

In Search of the Sensual Detail

Hagai Segev

Landscape photography is an act of merging with nature and its elements to become one. When Doron Adar steps out into the landscape, he searches for the specific feature that embodies a complete story, which holds within itself the sensual detail. He looks for an entire world whose total exceeds the sum of its parts. The emotions and feelings that he experiences while in nature infuse the photographs with emotion, rendering them more than mere portrayals of a place or a situation.

In this extensive photography book, published as an expansion of his exhibition at the Tel Aviv Artists' House, Adar conveys these feelings. For Adar, the most complete and perfect feeling as an artist is that of becoming one with the essence of his art. The landscapes are the realms in which he feels he is his true self.

The photographer's presence in nature is an attempt at merging with the landscape. The seconds of taking the photographs are only one manifestation of an entire range of sensations and experiences. The process of going out and wandering or searching for a spot to stop and take the photo is almost a meditative process of attunement. This leads to an unmediated encounter with the landscape, the environs, the soil, vegetation and rocks, and any other object in the area.

The observation of the landscape is not the issue – after all, the landscape exists with or without the photographer, with or without mankind. The landscape needs the approval and documentation of no one. Man is the one who needs the landscape's approval, the energies he absorbs just by being in it, in the hope to merge and assimilate into it or to return home charged with renewed energy.

In Doron Adar's work, photographing the landscape offers the viewer the possibility of reflecting inner feelings. The landscape contains the photographer, and the photographer in turn offers the viewer the possibility of personal containment.

Is there a way to bridge the gap between the perceived vista when we are in the landscape and what we see on the computer screen or in the printed photograph mounted on the wall? What is the value of the constant incongruity between the spectacular reality and the artistic outcome? It

seems that there is no way to avoid this gap. And yet – despite that – the photographic act and the landscape photograph continue to take on the gaps, trying to bridge and perhaps even create parallel worlds and realms – beyond reality itself.

While watching the landscape, the eye surveys the space and then suddenly pauses and focuses on something. This concentration obscures everything outside the focal point. The photographic frame further underscores this unique moment. For, in a second or two, the eye will move on to another focal point and it will be almost impossible to recreate the moment.

This fraction of a second freezes the poetic moment, the perception of sensed reality – real or abstract, dramatic or perhaps trivial, romantic and soft or rigid and tough. Which elements are observed and which absent-mindedly disappear? What causes the blur against the sharpness of the image? Doron Adar likes to convey the look of “a light touch here and there,” as he puts it. The expansive view poses a challenge, since it only has a few focal points or a single narrative that is clearly discernable. These characteristics make it a snapshot of a search and discovery of that elusive, indeterminate “something” that nevertheless exists.

Doron Adar’s photographs present a more profound observation of the familiar. He takes the viewer to landscapes that stretch beyond the view from the access road to the horizon, where he tries to find the right angle, the particular plant, the fold in the ground, whose extraction from its surroundings offers further understanding.

One of the prominent American photographers who influenced Adar’s approach to photography is Emmet Gowin, who said: “There are things in your life that only you will see, stories that only you will hear. If you don’t tell them or write them down, if you don’t make the picture, these things will not be seen, these things will not be heard.” Inspired by this quote, Doron Adar feels an obligation and a need to go out and photograph. His photographs recount the story of the landscape and nature in a way that no one else but him would have captured, recounted, or played for all the people who did not witness these phenomena and occurrences.

The bird's eye perspective that Doron Adar adopts is also influenced by Gowin’s aerial photographs, for which he is best known. Something about the gaze that overlooks the terrain from a distance at the same time comes closer and cuts through to the depths, the outcome of the bird’s-eye-view that is inaccessible to the eye but the camera enables and offers. Through the photographic frame, this gaze allows the isolation of landscape or situations that are not dispersed, but rather demonstrate the assembled, focused, and specific. In that moment of focus, the expanse that lies beyond the frame is insignificant. The photographic frame facilitates

the isolation of the trails in nature, the focus on the crevices, curves, ridges, the individual plants – anything that passes by quickly when one goes on a walk in nature. The photograph freezes, allows identification and a deeper insight.

Doron Adar tries to take the sensations he experiences while in nature to another level – he does not limit himself to photographing and recording the landscape. He goes out into the open vista with the intention of creating a portrait of the landscape, as it is reflected through his own personal world. He delineates an emotional-experiential portrait of the landscape, wishing to allow the viewer to experience the landscape, with all of its details, through his perspective. “For the photographer,” he says “observation is key. It does not transform the existing landscape, but offers it a parallel existence in the eyes of the photographer and the resulting photograph.”

Doron Adar’s photographs have a function and meaning that transcend the realistic documentation of a landscape: the impact of the landscape on those who walk along its trails from the perspective of the photographer, and the person who is moved by what his eyes see and the feelings that this evokes in him.