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Catharsis: Human Fragility and Aspects of Purification in a Corona Inspired Exhibition – a Curatorial Case

*By now the shepherds and neatherds all,
Yea, even the sturdy guiders of curved ploughs,
Began to sicken, and their bodies would lie
Huddled within back-corners of their huts,
Delivered by squalor and disease to death.*

(Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, translated by William Ellery Leonard, 6.1247)

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on an exhibition entitled – *Purity/Purification/Pure*, which engaged with questions regarding the condition of humanity in light of the present Covid 19 pandemic. Most of the works displayed in this exhibition were not created during the Covid 19 outbreak, but during the years preceding it. The context of the present pandemic was arrived at through the curatorial work.

Catharsis is an Aristotelian concept, defined as a tragic action happening to an individual, and purifying him through feelings of fear and compassion. "Purification" is a term particularly related to in Antiquity, and hence to the concept of catharsis. In affinity with Classical reception studies, the analysis and interpretation of the works are supported here by ancient literary and philosophical sources such as the *Poetics* by Aristotle, the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* by Plato, the *Enneads* by Plotinus, and others.

This study focuses on several aspects of the corona pandemic and the concept of 'Catharsis' that were reflected in the exhibition: Birth, death, and human fragility; the validity of purification rites in the present era; and nature and its degeneration or annihilation by humankind.

The main conclusions deriving from the exhibition and this study is that the human need for purity and purification is a primordial one and has never ceased to be the focus of a basic desire of humanity. However, the present pandemic appears to be a warning for humanity against its own extinction if it continues on its degenerate path, without any possibility of recovery or obtaining purification.

Keywords: Covid 19; Purification rites; Catharsis; Platonic Philosophy; Israeli Art.

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1. Introduction

The new situation in which the world found itself in 2020, of the Covid 19 pandemic (corona virus), led to a raising of questions regarding the condition of humanity in the universe, the status of religion and faith in human life, and the interaction between humanity and nature.

This study focuses on an exhibition entitled – *Purity/Purification/Pure*, which engaged with the above questions.² The exhibition took place in a municipal gallery of the city of Hod-Hasharon in Israel. In relation to this it should be noted that Israel was among the first countries to deal effectively with the pandemic, and is currently on the way to overcoming it. The ways of coping so far have included three lock-downs, strict guidelines on how the public should conduct themselves, and wide-spread vaccination.

"Purification" is a term particularly related to in Antiquity, and hence to the Aristotelian concept of *catharsis*. In Aristotle's *Poetics*, written in about 350 BCE, *catharsis* is defined as a tragic action happening to an individual, and purifying him through feelings of fear and compassion (Aristotle, 1970, lines 6.1449b22-28). The premise underlying this study is that the human need for purity and purification is a primordial one, and, has never ceased to be the focus of a basic desire of humanity.

Most of the works displayed in this exhibition were not created during the Covid 19 outbreak, but in the years preceding it. The context of the present pandemic was arrived at through by the curatorial work: the concept of the exhibition, the selection of the works, the manner of their arrangement, and the accompanying text.

This study focuses on several aspects of the corona pandemic that were reflected in this exhibition:

1. Birth, death, and human fragility.
2. The validity of purification rites in the present era.
3. Nature and its degeneration or annihilation by humankind.

In affinity with Classical reception studies, the analysis and interpretation of the works are supported here by ancient literary and philosophical sources.

2. Birth, death, and human fragility

The corona pandemic has made the sense of transience, life, death, and human fragility very tangible. These aspects are a main theme in the work of the following three artists.

The work "CO VIDA" (Figs. 1-6) by Mirta Edry is an installation composed of PVC recycled material and comprises several images of different sizes. The title of the installation – "CO VIDA", alludes immediately to the pandemic Covid 19, and perhaps suggests human co-existence with what seems to be a long-term occurrence, and even derives new insights and benefits from it.

