

RUTH DORRIT YACOBY: THE DOOR TO THE SECRET GARDEN

Curator: Hadas Kedar

Introduction

The entry point into the exhibition *The Door to the Secret Garden* is a contemporary analysis of the late Ruth Dorrit Yacoby's oeuvre. Yacoby, who passed away in 2015, left behind one of the most enigmatic bodies of work in the history of Israeli art. The exhibition, the first major presentation of Yacoby's work since she passed away, offers a renewed contemplation of her work in the context of Israeli and international art, reflecting on its past relevance and current significance.

Yacoby was born in 1952 as Ruth Yacoby to a Canadian-born mother and a father of Iraqi descent, who met in Palestine during the British Mandatory rule. They settled in a cooperative farming community near the Sea of Galilee, where they specialized in beekeeping, avocado, olives, and poultry farming. In her youth, she left her parents' home to study at the Boyar Boarding School for gifted youth in Jerusalem, and on reaching adulthood moved to the town of Arad, in Israel's southern Negev region, with her husband, Giyora Yacoby, who worked as an engineer for the mineral refining industries. There she qualified as a psychologist, and began working as one in the town. While raising four children, she began her art studies in Be'er Sheva, and subsequently enrolled in the Midrasha School of Art – one of Israel's main art schools. Although she began her creative journey later in life, Yacoby's body of work comprises thousands of artworks – a reflection of her total dedication to her craft – on universal themes such as birth, death, creativity, faith, spirituality, feminism, ecology, womanhood, motherhood, war, bereavement, and more.

The present exhibition seeks to reexamine Yacoby's oeuvre from two main perspectives: a feminist viewpoint and a local outlook related to her living and working

1 For example, in the group exhibition *Feminine Presence: Israeli Women Artists in the Seventies and the Eighties*, curated by Ellen Ginton at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 1990, Yacoby exhibited alongside Tamar Getter, Deganit Berest and Michal Na'aman, who have been largely associated with Israeli *Dalut HaHomer* (Arte Povera).

2 After Yacoby's untimely death, I assisted her family in cataloguing her artistic legacy, resulting in a digital database of thousands of items, available at www.ruthdy.com (accessed October 31, 2021).

conditions in the Negev desert. Looking back at Yacoby's work, it clearly diverged with the Israeli canon of the time, and at times contradicted it outright. Unlike other female artists of her generation, with whom she often exhibited her works,¹ Yacoby never entirely subscribed to any particular trend in Israeli art. Analyzing her work through the combined lens of feminism and locality highlights her unique voice, and how it challenges the Israeli art canon.

A Voice from the South

Yacoby exhibited widely, both in Israel's major museums (including an exhibition at the Herzliya Museum, curated by Yoav Dagon), and around the world – in Europe, South America, Asia, USA, and Canada. However, in contrast to the acclaim that she received overseas, she was considered by many in the local art scene to be an outsider artist. This was possibly due to her work being at odds with the prevailing trends of the Israeli art discourse, as an artist living and working at the geographical fringes of the country and centering on feminine themes.

My own personal acquaintance with Yacoby played a key part in the research for the present exhibition. On returning to my hometown Arad after my fine art studies and ten years of professional experience, I founded a local artists residency program – Arad Art & Architecture – and subsequently the first major art center in the eastern Negev, Arad Contemporary Art Center. It is through this professional work in Arad that I first became acquainted with Yacoby and her family.²

As a curator in Arad, I have developed the notion of a local genus of cultural production and display that is largely a product of the specific living and working conditions prevailing in the far-flung regions of the globe – especially in the southern hemisphere. I have dubbed this genus the “southern mindset,” and consider it as a swift gust of warm air emanating from the south, disrupting prevailing, somewhat ossified approaches and conventions of Western art and culture. I discern such an element in Yacoby's attitude or emotional state, which resulted in the intensiveness with which she sought to encapsulate her environment in her art.

Curator Dr. Gabriele Uelsberg considered the appropriation of “various materials, found objects, and colors” in Yacoby's art as a “blend of reality and imagination ... divesting them [the materials] of their

individual character.”³ To my mind, Yacoby’s use of natural items, such as leaves, twigs and branches (collected during her morning outings into the desert), combined with domestic discarded objects, such as broken furniture, windows and doors, and available or “worthless” materials, such as cardboard, broken glass and plastic (collected during her meanderings about the city), gave expression to the environment in which she operated, as well as to her belief that everything has a place in the world and in her art.

