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Nomi Talisman, *Camera Obscura*; Curator: Vered Maimon  
(Translated from the Hebrew)



The basis of Nomi Talisman's exhibition is three series of photographs in a calm square format, photographs of people lying on their backs. It is a project with no small emotional and theoretical potential. Talisman asked several people, some of whom she knows and some whom she barely knows, to photograph them in their homes while they are lying on their back. The people decided with whom they wanted to be photographed and what they would wear.

"My choice was only in deciding on the position of lying on their back, and I took care that they didn't move out of the frame," Talisman says. Restrained, non-intrusive voyeurism, not aggressive, but ultimately exposing, and even sly. The dedicated supine position and the lens watching from above have profound symbolic meaning. A person decides how he or she will be photographed - a seemingly presentable photograph par excellence - however the unusual angle and intimate pose transform the situation into a performance, a stage, and frees the imagination. Talisman conveys to her subjects to present themselves the way they see themselves, legitimizing openness, facilitating a channel for honesty. "The actors" can intervene, censor, move forward with a discovery, since Talisman shows them her Polaroid tests during the session. Some chose to show themselves as a happy family, a happy couple, and the distorting mirror did not remove the defensive masks. Some freed their fantasy to soar and created a fiction free of conventions. Two women lying on their backs with an Ethiopian child between them. Some exposed their private reality as a declaration or perhaps in defiance. The perspective distortion created by the photographic angle from above is doubtlessly highly charged. It is a metaphor of rubbing off the surface, a shift from the pose, an opportunity to give an account of the pose.

The degree of taking risks and the psychological strata in Talisman's open staging enable a richer emotional space than is expressed, and repeats itself, in Tiranit Barzilai's dictated and "domineering" positioning, for example. It would be interesting to see to what degree the coefficient of the minuscule mediation in Talisman's series realizes its potential.

A second series of photographs comprises more metaphoric, more staged, pictures in many of which Talisman herself is photographed. In many of the pictures her face is covered in a mud mask (processed mud from the Dead Sea which is marketed for cosmetic and medicinal purposes). If the series of photographs of people lying on their backs seeks to remove the mask, the emphasis here is on their very existence, on the presence of the barrier. The disconnection can be also seen in the image of the blocked spectacles made up of slices of zucchini or cucumbers. The tea bag is well known for its medicinal properties and the earphones made of yogurt containers; all the barriers come from home.

The third series is composed of photographs taken in the nature museum of the University of Florence: mummies and wax dolls. The dolls were evidently used for teaching anatomy, and the earliest ones date from the 1870s. The wax dolls are lying in glass cases - mimetic objects, almost flesh and blood, which in the self-evident comparison with the photographs of people lying on their backs, the status of the latter is sharpened as objects before the photographer, or as subjective objects following self analysis which the situation has forced upon them.

The series will not appear in the exhibition as a homogenous continuity. The joint editing work of Talisman and curator Vered Maimon produced a final product composed of several series of three-four frames taken from different series: "I have a picture before I have the sentence," Talisman says, "working with Vered put them together. The fact that Vered and I did not see the work in the same way contributed to the editing stage." The curator's intervention is interesting and merits thought, and the question is whether dismantling the series and re-editing them has added to their accumulated value as a continuum.

