Boaz Tal: BoaZehava

The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery
Michel Kikoine Foundation
Tel Aviv University
Boaz Tal's works from the 1980s and early 1990s recurrently depict the artist and his family—his wife and daughters—in diverse situations within the intimate domestic space. Carefully staged, the scenes usually portray the figures in partial or full nudity, thus surrendering to the viewer, at first sight, the figure's sex: whether man or woman.

Over the years, this extensive body of works has received various, different interpretations. Most of them read in these scenes a recurrent engagement in man-woman relationships. Sylvie Fogiel-Bijaoui, for one, wrote in 2001 that "through his quest for identity, the artist strives to fathom the meaning of the relationship between man and woman. The battle of the sexes is evident here, the emphasis being placed on what the artist perceives as the victory of women and their domination over men."1 Moshe Zuckermann read the photographs in a similar vein: "Tal is clearly trying to undermine time-honored conventions in this context. ... Rather than emphasizing the sorrow of the 'mother' lamenting her 'son,' Tal is concerned with the weakness of the 'man' helpless dependent on the mercies, support, and protection of the 'woman.' ... This critical scrutiny of gender power and inter-dependence culminates in a series of photographs from the early 1990s entitled Study for Male and Female. ... The man emerges alternately as physically defeated, as ridiculed in his somewhat bestial sexual desire, or as truly regressive, helpless, requiring the maternal protection of a woman. On the other hand, the woman vanquishing him is perceived as anonymous in her victory, ... as indifferent to his lustfulness."2

According to the interpretations given to Tal's artistic-photographic oeuvre thus far, then, their concern appears to be the battle of the sexes, as the artist confronts the different figures in his family one against the other, pitting the male camp versus the female camp as if they were in a battlefield. In this essay I will try to propose a different interpretation: no longer an exploration of man's versus woman's roles, but rather examination of the gender roles themselves—their constitution and their very feasibility in culture—as manifested in art in general, and in Boaz Tal's work specifically.

The medium of photography in general, and the photographic portrait in particular, afford the viewer a unique experience, observation of an image which forms a constant reminder of existence. As opposed to other artistic mediums, it elicits in the viewer a strong sense of identification: the replica is a memory and a trace of the man who had really been there. The act of observation triggers a chain of actions which generate a split within the self: a reminder that, ultimately, the self is always the other. It is an observation of an other, and at the same time also an observation of the refraction in the mirror and discovery of the self reflected back to the beholder, which enables the latter to identify with it.
In this context, Roland Barthes wrote: "Odd that no one has thought of the disturbance (to civilization) which this new action causes. I want a History of Looking. For the Photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity." Thus, one may add that this medium affords Narcissistic pleasure, as gained while looking in the mirror. Observation of the photographic image before us reinforces and reaffirms our existence, as suggested, for example, by Jennifer Blessing.

In the first part of the essay I set out to sharpen and expand these observations to the field of gender construction and gender constitution in culture, while discussing gender fluidity. In the second part I will explore the political-social-cultural climate in Israel in relation to perceptions of masculinity, and will try to explain how and why this issue has resurfaced since the 1980s. Simultaneously, I will establish my argument that Boaz Tal was among the pioneers who turned to this field in the period under discussion.

I.

Michel Foucault's basic assumption, in coming to define sexuality, is that it does not relate to natural, essential or biological conditions, since it is a cultural construct nourished by an ideological regime unique to a given historical period. What generates sexuality is certain knowledge about sex, a regime of discourse and writing about sexuality, texts which establish power relations as part of which it is represented. Foucault's writings explore the functions of power in society and the development of knowledge in the course of history. The term "discursive formations" which he coined indicates the dispositions of concepts, arguments, and technologies associated with the practices prevalent in a given period, dispositions which constitute not only the objects of research, the boundaries of the disciplines and their divides, but also the subject himself, his sphere of knowledge. The evolving science of psychiatry, for example, is not a natural outcome of science's progress into ever more human directions, but rather an expression of society's growing need for close supervision; the notion of "man," for instance, is a historical formation intended to better control individuals, while determining what is "normal" and who is "deviant." The regimes of knowledge thus involve an organizing apparatus which ties knowledge with power, underlying every aspect of the social relations.

