

Press Release: October 13, 2017

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## CEPA GALLERY PRESENTS OPENING & SPECIAL PERFORMANCE BY ACCLAIMED PERFORMANCE ARTISTS TAMY BEN-TOR & MIKI CARMİ



**Buffalo, NY**— CEPA is pleased to present a new installation and performance work by renowned avant-garde artist duo Tamy Ben-Tor and Miki Carmi, as part of *Place Relations: Identity in Contemporary Israeli Avant-Garde Art*. There will be a reception with the artists on Friday, October 27 from 6-8pm with a live performance by Tamy Ben-Tor at 8pm. This event is free and open to the public.

Tamy Ben-Tor and Miki Carmi's installation at CEPA Gallery is an attempt to mash together two strong artistic personalities that seemingly do not have much in common. It's a kind of experiment - a challenge posed by the artists for themselves - or a test: can this real-life couple also work as an artistic duo?

The exhibition features a number of video works by Tamy Ben-Tor, ranging from her famous video performances with 'talking heads', in which the artist wears make-up and costumes and plays roles, commenting in a perverse way on her situation as an Israeli artist living in New York, to her more recent video work. Initially, the artist used video as a means of working and also to document her performances, which are the most important area of her artistic activity. Later, they gained the status of autonomous works whose form is continuously evolving, and that are also influenced by Miki Carmi and his art. Constantly provoking 'normal' art viewers, the artist examines in a perverse and witty way her Jewish identity, contemporary perception of the Holocaust, and life in the New York art world. The selection of ten paintings from Miki Carmi's last 16 years of work is an excerpt from the artist's life-long project - since the late 1990s, Carmi has conducted a peculiar kind of anthropological research on a quest to find the so-called Jewish type. Initially, the paintings showed hyper-realistic portraits of persons representing those considered

to be “lower” races, but were then dominated by portraits of his family members. The paintings also become increasingly abstract, with the artist reducing the faces of his models to purely biological features: ears, nose, mouth, eyes and skin. The portraits have become a brutal testimony to the passage of time.

Apart from sharing a similar starting point for their otherwise formally different artistic works, the artists are directly linked by the theme of masks. Ben-Tor puts on various countenances and surrounds herself with props, while Carmi simplifies and synthesises, depriving his characters of the individual characteristics his partner plays with and combines to create her protagonists. Carmi’s endeavours pose a challenge to the viewer’s empathy and resilience in the face of decomposition and biodegradation, presented like a death mask. Ben-Tor wakes to life characters that are supposed to be tools for the viewer to use to study themselves, their own limitations, and their sense of comfort.

But primarily, this is a very personal project - both artists have involved their family members in their works, treating them as objects of study and putting them on display. They analyse their own identity and, by working as a duo, eventually do a vivisection of their own marriage, redefining their relationship. As portrayed by Miki Carmi, his family members, parents and grandparents all appear in Tamy Ben-Tor’s videos. Among Miki’s drawings we can find sketches of Tamy during her performances; Miki dressing in Tamy’s costumes, and Tamy videoing him as he takes pictures of his grandmother, etc. Art is mixed with the private life, and what was separate becomes common.

**Tamy Ben-Tor**(b. 1975, Jerusalem) - lives and works in New York. Performance and video artist. Graduated from Columbia University School of the Arts, New York and The School of Visual Theatre, Jerusalem. Selected individual exhibitions: 2014Radical Humanism(with Miki Carmi), Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv, and 1646 Project Space, The Hague; 2010Disembodied Archetypes(with Miki Carmi), Zach Feuer Gallery, New York, Stefan Stux Gallery, New York, Beaumontpublic +königbloc, Luxemburg; 2009 Atlanta Contemporary art Center; 2008 Kunsthalle Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland; The Kitchen, New York; 2007 PERFORMA 07, Salon 94, New York. Selected group exhibitions: 2015 Le Nouveau Festival du Centre Pompidou, Centre Pompidou, Paris; 2013Theatrical Gestures, Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Israel; 2005Day Labor; PS1/MoMA, New York. Works in collections: American University Museum, Washington; Miami Art Museum, Miami; Tel Aviv Museum of Art; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

**Miki Carmi**(b. 1976, Jerusalem) - lives and works in New York. Painter. Graduated from Columbia University in New York and Bezalel Academy of Fine Arts in Jerusalem. Selected individual exhibitions: 2014Radical Humanism(with Tamy Ben-Tor), Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv, and 1646 Project Space, The Hague; 2010Disembodied Archetypes(with Tamy Ben-Tor), Zach Feuer Gallery, New York, Stefan Stux Gallery, New York, Beaumontpublic +königbloc, Luxemburg; 2007Shrunken Heads, Anne De Villepoix Gallerie, Paris. Selected group exhibitions: 2013Jewyork, Untitled Gallery, New York, and Zach Feuer, New York; 2012Summer, Stefan Stux Gallery, New York; 2011Monanism, Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Tasmania. Works in collections: Jerry Speyer Collection, HVCCA (Hudson Valley Center of Contemporary Arts), and Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Tasmania.

**Event:** Place Relations: *Tamy Ben-Tor & Miki Carmi Opening and Performance*

**Date:** Friday, October 27 2017. Reception with the artists from 6-8pm. Performance at 8pm.

**Location:** CEPA Gallery, 617 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14203

*\*High-resolution images available by request.*