



Anat Betzer
Army Of Me



Cover: Untitled, 2014, oil on canvas, 28 x 39 1/2 in.

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Anat Betzer
Army Of Me

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JULIE M. GALLERY TORONTO

Army Of Me

by Hadas Reshef

In order for us to understand the brave dimension of Anat Betzer's artworks, it is necessary to reflect on the dominant features of Israeli art. Its conceptual, sophisticated and cerebral nature, at times anti-sensual, traditionally stays clear of realism, and it is oftentimes perceived as kitsch, or art in the service of ideology; an art scene in which depictions of still life and landscapes are often considered commercial, thus non-legitimate. In the spirit of this rigid patriarchal militarism, anyone who dares deviate from this "party line" will often find themselves in the margins. Material painting and the exploration of the painterly medium are ideologically pushed away from the forefront of the local art scene. In this vein, Betzer herself created sculptures, installations and paintings of conceptual connotations in the early stages of her artistic path. Her work in recent years is a profound study of a return to more traditional painting techniques, and presents a synthesis of the themes that she explored in the past, such as femininity, gender, integration of text and painting, literary quotes, among others.

The exhibition's title is borrowed from the song Army of Me by Björk:

Stand up, you've got to manage, I won't sympathize, anymore. And if you complain once more, you'll meet an army of me.

Betzer does not apologize, nor does she wish to please. Her sensual paintings deal with seduction, still life, images of colorful animals, laden with references. The emotional depth moves center stage. Many of the images allude to famous artworks, photographs, places, stories, various visual languages, even Betzer herself. They are a thoughtful study of representation as a source of language and emotion.

One of the leitmotifs in Betzer's paintings is the forest. Her first works in the series (2004-2005) depicted tree houses in a snowy forest. This sight is not a familiar one in Israel, and the image conjures up many associations – on the one hand, European romanticism, a house that is not rooted in the ground, Slavic fairytales of the witch Baba Yaga, or the tale of Rapunzel, who awaits to be rescued in the solitude of her tower. On the other hand, in Israeli collective memory the woods are associated with the Jewish history in the diaspora and the Holocaust.

The image of Rapunzel reoccurs in Betzer's paintings time after time, a reproduction of the artist herself – her portrait becomes a prototype – with flowing deep black hair. A temptress who reads books in bed in the nude, or in jeans

and a tank top on the rim of the sea of fog, dancing in the forests, traveling like a hunter with ghost dogs at her side. The hand gestures wish to please and take pleasure; others are bound and bleeding, portraying violence, anguish and restriction. The sublime beauty of nature, which the artist had never visited, is a replication of a fantasy drawn from culture: cinema, literature, music, art history – delving into it, transforms it into a tangible reality, the closest to a sane distance from the Israeli chaos.

Betzer is an avid reader who gulps literature like water after a long journey in the desert. In conversations about art, she mentions Flaubert and Nabokov. The love for words infiltrates her canvases and at the same time emerges from it in the form of quotes or defiant sentences. Instead of signing her name she sometimes orders: "Forget me not", or warns "Army of me." Betzer demands of the viewers to look and remember. Despite the romantic and lyric nature of these works, she commands of us to look directly at the material and asks of us to reexamine images of flowers, peacocks without hesitation; allow the body to feel the coldness of the snow, let the cold sensation permeate thought social criticism, feminism, the family unit, self image and the possibility of being hurt

by the exposure. The circles in many of these works are visual disturbances. They highlight and hide elements, a blessing and a curse, and the epitome of the connection between traditional painting and conceptual art.

