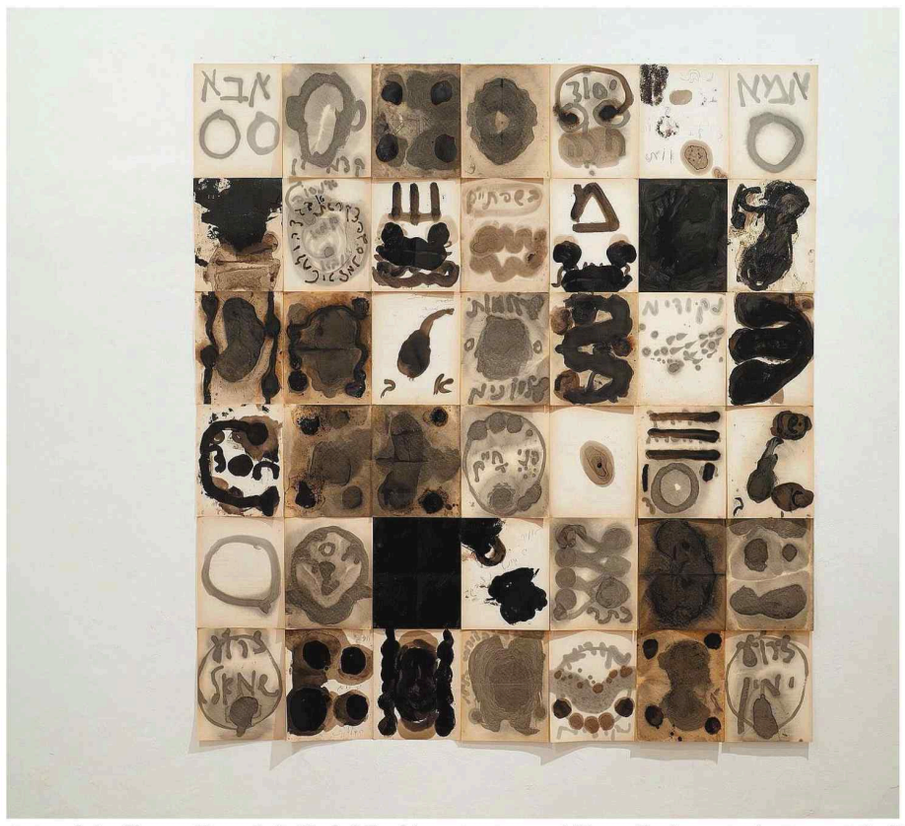
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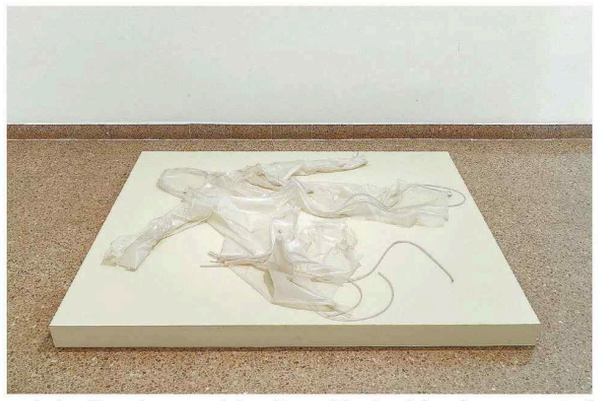
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: As cultural isolation intensifies, all thats left are Metallica and Beatles tribute acts

GALLERY גלריה









Artwork by Sharon Etgar, left, Shahd Zoubi, center top, and Yaara Zach, center bottom, at the Beinnale for Drawing; musician Omer Moskovich, who was part of the International Music Showcase Festival. *Daniel Hanoch; Etty Deutsch*

Cultural Roundup
Avshalom Halutz

As cultural isolation intensifies, all that's left are Metallica and Beatles tribute acts

The International Music Showcase Festival offered a platform to promising local artists, and the ninth Biennale for Drawing in Israel showcases works on a surprisingly apt theme

With ongoing boycotts, refusals to collaborate and removals of albums from streaming services, the Israeli music scene apprarently has been hit harder by our declining international standing than other artistic fields. Israelis looking to watch live performances of foreign artists are left with limited options (Kevin Spacey doing jazz), with mostly local artists taking the stage.

Now that they can no longer bring the hottest tours to Tel Aviv, some concert promoters have found a different way to bring home the biggest names in the music industry... sort of.

Unable to watch the real thing, Israelis are left with an onslaught of tribute acts: Starting December, local concertgoers will be bombarded with the likes of the Serbian group Black Metallica Tribute Band playing their "Metallica Symphony Tribute Show" promising covers of "Enter Sandman," "The Unforgiven," "Master of Puppets," "Nothing Else Matters" and "Fade to Black."

Another Serbian tribute band, BestBeat, will perform "The Beatles' Symphony," in which middle-aged singers perform the Beatles' greatest hits while wearing exact replicas of the Fab Four's outfits and copying their hairdos. There will also be a Led Zeppelin tribute concert made up of local artists, and even a concert celebrating the 40th anniversary of Dire Straits' "Brothers in Arms," using the Hebrew translation "Ahim Laneshek" as if the album were somehow an Israeli cultural milestone.

