

Yifat Bezalel: FSA Artist-in-Residence + Open Studio

The Diptych of Truth: Open Studio Installation: *Tehilla*, 2017. Film, *Hebraic Alphabet*, 2024.
Drawing and Duty of the Hearts, 2023. Drawing and projection.

Welcome to FSA's spring artists-in-residence open studios. Tel Aviv-based Yifat Bezalel seamlessly merges Renaissance and Baroque-inspired figurative drawing with Hebraic and Kabbalistic references, blending mysticism with art history and feminism with faith. Her drawings profoundly reflect her intricate identity—a fusion of global contemporaneity intertwined with her deep connection to Judaism.

In this studio, you will find two recent works that Bezalel was inspired to juxtapose in conversation with one another, informed by reflections during her Charleston residency, alongside new drawings and found objects. Bezalel's film *Tehilla* is based on a story by S.Y. Agnon, referencing the poetic prayers and songs of King David from the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. Bezalel's heroine Tehilla, an ageless and devout woman wandering Jerusalem, has dwelled in the world since the destruction of the Second Temple and is tasked with transforming the pain and sorrow of loss. She performs rituals invoking the *Shekhinah* (the divine presence) to address cosmic spiritual struggles, harmonizing what is negative, dark, and dense into light, order, and well-being.

Opposite this work is a projected image of Bezalel's *Duty of the Hearts*, a drawing based on Michelangelo's *Pietà*, created during a New York City-based residency last summer. In this image, the Mother of Mothers mourns her son, holding him like a baby. Both works depict women in sacred spaces: one in a black abyss activating salvation, the other in a deserted Jerusalem seeking redemption. These heroines symbolize "the unfathomed part of nature" and the essence of the *Shekhinah* or the divine feminine across all religions and spiritual traditions, embodying delicacy and strength simultaneously. Through silence, compassion, and humility, they activate a constant state of restoration, preservation, and expansion for humanity.

Bezalel reflects: "In my work, I transition from video to drawing and from drawing to video. Often, the video is the black box of a drawing containing essences that reveal themselves to me only later. Layers of pencil drawings describe the ghost of the divine presence left homeless to wander empty palaces, giving birth to the video that morphs between different appearances — sometimes animation, sometimes a silent story, a mirror image of the drawing that requires only paper and pencil. In my restless movement, I wish to reflect on the illusion of incompleteness and separation, especially in regards to mourning and loss."