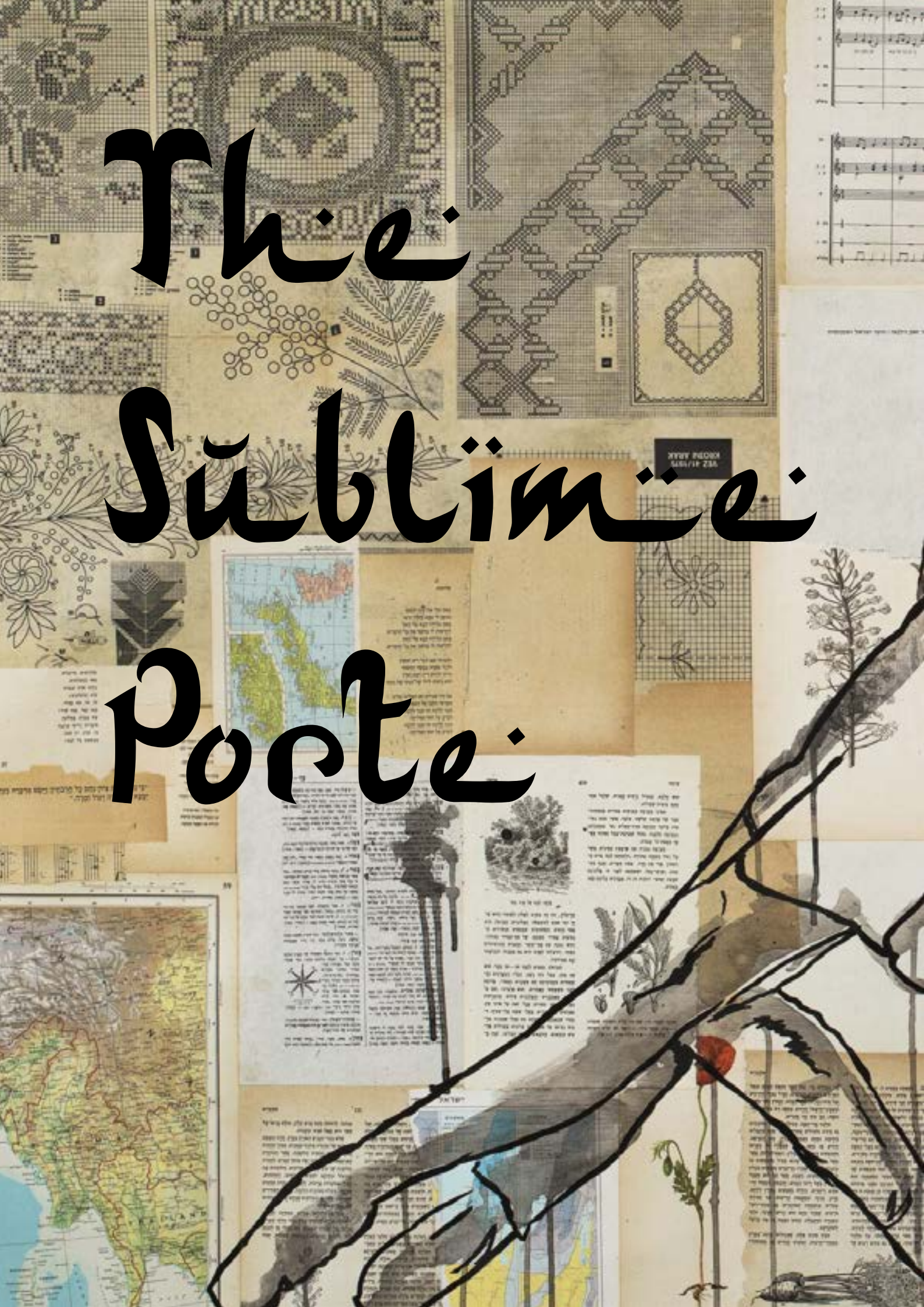


The Sublime Porte



The Sublime Porte

Contemporary Israeli Art Exhibition

The Minneapolis Jewish Federation's
Experience Israel 2023 Minnesota Mega Mission's journey
Opening night art & history exhibition catalogue

Curator: [Hadas Glazer](#)

Artists:

