

To

AICA

The Organizing board of the 36<sup>th</sup> AICA Congress

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14.7.2002

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am an art critic from Tel Aviv, member of AICA since 1999. I send you herewith a proposal for the coming congress.

My name and address:

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Abstract of the paper:

*Israeli Art and (at least) Two Others. The Mixed Identity of Israeli Art Between  
Judaism and Orientalism.*

The identity of Israeli art is something that was always being asked about (by artists and critics as well), something very complicated, compiled of inner paradoxes and contradictory poles.

As Jews, the experience of being the ultimate "Others" of the world was in the very depths of the identity of the first generations of those who immigrated to Palestine in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Jewish art was related mainly to Judaica and the

crafts of religious objects, and only during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish artists became part of the current trends of modern art.

The official date of the foundation of Israeli art is considered 1906, the year when the Bezalel Art School was founded in Jerusalem. The artists who came to Palestine had to invent, develop and define their art – they all studied in academies in Europe and were influenced by western aesthetics. On arriving to Palestine, they met with a different landscape, different climate, and of course the “natives” who lived there – Arabs, Bedouins. How were they to relate to their new home, yet a very strange place; how were they to relate to the “natives” of the place they arrived in, they who, as Jews, were in the words of Homi Baba “off-whites” themselves?

It is fascinating to follow the way Israeli artists adopted western art and western concept of the Orient, the Orient that was now their home and yet they looked at it from the outside, from the eyes of European artists.

I borrowed the name of a famous Leonardo's drawing “*St. Anne and Two Others*” with the addition of the not-less-famous analysis of Freud of that painting, as a paraphrase to what I want to suggest about Israeli art. The “Two Others” of Leonardo were Maria and the Baby, and there is also the little lamb. They are all connected in the same contours. The “Two Others” of Israeli art are the past - the very experience of Otherness that goes with being Jewish, and the near past of being Europeans in the Orient and thus removing the role of the Others to the Arab natives, and the concept of the exotic, erotic, romantic Orient to the landscape itself. The continuous and troublesome political present has made Israeli contemporary artists (from the 60s and the 70s on) aware to the impossible situation of being a Colonial state in an age of global post-Colonialism. They try, in many different ways, to create art that express a

critical, reflexive new attitude towards the place where they live, where we all live,  
Jews and Arabs. A place that combines the identities of First and Third Worlds

My lecture would be accompanied by slides of images made in Israel from the end of  
the 19<sup>th</sup> century till present days: images of Palestine from before the Zionist era till  
what is known now as the Post-Zionist times, images of landscape and people that  
oscillate between colonial to Post-colonial attitude.

(Lecture in English)

Short biography:

b. 1956, Tel Aviv

Lives in Tel Aviv.

Studies –

1976-1981- Studies for BA in Art History and Classical Studies, Tel Aviv University

1981-1984 – Studies for MA in Art History, Tel Aviv University

Writing –

1984-1991 – art critic of “Hadashot” (a daily newspaper)

1991- 1994 – art critic of “Ma’ariv” (a daily newspaper)

since 1995 – art critic of “HA’IR” (a weekly magazine)

Radio and TV –

Since 1990 – art critic of different cultural radio programs

1991-1995 – art critic of “Culture Diary”, TV program

1995-1996 – artistic counseling to the cable channel of the Educational Television



Free-lance curator (a selection of group exhibitions):

1992- "Silent Oppositions", Sara Levi Gallery, Tel Aviv

1994 – "Brother Sun, Sister Moon", The Artists' Studios in Tel Aviv

1997 – "Left Right", Gordon Gallery, Tel Aviv

1998 – "Suspicion" – Art in Cinema", The Haifa Museum of Art

1999 – "Getting Dressed", Haifa Museum of Art

Teaching –

Since 1997 I have been teaching in several art school and academies (among them Haifa University, The Open University etc.). The courses are on different issues concerning contemporary art, Israeli and international.