

Culture Report

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Eti More: Optimistic artist and sculptor exhibits in Jaffa

By Shula Kopf

ETI MORE was a young student at the Bat Yam Academy of Art when the renowned teacher, Elisha Gat, came to her drawing class looked at her work and said the words that would change the trajectory of her art career.

“You’re a sculptor,” he said. “Come with me.”

He took her by the hand next door to the sculpture class.

“It frightened me and fascinated me at the same time. He convinced me to stay,” says More.

And stay she did.

With some 40 years of steadfast devotion to art, More, a connoisseur of contour, a master of minimalist gestures, will be showcasing her sculptures and paintings in a solo exhibition, “Optimistic,” at the Gallery 12 in Jaffa.

Sculpture, challenging in its physicality, was once the domain of macho male artists who worked in metals and stone, heavy and difficult to manage.

For More, who stands 1.6-meter tall, it was intimidating. Today, her aluminum sculpture of three abstract figures, stands double her size at 3.5-meters at the entrance to her building in the Park Tzameret neighborhood of Tel Aviv. Painted in a bright Ferrari-red, it is a neighborhood icon.

“It took me a long time to get over the fear,” says More in an interview in her elegant, art-filled apartment. “Today there are tools that help us work with these materials.”

Sculptors she admires are Alberto Giacometti and Henry Moore, and closer to home, Menashe Kadishman and Igaël Tomarkin.

More’s art, with a refined aesthetic and unique fingerprint, focuses on the human figure, sculpting it in endless and fascinating variations, solo and in groups.



Artist Eti More: Her solo exhibition is titled ‘Optimistic’

The elongated, flat, faceless figures, often lacking gender, are surprisingly eloquent. When two or more are grouped in a single piece, one can almost eavesdrop on their conversation. The three-dimensional works enable viewers to imagine the ways their own physical bodies are implicated within the narratives.

More applies loving order and elegant gestures to materials that are sometimes cold and alienated working in layers and strata, both in sculpture and in paint. The layers, a metaphor to the myriad layers that make up human beings.

More has yet to meet a material she doesn’t like and experiments joyfully in various mediums – iron, stainless steel, polymers, plexiglass, laser cutting and Papier-mache.

To paint on canvas she uses oil, tar, chalk, industrial paint and spray to design sophisticated compositions.

Her first experiment with materials took place when, as a child, having heard about oil paints, she satisfied her curiosity by mixed her Gouache colors with her mother’s cooking oil. She still has the painting she created with her ad-hoc mixture.

More was born in Poland in a small, “beautiful town near a birch forest, a small river and everything green,” on the Czechoslovakian border. Her parents were Holocaust survivors whose hardcore survival stories, those told and those silenced, hovered to the sounds of classical music in the vivid imagination of a sensitive little girl. Are the faceless figures in the background of some paintings ghosts of relatives she didn’t get to meet?



Mixed media on canvas: 40x40 cm

"I always wanted family, grandparents," says More

The love for art began in infancy.

"My condition for agreeing to eat was a pencil in my hand and paper to draw on, or else books with lots of colorful pictures. I always knew that this is my destiny, I never thought of anything else.

"My mother's dream for me was to study medicine since the Germans cut off her dreams at age 14. But it was not for me. My mother, very practical, prodded me to at least study graphic art, so I could make a living. At age 15 I sold my first artwork."

More carried vivid, technicolor memories of her childhood home, and when she returned with her sister a year ago, it was exactly as she remembered, down to the particular shade of green of the trees.

The family moved to Israel when she was 6. Right after the army and three days after she married, More and her husband moved to New York City where she enrolled in art studies at the Parsons School of Design and later, in The New School of Art. She returned to Israel in the 90s after 23 years abroad and has participated in many solo and group exhibitions both in Israel and abroad.



