Absence, Speculation, Text

"I must build a 20-meter-long bridge, made of words, to the mystery works by Amos Groswagel, assuming they are where they should be." Shai-lee Horodi writes from a distance about Amos Groswagel's show at Livluv 24 Gallery in Tel Aviv.

Critique / Shai-Lee Horodi September 17, 2017

The stench of urine, so complementary to art spaces, rose from the gaps between the buildings. The glass door of the Livluv 24 gallery did not open. Peering through the glass entrance nothing caught my eye, only shadows and their shadows. I soon convinced myself that it wasn't a bad thing – that I didn't have to leave Tel Aviv, and that most exhibitions are much better when you don't actually see them.

tzlal 5 lowres.jpg



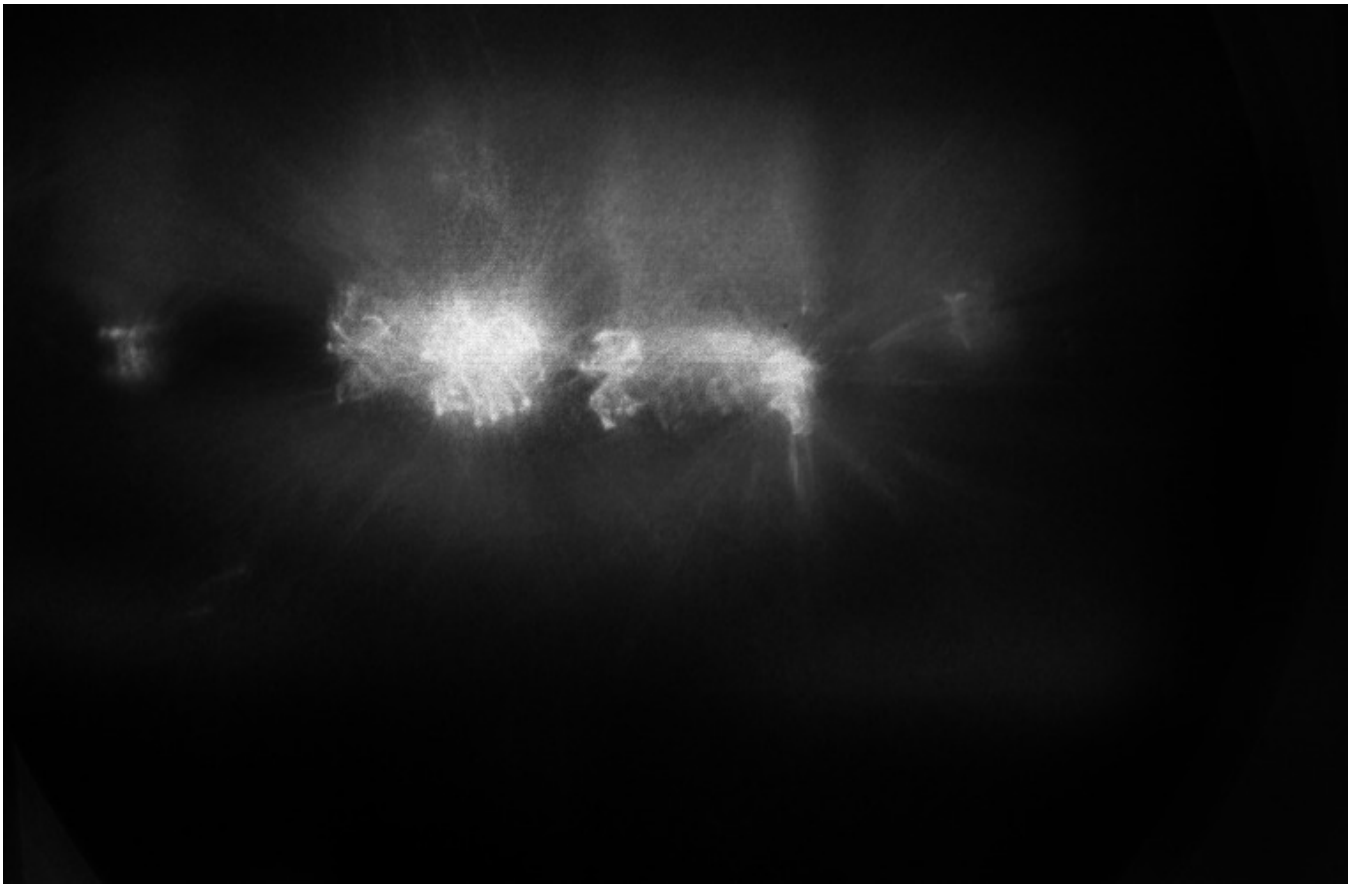
[1]Amos Groswagel, shadow #5, 2016
50X70X90 cm, various techniques

