Closing One Eye – Uzi Tzur
Inside an Imaginary Pyramid
Impressions from a visit to the new exhibition by Shahar Yahalon and Talia Keinan, *"Board"*
January 14, 2025

Shahar Yahalom, *"Hands"*, Exhibition View | Photo: Uzi Tzur
Shahar Yahalom and Talia Keinan, *"Board"*, Curator: Nadav Lifshitz, Uri Lifshitz House, Tel Aviv-Yafo

Before us unfolds a pharaonic connection between two extraordinary canonical artists, Shahar Yahalom and Talia Keinan, under the curation of Nadav Lifshitz, who has orchestrated a fantastic assemblage within this uniquely charged space, laden with the past of the founding artist. Together, they create a whole that is both challenging and nothing short of masterful. There is something in this exhibition that feels both contemporary and ancient, timeless—like an imaginary pyramid preserving remnants of a divine deceased's life, ensuring their journey into eternity.

Yahalom and Keinan possess a generative imagination, and through it, each artist moves fluidly and masterfully between mediums in her own distinct plastic language. At the heart of the exhibition stands Yahalom's mesmerizing enigma, *"Circus Tomb"*: an alchemist nomad's tent, its blackness swallowing light into its rigid yet fragile form. It is a Tabernacle of holiness, transportable from place to place—perhaps a mobile Kaaba, perhaps a colossal black accordion of an ancient camera, its outer surfaces resembling the craggy cliffs of dark stone, etched with cryptic diagrams. Stepping into the folds of the tent, it transforms into a kind of primordial planetarium—a shrine to celestial bodies

that hint at human fate. Inside the darkness of the tent, markings that Yahalom has punctured or scratched into the structure's black skin are revealed, as daylight filters through them. These markings depict cupped hands cradling meteors, crossed swords, geometric shapes, celestial scales of justice, and more.

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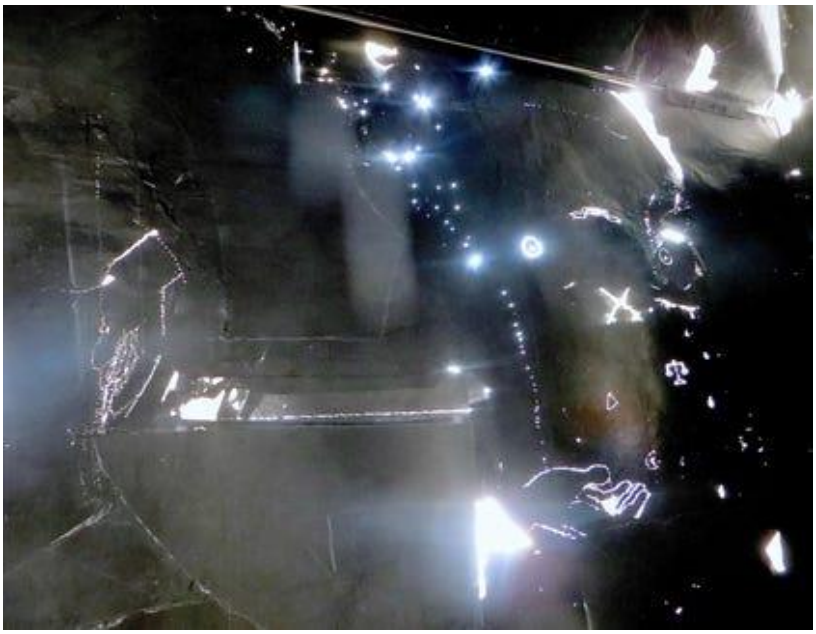

Shahar Yahalom, "Circus Tomb", Partial Interior View | Photo: Uzi Tzur

On the other side of "Circus Tomb", spread across the old, ornately decorated floor tiles of the house, lies another marvel of the exhibition—Keinan's "Carpet", a work that exemplifies her remarkable ability to conjure rare richness out of nothingness. Cutting diagonally through the patterned tiles, a precise, thin rectangle of beach sand is meticulously laid. Projected onto it from above is the detailed image of a Persian rug, its vibrant colors partially swallowed by the pale sand, transforming it into a kind of ghostly carpet. In two places, Keinan disrupts the delicate sand layer, revealing the original tile pattern beneath—both in contrast to and in dialogue with the projected rug. She seems to defy conventional aesthetic rules, yet with the mastery of a seasoned artist, she plants patches of abundance that feel perfectly attuned to the space, performing an alchemical act of transformation.

