

SHARON YA'ARI

The Romantic Trail and the
Concrete House

8 March–30 August 2020

Haus Esters Krefeld

romantic

trail

concrete

house

english

ENGLISH

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Introduction

The Israeli photographer Sharon Ya'ari is showing his first German solo exhibition under the title *The Romantic Trail and the Concrete House*. Ya'ari has developed a site-specific piece for Haus Esters that examines its atmosphere and intellectual history. Erected between 1927 and 1930 by the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Haus Lange and Haus Esters are two of the most iconic structures in the history of New Objectivity architecture in Germany and representatives of European modernism. The transfer of this modernism to the young State of Israel makes up the starting point of Ya'ari's photographic exploration. Associated with a societal vision, the modernist formal vocabulary is confronted with an everyday reality shaped by different cultural and social conditions. In the process, Ya'ari is above all concerned with observations of marginalia, relics of everyday life that are subject to decay and transience. Ya'ari regularly searches out places that are rich in history and which demonstrate up the contrast between constructed vision and everyday life in a highly charged manner. The camera's gaze exposes the political in the ostensibly trivial and arbitrary, triggering reflections on time, memory and social conditions.

Vision and reality, longing and hardship, memory and presence: The exhibition title *The Romantic Trail and the Concrete House*, which the artist took from two tourist signs in Yarkon National Park, directly clarifies with all associative openness the exhibition's themes. The "Romantic Trail" reflects the search for a place of longing, which can be a cliché at the same time; "Concrete House" is the designation for the first house built in the region in 1912 with reinforced concrete and which is now in a ruinous condition. Illuminating in this context is the ambiguity of the word concrete, which means tangible in the physical sense as well as being the name of the construction material that is associated like no other to modernist architecture.

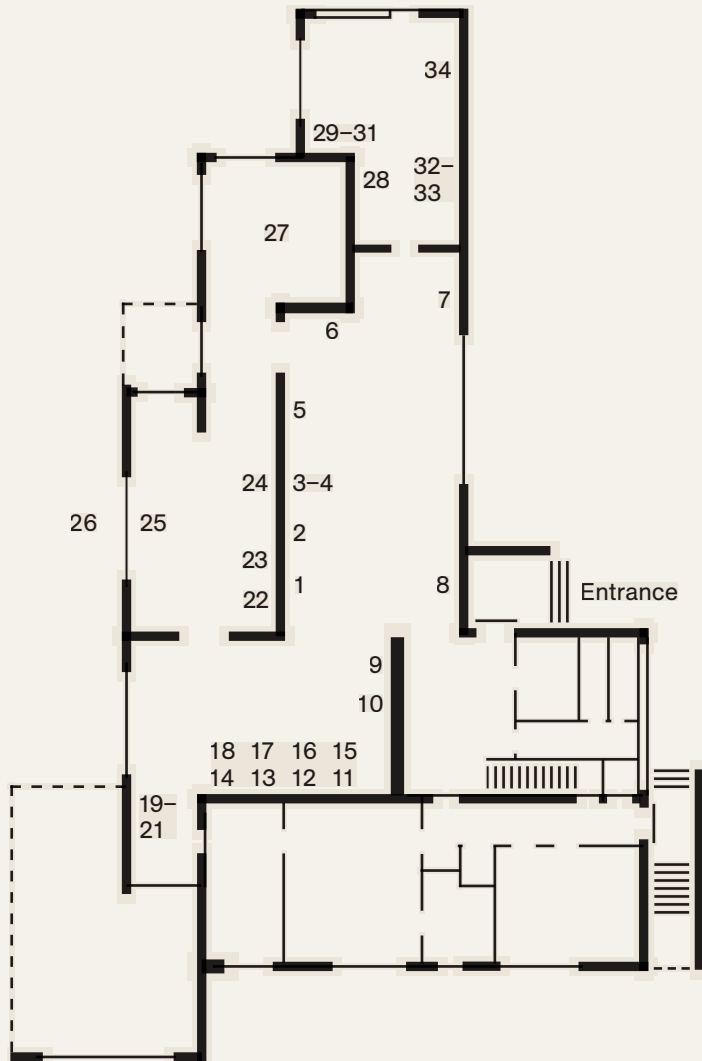
Sharon Ya'ari developed the exhibition as a whole for Haus Esters. In the process, Ya'ari worked with very diverse photographic approaches and genres, selecting a different photographic technique, format and framing for each motif. His approach to photography consistently represents an examination of the medium's possibilities. The hanging varies from room to room and from subject to subject, so that the works can enter into a dialogue with the



architecture of Haus Esters—up to and including the large concrete sculpture in the garden in which the photographic image encounters its real model. In its totality, the exhibition confronts the iconic space of Haus Esters with the contemporary perspective of a fragile reality.

