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Lili Almog **Betweenness**

Text von Jean Dykstra, Vered Tohar
 Gestaltet von Lili Almog und Kehrer Design (Hannah Feldmeier)
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***Betweenness* ist ein visuelles Skizzenbuch, das die Verschleierung als Ausdruck und die Darstellung von Frauen innerhalb von Mythologie und Religion, verflochten mit den globalen Wirren unserer Zeit, erforscht.**

Betweenness, die vierte und neueste Publikation von Lili Almog, ließ sich von den Praktiken der Verschleierung einer extremistischen jüdischen Sekte inspirieren. Indem sie die Setzung des Schleiers von seiner erwarteten Position in der islamischen Tradition verschiebt, hebt Lili Amogs künstlerische Darstellung verschleierter Frauen die Gemeinsamkeiten und Komplexität der weiblichen Natur hervor. In einer noch nie dagewesenen Darstellung des Symbols der Kopfbedeckung wirft sie Fragen nach Freiheit und Glauben auf und wie diese Wahrheiten in der Moderne koexistieren können. Ohne zu urteilen, lädt Almogs Verbildlichung den Betrachter ein, zu hinterfragen, wie Selbstdarstellung ihre Position und Macht beeinflusst.

Die 1961 in Israel geborene Fotokünstlerin **Lili Almog** ist für ihre intimen spirituellen Porträts der kulturellen Identitäten von Frauen aus aller Welt bekannt.

Almog zog Mitte der 80er-Jahre nach New York und begann ihre Karriere als Fotojournalistin vornehmlich in den Bereichen Mode und Porträt für mehrere internationale Magazine. Ihr künstlerischer Schwerpunkt sind Darstellungen des weiblichen Körpers und der weiblichen Psyche, um den Zustand der spirituellen und kulturellen Identität der von westlicher Kultur beeinflussten Frauen zu zeigen.

Ihre Werke wurden vielfach ausgestellt, mit Einzelausstellungen an internationalen Veranstaltungsorten wie dem Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel, dem Photographers' Place, UK, dem Alternative Museum, New York, dem Griffin Museum of Photography, Boston, dem Museet for Fotokunst, Dänemark, der Ffotogallery, UK, und dem Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Israel. Ihre Fotografien befinden sich im Bestand des Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; des Harvard Art Museums; des Victoria and Albert Museum, London; des Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; des Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; des Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee; des Musée de la Photographie in Belgien und zahlreicher privater Sammlungen.

Zu den veröffentlichten Monografien von Lili Almog gehören *Bed Sequence* (2002); *Perfect Intimacy* (2006); *The Other Half of the Sky* (2009) und *Between Presence and Absence*, New York (2015).

Jean Dykstra ist Fotokritikerin und Redakteurin vom photograph Magazin. Sie hat unter anderem Beiträge für The Brooklyn Rail, Art in America und Broadcast, das Online-Magazin von Pioneer Works, verfasst

Dykstra hat Essays für zahlreiche Bücher, Ausstellungskataloge und Monografien geschrieben, darunter *Vera Lutter: Fragments of Time Past, Running Falling Flying Floating Crawling* (Saint Lucy Books), *Jessica Backhaus: A Trilogy* (Kehrer Verlag) und *Albert Watson: Kaos* (Taschen).

Vered Tohar ist Senior Lecturer in der Abteilung für Literatur des jüdischen Volkes an der Bar-Ilan Universität. Ihre Forschung konzentriert sich auf jüdisch-traditionelle Narrative aus einer diachronischen und vergleichenden Perspektive.

Sie ist Autorin von *Abraham in the Furnace: A Rebel in a Pagan World* (2010); *The Book of Tales, Sermons and Legends: An Anthology of Hebrew Stories from the Print Era* (2016). Sie ist Mitherausgeberin von *Tell me about it: Aspects in narrative analysis* (2010); *Religious Stories in Transformation: Conflict, Revision and Reception* (2016), *Jerusalem and Other Holy Places as Foci as Multireligious and Ideological Confrontation* (2020). Tohar hat mehr als 40 Artikel in israelischen und internationalen wissenschaftlichen Zeitschriften veröffentlicht. Außerdem schreibt sie Gedichte und Kurzgeschichten.

Aus dem Text *The Space Within: Lili Almog's Covered Women* von **Jean Dykstra:**

A sense of urgency radiates from Lili Almog's photographs, staged images of covered women that circle around female subjectivity and female bodies at a time when women's autonomy, globally, feels increasingly under threat. Then again, when has it ever been otherwise? When have women's bodies not been contested sites? Almog has assembled photographs, drawings, collages, still lifes of studio interiors, and reproductions of art-historical works to ponder the question, inscribed in her own handwriting in these pages: "Is modesty a prerequisite to faith?" Put another way: "Why does faith require women to cover their head, their body, their soul?" Almog leads with curiosity, not with judgment, responding with photographs that are thoughtful and a little provocative. Reflecting on her own reaction to seeing a woman who's covered, Almog has called it "a disturbance to the frame" that elicits a flicker of curiosity about who the woman is and why she's covered. Lest we assume we know, her layered images are intentionally open-ended.