The knowledge about sexuality, which Foucault investigated in his formative book (from 1976) The History of Sexuality, is such a system of power which defines the subject in relation to himself, as well as the relationship between different subjects. Hence, in order to comprehend sexuality, one must fathom not only the experience, but also its formulation—the way in which passion is formulated in the political-cultural climate in which it is set, in a system of power that spans mechanisms of education, medicine, politics, etc., which monitor the normative definitions of "proper" sexuality and gender.

One may say that Foucault's greatest achievement lies in defining the subject as an ideological construct, a mere heterogeneous collection of texts which constitute his existence and account for his modus operandi (a-posteriori). His groundbreaking assertion—which was subsequently developed (and criticized) by many scholars, among them Judith Butler, involves a nonessentialist concept of identity, including sexual or gender identity constructed by its performances. The human body, in its border zones, functions as
an agent expressing the boundaries of passion, which represent a heterogeneous range of meanings—since the human body always thinks in multiplicity, as opposed to the abstract spirit which activates the concept of identity to define a single, fixed meaning. The human body thus articulates a new politics—and Boaz Tal's work, as I shall later show, is an exemplary expression of this revolutionary idea, expanding Foucault's notions of knowledge-power dispositions toward production of queer performances.

Jacques Lacan, who in contradistinction to Foucault focused mainly on processes experienced by the individual, re-read Freud's writings, combining psychoanalysis with linguistic principles. Following Freud, he construed the phallus as a meaningful signifier, a signifier of power. Obviously, this concerns not the real male genital organ, but the symbolic capital gained by a person who "has" such an organ. Every subject—whether man or woman—is in a symbolic relationship with the phallus (in the sense of "having a phallus" or "being a phallus"); ultimately, however, no one has a phallus in reality.

In order to better understand this, one must linger on Lacan's thought. According to Lacan, "the infant's entry into language parallels its separation from the mother. Before separation, there is plenitude based on the union of mother and child. After separation, the mother becomes the child's first object—that is, its first experience of absence, or lack," so that what is missing is, in fact, "the mother's phallus." For the mother, on the other hand, the child is a substitute for the missing phallus; she feels a sense of fulfillment in light of her close bond with the child. Without separation, however, the formation of language is inhibited. The father, for his part, is the element which tends to intervene in the mother-child relationship, so that in identifying with him, the child can come to form an identity of its own." In other words, "the child's identity is the outcome of its coming to terms with sexual difference." This is significant to our context since "first and foremost in this process of sexual differentiation is the recognition on the part of the child that its mother does not have a penis: she thus bears the indelible mark of difference," and the (missing) penis has a primary symbolic status (the penis is real and physical, while the phallus is a signifier). Since the mother is "an intimation of the child's own potential lack," John Lechte explains, the symbolic phallus, "confronts the subject with its own vulnerability and mortality."19

In the most general sense, the Symbolic is what lends the world its meaning, its law, and its order (the "Name-of-the-Father"), thus constituting society. Sexual difference, however, Lacan argues—hence his provocative aphorism 'la femme n'existe pas' [woman does not exist], and his explanation that for the woman, sexuality is always a play of masks and disguises10—cannot be contained in any symbolic form: it cannot be represented (since the penis becomes a phallus which exists only as a signifier of absence). This concept is manifested in Tal's photographs, where he chooses to present himself as a "castrated man," a man who is as a woman—as in the 1982 diptych Before the Bookcase: Self-Portrait with Zehava [p. 52], where the man is seen, "folding" his 'positive' penis back between his legs, concealing it, ostensibly coming to possess a vagina, which is a "negative" space. As part of the gender blurring performed by the artist in this photograph, he lifts the edges of his shirt with both his hands to expose "the horror of nothing to see."11 In this self-posed, which recurs in other photographs of this theme, Tal challenges the symbolic order and the principles distinguishing masculinity from femininity—two categories
which are not biological essences, but rather symbolic positions and an obligatory component of human subjectivity.13

