

'Mimicry' by Nima Ktalav, 2011 (Yaara Oren)

A new line

Jerusalem's fifth Drawing Biennale offers a fresh perspective

By GRAHAM LAWSON

Trades V - Beyond Paper" is the title given to the Fifth Biennale for Drawing in Israel, recently opened in Jerusalem. Artworks can be seen in five gallery spaces throughout the city, and each space has been allocated its own curator.

The majority of artworks can be seen at the Artists House and the Jerusalem Print Workshop. Smaller selections of works are exhibited at the Barbur Gallery, Agrippas 12 and Beit Ticho.

Approximately a year and half ago Tal Yahas, the chief curator of the biennale and the curator of the Artists' House, was asked by the Artists' House committee to submit a proposal for an overall theme for the biennale.

"I considered what had been done in the previous four biennales. I looked through the catalogues and saw that most of the important drawing artists had all been shown. I felt that I wanted to offer a new perspective," said Yahas.

Her criteria for the biennale's participating artists was that artwork not be executed on paper, but on or in any

other material or medium. In her own words, the artworks "should be something that had drawing as its essence, but not what we think of as conventional drawing."

"I do a lot of studio visits," continued Yahas. "When I spoke with artists they referred to drawing as a part of their practice, although what they do is not necessarily drawing. They think about drawing while they are working, even if the end result is not pencil and paper. It's drawing in a more conceptual and abstract way."

Traditionally, we understand a drawing to be a visual representation of figures or forms on paper. An artist, a man, woman or child, can portray any or all manner of marks, lines and shapes on a given surface; the finished result we perceive to be a "drawing."

Through the centuries, artists have drawn and created on various surfaces and used assorted materials. Our ancestors drew on cave walls and created the first murals; artists have woven pictorial scenes into tapestries and composed tableaux on stained-glass windows; many mosques are decorated with intricate designs on ceramic tiles.

In this way, drawing can be seen to have many forms and aspects, and is one of the earliest and most immediate means of expression known to man.

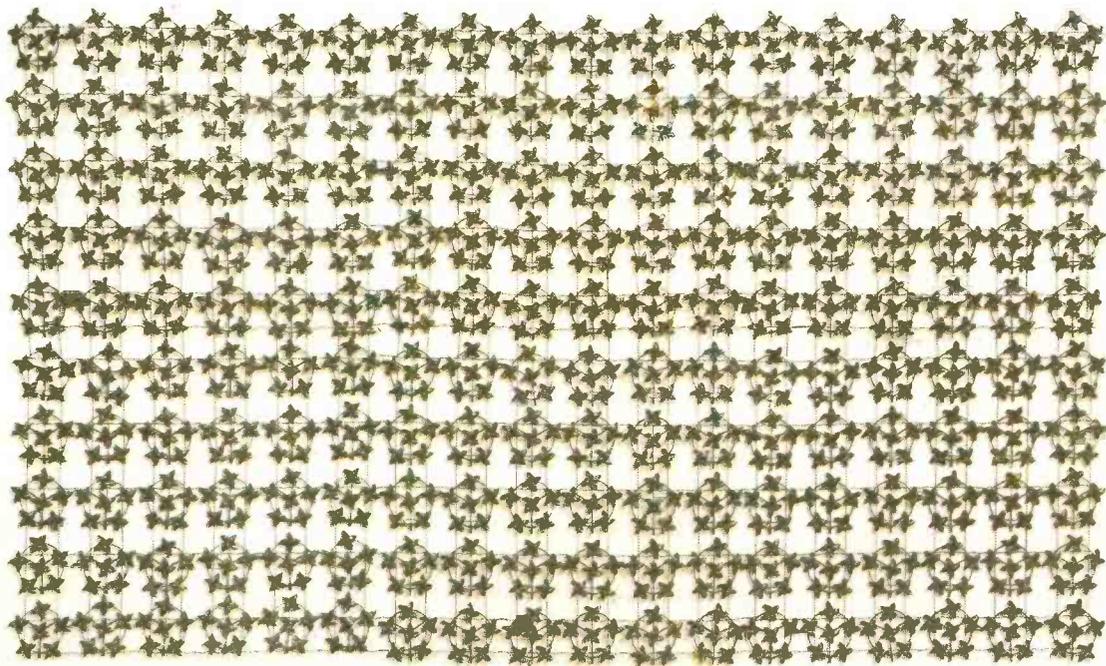
German-Swiss artist Paul Klee famously wrote that a drawing is "a line going for a walk." That line has not yet run its course, is ever-changing, often interweaving with the fabric of everyday life. Children doodle on paper, we make marks on moisture-laden windowpanes, create pictures on the sand at the beach - all of which can be understood as drawing.