The images that constitute this installation have been perceived to resemble seashells or eggs, as well as female genitalia. A close observation of the images, from which light emanates, makes them seem to ripple like waves or effervesce like sea foam.

All of these associations are related to creation, birth, and fertility. The images are soft-white in color and some are electrified with light emanating from within, making them bright, shining, and pure. Birth, thus, seems to be related to purity, and both these aspects are rooted in the Western classical heritage.

Birth from a seashell is clearly linked to the myth of the birth of Aphrodite. Her cosmic and sublime birth arising from the mighty fertilization of the sea, through Ouranus's sperm combining with the sea spume to form the *leukos aphros* - "white foam" (Hesiod, 1953, lines 190-91), can be perceived as a climax of purity, in constituting a combination of two of the most fundamental elements: the sky and the sea. The *anodos* of Aphrodite, her divine birth, symbolized her role as a mediator between the two cosmological realms - heaven and earth; and the moment of Aphrodite emerging from the sea and ascending into the sky is a moment of sublime epiphany (Cyrino, 2010, pp. 104-114). Hence, Aphrodite is a cosmic power and dual-natured: *Ourania* – celestial, and *Pandemos* – "of or belonging to all the people". Aphrodite was thus also perceived as a mediator between heaven and earth; between the human realm and the divine (Rosenzweig, 2004, pp. 13-28, 78-80; Cyrino, 2010, p. 117; Plato, 1951, line 180).

² The exhibition was curated by the author.

Aphrodite is described in the *Iliad* in terms of purity as golden, bright, and radiant (Homer, 1924-1925, lines 5.370, 9.390). The sea and the foam, which are the origin of the goddess according to the myth (Hesiod, 1953, lines 188-206), thus can be perceived as the womb of the universe, with water as a purifying element. Water was related to sacred ritual bathing, consecration, and initiation rites, and in being drawn from sacred springs was hence related to purification. The ritual bathing was intended to purify and consecrate the initiates and imbue them with the illusion of a sublime experience (Bremmer, 2014, pp. 40, 44, 51, 83, 94, 104). Purification by water and immersion in the sea was part of the initiation rites in cults such as that of Demeter at Eleusis, and was also part of the cult of Aphrodite (Havelock, 1995, pp. 23-25; Eliade, 1959, p. 131; Bowden, 2010, p. 33).

The image resembling a seashell in Edry's work may also be related to the Christian rite of purification by baptism, as the artist is a theoretician engaged in medieval Christian art. From this aspect, this image may symbolize the resurrection of Christ and hence the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth.

Birth and death are main themes in Mira Maylor's works, in which purity is related to birth and purification is related to death.

The work "Transparents" (Figs. 7, 8) presents three glass human heads protruding from a transparent black surface with the quality of clear water. The bright heads glow against the black background, as if they are erupting from the darkness, and floating above water.

The association of water connects the images to a mythological birth, purifying bath, and initiation, as discussed above. Their transparency causes a variable reflection of what is in front of them, mostly the changing audience, and thus an illusion of dynamism is created, as if of flowing water. The eyes of these glass human heads are closed and their general expression is one of passivity, like that of a newborn infant. Their white color may therefor symbolize purity; but it may also be associated with death; and the glass from which they are made – with the fragility of human existence (see Lucretius, 1942, lines 3. 140-160).

Another head from the Phoenix series (Fig. 9) made of glass fragments protrudes from a metal surface that resembles a veil and hence produces a dialectic between soft and rigid, between fragile and sturdy. In this work the human face is composed of glass fragments, unlike the previous three faces that are each created in one piece. This fragmentation further emphasizes the aspect of human fragility. The apparent "hatching" from the substrate brings to mind Michelangelo's unfinished slave sculptures (Fig. 9). Michelangelo's muscular human images seemingly struggle to free themselves from the rough marble block, constituting a metaphor of the human soul striving to free itself and attain purification from its corporeal being. Indeed, Michelangelo's *Rebellious and Dying Slaves* and his unfinished slave sculptures have been interpreted as deeply inspired by Neo-Platonic theories of the liberation of the soul from the corporeal body and its return to its divine origin (Armour, 1994, pp. 43, 46-47, 52-57, 67-68). In Maylor's works, however, death seems to be very present, with the image of the metal veil embracing the fragile human head in a way that emphasizes its fragility and transiency.

