

Four Entered Musrara

The Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Artists' Greenhouse for Excellence, initiated and led by the Musrara School, ran for four years and offered artists who were selected through an open call the opportunity to develop new works connected to the Jerusalem neighborhood of Musrara.

We were delighted to accompany the fourth and final cohort of artists: Orit Adar Bechar, Tziki Eisenberg, Rustam Bayramov, and Shay Zilberman. Throughout their creative journey, we discovered countless ways to engage with Musrara. The four works they produced - *The Lost*, *Treasure Island*, *A Passing Shadow*, and *Speech-Grille* - each uncovered new layers within the neighborhood's rich and multifaceted landscape.

The exhibition, presented in the school's gallery, brings together their works, all of which draw sustenance from histories of displacement, migration, and social struggle; from encounters with the neighborhood's residents; and from attentive listening to their stories and memories. Some pieces were shaped by materials gathered in the alleys and between the houses.

The four artists worked closely with the local community: longtime residents, visitors, and students alike. Through relationships built on trust, they created compelling bodies of work that remain individually distinct yet, together, form a shared terrain of exploration, connection, and transformation.

The title of the exhibition, *Four Entered Musrara*, alludes to the well-known Talmudic legend "Four Entered the Orchard," which tells of four sages who gathered to explore the secrets of mystical knowledge; none of them emerged as they had entered. Stepping into Musrara and encountering its people enabled the artists to join together, learn, and weave their new insights into their respective artistic practices. In doing so, they created new myths, now joining the growing mythology of Musrara.

We wish for you, Shay, Rustam, Orit, and Tziki, that what you experienced here will continue to influence your world just as you have influenced ours.

During the exhibition *Four Entered the Neighborhood*, a symposium will be held in three sessions. Over the course of these sessions, all sixteen projects created during the past four years will be presented, sparking a broad and stimulating discussion. The project website will also be launched.

We extend our gratitude to the Mandel Foundation for its continuous support over the four years, which enabled all participating artists to conduct profound artistic research and expand the circles of discourse about the Musrara neighborhood.

Rustam Bayramov | A Passing Shadow

Wet Plate Collodion

In this project, Rustam Bayramov continues his photographic research, creating portraits in the Musrara neighborhood. The first people he photographed were those he reached through friends' recommendations or by chance meetings on the street. Soon, an organic human network formed, linking the photographed subjects. Bayramov's images present the neighborhood as a living archive: a place where layers of history meet, fade, and renew themselves.

Using a mobile darkroom and the 19th-century wet-plate collodion technique, which requires immediate work and often produces unpredictable results, Bayramov briefly arrests the residents' daily lives and creates a one-time photographic event. His work does not attempt to define the community sociologically; instead, it reminds us that the neighborhood's heritage is not held solely by historical figures or distant memories, but is alive and breathing in the people who live there. At the same time, the ancient technique and large format give his subjects - longtime residents, students, newcomers, ultra orthodox (Haredi) men, individuals, and families- an almost iconic presence, usually reserved for heroes or saints. The project is a modest attempt to capture the fleeting moment of "the faces of Musrara" as they exist now and to embed them in the collective memory before they change.

"For me, Musrara is a microcosm of Jerusalem as a whole: layers upon layers of immigration, displacement, struggle, and coexistence," says Bayramov. "Christian Arab families once lived here alongside affluent Ashkenazi Jews. Later came immigrants from Morocco, Iraq, and Kurdistan. Musrara is where the Black Panthers' uprising erupted, demanding recognition and dignity. All of this is etched into the walls, the streets, and the faces of the people I meet. The portraits become gentle ghosts, carrying the weight of time, the struggle over place, and the open question - what will remain of all this a few decades from now?"

Special thanks to: Ronit Torgeman, assistant, and to the residents of Musrara for their cooperation, their open hearts, and willingness to be photographed.

Shay Zilberman | Speech-Grille

Paper Cuttings and Print

Shay Zilberman presents *Speech-Grille*, a title borrowed from an enigmatic poem by the Jewish-German poet Paul Celan. The poem was written in 1944, inspired by a postcard that hung in Celan's room depicting the gate of a monastery made of an iron grille - a perforated architectural remnant through which medieval nuns communicated with the outside world.

The project consists of three parts, beginning with the artist's wanderings in the neighborhood in search of its unique forms.

The works in black and white, employing various photographic techniques, look through the layers that frame the view of the neighborhood. Collaborating with students from Musrara, who serve as his "sight agents," Zilberman transforms the botanical and geometric designs of ornate iron grilles photographed in the area into four delicate, perforated sheets of paper resembling lace. Suspended from a thin rod, they move lightly in the space and cast drawn-

like shadows on the wall. At the rod's ends appears a tiny grille shaped like a flower or pupil, a subtle reference to the hidden origin of the name *Musrara - daisy-gravel*.

This body of work, titled *Prayer*, creates a metamorphosis of material and of the grille motif, a barrier between inside and outside, a physical and emotional theme echoed in conversations with members of the Black Panthers group during the program. In *Weave*, Zilberman interlaces layers of grilles and gates into a handmade collage. This imagined, infinite diagram is composed of a densely layered linear labyrinth of paper cuttings and becomes a kind of mirror image, a language of grilles drawn from Musrara itself.