[Niv Fridman](#)

[Tamar Lev-On](#)

[Keren Farago](#)

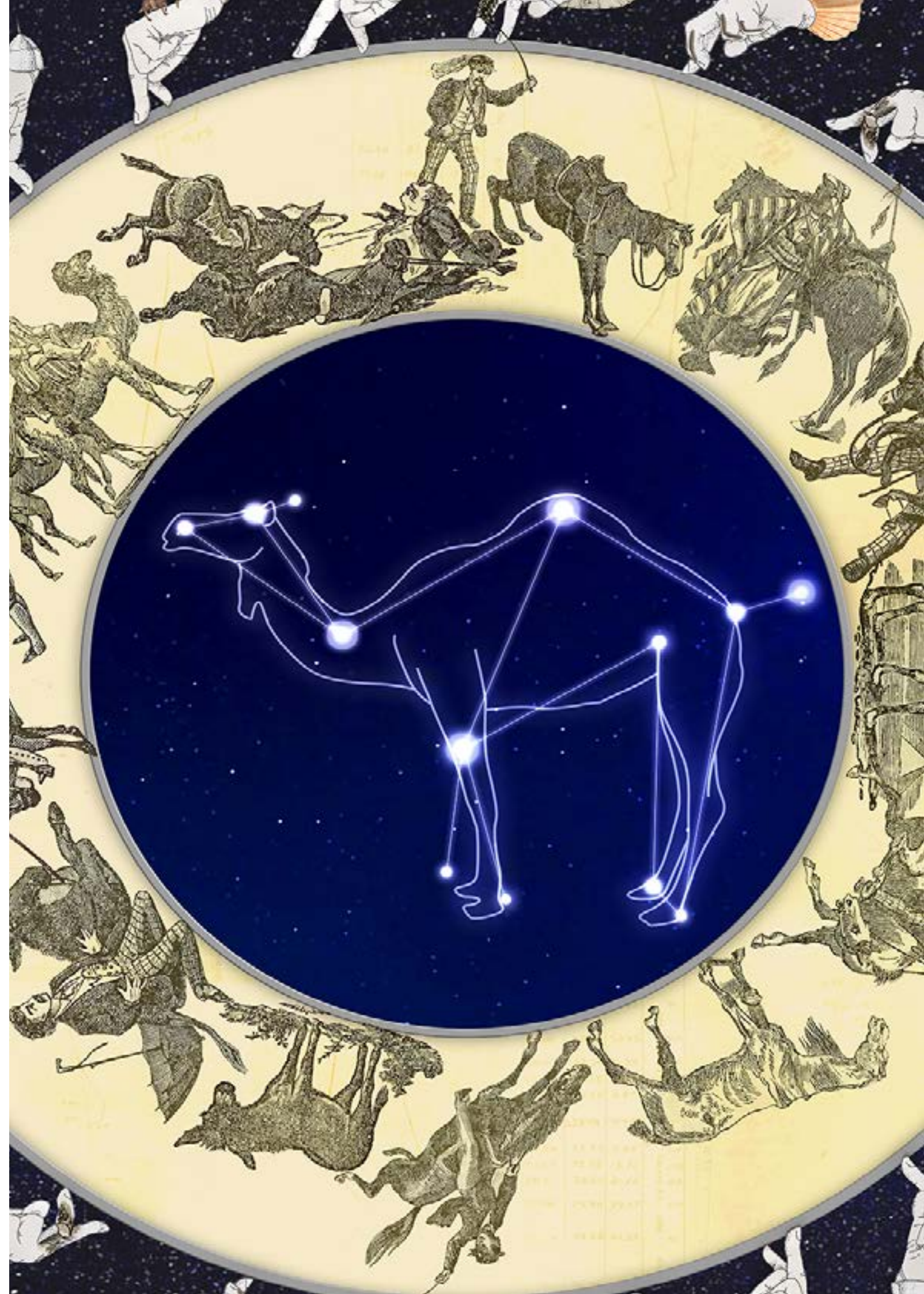
[Ayelet Carmi](#) & [Meirav Heiman](#)

Text editor: Susie Baumohl

Cover image: Keren Farago, *In My Garden* (detail)

Tamar Lev-On, *Twains*, (detail)>

Back cover: Niv Fridman, *Herzl* (detail)





The word Palestine always brought to my mind a vague suggestion of a country as large as the United States. I do not know why, but such was the case. I suppose it was because I could not conceive of a small country having so large a history.

Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869)

< Turkey In Asia. The Illustrations by H. Warren & Engraved by J.B. Allen. The Map Drawn & Engraved by J. Rapkin.

[Source](#)

The Sublime Porte

Text & Curation by Hadas Glazer

Step through and into “The Sublime Porte”, the festive opening of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation’s Experience Israel 2023 Minnesota Mega Mission’s journey through Israel. This carefully curated exhibition places 19th century Israel, during the late years of the Ottoman Empire, into the spotlight. During this time, the region was diverse and complex, with Jews, Turks, Arabs and European colonists coexisting in a place marked by significant political and social tensions. At that time, a Jewish state was but a Zionist dream. The title of this exhibition harkens back to the name of the central government of the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul.

In the waning years of the Ottoman Empire (which came to an end in 1919, following WWI), Israel/Palestine was fairly underdeveloped. At the same time however, the seeds of Zionism were beginning to take root, with a major influx of Jews immigrating to Israel from European and Arabic countries. Seeking a better life, this mass immigration exponentially increased Israel’s Jewish population, having a profound impact on the region.

Diving into this fascinating period through contemporary artworks, photographs, and archival materials, the exhibition consists of two parts: Israeli contemporary art and a historical exhibition. The historical exhibit on level 4 unfolds the story of this time and place where fragments of stories, figures, and places come together through archival photographs and maps to tell the story of Israel before the Declaration of Independence took place.

The art section, found on both the ground floor and level 4, showcases the works of five of Israel’s contemporary artists. Each work explores an influential figure from the period before the Declaration of Independence, offering a modern take on local history, re-telling the narratives that shaped the collective memory of Israel.



Jerusalem Citadel

[Source](#)



Niv Fridman

Herzl, 2023, a series of 6 photographs,
100X150 cm each

Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl was the visionary of the Jewish state, but the vision outlined in his writings vastly differs from the Israel we know today. What would Herzl have thought if he had come to metropolitan Tel Aviv and seen the towers of the Ramat Gan trade center? The noisy Ayalon road with its many lanes? Tel Aviv's spectacular promenade?

This series of photographs by Niv Fridman aims to seek answers to these questions. His works challenge the accepted differentiations between truth and fiction, past and present, reality and imagination.

Dressed as a 'modern', hipster Herzl, Fridman visited and photographed himself in the area of the historical Saronia Colony and Azrieli Center, located next to each other, at the heart of crowded Tel Aviv.

"Through costumes and the use of digital photography and photo editing tools, we hold a special ability to arouse emotional interest and connect us to the past," says Fridman. The disguise enables the artist to shed new light and color on archival photographs and raise questions about the shaping of historical narrative. It is not certain whether Herzl is filled with joy seeing his vision of the Jewish state coming alive, or whether there's some sadness and disappointment in his gaze towards Ayalon Road.

Today, the spotlight shines on the famous intersection of the historical Saronia complex and modern Azrieli Center, as it has become the center of civil protests against Israel's proposed Judicial reform, symbolizing not only the ancient and the contemporary, but also the tension between Jewish and Israeli identities.

Biography

Niv Fridman is a BFA graduate from Bezalel. Showed his works at The New Gallery Artists' Studios Teddy, the Hecht Museum, The Israel Museum the and Cuckoo's Nest and presented his video works at the Tel Aviv International LGBT Film Festival, and the Beer Sheva Short Film Festival.

He is the winner of multiple academic excellence awards, photography and music video competitions and the ARTiq scholarship. In his works, Fridman explores the lives of various figures from history such as a zoologist, an Arab poet, an escort boy or a servant.

Fridman's artistic practice combines meticulous historical research with the artistic freedom to weave imaginary stories and to plant/reveal gay and queer motifs hidden beneath the surface. In the works there is a reference to the concept of disguise, as Fridman himself embodies the historical figures that he so carefully researched as well as creates their

details at every stage of the process, from sewing the costumes to writing the texts, editing and post production. Fridman's action of disguise sheds new light on archival documents and raises questions about the heterosexual point of view and the manner in which it shapes history. His works challenge the accepted differentiations between truth and fiction, past and present, reality and imagination.

