

Paper Cuts

Yehoshua Grossbard – Between the Paintbrush and the Scissors

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Certain aspects of Grossbard's works of art revert us to primal art, to a sort of blessed freshness achieved by few.

His unique creation is characterized by a gentle stroke of the paintbrush, an intense observation of his close surroundings and a great yearning for the past, which is being destroyed right before his eyes. Thus were created his blue-white-grey-yellow houses, thus were erected ancient balconies, remote courtyards and unstable verandas. His art – an art of trifles characterized by line and color, does not change. When the artist takes a pair of scissors and creates paper cuts, it seems they are a distant memory of the “*Shtible*” in a small village, from *Beth Midrash* windows, from the Sukka holiday ornaments.

However, Grossbard's decoupage are not copies in any way but a “following”, a sort of conscious emotional sublimation, an awareness which is transformed into an original work of art. In this manner, inspired by past treasures, the artist creates his own poetic personality, and this creation is paradoxically merely “a monumental minimalism”. Minimalism in terms of form/design, monumental in terms of vision and love of the past.

Many artists, upon taking the scissors, regard the cutouts an addition to their colorist work. For example, Henri Matisse's decoupage complement the sunny illuminated canvases of his brilliant works of art.

For Yehoshua Grossbard, the scissors assume the same function as does his paintbrush with which he created the vision of ancient Haifa.

In Gerhart Hauptmann's play “Michael Kramer” a gifted artist paints his entire life just one painting of Jesus. It seems that like the play's hero, Grossbard's art is just one panoramic painting in which colors and cutouts constitute close relatives from one family, albeit their thematic and design difference.

In my opinion, Grossbard is one of Israel's greatest artists, one who preserved throughout his life his picturesque minimalist truth.

After his demise, Grossbard did not receive a retrospective exhibition in the Museum of his beloved city. True, he was not a modernist or a post-modernist, but an inspired local painter. He did not search for “isms” which pop up and die in the galleries in Paris and New York.

Through his decoupage, like filigree work, he carried on the golden chain of forgotten Jewish tradition, thus creating his own self.