

Dana Darvish

“Actual Animals”

Solo Exhibition at Arad Contemporary Art Center, 2021

Curator: Leah Abir | Opening: 16.4.21

During her stay in Arad, Dana Darvish found herself repeatedly returning to one place: on the outskirts of the city, in the industrial area, near the factories and the main landfill, where free dogs live. They are not pets but also not wild animals. Every evening, activists from the "Arad Lachay" animal welfare organization come there to feed and water these dogs, the outcasts, the expelled, who have been pushed beyond the boundaries of sight. In what looks like wilderness and aridity, like piles of neglected remains and alienated industrial buildings, Darvish's look at the lives of the outcast dogs community reveals to us powerful, proud and hunched forces, of survival, compassion, family and friendship.

This series of photographs directly raises the issue of animal rights – an area in which Israeli society and legislation are disturbingly lagging behind. But Darvish's loving photography, which respects distance, does not respond to the schemes of activist or documentary photography. It brings us together with figures who are “at the same time creatures of imagined possibility and creatures of fierce and ordinary reality” – actual

dogs, singular figures of flesh and blood. Having become real subjects, these dogs ask us to consider the social struggles of every living soul whatever it is, and questions of sovereignty, ownership, exclusion and freedom. In essence, this series of works deals with ethics and humanity, in their most fundamental and complicated meanings, and formulates a complex and unpredictable representation of freedom.

A special section in the exhibition is dedicated to previous works by the artist, created since 2014 under the title "The Destruction of All Art". These are collages that join together different images like artworks, commercials, and movie stills. The act of putting the different images together produces for them a different history, organs they did not know, words they could not imagine. "The Destruction of All Art" also features images of animals, which take on meanings connected to the body, to sexuality, language and more. Here, however, they join a whole spectrum of images that travel through visual history, foreign images that peek under each other, are swallowed up or cut into each other as if they were always hidden there.