

New in Tel Aviv for Eurovision 2019:

Artist Nirit Levav Packer reveals the work TOY A giant installation in the image of Netta Barzilai Made completely of used toys

Artist Nirit Levav Packer creates figurative sculptures and various objects out of recycled and surprising raw materials

Screws, bearings, pegs, bicycle chains and old toys are just a small part of the detritus of materials from which artist and designer Nirit Levav Packer creates sculptures, works and objects in various sizes and with various inspirations, with an emphasis on values of sustainability along with empowering women. Women and femininity, animals and especially dogs, are her passions and her main creations. Her unique handprint is characterized by the ability to take rigid, massive and dramatic materials such as a cog or nails and combine them delicately into vibrant works in life-size images of women, birds, dogs and other animals. The range of artist Levav Packer's works, some of which have been exhibited in New York, London, Miami and Israel, breaks through boundaries and shifts between genres, including contemporary and commercial art (sculptures and murals), jewellery, Judaica, furniture, light fixtures, public sculpture and more. In the words of Levav Packer: "As an artist, I wanted to take part in celebrating the Eurovision which Israel is hosting; as one creating with materials and out of the joy of creating, the image that sprang to my mind is that of Netta Barzilai made entirely of toys".



TOY by Nirit Levav Packer

Female Empowerment in the Image of Netta Barzilai

At this time, to celebrate the Eurovision, the current work by artist Nirit Levav Packer – TOY – is being exhibited: a huge installation in the image of Israeli Eurovision winner Netta Barzilai made of tens of thousands of used toy and game parts on an iron construction. The toys, which were meant to be thrown away, were collected in a huge collection project from kindergartens in Tel Aviv, which the Israeli public also volunteered for. The sculpture is 4 meters tall, 6 meters wide, 2 meters deep and weighs 2 tons. The installation was created with great care and sensitivity in the image of Netta Barzilai, with the hair rolls and unicorn horn identified with her. With Barzilai as an example of female daring, innovation and creativity for the artist, the sculpture serves as the opening round of a wide-ranging international initiative, encompassing multinationals like Google and Facebook, of a large-scale collection of old toys aimed at placing environmental sculptures by the artist in world capitals, aimed at promoting values of sustainability and art. In the words of Levav Packer: “with me, there is often a connection between the material and the subject, like the sculpture of a squirrel made of acorns, a crow I created from sunflower seeds and so on. To celebrate Israel is hosting the event, I wanted to create a homage to the Eurovision and to Netta Barzilai’s winning song, and since it’s about a TOY, there was an immediate connection in my imagination. I think the song’s message is very relevant to our time, to the ME TOO movement, and in general, I believe women have great powers, which are not sufficiently realized in world leadership and politics. For that same reason, I turned the spotlight on pregnancy and childbirth in the series ‘From the Belly’: women and mothers who have gone through the common experience of pregnancy and childbirth will never choose war as an option, in my opinion. They will choose to talk and talk and scream and argue, but it will be solved with speaking, not with sending their children to battle. To me, that is the power of femininity”.



Artist Nirit Levav Packer

For years, Nirit Levav Packer (55) has been playing with old, used and varied materials in sculpting dominant, avant-garde pieces. Bicycle chains, screws, bearings, light bulbs, pegs, keys, used watches and twigs are only some of the materials she handles with a delicate artist's hand, creating, with great sensitivity, huge sculptures as well as small ones, pictures, menorahs and candleholders, light fixtures, murals and other creations. A figurative, life-size sculpture of a pregnant woman made of metal motor springs, a stretching dog fashioned from rigid bicycle chains, a delicate crow made of seeds and a bird from an accumulation of clothes pegs are just some of the works she creates using craftwork. Levav Packer's work is driven by contrasts: masculinity vs. femininity, softness and gentleness vs. rigidity and power. Her works, on offer at the Nirit Levav Gallery in an old building in Jaffa's flea market, are exhibited in galleries, office buildings and private homes. Her love of sculptural art can be explained in three words: mother and father. Levav Packer's father, the late Zvi Levav, was a set manager with a workshop that drew interesting artists and designers (Tumarkin, Lifschitz and others). Unlike most girls her age, Levav Packer loved to work in her father's workshop even at a young age: creating, building, painting and working with the massive tools – a welder and saws, in the unique playground of her childhood. The smells of paint, glue, sawdust and iron are still with her today in her work as a sculptor and artist.

Levav Packer's mother was trained as a handicrafts teacher and worked at home on labour-intensive creations of knitting, sewing, embroidery and various crafts. Levav Packer, who already loved sewing as a child, made the natural choice in her early twenties to study fashion design. At 25, she graduated in fashion studies from Parsons School of Design in New York and began designing bridal gowns in a successful chain of stores. At a certain point in her work, the artist felt unfulfilled and unrealized artistically, since in managing a chain of stores bearing her name, most of her work consisted of dealing with clients, mothers and bridal companies, while creativity and design took a back seat. These feelings resulted in Levav Packer's gradual retirement from the world of fashion, and since 2000, she has been working on artworks in which she combines labour-intensive feminine creation such as knitting and embroidery with the masculine work of welding and soldering metals. In her view, that is how she recreates the connection between her mother and father. Her uniqueness lies in her ability to create with a variety of recycled raw materials: metals (cogwheels and bearings, railway ties, keys and old nails,



etc.), waste (lightbulbs, mattresses, matches, dolls, pegs, glass pieces etc.), and natural materials (acorns, sunflower seeds, rice, sea sand, gravel, shells etc.). She manages to give these old materials new life in the images of artworks ranging from profundity and thoughtfulness to daring, originality, humour and lightness.

Art Gallery in Jaffa

Artist Nirit Levav Packer has opened a gallery in the past year, in the flea market in Jaffa, taking up 400 sq.m in an ancient historic building, circa 1860, from the Ottoman period. The gallery is situated in a space that formerly served as stables for the horses and beasts of burden of the traders passing through the bustling port city, in the sumptuous building that used to be the "Manoli" Khan. In the gallery one can take in the large one-of-a-kind artworks (the best known of which are 'From the Belly', life-size sculptures of pregnant women made of thousands of metal parts), and minimal sculptures, and even furniture and jewellery design. The Jaffa gallery also serves as a means of introducing Nirit to collectors, curators, galleries and museums from overseas.

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