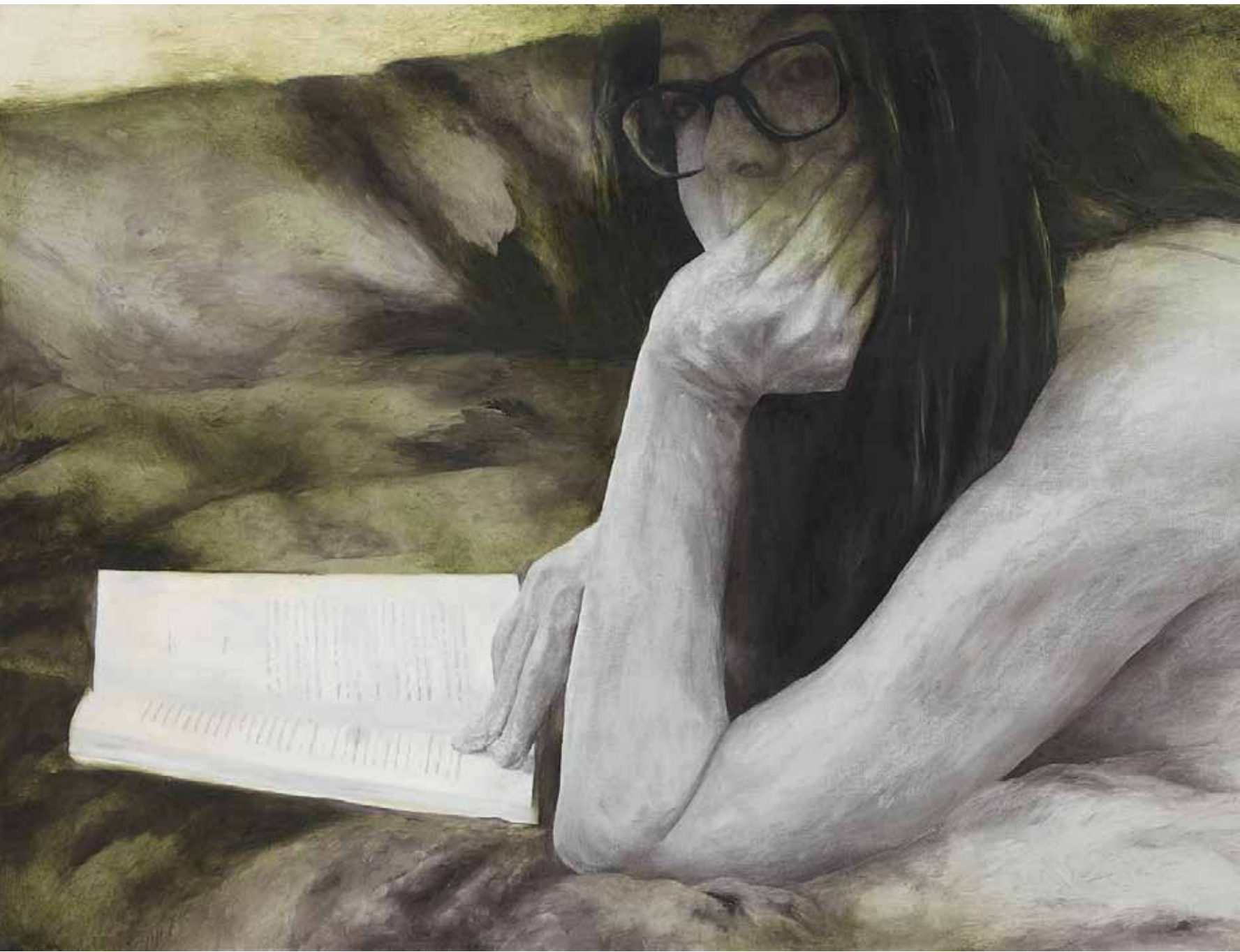
The works as a whole allude to the complexity of female power: fragility, gripping to beauty as a means of survival, using the aesthetic as social criticism, and sexuality—which always seems, and is perceived as objectified in the discourse of female representation; and loneliness, loneliness that allows wandering to fantastical realms, bravely facing the forces of nature and a rigid reality.



Untitled, 2012, oil on canvas, 55 x 55 in.



