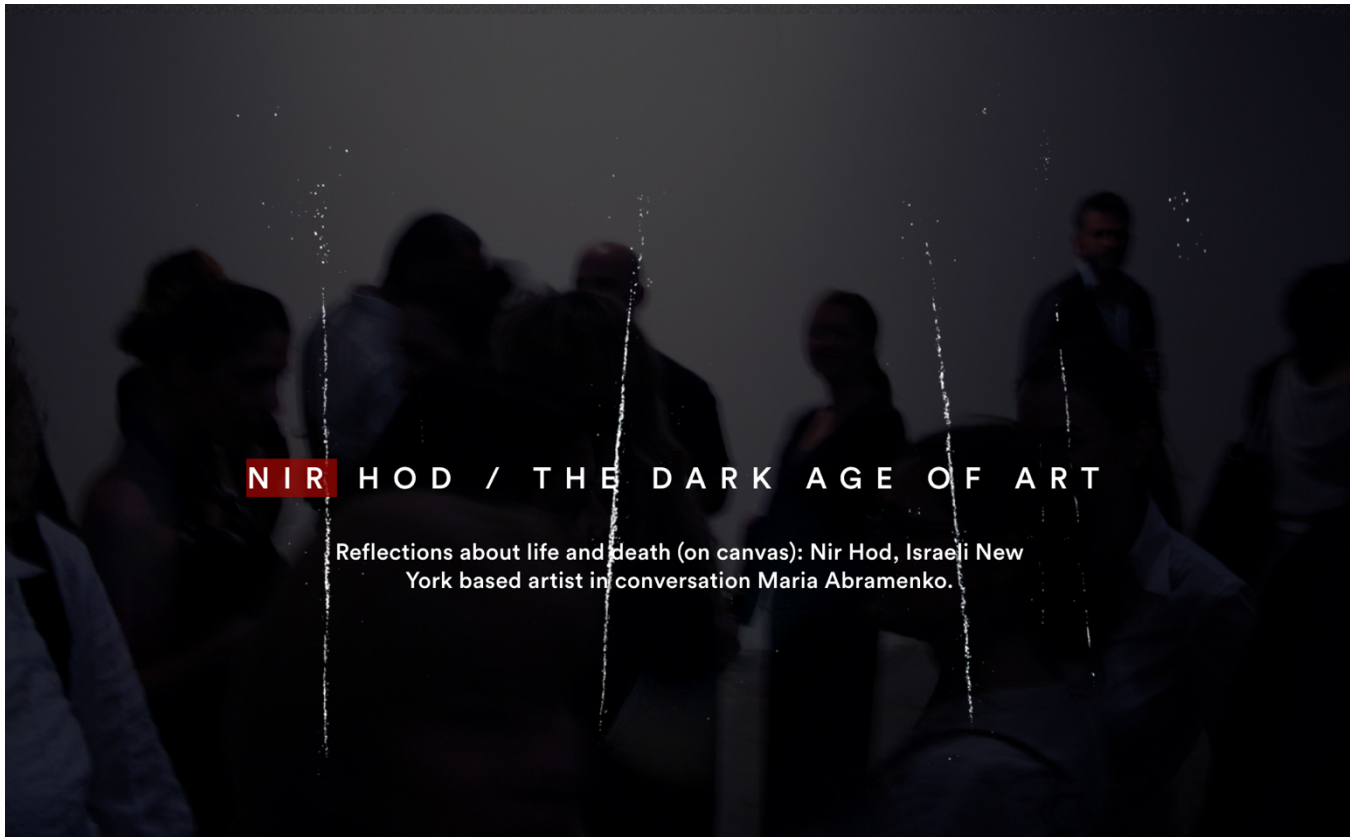


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*"Reflections about life and death (on canvas): Nir Hod, Israeli New York based artist in conversation
Maria Abramenko," Nasty Magazine, November 2020.*

nasty



**Reflections about life and death (on canvas): Nir Hod, Israeli New York
based artist in conversation Maria Abramenko.**

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When did you decide to become an artist and what happened next?

