







## Time Traveler

Sagi Refael

Rotem Reshef's current solo exhibition, "Time Traveler", presents a unique and innovative way of relating to the representational tradition of the Four Seasons.

The "Four Seasons" has been a central theme in the arts for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Early depictions of the "Horae", the personifications and later goddesses of the natural passage of time and the shifting between the different agricultural seasons, can be seen in as early as ancient Greco-Roman sculptural reliefs, throughout Renaissance and Rococo art, to Art Nouveau and modern art. The Horae were responsible for the smooth transition between the different seasons, for the fertility of the soil and the crops, and represented the "right time" or the "correct moment" in which each season reached its peak. The depiction of the Horae dancing in a circle holding hands, as in a continuous, fluid flow that has no hierarchical beginning nor end, has been a recurrent artistic motif through different styles over the years.

In "Western" art, the "Four Seasons" were mostly affiliated and personified by female figures, perhaps as a form of a secret, quieter control over nature, in opposition to male dominance by aggression and force. Alongside the extraordinary examples by the Italian Mannerist Giuseppe Arcimboldo and the biblically charged suite of paintings by Nicolas Poussin (both in the collection of Musée du Louvre, Paris), the passage of time via different blossoms and weather changes, was often a convenient platform for male painters to explore forms of eroticised feminine beauty and their varied characteristics. Such conventions can be seen in the work of Francois Boucher, Alphonse Mucha, and the Pre-Raphaelites, among others.

In "Eastern" art, and predominantly in Japanese culture, the "Four Seasons" transformed into a theme in as early as the 8th century, first focusing on the shorter

◀ Time Traveler, 2017  
Diluted acrylic and mixed media  
on six scrolls of canvas  
Dimensions variable  
400 x 554 inches wall





seasons, spring and autumn, and gradually relating to the longer seasons of winter, and eventually to summer in modern times. Inspired by the agricultural changes as evidenced in both rural and urban environments, the evolution of this theme occurred when the first metropolis began to develop, at a time when the "natural" order started to be manipulated, and even ruined by humans.

The partial separation from the "real" nature, in favour of urbanized ways of living, resulted in the strive for harmonious seasonal manifestations, and by development of "secondary nature", or "cultural surrogates for primary nature", a term coined by Prof. Haruo Shirano from Columbia University. Cultivated nature started to appear in forms of gardens, flower arrangements and festivals, as well as in poetry and visual arts, architecture, painting and theater.

Japanese screens and scroll paintings often juxtaposed the exterior, seasonal nature, with interior scenes and depictions of human behaviour. The natural surroundings – whether uplifting or melancholic – symbolically enhanced the emotional drama that was visually and literally represented inside.

In today's rapid pace of visual consumption, we might be used to looking at artworks in galleries and museums as quick as we look at online reportage. Creating "Time Traveler" specifically for the "Tall Wall Space" at the University of La Verne, took into consideration the unique nature of the space, and the fact that the audience's viewing experience should be a continuous one, impossible to absorb at a glance. Rotem Reshef aims to create a suspended composition that will take the viewers on a labyrinthian journey, sprawling through the different atmospheres, colors and techniques.

"Time Traveler" is a site-specific installation of painterly scrolls, each presents a monochromatic passage of seasonal atmospheres. These large-scale canvases are interwoven into each other horizontally and vertically, creating an ambitious and monumental grid of a climatic mix. It unfolds layers of icy blues and purplish storms of winter, pinkish red swirls and petals of spring, ochre-yellow of dry soils and orange tectonic shifts of summer, and muted tones of blues, violets, burgundy and greens, representing the nature as it recharges itself over the autumn. While each "season" can be identified by its own color scheme and mood interpretation, Reshef's aim might

be to create a contemporary visual remark about the lost primordial and untouched nature, at a time of human-made destruction for personal gain.

As an Action painter, Reshef endeavors to represent the passage of time through varied methods of layering compositions on large scrolls of canvas. By using diluted paints, her initial control over them is limited. Her process includes pouring the paint on the horizontal surface, and covering it with different kinds of plastic sheets, bubble wraps, threads, ribbons and leaves, harmonizing the natural, the synthetic, the functional and the symbolic. By incorporating the "cheap" and peripheral materials into the work itself, Reshef balances the hierarchies of the "precious" and the "wastable", giving an expression to the silent, hidden participants in the artworld game. Reshef is collecting painterly memories, documenting their impressions on the canvas and weaving them into a holistic organic world. Peeling the plastics off the drying paintings, is unveiling layers of somehow "distorted" paintings, as the plastic takes off part of the paint, leaving a "ghostly" appearance, a lean evidence to something that existed and was taken away.

