

Unpaid Leave

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The exhibition *Unpaid Leave* deals with the impact of the immediate physical and mental environment on the work practices of artists. For many months over the past two years, since the COVID-19 lockdown of March 2020, artists have been precluded from getting to their work studios – the sanctuaries where they pursue their work. As a result, many of them did their work at home, in very different physical, environmental, and emotional conditions than those afforded by their studios.

In the course of 2020 and 2021, the term *hufshah lelo tashlum* (unpaid leave; literally, “unpaid vacation”) has become commonplace, in reference to many workers in the economy who found themselves furloughed from their place of work. The artist community, forced to work at home instead of at the studio, also found itself in this predicament, although

the term *unpaid leave* in their case is somewhat ironic, as the work of artists – be it at the studio or at home – always carries on, regardless of whether they are paid for it or not.

Along with predictable changes in the format of the works (which became smaller due to the more confined home space), this period has also ushered in significant changes in the works themselves – be it self-directed study of watercolor painting or transition from painting landscapes to still-lives; photographing elements within the home or painterly interpretations of computer screens during Zoom meetings; a return to childhood settings of one's parents' home or digital drawings on one's cellphone screen. The works in the exhibition present such changes, that were born out of necessity but are indicative of more profound processes at work. These changes have left their mark on the artists' practices, and have permeated their work even after returning to the studio.