

The Gates of Air Are Barred with Doors¹

Irit Abramovich

Curator: Sagit Zluf Namir

Artist Irit Abramovich's first solo exhibition explores the meaning of perspective and its implications for understanding reality. Through a wide range of techniques – direct photography, 3D scans, drone photography, and photos taken from a glider – Abramovich uses the camera as a dynamic tool for expanding the boundaries of human vision. By shifting the gaze from “eye level” to “aerial level”, she examines questions of stability, migration and displacement, bringing the viewer closer to how her protagonists – migrating birds – experience aerial suspension.

The exhibition is based on the gap between two elements: on one hand, the human quest for a “permanent structure,” a safe home and land, which in our local context is often accompanied by a sense of transience and doubt; and on the other hand, bird migration, which is motivated by survival and biological needs, with no expectation of eternal ownership over any particular territory.

Through her camera, Abramovich shifts the viewpoint, echoing Hito Steyerl's concept of “vertical perspective.”² Steyerl asserts that looking down from above demonstrates how in modern times we have lost any safe anchor, generating a sense of “groundlessness.” This sensation is an overarching theme in the exhibition.

The very same sensation that can elicit a sense of threat and anxiety for humans is second nature for migrant birds. A fascinating reflection of this phenomenon can be found among the swifts appearing in the exhibition. Swifts live most of their lives in the air, without anchoring for any extended period on the ground or becoming attached to materiality. They live lives of constant migration which depend on their physical ability to fulfill all their biological needs while in flight. They are the “ultimate migrant” – with no need for any permanent structure.

Indeed, the “permanent structure” appearing in the exhibition is transformed through the same vertical perspective: Abramovich photographs the roof of a house in her neighborhood, from a bird's eye view, abstracting it visually and conceptually, draining it of its volume, and maybe even its essence. The

“roof over our heads,” which represents protection, becomes a permeable surface, infiltrated by its surroundings. The home is not a shelter, the outside breaches it.

This shift in perspective is expressed both through drone photography and through photos taken from a glider. This process enables the artist to merge her own gaze with that of the migrant birds, to move with them, and to turn the expanse into a space of relative freedom.

This merger is disrupted by a foreign object with a dominant color and shape: the aerial visibility marker. This orange ball hangs on high voltage cables, serving as both a warning and a marker for Abramovich’s glider and the birds alike. Abramovich removes it from its context and redirects attention to it. It constitutes a kind of “permanent structure” which serves as an anchor in the open expanse and allows orientation within the vastness of the sky, while representing boundaries and disruption.

One of these balls appears in the exhibition space, a 3D scan of the very same ball projected upon it, highlighting the gap between the complete ball and the damaged and distorted one: the ball that no longer serves its purpose. Through this installation, Abramovich emphasizes the point of encounter and the potential collision between the birds’ natural migration and human intervention in aerial space.

The tension appearing in the works between vertical perspective detached from the ground, and the search for an anchor, is also present in the gallery space. Abramovich challenges the accepted forms of display and aims to unsettle the viewer’s sense of orientation. By distorting spatial orientation and through immersive projection, visitors become active participants in the experience of suspension, boundlessness, and maybe even the search for them.

Sagit Zluf Namir

¹ Based on Poem of Parmenides, Hebrew translation by Yehuda Liebes

² Hito Steyerl, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/24/67860/in-free-fall-a-thought-experiment-on-vertical-perspective>