Female Alliances in the Book of Ruth

After studying art and raising her children, Yacoby was drawn to Kabbalah – a set of esoteric Jewish teachings with mystical religious interpretations. During this period, she also did something that must be considered a watershed moment in her life and work. In 1995, she reclaimed her birthname “Ruth” that her mother had changed to “Dorrit” when she was still a baby. In doing so – possibly also as a tribute to one of the most complex female characters of the Hebrew Bible – Yacoby was declaring her renewed interest in religious and spiritual themes through a feminist perspective.

4 The Book of Ruth was written between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE.

The Book of Ruth⁴ tells the story of the Moabite woman Ruth who, after the death of her husband, returns with her mother-in-law, Naomi of Judea, to the latter’s native Bethlehem. Declaring complete loyalty to her, Ruth accepts the God of the Israelites as her God and the Israelite people as her own. Despite hardships, she insists on accompanying Naomi back to Bethlehem, where – with Naomi’s encouragement – she marries Boaz, a prosperous relative of her late husband. Through the tale of a woman who challenges a male-centered society by seeking to fulfill her gendered role, the book of Ruth raises questions about female alliances and the social construct of womanhood and motherhood in a patriarchal society.

5 Prof. Pedaya (b.1957) is an Israeli poet, author, cultural researcher, and professor of Jewish history.

Haviva Pedaya,⁵ a noted Mizrahi feminist intellectual, who greatly influenced Yacoby, explores manifestations of religion in Israeli society as a cultural enterprise rather than through the lens of holiness and sanctity, and critiques Israeli society’s ongoing oppression of women, especially Mizrahi women living at the periphery. Through her encounters with Pedaya, Yacoby became interested in notions of womanhood and motherhood as expressed in a wide range of religious and traditional beliefs, which

6 The exhibition was on view at the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses.

7 Haviva Pedaya, "Between the Sky and the Land," *Ruth Dorrit Yacoby: Gate of Tears, Rain of Roses*, exh. cat. (The Vatican, 2001).



Fig. 1
Ruth Dorrit Yacoby, *On the Night of All the Moons Ruth was Born*, 2009–11, mixed media on wood panel, 250×100, estate of the artist (photo: Avraham Hay)



Fig. 2
Ruth Dorrit Yacoby, *Mary's Mercy Cabinet Is Empty*, 2000–03, mixed media on wood, 122×62, estate of the artist (photo: Yigal Pardo)

in turn led her to explore various religions and faiths. In 2001 she presented a solo exhibition, *Gate of Tears, Rain of Roses*, at the Vatican.⁶ Pedaya wrote the main text in the exhibition catalogue, noting:

The observer of Yacoby's works feels that her art is carved out of the abysses of the soul, and that one is looking at a story whose existential power draws on the effort and striving for spiritual and creative development, along with the urge for self-realization as a woman and mother.⁷

Pedaya clearly recognizes the strong association between religion and feminism in Yacoby's art. This connection is made explicit in the painting *On the Night of All the Moons Ruth was Born* (2009–11) that links the biblical scene in which Ruth follows Naomi's advice to meet Boaz at night (Ruth 3:3–4) with the moment of Yacoby's "re-birth" as her namesake.^{fig. 1} The painting depicts a female figure against a red background, wreathed in plants, cradling a bird in her arms. It is a full expression of Yacoby's exploration of Judaism and Kabbalah through the perspective of care and empathy. By restoring the name "Ruth" to her personal identity and incorporating the biblical Ruth into her art, Yacoby forged a unique mixture of spirituality, religion, and traditions, based on an unraveling of religious myths and legends through a feminist perspective.

Yacoby's exploration of religious and spiritual rituals and traditions was not necessarily pursued from a religious vantage point, nor was it an empty act of appropriation, but rather a way of raising pertinent questions about how institutionalized religion seeks to control female subjects. Although at the time it was fairly uncommon for Israeli secular women artists to address religious issues through a feminist perspective, a contemporary of hers, Michal Na'aman (b. 1951), did so in a 1974 installation and a series of paintings titled *Kid in Its Mother's Milk* – based on the biblical injunction, "Thou shalt not cook a kid in its mother's milk" (Exodus 23:19) – which combined the kosher prohibition of mixing together meat and dairy products with reference to the regimentation of the lives of female subjects at childbirth in medical institutions.