[Niv Fridman: official website](#)



Niv Fridman, *Herzl*, 2023



Niv Fridman, *Herzl*, 2023



Niv Fridman, *Herzl*, 2023



Niv Fridman, *Herzl*, 2023



Niv Fridman, *Herzl*, 2023

Tamar Lev-On

Twains, 2023, a triptych of manual and digital collages

In 1867, at the age of 31, the young journalist Samuel Clemens (aka Mark Twain), joined a Mediterranean tourist trip aboard a steamboat. His trip was sponsored by a local newspaper in exchange for articles and letters he would write about his journey. His letters were compiled into a travelogue, ultimately published under the title “The Innocents Abroad”, which, to this day, remains one of the most successful travel books in the world. Twain, to put it mildly, was unimpressed by the Holy Land. He described Palestine as bleak and heartbreaking, with an arid and hopeless landscape.

Tamar Lev-On’s collages fuse together the book’s illustrations - beautiful etchings by *Fay & Cox* - with images from her personal archives: historical and anatomical collections. She works manually with collage, light and shadows, eventually creating digital collages depicting Twain’s experience of wandering. The camel, a recurring theme throughout these works, is closely associated with the desert environment and the people of Palestine, and symbolizes Twain’s perception of the land, its landscape and inhabitants. In the first piece, the camel appears as a star

constellation at the heart of Twain’s mandala (circle of images), which is constructed from representations of man and camel, riding and chasing hopelessly in the arid environment. The main image refers to the human tendency to consult astronomy or structures in the sky as a map – physical and mental.

The second collage shows an Ottoman structure (“Sabil”, where the camels used to stop and drink water) in Jaffa. The columns are replaced by key characters from Twain’s travels, and its roof is supported by camels’ legs. The background consists of etchings of the local landscapes from Twain’s book.

Architecture plays a key role in the third collage as well. Here we see a camel and a skeleton supported by ancient Greek column bases taken from the etchings of the book. A skeleton-like tree grows on top of the camel’s potentially water-filled hump. It provides shade and comfort to a young Twain and an older Twain, for whom the artist tries to provide a pleasant respite from the journey.

Biography

Tamar Lev-On, b. 1978 is a mixed-media artist, lecturer and architect. Tamar gained her B.Arch from Tel-Aviv university and her MFA Fine Art from Kingston University, London, both in distinction.

During the five years she spent in London she regularly exhibited in “Red Gate” and “Macondo” Galleries. With the latter she exhibited an object and a film in Venice Biennale in 2009. In 2011 she participated in the Biennale again.

In her practice, Lev-On makes up myths, characters and histories through a variety of medium, which she uses to fracture the perception of reality of the viewers and questions the artist’s moral obligation towards her audience. In 2019 she published “Legend”, an artist book curated by Dr. Irena Gordon, suggesting an alternative Israeli history that includes 40 fictitious biographies, works of art and short stories written by renowned writers for the project.

Tamar is a member of P8 cooperative gallery in Tel Aviv in which she held her solo exhibition “Ancore” (curated by Avshalom Suliman) in 2022. She recently held the solo exhibition “BeGone”, in “Studio of her Own” in Jerusalem. She has exhibited in many solo and group exhibitions in nationally and internationally.

[Tamar Lev-On: official website](#)



Tamar Lev-On, *Twains*, 2023



Tamar Lev-On, *Twains*, 2023



Tamar Lev-On, *Twains*, 2023

Ayelet Carmi and Meirav Heiman

Zahara, 2021, video, 10:27 min.

The video art “Zahara”, begins with an aerial view over Jerusalem, above the site of the events which took place some 70 years ago, and serve as inspiration for this film. A female figure slowly revolves around herself, sinking to the ground, dragging a giant, magnificent wing. This figure is representative of Zahara Levitov, a young pilot killed in a plane crash on a civilian mission in 1948 at the Valley of the Cross. The elderly woman coming to her rescue is based on Ruth Dayan, a public figure in Zionism who, 10 years Zahara’s elder, went on to live for many years after Zahara died.

