

[⇒ Navigate](#)

Artist Dialogues: One-On-One with Gilad Ratman

26/06/2014 BY TEN DAYS IN PARIS

Gilad Ratman, an artist based out of Tel Aviv, works in the medium of videos and installations. He was one of the youngest artists to be chosen for the Israeli Pavilion in the Venice Biennale (2013) and has had his work shown in museums and galleries throughout Europe and the world.

The artist sat down with Ten Days' Amanda Hinton at Holybelly in London for a conversation on his own work in the field of video, artistic platforms, and the connection between contemporary art and youth today.



As that various meetings and presentations brought you to Paris instead of filming, what is the current project you're working on in Tel Aviv?

I'm working on two projects right now: one is a project with five heavy metal bands from Romania, and the other is in a very early stage. Basically I'm operating very small drones- very small- and they behave like a swarm.

So they go together?

Yes- or not. They are being operated by teenagers that I trained for the mission.

Teenagers... where?

In Israel, in my studio in Tel Aviv. We are building a structure of styrofoam, which is partly architectural and partly object-oriented, and we fly the drones through the structures, so the teenagers are searching or mapping or going through it, and by that defining the structure in a way.

We go back and forth between editing and shooting, which is unusual and important to me in this piece. It generally goes idea, prepa shooting, editing. But this time it's idea in general, shooting, editing, shooting, editing, shooting, editing. We do something s we shoot it and put it onto the computer, we look at it, then we like "Ohhh, this looks good, but if we do something else it will better. Then what happens if we put this near that," etc.

So it is, to some degree about encouraging mistakes, encouraging abnormality, and being free to compose later. In a w it's a little bit Cubist in its agenda because it involves many of view that will end up in one piece, and maybe in a single projection.

Despite the illusion, it won't be continuous because it's an ima space made out of many shots that I take at different times. But because all of the set is made out of styrofoam, it will create illusion, or the reality, of a new structure.



Cool, so since that's your current project, let's start back at beginning: when did you become an artist, where did this all com from?

I think that from an early age I was drawn to art. But the first

I decided to be an artist was at the age of 16. I was working in studio of an older artist, and I just liked his life. It was a good thing he was a painter- still is- named Gershon Knispel.

So more traditional than your work?

Yes, kind of traditional. It was a private group that he taught in his studio. So most of the students were older, aged 50 or 60. I was the only young person there and he really paid attention to me, and was very close because he saw me as the future. I just liked the atmosphere. I liked the studio, the coffee, the piles of books, the way he talked. This was the first example of thinking, "So you can be an artist. You don't necessarily end up like Van Gogh." I mean he was kind of poor, but he had everything that he needed. So I told my parents it was an option.

Then I went to art school, and from there I followed all the usual structures: doing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jerusalem at the Bezalel Academy for Art and Design, where I now teach, then working for several years. After 6 years or 7 years of working alone in Tel Aviv for a long time- I decided to go to Columbia University (in New York) and I did my MFA there. I lived and worked there for three years. I had enough with New York because it was too cruel to me. Then I came back to Tel Aviv.

Since most of your work is video, how does it sell? How does it find hands?

It's more difficult to sell, of course, because either A) museums buy it because they can present the work, or B) collectors have the money to show the work in their collection, or C) they buy it as an investment. But I can say that in the past ten years, the number of collectors buying video has really increased. I cannot complain.

There is a market for video and it's growing faster and faster. There are collectors that really specialize in videos sometimes, and to a certain extent it's even easier because it travels really easily. Like if I sell a big sculpture, you then have to store it, you have to ship it, you have to insure it. With a video sometimes it's only a file that you get a piece of paper for, a certificate that says, "This is number three out of five." Basically the paper is what's worth the

money.

Do you ever incorporate that idea into your work, as far as what worth as art itself, what it's worth physically, which is just on a computer, and then what it's worth monetarily? Those three juxtapositions.

No, not in the sense of saying something about the art world specifically. But the idea of the binary system, the 1 and 0, is something that is very much imbedded in my work. I've recently been very deeply involved in the idea of digitalization, especially about the idea of information in general and connectivity, the way information travels and relates to space and time. Yes, I think about that a lot. Even the drones relate to that.

I also look into the tension between the analog world, which is the world that I was born into, and a world that is constantly being changed and more digitalized. There is digitalization happening to the extent that everything could be coded and decoded, and by that everything could be controlled or created. This is the horizon. A very scary but I think about it a lot.



Would you say that's the main unifying theme through all of your

No. I wouldn't know what the unifying theme of my work is, and I the kind of artist that can say "I deals with A, B, C, .. etc" a tend to reset the system each time I finish a project.

I also resist this phenomena of artist statements as well. If I will fight artists statements. Actually I am thinking of that- h fight this notion. It didn't come from the artists, that's for s As much as I know, we hate it. Really, for artists, it's a pain ass. It's really a violent act to nail yourself down to somethir is communicated by words. I think it's a scheme.

