

A l'occasion des célébrations des 60 ans de l'Indépendance de l'Etat d'Israël, les auteurs de la Gazette des Arts ont décidé de publier un ouvrage unique sur les artistes israéliens.

L'objectif de ce livre est de servir de scène à la création des artistes israéliens contemporains et d'offrir l'accès au réseau international par l'organisation de rencontres et de programmes d'échange, des expositions, la publication de livres, le soutien aux artistes et les relations publiques mondiales, avec la coopération de partenaires de la Gazette des Arts.

Ce livre est destiné à un public varié : amateurs d'art en tout genre, personnes ayant attrait à l'art, artistes, conservateurs et collectionneurs, désirant connaître l'art israélien sous tous ses angles. Dans cette première et captivante édition, chaque artiste est présenté par cinq de ses créations et un texte sur son œuvre.

Le livre expose des créations sous toutes les formes : peinture, sculpture, photographie, céramique, mosaïque, Judaïca, art digital et interactif. L'art israélien est caractérisé par une langue unique reliée à la réalité israélienne, à la société et au lieu dans lequel elle évolue.

Des références historiques, des motifs juifs, des sujets nationaux, réalistes, sociaux, culturels et autres s'entremêlent pour former les courants et les styles variés qui façonnent l'identité artistique israélienne. Ces thèmes et d'autres trouvent leur expression dans les œuvres des artistes dépeints dans ce volume.

Ces artistes doivent présenter une série d'expositions en Israël, à travers la France et dans le reste du monde, qui feront office de vitrine à l'art israélien et l'introduiront à des publics nouveaux, permettant sa diffusion et sa commercialisation.

Prochainement, la Gazette des Arts doit publier des ouvrages de cette collection dans d'autres pays.

Pour prendre contact avec les artistes, l'adresse de leur site privé et leur e-mail sont mentionnés.

Ce livre est disponible dans les galeries et les librairies en Israël et à travers la France, ainsi que sur le site Internet du magazine : www.lagazettedesarts.fr

In celebration of the State of Israel's 60th Independence Day Anniversary, the editors of La Gazette des Arts are pleased to launch a special publication honoring Israel's artists.

The purpose of the book is to provide a platform for the artistic creativity of Israel's contemporary artists and to present them to circles of international art through meetings and exchange programs, exhibitions, distribution of publications, aid to artists, and world-wide public relations in cooperation with associates of La Gazette des Arts.

The book is intended for a diversified public: lovers of art; art dealers; curators; artists and art collectors who are interested in learning more about Israeli art from a wider perspective.

In this first special edition, each artist is represented by five of his art works and an accompanying text about the work. The book presents works in a variety of media: painting, sculpture, photography, ceramics, mosaics, Judaica, digital and interactive art.

Israeli art is characterized by a singular artistic language, resulting from the realities of life in Israel, the society, and the environment. The country's ancient historical background, the nation's Jewish heritage, and nationalistic, realistic, social and cultural subjects have been fused together with various trends and styles to form a unique Israeli artistic identity. These subjects, as well as others, find expression in the works of the artists presented in this book.

In addition, the artists are planning a series of exhibitions in Israel, France and throughout the world; these will provide a showcase for Israeli art, exposing it to a wider public, and offering an opportunity for promoting and generating broader sales of Israeli art work.

La Gazette des Arts intends to publish additional books in the series for distribution to other countries in the near future.

The participating artists may be contacted through their private web sites and/or e-mail addresses. The book is available through galleries and book stores in Israel and throughout France, as well as through the magazine's internet site: www.lagazettedesarts.fr

The Story of Israeli Art

Israeli art has been influenced by its exposure to a diversity of styles and trends. Over time, it has undergone a number of transformations involving changes of style and artistic expression. In the absence of a native tradition and a singular artistic vocabulary, and because of the vast geographical and cultural distance separating it from world centers of art, Israeli art has evolved into a unique fusion between a localized style and influences imported from Europe. The development of Israeli art can be understood when viewed through the prism of historical, social and cultural realities.

