



Beyond Likeness

Portraits in the Noa and Uzi Agassi Collection

October – December 2014

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The Noa and Uzi Agassi Collection

The Noa and Uzi Agassi art collection is the third in a series of exhibitions held in the Art Gallery of the Open University of Israel. The exhibitions are dedicated to a display of various schools of Israeli art that, in general, do not conform to the discourse of the Israeli art field as presented in Israel's main museums. The current display, comprised of exemplary works from the Agassi collection, was selected in cooperation with the collector and mirrors his personal taste and his choice of artistic styles.

Works from the Noa and Uzi Agassi's collection hang on the walls of his house, practically from top to bottom. Shelves, scattered around the house, display sculptures, window sills are covered with antique tapestries. Every room of the house bursts with old, rare books and even the marble kitchen counter acts as a small display for art objects of all kinds.

Uzi Agassi began his collection when he was a soldier in the Israeli army. He used to frequent art galleries in Tel Aviv. His first acquisition was a drawing by Israeli artist Jean David, presented as a gift to his wife in honor of the birth of their first son. From then on Agassi began 'courting' drawings and paintings, as he calls his approach. His frequent visits to galleries proved to him that artworks can be acquired for reasonable prices; after a visit to a certain gallery, he would wait for its closing and then would purchase the works he liked. At a later stage he encountered Baruch Becher, an Israeli art collector, who used to purchase his works straight from the artists; Agassi followed suit.

Next to his collecting activities, Agassi studied at the State Art Teachers' College with Yair Garbuz and Raffi Lavi. In 1978 he began his studies at Tel Aviv University, focusing on chemistry and biology. Due to an illness, he then changed course; after completing his first degree in the Exact Sciences he also completed his BA and a master's degree in Modern Art. During his studies he worked with Mordechai Omer at the Tel Aviv University Art Gallery. Together with his academic studies, Agassi worked as a printmaker with Rita Alima (silkscreen) and Dan Klinger (drypoint and etching).

His interest in Jewish and Israeli art aroused his curiosity for literature dedicated to these subjects. Consequently he began purchasing books on Israeli and Jewish artists – monographs and catalogs. In his search for such books he visited antique bookstores where he would find artists' books that, in most cases, contained original prints.

After many years dedicated to building his collection, Agassi felt that his love for art books could be re-directed into the establishment of a unique, high-quality publishing house. His initiative 'cured' him of his collecting urge. In 1994 he founded the *Even Hoshen* publishing house which publishes artists' books, poetry books and translations into Hebrew of works of classical literature. All his publications are lavish, illustrated editions, some of which are numbered and signed by their authors.

Every encounter between a collector and a gallery owner (or manager of an art auction) is characterized by a fascinating, hidden competition. The winner of such competitions is the one with a deeper, vaster knowledge of the local art field. Relying on his acquired knowledge of Israeli art, Agassi won these competitions more than once; he would notice a 'find', a rare work, highly valued financially and would immediately add it to his collection. His choice of artworks is made consciously, based on his profound knowledge as well as on his personal taste. His collection is comprised of, among others, illustrated books and drypoint prints by William Blake (1757-1827) and other 18th century British printmakers.

A major part of Agassi's collection consists of *portraits* by Jewish and Israeli artists; the current exhibition focuses on these. The public would be exposed to the facial features of familiar – and unfamiliar – men of renown in Jewish and Israeli culture, both of this century and the previous one.

Portraits and Self Portraits The portrait is a widespread genre in art because of its way of unifying the revealed and the concealed. The art of portraiture represents a human attempt to preserve what it is actually impossible to preserve. Portraiture annuls our transience and becomes a despairing denial of the acknowledgement of man's end. It is no wonder that portraits have become the most appreciated way of commemoration.

Serious and skilled portraitists convey not only their models' physical likeness, but also their spiritual nature. In other words, they convey to us a psychological documentation of the models. Scholar Ernst Gombrich discussed this complex undertaking by explaining how artists have dealt with the two components of their models– formal likeness and spiritual essence. In his discussion he uses two terms: 'Face' and 'Mask'. Face alludes to the physiognomic likeness, to the total sum of individual facial features that allow us to identify a certain person and distinguish him or her from others. Gombrich's Mask refers to the personality elements of the model or to his/her image as seen by others. The scholar claims that in most cases we tend to create our personal image on the basis of other people's expectations. This influence is so strong that we find ourselves bound to acquire a 'mask'. We grow into the type until it shapes the pattern of our behavior; it is expressed in visual terms such as our unique facial expressions or our individual way of walking. The Face is a static term, the Mask is dynamic and involves motion. Every portraitist is faced with the issue of how to combine the two in order to create an image containing a summation of many images.¹

We expect a professional portrait not to show its model in the situation in which he/she was seen by the portraitists in their studios. Indeed, while gazing at a perfect portrait we wish to dispose of our prior knowledge of the sitting process in the artist's studio and want to find in the portrait something that presents the models to us as they react to situations in reality and not to the artificial state in which they served as models for the artist.

