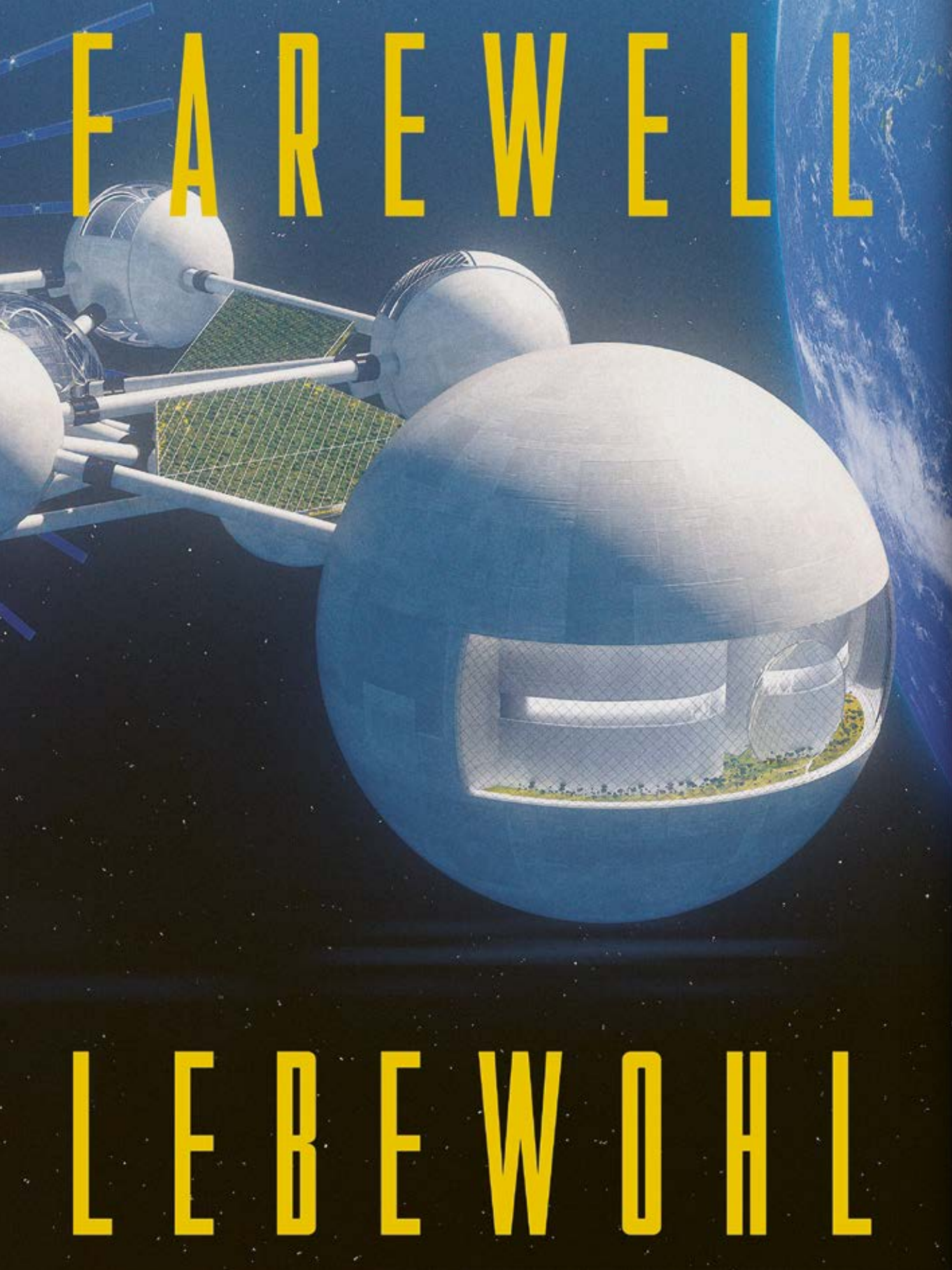


Yael Bartana



