

ART



Someck so good
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A wide range of artists pays tribute to a poet with tangible works

• By BARRY DAVIS



Nitzan Mintz and Dede, 'Slaughterhouse,' 2014. (Nitzan Mintz and Dede)

It is fair to say that most people appreciate works of art by discerning some rhyme or reason to the creation proffered to them. The same can clearly be said for the way artists relate to the work of their professional counterparts, and the general public can judge for itself whether this is the case with the items in "Brush of Fire."

The exhibition opened yesterday at the **Beit Meirov** Art Gallery in Holon, as part of the city's 2014-15 Season of Design.

Rhyme is certainly a prominent consideration here, as the Holon show comprises visual renditions of the work of 62-year-old poet Ronny Someck by around 30 top artists and designers from across a range of areas of endeavor.

For Guy Morag Tzepelewitz, the confluence between Someck's textual proffering and tangible readings thereof is a given. "There is a lot of color in his poems," he notes.

Tzepelewitz, who curated *Brush of Fire*, enlisted the talents of a wide range of artists whose works come from a broad disciplinary stretch. Consider the likes of 69-year-old Israel Prize laureate, graphic designer and educator David Tartakover, internationally acclaimed 65-year-old painter-photographer Deganit Berest, street poet Nitzan Mintz in tandem with conceptual graffiti artist Dede, and performance artist

Adva Drori, who focuses on the ritualistic side of life – and you get the eclectic curatorial idea.

The 41-year-old Tzepelewitz says he has been a Someck fan for some time, and that the stylistic spread is testament to the Iraqi-born poet's all-embracing ethos. "I have loved his poetry since the age of 16. You have lots of Israeli poets who fall into the kitsch trap – not in terms of the words they use, but with regard to the ideas they employ. But Ronny's not like that. He manages to be genuine."

That naturally appeals to an across-the-board readership base. "I know doctors and lawyers, professors of literature and street cleaners who all like to read Ronny's poems," continues Tzepelewitz. "And there is something so visual about Someck's poetry. That was my starting point for the exhibition."

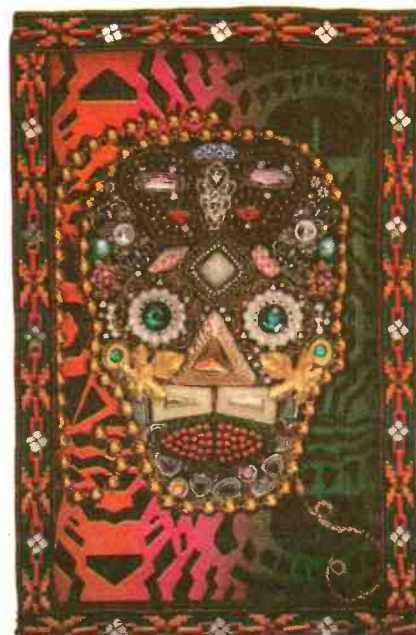
Someck also crosses expansive thematic and emotional terrain in his work, and the exhibitors clearly imbibed this with gusto. Some of the artists derived their inspiration from specific poems, while others fed off his oeuvre in general.

Fellow Iraqi-born artist Oded Halahmy has been courting the pomegranate icon for many a year now, and his contribution to *Brush of Fire* features a young naked woman holding a bunch of pomegranates in a strategically modest position, while the ruddy shade of the fruit is echoed in the model's nipples.

Someck actually displays a penchant for red – his bibliography includes a tome called *The Fire Stays in Red*, and there are quite a few references to it in his poems – and Tzepelewitz considered calling the exhibition "The Color Red," until the security situation down South deteriorated and he thought it prudent to opt for a less topical title.

In addition to his captivating written work, Someck produces appealing items of the plastic arts. One might thus have thought the poet could do a decent job with providing accurate visual versions of his own texts. Tzepelewitz says he briefly pondered the option, but quickly realized that Someck's poems naturally call out for others to offer their pennyworth.

"His work conjures up such a powerful visual side that I was intrigued to see how the connection between his poems and artists and designers would work. Designers generally work to a specific commission, to something very clearly defined. They are asked to create something practical, or something that precisely matches a text."



Yair Recanati, 'Bloody Mary,' 2014. (Dikla Recanati)

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Tzepelewitz was keen to allow the exhibitors as much freedom as possible, and he endeavored to stay out of their way. "My curatorship for this was mostly confined to choosing the artists," he says, "the artists who would react to Ronny's poems."

In fact, the curator went one step further, and introduced the chosen exhibitors to the man himself. "Most of the artists were already familiar with Ronny's work, and I sent the others his poems to read," Tzepelewitz explains. "Then I invited them all to my house to meet Ronny, and Ronny read some of his poems and talked about himself and his work. Everyone came out of the encounter enlightened. Even the artists who were not conversant with his poetry came out of the meeting with so much energy, and they were so eager to get on with their work for the exhibition."

Someck's writing is eminently accessible to one and all. There is very little in the highbrow league, and there is a very graphic element to it in addition to an abundance of humor, generally of the absurd or darker variety. He feeds off different cultural strands, including Israeli and Iraqi sources, with plenty of fun references

to the heyday of rock 'n' roll and the iconic performers of the '50s - primarily Elvis Presley.

