

# BEYOND BAUHAUS

TEL AVIV:

FROM THE

SEAFOAM AND

CLOUDS TO THE

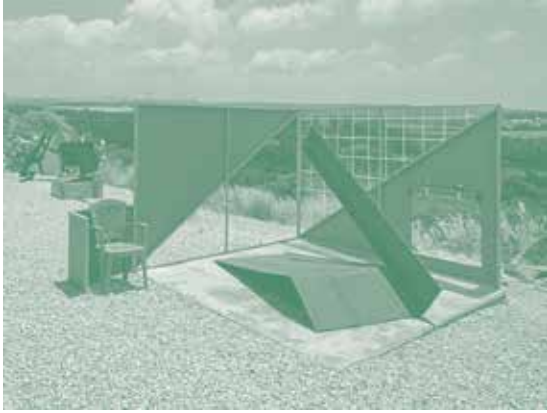
HERE AND NOW

SEPTEMBER 11 –

NOVEMBER 16,

2019

Providence  
College—  
Galleries



Hilla Toony Navok  
*Extensions,*  
2018  
PVC coated fabric, plastic chair.



Yael Efrati  
*From 14:00 To 16:00,*  
2014  
Metal window grill



David Adika  
*As In Water Face Reflects Face,*  
2014  
Photograph

## Many Cities, One Providence— Tel Aviv: From the seafoam and clouds to the here and now

**September 11th –  
November 16th, 2019**

**Participating artists:  
David Adika, Ronny Carny,  
Yael Efrati, Hilla Toony Navok  
& Shay Zilberman**

In the 1920s and 1930s, located primarily in the small town of Dessau, Weimar Republic, there was an art and design academy called Bauhaus. An avant-garde, international ethos dominated Bauhaus pedagogy, which combined crafts and the fine arts and espoused the International Style, an architecture based on the premise that it is possible to design and build a more just world. Among Bauhaus faculty, students and alumni were many Central and Eastern European Jews and descendants of Jewish pioneers from Palestine. When Adolf Hitler came to power and shut down the Bauhaus in 1933, its members were forced to disperse, and many of the Jews among them fled to Palestine. The legend—culled from the pages of books, lyrics of songs, and language of UNESCO—now goes that they went to ‘Little Tel Aviv,’ a small city with few people and full of eclectic architecture. Here they revived Bauhaus principles and built themselves a ‘White City, from the seafoam and clouds.’

*From the seafoam and clouds to the here and now* examines how contemporary artists from Tel Aviv take as their subject the images and forms of their hometown’s complex visual history, especially that of the iconic area of Modernist structures: The White City, a collection of over 4,000 buildings built in a unique form of Bauhaus or International Style. Making with visual vocabularies and art histories that are simultaneously inspiring and problematic, these artists ultimately convey how their city’s origin story and embrace of Bauhaus is complexly intertwined with its mythology. Featuring all new artwork commissioned by Providence College Galleries [PC-G], the painting, collage, photography, sculpture and installation on display in this group exhibition consider the synthesis of Bauhaus goals and aesthetics with the ancient and contemporary cultures of the multi-cultural Middle East.



Ronny Carry  
*Death at One's Elbow,*  
 2018  
 Painted wall mural



Shay Zilberman  
*Untitled,*  
 2013  
 Paper Collage, Ink and Graphite on Paper

## A Painting in Black & White

The artworks on display in *Tel Aviv: From the seafoam and clouds to the here and now* are underpinned and connected by one city's multifaceted past, dynamic present and uncertain future. Like any place, the mid-size metropolis of Tel Aviv exists as much in images, books, memories and dreams as it does in ever-evolving reality. Yet, Tel Aviv holds a unique position in urban history as one of the very few cities founded in the twentieth century. It is a distinctly modern city and a decidedly heterogeneous, secular and hedonistic place. Originally called Ahuzat Bayit, Tel-Aviv always aspired to be a Western metropolis and its early Jewish residents sought to realize the dual vision of creating both the first Hebrew city and the modernist urban plan of the West's dreams in the East. Tel Aviv was therefore a design solution manifested to attract Jews who were forced to leave Europe but did not want to give up their urban, cosmopolitan cultures.

The image of the White City in the world's mind's eye became that of the Jewish Venus—borne “from the seafoam and clouds,” the sun and sand, the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean sea—was first created by the Zionist movement. Sand and secular joined forces to mark Tel Aviv as a city liberated from the religious aspect of Israel and connected to a discourse of pioneering and settlement. The idea that Tel Aviv is a white city with no history, detached from its Palestinian roots, was consistent with the aims of Zionism.

