

HEZI COHEN GALLERY

The Vacation

Amit Cabessa

28.2.2013 – 20.4.2013

Meloncide / Patricide

Ron Bartos

Amit Cabessa's previous exhibition at Hezi Cohen Gallery, "*Bli Neder*" (No Guarantees), was centered on a monumental triptych entitled Exile. Burning in red, the painting featured a family (the artist's family) being exiled, leaving its home behind, leaving its place. That chapter in his oeuvre was marked by a triple exile: physical exile (from the place), metaphysical exile (of a person from himself), and artistic exile (of the painter to the realms of sculpture). In the current exhibition Cabessa takes his paintings on vacation, since a vacation also carries the exilic element, leaving home and the familiar place for another, foreign locus, although it is a positive, temporary, pleasurable, voluntary exile.

The exhibition comprises two key paintings—The Vacation and Watermelon. The first portrays a family—man, woman, and the family dog, sitting on a red river bank. The color red, we recall, is the color of the exile land in Cabessa's paintings. In addition to the use of furnace-like surfaces, the artist, it seems, has taken a greater painterly freedom for himself, which highlights the values of line, stain, and color—freedom which is gradually enhanced in this work. The painting leaves behind, for the time being, the indigenous sabra hedge which bursts forth (in the left-hand corner) as a reminder of localism, because only belonging to the place will make his departure possible.

The painting Watermelon is a strange picnic centered on eating that fruit which stands for summer and vacation, on the one hand, localism (also as a maternal womb) on the other hand, and Eros (of sexual urges) on yet another hand. The watermelon was clearly harnessed for the artist's enjoyment as a fruit which juxtaposes red and green—the

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"fathers" of the artist's color palette; at the same time, it is a fruit rife with meaning,¹ and when it stands "under the knife" in the left corner, the painting transforms into a scene of crime: "meloncide."

All the paintings in the exhibition contain the figure of Yuval, the artist's daughter. Born in 2010, she forthwith became the subject of many of her father's paintings. Her figure sometimes replaces that of the artist, who previously used to paint self-portraits, and now depicts his daughter. A fascinating occurrence takes place at this point: In some paintings (which are not presented here), she is seen seated on the floor, holding a brush in her hand, painting in red. The question arises: Has Amit Cabessa replaced himself with his daughter, who has now become the painter? Has he painted an inheriting-daughter (to use *moshav* lingo) as an alter-ego of his own figure? Has not the artist-father performed an act of suicide akin to "patricide"?

¹ On the meanings of the watermelon in Israeli art, see: Carmela Rubin, cat. Watermelons (Tel Aviv: Rubin Museum, 2009).

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