

Where the boys are

GIL GOLDFINE , THE JERUSALEM POST

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It seems that for too long the vociferous voices of the so-called weaker sex have managed to grab the limelight, complaining that opportunities have not been granted them to the same degree as to their male counterparts. Taking the upper hand in the battle of the sexes, male artists have now been given top billing, and all alone. By relegating the pro-feminist lobby to the back burner and recognizing that there are no men or women artists, just good and bad artists, Tami Katz-Freiman, chief curator at the Haifa Museum of Art, has mounted a riveting display of handiworks created by men who have used a wide range of media and techniques usually associated with women.

BoysCraft is an exhibition that examines labor intensive, handmade, craft-oriented items that cross the creative boundaries traditionally labeled women's work. As students, women were taught to knit, weave, sew, embroider, bead and engage in home economics as a guarantee that their matrimonial vows would be adhered to - or at least be improved upon. Thinking back to the workshop principle that witnessed artists engaging teams to produce their creations, a process that promoted dexterity rather than original art (from Peter Paul Rubens to Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons) or to the late 19th-century Arts and Crafts Movement in England led by John Ruskin and William Morris, one can understand the contemporary revival devoted to the making of high-end, skillfully produced, handcrafted objects, often in multiples.

Katz-Freiman describes these kinds of works as having a unique touch, which adds a tactile dimension to the current clinical world represented in large part by the digital and photographic media. In addition, these works emphasize the individuality of the artist's hand, by and large negating the global art world's demand for some kind of market-oriented conformity.

Fiber art has become a standard medium in the contemporary pantheon of fine arts. In a way it has retrenched itself into a pre-industrialized world where quality of workmanship was coupled with uniqueness of design. The difference between then and now is that silks, brocades and velour have been replaced by inexpensive cloth, remnants and recycled materials. BoysCraft has attracted a good number of artists who use raw fabrics, synthetic cloth, threads and ready-made goods which are amalgamated to create abstract and figuratively decorative three-dimensional works and wall hangings.

Using a stylish zigzag stitch, Ramazan Bayrakoglu (b. Turkey, 1966) has assembled hundreds of small pieces of fabric into a striking image of a large American automobile. Composing his subject from Detroit's favorite marketing vantage point, Bayrakoglu plays on the viewer's consumer ideal and social conscience by inflating

the basics of a popular product into a picture that is at once flashy, sleek and exquisitely manufactured.

It is not until one gets close up to Tim Curtis's (b. California, 1947) untitled hanging sculpture that one realizes the work is a 100-meter-long roped and looped entity braided from 365 neckties he purchased in a Nairobi market. The mélange of warm and cool colors and alluring designs brought together are, as noted by Katz-Freiman, a homage to African artisans who make a living from creatively recycling trash in a labor intensive mode and transforming the rubbish into saleable commodities.

Madame Defarge sat by the guillotine and counted the stitches as heads rolled, a bizarre Dickensian figure that finds a narrative parallel in Gil Yefman's (b. Israel, 1979) knitted dolls. More like fetish objects than a child's playmate, each and every doll can make one quiver with anxiety. Yefman describes them as living in a lonely, dream-like allegorical bubble where things that would never occur in reality take place. Beloved, perverse, humiliated and humiliating creatures stacked and dangling in his cabinet of toys are often without eyes and hands, yet they are playful in a morosely demonic manner.

But fetish figures come in all sizes and shapes. The larger-than-life Soundsuit, a free-standing sculpture of exotic human proportions originally used by Nick Cave (b. Missouri, 1959) for performance art, maintains the conceptual foundation of the exhibition's feminist role in society by being not only labor intensive but by employing a female orientation to the work's fashion design through an assembly of fabrics, beads, embroidery, branches, hair and a weird assortment of additional textures to create a magical presence.

The irrationality associated with mass culture and bewildering consumerism at the high end of society is attacked by Gean Moreno (b. New York, 1973) in *Gardy Loo*, a three-dimensional frame struggling to contain a mélange of pinned and stitched fabrics, found objects and bits and pieces of everything from cheap hairclips to basketball nets. This cacophony of uncontrolled colors and textures, as spelled out in the exhibition catalog, resembles a multi-layered psychedelic bulletin board and topographies of consciousness.

