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An Apocryphal Modernism¹

Who would have thought that a warm neck would turn into armrests, that legs / eager for flight and joy would stiffen into four simple crutches. / Once chairs were so beautiful, flower-devouring animals. / But they easily let themselves become domesticated and now they are the meanest / kind of quadrupeds. They have lost their obstinacy and courage. They are only patient.

– Zbigniew Herbert, “Chairs”²

In a small place – once in Kibbutz Messilot, once in Petach Tikva, Tel Aviv, or Moshav Beit Hanan – Nahum Tevet, artist (“carpenter”, as he puts it, or “Papa Gepetto”), recounts to himself anew one of the most meaningful chapters in the history of modernism – the modernist move at one edge of which is the Bauhaus and Constructivism, bearing traces of Cubism and Cézanne, and at the other minimalism and postminimalism, with artists such as Richard Artschwager, Robert Ryman or Richard Tuttle. These are two kinds and two edges of modernist practice, its beginning and its end (its “post-”), and between them, woven and unraveled alternately, is a net of various contexts and possible histories, reciprocal affinities and contradictory interpretations of some of the burning issues of the contemporary art discourse. But just as the elements of Tevet’s work are identified as so connected with those distinctive moves of modern art – so too, in another moment, it is immediately discernible that the configuration of the details and the ways they are organized in space divert the works away from the common frames of recognition of the modernist canon.

This deviation by Tevet from the canonical procedures of modernism is also discernible in the development of his works, each of them separately and all of them together, as an autonomous systemic organization, which does indeed borrow data from the major melting pots of modernist practice, but at the same time, out of an awareness of its peripheral place, also turns into an alternative biosphere. As such it directs the images of movement, the concatenation and the development in the works from within

themselves, disseminates their seeds in its own way, develops and diversifies, constructs and takes apart, piles up and knocks down, takes risks and stabilizes itself, moves and halts within and according to structures and motives dependent on themselves, conditioned by the Tevetian genealogy. And nonetheless it is worth noting once again that Tevet's work, in each stage of this genealogy, formulates itself in relation to its own history, that is to say: while the work continuously improves its own autonomization and its auto-indexicality, it also continues to do this as an allusion (even if in the guise of a faded trace) to what was once Bauhaus, Constructivism, minimalism,³ or some other cornerstone of modernism.

From within this dual indexicality, Tevet's work has a reckoning with the early and the late moments of the modernist move: it raises questions about orientations in European modernism and about possibilities of their historical transfer across the ocean, to the arms (or maws) of the American culture; it asks whether it is possible to gaze soberly at the various styles: and not only at the point of their growth from visions of utopian and idealistic art movements, but also at the moment when they changed their skin and became partners in an epistemological mechanism and in textual fields whose arrows of criticism would intercept immediately any highflying expression in an art product;⁴ it examines whether orientations that were described in merely formalistic terms, as if their entire concern was the organization of forms and bodies in space, nonetheless preserve traces of ideological motives; it seeks, too – among the reflexive gazes at the ways of modernism (which are known as postmodernist gazes) and the art movements that inscribed on their banner the social, the public, the semiotic, the phenomenological interest – the stamp of the individual's hand, and what has been left of the image of the subject.⁵

Far from the capitals of the modernist saga and from the heroic moments in which obligatory affinities (expressing support or opposition) were created between its forms and inventions and the burning issues of the moment, Tevet's work restores this saga to the zone of micro-territorial and extra-chronological time. In this extra-terrestrial time capsule it re-directs the moves of early modernism towards the later, terminal ones. The ways that are suggested in the works wind hither and thither around well-known historical moves, as though from a recognition of their importance and centrality – but at

the same time casting doubt on the familiar, “correct” and “final” formulation of these moves, as though from a chronic skepticism about the very possibility of knowing them. Thus, while Tevet trains his works to shift formal elements about from one artistic position to another, the works as-it-were permit themselves to divert details from the straight path of the canonical formulations. The multiplicity of deviations spins the modernist narrative in ways that are as diverse as possible: in its detours and its representational ways, in the forkings and re-intersections of way, in the emphasizing of milestones but also in their distortion and perforation, in the proposing of peepholes into niches and concealed paths. This re-weighting, in its encompassing not only the routes of modernism but also what is labeled postmodernism, makes Tevet’s work a partner in the crystallization of a postmodern awareness of the moves and the failings of modernism – but in this too it functions as a mirror of this awareness, as an awareness of an awareness.

Tevet sets up the elements of his works, which may be seen as traces of decisive moments in modernism, as organs that are defined by the reciprocal connections among them: they always come one after the other, in a kind of succession or consequentiality, wearing the appearance of a foyer to another configuration, while not infrequently one item supports another or leans on it, grows out of it or sticks to it like a parasite, while beside it there are bodies that seem to be setting out on a journey or storing some form inside a hollow frame form, in the framework of an active organization of a sculptural composition in space. These reciprocal connections do not at all relate to the canonical historiography of the historical moments alluded to by the given details. The Tevetian organization of the elements of the history is as-it-were severed from any historical reliability, yet it is nonetheless relevant and topical each time anew, as long as it crystallizes in a sculptural momentum of one kind or another. Moreover, Tevet’s historiographical drafts have no validity except when they are set up in a complex manner in space, in seductive ways that nourish decipherment but also play pranks with it; signs of the historical time exist in his work only while they are standing in a sculptural space – and the Tevetian spatiality depends on the indices of the time interspersed in it, the time of chronicle of modernism.

