

Thank you, Pam

Nomi Tannhauser

Pamela Levy passed away in December 2004, at the young age of fifty five. A woman in her prime, at the height of a renewed outburst of creativity, she was taken away before her time from her family, from the art community and from her own creative work. The life circumstances of Pamela Levy exemplify a reality of continuous struggle with conditions that are faced by many women of different cultures and classes in the entire world. Loneliness, single-motherhood, economic and health problems were only a few of the situations with which Pamela had to cope, relying on her own forces. The fact that she immigrated to Israel from the United States without knowledge of the language, without a supporting family of origin or economic assistance, did not make things easier. In the end, after calling up all her strength and resources, Pamela's body did not stand up to the task and collapsed.

Pamela's struggle, the struggle of a woman/mother/artist against all the demons – both inside and outside – was stubborn, inspiring and commendable. Her embrace of her creative work – as a window to inner reality, as an emotional anchor as well as a means of putting bread on the table, was uncompromising and full of optimism. The subject matters she fearlessly laid on the canvas filled those around her with wonder and paved the way for coming generations of women artists to critically examine questions related to female experience.

Born in the U.S.A. in 1949, Pamela Levy immigrated to Israel in 1979 and was regarded as one of the first women artist in Israel to speak in a clear feminist voice. The subject matters she worked with moved between her struggle with her fears as a woman and her straightforward speech on controversial issues such as sexual exploitation and incest. It was precisely the desire to bring such fundamental feminist issues to the public discourse that led to the establishment of Antea – a Space for Women's at Kol Ha-Isha. From the beginning, Pamela Levy was supportive of this pioneering gallery, participating in Antea's opening exhibit in May 1994 and again in the exhibit 'Beauty 95', curated by Nomi Tannhauser.

'Thank You, Pam' was born spontaneously after Pamela's sudden death. Most of the participating artists knew Pamela closely, or were close to her in their subject matter. The pieces in this exhibit deal with issues Pamela dealt with – the complexity of being a woman/girl; the experience of 'otherness'; relations between women; the dialogue between human beings and their environment and between written text and visual art. Most of all they express the desire to honor the work of this courageous artist. With this exhibit, Antea gallery – a decade after its founding – seeks to express its appreciation to Pamela Levy as well as to a generation of pioneering feminist artists who created a new language and brought forth female experience in Israeli art.

Text accompanying the exhibition 'Thank you Pam', in memory of Pamela Levy, May 2005