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“This Is Not My Tree” at NARS Foundation, NY

3 MINS AGO by [JONATHAN GOODMAN \(HTTPS://ARTEFUSE.COM/AUTHOR/JONATHAN-GOODMAN/\)](https://artefuse.com/author/jonathan-goodman/)

This Is Not My Tree at NARS Foundation | Contemporary Art





Installation view, *This Is Not My Tree*, March 26- April 16. NARS Foundation, Brooklyn. Photo by Jon Gomez.



Installation view, *This Is Not My Tree*, March 26- April 16. NARS Foundation, Brooklyn. Works by Lia Kim Farnsworth and Omer Ben Zvi. Photo by Lia Kim Farnsworth.

[“This Is Not My Tree” at NARS Foundation \(https://www.narsfoundation.org/2021_exhibitions/this-is-not-my-tree\)](https://www.narsfoundation.org/2021_exhibitions/this-is-not-my-tree)

March 26 – April 16, 2021

Curated by Nina Mdivani at NARS, the Brooklyn-based art, and residency center, “This Is Not My Tree” is a complex, unusually interesting group show based on the interaction of nature with the changing, often artificially established geopolitical boundaries we now encounter. It is a group show—fourteen participants (only a few can be mentioned in this text)—meant to comment on the complexity of transported species and the often tragic consequences of political change; several artists from Israel are represented as well as artists from the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Colombia, and Georgia. The exhibition, a bit constrained by the small space the work has been placed in, is itself an example of our preoccupation with bounded sites in which species transported from far away now inhabit places they were foreign to only a generation or two ago. While there are too many artists to individually characterize here, it is clear that they all share the hope that art can unify and even transform the troubling, mixed mosaic of contemporary politics and ecological decay they are addressing.



Michal Geva, *Building a Home#1*, acrylic on canvas, 48"x60", 2019. Photo by Vincent Wong-Crocitto.

Israeli artist Michal Geva's semi-cubist collection of flora and architecture is called *Building a Home #1* (2018). It is a group of partial scenes, of the landscape and foliage and parts of homes, that exists on a wall divided into two halves, one pinkish and the other a bright red, that has no roof. A floor consisting of two blue areas, the left part a light blue and the right a darker blue divided into squares, completes the picture. We can take the title in a literal sense. Knowing that the artist comes from a contested land, we can ask where the homes have been built, and to whom do the homes belong.

Netta Laufer, 25Ft, 2016, still from video, 25:00. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Netta Laufer's video, made in 2016, shows, in black and white, animals at the fences separating Israel from Palestine. There is not much action: a black cow of some sort goes directly to the fence enforcing the separation. The allegorical possibilities, made evident by the reality of the fenced divide, are chilling; we are living in a time of regulated divides, in which nature itself is constrained. Blocking the animal's movement shows that people can be just as easily blocked. And the fence destroys whatever lyric presence the land communicated before politics took over.

Delano Dunn, *Far Back To Sanity*, 2019, mylar, copper tape, masking tape, paper, vinyl, wood stain, and shoe polish on wood, 48 x 35 inches. Photo by Vincent Wong-Crocitto.

Delano Dunn's *Far Back to Reality* (2019), a collaged image, on Mylar, of a black man extending a hand to an Asian man without a shirt, streams of blood covering his bare torso. The image comes from the 1980s Los Angeles riots, reminding us that areas of conflict, usually based on the differing cultural and racial backgrounds of the antagonists, can also be marked by momentary evidence of compassion. The trashed car, painted in red, next to the two men indicates the violence of the moment, but the gesture of support overrides, for a short span of time, the alienation that so often occurs between Americans of different backgrounds.

Omer Ben Zvi, *Galls*, 2018, glazed white earthenware clay, 2018. Approximately 5 by 6 feet, individual dimensions vary. Photo by Vincent Wong-Crocitto.

Omar Ben Zvi's *Galls* (2018-21), a collection of brightly painted earthenware forms, is according to press notes, about mutational disturbances in living species—and their ability to live together in a relative lack of discord. The gourd-like forms are attended by a yellow work with sharply rising spikes, which may represent the animal invader species among mutually co-existing plant life. It is an apt

visual metaphor for the political complexities influencing human behavior all over the world. Yet *Galls* is implicitly optimistic; the violence that might attend so odd a collection of flora and fauna, more imagined than real, is not evident in their grouping.

Mdivani's strong collection of diverse artists working in different ways indicates her position is an international one. She is herself a foreigner who has crossed boundaries from Georgia, on the edge of Eastern Europe, to live in New York, where her point of view is necessarily distanced from that of the New York art world. Alienation, and a pointedly social view of how nature interacts with boundaries, the two primary themes of this fine show, may be easier for her to understand than for Americans. Her outlook, well-illustrated by her choice of imagery, is an accurate, up-to-date view of social complexities beyond any easy comprehension.

Participating artists: Yael Azoulay , Eli Barak, Omer Ben-Zvi, Mosen Binnalee, Jan Dickey, Delano Dunn, Michal Geva, Jon Gomez, Lia Kim Farnsworth, Tamara Kvesitadze, Netta Laufer, Dana Levy, Pedro Mesa, Mark Tribe

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JONATHAN GOODMAN IS AN ART WRITER BASED IN NEW YORK. FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS HE HAS WRITTEN ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ART—FOR SUCH PUBLICATIONS AS ART IN AMERICA, THE BROOKLYN RAIL, WHITEHOT MAGAZINE, SCULPTURE, AND FRONTERAD (AN INTERNET PUBLICATION BASED IN MADRID). HE CURRENTLY TEACHES CONTEMPORARY ART WRITING AND THESIS ESSAY WRITING AT PRATT INSTITUTE IN BROOKLYN.

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