At the age of 15 I understood that I wanted to be an artist. I was a problematic kid and the only thing that interested me was surfing and riding my BMX bike. In the 80s I was the Israeli BMX champion. I never drew but from an early age everything that I did was eccentric. Being this way allowed me freedom to be and to be inspired by movies, songs and magic. At age 14 I was thrown out of school and decided to go to art school since it was close to the beach where I grew up and not because I was interested in art. In fact I'd never picked up a paintbrush in my life. I was accepted only because I'd borrowed the neighbour in my grades, drawings and paintings. I got in and the truth was I had no idea how to paint. In the first and following years I didn't really study, I didn't take this place seriously. In conjunction with practicing painting, drawing and sculpture we also had the academic component and we studied art history from the beginning of time. From cave paintings to the Egyptian Empire and by the end of the first year we arrived at the Renaissance Era. Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Rafael....these were the catalysts of my awakening. These figures deeply fascinated me and all of a sudden my whole world was blown open and my life transformed in an extreme manner. Within a few months I was unrecognisable to my friends and family and even to myself. Everything in my life at that point changed...my hair color, my skin color (I never saw

the sun for a few years) my perspective on life and the music I listened to. The first books I began to read at age 15 were Nietzsche, Spinoza and Freud. I started to paint in an obsessive way and to write and ask questions, So many questions. In my second year I became one of the best painters in the school, I still to this day cannot comprehend how this all happened...it's simply magic. It's a very Forrest Gump fairytale. Since age 15, art is the only thing that I do and I couldn't be more grateful that it found me, I understand what a gift and privilege it is to be an artist.

I'd like you to tell me more about your last project "*The life you left behind*"?

After doing all the mother paintings with repetition and 102 portraits of geniuses children I understand that I can no longer work with images of people, not my own, no one. But I knew that I wanted my work to deal with people. I started to work with the concept of a person who is so tempting that you want to touch them but they are untouchable, unreachable. I began to think about the meaning of painting today, how the artwork should function. We live in a time when images are accessible without limits- thanks to smartphones, the whole world is in our hand. In addition, people are obsessed with themselves. Wherever we go we have to take a smiling or sexy selfie of ourselves freezing moments after moments... when standing in front of my chromed canvases, the viewer sees only themselves in the reflection. The paintings do not exist without the viewer. The viewer becomes a part of it. And people are happy to see themselves in a painting. They see themselves as a work of art. There is something from Dorian Gray in these works (subject I always work with) ... in an interesting, distracted, emotional, metaphorical way. Today, in the time of the pandemic, the title "*The Life We Left Behind*" now has such a spiritual and poetic meaning. We all left behind the life we used to have in so many ways. Our old life has now turned into a memory and the idea of these works are an interpretation of life. The chrome, which lies on top of the oil paint represents us, we as people in society; money, dreams, desire, power and beauty. All these things dissolve with the time. The underpainting, which is the background, represents nature, sunsets and sunrises, destruction, decay, history; it represents both the beautiful and the dark times. It's so relevant now and it shows how life imitates art.

Who are the artists you are mostly inspired by and why?

I love so many artists and influence by so many great artists like Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Goia, Paul Cézanne, Picasso, August Rudin, Francis Bacon, Anselm Kiefer, Gerhard Richter (I started to paint because of him after I saw for the first time the candles paintings), Rudolf Stingel, Franz Gertch, Louise Bourgeois, Lucio Fontana, Jenny Saville, Andy Warhol, Elizabeth Peyton, Maurizio Cattelan, Lisa Yuskavage, El Greco. These artists taught me so much about technique, colors, compositions, imagination, narrative, power and beauty.

What do you think about the art scene in Tel Aviv, what would you suggest to young artists based there?

I appreciate the Israeli art scene. It's where I am from, where I grew up and started my journey, even though so much has changed since, especially in the art world we know today. I believe that there are in Israel excellent artists who are fighting hard in a market that is small and problematic, to attend a state of living off of their art. Artists in Israel create high art that stands on its own in the big world. Israel is a political country and of course the politics, the army and the Israeli-Arab conflict are impaled deeply in the art

scene. It is hard to escape from these aspects of life there and from the geographical place Israel is in. There are excellent museums in Israel, such as the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv Museum. In the last two decades there is a lot of interest in Israeli art and the Israeli artists who show in important places in the USA and Europe. I don't believe that there is an equation for art as it is very subjective. The world on one hand becomes smaller and therefore there are many ways to expose art via social media and the internet. I will never tell an artist to leave his country. I believe that through hard work, focus and diligent approach, one can get far from any place one chooses to be in. The bottom line is that art is beyond time or a specific place. It is universal and eternal.

What are you working on these days?