In 1997 Uzi Agassi published *Four Hours Top, Jan Rauchwerger, Portraits in Poetry and Painting*. The book comprises poems by Israeli poets accompanied by reproductions of their portraits, painted by Israeli artist Jan Rauchwerger (b. 1942). The artist painted a few of the portraits 'from life', others by looking at photographs of poets who were no longer alive. Agassi interviewed the artist and heard his version of involvement in the process of portrait painting:

¹ E. H. Gombrich, "The Mask and the Face: The Perception of Physiognomic Likeness in Life and Art", in *The Image and the Eye, Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Oxford, Phaidon Press, 1986, 109-111.

“...The process of portrait painting is actually a meeting between two persons. Not always [does one encounter] 'chemistry' between the two. It is as if you meet a twin soul and then, in any case, I wanted to reveal the secret that is underneath the outer shell.

I did not want to be under potential pressure by poets who would ask to be portrayed this or that way or would be the ones to decide for me the nature of my painting [activity]. Therefore I decided to finish my work in a single session.

In most cases I was not familiar with the poet. They would come to my studio and at times I was surprised at meeting them – their height, their age and character. When going to their homes for the painting session, I was influenced by the abode's atmosphere...when painting a well-known poet, you wish to link [their physiognomic likeness] to the highest echelons of their culture...I was well aware of the fact that I was facing a poet. Linking the image of a poet who sat in front of me with my strong will to fathom his powerful traits caused various difficulties from one poet to the next. My conversations with them were fascinating. In most cases I met interesting persons; I wanted to understand them through watching them and through conversation, as a psychological experiment.

Actually I was interested in their human, intimate aspect, the one behind the image. I look at the model and decide which technique to use, which material would serve my painting. Catching the character of the poet influences the choice of technique while, obviously my choice of material is one I felt comfortable working with at the time... my first decisions were concerned with materials and size.”²

Rauchwerger's description shows that during the painting process he tried, more than representing the 'Face', to express the model's 'Mask', "I wanted to understand them through watching them and through conversation, as a psychological experiment" as he put it.

² Painter Jan Rauchwerger in an interview with Uzi Agassi as quoted in *Arba Sha'ot Gagim Jan Rauchwerger, Diokna'ot beShira u'vaTziur* (Four hours top, Kan Rauchwerger, Portraits in Poetry and Painting), Ra'anana, Even Hoshen Publication, 1997, 7, 8. 7, 8.

Portraits depict models' faces and at times the upper part of their bodies. When the model is surrounded with elements such as landscape or various accessories, artists may then create interpretations, according to which they install their models within various contexts. Urban or rural landscapes, household furniture, tools or room interiors are made into reflections of specific sites and historical eras. Their inclusion in a portrait painting conveys to their spectators information about a certain period of an artist's creative process and indirectly about the model's way of life.

When artists depict certain costumes, a theatrical set that reminds one of a certain narrative, they indeed present a certain historical chapter or a familiar story and thus in an indirect way the model is given the role of an actor. The model's portrait then becomes something that is beyond commemoration; it conveys a certain message – social, religious, moral and at times political – due to the fact that the artist tells us which historical figure the model identifies with.

The self-portrait is a unique aspect of portraiture; it is solely the initiative of artists due to a personal, internal urge. A self-portrait presents us with artists' images as they see themselves or as they would like to be seen by their public. Through their self-portraits artists conduct an inner search into themselves in which they perform various roles, as actors do on stage. Their self-portraits, in which they examine their souls and ways of thinking, assist them in attributing to themselves high spiritual and creative forces when they portray themselves as intellectuals (image on page 35 in the Hebrew section). At times something completely different occurs: while painting their self-portraits artists discover deep psychological inhibitions that disrupt their self-esteem. Consequently, they depict themselves in states of misery, self-destruction and apathy.

Sometimes such self-analysis causes artists to lose their identity and bring about self-annulment. The development of self-awareness through the making of a self-portrait brings artists closer to themselves and causes them to expose themselves entirely. This kind of process involves contradictory actions; the self-search may reveal personal details that artists are not willing to share with us; consequently, a need to cover and blur arises (image on page 17 in the Hebrew section).

Self-portraits reveal artists' personal philosophies. Through their self-portraits they pose existential issues and relate to the nature of art and exhibit a symbolical defiance of death. Self-portraits actually embody symbolic meaning of everlasting life both of artists and of works of art as such.

An alleged marginal, technical aspect linked to self-portraiture is the *means* through which it is made: the mirror. This was – and still is – the only means for artists to look at their own image.³ Mirrors do not reflect reality; rather, they show a reversed image of it. When looking at a mirror, artists see a reversed image of themselves (left is right and vice versa). In their drawn or painted self-portraits we observe them in action, using their left hand while in reality, the artist is usually right handed (image on page 15 in the Hebrew section).

Printmaking allows the reversed image of a self-portrait to be reversed once more and thus become a 'true', realistic image. In making woodcuts, etchings, lithographs, the image drawn by the artist on a plate reverses itself during the printing process. The result, after the two reversals, is a 'true' image (image on page 23 in the Hebrew section).

Another aspect of self-portraits shows that artists, in general, depict themselves in a three-quarter position. A self-portrait in profile is hard to execute since a look to the side does not allow artists to see themselves in the mirror. A frontal view is a bit flat. Consequently, by depicting themselves in a three-quarter position, their image is given a more convincing dimension and illusion of volume. Artists' repeated glances at the mirror cause their depicted image to look as if they are gazing outwards. It is thus that they make eye contact with us, spectators, and invite us into the illusionist space they occupy.

