

Talking to Nomi Bruckmann:

NT: I remember your exhibition “Leaves and Folds” in 2005, at the Artspace Gallery in Jerusalem. Together with self-portraits you also exhibited your nude drawings. They impressed me with their directness and daring. Apart from which, your children were there, and to me they didn’t seem a bit embarrassed. I found that surprising and inspirational.

NB: I’ve never thought of that as something special till now, that my children should see my nude works. I’ve never thought of it as anything shameful. It’s not that I undress in front of everybody at home, but – a painting is a painting ...

NT: So what is a painting?

NB: From my point of view, a painting is a completely different matter, it expresses something, it isn’t me. It’s how I experience the thing that I’m painting, absolutely separate. Nakedness in art really is nothing to be ashamed of, for me, but there are things that I find even more surprising: People get really upset about the effects of time on the body, how the veins look, and the tendons stand out. It’s as if the stones in the river didn’t want the river to change them.

NT: Of course the business of age exists, but you’re also a public figure, a mother, and an art teacher. And in spite of all that, you document yourself naked. Even younger and less well-known women don’t find it easy to do that.

NB: It all depends on what they want in their painting. I want the truth in mine. I think the whole concept of the body is currently very distorted, from the point of view of what it’s meant to be. One reason why I like the images from which I create the prints so much is because it looks as if those women love their bodies, the great belly, the enormous legs – for me they are at peace with their ability to bring forth life, to breast-feed, it’s a reason for pride. Women today, those skinny creatures, the minute you’re pregnant they tell you “get your figure back”.

NT: Where do those figurines come from?

NB: They're "Yarmuk" figurines from 8000 BCE, found in an archaeological dig on Ramat Hagolan. I sketched them for the first time in 1999 for an exhibition that didn't happen.

NT: But in the studio you began to work from a more general perception of the body.

NB: True, I started from the idea of accepting the body as it is, with all the signs of aging. Afterwards, I remembered the statuettes, and in the end I went back to them, this time almost as abstract forms.

NT: Right, the prints are almost abstract, but nonetheless they're recognizable as women.

NB: As soon as there are two dots and another one below them, you know that they are breast and a navel... The abstraction process is gradual. The format is relatively small, and that's why I focused on the centre of the body. The print technique allowed me new ways of working and the ability to attain new textures and tones. I began to feel more certain about the possibilities of the material and the results that I wanted to achieve. It was a bit strange for me at first, because in the past I had related to the silkscreen print as something smooth, flat.

NT: What made you change?

NB: I saw the silkscreen works by Gershuni in the studio displayed at the Jerusalem Print Workshop in 2010 as part of the 4th national Drawing Biennale. Gershuni achieved such fine textures, such complex layers of the material. I didn't know it was possible to achieve such sensitivity in silkscreen printing, such transitions of color, such a range of textures. Until then, I'd always preferred monotype. When I began to try silkscreen I saw that I could work in the same fashion, but in larger sizes, and feel absolutely free. And I don't even have to reverse left and right.

NT: I think you even made use of some mistake that was made.

NB: They showed me how to prepare the work with a kind of spray – spraying glue on acetate. I didn't have that kind of glue, so I used wallpaper glue, and that created the most amazing textures – something like a watermelon... Afterwards, I tried to work in other

techniques. I learned by means of trial and error, and how each technique is evident in the print itself.

NT: I've a feeling that you paint yourself less these days than you did before...

NB: Right – a bit less. I work less from direct observation, more from instinct. I'm looking for the essence, so it's not always important to be so accurate about the face. I've always accepted myself as I am, and that also seems important to me in regard to other people. If we can't accept ourselves, we can't accept others. I also see that there's a close connection between the difficulty of accepting the body as it is, and our problem in society with accepting the less "complete". We find it hard to accept the wounded, the aged, or even those who look after them. That's where racism starts, in my opinion. We beautify the past, but we find it hard to accept the present.