During these surreal days I have spent a lot of time in the studio, which I feel so lucky to work in again after spending four months in Connecticut, away from my studio and NYC. I'm working on a large commission for the new building of MIT in Boston, which will consist of three large chrome paintings. In addition, I'm working on a very large sculpture of a frozen fountain for an exhibition that I will have in Tokyo next year. It's a very complicated sculpture to produce and I'm working on it with several people. We started working on the sculpture back in January, but I was unable to finish it for some time due to the Corona pandemic in the world. The name of the sculpture is "*I Will Always Wait For You Even If You Never Come Back.*"



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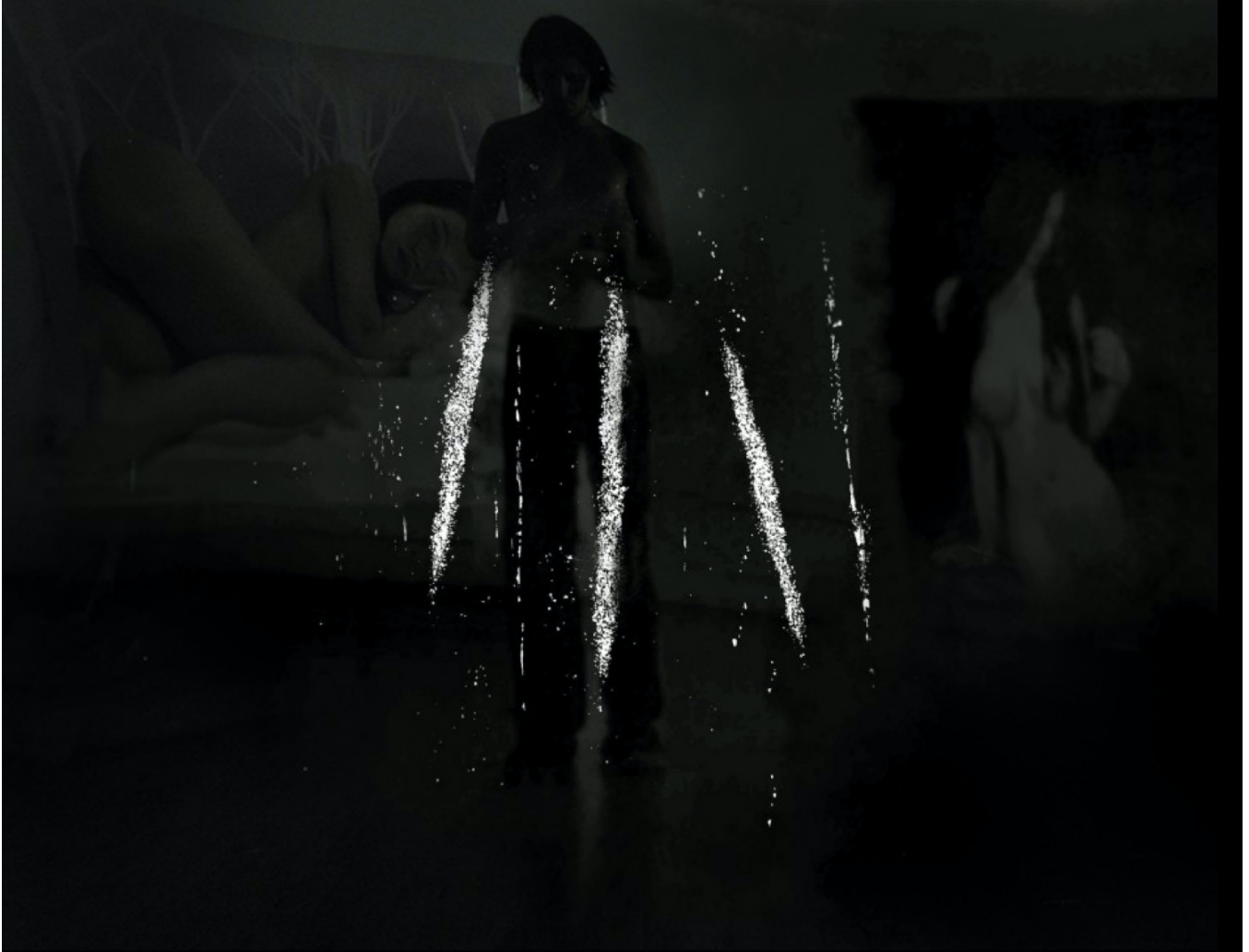
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