Guy Goldstein (b. Israel, 1974) has used 100 meters of blue thread to embroider a 10-meter running track complete with a score of men sprinting towards a finish line. His threaded drawings, despite their attempt to maintain accuracy of gesture, are too often confused by the medium and its inability to preserve anatomical correctness.

The delicacy and softness of Goldstein's display is challenged by Gal Weinstein's (b. Israel, 1970) frilly lace design carved into the hard surface of a plastic plumbing column. Standing alone from floor to ceiling Weinstein's erect ode to lingerie also smacks of phallic symbolism. The skills essential to produce craft items historically perceived as women's work have been extended beyond the framework of knitting, sewing, quilting and embroidery to include a male track of carving and constructing.

Two artists stand out in this field: Haimi Fenichel (b. Israel, 1972) and Guy Zagursky (b. Israel, 1972). The former exhibits *Homebox*, a group of miniature houses assembled from lacy thin walls, shutters and a selection of details from sun heaters to

drainpipes, all meticulously carved from gray construction brick. The relationship of Fenichel's buildings to craft is much more obvious than it is to women's work. But in his second piece, *Passive Aggressive*, an astoundingly beautiful rose, also carved from the gray brick with exacting detail to the truth of the flower, he resurrects the feminine ethos.

Zagursky, on the other hand, has undertaken a Herculean task, not female oriented at all either subject-wise or media-wise. Katz-Freiman has included his work because of the woodcarving craft and his commitment to his art. *Fat Boy, the King is Dead*, is a wooden facsimile of the famous Harley Davidson motorcycle, an American icon symbolizing freedom, consumerism and the great push westward. But as an allegory, Zagursky's carving sends a message - this static, unfinished sculpture alludes to the questionable status of the US as a free country and its hyped consumer society, not to mention that *Fat Boy* was the Manhattan Project's forerunner of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end World War II.

When used ceremoniously the mask becomes infused with primitive magical powers and an extension of the shaman, Venetian countess or child at play. When created purely as grotesque faces, like those by Stephan Goldrajch (b. Israel, 1985) who uses a crochet technique with wool, pearls, yarn and ribbons, they become something else entirely: sinister personas that let one escape from reality into a fantasy world of irresponsible deeds.

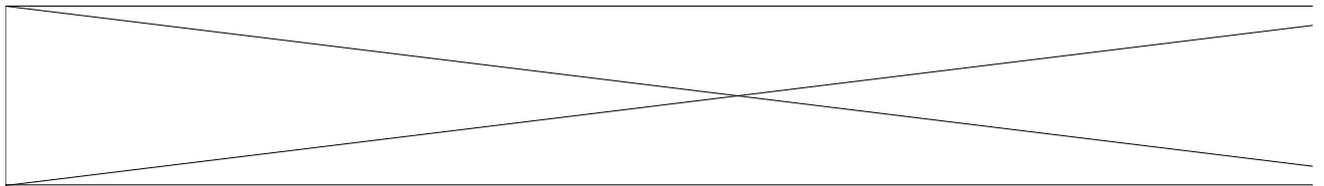
Using the *karigami* technique developed in Asia, Tom Gallant has created an amazing set of colorful paper cuts from the slick pages of porno magazines. Culled from a series, *The Collector II: Chrysanthemum*, in addition to honoring the decorative panels of the Victorian William Morris, relates to *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a novel by the 19th-century feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman. The book tells the story of a woman, stuck in an impossible marriage, who sees her domestic wallpaper as a place of refuge and acts as metaphor for 19th century bourgeois mores. Gallant's protagonists from the demimonde are also locked away among the violent frills and arabesques of his intricate cuttings, sending a message, to quote Katz-Freiman, of society's pathological conception of female sexuality and objectification of the female body.

Bizarre, tasteless yet quite amusing is Kristian Kozul's (b. Germany, 1975) *Wheelchair I* and its associate, *Crutch*. Ultra-baroque in its garishness, Kozul lavishes upon the surface of the wheelchair a myriad of beads, mirrors and rhinestones then sets them down on a bed of rotating fluffy white feathers. It's impossible to slot Kozul's work into any craft idiom, and as art its perverse Dionysian attributes sketch a boundary between kitsch and taste, appeal and revulsion.

