

ORIT HOFSHI & MAHMOOD KAISS ON TREES AND WOOD

Ron Bartos / Zemack Contemporary Art

Mahmood Kaiss, The Dome, Wood Installation, 250x400 cm. (The Museum for Islamic Art, Photography by Shai Halevi.

What distinguishes 'tree' from 'wood'? The tree grows, changes, yields, responds to the seasons and its life cycle. Wood, in contrast, is a man-made raw material created after the tree's death or intentional felling. And so, a tree is life and wood is death, one is nature and the other is man, one is the wild and the other is culture.

Wood is the basic raw material in the works of Orit Hofshi and Mahmood Kaiss, as it is also in the current installation by the two artists. The juxtaposition of the two artworks created by the two artists brings to mind additional dualities such as art/craft, painting/installation, figuration/abstraction, expressive/geometric, secular/religious, destruction/

construction, finite/infinite; and if we turn to the artists themselves, we can also add to these: woman/man, senior artist/emerging artist, Jewish/Muslim.

The work of each artist is fundamentally different, but one of the central aspects of their art form an affinity between their works, planted precisely in the difference between tree and wood. If you will, the transformation of the tree is in itself the entire story – mankind's imprint on the world, meaning, the traces that man leaves in the world as the generator of culture in a natural space, who leaves devastation in his wake. Hofshi's painted worlds are apocalyptic visions that portray man in the ruins of his culture, their setting alludes to (without fixing them in) the current sociopolitical

climate. Kaiss's arabesques force nature (tree) to become raw material (wood), disciplining the raw material to serve as culture and tradition. Removed from their natural religious context (mosques, holy books, combined with calligraphy, etc.), the arabesques stand as artworks that hold both the geopolitical conflicts and the added value in the relationship between Islamic culture and Western culture. The act of cutting down a tree is a violent one. Orit Hofshi portrays violent situations and environments while Mahmood Kaiss weaves infinite geometric patterns that captivate the eye and the heart. We opened the text with a question, and we will end it with another question: which is more violent – to depict violence, allude to it, or ignore it?

Orit Hofshi is constantly pre-occupied with the human condition, researching historical and current contexts and perspectives, questioning humans' place and significance as part of their socio-political fabric and in the broader planetary scheme. The current installation, "Crossing", continues her examination of chronology, being and evident traces. She is captivated and agitated by the intertwined evolution of humans in the environment, the existence of communities, both in the physical sense as well as broader social and political sense. Historically, humans have left their mark in their environment for thousands of years, at times remarkable monuments and at times remnants reclaimed by natural elements. Hofshi is preoccupied with the quite brief yet subjectively perceived total existence of the individual, as part of turbulent social circumstances. Humans' migration, displacement and traveling have been constant whether as a result of severe natural, living conditions or socio-political circumstances. More frequently involuntary than self-motivated or by choice, human migration has also continued in the age of globalization of the 20th century, followed by the very current dramatic fleeing of millions from harsh and chaotic conditions.

The installation, 'The Dome', by Mahmood Kaiss, is a further stage in the study of the traditional ornament. It is a development of 'Arabesque #3', a construction of wooden slats, joined in a recurring geometric pattern to form a kind of wall (Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2015). In 'The Dome', Kaiss returns to the wooden slats, this time forming a domed structure that appears squeezed in between the floor and the ceiling of the gallery. The dome appears impermanent, a kind of scaffolding with a geometric arabesque pattern; and its central location divides the space in two, allowing the visitor to look from one end of the gallery to the other,

as if through amashrabiya, or lattice screen. The dome is used in different cultures to roof large sacred spaces. Its round structure symbolizes heaven, perfection, eternity and infinity. Kaiss chose this form, which is so closely identified with Muslim architecture, and invites the visitor to experience its qualities close up, while at the same time creating a sense of displacement and alienation. The large object at the center of the space is unconnected to any religious structure, and has been placed or buried in the heart of the museum – the 'shrine of the muses'! – Which is off limits to the visitor.



Mahmood Kaiss, The Dome, Wood Installation, 250x400 cm. (The Museum for Islamic Art, Photography by Shai Halevi.



