

THE READYMADE CENTENNIAL

Curator: Ruti Direktor

"The problem begins with the connection between them

At the center of Merav Shinn Ben-Alon's work is a written page in her handwriting, from a summary of a lecture by the late Prof. Mordechai (Moti) Omer. The name of the course: "The Empty Chair." The name of the institution: Bezalel. Date of the lecture: February 2, 1989. The lecture focuses on Duchamp, on the bicycle wheel and the kitchen stool. "The problem begins with the connection between them," Omer states.

Twenty-four years later, Shinn Ben-Alon returns to the lecture summary from Bezalel and reads it in retrospect not only as a formative encounter with readymade, but as an inaugurating ceremony/ text of entry into the language of art and the symbolic order of the history of art.

Her experience is a personal one, but it is also shared with many others: For generations of artists and art professionals in Israel, Omer's lectures were the gate of entry to modernism in general and to Duchamp in particular. In re-reading the lecture summary, the male world of art is portrayed - the text, the words, Duchamp himself, the bicycle wheel, Moti Omer. The inauguration ceremony turns out to be a painful, violent, intrusive, depressing process. By using language as an object, and by breaking it down again and again, Shinn Ben-Alon searches for the connection between the language of art and her own language. She fuses the familiar readymade images of Duchamp into her work, and vice versa - she hybridizes images and words from her private world into the text of Duchamp