

*Dead Flat*  
Gil Shachar

24<sup>th</sup> April – 26<sup>th</sup> May 2018

In his recent exhibition *Dead Flat* Gil Shachar presents two phenotypically entirely different groups of works, based, however, on the same manufacturing method of replicating real objects. Thus, for the bust *Eli*, a cast was made of the head, neck and upper part of the shoulders, taken from a living model, here a boy named Eli. Examples from another group of works are the mostly untitled wall objects, epoxy resin casts which form a counterpart to the bust. These works vary in the manner they were made and in their visual and sculptural appearance, which is either drawn silhouettes or mostly monochrome, minimalistic works. In both variations the surface of the 'paper objects' was broken up through tearing and perforating.

Although the bust *Eli* measures only 36 x 33 x 17 cm without plinth – as it is a one-to-one copy of the original –, the viewer is immediately fascinated by it. The depicted boy, presumably aged between 10 and 12, seems to be sunk into reflection with his eyes shut – a main characteristic of all busts and heads created by Gil Shachar. His presence is undeniable, despite the tenderness and vulnerability, which is even intensified through the closed eyes. His physical constitution marks the transitional phase between boyhood and adolescence. Through its physical presence the bust, which avoids direct eye contact with the viewer, as its eyes are shut, requires the observer to relate to it, if only through its setting in the gallery space and through its function as the observer's physical counterpart. The closed eyes, however, are unsettling, making the viewer feel captured and guilty for disturbing the silence and the figure's solitude. The observer might feel like a voyeur, triggering in him or her mixed feelings. This is outweighed through the sense of curiosity about how exactly the naturalistic-appearing sculpture has been created. Curiosity, however, will prevail and the observer will discover with bewilderment that every hair on eyebrows and scalp has been painted, and with the application of paint the illusion of three-dimensionality is created through its 'overlying' effect.

Opposite *Eli* a large yellow crescent stretches over the wall and covers it almost entirely on the horizontal level, which may indicate a protective sheath or symbolize a sense of longing. The boy's contemplative view inward may be conceived as a metaphor for the window to eternity. The analogy between the crescent-shapes of the eyelids and the crescent of the

moon was certainly not created accidentally.

One half of the crescent – so far the largest replication of a crumpled paper object, which has previously been accordingly shaped – is painted white, and the other half in a flat yellow. Only by means of this 'mantle of one thousand folds' a sculptural surface is created, and thus the simple basic shape is animated through an abundance of minute shadows. Incidentally, metaphorically speaking, it is a beautifully imagined translation of the moon surface, about which we know that it shows a strong mountainous topography just as our earth. In addition to the large crescent, other circular wall objects will be displayed in the exhibition, which consist either of two differently colored halves with a small crescent or harbor the cut-out shape of a small full moon revealing views on the wall. The sculptural quality of Gil Shachar's works can be traced here especially well, since through crumpling the paper - which, as we know, is a cast made of epoxy resin - the edges show their physical presence and appear all the more prominent and razor-sharp.

Thus, the image becomes a shield, a sign of something which can easily be deciphered through centuries of symbolical allocation. However, it becomes entirely abstract when the large black disc is pierced with three equally sized circular discs arranged in a triangle form and its remaining body is pushed to the margins without losing its physical presence. The moon disc could be interpreted as a black smiley sign. Surely not unintentionally the artist has also created another untitled series of works, in which DIN A4 sheets of paper are mutated to form a face, or rather the sign of a face. Here, the epiphany of the paper is particularly evident: its standardized size makes it familiar to us, and it appears as if torn by a child's hand to form the representation of a face, a sign. Only through recognizing the material it is made of we realize that this profane object is in fact a highly complex, even deceptive symbol of realities that we think we already know.

When Shachar draws with his graphite pencil on apparently torn paper the silhouette of a person in his precise drawing manner, showing every detail even of the hair contours, it becomes most deceptive: the image shows a shadow as a representation of a portrayed person on the representation of a sheet of paper!

Viewing all the exhibits as a whole, manifold associations arise. The boy becomes a *Small Prince*, the circular discs heavenly bodies. The gallery space becomes a planetarium, at least, perhaps, for the contemplative *Eli*.

The artist has chosen the term *Dead Flat* as exhibition title, which he borrowed from the brand name of his new acrylic paint used to imitate the haptic bluntness of the paper surface. However, *Dead Flat* also means absolute planarity (as material property of the paint, which can be applied especially smoothly and thin onto the surface). Related to the wall objects the term thwarts what can be seen. The paper is not smooth, it is not even paper. Only its crumpled texture makes us think of paper.

However, *Dead Flat* is also the primary frame line in shipbuilding, the main constructive element for weight reduction, more precisely in the building of metal ships (earlier wooden ships), where the metal hull is fastened over the rib construction of the frame.

*Dead Flat* might also suggest that now a basis (or frame line) has been provided for further artistic development, and not even the artist himself knows what threads will emanate from this scaffold of creativity founded thereupon.

Semjon H. N. Semjon,

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(Translation: Julia Böttcher)

### **Paper Position Berlin**

Parallel to the Gallery Weekend on the *Paper Positions Berlin* further works on paper will be presented from 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> April.

### **THE WHALE CAST PROJECT**

Currently Gil Shachar is awaiting sad news: he will be informed once a whale will be washed ashore in South Africa. After many years of preparations and coordination with the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, the artist has obtained a permit for making a cast of a whale that will appear suitable to him for his sculpting project THE CAST WHALE.

By aid of crowdfunding Gil Shachar has been successful in raising the necessary means for the project last year (facebook – Gil Shachar).