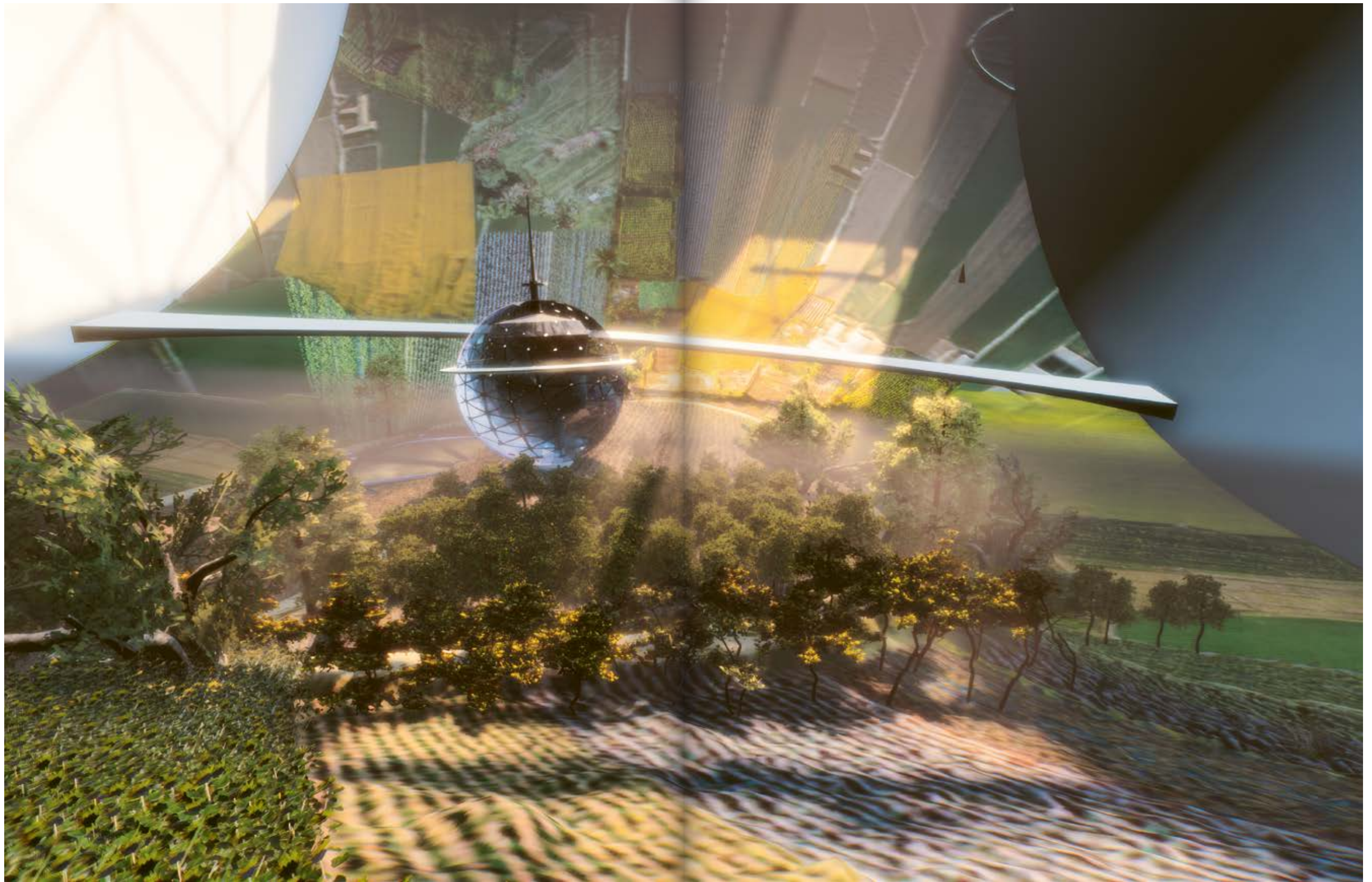
STUDIO 5
2023|24



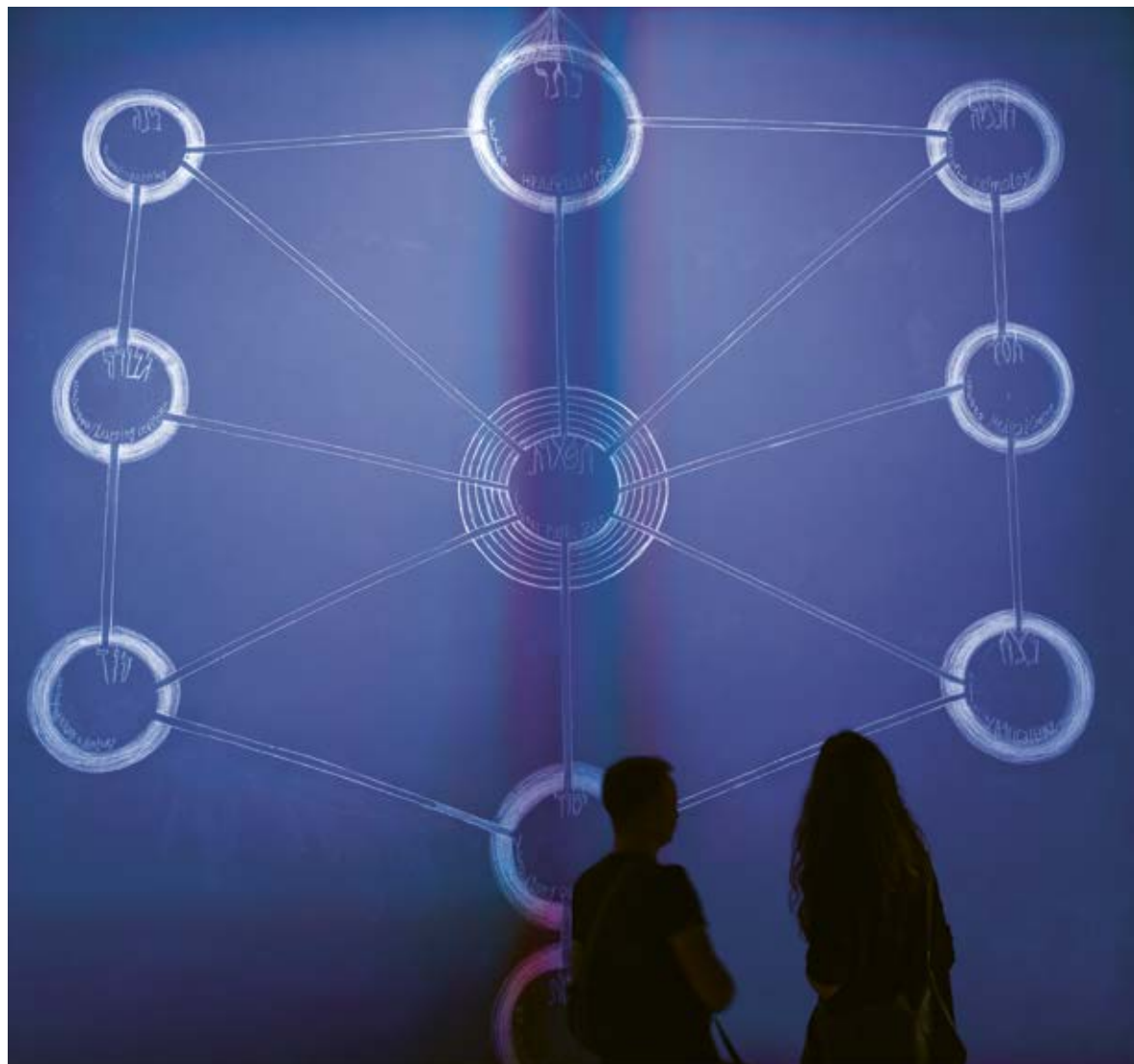
LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