In 1984, the exhibition *White City* curated by the architect Micha Levin for the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, marked the connection between the city that was built on sand and the notion that innocence and purity are well symbolized by bright light, or in this case, whiteness. This notion also parallels a central idea of modernist architecture, that edifices composed of pure, simple form unsullied by ornamentation create utopia. In the exhibition, Levin told the story of the Bauhaus master architects whose ideas help shape Tel Aviv as a modern city. Educated in central Europe, architects like Polish-Israeli Arie Sharon and German-Israeli Wilhelm Zeev Haller were influenced by the International Style espoused by the Bauhaus school masters—Walter Gropius, Hans Meyer Ludwig and Miss van de Rohe, among many others)—in Germany and their rogue contemporaries, like the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier and Austrian-American architect Rudolph Schindler. The exhibition repositioned International Style architecture in the mind of Tel Avivians and on the Israeli public agenda, and so it was at this moment, several decades the subject buildings' construction, that Tel Aviv's

architectural landscape was first endowed with the magic of myth and nostalgia.

Levin's curatorial narrative eventually passed from the Tel Aviv Museum of Art to the newspapers and from there to a host of public events that perpetuated Tel Aviv as a 'white city.' In the 1990s, the effort to brand the iconic buildings and their locations as a White City worthy of the Bauhaus marker and revered by modern architecture buffs was joined by Nitza Szmuk, the appointed preservation architect for the Tel Aviv municipality. For decades, Szmuk, who turned the preservation of International Style into her life's work, actively embed and preserved this kind of architecture in private and public spaces as well as on a cultural level. Szmuk's efforts bore fruit when, in 2003, following her proposal, UNESCO declared Tel Aviv a World Heritage Site and only the second modern city, after Brasilia, to receive the prestigious status.

White city, however, does not accurately reflect the colors of buildings in Tel Aviv. In reality most of the buildings are shades of gray, brown, or somewhere in between. Only as a result of the World Heritage declaration have some of Tel Aviv's soot-laden buildings and shutters been made white and uniform in appearance. The White City, therefore, is both visually and historically a myth. Like any myth, as Sharon Rotbard argues in his book *Black City, White City*, the narrative of the White City—officially only a neighborhood in a well-to-do part of the city—and Tel Aviv in general begins with some untruths. The early elements of this white city mythology grew from European-Ashkenazi foundations that sought to avoid any relationship to historic Jaffa, a city populated by citizens with religious ties to all three major monotheistic religions. The ambitions of Tel Aviv's urban planners uprooted Jaffa and moved its borders and predominantly black and brown citizens farther South. The irony is the physical and cultural erasure of large portions of Jaffa, an ancient port city with a majority Muslim population, made way for the vision of thoroughly modern city promising a more just, higher quality of life for diverse, pluralist populations. Eventually annexed into Tel Aviv, the southern neighborhoods that make up Jaffa were subsequently neglected for years by the Tel Aviv municipality.

After the 1980s reframing of Tel Aviv as a white city like that imagined by the Bauhaus master architects, Rotbard writes that two elements of the urban history must now be articulated if the record is ever to be set straight. First is the tracing of the process of capturing the image of a white city, or more accurately, the analysis of the fabrication of an image intended to connect and strengthen a narrative that gives an international cultural significance to the existence of Tel Aviv. The second is the obliteration of Jaffa, an Arab city, and the inclusion of its meager remains within the boundaries

of Tel Aviv, a Hebrew city. The decision to preserve the International Style architecture of the city, as well as the decision to whiten the so-called Bauhaus buildings (which were never really white), leverages and a complicated cultural history and embraces, albeit subtly, a pervasive ideological positioning of one culture importance over another. One could argue, using a crude poetry of artistic language, that white Tel Aviv exists only in places where black Jaffa does not, and vice versa. The painting of Tel Aviv in white, therefore, is an erasure of the painting of Jaffa in black.

The artists featured in *Tel Aviv: From the seafoam and clouds to the here and now* are all acutely aware and critically looking at this painting, the city, their home.