These relationships between artists' self-portraits and us, spectators, are taken into consideration by their creators when they decide how and where they would distance themselves from the mirror. In some cases artists make 'close-up' depictions, in which their

³ The video camera and its 'successor', the cellular phone, allow people to easily create a self-portrait, known today as 'selfie'.

faces fill the entire work. On other occasions they 'zoom out' and include more parts of their body, from a distant vantage point. The actions of close-ups and zooming out endow their works with special atmospheres, created according to their compositional decisions.



The group of portraits in the Noa and Uzi Agassi collection is only a part of the entire collection; it forms an exemplary representation of the collector's process of contemplation, search and fascinating final decisions.

Portraits and self-portraits in the Agassi collection exhibit all of the characteristics mentioned above. The next pages contain exemplary reproductions; each one is accompanied by concise information on the artist who made the portrait as well as on the model documented in it. The texts are accompanied by a photograph of the model, in most cases not of high artistic quality. By looking at the models' photographic image, one may fathom the artists' expertise in that they are not satisfied solely with the model's likeness. Indeed, the portrait is a fascinating and complex interpretation of the model's character.

Works Exhibited

All measurements in centimeters, height x width.

Arieh Alweil, *Portrait of the Artist's Daughter Playing the Piano*, 1950s, oil on canvas glued to a wooden board, 40x50.

Avigdor Aricha, *Portrait of Poetess Yocheved Bat Miriam*, 1966, paint brush with touches of dry gouache, 15x20.5 (page 49 in the Hebrew section).

Naftali Bezem, *Self Portrait*, c. 1951, watercolor on paper, 26x22 (page 35 in the Hebrew section).

Zila Binder, *Portrait of a Man* (probably that of artist Avshalom Okashi), pen, ink and wash on paper, 34x25 (page 47 in the Hebrew section).

Zila Binder, *Portrait of a Woman*, pencil and watercolor on paper, 35x25.

Zippora Brenner, *Portrait of a Woman*, pencil and watercolor on paper, 44x28.5.

Joseph Budko, *Portrait of an Artist in his Studio* (probably portrait of Herman Struck), 1915, drypoint, 14.6x10.5.

Moshe Bernstein, *Self Portrait*, 1956, pen and ink on paper, 26x26 (page 13 in the Hebrew section).

Marcel Duchamp, *Obligation pour la roulette de Monte-Carlo*, 1924, photocollage, including *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* by Man Ray, color lithograph attached to a cardboard holder, 31.5x19.5 (page 41 in the Hebrew section).

Edmund Fürst, *Portrait of Architect Werner Joseph Wittkower*, pencil on paper, 39.5x28.3 (page 19 in the Hebrew section).

Ran Hedri, *Self Portrait*, 1986, oil on canvas, 45x38.5.

Euseas Hofstater, *Portrait of an Unknown Woman*, 1940, pencil on paper, 15.5x11 (page 21 in the Hebrew section).

David Handler, *Portrait of Aviva Uri*, pen and ink on paper, 50x35 (page 25 in the Hebrew section).

David Handler, *Portrait of Aviva Uri*, pen and brush on paper, 50x35.

Mordechai Levanon, *Self Portrait*, gouache, wide nib and ink on paper, 34x24 (page 43 in the Hebrew section).

Mordechai Levanon, *Portrait of a Woman* (probably the artist's wife), watercolor on paper, 70x50.

Ephraim Mose Lilien *Printmaker Working (Self Portrait)*, etching and aquatint, 40x35 (page 53 in The Hebrew section).

Arieh Lubin, *Self Portrait*, pen and brown ink on paper, 27x21 (page 15 in the Hebrew section).

Arieh Lubin, *Portrait of a Young Girl*, oil on canvas, 20x11.

Arieh Lubin, *Portrait of a Man*, oil on canvas glued to a wooden board, 21x18.2

Pamela Levi, *Portrait of an Arab Woman*, 1966, color woodcut print, 66x50 (page 39 in the Hebrew section).

Pamela Levi, *Woman on the Beach*, oil on canvas.

Batia Lishansky, *Self Portrait*, oil on canvas, 18.5x15 (page 29 in the Hebrew section).

Batia Lishansky, *Self Portrait*, oil on canvas, 34x22.5.

Marvadia Workshops, *Theodore Herzl*, silk carpet, 100x61.

Avraham Naton (Nathanson), *Self Portrait*, 1938, charcoal pencil with touches of watercolor on paper, 29.6x24.2 (page 17 in the Hebrew section).

Avraham Naton (Nathanson), *Portrait of Poet Avraham Shlonsky*, pencil on paper, 21x13.2.

Jan Rauchwerger, *Portrait of Poet Aharon Shabtai*, 1987, oil on canvas, 50x41.5 (page 31 in the Hebrew section).

Jan Rauchwerger, *Portrait of Poet Meir Wieseltier*, 1985, charcoal and chalk on paper, 100x70 (page 45 in the Hebrew section).

Jan Rauchwerger, *Portrait of Poetess Yona Volach*, 1986, oil and gouache on paper, 45x30.

Ludwig Schwerin, *Portrait of Poet Uri Zvi Grinberg*, 1942, oil on canvas, 61.5x44.5 (page 37 in the Hebrew section).