The works’ immunity to sterile formalism – to a fall into mere designing, brilliant and virtuoso work though it might

be – depends on their making room to evoke the key moments in the chronicle of modernism and on their relating to it, in a dynamism of the action in the time dimension, in the vitality entailed in transience, in changes of ephemerality, in putting in question, in movement among countless possible movements and hypothetical moves of time. The extra-chronological that maps and positions Tevet's works is also their pan-chronological; hence the immediate and passing moment of each sculptural element (which changes at the moment that it is apperceived in relation to its similar which is a jot different from it) is in a constant affinity to all of time in all its allness, the modernist time that is like a universe that expands ceaselessly in an infinity of ways and concatenations.⁶

The voracious desire displayed by the works to find more and more alternative routes for the modernist story, their challenging of the authoritative historiographical formulation, and the shake-up they give to the familiar routes while distorting them or changing their direction – all these again and again reflect the works' participation in Israeli culture, in the modernist estate that came into being far from the melting pots that constituted the modernist narrative. The code of the extra-modernist action enfolds a deviation from the dialectic embraced within modernism, that on the one hand is identified with a territory (possessing a background that is European, Christian, pagan) saturated with a tradition and a metaphysics of supernal visual images (possessing an aura, Walter Benjamin would say) – and on the other hand rebels, spectacularly, against those traditional representations. The gesture of betraying the tradition, as a movement of parricide, loses some of its meaning and some of its heroics for a work like that of Tevet, which is made within and out of a site of new Israeli art, young in years, which exists on a background (concealed as it may be) of an essentially iconoclastic Jewish world-view. This anti-Oedipality is discernible in the indifference that Tevet's works display towards the militant moves of the avantgarde: in the canonical discourse, for example, the transition from modernism to postmodernism entails abandoning the heroic tone of the ideologies and the utopias (Bauhaus, Constructivism) in favor of the critical discussion – but Tevet's work places the markers of the Bauhaus beside the allusions to minimalism or postminimalism, and even presents the latter as a point of departure for the former, as though from

an equanimity towards the critical awareness and the political responsibility that accompanies the forms of late (post)modernism. In the framework of the reading of minimalism and its derivatives as major partners in the project of the desublimation of contemporary art (that is, its discarding of everything that is not anchored in the circumstances and conditions of its action),⁷ it is customary to map minimalism in terms of epistemological methods, linguistic structures, and textual arrangements. Rosalind Krauss or Hal Foster, for example, describe the main concern of the minimalist orientation as identification of the means in relation to the givens of the site that produces, represents and populates them, while diagnosing their semiotic status in the pan-systemic mechanism of production (“the expanded field”, to use Krauss’s term) and examining their affinities to the concrete conditions of a given display site (which too is saturated with meanings of public contexts: social, cultural, economic).⁸ Since Tevet has been toiling for years to recycle and divert the versions of minimalism that he created in his early work during the ’70s, as the basic measures of all of his works, it is important to emphasize that the network of contexts that shaped the forms of his work already at the outset of his path is not embedded in the socio-economic-cultural field that produced minimalism – with its capitalist logistics, the power mechanisms that rule it, the division of labor practiced in it and the forms of representation prevalent in its domain: it does not relate to an intricate system of exhibiting institutions and economic backing factors (private and state collection bodies), to communications media networks that reign over the images market, to technologies that convey it, and to the exchange of materials between the First World’s means and its art arena. Tevet’s activity outside this place and this time – and, in other words, his non-belonging to the base grid of minimalism – makes it necessary to set out his “minimalism” in a different way and to give a different meaning to the critical or reflexive aspect that is dominant in it. The distance from “the expanded field” makes it necessary to diagnose Tevet’s “minimalist” elements as minimalist-nonminimalist elements.

Here are some quick proposals for reading Tevet’s elements, based on one of the most brilliant and distinctive analyses of canonical minimalism, that of Hal Foster. Foster identifies minimalism (and also the objects of Pop that preceded it) as a distinctive case of sculpture that is entirely anchored in late capitalist production– but at the same time he

takes the trouble to emphasize that its meaning lies precisely in its deviation from the culture industry, because the minimalist object, unlike a commodity, actualizes itself not as a reproduction of something else (which, like it, is a reproduction), but also as different from it.⁹ This difference is what impressed Tevet already at his first encounter with minimalism years ago, as appears from a memoir he has kept from the period of his studies under Raffi Lavie. About a photograph of a work by Donald Judd that was published in one of the art journals he had at home at the time (only there, Tevet says, could one have found such magazines), Lavie said: “We’ve seen lots of cubes like the ones that comprise the work – but we’ve never seen any exactly like them”.¹⁰ In the cube (the “epistemological cube” of minimalism, to use Barbara Rose’s term), on the geometric body that represents the compulsive-arbitrary-mechanistic form, almost concealed changes have been introduced, which activate in it a subversive momentum that speaks to Tevet’s heart. But in Tevet’s works the emphases and the orientation are different from those of the minimalists: the minimalists’ elements refer before anything else to the image of the matrix, to the generic object and the grid of the objectifying and automatic mechanisms of the public space – and only afterwards are the individuating signs of the subject, the artist, imprinted in them; in Tevet’s works, in contrast, that minimalist consummation is a prologue, the beginnings of a move, of a formulation that is personal, stubborn, complicated, unorganized, that paves a way to the engendering, the ordering and the story of the histories of these quasi-found, quasi-environment-dependent, quasi-audience-orienting, quasi-industrial objects, in a totally different way from that described here by Benjamin Buchloh:

The postwar situation can be described as a negative teleology; a steady dismantling of the autonomous practices, spaces and spheres of culture, and a perpetual intensification of assimilation and homogenization, to the point today where we witness what Debord called “the integrated spectacle”. Where does that leave artistic practices in the present [...]? Are there still spaces situated outside that homogenizing apparatus? Or do we have to recognize that many artists themselves don’t want to be situated outside it? [...] I’m

not concluding that every artist in the present defines her or his work as inextricably integrated and affirmative. The artistic capacity might exist not only to reflect on the position that the art work assumes within the wider system of infinitely differentiated representations (fashion, advertisement, entertainment, etc.), but also to recognize its susceptibility to becoming integrated into these subsets of ideological control. And yet, if there are artistic practices that still stand apart from this process of homogenization, I'm less convinced than ever that they can survive.¹¹

Tevet's minimalist-nonminimalist item, which in its distinctive differentness distances itself from the "process of homogenization", allows itself to be formulated as a substitute for (or as a simulacrum of) the standard data of minimalism (which are themselves exchangeable), with the substitute of course taking to an extreme the displacement and exchangeability traits of the minimalist code. In the case of Tevet, the severance of the works (which look minimalistic) from the symbolic space of minimalism makes it possible to describe them as a syntax of simulations of minimalist elements, as a move that evokes only the simulated dimension of the minimalistic images while neutralizing their symbolic aspect – which transforms the images into phantoms of what is meant to be anchored in procedures of the language and the order of "the expanded field". The ephemerality of his sculptural bodies is discernible also in the light weight of the plywood from which they are built, their thinness (about three millimeters) differentiating them from the heavier materiality of the minimalists' objects. "My work is built from the shells of objects, not from the objects themselves", says Tevet. One way or another – whether in their lateral reference to the data of the field of minimalism, or in their longitudinal turn to the historical contexts of cube images in art – Tevet's works invoke the act of emptying encoded in the minimalist object, while emptying it even of its intention to represent itself as the empty face of the mechanisms of language as well as of its historical precedents.