Re-imagined as mythological figures, the two make their way in the streets of a modern-day Jerusalem - through alleyways, the old market. The journey of Zahara and Ruth also brings to mind the story of Jesus’ tormented walk along the Via Dolorosa. Seeing Zahara walking along the same path, adds another layer of history to the work, thus elevating the

forgotten history of Zahara in which she becomes an allegorical heroine.

The aerial shot at the end connects the circular motion seen at the beginning, of a fall from heaven, to Zahara’s apotheosis, tying her final journey between two geographic spots and the one-time, fateful encounter between two female characters.

Biography

The Collaboration Ayelet Carmi and Meirav Heiman have been working together since 2014 and produced four joint projects to date. In 2014, they began collaborating on The Procession, which debuted as a 3-channel video installation at the Petach Tikva Museum of Art, Israel in 2018. The work was purchased by the collection of the Israel Museum. Also in 2018, Sphere stood at the center of a collaborative show that the two artists presented at the Neve Schechter Gallery in Tel Aviv. Additional projects include Icosahedron (Haifa Museum of Art, Israel in 2016), and Eclipse (2015), screened in Israel and abroad. Their collaborative work has gained support from the Lottery Council for the Arts (Israel), the Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts (Israel), Artis (NY), and Asylum Arts (NY). In 2019, Carmi and Heiman's collaborative works were featured in a large duo exhibition at Hadassah-Brandeis institute, Kniznick Gallery, Boston.

Their works were also featured in a series of festivals, including Videoformes, The Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, a video art program for the Museum of Nature and Hunting in Paris, Stuttgarter Filmwinter – Festival for Expanded Media, , FIVA – International Festival for Video Art, and KLEX – independent international festival of experimental film, video art and music.

[Ayelet Carmi: official website](#)

[Meirav Heiman: official website](#)



Ayelet Carmi and Meirav Heiman, *Zahara* (trailer), 2021



Ayelet Carmi and Meirav Heiman, *Zahara* (stills from videom), 2021



Ayelet Carmi and Meirav Heiman, *Zahara* (stills from video), 2021



Αλέξης Σαίμης and Μελίανν Ηέλμαν, Σάββατο (stills from video), 2021

Keren Farago

Characterized by its simplicity, sincerity, and emotional depth, many of Rachel's poems are considered to be nationalistic and romantic, celebrating the Jewish connection to the land and the Zionist dream of building a homeland. Many of Rachel's works were written in the last six years of her life. Tragically, Rachel died at the young age of 41 from tuberculosis. Despite her relatively short career, Rachel is widely regarded as one of the greatest Hebrew poets of the 20th century, and a significant cultural figure in the development of modern Hebrew literature. In her late days, she lived by the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), where she is buried.

In her work, Farago focuses on creating layered paintings on a background of various prefabricated materials of her own selection, using pages from old, discarded books, old maps and embroidery patterns and fabrics. These backgrounds are carefully chosen to enhance the meaning and beauty of the text or patterns, on which she sketches feminine figures, and the local fauna and flora using simple, clear lines. Farago is inspired by Rachel the Poetess' poetry and lyrics, and offers further visual and textual interpretation.

In My Garden I Have Planted Thee

Rachel Bluwstein, 1930

In my garden I have planted thee,
My hidden garden – that heart of mine.
Thy branches have intertwined within me
And deep thy roots serpentine.

From sunrise till nightfall
My garden shall not be stilled –
For thou art in it, thou art in it,
With thy thousand singing birds it is filled.