Villa Massimo 2023 | 24

Venice Art Biennale 2024







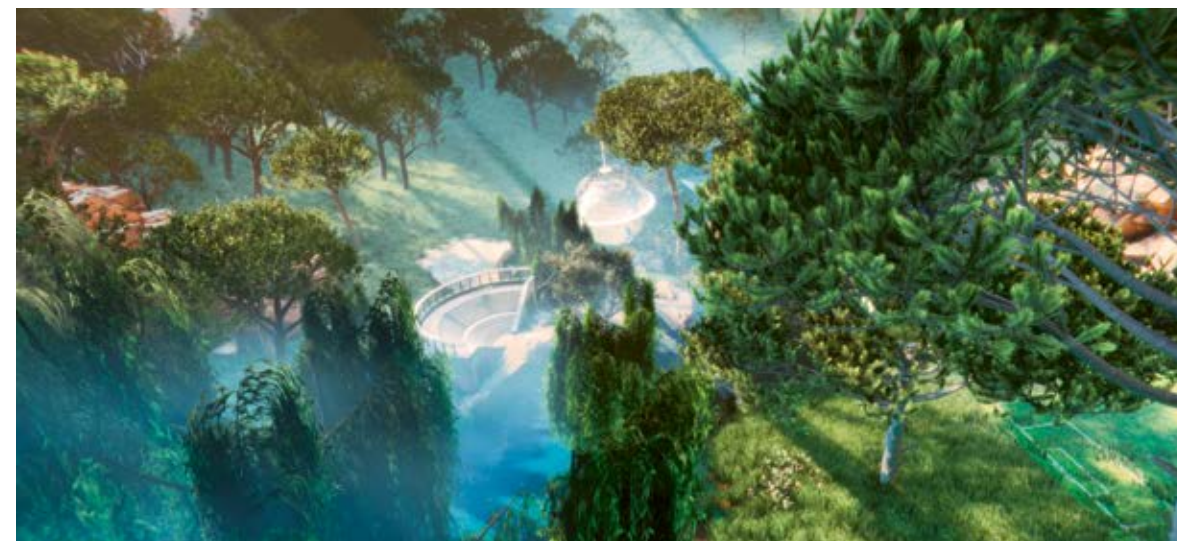
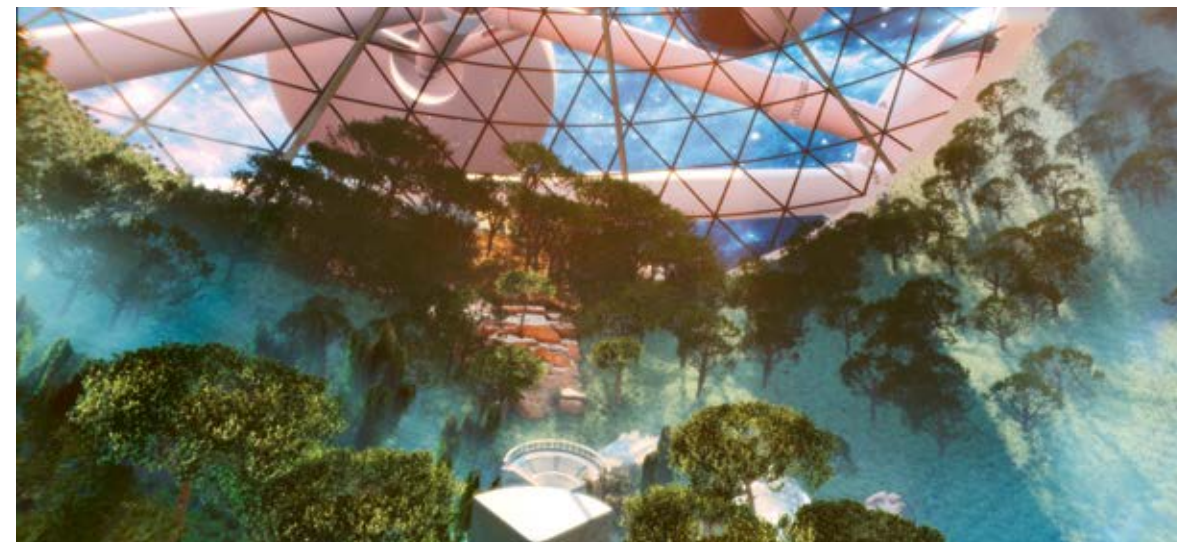
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Yael Bartana: *The Ten Sefirot*, 2024, site-specific wall drawing, installation view. Photo by Matthias Singer