The conflict between the soul's desire to purify and its inability to do so is effectively manifested in another work by Maylor, entitled "Borders" (Fig. 10). This consists in a metal frame and metal wires enclosing three transparent glittering crystals. These crystals may be reminiscent of the purifying stones used in worship. On closer inspection (Fig. 11), mesmerizing textures and reflections appear, as a kind of revelation. However, this revelation remains distant from the viewer and an illusion only: it is trapped in the stones, which in themselves are trapped between metal wires, as if purification is remote and distant. The human desire for purification and redemption from the earthly and the corporeal is also manifested in another work by Maylor, entitled "Touch" (Fig. 12) presenting a glass hand protruding from a metal substrate. The amputated hand seems to be desperately calling for salvation, while the glass from which it is made is indicative of human fragility. The words 'touch' and 'touches' appear several times on the metal substrate in English and in Hebrew, as a desperate expression of the human longing for warmth and emotion. Another work, entitled "Site" (Fig. 13), presents two glass hands resting on a hoe covered with soil. This work clearly refers to death and burial, while the white-glass hands touching the soil allude to the human yearning for purification and release from corporeality. This work stands next to another work, entitled "Perspectives". This is an image of white cloth (Fig. 14), evoking an association of a shroud. In both these works the matter of

purification is in the context of death. In the ancient world purification of the body after death was obligatory, as exemplified in the play 'Antigone' (Sophocles, 2016), in which the protagonist Antigone demands a proper burial for her brother Polynice; and in Elfenor (Homer, 2000, lines 11.51-83), whose body was not buried and whose soul asks for a proper funeral pyre. Death was only considered as complete following several defined stages in which the body was washed and cleansed, anointed with oil, and wrapped from head to foot; followed by guarding of the prepared body (prosthesis), and a procession to the burial location (*ekphora*) where the purification rituals were performed (Vermeule, 1979, pp. 2, 12-13). Mira Maylor's works, therefore, engage with the span between birth and death, emphasizing human fragility and the desire for purification from corporeality.

Human fragility and its being subject to extinction are manifested in Alina Rom-Cohen's glass fragment works. The work "A girl with wolves" (Fig. 15) portrays a human figure in a supine position, with folded limbs, in a manner resembling the fetal position. Her position seems also to suggest a defensive pose, and with the figure being made of glass shards it increases the sense of the fragility of human existence. This work brings to mind the fossilized corpses of the victims of the volcano in Pompeii in 79 AD (Fig. 16). This resemblance also reminds us that humans are subject to unpredictable injuries and disasters. The title of the work - "A girl with wolves", may imply that the human soul is subject to the predatory forces of nature, while the glass chess board beneath the sculpted figure suggests a metaphor of the human as an object in a game of the gods. The second work by Rom-Cohen, titled "A new and somewhat interrupted friend" (Fig. 17), displays a glass human figure with truncated legs standing above a chessboard also made of glass. The title may also allude to the fundamental vulnerability of human beings, which is expressed too in the seemingly terrified face of the figure. The glass fragments from which the two figures are made (Fig.18) evoke an association of tendons and muscles in a way reminiscent of the papier-mâché sculptures (Fig. 19) by the international Israeli artist Sigalit Landau (also a participant in this exhibition, to be discussed below. See: Sevilla-Sadeh, 2015). However, while the latter's characters resemble skinless, flesh-and-blood corpses, and thus offer an embodiment of the abject, the shards of glass in Rom-Cohen's figures produce a seemingly clean and pure appearance, as if the artist is seeking to purify the human. Moreover, the poses of her two figures are also reminiscent of submissive prayer, and indeed religious prayer is the most common means for seeking purification. Through purifying prayer, humankind seeks to become strengthened and regenerated, despite their fragility and vulnerability to the mighty forces of nature. Hence, here too there is a close connection between birth, death, and purification.