The medium of photography is an apt space for self-exploration, and especially—for exploration of sexuality and gender boundaries. Photography, the foremost means of mechanical reproduction, was invented in the 19th century. It is—as Jennifer Blessing reminds us—a quintessential product of the Enlightenment and its exaltation of the individual. The rise of mythologies of the self in modernity, in the figure of psychoanalysis and the capitalistic ethos, Blessing adds, coincides with the elaboration of the technological means enabling its promotion and representation.13 Interestingly, most of the self-portraits in Tal’s series discussed here are typified by “directly addressing” the viewers: the photographed subject’s gaze is turned towards the camera, so that the object of his gaze is the viewer who, in turn, reciprocates and examines him. These photographs do not introduce him as one who was “accidentally caught” by the camera’s lens, for these compositions are the result of meticulous, pre-calculated construction. In so doing, Tal does not introduce himself alone as a subject. He concurrently forces the viewer to position himself in relation to his subjects, and to examine his views with regard to man-woman relationship in general, and identity exchange in particular; to find out to what extent the gender fluidity presented to him challenges the very foundations of his identity. In other words, Tal’s art poses the viewer as the other, through whom it formulates itself. In such a world, to operate performatively is to be in control.14 Another example is the 1985 work The Doubt: Self-Portrait with Zehava [p. 32], where Tal stands naked next to his wife in contrapposto stance, like a bashful Venus or an experienced model rooted in a classical female posture. Here too, his male sexual organ is folded back, tightened between his legs, ostensibly eliminated. The woman by his side raises a scepter, crowning him/her as “Miss Universe.”

This work and its likes call to mind Pierre Molinier’s photographs (1900-1976) [p. 33], which feature him time and again hiding his male sexual organ, wearing corsets, high heels, masks, and women’s stockings, adding distinctive female organs, such as breasts, striving to present an ideal, alternative self-image [p. 33].15 At the same time, Molinier ironically highlights phallic elements—such as a high heel shoe to which a dildo had been attached—which emerge in his works, and often on his actual body. Tal does the same when he hides his masculine organ while exposing his hairy masculine chest [see The Slave (1986), p. 33]. Through symbolic castration, as he declares femininity without revoking masculinity, Tal interferes with the codes of distinction between the feminine and the masculine in terms which tie certain organs with a certain gender.

The blending of gender codes, like the act of shuffling a deck of cards, is, for Tal, the perfect basis for dialogue with his wife-partner Zehava; it is a vast arena for discourse which employs perceptions of gender to understand intersexual relationships in our culture. A deliberate subversion of the illusion of reality—and in our context, of any binary distinction whatsoever—is a foundational dimension in his work. Like Marcel Duchamp who, in his masterpiece The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass) (1915-23), outlined the unresolved exchange between the female and the male spheres, and in his L.H.O.O.Q (1919) added a moustache to a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci’s Mona Lisa, as if declaring that he had uncovered her hidden sexual identity16—Tal, too, blends and even inverts these spheres. As always, his private
coupleship serves as a laboratory for examining the fluid gender boundaries. The successive photographs in the series entitled *The Doubt: Self-Portrait with Zehava* (1987) [pp. 58-59] unfold the conceptual and emotional infrastructure for his work. When he accentuates once the masculine parts in his body, and once—and via performative role exchange with his wife—the feminine parts in him, he in fact declares that there is no essential difference between the two figures, and in so doing even deviates into the realms of camp and perversion (a sequined scepter; a shiny birthday ribbon turned beauty-queen sash; a black eye-patch alluding to perverse sexual practices).

