



Belle Shafir: Survival (Botanical Gardens)

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of Affairs," her reference is evidently to contradictions and absurdities in our political expectations, but again the work itself is strong and original enough to do without title or conceptual justification.

An unusual referential piece in this botanic setting is "Survival" by **Belle Shafir**, which consists of the bole and roots of a huge tree, the roughly circular biomass of roots forming a natural sculpture (the remains of the trunk have been reworked a bit too but it's the "frontal" view that counts. The root system is fantastic, an exercise in survival.

Some works are protest pieces. A pseudo battering-ram for knocking down buildings, a ball suspended from a crane arm, by **Avi Shaham**, is supposed to represent the forces of darkness and greed. It isn't sufficiently interesting as an object, nor solid enough to convince as a ram.

Terrorism is also attacked in a construction made of old door jambs and window frames by **Gili Shanit**. It represents the aftermath of an explosion, but has no artistic point of view. As a *New Yorker* cartoon once put it: "Lacks form and meaning."

The centerpiece of this garden is the very large pond, filled with half-dead water plants, beautiful Japanese carp and a variety of wildfowl, including a pair of white swans and a brace of rarely seen Western Australian black swans. A number of waterfowl have had their wings brutally and unprofessionally cut to keep them from flying away and feebly try to fan themselves in the shade of a bush with the miserable stumps of what's left. It's a truly awful sight; I had a fantasy of the perpetrators having their limbs amputated, Saudi Arabian style.

The pond has attracted several artists. The best of the pond efforts, a slight one at that, is a raft of flowers with four lake white geese aboard, made by **Gideon Gechtman**, intended as a "comment" on the real and the unreal. Gosh, spot the difference! The worst of the pond efforts is a messy construction at water's edge by **Nekoda Singer**, optimistically entitled "Angel of the Pond."

Hoping for better things, I climbed to the summit of the Givat Ram slope to search for number 31, a work by veteran environmental artist **Dani Karavan**, who took as his text a line from the *Song of Songs*, "Oh my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock." It's pretty obvious that real doves and rocks are not what was on King Solomon's mind but Karavan has mounted the original Hebrew phrase in the back of one of the small burial caves at the summit of this site, having written it in purple neon lighting tubing which glows in the gloom. Well, a burial cave isn't a cleft by any interpretation, though I admit the

color of the light is royal purple.

Others participating with very varying degrees of success are **Mirta Edery**; **Naama Aaronson**; **Aliza Olmert**, **Nitza and Ofer Shmuelfeld**; **Sam Azoulay**; **Ora Eitan**; **Dov Or-Ner**, **Shai Zakai** and **Boaz Tal**; **Mira Weinstein**; **Talia Tokatly**; **Michael Tropper**; **Noa Treister**; **Mira Cohen**; **Maya Muchawsky-Parnas**; **Shuli and Roi Nachshon**; **Ronen Siman-Tov**; **Edna Fisher**; **Lotus Peles-Chen**; **Guy Raz**; **Talma Shiloni** and **Yoav Weiss**; **Ayal Shifron**, **Dikla Baniel** and **Ofer Tamir**; **Yoav Trifon**, **Reuven Cohen-Alloro** and "friends."

(Botanical Gardens, entrance from parking adjoining the Superpharm off Rehov Herzog). Till October 31.

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