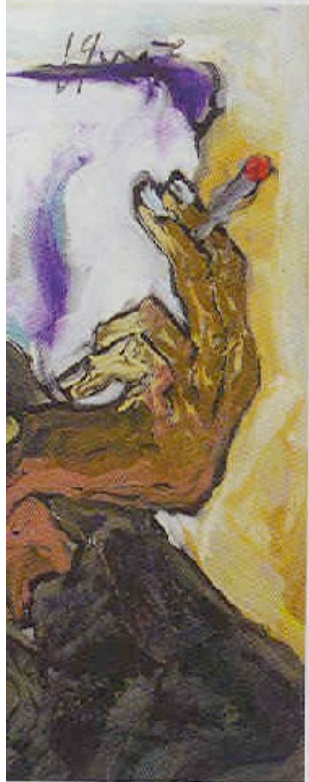


Above left: Marli Shamir, *Russian Church, Jerusalem*, 1940s, photograph, 36 x 29.5 cm. **Above right:** Sheffy Bleier, *Body of Love, Uterus*, Lamba print, 170 x 123 cm.

portraits are firm echoes, one in solid black as if describing the principal's shadow; the other hidden behind a rectangular swath of sharp red. Elegantly illustrated in a graphic line-and-shape style, all three figures are brought together by a winding shape of tropical green leaves in the background.

Thao Ngoc has merged symbols of Western society, notably a necktie, clothes hanger, and a schematic electrical diagram of a human heart, with an eccentric figure of a scalloped white and pink Buddha in her oil painting *Wedding Party*. A cluster of sketched hand-signs of the Buddha at the base of the headless statue is the true message of tranquility, harmony,



Le Ba Quan, Happy Hour #15, 2007, oil on canvas, 50 x 50 cm.

and happiness, a triple tribute that challenges the dark presence of a male suit behind it. Undoubtedly this painting attempts to communicate some sort of social memorandum but gets stuck somewhere between East and West.

Gil Goldfine



Tel Hai

Sheffy Bleier and Marli Shamir at the Open Museum of Photography

Marli Shamir and Sheffy Bleier couldn't be more different. Marli Shamir, 91, was born in Berlin and emigrated to Palestine in 1938, a decade before the birth of Israel. Her photographic portfolio on view, entitled *Black Light*, covers old and new architectural sites of Jerusalem spotted with a handful of figurative studies and landscapes, all printed in black and white. Sheffy Bleier, 46, a Sabra, was born in Tel Aviv. She has labeled her contribution to this two-person exhibition *Body of Love*, a shockingly beautiful display of colossal color prints depicting a survey of an animal's innards—udders, uterus, testicles, stomach,

and the full run of intestines.

One after the other, Shamir's pictures are highlighted by tracts of black geometric and organic shapes. Descriptive by nature, they are dramatically designed as she achieves a visual harmony between subject and aesthetic elements. The exhibition curator Naama Haikin has placed on facing pages in the catalog *Russian Church, Jerusalem* (1940s) opposite *Shrine of the Book, Jerusalem* (1960s) to indicate the power of Shamir's light and, by contrast, the absence of it. In both frames ebony shapes illuminate the middle tones of stone and flesh caught in the throes of either bright sunlight or artificial lighting. In her print *Between Eilat and the Egyptian Border* (1949) Shamir focuses on the variance between natural elements as the linear black silhouette of an Acacia tree, all sinewy and crackly, emerges from a swath of black earth set thoroughly at the base of the picture frame; together serving as foreground elements for a gargantuan craggy mountain of hard stone and a dark gray sky looming above, closing the upper border. Looking with utter amazement at the *Sculpture Garden, the Israel Museum, Jerusalem* (1960s) the viewer cannot but recall the compositional intuitiveness of Henri Cartier-