In *Self-Portrait with Zehava: Figure with Giraffe*, 1983 [pp. 60-61] Tal performs an act of cross-dressing, presenting himself standing upright on a bed, in a woman’s lingerie: pantyhose, stockings, rolled-up bra exposing his masculine chest. His ordinary male underwear burst forth underneath the guise of his masquerading as a woman, a deliberately imperfect disguise. The result is a patchwork, a gender-blend, as in Hannah Höch’s photomontages [see *Dompteuse (Tamar)* (ca. 1930), p. 34]. Tal’s strategy indicates that, on the one hand, he does not want us to see him the way he is (for he dresses up), but rather as he attempts to present himself; on the other hand, we know exactly who he is, we know him and his life story, as they have been exposed to us in his many photographs. It is a long-lasting double game embodied by his work. Through the mixture of body parts and clothing items, he sets out to criticize strict, disciplining norms, which at the same time enable playfulness and humor.

Tal may be said to practically apply Judith Butler’s theory before the camera, when he juxtaposes performance with apparatus. The masquerading and use of carnivalesque accessories and masks in some of the photographs is congruent with Butler’s argument that gender is always a performance, and that all expressions of sexuality are underlain by performative imitation. The practice of drag, Butler adds, exposes to what extent the “original” itself is voided of all essential content, and that all gendering is a kind of impersonation, a disguise. In her 1990 book *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that there is no “authentic” identity, and that gender identities are but an endless set of practices, a repeating imitation of nonrealizable, imaginary gender ideals. The practices do not stem from a priori gender identity; rather, they constitute and generate it, for identity is shaped performatively through the manifestations perceived as its outcome, namely: the practices inscribed on the surface of the body generate the gender concept. As in any social ritual, gender is constructed through constant repetition of the implementation, a repetition which is a reactivation and at the same time—a renewed, renewing experience of the social meaning of gender. 17

A theory such as Butler’s in the 1990s, and even previously—that of psychoanalyst Joan Riviere in her groundbreaking 1929 essay, 18 helped establish the understanding that femininity is not an essence, and that gender identity in general is fluid and mutable, a mythical construct perpetuated via performative repetition of stereotypical behaviors and attires. Marcel Duchamp, one of the progenitors of modernism, wittingly realized this principle when he adopted for himself the persona of Rose Selavy and created an extensive series of works under the name of this fictive character. Similarly, Boaz Tal realizes this when he repeatedly accentuates the performative dimension of gender, to remind us that it is a mere social construct.

In the photograph *Study for Male and Female: Self-Portrait,*
the English (1987) [p. 35], Tal is seen kneeling in his underwear which clearly show his testicles and male sexual organ. At the same time, he attaches plastic female breasts to his chest. The breasts, however, are not presented as an organic part of his body, and he does not try to trick the viewers or convince them of their realness, for they are discernibly artificial. He does not try to pass as a woman, but rather performs an amused subversive act, a humorous proposal offered to viewers, as an invitation to embark with him on a journey into the depths of his hybrid soul in the spirit of Homi K. Bhabha who coined the term "state of hybridity" to define an identity which is never monolithic, but rather complex and ambivalent, volatile and fluid.\(^{19}\) The hybrid discourse, Bhabha argued, wishes to discuss intermediate states, the assumption that the binary categories limit and even castrate the cultural possibilities, whereas hybrid passion is positive in that it opens the door to resistance and creativity, empowering the subject, furnishing him with channels of speech and existence in the world.

Tal's photographs often deviate toward the grotesque. In her book On the Grotesque Body: A Philosophical Inquiry on Bakhtin, Merleau-Ponty, and Other Thinkers, Sara Cohen Shabot defines the grotesque as "deformation, distortion, inversion of the familiar order ... The major goal of the grotesque work is to invoke in the viewer a sense of 'order switching,' of paradox, of 'alienation,' spawned by the blending of categories ... The grotesque is a hybrid, inconsistent even in its hybrid qualities: it cannot be conclusively or unequivocally defined."\(^{20}\) In other words, the grotesque is blurred and anomalous, by nature. It enables definition of that which is not defined by itself, thereby recalling Derrida's principle of *différance*. The obscurity of the grotesque is not homogenous—it is obscurity in the sense of "elimination of all difference," a type of homogenous mass whose details cannot be discerned, since everything in it is "the same." The grotesque is blurred because of its multiplicity, because of the inability to identify in it one solid identity. It is a blurring of boundaries between categories and types, while preserving the private, different, differentiated, namely—a paradoxical existence which is incongruent with systems based on binary oppositions. The grotesque thus relates to the body, to the modification of bodies, and to their different forms of contact and communication with other bodies, and in relation to the reality around them—and these are always bodies in flux, ready to be deformed, metamorphosed, transformed.