The installation's title, "Time Traveler", refers to an utopian sci-fi concept of an outer-bodily experience, a fantasy of moving through unsolidified periods of past and future, from pre-existence to post-mortem eras. It suggests the timeless nature of art, perhaps with similarity to nature's continuous existence pre and post-human's presence. This breakage of linear time frame collides the rotating and repeating nature of the four seasons, with the diffused manner of consuming a nonlinear artwork, that has neither a start nor an end.

As the scrolls appear only in a partial manner, due to the overlapping quality of the interwoven grid installation, they suggest both the diffusion of the solid elements into each other, and the potential of revival and exposure in new circumstances and future locations. Just as the seasons fade away in time yet consistently reappear, Rotem Reshef's "Time Traveler" obtains the promise of a constant evolution and reshifting as time passes by.











ROTEM RESHEF  
Time Traveler

September 5 – December 15, 2017

Curator: Sagi Refael

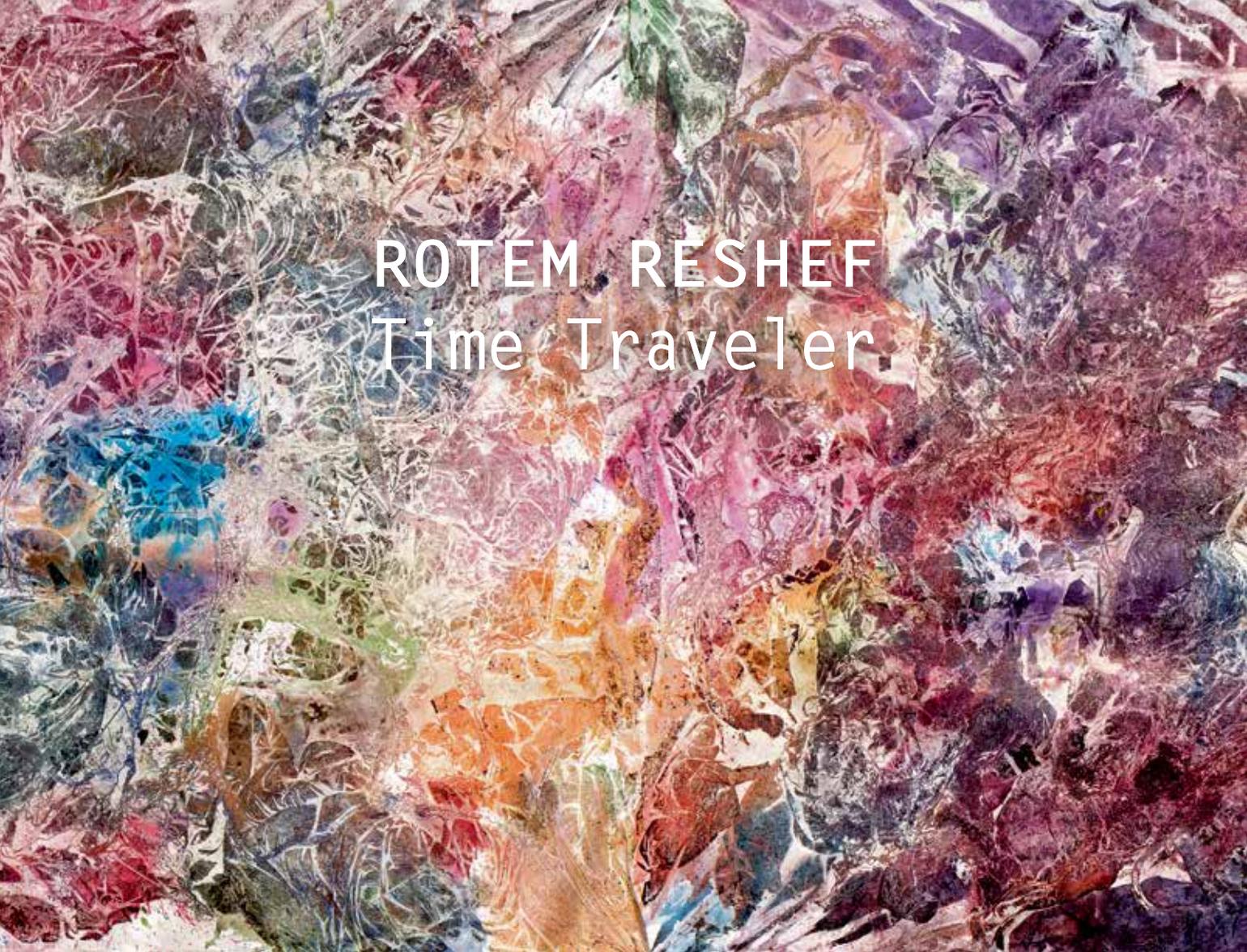
Graphic Design: Dafna Graif

Photographs: Michael Underwood

Artist's Portrait: Eric Minh Swenson

Tall Wall Space  
The Department of Art and Art History  
University of La Verne, California  
**University of La Verne**

