

Yonatan Ullman - Temple (2015-2020) - expanded texts

Yonatan Ullman, **Genetics**, 2015

Plaster and gold leaf on formica, variable dimension (each panel 60x100 cm)



'Genetics' Is an installation that relates to death, loss, resurrection and birth.

In it, like strings of D.N.A, 'unfinished' infinity symbols are set up in a row.

Similar, but not identical to one another.

As if selected from this 'genetic pool' -

a single stroke, 'the chosen one', is gilded in gold.

Yonatan Ullman, Gehazi (tribute to Yehiel Shemi), 2015

Plaster on formica, variable dimension (each panel 60x100 cm)



This work is another 'Ullman treatment' to a work from art history.

This time, Ullman references 'Gehazi' (meaning: "valley of vision") -
a lost sculpture by Israeli canon artist Yehiel Shemi.

Shemi depicted a biblical figure who is considered controversial -

A servant of the prophet Elisha who proved to be a skeptic -

He denied the power of resurrection.

Shemi depicted Gehazi still holding the staff of Elisha.

In turn, Ullman depicts the image of this lost sculpture -

once as a negative imprint,

and a second time as a 'revived' positive relief,

which metaphorically, erect from the negative mold.

Yonatan Ullman, The Genesis Stone, 2018
gilded stone, 24x20x15cm

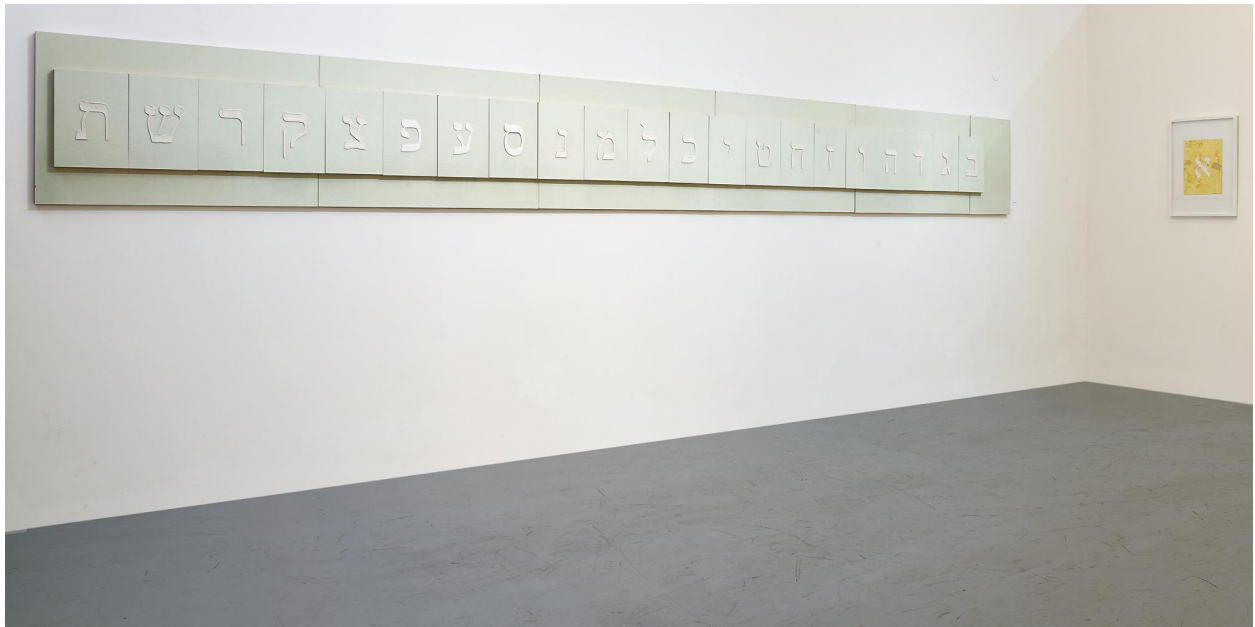


This strange stone is completely gilded in gold.

It might call to mind 'valuable' objects 'worthy' of preservation.

The title refers to the first stones which were brought back to Earth from the very first moon landing.

**Yonatan Ullman, Aleph - Taph, 2018,
plaster on formica, gilded cardboard, variable dimensions (each letter 24x34 cm)**



Yonatan Ullman created low plaster reliefs of each letter in the Hebrew Alphabet. This 'bank' laid in the artist's studio, holding the potential to breed life into infinite words. However, even before the first word was ever uttered, Israel's minister of culture proposed the 'loyalty in the arts act' - in essence, the bill would grant the government power to deny funding of any project that they deemed 'not loyal' to the country. At once artists raised their voice in protest. In one of these events, artists even went so far as to burn their own original works. Ullman participated in this event by burning the letter 'Aleph' (the first letter of the Hebrew Alphabet). Since then, Ullman's entire sequence of letters has been exhibited numerous times - The Aleph (a letter that represents the oneness of God) forever missing from it. Thus, Ullman's sequence of letters, like the entire biblical narrative itself (that

begins with the letter 'Beit' - the second letter of the Hebrew Alphabet - rather than the first letter of the Hebrew Alphabet - 'Aleph'), begins with absence.

