



JUDAH L.
MAGNES
MUSEUM
EST. 1962

Exhibition: @60.art.israel.world
When: February 19–July 27, 2008
Where: Judah L. Magnes Museum
2911 Russell Street,
Berkeley, CA 94705
510.549.6950
www.magnes.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Berkeley CA— The Magnes presents **@60.art.israel.world**, a survey of recent work by over 20 contemporary Israeli artists, including Barry Frydlender, Ori Gersht, Sigalit Landau, Adi Nes, Michal Rovner, and Yehudit Sasportas. On loan from important private Bay Area collections, the paintings, photographs, and media art in the exhibition demonstrate the progressive and international scope of Israeli art today.

Left: Tal Shochat, *Apple Tree*, 2003, color photograph, private collection, image courtesy of the Andrea Meislin Gallery

May 2008 will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. As part of the international celebration the Magnes has organized **@60.art.israel.world**, an exhibition of work by contemporary Israeli artists, curated by Alla Efimova, Magnes Chief Curator.

The exhibition features the work of over twenty artists of diverse ethnic backgrounds, from Morocco and Iraq to Russia. Some live and work in Israel, others reside in major international art centers such as New York, London, San Francisco, and Berlin. The artists use photography, video, installations, drawings and paintings to express a wide range of opinions and viewpoints; some explore the boundaries between utopias and realities, the old and the new. Others question viewpoints, boundaries, orientations and beliefs; and some present work in which formal aesthetics prevail over content. Most significantly, they all speak to core experiences of their international audience.

The last two decades have been a period of increasing internationalism for many artists. The rapid growth and expansion of national art biennials and commercial art fairs—as well as the increasing reliance on the Web for images and information—have profoundly changed perceptions and categorizations of contemporary artists based on nationality. Nationalism and cultural identity, contested borders, and security are now issues shared by many artists throughout the world, and inform much of contemporary art theory and discourse.

The internationalism of contemporary Israeli art is reflected in the artists' careers and its new appeal to collectors. All the work in the exhibition is on loan from important Bay Area collections. Many of the seasoned contemporary art collectors started acquiring work by Israeli artists only in the last decade. The Magnes is privileged to serve an enlightened, globally-thinking community and grateful to collectors who generously loaned their recent acquisitions to the exhibition.

Among the artists included in the exhibition are **Sigalit Landau**, **Michal Rovner**, and **Yehudit Sasportas**, who have all represented Israel at the Venice Biennale—Landau in 1997, Rovner in 2003, and Sasportas in 2007. Landau, whose ambitious installations and potent images have made her *l'enfant terrible* of contemporary Israeli art, was also included in the 1997 Documenta X, just two years after graduating from the Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem. Landau's "The Country" has been called Israel's *Guernica* by critic Philip Leider, "a work of endless lamentation..." and is among the most well-known works by Israeli artists. Rovner's work in video, film, photography, and installation has been the subject of over forty solo exhibitions including the first for a non-American at the Whitney Museum of American Art (2002). A strategy she uses in her art is re-photographing and processing an image to remove layers of identity and locality, erasing the actual reality to achieve universality. Sasportas has won numerous awards in Israel, Europe and the U.S. for her drawings, paintings and installations. Her work uses landscape and nature in a symbiotic relationship with the human body and emotions. A catalogue of her exhibition at the Berkeley Art Museum (2002), mentioned the artist's allusions to the "noetic, a cosmic consciousness found in the writings of Plato and in Eastern philosophy."

The photographs of **Adi Nes**, and **Barry Frydlender** are well-known in both Israel and the U.S. Exploring issues of identity, politics, and gender, Nes stages images that juxtapose myth with everyday reality in Israel, using the landscape of urban Israel and drawing from art historical compositions. Last year his *Untitled (Last Supper)*, sold at a Sotheby's New York auction, setting a record for the work of a living Israeli artist. Frydlender's large-scale photographs are digitally assembled from dozens of individual shots, taken with a hand-held camera. Clues to the passage of time (such as figures that appear more than once) disclose the artificiality of the image. Ten recent examples of this work, including *The Flood*, were on view at the Museum of Modern Art in 2007.