Avigdor Stematzky, *Portrait of a Woman*, watercolor on paper, 48x36.

Avigdor Stematzky, *Portait*, oil on cavas.

Avigdor Stematzky, *Portait*, gouache on paper.

Herman Struck, *Self Portrait*, first decade of the 20th century, etching and aquatint, 19.5x14.5 (page 23 in the Hebrew section).

Aviva Uri, *Portrait of David Handler*, date, pastel chalks (blue and red) on paper, 100x70 (page 33 in the Hebrew section).

Alexander a Viase, *Portrait of Moshe Hefetz*, 1700, frontispiece of his book *Mlechet Machshevet*, written and published in Venice.

Yocheved Weinfeld, *Self Portrait*.,1974, series of 5 photographs painted over with white paint, 21x19.



Moshe Bernstein, *Self Portrait*, 1956, pen and ink on paper 26x26 cm (full reproduction on page 13 in the Hebrew section)

Moshe Bernstein (1920-2006) was born in Poland. At age 15 he began his art studies at the Vilnius art academy. During the Second World War he lived in the Soviet Union and immigrated to Jewish Palestine in 1947. All his family remaining in Poland was murdered in the Holocaust. Bernstein was a dominant figure in the Bohemian circles of Tel Aviv. Most of his artistic preoccupation was dedicated to documenting the *shtetl* in which he was born.

Bernstein's 'mask' – the way he presented himself in public – was that of a bohemian. He was always dressed in black, a large silver chain hanging on his chest, from which dangled a round silver piece of jewelry. He took off his 'mask' in front of a mirror. His drawing shows that he focused on his inquisitive eyes, which convey great internal energies. They make contact with our eyes and convey the artist's powerful inner tension. His long flowing hair, his moustache and beard, were exceptional, both in reality and in this self-portrait. They conveyed a defiant attitude directed against the Israeli bourgeoisie.



Arieh Lubin, *Self Portrait*, pen and brown ink on paper, 27x21 cm (full reproduction on page 15 in the Hebrew section)

Arieh Lubin (1896-1980) was born in the United States. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. After his graduation he travelled to Europe and lived in England, Paris and Belgium. In 1923 he immigrated to Jewish Palestine. In 1924 he participated in the Modern Artists' Exhibition held in Jerusalem and during his years of artistic production he had a one man show at the Tel Aviv Museum and his works were exhibited at the Venice Biennale. His style owes much to the formal experiments carried out by Paul Cezanne. He was a virtuoso draftsman; echoes of Cubist aspects characterize his drawings.

It is not certain whether Lubin drew his *Self Portrait* assisted by a mirror or whether he created it relying on a visual memory of himself. He presents himself to us as gazing at something that is in front of him, outside the picture. The artist 'opened' his eye 'lens' and through a choice of a distant vantage point, his drawing includes various elements of the space he occupies. To his right is a window and part of the floor. The back of a chair is behind him. He sits next to a round table on top of which one detects an ink well with a pen nib stuck in it and a sketchbook. The book is open; the artist's left hand pushes on it so it doesn't close. His face conveys astonishment, his mouth is open and his eyebrows raised.

Lubin's drawing is an embodiment of the 'mask' concept. The artist was concerned with presenting himself to us, spectators, as an important bourgeois, meticulous and well kept. He wears a suit and a tie. His virtuoso draftsmanship is evident in the delineation of the

composition thorough vigorous, almost spontaneous lines. The composition is Cubist in character; it is comprised of consciously constructed disproportional, distorted shapes (two enormous hands in comparison with the small size of the sketchbook). Beyond his feeling of astonishment in facing his own image in the mirror, the artist was probably surprised by the excellence of his spontaneous drawing, a rare phenomenon when one deals with something that was not consciously planned in advance.



Avraham Naton (Nathanson), *Self Portrait*, 1938, charcoal with touches of watercolor on paper, 29.8x24.2 cm (full reproduction on page 17 in the Hebrew section)

Avraham Naton (Nathanson 1906-1959) was born in a village in the Ukraine. Between 1933 and 1939 he studied at the academy of art in Bucharest. In 1935 he immigrated to Jewish Palestine. He was a member of the Association of Israeli Painters and Sculptors and in 1948 participated in the *Ofakim Hadashim* (New Horizons) exhibition held at the Tel Aviv Museum. At the beginning of his artistic career in Israel Naton painted landscapes. After a continuing education in Paris, his works were mostly abstract, mainly Geometrical.

When Naton drew this self-portrait he was 32 years old. He depicted his head in darkness; only his forehead is lit. He turns his gaze to the left (to the right in the drawing). His mouth is closed, his eyebrows raised a little. His facial expression and the dim quality of the drawing convey an unpleasant atmosphere and perhaps a moment in which the artist felt embarrassed in front of his own image, reflected in the mirror in front of him.



Edmund Fürst, *Portrait of Architect Werner Joseph Wittkower*, pencil on paper, 39.5x28.3 (full reproduction on page 19 in the Hebrew section)

Edmund Fürst (1874-1955) was born in Berlin and studied art at the local art academy. He was known as an illustrator; his works were published by various publishing firms in Germany. During the 1920s he roamed around Europe and painted its landscapes. After the Nazis ascent to power he was expelled from the publishing firms he worked for. He reached Jewish Palestine in 1934. His style was Impressionistic; many of his drawings and prints were dedicated mostly to Biblical subjects and classical mythology.

