

## **EREZ ISRAELI – BY EDNA MOSENSON**

From the very start of his artistic itinerary, **Erez Israeli** is confronted with the dilemma of the artist, who does not shun away from dealing with issues tending the risk of over emotionality and the immersion in clichés. His intensive oeuvre succeeds to awaken emotions which have dimmed, and puts life into images, that dealing with them, seems to have been exhausted to the surfeit. He acts, as he puts it, out of a feeling of “urgency to make a significant statement in the plastic art.”

His art deals with representations of death and beauty, pain and desire, while in addition he confronts issues that touch upon one’s identity and identification, immortalization and oblivion, monumentality and putting it on hold as well.

In many of his oeuvres, Erez Israeli focuses on the expressions of heroism, pushed to the margins of the art dialogue. The armored vehicles standing in their silence on the side of the road leading to Jerusalem are echoed in the military jeep shown in his **Sound Installation** (2003), which he presented at his graduation exhibition at art school.



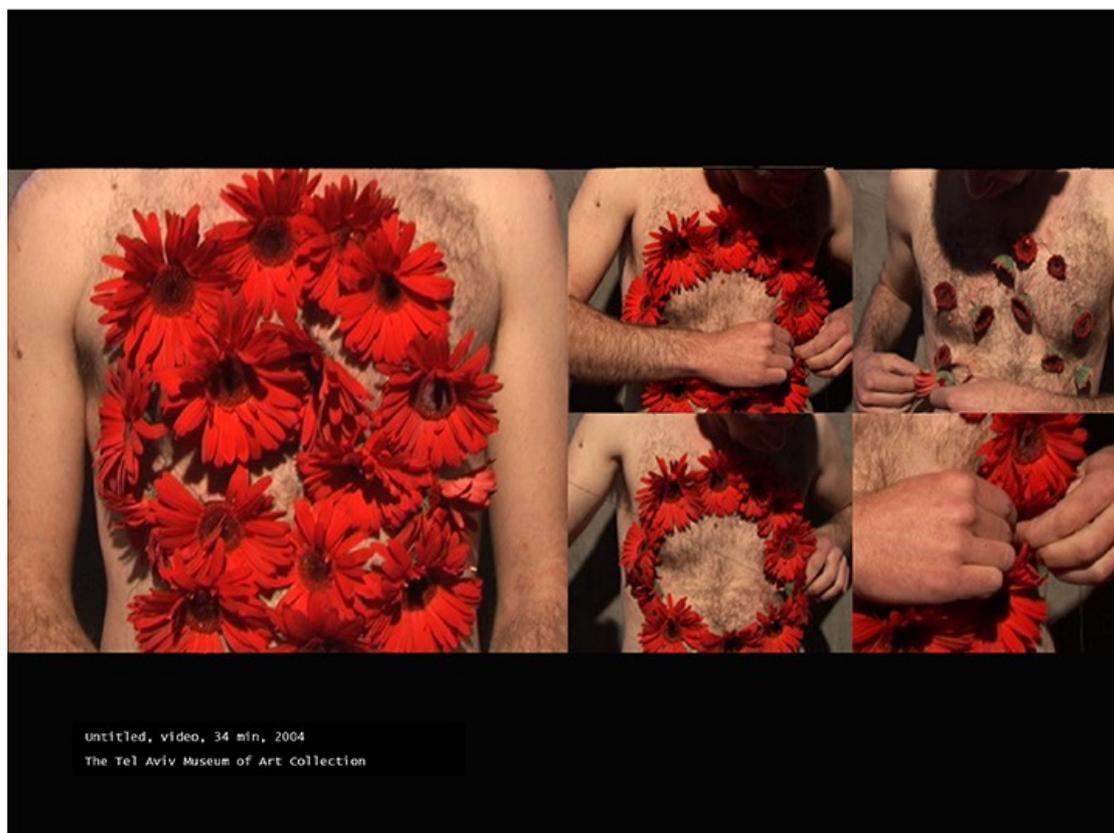
"Jeep". sound installation, mixed media  
250\80\90 cm, 2003

The military jeep makes one doubt whether it is a war tool or a toy, activates a horn with a shuddering noise, by dropping the head of its driver on to it. Watching the

moment of death in this work of art connects to a genre of work called “Remember Death”.

