



## Victimizing. Revisiting Museutopia

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This triptych is composed of two parts. On the sides is a photo I took at The National Museum of Archaeology and History in Chisinau (2009), and in the middle is a photograph I took at The Clandestine Immigration Naval Museum in Haifa in 2013.

The Naval Museum was built in 1960 in Haifa and hosts artifacts that depict the recent establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 through the perspective of two periods. The pre-independence era (before 1948) is commemorated through the clandestine immigration that took place during the British Mandate period and in the years following World War II. After independence, history is represented by showcasing the development and operations of the Israeli Naval forces.

At the heart of the Naval Museum is a ship, the first of which was named Nevertheless. It transported Jewish refugees from Europe to Palestine in 1946 and was seized by British authorities. The refugees

were deported to a British refugee camp in Cyprus, and after Israel's independence, the same ship was converted by the Israeli Navy and became one of the first vessels in the naval fleet. It was decommissioned and brought into the museum in 1969. Inside the hull of the ship, historical documents and an audiovisual exhibit are displayed. In the backdrop of the audiovisual program, behind a semi-transparent screen, there is a small restored section featuring sleeping bunks and mannequin figures that illustrate the sleeping and living conditions of the refugees who attempted to immigrate to Palestine. These mannequins were not meant to be seen up close by visitors. By chance, I found a way to get behind the semi-transparent screen and was shocked when I saw how they actually looked. The standing man was not taken from a fashion shop but was manually carved by an unskilled artisan who was unable to create a more lifelike representation than the one currently displayed.

The National Museum of Archaeology and History in Chisinau is housed in a historic building constructed in the 17th century in an Italian style. It was originally established as a school for boys by Czar Peter, as Moldova was part of the Russian Empire at the time. The building was renovated in the early 1980s and was initially intended to house a military museum dedicated to the Red Army.

Right at the entrance is a hall featuring a diorama called \*Iași-Chișinău Operation 1942. It depicts a famous battle between the Red Army and the German Army during World War II, which resulted in Moldova being annexed by the Soviet Union. The diorama was painted in the 1980s, prior to the museum's opening. Measuring 11 meters long and 6 meters high, it was the largest of its kind in the Soviet Union at the time. The painting was created with great detail and was based on historical photographs. However, when I photographed it in 2009, I noticed that all the emblems belonging to both the Red Army and the German Army were missing. It appears that after the Republic of Moldova gained independence in 1989, someone gave an order for them to be covered. The result is astounding—because as a young visitor, you wouldn't know who was who, which immediately casts Moldova in the role of a victim, caught between two oppressive forces that occupied it.

Frame	None
Medium	Digital Print on Canvas
Location	Cape Town, South Africa
Height	181.00 cm
Width	373.00 cm
Artist	Ilya Rabinovich
Year	2024