Elsewhere on the same decorated tiles rests Yahalom's "Eagle": a massive casting mold lying on its side, once containing a sculpted eagle of almost pharaonic presence—only

now, the eagle itself has seemingly hatched and taken flight, leaving behind its cast. Of course, this is merely an illusion; the mold is not a remnant but rather the essence of the piece. It speaks to the beauty of the artistic process, highlighting the tension between creation and completion, between negative and positive space, between shell and absent form—each shaping the other in a symbiotic interplay of cause and effect. Yahalom's eagle subtly echoes the falcon of "Nimrod", the iconic sculpture by Danziger, almost mocking its stoic, mythic perfection and returning it to a raw, primordial state..

Shahar Yahalom, *"Eagle"*, Exhibition View | Photo: Uzi Tzur

Keinan has also created a series of paintings that verge on relief, composed of layered, granulated sandy plaster in subtle tonal variations—materials that echo the sand and cement of the city that rose from the sea's dunes, with architecture serving as its witness. One of these works, titled *"Flower (Seed)"*, is a geometric abstraction in different shades of drying concrete, all converging toward a black square. This blackness is punctured by a single, tiny pinprick of light—like a lone star emerging, a seed from which light might grow.

In *"Rusty Sun"*, an abstract sun curves over a sky divided diagonally into two shades of gray. Its sandy, rust-colored surface has been combed with fine raking marks, creating a dense, undulating wave that evokes the muted warmth of a fading celestial body. Yet the act of scratching has also wounded its surface—fragments have chipped away and fallen, revealing a dark, extinguished core beneath.

On a wide windowsill overlooking Jaffa Street, Yahalom has placed a pair of *"Hands"*, sculpted from black basalt rock. Their human form remains embedded within the raw

stone, yet they resemble something closer to heavy, hardened boxing gloves, radiating a kind of poetic violence. Once again, Yahalom emphasizes the sculptural process as an integral part of the final piece, preserving something of its initial enigma within the finished form.

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Talia Keinan, "*Snatch*", Photo: Uzi Tzur

"*Snatch*" is a surrealist miniature drawing by Keinan, reminiscent of an illustration from a medieval manuscript. A winged centaur, wearing a lotus-flower crown like a king, carries on his back a mysterious, veiled female figure he has abducted. The drawing is both virtuosic and sensual, its composition perfectly filling the square frame that contains it.

Nearby, a lone "*Nine of Hearts*" playing card hangs from a thread, fastened to the wall with a single nail. Yahalom has split its red hearts in half, letting the severed halves drip like drops of blood toward the bottom edge of the card. This charged disruption seems to taunt the arbitrariness of fate. On the opposite side of the room, a small, round mirror leans at the base of a column. Once a day, as the sun sets through the west-facing window, a ray of light strikes the mirror, reflecting onto the heart-adorned card. The entire gesture recalls the ancient solar alignment, where once a year, a beam of light penetrates a narrow shaft in a pyramid's wall, illuminating the heart of the divine deceased within its central chamber.

Keinan's "*Spine*" stretches diagonally from wall to floor, linking the exposed layers of peeling paint—like human skin revealing time-worn layers beneath—to the rhythmic

symmetry of the decorated floor tiles. The spine itself is supported at its center by a vertical stump, as if it were a seesaw suspended between heaven and earth. Both the spine and stump are weathered wooden fragments, worn smooth from long use. The spine is painted black, resembling charred remains saved from fire.

Across the room, leaning against the wall, is Yahalom's *"Alef Owl"*, an elongated, distorted letter Aleph, its limbs stretched and disjointed, as if on the verge of collapse. It is constructed from rough, uneven pieces of salvaged wood, crudely nailed together. Like Keinan's *"Spine"*, it appears blackened and eroded, as if pulled from a great fire. At the peak of this fractured letter stands what seems to be a barn owl, attempting to rise from the ashes like a phoenix, its legs bound to a flint stone with a black thread. The creature's mysterious body is a black-winged accordion, with pale flight feathers fanning out. A single talon emerges from its core, extending a white thread, at the end of which dangles a wedge-shaped stone—part counterweight, part pendulum of the soul.

With this exhibition, the display space at the Uri Lifshitz House is emerging as one of the most compelling venues in the local art scene, offering true artistic freedom.