

'The Bell Has Rung But the Queen is Underwater' is a performative installation which deals with the mechanism of repression and escapism of the human soul. In the space of the Tel Aviv Artists House, Elinor Sahm builds a jagged iceberg, blocking and disrupting the viewers' way around the room. There, behind a two-way mirror, stands the artist herself, creating a multitude of events through various objects, lighting, and sound.

Sahm's exhibition continues her focused work on empathy and human relationships, especially those that can be built through the art, between herself and the audience watching her works. Many of Sahm's works are built as installations and are created as space-dependent environments that completely contain and assimilate the viewer's body.

In her current exhibition, viewers that enter the space encounter a massive concrete construction, with arms that resemble huge ice growlers directed at their bodies. At the entrance, they are confronted with the choice: to pass the iceberg from left or right? To go under it? Or above it? Maybe they are not supposed to go in at all?

As with her past works, Sahm's cement iceberg is a spectacle of deception, as it is not made from cement at all. Sahm works with materials that imitate other materials, to capture her audience's curiosity and offer them a materialistic environment that stimulates the senses and arouses the mind. The piece of cement hanging by a thread at the entrance seems threatening but is actually hollow and light. This deceptive materialism characterizes Sahm's works and is revealed in all aspects of the exhibition which tries to deal with the tension between indifference and involvement, consideration and denial - and the short, deceiving distance between those ends.

The two-way mirror standing behind the glacier acts as a metaphor for human defense against various events in the world. Through an elaborate set of lighting effects, the back of the exhibition, which is behind the mirror, is alternately revealed and concealed to the viewers. There, along with various objects and using original sounds, Sahm herself stands in a kind of performative - collaborative action with her viewers: through the world she built behind the mirror, she is looking at us, creating eye contact, allowing us to look back and take part in her physical presence in the space and react to it.

From this real-time, real-life relationship, Sahm seeks to reflect on the mental actions we take to protect ourselves from the horrendous reality that surrounds us: environmental disasters, humanitarian crises, war-torn areas and personal troubles that interfere with our daily life. These are all events that are supposedly far from us, at the bottom of the glacier,

below the surface of the water. We are only exposed to the tip, and we must take action facing the mirror: to look at what is beyond the edge of the iceberg - or to escape from it? Exposing ourselves to what is happening, or ignore it in order to protect ourselves? And has the ability to feel empathy in the face of destruction is completely lost to us?

Sahm's exhibition evokes thoughts about the personal and public danger inherent in the operation of the mental defense mechanisms we are so accustomed to in the age of information and visual flux. The mirror dividing the space into two acts as the surface of the sea, but does so deceptively, not allowing us to clearly decide whether we are above or below them. Is it their job to keep us away from what is happening behind the mirror, as acts of repression and disengagement seek to isolate us from "bad news"? Or is it actually the queen on the other side that is fastened within her world?

The mirror panel does not allow us to glance and sets us apart from what is happening - while Sahm urges us to try and overcome this separation. The wall that is meant to protect us, Sahm says, is precisely the thing that will destroy us: it dulls the senses, blocks the ability to identify and pushes aside difficulties and emotions that seek expression. Through the communication she establishes with viewers, Sahm actually invites us to come closer to the surface of the water, look her straight in the eye, and dare to listen with her to the toll of the bells.

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