

Sylvia Naimark | Zimzum

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The Kabbalist concept of “zimzum” embodies the art of being present in absence – to withdraw to make space for the Unknown. Confronted with Naimark’s works, we can look anew, embrace liminality, and explore the potential for contemplation. It is a language of removal and addendum which allows for intuition in an age of “storytelling”. Discretion, and integrity in times of self-promotion and personality cult where everyone is pouring out their privacy.

Chestnuts found in her mother’s pocket and fossilized coral. Forgotten places, beings, and things. Over time some of this imagery translates into circles and lines. I could simply state that as a viewer you must be patient and remain with the images. Because despite several layers of paint, it is only the surface that is unveiled in an exhibition. The rest remains concealed, leaving behind a trace, a scar.

Yet, to truly grasp Naimark’s work, we must let it reverberate. Focus not solely on what the paintings are, but on what they convey, allowing them to act as membranes rather than mere storyboards.

There is no manual or predisposed program. Naimark works until the painting is released. The surface of the canvas is never just an image and cannot be taken at face value. Her images are generous, run deeper, are projected from the outer layers of the painting, and exist in a network of transition, memory, and forgetfulness – some with, and others without, connections to earlier works.

In both the creation and appreciation of Naimark’s art, the act of seeing and unseeing is integral. It doesn’t become cognitive until you see what you see, and this process of becoming is vital to the experience. It is the point where the artist and observer briefly meet. This is also where the complexities of Naimark’s work reside: transcending the boundaries of form and narrative, abstraction, and representation.

In works like “The Other Side”, “Lingering Points”, and “Transit”, the trauma of otherness is intertwined with personal and historical narratives. Yet, these images don’t merely signify;

they exist for themselves while offering clues for interpretation. They are abstract. Obtainable as unsayable secrets, intimate but not private. Naimark's art is a place to unsee and see anew, to listen. A space of Not Knowing.

Despite the ambiguity of the image, a description of Naimark's art requires a particular precision, and exactness. It might even be necessary to adjust one's "spiritual retina" to access the connections between elements of Jewish mysticism intertwined with inherited trauma and the collective memory. The dilemma thus being that the images resurface as a set of constellations on a cloudy night – as both trajectories and contours.

Like a musical score, her poetic titles set a tone and could collectively work as harmonics. By allowing several thoughts to exist at the same time Naimark's paintings invite attention to what is there. By refusing to tell a singular story the works continue to call back the viewer. This creates a rhythm where paintings that take time to make also need time to be seen. They open cracks, voids, portholes that can transport you to a place deep inside.

So, in the end Naimark's painting is phenomenological in the sense that it describes rather than explains. Attempting to instigate a perspective freed from hypotheses or preconceptions. Achieving coherence within the singular frame while weaving works together to create a sense of both repetition and transience. The works change, and nevertheless remain coherent. Harboring the kind of secret that can take radical responsibility for the other.