The aforementioned street-level mind-set was a curator's boon. "It is sometimes difficult to get artists of the caliber of Deganit Berest to agree to take part in a group show, but she agreed within seconds," says Tzepelewitz, adding that he didn't point the artists in the direction of specific poems he might have thought would lend themselves more comfortably to the artist's creative approach. "My attitude towards my curatorial work has always been that if you allow the artist, a good artist, freedom to do what he or she wants to do and what they like, you would get a good result."

Tzepelewitz certainly places the contribution by Yossi Lemel in that favorable category. Lemel is an internationally renowned poster artist who served as a paratrooper officer in the First Lebanon War, and war is a recurrent element of his work. His creation for Brush of Fire features the female pubic area tactfully concealed by toy chocolate soldiers. "He did a provocative work - but not just to be provocative. He chose a poem called 'God's Bag of Candy.'" The last line of



Curator Guy Morag Tzepelewitz. (Courtesy Beit Meirov Art Gallery)



Poet Ronny Someck. (Leora Someck)

the single-stanza poems reads "I am a chocolate soldier."

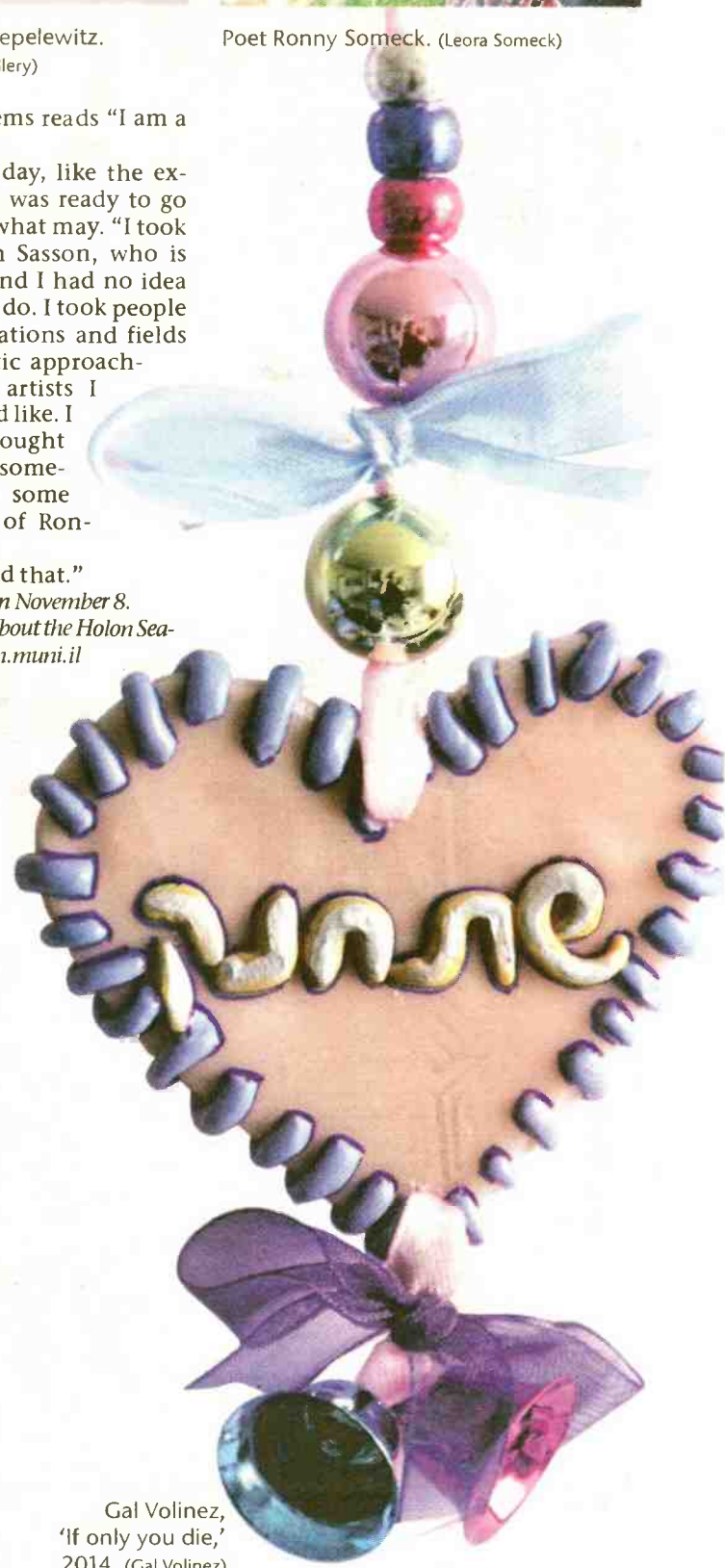
At the end of the day, like the exhibitors, Tzepelewitz was ready to go with the flow, come what may. "I took someone like Kedem Sasson, who is a fashion designer, and I had no idea what he was going to do. I took people from different generations and fields of interest and artistic approaches. I didn't choose artists I thought Ronny would like. I chose the people I thought would come up with something interesting, some fresh interpretation of Ronny's work.

"I think we managed that."

"Brush of Fire" closes on November 8.

For more information about the Holon Season of Design: www.holon.muni.il

Debby Morag, 'Anonymous,' 2014. (Courtesy Beit Meirov Art Gallery)



Gal Volinez, 'If only you die,' 2014. (Gal Volinez)