'Relating to shedding as something concrete and as a metaphor for a collective state of mind enabled interesting works to come.'

Apart from the fact that mainstream Israeli taste seems to be stuck somewhere in the 1980s, the invasion of the replicas helps make sure locals remain as disconnected from the world as possible. Meanwhile, there is a good reason to buy tickets to shows from authentic Israeli talent: Mashina, one of the greatest Israeli rock bands from the 1980s and 1990s, is celebrating 40 years since it was formed with two performances in December. If you are a Mashina fan, you better hurry: One concert is already sold out.

Israeli talent shines through

Notwithstanding the bad rap given to the International Music Showcase Festival in this column just last week, some of its acts proved that despite the negativity surrounding the Israeli music scene and after two years of artists' not being able to make a living, there is still a fountain of local creativity and talent.

On Friday, the festival arrived at Tel Aviv's Teder, the cultural center at Romano House (the historical building recently bought by the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality, meaning it may not be leveled, but might soon go through a renovation process leaving it unrecognizable). Despite being sponsored by the Foreign Ministry, the night – which was broadcasted live on Teder's radio station and is available via streaming – offered the chance to show that music making can provide hope in dark times.

The lineup included several promising local artists who gave it their best, and I recommend checking out. Among them were Omer Moskovich, Hewan, Dina Kitrosky Trio, Max Oleartchik, Sneaky and Malox, as well as great DJ sets between the live performances by duo Shir Shushan & Shai Samana and Autarkic.

Drawing what's left behind

The ninth Biennale for Drawing in Israel, which opened in Jerusalem's Artists' House two weeks ago under the title "Traces IX – Slough," is unlike most biennales. "The Drawing Biennale is meant to point out something, to try to map a trend or a mood in the field of drawing. ... But [this year] the exhibition is not ... a survey of drawing. .. That is less what this is," says Tali Ben-Nun, the exhibition's chief curator. "I really believe there is something very modest in the intimacy of the exhibition. There are no big muscles in it; there is nothing spectacular. It is mainly a very intimate encounter with works."



Teder in Tel Aviv. *Ilan Assayag*

The event's theme, sloughing (shedding outer layers of dead skin), is a pretty good choice of metaphor for times that seem unclear and unsafe and that move quickly between life and death. Beyond the personal, it also illustrates a state of creativity during war, and might point to a society that is dealing with the shelling of old narratives, trying to rebuild itself while also escaping responsibility for its own actions.

"When the war began, we were all thrown into a collective trauma. But for me, it also became very personal. My son, who serves in Golani Brigade, was stationed near the Gaza border on October 7. He was wounded. The army calls it 'lightly,' but for a mother it never feels light," Ben-Nun says. "Only a few weeks later, he returned to serve again. I felt as if the armor around me had fallen away. I was moving through the world as an exposed, empty shell, and that image entered my life even before I connected it to drawing.

"I began thinking about shedding in nature. Many animals cast off skin or shells as part of their survival and growth. Something needs to fall away for something new to emerge. What is discarded appears dead, but it makes space for life. That idea stayed with me.

"I feel that by relating to [the image of shedding] as something concrete and at the same time a metaphor for a collective state of mind that we are all carrying, this enabled works that are truly interesting to come. Some of them illuminate very beautiful things about drawing."

How did that lead you to drawing?

"Drawing is immediate. It is a direct imprint of thought or emotion on paper. It is often rough and exposed, or left aside as something provisional. It contains the first gestures that later give way to more polished works. These are the shells of the artistic process.

"I wanted to look at castoffs of the studio. Sketches, print plates once the edition is complete, molds that are no longer useful. All of them carry traces, memory and a sense of movement."

Ben-Nun also wanted to create a dialogue between different generations. For example, she invited major sculptors such as Ya'acov Dorchin and Yitzhak Golombek to be part of the exhibition, but chose their drawings rather than sculptures. "Dorchin's drawings are completely free and abstract, and Golombek's figurative drawings are portraits drawn from memory. They feel sculptural even though they are not studies for actual sculptures."

She also included the works of two artists who are no longer alive: Pesach Slabosky and Maya Attoun. "One of the most moving objects in the exhibition is a small art book Maya published in 2018, which was also a calendar," Ben-Nun says. "In the last weeks of his life, when his eyesight was already failing, Pesach filled its pages with colored pencil. The result is a single fragile object that contains both of them."

Talking about the war, Ben-Nun adds that "the exhibition was born from a very personal place. And I think part of that also seeped into the dialogue with the artists. Not my personal experience of October 7, but each person's own fracture, their skin, their cracked protective layer. I also did not want to shout the trauma illustratively or shout everything that we are carrying from that Saturday. But I think that the pain is very present in the exhibition, present both in the space and in the works."

We are not only victims. There is also what Israel has done. Is that present in the exhibition?

"It is important for me to clarify this. The exhibition does not directly address suffering or death, and not one side or the other. There are no works that were made as a direct response to the war. The focus is on the image of shedded skin. It is a reminder, a sign, a memory. It is the empty shell of a process. The vulnerability you feel in the exhibition is present not because the works depict trauma, but because drawing itself is a thin skin. It is delicate and easily pierced."