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## PRESS-RELEASE

### 16th Republic. Israeli video programme

Opening: May 14, 2005 5 p.m. Screening starts at 6 p.m.

Artists: Liron Lupu, Effi and Amir, Keren Cytter, Maria Pomianski, Vadim Levin, Irina Birger

Curator: Irina Birger

Screenings: May 14- June 12, Thu-Sun, 4/5/6 p.m. Entrance: free

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15 years have passed since the beginning of the immense Russian immigration wave to Israel and *16th Republic* (a term used by Russians for countries under their cultural influence) is a distinctive product of this fascinating process.

One immediate common aspect of all the artists showing in this exhibition is Israel, where three of them were born and three others have immigrated to. Another common element is the fact that they all have decided to depart Israel. While locating themselves deep in the heart of (old) Europe (Amsterdam, Berlin, Zurich) they all choose to deal with Israel in their body of work.

*16th Republic* is the unique result of a dialogue taking place nowadays between Israeli-born artists and their fellow Russian Israelis. While using a range of techniques all artists are focusing their gaze on the changeable face of Israel's young society. In the exhibition the various videos are juxtaposed through semi-narrative single day occurrences. It starts with a sunset and ends with the moon while the audience receives a direct, sometimes cynical observation of a universal circle of emotions.

The acuteness of the exhibition's context is made apparent by displaying it in a gallery associated with Eastern (New) Europe in a city struggling to face its own changing character. "16th Republic" offers a variegated look into an urban culture laden with numerous layers of history and almost infinite faces of society. It does neither suggest utopia nor reality. In this twilight zone the exhibition depicts a subtle description, which appears to contain an (almost) normal day of a restless metropolitan.

*Liron Lupu* is opening with "Early Morning" and catches a special moment of Tel Aviv's night becoming a day. It is an unstable start for another day in our life. Later *Effi and Amir's* "All my sons" is presenting a unique take on a nuclear family while reconstructing a future history of their possible children. Through different episodes they deal with their existence and identity as a couple and as artists with moral conventions, common beliefs and behaviors of the Israeli society in which they live. *Keren Cytter's* "Ruthi and Keren" depicts an ordinary conversation about life issues discussed by two young female waitresses during their shift. *Maria Pomianski's* "Fountains in Tel Aviv" manages to integrate a personal relationship with urban architecture by placing her friends as the city's enduring fountains. "Jerusalem Partisan" by *Vadim Levin* uses different associations related with Israeli war documentaries and popular Russian Cinematography war movies. Levin points a finger at a society living on the edge and turns the city space into a battleground. *Irina Birger*, with two animated short films, examines masculinity as experienced in Russia, Israel, and Germany while not ignoring Arabic influence. Birger dares to look deep and beyond the sources influencing the Israeli identity.

Together the works in this exhibition acknowledge the importance of artistic discourse in a multi-layered society (even if occurring outside its borders) and argue for a more complex appreciation of what seems to be a unified Israeli character.

Text by: Eyal de Leeuw. Cultural affairs at the Embassy of Israel