



Mark Yashaev's 'Self Shadow'. (photo credit:PR)

A nude woman is standing in a darkened empty apartment, the only light reflecting against her is that of a yellowish chandelier. It's evident that she is not there to be objectified or to entertain the beholder. Her round body is reminiscent of those perpetuated in romantic Renaissance paintings but is slightly too angular to fit the stereotype.

She's leaning against the wall with one hand and seems utterly consumed with herself, bringing to mind the tender frames of American painter Edward Hopper, who excelled at portraying lackluster loneliness mid-moment.

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Another glance reveals that the chandelier is part of a different setting, a larger, better-lit room.

The woman is frozen in time, depicted in a large picture pasted onto the wall of a different space, a measuring tape hanging crookedly before it.

Who is the woman in question? Was she truly captured in an intimate moment or is it a painting? Are both spaces one and the same? This work, titled Self Shadow, raises countless questions, much like all the other creations accompanying it at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art's photography gallery. Several walks around the modestly small gallery reveal more scenes that are as alluring as the first creation but don't help solve the puzzle. Instead, they make room for even more questions.

The man with the key to the mystery and the very maker of these eerie, surreal works that seem to mock and challenge the strict definition of classic photography is Israeli artist Mark Yashaev.

The 35-year-old Yashaev's solo exhibition "Only from this suddenness and on" marks a dual feat for the young artist: It is the first time Yashaev is presenting his work at the museum in the same year that he has won the Lauren and Mitchell Presser Photography Award for a Young Israeli Artist.

Yashaev draws on his personal photography archive in an elaborately complex creation process. He builds installations, photographs them, prints the photographs and installs the prints in sets he makes himself. The photographed sets are the final, touching and visually challenging result.

The sets in the photographs seem to belong to a world of uncertainty, where time is essential but cannot be controlled. Through the decision to create and work within temporary spaces that will eventually be abandoned, Yashaev's dialogue with the meanings of space and time comes to the forefront.

"One explanation of the fact that I create sets that are not there to last is that I have to work with cheap materials. Otherwise I wouldn't have been able to create as many works," he points out.

Yashaev, who immigrated to Israel as a child from the former USSR, also offers a more emotional aspect. "I constantly feel like I don't really belong to the place, like I haven't unpacked my suitcases yet.

It's a feeling I carry with me everywhere, not just in Israel, of transiency."

Each of his works is a different, enigmatic tale in itself. Cast Shadow (a site-specific work that Yashaev created on a whim three days before the exhibition opened) is a confusing work with threedimensional qualities showing a man dragging or perhaps leaning into a photograph of a classic sculpture.

#Room 1 is a minimalistic, quirky and sad portrayal of an empty room, a large bed taking up most of the space. Numerous electric jacks decorate the bare wall behind the bed, suggesting a presence that once created them and filled up the room.

Untitled (Arkady) somewhat mirrors the strange world of the woman in Self Shadow, showing a man leaning against the wall in a room that looks as though it could get swept away any minute by the wind blowing through the open window.

Yashaev's creation strikes an odd balance between alienation and intimacy, at once insisting that the viewer explore the intricate details but refusing to suggest one coherent answer to questions raised.

"To me, intimacy goes hand in hand with the feeling of safety. So maybe when people become disoriented by what they see in the photos, it defies their sense of security. But the warmth and intimacy are still there," he says.

*"Only from this suddenness and on" is on display at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art until May 27.*

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