These are the things that I'm way more concerned about than the market. I mean the money was always there, from the days of Medi even before, but the role of the curator as a mediator, and ever that is trying to make art a fixed idea or..

To put art inside a box?

Yes, something like that. Even to make it bridgable through word very problematic. I think it shouldn't be a default or automatic that we write statements or that those statements should be in w Language is always too small of a blanket over reality. No matte you do, some part of your existence will remain outside of it. S connection between art and words shouldn't be automatic, it shou something to explore.



I know there are people that disagree with me, but I feel like in the youth of my generation there's not a lot of interest in contemporary art. Not so much interest maybe, but understanding or willingness to understand. You know, going to a piece and saying I don't get it. I'm not going to try to figure it out. How would you explain your work to someone who wasn't really interested in art? They walk in and see a piece of yours- what would you say to them?

I would ask the person "What do you see? What do you feel? What do you think?" And I would start from there. I don't think my role is to translate my thought or to explain things directly about my work. If somebody asks me questions of course I will try to answer, but I think the most important idea, the most important connection between the people that make art and the people that don't, is to embrace the notion of not understanding as a power, not as a defeat.

We are so afraid of not understanding, which is the fear of something not falling into what we think is logical. And we get stressed about it. "I don't understand, I don't understand!" Well, great! You don't need to understand, you need to cope on a different level.

So if I have a mission, an educational mission, it is to embrace the notion of not understanding. You shouldn't think "What did the artist mean? And what is the meaning of all of this? And why is this work important?"

that?" Instead just try to look at art as a tool, a box of tools you can take and do something with it.

I think art lies exactly where the power of the logic structures. We are being controlled and organized and governed by a certain at least most human beings are through language, through rules and norms. The system in large strives for balance and stability and therefore encourages a binary logic based on a limited notion of what is to « make sense ». Without that, it's difficult to maintain control and to stabilize the system. So I think that's what art should try to resist. The language, the binary code. At most of the time, a specific event in reality.

Resisting one thing is not exclusively what art does. Journalism does that, documentaries can do that, politics can do that. You can resist to something.

For example, Pussy Riot. This is not art for me. I mean, I'm not gatekeeper of art, but this is not interesting art. Because it doesn't deal with the language we speak. It's just repeating the same logic the system by using different words. So many other things can do. But by saying that it's not art for me, I'm not saying that I'm happy that this exists in the world. I'm very happy that they exist. But this is not what I'm dealing with. This is like being a good citizen- that's what they're doing, for me. It's their role as a citizen.

My motivation as an artist is to resist the syntax and structure rather than a specific content.



With the internet, we have everything laid out for us. We can find anything and see anything. So then when there is art that doesn't make sense and that's not part of reality, where the answer isn't the answer, it feels uncomfortable perhaps. With the internet, there is no unanswerable question. But you can walk into a museum and there are answers and that can confront something in us that maybe we don't get confronted.

The first thing, and maybe most important thing, is to be able to ask a question. That's why if you encounter a work of art and you come up with a question, that's a start. That's engagement. And maybe the question, "What does that mean?" Maybe a question like "Why is it like this, or why are these things together? Why is it this? Why is this person doing that?" To create the questions, is already starting to engage.

And not to understand, not to simplify everything so that it will make sense. No, it will not make sense, and that is what's great about it. And maybe it will make certain sense, but then shift into a different

sense. Art should be something flexible. If I know what I want to do, I won't say it in art. To you I might, but not in my work.

I mean, I know what I want to do sometimes. I can say to myself, "I want to bring 5 heavy-metal bands to Romania to do this and that this," and then you ask me "Why?" Well, I don't really know! I have many answers- I have many questions.

But the fundamental question, the why, why, why question, remains hollow center. I think most art that I like revolves around a hollow center. Or maybe multiple hollow centers.

Right, in a more empty space.

Because when you make art- and I'm talking about myself- you are calibrating something or you are adjusting something or you make a decision according to something, but you don't know what that something is.

It's always slippery, it always goes somewhere else. And then you make decisions, let's say, according to an imaginary three-dimensional structure that is all about the relationship between things. Imagine a net. Not lines all leading towards a center point.

So do you think that in connecting contemporary art to the general public, it's all about learning how to interact with art? No one teaches that. No one teaches how to connect with something other than a person or a fact.

Mhmmm. I think it's very important, and I can't say that I know how to do it, because I haven't given it much thought. I'm too concentrated on my thought. But I must say that I think the way it's been done, for instance, through audio tour guides in museums, etc., most of the time does more harm than justice. And I think we should develop more.

When I see guides, they are usually trying to bridge with an answer they know, "This artist dealt with this and that. This meant A, and that meant B." They end up just shrinking the work so that the ignorant can say, "Oh now I understand." And that's a problem. We should encourage something more creative. We should teach how to ask questions about art and show that art could be a living form. It's not a fixed form. It's a living form in which you can enter and shape.