3. Rites for purification

The aspiration to achieve purification is one of the main aspects arising from the corona pandemic. Rites performed for purification constituted a procedure that functioned as a kind of vaccination carried out by the fragile human being to protect against disasters and injuries, such as a plague. This finds expression in the works of three artists in the exhibition.

The fragility of human life is given a unique visual expression in Dvora Morag's work "Cheers" (Figs. 20-22). This installation is composed of threads attached to wine glasses of different sizes and shapes. The overall structure seems very delicate, and the wires are reminiscent of the strings of a musical instrument such as a harp. As the daughter of Holocaust survivors who had suffered greatly, Morag's artistic work stemmed from her reflections on family loss, fragments of memories and fragments of lost possessions, fragments of life, human fragility, and fate as hanging on a thin thread. Indeed, threads may evoke the myth of the Moirai, the goddesses of fate, who wove the thread of life and determined its length (Hesiod, 1953, lines 221-225). The association with strings suggests the thought of life as a musical instrument, on which one must know how to play.

The wine glasses may evoke an association to Dionysus, the god of wine, the purification rituals undergone by the initiates into his cult. These rituals involved participation in a purifying madness, as described by Plato:

And we made four divisions of the divine madness, ascribing them to four gods, saying that prophecy was inspired by Apollo, the mystic madness by Dionysus, the poetic by the Muses, and the madness of love, inspired by Aphrodite and Eros... (Plato, 2011, lines 264-265)

Such madness is considered a *pharmakon* by Plato (Plato, 1963, lines 672, 790; Lonsdale, 1993, p. 79). It is temporary and positive in nature, and purifies the soul through catharsis. Plotinus points out that wine is a medium for exultation:

[...] but those drunken with this wine, filled with the nectar, all their soul penetrated by this beauty, cannot remain mere gazers: no longer is there a spectator outside gazing on an outside spectacle; the clear-eyed hold the vision within themselves, though, for the most part, they have no idea that it is within but look towards it as to something beyond them and see it as an object of vision caught by a direction of the will (Plotinus, 1991, lines 5.8.10).

The state of temporary insanity attained by means of the Dionysian rites was intended to produce an atmosphere of sublime confusion and an illusion of merging with the divine (Barkan, 1986, p. 38; Meyer, 1987, pp. 63-65). Thus, wine is the means to entering into the state of ecstasy necessary to abandon consciousness, and achieve purification and catharsis. Moreover, the association to the strings of a harp may allude to purification derived from the harmonious music of Apollo and the Muses. The purification offered by Morag's installation may relate to many aspects of life: the collective memories of the past, personal memories, purification from any possible pollution - moral or physical, and purification from the current pandemic. This installation offers the viewer a unique aesthetic quality, with prolonged observation revealing many additional details, such as the different shapes of the glasses perceived from different perspectives - from the side, top and bottom (Figs. 23, 24, 25); small paintings such as butterflies on several of the glasses, shapes like crystal balls (Fig. 26); and pearl-like shapes formed by the shadows on the floor (Fig. 27). This prolonged contemplation in itself has a purifying quality. Purification is also symbolized by two additional objects created by Morag: two kinds of boxes containing test tubes, entitled "Barometers" (Fig. 28) and "White Swan" (Fig. 29). The metaphorical aspect is sharpened by the fact that these are empty test tubes, unused. All of these objects by Dvora Morag may suggest ritual objects or memorial gifts offered in Antiquity in temples and ancient treasure houses.