Over the years, Israeli artistic expression has included a number of subjects such as local and world tensions; social fabric and ideology; and political-social events such as waves of immigration, wars and political upheavals; holy sites, national borders, settlement and defense and the convergence of landscape, earth and territory.

The Bezalel Period – 1906-1929

The official beginning of Israeli art can be linked to the opening of the Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem, founded by Boris Schatz in 1906. There were, of course, a number of artists working throughout the country, but the impetus and desire to form a native artistic expression can be directly traced to the original teachers and students at Bezalel.

Their artistic style was based on a synthesis of European romanticism and Middle Eastern influences, and included elements of German Art Nouveau. At the time, Jewish influences, including life in the Diaspora, were still evident. The dominant subjects of the Bezalel artists included depictions of various ethnic groups (especially Oriental subjects), descriptions and characters from Biblical stories or Jewish history; portraits of Zionist leaders; portrayals of the country's pioneers; and landscapes of Eretz Israel.

Financial hardships, disputes with institutions which underwrote expenses, internal conflicts, and the withdrawal of official financial support, along with the strong criticism directed at Bezalel Art and its historical subject matter, resulted in the school's closure in 1929.

Artists representative of this period include Boris Schatz, Efraim Moshe Lilian, Ze'ev Raban, and Abel Pann.

The 1920s

A group of painters left Bezalel and pursued their own unique Israeli style, which became known as "The School of Eretz Israel Artists." These artists, who rejected their teachers at Bezalel, were essentially the fathers of contemporary Israeli art and sculpture. Their art was influenced by the prevailing styles of European visual arts such as Primitivism, Expressionism and Cubism.

It was during these years that a new artistic form of Israeli art was developing, a style which encompassed a native Israeli viewpoint. The pioneering spirit, accomplishment and work, expressions of values and social ideals - all of these were subjects considered worthy of creative expression. Native landscapes, the Arab population, ordinary scenes and depictions of the new settlements were the most common subjects of painters working during this period. By the end of the decade, the center of art had moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, where artistic form was

emphasized over content.

The artists associated with this period include Nahum Gutman, Reuven Rubin, Siona Tagger, Israel Paldi, Menachem Shemi, Mordechai Levanon, Yossef Zaritisky, and Arie Lubin.

The 1930s

The influence of contemporary art as it was developing in France and Germany is evident during this decade. The group of artists centered in Tel Aviv was inspired by the Parisian school - Impressionism, Post-impressionism and the work of Jewish painters living in Paris. Those artists who worked in Jerusalem were mainly influenced by German Expressionism. The modernistic style dictated a new approach, according to which color was the most important element in painting. The Eretz Israeli artists worked with a palette of bright and flat colors while the new generation used dark colors in a variety of shades, thus, the narrative landscape characteristic of the previous decade was abandoned.

Those artists particularly influenced by the Paris school were Haim Atar, Moshe Mokdi, Israel Paldi, Avigdor Stematsky, Haya Schwartz, and Batya Lichanski. The re-opening of Bezalel in 1935 occurred contemporaneously with the arrival of artists who had immigrated after the Nazis' rise to power. A number of these painters and sculptors were imbued with a rich cultural background, and they became teachers and directors at the New Bezalel school. The artists Anna Ticho and Leopold Krakauer generously helped ease the newcomers' successful absorption into the country.

Artists of the German school were influenced by a number of trends and styles, such as expressionistic portrayals and emotionally-charged depictions achieved by the application of the graphic techniques employed in woodcuts, the functionality of the Bauhaus tradition, and the "New Objectivity" movement which ushered in a return to realism.

Those artists most influenced by the German school were Yosef (Joseph) Hirsch, Shalom Sebba, Mordechai Ardon, Yaakov (Jacob) Steinhart, Yossef (Joseph) Bodko, and Yaakov (Jacob) Eisenscher.