Moreover, since the very choice of activating "minimalist" items entails a commitment to presenting the conditions of the action, Tevet's work, in its distinctive place of action, in fact commits itself to presenting its own distance from pure minimalism. The peripheral distance makes it possible to broaden the range of

observation, the extent of the indexical mechanism enfolded in textual constellations. The definition of each Tevetian item derives from its always being positioned in relation to one other item measured in relation to a different possible embodiment of itself, bound to one other item that directs the gaze towards it. From their earliest phases, and only more and more as time has passed, Tevet's works constitute themselves as language machines that contain not a single independent item that does not anticipate or follow or reproduce or reflect or imitate or distort another item, that is not bound in relations of succession and indexical affinities to another item in the sculptural system. And this has been going on now for more than thirty years, in the course of which Tevet has time after time brought back almost the same elements, the pulse of their return always beating in relation to their earlier manifestations while making changes in the context or in the form, the positioning, the intention (in one case they can stand and in another they may be laid down, in one case they may support and in another be supported). The strange and diverse versions of items that already existed in earlier works are presented as a kind of concatenation of daughter-forms from mother-forms, while in the course of this alert movement of concatenation of forms the linguistic-sculptural mechanism seems to turn unpremeditatedly into a new organism.¹² And it is not only the small elements that are brought back in the later works, but also syntactic sets or even entire works – such as *Painting Lesson No. 9* from 1989, which became the central organ around which the works *Man With a Camera* (1994) and *A Page from a Catalogue* (1998)^{pp.79-93} grew. At this stage, with the large sculptural works made from the '90s onward, Tevet's language machine is actualized in a spatial occurrence, and this is especially conspicuous in the large-scale work *Seven Walks* (1997-2004)^{pp.99-119}, which to a great degree may be seen as the pinnacle of the procedures described here: the elements and the configurations of elements concatenate in it in infinite ways as if out of themselves, in a manner that strengthens its linguistic idiosyncrasy more and more, as though it were a giant organism or an almost declaredly megalomaniac language machine, almost a futile labor apart from its being a response to the will to sever itself – as an act of the language – from the web of contexts and affinities to the world and the reality outside it.

From the same stance, which makes more pointed and extreme the linguistic identity of the items in a work by Tevet, their dissociated, extra-territorial existence,

emptied of the contexts of minimalism and of the immediate legitimation entailed in them, is more acutely sensed. This is the seed of catastrophe concealed in every work by Tevet and also formulated in it, thematized, in the center-less sculptural syntax, in the cancerous proliferating branchings, in the errant wanderings in space (this is especially evident in the late sculptural works, but already in the early works the quest for the lacking center can be felt – for example in the black drawings from the '70s, where in the core of their dark and emptied space there appears a little cross, like one a sniper working in the dark may use to mark the focal point of his gaze on his target). The movement of the works over the years, one work out of and into another, presents Tevet's work also as a machine of emptying, which engages recurrently with what has already been identified as dispossessed of all context, meaning and function while it continues to reproduce the reflexivity entailed in the pointing to the emptiness of the elements. Out of the blockage that is created in Tevet's ways in the course of this proliferating reproduction, out of the power required for the complex formulation of the host of elements in the space that runs out because it contains so many emptied elements, Tevet's work distills the traditional version of "*Vanitas*" in art history into a "vanity of vanities" inherent in the work being made and existing in the world, into "the complete stupidity implicit in this parasitic carpentry and in its taking over more and more territories".

But this anti-Oedipal dissociation in Tevet's works is also the source of their impetus – the starting shot for a vigorous race of addition, division, reproduction and recycling of more and more elements. Out of what seems like an accelerated reproduction of the minimalist gene, the hidden face of the Tevetian art reveals itself. As "minimalistic" elements that are not derived from a given field, mechanism or process, the items in Tevet's works are less obedient to dictates of predetermined definitions and conditions, and hence they are more accessible to the motives of the imagination. The conditioning of the elements' existence on their concatenation out of one another is nourished by the potential of the imagining power with all its twistings and turnings, its inventions, its mischiefs, its acrobatic movements, its strange ways of returning and remembering and recycling things while incessantly changing them. The configuration of items in the works not infrequently aims to see them as images in some narrative concatenation, let us say – as an image of a chair that is prancing on top of an image of a

table that intends an image of a bridge that leads to an image of a boat that turns over on its side and becomes an image of a pressing iron. The intervals between these images – for example, between the “chair” and the “boat” – ask us to think of an unseen human figure that has run into a situation that is strange, at times grotesque, at times absurd, almost always rich in poetic potential.

Tevet’s sculptural works, since the early ’80s, have the appearance of a maze. The structures that have developed in his works since the *Narcissi* sculptures^{seep.31} of the early ’80s were described by him already at that time, in a conversation with Michal Na’aman, as trap configurations, which tempt the eye to penetrate into them and to make paths through them – but reveal themselves to be false temptations, blocking the way rather than leading anywhere.¹³ Over the years his works have continued embodying themselves as configurations of ways – straight and crooked, advancing and reversing – that do not cease masquerading as lines of movement leading to a destination and a meaning and while so doing illuminating the meaning of movement itself. These “ways” are cut off in their initial stages, reversing on their axis and returning towards where they came from, being suddenly blocked by various obstructing factors which obscure the destination that has only now appeared – a process that finds expression in the structure and the name of a work from 1984, *Ursa Major (With Eclipse)*^{p.22}. The celestial bodies that light the way of those walking in the darkness are harnessed here to the service of a more complex metaphor: a momentary lighting is replaced in a flash by an eclipse, by a blocking of the visible, the structured and the paved, or a miniaturization of the understood to marginal dimensions. Tevet remarks that the work’s name also refers to the “eclipse” entailed in the very act of representation, to the absurdity of the attempt to represent a constellation of stars by means of simple chairs. In responding to this challenge, Tevet’s works therefore act two-directionally: they cast a sheaf of backlight onto their point of reference, onto minimalism and “the expanded field”, and at the same time they note their awareness of the absence of a hidden meaning (“seeing in the stars”) that is non-public, enigmatic (in other words, artistic) among the elements in “the expanded field”, which tend to become integrated in the legible and immediate representation that is demanded

by those “subsets of ideological control”. In this way, however, Tevet’s works also dramatize their existence as a stubborn species in which sparks still survive of that marginal dimension that belongs to what Hal Foster calls “different modernisms” – textual weaves that have developed outside the interests and the language forms of modernism, outside the First World’s strongholds.¹⁴ Tevet, as it were, sets up a twisted mirror opposite the palaces (or fortresses?) of modernism, that reflects everything they could have been, everything they cannot be.