Werner Josef Wittkower (1903-1997), architect, was born in Berlin. He studied architecture and history in Stuttgart, Berlin and Heidelberg. Wittkower immigrated to Jewish Palestine in 1933. He designed the old Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv and made the first comprehensive plan of the Tel Aviv University campus. Most buildings of his designs were erected in Tel Aviv.

Fürst's portrait of Wittkower presents us with a three-quarter view of a man's face. His head is bent down, his gaze is directed downwards. His hair is thin, exposing a large, high forehead. All these components contribute to the making of a unique atmosphere that hints at contemplation and the personal trait of great modesty.



Euseas Hofstater, *Portrait of an Unknown Woman*, 1940, pencil on paper, 15.5x11 cm (full reproduction on page 21 in the Hebrew section)

The family of artist **Euseas Hofstater** (1905-1995) made Vienna their home at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1938 they were arrested by the Gestapo. The artist's parents were sent to concentration camps and all trace of them was lost. Hofstater wandered through Europe and finally settled in Brussels. He was deported in 1940 to German camps in France. As a prisoner in these camps he drew tens of portraits of his fellow prisoners, as a reaction to a basic need for commemoration of the horrible conditions in the camp. After many tribulations he arrived in Israel in 1957. His works deal mainly with the traumas of the war years of his life.

Artists do not bother sometimes to include a date next to their signature on a painting or a drawing. Hofstater did so, and the date is significant; in 1940 he was interned in Saint Cyprian, a German camp in France. With a skilled hand and a quick doodling action he succeeded in rendering the likeness of his model. The date endows the drawing with additional value: the historical context adds aspects of mysticism and tragedy because one has no clue as to what happened to that anonymous woman whom Hofstater met and whose portrait he drew during one of the most traumatic periods of both their lives.



Herman Struck, *Self Portrait*, first decade of the 20th century, etching and aquatint 19.5x14.5 cm (full reproduction on page 23 in the Hebrew section)

Herman Struck (1876-1944) was born in Berlin and studied at the local art academy. He was known as a printmaker. In 1908 he published a book on the art of drypoint printmaking; it was published in many editions and was considered a must among printmakers. In 1922 he immigrated to Jewish Palestine and built his house in Haifa. Struck was known in Germany for his portraits of men of renown like Sigmund Freud, Heinrich Heine, Theodor Herzl, Henrik Ibsen and others. He produced more than 200 portraits, mainly etchings. Struck was a virtuoso in creating a dramatic atmosphere for the models of his portraits. His expertise in the technique of chiaroscuro endows his models with the illusion that light emanates from their faces.

This is a self-portrait from the beginning of the 20th century. Most of Struck's portraits show the models in profile or with a slight turning of the face to the side. The young man represented in this etching lifts his head up. He looks as if he has just seen an epiphany (outside the frame of the work). His head is crowned by a thick, black, tangled forelock; so are his beard and moustache. The magical phenomenon which he sees in front of him shines its light on his forehead – the obvious section of the head that signifies wisdom and the lightest part of the etching.



David Handler. *Portrait of Aviva Uri*, pen and ink on paper, 50x35 cm (full reproduction on page 25 in the Hebrew section)

David Handler (1904-1984) was born in Kiev. He immigrated to Jewish Palestine in 1924. Handler was known mainly for his drawings, executed with pencils, pen and ink. He accompanied his genre drawings and landscapes with abstract areas in watercolor, meant to enliven them with minimalistic hues. His drawing process used assertive hand strokes, scampering over the page nimbly, creating quick and suggestive lines.

Aviva Uri (1922-1989) was born in Safed. She studied with painter Moshe Castel and later on with David Handler whom she married. Uri was first and foremost a draftsman. At the beginning of her career, her drawings were based on impressions of landscapes. Within a process of personal research, her drawings ripened into abstract expressions, made of flickering, 'nervous' lines. Uri is the most celebrated representative of abstraction through drawing in Israeli art. Through her tremulous lines, she endows her works with a thoroughly personal aspect and makes spectators identify with feelings of deep pain, sorrow, loss and impotence. The artist's unique handwriting doodles, erases, adds and erases again and again. Her drawings lead our eyes in a quest; the journey is tiresome and confusing because it pushes us to try and untangle the meaning of the thicket of scampering lines, discovering at the end a few images, hidden within the entanglement. We then discover images, most of which allude to death, torture, destruction and fire that consumes everything.

"Please, sit down"; this is how Handler probably approached Aviva, "I would like to draw you". She acquiesced by sitting on a chair. She put one leg on top of the other, embraced herself with her arms in a gesture of withdrawing into herself, of self-protection. She lowered her head and her entire body, distanced her gaze from the artist and directed it towards the floor. With a quick doodle Handler created minimalistic hints for the 'set' in which his wife was sitting. The result is a very expressive documentation of a domestic atmosphere, accompanied by a sensation of vulnerability.