Other strange and curious works among the 40 displays are Ron Aloni's (b. Israel, 1950) monumental pillows made from iron wire; a wall hanging by El Anatsui (b. Ghana, 1944) entitled *Another Man's Cloth* is composed from pure rubbish; a pair of stunning coats knitted from silver coated mylar strips by Oliver Herring (b. Germany, 1964); *One Who Almost Looks Like a Woman*, an installation by Nicholas Hlobo (b. Cape Town, 1975); *The Architect: Order Against the Dangers of Nature*, ersatz wall hangings painted in oils by Roe Rosen (b. Israel, 1963) and *Decay and Splendor, After Raphael*, a sumptuous installation in which Tomás Rivas (b. Chile, 1975), by

etching and carving decorative elements into drywall, unites classical architectural styles and proportions from The School of Athens within a niche on the second floor of the Haifa Museum of Art.

BoysCraft, accompanied by an incisive English-Hebrew catalog, is quite an exhibition and worth viewing. (Haifa Museum of Art, Rehov Shabtai Levi 26, Haifa). Until February 23.



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תזונה

"אנשים שמכורים אותי לא מבינים איך יצא ממני אמן ולא נהג משאתי", מתחזה
גיא זמורסקי, שמציג תערוכה בנושא תענועי ראווה

רונן של

כי שפוגש בן. "כל חיי הייתי איש נראה חזק", הוא אומר
ממעט בהתמצלות. "הייתי ילד יותר גדול מכולם, התאמץ
נהי בחמירה, בהרמת משקולות, והייתי בנבחרת ישראל
בהודות ידיים. אני נראה מאיים, אבל אני הכי חנון בעיר
לם. כשרוורכים לי על הרגל אני מבקש סליחה".

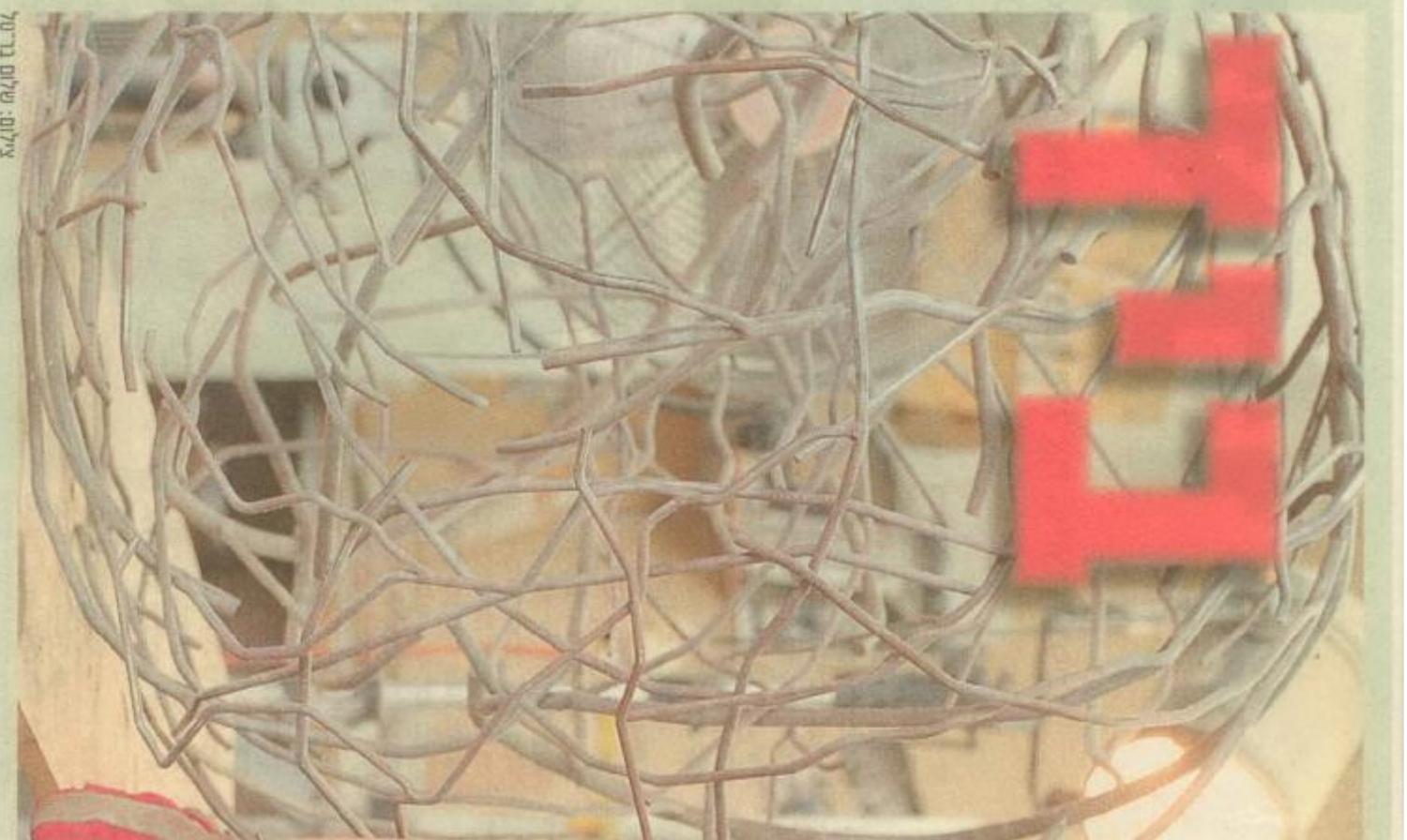
לפני שהפך לאמן תל אביב, שמועט באמן חופשי
מבודח ומשוקן, התפרנס זמורסקי כהשמלאל, נפח, נגן
מתקין דקים ומרכיב הממות לסחלים. "תמיד ציידתי ורי"
שמת, אבל בבית שלי לא הייתה לגיטימציה לציור במקי
צד ולא ידעתי שאפשר לעשות עם זה משהו. עד שהגעתי
למודשה בבית ברל והשתגעו לי החיים".