"The more I explored it, the more I thought that drawing can be in every gesture, in every movement of the body. It's a line in space and time, and can be interpreted and manifested in many ways," said Yahas.

Throughout the 20th century, artists have variously experimented, shaped and played with "line" as never before. The beginnings of the Land Art movement in the 1960s and 1970s saw artists such as Richard Long and Robert Smithson create seminal artworks on the earth's surface, in effect drawing on land.

New mediums such as installation and video art and

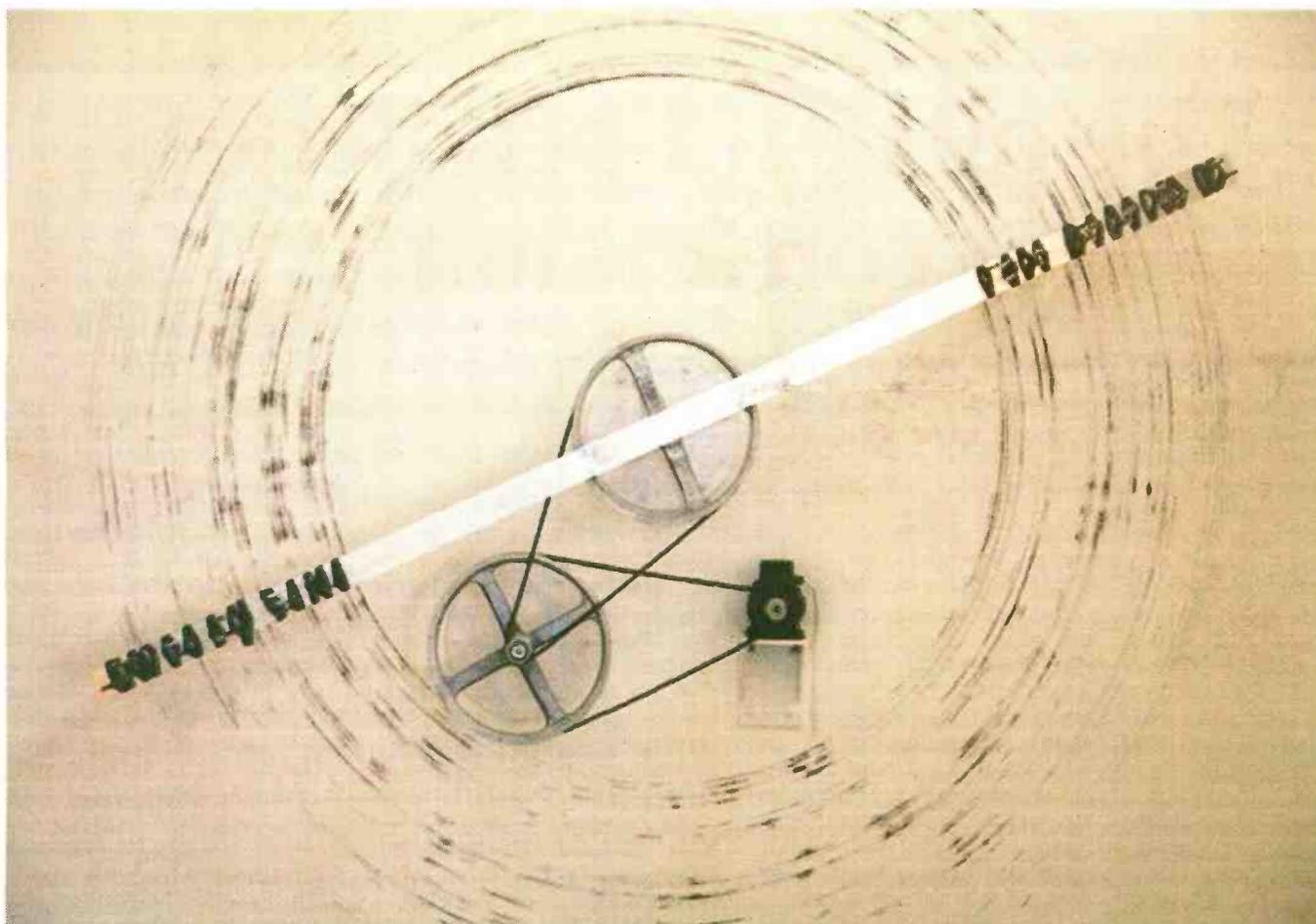
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'Vanes' by Liron Golan, 2013, mixed media (Warhaftig Venizian)