Sharon Ya'ari (born 1966, lives and works in Tel Aviv, teaches at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem) is one of the most renowned Israeli artists of his generation. Sharon Ya'ari's work is characterized by a precise as well as versatile use of the photographic medium that he comprehends as a means of cultural and political research. He has been represented in numerous international solo and group exhibitions, including at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (IL), National Gallery Museum, Vilnius (LT), Kunsthaus Baselland, Basel (CH), Drexler University Art Gallery, Philadelphia (US), National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (India), Camera Austria, Graz (A), Israel Museum, Jerusalem (IL). In 2018, he was awarded the EMET Prize for Arts, Science and Culture, which is presented in Israel for excellence in academic and professional achievements that have a far-reaching influence and make a significant contribution to society.

Haus Esters Ground Floor



Room 1

- 1 *Beit Ha'am, Nahalal, East View, 2019*
- 2 *Parasols, Nahalal, West View, 2019*
- 3-4 *Run, 2017*
- 5 *Arad, Avishur Neighborhood 1969, 2019*
- 6 *Immigrant 1933, 2020*
- 7 *Transformers, 2019*
- 8 *Private courtyard, 2019*
Archival pigment prints

Room 2

- 9 *Snow Mountain, (2 Trucks Full) Details, 2019*
- 10 *Snow Mountain (2 Trucks Full), 2019*
- 11 *Arad, Color Index, 2019*
- 12 *Public Garden, Ramla, 2019*
- 13 *B-W Public Garden, Ramla, 2019*
- 14 *School, Kiryat Malakhi, Winter, 2019*
- 15 *Morning Walk, Ramla, 2019*
- 16 *Beit She'an, 2019*
- 17 *Beersheba (A Drawing of a dead Tree), 2019*
- 18 *Arad, Avishur Neighborhood 1969, 2019*
- 19-21 *Welcomes, 2019*
Archival pigment prints

Room 3

- 22 *Palm, 1 Out Of 3, 2019*
- 23 *Palms, 2 Out Of 3, 2017*
- 24 *Bnei-Or, Beersheba, 2018*
Archival pigment prints
- 25 *Bnei Or Beersheba, 2010-2020*
36 prints binding as book
- 26 *Unknown architect*
Bnei-Or, Beersheba, c. 1970
Concrete

Room 4

- 27 *Birds, 2017-2020*
Archival pigment prints and
Fiber-Base Gelatin Silver Prints

Room 5

- 28 *Woman with Flowers, 2016*
- 29 *Landscape, Jaljulye, 2019*
- 30 *Ramat Hanadiv Gardens, 2019*
- 31 *Ramat Hanadiv Gardens, 2019*
- 32-33 *Sea Promenade, 2019*
- 34 *Pic, 1994, 2019*
Archival pigment prints

Room 1 Works 1–8

The large-format works in the first room place the viewers in the atmosphere of a different reality. A programmatic start is formed by the black-and-white photograph of a former cultural center at Nahalal, the oldest Israeli moshav, a rural cooperative community (1). Nahalal was planned in the early nineteen twenties by the German-born architect Richard Kauffmann, who made a decisive contribution to the architecture of the nascent State of Israel with his adaption of modernist principles of form. The cultural center was constructed at exactly the same time as Haus Esters, namely between 1928 and 1930. Long abandoned and walled in like a bunker, traces of life are nevertheless visible: the sunshades, the playground, the spotlights on the roof at twilight. A small color photograph of the backlit sunshades hangs next to the large-format image in the classic black and white of modern architectural photography (2). The diverse types of photographic vision underscore the contrast between timelessness and the present, between decay and liveliness, aspects that are inherent to Ya'ari's works on the whole. Another black and white photograph shows a courtyard in the desert city of Arad, which was built as Israel's first planned city on the edge of the Negev in 1962 (5). The courtyards intended to protect against sun and sand are among the characteristic features of its housing block development. Light and shade on Ya'ari's photograph model the urban sculpture into an almost abstract composition.

Sharon Ya'ari connects places possessing a collective meaning with places that attain meaning through individual action—either on the part of the artist himself or through the everyday actions of others who were captured by the camera. This is evident, for example, on the large color photograph of an unusual garden decoration that an anonymous person cleanses from dust with water so that the entire image seemingly dissolves into a shimmering array of drops, crystals and sunlight (8). All the works are characterized by unusual lighting situations. In some cases, they involve errors in the photographic developing process that Ya'ari deliberately employs in the production of his pictures: the jogger in the twilight of the cityscape who follows his own track (3–4) or the woman on a considerably enlarged photograph found a long time ago who seemingly conceals her identity behind the speck on the film as if behind a veil (6).

Room 2

Works 9–21

The migration of forms from one reality to another continues with a narrative moment from everyday life in Israel. A large pile of snow was transported as a short-lived pleasure from the Golan Heights to Tel Aviv (9 & 10). Here as well, the juxtaposition of two photographic genres and dimensions generate different perceptions of reality. Transient forms and vivid moments collide. The meticulously composed black and white landscape photographs of the heap of snow presentiment its immanent disappearance. The adjacent snapshot only makes the pile of snow visible upon second glance under the crowd of people that has taken possession of this unusual element.

