

It's Hard to Forget a Name Like That

Merav Shinn Ben-Alon

Curator: Leann Wolf

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The exhibition **It's Hard to Forget a Name Like That** takes its starting point from the artist book **VENICE** by **Merav Shinn Ben-Alon**. This book, which is a cross between an art catalogue and a graphic novel, narrates the story of a young woman, an art student who suffers a sexual assault during her visit to the Venice Biennale.

In her book, Shinn Ben-Alon constructs an artistic mechanism that strives to reveal the "truth", and confront the dominant figures who hold power and control in the Western art world: the man, the artist, and the teacher. Over the erased pages of five art books detailing the lives and works of great masters, she lays out a rich array of dozens of her artworks, alongside a narrative text that begins and ends with the exhibition's title: "It's Hard to Forget a Name Like That."

The story of the woman's character in **VENICE** transcends the book's confines and extends into the gallery space. Dispersing into multiple different moments that resonate trauma-related emotions and memories. The exhibition showcases Shinn Ben-Alon's works spanning twenty years, focusing on themes such as the body, sexuality, vulnerability, eroticism, and feminism. These works now reveal the artist's trauma, a wound that was always present. However, the passage of time has allowed her to reinterpret and reclaim her art, and unveil some works for the very first time. This re-interpretation is partly influenced by the evolving social climate, including the emergence of the Me Too movement, which initiated the book's creation. Additionally, the passage of time has allowed for a personal journey where the artist processed her trauma through a decade-long creation of daily drawings.

In her works, Shinn Ben-Alon repeatedly revisits her wound, using oil paintings, drawings, and collages as if examining it under a microscope. The large-scale oil paintings delve into the wound's depth, exploring tissues, dirt, and blood, while the smaller paintings offer a view of the damaged skin and its hues. The drawings and collages take a further step back, depicting the female body and its environment through a red and black line.

In the exhibition, Shinn Ben-Alon seeks to unravel the chronological timeline and sew together, with both symbolic and real red thread, the moments, thoughts, and emotions associated with the trauma. Contrary to the common notion that one should "move on" from trauma, Shinn Ben-Alon reminds us that the trauma never truly fades; it continues to accompany us throughout life. While the artist's experience is personal, it resonates with the experiences of many women. Amidst current events, her works also reflect the broader societal trauma we have been experiencing since October 7th, the scope and consequences of which will only become apparent over time.

Leann Wolf