

## Father-daughter exhibit stars at Ron Arad show

A new exhibit at the Israel Museum showcases a collaboration of Israeli-born father and daughter artists Gabriel and Shira Klasmer.

By Ellie Armon Azoulay | Aug.28, 2012 | 10:19 AM



Shira and Gabriel (Gabi) Klasmer: Art brings them closer together. Photo by Emil Salman

He's a sculptor and painter. She's a photographer. Working together professionally brought the father-and-daughter team of Gabriel (Gabi) and Shira Klasmer closer together, and produced a new show in Israel.

The collaboration of the Israeli-born artists, who both live in London, was shown for a few days this month at the Givon Gallery in Tel Aviv and, will be exhibited until September 5, at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem as part of Israeli-born designer Ron Arad's "720 Degrees" project (which consists of 5,600 silicon rods that form a circle 26 feet above the museum garden).

An unclear sound wafts from the lower exhibition space in the Givon Gallery in Tel Aviv, which has been the home gallery of Gabi Klasmer since the 1980s. An abstract visual image accompanies the sound at the entrance to the space of "Walking the Line." The work is a panoramic frame of horizontal color surfaces moving from right to left. A black vertical line cuts through the image each time, creating a different image in its place. Klasmer painted the panoramic surfaces, with their changing colors, in a dark parking lot as his daughter filmed him at work. Without an explanation by the artists, it is difficult to understand what is happening in the work. It is even more difficult to imagine that it is not a digital creation.

Klasmer is best known for his large, more or less abstract paintings with their sweeping, repetitive movements that are often created with a squeegie or a brush.

The main difference in this work is in the material employed. Instead of using paint and seeing the results of his meeting with the fabric as he labors, he held a rod with LED lights and moved it from right to left over a surface that had been prepared in advance. His daughter Shira, 32, filmed the results at a very slow exposure.

"This work creates a supposedly meditative effect for the viewer, but it is more fundamental at its basis," the older Klasmer explains during a recent visit to Israel. "It works on the principle of memory and repetition. The work represents my attempt to remember what the previous move was."

Shira pipes in to explain the work. "While I do a 40-second exposure with two parallel cameras that create a panorama, Gabi walks through the space with a rod and paints with the light." Through trial and error, when they realized that they could not repeat the same movement over and over, Gabi felt free to do something different, to make mistakes and invent new moves.

They developed a method of calculating the effect, and began counting steps to define the work space. Any time that there was a deviation in Gabi's movements, new phenomena occurred within the frame. Sometimes, black spots that looked like people walking in some kind of landscape appeared among the colorful lines. At other times, the surface seemed like a card that is turned over before our gaze and gathers itself into a form reminiscent of the folds of a curtain, creating a three-dimensional effect.



Visitors walk past Israeli designer Ron Arad's video installation in the Art Garden at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem August 14, 2012. Photo by Reuters

### Playing in the parking lot

Another work that Gabi and his daughter have presented, entitled "Thin Air," is exhibited on the gallery's second floor, and is an outgrowth of Gabi's work as a sculptor. It is comprised of two slide projectors placed at the center of the space, projecting onto two walls that face each other. The objects projected are three-dimensional images that were arranged in the same parking lot adjacent to Gabi's studio in London. Every few seconds, the slide changes and another playful sculpture appears: a mountainous landscape made of a felt blanket, a sculpture made of plastic bags, a spray of water or a cloud of dust. Several slides contain an image of Gabi at work, and one of the slides shows both of them standing beside one of the sculptures.

They said that the parking lot has become their playground, and they used it over several weekends when it was dark and empty. "The idea of using three-dimensional techniques did something enormous," he says. "It must create a 'wow' effect and it stimulated us a lot. In general, the possibility of making something completely three-dimensional exists only for a hundredth of a second. We started playing with anything that could stay in the air."

Shira adds: "It connected very much with my interest as a photographer in terms of the long exposure and the movement. Gabi and I both have a methodical side that works with formulas that are almost mathematical and statistical. At the same time, we have a very spontaneous side that finds expression in this work."

Gabi grew up in Israel and attended the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. He has lived in London with his family for many years. A comprehensive exhibition of his work is expected to open next year at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

Shira, was born in Israel, but has lived in London since the age of seven. She attended Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design. About two years ago, she contacted Gallery 39 in Tel Aviv (which has since closed) in order to exhibit her work in Israel. The gallery suggested a joint exhibition with her father, which was the first time they had worked together. From the start of their collaboration, they discovered that they had a common interest in dealing with time, and Gabi's interest in spreading color complemented Shira's interest in slow-exposure photography.

## The odd couple

"The closeness between us really is professional," Gabi says. "There's no instance here of a father being a patron to his daughter. She's a photographer, and she does the things she does, and in certain places they come up against similar problems. Only I do that in my messy field of painting, while she's in the cleaner field of photography."

"I had a hard time as a student at Saint Martins," Shira says. "They didn't teach me too much technique or how to use certain materials. Everything was very conceptual, and I don't have enough technical knowledge." After her studies, she enrolled in a professional photography course and began to combine the knowledge that she accumulated with her love of dance – she had been a dancer from childhood until the age of 14. As she finds her path in art, she works in commercial photography and as an assistant to the well-known dance photographer, Chris Nash.

In her second collaboration with her father, they created a work together. Their long-time friend, London-based artist-designer-architect Ron Arad, invited them to create something together for his installation, "720 Degrees." The installation, which was exhibited for the first time at the London Roundhouse, is now on display at the Israel Museum. Arad's invitation arrived just as the Klasmers were working on a comprehensive documentation of all Gabi's works that are in his possession, from his earliest to his latest.

"All of these things together made us very close," Shira says. "We always spoke together. We have a houseful of artists – my mother is a painter, too. But suddenly an ongoing, deeper dialogue was created." They see the exhibition at the Givon Gallery as a kind of prelude of things to come. "I was looking for a place to hold a one-time event," Shira says. "We didn't have the strength to do a complicated installation and a long-term exhibition, and when we proposed the project to the Givon Gallery we didn't have any works yet because we were at the start of the process. But we keep on working, and we'd like to think about a more complex exhibition of longer duration."

During the conversation, father and daughter zigzag from Hebrew to English. Sometimes it is evident that Shira thinks in English and translates her thoughts into Hebrew. Gabi admits that he still thinks in Hebrew, "and in general I'm still very much Israeli. Still, I find English more precise. It's richer and lets you define yourself better."



The Klasmers duo near Ron Arad's '720 Degrees.'  
Photo by Emil Salman

Both of them see London as fertile ground for artistic endeavor. "It's very secular, and right now it seems to be one of the best cities in terms of multiculturalism. It's very civil."

Gabi evolved as an artist during the 1970s as part of the conceptual period in Israeli art. At a young age, he exhibited installations and various other works together with Sharon Keren (today a member of the Zik Group) as part of the important exhibition, "The Open Workshop" (1975), curated by Yona Fischer, and at the Yodfat Gallery in Tel Aviv. Much of his content had local, social and political themes.

"Much of Israeli art, for better or worse, deals with identity, Israeli identity," Gabi says. "I think that with Israeli art, like with Israeli music, people here love a work that has an Israeli stamp that says something about the place, the time and the language. But when you live abroad, you deal with that less."

"I contacted the gallery after years of working with Israeli artists," says Shira. "I married an Israeli and I felt that I had something that was connected to Israel. I felt it was important to exhibit here."

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