Solo shows of well-known artists deliver exactly what is expected of them; artists are themselves ad absurdum. This time, it was a name I didn't recognize - Amos Groswagel. Leaving home to see a show by an artist I know nothing about, I assume there is a 15 percent chance of it being interesting. It was terribly strange to smell urine while looking at the artworks from afar. Art usually smells like floor cleaner (one odor for the Rosenfeld Gallery, a different one for RawArt) or oil paint and air-conditioning. I hope Groswagel would forgive me for a critique written at a distance of twenty meters from his works, but I am not to blame if the gallery was closed when, according to the sticker on its window-pane, it should have been open. Moreover, the distance could work to his advantage. There was once an art critic, it is said, who used to write her reviews not from twenty or even two thousand meters away, but from the other end of the galaxy, and to this day, they say, she still writes art reviews, deep from within the netherworld, mountains of words whose shadow spreads fear in the hearts of young artists (most artists, actually, because in the field of art the category of "young" extends to the age of 49). There are other artists whose sleep is not as disturbed, their bed softened with kind words as they lay under the grace of the art critic’s ghost. Upon meeting with a piece of art, a devoted viewer says “I am here, a single step - a spitting distance, a peeing range, a cumming gap - away from you. It’s solely you and me and the thousand books between us.

As for the artist who actuality peed, spat, came, and stepped on his own works, it has been written that bodily excess makes of his works a painful mini-fest of desire and physicality (perhaps had the writer known that the artist used to be teased at school for his excess physicality he might have chosen other words). The same actions (peeing, spitting and so on…) when performed by a viewer

are neither read as bodily excess nor a manifest, but rather as a metaphysical hard-on, spiritual as it is intellectual, for art (that is, for one piece at a time but through it, for the entirety that is art). The vanishing point is a meeting place for two eyes, where spirit and intellect are one (the gaze!), where the eyes feel, the nose sees, the cock contemplates.

tzlal 33 lowres.jpg **[2]**



[3]Amos Groswagel, Shadow #33, 2016
31X47X95 cm, various techniques

Groswagel creates images, I guess. His images fall into one or more of these categories: images of inquisitiveness, images of young coolness, images of characteristics of a marginalized and not unfashionable community (gays, Palestinians, Russian immigrants, people of Middle Eastern extraction), images of left-wing-ness, images of inventiveness, scientific-ness, musical-ness, images of technological-ness, images of originality and semi-creativeness, so called political or almost sociological-ness, scornful outsider-ness, scornful insider-ness. Images of art that call upon the history of art, and the words they use for this call not even Groswagel knows. The works are smarter than their creator but still bear witness to his genius; themes of representation, deconstructed aesthetics, the relations between exterior and interior, inventions in physics, chemical guesses, philosophical approximations and mathematical politics.

But the distance remains. I need to build a bridge made of words, twenty meters long to reach Groswagel's mystery works, assuming his works are where they are and not, say, one or two miles

away. Usually it is the case that art isn’t at the art, it is in the books and at the curators, in the old and stubborn artists. There is art that hides in the shadow, in the I-don’t-get-it of art, in darkness that can only be illuminated by the gloomy yellowish light of words.