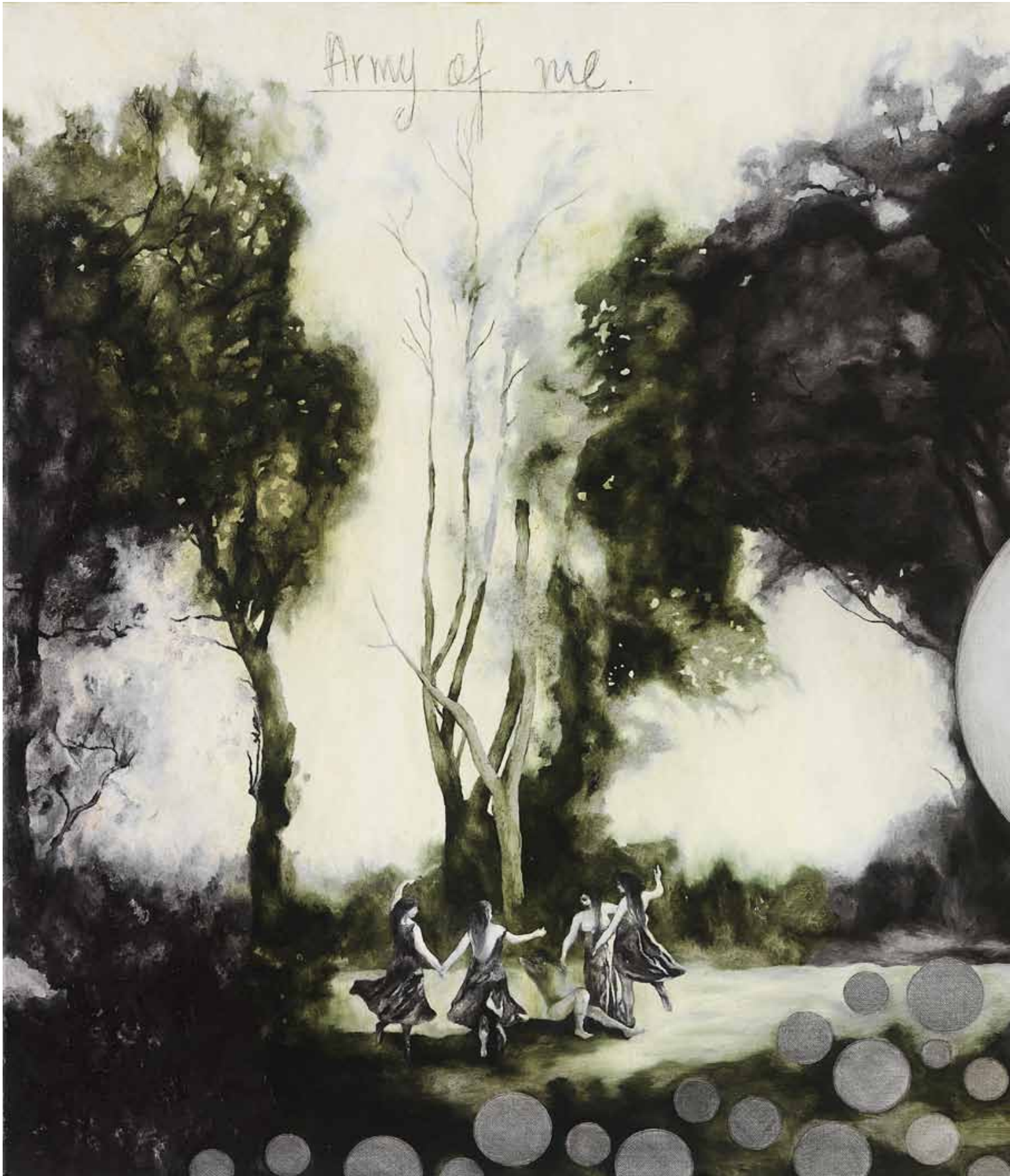
Untitled (After Herbert Draper), 2014, oil on canvas, 39 1/2 x 32 1/4 in.





Untitled, 2012, oil on canvas, 32 1/2 x 63 in.

Army of me.





Untitled (After Camille Corot), 2014, oil on canvas, 29 x 39 1/2 in.



Untitled, 2014, oil on canvas, 57 1/4 x 39 1/2 in.



Untitled (After Jean Francois), 2014, oil on canvas, 29 1/2 x 39 1/2 in.





Untitled (After Arnold Böcklin), 2014, oil on canvas, 21 x 39 1/2 in.





Untitled (After Correggio), 2014, oil on canvas, 44 1/2 x 39 1/2 in.

