

שני

קרבן

אשרת - הלן בנתור, אסד עזי, יוספה דרשר

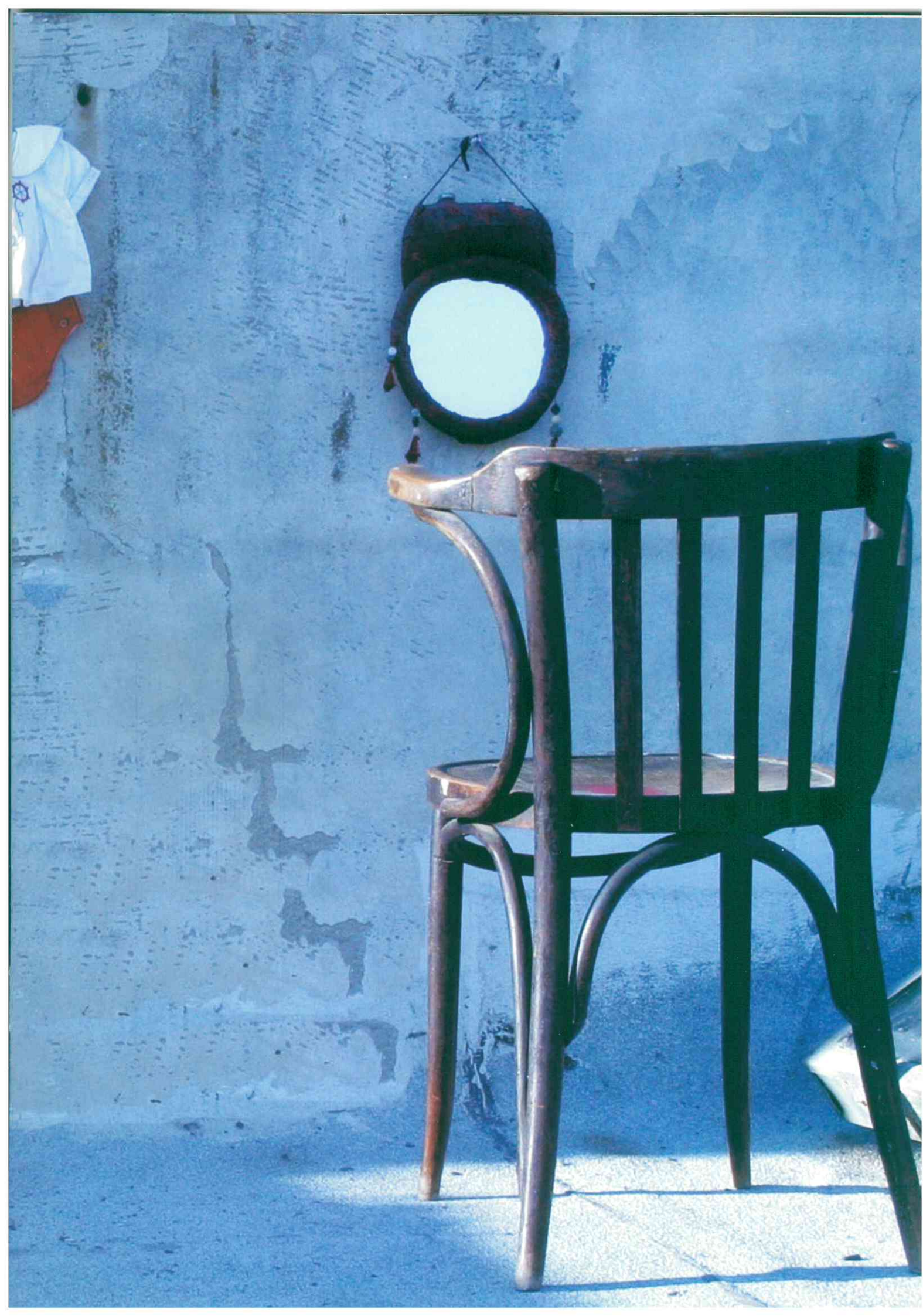


אשרת - הלן בנתור
Oshrat - Helen Bentor

מיצב פיסולי ומיצב ווידאו
Sculpture and video installation



פרט מתוך מיצב פיסולי ומיצב ווידאו





יוספה דרשר
Yosefa Drescher



‘קדיש’ אשוויץ בירקנאו, פולין.
צילום בסרט אינפרא אדום

“Kadish” Auschwitz Birkenau, Poland.
Kodak Infrared film



אבא בדרכו לקבר סבתו מנהיים, גרמניה.
צילום בסרט באינפרא אדום

"Abba on His Way to His Grandmother's Grave"

VICTIM: THE ETERNAL OFFERING

The tale of the offering of Isaac is one of the high-points of biblical prose. A chilling drama narrated tersely, with a minimum of detail, without a word too much. Possibly for that very reason, the tale draws the attention of each generation, the reader's attention riveted by its sparse potency.