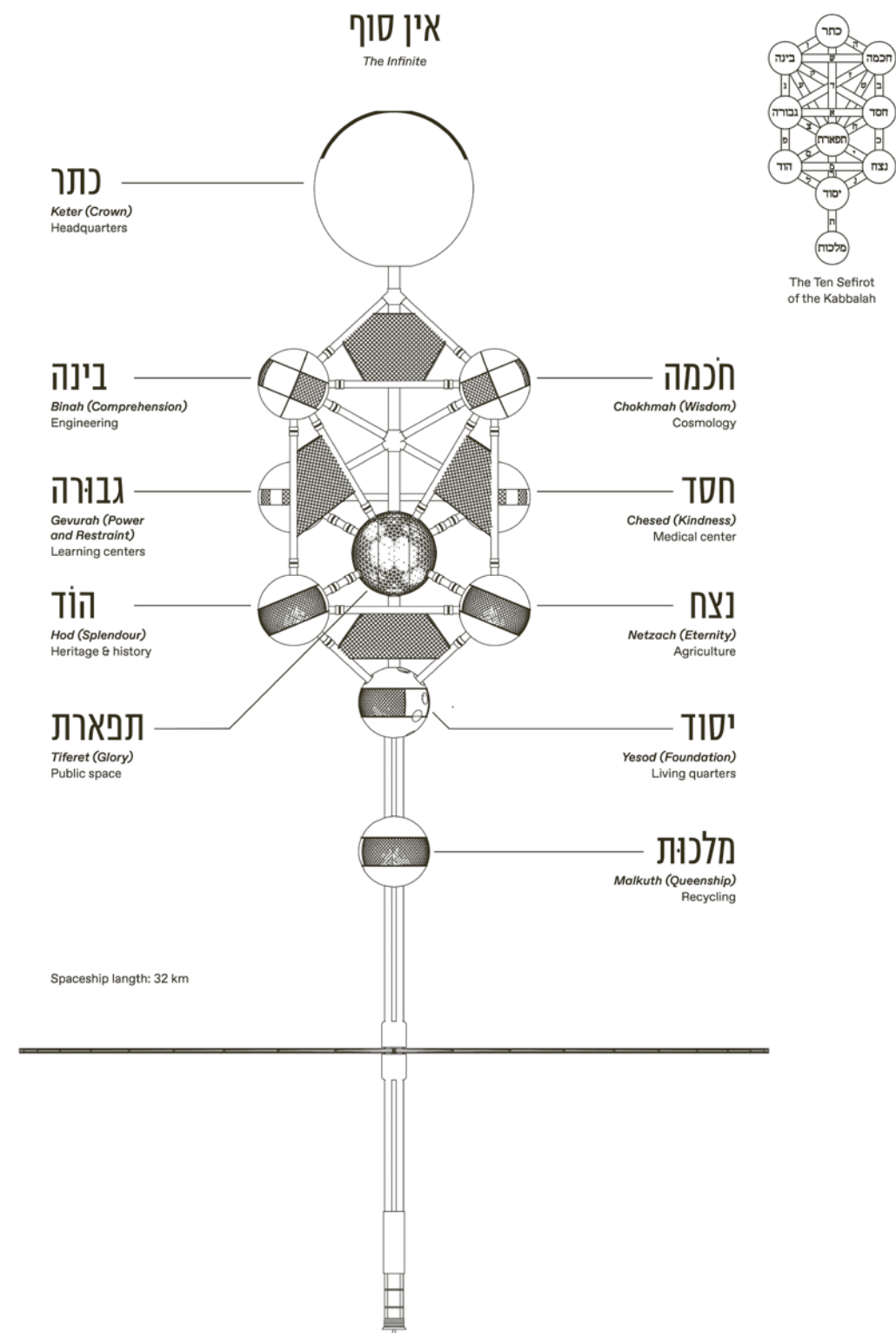
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Yael Bartana: *Life in the Generation Ship*, 2024, still, 3D rendering dome projection. Courtesy of Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan; Petzel Gallery, New York; Capitain Petzel, Berlin and Cecilia Hillström Gallery, Stockholm

← ← front cover:
Yael Bartana: *Light to the Nations — Generation Ship*, 2024, 3D model, installation view, 410 × 410 × 700 cm. Photo by Andrea Rosetti, courtesy of LAS Art Foundation

← ← inside cover:
Yael Bartana: *Farewell*, 2024, poster, 59,4 x 42 cm.

← ← previous pages:
Yael Bartana: *Life in the Generation Ship*, 2024, still, 3D rendering dome projection, and: *Farewell*, 2024, video stills. Courtesy of Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan; Petzel Gallery, New York; Capitain Petzel, Berlin and Cecilia Hillström Gallery, Stockholm





↑

Yael Bartana: *The Ten Spheres of the Generation Ship*, 2024, poster, 59,4 × 42 cm.

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Yael Bartana: *Light to the Nations — Generation Ship*, 2024, 3D model, installation view, 410 × 410 × 700 cm.