Untitled, 2013, oil on canvas, 57 x 47 1/2 in.



צביה אור, 2010

Loves Me, Loves Me Not I, 2013, oil on canvas, 44 x 59 1/2 in.





Loves me, Loves me not.



Untitled, 2011, oil on canvas, 37 1/4 x 59 in.

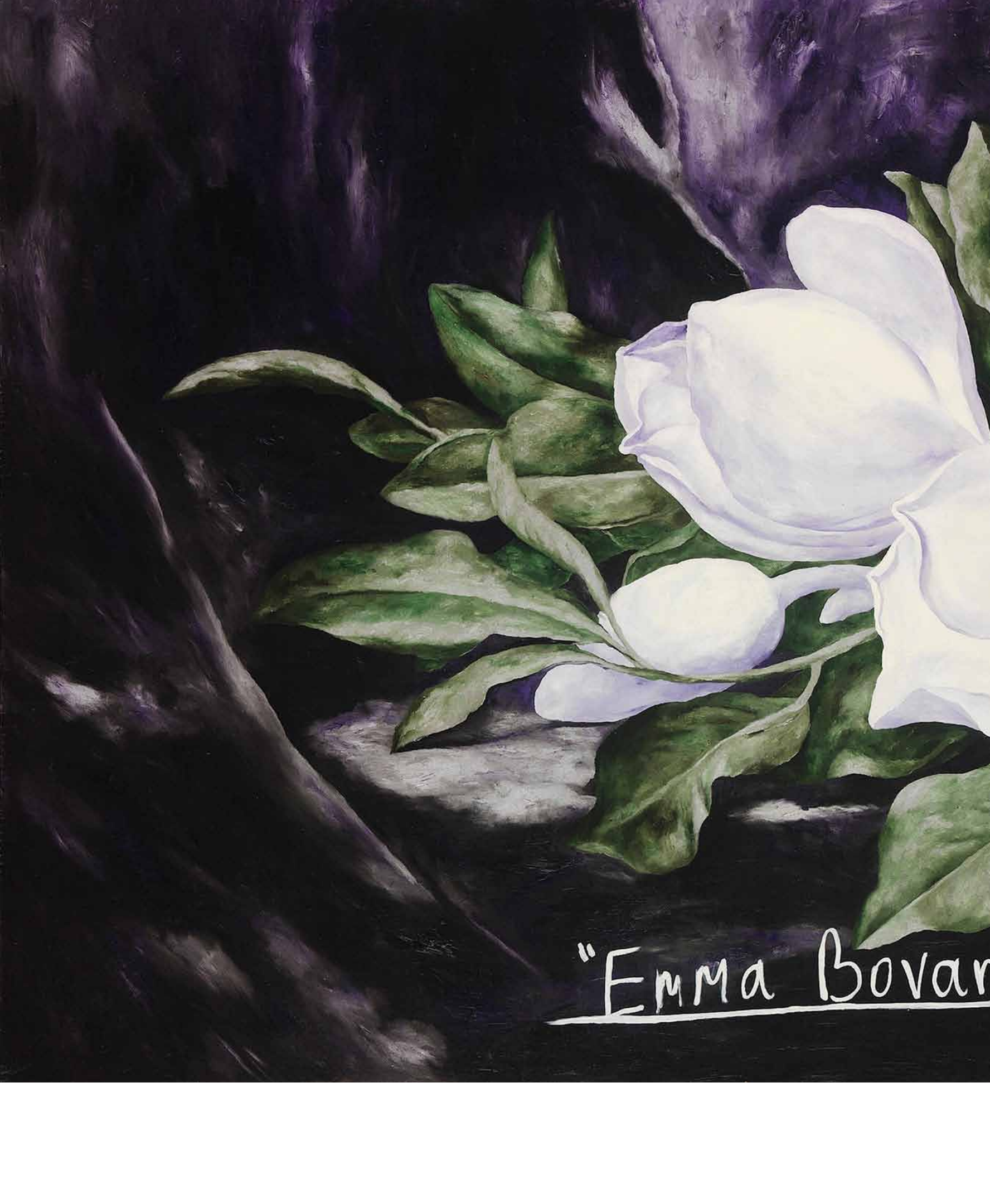


Untitled, 2012, oil on canvas, 48 x 64 in.