The disconnection from any context that might dictate a meaning is discernible in Tevet’s works also in the way they relate to the concrete spaces in which they are set up and exhibited. In his earliest works, in 1973-74^{seepp.24-26}, Tevet laid panels that had been painted white on simple chairs or on wooden legs, as points to be noticed (or better, reference points) in an empty space. These were quasi-minimalistic elements, which in addition alluded to tables, chairs, beds, or stretchers – objects that are generally found in ascetic spaces such as a monastery, a hospital, an army camp, a boarding school or a kibbutz during the early days of Zionist settlement. Places such as this, according to Victor Turner, are appropriate to liminal or transition states that are concerned with distancing persons from a previous social status and initiating them into a new status,¹⁵ and the items of furniture found in them and alluded to in Tevet’s early works arouse associations with fraternal gatherings of comrades, ‘brothers’ or partners in the clarification of a task, and of themselves encapsulate energy and desire that have accumulated through the very fact of coming together for a common purpose.¹⁶ In Tevet’s works these objects are not infrequently arranged in a corner of an empty space, like a camp that has been set up at the borders of a site – perhaps retreating, perhaps on the verge of penetration and expansion, not emplaced so much as holding on to the margins, isolating a sub-space that as-it-were clings to the center. The early Tevet’s camp of objects/furniture items is a beginning or an end of some kind of territorialization – but of what territory? This question is contained in all of the works; it is almost their subject-matter. As holdings of minimalist elements that have been uprooted from their textual, intertextual, and contextual basis, the works are samplings of an isolation-space in an abstract territory that has not undergone territorialization. Their quasi-modeled

arrangement presents what is not a model of a production mechanism that produces objects: at most it produces dissociated things that will perhaps create a territory.

Afterwards too, from the early '80s on, when the quasi-minimalist asceticism made way for the abundant panorama of a multiplicity of splitting and dividing items, the framework of the Tevetian camp's separate existence was zealously preserved. His works continue to sojourn in the sites where they are set up like packs or flocks (of animals, birds, nomads or performance artists) while the patterns of discipline that organize and motivate them seem to obey a law that is not anchored in the territory or space of their appearance. Their syntax, somehow, is always inclined on its side, the ways marked out in them escape from the center to the peripheries, the elements that constitute them are heaped on top of one another, not infrequently as images of furniture items (benches, tables, chairs) that turn over on one another at a moment of transition or abandonment – and only a few sculptural elements scattered here and there stabilize the holding and designate sites within it. These works as-it-were present not their place in the space but their momentary emplacement in it, and appear in the given exhibition site as though at a moment of parking or of temporary adaptation to its conditions.

Tevet's works channel the eye to see in them a presentation of some kind of grid – but at the moment when the mind begins to wonder what is the form that organizes these things in their place, it cannot associate that form with any given structured order – not the cosmic (as in the classics), not the ideal or the meta-artistic (as in high modernism), not the mechanistic (as in postmodernism). The grid that navigates the *mise-en-scène* of the works (a *mise-en-scène* that as-it-were follows a move, a strategy of movement), can be understood only as a hybrid of what is guided by a retinal pragmatism (that is to say, a responding to how it is comfortable for the eye to see and to organize a multiplicity of items in a space) and of what organizes an intra-systemic concatenation of items within and among the works of Tevet himself (from the previous work, within the present work and towards the next work). The grid, as well as the positioning and the behavior based on its patterns, seem as if they have been calculated from a position that shifts the work from the place of its appearance. In the situation that is created, forms that are congruous with one framework (images of Bauhaus, Constructivism, and especially minimalism) also make themselves congruous (at certain points, not totally) with another framework

(the given exhibition space). “My works”, Tevet says, “despite their large size, the use that they make of minimalist and postminimalist elements, and their ‘installation’-like appearance – only pretend to obey the conventions of site-specific art”.

The works’ distancing of themselves from the centers of systemic modernist production and action, and their movement or multiplication that proceed to an independent order and pulse, paint each of Tevet’s sculptural clusters with a tint of secrecy; and the clusters’ way of expansion, since it is never predictable, always has something threatening about it, as if pregnant with danger. In their *Treatise on Nomadology: The War Machine*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe the world of Indian nomads who live in caves and in crevices in the ground and continue to make holes in the earth to prepare dwellings for themselves. In these holes they live, love, die, are born, and three or four hundred years afterwards they again set out on their way, and again in groups.¹⁷ In the rapid, almost hurried, proliferation that characterizes Tevet’s work, there is something of the fervency and the eagerness of a group of nomads to continue their existence in a place despite – or perhaps due to – the transience of their sojourn in it, from the power that is inherent in temporariness and is activated against the place of sojourn, because of their belonging to the time dimension: to movement, to proliferation, to dissemination and familial expansion outside of any fixed territory. Hence the proliferation of items in his works, which are identified as exterritorialized sites, designates them as strongholds of resistance to territory carried out by the “homogenizing apparatus” (Buchloh).

Aware that the “Big Brother” that is breathing down the neck of contemporary art practice is the found object (Duchamp), and that its [the object’s] being anchored in the conditions of production of a historical reality is necessary to its being defined as “found”, Tevet imports generations of offspring of the found object into an arena of action where those conditions do not apply. On this background he is not able to identify them as “found”, and he has to produce them with his own hands. The later works are produced in Tevet’s workshop, which is divided into various craft or production “areas”: the carpentry area, the painting area, and the “art” area. This “plant” however, is not pre-oriented to a pattern of planned installation or assembly. Some of the objects produced in the craft areas find their place in a sculptural installation assembled in the “art” area,

while those that are not used for this purpose are abandoned as production surpluses of the Tevetian process. In all this, the workshop and its tools, and Tevet's body and personality, seem to be put to the task of serving and imitating a mechanized production line – except that this production mechanism can be emitted solely from within these four walls, from within the world and the body of its creator. Hence the things produced in the workshop are hybrid creatures of two orientations: the one-off making of the modernist creator, and the postmodernist production mechanism; more precisely – they are works made manually by the artist after the mechanized objects of minimalism, and may therefore be called made-readymades, objects masquerading as readymades, or remade-readymades, that is to say – products of a modernist action that occurs after what is posterior to modernism, a post-postmodernist action. From this tip of the iceberg of the minimalist object's movement, from the endpoint of its instrumental existence, Tevet sends the items of his works to take off into space, to cast discontent upon it, to seep into it as if paving ways that mislead the eye, conducting the eye with their webs to the horizon but also moving it to the pits of the field of vision, to the places of blocking that are prohibited to the comprehensive gaze.