צלל #12, 2016, מידות 23X15, עומק 90, טכניקה מעורבת.jpg **[4]**

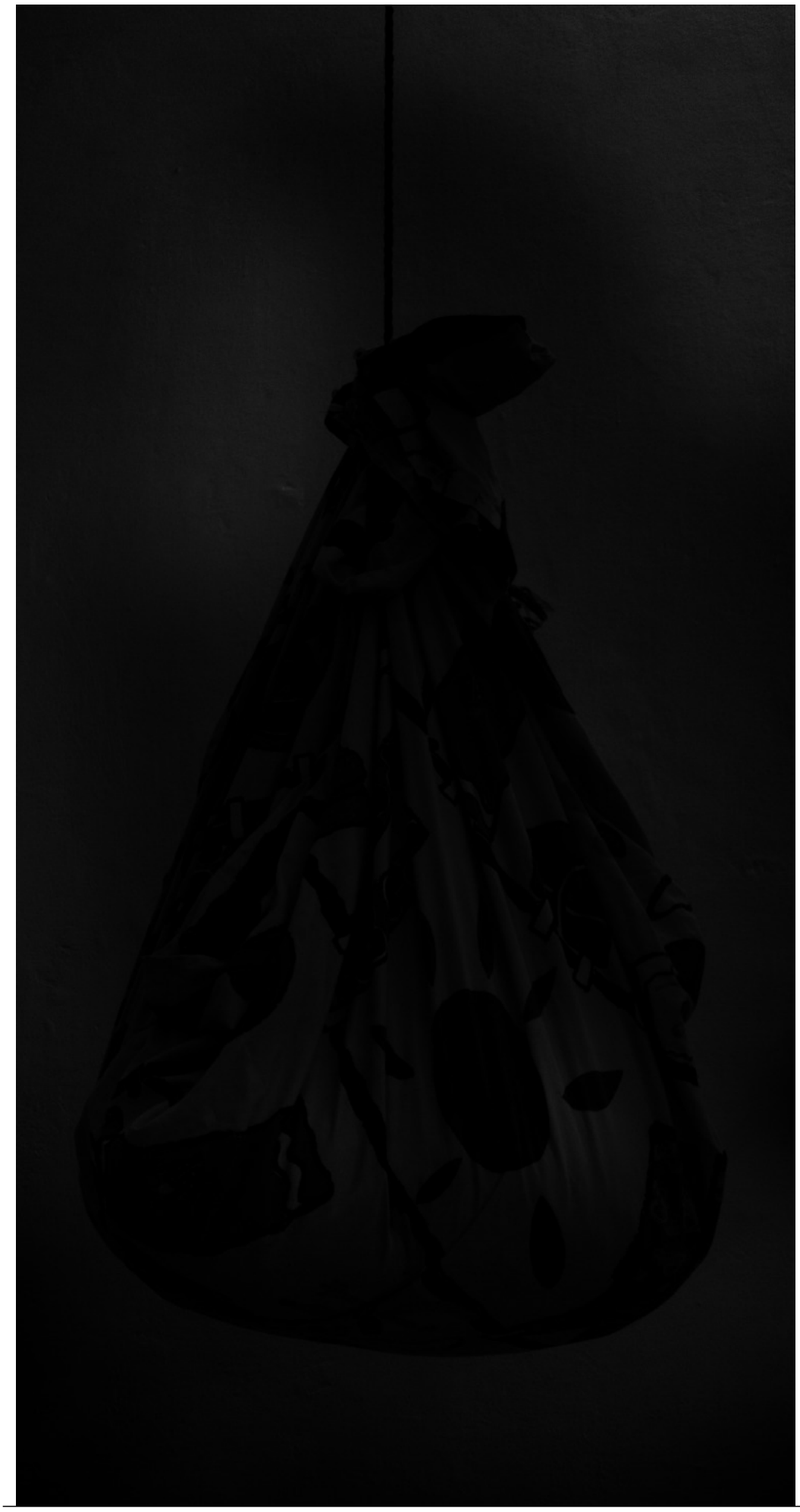


[5]Amos Groswagel, Shadow #12, 2016
15X23X90 cm, various techniques

Groswagel’s artworks are pocket-size, but which pocket I don’t know. With some confidence I can say that the artist’s intense preoccupation with what his work is about is not intense enough to tear any pocket, no matter its size. Yet, opposing the immanent impotence of the act that is art, Groswagel builds, even if only in order to destroy. His pieces can be read as towers of meaning built by skillful hands and disassembled completely the moment they are finished, so that the viewer can only get a view of the nothing that is the remnant of something that might have been and isn’t. Indeed, Groswagel is an artist of memories unremembered, the traumatic event is implied by its absence. In the inverted world of his work, everything appears first as an absence, later as speculation, and finally as text. What are those words escaping the mouth? Maybe it’s this perpetual fleeing that denies satiation. In Groswagelian, not only does every word follow another, but it also precedes one. Engrossed, the viewer confronts the pieces vomiting, in his stomach the sea; and the sea in Groswagel’s work is as dark as night; and the more the viewer is submerged the more the nausea increases, so he sinks into his internal sea; and the drowning viewer knows no more if this sea of words comes from an exterior or interior origin, and which of the two is the origin of the meaning in Groswagel’s work. The affiliation of how and why branches out. It's as if when one knows the “why,”

then there can’t be a “how,” and when there is a “how” it always lacks the “why.”

צלל #19, 2016, מידות 48X25 עומק 70 טכניקה מעורבת.jpg **[6]**



[7]Amos Groswagel,

Shadow #19, 2016
25X48X70 cm, various techniques

In a constant now of forgetfulness, Groswagel does what he is obliged to do, as if by order from an indisputable force. So why does his obedience seem to undermine itself? What force is it that commands him to make art? And if this force does exist, why does it insist that this art be done? And if there is no such force, then why, Groswagel? Why this way? What gave those shadow works their form? And who is it that subtracted the works from themselves, pulled them into his eyes and pushed them out through his mouth? Where, in this tiny field, did you find space for an empty sea? How did you fish so many fishes from a sea that is empty? How long could you live off these fishes that are neither of salt water nor sweet? And the hunger, Groswagel, do you feel it? Or is it negative hunger, which is a sort of a tremendous satiation? And the viewer, Groswagel, what is he to you? Is he the one you've been waiting for? And when will he arrive, arrive at the piece? And if he arrives, would he find you there? Or maybe the piece is the distance from the piece? And from where, Groswagel, from where came the piece? Out of nowhere? Where is the hole that's responsible for the leak from the world of words to the world of things? Did your work pierce the hole or is your work a broken plug? A plug with a hole for a stomach. Or is the hole a mouth and the mouth an ass-hole for the eyes and the eyes a drain-hole for the art and the art sewage for this boredom of yours, Groswagel? There flows whatever is too boring to be boring, everything that is itself so much so it can't be anything else - the way in which art can resemble itself even though it is one and the same.

"Beyond the Sun's Limit," Amos Groswagel, Livluv 24 Gallery, 1.6.17 – 1.7.17

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