

Excerpts from an artist–curator conversation
Words by Lihi Turjeman

I came to the pots by being exposed for a long time to archeological imagery (a combination of virtual tours, science sites and Google image algorithms).
But this wasn't about looking back to the past as I was looking at very contemporary new materials, sometimes live when traveling but mostly through the web... there's an endless arsenal of images of findings, artifacts, figurines, that have been unearthed, mapped, scanned, categorized and well photographed ...

The most common and basic form is the clay pot. We have been making them since the dawn of civilization. They are actually tools, vessels.
They have a clear function, but at the same time are full of mythology...Now I saw them in this way – without a physical grounding – not telling any 'other story' than the one they create on the canvas.

The black canvases I used this time are already an object in themselves, like a green screen. The black ready-made surface is the only point of spatial reference I have here.

I am not interested in the existential presence of the object in the world but in what the object contains; not the material content but the abstract one, the black field. The surface color creates spaces within the object, and these are the spaces that create depth and refer to what 'lies within the object', as things are hidden within words.

Archeology here, for me, is not one that deals with lifeless historical objects, but one that moves in space and happens to pop up / appear as a container. It exists within the vase or its 'image', a movement that is abstracted from its materiality. This is how I use archeology to move away from it, seeking hidden knowledge, touching those places in our present that we cannot experience or grasp.

I seek to revive the object, to reach the shimmering, malleable place of it, always concerned with the *spectral* that resides within it. I work within the shape of the object but it's the matter that fills the shape that is showing something... Those hollows are made as acts of forgetting the material essence of the painting – so the cavity is not the object's volume and depth but rather an entrance, a path to a vivid and elastic sphere.

It's not a new thing that I am attracted to archeological news, findings etc.
it was even before I saw it in real life that I wondered about this 'pensive figure'. I had a sense I was looking at a pure representation of an archetype, a persevered, unearthed artefact that might be perceived as a sediment of human memory.
By enlarging it, I could actually glorify this image and bring it closer. I also thought about translocation; it's as if I came with one of the 'newest' discoveries from my homeland and brought it into view in a different place where it's something of an alien. Canaan (Palestine/Israel) was influenced by many surrounding cultures, which makes this figure expressive and makes an impact even outside of its original location.

Material culture testifies how – then as now – national identity is nothing more than a story, imagination. Our attraction to the archaic is an expression of the unconscious desire to connect to the root of our being human beings, an effort to confirm continuity in an existence that is all fragmentary. This is one of the main movements I am embracing concerning art-making and the power of the image and material sensitivity: a deep need to come close to our psychic archetypes in their material incarnation.