An association to ritual objects also arises when contemplating Khen Shish's works – "Gold Butterflies" (Figs. 30-32). These small, gold-painted, acrylic paintings on paper are arranged in a square composition containing nine paintings, thereby resembling a painting installation. The painted abstract images look like calligraphy, reminiscent of secret letters, cryptography, or amulets. Some of the images evoke the figure of the scarab in ancient Egypt (Fig. 33),³ which served as an amulet and was associated with the solar god Khepri, symbolizing the act of divine creation. The scarab was seen as a reflection of the heavenly cycle, and as representing the idea of rebirth, regeneration, and spiritual ascension (Andrews, 1994; Ben-Tor, 1993), and hence related to religious purification.

The color gold is associated with sacredness, and also with mythological and fantastic images, such as floating nymphs clothed in gilded fabrics featuring on ancient Roman wall paintings (Fig. 34).⁴ Indeed, nymphs were related to sacredness, with the winged mediators, such as Cupid or Nike the goddess of victory, connecting between the corporeal and the divine, as defined by McNally: "In Greco-Roman art, wings generally mark figures who mediate between gods and human beings, figures who bring change, sometimes conveying decisions and messages, sometimes assisting passage into the next world" (McNally, 1985, p. 185).

The color gold can also be associated with the breastplate - the garment of the high priest in the temple, which was embroidered with threads of gold, azure and crimson, and in which precious stones were set. The location of Shish's works in this composition on the wall in front of the viewer in the rectangular space endows them with a sacred nature, suggesting a pseudo-ritual image that may provoke thoughts about supplication for purification in this time of crisis. The positioning of the works of Dvora Morag and Khen Shish in close proximity (Fig. 20) was intended to enhance the pseudo-ritual aspect of the works, thus eliciting thoughts about the anachronism of pagan worship in the present era.

³ Egyptian scarab amulet, between 1333 and 1279 (New kingdom of Egypt), faience with blue- green glaze, Height: 2.5 cm; Width: 1.9 cm; Depth: 1.1 cm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. Credit Line: Acquired by Henry Walters, 1913

Public Domain https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egyptian_-_Scarab_Amulet_-_Walters_4241_-_Back.jpg

⁴ A Nymph, wall painting from Pompeii, 1st Century AD, Naples Archeological Museum. Author: Berthold Werner Public Domain

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Napoli_BW_2013-05-16_15-33-05_DxO.jpg

Purification takes on a different and original manifestation in the works of the painter Dorit Kalish Teichman. Her works, such as "Genesis", "Albatros", and "Untitled" (Figs. 35, 36, 37) focus on abstract images based on light-colored splotches. These images appear to be undulating like waves or flying like wings, in an upward movement, as if intending to detach themselves from materiality.

There is a certain aesthetic closeness between the works of Teichman and Mirta Edry (Fig. 38), which was highlighted by the curatorial work of placing the works in close proximity, with Teichman's abstract curving purple objects corresponding with Edry's illuminated sculptured curves. This correspondence was intended to create an aesthetic effect leading to thoughts about purification and its various contexts.

Sometimes the material aspect is indicated by a dark stain, as in the painting "Untitled" (Fig. 39), in which a red stain is reminiscent of a drop of blood, or a green stain in another work, "Untitled" (Fig. 40), as an abstraction of a plant. These stains seem to express the desire to be liberated from materiality, or as a struggle between the physical and the spiritual. As both an artist and art therapist, Teichman's search for disengagement from materiality stems from the physical and spiritual journeys she has taken. For several years Teichman lived in the Far East, studied and practiced yoga and meditation and for four years was part of the international Auruville community in India, which combines Western and Eastern philosophy and knowledge and explores alternative ways of life. Indeed, Teichman's affinity to Zen, Buddhism, and traditional Japanese writing is evident in her works. Influenced by Buddhist thought, Teichman's work engages with movement and flow, the recognition and belief in the existence of constant change in life, and the reconciliation with the inability of the human to know and anticipate what is to come. Teichman's work is also influenced by the belief in the necessity to contain the opposites in the human experience. These perceptions are expressed in the painting technique itself: the paintings are never pre-planned but develop on their own at each given moment. Teichman also usually paints with the canvas spread on the ground, allowing access and observation from different directions. As a result, the abstract images in the paintings look completely different when viewed from different sides, conducing to the flow of thoughts that arise from the depths of consciousness, like rolling waves in a pleasant and purifying spiritual act of floating. This mode of operation is reminiscent of philosopher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's Flow theory: Flow is a state of extreme concentration, enjoyment, and attention in which one becomes part of the action, as if he becomes one with his creation (Csikszentmihalyi, 2012, pp. 18-21, 37-53, 61-62). The Flow experience, in turn, is reminiscent of the Dionysian-pagan purification rites described earlier, and thus becomes a contemporary purification experience.

