

Larisa Miller: Artichokes

Curator: Hagai Ulrich

Opening: Wednesday, April 20, at 20:00

April 20, 2022 - June 2, 2022

Exhibition text: Artichokes / Hagai Ulrich

"Artichokes" is a solo show by Larissa Miller at "Bread and Roses Gallery" at the space located in Ma'an Workers' Organization at 45 Aliya Street in Tel Aviv. The show is a continuation of the artist's participation at "Performances for Social Nearing"*, a special event held as part of the "Bread and Roses 16" show, where performance works were intended to enhance the interaction between performers and spectators. In her event at the show, titled "Close Portrait", Miller stayed for two days at the Sadnaot Haomanim space and painted portraits of the Bread and Roses community and its visitors.

Miller's motivation for a painting, on paper, cardboard, or canvas, is in the direct and swift impression of the object - an action that ends as soon as the particular encounter ends. For this reason, and alongside the intention to make a visual acquaintance with the object, in Miller's paintings, there are visual remnants of the documentary as well as a subjective representation. At one moment her brushstrokes are giving intelligibility to the form and in another moment the strokes are general or crude as if meant to quickly bring the open encounter to its closure with the minimum effort necessary in order for a memory of its origination to be visually evident. Seemingly, the foreground in her paintings might look superficial or shallow, as the acrylic or oil paints literally receive the grayish hue of the cardboard surface. Accordingly, the objects in the paintings may appear trivial: vegetables, still life, people, food, interiors, view from the window of her studio, and paintbrushes. However, like with Miller's poems, the paintings bring to the foreground the seemingly mundane contemplations and the existential insights dealing with a subjective perception of the changing moment, as well as evidence of immigration experiences.

Miller was born in Belarus and immigrated to Israel at the age of 5 with her family. She studied art in Kalisher and painting with Natalia Zourabova. Her works are somewhat reminiscent of the direct and swift painting of the New Barbizon painters, a local group of women painters who immigrated from the former USSR, with whom she also exhibited in a number of group shows. But unlike these painters, which are associated with venturing into the problematic scene of the tensioned social structure in Israel, Miller's descriptiveness is created thanks to the nearness needed for a visual impression to occur, and through an observation that is not meant to reflect the social representations that are visible in the press, in images seen through the news, in academic analysis, or as they emerge from an outside look into conflict zones.

The hierarchy in Miller's compositions can be noticed by the way the edges in the periphery of the paintings unravel. It stems from the intention to sustain a living encounter and turn it into what keeps it as a memory in the mind - the blurry, existential, and inaccurate impression of the direct encounter with a person or place. These features in her paintings also give a representation to boundaries, be they cultural boundaries, social, intimate, or of a political nature. Thanks to the intimate and thematic evidence of translating the "here and now" into form, and through her choices of objects to paint, in "Artichokes" one can discern the

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influence of post-Soviet painting, a confrontation with Social Realism, the visibility of the socioeconomic gaze of immigrants, as well as of effects of moving from the periphery to Tel-Aviv.

Considering all these, in installing "Artichokes" at the Bread and Roses Gallery, there appears the feeling of an a-hierarchical network of portraits, sites, and the streets of south Tel Aviv, the locals living and working in it. The paintings draw attention to the specific space in which the paintings are displayed as well as to Ma'an Workers' Organization and Sindiana of Galilee activities - the two NGOs that run the annual Bread and Roses shows - in which Miller is a frequent participant - organizations and events of which the main characteristics are the direct encounter and the mundane fieldwork, needed for creating what is necessary to have, in order to exist at all.

*In "Performances for Social Nearing," (December 30-31, 2021) Miller participated alongside three other artists: Joy Bernard, Arava Assaf, and Tami Assulin. Curator: Hagai Ulrich, Artists' Workshops, Hatavor 32, Tel Aviv. The event took place as part of the "Bread and Roses 16" show (December 29, 2021 - January 1, 2022).

About the artist:

Larisa Miller is a painter and poet, born in Belarus. She immigrated to Israel with her family at the age of 5. Miller studied art at Kalisher and at Kibbutzim College of Education, and also studied painting with Asia Lukin and Natalia Zourabova. Since 2014, she has exhibited in many group shows and in several solo shows in Tel Aviv. Miller has two poetry books: *Golden Land* (2019) published by Maayan and *Mashed Potatoes* (2022) published by Gnat Micro Press.

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