

Nut case //

The exhibition's title is taken from one of the drawings on display—"Nutcase" The hermetic and complete image of a coconut is not only a metaphor for a tough, hairy shell that resists easy cracking and protects what lies inside ("a hard nut to crack"), but also a symbolic wordplay that, when translated back to its English origin ("nutcase"), evokes a flash of madness, marginality, or instability.

The hollow knock on the coconut shell (knock knock, who's there?) led me to T.S. Eliot's poem *The Hollow Men*:

*"We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
... Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion."*

Eliot's poem is steeped in doubt, absurdity, death, and alienation. In a plastic and poetic language, he describes the emptiness of human existence and the people who inhabit it—scarecrows, hollowed-out taxidermy figures, "vessels" filled with dubious substances. Lonely and lost souls whose skulls are like hollow helmets. Mass without a skeleton.

Yahalom's personal mythology drifts between Mesopotamian myths and Gothic imagery, memories, and dreams: sleeping (or dead) heads, conjoined Siamese heads, hands, a drooping bird, a chameleon, a black cat, tropical vegetation. The animate, the inanimate, and the human are intertwined—predators or prey—forming a blend of living still life. The images embrace the material from all angles—front, back, or side—blurring the distinction between foreground and background.

Her working process is physical, manual, and deeply material-based, yet also carries a human, personal, and emotional dimension embedded within the sculptures themselves. The images emerge onto the surface of the material from a massive and abstract block or from a liquid solidifying in a mold—like a fetus in advanced stages of development curled in the womb, shifting, turning, stretching, kicking, attempting to push against the abdominal wall and break out.

The roughness and smoothness of lime plaster, the transparency and opacity of glass, the soot-black lead of cement, the metallic conductivity of aluminum—an alchemy of materials that expand and contract, stretch or warp according to the energy that erupts in the encounter between body and matter. Saturated with time—both mythical and contemporary—they present themselves to the viewer as if they were unique, accidental, and vulnerable. Yahalom organically fuses different techniques—extracting sketch-like qualities from sculpture, layering sculptural gestures in drawing, and in stained glass,

melting together drawing, sculpture, and engraving within the greenish glass, where light refracting through it transforms the metaphysical into the physical.

The transformation from a liquid to a solid state does not erase the traces of sharp tools that gouged and carved into the material, nor the movement of the artist's fingers. Facial features, noses, sunken eyes, holes, indentations, and protrusions turn the inanimate into something human, amplifying the paradox of the living-dead object, whose presence signifies its absence.

The sculptural space is charged with tension between sight and touch. We look at the sculptures, and they look back at us. They are static, while we move—wandering among them, circling them. They avoid presenting themselves as monumental sculptures and instead seek to be deciphered as sentimental, domestic objects—resting on a dresser or table in a living space, transforming into enchanted artifacts that narrate their own stream of consciousness—and ours. Their presence, or our presence in their presence, brings raw, pulsing human emotion to the surface, as if life is trapped within them. The longer we linger in their company, the more they are imbued with human qualities, conveying not only their material rawness and dense accumulation but also an intimate, physical, and mental human experience—woven in the triad between the living body (the sculptor), the inanimate body (the sculpture), and the living body (the viewer). The urge to touch them, hold them, feel them, cradle them in one's palm or lap as if they were an extension of the body itself, stems from their human-scale proportions.

The relationship between body, sculpture, and space is also expressed through the pairing of sculptures with their display bases. The choice of household furniture (ready-mades) as a substitute—temporary or permanent—for the museum pedestal softens the materiality, mass, and scale of the sculptures, endowing them with intimacy and making them accessible, as if they were decorative “ornamental objects.” The organic yet unnatural, functional yet subversive connection liberates the sculptures from the dependency on the formal, inaccessible institutional art space, granting them a human, domestic, and familiar dimension.

The exhibition space transforms into an active mineral crystal, weaving a multi-perspective network of vanishing points. Each piece is a vertex within the body of the exhibition, yet also an independent entity with a strong gravitational pull—dense, compact, and magnetic. The viewer moves through the space, becoming part of a landscape painting of living still life.

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