Jan Rauchwerger, *Portrait of Poet Aharon Shabtai*, 1987, oil on canvas, 50x41.5 cm (full reproduction on page 31 in the Hebrew section)

Jan Rauchwerger (b. 1942) was born in Iramali, Turkmenistan. He studied graphic art in Moscow. When in Israel, Rauchwerger never succumbed to the dominant trend of Israeli abstraction. He developed a personal style in which he expressed his great expertise in paintings that are both realistic and mystical. The artist conducts 'conversations' with the great masters of the past when he is busy observing the subject matter of his works. His paintings are abundant with rich renditions of textures, gradual passages of hues and a great sensitivity to chiaroscuro. All these components contribute to the making of magical atmospheres in most of his paintings.

Poet Aharon Shabtai (b. 1939) was born in Tel Aviv. His poetry deals with Israeli political issues. His translations from the Greek focus on works by classical authors such as Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes. He also translated works by Berthold Brecht from the German. Shabtai's poetry exposes sexuality, the admiration of everyday phenomena, beauty and ugliness, pain and grace of the human body.

All of Rauchwerger's portraits of Israeli poets are full of motion. Shabtai's image looks as if it just entered the picture frame. He bursts forth from the left, lower corner of the painting into its frame, abstaining from establishing a frontal position in front of the artist, busy drawing his portrait. All this is, of course, the staging production of the artist who acts as a theater director. The portrait shows the poet as if he were just passing there by chance. He dons a speckled household robe made of thin, clinging, limp material, revealing his hairy chest. His face is made by brushstrokes of semi-dry paint of various brown hues. These endow this part of the painting with an illusion of volume. Shabtai's eyes are depicted with thin black lines. The rest of the visual information we get about the poet is made with white spots and lines, delineating his glasses and his large, high forehead. His mouth is closed, hinting at a certain restraint, in spite of the fact that he probably had much to say during the session with the artist.



Batia Lishansky, *Self Portrait*, oil on canvas, 18.5x15 cm (full reproduction on page 29 in the Hebrew section)

Batia Lishansky (1901-1992) was born in the Ukraine and immigrated to Jewish Palestine in 1910. She studied at the Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem, and later in Berlin, Rome and Paris. Upon her return she was commissioned to sculpt a memorial for kibbutz Hulda. Lishansky was known as a sculptress of portraits and public memorials. Her style is realistic, depending much on the influence of French sculptor Auguste Rodin. Most of her works were in stone – she made no bronze sculptures.

Lishansky approached the mirror closely. Her face fills the entire space of the composition, against a dark background. The right side of her face is lit and its left side is in complete darkness. Her hair blends into the dark background. Her gaze suggests introspection and contemplation.



Aviva Uri, *Portrait of David Handler*, pastel chalks (blue and red) on paper, 100x70 cm (full reproduction on page 33 in the Hebrew section)

Aviva Uri (see page 33) saw in David Handler (same page) sitting in front of her a depressed, suffering man, looking straight at her (and at us, the onlookers). She depicts his inner storms of the soul with nervous crosshatching that surrounds his image. The elderly and tormented model is rendered through formal distortion, typical of Uri's style. His very small legs hardly support the awkward upper part of his body, or do so with great difficulty. Uri scribbled the facial features of her model very quickly with blue chalk, and went on to fill its contours with red crosshatching. She rendered the model's feet in red as well. The combination of blue (calm) and red (danger, pain) helped to endow her husband's portrait with an atmosphere of gloom, pain and suffering.



Naftali Bezem, *Self Portrait*, ca. 1951, watercolor on paper, 26x22 cm (full reproduction on page 35 in the Hebrew section)

Naftali Bezem (b. 1924) was born in Essen, Germany and immigrated to Jewish Palestine in 1939. He studied at the Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem. Bezem was not part of the abstract painting circles in Israel, developing his own independent style. In the early 1950s he protested in his works against evils of Israeli society. Later, he devoted his works to the topic of the Holocaust. In his very own symbolic sign language many of his works deal with Jewish tradition and culture.

For his self portrait, Bezem put a large scale mirror in his studio; it reflects an easel (its red legs may be seen at the bottom of the drawing). He is a thin man, bespectacled, with the look of a simple worker. He wears a workman's undershirt and an overall. In his hand he holds and points to one of his earlier paintings in which a baby, lying in its carriage, holds a placard with the word PAIX ("peace" in French) written on it. Through his self-portrait, Bezen relates how he conceives his professional function: as a painter, he must protest social injustice and express in his works his wish for a better world with no more wars.



Ludwig Schwerin, *Portrait of Uri Zvi Grinberg*, 1942, oil on canvas, 61.5x44.5 cm (full reproduction on page 37 in the Hebrew section)

Ludwig Schwerin (1897-1983) was born in Buchen, Germany. He studied at the Munich art academy and during the years 1932-1938 settled in Berlin. In 1938 he immigrated to Jewish Palestine and settled in Tel Aviv. In Germany Schwerin made portraits of, among others, Thomas Mann and Stefan Zweig. He was known as a draftsman and printmaker. His publications included illustrations for the Biblical books of *Jonah* and *Ruth*.

Uri Zvi Grinberg (1896-1981) is one of the greatest Hebrew Expressionist poets. The scope of his work is vast. Greenberg opposed the writing of new Hebrew poetry in the classic tradition and claimed that it should penetrate new realms. His writing blurs the borders between various language structures and he combines in his poems everyday, 'high' and Biblical language, as well as Yiddishisms and non-Hebrew words.