The grotesque dimension in Tal's works is especially congruent with his photographic project, which conveys profound identification with his partner and daughters, for the hybrid-grotesque leads to blurring of differences between the heterogeneous worlds contained therein, at times to the point of total collapse of one into the other.\(^{21}\) In *Study for Male and Female in the Closet* (1986) [p. 36] one may note this boundless intersubjectivity in the constant interrelations between subjects the boundaries of whose identity are not clearly differentiated, in physical relations of blending which seem to breach the boundaries between them completely.

The grotesque enfolds an antithetical, double element of rejection and attraction since the blurring of boundaries undermines the boundaries of the subject observing it—but at the same time, observation of the grotesque, the "freak," may be consoling in that it affirms the non-monstrous, "normal," unequivocal identity of the beholder. This is why freak shows are so prevalent in our world, in carnivals and circuses: liminal spaces which make for interaction with the deviant as long
as he is delimited by clearly defined boundaries. Against this backdrop one may introduce yet another reading of Tal's works, antithetical to the one proposed above: instead of a Narcissistic identification with the photographic image discernible in the works—e.g. a man with plastic woman's breasts—it may concern an attraction to the deviant which contains a self-definition by way of negation, perhaps a need to be entirely differentiated from this anomaly naturally nestling within us.

The grotesque is a key concept in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory and his discussion of the carnival—a subversive, border-blurring event, primarily because it eliminates the distance and distinction between "actors" and "spectators" determined by various establishments, such as the church, as a means to enforce the truths and order they seek to perpetuate. Bakhtin emphasizes the blurring, grotesque aspect of the carnival, its being a representative of a free world which releases itself from rigid hierarchies and a paradigm of the dynamic reality and the ever changing world. In this spirit one may say that Tal's works repeatedly incorporate carnival-like elements which undermine the "proper order."

II

Several prominent critics in the field of visual culture—among them Paul Williams, Peter Lehman, and Dennis Bingham—discussed the image of the male body in Western culture based on feminist theories such as that of Laura Mulvey, who theorized that the sadistic nature of the cinematic gaze generates visual pleasure for the male viewer. The usual object of visual pleasure in Hollywood cinema is the woman, and when a man assumes her role as the object of erotic objectification—this can be threatening for the normative subject. Therefore, cinema scholar Raz Yosef maintains, such manifestations in contemporary cinema emerge in scenes portraying "physical destruction of the male body through beating or mutilation," when the objectification of the male body linked to the sadist gaze is ostensibly balanced by the bodily destruction linked to masochistic pleasure. This thesis may serve us in the discussion of tangential fields, such as photography, to indicate that masochistic mutilation often appears in Tal's work as well (such as the act of symbolic castration which the artist forces upon himself), and the image introduced in them certainly contains such duality between homoerotic implications and their contradiction by means of mutilation.

