

Nature Reserve

By: Anat Lidror, curator

Sofie Berzon MacKie came to the kibbutz as a child from the great city of London, and has since held within her these two different worlds.

Sofie dreams, photographs and digitally treats animals and plants, in every "nature" she finds around her, from her infancy in England, through her childhood in the kibbutz and its surroundings, to her life as a mother to children growing up in today's kibbutz. She is also interested in the blackbird in the tree in front of her house, nocturnal creatures and camouflage in animals, the animals from the London Zoo, and butterflies from here and there. The beginning for her is a deep black death that can swallow you up; it is joined by meticulous parts of animals, Israeli nature (irises, cyclamen, fig leaves), kibbutz horticulture (a Bauhinia tree, bougainvillea, calla lilies - in Be'eri people used to plant them in their front gardens) and typical kibbutz still life. Like Ziva, she isolates images: the lamppost, the curtains of the social hall, a brutalist-style bench.

Sofie puts together collages, small islands, stories of identity and place. She is drawn to and draws from the worlds of museums of natural history and zoos, both institutions that were born in the 19th century and saw themselves as cultural institutions, a source of education, even though they were largely a showcase for imperialist colonialism. The zoos keep animals whose surroundings are painted and the cage frames them like a painting; in museums, the animals are dead, catalogued, on timeless display. Both are examples of human dominance. How did these institutions come about and with this kind of aesthetics? When did man and beast lose the balance in their relationship?

"In modern times, man has become detached from nature, changing the attitude towards animals that have become raw materials, commodities. Zoos are where we go to watch animals. Animals disappear everywhere. Their presence in zoos is a monument to their disappearance." This is what John Berger writes. Berger opposes the disconnect between life, nature and art. Today, he claims, "culture operates in parallel with nature and is completely separated from it. Even the appearance of nature itself is reduced into a commodity." Sofie believes that the historic loss that zoos are a monument to is irreversible in the culture that capitalism produces, but she does not yield to nostalgia but "wonders about the composition, the mix, the current identity of my kibbutz, the processes of constructing or deconstructing identity, closed and conservative communities, about hybrid creatures and the beauty and promise inherent in them. "

Sofie seems to have arrived at the simple kibbutz, with its small and common nature, with her European eyes and aesthetics, so that her camera heroically captures even the simplicity of a puddle with the gaze of a London immigrant: half enchanted, half dressing these common sights in regal robes. "The kibbutz can exist in a completely separate solar system from London and that would make sense to me. I live with these universes spiralling within me. The integration and differentiation processes of immigrants are a dynamic thing that lasts a lifetime, it is a process of continuous dialogue between parts of your identity and this dialogue never ends, that is its nature, it is fluid and dynamic. Mine exists in the paths of the kibbutz. " - Sofie Berzon MacKie.