



LAMINATED EARTH

By Sharon Yavo-Ayalon

ZAZ10TS Gallery NYC, 10 Times Square (1441 Broadway), New York, NY 10018

Wednesday, Feb 16, 6-8PM Reception

Lola Ben Alon, curator

I'm super excited to be here tonight on Sharon's solo site-specific exhibition opening at ZAZ10TS.

Sharon wears many hats, and combines a range of practices: for those of you who don't know, Sharon is trained as an architect, currently completing her postdoctoral position at Cornell Tech on data and urbanism, while in parallel she operates extensively in the art domain through her performance and installation art.

In her show today, she combines this vast array of perspectives; You will see hints to various correlations between her artistic, architectural, and research practices.

The Mud curtain walls, for instance, re-depict an image bathing in mud, taken from her previous video art, spaced here 7 feet apart between curtains - as a reflection on her urbanism research - where she mapped NYC social distancing stories through interactive COVID-19 data analysis. The soil used in this installation was sourced from Goshen, a village in upstate NY that is named after the Biblical Goshen in Israel, very close to the actual mud puddle in which she bathes in her video art. In this video from 2012, Sharon returns to a childhood landscape in the Kibutz, a memory of summer and childhood.

Her work with mud materiality is made in reference to her own, previous, work, but also as homage to great masters of land art, (which was Sharon's master thesis topic and also a reference to some of her previous artwork). Not much like masculine grandiose figures like Robert Smithson or Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria and Robert Morris who coined earth art in their 1969 exhibition at Cornell, but rather more in alignment with Eve Hesse's contemplations on post-minimalism materiality, using matter in its utmost bold, but also mysterious, fragile, sensuous way.

Sharon uses earth as a primal substance - in what we described as "obsessive conservation" of soils as a resource that humankind will consume, exhaust, and laminate on the planet. The preservation was made with petrochemicals, making the earth barren, laminated, and sterile.

The nylon homes depict moments from her performance art, projected at the front and on the ZAZ billboard, representing her personal home, but also as a symbol for the collective home, that is, humanity's "planet earth". The video shows Sharon in Acco Alternative Theater Festival, where she steps into the shoes of an archetypal female architect who teaches the foundations of building a sound family home while building and destroying her own nylon-made home, inhibited by her madness and the premise of immigration to a better land.

Sharon Yavo-Ayalon, Artist

Thank you Lola for the beautiful introduction and for your sensitive curatorial accompaniment. Like the great curator she is, Lola presented the work in such depth that I am going to focus mainly on thanks. So Thank you Lola for this collaboration which gave me the exact supportive framework, with you wisely knowing when to intervene and when to allow space. Supported by your Natural Material Lab at Columbia GSAPP, I was able to have a scientific back to my intuitive experiments with earthen materials.

I also want to thank Keren Anavy, a wonderful artist, who unfortunately is not here today, but out of the invitation to lecture in her exhibition, here at ZAZ10ys, this whole thing began.

Most importantly the lady who made this all happen: Thank you Tzili, for this incredible opportunity. for your advice and perspective in this journey of creating an exhibition about earth in NYC, where earth is a scarce commodity, and about home when living in a foreign land.

The concept for this exhibition has actually sparked in one of our conversations. When thinking together about how to use earth as the base material, and at the same time to keep the lobby clean. A “real” artist might have considered that as a limitation that interferes with their “artistic freedom”. But as an architect, I’m a great believer in limitations. And out of this limitation: of keeping the lobby clean, I started laminating earth, and as I kept doing that I realized that this is what we do. We as humanity, as a species, cover our whole world with plastic. Metaphorically and literally.. We want to make things beautiful and clean, and at the same time to protect nature. We want to have “fine” “designed” environments, and at the same time to feel as if it “has always been there”. Without a human touch. (The known example for architects is of course Central Park). In this tension between nature and culture, we consume everything. So we’ve laminated our earth and now it’s dying.

For me, working with earth starts with a childhood memory, my first home in the Kibbutz. Growing up with the local mythology of the drying (and dying) Hula lake, this was the first home to die or to be rowined. The 7 ft, mud curtains are referring to this childhood memory of bathing in the Kibbutz fish ponds. Those are images taken out of a video art I created in 2013, in which I recreated this experience as a grown woman. The second and third homes are those nylon homes around the exhibitions. All are in different stages of being built or falling apart. These are referring to my original family home, or the lack of, and the existential fear of losing it, but also, specify in Hebrew - they refer to “Bait Reshon”, “Bait Shani” the common name for the holy Jewish temple in Jerusalem that was ruined and it’s only remanence is the famous west wall (Hacotel).

Well, I said I will be focusing on Thanks. So enough with childhood memories.