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27-year-old painter Daniel Oksenberg has lately been one of the refreshing voices to enrich Tel Aviv's contemporary art scene. In his richly-colored, abstract paintings, he casts his gaze on trivial subject matters. Using his canvas as a launchpad for emotional and anthropological research, he zeroes in on seemingly mundane objects, coaxing out their secrets.

»Art stretches the limit between the conscious and the subconscious.«

Daniel, how would you describe your art in a few sentences?

I examine still life, which becomes very alive – both in the sense that objects become symbolic, and in the sense that I understand that these objects have a history, they tell a story. All the small knick-knacks we collect in life that remind us of experiences and memories have

a sentimental value. I also look at the places where painting interfaces with life itself; when the painting creates an environment, kind of like a theater set. There is a connection between how I look at the potential objects have of telling a story, and the way in which painting expresses that story.

Is there one specific theme that you think defines your craft more than others?

Probably memories. The tension between home and the outside world. Love. These are very big words, I'm not sure they do justice to how I feel. It's mostly an attempt to connect to a feeling or a poetic meaning behind things, and through painting to unveil something about our reality that we may know but don't pay attention to.

As an artist operating in Israel you are surrounded by a complicated geopolitical reality. In how far does this affect your art?

I always take images and stories from my own life into my art, and I live here, so there is a connection to reality and to life in Israel. Some of the images I paint are very recognizable for their so-called 'Israeliness': Whether it be an electric antenna or a bus. Politically, I am pre-occupied with contents that have less to do with who will head our next government, and more connected to concrete, everyday things: Love, death, disappointment.

Do you think that people see that in your art, or that they miss out on this more subtle layer if they don't look closely enough?

Maybe, but I believe that even if an encounter with something lasts only a minute, it does leave an impact. Many of my works are borderline abstract, so people don't always understand what they are looking at. So someone could look at my painting and not get it, and then when I point out what the object is they suddenly go: 'Oh, wait, wow. I see it now!' Or they discover it on their own, and then it's beautiful to see how the familiar object turns into something foreign in the viewer's eyes.



Your paintings bring about associations with one's home, the grappling with one's roots and the place one comes from. Is that something you are aware of?

What's beautiful about art is that it stretches the limit between the conscious and the subconscious. I'm very aware of the fact that I'm pre-occupied with the concept of home and losing one's home, but I'm also always surprised by how much my work expresses that. Throughout my life I moved around a lot, and the notion of home or lack thereof is always at the center. Recently my parents sold my childhood home, and that caught me off guard. I often search for a home in my craft, a place that will contain me. Fruits and flowers, which I draw a lot, are things you generally find in a bowl at home. My subject matters belong to that private space.

● [read the full story on bit.ly/_DanielOksenberg](https://bit.ly/_DanielOksenberg)

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