

In Conversation: Dor Zlekha Levy

By Leonardo Berenstein



“Umbra”, Dor Zlekha Levy photo by Hila Ido

It's Tuesday, 6:00 PM—with glass of water by my side, I am about to interview Dor Zlekha Levy. Dor Zlekha Levy is a multidisciplinary-artist, working mostly in multimedia, sound, and installation format. His works are exhibited in Israel and abroad. He has held solo exhibitions at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Braverman Gallery, among others, and was granted awards from the Israel Ministry of Culture, The European Cultural Foundation (Amsterdam), the Hetch Foundation (Haifa), to name a few. Levy's art revives forgotten Eastern Jewish traditions giving them a very modern, youthful and experimental personality. With his creations, image and sound take the same primary roll, making no distinction between them, creating a unique and unforgettable experience.

CAIJ: Shalom, Dor, your work is mostly based on Jewish-Arabic imagery and themes, where did the interest for this topic come from ?

Dor Zlekha Levy: *Apart from my own personal and familiar connection with the Jewish-Arabic world, I find the Jewish history in Arab countries still relevant in today's reality. Through a modern re-examination of these traditions, I find a starting point for a discussion that will question the accepted dichotomous division between Jews and Arabs, and embodies within it the possibility of sharing our lives together.*

CAIJ: I feel obliged to ask, as your work deals with this themes, your own opinion in the Israel-Palestine conflict, and if, and how, do you think art can be a tool for social change?

I would like to believe that art has the power to influence political and social realities. However, I feel that in the last couple of years these worlds become more and more extreme, and because of growing fears, walls are being built around us as artists. It is difficult, for me, to believe that art by itself can tear down these walls. And yet, I believe in our attempts as artists to find the places where these walls are cracked, on both sides, and I attempt to widen it in the hope that more and more light can enter through them.



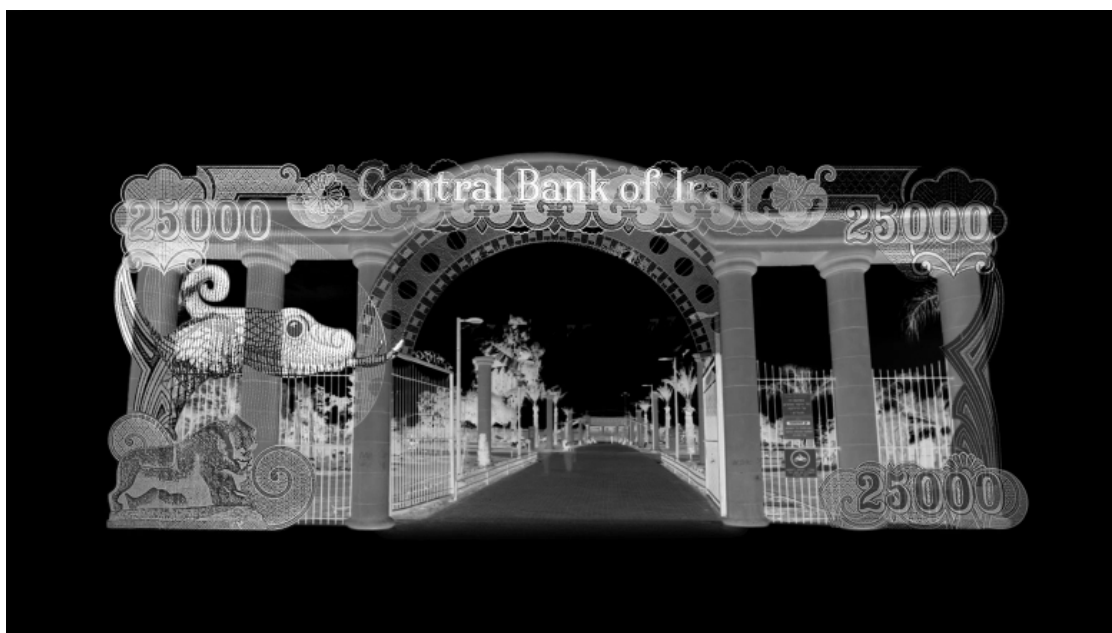
“Maqamat”, Dor Zlekha Levy photo by Hila Ido

CAIJ: Tell me about your beginnings as an artist ?

DZL: *Art was always with me. I started painting and drawing when I was young, I continued making art in the public sphere, and while I was studying I focused on video and new media. After my finishing project in Ha'Midrasha, I searched for opportunities to continue and to grow. The display of my work required very expensive technical equipment, and due to that I didn't have access to the relevant spaces or tools that I needed, I created temporary works for festivals and even productions that lasted for only one evening (for example : Songs of the Next War, Bad Seeds of Summer). At the same time, I was invited to develop and present a new work (Umbra), as part of the exhibition “Zoom 2016”, held at the Ticho House. Both my personal work and the museum opportunities, generated connections that later on, gave me the chance to present more projects in very important spaces in Israel and abroad.*

CAIJ: What influences you to start working on a new project ?

DZL: *Most of the time, the trigger for my work will be some sort of audio or visual material that already exists, and I find it interesting to sample, rediscover and represent these in my own creations. Some works start by finding a place whose qualities adapt to them. And also a voluntary collaboration with colleagues, usually from the music field.*



Still from “Maqamat”, Dor Zlekha Levy

CAIJ: Tell me about your workflow, what comes first? The image or the sound ?

DZL: *There are no rules. My challenge, and the challenge of the musicians that work with me, is to adapt the work process each time anew. In any case, our work process undermines the concept that soundtrack is part of the process that accompanies the film, post-production, and makes it a constitutive part of the work. One project that I'm very proud of is called Magamat, that both, the musician Aviad Zinemanas, and me, created for the series "Compositions For Timespace", at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Here we share the creative credits: from film direction to musical production. I learn a lot from other colleagues, too: Omer Schonberger, Ofer Tisser, Yuval Shenhar, Uri Wertheim and others.*

CAIJ: Would you like to tell us about your experience presenting your art abroad? Do you notice a difference between the art scene in Israel and outside Israel ?

DZL: *I always worked from a starting point that is very strongly rooted in the language, culture and the context of this country (Israel). The encounter between the audience and the context abroad is new and refreshing, and I feel that there is much more to experience and discover. In any case, I am glad that my work has the possibility to travel without me, and is less bound by the limitations of my passport or my origin.*



"Even", Dor Zlheka Levy, image from [website](#).

CAIJ: Apart from your work as an artist, you also work as an educator, will you tell us a bit about that ?

DZL: *Working as an educator is a privilege and a great challenge that I have been committed to for more than ten years. I try to integrate tools from the art and technological worlds in my work with children at risk and children with special needs.*

See more of Dor's work at www.dorlevy.com, and check out the artist's ongoing online exhibition at: even.jerusalemplimpsest.com.

About the author: Leonardo Berenstein is a self-taught photographer, abstract artist, and poetry writer. Instagram: [@abstract.wergh](#).