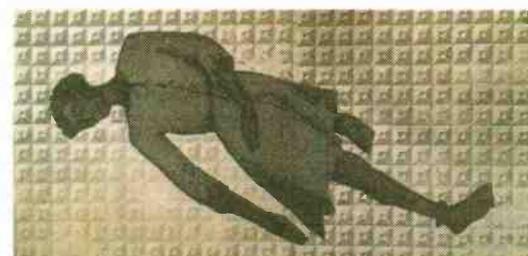
'Suprematist Wall' by Esther Schneider, 2013 (Courtesy of the artist)



Freeze, Aharon Ozery, 2012 (Ella Sverdlov-Keren)



'The Angel of Memory' by Israel Hadany, 2013 (Courtesy of the artist)



After 'Sts. Cosmas and Damian healing a Christian with the leg of a dead Moor' by Hilla Ben-Ari (Jerusalem Print Workshop)

advances in technology have presented contemporary artists with many new ways to explore drawing's traditional starting point – the line.

The biennale does not seek to challenge our notions of what a drawing is or should be, but to offer alternative ways of seeing what a drawing can be. "I thought to bring this perspective of how to look at drawing outside of the traditional coupling of pencil and paper, of how we're used to thinking about drawing," said Yahas.

On display at the Jerusalem Artists' House are works by 38 artists. In what is a contemporary take on the drawing practice there are works in a variety of mediums, such as sculpture, installation and video art, and which incorporate the use of unorthodox materials.

A mixed-media piece by Lea Avital weaves a path in and through the gallery space, Tal Shoshan "draws" on paper with the use of a sewing machine, while Aharon Ozery has created a striking metal assemblage that can function as a drawing machine. Ozery's "machine" is bolted to the wall, seemingly halted in its act of drawing circular shapes. A kind of performative drawing is seen in a video piece

by Michal Schreiber. Schreiber's work, titled *Registration*, is the result of a performance in which she donned a transparent nylon dress, which she inscribed with words that spring to mind or overheard in conversations. The dress becomes covered in a multicolored scrawl of words that merge into grid-like patterns.

Artists such as Talia Keinan, Merav Svirsky and Elham Rokni have combined the act of drawing with video projections.

Herd of Horses, the title given to Rokni's work, is a homage to English photographer Eadweard Muybridge, best known for his photographic studies of motion. Rokni has stenciled images of horses on the gallery wall and by means of a simple animation technique, creates the illusion of the horses in motion.

Just as magical, more ethereal in nature, is Svirsky's work *Common Swift*, in which is seen a projection of a flock of birds soaring in and out of the frame, their lines of flight appearing to create a kind of drawing through the tangled mass of lines on the gallery wall.

Other highlights in this exhibition are works by Nima

Ktalav, Joshua Neustein and Dvora Morag.

Traditionally, the main focus of the biennale has been the Artists' House. However, a visit to the Jerusalem Print Workshop, where Irena Gordon has curated an excellent exhibition, is recommended.

Works by 20 artists are on show, also incorporating different mediums and using materials as varied as brass, wood, glass and ceramic. Many of the works here are less conceptual, and in some cases ornate and decorative.

The biennale is a large event; there are some good works in the smaller spaces, and it might have been preferable to have displayed these works in the main Artists' House exhibition. This would have allowed the biennale's main theme to be seen in a stronger light, and enabled some good works to get more of a showing.

For those wishing to take in all the event has to offer there are events coordinated with the Muslala Art Group and at the recently reopened Mamuta Art and Media Center.

The biennale runs through March 1. More information is available on the interactive website specially designed for the biennale: www.art.org.il.