Yacoby's painting *Mary's Mercy Cabinet is Empty* (2000–03)^{fig. 2} references the institutionalization of the female subject in religion – particularly in Christianity



Fig. 3
Ruth Dorrit Yacoby, *Untitled*,
2010–12, paint and fabric on
wood, 122×80, estate of the
artist (photo: Yigal Pardo)

and the New Testament. Referring to the Virgin Mary – believed to have conceived Jesus after being impregnated by the Holy Spirit without having sexual relations – Yacoby highlights the incongruity rooted in conceptions of womanhood, motherhood, and childbearing in monotheistic religions. In another series of paintings – housed in a set of shallow boxes – a female figure appears in progressive stages of disintegration. Blending in with her background, fragments of the silhouette are graced by desert debris such as stones, twigs, and sand. Clay burial candles and vessels adorn the bottom of the boxes, reminiscent of the pagan rituals of the region. As though emerging from the depths of the desert soil, these three-dimensional works demonstrate Yacoby's liberated exploration of death, burial, and bereavement.

In addition, incorporating militarist aspects of Israeli society into many of her paintings, Yacoby invoked her own particular existence as the mother or wife of her male family members, who were all conscripted by the military. By combining religious and military iconography, Yacoby grappled with notions of life, death, and eternity in Israeli society, underlining the fact that death and bereavement are a major part of life in Israel.

The film *The Woman of a Thousand Voices* (2007), created by Yacoby's son, Amram Yacoby, fleshes out her unique combination of ancient rituals and traditions, with their relevance to contemporary Israeli society. With particular focus on salt, the film links her output's particular geographical, geological, environmental roots in the Dead Sea with motherhood, care, and the Holy Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible. By filming on the shores of the Dead Sea, the film alludes to the biblical tale of Lot's (nameless) wife, who is turned into a pillar of salt as punishment for disobeying the angels' warning not to look back at the evil cities of Sodom⁸ – the fate of a woman who speaks truth in a patriarchal society. Through the crystalized lens of salt, Yacoby's son portrays his mother, the protagonist, in all her complexity. The contradictory nature of salt – as a substance of healing and preservation, yet also as an element that impedes life and growth – is echoed through the character of Yacoby in the film. She is portrayed by her son as a caring and empathetic human being, concerned about her environment and the preservation of local traditions, while, suffering for all the fallen sons, she drowns herself in a sea of tears.

⁸ A pillar of salt stands to this day on the shores of the Dead Sea, symbolizing this biblical myth and attesting to a woman deemed unworthy to be saved by her husband and her community due to her devotion to her moral truths.

9 A practice that may be linked with Freud's notion of repetition compulsion (Wiederholungszwang).

10 Aristotle's first wife, who worked with her husband on an encyclopedia of the materials they gathered on their honeymoon, which included a collection of specimens of living things.

11 Her teacher Moshe Gershuni, for example, painted letters and words as part of an exploration of spirituality in the context of commemorating the Holocaust. But unlike Yacoby, Gershuni, as a male artist, maintained his status in the mainstream canon of Israeli art despite his homoerotic challenges to religious institutionalization of bereavement.

12 Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," *College English: Women, Writing and Teaching*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1972), p.18.

13 Tal Dekel, "From First-Wave to Third-Wave Feminist Art in Israel: A Quantum Leap," *Israel Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Spring 2011), pp. 149–178.

Loosening Language Links: Painting Language from a Feminist Perspective

Yacoby's text-based works span a wide range of materials and periods of her creativity. Her repeated painting of the same words, sentences, and phrases⁹ – including her adopted name (Ruth), the name of a museum (MoMA), or that of a female Ancient Greek biologist and embryologist (Pitias),¹⁰ loosely smeared or stained onto canvas, textile, or wood^{fig. 3} – challenged institutional, dominant language constructions. By re-signifying textual elements, Yacoby forged an affinity with a previous generation of Israeli artists who criticized the use of Hebrew in political contexts.¹¹ Recognizing that word associations were a key means of exerting control in a patriarchal society, Yacoby consciously destabilized the logic of traditional structures by creating her own female, poetic constructions.