Here one ought to linger on the local-historical context in which Tal's work is rooted. According to Ilana Tenenbaum, in the 1980s male artists began exploring, for the first time, the boundaries between the sexes by way of gender fluidity and playfulness. This process was made possible against the backdrop of the disintegration of the Zionist ethos in those years, which involved the breakdown of the masculine image of the "pioneer," paving the way to post-modern and even post-Zionist alternatives. Raz Yosef, in his book, focuses on the way in which national-heterosexual masculinity in Israel was constituted via cinematic images, concurrent with attempts at exclusion, policing, and normalization of queer manifestations, maintaining that heterosexual Israeli masculinity—phallic-Zionist masculinity, as he calls it—cannot imagine itself apart from the racialized, sexual, and excluded "others" from whom it exerted to differentiate itself. The hegemonic subject's denial of the other occurs within normative masculinity, opening an
epistemological gap in it that threatens to undo the national and sexual authority on which Israeli identity is based.\textsuperscript{28} Zionism, Yosef goes on to argue, was not only a political and ideological project, but also a project aimed at defining identity, including sexual identity. The creation of a nation like all other nations from the Jewish anomaly required sexual redemption and normalization of the diasporic Jewish male body, which was presented in fin-de-siècle anti-Semitic scientific-medical discourse as a degenerated manifestation of disease, passivity, madness, sexual perversity, homosexuality, and femininity. This pathologization of the Jewish male body had also entered the discourse of Jewish thinkers and ideologues. It is in this context that one should understand the desire of the Zionist Movement to erect a "Jewry of Muscles" comprising robust, healthy, native-born sabras based on the Aryan model, manual laborers who till their land, active subjects ready to fight their enemies.\textsuperscript{29}

Yosef's study exposes how the heterosexual subject's fear of the desire and memories elicited in him by queer masculinity undermines the foundations of his monolithic identity, makes him feel his gender fluidity, even estranged from himself, thus illustrating the need for the other. Homi K. Bhabha's theory contributes further insights to this matter through his discussion of another "state of hybridity"—a mix of repulsion and attraction, fear and desire, characterizing colonizer-colonized, or master-subaltern, relationships.\textsuperscript{30} One way to deal with this instable "state of hybridity" is the demand of the subaltern—such as Mizrahi men—to imitate the norms of the hegemony, for example by indoctrination of military culture, or via interethnic marriage, which have led to stabilization of a given, uniform male image, on- and off-screen.\textsuperscript{31} With the decline of the Zionist ethos, this image has ceased to be an exclusive option. The advent of new paradigms opened a new, diverse range of possibilities also for the definition of "manliness" in Israeli society.

Dan Bar-On analyzes such processes of identity construction using a psychosocial approach, distinguishing between two major channels: construction of identity through the other, and construction of identity through internal dialogue or symposium among the various components of identity.\textsuperscript{32} The latter channel is more intricate and advanced than the former, ultimately leading to the constitution of identity which does not require the other for its definition, and it characterizes the disintegration of monolithic Israeli identity, which has drawn the self and the other in black-and-white—be it an external other (such as the Arab) or an internal other (such as the Mizrahi or diasporic Jew). In the course of this process, the voice of the Mizrahi began to be heard, and cracks developed in the hegemonic picture of the view, in continuation of understanding parts of our self as "others" within us. Highlighting the oppositions bustling within the self produced an intricate world view replete with internal contradictions, often perceived as "weak," generating a pendulum movement of violent backlash in the form of the phenomenon of new fundamentalism in Israel and the world; ultimately, however, society advances toward becoming accepting of others, assimilating its various parts in a rich and variegated tapestry.\textsuperscript{33}

Still, it is obviously impossible to discuss the body and its images independent of the emotions involved in the body and its experience, and these are not "natural" and "universal," but rather acquired and shaped by the dialogue with the systems of power relations in culture.\textsuperscript{34} The discourse of emotion can establish, reinforce, or alternatively challenge traditional
symbols

in 1989 the financial crisis and the violent uprisings of the 1970s led to the end of the socialist regime in Eastern Europe. The pro-democratic and anti-communist revolutions of the 1989 'Velvet Revolutions' swept across the region, marking the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new era of political and economic transition.

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Miriam Sharon—yet their works were of quintessentially feminist-essentialist character. This state of affairs changed only during the 1990s, with the advent of the post-modern paradigms, in the work of artists such as Alona Friedberg and Limor Orenstein, whose video pieces present images of gender fluidity and toy with gender roles.

