

Meir Pichhadze | Portraits and People

Opening: 26.6.2020 - 1.8.2020

The current exhibition is taking place upon the backdrop of a decade anniversary to Meir Pichhadze's (1955-2010) death and it is dedicated to his portraiture which constitutes a substantial segment of his multi faceted creation, particularly since the second half of the 1990's. "I would like to paint portraits and people, but it doesn't flow"¹ Pichhadze remarked. What is striking is not his humble confession that "it doesn't flow" rather it is the expression of his approach which creates a division between portraits and people- "Portraits and People". Indeed the word "Portrait" which originates in Greek, contains a dual relation as in the joining of the words dyo (two) and eikon (icon). This duality is the crack that Pichhadze recognized and in which he can place his mark in order to open the door into the multitude so characteristic his work – the multiplicity with which he wears the nickname "Chameleon".

Pichhadze's portraits are based on photographs from the family album, photographs which he himself took (for instance on his trips to Georgia), or from images which he chose and gathered. The transition of the photographed image to the painted portrait, initiates in the detachment of the figure from its original context and its "pasting" in a painterly field which is nothing but the recognizable signature Pichhadze landscape, barren and dark, that which usually flickers a yellowish-green light on the distant horizon. This landscape suggests a theater set rather than nature, it wears a kitsch and sweet look as it does an alienating and estranged appearance.

"An open window and empty at night"², Pichhadze characterized the feeling he wished to arouse. Returning to the image and to the process of it's materialization into a Pichhadze portrait: Thus, initially there is the subject which is painted; following is the photograph of the particular person depicted in one manner or the other;

¹Gideon Ofrat "Journey Towards the Light Shimmering on the Horizon", Dan Gallery, Tel Aviv, pg.33

² Sham, pg. 19

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Lastly, the portrait composed is integrated with the stylized origin landscape of Pichhadze. The practice of painting the portrait and composing its identity hence is also the process of detaching the image from its original source (the person himself) as well as from its secondary source (the image photographed).

The detachment from medium has an additional meaning – it sentences its subjects to extraction, and in Pichhadze's context immigration and refuge. The withdrawal of the subject and its resetting in a characteristic landscape highlights in particular its dislocation from the place. The estranged relationship between the landscape and the figure is also recognizable in the clothing items, in binding activity, in the gestures of the body and of the face. So, thus the figure is not inserted in a natural manner in the landscape, is not illuminated in a equal manner, nor does she share the color palette or a painterly order nor any realism with the fantastical space surrounding her. This tension, which originates in the biographical experience of Pichhadze and his family morphs into his paintings, their language, their styling, and into their cultural makeup.

The exhibition of portraits before us spreads Pichhadze's figures, amongst which are family members, his partner, passerby's which he met and photographed and others which he never met personally yet their photographs caught his attention. Pichhadze infused his portraits with the loneliness of his personal experience, yet concurrently this chapter of his origination, which comprises them together as allies of the same fate, constitutes in itself a sort of home for them. This way, the shearing of the missing home, the multitude of styles, the additional tensions which are so characteristic of his paintings can reside in one bending of Meir Pichhadze's creation.

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