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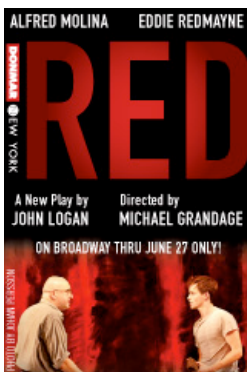
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SCENE & HERD

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- Steven Cairns around the Glasgow International Festival
- Michael Wilson at Seven on Seven at the New Museum
- Michael Bilsborough at Art Production Fund's Benefit at The Standard
- Cathryn Drake at a Damien Hirst opening in Venice
- Michael Wilson at a preview of Bravo's *Work of Art*
- Lauren O'Neill-Butler around IHME Days in Helsinki



NEWS | PICKS | FILM

Newest Headlines

- LA's Natural History Museum Plans \$30 Million Wilderness Garden
- Fresno Metropolitan Museum Can't Sell Six Ansel Adams Photos
- Jack Tilton Testifies in *Robins v. Zwirner*
- Nikolaus Hirsch to Take Over for Daniel Birnbaum at Frankfurt's Städel Schule "Degenerate Art"
- Database Shows 21,000 Works Seized by Nazis
- FIFA World Cup 2010 Enlists Seventeen Artists for Posters
- Gioni Announces Eighth Gwangju Biennial's Artists and Exhibits
- Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona

Show and Tel

TEL AVIV 10.05.08



Left: Art TLV curator Andrew Renton. Right: Walker curator Peter Eleey, MIT List curator Bill Arning, Whitney curator Shamim Momin, and consultant Maureen Sullivan. (All photos: Cathryn Drake)

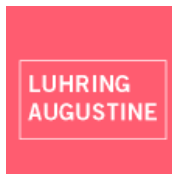
In Israel especially, politics are never far from one's mind. The day before I arrived in Tel Aviv for the first edition of the citywide art exhibition Art TLV, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert resigned in the face of corruption charges. He punctuated his exit with a radical message, characterizing the aggressive Israeli defense strategy as shortsighted and arguing that a withdrawal from the West Bank and East Jerusalem was the only way to peace. "The time has come to say these things," he said in an interview for the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah. "We are a country that has lost a sense of proportion about itself."

That first evening, the Monday before last, at a dinner party hosted by Rivka Saker—managing director of Sotheby's Israel and founder of the nonprofit Artis, organizer of Art TLV—I heard a riveting talk by Ron Pundak, who briefly recounted the history of Israel and his inspiring activities as head of the Peres Center for Peace. "We all want peace," he said. "It is the leaders who need to come around to the idea that a strong neighbor is beneficial for everyone." The terrace, where dinner was served to mostly American guests, featured a stunning panoramic view of the city lights. Curators Bill Arning, Peter Eleey, Shamim Momin, and Manon Slome; Contemporary Jewish Museum director Connie Wolf; and Milanese dealer Francesca Kaufmann were in attendance, as was Ethan Bronner, the *New York Times* Jerusalem bureau chief.

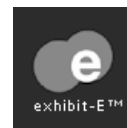


Left: Artist Anish Kapoor, Susan Kapoor, and dealer Irit Sommer. Right: Mayor Ron Holdai and Eyal de Leeuw.

In addition to Tel Aviv's recent designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (for its profusion of decaying Bauhaus architecture), next year the city will celebrate its centennial; roughly set to coincide with these events, this fledgling international contemporary-art exhibition is slated to become a biennial linked to the fall biennials in Athens and Istanbul. Curated by Andrew Renton, the main exhibition at the Helena Rubenstein Pavilion, titled "Open Plan Living," was a statement on modern life featuring an impressive roster of international artists. As we arrived, I spotted the casually dressed mayor, Ron Huldai, rushing out the door. "You're the mayor!" I said, to which he replied, "At least this week!" Ulrich Strothjohann's corridor-shaped box, featuring a mirror on which had been scrawled SICK OF GOOD BUYS, cleverly punned on the 1978 photo by Robert Frank. Kathy Temin's giant dollhouse, *My House*,



links



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was a self-portrait replete with a pink room dedicated to Kylie Minogue surrounded by furry, fantastic Dr. Seuss trees. Rosemarie Trockel and Thea Djordjadze's dummy *Limitation of Life* depicted the cumulative effects of our lifestyle. Afterward, there was a party in the adjacent Yaacob garden with Jennifer West's psychedelic *Rainbow Party* projected on the pavilion's exterior wall.