David Adika  
*Mizrachi: Figurines No. 1 – 4*, 2019  
 Pigment prints and wall painting  
 Approximately 18 x 5.5 feet each



David Adika  
*Beach Towel 1 & 2, Tel Aviv – Jaffa*, 2019  
 Pigment print on Microfiber towel,  
 Balsa wood stands  
 Approximately 55 x 39 inches each



David Adika  
*From the Sands, South Tel Aviv: Untitled (1 – 3)*, 2019  
 Color photography, inkjet print,  
 painted aluminum frame  
 Approximately 10 x 15 inches each

## David Adika

Over the last decade, David Adika's photographs and installations have drawn on his extensive image-based research to illustrate the ways architecture, craft and design relate to identity and cultural heritage. This research generally focuses on the urban and design cultures of non-white, non-European cultures, especially those of the Mizrachim, which, if loosely defined, are Jewish communities of Arab and North African descent. This work enables Adika to shine light on and pay homage to the non-European influences on Modernist aesthetics and contemporary culture in Israel.

On view in PC-G's Hunt-Cavanagh Gallery, Adika's installation *Mizrachi: Figurines 1 – 4* references the Hatikvah neighborhood of Tel Aviv, where the Mizrahi porcelain factories for years designed and fabricated ornamental statues of historic and heroic African figures. Now, populations of color and foreign workers of African and Arab descent, many of whom work in manufacturing, are leaving the area, forced out either by government policy or economic hardship. At midcentury in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, the depicted figurines were mass-produced by black and brown people on a scale that reaped economic and therefore cultural benefits for their communities. Given the current reality of many Tel Avivians of color, such objects, despite their complicated relationship to the fueling of twentieth century exoticism, now take on new significance today as talismans of resourcefulness and dignity.

In the series of small photographs on view in PC-G's Reilly Gallery, Adika documents International Style buildings in Southern Tel Aviv not included on UNESCO's official White City conservation list. The artist made these pictures on a hot summer day to show the buildings as they actually are—sites bearing the damage of a relentless Mediterranean sun and the municipal neglect too-often subjected on communities of color lacking political and/or financial power. While some such buildings are abandoned, others are pieced-together places of refuge and respite, currently inhabited by refugees and foreign laborers mostly from Eritrea and Sudan.

This photo series' title, *From the Sands, South Tel Aviv*, hints at an ironic duplicity by referring to the origin story of how white Tel Aviv grew out of the glistening, bleached sands of the sea. But it also refers to recent immigrants and refugees who fled their homelands, from and through the desert, to make a better (if illegal and therefore precarious) life in Israel. Many of these migrants were temporarily imprisoned in the Holot (Sands) Facility, a now-defunct immigration authority center. Framed in the iconic primary colors of Bauhaus and similarly featured in Adika's *Mizrachi: Figurines 1-4* installation, the photographs aim to remind viewers that many people, because of their identity, are robbed of the ability to live in the kind of compassionate, egalitarian societies that Bauhaus professed to foster through modern design principles and innovation.

## Ronny Carny

Ronny Carny finds new forms and patterns by looking back into art history. In much of her recent work, which includes several mural projects, she searches for a less rational, more flexible and sentimental account of modern art aesthetics. She is best known for her improvisational yet precisely rendered abstractions, which range from barely-there drawings and collage on paper to large-scale, site-specific wall paintings. She frequently paints incrementally, sometimes working in front of a live audience and other times moving methodically between computer-drawn diagrams and huge expanses of wall space. The result is a confluence of disparate references and making methods.

In the large and complex wall mural she designed for PC-G's Reilly Gallery, she appropriates and riffs on several different artworks by various seminal Bauhaus figures, especially the women members who, because of the referential work being produced by artists like Carny, are finally being more deeply considered by scholars and audiences alike. The wall painting *Colored Glass Destroys Hate* therefore incorporates work by household names in Modern art history, such as a tweaked composition of a stained-glass artwork by de Stijl founder Theo van Doesburg, but also privileges the pioneering pattern design of women artists like Benita Otte Koch and Anni Albers. In focusing on these German and central European figures, Carny excavates and indirectly remembers a cultural past, particularly that of twentieth-century Germany, which many Tel Avivians and Israelis have chosen to forget in their pursuit of new traditions unsullied by the pain and trauma inflicted by Germany on the Jewish people.

The mural, although built with standard Bauhaus color palettes, is characteristically Tel Avivian—it is brilliant and bright as if illuminated by the Middle-Eastern sun and reflective of the Mediterranean sea's bold blues and greens. Carny's use of hard-edge abstraction also echoes the signature geometry of Islamic and Arabic architecture and tile-work, which profoundly influenced Bauhaus design and still today feature prominently throughout Israel.

By stitching together this wall painting from multiple sources, Carny inserts herself into and concurrently expands the established Tel Aviv canon of art and architectural record. She lends voice to female designers and non-Western artisans, while exploring historiographical authority, destabilizing certain Israeli cultural conventions and creating a space of play around the mythos of the Bauhaus in Tel Aviv. The artwork further demonstrates how art historical movements and ideology are in a constant flux, that is both complicated and contradictory but ever inspiring to some artists.

