

Traces of Existence

What to do on a rainy day? Artist, Hila Laviv

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Jewish Museum c/o Dalarna Museum

Hila Laviv is an artist based in Tel Aviv, far distant from Sweden's forests with their riches of blueberries and wild strawberries. Despite this, her pictures are full of fragments of the Swedish countryside. Her narratives and her art work their way in via the Hälsinggården kibbutz and they stretch across the world through the generations, in the form of memories and objects. Her art is far from being nostalgic even though she often seeks nourishment from her family history and from her grandmother Noni. Hila Laviv is a solitary who narrates an independent story. The traces of existence have brought us to a story that really begins long before the kibbutz was established at Hälsinggården and which is much more complex than we could possibly imagine. It is thanks to Hila's art that the historical roots become visible, letting us sense a narrative that is very much broader. Hila's subtle and loving artistic treatment in the apple orchard at Hälsinggården does not just bring the place's history to life, but also her very own story. By means of the artistic process, the alternation of memories that Noni and Hila have shared since Hila was a child, have metamorphosed into cut-out images, or into a vacuum and to phantom images of a common memory. It was Anna Warburg who wrote the book about "fun things to do for children" together with Elsa Beskow. Hila got to know the book at her grandmother's and this encouraged her to work with paper and scissors while she was a child. The visual impression we gain from Hila Laviv's art reflects not only a joint visual world. It also tells us about the female force that they both represented during the patriarchal 1920s. Elsa Beskow's beautiful illustrations and clever tales communicated a subtle contribution to social discourse at the time. In her fairy-tale world one senses a questioning of accepted norms and hierarchies hidden beneath a surface of elves and fabled animals. In Hila's art these memories and fragments have been reduced and transformed into a variety of dimensions. Using photography, three-dimensional forms are shifted to a two-dimensional plane of a memory, a phantom image. The story and the

visual memories fuse and are turned into a new tale by changing the scale. There is a book. There is a cane rocking chair. There are lampshades decorated with unidentifiable flowers. And there are wooden toys. Some of the items have undertaken the same journey as Noni and her sister Eva to escape persecution in Germany, the journey that led to the kibbutz in Falun. The Pluba-brand toys, were made in the kibbutz. Some of them remained unsold and they journeyed on with the youngsters to Israel where they were spread around in their adult lives. The items to which Hila has given such loving importance form the start of the narrative which we encounter in the garden.

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