Every age has elevated the sacrifice of Isaac into a major motif in prayer, in religious literature and in creative art. In its terrifying essence, the tale has preoccupied the attention of Jewish sages and the scholars of all religions. No wonder, for the tale presents tough questions relating to the most fundamental issues of theology and morals.

Why was Abraham subjected to so cruel a trial? Why did an omniscient God need to test Abraham's faith? Why did a god of mercy and morals require a blood sacrifice? Why was Abraham required to place obedience to his God above the call of conscience and the most basic humane instinct? In the theological view ostensibly, Isaac was chosen for sacrificial offering because he was Abraham's cherished only son. ("Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest...") But in fact Abraham had another son, Ishmael whom he would also "offer up" when he expelled him and his mother Hagar into the wilderness. It should be noted that Islamic tradition switches the roles of the two brothers: there it is Ishmael who comes under the knife. But the issues remain unchanged.

The close connection between the two half-brothers transcends their sacrificial role: the fate of each one is determined by God's command: one to the knife, the other to the wilderness. But, mirroring the cruel order, salvation too arrives by heavenly intervention: each of the brothers is saved from the claws of fate, at the last moment and by the workings of Divine will. The tale comes full circle on Abraham's demise, when the brothers, apparently rivals and adversaries, come together to bring their father to burial. The numerous parallels between Isaac and Ishmael highlight the moral dilemmas arising out of the ferocity of the Divine decree. Why was Abraham required to offer up those he cherished? A believer would reply simply that this was God's way of testing his faith.

Such an answer may satisfy traditional supporters of any of the monotheistic religions. But the skeptic in relation to any of these faiths seeks answers elsewhere.

THROUGH A SKEPTICAL EYE

The non-believer finds little difficulty in defining God's role in the tale of Isaac's sacrifice. The God of Abraham was, simultaneously, the offspring and rival of the pagan divinities of the time, whom He was expected to battle as "God of Hosts". As magic token to guarantee triumph on the field of battle, there was call for a bloodthirsty, arbitrary god, who therefore had to call upon the blind obedience of the faithful. This loyalty could be tested by unquestioning obedience to any arbitrary demand, and the willingness of the believers to offer up everything they cherished. The skeptic notes further that God came to be regarded as "merciful" and "benevolent", but there is a lurking suspicion that it is a kind of game of "good-cop-bad-cop", with religious teaching seeming to imply that if we fail to work things out with the "good" God, we will soon be confronted with his cruel alter ego of antiquity. That being so, we had better toe the line. The dream of any ruling elite.

For here, the skeptic would argue, the underlying import of the tale of Isaac's sacrifice - indeed, the true function of any religious faith. Religion discharges a social role, in the service of the powers that be. For faith transforms each individual into a submissive "Abraham"; obedience to one single and unique divinity easily translates into subservience to the ruler ("by the will of God"). Just as Abraham bowed to the cruel whims of the Lord who commanded him, so are we likewise required to present ourselves whenever called, naked knife in hand, ready for anything. "At your command...." Amen.

When we consider the identity of the ego - out of the collective memory of victim and in the absence of direct experience of the events - the artistic creation undergoes transformation to come into being again. Whether story, event, or trauma, when transformed and creatively cloned, the experience of the Other is transposed into the identity of the artist's ego.

Thus it is in the work of Yosefa Drescher who, following in her father's footsteps, relocates the identities of her family members into her own. This transformation gives rise to a new identity, constructed out of the memory of the Other. A plunge into the past becomes present, within the artist's personal memory.

Asad Azi hurls us straight into the experience of the victim, with a direct regard at the mirror of private conscience, where the identities of sacrificed and sacrificer are reflected, denying the observer the relief of forgetting. It is an intimate encounter with pain - a Weltschmerz we all sense - on the death of any child.

The work by Oshrat Bentor is a nexus, a nerve centre of the female experience; a tormented identity, aware of future victims. The connections - infinite, cyclical, uterine, associating torment and beauty - bear hope and succor. Scrutiny of the open wound that afflicts us, arouses memory and purifies it. The mother's sacrifice is simultaneously the sacrifice of femininity. The "great mother" leads us, sightless, along a *via dolorosa*, internal and external, beyond time, with the artist's sure touch. Is this the path of reconciliation and comprehension?



The New Gallery Teddy Stadium, Jerusalem

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עיריית ירושלים, האגף לתרבות
Jerusalem Municipality

הגלריה החדשה איצטדיון טדי, ירושלים

אוצרת הגלריה: חדוה שמש

עיצוב קטלוג: קרן ישראלי

תמונה: סמך קדרי

Sacrifice



Oshrat - Helen Bentor - Asad Azi - Yosefa Drescher