

October 7 rave victims honored in TLV exhibit

'6:29' recalls the harrowing events of the Nova festival in Re'im

• BY EREZ HAREL/Walla

In normal times, a music festival is a haven of joy and beauty. Colorful revellers sway under vibrant curtains, surrounded by captivating art installations.

However, as visitors enter "6:29: A Memorial and Commemoration Exhibition for the Nova Community," they are confronted with a complex array of emotions amidst the breathtaking displays.

The new exhibition at the Tel Aviv Expo meticulously recreates the Nova festival, encompassing both its original splendor and the grim remnants of the horrific massacre that unfolded on that fateful day.

The poignant exhibition, organized by the Nova festival producers in collaboration with numerous organizations and participants, faithfully reconstructs the square where the devastating Hamas attack took place on October 7.

The exhibition will run for a minimum of two weeks, with an entrance fee of NIS 50, serving as both a donation to the Nova community and a means to cover the exhibition's expenses.

Among the original artifacts on display are the spandex curtains, concert stages that fell victim to the attack, bullet-riddled toilet cubicles, charred vehicles, and the bar adorned with untouched bottles.

Even the sound equipment once operated by Matan Lior, the festival's sound engineer who tragically lost his life in



TWO OF THE displays at the Tel Aviv '6:29' exhibit for the Nova community. (Reuven Castro)

the massacre, can be found.

Visitors to the exhibition navigate through scattered tents, mats, and beanbags, encountering a blend of artwork and informative signs providing insight into the Nova community.

A focal point within the exhibit is the "Corner of Loss and Reality," showcasing shirts, colorful bags, pairs of shoes, books, and beauty products, each carrying a poignant tale from those present at the festival. The organizers extend an invitation to the families of victims and abductees, working closely with the Lahav 433 police unit representatives stationed at the exhibition, to

help identify and reclaim personal belongings.

Throughout the exhibition, screens display dedicated video clips, artistic projections, and other means of conveying the haunting final moments experienced at the festival grounds.

The primary objectives of the exhibition are to pay homage to the lives lost, raise awareness about locating missing individuals and securing the release of abductees. As visitors witness exuberant youth dancing to the music on one screen, they are simultaneously confronted with the desolation that followed the massacre on the other. An evocative soundtrack of specially curat-

ed trance music from the past two decades plays softly in the background.

"Many grieving parents have reached out, seeking solace and a safe space to find comfort," shared Omri Sassi, one of the Nova Festival producers. "Our goal is to allow people to experience what we went through and, above all, to remember our fallen friends and brothers. The exhibition required significant time and minimal funding, and we rely on the support of the general public to finance future projects."

Reut Feingold, the exhibition director, expressed, "The commemoration corner offers the audience a chance to meet the faces and names of the hundreds of souls taken prematurely. This exhibition tells not only a tragic tale but portrays a community that embodies hope, resilience, and unity in the face of darkness. We invite the audience to witness the vision of light emerging from an abyss of despair and to join us in praying for the safe return of our missing loved ones."

Amidst attempts to deny the events of October 7, Omri Kochavi, producer and founder of Nova, emphasized the necessity of the exhibition, stating, "We cannot allow anyone to erase the truth of what transpired. We still have a long

journey ahead.

"Nova is no longer just a party; it is a community, a tribe that represents the guiding light for others. Not only does our Nova audience look up to us, but the entire Israeli public looks to us as an example. We implore all Israelis to recognize us as a united community and provide us with the strength and resources to keep moving forward. Our ultimate goal is to keep marching and, eventually, return to the dance floor."

The commemorative exhibition opened last week in the presence of the country's president and families of the victims. Yael Bar Zohar moderated the ceremony, featuring



Castel Museum showcases Pinchas Shaar

• BY HAGAY HACOHEN

In 2008, Bilhah, the widow of noted Israeli artist Moshe Castel acquiesced to move both her home and the adjacent museum dedicated to her husband's art from the Old City of Safed to the Jerusalem suburb of Ma'ale Adumim.

While Castel's murals hang in the Knesset, the Binyanei Hauma Convention Center, the Rockefeller Center in New York, and the official residence of the president of Israel in Jerusalem, the Castel Museum hosts nearly all the other important works by the acclaimed artist.

Castel was described after his death in 1991 by art historian Gideon Ofra as a member of the "heroic period of Israeli modernism." Ofra added that Castel was a victim of "violence by art critics and a withdrawal by the cultural establishment."

"He remained singular," Ofra told art writer Ruthi Regev, "without pupils."

The basalt artwork at the President's Residence, *Glory Kotel for Jerusalem*, is familiar to anyone following the news. This is because it has been shown in the background of every government inauguration press photo since Menachem Begin.

"When visitors come," Moshe Castel Museum curator Alek D. Epstein told *The Jerusalem Post*, "they can go back and watch works of art shown at famous exhibitions as if they were using a time machine."

"What we have here," he pointed out, "doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. In one spot we have 65 years of accumulated artistic labor."

"There will always be script," former Moshe Castel Museum CEO Eli Raz explained about Castel's mature paintings, "because everything in them comes from the written word."

Castel used Arabic, ancient Hebrew, Cuneiform, and other regional writing systems to reach a highly personal aesthetic. The textual density in his work is awe-inspiring. Most viewers, except perhaps biblical archeology professors, will not be able to read them.

It is only after a while that the eye begins to notice plants, a priest, human figures, and

women. The heavy paintings, usually made with crushed minerals, transmit a unique energy. They might resemble the masculine drip action paintings of Jackson Pollock, but unlike those, these are highly structural. The movement in Castel's paintings is divided into sections and is restrained.