An index of a modernist-shaped everyday life is formed by the other photographs in the room. Urban scenarios and peripheral cityscapes are exposed in geometrical arrangements to the inevitable changes of everyday life—or first come about through them. The palm stump behind a flat air-raid shelter (16), random correspondences of color or form, artificial grass in basic geometrical shapes as doormats in the entrance (19–21), once again a public square in the planned city of Arad, this time not as a sculpture, a timeless composition, but rather interspersed with traces of use and neglect (14). It is as if the artist wanted to furnish proof of the elementary role of the modernist formal vocabulary that pervades everyday life in his native country as a kind of historical code. The colors of the photographs tend towards a monochrome, as if a layer of sand was lying on top of them. Sharon Ya'ari also speaks of “tired objects” when describing a view of the things that extracts a veiled melancholic magic from the normal, the parenthetical and the mundane.

Room 3

Works 22–26

A public square in the large southern Israeli city of Beersheba is one of the places that Sharon Ya'ari frequently visits because there is something about it that sustainably interests him. For ten years, the artist has been documenting the changes that have occurred in this square erected in the early nineteen seventies by an unknown architect, beautification attempts, the moments of use and the traces of decay over a long period of time. An object at the center of the square—an everyday sculpture, playground and neighborhood meeting place—consists of thirteen different concrete cylinders. Only a few months ago in conjunction with the preparations for this exhibition and the redevelopment of the square, the city of Beersheba, after numerous bureaucratic hurdles, permitted the artist to remove the concrete object weighing several tons and transport it by ship to Krefeld. It has found a new temporary location in Haus Esters's garden, where it has been integrated into its elaborate measuring system like the somewhat awkward progeny of an environment created in accordance with geometrical principles of form. It is a curiously open piece of furnishing that is presented to the viewers in front of the window of the former nursery of the Esters family. Misplaced in the truest sense of the word, the concrete cylinders transport the many decades of their existence to a different place: inexpensive concrete as a typical local material, the graffiti, ornamental paintings, traces of wear, lived everyday life. The entire space with the large-format photographs and the thick book that invites visitors to leaf through it tell the story of this public square over the course of a decade. But it is only through the confrontation between the photographic image and the real object, the existence of which appears so improbable in this place despite its conspicuousness that a dialogue across time and place comes about.

Room 4 Works 27

One aspect of Sharon Ya'ari's oeuvre follows the principle of seriality. From time to time, he produces interrelated complexes of works based on certain motifs or photographic methods. In this way, he combines long-term observations with a supposedly systematic collection, a network of signs and events. For many years he has been observing birds in the urban space that wander about on streets and public squares. In the confrontation with a concreted world, they appear like temporary guests in an alien territory and in an untypical form of movement. The parenthetical nature of the snapshots corresponds to the manner of their presentation: pinned frameless on the wall as living beings captured in a state that they could—in keeping with their nature—leave again at the next moment. These living beings thus likewise become representatives for an unconcluded process of migration, of the wandering of forms and appearances.

Room 5 Works 28–34

The human being is the central theme of the works in the last room—not in the sense of portrait photography but as an observed person carrying out his or her everyday tasks and duties. The persons move about in their environment; sometimes they only seem to look or wait. The possible narrative always seems vague and open to interpretation. The photographs freeze randomly observed moments that reject any static or unambiguity. This state of limbo is exemplarily illuminated in a piece that has long accompanied the artist (34). Many years ago, he found by chance the blurred photograph of the two women lying in bed that he presents here for the first time in a considerably enlarged print. The twin figures appear disconcerting in the curiously arranged situation; their presence is monumental and seems at the same time to be in a state of dissolution. It is conspicuous that the portrayed persons often enter into a relationship with the image itself. The woman hurrying past with a bouquet of flowers in her arm seemingly causes the picture's horizon itself to tilt (28). The two girls shown against the backdrop of the harbor are seated, as it were, on the frame while they appear to walk out of the second picture (32–33). Finally, three small color photographs (29–31) depict the well known Ramat Hanadiv Park, which is dedicated to the memory of Baron Edmond de Rothschild (1845–1934). European garden art and native vegetation enter into a synthesis here. The photographs of young girls wearing headscarves cite the aesthetic of touristic snapshots. As always, the political message in Ya'ari's works is subdued and expressed above all in the attempt to trace the struggle for normality in a country perpetually subject to domestic political conflicts. "The work of Sharon Ya'ari [is] informed by the question of how to photograph, what can be represented, where images can be found that do not invariably fall into the contextual trap of Yes-No, Here-There, This-That." (Urs Stahel)

Colophon

Sharon Ya'ari
*The Romantic Trail and the
Concrete House*

Kunstmuseen Krefeld
Haus Esters
08.03.–30.08.2020

Director
Katia Baudin

Curator of the Exhibition
Magdalena Holzhey

Design
Mevis & van Deursen
with Robert Milne

Visit

Haus Lange Haus Esters
Wilhelmshofallee 91–97
D-47800 Krefeld

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum
Joseph-Beuys-Platz 1
D-47798 Krefeld

Opening Hours

Haus Lange Haus Esters
Tue–Sun 11 am–5 pm

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum
Tue–Sun 11 am–5 pm

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