Orit Hofshi, Crossing, 2013, Spoon printed woodcut on hand made paper, carved pine wood panels and ink, 300 x 762 cm. Photography by Ylgal Pardo ©

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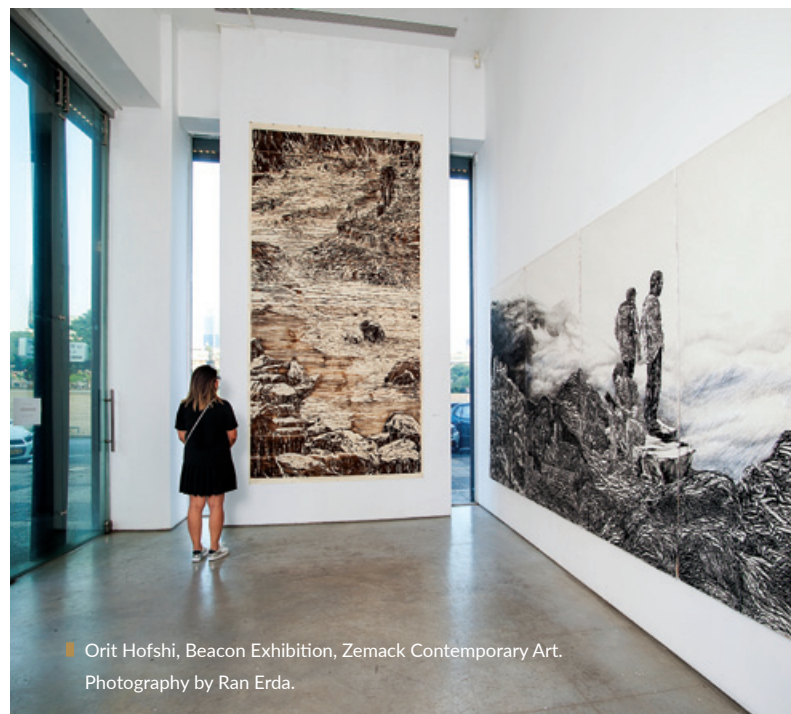
Orit Hofshi. Photography by Ylgal Pardo.

ORIT HOFSHI | "CROSSING"

Orit Hofshi (born in 1959, Kibbutz Matzuva, Israel) Lives and works in Herzliya, Israel.

Hofshi received her MA in Arts from Leeds University, UK following her studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, where she majored in painting and printmaking (1986-1990) and her studies at The NB Haifa School of Design (1980-1985). Orit's practice has for many years focused on printmaking, works on paper, installations, and woodcutting

as her primary mediator. Concerned with the past/present political realities, Orit imagery projects the perception of oneself in relation to natural and man-made topographies and investigates broader personal and social narratives. She has exhibited widely in Israel, Europe and the United States including The Tel Aviv Art Museum, Israel; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, Bratislava, Slovakia; Shulamit Nazarian Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA; Contemporary Art



Orit Hofshi, Beacon Exhibition, Zemack Contemporary Art. Photography by Ran Erda.



Orit Hofshi, Alternative, 2014, Ink drawing and carving on pine wood panels, 200 x 200 cm.

Collection of the German Bundestag in The Reichstag Building, Berlin, Germany; Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, USA; Haifa Museum of Art, Israel; The Open Museum, Israel; Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Israel; Swarthmore College, PA, USA; Asheville Art Museum, North Carolina, USA; Philagrafika 2010: "The Graphic Unconscious" PAFA Arts Museum, Philadelphia, PA, USA; The Print Center, Philadelphia, PA, USA; International Print Center, New York, USA and The Royal Academy, London, England.

Photography by Ylgal Pardo © Courtesy of the artists and Zemack Gallery.



Orit Hofshi, Alternative, 2014, (Detail) Ink drawing and carving on pine wood panels, 200 x 200 cm.



■ Orit Hofshi, Cirque, 2016, Carved Birch wood panels, Ink, Oil sticks, 192 x 248 cm.



■ Orit Hofshi Crossing installation , (Danubian Museum)



■ Orit Hofshi, Crossing, 2013, Spoon printed woodcut on hand made paper, carved pine wood panels and Ink, 300 x 762cm.



■ Orit Hofshi, Acathexis, 2016, Woodcut on hand made Kozo and Abaca paper, 200 x 100 cm.



■ Orit Hofshi, Beacon Exhibition, Zemack Contemporary Art.



