



Roni Taharlev

Artist

Jaffa

from February to July 2025
Born in 1964 in Kibbutz Yagur, Israel

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PROJECT

The Swing

I am an Israeli artist, investigating portraits and human figures from observation, and in continual dialogue with the classical tradition of Western art. In particular, my work over the past fifteen years focuses on how bodies are gendered and on the social and cultural expectations from supposedly gendered bodies, reflecting relations of power in 21st-century contexts. The project I wish to carry out at the Wissenschaftskolleg takes this work to the key topic of sexual apprehension. By sexual apprehension I mean that ubiquitous sense of vulnerability and potential danger into which women are socialized from a very early age, an ever-present socio-cultural grounding that shapes and conditions their physical comportment, body language, and gestures in the public sphere and in the company of others. These practices are so ingrained that they are rarely conscious, and it is precisely for this reason that they are one of the most fundamental experiences of women, as if inscribed onto their DNA, even today at the age of supposed women's liberation and the #MeToo movement.

Although I conceptualized this series before the war of 7 October 2023, my own personal trauma and the collective Israeli and Palestinian traumas that have been accruing since then, not least the unimaginable sexual assaults and violence that have since been documented, obviously shape my conception of this project and alter its meaning. My starting point is Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Swing*, a famous painting from the Rococo period that is usually taken as the sugar candy of relations between the sexes in a period of frolic and playfulness. In fact, however, this painting is the epitome of the embodied and embedded experience of sexual apprehension. A woman without a face, really a faceless dress, a passive woman toy, that has no agency as she is rocked up and down by one man while another is looking up her dress. My proposed series will use the swing – with its back-and-forth mixture of swinging action and passive subjection – in subtle ways to explore questions of objectification versus agency, passivity versus power, apprehension versus control. I will try to explore the inherent sexual apprehension already conditioning woman's bodies as against more forceful and nonconforming female figures that defy and subvert this predicament.

Recommended Reading

Taharlev, Roni: *Undressing the Nude*. Edited by Haim Maor. Be'er Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2018. Exhibition catalog.

Taharlev, Roni: *White Ravens 2015–2019*. Edited by Aya Lurie. Herzliya: Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, 2019. Exhibition catalog.

Taharlev, Roni: *Not This Light, the Other Light*. Edited by Galit Landau Epstein. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2023. Exhibition catalog.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOWS' LIBRARY

Taharlev, Roni (Herzliya,2019)

White ravens : 2015-2019

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1676301674>