בתערוכה במוזיאון חיפה, שעוסקת בתענועי ראווה
כאמנות, מציג זמורסקי "באר" שמקפלת – בעזרת מראות
ונוריות – עומק אנומפי, עד כדי כך שהיא גורמת למי
שנסמטל לתמונה תחושה של וריטיגו. בתערוכה בוזמר הוא
יעמוד שלדים של צב. ענק השרדעים על גבם, לצד תוכה
מלאה בחול, שמי שיסתכל לתוכה ידאה מורב בלתי נסי'
תיים. את הכות שלי הוא רוחה לכיסוף כדורים והלחמה,
אבל פה ושם, הוא מודח, אנשים עדיין קצת פחדים ממנו
"ספריאופיית יש בעיר עם מישהו שמרבה על אמנות נח'
ראה כמו ג'אמס שיכול לדפוח אותה. אנשים שהפידו אותי
פעם לא מבינים איך יצא ממני אמן ולא נהג משאתי. הרי
הרבה סיפורים שאהיה נהג משאתי כי אני אותה משאות
ומנפס ודברים גדולים. אני גם אותה נשים שמנות, אבל
ברא שאפסיק כאן לפני שאשתי תרצה אותי".

בכניסה לסטודיו של גיא זמורסקי רוכז קרנף פיבר'
גלם שחור. הוא לא נראה מאיים או אלים במיוחד, יותר
כמו מי שמנסה לתפוס תנוחה. זמורסקי (34) נהר בקרנף
זהה ברייבו מושלם לו עצמו. "הייתי בספארי קצת הקרתי
את הנושא וגיליתי שהקרנף הוא חיה פחדנית", הוא אומר.
"אתה חזק סיגריה, ועדי של קרנפים מתחיל לברוח. עם
כל המאסה האירדה שלו, הקרנף הוא נוגה, מעורר חמוס.
בשכונה שלי אני הייתי טיז קרנף, גדול יותר מכולם ומס'
חיה. כאילו לא פגעי בגלל זה בחרתי בו לעבודה הראשונה
המשמעותית שלי".

