



Jüdisches Museum Berlin

Zwei Jahrtausende Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte

Dateline: Israel

New Photography and Video Art

No international conflict attracts more global attention than the confrontations on the area between Libya, Syria, Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Egypt. The fact that this permanent state of war affects the day-to-day life of the people living in these states serves as a central theme for a diverse range of works by visual artists, authors and filmmakers in the region.

"Photography and video are powerful artistic mediums for mining day-to-day life, and nowhere is this more evident than in Israel today," remarks the curator of the Jewish Museum New York, Susan Tumarkin Goodman, of her exhibition "Dateline Israel: New Photography and Video Art" in New York, which the Jewish Museum Berlin will be showing in winter 2007/08 under the German title "Betrifft: Israel".

The result is not a critical commentary of armed conflicts, but rather a panoramic view of the everyday life of people in an atmosphere of political tensions and constant imperilment. More than twenty artists, among them four Europeans, present the life and culture of a nation in which politics permeates every area of creative endeavor. Photographers and video artists have been among the first to react to current events. Their art imparts a strong impression of day-to-day strains in a society whose social foundation was erected on the model of a utopian state. The exhibition describes an arc ranging from the depiction of epic landscapes of the Bible, through current social commentaries, all the way to new aesthetic forms and formats in photography and video art.

It is left to the visitor to discover whether the gaze of European artists differs from that of the Israelis. The German photographer Wolfgang Tillmans portrays a postcard view of Tel Aviv drenched in golden light, transforming the Hebrew city into a Levantine metropolis. Wim Wenders shows "Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives," a mystical place for all monotheistic religions, complete with carelessly discarded garbage visible in the valley. The British artist Mark Wallinger draws on architectural forms to show how the country is interwoven with its Muslim and Christian parts. How strongly violence penetrates day-to-day life is shown in a film by the British artist Catherine Yass, in which she drives with her camera along the wall between the Jewish settlement and the West Bank, leaving unclear whether the wall must be interpreted as a protective barrier or (and?) a threatening gesture.



But even harmless views of Mediterranean beaches are unable to hide the explosiveness of their subject. The Israeli artist Guy Raz takes pictures of very similar looking beach lifeguard stations—idyllic scenes until you notice the different flags: the Israeli one on the beach of Tel Aviv and the Palestinian on the beach of Gaza, which turn these booths for swimming attendants into protective watchtowers.

The works by over twenty artists provide a current perspective on Israel, revealing not only the complexity of the political conflicts, but also the traditional ideas of the Holy Land and of Theodor Herzl's Jewish state.

The exhibition can be seen at the Jewish Museum Berlin from 14 December 2007 to 24 February 2008. The original catalogue with a German translation of the essays as an insert will cost 29.90 euros.

Artists

Boaz Arad
Yael Bartana
Rina Castelnuevo
Rineke Dijkstra
Barry Frydlender
Ori Gersht
Amit Goren
Michal Heiman
Miki Kratsman
Leora Laor
Gillian Laub
Yaron Leshem
Motti Mizrachi
Orit Raff
Guy Raz
Igael Shemtov
Wolfgang Tilman
Mark Wallinger
Wim Wenders
Pavel Wolberg
Sharon Ya'ari
Catherine Yass