Photo by Katarina Sopčič, courtesy of LAS Art Foundation

ABOUT THE ABSENCE OF THINGS

Yael Bartana in conversation
with Susanne Kaufmann-Valet

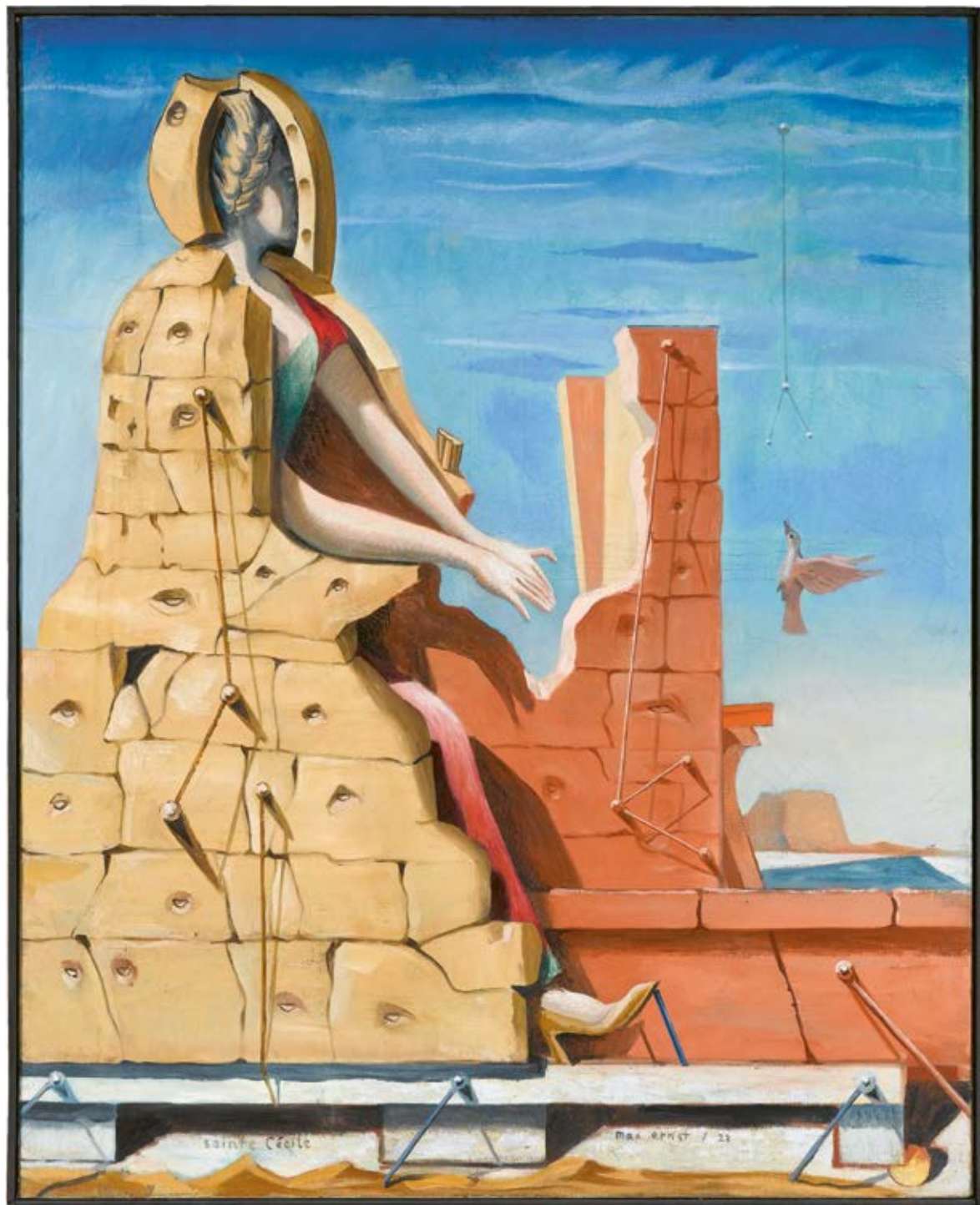
Susanne Kaufmann-Valet: Dear Yael, when I first saw your work *The Cross-Dressers* that we now have in the collection of Staatsgalerie Stuttgart I directly imagined that this one photo could change the way people see our Marcel Duchamp collection, which comprises over 100 works, if you show it in juxtaposition to it. What was your intention of combining these two iconic motifs of art history — Duchamp's *Fountain* and Georgia O'Keeffe's *Callas* — to one symbiotic image?

Yael Bartana: Well, I'm quite surprised to hear that my work could reshape the way people view the Duchamp collection — for me it is a collage, combining two elements that don't naturally connect. It all started with the invitation by Irit Sommer to create new works for an exhibition in Zurich focused on Georgia O'Keeffe. Thinking about Georgia O'Keeffe always brings to mind Callas, not only because she painted Callas over the years, but also as a child, we had Callas in our garden, and I was obsessed with these flowers.

I wanted to create an image that melded male and female. I imagined that Georgia O'Keeffe and Marcel Duchamp met via Alfred Stieglitz, who took the first photo of *Fountain*. One thing led to another. I combined these two stories playing with gender issues and ideas of the original and its references. It's a playful take on Duchamp's pissoir, transforming it into a vase for the Callas. The fact that Georgia O'Keeffe and Marcel Duchamp were both cross-dressers made it even more interesting for me, that's why I decided to title the photo *The Cross-Dressers*, queering the artwork somehow. Generally, as a non-European myself, I like to be in dialogue with the male dominated European 20th century art scene.

When you invited me to participate in the Villa Massimo project *Summer of the Arts*, my reaction was: let's continue. I remember we had a long conversation about my work when I visited your Duchamp collection. This was a natural way to continue with Duchamp, but I also wanted to explore your Max Ernst collection, since I have been a fan of his work for years.