The 1940s

During this decade, "Canaanite" artists resisted the eclectic style of art which was

then prevalent in the country. They encouraged the adoption of an innovative Israeli style, a continuation of the art of the ancient cultures of the Fertile Crescent. These artists sought meaning in the primitive - the geo-mythical motifs of Eretz Israel prior to the arrival of ancient Israeli tribes.

Their adherence to Canaanite values was suggested by their direct contact with the land and its archeological sites, and by the use of stone associated with the Canaanite era, (such as ancient, red Nabatean stone and black basalt rock). The Canaanite style embraces subjects drawn from the ancient past of the Mediterranean region, particularly Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian sculpture, patterns and ornamentation, and the use of earth tones. Artists of this period include the sculptor Itzhak Danziger, who was the central figure in the Canaanite art movement, and the painters Moshe Tamir, Moshe Castel and Aharon Kahana, who also created original ceramic works.

The 1950s

The school known as "New Horizons" was founded by Yosef (Joseph) Zaritsky in 1948, following Israel's War of Independence. This was the most significant art movement to appear in the country, exerting a profound influence on future generations of artists. The group was involved in ten exhibitions between 1948-1963; its intent was to differentiate itself from the conservative and anachronistic approach characteristic of the Society of Israeli Artists and Sculptors, and to speak in a universal, abstract language.

The style of these artists marks a place on the continuum from geometric painting (inspired by Picasso and synthetic Cubism which emphasized line and form over color) to lyric abstract works of art (in which overriding importance was given to texture). The subjects addressed by the group were inspired by historical narratives, national symbols, and local landscapes. In 1965, the group disbanded due to internal friction and artistic disputes. Members of this group include Yehezkel Streichman, Avigdor Luizada, Pinhas Abramovitch, Avigdor Stematsky, Aharon Kahana, Zvi Meirovitch, Marcel Iancu, Yohanan Simon, and Moshe Wexler. It was during this period that a politicization of art occurred, reflecting contemporary economic and social issues such as the opening of transit camps

[maabarot], the establishment of a military government, official corruption, and immigrant demonstrations. The art world was characterized by the expression of social realism and national symbolism. Artists representative of this approach include Naftali Bezem, Abraham Ofek, and Shraga Weil.

The 1960s

A transition in style and resistance to the art establishment characterize this period. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Israeli artists returned to figurative art, which included a pronounced and growing interest in "pop" art. In 1964, a regrouping took place in the form of "Tazpit" (View) during which a number of established artists joined the movement of a younger generation of Israeli artists. The group's significance can be attributed to the mere fact of its organization and its ability to secure museum space for artistic exhibitions. In 1965, another group of dissidents came together under the name "10+", a movement in conflict with the official museum establishment. Their aim was to promote young artists to the forefront of the Israeli art world, and to bring attention to the ten members of the group as well as to other artists who joined them in mounting several exhibitions. Although their work was not stylistically unified, five years of lively and provocative activities resulted in ten exhibitions, all of which captivated the public with a mischievous spirit of Israeli "chutzpah" and the unique humor of native-born Israelis. The group was also distinguished by its use of original, sophisticated and innovative materials (such as nylon, polyester, and poly-vinyl/PVC).

Artists associated with this period include Rafi Lavi, Buky Schwartz, Uri Lifshitz, Siona Shimshi, Beni Efrat, and Yigal Tumarkin.

The 1970s

The work of artists in the 1970s was centered around "conceptual art", an expression dominated by amorphous forms and an exposition of ideas related to current social and political issues. This minimal, abstract form was the credo of the new artist. The poetic relationship between man and the universe was expressed within a medium which was both simple and neat. The effect was achieved by relinquishing details in favor of formal elements, and by minimizing areas of uniform and flat colors. A rare fusion between art, territory and politics gave birth to the dynamics of a group of artists who met together during a period of four months in 1972, traveling between Kibbutz Metzger and the Arab village of Masar. Their personal