4. Nature and degeneration

Metaphorically, and as a result of the desire for purification following the pandemic, the world appears to be in a state of rebirth and metamorphosis. Several aspects of metamorphosis are represented in Sigalit Landau's work in this exhibition.

Her work "Alon" (Fig. 41) is an installation comprising a fishing net suspended in the waters of the Dead Sea. Since 2004 Landau has been engaged in artistic activity with the Dead Sea that involves the controlled immersion of objects in the water for a period of about three weeks. These objects are, among other things - shoes, musical instruments (mostly damaged violins), a bridal veil, a dress, and fishing nets.⁵ During this period of immersion the objects become covered with salt, which becomes part of them, while still enabling the essence of the objects to be discerned. The salt that accumulates on the objects changes their nature and function, and so too their meaning.

Like a patina on the objects, the salt ages them, and endows them with the nature of archeological objects. This archeological appearance reminds us that everything on earth will become obsolete. The salt too is deceptive and resembles a covering of ice. This deception and the sense of degeneration of the object offer a metaphor of decadence, which is degeneration in the social and cultural sense (Gilman, 1979, p. 24; Bernheimer, 2002, p. 11, 13; Paglia, 1990, p. 136).

Landau's salt images are as cold as ice, and as shiny and crystalline as sugar. The light shining through the crystals sparkles and dazzles, similar to light falling on a diamond; the crystalline marble of a Classical sculpture; or white snow-capped mountains. Observing the crystals from different points of

⁵ See in Sigalit Landau's website: <https://www.sigalitlandau.com/sigalitlandau>

view (Figs. 42, 43) can even suggest mutations, arising as a result of human intervention in nature. As a parasite, humankind has disturbed the balance of nature, and their savagery has usurped the savagery of nature. Specifically for Landau, these images symbolize decadence in relation to the extinction of the Dead Sea (which she calls 'My Dead Sea'), its exploitation and abandonment. The violation of the balance and the rules of nature by humankind may lead to pandemics, annihilation, and death. Such violation is a deviation from human restraint, and thus hubris, a sin. Landau's objects may symbolize a cold and alienated society, pursuing a falsely glamorous and hedonistic life, corrupted like Sodom; a society that is defined by Guy Debord as 'a spectacle society' ('la société de spectacle'), in which externalization and externality are the most important factors (Debord, 1967, p. 32). Fredric Jameson has defined capitalist society as greedy and constantly hungry for new stimuli, and which produces a planned obsolescence in order to stimulate consumption artificially, thus increasing production and profit (Jameson, 2009, p. 19). However, and in contrast, salt is a preservative, covering the objects in a protective layer, and in doing so altering their essence so that they became a *simulacrum* - a real and unreal image in one; an image that mimics a source, but functions differently (Baudrillard, 1981; Deleuze, 1990). As *simulacrum* the images are now symbols or signs, and have returned to a patterned state, as a kind of prototype or idea. Idea, according to Plato, is the basic essence, the archetype, while the material-phenomenal appearance is only a reflection of the idea. As such, Landau's salt images may symbolize nature, and its creative and destructive traits.

Lucretius, the Roman poet of the first century BCE, praises nature in his wide-ranging poem *De Rerum Natura* - "On the Nature of the Things" (Lucretius, 1942, lines 5.247-260) and explains it in verse. The universe, as it appears from this poem, is based on physical laws from which all celestial and terrestrial phenomena arise. In the universe and the cycles of nature, every being is born, grows, matures, flourishes, fades, withers, dies, and is born again.

