

**Nomi Talisman**  
**“Look & Listen, Say That”**  
**The “Midrasha” Gallery**  
**By Galia Yahav**  
**Studio**  
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The photograph of public equipment that holds telephone directories, index booklets, an illustration of numbered gardening tools. A photograph of window boxes with computerized irrigation, a sketch of a dancing “Spanish” couple. A close-up of a makeshift bookmark in a book, an illustration explaining dance steps, a water installation in a hothouse that resembles a fountain, individual copper units in a Turkish bath, numbered in Arabic numerals.



Exactly one year after her exhibition at the Camera Obscura Gallery, which was composed of three main series (stuffed animals from the anatomy museum, couples, masks) Nomi Talisman exhibits another solo exhibition that more or less addresses the same rules of a series: hothouses, user manuals and instructions, used books. This time too the series are combined as diptychs, triptychs and quadtychs, in connections that seem modular and arbitrary. This time without people.

The photographs of the hothouses, together with their equipment and computerization, pipes in three colors and switches, show a site that contains the splendor of a palace, an autocratic kingdom. Not only are human beings, the operators of the apparatus, absent, but the vegetation itself cannot be seen in any of the photographs. These are photographs of the hermetic, sterile ecological mechanism that deals with control and monitoring, without operators and without its results. The anatomy of smart hothouses. The photography serves for freezing the movement of water, growth, development and flow. But a priori it is non-free movement, the movement of channeled and computerized energy guided by considerations of efficacy.

After looking at several photographs it becomes clear that the hothouses are not essentially different from the museums with stuffed animals that Talisman photographed a year ago. Then her camera succeeded in giving life to the so still nature that was the subject. Now she is “stuffing” and paralyzing the perpetuum mobile. The hothouses are representative and didactic. There are instruction and exhibition corners.

In any event, it is an imitative, alternative, simulative world of natural processes with studying, research, didactic and commerce objectives. The hothouse seemingly creates copies of nature, similar to the camera. But the “foreign” considerations that join the act of imitation omit and kill the accidental element, the unexpected, the chaotic, the squandering and the inefficient element of the natural, the true. The perpetuum mobile is the mechanism for transferring things from a situation in “which things are as they are” to one of “human engineering” in which they are given to use, and use is their purpose.

Next to the hothouses there are photographs of instruction sheets for the gardener relating to the seasons for sowing, methods of manual irrigation, a variety of gardening tools, dates and instructions for treatment. There are also pages taken from instructions for ballroom dancing; flow charts of steps, represented by shoes and curved arrows, marked as right and left, which are reminiscent of a secret code or hieroglyphics. The spectator sees that it is a code to be deciphered, the schemata of an agreed language. But he or she is left with no index, no code. The riddle becomes clear not from the dismantlement of each photograph or the interpretation of each theme, but from the syntax of the photographs' presentation together. There is an obscure space between them, which can be bridged only by the assemblage of the entire exhibition, from which the similarity between the photographs becomes clear, the fact that they are analogous.

The relationship between the hothouses and the ballroom dancing is a result of the accumulation of more and more evidence: domestication, taming, embalming, sampling. After all, the hothouse is not nature, just as ballroom dancing is a regimental distortion, an artificial method for organizing the body in an aesthetic way. They are both frameworks of work, structures or models based on knowledge and the synchronization of different factors (body, ideal and music; technology, soil and water and market needs), which are under the control of a productive mechanism. They are both simulations of "the real thing." In both methods perfect synchronization is experienced as aesthetics.

A year ago, when she photographed couples, Talisman's photography had a voyeuristic element. Combined with photographs from the museum of anatomy, her photography had an "undressing" power, peeling away skin, intimate and shocking all at the same time. Now she shifts from the subject of the lack of interpersonal communication and moves towards impervious and high-tech mechanisms (at least more so than empty yogurt containers as telephones).

The bodies with the eyes that looked straight into the camera/to the spectator are absent in the present exhibition. Distancing the eyes is a distancing of the evidence, which seemingly creates an omniscient, almost scientific, photographic mask. Voyeurism is more sophisticated. It sends a direct look, this time to the methods of the absent people who produce in order to give their actions a scientific cover. To their food, their dancing, their communications, their knowledge. Talisman's camera exposes the fact that the creators of domesticity are replete with fright. They are the taxidermists and those who distance evidence. They shift themselves (like moving the course of a river, like moving limbs in ballroom dancing, like learning about the seasons from the calendar) from nature to a second nature, whose name is the increase of production. But if they succeed - they will attain "perfect production" - they will become its instruments, its servants, its objects.

The simulation of the seasons transforms the seasons into an object of passion. Creating schemata which can be constructed in dancing transforms the body into scientific data - when the same conditions will be reproduced, it will produce identical results. Leafing through the indexes, dictionaries and user manuals or libraries means involvement in a sphere that has an inner regularity (like Arabic numerals, the only language in the world that counts in a different way) and resembles a path paved by feet.

All these are paving paths, the subject of which is ownership and submission. Talisman illustrates that this is also bargaining, evidently perpetual, of the people who press the buttons of the appliances and pages come out with pictures.

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