Placed at these points of blockage, in the works from the mid-'90s on, there are not infrequently walls that come together to create rooms, niches, and solitary cells – spaces that invite one to see them as places of pause for one person, stations for self-collection, contemplation, self-communion. These are Tevet's versions of "the narcissistic cage" – the arena of action of the modern creator, as the Surrealist poet Paul Eluard put it – and in this there is something of an explicit evocation of a modernist value of the first rank. And Tevet continues to evoke additional modernist values in his square complexes which, on an imaginary grid of lines of longitude and latitude, are populated by bustling configurations of numerous items that weave together and unravel frequently like encyclopedistic knowledge undergoing continuous processes of sorting, classification and cataloguing.

Tevet's works have the appearance of machines – but of a kind that can be possible only by dint of their sculptural presence and of their affinities with the history of sculpture. Their mechanism-like appearance brings up from the recesses of memory the

follies of the early years of modernism, the dreams of wonder machines and of an art that screws itself into the innards of a gigantic mechanism that stands at the service of the ideology and the utopian dream of a new society. The multiplicity of items and reciprocal relations in the works also alludes to the distinctive sites of activity of modern life – large metropolises, construction sites, ports, industrial plants – and conjures up anew the pretension of some modernist movements about working in parallel with the entire culture industry, and as a futuristic alternative to it. And there is another major issue that troubled orientations such as the Bauhaus or Constructivism: the question of the place of the subject within the host of products of the objectifying consumerist culture and society, which is alluded to in Tevet's work in confrontations, affinities and tensions between the rooms that suit the stature of the individual and the sculptural environment with its multiplicity and continuous reproducibility of activities and spheres.

Tevet indeed repeatedly brings up the burning concerns of modernism – but all of it in retrospect, from the last extremity of the modernist grid and from the end of its immense dreams. It is possible that there is here an act of resuscitation, a realization of the Eternal Return (Nietzsche), a proposal for another way of replication and renewed revelation of modes of repetition – and it is also possible that there is here a giving of a place to a residue of modernism, to leftovers of dreams, ideas, great passions and pictures of sublimity that had been wrapped up in the margins of the critical and 'cool' objects of postmodernism, which are self-aware to the point of horror. But this move – which is mainly about bringing to light motives and narratives that were suppressed by the art of the time, and about proposing modernist versions that were never listed in the canon – may perhaps be defined as an "apocryphal modernism". Under the terms "apocryphal" in the [Hebrew (Tr.)] Even-Shoshan Dictionary is written: "Shelved/hidden [i.e., non-canonical] books, the last 14 books of the Hagiographa (Hasmoneans, Sirach, etc.), that are included in the Septuagint translation but were not included in the Scriptures by Our Sages, and were shelved. The Hebrew original of most of these books has been lost, and they have reached us in Greek, Ethiopian, and other translations." Tevet's works, too, as mentioned before, are a translation of forms and structures (minimalism) that were coined in a language of other places, but in this translation of them we find revealed what preceded them (Bauhaus, Constructivism) and did not survive the traditionalist version

(the *Massorah*) of the modernist chronicle. When Tevet again and again replicates allusions to modernist forms, and in the course of this turns them into an actual duration of linguistic genealogy, he proposes that we think of his reproduced generations as a parallel world, which as-it-were exists in secret beside its frame of reference – as a kind of dormant organism or a silent action mechanism, which has already continued in this world for a long time.

Tevet's sculptures derive from painting, and he is constantly paying back his debt to this medium. His art studies began with painting lessons given by Raffi Lavie, and in *Painting Lessons*^{sep.29}, Tevet's major sculpture series in the '80s, a late expression was given not only to this biographical detail but also and mainly to the sculpture's contemplation of its beginnings as a painting or as a learning of painting. Sculpture is read as a continuation of the learning of painting – and painting is identified as a stage of preparation and training, which is fulfilled in sculpture and in organization of bodies in a space (for *Painting Lessons*, after all, are sculptures). This processual principle was transferred, as already noted, to later sculptural environments such as *Man with Camera* (1992-94)^{pp.57-63} or *A Page from a Catalogue*, in the cores of each of which one of the *Painting Lessons* that preceded them has been inserted in its entirety. *Sign* (1970)^{p.28}, one of Tevet's first works, was a hybrid made of painting and sculpture: a panel was placed on a support and smears of white paint were applied to it, "like an abstract painting executed with a house-painter's motions". This manner of applying paint has been used regularly since then to coat and cover the sculptural items in the works, so that the surface of the sculptural elements – the screen that accords them their immediate representation – is made with the craft of painting. The objects – those that are read in a context of functional objects from the more immediate vicinity, and those that are measured in relation to the Bauhaus manufacture or the capitalistic production line of minimalism – are not imprinted with an identity that can be pulled out of an existing data bank: the identity that enwraps them is acquired in a process of learning and preparation for painting.¹⁸

This act of "applying paint" has several ramifications, some of them overt and some of them covert. It can be seen as an expression of an affinity between painting (and

the making of art in general) and the work ethos, principally in the socialistic context (an interpretation that seeks traces of the biography in the work will point in this context to Tevet's past in a kibbutz). The genealogical quest will find in this way of applying paint to objects traces of acts of painting that are connected with craft, of the kind that characterizes Israeli painters such as Arie Aroch, Raffi Lavie, and after them also Ido Bar-El.¹⁹ The affinity between the making of a painting and the action of applying paint, with all its connotations of "labor", also sends us to the modernist painting that presents itself as a chronicle of mechanistic, functional and pragmatic actions, painting that according to Thierry de Duve began with Georges Seurat and Paul Signac and was conceptualized in Duchamp's found object.²⁰

