

Within Reach

Ashdod Museum of Art, 2016

Curator: Iris Mendel

Dana Darvish's works, presented in three different locations, are linked by a thematic and formal connection that gradually unfolds throughout the exhibition. The works are characterized by a dark monochromatic palette, and revolve around a static female figure that undergoes transformation, or rather – is trapped in a state of transforming, unable to leave or escape. Like three enigmatic Venuses in different poses, connected to one another in a genealogical relation. The videos and the photograph, created in the technique of collage, are comprised of images that the artist selected from ready-made photographs and films. Out of these "archeological" layers and the interplay between the tangible and the ephemeral, emerges a new, fabricated, and anonymous identity.

The video work "**Rear View**" (2012) greets the visitors at the entrance to the exhibition, and in keeping with its cyclical loop, also serves as its end point. At the center of the frame we see an unidentified woman from the back, the camera focusing on her neck and head. Motionless, she gazes toward the black nocturnal horizon, while her body changes ceaselessly, becoming the locus of tumultuous volcanic activity. The carefully arranged hair is ruffled and dissolves in a mountain of dust and metal as her entire body becomes the arena of apocalyptic events. The figure's head may bring to mind the staging of the imposter in Hitchcock's 1958 film *Vertigo*, where our gaze is drawn to the back of the actress (Kim Novak) head, while she is sitting in front of a portrait painting in a museum. The resemblance to this scene is also inspired by the styling of the hair and the tense stillness of the woman, who seem to belong in the past.

In Dana Darvish second video work, "**Slave to the Rhythm**", a motionless sculptural figure appears and disappears alternately in a murky space. For a brief moment her body flashes in the darkness like a silhouette, and immediately changes into a rocky terrain. Like a Classical statue discovered at the bottom of the sea, she seems sunken and trapped in the abyss, the chains on her hands underscore the servitude which is her fate. Darvish creates a mystery of stillness, uncertainty, and constant flux, which relates, among other things, to an internal-mental state. While viewing the work, there is a sneaking feeling that we could grasp the figure and touch her, yet she remains unattainable and disappears beyond a thick curtain of folds."

The point of departure for the photograph "**Untitled (After Man Ray)**", which features a partially nude female model, is a photograph taken by Man Ray (Untitled, 1928). Darvish places Ray's model in an ambiguous space, while the fish that circle her body suggest that she is submerged underwater. Her body, recumbent in a sexual pose, looks as though it was subjected to violence: the face was erased from the photograph to the point of transparency, bringing to mind an X-ray; a rectangular frame, one of its sides resembles a bat swung over the woman's head, delimits her body as in an attempt to capture her; and finally, a long rope coils around her, forming a loop knot around her neck. All these conjure a feeling of danger and threat. Like in the other works, the figure is suspended in a destructive moment without any possibility to break away from its loop. Surrounded by the silence of the fish, she is sinking into the deeps.