In a series of large-scale text-based works, Yacoby painted her own poems – many in red paint on white linen: bleeding language constructions that call to mind female poets who reclaimed language from a feminist perspective. One such example is the work of the American poet, essayist, and feminist Adrienne Rich, who in her essay, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," wrote: "Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival."¹²

Although Yacoby never clearly conveyed an ideological political feminist agenda as Rich did, she challenged male domination of culture through acts of "re-vision" of Hebrew language constructions. Israeli feminist art historian Tal Dekel explains that in the Holy Land (pre-independence Israel, late 1800s and early 1900s), Zionism promoted the idea of gender equality in the spirit of First-Wave feminism, but in reality, Israeli First-Wave feminism – before and after independence – was essentialist.¹³ Likewise, the so-called gender equality associated with Israeli society of mid- to late twentieth century was, in reality, founded on a biological-essentialist approach, with socially and culturally predefined differences between men and women. It is within this context that one must regard the fact that Yacoby, a mother of four, also pursued a career as an artist. According to Dekel, one of the strengths of feminist thought is the opportunity to reevaluate, or even recast,

events and accepted historical narratives by asking in the name of what, and for whose interests, do certain events become part of the collective experience.

Yacoby, it seems, opted not to bear the consequences of explicitly raising such questions in public. The understated tones of feminism in her art notably contrasted with the more overt expressions of feminist artists who chose to forego motherhood in order to be accepted into the masculine art canon. The artist Aviva Uri (1922–1989), for example, asserted that “If one wishes to create, one must firstly be an artist, and only then a woman.”¹⁴ The poet Yona Wallach (1944–1985) also gave up motherhood for her career. As a revolutionary Israeli feminist and postmodernist poet experimenting with art, womanhood, and Jewish mysticism, she dealt with the very nature of feminine creativity within the social construction of a woman artist in Israel. Yacoby – like Wallach – pursued death, sex, and femininity as major themes in her work, highlighting womanhood at a time when the national, collective voice was mainly male-dominated. However, while Wallach is considered by many to have been an overt and declared feminist speaking to a generation of female artists that challenged the canon, Yacoby – by pursuing a path that diverged from that of both male and female Israeli artists of her time – was never part of a circle of Israeli feminist artists.

The intricate undertones of Yacoby’s work, subtly addressing questions of patriarchal order, are apparent in a text-based series in which repetition of the Hebrew word *yeled* (boy, child, or son) is constructed from child-like objects. In this series, Yacoby’s use of letters reveals how she played with the masculine conditioning of language, revealing how systems of logic are affected by the patriarchal order.

The (Non) Representative of Israel at the Venice Biennale of 2015

In April 2014, a year before her death, Yacoby submitted a proposal to represent Israel at the 2015 Venice Biennale. The extensive one-hundred-page proposal is a testament to Yacoby’s persistent attempts to become officially recognized by the Israeli institutional art institutions. In it, she wrote:

The creative work of the Great Mother’s journey is rooted in the depths of a personal psychic being,

¹⁴ Uri quoted in Dekel, p. 154.

that understands suffering as an existential state of continuing antiquity. The occurrences within the soul, like the world of phenomena and nature, are experienced as a manifestation of magical forces and as the embodiment of a spiritual element that seemingly unites the entire world. An existential way of life akin to a mystical religious experience and to the realm of ancient myth is therefore interpreted as a journey: a transformative, conscious, and spiritual process; the journey of mythical heroes to the depths of the underworld and back to the world of life, or the journey of the soul to redemption and eternity. This journey takes place between the poles of birth, death, and rebirth, in a cyclical motion that proclaims life from the midst of death.¹⁵

15 Ruth Dorrit Yacoby, The Venice Biennale Project – The Joyful Mother of Children: Journey to the Land of Life, application to Represent Israel at the 2015 Venice Biennale, PDF, 2014 (In Hebrew).

16 The submitted proposal consisted of a three-page submission form; 18 pages of her CV; two-page verbal description of the Biennale Project titled Ruth Dorrit Yacoby: The Venice Biennale Project – The Joyful Mother of Children: Journey to the Land of Life; the proposed overall layout of the exhibition as a journey between three territories within the three spaces of the Israeli Pavilion in Venice; a five-page rendering of the exhibition overlaying the architectural plans of the pavilion; detailed descriptions of the display on each floor of the pavilion, including her own poems and writings (a 32-page description of *The Land of the Dead*, a 19-page description of *The Journey – The Living Heart*, a 24-page description of *The Land of the Living*); eleven scanned pages of newspaper articles on her art in English, Italian, and Japanese; eight frames from the film The Woman of the Thousand Voices, produced by her son, Amram Yacoby, with a one-page synopsis; 25 scanned pages from the exhibition catalogue of her solo show at the Vatican; and 50 scanned pages describing her solo exhibition at the Tel Aviv University Gallery, 2011.

