



FOUR: Stretching the Boundaries

Continuing along the path of experimentation, Izzy next showcases Hebrew lettering artists who are pushing the limits, looking for new ways of transforming the classic characters. Posing the question, “When is an aleph no longer an aleph?” he prepares us for their explorations. He reminds us that, while technology has replaced us in the past, it can also open up new territory. Interestingly, this artistic stretch also stretches the boundaries of beauty, as Izzy says, “in the classic sense.” With works from the early 20th century, we find designers and artists exhibiting “a rebellious attitude towards traditional letter forms.” Even to viewers unacquainted with Hebrew letters, the sense of transgression will be clear. Even with his larger definition of beauty, Izzy’s examples ask viewers to stretch beyond it — perhaps to question convention itself.

FIVE: Street Art and Fine Art

Which leads to the penultimate step in this journey, out into the streets as well as into galleries of fine art. Beginning with examples of street art and graffiti, Izzy notes his interest in the seeming deconstruction of Hebrew forms into strokes and new letter shapes, and I can’t help wanting to deconstruct the society in which artists work outside the law to be seen. In the US, we’re familiar with “graffiti” alongside railroad tracks, on train cars, and on walls of abandoned buildings. Are we complicit in some way as viewers of this “handwriting on the wall”? At the same time, can we take vicarious pleasure in the large, exuberance-embodied strokes and gestures of

these works? If energy, a sign of life force, partially defines beauty as Izzy proposes, these Hebrew letters might also fulfill his purpose, “to delight, uplift, and transport the soul, both outwards and inwards.”

“Fine art” examples follow as “the other side of the coin.” What is this coin Izzy refers to? I’d like to propose considering it as self-expression — seen

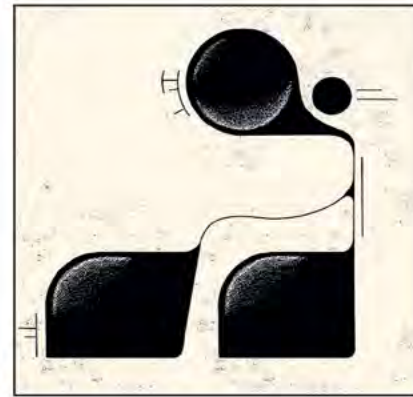
both outdoors as street art (un-sanctioned) and indoors as fine art (sanctioned). While perhaps too confining, it allows me to suggest interior physical place as a metaphor for self-exploration. Here, artists may raise questions about themselves, the human condition, about human nature: “Who am I, who are we?” Their works display Walt Whitman’s

liberating answer: “I am large, I contain multitudes.” Across this expanse, Hebrew letter artists share their discoveries, their intimate, sensitive probings recorded in aesthetic statements, perhaps connecting us to our own transcendent longings for wholeness. For such a response to the experience of beauty, Izzy has prepared us by quoting André Aciman: “Suddenly, we are marveled and uplifted, pulled out of our small, ordinary lives and taken to a realm far richer and more eloquent than anything we know.” (Continued on page 11.)

LETTERS & ALPHABETS • Opposite, clockwise from top left: Tal Becker, 2020; David Goldstein, 2021; Kalman Gavriel, 2018; Tal Becker, 2020; Guy Tamam; Sagi Carmi; Moshik Nadav; Anna Zakai, 2015–16. All are from the third section.



Above: Ismar David, 1951, from the second section.





Opposite left: Hiroko's piece from a collaborative installation, "Guideposts," 2009. Originally wrapped around a post, this is flattened on a panel. 78 x 10."

Opposite right: Marble inscription, 2016, 39" tall.

Right: Every Moment Instructs, 2005, 29 x 12.5".



EVERY MOMENT
INSTRUCTS, AND
EVERY OBJECT:
FOR WISDOM IS
INFUSED INTO
EVERY FORM.



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INTO US AS BLOOD;
IT CONVULSED US
AS PAIN; IT SILD INTO
US AS PLEASURE; IT
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DUL, MELANCHOLY
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WE DID NOT GUESS
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RALPH WALDO EMERSON