

Liat Elbling: Into Dust

Liat Elbling's grandfather and father owned a thriving marble factory in Jaffa's flea market. In the early 2000s, private companies started taking over the area, pushing veteran business owners out. The factory went bankrupt, having accumulated heavy debts, and eventually had to close down. This chain of events became a family tragedy. In its wake, after the passing of both her parents several years later, Elbling was forced to sell her childhood home. When the house underwent a major renovation, she visited the site to collect fragments of the debris. The broken tiles and bits of walls she took from the house are still kept in a box in her studio as a memorial, serving as relics of her father's life's work and the family home, as well as raw materials for the exhibition. During those years, Elbling became a mother and began building her own home. When she recently noticed her toddler son collecting stones on their walks in the neighborhood park, she began photographing the growing collection, borrowing her son's stones for a "joint" project.

The exhibition "Into Dust" creates an intergenerational amalgamation of fragments from the house in which Elbling grew up and from the house she has made for herself as an adult. Through the photographic act, she brings the father's pieces of marble and the son's roadside stones together. The photographed raw materials summon fascinating and unexpected encounters: the photographed stones are printed, cut, and subsequently rephotographed; gaped holes are filled with photographs of new stones, potsherds are made into new vases, and the old marble and ceramic slabs are fused to form a new reality, gaining a new place in the family's history.

The works on view feature holes and empty spaces, and the photograph, taken over and over again, substitutes for the real material. The only actual representation of the artist's parents' house in the exhibition is a photograph of the living room in the original house, spread like wallpaper around the old well in the gallery. The integration of the image of the house that no longer exists inside a historical structure that has changed its purpose, results in a unique interplay between the private and the public, between the tangible and the imaginary, and between the real and the represented.

The exhibition concludes with a two-channel video work in which the artist's hands are seen holding a hammer, crushing sandstone tiles from her parents' house into dust. The sound of hammer blows represents destruction rather than construction, as the patterned tiles revert back to their origins—to the dust from which they were formed. By touching the concrete material with her bare hands, Elbling seeks to present the absence, while bidding farewell. Crushing the material into dust, she is left with only memories.

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