But when he applies paint to his sculptures with his own hands, Tevet (like Aroch or Lavie before him) places less emphasis on the labor aspect than on the craft aspect, "an act of craft that might be done on the porch at home". Thus, indirectly, almost secretly, Tevet imprints in the work the sign of what is missing in it, of what it is seeking: the sign of an art that grows from a world which remembers craft and is anchored in a daily routine and a tradition of the guilds and in a dynastic knowledge that passes from father to son, whose technique is attentive to the processing and the distillation of mineral materials from the earth and of fluids from the bodies of fauna and flora, whose technical meticulousness enfolds an ordered doctrine of an organic universe that is present in everything. Hal Foster writes:

Since the Industrial Revolution a contradiction has existed between the craft basis of visual art and the industrial order of social life. Much sculpture since Rodin seeks to resolve this contradiction between "individual aesthetic creation" and "collective social production" especially in the turn to processes like welding and to paradigms like the readymade.²¹

The screening of his objects with painting that acts like a work of craft enables Tevet to point to that historical disparity between art that preserves the remnants of craft, and art that adheres to the "industrial order of social life". This has the capacity to emphasize "the central dynamic in modernist art" – except that Tevet as-it-were inclines the scales

towards what is running out, vanishing, for, as Foster puts it, “the seriality of minimalism and pop is indicative of advanced capitalist production and consumption, for both register the penetration of industrial modes into spheres (art, leisure, sport) that were once removed from them”.²² By affiliating himself declaredly with craft and not with industry, Tevet as-it-were signifies the horizon of his work in a place of art that saw itself as possessing a distinctive function and identity. This horizon is also a non-place (the utopian place) where he and his work are still likely to find some lost modernist moments that sought the new and the degree of avantgarde not by putting to death everything that was ever born as craft and turned into art – but by distilling these to their pure movement.

In a world of craft that is acquired assiduously and with great skill, with meticulous treatment of details that are inlaid precisely in the whole, in the immense body of knowledge of secrets that associate craft with the work of Creation and with the universe, a place of honor is reserved for the instructee, the apprentice, the pupil – and consequently also to the time of learning, initiation and transition required for entry into the world of craft, and for his training, which is frequently renewed. When someone – Nahum Tevet, for example – declares that his deeds are connected with learning, he identifies them as actions of someone who does not know but wants to know, someone who asks in order to obtain not only a response, but also another good question. The movement that begins from not-knowing, on the face of it from an agreed ignorance, is like a choice to go out into the world you’ve chosen to be in (as a craftsman, as an artist, as a sculptor) from a zero point of acceptance of the judgment, of doing and hearing. The person who chooses this position invests him/herself in mute acts that as-it-were place the voice of meaning in brackets, defer it to a distanced horizon because the mind is not free at the moment to know it and to communicate it and hence removes itself from any open and communicative expression it might make. This removal of oneself from the order of speech and meaning (the symbolic order, in Jacques Lacan’s terms) was identified by Victor Turner as an in-between, liminal, time of rituals of initiation and transition.²³ The “industrial order of social life” and the art world that is annexed to it have parted from those worlds of initiation and from the figures identified with them – but Tevet’s works seek to restore these in-between times in the shape of transition spaces, configurations of a lesson and figures of apprentices and instructees. In the great assiduousness that is

invested in making the items and numerous details of the works, in the severity of the meticulous attention on the positioning of every detail that has already been positioned countless times, in the mapping of every tiny body and every configuration in the general arrangement of the work – in all these there is something of the taste of a craft that prepares, trains and legitimizes a different modernism.²⁴

And this transition space tacitly alludes to the grid lines of early modernist paintings: the central image in the group of two-dimensional works *A Page from a Catalogue (Cézanne)*^{pp.128-129} is a grid formed from the division into equal oblongs of the surface area of a standard sheet of plywood (at times supplemented by pieces from additional sheets). The starting point for the drawing of the grid was pages from a comprehensive catalogue on Cézanne.²⁵ Tevet employed the method of sorting (by years and by themes) used in it, and imposed upon it a “method” of his own: a count of the number of appearances of paintings of identical size on each given page is what determines the number and the size of the grid’s units. Beside each work, as a kind of footnote or key, is hung a photograph of the catalogue page after which it was made (in some of the pages we see tables with still lifes on them, or tables with card-players around them, or Mont Sainte-Victoire).²⁶ The translation of the mechanistic order of the print medium (the repetition of similar images and of the information about the sizes of the paintings) into a grid structure executed by an act of manual drawing provokes thought about the relation between the print medium and art catalogue conventions and the grid of the work; what also comes to mind here is Cézanne’s grid, in which his brushstrokes flowed and pulsed, lengthwise and breadthwise, while emphasizing the lines of the frame of the canvas and its quasi-automatic differentiatedness. Tevet: “In these works I marked out the surface before Cézanne painted on it”, that is to say “marking” the organizing forms, the cataloguing and the reproduction implicit in the transmission of the visual knowledge that taught the story of Cézanne and prepared his reception as the herald of modernism, as a fundamental breakthrough that made possible Cubism, Duchamp, minimalism and even Conceptual Art – and perhaps also “marking” this “belated” grid of Tevet’s, drawn after the formal, the technical, even if banal, conclusions of artistic knowledge had been reached; and yet precisely a grid such as this may promote

the re-creation of Cézanne, the possibility of creating or of re-discovering a Cézannean momentum such as this in another place. In another time. In another dimension.

“The method of sorting in that Cézanne catalogue led me to invent a preposterous method”, Tevet adds. It could be said that this method is also nourished by the more covert meanings of some of the miniaturized Cézannean images in those “footnotes” beside the grid drawings – for example, one that proposes a different surface for the art image, i.e., the table on which the apples are placed or around which people are seated (the card players) for a common interest. When Tevet draws attention to the positioning of the art image on a table, his remark relates both to the history of painting and to the history of sculpture: Cézanne may thus be visualized as a precedent for the painting that is laid flat, is presented and represents itself on a horizontal plane (long before Robert Rauschenberg, who is considered to be the first to have done this in a distinctive manner) and as the one who proposed to modern sculpture (before Duchamp set up the bicycle wheel on a stool) to replace its traditional pedestal with a functional domestic object that is extrinsic to the tradition and the conventions of the canonical institutions of display. In Tevet’s private modernism, in the space of the self-emplacement, growth and expansion of his items, tables and other level panels laid on four legs (benches, for example) function as bearers of diverse images and elements, as surfaces for additional bodies, as foci of human or sculptural occurrences that eventuate out of the movement of the body and eyes of the viewer.