Ronny Carny  
*Colored Glass Destroys Hate*, 2019  
Site-specific wall painting  
13 x 42.5 feet





Yael Efrati  
*Untitled*, 2019  
Masonite, wood, drywall compound and paint  
63 x 81 x 4 inches



Yael Efrati  
*Untitled (Bat Poop)*, 2019  
Masonite, wood, Styrofoam ball, drywall compound,  
paint and coffee grounds  
98 x 79 x 4 inches

## Yael Efrati

Yael Efrati explores cultural objecthood and architectural gestures via what she calls “documentary sculpture.” While the artist cites a practice of improvisational drawing and documentary photography as the starting points for each sculpture, she also acknowledges that, like any form of documentation, her artworks exist somewhere between exact replica and flawed simulacra. In turn, the finely crafted art objects Efrati makes expose the literal and figurative gaps between words and matter and vision and reality.

On view in both PC–G exhibition spaces, *Untitled* and *Untitled (Bat Poop)* showcase could-be fragments of the facades of the White City’s International Style buildings. At first glance, the two sections look familiar, even generically representative of Bauhaus architectural aesthetics found all over the world... and they are. Upon further examination, however, the pieces carry distinct markers of Tel Aviv. One of the wall-hanging sculptures’ pristine and bright white Bauhaus building style surface has running across its corner section a type of piping that is easily identifiable to most Middle Easterners as an air-conditioning conduit. The Bauhaus architects of Germany likely never imagined the sleek exteriors of their buildings covered with several such variants of pipes, all added on over the years to make life a little more comfortable in the harsh desert environs.

Efrati’s second piece, descriptively titled *Untitled (Bat Poop)*, is ‘decorated’ with a pattern imitating that made by the fruit-bat feces found all over the so-called White City. The bat poop is particular to Tel Aviv, too. The fig fruit growing from the Ficus trees, that the British imported from Asia in the early 20th century and which now line Tel Aviv’s streets, is too rich for the native bats. They eat it anyway and then projectile excrete their fig-laced waste from top to bottom of the light-colored buildings found throughout famously modernist (and swanky) sections of Tel Aviv, like Rothschild Boulevard and Bialik Square. With works like these, viewers of *Tel Aviv: From the seafoam and clouds to the here and now* intimately encounter the quirky realities of contemporary Tel Aviv as well as the literal and figurative residue of occupation and colonization.

## Hilla Toony Navok

Hilla Toony Navok makes found-object sculptures and installations that evoke the commercial space and functional design proliferated in the post-war era. The dozens of sculptural displays, lighting fixtures and surface treatments she has composed over the years obliquely reference the relationship of labor and commerce to creativity. The artist's work also frequently reformats the geometrically abstract elements of Modern art painting and sculpture into playful readymade tableaux that allude to the resourcefulness and creative thinking required in everyday life.

Staged like the iconic balconies and porticos seen on most Tel Aviv International Style buildings (and notably absent from most modernist architecture in central and eastern Europe), Navok's installation in PC-G's Reilly Gallery raises questions about use-value preservation. For example, her work asks: Can a building ever really be totally preserved? And if so, will that building survive if it doesn't meet the needs of contemporary culture or integrate into the fabric of everyday life? *Rolling Room* answers such questions by showing how inhabitants of Tel Aviv and the greater Middle East adapt their spaces. From the artist's perspective the adjustments are done beautifully, creatively and economically. Honoring these adaptations, the sculptural units Navok presents here are made of typical materials, including marquees, PVC fabrics and synthetic carpets. They gesture to the make-shift enclosed balconies Tel Avivians fashion to make additional storage or much-needed living space for their urban apartments.

The vignettes that comprise the installation also delve into the paradox of commercial color palettes that further color the White City and greater Tel Aviv. By aligning her materials to form sculptures of fluid lines, thoughtful rhythms and bursts of color and light, Navok associates the collections of everyday objects with the vibrant paintings of Laszlo Moholy Nagy and Wassily Kandinsky. Such flights of colorful fancy enable the viewer to observe and appreciate the beauty and poetry in the ordinary objects abound in urban, not-so-white Tel Aviv.