Landau's ostensibly petrified work thus appears to be a warning for humanity, against its own extinction if it continues on its degenerate path, without any possibility of recovery or obtaining purification. The work can also be seen, in contrast, as the artist wishing to purify a degenerate existence and return it to its pure state as a Platonic idea.

5. Summary and conclusions

This study has focused on an exhibition entitled - *Purity/Purification/ Pure*, which engaged with questions derived from the corona pandemic.

Catharsis is an ancient concept that defines the act of purification undergone by the viewer (and the protagonist) in a tragedy. The premise underlying the study is that the human need for purity and purification is a primordial one, and has never ceased to be a focus of a basic desire of humanity.

It is significant that most of the works displayed in the exhibition were not created during the corona pandemic, but during the years preceding it. The context of the current pandemic was created by the curatorial work.

The study has focused on three aspects of the corona outbreak reflected in this exhibition:

1. The aspect of birth, death, and human fragility, as manifested in the works of three artists: Mirta Edry, Mira Maylor, and Alina Rom-Cohen.

The installation CO VIDA by Mirta Edry suggests ripples of waves or sea foam that is associated with the myth of the birth of Aphrodite, and hence with purity, birth, and fertility in relation to ancient purification rites.

Mira Maylor's works engage with both birth and death, and hence with purification in both senses. The path from birth to death reflects the human corporeal fragility, and the yearning of the soul for purification from its corporeal limits. Maylor's works seem to infer that purification is an unrealizable illusion. Her works deal with the span between birth and death, emphasizing human fragility and its frustrated desire for purification from corporeality.

Alina Rom Cohen's glass fragment works transmit several aspects: human fragility, death, and the hope for purification.

2. The aspect of rites for purification is reflected by the artists: Dvora Morag, Khen Shish, and Dorith Kalish Teichman.

Dvora Morag's work "Cheers" refers to human fragility in several contexts: in relation to her overall artistic work - the fragility of the Jews in relation to the Holocaust from the personal aspect; and the temporality of human life from a general aspect. The concept of purification is prominent in this installation in the context of Dionysian rituals of purification and the divine Apollonian purifying music. Morag's two other objects, resembling boxes containing test tubes or objects of worship, reflect and undermine the functionality of the pagan purification process.

The thought and appeal to the present role and functionality of the ritual object and of worship are intensified by the gilded pictorial installation by Khen Shish.

The thoughts on present-day purification take on another direction in the contemplation of the works by Dorit Kalish Teichman, which combine Western and Eastern thought.

3. These lead to the third aspect - the relationship between humankind and the universe, and moreover, the destruction of nature by humankind. This aspect is embodied in the work "Alon" by Sigalit Landau, which presents a fishing net immersed in the Dead Sea. This work offers a metaphor of the social and moral degeneration of humankind, and their violation of the balance and rules of nature that may lead to pandemics, annihilation, and death.

Landau's salt object may symbolize, on the one hand, the danger of human degeneration due to moral decadence and the destruction of nature; and on the other hand, the desperate human attempts to purify the world and return to a healthier and balanced life.

The participation of only women artists in this exhibition was not intentional. However, this may not in fact be coincidental. The contexts that emerge from this exhibition, especially of childbirth and ritual, are deeply related to femininity, particularly in Antiquity, when women performed rituals to achieve fertility and purification (especially in the Dionysian cult).

The prominent aesthetic nature of the exhibition was intended to attract the viewer's attention, to the extent that would deeply engage them, leading them to a state of prolonged contemplation, which is in itself a sort of purifying practice.

This contemplation may lead to an understanding of the current epidemic as a warning for humanity against its own extinction as a result of its degeneration.

In conclusion, this exhibition seeks to bring the viewers to an awareness of the various aspects caused by the corona pandemic, and thus to a possible change in the human conduct.

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