

Now you remember?

In her exhibition "P.S. I just remembered," Orit Hasson Walder creates an imaginary and realistic dialogue between details of memory both present and absent

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Tags: Orit Hasson Walder

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Orit Hasson Walder, Mickey Mouse's breastbone (Courtesy photograph)

Orit Hasson Walder, an artist who has been exhibiting in Israel and abroad for over 20 years, is asking numerous questions in her new exhibit at the Heder Gallery in Tel Aviv, "P.S. I just remembered." The issues she raises are about memory, doubling, the unity of time and the continuity of the story we tell ourselves. But, beyond these questions, she also asks what can we do with simple, basic tools, such as a pencil and watercolors, in an era so overloaded with photographic images and films.

Hasson Walder's paintings express deep frustration at the impotence in not being able to recreate a continuous whole from memory as well as from the painter's methodical attempt to create a significant image in a world so suffused with images from cameras. It seems that all that is missing in the exhibit to unify the pictures is a roll of film to tie all of the isolated visions in one uniform, moving roll. This same lack is found in the paintings themselves, most of which emphasize in one sense or another what is out of place. "There are many processings of memory," Hasson Walder states as she talks about the works. "I reload it and find only wordless images that jump up and don't leave me alone, so I finally put them in, with a bit of skepticism." It's possible to think about this random remembering process like the exhibit's installation, to create cyber-specific unity, in which each pressing on a link sends you to a different world but does not disrupt the experience of continuous surfing.

A series of watercolor paintings are hanging in the small space facing a series of pencil drawings. Together they create a "double dialogue," like the name of one of the paintings. This is a dialogue between the motifs of doubling, identity, similarity, fiction and reality. The contrast between the glistening and dark colors in the works on one side of the room and the transparency of the pencil drawings facing the watercolors – from a distance they look like delicate engravings on a glass plate – transform the room into a negative, leading the viewer with hesitant, associative steps, between the artworks.

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Identity trap

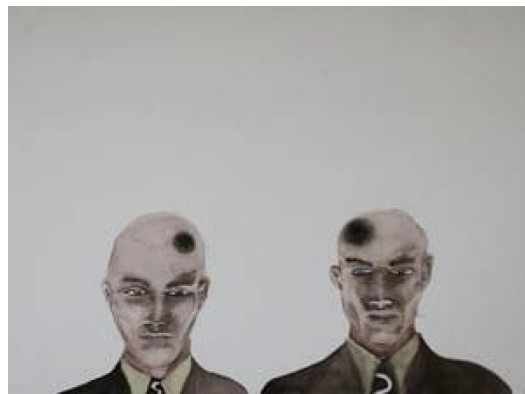
The Twins



Face to face



Marked



Twins is the painting that leaves the biggest impression. It is loaded with partial messages: two men extremely similar but not identical, each with a missing leg, lean on each other's shoulder. Between their legs is a clearly phallic symbol. What connects them is what looks like the remains of the Twin Towers. In contrast to the aggressive buildings which are not standing up, and despite the emphasized disability of the men, the organ between their legs is erect. The gap between the fragility of the twins and male potency needs an explanation, but Hasson Wilder states firmly: "If you are looking for something beyond, you won't find it. It's like when sometimes it's hard to put things into words, and when you try it sounds incorrect or imprecise. It's like a story underneath which is an entire layer of other stories that maybe come out subconsciously but shed a bit of light on the surface images."

Another pair, which stands out especially, is the pair of paintings Face to Face. Two ostriches

look at each other, and above them, *Marked*, depicts two men, each with a dot or a whole in his head. The ostriches look like a reflection of each other, and when looking above them to the pair of morbid men, the expectation of identification no longer exists. Perhaps the closeness between the two paintings is what creates the desire for continuity of the motif of sameness, or perhaps it's the déjà vu feeling resulting from looking at the paintings. Mickey Mouse's breastbone, the painting shows a skeleton leaning on a candy cane, with Mickey Mouse's head in place of a pelvis. In many aspects, this painting captures something about this exhibit that refuses to explain itself. The head does not belong to the body, it's placed in the wrong area, it's from the wrong figures, and brings humor into the image of a skeleton which is a reminder of death above all. On the surface there is no connection, but, as Hasson Walder says, "Maybe there is no connection due to the fluidity of the paintings. But this is also a dialogue, isn't it?"