Hilla Toony Navok  
*Rolling Room*, 2019  
Marquee awnings, carpet, metal  
thresholds, MDF, PVC fabric and storage



Hilla Toony Navok  
*Rolling Room (detail)*, 2019  
Marquee awnings, carpet, metal  
thresholds, MDF, PVC fabric and storage



Hilla Toony Navok  
*Rolling Room*, 2019  
Marquee awnings, carpet, metal  
thresholds, MDF, PVC fabric and storage





Installation view of *Tel Aviv: From the seafoam and clouds to the here now* at Providence College Galleries, 2019



Shay Zilberman  
*Untitled (Postcards from Tel Aviv)*, 2019  
Paper collage, ink and graphite on paper  
Approximately 12 x 10 inches each



Shay Zilberman  
*Untitled*, 2019  
Unique chine-collé prints on paper  
Approximately 22 x 18 inches each  
Printed in collaboration with Gottesman Etching Center, Kibbutz Cabri, Israel

## Shay Zilberman

Shay Zilberman employs the art of layering to showcase a kind of urban alchemy cultivated by artists, architects and broader society. His every artwork meticulously pieces together carefully sourced mid-century magazine pages and layers of paper, parchment and pigment. Alternating between collages made of historical imagery and unique prints composed of color blocking, his overall oeuvre represents the ways in which individual and collective memories of places differ from reality. Using making techniques that are as precise as they are intuitive, Zilberman becomes an imagistic storyteller, documenting and speculating on the built environment's promise and failure to improve its users' quality of life.

For *Tel Aviv: From the seafoam and clouds to the here and now*, the artist created works on paper that manifest connections between the past and present states of Tel Aviv's International Style buildings. Whether with collage or chine-collé print, the multiple layers and juxtapositions of his compositions poetically synthesize the imagined histories of the White City with the diverse realities of Tel Aviv today. Many of the building parts pictured in the collages and prints were documented in the 1930s. Today, they usually look completely different because of neglect, the damage that comes with time, or alterations made in service to later additions and decorative features. The fantastical towers shown in *Untitled (Postcards from Tel Aviv)* all at once conjure the utopic yet unrealistic ideals of Bauhaus design. They most directly reference the various towers that spring up all over Tel Aviv on a regular basis. Zilberman's re-imagined buildings gussy up archival photographs not to preserve them, but rather to highlight societies' strangely incessant re-creation of the Tower of Babel. With this, he consciously brings together the multiculturalism of biblical Babylon and contemporary Tel Aviv with the socialist values that informed the International Style and the capitalist real estate interests that currently profit off the White City narrative to power the tower projects of today.



*Many Cities, One Providence–Tel Aviv: From the seafoam and clouds to the here and now* is organized by Jamilee Lacy, PC–G Director and Chief Curator, with guest curator Dr. Revital Michali, an independent curator and art historian from Tel Aviv.

*Many Cities, One Providence–Tel Aviv: From the seafoam and clouds to the here and now* overlaps with two initiatives at PC–G:

The exhibition is presented within PC–G’s Beyond Bauhaus, a more than yearlong series of exhibitions, publications and commissioned installations featuring contemporary artists whose practices are inspired by or respondent to the history of Bauhaus (1919-1933), the German art school so influential on modern art, architecture, craft, design and education.

It is also part of Many Cities, One Providence, a programming initiative at PC–G that offers Providence audiences idiosyncratic glimpses of innovative artists and thinkers working in cities near and far. The series stems from Providence College Galleries’ interest in cultivating relationships with artists, scholars and arts communities from around the world in order to draw connections between the city of Providence and other urban contexts.

It is made possible by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Artis, Israel Consul General’s Office, and Department of Art & Art History at Providence College.

**Providence College Galleries**  
**—Hunt-Cavanagh Gallery at Hunt-Cavanagh Hall,**  
**—Reilly Gallery at the Smith Center for the Arts**  
**Providence College, Providence, RI 02918**

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# BEYOND BAUHAUS 2019 – 2020

A New(er) Unity

*An Online Primer for Beyond Bauhaus*

April 15, 2019 –

August 1, 2020

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On the Wall:

Elizabeth Corkery

May 1, 2019 –

July 26, 2019

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From the seafoam and  
clouds to the here and now

September 11 –

November 17, 2019

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Katarina Burin

December 4, 2019 –

March 1, 2020

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Construction House

*Heather Rowe & Ad Minoliti*

December 4, 2019 –

March 1, 2020

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On the Wall

*LUFTWERK*

April 29, 2010 –

July 26, 2020

PC  
-G



*Andy Warhol*

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

ISRAEL

The Consulate General  
of Israel to New England

ארטיס ארטיס  
artis  
grant  
program

Art &  
Art History  
Department

School of  
Arts &  
Sciences