The motif of the IDF memorial wreaths, started with the pictures of faded margin wreaths thrown at the far ends of cemeteries, and which have caused the growing of new vegetation. Later, he molds wreaths in concrete, as if wanting to stop their disappearance in time.

In his video-art work, **Untitled** (2004), he sews such a wreath - this time to his own body. Gradually, as the red flowers are progressively adorning his body, they get torn off, leaving behind them red skin spots, wounds caused by shooting in addition to other colourful spots.



Later, he interweaves with glass beads, a large **Poppy Field**, 2007, to represent a memorial site.

By using his body, as part of the Body Art tradition, he reaches a climax. In a video-art (2007), one sees him sewing to his body, his hand made Yellow Star, an action that is actually the bringing back of the real pain into dealing with the Holocaust issue. By the exhaustion and commercialisation of this issue, its importance has dimmed.

His video-art **El Male Rahamim!**, 2004, turns into a forceful contemporary Israeli Pieta. One sees the artist collapsing, holding onto his mother, while she holds him in

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<sup>1</sup> An Ashkenazi funeral prayer



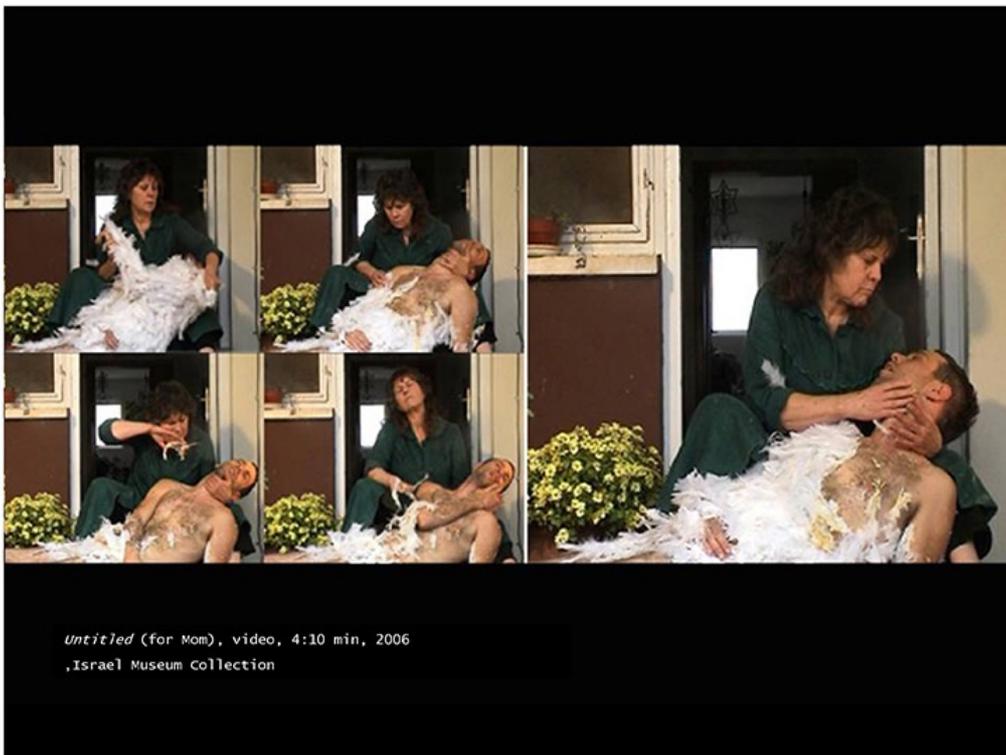
Fields of Poppies, glass beads, 360\260 cm, 2005  
The Israel Museum Collection

an endless process of farewell. In the background is heard the El Male Rahamim prayer in slow motion.