'Bowing' sculptures made from resin

She works in a studio in her apartment to the sounds of jazz or heavy metal and lately, classical music. A large wall closet with a sliding glass door holds all the paints, brushes and materials. The wooden floor is meticulously clean without a drop of paint, her work, painstakingly executed. She begins with a gesture that catches her attention, a slope of a shoulder, a tilt of a head, a lift of a chin, a bare arm braced upon a table. She then translates that into a series of sketches, sometimes hundreds, with most ending up in the trash, before she is satisfied and ready to execute the sculpture.



"If I'm sitting in a café observing people, it doesn't interest me if they smiling or sad, or any other the facial expression. But rather the way the human body moves."

She gets up from the sofa to demonstrate, slightly moving her shoulder and then her head to illustrate how the body can speak emotions in volume without facial expressions to mediate.

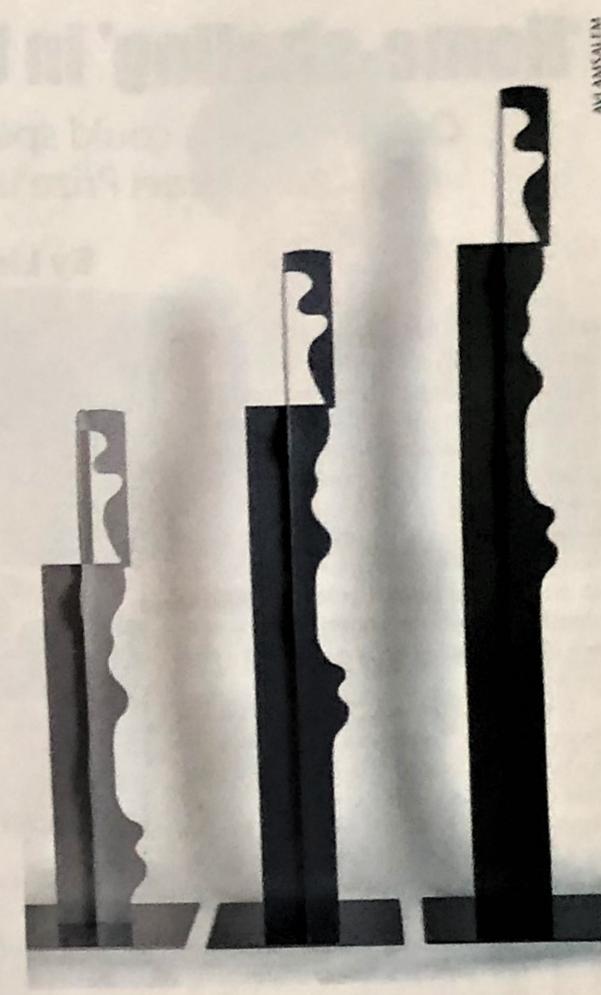
"You don't need to see sadness or happiness in the face. I explore the contours of the body."

She is also interested in the relationships between people. "How they stand, how they react to each other, how far from each other,

how close, how is the head tilted, you can tell about the relationship just by the body's contour. Both painting and sculpture come from the belly," she says. "Painting comes more spontaneously, in a stream and burst of feelings. Sculpture has to be planned."

Even discounting her being a member of the second generation to the Holocaust, More, has gone through her share of sorrows; divorce, illness, death of her beloved father. Lately, she has noticed a change in her disposition.

"I am becoming softer to my surrounding and to myself. I see things as being more optimistic, more open and accepting, and more forgiving towards everything and this is ex-



'Window': Painted iron; the tallest figure is 150 cm

pressed in my work."

Enter pink.

The very name of her upcoming exhibition is "Optimistic" and the letters in the invitation are rendered in pink, the color that surprised her as it inserted itself into her painting and sculptures.

"I believe that I'm only in the beginning of the journey with a lot more to learn. When I see a sculpture in my imagination, and it comes out as I conceived it, my elation is beyond measure. I have an endless supply of ideas and unending passion for art. At night I dream colors and shapes. I will paint and sculpt all my life."