Biography

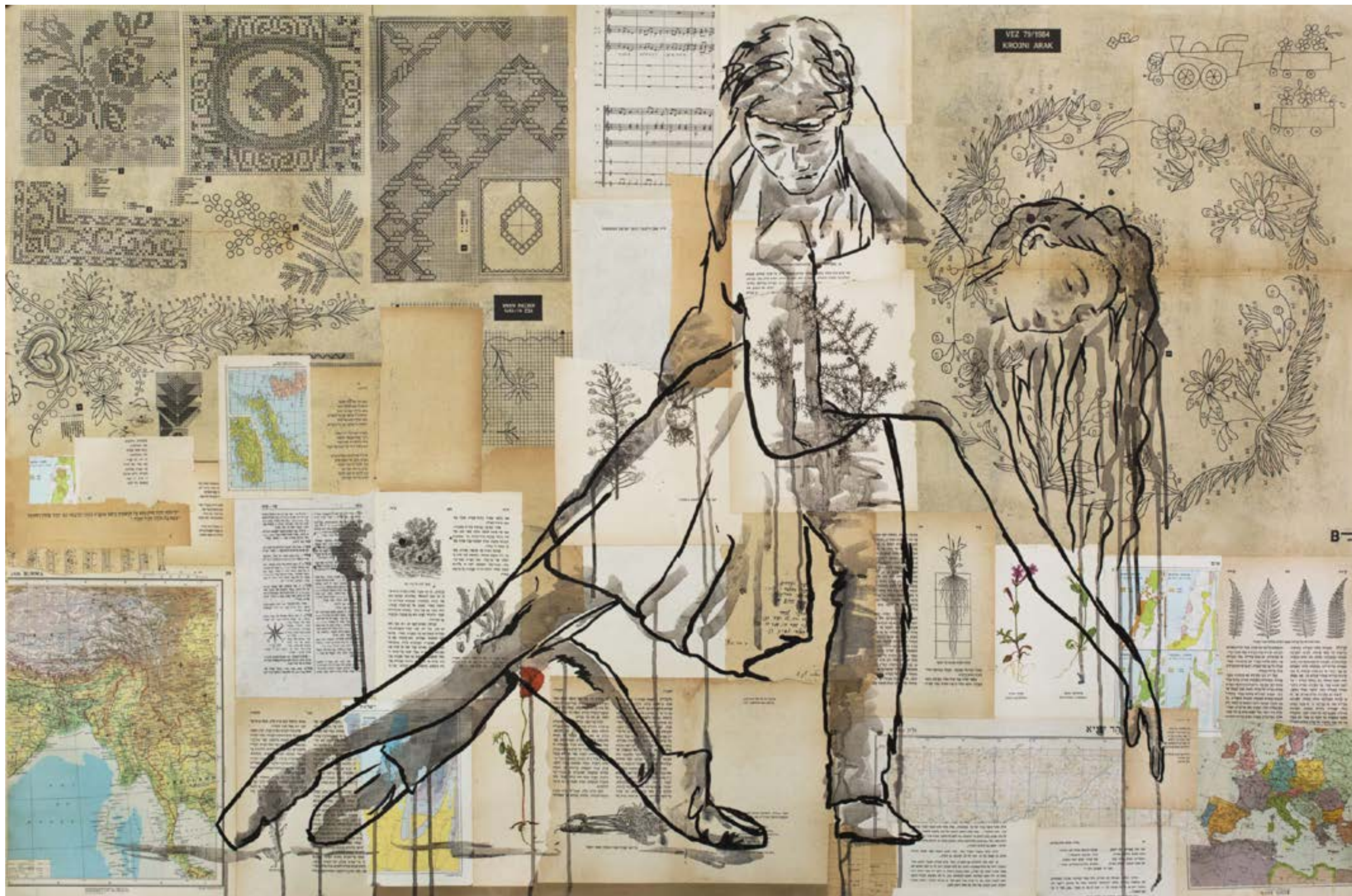
Keren Farago was born in 1975 and lives and creates on Kibbutz Maayan Zvi. She is a graduate of HIT (2002) in studies for industrial design and art. She further studied independently in various fields such as sewing, stitching and imagery.

She currently focuses her creative activities in specialized drawing on a background of various “ready-made” papers of her own concept. Keren’s work involves a background of this “ready-made” paper which she prepares by using pages from old discarded books, in many cases where the text may be relevant, and on which she sketches simple, clear lines to portray the subject, generally from fauna and flora. The paper used is from old texts, usually from the early last century or prior, using different kinds of paper and print and generally telling the story of the Jewish people. The drawing itself relates directly to the background texts and pages which Keren carefully chooses and assembles, and the ensuing sketch is a conceptual and emotive flow which exhibits her personal and unique artistry.

[Keren Farago: official website](#)

Keren Farago, *In my Garden (detail)*, 2020 >





Keren Farago, *In my Garden*, 2020



The Sublime Porte

Israel Under the
Ottoman Reign

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