זמורסקי כבר לא מפתח, אבל הוא בין האמנים הכי חדי
קים פיזית והכי מנדודלים שתזכו לפגוש. הכוח הנפשי של
זמורסקי שיימש לו בנושא למיצ שהעלה בפסטיבל האמנות
"ארט באר" לפני כשנה. "יצרתי תענועי שקפרא 'האמן הכי
חזק בעולם'. הזנבתי שולחו לחדרת ידיים, ויחד עם הגלריה
הכרתי על קמפיין שנועד לבדוק מיהו האמן החזק בעולם.
נסעתי בלי הרבה תמורה, אבל אנשים נכנסו לתפקיד וכא
לתחרות. הם לגמרי האמינו שאם ויידו אותי, הם יזכו
בתחרות. אפילו חילקנו חולצות. במסך כמה שעות הודדתי
ידיים מיל 60 מתמודדים – מבקרי אמנות, אננים, בעלי
גלריות. בשלב מסוים נכנסתי לאמניצייה האמרת לעצמי.
אסיר לי לתפקיד'. בסוף ניצחתי את כולם".

המקור לאוטוביסיה של זמורסקי עם כוח פיזי ברור לכל



צילום: שלום ברנדל

GUY ZAGURSKY

Guy Zagursky's works have a prominent experiential and sensory dimension. In *Step by Step*, the viewer enters a darkened space, where he is confronted by a visionary image – a circular structure resembling an infinite well of light, whose walls bear a circular inscription composed of red neon letters: "step by step by..." The inscription invites the viewer to walk around the infinite well and to experience the meaningless nature of the eternal circle. Zagursky frequently employs visual illusions and optical deceptions as artistic strategies. Yet in contrast to other artists who use lighting and optics, it seems that Zagursky's interest exceeds the creation of a spectacular vision or form of optical deception accompanied by sheer amazement.

Embedded in this work, as in other works by Zagursky, is a profound meditation on the meaning of beauty and on its relation to the ephemeral nature of time – a meditation that also addresses the surreal, incomprehensible dimension of infinity. Within this grandiose baroque setting, the artist comments on the absurdity of existence: "Due to the fact that we cannot comprehend infinity, we naturally tend to perceive fragments of time, to isolate objects and to endow them with importance," Zagursky says. "I would like to think of myself as the producer of postmodern vanitas images; to investigate the great power games that

unfold in opposition to, or in relation to, one another – while man is caught in their midst, engaged in his Sisyphean struggles and his grotesque aspirations for power and eternity."



2006, *Step by Step*
Guy Zagursky



Guy Zagursky, *Fat Boy, the King is Dead*, 2007 (detail)
(לווי) 2007 תרן לרנן ,ניב וקצב ,י'רז'ר'ר'ר ר'ר'

By engaging in the slow, exhausting and labor-intensive process of hollowing out and carving a massive wooden block, Guy Zagursky created a monumental Harley Davidson Fat Boy. Using sculpting tools and knives, without any mechanical assistance, Zagursky spent long months peeling away excess layers, until the form emerged out of the wood. For motorcycle aficionadoes, the prestigious Harley is located in a class of its own. The FAT BOY – one of this brand's sturdiest and strongest models – is a symbol of masculinity, strength, freedom ("Easy Rider"), wide-open expanses, an anti-establishment attitude and a connection to nature. Ever since the 1960s, it has been part of the mythology of Western consumer society. Zagursky, who was drawn to its Romantic symbolism, points the viewer towards the work's allegorical meaning – as he has similarly done in earlier works.

According to him, "Like the masters who scripted Greek mythology in marble, I wanted to carve one of the symbols of American mythology." Indeed, the name of this work – *Fat Boy, the King is Dead* – relates to the status of the U.S. as a "free country," and to American consumer culture; it also alludes to the name of one of the atom bombs that vanquished Japan during the Second World War. Inspired by Michelangelo's classical sculptures and by African woodcarving traditions, Zagursky continues to examine themes of power, competition and struggle ("This is how I imagine a carver in Zanzibar or Kenya describing the totem of the God of War.") His choice of wood, meanwhile, transforms the motorcycle into a kind of ancient totem and endows it with the character of a mythological or legendary figure – as if it were a secular vanitas image.



Guy Zagursky, *Fat Boy, the King is Dead*, 2007
(ל'ר'ר'ר'ר ר'ר'ר'ר) 2007 ,ת'רן ל'רנן ,ר'ב