The next day, I set off for the inauguration of Mekomon, an open-air events space set in a gutted apartment building on Rothschild Boulevard, an area flush with modernist buildings in the midst of gentrification. After the official proceedings, I took a walk down the leafy avenue with Eyal de Leeuw, former Israeli cultural attaché to the Netherlands; he told me he had just returned to Israel to find the country full of excitement after the difficult period during the 2006 war with Lebanon: "There is an electricity in the air now." He explained that the only thing to do after a bomb goes off is to clean up—and party: "They call Tel Aviv the bubble between Gaza and Jerusalem. But it is a small country, so everything that happens affects everyone."



Left: Connie Wolf, director of the Contemporary Jewish Museum; Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson, director and chief curator of the Aspen Art Museum; and curator Dalia Levine. Right: Artist Kathy Temin.

A whirlwind tour of Jerusalem's Old City followed: We visited the Wailing Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Shrine of the Book (which hosts the Dead Sea Scrolls, contained in a spaceshiplike capsule that can descend into a vault in the event of an attack). At noon, we were bombarded by a cacophony of church bells and calls to prayer emanating from the loudspeakers of the muezzin. Finally, at the Israel Museum, we took refuge in the nondenominational spiritual respite of James Turrell's sky room.

That evening, the Jerusalem Foundation's Art Focus opened "Can Art Do More?," an exhibition on the periphery of the city at the Banit Center. A headache-inducing sound piece greeted us as we entered the enormous open space, but the rest of the exhibition was a wondrous display of nicely paced installations. Some of us were mesmerized by Nira Pereg's video *Sabbath*, a simple statement on the irony of divisions in the service of religion featuring a repetitive slapstick rendition of Orthodox men and boys dragging barriers across streets to block off their neighborhood on the eve of Shabbat. The opposite side of the space featured another darkly humorous take on walls and divisions: Rona Yefman's *Pippi Longstocking, the Strongest Girl in the World, at Abu Dis*, in which a dolled-up Pippi with red braids sticking straight out tries fruitlessly to move aside a panel of the wall with her bare hands, while sympathetic Palestinian passersby attempt either to help or to advise her. Another big hit was Joe Scanlan's *DIY Dead on Arrival (Ann Lee)*, a do-it-yourself casket and two flower stands assembled from IKEA components.

Not unsurprisingly, borders, divisions, and barriers were the thematic underpinning to nearly every one of the exhibitions I visited. These tropes were particularly salient in "Panoramic Landscapes," at the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art. There, Ron Amir's series of photographs *Jisr-Caesarea* depicted a barrier erected by residents of a wealthy town at its boundary with the adjacent poor Arab village. In the courtyard was Santiago Sierra's *Arrangement of Twelve Prefabricated Parapets*, a simple cement installation that demonstrates the impossibility of dividing territory.



Left: A performance at "Can Art Do More?" Right: Artists Rudi Sele and Adrian Paci.



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At street level, one could sense a feeling of optimism, with talk of the foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, becoming the second female prime minister of Israel (after Golda Meir). On Thursday in Tel Aviv, Paul McCartney performed his first concert in Israel. When he started to sing “Give Peace a Chance,” the crowd of forty thousand cheered and joined in. That evening, as we toured the art interventions in Neve Tzedek, the first Jewish neighborhood built outside of Jaffa, Beatles songs emanated from people’s homes. In a kindergarten classroom, artist Elyasaf Kowner played guitar and sang in front of his video projection *Facing the Wishes*, in which children’s faces were juxtaposed with their spoken desires, such as “That there would be no more wars,” “That everyone would be satisfied from what they have,” and “That all the family would be healthy and have livelihood and that’s it.”

If anachronistic, there was also something comforting about the retro-counterculture vibe. On Friday evening at sunset, I wandered down to the Mediterranean seafront and followed drumbeats to the abandoned Dolphinarium disco, site of the 2001 suicide bombing that killed twenty-one people. As I stood watching the drummers and free-form dancers, a young man named Judah turned and handed me a joint. That, combined with the sound of sea spray washing off the rocks, brought a sense of universal calm.

— Cathryn Drake



Left: Artist Elyasaf Kowner. Right: Curator Manon Slome, Artis founder Rivka Saker, curator Ellen Ginton, and artist Itzhak Livneh.

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