Paintings and drawings by **Larry Abramson** and **Naomie Kremer** have been seen previously at the Magnes in the Revisions series of collection-based exhibitions. Abramson finds the physicality of painting fundamental to his conceptual practice. The mystical Jewish story about Lilith and her female companions, who seduce men and steal their wasted seed to procreate demons, is the central subject of Abramson's *Eventus Nocturnus* series, included in the exhibition. Biblical sources are also significant in Kremer's drawings, as described by artist and writer Jonathon Keats: "In the beginning, before the first painting, before even the

first drawing, was Genesis. Learned from her father in Hebrew, when she was a young girl in Israel, Genesis was what Naomie Kremer knew first, and, in the beginning of Genesis, there was nothing but *tobu vavobu*—the pure promise of an embryonic universe—not yet woman and man, nor even heaven and earth...”

Artists in the Exhibition

Larry Abramson	Ori Gersht	Nira Pereg
Michal Bachi	Mosh Kashi	Michal Rovner
Tiranit Barzilay	Naomie Kremer	Yehudit Sasportas
Daniel Bauer	Sigalit Landau	Tal Shochat
Avner Ben-Gal	Tamara Massel	Haim Sokol
Barry Frydlender	Adi Nes	Yuval Yairi
Helen and Asnat	Yigal Ozeri	Amon Yariv

Lenders to the Exhibition

Tamar and David Akov	Simcha Moyal, Palo Alto, CA
Daniel and Chava Boyarin	Jay Pidto and Lynne Baer
Jacqueline and Alex Gerson	Katie and Amnon Rodan
Charles and Naomie Kremer	Robert Harshorn Shimshak and Marion Brenner
Bobby and Fran Lent	Gary B. Sokol
Avram Miller	
Modernism Inc.	

@60.art.israel.world is initiated by and made possible with support from the Consulate General of Israel, San Francisco. The exhibition is co-sponsored with the Israel Center, San Francisco. The museum’s educational programming has been made possible through a generous gift from the Isabel Wiel Trust.

ALSO ON VIEW through July 6, 2008: **Revisions/Shahrokh Yadegari: Through Music** Continuing a centuries-old dialogue between Jewish and Islamic musical traditions, guest curator Lawrence Rinder stages a multi-channel sound installation incorporating a new musical composition by Shahrokh Yadegari. Extending the work of Rinder's grandfather, Cantor Reuben R. Rinder (1887–1966), the composition blends singing in Hebrew, Farsi and English with classical Persian and electronic music.

Berkeley’s **Judah L. Magnes Museum** houses the third largest collection of Judaica in the United States. Through innovative educational programs, exhibitions, and publications the Magnes engages with significant issues in contemporary life, promotes public dialogue and scholarship, and encourages understanding of Jewish history for present and future generations. The Magnes also houses the Western Jewish History Center and the Blumenthal Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The Magnes is accredited by the American Association of Museums.

Public Programs in conjunction with @60.art.israel.world

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The Magnes offers artist talks, panel discussions, and salons to complement Magnes exhibitions, as well as docent tours and other activities. Please check the website (www.magnes.org) for information about admissions and reservations for the various programs, or call 510.549.6950 x345.

Sunday, February 17, 2008 2 pm

Lecture by Sarah Breitberg-Semel: *Memory Deficiency in Recent Israeli Art*

Breitberg-Semel is an art historian, the former curator of Israeli art at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and is editor-in-chief of *Studio Art Magazine*.

Sponsored by the Consulate General of Israel, San Francisco

Sunday, April 6, 2008 11-3 pm

Friends and Family Day

Printing and Planting: art-making activities celebrating nature and growth, inspired by images in the exhibition, for children and adults.

Sunday, May 18, 2008 2 pm

Lecture by Michal Gavish: *60 years of Israeli Art*

Gavish is an artist whose work has been shown in Israel and the United States, and is currently a MFA candidate, at San Francisco Art Institute.



Left:
Yehudit Sasportas, *Cosmic Layers*, 2006,
ink on paper, private collection