

ROTHSCHILD 69



Rothschild 69 and the New Israeli Foundation for Cinema and Television are pleased to announce the opening of the exhibition “Neo-Barbarism” within the framework of the project “Video 1.01”

Exhibition opening: December 2nd, 2010, 8 p.m. at Rothschild 12, Tel Aviv

Curators: Naomi Aviv and Noam Segal

Participating artists: Yuli Aloni-Primor, Benni Efrat, Boaz Arad, Avner Ben-Gal, Sharon Balaban, Eitan Bartal, Sharif Waked, Lior Waterman, Eti Wieseltier, Gal Weinstein, Maya Zack, Ruti Sela, Keren Cytter, Uri Katzenstein, Roe Rosen, Gilad Ratman and Lior Shvil

The exhibition “Neo-Barbarism,” which is based on the works and video installations of 17 Israeli artists, seeks to turn the spotlight on an artistic movement that has gained a presence in Israel over the last decade.

The exhibition draws its name from the etymological meaning of the Greek word *barbaros*, which was used to describe those who did not speak the dominant language (in other words, Greek). Behind that linguistic differentiation existed a sweeping outlook that viewed anyone who did not speak Greek as foreign, hostile, outside of the law and lacking the ability to think independently. The barbarian is the wild enemy that is irrational, spontaneous, that threatens civilization and antagonizes the accomplishments of culture. One can never know from where barbarians will rise and plunder or for what purpose or ideology they choose to attack, as the barbarian in and of itself represents a lack of language and social, political or ideological structure.

“Neo-Barbarism,” according to the curators, is a contemporary trend of the uncivilized or wild that lacks sublimation and strives for a broader meaning. It is characterized by a clear preference for the theatrical, the artificial, the processed – even crudely – over that which seeks to impersonate reality itself. The neo-barbarians are the artists themselves, postmodernists who could never point to acts of injustice without incriminating themselves. There is no mistaking them for furious prophets who point to ethical corruption while removing themselves from the sinning masses. Their works express, in more than one case, an unsolved ethical duality.

The artists presented under the title “Neo-Barbarism” test the limits of their existence within a repressive society and question the logic of the loyalty to a ruling language and to the dominant and familiar structures within the fields of art and entertainment. The neo-barbarian artists seek an escape route, a point of departure from the political and diplomatic dead end

as well as a refuge from the atmosphere of stagnation and indifference that permeates Israeli society.

A majority of the neo-barbarian artists have chosen to adopt a “discourse of treason” that is expressed in opposition to the “discourse of loyalty” that has swept Israeli society and stands, at any moment, to amend the country’s citizenship law. Several of the artists exhibited here have chosen to appropriate television, cinematic, linguistic or theatrical formats and use them to instigate acts of passive-aggressive resistance and, in many cases, treason. This act can be explained using familiar strategies seen in face-to-face battles: The one who is attacked diverts the assailant’s energy to turn the tables on him and sabotage his stability. Several of these neo-barbarian works draw from situations in which the body seeks to rebel against materials it can no longer contain or digest, both literally and metaphorically. The act of vomiting, for example, is perceived as a kind of transgression that does not harm others, yet it is still considered repugnant. Most of the works in the exhibition contain a comic undercurrent that is meant to cast doubt on the logic of traditional Western thinking and to offer enclaves of non-structure that seek to perpetuate themselves.

“Video 1.01” is a collaborative project between Rothschild 69 and the experimental cinema track of the New Israeli Foundation for Cinema and Television. “Neo-Barbarism” is the first exhibition to showcase the fruits of this joint effort.