involvement was motivated by a sense of social and environmental awareness, fostered through nature outings and an appreciation for the earth as artistic subject matter. This cooperation between the Jewish and Arab communities led to the creation of environmental works of art. Another group of artists known as "Aklim" (Climate) was formed in the mid-70s with the goal of returning to the previous subjects of Eretz Israeli artists – such as the hills of Galilee and Jerusalem. Artists working during this period included Moshe Kuperman, Pinhas Cohen-Gan, Avital Geva, Moshe Gershuni, Joshua Neustein, Menashe Kadishman, Michael Druks, Michael Gross, and Ori Reisman. "The Academists" – a group of Tel Aviv artists formed during this decade – contributed to existing tensions between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Their work explored individual, social, and cultural perceptions and the artists' attitudes toward the media. Those associated with this group are Michal Naaman, Tamar Getter, Nahum Tevet, Yair Garbuz, Efrat Natan, David Ginton, Deganit Beresht and Motti Mizrahi.

The 1980s

Contacts between Israeli artists and the international art world began at the end of the 1970s, as access became easier and more available, but the overriding influences remained local, centered on the complex issues of Israeli identity, gender identity and the political realities at the time. An approach defined as "lack of substance" was emblematic of this period, leaving its mark for many years to come. This theory of aesthetics favored a minimal representational style, and created a link to the art of the 60s and 70s, which embraced native cultural values and artistic expressions of a singular Israeli identity. The salient characteristic of this period was the return to art works drawn from various styles, with an emphasis on color. Feminine awareness grew and found expression in the works of many female artists. Post-modernist art became cold, sleek and refined, leading to the creation of sophisticated installations and objects made of wood.

Artists representative of this period include Moshe Gershuni, David Reeb, Nurit David, Ido Barel, Diti Almog, and Netta Ziv.

The 1990s

This period witnessed the emergence of post-Zionist tendencies, wherein political criticism found expression alongside nationalistic subject matter. Another common expression was the pursuit of aesthetics through the exploration of personal issues, including gender and sexual identity. A pre-occupation with self coincides with a focus on the complex

political realities of occupation, the Lebanese War, and the intifada. Other dramatic events such as the assassination of Rabin, suicidal acts of terrorism, the shifting of governments, revelations of official corruption, the struggle between the religious and secular sectors of society, and conflicts between Oriental and Ashkenazi Jews – all find expression in works of art.

The theoretical and critical debate taking place during this decade also touches on reproductions of images, simulation (simulacrum) and representation of the outsider. The contemporary scene is distinguished by a stylistic pluralism embracing parallel currents. Many artists began to integrate sophisticated images of kitsch, pornography and death as represented in billboard advertisements, video clips and television commercials. The artists whose work appeared during this period include Moshe Nimio, Gil Shani, Tal Mazliah, Doron Solomons, Larry Abramson, Yoav Shmueli, Gilad Ofir, Nir Hod, and Doron Rabina.

The 21st Century

Israeli artistic identity continues to strive for an integration of the expression of one's personal bond with the state and a connection to international trends in art. On a national level, young Israeli artists seek to express critical and anti-establishment views in the aftermath of the second intifada and the second Lebanese War; they have gone as far as drawing an analogy between the assassination of Rabin and the experience of the Holocaust. The regional threat and global terrorism following the events of September 11, 2001, have given rise to a discourse focused on the feelings experienced in living with the continuous threat of war, terror and violence; it has also fostered an attempt to express the difficulty of leading a normal existence under constant threat, while at the same time searching for a sense of security.

The era of globalization, which is characterized by a stream of information cutting across the planet, and the mass culture and communication which invades our lives, has created a new kind of artistic dialogue and a blurring of the local and the universal. New understandings and perceptions of contemporary reality are the result of an abundance of information and visual stimuli, the widespread availability of consumer goods, innovative technology, and scientific discoveries. These innovations have also manifested themselves in changing lifestyles and in the evolving aspirations within Israeli society.

The artists characteristic of this period include Boaz Arad, Sigalit Landau, Michal Rovner, Reut Ferster, Orit Adar-Bahar, Erez Israeli, Yael Bertana, Shai Zurim, and Guy Goldstein.