Untitled, 2014, oil on canvas, 41 x 59 1/4 in.



"Emma Bovary"



Untitled, 2012, oil on canvas, 36 3/4 x 59 in.

Anat Betzer

b. 1965

1986 - 1989 Fine Art Studies
"Midrasha" College in Ramat - Hasharon
1989 - 1992 Lived and Worked in London
1996 - 2008 Lecturer of Fine Art
"Midrasha College in Beit-Bearl
1992 - present Lives and works in Tel Aviv

Solo Exhibitions

2014 Army Of My, Julie M. Gallery, Toronto
2013 Forget - Me - Not, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
2012 Forest, MNjcc, Toronto
2010 Run Betzer Run, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
2010 Purple Rain, Julie M. Gallery, Toronto
2009 Purple Rain, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
2008 Anat Betzer, Ermanno Tedeschi Gallery, Milano
2007 Wuthering Heights, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
2004 Anat Betzer, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
2003 Three, Two, One, Herzliya Museum of Art
2002 Mountains Shadows, Tmuna Gallery, Tel Aviv
2001 Paintings, Oranim College Art Gallery
2000 Anana, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
1998 With Love to Dad and Mom, Julie M. Gallery,
Tel Aviv
1997 David: It's True. Richter, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
1994 One Woman Show, The Artists' House Gallery,
Jerusalem
1993 Double Exhibition, The Tel Aviv Artists' Studios
Gallery

Selected Group Exhibitions

2012 Take my breath away: Landscape & Colour, Julie
M. Gallery, Toronto
2011 TIAF: Toronto International Art Fair, Julie M.
Gallery,
2011 Execution, Minshar Gallery, Tel Aviv
2011 Nominator and Denominator, Herzliya Museum of
Contemporary Art
2011 The Woods are Lovely, Dark and Deep, Asya
Geisburg Gallery, New York
2010 Forest, Julie M. Gallery, Toronto

2009 Architecture Inside/Out, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
2009 Flakes, Kalisher Gallery, Tel Aviv
2009 Constellation, Ermanno Tedeschi Gallery, Rome
2008 Eventually We'll Die, Herzliya Museum of
Contemporary Art
2007 Educated, Hakita Gallery, Tel Aviv
2007 Plato, Bezalel Gallery, Tel Aviv
2007 Women Relay Race, Haifa Museum of Art
2006 Raffi's Collection, The Ein Harod Museum of Art
2006 Fault, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
2005 Mighty as Death – Love, Minshar Gallery, Tel Aviv
2004 Hookers, Ha'midrasha Gallery, Tel Aviv
What is that thing, turning homes nowadays
to something so different, so wonderful?,
Route 16, Tel Aviv
2004 Love is in The Air, Time for Art, Tel Aviv
2003 Side Effect, Midrasha Gallery, Tel Aviv
2002 Mediterranean Art, Catania Museum of Con
temporary Art, Italy
2001 Yeladudes, Hollon Art Museum
2001 FlatLand, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
2000 Artistic Political Statement, Beit-Ha'am, Tel
Aviv; Um-El-Fah'em Gallery
1999 About Raffie, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv
1998 Good Boys, Bad Boys, The Israel Museum,
Jerusalem
1998 Texts in Israeli Art, O.R.S Collection, Nogga
Theatre, Jaffa
1998 After Alice in Wonderland, Julie M. Gallery,
Tel Aviv
1997 Shalom Haver - Goodbye Friend, Abu-Cabir
Gallery, Tel Aviv
1997 Women In The Real World, The Limboos
Gallery, Tel Aviv
1996 Group Exhibition, Julie M. Gallery, Tel Aviv, '96
1994 I Look Like..., The Tel Aviv Museum
1994 Meta-Sex, The Ein Harod Museum of Art
1993 Wild Seeds, Mary Fouzi Gallery, Tel Aviv

Awards

2008 Fine Art Award
The Minister of Culture, Science and Sport
1994 Young Artist Award
The Israeli Minister of Education and Culture

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