The extensive description of the proposed exhibition was based on three overarching themes that preoccupied Yacoby at her studio in the final decade of her life: *The Land of the Dead; The Journey – The Living Heart; and The Land of the Living*. Merging together sketches, poems, images, stills from videos, links to videos, exhibition texts, and newspaper articles,¹⁶ the proposal reflected Yacoby's perseverance in using a poetic language that is quite foreign to contemporary exhibition proposals. In light of its style and volume, Yacoby's proposal might be read as a subversive act that challenged the very structure of the contemporary art world and its codes. Through its own coded lexicon, it raised questions about exclusion and inequalities as experienced by women artists in the contemporary art world. But at the same time, Yacoby's criticism of the division of cultural capital appears to have stemmed not necessarily from a critical awareness of such issues, but from a resentment at being excluded from the mainstream of the art world in Israel due to her gender and age. Her proposal's vocabulary suggests that her opprobrium was aimed in particular at the leading figures of the local art field, who had previously rejected her proposals due to a male-biased approach and ageism – which ultimately resulted in her art being repeatedly marginalized in Israel.

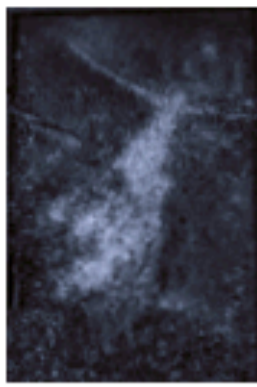


Fig. 4
Ruth Dorrit Yacoby, *Garment of Life*, 2008–10, mixed media on wood, 180×122, estate of the artist (photo: Yigal Pardo)

17 Mordechai Omer, Preface, *The Woman of the Thousand Voices*, exh. cat. (Tel Aviv: The Genia Schreiber University Gallery, 2011) (in Hebrew).

18 Rosalind E. Krauss, "Grids," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass./London: The MIT Press, 1986), p. 10.

19 The flattened female silhouette may also be found in the black silhouette technique used by artist Kara Walker, which has its roots in nineteenth-century Victorian portraits. In a series of prints titled *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)* (2005), Walker explored the disappearance of the female subject from depictions of slavery and representations of the Civil War in the United States.

The Feminine Grid: Rhythmic Dynamism of a Female Fragmented Presence

The image that recurs most often in Yacoby's work is that of a silhouette of a woman – suspended in the air, arms outstretched, cross-like, at times with a halo around her head – that appears in a wide array of compositional and color variations. This image has been discussed by the late curator Mordechai Omer as the spiritual experience of the Great Mother of all life and death, lamenting over the dead but also giving life and curing the hurt.¹⁷

The extensive repetition of the female figure in Yacoby's work makes one consider its role in the overall composition of the canvas – in particular, in dividing the canvas into sub-sections. In her seminal essay "Grids," the American art theorist Rosalind Krauss asserted regarding Mondrian and Malevich: "They ... are talking about Being or Mind or Spirit. From their point of view, the grid is a staircase to the Universal, and they are not interested in what happens below in the Concrete."¹⁸ Unlike the modernist construction of the grid, the female figure in Yacoby's compositions serves as a subtle lattice that introduces rhythm and dynamism into the division of space. While Mondrian and Malevich used grids to denote a modern notion of the universal, Yacoby's female silhouette-grid expressed the fragmented and diffused presence of women in a male-dominated society.¹⁹

Desert Tableaux: Impact of the Desert Environment on the Artwork and Artist

Yacoby drew inspiration for her art from the landscape and natural world of southern Israel. The flora and fauna and the sand dunes found their way into her work, as did the extreme climatic and terrestrial conditions of the desert. For instance, she subjected a series of works contained within white, rectangular boxes to the natural elements of the desert climate – including sandstorms, rain, high temperatures, and the blazing sun.^{fig. 4}

Likewise, she exposed other works to toxic and poisonous materials. Yacoby submitted her own body to the same destructive forces that she applied to her art. Immersing one's body in the studio and its materials is a theme that recurs in the work of several female artists who dealt with the body through concepts such as abjection. One such example is the American artist Carolee Schneemann, who wrote:

20 Carolee Schneemann,
 "The Obscene Body/
 Politic," *Art Journal*, no. 50,
 vol. 4 (1991), p. 28.

Covered in paint, grease, chalk, ropes, plastic, I establish my body as visual territory. Not only am I an image-maker, but I explore the image values of flesh as material I choose to work with. The body may remain erotic, sexual, desired, desiring but it is as well votive: marked, written over in a text of stroke and gesture discovered by my creative female will.²⁰

Like Schneemann, Yacoby often merged her body and her work into an integral material whole. She physically engaged with her work, immersing herself in it to produce a fusion. Bonding the forces of the desert to her body and her art, she created a sensual environment of experimental artistic endeavors that eventually took its toll on her health.