The rich hues Castel labored over, grinding mineral samples with meticulous precision, are reminiscent of how Anish Kapoor lavishes pigments on his sculptures to offer a taste of the sublime, even while Kapoor's outlook differs from Castel's.

For example, Kapoor purchased the exclusive rights to use Vantablack pigment. Said to be the blackest black ever produced, Vantablack is used to prevent light from entering telescopes in space. In contrast, Castel ground his pigments by hand and took them from the very earth of the land he felt connected to.

"His understanding of Jacob's Ladder," said Raz, "was not like the Western one. Christian tradition depicted a ladder on which angels ascend and descend. Castel followed a unique, Jewish understanding, according to which man himself is the ladder connecting heaven and earth."

The collection offers a deeply satisfying journey that begins with Castel's paintings from the Bezalel Art Academy of 1920s Jerusalem, continues with works created in France, moves on to his involvement with the *Ofakim Hadashim* (New Horizons) art group in the 1940s, and depicts his role in the foundation of the Safed Artists' Quarter after the 1948 War of Independence.

According to Raz, French friends of Castel teased the artist by saying that even when he paints French models he is unable to restrain himself from painting Jerusalem-like buildings in the background.

While Bilhah Castel's home is not usually open to the public, Castel Museum CEO Haggai Sasson opened it up for our tour. Castel's widow oversaw the work carried out to build the museum and lived alongside



'GLORY KOTEL for Jerusalem' by Moshe Castel. (Mark Neyman/GPO)



MOSHE CASTEL
(Wikimedia Commons)



PINCHAS SAAR'S 'Chariots of Gods (An Artist as a Magician)', 1986. (Alek D. Epstein)

it. The charming residence is furnished with elegant French furniture and offers an intimate look into the life of the artist. "It is possible to visit the home upon special request," Sasson explained.

Thanks to the generosity of art collector Zohar Bernard Cohen, the museum now exhibits showing never-seen-before works by Pinchas Shaar. Born in Poland and of the same generation as Castel, Shaar was a brilliant Jewish artist who survived the Lodz Ghetto, lived in Tel Aviv, painted in New York, and is now sadly known only to a handful of art lovers.

Shaar's first painting after his liberation was created with paint and canvas given to him by the UN International Refugee Organization and is now in the Yad Vashem collection. It depicts a Jewish refugee sitting on whatever meager possessions he was able to save.

In Israel, Shaar befriended Naftali Bezem. Bezem, sent to Israel from Poland at the age of 14 by his parents before the Holocaust, designed the Palmach symbol as well as the ceiling of Beit HaNassi.

He worked as a theater set designer and was one of the first artists to open a studio in Jaffa. The paintings on display at the Castel Museum are vivid and imaginative. Created in New York during the 1970s and 1980s, they express a deeply rooted sense of Jewish visual imagination.

One unusual work, a large diptych depicting a golden chariot pulled by a flaming horse as the painter behind it soars, is breathtaking. Its sheer delight in the creative act, the painterly genius that delivers in an instant a powerful emotion, is worth the trip.

In a country where the city of Bat Yam destroyed paintings by Issachar Ber Ryback after it had

kept them in a water tower for decades; and Ashdod made no effort to hold on to the Kenda and Jacob Bar-Gera collection of art made by persecuted artists, Ma'ale Adumim has risen to the task of creating and maintaining a museum which honors an original Israeli painter and his generation of Jewish artists.

The Art of Pinchas Shaar—from the Biblical World to the New World and Back, will be shown until the end of the month. Museum opening hours are Sunday to Thursday 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Free admission. Call (02) 535-7000 to learn more. Guided tours are offered in a variety of languages, such as English, Russian, Italian, and Arabic. (Beit Castel, where Moshe and Bilhah once lived, is still an art gallery.)

Alek D. Epstein and Sofia Birina published an English language book on the Bar-Gera collection in 2022 titled *Kenda and Jacob Bar Gera and their Unique Collection*.

Michael Rapaport in Israel, guests on 'Eretz Nehederet'

• BY HANNAH BROWN

American actor and comedian Michael Rapaport, an outspoken voice of support for Israel in the United States, landed in Israel early on Tuesday morning, when he headed straight for Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, and followed this visit by taping an appearance on *Eretz Nehederet* ("Wonderful Country"), Israel's premiere satirical comedy show.

As he walked around Hostage Square, the place where families and friends of those taken hostage by Hamas on October 7 have created various exhibits to publicize their plight, he posted a video on his Instagram account, saying, "You know what's crazy, if it were anywhere else in the world, it would be vandalized, which is so f***king ridiculous that all these posters and all this... people would rip this down. And the poster ripping... at the end of the day, it's such a slap in

the face, it's so embarrassing, especially in my city of New York, it's embarrassing that people have been doing that... Literally, this would get torn to shreds."

Heading to the Keshet studios in Herzliya, Rapaport taped an appearance on *Eretz Nehederet* in a skit with the comedy show's regulars Alma Zack, Liat Harlev, and Yuval Semo, and conferred with one of the show's creators, Muli Segev. The episode featuring Rapaport aired after the Tuesday night news on Keshet 12.

A long-time supporter of Israel, Rapaport has become especially vocal since the massacre that started the war with Hamas in Gaza. Speaking at a rally in Washington last month, he called for the hostages to be freed and said, "I've never felt this prideful to be Jewish in my life. It's been a crazy time, but Jewish people around the world, we have seen it all and we have heard it all. Israel is not going anywhere."



MICHAEL RAPAPORT (Keshet)