An anonymous woman Almog spotted in Jerusalem some years ago was the inspiration for this body of work, this line of visual inquiry. She noticed a woman in the Jewish quarter of the city who was covered, head to toe, in black. Initially, she thought that the woman, being covered, must be Muslim, but in fact she was a member of an ultra-Orthodox sect of Hasidic Judaism. Almog began to reflect on her own assumptions about women who cover themselves, and why.

(...)

Almog here alludes to a countervailing view of women, one which demands that they bare their bodies for a male gaze. Her photographs and collages engage in conversation with these male artists, whose paintings submit the female body to scrutiny. Echoing the precise lighting and formal poses of a Titian or Goya, her images are at once homages to those classic artworks and a sly challenge. The hand of her covered model echoes the hand of Titian's nude Venus of Urbino. The model's bare legs seem to complete the nude torso of Manet's Olympia. There are threads that connect these women across centuries and cultures having to do with their status as objects without agency, symbols rather than individuals.

In a period when masks and face coverings have taken on an entirely new meaning, Almog's portraits are acts of appreciation for the diversity of women's sense of themselves and their place in society, and of their own spirituality and autonomy.

Aus dem Text *Lili Almog's Language of the Gaze* von **Vered Tohar:**

What is the meaning of covering and revealing a woman's body? Which body parts does a culture worry about covering? How does covering affect those who look at the covered body? What role do imagination and reality play in the practices of covering and revealing?

In his essay, "The Look," the French philosopher Jean-Claude Sartre (1905–1980) discusses the relationship between the observer and the observed object. Sartre's essay follows the argument of Czech-German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) on the relationship between the self and the other, in his essay, "Philosophy as a Strict Science." Husserl argues that the subject's gaze negates the other who is in front of him, denies him his identity and thus makes him an object. Sartre argues the opposite, that it is the observer who becomes an object by virtue of his own gaze. The act of looking negates the self. Thus, at the heart of the drama of the gaze is the other, the person being observed.

The images of women created by photographer and artist Lili Almog lie precisely along this seam, between observer and observed, between object and subject, between self and other, between what is and what is not. These photographed images depict the barriers that exist between the female body and the world. These barriers are sometimes a product of choice and sometimes a product of compulsion. In either case, these barriers change the landscape, affect it, and evoke a wide range of emotions in the viewer. The covered body is simultaneously an aesthetic accessory, a prison or obstacle, and a statement to the world.

(...)

Today, the Western world is increasingly exposed to covered women, especially migrants from Western Asia and North Africa to Europe and the United States. Covered women are increasingly seen in public spaces, often attracting attention, curiosity, and sometimes anger. A covered woman protects her privacy in the public sphere, but she is also highly prominent in this space, to the point of expropriating her privacy. The covering is designed to protect her from being seen, but it actually exposes her to people's gaze. A contemporary woman who is fully covered must deal with this contradictory situation in the public sphere.

(...)

On the other side of this crossroads stands the surprising shift in the year 2020, when the global Coronavirus pandemic created a new kind of covering — facial coverings that are a medical necessity, not a religious, cultural, or ethnic obligation.

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Pressebilder



01_Jewish Girl (detail)
© Lili Almog



02_Drawing Room # 7
© Lili Almog



03_Seasons # 9
© Lili Almog



04_Mother with Her Children # 1
© Lili Almog



05_Mother and Child
(with drawing by Lili Almog on opposite page)
© Lili Almog



06_Drawing Room # 33
© Lili Almog



07_Seasons # 24
© Lili Almog



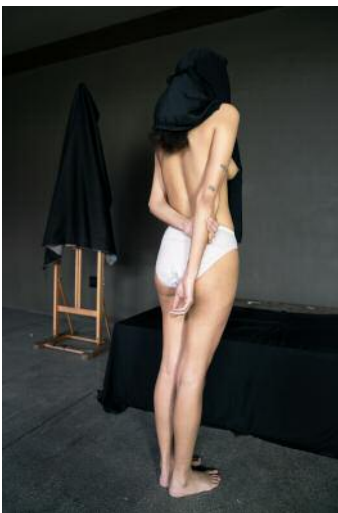
08_Composite # 8
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09_Composite # 18
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10_Composite # 14
(with drawing by Lili Almog on opposite page)
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11_Drawing Room # 42
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12_Drawing Room # 4
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