*A Note on the Curatorial Rationale of *The Door to the Secret Garden**

At the root of the present curatorial interpretation of Yacoby's work is the challenge of exploring her art beyond previous interpretations. The totality and intensity of her work – including the toxic environment of her studio – were not merely stylistic, but artistic choices, reflecting her state of existence. A restaging of her work requires a careful examination of the personal motivations related to her particular working conditions. In the current exhibition, Yacoby's work is read as a testament to aspects of her artistic and personal journey. Such a reading is attained by tapping into her inner voice and noting the delicate resonances that were muted by her own opaque language.

The exhibition creates a moment of recognition of the political subjectivation of a female, mature artist from a remote region of the country, who was repeatedly marginalized by patriarchal systems and orders. My research into the historical, geographical, sociological, and psychological conditions that shaped Yacoby's work has resulted in five cross-sectional themes:

art. Immersing one's body in the studio and its materials is a theme that recurs in the work of several female artists who dealt with the body through concepts such as abjection. One such example is the American artist Carolee Schneemann, who wrote:

universal subjection of the female subject to disciplining by religious institutions through rituals and rites such as marriage, birth and death.

Freeing Language from Prevalent Systems of Logic

Yacoby often inscribed her own poems into her artwork. In addition, she repeatedly painted broken sentences, words, phrases, and syllables on a variety of supports, engaging in a feminist deconstruction of language that challenges accepted systems of thought. Yacoby used text to expose the supremacy of the patriarchal order of language, and its inclination to concealment of affect – especially with regard to bereavement and commemoration.

A Fragmented Female Silhouette

The recurring presence of a flat female silhouette in many of Yacoby's artworks may be linked to notions of spirituality and feminism. It is also an artistic device that divides the canvas into sections. This anamorphic grid allows Yacoby to introduce a myriad of hues, images, and tempos into her compositions, while stressing the notion that in a patriarchal society the female subject is divided into partialities by the social constructions of her as a woman, artist, and mother.

Infliction of Harsh Conditions on Art and Artist

A wide range of images of suffering, anguish, and disintegration of the body recurs throughout Yacoby's work. These themes also find expression in her materials (such as bandages) and work processes: she habitually inflicted the harsh desert environment upon her art. This is manifested in faded colors (due to exposure to bright sunlight and high temperatures) and in the presence of dust, sand, twigs and other organic materials in her artwork. She also used toxic materials in her art, inadvertently inflicting them upon her own body in the process and harming her health.

artists who dealt with the body through concepts such as abjection. One such example is the American artist Carolee Schneemann, who wrote:

this figure into her identity, Yacoby highlighted the social constructs of womanhood and motherhood as a major concern for her. It was during this time that she began steering her work in a clearly feminist direction.

Postscript: In Favor of Intimacy and Partiality
 To enable a profound experience in the encounter with Yacoby's work, I conceived the notion of *Inhibition* (as opposed to *exhibition*) with regard to the show's layout – namely, an intimate format that enables the viewer to engage with the artworks on a one-on-one basis. Motivated by the notion of a collective emancipation of the female subject from the patriarchal order, this allows for intimacy and partiality, rather than objectivity and entirety. Accordingly, a succession of architectural spaces – developed with Ariel Armoni, the exhibition's designer – present a series of partial "ensembles" or "events" highlighting the main themes of Yacoby's work. This enables a close encounter with the subtlety of one of the most interesting female Israeli artists of her time.

Ruth Dorrit Yacoby,
Untitled, 2010–15, mixed
 media on wood, 120×62
 cm, estate of the artist
 (photo: Yigal Pardo)
 רות דורית יעקבי,
ללא כותרת, 2010-15,
 טכניקה מעורבת על עץ,
 120×62 ס"מ, עידבון האמנית
 (צילום: יגאל פרדו)



Ruth Dorrit Yacoby,
Happy Home, 2008–10,
mixed media on
wood, 122×62, estate
of the artist (photo:
Avraham Hay)
רוח דורית יעקבי, **בית שמח**,
2008–10, מדיה מעורבת
על עץ, 122×62, עיבוד
האמנית (פילום: אברהם חי)