Grinberg's portrait makes one wonder if the poet came to 'have his picture taken' at the artist's studio. The latter observed him from a frontal vantage point, apparently aiming at creating a formal portrait of his model. The poet was known as an elegant man, very meticulous in his dress. The artist depicts him wearing an elegant suit; however, his necktie, at a slight angle, hints, perhaps at negligence. Greenberg is rigid, his facial expression borders on a smile that was stopped in front of the painter's 'camera'.



Pamela Levi, *Portrait of an Arab Woman*, 1966, woodcut print, 66x50 cm (full reproduction on page 39 in the Hebrew section)

Pamela Levi (1949-2004) was born in the United States. She studied art and immigrated to Israel in 1976. At the beginning of her artistic career she made collages that combine pieces of cloth and other simple materials using rough stitches. Gradually, she changed course and moved to realistic paintings which she based on photographs she took herself. Her paintings deal with Israeli political issues and have links to multicultural aspects and gender. They are rich in detail and generally convey threatening and catastrophic sensations.

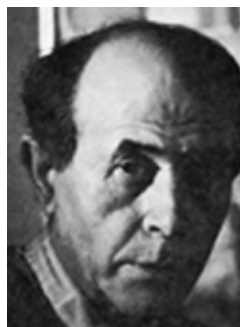
Levi's portrait is of an anonymous woman. The model talks to us and explains her inner spiritual state through her facial expression as well as the clothes she wears. Her head is covered by a wide piece of cloth wrapped around her head and neck, falling to her chest. The coat she wears is much larger than her size; it reveals that second-hand clothing is the only kind she can afford. Her tightly closed mouth shows restrained pain and even despair, an inner state of mind that she shares with us through her gaze that meets our eyes.



Marcel Duchamp, *Obligation pour la roulette de Monte-Carlo*, 1924, photcollage, including *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* by Man Ray, color lithograph attached to a cardboard holder, 31.5x19.5 (full reproduction on page 41 in the Hebrew section)

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) is considered one of the 20th century's most significant artists who contributed revolutionary developments to its visual art. He invented new media and was the father of all renovators in the art of the 1960s, both in Europe and in the United States. Minimalism, Pop art and Conceptual art would not have been formed without Duchamp's precedent.

Dada and Surrealist artist Man Ray photographed Marcel Duchamp as he was shaping his face with shaving cream to look like a faun or the image of the Devil. Duchamp, a magician of parodies, created a fictitious financial document, designated to be presented to the manager of the Monte Carlo Casino. In this alleged official document he appoints himself to the status of a financial company manager that would acquire shares of 15,000 francs in an attempt to make the Monte Carlo Bank go bankrupt. Duchamp's work was published as a photographic lithograph in 1938 in the 1200 copies of *The 20th Century* (XXième siècle) journal with printed signatures of Rose Selavy and Marcel Duchamp.



Mordechai Levanon, *Self Portrait*, gouache, wide nib and ink on paper, 34x24 cm (full reproduction on page 43 in the Hebrew section)

Mordechai Levanon (1901-1968) was born in Rumania. He immigrated to Jewish Palestine in 1921; for a short period of time he studied at the Bezalel Academy, and later with painter Yitzhak Frenkel. He was first and foremost a landscape painter. His paintings are suffused with mysticism and an illusion of floating, especially those depicting the Old Cities of Jerusalem and Safed. His style borders on abstraction.

The first step Levanon took in conveying his state of mind was to lay grey-pastel abstract color patches onto the paper. He then held a wide nib, dipped it in black ink and delineated the contours of his own image. His penetrating gaze meets ours. His cheeks and chin are thin and narrow. His face grows larger and ends in a wide forehead and bald spot. Levanon emphasized the wrinkles of his forehead, thus giving an impression that he is a thinking man. The outlines of his cheeks, and black lines that descend from his eyes to his open mouth convey to us yet another characteristic – he is a tragic figure, contemplating his existence and maybe ours as well.



Jan Rauchwerger, *Portrait of Poet Meir Wieseltier*, 1985, charcoal and chalk on paper, 100x70 cm (full reproduction on page 45 in the Hebrew section)

Meir Wieseltier (b. 1941), was born in Moscow. He immigrated to Israel in 1949. He studied Law, Philosophy and History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Wieseltier is best known for his political and passionate love poems and his urban poetry. He is also a translator; he translated Shakespeare's plays into a language that takes into consideration the needs of Hebrew speaking actors, creating a version that suited Hebrew diction, so that it could be easily understood by the audience.

Jan Rauchwerger (see page 19) depicts the poet as a person without a body; his head and right hand float on top of a uniform, murky background, highlighted by black contours. The artist sums up his meeting with the poet; the latter exemplifies for him a perfect combination of spirit and flesh. The model is rendered as an intellectual, man of thoughts, physically enjoying his senses of taste and smell. He turns his head sideways, looks in wonder at his surroundings while he enjoys smoking a cigarette. Rauchwerger was thrilled with his model's emanating grace; no wonder that the gestures of Wieseltier's hand and head echo Leonardo's drawings that are full of grace (*Grazia*).