Yonatan Ullman, Sacrificed Aleph, 2018

Gilded cardboard, framed: 60x40cm, unframed: 24x34cm



The stencil originally used in order to cast the letter 'Aleph' was gilded in gold and framed.

The empty mold replaced the missing letter, thus emphasizing the absence.

Yonatan Ullman, Birth / Death, 2019

Plaster and gold leaf on formica, each 240x120cm



The name of the letter 'Aleph' is derived from the semitic word 'ox'.

Moreover the shape of this letter - א - was derived from a proto-Sinaitic glyph that depicts the head of an ox.

Ancient cave paintings, Greek mythology, Pablo Picasso's many depictions of oxen, the Bull sculpture in Wall Street, the biblical tale of the golden calf...

are some of the loose associations that Ullman summons in his depiction of this animal.

Ullman depicts this ox decapitated.

The fallen head reveals an empty shell of a body.

This images is depicted as a 'negative imprint' (titled 'Death')

and 'positive relief' (titled 'Birth')

Yonatan Ullman, *The Moment* (scene 01 through 04), 2015 - 2020

Plaster on formica, overall 720x300cm, each 'unit' 60x100cm



The title 'The Moment' refers to: '*momentum*', as well as to '*a moment in time*'.

Likewise, this title may call to mind the word: '*monument*'.

This sequence of works consists of four mammoth-sized low plaster reliefs.

Together these tell a timely and timeless allegory about inevitable collapse.

Each relief depicts a 'scene' in the 'life' of a sculpture - Ullman's self portrait

posing as a hybrid of two iconic sculptures -

Michelangelo's 'David', and August Rodin's 'The Thinker':

Scene 1-'Embryo':

Creation begins from absence, and the desire to fill that void.

This 'scene' depicts a 'negative' of the image depicted in 'scene 2'.

Like an embryo in a womb, the finished sculpture's full form already lay encased inside a large block.

Scene 2 - 'Glory':

All excess has been removed.

The full sculpture is released from the block.

It appears to stand forever flawless and glorious.

Scene 3 - 'Collapse':

This scene is based on a 2016 New York Times Magazine article by Sam Anderson:

'David's Ankles: How Imperfections Could Bring Down The World's Most Perfect Statue'

This article describes a fatal, yet barely noticeable mistake that was made when Michelangelo's 'David' was initially erect - the sculpture's center of mass deviated at an unnoticeable three degree angle in relation to that of its base.

Thus over time, like a ticking time bomb, gravity pulled down at this massive icon...

Gradually, cracks began to form at the sculpture's weakest point - its ankles.

This scene depicts the decisive moment of the entire sequence - the exact moment when eventually the sculptures give in.

In this 'scene', the sculpture is frozen in time - suspended mid-air - at an angle where the conclusion is inevitable.

Scene 4 - 'Forever':

What once was a perfect form, now lay bare, broken and shattered on the ground.

Forever, it will remain in this state - a distant reminder of the glory which it once held.

Yonatan Ullman, The Columns of Time, 2019

Plaster on formica, 300x240cm



Like, 'The Moment', this work is an allegory.

Again this allegory is expressed through four 'scenes'.

This time, each depicts the image of a Corinthian column*.

In Hebrew the title of this work reads as: 'עמוד אחרי עמוד'.

This translates to: 'page by page'.

This title was inspired by Ullman's grandmother - Lisa Ullman.

She, at the age of 77 began her Magnum Opus -

translating the 2000 year old text by Josephus Flavius 'The Jewish War'

from Greek to Hebrew.

When, ten years later, she completed the task she was asked in an interview

about how she had done it?

She replied: "*page by page.*"

* The Roman writer Vitruvius (c. 75 – c. 15 BC) related that the Corinthian order had been invented by Callimachus, a Greek architect and sculptor.

According to his account discovery of this form of capital was:

“A freeborn maiden of Corinth, just of marriageable age, was attacked by an illness and died.

After her burial her nurse collected a few things which gave the girl pleasure in a basket.

She placed the basket over the tomb and covered it with a roof-tile

so that the things might last longer.

This basket happened to be placed just above the root of an acanthus.

When springtime came round, stalks grew up along the sides of the basket.

Just then Callimachus passed by this tomb

and observed the basket with the tender young leaves growing round it.

Delighted with the novel style and form, he built columns after that pattern

for the Corinthians, and established from that time forth

the rules to be followed in finished works of the Corinthian order”.

Yonatan Ullman, Prophecy, 2019

Plaster on formica, 120x100cm



Yonatan Ullman was born on the 4th of November, 1982.

He will die on the 4th of November 2058.

A saint.