↑
Max Ernst: *Heilige Cäcilie—Das unsichtbare Klavier (Sainte Cécile—Le piano invisible)*, 1923, oil on canvas, 101×82 cm.
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

← ←
Yael Bartana: *The Cross-Dressers*, 2022, digital print on cotton paper, 36×37 cm. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

SK: And when we were walking through the collection, it was the painting *Sainte Cécile. Le Piano invisible* of Max Ernst from 1923, which you were immediately interested in. Max Ernst here portrays Saint Cecilia, whose legend tells of her brutal execution. As a heavenly organ is said to have played during her suffering, Max Ernst portrays her as the patron saint of church music in front of an invisible piano. What exactly is so interesting for you in regard to the absent piano? Is it that you hear the sound play or is it something that is inside of the myth regarding Saint Cecilia and all of the torture she suffered?

YB: Being in Rome now, I'm drawn to the connection between the city and Saint Cecilia. There is a church here in her name. But of course, with Max Ernst you always have this surrealist element in the way he thinks about war and violence. This scene portrays a very violent moment where Cecilia is trapped in all these blocks of stones, and you see her disability because she has lost any access to create instrumental sound. This triggered me in a way, and I wanted to work with it. I first thought of recreating the scene with a video but then I came up with this idea of showing the invisible. How to give presence to the invisible element in the space? And perhaps creating music for that? I think it is like showing what is missing. And it doesn't have to be authentic, it is enough to have some sort of collage.

SK: Is that an idea of giving the voice back to this woman?

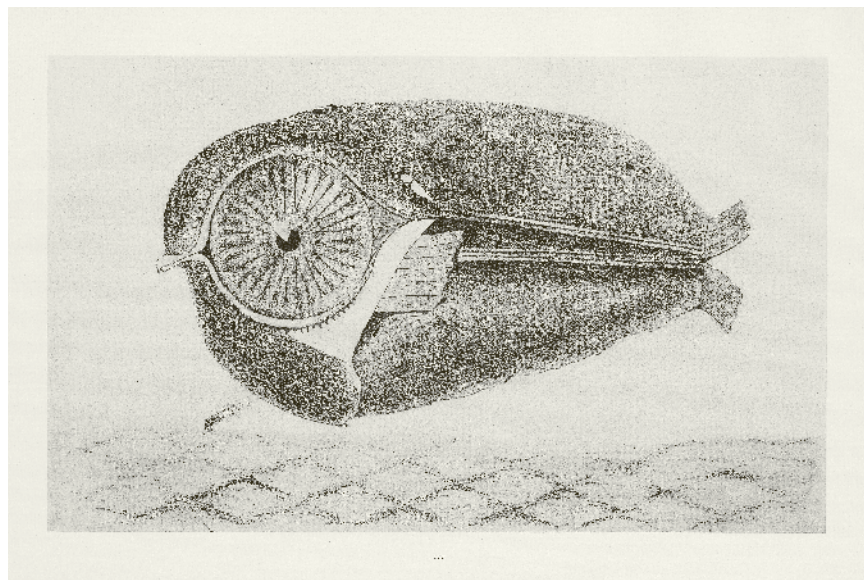
YB: It is an imaginative moment of justice, maybe. But it all happens in the imagination — we do not see the piano player; the player remains a ghost.

SK: And what I could also add to the story of the painting is that through research of our Department of Conservation we know that the piano actually existed in a preliminary drawing below the painting on the canvas. But Max Ernst decided to not have the image of the piano in the final painting, he just left the ruins of it. You were just talking about this kind of absence — how important is the absence of things in your work in general?

YB: I often focus on the concept of absence as a way to create space for the audience's imagination. To suggest a new experience of reality or in this case of the artwork. This kind of absence triggers the audience's imagination. What could potentially be part of the image that they are seeing — I am dealing with absence by not composing complete narratives.

SK: In Stuttgart you show a spaceship, as you do in the German Pavillon at the Venice Biennale, which has just opened — in which way does this relate to our collection?

YB: I proposed the collage *Ascending*, which is again combining two elements that don't belong together. This time an illustration of my spaceship is superimposed on Gustave Doré's illustration of the ascension of Jesus. Instead of Jesus the spaceship is ascending, and the disciples are in awe. For me this work communicates with Max Ernst's work on



paper *L'évadé*, which he included in his series *Histoire naturelle* in 1926.

The spaceship represents a mode of survival, mirroring Ernst's imaginative approach. By incorporating a spaceship, I engage with themes of displacement and refuge, focusing on groups who are forced to flee. I understand the spaceship as a redemptive vessel, a mechanism of survival and an attempt of giving nature a chance to heal without the presence of humans who destroy it. In this aspect I am very interested in the ideas of Max Ernst, who seeks all kinds of fantasies in his imaginative nature.

