

Ruti de Vries, 'Heavy Sadness'

HaAmakim Gallery, Kibbutz Sha'ar Ha'amakim, 30 November 2019 – 7 March 2020

Curator: Ruth Oppenheim

HaAmakim Gallery is happy to invite the artist Ruti de Vries to present a solo exhibition that will inaugurate the gallery's renovated space. The gallery – a unique building for preservation – was designed and planned as the studio of the late artist Avraham Omri, a member of Kibbutz Sha'ar HaAmakim. Its external walls are ornamented in Sgraffito style, characteristic of Omri's work. The gallery, for long used as an office space, has now been comprehensively renovated, and resumed its role as a space for exhibiting art.

Ruti de Vries has researched for a few months the work of Avraham Omri – a versatile artist whose art ranged between the graphic and the painted, serving both the socialist movement and his own artistic aspirations.

In her solo exhibition – "Heavy Sadness" – de Vries created a body of works influenced by the materials that she found in the Kibbutz's archive, and through which she structured a sort of a minimalist temple to the late artist's work.

The exhibition includes a number of de Vries's new works – among them painting on canvas, paintings on mud surfaces, as well as sculpture. The works are exhibited alongside some of Omri's works to which de Vries chose to refer to. In addition, de Vries brings back to the art space some of the elements that were part of the original studio. Here she attempts to follow the unwritten will of Avraham Omri that art is not entertainment, and that the future of the studio is not to turn into a discotheque, but to keep on presenting art.

Ruti de Vries's new works are all soaked in sadness. It is as if the sadness she encountered in Omri's works met her own, placed at the center of her creation and ranging between the heavy heartedness and the weightlessness of the material. Avraham Omri was a talented artist, realized only a little his artistic aspirations, and experienced many losses. The space de Vries creates turns into a sort of a burial room – a pyramid – that recycles life and death. Archetypal worlds of primeval cultures give shape to the figures therein, and support the sense of the built-up temple as leftover relics.

de Vries's style, ranging too between the graphic and the painted, corresponds properly to Omri's wide representational spectrum: his role as the graphic designer of Hashomer Hatzair movement, his activity as an artist in the Kibbutz, a designer of fonts, as well as an oil and sand painter of somber and wild paintings of apocalyptic worlds.

The exhibition is an occasion to bring together Omri's forgotten work and the art of a contemporary artist. It is also an opportunity to bring back his studio (his art space) to its original role as a space that interweaves the practical with the abstract, the sad with the happy.