

This is Not My Tree

Curated by Nina Mdivani

Participating artists: Yael Azoulay, Eli Barak, Omer Ben-Zvi, Mosen Binnalee, Delano Dunn, Jan Dickey, Michal Geva, Jon Gomez, Lia Kim Farnsworth, Tamara Kvesitadze, Netta Laufer, Dana Levy, Pedro Mesa, Mark Tribe

March 26-April 16, 2021



Eli Barak, *A Rolling Stone*, 2015-2016, image still from single channel video, 5:23

NARS Foundation is pleased to present *This is Not My Tree*, a group show of fourteen artists curated by New York-based independent curator **Nina Mdivani**. The exhibition considers several questions. First, how new species change and destabilize the ecosystem and over time assimilate into hierarchical groups, irrevocably changing them while simultaneously adapting to the existing conditions. Second, how migration stories of our times mirror these environmental movements and how artistic works could show these complex processes. Third, why and where do we feel at home and what is an ecosystem on our human, every-day, level. As globalization is showing its alternative face, we are faced with the collective question of where do we belong and how we know it. If until now we, almost blissfully, lived in a dream of integration and connectivity we are forced to once again reevaluate our notions of territoriality, control, and parameters of trust. In the presented works natural habitats stand in for human ecosystems,

some of them being welcoming and open, others prejudiced, discriminating, and punishing. Considering nature and environmentalism as part of social theory is necessary if we want to have a more rounded understanding of human journeys. Presented artists come from Israel, Georgia, Saudi Arabia, United States, and Colombia, but all of them share either immigrant past or present and find connection with natural environment as their main metaphor.

The name of the exhibition comes from the work of **Yael Azoulay**, who similarly to **Tamara Kvesitadze** and **Eli Barak** looks at the concept of belonging, self-perception within the larger natural and social context, our attempt to fit in either through assuming a new identity, trying to shed an old one, or remaining an outlier, a proverbial rolling stone. In this show they use watercolor, photography and video to present their positions.

Mosen Binnalee and **Michal Geva** both consider nature of post colonialism and impermanence as it relates to the notions of architecture, artifacts, or objects of material culture yet, observed in interaction with forces of nature. Notions of control, disruption, and disintegration are investigated in their mediums of video and painting respectively.

Netta Laufer and **Jan Dickey** look at the nature of borders pertaining to ecosystems and states. Laufer surveillance footage from the border with Palestine does not show people, but instead shows how animals continue to permeate man-made constructs in the age of Anthropocene. Dickey's site-specific installation looks at the mechanism of adaptation when confronted with instances of hierarchy and control.

Pedro Mesa and **Mark Tribe** use drawing and painting to evaluate how we relate to nature as a mental construct. Outwardly humans might fight for its purity, while implicitly use ideologies to undermine it. Tribe employs hyper-realistic painting style to analyze the duplicity of the American Manifest Destiny as dominant force for destruction of indigenous populations and habitats. Mesa's detailed drawings explore Colombia's sacred grounds as they are transformed by mining.

Omer Ben-Zvi, **Jon Gomez**, and **Delano Dunn** ask questions of how do we physically co-exist with a surrounding environment and relate to its power structures. They use fieldwork as well as scientific research to extrapolate relevant narratives. **Ben-Zvi** investigates plant galls that enter simultaneously parasitic and symbiotic relationship with the plants they invade and gives us enlarged ceramic representation of this mechanism. **Jon Gomez** documents a migrant's perilous journey through the Devil's Highway, Arizona and shows how desert becomes an indelible part of this nameless person's identity. **Delano Dunn**'s misleadingly cheerful colors portray a reality that has a lot of dissonance juxtaposing figures of authority with allegorical birds, with danger lurking underneath, an uncertainty closely related to the reality of the day.

Dana Levy and **Lia Kim Farnsworth** both work with natural environment as a metaphoric device for asking questions about our shared colonial past as well as apocalyptic future. **Levy** uses Everglades to construct a floating studio of a European explorer unable to become part of the Florida's natural habitat. **Farnsworth** uses opaque containers with carefully researched plants as means to blend the reality of today with the unsettled future affected by climate change. In both of these environments, humans are simultaneously actors and narrators.

All fourteen artists recognize the uncertain and precarious time we are inhabiting. Nature of borders is changing affecting our understanding of belonging, social and natural ecosystems, native and invasive species, mechanisms of adaptation. By looking at flora and fauna in a larger social context we are able to have a novel discussion of where we are as human species.

Accessibility:

Nars Foundation is only wheelchair accessible via prior arrangement - please contact programs@narsfoundation.org to arrange this. Free tap water available. There is no nearby accessible public transport. On street parking is available. Please consider coming to this event scent free. For further questions regarding accessibility, please contact NARS directly at programs@narsfoundation.org.

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