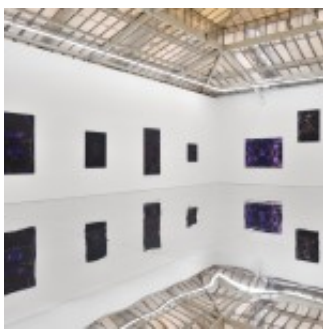
General labeling is a problem in art. And I want to mention that people that know art or have learned about it develop more exper language with art, so they come in with a different tool box. An that's fine. They have their own instruments they can work with. you can also come with nothing, because you always have all of y life experience with you, and that should be enough to do someth

Itw : Amanda Hinton

Like 7 people like this.



ALSO ON TEN DAYS IN PARIS



Top of the Art Scene:
Interview chez Galerie
Yvon Lambert



Your Gallery Exhibition
Agenda by Tout Ce
Que Vous Avez Raté



A Guide To The Best
Exhibitions This
Summer



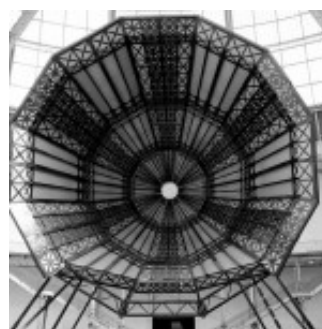
« Flamme Éternelle »
at Palais de Tokyo:
Contemporary Art as a
Social Laboratory



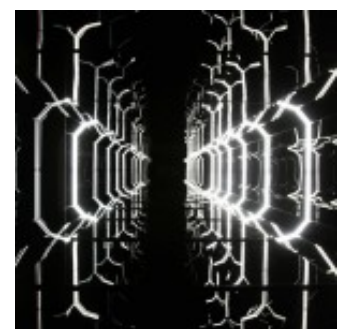
« Parle Pour Toi »:
Foreign Film
Projections at Galerie
Marian Goodman Lead
Up to Friday Night
Performance by Artist



Oscar Murillo at Marian
Goodman



Monumenta 2014 : Ilya
& Emilia Kabakov



Paris' Top 5 Spring
Exhibits

Bio

Derniers articles



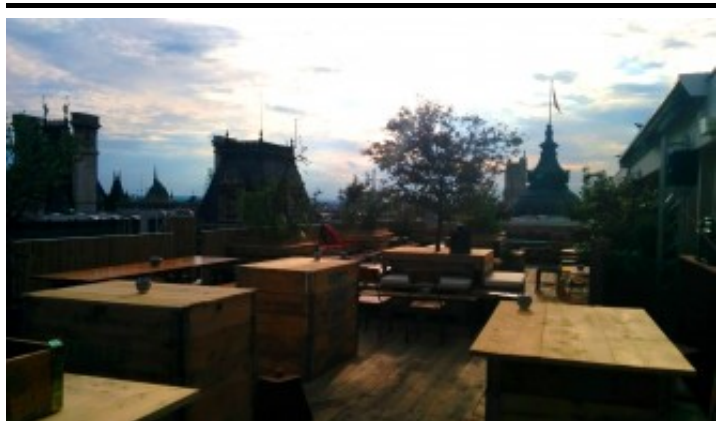
Ten Days In Paris

FILED UNDER: MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

RECENT POST



IT'S PLAYTIME AT LE PLAYTIME!



TOP 5 ROOFTOPS & TERRASSES: YOUR 2014 PARIS SUMMER HOTSPOTS



STATE OF BEING: GALERIE DANIEL TEMPLON SHOWCASES CHIHARU SHIOTA

FACEBOOK



Ten Days In Paris

Like 14,508

SIGN UP FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Enter email adress....

SUBSCRIBE



Search this website...

INSTAGRAMS



TAP

UPCOMING EVENTS

There are no upcoming events at this time.

WHAT'S HOT



LE BLUE CLUB: NEW HIPSTER PARADISE IN BARBES



LE PERCHOIR



THE COMING OF FAUST – WILL PARIS' WORST KEPT SECRET SPELL A NEW ERA FOR PARIS NIGHTLIFE?

OTHER TENDAYS



[tendaysinlondon](#) [tendaysintlv](#)

TAG CLOUD

[#Cannes2014](#) [10 days'](#) [Top 10](#)

[Bars](#) [Bastille](#) [Canal Saint Martin](#)

[Champs Elysees](#) [Cityguide](#) [Clubs](#)

[Events](#) [Extra](#) [Fbg St Denis](#) [Left](#)

[Bank Louvre](#) [Marais](#) [Museums & galleries](#) [Neighborhoods](#) [Paris](#)

[Fashion Week](#) [Parties](#) [Party](#)

[invitations](#) [Party](#)

[Reports](#) [Pigalle - Montmartre](#)

[Restaurants](#) [sex](#) [Shopping](#) [what's hot](#) [Where to Meet](#)

JOINS US



PAGES

[about](#) [tendays](#) [contact](#) [media kit](#) [Site Map](#)