SK: I like the idea of this circle of concepts that came from Stuttgart to Rome and back to Stuttgart, in a way you link your thoughts to our collection. Your ideas add a very strong, contemporary comment to the historic works of Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst, which shows that they are still relevant to this day — thank you!

The mentioned works by Yael Bartana and Max Ernst are shown from July 19, 2024 to January 26, 2025 at Staatsgalerie Stuttgart as part of the cooperation project "Summer of the Arts. Villa Massimo visits Stuttgart".

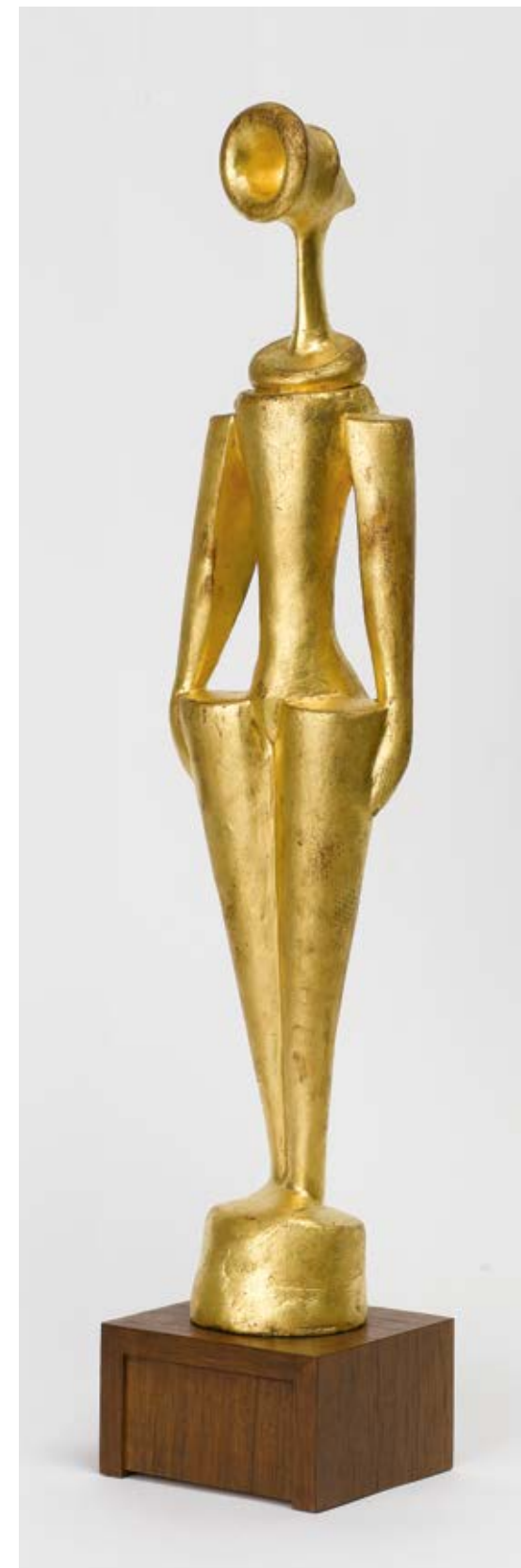
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Max Ernst: *L'évadé* (*Der Ausbrecher*), sheet No. 30 in: *Histoire naturelle*, 1926, collotype on paper, 50×32,3 cm. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

Yael Bartana: *Ascending*, 2023, collage, 82,5×108 cm. Courtesy of Wannsee Contemporary, Berlin; Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan; Petzel Gallery, New York; Capitain Petzel, Berlin and Cecilia Hillström Gallery, Stockholm

→

Max Ernst: *La Parisienne* (*Die Pariserin*), 1950, plaster (gilded), 18×81,5×12 cm. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart





↑
Yael Bartana: *Heroes*, 2023, color photograph, 160×110 cm. Courtesy of Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan; Petzel Gallery, New York; Capitain Petzel, Berlin and Cecilia Hillström Gallery, Stockholm

→ → back cover:
Yael Bartana: *Zukunftsbewältigung 1*, 2023, video still. Courtesy of Wannsee Contemporary, Berlin; Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan; Petzel Gallery, New York; Capitain Petzel, Berlin and Cecilia Hillström Gallery, Stockholm

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Julia Draganović
Deutsche Akademie Rom Villa Massimo
Accademia Tedesca Roma Villa Massimo
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Susanne Kaufmann-Valet, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

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