This speaking about Tevet’s work in terms of painting sits well with an identifying of it as a collective of mere images (images of minimalist objects, as already noted) – at least if we see Tevet as someone who weights his work in relation to the insight of modernist painting as presenting its images (even when they are figurative and mimetic on the face of it) as limbs of the painting’s dimensions and its imaginary world. In the history of modern painting this was not infrequently done by inserting an image of a painting within a picture of a real scene, while creating an analogy between what is identified as world and what is seen as painting.²⁷

Modernism’s need to make explicit declarations about the image’s idiosyncratic existence found expression, for example, in the inscription “This is not a pipe” attached to the image of a pipe in a painting by René Magritte. Similarly, Jean-Paul

Sartre claimed that the image in painting is purely visual and there is no way of verifying it other than from its existence in the beholder's eyes.²⁸ Tevet's screening of the elements with applications of paint, as if after an act of painting, is an additional way of marking his works as non-bodily sculptural bodies, that contain something of the hovering existence of the purely visual-painterly image or of the phantasmic existence of the thing that is seen only, as though before it has been revealed totally and landed upon the earth. Hence, too, perhaps stems the sensitivity – a sensitivity in the absence – that Tevet's works display towards the ground level, and the countless ways that they take in order to be on the ground, to touch it, to leave it only in order to stabilize themselves in an acrobatic stance above it and then to return and to formulate a landing, a fall, or another piling up.²⁹ The magnet images, as well as the images of pressing irons that are so prevalent in Tevet's works throughout the years, also create a sense of being pulled to ground level. But Tevet's images of irons are not infrequently inversions of images of boats, and in this the frequently changing face of the work is revealed, where its images return and reproduce also echoes of a movement on a less stable and a more watery surface – those that make possible the appearance of reflections and sights of the kind that was revealed to the mythological Narcissus.

Narcissi (1979-83)^{seep.31}, Tevet's early series of sculptures, already marked his sculptural work's affiliation to the worlds of fiction or the "Imaginary" (to use Lacan's term) – an affiliation that only grew stronger over the years with works such as *Sound for a Silent Movie* (1986)^{p.32} or *Man with Camera* – a gesture to the photographic and cinematic image and to the film of the Russian avantgardist Djiga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1924).³⁰ The phantasmic cinematic figures hinted at in the titles are also reflected in the character of the works, which are composed of clusterings and concatenations of images (one of another, one out of another) each of which is identifiable only as a mirror image of another, and their actual existence is conditional upon their continuing their mechanism of self-replication. Except that Tevet directs the viewer's eye to notice the difference between the two forms, which as-it-were exist in a reciprocity of duplication: even what is identifiable as relations of similarity and identity

is actually a narcissistic picture, which at an additional glance constitutes an estrangement between its partners. As the eye distinguishes more replications of estranged/similar images, and as their Tevetian multiplication increases – the more their ephemeral, elusive, momentary appearance is seen as a medium for a burgeoning narcissistic mental procedure that increasingly withdraws into itself, as a psychic state of interiorization, sublimation and idea-oriented contemplation (of the kind that was already described by Sigmund Freud and by Julia Kristeva after him).³¹

The narcissistic proposal embodied in Tevet's work is congruous with the state of mind offered by the cells for solitary communion scattered among the large works, and by this congruence Tevet as-it-were draws his viewers' attention to the analogy between the act of the eye (in its narcissistic world) and what the body wants to do (and perhaps the act that the mind seeks for itself by means of the body: calm, self-communion, contemplation). At the same time, however, these works also point up the split between moving the eye and activating the body as if it has been decapitated, like a body that moves by motor impulses only in response to items that recur here and there in variable dimensions and cause it to bend, to stretch, to advance, to perform each and every movement like a blind person. Tevet: "Sometimes I think about a sort of polyphonic movement in relation to the sculptural items in my works, for by means of them I sort of divide the body into three parts that act separately". The later works, and especially *Seven Walks* pp.99-119, *Take Two* (2005) pp.147-151, or *Several Things* (2006) pp.159-173, emphasize reciprocal relations with the lower part of the body that moves around them, for they are built of more massive bodies and tend to emphasize the weight of the sculptural arrangement and its affinity to the ground level. At the same time, however, Tevet's works continue to impede the body from moving at its own rhythm by creating more and more situations of seeing, more data of replication, change, concealment and revelation, which do not cease tempting the eye to cut itself off from the body and to continue cruising through the sight of the work.

This sight, which overflows its banks, does not cease to fascinate and magnetize the eye to its hidden treasures – but with its proliferating dimensions it also makes the eye face its own limitations, like a baroque picture which begins as demonstration of

spectacle, virtuosity and majesty, but the more the marveling gaze pauses over it, it is made painfully aware of how limited and in error it is. What is presented as a totality in a picture such as this calls simultaneously for a forgetting of the totality, for an abandonment of the search for the individual item's place in the totality, and of the focus on that item, and on another item after it, each of which will quickly be forgotten but will also be resuscitated out of its similar, its double, its offspring, which resembles it but is also different from it and is individual in its particular physical presence in the work in the presence of the concrete presence of the gaze.³²

1

On apocrypha, see in this essay, p. 220 below.

2

Translated from the Polish for this essay; source: www.michalszkutnik.one.pl/poezja/wiersz/?numer=7. (The author quoted the Hebrew translation by David Weinfeld, in *Epilogue of a Storm* [Tel Aviv: Keshev Lashirah, 2005], p. 30.)

3

For a comprehensive analysis and summary of the various forms of interpretation of minimalism, see Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge MA.: MIT Press 1996), pp 35-68.

4

In the art discourse, one of the commonly accepted ways of describing the transition from modernism to postmodernism is that formulated by Rosalind Krauss, in her "The Originality of the Avant-Garde", in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1985), pp. 151-170.

5

Harold Rosenberg was early to comment on contemporary art's tendency to become assimilated in the culture industry. Rosenberg quotes the Bauhaus artist Georg Mucbe, who already in 1960 claimed that "Enthusiasm for modern design is extraordinarily intolerant toward art.[...] art has no ties to technology: it comes about in the Utopia of its own reality". Summing up the later relations between art and technology, Rosenberg remarked that "The popularity of art in America today derives from its design appeal, but American art will not settle for a role in product design. American artists are aware that art for industry is, as Mucbe pointed out, limited by the needs of distribution, managerial control, and

profits. Beyond the social utility of what he produces, the American artist seeks a deeper meaning; he has not ceased to be a Romantic". See: Harold Rosenberg, "Keeping Up: The De-Definition of Art: Action Art to Pop to Earthworks" (New York: Horizon Press, 1972), pp. 227, 231.

