

Inside and Out - Associations and a Journey into Guided Imagination **By Yehoshua Sobol**

When I saw Ruti's new paintings, an old dream burst out of my consciousness and before my eyes I saw the shattered city walls made of flesh bricks, and I saw the blood that holds the bricks together, and behind the wall I saw the horrified skin peeled faces with their wounded eyes, and this bleeding wall veils them like a Shahid's (martyr) scarf, and now I remember that in my dream, there was laundry hanging down from the balconies of the shattered city while I was running to a missed appointment, and here they are in Ruti's paintings, in the shape of washed baby clothes smashed into the flesh and blood brick wall. And on the wall in letters of blood you can see childish spells like "Abra Kadabra" and "Alakazam", childish spells that are meant to work a miracle, to scare away evil and spread good. Another interpretation sneaks to mind, it is based on the etymological connection between Kadabra and Cadaver; a corpse. The question is whether the word Cadaver reminds one only by accident of the Hebrew word "Cadever" which means: "like the plague".

And now I remember that all this happened on a moonlit night. It was not a full moon that was hanging there in the torn raggedy sky above the shattered city, but some kind of a decapitating sickle blade, like that crescent moon above the scalped head in Ruti's painting. A moon that is lingering over a skinless face with blood filled eyes staring out of sockets that are nothing more than open bleeding wounds frozen in horror. With a second look it is clear that this black crescent moon forms the arch that holds the earplugs that are meant to protect the ears of shooters from the roaring thunder of gunfire. This bleeding head is a head that shoots and does not hear.

With this comprehension comes great clarity that is as harsh as the cruel light of this land. Ruti Helbitz Cohen captures and paints the inside and out of the horrific Israeli experience and existence with concise and primal intensity that combines the power of children's drawings with adults' nightmares. The bleeding flesh walls in her paintings destroys faces and heads and yet still carries inscriptions in Latin characters like "Remember" or the odd word "Feelfull". Underneath this odd word is a blood painted weapon breaking through a veiled-wall head that hides another inscription, a word with two F's appearing above and under the weapon, suggesting that it may be the word "Fulfill", the reverse of "Feelfull".

Beyond all these associations there is the wall and the writing on our wall. There are barriers and flesh and blood walls seemingly built for protection but which only invoke aggressiveness that invites more torn flesh and more blood.

Yehoshua Sobol is a leading Hebrew playwright. He has written 13 plays, many of which have been staged in Europe and the USA to great critical acclaim. Sobol has also published two novels, *Silence* (2000) and *Whiskey's Fine* (2004).