The "new masculinity" tendencies in Israel display a certain belated ripple effect of inclinations that have arrived here from overseas, such as the crisis of masculinity diagnosed by Leslie Fiedler back in 1965 in a controversial essay. The crisis of masculinity, Fiedler argued, began to take shape in the 1960s in the hippie clothing culture, which blurred the familiar male appearance in favor of a more androgynous look. Artists such as David Bowie and Andy Warhol, inspired an entire generation with self-representations of rock glamour with a penchant for camp, which was defined by Susan Sontag as an attempt to live life on a theatrical stage. This tendency, which embedded a distinctive political dimension, paved the way to perusing the boundaries of masculinity by male artists who, in this field, lagged behind groundbreaking female artists who had already begun this in the 1920s.

These foreign tendencies, alongside the growing legitimization of gay and queer manifestations, influenced a limited group of heterosexual artists in Israel, among them Jacob Mishori [see Self-Portrait (1984-85), p. 39], Motti Mizrahi [see Dvar Hashavua: Our Man in Venice (1988), p. 40], Yehuda Porbuchrai [see Self-Portrait (1980), p. 40], and Boaz Tal, who already in the 1980s engaged in artistic experiments involving masquerading and makeup. These artists gave the cue for challenging the boundaries of gender definitions. Among the aforementioned artists, however, only Tal persisted in this move with great commitment over many years. His brave and unbiased exploration has spawned an especially fascinating body of work, revealing profound insights on issues of identity and gender.

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Tal's artistic project in the years discussed here indeed centered on private issues of couplehood and family, yet it may be projected onto marginal groups in society and in fields which do not obey the rigid, binary, hegemonic codes of culture. Further insights arising from Tal's work pertain to social phenomena which gradually become more prevalent, such as new perceptions of the family institution following the escalation in divorce, single-parent and same sex families, changes in the perception of fatherhood, etc. In his photographic enterprise, Tal examines the elusive components of the self time and again. In some of the photographs he endeavors to leave the issue of gender deliberately open, whereas in others he strives to identify and fix an elusive rudimentary formula defining the "masculine" and the "feminine," only to melt them into a single, hybrid body: BoazZehava.


6. For an elaboration, see for example: Tamsin Spargo, Foucault and Queer Theory (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2000).


9. Ibid., pp. 69-70.


15. See ibid., p. 62.


23. The carnival, which originated in ancient Rome, became a popular phenomenon in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance. Carnivals were held in response to official events initiated by the government. For an elaboration, see Shabot, op. cit. (note 20), pp. 83-89.


31. Yosef, ibid., p. 5.

33. Ibid., p. 6.


38. The exhibition delved into the fluidity of gender boundaries. It was curated by Tami Katz-Freiman and Tamar El-Or and staged at the Museum of Art, Ein Harod.


42. Leslie Fiedler, "The New Mutants", Partisan Review (Fall 1965).

43. Camp is a means by which rigid patriarchal functions may be challenged and ridiculed; for an elaboration on the subject, see: Esther Newton, Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972).


45. This outbreak accompanied the beginnings of the Feminist Movement in the 19th century, the activity of the suffragists in the beginning of the 20th century, and the enhanced status of the "new woman" in the 1920s. One of the first female artists to present herself by fluid gender identity was photographer Claude Cahun; see: Whitney Chadwick and Tirza True Latimer (eds.), The Modern Woman Revisited: Paris Between the Wars (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2003).

46. At the same time, one ought to put forth the reservation that despite the Popish facet of their work (especially that of Mishori), true Pop Art never became naturalized in Israel, much like cultural movements such as the Beatniks and Hippies, hence the use of the term 'ripple-effect.'
Self-Portrait with Zehava: Figure with Giraffe, 1983, b&w photograph, diptych, 30x30 each unit
The Doubt: Self-Portrait with Zehava, 1987, b&w photograph, quadriptych, 30x30 each unit
Before the Bookcase: Self-Portrait with Zehava, 1982, b&w photograph, diptych, 30x30 each unit