

LAMONTAGNE GALLERY

555 East Second St. | South Boston, MA 02127



Lived & Laughed & Loved & Left

LaMontagne Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Israeli artist Guy Yanai. The exhibition opens on June 20th and will run through August 28th. The opening reception is on Thursday, June 20th, 6 - 8PM.

For Guy Yanai, painting had always been related to looking, and hence the question "what are we looking at now?" At the moment, Yanai's answer is that we are looking at images through screens. Whether we are looking at tennis shoes or at a mountain in Japan, they are mostly absorbed in photographic form, mediated by a computer screen or that of an iPad or iPhone. In Yanai's case, they are later printed on sheets of A4 paper and hung in the studio, among other sources of inspiration. In fact, his subjects always exist in four formats simultaneously: in reality, on screen, in the studio, and on the support – so much so that one may say that the world outside relates to the studio in the same way that the digital screen relates to the canvas. And just like the screen and the studio that is enclosed between four walls – so is the canvas a rectangular, delimited, and disciplined space.

In Yanai's paintings, color underlies form. In his earlier works, the subject-matter was deconstructed into flattened and multi-layered constructs, and the paintings at large gave the impression of fortified walls, camouflaging the trace of the artist's hand. In their bold colors they expressed an optimism which was nonetheless misleading and even deceitful; and inasmuch as they externalized emotions and presented a reality, they concealed the very things they ostensibly expressed. In his current series, however, the color surfaces seem rather unfurled and melancholic. The brutality that was once hidden and repressed now surfaces to the foreground – a surface that is treated with only a single layer of color that seems at once spontaneous, mechanic, and rigid. The brushstrokes traverse the canvas in a multitude of stripes, evoking the artist's hand moving from left to right, automatic as a printer. If his eye is fixed on screens of digitally reproduced imagery, then his hand seems to reproduce on the canvas the mechanical process involved in making them. But it is precisely this attempt to achieve straight lines that betrays the hand-print of the artist, with the gradual weakening of muscles, the physical effort and inflamed tendon showing through – so much so, that the mimetic failure holds the very impact of the painting.

Yanai's paintings produce a system of tensions that, despite their inherent incompatibility, still insist on lodging side by side. His gaze wanders back and forth, moving between a micro- and macro-vision, a zooming-in and a zooming-out, with these aspects merged together in a way that a single tennis shoe looks remarkably like a mountain. The feral is mixed with the domesticated, and a boat sailing in an open sea may seem as artificial as

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the grass of a soccer field. Imagery derived from private and public realms are also mixed together, and, as both are subject to the same painterly regime, they both emit the same sense of alienation and closeness. Foreign places that the artist has never been to are given to the same gaze as the potted plant he once bought for the entryway of a building he once lived in.

In many respects, these are paintings of defeats: a single, isolated sports shoe, Italy losing, a grayish corner in a Shell station in an American suburb, well-kept artificial houseplants. Loneliness unravels its colors, which are both stark and melancholy, but through the distress evident on the surface we perceive a sense of liberty. It is, perhaps, because the painting itself has nothing more to lose; not quite defeated, it no longer fears its own failure and therefore prevails.

- Hila Cohen-Schneiderman, May 2013

Hila Cohen-Schneiderman is a curator at the Petach Tikva Museum of Art and at CAiR, a program for creating artists' residencies in municipal departments in Israel. She holds an MA in Hebrew Literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. During 2010–2011 she was the in-house curator at the Spaceship Gallery in Hayarkon 70, a multipurpose collaborative space in Tel Aviv. Her curatorial projects include numerous exhibitions in independent and public settings, among them *Space Shuttle*, a combined exhibition involving 14 artists' studios in Tel Aviv ([2012](#)), and *Search Engine*, a group exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Art in Tel Aviv ([2012](#)).

Translated from the Hebrew by Hemda Rosenbaum



For more information, contact George Wong by emailing george@lamontagnegallery.com or call the gallery at 617 464 4640.

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