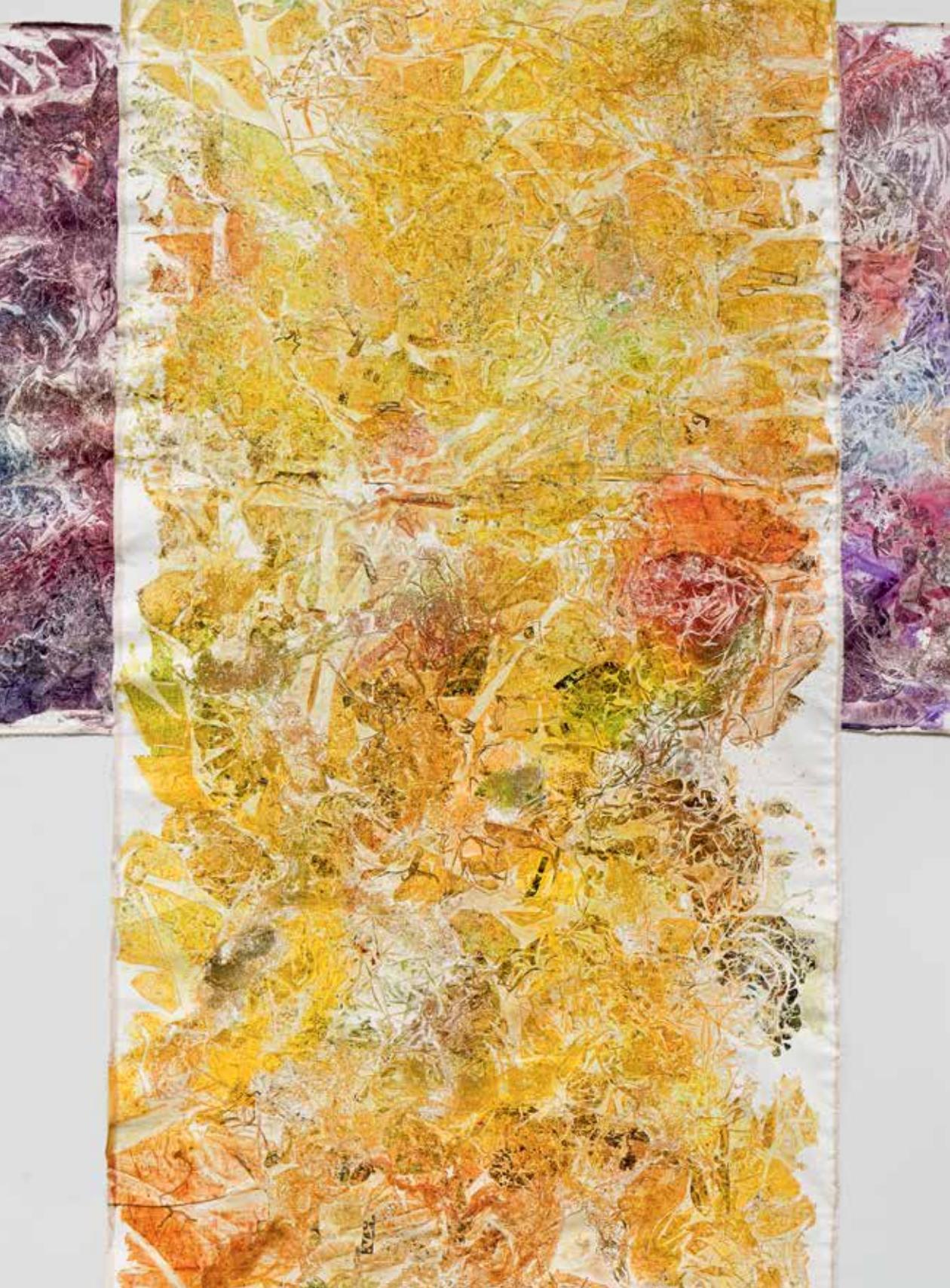
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