Zila Binder, *Portrait of a Man (probably that of artist Avshalom Okashi)*, pen, ink and wash on paper, 34x25 cm (full reproduction on page 47 in the Hebrew section)

Artist **Zila Binder** (1919-1987), painter, author and poetess was born in Vilnius and arrived in Jewish Palestine in 1931. She studied as a free student at the Bezalel Academy and was known for the many illustrations she made for children's book and theater posters.

With quick energetic lines Binder delineated her model's facial features. She added some volume to his face with watery areas of wash by creating an illusion of shadow on his cheeks and forehead. The model is a heavy set man, his eye sockets sunken, his mouth fleshy and his hair thick and abundant; this is an earthy man, a bit clumsy and coarse. His facial expression conveys an inner storm of feelings repressed below the surface.



Avigdor Aricha, *Portrait of Poetess Yocheved Bat Miriam*, pen and ink on paper with touches of dry gouache, 20.5x15.5 cm (full reproduction on page 49 in the Hebrew section)

Painter **Avigdor Aricha** (1929-2010) was born in Rumania. In 1942 his family was deported, his father murdered and only his mother and sister survived. He immigrated to Jewish Palestine in 1944, and studied at the Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem. In 1949 he moved to Paris where he continued his studies in art and meetings with thinkers and artists. His paintings combine realistic renderings sketched from life. At the same time they possess a certain mystical quality of the world beyond. Aricha is known for many portraits he painted of men of renown from all echelons of contemporary culture.

Yocheved Bat Miriam (1920-1980) was born Yocheved Zheliniak in Russia. When she was seventeen, she chose the name 'Bat Miriam' (daughter of Miriam) because she was convinced that she would become a poetess, like Moses' sister Miriam. Her first poems were published in Hebrew journals and newspapers in Russia. She immigrated to Jewish Palestine in 1928.

The painter drew the poetess' portrait in 1966, her face slightly turned. The hand is rendered in very delicate brush strokes, grading the transition between the drawing's empty space on the right with the image of the model on the left.

Aricha's definition of Ingre's (1780-1867) unique drawing technique reveals his concept of drawing in general and sheds light on his own drawing characteristics: 'Drawing traces all subtleties of feeling through the thrilling process of observation. It is concerned with capturing something utterly illusive, with no means other than nuances. When this miracle takes place in the drawing process, it is closer to the soul (like a poem for Aristotle), more so than any other way of expression'. In Aricha's portrait of Bat Miriam one senses this miracle of the drawing process. It is expressed in the way the artist emphasized the model's eyes and in the mystical connection between her hand and her forehead.

(Uzi Agassi, *Yocheved Bat Miriam be'Eyney Acherim uve'Eyney Atzma* (Yocheved Bar Miriam as seen by others and herself) (exh. cat.), Tel Aviv: University Gallery, Tel Aviv University, 1989, 11-12.)



Raffie Lavie. *Portrait of Ethel Broida*, mixed media on cardboard, 29.5x24.5 cm
(full reproduction on page 51 in the Hebrew section)

Raffi Lavie (1937-2007)

At the beginning of her career Ethel Broida managed the Gordon Gallery (established by Shaya Yariv in 1966). Lavie's drawing was done in his early period, when he established his monochromatic white/pink style along with other pictorial elements such as the images of an airplane, the 'Magen David', as well as the use of photographs for collage and their coloring with cartoon text balloons. Ethel's balloon says: 'help'. Lavie took one of his finished drawings of 1966 and added to it three photographs of Ethel Broida. It is uncertain whether he took them himself. The three photographs tell a story and so does the drawing. Lavie acknowledged the influence of the works of Robert Rauschenberg, and like him he attached to his work photographs, as well as objects of various sources that put the quoted material in a new context.

'To Ethel, Cordially eeRaffi' he writes with a pencil, the letters larger in scale than his signature on the lower right of the work. The artist covered the signature with semi transparent white paint, failing to wholly conceal the signature. The text in the drawing has turned into a very significant part of it, endowing Ethel Broida with the same status as the images of the airplane and the 'magen david'.

(Uzi Agassi)



Ephraim Mose Lilien, *Printmaker Working (Self Portrait)*, etching and aquatint, 35x40 cm (full reproduction on page 53 in the Hebrew section)

Ephraim Mose Lilien (1874-1925) was born in Drohowitz, Galicia, and studied art in Munich. In 1869 he won a prize at a photography competition, organized by the *Die Jugend* (Youth) journal. Consequently he started publishing his illustrations in this journal. His style was greatly influenced by *art nouveau* (known as *Jugendstil* in German). His illustrations for poetry books were the basis for a modern Jewish movement in art that was centered in Berlin and Vienna. In a short while Lilien contributed illustrations to the Zionist journal *Die Welt* (The World) and to the Jewish journal *Ost und West* (East and West) and organized the first great exhibition of Jewish artists at the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901. Boris Schatz, head and founder of 'Bezalel' School of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem, invited Lilien to teach there. He stayed in Jerusalem for a while and returned to Germany. His Zionist illustrations were well known amongst European Jewry and served as models in Jewish Palestine for many artists in the 1920s.

A nude model stands on a table; the interior is that of an artist's studio, while light is penetrating through its large windows. The artist observes his model and depicts her image on a large piece of paper, placed on his drawing desk. The artist's drawing process was recorded, apparently, by somebody else (probably a photographer). Lilien created this print by following the image on that photograph.

Alec Mishory
Tel Aviv, August 2014