■ Orit Hofshi, Laver 2017, Ink, on Carved pine wood panels, 79 x 157.5 in

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TOP ISRAELI ARTIST

MAHMOOD KAISS | 'THE DOME'



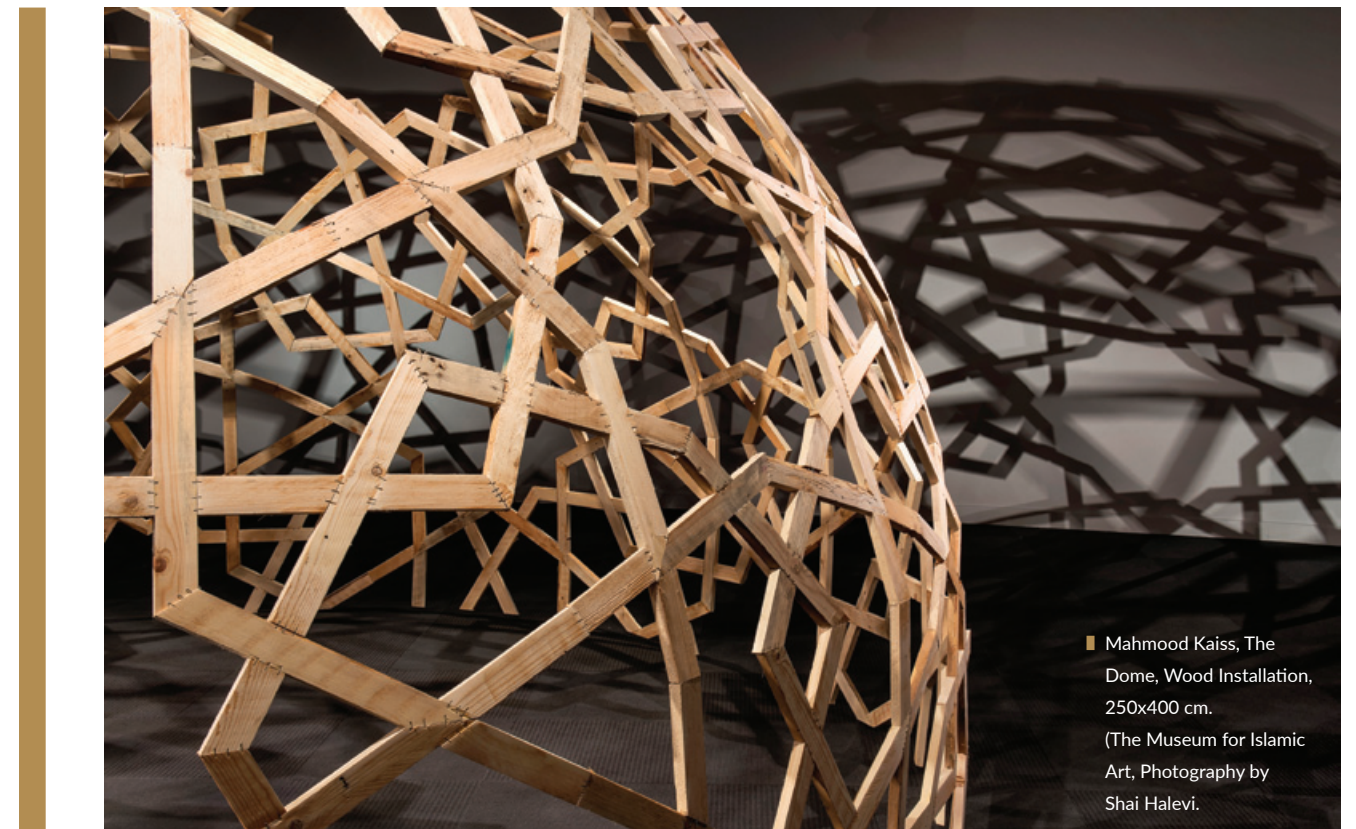
Mahmood Kaiss,
Photography by Shai Halevi.

Mahmood Kaiss
(Born in 1985, Nahaf, Israel)
Lives and works in Haifa, Israel.

Mahmood Kaiss received his MFA in Fine Art from University of Haifa. Despite his young age, Kaiss' installations are already held in three Museums shows: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Herzliya Museum of Art and The Museum for Islamic Art in Jerusalem. Kaiss is considered to be one of the most promising Palestinian artists active in the Israeli art scene.

The arabesque - an ornamentation style, stunningly intertwining vegetal or geometric designs—is at the center of Mahmood Kaiss' practice, which retains some traditional arabesque characteristics, while making far-reaching modifications with others. Using transformation, abstraction and hybridization, Kaiss examines the severing of a form, its familiar image and its translocation into a different stylistic, material, spatial and theoretical world and deals with questions of Islamic vs. western culture, identification, belonging and detachment.

Photography by Shai Halevi © Courtesy of the artists and Zemack Gallery.



■ Mahmood Kaiss, The Dome, Wood Installation, 250x400 cm.
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■ Mahmood Kaiss, ARABESQUE #3, 2015
(Tel Aviv Museum of Art) Installation view.



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