In *Four Winds*, Zilberman presents processed photographs printed at the Jerusalem Print Workshop. The prints are based on figures of Haredi women, fully veiled in black garments from head to toe, who passed by him in the neighborhood. The four anonymous women, photographed from behind, are detached from the public space and appear to float. Their layers of fabric are meant to obscure the contours of the body as a spiritual practice and as an homage, individual and collective, to the way the four biblical matriarchs were traditionally believed to appear in public. The dark silhouettes, printed in black-on-black paper, are presented as images aspiring to become matter for the spirit.

Special thanks to:

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Tziki Eisenberg | Treasure Island

Photographic Installation

Tziki Eisenberg's work grows out of a series of meetings and interviews with men from the Musrara neighborhood, both longtime residents and young men from Mifras, a rehabilitation center for individuals struggling with addiction, where Eisenberg led a photography workshop. They shared with him stories about objects that hold meaning for them, objects that carry memories. Eisenberg's installation presents a vibrant array of photographs of these items, placed without hierarchy. Through various photographic transformations, the objects are lifted out of their nostalgic context and private histories, becoming archetypal images and forms.

The transition of each item, from object, to photograph, and back into a newly created object displayed on a shelf in the gallery, often at shifting scales, forges a connection between Eisenberg, an artist who observes, collects, maps, and tells stories, and the community of men in the neighborhood, who similarly accumulate objects along the course of their lives. The stories he heard about their cherished belongings are given presence through a numbered index and concise textual fragments.

These collected objects within the gallery continue the artistic language Eisenberg has been developing in recent years. Although the items originate in personal histories, he approaches them with creative freedom, incorporating alongside them unidentified, ownerless objects he

discovered throughout the neighborhood. In doing so, he weaves together the personal and the communal, suggesting a space where objects detached from their original heritage become, in a sense, homeless - yet newly resonant.

“In my encounters with longtime residents, I visited many homes filled to the brim with objects - an eclectic mix of precious and cheap things, abundant combinations that led to conversations about history and the past, yielding countless stories,” Eisenberg recounts. “There was a sense of entering treasure dens. The project brought back memories of my father’s home; he passed away seven years ago, and my siblings and I found ourselves sorting and organizing the piles of objects, books, notes, and belongings he left behind.”

Index design: Segev Yakir

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Orit Adar Bechar | The Lost

Multi-channel video installation

The multi-channel video work “The Lost” is a contemporary interpretive adaptation of a text by the existentialist Irish playwright, novelist, and theater director Samuel Beckett (from “Four Pieces,” Carmel Publishing, 1991, translated by Ora Segal).

Adar Bechar divided the original text, written as a single monologue from the viewpoint of an omniscient narrator, among six characters, each of whom speaks at least one sentence, creating internal dialogues and giving the piece the appearance of a play. The characters are viewed through six fixed windows projected in the exhibition space. They emerge, one by one, from the gray void, sit at the front, facing the viewer, make eye contact, speak to the viewer or to one another, occasionally stand, turn their backs to the viewer, walk into the void, disappear, and return from it at another time. The monochrome video work presents six characters standing on podiums: four professional actors appear, one Black Panther - Coco Deri, and the artist herself. The decision regarding the characters’ makeup was shaped by Beckett’s artistic world, in which he oscillates between stark realism and dystopia, and between a firm, authoritative narrative voice and a persistent uncertainty about the humanity of his characters.

Within the Musrara Greenhouse, Adar Bechar began exploring texts written and published by the Black Panthers in the 1970s. She discovered a striking affinity between Beckett’s perspective as it emerges from the work and the political stance of the Panthers. The shared view suggests that we all exist under the influence of both overt and covert governmental powers and mechanisms. The piece took an important turn when she integrated texts by the Black Panthers into Beckett’s original script.

The panoramic video, which can be experienced simultaneously as a miniature, almost a small-scale model of absurdist theater, invites the viewer either to gather the spoken fragments into a coherent statement or to dismantle them and focus instead on the individual performers. The characters voice despair, indifference, or anger; they hold their own distinct positions, yet remain caught in a continuous loop, performing a repetitive role that becomes an allegory of human existence.

The Lost Ones continues Adar Bechar's long-standing engagement with labyrinthine structures. As in her earlier video works and her sculptural and installation pieces, she returns to defining features of her artistic language: an anonymous, public, timeless space devoid of identifying characteristics, and, crucial to the sensation of a labyrinth, a setting in which entrances and exits remain hidden from view.

Idea, script, and direction: Orit Adar Bechar

Lighting Designer: Yuval Katzover

Assistant Lighting Designer: Noam Levy

Sound Recording: Haim Shaffir

Makeup Artist: Hila Mines

Script Editing: Yotam Weizman

Dramaturgical Consultation: Roni Mendelson

Translation from English: Inbar Weitzman

Set and Costume Design: Orit Adar Bechar

Set Production: Aviram Levy

Producer: Yuval Sheizaf

Acting Coach: Yotam Weizman

Actors:

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Dalia Shimko

Amit Lasri

Yuval Dan

Hagar Zunder

Koko Deri

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Still Photographer: Yigal Pardo

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The Musrara School Art Gallery

Greenhouse 4

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