



started with photography very early – 14 or something. But then I found myself accidentally starting with painting.

DID IT COME VERY NATURALLY TO YOU?

AH: Yes, it came so naturally to me.

DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS SOMEONE WHO PAINTS OR DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS A PAINTER?

AH: I consider myself as someone who sometimes does these paintings. I mean, this is my role, yes? But I consider myself as someone who paints – not as a painter in the romantic sense. I'm always changing what I'm doing.

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF CONTINUING PAINTING OR DO YOU SEE YOURSELF EXPLORING SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN ANOTHER TEN YEARS?

AH: I see myself continuing painting. For me, it's very perfect to do it.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE DIFFERENT MATERIALS THAT YOU'RE PAINTING WITH. IS IT MOSTLY ACRYLIC?

AH: It's acrylic. It's industrial colors. Like lacquer from when you paint at home, like your windows. Not only acrylic and industrial (paints), but spray (paint).

WHY DO YOU CHOOSE THAT KIND OF PAINT?

AH: I like those colors because there is something very much from the moment. It's not a holy painting I would like to stay (around) for the next ten thousand years. It's for now. And most of those colors, when you see the

painting, you can really relate to it. It's something that belongs to the environment. I have a two years old child, and he's really attracted to this. He always wants to touch it.

ARE THE COLOR QUALITIES ACTUALLY DIFFERENT OR IS IT MORE JUST KNOWING THAT THE PAINT IS NOT SO PRECIOUS?

AH: I think it's both. I make it precious on another level. Like inviting you just to be happy and to look and not to make some differences between art and life and high level and low level. Everybody can look and relate and touch. I would like that people touch my works. Sometimes when you touch it, it's really sexy. I wouldn't like for people to get distance from the work – that they just look, and that's it.

YOUR GALLERY CAN'T BE TOO HAPPY ABOUT THAT, THOUGH.

AH: When it's in my gallery in Israel, I tell them that it's okay. But when it's in the museum, of course it's not possible.

THE REOCCURRING WOMAN IN A LOT OF YOUR PAINTINGS: IS THAT A SPECIFIC WOMAN? IS THAT YOU? IS THAT SOMEBODY YOU KNOW?

AH: No, it's an image from a magazine I just found. I have two main models, unknown to me, both from a magazine, and I feel connected to them. But no, I don't know them, and even don't know their names.

THAT'S WEIRD. I WONDER WHAT YOU WOULD SAY TO THEM IF YOU MET THEM.

AH: I guess it would be a kind of boring meeting. I'd have too much expectation from her.

# ArtReview

INTERNATIONAL ART & STYLE

## Alona Harpaz

Born Tel Aviv, 1971. Lives in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Represented by Sommer Contemporary, Tel Aviv

### Richard Prince, artist:

I was at the Miami art fair last year, walking around looking at things and I saw this painting by Alona. I asked the person in charge of the booth to tell me about the artist. I didn't know if a girl or a guy did it. The person said it was a girl artist. Grew up in Tel Aviv and moved to Berlin. The person showed me a catalogue of her work. All self-portraits. The painting I was looking at reminded me of Matisse meets Poike meets punk. Maybe there was some

Kippenberger in there but I think mostly I liked the way the paint was poured and lightly brushed to make this face with a naked body and some kind of 'kitty' hat on the head. The colours were all hers and the way she dragged her paint was mixing up the medicine.



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KING OF ART ALONA HARPAZ NOMINATED BY RICHARD PRINCE



*We inadvertently offended Israeli-born artist ALONA HARPAZ when we referred to her paintings as “old fashioned,” and yeah, in 20/20 hindsight, that was perhaps not the best choice of words. But what we meant to say is that they have a warm, classic feel that stands apart from any current art trend we can think of. Harpaz seems to be off on her own, with her kid and her cat, looking at the world around her and making lovely paintings drawn from the details of daily life.*

**WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO MOVE TO BERLIN?**

ALONA HARPAZ: I met my boyfriend in India five years ago. And then I moved to Berlin. I was quite sure I wanted to come and try (living) here. I didn't know I would stay so long.

**THERE'S NOT ANY POLITICS ABOUT BEING FROM ISRAEL AND MOVING TO BERLIN?**

AH: Maybe there is. But you know I'm not so busy with that. It's not my issue. I guess there is an issue when you are a really political person, and you put so much energy there, so you can find (politics) everywhere. But here, for me, it's not a topic at all. I'm doing my thing.

**YOUR PAINTINGS HAVE SORT OF A FOLK ART OR OLD-FASHIONED FEEL, ALMOST LIKE YOU'RE REFERRING TO ART FROM THE LATE 19TH CENTURY OR EARLY 20TH CENTURY. I'M WONDERING WHAT YOUR INFLUENCES ARE, VISUALLY.**

AH: It's really from life. You know, it's the people around me, the materials around me, the art around me... It's not something specific. I'm more into nature and trees. Actually, I don't get so much what you said. What do you mean “old fashioned?”

**TO ME, IT'S NOT MODERN, IT'S NOT “COOL.” YOUR WORK SEEMS MORE WARM AND CALM...**

AH: There is something in what you say. I'm not trying to be cool or modern. Definitely not. I'm trying to be who I am, just in each moment. Sometimes it

tends to be very boring, and sometimes it's totally modern and fashion. But I'm not looking after it. It's not some intense searching. It's more like, what is supposed to come around me is always there. It's always perfect. It's always exactly what I need. I just have to open my eyes, and it's here.

**DO YOU SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN NATURE? YOU HAVE A LOT OF ANIMALS AND TREES AND PLANTS IN YOUR WORK...**

AH: No, I don't spend a lot of time in nature. I have maybe more of a longing to spend more time in nature. And the nature is also the tree that I see from my window. It's not necessarily nature in the woods. But I do have a cat. I brought a cat from Israel – Yanouah. He's very special here in Germany. He's very cool, because he looks a bit Arabic. He's not a European cat. So everybody's very amazed from him, but in Israel we call him a “garbage cat.”

**WHY?**

AH: He's a very cheap cat from Israel. I found him on the street. But in Germany, he looks aristocratic.

**WHEN DID YOU START PAINTING? WERE YOU PAINTING SINCE YOU WERE VERY YOUNG?**

AH: No, I started ten years ago. I'm now 34. I started when I was 24. Everything happened in a couple years. I'd been a photographer before. I