6

In other words, Tevet's works constitute an affinity between the constant changing of his items (and hence also their fleeting and momentary existence) and their endless potential for change, that is to say, their existence in an unlimited time zone while morphing from one work to the next. This affinity between the momentary and the global brings to mind the way that Jean-François Lyotard conceptualizes the perception of time in modern art; see his "Time Today", in: *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 58-78.

7

On desublimation and the problem of the history of social art in the period after World War II, see Hal Foster, Yve-Alain Bois, Rosalind Krauss, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "The Predicament of Contemporary Art", *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp. 671-679.

8

See, e.g., Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* (n. 4 above), pp. 276-290.

9

See Foster (n. 3 above), pp. 66-88.

10

Nahum Tevet in conversations with the author, 2006; unless otherwise specified, all quotations from Tevet are from these conversations.

11

Buchloh, in "The Predicament" (n. 7 above).

12

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattary claim that the behavior of a linguistic mechanism as if it were organic is a distinctive symptom of "minor culture", which is embodied in Kafka's literature; see their *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1975).

13

On Tevet's works as configurations of traps, see Michal Na'aman, "Nahum Tevet Talks About His Works", *Kav 3* (December 1981), pp. 3-5 [Heb.]; on the works as

configurations of a labyrinth, see Sarit Shapira, “The Passage Through Physical Mirrors”, *Nahum Tevet: Opening Moves*, exh. cat. (Vienna: Museum of Modern Art, Ludwig Foundation, 1997), pp. 36-53.

14

In this context Foster notes that “Other possibilities also opened up in other parts of the globe, [...]. For example, Yves-Alain [Bois] discusses the elaboration of Constructivism among the Neoconcretists in Brazil, as well as of performance after Pollock with the Gutai artists in Japan. [...] It’s an alternative narrative of cultural *difference* – of avant-garde practices in other place times”; see “The Predicament” (n. 7 above), p. 673.

15

Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969).

16

Freud writes that “The most primitive organization we know [...] is *associations of men* consisting of members with equal rights [...]. In thus ensuring each other’s lives the brothers express the fact that no one of them is to be treated as they all treated the father”; see his *Totem and Taboo*, trans. A.A. Brill, (New York: Random House, 1946), pp. 183, 188. The way the images of furniture are arranged in Tevet’s early works brings to mind sites that host suppression and conversion of Oedipal drives. The Tevetian action, which for many years has initiated the mobility of images between frequently changing ludic and linguistic contexts, may be perceived as a distancing of them from an affinity to Oedipal models.

17

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattary, *A Thousand Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987), p. 413.

18

Clement Greenberg, in a survey of the relations between painting and sculpture throughout art history, concludes that a dominant part of modern sculpture relates distinctively to problems raised by the painting of its time. On this background, when Tevet connects his sculptures to the space of painting, he adds and makes pointed the identification of his work as one of the forms of modernist practice; see: Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Sculpture: Its Pictorial Past”, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 158-164. On Tevet’s affinity to the formulation of painting in the rhetoric of minimalism, and on his own special version of this formulation, see David Ginton, “When Tevet Enters”, *Iton Tel Aviv*, 25 December 1987 [Heb.].

19

On the metamorphoses of the image of craft in Raffi Lavie’s painting, its affinity to Arie Aroch’s painting, and its reception of historiographical meaning in an affinity to the chronicle of modernism (the image of craft in the works of Marcel Duchamp) on the one hand, and to the fabric of the local culture (the action of applying paint in S.Y. Agnon’s

story “A Stray Dog”) on the other hand, see Sarit Shapira *Raffi Lavie, Works from 1950 to 2003* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2003), pp. 48-50, 92-96. On the affinity between Tevet’s later sculptural works and Ido Bar-El’s painting, Tevet says: “In conversation with Ido Bar-El

and in his work I found much that was of interest and a source of encouragement and inspiration. This is discernible, for example, in the shift from *Painting Lessons*, with their colorfulness, to the new works, which returned me to my white from the ’70s. Here, among other things, there was also an influence of the paintings on objects that Bar-El was making in that period”.

20

See Thierry de Duve, “The Ready-Made and the Tube of Paint”, *Artforum* 24 (May 1986).

21

Foster (n. 3 above), p. 66.

22

Ibid.

23

Turner (n. 15 above).

24

On a traditional cultural world that preserves the craft domains within itself, and on their disappearance from the space of modernist practice, see de Duve (n. 20 above).

25

Paolo Lecaldano (ed.), *The Complete Paintings of Cézanne*, exh. cat. (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1972).

26

The name of this two-dimensional series is also used for one of Tevet’s later sculptural works, *A Page from a Catalogue* (1998), and it is reasonable to assume that some of its insights are also included in the later work.

27

The transformation of this form in Tevet’s work may be seen in the gesture of inserting early *Painting Lessons* within the later and more comprehensive sculptural arrangements.

28

See Jean-Paul Sartre, “La recherche de l’absolu”, *Situations III*, Gallimard, Paris, 1949.

29

On the relation to the ground in Tevet's work, see, "'You too, actually, have never finished a work': Sarit Shapira in Conversation with Nahum Tevet and Ohad Naharin", in this catalogue, pp. 185-192.

30

On the coding of photographic images as performative of Lacan's "mirror-stage", see Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index, Part 1", *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* (n. 4 above), pp. 196-209.

31

See Joseph Sandler et al. (eds.) Freud's "*On Narcissism: An Introduction*" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

32

The gaze and the detail, Walter Benjamin would say, are of the kind that might appear in baroque allegory – one of the large allegorical pictures of human culture that contain "'progression in a series of moments' [...], 'a successively progressing, dramatically mobile, dynamic representation of ideas which has acquired the fluidity of time' [...]" in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face – or rather in a death's head. And although such a thing lacks all 'symbolic' freedom of expression, all classical proportion, all humanity, nevertheless, this is the form in which man's subjection to nature is most obvious and it significantly gives rise not only to the enigmatic question of the nature of human existence as such, but also to of the biographical historicity of the individual. This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing, of the baroque, secular explanation of history as the Passion of the world; its importance resides solely in the stations of its decline. The greater the significance, the greater the subjection to death, because death digs most deeply the jagged line of nature between physical nature and significance"; see Walter Benjamin, *Allegory and Trauerspiel: The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977, pp. 163-166.