

Israel Museum celebrates a decade of supporting local artists collection

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By ILANIT CHERNICK FEBRUARY 7, 2020 00:10



EILAT CARMİ and Merav Hyman, Israel Trail: The Parade, 2018, multichannel video installation.
(photo credit: ILAN SHARIF)

It's been 10 years since a group of art enthusiasts from Israel gathered together to support the [Israel Museum](#) (IM) with a focus on Israeli art, and they are celebrating a decade of activity.

Since its inception in 2010, the group, known as "Here, Now," has made a record acquisition of 151 works by 89 artists for the total sum of NIS 7 million.

This includes several insightful and interesting works by emerging artists, as well as pieces from renowned artists, which have enhanced the museum's collection of local art.

Their purchases include pieces from Ilit Azoulay, Maya Zack, Nevet Yitzhak, Ido Michaeli, Dor Zlekha Levy, Nirit Nekla, Fatma Shanan, Noa Yaffe, Hadassa Goldvicht and Yonatan Tsofi.

Opening later this month, some of the works will be on display at the Israel Museum as part of the *Shutters and Stairs: Elements of Modern Architecture in Contemporary Art* exhibition.

The IM explained that "its collections are an endless source for curatorial ideas and creativity."

According to the IM's statement, curator Aya Miron has identified "an intriguing phenomenon in recent acquisitions: artists focusing not on whole architectural structures or even fragments of a structure, but rather on isolated elements of architecture, such as the floor, stairs, a wall or a window," which inspired the name behind the new exhibition.

Shutters and Stairs: Elements of Modern Architecture in Contemporary Art features works by acclaimed artists such as Ariel Schlesinger, Noa Yaffe, Jonathan Zofy and Hadar Saifan, which are among the works acquired by the "Here, Now" group.

The art exhibition's description points out that each work presents "an encounter with a different element, offering an opportunity to examine the small details that normally evade us, as well as the conceptual shifts involved in the transition of an object into a work of art." It added that although many of the artists featured in the exhibition "often use photography to dissect their reality or installation to immerse the viewer in new surroundings, here they focus on a solitary elements selected from the vast incomprehensible space of life."

The exhibition is also set to be accompanied by a bilingual catalogue featuring 30 color plates and an essay by Miron.

For Dr. Amitai Mendelsohn, the senior curator of Israeli art at the Israel Museum, every artwork purchased for the museum's art collection "is very significant.

"Here, it takes on a new and unexpected life," he told *In Jerusalem*. "It can be exhibited immediately or in the future, participate in various group

exhibitions or, as was the case with Gilad Efrat's exhibition, be a part of the solo exhibition of an artist whose work was purchased some years ago."

Mendelsohn explained that they "acquire works by emerging young artists, by established artists, as well as by historical masters of Israeli art and non-collected artists.

"The works become a part of the museum's family and receive the best home possible in the present and future – for display and research, for the benefit of the general public, scholars, and the generations of art lovers to come," he said. "Together, they comprise the museum's heart and help preserve its place as a cornerstone of local and international art and culture."

Asked about the process of how art works are chosen, Mendelsohn said that there are 35 or so members of the "Here, Now" group, who are all part of the Israeli Friends of the Israel Museum (IFIM) that formed the group in order to help the Israel Museum "acquire works by Israeli artists."

"We needed more funds in order to buy new works of art to add to our collection and most of the money that we use to acquire Israeli art works comes from them ['Here, Now']."

He said that the museum's professional curatorial staff "is constantly meeting with artists and looking at galleries and exhibitions around the country.

"What we do, twice a year, we bring in about six or seven works to each meeting with 'Here, Now' committee and these are works we choose from various different media and ages of artists," Mendelsohn continued. "A shortlist is then made of about say 20 works, or 12 or so – each year it's a little bit different, and the curators propose the artworks of the artists that they chose and the 'Here, Now' group then votes [on it]."

He made it clear that not all the works can get in because there are limited funds, "but the way it works is there is a voting session at the end of the year, around the end of June after we've done the two different presentations of the works during the year."

During the voting session, the group members vote according to their personal preference of the works.

"All the works that we propose are good and we want them, but not all of them can get in because we only have a certain amount of money," Mendelsohn said, adding that this way the "Here, Now" group gets to give their opinion.

In November, a special celebration marking the 10-year anniversary of the establishment of "Here, Now" was also held.

He said that every work that joins the collection "... will either be displayed immediately or in future, and will have a life some way or another in our museum plans.

"Every piece that gets in is like a newcomer to our permanent hotel," Mendelsohn added.

FOR ONE of the artists, Shanan, whose work was bought in 2016 by the "Here, Now" group, "one important aspect implemented by the Israel Museum is the presentation of the works it acquires in its temporary and/or permanent exhibitions.

"This is of the utmost importance, as it gives an artwork life beyond the studio's boundaries, through the acquisition, and beyond the boundaries of the museum's storage, through its exposure to the general public," she told *In Jerusalem*. "Exhibiting a work provides local and international exposure; this leads to progress in the international field through the local one."

Leah Rothstein, the director of IM's Society of Friends and of the group "Here, Now," told *In Jerusalem* that they "had a dual goal in mind: Supporting the artists, especially those just beginning their careers; and enriching the Museum's collection of Israeli art, and through that – enabling the Israeli public to experience a wide range of outstanding artistic creation," she said.

The group's distinguished members include Gil Brandes, chairman of the IM's IFIM, as well as Rivka Saker, Gideon and Hani Hamburger, Hanna Pri-Zan, Philippe J. Weil, Ruth Cheshin and others.

In 2019 alone, "Here, Now" purchased 24 artworks. These include Aya Ben Ron's 2017 video work *No Body*, previously exhibited at the [Venice Biennale](#) as part of the X Field Hospital project; Eli Petel's now-iconic *Negative Portrait*, addressing the representation of Sephardi Jewish identity; and the monumental video installation by Meirav Heiman and Ayelet Carmi, *The Israel Trail: Procession*, a spectacular parade of people traversing the Israel Trail without touching the ground, which evokes questions of place, belonging and displacement.

Prof. Ido Bruno, director of the IM, told *In Jerusalem* that "Here, Now" represents a "unique partnership between the Israel Museum and Israeli philanthropists, which has greatly enriched both sides."

He explained that through an innovative model developed at the IM, "art lovers gain insight and knowledge into the Israeli art world, and make a significant contribution to the IM's art collections.

"I am proud of our Israeli supporters for their achievements over the past decade, and look forward to many more rewarding years," he concluded.

The *Shutters and Stairs: Elements of Modern Architecture in Contemporary Art* exhibition opens on February 21 at the Ayala Zacks Abramov Pavilion for Israeli Art, The Israel Museum.

The exhibition will run until October 3.