

Naomi Leshem, *Between Zones*

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Andrea Meislin Gallery, through
Feb 18 (see Chelsea)

Israeli photographer Naomi Leshem makes her New York solo debut with two separate yet complementary bodies of work dealing with youths in transition. “Runways,” from 2007, features women about to begin their mandatory service in the Israeli Army, posing in the midday sun on active airstrips at one of the country’s highly protected military bases. The more recent “Sleepers” series captures subjects from five different countries, dozing in their beds.

The latter group, which takes up the bulk of the show with 20

midsized C-prints, exposes men and women between the ages of 16 and 20 from Israel, Switzerland, France, Germany and the United States in a highly vulnerable state. They’re seen in their usual sleepwear (or lack thereof) amid twisted sheets and bunched-up pillows. Leshem created the shots by setting up the camera before bedtime, then leaving for an hour or so to let the sitter fall asleep. We see Rotem entwining herself in a multicolored blanket, Ofir hugging a puffy, red comforter and Kristina getting cozy with an Uglydoll.

Of her “Runways” series, eight are on view, and all of them are striking. The secluded airstrips—thickly covered in tread marks from landing gear, sometimes to the point of total blackness—provide a dramatic

setting for the casually clad women, photographed at noon to reduce shadows. Tal spreads her arms like wings as she meanders down the airfield, while Nitsan is caught in virtual flight as she runs toward a vanishing point. In a manner that’s both poetic and chillingly real, these images capture women on the brink of a momentous change, having one last chance at being themselves.

—Paul Laster

Yarden, Israel