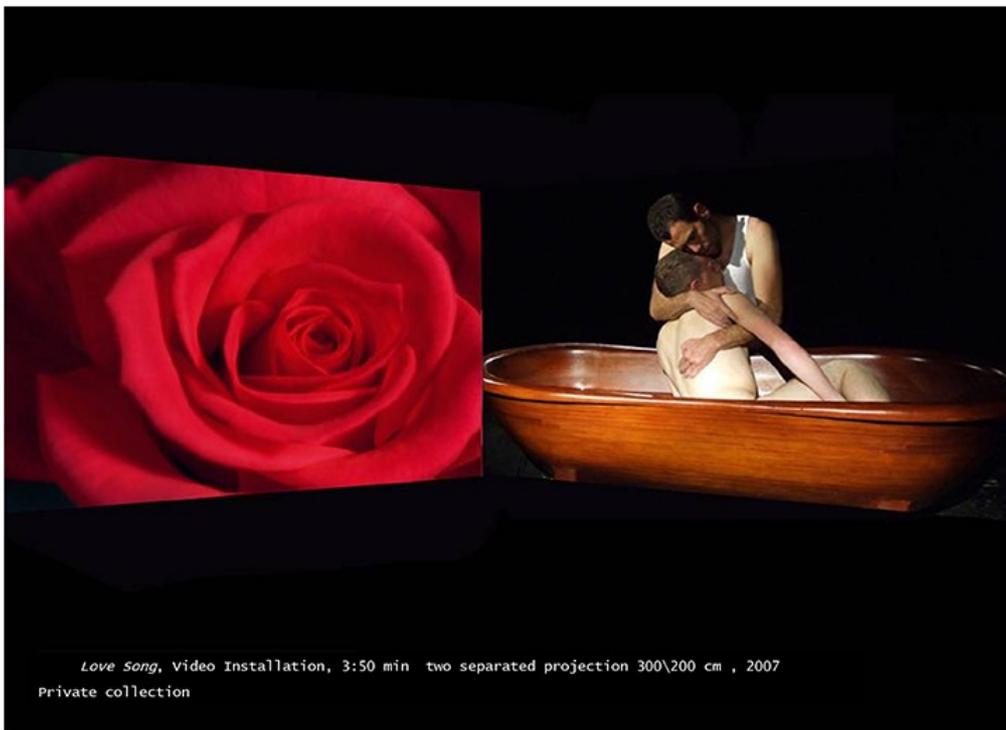


*El Male Rahamim* (God Full of Mercy), video in loop, 2004  
The Haifa Museum Collection

In another video-art (2006), the artist's mother, in a classical Pieta position, plucks feathers which are glued to his body with wax.



His video-art **Love Song N° 1**, 2007, presents a homo-erotic Pieta, which connects between desire and death, compassion and violence.



**The Young Watchman**, (plaster cast, 2006), is the image of the artist as a dubious hero standing with a disguise of a horse on a cardboard box. On his head rests a

stuffed sparrow. This is an ironical reference to monumental outdoor sculptures and to



"Hashomer Hatzair" (The Young Gardner), plaster cast, stuffed bird and carton, 2006  
Private collection

expressions of masculine heroism, which are well known in Western culture (Gattamelata by Donatello) and is expressed for example, by the Israeli artist, Alexander Zaid.

So is the case of **The Terrorist** (an epoxy cast and stuffed animals, 2007); in his oeuvre **Heads**, we see a monumental installation of terrorists' heads, casted in concrete and posed on the ground, as if they were archeological remnants of the future.

Erez Israeli in his artwork connects to the Israeli art history and making, with allusions to Western art history, to literature and Western myths, in such a way that



Terrorist, epoxy casting, wood & stuffed pigeon  
235\50\50 cm 2007

makes his dealing with the present as well as with the political aspect of his local life, an expression and an investigation of the human on its universal level. #



"Heads", view from: "Real Time, Art in Israel, 1998-2008", concrete casting, 120\100\80, 2007"  
The Israel Museum Collection